INSENSE + revealbot

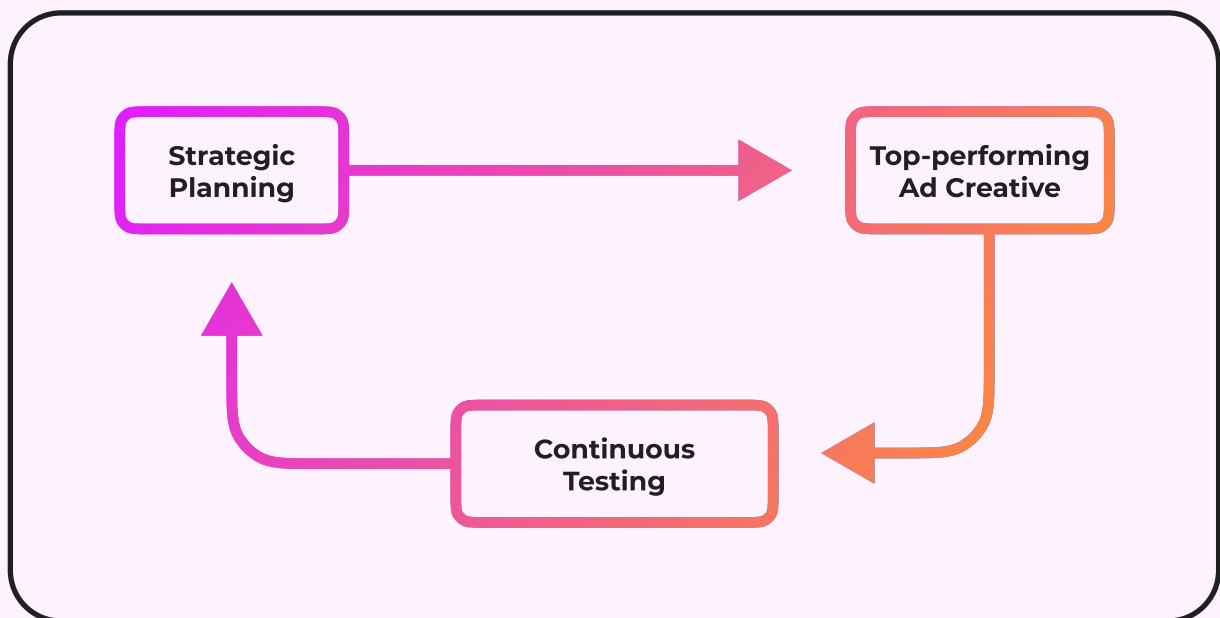# THE ART AND SCIENCE OF AD CREATIVE FOR ECOMMERCE

Stand out from your competition with scroll-stopping creative that drives interest, engagement, and action!

Contents

The 3 Pillars of Successful Paid Social Campaigns

When you zoom out on the social advertising metrics of successful eCommerce brands, you'll find **three things in common.**

Successful eCommerce brands aren't all using 6-second videos, they're not all switching to Snapchat ads, and they're not all using Lookalike audiences...

In fact, none of them are following a rigid advertising formula.

Rather, successful eCommerce brands are using the three-part framework above to create winning paid social campaigns in spite of all the volatility

on the various social media networks. The reason a framework works better than a strict recipe is that it allows brands to utilize their strengths and competitive advantages in a way that will resonate with their audiences.

In this guide, we're going to unpack the step-by-step process that successful eCommerce brands are using to drive product discovery, establish awareness of problems/benefits, and convert views into clicks and clicks into customers.

We'll cover overviews of the planning, analytics, and testing processes and provide a massively thorough guide on how to produce high-performing ad creative.

Let's get started!

Planning Your Paid Social Campaign

More clicks, more traffic, more sales—every single eCommerce brand pretty much has the same top-level goals for their paid social campaigns.

What many don't realize, however, is that success with paid social advertising is less about creating one perfect ad and more about **finding winning combinations of an audience, creative, channel, and products over time.**

Goal

What goals (business-wise and campaign-wise) is a business going to achieve?

Audience

Who does the business want to reach out to?

Ad Creative

What will the ads be about?

The best advertising campaign is a winning combination of all these components.

For instance, the **best-selling items on TikTok generally cost less than $50.** Perhaps it's because the platform attracts a younger audience, perhaps it's that ad formats encourage impulse buys, or more likely, it's a combination of those things.

The point is paid social campaigns rely heavily on how those elements interact with each other in combination.

Therefore the planning phase of your paid social efforts come down to the following steps that you must do before you start designing ads.

1. Identify goals, audiences, and channels.
2. Determine paid social strategy by ad type.
3. Define ad creative strategy.

Identify Goals, Audiences and Channels	Determine Paid Social Strategy by Ad Type	Define Ad Creative Strategy

Think of it like preparing for a basketball game. The first step is to make sure you've got all the players, equipment, and rules. Then, you need a coaching strategy to get the most out of your team so you can win the game.

Let's tackle each planning objective one at a time.

Identify Goals, Audiences, and Channels

Before you start writing **creative briefs** or renting camera equipment, it's super important to take a step back and think about a few of the larger pieces of your overall plan.
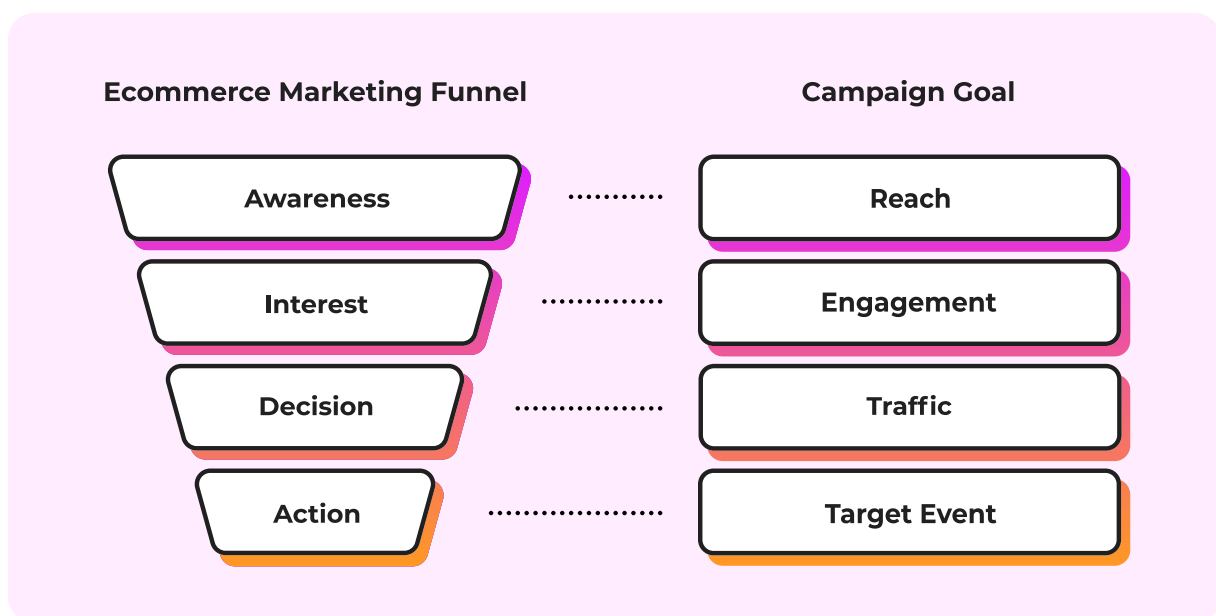
For example, it is not a secret that you have to test different ad creatives in order to find a winning one. So, in this case, you might need to invest time into building partnerships with creators who produce creator-generated content for your ads or renting a studio space and professional photographers to make perfect shots of your product.

Take some time to carefully consider the following four top-level components of your plan.

1. Goals

Ads cost money, and similar to the stock market, there is some risk that your investment may not pay off in the end. But advertising isn't just a pass or fail—there is some nuance to your success.

Your goals need to be mapped to the consumer buying cycle, shown below.

Ecommerce Marketing Funnel | **Campaign Goal**

Ecommerce Marketing Funnel		Campaign Goal
Awareness	············	Reach
Interest	············	Engagement
Decision	············	Traffic
Action	············	Target Event

While we know that not every single consumer will view your ads in a linear fashion, it's crucial for you to approach your target audience depending on their buyer journey stage to move them down the funnel successfully.

Your goal for sales (the pointy end of the funnel) needs to inform your goals for awareness (the top of the funnel). Setting your goals in this way will also lead to smarter budget decisions.

Here's how to measure the goals you set.

2. Metrics

As discussed above, ads cost money, therefore you do need to measure your paid social campaigns with traditional money metrics. But paid social campaigns can do a lot more for your business than function as simple direct-response tools.

For instance, using your paid social ad budget to grow your email or SMS list then marketing to that audience over time can potentially lead to a higher lifetime customer value.

However, when you zoom in and focus on the metrics specific to ad performance, it's best to use the AIDA framework.

A Attention	I Interest	D Desire	A Action
Metrics	**Metrics**	**Metrics**	**Metrics**
Reach	Average Watch Time	Clicks	Purchase
Impressions	Engagement		Conversion
3-second video views Impressions			
Ad component	**Ad component**	**Ad component**	**Ad component**
Video or image	Video	Headline + Post Copy	Product or landing page fit
Cost	**Cost**	**Cost**	**Cost**
CPU	CPE	CPC	ROAS
CPM			CPA
CPV			
Rate	**Rate**	**Rate**	**Rate**
Frequency	ER	CTR	CR
CTV			

By assigning AIDA metrics to each component of your ad, you can see what you need to change as you go through various iterations on your way to the best possible ad.

Attention

Starting at the top, you first need to look at your reach and impressions—if you don't have an affordable way to reach a lot of people, you'll never make it to the bottom of the funnel.

