
CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR TRENDS ON Q-COMMERCE PLATFORM ZEPTO - A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This case study investigates consumer purchasing behavior on Zepto, a popular rapid commerce platform that provides 10-minute supermarket delivery services. The study looks at major aspects that influence consumer decisions, such as convenience, price sensitivity, and product diversity. Zepto's speedy delivery concept is especially appealing to urban consumers, who seek immediate fulfillment of fundamental shopping demands. The study used several books, journal articles, and websites as secondary sources to learn about zepto-related information and consumer purchasing patterns. For the literature review, the study used Research Gate and Google Scholar. The findings show that convenience, specifically the capacity to obtain food fast, is the most important driver for purchasing decisions. While price remains a crucial consideration for consumers, with many being reluctant to pay high prices for convenience alone. This case study highlights the common purchase behaviors displayed by the consumers on the platform Zepto.

Keywords: Zepto, Technology, Dark Stores, Quick Delivery, SWOT analysis, Competitors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Smart application development has transformed our daily lives in this fast-paced digital era. Among the many evolving needs, grocery shopping stands out as one of the most essential activities that has seamlessly entered the digital realm. Thanks to digitalization, modern consumers are no longer confined to physical stores; they can now effortlessly navigate the world of grocery shopping from the comfort of their homes. Stocking up essentials has become a streamlined and efficient process with the advent of specialized food delivery apps. With just a few taps on their devices, consumers can have a wide range of products delivered directly to their doorsteps, eliminating the hassle of store visits for daily necessities.

With its emphasis on lightning-fast delivery services, quick commerce, or q-commerce, is the next development in e-commerce. Q-commerce guarantees delivery within minutes, usually less than 30 minutes and frequently as quickly as 10-15 minutes, in contrast to regular e-commerce, which frequently involves delivery timeframes of days. It meets the growing needs of customers for speed and convenience, especially when it comes to necessities like food, personal care products, and over-the-counter medications. The q-commerce business depends on well placed "dark stores" or micro-fulfillment centers in high-demand locations and thrives on hyper-localized operations. With the help of technological innovations like



artificial intelligence, real-time inventory tracking, and delivery route optimization, these establishments facilitate speedy order processing and effective last-mile delivery.

Urbanization, shifting consumer habits, and the growth of gig economy platforms are the main drivers of this industry. Leading firms in this market include Zepto, Gopuff, and Gorillas, which cater to tech-savvy urbanites who value speed and convenience. Despite its enormous growth potential, q-commerce has drawbacks such as high operating costs, problems with scalability, and environmental issues. Nevertheless, in the digital era, it keeps changing retail dynamics and customer expectations.

1.1. Overview of Zepto

Zepto, a Mumbai-based startup, specializes in 10-minute instant grocery delivery services. In less than two months, the company has seen its valuation skyrocket from \$225 million to \$570 million as it expands into new markets. Founded by two 19-year-old entrepreneurs who left Stanford University, Zepto quickly garnered attention from the local startup community, sparking widespread interest and discussions even before its official launch. Unlike traditional supermarket delivery apps, Zepto positions itself as a transformative platform, revolutionizing the grocery shopping experience.

With its app, customers can choose from over 5,000 products and have them delivered directly to their doorsteps in just 10 minutes. Before Zepto, Palicha and Vohra attempted a startup called Kirana Kart, which focused on grocery deliveries within 45 minutes but struggled to achieve market fit. Learning from this experience, they shifted to Zepto's hyper-localized model, supported by a network of "dark stores"—small, strategically located warehouses stocked with popular items. These dark stores enable efficient inventory management and rapid order fulfillment.

Zepto's tagline, "Groceries delivered in 10 minutes," is made possible through its innovative use of dark stores. These private warehouses are strategically located in high-demand areas and stock frequently ordered items, minimizing the risk of unsold inventory. Designed for speed and efficiency, Zepto's dark stores enable the company to fulfill orders in record time. According to Aadit Palicha, Zepto's CEO, the average delivery time is an impressive 8 minutes and 47 seconds. This rapid delivery is powered by advanced technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI). Zepto leverages AI to optimize its delivery network by analyzing factors such as last-mile supply availability, weather conditions, population density, geography, and traffic patterns, ensuring seamless and reliable service.

