

How to Effectively Measure TikTok

Key Principles for Effective Measurement

February 2025

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Abstract

The digital landscape is evolving. This whitepaper explores how TikTok has rapidly become a key channel in an evolving digital environment marked by constant data growth and new technologies. By mapping TikTok's unique funnel—from discovery to research and action—it underscores how brands can effectively measure campaign performance through robust data tracking, incrementality testing, and cross-channel analysis.

Techniques such as Multi-Touch Attribution and Marketing Mix Modeling help align business objectives with relevant KPIs, enabling data-driven decision-making and improved return on ad spend. Ultimately, the paper offers a roadmap for marketers to harness the power of TikTok's short-form videos, optimize budgets across media channels, and deliver impactful, measurable outcomes in today's dynamic media ecosystem.



“Marketing impact measurement techniques, combined with expert insights, provide companies with strategic and tactical points of view, enabling effective assessment of campaigns on impactful platforms like TikTok and optimization for maximum ROI”

Daide Fabrizio
Partner Advanced Analytics - Deloitte



“At TikTok, we know that measurement drives business growth. This white paper emphasizes the need to say RIP to last-click attribution, adopting smarter methodologies to uncover each channel's true contribution. With data-driven insights, advertisers can optimize strategies and build sustainable growth”

Adriano Accardo
Managing Director - GBS Southern Europe

The New

The digital landscape is evolving rapidly.

We can observe a constant increase of data, touchpoints, and technologies with which companies, brands, customers, and consumer communicate, interact and engage with each other. Within only one minute, audiences across the globe stream over 694,000 hours of video on Youtube¹, conduct 5.9 million searches on internet², send 241 million emails³, create 2.4 million snaps⁴, publish 66k new posts on social media⁵ and **upload 16k videos on TikTok⁶**, to name but a few. Not only the complexity and amount of data, tech and touchpoints is increasing, but also the data generation and evolving customer journey has fundamentally transformed how audiences interact with content and brands. The technological advancement continues to re-define the rules of engagement and ushering in a new era where known and traditional

methodologies are being replaced by innovative and data-driven approaches. To make the speed of development tangible, one should consider peaks of the big and well-known social media platforms and their meaning for consumers and brands.



“TikTok shifts to a content-driven graph, where mastering hooks and measuring their effectiveness with engaging text, audio, and visuals is key to capturing attention and driving performance”

Sjef van Dijk
Head of Brand Experience Digital - Beiersdorf AG

[1] TikTok Marketing Science Global Retail Path to Purchase Study 2021 conducted by Material

[2] TikTok Marketing Science Global Shopping Ad Products Study 2022 conducted by Material February 2022

[3] TikTok Marketing Science, CPG Media Mix. Model Meta-Analyses, METAP, US, EU, SEA, Conducted by Nielsen, 2020-2022

[4] Duarte, F. Amount of data created daily (2024). Exploding Topics (June 13, 2024). <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/data-generated-per-day>

[5] Newberry, C. 36 must-know Instagram stats for marketers in 2024. Hootsuite Blog (July 23, 2024). https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-statistics/#General_Instagram_statistics

[6] akuebionwurichardson@gmail.com.. TikTok users and Growth Statistics (2024). SignHouse. (December 29, 2023) <https://usesignhouse.com/blog/tiktok-stats>

In 2012 and 2013 new Go-To platforms for younger audiences, who were looking for trends, visually appealing photo, and video content became popular along with the emergence of the content creation culture and the popularity of visual driven lifestyles. Engagement and inspiration experiences has become the new way of consuming content, especially among the young target group, and today counts billions monthly active users globally⁷.

TikTok has innovated the market with new formats in the form of **highly engaging** viral trends and challenges and quick entertaining short-form videos. By the end of 2019, TikTok became one of the most downloaded apps worldwide and today counts to the most influential media channels with a global reach for a broad audience and reshapes the way people consume and engage with content and brands⁸. 7 of 10 users state that TikTok is their go to platform for consuming short form videos⁹.

Understanding how TikTok works is crucial for improving campaign performance on the platform. This knowledge enhances not only segmentation, targeting, and content personalization but also the measurement of impact and detailed performance analytics. These insights enable brands to optimize their campaigns in real time, ensuring more effective and efficient marketing strategies.

However, **changes in the ecosystem have introduced significant challenges affecting the measurement landscape**, with a strong emphasis on user privacy and data protection. This includes explicit consent, data minimization, strengthened user rights, data portability, and mandatory privacy by design and default. While the postponement of the third-party cookie phase-out provides a temporary reprieve, publishers and brands must continue exploring compliant, sustainable methods for ad targeting and measurement. As privacy becomes the centerpiece of the digital ecosystem, leveraging alternative measurement solutions is crucial for maintaining effective marketing strategies.

