

Ekimetrics.

Creative effectiveness: a how-to guide for marketing teams

Discover what up to 85% of video ads are getting wrong, and how to score, measure, and optimize creative for up to 2X ROI.



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Introduction

Every marketer knows great creative when they see it. Data tells us something more actionable: that creative is the number one driver of campaign effectiveness.

Still, for most marketing teams, creative remains the most under-measured compared to other marketing levers.

This how-to guide bridges that gap: so you can make, measure, and refine creative decisions for optimized performance and increased commercial lift.

Because creative effectiveness is a relatively new field of marketing measurement, let's stick to the essentials for now. And when you want to dive deeper, our experts can guide the conversation further.

Let's start with the methodology behind measuring creative effectiveness. Then, we will discuss how this methodology integrates with Marketing Mix Modeling (MMM), showing what it looks like in a real campaign environment.

How we're approaching the conversation:

Best practice: Creative effectiveness is the quantifiable link between specific creative decisions and commercial outcomes: sales effects, brand equity, or both. For any team producing creative for paid media at scale, the measurement gap is significant—especially when media buying has already been optimized.

Why now? For a long time, measuring creative effectiveness at scale wasn't feasible. Two developments changed that: the maturity of MMM as a discipline, and the availability of tools that provide structure to creative data.

What you will learn:

How we score and measure creative effectiveness: Ekimetrics integrates a creative quality score directly into MMM. Brands can isolate and attribute the commercial contribution of individual creative decisions with the same rigor applied to media spend.

What creative effectiveness unlocks: Creative is one of the last major performance levers most marketing teams haven't yet measured. Brands that move from suboptimal to optimized creative can more than double video ad ROI.

What is creative effectiveness?

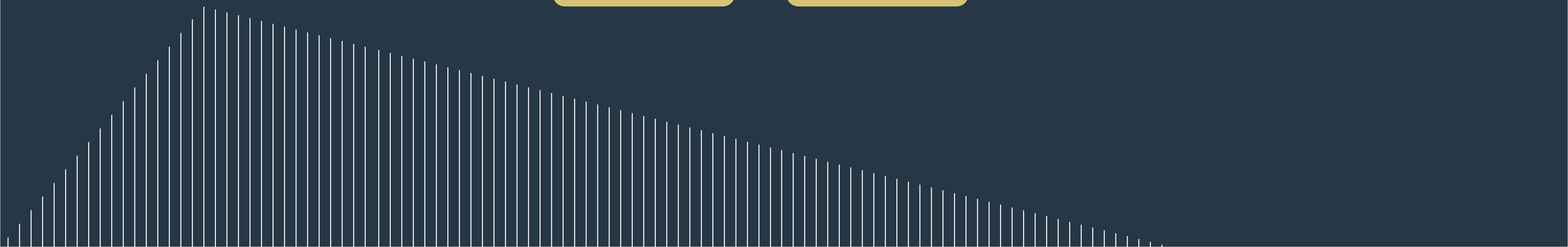
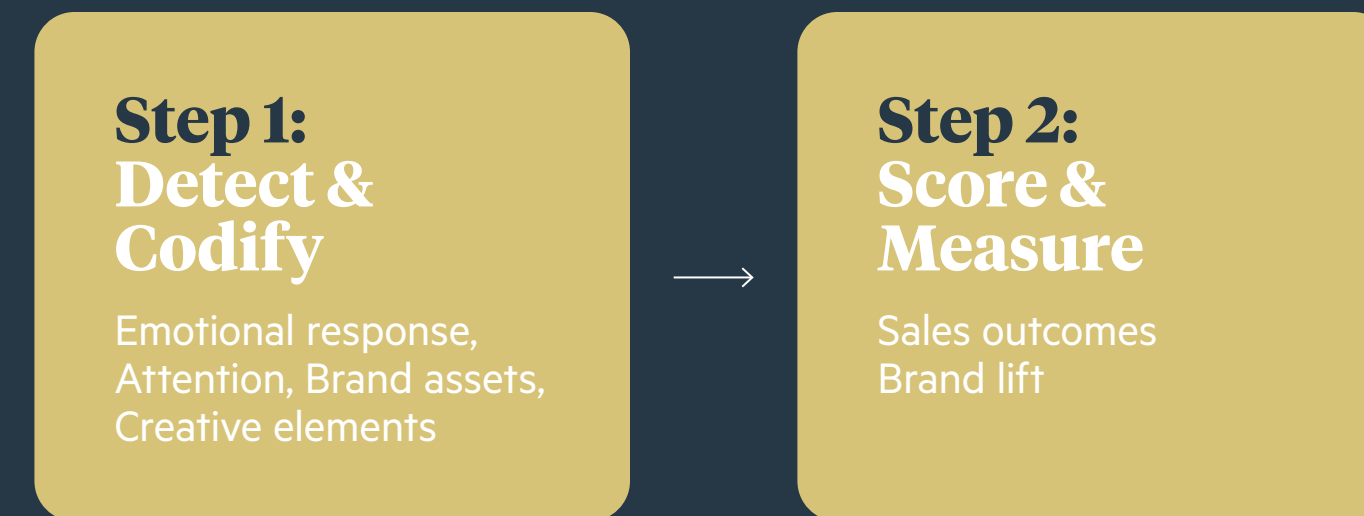
Creative effectiveness is the quantifiable link between a creative asset's specific features and its ability to drive sales effects, brand equity, or both.

