Chapter 1

COVID-19 and the Rise of Quick Commerce in Tunisia:
Consumer Insights From a Qualitative Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This chapter investigates the rise of Quick Commerce in Tunisia, focusing on changes in consumer behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on qualitative interviews, five key themes shape consumer perceptions and adoption of Q Commerce: (1) Navigating technology in everyday life, emphasizing how technology has become integral to daily routines; (2) Perceptions of risk and trust in digital transactions, addressing concerns about security and reliability in online purchases; (3) Cultural norms and collective influence, examining the role of societal expectations and peer influence in shaping consumer decisions; (4) Evolving habits in the age of instant delivery, exploring the shift toward faster, more convenient shopping experiences; and (5) Emotional resilience and meaning making in times of crisis, reflecting how consumers adapt and find meaning in their purchasing behaviors during uncertain times. The chapter concludes with insights into dynamics between technological adoption, cultural factors, and consumer resilience, offering an understanding of Q Commerce in Tunisia.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced and hyper-connected world, patterns of consumption are evolving rapidly. Long-term planning is increasingly giving way to a culture of immediacy, where convenience, speed, and personalization dominate consumer expectations. This transformation is largely fueled by the widespread adoption of digital technologies offering seamless, real-time experiences. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated this shift, as millions of consumers worldwide turned to digital platforms for work, education, healthcare, and everyday shopping given the strict restrictions on daily life, such as social distancing and the closure of businesses and schools (Ben Hassen et al., 2020). This disruption has made it especially important for businesses to adapt quickly to changing consumer behaviors (Schorung, 2023).

Within this evolving landscape, quick commerce (Q-commerce) has emerged as a particularly disruptive model. Promising ultra-fast deliveries, often within 30 minutes, Q-commerce is redefining supply chains, customer expectations, and the nature of brand-consumer relationships (Stojanov, 2022). According to McKinsey (2022), 90% of consumers now see two- to three-day delivery as standard, while 30% expect same-day delivery, a figure that continues to rise with the growth of Q-commerce platforms. While extensive research has explored Q-commerce in mature economies, the focus has largely remained on optimized infrastructures, high consumer trust, and well-documented behavioral patterns (Setiyono et al., 2023; Goel and Sharma, 2025). In contrast, relatively little attention has been paid to how Q-commerce is experienced, negotiated, and interpreted in emerging economies, contexts where digital transformation intersects with diverse cultural, economic, and institutional realities.

This research gap is particularly striking in the Tunisian context, where digital behaviors are deeply intertwined with cultural practices, social norms, and informal economies. Despite growing smartphone penetration, a vibrant social media culture, and the official launch of 5G networks in 2025, existing studies often adopt macro-economic or technological perspectives, overlooking the everyday lived experiences of consumers. The way individuals symbolically interpret digital platforms and adapt Q-commerce to fit their social rhythms and values remains largely unexamined.

In this context, a study by Haneefa (2024) emphasizes that the future of Q-commerce in the 'quantum age' will depend on understanding nuanced consumer behaviors in diverse settings.

In Tunisia, these issues are especially salient. As of January 2025, internet penetration reached 84.9%, and social media usage remains exceptionally high (DataReportal, 2025)[1]. The Q-commerce sector is expected to generate USD 6.72 million in 2025, growing at an annual rate of 8.65% to reach USD 9.36 million by 2029, with

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