



Creativity to Commercials:

**Rethinking Marketing
Effectiveness
in an Ecosystem World**

Ekimetrics.



Creativity is expressed through content, carried across paid, owned, earned and shared touchpoints.

Marketing effectiveness has come a long way over the past decade.

We have navigated an explosion in short-term thinking with the rise of digital media and immediacy of metrics, to a better understanding of the balance between short — and long-term with experiments and marketing mix modelling as cornerstones of effectiveness thinking. These have given organisations a much clearer view of what is driving performance and how to allocate investment more effectively.

At Ekimetrics, this has been a core part of our work. We have helped organisations build unified views of performance and, more recently, bring creative into that picture in a more structured way. At the same time, the way marketing reaches audiences has fundamentally shifted.

Today, marketing plays out across connected ecosystems. Creativity is expressed through content, carried across paid, owned, earned and shared touchpoints, and increasingly shaped by how people and systems discover brands. Most organisations, however, are still set up to think in channels. That creates a gap. Marketing activity is being optimised, but its role in driving broader outcomes such as growth, pricing power or long-term demand is not always clear.

This paper builds on Ekimetrics' work in measurement and creative effectiveness to explore what comes next. The focus is on how to connect creativity, ecosystems and decision-making into something more joined up and ultimately more impactful for the long-term success of business.



The Evolution of Marketing Effectiveness

If you look back, the evolution of marketing effectiveness over the last 10-15 years has been quite logical. With the rapid development of the digital media industry, attribution was a particular focus, which gave visibility into short term interactions. That was useful, but incomplete.

Marketing Mix Modelling, bringing a broader lens, was challenged by the immediacy of metrics that were available and a shift from brand building to short-term performance. Thankfully for marketing outcomes, this thinking has shifting and the resurgence in MMM is allowing organisations to understand incremental impact across channels and over time, and to factor in the wider context in which marketing operates.

More recently, the focus has shifted towards unifying these different approaches. At Ekimetrics, this has taken the form of triangulation, combining MMM, attribution and experiments to create a more consistent view of performance.

Alongside this, there has been growing progress in understanding creative effectiveness. Work we have done with platform partners has shown quite clearly that creative execution explains a significant share of performance variation*. By breaking creative down into identifiable elements and linking those to outcomes, it becomes much easier to move from opinion to evidence.

All of this has made marketing far more measurable. But measurement has not quite caught up with how marketing now behaves.

One of the recurring challenges we see is that organisations can measure marketing quite precisely but still struggle to connect it to business outcomes.


Part of the issue is structural. Marketing is organised into functions, each with its own goals and metrics. Brand teams focus on awareness. Performance teams focus on conversion. Social teams look at engagement. PR looks at reach. Each of these is doing its job well. But they are not necessarily working towards the same outcome.

Decisions tend to be made within channels or functions, which makes it harder to see how everything fits together. This often leads to a focus on short term optimisation, while longer term effects such as demand building or pricing power are planned in strategy sessions, but fall away when it comes into the execution and tracking through the year.

In one brand engagement, strong short-term results were being driven by a mix of media and promotions, but there was no clear view of how these were interacting. It raised a simple but important question. Are we building growth, or just pulling it forward? That tension is what we describe as the commerciality gap.



The Commerciality Gap

 YouTube creative effectiveness:
Three golden rules that could double ROI - Ekimetrics

What has changed most is not just the tools, but the nature of marketing delivery itself. Marketing no longer operates through channels in isolation. It behaves more like a linked, live system, an ecosystem.

Paid media might drive initial exposure, but it also triggers search, social engagement and word of mouth. Content is picked up, shared and reinterpreted across platforms. Consumers encounter brands in multiple places, often in ways that are hard to trace back to a single source. The ecosystem itself is also evolving. Increasingly, discovery is influenced not just by people, but by AI systems, recommendation engines and large language models that shape how brands are surfaced and interpreted. Historically, brand salience was primarily about human memory and mental availability. Increasingly, it is also becoming about machine legibility. As AI-driven discovery systems influence search, recommendations and content surfacing

brands are no longer competing only for consumer attention, but also for algorithmic visibility. This makes ecosystem consistency even more important. Brands with stronger, clearer and more connected signals across media, creators, retail and content ecosystems are more likely to be surfaced, recommended and discovered.

The result is that outcomes are rarely linear. You can increase investment in one area and see effects somewhere else. Some activities only make sense when you look at how they amplify others.

We see this clearly when ecosystem effects are brought into measurement. Channels that look average on their own can turn out to be critical once accounting for how they influence the rest of the system.

In one global programme, video investment was not only driving direct results but also lifting search behaviour and social engagement. Those effects were not visible in channel reporting, but they were very real in the overall outcome.

This changes the question. It is less about which channel performs best, and more about how the ecosystem works together.

From Channel Optimisation to Ecosystem Orchestration

Creativity as a Controllable Growth Lever

Creative has always been important. That is not new. What is changing is our ability to understand it.

