



How To Find Winning Ads: Accelerated Testing Strategy For DTC Ecommerce Brands

Learn the cost-effective testing strategy that will help you find more winning, profitable, and sustainable ads, faster.



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Introduction

As DTC ecommerce marketing teams continue to encounter challenges with reporting, targeting, audiences, and tracking as a result of iOS 14, brands are doubling down on accurate ad attribution to scale ad campaigns. Especially to identify winning ads in the early stages of a campaign. By definition, a winning ad is a sustainable and profitable ad that consistently generates profits.

The problem is that it's very difficult for ecommerce brands to find high performing ad copy and ad creative that will consistently sustain optimal ROAS over a long period of time. Almost every DTC ecommerce marketing team is well aware of ads that start off performing very well and then a few days later or weeks later start drastically underperforming.

In this guide, we'll cover how to ensure you consistently have optimal ROAS for your ad campaigns, the importance of testing, and how to implement the Accelerated Testing Strategy. The Accelerated Testing Strategy is a cost-effective testing strategy that will help you find more winning ads faster than standard testing campaigns.

CHAPTER 1

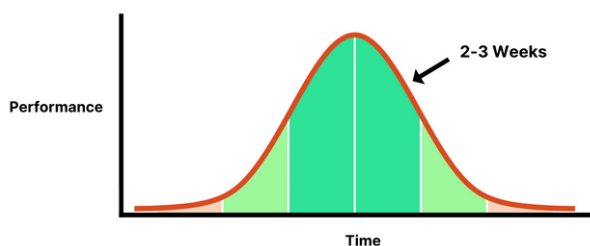
How To Ensure You Consistently Have Optimal ROAS

- Which brand are you?
- How can testing become cost effective?
- Building ad creative

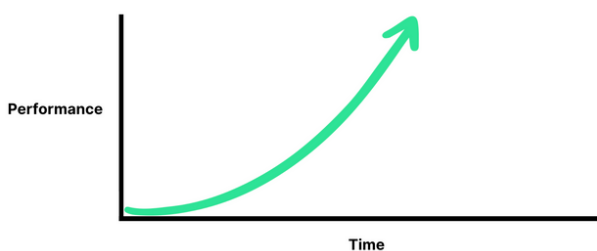
Which brand are you?

All DTC ecommerce marketing teams want consistent and profitable ad campaigns, at all times, no matter what time of the year. There are very few brands that can achieve that scenario, but it is few and far between. *Which brand are you?*

The common cycle that most ecommerce brands are familiar with is a 2-3 week streak of very optimal ROAS, then everything seems to drop off and it's back to the drawing board.

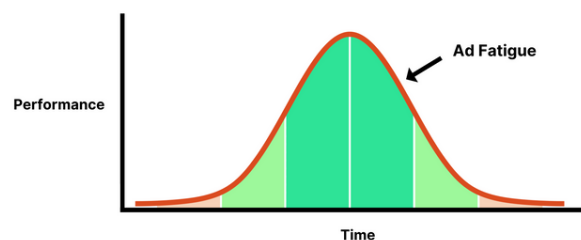


The brands that are consistently and profitably scaling ad campaigns are doing one major thing different from the others. They are constantly testing new ad creative and ad copy. They know the reality is that all ads will at some point in the future experience ad fatigue. So no matter how great ads are performing now, they know they need to constantly test more ads to find new winning ads that will supplement the existing ads.



It's very, very easy to stop testing new ad creative and ad copy during that 2-3 week streak of optimal results, and most advertisers will stop testing and focus on scaling the ads that are currently working. But again, brands consistently scaling profitably on social media ads fully understand ad fatigue.

Ad fatigue occurs when users see the same ad repeatedly, causing them to become desensitized to it, leading to decreased engagement and effectiveness. By testing different ad copy and creatives, you can find the most effective message and visual presentation to keep your ads fresh and engaging to your target audience. This helps to ensure that your ads remain effective over time, avoiding ad fatigue and maximizing the return on your advertising investment. Additionally, ad testing allows you to continuously optimize and improve your ads based on performance data, keeping them relevant and appealing to your target audience.



How can testing become cost effective?

