upperdog.

What *actually* improves digital bookings in 2026?

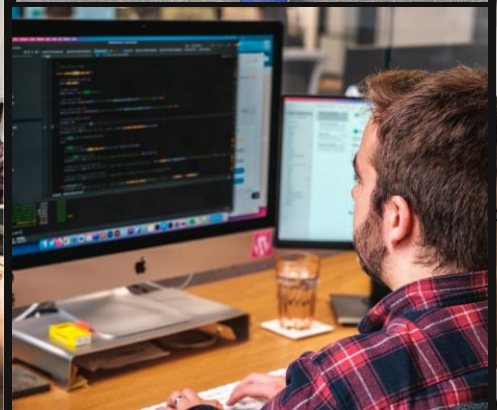
6 hot tips to improve performance 🔥










Intro



Tom Wright

Head of Paid Media @ Upperdog

tom.wright@upperdog.co.uk

- 17 years in media investment
- Led activation teams at WPP and OMD
- Media investment lead for Adobe, Audible, Amazon & Sky

Google Partner
PREMIER 2026

Meta
Business Partner

2026 Microsoft Advertising
Partner

Marketing Partner

Accredited Professional Bing ads

Spotify Advertising
Certified Partner

The Drum
Recommended

Advertising Essentials
Pinterest

amazon ads
Verified partner

klaviyo
PARTNER

CYBER ESSENTIALS
CERTIFIED













Agenda

The booking journey

META's latest algorithm

Conversion signals in Google

Tracking

AI

Booking engine

3 things to test in the next 30 days

2 things to test by January



Every guest is trying to answer four questions:

Relevance

Is this for someone like me?

Confidence

Can I trust what I am seeing?

Value

Is this worth choosing?

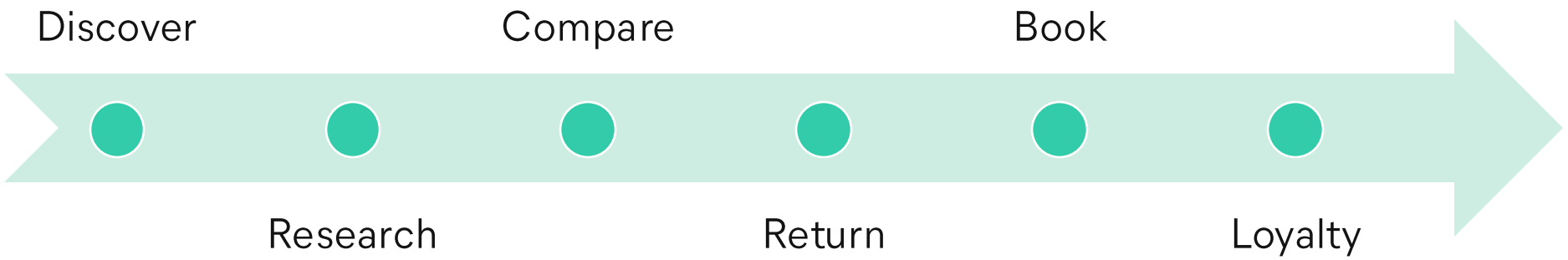
Ease

Can I book without friction?

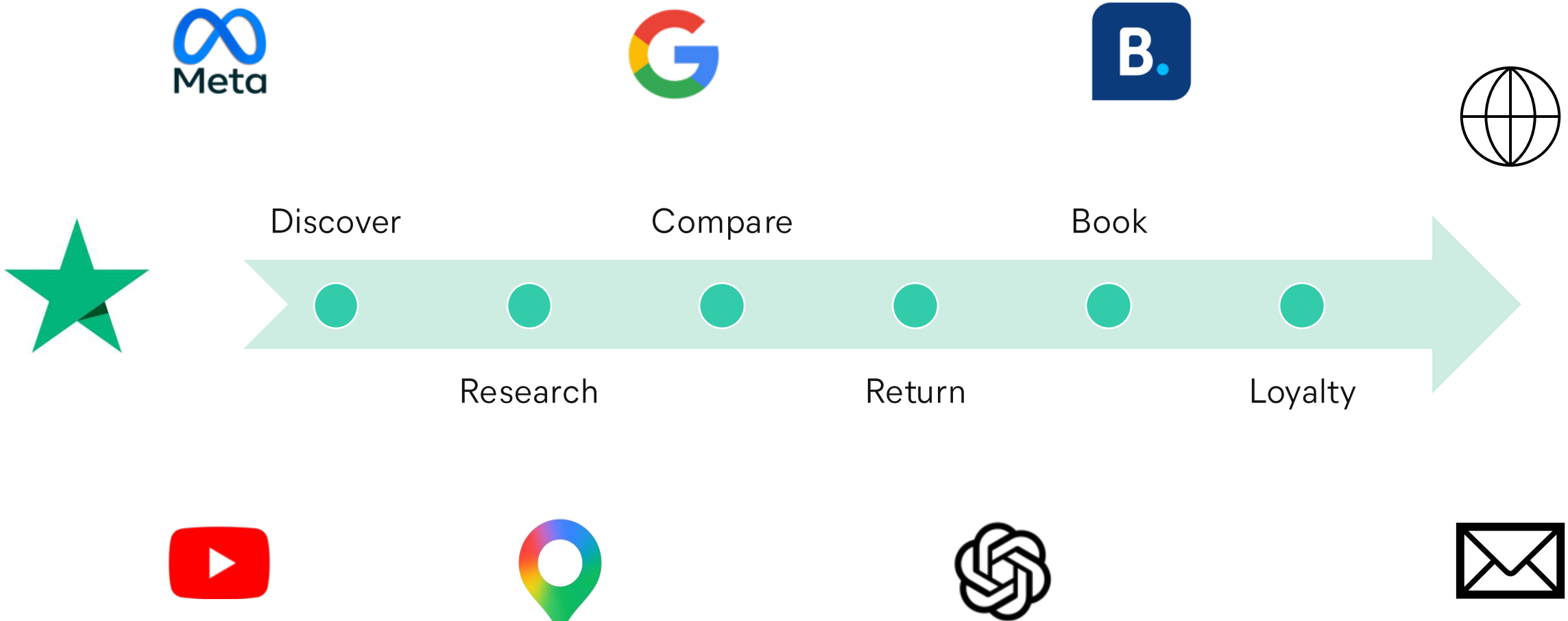
01

The booking journey belongs to the guest. Not the channel plan.

