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The Need for Speed: Factors Influencing Q-Commerce Brand Preference in Urban Grocery Buying

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ABSTRACT

The quick expansion of quick-commerce (Q-commerce) platforms in Indian urban markets has radically transformed age-old grocery-buying behavior. This research work looks into what drives consumer brand preference for Q-commerce platforms in urgent grocery-buying situations in some selected Indian Cities, including Kolkata, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, and Bhatpara. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire from a purposive sample of 29 Indian urban executives, capturing data on brand recall and awareness, user engagement patterns, preferred delivery window, and the relative significance of 15 service-quality parameters rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using descriptive stats and frequencies to identify key factors of brand choice. Outputs reveal that Perceived cost-effectiveness —specifically low delivery fees (M = 3.97) and low platform fees (M = 3.90)—rank above speed-of-delivery promises (M = 3.28) as brand preference drivers in Q-Commerce, challenging traditional belief that give more importance to speed above all else. Item availability, product quality, and trust in delivery have a comparable impact on brand loyalty of Q-Commerce Platforms. Blinkit commanded universal brand awareness, recall (100%), and dominated primary usage (41.4%), followed by Big Basket Now (24.1%). A strong majority of respondents (79.3%) indicated balancing speed and cost when making

very urgent orders. The study contributes to the early stage literature on Q-commerce consumer behavior in Indian emerging markets and reflects practical implications for Q-Commerce platform operators looking to build sustainable brand preference in Indian urban perspectives.

1. Introduction

The grocery retail industry in India is witnessing a paradigm shift. While previously consumers would plan weekly visits to nearby kiranas or modern format supermarkets, today they simply pick up their smartphones to purchase groceries within minutes. Underpinning this behavior change is the emergence of Quick Commerce, commonly referred to as Q-commerce, which delivers products to consumers within a hyperlocal radius of 10 to 30 minutes using a fleet of dark stores, advanced inventory management systems, and gig economy-based delivery riders.

The market size of the Indian Q-commerce ecosystem stood at around USD 700 million in 2023 and is expected to touch USD 5 billion by 2027, primarily driven by widespread smartphone penetration, dense urban populations, and changes in household time budgets (RedSeer Consulting, 2024). Several players, including Blinkit (formerly Grofers), Zepto, Swiggy Instamart, and Big Basket Now, have established themselves in the market, competing fiercely for dominance through intense brand building efforts. However, with the intensifying competition, the important question is: what drives consumer preferences in choosing a platform based on urgent time pressures?

Conventional models of consumer preference in the domain of online commerce focused primarily on pricing, product offerings, and ease-of-use aspects (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, the Q-commerce domain presents a fundamentally different decision-making environment characterized by greater urgency and shorter time frames of decision-making, leading to a different set of trade-offs between speed of delivery, cost of delivery, platform familiarity, and so forth. Hence, there is a need to understand Q-commerce brand preference more comprehensively.

In this regard, the present paper attempts to contribute to the existing body of literature. The research was motivated by three interconnected observations: (a) the scarcity of studies on Q-commerce brand preference in the urban Indian context; (b) the tendency of practitioners to focus excessively on delivery speed as a brand differentiator; and (c) the possibility of identifying a hierarchy of brand preference factors using actual consumer data. To address this problem, this study leverages survey data collected from 29 urban professionals in five Indian cities.

1.1 Research Objectives

The study pursues four principal objectives:

(i) To profile the demographic and behavioral characteristics of urban Q-commerce grocery consumers.

(ii) To assess brand awareness, trial, and primary brand preference across leading Q-commerce platforms.

(iii) To identify and rank the factors that most strongly influence brand choice in urgent grocery-buying contexts.

(iv) To examine the role of pricing behavior and cost sensitivity in shaping platform loyalty.

1.2 Research Questions

Guided by these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: Which Q-commerce brands are most widely known and preferred by urban grocery consumers?

RQ2: What factors most significantly influence brand preference in urgent grocery-buying situations?

RQ3: How do price sensitivity and discount preferences affect Q-commerce platform choice?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Evolution of Quick Commerce

Q-commerce can be considered as an evolutionary version of e-commerce, characterized by the compression of the delivery time window to extremely tight sub-30 minutes. While the traditional scheduled online delivery models for grocery shopping offered by companies like Amazon Pantry and Big Basket follow the next-day/same-day delivery paradigm, Q-commerce brings this down to under 30-minutes with the help of dark stores stationed close to residential localities in cities (Venkatesan & Ravi, 2023). This model was innovated by Getir in Turkey back in 2015 before it started getting popularized across Europe and North America before finally coming to South Asia. This is due to the dense population and availability of gig workers in the region, making the unit economics of operations favorable.

