

The Death of Marketing Attribution

In 2023, privacy, legal, competitive, and browser/cookie changes are conspiring to block an overwhelming amount of attribution that marketers take for granted... Here's what's next.

Rand Fishkin, CEO



DIGITAL OUTPERFORMS TV, PRINT, RADIO & OUTDOOR

ECONSULTANCY

comScore and Econsultancy show that more than half of digital ads (54%) are never seen by consumers. It's a colossal waste, and demonstrates the need for brands and marketers to make sure for ROI that ads are viewable. They recommend: 1) Make viewability a top priority, 2) Select 'on-demand' ad formats, 3) Native ad formats will be more viewable, 4) Make the creative compelling and 5) Be relevant to the content and the consumer.

ECONOMETRICS

Microsoft did an Econometrics study of the effectiveness of digital advertising. Econometrics is looking at vast amounts of good quality data, collected over long periods of time to identify and quantify different brand drivers. As for ROI, they found digital outperforms TV, Print, Radio and Outdoor. They also found that, if digital is added to these media channels, it enhances their effectiveness.

54%
OF ADS
ARE NEVER SEEN



FOURNAISE

In interviews with 1,200 CEO's, management and marketing decision makers, 90% global marketers are not trained to calculate return on investment (ROI), and 80% struggle with being able to properly demonstrate to their management the business effectiveness of their spending, campaigns and activities.



GOOGLE AND DOVE

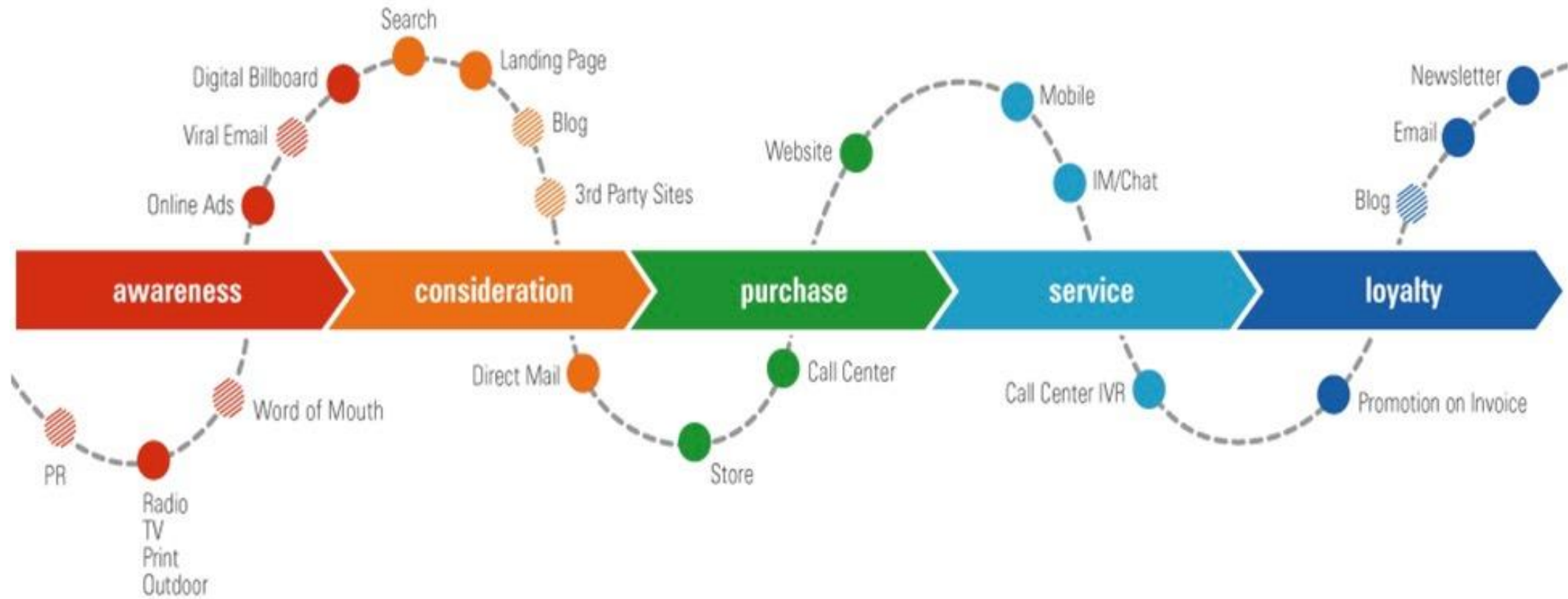
Google and Dove worked together to explore the impact of online advertising on in-store sales. The study found that the inclusion of online advertising resulted in a 6% overall sales uplift. Online advertising was most effective when used in synergy with national TV, a combination that led to a 11% sales uplift. Most interestingly, it was found that although the campaign advertised a single product, it was effective in generating sales over the whole range.



KANTAR WORDPA

Coke's return on investment from Facebook advertising in France beat its ROI from TV. Every euro spent on Facebook returned 2.74 euros in additional Coke sales. That was 3.6 times better than the ROI attributed to TV ads. In all, 27% of incremental sales Kantar attributed to the campaign came from Facebook, but only 2% of the cost.

Marketers Spent 20 Years Convincing Execs to Invest in Digital Channels



Our biggest weapon in that fight:

Unlike offline channels, online journeys **could be precisely measured**, ensuring high-confidence ROI

We trained CEOs, CFOs, boards, and investors to believe...



...every conversion and sale could be attributed to the channels & tactics in that buyer journey

How did it all
go sideways?

#1

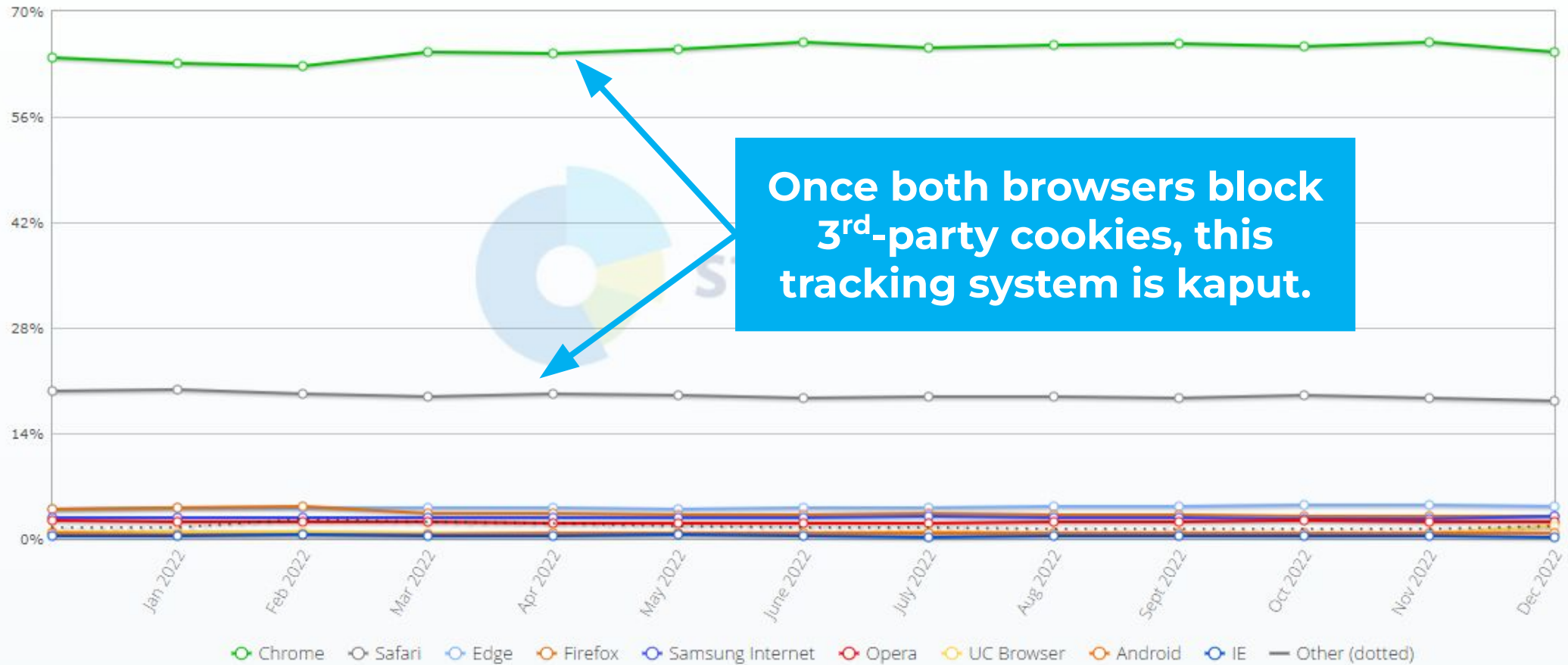
Browsers & Cookies

3rd-Party Cookies Are Nearly Dead

Browser Market Share Worldwide

Dec 2021 - Dec 2022

Edit Chart Data



1st-Party Cookies are Getting Less Effective & Accurate, Too

	AppCache	HTML	Headers	Redirects	PDF JS	JavaScript	SW
Chrome 63	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
- Block third-party cookies	◐	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐
Opera 51	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
- Block third-party cookies*	◐	◐	◐	●	●	◐	◐
- Ad Blocker	●	●	○	●	○	●	●
Firefox 57	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
- Block third-party cookies	◐	◐	◐	●	○	◐	◐
- Tracking Protection	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
Safari 11	○ [†]	◐	○	●	○	◐	N/A
- No Intelligent Tracking Prevention	● [†]	●	○	●	○	●	N/A
- Block third-party cookies [‡]	● [†]	●	◐	●	○	●	N/A
Edge 40	●	●	◐	●	○	●	N/A
- Block third-party cookies	●	●	◐	●	○	●	N/A
Cliqz 1.17*	◐	●	◐	●	○	◐	◐
- Block third-party cookies	◐	◐	◐	●	○	◐	◐
Tor Browser 7	○	◐	◐	●	○	◐	N/A

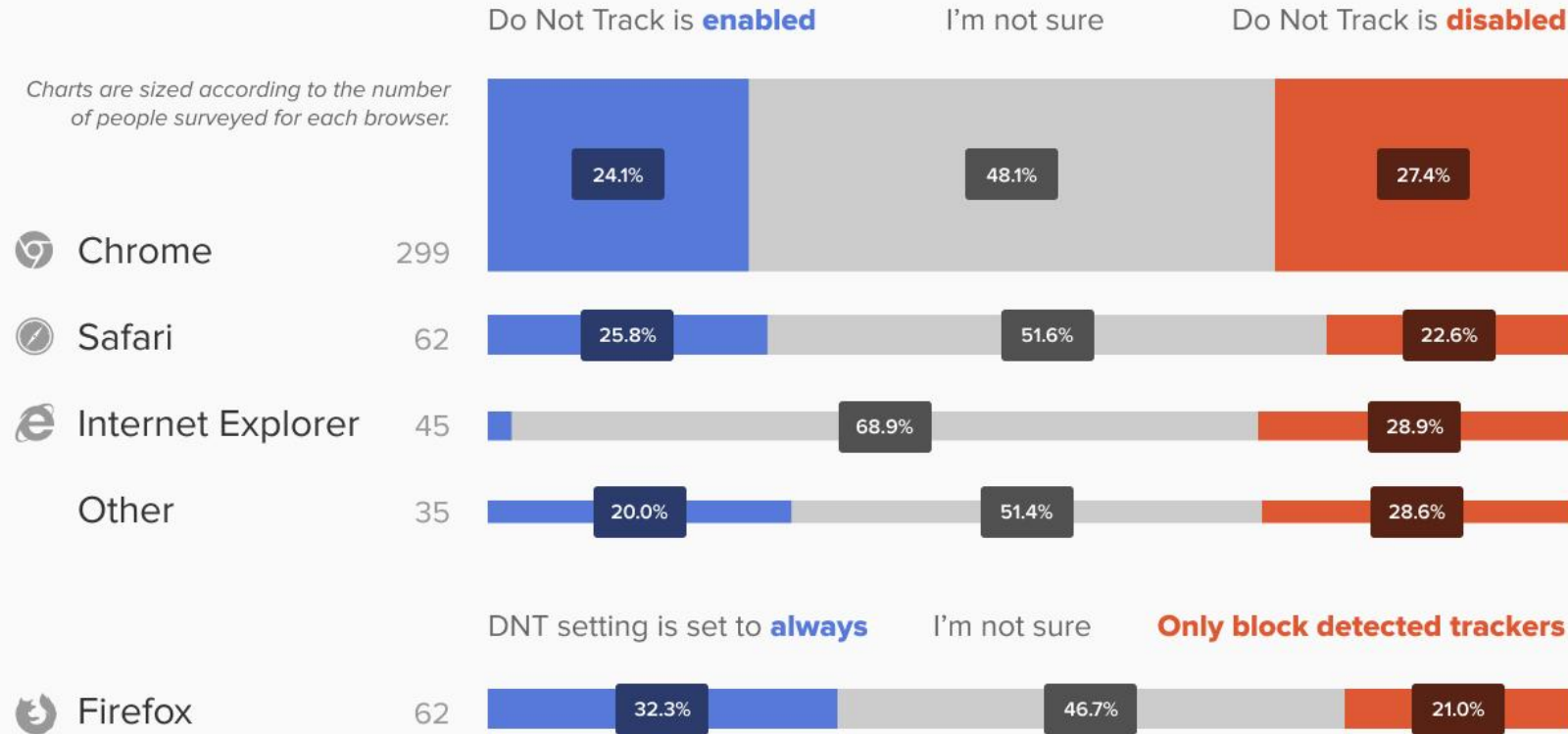
●: request with cookies ◐: request without cookies ○: no request

* Secure cookies were omitted in all requests.
[†] Safari does not permit cross-domain caching over https (only over http).
[‡] Safari 10.1.2

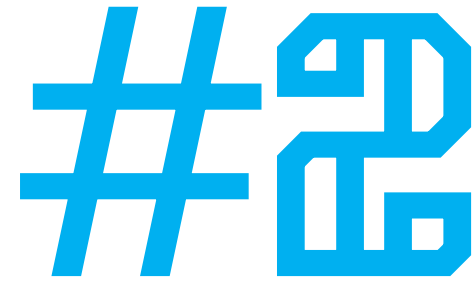
Users are manually blocking more tracking in their browsers, too

Use of “Do Not Track” Browser Setting

Which of the following best represents the current status of the Do Not Track (DNT) setting on your primary desktop computer's Web browser?



Respondents were asked to specify their primary desktop browser, and then were shown screenshots of the setting in that browser, prior to answering this question.



