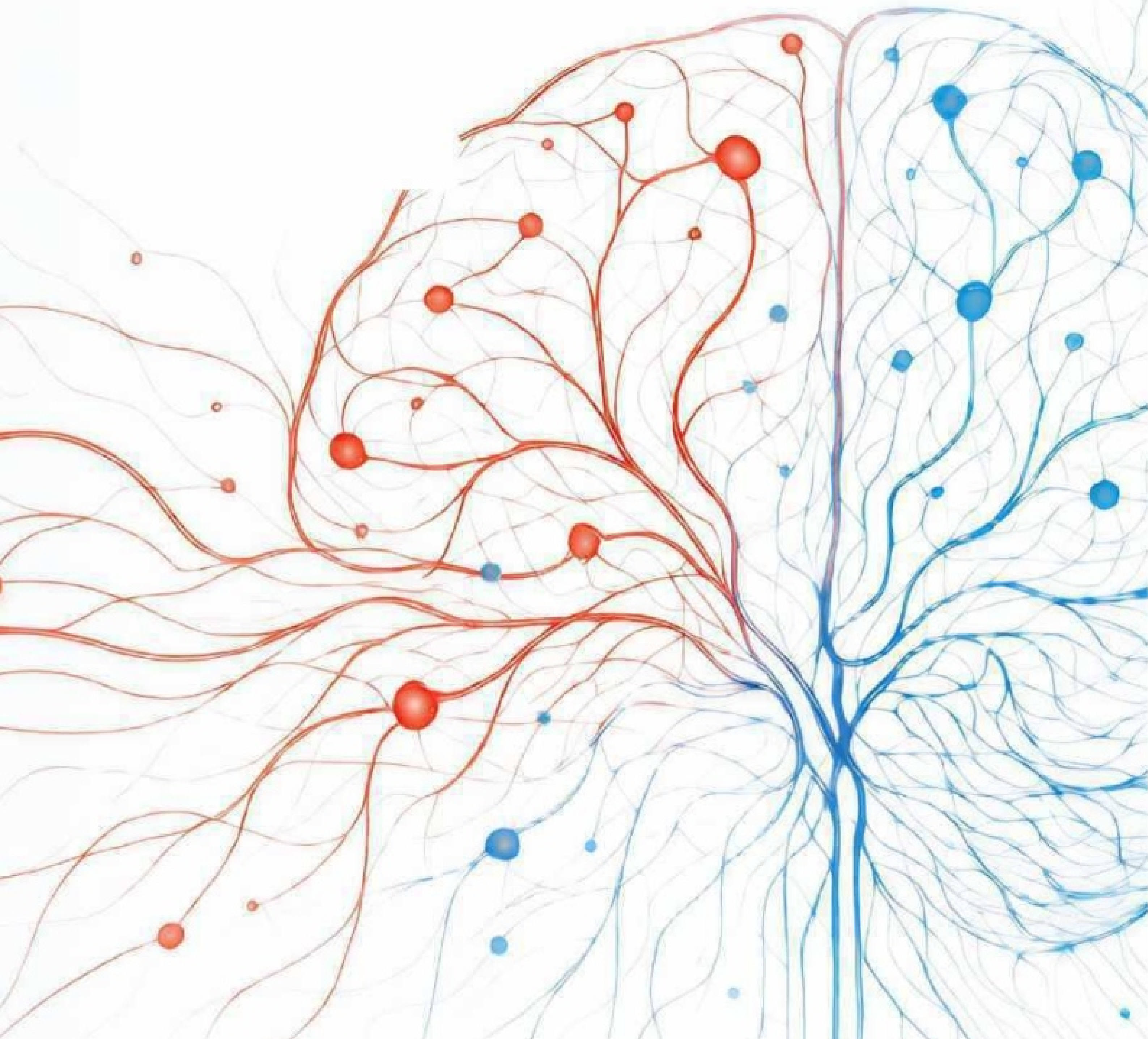
Leveraging AI
to drive performance ROI



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Special thanks to

Our partner brands and contributors that shaped this field-tested playbook by generously sharing data, experiments, and war stories.

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Part 1

Foundation & Mindset

1.Missed the first edition?

In case you missed the first edition of QComm Growth Playbook!
Catch up on the insights and strategic framework that helped D2C brands unlock growth in quick commerce

1. Marketing & Visibility Highlight

Question	Answer
Why must QComm marketing strategies be “city-first”?	*Because category offtake, competition intensity, demand, and brand recall vary dramatically by geography. Brands should prioritize cities where winning odds are already in their favor.*
What signals should govern whether a brand increases or decreases ad spend in a city?	*Use the gap between category offtake share and Share of Voice (SOV):* *• Low SOV + High Offtake → selling but under-visible → increase ad spend.* *• High SOV + Low Offtake → visible but not converting → fix availability/listings.*
What types of keywords can brands target?	*Three types: • Generic (e.g., “biscuits”)• Branded (e.g., “Parle biscuits”)• Competitor (e.g., “Britannia biscuits”) — chosen based on SKU role and category dynamics.*
Where is the “opportunity” in day-parting?	*Many brands front-load and go out-of-budget early. The second half of the day has lower competition, lower CPMs, and higher efficiency, making it an underused opportunity.*
How can brands avoid wasting keyword spend?	*Don’t spend where ad rank is worse than organic rank. Avoid spending when ad rank > 20 because most shoppers don’t scroll that far.*

