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MAKING BUSINESSES BETTER

Swipe, Scroll, Borrow: Mapping India's BNPL Inflection Point

A Deep Dive into India's BNPL Revolution

BRC Bytes
June 2025









Market Context

- Credit card penetration: ~6% in India vs. 65% in US
- 300M+ Indians remain credit-invisible (Experian/CIBIL)
- Formal credit still excludes low-income and informal workers
- India skipped plastic jumped from cash to UPI



Digital Readiness



250M+ online shoppers



700M+ smartphone users (Bain, 2024)



Digital trust shift: 75%+ Gen Z prefers apps over banks



UPI + Aadhaar = Real-time identity + transaction stack already in place

"India didn't grow credit step-by-step — it jumped ahead. BNPL works here because it fills the gap between excluded users and digital-ready infrastructure."



Why BNPL is Exploding Now

Digital Payments Infrastructure

₹24 Lakh Cr transacted via UPI in April 2025 (NPCI). India's digital rails are ready — BNPL layers credit seamlessly on top

Young & Underserved Demographic

65% of Indians Are Under 35. Aspirational, mobile-first youth – eager to spend, excluded from formal credit.

Merchant Adoption

30% Order Value Boost. BNPL drives conversions across e-commerce, D2C, edtech, & healthcare.

India's biggest credit challenge isn't demand – it's access; while consumption is booming, over 300 million Indians remain invisible to formal lenders

Quick Timeline on Indian Credit Industry

Informal Trust Era

Khata System
Credit was personal, and relationship-based. No paperwork – just trust.

Formalization Era

Banking Credit
Credit became regulated
but inaccessible for many
due to rigid norms.

Urban Consumption Era

Credit Cards
Credit turned aspirational –
but stayed limited to the
salaried elite in urban India.

Access Expansion Era

Digital Lending

Mobile apps brought loans
to more users – but mostly
salaried consumers.

Democratization Era

BNPL Emerges
Credit became frictionless,
embedded, and open to
outside the formal credit.

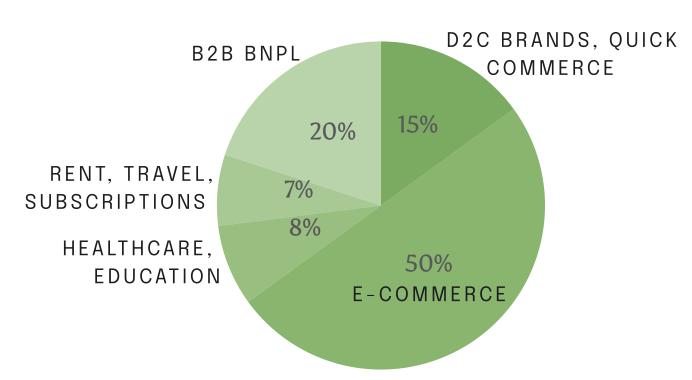
Convergence Era

UPI-Linked Credit Cards
The line between credit and payments blurred – all inside one digital flow.