Zepto is becoming more and more popular in Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Delhi-NCR; in the upcoming months, Hyderabad, Chennai, Pune, and Kolkata are anticipated to follow. Although it operates out of Mumbai, its technical headquarters are in Bengaluru. Zepto has recruited top executives from Pepperfry, Uber, Pharmacy, Flipkart, and Dream11. Additionally, Zepto offers positions in engineering, operations, marketing, and finance. Palicha reports a monthly retention rate of 78% and a monthly growth rate of 200 percent.

1.2. Competitors of Zepto

Zomato Blinkit: Blinkit, formerly known as Grofers, has been renamed under Zomato's umbrella and now focuses on delivering groceries and basics in under 15 minutes.

Swiggy Instamart: Swiggy's quick commerce branch offers a diverse range of products, leveraging its huge delivery fleet to provide fast groceries and basics delivery.

Dunzo Daily: Dunzo Daily, which is part of Dunzo's operations, focuses on super-fast grocery delivery by using its hyperlocal network and agreements with local merchants.

Big Basket BB Now: BB Now, a division of Big Basket's operations, focuses on delivering a handpicked selection of groceries within minutes, supplementing its main e-commerce platform.

Amazon Fresh: Amazon's groceries and basics delivery service focuses on rapid commerce, including express delivery alternatives in key cities.

Jio Mart Express: Jio Mart Express, a Reliance retail location, is establishing a strong position in the rapid commerce industry using its current network and affordable prices.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To understand the various buying behaviors exhibited by the consumers on the quick commerce platforms several studies were done on this area to specifically understand what the different buying behavioral patterns of the consumers on the q-commerce platforms. The findings of a thorough literature search conducted with Google Scholar and a database for articles published from 2015 to 2024 that had the terms "online purchase," "e-commerce," and "consumer behavior"

Pedro Edwin Luna Sanchez (2024) in his work on Consumer purchase behavior on Quick Commerce platforms highlighted that technology acceptance factors, such as perceived usefulness and ease of use, along with mobile service quality factors like interface and information quality, strongly and positively influence consumer purchasing behavior.

Anagha Raghupathi kalsi (2022) in his work on impacts of digital marketing strategies of Zara concluded that Zara's digital marketing efforts, especially ads and emails, are perceived as annoying, leading to a negative impression. However, the brand maintains strong loyalty due to its product quality rather than its social media presence. Customers mainly learn about discounts through social media, but trust in the brand stems from its reliability and high standards. COVID-19 has also influenced consumer behavior, highlighting a shift in shopping preferences. Dwi Nita Aryani, Padmalini Singh Yun Xuan Khor Daisy Mui Hung Kee, Kornelia Selvia, Cui Wen Lee, Yee Hsien Lee , Levisha Anantharavoo(2022) in their paper on consumer behavior and intension to use identified price, service quality, information quality, and perceived usefulness as key factors for using the Food panda app. However, only information quality and perceived usefulness show a positive relationship with consumer behavioral intention.

Otto Bartok, Vratislav Kozak, Radka Bauerova (2021) in his study on purchase of online groceries highlighted that customer age influences online grocery purchases. Buyers prefer manufacturer-packed items and avoid perishables like meat and pastries. Key priorities include service quality, payment options, delivery, and product variety.

According to Gajewska, Zimon, Kaczor, and Madzík's (2020) research, a focus on security and trust may be essential to raising customer satisfaction in the e-commerce industry. Customers give the guarantee/safety dimension top priority when assessing e-commerce services, according to the comparison of weighted and unweighted Servqual data, suggesting that trust is a key factor in determining customer happiness. Customers start to view these services as more dependable as e-commerce gains trust. As companies concentrate on enhancing the safety and security features of their products, e-commerce in Poland is predicted to continue growing, which is consistent with this trend

Rafael Anaya Sánchez, Francisco Liébana-Cabanillas, and Sebastián Molinillo (2017) investigated the variables affecting inclinations to engage in social commerce. They discovered that users' intentions to participate in social commerce are positively impacted by factors including site quality, flow, and emotional social support. However, it was discovered that informational assistance and social presence had less of an effect. By emphasizing important elements that propel social commerce and providing useful advice for e-commerce professionals looking to maximize social tools to improve user engagement and happiness, the study advances the theory of consumer behavior.