Your goal is to consistently have profitable ads at all times. By now you know in order to achieve that goal you need to be testing at all times. Your focus will be broken down into four areas:

1. **Creating** new ad creating & ad copy
2. **Launching** new test campaigns
3. **Optimizing** existing winning ads
4. **Scaling** existing winning ads

When you are testing different ads, you are always looking for a winning ad. **Winning ads** are a combination of ad creative and ad copy that are profitable and consistently generating profits.



It's always great when you get winning ads from testing, but the truth about testing is that it's very time consuming and can get very expensive. It can also be very discouraging when you spend hours and hours creating one ad creative, and the test yields zero results.

Typically most 'standard tests' involve only one ad creative with different targeting for every ad set. These types of tests can be very discouraging

because you likely have spent hours creating one ad creative, spent hundreds of dollars, and the test yielded zero results (or sub-par results with minimal purchases).

So here are our questions:

1. How can we get feedback faster?
2. How can we find more than one winning ad combination from a single test campaign?
3. How can we test in a cost-effective way?

Answer: Accelerated Testing

The **Accelerated Testing Strategy** is a cost-effective testing strategy that will help you find more winning, profitable, and sustainable ads, faster.

Structure of an accelerated test:

- 1 campaign, 6 ad sets, only variable is the creative on every ad set of campaign, targeting the same product
 - Use the exact same targeting / audience on every ad set.
 - You have to keep everything the exact same for every ad set, except the ad creative (which is the variable).

The ad creative has a bigger impact on the ad results than the ad copy, so it's always important to have the ad creative as the variable to find new winners.

When you have a winning ad creative, you can use the same ad creative on every ad set and have the variable be the ad copy to find the best combination.

Building ad creative

As you know by now, when it comes to testing, the ad creative will make the greatest impact on ad performance during your accelerated test campaign. So it's very important that you develop 6 different ad creative variations for your accelerated test.

Ad creative refers to both the design and text based components of an advertisement, specifically designed to engage and persuade target audience to take action, such as making a purchase.

In the context of social advertising, ad creative can include images, videos, animations, text, and graphic elements that are used to represent the brand and convey its message on social media platforms. Ad creative is a crucial aspect of social advertising as it determines the overall look, feel, and impact of an advertisement. Effective ad creative must grab the attention of the target audience, clearly communicate the brand's value proposition, and drive desired actions.

Video and image social media ads for DTC (direct-to-consumer) ecommerce brands have some key differences that brands should consider when creating

and placing their ads.

Video Ads:

- Allow for a more engaging and dynamic storytelling experience, using motion, sound and music to convey the message and brand.
- Offer the ability to showcase products in use and demonstrate their features, benefits, and unique selling points.
- Usually requires more time and resources to produce, but can result in a higher level of viewer engagement and impact.

Image Ads:

- Offer a simpler and more direct approach, focusing on the product image and accompanying text to convey the message.
- Are quicker and easier to produce, making them a cost-effective option for DTC brands on a tight budget.
- Can be less engaging than video ads but still effective in delivering a clear and concise message.

Both video and image social media ads have their own strengths and weaknesses, and the choice between them will depend on the specific needs, goals and budget of the brand. Ultimately, the key to success with both formats is to create high-quality content that resonates with the target audience, captures their attention and drives conversions.

CHAPTER 2

Implementing the Accelerated Testing Strategy

- What is your testing goal?
- Comparing standard testing v.s. accelerated testing
- Example structure of a Accelerated Test

What is your testing goal?

Before you implement any type of test for new ad creative or ad copy, you always want to first establish your benchmark KPI's and your testing goal. As a DTC ecommerce brand, your primary goal should be purchases.

Metrics	Benchmarks
Purchases	X
CPC (cost per click)	\$.XX
CTR (link)	X%

Your secondary goal should be metrics such as CPC or CTR (link). It's always best to look at previous winning ads and look at the KPI's to determine your benchmarks for your secondary metrics. Secondary metrics should always be established in your benchmark KPI's prior to launching your test campaign.

If your test campaign does not have purchases initially, your secondary metrics will provide you with an indication of your ad performance so you can draw conclusions from different ad creative types or ad copy types.

