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# THE CONVENIENCE ECONOMY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF CONSUMER EFFORT, VALUE CREATION, AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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## ABSTRACT

Convenience has evolved from being a from a feature of products relating to how easy it is to buy them into a multidimensional source of consumer value and is now an increasingly important basis of competitive differentiation. This paper reviews the evolution of the literature on convenience and synthesizes its implications for contemporary consumer markets. Based on both fundamental and more recent research, the review conceptualizes convenience as a consumer-perceived reduction in temporal, physical, search, cognitive, transactional, and post-purchase effort throughout their entire customer journey. It looks at how such a reduction in effort can increase perceived value and influence consumer behaviour, while also provide businesses with opportunities to distinguish themselves by offering simpler, faster, and more frictionless experiences. The review also examines the convenience premium, the potential dark side of convenience, and the Convenience Paradox, which is the idea that greater convenience may lead to higher consumer expectations and a lower tolerance for friction in their future purchases. On the basis of these insights, a conceptual framework is suggested that links the different dimensions of convenience and the reduction in effort to consumer value, behavioral outcomes, and competitive differentiation, while taking into account the contextual and strategic trade-offs. The study thus positions convenience not just as a supporting service attribute but as a dynamic strategic capability that enables firms to create consumer value and compete in markets that increasingly tend to become more sensitive to friction.

**KEYWORDS:** Consumer Convenience; Consumer Effort Reduction; Competitive Differentiation; Convenience Economy; Convenience Paradox; Frictionless Consumption.

## INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, the consumer markets have seen the introduction of ways and means that fundamentally changed the way companies create and deliver value to their customers. For example, in a competitive business environment characterized by commodities (and services), competitive pricing, extensive distribution networks, and aggressive advertising, conventionally firms competed with each other through their ability to offer superior products at lower prices and ensure their presence in different distribution channels. While these strategic levers continue to underpin the overall marketing strategy, an equally influential yet comparatively under-explored factor has emerged, which serves as a source of competitive advantage, namely, the ability to shorten the time, reduce the effort and minimize the complexity of the entire process, which is referred to as convenience. In other words, in the context of a society driven by time constraints, wherein consumers no longer evaluate a product based solely on its quality or price, and are increasingly valuing the ease, speed, and simplicity with which the product can be searched for, purchased, consumed, and even returned, we can clearly say that on the part of consumers, convenience has become a key element that differentiates companies from their competitors and facilitates buying behavior.

The proliferation of digital technology, smartphones, omnichannel commerce, platform-based business models, digital payments, quick-commerce, and other tools have fundamentally influenced and continue to influence consumer expectations. Customers now anticipate instant access to goods, seamless payments, rapid deliveries, and post-purchase services to require minimal effort. As lifestyles become increasingly fast-paced, time has become a precious commodity. Businesses are investing significantly in technology and business models that make the customer experience as friction-less as possible at every stage of the journey. Companies are increasingly looking to deliver more value to their customers by removing any impediments that stand between consumers and the value the products provide, instead of simply improving the quality of the products.

It is important to note that this trend reflects a paradigm shift in the competitive landscape as businesses grapple to satisfy the growing demand for convenience. It is now not just what companies offer to their customers but rather how the products and services can be obtained by the customers that actually differentiates them from their competition. Take, for instance, the evolution of retail grocery industry. Traditionally, consumers had to visit a store, locate desired products, compare options, wait in line, make the payment, load the items in the car, and return home. Subsequently, they would have to go through the same process again the next time they needed groceries. E-commerce websites removed the need for physical stores and allowed customers to shop from the comfort of their homes while also having the products delivered to them. Quick-commerce took this concept one step further by cutting down on delivery times to a matter of minutes, if not hours. At the same time, technology is enabling businesses to recommend products and anticipate consumers' needs before even they themselves could realize them, with artificial intelligence suggesting items based on their past purchases or browsing history. In each step, it is evident that the products typically remain the same, while convenience is engineered in to eliminate as much effort as possible. It could thus be argued that marketing has evolved beyond merely facilitating a purchase and instead is continuously focusing on eliminating any friction in consumers' quest for goods and services.

To illustrate, imagine two retailers offering the same product at the same price. One requires you to go to the store, find the item, wait in line, pay, and carry the product home. The other allows you to find the item in seconds, pay electronically, have it delivered to your door, and return it via an app. While the product and its price are essentially the same, the value you receive is different because the effort needed to obtain the item is significantly different. Increasingly, one may realize that competitive advantage can be derived not only from the value embedded in the good or service itself but also in the systematic reduction of the effort it takes to obtain the good or service.

This paper argues that these developments collectively signal the emergence of a Convenience Economy—a marketplace in which organizations increasingly compete by minimizing the temporal, physical, cognitive, transactional, and post-purchase effort consumers expend throughout the customer journey. Within this friction-less marketplace, convenience goes beyond merely saving time, rather it is achieved by reducing the effort in all aspects of the consumer journey—simplifying the search for products/services, reducing the hassle in decision-making, simplifying payments, accelerating the fulfillment of orders, and providing more accessible post-purchase support. This perspective, thus posits convenience as not only as a functional characteristic involved in the delivery of services. Rather it presents convenience as a strategic capability that leverages multiple avenues and through which businesses create, deliver, and sustain customer value.

The growing prominence of convenience as a key factor across industries is clearly evident in consumers' willingness to pay a premium for same-day deliveries, opt for subscription-based OTT platforms, express checkout systems, contactless payments, click-and-collect facilities, and other personalized recommendation even though the lower-cost alternatives are readily available. This suggests that consumer value is increasingly based not only on the attributes of products and services, but also on the options that help them save their time and effort. In essence, convenience, time, and simplicity have become highly valuable marketplace resources which customers prefer exchanging monetary value for. As a result of this, businesses continue to make significant investments in logistical capabilities, digital platforms, predictive analytics, automation, and customer experience that eventually reduce friction across every consumer touchpoint.

While the concept of convenience is strategically integral to modern business studies, research on convenience remains dispersed across multiple streams of marketing and management studies. Consequently, there is a need to integrate the various research avenues to understand how convenience drives value creation and competitive advantage. Existing studies have examined service convenience, shopping convenience, online convenience, mobile convenience, delivery convenience, self-service technologies, omnichannel retailing, and digital platforms independently, frequently employing different conceptualizations, theoretical perspectives, and measurement approaches. Each study has made valuable contributions to understanding the dynamics of convenience in a given setting. However, convenience has been considered as a situational construct rather than a key differentiator in the conventional marketplace. As a result, research on convenience remains fragmented, with studies conducted from different angles limiting our understanding of how different dimensions of convenience collectively create consumer value and competitive advantage.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the existing literature tend to describe convenience as an operational or service-related attribute and not as a competitive business capability. Though the previous studies have largely demonstrated a positive correlation between convenience and customer satisfaction, loyalty, purchase intention, and service quality, very few of them have laid emphasis on integrating the behavioral and psychological processes through which convenience shapes consumer decision-making. Aspects such as why customers are willing to pay convenience premiums, how the minimization in consumer effort influence value perceptions, and what are those conditions under which convenience outweighs the conventional determinants such as price remain poorly connected. At the same time, the pursuit of provision of friction-less consumption raises concerns including but not limited to impulse buying, overconsumption, ecological footprints, rising customer expectations, and the increasing dependency on effortless consumption experiences. Convenience, according to these emerging aspects, therefore, simultaneously creates substantial value as well as presents important managerial and societal challenges that need to be synthesized systematically.

Based on this, the current paper provides an alternative view on Convenience Economy by reconceptualizing convenience as a strategic source of value creation. This paper attempts to provide a systematically comprehensive overview of the insights available across the diverse streams of marketing literature, which illustrates the evolution of convenience research and integrates the various fragmented conceptualizations into a unified framework. It further explains how convenience creates value by reducing consumer effort, and develops a comprehensive conceptual model linking convenience, consumer value, and competitive advantage. By doing so, it will contribute towards understanding how convenience is embedded into the competitive business landscape and seeks to reposition it as one of the key competitive differentiators in the context of contemporary marketing, rather than merely a supporting service attribute.

**Research Problem**

Although convenience has been looked at extensively across consumer and service research, its conceptualization still remains fragmented. In earlier studies the emphasis was on the time and effort involved for consumers, whereas subsequent research identified a number of dimensions of service convenience, such as decision, access, transaction, benefit, and post-benefit convenience. The development of digital platforms, self-service technologies, personalised interfaces, and quick-commerce has also enabled firms to find even more ways of reducing the effort required by consumers. Yet relatively little attention has been paid to combining this understanding at the consumer level with the strategic role of convenience in creating value and gaining a competitive advantage.

The research dimension addressed by this review article therefore lies in the limited integration between convenience as it is perceived by consumers and convenience as a strategic capability at the firm level. Though the existing body of literature offers considerable evidence that convenience influences consumer evaluations and their behaviour, its wider implications for competitive differentiation, the changing expectations of consumers, and the possible trade-offs linked to convenience have not sufficiently been integrated. This article attempts to theoretically address this gap by conceptualizing convenience as a dynamic strategic mechanism by means of which firms are able to reduce consumer effort, create value, influence behaviour, and possibly achieve competitive differentiation.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a systematic literature review and conceptual synthesis approach. Literature relating to consumer convenience, service convenience, consumer effort, convenience value, and competitive advantage was identified and closely examined in both foundational and more recent studies. The literature was thematically synthesised with regard to the evolution and dimensions of convenience, the outcomes for consumers and firms, the convenience premium, the dark-side implications, and the changing expectations of consumers. A conceptual framework, based on this, is then suggested which links effort reduction, consumer value, behavioral outcomes, and competitive differentiation.

