Google Ads

Paving the path to proven success

Your playbook on experimentation

2022 edition

What’s inside?

1. The marketing value of experimentation →
2. The fundamental principles of experimentation →
3. Experiment methodologies & tools →
4. Setting up for success at scale →

1.

The marketing value of experimentation

Experimentation isn't limited to the fields of science - we experiment all the time.

As marketers, a few key questions linger at the top of our minds: how do we connect with consumers? What is the best way, when is the best time, and which is the best platform to reach them?

Advertisers who run 15 experiments per year reap proven positive impact over the long term, seeing:

~30%

higher ad performance in the same year and

45%

increase in performance the year after that[1]

Instead of wondering, experiments answer your questions, so that you can focus on strategizing.

Share this

> Every marketer should have experimentation as the biggest, most powerful tool in their arsenal.
>
> – Shaifali Nathan, Director,
> Large Customer Marketing & Events, Google

Navigating a world that’s constantly changing

Even without taking a global pandemic into account, consumer behavior is constantly evolving.

Recent search trends show that shoppers are willing to invest more of their time and resources to ensure that their choices align with their value systems and beliefs, regardless of how much they trust a brand[2]. This means that even if a marketing strategy worked before, it may no longer hold true for businesses and brands.

Instead of overhauling your campaigns each time, why not conduct an experiment?

Share this

> There’s no marketing strategy that you can use forever, because you are always exposed to new challenges. If you do not evolve or adapt yourself, you will be left behind by your competitors.
>
> – Palson Yi, Marketing Director, Realme Indonesia

Making decisions driven by data

One of our biggest challenges as marketers is identifying and justifying the true impact of marketing.

This means that understanding what works – and more importantly what doesn't - is crucial to making future campaign decisions.

According to Thor Ernstsson, Forbes Technology council member, the goal is less about failure and more about learning quickly[3].

While it may feel counterintuitive to invest time and resources in experimentation during times of turbulence, it's actually a critical step forward.

Experiments are a relatively low-risk environment where we can test and learn, enabling us to make better, more informed decisions based on proven results.

20-30%

of every campaign budget is reserved by Google for testing

We constantly test theories and ideas before scaling them to ensure maximum impact.

Share this

> We pride ourselves on being digital-first marketers who want to push the industry forward. Having a test-and-learn mindset is a belief we hold so dear.
>
> – Bob Arnold, Digital Media and Strategy Lead,
> Google Media Lab

Embracing an experimental mindset

In our day-to-day strategies; we tweak and test different copies, layouts, and even fonts.

Behind this is a simple idea: try different things, and keep what works.

A business that ingrains an experimental mindset at its core realizes the importance of challenging assumptions, whether it's a campaign or infrastructural change.

Whether you're a brand that's risk-averse or embraces innovation, testing is still extremely crucial.

Changes based solely on assumptions, rather than data, run the risk of being unnecessary. Running experiments allow us to unambiguously measure its effectiveness before giving it the green light.

Share this

> It's not enough to place value on experimenting; organizations should actually live this day in and day out to ensure they are keeping pace in our rapidly changing business environment.
>
> – Thor Ernstsson,
> Forbes Technology Council Member

> Without testing your assumptions and challenging the way things are done, you're leaving opportunity on the table.
>
> – Matt Meisner, VP Performance,
> Luxury Escapes Australia

2.

The fundamental principles of experimentation

A successful experiment is not necessarily the same as a successful campaign.

An experiment helps identify the causal impact that a strategic change has on a given success metric. In other words, if I change A, this results in B.

A

What we are changing (A) is known as the variable in our experiment.

E.g., a bidding strategy, an audience segment, ad creative, or media channel.

B

The success metric (B) would be a relevant, quantifiable campaign result.

E.g., leads generated, online purchases, foot traffic, or return on ad spend.

Results may or may not be in line with what you expected would happen. Even if you encounter unexpected results, don't treat your experiment as a bust.

As long as an experiment allows us to interpret results without ambiguity and gain insights from it, it's a successful experiment.

With that in mind, we've put together some core fundamental principles to designing and running controlled experiments, regardless of the solution or variable you're looking to test with.

In every experiment, you should:

Takeaway

Hatch your hypothesis

Validate your victories

Assign your audience

Respond to your results

> If you thought something was going to happen and it didn't, then you've learned something important. And if you thought something minor was going to happen, and the results are a major surprise and lead to a breakthrough, you've learned something highly valuable.
>
> – Ron Kohavi & Stefan Thomke, Harvard Business Review[4]

Hatch your hypothesis

Each experiment should start by defining a clear hypothesis – a statement on what we want to prove or disprove.

Why do you want to run this experiment in the first place?

For example, are you interested in finding out if increased presence across more online platforms can drive incremental conversions? Or whether an automated search campaign can increase brand discoverability?

Also, don't just test for the sake of testing. A good hypothesis frames a focused and unambiguous question based on specific business goals.

Validate your victories

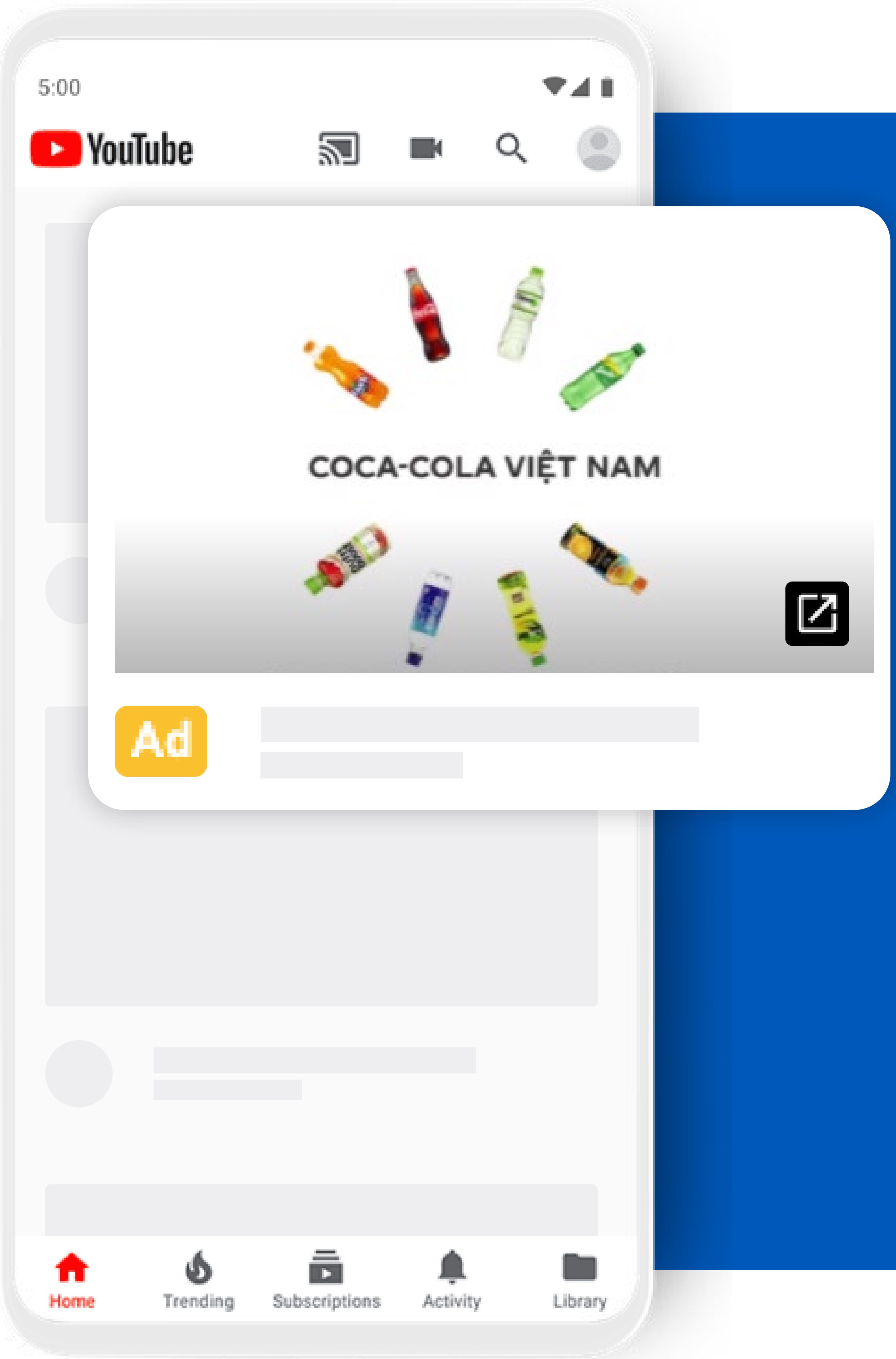
What does success look like for your business, and how can this be measured? These are questions you should answer before launching any experiment or campaign.

It's crucial to identify key success metrics; don't rush to start and change your goals mid-flight! Making changes to your experiment on the fly can invalidate results.

It's equally important not to have too many metrics. Ask yourself which goals are most business-critical. A good success metric is one that is clear, relevant, and quantifiable.

Part of this step is also mapping out what actions you will take based on respective outcomes.

It is also helpful to establish what level of impact you would need to see in order to determine that results are statistically significant.



Cheers to Coke's bold stroke

Coca-cola, one of the world's leading beverage brands, tapped on YouTube cross-media reach reporting to measure the incremental reach and impact on top of its evergreen TV strategy.

The YouTube campaign delivered:

+28%

incremental reach on top of TV campaign

-67%

cost per reach vs TV campaign

Learn more ↗

Assign your audiences

A controlled experiment refers to a test that isolates the impact of the selected testing variable on the success metric(s).

This isolation can be achieved by splitting users into comparable, separate and non-overlapping test and control groups.

By comparing the difference in behaviors between the test and control groups, we can find the impact of the variable.

A test group is exposed to a change in the variable we're testing.

A control group is left status quo i.e. not exposed to the change in variable.

Homerun for Moonton

Game developer Moonton was keen to measure the impact of its online video ads on app installs for Mobile Legends: Bang Bang. Testing across three distinct audience groups – one served only with YouTube branding ads, one served only App campaign ads, and one served with both YouTube branding and App campaign ads, they found that running both YouTube and App campaigns delivered:

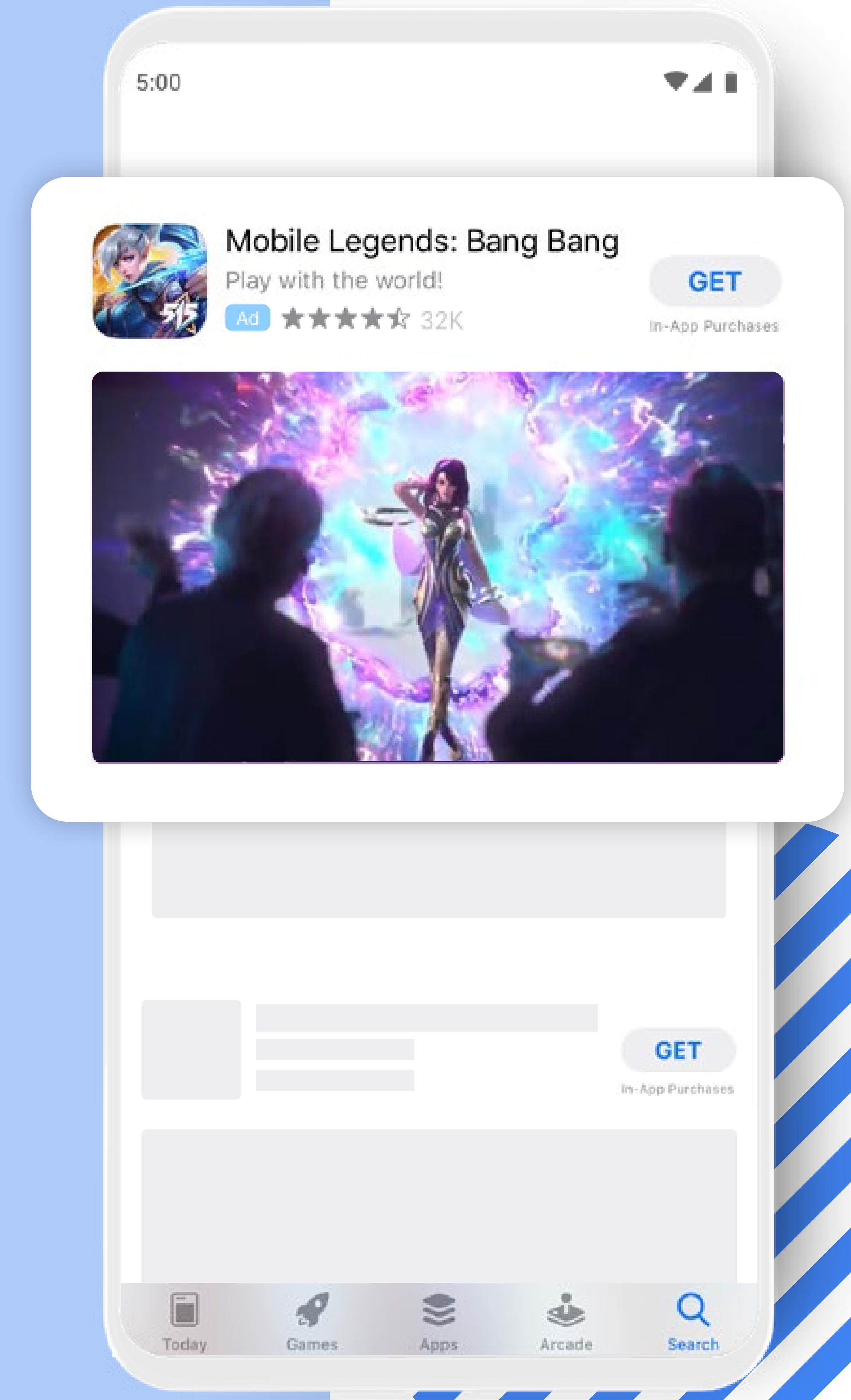
+27%

conversion rate

-55%

cost per app install

Learn more ↗


5:00
Mobile Legends: Bang Bang
Play with the world!
Ad
★★★★☆ 32K
GET
In-App Purchases
GET
In-App Purchases
Today
Games
Apps
Arcade
Search

Respond to your results

Once the test has wrapped up it's time to analyze, and then act.

If the outcome aligns with your expectations, your hypothesis is proven; data has confirmed that the strategic change you had in mind is impactful and successful! Decide how you will incorporate the change into your marketing plan.

If the test produces an unexpected outcome, brainstorm about reasons why the strategic change didn't work out. Are there any other ways you can modify or evolve this to work better?

Either way, make sure you take action with the results you have. Otherwise, why run the experiment at all?

> Learning organizations try many things and keep what works.
>
> – James Heskett, Professor Emeritus of Harvard Business School

Explore some of our standout experiment success stories on [Think with Google.]