It does not score aesthetic quality the way a consumer or an award judge might. Rather, it evaluates whether the creative asset was developed with the specific, measurable attributes known to move the commercial needle.

Two principles are worth keeping in mind:

1. No single method captures everything that makes creative work. The goal is to layer the right lenses, not to find a perfect score.
2. Creative effectiveness only means something when it's linked to sales outcomes. Attention and emotion are inputs, not endpoints.

In practice, that means two things: detecting and codifying the elements present in each creative asset, and scoring their relationship to commercial outcomes. Everything else in this guide follows from those two steps.



Why measure creative effectiveness?

Our study with Google on YouTube video ad performance makes the clearest case yet for why creative measurement belongs at the core of any marketing effectiveness program.

Creative effectiveness is proven.

#1

driver of campaign success

Creative is the single largest driver of campaign effectiveness—more than media spend, targeting, or any other variable.

2x

ROI when creative is optimized

Moving from suboptimal to fully optimized creative can double video ad ROI.

Most teams aren't measuring creative effectiveness. Yet.

40%

of YouTube performance is driven by technical choices.

Examples: formats, objectives, device targeting.

60%

of YouTube performance is driven by creative execution.

Examples: taglines, emotion, group dynamics, CTA presence.

58%

of videos in the U.S. / 85% of videos in EMEA are suboptimal

Meaning they don't activate the proven drivers of effectiveness.

Ready to optimize? Creative effectiveness has a formula.

73 → 20

Google's ABCD framework covers 73 creative attributes. Our study distilled these to the 20 that explain the vast majority of creative-driven performance—making it actionable for real teams.

Which questions can creative effectiveness measure?

Now that you know what's at stake, here's what creative effectiveness can actually tell you.

- How did the creative impact sales?
- What's the impact of the creative itself?
- Is it executed well?
- Is it best practice for the platform?
- Does it capture attention?
- Does it generate a response?
- Does it resonate with the brand/shift brand metrics?
- Did it leave a lasting link to the brand/product?
- Did it generate recall?
- What media choices can we make to maximise the impact from varied creative executions?
- Did our intended audience respond?
- Does it work with how audiences consume that media?

Step 1: Detect and codify creative elements

Choosing what to measure is the first decision. No methodology captures every nuance of a creative asset. Instead, the goal is to identify the attributes that drive commercial performance, individually or in combination. Most of what matters fall into five categories.

Brand Assets & Codes

- Logo, colors, typography, shapes
- Straplines, campaign taglines, brand sounds
- Characters, mascots, brand ambassadors

Calls to Action

- Presence, placement, and construct of CTAs

Product Presence

- Whether the product is shown in use
- How people are shown reacting to it

Storytelling & Flow

- Narrative structure, pacing, emotional arc

People Presence

- Demeanor: smiling, engaged, active
- Group dynamics: solo, couples, families
- Representation and audience relevance

Tools for detection at scale

The right detection tools depend on budget, capability, and the specific questions being asked. A few platforms lead the field.