### Working Diagram of the Study

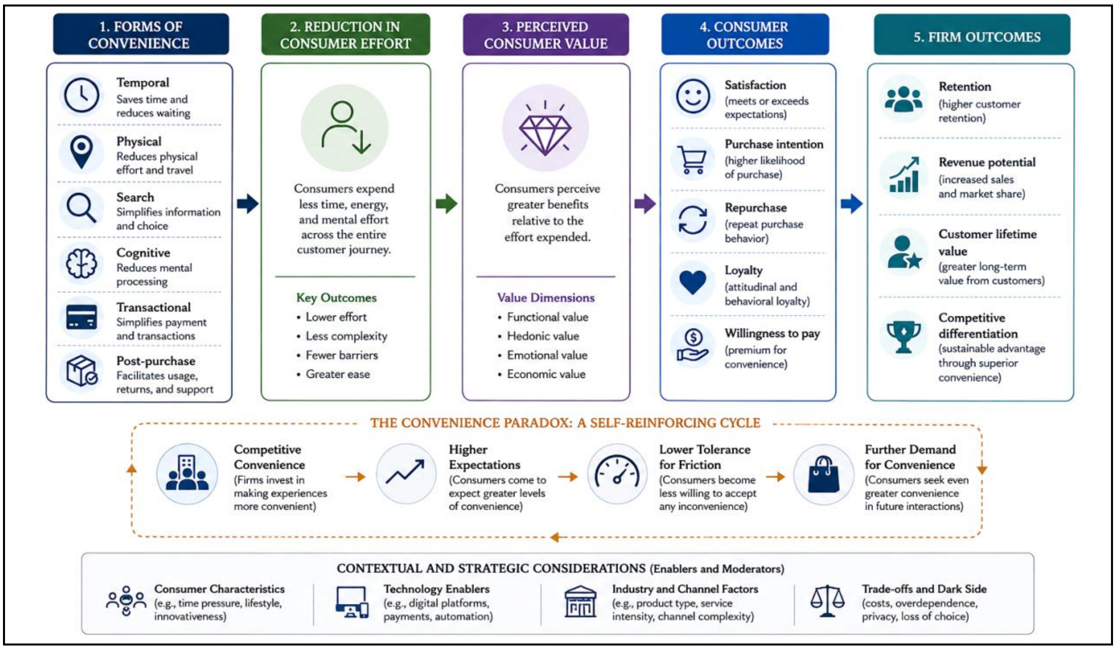


**Figure 1: Working Diagram of the Study.**

### A. The Evolution of Convenience in Marketing

Convenience has always been an essential element of consumer behavior, the role of which has undergone significant transformations (as presented in Figure 2) over the years. One of the earliest discussions on the concept of convenience in marketing can be traced back to Copeland's classification of consumer goods in 1923. He identified the convenience goods as products that require minimal effort to be acquired and are purchased frequently with limited deliberation. Although this categorization emphasized aspects like ease and accessibility of purchase, convenience was regarded as an inherent characteristic of products and not as something which can function as the strategic capability of firms. As the understanding of convenience developed and its importance in consumer behaviour was recognized, scholars began to realize that convenience was something that extends beyond the attributes of products. It is a pervasive characteristic that reflects the consumer's desire to minimize the time and effort associated with the marketplace activities, and thus plays an important role in their decision-making process.

The initial research exploring the nuances of consumer convenience began to appear in the 1970s. They examined convenience orientation as a behavioral tendency. Anderson (1971, 1972) was the first to suggest that some consumers had a greater tendency to seek convenience, which manifested in their preference for specific products and services that would eliminate the need to put effort into the shopping and consumption process. Yale and Venkatesh (1986) highlighted that while convenience traditionally was seen as geographical accessibility, it is better conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct that incorporates temporal, physical, and psychological dimensions. Brown's (1989, 1990) contribution to the discussion of convenience was to note that it was an extremely important consideration for marketers, as it influenced consumer evaluation and decision-making in relation to both goods and services. Collectively, these studies shifted scholarly attention from convenience as an inherent characteristic of goods an services to increasingly regard convenience as a consumer perception influenced by multiple aspects of the buying process.

One of the significant contributions in understanding of the evolution of the concept was made by Berry, Seiders, and Grewal (2002). They reconceptualized convenience within the context of service marketing. Unlike previous definitions that tend to regard convenience as a single attribute, they proposed that service convenience comprises multiple dimensions associated with a customers' perceptions of time and effort required to obtain and use a particular service. Accordingly, they put forward a framework that identified convenience as a multidimensional construct comprising decision, access, transaction, benefit, and post-benefit convenience. They demonstrated that consumers evaluate convenience throughout the entire service consumption process rather than at a single point of purchase. This marked a shift from viewing convenience primarily as a retail characteristic to understanding it as an vital component of service experiences and overall customer value creation.

Subsequent research tends to regard convenience as an important aspect of the consumer experience that touches on all elements of the decision-making, purchase, and post-purchase behaviours. With the emergence and proliferation of e-commerce, self-service technologies, mobile applications, digital payment systems, and omnichannel retailing, customers' expectations in terms of convenience have.

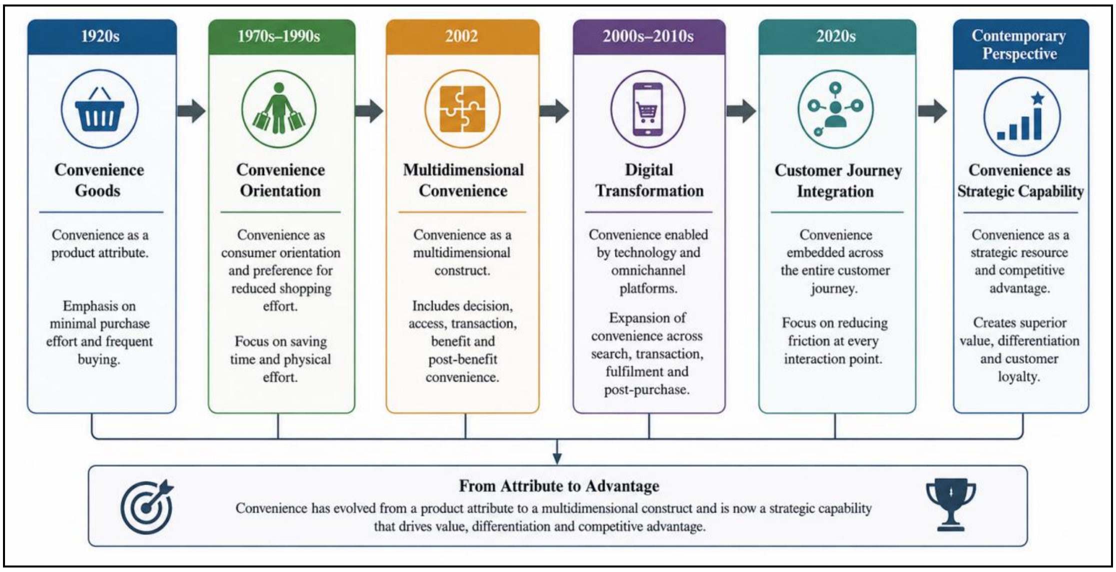


**Figure 2: Evolution of Convenience from Product Attribute to Strategic Capability.**

Substantially been altered in terms of how they search for information, evaluated alternatives, completed transactions, and interacted with firms post purchase. Not only does convenience encompass the reduction of effort and time spent on shopping and purchases, it also incorporates simplified decision-making, reducing information search costs, facilitating seamless transactions, and integrating multiple channels into a unified customer journey. As the consumer experience becomes more digitized and technology-enabled, business firms begin to compete on the basis of convenience offered throughout the purchasing process rather than merely improving the functional performance of their offerings.

The growing interest to studying the phenomenon has been fueled by numerous advancements in technologies and platforms that continue to shape the business environment in profound ways. With the rapid rise of platform-based quick-commerce business models like Blinkit, Swiggy Instamart, Flipkart Minutes, BigBasket, etc., consumers now increasingly expect immediate access to products and services, personalized recommendations, frictionless payment systems, rapid fulfillment, and effortless post-purchase support. Predictive analytics, digital ecosystems, subscription models, one-click purchasing, and algorithm-driven recommendations have all facilitated removing layers of physical as well as cognitive effort while purchasing goods or services. As a result, convenience has been integrated into the core of businesses as a critical aspect of experience, product design, and strategy. This reflects a comprehensive transition from merely facilitating transactions to providing a frictionless buying experience to customers.

This progression has reflects a fundamental shift in the market dynamics. The same grocery item, say for an instance, a pack of sugar, that required consumers to visit a nearby store or supermarket, search for the product, stand in the billing ques, and carry the purchased item home. The advent of e-commerce reduced much of this physical effort through doorstep delivery. Much recently, the quick-commerce platforms such as Blinkit, Instamart, etc. have made it possible for customers to receive the same pack of sugar within a matter of minutes, thus making speed and convenience central competitive differentiators, while the product largely remains unchanged.

Table 1 summarizes this conceptual progression and highlights the shift towards viewing convenience as a potential strategic capability in contemporary marketing.

***Table 1: Evolution of the Conceptualization of Convenience in Marketing Literature***

| Period | Key Scholar(s) | Conceptualisation of Convenience | Principal Emphasis | Implication for Marketing |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1920s | Copeland (1923) | Convenience associated primarily with the classification of convenience goods. | Easy accessibility, frequent purchase, and limited consumer effort. | Convenience was largely considered a characteristic of the product and its distribution. |
| 1970s | Anderson (1971, 1972) | Emergence of the convenience-oriented consumer. | Individual differences in consumers' tendency to seek reduced effort. | Attention shifted from the product toward consumer preferences and behaviour. |
| 1980s | Yale & Venkatesh (1986) | Convenience conceptualised as a broader, multidimensional construct. | Time, effort, accessibility, and psychological considerations. | Convenience began to be understood as a consumer-perceived construct rather than simply a product attribute. |
| 1980s–1990s | Brown (1989, 1990) | Convenience developed as a strategic construct in consumer product marketing. | Time, place, acquisition, use, and execution. | Convenience became relevant to marketing strategy and managerial decision-making. |
| 2000s | Berry, Seiders & Grewal (2002) | Service convenience conceptualised as a multidimensional construct. | Five dimensions: decision, access, transaction, benefit, and post-benefit. | Convenience extended across the entire service consumption process. |
| 2000s | **Seiders, Voss,** Grewal & Godfrey (2007) | Development and validation of SERVCON scale. | Measurement of consumers' perceived time and effort across five dimensions. | Established a more rigorous basis for empirical measurement of service convenience. |
| 2000s onward | **Farquhar & Rowley** (2009) | Convenience positioned within broader service and consumption experiences. | Time, effort, customer value, co-production, and experiential consumption. | Reinforced convenience as an important element of customer experience and value creation. |
| Contemporary Perspective | This Review | Convenience conceptualised as a **strategic capability** for reducing consumer friction. | Temporal, physical, cognitive, search, transactional, and post-purchase effort across the customer journey. | Positions convenience beyond a supporting service attribute as a potential source of competitive differentiation and value capture. |

**Source:** Compiled by the authors based on Copeland (1923), Anderson (1971, 1972), Yale and Venkatesh (1986), Brown (1989, 1990), Berry, Seiders and Grewal (2002), Seiders, Voss, Grewal and Godfrey (2007), and Farquhar and Rowley (2009).

Collectively, this evolution demonstrates that convenience has progressed far beyond its traditional role as a product or service attribute. As consumers increasingly value reduced complexity throughout the purchase journey, organizations in the contemporary marketplace are compelled to compete through their ability to systematically eliminate friction from marketplace interactions. Against this backdrop, it becomes necessary to evaluate how has convenience been defined in the existing literature and develop an integrated understanding of the concept in the context of modern marketing.

