



The Marketing ROI Blueprint:

Unlocking the full value of marketing investments

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Introduction

The role of a marketer is continuously evolving. With economic pressures and a shifting media landscape, the marketer's work now involves making strategic decisions that directly connect to tangible business results. A new level of sophistication is critical, calling for data-driven decision-making and a confident ability to navigate a highly fragmented landscape. In this environment, confidence isn't a luxury—it's a necessity.

Our report is a blueprint for building that confidence. It aims to equip you with the tools and insights to move from uncertainty to data-driven strategy. To achieve this, we will explore two areas:



Section 1: The challenge of proving ROI

An in-depth analysis of current market pressures and the challenges posed by fragmented market conditions and siloed approaches that hinder the accurate measurement of marketing's true value.

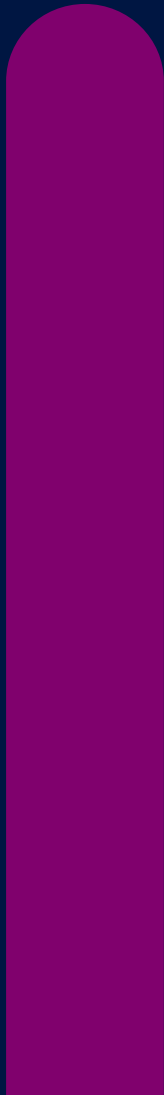


Section 2: A unified approach to maximizing ROI

A strategic blueprint for unifying your data and optimizing campaigns at every stage, unlocking high ROI potential and transforming accountability into a powerful competitive edge.

1

The challenge of proving ROI



The high-stakes environment of marketing

Across the globe, businesses are focused on financial discipline and risk management. Every division of an organization is under pressure to justify its spending, but for marketing, the scrutiny is even more intense due to the historically tenure of CMOs.¹ According to our [2025 Annual Marketing report](#), a significant 54% of marketers plan to cut ad spending in 2025. Yet, even with reduced budgets, a brand cannot afford to disappear from its customers' minds. Every marketing dollar must be deployed with maximum efficiency.

The pressure on budgets is a powerful catalyst for a positive shift in the industry. Ad budgets have gradually moved from a focus on broad reach to a greater emphasis on measurable impact, with marketers increasingly prioritizing tangible return on investment (ROI). Our data shows this shift clearly. Globally, a significant 38% of marketers identify sales or ROI as their top or second-most important metric for measuring success. The movement toward a tangible ROI is also reflected in the metrics they use most often. The data shows the industry is maturing from a focus on top-of-funnel reach to a full-funnel approach that is centered on measurable business impact.

¹CMO Tenure Study 2025: The Evolution of Marketing Leadership (March 2025)

Figure 1.1 a

Metrics to measure success of marketing efforts

By region

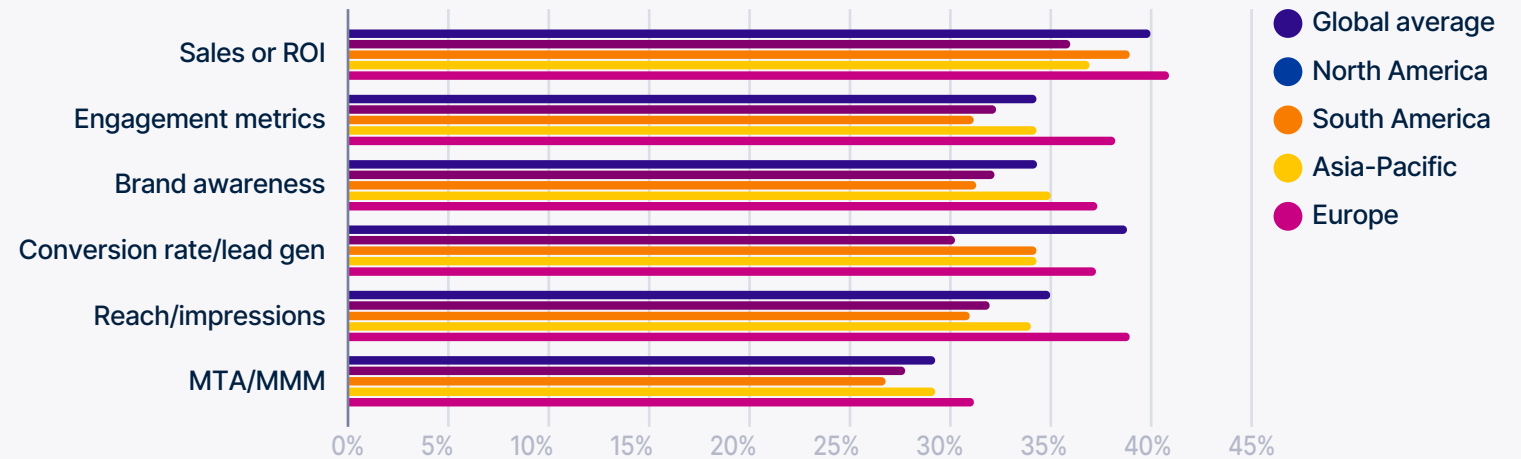
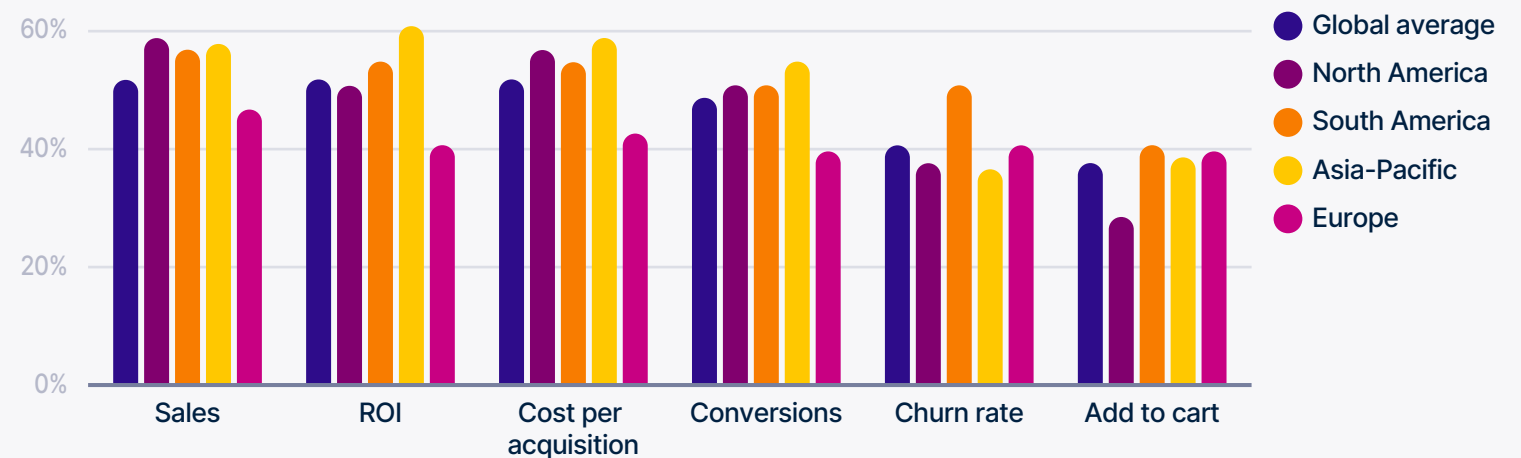


