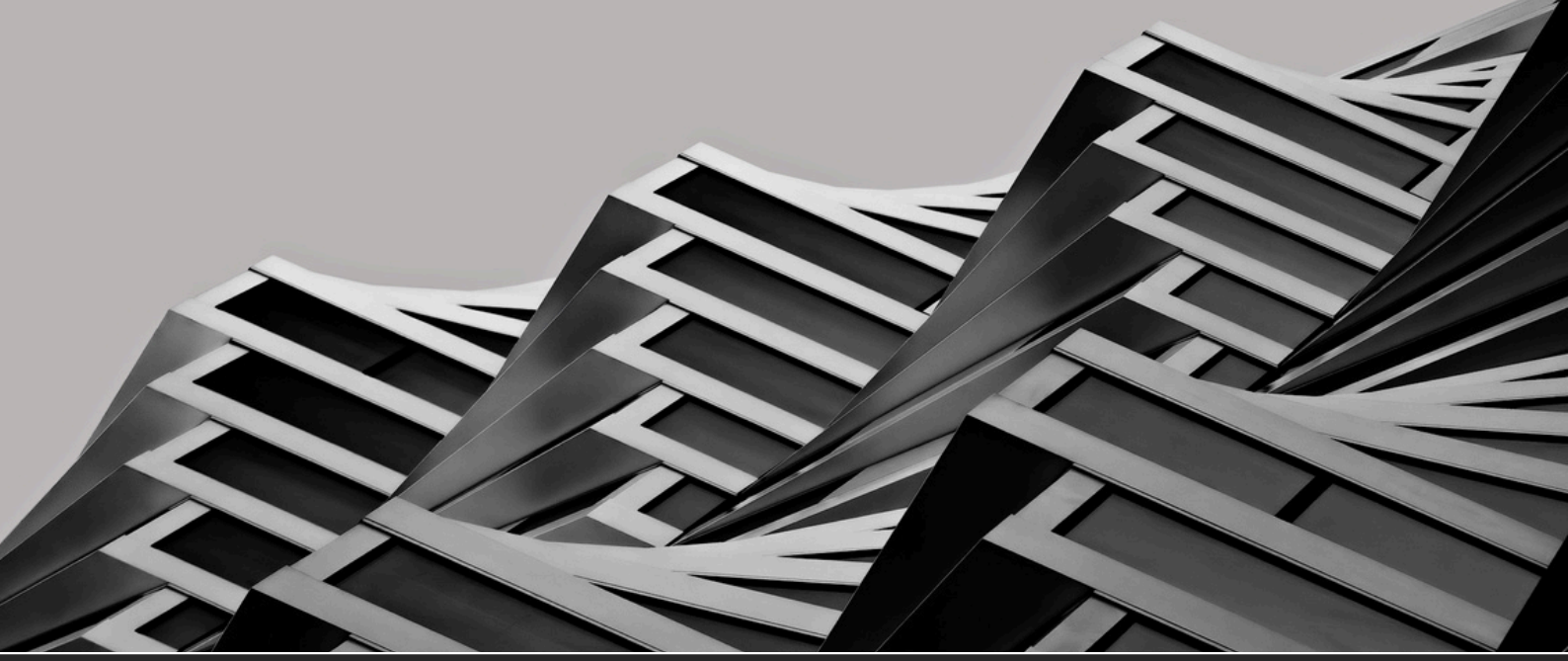

CASE STUDY

Reducing Paid Media Waste Through Omnichannel Validation

BRAND PROFILE

Category: Outdoor Sporting Goods
Business Model: DTC | Highly Seasonal
Primary Growth Channels: Meta, Google Search, Amazon, Email

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2026

THE CHALLENGE

With peak season approaching and spend levels rising, the core question became more urgent:

How much Meta spend was truly necessary to sustain growth and where did incremental returns begin to diminish?