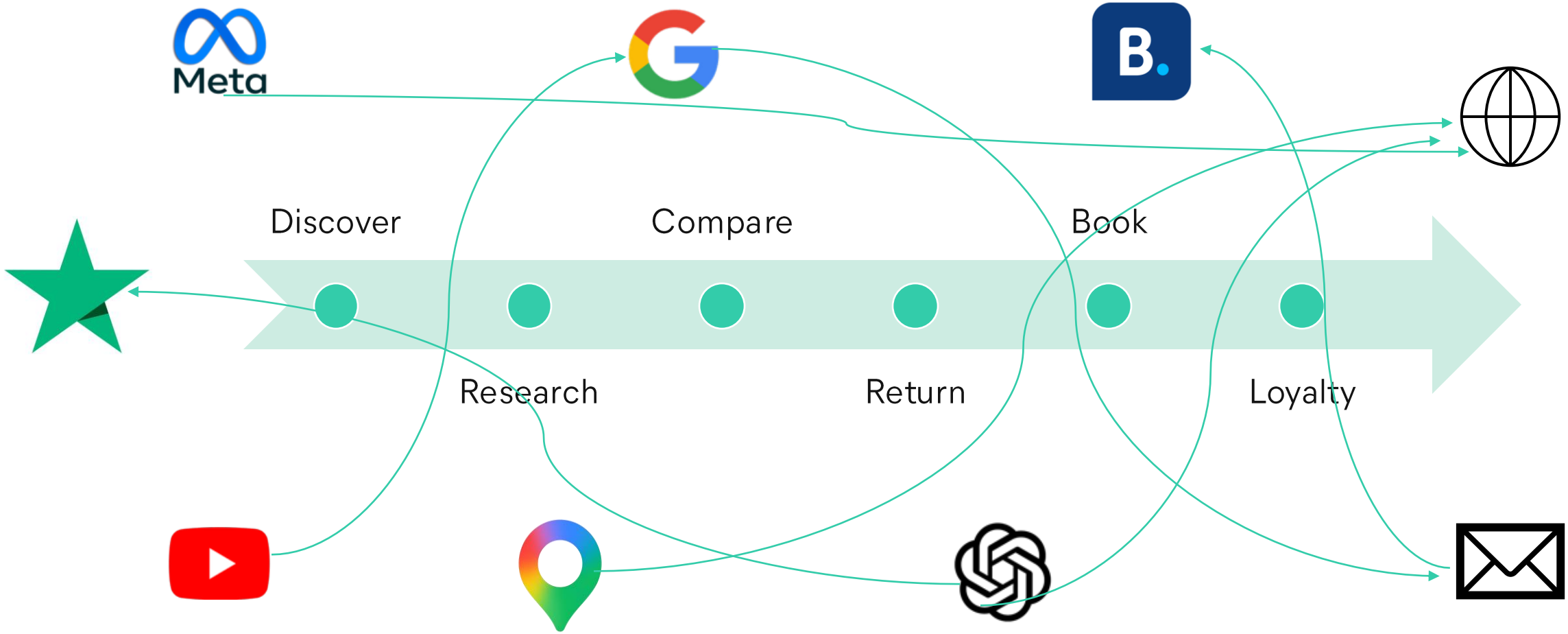
The booking journey helps to map things out



If only it were that simple...



But a guest's booking decision is rarely a straight line...



You **can't** control the order that guests experience your digital touchpoints

You can control the consistency between them

Guests may check:

- Reviews
- Google Business Profile
- Recent photographs
- Social content
- Menus
- Room information
- Location
- Cancellation terms
- Direct-booking benefits

