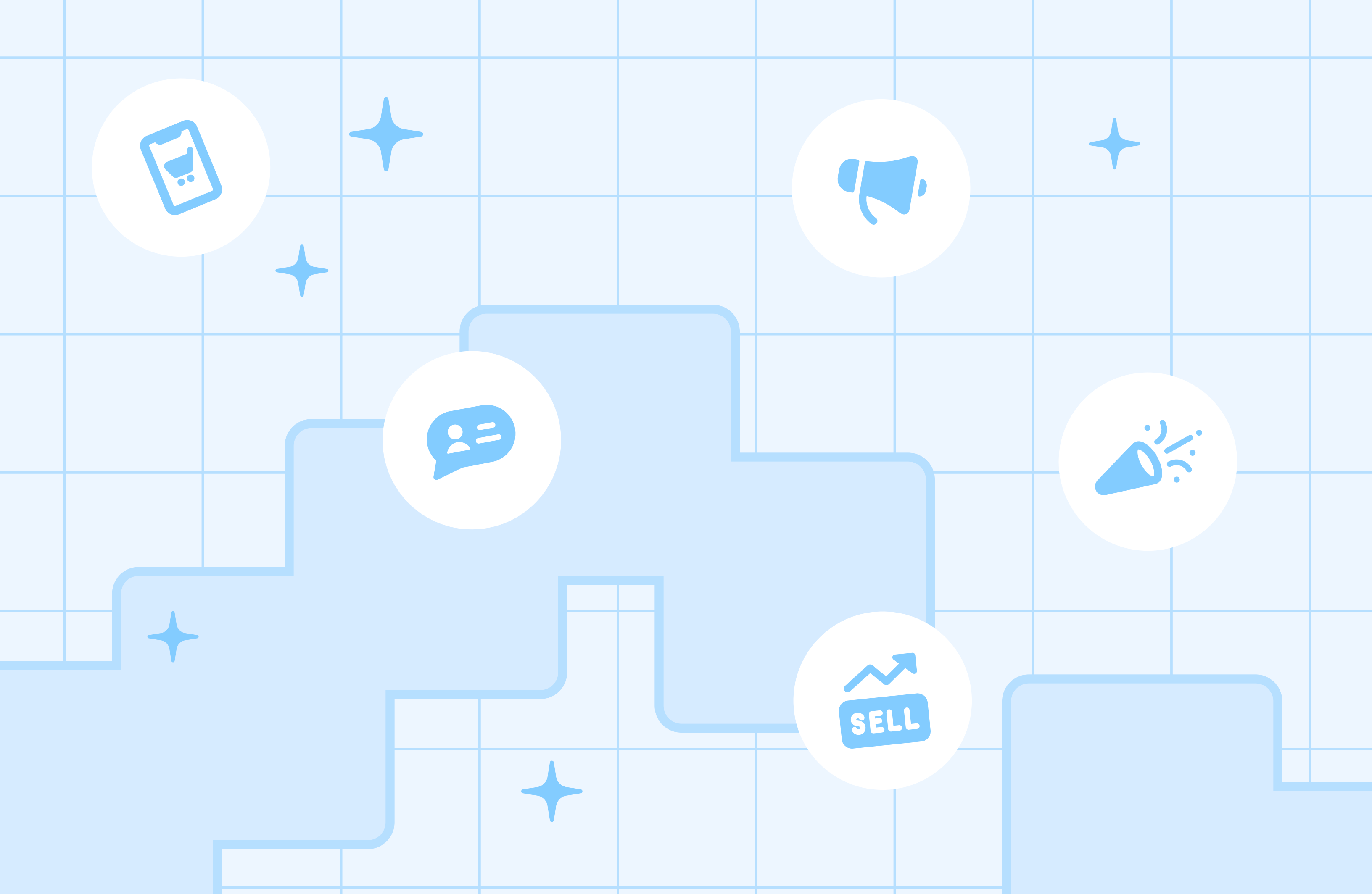

Haus

The Haus Platform Playbook

A channel-by-channel guide based on thousands of incrementality experiments

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Notes from the field

We analyzed thousands of experiments across Meta, Google, YouTube, and TikTok. Here's what we learned.

“Did that work?”

It’s the question every marketer asks after pouring budget and time into a campaign. It’s also the question that inspires incrementality tests each day.

At Haus, we’ve spent the past year poring over the results of these tests to gain a comprehensive understanding of what is and isn’t working for today’s marketers. These findings were published in our detailed meta-analyses of Performance Max (Google PMax), Branded Search, Meta, YouTube, and TikTok.