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in India saw a decline in consumer interest in visiting brick-and-mortar stores as well as increasing their adoption of online payments methods such as the UPI system

(Economic Times, 2022). It can be said that the tipping point for the Indian market was achieved by Blinkit when it transitioned from being a scheduled delivery model to the sub-10-minute guarantee service in the year 2021 (Economic Times, 2022). The other competitors in the market included the newly formed company by two Stanford graduates named Zepto in 2021, who made use of sub-10-minute deliveries. Swiggy's Instamart and Big Basket Now were established using their pre-existing logistics systems and long-running brands respectively.

2.2 Consumer Brand Preference in Digital Commerce

Brand preference is described as the tendency to choose a certain brand in comparison to other brands when available equally. Brand preference is influenced by various cognitive, emotional, and situational elements (Keller, 2013). Satisfaction, trust, and switching costs are among the key antecedents of brand loyalty as was demonstrated by Oliver (1999) in an e-commerce setting. The research conducted by Bilgihan (2016) showed that utilitarian motivations of efficiency and convenience and hedonic motivations of pleasure and exploration combined are what drives stickiness on platforms.

Various studies have revealed that price sensitivity is highly pronounced in the digital grocery space. Grewal et al. (2018) found out that dynamic pricing and hidden fees impact negatively platform trust more than the same behaviors would in an analog environment. The same applies to the structure of delivery fees, according to Herhausen et al. (2021): one of the biggest determinants of cart abandonment when using same-day delivery services is the delivery fee, as consumers heavily rely on zero-cost reference price anchor.

The role of service quality and reliability becomes crucial in cases when there is urgency for purchases. SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1988) adapted by Xing et al. (2011) as e-SERVQUAL indicated that reliability (responsiveness, assurance) were the most important factors affecting consumers' willingness to use online delivery services in the future. In the context of Q-commerce, Dabir and Singh (2022) found that order accuracy and in-stock rate had stronger association with net promoter score than delivery time, implying that once certain thresholds for minimum delivery time are reached, reliability prevails.

2.3 The Paradox of Speed: Expectations vs. Priorities

The contrast between consumers' expectations about delivery time and their subsequent choice behavior regarding brands in Q-commerce appears consistently across studies in consumer research (Rajaguru & Matanda, 2022). While consumers may say that they prefer shorter delivery times, experiments and

revealed preference analyses indicate that clear information regarding delivery costs and the integrity of the process are more powerful motivators of repurchase intent (Rajaguru & Matanda, 2022). This contradiction between the attraction factor of faster delivery, as an example of 'the need for speed,' and factors of reliability and cost as retainers has been explained through Prospect Theory by Kahneman and Tversky (1979).

Kumar and Nanda (2019) extended this theory to a hyperlocal delivery situation in India, demonstrating that consumers in different income groups in Tier-1 cities preferred up to 5-10 more minutes of delivery time in order to get free delivery. The preference increased with income level, but surprisingly, consumers in higher-income brackets had more strongly anchored prices at zero, probably as a result of feeling that it was unfair to be asked to pay for an inherently inexpensive service. This conclusion applies directly to the study at hand.

2.4 Research Gap

Despite an increasing amount of literature on Q-commerce, there are still several shortcomings that exist. Firstly, a number of the empirical researches used for analysis in this context refer to the Western European countries, where the cost of work, geography, and customer needs differ much from those in India. Secondly, the few researches carried out in India have mostly concentrated on adopting Q-commerce instead of branding issues and customer loyalty after adoption. Thirdly, the factor hierarchy determining brand choice in case of really urgent purchases is yet to be explored.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The proposed study employs a quantitative descriptive research design. "A primary aim of descriptive research is to describe the characteristics and patterns associated with a particular phenomenon," says Creswell (2014). Since this particular type of research, being about brand preference in Q-commerce in India, is exploratory in nature, a descriptive survey method fits in well here because of its suitability in providing baseline information. This study employs a cross-sectional research design where information is gathered at a point in time.

3.2 Instrument Development

A questionnaire was created, consisting of 37 questions divided into five theme-based blocks: (i) Demographic profile, which includes sex, age, city, qualification, and number of family members; (ii) Q-

commerce usage behavior including recency, frequency, and average order time windows; (iii) Urgency trigger situation and delivery time expectation; (iv) Brand awareness, usage, and preference; and (v) Importance of 15 factors evaluated using the Likert scale from 1 = Not important to 5 = Extremely important, along with other questions concerning pricing, cart abandonment, and discount preference.

