ONLINE GROCERY MARKET IN INDIA

CCS Term Paper Submitted to

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BACKGROUND

Groceries are one of the basic needs in everyone's life. People can stay without good clothes, with technological problems but cannot spend a day without proper food and hence the grocery market has always been either steady or growing.

Until a decade back the need for daily grocery was fulfilled by local *kirana* store (mom & pop store) or hyper-local market/supermarket. However, with advent of technology and urbanization, several start-ups are opening online grocery stores to serve consumer's demand of grocery and at the same time providing them advantage of home delivery and relaxation from standing in long billing queues. Currently, most of the online grocery stores are located in Metro and Tier-I cities, but with increasing incomes and urbanization, they are slowly expanding to Tier-II cities as well.

The need for online grocery has emerged because of change in working conditions over the last decade with both partners working for long hours. Also, with urbanization and soaring land prices, it has become difficult to find large amount of land within cities like Mumbai, Delhi to open large stores. Hence, the new hyper-local markets are being opened in outer areas resulting in the increased distances that one has to travel to get to hyper-local store. This coupled with long billing queues leave little time for people to shop on stores. Apart from this, the ubiquitous presence of Internet has made it possible for the grocery stores to go online and has resulted in growth of e-tailing.

Although, from outside the industry for online grocery looks very attractive, however not many start-ups in this domain were able to survive leaving few players in the market. This report covers three major aspects of this industry including attractiveness of this industry, challenges and opportunities for the current online players and how offline retail giants like More, Reliance fresh can build their brand in online grocery space.

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS – RETAIL AND GROCERY

This section of the report focuses on the current status and growth of retail and grocery business.

According to KPMG Report[1] on Indian Retail, overall size of Indian Retail Market is INR 31 trillion ($534 billion) in 2013-14 and is expected to grow to INR 55 trillion by 2018-19 with an expected CAGR of 12-13%. The current growth rate of retail industry is around 15% which is higher than the growth rate of Indian GDP.

In retail industry, 92% of the market is unorganized, whereas organized market is about 8-10% (i.e. around $60 billion) of total industry (Exhibit 1). Hence there is a huge potential for organized retail in this industry which is also evident from its growth rate in last 5 years. In 2009, the total size of organized retail was INR 0.9 trillion which increased to 2.4 trillion in 2012 and is expected to reach 5.5 trillion by 2019[2]. The increase in growth of organized retailed also signals towards the increase in growth rate of online players in retail and grocery business. According to KPMG report, it is expected that by 2020, around 650 million customers will be online and ecommerce market will grow to $45-50 billion. Retailers will prefer operating in omni-channel rather than single channel

The major growth drivers for the same has been the following[3]

- Increase in Income Levels by 70%
- 100 Million youth entering the market
- Increasing nuclear families
- 35% Indians living in urban centers
- Increase in demand for wider variety, convenience and better prices.

In grocery sector only, India is currently sixth-largest in world with grocery shopping being expected to rise form $383 billion a year to $1 trillion by 2020, as reported by Retail Consultancy Technopak.

INDUSTRY ATTRACTIVENESS

Although the figures above show that grocery and retail industry is poised to grow in future however, it is important to analyze how attractive would be the industry for new players in online domain. Industry attractiveness for the online grocery business has been analyzed through Porter's Five Forces[4].

1. BARGAINING POWER

i. Suppliers – Suppliers can be small and big retailers, farmers, FMCG companies, etc.

a. **Number of Suppliers** - Large number of suppliers in the industry make it easy to procure the goods
b. Suppliers do not depend on the online retailers for their sale, it is just another medium for them to sell grocery items
c. **Switching Costs**- Switching Costs are very less in case of the online grocery stores wanted to change suppliers.
d. **Differentiated Product** - Products offered are also not differentiated and unique.

Hence, bargaining power of suppliers is medium.

ii. **Buyers** – Buyers are the customers

   a. **Number of buyers** - Buyers are increasing every day with increase in penetration of mobile and internet

   b. **Differentiated Product** – The product offered is a standard product however the service is differentiated w.r.t local mom and pop stores

   c. **Switching Costs –** Switching Costs for buyer is very less.