We wanted to ensure those reports were as actionable as possible, which is why we’re boiling them down into one handy resource. Think of this as a helpful field guide that you can turn to as you navigate the marketing ecosystem. It can help you identify the channels aligned with your business, then give you advice on optimizing.

And to extend the nature metaphor even further: These pages are a compass, not a map. Our findings offer a directional sense of what works and what doesn’t, but you won’t know until you test for yourself.

We hope this guide inspires that next incrementality test. And, above all, we hope it leads to those words every marketer eventually wants to say:

“Yes, that did work.”

Tyler Horner
Solutions Engineering Lead, Haus

Google PMax

Google's PMax campaign type promotes efficiency through automation, but its flexibility can also blur where incremental value is actually coming from. In particular, the inclusion of branded search terms may inflate platform-reported performance, making it difficult to understand whether PMax is creating demand or simply capturing it.

That's why our PMax analysis focused on a narrow but essential question: Does including branded search terms in PMax campaigns drive more incremental business value than excluding them?

Google PMax

Observations

Incremental revenue: 50/50 split, but excluding has higher upside

- In the experiments evaluated, excluding branded search terms resulted in more incremental revenue in about 50% of cases.
- But when excluding branded terms did win, it drove on average 24% more incremental revenue than when branded terms were included.

For new customer acquisition, exclusion is overwhelmingly better

- In experiments tracking new-customer metrics, we found that 100% of experiments showed exclusion was more efficient. (Yes, 100%.)
- We saw a 19% to 60% lower CAC when brand terms were excluded.

High AOV / low volume brands may need a different approach

- We found that brands with an AOV above roughly $238 achieved 27% more incremental revenue when including branded terms.
- That's because higher AOV often means fewer conversions (data scarcity), which may hamper algorithmic learning when you exclude branded terms (i.e., fewer signals).
- So for high-AOV, low-volume brands, including branded terms may support algorithmic performance when volume is inadequate.

100%

100% of new customer acquisition experiments favored excluding branded terms. Separately, exclusion also wins ~50% of the time on incremental revenue, with a bigger upside when it does.

Exception: High-AOV, low-volume brands are the outlier.

Google PMax

Apply the insights

Move from understanding to execution. Use the checklist below to sharpen your thinking and take the next step forward.

- [ ] **Decide based on objectives, not defaults.** Inclusion and exclusion can both work, but for different goals.
- [ ] **Optimize for new customers explicitly.** If acquisition efficiency matters, start by excluding branded terms.
- [ ] **Account for data scarcity.** High-AOV, low-volume brands may need branded terms to support learning.
- [ ] **Test both approaches.** The win rate is close enough that assumptions won't hold up without experimentation.
- [ ] **Evaluate incrementality, not platform ROAS.** Branded terms can materially distort reported performance.

Google Branded Search

On paper, Google Branded Search looks like the world’s safest spend driving high intent, high click-through, and flattering ROAS. But in practice, it can be polarizing among performance marketers. When competition is light, it can feel like paying for traffic you’d get anyway. And when competition heats up, it can feel reckless not to defend your terms.

The truth lives in the middle: Branded search is a situational defensive and demand capture channel, not an automatic growth engine or an automatic tax.

Let’s unpack in more detail.

Observations

Competition changes everything

- Haus found that 82% of brands facing high competition (3+ competitors with >50% impression share) saw significant incremental lift vs. just 35% under low competition.
- High-competition brands also showed much higher incrementality factors (0.37 vs. 0.09) and 47% higher iROAS on average, even while paying higher CPCs.

Branded search pulls sales away from Amazon

- For brands selling on Amazon, 67% saw neutral or negative lift on Amazon sales when branded search was active.
- On average, this translated to a ~5% shift in sales share from Amazon to DTC.
- The key finding is that branded search often reallocates demand across channels, a dynamic that's invisible if you only look at DTC metrics.

Most of branded search's impact is on new customers

- While branded search attracts both prospects and loyal customers, incremental lift was 1.7x higher for new customers than for existing ones.
- Existing customers tend to convert regardless, while new customers are more susceptible to competitive interception at the final step.

82%

Branded search works hardest when competition is high and new customers are the goal. It pulls sales from Amazon to DTC, and delivers 1.7x more lift for new customers than existing ones.

Google Branded Search

Apply the insights

Move from understanding to execution. Use the checklist below to sharpen your thinking and take the next step forward.

- [ ] **Anchor on iROAS, not ego metrics.** Don’t chase 100% top-of-page or first position at any cost. Run at least one branded-search incrementality test and set a walk-away iROAS threshold.