2. Operations & Availability Highlights

Question	Answer
What are the distinct roles of DS vs. MDS?	*Dark Stores (DS): Shallow, high-velocity assortment within 2–3 km; ≤10-minute delivery.Mega Dark Stores (MDS): Inventory hubs for low-velocity or test SKUs.*
How should brands use MDS strategically?	*Use MDS for controlled testing before scaling SKUs into DSs — this reduces working capital exposure and mitigates risk.*
How should brands prioritize POs?	*Not FIFO. Prioritise based on delivery deadline, quantity ordered, and sales potential protected.*
What are the critical daily operational focus areas?	*Monitor SKU × City combinations with highest stockout risk and largest potential sales loss. Check OSA, track OOS, and fix high-impact gaps first.*

3. Account Management & Team Agility

Question	Answer
Why does QComm demand extreme agility?	*QComm runs on near-daily cycles with small, frequent POs. A one-day delay can trigger stockouts across multiple cities. Escalations must happen hourly or daily, not weekly.*
How should brands communicate issues to platforms?	*With data-backed, solution-oriented communication.Example: "SKU X shows 60% coverage; only 6/10 high-value stores have <20% stock. Potential loss: 750K/day. Can we address replenishment?"*
What information should brands share with Category Managers?	*Regularly share velocity trends, estimated lost sales, and competitor insights to secure visibility, listings, and pinned placements — proving that the brand drives category growth or margin.*

2.The Only Constant in Quick Commerce: Change

If you've been building or scaling a D2C brand in 2025, you've likely faced this: Platform algorithms, user behavior, pin-code performance, delivery SLAs — everything evolves weekly.

This is the new reality of dynamic systems, where every variable is in flux:

Variable	How it shifts
Shopper Behavior	Changes with seasonality, city, platform offers, time of day
Advertiser Behavior	Extremely dynamic by location, time of the day
Platform Capabilities	Frequently changing ad formats, targeting layers, and visibility rules

And these are just the visible variables. If you're in the system, you already know each has multiple sub-variables shifting by minute.

The challenge is multi-fold and goes beyond human intelligence

In fact, to operate with lightning speed and efficiency, brands need not just an AI, but an orchestrated network of specialized agents, each trained for a specific objective.

Multi-founders & brand teams learned this the hard way, you don't have to

We tested dozens of hypotheses across brands and platforms. What emerged were replicable frameworks that any brand can use.

This playbook exists to democratize that knowledge!

Clear models that founders, performance marketers, and operators can apply instantly, even in the chaos of daily QComm execution.

3. Busting Some Common QComm Advertising Myths

Let's bust some common QComm advertising myths!

📣 *Most "myths" are just hypotheses that get repeated so often, they start sounding like facts.*

Even the best D2C teams rely on assumptions that feel intuitive... until they actually test them.

So we put the most common ones under real experimentation to see what the data really says.

Hypothesis #1:
"The delta between Pan-India and city-level campaigns is negligible... and honestly, city-level is too much work"

What we experimented:

Tested Pan-India campaigns against city-level campaigns within the same budget

What we saw:

We tested Pan-India vs City-Level campaigns for the same SKUs, budgets, and keywords for a snack brand and a personal care brand

The delta? Pretty significant!

- A snack brand's city-level campaigns delivered a 57% higher ROAS
- A fast-growing B&P brand drove a 30% uplift in ROAS with city-specific campaigns

💡 *CPMs for the same keyword vary dramatically by city. If the auction itself behaves differently, how can one Pan-India campaign win?*

Hypothesis #2:

"To maximise ROAS on a limited budget, ads should run only during the highest-traffic hours"

What we experimented:

We tested day-parted campaigns with a few brands and ran ads only during peak traffic hours

What we saw:

ROAS dipped for day-parted campaigns! Full day visibility consistently outperformed the day parted campaign

> 💡 ***Your highest-competition hours are also when CPMs peak, driving up spend and pushing your ROAS down***

Hypothesis #3:

"Only the top ad slots get you good conversions"

What we experimented:

Identified and targeted the rank–slot combinations that provided the best CPM to conversion ratio

What we saw:

Optimising for low-CPM slots (instead of default/any slot) delivered disproportionate gains:

- Nearly 2× higher ROAS without increasing budget
- Conversions held steady, while cost per visibility dropped sharply

> 💡 ***Not all slots are created equal. The *same rank* in one slot can cost 2–3× more in another. Picking "any slot" is like paying surge pricing without knowing — slot arbitrage is real***

Part 2

Mastering QComm Performance Marketing

1. The Problems Every Brand Faces

When the GobbleCube and DSG teams sat down and compared notes from our day-to-day conversations with founders, marketers, and operators, one thing became clear:

The problems are universal — only the context changes!

So, we've broken the next section into three simple, high-impact questions every brand struggles with:

1. Ambiguous campaign goals, which lead to → wrong optimisation
2. Budget deployment that doesn't match market realities
3. High-performing campaigns going out of budget
4. Poor keyword selection → wasted SOV

2. Modern Experimentation for QComm

The 2026 Imperative for QComm Advertising: Continuous & High-Velocity Experimentation

Success on QComm comes from rapid experimentation. Each test uncovers hidden behavioral patterns, not just better metrics. Here's how leading brands run smart experiments to stay ahead, and how you can start too.