1 Your ads can ***introduce*** trust

2 The wider experience must **confirm** it

3 **Consistency** gives guests confidence

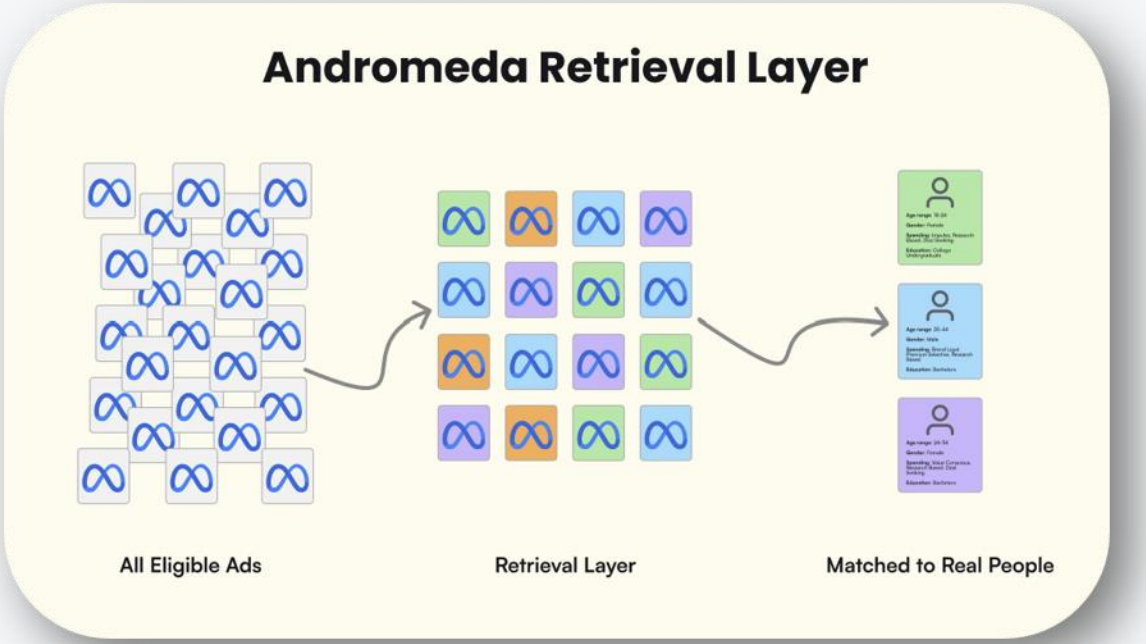
02

Creative is your primary targeting lever across META

META's Andromeda algorithm

Creative first targeting

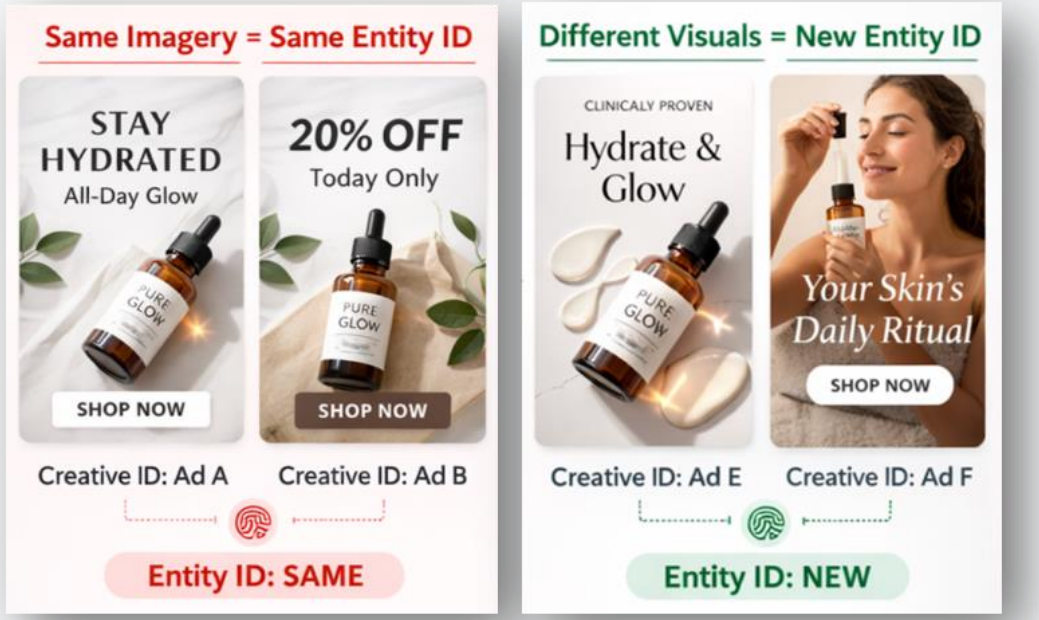
- Analyses the visuals, text, audio, pacing, on-screen actions and context.
- Creates a shortlist of ads that appear relevant to the user at that moment to move into the auction.
- Creative quality now accounts for 50–60% of what determines whether your ad wins a Meta auction.



Creative angles, not variants

META matches angles with audiences

- Meta now groups similar assets by a shared Entity ID and ads in that group compete against each other, capping reach.
- Creatives need to be built around audience mindsets and personas.
- Most high-performing accounts now run 8+ conceptually distinct creatives per ad set, with a 2-3 week refresh cycle.