Google ABCD

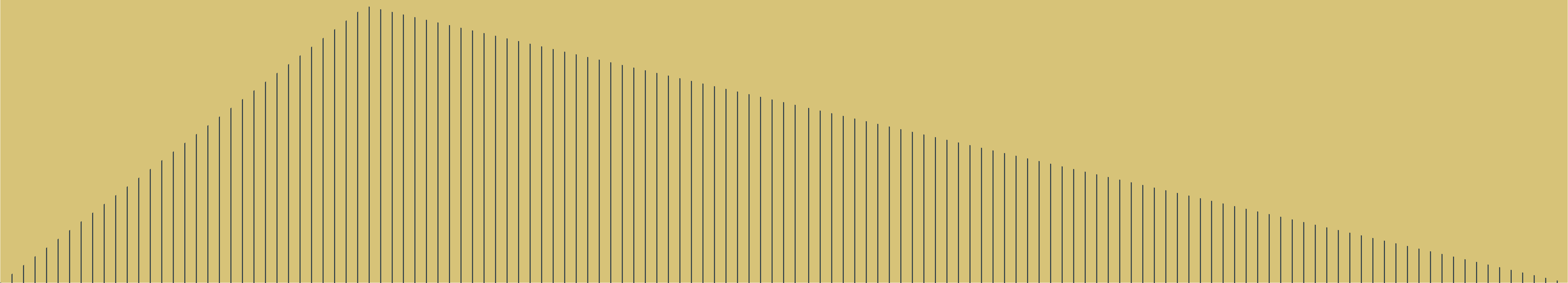
The Google Attention, Branding, Connection, and Direction (ABCD) framework covers 73 attributes and platform-specific guidelines for maximizing creative effects on YouTube.

CreativeX

CreativeX uses AI to analyze patterns across millions of ads—assessing whether creative execution is fit for the platform and identifying which elements are actually being used by teams and agencies. CreativeX transforms visual assets into structured, standardized data across nine global media platforms, including YouTube, TikTok, and Amazon. That structured output is what makes creative data compatible with MMM at scale.

Other key tools

- Vidmob: AI-driven creative data and performance analysis across platforms.
- DAIVID: Attention, emotion, brand recall and intent scoring via AI.
- Lumen: Predictive eye-tracking and attention metrics across channels.
- System1: Emotional response testing and star-rating by panel.
- Realeyes: AI computer vision for attention and emotional response tracking.
- Toluna (MetrixLab): Panel, social data and AI-driven testing across development stages.

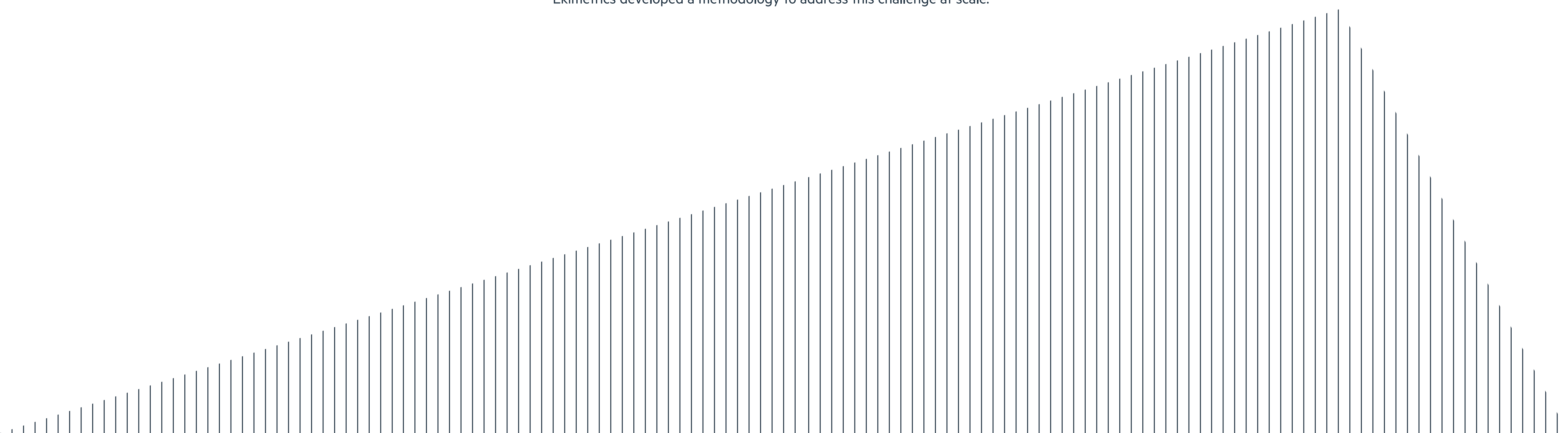


Step 2: Score and measure with the MMM methodology

Now that you have cataloged your creative elements, the next step is linking these elements to outcomes. Ideally, doing so with the same rigor that marketing teams apply to media spend, pricing, and distribution.