Figure 1.1 b

Metrics used to measure lower funnel success



Source: 2025 Nielsen Global Annual Marketing Survey

The gap between confidence and reality

The push to prove ROI is made more difficult by a measurement landscape that is increasingly fragmented and inconsistent. Marketers face a growing number of challenges as they try to connect the dots across a disconnected system and a complex mix of media channels.

Despite this fragmentation, confidence remains surprisingly high. Globally, 85% of marketers report being extremely or very confident in their ability to measure holistic ROI. However, this confidence contrasts sharply with reality—only 32% of marketers actually measure their traditional and digital spending in a truly holistic way. This paradox between perceived capability and actual practice suggests a potential overestimation of measurement effectiveness.²

² Maximizing your marketing effectiveness with data-driven decision making (June 2025)

Figure 1.2 a
Confidence of having right tools and technology to measure ROI
 By region

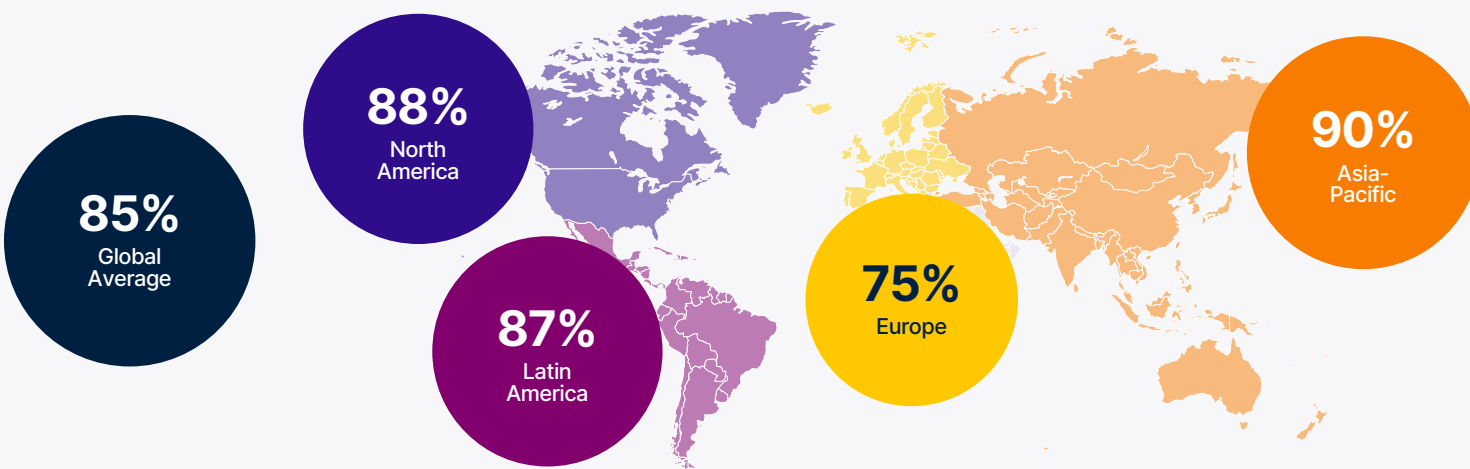
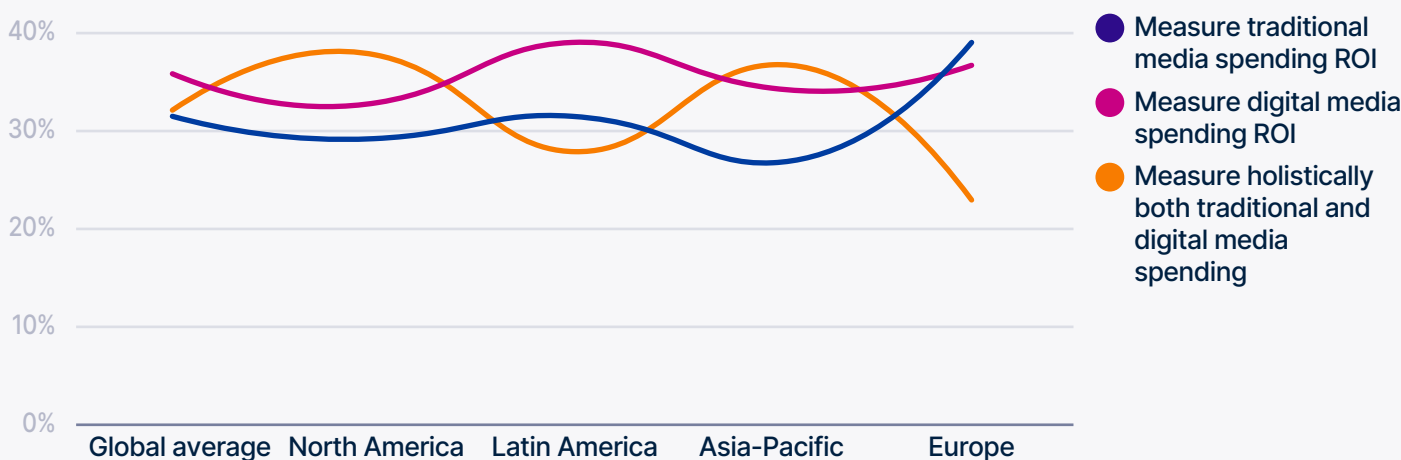


