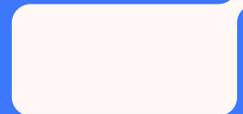


BindMedia



WTF is Creative Strategy?



Contents.

Introduction.	1-2
<hr/>	
Defining a Creative Strategist.	3-6
Some key areas of focus include:	4
How does the role overlap with Design and Paid Media?	6
<hr/>	
Research. Research. Research.	7-8
Why bother with research?	7
Behavioural science: Your creative cheat code.	7
So, how do you put all this into action?	8
<hr/>	
Creative is king.	9-10
<hr/>	
Creative diversity.	11-12
<hr/>	
The age-old debate of quality versus quantity.	13-14
<hr/>	
Every expert media buyer should know this.	15-16
<hr/>	
Now, what does this mean for your business?	17
<hr/>	
How do we analyse performance?	18-20
The metrics and how we use them.	19
Primary and secondary KPIs.	19
<hr/>	
Case study.	21
What happened?	21
Overall account results.	21
Diagnostic metrics.	21
<hr/>	
Concluding thoughts.	22
<hr/>	
The shameless plug.	23



A cohesive creative
strategy is your
golden ticket to
improving account
performance.

Introduction.

Are you a marketer who is already experimenting with creative testing and wants to take it to the next level? A cohesive creative strategy is your golden ticket to improving account performance.

So, WTF is Creative Strategy? Creative strategy is a data-driven approach to creative execution. The role of a Creative Strategist has existed for decades but has become increasingly geared toward a social-first approach in a constantly evolving digital landscape. Creative Strategists now need to have a broader skillset, including project management, data analysis, and communication. We often collaborate closely with Design and Paid Media to leverage insights on how to create an effective ad that will resonate with our target audience.

It's not to be confused with the traditional Creative Strategy role in creative agencies, though there are similarities, this new phenomenon is primarily focussed on performance marketing goals, not all-encompassing brand campaigns.

Picture this: You're a marketer who knows your creative is not landing with your audience, but can't understand why? Well, many businesses treat creative strategy as a one-time task, neglecting the need for continuous testing and iterations to achieve their desired results.

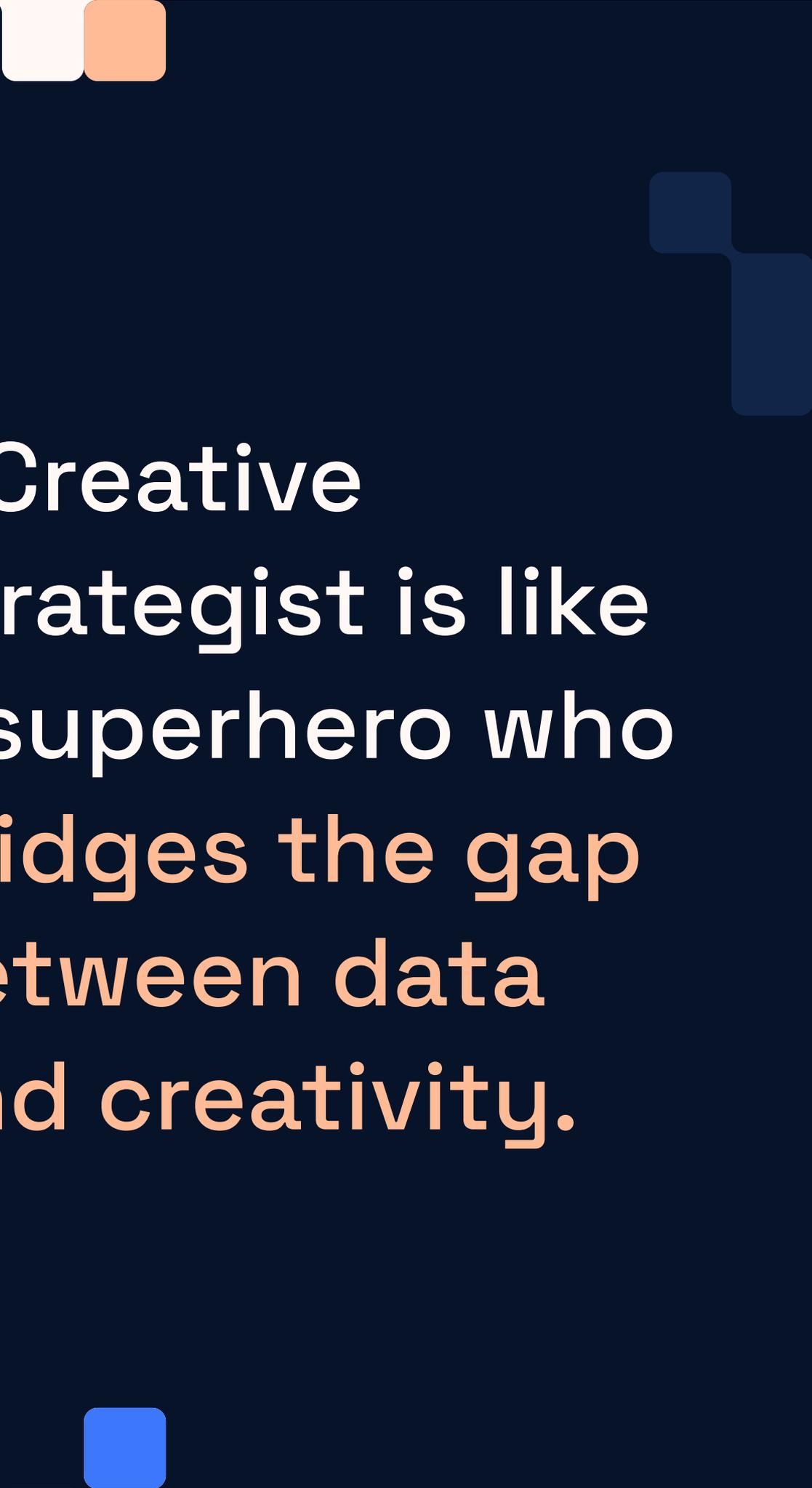
Often misunderstood, creativity is not solely about spontaneous inspiration but rather a methodical, data-driven approach. On the flip side, some marketers become overly focused on data and neglect the importance of appealing to human desires to drive the desired action.