For video ads, your 3-second video views should be nearly equal to your total views. If they're not, that means people are scrolling past your videos without a second glance, let alone reading the headline or post copy.

If you're not getting enough attention, re-work your video to include a better hook—use color, use motion, use text and animation.

Pay special attention to your CPM—high CPMs indicate weak campaigns. There could be an issue with your targeting, too.

Interest

If you are getting enough attention, the next step is to see if they're hanging around long enough to build interest. **The longer somebody watches your video, the more time you have to deliver your message.**

If they're enjoying the video, they will also start multi-tasking and read your headlines and post copy and make comments and engage (likes, comments, shares, etc.) with the content.

If your audience isn't watching your video past the 3-second mark, consider editing your video with a more attention-grabbing hook at the beginning.

Desire

There's a big difference between passing interest in a product and an actual desire to learn more about it — especially on social media. Desire, in terms of AIDA, can be measured by looking at your clicks.

It varies by product category, market, and seasonality, but **generally, you're going to want your CTR to be above 1%.**

If you're below that, it's time to take a closer look at your headlines and post copy. Go back to your personas and think of new angles that will resonate better with them.

CPC is a math equation that is largely determined by the price of your product, but generally, you want your **CPC to be under $2, and a lot lower if you have an inexpensive product.**

> **CTR is primarily driven by the ad copy. If your CTR is too low, consider editing your ad copy to create a curiosity gap. A "curiosity gap" is a technique that Buzzfeed mastered with its article headlines like "33 Amazingly Useful Websites You Never Knew Existed."**

Build up some value in your ad copy, but don't reveal the answer until the audience clicks through to your landing page.

Action

In eCommerce, an action is a purchase, or in some cases, a soft conversion like email signup. The metrics for action, ROAS, and CPA, are largely driven by the product page or landing page experience, but ads do play a role.

For instance, if you see that two ads that point to the same product page are having disparate results, there is something superior about the setup you've done in one of the ads such as the ad copy or headline.

While your goals may vary depending on which stage of business you're at, you need to be accurately collecting the metrics that will tell you if you're on track to meet them or not.

3. Target Audience and Platforms

This cannot be overstated:

If you want to have success with your paid social campaigns, you need a deep understanding of your target audience.

You can't sell anybody anything without intimate knowledge of their why — the issue they're trying to solve, the image they're trying to project, or the need they're trying to fulfill. This knowledge informs not only your targeting choices, but also your ad creative.

Note — We're not going in-depth on audience targeting from a technical perspective in this guide. Targeting is important, however, and the opinions of media buyers are mixed on strategies such as using broad, interest-based audiences vs. Lookalikes, etc. Add to that the turmoil of the

iOS 14.5 update and you'd have an entire extra guide on just that topic alone! Therefore, for technical guides on how to actually configure audiences, we've selected a few hand-picked resources for you.

- Targeting on Instagram and Facebook
- Targeting on Snapchat
- Targeting on TikTok

Let's tackle these one at a time.

Facebook and Instagram

Until recently, this was one of the more reliable paid social channels for eCommerce. There is still plenty of opportunity for success here! Here are a few general targeting tips:

- **Keep interest-based targeting broad and simple.** The Facebook ads algorithm is super delicate, and adding too many inputs is likely to confuse it and limit your results. Conversion-oriented campaigns typically work best when you give the algorithm some room to explore and find those conversions within broad parameters.
- **Don't invest too heavily in retargeting campaigns**, which have become less reliable. It's always wise to retarget website and app visitors, but if you were counting on those for a large chunk of your revenue (like 40%), you're going to need to focus more on top-of-funnel ads due to the iOS 14.5 update and limitations of retargeting.
- **Take advantage of Engagement custom audiences** (video views, page engagement, etc.). Unlike Pixel-based retargeting audiences that have seen a decline since iOS 14.5, these engagement-based audiences are based on Facebook data. This means as long as a user is logged in, Facebook can still track and use these audiences.
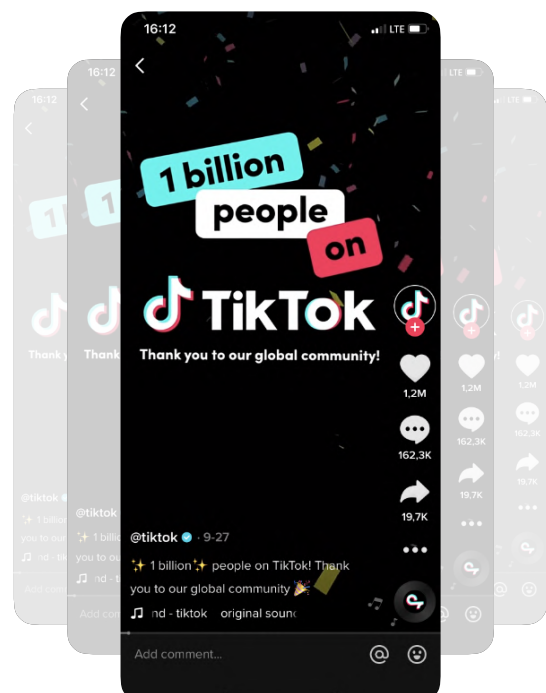
TikTok

TikTok is good for advertising, particularly for businesses that want to reach a wider audience; it's one of the most-used social platforms with a wide variety of demographics.

Source: Statista
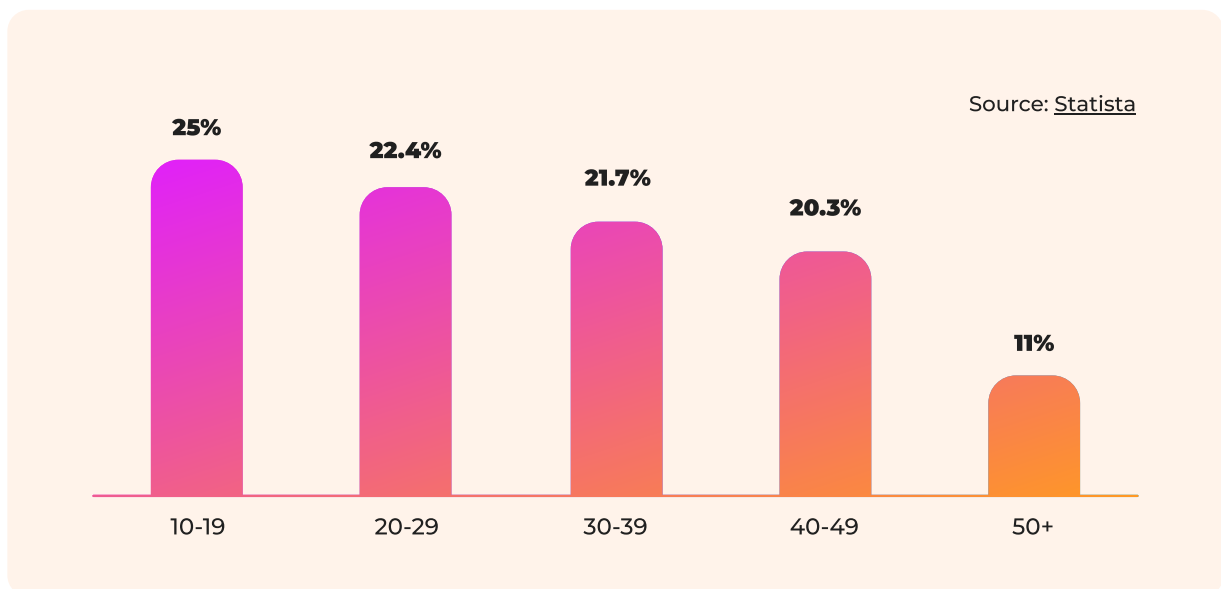
The Chinese app, known as Douyin in its home market and owned by Bytedance, actually revealed recently that it has now **reached over 1 billion monthly active users.**
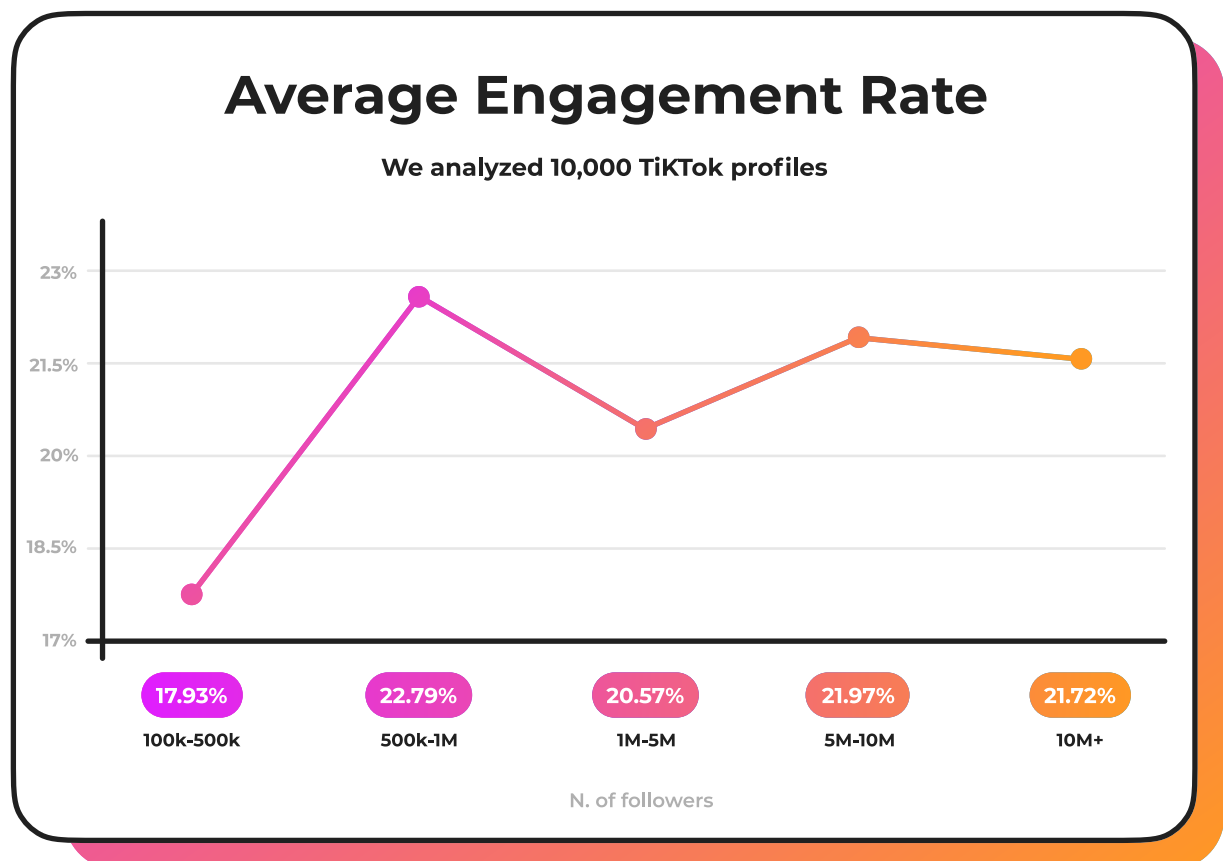
This makes TikTok one of the most-used social media apps, falling just behind Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Therefore, **it's clear that TikTok can be suitable for almost any type of brand**, whether you're aiming at both older and younger audiences.