SEPHORA

Sephora's scalable smart shopping strategy

After the brand's experiment with Smart Shopping in Australia drove an incremental:

+20%

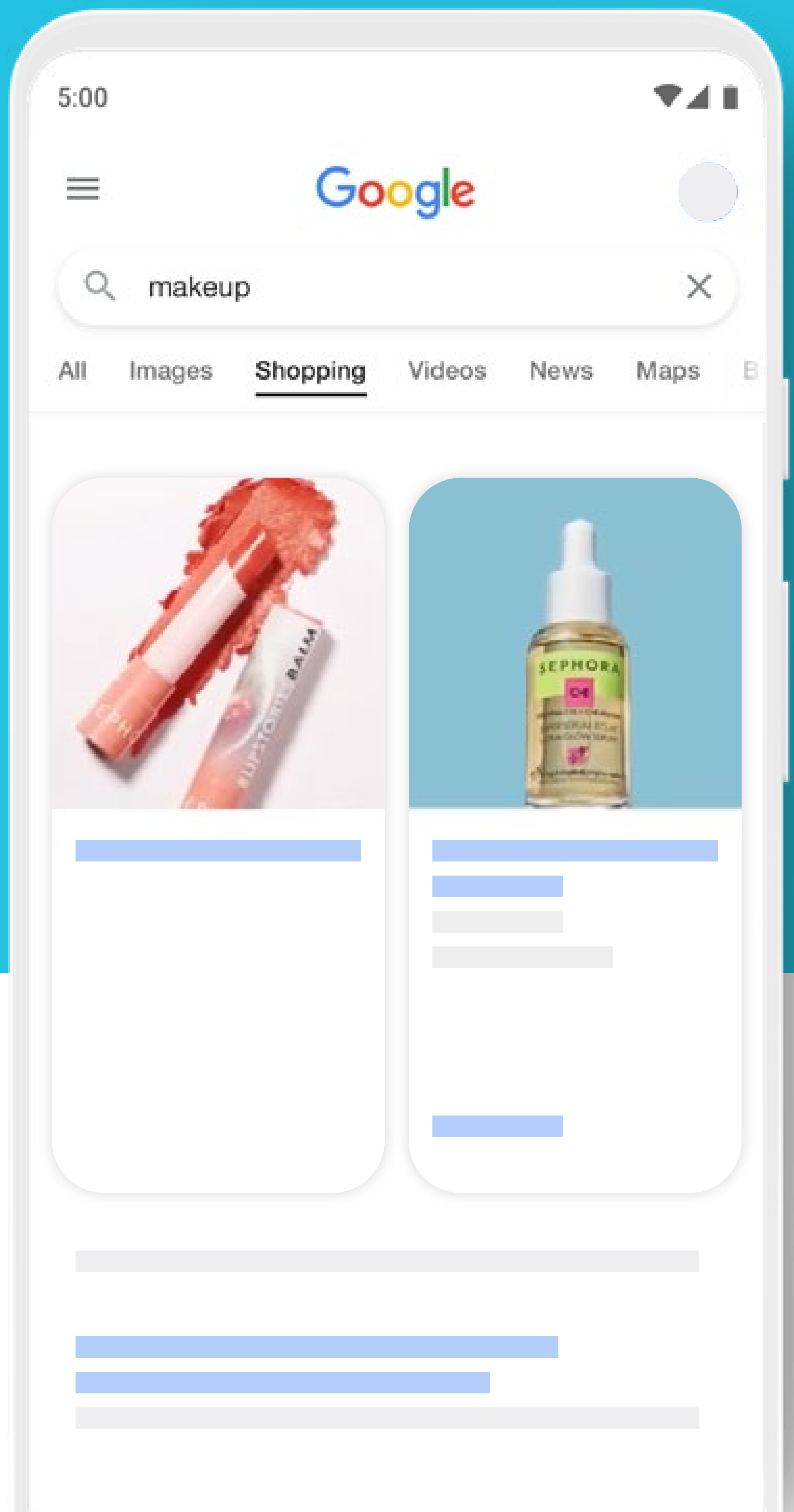
conversions and

+15%

revenue

The beauty retailer decided to scale this always-on and expanded the successful strategy to an additional six markets.

Learn more ↗



3.

Experiment methodologies & tools

Different experiments suit different testing methodologies

A solid testing methodology, coupled with robust measurement and attribution enables marketers to:

Track consumer journeys across digital touchpoints, devices and online to offline activity

Accurately assign value to each action

Use data to make challenging business decisions

If 2020 saw millions migrate online, 2021 witnessed the staying power of digital. In 2021:

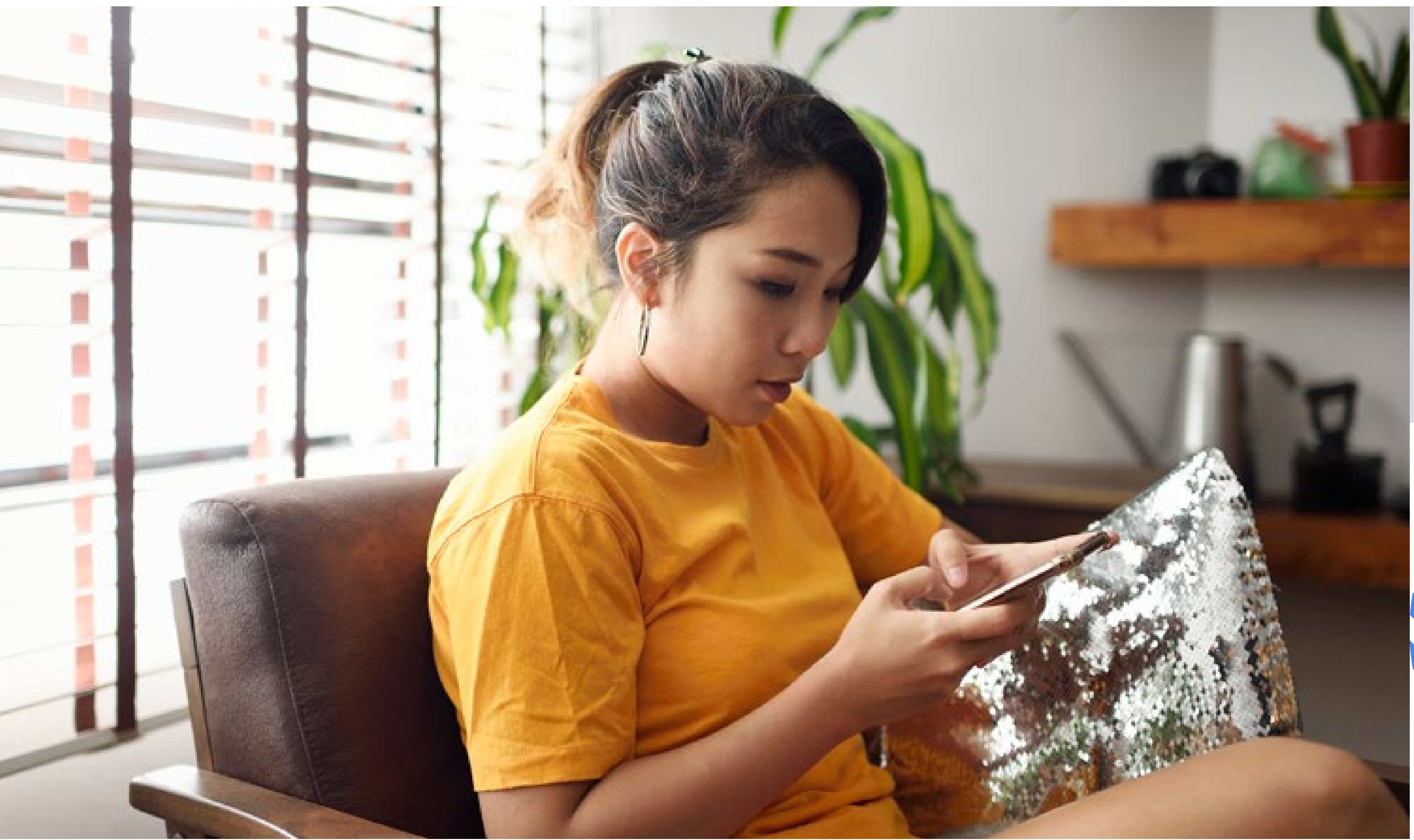
+20 million

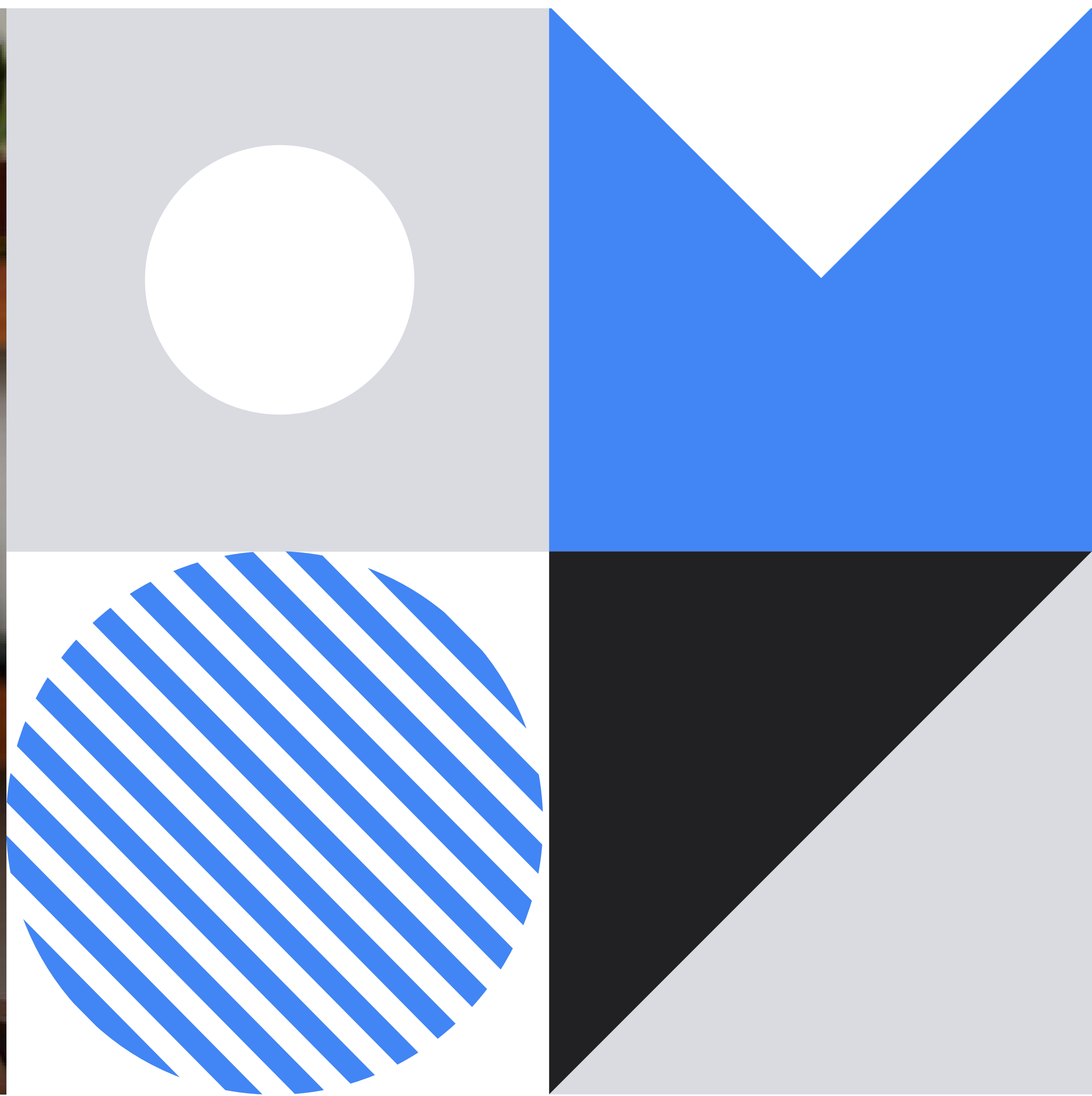
in Southeast Asia became new digital consumers in the first half of the year

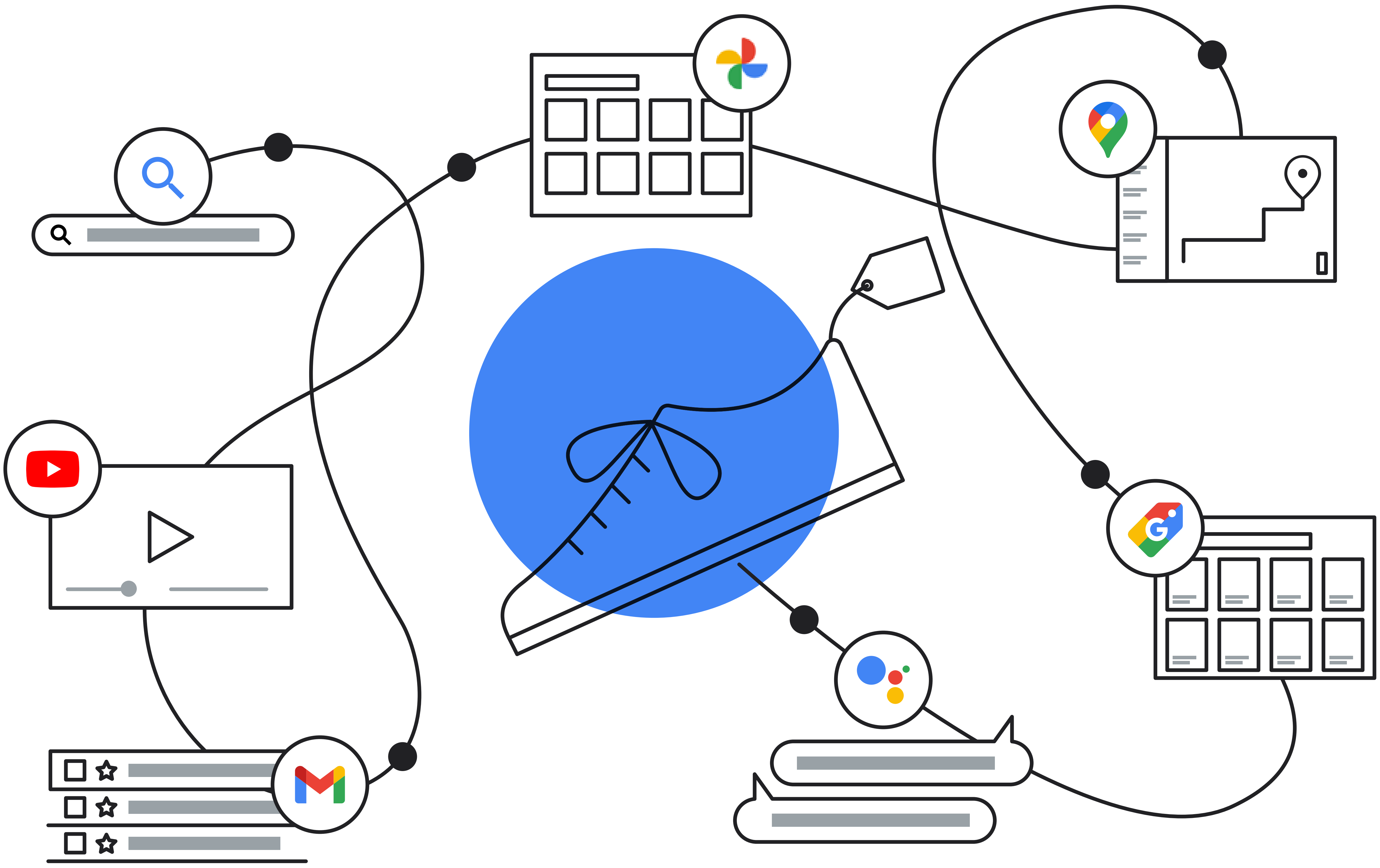
+90%

of APAC consumers expect retailers to sell their products online[5]

China became the first country in the world to see e-commerce sales surpass store sales. It's clear that digital is here to stay and it's leveling the playing field for businesses. Given this, being equipped with both data and measurement remains fundamental to marketing.





