For years her company earned a cut on every payment. Then India built a way to pay that charged the shop nothing.

WOMEN WHO BUILT IT

MobiKwik

Upasana Taku
Co-founder
Founded 2009

THE ZERO	THE BET	THE PEAK	THE NOW
A US career left behind for a flat in Dwarka	**Mobile recharges, then a wallet: load once, pay anywhere**	**Listed on NSE and BSE in December 2024**	**Q1 FY27 profit ₹7.6 cr, a third profitable quarter**

ABOUT THE FOUNDER

Upasana Taku studied engineering at **NIT Jalandhar**, then took a master's at **Stanford** and worked in the United States. In 2009 she came back to India to build a payments company with **Bipin Preet Singh**, out of a small flat in Dwarka.

MobiKwik began with mobile recharges, then became a wallet, then added a payment gateway (**Zaakpay**), loans and investments. In 2016 demonetisation sent people to wallets overnight. The same year, UPI arrived.

THE TURNING POINT UPI moved money bank to bank, with no wallet, and the shop paid nothing. What the business had stood on became free.

IN THE NEWS NOW 28–29 Sep 2026

Upasana Taku buys more MobiKwik shares: ₹2.12 crore, stake up to 10.24%.

She bought 1.07 lakh shares on the NSE and has bought **2.94 lakh since the IPO**. An insider buy is a signal, not proof. A **0.4% UPI fee** on larger merchant payments is due from 15 Oct, and may slip to January.

THE ROAD, IN SEVEN STOPS



IN HER WORDS

> **"The revenues that we've been earning on all of this has been zero, and it is a huge drag on our portfolios."**
>
> On UPI · Business Today, 16 Sep 2026

> **"Almost all payment companies have reported that the cost of processing a transaction just in terms of server cost itself is 20 paise."**
>
> Business Today, 16 Sep 2026

> **"Please give at least some slice of the UPI, please monetise it."**
>
> On what the industry has asked for · Business Today, 16 Sep 2026

01
Know what your price rests on.
A fee someone else can set to zero is borrowed ground.

02
Zero is arithmetic, not bad luck.
Multiply any number of payments by a fee of zero and nothing is left.

03
Move to where money is still made.
Loans, a gateway, investments. Page 5 shows whether the move paid.

* Illustrative wallet fee, costs and payment counts are teaching numbers, not MobiKwik's data. UPI fee status as reported on 8–10 Oct 2026; no final decision found.

Don’t look at the payment. Follow the money out of it.

QUESTION 1 · FROM THE SCRIPT

You pay ₹100. What does the payments app keep?



10 CR PAYMENTS × 50 PAISE **= ₹5 cr / month**

Illustrative. On UPI the shop pays nothing: 10 cr × ₹0 = ₹0. Teaching numbers, not MobiKwik’s data.

WATCH THE FEE VS WHAT IS KEPT

₹1.50 is what the shop **pays**. 50 paise is what the app **keeps**, after the bank’s charges and cashback. Only the second number multiplies into revenue.

30-SECOND SANITY CHECK

Baseline: ₹1.50 − ₹1.00 = 50 paise × 10 cr = **₹5 cr**.

TEST Costs at ₹1.20, not ₹1.00: 30 paise, ₹3 cr **(−40%)**. At ₹0.80: 70 paise, ₹7 cr **(+40%)**. The cost line moves the answer most.

CONCEPT Take rate · follow the money

PLAIN WORDS	MBA TERM	MOBIKWIK
Trace one payment and count what stays with you.	Take rate; unit economics per transaction.	₹100 paid → ₹1.50 fee → ₹1 of costs → 50 paise kept.

CONCEPT Disruption · the STD-booth rule

PLAIN WORDS	MBA TERM	MOBIKWIK
Something cheaper arrives and your price becomes impossible. Nobody bans you.	Disruptive innovation (Christensen).	Phones made the STD booth’s price impossible. UPI did that to the wallet fee.

QUESTION 2 · THE CTA

You’re running MobiKwik. ₹200 cr — more lending, or win back payments?