Dr. Godswill Chukwu, Igani, and Dukoye Corton (2017) investigated the role of personality in consumer purchasing behavior. They discovered that personality traits and other elements like career, lifestyle, and financial status greatly influence the decisions that consumers make about what to buy. The study highlights the significance of personality in describing consumer behavior and preferences and supports the notion that personality plays a crucial role in understanding how products and services are consumed.

Filda Rahmiati's 2016 study looked at how fast fashion components affected the purchasing decisions of female consumers. The study found that while improved design had no discernible impact on purchasing decisions, two important factors—price and quick response—have a considerable impact. According to the adjusted R² value, price and quick response together explained 26% of the variation in customer purchasing behavior, underscoring the significance of these factors in influencing consumer decisions in the fast fashion industry.

Anna Blomqvist, Frida Lennartsson, and Louise Nyman (2015) investigated consumer attitudes on food shopping online and found several important elements that influence customers' decision to make purchases online. Convenience, cost-effectiveness, time savings, accessibility to a large selection of product categories, and the flexibility to purchase whenever and anywhere are some of these benefits. Of these, 53.33% of respondents cited simplicity of purchase as the main reason for preferring online grocery shopping, making it the most powerful motivation. This implies that in the online grocery sector, a

straightforward and easy-to-use purchasing experience is quite important in influencing customer behavior.

3. CONSUMER PURCHASE BEHAVIOR ON ZEPTO

Consumer behavior on Zepto can be analyzed from several angles:

Convenience and Instant Gratification: Speed and convenience are top priorities for Zepto users. Numerous surveys and market research studies indicate that Zepto's primary customer base consists of people who live in fast-paced metropolitan settings and desire to receive their orders promptly, frequently within a few minutes. Customers are more prone to make impulsive purchases for necessities like snacks, drinks, and perishables as a result of this inclination, which directly affects their purchasing decisions.

Trust and Brand Perception: On fast commerce platforms, trust plays a critical role in consumer purchasing decisions. Customers are more likely to believe in brands that offer prompt, dependable, and consistent service. Users are more trusting of Zepto because of its emphasis on product availability and delivery speed. Although price sensitivity is important, the perceived dependability of the service is more important. When time is of the essence, customers are willing to pay more for convenience and confidence in the delivery process. According to studies published in consumer behavior journals and industry reports, q-commerce prioritizes speed and dependability over more conventional considerations like price.

Price Sensitivity and Promotions: Even if Zepto provides high-end services, cost still affects how customers behave, especially when loyalty programs or promotional reductions are offered. Price and delivery speed are frequently weighed by customers, who may choose a competitor with cheaper prices if it provides comparable goods at a lower cost, even if delivery takes longer. Price sensitivity is still a major factor for consumers who are cost concerned, even when speed is a top priority, according to consumer behavior studies on online grocery shopping.

User Interface and Mobile App Experience: Zepto's customers' purchasing decisions are heavily influenced by the usability of the mobile app. If the checkout process is smooth and the app is easy to use, customers are more inclined to make repeat purchases. Zepto makes significant investments in mobile optimization to guarantee high conversion rates, a user-friendly interface, and convenient access to commonly bought items.

Product Availability and Assortment: Zepto is used by customers for both product availability and speed. The platform's capacity to keep an inventory of regularly bought commodities, particularly perishable items like dairy, fruits, and vegetables, is essential to its success. Purchase behavior can be directly impacted by the variety and availability of products, since customers are less likely to make a purchase from a platform that regularly has out-of-stock problems.

Sustainability and Ethical Considerations: Zepto is under growing pressure to address



sustainability and ethical consumption issues as consumers become more conscious of these issues. Certain consumer categories might favor buying from businesses that reduce their carbon footprint, offer fair-trade goods, or use sustainable packaging. Environmentally conscious consumers are increasingly taking this into account, particularly in metropolitan markets, even though it is not the main motivator for the majority of Zepto users.