Ad/Analytics Blockers & Multi-Device Journeys

In this piece, we:

1. Identified a self-hosted alternative to Google Analytics
2. Compare analytics data between both analytics services for two websites
3. Identified user segments more likely to be missing from Google Analytics (Desktop and Firefox users)
4. Looked at potential biases in the observations and situations where Google Analytics might have more complete data

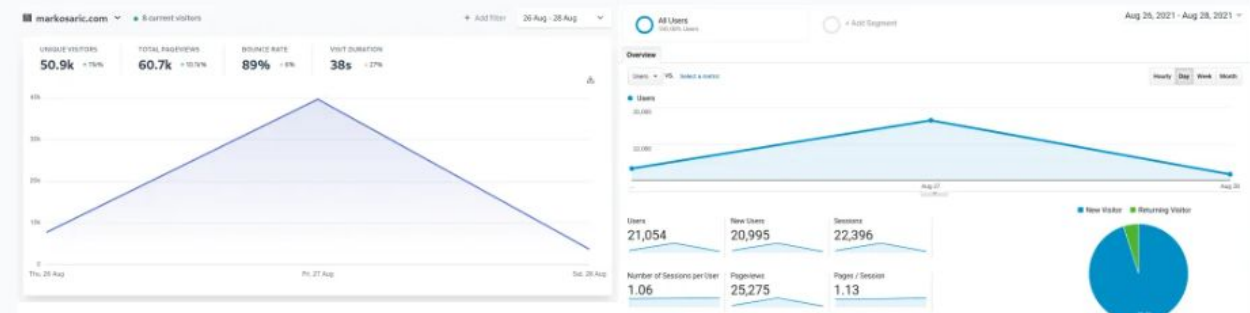
The results were pretty informative. For most purposes, Google Analytics should be able to report trends for around 80% of users. However, there are certain situations that might lead to more or less data being collected. With the increase in popularity of ad blockers, a self-hosted alternative like Umami might be the way to go as it can collect all available data and also give you better control over your own data.

Toward Data Science estimates ~20% of browsers block GA tracking (more on desktop than mobile)

← ALL POSTS

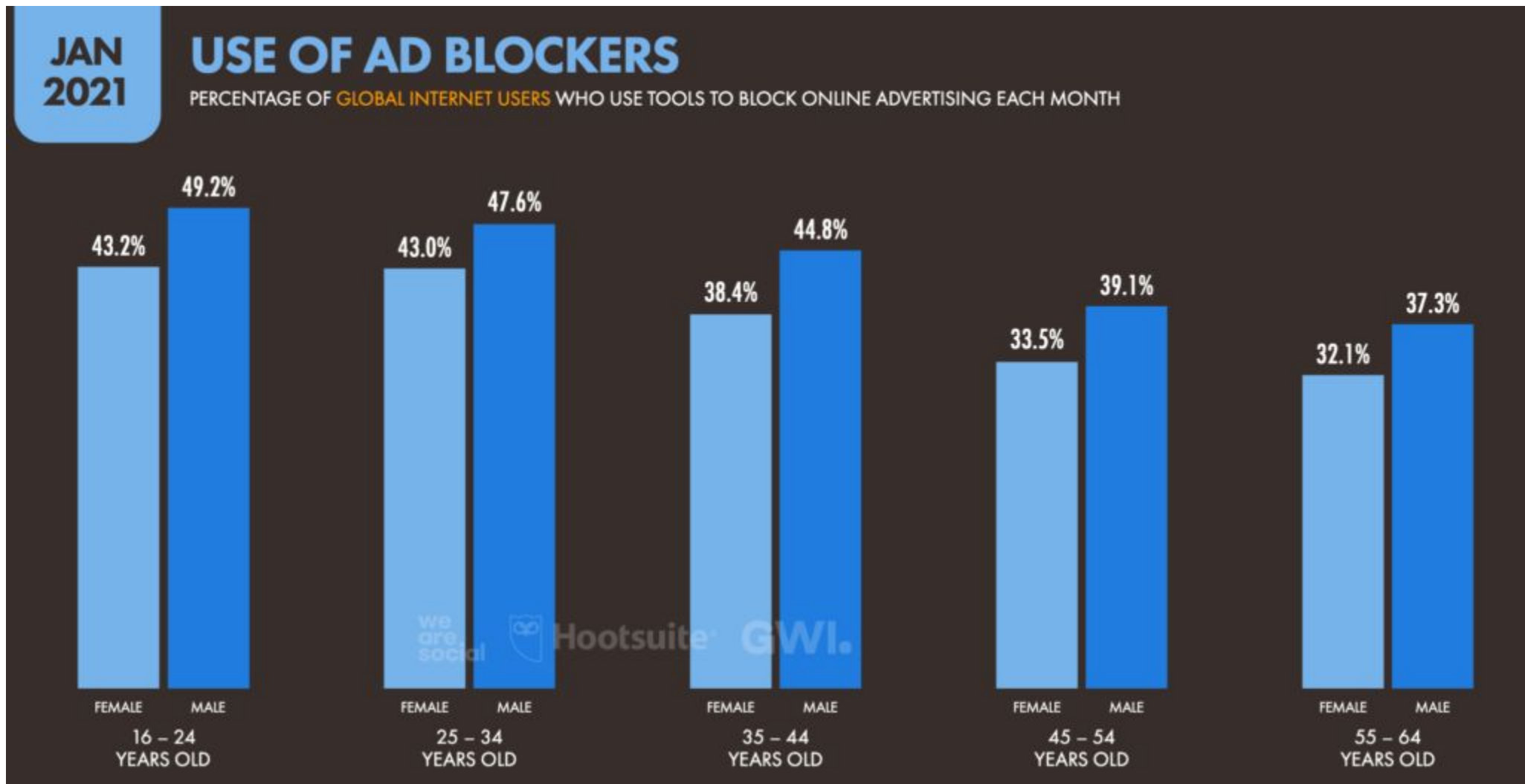
58% of Hacker News, Reddit and tech-savvy audiences block Google Analytics

AUG 31, 2021 • WRITTEN BY [MARKO SARIC](#)



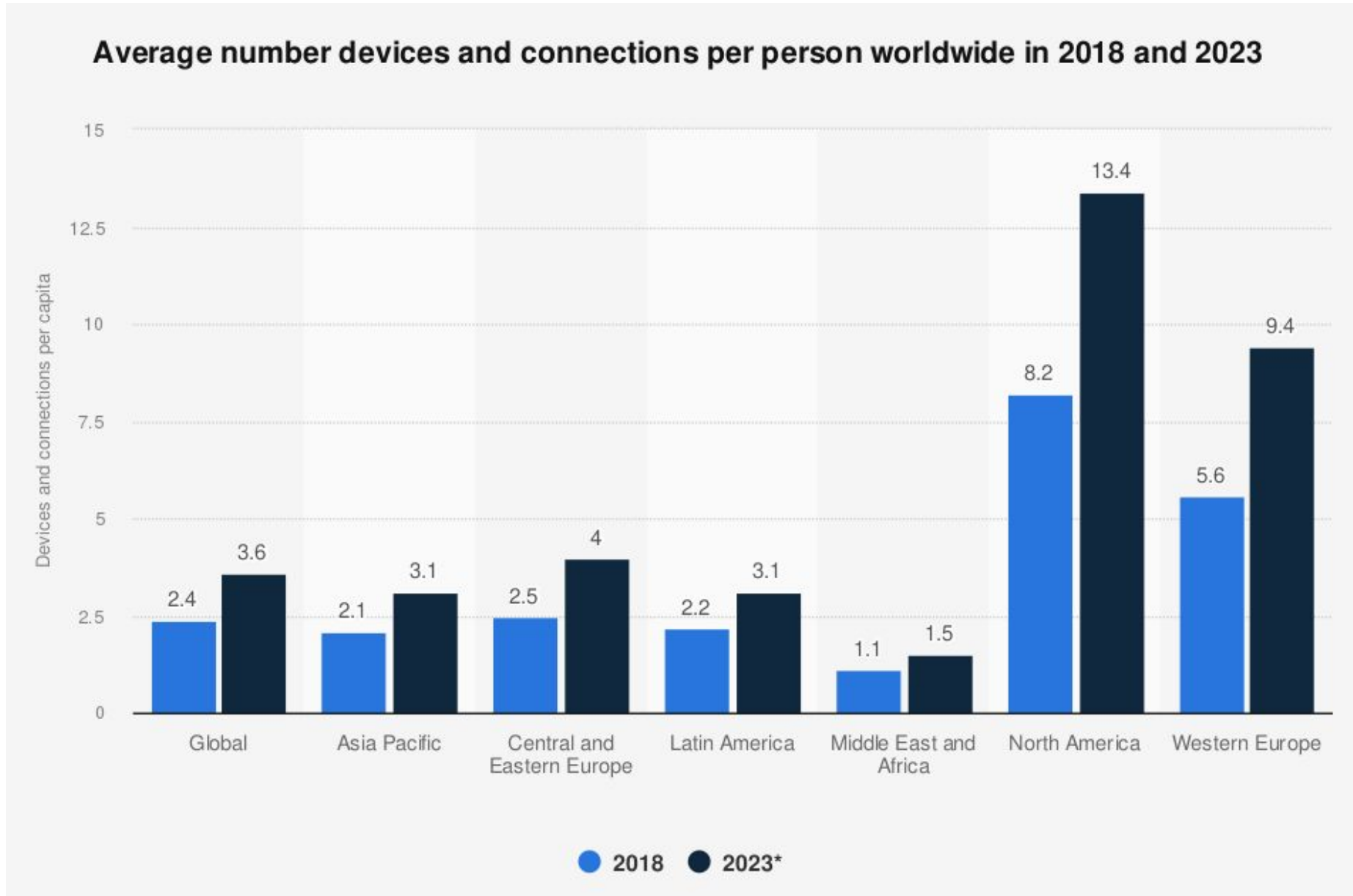
There are several [privacy concerns with running Google Analytics](#) but there are worries about data accuracy too. How much data is missing from Google Analytics due to adblockers and privacy-friendly browsers?

