QuickCommerceOS

FIELD GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

The Marketplace Launch Playbook

How to launch a local quick-commerce marketplace in India — choosing a category, signing your first vendors, standing up rider supply, pricing it so it makes money, and knowing by day 90 whether it is working.

Nine pages. No filler.

quickcommerceos.com

What's inside

This playbook is written for founders and regional operators launching their first quick-commerce marketplace — one city, one category, real vendors, real riders. It assumes you have not launched before and that capital is finite.

Read it in order. Each chapter ends where the next one begins, and the launch checklist in Chapter 5 only makes sense once you have made the decisions in Chapters 1 to 4.

> **HOW TO USE THIS**
> Work through it with a spreadsheet open. Every number in here is a placeholder for your number — the ranges are drawn from Indian tier-1 and tier-2 launches, but your catchment, category and rider market will move them. The point is to know which numbers to track before you spend money, not after.

CHAPTER 01

Pick one category and one catchment

The most common first-launch mistake is trying to be a general store across a whole city — thin catalogue depth everywhere, delivery promises you cannot keep, and no reason to reorder.

Start with one category

A single category gives you catalogue depth, a repeatable basket, and vendors who compete with each other on your platform instead of ignoring you. It also makes your delivery promise honest — a grocery basket and a phone charger do not have the same pick-and-pack time.

CATEGORY	TYPICAL AOV	ORDERS / CUSTOMER / MONTH	GROSS TAKE	HARD PART
Grocery	Rs 380–520	6–10	12–18%	Cold chain,
Food	Rs 260–420	4–8	18–25%	Peak-hour rider crunch
Pharmacy	Rs 300–700	1–3	10–16%	Licensing,
Electronics	Rs 900–2,400	0.3–0.8	6–12%	Low frequency, returns

Indicative ranges from Indian tier-1 and tier-2 launches. Grocery buys frequency; electronics buys basket size. Frequency compounds — start there.

Then draw one catchment, not a city

Quick commerce is a radius business: a 12-minute promise survives roughly a 2–3 km radius in Indian traffic once you count pick-up time. Pick the radius first, then check that enough demand lives inside it.

- **Household density.** 15,000–25,000 households inside the radius. Below that, volume will not support enough riders to hold delivery time at peak.
- **Vendor fragmentation.** Many small vendors beat one dominant chain — fragmented supply is what makes you useful as the demand aggregator.
- **A natural anchor.** A dense residential cluster, tech park or university gives you a predictable demand curve to staff against.
- **Rider availability.** If existing aggregators already saturate the local rider pool, your rider cost per order runs 20–30% above Chapter 3's numbers.

> **RULE OF THUMB**
> If you cannot name the six streets your first 500 orders will come from, the catchment is too big. Narrow it until you can, and only widen once on-time delivery holds above 90% for three consecutive weeks.

CHAPTER 02

Sign your first vendors

Recruit 12 to 15 vendors so that 8 to 10 are genuinely live on launch day. Some stall on documents, one or two go quiet, and at least one cannot keep up with pick times. Plan for that attrition.

Collect documents once, properly

Chasing paperwork after a vendor has agreed to join is where onboarding timelines die. Send one list, collect it in a single pass, and do not start catalogue work until it is complete.

- **Identity and tax.** PAN, GSTIN where applicable, and the business name exactly as printed on the GST certificate — mismatches block settlement later.
- **Category licences.** FSSAI for food and packaged groceries; a valid drug licence plus pharmacist details for pharmacy; none extra for general electronics.
- **Settlement details.** Bank account with IFSC or a verified UPI ID. Confirm with a Rs 1 test transfer before launch, not after the first payout cycle.
- **Storefront assets.** Shop photographs, operating hours per weekday, and a named contact who answers the phone during those hours.

Set the catalogue standard before you load anything

Vendor catalogues arrive inconsistent — the same product spelled four ways, weights in the title, prices both including and excluding tax. Fix the standard first, then load.