BACKGROUND

The brand was investing heavily in Meta advertising and, on the surface, seeing border line platform-level ROAS. Their existing agency maintained that increasing Meta spend was not only driving direct sales, but also fueling branded demand downstream, specifically on Google and Amazon. As a result, Meta was being scaled with the assumption that it functioned as a primary awareness and demand-generation engine across the entire funnel.

Despite continued investment, leadership lacked confidence in whether higher Meta budgets were actually:

- Creating incremental demand
- Driving meaningful increases in branded search and marketplace activity
- Or simply capturing demand that would have converted through other channels

APPROACH

Rather than optimizing Meta in isolation, we approached this as a business-level measurement problem, not a channel-level performance issue. The goal was to determine Meta's true incremental contribution to revenue and downstream demand across the entire ecosystem.

To do this, we unified data across paid media, search, and marketplace signals and applied statistical correlation and lag analysis across multiple time periods. This allowed us to move beyond platform-reported attribution and evaluate how Meta spend actually influenced branded demand and conversions on Google and Amazon. Findings were replicated across seasons to ensure consistency, and insights were then validated through a controlled live spend test.

Aggregating Meta spend alongside:

- Paid branded search (Google Ads)
- Organic branded search (Google Search Console)
- Amazon branded search activity (AMZ Brand Analytics)

Analyzing correlations between Meta spend and downstream demand:

- Same-day and delayed (lagged) impact
- Multiple historical periods to confirm repeatability

Identifying efficiency thresholds:

- Where Meta spend drove incremental value
- Where diminishing returns began to appear

Validating conclusions through a controlled spend-reduction test:

- Measuring total revenue, new customer volume, and blended efficiency
- Evaluating success holistically, not by single-platform ROAS

KEY FINDINGS

Meta was driving results, but not in the way it was being scaled. The analysis showed that Meta functioned primarily as a direct-response acquisition channel, with limited and inconsistent influence on downstream branded demand across Google and Amazon once spend moved beyond an efficient range.

Recent performance periods (2024–2025):

- Meta spend showed very weak correlation to paid branded demand on Google and Amazon
- Organic branded search showed only a mild awareness effect, not a strong or scalable one
- Increasing Meta budgets did not consistently increase downstream search or marketplace activity

Earlier performance period (early 2023):

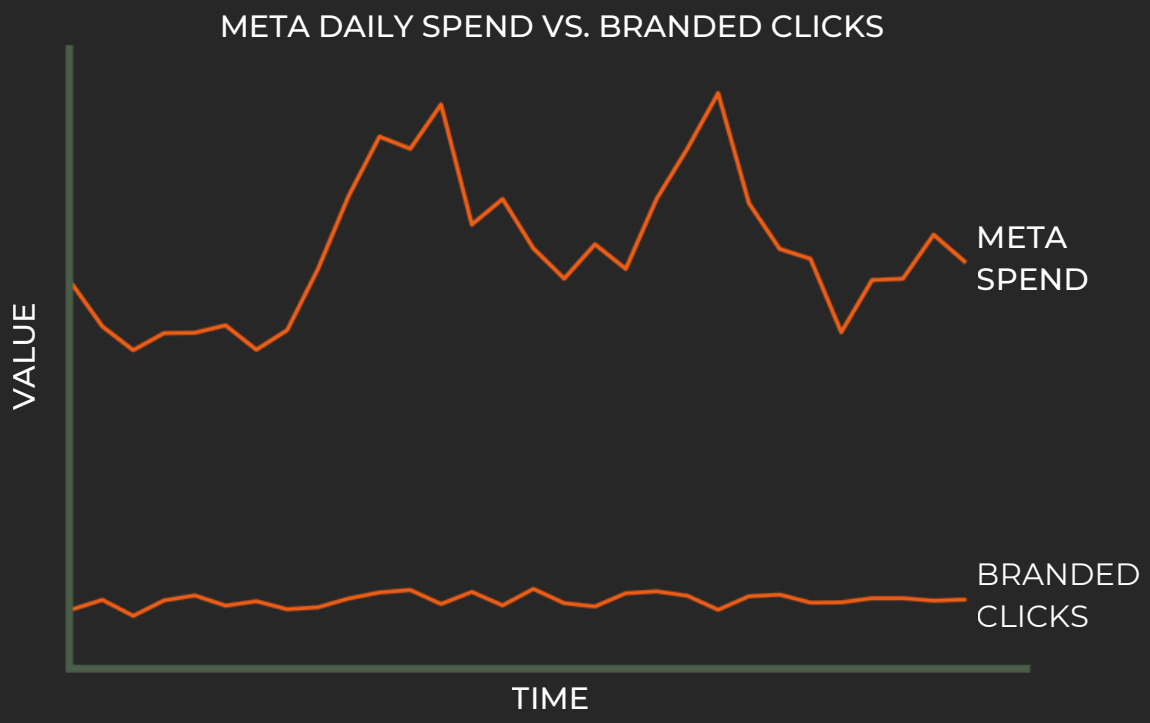
- When Meta spend was lower and more efficient, stronger downstream effects were visible
- As budgets and CPMs increased, diminishing returns set in
- Incrementality declined as spend moved beyond the efficient range