This whitepaper addresses the described dynamic changes and reflects the implications of an increasing complex media environment and explores strategies to navigate through the diverse and heterogenous digital ecosystem, while focusing on TikTok, its individual funnel, KPIs and contemporary approaches to measure not only the effectiveness of the platform itself, but also the performance of TikTok among other online and offline channels in the brands' eco-system.

[7] Dixon, S. J. Biggest social media platforms by users 2024. Statista. (July 10, 2024). <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/>

[8] Iqbal, M. TikTok revenue and Usage Statistics (2024). Business of Apps. (July 8, 2024). <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tik-tok-statistics/>

[9] National Research Group in Partnership with TikTok. Empowering consumers through the short-form video revolution. National Research Group: Global Market Research Company. (January 2, 2024). <https://www.nrgmr.com/our-thinking/entertainment/empowering-consumers-through-the-short-form-video-revolution/>

Measuring the effectiveness of TikTok

Assessing the intricacies of the customer journey continues to be one of the industry's most significant challenges

In the dynamic landscape of digital marketing, platforms such as TikTok have established themselves as essential tools for brands aiming to engage and expand their audiences. Each platform is equipped with its unique set of Key Performance Indicators - KPIs, tools, and techniques to measure and manage the effectiveness of marketing according to the platform purpose and individual formats. But when can a marketing activity be described as effective? Is it about incremental reach of an additional touchpoint, driving consumer engagement with brands and influencers, or the conversion to buy a product or a service? To answer this question, it is worth to look at different relevant criteria. Like the campaign objective, the product, the target audience, and the role of each activity plays in the overall marketing and media mix for a brand.

This chapter aims to identify the metrics brands should focus on to evaluate the effectiveness of their TikTok campaigns and advertisements. It will delve into how to leverage the platform's specific KPIs and measurement tools to maximize their impact across the conversion funnel.

The evolution of the traditional Marketing Funnel to TikTok's new funnel

The traditional Marketing funnel illustrates a brands' customer journey starting from the **Awareness** phase, moving through **Consideration**, and leading to **Conversion**, which can be the Purchase of a product or service. The following stages can be applied for typical Marketing purposes:

- 1. Awareness:** Prospective consumers are exposed to information about a product or service through various promotional channels, including advertising, social media, and other marketing communications.
- 2. Consideration:** Engaged consumers assess the product or service, juxtaposing it with alternative options and scrutinizing its suitability in addressing their specific requirements and preferences.
- 3. Conversion:** The terminal phase wherein the consumer finalizes the purchasing decision and consummates the transaction to acquire the product or service.

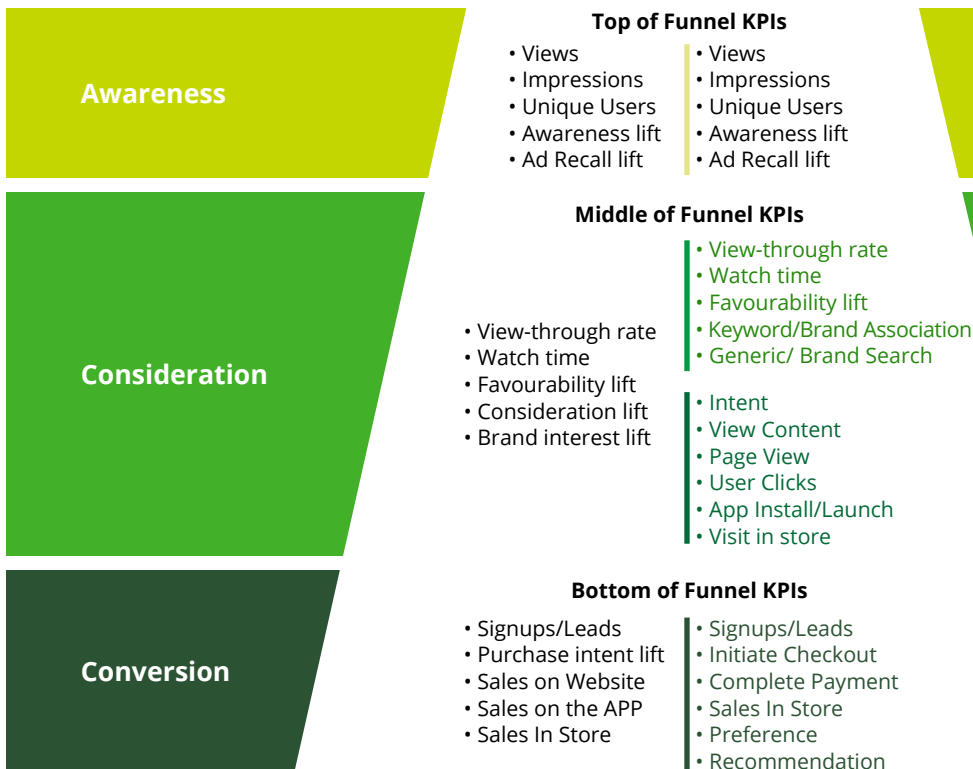
On TikTok, 70% percent of the users **Discover** new brands and products on the platform. 74% of them start a **Research** to find out more about the brand or product, while 92% of users take some form of **Action** on a content they saw on TikTok.

