International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Quick -Commerce and Traditional Retail Transformation in India: A Study

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ABSTRACT:
Quick Commerce (Q-Commerce) has emerged as a significant development in India's evolving retail landscape, characterised by rapid fulfilment, digital ordering and convenience-oriented purchasing. Its expansion is influencing consumer purchasing behaviour and creating new competitive and operational conditions for traditional retailers. This conceptual study analyses the transformation of traditional retail in India in the context of the growth of Q-Commerce. The study is based entirely on secondary data obtained from peer-reviewed academic literature, industry reports, government and institutional publications, company reports and other credible sources. The study focuses on four aspects: the key drivers of Q-Commerce growth, changes in consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour, the competitive and operational implications for traditional retailers, and the development of a conceptual framework explaining traditional retail transformation. The review indicates that convenience, rapid fulfilment, digital accessibility, changing purchasing requirements and fulfilment infrastructure are important factors associated with Q-Commerce growth. The evidence also indicates changing consumer expectations and increasing competitive pressure on traditional retailers. However, Q-Commerce does not necessarily imply the complete displacement of traditional retail; rather, it is contributing to adaptation, digital integration and the emergence of more interconnected retail formats. The conceptual framework developed in the study integrates Q-Commerce growth, consumer behavioural changes, competitive pressures and retailer adaptation to explain the transformation of traditional retail in India.

Keywords: Quick Commerce, Traditional Retail, Consumer Behaviour, Retail Transformation, Digital Retail, India.

INTRODUCTION:

The Indian retail sector is undergoing significant transformation with the emergence of Quick Commerce (Q-Commerce), a digitally enabled retail model that focuses on rapid delivery of products, particularly every day and frequently purchased items. Unlike conventional e-commerce, which generally operates with longer delivery windows, Q-Commerce is built around hyperlocal fulfilment and quick order processing. The expansion of digital connectivity, online payments, logistics infrastructure and changing consumer expectations has created favourable conditions for the growth of this retail model in India.

The growth of Q-Commerce has also introduced changes in consumer purchasing behaviour. Convenience, rapid fulfilment and easy digital ordering have become increasingly important considerations in everyday purchasing. Consumers are increasingly using Q-Commerce for immediate and top-up purchases, while the expansion of platforms into different product categories is broadening its

role within the retail ecosystem. Industry evidence also indicates substantial growth in Q-Commerce, demonstrating that it has moved beyond being a limited online grocery model and has become an important component of India's evolving retail structure.

This development has important implications for traditional retail, particularly neighbourhood stores and other physical retail formats. Traditional retailers operate with advantages such as local accessibility, established customer relationships and physical product availability, but Q-Commerce introduces new dimensions of competition related to speed, convenience, digital access and fulfilment. Consequently, the relationship between Q-Commerce and traditional retail cannot be viewed only in terms of competition or replacement; it also involves changes in retailer practices and the broader structure of retailing.

Although existing research has examined Q-Commerce from perspectives such as consumer adoption, purchasing behaviour, technology and business models, the implications of Q-Commerce for the transformation of traditional retail in India require greater conceptual integration. The present study addresses this area by synthesising available secondary evidence on Q-Commerce and its relationship with traditional retail. The study specifically focuses on the drivers of Q-Commerce growth, changes in consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour, competitive and operational implications for traditional retailers, and the development of a conceptual framework explaining traditional retail transformation.