What's more, the app seems to have the best engagement rates out there, outperforming even the most used platforms such as Instagram.

For example, while the average engagement rate of micro-influencers on Instagram is 3.8%, on TikTok it's as high as 17.9%.

Average Engagement Rate

We analyzed 10,000 TiKTok profiles

| 17.93%	22.79%	20.57%	21.97%	21.72%
100k-500k	500k-1M	1M-5M	5M-10M	10M+

N. of followers

Snapchat

This is the most-used app for individuals aged 12-17, but it's also hugely popular with Millennials and Gen Z. If you're targeting a younger audience, you need Snapchat ads in your marketing mix. The actual targeting options (demographic, psychographic, etc.) in the ads manager are actually fairly limited, which is why your ad creative is so important — more on that in a bit.

Now, let's finish your paid social ad plan strong by choosing the proper ad content strategy.

Define Ad Creative Strategy

The last component of your paid social ad plan is the format of your creative — images, videos, and GIFs. Snapchat is also experimenting with an augmented reality ad unit called a <u>Lens</u>, but it's still developing.

Anyway, we'll keep this short — the most successful campaigns **utilize all formats.** Videos are essential for discovery and engagement purposes, while images can be useful in converting previously engaged audiences by showing a product in every detail. You absolutely need to plan for a mix of media formats from the beginning. That said, here are a few additional considerations for media formats.
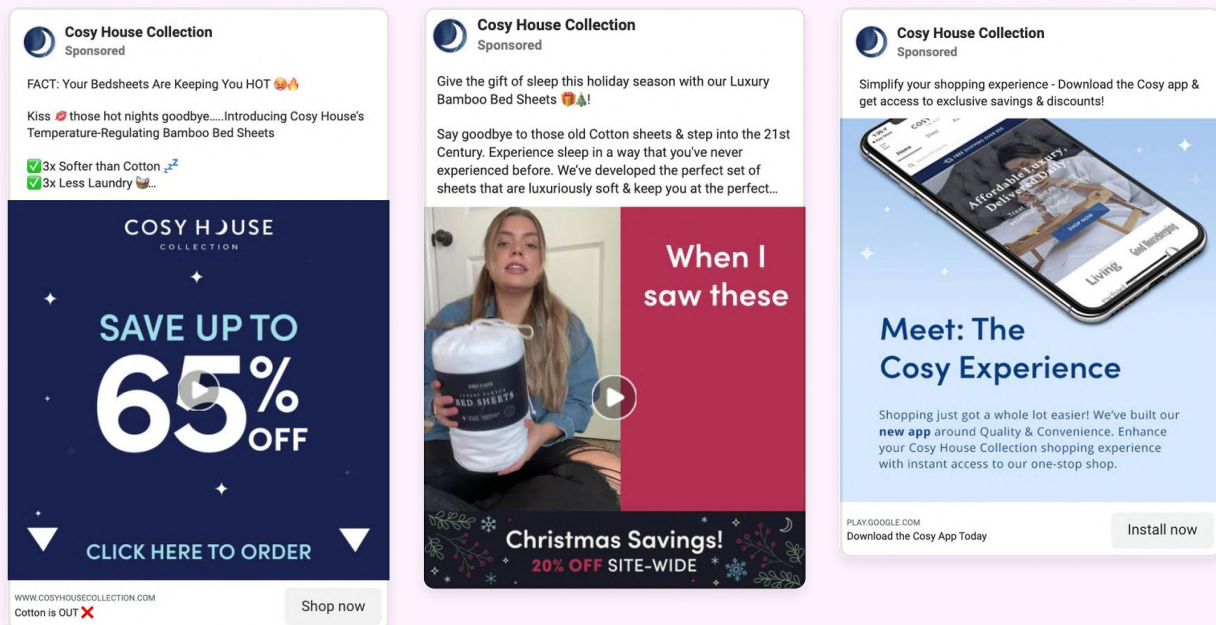
Source: Facebook Ads Library

Videos

We know you can execute :30 and :60-second videos, but how well can you tell a story in 6-10 seconds? Master this short-form video format if you want to maximize your results with paid social ads.

Images

It's great to balance your glossy product shots with some lifestyle photos. Don't be afraid to show your products out in the wild.

Even though there are the endless number of ad creative types, at the very highest level, there are basically two ad creative types.

- Traditional ads (professional photos/videos/graphics).
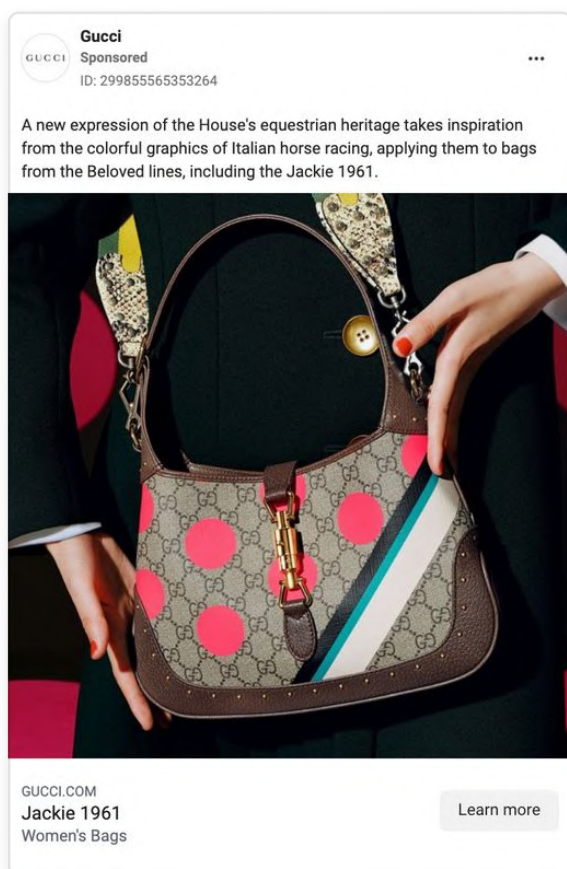- Creator-generated content ads (also known as user-generated content).

Let's take a closer look at each.

Related reading: Traditional vs. User-Generated Content (UGC): Which One Should You Focus On?

Traditional Ads

A "traditional ad" is generally something that is produced in-house (or contracted through an agency) that is obviously created from the brand's point of view. We've all seen and used these types of paid social ads for years.

Even with the rise of creator-generated content, there is still a time and place for more traditional ads.
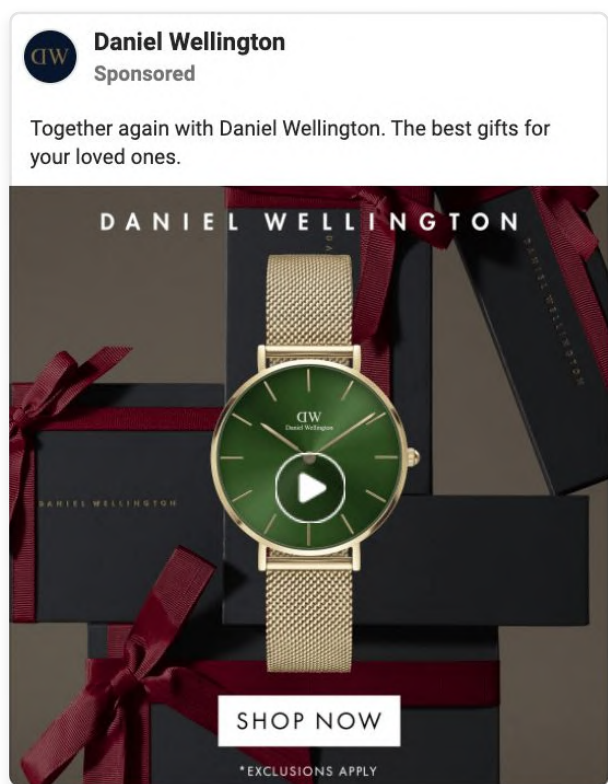

Source: Facebook Ads Library

For instance, when you're looking to capture attention, in some cases nothing beats showing your product in ideal lighting, i.e. a photo produced in studio conditions. In this way, traditional ads allow your brand

to make a great first impression.

