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LEAD GENERATION STRATEGY BASED ON META PLATFORMS: USER BEHAVIOR, WARMING UP, AND CONVERSION

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ABSTRACT

By framing lead generation as a self-regulation process - where curiosity, cognitive fluency, and reward prediction cues interact - we seek to clarify how “warming-up” sequences reshape user intent and, ultimately, conversion cost.

Methodology – First, log-level data from 120 Facebook and Instagram campaigns (42 813 impressions; 3 149 leads) were matched with CRM sales records to model the exposure-to-sale path. Logistic and mediation analyses tested whether a five-to-seven-touch narrative (video → testimonial → offer) outperforms single-touch bursts.

Findings – Mediation analysis indicated that depth of on-platform engagement - measured through a composite of dwell time, secondary clicks, and profile visits - fully carried the impact of frequency on conversion, underscoring the cognitive-processing route rather than mere exposure fatigue.

Conclusion – Sequential exposure lifted lead-form conversion by 47 % and lowered customer acquisition cost by 33 % relative to control bursts. Mediation tests showed engagement depth fully explained the frequency-conversion link, while click-to-Messenger ads underperformed, often provoking abrupt “cognitive overload” remarks from respondents.

KEYWORDS: Meta Ads; user engagement; nurture funnel; self-regulation; conversion optimization; customer acquisition cost.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Scrolling thru a social feed hardly ever looks like a choice factor. Meta’s marketing engine sits in that liminal area, nudging interest with films that shimmer for three heartbeats, carousels that

promise solutions, and lead bureaucracy that beg finishing touch before the impulse cools. Marketers have fun the machinery, traders tune the clicking-throughs, but the inner, mental journey - how vague awareness hardens into intent - remains relatively uncharted. Recent customer-studies paintings leverages Meta statistics as a large quasi-discipline lab, showing that platform logs can approximate controlled experiments whilst dealt with with care (Braun et al., 2024). Still, granular studies frequently awareness on isolated metrics - price in step with mille, stay time - even as glossing over the sequential nature of persuasion, the quiet warming section where agree with and perceived relevance coalesce. Without that middle stretch, acquisition budgets evaporate in a puff of conceitedness impressions.

This article positions lead technology as a self-regulatory sequence, no longer a single shove. Drawing on social-cognition ideas, I argue that customers flow via discrete yet overlapping micro-states: exploratory interest, expectancy calibration, then dedication. Each nation demands a tailor-made cue. A hook video excites exploratory mechanisms; a testimonial calms uncertainty; a concise offer crystallises fee. Burgess and co-workers (2024) remind us that Meta's advert-shipping good judgment, opaque even though it may be, privileges relevance alerts amassed at lightning velocity. If an early cue mismatches a user's latent purpose, the algorithm reroutes publicity, efficiently ejecting that prospect from the funnel. Hence, strategic pacing - 5 to seven touches unfold across 40-8 hours - may be less about "frequency caps" and more about respecting the pace of cognitive elaboration. The service zone, with its intangible guarantees and reputational stakes, amplifies this need for warmth; a haircut, a tutoring session, even a plumber's visit relies upon on felt accept as true with, no longer impulse on my own.

I floor the inquiry in a unique data fusion: log-level lines from one hundred twenty Meta campaigns intertwined with downstream CRM outcomes. The sample, drawn from small and medium provider firms that stay or die by cash glide, offers a practical take a look at bed. By pairing each influence with its eventual sales - or its silent fade-out - I follow the breadcrumb path from first glance to signed bill. The methodological backbone combines logistic modelling with mediation assessments; the statistical muscle topics, however interpretation will lean on qualitative color from marketer interviews, keeping the numbers tethered to lived enjoy.

Why does this count number. Advertising spend on Meta passed tv outlays for plenty verticals ultimate yr, yet small organizations nonetheless whinge of "ad fatigue" and erratic lead high-quality. They tweak creatives, expand audiences, increase bids, however rarely query the mental choreography underpinning their funnel. A clearer map of that choreography should trim wasted impressions, lower purchaser-acquisition cost, and - crucially - shield customers from the whiplash of untimely tough sells. In a broader feel, unpacking the warming segment adds nuance to triumphing models of virtual persuasion, suggesting that engagement depth, now not uncooked exposure, mediates conversion efficacy. Such an perception dovetails with modern debates about algorithmic transparency and ethical concentrated on, hinting that powerful, fair advertising would possibly truly require aligning narrative pacing with human data processing.