The framework is simple:

Hypothesize

Experiment Setup

Measure

Recalibrate Based on Learnings

The framework is simple. Let's understand this with a few examples:

Example	Hypothesis	Experiment	Variable
Which city should I target?	*Tier-1 cities outperform Tier-2*	Create separate city campaigns	Compare ROAS
What time of day should I run my ads?	*Evenings drive higher conversions than morning*	Create multiple day-parted campaigns	Compare time slot conversions
Which city should I target?	*First scroll drives better ROAS than second scroll*	Target different ranks for the keyword in the campaign	Compare keyword rank ROAS

3. Campaign Goals & Contextual Objective Setting

How Do I Set My Campaign Goals?

The most common issue we see in marketing teams isn't a lack of budget; it's the lack of a well-defined goal.
When your goals aren't defined upfront, you end up optimising for the wrong metric, which leads to wasted spend and misleading learnings.

> 💡 ***For example: If you're running a new product launch campaign, the right success metric is Impressions — not ROAS!***

Start By Defining Objectives by Context

Your goals will shift based on SKU, city, keyword type, time of day, and asset. Before launching anything, get clear on which of these contexts you're optimizing for and why.

Here's a simple cheat sheet to help you get started —

Dimension	Type	What Success Looks Like
SKU	*High Market Share, High ROAS*	*Strong ROAS and steady growth in visibility & market share*
	High Market Share, Low ROAS	*Improved ROAS through optimized budgets and bids*
	Low Market Share, High ROAS	*Improved SOV through rank targeting*
	Low Market Share, Low ROAS	*Increase spend till a read on ROAS is established at a spend threshold*
	New Launches	*High visibility and healthy first-time trials*

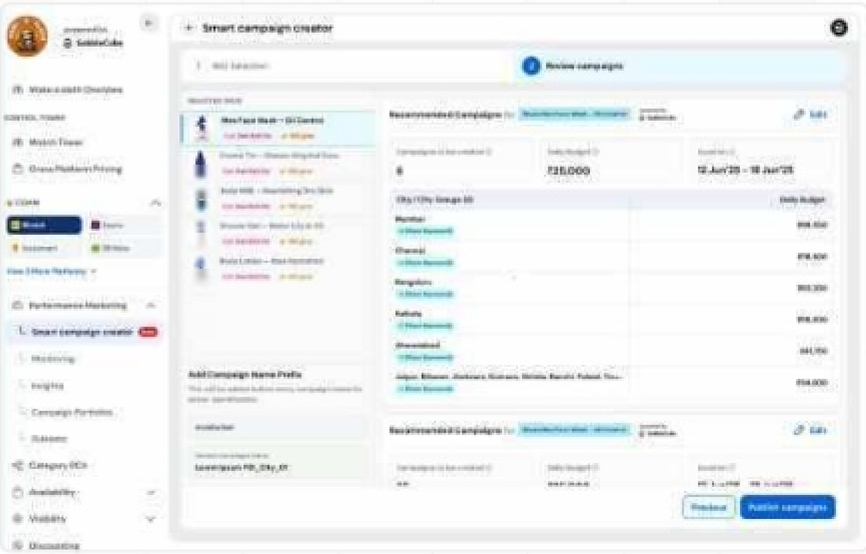
Dimension	Type	What Success Looks Like
City	*High ROAS, High Market Share*	*Maintain dominance and efficiency in top-performing cities*
	High ROAS, Low Market Share	*Growing impressions and market presence without losing ROAS*
	Low ROAS, High Market Share	*Improved ROAS through reduced spent leakages*
	Low ROAS, Low Market Share	*Low-budget testing to evaluate whether the city is worth scaling*
Keyword Type	*Brand Keywords*	*Branded keywords should only be used for defense . Not more than 15% of the portfolio budget must be allocated to branded keyword*
	Generic Keywords	*New user acquisition*
	Competitor Keywords	*Affordable acquisition from competitor audiences*

Dimension	Type	What Success Looks Like
Time of Day	*High CPM, High Intent Slots*	*Paying the lowest possible CPM for top ranks in premium hours*
	High CPM, Low Intent Slots	*Minimal spend; avoid wasting budget*
	Low CPM, High Intent Slots	*Highest ROAS, capturing traffic when others go out of budget*
	Low CPM, Low Intent Slots	*Light presence at the cheapest bids*
Asset Type	*Search-Based Assets*	*Efficient conversions and strong ROAS*
	Visibility-Based Assets	*Maximum reach, impression share, and brand recall*

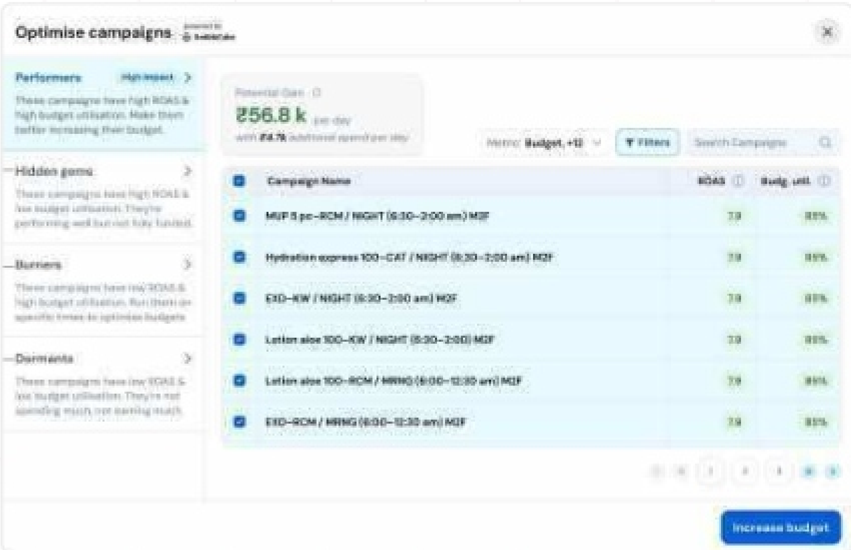
Too overwhelming? We've got you covered!

