

THE PERFORMANCE MARKETING PLAYBOOK

Truths, Trends, and Growth Levers for Marketing Effectiveness

The old playbook is breaking down. Costs are rising, precise tracking is fading, attention is fragmented, volatility is everywhere, and AI is rewriting the rules in real time. Meanwhile, most teams continue to treat performance marketing as a set of channel-level tactics to optimize.

This playbook reframes performance marketing as a cross-functional discipline. It's not a channel, a team, or a last-click outcome. It's the orchestrated, insight-driven force behind how your brand shows up, converts, and grows in an increasingly complex world. One that organizes media, content, and data across paid, earned, and owned channels to activate buyers along their increasingly complex path to purchase.

We have anchored this framework in five enduring marketing truths. These are “first principles” surrounding how people think, act, and buy. Layered on top: the key, correlating marketing trends reshaping the landscape in 2025.

The result? Fifteen practical growth levers to help marketing leaders cut through noise, align teams, and accelerate outcomes.

THE PLAYBOOK AT A GLANCE

(01) **ENDURING TRUTHS**

The core principles of how consumers think and act, unchanged by trends, platforms, or tools

(02) **CURRENT TRENDS**

The most important shifts in media, technology, and behavior impacting marketers in 2025

(03) **GROWTH LEVERS**

High-impact, actionable moves that drive measurable improvement across your funnel

This is your roadmap to a more strategic, integrated, and effective performance marketing function. It's a playbook that modern CMOs, Directors, and Strategists can use to unify brand and demand, transform volatility into opportunity, and build marketing systems that consistently outperform.

Truth #1

PEOPLE WANT ANSWERS 01

In every product/service category, people are constantly seeking clarity. They are looking for answers that inform, solve problems, and move them closer to a decision. Whether they're casually exploring or urgently looking to buy, today's consumers expect brands to meet their needs with immediacy and authority.

In this era of information overload and knowledge commoditization, the brands that succeed are the ones that consistently provide relevant, trustworthy, and easy-to-access answers. This truth remains foundational regardless of channel or technology. Performance marketing isn't just about promotion. It's about being useful to buyers throughout their customer journey.

The best-performing content wins by answering the right questions better than anyone else, backed by the authority of a trusted brand.

TREND: AI IS RESHAPING HOW CONSUMERS FIND ANSWERS

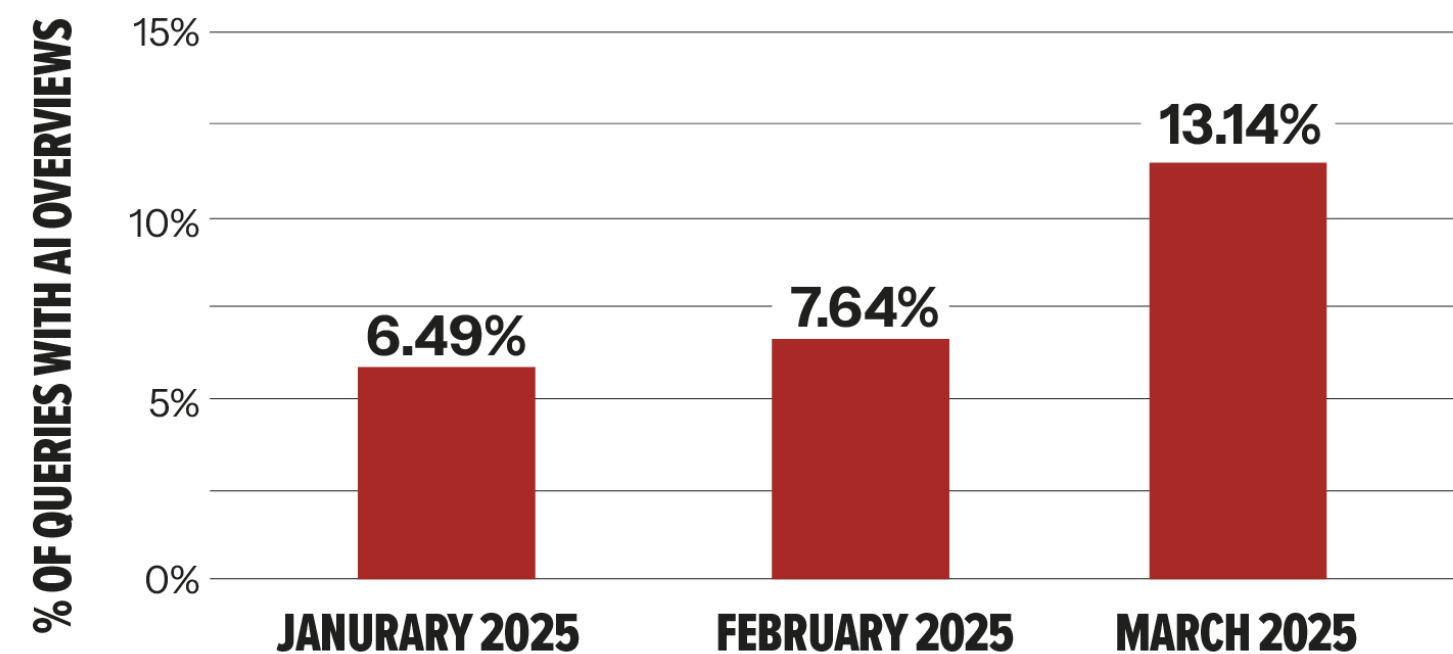
AI-powered “answer engines” are transforming how people discover information. These large language models (LLMs) reduce the need for traditional link-clicking by surfacing summarized answers directly in their interface.

While the total number of searches on Google continued to grow in 2024 and their share of the search market remained over 90%, ChatGPT seems to be slowly chipping away at Google’s dominance in the “answers business.” As a result, Google is embracing generative AI as well. In fact, 13% (and growing) of Google searches result in an “AI Overview” result and ~40% of those results don’t lead to a click. Even more dramatically, Google has just rolled out AI Mode, giving users an agent to conduct a multitude of searches on their behalf and summarize results with only a handful of source URLs listed in the sidebar.

All of this means fewer opportunities to earn traffic through traditional SEO. AI answer engines won’t kill organic search, but they will compress the real estate and change how value is captured. Leading marketers are updating their SEO and search measurement strategies accordingly.

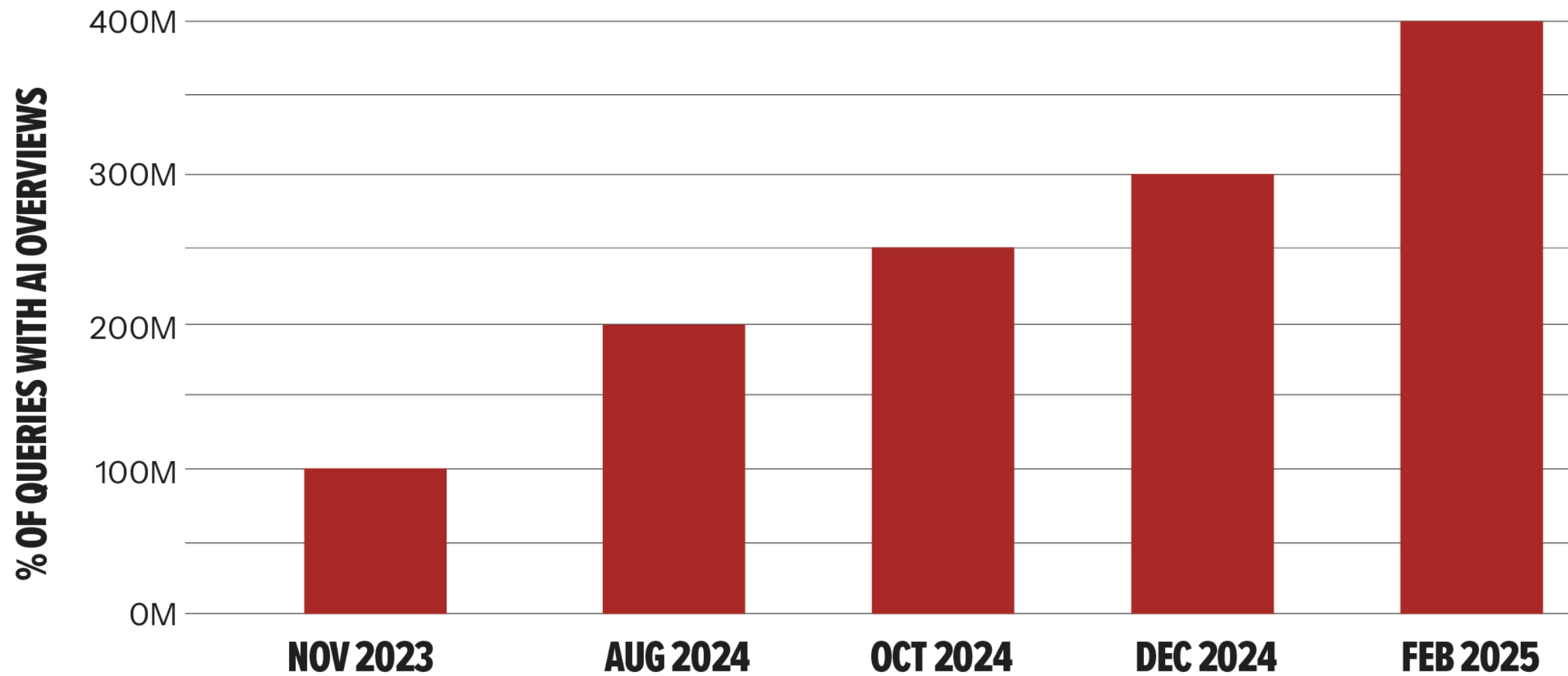
SHARE OF QUERIES TRIGGERING AI OVERVIEWS (JAN-MAR 2025)

US, Desktop Data



[SEMrush: AI Overviews Study: What 2025 SEO Data Tells Us About Google’s Search Shift](#)

CHATGPT WEEKLY ACTIVE USERS WORLDWIDE



[Backlinkio: ChatGPT / OpenAI Statistics: How Many People Use ChatGPT?](#)

1. CREATE CONTENT THAT AI TRUSTS

AI tools prioritize credible sources and unique data. Brands that generate proprietary research and expert commentary become preferred sources for summaries and AI citations. This not only builds domain authority when the content is cited/linked, but it also helps marketers avoid “copycat” content that has come to dominate company blogs.

Successful content marketers present information in concise, authoritative bites that AI summaries favor. For example, including a brief synopsis or bullet-point answer at the top (which an Overview might pull), followed by in-depth details. It’s also important to use descriptive subheadings, and incorporate direct Q&A sections. The content’s tone and evidence must signal expertise. So, it should include author bios with credentials, cite trustworthy sources, and create original images and graphics that stand out.