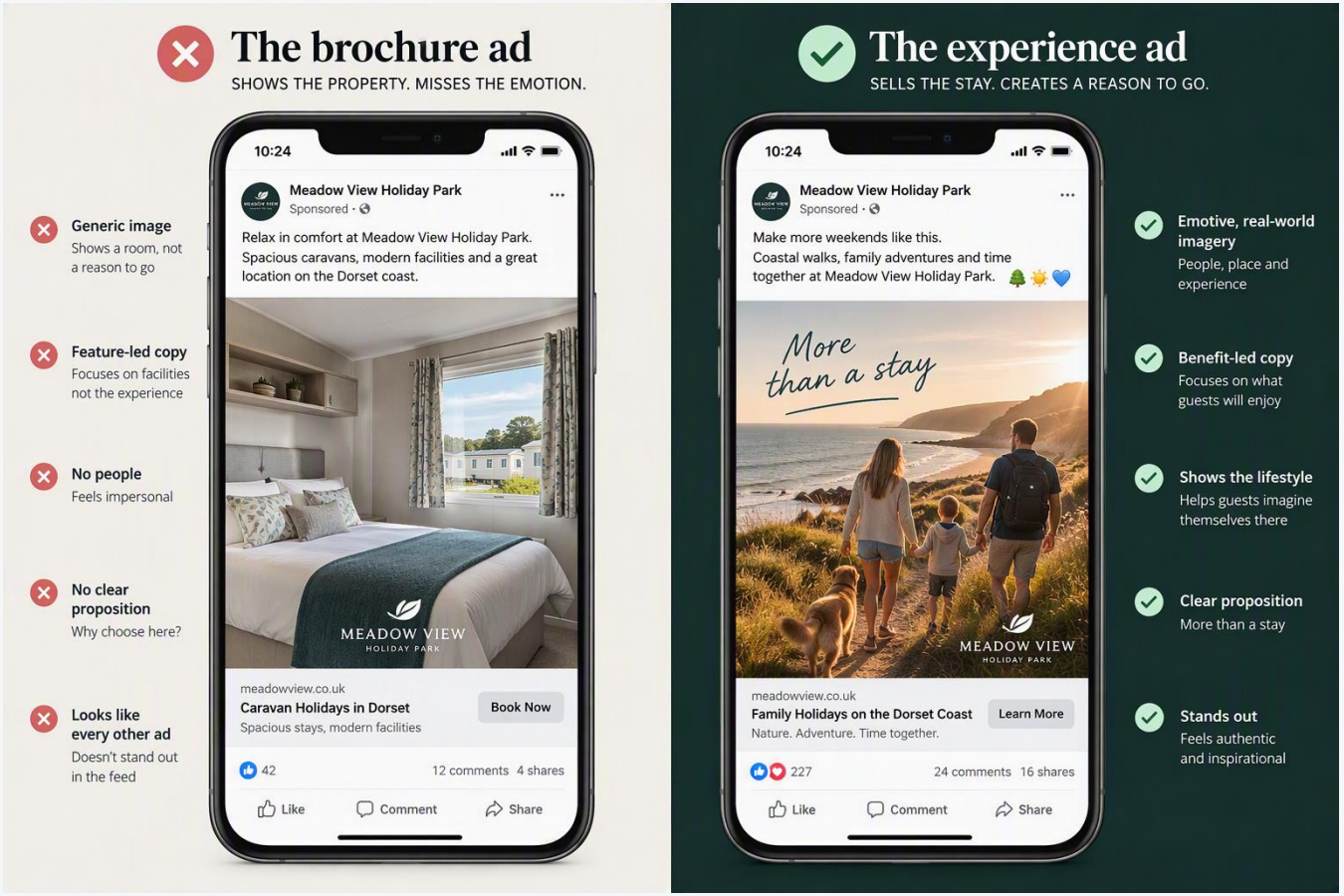
Guests do not buy accommodation

They buy the inspiration for the accommodation

- A weekend away
- Time together
- A celebration
- A break from routine
- Dinner for a special occasion
- Somewhere the dog can come too

Chains have scale. Independents have specificity.

Focus on what makes your experience unique.



upperdog.

03

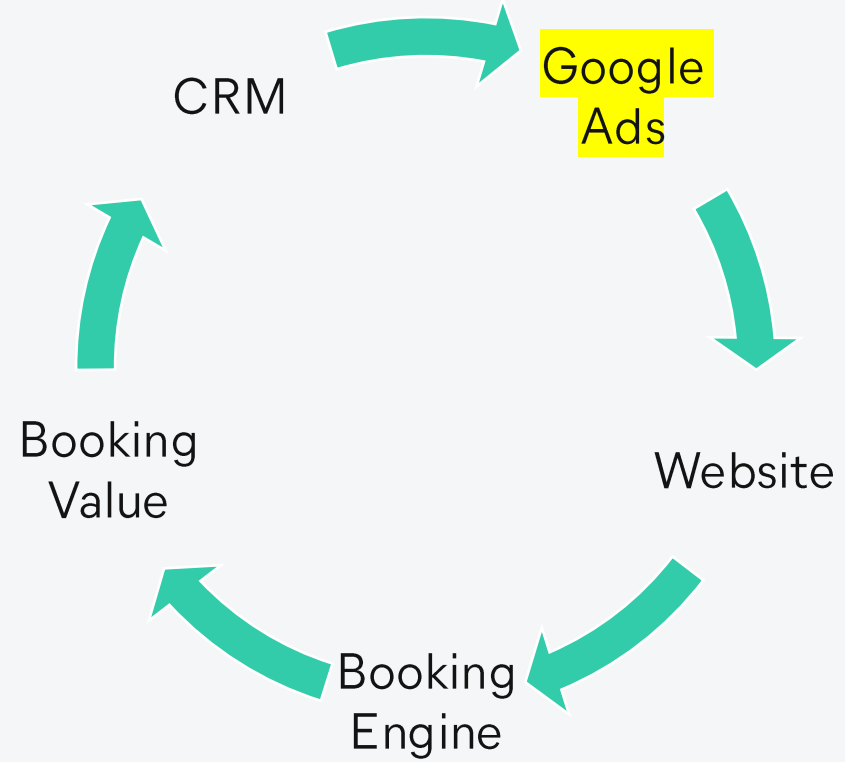
A booking is worth more than a click
A £2,000 stay is worth more than a £200 stay

So why tell Google they are equal?

Outcome-based bidding

What does success look like for your brand?

- If Google only receives 'purchase' or 'booking success' – it will treat all bookings equally
- With value included in the conversion, this opens up distinction between conversions
- With a value based bidding strategy, uniquely configured to your brand, you can direct Google to distinguish its bidding between high and low value customers
- With CRM integration, specific segments of customers (and their values) can be used as signals for optimisation, or targeting segments for upsells.



Booking value
Length of stay
Added Extras

Venue enquiry
New vs returning guest
Cancelled vs completed

upperdog.

CRM segments that add depth to your booking strategy

Lapsed customer reactivation

Booked over 2 years ago

Test: Run a PMAX reactivation campaign to target exclusively lapsed customers at a target CPA

Hypothesis: Lapsed customer reactivation can be more cost effective than new customer acquisition. Reduces churn

Top 5% customer lookalike

Top 5% of customers by LTV

Test: Run a Demand Gen campaign targeting a lookalike audience of your most valuable audiences

Hypothesis: Targeting the top 1% of the UK that look and behave like your top 5% of customers can bring in higher value new audiences