Finally, the **Conversion** rate of the platform shows that 61% of users made a purchase after seeing content on TikTok¹⁰. And for EMEA markets, 35% of users bought products or services first seen on TikTok, directly through the app or somewhere else, and 41% of those that purchased or tried a product/service they saw on TikTok did so within a week of first seeing it on the platform¹¹.

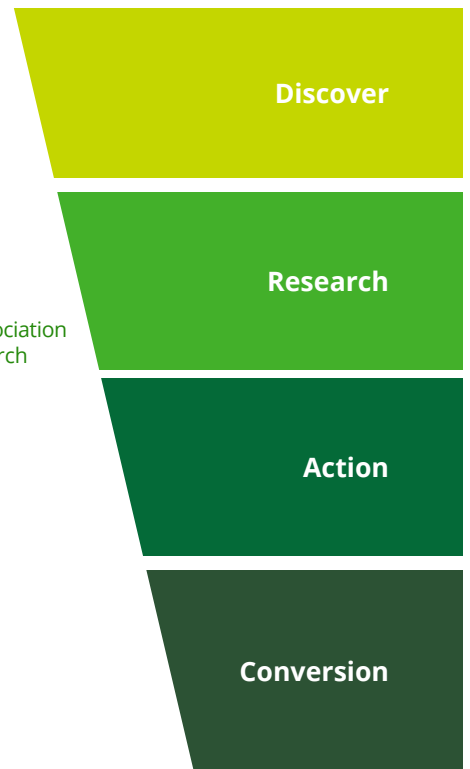
The difference of the traditional Marketing funnel and the TikTok decision journey starts with the fact, that users visit the platform to consume engaging

content and Discover the New instead of being made aware of a product or service through an ad. The resulting Research on or outside of TikTok can be compared to the Interest and Consideration phase in the conventional journey theory. As mentioned before, the platform purpose is about engaging content, that on TikTok leads to high Action and Conversion Rates. This can be compared to Sales or even Advocacy, where users are becoming multipliers of brands and their messages.

Traditional Marketing Funnel



TikTok Decision Journey



[10] Material, Marketing Science Global Retail Path to Purchase Study 2021, (March 1, 2023). <https://www.tiktok.com/business/en-US/blog/infinite-loop-tiktok-retail-path-to-purchase>

[11] TikTok Marketing Science ES,UK Vertical Surveys 2023 conducted via AYTM; TikTok Marketing Science EUI TikTok for Full Funnel Research 2023 conducted by Material

To make all stages, from Discovery to Conversion, measurable, TikTok provides different ***measurement principles***, while holding the opinion that measurement approaches need to transform as business evolve alongside with consumer behavior.

