A Study on Consumer Perception of Business Ethics among Quick Commerce Apps in Madurai District

P. Jerlin Rupa[1]* and K. Mangayarkarasi[1]

[1]*Assistant Professor, Department of Business Administration, The American College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India*

**Corresponding Author Email: jerlinrupa@americancollege.edu.in*

Abstract

Quick commerce has transformed digital retailing by providing consumers with fast delivery and convenience. In this context, ethical practices related to pricing, product quality, advertising, data privacy and customer service are important in shaping consumer perception. This study examines consumer perception of business ethics among quick commerce applications in Madurai District and identifies the factors associated with overall consumer perception. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, multiple regression and correlation analysis. The findings indicate a positive perception of business ethics, with customer service emerging as an important factor and business ethics showing a positive relationship with overall consumer perception. The study suggests that quick commerce companies should strengthen ethical and consumer-oriented practices to build trust and maintain favourable consumer relationships.

Keywords: Quick Commerce, Business Ethics, Consumer Perception, Customer Service, Data Privacy, Price Transparency, Consumer Trust

1. Introduction

Quick commerce, commonly referred to as Q-commerce, has emerged as an important form of digital retailing that focuses on rapid delivery of products to consumers. The model differs from traditional e-commerce through its emphasis on speed, convenience and hyper-local fulfilment. Recent research indicates that Q-commerce research has expanded considerably, particularly around service quality, satisfaction, trust and customer loyalty, while ethical consumption and digitally mediated trust remain comparatively less explored.

The rapid growth of digital commerce has also increased the importance of ethical practices in consumer–platform relationships. Consumers increasingly expect online platforms to provide transparent information, protect personal data, communicate honestly and respond effectively to complaints. Recent research on digital marketplaces highlights transparency, privacy and ethical information disclosure as important elements in developing consumer confidence. Similarly, studies of online retailing indicate that perceived ethical behaviour can contribute to consumer trust, satisfaction and favourable consumer–brand relationships.

Customer service and privacy are also important components of consumers' evaluation of digital services. Research on Indian online shoppers has identified customer service, fulfilment and privacy among important dimensions of perceived website service quality. Other research in the Indian e-commerce context has shown that service-quality attributes are associated with consumer happiness, retention and loyalty. These findings suggest that ethical business practices cannot be separated from the quality of the consumer experience in digital commerce.

The issue is particularly relevant to quick commerce because the business model combines high-speed fulfilment, digital payments, customer data collection, promotional communication and frequent consumer interactions. Recent research specifically examining Indian quick-commerce platforms has also drawn attention to potentially deceptive interface practices and their effects on consumer trust and negative behavioural responses. Therefore, examining business ethics from the consumer's perspective is relevant for understanding how consumers evaluate quick commerce platforms.

In this context, the present study examines consumer perception of business ethics among quick commerce applications in Madurai District. The study focuses on price transparency and fairness, product quality and safety, advertising and promotional ethics, consumer data privacy, and customer service and complaint handling. It also examines the factors associated with overall consumer perception and the relationship between perceived business ethics and overall consumer perception.

2. Review of Literature

Bhattacharya, Sharma and Gupta (2024), "Determinants of Consumer Perceptions of the Ethics of Online Retailers: An Investigation Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis,"

examined factors shaping consumer perceptions of online retailer ethics and highlighted the importance of ethical practices in consumer responses.

Mainardes, Coutinho and Alves (2023), "The Influence of the Ethics of E-Retailers on Online Customer Experience and Customer Satisfaction," found that perceived e-retailer ethics were associated with customer experience and satisfaction, particularly in relation to products, pricing, privacy, non-delivery and advertising.

Khan, Naaz and Fathima (2024), "Do Consumers Love Ethical E-Tailers? Investigating the Influence of Perceived Ethics on Brand Love," reported that perceived ethical behaviour can strengthen consumer trust, satisfaction and loyalty.

Singh (2024), "The Impact of Quick Commerce on Consumer Behavior and Economic Trends in India: A Systematic Review," highlighted convenience, rapid delivery, service quality, secure transactions and ease of use as important aspects of quick commerce.

Leelawati, Gupta, Bansal, Saxena and Jain (2024), in their study titled "Understanding Consumer Trust: Issues and Challenges of E-commerce in India," examined consumer trust in the Indian e-commerce sector. The study found a significant relationship between trust and consumer perceptions of safety and product-related assurance, highlighting the importance of trust-building mechanisms in online commerce.

Bhattacharya and Sharma (2022), in their study titled "Country-of-Origin and Online Retailing Ethics: The Mediating Role of Trust and Satisfaction on Purchase Intention," examined the role of online retailing ethics, trust and satisfaction in influencing purchase intention. The study provides support for considering trust and satisfaction as important outcomes associated with ethical online retailing practices.

3. Objectives of the Study

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To examine the level of consumer perception towards business ethics practiced by quick commerce applications in Madurai District.

2. To identify the factors influencing consumer perception of business ethics among quick commerce app users.
3. To examine the relationship between perceived business ethics and overall consumer perception towards quick commerce applications.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research method to examine consumer perception of business ethics among quick commerce users in Madurai District. The study used primary data collected through a structured questionnaire from 119 respondents. A convenience sampling method was used to select the respondents based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. The questionnaire included demographic details and five-point Likert-scale statements covering price transparency and fairness, product quality and safety, advertising and promotional ethics, data privacy, and customer service. The collected data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, multiple regression and Pearson correlation to examine consumer perception, reliability, influencing factors and the relationship between business ethics and overall consumer perception.

Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1.1: Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Category	%
Gender	Male	73.1
	Female	26.9
Age	Below 18	6.7
	18–25	38.7
	26–35	0.8
	36–45	35.3
	45 & above	18.5
Occupation	Student	40.3
	Business	16.0
	Government Employee	7.6
	Private Employee	12.6

	Homemaker	9.2
	Others	14.3
Monthly Income (₹)	Below 15,000	31.1
	15,001–30,000	31.1
	30,001–50,000	21.0
	50,001–75,000	8.4
	Above 75,000	8.4

The sample is predominantly male, with 18–25 years and students forming the largest groups.

Table 2: Most Frequently Used Quick Commerce App

App	Frequency	Percentage
Swiggy Instamart	53	44.6
Blinkit	34	28.5
Zepto	32	26.9
Total	119	100.0

Swiggy Instamart is the most frequently used quick commerce application among the respondents.

Table 3: Consumer Perception towards Business Ethics

Business Ethics Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Consumer Data Privacy	3.836	0.555	1
Advertising & Promotional Ethics	3.821	0.623	2
Customer Service & Complaint Handling	3.800	0.664	3
Product Quality & Safety	3.794	0.658	4
Price Transparency & Fairness	3.761	0.626	5
Overall Business Ethics	3.803	0.494	—

The overall mean of 3.803 indicates a positive perception of business ethics. Consumer Data Privacy received the highest mean score, while Price Transparency and Fairness received the lowest.

Table 4: Reliability Statistics

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Consumer Perception of Business Ethics	20	0.919
Factors Influencing Consumer Perception	10	0.869
Overall Consumer Perception	7	0.853

Cronbach's Alpha was employed to examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire. All values are well above the generally accepted threshold of 0.70. Therefore, the questionnaire demonstrates high internal consistency and satisfactory reliability.

Table 5: Factors Associated with Consumer Perception

Factor	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Customer Service	3.945	0.524	1
Product Responsibility	3.908	0.552	2
Advertising Transparency	3.857	0.621	3
Price Fairness	3.845	0.653	4
Data Privacy	3.828	0.595	5

Customer Service recorded the highest mean score, followed by Product Responsibility and Advertising Transparency. Statistical influence was examined through regression analysis.

Table 6: Factors Influencing Overall Consumer Perception - Multiple Regression Analysis

H_{01}: Business ethics factors do not significantly influence overall consumer perception.

Independent Variable	Standardized Beta	t-value	p-value	Decision
Price Fairness	-0.010	-0.108	0.915	Not Significant
Product Responsibility	0.148	1.508	0.134	Not Significant

Advertising Transparency	0.152	1.800	0.075	Not Significant at 5%
Data Privacy	0.083	0.845	0.400	Not Significant
Customer Service	0.397	3.697	<0.001	Significant

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p-value
0.665	0.443	0.419	17.980	< 0.001
Positive relationship	44.3% explained	41.9% adjusted	Significant model	Significant

The regression model is significant and explains 44.3% of the variation in overall consumer perception. Customer Service is the only individual factor with a significant positive effect.

Table 7: Correlation between Business Ethics and Overall Consumer Perception

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between business ethics and overall consumer perception of quick commerce apps.

Variables	Pearson's Correlation (r)	p-value	Decision
Business Ethics × Overall Consumer Perception	0.574	<0.001	Significant

The results show a moderate positive and significant relationship between perceived business ethics and overall consumer perception. Spearman correlation also supports the finding ($\rho = 0.631$, $p < 0.001$).

Findings

The study found that consumers generally have a positive perception of business ethics among quick commerce applications. Consumer Data Privacy was the highest-rated ethical dimension, while Price Transparency and Fairness received the lowest rating. Customer Service recorded the highest descriptive score among the selected factors. Regression analysis showed that the selected factors collectively explained a substantial share of variation in overall consumer perception, with Customer Service emerging as the only significant individual

predictor. Further, perceived business ethics was positively and significantly associated with overall consumer perception. The reliability analysis confirmed satisfactory internal consistency of the measurement scales

Suggestions

Quick commerce companies should improve customer service by providing faster responses and effective support to consumers. Refund, return and replacement procedures should be made simple and timely. Companies should ensure transparent pricing by clearly displaying product prices, delivery charges and other applicable fees. Promotional offers and advertisements should be genuine and clearly communicated. Greater attention should be given to product quality, accurate product information and proper packaging. Companies should strengthen the protection of customers' personal and payment information and provide effective mechanisms for handling complaints. Regular customer feedback should also be collected to identify areas for improvement and strengthen consumer trust through ethical and transparent business practices.

Conclusion

The study concludes that consumers in Madurai District have a positive perception of business ethics among quick commerce applications. Consumer Data Privacy was the highest-rated ethical dimension, while Price Transparency and Fairness received the lowest rating. Customer Service emerged as the most significant individual factor influencing overall consumer perception, and the selected factors collectively explained 44.3% of its variation. The significant positive relationship between business ethics and overall consumer perception further indicates that ethical business practices are associated with favourable consumer perception. Therefore, quick commerce companies should focus on customer service, transparent pricing, product responsibility, ethical promotions and data privacy to strengthen consumer trust and maintain a positive consumer perception.

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