- ***The Initialization Agent that builds your full setup, from budgets, SKUs, cities, and starting bids, grounded in historic off-take, market share, and ROAS.***
- ***The Optimization Agent then takes over, adjusting budgets and bids dynamically based on real performance signals and campaign KPIs.***

Try it for your brand for free – [Request Info]



The Initialization Agent



The Optimization Agent

Another layer (for marketing nerds): Intra vs. Inter Campaign Optimization

- Inter-campaign optimisation is everything between campaigns: reallocating budgets between different campaigns based on their performance to maximise overall efficiency and ensure every rupee flows to the highest-return pocket to achieve
- *Intra-campaign optimisation is all about what happens inside the campaign: tuning keywords, adjusting bids & changing campaign budgets to achieve well-defined campaign objectives*

Finally, How Do I Ensure My Campaigns Are Optimized for Cross-Platform Performance?

Treat every platform as an investment asset, guided by expected performance. At an SKU-level, each platform should be viewed as a reallocation of budgets between high-performing and low-performing, depending on how efficiently it drives outcomes for that specific SKU.

Try this:

1. Allocate budgets at a category level and split them across SKUs or SKU groups and cities. (Each SKU–city combination should have clear objectives and defined KPIs)

2. Based on SKU and city performance across platforms, budgets should be reallocated dynamically. Inter-platform optimization should occur at the SKU–city level or at the level of grouped SKUs and grouped cities, ensuring capital flows to the highest-return pockets.

4. Keyword Strategy & Selection

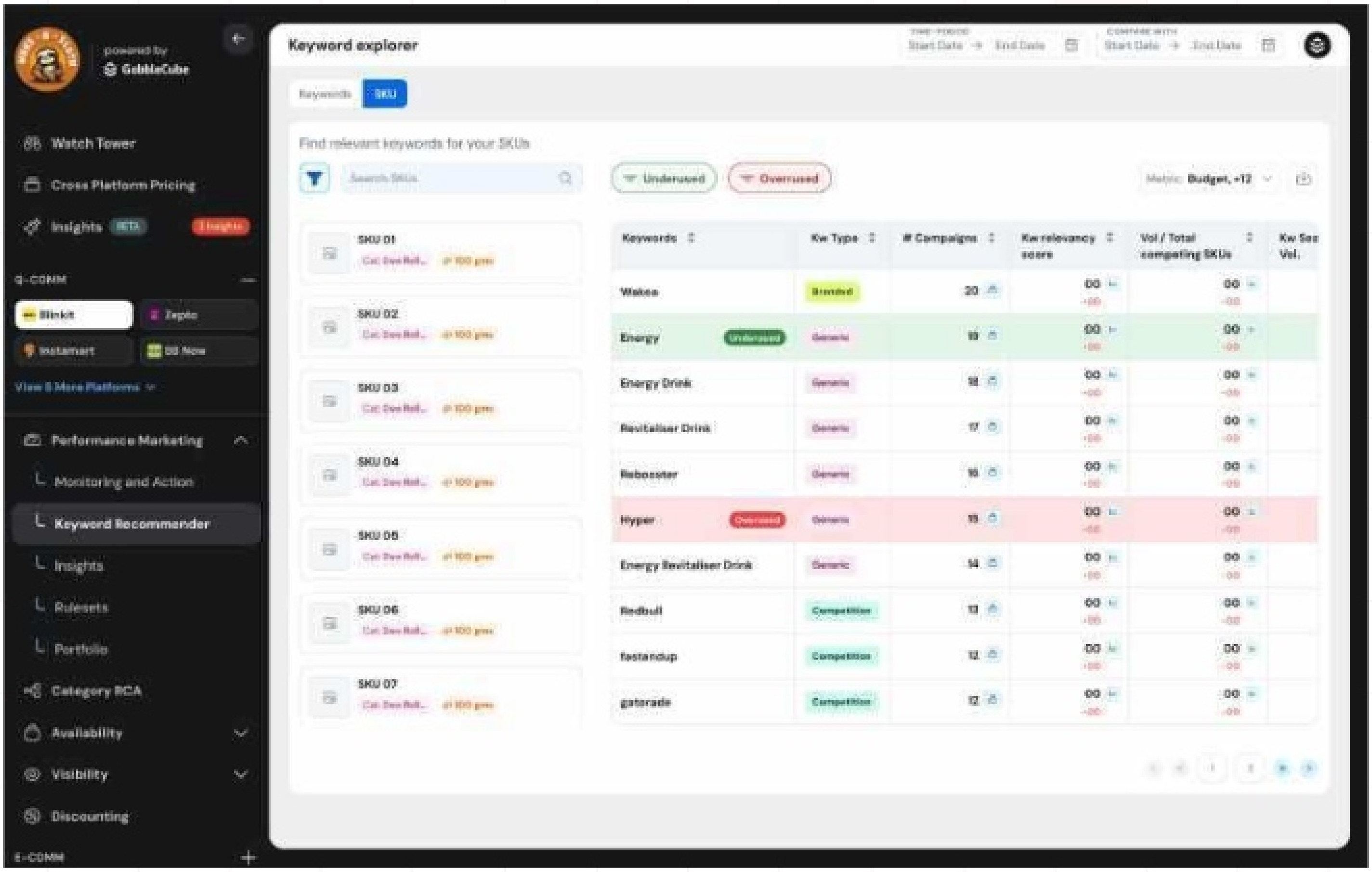
Underrated & Most Important Lever: Choosing The Right (& Relevant) Keywords

Times have changed; brands can no longer depend solely on basic keyword volume research to decide which keywords to bid on.