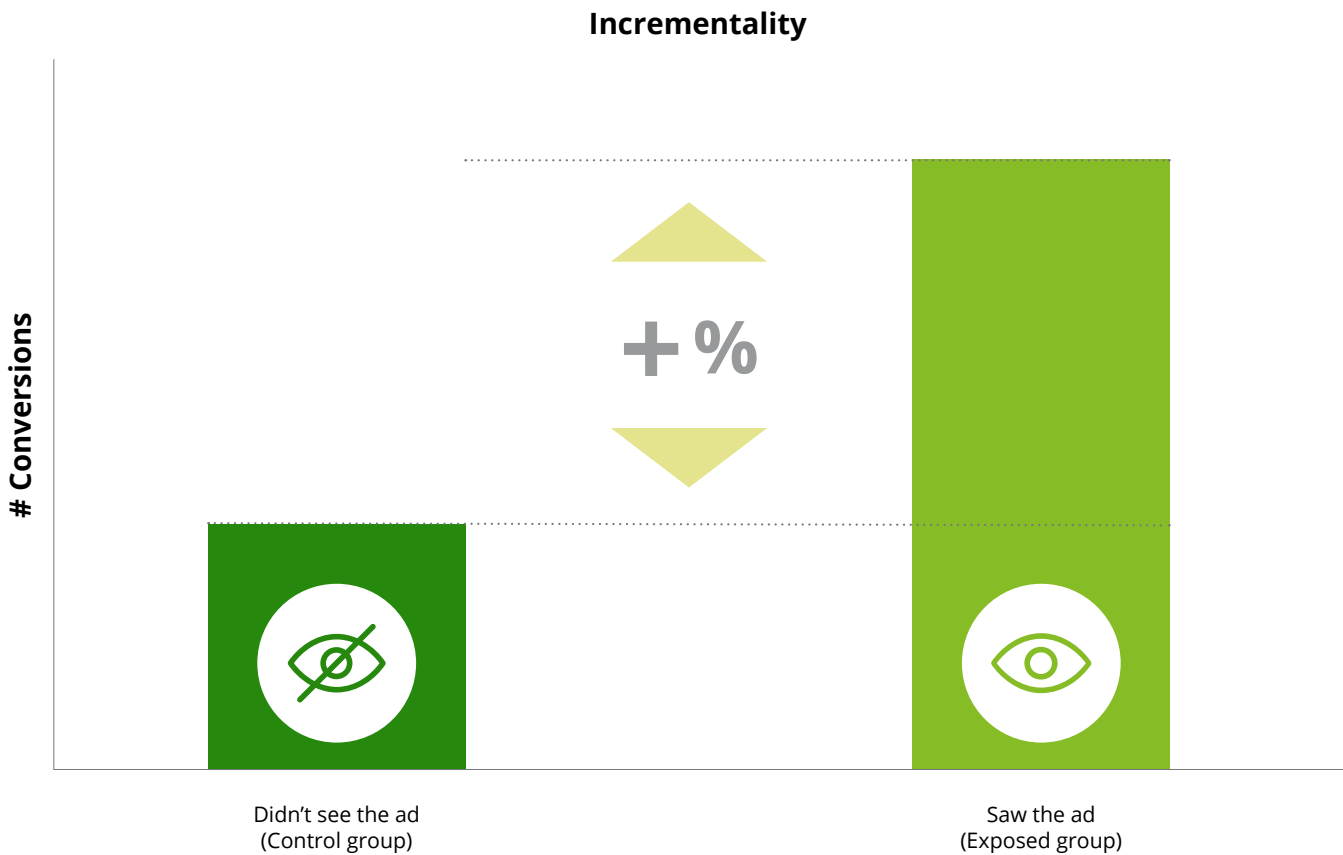


Robust data connection

The TikTok Pixel is a piece of code that website owners / brands can install on their site. By placing this pixel in the website's code, it can track various user actions. When the users interact with the brand website, the TikTok Pixel tracks these actions—such as page views, clicks, add-to-carts, and purchases. This data is then sent back to TikTok. The data collected helps in understanding user behavior and preferences. Marketers can identify which TikTok ads are driving traffic and conversions, allowing for data-driven decision-making. The gained insights can be used to create custom audiences for retargeting purposes. For example, showing ads to users who previously visited the website but did not complete a purchase.

Using TikTok Pixel and Event API's led to an increase of +19% recorded events and a decrease of the cost per action (CPA) by -15%