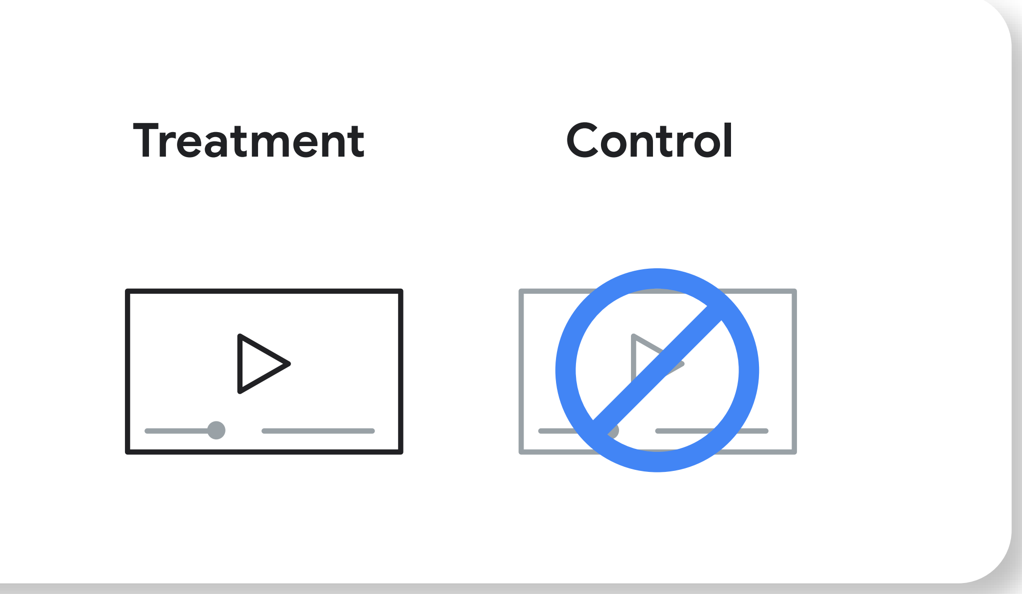


It might seem intimidating to have to decide on a testing methodology.

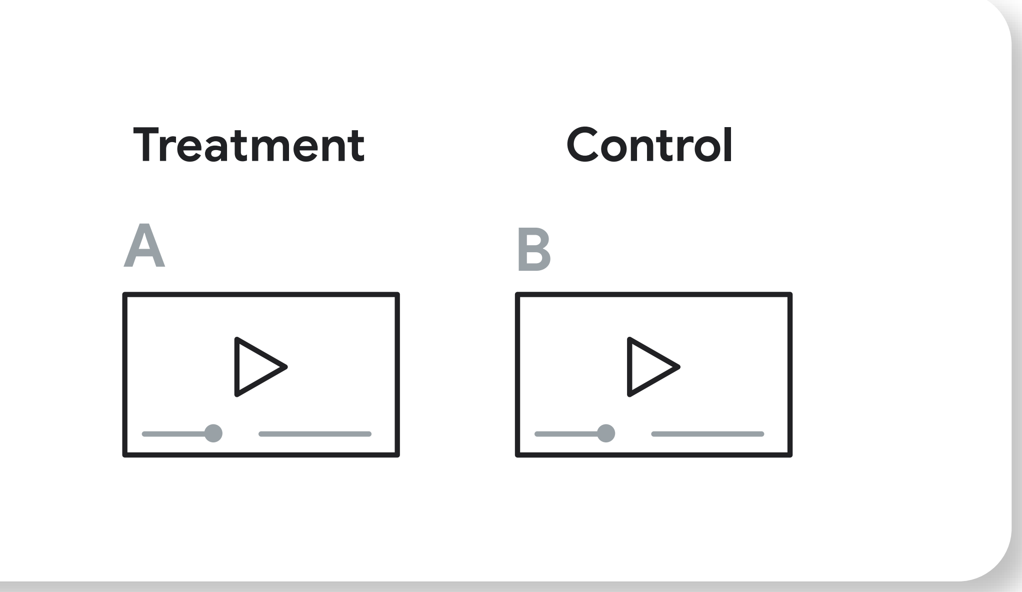
However, this simply means identifying how your experiment should be carried out to best understand if your ads are effective in delivering incremental results.

For example, you can run your experiment using user-based, geo-based, or time-based partitions to analyze incrementality or optimization:

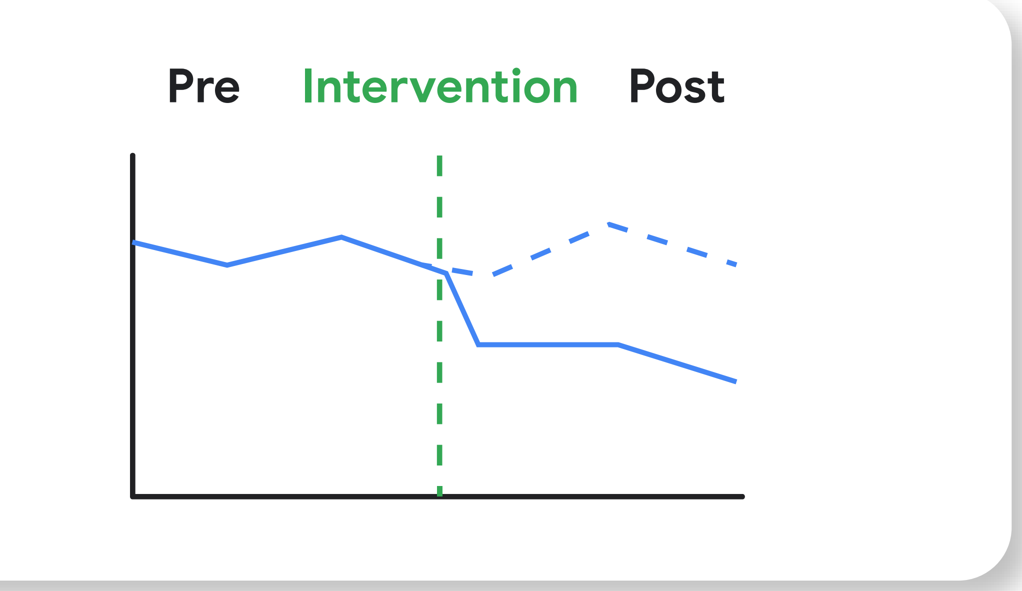
Incrementality experiments



Optimization experiments (A/B)



Causal impact analysis

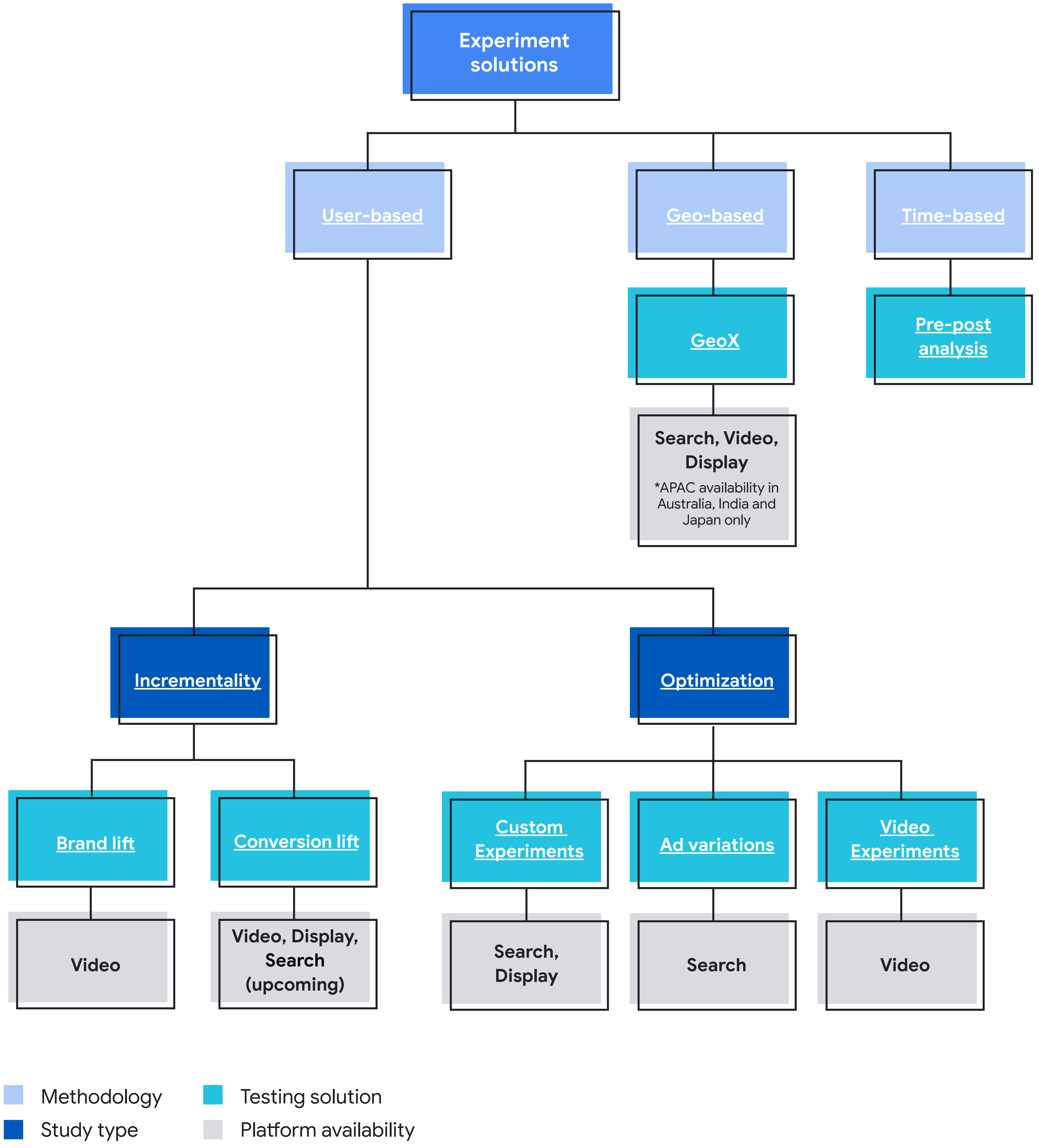


Screening for suitability

Takeaway

Once you've identified the testing methodology you want to use, it's just a matter of finding the most suitable corresponding experimentation solution.

Here is an overview of the solutions Google offers:

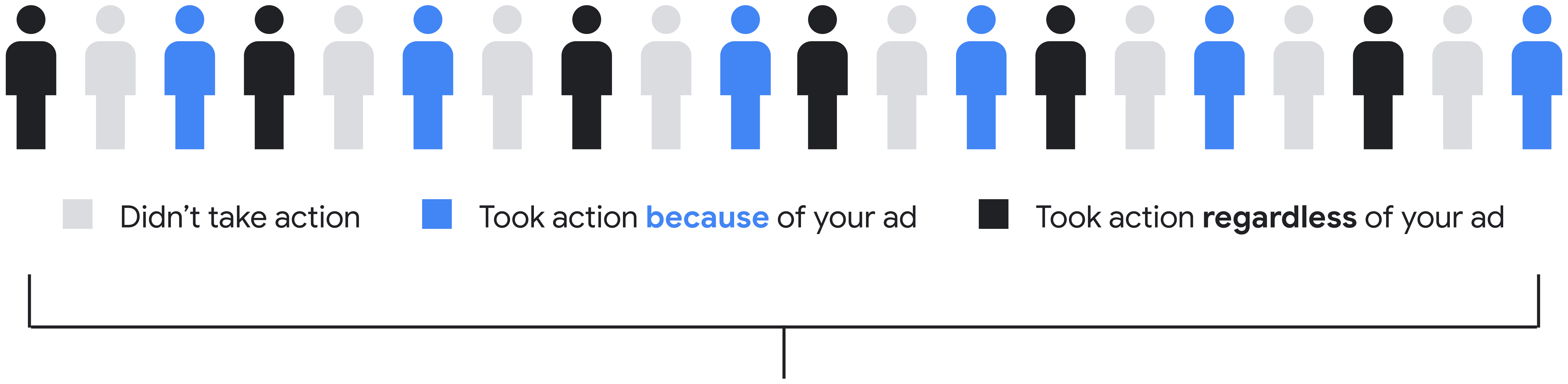

Experiment solutions
User-based
Geo-based
Time-based
GeoX
Pre-post analysis
Search, Video, Display
*APAC availability in Australia, India and Japan only
Incrementality
Optimization
Brand lift
Conversion lift
Custom Experiments
Ad variations
Video Experiments
Video
Video, Display, Search (upcoming)
Search, Display
Search
Video
Methodology
Testing solution
Study type
Platform availability

User-based testing

Testing for incrementality

Incrementality experiments are ad hoc statistical tests to determine the causal impact of media.

This is done through randomized controlled experiments to determine whether an ad actually changed consumer behavior, which in turn can be used to determine channel-level budgets or measure lift to optimize future campaigns.


⬜ Didn't take action
🟦 Took action because of your ad
⬛ Took action regardless of your ad

Did the ad campaign itself **compel a customer to take an action**...

OR

Did they happen to see the ad, but were **going to act regardless**?

Best practices

- Align on a robust execution strategy.
- Keep experiments clean from one another and set clear expectations for test outcomes.
- Avoid comparing test results between different types of methodologies.
- Make results actionable based on the experiment goals.
- Bear in mind that measured uplifts are conservative as impact is measured only within the timeframe of the experiment.

Understanding incrementality vs causality

Incrementality refers to the amount of change caused by an increment in input, which would have not occurred without the input under measurement.

Causality is the relation between an event (the cause) and a second event (the effect), where the second event is understood as a consequence of the first.

Brand Lift (for video)

Is my target audience more aware of my brand after viewing my video ads?

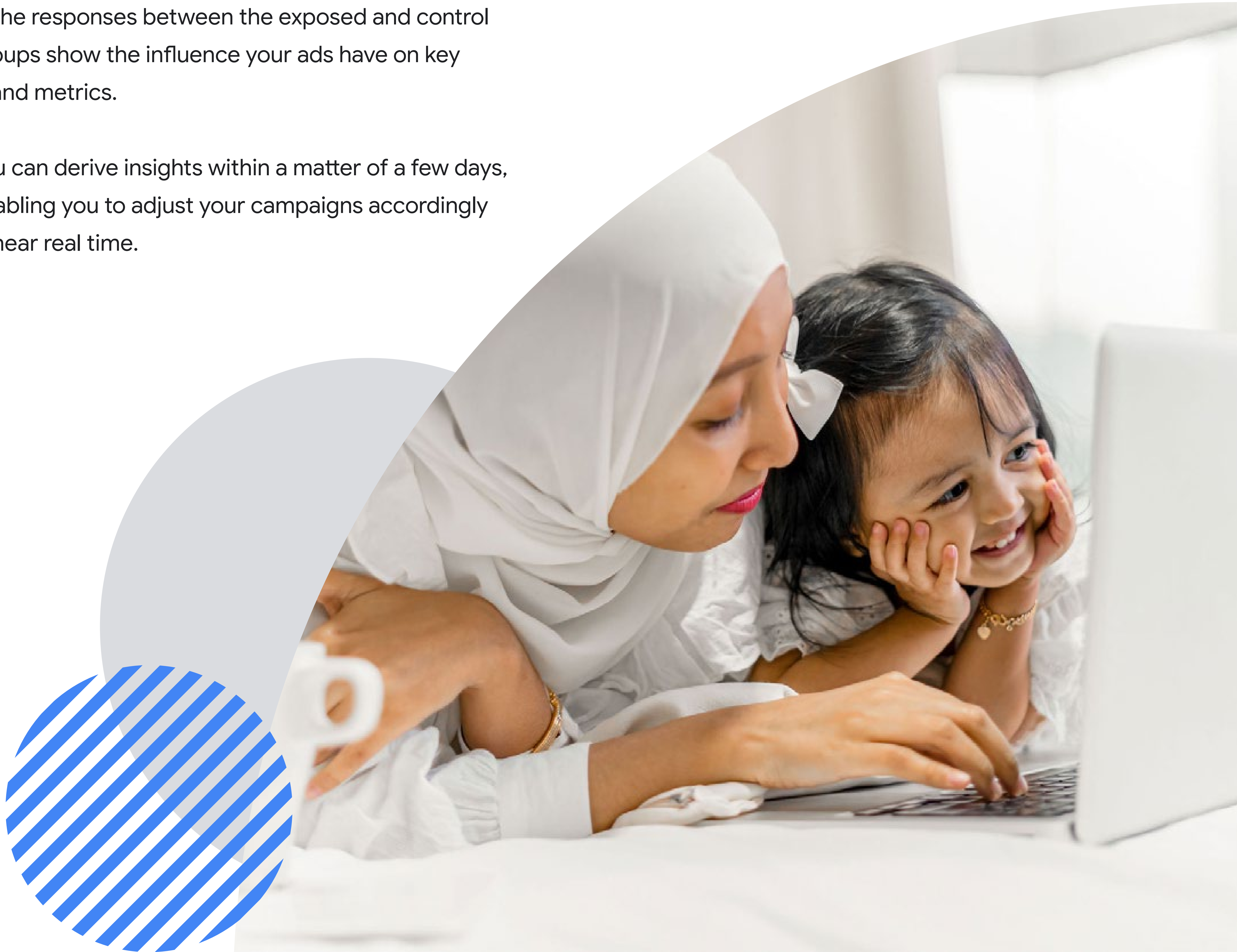
Brand Lift uses surveys to measure a viewer's reaction to the content, message, or product in your video ads. Once your ad campaigns are live, these surveys are shown to the following groups:

Exposed group: People who have seen your ads

Control group: People who were eligible to see your ads, but didn't see them

Multiple surveys can be created for different metrics to be shown to users at different times. The difference in the responses between the exposed and control groups show the influence your ads have on key brand metrics.