Plausible shows that percentage risers to nearly 60% for “tech-savvy” audiences



Ad Blockers don't just block ads... they block most tracking techniques, too

Forget about tracking individuals pre-login



#3

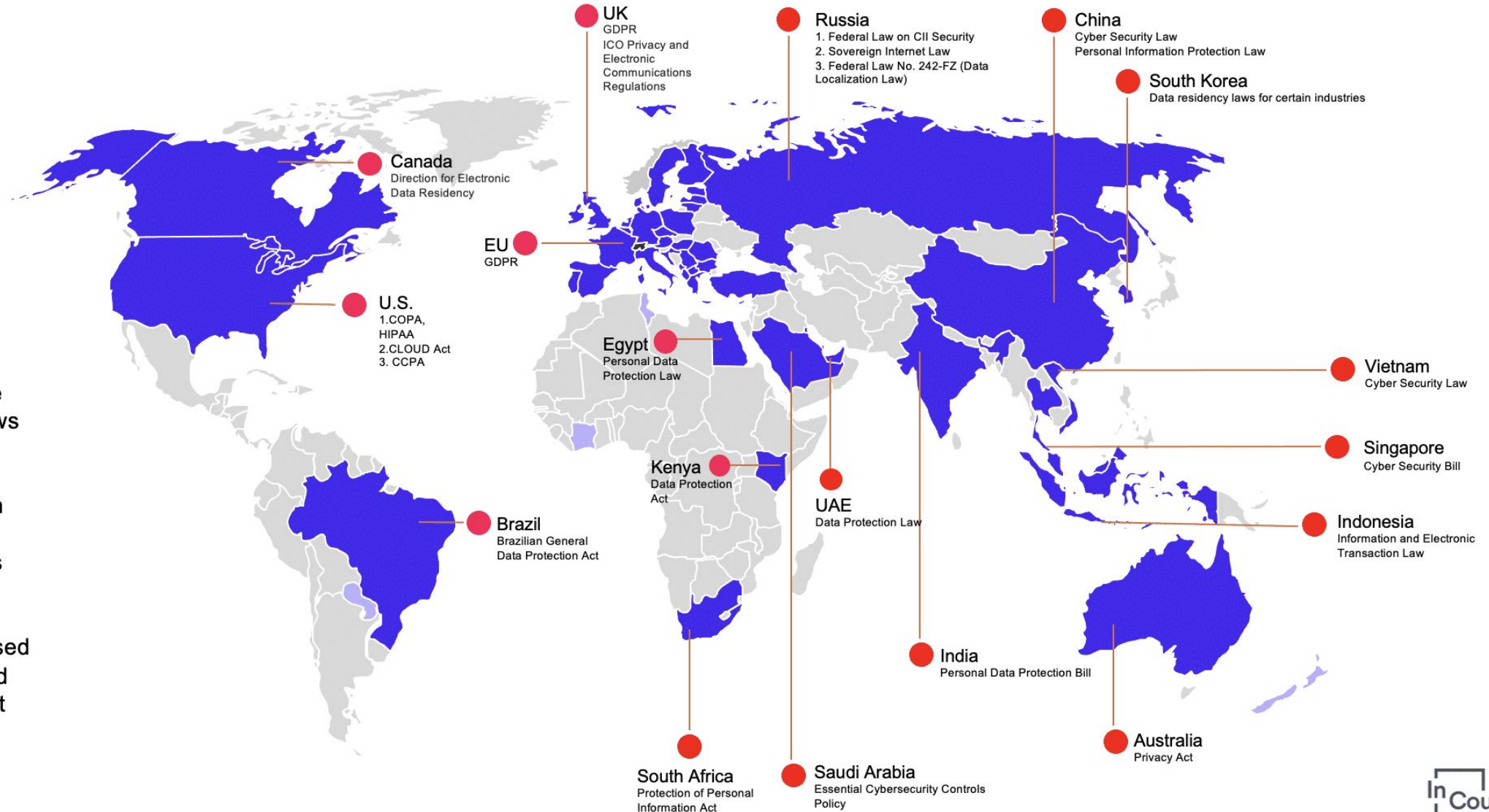
Privacy Laws & Regulation

What's Possible & Legal in the US Isn't Most Anywhere Else

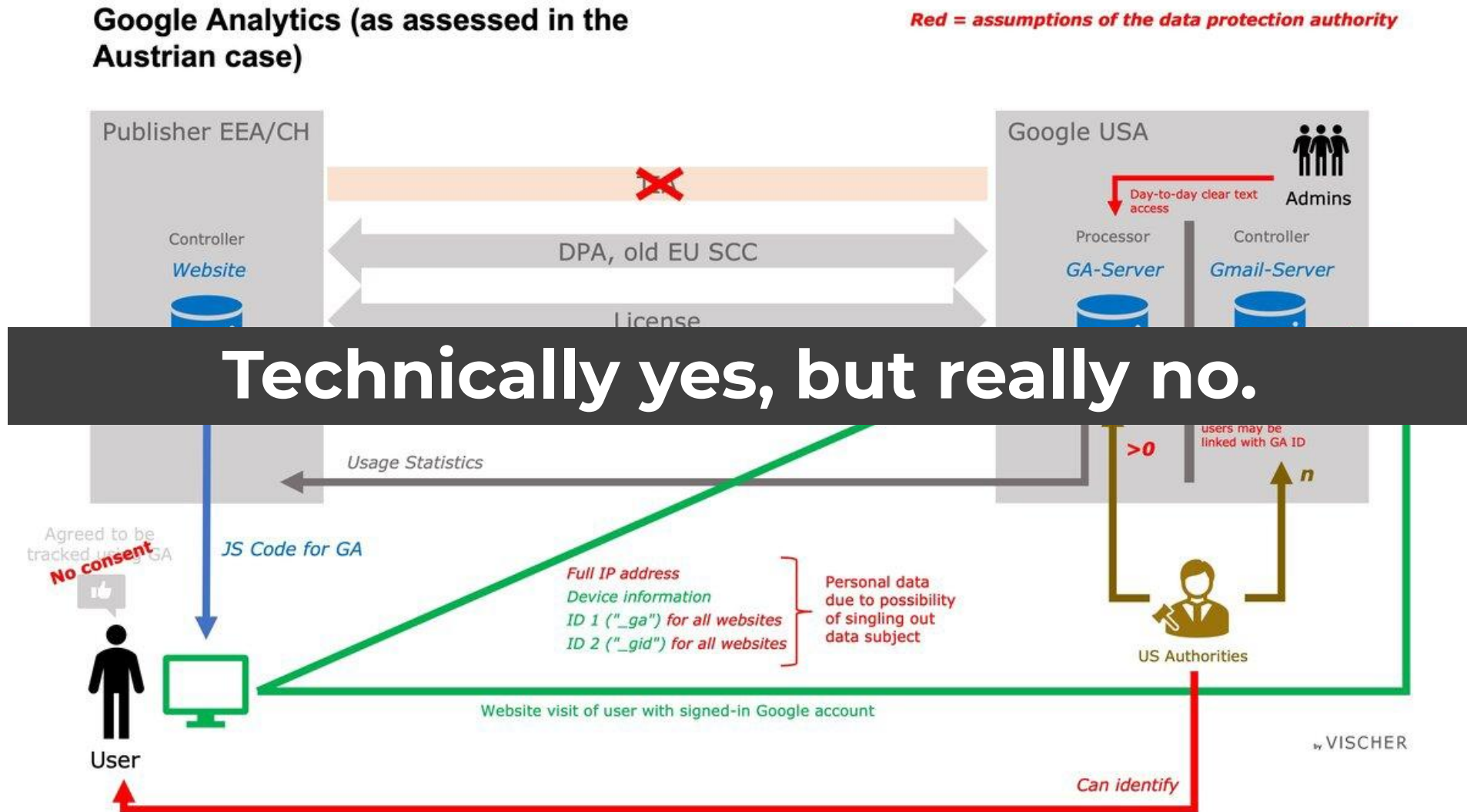
Trends

- ✓ More and more countries stipulate data residency laws
- ✓ Data residency is evolving and often related to national security strategies
- ✓ Data residency is more and more used as a trade tool and foreign investment review

 New laws impending



Can you still use Google Analytics (or analytics tools that have similar types of persistent tracking) in the EU?



#41

Google Being Google

Marketers have forgotten how **easy** it was to justify content & SEO investments when Google provided keyword data

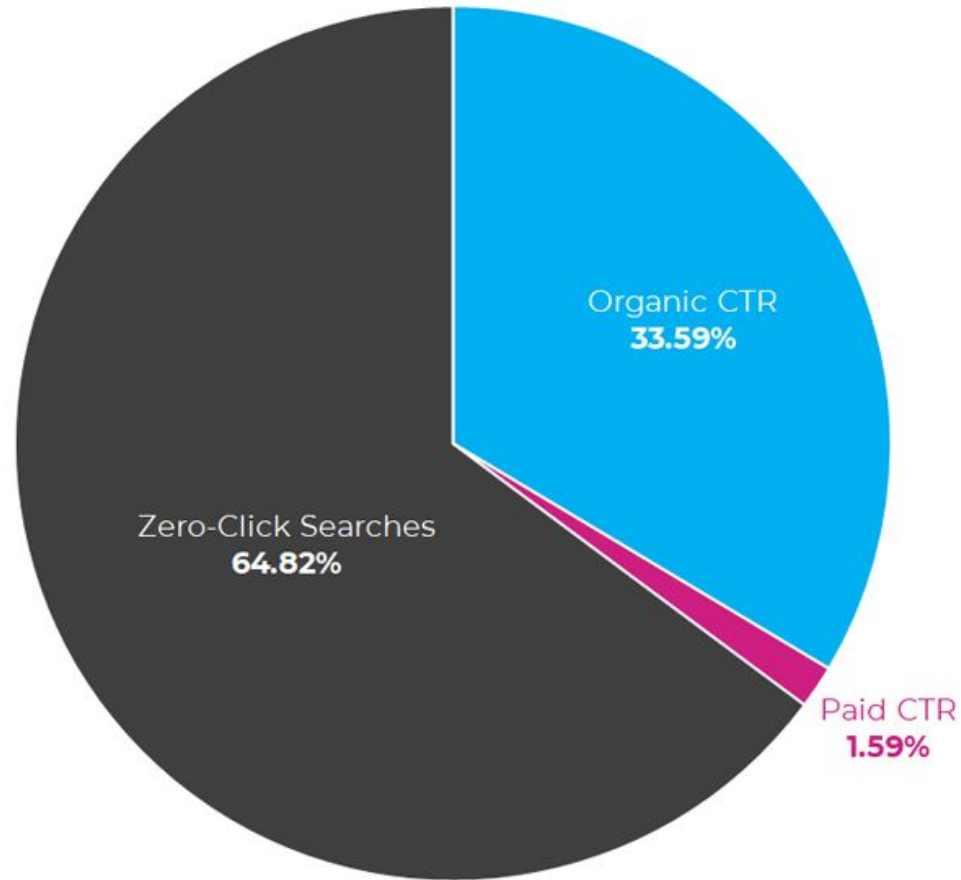
Keyword	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions	
	Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Goal Conversion Rate	Goal Completions
	9,652 % of Total: 39.84% (24,225)	99.98% Avg for View: 99.96% (0.02%)	9,650 % of Total: 39.83% (24,215)	74.80% Avg for View: 77.26% (-3.18%)	1.49 Avg for View: 1.42 (4.74%)	00:01:34 Avg for View: 00:01:29 (5.15%)	0.95% Avg for View: 0.00% (0.00%)	92 % of Total: 0.00% (0)
1. buy flowers	272 (2.82%)	99.63%	271 (2.81%)	69.49%	1.67	00:02:08	8.46%	23 (0.00%)
2. roses	61 (0.63%)	100.00%	61 (0.63%)	90.16%	1.16	00:00:49	11.48%	7 (0.00%)
3. flower bouquet	56 (0.58%)	100.00%	56 (0.58%)	98.21%	1.02	00:00:19	12.50%	7 (0.00%)
4. valentine flowers	53 (0.55%)	100.00%	53 (0.55%)	49.06%	2.21	00:02:44	11.32%	6 (0.00%)
5. buy roses	65 (0.67%)	100.00%	65 (0.67%)	81.54%	1.31	00:01:12	6.15%	4 (0.00%)
6. buttercups	64 (0.66%)	100.00%	64 (0.66%)	90.62%	1.12	00:00:45	6.25%	4 (0.00%)
7. long living flowers	145 (1.50%)	100.00%	145 (1.50%)	77.93%	1.38	00:01:16	2.76%	4 (0.00%)
8. buy flower bouquet	100 (1.04%)	100.00%	100 (1.04%)	78.00%	1.28	00:01:52	3.00%	3 (0.00%)
9.						00:01:42	3.45%	3 (0.00%)
10.						00:01:14	3.90%	3 (0.00%)

“We rank #12 for this KW, which means we could get 40-60X this many conversions by moving to #2.”

In 2023, Google's learned their monopoly power is untouchable, so they might as well do things like:

Google Search CTR & Zero-Click Searches, 2020

(worldwide data, desktop & mobile devices, via SimilarWeb's 100M+ user clickstream panel)



Answer queries directly in the SERPs, continually shrinking organic clicks

About 60,900,000 results (0.40 seconds)

Ad · <https://learnmore.topproducer.com/>

Best CRM for Real Estate - All-in-one Software

Share insights and updated MLS data you and your contacts will love. Stay top of mind. All-in-one **CRM** software for top agents. Send **real** MLS data and track transactions.

CRM for Realtors®

Solutions for real estate agents Leading real estate CRM

MLS Integration

Search, save and assign properties Use MLS data to enrich database

<https://www.forbes.com> › advisor › business › software

Best CRM For Real Estate 2023 – Forbes Advisor

Dec 23, 2022 — The Best **Real Estate CRM** of 2023 · Wise Agent · LionDesk · Realvolve · Follow Up Boss · Top Producer · Market Leader · Propertybase.

Related searches

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See more →

% of clicks rising, keyword data is provided (for now).

% of clicks is declining, keyword data is intentionally hidden.

% of searchers who are satisfied by what Google surfaces on the SERP keeps rising

Intentionally Conflate Unbranded & Branded Keywords to Make Advertisers Pay More for Worse Results

Posted by u/Any-Sky-7089 5 months ago

Performance Max Campaigns are borderline fraud, what's up with this?

Google Ads

I set up a new Perf Max campaign to see if it will perform better than my Standard shopping campaign for my Ecommerce website

My Standard Shopping campaign was having issues spending the whole budget lately so I tested a Perf Max

I set the budget at \$400 per day, the first day went okay with many sales; but today was ridiculous. I woke up to half of the budget already spent by 9am. The traffic I was getting was very weird. My dashboard was stating that I had over 30 live visitors (very weird, its never that high at one time) and over 500 visitors in total by 9am and No sales.

These "Visitors" seemed fake to me, or just low quality, None of them seemed to have had any interest in buying. Its like they were all bots or something.

I immediatly turned off the campaign, and It continued to spend \$60 more dollars while the campaign was off. Lol, pure BS. Even to this very moment, I refresh the page and the campaigns spends a few more dollars while being off

47 Comments Share Save ...



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About 263,000 results (0.43 seconds)

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Try Our Influencer Database - The #1 Influencer Platform

Send influencer reports to your boss in seconds with our influencer marketing platform. End-to-end influencer marketing platform for content tracking & influencer analytics.

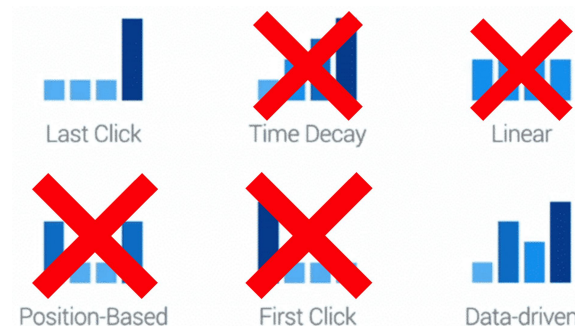
[Content Media Library](#) · [Grow Influencer Marketing](#) · [Why GRIN?](#) · [#1 Influencer Software](#)

Source: [Reddit](#)



Switch to less granular behavioral tracking in the name of privacy (that also raises prices by forcing everyone to compete for the same few topics)

Cut GA attribution models unfavorable to Google's ads



Sources: [SearchEngineLand](#), [Beebom](#), & [Twitter](#)



pedram is offline - on bsky and threads ✓

@pdrmnvd

i fucking called it. ads team begging for worse search results so that the ads team can hit their goals this year

From: Jerry Dischler <jdischler@google.com>
To: Anil Sabharwal <anilsa@google.com>
Sent: Fri, 3 May 2019 09:05:53 -0700
Subject: Re: Important SQV Update
Cc: Prabhakar Raghavan <pragh@google.com>, Nick Fox <nicholas@google.com>, Benedict Gomes <gomes@google.com>, John Maletis <maletis@google.com>, Hiroshi Lockheimer <hiroshi@google.com>

Thanks Anil for pushing your team and for being open to this whole line of thinking. Is there any chance we can converge on this more quickly? To elaborate:

Just looking at this very tactically, and sorry to go into this level of detail, but based on where we are I'm afraid it's warranted. We are short ^{revenue} % queries and are ahead on ads launches so are short ^{revenue} % revenue vs. plan. If we don't hit plan, our sales team doesn't get its quota for the second quarter in a row and we miss the street's expectations again, which is not what Ruth signaled to

Literally make search results worse to sell more ads?!

need to make this choice. I care more about revenue than the average person but I think we can all agree that for all of our teams trying to live in high cost areas another \$^{Redacted} in stock price loss will not be great for morale, not to mention the huge impact on our sales team.

I'm super proud of our pure approach at Google and don't want to poison the culture of any team, and this is why I haven't pushed harder. I also don't want the message to be "we're doing this thing because the Ads team needs revenue." That's a very negative message. But my question to all of you is - based on above - what do we think is the best decision for Google overall?

In that spirit, do we think it's worth reconsidering a rollback? Or are there very scrappy tactical

#5

Dark Social

Default Channel Grouping		Users ? ↓	New Users ?	Sessions ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages / Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?	Free Account Creation (Goal 1 Conversion Rate) ?	Free Account Creation (Goal 1 Completions) ?
		311,160 % of Total: 100.00% (311,160)	304,212 % of Total: 100.06% (304,032)	408,785 % of Total: 100.00% (408,785)	36.28% Avg for View: 36.28% (0.00%)	2.58 Avg for View: 2.58 (0.00%)	00:01:55 Avg for View: 00:01:55 (0.00%)	4.83% Avg for View: 4.83% (0.00%)	19,750 % of Total: 100.00% (19,750)
1.	Direct	240,252 (76.44%)	238,324 (78.34%)	284,593 (69.62%)	28.82%	1.82	00:01:17	4.33%	12,326 (62.41%)
2.	Organic Search	40,868 (13.00%)	36,290 (11.93%)	73,616 (18.01%)	43.74%	5.41	00:04:16	8.55%	6,293 (31.86%)
3.	Social	16,353 (5.20%)	14,897 (4.90%)	23,054 (5.64%)	74.23%	2.23	00:01:35	1.56%	360 (1.82%)
4.	Referral	11,501 (3.66%)	10,169 (3.34%)	17,096 (4.18%)	50.69%	3.82	00:02:58	4.25%	726 (3.68%)
5.	Email	4,653 (1.48%)	3,917 (1.29%)	9,455 (2.31%)	79.41%	2.13	00:01:41	0.31%	29 (0.15%)
6.	(Other)	680 (0.22%)	610 (0.20%)	964 (0.24%)	84.34%	1.77	00:01:12	1.66%	16 (0.08%)


76% of our visitors come from “Direct?!”