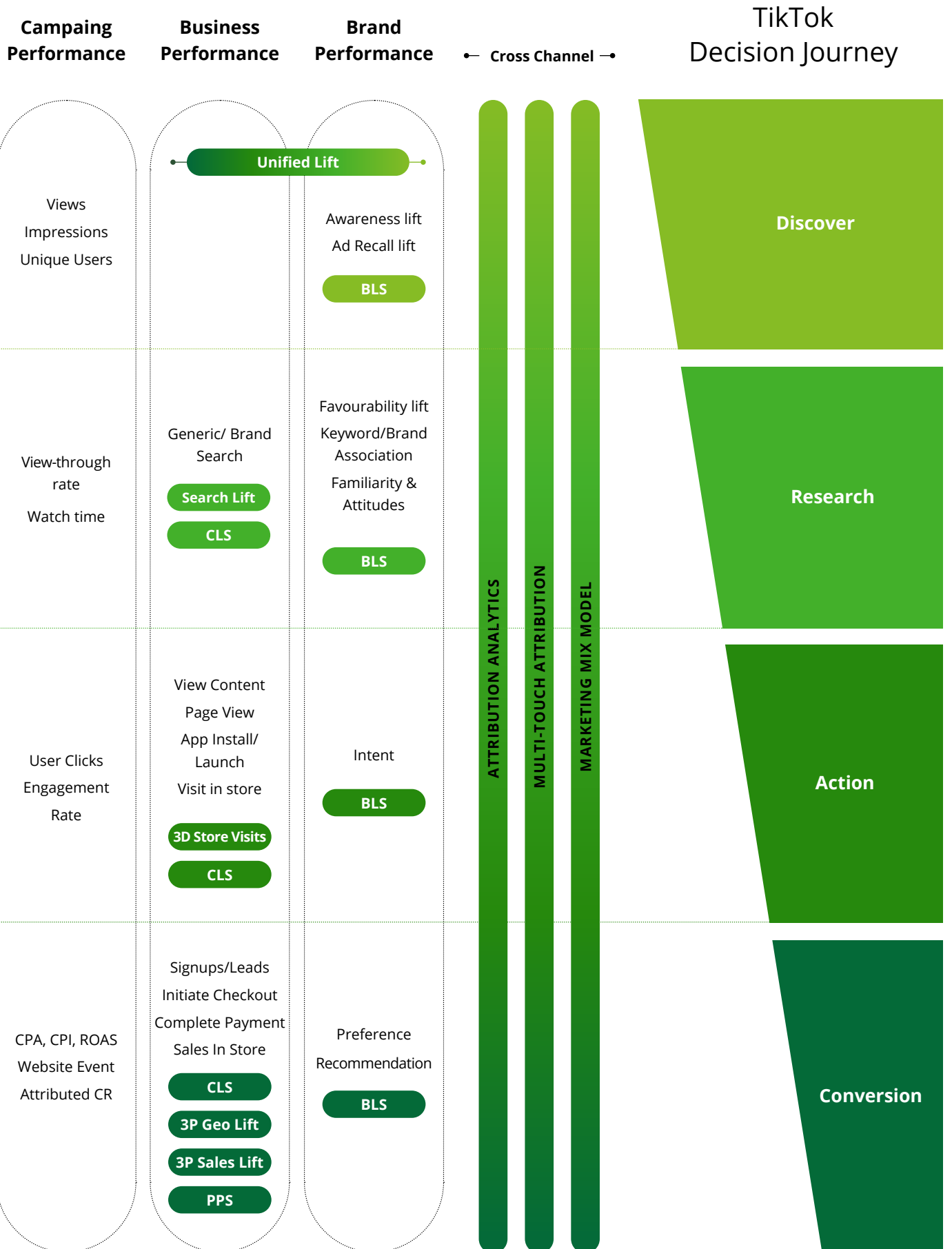
The Event API (Application Programming Interface) allows for more granular and customized tracking of user actions across multiple platforms (e.g., websites, mobile apps). Unlike the pixel, which operates on the brand side via user browsers, the Event API sends data directly from the server. This allows for more reliable data capture, especially in environments where cookies might be blocked. Additionally, the Event API enables tracking of custom events beyond the standard set provided by the TikTok Pixel. This could include actions such as form submissions, video views, or other specific interactions relevant according to business and marketing objectives. By capturing a wide array of detailed user actions, marketers can better attribute which campaigns are contributing to conversions and ROAS. This leads to more accurate performance measurement and optimization.



Understanding Incrementality

The Incrementality test helps advertisers to evaluate and understand if a specific ad, a channel or a campaign can cause an uplift in sales or show any other incremental impact – by analyzing conversion of an exposed target group who saw the ad vs. a control group, who didn't see the ad. **Incremental Studies** support the scientific hypothesis while analyzing if TikTok is an incremental channel that brings higher business results on all relevant KPIs from brand awareness

to final conversion. Conversion Lift Studies (CLS) are one of the solutions TikTok is offering to measure the incremental impact TikTok generates on conversion events. In addition to this, other studies, like **Sales Lift or Store Visits in partnership with third parties**, help analyze incremental online and offline sales identifying if incremental sales are driven by investments on TikTok platform – as well as quantifying the campaign ROAS.



Uncover the impact across channels and analyze the importance of TikTok in the customer journey

The **cross-channel analysis** helps to understand the role of every channel in the Media Mix and its impact on business outcomes. Two of the most used techniques are:

- The **Multi-touch attribution (MTA)** provides a granular view of the digital channel, campaign or ad performance by tracking the actions after an impression or click of an ad. It is effective for measuring the response of each user to each digital impact.
- And, In order to allocate the most effective and efficient amount of media spendings per channel, a **Marketing Mix Modeling (MMM)** is an appropriate methodology to understand the role of paid, owned and earned media €. By doing this the systematic approach reveals the contribution of channels, Marketing ROAS and ROAS per channel, the stage when a channel reaches a point of diminishing return and provides a performance forecast in consideration of an optimized budget allocation across channels.