Hence, considering the above factors the bargaining power of buyers is high.

2. RIVALRY AMONG EXISTING COMPETITORS

a. Number of Competitors - Number of competitors in the industry is very large as not only online grocery stores but the offline kirana stores are their competitors.

b. Growth of Industry – Industry is growing at a fast pace with a CAGR of 15% due to increasing incomes and urbanization.

c. Exit Barriers – Exit barriers are not very high if the model is of hyper-local in nature.

d. Committed Rivals – In online grocery, rivals are highly committed and wanted to establish themselves as industry leaders. For them, acquiring new customers is the biggest challenge and hence all of them engage in giving huge discounts to attract new customers which leads to burning high amount of cash for customer acquisition.

Thus, above factors reflect that rivalry is very high in this industry.

3. THREAT TO ENTRY/ ENTRY BARRIERS

a. Supply Side economies of Scale – For new players, supply side economies of scale is very low. This is because they do not procure much (in case of inventory model) or cannot serve multiple deliveries at one go (in case of hyper-local model) as they do not have large customer base, hence for them per unit cost is very high compared to existing players.

b. Demand side benefits of scale – Network effects does not come into play in this industry as the buyer's willingness to pay does not increase with more number of customers.

c. Customer Switching Costs – Customer switching costs are very low in this case as switching to new service does not incur any additional costs.

d. Capital Requirements – Initial financial resources needed are low (if firm is starting with hyper-local model), however if later on the company is expanding for inventory model, capital requirements are huge.

e. Incumbency advantage independent of size– Incumbents have few advantages compared to new entrants in terms of established brand identities, existing customer base, etc.

f. Unequal Excess to Distribution Channel – Access to distribution channel is almost similar and does not depend on whether the player is a new entrant or an established one.

Thus, barriers to entry in case of grocery e-tailing are very few and hence there is always a threat of new entrant. This is the reason that over the last 3 years many grocery e-tailers have come in market.

4. THREAT OF SUBSTITUTES

Substitutes are the offline kirana stores, hyperlocal markets

a. **Value of the substitute** – On the price front both the offline and online stores are almost similar with offline stores might be having little higher prices. However, the offline stores provide the experience of feeling and self-checking before buying but has the disadvantage like long billing queues.
b. **Cost of switching** – Buyer's cost of switching to substitute is very low.

Hence, threat of substitutes is very high in this industry.

