

// 2026 PAID ADS CHECKLIST

The paid ads checklist for service businesses.

Ads bring the click. Your system brings the sale. This checklist covers both, in plain language, built for Indian service founders running the whole thing themselves.

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// 01 STRATEGY

Define your strategy first.

Before you spend a rupee, get clear on who you want, where they are, and what a win looks like.

Know exactly who buys

Write down your best customer in one line: their problem, their budget, and what makes them say yes. Ads pointed at everyone reach no one.

Pick the right channels

Meta (Instagram and Facebook) for discovery. Google for people already searching your service. YouTube Shorts and WhatsApp to follow up. TikTok is banned in India, so leave it out.

META 40-60% · GOOGLE 25-30% · SHORTS + WHATSAPP 15-25%

Set one number that matters

Leads, bookings, or sales. Pick the one that pays your bills and build every campaign around it. One goal per campaign, always.

Budget with intent

In India, below ₹15,000 a month Meta can't gather enough signals to learn. Start near ₹500 a day, then move budget behind whatever converts.

START ₹500/DAY · MIN ₹15K/MONTH

Plan around real demand

Map your busy months and your slow months. Spend more before demand peaks, not in the middle of the rush when everyone else is bidding too. Line campaigns up with festivals, launches, and the seasons your buyers actually move in.

// 02 ASSETS

Build creative that stops the scroll.

In 2026 the ad is the targeting. Good creative decides who the algorithm shows you to, so this is where the work goes.

Shoot short vertical video

Reels and Shorts win in 2026. Shoot on your phone, talk like a human, and land the hook in the first three seconds. No fancy shoot needed.

Test on purpose

Run three to five versions. Change one thing at a time: the hook, the offer, or the visual. Let the numbers pick the winner, not your gut.

Keep it real

Real faces, real work, real before-and-afters beat stock photos every time. People buy from people, especially for a service.

KEY TIP

Sort the landing before the click

The fastest landing in India is a WhatsApp chat. "Send WhatsApp message" buttons convert 5 to 10x better than web forms here. If you do send to a page, make it load fast and ask for one clear action.

// 03 LAUNCH

Launch, then optimise.

Getting live is step one. The money is made in the tuning you do after.

01

Target smart

Start with your own audiences and a few interests. Move to Meta Advantage+ once you have 50+ conversions and creative you trust.

02

Track everything

Meta Pixel plus the Conversions API, and GA4 with server-side tags. Without clean tracking you are guessing, not optimising.

03

Time it right

Run ads when your buyers are actually online. Use your own data, not a generic "best time to post" chart.

DAILY

Watch cost per lead, CTR, and spend. Catch a runaway before it burns the budget.

WEEKLY

Cut the losers, scale the winners, and refresh creative before it gets tired.

ALWAYS ON

Reply to every lead in minutes, not hours. Speed is the cheapest edge you have.

21x

Reply within 5 minutes and you are 21x more likely to qualify a lead than at 30 minutes (MIT lead response study). Set up WhatsApp auto-replies so no enquiry ever goes cold.

// 04 ADVANCED 2026 TACTICS

The tactics that compound.

Once the basics pay, these are the moves that lower your cost per lead and keep it there.

Retarget the warm ones

Upload your WhatsApp and customer numbers to Meta as a Custom Audience. In India these convert 3 to 5x better than cold traffic.

3-5x VS COLD TRAFFIC

Let AI find lookalikes

Advantage+ and lookalike audiences use platform AI to find more people who behave like your best customers. Feed it clean conversion data.

Show the right thing

Catalog and dynamic ads automatically show the exact service or product someone looked at. Set it up once, it runs itself.

Use the 2026 formats

Meta Advantage+ and Collection ads, Google Performance Max, Demand Gen, and AI Max for Search are the workhorses now. Give AI a tight goal and good inputs.

THE TOP RULE

Keep a human on strategy

AI runs the buttons. You still own the strategy, the offer, and the follow-up. Automation scales a good system fast, and a bad one just as fast. Point it at the right thing first.

// 05 MEASURE & IMPROVE

Measure what matters.

Reporting is not busywork. It is how you find the winners worth doubling and the leaks worth plugging.

- ✓ **Build one simple dashboard.** A weekly and monthly view of spend, leads, cost per lead, and sales. One screen, no guesswork.
- ✓ **Review what worked.** Every month, find your best ad, audience, and channel. Do more of that, and cut the rest without sentiment.
- ✓ **Ask your customers.** The people who enquired will tell you what almost stopped them. That feedback sharpens your next ad more than any tool.
- ✓ **Own your first-party data.** Google kept third-party cookies in 2026, but data you own still wins. Collect emails and numbers you can reach directly.
- ✓ **Review every 90 days.** Platforms change fast. Re-check your channels, budgets, offers, and creative each quarter so you never drift.

// THE REAL PROBLEM

Ads are only half the job.

You can run perfect ads and still lose the sale. Slow replies, a confusing page, no follow-up. That is a leak, not a budget problem or bad luck. Fix the system behind the click and the same ads quietly start making more money.

// FREE GROWTH GAP AUDIT

Ready to plug the leaks?

Get a free Growth Gap Audit. I will look at what happens after a lead comes in: your follow-up, your page, and whether you have a real system or it all lives in your head. Plain feedback, no pitch.

WhatsApp me →

Email the audit request →

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