Factor importance was measured based on the existing models for evaluating service quality (Parasuraman et al., 1988; Xing et al., 2011), as well as Q-commerce-specific literature, such as speed, which includes fast delivery and reliability; availability, which involves in stock rates and accurate fulfillment; costs, which include delivery fees, platform fees, price competitiveness, and discounts; usability, which includes searchability and reordering ease; quality, which covers freshness and packaging; customer support, which covers responsiveness and refund policy; and convenience.

3.3 Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling technique was utilized to make sure that the individuals selected for the survey were active players within the Q-commerce environment. The population of interest involved individuals aged between 18 and 60 years living in metro and semi-metro cities within India and were able to use the Q-commerce service platforms. The selection process involved the identification of individuals through professional networks in five cities, including Kolkata (n = 19), Pune (n = 4), Bangalore (n = 2), Chennai (n = 2), and Bhatpara (n = 2). The overall sample size was 29 respondents. Although the sample size is relatively small and cannot be generalized to the larger population, it is adequate for the research objectives.3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The survey was administered electronically via a structured spreadsheet-based instrument during early 2026. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of anonymity. Duplicate entries were identified and handled through cross-verification of demographic profiles, ensuring data integrity. The dataset was cleaned and imported into Python (pandas library) for analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation were obtained for all variables. In relation to the 15-item factor battery, the mean rating was obtained for each item with ranking done from highest to lowest rating to determine the most important factors associated with brand preference. The brand metrics were analyzed by obtaining awareness, trial, and primary preference metrics to develop the brand funnel. Coding for open-ended questions regarding urgency and pricing were done using frequencies.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographics of the 29 respondents are provided in Table 1 below. In terms of gender distribution, the respondents were almost equally distributed between both genders, with female respondents comprising 51.7% of the respondents and male respondents making up 48.3%. Respondents belonging to the 41-50 year age group formed the majority (37.9%) of the respondents, which is indicative of the nature of the sample that had been chosen for the study; on average, the respondents were 42.1 years old (age range 24-54). The city of Kolkata was represented by the largest proportion of respondents (65.5%), which is aligned with the research strategy employed in the study.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents (N = 29)

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Female	15 (51.7%)
	Male	14 (48.3%)
Age Group	21–30 years	6 (20.7%)
	31–40 years	4 (13.8%)
	41–50 years	11 (37.9%)
	51–60 years	6 (20.7%)
City	Kolkata	19 (65.5%)
	Pune	4 (13.8%)
	Bangalore	2 (6.9%)
	Chennai	2 (6.9%)
	Bhatpara	2 (6.9%)
Qualification	MBA / MBA (HR) / MBA HR	15 (51.7%)
	PhD / PhD & Post Doc	6 (20.7%)

	Masters / M.Com	4 (13.8%)
	Graduation	2 (6.9%)
Family Size	1–2 members	4 (13.8%)
	3–4 members	19 (65.5%)
	5+ members	4 (13.8%)

4.2 Q-Commerce Usage Patterns

As evident from Table 2, a vast majority of the respondents (93.1%) have made at least one Q-commerce grocery order in the past 30 days prior to taking the survey, which validates their interaction with the topic at hand. The usage frequency was largely high since 41.4% of the respondents ordered groceries 2-3 times a week, and 24.1% ordered once a day, accounting for 65.5% of total respondents. This shows that Q-commerce is no longer used solely for emergencies; rather, it is being integrated into the normal course of household provision.

With regards to delivery expectations, 48.3% of the surveyed consumers said they had a tolerance level of 16-20 minutes for their urgent deliveries, and 31.0% responded with a 10-15 minute window. It is interesting to note that only 6.9% of consumers asked for deliveries in less than 10 minutes—the very window used by aggressive players like Zepto as part of their marketing strategy. There was a fairly even spread of order times throughout the day with peak order times in the 12-3 PM and 6-9 PM brackets.