You can derive insights within a matter of a few days, enabling you to adjust your campaigns accordingly in near real time.



What can you measure?

Ad recall

Do people recall watching my video ad?

Consideration

Did my video ad move people to consider my brand or product?

Purchase intent

Are consumers intending to purchase my product after seeing my ad?

Brand awareness

Are consumers more aware of my brand after viewing my video ad?

Favorability

Are consumers more favorably aligned with my brand's message/ identity after viewing my ad?

LISTERINE

Rinse, repeat, reap

Global mouthwash brand J&J Listerine aimed to build a routine for its consumers to use mouthwash before going to bed through its "nightly habit" campaign. By personalizing creatives to their audience's interest, the YouTube Director Mix campaigns drove an average of:

+16.3%

ad recall lift (best-in-class) and

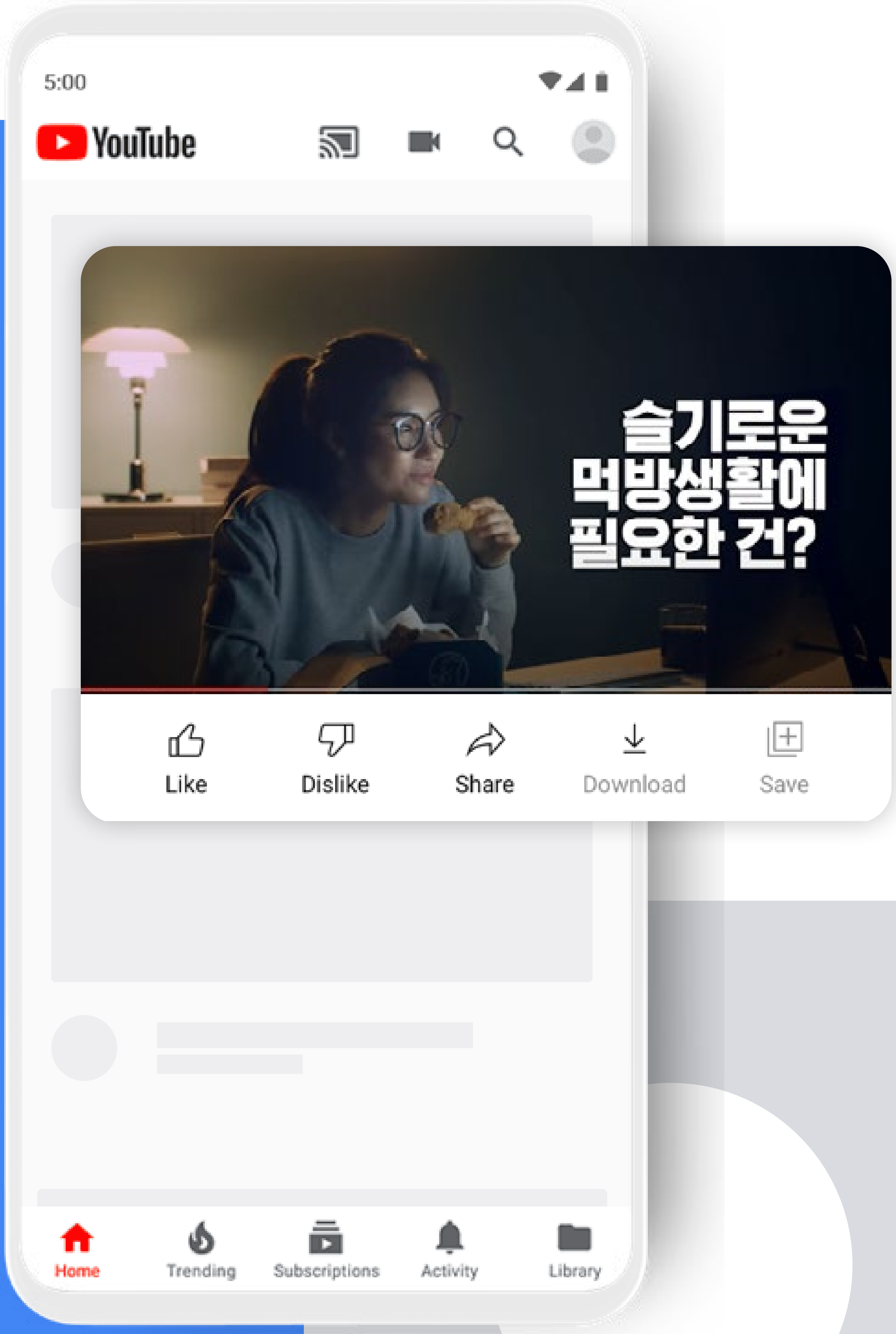
+3.5%

purchase intent lift

Brand search queries also rose by:

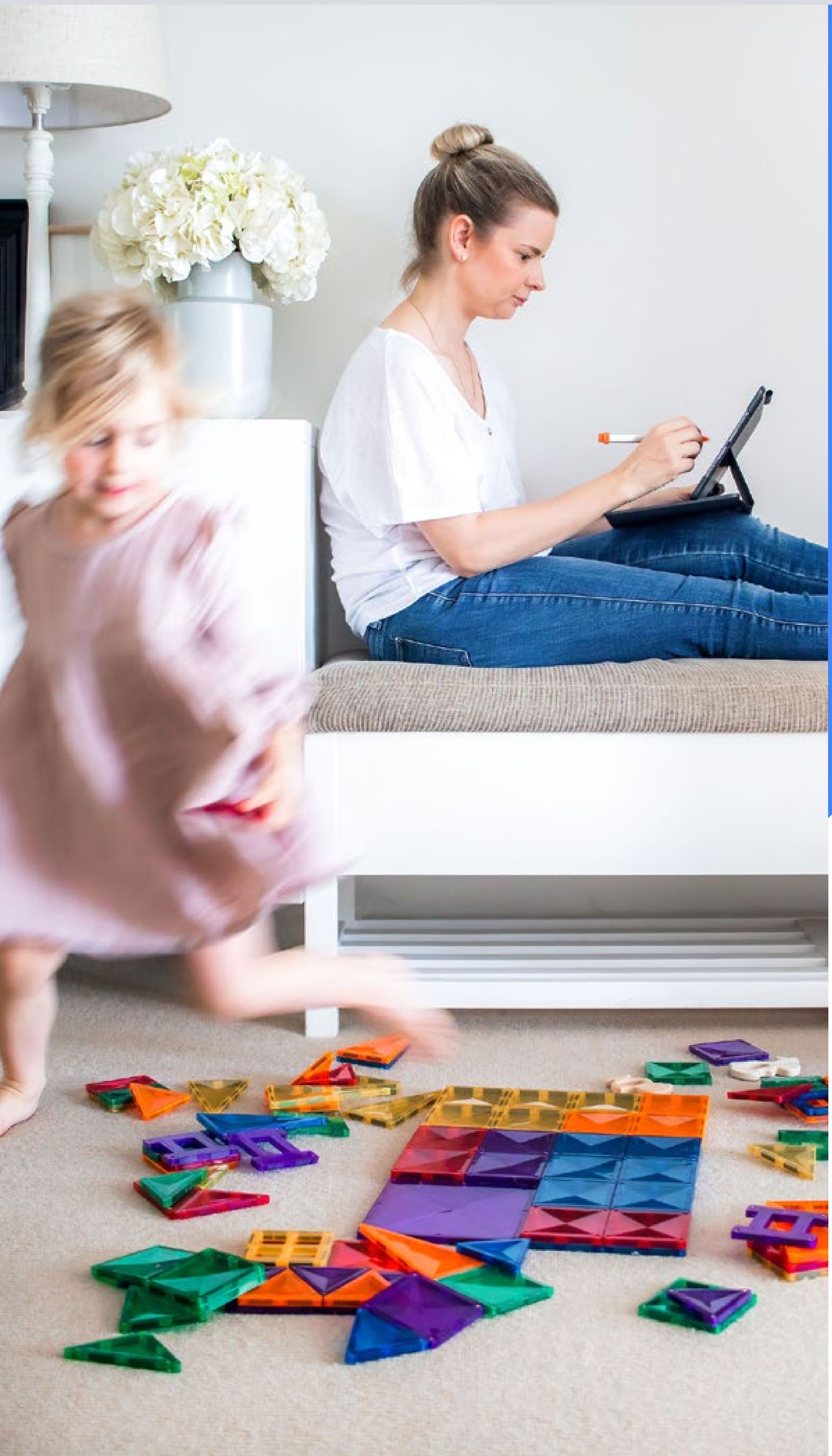
1.8x

when time-relevant messaging was used, proving that further advanced personalization can unlock increased brand interest.



Best practices

- To maximize the chance of receiving meaningful results, select only the metric(s) that most closely align to your marketing goals.
- To test the performance of different creatives, audiences, and more, run each campaign within a separate Brand Lift to receive individual campaign results.
- Use the Video Experiments tool for a clean head-to-head A/B test. You can then run a Brand Lift study in each experiment arm.



Tip

Consider running a Search Lift study alongside Brand Lift. Search Lift analyzes organic searches on both Google.com and YouTube.com to understand the influence of your campaigns.

To use Search Lift, contact your Google account representative for eligibility.

Learn more about setting up, accelerated and re-measurement for Brand Lift.

Conversion Lift

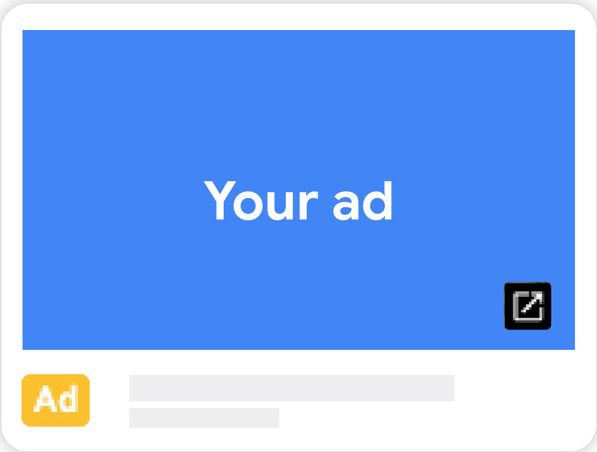
(for video & display; Search upcoming in 2022)

How many more site visits or purchases were generated because users saw my ads?

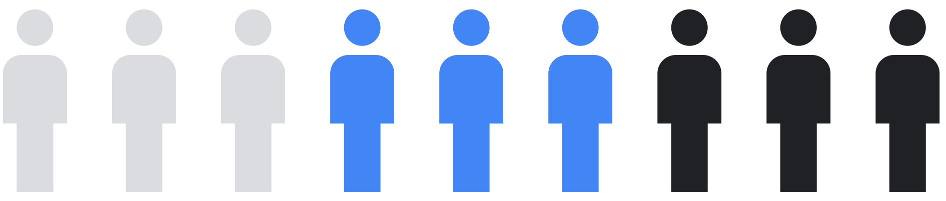
A Conversion Lift study measures causal differences in site visit or conversion behavior. This is done by dividing users into two groups:

Test group:

People who have seen your ads

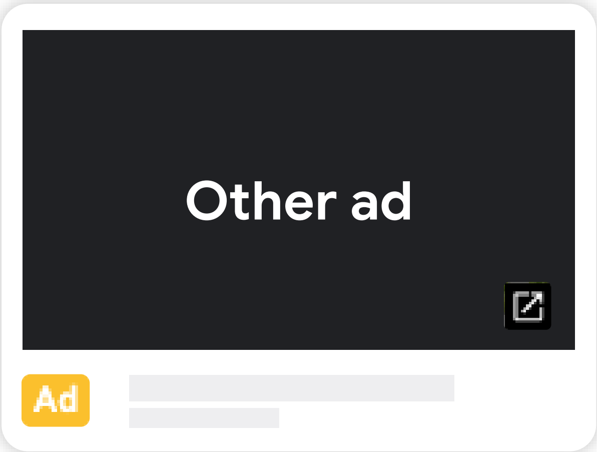


Those who **saw** your ad

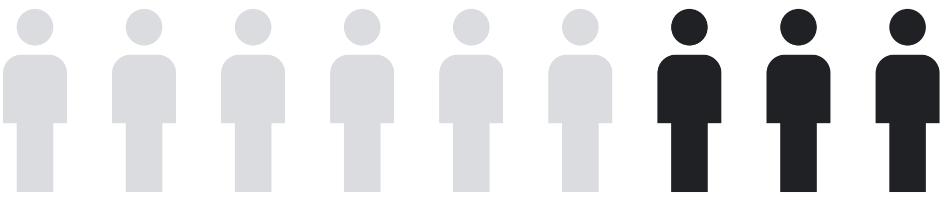


Control group:

People who were eligible to see your ads, but were shown another ad in auction instead



Those who **would have seen** your ad



The differences in downstream behaviors (e.g., conversions and site visits) of the test and control groups are then tracked and compared.

- ⬜ Didn't convert
- 🟦 Converted **because** of this ad
- ⬛ Converted **regardless** of this ad

CIRCLES.LIFE

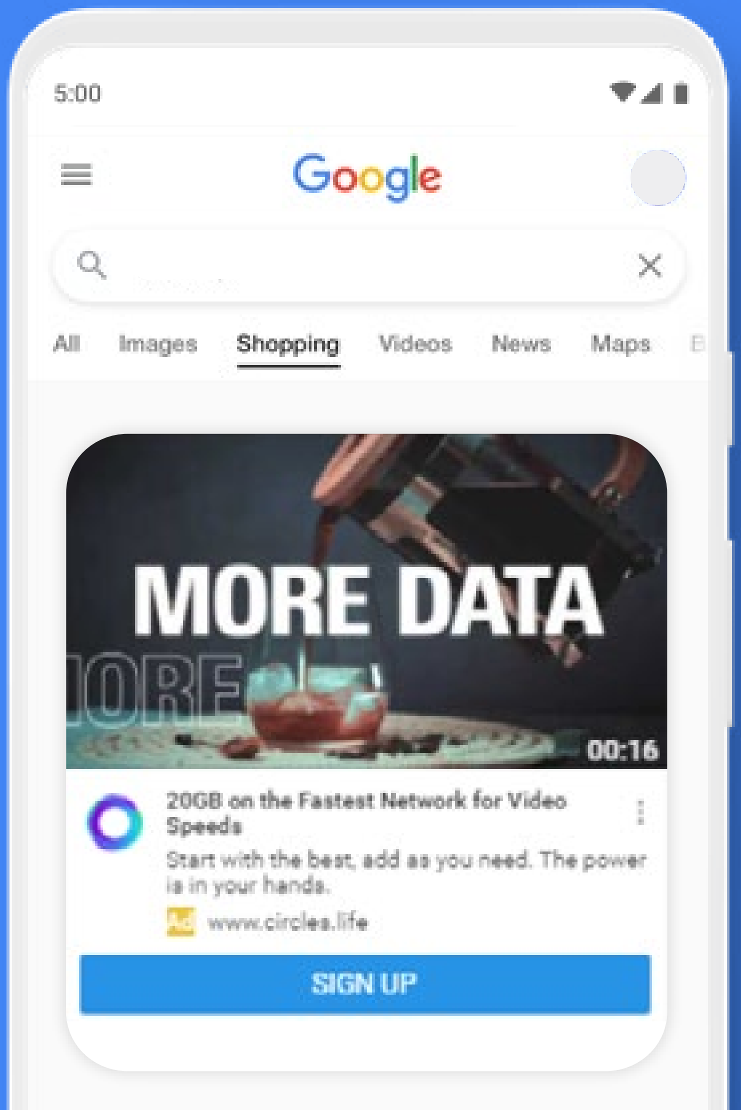
Taking action for greater connection

Circles.Life, Singapore's fully digital telco, set up a Conversion Lift study to assess the incremental impact of Video Action Campaigns in driving mobile plan subscriptions for the business.