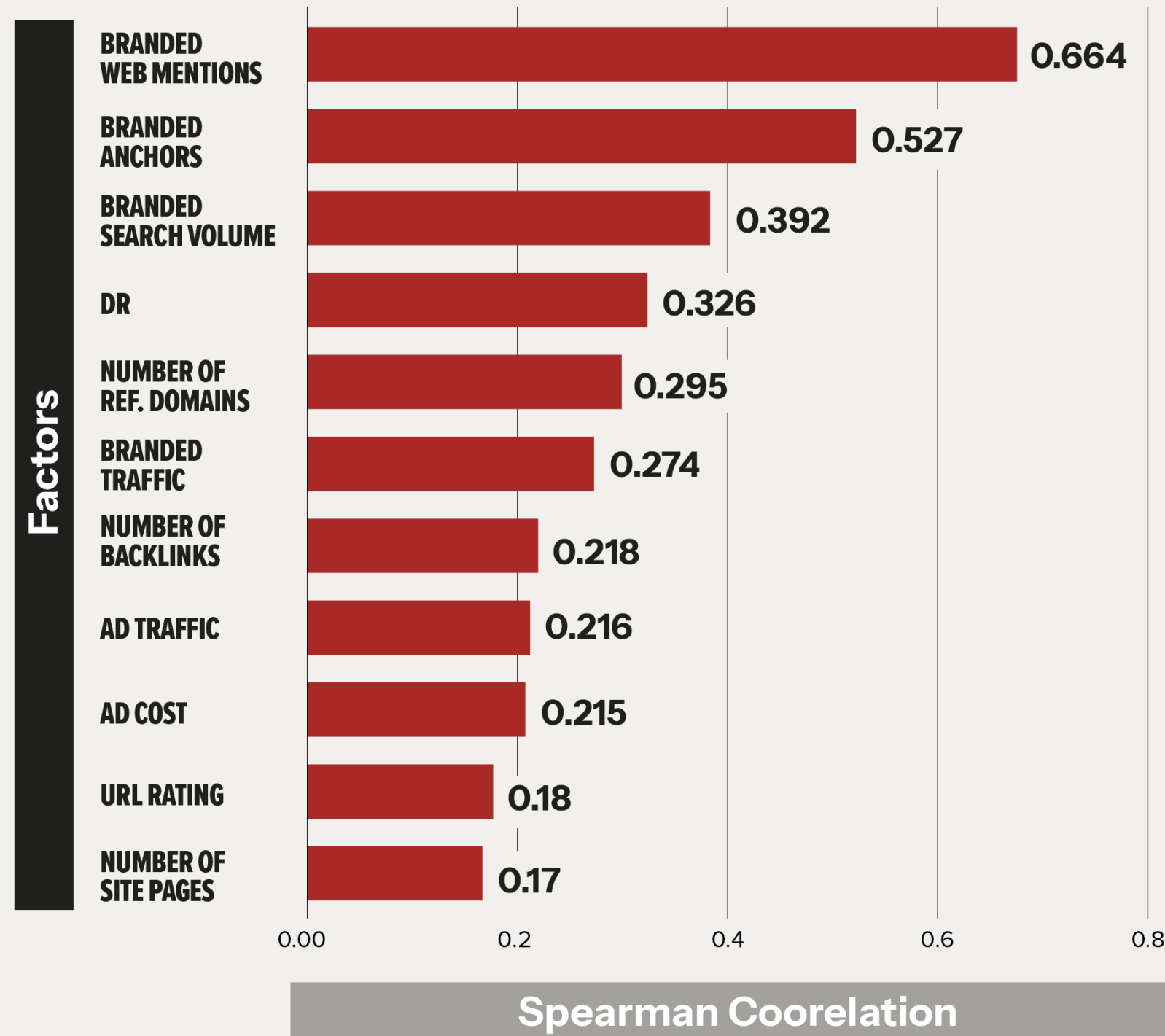
“The ability to influence how people write about, talk about, and publish about you on the web directly impacts how AI tools respond to questions about your brand, your field, and whether they include you when us prompters ask about the problems you solve.”

Rand Fishkin

Cofounder of SparkToro

FACTORS THAT CORRELATE WITH BRAND APPEARANCE IN AI OVERVIEWS

Based on a study of ~75K brands. Source: Ahrefs Brand Radar & Ahrefs Site Explorer



2. EXPAND YOUR DIGITAL FOOTPRINT TO INFLUENCE AI MODELS

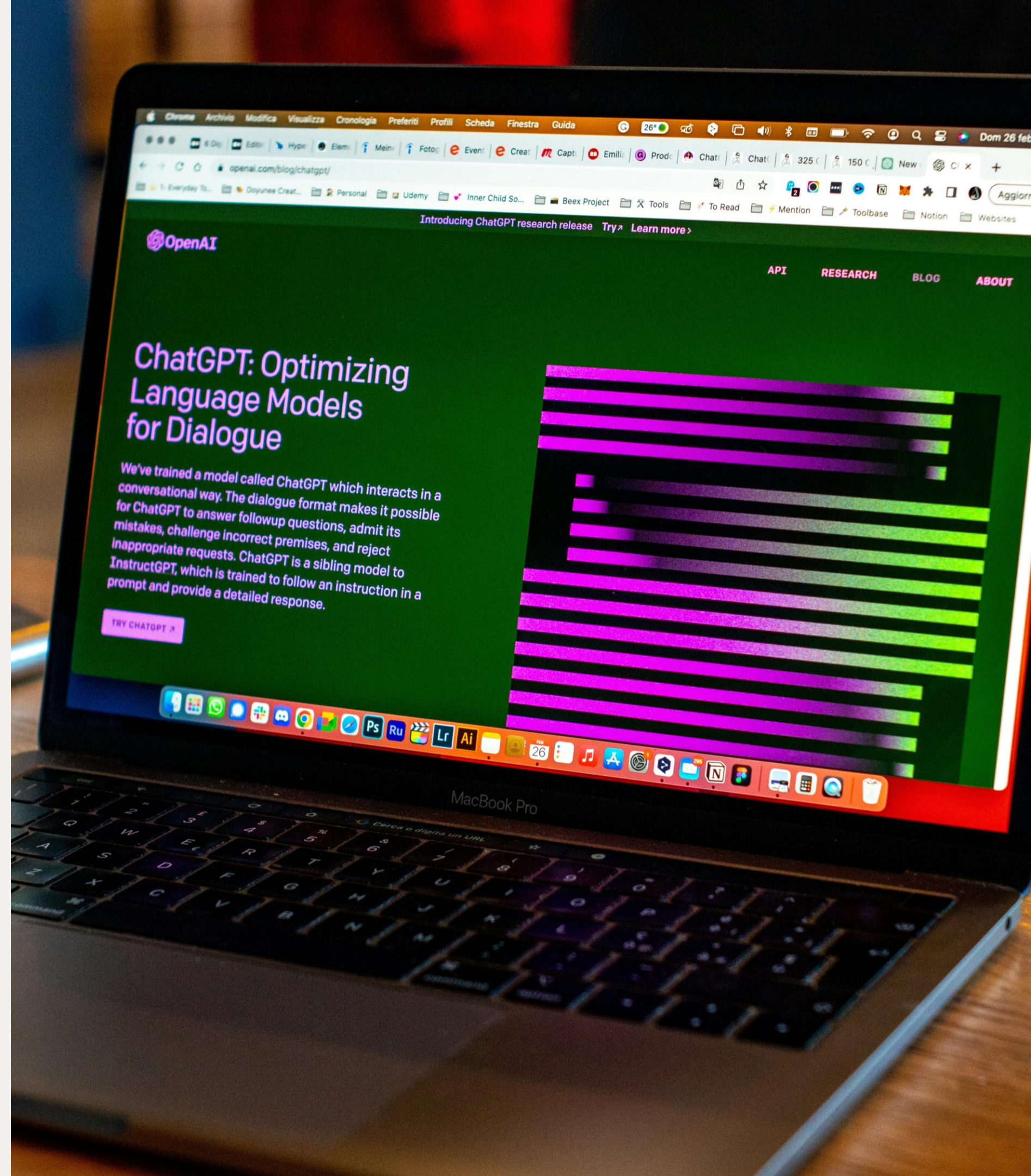
LLMs like GPT and Google’s Gemini train on publicly available, high-authority content. So, more media coverage and digital brand mentions give active brands more prevalence in AI training data.

More prevalence in training data, especially if it associates these brands with relevant need states, gives them a higher probability of being recommended by AI for key "category-entry points." Performance marketers can supercharge this effect by using content distribution and PR to promote their high-quality content across widely trusted domains like industry news outlets, academic sites, Reddit (tread lightly), and/or LinkedIn. Of course, broader brand building efforts (brand advertising, events with digital activations, etc.) support this visibility as well.

3. OPTIMIZE AI'S DEFINITION OF YOUR BRAND

LLMs are answering more consumer questions, while Google knowledge panels, AI Overviews, YouTube videos, local listings, and other features are displacing traditional search result links in Google. That means owning the top ranking for the company's own name is no longer sufficient to protect and promote the brand.

To influence how AI talks about their brand, smart marketers have an exceptional "About Us" page on their website and syndicate their company positioning consistently to a wide variety of sources. They use structured Schema.org mark-up to help AI/bots understand and reference their site. They monitor what questions people ask AI about their industry or brand (e.g., use ChatGPT to see how it describes their products) and adjust their content to fill gaps or correct inaccuracies.



Truth #2

**BRAND AND
PERFORMANCE ARE
GREATER TOGETHER**

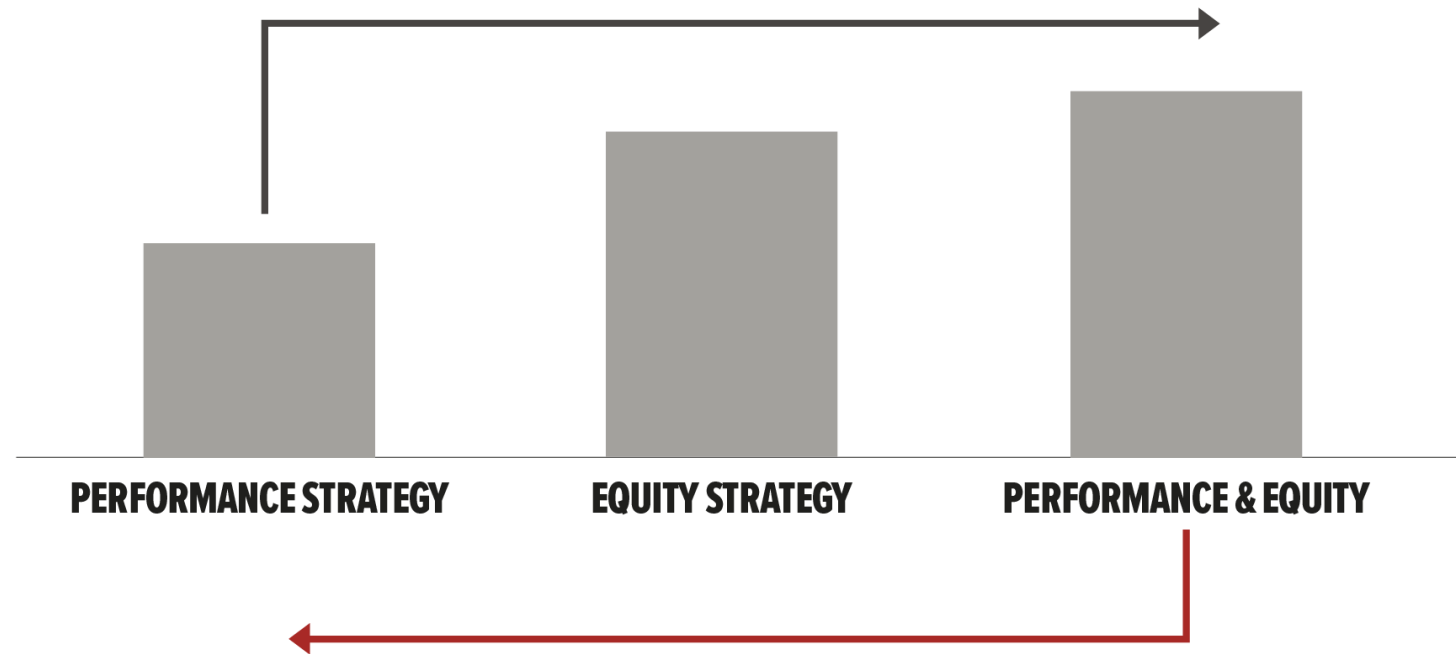
02

THE BENEFITS OF DOING BOTH

The Brand Advantage

Median revenue ROI increase when moving from a performance strategy to a mixed approach

+90%



-40%

The Performance Penalty

Median revenue ROI decrease when moving from a mixed to a performance strategy

Brand investment creates mental availability, and primes future buyers; performance spend activates those already in-market. The strongest growth comes from recognizing that they overlap significantly and by integrating them throughout the funnel.

The tension between brand and performance is not a choice but a balance to be managed. Brands that unify both approaches enjoy compounding returns, stronger acquisition now, and more efficient acquisition later.

