



The D2C Launch Checklist.

The step-by-step list we use with founders to go from idea to a sales-ready brand — without the expensive mistakes.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Eight stages. Tick them in order.

Most first-time brands fail on the stages they skipped, not the ones they found hard. Work through each stage before you spend serious money on the next one. If a box stays unticked, that is your to-do list.

1 Idea & demand

Prove people want it — and will pay your price.

2 Brand & positioning

Who it is for, and why it is different.

3 Product & manufacturing

Find, test and negotiate with the right maker.

4 Compliance

Registrations and labels for your category.

5 Packaging

Sells on the shelf, survives the courier.

6 Pricing & unit economics

Every order should make money.

7 Channels

Website, marketplaces, quick commerce.

8 Launch & first 100

Customers before ad budgets.

The rule of thumb: don't order your first commercial batch until stages 1–6 are ticked. Inventory is the most expensive mistake to undo.

1 Idea & demand validation

- ☐ Write the problem in one sentence — **who** has it, **when**, and what they use today.
- ☐ Interview 30+ people in your target customer group. Ask about what they buy now, not what they'd like.
- ☐ Map 10 competitors: price per unit/gram/ml, claims, ratings, and what reviews complain about.
- ☐ Check search and marketplace demand for your category keywords.
- ☐ Test willingness to pay: a pre-order page, a waitlist with a deposit, or a small sampling run.
- ☐ Decide on **one or two hero SKUs**. A long catalogue at launch ties up cash.

2 Brand & positioning

- ☐ One-line positioning: "For [customer] who [need], [brand] is the [category] that [difference]."
- ☐ The one reason to believe — ingredient, format, origin, price, design — that a competitor can't copy overnight.
- ☐ Name checked for availability: trademark search in your class, domain, Instagram handle, marketplace brand name.
- ☐ Price tier chosen deliberately (mass, masstige or premium) — it decides your packaging, channels and ad budget.
- ☐ Basic identity ready: logo, colours, type, tone of voice, product photography plan.

Founder test: if you can't explain who it's for and why it's different in one breath, customers won't be able to either.

3 Product & manufacturing

- ☐ Shortlist 3–5 manufacturers who already make your category; visit at least two.
- ☐ Check they hold the licences your category needs, and ask for client references.
- ☐ Get written quotes: price per unit at different MOQs, lead time, payment terms, who supplies packaging.
- ☐ Run sample rounds until the product is right; sign off a "golden sample" and specification.
- ☐ Agree quality checks: certificate of analysis or test reports, batch coding, shelf-life or stability data.
- ☐ Get a written agreement covering formula/IP ownership, quality, rejections and confidentiality.

5 Packaging

- ☐ Pick materials and formats that suit both the shelf and the courier — and your price tier.
- ☐ Know packaging MOQs and lead times; they are often longer than the product's.
- ☐ Design the front to answer "what is it?" and "why buy it?" in three seconds — and to read as a phone thumbnail.
- ☐ Leave room for every mandatory declaration before the design is final.
- ☐ Drop-test and leak-test packed orders. Damaged deliveries become returns and 1-star reviews.
- ☐ Cost out every layer: primary, secondary, shipper box, filler, labels, inserts.

4 Compliance & registrations

- ☐ **Business set-up:** company or LLP registration, PAN, current account, and GST registration (needed for most marketplace selling).
- ☐ **Trademark:** file an application for your brand name in the right class(es).
- ☐ **Food, beverages, snacks & supplements:** the right FSSAI registration or licence for your turnover and business model; supplements follow FSSAI's nutraceutical regulations.
- ☐ **Cosmetics & personal care:** manufactured under a licence from the State Licensing Authority (your contract manufacturer's licence, or a loan licence); imported cosmetics need CDSCO registration.
- ☐ **Packaged goods labels (Legal Metrology):** MRP, net quantity, manufacturer/packer name and address, month and year of manufacture, and consumer-care details — also shown on your online listings.
- ☐ **Category-specific checks** — for example BIS for certain products, or the rules on claims such as "natural", "organic", "sugar-free" and health benefits.
- ☐ **Barcodes** (GS1 EAN) for retail, marketplaces and quick commerce.