**B. Conceptualizing Convenience: From Consumer Perception to Strategic Capability**

Convenience has been conceptualized from different overlapping perspectives in marketing literature. The initial studies moved a step further from focusing on convenience as a characteristic of products or services, to examining it as a consumer-oriented construct associated with the reduction of time and effort involved in consumption activities (Anderson, 1972; Yale & Venkatesh, 1986). Brown (1989, 1990) later argued that convenience was integral to both product and service consumption, wherein the central idea was that consumers are concerned about the effort needed to obtain and use an offering. Thus, convenience is defined in terms of the consumer's perceptions of the cost of resources expended to perform a particular marketplace activity.

An important contribution to the conceptualization of convenience was made by Berry, Seiders, and Grewal (2002). They proposed a five-dimensional model of service convenience: decision, access, transaction, benefit, and post-benefit convenience. It means that in order to purchase, consumers may need to make decisions, gain access to the service, make the payment (transaction), receive the purchased item (benefit), and return it (post-benefit). Each of these stages can be inconvenient in some cases and convenient in others. For instance, getting the necessary information about the service may make its purchase easier (reduced decision difficulty). A store's location may influence the ease of access to it. Making payments via digital mode can make the transaction easier than other methods. The ease of returning items is also an element of convenience. Establishing convenience as an element that spans across the customer journey rather than being merely confined to the point of purchase, was the major value-addition of this framework.

Seiders et al. (2007) later demonstrated that service convenience is essentially a five-dimensional, second-order construct by developing and validating the SERVCON scale. Each of these dimensions was found to have unique drivers and outcomes, including implications for repurchase behaviour. It was an important milestone as it facilitated a better understanding of how consumers evaluate the effort involved in different stages of service consumption.

Farquhar & Rowley (2009) further extended the discussion on convenience, by asserting that convenience should occupy a more prominent position within marketing theory and practice than it does now because of its relationship with customer value, service experience, and consumer participation. Their view of convenience is especially pertinent in the contemporary markets, where the process of convenience creation increasingly involves interactions between consumers, firms, technologies, and service systems. Convenience can be provided by different sources, some of them

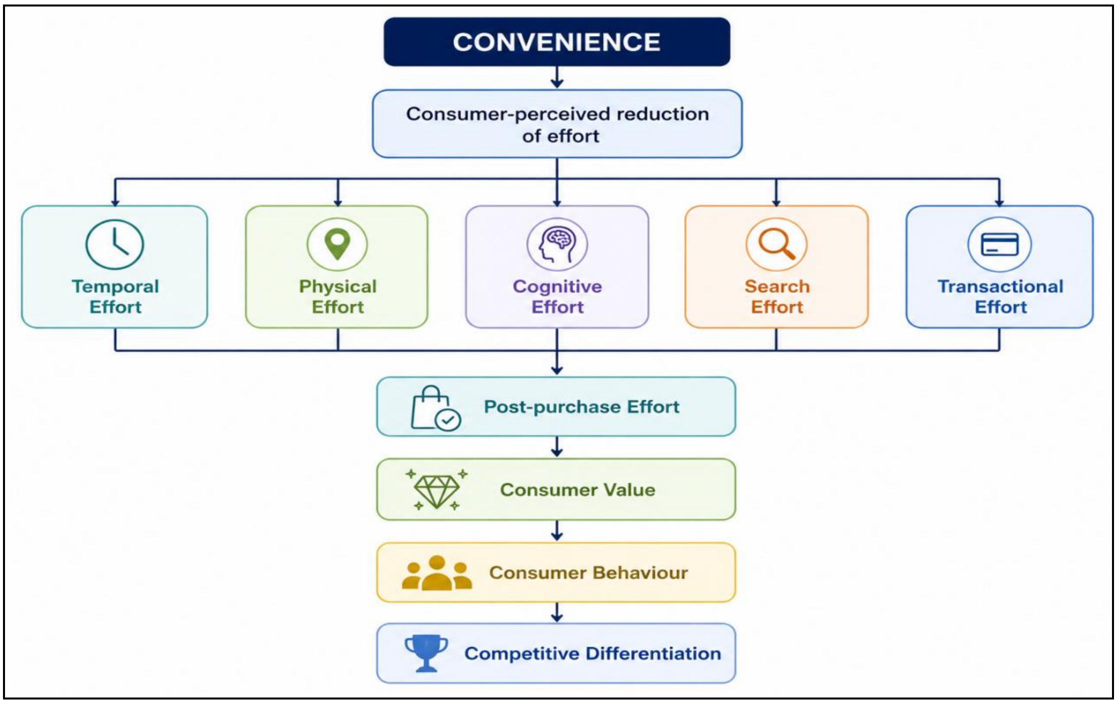


**Figure 3: Multidimensional Nature of Consumer Convenience.**

May seem unusual at first sight. Say for an instance, a retailer who tracks what a particular customer buys, a payment app that records what one pays for, or an online grocery delivery service that lists the most frequently purchased items in one place, allowing the customers to re-order the same things over and again–all of them reduce the effort associated with otherwise routine activities. Thus, the aspect of convenience can be embedded into the design of the overall customer experience, and not just into the product or service characteristic.

An important implication of this literature is that convenience should not be equated exclusively in terms of speed. While time reduction remains a critical element of this construct, consumers may experience convenience through reduced physical, cognitive, search, transactional, and post-purchase effort as well. A consumer could, for example, find online shopping more convenient than shopping in a physical store not only because it saves travel time but because it also provides product filters that reduce search effort, saved payment details which simplify transactions, and doorstep delivery which eliminate the need to carry the bulk purchases back home. On the other hand, a faster service, which is more complicated would not be perceived as convenient. For example, a food-delivery app may promise faster delivery but still be perceived as inconvenient if customers have to navigate a complicated interface, deal with unclear charges, or struggle to select their exact delivery location. This reinforces the multidimensional nature of convenience established in the earlier literature (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007).

Building on these perspectives, this review views convenience as the ease with which consumers can accomplish marketplace activities with minimal expenditure of time and effort across the customer journey. In contemporary markets, this ease is increasingly engineered through digital platforms, personalized interfaces, automated processes, seamless payments, doorstep delivery, and rapid fulfillment. Although convenience is ultimately evaluated as a consumer perception, firms increasingly embed effort reduction into their products, processes, platforms, and customer journeys. When this effort reduction is systematically integrated across multiple stages of the customer journey, convenience moves beyond a supporting service attribute to become a strategic capability through which firms create consumer value and achieve competitive differentiation.

**C. Dimensions of Convenience Across the Customer Journey**

Convenience is not a single kind of consumer benefit; it can occur at various stages of the consumption process, depending on the amount of effort a consumer has to put into identifying, obtaining, using, and managing an offering. Although early research into service convenience proposed a multidimensional understanding (as presented in Figure 3) of the concept, subsequent studies have modified these dimensions to suit different situations, especially in the areas of retailing, e-commerce, and technology-enabled services. For example, research carried out in the organized food and grocery retailing sector in India confirmed the multidimensional character of service convenience, while further research on online shopping found search, order,

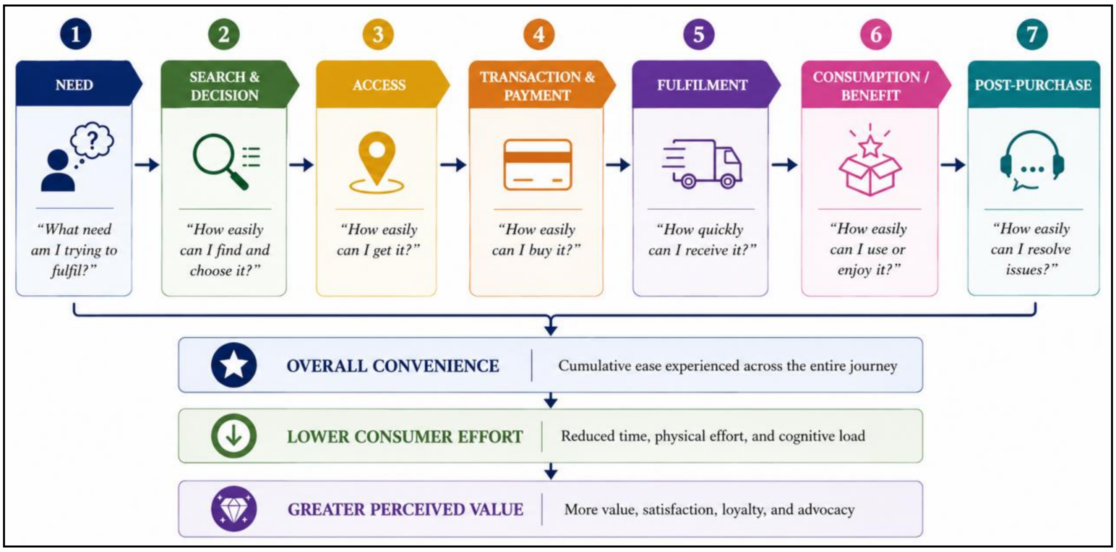


**Figure 4: The Convenience Journey: From Need to Value.**

Transaction, and post-purchase convenience to be separate dimensions (Aagja et al., 2011; Bhatt & Khokhar, 2020). This indicates that the dimensions of convenience are not necessarily fixed and can change as the way consumers interact with companies does, as presented in Figure 4.

### 1. Search and Decision Convenience

When consumers are trying to decide which product to buy and where to get it, they first come across convenience. The degree of search convenience refers to the amount of effort needed to find the relevant products or information, while decision convenience is about how easy it is to choose among the available options. According to Benoit et al. (2017), search convenience had the greatest impact on the overall perception of service convenience, followed by transaction convenience and finally decision convenience, thus showing how important it is to reduce the effort involved even before the purchase occurs.

Digital marketplaces have greatly changed this area. Features such as product filters, comparison tools, customer reviews, personalized rankings, and predictive search can reduce the number of options that consumers have to deal with. For example, a travel website that shows flights automatically based on the user's preferred departure times and price range can cut both the search and the evaluation effort. The convenience available at this stage therefore does not consist merely in offering information, but in making it easier to find and act on relevant information.

**2. Access Convenience**

The ease with which consumers can access a product or service is what is meant by access convenience. In the case of traditional retail, this was mainly a result of the position of the store, the hours it was open, and the physical closeness to the customer. Aagja et al. (2011), in their study of food and grocery retailing in India, showed that service convenience goes beyond simple proximity in location, thus highlighting the wider scope of the concept.

Modern business models have increasingly parted access to the product from access to the physical store. Services such as home delivery, click-and-collect, vending machines, and the provision of services via mobile devices enable consumers to get hold of products without having to go to the company's premises. For instance, online pharmacy platforms let customers order medications from their homes instead of having to go to a pharmacy. Although the product itself may be the same, the amount of effort needed to access it is greatly changed.

**3. Transaction Convenience**

Even once a product that they want has been identified, consumers still have to go ahead with the transaction. Transaction convenience means how easy it is to make the purchase, covering both the number of steps and the complexity of these steps. Research carried out in the field of online retailing has found that order convenience and transaction convenience are separate elements of the digital shopping experience (Bhatt & Khokhar, 2020).