Landing Page ?		Sessions ? ↓	% New Sessions ?	New Users ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages / Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?
		259,172 % of Total: 63.40% (408,785)	60.06% Avg for View: 74.37% (-19.24%)	155,669 % of Total: 51.20% (304,032)	57.23% Avg for View: 36.28% (57.73%)	4.07 Avg for View: 2.58 (57.73%)	00:03:01 Avg for View: 00:01:55 (57.09%)
1.	/	75,205 (29.02%)	70.97%	53,371 (34.28%)	44.20%	5.00	00:03:01
2.	/tools/fake-followers-audit	18,340 (7.08%)	79.96%	14,665 (9.42%)	48.57%	3.00	00:03:01
3.	/trending	12,957 (5.00%)	25.51%	3,305 (2.12%)	52.67%	1.00	00:03:01
4.	/product/dashboard	9,263 (3.57%)	26.08%	2,416 (1.55%)	30.03%	7.95	00:06:37
5.	/blog/too-few-marketers-grasp-the-difference-between-strategy-vs-tactics-we-need-to-fix-that/	7,525 (2.90%)	63.59%	4,785 (3.07%)	92.03%	1.16	00:00:39
6.	/product/search/overview/run	7,265 (2.80%)	6.90%	501 (0.32%)	42.99%	6.38	00:05:56
7.	/fake-followers	7,162 (2.76%)	23.97%	1,717 (1.10%)	16.22%	3.76	00:03:42
8.	/account/conversion/free	5,835 (2.25%)	97.31%	5,678 (3.65%)	96.73%	1.40	00:03:01
9.	/vp/account/register/search	5,241 (2.02%)	89.45%	4,688 (3.01%)	89.75%	1.38	00:03:01
10.	/pricing	5,021 (1.94%)	42.82%	2,150 (1.38%)	60.53%	3.89	00:03:01
11.	/blog/ai-generated-content-is-the-new-floor/	4,943 (1.91%)	69.23%	3,422 (2.20%)	87.44%	1.21	00:03:01
12.	/tools	4,043 (1.56%)	71.80%	2,903 (1.86%)	52.49%	3.46	00:01:56
13.	/blog/maybe-you-need-a-fractional-marketing-director-not-a-fractional-cmo/	3,619 (1.40%)	75.24%	2,723 (1.75%)	92.35%	1.14	00:00:33
14.	/blog/zero-click-content-the-counterintuitive-way-to-succeed-in-a-platform-native-world/	3,311 (1.28%)	65.30%	2,162 (1.39%)	87.47%	1.26	00:00:47
15.	/product	3,297 (1.27%)	38.19%	1,259 (0.81%)	61.51%	4.09	00:03:12


Yet, only 29% land on the homepage...?


Are people really typing or bookmarking these long URLs?


We ran an experiment to measure **Dark Social**, and found entire networks hiding referral data:


 **TikTok** —————> **100%** hidden


 **WhatsApp** —————> **100%** hidden

 **Discord** —————> **100%** hidden

 **mastodon** —————> **100%** hidden

 **slack** —————> **100%** hidden

 **facebook** Messenger —————> **75%** hidden

 *DM ON* Instagram —————> **30%** hidden

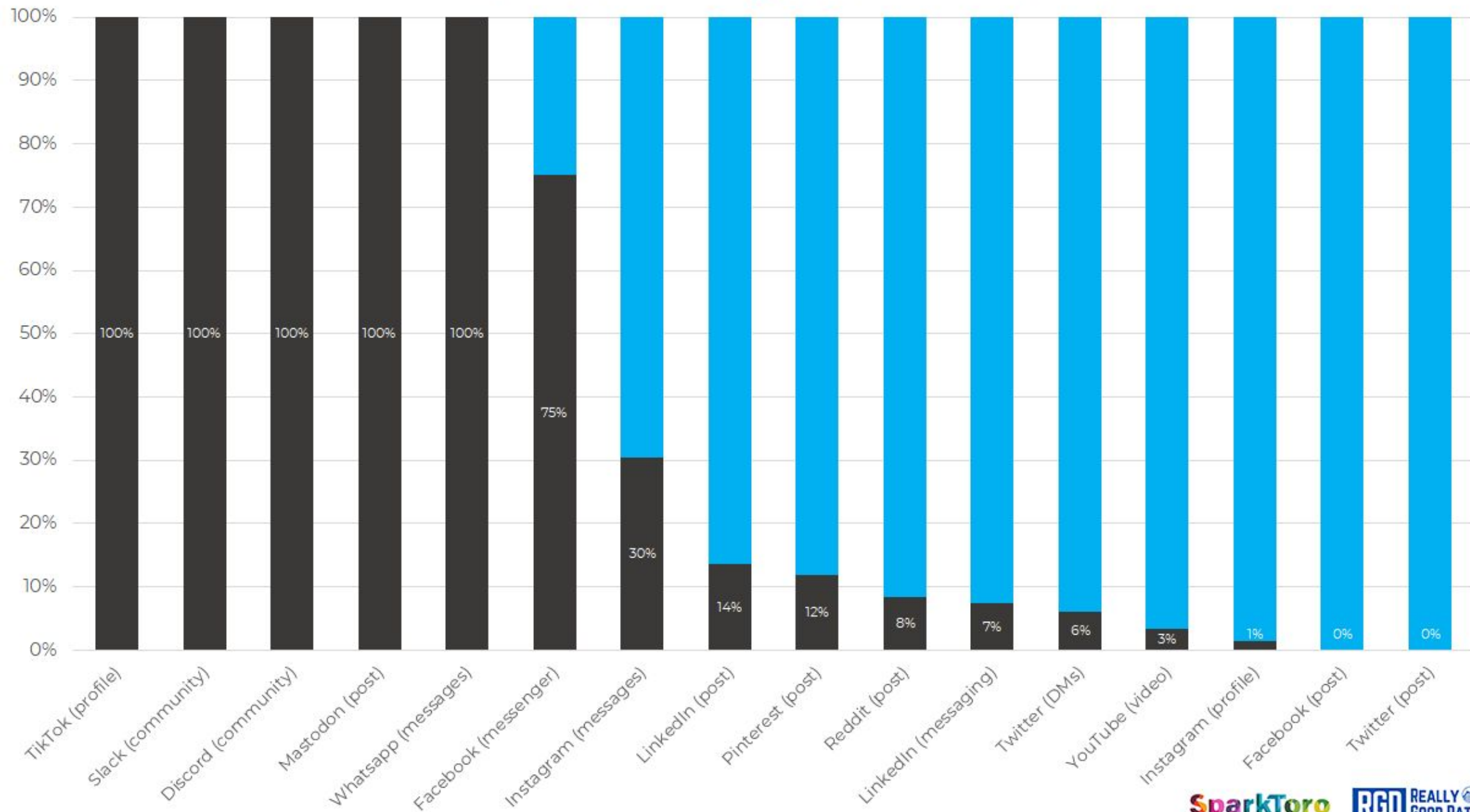
Linked in —————> **14%** hidden

If these sites & apps send you traffic, your analytics will report those visits as **“Direct”**

Dark Traffic on Major Social Networks

■ % of Visits Attributed to "Direct"

■ % of Visits with Accurate Attribution














#6

The Rise of Zero-Click Everything

These Platforms Prioritize ***Native Content***

Zero-Click Content on Major Web Platforms

Platform	Allows Outlinks in Content	Allows Outlinks in Bios	Algo Prioritizes Native Content	Creators Benefit from Zero-Click Approach
 Google	Yes*	No	Yes	Yes
 YouTube	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 facebook	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 Instagram	No**	Yes	Exclusively	Yes
 twitter	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 reddit	Varies***	Yes	No	Yes
 LinkedIn	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
 TikTok	No	Yes	Exclusively	Yes
 Pinterest	Yes	Yes	No	No
 Quora	Yes	Yes	No	No
 SnapChat	No	No	Exclusively	Yes

SparkToro

Rand Fishkin
Published by Rand DeRuiter · January 8 at 2:12 PM · 🌐

NEW post: <https://sparktoro.com/.../the-creator-economy-is-far.../> in which I call BS on the weirdly-popular idea that the creator economy is overblown, shrinking, or in trouble.

Read this and tell me if you agree?

"After years of hype, the Creator Economy is slamming into reality. Influencer programs are shuttering. Investment is drying up. And worsening economic conditions are threatening to crush creators and the tech infrastructure behind them."... [See more](#)

ice frequently talks about ▾ finance

Start Tour | Add Location | Comp

This one has a link.

6 people that talk about **finance** engage most with these account:

ive Filter | Export .csv | Add to List ▾

SPARKTORO.COM

The Creator Economy Is Far From Overblown - Spark
I came across Alex Kantrowitz's The Creator Economy Was W

[See insights and ads](#)

6

Rand Fishkin
Published by Rand DeRuiter · January 12 at 3:28 PM · 🌐

The big social networks—Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok—have taken away SO MUCH audience data that they used to provide, it's infuriating.

This is YOUR data. In exchange for all the hard work our brands do building up audiences on these platforms, engaging them, entertaining them, serving them, making these networks places to come back to, the least the networks should do is provide basic information on your audience's behaviors and demographics.

But, no. The... [See more](#)

This one has no link.

facebook

Messaging settings
Linked accounts
Fan engagement tools
Business Apps
Platform tools
Meta Business Suite
Tools to try
Moderation Assist
Paid online events
Nonprofit Manager
Stars
Help and guidance
Set your page up for success
New Pages guide

10%
5%
18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65+

Location
Cities Countries

Cairo, Cairo Governorate, Egypt	42
Dhaka, Dhaka Division, Bangladesh	40
Bangalore, Karnataka, India	25
Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan	26
London, UK	27
Seattle, WA	26
Delhi, India	24
Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan	24
Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India	21
Mumbai, Maharashtra, India	21

Boost post

13 comments 8 shares

**~10X the reach with
zero-click content**

Total Insights
See more details about your post.

Post Impressions ⓘ
444

Post reach ⓘ
439

Post Engagement ⓘ
29

Total Insights
See more details about your post.

Post Impressions ⓘ
3,888

Post reach ⓘ
3,880

Post Engagement ⓘ
353


“Don’t Let People Click Out!” –Every Network

Results


TL;DR: On average, posts without links got **6x more** reach than posts with links. While linkless posts had **fewer shares** on average, they received almost **4x more reactions** and **18x more comments** than the average post with a link.

	Posts	Impressions	Reactions	Comments	Shares	Clicks
Linkless	7	205,363	1,671	445	60	7,015
Linked	177	834,328	11,533	608	1632	52,035
Av per linkless post	–	29,337.57	238.71	63.57	8.57	1,002.14
Av per linked post	–	4,713.72	65.16	3.44	9.22	293.98

“As you can see, the data suggests that linkless posts far outperform posts with links in terms of engagement,” says Beable.


 **Matt Navarra** ✓
@MattNavarra

TikTok is hiding some users' link in bio as a test

 **Simoni Tse • STEROAS** @monnitse · Jul 31
Contacted Tiktok about the no link in bio for some pages

“Testing”
“Some users”

they doing this on purpose

 **July 30, 07:20 PM**

Hi, thanks for reaching out!

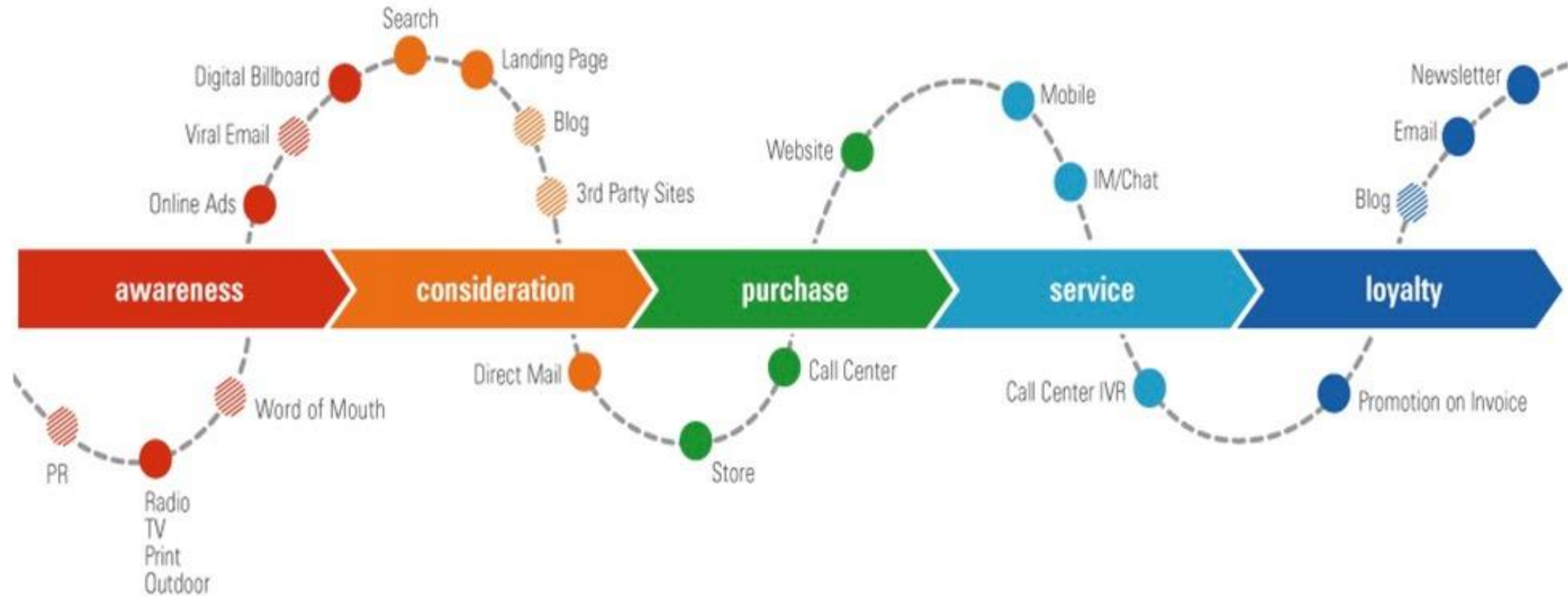
We are currently testing features within the profile page. As is standard across the industry, we are always experimenting with new ways to add further value to the app experience and our community, but experimenting with a change to a feature with some users does not mean it will necessarily ever roll out fully. Thank you for your feedback!