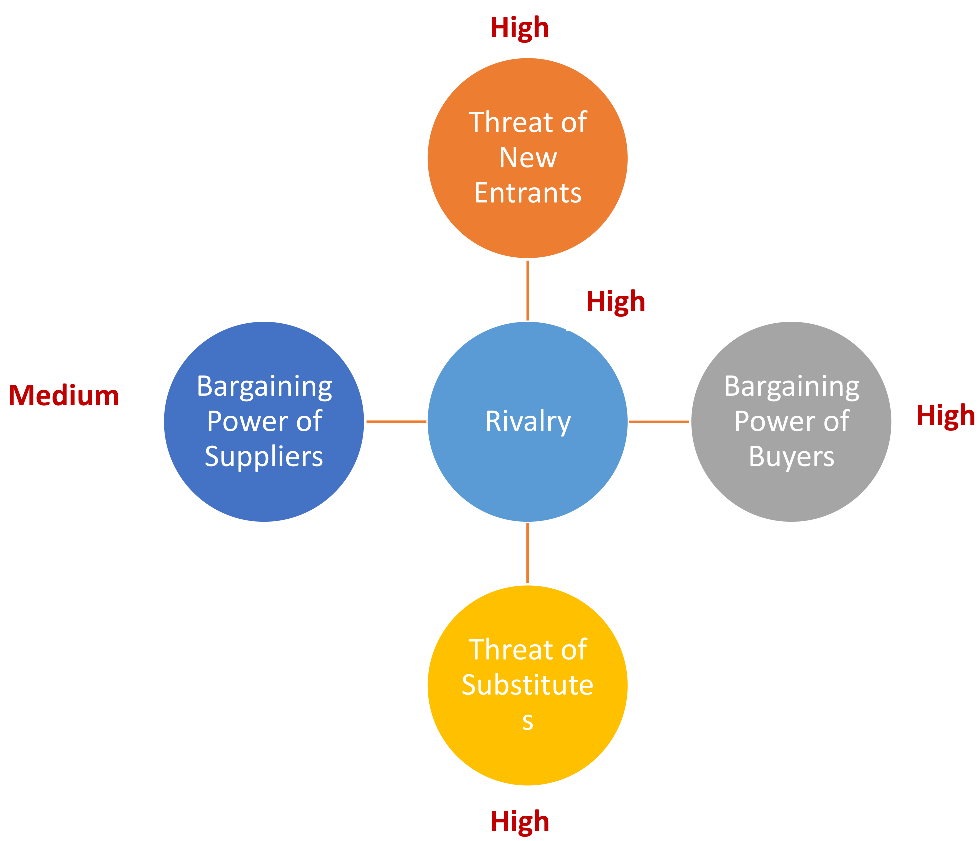


Figure 1: Porter's Five Forces Analysis of Grocery Industry

Hence, when observed properly, entering online grocery industry is not very attractive due to high competition (both with existing online and offline players), high threat of substitutes and high bargaining power of buyers because of their low switching costs.

ONLINE GROCERY RETAILERS

Since 2011, the total funding of top 5 online grocery retailers in India has gone up to $400 million. On the basis of the funding raised, the top 5 online grocery stores included Grofers, Big Basket, PepperTap, ZopNow and Local Banya, out of which PepperTap and LocalBanya has gone out of operation and ZopNow has gone into partnership with Aditya Birla Group' retail business 'More'. The table below shows the funding they were able to raise till 2015[5].

Name	Launch Year	Funding	Current Status
Grofers	2013	$ 167 Million	Operational in 17 cities
BigBasket	2011	$ 155 Million	Operational in 18 cities
PepperTap	2013	$ 51 Million	Shut Down – Closed operations
ZopNow	2011	$ 10 Million	Partnership with More and HyperCity, Operational in 11 cities
Local Banya	2012	$ 5 Million	Closed the operations

Table 1: Current Status of online grocery firms in India

Despite receiving heavy funding of $51 million in first few years of its launch, PepperTap shut down its operations. In December 2015, according to its CEO, PepperTap was fulfilling around 20,000 orders a day but in April 2016, the number of orders have drastically reduced to 1000 per day forcing the company to shut down its operations as they have burnt all their cash[6]. Similar is the story of Local Banya and many other start-ups who came into this industry but were shut down within few months of their launch.

This section of report analyzes the major business models that various start-ups in this industry have adopted to gauge the reasons for their failures and to anticipate the future of the existing players.

BUSINESS MODELS

There are three most prominent business models in this industry –

1. Hyper-Local Model
2. Inventory Model
3. Hybrid Model which is part inventory and part hyper-local

1. HYPER-LOCAL MODEL

In the hyper-local model, the firm does not store any inventory of goods/grocery/retail items but procure them directly from local kirana stores or hypermarkets as and when demand come. In this system, when consumer places an order using the firm's mobile or desktop application, the local store fulfills the order and delivers it to consumer's home using the delivery services of start-up. Most of the players in this industry follow this model as it does not need huge capital requirements to set up the business. Some of the prominent one are Grofers, PepperTap, Zip.in, ZopNow, etc.

Some of the major advantages and challenges faced by the start-ups/firm having this business model are listed below

Advantages –

Low Capital Requirements - Since the procurement happens from the local kirana store, they do not have to keep inventory with themselves, thus removing the huge costs associated with holding inventory. This also enables them to not have any warehouses which makes them asset light and thus does not require huge capital investment.

Same day delivery - Their model allows them to have same day delivery for grocery food items which is very important in this industry and this results in them fulfilling both the 0n-demand and planned purchases of the customer.

Analytics for FMCG giants - Using their technology, they can estimate the demands at retail stores and can sell the analytics to FMCG companies, who are always on look-out for such data to improve their supply-chain management.