The contemporary transaction environment shows the way in which companies compete by reducing the number of steps in their processes. Thanks to UPI payments, saved credentials, biometric authentication, digital wallets, and buy-now and pay-later options a transaction which used to involve handling cash, standing in physical queues, and manual verification can now be reduced to just a few digital interactions. Convenience is thus achieved not by changing the product but by redesigning the transaction so that it requires fewer actions from the consumer.

### 4. Fulfillment and Time Convenience

Time has always played an essential role in convenience, but its importance has grown as consumers increasingly expect rapid fulfillment. Benoit et al. (2017) link this increasing demand for convenience to time pressure, showing that consumers under time constraints value convenient services more.

This trend is especially noticeable in modern retailing, where the speed of fulfillment has become part of a company's value proposition. Services like food delivery, same-day shopping, and quick commerce compete on how well they shorten the time interval between the purchase of a product and its consumption. The key takeaway is that time is no longer just a resource saved through convenience; it can serve as a way for companies to differentiate themselves from otherwise similar offerings, and thus lead to competitive advantage.

### 5. Post-Purchase Convenience

Convenience also goes beyond simply completing a transaction. Consumers often need to track orders, modify bookings, return items, request refunds, or get assistance after making a purchase. Bhatt and Khokhar (2020) identified post-purchase convenience as a separate aspect of online shopping convenience, showing that how consumer's evaluation of convenience continues even after they have purchased something.

This dimension becomes especially significant in digital commerce. What seems like a simple convenient purchase can become inconvenient if the post-purchase processes followed are too complicated. An e-commerce site might offer an easy interface to buy something but require customers to go through several steps to return it. This creates convenience at one stage but adds difficulty at another. Therefore, convenience should be evaluated over the entire buying process, not just based on how easy it is to make a purchase.

### 6. Convenience as a Journey-Level Construct

The literature suggests that convenience is best understood as a journey-level phenomenon. Different types of convenience matter at different points (as summarized in Table 2), and their importance can change based on the situation and the consumer's traits. For instance, research in Indian commercial banking established that service convenience influences customer satisfaction, which consequently contributes to customer loyalty, with decision convenience showing a particularly strong effect on satisfaction (Kaura, 2013). Similarly, research on Indian e-retailing found that access, search, and order convenience significantly influence customer satisfaction, while evaluation and logistics/reverse-logistics convenience did not show significant effects, highlighting that different dimensions of convenience may not contribute equally to consumer responses (Shamsi et al., 2023).

**Table 2: Dimensions of Convenience and Consumer Effort Reduction.**

| DIMENSION | CONSUMER EFFORT REDUCED | ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE |
|---|---|---|
| Temporal | Waiting and time expenditure | Blinkit/Instamart reducing delivery time to minutes |
| Physical | Travel and physical exertion | Doorstep grocery delivery |
| Search | Time and effort spent locating alternatives | Product filters and personalised search |
| Cognitive | Decision-making complexity | Recommendations based on previous purchases |
| Transactional | Steps required to complete a purchase | One-click checkout and digital wallets |
| Post-purchase | Effort required after purchase | App-based returns and automated refunds |

This has significant implications for modern marketing. A company does not necessarily create a convenient experience by improving just a single touchpoint. A consumer might find it easy to discover a product but difficult to pay, or checkout easy but delivery slow, or delivery fast but returns challenging. Convenience is therefore cumulative: easing one step can be offset by complications in another. The strategic challenge for companies thus is to design a process that minimizes effort across multiple steps instead of just focusing on optimizing convenience in isolation.

### D. Why Consumers Value Convenience: Time, Effort and Perceived

The value that consumers place on convenience is closely tied to the resources they need to spend when shopping. Time is especially important because, unlike money, once it's spent, it can't be recovered. Research on how consumers view time scarcity shows that people who feel they have less time available are more inclined to look for products and services that save them time and effort (Jabs & Devine, 2006; Reimers & Clulow, 2009). For instance, Reimers and Clulow (2009) found that time convenience significantly affects shopping behavior and suggested that stores can help consumers "buy" time through proximity, operating for longer hours, and offering one-stop shopping.

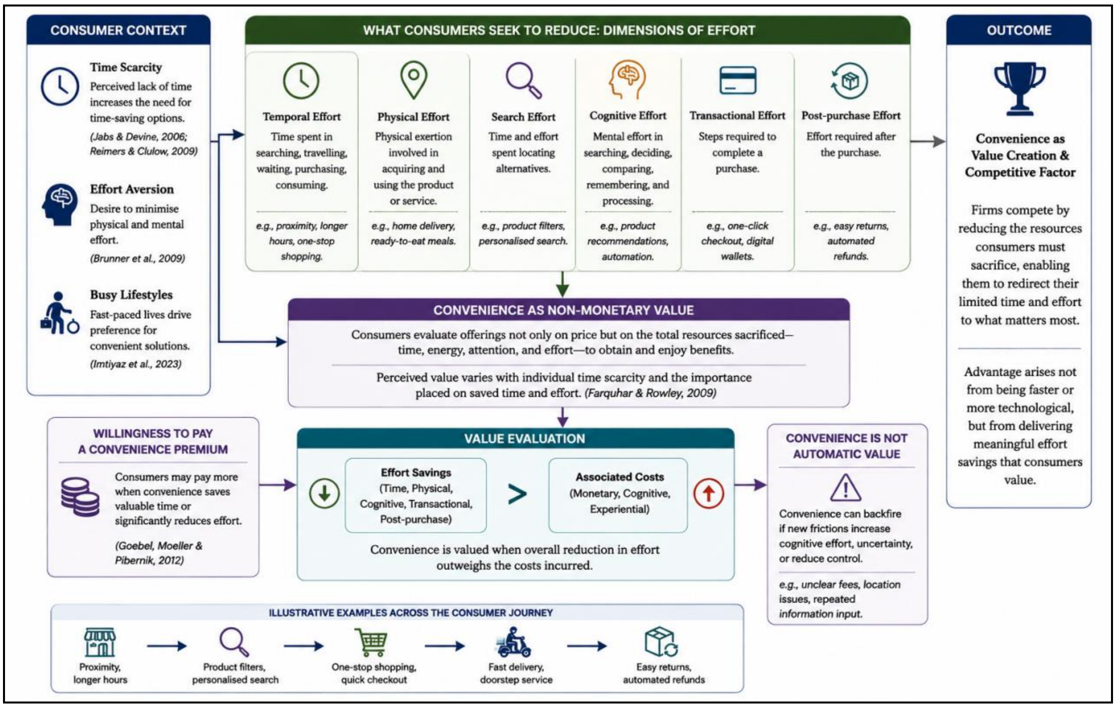


**Figure 5: Consumer Effort Reduction and Perceived Value of Convenience.**

Convenience is not however, just about saving time. Consumers also seek to minimize physical and mental effort. Research on convenience consumption indicates that reduced physical and cognitive effort can influence consumers' choices alongside time savings (Brunner et al., 2009). This becomes particularly clear in daily choices, where people might pick a ready-to-eat meal instead of cooking using the basic ingredients, or use an online service rather than doing the things physically. Studies in emerging markets show that time scarcity, a disinterest in physical and mental effort, and busy lifestyles can drive consumers to purchase convenience foods (Imtiyaz et al., 2023).

Thus, we can understand convenience as a type of non-monetary value. Consumers don't make a judgement of an offering based solely on its price; they also think about the time, energy, attention, and effort needed to obtain and enjoy its benefits. Farquhar and Rowley (2009) note that consumers view time scarcity differently and value their time to varying degrees. A consumer with less time may see a service that simplifies a routine task as much more valuable than someone who has more time available.

This helps explain why customers might sometimes pay a premium for convenience. When a service saves them time or significantly reduces their effort, the added cost can be viewed as the price of those saved resources. For an instance, Goebel, Moeller, and Pibernik (2012) studied consumers' willingness to pay for time-saving parcel delivery and found that delivery options that enhance convenience have a measurable revenue potential. Similar research on mobile payments has shown that perceived convenience can function as a mediating variable influencing the relationship between payment technology and how willing consumers are to pay.

However, convenience does not automatically mean higher value (as presented in Figure 5). Consumers weigh the savings in effort against any costs that may arise elsewhere during the experience. A food delivery app might promise fast delivery but can still be seen as inconvenient if customers struggle to pinpoint their location, face unclear fees, or repeatedly input information. Likewise, a highly automated service could cut down on physical effort but might increase mental effort or make consumers feel less in control. Convenience holds value when the overall decrease in effort is greater than any costs associated with obtaining it, whether those costs are monetary, cognitive, or experiential.

This viewpoint lays the groundwork for understanding convenience as a competitive factor. Consumers do not automatically pay more just because an offering is quicker or more technology-driven; they may pay more because it lets them redirect their limited time and effort to things they find more worthwhile. Therefore, convenience becomes a form of value creation where companies compete not just by offering products or services, but also by lowering the resources consumers need to give up to acquire them.

### E. Convenience as a Source of Competitive Advantage

As convenience becomes more common throughout the customer journey, it shifts from being just a service feature to a key competitive factor (as presented in Figure 6). In markets where products with similar functional characteristics are offered, the ease, speed, and effort involved in getting those products can distinguish one company from another. Research supports this idea. Sen et al. (2023) found that service convenience affects customer loyalty and spending through perceived service quality and perceived value. This shows that convenience can lead to significant competitive results. Likewise, Aagja et al. (2011) discovered meaningful links between service convenience, satisfaction, and behavior in India's organized food and grocery retail.

The importance of convenience becomes clear when companies change how an existing product reaches consumers. Consider banking services: the underlying function of transferring money, checking an account balance, or paying a bill remains largely unchanged, yet mobile banking and digital payment platforms have substantially reduced the effort required to perform these activities. Consumers who previously needed to visit a branch, complete physical forms, or wait for assistance can now perform routine transactions from their smartphones within seconds. The service itself has not fundamentally changed; rather, the process through which consumers obtain its value has been simplified. Convenience therefore becomes a source of differentiation even when competing firms provide broadly comparable core services. (Kaura, 2013)

This represents a significant change: companies can compete by altering the consumption process even if the product itself remains the same. In the banking example used in the last paragraph, a bank doesn't need to change how a savings account works to make it more convenient. Mobile banking can remove the need to go to a branch for regular tasks. Similarly, a quick commerce platform doesn't have to offer a broader product range to improve the shopping experience. Consider Blinkit's dark stores, they offer 1000 most frequently purchased products in total but with better search options, recommendations, and checkout processes can make finding and buying products easier. Recent studies on Indian quick commerce identify delivery service and operational improvements as crucial for gaining a competitive edge in this area.

This competitive logic is clear in how companies change access to everyday services. For example, Netflix changed how we consume entertainment. It removed the need to visit a physical store or manage physical media. Similarly, Spotify made it easier to find and access individual songs by offering large music libraries on a searchable digital platform. In both instances, the basic benefit—watching a film or listening to music—was not new; instead, the effort needed to enjoy that benefit was greatly reduced. These examples show how companies can stand out by changing how consumers experience an existing benefit instead of just changing the product itself.