TREND: CMOs ARE BRIDGING THE BRAND-PERFORMANCE DIVIDE

Facing economic uncertainties and rising acquisition costs, CMOs are asking their teams to deliver more value from each dollar (and to prove it). This has led to a mindset shift: rather than siloed teams (brand vs performance, media vs creative, etc.), companies are forming cross-functional “growth” teams oriented around the entire customer journey.

Forrester refers to this shift as redefining the role of the performance marketer to be a full-funnel strategist who “owns the advertising lifecycle from audience understanding to creative optimization,” rather than just a lower-funnel specialist.

46%

of US B2C marketing executives
**PLANNED TO INTEGRATE
PERFORMANCE & BRAND
MEDIA ASSIGNMENTS**
with a single media agency in 2024.

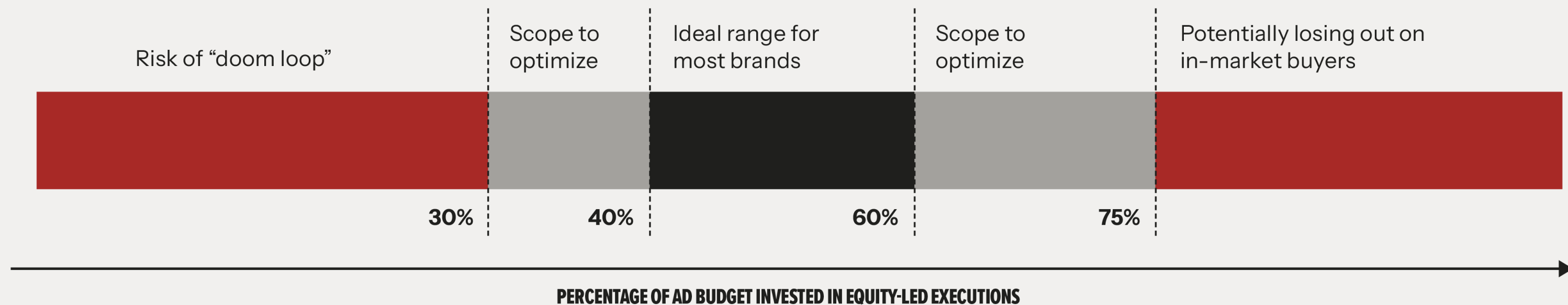
[Forrester: What Should Performance Marketers Actually Do?](#)

1. APPLY A 60/40 BRAND TO PERFORMANCE BUDGET SPLIT

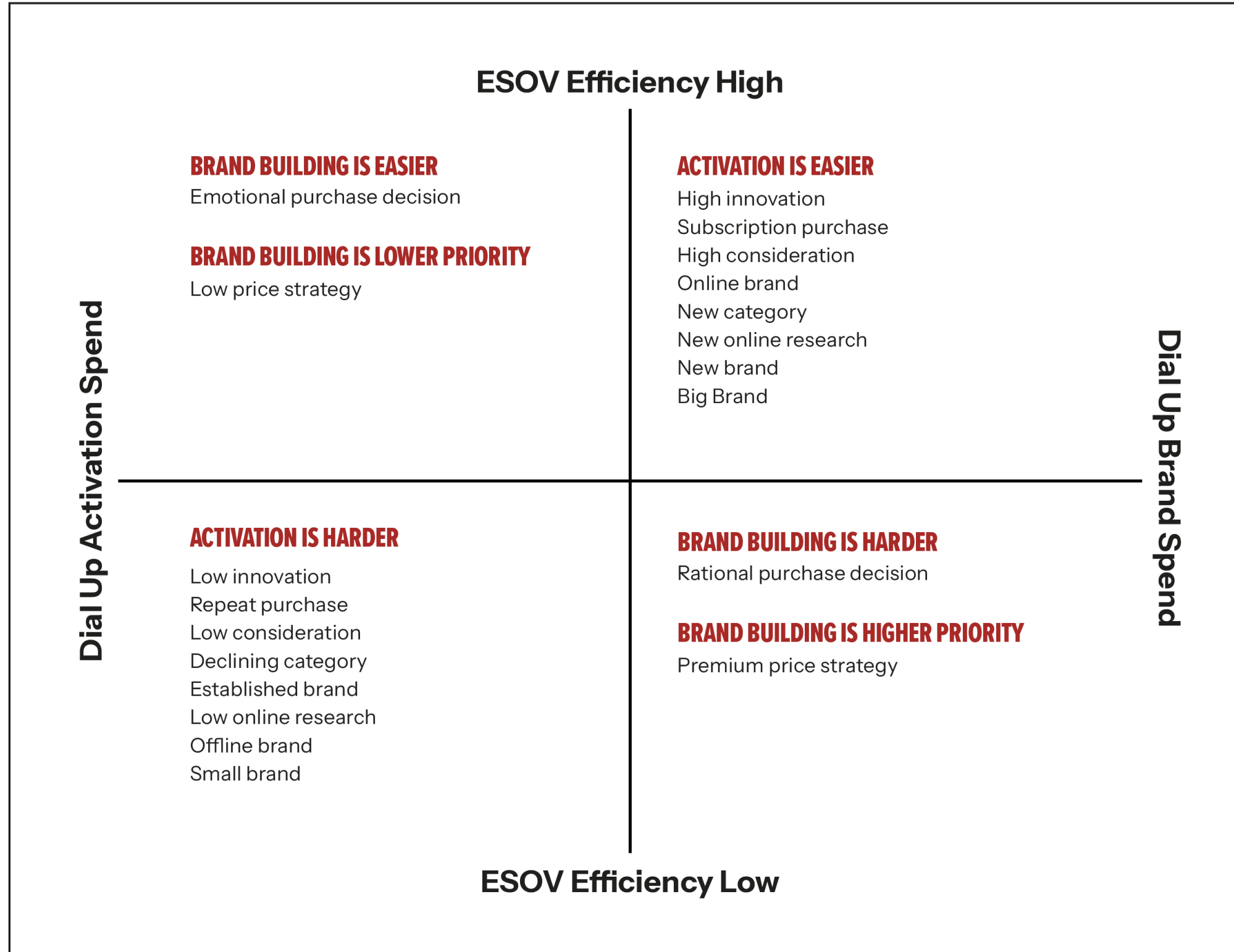
Brand marketing spend ensures that when a consumer enters the market, your brand is top of mind, making every activation dollar (including Paid Media, SEO, and Social) more efficient now and into the future. Les Binet and Peter Field's landmark analysis revealed that the optimal marketing budget split for most categories is approximately 60% brand -building and 40% activation. This largely applies to advertising but should be considered in balancing organic social media efforts too.

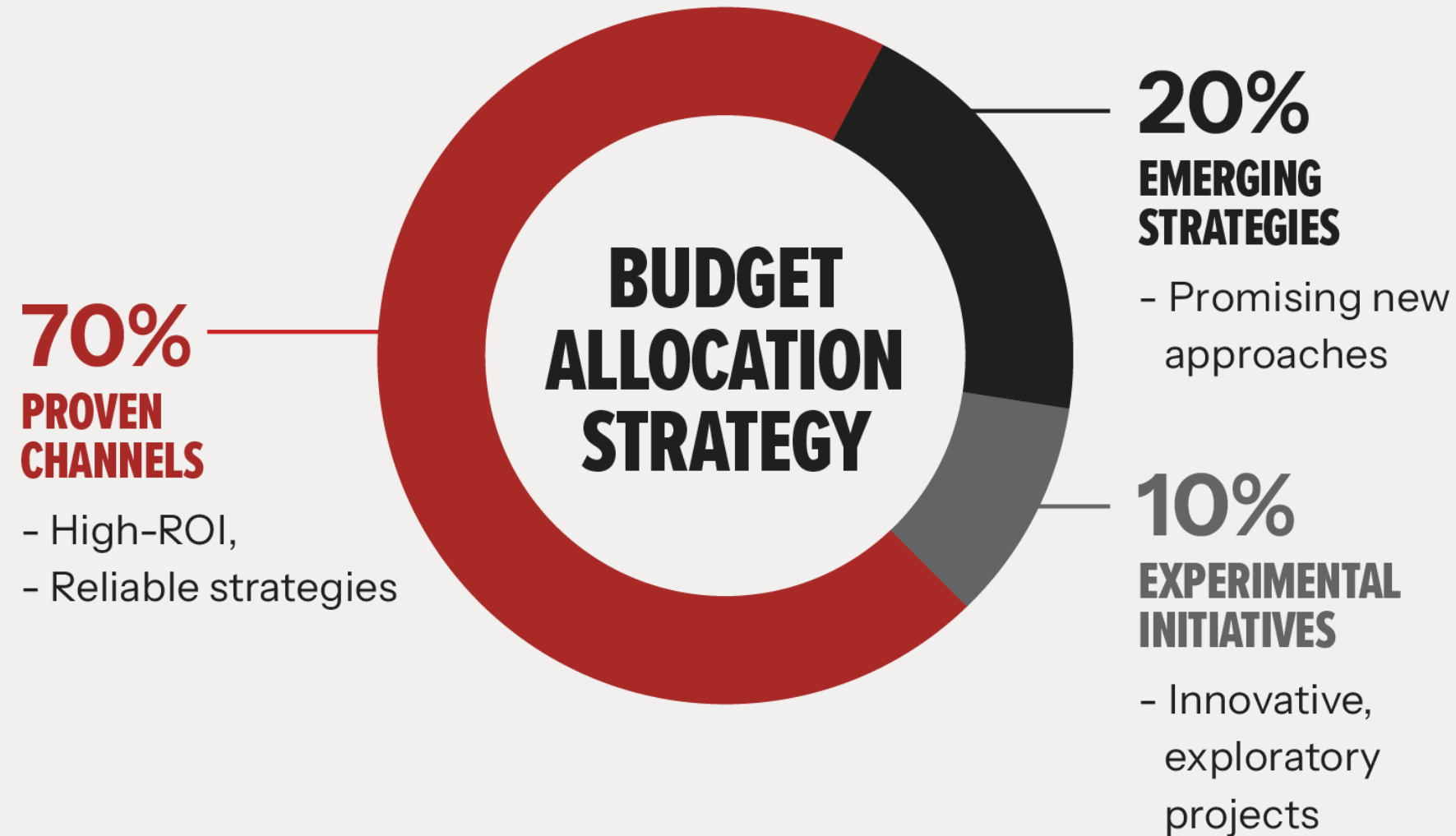
On average, this formula delivers the best combination of short-term revenue and enduring brand equity to maximize return over time. However, it depends on several factors, including the brand maturity and idiosyncrasies of the product category, as broken down in the chart from “Effectiveness in Context” on the following page.

THE BRAND INVESTMENT SPECTRUM



BRAND ACTIATION BALANCE GUIDELINES





2. BALANCE STABILITY, INNOVATION, AND RISK WITHIN PERFORMANCE

Even within the performance marketing portion of your budget, diversification is key to reducing risk and driving innovation. The 70/20/10 model, championed by brands like Coca-Cola, allocates 70% of spend to proven, high-ROI channels, 20% to promising emerging strategies, and 10% to experimental initiatives. This structure ensures you have a dependable baseline while nurturing potential breakout channels or formats.