Challenges

Inventory Mismatch between store and application - One of the biggest challenge they face is to match the inventory shown at the app and the actual inventory at store. Since most of the local kirana stores do not have sufficient technological systems that updates their inventory in real-time, hence some-times it happens that their inventory does not match with the one shown at the application of the firm.

Incomplete Fulfillment of Order - Mismatch of inventory leads to another challenge of not fulfilling the customer order in its entirety. For e.g. – they may get a delivery order of 1000 Rs but may be able to fulfill the order worth Rs. 800 because the stores from where they procure might not be having all the items in their inventory, which results in bad user experience. In this case, either the customer will shift to some other service or will have to go back to store himself to buy the stuff and in both the situation, the firm has lost its customer.

Investment in Technological Upgradation of stores - To remove the above bottleneck, most of them tries to procure the items from hyper-local markets which have better technological systems, but all the neighborhoods in the city does not have supermarkets resulting in the increased delivery cost. Also, in this case, the margins they get are relatively less compared to local kirana store. In other scenario, they try to upgrade the technological systems at local kirana store, which means increased investment on their part.

Unable to process heavy orders - Since procurement happens from the store, it is important that stores have sufficient inventory to process the spikes in order. However, most of the stores due to little capital in hand have little inventory and reach stock-out early. Next challenge is that it takes time (2-3 days) to refurbish the inventory from distributor, resulting in stock-outs being shown in their apps and hence bad customer experience and lost sales.

Logistics – Logistics is one of the biggest challenge accounting for 70%[5] of the cost. In order to reduce the delivery cost, PepperTap used to identify store near the delivery address but that results in limiting the choice and inability to fulfill the complete order. Other services like Zip.in have found other ways of reducing this cost. They take order up to a specific time in the day and thereafter delivers by the end of day. This way they were able to serve multiple deliveries at one go in the same van resulting in reduced delivery cost. However, this enabled them to only concentrate on planned purchases (they cannot serve on-demand orders with this model) which resulted in less number of order per day but the average order size was around 1200-1500 Rs. with a margin of 15-20%[7].

2. INVENTORY MODEL

Under inventory model, the firm stores their own inventory of grocery products. This inventory is bought from local mandis, farmers, FMCG companies, big distributors, etc. Not many firms are operating on this model since it requires huge financial investment. ZopNow and LocalBanya started with inventory model but later on turned to hyper-local model due to huge investment required. Big Basket (valuation of Rs. 280 crore)[8] is the only start-up currently operating on inventory model in this industry.

Advantages –

Complete order fulfillment – As in this business model, they have their own inventory, they are able to fulfill the orders all the time because if there is something not available, the same will be reflected on their application and hence customer will not order it.

Higher Margins – Start-ups operating with inventory model commands higher margins due to better sourcing capability and economies of scale. For example – Big Basket source around 30-35%[9] of their products from farmers directly. When they start operation in a new city, they source first from mandis and with time try to move backwards by sourcing directly from farmers or FMCG companies which enables them to command high margins.

Private Labels – Having own inventory, give the business an advantage of starting their own private labels as done by Big Basket. Big Basket currently has high private labels which accounts for around 35% of its business which will be around 200-300[5] crore. However, private label faces a lot of competition from outside.

Challenges -

Huge infrastructure Requirements – To store inventory, they need large warehouses which demands high capital expenditure. Huge financial investment is one of the biggest reason that many start-ups do not operate with this model.

Huge Wastage – Since the shelf-life of grocery items is not more than 1 or 2 days, businesses operating with this model always faces the risk of huge wastage owing to high perishability of product. Big Basket employs extensive technology to predict the future orders (demand), but still faces some minimum amount of wastage, leading to huge loss.

Same Day Delivery and high delivery cost – Since the warehouses are large and requires good amount of land, most of the warehouse of Big Basket lies outside the city making the same day delivery for goods difficult owing to large distance. This large distance also results in high delivery costs to these start-ups compared to business operating with hyper-local model where salesforce has to cover short distances.

As it has setup its foot in the industry, BigBasket is going towards establishing smaller warehouses within cities for faster deliveries and reduced costs. Given the fact that BigBasket has started selling other retail items as well as private labels, it is now a question that whether they can remain truly grocery e-tailors or will expand to other items making themselves a competitor of ecommerce giants like amazon, Flipkart.