The YouTube campaign saw:

+36%

mobile plan puchases



20GB on the Fastest Network for Video Speeds

Start with the best, add as you need. The power is in your hands.

www.circles.life

Best practices

- Use Google Ads Web Conversion Tracking with gtag.js or Google Tag Manager, and if relevant implement Enhanced conversions to improve tracking
- Ensure the campaign meets the minimum conversion volume and budget and understand conversion lag
  - Measure upper funnel conversions such as site visits where possible to increase likelihood of a statistically significant positive lift
  - Conversion Lift captures conversions that occur within a 7-56 day window. If conversion lag is long (40+ days), include upper funnel conversions or consider a different testing solution
- Avoid brand-focused creatives that do lack a clear call-to-action, or leverage maximize conversions or smart bidding.
- Avoid stacking tests. Don't run an experiment on your prospecting campaign if you are also running a holdback experiment on your remarketing campaign, as ~30% of your prospecting users will be in the remarketing holdback.

Tip

The higher a CPA, the longer the conversion lag (usually). Conversions demanding higher CPAs (>$20) require higher budget minimums, and lead to longer tests and measurement challenges. In this case, consider shifting to micro-conversions such as basket views, on-site searches, etc that have a shorter time to conversion and are expected to come in larger numbers.

Conversion Lift might not be available for all Google Ads accounts. To use Conversion Lift, contact your Google account representative for eligibility.

User-based testing

Testing for optimization

It’s crucial to stay nimble and evolve your strategies over time.

As you come up with various ideas, notice how many assumptions you’re making about factors like your audience, your bidding strategy, or your creatives. To understand if your proposed changes will actually help to improve your campaign performance, you can leverage the following experiment solutions available.

Test with even more ease and confidence with the new Experiments page on Google Ads (formerly drafts and experiments).

Custom experiments (for search & display)

Custom experiments allow you to perform a true A/B test without additional budgets or the need to create a draft, by directing a percentage of your campaign budget, cookies or searches from an existing campaign to a test campaign.

This allows control for external factors that may otherwise lead to biased results, with a clear picture of statistical significance indicators, enabling you to analyze the effectiveness of implemented changes.

From there, you can then also easily turn the better performing campaign into your new evergreen strategy.

Tip

Optimization score is a useful guide to prioritizing the strongest opportunities in your campaigns. Check the personalized recommendations that are surfaced so you can boost performance.

What can be tested?

Bidding

Test different bid strategies

- Manual bidding vs Google auto bidding
- 3rd party bidding vs Google auto bidding
- tCPA vs tROAS

Compare standard vs portfolio bid strategies

Targeting

Test a new keyword strategy

- Expand match-types on Smart Bidding campaigns
- Add/remove keywords or try different groupings
- Dynamic Search ads

Test new audience set-up

wondershare

No wondering with smart bidding

Leading desktop software Wondershare leveraged Smart Bidding with the intent of driving efficient business growth. Using a target Return on Ad Spend (tROAS) bid strategy drove:

+52% software sales value and

+49% ROAS

*Against a control Search campaign with enhanced CPC bidding

tafe Queensland

Performing with machine learning

Tafe QLD aimed to measure incremental performance brought on by automated Search. Through Dynamic Search Ads, the largest training provider in Queensland unlocked discoverability with:

+11% impression share and

+32% conversions

*Against a control standard keyword campaign

Landing pages

Test landing page experiences on campaign performance

- Page A vs Page B
- Accelerated Mobile Page (AMP) vs non-AMP

Creative

Test new ad creatives

- New ad extensions
- Responsive Search Ads
- Responsive Display Ads

LG Electronics

Electrifying speed

For LG Electronics, a leading electronics brand in Korea, search has been a key platform contributor of quality traffic and conversions. By enhancing their mobile site speed with AMP, they delivered better user browsing experiences that led to:

+37%

conversions at

-26%

cost per conversion

*Against a control search campaign leading to standard landing pages

Shakey's

EST. 1954

PIZZA PARLOR

Shakey-ing things up

Shakey's Pizza, a leading pizza restaurant chain in the Philippines, utilized tailored creatives with Responsive Display Ads to drive customers to their online delivery website. As a result, the campaign unlocked:

+135%

website traffic with

2.3x

click-through rate (CTR)

*Against a control campaign running static display ads only

Learn more about setting up, testing and optimizing with Custom experiments.

Ad variations (for search)

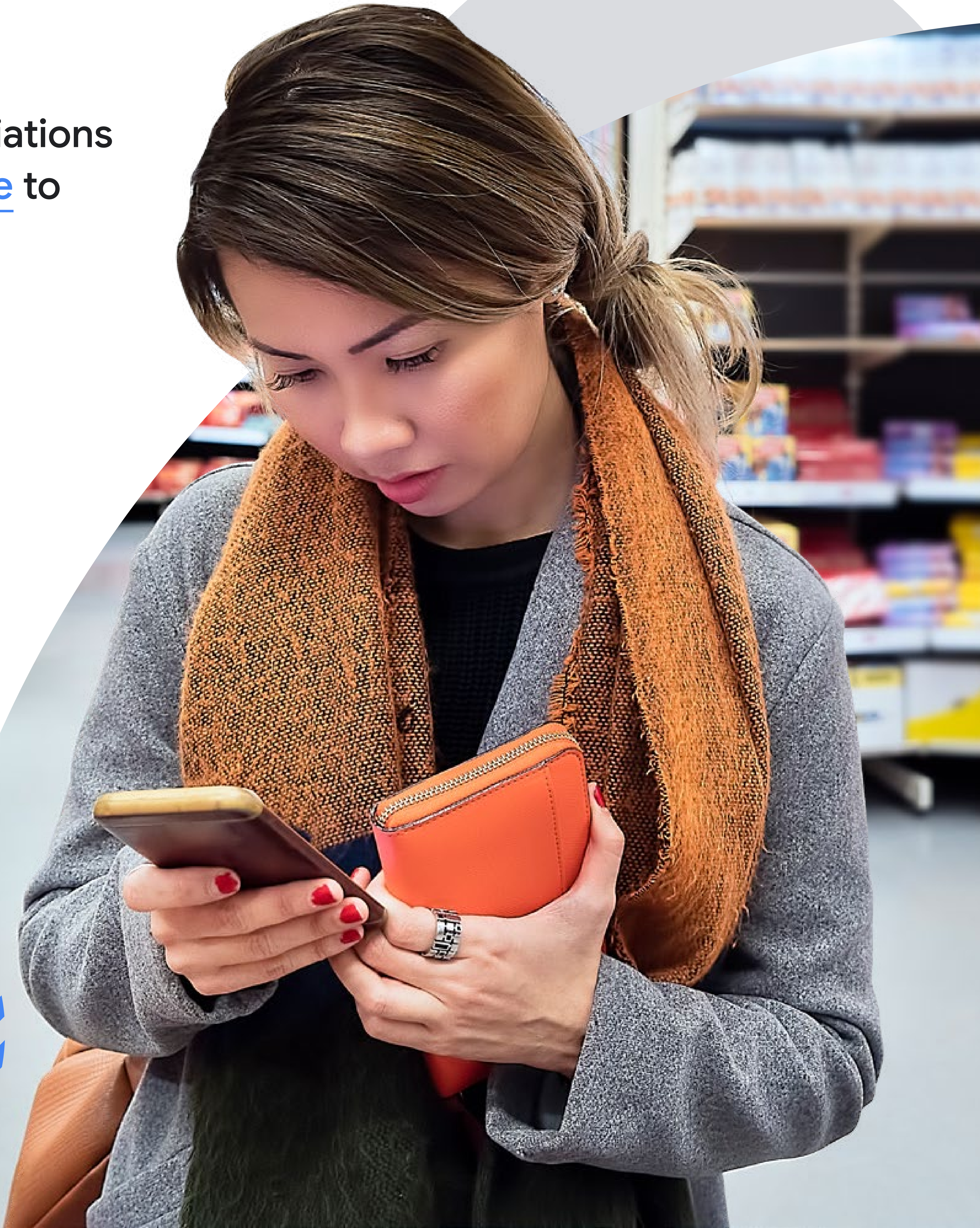
By honing ad text, you can learn a lot about your users' preferences and improve your performance.

When applied to a large number of ads, even small improvements in ad texts can have a very meaningful impact on the performance.

Ad variations help you test creative variations in search text ads at scale. This tool is best used when you want to test a single change across multiple campaigns or even your entire account.

For example, set up an ad variation to compare how well your ads perform if you were to change your call to action from "Buy now" to "Buy today."

Check out the ad variations implementation guide to learn more.



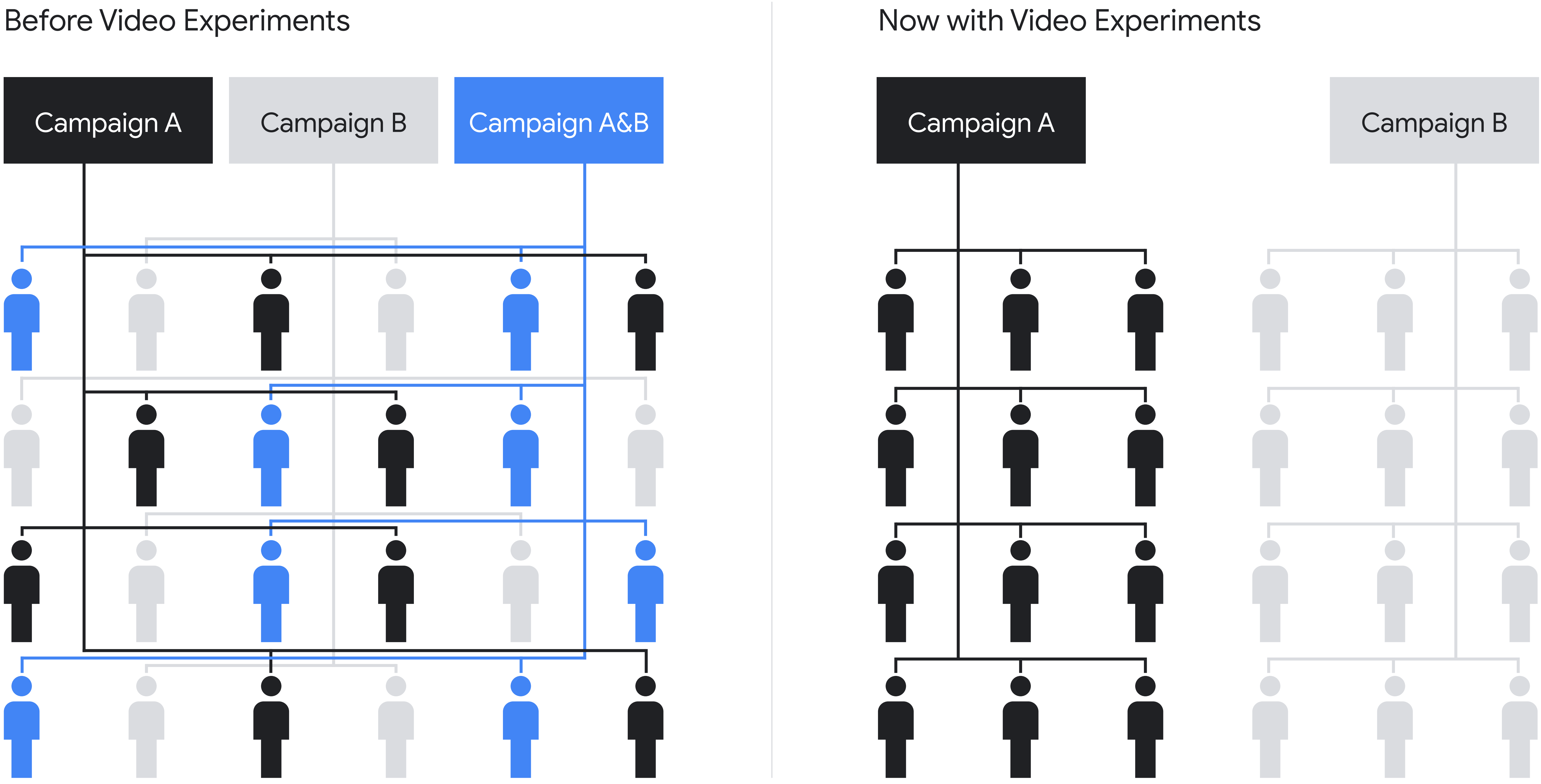
Video experiments (for video)

In a world where consumer attention is a scarce commodity, Video Experiments enables you to test different variables of your video campaign head-to-head on YouTube.

This enables testing in a real ad environment to quickly learn what's driving the most impact.

A randomized A/B test is created by assigning users to isolated groups (arms) and exposing them to only a single campaign. Performance is then compared across the respective groups with statistical significance.

Video experiments is real A/B testing


Before Video Experiments
Campaign A
Campaign B
Campaign A&B
Now with Video Experiments
Campaign A
Campaign B

Users could be exposed to an ad from both campaigns

Exposed groups can no longer be contaminated during the test

What can be tested?

Creatives

Test different creatives against a single audience segment

Visual language:
TVC vs. YT guidelines

Set up an experiment to test the impact of a TVC vs a video that has followed the ABCD guidelines for effective creatives for YouTube.

Tuning for your audience:
Customized Creative vs. Generic video

Set up an experiment to prove the value of serving customized creatives for specific audience segments vs. showing all audiences the same generic video asset. Check out Director Mix to build personalized videos at scale.

Build for attention:
Narrative A vs. narrative B

Set up an experiment to understand which type of creative messaging (eg. emotional or functional) performs better for your audience segment.

