Chapter 7
Streamlining Returns Management in Quick Commerce Supply Chains

A. S. Anurag
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5790-9084
Central University of Kerala, India

M. Johnpaul
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1133-0588
Central University of Kerala, India

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the crucial role of returns management in optimizing Q-Commerce supply chains. With the rapid evolution of e-commerce, the demand for near-instant fulfillment has surged, making speed and customer satisfaction top priorities. Q-Commerce, known for ultra-fast deliveries, faces unique challenges in handling returns. This chapter explores its operational framework and the impact of effective returns management on business performance. It also discusses strategies to streamline returns, minimize disruptions, and enhance customer satisfaction. Case studies of industry leaders like Amazon, Flipkart, and Blinkit highlight best practices and key lessons. The findings emphasize continuous innovation in returns management to meet evolving consumer expectations and sustain growth in Q-Commerce.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the dawn of civilization, commerce has been the foundation of human progress. Imagine a time thousands of years ago when a merchant exchanged some cocoa beans for a piece of dried animal skin or even before that, when the first humans exchanged resources for mutual benefit, the concept of commerce was born (Chen, 2024). Over time, these rudimentary exchanges evolved into structured trade networks, fueling societal growth and fostering global interconnectivity. From the barter systems of ancient Mesopotamia to the complex digital transactions of the 21st century, commerce has remained integral to human interaction and progress. **Figure 1** below illustrates how the face of commerce has evolved and changed with technological developments.

With technological advances and digitalization, traditional commerce has transformed into Electronic Commerce (e-commerce). E-commerce can be broadly defined as commercial transactions conducted digitally or electronically, primarily through the Internet. The International Trade Administration describes e-commerce as "*a sales channel that crosses all industries that sell or promote brand awareness online and is considered a sales channel and part of a business's digital strategy*" (ITA, 2025).

Origins and Growth of E-commerce

The development of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) technology laid the foundation for the concept of e-commerce by enabling businesses to exchange digital transactions efficiently. EDI allows companies to electronically transfer payment-related documents, purchase orders, invoices, and other business communications through secure networks, reducing reliance on paper-based transactions. Initially developed in the 1960s and formally standardized in the 1970s, EDI played a crucial role in shaping early e-commerce platforms by streamlining business operations, improving transaction speed, and enhancing supply chain efficiency. This innovation marked a significant step toward digital commerce, paving the way for further advancements in online business transactions. As the first generation of e-commerce, EDI allowed companies to exchange information, place orders, and conduct electronic funds transfers via computers (Tian & Stewart, 2006). However, historical records indicate that EDI adoption among businesses was limited due to high implementation costs and the requirement of technological infrastructure. Like any emerging technology, EDI faced challenges in reaching its full potential, and the lack of market competition may have further slowed down its adoption. Consequently, first-generation e-commerce did not achieve widespread success.

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