Additionally, traditional ads can be useful when showing off features or product variations that require a lot of detail and specificity.

Creator-generated Content Ads

On the other side of the coin, we have an **ad content type that doesn't really look like an ad at all.**

Let's say you need a review or testimonial for part of your paid social funnel. What do you think will resonate with your audience better—a highly polished video with a paid actor reading from a teleprompter, or a raw reaction from somebody that looks and talks like them shot on an iPhone?
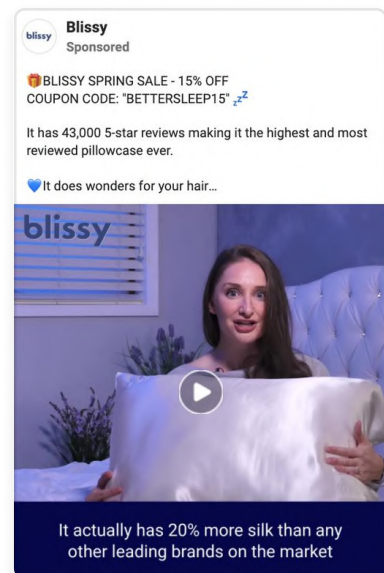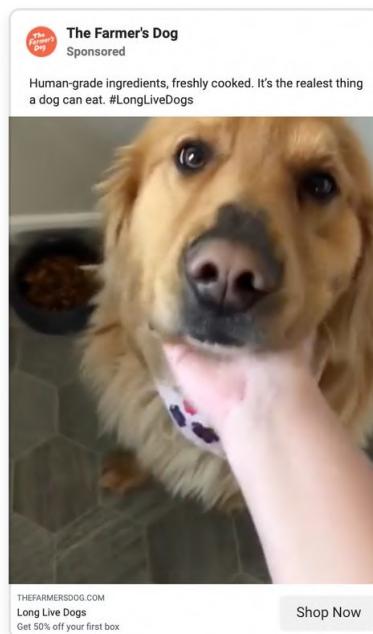
Source: Facebook Ads Library

We're talking about creator-generated content (CGC, also known as user-generated content (UGC)), a proven method for converting social media users to customers.

71%

of users have taken shopping action as a result of seeing content posted by creators.

Source: TikTok Inspiration

Why is CGC so Popular?

😍
Represents social proof

🪄
Creative, engaging

🎍
Look natural to an organic feed

But if you're going to incorporate creators and CGC into your advertising campaign, **you'll need to start building those relationships** before you can even think about editing their content.

You'll need to become familiar with the following tools and practices in order to collaborate effectively with creators.

So, here are the relevant readings for you to get started.

- **Facebook's Branded Content Ads Tool**
- **The ultimate guide to influencer whitelisting**
- **Step-by-step guide to TikTok Spark Ads**
- **How to make dark posts**

Because the ad creative strategy will influence whether you need to rent studio space or begin the process of building relationships with creators, this is why understanding what type of campaign you want to run beforehand is important.

As we'll cover later in this guide, testing is crucial as well — image vs. video, traditional ad vs. CGC ad, and so on.

Make sure that you have from 5 to 10 fresh creatives every week to find out what resonates best with your audiences.

Let's move on to the main event—how to generate high-quality ad creative for your paid social campaigns!

How to Produce a Scroll-stopping Ad Creative that Drives Interest, Engagement, and Action
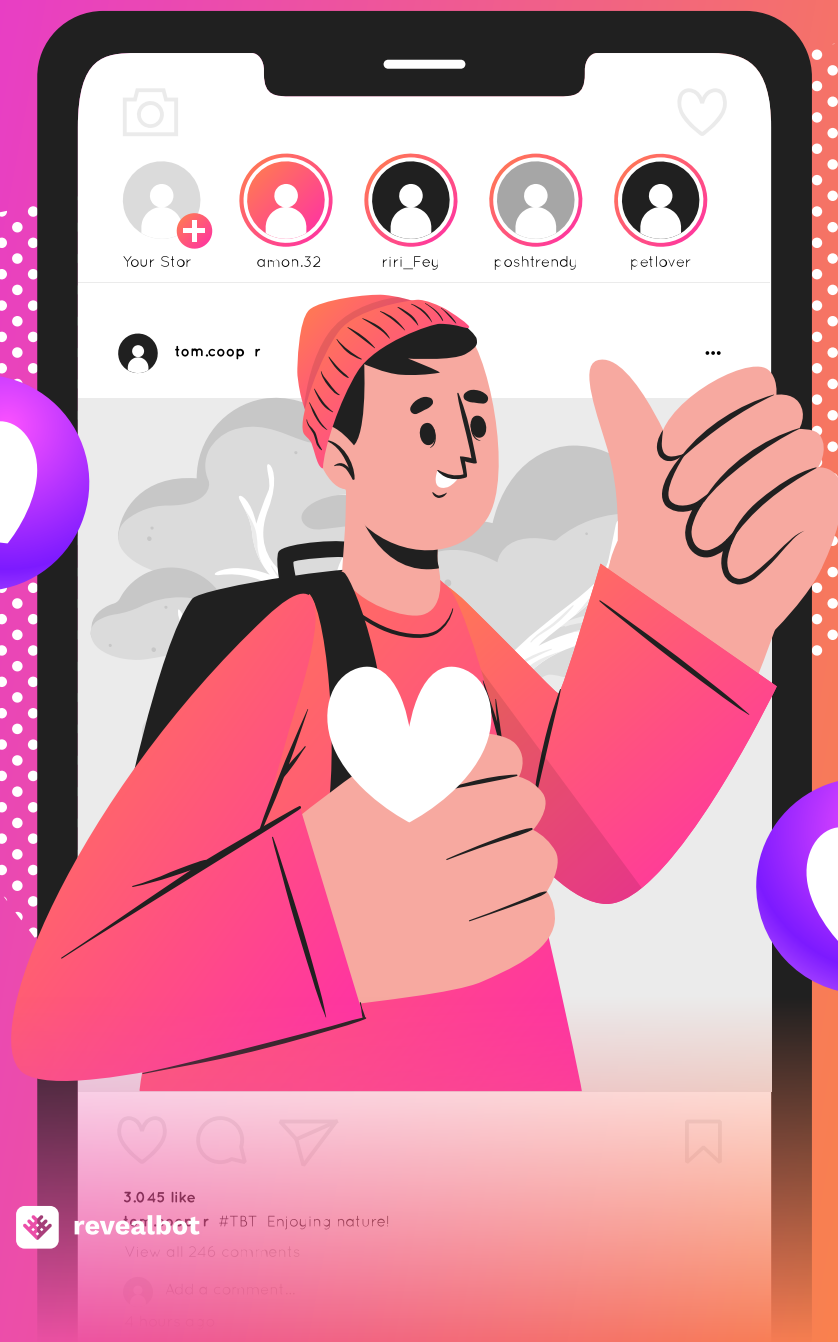
Oh yeah — now for the fun part!

Right now, you have more creative options open to you than ever before.

Images, slideshows, GIFs, long-form videos, short videos, highly polished videos, CGC videos...

There's never been a better time for creative minds to use a diverse set of mediums to deliver messages to their target audiences.

Ad creative is absolutely critical for success, especially given some of the new targeting limitations on account of iOS 14.5. Using a variety of creative— from videos to images to slideshows to CGC — is a must for brands to get results from paid social campaigns.

In this section we're going to unpack what's working right now on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. We'll cover creative strategy, but also provide some highly actionable tips for your copywriters, graphic designers, video editors, creative strategists, and content creators.

CGC as your #1 Priority for Ads Creative

Three years ago, cutting-edge brands began using user-generated content in their advertising campaigns. Today, the secret is out and nearly every brand is utilizing this tactic. Why?

Because according to Social Media Today, 93% of consumers say UGC is helpful when they are considering a purchase!

93%

of consumers say UGC is helpful when they are considering a purchase!

Shopify reported that ads with UGC received 4x higher click-through rates plus a 50% drop in cost-per-click compared to other types of ads.

"As an agency that has scaled all types of eCommerce brands, we know how important and vital good creatives are for scaling. With the amount of spend we manage at our agency, we wouldn't be as successful as we are today if we didn't continue to push and test new ideas. At the same time, why fix something that isn't broken? Without getting too deep into our creative strategy, I'll share some strategies that have worked well with the brands that we work with.

We've tested everything from brand-created video content to all different types of user-generated content (UGC). From our experience, we can tell you that we've seen the same results or better using UGC video ads compared to working with a creative studio, and UGC only costs a fraction of what studios charge. By using creatives from UGC video ad vs. a brand-created video, we have saved our clients 6-7 figures monthly."

Emanuele Maragno
Co-Founder & Facebook Advertising Strategist
at Ecom House, an eCommerce scaling agency

"We found that using UGC content has drastically cut down our CPCs and increased our CTRs at all stages of the funnel.

In this current marketing climate, you need to cut costs where you can. And that starts with creating ads that are going to resonate more with your potential customer."

Ash Melwani
CMO at Obvi, a health and beauty company.

It's important for consumers to see 'the real thing,' as opposed to one of the fake cheeseburgers from a McDonald's ad that we all know is totally inedible due to all the glue holding the lettuce on juuuuuust right. We want to see your products in real-life scenarios and to hear them reviewed by third parties.

While **we do highly recommend engaging with content creators to source this type of video**, be sure to script your videos or use a creative brief to ensure they still follow the proper framework for performance content (hook, education, CTA).

The beauty of raw material produced by a content creator is that you can work with the editor to create the many variations of ready-to-use ads by experimenting with elements like subtitles, music, captions, CTA buttons, etc.

Goodbye UGC - Hello CGC!

Marketers love acronyms, don't we? :)

For the sake of clarity, let's quickly clear up a few definitions for UGC, IGC, and CGC.

