FOR BUSINESS

BEFORE THE SEARCH

How to see beyond the click and make informed decisions about where your next dollar should go.



A Practical Guide for Performance and Growth Marketers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Click Doesn't Tell the Whole Growth Story

People don't make decisions in one place anymore. They discover, research, compare, validate, and buy across social, video, creators, AI tools, search, reviews, websites, and physical stores.

But the easiest interaction to measure isn't always the only one influencing the outcome.

51% of consumers surveyed globally said they had discovered a new product or brand through social media in the previous six months.[1]

55% of U.S. shoppers surveyed who had tried AI said they research products with AI at least weekly.[2]

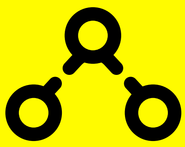
90%+ Fospha's analysis of 83,000 campaigns found that last-click models undervalued paid channels by more than 90% on average.[3]

For performance marketers, that creates an important question: **Should you invest based on what received the credit, or what actually drove the result?**

Click data still helps us to understand user interest, but it doesn’t capture every signal that shapes a customer’s decision. Broader attribution shows how channels contribute to conversions, but adding incrementality testing provides the full picture by revealing which sales or revenue the media actually drove.

As customer behavior diversifies, **overweighting clicks can lead to inefficiencies in spend and hide opportunities for scalable growth.**

What You'll Learn



Why today's decision journey extends beyond clicks.



How to identify the **Click Gap** between what reporting can observe and the broader influences on a decision.



How attribution and incrementality answer different measurement questions.



A **Five-Minute Measurement Pressure Test** to identify one assumption worth testing before your next budget decision.

THE DECISION JOURNEY HAS BECOME HARDER TO SEE

Decisions are built across moments, not just the moment that gets the credit in your click based attribution model.

A customer might discover something through social media or video, research and compare options using AI or reviews, and later convert through a search result.

The final action matters, **but it may not explain everything that made the customer ready to act.**

As new research tools enter the journey, the path from discovery to purchase can become even harder to see.



The Modern Decision Journey

How customers can move from discovery to action.

DISCOVER

Where It Happens:
Group chats, Word of mouth, Social & video platforms featuring creator content

Who Influences Them:
Creators, Friends & family, Publishers, Brand, Cultural voices

What The Customer Is Doing:
Encountering new ideas, needs, brands, or products

RESEARCH & COMPARE

Where It Happens:
Search engines, AI assistants, Creator videos, Comparison sites, Brand/retail sites

Who Influences Them:
Reviewers, Category experts, Social media creators, Friends/Community members

What The Customer Is Doing:
Learning about options, comparing alternatives, and narrowing the field

VALIDATE

Where It Happens:
Social comments, Online communities, Brand website, Ratings & reviews

Who Influences Them:
Trusted social media creators, Friends/Community members, Verified buyers

What The Customer Is Doing:
Confirming credibility, fit, value, and confidence before acting

ACT

Where It Happens:
Search, Marketplaces, App stores, Social commerce, Booking & lead forms