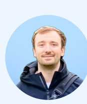
- [ ] **Split new vs. existing customers.** Bid more aggressively where lift skews highest (true prospects) and cap bids where conversions are least incremental (loyal buyers).

- [ ] **Don’t make your brand an easy target.** Maintaining a presence on your branded search terms is usually wise. Plus, it gives your ads access to Google’s auction insights, which helps you spot incoming competitors.

- [ ] **Adjust for competition and seasonality.** Assume branded search is more likely to be incremental under high competition.

“

In my experience with branded search, the key is striking the right balance between defense and performance. You want to invest enough to capture high-intent demand and block competitors, but not so much that it cannibalizes more scalable growth channels.



Ike Armstrong
Measurement Strategy Lead, Haus

Meta

Meta is a powerhouse. So when we set out to study Meta more closely, the question wasn't "Does Meta work?" Most brands instinctively feel that turning Meta off would instantly erase a chunk of total revenue.

As a core channel for many brands, our data is aimed at helping businesses optimize their Meta strategy. Below, we unpack how teams can use Meta's AI-powered ad products in ways that are incrementally efficient and support long-term funnel health.

Observations

Meta drives omnichannel impact

- For advertisers doing ≥25% of revenue beyond DTC, about 32% of Meta's incremental impact landed in non-DTC channels.
- For the average omnichannel brand, that means you could break even across all sales channels at roughly 0.68x DTC iROAS.

The Advantage+ vs. Manual conundrum

- Haus found that 58% of brands saw higher iROAS on Manual campaigns than Advantage+ in head-to-head tests.
- On average, Advantage+ drove 12% lower DTC iROAS at 18% lower daily spend.
- Advantage+ outperformed Manual by 9% on average at the experiment midpoint, drew even at the end of the testing period, then fell behind in the post-treatment window (PTW).

Balancing the funnel

- Mid-funnel testing frequency is up 121% across Haus customers.
- Mid-funnel optimization still performs worse than lower-funnel optimization, with 14% lower DTC iROAS at 85% lower spend/day.
- But mid-funnel shows stronger funnel-building effects (9% higher PTW lift), omni-channel halo effects (+70% vs. +46%), and new-customer rates (78% vs. 67%).

58%

58% of brands got higher iROAS from Manual than Advantage+. Advantage+ moves fast but can over-harvest lower-funnel demand over time. Mid-funnel is worth testing — it builds new customers and drives omnichannel impact even if DTC iROAS lags.

Meta

Apply the insights

Move from understanding to execution. Use the checklist below to sharpen your thinking and take the next step forward.

- [ ] **Assume Meta works and optimize.** Treat Meta as a core engine and focus tests on spend levels, mix, and structure. You have a lot of levers to pull.
- [ ] **Pick a primary campaign type; don't force 50/50.** Test Advantage+ vs. Manual for your brand, then lean into the winner.
- [ ] **Explore testing Incremental Attribution.** Early results from The Meta Report are mixed, but there is upside that this could drive incremental value in the future.
- [ ] **Always measure beyond DTC (if applicable).** Revisit your DTC iROAS targets, knowing that roughly one-third of impact often lands off-site.
- [ ] **Allocate a slice to mid- and upper-funnel.** Judge them on incremental efficiency and halo, not in-platform ROAS alone.

YouTube

YouTube doesn’t neatly fit into the paid media playbook. It doesn’t behave like search or Meta, but it isn’t quite TV either. Click-through rates are low, conversions are delayed, and platform reporting often doesn’t inspire confidence. As a result, many teams test YouTube cautiously or abandon it before its impact has time to show up.

Our deep analysis of YouTube suggests that might be a mistake. Because while the platform isn’t as easy to measure, it drives measurable impact once you factor in omnichannel, lagged effects, and new customer acquisition.

Observations

Platform reporting significantly undercounts YouTube's impact

- Across the incrementality experiments we analyzed, YouTube drove 3.4x more incremental lift to DTC sales than was reported in Google Ads.
- What that means: The performance most teams see day-to-day likely understates YouTube's true value by 70% or more.

YouTube drives outsized omnichannel halo effects

- For brands selling across multiple channels, YouTube delivered an average +99% additional sales lift beyond DTC alone.
- For comparison, the same brands measured an average halo effect of +46% across all other channels tested.

Impact unfolds over time

- Across experiments, incremental ROAS improved by an average of 79% during the post-treatment window, indicating both ramp-up and long-tail effects.
- This pattern is consistent with a channel that influences consideration and demand before conversion.