By understanding what creative strategy truly is and avoiding common pitfalls, you can help your business drive meaningful results.

We'll go on to discuss the following:

- Key areas of focus of a Creative Strategist, and how they collaborate with the Design and Paid Media teams
- The importance of research
- The importance of creative diversity
- How does Meta's algorithm work?
- How to analyse performance, and we will share a case study to showcase how it can work in practice

So, let's get into it!



A Creative
Strategist is like
a superhero who
bridges the gap
between data
and creativity.

Defining a Creative Strategist.

A Creative Strategist is like a superhero who bridges the gap between data and creativity. They're the masterminds behind those killer ideas for your ads, making sure they're not only eye-catching but also effective.

Some key areas of focus include:

- ❖ **Ideation & concept development:**
Coming up with fresh angles and ideas based on research, ad account performance, and competitor analysis
- ❖ **Creative briefing:**
Taking these ideas and turning them into a clear brief based on a hypothesis
- ❖ **Project management:**
Making sure everything runs smoothly and meets quality assurance standards

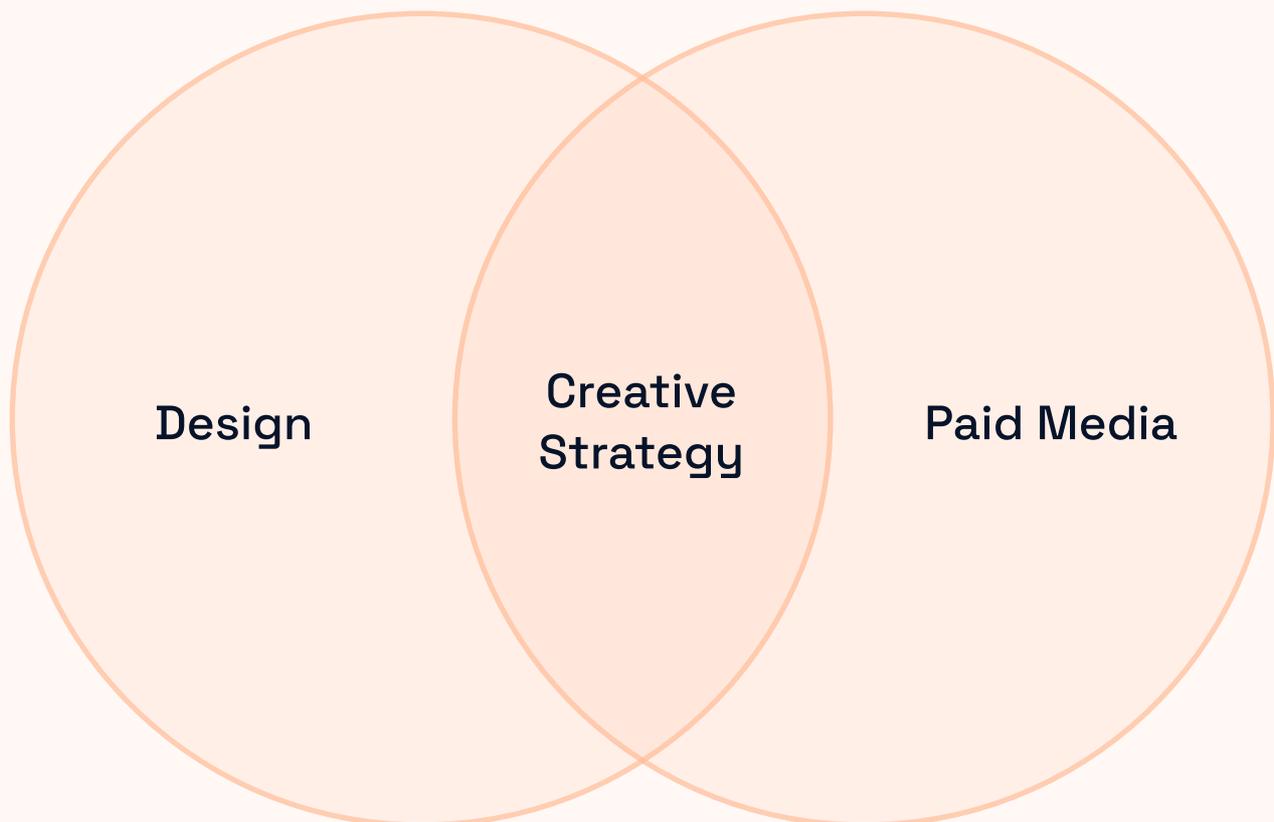




Creative
strategists are all
about bridging the
gap between Paid
Media and Design.

How does the role overlap with Design and Paid Media?

Creative Strategists bridge the gap between Paid Media and Design. A Creative Strategist works closely with both teams, acting as a kind of translator, so everyone's on the same page. By combining insights from both sides, we create compelling messaging that resonates with our target audiences. And our creative testing? That helps both teams learn what's working and drive even better client results.



Research. Research. Res

Research. Research. Res

Why bother with research?

Creating an ad based on guesswork is like throwing spaghetti at a wall, hoping something sticks. Research removes the guesswork; it turns a pretty ad into a performance-driven powerhouse. Without it, you're just making noise, and wow, there's plenty of that already. Creative strategy isn't just about having a good idea; it's about having the **right** idea, backed by insight.