Modern QComm advertising requires a deeper lens: one that factors user behaviour, intent patterns, and competitive intensity alongside search demand.

Key Principle: Identify keywords that you are not winning and should win & identify the right SKU to win it with!

We've broken down the complete methodology of choosing the right keywords in QComm Growth Playbook – Part 1 (Section 1), if you'd like to explore it in detail: Download QComm Growth Playbook



📣 *At GobbleCube , we've built a KW recommendation agent that adds keywords to campaigns based on campaign objectives. Keywords are re-selected based on KW volumes, relevancy, and advertiser intensity to add to campaigns where they are not yet present*

Want to see it in action? Request free trial

Case Study

Dry Fruit Mix Experiment by Farmley

Pankaj Goyal from Farmley shared an insightful experiment they conducted using keyword analysis and customer intent on platforms, specifically focusing on dry fruit mix products.

Experiment Details

Objective: Farmley wanted to crack a high-volume, highly competitive keyword: "dry fruit"

What they discovered:

Instead of chasing individual nut keywords, they realised "dry fruit" was a broad-intent term, and they could win it more effectively with a mixed dry-fruit SKU than with single-nut products.

Experimental Findings

1. **Broad Keyword Insight:**
- Customers were searching for generic terms like "dry fruit" instead of specific nuts
- Many customers were open to trying mixed dry fruit options

1. **Search Behavior:**
    - Instead of searching for specific nuts like almonds or cashews, customers were more interested in mixed dry fruit options
    - This suggested a broader customer intent beyond individual nut purchases

Experimental Approach

- They started bidding on broader keywords like "dry fruit"
- Showed their mixed dry fruit products in search results for these generic terms

Results

- The experiment revealed new customer acquisition opportunities
- Discovered that customers were willing to explore mixed dry fruit options
- Gained insights into customer search behaviors and preferences

Key Takeaways

- **Keyword Flexibility:** Don't just focus on specific product keywords
- **Customer Intent:** Understand broader search behaviors
- **Experimentation:** Use data tools to uncover hidden market opportunities

Business Impact

By understanding and targeting broader search terms, Farmley was not only able to expand their product's visibility but were able to drive 3X% ROAS.

5. Budgeting, Bidding & Rank Efficiency

What Should Be My Budget & Bidding Strategy For Achieving the Campaign Goal?

With auctions, intent, and competition shifting every hour on quick commerce, the highest marketing ROI can only be generated when every decision you make, whether it's about what to test, how much budget to allocate, or how fast you act on the signals, all of it HAS to work and change at lightning speed.

In this world, optimization isn't optional — it's a necessity!

Budgeting Strategies: Pacing Your Spend Intelligently

Different brands need different pacing models depending on how traffic, intent, and platform behavior evolve through the day.

Strategy	How it Works	When to Use
Uniform Pacing	Budget is distributed evenly across all slots and hours.	For stable demand patterns or early testing when you want consistent data across time bands.
Front-Loading	Higher budget allocation in early or high-intent slots.	When you know where demand peaks (e.g., morning grocery runs or evening snacking hours). Great for maximizing returns in competitive slots.
Hybrid Pacing	Combines both — initial front-loading with adaptive throttling later	When you want the balance between coverage and control, especially in categories where user intent shifts through the day.

How Do I Optimize Bids?

While pacing manages *when* you spend, bidding determines *how* smartly you compete

Strategy	Description	Best Used When
Static Bidding	Fixed bids across slots or hours.	Used when testing baselines or operating in low-volatility categories.
Temporal Bidding	Bids vary based on what rank one needs to target in a particular time slot	Used when consumer and advertiser behaviour shifts through the day

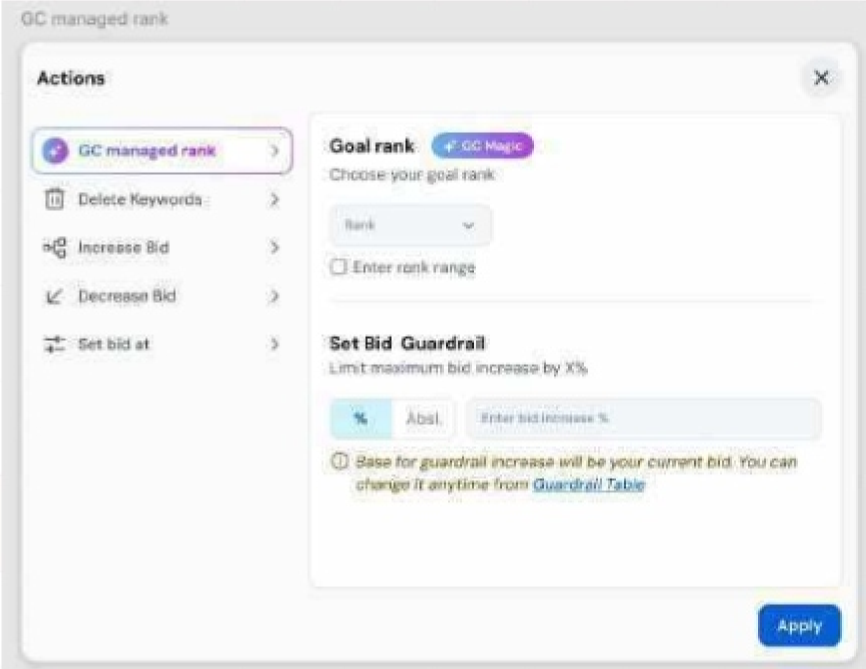
Static bids help you **set the foundation;** Temporal bids help you **capitalize on intent in motion.**