- 150–300 SKUs per vendor at launch. Depth in top sellers beats a long tail nobody searches for.
- One naming pattern everywhere: brand, product, variant, pack size — "Amul, Butter, Salted, 500g".
- A real photograph for every SKU. Placeholder images depress conversion, and vendors send you whatever you accept.
- An approved substitute list per SKU. Quick commerce runs out of stock constantly, and substitutions prevent cancellations.

> **WHAT VENDORS ASK FIRST**
>
> "When do I get paid?" comes before "what is your commission?" almost every time. Have a precise answer — cycle length, cut-off day, and where they can see the statement themselves — and your close rate rises without touching the commission rate. Weekly settlement is a real differentiator against 15-day cycles; it costs working capital, so price it in.

CHAPTER 03

Rider supply and unit economics

Riders are your largest variable cost and the only part of the operation your customer sees. Get the ratio wrong in either direction and you burn either cash or your delivery promise.

How many riders you actually need

At a 12–15 minute promise inside a 2–3 km radius, a rider completes 3 to 4 deliveries an hour including return legs. Demand is not flat — expect 55-65% of daily orders inside two peaks, roughly 8:00–11:00 and 18:00–22:00. Staff the peak, not the average.

ORDERS / DAY	PEAK-HOUR ORDERS	RIDERS AT PEAK	TOTAL ROSTER	MIX
150	~50	14–16	22–26	60% gig
300	~100	28–32	42–48	50% gig
600	~200	55–62	80–90	45% gig

A fixed core across both peaks plus a gig layer for surge beats an all-fixed roster on cost and an all-gig one on reliability.

Where the money goes on a single order

LINE ITEM	PER ORDER	% OF AOV
Average order value (grocery)	Rs 420	100%
Commission earned (15%)	+Rs 63	15.0%
Delivery fee charged	+Rs 25	6.0%
Rider cost	−Rs 38	9.0%
Packaging and consumables	−Rs 6	1.4%
Payment gateway (2%)	−Rs 8	1.9%
Support and ops allocation	−Rs 7	1.7%
Contribution per order	Rs 29	6.9%

Worked example at Rs 420 AOV. Contribution — not GMV — decides whether more orders help you. Where it is negative, growth accelerates the loss.

> **THE BATCHING LEVER**
> Delivering two orders on one trip drops rider cost per order from Rs 38 to roughly Rs 24 without touching price or commission. Batching needs density inside a tight radius — which is why Chapter 1 argues for a small catchment.

CHAPTER 04

Pricing and commission structure

Three dials: what you charge vendors, what you charge for delivery, and what you give away. Set all three before launch — retrofitting a commission increase onto signed vendors costs goodwill you cannot buy back.

Commission by category

CATEGORY	LAUNCH RATE	STEADY STATE	WHY IT DIFFERS
Grocery	8–10%	12–18%	Thin vendor margins, high
Food	12–15%	18–25%	Higher vendor margin absorbs it
Pharmacy	6–8%	10–16%	Regulated pricing, low flexibility
Electronics	4–6%	6–12%	Price-transparent, comparison-shopped

A lower launch rate for the first 60–90 days is a legitimate cost of acquiring vendor supply. Put the step-up date in the contract from day one so it is not a renegotiation later.

The delivery-fee ladder

A flat fee either kills small baskets or subsidises large ones. Ladder it against basket value so the fee falls as your contribution rises.

BASKET VALUE	DELIVERY FEE	WHAT IT DOES
Below Rs 149	Rs 35	Discourages loss-making micro-baskets
Rs 149 - Rs 349	Rs 25	The working majority of orders
Rs 350 - Rs 599	Rs 15	Nudges basket building
Rs 600 and above	Free	Rewards the baskets that already pay

Two things worth charging for

- **A delivery pass.** Rs 99–149 a month covering delivery above your mid-tier threshold. It turns your best customers into predictable revenue and lifts order frequency.
- **Vendor visibility.** Sponsored placement in category listings — high-margin revenue that does not touch unit economics, but worthless before you have traffic. Do not build it at launch.

> THE DISCOUNT TRAP
>
> A launch built on Rs 100-off coupons produces a cohort with a 20–30% day-30 repeat rate. The same spend put into reliability — accurate stock, honest delivery times, fast refunds — typically produces 40–50%. Discounts buy the first order; the second is bought by not disappointing anyone.

