Reaching shoppers beyond the cart

How brands can use retail media networks to accelerate full funnel marketing strategies

October 2025

EY Studio+

Shape the future with confidence

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Executive summary

Reaching shoppers beyond the cart

From building awareness to driving sales and loyalty: How brands can use retail media networks to accelerate full funnel marketing strategies

Retail media networks (RMNs) are evolving well beyond being used for just sponsored search results on e-commerce websites. Their access to rich, first-party shopper data, direct shopper relationships and sophisticated, closed-loop measurement makes them an invaluable tool for full-funnel brand marketing. That's because RMNs enable brands to tell their story across the full shopper purchase funnel.

However, many brand marketers have yet to take full advantage of capabilities RMNs offer. Instead of using them as a strategic full-funnel marketing channel, brand marketers continue to view RMNs for most part through a transactional, sales focused lens.

At EY, we wanted to create this report for brand marketing leaders to study how the rise of RMNs (amidst the merging of online and offline channels, such as in-store) is impacting brand marketing - and evaluate how brands are using RMNs to achieve their objectives across the full funnel.

OUR GOAL

Assess the strategic value RMNs offer in achieving key brand marketing objectives - spanning awareness, consideration, and purchase - and explore how brands can leverage RMNs to drive full-funnel performance across the entire shopper journey.

We sought these answers by asking key questions to better understand full-funnel marketing capabilities of RMNs and how brands can use them to drive brand objectives. Those questions include:

- How well are RMNs able to help brands achieve their funnel brand marketing objectives?
- How can brand marketers assess their spend with RMNs relative to other channels?
- What are the ways in which brands can better work with and utilize these RMN capabilities?

THE APPROACH

For this report, we focused on mass consumer brands with a retail presence in the Canadian market, engaging EY subject matter leaders, brand marketers from leading consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies, and industry leaders to provide real-world context.

While this report explores examples in the Canadian market, many of the core principles apply in other global markets.

We were engaged by Loblaw Advance™, a leading omni-channel RMN in Canada, to investigate how RMNs are being leveraged by leading consumer brands to achieve their marketing objectives. Loblaw Advance™ ™ is part of Loblaw Companies Limited, which is Canada's largest omnichannel retailer and operates across various sectors and operates the PC Optimum™ loyalty program.

In working with Loblaw Advance™, we identified and examined three specific examples of brand marketing campaigns where brands sought to drive awareness, gain new product market share, and drive incremental sales. By studying campaign goals, strategy, planning, execution and results we were able to identify insights and best practices in how brands can leverage RMNs for each of these objectives.

KEY FINDINGS

With the convergence of online and offline channels and the emergence of RMNs, brand marketers can use RMNs to engage with shoppers and drive full funnel brand objectives.

Across the full purchase funnel, RMNs can help brands:

- **Build awareness:** Brands can use their reach, targeting and full-funnel capabilities to drive awareness amongst qualified shoppers that can be tracked to sales and an on-target CPM.
- **Grow sales:** RMNs connect media exposure directly to purchase behaviour, making it easier to build personalized experiences that connect tactics to sales.
- **Improve effectiveness:** With layered audience targeting and full-funnel execution, RMNs can help brands reach the right shoppers with the right message at the right time, reducing wasted spend.
- **Inform brand product strategy:** First-party data gives brands deep insight into shopper behaviour, fueling marketing strategies and better product development.
- **Measure what matters:** RMNs unlock metrics like incremental ROAS and CLV, and adjusted cost per mile (aCPM), providing a more sophisticated view into brand and campaign performance.