BNPL Market Landscape



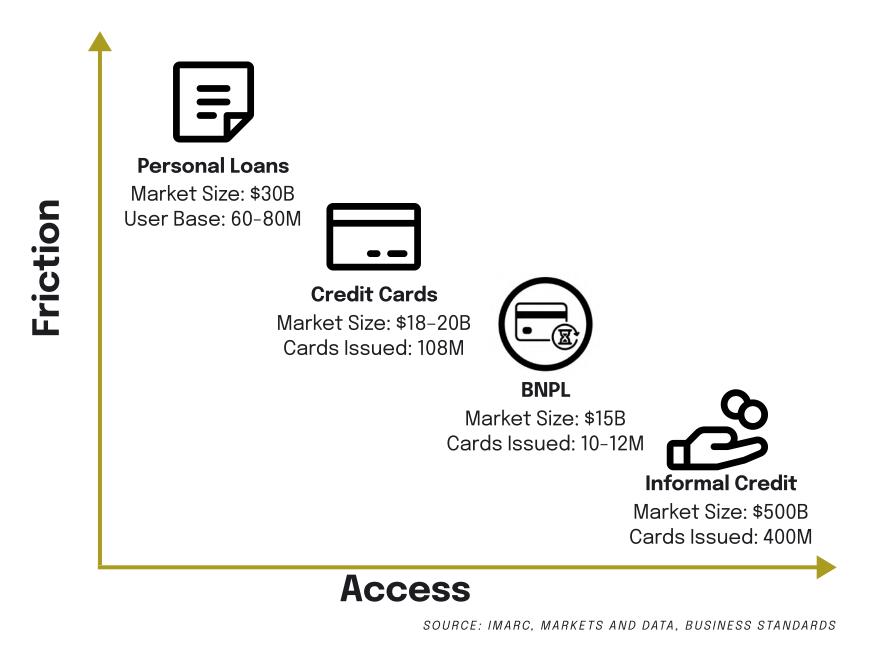
BNPL Market Size & Growth



BNPL has moved beyond discretionary spends — it's increasingly funding **essentials** like tuition, doctor visits, and groceries.



India's Credit Landscape: Speed vs Scale



BNPL is bridging the biggest gap in Indian credit – high friction, low access. That's why it's scaling fast.



BNPL's Core Audience: India's Underserved, Digital-First Majority



Students & Early
Earners
~35%

share of Users

Gadgets, fashion, travel, edtech

Unique Traits

No credit history, high aspirations



Urban Salaried
Class
~30%
share of Users

Electronics, furniture, bill payments

Unique Traits

Budget-conscious, seeks financial flexibility



Gig Workers & Freelancers ~15% share of Users

Rent, groceries, mobile bills

Unique Traits

Irregular income, short-term liquidity stress



Homemakers & Informal Users ~ 10% share of Users

Healthcare, education fees, family expenses

Unique Traits

Cash-based, often unbanked



Small Business
Owners
~10%
share of Users

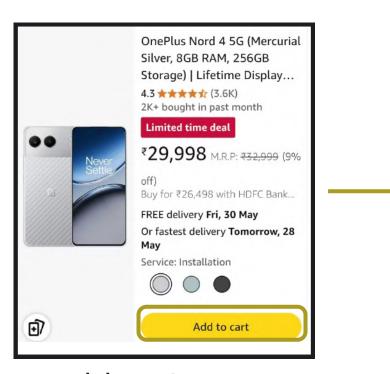
Inventory purchases, small B2B transactions

Unique Traits

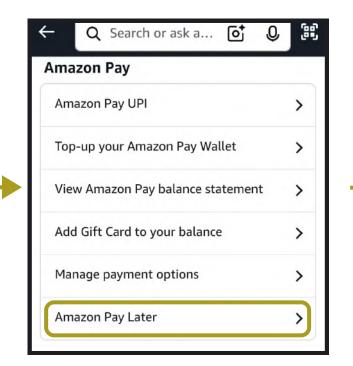
Excluded from traditional working capital credit

How BNPL Works - Behind the Checkout Button

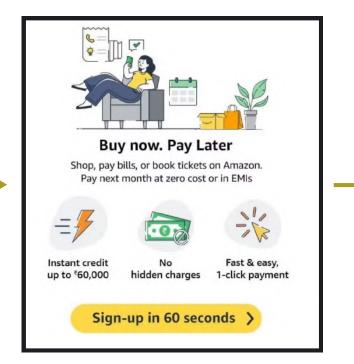




1. Add to CartUser selects product



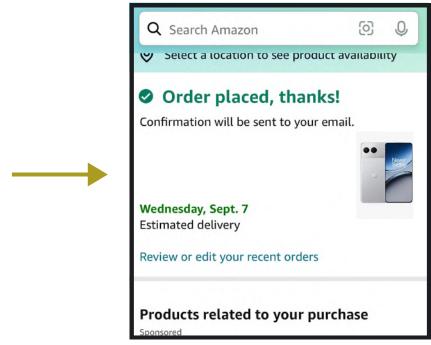
2. Choose BNPL BNPL appears next to UPI/cards