Figure 1.2 b
Marketing ROI measurement approaches



Source: 2025 Nielsen Global Annual Marketing Survey

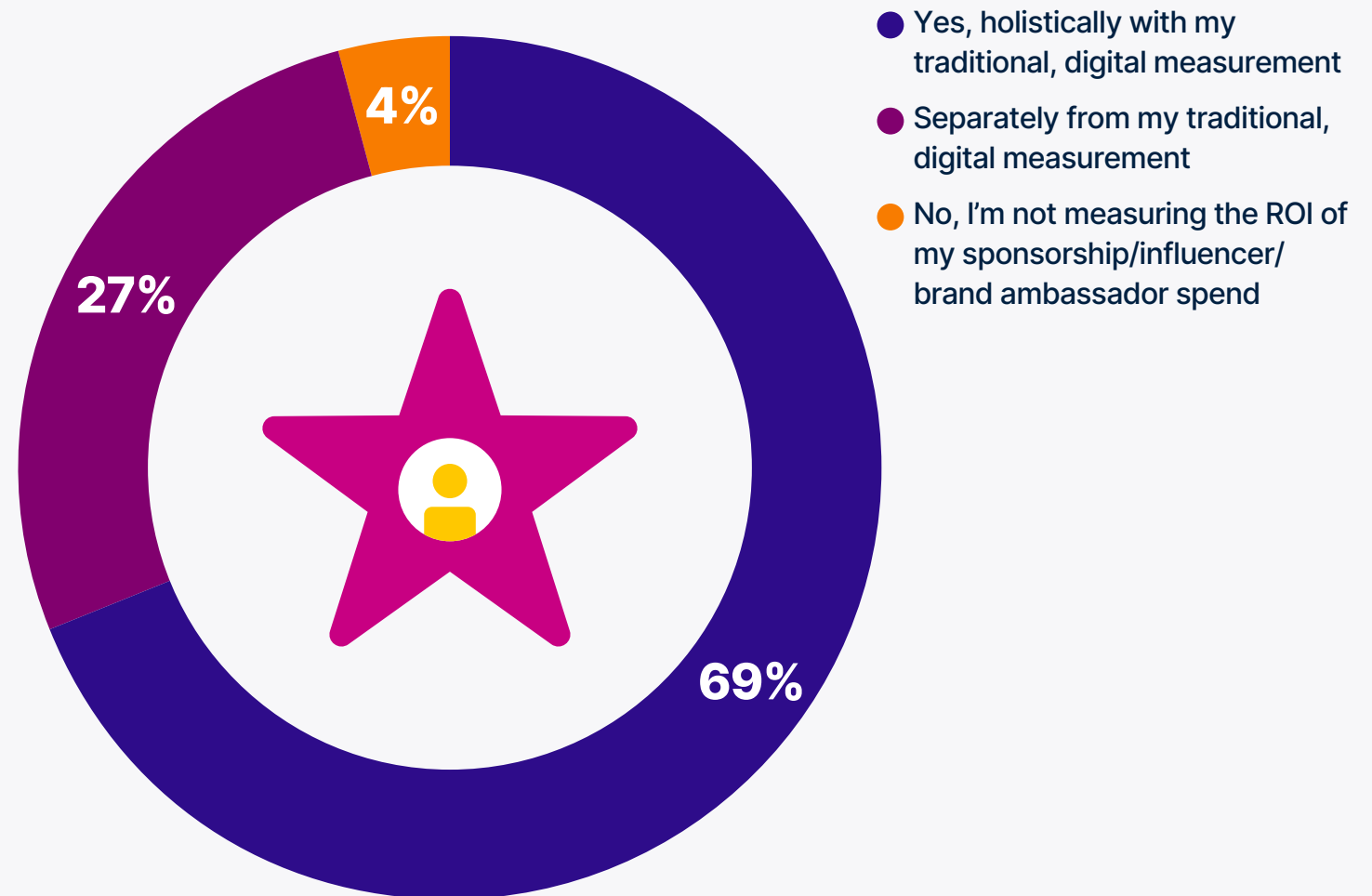
The challenge in measuring ROI

A fragmented, piecemeal approach to data leads to disconnected and incomplete information, which severely limits marketers' ability to understand the true impact of their efforts and make informed investment decisions. Such a system leaves money on the table by preventing marketers from confidently justifying their full budget and optimizing campaigns for maximum return.

This challenge is especially pronounced in emerging channels like sponsorship and influencer marketing, which are frequently measured in isolation. Our research shows a concerning gap—27% of marketers measure sponsorship separately, and 4% don't measure it at all. In industries with