Example:

"My video ads have a \$.20 - \$.40 lower CPC than my image ads"

Comparing standard testing v.s. accelerated testing

Here's the structure of a standard test and an accelerated test:

Standard Test

- 1 campaign, 6 ad sets, same ad copy, same creative, same product page or collection page, the only variable on every ad set that is different is the audience (either different lookalike audiences or interest audiences)
- Budget: \$25 each ad set (\$150 /day)
- Goal: Purchases

Accelerated Test

- 1 campaign, 6 ad sets, the only variable that is different here is creative on every ad set of campaign - same audience same lookalike audience or interest audience)
- Schedule the campaign to start at 3:00 am the next day.
 - It's always 3:00 am (ad account time) because that will provide the campaign a full 24+ hour period to run.
- Budget: \$25 each ad set (\$150 /day)
- Goal: Purchases

The Accelerated Test compared to the Standard Test clearly gives you more feedback on more ad creative for the same budget, so you can find a winner faster.

Example structure of an Accelerated Test

Here's an example campaign structure for an **Accelerated Test**:

- Please note that the gender, age, and detailed targeting information should pertain exactly to your target audience.
- It's extremely important that you have naming conventions on your campaign, so you can stay organized when it comes time to optimize your ad campaign.
 - **Naming Convention** refers to the way we name the campaign, ad sets, and ads.

Campaign - 01

- Ad Set 1: Lookalike 1-2% - 35-65+
 - Ad: Copy 1 - **Creative 1**
- Ad Set 2: Lookalike 1-2% - 35-65+
 - Ad: Copy 1 - **Creative 2**
- Ad Set 3: Lookalike 1-2% - 35-65+
 - Ad: Copy 1 - **Creative 3**
- Ad Set 4: Lookalike 1-2% - 35-65+
 - Ad: Copy 1 - **Creative 4**
- Ad Set 5: Lookalike 1-2% - 35-65+
 - Ad: Copy 1 - **Creative 5**
- Ad Set 6: Lookalike 1-2% - 35-65+
 - Ad: Copy 1 - **Creative 6**



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CHAPTER 3

Analyzing Results & Optimizing Ads

- How to analyze & optimize initial data

How to analyze and optimize initial data

For your accelerated test, you have to give your ad sets at least 24 hours without turning any of the ad sets on or off, or adjusting the budgets. If you can support the budget for 48 hours that is even more optimal. There is a time element with the ad platforms and giving your ads time to get impressions, spend, and get clicks is essential for analyzing initial results & ad performance.

You have to give your ad sets at least 24 hours without turning any of the ad sets on or off, or adjusting the budgets. If you can support the budget for 48 hours that is even more optimal. There is a time element with the ad platforms and giving your ads time to get impressions, spend, and get clicks is essential for analyzing initial results & ad performance.

After the 24 hour mark, you will do the following:

A) Turn off any ad set that does not have a sale and analyze the secondary metrics to determine if they are in your benchmark. Given your primary goal of the accelerated test is purchases, you will turn off the ad sets that have no sales no matter what. However, it's best to compare your benchmark KPI's of your secondary metrics to identify any ad creative that are within your benchmark KPI's.

Note: If an ad creative has 0 sales after 24 hours, but met your secondary metric benchmark KPI's, then you can re-test the ad creative in brand new ad set within that same campaign and start the process over again.

B) Create new ad sets with different targeting for any ad sets that have purchases.

Review the two common scenarios below for your accelerated test campaign for next steps.

Scenario 1: No purchases

As we know, your primary goal is purchases. After the 24-48 hour period, if your ad sets (that have the different ad creative) do not have any purchases, you need to turn the ad sets off and launch new ads. The most common mistake when you have 0 purchases is you continue to keep the ads running hoping that they will soon have a purchase. This is incorrect because you are looking for your ad sets to get purchases, and if you are not getting purchases right away it's a clear indication that you need to test new ads. For this situation, this is why we have secondary metrics. You may be able to draw conclusions from your secondary metrics to determine if there was interest from the impressions that saw your ads. The most important metric to look at if you do not have purchases is your CTR (link) because that metric will provide you with the

number of link clicks that your ad received divided by the number of times your ad was shown. The higher the CTR (link), the better, and you can focus on those types of ad creative.