3. One-Click Signup
Phone login + quick
KYC



4. Instant Credit Check
Real-time approval using
alt-data



5. Approval & Payment Merchant is paid instantly

Dear Cardmember, your
Instant EMI request has been
processed for transaction of Rs
30000.00 for 003 months tenure
on your YES BANK Credit Card
ending XXXX -YES BANK LTD

Dear Cardmember, your
Instant EMI request has been
processed for transaction of Rs
30000.00 for 003 months tenure
on your YES BANK Credit Card
ending XXXX -YES BANK LTD

6. Repay in Installments
UPI/ in 15 days or monthly

Your credit report
 300 Good ① 900
 Your score is in the top 15% in India as per CIBIL ★
 No late payments > 112/112 payments on time
 See full report
 Next credit report in 30 days

7. Credit Bureau Reported
Gradual credit score build-up

BNPL Tech Stack: How APIs Power Embedded Credit

Merchant Platform (Front-End Layer)

- Website/App checkout
- BNPL widget or "Pay Later" button

User-facing interface where BNPL is offered

BNPL Fintech Middleware

- Connects BNPL to the merchant's app
- Sends user info for approval
 Fintech's code layer
 embedded inside merchant UX

Risk & Decision Engine

- Real-time KYC / Aadhaar / PAN
- Alt-data scoring
 Approves/disapproves based on underwriting policies

Repayment & Collections Stack

- · Auto debit
- In-app reminders, bureau reporting

Closes the loop – tracks repayments, builds credit profile

NBFC & Credit Disbursal Layer

- · Disburse credit to merchants
- BNPL player acts as tech-layer
 + FLDG backer

Compliant credit routing, per RBI norms

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Winning BNPL

players master

this stack — not

just the front-end

UX, but the full

credit and

compliance

engine beneath it.

Modern BNPL is an orchestration of real-time APIs – integrating UX, risk logic, credit disbursal, and repayment inside merchant checkout flows.

The Psychology Behind BNPL

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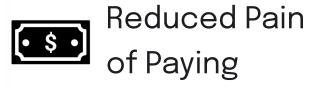
A credit model shaped by behavior – not just convenience

Key Behaviour Drivers

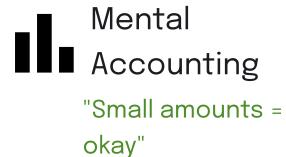




"I want it now"



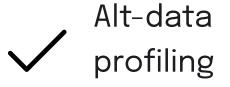
"Doesn't feel like spending"



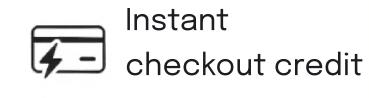
+20-30% checkout conversion in highticket categories

BNPL Solves Real Friction

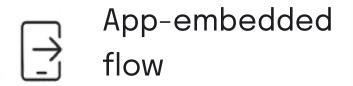
X Rejected due to informal income



Slow loan approvals



Bank
discomfort





Low-ticket flexibility

BNPL = First Credit Step for Millions



Builds credit history



Enables future loans & insurance



Helps underwrite new credit profiles

Just as UPI brought digital payments to the masses, BNPL is bringing them into formal credit.

BNPL as a Credit-Building Onramp: From Access to Identity



How BNPL Builds Trust: Step by Step



New User

Thin-file or no credit history



First BNPL Transaction

Small ticket, low-friction entry



Digital Repayments

Tracked and reported to CIBIL



Credit Scores Starts Building

Users start generating score in 1–2 transactions



Future-Ready

Eligible for loans, cards, EMIs

Rapid Credit Visibility

Most BNPL users build a score within 3–6 months of responsible usage

CIBIL-Linked

Axio, Simpl, LazyPay report repayment behavior to bureaus



BNPL is India's bottom-up credit revolution –

onboarding the next generation of credit users, one transaction at a time.