Critical Insight:

Meta was functioning more as a direct-response acquisition channel than as a reliable brand-search driver. This reframed how scaling should be evaluated.

DATA VISUALIZATIONS

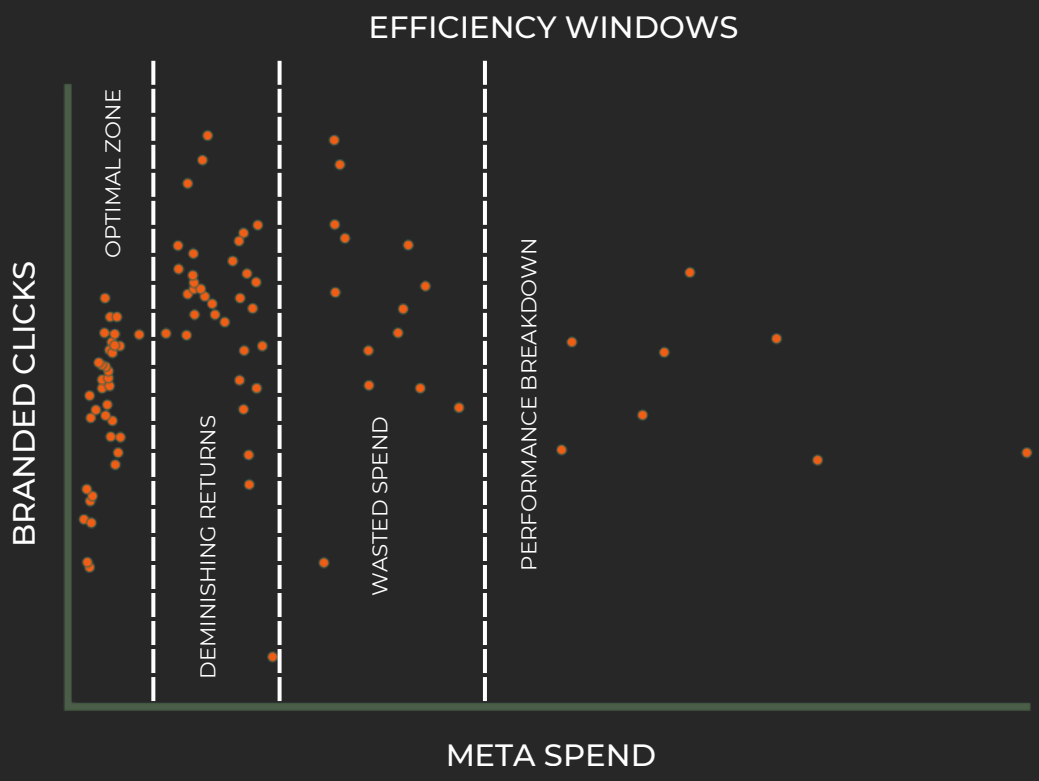
The visualizations below illustrate how Meta spend related to downstream branded demand over time. By comparing daily investment levels against branded click behavior, these charts help distinguish correlation from assumption and visually confirm the conclusions drawn from the analysis.