Framework for Rank & Bid Efficiency

Always aim to capture the lowest possible CPM for the rank that delivers the best conversions.

This requires continual experimentation and slot-wise analysis, because efficiency shifts hour by hour.

💡 ***At GobbleCube, we've built an agent which helps you achieve the targeted Ad rank with the least possible bid.***



How Can I Optimize For Out-of-Budget Campaigns?

High-performing campaigns should never be allowed to go out of Budget! Here's a simple decision framework to help you navigate this situation:

1. Creating An Alerting & Actioning System

Set up continuous alerting and actioning systems that top up budgets the moment a high-performing campaign goes on hold, so you never lose momentum during peak intent moments.

> 💡 ***Sounds complex? We've built an AI agent that handles this in real time. It monitors performance, detects pauses instantly, and auto-replenishes budgets, keeping your best campaigns live and visible at peak intent moments.***
>
> ***Want to see it in action? Request free trial***

2. Use smart pacing across the day

Instead of dumping money early and going OOB by afternoon, use hybrid pacing + day-parting to spread budgets across time slots based on each slot's CPM, conversion %, and competitive intensity.

This ensures you're available at the right hours, not just the expensive ones.

6. Clustering Cities & SKU-City Experimentation

No two cities behave the same, clustering your campaigns the right way

QComm behaves differently across cities, even within the same state. What's "premium" in one metro might be "value" in another.
To truly benefit from granular learnings:

- **Cluster cities** that share similar objectives or behavioural patterns into campaigns, and NOT based on geographies or conventional methods.
- Keep clusters tight, similar audience density, demand curves, and delivery ecosystems.
- Treat each cluster as its own test lab, learn, replicate, and then scale.

> 💡 **Another layer (for marketing nerds): Intra vs. Inter Campaign Optimization**
>
> - ***Inter-campaign optimisation is everything between campaigns: reallocating budgets between different campaigns based on their performance to maximise overall efficiency and ensure every rupee flows to the highest-return pocket to achieve.***
> - ***Intra-campaign optimisation is all about what happens inside the campaign: tuning keywords, adjusting bids & changing campaign budgets to achieve well-defined campaign objectives.***

How do you ensure your campaigns are optimised for all QComm platforms?

Treat every platform as an investment asset, guided by expected performance. At an SKU-level, each platform should be viewed as either a receiver or a donor of budget, depending on how efficiently it drives outcomes for that specific SKU.
Try this:

- Allocate budgets at a category level and split them across SKUs or SKU groups and cities. (Each SKU–city combination should have clear objectives and defined KPIs)

Case Study #1:

Go Zero's SKU X City Level Experiment

Objective

Identify which ice-cream flavours convert best during different time slots of the day across Delhi and Mumbai.

Approach

1. Ran campaigns for the "ice-cream cups" category featuring four flavours: Mango, Mocha, Belgian, and Blueberry
2. Tested performance across two cities: Delhi (DL) and Mumbai (MUM)
3. Evaluated direct revenue, ROAS, and time-slot conversion patterns

Results:

Hypothesis	Hypothesis
Evergreen Flavours	**Mango & Blueberry** performed consistently across all time slots, driving ~55% of ad revenue with direct **ROAS >1**
Time-Specific Flavours	Belgian & Mocha converted better in the post 7 PM window
Delhi Nuances	Delhi shoppers showed stronger preference for Mango & Blueberry across both revenue and ROAS
Mumbai Nuances	**Blueberry peaked** during **8 AM–2 PM** and **post-9 PM; Mocha** dominated **6 PM–9 PM**

Consumer Insight:

1. In Delhi, consumers are frequently exposed to multiple chocolate-heavy flavours in the top search results, creating flavour fatigue (making Mango and Blueberry feel fresher and more appealing with new colours & reducing cognitive load)
2. In Mumbai, the top results include more variety (vanilla, raspberry, etc.), so this fatigue effect does not apply, leading to different flavour peaking patterns

Key Takeaways:

- Flavour preference is both time-slot-specific and city-specific
- Evergreen flavours (Mango, Blueberry) can anchor all-day campaigns
- Time-sensitive flavours (Mocha, Belgian) perform best in evening windows
- Local search behaviour and flavour fatigue play a major role in QComm conversion patterns

7. The Critical Feedback Loop

Why Experimentation Alone Will Not Work!

Many performance teams still analyze results monthly or weekly. But in QComm, a day can be a week, and a week can be an era.

Once your pacing, bidding, and location structure are set, the system should never stand still.