User-generated content (UGC)

UGC is actually the oldest marketing asset of this mix. UGC is defined as any digital content (images, videos, text, and audio) that has been posted online by a user. There are dozens of examples of UGC, but here are just a few:

- Written product reviews
- Fanfiction
- Custom graphics and memes
- Photo contest submissions
- YouTube videos

UGC can either be solicited by brands through a mechanism like a contest or can appear online unsolicited like a travel blog post. It's been around for more than 20 years, but really took off after social media sites emerged with Web 2.0.


Source: Instagram

Influencer-generated content (IGC)

Fast forward a few years as social media sites became ubiquitous and matured from a business and monetization perspective — marketers quickly realized they could use social media as a channel for celebrity endorsement or **use the influential power of established influencers to impact buying decisions of their followers and "influencer marketing" was born.**

IGC is typically content that is solicited by brands from influencers for marketing purposes. Examples of IGC include:

- Sponsored social media content
- Social media takeovers
- Affiliate marketing
- Sponsored blog posts
- Guest blogging
- Brand ambassador programs

As more and more people got involved in influencer marketing, even those without any type of celebrity status, a new genre of content arose
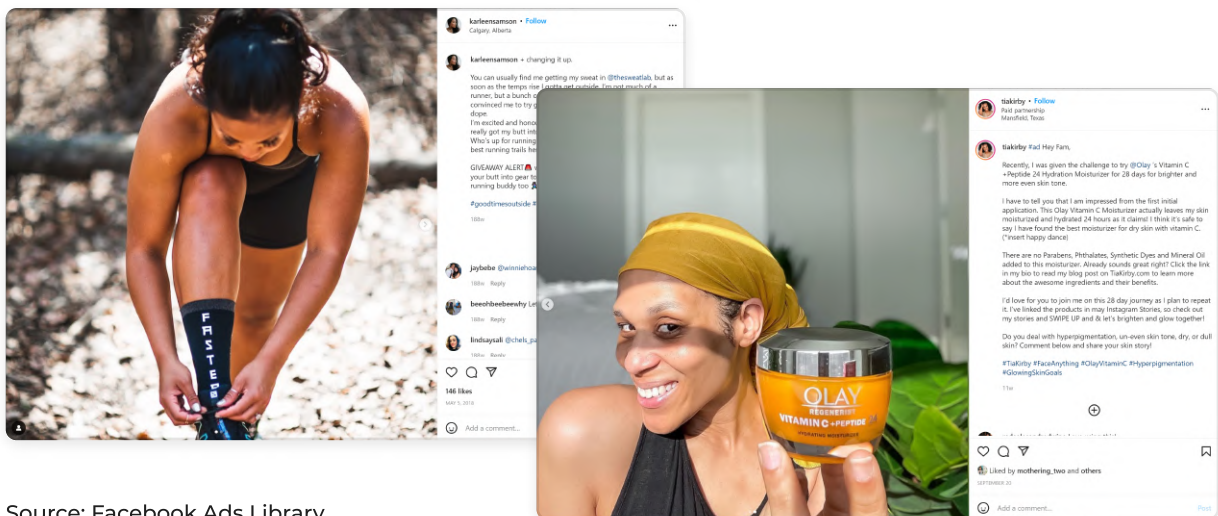
Source: Facebook Ads Library

Creator-generated content (CGC)

The newest acronym on the block, CGC is an umbrella term for content that is **created by either product users, creators, influencers, or anyone in between** so long as it's not the brand itself. But it can be sponsored by a brand, of course.

CGC = UGC + IGC

To be clear, however, CGC is more than just a wording choice. CGC represents the natural evolution of how content is created online, how creators build relationships with their audience, and how brands interact with those creators.

Here's another way to think about it.

How it started - Influencer marketing

As a result, people started focusing on producing better content instead of gaining more followers, and the creator economy was born.

In order to deal with smaller audience sizes, many marketers began partnering with multiple creators, some even forming official ambassador programs. And given how much effort it takes to manually discover, connect, and collaborate with multiple creators, platforms like Insense were created to help marketers scale their CGC efforts.

The quality of the content was secondary, as well as the engagement with that content.

Source: Instagram: @kendalljenner

The influencer marketing campaign promoting the spectacularly failed Fyre Festival is a perfect example of this. Big-name influencers were paid to **simply post an orange square on their Instagram profiles with the hashtag #FyreFestival**. Kendall Jenner was reportedly paid $250,000 for that single post, which she ended up deleting! While the content value of an orange square is negligible, the timing, status, and reach of the influencers created the desired outcome — massive interest in the event.

The downside is that when the event turned out to be a huge scam, none of the influencers who promoted it took any accountability for their involvement.

This created a lack of trust between audience and influencer and led to widespread skepticism of "influencer marketing."

Influencer marketing was essentially just celebrity endorsements on social media.

How it's going - The creator economy

The first big shift for influencer marketing came when marketers changed their metric for success — rather than focus on reach, they switched to engagement. This shift led to the realization that "micro-influencers," creators on social media with no celebrity status, were actually getting more engagement with their content. This was due to the relationships they had with their smaller but more niche audiences.

> **Marketers changed their metric for success — rather than focus on reach, they switched to engagement.**

As a result, people started focusing on producing better content instead of gaining more followers, and the creator economy was born.

In order to deal with smaller audience sizes, many marketers began partnering with multiple creators, some even forming official ambassador programs. And given how much effort it takes to manually discover, connect, and collaborate with multiple creators, platforms like Insense were created to help marketers scale their CGC efforts.

Source: Instagram: @tiakirby

Additionally, brands began bringing their paid social expertise into their creator collaborations via whitelisting. When a brand whitelists a creator it's able to run paid social ads that originate from the accounts of the creators instead of the brand. This can lead to more effective ad campaigns.

Related Reading: [The ultimate guide to influencer whitelisting](#)

The process of manually whitelisting multiple creators, however, was time-consuming and tedious. And again, this is where CGC platforms like **Insense** can save marketers a lot of time and effort by reducing the entire whitelisting process to only a few clicks.

The creator economy is an industry of people who create and monetize their content, as well as the companies and tools built to serve them.

The benefits of CGC

Brands are utilizing CGC more and more — in fact, 42% of marketers said CGC is a vital component of their marketing strategy (TINT). CGC comes with several built-in benefits.

Why is CGC so Popular?

| Authentic | Brand loyalty and trust | Cost-effective | Scales content production | Leads to better ads |

CGC is authentic

Shoppers crave reviews before making an online purchase, and CGC takes that concept and enhances it with multimedia. It's still a regular person — or a non-celebrity with niche expertise — making the review, but now it has more detail in the form of audio and video so shoppers can get a sense of what the product is really like.

CGC has built-in authenticity because the brand doesn't have full control over the content—sure, they partnered and likely paid the creator, but the viewers know the creator wouldn't allow the brand to completely airbrush the content.

93% of customers believe UGC to be very helpful and vital when making a purchasing decision

CGC encourages brand loyalty and trust

According to a Facebook study, 38% of respondents say that they stay more loyal to a brand if it is promoted by creators. This means CGC ads are not only a good way to introduce a new customer to a brand, but they're also a good way to keep them as a customer. And everyone knows a loyal customer base is a key to long-term growth as a DTC brand.

38% say that they stay more loyal to a brand if it is promoted by creators through CGC

CGC is cost-effective

Content creation can be expensive — you need a strategist, a copywriter, a designer, a videographer, and access to locations. All of those elements cost money.

Or, if you're using CGC, you can pass all those responsibilities to a creator — or multiple creators — for a fraction of the cost. And because creators will usually be contracted for the work, as opposed to hired as full-time employees, your company liability is lower, too.

CGC scales content production

Every media buyer knows you need a variety of ads to be successful on paid social platforms, but generating tons of content in-house is expensive and time-consuming. **With CGC, however, you can turn one creative brief into 30 pieces of content from 30 different creators in a few minutes.**

There are tons of ways to obtain CGC, from contests to using a CGC platform.

Related reading: How to Get High-Quality CGC at Scale

CGC leads to better ads

According to Shopify, the #1 eCommerce platform, ads with CGC received 4x higher click-through rates plus a 50% drop in cost-per-click compared to other types of ads. Additionally, Jukin Media

4X

higher CTR

found that ads featuring UGC garnered 73% more positive comments on social networks than traditional ads.

In short, CGC is a vital component to your advertising mix due to the numerous benefits it provides. Now let's take a look at the various types of CGC available to you.

Types of CGC for social ads

Before you start collecting your CGC, it's a good idea to understand the basic types of ads you can make with it. Many of these will likely look familiar to you, but the examples can be super helpful as you write your creative briefs.