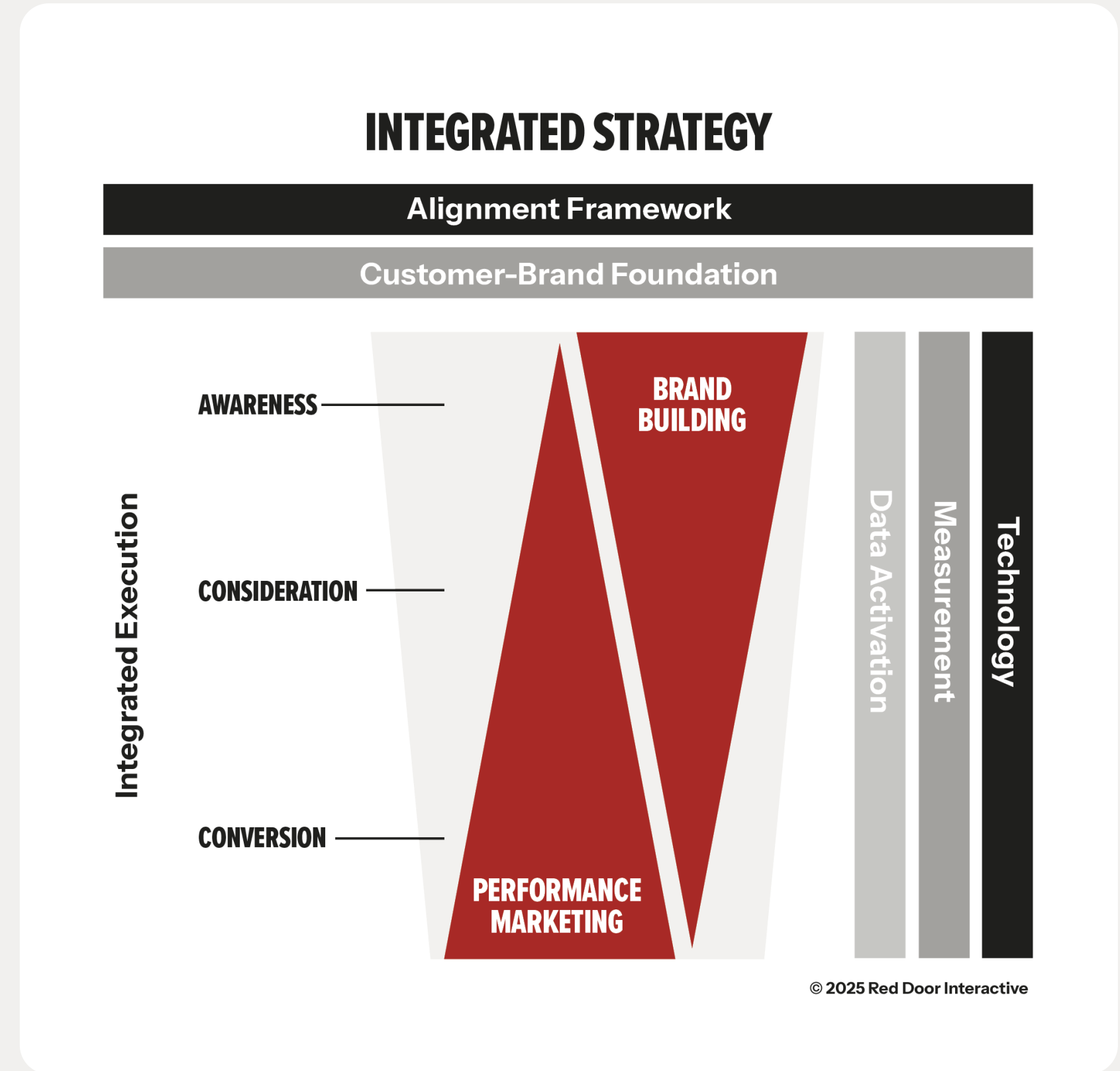
The 70% keeps the revenue engine running, the 20% provides a testing ground for rising platforms or tactics like influencer retargeting or retail media, and the 10% fuels creative moonshots, such as AI-generated content or immersive formats like AR. This balance avoids stagnation and keeps your brand competitive as media consumption habits evolve.

3. UNIFY MESSAGING, TEAMS, AND TOUCHPOINTS TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT

When brand and performance marketing functions operate in silos, problems arise. The brand team may focus on metrics that don't translate to sales, while the performance team may ignore long-term brand health. Consequently, integration is a leadership imperative. From an organizational perspective, this could mean restructuring teams into cross-functional squads focused on customer segments or campaigns rather than specific channels. Unifying budgets and setting shared objectives are also critical.

From a tactical perspective, integration means video ads, search ads, social ads, organic social, email, event sponsorships, and offline media are planned with synchronized/sequenced flighting, aligned around an overarching brand platform. The campaigns must also include distinctive brand assets and focus on a limited number of clear rational offers.

Remember, to consumers, there is just "one brand," and brand-building and performance marketing overlap significantly in the sales funnel. So, speaking with one voice across touchpoints drives maximum clarity and impact.



Truth #3

ATTENTION IS SCATTERED 03

Humans can only focus on a few things at a time and consumers today live in a state of media overload. Algorithms fragment what we see, and platform behaviors (e.g., swiping, skipping, muting) shorten the window to register. They bounce between apps, devices, screens, and moments – Scrolling TikTok during commercials, Googling products while in stores. Marketers are competing not just with other brands, but with every notification and dopamine-fueled impulse in a consumer's world. In other words, attention is scarce, fragmented, and nonlinear.

TREND: CONSUMER ATTENTION IS FRAGMENTED ACROSS CHANNELS, MOMENTS, AND MOODS

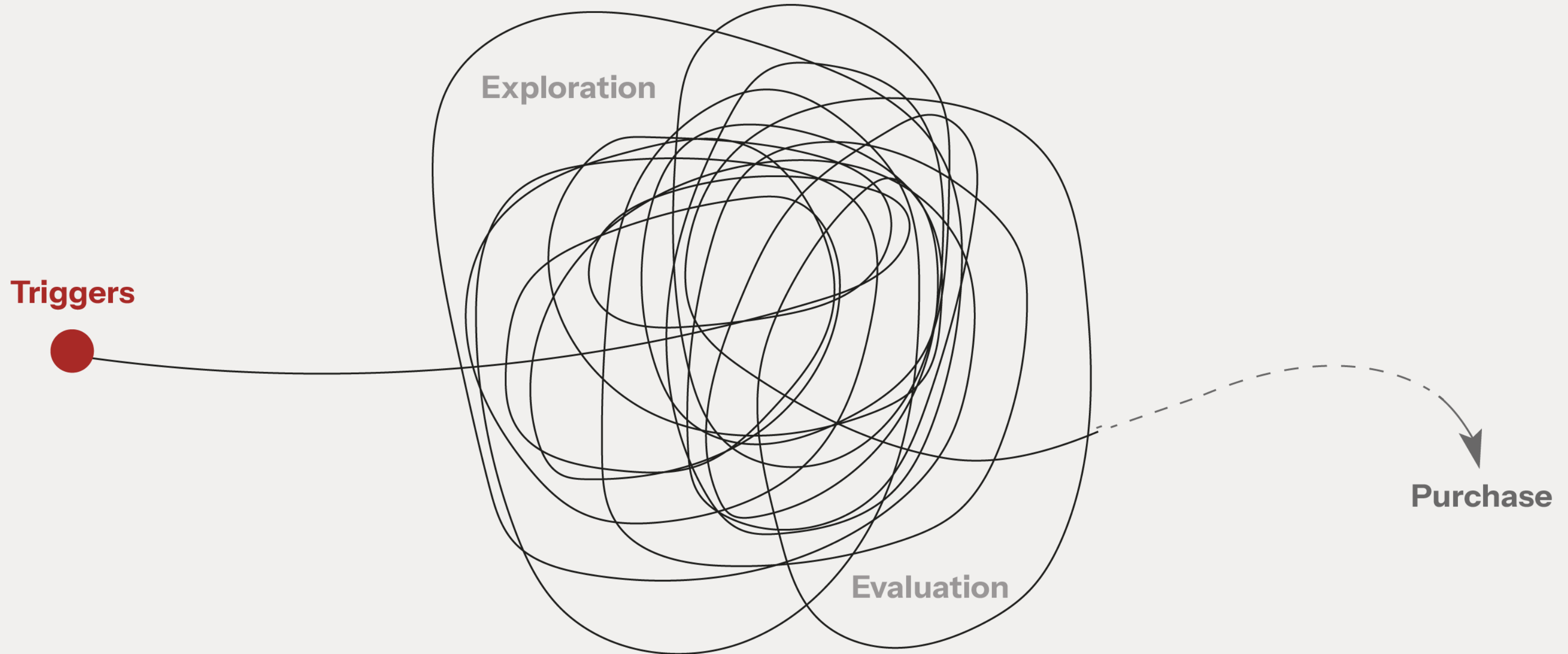
Media consumption is more fragmented than ever across channels, formats, and moments, making attention harder to capture. Consumers zig-zag through a “Messy Middle” of exploration and evaluation; Googling, scrolling, watching, and comparing across paid, earned, and owned content. While LLM agents like ChatGPT Deep Research and Google’s AI mode are starting to streamline this phase for early adopters by researching and summarizing options in seconds, most journeys remain nonlinear and multitouch. Consequently, brands must show up consistently and distinctively across the full journey to stay top-of-mind and top-of-wallet.

60%

of consumers are taking
**SIX OR MORE ACTIONS
BEFORE DECIDING
TO BUY A BRAND**

[Google: How people decide to buy lies in the ‘messy middle’ of the purchase journey](#)

THE MESSY MIDDLE



[Google: How people decide to buy lies in the 'messy middle' of the purchase journey](#)

CTV ADS DELIVER

~2X

THE ATTENTIVE SECONDS

than standard online video, and 3X
that of display ads.

1. BUILD AN ATTENTION BLUEPRINT BASED ON REAL BEHAVIOR

Before brands can capture attention, they must understand how it flows. Not all impressions (or views) are created equally, which makes CPM a relatively meaningless performance metric. When marketers ground their strategy in how people actually behave, not how we wish they did, media and creative choices become more precise, more relevant, and more effective. An Attention Blueprint begins with research exploring when, where, and why consumers engage across their journey.

This means analyzing behavioral patterns, emotional triggers, and platform-specific habits of your best customers to uncover the moments that shape their decisions. Tools like panel-based customer segmentation, AI-driven synthetic audience analysis, data-backed customer journey mapping, and media attention tracking can help reveal the true needle movers.

[Emarketer: Why media mix modeling, attention metrics may take the spotlight in 2025](#)

2. REACH FRAGMENTED AUDIENCES WITH A SMARTER, SAFER MEDIA MIX

A concentrated bottom-funnel media strategy may drive short-term gains, but over-reliance on a single channel, like Google Search or Meta, leaves brands exposed to algorithm shifts, rising costs, and diminishing returns.

Spreading investments across additional social platforms, CTV, streaming audio/podcast, and/or retail media helps marketers reach fragmented audiences while hedging against volatility. Of course, media planners have to be wary of spreading media and creative budgets too thin as well, so they should keep the 70/20/10 rule in mind, and target audiences and geographies judiciously.