Convenience becomes even more powerful when it is built into the business model. For instance, Amazon's one-click purchasing cut down the steps needed to complete an online order. Subscription models like Amazon Subscribe & Save lessen the need to routinely search for and reorder frequently bought items. Likewise, food-delivery platforms combine restaurant discovery, ordering, payment, tracking, and delivery into one interface. These models show that convenience can arise from mixing multiple activities that used to be done separately. The competitive focus then shifts from merely providing a product or service to making the entire process of obtaining it easier.

This creates an important difference between offering convenience as just a feature and competing with it as a strategy. A retailer might add home delivery as a service, but a company can take it further by designing its inventory, technology, logistics, payment systems, and customer support around reducing consumer effort.

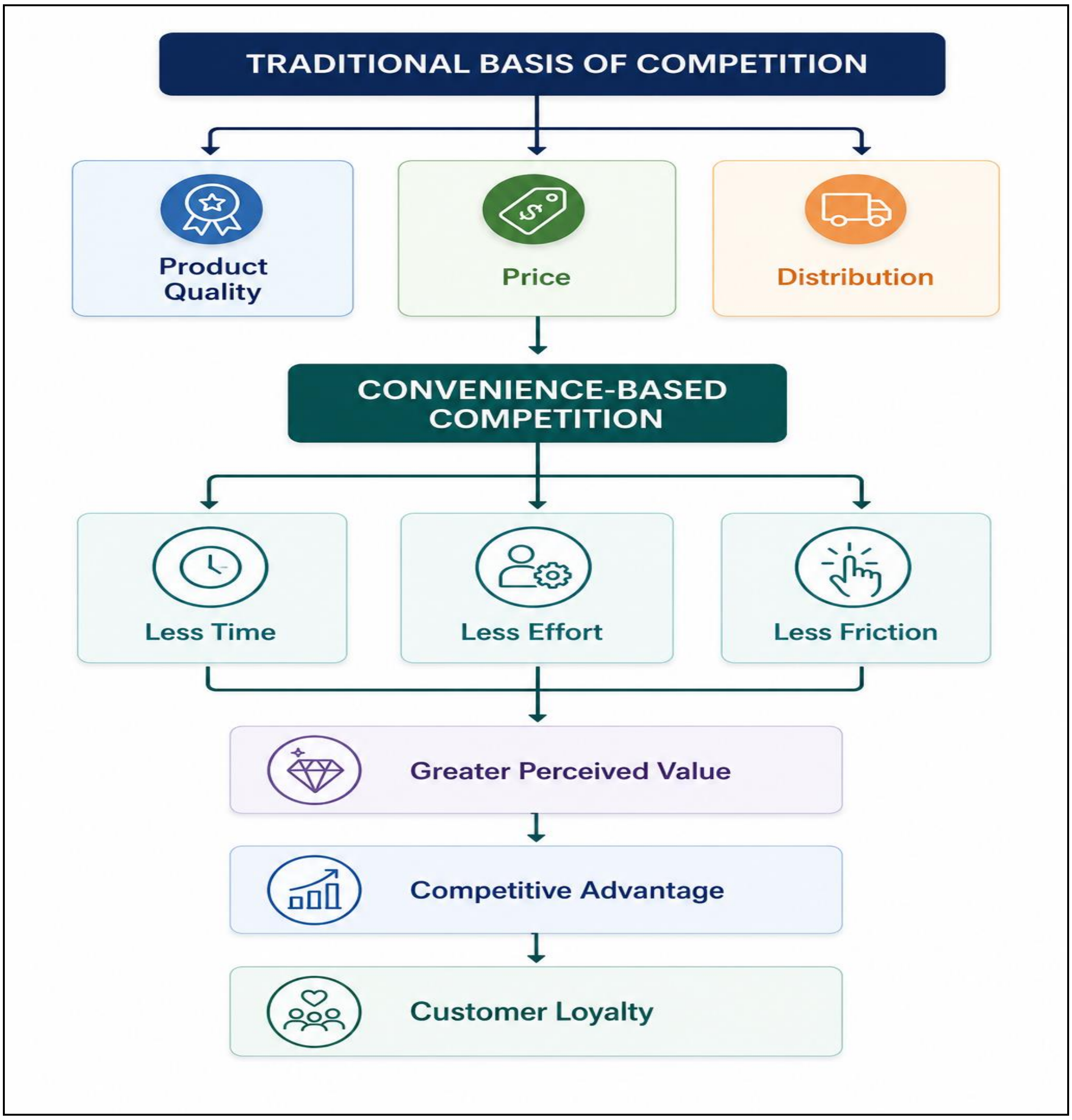


**Figure 6: Convenience as a Source of Competitive Advantage & Customer Loyalty.**

Research on retail convenience indicates that various aspects of convenience can affect customer responses in different ways. This suggests that companies should pinpoint which types of effort matter most in their specific market rather than viewing convenience as a onesize-fits-all term (Aagja et al., 2011; Shamsi et al., 2023). For instance, a customer may prioritize search convenience more in a large online marketplace, while fulfillment speed may be more crucial for urgent purchases like medicines.

However, the competitive value of convenience does not mean that more convenience is always better. Cutting down one type of effort could create another problem. A highly automated service may reduce physical effort but increase mental complexity. Extremely fast fulfillment might lead to higher prices or less product availability. Also, consumers may prefer having control over a process instead of having every decision made for them. As for an example, an autonomous driving or autopilot feature may reduce the physical and cognitive effort required to drive a vehicle, yet a driver who enjoys the experience and control of driving may perceive the same feature as unnecessary or even inconvenient. Convenience thus becomes valuable when the overall reduction in consumer effort is significant compared to the monetary, mental, and experiential costs involved. This makes convenience reliant on context rather than an absolute measure of service quality.

Moreover, individual features of convenience can be imitated quite easily. Free delivery, simplified checkout, or digital payment options can quickly become the industry standards once competitors adopt them. The more lasting advantage lies in integrating convenience throughout the customer journey. A company that combines easy discovery, dependable availability, seamless payment, quick fulfillment, and smooth post-purchase support creates a system of convenience that is harder to replicate than any single feature. In this way, convenience can become part of the organization's capabilities and processes rather than just a marketing gimmick.

***Table 3: Convenience: From Feature to Strategy.***

| Convenience as a Feature | Convenience as a Strategy |
|---|---|
| Home Delivery | Business model built around Delivery |
| Digital Payments | Frictionless transaction ecosystem |
| Product Recommendations | Personalized shopping journey |
| Fast Deliveries | Fulfilment capability built around speed |
| Easy Returns | End-to-end post-purchase experience |
| Extended Store Hours | 24/7 Always-accessible marketplace |

Ultimately, convenience can be seen as a strategic configuration of resources, technologies, processes, and customer interactions designed to reduce friction throughout consumption. Its competitive importance comes when this reduction in effort becomes a part of the company's value proposition (as presented in Table 3) and is experienced consistently by consumers. The competition begins to shift from what companies provide to how effortlessly consumers can obtain and enjoy what they provide. In today's markets, where product differences can often be quickly replicated, making consumption simpler, faster, and less demanding can create a significant source of competitive advantage.

**F. The Convenience Premium: Will Consumers Always Pay More for Less Effort?**

If convenience adds value by cutting down the time and effort needed for a marketplace activity, a key question (as presented in Figure 7) arises: are consumers always ready to pay for that reduced effort? Research suggests that some consumers are, but their willingness to pay for convenience differs among individuals and is neither universal nor constant. Goebel, Moeller, and Pibernik (2012) found that consumers were willing to pay for time-based parcel delivery. The appeal of this service varied based on factors like whether consumers were home and their working hours. Their study shows that saving time and having flexible scheduling can hold real economic value beyond just the product or delivery service.

The rise of premium fulfillment options illustrates this idea well. Consumers may opt for a paid same-day delivery service even when a free standard option is available if they find enough value in receiving the product sooner. Similarly, a person ordering food might agree to a delivery fee because it saves them the trip to a restaurant, the wait for a table, or cooking the meal themselves. Here, the extra cost isn't necessarily for a better product; it partly represents a payment for saved time, avoided effort, and gained convenience. Research on online food delivery in India also shows that consumers place a monetary value on service features like convenience and delivery time, though the significance of these features varies based on the order characteristics (Singh et al., 2023).

However, just because there is a convenience premium doesn't mean consumers will always pay more when a service becomes quicker or easier. Recent studies on e-commerce delivery timing highlight this point. Oyama et al. (2024) found significant differences in consumers' willingness to pay for quicker delivery, with many placing little monetary value on shorter delivery times. The value of faster delivery also differed based on elements like product type, price, and how often a consumer shops. This means that convenience has real economic value only when the time or effort saved is significant to the particular consumer and their specific situation.

A clear example comes from the online gifting market. Platforms like Ferns N Petals (FNP) and IGP offer midnight delivery of cakes and gifts. This allows consumers to get items at specific times when regular stores might be closed. A person buying a cake for a midnight birthday celebration may pay a higher delivery fee or choose a more expensive delivery option, even if similar cakes are available at lower prices during normal hours. This extra payment isn't necessarily for a better cake; it reflects the value connected to precise timing, reduced search and travel effort, and meeting a time-sensitive need. In these cases, consumers are paying more for convenience because the benefit of receiving the item when they want it outweighs the additional cost.

Context is especially important when considering urgency. A consumer who forgot an ingredient for dinner may value fast delivery and be willing to pay for a 10–20 minute delivery much more than someone buying extra detergent or tissues for next week. Likewise, a busy consumer may prioritize scheduled delivery over someone who is home all day. Goebel et al. (2012) showed that working hours and being home were crucial factors in how appealing time-based delivery services were, reinforcing that the value of convenience varies based on consumers' situations.

This also explains why different consumers may value convenience differently. Amorim et al. (2024), in their study of attended home delivery, found that consumers appreciated not only delivery speed but also accuracy and the choice of delivery times, with large differences in willingness to pay among customers. Their findings show that convenience is about more than just being faster; it can also mean having control over when and how a service is delivered. This point supports the broader argument of this review. It shows that convenience can come from reducing uncertainty and improving control, not just from cutting down the time it takes.

The same idea applies to everyday purchases. A consumer buying pre-cut vegetables, ready-to-eat meals, or subscription-based household products might pay more than they would for regular options because they value the effort saved. Convenience can be seen as a type of non-monetary value exchange: consumers give extra money in return for saving time, easing physical or mental effort, or avoiding hassle with repetitive tasks. The resulting extra cost isn't necessarily linked to the product itself but to how the product is delivered and experienced.