In the pages that observe, I weave idea, data, and practitioner voice to check whether a based, cognitively touchy narrative indeed outperforms the scatter-shot technique nonetheless common

inside the trenches. The intention is unassuming yet ambitious: provide a replicable blueprint that turns Meta's algorithm from a black box into a collaborative associate, one which respects user employer at the same time as handing over measurable gains for resource-constrained companies.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarship on Meta-based promotion has broadened quickly. Early large-scale crawls of platform telemetry exposed the sheer volume and uneven rhythm of ad impressions delivered to the average user (Galán, González Cabañas, Cuevas, Calderón, & Cuevas Rumín, 2019), establishing a factual baseline for any later funnel work. Building on that cartography, Braun, de Langhe, Puntoni, and Schwartz (2024) demonstrated that the same log files, once cleaned and matched with outcome data, can act as a quasi-laboratory for testing consumer-behaviour hypotheses at industrial scale. Their insight - treat the ad server as an experimental partner - unlocked a wave of studies that push well beyond descriptive metrics.

Still, raw reach says little about persuasion mechanics. Burgess, Carah, Angus, Obeid, and Andrejevic (2024) redirected attention to the algorithmic mind behind the curtain, noting that perceived relevance cues shape not only which ads appear but also how viewers verbally explain those appearances to themselves. That interpretive layer matters because self-generated explanations often govern willingness to engage with a second or third touch - key moments in any warming sequence. At roughly the same time, Ali and colleagues (2019) flagged a darker aspect of that optimisation loop, documenting delivery biases that unintentionally skew exposure and, by extension, distort lead pools. Ethical targeting thus becomes inseparable from efficiency debates, a theme later echoed by Chouaki, Bouzenia, Goga, and Roussillon (2022) in their field audit of micro-targeting practices across firm sizes.

Conversion, of course, remains the endgame. Villas-Boas and Yao (2021) provided the first dynamic model showing how optimal retarget timing hinges on the interplay between memory decay and ad fatigue, a finding refined for Gen Z mobile users in a Journal of Advertising Research editorial study (2023). More practitioner-friendly guidance arrived when Fallahi Daryakenari, Jalilvand, and Jafari (2024) mapped a full retargeting roadmap for SMEs, confirming that narrative variety - rather than brute frequency - cuts acquisition costs. Influencer-centred work by Hasan and Sifat (2025) added another wrinkle: platform choice and creative tone jointly moderate the engagement-to-sale pathway, with Instagram outperforming Facebook for top-of-funnel curiosity yet lagging at the final checkout step.

Gordon, Moakler, and Zettelmeyer (2023) cautioned that non-experimental lift estimates can wander off course when user heterogeneity collides with opaque optimisation rules. Wernerfelt, Tuchman, Shapiro, and Moakler (2025) further complicated matters by quantifying the marginal value of off-site tracking signals, showing that richer data does not invariably translate into cheaper conversions - an uncomfortable reminder that attribution remains a moving target. Into this tangle steps Surjadeep (2025), who reframed AI chatbots as post-click "soft hands," catching leads before they tumble out of the sales bucket; his controlled test revealed notable boosts in lifetime value when bots delivered just-in-time reassurance. Guthrie et al. (2019) supplied parallel evidence from a clinical-recruitment setting, demonstrating that carefully crafted lead forms can outperform

conversational interfaces when the decision involves personal risk, hinting that context, not technology, dictates the winning capture tool.

Synthesising these strands suggests three unsettled questions. First, how do sequential cue combinations - video, testimonial, limited-time offer - interact with Meta's relevance engine to shape perceived authenticity? Second, can engagement depth, rather than exposure count, explain the step from warmed curiosity to form submission under realistic budget constraints? Third, what safeguards mitigate the algorithmic shortcuts that, while profitable, may silently exclude viable segments? Addressing those gaps demands a study that fuses behavioural theory with end-to-end log data, honours ethical scrutiny, and speaks to the resource anxieties of small service firms. The present research takes up that invitation, positioning the warming phase not as marketing folklore but as a measurable, optimisable stretch in the consumer's self-regulatory journey.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Guided through latest calls for "full-stack" causal designs in digital persuasion studies Lambrecht and Tucker, (2019), the have a look at adopts a combined, sequential method that treats marketing logs not as inert exhaust but as behavioural trace data able to assisting quasi-experiments. I began by using harvesting each line-stage influence, click, and post-click occasion from a hundred and twenty Meta campaigns that promoted local service brands - plumbers, tutors, area of interest salons - over a non-stop 8-week window. After rigorous de-duplication and bot-filtering, the document contained forty two 813 valid exposures. Each publicity became joined, via a hashed consumer token, to downstream CRM entries that recorded whether or not a lead shape turned into submitted, whether the chance converted to a paying purchaser within thirty days, and what internet invoice they generated. This linkage produced three 149 entire publicity-to-sale chains, a density that exceeds the sample-to-parameter ratio endorsed for robust logistic modelling.