BNPL Unit Economics: Who Pays, Who Profits, Who Risks

How BNPL Players Make Money

Multiple Touchpoints, One Core Driver



Merchant Commission

Core revenue engine – paid by seller

Interest on EMIs

Applies only on long tenure loans

Late Fees & Penalties

Adds margin, must avoid overuse

Cross-sell / Upsell

Loans, credit line top-ups, insurance

Only players who monetize across the lifecycle – not just the checkout – build sustainable models

Merchant's Role & Incentive

BNPL Isn't Free – Merchants Fund It for Growth



20-30% Higher Conversion

BNPL boosts checkout success

Upfront Liquidity

BNPL pays merchant, takes collection risk

Higher AOV

Deferred payment = more spend

User Retention

Easy EMIs = recurring buyers

For merchants, BNPL is a conversion engine – not a discount tool.

Real Transaction Snapshot

What ₹30,000 Looks Like in BNPL Logic



Product: Smartphone

Price: ₹30,000

Tenure: 6 Months

Merchant MDR (5%): ₹1,500

Capital Cost: ₹750

Net Margin (Before Opex): ₹750

IRR: 21.5%-23.5%

Returns come from compressing cycles – not charging the user





Use alt-data and restrict initial credit to low-ticket spends. This keeps early-stage defaults below the 3-5% danger zone

Acquire Users at Low Cost

Leverage embedded flows (e.g., one-click BNPL at checkout) and merchant-driven acquisition to keep CAC low and recoverable

Build Repeatable Usage

Target high-frequency categories and use nudges (like trust scores or rewards) to drive habit, not just one-time use



Partner with NBFCs or use short tenures (3-6 months) to recycle capital faster and unlock higher IRRs

Focus on High-Yield Merchants

Prioritize large-ticket, highvolume merchants where MDR is defensible and repeat behavior is likely

True BNPL profitability lies in system design, not pricing. It's about reducing leakages at every stage — not charging more, but losing less.



BNPL at its core is a capital rotation engine, not a loan product. Players who master the cycle of acquire fast, lend small, collect quickly, repeat will dominate.



BNPL vs. Credit Cards vs. Personal Loans

Understanding the Cost, Convenience & Control Equation

	BNPL	Credit Cards	Personal Loans
Typical Ticket Size	₹500–₹30,000	₹5,000–₹2,00,000	₹50,000-₹10 Lakhs
Cost to User	Penalty and interest 36-42% p.a if unpaid	36-42% p.a. interest if unpaid	11-16% p.a. interest
Repayment Method	Auto-debit, app- based	Revolving balance, statement cycle	Fixed EMIs
Approval Time	Instant at checkout	2-3 days	3-7 days
Merchant/Partner Benefit	Higher conversion + upfront liquidity	Offer-based promotions	Low to None
Core Use Case	Low-ticket daily needs	Large spends + rewards	One-time high-ticket expenses



BNPL isn't just cheaper or faster – it's contextual

It embeds credit where users spend, reduces decision friction, and serves a financially invisible population that credit cards and personal loans leave behind

Funding the Future: BNPL's Capital Landscape



Global Fintech Funding Snapshot

Payment Processing

\$6.6B

Digital Wallets

\$1.3B

BNPL

\$1.19B

Investor interest is real – but sustainable scale and capital efficiency are still rare.

Source: PWC

What Investors Are Really Backing

Infra over Interfaces

Infrastructure plays are where the conviction lies

Global Thesis, Local Playbooks

BNPL is scaling globally, but in India, investor are concentrated and cautious

Caution on Profitability

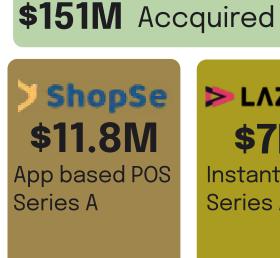
Despite funding inflows, capital efficiency remain investor concerns

\$206M Full-stack BNPL Series F

PAYJOY \$205MGlobal
Series C







zest money



Over 70% of India's BNPL funding is concentrated in just three players. The rest are fighting for scale with capital-light models.