To build this visualization, daily Meta spend was plotted alongside multiple downstream demand signals, including Google branded search clicks, Google paid branded clicks, and Amazon branded search activity. All data was normalized to a consistent daily time series and formatted onto a shared timeline, allowing spend and response patterns to be evaluated visually rather than inferred solely through statistical correlation.

DATA VISUALIZATIONS

With the correlation broken, the focus moved to defining the efficient level of investment. Historical performance was used to identify diminishing returns and establish a spend range where Meta consistently produced incremental value.



Daily Meta spend was plotted against performance outcomes to visualize how efficiency changed at different investment levels. Distinct clusters emerged, revealing an optimal efficiency window, followed by diminishing returns and, ultimately, spend levels where performance became unpredictable and non-incremental.

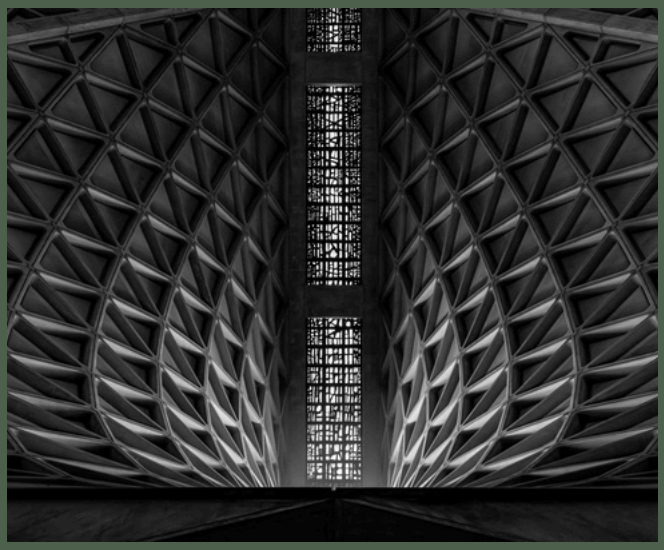
VALIDATION

The analysis was validated through a controlled reduction in spend (lift test), designed to confirm incremental impact without introducing unnecessary business risk.

CONFIRMING INCREMENTAL IMPACT

With a clear hypothesis established, we moved into a controlled validation phase designed to confirm Meta's true incremental contribution without introducing unnecessary risk to the business.

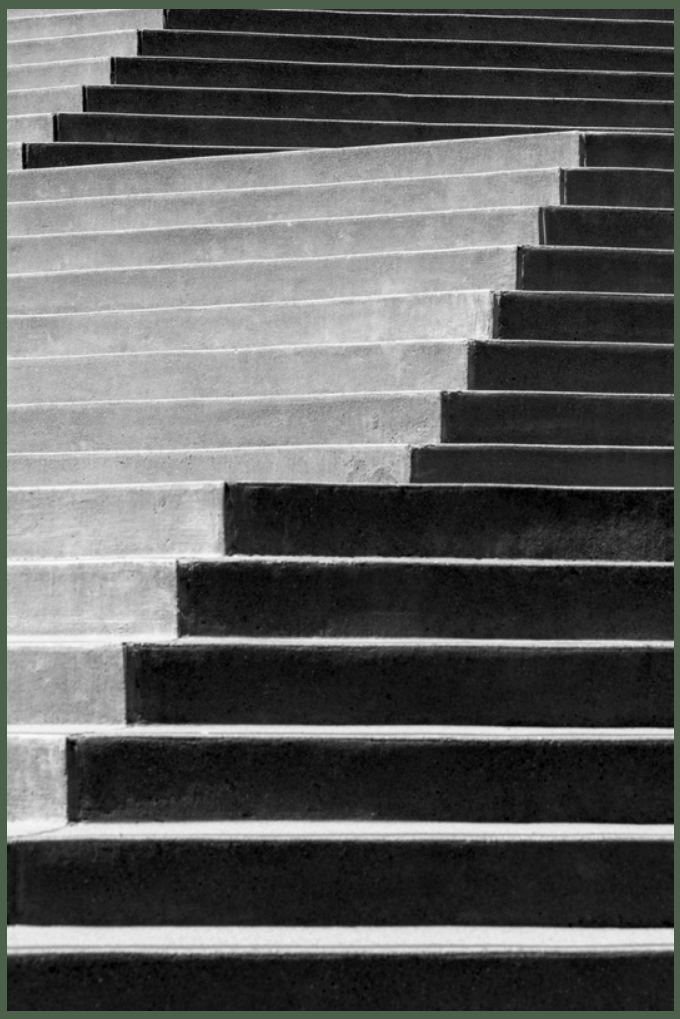
Meta budgets were reduced in a structured manner while closely monitoring performance across the full ecosystem. Rather than evaluating success based on platform-reported ROAS alone, results were assessed holistically, with emphasis on total revenue, new customer acquisition, and blended efficiency across channels. This ensured that any observed changes reflected true business impact rather than attribution shifts between platforms.