GOING FROM ONE PLATFORM TO TWO
increases ROI by

19%

WHILE INVESTING ACROSS FIVE PLATFORMS
delivers an average incremental ROI over

35%

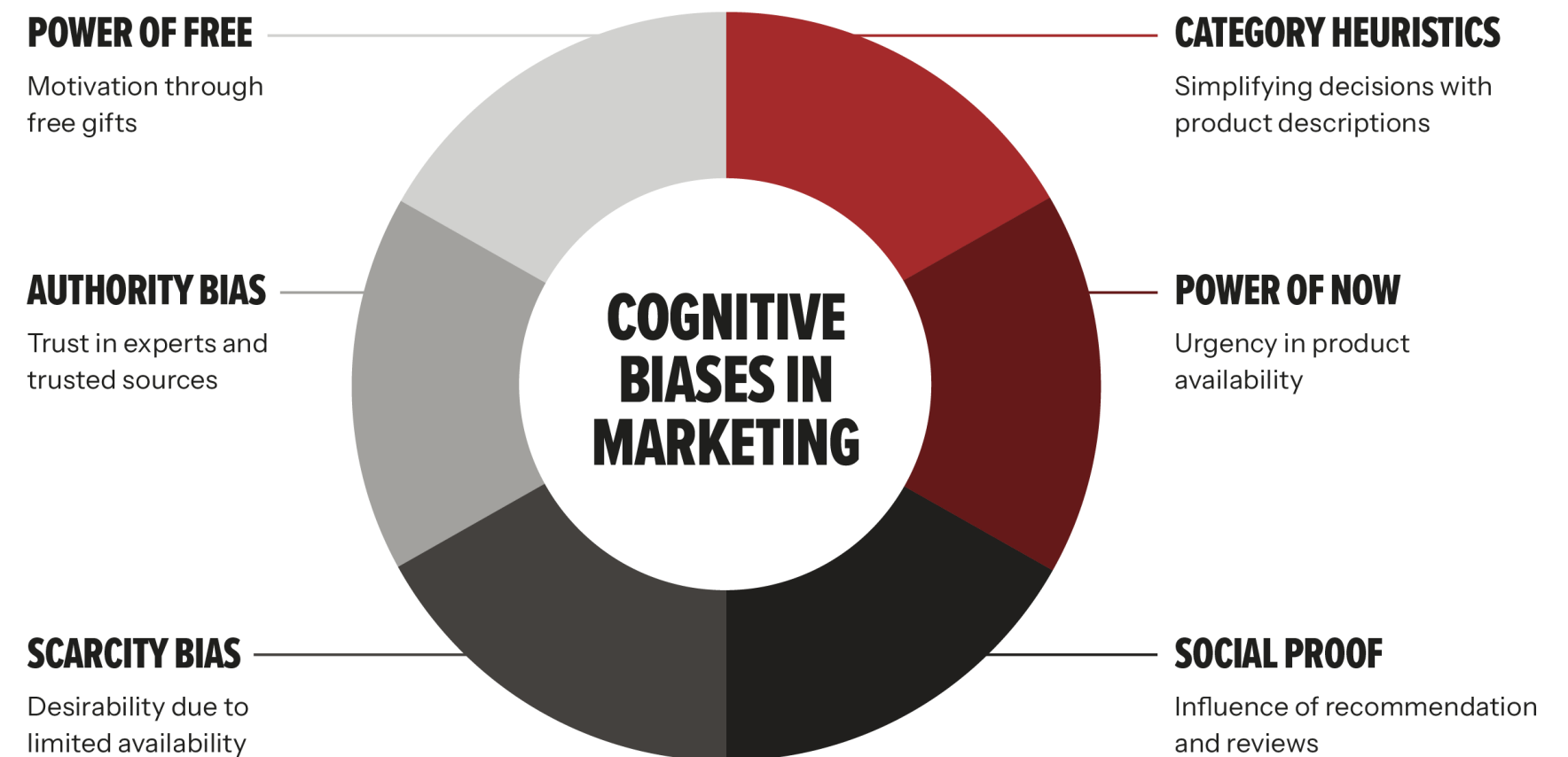
WARC from Home: Integrating media – why it matters and how to do it well

3. CONVERT ATTENTION INTO ACTION WITH COMPELLING CREATIVE & SEAMLESS UX

A performance marketer can have the best media plan, the biggest budget, and the most precise targeting, but if their creative is dull, their landing page is unconvincing, or their path to purchase is full of friction, their campaign won't achieve its potential.

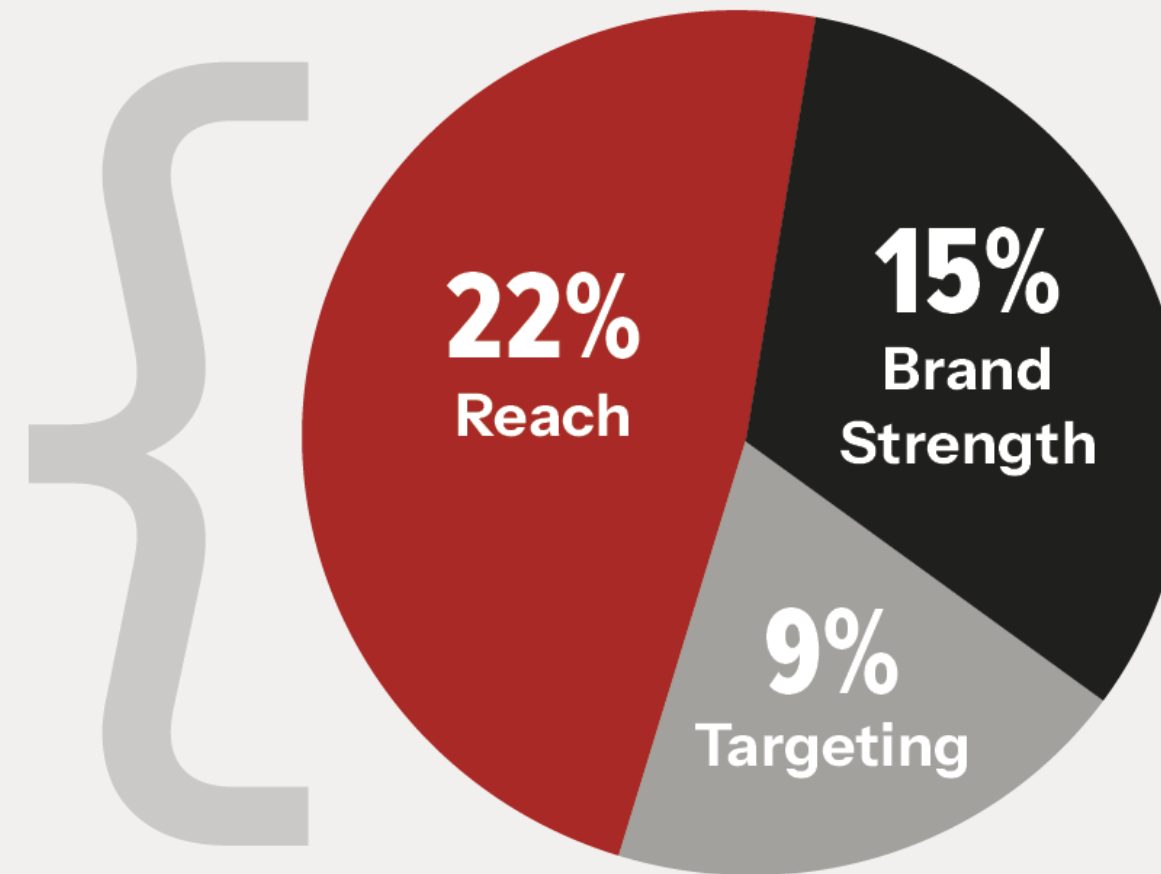
This is true even for performance marketing ads that are more rational and offer-focused than their emotion-focused brand-building counterparts. However, where branding ads rely on creating sticky memories, successful bottom-of-funnel ads and their associated post-click journeys rely more on **cognitive biases**, rooted in behavioral psychology, that drive action.

And, crucially, the post-click journey (website, email, retargeting) has to pay off the user's attention by delivering an experience congruent with the ad. That means having a fast-loading website, a clear value proposition, a frictionless path to conversion, and helpful post-conversion follow-up.



Google: How people decide what to buy lies in the 'messy middle' of the purchase journey

Nielsen found that
**THE CREATIVE WAS THE
SINGLE LARGEST DRIVER**
of campaign sales impact,
contributing
46%
OF TOTAL SALES EFFECT
more than any other factor

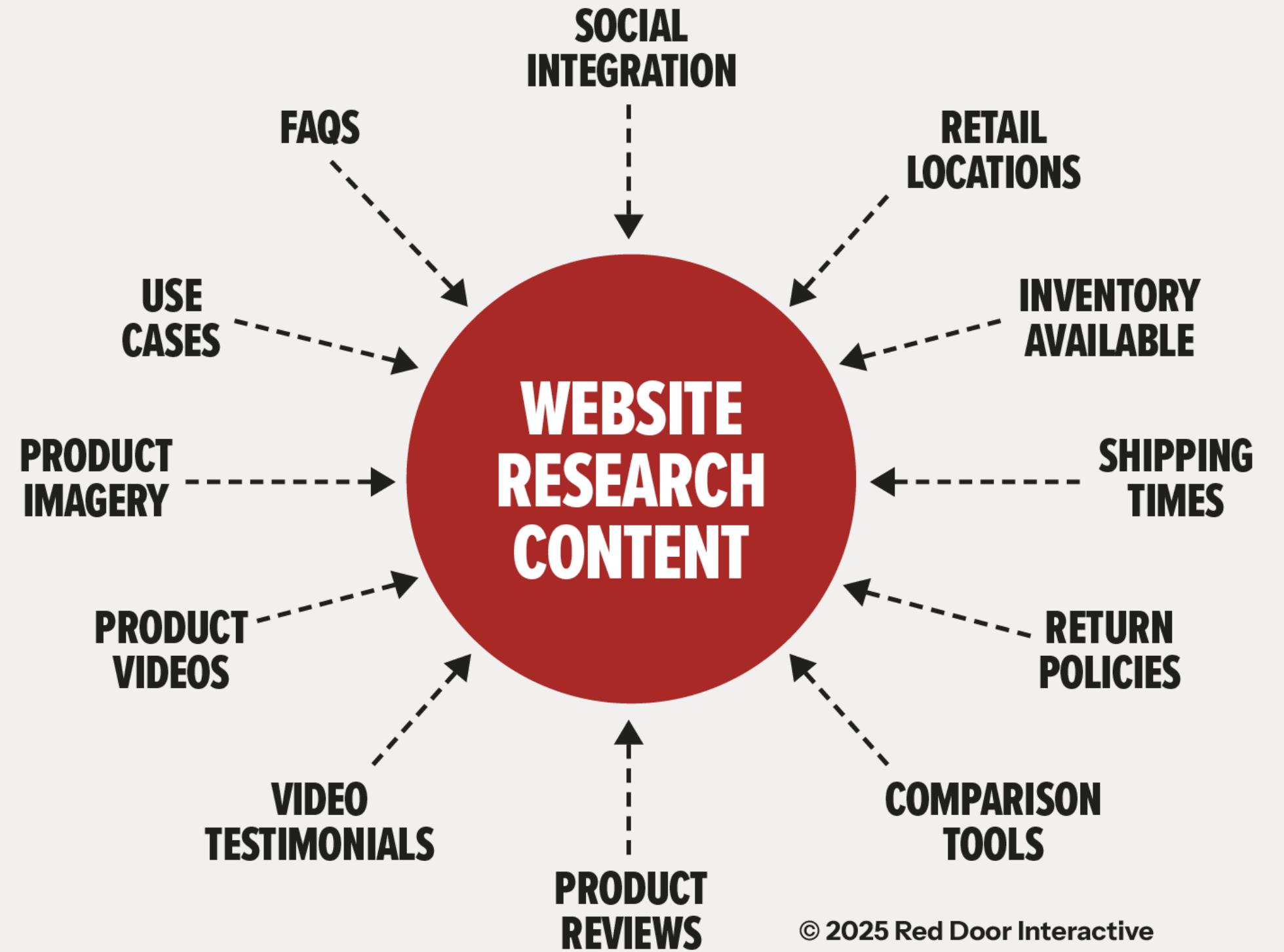


Marketing Charts: Creative's Still the Biggest Driver of Sales, Analysis Finds, but Brand's Influence Rises

4. WIN RESEARCH PHASE WITH MID-FUNNEL CONTENT

Brands that support research-oriented consumer activities outperform those that focus only on top- or bottom-funnel. Those that show up consistently with helpful content across organic social, influencers, email, and community give themselves a great shot at winning mid-funnel consumers. Paid search, paid social, LLMs (i.e., ChatGPT), forums (i.e., Reddit), review sites, and other earned media can certainly influence people in the “messy middle” as well.

Brand websites are perhaps the easiest places to control consumer experience, so the best marketers take advantage by investing in detailed product content.



© 2025 Red Door Interactive

Truth #4

**WINNING REQUIRES
RELENTLESS TESTING
AND AUTOMATION**

04

In marketing, stagnation is the enemy. The work needed to keep up with platform features and shifting consumer behaviors never stops. So, the best teams automate formulaic tasks to free up their time for strategy, experimentation, and learning. They lean on technology, while also recognizing its limitations. They are strategic, creating hypotheses for tests that can scale broadly to other channels, campaigns, creative assets, and/or pages. These high-performance marketers also accept that most tests will fail, because either they run those tests, or they become the “control group” 100% of the time.