Table 2. Q-Commerce Usage Behavior (N = 29)

Variable	Category	n (%)
Ordered in last 30 days	Yes	27 (93.1%)
	No	2 (6.9%)
Usage Frequency	Daily	7 (24.1%)
	2–3 times/week	12 (41.4%)
	Weekly	2 (6.9%)

	2–3 times/month	4 (13.8%)
	Rarely	4 (13.8%)
Expected Delivery Time	Under 10 min	2 (6.9%)
	10–15 min	9 (31.0%)
	16–20 min	14 (48.3%)
	21–30 min	2 (6.9%)
	46–60 min	2 (6.9%)

4.3 Brand Awareness, Trial, and Preference

Table 3 provides information about the brand funnel metrics of the top 5 Q-commerce platforms, based on respondent reports. Blinkit recorded highest levels of universal unaided awareness (100%), which can be attributed to strong ATL campaigns and word-of-mouth buzz about the product. Next came Zepto and Big Basket Now with respective awareness scores of 62.1% and 58.6%, while Swiggy Instamart lagged behind with awareness score of 55.2% perhaps due to the way respondents perceive it as a food delivery service and not a grocery platform. Finally, Flipkart Minutes (41.4%) being the most recent addition to the Q-commerce segment registered lower awareness scores.

Regarding usage within the last month (trial within 30 days), once again Blinkit recorded highest scores, with 86.2% respondents making purchases through Blinkit. The next two brands were Big Basket Now (44.8%) and Swiggy Instamart (34.5%). Conversion of awareness into usage for Blinkit was very high (86.2% of total, 100% of aware respondents). For their primary preferred brand in situations of urgent need, Blinkit was again the clear winner with 41.4%, with Big Basket Now coming second (24.1%). Flipkart Minutes recorded an unexpectedly higher preference rate (13.8%) compared to its awareness/trial rate, probably indicating customer satisfaction – a classic example of loyal niche brand strategy.

On the other hand, Zepto and Swiggy Instamart each got a preference rate of 6.9%. As far as urgency situations where consumers require instant delivery, lack of essential staples like milk/eggs/bread, gap of ingredients during food preparation and weather concerns emerged as major triggers.

Table 3. Brand Awareness, Trial, and Primary Preference (N = 29)

Brand	Awareness (n)	Used Last 30d (n)	Primary Preferred (n)
Blinkit	29 (100%)	25 (86.2%)	12 (41.4%)
Big Basket Now	17 (58.6%)	13 (44.8%)	7 (24.1%)
Swiggy Instamart	16 (55.2%)	10 (34.5%)	2 (6.9%)
Zepto	18 (62.1%)	8 (27.6%)	2 (6.9%)
Flipkart Minutes	12 (41.4%)	2 (6.9%)	4 (13.8%)

4.4 Factor Importance Rankings

The 15-item factor battery revealed a clear importance hierarchy, as shown in Table 4. Contrary to what one might expect, delivery speed did not take the top spot; instead, cost-related factors came first. The low delivery fee (M = 3.97, SD = 1.15) ranked first overall, closely followed by item availability (M = 3.90, SD = 0.82) and low platform fee (M = 3.90, SD = 1.11), which tied for second place. This finding has important strategic implications: even in urgent purchasing situations, consumers are very aware of the total cost of their order. In the middle tier of importance, factors included accurate fulfillment (M = 3.85), quality and freshness of perishables (M = 3.85), trust and safety of delivery packaging (M = 3.83), and flexibility in payment options (M = 3.83). These factors make up a 'service integrity' group, reflecting whether the platform reliably and safely keeps its basic promises. Their high scores suggest that consumers care about more than speed and cost; they also want assurance that they will receive the right products in good condition. The promise of fast delivery, often highlighted in Q-commerce brand messages, came in 14th out of 15 (M = 3.28, SD = 0.88). This result, while surprising, aligns with studies showing that delivery speed is a basic expectation rather than a unique feature once minimum standards are achieved. Past delivery reliability (M = 3.34) and ease of reordering (M = 3.14) also ranked lower in importance.

Table 4. Factor Importance Ratings for Q-Commerce Brand Choice (1–5 Likert Scale, N = 26–29)

Factor	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank

Low Delivery Fee	3.97	1.15	**1**
Item Availability (In-Stock)	3.90	0.82	**2**
Low Platform Fee / Handling Fee	3.90	1.11	**2**
Accurate Fulfillment	3.85	1.19	**4**
Quality/Freshness of Perishables	3.85	1.32	**4**
Trust & Safety of Delivery	3.83	1.20	**6**
Payment Options	3.83	1.14	**6**
Customer Support Responsiveness	3.62	1.42	**8**
Refund Speed and Fairness	3.62	1.35	**8**
Best Discounts/Coupons	3.54	1.10	**10**
Competitive Item Prices vs Offline	3.48	1.06	**11**
Ease of Finding Items	3.41	0.98	**12**
Past Delivery Reliability	3.34	1.17	**13**
Fast Delivery Promise (10–15 min)	3.28	0.88	**14**
Ease of Reordering	3.14	1.13	**15**

4.5 Pricing Behavior and Cost Sensitivity

The behavior and preferences for pricing are displayed in Table 5. Surprisingly, 79.3% of customers state they balance delivery time and cost when ordering urgently, and 13.8% prioritize time and 6.9% prioritize amount. The nature of consumers is not the pure speed-at-any-price consumer as described in many Q-commerce reports.