Source: socialsavannah

Customer Testimonial

- Looks like a real customer sharing their experience, which is social proof
- Strong eye-contact makes tick
- Share the genuine feelings
- Drives desire to try a product to get the same results
- Captions for sound-off experience
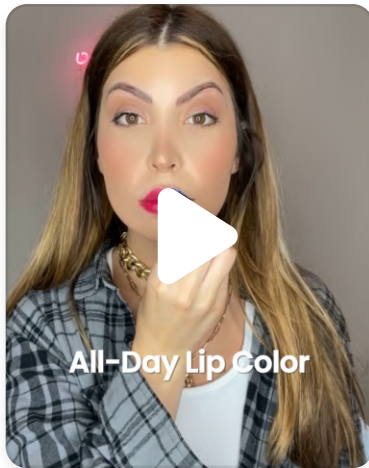
Source: Facebook Ads Library
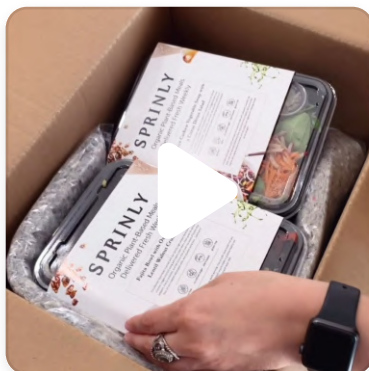
Testimonial Mashups

- Makes tick because of fast video change
- Many customers prove a product effect
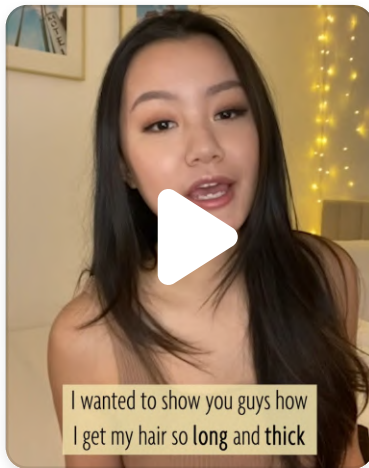
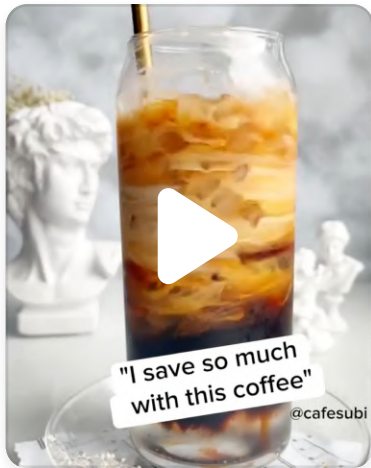
Source: Facebook Ads Library

How-to

- Engaging life story that makes a client watch till the end
- Clearly explains how a product works
- Drives the desire to try it too

Source: Facebook Ads Library

Product Unboxing

Unboxing videos can be particularly effective CGC because it encourages people to watch until the very end.

Product-focused Demo

- Showcases a product in an engaging way
- Demonstrate the ease of using a product
- Genuine feelings of testing a product
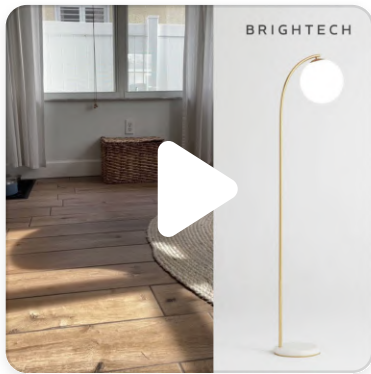
Source: Facebook Ads Library

CGC Combined with a static Image

The use of CGC drives interest and engagement while a static image presents a product in the perfect angle.

Source: socialsavannah
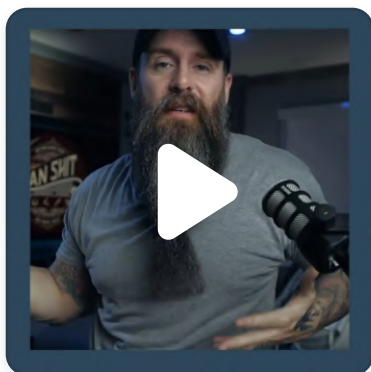
CGC mixed with a brand video

- Showcases products
- Drives social proof

Source: Facebook Ads Library

Now that you have a sense of what types of CGC ads are available, let's cover a step-by-step guide on your next steps.

How to get started with CGC
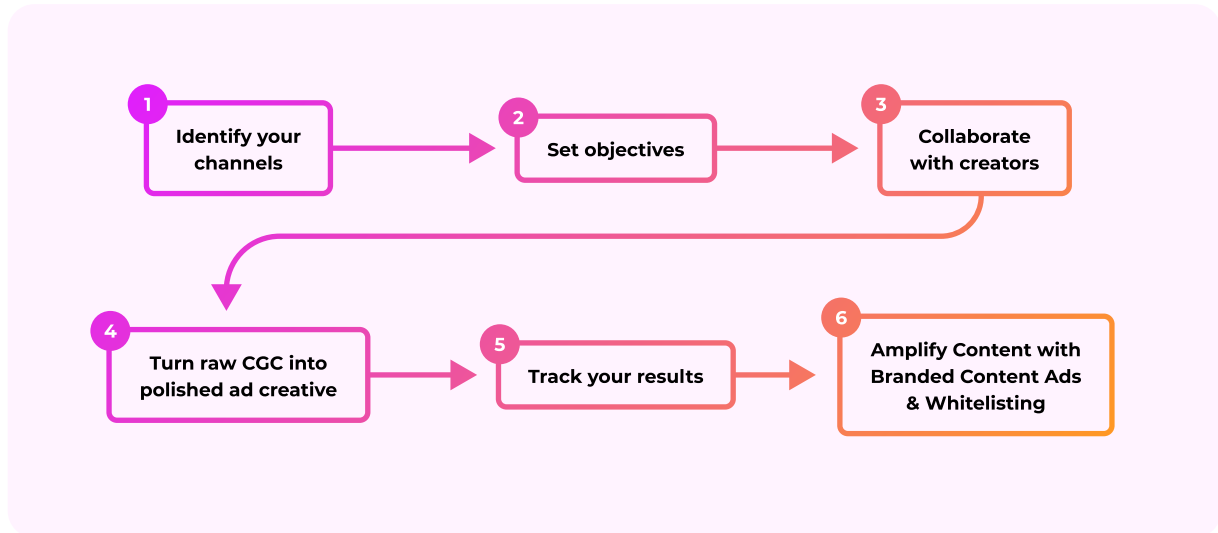
Step #1: Identify your channels

Following through from your initial campaign planning phase, which channels will be best for your brand? TikTok has a younger audience than Instagram, but the best-selling products are generally less than $50. More than likely you'll want to explore more than one channel.

Pro tip: Spend a significant amount of time browsing through each channel you're considering. Pay special attention to the ads you see, but also try and get a sense of the 'mood' of the content being published on each channel.

Step #2: Set objectives

In addition to the campaign goals we covered in the planning section, you're also going to want to set some CGC-specific goals.

For instance, you might set an objective to have active engagements with 10 new creators. Because you will not sign contracts with all the creators you approach, you're likely going to have to reach out to 30+ creators in order to find 10 that fit your brand and budget.

Other CGC-specific objectives you'll want to consider:

- The total number of CGC pieces obtained
- The balance between photo and video
- The diversity of your creator pool

Step #3: Collaborate with creators

Once you've identified the channels and the objectives you're going after, it's time to dig in and start the collaboration process. Collaborating with creators is generally broken down into a few more steps:

1. Create prospecting list
2. Send outreach emails/DMs
3. Negotiate compensation
4. Provide creative brief
5. Obtain, review, and post content

As we mentioned in the previous step, you're going to need to contact 3-5x more creators than you'll end up working with. Between researching

their post history, the back-and-forth via email, compensating them, and tracking the results, collaborating with creators is like having two full-time jobs!
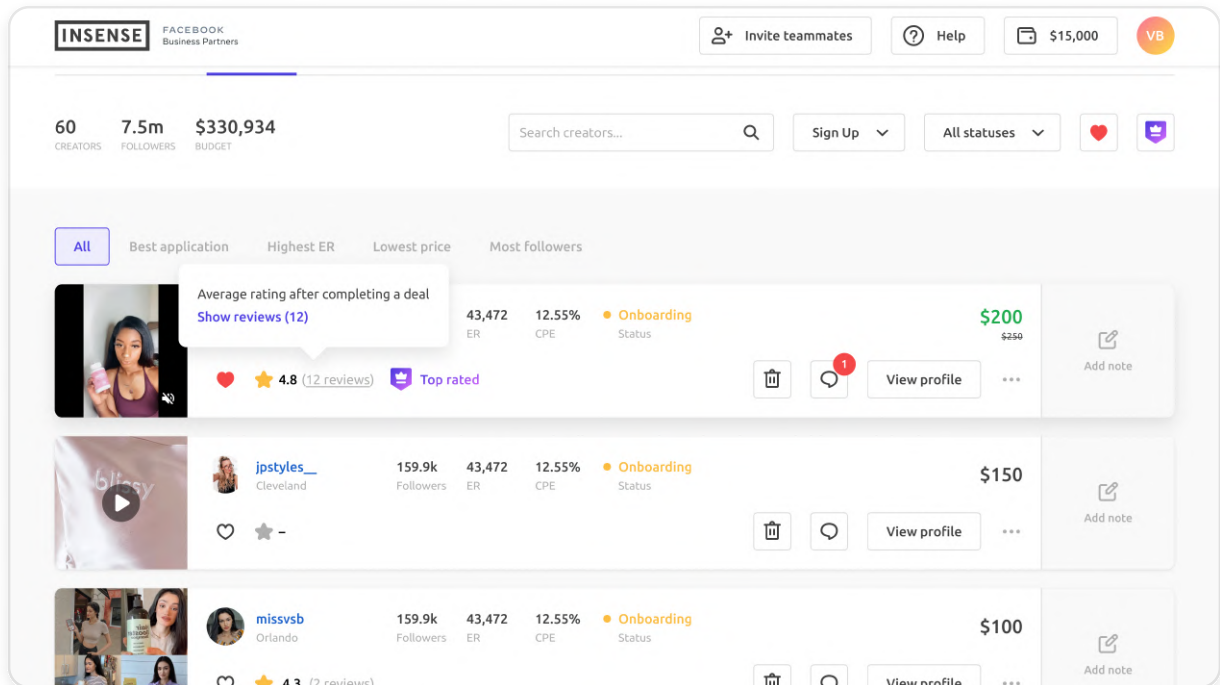
Insense Platform

Step #4: Turn raw CGC into polished ad creative

While the content that you get from your creators may be spectacular, it usually needs some light editing to ensure it will make a good ad. Here are a few general tips for editing the CGC you receive to make fully optimized ads:

