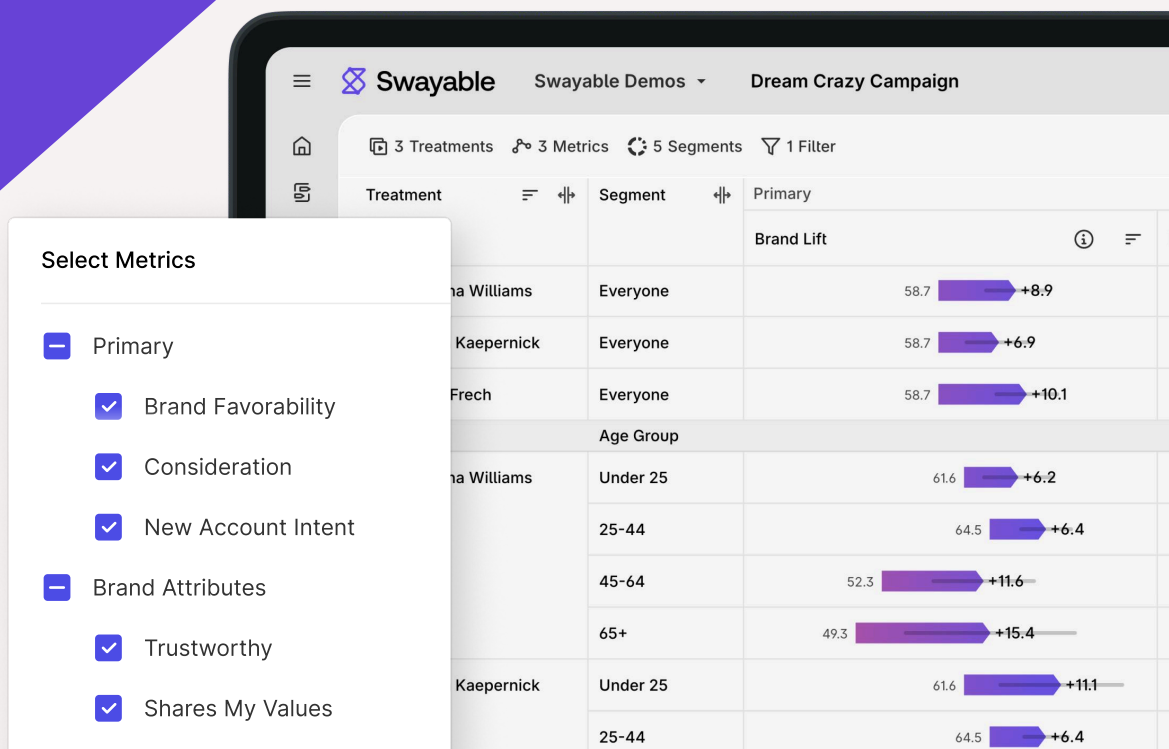


Proving Persuasion

A guide to using **creative pre-testing technology** to rapidly **measure brand lift** and **validate marketing ideas**



01

Introduction

The state of marketing has reached a tipping point in today's world of constantly shifting news cycles, cultural moments, and consumer opinions. It has become paramount for marketing teams to consistently break through the chaos with content that stands out among their competition—and positively sways people's opinions and perceptions of their brand.

The ability to do this successfully, however, has become a challenge for marketers without the proper tools to measure the impact of their campaigns:

- **More than 50%** of marketers rate their ability to develop high-quality insights as poor, while only 13% rate their ability to develop high-quality insights as very good or excellent, according to a study conducted by the Lions Advisory.¹
- **Only one-third** of marketers are satisfied with how they use customer data to create relevant content, according to research conducted by Salesforce.²
- **Eight in 10 shoppers** ignore irrelevant marketing messages, while one in four are less likely to purchase from brands that deliver generic messages, according to research conducted by Attentive.³

To continue driving ROI and positive perceptions, brands can't afford to keep spending millions on advertising campaigns that don't work. Marketers can no longer rely on guesswork or gut instinct to inform their campaign themes and messages. And they can no longer solely prioritize vanity engagement metrics such as clicks, likes, and views to measure performance.