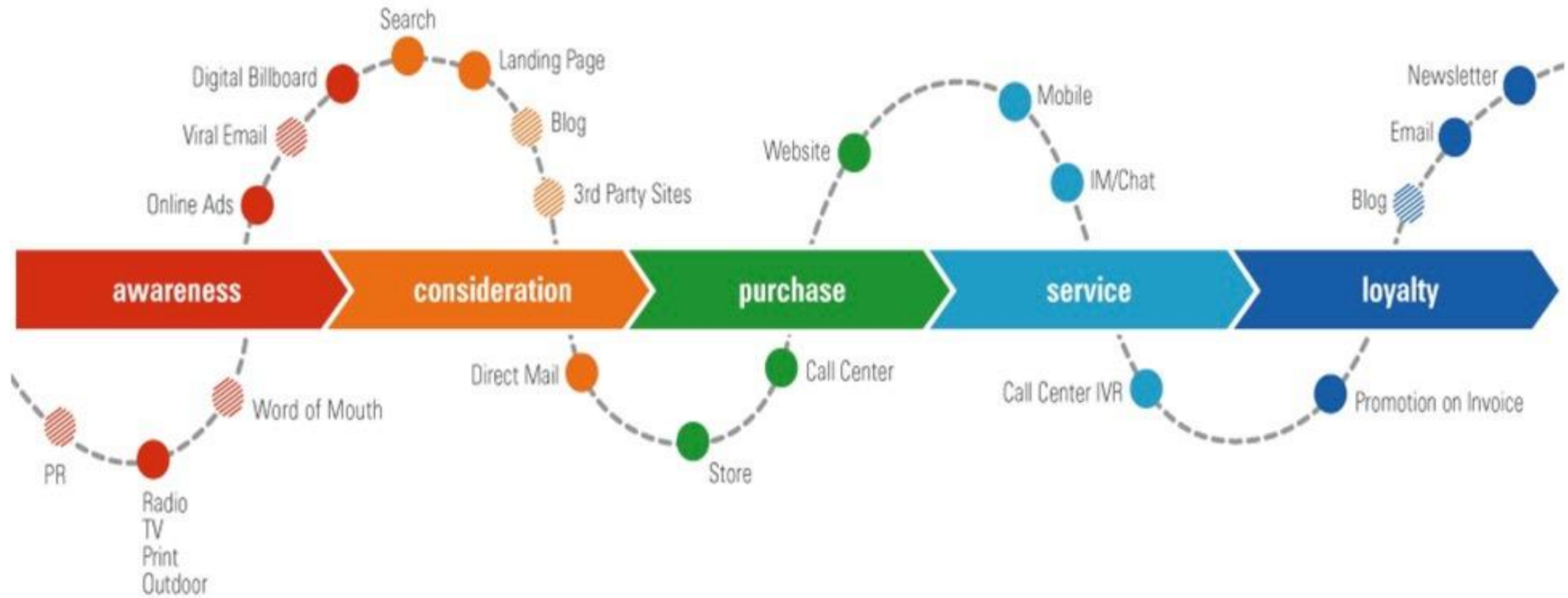
Best,
The TikTok Team

2:46 AM · Aug 8, 2022 · Twitter Web App

TIL:DIR

In 2013, it was challenging, but possible to measure and attribute **~75%** of digital marketing investments





In 2023, it's still possible to **measure** many of these, but impossible to realistically assign **attribution**.

Measurement

vs.


Attribution

Attribution is...

See this ad while scrolling Reddit:

u/citizensofone
Promoted

Scrape data from Twitter before it's too late. Build email lists from your competitors' followers with Clay. Tutorial and free trial in comments 🖱️



inc.one [Sign Up](#)

Visit the website, reach a CTA, and complete it.

clay

Citizens of One invited you to join Clay.com

Find data from anywhere. Prospect differently.

Creatively find customers from 50+ data sources—get live LinkedIn data, automate Googling, find keywords on any website, scour tech stacks, scrape job listings and even use GPT-3 to create personalized emails.

- ✓ 14-day free trial
- ✓ No credit card required

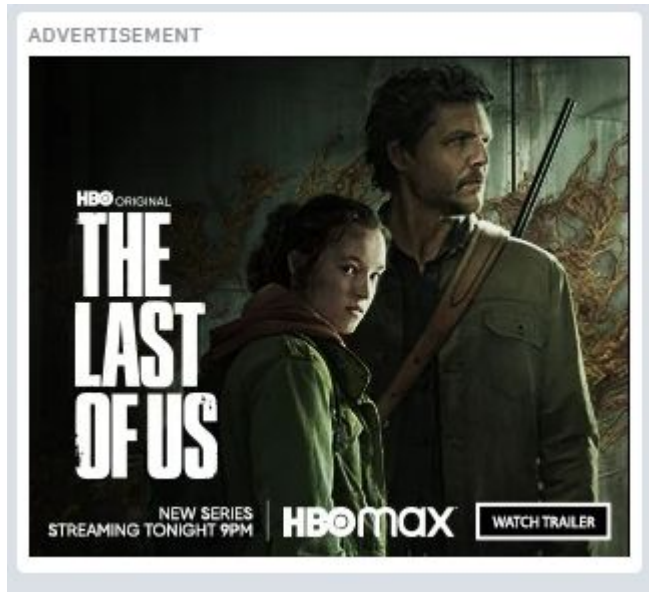
[Join the kiln! \(Get access\)](#)

See Reddit.com referrals in analytics to know exactly how many paid subscriptions it sent:

Source ?	Acquisition		
	Users ? ↓	New Users ?	Sessions ?
	831 % of Total: 6.22% (13,360)	650 % of Total: 5.79% (11,217)	1,100 % of Total: 6.13% (17,933)
1. wporz.com	133 (15.81%)	113 (17.38%)	211 (19.18%)
2. reddit.com	83 (9.87%)	72 (11.08%)	95 (8.64%)
3. wporz-com.cdn.ampproject.org	38 (4.52%)	34 (5.23%)	39 (3.55%)
4. wilreynolds.medium.com	36 (4.28%)	31 (4.77%)	36 (3.27%)
5. ahrefs.com	26 (3.09%)	19 (2.92%)	42 (3.82%)
6. mail.google.com	23 (2.73%)	11 (1.69%)	43 (3.91%)

Measurement is...

Run this awareness
ad on Reddit:



Get stats about how
many people saw it,
hovered on it, clicked,
and watched the trailer:

Views: 105,003,358
Hovers: 9,432,119
Clicks: 182,226
Trailer Starts: 161,494
Trailer Completions: 73,029

Compare to other HBO
series that were/weren't
promoted to estimate
Reddit's marginal
audience contribution:

Mythic Quest: -7%
Barry: +14%
Distant Lands: -31%
Harley Quinn: -8%
Flight Attendant: +11%

Many digital marketers
call these “vanity metrics.”



In 1960, Coca-Cola spent millions on outdoor advertising like this billboard in Chicago...

How'd they decide to run that message in that location?

Audience

Demographics, size, composition

Potential Reach

Amount of people expected to pass that location during the time the billboard is running

Context & Relevance

In an area Coke wants to be associated with?

Market Comparables

Did similar ads in similar cities yield positive results?

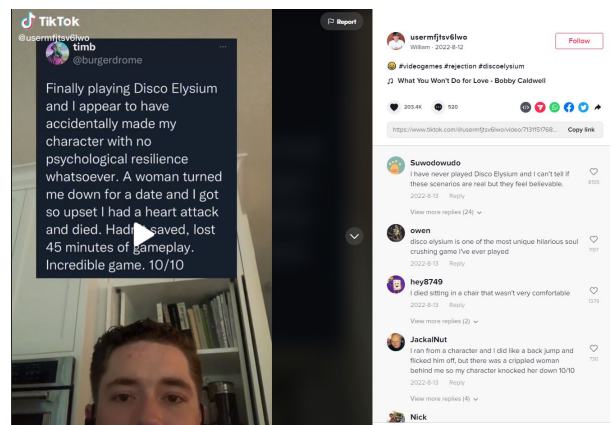
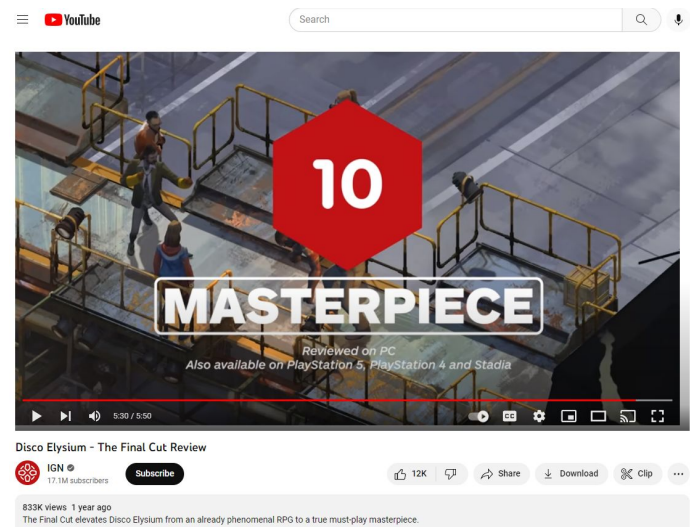
Lift-Based Measurement

If sales in downtown Chicago are higher YTD/in-comparison-to similarly dense neighborhoods without Coke ads, Coke can attribute some of the lift to the ads.

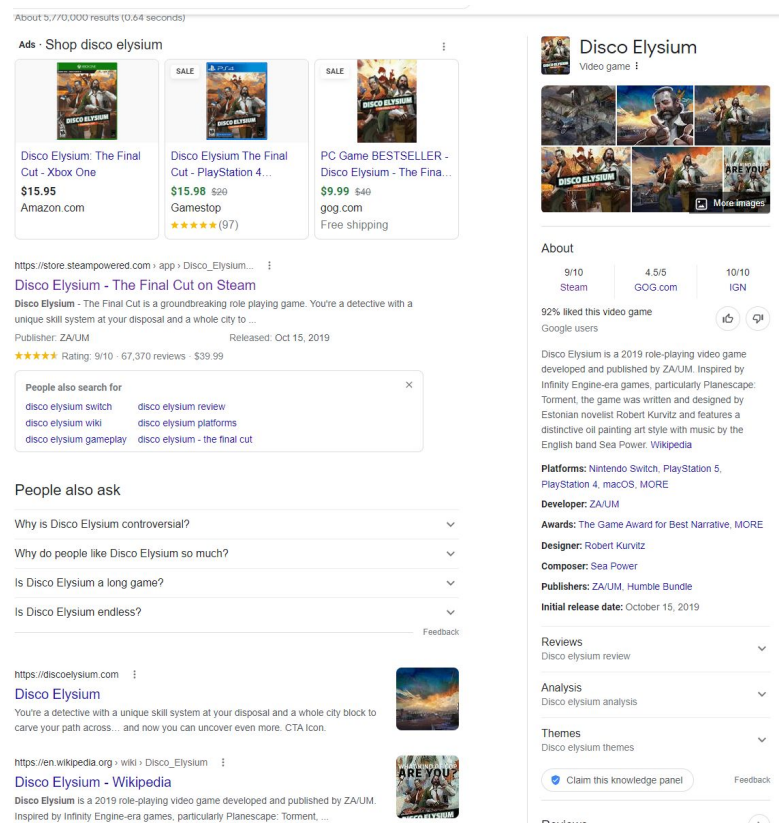


AKA: Vanity Metrics!

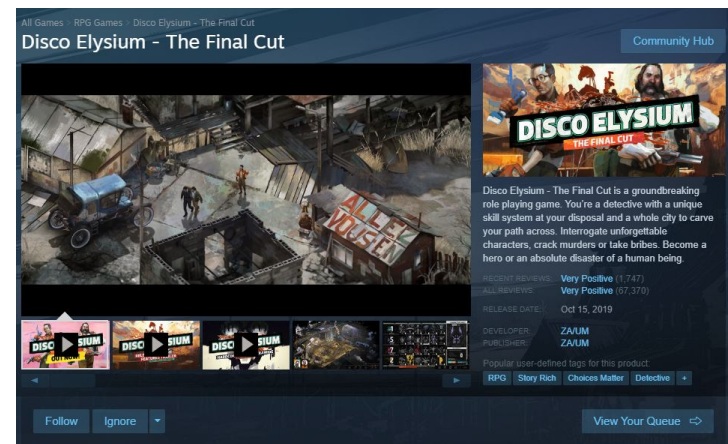
Potential customer consumes content about your product



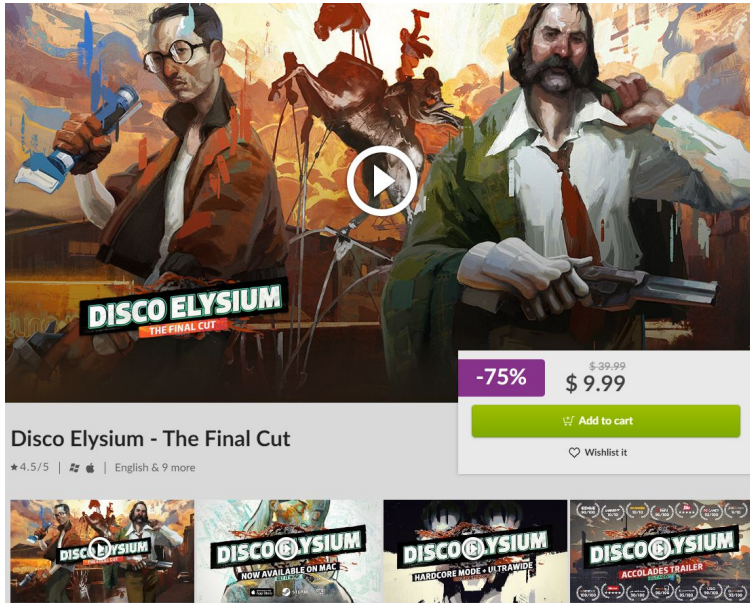
They Google it and get so much info, there's no need to visit your site at all



They might go to some third parties to read reviews

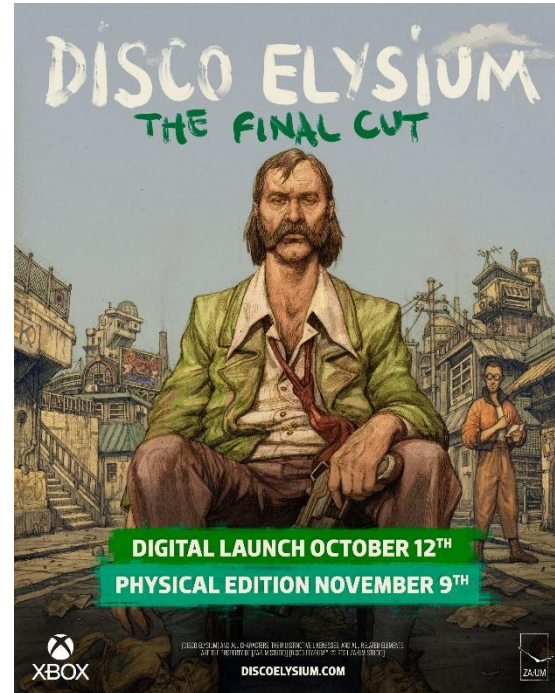


When they finally buy

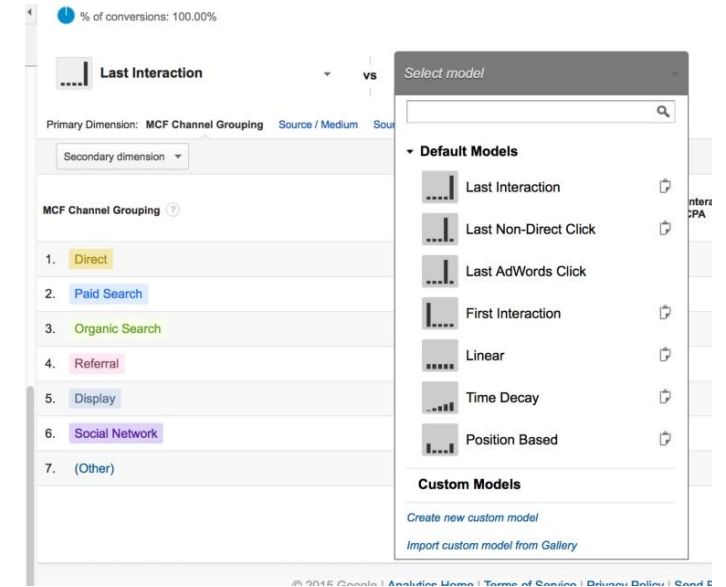


You get two kinds of “attribution.”