Research is how you get there. It helps you understand **why** people scroll, **what** makes them stop, and **how** to get them to take action. No crystal ball required: just data, observation, and a bit of human psychology.

Behavioural science: Your creative cheat code.

People aren't as rational as we like to think. Behavioural science helps us tap into the quirks of human decision-making; most buying decisions are made on impulse, and then justify it later.

As marketers, we can use these "Mental Shortcuts" or heuristic behaviours to give our creative that extra edge. Heuristics aren't cookie-cutter; understanding your audience is key to making sure you are using the right ones to create a clear and effective path to conversion.¹

¹ Marketing to Mindstates, Will Leach



“

Without thorough research into your audience, you simply cannot market to them effectively. Every marketing effort is somewhat of a stab in the dark, but utilising research provides you with night vision goggles.”

Bexley Terrell
Creative Strateau Director

Research. Research. Research. Research. Research. Research

So, how do you put all this into action?

Research isn't just about gathering data; it's about turning it into **something useful**. Here's how we approach it:

1. Look at organic content within the niche:

Platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and others offer a goldmine of insight into what content resonates. While this isn't always possible for every niche, it's usually super useful when it is.

2. Use audience research tools:

Tools like GWI give us data-backed insights into audience demographics, behaviours, and interests.

3. Run polls and surveys:

Sometimes, the best way to understand your audience is to ask them directly.

4. Message mining around the web:

We explore search trends, search terms, community conversations, and customer reviews to understand what people are saying and how they talk about topics relevant to the brand.

5. Conduct competitor analysis:

Tools like Adnova help us see what competitors are running, spot gaps, and identify creative angles that stand out.²

This combination of qualitative and quantitative research ensures we're not just guessing what will work; we're building creative strategies on a solid foundation of real-world data and audience insight.