CHAPTER 05

The launch checklist

Six weeks, four phases. Print this page and work backwards from your launch date.

T-30 TO T-21 · FOUNDATIONS

- [ ] Catchment boundary drawn and geofenced, with the delivery radius signed off
- [ ] Category chosen and the unit-economics model built for your own numbers
- [ ] Commission, delivery-fee ladder and settlement cycle agreed internally
- [ ] Vendor target list of 20+ prospects inside the catchment

T-20 TO T-11 · SUPPLY

- [ ] 12–15 vendors signed with complete documentation
- [ ] Catalogue standard published and shared with every vendor
- [ ] First 8 vendors' catalogues loaded, priced and photographed
- [ ] Rider roster recruited to peak requirement plus 20% buffer, test payout sent

T-10 TO T-3 · DRY RUN

- [ ] 50+ internal test orders placed across every vendor and time slot
- [ ] Pick-and-pack timed per vendor; anyone over 6 minutes is coached or delayed
- [ ] Refund and cancellation flow tested end to end, including a partial refund
- [ ] Support phone number staffed with published hours and an escalation path
- [ ] Out-of-stock and substitution flow tested with a real vendor

T-2 TO LAUNCH DAY

- [ ] Delivery promise set to your dry-run p90, not your best case
- [ ] Rider incentives live for the first week's peaks
- [ ] Vendor WhatsApp group active with a named ops owner per shift
- [ ] Analytics tracking verified for order, cancellation and delivery-time events

T+1 TO T+7 · HOLD THE LINE

- [ ] Daily review of on-time rate, fill rate and cancellations with named owners
- [ ] Every cancellation in week one read individually, not in aggregate
- [ ] Vendor pick times reviewed daily; drop chronic laggards from search ranking
- [ ] No catchment expansion, no new category, no new vendor cohort until on-time holds

CHAPTER 06

The first 90 days

GMV is the number investors ask about and the number that will mislead you first. These six tell you whether the business underneath it is real.

METRIC	WHAT IT MEANS	DAY 30	DAY 60	DAY 90
Day-30 repeat rate	Customers ordering again within 30	25%	35%	45%
On-time delivery	Delivered inside the promised window	85%	90%	93%
Fill rate	Items delivered vs items ordered	92%	95%	97%
Contribution / order	After rider, packaging, gateway, support	−Rs 10	Rs 5	Rs 25
Blended CAC	Total acquisition spend per new	Rs 220	Rs 170	Rs 130
Vendor churn	Active vendors lost per month	<15%	<10%	<7%

Targets for a single-catchment grocery launch. Adjust the absolute values for your category, but keep the direction: repeat rate and contribution climb while CAC falls.

Reading the numbers together

- **Repeat rate is the verdict.** It compresses reliability, catalogue quality and pricing into one number. Flat by day 60 while orders climb means you are buying strangers.
- **On-time rate leads repeat rate.** It moves first and repeat follows about three weeks later. Treat a dip in on-time as a forecast of next month's retention.
- **Fill rate is a catalogue problem.** Persistent shortfalls mean vendor stock data is stale. Fix the update cadence before adding vendors.
- **CAC without repeat rate is meaningless.** A Rs 130 CAC is excellent at a 45% repeat rate and fatal at 15%. Always read them as a pair.

WHEN TO EXPAND

Widen the catchment or add a category only when on-time sits above 90%, fill rate above 95%, and contribution per order is positive — for three consecutive weeks, not one good week. Expanding on top of a broken operation multiplies the breakage.

NEXT STEPS

You have the plan. Now you need the platform.

Everything in this playbook assumes working software underneath it: vendor onboarding and catalogue tools, a customer app under your own brand, rider dispatch, a settlement engine that pays vendors on the cycle you promised, and analytics that surface the six numbers in Chapter 6 without a spreadsheet.

That is what QuickCommerceOS is. White-label marketplace infrastructure for founders and regional operators — typically live in 6 to 11 weeks, under your brand, in your city.

Book a demo

Walk through your catchment, category and unit economics with our team, and see the platform running against your numbers.

quickcommerceos.com/demo