3.1 Factors that influence Consumer Purchase Behavior on Zepto

Speed of delivery: The main element influencing customer loyalty is delivery speed (10 minutes), which corresponds with the need for prompt, on-demand services.

User Friendly experience: A simplified checkout procedure and the Zepto app's simplicity of use increase the possibility of repeat business.

Confidence and Trust based on prior experiences: Customers depend on Zepto to deliver goods quickly and reliably. Positive prior experiences are frequently the foundation of brand trust.

Discounts and offers: Short-term price cuts, exclusive deals, and loyalty plans have a big impact on what people decide to buy.

Multiple options to choose from: Having a wide selection of goods, especially fresh produce and basic pantry items, increases customer happiness.

3.2 Common Behavior Trends displayed by consumers on Zepto

Impulsive shopping: Motivated by the ease and quickness of acquiring goods in a matter of minutes, impulsive shopping is one of the most prevalent activities on Zepto. Due to the instant gratification component, customers are more inclined to impulsively add things to their cart. This tendency is especially prominent for ready-to-eat meals, drinks, and snacks.

Preference for Daily Essentials and Perishables: Fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and meats are among the perishable items that consumers are increasingly buying with Zepto. The speedy delivery strategy works well for these products since customers appreciate getting them before they go bad. Customers that value quality and freshness are more likely to trust Zepto because of its quick delivery of fresh goods.

Repeated, Routine Purchases: As users grow used to the platform's speed and convenience, many continue to buy basic commodities like bread, milk, and fruits daily. The requirement for consistency in the online grocery buying experience is reflected in this behavior. Platforms like Zepto take use of the fact that repeat purchases indicate customer loyalty by providing simple reordering options for commonly purchased items.

Higher Usage during Busiest Times: On Zepto, a lot of customers act in a time-sensitive manner, particularly during busy times or when they urgently need something. For instance, Zepto is used more frequently in the evenings when consumers might need last-minute



ingredients for movie night snacks or supper preparation. Customers typically utilize the app to satisfy urgent requirements because it promises 10-minute deliveries.

Willingness to Pay for Convenience: Despite their propensity for price sensitivity, Zepto customers are prepared to shell out more money for convenience. This tendency is particularly apparent in urban settings where consumers prioritize convenience and speed over cost, especially when it comes to smaller supermarket baskets. Nevertheless, price reductions, discounts, and promotional offers do have an impact on consumers' decisions to buy.

Brand Loyalty and Trust: By providing dependable and consistent service, Zepto fosters brand loyalty. Customers are highly trusting of the platform because of its promise to deliver things within 10 minutes. Customers are therefore more inclined to make more purchases from Zepto, particularly if they connect the brand with dependable customer care and prompt delivery.

Adaptation of environmentally friendly methods: Sustainability and social responsibility, while still in their early stages, are increasingly influencing consumer purchasing behavior. Younger, more environmentally concerned shoppers are increasingly thinking about the environmental impact of their purchases. Zepto, like other platforms, faces pressure to innovate and solve these concerns by emphasizing sustainable packaging and eco-friendly processes.

3.3 Challenges in Consumer Behavior

Price Sensitivity vs. Convenience: Consumers frequently choose Zepto for the ease of 10-minute deliveries. However, many people are still price-sensitive, particularly when it comes to routine supermarket shopping. Consumers are prepared to pay a premium for speed, but there is a limit to how much they will pay for greater convenience. As a result, platforms like Zepto must combine maintaining affordable rates with providing fast delivery, which might increase operational costs.

Product availability and stockouts: One of the most common challenges faced in quick commerce is supply availability. Even though Zepto promises quick delivery, ensuring that the proper stock is accessible at local dark stores it can be difficult, particularly in fast-moving categories such as fresh produce and perishables. If an item is out of supply, it might cause customer dissatisfaction and discourage repeat purchases.