Marketing Mix Modeling is one of the most established approaches to quantifying marketing performance across levers. By integrating and calibrating multiple drivers—media, pricing, distribution, and now creative—MMM provides a unified view of incremental performance.

Historically, creative has been left out of MMM, as a discipline that remained too fluid, too subjective, and too variable to be modeled reliably. Ekimetrics developed a methodology to address this challenge at scale.



Determining a creative score

The key innovation is the introduction of a creative quality score as a variable within the MMM model. Each asset is analyzed at the feature level, producing a structured, standardized score based on which creative elements are present and how they have historically correlated with performance.

That score enters the model as a measurable input, producing a modeled, attributed contribution of creative execution to commercial outcomes—separate from media spend, seasonality, pricing, and all other variables. This approach requires robust data, consistent labeling, and careful model calibration to ensure reliable results.

In practice, brands can see whether creative is working, and which specific decisions are driving or limiting performance. More significantly, they can model the ROI impact of changing those decisions before committing to production.

Building that score requires a consistent four-step process:

1. Data collection

gather asset-level media data to enable matching between creative scores and campaign activation.

2. Creative labeling

determine which attributes are present in each creative asset.

3. Creative scoring

produce a structured, standardized score per asset.

4. MMM integration

feed scores into the model to isolate creative's contribution from all other variables.

A consistent methodology ensures two things: better model fit and explanation of sales performance, and the ability to quantify and monitor the impact of creative execution on an ongoing basis. Our technical paper with Google explains the methodology in full, including how we develop the creative score using Random Forests and SHAP values.