Scenario 2: Purchases

If you have one or even multiple purchases on different ad sets, then congratulations you have a successful Accelerated Test!

Now that you have purchases, it doesn't necessarily mean that those ad creative are 'winners'. There are two phases of determining if an ad combination (combination of ad copy and ad creative) is a winner:

- **Phase 1:** You have initial purchases which is an early sign that indicates the ad combination could be a winner.
- **Phase 2:** You add new ad sets (same budget of \$25 /day each) with that same ad combination that had the purchases from phase 1, but with different targeting for each ad set. If the new ad sets get sales with optimal ROAS, you have new winning ads!

Regardless of whether the results of your accelerated test yielded purchases or had zero purchases, you want to keep all new ad sets inside of the same campaign.

The social ad platforms optimization algorithm learns from the campaign level, ad set level, and ad level. Your goal should be to turn the accelerated test campaign into a winning campaign that you can scale until your ads begin to experience ad fatigue. A common mistake advertisers will make is taking the winning ad combination and starting a new campaign, which will completely reset learning.

In order for you to be successful with the accelerated testing strategy (or any other type of test campaign), you have to have accurate ad and sales data to identify what ads are working and what ads are not working. You can not rely on the native ad platforms to report back data correctly as a result of iOS 14. Google Analytics will help you get accurate ad attribution on roughly 60-65% of your purchases, but in order to have full visibility, you need an ad attribution solution like **Cometly**.



CHAPTER 4

How To Scale Winners Using Accurate Data

- Scaling winning ads
- How Cometly helps brands scale ads profitably

Scaling winning ads

When it comes to scaling your ads, you have a few different options available to you. Let's say you have two new winning ad combinations, and you have 5 different ad sets running for each combination.

You have three different options:

1. Vertical Scale
2. Horizontal Scale
3. Hybrid Scale: Mix of Vertical & Horizontal Scaling

Vertical scaling is when you increase the budget on an already successful ad set. When vertically scaling, you can increase the budget 20% - 50% every day or every 48 hours. Everytime you increase the budget on the ad set, you are increasing the size of the audience, which means the ad platforms are going to display your ads to a bigger pocket of traffic or audience. We recommend that you increase the budget every 48 hours because it can be worthwhile for you to let ads run and get data in that new pocket of traffic. Though you can successfully scale ads vertically, vertical scaling has its limitations:

- You are relying on fewer ad sets to consistently generate results.
- If your ad sets are at higher budgets, when they have a few days of bad performance it can dip into profits very fast.

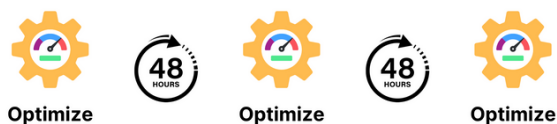
Horizontal scaling is the most common, and most recommended ad scaling strategy. It entails duplicating already successful ad sets, keeping the budget the same, and seeing if you can get better performing ad sets in that same audience. It also offers you the ability to duplicate already successful ad sets and change the targeting to see if you can reach a new pocket of traffic where your ads are getting optimal ROAS. Horizontal scaling has very few limitations compared to vertical scaling and helps you keep the costs more controlled, while giving you the ability to make ad optimization decisions on a variety of ad sets compared to just a single ad set.

We like to compare the way hedge funds manage a portfolio of investments to horizontal scaling. Hedge funds will have a large quantity of small investments to diversify risk and see consistent gains. Some investments will underperform and some investments will outperform. Ultimately the goal is to have consistent asset growth over periods of time. With horizontal scaling you will have a large quantity of ad sets at low budgets, with the desired result of having consistent optimal ROAS. When you have many ad sets active at the same time, you will have days where 40% of the ad sets will underperform, but 60% outperform. And days where 60% underperform, and 40% outperform. The more profitable ad sets that you have active,

the more consistency you will have with ad profitability and performance.