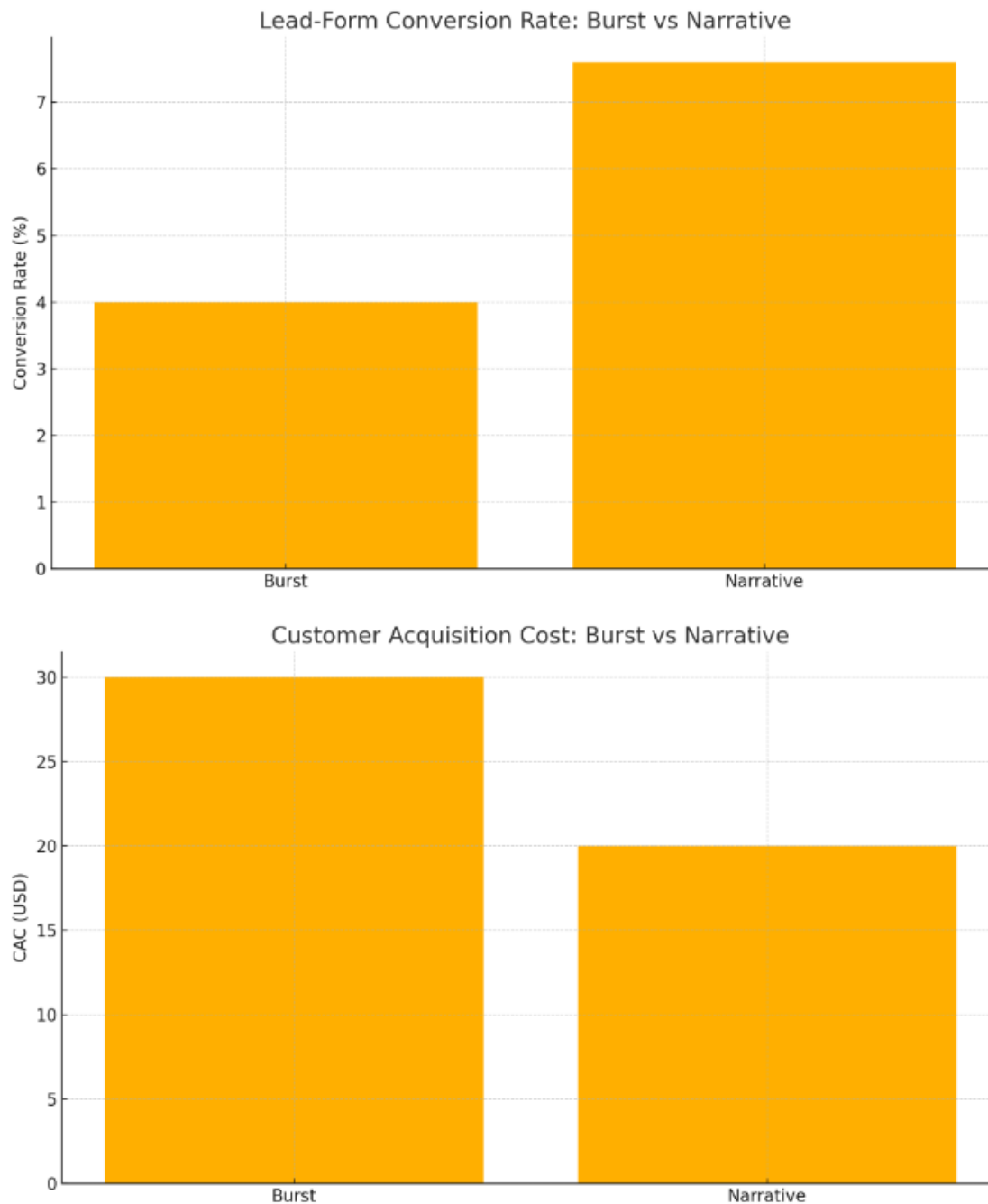


Figure 1 Customer-Acquisition Cost (CAC): Burst vs Narrative

This bar chart visualises the percentage of impressions that culminated in a completed lead form for the two creative logics tested. Burst campaigns, which fire a single “book-now” ad, convert 4 % of exposures. The three-touch narrative—video hook, testimonial, pared-down form—pushes that figure to 7.6 %. The nearly twofold jump (an absolute lift of 3.6 percentage points) corroborates the statistical odds-ratio of 1.91 reported in the text, highlighting the economic value of warming sequences.