high engagement—such as sports—where sponsorship plays a critical role, this lack of unified measurement results in an incomplete view of its contribution to long-term brand value and overall marketing effectiveness.

Figure 1.3

Measuring sponsorship and influencer spend



Source: 2025 Nielsen Global Annual Marketing Survey



2

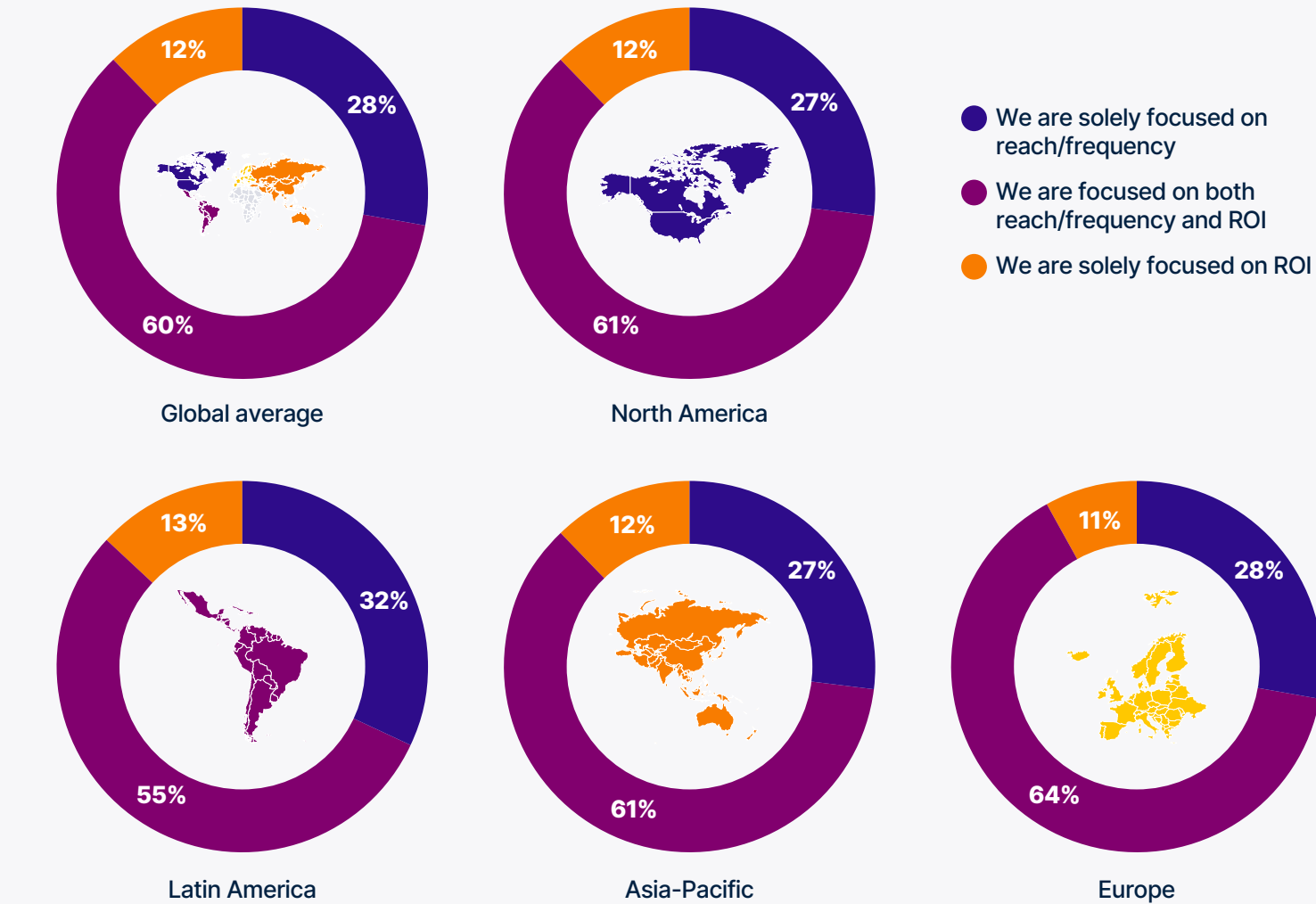
**A unified
approach to
maximizing
ROI**

Aiming for holistic measurement

Marketers are not content with the current inefficient status quo. Recognizing the limitations of fragmented data, there is a growing focus on a unified approach, aiming to measure efforts holistically. This strategic pivot moves beyond a single-channel view to encompass the entire media ecosystem, providing a clear picture of how campaigns work together to drive business outcomes.