Retention

Acquisition

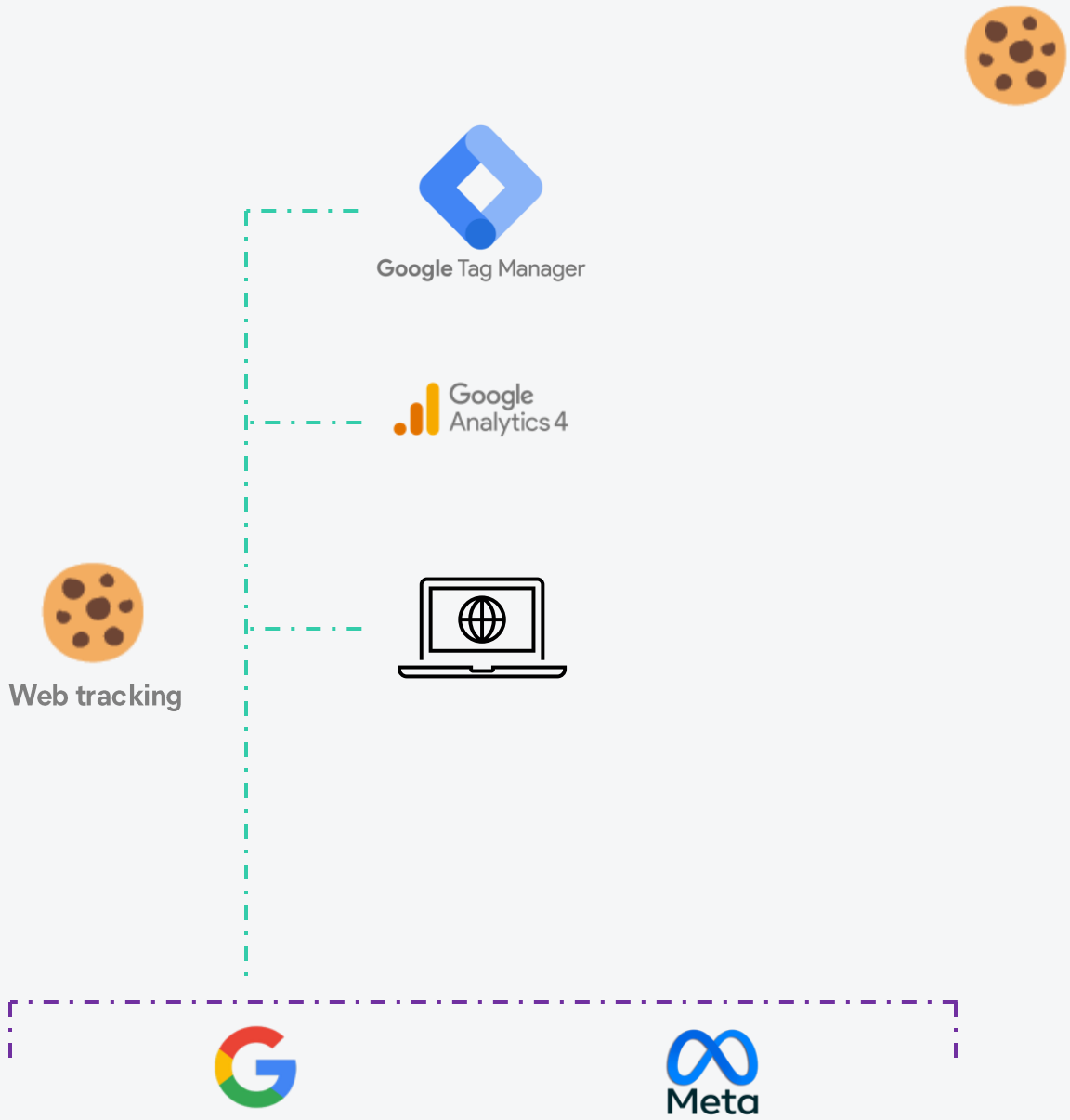


04

Cookies are reliable as tasty treats 🍪
Less so robust tracking solutions

Incomplete tracking = lost opportunities

"Cross-site limitations and short cookie expiration windows (such as Safari's 24-hour limits) break multi-touch attribution, causing ad platforms like Meta and Google Ads to ***miss up to half of downstream conversions"*** *- eMarketer*



upperdog.

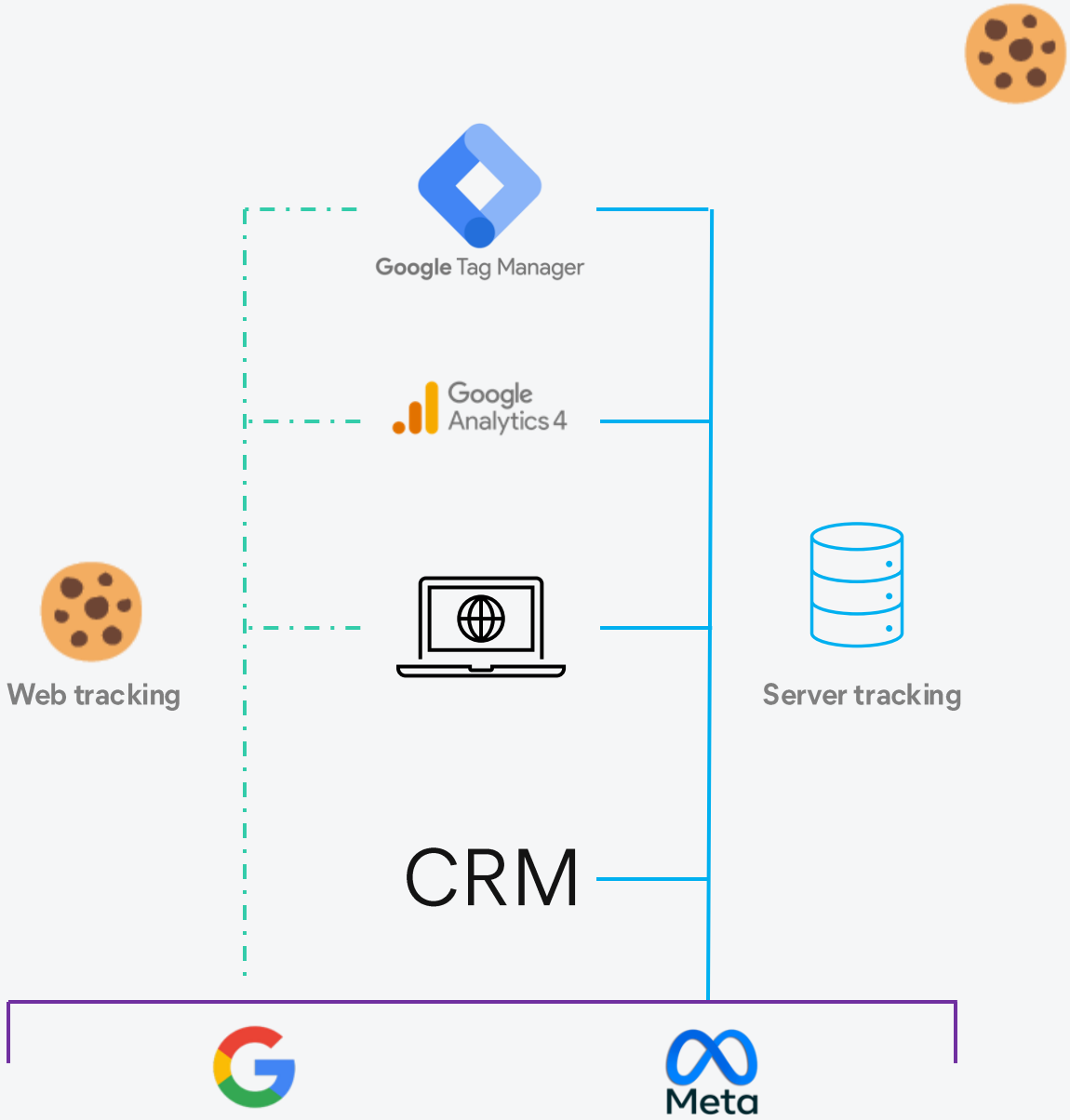
Incomplete tracking = lost opportunities