SOURCE: TRACXN

What Comes After Funding? BNPL Exit Pathways





IPO (Public Listing)

Affirm, Afterpay

- Requires: Compliance maturity, visibility on unit economics
- Suits: Full-stack players with low default rates and scalable underwriting
- Rare in India for now but Axio/Simpl could be early contenders



M&A (Strategic Acquisition)

ZestMoney (attempt)

- Targets: Distribution reach, merchant network, risk IP
- Risks: Regulatory drag, due diligence hurdles
- Likely buyers: Banks, payment giants, super-apps



Acqui-Hire / Asset Sale

Early-stage BNPLs

- Used when: Product-market fit weak but infra/team is strong
- Value comes from: Credit scoring IP, alt-data engines, collections tech
- Silent but common path for non-scalable players

BNPL exits won't mirror SaaS or ecommerce.

Only models that align with RBI norms and capital discipline will find real buyers — or public trust.





BNPL isn't a one-size-fits-all model – every market evolves it based on its own credit DNA.

Country	Adoption	Market Traits	Risks / Strategic View
USA	41%	Card-heavy, digital-native	Delinquencies rising → BNPL = profit engine
Australia	38%	Fintech-first, saturated	Regulations tightening → shift to compliance
UK	42%	Low-friction culture	Stable but crowded
China	4%	BNPL via super-apps	Low visibility → embedded in ecosystem
India	21%	EMI-savvy, underserved	High growth potential → infra-led scale

SOURCE: STATISTA, RESERVE BANK OF AUSTRALIA, FINDER, RESEARCH AND MARKETS



EMI-Ready Consumer Behavior

Installment culture is already widespread – BNPL digitizes an existing habit

Massive Credit Headroom

<5% card penetration & 300M+ creditinvisible users create a vast target base

World-Class Payment Rails

UPI enables instant disbursal, repayment, and low-CAC onboarding

Capital via NBFC Partnerships

Fintechs scale credit without direct lending licenses or regulatory drag

Beyond India: BNPL in Emerging Fintech Markets



Region BNPL Trends		India Parallels
INDONESIA	 Low credit penetration, high smartphone usage BNPL growing via Tokopedia, Akulaku 	UPI-like adoption of QR-based payments
NIGERIA	 Card-light, mobile-first, high unbanked population BNPL via Paylater, Carbon 	Similar thin-file population + bank distrust
 High inflation, distrust in cards Players like Kueski, Nelo offer BNPL via WhatsApp 		Informal income + embedded finance preference

Takeaway: These regions share **digital rails + credit exclusion**, just like India — making BNPL a globally adaptable model.

Solving for Scale: India's BNPL Growing Pains



India's BNPL market is scaling fast — but structural, regulatory, and behavioral challenges still threaten sustainable growth

Regulatory Uncertainty

Many BNPL players relied on prepaid cards and NBFC tieups – models that were disrupted by RBI's 2022 digital lending rules.

Now, players are adapting with FLDG-backed co-lending and by building compliance directly into their product flow.

Thin-File Risk Exposure

Most BNPL users are new to credit and lack bureau history — and alt-data models still struggle with accuracy and consistency.

Fintechs are layering alternative data with short-tenure loans and dynamic credit limits to safely onboard and learn user behavior.

Tight Unit Economics

Low merchant fees and high acquisition and recovery costs make small-ticket BNPL hard to scale profitably.

The shift is toward high-frequency use cases like bills and subscriptions, where repeat behavior and upsell potential drive margins.

Consumer Misuse & Awareness Gaps

Zero-interest branding misleads users into viewing BNPL as free money, hurting repayment discipline.

Players are embedding repayment nudges, real-time credit impact visibility, and contextual onboarding education to build financial discipline.