Calibrate across solution to evaluate true incremental ROAS

To optimize the media mix, particularly for TikTok, it is essential to calibrate the results from various measurement techniques. By integrating MMM and MTA with lift approaches, we can enhance an already robust methodology, bringing it closer to ground truth accuracy. Additionally, using experiments to calibrate these models strengthens the decision-making process, ensuring it is based on reliable and precise insights.

As a matter of fact, a continuous test and learn approach should evaluate the best possible ROAS and should uncover opportunities for growth. The table below shows an overview of the TikTok measurement toolbox according to the company's individual measurement objective and to the funnel stage and thus use case.



“Platforms like TikTok offer advertisers and agencies a comprehensive toolkit of measurement solutions, including search lift, conversion lift, conversion API, and customer audiences, with the ideal approach being a combination of econometric modeling and MTA (Multi-Touch Attribution)”

Emiliano Bozzi
Head of Digital Marketing & Data Strategy -
Vodafone IT

Synergies between Business Objectives and Media KPIs

Organizations on average use over 20 digitally enabled media, marketing, and sales channels to engage customers and prospects¹². Effective media programs must be orchestrated across this mix, as they cannot operate in isolation. Marketing teams frequently prioritize and activate media in silos, neglecting the integration of content, data, and technology expenses that drive business impact. This disjointed approach increases cost and complexity, making it essential to connect and orchestrate media strategies.

When interacting with a brand, customers and consumers require a fully integrated communication and personalized relevant messages across touchpoints. This is why an overarching measurement approach of all touchpoints is crucial to manage audience expectations, while generating the most effective communication impact according to the Business objectives of a company. Depending on the objectives, various touchpoints and platforms have different tasks in this journey. It is important that this omnichannel marketing approach is in line with business, communication and media KPI's, not only to be measurable and manageable,

but to maximize the effectiveness and the efficiency of TikTok and other touchpoints in the brand eco-system. Bringing the right KPIs in line requires to **understand** which marketing and media activities and thus investments show the highest impact. Making use of the right data will help companies and brands to **make better decisions** according to their business and marketing objectives. The data led decision making process enable companies to derive insights that can be translated into **future scenarios** to increase the ROAS of marketing investments and to achieve higher sales.

Why is this important? As described in chapters one and two, brands and their audiences interact in a complex and interconnected network, where they engage with multiple online and offline channels. Analytics and in-depth research and attribution methodologies (as described in chapter two) show that this process is not linear, but consumer behavior is tracked in a seamless channel-hop and non-linear decision making – a fully individual path to purchase. In this individual path, TikTok is one important cogwheel in the interplay of variables that are measured within

[12] Diorio, S. Connecting the dots to maximize the business impact of Media. Forbes. (June 6, 2024). <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stephendiorio/2024/06/04/connecting-the-dots-to-maximize-the-business-impact-of-media/>

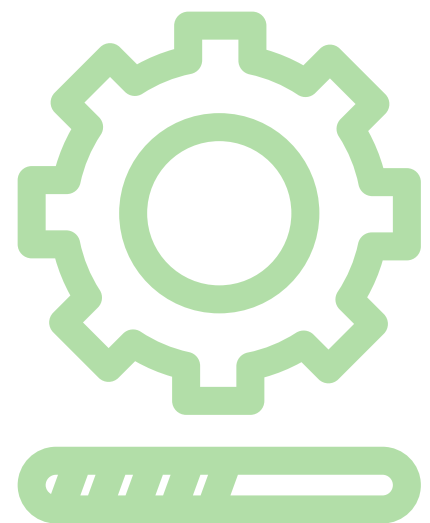
each channel, but also in the context of all touchpoints in the customer journey, and with regard to the integration between business and communication as shown in the table above. Understanding TikTok specific requirements and drivers is crucial to apply an evolved approach to measuring the brand ecosystem, encompassing traditional channels like TV, OOH, Radio and Print alongside digital media incl. TikTok as one of the main contributors.

How do we apply the Deloitte Measurement approaches considering all touchpoints of the marketing funnel with TikTok effectiveness in a brand eco-system?

To effectively measure media channels using a MMM, it is essential to define a KPI that accurately reflects their behavior and captures the variations and impacts on revenue, sales, app installs, or the chosen business KPI, we have conducted multiple iterations across different industries and advertisers to determine the optimal variable for describing TikTok within an MMM.