RECOMENDATIONS

It will be critical to incorporate RMNs as a strategic tool within brand marketing and media strategy. Unlocking the value RMNs offer requires an integrated approach to brand marketing. Brands need to reconsider their strategic planning, ways of working and approach to media investments. **To take advantage of retail media networks, brand marketers need to:**

- **Foster awareness, education, alignment:** Brand marketers must educate themselves and the broader brand organization on RMN benefits. Experiment with RMNs and share learnings broadly.
- **Take a strategic, focused approach to RMNs:** Identify RMNs you need to engage with by evaluating them objectively against your needs and strategy.
- **Integrate marketing and commercial efforts:** Develop integrated marketing and media planning across teams and include RMNs as a channel in your process.
- **Reframe measures of success:** Leverage RMNs measurement capabilities to track metrics that align with your objectives and measure impact more accurately.

Brands that lean in, test, learn and evolve using retail media networks will be better positioned to navigate this shift and unlock the full potential of the next era of commerce.
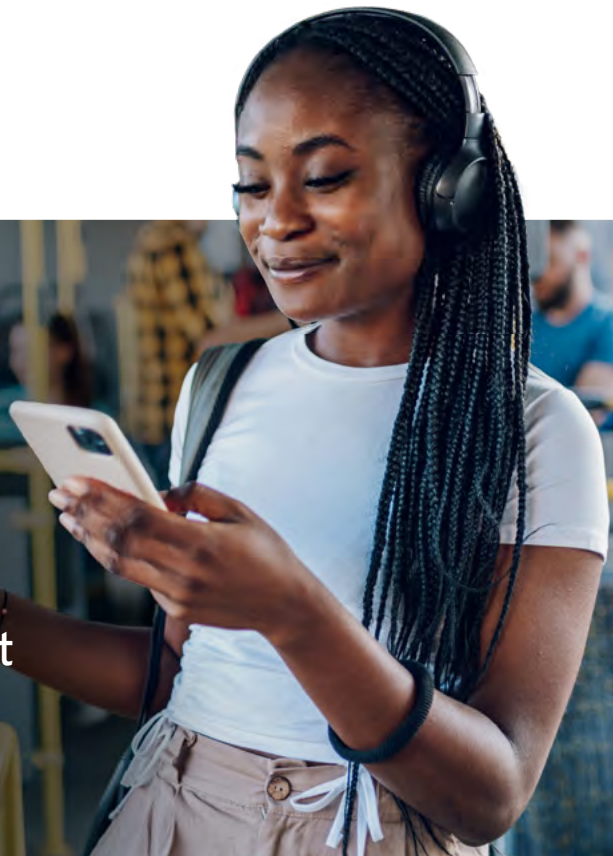
Digital impact on the shopping journey and the evolving shopper behaviour

Digital impact on the shopping journey and the evolving shopper behaviour

Evolving shopper behaviours require innovative brand marketing strategies

Consumer brands – and brand marketers – face unprecedented challenges driving marketing, sales and innovation. They need to find new ways to reach shoppers with personalized and targeted messaging capable of driving measurable brand objectives. What does this look like from day-to-day perspective?

The shopping journey is increasingly digital and fragmented

Shoppers are increasingly researching products, comparing prices, creating lists and exploring promotions using digital channels before they buy. In fact, 70% of all retail sales in the U.S. are projected to be influenced by digital by 2027[1], making digital touchpoints critical in shaping early brand impressions and influencing purchase intent.