Regulatory Reset: How RBI Reshaped India's BNPL Landscape



RBI's 2022 Crackdown - What Changed

- RBI banned loading credit onto PPIs (wallets/cards)
- Only bank-issued credit allowed on PPIs NBFC credit not permitted
- Outcome: Fintechs had to pause, pivot, or shut down

Real-World Impact

- Uni Card \rightarrow Temporarily halted operations
- Paytm Postpaid → Scaled back features
- ZestMoney → Eventually shut down post acquisition failure

Key Insight: The RBI redefined BNPL not as a product, but as regulated credit – forcing the ecosystem to evolve

The BNPL Compliance Playbook (2025)

What founders need to operationalize

Focus Area

FLDG Compliance

- Only permitted with **regulated NBFCs**
- Maximum first-loss cover: 5% of portfolio
- Must disclose FLDG terms in co-lending agreements

NBFC Partnerships

- Partner with RBI-licensed NBFCs with adequate capital buffer
- Ensure direct disbursal from NBFC → user

Digital Lending Guidelines

- Full KYC + bureau reporting mandatory
- Loan details must be shared with users via SMS/email
- Disclose APR, tenure, and grievance redressal

BNPL's Blind Spots: 3 Risks Every Player Must Control





Debt-Trap Risk & Low Consumer Awareness

'Zero-cost' illusion + multiapp stacking hides real debt

Hidden liabilities erode repayment capacity & trust



Small-Ticket-Default-Spike

Thin-file borrowers, ₹500-₹20k loans hard to collect

Rising NPAs around 5%-7% crush already-thin spreads



Regulatory Overhang

Wallet BNPL ban (2022); ever-tighter KYC rules

Constant rule shifts raise compliance cost & model risk

Sustainable BNPL = convert red & amber risks into managed green zones via underwriting, data visibility, and compliance design.

Zestmoney - Growth Without Control Led to Collapse





Founded in 2015 by Lizzie Chapman

Revenue (FY 2023)

Rs. 240 Cr

Net Profit (FY 2023)

Rs. (463) Cr

Serves

10K+ Merchants

Funds Raised

\$151 M

Where it went Wrong



Operational Fragility

Tech stack was fragmented; merchant integrations slowed growth



No Lending License

Dependent on NBFCs → higher costs, limited credit control



Poor Asset Quality

Thin-file lending with weak scoring led to defaults



Failed Exit

PhonePe's acquisition fell through after due diligence

The Industry Shift It Forced

- Revealed model risk
 Scaling without lending control proved unsustainable
- Cooled investor sentiment
 VCs became cautious toward unsecured,
 thin-file lending
- Shifted focus to fundamentals
 BNPL narrative moved from growth to compliance and capital discipline

Key Takeaway

ZestMoney scaled fast, but without control over credit, capital, or compliance. In BNPL, ambition without infrastructure isn't scale – it's risk.

Simpl - Focused Execution, Embedded Success





Founded in 2015 by Nitya Sharma and Chaitra Chidanand

Revenue (FY 2024)

Rs. 150 Cr

Net Profit (FY 2024)

Rs. (266) Cr

Serves

26K+ Merchants

Funds Raised

\$83 M

Why It Worked



Risk-Conscious Targeting

Focuses on salaried users with predictable spending patterns

→ lower default exposure



Lean, Simple Model

No EMI or long-tenure products – operates as a lightweight pay-later layer



Repeat-First Strategy

High-frequency categories (Swiggy, Zepto) encourage habit + lifetime value



Merchant-Embedded Growth

Deep integrations over broad listings → drives utility, not just visibility

Strategic Wins

- Redefined checkout UX
 Made BNPL invisible, fast, and habit-forming
- Prioritized LTV over GMV
 Repeat use outperformed transaction volume
- Shifted use case to utility
 BNPL became a daily convenience, not a debt tool

Key Takeaway

BNPL succeeds when it solves a daily need – not when it mimics a loan.

Simplicity, repeat use, and control beat scale without stickiness.