#1: View-through ads

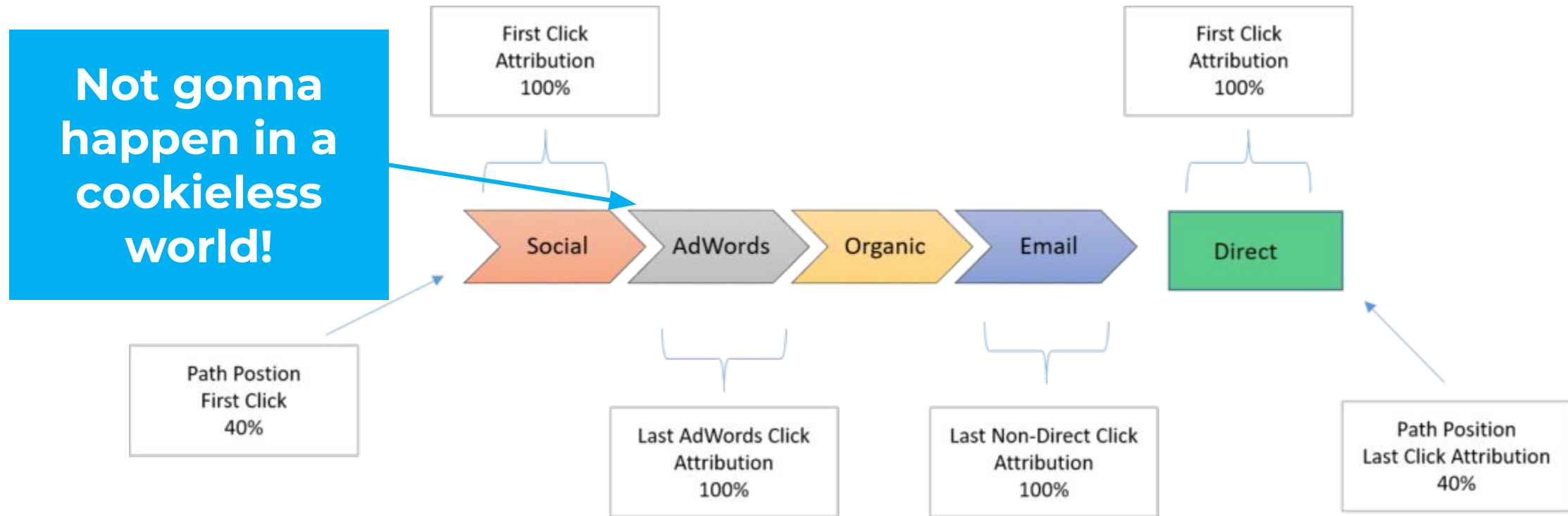


#2: Last Click



Any org exclusively optimizing for these two will destroy the brand building responsible for most sales.

The only way attribution models work is if...



the analytics software can record the devices that made all these visits and tie them together.

MarTech Vendors Are Trying to Sell You ML/AI-Based Solutions that Build Samples Based on Marketing Mix Models

REPRISE

Attribution is (almost) dead, MMM to the rescue

Why do we need Attribution?

In football (soccer), the striker gets all the glory, but in order to win, every player on the field plays a role in their team's success. Was it the striker's fine finish that accomplished the win on their own? Or the midfielder's through-ball that set them up for the goal?

The same is true for marketing Attribution. Just because one touchpoint (like a click) gets a lot of attention doesn't mean this particular touchpoint is the most important of all. In the same way, it may seem obvious to give all the conversion's credit to the last ad a person saw, but what about the brand awareness campaign from months ago? Or perhaps it was the well-timed email blast that reignited your brand's offerings and back to top of mind?

When done correctly, Attribution can help marketers understand which channels are most effective at driving conversions.

Attribution then and now.

As the internet became more sophisticated in the early 2000s, cookies began to play a role in online marketing.

Chrome handles privacy, with further updates in [March 2021](#) and [July 2022](#). Apple also evolved their position on privacy, doubling down on their [App Tracking Transparency framework](#) along with the anticipated iOS14.5 update in the first half of 2021.

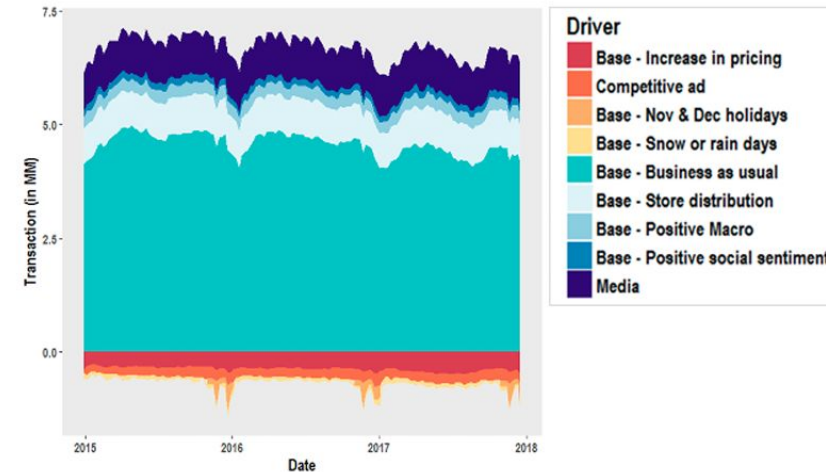
Consumers' privacy and rights to choose how their data is shared takes precedent in all of these changes, forming the basis for regulations such as [GDPR](#) and [ePrivacy regulations](#) in Europe, [CCPA in California](#), and [Brazil General Data Protection Law](#), all aimed at further protecting consumers' privacy.

As a result, existing attribution solutions have an increasingly incomplete view of the sequence of touches that leads to conversion. If unprepared, advertisers risk having to rely on antiquated techniques (i.e., last touch attribution) and lose perception of the top of the funnel.

However, this also presents an opportunity for marketers to rethink attribution in a cookieless world.

Marketing Mix Modelling to the rescue.

What is MMM?



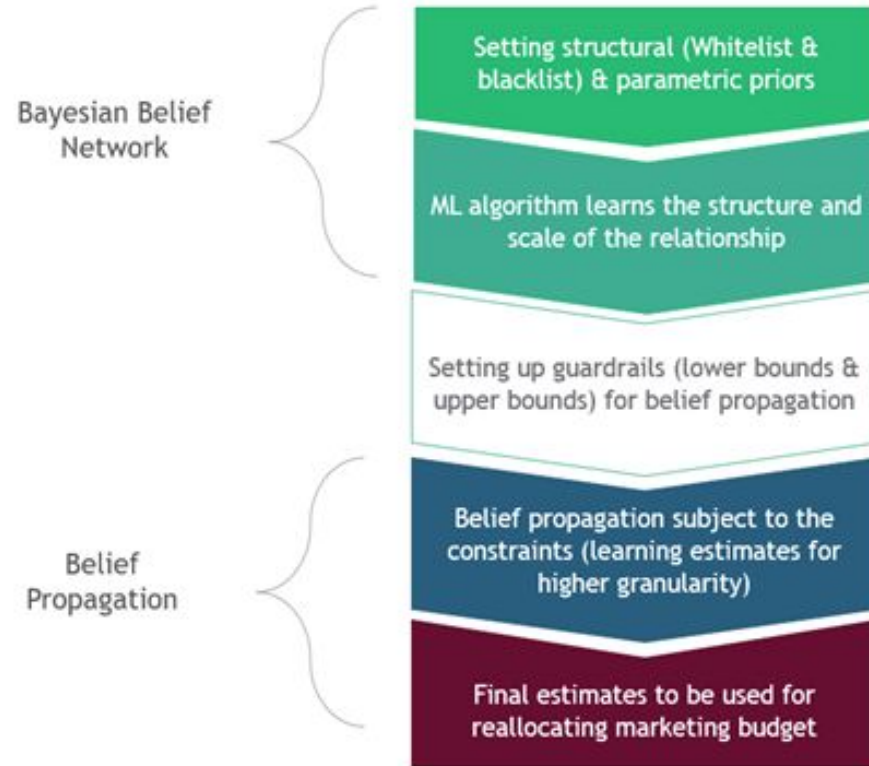
MMM uses statistical techniques to isolate the relationship between media activity and sales. The objective is to replicate historical business metrics by building an equation using available data on underlying drivers over time. This allows us to pull apart and quantify the impact of media versus other influences (e.g., seasonality, promotions, etc.).

MMM in today's dynamic world.

Traditionally, marketing mix modelling is a strenuous process as it requires analysts to comb over multiple data sources to understand the relationships between different marketing activities and sales outcomes. MMM often relies significantly on the expert & domain knowledge of these analysts.

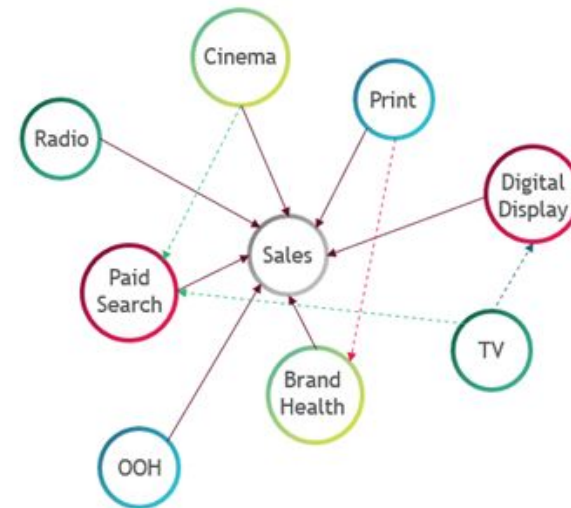
E.G. [Here's Reprise Digital's stab](#) at attribution modeling

This “MMM” Stuff Only Works If... Every Brand Touch Can Be Included



5. Bayesian Belief Network (Belief Propagation)

Bayesian Belief networks allow various advertising channels to be captured in the form of a network. The network, in turn, learns the shape of the relationship (parent/child pairs) between channels, as well as the scale of the relationship (responsiveness). The Bayesian approach allows the user to pass on priors (structural as well as parametric) and allows the models to converge into a solution in the neighborhood.



An abbreviated list of things that MMM cannot measure:



Word of mouth

Heard about you on a podcast

Friend emailed/messed me about you

Saw your content quoted in a publication I read

Watched your talk at a conference

You were on a list of recommendations
in a private FB group

Mentioned in a YouTube video

Reddit comment
thread suggested
your brand

Boss forwarded your
newsletter

Learned about you from some branded merch

Zero-Click
Searches

Most organic social
media marketing

Most organic
content
marketing

Unpaid
co-marketin
g

Customer
support
driven
marketing

Most small publication PR

1:1 outreach via
emails or DMs

Marketing-focused
improvements to
the product

Event
participation

Private forum & group participation
(Discord, Slack, FB groups, Tweet DM
groups, private email groups, etc)

Comment
marketing

SMS
marketing

Organic
participation on
platforms that
lack crawlability
or APIs: Pinterest,
LinkedIn,
Instagram, Twitch,
Quora, Medium,
etc.)

Unpaid influencer
marketing

Media brand mentions
(esp. in video or
audio-centric content)

Streamer
reviews

Virtually anything unpaid
to do with outdoor, print,
TV, or radio

**And that's not to mention
all the things MMM could
conceivably measure that
almost sets up**

Just Spend More on Ads, Right?

ADWEEK

CREATIVE CONVERGENCE

When Procter & Gamble Cut \$200 Million in Digital Ad Spend, It Increased Its Reach 10%

Unilever is also reevaluating its budget



Pritchard continues to evaluate P&G's digital spend. Getty Images

The New York Times

Chase Had Ads on 400,000 Sites. Then on Just 5,000. Same Results.



JP Morgan Chase began limiting its display ads to preapproved websites to avoid proximity to content like fake news and offensive videos. Michael Nagle/Getty Images

By Sapna Maheshwari

March 29, 2017

As of a few weeks ago, advertisements for JPMorgan Chase were

INPUT

Andrew Paul

CULTURE

Uber wasted \$100 million on useless digital ad campaigns

\$100M

Uber [sucks](#) on so many levels, being a perfect encapsulation of everything wrong with craven, greed-driven venture capitalist startup culture. Yet, even being so obsessed with profit, it is apparently godawful at managing vast sums of money, all the while cruising right along (no pun intended) as if its decisions won't eventually catch up with the company. Case in point: the estimated \$100 million Uber apparently straight-up squandered on incredibly obvious, third-party digital advertising scams... something that is garnering mainstream coverage in the first days of 2021, despite coming to light back in February of last damn year.

If you search for eBay, though, you'll find only a single listing — an unpaid one. Odds are, after marketers at Amazon, Walgreens and elsewhere catch wind of a [preliminary study](#) released on Friday, their search listings will start to look a lot more like eBay's. The study — by eBay Research Labs economists Thomas Blake, Chris Nosko, and Steve Tadelis — analyzed eBay sales after shutting down purchases of search ads on Google and elsewhere, while maintaining a control set of regions where search ads continued unchanged. Their findings suggest that many paid ads generate virtually no increase in sales, and even for ones that do, the sales benefits are far eclipsed by the cost of the ads themselves.

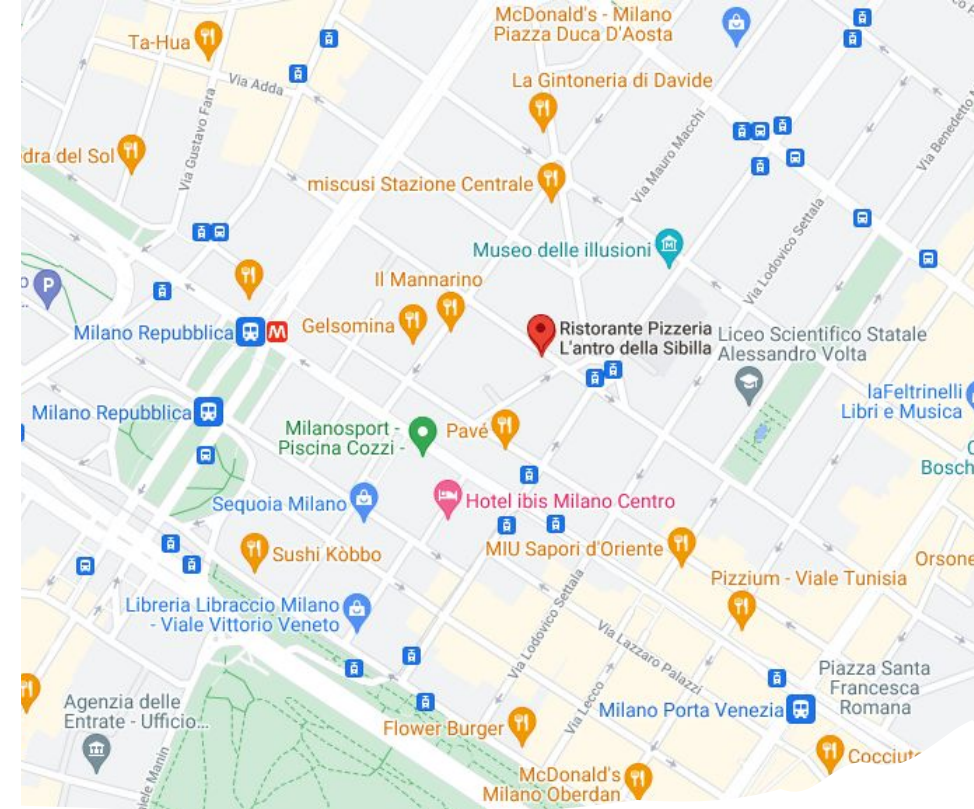
“What the pandemic showed is **we can take marketing down to zero and still have 95% of the same traffic** as the year before. So, we’re not going to forget that lesson.”