Experiment → Learn → Reallocate → Recalibrate → Repeat

Every day, you'll find micro-pockets of inefficiency or untapped demand. Reallocating even 5–10% of daily budget toward high-performing slots or clusters can unlock compounding gains.

So, feedback must be continuous!

The modern feedback loop looks like this — an adaptive system that learns, unlearns, and relearns faster than the environment changes

Part 3

Off-Platform → On-Platform Linkage & Flywheel

1. Off Platform Linkage

How Off-Platform Demand Actually Appears on QComm

Off-platform marketing (Meta, Google, Influencers) is not separate from QComm; it is a primary demand source. The goal here is Attribution: You need to prove that your off-platform spend is driving QComm orders so you can confidently allocate budget to it.

Most people think "off-platform = separate from QComm". But almost everything you do off-platform eventually lands inside your Quick Commerce platforms. It just shows up in four different ways.

Path 1: Direct Deep Link → Order

This is the cleanest, most trackable flow.

- A user clicks "**Buy on Blinkit/Zepto/Instamart/BBnow or Flipkar Minutes**" from a Meta/ Google ad, influencer post, email, WhatsApp, etc.
- Lands directly on your PDP/collection.
- Places an order.
- You can track this through tagged deep links or platform dashboards (where supported).

This is your **hard, lower-bound attribution.**

Path 2: Brand Recall → Brand Search

This is where most off-platform impact goes.

- User sees you on Meta, YouTube, OOH, a reel, etc.
- Later opens their preferred QComm app
- Types **your brand name or your brand + category**
- Order is logged as **branded** search (paid or organic)

This is not credited to the off-platform channel, but the demand was built off-platform.

Path 3: Brand Recall → Generic Search/Browse

Sometimes users don’t remember your brand name — only your promise

- “high-protein cookies”
- “BLDC fan”
- “sugar-free mithai”

They search for this generic term or browse the category. And choose your brand because it “feels familiar”
The platform logs this as a non-brand search or category browse, but you earned that familiarity elsewhere

Path 4: Brand Recall → Repeat & Recommendations

This is silent, but powerful.

- User has already bought your product once
- Off-platform keeps the brand top-of-mind
- Next time they reorder via Buy Again, Recently Ordered, Recommended for you

This appears as repeat / recommendation-led orders, which is a type of organic brand demand.

The Budget Rule

The Logic: If you can prove via Geo-Lift (Test vs. Control cities) or Time-Series (Baseline vs. Campaign) that off-platform spend is driving these 4 paths, then that channel deserves a dedicated QComm budget.
The Action: Don't starve efficient channels just because they don't generate a "Direct Deep Link" sale. If the ecosystem lift is there, fund it.

2. The Flywheel

Defining the Flywheel

The Flywheel is defined by one specific metric: Rising sales from Organic Non-Brand Keywords.

- **The Problem (The "Rent" Trap):** When you rely on Paid Ads (Brand or Non-Brand, including Meta/Google, etc), you are effectively "paying rent" for every customer. Your marketing costs stay high, squeezing your Contribution Margin 2 (CM2).
- **The Solution (The Discovery Shift):** The Flywheel spins when the platform's algorithm, not your ad budget,starts showing your product to users searching for generic terms (e.g., "Best Face Wash" or "Healthy Snacks").

The Economic Impact: Why CM2 Finally Improves

This is the only phase in the QComm life cycle where your unit economics fundamentally change.

- Before Flywheel: You pay for visibility. High CAC (Customer Acquisition Cost) leads to suppressed CM2.
- During Flywheel: Your high sales velocity (initially driven by ads) convinces the algorithm that you are a "best-seller."
- The Result: The algorithm ranks you #1 organically for generic terms. You start acquiring customers for free.
  - Marketing Cost: Drops drastically.
  - CM2: Expands significantly because the "rent" (ad spend) is removed from the unit cost.

Arata's QComm Marketing Playbook

Objective: Boost visibility and sales efficiency across QComm platforms (Blinklt, Zepto, Instamart, BBNow & Flipkart Minutes) while maintaining ROI and margin discipline.

Approach:

1. Visibility-Led Activation

- Prioritised high-impact banner placements during key buying hours (7–9 PM)
- Used moment-based visibility (payday, festive, weekend themes)
- Activated an influencer-led collaboration with QComm platforms to amplify reach

2. Tactical Discounting

- Ran **1-day tactical bursts** to spike rank and discoverability
- Added **3–4% cart coupons** for NTB users to improve AOV without heavy discounting
- Matched discounts with ecommerce to stay competitive
- Created selective deal cycles for slow-moving SKUs

3. Platform-Specific Targeting

- Drove traffic from Meta with platform-tailored messaging (*eg:youth-centric platforms vs. family-centric platforms*)
- Ran geo-focused campaigns aligned to **real-time availability insights** from GobbleCube
- Leveraged **CPAS + dynamic audiences** for sharper conversions
- Used **dayparting** to focus spend on high-intent windows

4. Creative Strategy

- Highlighted quick delivery + product authenticity in Meta creatives
- Used GIFs and carousels to showcase instant results and simple routines

Results

Metric	Outcome
Visibility ROI	*3× better vs generic QComm campaigns*

Metric	Outcome
Sales Velocity	*30–40% higher during tactical bursts*
SKU Strategy	*Identified hero SKUs and optimised weekly push*
Efficiency	*Reduced waste by comparing* **paid vs organic ranks** *and pausing inefficient keywords*

Key Takeaways:

- Short, high-impact visibility bursts outperform long discount cycles
- Aligning ads with stock availability prevents wasted spend
- Consistent messaging + tight control on inventory drives profitable growth in QComm

Part 4

JBP Framework & What's Next

Why JBP Needs to Evolve

For years, Joint Business Plans (JBPs) have been transactional: a negotiation over rates, slots, and fixed budgets. But as Quick Commerce matures, the best brands know that Category Managers (CMs) are not vendors; they are growth partners.