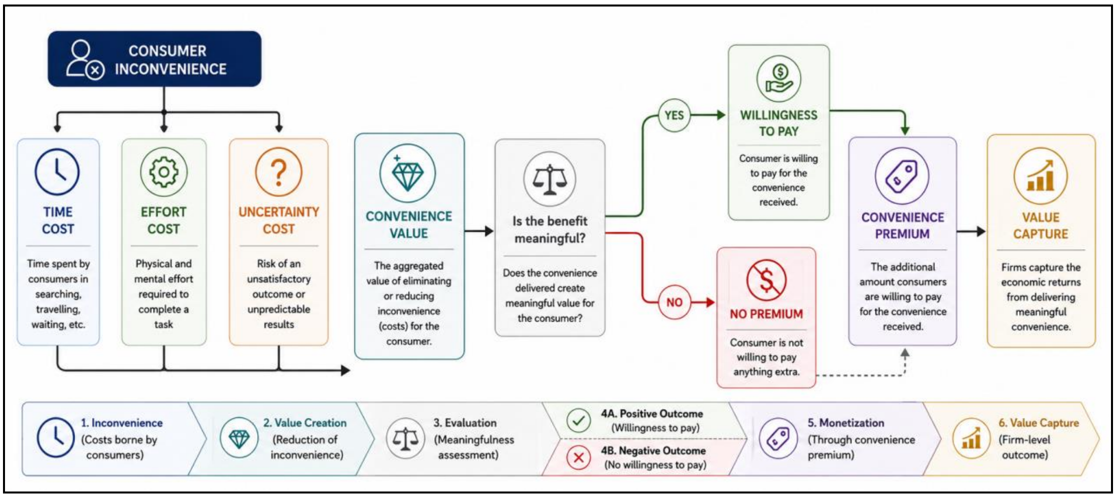


***Figure 7: From Consumer Inconvenience to Value Capture: The Convenience Value Chain***

Nonetheless, there is an important boundary to this argument. Consumers judge convenience alongside price, quality, reliability, control, and other sources of value. A faster delivery service might not warrant additional charges if the consumer doesn't see the saved time as important. Similarly, a very convenient service may lose its appeal if the added fee seems too high compared to the benefit. So, the convenience premium is better understood as a trade-off in value than a guarantee of willingness to pay. Recent findings from delivery research underscore this point by revealing significant variations in how consumers value quicker and more precisely timed deliveries.

This distinction carries important lessons for marketers. Instead of presuming that each consumers will simply pay more for added convenience, companies should identify the specific inconveniences consumers are willing to pay to remove. For some, it may be waiting time; for others, it could be travel, searching, preparing, uncertainty, or the need to repeat a task. Thus, the strategic opportunity lies in matching the type of convenience offered with the effort consumers consider most burdensome, rather than merely in charging for convenience.

The convenience premium strengthens the main idea of this review. Convenience can provide a competitive edge not just by attracting customers or enhancing satisfaction but also by creating economic value that companies can capture. When consumers view the time, effort, or uncertainty saved through a service as worth more than the extra price, convenience becomes a source of revenue. However, research warns against viewing convenience as an inherently valuable attribute; its financial worth depends on context, consumers' situations, the kind of effort eliminated, and the balance between convenience and price.

**G. Convenience Versus Other Sources of Consumer Value**

Consumer value is rarely defined by just one attribute. Consumers assess products based on a mix of functional, economic, experiential, social, and relational aspects, such as price, quality, convenience, experience, personalization, status, sustainability, and trust (Sheth, Newman, & Gross, 1991; Holbrook, 1999). Within this broader value framework (as presented in Fgure 8), convenience stands out because it primarily relates to the effort required from consumers to achieve a desired result. A product may create value by offering superior quality, a lower price, or a memorable experience, while another may deliver value by allowing consumers to reach a similar result with significantly less effort.

The link between price and convenience is particularly significant. Traditional economic value often connects to receiving a desired benefit at a lower cost. In contrast, convenience reduces non-monetary costs related to consumption, especially time and effort (Berry et al., 2002). These two sources of value can work together. A consumer might choose a slightly pricier service if the extra cost makes up for the time and effort saved. This explains why some consumers are willing to pay more for express delivery, doorstep services, priority access, or late-night options. Convenience does not make price irrelevant; it changes the balance consumers are ready to strike between spending money and putting in effort.

The relationship with quality differs somewhat. Consumers may be willing to give up some convenience if the differences in product quality are significant. A consumer might travel further, wait longer, or do more research if they feel the quality of the final product justifies the extra effort. On the other hand, if competing products are viewed as similar in quality, convenience may play a larger role in their decision-making. This indicates that convenience may be especially influential in mature or highly competitive markets, where the functional differences between competing products are minor. In such situations, making it easier to obtain a comparable product can provide firms with an additional basis for differentiation.

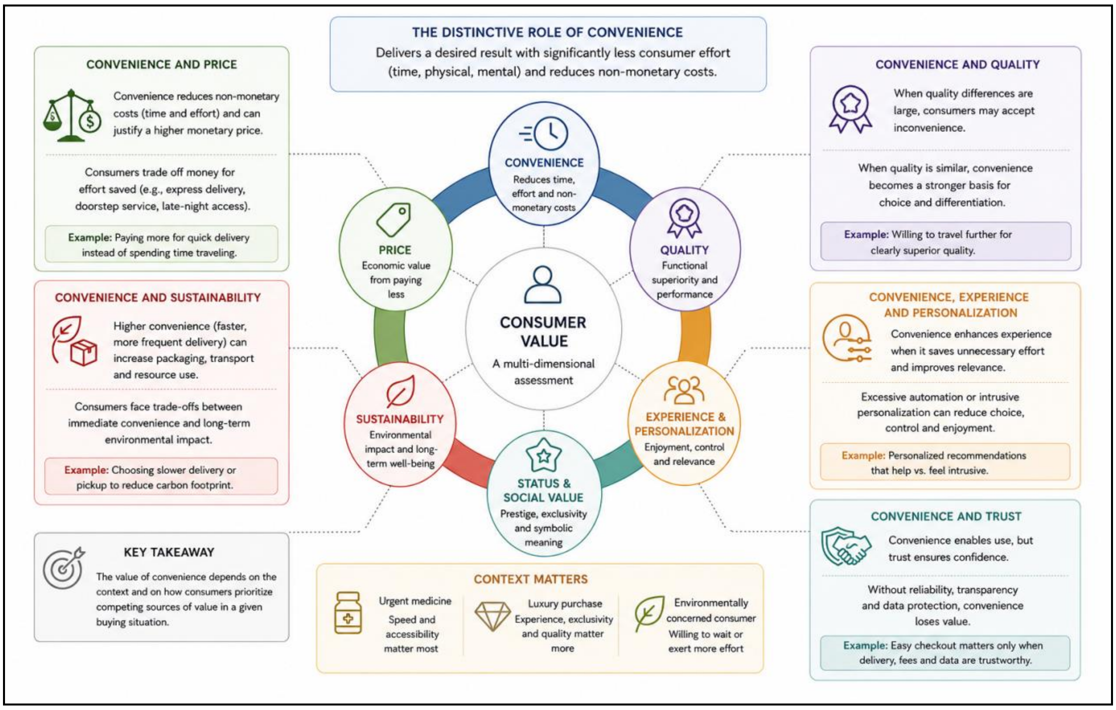


***Figure 8: Convenience in the Multidimensional Consumer Value Framework.***

Convenience also interacts with experience and personalization. A well-designed service may save effort, but consumers do not always look for the quickest route to an outcome. Browsing in a physical bookstore, cooking a meal, or customizing a product can require effort that consumers enjoy. Excessive automation can limit opportunities for choice and control. Personalization can enhance convenience when it helps consumers find relevant options faster, but it may backfire if consumers see recommendations as intrusive or overly limiting. Therefore, the value of convenience partly depends on whether the removed effort is viewed as unnecessary hassle or meaningful involvement.

The connection between convenience and status shows that consumer value is not only functional. Some consumers intentionally choose less convenient options because exclusivity, prestige, craftsmanship, or symbolic value are crucial parts of their experience (Holbrook, 1999). A luxury product that requires an appointment, physical visit, or waiting period might be more appealing because it includes effort and exclusivity. In these cases, removing every hassle could even lessen the value offered. Convenience is not always better than effort; its worth hinges on what the consumer seeks beyond just the functional outcome.

The tension becomes even clearer when considering convenience and sustainability together. Quicker and more frequent delivery can offer significant convenience, but it may also lead to more packaging, transportation, and fulfillment activities. Research on sustainable consumption indicates that consumers often face trade-offs between immediate functional benefits and larger environmental issues (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). Therefore, what seems most convenient for an individual consumer may not always align with the most sustainable choice for society as a whole. This outlines an important limit on the convenience proposition: reducing consumer effort in one place can sometimes increase resource usage elsewhere in the system.

Trust is another important source of consumer value. Convenience can simplify transactions, but consumers still need to believe that the company will deliver what it promises. A highly convenient platform with unreliable delivery, hidden fees, poor product quality, or weak data protection may eventually be seen as less valuable. Especially in digital spaces, convenience and trust often go hand in hand: easier processes encourage use, while trust diminishes perceived risks when allowing companies to automate or manage parts of the buying process. Thus, convenience cannot fully compensate for a lack of reliability or trustworthiness.

These relationships indicate that convenience should not be seen as an isolated factor in determining consumer value. Instead, its significance depends on how much weight consumers assign to different sources of value in a specific buying situation. For example, a consumer ordering an urgently required medicine may prioritize speed and accessibility, while another consumer buying a luxury item may focus more on experience, exclusivity, and quality. Similarly, a consumer concerned with sustainability may be willing to wait longer or put in more effort in exchange for a lower environmental impact.

### H. The Dark Side of the Convenience Economy

The growing strategic emphasis on convenience doesn't mean that more convenience always leads to more value (as presented in Figure 9). While companies aim to make the customer journey smoother, this can also change influence purchasing behaviour, shift effort throughout the value chain, increase resource requirements, and raise consumer expectations. Therefore, convenience can create significant value while also leading to effects that aren't immediately obvious during the consumption experience (Berry, Seiders, & Grewal, 2002).

One potential consequence is impulsive buying and excessive consumption. Digital platforms have made it easier to go from discovering a product to making a purchase through personalized suggestions, easy checkouts, saved payment information, and quick delivery. Research shows that online convenience can influence consumers' cognitive and affective responses associated with impulsive buying (Lina, Hou, & Ali, 2022). Thus, the same reduction in friction that improves the purchase experience for firms and consumers may also reduce deliberation leading to unplanned purchases.

Convenience can also result in effort displacement rather than complete removal of effort. Home delivery eliminates the need for consumers to travel to stores, but transportation still occurs within the company's logistics system. Similarly, effortless returns lessen consumer effort but create additional reverse-logistics requirements. So, the convenience that consumers perceive shouldn't be automatically equated with system-wide efficiency (Berry et al., 2002).