The hybrid strategy is what we recommend that involves initially duplicating ad sets 3-5 times and everytime a new ad set that was duplicated receives two purchases at optimal ROAS, duplicate that ad set 3-5 times. If you continuously repeat that cycle, you will find yourself with a large quantity of ad sets that are consistently producing optimal ROAS.

Where the hybrid strategy becomes 'hybrid' is when you are optimizing, you can increase or decrease the budget vertically. While optimizing, you will be making decisions on the ad sets every 48 hours of either turning the ad set off, not touching it, decreasing the ad set budget, or increasing the ad set budget.



It's very important to analyze the data from the last 3, 5, and 7 days to make these critical ad optimization decisions. Using a tool like Cometly, you can view the daily performance breakdown on a day-by-day basis.

Daily Performance Breakdown

The daily breakdown feature inside the ads manager provides you with a level of insight you will not get anywhere else. In 1 click you can analyze a day-by-day performance breakdown of your campaign, ad set or ad. This report provides you with amazing insight to see how well an ad is trending on a daily basis.

2023-02-03	3.37
2023-02-02	3.87
2023-02-01	2.88
2023-01-31	3.79
2023-01-30	3.5
2023-01-29	4.62
2023-01-28	3.85

How Cometly helps brands scale ads profitably

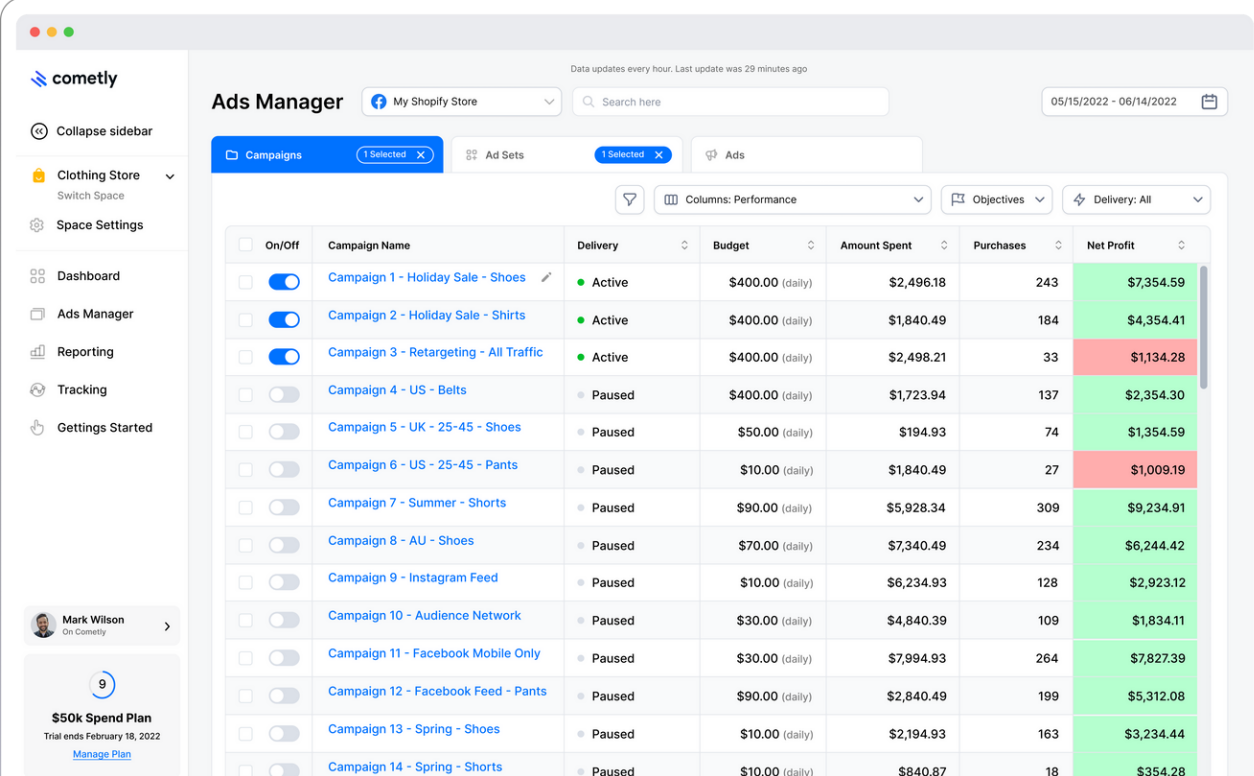
While running social ads for your DTC ecommerce brand, if you are seeing between 50-65% of ad attribution in the ad platforms, you need to improve your ad attribution immediately or it will be almost impossible to scale your ad campaigns.