"The job of marketers is to tell stories that change how people see the world," said James Slezak, Founder and CEO at Swayable. "The trillion dollar question is: which stories actually work?"

The key to understanding the true impact campaigns have on consumer attitudes is measuring brand lift: how certain messages increase or decrease favorability, consideration, and purchase intent. And it's not enough to simply measure brand lift—it's vital to do it quickly and consistently, before taking campaigns live, to generate the most relevant, up-to-date insights.

With the rise of cloud computing and machine learning technology, it's now possible to rapidly measure persuasion impact. This guide explores how global brands are leveraging Swayable, the gold standard for creative pre-testing, to measure what matters—and how it's fueling agile marketing strategies that produce high performing campaigns.

Highlights

- The impact of rapid randomized controlled trial methodology
- How AI-powered testing accelerates measurement and analysis
- Use cases: from New Balance to Thomas' English Muffins
- Best practices for creative pre-testing to measure persuasion

¹ "State of Creativity 2025: A call for confidence" - Lions Advisory - 2025

² "State of Marketing Report 9th Edition" - Salesforce - 2024

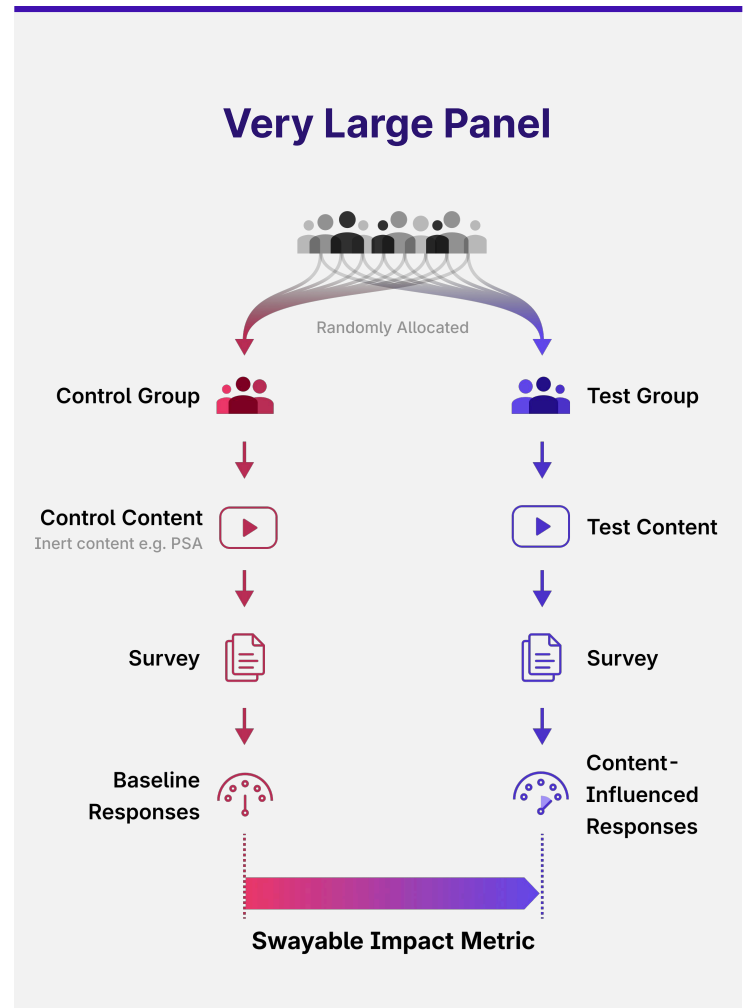
³ "Consumer Trends Report: The State of Personalized Marketing in 2025" - Attentive - 2025

The impact of rapid randomized controlled trial (RCT) methodology

The concept of measuring persuasion has existed since the 1990s, when measurement firms introduced brand lift studies. At the core of these studies were randomized controlled trial (RCT) methods: quantitative surveys that definitively proved shifts in consumer opinion. These experiments enabled marketers to gauge the reactions of consumers randomly selected to view certain ads versus those who weren't.

In the context of today's digital media ecosystem—where cultural trends and consumer opinions change constantly—there are clear limitations to traditional lift studies. They're expensive and can take as long as a month to deploy. Marketers can only conduct them after they've launched the campaigns they want to test—meaning they've already deployed the media budget for the campaign and finalized the creative without real evidence of whether it will drive lift.