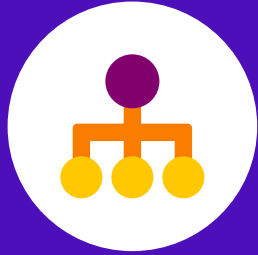
Our data confirms this shift, showing that a significant 60% of marketers are now focused on both reach/frequency and ROI in their cross-media measurement approach. This signals a desire to understand not just what campaigns are seen, but also the full-funnel impact they deliver.

Figure 2.1
Approach to cross-media measurement
 By region



Source: 2025 Nielsen Global Annual Marketing Survey

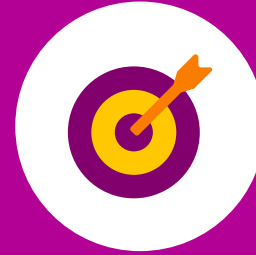
How you can act on this:



Look at campaigns across both traditional and digital channels as part of an integrated ecosystem—one that provides both a comprehensive overview and the ability to isolate granular insights for deeper analysis and agile decision-making.



Nielsen ONE helps marketers understand the true impact of their campaigns by combining cross-channel metrics with a single, deduplicated view of their audience. This allows them to measure reach across various platforms, reduce wasted ad spend, and connect to campaign performance metrics like brand lift and sales lift through its Outcomes Marketplace.



Focus on both reach/frequency and ROI when evaluating campaigns, not just delivery metrics.



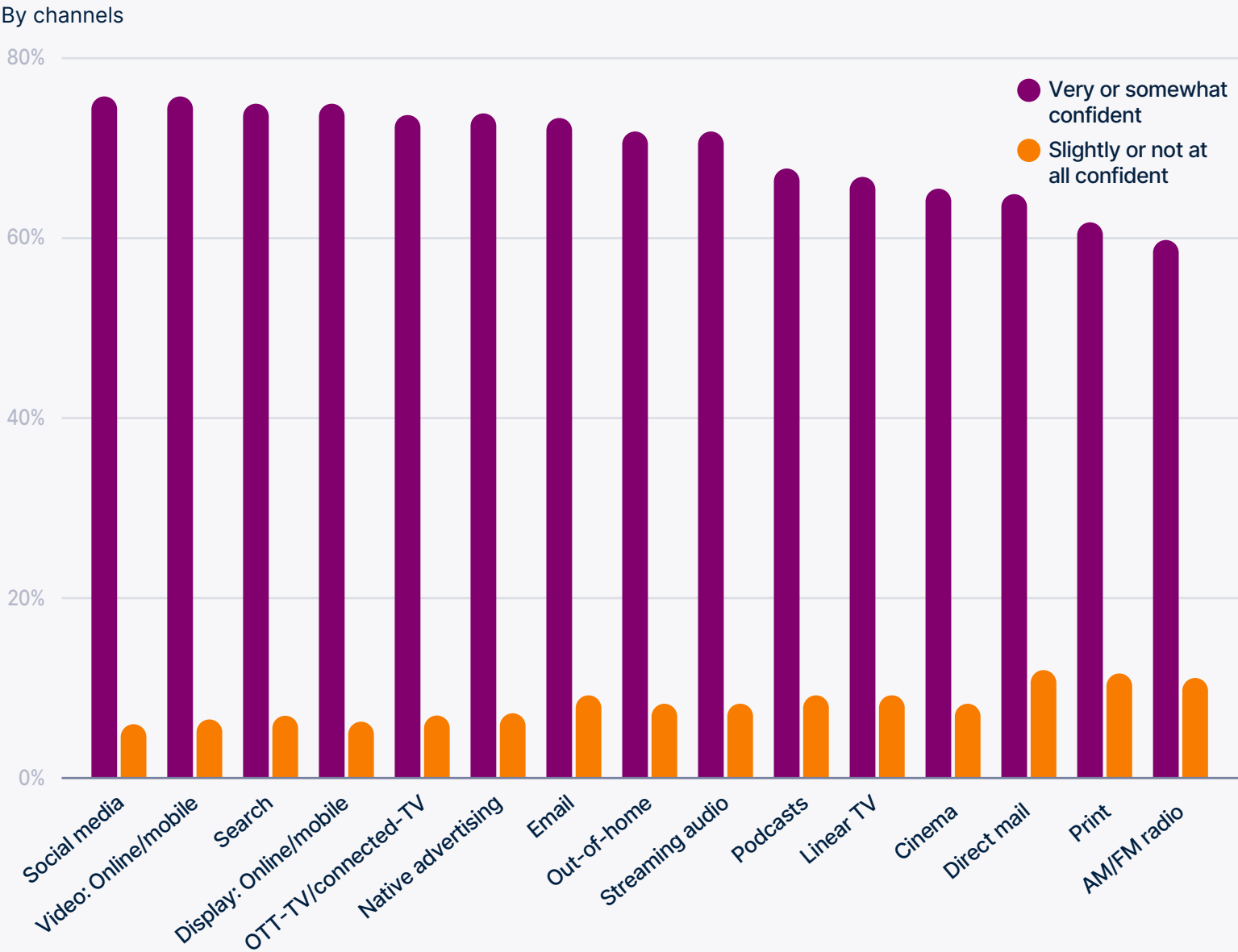
Assess how the full media mix works together to strengthen brand presence and drive measurable results.