	PAYMENTS (WIN BACK)	LENDING (PUSH HARDER)
Revenue, Q1 FY27 *(reported)*	₹208.1 cr (−2%)	₹73.3 cr **(+26%)**
Gross profit *(reported)*	₹77.7 cr (+31%)	₹43.3 cr (+459%, low base)
Gross profit per ₹100 revenue *(derived)*	~₹37	**~₹59**
Main risk	Fee is zero on most UPI	Credit losses; disbursals dipped

THE CALL

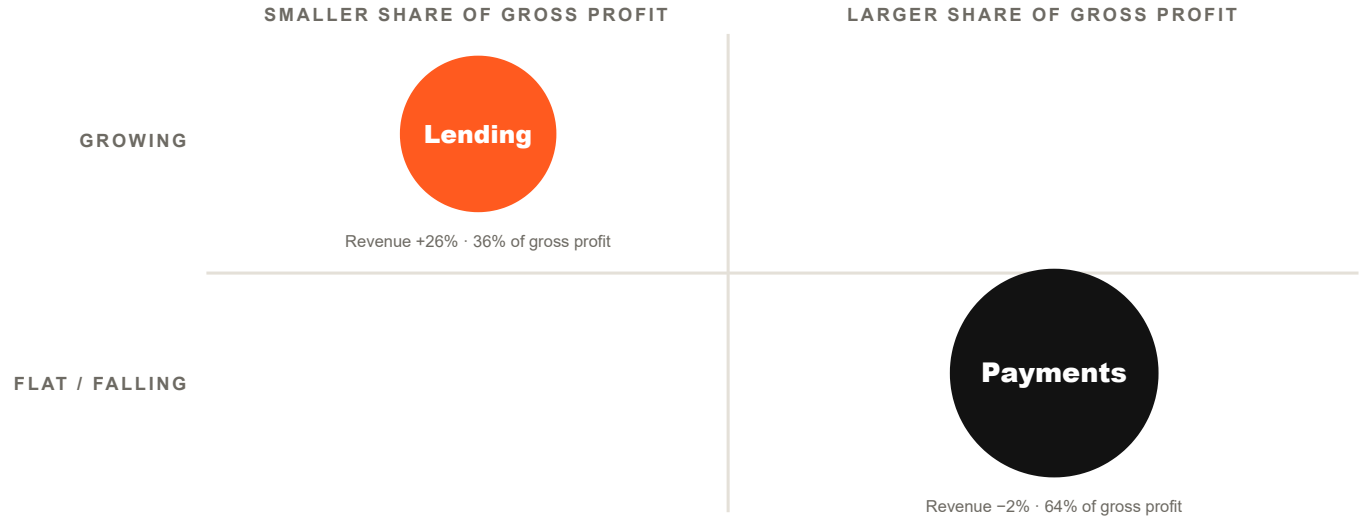
Lead with lending — fund it through the payments base, and release money in tranches.

Working split: ~70% lending / ~30% payments and merchants *(illustrative)*. **Gate:** release each tranche only while net margin on credit stays above 5% (5.9% in Q1 FY27, reported). **Change my mind:** if the 0.4% merchant fee starts and MobiKwik earns a real share of it, payments earn more of the ₹200 cr.

Your comment template: **my call → the framework I used → an example I’ve seen work → what I’d be worried about.**

FRAMEWORK 1 Portfolio view: which business gets the next rupee?

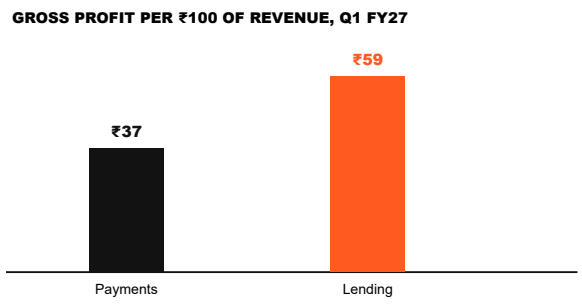
PLAIN WORDS	MBA TERM	MOBIKWIK
Sort each business by growth and by how much profit it carries.	Growth-share (BCG) portfolio matrix.	Payments carries most of the gross profit but isn't growing. Lending is smaller and growing.



Q1 FY27 reported segment figures; shares of gross profit are derived (433 and 777 of 1,210). Placement is our own. Payments gross profit grew 31% on cost cuts even as revenue fell.

FRAMEWORK 2 Gross margin: how much of each rupee is left?

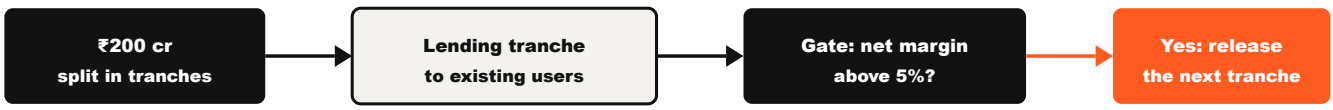
PLAIN WORDS	MBA TERM	MOBIKWIK
Two businesses, same revenue rupee: which one keeps more before overheads?	Gross margin by segment.	Payments revenue ₹208.1 cr, gross profit ₹77.7 cr. Lending revenue ₹73.3 cr, gross profit ₹43.3 cr.