L'ORÉAL
VIETNAM

More than lip service

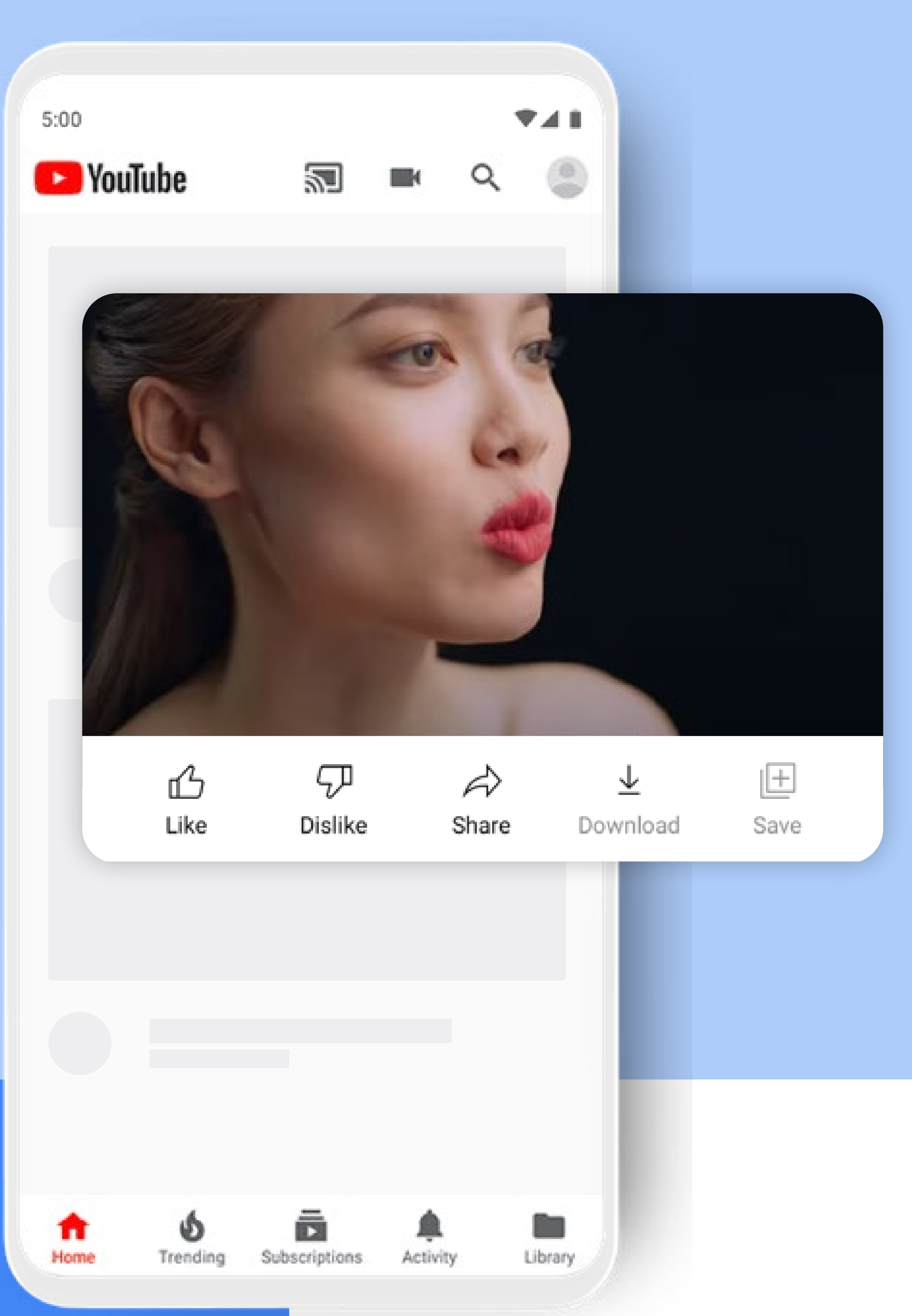
L'Oreal wanted to test if sequencing their video ads could help raise top-of-mind awareness and recall for the brand's Sensational Liquid Matte lipstick. By delivering the right message at the right moment to the right audience, Video Ad Sequencing unlocked:

2.6x

ad recall lift and also sparked

1.3x

brand interest compared to the control campaign with no sequencing



Audiences

Test a single creative against multiple audiences

Advanced Audiences vs. demo only

Set up an experiment to prove the value of Google's Advanced Audience solutions vs. Demographic signals like age and gender.

Audience types: Gender, age, etc.

Set up an experiment to find out if there are significant differences between how your message is perceived by different genders or age groups.

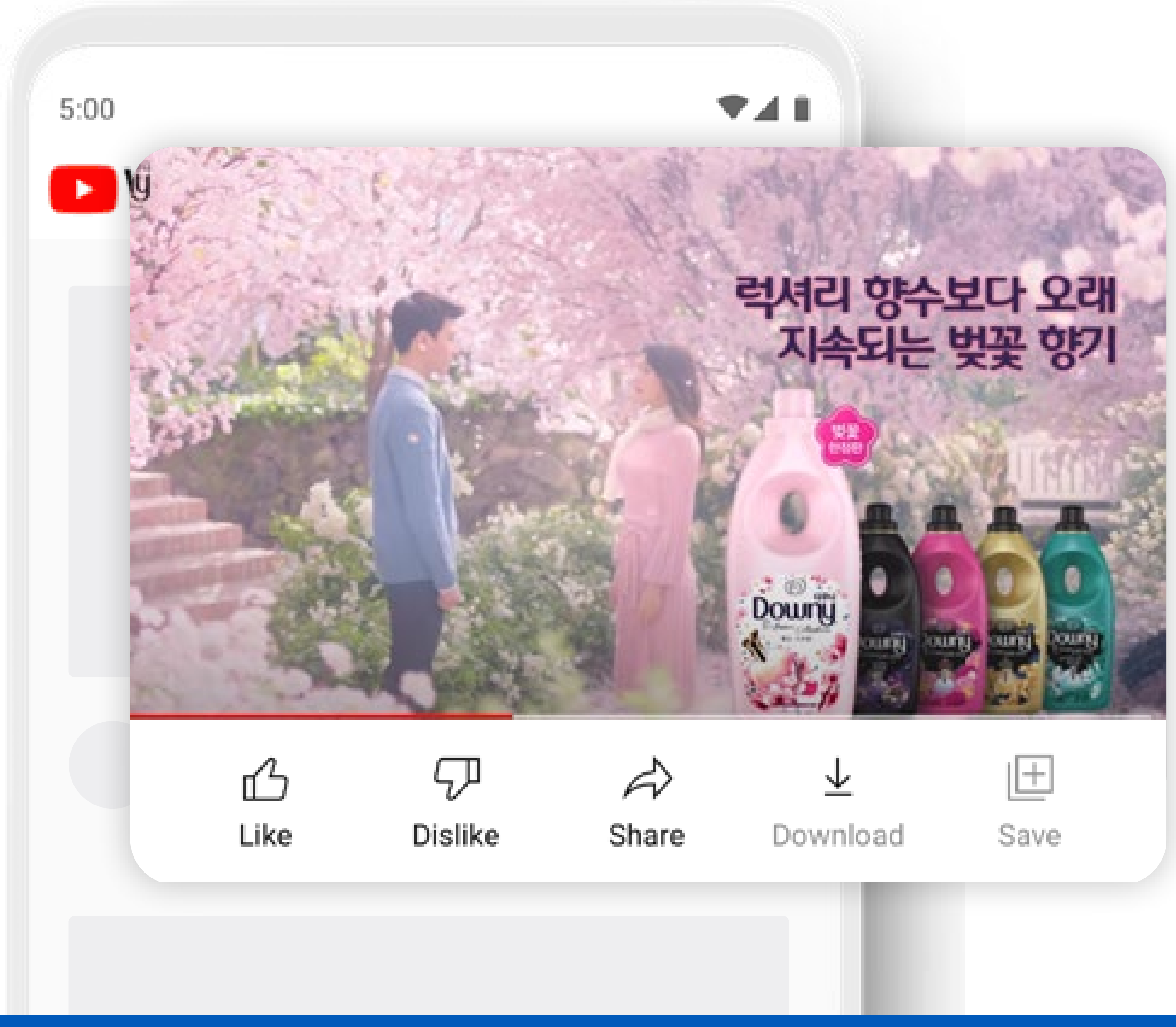
Need more proof? Advertisers that optimized their creative strategy with experiments saw:

↓ **30%**

lower median CPA from the better performing creative

↑ **60%**

higher ad recall from the better performing creative[6]



Downy

Interest goes up for Downy

When the fabric softener brand went beyond demographic audiences and used advanced audiences (In-market + Affinity + Life Events), the bumper ads campaign with promotional messaging drove:

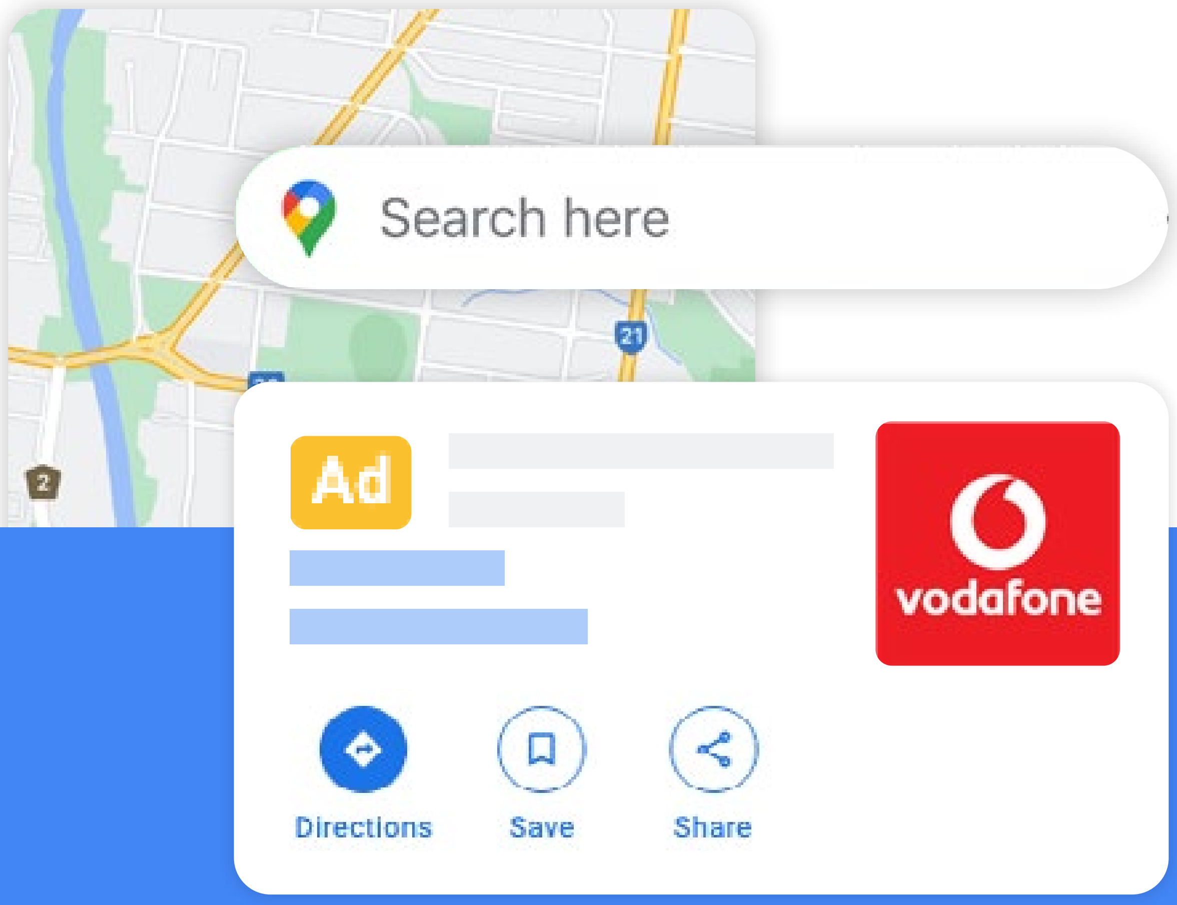
+23.3%	**+12.9%**
ad recall and	purchase intent

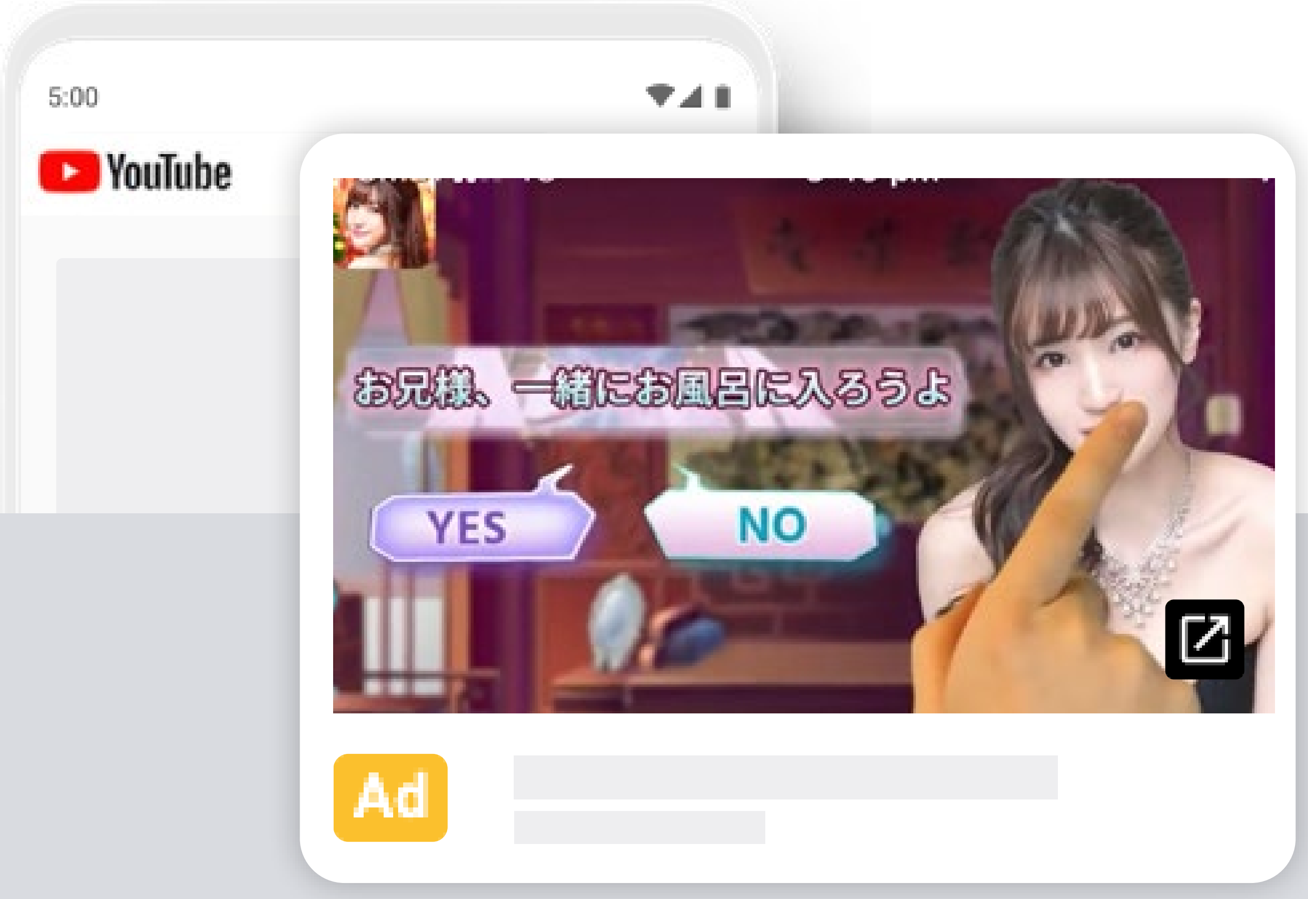
Learn more ↗

Learn more about setting up, testing and optimizing with Video Experiments.

Geo-based testing

Geo experiments are another well-established method designed to measure the causal, incremental effects of ad strategy or spend changes.





vodafone

Victory for Vodafone strategy

Telecommunications company Vodafone was keen to drive offline store impact, and wanted to see how digital ads could affect their offline stores' KPIs. By using an equal geo store-split of brick-and-mortar stores, Vodafone found that Local Campaigns unlocked:

+12%

incremental ROAS

*Against a control geo with no Local Campaigns run

37GAMES

Bringing the a-game

Game publisher 37GAMES decided to explore the incremental impact of video branding ads as a complement to its app campaigns. Using a geo-based split test, the brand found that its YouTube branding campaign unlocked:

1.4x

more installs and recruited high value players at

+7%

average revenue per user

*Against a control geo running App campaigns only

Learn more about measuring ad effectiveness with geo experiments[7].

GeoX: (APAC availability in Australia, India and Japan)

GeoX is a platform to design, execute, analyze and interpret controlled experiments, using open source methodologies grounded in robust statistical research.

With GeoX, comparable and non-overlapping geographic regions are assigned as control and test groups. This can be done at a national, state, city or even postal code level. When the groups are compared, we can then attribute any uplift in success metrics to the advertising spend that was allocated.

How does GeoX work?

1. Once a thorough hypothesis has been set and the necessary inputs added, the tool follows a rigorous pre-analysis and test design process to determine feasibility.

2. It then recommends a change in ad spend that is required to acquire a useful signal.

3. It also outputs a list of treatment and control regions to target within Google Ads, as well as an estimation of accuracy prior to running a test.