Aligning confidence with reality

Confidence in measuring ROI varies significantly across paid media channels, and our data highlights why that desire for a holistic approach exists.

Marketer confidence is often linked to a channel’s perceived ease of measurement, not its actual performance. While confidence is high for digital channels with built-in attribution like social media, it drops considerably for traditional and emerging channels where measurement is more complex, such as AM/FM radio. In fact, up to 12% of marketers express little to no confidence in measuring channels like direct mail and print (as seen in figure 2.2). Due to this disparity, marketers have limited visibility into the full media mix, which underscores the need for a solution that provides consistent measurement across all platforms.

Figure 2.2
Confidence in measuring ROI for paid media channels



Source: 2025 Nielsen Global Annual Marketing Survey

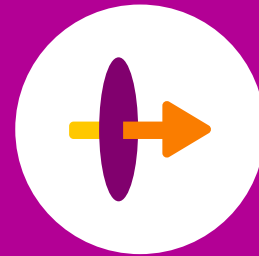
How you can act on this:



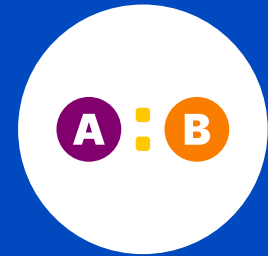
Prioritize measuring for business impact independent of measurement complexity to obtain the most comprehensive and accurate view of your marketing strategy's performance.



Go beyond what's easy to measure—use a consistent approach even across complex or emerging channels to reveal real performance and maximize ROI.



Benchmark campaigns consistently across all platforms, competitors, verticals and even your past efforts to identify gaps, blind spots and sharpen your media mix for maximum impact.



Compare your performance with other campaigns across the market to understand what's working in your category. **Nielsen Ad Intel** provides a comprehensive view of industry ad spend and creative messaging, enabling you to make smarter data-driven decisions about where to invest and how to differentiate your brand.

Elevating creatives and performance

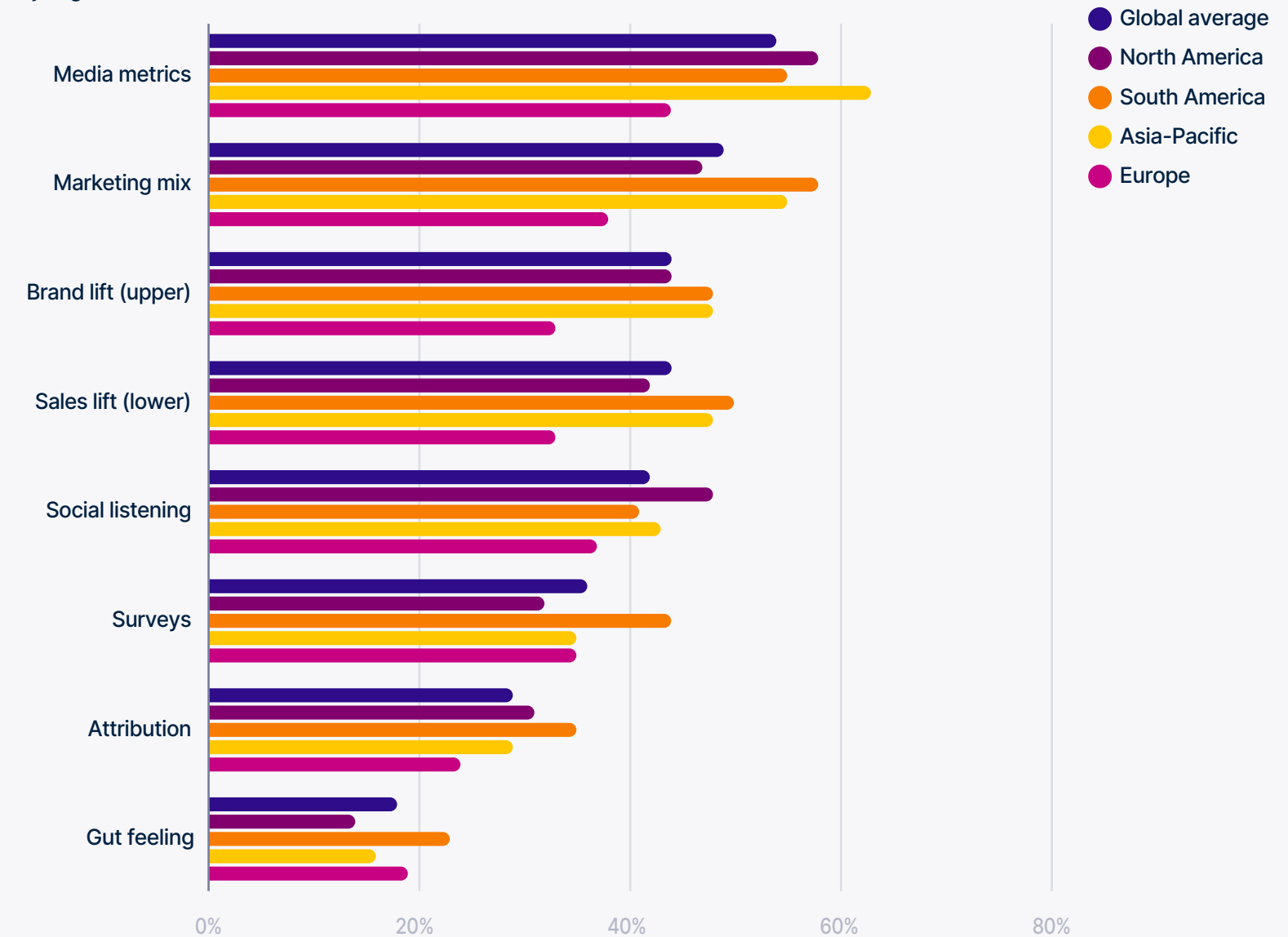
In the pursuit of maximizing ROI, marketers are increasingly recognizing the importance of both creative impact and performance metrics. Our data shows a growing sophistication in how campaigns are evaluated, with a multi-faceted approach becoming the norm.