² Creative Strategy: The Ultimate Guide for Performance Marketers and DTC Brands



In today's digital
world capturing
and retaining
information is
everything.



try it at home for 90 days, no cords attached.

buy now

Lupe

pet drugs online* 4.9/5 feelo™

New year, new diet.
Find the perfect food for your pet.

- 1000's to choose from
- Easy repeat options
- Vet-approved food

Low FODMAP friendly

Cook in minutes

Award winning taste

field doctor™

STRAVA business

Increase brand recall by over 2x
with the world's most active audience.

Learn More

Source: Multisport Research 2022. Strava survey data

pet drugs online*

"Second to none. Great prices, speedy delivery"

174,000+ 5-star reviews and counting
4.9/5 feelo™

Revolutionise your fleet operations
with advanced vehicle telematics and real-time driver insights.

Learn more

Prolius

If you're a Dad please read this

Every 20 minutes a child in the UK loses a parent they rely on. You can help protect your family financially if the worst were to happen by taking out life insurance.

Start a free non-obligation quote.

According to Child Bereavement UK approximately 45,000 parents die each year in the UK leaving dependent children that are aged under 18. Source: Child Bereavement Centre, April 2018. ©2022 Polly.co.uk

Adulting is hard enough. Life insurance shouldn't be.

Start a free quote at Polly.co.uk

Polly

"the most powerful bare-floor cleaner we've tested."
The New York Times | Wirecutter

try for 90 days

Lupe

medichecks

New year, new old you. Get 20% off and reach your health goals.

Order your test

Field Doctor

"The meals felt great in my body, no issues with bloating. I felt nourished." - Dee

Trustpilot 4.5/5

"Couldn't be easier"

Arrived quickly, the drop-in clinic was at one of our local hospitals. Results back quickly & very thorough with explanations.

★★★★★ Trusted customer

STRAVA business

Move in the same circles as your audience.

135M+ active people & counting.

House move to do

- Book a moving van
- Get boxes
- Donate old clothes
- Get life insurance

Start your free quote at Tom.co.uk

STRAVA BUSINESS

Motivate people to move with your brand at the center.

Get Started

Lease your new car with heycar.

Keep it simple. With fixed monthly rental.

Ready to drive away. Cars ready to drive away.

Peace of mind. Full manufacturer warranty.

heycar Trustpilot 4.5/5 Rated: Excellent

Creative is king.

Capturing and retaining attention³ is everything. Google and Meta are increasingly using creative as a form of targeting rather than interest-based targeting.⁴ Why? Because there is a growing demand for data privacy.⁵

So what does that mean for you? Well, you need to create social-first creatives that are native to each platform and disruptive enough to stand out in a crowded market.

³ Beyond view ability: The role of attention in creative effectiveness

⁴ Updates to detailed targeting

⁵ No more cookies? Google ending third-party cookies in Chrome



Keep experimenting
with different ad
formats and
messaging angles to
see what works best
for different pockets
of your audience.



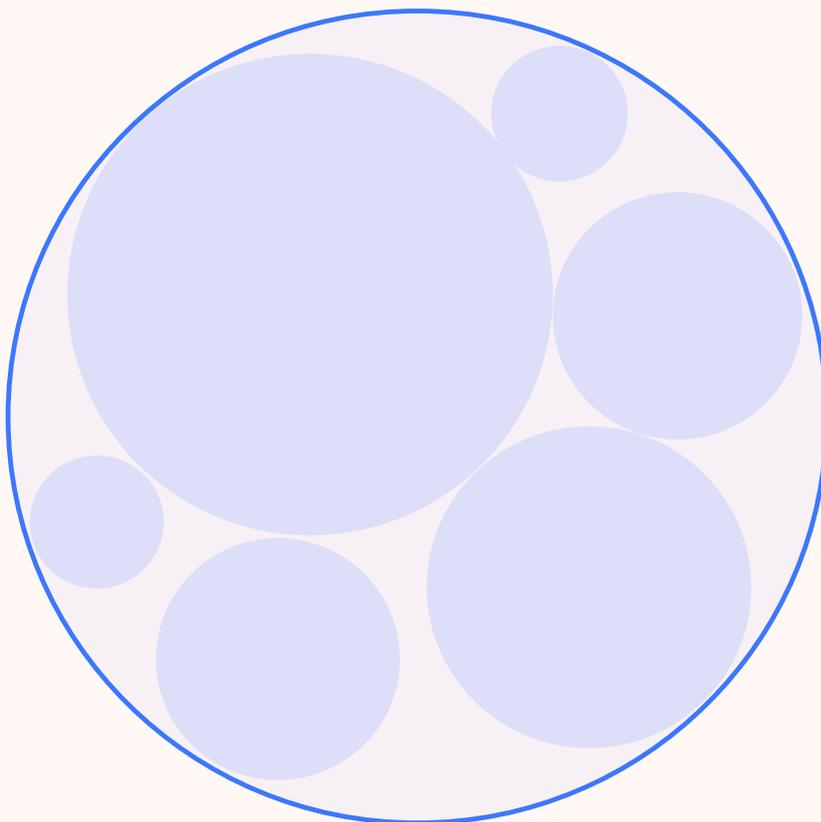
Creative diversity.