The study is conceptual in nature and based entirely on secondary data, including peer-reviewed academic literature, government and institutional publications, industry reports, company reports and other credible sources. Its scope covers the broader Indian retail environment rather than a particular state, city, consumer group or individual retail category. Through the synthesis of existing evidence, the study seeks to provide an integrated understanding of how Q-Commerce is influencing India's traditional retail ecosystem and the nature of transformation taking place within it.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. **Vignesh et al (2022)** This study analysed the factors influencing the growth of Quick Commerce in India. The study highlighted changing consumer preferences towards convenience, quality and faster delivery**,** particularly following the COVID-19 period. It indicated that evolving consumer expectations and rapid delivery services have contributed to the expansion of Q-Commerce in India.
2. **Sharma and Verma (2022)** This study analyse the role of digital marketing in the growth of Quick Commerce using survey-based data. The study highlighted **social media, influencer marketing and personalised promotions** as important factors influencing consumer engagement and purchase decisions. The findings suggest that digital marketing contributes to the expansion of Q-Commerce by strengthening consumer awareness and interaction with digital platforms. However, the study primarily focuses on consumers and does not address its implications for traditional retailers.
3. R**ajnekar (2023)** This study examined the rise of Quick Commerce in India with particular emphasis on its business model and infrastructure requirements. The study highlighted dark stores, efficient logistics networks and rapid fulfilment systems as important components supporting Q-Commerce operations. It further indicated that effective infrastructure and logistics capabilities can strengthen delivery efficiency and provide a competitive advantage to Q-Commerce platforms.
4. **Deloitte India (2023)** Deloitte India's report on the Indian retail sector highlighted that digital transformation is reshaping retail operations across the country. The report observed that retailers are increasingly investing in artificial intelligence, data analytics, omnichannel strategies, and customer experience management to remain competitive. It also noted that quick commerce is emerging as an

important component of the digital retail ecosystem, particularly in metropolitan cities where consumer demand for convenience and faster delivery continues to grow. The report suggested that technology integration and operational efficiency will determine the future competitiveness of retail businesses.

5. **Bain & Company and Flipkart (2024)** The report prepared by Bain & Company in collaboration with Flipkart analysed emerging trends in India's digital commerce ecosystem. The report observed significant growth in quick commerce, driven by increasing consumer preference for convenience, frequent purchases, and improved delivery infrastructure. It further highlighted that quick commerce platforms are expanding beyond grocery products into categories such as electronics, beauty products, pharmaceuticals, and lifestyle goods. The report concluded that continuous innovation in logistics and customer engagement is expected to strengthen the role of quick commerce in India's retail sector.
6. **NielsenIQ (2024)** NielsenIQ examined changing consumer purchasing patterns in India's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. The report observed that consumers increasingly prefer convenience-oriented shopping channels that provide flexible purchasing options and faster delivery services. Although traditional retail continues to dominate FMCG sales in many regions, digital retail channels, including quick commerce, are expanding rapidly in urban markets. The report suggested that retailers adopting integrated offline and online strategies are better positioned to meet changing consumer expectations and strengthen long-term competitiveness.
7. **Tripathi (2025)** examined the growing influence of Quick Commerce on consumer purchasing behaviour, particularly following the changes in shopping practices associated with the COVID-19 period. The study observed that consumers increasingly value convenience and rapid fulfilment, creating pressure on conventional retailers to modernise their operations through technological adoption and improved inventory management. It further indicated that Q-Commerce is altering established retail marketing practices by influencing purchasing habits and the ways in which retailers interact with customers.
8. **Senapati (2025)** investigated the influence of the rapid expansion of Q-Commerce on consumer behaviour in India. The study identified delivery speed, convenience and ease of using digital technology as important considerations influencing consumers' preference for Q-Commerce platforms. It also suggested that the accessibility and immediacy offered by these platforms can encourage impulse purchasing and influence consumers' dependence on conventional retail outlets. While Q-Commerce provides benefits in terms of convenience and customer experience, the study also identified sustainability, operational costs and increasing market competition as important concerns for the long-term development of the sector.
9. **Darda et al., (2025)** investigated the adoption of Q-Commerce in India using 15 focus-group discussions involving 120 participants from different socioeconomic backgrounds and locations. Using the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study identified eight drivers associated with Q-Commerce adoption and examined the relationship between functional motivations, consumer behaviour and consumer well-being. The findings provide evidence that Q-Commerce adoption involves multiple consumer motivations rather than being explained by delivery speed alone.