Media metrics remain the most widely used tool for ROI evaluation, with 54% of marketers relying on these foundational measures. Marketers are moving beyond foundational metrics in search of methods that balance depth, speed, and actionable insight. While some approaches offer rigor, they can be too slow or complex for agile decisions. That's why tools like sales lift and brand lift are gaining traction—they deliver timely, meaningful results.

Figure 2.3

Tools used to evaluate ROI holistically

By region



Source: 2025 Nielsen Global Annual Marketing Survey

How you can act on this:



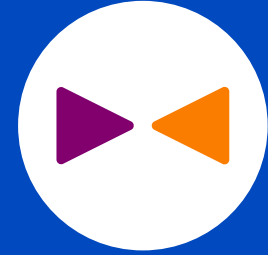
Evaluate ads based on their impact beyond reach—such as awareness, consideration, intent, and conversion.



Pair creative evaluation with ROI metrics to connect actionable results to brand KPIs—**Nielsen Brand Lift** helps quantify these brand KPIs with proven survey methodology.



Benchmark your brand lift against independent norms to see how your campaigns stack up and refine your strategy for maximum impact.



Tie campaign exposure back to incremental sales to prove real contribution to the bottom line, a gap closed with **Nielsen Sales Lift**.

Brand Lift

How Obviously achieved measurable results with Nielsen

Obviously, a leading influencer marketing agency, partnered with Nielsen to measure top-of-the-funnel brand metrics for a healthcare advertiser. The goal was to evaluate awareness, consideration and intent across six creators—from doctors to wellness influencers—on two social media platforms.

Healthcare influencer campaigns demand rigor and accountability. Obviously needed independent metrics to complement in-house analytics and assess which creative formats and influencers drove the strongest brand results.

Winning solution

Nielsen's Brand Impact solution quantified influencer performance and creative effectiveness using a simulated social media environment:



- **Forced exposure:** Respondents viewed influencer content resembling a real social feed.
- **Metrics captured:** Visibility, view time, interactions, and creative impact.
- **Control vs. exposed groups:** Enabled precise measurement of brand lift and perception.
- **Platform-specific insights:** Identified which influencers and creative formats resonated most on each platform.

Key findings

Nielsen's brand lift studies provided Obviously with actionable, data-driven insights, enabling the agency to demonstrate measurable influencer marketing impact, strengthen client storytelling, and establish a systematic, results-driven approach to driving top-of-the-funnel brand lift:



- **70% Recall:** Influencer 2 on Platform A drove the highest recall via forced-exposure measurement.
- **70% Likability:** Engagement metrics showed Platform B posts were slightly more likable.
- **1.2x Credibility:** Comparisons between control and exposed groups revealed Platform A posts were more informative and educational.
- **1.8x Entertainment:** Platform B content scored higher on entertainment and engagement.

Sales Lift

How Alpro and Pinterest proved sales impact with Nielsen

Alpro, a European leader in plant-based food alternatives, partnered with Pinterest to connect with health-conscious audiences in moments of discovery and convert inspiration into sales. While Pinterest was already valued as a brand-building platform, this collaboration aimed to prove its ability to drive bottom-of-funnel sales impact.

The challenge lay in proving offline sales growth from online campaigns. Alpro products are primarily sold in retail stores, so Pinterest needed independent evidence that its ad formats could influence actual purchase behavior.

Winning solution

Nielsen conducted a Market Lift study to quantify offline sales impact and ROI:



- **Matched control vs. exposed groups:** Compared in-store purchase behavior between shoppers exposed to Pinterest ads and those who were not.
- **Retail sales data integration:** Linked campaign exposure with verified sales across outlets in Germany.
- **Format-level insights:** Measured performance across Quiz ads, Showcase ads, video and static Pins.
- **ROI validation:** Assessed incremental sales against media spend to calculate return on ad spend (ROAS).

Key findings

Nielsen's independent measurement proved that Pinterest goes beyond inspiration to conversion. For Alpro, the study demonstrated that creative formats combined with trusted measurement can deliver real-world ROI and incremental sales growth:



- **+3.2% In-store sales lift:** Directly linked to exposed groups in Nielsen's study.
- **2.6x ROAS:** Every euro delivered more than double the return, validating ROI.
- **Top 20% in F&B vertical:** Proven through Nielsen's benchmark database.
- **Multi-format effectiveness:** Nielsen's methodology showed all formats contributed to sales impact.