- Crop photos and video to platform specifications
- Trim length of videos to platform specifications
- Add text overlay and captions (Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat)
- Combine CGC with traditional content produced in-house or with agency
- Add logos, CTA, end cards

Once you've polished the CGC into optimized ads, turn them on!
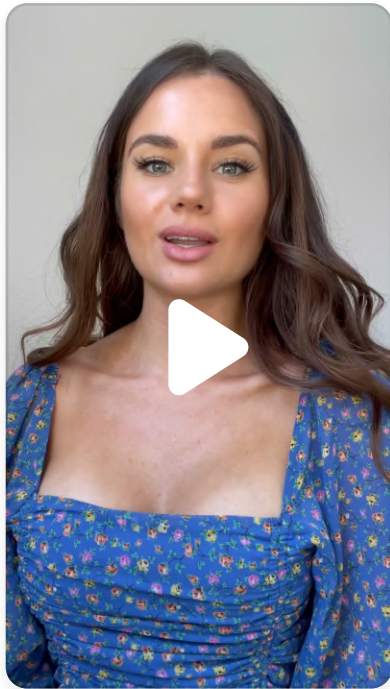
Source: Insense Platform
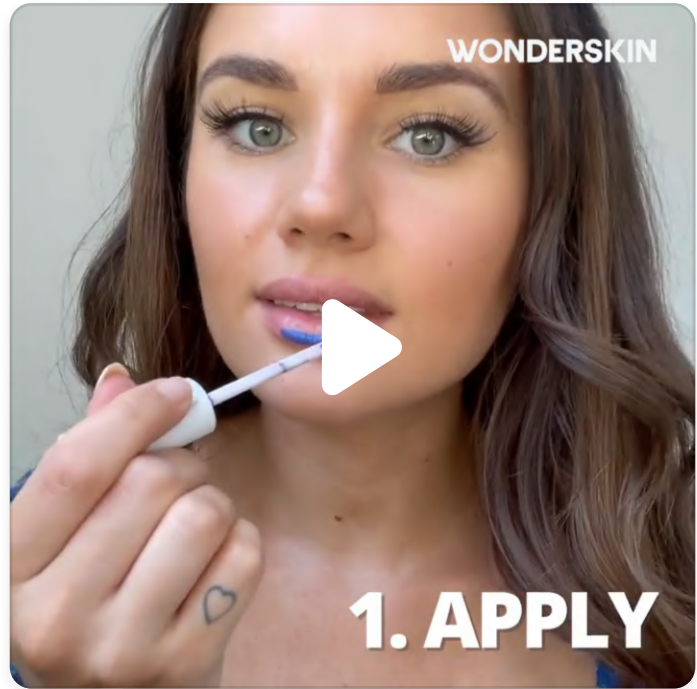
Source: Facebook Ads Library

Step #5: Track your results

The last step is to review your results. We'll discuss a robust testing framework in the next section, but you're also going to want to monitor your CGC-specific objectives. How many pieces of content did you receive? Did all of that get published? Does the content from any particular creator stand out, and if so, why?

Step #6: Amplify Content with Branded Content Ads & Whitelisting

Consumers are increasingly drawn to purchasing products that have the endorsement of real people with real takes — content creators.

> **"In fact, 71% of consumers took shopping action after seeing UGC from content creators in an ad. "**

But you can actually do better than just re-purposing CGC into an ad — you can actually have creators publishing the ads from their accounts.

The method goes beyond just using the content from your content creator partners and actually bring their accounts into your advertising campaigns through whitelisting or Facebook's Branded Content Ads Tool.

Each of these methods provides a way for you to have deeper collaborations with your creative partners and potentially unlock a more profitable ROAS. Whitelisting gives you access to run ads from their accounts, while the Branded Content Tool allows them to identify you as their advertising partner in their content.

Whitelisting vs Branded Content Tool / Boosting

Insense's Whitelist feature lets you easily choose the creators and content you want to use for whitelisted ads.

Features	Whitelisting	Branded Content/ Boosting
Leverage just content (no organic post) for a whitelisted ad using the creators identity at the ad level.	✔	✖
Edit ad copy & adjust ad creative	✔	✖
A/B test ad copy optionality at the ad level	✔	✖
Change placements (for example: leverage feed content for story placement)	✔	✖
Use creator content & identity for all FB campaign objectives	✔	✖
Use creator organic audience (from IG/FB) as a source foraudience creation & LAL building in Ad Account	✔	✖
Ability to amplify content in Facebook Ads Manager	✔	✔
View ad analytics & reporting from creator ads	✔	✔

Related Reading: [The ultimate guide to influencer whitelisting](#)

Scale Winning Ads With a Strategic Testing Framework

As you're reading through this guide you may have noticed something: You need to create a ton of ads!

From professional product photos to selfie-style testimonial videos sourced from creators, it's vital to your success that you have a high volume of diverse ad content.

And there's a very good reason for that. According to proprietary data from Facebook, the fastest-growing advertisers test 11x more creatives than their competitors, which resulted in 3x more revenue in 2019.

But the reason you're creating all these ads isn't just for fun—you're looking for winners that you can scale into a positive ROAS. What that means is that you need a system for testing your ads so you can be sure the ones you pick to scale will deliver ROI. Without a strategic testing framework you are literally:

- Wasting ad budget on underperforming ads
- Leaving ROAS on the table by under-funding profitable ads

Finding your winners means more than just digging through your analytics after the fact—you actually have to set up your testing parameters way before you actually launch your first ad.

But don't just listen to us — here's some insight from <u>Ecom House</u>, a digital marketing agency specializing in eCommerce.

"We like to think that successfully scaling a brand is both art and science at the same time. It is key to figure out how to convert creatives and copywriting, but we also find it crucial to master your marketing principles and strategy.

Let's dive into the creatives first.

As we mentioned earlier, we've spent tens of thousands of dollars generating video creatives that just simply didn't perform as we'd hoped. In the same vein, we've accidentally put together a UGC video ad that we thought wouldn't do well, but after testing and scaling the campaign, we realized that you have to think outside of the box and test everything. Here is an example on the right.
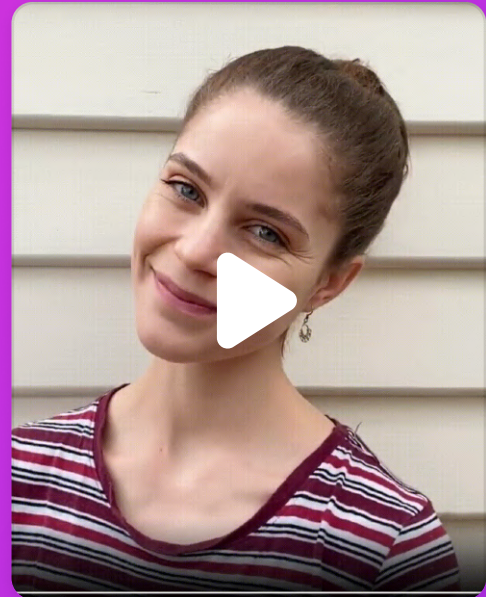
Source: Ecom House

Here are a few things that have worked well for us.

Customers vs. Influencers
We're not necessarily sharing anything completely new here, but customers are savvier than ever before when it comes to advertising practices, so it's no surprise that customers tend to naturally distrust brands. This is why we're big believers in using customers, influencers, and reviews to drive more conversions.

We've built CGC videos with both customers and influencers. Some brands may have more success with influencers, while other brands will

see better conversions when they're running ads using content generated from their customers. It's important to test and understand what might better speak to your audience here.

*For example, **a still image ad might work better than a video ad. So testing different variations of still images, maybe images of your top products, slideshow, video, etc.***

One of the big reasons we love CGC is for building brand trust, social proof, and showcase your good customer reviews.

Copywriting
As I mentioned before, customers are savvier than they've ever been. We take a methodical approach when it comes to copywriting. The first step we take is to know our audiences and then we'll test our copywriting from there. We typically test a variety of copy strategies, but usually, we'll test reviews and call to actions. We also always try to make sure that we focus on the customer and not the brand."
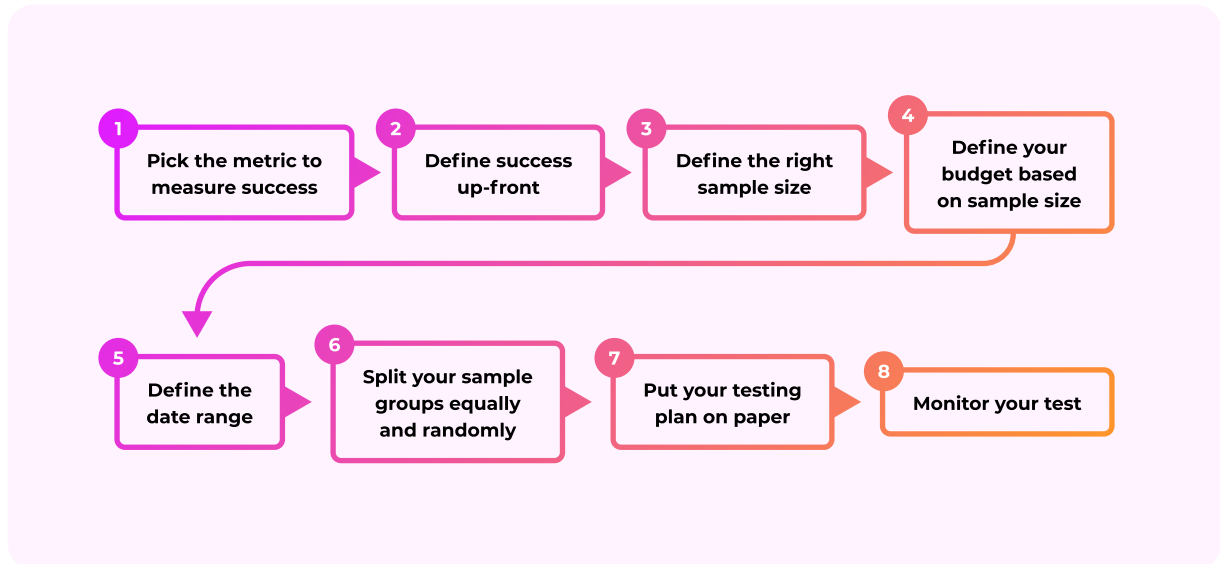
Emanuele Maragno
Co-Founder & Facebook Advertising Strategist
at Ecom House, an eCommerce scaling agency

In addition to this valuable insight, our friends at Ecom House and Revealbot have decided to share their proprietary testing framework you can use to scale your paid social campaigns info profitability.