Consumer confidence in supply of fresh and perishable goods: Despite Zepto's promise to deliver groceries in minutes, consumers are still reluctant to purchase very perishable items. Consumers frequently express concerns about the quality, packing, and handling of such items throughout the small delivery window. This hesitancy may result in fewer sales of perishable commodities, which are critical to the platform's growth. Trusting the freshness and quality of things delivered rapidly is still a difficulty.



Sustainability issues: As consumers become more environmentally conscious, there is a greater demand for sustainable packaging and eco-friendly delivery solutions. Zepto's speedy delivery methodology may come under scrutiny for its carbon impact and use of packing materials, especially since consumers want e-commerce platforms to be environmentally responsible. Addressing these concerns without affecting service speed poses a significant challenge.

Technology and Application Experience faced by consumers on zepto platform: Because Zepto operates solely through their mobile app, any malfunctions or technology difficulties might have a substantial impact on purchasing behavior. Consumers demand a seamless, intuitive design, and challenges with browsing or checkout processes can irritate users, resulting in rejecting carts or negative feedback. Continuous improvement and upgrades are essential to offer a smooth experience across varied devices.

Customer Retention: While Zepto's promise of speedy delivery draws clients, long-term customer retention remains a concern. Consumers may be lured to Zepto for its convenience, but without strong brand loyalty or differentiators (such as lower prices or exclusive products), there is a danger of churn. Competitors with similar offers can readily acquire market share by providing slightly better deals, product ranges, or delivery times.

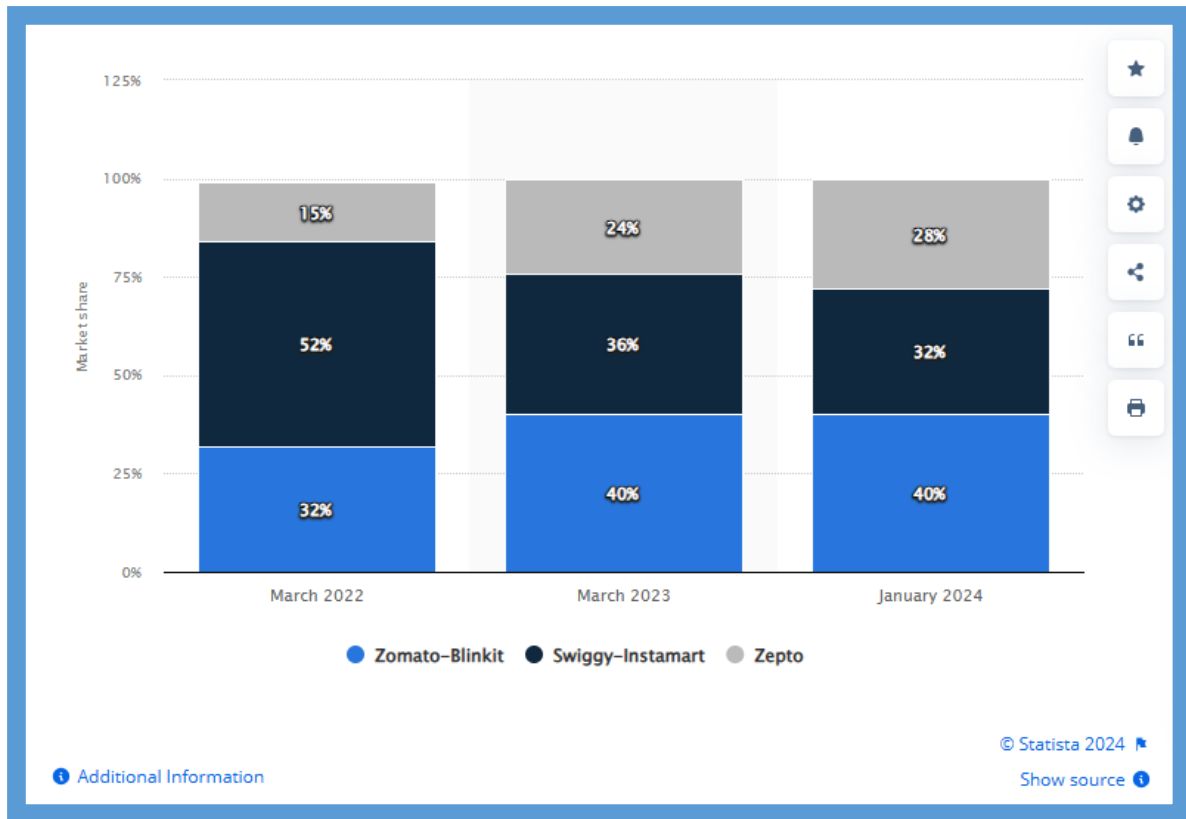
Behavioral Changes Post-COVID-19: The rapid development of e-commerce during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in new consumer purchasing behaviors, with many shifting to online grocery shopping. However, as consumers return to physical business, purchase habits may vary, with some customers returning to traditional shopping methods. This shift may result in challenges in retaining after the pandemic.