Axio - Full Stack Discipline, Embedded Growth



Founded in 2013 by Sashank Rishyasringa and Gaurav Hinduja

Revenue (FY 2024)

Rs. 32.5 Cr

Net Profit (FY 2024)

Rs. (369) Cr

Serves

8K+ Merchants

Funds Raised

\$206 M

What Axio Got Right



Built Infra, Not Just UI

Owned NBFC + risk stack for full credit control



Risk-Led Onboarding

Focused on prime users, not mass signups



Strategic Integrations

Embedded with Amazon, MakeMyTrip, Myntra



Regulation-Ready

Structured for compliance before RBI crackdown

How It Redefined BNPL

- Credit Onramp, Not Just Checkout
 Bureau-linked flows built formal credit profiles
- Prioritized LTV over GMV
 Prioritized retention and repayment over volume
- Compliance-First Scaling
 Proved full-stack BNPL can grow responsibly

Key Takeaway

Axio scaled BNPL with discipline, not just demand.

It's a case of credit-first design that put compliance, repayment visibility, and longterm LTV above short-term GMV.

BNPL 2.0: What's Taking the Lead







MSMEs now get checkout credit for inventory & raw materials.

Rupifi and Protium see 2× YoY GMV from Tier-2/3 distributors.



BNPL moves from discretion to life essentials

Pay-later now funds OPD, tuition, insurance premiums

30 % of SaveIn tickets = healthcare; 60 % of upGrad learners use BNPL



Al-Led risk discipline is the new MOAT

Alt-data + ML scoring cuts defaults by ~200 bps

RBI norms push full-KYC & bureau reporting





Embedded credit at Financing working-B2B marketplaces capital cycles



OPD pay-later for 5K+ clinics

Education BNPL for skill programs

upGrad





Behaviour-Al limits & dynamic pricing

NPA < 2 % after shift to card-rail BNPL

BNPL Strategy Matrix: Matching Model with Market



	Embedded	Full Stack
	Jumbotail	KredX
8	Fast credit for distributor	Direct underwriting for MSMEs
B2B	 Integrated into B2B checkout flows 	Focus: capital control + deeper yield
	Focus: scale and repeat utility	
	Simpl	Axio
	· Light UX for small spends	• Larger EMIs, NBFC-backed
B2C	High-frequency, trust-building	Focus: underwriting and user lifetime
	Focus: habit and volume	value

Strategic fit matters; embedded models win on access and speed. Full-stack players win when control is needed.

No single formula – only aligned fit. B2B needs underwriting depth. B2C needs engagement and UX trust.

The Next Credit Frontier: Untapped BNPL Opportunities



BNPL for Offline Retail

80%+ of electronics and appliance sales happen offline but financing options are missing at most Tier 2/3 stores.

Consumers are credit-ready, but merchant infra is not.

Offer QR-based BNPL via retailer apps or lightweight PoS integrations.

Plug BNPL into consumer durables, mobile stores, and appliance chains outside metros.

Kirana Working Capital Credit

Kiranas need credit to buy stock – but only ~7% have access to formal credit lines.

Distributors and B2B apps already have for layer short-tenure BNPL.

Offer credit limits that reset weekly/biweekly, tied to inventory cycles.

Digitize and underwrite 12M+ kiranas – unlock daily working capital need via BNPL.

BNPL Inside ONDC

IndiaStack enables digital commerce, but checkout credit hasn't reached the long-tail of merchants on ONDC.

ONDC enables API-based lending via standardized storefronts.

Build a plug-and-play BNPL SDK for ONDC merchants, backed by NBFC partners.

Serve millions of MSMEs selling via ONDC with embedded, compliant BNPL.

BNPL for Services

High-value service spends (₹5K-₹50K) are rising – but upfront payment is a barrier.

These aren't discretionary spends –they're life needs.

Embed pay-later inside appointment apps, coaching platforms, and legal-tech portals.

Build lifecycle credit rails – for education, healthcare, and skill-building.