Cart abandonment due to additional charges was significant: only 20.7% reported never abandoning a cart because of added fees, while 79.3% do so sometimes, rarely, often, or always (Table 5). The two biggest price-related pain points were reported to be delivery fees and platform fees. Among different kinds of discounts, respondents preferred free delivery most (37.9%), followed by having no preference

(34.5%), percentage-off discount (13.8%) and rupee-off discount (13.8%). The strong preference for free delivery (which is functionally equivalent to waiving the delivery charge) is very much aligned with the previous stated fact that delivery fee was a top factor for brand preference.

Table 5. Pricing Behavior and Cost Sensitivity (N = 29)

Variable	Response	n (%)
Priority When Ordering	Balanced speed and price	23 (79.3%)
	Delivery speed	4 (13.8%)
	Total payable amount	2 (6.9%)
Cart Abandonment Due to Charges	Never	6 (20.7%)
	Rarely	7 (24.1%)
	Sometimes	8 (27.6%)
	Often	6 (20.7%)
	Always	2 (6.9%)
Preferred Discount Type	Free delivery	11 (37.9%)
	Does not matter	10 (34.5%)
	% off on order	4 (13.8%)
	Flat ₹ off	4 (13.8%)

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Blinkit's Market Dominance

The least surprising result of the study is Blinkit's clear dominance across all brand funnel metrics. A score of 100% unaided awareness, 86.2% recent trial and 41.4% primary preference score in this metric clearly defines a brand equity that no competitor comes close to. A multitude of factors could contribute to this dominant position: the significant funding and marketing support that Zomato poured in after its acquisition (2022), rapid expansion of dark store network to Tier-1 cities and the early mover advantage

which has helped the company normalize the 10 minute delivery as a signal for credibility. Relatively high preference score for Big Basket Now (24.1%) despite lower preference and trial might have a role played by the long and entrenched trust in the decade old brand name that Big Basket has in the organized grocery space.

5.2 The Cost Primacy Paradox

The fact that cost (over speed) outweighs other factors as brand preference drivers warrants some explanation. The easy explanation for this is simply to say that the profile of the sample as (educated, middle-to-middle upper income) customers who are highly sensitive to cost due to their business schooling led to the results we see. Nevertheless, it supports much of the work done within the behavioral economics field to date that the pain of paying fees for low-cost goods can psychologically exceed their real, monetary cost (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). In this context, paying an additional $30 for a $200 order isn't seen as 15% of additional cost, but rather as a broken trust-something the platform is taking from me, demonstrating platform opportunism.

5.3 Service Integrity as the Middle Ground

This "service integrity" cluster-accurate order fulfillment, good quality, trust in packaging, and convenience of payment-received very similar high ratings (between 3.83 and 3.85) and was in the middle layer of the importance ranking. These four components represent a fundamental need for a consumer – an assurance that the Q-commerce platform will indeed deliver what was promised, in the required condition, with a payment process that one feels comfortable with. High SD scores for both product quality and customer support (1.32 and 1.42 respectively) suggest that performance in these areas is likely perceived quite differently among individual consumers, making them key differentiators across different Q-commerce platforms.

Particular focus should be paid to fresh produce and hygiene of packaging. Given the fact that the consumer base is mainly composed of working professionals in urban environments (65.5% of which live in families of three or more members), most customers who place orders through Q-commerce channels likely order perishable items, such as fruits and vegetables, meat, and dairy. The fact that freshness of product and hygiene of packaging are a high concern suggests that these attributes are no longer logistics functions but brand experience features that determine a consumer's purchase intent.

5.4 Delivery Speed as Hygiene, Not Differentiator

The fact that both fast delivery promise (14/15) and historical delivery reliability (13/15) score low in the lower part of the factor ranking shouldn't be misinterpreted to suggest consumer apathy toward speed. Instead, it indicates that among Q-commerce context a standard expectation has been internalized: the 16-20-minute interval that nearly half (48.3%) of the survey respondents feel acceptable is the tipping point at which the brand promise loses relevance (delivery occurs quickly enough) and above which brand equity begins to decline. In such a setup, speed is more of a hygiene factor than a differentiator.