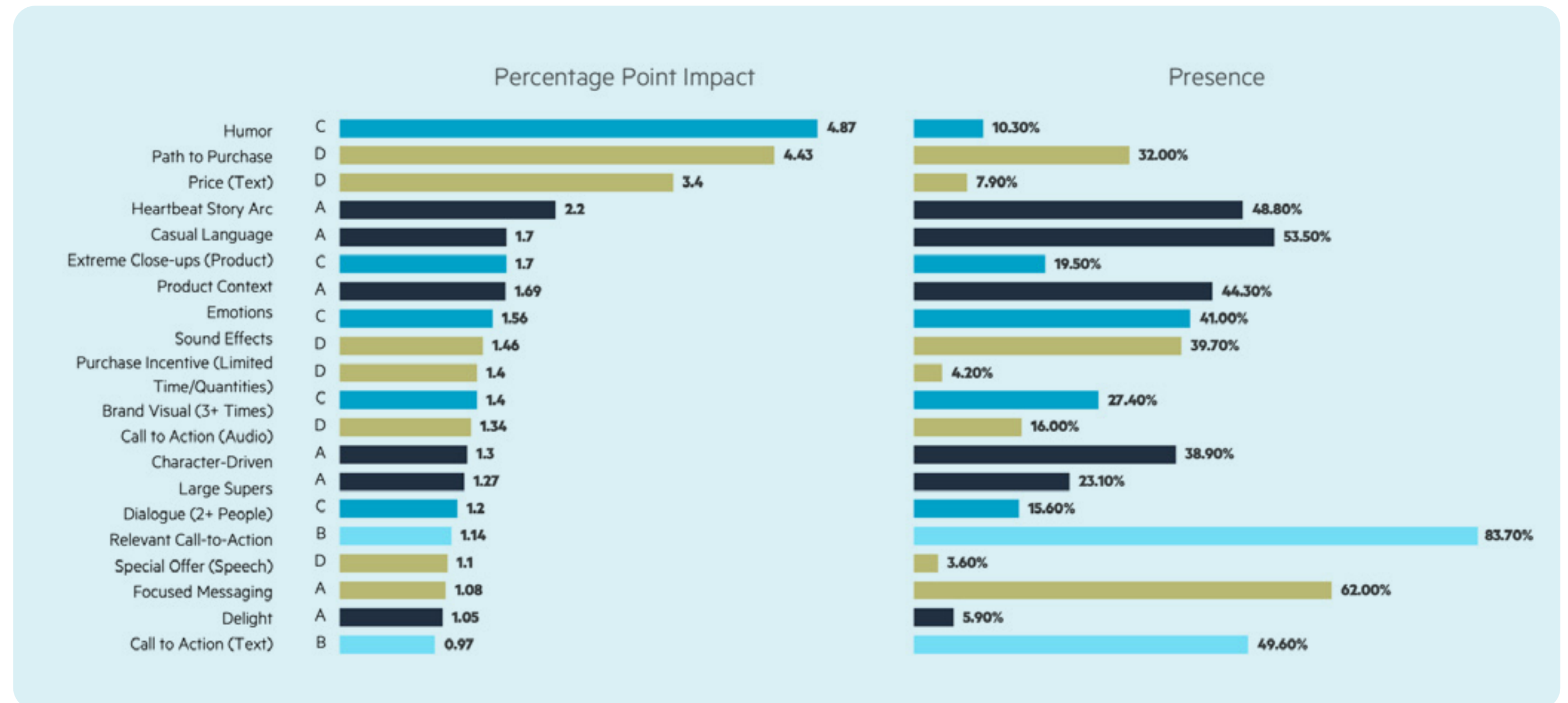
In practice: Ekimetrics x YouTube

Our study with Google across YouTube video ad creative put the methodology to the test. Starting from Google’s 73 ABCD attributes, we identified the top 20 features that explain the majority of creative-driven performance:

Key findings:

- By applying 8 of the top 20 creative best practices, brands can achieve 2X video ad ROI.
- **‘Compelling CTAs’, ‘sound attributes’, and ‘product in context’** are the most effective (and the most consistently underused) creative elements.
- Integrating creative effectiveness increased MMM predictive power.

Figure 4: Top 20 Features by average percentage point impact on YouTube Video Performance with utilization rate



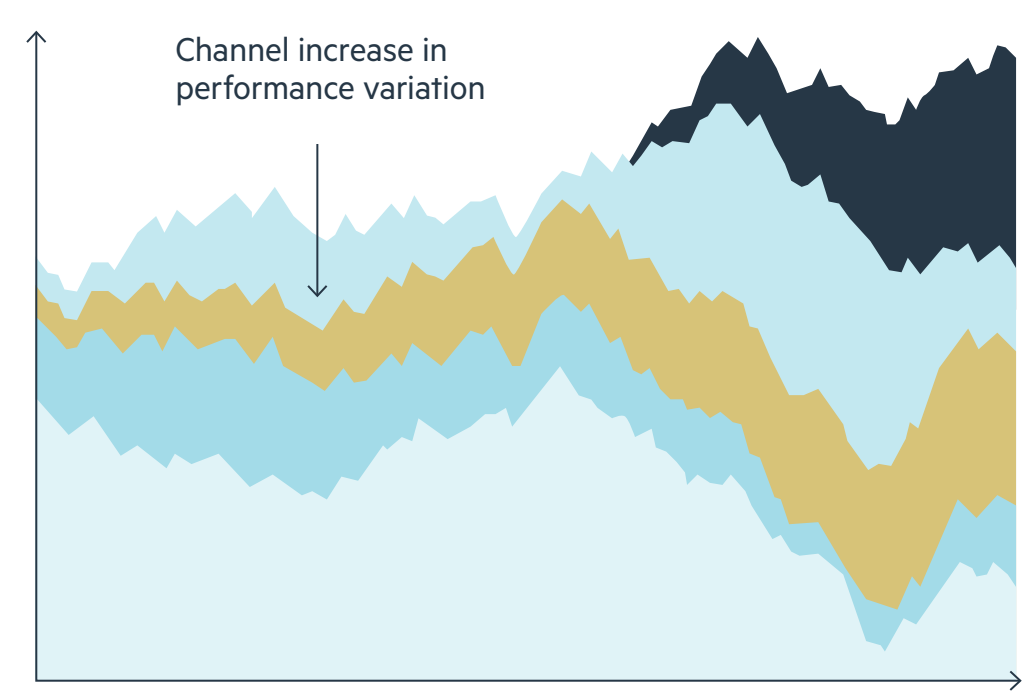
Step 3: Analyze the 'why' and 'how' with explanatory analysis

MMM integration answers the question of how much creative contributes to performance. Explanatory analysis answers the question of why, and what to do about it.