“Never stop testing, and
your advertising will never
stop improving.”

David Ogilvy

Founder of Ogilvy

TREND: PERSONALIZATION IS EXPECTED, BUT PRIVACY STILL RULES

Consumers expect relevance but demand privacy, a paradox intensified by the introduction of government regulation (i.e. CCPA, GDPR) and tech company policies (i.e. Apple iOS tracking opt-out). One-to-one personalization often feels intrusive, yet generic messaging falls flat. The path forward isn't hyper-targeting individuals by name, but rather, tailoring content and offers to segments aligned with Category Entry Points (CEPs).

These are the moments, needs, or contexts that trigger brand consideration and lead to purchase. By mapping creative to these entry points, then using CDP/Clean Room data for triggering, brands can deliver relevance without overstepping. This approach respects user boundaries while still guiding attention and intent.

2023 PEW RESEARCH SURVEY

81%

OF AMERICANS EXPRESS CONCERN OVER HOW COMPANIES USE THEIR PERSONAL DATA

71%

of consumers expect companies to deliver **PERSONALIZED INTERACTIONS**

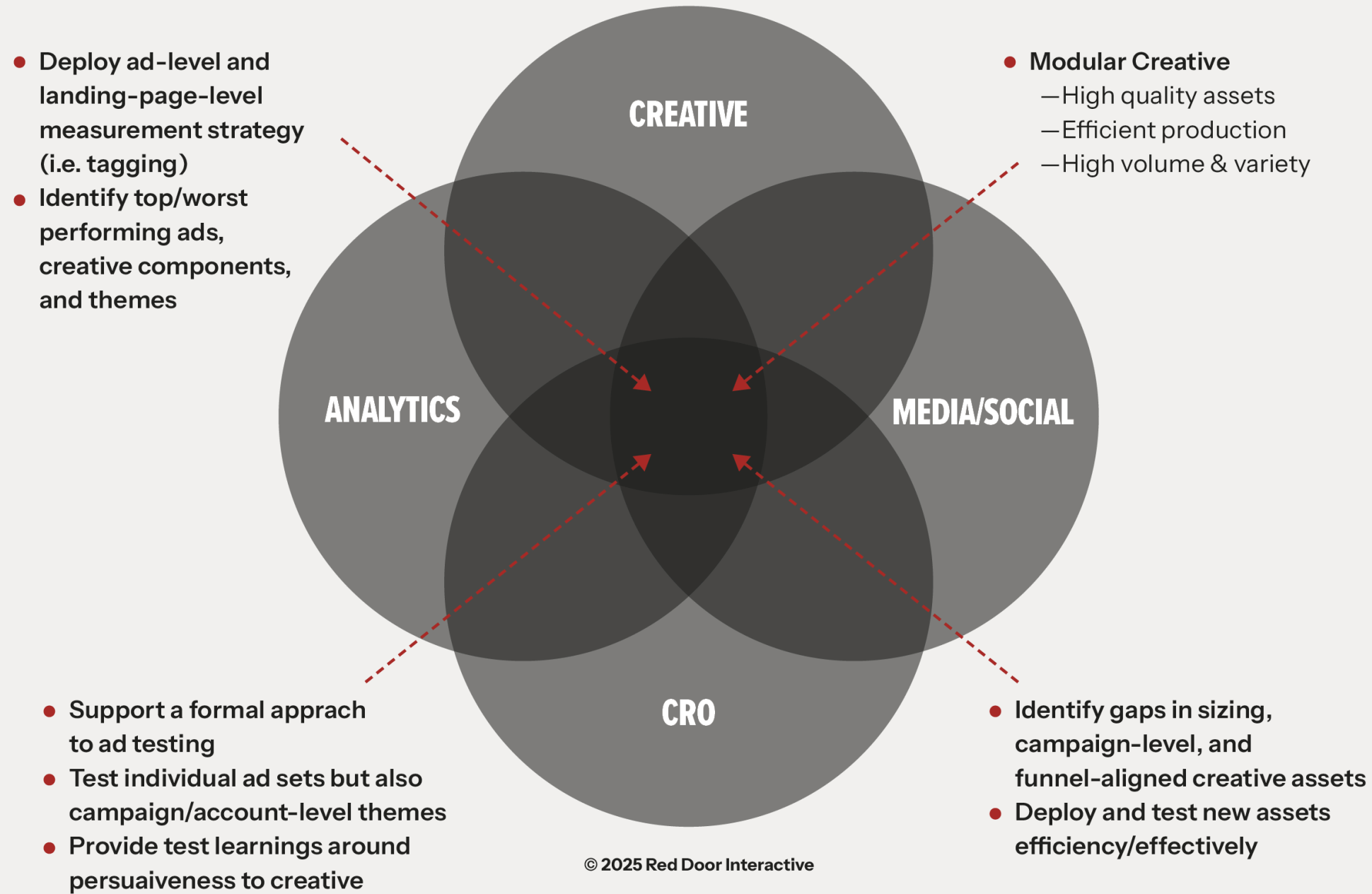
76%

GET FRUSTRATED when it doesn't happen

[Pew Research Center: How Americans View Data Privacy](#)

[McKinsey & Company: the value of getting personalization right-or wrong-is multiplying](#)

CREATIVE OPTIMIZATION



1. TEST CREATIVE LIKE IT MATTERS, BECAUSE IT DOES

In the performance marketing arena, tacticians tend to overvalue targeting and bid optimization and undervalue creative optimization. But we know that old-fashioned creative skill (e.g., persuasive storytelling and attention-grabbing visuals in a TikTok video ad) acts as a huge lever on results. So, marketing leaders treat creative development as an integral part of performance strategy, not a separate silo.

They invest in their creative team’s capacity to produce a high volume of variants, and to iterate based on performance. They develop testing roadmaps with clear experiment hypotheses and desired outcomes. They develop modular creative with interchangeable components for ads, organic social assets, websites, and emails to make it easier to test, personalize, and automate at scale.

To formalize integration, these top performers document test learnings and set up forums for cross-functional sharing between the Creative, Media, Social, and Analytics teams. And critically, they foster a culture of experimentation and collaboration so that more informal integration can take root as well.

PAID SOCIAL CREATIVE CHECKLIST

1 Immediate Engagement

- Grab attention in first 2–3 seconds with bold visuals or provocative hooks
- Use dynamic transitions and on-screen text
- Lead with motion or surprise

2 Clear & Compelling Message

- Front-load benefits and product value
- Keep copy simple, direct, and mobile-friendly
- Use captions to support sound-off viewing
- Ensure message-match post-click

3 Authenticity & Relatability

- Use UGC or content that mimics native platform posts
- Partner with relatable micro-influencers
- Show everyday or behind-the-scenes scenarios
- Reflect real-life moments

4 Brand Distinction

- Integrate distinctive brand assets: logo, color, tone, jingle, mnemonic

5 Sound & Music

- Add trending audio to boost discoverability
- Make ads understandable with sound off

6 Interactive Engagement

- Use platform-native tools like polls, quizzes, and countdowns
- Leverage swipe features and carousels

7 Clear Call-to-Action (CTA)

- Include strong CTAs (e.g., “Shop Now,” “Try Free”)
- Place CTA early and clearly

8 Format & Video Length

- Stick to 15–30 sec formats (Stories, Reels, Shorts)
- Apply proven creative formulas: UGC, Problem/Solution, Testimonials

9 Post-Click Experience

- Optimize for fast load times and mobile-first UX
- Ensure landing page aligns with ad promise

10 Personalization

- Tailor messaging by audience behavior or segments

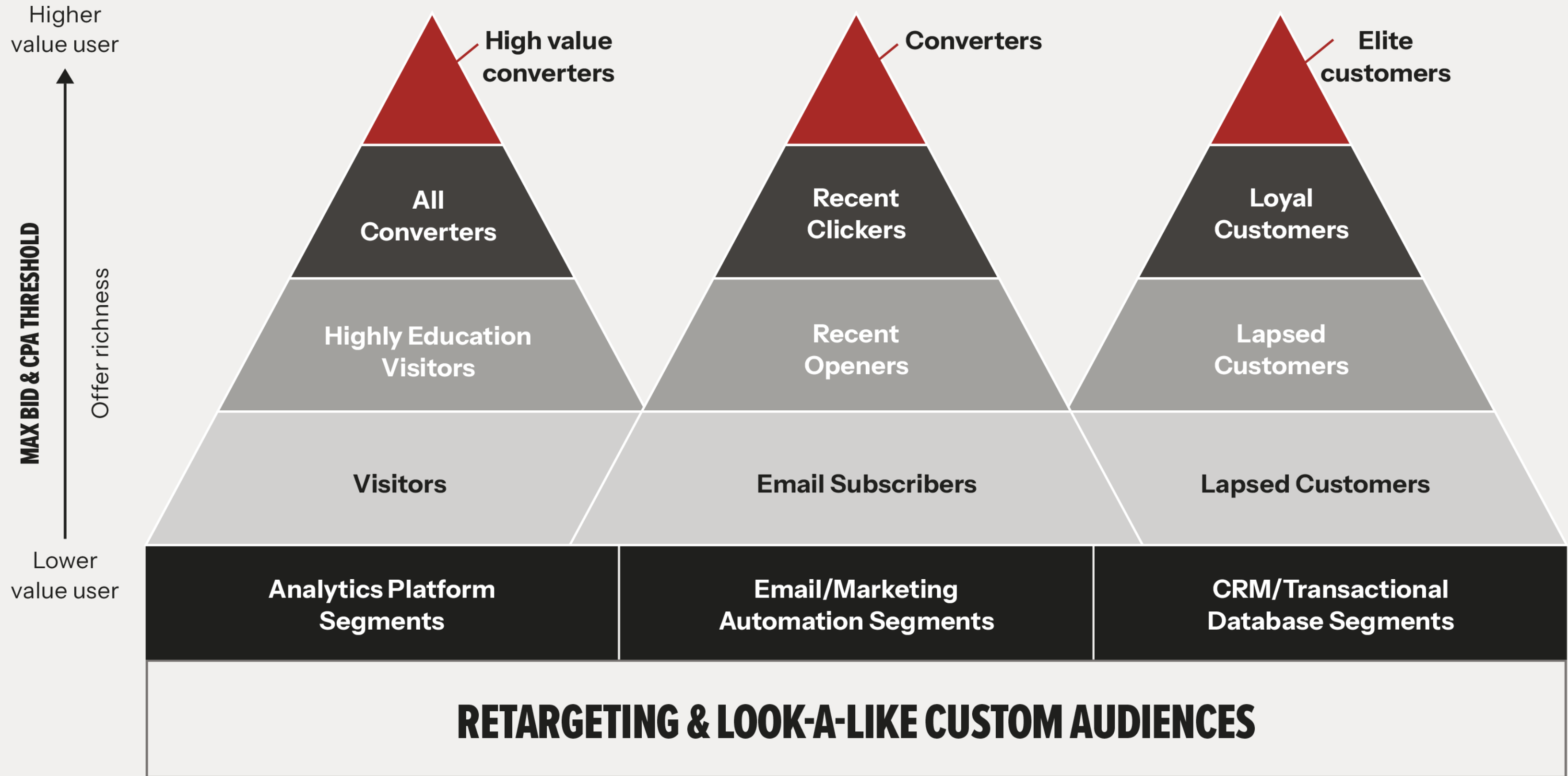
2. SEGMENT AND ACTIVATE FRESH FIRST-PARTY DATA

With third-party cookies and external targeting data becoming less reliable, zero- and first-party data are critical assets for identifying and reaching in-market consumers. While most performance marketers take advantage of first-party data through Google/Meta custom audiences, they often lack sophistication. Many are leaving money on the table by failing to: ethically collect as much data as they should, maintain clean data, regularly/automatically refresh their custom audiences, and activate value-based segmented audiences. Data decays quickly and bad data makes for dumb robots.