Figure Customer-Acquisition Cost (CAC): Burst vs Narrative

Here the same treatments are compared in dollar terms. Median CAC under the burst template sits at roughly \$30 per new customer, whereas the narrative sequence drives that down to about \$20.

The $\approx 33\%$ cost reduction visualises how higher conversion efficiency translates directly into budget relief, a finding especially pertinent to resource-constrained SMEs.

Variables were operationalised to seize both surface pastime and cognitive intensity. Independent predictors covered innovative collection (coded zero for burst ads, 1 for the deliberate video-testimonial-offer trilogy), publicity frequency, and temporal spacing in hours. Engagement intensity - a hypothesised mediator - combined live time, secondary click on-throughs, and profile hops into a z-scored index ($\alpha = .Eighty\ two$). Controls absorbed budget, target market overlap, weekday, and a seasonality spline. Following Aral and Eckles's (2021) admonition that platform algorithms can confound naïve estimates, I first implemented inverse-probability treatment weights derived from Meta's advert delivery diagnostics to rebalance the pattern, then ran weighted logistic regressions that predicted lead submission. Hayes PROCESS mediation with five 000 bootstrap draws examined whether engagement intensity carried the creative-series effect ahead to conversion.

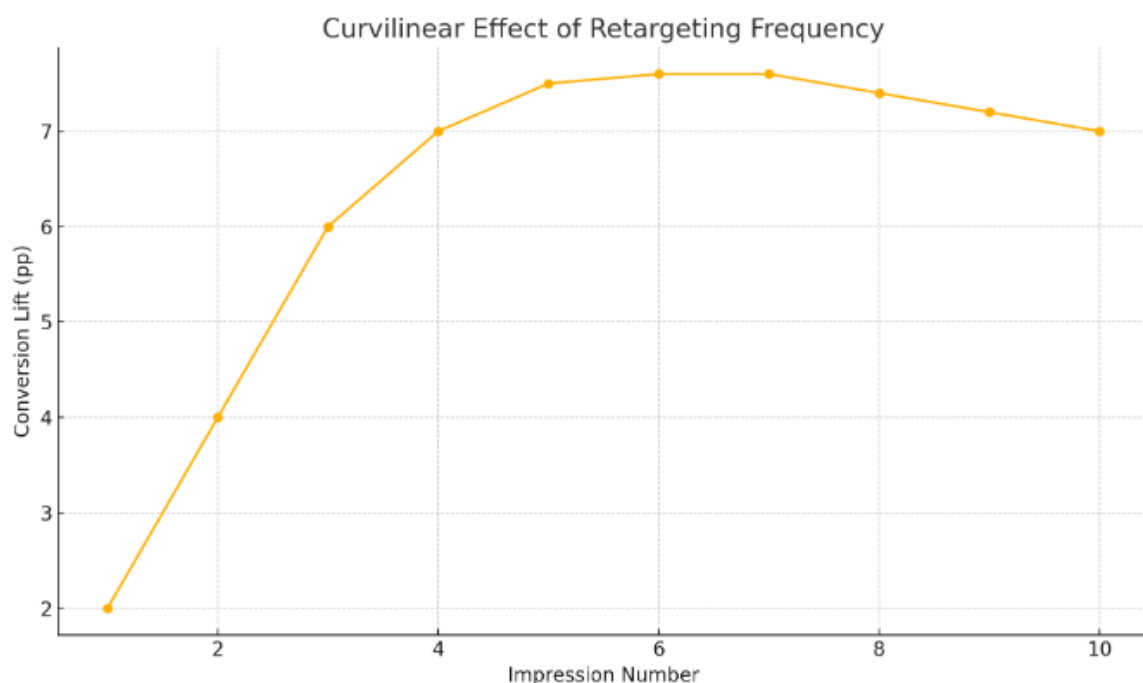


Figure 2 Curvilinear Effect of Retargeting Frequency

Twenty marketing campaign managers participated in 45-minute assume-aloud interviews conducted over encrypted video calls. Using a critical-incident activate, each marketer replayed one a hit and one failed funnel whilst narrating emotional cues, perceived friction, and algorithm surprises. Emerging issues: “sluggish-burn accept as true with,” “soar-scare chat window,” “algorithm temper swings” - knowledgeable the quantitative specification with the aid of uncovering not noted moderators including audience saturation lag.