Beyond MMM, dimensionality reduction and attribution methods can break down campaign performance into its creative components, identifying which specific elements are driving or limiting results. These analyses are typically more bespoke, but they're where the most granular and actionable creative intelligence lives.

Core Solutions

Channel x Creative
Greater variation in incrementality



Creative Breakdown

Relevant creative elements
extracted from platform



Creative Weight

Each creative element is weighted
based on its presence or absence



What does explanatory analysis facilitate?

1. Creative thresholds

Find and set 'go/no go' benchmarks so creative entering production has a realistic incrementality potential.

2. Creative standards

Identify the brand codes, approaches, and assets that drive the highest incrementality—and ensure they are used consistently.

3. Creative balance

Understand which creative drives immediate response and which builds perception over time, then use them in the right proportion for short and long-term gains.

4. Wear out management

Distinguish between an idea that has run its course and an execution that needs refreshing—a meaningful difference that affects both creative and media decisions.

Explanatory analysis in action



AXA x Realeyes

AXA had a specific goal: connect creative to commercial outcomes with a single, reliable metric, and use it to make faster, more confident media decisions.

Using Realeyes' PreView AI solution, which rates video creatives with an Attention Potential score, Ekimetrics used those scores to map the relationship between attention and sales outcomes and identify the creative benchmark needed for measurable impact.

**Predict ROI
within +/-10%
accuracy**

Applying creative effectiveness to Meta platforms

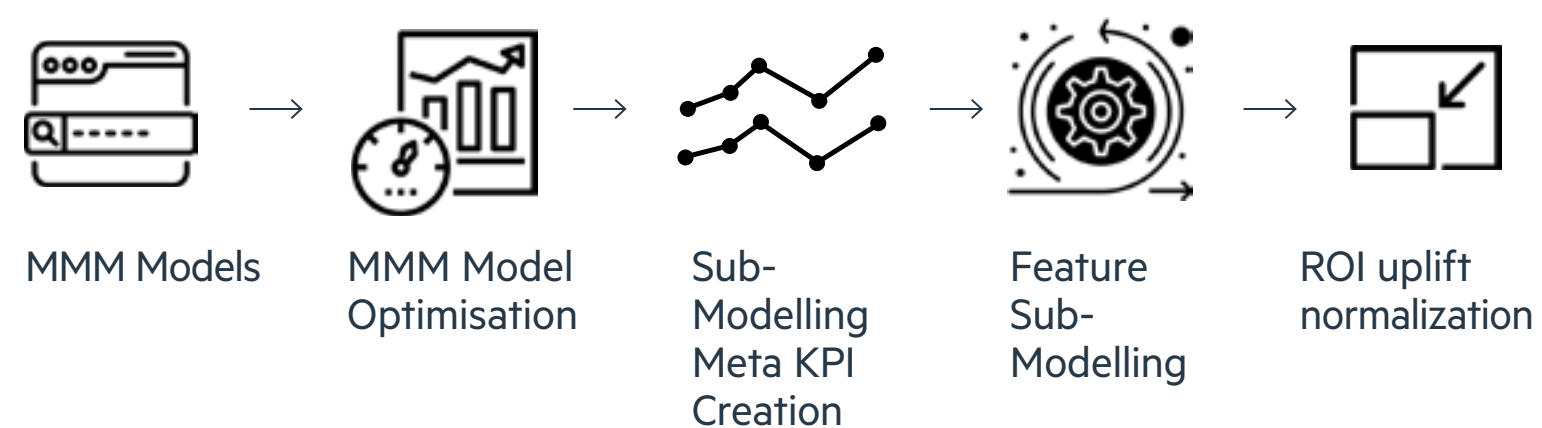


Our 2023 Meta study analyzed creatives across 10 brands, 3 billion impressions, and approximately 23,000 assets worth \$9MM in media spend. It was among the first to bring computer vision into an MMM framework at this scale. We measured across sectors including insurance, cosmetics, hospitality, and automotive.

The study sought to answer:

1. Which features are important?
2. Which features are the most efficient?

The novel methodology collected and defined impression, object, and feature data, which were then used in MMM.



What did we discover?