3.3.1 Grocery delivery: Zepto users in India

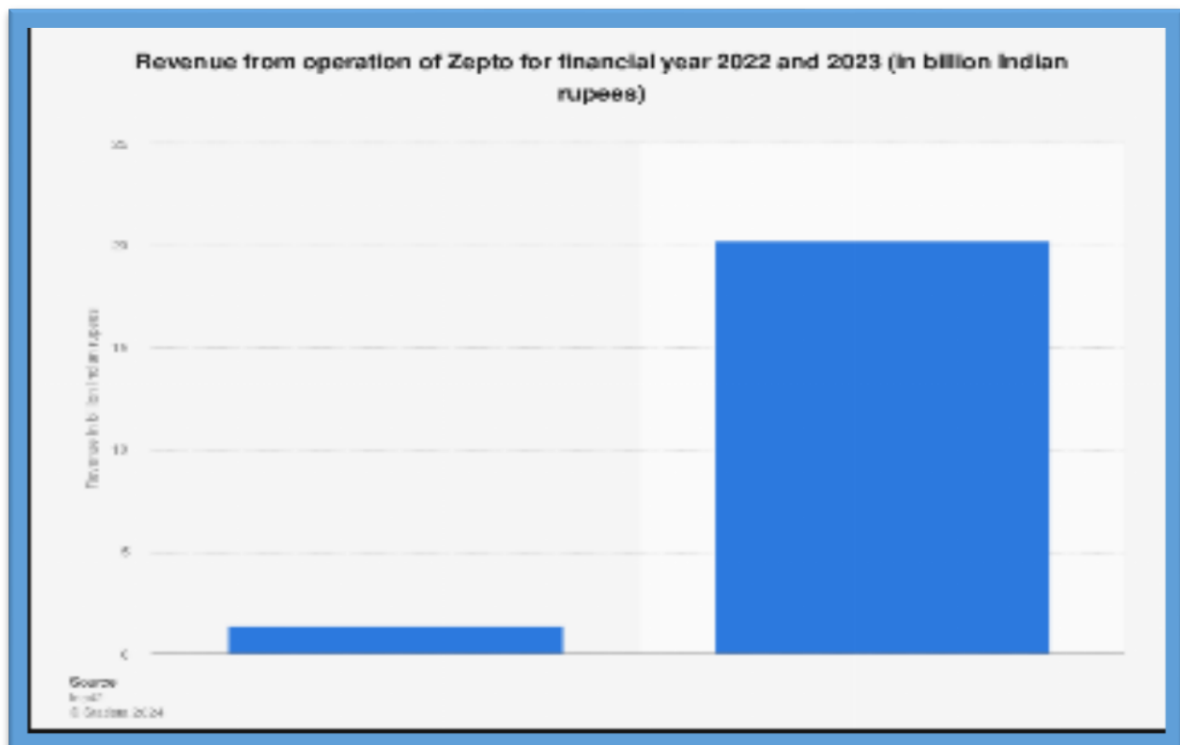
- **48%** of Zepto users are Millennials.
- **Male** users outnumber females.
- Zepto has a **higher proportion** of high-income users compared to other grocery delivery businesses.
- **55%** of Zepto users prioritize success in their lives.
- Zepto consumers are more likely to **live in megacities** compared to other grocery delivery users.