Meta, like most social media platforms, uses an oCPM (optimised cost per thousand impressions) model, where the cost of reaching your audience depends on your ad quality. Imagine Meta as a bustling marketplace where you're vying for attention among a sea of competitors.

Every ad you put out there, whether it's organic or paid, starts to build its own lookalike audience. This means that it's targeting people similar to those who have positively engaged with your ad.

Imagine your audience as a blue circle, with peach bubbles representing the reach of each ad. The more diverse your ads, the more of your audience you can reach. Keep experimenting with different ad formats and messaging angles to see what works best for different pockets of your audience.

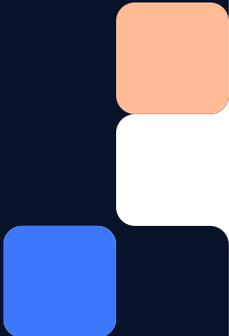
The petri dish.

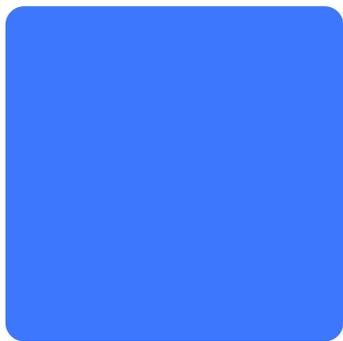
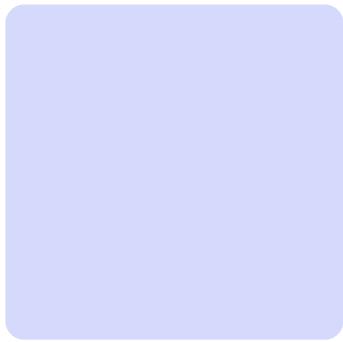


- Audience
- Ads

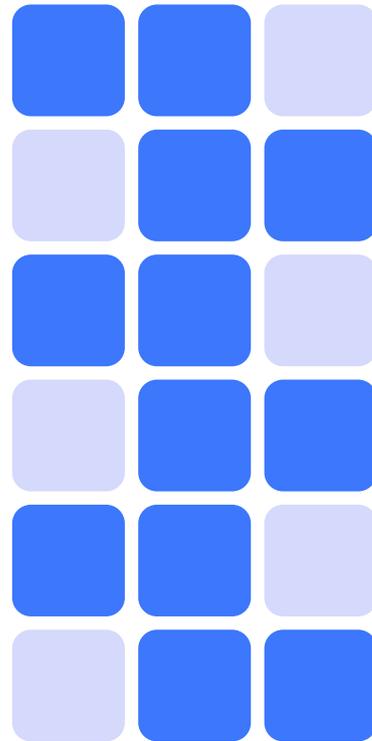


Let the Meta
algorithm do its
magic and allocate
spend where it
sees the most
potential.





Quality



Quantity

The age-old debate of quality versus quantity.

Now, you might be thinking, “Should I focus on creating loads of ads or just a few really good ones?” Honestly, it’s a bit of both. Start by introducing different ad formats and messaging angles, especially if you don’t have much creative variety in your Meta ad account. Let the Meta algorithm do its magic and allocate spend where it sees the most potential.

Once you have enough data to work with, focus on creating high-quality creative. The outcome will be a bank of learnings that you can take away and apply to your next round of creative testing.

Meta wants to allocate spend to ads that have the most scaling potential.

Every expert media buyer should know this.