The rise of e-commerce, delivery apps and social media has made the buying journey increasingly non-linear. Emerging tools like artificial-intelligence (AI)-enabled chat interfaces with integrated commerce capabilities and voice assistants are reshaping how people shop. To stay relevant, brands must understand how their shoppers make decisions throughout the full purchase journey and how best to influence them.
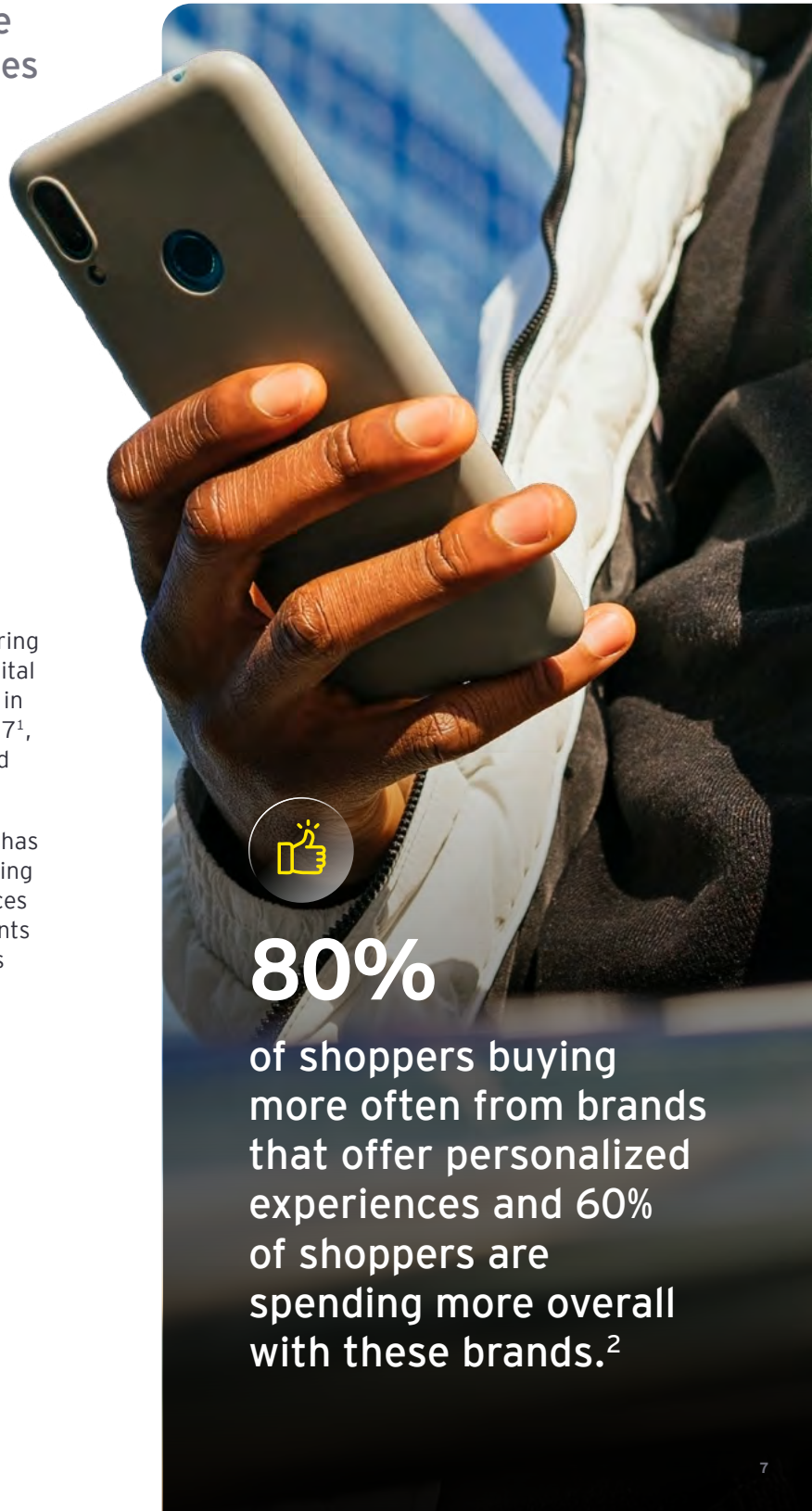
80%

of shoppers buying more often from brands that offer personalized experiences and 60% of shoppers are spending more overall with these brands.[2]

Shoppers are looking for relevant, personalized content through their journey

With this rising influence of digital on shopping, brands are investing more heavily in digital advertising. However, capturing the attention of shoppers (let alone influencing their purchase) is becoming increasingly challenging. Shoppers are exposed to ads across social media, connected TV, video and display advertising as well as search, in addition to offline channels (like brick-and-mortar stores).