3. HYBRID MODEL

Under hybrid model, firms operate both employs both inventory as well as marketplace model. For example- Grosseryhub.com operates with this model. They have two warehouses in the country where they store their inventory of dry products which enables them to provide discounts as they buy in bulk. For perishable products like fruits, vegetables, they procure directly from stores. However, such stores also face problem of inventory mismatch and wastage.

As different firms operate on different models, there are certain commonalities shared between all of them. One of them being the extensive use of technology in order to determine the demand forecast to manage inventory, to determine the store to procure from and to estimate the route of delivery personnel so that multiple deliveries could be done in one go. However, the complete online grocery industry faces some of the major challenges. One of them being the low margins that the firms operate on. For example- Grofers work on wafer-thin margins of 12-15%[5] and hence huge delivery costs cut across these margins. Some of these stores charge delivery fees below a certain order amount, but these delivery fees are extremely low compared to incurred costs and hence they do not make money on small orders.

For them acquiring new customers as well as maintaining old customers are equally important. For them maintaining the existing customer is important as they start making money only after 5-6th repeat purchase when size of average order values start to increase. Cost of acquisition of new customer is high (in terms of low average order value resulting in high delivery charges and discounts given to attract them)

OFFLINE STORES GOING ONLINE

With the increasing penetration of internet and seeing the market demand, most of the offline firms have started going online. For example – Reliance Fresh has gone online few months back with their website www. Reliancefreshdirect.com. They have started their operation with Mumbai and source directly from Reliance Fresh stores or their distribution centers.

One of the largest retailer in India, Biyani group (retail stores include Big Bazaar, FairPriceShops, etc.) is also going online with their Omni-channel model where existing stores will act as warehouse for online store.

1. TESCO MODEL – A STUDY

Tesco is one of the third largest retailers in the world with its Tesco.com being one of the most successful e-grocery in the world, with a turnover of 4.3 billion $[10] only in UK. It is one of the dot com companies operating profitably within e-grocery business and has its presence across Poland, Czech Republic, Thailand and South Korea.

Initially Tesco used to fulfill the online order from their retail stores, however that created several problems like inconvenience to in-store shoppers who have to compete with the Tesco associates picking dotcom orders for the inventory at retail shelf, stores not capable of supporting the high volume inventory to fulfill the large online orders, etc.

Hence eventually Tesco moved towards a hybrid model whereas the online demand in remote areas are served by retail stores only, but for densely populated areas like London, demand is catered through dedicated dotcom depots. Over the time, these depots have become so technologically advanced with most of the work being done by robots that they were able to improve labor efficiency by 82%[10] compared to initial model. This is one of the reasons for their profitable business, with Tesco aiming to provide same day delivery. The inventory for both dotcom depots and retail stores is being fulfilled through their distribution centers.

The Tesco made sure that their delivery men are well trained and able to understand the customer problems as they are the face that represent Tesco in front of customers. For this reason, they have also employed private fleet of vehicles and delivery van became a sort of extension of store in mind of consumer.

Already having the retail store helped its dotcom business in effectively forecasting the demand and efficiently procuring the inventory.

2. RELIANCE FRESH – ONLINE STORE

In 2014, Reliance Fresh started its online grocery store – *Reliance Fresh Direct* in order to expand its reach. It offers more than 6000 grocery product which include fruits, vegetables, cereals, pulses, packaged food, dairy products, household cleaning items and personal care products including toiletries and cosmetics. Service is currently limited to areas in South Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane.

Online store provides different payment options like net banking, credit/debit card, cash on delivery, store credit and meal coupons. Reliance Online store provide the option of scheduling deliveries in a time slot of 2 hours and 30 minutes. Shipping Charge of Rs. 25 is applicable on orders below order of Rs. 750[11].

Sourcing of the items ordered online is done from their retail stores as well as distribution center depending upon the availability of the item as well as the shortest distance. Delivery boy for home deliveries work for the store in the free time.