YouTube also plays a meaningful role in new customer acquisition

- In our analysis, lift against new-customer KPIs was 85% higher than lift against repeat customers, with new customers responsible for 76% of YouTube's DTC sales impact.
- While perfect prospecting is no longer possible after iOS 14, YouTube appears to be effective in expanding reach beyond existing demand.

3.4x

YouTube drives 3.4x more incremental lift than platform reporting shows. Its true impact compounds over time and across channels, making it significantly undervalued by standard metrics.

YouTube

Apply the insights

Move from understanding to execution. Use the checklist below to sharpen your thinking and take the next step forward.

- [ ] **Extend your measurement window.** Expect delayed and post-campaign effects; short tests systematically disadvantage YouTube.
- [ ] **Evaluate omnichannel outcomes.** Include retail and Amazon KPIs to avoid understating impact.
- [ ] **Optimize for incrementality, not clicks.** In-platform ROAS is a poor proxy for YouTube's true contribution.
- [ ] **Be patient.** YouTube rewards sustained testing and disciplined measurement more than rapid optimization cycles.

TikTok

TikTok is no longer a novelty channel… but it's also not a guaranteed growth engine. Brands see opportunity in TikTok, experiment aggressively, then sometimes struggle to determine how far it can actually scale.

Our TikTok analysis set out to answer the questions we hear most often: Can TikTok scale? Where does it sit in the funnel? And how much value does it drive beyond DTC?

TikTok

Observations

Most brands find a narrow but meaningful spend range

- Among brands that ran three or more incrementality experiments, TikTok spend typically settled between 11–15% of total search and social budget, with an average long-term equilibrium around 13%.
- That range may look narrow, but the difference represents a ~36% swing in channel-level spend.

TikTok's impact strengthens over time, especially ahead of promotions

- Brands observed an additional 68% lift to their primary KPI during the post-treatment window, with lift often accelerating in the second half of campaigns.

Omnichannel halo effects are meaningful

- TikTok delivered 1.9x more value than when evaluated beyond DTC.
- That includes +34% incremental sales on Amazon and +57% incremental sales in physical retail.

TikTok delivers a balanced mix of new and existing customers

- We found that 62% of TikTok's incremental lift came from new customers, with the remainder driven by existing customers.
- This makes TikTok neither purely acquisition nor purely retention, but a hybrid channel that expands reach while reinforcing demand.

1.9x

TikTok delivers 1.9x more value when measured beyond DTC. Its impact builds over time, peaks around promotions, and splits evenly between new and existing customers, making it a true hybrid channel.

TikTok

Apply the insights

Move from understanding to execution. Use the checklist below to sharpen your thinking and take the next step forward.

- [ ] **Test your way to scale.** TikTok rarely settles at the right spend level on the first experiment.
- [ ] **Plan for delayed impact.** Short tests and early readouts tend to understate performance.
- [ ] **Pair TikTok with promotions.** The channel is especially effective at priming demand ahead of key sales periods.
- [ ] **Measure beyond DTC.** Include Amazon and retail outcomes to capture true business impact.
- [ ] **Pressure-test fit.** Audience age, consideration level, and time-to-value materially influence TikTok's scalability.

Final thoughts

Across thousands of incrementality experiments, one theme shows up again and again: **Most paid media decisions fail not because teams choose the wrong channels, but because they rely on the wrong signals**.

Platform metrics reward demand capture. Attribution models struggle with delayed and cross-channel effects. And as media mixes grow more complex, confidence becomes harder to come by, even when performance looks strong on paper.

That's why this guide exists.

The observations in these pages weren't designed to serve as a universal playbook. In some cases, the data confirms common instincts. In others, it challenges them. Either way, the lesson is the same: The only way to know what works for your business is to test it under controlled conditions.

Incrementality testing isn't a one-time exercise. It's a practice.

When done consistently, incrementality testing allows teams to:

- Reallocate ad budget toward a channel mix that maximizes growth & efficiency
- Frame measurement around causal truth, not platform-reported metrics
- Experiment with new channels that have the potential to transform outcomes

Building that capability takes more than a spreadsheet or a dashboard. It requires rigorous methodology, the right guardrails, and a partner who's seen how these dynamics play out across hundreds of real businesses.

Ready to test what actually works?

If you're ready to make incrementality a core part of how you plan, measure, and scale paid media, Haus can help you get there, whether you're launching a new channel, pressure-testing your current mix, or grounding an MMM in causal data.

The marketing landscape isn't getting simpler.
But your decision-making can.

Schedule a demo to see how Haus helps teams measure what actually moves the needle.

Schedule a demo

Haus