This conflict is especially evident in quick-commerce. Fast delivery has made delivery time an important competitive dimension of convenience, but shorter delivery times can also increase the strain on last-mile operations. Sarkar (2024) points out the environmental issues linked to quick-commerce, such as delivery frequency, transportation, and greenhouse gas emissions, while also discussing the potential of electric vehicles and dark-store models to mitigate some of these impacts. In the same way, Haneefa and Singh (2025) address sustainability issues in India's quick-commerce sector, focusing on emissions and packaging effects. The challenge, therefore, is not that fast delivery is inherently harmful to the environment, but that the extra resources required to provide greater speed must be weighed against the additional value it delivers to the consumers.

The marginal value of convenience does not remains constant. The more time-sensitive the need, the more valuable it is to cut waiting time. Companies competing on convenience must therefore understand that its not merely about how much friction can they remove, but which friction consumers actually consider important. For an instance, a traveller who discovers that they have forgotten a phone charger just before an early-morning departure may place far greater value on immediate delivery than a consumer purchasing a replacement charger well in advance.

Convenience can sometimes also clash with consumer autonomy and control. Many consumers don't want every part of their experience to require minimal effort. Activities like browsing, comparing options, customizing products, or personally making decisions are all part of the consumption experience itself. Too much automation might reduce cognitive effort but also limit perceived choice. The strategic goal should apparently be to remove unwanted friction rather than effort indiscriminately.

Another concern is that convenience increasingly relies on technology, data, and trust. Smooth payments, personalized suggestions, location-based services, and automated customer support tend to simplify processes, but they also require consumers to trust the company's technology and information systems. A frictionless process that raises concerns about privacy, payment security, reliability, or data usage may ultimately undermine the convenience it aims to create. Therefore, convenience cannot be viewed independently of trust and perceived risks.

Perhaps the most important strategic consequence is expectation escalation. Once consumers become accustomed to fast delivery, easy payments, simple returns, and constant availability, previously acceptable levels of effort may seem to be inconvenient. Because convenience spans multiple stages of consumption process (Berry et al., 2002; Seiders et al., 2007), improvements introduced at one stage can significantly raise expectations for the entire customer journey. As a result, a convenience feature which might initially begin as a competitive advantage, eventually becomes a standard expectation. Quick-commerce exemplifies this shift: reducing delivery times from hours to minutes can initially set a platform apart, but if competitors match that speed, fast delivery becomes expected rather than a unique selling point. Companies must then find and eliminate further sources of friction. What is seen as convenient today might become the basic requirement tomorrow.

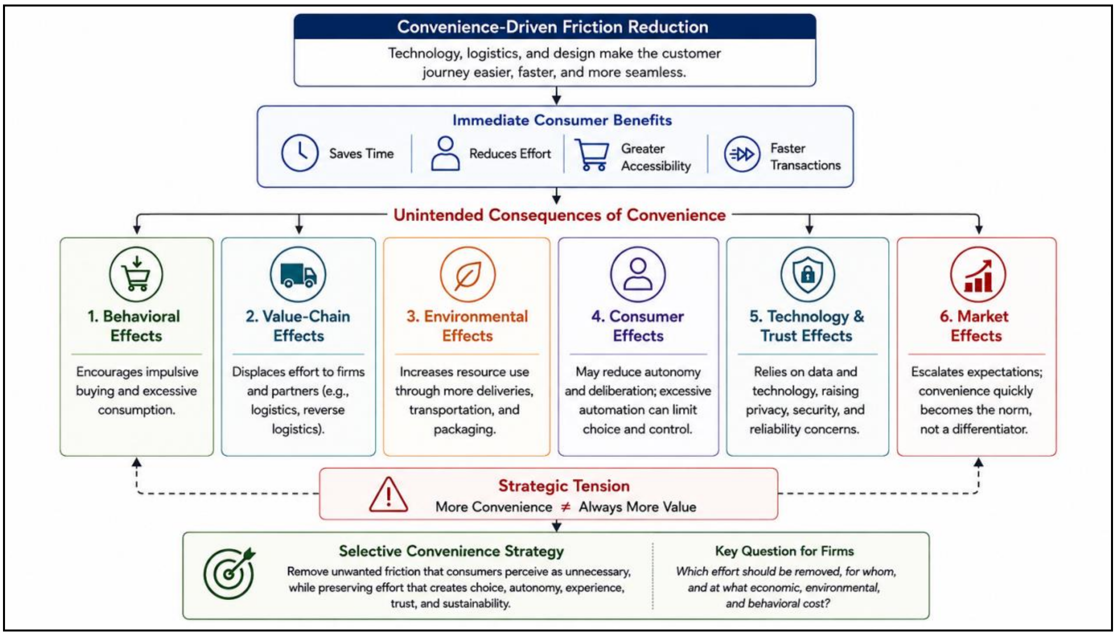


***Figure 9: The Dark Side of the Convenience Economy: Unintended Consequences of Friction Reduction.***

The dark side of convenience, thus, doesn't lies in convenience itself but the unchecked pursuit of it. More convenience can enhance the customer experience and yield benefits for the business firm, but it can also encourage impulsive buying, shift effort across the value chain, heighten environmental pressures, limit consumer control, and consistently raise expectations. Firms should therefore not only consider how much convenience they can provide but also contemplate which efforts to remove, for whom, and at what economic, environmental, and behavioral cost.

Eventually, convenience should be viewed as a selective strategic objective rather than something to be maximized endlessly. The biggest competitive edge may emerge when firms eliminate friction that consumers genuinely see as unnecessary while keeping the effort that adds to choice, autonomy, experience, trust, or sustainability. This tension sets the stage for the next section: the Convenience Paradox, where reducing friction can lead to increased expectations and lesser tolerance for inconvenience.

**I. The Convenience Paradox**

As indicated in the previous discussion, convenience can lead to a significant competitive advantage, but this advantage does not remains static. If companies increasingly decrease the time, effort, or complexity needed by consumers in the process of using a product, consumers will eventually would eventually integrate this improved experience into their future expectations. It is for this reason that a feature which at first seems exceptional may end up becoming a basic expectation. The paradox thus lies in the fact that achieving convenience at the same time lowers consumers' tolerance for inconvenience.

This situation is evident in the banking industry. In the past, people had to go to a branch, fill out forms and then wait for help from staff. Internet and mobile banking later allowed consumers to carry out many of these tasks on their own and at any time. Research into technology-based self-service has demonstrated that convenience is a key factor in consumers' assessment of such services (Dabholkar, 1996; Lin & Hsieh, 2011). When customers get used to checking their balances, transferring money or making payments via a mobile interface, asking them to visit a branch for a simple task may no longer just seem normal; it might be seen as unnecessary friction.

A similar transition is evident in the field of air travel. Instead of carrying out various tasks that used to be done at airport counters, customers are now carrying them out on their mobile devices through online check-in and digital boarding. A recent study into the adoption of airline self-service systems confirms the growing importance of online check-in as a technology-mediated form of service delivery (International Air Transport Association [IATA], 2024). Evidence from the industry also indicates that consumers are becoming more inclined to use mobile methods for booking, check-in, digital identity, and other travel processes that are enabled by technology. When these processes become standard, the lack of digital alternatives can become a cause of customer dissatisfaction. Therefore, convenience does not just meet people's expectations; repeated experience of convenience can in fact change what consumers regard as a normal service experience.

The same mechanism is true for the way people consume entertainment. In the past, consumers used to plan their viewing around television schedules or bought physical media in order to watch programmes. With on-demand streaming, people have gained control over both when and where they consume content. A study looking at the adoption of OTT services in India found that convenience is one of the main factors affecting customers' decisions related to subscription (2021). After consumers have got used to being able to choose their content and watch it at their own preferred time, having to wait for a scheduled broadcast, seems rather inconvenient. It is therefore validated, that the competitive significance of convenience changes as the market becomes accustomed to it.

A similar trend is evident in the area of self-service retail. Features such as self-checkout, digital product information, and other self-service facilities enable consumers to carry out various tasks with only a small amount of employee involvement. Although these technologies can enhance convenience and the experience regarding waiting times, research also indicates that their success relies on the quality of the technology and the overall customer experience (Dabholkar, 1996; Meuter et al., 2000; Weijters et al., 2007). After consumers become familiar with a seamless self-service process, a poorly designed interface or a checkout procedure that is unnecessarily long may seem excessively onerous. This is because the reference point has now shifted since the consumer has had the experience of a more convenient option.

The cycle (as presented in Figure 10) is important since the introduction and improvements of convenience features can have wide-ranging effects throughout a category. If one company brings in a much easier method of carrying out a particular activity, the competing firms may choose to copy the innovation, which causes the feature to become more widespread. Bitner, Ostrom, and Meuter (2002) point out that businesses are increasingly employing self-service technologies in order to redesign the way in which services are provided, and subsequent studies have shown that convenience is a key factor when consumers evaluate technology-enabled services. Once the feature has been widely adopted, it may stop being something that distinguishes the firm that pioneered it and instead become part of the standard level of service. The paradox can therefore be expressed as a **Self-Reinforcing Convenience Cycle**:


***Figure 10: The Convenience Cycle: A Self-Reinforcing Paradox.***

Yet this cycle does not mean that each further reduction in effort creates equivalent consumer value. The value of convenience varies according to the task, the situation, and the amount of effort being removed. For instance, getting rid of a ten-minute administrative procedure might be very valuable if the consumer is carrying out an urgent task, but much less significant when the activity is infrequent and has already been made simple. Just as research into self-service technologies has shown, consumers assess convenience together with other factors such as functionality, security, assurance, design, and customization, rather than looking at it on its own (Lin & Hsieh, 2011). Hence, companies cannot assume that making an experience faster or simpler will automatically lead to a proportional increase in perceived value. Thus a significant difference emerges between treating convenience as a means of differentiation and treating it as an expectation. A company can at first gain an advantage by removing a source of friction that its competitors have not dealt with. But when competitors replicate the improvement, consumers may start to see it as a basic requirement rather than as a distinctive benefit. Mobile banking, online check-in, digital self-service, and on-demand entertainment all demonstrate how features that originally amounted to innovation can end up becoming ordinary elements of the customer experience. Convenience thus has a dynamic competitive value in that its significance is in part determined by what consumers have already learned to expect from the market.

The paradox also poses a problem when it comes to allocating resources. It is not possible for companies to indefinitely maximize all aspects of convenience. Cutting back on effort at one stage may call for a large amount of investment even though it brings only a small extra value, while eliminating another source of friction might elicit a much greater response. For instance, research into self-service technologies shows that customers assess convenience along with functionality, security, assurance, enjoyment, and customization (Lin & Hsieh, 2011). The strategic issue is therefore not merely how the firm can make the process easier, but rather which kind of effort is most important to the consumer and leads to meaningful competitive differentiation?