The maths *(derived)*: 77.7 ÷ 208.1 = 37.3%. 43.3 ÷ 73.3 = 59.1%. The company also reports a net margin of 5.87% on credit disbursed, after credit costs. Gross margin isn't profit: credit losses and overheads still come out.

Zero isn't bad luck. It's arithmetic.

APPLY IT How the ₹200 cr decision actually gets made



The gate is our suggestion. Net margin on credit was 5.87% in Q1 FY27 (reported). If it falls below, money goes back to payments.

FRAMEWORK 3 Pivot: the old model against the new one

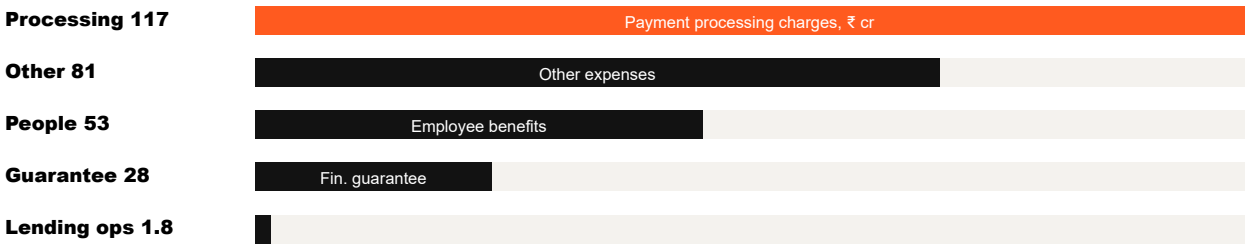
PLAIN WORDS	MBA TERM	MOBIKWIK
Put the old way of earning next to the new one and see what changed.	Business-model pivot; old vs new value proposition.	Taku says even server cost is 20 paise a UPI payment. On 23 cr UPI payments a quarter that is about ₹4.6 cr (derived, illustrative).

	WALLET YEARS	TODAY
What the shop pays on ₹100	₹1.50 *(illustrative)*	**₹0** on standard UPI
How money comes in	A fee on each payment	Recharge and loan commissions, gateway and platform services
Where growth is	Wallet payments	UPI volume (+98%), lending (+26%)

Verdict: the company didn't fight the free rail. It carried it, and moved the earning elsewhere.

FRAMEWORK 4 Cost structure: where does the money go?

PLAIN WORDS	MBA TERM	MOBIKWIK
List the bills by size. The biggest bill is where the business really lives.	Cost structure; cost-to-serve.	Q1 FY27 total expenses ₹281 cr, as reported by Entrackr.



Verdict: payment processing is ~42% of all expenses (derived: 117 ÷ 281). Free payments aren't free to run.

FRAMEWORK 5 Operating leverage: costs fell, revenue didn't

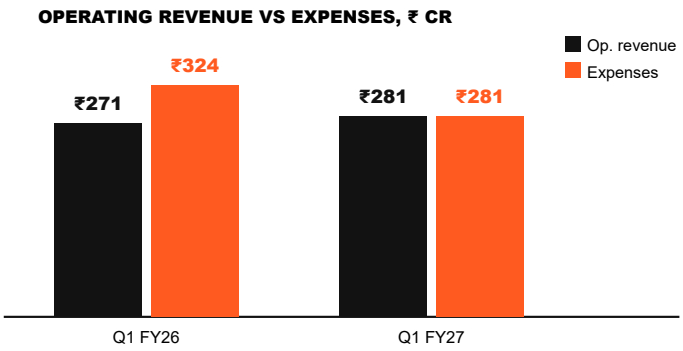
PLAIN WORDS	MBA TERM	MOBIKWIK
When revenue barely moves, cost cuts decide whether you make a profit.	Operating leverage; cost-led turnaround.	Revenue +3.7% in Q1 FY27 while expenses fell 13.3%.

	Q1 FY26	Q1 FY27	CHANGE
Operating revenue	271	281	+3.7%
Total expenses	324	281	**−13.3%**
Net profit / (loss)	(41.9)	**7.6**	swing of ₹49.5 cr

A profit that comes from cutting costs has to be rebuilt on growth.

Segment, cost and profit figures are Q1 FY27 as reported by the company and press; shares, margins and changes are derived. The portfolio placement and the gate are our own assessment.

WHERE MOBIKWIK STANDS TODAY



Reported. Net profit moved from a ₹41.9 cr loss to a ₹7.6 cr profit.