The discrepancy between platform marketing (sub-10 minutes promised) and consumer expectations (16-20 minutes acceptable; 48.3% of survey respondents) poses both a risk and opportunity: Risk is that platforms' substantial capital investments into dark store density for sub-10 minute delivery offer consumers only an incrementally marginal improvement to their satisfaction given the expense. Opportunity is that clearly differentiated brands that communicate transparency on price and quality might win over brand preference share without compromising on the more essential factor of speed.

5.5 Urgency Triggers and Time Patterns

The dominant urgency drivers identified were domestic staples (milk, bread, eggs), running out of an ingredient whilst cooking, and the inability to leave the house due to the weather. It is interesting to note that the strongest urgency triggers are grounded in domestic need rather than hedonistic or aspirational intent, positioning the purpose of Q-commerce for groceries as an assurance or insurance against household supply failure rather than as a desirable extra that consumers indulge in. This has implications on how brands message the service; with the potential that convenient and home-focused messaging might be more successful.

6. Conclusions

6.1 Summary of Key Conclusions

This research explored what determines the Q-commerce brand choice among Indian urban consumers in the context of grocery purchase. A number of substantive findings emerged from the analysis of primary survey data collected from 29 urban professionals across 5 cities:

Firstly, Blinkit has established a category-defining brand position in urban India and has been universally recognized, along with dominant preference scores, establishing a formidable competitive moat for rivals to contend. The substantial secondary preference shares secured by Big Basket Now can largely be

attributed to its brand heritage. This also implies an opportunity to transfer brand equity across to new delivery models.

Secondly, the dominant story where the core value proposition for Q-commerce is exclusively about speed need to be recalibrated. Cost-related variables (delivery and platform charges) are ranked significantly higher over speed promises in determining brand choice for active users of Q-commerce platforms. This discovery will have implications for the strategic and pricing perspectives for every player in this segment.

Thirdly, integrity of services, that include accuracy of fulfillment, product quality and freshness, delivery trust and transaction ease, occupy the middle ranks of the Q-commerce brand drivers. It would be a fallacy for platforms which have made over-emphasis on speed in their brand proposition to ignore these service components since even though it may help secure first order trial for a platform, it will not result in conversion into a primary brand choice.

Fourthly, instead of aiming to maximize on speed during urgent grocery shopping needs, it is a delicate balance that most consumers aim for. The sheer majority of respondents (79.3%) want to find an equilibrium between cost and speed. On the other hand, the number of respondents who value total cost and completely overlook speed in their Q-commerce brand choices is just 6.9%. The existence of such a balanced trade-off pattern indicates that consumers of Q-commerce segment are smarter than they appear based on standardurgency framing.

6.2 Managerial Implications

What the data imply: First, they imply a shift in brand-investment focus for Q-commerce platforms. Investment in speed-claim advertising may yield more brand preference in the long run, if refocused in areas like explicit disclosure of costs/fees, free delivery tiers, quality signalling and customer service. The large cart abandonment rate (79.3% have experienced some incident) can become a source of recoverable revenue if fee structure can be streamlined-mainly the removal of hidden costs, and use of standardized or even predictable (up-front) delivery costs. Second, these data may imply that, if challenging a brand like Blinkit, attempts to compete on speed will not win. Because of Blinkit's dark store infrastructure, parity in delivery speed may simply be impossible forchallengerbrands, and a differentiation strategy based on cost transparency, quality, and post-delivery service would be more likely to yield preference share.

6.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations which the reader should bear in mind while interpreting the results. The number of 29 respondents is adequate for exploratory descriptive analyses; inferential generalisation would not be valid. Since 65.5% of the respondents are based in Kolkata, generalization to other metros with different competitive structures (more balanced Q-commerce market shares of Bangalore and Delhi-NCR) may not be accurate. Purposive sampling is appropriate for exploratory research; however, the highly qualified sample can be considered biased and not necessarily reflective of the entire Q-commerce users.

Further research should involve larger samples, which are representative of the nation, and utilize multivariate analyses (factor analysis, structural equation modeling, cluster based segmentation). Longitudinal studies documenting the changing patterns in brand choice as platform business models evolve would provide substantial explanation for their results. Conjoint studies, with experimental designs, can offer a quantitative estimate of trade-offs made by customers between fast delivery versus price and service levels; it offers useful guidance on product and platform design.

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