-Brian Chesky, CEO of Airbnb

The annual report showed Airbnb slashed its combined spend on brand and performance marketing by 58% or \$662m from \$1.14bn in 2019 to \$482m in 2020.

The vast majority of the \$662m decline was in performance marketing, such as online bidding and search marketing, which dropped by \$541m – more than four times the cut in brand marketing spend, such as TV and sponsorship of the Olympic Games, which fell by \$121m.

Marketing represented 14.2% of revenue in 2020, compared with 23.7% in 2019, as the company cut costs more steeply than the decline in its sales.



SparkToro

WHY WORK HARD TO
MAKE MORE SALES,
WHEN I COULD JUST
GET CREDIT FOR SALES
THAT WERE ABOUT TO
HAPPEN ANYWAY?





**The best marketing opportunities
are often the least measurable**



What's the Solution?

In 2023 (and Beyond), These Are Your Options:

#1

Throw money at the Big Tech ad providers, who'll continue to provide "attribution" (but, almost certainly taking credit for sales that would have happened anyway).

#2

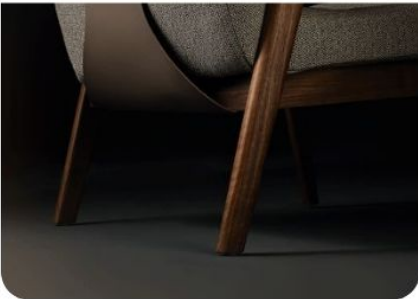
Build a "hard to measure" dashboard that infers lift from channels. Be willing to shut off ads & organic investments for extended periods to confirm their lift. Use 20th-century style measurement tactics.

#3

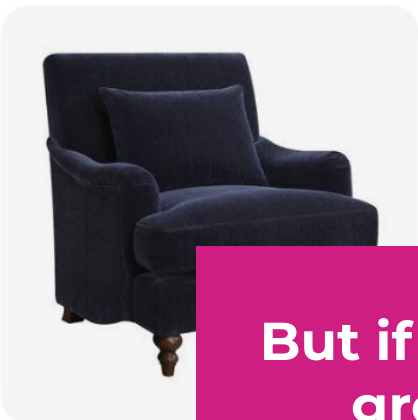
Measure the big stuff: traffic, conversions, revenue. Ignore most everything else, and instead be willing to invest in creative, hard-to-measure channels and tactics based on customer presence, gut feel, and "vanity metrics."

Option #1

Big Tech Ads



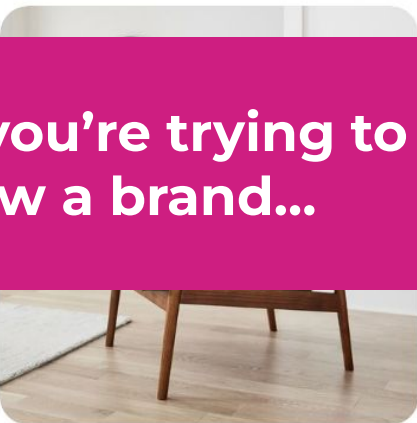
Armchair FRIDAY 1 - Zeitraum Sustainable Furniture



Armchair - Canoe Wayfair.com



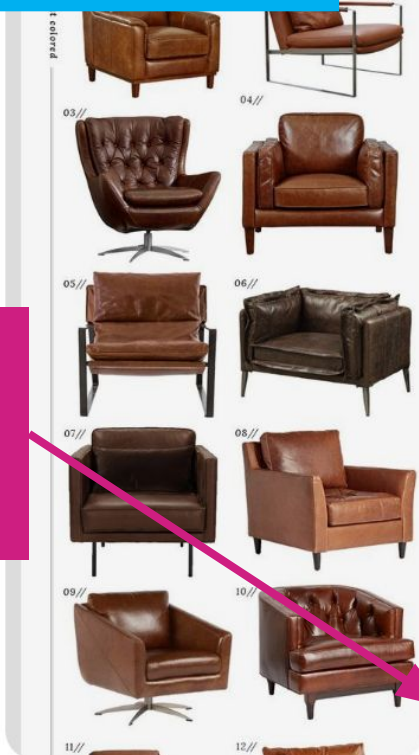
Horchow



Mid-Century Show Wood Chair west elm



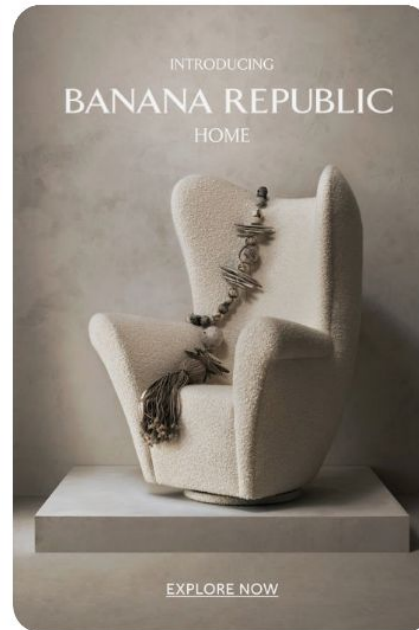
Century Chesterfield Sofa - Light... Crafters and Weavers



Roundup : Leather Lounge Chairs



Sit Back and Relax Promoted by Abbyson Home



INTRODUCING BR HOME Promoted by Banana Republic

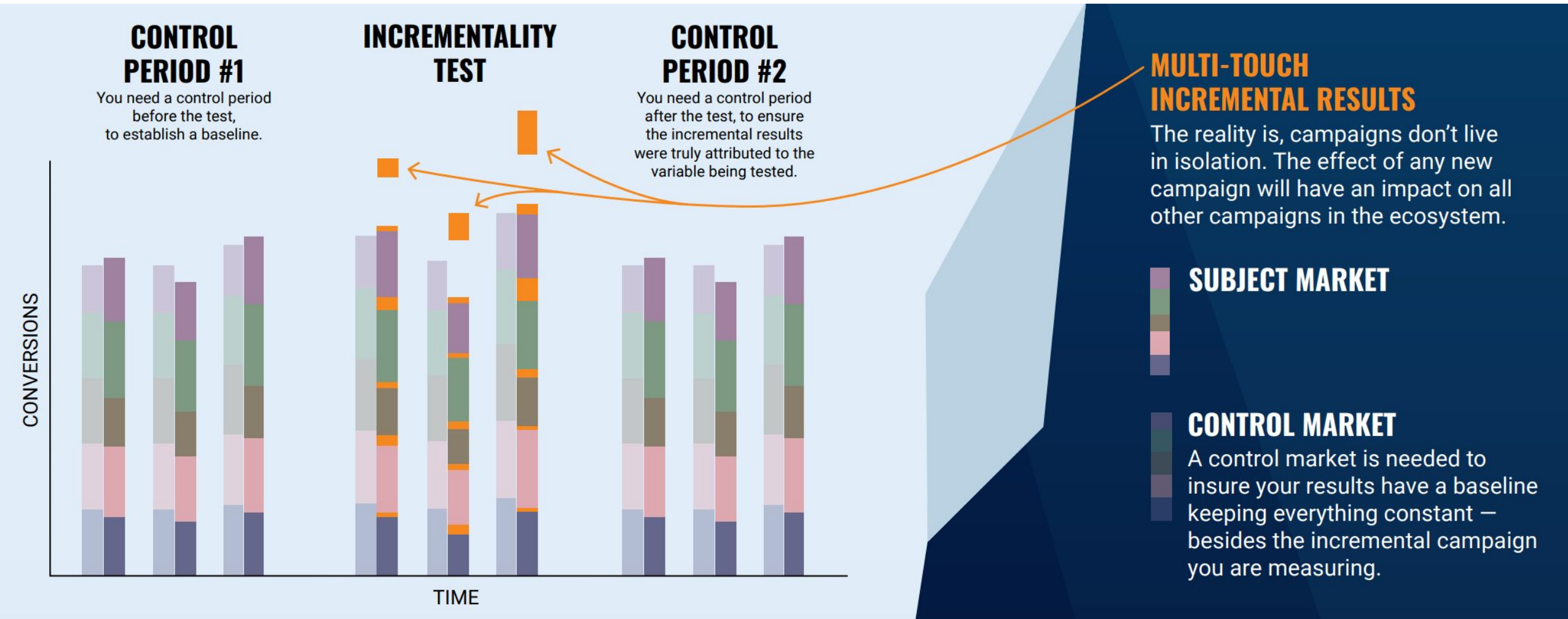


30 Best Reading Chairs Money Can

These ads probably work fine for big brands

But if you're trying to grow a brand...

But if you're gonna throw \$\$ at ads...



At least test shutting 'em off!

Option #2

**Build a
Hard-to-Measure
Dashboard**

How “Untrackable” Marketing Can Be Measured

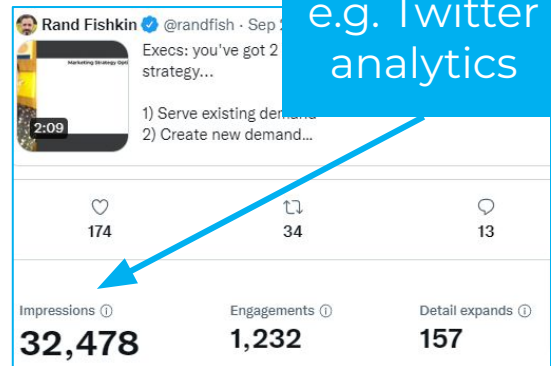
Awareness

Audience learns about your brand on a channel that can't be attributed

Measure with: Impressions

Content on social, articles in media, podcast episodes, YouTube videos, and the like can (often) be measured with impression & view numbers

e.g. Twitter analytics



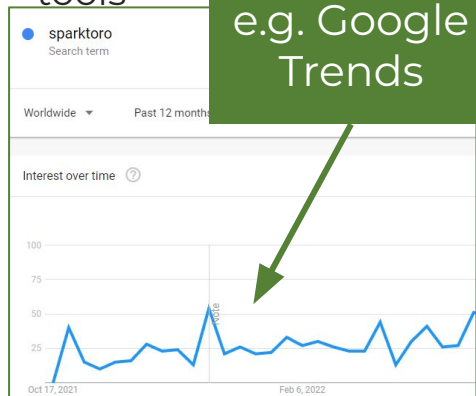
Interest

Those who want more info search for your brand or type-in your website

Measure with: Search Volume

Monthly search volume on Google, YouTube, LinkedIn and others can be collected through first and/or third-party tools

e.g. Google Trends



Visit

Visitors from these channels are labeled direct/type-in, or come from branded search

Measure with: Visits from Direct, Type-In, & Branded Search

You can't prove which channel brought them, but you can show trends for unattributed site

e.g. “Direct” in Google Analytics

Default Channel Grouping			
	Users ?	New Users ?	Sessions ?
	14,149 % of Total: 100.00% (14,149)	12,036 % of Total: 100.10% (12,024)	18,768 % of Total: 100.00% (18,768)
1. Direct	8,940 (61.55%)	7,969 (66.21%)	11,267 (60.03%)

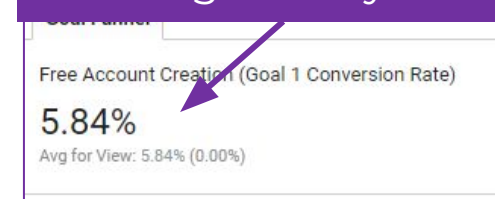
Familiarity Lift

People who've heard positive things are more likely to engage, click, & convert with your brand

Measure with: Overall Traffic, CTR & Conversion Rates

Recording changes in total visits and click/conversion rates can show how unmeasurable branding activity may impact

e.g. Conversion Rate in Google Analytics



You Can Build Something Like This...

The "Impossible to Measure" Marketing Dashboard														
		7/2021	8/2021	9/2021	10/2021	11/2021	12/2021	01/2022	02/2022	03/2022	04/2022	05/2022	06/2022	07/2022
Brand Interest	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)				39.43%	26.91%	37.43%	34.15%	41.98%	41.13%	36.43%	55.67%	29.24%	25.83%
	Branded Search Volume (Google Search Console)	16,300	41,800	18,100	23,100	17,000	20,100	20,900	20,100	21,400	18,600	36,900	24,500	18,500
	Total Visits from Search (Google Analytics)	23,608	38,557	28,607	17,759	8,662	8,723	15,927	22,420	25,494	23,939	39,595	24,329	20,744
	Direct & Type-In Visits (Google Analytics)	24,008	33,197	33,524	45,197	38,880	50,510	35,681	32,839	37,469	38,965	55,158	35,041	41,937
	Interest Avg for Brand (Google Trends)	14.25	19.75	6.50	23.50	21.00	28.75	22.00	28.50	34.75	35.50	55.00	39.00	31.25
Social Engagement	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)				35.65%	26.37%	43.48%	34.25%	35.73%	29.73%	31.04%	52.84%	36.36%	33.90%
	Tweet Impressions (from Twitter)	2,650,000	2,330,000	1,190,000	1,830,000	1,040,000	2,320,000	1,600,000	1,160,000	755,000	1,010,000	2,480,000	1,100,000	1,210,000
	Profile Visits (from Twitter)	117,000	82,400	82,100	101,000	91,600	168,000	141,000	133,000	122,000	127,000	215,000	133,000	136,000
	LinkedIn Post Impressions (from LinkedIn)	99,501	67,589	105,874	115,204	66,874	74,132	91,084	110,749	109,821	88,591	98,732	161,530	159,684
	LinkedIn Profile Views (from LinkedIn)	2,810	3,239	3,239	3,239	2,758	2,758	2,758	3,195	3,195	3,195	3,675	3,675	3,675
Website Traffic	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)				84.18%	51.66%	70.76%	75.10%	85.24%	88.51%	93.88%	151.99%	58.59%	58.67%
	Total Sessions (from Google Analytics)	72,462	93,464	100,301	95,629	63,889	76,871	76,903	80,436	89,141	99,198	170,790	92,287	91,618
	Total Unique Users (from Google Analytics)	49,532	65,411	69,707	71,599	47,063	59,557	53,565	53,423	60,202	69,826	132,899	62,649	65,370
	Total Page Views (from Google Analytics)	253,167	357,112	315,915	263,578	191,628	221,174	253,844	298,687	331,900	314,854	453,938	299,256	280,376
Subscribed Audience	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)				37.32%	36.97%	30.61%	39.33%	35.56%	39.59%	34.90%	37.26%	34.25%	36.73%
	Newsletter Subscribers (from Mailchimp)	30,857	32,505	34,817	36,501	40,198	40,552	42,257	44,611	48,204	51,656	53,881	56,770	60,410
	Email Opens + Clickthroughs (from Mailchimp)	20,983	21,453	21,935	27,376	25,727	24,331	30,848	28,551	34,225	36,159	38,794	42,010	47,112
	Total Free Accounts (from Analytics)	3,870	6,909	5,562	5,608	6,476	7,986	6,178	6,500	7,554	5,925	6,843	5,314	4720
	Twitter Followers (from Followerwonk)	12090	12933	13182	13364	13956	14097	15147	15518	16329	16459	17833	18704	20,500
	LinkedIn Followers (from LinkedIn)	5544	5930	6045	6128	6399	6464	6945	7116	7488	7547	8177	8577	9,400
	Webinar Attendees (from Crowdcast)	544	602	585	691	755	0	812	603	698	702	780	655	842
Conversions	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)				50.53%	51.76%	64.19%	51.19%	49.17%	54.53%	42.61%	48.28%	42.53%	44.04%
	New Free Accounts (from Analytics)	3870	6909	5562	5608	6476	7986	6178	6500	7554	5925	6843	5314	4720
	New Paid Subscribers (from Analytics)	179	184	189	179	176	206	229	216	234	181	177	194	198

A few software companies are building products to automate this (or at least, parts of it):

Pillars Channels Brand Power **Beta** Calendar

Score **58**

Digital Presence **64**

Audience Attention **53**

Brand Reputation **71**

Momentum **46**

Date Range 04/01/22 - 12/02/22

Start Score: **59** End Score: **58** Avg Score: **55.4** Performance: **-1.7%**

Overall Summary

- Automation Anywhere is 2nd in the category. UiPath is the leader.
- From 04/02/2022 to 12/01/2022 your brand's rank did not change and its score decreased by 1.7%.