4. These simulations help determine the optimal parameters, minimizing the likelihood of an inconclusive result.

What can you test?

The tool enables measurement of both online-to-online and online-to-offline success metrics.

There are three main ways you can use GeoX to test for various objectives:

Heavy-up

Measure additional ad spend for active campaigns

Go-dark

Measure existing ad spend for active campaigns

Holdback

Measure new ad spend for pending campaigns

Tip

As you craft your hypothesis for a GeoX experiment, keep in mind its two types of response metrics:

Value-based: measures incremental return on ad spend (iROAS), e.g., in-store revenue

Count-based: measures ad cost per incremental acquisition e.g., website sign-ups

Best practices

- Use methodologies that rely on stable relationships across treatment and control regions over time.
- Ensure clean and robust data with thorough pre-analysis.

In APAC, GeoX is currently available in Australia, India, and Japan only, and might not be available for all Google Ads accounts. Contact your Google account representative for eligibility.

Time-based causal impact analysis

A time-based or pre-post analysis is a statistical methodology to estimate the effect of implemented changes in an experiment. This method essentially leverages specific pre-period information to get tighter confidence intervals and more accurate estimates of the treatment effect.

With such analyses it can be difficult to isolate the impact of seasonality and other external factors (known as noise) to tell if changes in success metrics are due to ad intervention alone. Thus these are typically only directionally helpful and rarely statistically significant.

FLEXISPOT®

Discovering the right spot

FlexiSpot, a manufacturer of home office desks, wanted to test whether adding Discovery ads to its existing Search ads could boost quality traffic. FlexiSpot found that adding interactive and visually-compelling Discovery ads unlocked:

2.7x

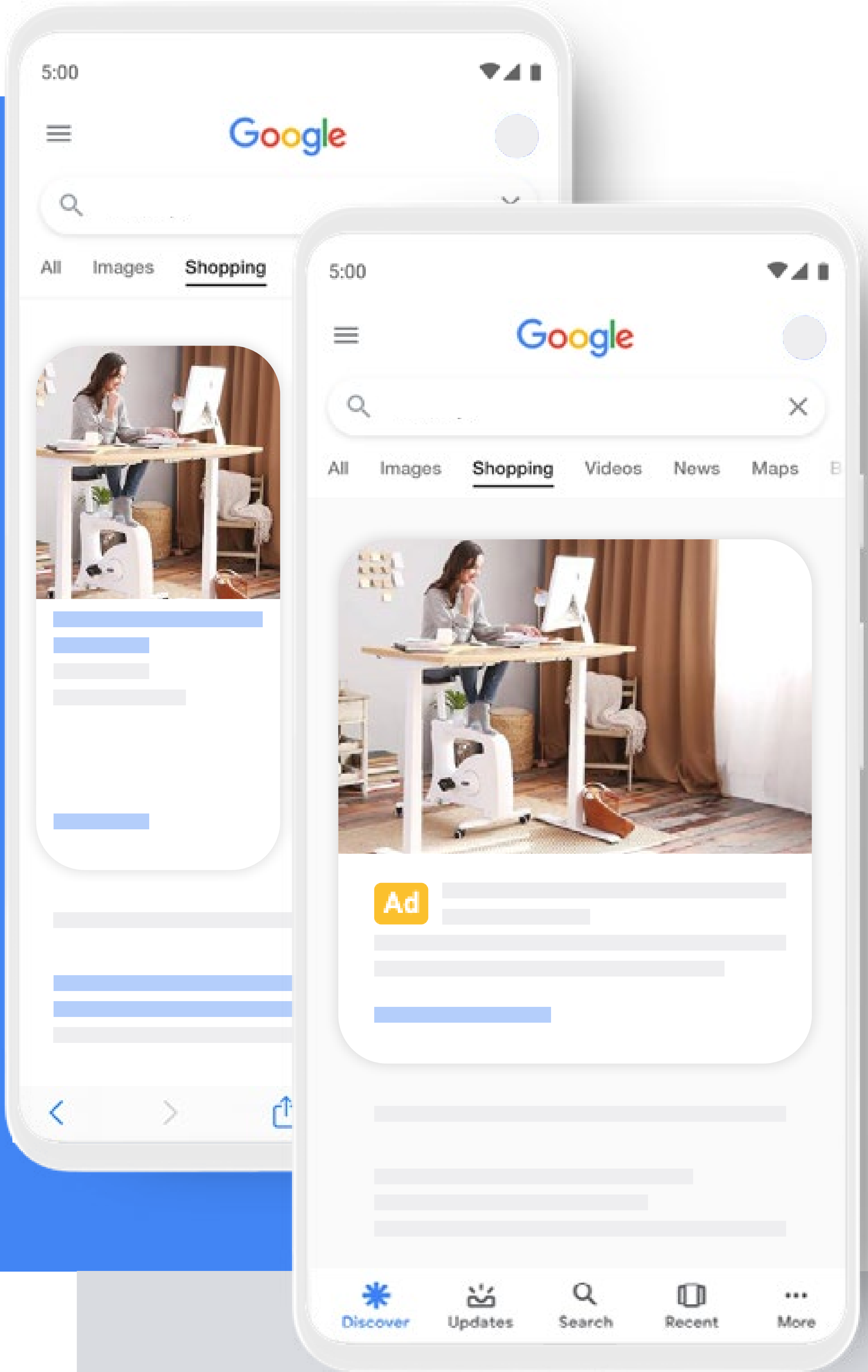
conversions and

17x

site traffic

*Against a pre-phase running Generic Search ads only

Learn more ↗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Best Practices

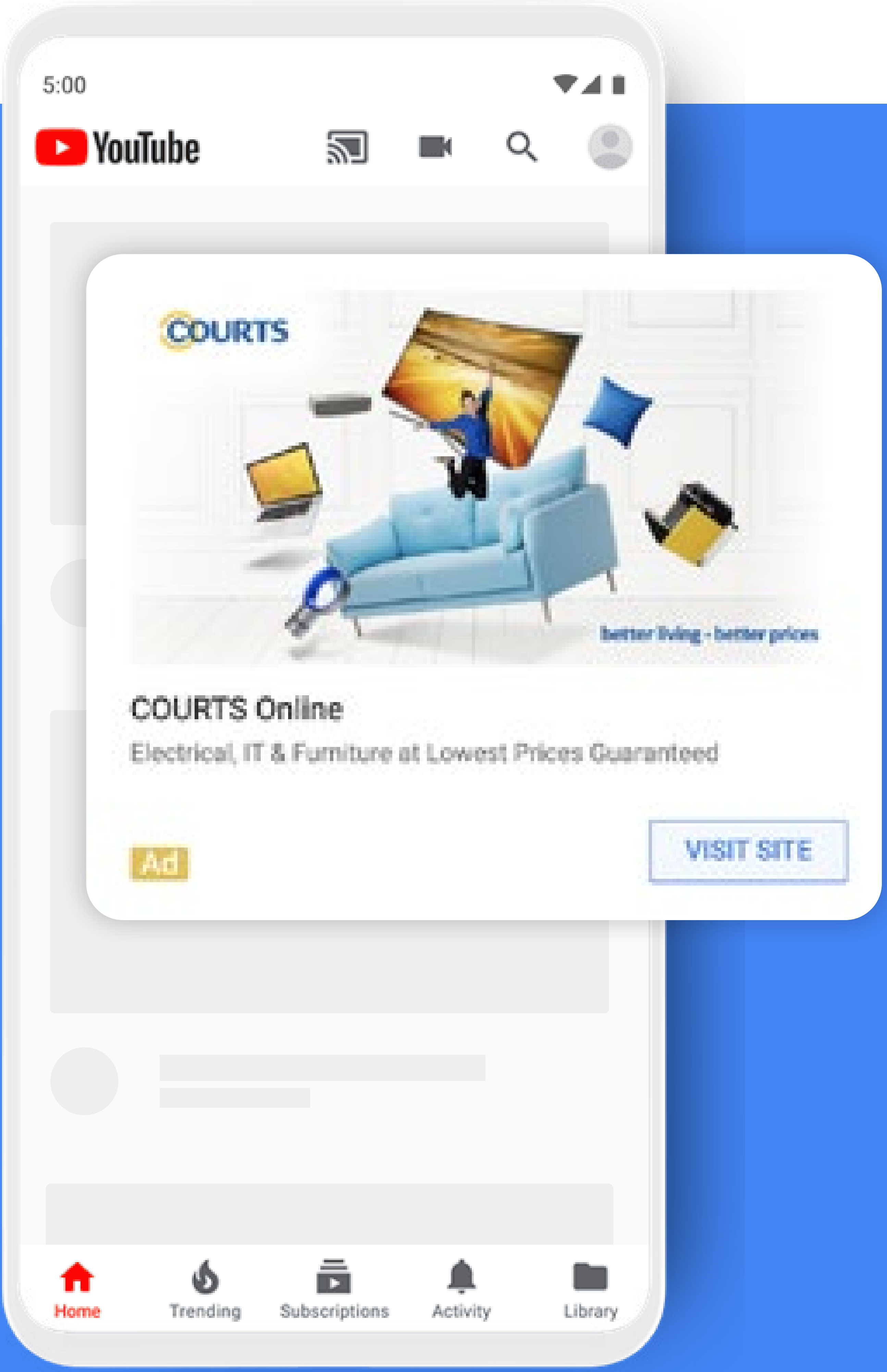
- Ensure pre and post phases are comparable in terms of activity and number of days, with limited seasonality and noise impact.
- Factor in and exclude the effect of any ramp up period (typically 1-2 weeks) and conversion time lag – the delay between when people click an ad and convert – during analyses.

Court-ing complementary campaigns

When the electrical, IT and furniture omnichannel retailer took its consumers' cue to ramp up its online focus, Courts ran an experiment to measure the impact of complementing its existing Search ad strategies with automated Shopping ad solutions. The retailer conducted a pre-post test to compare its performance before and after adding Smart Shopping Campaigns into its overall media mix, and discovered that Smart Shopping increased Courts' ROAS by:

3.7x at **-84%** cost per transaction

*Against a prior comparable period with Generic Search ads only (mix of Max Conversions and target ROAS bidding)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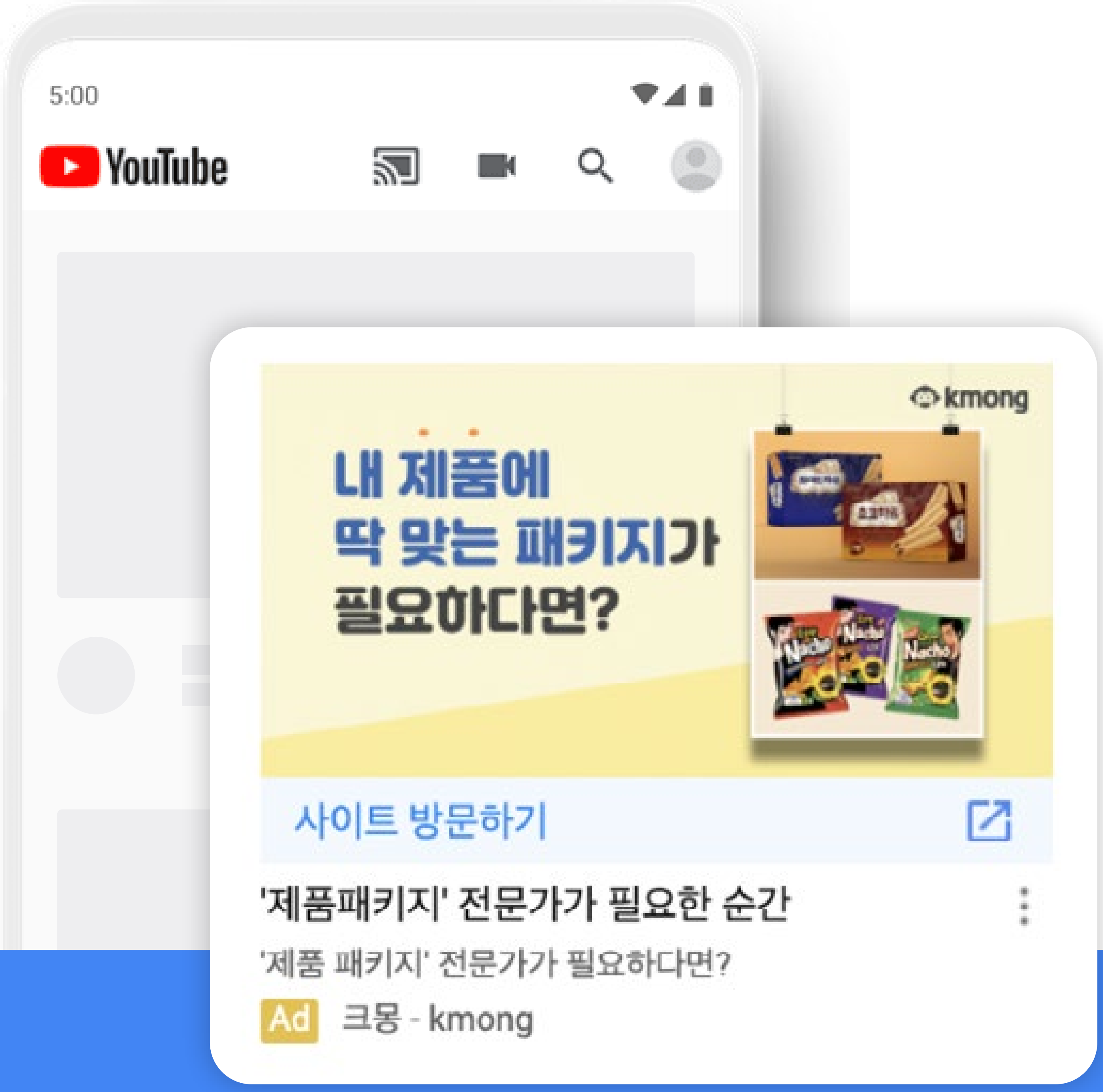
Learn more ↗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'제품패키지' 전문가가 필요한 순간

'제품 패키지' 전문가가 필요하다면?

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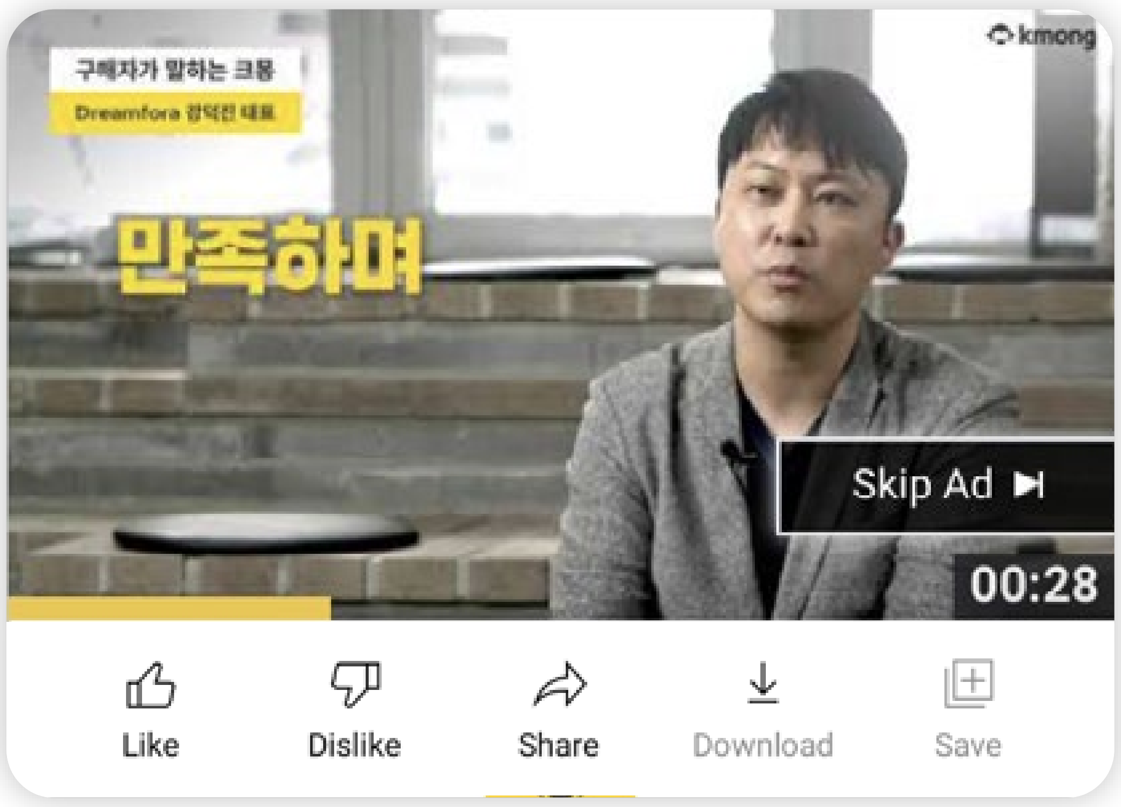
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Kmong expands strong strategy

Korea's largest freelance market platform was keen to acquire more users and decided to explore if taking a cross-product approach across Search ads, Discovery ads and YouTube Trueview for Action video ads (leveraging remarketing, customer match and custom intent audiences) could drive conversion growth at scale efficiently. The cross-channel campaign delivered:

3x

conversions and

+73%

higher ROAS with 2x budgets

*Against a comparable pre-phase running Generic Search ads only

4.