Brand Cue, Logo, Product, and Person were the features that most consistently drove ROI uplifts across brands.

Product and Person were the most important in combination, though with notable sector differences.

The approach has since been validated across additional platforms. The final step is making it work continuously.

The most efficient features are those which are relevant and have the highest ROI uplifts.

	Model	Feature	Rank (1=top)	
Logo, Brand Code & Text	Brand Cue	Brand Cue	7 6	
	Logo	Logo	6 6	
	Text	Text	1	
	Logo Size	Small Logo (0-16%)	Small Logo (0-16%)	4 5
		Medium Logo (16-42%)	Medium Logo (16-42%)	2 4
		Large Logo (42-100%)	Large Logo (42-100%)	
Logo & Brand Cue	Both	5 2		
Product	Product	Product	3 1	
	Product & Logo	Both		
Person	Person	Person	3	
	Person & Face	Person w/ Face	1 1	
	Person & Face & Smile	All	4	
	Person & Product	Both	3 2	
	Person & Face & Product	All	5 2	

■ Cosmetic
 ■ Hospitality
 ■ Insurance
 ■ Insurance

Table 6: Top performing features by brand

Step 4:

Apply creative measurement

Creative measurement is most valuable when it becomes an ongoing input to creative and media decisions—not a one-off study. The goal is to build strategic guidelines and creative playbooks grounded in evidence, from high-level strategy down to channel and objective-level decisions.

In practice, creative measurement enables teams to:

- Embed continuous learning into a discipline that has historically relied on instinct.
- Inform future creative decisions—which elements to include, when, and by platform.
- Direct GenAI to produce better performing creative that adheres to brand guidelines.
- Ensure efficiency in asset development and reduce waste from repeated testing.
- Identify wear out—and know when to rest, refresh, or retire assets.
- Improve relevance and salience by audience segment.
- Prove the commercial value of creative to the wider business.

The brands that get this right don't just make better creative. They make creative that compounds, building the evidence base that makes each following campaign sharper, and every budget work harder toward that 2x ROI ceiling.

About the Authors

To find out more about how to measure creative effectiveness, get in touch:



Matt Andrew
GM & Partner 



Thibault Labarre
Partner and Deputy
GM France 



Sona Abaryan
Partner 



Akhila Venkitachalam
Global MMO
Lead & Partner 

Useful resources

Unified Marketing Measurement (UMM)/Triangulation

Interactive tool:
[A Marketer's Guide to Major Measurement Methods and Triangulation](#)

Podcast:
[From Marketing Mix Modelling to Econometrics: Top 10 FAQs answered](#)

Whitepaper/case study:
[Marketing Measurement Transformation: How Sky made Unified Marketing Measurement/Triangulation a reality](#)

Creative Effectiveness studies/ methodologies

Whitepaper (technical):
[Advanced Study: Measuring YouTube ad creative quality impact at scale](#)

Whitepaper (commercial):
[YouTube creative effectiveness: Three golden rules that could double ROI](#)

Podcast (visual):
[Ekimetrics x Google: Measuring YouTube ad creative quality impact at scale](#)

Whitepaper:
[Exploring the links between creative execution and marketing effectiveness \(Meta\)](#)

Podcast (audio):
[Measuring creative with Meta: Are we closer than ever before?](#)

Case studies

Realeyes:
[AXA uses creative attention scoring to drive business outcomes](#)

Webinar (WARC):
[Making unified measurement a reality: The view from Sky](#)

Podcast (visual):
[Sky x Ekimetrics: Cultivating a measurement and effectiveness culture through media triangulation](#)

From methodology to results: Ekimetrics Marketing Effectiveness

Ekimetrics brings together the methodology, the partnerships, and the platform to make creative effectiveness operational.

- The Ekimetrics x Google YouTube study provides the foundational evidence base and the top 20 best practices framework.
- The CreativeX partnership makes structured creative data available at scale across nine platforms—the input that makes MMM integration repeatable.
- One.Vision, Ekimetrics' proprietary MMM platform, integrates creative effectiveness into a unified view of all marketing KPIs—covering the full spectrum from creative scoring to sales forecasting and scenario planning.

The idea is not to remove the instinct from creative; it's to give that instinct a feedback loop. Teams that measure creative effectiveness don't make fewer creative decisions. They make better ones.

Want to know more?

Drop us a line, we'd love to hear from you.



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