While deploying a robust customer data platform (CDP) is ideal, even without one, marketers can use progressive profiling, re-permissioning strategies, and live data feeds to ensure their first-party data stays fresh and relevant. With that data in hand, they can deploy a robust CRM retargeting and lookalike strategy. For instance, building dynamic segments of recent website abandoners, past purchasers, or repeat visitors, then prioritizing who gets added to campaigns with higher bids, richer offers, and personalized creative. This turns data into a competitive advantage. However, it's critical for marketers to always use data ethically and transparently, as customer trust is paramount.

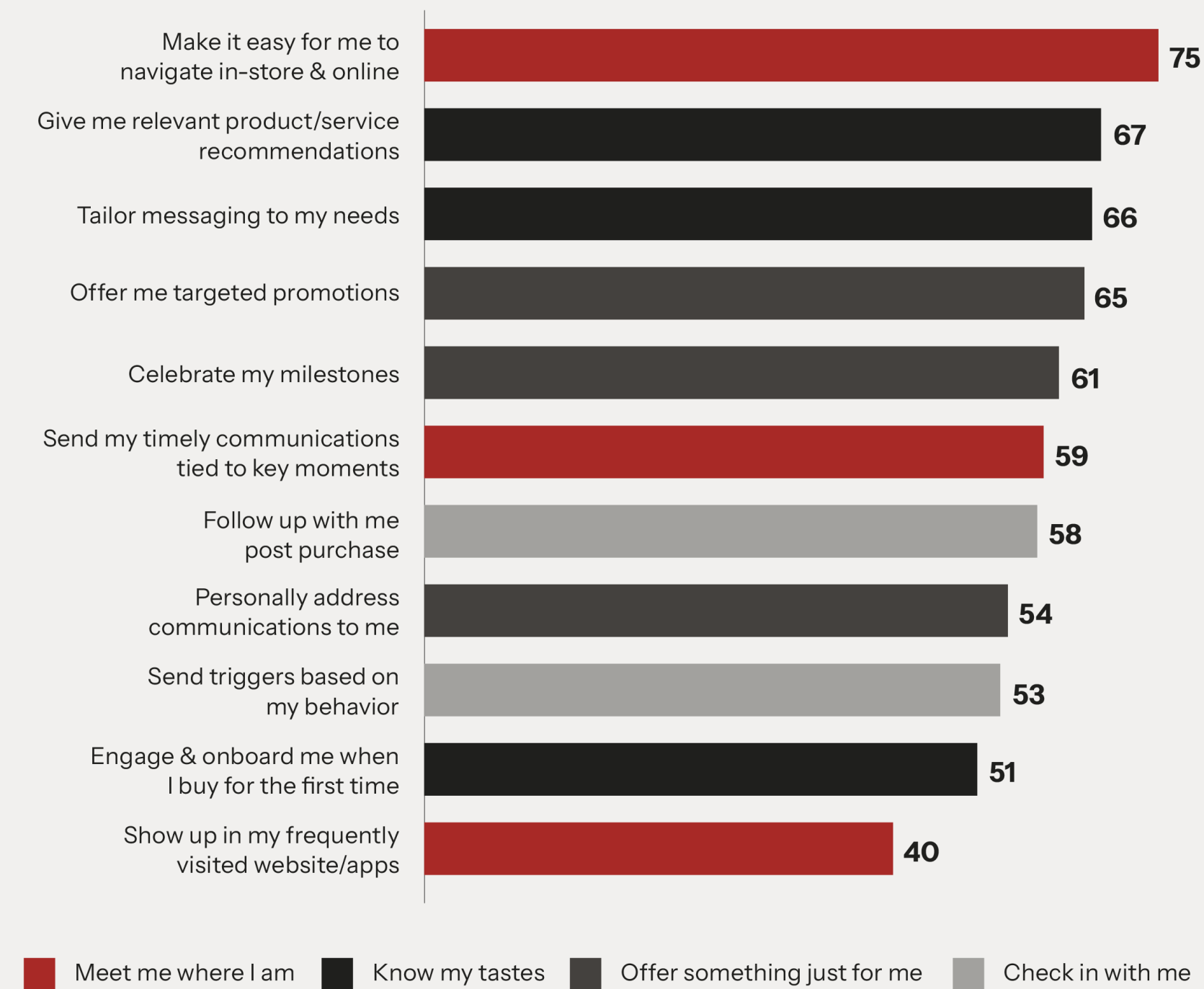
~30% **OF CRM DATA BECOMES OUTDATED EVERY YEAR**

[Salesforce Developers Blog: Bad Data Prevention: Best Practices for Developers](#)



IMPORTANCE OF PERSONALIZATION ACTIONS FOR CONSUMERS PURCHASING FOR THE FIRST TIME

% of respondents



3. LET THE MACHINES DO THE WORK, BUT DON'T LET GO OF THE WHEEL

Marketing, media, and LLM platforms are increasingly automating tasks like media buying, bid optimization, and dynamic creative-intent matching. Tools like Google's Performance Max and Meta's Advantage+ use AI to decide where ads show and optimize spend in real-time based on conversion likelihood. When fed the right data, these automated solutions can outperform manual campaign management by reacting faster to signals, at scale. However, due to the "black box" nature of these systems, performance marketers must remain "in-the-loop" by contributing expert input, developing compelling creative assets, inputting clean data, defining relevant goals, setting appropriate guardrails, enabling notifications to manage by exception, and applying human judgment to guide the machines.

Particularly for bottom-funnel campaigns, another critical input is personalization strategy. The best performance marketers focus on key category entry points and develop creative assets and offers to match the wants, needs, and desires of people who are likely to buy. Most of all, they make it easy for customers to connect their web, app, and retail activity into a seamless omni-channel experience.

Truth #5

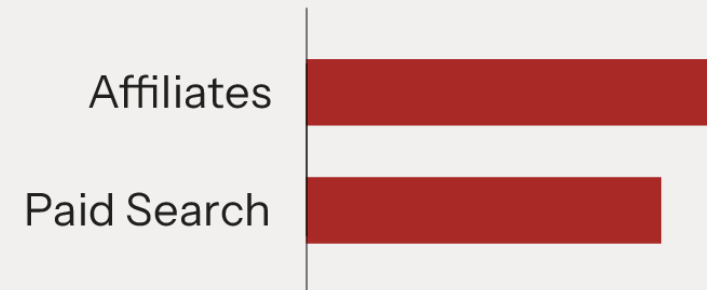
**YOU CAN'T MANAGE WHAT
YOU DON'T MEASURE 05**

Measurement is the lifeblood of performance marketing. Hence why marketers love dashboards. But they can also drown in tactical metrics and experience analysis paralysis. Vanity KPIs, especially those like CPM, last-click CPA, and even short-term ROAS, can lead to the wrong budget allocation decisions. This is especially critical in today's landscape because measurement has become significantly harder with data privacy changes, cookie deprecation, and the non-linear customer journey complicating traditional attribution. This lack of clear, simple measurement means marketers must actively invest in and manage their measurement capabilities to optimize performance.

OPTIMIZING AWAY FROM EFFECTIVENESS

Focusing on the wrong metrics can lead to missed opportunities, as shown by this impact assessment for an apparel retailer.

QUICK, REAL-TIME ROAS



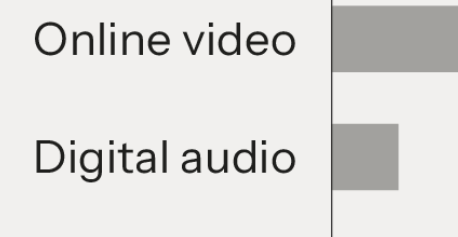
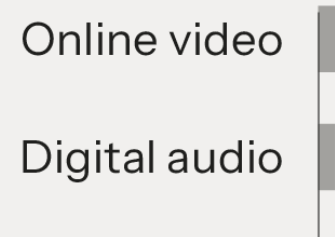
ROBUST COMMERCIAL ANALYTICS



Overstated by 3x



Opportunities to drive in-store sales are missed through last click



Significantly understated

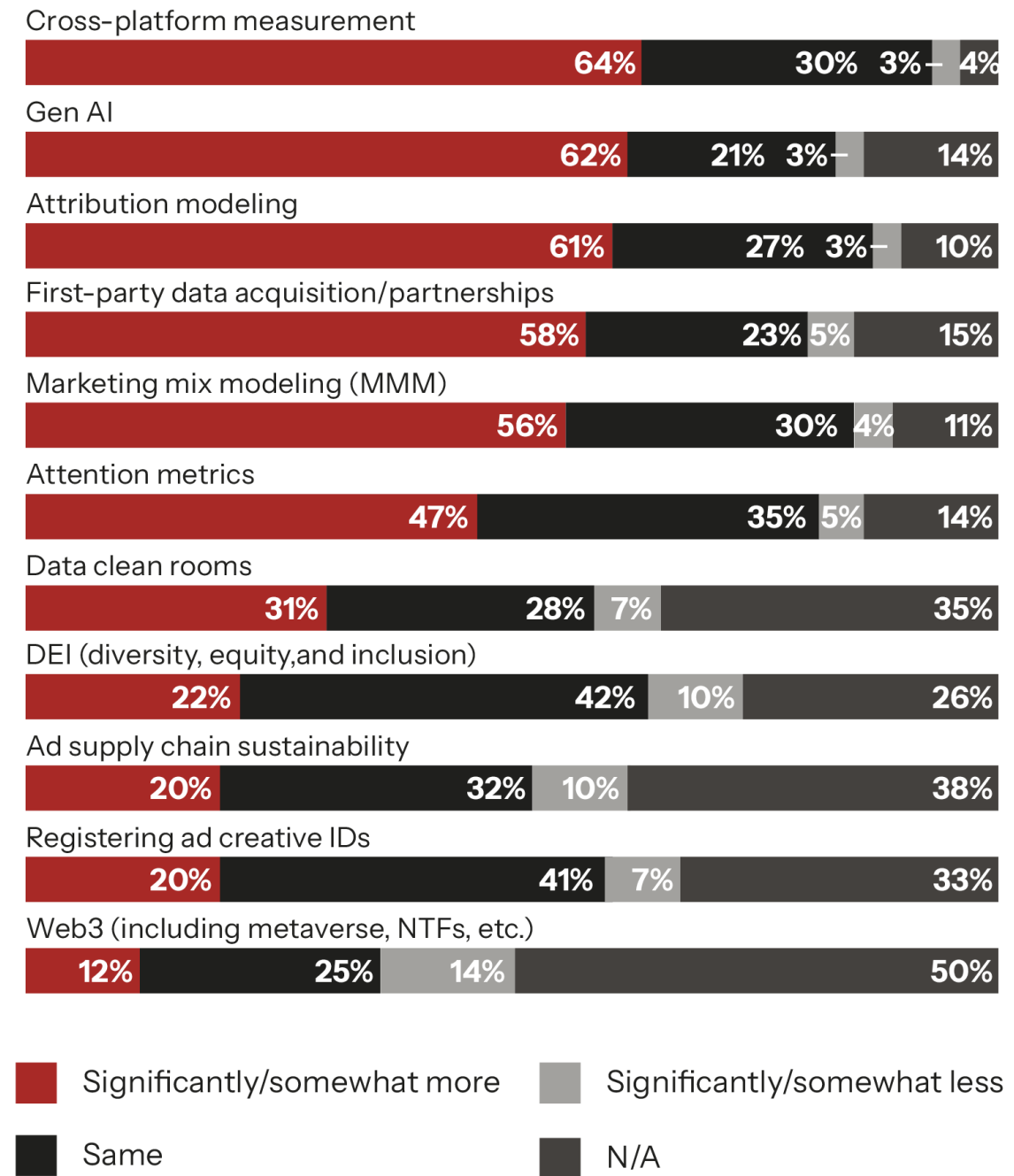
TREND: NEXT GEN MEASUREMENT IS NOW ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE

A few years ago, sophisticated media measurement was typically limited to large advertisers with big budgets and long timelines. As analytics platforms have advanced and costs have come down, performance marketers with smaller budgets are increasingly embracing measurement techniques like Marketing Mix Modeling (MMM), Incrementality Testing, and Attention Metrics.