Setting up for success at scale

Testing best practices (regardless of solution)

Takeaway

This is a simple principle that applies to everything from baking to experimenting: the quality of your input determines the quality of the output.

To achieve conclusive results, it's crucial to exercise rigor and keep these factors in mind:

When designing your experiment:

Do

- ✓ Define randomized and comparable control / test groups
- ✓ Focus on one variable at a time
- ✓ Size the growth opportunity and set realistic expectations
- ✓ Ensure clean data to measure success metrics

While the experiment is live:

Avoid

- ✗ Making changes to its campaign settings or other variables that may impact BAU
- ✗ Making premature conclusions or sharing results before it has concluded

We also recommend to test and iterate continuously. Experimentation works best when it is not seen as a 'one and done' tactic.

Whatever the outcome of your experiment, gather the learnings from it and use them to influence future marketing and testing strategies.

Find additional resources on Google ads best practices to learn more.

Tips for experimenting at scale

How can business leaders empower and organize their teams to experiment at scale?

Having run more than 600 experiments with over 450 brands across 15 APAC markets in the last few years, we've gathered a number of insights and here are some tips from us:

Organize: Centralize for efficiency, localize for the noteworthy

Running experiments at scale requires a delicate balance. A lot of efforts can be centralized to be more efficient, and it's key to find a middle ground that works best for your business.

Start by identifying common ground – which steps need to be replicated regardless of each experiment's specific goals?

We've also identified three fundamental and integral steps to make experiments more collaborative, efficient, and successful:

1.

Set clear responsibilities and expectations across teams

Avoid bottlenecks by assigning who's responsible for what; this applies to all roles from creative production and campaign implementation, all the way up to CMO.

Timelines and required resources should be agreed upon and clearly outlined. Appointing someone who has a full view of your scaled experiments will also help to ensure that everyone else in the organization can easily access, and benefit from, these centralized efforts.

2.

Create a template as a foundation to scope out each experiment

Regardless of what you're trying to achieve, every experiment has some key components such as the hypothesis, success metrics, and methods of design and execution.

By building a process or template to account for these elements beforehand, you can avoid redundancies, common mistakes, and speed up the entire process.

This is an example of our tried-and-tested template we've created:

Template

3.

Keep clean records at every stage

Working with a growing volume of different projects can cause you to lose sight of the insights you've discovered.

Team transitions can also lead to blindspots, so it's helpful to keep central visibility of all experiments – whether past, ongoing, or upcoming – in a centralized pipeline.

Standardizing insights from past experiments and how results are captured will also enable you to accurately benchmark the value of your efforts.

HACKERS
Education Group

Champions of clarity

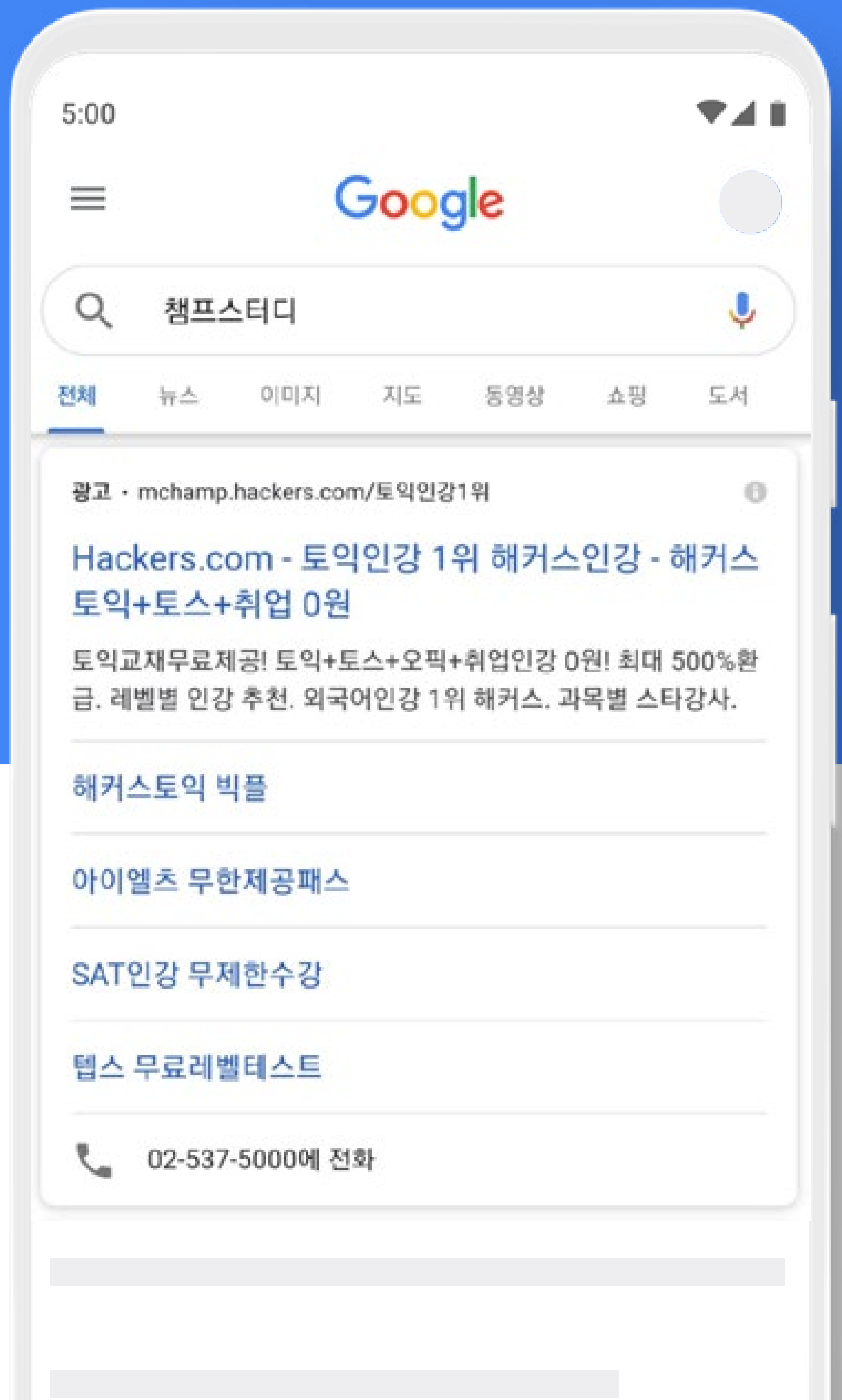
Champ Study conducted a methodical experiment in 3 separate phases to understand the true impact of leveraging optimization score recommendations. In each phase, the Campaign Experiments tool was used to to test specific themes, namely ad creatives, bid strategy, and keyword expansion.

After each phase was completed, performance was reviewed and changes applied before moving to the next phase. This structured approach ensured efficiency and clarity, allowing each phase to run smoothly and build upon previous phases. Overall this resulted in a:

+59%

improvement in the brand's optimization score

Learn more ↗



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Prioritize: Select scalable strategies

Start by mapping out common challenges – whether by brand, audience, vertical, or market – and the potential benefits of solving them. A good rule of thumb for prioritization is whether the learnings can be scaled to inform a better strategy for other campaigns without running more individual experiments.

SHEIN

All in with SHEIN

International e-commerce retailer SHEIN is well-versed on display campaigns, and when the brand ran YouTube Trueview for Action video ads simultaneously, it saw:

+5%

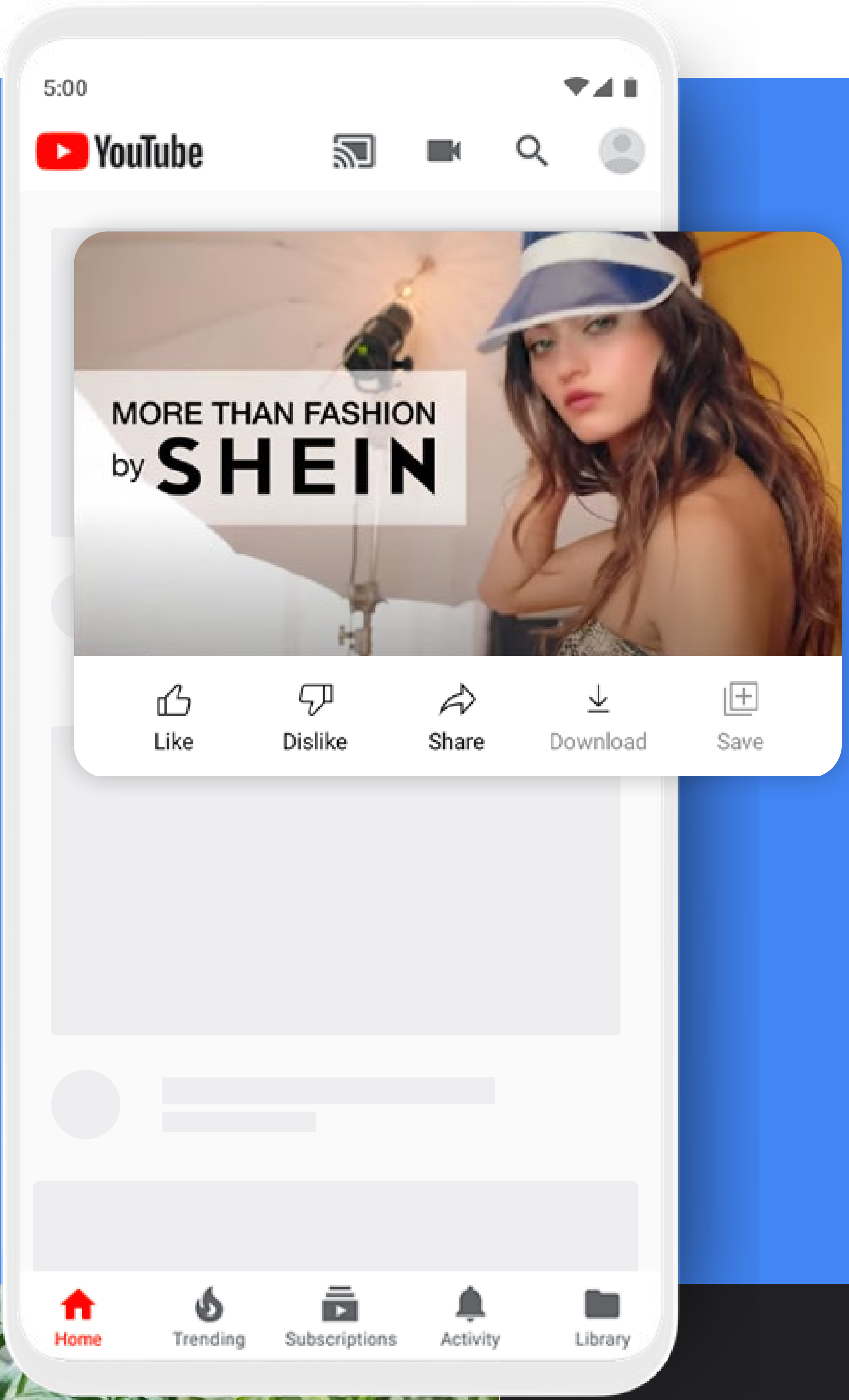
online sales at

~50%

lower costs than its target cost per transaction. It's no surprise the brand is planning to roll out video campaigns across its best performing regions.

*compared to control geos running display ads only

Learn more ↗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Cultivate a culture of experimentation

It is only natural to not want to fail.

Inspiring an experimental mindset requires nurturing a culture that empowers marketers to test out novel ideas without the fear of failure.

Incentivize and encourage your team to be courageous enough to just try, even if they're unsure of the outcome.

No matter the results, every experiment is an opportunity to learn.

To get your team used to experimenting without fear, consider gamifying the exercise.

This acts as a sandbox that allows your team to start embracing an experimental mindset.

For example, you can conduct a Shark Tank-like competition where teams can pitch and present experiments' results to senior leaders, hold peer-to-peer "behind the case study" sharing sessions, or even introduce regular leaderboards to hero and reward experiment champions across teams.

Test, learn, repeat: Embrace the power of experimentation

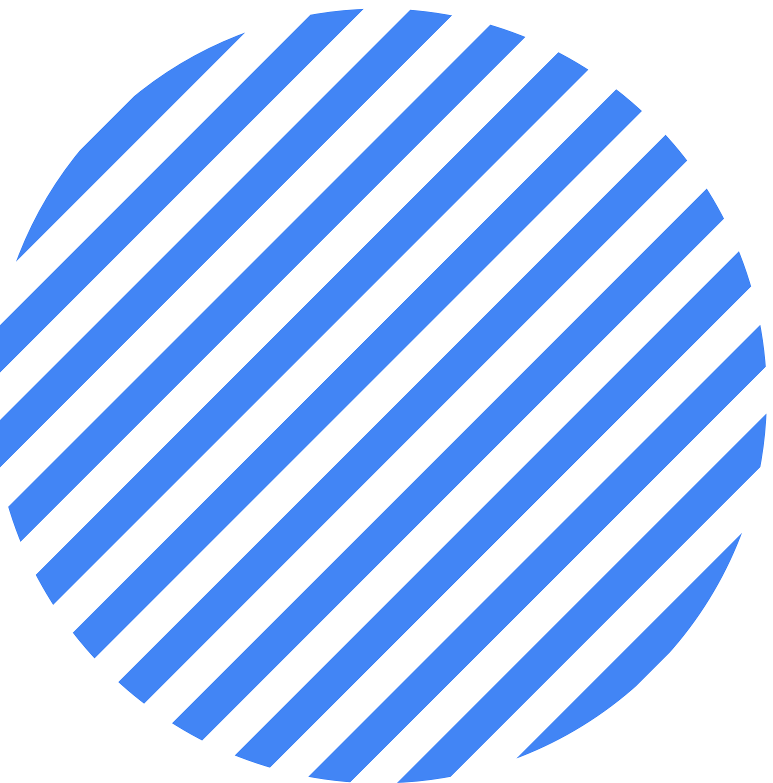
Conducting individual experiments is a good starting point for marketers to test out ideas before rolling out campaigns at scale. With digital, this can be done with smaller sample sizes or in a shorter time frame before scaling up.

The balancing act is all about diversifying, broadening, and deepening the relevance of each experiment while fostering a “fail fast” culture.

In an environment that’s always evolving, constant learning becomes critical to ensure we stay ahead of the curve.

Experimentation makes us think about what works, why it works, and what might be done differently, making it an important tool for marketers to keep a finger on the pulse and keep up with the evolving nature of how consumers interact with brands.

Explore more about experimentation on Think with Google.



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