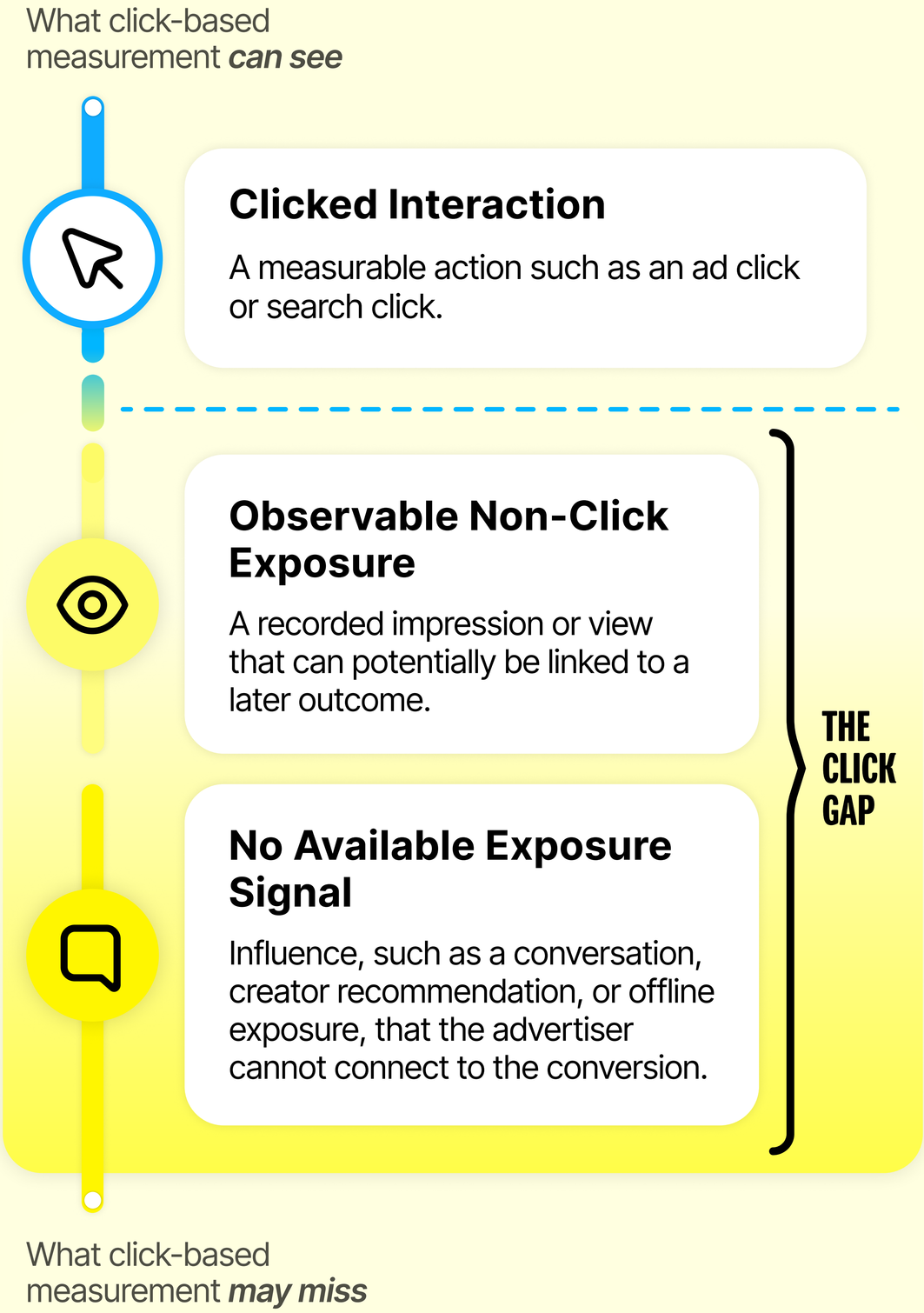
Who Influences Them:
Brands, Retailers, Creator referrals, Sales representatives, Customer support

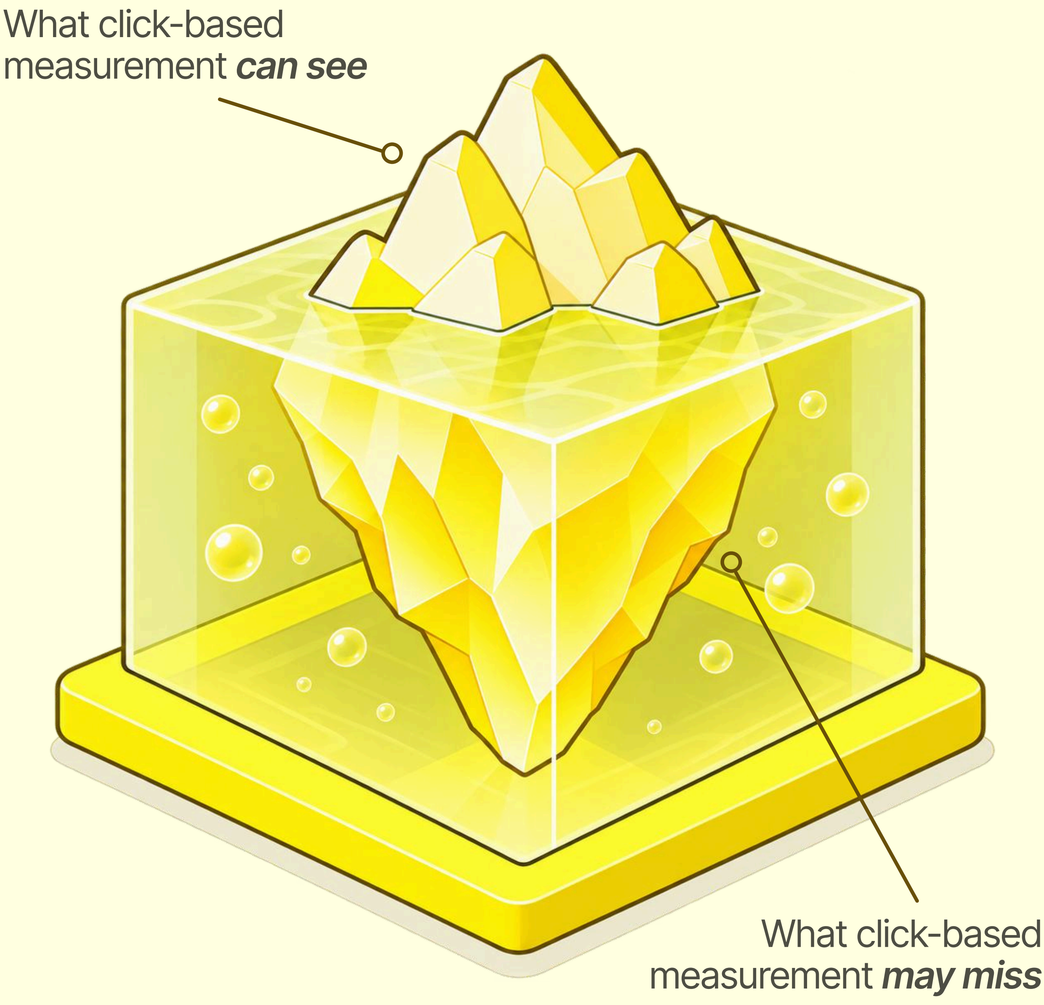
What The Customer Is Doing:
Clicking, installing, subscribing, signing up, booking, or buying.

