The First Screen Checklist

The CPG DTC Playbook | Prepared by Dumo Digital Strategies

For specialty CPG brands

Why the first screen decides whether your ad spend works, the three questions it has to answer, and a 10 minute test to score yours.

You Get 5 Seconds. Use Them.

The people your ads reach are curious, not committed. They tapped an ad between two other things, and they decide whether to keep scrolling before they read a single paragraph. People form a first impression of a page in about 50 milliseconds. Curious leaves at the first sign of confusion.

The first screen is everything a shopper sees on their phone before they scroll. For most ad traffic that is your product page: the photo, the title, the line under it and the price. **Paid traffic does not fix a broken first screen. It exposes one.**

Why It Costs More Than You Think

Your real cost per customer is what you pay for a click divided by your conversion rate. When the first screen loses people, every customer gets more expensive, even if your ads are perfect.

	Confusing first screen	**Clear first screen**
Cost per click	$1.00	$1.00
Conversion rate	1.4%	2.8%
Cost to get one customer	$71	$36

Example numbers. 1.4% is the average Shopify store. For repeat-purchase CPG we aim for 2.5 to 3%.

Same ads, same budget, half the cost per customer. The first screen is your shelf. If a stranger cannot tell what you are and why you are different, you look like every other brand in the category.

The Three Questions

A stranger should be able to answer three questions before they scroll. If any one goes unanswered, they leave.

1. What is this, and who is it for?

The brain needs to file your product into a category before it can want it. Clever names and taglines ask a stranger to do work they will not do. Say what it is, and who it is for, in plain words.

Makes them think	**Answers it**
"Hydration, reimagined."	"Electrolyte drink mix. Hydrates faster than water, with no sugar."
"The OG"	"Peanut Butter Protein Bar"
A lifestyle photo of someone on a beach	The product itself, clearly, as the first image

2. Why should I trust it?

A stranger has no reason to believe you yet. They do believe other people. The fastest way to borrow trust is to put proof right where they are looking: the star rating and review count at the title, and a real number or customer quote above the fold. Badges help when they matter to this

buyer, like gluten free, third-party tested or Made in USA. A product with just 5 reviews is about 270% more likely to sell than one with none.

3. Why would I want it?

People buy outcomes, not ingredients. Three or four short benefit lines or icons do more than any paragraph, because nobody reads a paragraph on the first screen. Make the price feel small too: "$1.50 a bar" or "$2 a serving" reads like part of their day. A total price alone makes them do math.

Then Get Out of the Way

A first screen that answers everything still fails if they cannot see it or reach the button.

Speed	53% of mobile visitors leave a page that takes more than 3 seconds to load (Google). Compress images and remove apps you are not using.
Pop-ups	A pop-up in the first few seconds covers the answers before they read them. Delay it, and make it easy to close on a phone.
Cookie banners and chat bubbles	Nothing should cover the product photo, the price or the add to cart button.
The button	Add to cart should be one thumb-scroll away, or sticky as they scroll.

Run the 5 Second Test

Open your best seller on your phone, in a private window. Show it to a friend who has never seen your brand for 5 seconds, then take the phone back and ask them these three questions. Write down exactly what they say.

What is it, and who is it for?	
Why should I trust it?	
Why would I want it?	

If their answers do not match what you wanted them to say, the first screen is not doing its job. Their words are also a good start for your new copy.

The Checklist

	What is this, and who is it for?
☐	The product name says what it is (bar, cereal, powder, oil), not just a brand word.
☐	The line under the title says the problem it solves, in plain words.
☐	The first image shows the actual product.
☐	I can tell who it is for without reading a paragraph.

	Why should I trust it?
☐	Star rating and review count sit at the title.
☐	A real number or customer quote is above the fold.
☐	Badges that matter to this buyer are visible.

	Why would I want it?
☐	3 or 4 benefits show as short lines or icons, before any paragraph.
☐	Benefits are outcomes ("no 2pm crash"), not ingredients ("lion’s mane").
☐	The price reads small: per serving, per bar or per meal.
☐	The best pack size is preselected.

	Can they actually use it?
☐	The page loads in under 3 seconds on a phone.
☐	Nothing covers the first screen in the first 5 seconds.
☐	Add to cart is one thumb-scroll away, or sticky.

Checked, out of 14	**What it means**
12 to 14	Strong. Spend your time further down the funnel.
8 to 11	Okay. Fix the unchecked items in the first two groups first.
0 to 7	This is your first fix, before you spend another dollar on ads.

Want us to look at your first screen? Book a strategy call at dumodigital.com.

Sources: first impressions in 50ms (Lindgaard et al., 2006), mobile load time (Google), reviews and purchase likelihood (Spiegel Research Center), Shopify conversion benchmarks (Littledata).