This saturation makes it harder for brand marketers to break through the noise. In fact, 35% of consumers no longer consider brands a significant factor in their purchase decisions, signalling a shift in consumer priorities.[3]

Shoppers are also more selective about the messages they engage with, making attention more fragmented and harder to earn. In this environment, it's more critical than ever for brands to deliver tailored, contextually relevant messages at precise moments.

Retailers are using shopper data and offering full-funnel marketing solutions

In this new reality, "shopper signals" are becoming a key cornerstone of brand marketing. These data points indicate a shopper's intent, preference or readiness to purchase (i.e., clicks, searches, dwell time and engagement with brand or product content).

While upper-funnel channels like social media can help build brand equity, they're less effective for brands aiming to deliver targeted, personalized brand stories across the full purchase funnel. By contrast, retailers have direct access to shopper purchase and behaviour data collected through their online and in-store shopping channels, digital experiences and loyalty programs. This is a highly valuable currency for brands seeking to create personalized experiences for specific shopper segments.

Recognizing this, retailers have built retail media networks (RMNs), platforms that give brands the ability to reach targeted shoppers throughout their purchase journey and track impact of advertising spend on purchase.

> "
>
> Our main objective is always to reach the right shopper at the right time in their shopping journey. By leveraging retail media network data, we're able to do exactly that, as opposed to reaching who we think the right audience is on the platform that we think they are on.
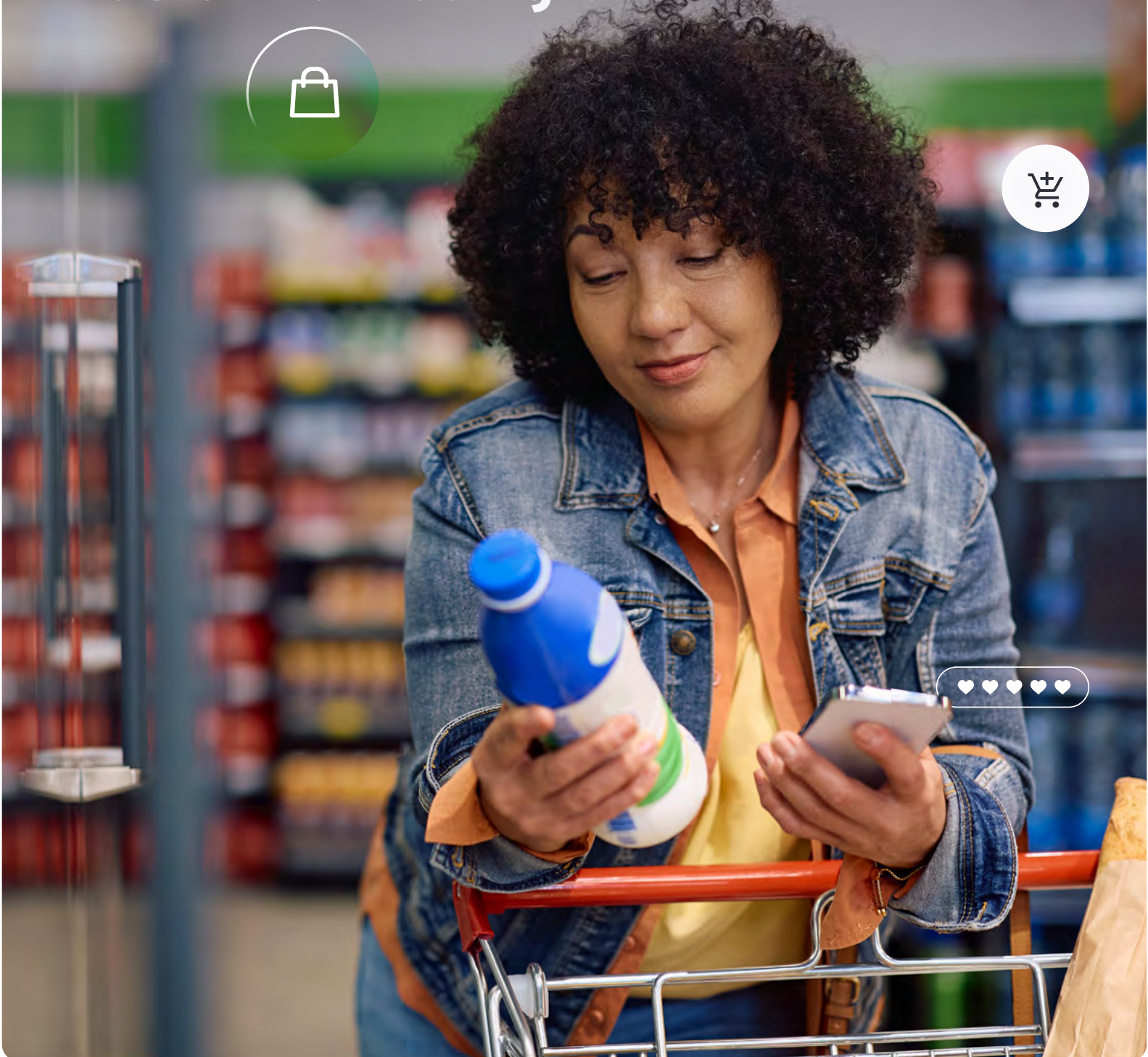>
> **BRAND ADVERTISER**
> Global CPG Brand