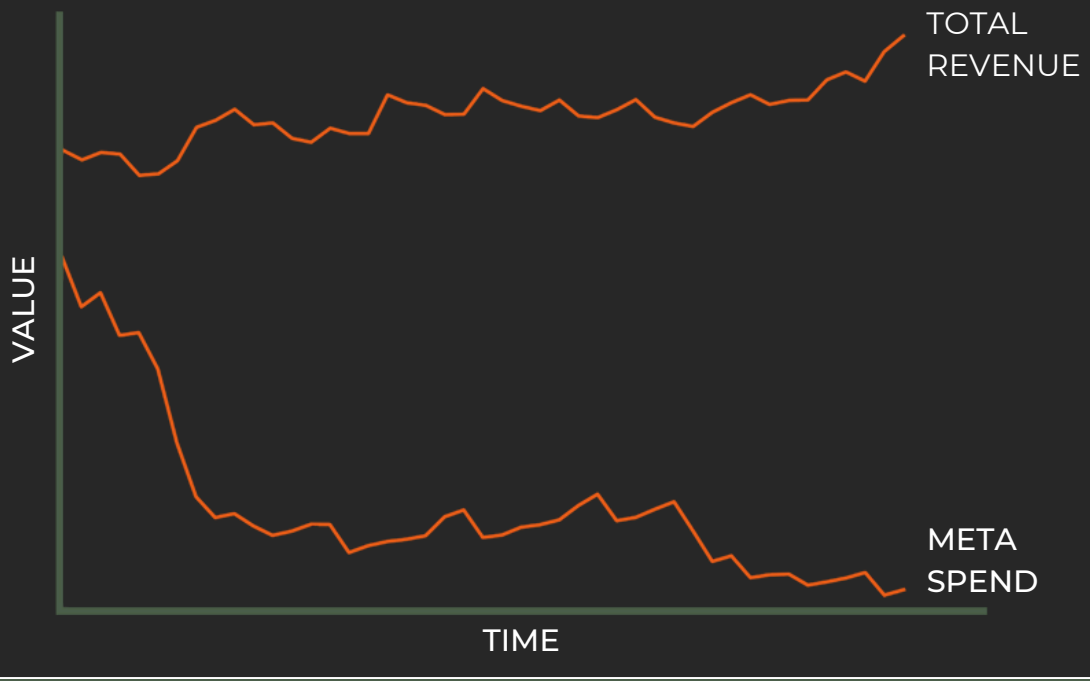


The validation period removed ambiguity from the decision-making process. By confirming that reduced Meta spend did not produce a corresponding decline in total revenue or new customer acquisition, the business gained clear evidence of where incremental value was (and was not) being created. Creating confidence, in knowing that paid media budgets were aligned to measurable impact rather than assumption, and that future scaling decisions could be made deliberately, with full visibility into risk and return.