At best, the results of these studies could show positive lift—but the insights would be months old, and no longer relevant to inform future campaigns. At worst, marketers learned their campaign was ineffective after they deployed precious marketing dollars, long after it reached their target audiences. The same study conducted by the Lions Advisory suggests that many marketers and creatives find it a challenge to remain proactive: 57% of brands struggle to react quickly to cultural moments, while only 12% rate their ability to do so as “excellent.”



“We’ve never lived in more fast-paced and challenging times; just ask any marketer or brand manager,” said Dominik Prinz-Barley, Head of Brand at Google. “Only brands who understand the current culture can thrive.”

The good news is there's now a way for marketers to keep up with the speed of culture by rapidly measuring brand lift. Swayable is a platform that uses machine learning to automate high-precision RCTs, letting brands survey many segments and subsegments—and generate evidence of lift in as little as a day.

How RCT testing accelerates brand lift measurement—with the help of AI

When marketing teams adopt rapid creative pre-testing programs, they unlock speed, rigor, flexibility, and real-time insights.

Brands are able to quickly test any concept at any stage of development, from ad mockups and final creative to product package design and brand refreshes. The outcomes of this testing represent the best possible evidence of a change caused in consumer attitudes about a brand or its products.

Marketing teams can test any metric that represents a change in opinion, attitude or intention.

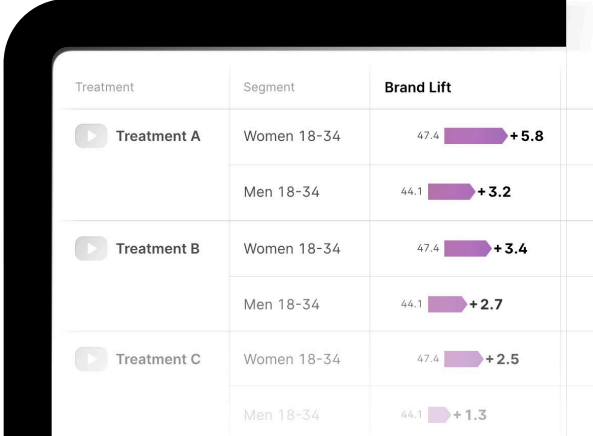
The added layer of testing innovation—one that is constantly evolving—is using AI to improve the process. Swayable, for example, is built around patented technology that uses sophisticated machine learning population modeling to measure the persuasive impact of content. This makes measurements far more precise, taking advantage of patterns emerging from the world's largest dataset of RCT experiment results.

There are also opportunities to incorporate large language model (LLM)-based agentic automation across the full stack of experiment and analysis execution, including response quality control, qualitative analysis, and support for bespoke visualization outputs.

Overall, leveraging AI lets companies analyze persuasion impact data across thousands of campaigns faster than ever before. The technology has reduced the time it takes to extract insights from months to days.

“There are many theories about what will sway a consumer’s perception or intent. Using AI to rapidly search that haystack to find out which theory works is an incredible benefit,” said Slezak. “Getting answers has become 100 times faster. We just need to make sure we’re asking the right questions.”

But how, exactly, are brands using AI-powered creative testing and real-time persuasion impact data to improve their marketing campaigns? We’ll explore a few key use cases for how top global brands are using Swayable to drive more proactive, agile marketing programs.



Treatment	Segment	Brand Lift
Treatment A	Women 18-34	47.4  +5.8
	Men 18-34	44.1  +3.2
Treatment B	Women 18-34	47.4  +3.4
	Men 18-34	44.1  +2.7
Treatment C	Women 18-34	47.4  +2.5
	Men 18-34	44.1  +1.3

Metrics include brand lift components and direct reactions to the content:



Favorability



Consideration



Purchase Intent



Authenticity



Motivation to Share



Long-Form Qualitative Feedback

01. Case Study

New Balance

tests celebrity ads to
inform targeting strategy



New Balance is a legacy athletic brand known for its practical, high-performance running sneakers. Over the past few years, the brand has opted to showcase a more modern, fun aesthetic, leaning into streetwear culture and celebrity collaborations to drive awareness and conversions among younger audiences—particularly 13- to 34-year olds, which the brand dubs “global independents.” For New Balance’s “We Got Now” campaign, the brand needed to deploy creative content testing to uncover which celebrity ad spots would drive the highest increases in favorability, consideration, and positive feedback among this coveted demographic.