The old model of "buying slots" is inefficient. The new model is about building an infrastructure that allows both the platform and the brand to scale sustainably.

What Platforms Actually Care About (The 4 KRAs)

To build a winning JBP, you must solve for the Platform's Scorecard. Category Managers are optimizing for four specific metrics:

- Category Growth: Growing the total pie (GMV), not just shifting share between brands.
- Take Rate (Monetization): The combination of Commission + Ad Revenue; they prioritize partners who drive category-level economics.
- Unit Economics: Reducing wasted logistics costs (like returns and long wait times) to improve the total profit pool.
- User Experience: Ensuring the best products are always in stock (OSA) because stock outs kill user retention.

How Founders Should Negotiate Against These KRAs (A VCs Lens)

We advise portfolio companies to stop negotiating for "cheaper ads" and start negotiating for "Strategic Alignment".

Be a partner helping the platform achieve their goals. If you align your growth with their P&L, you move from a transactional vendor to a strategic brand.

The Four JBP Levers That Actually Move the Needle

Pillar 1: The "Growth Envelope" (Moving from CapEx to OpEx)

The Old Way: "We have a fixed marketing budget of ₹15 Lakhs for this quarter"

Why it fails: It caps the CM's upside. If the category explodes, the brand runs out of fuel, and the CM loses momentum

The Partner Way: **"GMV-Linked Investment Tiers"**

- We propose a Variable Investment Model. Instead of a ceiling, we set a floor and a percentage.

The Pitch: "Our investors are happy to spend more as long as efficiency holds. Let's agree that if we hit ₹5 Cr GMV, we invest 10%. But if we hit ₹7 Cr, we automatically unlock a 12% investment tier. We want to be an uncapped partner in your growth"

The Win: The CM sees a partner who doubles down on success, not one who pulls the plug when the budget runs out.

Pillar 2: Operational Excellence as a Currency

The Old Way: "We want free banners (FOC) because our margins are tight.".

Why it fails: It sounds like a discount request. CMs have limited inventory and high demand.

The Partner Way: "Efficiency-Based Velocity Kickers"

- VCs value capital efficiency. Platforms value inventory velocity.

The Pitch: "We commit to a 95% Fill Rate and Top-Tier On-Shelf Availability (OSA). We know that stockouts hurt your platform's retention. In exchange for this reliability, we request 'Velocity Kickers'—bonus visibility slots that are unlocked only when we maintain these high operational standards"

The Win: You position the "free" visibility not as a handout, but as a reward for being a reliable infrastructure partner. You are helping the CM deliver a better customer experience.

Pillar 3: The "Reinvestment" Pact (Supply Chain x Marketing)

The Old Way: "We need you to reduce MOQs and fines because they are eating our P&L."

Why it fails: It looks like the brand is trying to pocket the margin.

The Partner Way: "The Marketing Reinvestment Clause"

- This is the ultimate alignment lever.

The Pitch: "Our Board demands unit economic discipline. Currently, supply chain inefficiencies (e.g., rigid appointment slots, high RTOs) are bleeding capital. We propose a pact: 100% of the savings generated from optimizing these supply chain terms will be reinvested directly back into platform marketing"
The Win: You arm the CM with a powerful argument to take to their internal Supply Chain/Ops teams: "Help me fix this brand's logistics, and they will pour that money right back into our ad revenue."

Pillar 4: Building the Category, Not Just the Brand

The Old Way: "Give us the top slot."

- Why it fails: It's a zero-sum game against other brands.

The Partner Way: "Innovation & Exclusivity"

- CMs need to differentiate their platform from competitors.

The Pitch: "We want to help you win against the market. We will launch Platform-Exclusive SKUs (e.g., a special 'Party Pack' or a new flavor) for 60 days. We use our external media to drive traffic to your app, and you support the launch with 'New Arrival' visibility"
The Win: The CM gets a unique selling proposition (USP) that drives new users to the platform.

2. Supply Chain × Marketing Sync

The Final Lever: Syncing Supply Chain with Your Marketing Campaigns

Marketing and supply chain are two sides of the same growth equation. Performance teams can't operate in isolation from demand and availability signals anymore.

Function	Focus	Opportunity
Marketing	*Creates demand and visibility*	*Needs real-time availability cues*
Supply Chain	*Fulfills demand efficiently*	*Needs demand forecasting and category velocity inputs*

When both speak to each other, growth becomes self-reinforcing.

Campaigns should adapt dynamically to **stock availability, lead times, and regional velocity** — turning data into decisions across both demand and supply.

> 💡 ***The next evolution of performance marketing is not just faster ads, it's smarter orchestration between marketing and supply chain.***

To Be Continued...

Hey there, if you made it till here — thank you! That's all we've covered for this edition, but we're far from done.

In the next playbook, we'll go deeper into how to align demand forecasting with campaign design, so your marketing doesn't just create demand, it helps your supply chain stay one step ahead.