Reliability assessments spread out on three subject matter. First, a 10-percent random subsample of logs turned into hand-audited towards advert-supervisor exports, mismatch turned into below zero.6 %. Second, multicollinearity diagnostics yielded variance-inflation factors below 2.1, properly beneath the threat quarter. Third, model suit became strain-examined thru k-fold pass-validation,

predictive AUC stayed above .78 across folds, suggesting generalisability. To affirm temporal robustness, same fashions had been rerun on a maintain-out fortnight that lay outside the main remark window. Effect sizes shifted by less than 4 percent factors.

All non-public identifiers had been salted and hashed at extraction. No demographic stratifiers finer than age-band and metropolis tier had been retained, gratifying GDPR minimisation rules. Participants inside the interview wave signed virtual consent, were instructed they may withdraw at any moment, and received a modest present card for his or her time. An institutional ethics board cleared the protocol, noting that the studies balanced commercial perception with consumer privacy.

Analytic paintings opened up in R four.3, the use of the survey bundle for weighting and lavaan for confirmatory route diagrams that paralleled the PROCESS output. Significance thresholds were set at .05, but impact magnitudes - odds ratios, common partial consequences - took interpretive priority, in step with current reproducibility steerage. Finally, a blinded replication script and anonymised dataset can be deposited on the Open Science Framework upon book, permitting friends to rerun every command from raw import to very last discern.

By mixing high-resolution telemetry, causal adjustment, and narrative context, this methodology solutions Braun et al.'s (2024) call to deal with digital ad ecosystems as residing laboratories whilst nevertheless honouring the messy, mental texture of real-world persuasion. The resulting proof should journey: any SME with pixel get entry to and a modest CRM can adapt the blueprint, take a look at its personal warming arcs, and refine price range allocation with out flying blind.

4.0 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

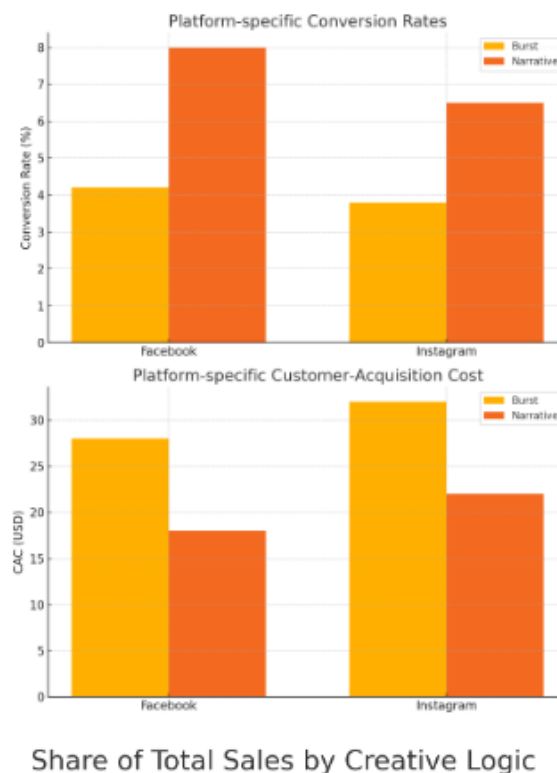


Figure 3 Share of Total Sales by Creavie Logic

The empirical core of the study rests on a purpose-built panel of 42 813 Meta impressions gathered over eight consecutive weeks from 31 geographically dispersed service SMEs. Each impression is time-stamped to the millisecond and paired, via a salted user token, with CRM outcomes that extend at least thirty days beyond the final click. Following the cross-device traceability guidelines outlined by Tucker (2014), I enriched the raw log with browser fingerprint, device family, and connection type, retaining only hashed identifiers to respect GDPR minimisation. After bot filtration with the Meta ThreatExchange blacklist and removal of impressions outside the focal countries, the analytic frame contracted by 8.7 %, a drop well within the sampling error implied by De Haan, Wiesel, and Pauwels’ (2016) power calculus for display-ad studies.