Here's a quick comparison between Big Basket and Reliance Fresh Direct -

1. **Offline Stores** – Reliance fresh has the presence of offline stores i.e. Reliance Fresh that makes its asset and inventory holding cost less compared to Big Basket who has to hold all the inventory within warehouses from where walk-in customer can't purchase. This coerces Big Basket to maintain robust demand forecasting systems in order to minimize wastage loss. In case of Reliance Fresh, wastage losses are less compared to Big Basket because walk-in customers can buy the left out item at discounted price.
2. **Delivery Personnel** – Big Basket has currently outsourced its complete delivery to logistics startups like ShadowFax, that has lowered down their delivery costs and they do not have to bear the cost of training them as well. In case of Reliance Fresh delivery personnel work at the store when not engaged in delivery. This way they are able to fully utilize the man-hours of the delivery personnel.
3. **Shipping Charges** – Shipping charges of both the companies are very minimum and represents only a fraction of shipping cost they have to bear. Shipping cost of Reliance Fresh is Rs. 25 for orders below Rs. 750 and free above it. Shipping cost for Big Basket is Rs. 20 for order below Rs. 1000 and free above it. Both the company make losses if the cart value is not above a certain limit which is approximately Rs. 1000.
4. **Prices of Goods** - Prices of items across both the companies are approximately same. A cart of goods comprising of fruits and vegetables, personal care products, home cleaning products and dairy products costs almost same across both the companies (Exhibit 1). Hence, there is no incentive for consumers to purchase from one store over the other,

unless they are the loyal customers. In this case, availability of product become the major factor in choosing one store over other.

Hence, a quick comparison between two reveals that customer does not have the incentive to purchase goods from one company over the other and availability of products become the major selection factor. Hence, in order to attract the consumer in this competitive industry, Reliance Fresh has to bring down its prices of goods. This could be done by lowering the costs associated with holding inventory, managing offline stores and training delivery boys in a way that they can work well in both the cases i.e. in stores as well as during home deliveries.

3. MYMORESTORE - MORE ONLINE STORE

(Based on Interview with Ms. Ghazala who is working in Aditya Birla Retail)

Aditya Birla Retail's more store went online with mymorestore.com with ZopNow serving as their technology partner i.e. sourcing of basket goods will be done from more hypermarket stores and ZopNow will act as deliverer, using its own fleet of vehicles. Delivery is done within a three-hour slot as selected by consumer. For example- if consumer has placed an order at 12:45 P.M., s/he can choose the delivery slot following the time of order like 1-4 P.M[12]. Delivery charges are free for orders above Rs. 750 and for order below it, shipping fee of Rs. 20 is applied. Mymorestore is currently providing services in Bengaluru, Pune, Hyderabad and Navi Mumbai.

To enable fast delivery, ZopNow has deployed GPS in all delivery vehicles and equipped all its delivery personnel with smartphone. Hence, whenever customer places an order, it is automatically flashed across all the employees which are involved in order fulfillment. Meanwhile, a person at the more store package the order which is then collected by ZopNow delivery personnel. ZopNow clubs 4-5 different deliveries within same time to be economical.

The model chosen by More where delivery is outsourced has both pros and cons -

Pros –

1. **Reduced Delivery Cost** – Outsourcing delivery will result in reduced delivery cost compared to the model when delivery would be done by More. The benefit of reduced cost can then be transferred to customers in the form of reduced price in order to attract more consumers.
2. **Faster Delivery –** ZopNow's promise of three-hour delivery will help in attracting customers who has immediate demand. Such faster delivery would not have been possible had the store employed their own delivery personnel and fleet of vehicles for delivery.

Cons –

1. **Wrong Delivery** – The person packing the goods and person delivering are different in this case. Hence, if there is delivery of wrong product, the delivery personnel will not be able to understand the customer problem. This might irk the customer leading to the loss of customer of more.
2. **Quality Management** – Since the delivery personnel are ZopNow employees, there is no control of their training and how they behave with customers. Inappropriate behavior on their part might damage the firm's reputation and result in loss of customer forever.

RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of above study, here are some of the key things that offline stores should consider and follow in order to be successful in the online space. Figure 2 shows a pictorial representation of the suggestions recommended.