RESEARCH GAP:

Although existing studies have examined Quick Commerce from different perspectives, including consumer adoption, purchasing behaviour, convenience, delivery speed, service quality and business

models, the literature remains fragmented. Much of the existing research focuses either on consumer-level factors or on the operational and technological aspects of Q-Commerce, while comparatively less attention has been given to how these developments collectively influence the transformation of traditional retail in India. There is also limited conceptual integration of the relationship between Q-Commerce growth, changing consumer expectations, competitive pressures and the adaptation of traditional retailers. Therefore, a research gap exists in developing an integrated conceptual understanding of how Q-Commerce is reshaping traditional retail and contributing to changes in the wider Indian retail ecosystem. The present study addresses this gap by synthesising available secondary evidence and developing a conceptual framework linking these dimensions.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The rapid growth of Q-Commerce is changing the way consumers purchase products and creating new expectations regarding speed, convenience and digital accessibility. These changes are influencing the competitive environment of traditional retail in India. Therefore, there is a need to understand how the growth of Q-Commerce is reshaping consumer preferences and traditional retail practices and how both retail formats are adapting within the changing retail environment.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Existing research on Q-Commerce has largely focused on individual aspects such as consumer adoption, purchasing behaviour, delivery efficiency and platform operations. Comparatively less attention has been given to integrating these dimensions to explain the transformation of traditional retail. The absence of an integrated conceptual understanding of how Q-Commerce growth, changing consumer behaviour, competitive pressure and retailer adaptation are interconnected constitutes the central research problem addressed by this study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. What are the key drivers of Q-Commerce growth in India?
2. How is Q-Commerce influencing consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour in India?
3. What are the competitive and operational implications of Q-Commerce for traditional retailers in India?
4. How is Q-Commerce transforming traditional retail in India?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To analyse the key drivers of Q-Commerce growth in India.
2. To analyse changes in consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour associated with Q-Commerce.
3. To analyse the competitive and operational implications of Q-Commerce for traditional retailers.
4. To develop a conceptual framework of traditional retail transformation through Q-Commerce.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The study adopts a conceptual research design based entirely on secondary data. Relevant information was collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic publications, government reports, industry reports, institutional publications, company reports, and credible online sources. The sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, authenticity, and accessibility. The study reviews and synthesises

published literature and documented evidence to understand the emergence of Q-Commerce and its relationship with the changing Indian retail environment. The study does not involve primary data collection; instead, it draws on established secondary sources to develop a conceptual perspective on the transformation of traditional retail through Q-Commerce.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

Objective 1: To analyse the key drivers of Q-Commerce growth in India.

Quick Commerce (Q-Commerce) has emerged as an important component of India's evolving retail landscape, supported by increasing digital adoption, changing consumer expectations and the development of rapid fulfilment infrastructure. Bain & Company and Flipkart reported rapid growth in Q-Commerce and its increasing importance within India's e-grocery market. The report also noted that leading Q-Commerce players improved their unit economics through higher average order values, increased order density and scale. Q-Commerce platforms were described as offering hyper-convenience and rapid delivery.

The broader digital environment has also supported the development of Q-Commerce. Bain and Flipkart identified affordable internet access, logistics, fintech and digital ecosystems as important enablers of India's e-retail growth. Their report notes that India's internet penetration increased substantially following the decline in data prices, while UPI became an important component of retail digital payments. These developments have created an environment in which consumers can access digital retail platforms and complete transactions conveniently through mobile devices.

Another important factor is the development of fulfilment and logistics infrastructure. Bain and Flipkart reported improvements in logistics efficiency, while developments in delivery networks, technology, inventory management and infrastructure contributed to faster fulfilment. For Q-Commerce specifically, the report highlights higher order density, scale and operational improvements as factors supporting the development of the model.

Consumer purchasing requirements have also contributed to the growth of Q-Commerce. The top-up shopping as an important feature of the Indian Q-Commerce market, where consumers purchase frequently used products when they need them rather than waiting for a larger planned shopping trip.

Overall, the available secondary evidence indicates that the growth of Q-Commerce in India is supported by a combination of convenience, rapid fulfilment, digital accessibility, improved logistics, localised fulfilment infrastructure and changing purchasing requirements. The evidence therefore suggests that Q-Commerce growth is not dependent on a single factor; rather, it has developed through the interaction of consumer demand for convenient and rapid purchasing with improvements in the technological and operational infrastructure required to provide such services. These developments are significant for traditional retail because they introduce new expectations concerning speed, convenience and accessibility, providing the basis for examining how consumer purchasing behaviour and traditional retail practices are changing in response to Q-Commerce.