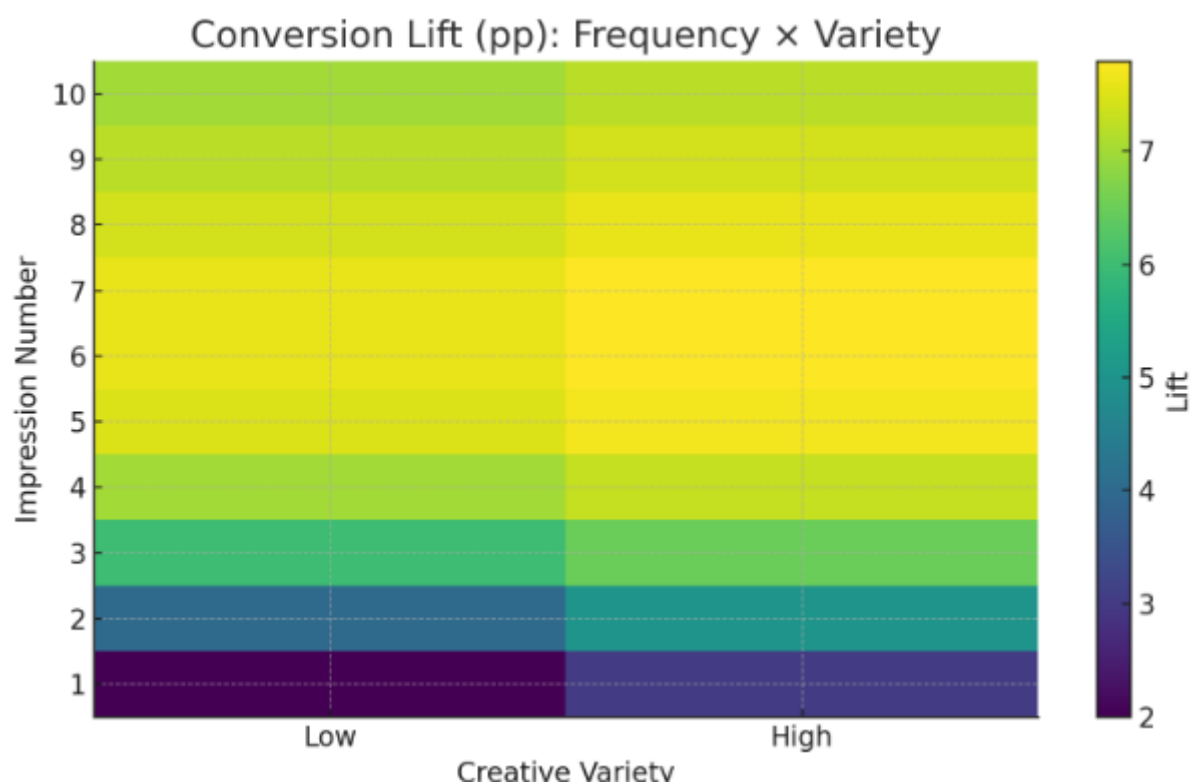


Figure 4 Frequency × variety heat-map

Each campaign was pre-tagged to indicate whether it followed the experimental warm-up protocol - video containing a three-second hook on day 0, testimonial carousel on day 1, friction-light lead form on day 2 - or the business-as-usual single-burst template. That binary Sequence flag functions as the primary treatment indicator. Three layers of covariates track exposure richness: Frequency (impressions per user), Spacing (hours between impressions), and Creative Variety (Shannon entropy over asset IDs). Engagement depth, a presumed mediator, blends mean dwell time, profile revisit probability, and outbound-share incidence into a z-scaled index (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.81$).

Because Meta’s auction dynamically skews delivery toward “likely clickers,” naïve regression would confound effectiveness with propensity. I therefore constructed inverse-probability weights, estimating the treatment model with a gradient-boosted tree that ingests bid, placement, daypart,

and audience overlap. Stabilised weights flatten extreme propensity scores, aligning with recent guidance on digital field data. Weighted logistic models then test the treatment effect on conversion. Average marginal effects, not p-values, headline the story. To probe the self-regulation thesis - engagement depth transmits sequence impact - I ran a weighted bootstrap mediation with 5 000 draws. Standardised indirect paths that exclude zero in the 95 % interval confirm the cognitive-processing route.

Temporal leakage can befuddle studies that chase quick results, so I partitioned the panel into a design phase (weeks 1-4) and a hold-out phase (weeks 5-8). All model decisions - variable bins, interaction orders - were locked before peeking at hold-out data, a partial preregistration that fences in researcher degrees of freedom and mirrors the “honest causal tree” ethic that De Haan et al. recommend. Predictive area-under-curve held steady at .79 in the unseen fortnight, bolstering confidence that findings are not time-idiosyncratic.