Poor ad attribution will inhibit your ability to:

1. Identify the true ad performance of winning ads during testing
2. Justify scaling winning ads (horizontally or vertically)

Cometly is a tool that helps advertisers accurately track their digital ad campaigns. Cometly customers use Cometly to:

- **Unlock new visibility** on their ads by getting the true ad performance based on the accurate Gen-2 Comet Pixel.
- **Save wasted ad spend** by proactively turning off unprofitable ads before they overspend and dip into hard earned profits.
- **Increase ad profits** by accelerating winning ad campaigns faster using real time accurate ad & sales data.



The screenshot shows the Cometly Ads Manager interface for 'My Shopify Store'. It displays a table of 14 campaigns. The table columns are: On/Off, Campaign Name, Delivery, Budget, Amount Spent, Purchases, and Net Profit. The campaigns are listed with their respective statuses (Active or Paused), budgets, amounts spent, number of purchases, and net profit. The interface also includes a sidebar with navigation options like Dashboard, Ads Manager, Reporting, Tracking, and Settings. A sidebar menu item 'Clothing Store' is selected. A sidebar menu item 'Space Settings' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Dashboard' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Ads Manager' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Reporting' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Tracking' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Settings Started' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Mark Wilson' is also visible. A sidebar menu item '9' is also visible. A sidebar menu item '\$50k Spend Plan' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Trial ends February 18, 2022' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Manage Plan' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Data updates every hour. Last update was 29 minutes ago' is also visible. A sidebar menu item '05/15/2022 - 06/14/2022' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Search here' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Columns: Performance' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Objectives' is also visible. A sidebar menu item 'Delivery: All' is also visible.

On/Off	Campaign Name	Delivery	Budget	Amount Spent	Purchases	Net Profit
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 1 - Holiday Sale - Shoes	Active	\$400.00 (daily)	\$2,496.18	243	\$7,354.59
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 2 - Holiday Sale - Shirts	Active	\$400.00 (daily)	\$1,840.49	184	\$4,354.41
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 3 - Retargeting - All Traffic	Active	\$400.00 (daily)	\$2,498.21	33	\$1,134.28
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 4 - US - Belts	Paused	\$400.00 (daily)	\$1,723.94	137	\$2,354.30
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 5 - UK - 25-45 - Shoes	Paused	\$50.00 (daily)	\$194.93	74	\$1,354.59
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 6 - US - 25-45 - Pants	Paused	\$10.00 (daily)	\$1,840.49	27	\$1,009.19
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 7 - Summer - Shorts	Paused	\$90.00 (daily)	\$5,928.34	309	\$9,234.91
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 8 - AU - Shoes	Paused	\$70.00 (daily)	\$7,340.49	234	\$6,244.42
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 9 - Instagram Feed	Paused	\$10.00 (daily)	\$6,234.93	128	\$2,923.12
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 10 - Audience Network	Paused	\$30.00 (daily)	\$4,840.39	109	\$1,834.11
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 11 - Facebook Mobile Only	Paused	\$30.00 (daily)	\$7,994.93	264	\$7,827.39
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 12 - Facebook Feed - Pants	Paused	\$90.00 (daily)	\$2,840.49	199	\$5,312.08
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 13 - Spring - Shoes	Paused	\$10.00 (daily)	\$2,194.93	163	\$3,234.44
<input type="checkbox"/>	Campaign 14 - Spring - Shorts	Paused	\$10.00 (daily)	\$840.87	18	\$354.28

By using Cometly, advertisers can ensure that they are spending their money on ads that are actually effective, rather than wasting their money on ads that are not performing well. In addition, by optimizing their ads based on click-through conversion attribution, advertisers can target their ads to the right audience and improve their chances of converting them into customers.

Start 14-day free trial

no credit card required