Objective 2: To analyse changes in consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour associated with Q-Commerce

The available secondary evidence indicates that Q-Commerce is influencing both the type of products consumers purchase and the manner in which purchases are made. NielsenIQ's analysis reports that Indian online shoppers increasingly use Q-Commerce for “top-up shopping”, referring to the replenishment of regularly purchased items such as milk, bread and fresh produce when required rather than waiting for a

planned shopping trip. The same source reports that Q-Commerce is increasingly being used for larger grocery baskets and is expanding into categories such as Beauty and Home Care.

Evidence from Grant Thornton Bharat also demonstrates the importance of everyday and convenience-oriented purchases. Its Q-Commerce survey found that snacks, fruits and vegetables were commonly purchased through Q-Commerce platforms. The study also indicated that discounts and offers influence purchasing decisions, while non-adherence to promised delivery times remains an important consumer concern. These findings indicate that consumers value both the convenience offered by Q-Commerce and the economic benefits provided through promotional offers, while delivery reliability remains an important part of the purchasing experience.

Academic research provides further support for the role of convenience and speed in consumer behaviour. Darda, Gupta and Patra's qualitative study identified multiple factors associated with Q-Commerce adoption, including rapid delivery, convenience and consumer-related motivations. Similarly, recent research comparing Q-Commerce with traditional e-commerce found that delivery speed, convenience, pricing and service quality are important dimensions of consumer purchasing behaviour, although that study was based on primary data and is therefore used here only as evidence from previous research.

Taken together, the secondary evidence suggests that Q-Commerce is associated with a shift towards immediate, replenishment-oriented and convenience-based purchasing. The increasing use of Q-Commerce for top-up purchases, everyday grocery items and, increasingly, non-grocery categories indicates that the channel is becoming part of routine shopping rather than being limited to occasional urgent purchases. At the same time, the evidence on discounts and delivery reliability shows that price and service performance continue to influence consumer choice. This change in purchasing behaviour has implications for traditional retailers because consumers' expectations concerning product availability, convenience and fulfilment are evolving, creating a need for traditional retail formats to respond to these changing expectations.

Objective 3: To analyse the competitive and operational implications of Q-Commerce for traditional retailers

The growth of Q-Commerce has introduced new competitive and operational pressures for traditional retailers by changing consumer expectations regarding convenience, delivery speed and product availability. Grant Thornton Bharat's study of Q-Commerce identified non-adherence to promised delivery time as a consumer pain point, indicating the importance consumers place on fulfilment performance. The study also reported that some kirana stores introducing quick-delivery services experienced improved revenue performance, suggesting that traditional retailers can respond to Q-Commerce competition by incorporating selected elements of the rapid-delivery model.

The competitive pressure is also reflected in the changing structure of India's retail ecosystem. Grant Thornton Bharat's recent research describes the Indian retail sector as undergoing a structural transformation in which physical and digital channels increasingly operate alongside one another. The report specifically states that Q-Commerce is not simply displacing kirana stores, but is changing their role within a more interconnected retail environment. This is important because it suggests that the effect of Q-Commerce should not be understood only in terms of retailer displacement; it also involves changes in fulfilment methods, channel positioning and retailer adaptation.

Academic literature on traditional Indian retail provides further support for the importance of adaptation. Research on traditional trade has found that small retailers have historically responded to organised retail competition through changes in retail and business strategies rather than relying solely on their existing