Have you ever noticed how Meta sometimes shifts your ad spend to underperforming adsets or ads? It's **not** an accident, and it's **not** Meta wasting your budget.

Meta spend is a meritocracy. The breakdown effect⁶ is where the Meta algorithm shifts spend to the adset or ad that will provide the highest volume for the lowest cost. Meta wants to allocate spend to ads that have the most scaling potential.⁷ So, don't try to outsmart the algorithm. Trust the algorithm, and you'll see better results.

Based on this graph, we can see that there is a point of diminishing returns. We aim to increase reach and awareness without sacrificing profitability. Creative testing can therefore help by reducing the cost to advertise, as the Meta algorithm favours ads that drive strong engagement.

⁶ About the "breakdown effect" when advertising on our system
⁷ Expert Media Buyers Know THIS About Facebook Ads (The Breakdown Effect)





Now, what does this mean for your business?

- ❑ Don't turn off your highest-spending ad, just because it's costing you money. It's doing its job!
- ❑ Keep refining your winning ads to see if you can make them even better
- ❑ Remember, not every creative test will be a winner, but you can learn something from every single one, even the flops



Primary KPIs tell us
whether a creative
test was successful,
whilst secondary
KPIs help us to tell
a story.



How do we analyse performance?

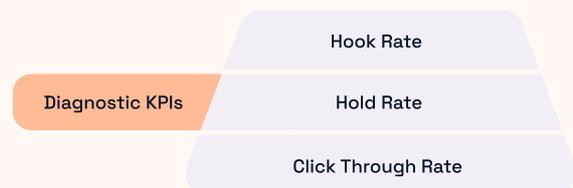
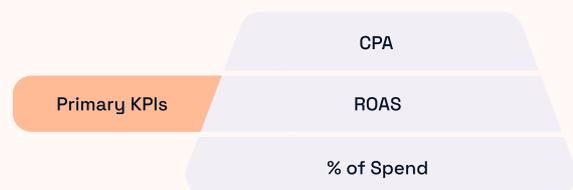
The metrics and how we use them.

Name	Description	Formula
CPA	How much did it cost to drive a result? (£)	Cost/Conv
ROAS	What revenue did we get in return for our ad spend?	Revenue/Cost
% of Spend	How much of our total budget did your ad demand? (%)	Ad Spend/Total Test Spend
Hook Rate	How effectively we grabbed attention? (%)	3-sec VV/Impr.
Hold Rate	How effectively we retained attention? (%)	Thru Plays/3-Sec VV
Click Through Rate	How effectively we drove clicks? (%)	Clicks/Impr.

Primary KPIs.

Now, let's talk about how to measure the success of your ads. The main metrics we look at are spend and CPA (cost per acquisition).

Meta's algorithm is designed to allocate spend to the ads that are most likely to drive performance at the lowest cost. So, don't try to outsmart the algorithm. Work with it, and you'll see better results.



Secondary KPIs.

We also look at secondary metrics like Hook Rate, Hold Rate and Click Through Rate. These help us to understand why an ad is or isn't performing well, and tell a story.

For example, if we saw a strong Hook Rate, but a low Hold Rate, we would want to review the script, pacing, and talent to understand what factors would drive a stronger engagement. Whereas, if a Hook Rate was low, this would suggest we would need to test different ways to generate interest.

Now, what about static ads? In this instance, we use the Click-Through Rate to analyse performance.

Native-style ad formats such as User-Generated Content (UGC) drove strong engagement rates for one of our clients.

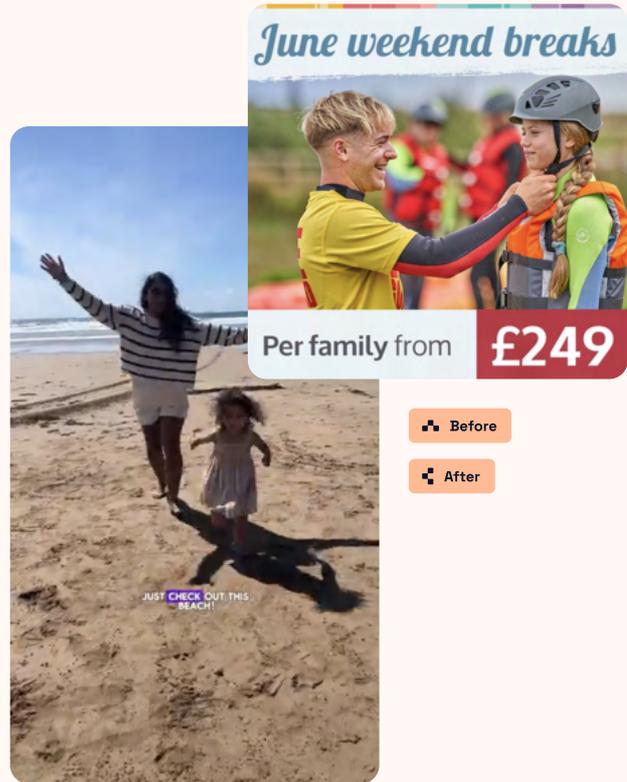
Case study.