Meta spend was reduced decisively while total revenue was monitored at the system level. Despite a significant decrease in daily Meta investment, total revenue remained stable and trended slightly upward, confirming that the reduced spend did not negatively impact sales performance. This provided clear evidence that a portion of prior investment was non-incremental, and that efficiency gains could be realized without sacrificing growth.

Once resilience to reduced Meta spend was established, a second phase was initiated to further optimize overall funnel performance. With inefficient spend removed, remaining budget was reallocated toward high-intent, direct-response initiatives that met newly defined thresholds. This phase focused on improving conversion quality rather than increasing volume, allowing performance gains to be driven by precision and timing rather than raw spend.

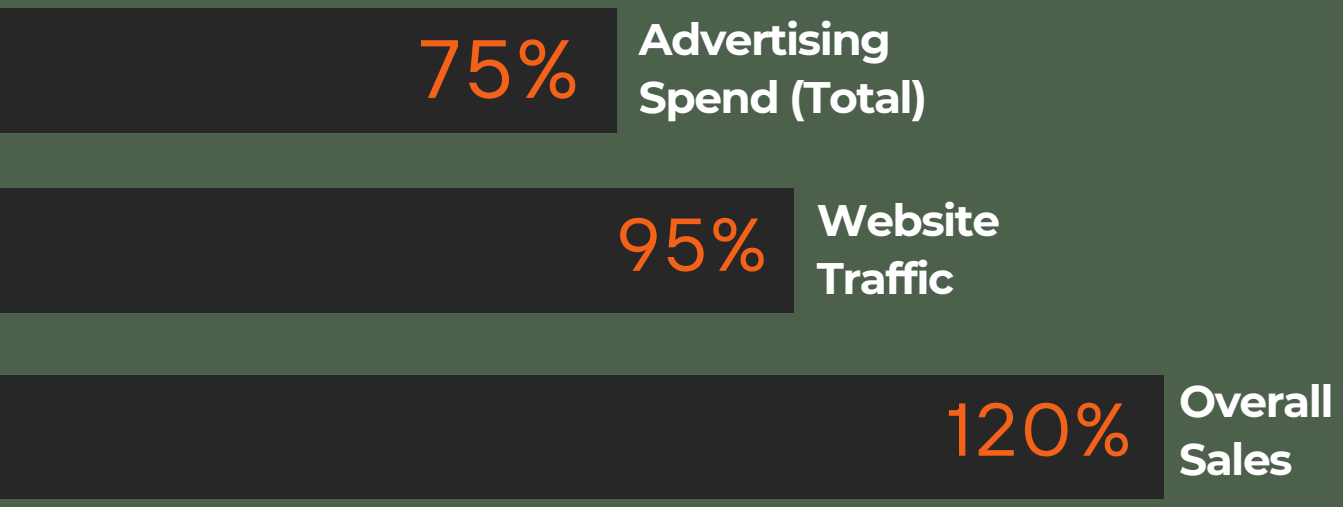




RESULTS

Validated spend reductions removed approximately $1,000 per day in inefficient Meta investment, while remaining budget was concentrated into a purpose-built direct-response offer that delivered the brand's strongest Meta performance to date.

METRICS VS. PRIOR YEAR



The validation confirmed that Meta spend could be materially reduced without negatively impacting business performance. As a result, the brand safely eliminated approximately $1,000 per day in Meta ad spend while maintaining total revenue and new customer acquisition. This improvement flowed directly to contribution margin, creating immediate and measurable financial upside.

More importantly, the work clarified Meta's true role within the ecosystem. Rather than functioning as a broad demand-generation engine, Meta was redefined as a primarily direct-response acquisition channel. This shifted scaling decisions away from blended performance and assumed halo effects, and toward clearly defined efficiency thresholds and measurable incremental impact.