1. **Sourcing** – It is better to source the products from their offline stores rather than opening separate warehouses. This will help in managing the huge inventory and real estate costs which could further help them in bringing down the prices offered to customers in order to be more competitive.
2. **Delivery Personnel** – Delivery personnel should be well-trained in logistics as well as communication. This will help the company in maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction as they will be able to communicate better with customers in scenarios like damage of product because of mishandling while delivery or cancellation of order due to delivery of wrong products.
   It is recommended that the person who delivers the cart should be the one who procure the items from store. This way s/he will be able to understand the customer if s/he has delivered wrong item and will be able to rectify the mistake in next delivery. The delivery personnel should be trained in a way that he can work in store in its free time i.e. while not delivering. This way the company will be able to fully utilize the man-hours it is paying for.
3. **Delivery Fees** – Offline stores has to increase their delivery fees in order to cover their logistics costs. However, increasing delivery fees might make them uncompetitive with respect to other players in the online space. Hence, in order to be competitive they can offer lower prices for goods compared to other players such that the total bill amount is still less than other online players.
   Offline players have the capability to offer goods at much lower prices because of economies of scale which has been achieved due to their offline stores and centralized sourcing and pooling of their inventory.

Figure 2: Model for offline store going online

Self-Pick Up Model

Offline companies can also employ another model in order to reduce their delivery charges. Apart from home-delivery, they can give the customer option of picking up delivery from their stores. Customers will be able to place order on the online store/website. Store employee in charge of self-pick-up will pack the goods ordered in the given time frame (say an hour) so that the customer will just walk in the store and get their goods without having to stand in long billing queues. However, in order to restrict the number of customer going for this option, store can charge a minimum convenience fee. However, this fee should be less than the delivery fees charged by the store otherwise customers will always opt for home delivery. Figure 3 gives the pictorial representation of the suggested recommendation.