What happened?

We first introduced Creative Strategy to Woolacombe Bay in May 2024.

We spotted opportunities within the Meta ad account to improve the creative diversity.

Shifting away from price-focused images to a more balanced approach. We introduced User-Generated Content (UGC) and native-style ad formats to add more variety and tested various messaging angles that pulled on more levers other than price.

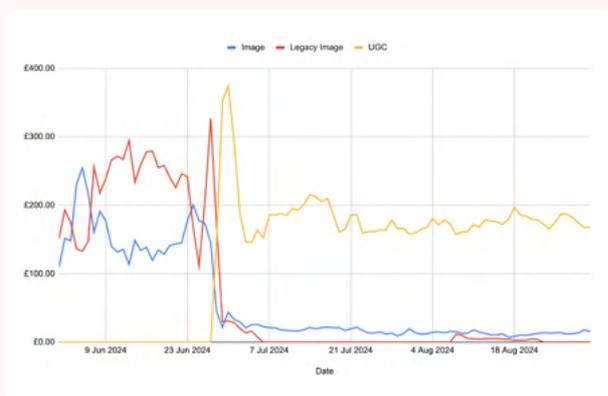


Overall account results:

-48% **+73%** **+230%**
Spend Revenue ROAS

Diagnostic metrics:

1.8% **30.9%** **29.2%**
CTR (0.9%) Hook Rate (30%) Hold Rate (20%)



When looking at Meta ad performance within the peak period year over year, we found that deploying UGC as well as other content that focused further up the funnel, enabled us to obtain greater reach within key pockets of the target audience.

However, it's important to note that there were also other factors such as delayed purchasing and a flatter account structure that played their part.

As you can see from the graph above, UGC took a large proportion of spend when it was introduced. When looking at the secondary metrics, we found that they outperformed against industry benchmarks, which is positive! Moving forward, we focused on native content and continued to test additional messaging angles focusing on emotional levers to drive the desired action from the user.

Concluding thoughts.

So, here we are. We've explored what creative strategy really means, why research is the foundation of everything, and how to use that research to fuel creative decisions that don't just look good but perform where it matters. You've seen how understanding your audience, tapping into behavioural science, and collaborating with the right teams can transform a campaign from average to exceptional.

Here's the truth: creative strategy isn't a one-time thing. It's not a checkbox you tick at the start of a campaign. It's a continuous process of testing, learning, and refining. The digital landscape moves fast; what worked yesterday might not land tomorrow. That's why staying curious, adaptable, and audience-focused is essential.

Remember:

- ❏ Research is your launchpad; it helps you understand **why** people engage and **what** motivates them to act
- ❏ Creative diversity isn't just nice to have; it's critical for reaching different pockets of your audience and staying competitive in crowded feeds
- ❏ Not every test will be a winner, and that's okay. Learn from the flops just as much as the hits
- ❏ Let platforms like Meta do some of the heavy lifting, but only after you've given them the right creative to work with
- ❏ Quality versus quantity isn't an either-or. Start broad, gather insights, and then narrow in on what's working with high-quality iterations

So, what now?

Take what you've learned and put it into action. Audit your current creative; where are the gaps? Start small with fresh concepts, backed by research, and scale what sticks. Be brave enough to experiment, but smart enough to measure everything you do.

Because, at the end of the day, creative strategy is about connecting with people.

It's about making someone stop mid-scroll, pay attention, and, ultimately, take action. And that doesn't happen by accident; it happens through strategy, insight, and creativity working hand in hand.

Ready to get started? Your next breakthrough campaign is just a test (or two) away.

The shameless plug.

As an agency, we deal with these sorts of challenges and questions every day. [Chat with the team](#) if you would like to learn about how we can help you with Audience Research, Creative Strategy, Performance Creative or Paid Social.

BindMedia

