

META ADS PLAYBOOK · 2026 EDITION

The Meta Ads Creative Audit

A 12-point checklist to stop draining your ROAS — for D2C & Shopify founders running Facebook & Instagram ads.

5 mistakes → fixes

12-point checklist

Placement specs

START HERE

Your budget probably isn't the problem

Virexo Media is an ecommerce growth agency for D2C & Shopify brands. We build and scale Meta ad accounts for a living — and we wrote this for founders spending real money on Facebook and Instagram who suspect their *creative*, not their budget, is the bottleneck. Use it as a working checklist before your next launch.

The 2026 reality: Meta's "Andromeda" overhaul made your creative the primary signal the system uses to find buyers. Targeting and budget still matter — but the algorithm reads the ad itself (hook, format, offer) to decide who sees it.

Treat creative as decoration and you're optimizing the wrong lever. The upside: creative is the part you fully control. The next pages give you the five mistakes that quietly drain ROAS, the fixes, a 12-point audit you can run today, and the placement specs most stores get wrong.

WHERE YOU STAND — 2026 META ECOMMERCE BENCHMARKS

1.9–3.4×

ROAS (MEDIAN)

\$30–\$38

CPA (MEDIAN)

~2.2%

CTR (MEDIAN)

~\$13.50

CPM

Industry medians, not a Virexo promise — use them as a sanity check, not a target; your margin and AOV decide what "good" is. Sources: 27five, Triple Whale, Ryze (2026).

5 mistakes quietly killing your ROAS

1 Your ads look like ads

STOP

Studio-lit, logo-forward, perfectly polished “campaign” creative. It pattern-matches as an ad in the first 1.5 seconds and gets scrolled.

START

Feed-native creative — product on a real counter, a quick phone clip, a hand holding the package, sticky-note overlays. It earns attention before the viewer decides to scroll.

2 One size, every placement

STOP

Uploading a single 1:1 (or landscape) asset and running it everywhere. Wrong ratios get letterboxed, scream “ad,” and Meta quietly raises your CPM.

START

Build to placement — 4:5 for Feed, 9:16 for Stories/Reels. Keep text and logos out of the top/bottom unsafe zones so nothing gets covered by the UI.

3 Too few creatives

STOP

Launching 2–3 ads and calling it a test. Creative underinvestment — not targeting — is the most common reason accounts stall at scale.

START

Ship in concepts, not one-offs. Aim for a handful of distinct angles (problem, proof, offer, demo, founder story), each in 2–3 formats, every refresh cycle.

4 Set-and-forget fatigue (and messy tests)

STOP

Running one winner until performance bleeds out — or changing audience, creative and budget at once, so you can never tell what moved the number.

START

Watch frequency and 3-second hold rate; refresh *before* fatigue. Change one variable at a time so the result is readable.

5 No clear offer, weak hook, mismatched page

STOP

Pretty ads with no reason to act, a hook that arrives at second 4, and a click that lands on a generic homepage.

START

Lead with the offer in the first 1.5s, make the hook a real pain or outcome, and send the click to a page that repeats the exact promise. Message match beats most targeting tweaks.

Rule of thumb: *if you can't tell within three seconds what's being sold and why it matters to you, neither can your customer — or the algorithm.*

The 12-point creative audit

Score your current ads honestly. Anything you can't check is your highest-leverage fix this week.

- ✓ The first **1.5 seconds** shows the product, the hook, or the offer — not a logo intro.
- ✓ The ad could pass as **organic content** in the feed.
- ✓ Built natively in **4:5 (Feed)** and **9:16 (Stories/Reels)**.
- ✓ Critical text and logo sit inside the **safe zone** (top & bottom kept clear of the UI).
- ✓ **On-screen captions** are on — most feed views are muted.
- ✓ At least **4–5 distinct concepts** are live, not variations of one.
- ✓ Each concept covers a different **angle**: problem, proof, offer, demo, founder.
- ✓ A clear, specific **offer** appears on the creative itself.
- ✓ The **hook** names a real pain or concrete outcome in the first line.
- ✓ **One variable** changes per test; a naming convention keeps results readable.
- ✓ **Frequency** is monitored; fatigued creatives are refreshed on a set cadence.
- ✓ The **destination page** repeats the ad's exact promise (message match).

Placement & format cheat sheet

PLACEMENT	RATIO	BEST FOR	KEEP CLEAR
Feed (FB & IG)	4:5	Primary conversions	~14% top & bottom
Stories	9:16	Full-screen immersion	top ~14% / bottom ~20%
Reels	9:16	Cheap reach + discovery	bottom ~20% (UI + caption)
Right column / search	1:1	Supplemental	center the subject

Video under ~15 seconds consistently leads engagement for ecommerce. When in doubt, build vertical-first and crop up, not down.

5 quick wins you can ship this week

- Turn your 3 best organic posts or UGC clips into ads — native and already proven.
- Add bold, readable captions to every video.
- Re-export your top creative natively in **4:5** and **9:16**.
- Write 3 new hooks, each naming a different customer pain.
- Point every ad at a landing page that mirrors its exact promise.

AVOID THESE

Common pitfalls

- ✗ Boosting posts and calling it a strategy.
- ✗ Judging a creative on day one — let the data settle.
- ✗ Killing winners by editing them mid-flight (duplicate instead).
- ✗ “Brand” videos with no offer and no reason to act.
- ✗ Beautiful ads pointing at a broken mobile landing page.

What “good” looks like

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE · HYPOTHETICAL

A Shopify store spending ~\$15k/mo on Meta is stuck near the bottom of the ROAS range with three polished video ads. They rebuild around **five native concepts** — UGC unboxing, founder story, problem/solution, offer, review wall — ship each in 4:5 and 9:16, add captions, and match each ad to a dedicated landing page.

Over a few refresh cycles, hook rate and CTR climb and blended ROAS moves toward the benchmark range. *The numbers here are hypothetical, to illustrate the method — not a guaranteed outcome.*

WANT THIS DONE FOR YOU?

We build Meta ad creative that doesn't look like an ad.

Virexo Media builds and scales Facebook & Instagram ad creative for D2C & Shopify brands — native concepts, correct placements, structured testing, and landing pages that match the promise.

- **Book a call at virexomedia.com**
- **Or send us your ad account — we'll tell you the first 3 things we'd fix.**

We teach first and sell second — but if you'd rather ship winning creative than audit your own, you've found the team that does this daily.