Conclusion

The focus on measurable ROI is a powerful driver of progress—encouraging marketers to innovate, optimize, and elevate the impact of their strategies. Rising to this opportunity means moving beyond surface-level metrics to:



Seek solutions that measure campaigns across channels to demonstrate the full impact of your strategy—revealing how touchpoints work together to drive business outcomes.



Understand how different creative elements influence audience attention, engagement, and perception across platforms.



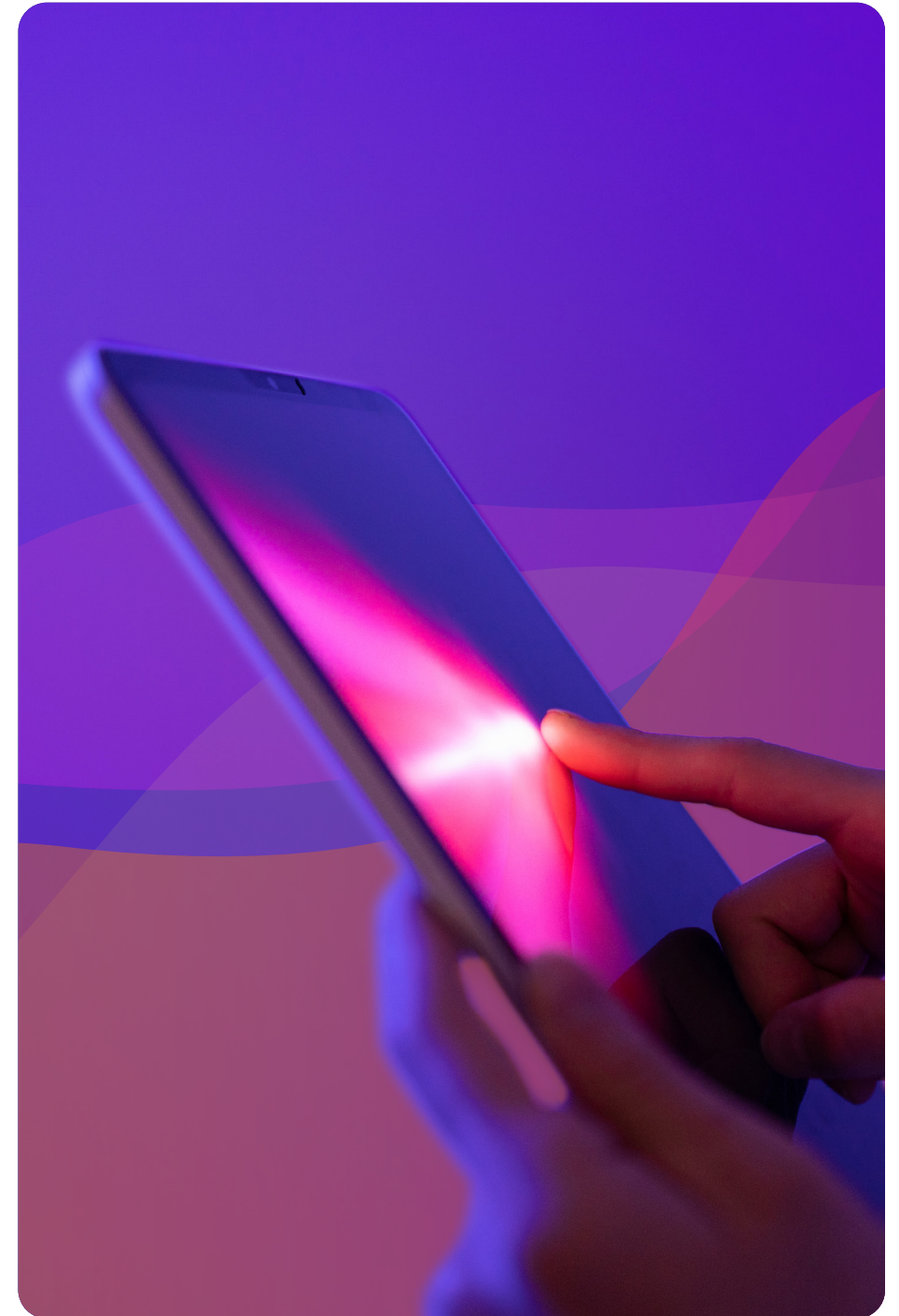
Leverage measurement approaches that connect brand-building efforts to shifts in perception—demonstrating the lasting impact of your upper-funnel strategy.



Demonstrate how your campaigns drive business outcomes—by measuring their impact on sales, conversions, or other key performance indicators.

Tracking shifts in consumer behavior and purchase patterns helps clarify the real-world impact of your marketing efforts.

When these insights inform decisions, investments naturally align with what drives results, turning every campaign into a source of measurable impact and unlocking stronger returns.



About Nielsen

Nielsen is a global leader in audience measurement, data and analytics. Through our understanding of people and their behaviors across all channels and platforms, we empower our clients with independent and actionable intelligence so they can connect and engage with their global audiences—now and into the future. Learn more at www.nielsen.com and connect with us on social media ([X](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)).

Audience Is Everything®