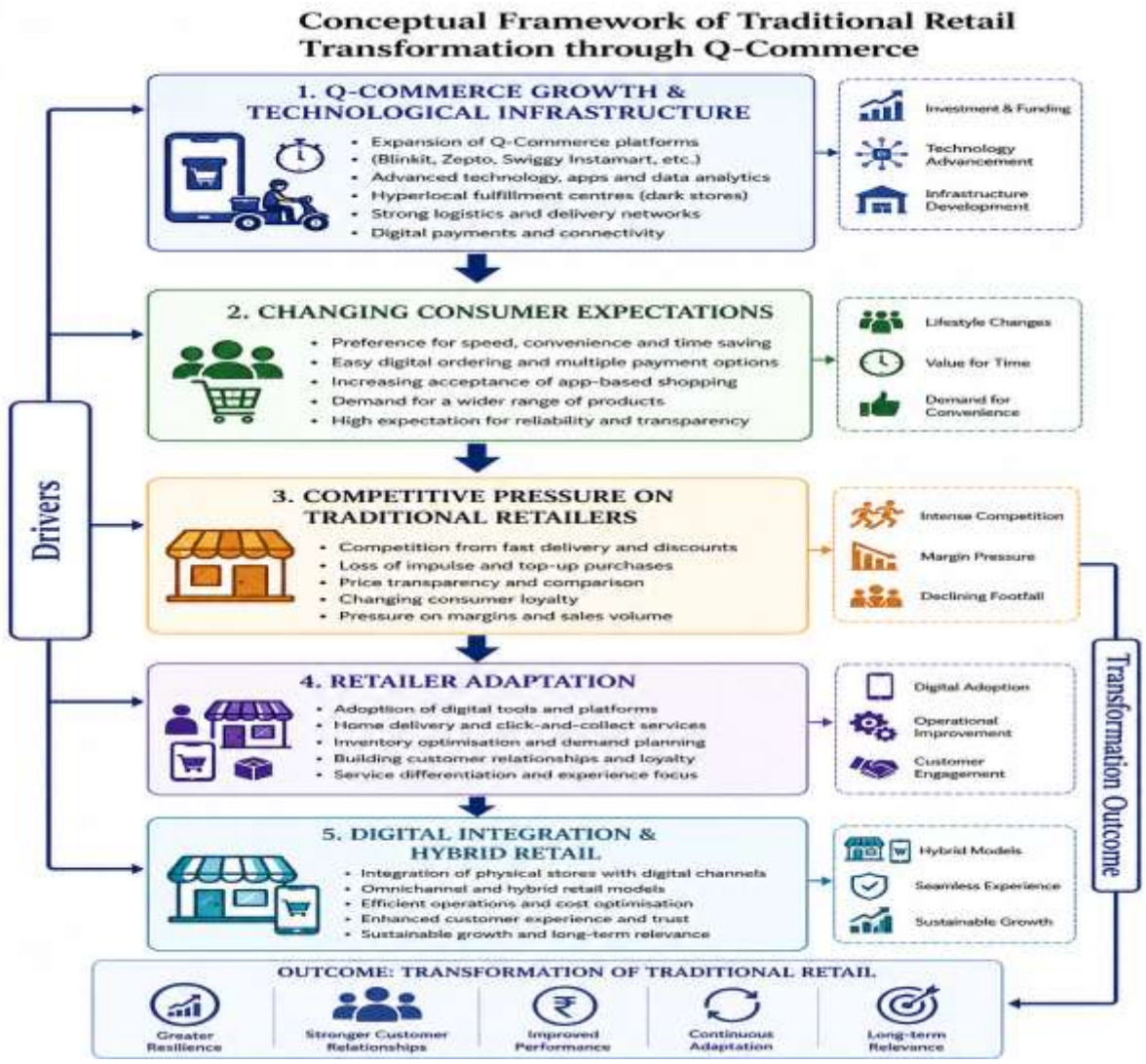
operating model. More recent Q-Commerce research similarly identifies reduced customer footfall, price competition, pressure on margins and difficulties in matching delivery speed and technological capabilities as challenges faced by traditional retailers, while digital ordering, digital payments and hybrid retail practices are identified as potential adaptation mechanisms.

The evidence therefore indicates that Q-Commerce is creating competitive pressure while also encouraging operational adaptation among traditional retailers. The principal challenge is not simply the existence of a new retail channel, but the change in the basis of competition towards speed, convenience, digital accessibility and fulfilment capability. At the same time, evidence of improved performance among some kirana stores following the introduction of quick delivery suggests that traditional retailers can respond by adopting selected digital and service capabilities rather than attempting to replicate the complete Q-Commerce business model.

Objective 4: To develop a conceptual framework explaining traditional retail transformation through Q-Commerce

The evidence reviewed in the preceding analysis indicates that Q-Commerce is contributing to changes in the structure and functioning of India's retail ecosystem rather than representing only an additional delivery channel. Bain and Flipkart report that Q-Commerce has become a significant part of India's e-grocery market and is expected to continue expanding. The report also notes that Q-Commerce is expanding across categories, geographies and customer segments, while its business model is based on rapid delivery through networks of dark stores.