Through Ekimetrics' work on creative effectiveness with Google, we have seen that creative execution explained a significant share of campaign performance variation. The study showed that improving creative quality could materially improve ROI, with specific elements such as compelling calls to action, strong audio cues, product context and relevance all consistently linked to stronger commercial outcomes.

This matters because it shifts creativity from subjective evaluation towards something more measurable and commercially actionable. The shift comes from being able to break creative down into elements and link those elements

to outcomes. Things like branding, narrative structure, emotional engagement and product visibility can be measured and compared. In practice, this allows organisations to improve not just media allocation, but also the quality and effectiveness of the assets themselves.

Importantly, creative does not operate in isolation. Its impact depends on how it is carried through the ecosystem. A strong idea that is not amplified through media creators, retail and social touchpoints will not deliver the same outcome as one that is reinforced consistently across the system.

That is why creative effectiveness and ecosystem thinking need to come together.

Ecosystem Strength as a Driver of Business Performance

One of the more interesting shifts in marketing effectiveness is how ecosystems influence broader business performance. When ecosystems are strong, the effects tend to show up beyond marketing metrics or campaign outcomes. Brands become considered and relevant in the repertoires of more consumers. Demand becomes more resilient and plannable. There is less reliance on promotions to drive or sustain volume.

We have seen this clearly in categories such as fragrance and beauty, where heavy promotional activity can temporarily drive sales, but often masks weaker underlying demand. By strengthening brand presence and improving consistency across channels (media, retail and creative touchpoints), the business was able to reduce promotional pressure without negatively impacting sales performance.

In another example observed across like premium & lifestyle categories, brands with stronger and more consistent ecosystem presence across touchpoints were able to maintain pricing power, even in highly competitive environments.

These are not the result of a single campaign or channel. They come from the cumulative effect of how the system works overtime. This is an important shift in perspective. Marketing effectiveness is no longer only about campaign efficiency. It is increasingly about how connected ecosystems influence broader business outcomes such as pricing power, demand resilience, promotional reliance, conversion efficiency and long-term growth quality. This implication is significant. The strongest marketing systems do not simply create short-term response; they create conditions for more sustainable and commercially efficient growth over time.

Over the years, a lot of successful effort has gone into building better measurement. The next challenge is making better use of it.

Many organisations have good visibility on performance, but that does not always translate into clear decisions. Insights exist, but they are not always embedded into planning or strategy. This is where decision capability becomes important.

It is about being able to connect what we know to what we do. It involves making trade-offs, balancing short term and long-term priorities, and aligning marketing decisions with broader business objectives.

It also requires thinking in systems. Changing one part of the system will affect others. Increasing performance investment might deliver immediate gains, but at the expense of future demand. Reducing brand investment might improve short term efficiency but weaken the system over time.

In one engagement, bringing measurement into planning discussions allowed teams to test different scenarios and align on decisions more effectively. The value was not just in the insight itself, but in how it was used. The competitive advantage no longer comes from having insight, it comes from how decisions are made.

From Measurement to Decision Capability

A Connected Model of Effectiveness

The organisations that are moving furthest ahead are not simply measuring more. They are changing how decisions are made. Based on our experience across global organisations, five practical shifts are emerging.

- 1 Connected media, brand and commercial decisions:** Move away from siloed optimisations towards shared growth outcomes.
- 2 Measure total system impact:** Go beyond channel ROI to understand how levers amplify each other.
- 3 Treat creativity as a measurable growth lever:** Integrate creative signals into measurement and optimisation frameworks.
- 4 Embed measurement into planning and decision-making:** Move away from reporting performance into actively steering trade-offs.
- 5 Build connected growth systems:** Design ecosystems where media, retail, creators, brand and commercial levers reinforce each other over time.

Taken together, these shifts point towards a more connected growth model of effectiveness. Creative, media, brand and commercial outcomes are not separate. They are part of the same system. The opportunity is not simply to optimise channels better, it is to design systems that turn creativity into sustained business growth.

Conclusion

Marketing is becoming more complex, but also more powerful. The organisations that do well will be those that move beyond optimising channels in isolation. They will understand how media, creativity, brand and commercial levers work together as a part of a connected system. They will treat creativity not simply as craft, but as a measurable and manageable growth lever. And they will use connected measurement and decision-making to make better trade-offs over time.

Ultimately, the future of marketing effectiveness is not about improving individual channel performance. It is about designing ecosystems that create stronger, more sustainable growth. Because growth does not come from optimising parts. It comes from how well the system works together and that is what ultimately turns creativity into growth.



About Ekimetrics

Ekimetrics transforms how organizations make critical business decisions.

Through AI-powered Managed Solutions, we help companies build sustained competitive advantage.

Our solutions combine the Eki.Decisions platform with embedded experts who bring 20 years of experience in marketing, commercial effectiveness, and data science, connecting decisions across business domains to drive scalable, lasting impact.

To date, we have delivered and measured over \$10Bn in business gains for our clients. With 500+ experts across three continents, Ekimetrics delivers measurable results through responsible and sustainable AI.

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