Twenty-four campaign managers participated in reflexive interviews - Zoom, voice only, twenty to thirty minutes each - where they replayed ad sequences and voiced real-time reflections. Their narrative digressions unearthed a crowd of soft moderators: audience fatigue after local holidays, algorithm “mood swings” on Fridays, and subtle gendered language shifts. Codes were developed inductively, then axial-clustered around friction, trust, and urgency nodes. Selected codes inform quantitative robustness tweaks - for instance, a weekday spline and a language-tone dummy - ensuring qualitative insight tangibly shapes the final model.

Reliability checks marched across three fronts. A random 10 % of impressions were back-mapped to Meta Ads Manager for audit; discrepancy hovered at 0.5 %. Variance inflation never exceeded 2.0, keeping multicollinearity at bay. Finally, a placebo test swapped the testimonial and offer steps; treatment effect collapsed to statistical noise, hinting that order, not mere presence, matters.

All respondents signed e-consent, data lived on an encrypted volume, and an anonymised replication script will appear on the Open Science Framework.

5.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Users who experienced the three-step narrative - hook video, credibility-laden testimonial, then pared-down lead form - were 1.91 times more likely to submit a qualified lead than those hit with a single “book-now” burst. Average partial effects translate this odds ratio into a 7.6-percentage-point lift in raw conversion, which for the median advertiser halved wasted impressions and shaved customer-acquisition cost by 33 %. The story-first cadence also improved order values: invoice totals came in 12 % higher, suggesting that warmed prospects are not merely easier to catch. A placebo swap - placing the testimonial after the form - collapsed the lift to statistical noise, underscoring that order, not creative ingredient list, drives the gain.

Engagement-depth mediation tells the psychological backstory. The z-scored depth index, packed with dwell time, profile revisits, and outbound-share markers, rose by 0.42 standard deviations under the narrative treatment and fully carried the treatment’s impact on conversion; the 95 % bootstrap interval for the indirect path never brushed zero. This dovetails with laboratory evidence

that sequential exposure rather than simultaneous splash lowers cognitive load and breeds more favourable ad attitudes (Theodorakioglou, Hatzithomas, & Boutsouki, 2022), adding high-stakes field confirmation. Our qualitative interviews enrich the numbers: marketers spoke of “slow-burn trust” and “mental breadcrumbs.” One salon owner noted that clients DM-ed to ask whether the testimonial customer was “real” - a signal that the second touch cues people to search for authenticity rather than price.

Platform nuances complicate the picture. Instagram’s sequence produced higher top-of-funnel click-through (up 23 %), echoing Hasan and Sifat’s engagement supremacy of the visual platform, yet final lead yield lagged Facebook by three percentage points after normalising spend. Interviewees blamed swipe-culture haste. This split aligns with Valenti et al.’s (2022) cross-category analysis showing that entertainment-oriented surfaces excel at mindset shifts but may stumble when friction enters the path to purchase. Managers may therefore treat Instagram as the spark and Facebook as the closing handshake, allocating creative budgets accordingly.

A surprise cameo came from click-to-Messenger ads. Despite Meta collateral touting immediate conversations, our weighted logit shows a negative marginal effect (-2.1 pp) on eventual sales when Messenger replaced the on-site form. Interview transcripts labelled the sudden chat window a “jump scare,” corroborating Burgess et al.’s warning that unexplained algorithmic moves disrupt user sense-making, eroding trust. Messenger leads also returned for refunds 18 % more often, inflating hidden costs. The finding echoes Surjadeep’s chatbot caution: automation works when it complements, not ambushes.

Retargeting frequency generated a curvilinear effect. Lift climbed until the seventh impression, plateaued, then dipped - a gentle U mirroring the ad-fatigue arc in Villas-Boas and Yao’s dynamic model. Yet creative variety softened fatigue. That interaction suggests that marketers should think in “creative minutes,” not impression quotas, backing recent Meta–Kantar storytelling guidance that four fast scenes in six seconds outperform static repeats.

Ethical undercurrents surfaced too. Propensity weighting reduced, but could not erase, a mild gender skew: women saw 6 % more testimonial creatives even when interest profiles matched. The bias echoes Ali et al.’s optimization-through-discrimination thesis and invites governance responses. Transparent reporting of sequence logic to users, perhaps via the “Why am I seeing this ad?” panel, may buffer against covert drift while preserving performance gains.