Note: requirements change and depend on your exact product. Treat this as a list of questions, and confirm the details with your manufacturer and a qualified compliance professional before you print packaging.

Why it matters: a label reprint after launch costs you packaging, time and stock. Getting declarations right first time is one of the cheapest wins in this whole checklist.

6 Pricing & unit economics

- ☐ Build your **landed cost** per unit: product + packaging + inbound freight + wastage.
- ☐ Build a **per-order P&L** for every channel — not just your website.
- ☐ Aim for a gross margin that can carry shipping, returns, platform fees and ads. Many D2C brands target 60–70%+ at MRP.
- ☐ Know your RTO and cash-on-delivery assumptions — and the cost of each failed delivery.
- ☐ Set a target CAC you can afford on the first order, or know how many repeat orders pay it back.

Illustrative per-order P&L (selling price ₹599, prepaid, own website)

Line	₹	% of net revenue
Selling price (incl. 18% GST)	599	
Net revenue after GST	508	100%
Product + packaging (landed)	-140	28%
Shipping + pick & pack	-70	14%
Payment gateway (~2%)	-10	2%
Returns / RTO allowance	-25	5%
Contribution before marketing	263	52%
Marketing (CAC on first order)	-200	39%
Contribution after marketing	63	12%

Illustrative numbers only. Your costs will differ by category, weight, region and channel — and marketplaces add commissions and fees on top.

The trap: a "4x ROAS" on an ad dashboard can still mean a loss once GST, returns, COD and shipping are counted. Always judge ads on contribution after marketing.

7 Channels

- ☐ **Website:** fast mobile store, clear product pages (benefits, how to use, ingredients, reviews), UPI and COD settings, shipping and returns policy, WhatsApp support.
- ☐ **Marketplaces (Amazon, Flipkart, Nykaa, Myntra):** brand registry, optimised titles and images, A+ content, and a fee calculation for every SKU.
- ☐ **Quick commerce (Blinkit, Zepto, Instamart):** barcodes, shelf life on receipt, case packs, sell-in price and margin structure — and enough stock and cash for replenishment.
- ☐ **Offline:** only when you can support distributor margins, credit periods and in-store visibility.
- ☐ Start with one or two channels you can run well; add the next when the first is profitable.

8 Launch & your first 100 customers

- ☐ List 100 people who should buy first: friends' networks, communities, niche creators, your waitlist.
- ☐ Send product to 20–30 relevant micro-creators and customers for honest reviews and content.
- ☐ Set up post-purchase WhatsApp and email flows: order updates, how-to-use, review request, reorder reminder.
- ☐ Collect reviews and photos from day one — they lift conversion on every channel.
- ☐ Run small paid tests only after organic orders prove the product converts.

AFTER LAUNCH

Track these every week.

The brands that last are the ones that know their numbers. Put these on one sheet and review them every Monday.

Sales & margin

- ☐ Orders, revenue and average order value — by channel
- ☐ Gross margin, and contribution margin after marketing
- ☐ Top SKUs by revenue and by contribution

Acquisition

- ☐ CAC by channel, and ROAS measured on contribution — not just revenue
- ☐ Website conversion rate and add-to-cart rate

Operations & retention

- ☐ RTO %, COD share, and the top three return reasons
- ☐ Repeat purchase rate at 30, 60 and 90 days
- ☐ Stock cover in days, cash in bank and weeks of runway

One last thing: write your answers down. A checklist you can show a mentor, manufacturer or investor is worth ten you keep in your head.



Want founders who've done it to **build it with you?**

Get Into D2C is the startup launchpad for consumer brands in India. Every cohort is application-only, with one-on-one mentoring from founders who have built brands for real.

Origin

Idea → Launch

Momentum

3–6 months in market,
can't scale

Capital

6 months+ or ₹5L+
monthly revenue — scale
& raise

Apply at getintod2c.in/build-your-brand