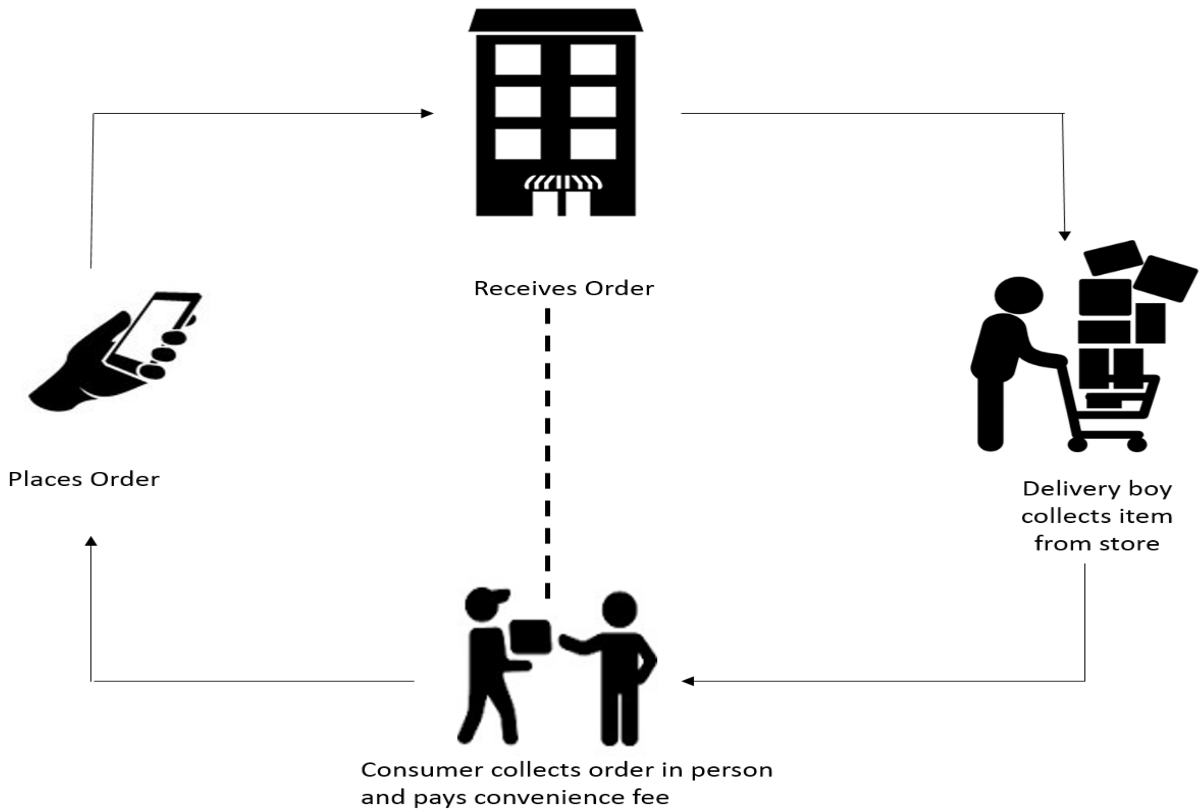
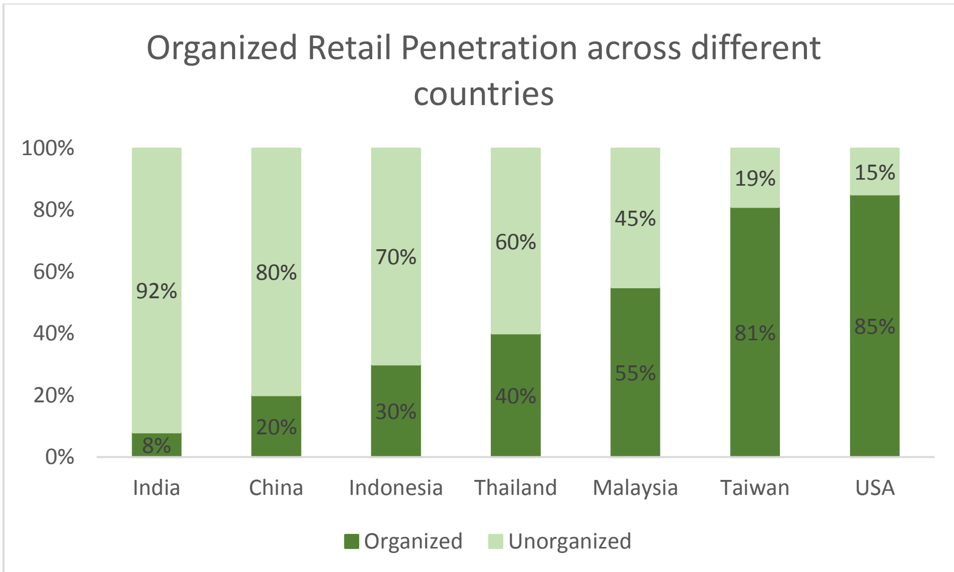


Figure 3: Self-Pick Up Model

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Penetration of Organized Retail in different countries



Source: KPMG Report,2014

Exhibit 2: Comparison of Cart Value of Reliance Fresh and Big Basket

Product	Qty	Price/kg	Total Price
Apple Fuji	1	169	169
Onion	1	15	15
Banana Yellaki	0.5	115	57.5
Potato	1	24	24
Amul Paneer	0.2	62	62
Amul Butter	0.1	40	40
Channa Dal	0.5	124	62
Surf Excel Detergent Bar	4	46	184
Ambi Pur	1	299	299
Fiama Di Will Shower Gel	1	195	195
Total Cart Value			**1107.5**

Table 2: Prices of goods bought from Reliance Fresh Direct (as on 06/08/2016)

Product	Qty	Price/kg	Total Price
Apple Fuji	1	181	181
Onion	1	17	17
Banana Yellaki	0.5	94	47
Potato	1	27	27
Amul Paneer	0.2	56	56
Amul Butter	0.1	40	40
Channa Dal	0.5	160	80
Surf Exel Detergent Bar	4	46	184
Ambi Pur	1	299	299
Fiama Di Will Shower Gel	1	175	175
Total Cart Value			**1106**

Table 3: Prices of goods bought from Big Basket (as on 06/08/2016)

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