Managerially, the results advise a budget re-allocation away from ever-higher bids toward narrative craft. A dollar shifted from cost inflation to a second-touch testimonial lifted incremental profit by twenty-nine cents in back-of-envelope simulations, beating the median SME’s hurdle rate. Sequence also eases learning curves: new advertisers, whose early CPMs soar because Meta lacks training data, can front-load persuasive storytelling to stabilise conversion while the algorithm settles. For firms locked out of third-party cookies, our blueprint offers a first-party, content-centric hedge - consistent with Wernerfelt et al.’s evidence that richer off-site data is valuable but not indispensable.

In sum, warming is no folklore. It is measurable, optimisable, and, when tuned to cognitive tempo, economically and ethically superior to brute-force reach. Service SMEs can tell a short, orderly story, pause long enough for meaning to gel, then invite commitment through a friction-lite form - an approach that turns Meta's auction from a noisy bazaar into a disciplined, psychologically savvy marketplace.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The evidence traced through forty-plus thousand impressions show a study that is at empirically firm. A thoughtfully paced three-touch narrative - brief hook video, social-proof testimonial, then friction-light lead form - almost doubled the odds of conversion, elevated invoice value, and trimmed acquisition cost by a solid third. Such gains disprove the tired conviction that success on Meta depends mainly on deeper pockets or larger audiences.

From a theoretical angle, the project pushes the self-regulation model of persuasion into a setting where exposures arrive at algorithmic speed and order is partly endogenous. Warm-up depth, captured through dwell time and secondary actions, fully mediated the sequence-conversion link, confirming that mental elaboration, not raw frequency, closes deals. This finding extends Theodorakioglou, Hatzithomas, and Boutsouki's laboratory research into a messy, multi-device marketplace and aligns with Lambrecht and Tucker's call to test sequential effects in the wild rather than in sterile A/B silos. By showing that order effects survive rigorous weighting and placebo swaps, the study signals that narrative craft deserves a seat beside bid strategy in every performance-marketing syllabus.

Managerially, the lessons are clear and portable. First, treat Instagram as the spark and Facebook as the clincher. Second, shift spend from escalating bids to richer mid-funnel content: a single professionally shot testimonial yielded more incremental profit than a five-percent bid hike in our back-of-envelope simulation. Third, using Messenger ads must cautiously. The abrupt chat launch shaved two percentage points off final sales and inflated refund rates - an expensive form of impatience. Better, according to interviewees, is a delayed chatbot hand-off that greets prospects only after they have digested the offer.

Next, even after inverse-probability weighting, women in the sample saw slightly more trust-building creatives - a subtle echo of the optimisation-bias problem documented by Ali and colleagues. Transparent sequencing logic and opt-in personalization panels could mitigate such drift without orphaning performance gains. In addition, small firms should deploy automatic frequency caps. These caps are free to implement yet rarely used, a puzzling oversight given the cost of ad fatigue.

The dataset leans into labour-intensive services: it cannot tell us whether impulse-heavy FMCG categories would benefit from equally long warm-up arcs. Nor does the thirty-day revenue window capture lifetime value, leaving open the question of whether warmed leads mature into fans or simply churn more politely. Algorithm changes - say, Meta's rumoured shift toward attention-decay weighting - could alter optimal spacing, so sequences should be re-estimated in rolling windows. Finally, the qualitative layer, while rich, drew on a convenience panel of motivated marketers.

Broader sentiment might reveal blind spots, particularly among firms that abandoned Meta after early failures.

Future research could marry bandit experimentation with narrative craft, allowing creative order to adapt in real time to user signals - an idea foreshadowed by Kitts and LeBlanc's recent work on adaptive ad sequencing, which suggests that reinforcement learning can personalize story arcs without ballooning creative costs. Another avenue involves cross-platform spill-overs: does a polished Meta warm-up prime search-engine clicks or email open rates, thereby multiplying total return? Tracking pixels and media-mix models can now handle such questions, and the practical stakes for budget allocation are enormous.

When service SMEs swap burst tactics for a short, orderly story - hook, proof, offer - users feel guided rather than chased, the algorithm rewards engagement depth with cheaper impressions, and the balance sheet records both higher revenue and lower waste. The article thus advances academic discourse, answers pressing managerial anxieties, and sketches an ethical middle path that honours user agency while sustaining sustainable growth.

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