The emergence of retail media networks as a marketing channel

The emergence of retail media networks as a marketing channel

From shopper marketing to media advertising

For decades, brands have partnered with retailers through shopper marketing programs (think in-store displays, circulars, couponing, and co-op advertising).

While these tactics helped reach shoppers at the point of purchase, they offered limited precision in targeting, reach and measurement. The advent of e-commerce created rich, first-party shopper data, which retailers have used as a cornerstone to create media networks that bring together data, technology, advertising and monetization infrastructure.

RMNs hold the promise of being able to identify specific shopper segments, target them through owned (e.g., e-commerce websites and in-store) and offsite (e.g., social, connected TV) channels, and measure advertising performance through the purchase funnel. While RMNs originally targeted endemic brands (brands that are sold by the retailer), larger and more sophisticated RMNs also attract advertising spend from non-endemic brands (brands not sold by the retailer).

21%

retail media network's share of all media advertising by 2027[4]
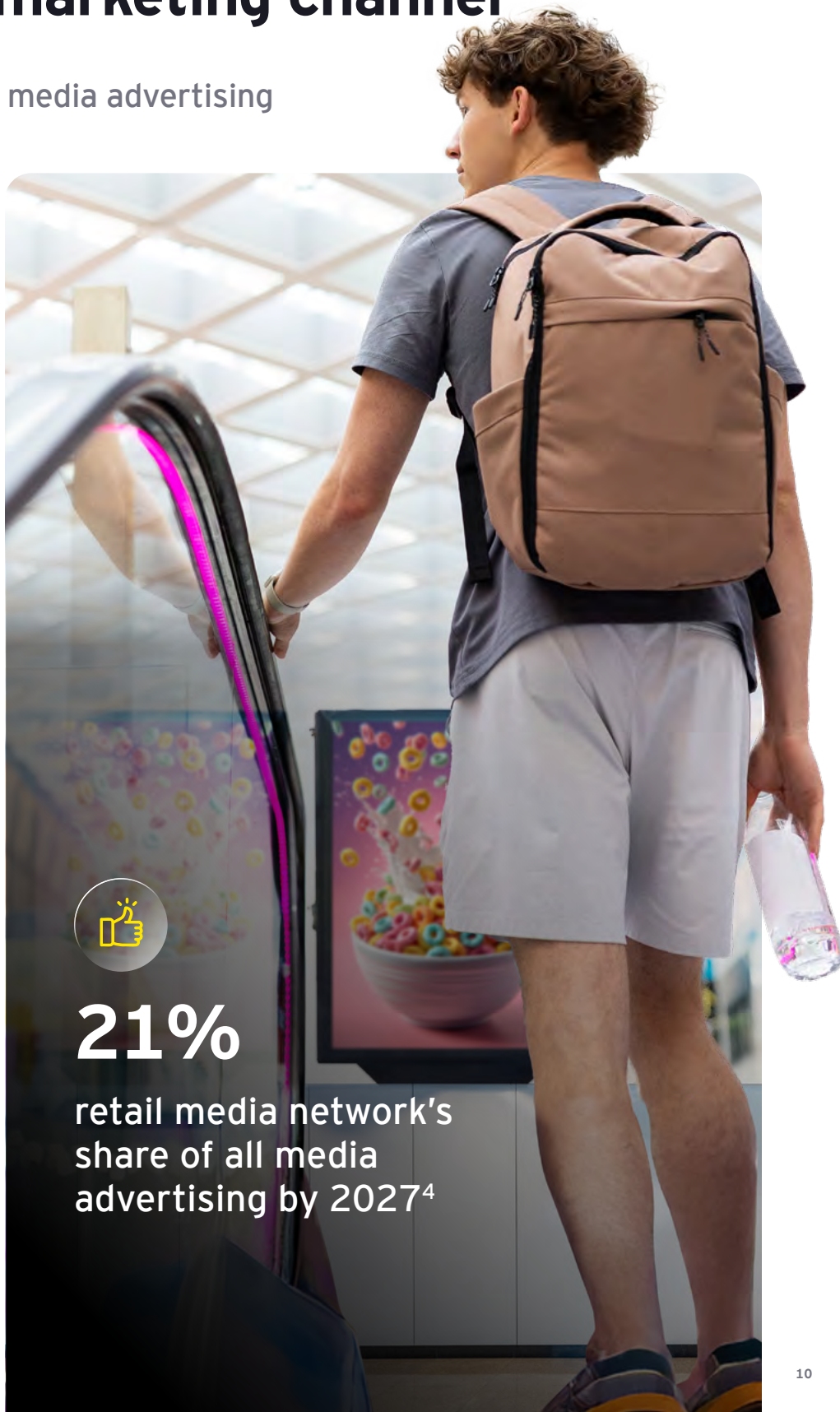
THE CASE FOR RETAIL MEDIA NETWORKS

What's driving this rapid growth and popularity of RMNs?