Approach

The brand used Swayable to test four 15-second spots, each of which featured different celebrities: tennis player Coco Gauff, musician Jack Harlow, baseball player Shohei Otani, and a group of NBA and WNBA players.

Outcome

The Coco Gauff ad drove the highest combination of lift in awareness, brand favorability, consideration, purchase intent, and message association against its target audience. These insights guided ad frequency and placements, prompting the brand to shift investment to Gauff’s creative in real time across broadcast, streaming, social, retail, and OOH.

The takeaway

Rapid creative pre-testing empowers brands to make agile, data-driven decisions that make an impact. By testing against customized buyer segments, New Balance was able to select the winning creative and increase the precision of its media placements.

"We've done creative testing in the past, but through longer processes like Kantar reporting and brand health tracking on a quarterly basis. Being able to test something and have answers back within a matter of hours or a couple of days has been incredibly valuable."

– Lauren Riker, Global Marketing Manager, New Balance

Thomas' English Muffins

drives a 7% sales lift with message pre-testing



Thomas' English Muffins, a legacy CPG brand under Bimbo Bakeries USA (BBU), was seeking to reach and convert younger consumers through digital and social marketing campaigns. Metrics like clicks and views were sufficient for measuring digital engagement, but the brand's marketing team needed to answer a more important question: which creative approaches would actually translate to in-store sales and brand lift among younger audiences? The brand developed ideas for traditional, optimistic, and edgy ads, but needed to test each concept with younger audiences before deploying its media budget on one idea.

Approach

Thomas' English Muffins tested three messaging options for a brand refresh: maintaining the traditional brand voice, adopting a more optimistic tone, or taking on a more edgy tone with emojis and slang. The brand used Swayable to test how each message direction would drive brand affinity, consideration, and in-store purchase intent.

Outcome

Traditional messaging drove the highest increase in brand consideration, affinity, and purchase intent, suggesting that an authentic brand voice resonated best. An independent study by Bain & Company registered a 7%+ sales lift in markets where Swayable's recommended messaging went live. Since then, BBU has used Swayable across its brand portfolio, testing campaigns, packaging, and celebrity endorsement options.

The takeaway

Message pre-testing allows brands to confirm whether taking a risk—such as using an edgy tone vs. a traditional tone—will land with target consumers and sway them to make a purchase.

“Putting completed work before focus groups takes time and money. When we began talking about our plans for this campaign, Swayable told us about testing concepts first. This effort started off with a huge save to our budget by unlocking ideas we didn’t know we had.”

– Mike Jensen, Senior Brand Manager, Thomas' English Muffins

03. Case Study

SS+K & Visit Iceland

use post-launch measurement to create Lions-winning campaign



Creative agency SS+K and partners Peel and M&C Saatchi Group created an ad campaign for Visit Iceland that positioned the country as the antidote to the pandemic. While the campaign generated buzz in the press, the agencies also wanted to confirm whether the creative was meeting the campaign's most important objective: increasing travel demand for Iceland during a time when people were slowly becoming interested in traveling globally again.

Approach

SS+K used Swayable to measure the campaign's impact by testing the final ads against three metrics: Dream, Plan, and Book.

Outcome

SS+K found that its campaign increased the likelihood of people to rank Iceland number one for their next holiday and start planning their trip. The agency included Swayable's evidence of lift to support awards applications. The campaign garnered three Cannes Lions, two ANDYs, five Effies, one Pencil from the One Show.

The takeaway

Agencies can use rapid RCTs to not only gauge the impact of their live campaigns—but also use the testing insights they generate to inform high-quality, award-winning creative.

"It was important to have something concretely measured with our target to show that our campaign was not just a flash in the pan, but it drove real brand and business results."