There is a solution!

Server-side tracking enhances measurement accuracy, reduces data loss, and delivers stronger optimisation signals to Google Ads, Meta and ChatGPT for improved performance.

- More accurate attribution across devices and booking journeys
- Reduced data loss from browser restrictions and ad blockers
- Stronger optimisation signals for Google Ads and Meta
- Better visibility of the full guest journey

This can be set up in parallel to your existing tracking setup



upperdog.

05

AI has entered the chat

Traditional search is becoming conversational

AI overviews are speeding up the shortlist process in guests' research phase

Traditional search

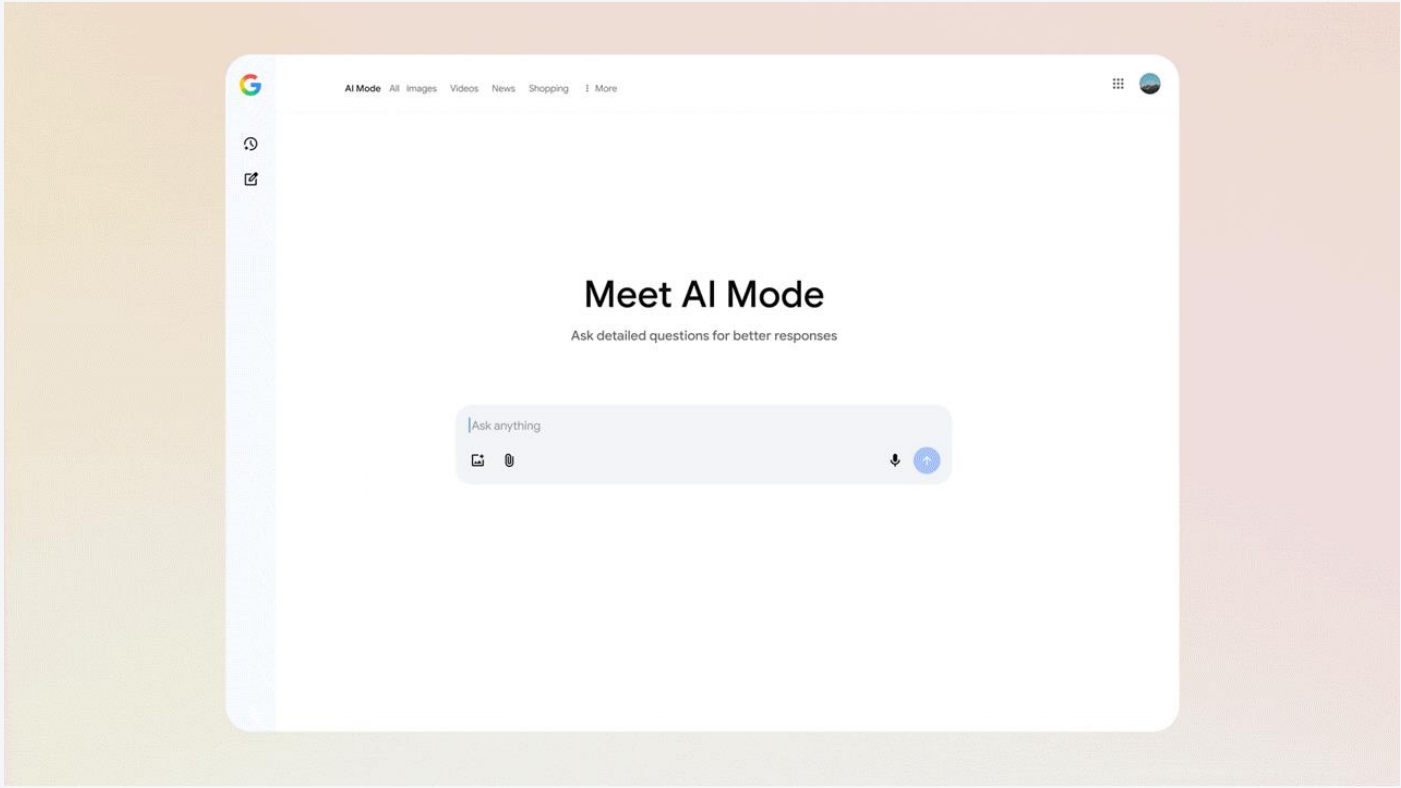
"Dog friendly holiday park Dorset"

Conversational discovery

"Where should I stay for a dog friendly weekend near the Dorset coast, with good food and walks nearby?"

Appearing in AI Overviews relies on organic reference, or paid entry via Google's AI Max / Performance Max campaign types.

Create content that answers conversational length queries



What helps hospitality become visible to AI?

- Accurate property information
- Distinctive experiences
- Clear amenities
- Current photography
- Reviews
- Location information
- Live pricing and availability
- Consistent website content

upperdog.