The Convenience Paradox can consequently be stated as follows:

***"When companies decrease the amount of effort required by consumers, the improved experience that results can lead to higher expectations and a lower tolerance for future inconvenience, creating continuing pressure for further convenience."***

This view goes beyond the traditional conceptualization of convenience by considering it as a dynamic competitive phenomenon rather than static consumer attribute. Companies do not only look at the level of convenience that consumers experience today but also set the standard against which they will evaluate their experiences in the future. The strategic importance of convenience therefore does not comprises trying to increase ease indefinitely, but in continuously spotting and eliminating the most concerning sources of unwanted friction while refraining from making investments whose additional benefits are unlikely to warrant the costs incurred.

This forms the foundation of the framework that is being proposed in this review, which positions convenience as the connection between a firm's capabilities, the reduction in consumer effort, perceived value, behavioral outcomes, and competitive differentiation, while at the same time acknowledging that the consequently concurring improvements can subsequently reshape consumer expectations and alter the competitive value of convenience itself.

### J. Proposed Conceptual Framework: Convenience as a Source of Competitive Advantage

Building on the preceding discussion, the present review introduces a conceptual framework (as presented in Figure 11) in which convenience is seen as a mechanism by which companies convert the reductions in the amount of effort required by consumers into value for consumers and, eventually, into a basis for competitive differentiation. Previous studies have shown that convenience is a multidimensional construct comprising various kinds of time and effort expenditure during the consumption process (Berry, Seiders, & Grewal, 2002; Seiders et al., 2007). The framework put forward here goes beyond this view by linking these dimensions to their wider strategic implications for both consumers and firms.

The key element in the framework is the reduction of effort as perceived by consumers. Convenience becomes meaningful only when consumers believe that a particular activity in the marketplace involves less temporal, physical, cognitive, search, transactional, or post-purchase effort. These dimensions need not operate independently. One convenience intervention can at the same time reduce several kinds of effort. For instance, a personalized shopping interface can cut down on both search and cognitive effort, while digital payment can reduce transactional effort. This decrease in effort leads to an increase in perceived consumer value since consumers achieve their desired result having used fewer of their scarce resources, especially their time and effort (Berry et al., 2002).

The value that results can have an effect on a number of consumer outcomes, such as satisfaction, the intention to make a purchase, repurchase behaviour, loyalty, and willingness to pay. Previous studies have found links between service convenience and behavioral intentions (Seiders et al., 2007), and research conducted on online environments has also connected convenience with impulsive purchasing behaviour (Lina, Hou, & Ali, 2022). Convenience must therefore not be viewed as causing just one behavioral response; its effects may vary depending on the nature of the consumption task, the consumer's situation, and the kind of convenience offered.

At the firm level, these consumers' reactions can lead to higher customer retention, greater purchase frequency, an increased willingness to pay, easier customer acquisition, and a means of achieving competitive distinction. Convenience is especially valuable when the available alternatives are alike in both price and functional quality. When this is the case, the company which allows consumers to achieve their desired result with less effort can add value even without making any changes to the underlying product itself. This thus supports the broader argument made in this review that competition can increasingly take place not only on the basis of what firms offer but also on the basis of how easy it is for consumers to obtain and use what is offered.

The framework, however, includes a significant qualification in that increased convenience does not necessarily lead to greater value. The connection between reduced effort and consumer value may be influenced by contextual factors such as urgency, the complexity of the task, consumer preferences, trust, and the importance of control. Furthermore, the discussion on the dark side of convenience shows that convenience can result in trade-offs such as impulsive consumption, environmental costs, and effort displacement. For these reasons, the framework regards convenience as a mechanism for generating value rather than as an inherently positive outcome.

The framework also includes the Convenience Paradox as a means of providing feedback (as presented in Figure 12). If a company succeeds in lowering the amount of effort consumers have to put in, the experience gained can lead to higher expectations and a lower tolerance for friction in subsequent purchases. The very factor which at first creates a distinction between firms may later become a standard expectation in the market. As a result, the competitive edge obtained through convenience is potentially dynamic since companies have to constantly identify meaningful sources of friction rather than assuming that one innovation aimed at convenience will give them a lasting advantage.

Accordingly, the proposed framework can be represented as:

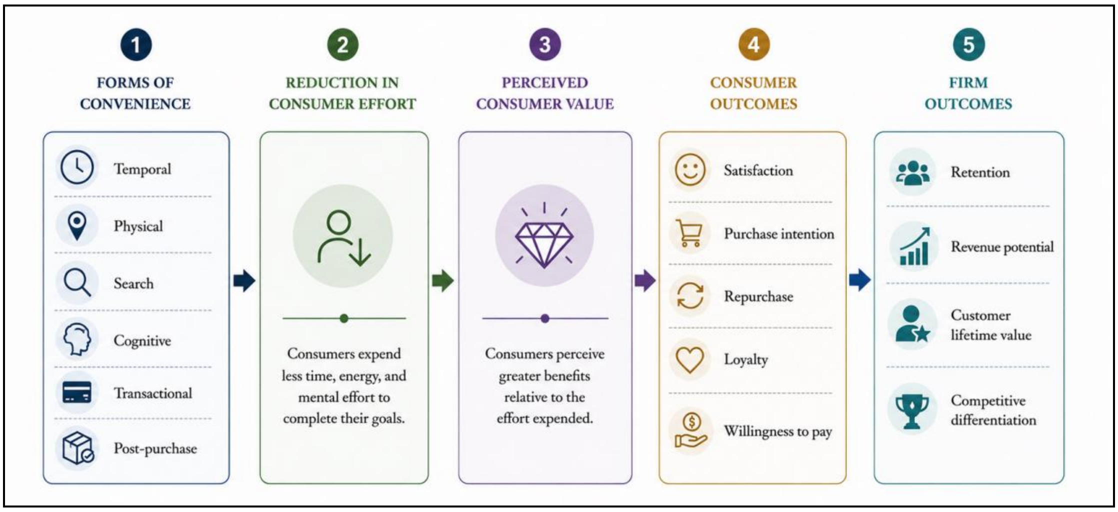


***Figure 11: A Conceptual Framework Linking Convenience to Consumer and Firm Outcomes***

Competitive Advantage with two important relationships operating around the framework:

- **Contextual factors → urgency, task characteristics, consumer preferences, trust, perceived control**
- **Dark-side trade-offs → impulsive consumption, environmental burden, effort displacement**

And a feedback loop:

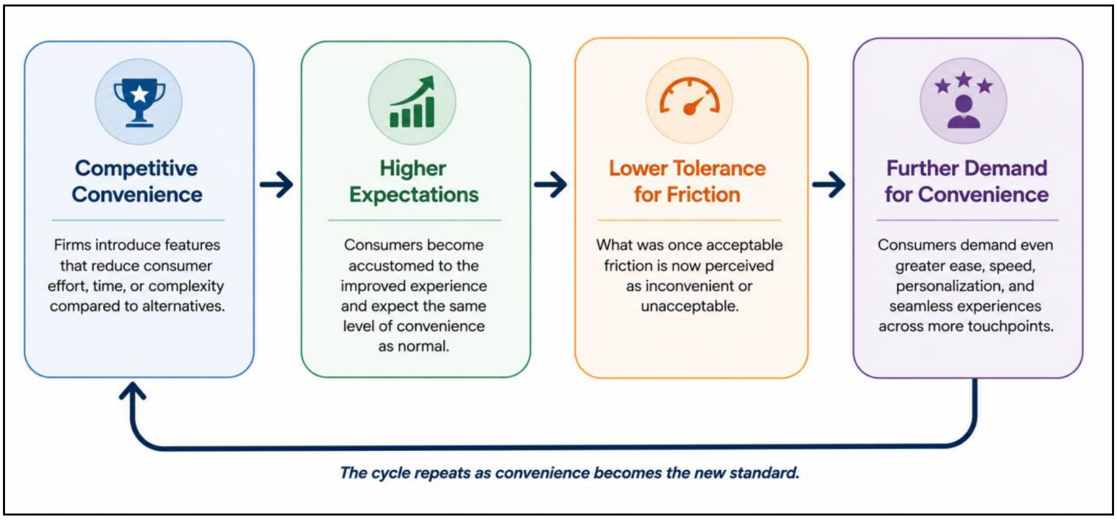


**Figure 12: A Self-Reinforcing Cycle of Consumer Expectations.**

Hence, the framework does not see convenience merely as a feature of a product or service; instead, it views convenience as a strategic pathway through which companies are able to reduce the effort required by consumers, generate perceived value, influence consumer behaviour, and may thereby secure competitive differentiation. At the same time, the framework acknowledges that this approach is neither linear nor universally positive, since its effectiveness varies according to the context, the kind of effort eliminated, the value that consumers place on that reduction, and the wider broader consequences of pursuing greater convenience.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The review states that convenience has changed from being seen mainly as a feature of items that are bought often to becoming a multidimensional, consumer-perceived reduction in the effort required throughout the customer journey (Copeland, 1923; Yale & Venkatesh, 1986; Berry et al., 2002). In the contemporary marketplace, this reduction in effort includes the temporal, physical, search, cognitive, transactional and post-purchase dimensions.

A key conclusion is that convenience generates value whenever the effort which is removed is meaningful to the consumer within a given context, since this can affect consumer outcomes such as satisfaction, repurchase intentions, loyalty, and willingness to pay, and at the same time offers firms the possibility of differentiation (Seiders et al., 2007). The review, however, also points out that convenience is not universally advantageous. Impulsive consumption, environmental costs, effort displacement, and the reduction of consumer control all demonstrate that increased convenience can involve significant trade-offs.

The review also points out what has been called the Convenience Paradox, according to which successfully lowering the amount of effort required by consumers can raise expectations and thus reduce their tolerance for friction. As a result, a convenience feature might at first provide a means of differentiation, but eventually comes to be regarded as a basic expectation in the market. The framework suggested therefore sees convenience as a strategic route:

**Effort Reduction → Consumer Value → Consumer Outcomes → Firm Outcomes → Competitive Differentiation**

The review as a whole concludes that the strategic value of convenience does not consist in making consumption effortless at all costs, but rather in eliminating unnecessary friction in a way that generates meaningful consumer value and at the same time remains economically, environmentally, and strategically sustainable.

**Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research**

The review is mainly conceptual and hence, does not carries out any empirical tests of the relationships proposed by the framework. The degree of importance attached to different convenience dimensions might also differ depending on the industry, the consumer group, the culture, and the situation in which consumption takes place. Research in the future could overcome these limitations by empirically testing the proposed relationships and evaluating how factors such as urgency, task complexity, consumer involvement, trust, and perceived control influence the value of convenience. Longitudinal research could also be carried out to investigate the presented Convenience Paradox and to test whether increasing exposure to frictionless experiences systematically leads to higher consumer expectations. Future studies might also examine the trade-offs between convenience and sustainability, autonomy, and responsible consumption, especially in digitally enabled and quick-commerce environments. Cross-industry and cross-cultural studies would further aid in establishing the generalizability of the proposed framework.

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