– Elena Claro, Senior Strategist, SS+K

04. Case Study

Outlaw Sake

uses AI-powered testing to build a brand in four weeks



Marketing agency Obsssn.co wanted to disrupt the hard seltzer market by launching Outlaw Sake, an American-themed canned sake brand. The challenge for Obsssn.co was accomplishing this quickly, so the agency used AI to accelerate the brand development process. The agency created humorous AI-generated ad prototypes to start—but it was vital to understand how these AI concepts would impact lift for a disruptor brand, particularly among sake and seltzer drinkers.

Approach

The agency used Swayable to test six ad concepts and confirm whether irreverent, AI-generated creative could positively impact lift and authenticity. Concepts included a talking alligator, an ad that was transparent about being entirely generated by AI, and a joke about the pronunciation of sake.

Outcome

Among sake and seltzer drinkers, nearly all concepts saw increases in favorability, consideration, and purchase intent. A qualitative analysis of comments also supported the idea that the more Outlaw Sake leaned into self-awareness around AI, the more likely respondents were to perceive the brand as authentic.

The takeaway

Using AI to produce and pre-test prototypes can allow brands to quickly validate or refute ideas and speed up the creative development process.

“By using AI to generate creative and pre-test your ads, you can have a brand new idea validated within a four-week period instead of a four-month period.”

– Felix Yip, Co-Founder, Obsssn.co

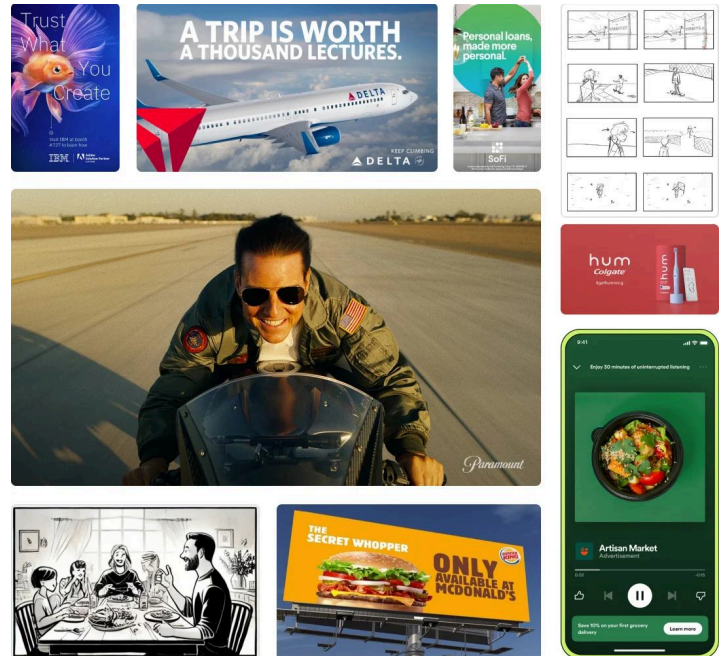
Building a successful persuasion measurement program

Generating high-quality, real-time insights about persuasion is crucial to build an agile marketing strategy that drives lift and ROI. No matter their industry, campaign type, or target audience, marketing and insights teams should strive to ingrain rapid RCT pre-testing into their existing testing programs.

But measuring persuasion doesn't just involve adopting a new technology platform—it also requires a mindset shift. Consider these best practices for generating value from creative pre-testing.

- **Measure the KPIs that matter.** Moving beyond clicks requires defining the metrics that actually show a change in attitude—whether it's favorability, consideration, purchase intent, or shareability.
- **Develop an iterative testing process.** Whether testing final creative or simple prototypes, it's vital to test, learn, refine, and repeat. This approach helps brands make small, but instrumental creative changes that ultimately drive lift.
- **Use data as a creative catalyst.** While generating persuasion impact data is the immediate benefit of creative pre-testing, a key outcome is using the evidence to take storytelling risks. Teams should use data as a catalyst to inform bold, innovative campaigns.

Incorporating these tactics sets the foundation for a productive persuasion measurement program—one that enables marketers to prioritize insights over instincts.



About Swayable

Swayable is the creative pre-testing platform used by top brands globally to measure persuasion. Companies use the product to conduct rapid randomized controlled trial (RCT) survey experiments and gather relevant insights into what creative messaging positively or negatively sways consumer segments.

[Book a demo](#) with Swayable today.