ChatGPT ads

The newest way to intercept users in the research and consideration phase

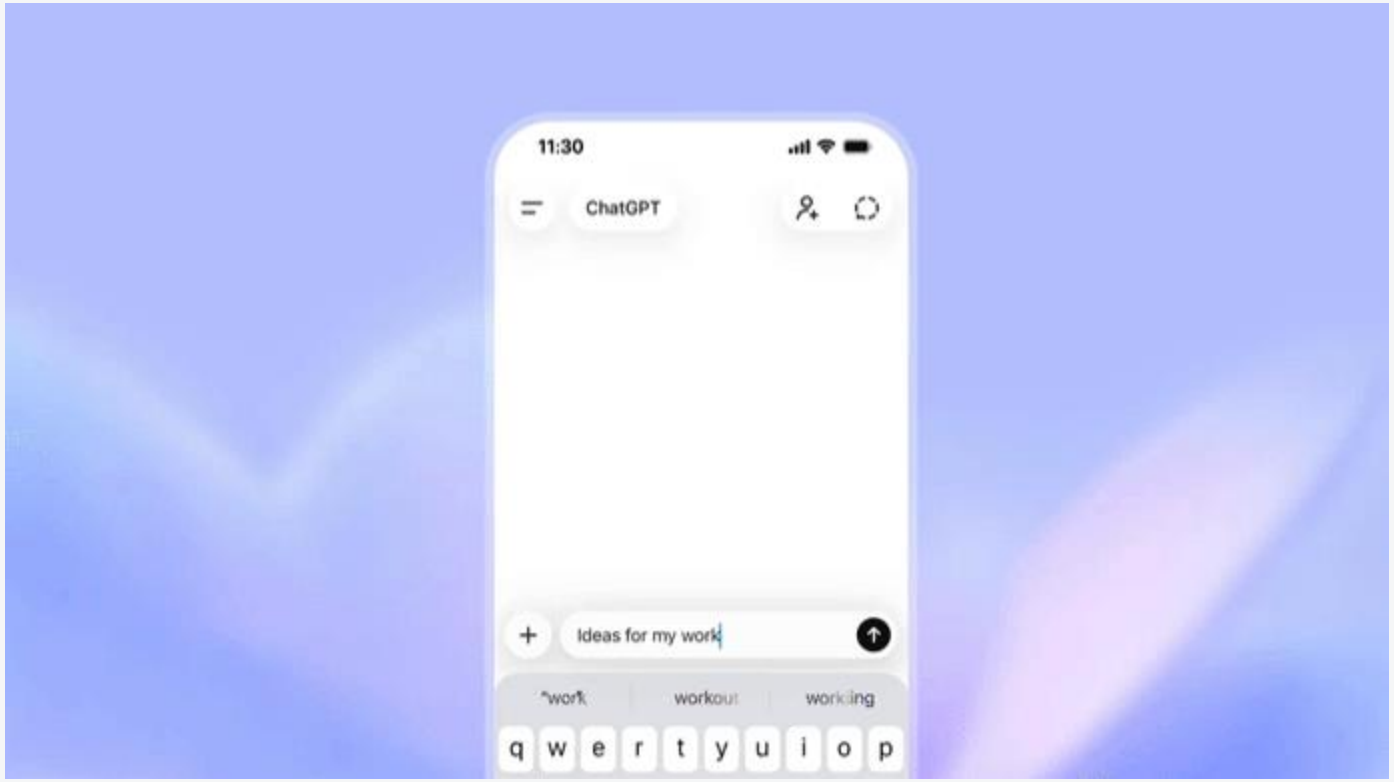
Prompt based targeting

'Target UK families who are actively planning a family holiday within the next 3-12 months and are researching holiday parks, caravan parks, lodges, resorts, family attractions, beaches, and family-friendly accommodation in Dorset.'

Test, measure, iterate

ChatGPT ads are powerful at the point of research and discovery. Having a robust measurement strategy in place is important to gauge success – especially if users discover via ChatGPT and convert via Google or META.

Conversion path analysis via GA4 can uncover this insight



- **16 Million Active users in the UK using the ad-supported free tier**
- **£15 daily minimum spend**
- **Billed on the click**
- **Optimise towards conversions or clicks**

upperdog.

06

Don’t fall at the final hurdle.
Check your booking engine for friction

The marketing worked!

Then the guest tried to book...

Booking friction creates drop off:

- No obvious availability
- Slow mobile experience
- Unclear room differences
- Unexpected charges
- Poor payment process
- Better price on an OTA
- No clear reason to book direct

Every £ spent on acquisition places more pressure on the booking experience.

Advert ✓ → Search ✓ → Reviews ✓ → Website ✓ → Booking engine ?

- Don't just assume the booking engine is perfect
- Simulate the user journey for yourself
- Check % drop off between key user stages
    - View product -> add to cart
    - Add to cart -> begin checkout
    - Begin checkout -> booking success

Three actions for the next 30 days

1. Creative

Assess whether your creative communicates a relevant experience.

Test: Identify 3 different creative angles that lean into your USP and end user inspiration. Test these together in a fresh adset. Graduate the winning creative and scale.

2. Data

Check whether Meta and Google receive reliable booking, revenue or qualified-lead signals.

Test: Integrate your CRM with META / Google. Create a top 5% customer value segment. Use this as an optimisation signal. Measure average order value vs baseline.

3. Booking

Book your own stay or experience on all devices, from first click to confirmation.

Test: Establish user journey drop off averages for the last 3-6 months. Deploy one friction fix. Measure the impact upon user journey. Build statistically significant benchmark. Verify the difference. Iterate.

Two actions in time for January

1. Tracking

Audit tracking setup & install server-side tracking

Test: Once in place, measure the difference in recorded conversions pre / post installation.

More conversions = faster learning = larger data pools = better performance

2. ChatGPT

Expand into ChatGPT ads with a Q1 activation strategy

Test: Commit to 3 months of activity. Construct a measurement framework. Observe direct bookings vs assisted bookings. Assess overall value to marketing mix.