The journey isn't always **linear**. Customers may move between moments and revisit the same touchpoints several times before taking action.

The Click Gap

The **Click Gap** is the difference between what click-based measurement can observe and the broader influences that may leave *no* click trail.





The goal isn't to give every interaction credit. **An exposure does not prove causality.** Attribution can broaden what is observable, but it cannot tell you on its own which conversions would have happened anyway.[4] **Causal testing can help answer what outcomes the media actually caused.**

Key Takeaways

- Customer decisions can be shaped across channels before the final measurable action.
- Click-based reporting is useful, but its visibility is strongest where customers leave a click trail.
- Understanding what your measurement can (and cannot) see is the first step toward making stronger allocation decisions.

THE PERFORMANCE MARKETER'S DECISION

A Five-Minute Measurement Pressure Test

Every media plan makes assumptions about where value is created, and every measurement system has limits on what it can observe.

Before your next budget decision, run these four checks. The goal isn't to make one channel win, it's to **identify where your measurement may be giving you an incomplete basis for deciding where the next dollar should go.**



SIGNAL CHECK

What might your reporting be missing?

A click proves an interaction happened. A recorded view or impression can add another piece of the path. Neither, on its own, proves what caused the conversion.

Start by identifying which signals your current setup can actually see.

SELF-CHECK

For each major channel, mark whether your reporting can see:

- [ ] Clicked Conversions
- [ ] Observable Non-Click Exposures
- [ ] Assisted Or Cross-Channel Paths
- [ ] No Usable Exposure Signal

> Where could missing signals be hiding valuable performance?

EVIDENCE-CHECK

Don't compare a click-heavy channel and a view-heavy channel as though their observable signals are identical. Last-click measurement naturally favors the interaction closest to conversion and can assign little or no credit to channels serving discovery or consideration.[5]

> That doesn't mean those channels caused the conversion. It means their role may require a different measurement lens.

MONDAY MOVE

Choose one important channel with a meaningful signal gap. Determine whether your measurement setup can add a relevant exposure, assisted-path, or cross-channel signal before changing spend.

For eligible Snapchat app advertisers, **Unified Attribution** is one example of a broader cross-channel approach. It brings Snapchat platform metrics together with performance signals from mobile measurement partners.6

It can improve the attribution view, but **does not replace incrementality testing or prove causality.**

INCREMENTALITY CHECK

What did the media actually cause?

Attribution and incrementality answer different questions.

Attribution asks

Which interactions should receive credit for a conversion?

Incrementality asks

Which outcomes would not have happened without the media?

That distinction matters because an attributed conversion may still have occurred without the ad. Controlled testing addresses that question by comparing outcomes with and without the media.[7]

SELF-CHECK

Think about one channel your team wants to scale (or is considering cutting).

Is the decision based mainly on attributed performance, or do you have evidence that the channel is producing incremental outcomes?

> If attribution is the only evidence, you may not know whether the channel is receiving too much credit, too little, or roughly the right amount.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

When the budget decision is material and attribution remains uncertain, look for a controlled test that can answer: **What would have happened without this media?**

MONDAY MOVE

Turn one important attribution assumption into a causal question:

> If this media were withheld or reduced under a valid controlled design, what would happen to the business outcome we care about?

Proof in Practice: Comfrt

In a 21-day geo holdout test, WorkMagic reported that Comfrt's Snapchat activity generated

3X INCREMENTAL ROAS

producing a different performance reading than last-click attribution.[8]



The takeaway isn't that every advertiser will see the same result. It's that **attribution and incrementality can produce meaningfully different readings of the same channel.**



ALLOCATION CHECK

Would a fuller measurement view change where your next dollar goes?