Market share of quick commerce brands across India from March 2022 to January 2024



Zepto Revenue from Operations for the financial year 2022 and 2023 (in billion rupees)



3.4. Conclusion

Zepto's capacity to influence consumer purchase behavior stems from its emphasis on speed, reliability, and convenience. The company's understanding of the subtleties of urban customer behavior has helped it carve out a place in the highly competitive rapid commerce sector. However, as with any rapid commerce platforms, Zepto must continue to innovate to build customer loyalty, successfully manage expenses, and meet consumers' ever-increasing demands for speed, price, and product diversity. For PhD researchers, Zepto's business model provides numerous options to investigate customer behavior patterns, loyalty dynamics, and the impact of service speed on purchasing decisions in the e-commerce and rapid commerce landscapes.

4. SWOT ANALYSIS OF ZEPTO

4.1. Strengths

Rapid Delivery Model: 10-minute delivery service differentiates it from competitors, creating a strong appeal to urban consumers seeking instant gratification. With an average delivery time of 8 minutes and 47 seconds, the company sets industry benchmarks for speed.

Strategic Use of Dark Stores: Its dark stores (micro-warehouses) are strategically located in high-demand areas, ensuring quick fulfillment of orders. Stocking only high-demand items reduces wastage and optimizes inventory management.

Advanced Technology: AI-driven systems for inventory management, demand forecasting, and route optimization enhance operational efficiency. Real-time tracking provides a transparent and seamless customer experience.

Customer-Centric Approach: The user-friendly app, loyalty programs, and referral rewards foster high customer retention rates. Broad product range, including fresh produce and specialty items, meets diverse consumer needs

Strong Market Position: Backed by significant funding, Zepto is valued at over \$1.4 billion as of 2023, making it a major player in India's quick-commerce sector

4.2 Weaknesses

High Operational Costs: Maintaining a network of dark stores, delivery personnel, and technology systems incurs substantial expenses, potentially impacting profitability.

Limited Geographic Reach: Currently focused on tier-one cities, Zepto has yet to establish a presence in rural or semi-urban markets, limiting its overall market penetration

Dependence on Urban Markets: Heavy reliance on urban, time-sensitive consumers means that Zepto's model may not scale well to less densely populated areas with lower demand for instant delivery.

4.3 Opportunities

Market Expansion: Expanding into two and three cities, as well as international markets, offers substantial growth potential. Targeting niche segments, such as organic or gourmet grocery buyers, could attract a broader customer base.

Technological Innovations: Further leveraging AI and machine learning for personalized recommendations and predictive analysis could enhance customer experience and operational efficiency.

Partnerships and Diversification: Collaborations with retailers and brands can diversify revenue streams, including advertising and product promotions. Offering subscription models or premium memberships could create consistent revenue flows.

Evolving Consumer Behavior: Growing adoption of e-commerce and quick commerce, especially among young urban professionals, aligns with Zepto's core offering.

4.4 Threats

Intense Competition: Rivals like Blinkit, Dunzo, and Swiggy Instamart offer similar services, creating a fiercely competitive landscape

Regulatory Challenges: Compliance with labor laws, environmental regulations (related to packaging), and consumer protection laws can increase costs and operational complexity

Economic Fluctuations: Rising inflation or changes in consumer spending habits could impact demand for premium, fast-delivery services.

Logistical Challenges: Traffic congestion, adverse weather conditions, or supply chain disruptions can hinder the 10-minute delivery promise, affecting customer satisfaction

5. SUGGESTIONS

1. To perform better than the competitors zepto should ensure that it constantly expands its product varieties and ensure they are constantly in stock.
2. They should optimize delivery speed and accuracy by establishing hyper-localized fulfillment centers for proximity to customers.
3. Improve marketing and promotions strategies by offering discounts on popular items or free delivery of big orders.
4. Promote sustainability initiatives by offering eco-friendly packaging to attract ecologically sensitive shoppers.

6. FURTHER RESEARCH

This case study can be expanded by evaluating customer purchasing behavior data obtained from surveys or interviews with Zepto users. In addition, combining insights from market



research, consumer psychology, and loyalty theory can provide a holistic understanding of the dynamics affecting consumer behavior in the rapid commerce area.

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