Case study – Wilderness Reserve

A complete overhaul of the digital and channel strategy was executed for Wilderness Reserve, which saw low-intent traffic acquisition shift to high-value direct revenue generation, significantly improving year-on-year growth in both leads and direct bookings.

Performance insights

↑ 22%
increase in revenue YoY

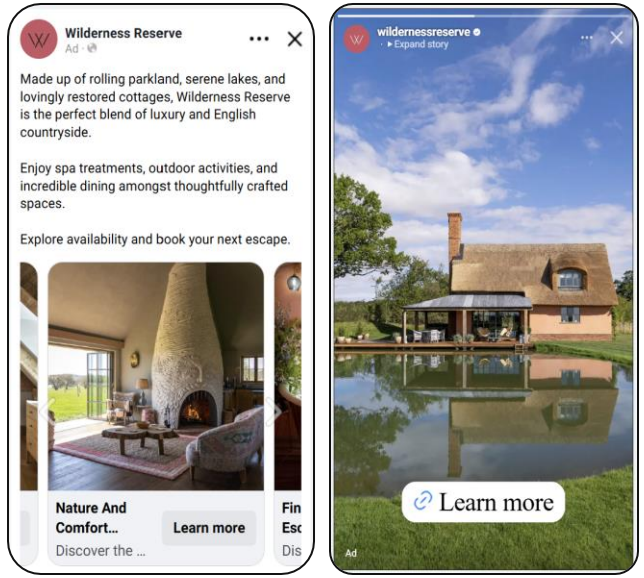
↑ 53%
increase in leads

↓ 24%
reduction to paid spend

↓ 24%
reduction to CPA

Performance gains were driven through:

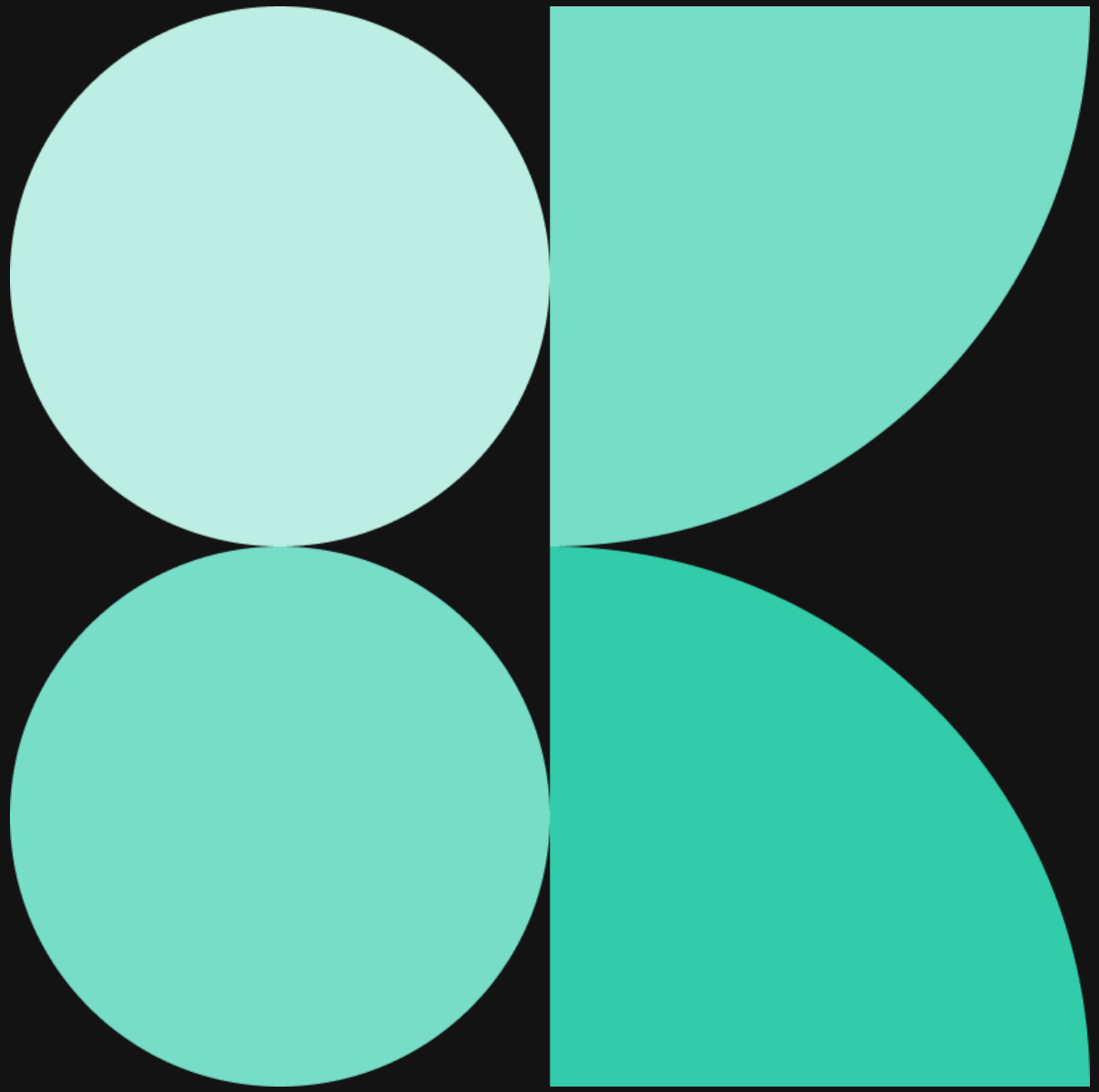
- Full overhaul of ad accounts, launching new and restructured campaigns with refined targeting.
- Optimised media spend around peak seasonal booking cycles to maximise revenue return.
- Connected backend sales funnel data directly to ad platforms to optimise the algorithms.



Thank you

Upperdog
01202 798 820
tom.wright@upperdog.co.uk

Studio 1
Green Park
Exeter Park Rd
Bournemouth
BH2 5BD



upperdog.