44% of advertisers have successfully enhanced their ROAS by at least 10%, all while maintaining the same marketing budget. Advertisers who increase their budgets according to the MMM analysis and attribution increase their ROAS by 15% - 30%. This remarkable feat was made possible through the implementation of an

By using impressions, instead of investment or clicks, it helped capture more sources of variance between 7% to 22%, by consequence improving overall model fit¹³



optimized investment allocation strategy facilitated by MMM. Setting up the infrastructure to make frequent decisions based on MMM results involves implementing a range of tools, from visualization aids to simulation capabilities¹⁴.

[13], 14 Deloitte Benchmark

[14], 14 Deloitte Benchmark

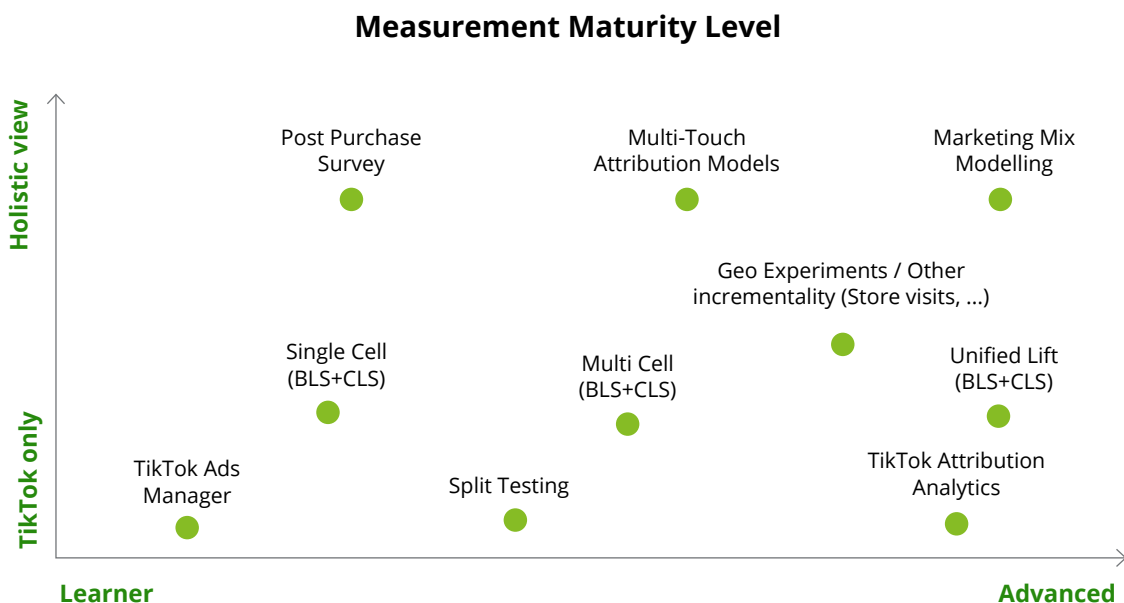
Strategic measurement for a successful media optimization

TikTok is an effective platform, which has the power to show significant impact on the consumer journey, where consumers get inspired and engage with content via innovative formats from Discovery, over Research to Action.

Individual techniques and methodologies to analyze and optimize strategies and ROAS are evolving according to the described approaches from Lift studies over attribution measurement to Marketing Mix Modeling's. To have holistic measurement approach we advise to utilize multiple methodologies to maximize and

understand each media channel, and to optimize the overall media mix.

To enhance the decision-making process, advertisers have several complementary opportunities to better understand their marketing investments, make data-driven decisions, and continuously optimize their strategies. These opportunities vary based on the measurement maturity level and the ability to integrate insights into optimization activities throughout the customer journey, and from TikTok's perspective into a holistic view.



Methodologies for learner with a lower maturity level

To monitor ad performance on **TikTok Ads Manager**, brands can use the platform dashboard metrics for all active campaigns, ad groups, and individual creativities. The Campaign function allows for specific tracking, whereas the reporting function provides advertisers to export custom reports. Additionally, the Audience Size tool helps to estimate the eligible audience for the ads, but actual reach depends on factors like budget, bid, and auction competitiveness.

The **Brand Lift Study** runs alongside sponsored content to measure the incremental brand impact of the TikTok campaign. It divides the target audience into two randomized groups. An exposed group that views the content and a control group that does not. By using polling and statistical analysis, the study measures differences in KPI's like brand awareness and ad recall between both

groups, attributing changes to the ads. This form of analysis helps to answer questions such as baseline brand awareness on TikTok, the impact of sponsored content on purchase intent, and which creatives resonate most with the audience.