THE PROBLEM THEY FACE RIGHT NOW

1. **The core fee is zero.** UPI volume doubled (+98%) and the company says the revenue on it has been zero.
2. **Payments revenue is still falling.** ₹208.1 cr, −2% YoY, and about three-quarters of all revenue (derived).
3. **Lending isn't at target.** Q1 disbursals of ~₹737 cr against a stated aim of ₹1,000 cr a quarter.
4. **Profit is thin.** ₹7.6 cr on ₹281.5 cr is about 2.7% (derived). Management points to ~₹40 cr profit for FY27.

FIVE TAKEAWAYS

1. Follow one payment, and count what stays with you.
2. Anything multiplied by zero is zero.
3. A fee you don't control can be set to zero.
4. When a price falls to zero, move to where money is still made.
5. An insider buy is a signal, not proof.

THE MISTAKE MUSEUM

- ✖ **Mistaking volume for revenue.** UPI volume doubled; the fee on it stayed zero.
- ✖ **Reading an insider buy as a forecast.** It shows confidence. It doesn't move the numbers.
- ✖ **Calling it a ban.** Wallets still exist. The fee pool is what vanished.

Full loop. In the script you chose between more lending and winning back payments. The company's own numbers lean to lending's margin, yet payments is still about three-quarters of revenue, and a 0.4% merchant fee could change that picture. None of it proves either answer. It shows the question was worth asking.

WHAT TO WATCH NEXT

SIGNAL 1

Does the 0.4% UPI fee start, and who gets a share?

Due 15 Oct for payments above ₹2,000; a delay to January is reported.

SIGNAL 2

Does lending get back to ₹1,000 cr a quarter?

Q1 disbursals were ~₹737 cr.

SIGNAL 3

Does the merchant business keep growing?

Management targets about 25% a quarter. A target, not a result.

Sources: Business Today (16 Sep 2026); Tribune / ANI; Medianama (8 Oct 2026); Entrackr (Aug 2026); Investing.com; HDFC Sky; Inc42; Outlook Business. Illustrative numbers labelled. Not investment advice.

Every term, formula and full form used in this PDF — one page to keep.

FULL FORMS & MEANINGS

UPI	**Unified Payments Interface.** Bank-to-bank payments by phone.
MDR	**Merchant Discount Rate.** The fee a shop pays on a card or UPI payment.
NPCI	**National Payments Corporation of India.** Runs UPI.
GMV	**Gross Merchandise Value.** Total value of payments through the app.
IPO	**Initial Public Offering.** First sale of shares to the public.
EBITDA	**Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation.**
PAT	**Profit After Tax.**
YoY	**Year on year.** Against the same period a year earlier.
Q1 FY27	April to June 2026 (Financial Year 2026–27).
Take rate	The share of each payment the app keeps.
Gross profit	Revenue minus the direct cost of earning it.
Disbursal	Money lent out in a period.
Disruption	A cheaper, simpler alternative that makes the old price impossible.
Insider buy	A founder or promoter buying shares in her own company.

INDIAN NUMBER UNITS

1 lakh = 1,00,000 · 1 crore = 100 lakh = 1,00,00,000
10 crore payments = 100 million.

₹281.5 crore ≈ ₹2.8 billion
₹2.12 crore ≈ ₹21.2 million.

FORMULAS USED

KEPT PER PAYMENT
Fee − costs
₹1.50 − ₹1.00 = 50 paise

MONTHLY TAKE
Payments × kept per payment
10 cr × ₹0.50 = ₹5 cr · on UPI: 10 cr × ₹0 = ₹0

GROSS MARGIN
Gross profit ÷ revenue × 100
77.7 ÷ 208.1 = 37.3% · 43.3 ÷ 73.3 = 59.1%

SHARE OF GROSS PROFIT
Segment ÷ total
777 ÷ 1,210 = 64% · 433 ÷ 1,210 = 36%

COST SHARE
Cost line ÷ total expenses
117 ÷ 281 = 41.6%

PERCENTAGE CHANGE
(New − old) ÷ old × 100
Expenses: (281 − 324) ÷ 324 = −13.3%

THE FRAMEWORKS, IN ONE LINE EACH

Take rate	**What does the app keep?** Fee minus costs, times payments.
Disruption	**Why did the price collapse?** Something cheaper arrived.
Portfolio	**Which business gets the next rupee?**
Gross margin	**How much of each rupee is left?**
Pivot	**What changed in how it earns?**
Cost structure	**Where does the money go?**
Operating leverage	**What if costs fall and revenue doesn't?**