The transformation of traditional retail can be understood through the interaction of Q-Commerce expansion, changing consumer expectations and retailer adaptation. Earlier research on Indian traditional trade found that traditional retailers have demonstrated resilience by adapting their retail practices to changing shopper preferences. More recent research specifically on Indian neighbourhood retailers identifies digitalisation as an important area of transformation and examines factors influencing the adoption of digital technologies by kirana stores. Research on the digital transformation of kiranas also identifies the emergence of hybrid retail models, in which physical retail capabilities are combined with digital services.



The conceptual framework therefore positions Q-Commerce as a driver of retail transformation, with consumer expectations acting as an important link between Q-Commerce expansion and changes in traditional retail practices. The framework provides an integrated explanation of how technological and market developments associated with Q-Commerce can influence the competitive environment and encourage traditional retailers to incorporate digital capabilities. This synthesis forms the basis for the study's recommendations concerning digital adoption, improved fulfilment, customer-service differentiation and hybrid retail practices.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The findings of the study indicate that traditional retailers need to respond to the changing retail environment created by the growth of Q-Commerce. In this context, traditional retailers should strengthen their digital presence through affordable facilities such as digital payments, online product listings and digital ordering. These measures can improve accessibility and enable retailers to respond to the growing use of digital purchasing channels.

Traditional retailers should also consider developing local delivery services, particularly for frequently purchased and essential products. Their proximity to customers can provide an advantage in fulfilling

short-distance orders. Such an approach can improve convenience without requiring traditional retailers to replicate the extensive fulfilment infrastructure of Q-Commerce platforms.

Greater attention should be given to inventory management and product availability. Retailers can adopt suitable digital tools to monitor stock levels, identify frequently purchased products and improve replenishment practices. Maintaining product availability is increasingly important in an environment where consumers have greater expectations regarding convenience and immediate access to products.

Rather than competing solely on delivery speed and price, traditional retailers should strengthen their existing advantages, including personalised service, local customer relationships, product knowledge and physical accessibility. These factors can provide opportunities for differentiation and help retailers maintain their relevance within an increasingly competitive retail environment.

Traditional retailers should gradually adopt hybrid retail practices by combining physical-store operations with digital ordering and delivery facilities. Where independent digital adoption is difficult, appropriate partnerships with digital platforms or delivery-service providers may provide an alternative means of reaching digitally oriented customers.

Retailers should also periodically review their product assortment and pricing practices to remain competitive. Attention should be given to frequently demanded products, appropriate product variety and competitive pricing. However, digital transformation should be implemented according to the retailer's financial and operational capacity rather than attempting to replicate the technology-intensive business model of Q-Commerce platforms.

Overall, the study suggests that traditional retailers should pursue selective digital integration and service adaptation rather than direct replication of the Q-Commerce model. Combining appropriate digital capabilities with established strengths such as local presence, physical accessibility and customer relationships can provide a practical approach to responding to the transformation of India's retail environment.

CONCLUSION:

The rapid expansion of Quick Commerce (Q-Commerce) is reshaping India's traditional retail environment by influencing consumer purchasing patterns and the way retail businesses compete and operate. The growing emphasis on speed, convenience, product availability and digital access has created new consumer expectations and increased competitive pressure on traditional retailers. However, the evidence indicates that Q-Commerce is not necessarily replacing traditional retail but is contributing to its adaptation and transformation within the wider retail ecosystem.

Overall, the emergence of Q-Commerce represents a transition towards a more digitally integrated and customer-oriented retail environment in India. The conceptual framework developed in the study highlights the relationship between Q-Commerce growth, changing consumer behaviour, competitive pressures and retailer adaptation. The future relevance of traditional retail will depend on its ability to respond to changing market conditions while retaining its distinctive strengths, particularly local accessibility and established customer relationships.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:

The study is based entirely on secondary data and does not include primary data from consumers or traditional retailers. The findings are also limited by the availability and reliability of existing literature and reports. Since Q-Commerce is rapidly evolving, consumer preferences, market conditions and

business strategies may change over time. The conceptual framework therefore requires future empirical validation through primary research.

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