Pillar Summary

- Automation Anywhere leads on Digital Presence.

Priority Ranked Recommendations

1. Increase video views, YouTube.
2. Increase video count, YouTube.
3. Increase blog post, email promo count.
4. Increase net new followers, Twitter.
5. Increase percent of 4 & 5 star employer reviews.

Scores

Add Event

Automation Anywhere AutomationEdge Blue Prism Kofax NICE RPA Pega Power Automate UiPath



Option #3

Measure the Big Stuff.

**Invest where your audience pays attention.
Ignore the rest.**

Sorry.

You're gonna hate this
part...

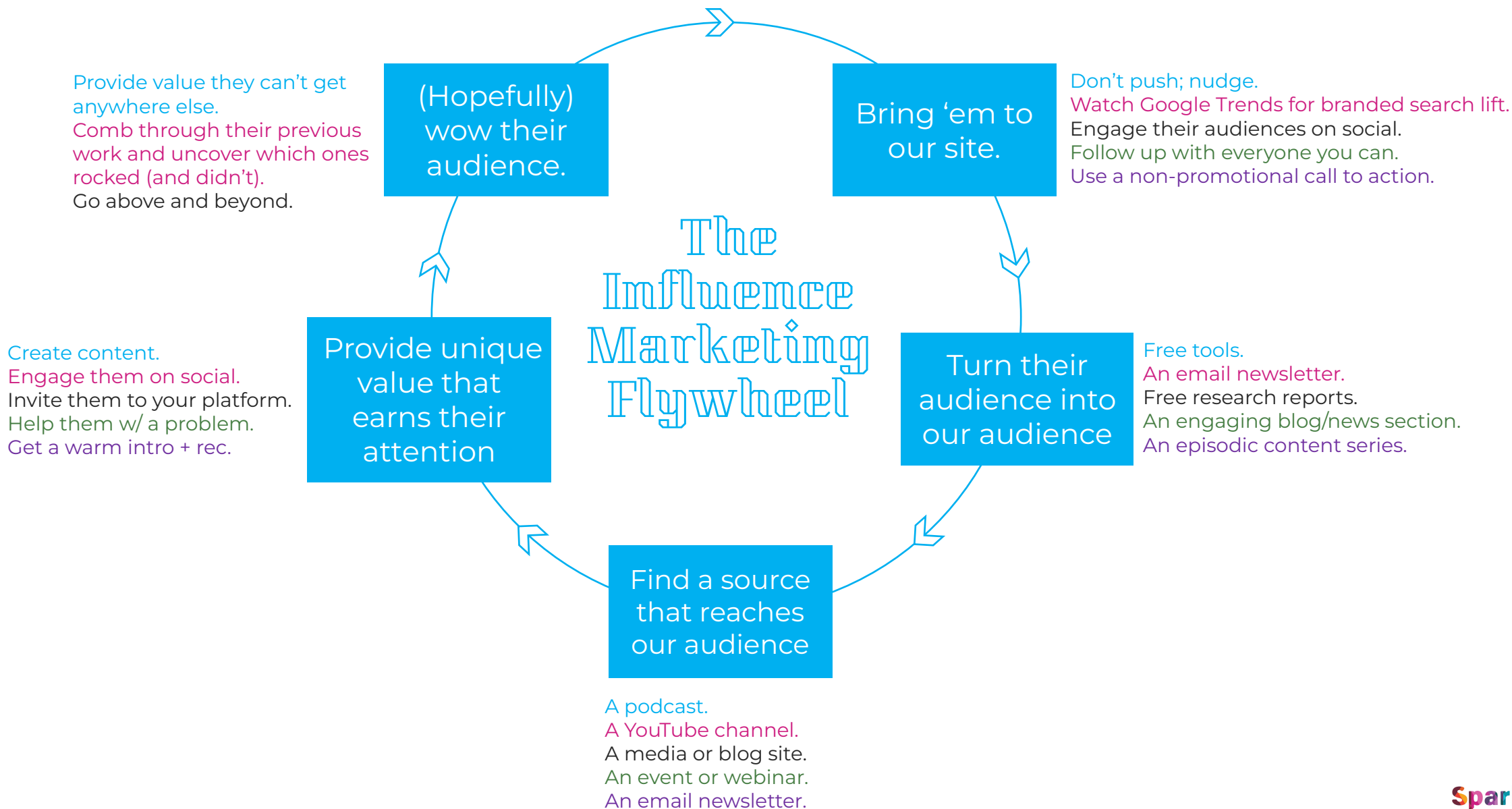
We **reject** not only attribution, but
most **measurement**, too.

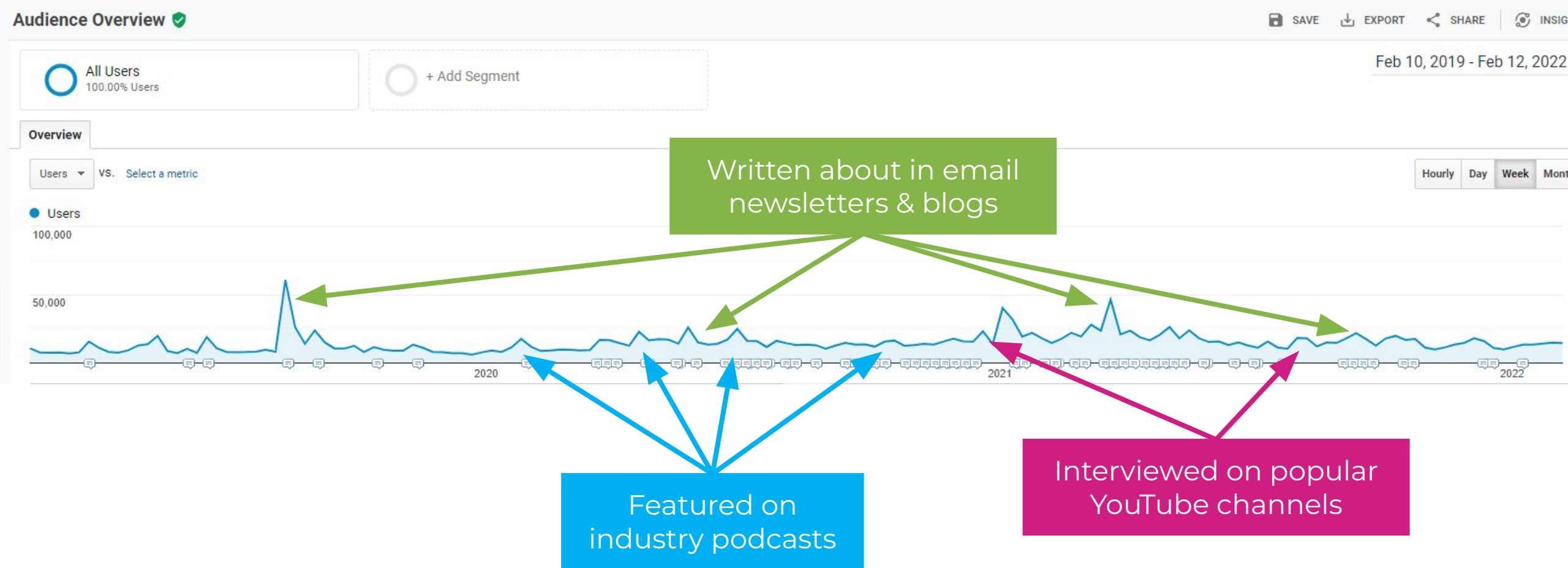
	The "Impossible to Measure" Marketing Dashboard														
		7/2021	8/2021	9/2021	10/2021	11/2021	12/2021	01/2022	02/2022	03/2022	04/2022	05/2022	06/2022	07/2022	
Brand Interest	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)				39.43%	26.91%	37.43%	34.15%	41.98%	41.13%	36.43%	55.67%	29.24%	25.83%	
	Branded Search Volume (Google Search Console)	16,300	41,800	17,100	23,100	17,000	20,100	20,900	20,100	21,400	18,600	36,900	24,500	18,500	
	Total Visits from Search (Google Analytics)	23,608	38,557	17,759	17,759	8,662	12,223	15,927	22,420	25,494	23,939	39,595	24,329	20,744	
	Direct & Type-In Visits (Google Analytics)	24,008	33,197	45,197	45,197	38,880	35,681	32,839	37,469	38,965	55,158	35,041	41,937		
	Interest Avg for Brand (Google Trends)	14.25	19.75	23.50	23.50	22.00	22.00	28.50	34.75	35.50	55.00	39.00	31.25		
Social Engagement	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)						1.25%	35.73%	29.73%	31.04%	52.84%	36.36%	33.90%		
	Tweet Impressions (from Twitter)	2,650,000	2,350,000	1,100,000	1,100,000	1,100,000	1,100,000	1,160,000	755,000	1,010,000	2,480,000	1,100,000	1,210,000		
	Profile Visits (from Twitter)	117,000	82,400	141,000	141,000	133,000	122,000	127,000	215,000	133,000	136,000	136,000	136,000		
	LinkedIn Post Impressions (from LinkedIn)	99,501	67,589	91,084	110,749	109,821	88,591	98,732	161,530	159,684	159,684	159,684	159,684		
	LinkedIn Profile Views (from LinkedIn)	2,810	3,239	2,758	3,195	3,195	3,195	3,195	3,675	3,675	3,675	3,675	3,675		
Website Traffic	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)						70.76%	75.10%	85.24%	88.51%	93.88%	151.99%	58.59%	58.67%	
	Total Sessions (from Google Analytics)	72,462	93,464	100,000	76,871	76,903	80,436	89,141	99,198	170,790	92,287	91,618	91,618		
	Total Unique Users (from Google Analytics)	49,532	65,411	53,565	53,423	60,202	69,826	132,899	62,649	65,370	65,370	65,370	65,370		
	Total Page Views (from Google Analytics)	253,167	357,112	253,844	298,687	331,900	314,854	453,938	299,256	280,376	280,376	280,376	280,376		
Subscribed Audience	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)						39.33%	35.56%	39.59%	34.90%	37.26%	34.25%	36.73%		
	Newsletter Subscribers (from Mailchimp)	30,857	37,000	42,257	44,611	48,204	51,656	53,881	56,770	60,410	60,410	60,410	60,410		
	Email Opens + Clickthroughs (from Mailchimp)	20,983	20,983	28,551	34,225	36,159	38,794	42,010	47,112	47,112	47,112	47,112	47,112		
	Total Free Accounts (from Analytics)	3,870	6,178	6,500	7,554	5,925	6,843	5,314	4,720	4,720	4,720	4,720	4,720		
	Twitter Followers (from Followvork)	12090	12930	13364	15147	15518	16329	17833	18704	20,500	20,500	20,500	20,500		
	LinkedIn Followers (from LinkedIn)	5544	5930	6128	6945	7116	7488	8177	8577	9,400	9,400	9,400	9,400		
	Webinar Attendees (from Crowdcast)	544	602	691	755	812	698	702	780	842	842	842	842		
Conversions	3-Month Trend (growth rate vs. prior 3 months)				50.53%	51.76%	64.19%	51.19%	49.17%	54.53%	42.61%	48.28%	42.53%	44.04%	
	New Free Accounts (from Analytics)	3870	6909	5562	5608	6476	7986	6178	6500	7554	5925	6843	5314	4720	
	New Paid Subscribers (from Analytics)	179	184	189	179	176	206	229	216	234	181	177	194	198	

Why?!

Properly testing & measuring is more costly than wasting even big portions of effort.

Here's What We Do Instead:





We **don't use any paid media or SEO**, instead opting to find our audience's **sources of influence** and be present there.

Find the **Shared Value** Between Your Brand & the Source of Influence's Goals

"I want Source of Influence X to amplify my brand."



"What could I do for or with X that would earn me coverage."



Do newsworthy things they'd cover?

Guest on their podcast?

Be one of their webinar speakers?

Sponsor their email newsletter?

Publish research they'd write about?

Run a joint survey with them?

Get quoted in one of their articles?



Rand Fishkin (He/Him) • You

SparkToro CEO. Author of Lost & Founder. Feminist. I love underdogs, cookin...

1d • 🌐

Measurement and Attribution are NOT the same thing. 2 mins on the difference between them.

Measurement is here to stay. In fact, it's probably the future of attribution, thanks to changes from Google, Apple, and Facebook on its way out. In the future, proving that a channel is driving traffic through analytics software will be incredibly rare.



Measurement
Attribution

👍❤️ Anthony Skinner and 635 others

Reactions



Like



Comment



Repost



Send



74,301 impressions

[View analytics](#)



Measurement and Attribution are NOT the same thing. 2 mins on the difference between them.

[...show more](#)

Are my customers engaged on this platform around topics relevant to what I'm selling?

Do I like participating here? Does it fit with my strengths?

Are my "vanity metrics" improving? Am I getting reach & engagement?

Reactions

636 →

Comments

60 →

61 →

24,437

Views

23,503

Viewers

9,160.3

Minutes viewed

Marketing Specialist · 14.1%

Founder · 7.9%

Salesperson · 6.5%

Business Strategist · 5.1%

Thank You!

Want to chat more? I'm @[randfish@mastodon.social](#)
or [rand@sparktoro.com](#).