Better measurement matters when it changes a decision.

If a channel appears weak under click-heavy reporting but has a credible reason to be incompletely measured, the answer isn't to move budget blindly. It's to **run a bounded test that gives the hypothesis a fair opportunity to succeed—or fail.**

If measurement overweights the final click, marketers may overlook channels that could contribute to future growth while continuing to fund those that capture the clearest short-term signal.

SELF-CHECK

Look at the next dollar planned for your largest channels.

For each one, ask:

> What evidence says the next dollar belongs here?

Is the decision based on what the channel actually contributes, or mainly on what the current attribution model credits?

DECISION RULE

Don't reallocate simply because another attribution view makes a channel look better.

Reallocate when you have:

1. **A Credible Measurement Gap Or Growth Hypothesis**
2. **A Defined Business Outcome**
3. **A Fair Test**
4. **A Pre-Agreed Scale / Revise / Stop Decision**

MONDAY MOVE

Choose one assumption, not an entire media plan.

Fund one bounded test with a clear outcome and decision rule, and let the evidence determine whether that channel earns a larger role.

CREDIT CHECK

Could click-based measurement be costing you future growth?

When reporting favors the final measurable interaction, channels closest to conversion often appear to perform best. That can shift budget away from the channels creating discovery, consideration, and new customer demand.

What could you be leaving on the table?
Incremental sales, future customers, and scalable growth from channels who influence is not fully reflected in reported CPA or ROAS.

Why should you care?
If this pattern repeats, your plan can become increasingly effective at capturing existing demand but less capable of creating the demand needed for future growth.

SELF-CHECK

For your five largest media investments, compare their share of spend, **share of reported conversions, CPA or ROAS, primary role in the journey, and contribution to new customers or incremental sales.**

Ask yourself

> If you shifted more budget to the platform receiving the most credit, would it create more conversions or simply claim more of them?

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Strong platform ROAS despite flat sales, duplicate conversion claims, retargeting gains alongside slowing customer growth, and declining discovery investment as more budget shifts to conversion channels.

That doesn't prove the channel works; **it identifies an assumption worth testing.**

MONDAY MOVE

Choose one channel receiving a disproportionate share of credit and complete this sentence:

> This channel receives credit for _____, but before shifting more budget to it, we need to determine whether it is generating _____ or capturing demand created elsewhere.

Test it with Snapchat: Use a lift or incrementality test to determine whether Snapchat is creating new conversions, not just receiving credit for existing demand.

The journey is not always linear. Customers may move between moments and revisit the same touchpoints several times before taking action.

Takeaway: The goal isn't to redesign your media plan overnight. It's to **identify one measurement assumption worth testing and get better evidence before deciding where the next dollar goes.**

THE FIVE-MINUTE MEASUREMENT PRESSURE TEST

The four checks from the previous pages are summarized here as a quick reference for your next media planning session. Use this page to identify the measurement assumption most worth testing before your next budget decision.

Signal Check

Can your measurement see meaningful influence beyond the final click?

Identify where clicks, non-click exposures, and assisted or cross-channel paths are visible, and where important gaps remain.

Incrementality Check

Do you have evidence of what the media actually caused?

Separate attributed outcomes from incremental outcomes. Where the decision matters, identify an assumption that controlled testing could resolve.

Allocation Check

Would better evidence change where your next dollar goes?

Choose one credible hypothesis, define the business outcome, and test it before making a larger reallocation.

Credit Check

Are you evaluating each channel against the job it is actually meant to do?

Identify whether each major investment is expected to create discovery, shape consideration, capture intent, convert, retarget or reactivate, or do more than one.

Remember: You don't need to change everything at once. Start with one pressure test, identify one assumption worth challenging, and run one meaningful test. Then use what you learn to make your next media decision with better evidence.

Footnotes

1. Capgemini Research Institute, What Matters to Today's Consumer 2025 (2025).
2. Semrush, How AI Tools Influence the Modern Buyer Journey (2026).
3. Fospha, Why Can't Last-Click Attribution Measure Upper-Funnel Channels?, citing Peak Playbook 2025 (2025).
4. Google, Modern Measurement Playbook (2024).
5. Source: Fospha, Click vs. Impression Measurement: What's the Real Difference and Which Should You Trust? (2025).
6. Source: Snapchat for Business, Unified Attribution Globally Available to All App Advertisers (2026).
7. Source: Google Ads, Understand your Conversion Lift based on users measurement data.
8. Source: WorkMagic, How Doubling Snapchat Spend Unlocked 12% Higher ROAS for Comfrt (2026).