India's next credit leap won't come from urban EMI users — but from frictionless, embedded credit in the long tail of real, daily use cases

The BNPL Evolution: What Will Define the Next Phase



Regulation Will Reshape the Landscape



Insight: RBI is pushing BNPL into the formal credit system

70%

Over 70% of BNPL players now rely on NBFC partnerships post-RBI digital lending norms (2022)

Implication: Players without capital reserves or tech-compliance capabilities will exit

B2B BNPL Will Outpace
B2C



Insight: Consumer BNPL faces saturation, B2B solves a real liquidity gap

₹25L Cr+

MSME credit gap underscores B2B opportunity 90% of B2B BNPL users are repeat borrowers

Model Advantage: Higher average ticket sizes, lower CAC, embedded into transaction flows

Checkout Is Just the Start



Insight: BNPL is evolving into embedded finance across verticals

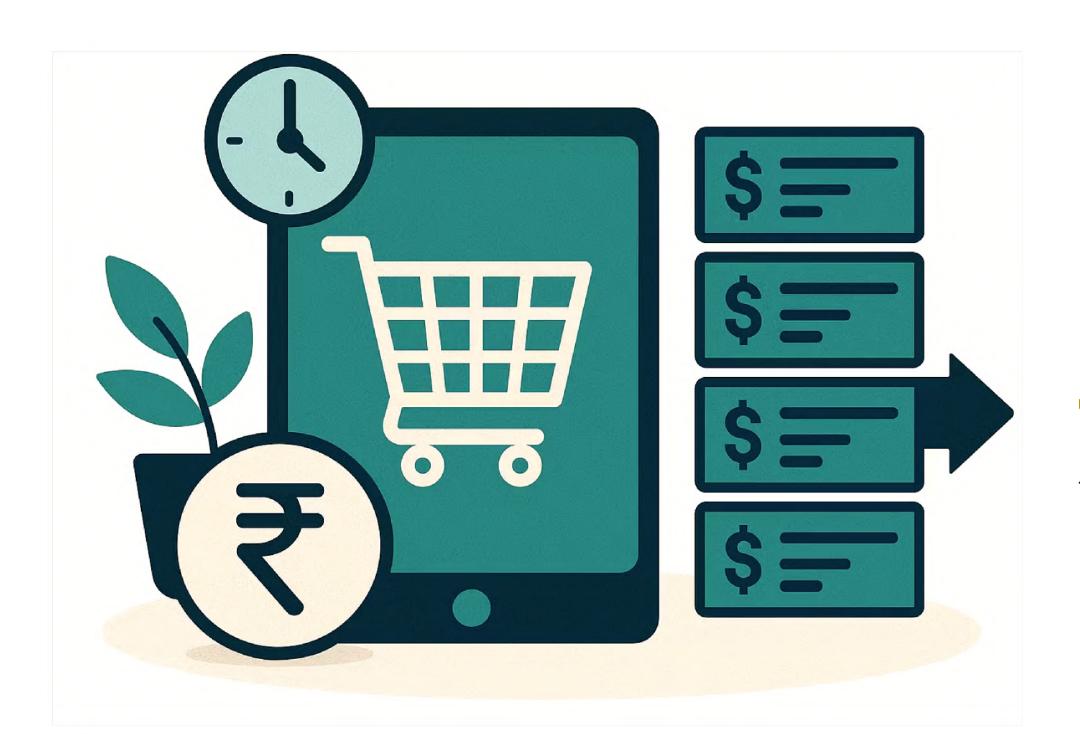
Sectors:

Healthcare Education Insurance SaaS tools Emerging Use Cases:
"BNPL for services"—
legal", renovation,
wellness subscription

Implication: BNPL becomes invisible infra, not a standalone product

BNPL's future = smarter credit, not just faster credit.

Winners will master compliance, embed deeply, and solve real capital frictions.





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THANKYOU

Basic Roots Consulting | teambro@basicroots.in
Prepared by: Pranav Gupta