This trend is driven by the need for privacy-safe measurement, the pressure to prove the true incremental impact of marketing beyond simple attribution, and the challenge of capturing consumer focus in a saturated digital landscape. MMM provides a strategic cross-channel view, incrementality tests prove causal lift, and attention metrics ensure ads have an impact. The move is towards a hybrid measurement approach combining these methods for a more holistic and reliable understanding of performance.

LEVEL OF FOCUS AMONG US AD BUYERS IN 2025 FOR SELECT AD TOPICS/SOLUTIONS, DEC 2024

% of respondents



“Don’t tie yourself to last click. If you go into the CFO and say ‘I’ve done last-click and I haven’t done any uplift experiments,’ you are going to get laughed out of the room.”

Alex Schultz

CMO and VP of Analytics, Meta

“Most people don’t understand the **CONSEQUENCES TO CPM,** which I call **COST-PER-MEANING-LESS-THOUSAND.**”

Dr. Karen Nelson Field

1. MAKE ATTENTION A PRIORITY OVER EFFICIENCY

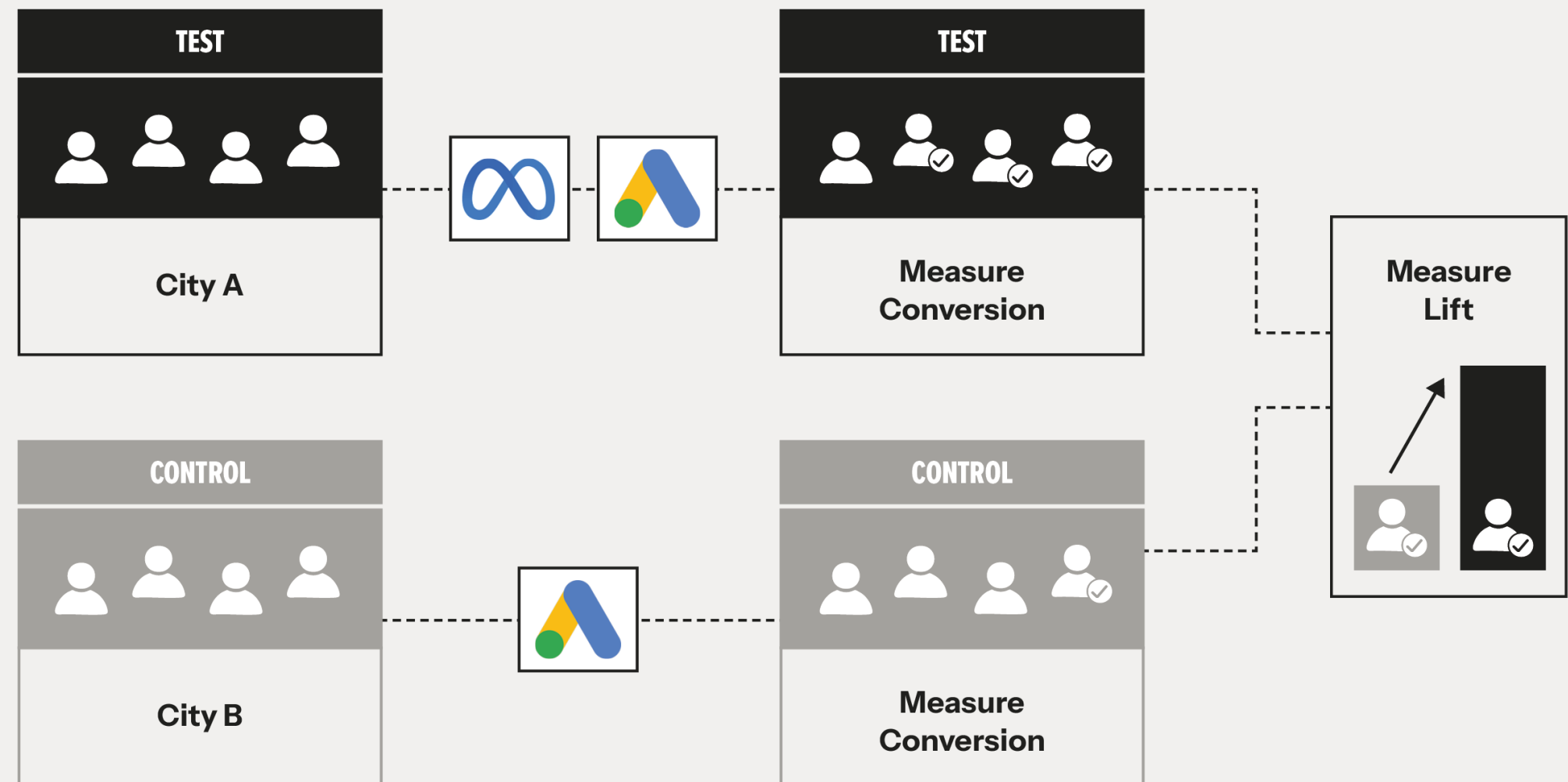
Attention metrics go beyond simple reach, frequency, CPM, and viewability KPIs to measure the likelihood that an ad was truly registered by the viewer. Attention signals include ad size, contextual position, surrounding clutter, view duration, and device type. These signals offer a richer understanding of engagement than just a viewable impression count. Performance marketers should incorporate attention as a KPI because capturing consumer attention, even briefly, is a prerequisite for any conversion or downstream action.

To implement, savvy marketers are using solutions from platforms like Lumen or Adelaide and front-loading their creative assets for immediate impact. By measuring and optimizing for attention, performance marketers can improve creative effectiveness, make smarter media buying decisions, and ultimately drive more meaningful engagement that can lead to higher quality clicks and conversions.

2. PROVE IMPACT WITH INCREMENTALITY, NOT JUST ATTRIBUTION

Incrementality measures the true additional lift in conversions or outcomes directly caused by a brand’s marketing efforts, beyond what would have occurred naturally. Performance marketers should make incremental lift a core KPI. The primary implementation method is running controlled experiments. This involves designing tests with control groups, like regional holdouts or in-platform (i.e., Google/Meta/Programmatic) “Conversion Lift” tests. Savvy marketers measure beyond the conversion too, tracking repeat purchase rates and customer lifetime value. If certain channels bring in customers with higher lifetime value (LTV), they factor that into their CPA goals for those channels.

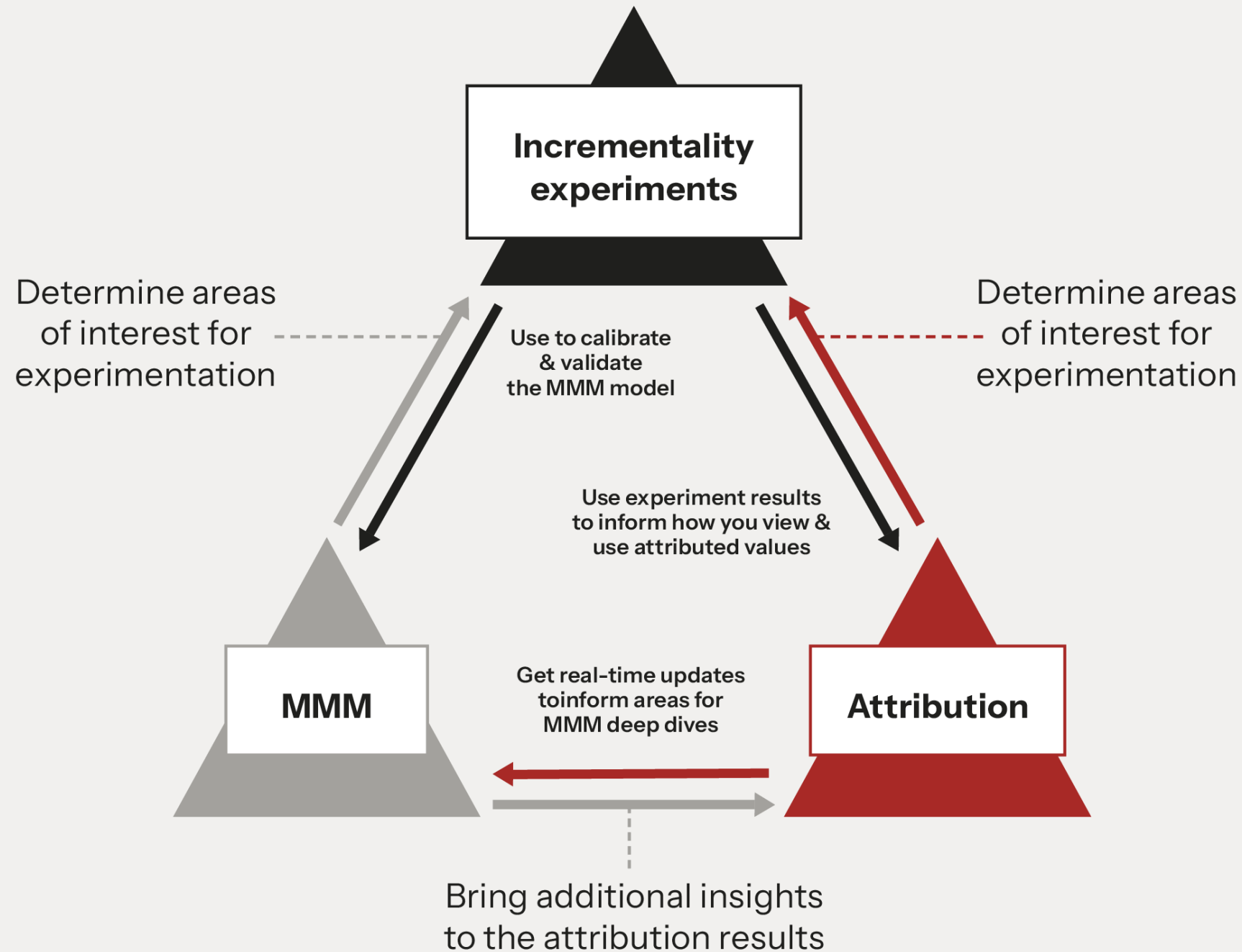
GEO-MATCHED MARKET TESTING



3. ADOPT A HYBRID MEASUREMENT MODEL

A hybrid marketing measurement strategy blends Multi-Touch Attribution (MTA), Marketing Mix Modeling (MMM), and Incrementality Testing to overcome each method's limits. MTA, MMM, and incrementality tests each have their own strengths and weaknesses. MTA offers digital granularity but struggles post-privacy changes. MMM provides holistic, privacy-safe insights but lacks speed and detail. Incrementality testing delivers causal truth but is limited in scope and scale.

Used together, MMM informs strategic budget allocation, MTA optimizes daily digital decisions, and incrementality validates both. This integrated approach ensures accuracy, agility, and accountability, essential in a fragmented, privacy-first world. The key is ongoing calibration across methods to guide investment, prove value, and drive both short-term results and long-term growth.



CONCLUSION

In this playbook, we've reframed performance marketing not just as a set of tactics, but as a framework for modern marketing effectiveness, anchored in five enduring truths, five modern trends, and activated through fifteen high-impact growth levers.

Performance marketing is at a crossroads. Once defined by channel-level optimizations and isolated ROAS wins, it now demands a broader, more strategic mindset. The future belongs to leaders who move beyond last-click conversions and embrace performance as an integrated discipline, one that aligns brand with demand, earns attention across fragmented journeys, and operationalizes growth through relentless testing, smart automation, and meaningful measurement.

Winning performance marketers will be those who unify teams around shared outcomes, invest in creativity as a performance multiplier, treat data as a living asset, and build adaptive systems that learn faster than the market shifts. It's time for performance marketers to stop chasing algorithm changes and start architecting advantage strategically, sustainably, and relentlessly.

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