For measuring the incrementality for specific events such as add to cart, view content or purchases, between others; the **Conversion Lift** solution helps understand the incremental impact of TikTok ads by comparing these events between test and control group at a user level.

The **Post Purchase Survey** is presented to consumers immediately after a purchase to gather additional data. It helps brands and companies understand brand awareness, purchase decision time, and the effectiveness of marketing channels in the Media Mix. The results can be viewed in Attribution Analytics and the survey supports Shopify-integrated e-commerce sites.



“Effective measurement combines quick results for ROI optimization with a cross-channel approach that accounts for short- and long-term impact, leveraging tools like Brand Lift Studies, Conversion Lift, and MMM to track brand metrics and incremental business outcomes”

Gemma Navarro
Senior Media Manager – Nestlé Spain

Suitable approaches for intermediate experienced brands

Split testing is also known as A/B testing. By doing this, the TikTok Ads Manager allows to test two different ad versions to see which performs better, with the objective to optimize future campaigns. IT also gives the possibility to test different attribution windows to improve the optimization. Brands can test variables such as Targeting, Bidding and Creatives by splitting the audience into two equal groups, each seeing one ad version. This method provides a comparison, helping companies to allocate spending for the best ROAS¹⁵.

[15] TikTok, About split testing: TikTok ads manager. TikTok for Business. (July , 2024). <https://ads.tiktok.com/help/article/split-testing>

The **Geo Lift Test** uses machine learning and statistics to see how two factors are related by comparing different geographic areas. This approach gives accurate results and maintains user privacy. It helps brands understand how effective their platform communication is. Key questions it tackles include whether TikTok generates unique conversions, revenue, or return on ad spend, if it's not getting enough credit from last-click analytics, and which other channels are wrongly getting credit instead. In addition to Geo-Testing, there are other incrementality third party solutions that can be customized according to client's needs and KPI of interest (i.e. store visits).

Multi touch attribution Models. When it comes to ROAS and performance measurement, the industry should go beyond last-click attribution. While considering TikTok specific measurement principles to capture the complexity of modern consumer journeys across multiple touchpoints. With this methodology brands gain insights about the effectiveness of marketing channels and touchpoints, enabling better budget allocation and optimization of digital tactics, into a creative, ad or campaign level. It enables decision making in a tactical way but not in a strategical scope.

Measurement techniques for advanced analysts

In the cookieless era, first-party data has become increasingly crucial and having the right tools will potentialize results for advertisers.

TikTok is an underreported channel in last click: 79% of all conversions attributed to TikTok by users themselves were missed by Last-Click attribution models¹⁶.

TikTok Attribution Analytics helps to better capture the customer journey beyond the last-click model. Traditional models often miss conversions as users are inspired by ads but resume their purchase journey later without clicking immediately. This is why TikTok aims to advance measurement transparency and enhances Attribution Analytics to support multiple campaign types and provide a holistic view of advertising impact. The performance comparison tool allows advertisers to analyze conversions across various attribution windows and gain insights into the impact of ad views and clicks.

Understanding the impact of your multi-channel investments with Marketing Mix Modeling this methodology not only helps advertisers to understand the TikTok performance better, but also provide a context about the role of TikTok in the entire Marketing Mix in consideration of the impact of TikTok and other channels on ROAS, saturation of selected channels and the derivation of optimized scenarios to allocate marketing budgets in the most effective and efficient way according to the overall business objectives. The results provide an overarching understanding and a basis to improve based on cross-media insights.

[16] TikTok Marketing Science Post-Purchase Analysis conducted by KnoCommerce, 2022

In conclusion

The right measurement approach starts with your objectives and media strategy

The right measurement approach starts with a clear understanding of the objectives and media strategy. It begins by identifying the specific goals aimed to achieve, such as discovering a brand, invite to research, provoke an action or driving conversions. With these objectives in mind, you can tailor your measurement approach to align with your media strategy, ensuring that each metric and methodology used is relevant and impactful, but mainly enhancing the decision-making process to optimize the performance of the advertising.

Moreover, adopting a several methodologies approach enables the cross verification of the insights in different levels, providing a more robust and accurate analysis. This holistic perspective allows for better optimization, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively across all channels. The right measurement approach is dynamic, adaptable and constantly evolving with the objectives in the ever-changing media landscape.



“An improved measurement framework enables data-driven budget decisions, cross-channel synergies across all the funnel, and real-time strategy refinement. It ensures media spend is strategically aligned with business objectives, while also providing the agility to adapt to changing market conditions and consumer behavior. It aligns marketing with business goals like brand awareness and sales”

Fran Espejo

Paid Media Manager - Cabify

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