BUSINESS · FREE GUIDE 10

The Quick Commerce Dark Store Cheatsheet

The operating maths of 10-minute delivery — layout, metrics, and the economics that decide whether a dark store prints money or burns it.

The non-negotiable metrics

- O2D (order-to-dispatch) in minutes — the store's heartbeat
- Picker UPH and rider utilisation — the two salary lines that decide P&L;
- Inventory accuracy ≥ 98.5% — a stockout in q-commerce is a lost customer, not a lost sale
- Availability % on the top-500 SKUs, measured at slot level
- Orders per store per day vs breakeven — know your number cold

Layout & slotting

- Top 200 SKUs within 15 steps of the packing table
- Order-affinity slotting: milk, bread, eggs live together for a reason
- One-way pick flow beats shortest-path chaos at peak
- Dedicated fast lane for 1–3 line orders (most of your volume)
- Receiving never blocks picking — separate windows, separate doors

Industry example — Snack-category analysis across Indian q-commerce shows a small top slice of SKUs driving the bulk of picks — slot for that reality, not the full catalogue.

The economics in one panel

- Contribution per order = AOV × margin % – pick cost – delivery cost – packaging
- Delivery cost falls with density: orders per rider-hour is the lever, not rider salary
- Dead inventory in 3,000 sq ft hurts twice: cash AND your best locations
- Ad/visibility income per store can be the difference between red and black

Expansion discipline

- New store only when the catchment models to breakeven orders within 2 quarters
- Cannibalisation check against existing stores' heat maps
- Dark store + motherhub replenishment cadence designed BEFORE launch
- Exit criteria written on day one — sunk-cost stores kill networks

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