The 8-Step Paid Social Testing Framework

| 1 Pick the metric to measure success | 2 Define success up-front | 3 Define the right sample size | 4 Define your budget based on sample size |
| 5 Define the date range | 6 Split your sample groups equally and randomly | 7 Put your testing plan on paper | 8 Monitor your test |

1 Pick the metric to measure success

The main KPIs that we typically see marketers focus on has always been CPA (cost per acquisition) and ROAS (return on ad spend). Testing any top-of-funnel metric, such as CPC or CTR are helpful indicators of campaign traction, but a decrease in CPC doesn't necessarily lead to a decrease in CPA.

We suggest defining the baseline conversion as purchases divided by unique outbound clicks.

Define success up-front

The next step in the paid social testing framework is called the minimum detectable effect. This is the change in the metric you want to observe and will tell you the sample size you need. The smaller the effect, the more people you need to reach.

For example, if the CPA is $50, it means the conversion rate is 1.84%. We want to detect a decrease in CPA to $40, which equals an increase in conversion to 2.30%. The minimum detectable effect would be 0.46%, 2.30% minus 1.84%.

Define the right sample size

When analyzing data from paid social, it's important to remember that you need a level of statistical significance before you can trust the results. Let's unpack some of the math behind stats for paid social.

Power and statistical significance

A question that always comes up when analyzing test results:

"Is the observed lift in conversion a result of the change that I made or just a random coincidence?"

If you attribute the lift in conversions to the tested change when in reality it is not, it's called a false positive.

To reduce the chance of reaching a false positive, we calculate the statistical significance, which is a measurement of the level of confidence

that a result is not likely due to chance. If we accept that there is a 5% chance the test results are wrong (accepted false positive rate), the statistical significance is 100% minus 5% = 95%.

The higher the statistical significance the better, as that means you can be more confident in your test results. 95% is the recommended level of significance you should aim for.

The other type of error that may occur in a test is called a false negative, which refers to the probability of reaching a negative result when in fact the test should have yielded a positive outcome. To reduce the chance of reaching a false negative, statisticians measure the statistical power, which is the probability that a test will correctly reach a negative result. The power is equal to 100% minus the false-negative rate. It is generally accepted that the power of an A/B test should be at least 80%.

Calculating the sample size

The minimum detectable effect, power, and statistical significance define the sample for your test. Thanks to all of the resources available on the internet, there is no need to calculate it by hand. Use one of the many free calculators out there. Here is the one we like to use.

To detect the desired effect, we'll need 13,881 people in each variation, meaning 27,726 people in total.

Question: How many subjects are needed for an A/B test?

Baseline conversion rate: 20 %   20%   [link]
Minimum Detectable Effect: 5 %   15% – 25%

The Minimum Detectable Effect is the smallest effect that will be detected (1-β)% of the time.   ● Absolute ○ Relative   Conversion rates in the gray area will not be distinguishable from the baseline.

Sample size:
1,030
per variation

Statistical power 1−β: 80%   Percent of the time the minimum effect size will be detected, assuming it exists
Significance level α: 5%   Percent of the time a difference will be detected, assuming one does NOT exist

See also: How Not To Run an A/B Test

Miller's sample size calculator

Define your budget based on sample size

Knowing the required sample size, you can estimate the budget for the test. Our average cost per unique click for this example is $0.92, so the budget will be 27,726 unique outbound clicks multiplied by $0.92, which equals $25,541.

This will ensure you've got enough data to reliably interpret your results with an acceptable measure of confidence.

Define the date range

A test should usually run for at least 1-2 weeks but can be active for several months. Both the control and test groups should be live at the same time so other factors don't influence the test results.

Tests can be expensive, so it's best to calculate the period based on the share of the budget you can afford to allocate to the test. To do that, we consider the worst possible outcome—for example if the conversion rate drops by 50% in the test group. Let's see what will happen with the total ad account's CPA in this case.

Let's assume our monthly ad spend is $200k and our target CPA is $50. If our test fails and the conversion rate decreases to half its current value, our ad account's total CPA will increase to $52. If this outcome is fine, then we don't need to run the test for more than two months. We could complete it within 1-4 weeks.

	Spend	Cost per acquisition
Test group	$12,770	$100
Control group	$12,770	$50
Other campaigns	$174,460	$50
	$200,00	$52

6 Split your sample groups equally and randomly

Here's the tricky part. There is no way to get two equal non-overlapping audiences in Ads Manager without the Split Test tool. The Split Test tool in the Ads Manager allows you to split an audience into several randomized groups, then test ad variations, placements, and some other variables. In our experience, these tests have always been much more expensive than what we'd want to pay. You also can't test strategies because you can't make any changes to the test after it has been set live.

Knowing that Facebook's split tests don't quite work as well as they could, there is a workaround— you can randomly assign Ad Sets to either the test or control groups. We decided to ignore that someone might belong to the test and control groups at the same time if the sample is big enough.

Revealbot's Facebook ad automation tool can assign one-half of ad sets to a test group and the other to the control group. Here's what that looks like.

Add to ad set name
[test group]

| Random number from 0 to 100 | < | 50 |

Add to ad set name
[control group]

| Random number from 0 to 100 | > | 50 |

But before splitting ad sets to the test and control groups, you can create one more rule that will limit the number of ad sets in the test. In the previous steps, we've estimated the total test budget to be $25,541, which is 13% of the total monthly budget ($200,000).

The following rule will assign 13% of all new ad sets to the test.

Add to ad set name
[test #01]

CONDITIONS

| | Spend | Lifetime | > | $1 |
| AND | Random number from 0 to 100 | <= | 13 | |

Add to ad set name
[no test]

CONDITIONS

| | Spend | Lifetime | > | $1 |
| AND | Random number from 0 to 100 | > | 13 | |

Put your testing plan on paper

Determine how you'll manage the test group. It should be a clear instruction that covers all scenarios. This is what a descriptive plan could look like.

Observation

Ad sets on automatic bidding that have grown to a $2,000+ daily budget quickly drop the ad account's performance if their conversion rate goes below 20% of the target value. Lower conversion always results in higher CPA.

If we observe high CPA for three consecutive days, we will substitute the ad set with a new one that has an identical audience. While the new ad set has a significantly lower daily budget, the purchase volume on the ad account has decreased.

Hypothesis

If you decrease the budget to $1,000 a day, the ad set will restore the target conversion rate and the ad account purchase volume will decrease less.

Test scenario:

1. If an ad set's daily budget is greater than $2,000 and its conversion rate over the past three days including today is .8 of the target value, add "[downscale test]" to the ad set's name.

2. If an ad set has "[downscale test]" in the name, add "[test group] " to its name with a 50% probability.

3. If an ad set has "[downscale test]" and "[test group]" in the name, set its budget to $1,000 daily.

4. Check the conversion rate for each ad set five days after the downscale.

If possible, it's best to set up the test in automated rules.

Monitor your test

Check the reach of your test and control groups regularly. Ad spend is volatile and may cause unequal budget allocation and therefore unequal reach to each group of the test. If this happens, make sure to even them out by changing how each group tag is assigned.

Testing requires time and budget. This is why it's important to prioritize what you want to test first and define which hypothesis could drive the biggest impact. To reduce the cost, try detecting a bigger effect, but never sacrifice power or significance for the sake of the cost of the test.

Thanks again to our friends at <u>Revealbot</u> for their strategic testing framework!

Conclusion

So there you have it! Our exhaustive guide to producing high-performing paid social ad creative. We really hope you enjoyed the content, but more importantly than that, we hope you do something with it.

Competition in the DTC eCommerce space is fierce — new brands pop up online every day, maybe even some in your niche. **Paid social is a great channel for product discovery and sales, but if you want to succeed, you're going to need to do it better and faster than your competitors.**

Follow the steps in this guide to ensure you're maximizing every opportunity available. To recap:

1. Strategic planning based on business objectives.
2. Top-performing ad creative.
3. Highly structured continuous testing.

If you need help with your CGC plan, we have a solution for you! In order to connect with vetted, experienced content creators to obtain a variety of CGC for use in your paid social campaigns, we invite you to check out **Insense**.

If you need a powerful automation tool for managing ads, go checkout **Revealbot**.

INSENSE

Insense is a creator marketing platform helping brands scale their authentic, mobile-first video and image production through their network of influential and vetted content creators. If you're a DTC marketer or just looking to bring in new customers, Insense can be your one-stop-shop to source testimonials, unboxings, product demonstrations, and other content, while providing its full digital copyright, so you can leverage it via paid ads to reach wider audiences

And if you're looking for an extra spark in your ad performance, Insense has a one-click influencer whitelisting solution, enabling you to run ads that appear as if they are coming directly from an influencer.

Get started today, visit **www.Insense.pro**.

revealbot

Revealbot is a one-stop automation platform for Facebook, Instagram, Google, and Snapchat ads. It helps marketers automate their account management on all stages of the campaign lifecycle: from launching ads to managing ongoing campaigns, and analyzing performance.

Visit **www.revealbot.com** to learn more.