RMNs allow for precise shopper targeting. Retailers know who their shoppers are, what they buy, how often they buy and even how they buy. This insight makes marketing and advertising more targeted and precise. Brand marketers can use this data to find and target shopper segments with personalized messages across the purchase funnel, whether offsite (social media, programmatic ads, connected TV), onsite (websites, apps) and in-store (screens, audio, signage).

In addition, they provide "closed loop measurement", linking advertising to purchase. RMNs can track the shopper from their exposure to advertising down to purchase across their omnichannel retail ecosystem (online and in-store). This provides brands with the ability to attribute advertising spend to a return (purchase). These models can be quite sophisticated such as the multi-touch attribution model (MTA) which incorporates multiple points of advertising exposure back to purchase.

Multi-touch attribution models (MTAs) are an example of sophisticated measurement that can allow marketers to understand the contribution of each touchpoint in the customer journey, providing a more comprehensive view of how different interactions influence buying decisions. This is a significant advancement over the traditional approaches, including last-click attribution models, which attributes conversion to the final pre-purchase touchpoint.

> What differentiates the way that retail media targets awareness from a traditional awareness campaign is that first-party data is being used to talk directly to shoppers, so it brings the awareness closer to the lower funnel because you're way more targeted with your audience.
>
> **BRAND MARKETER**
> Global CPG brand
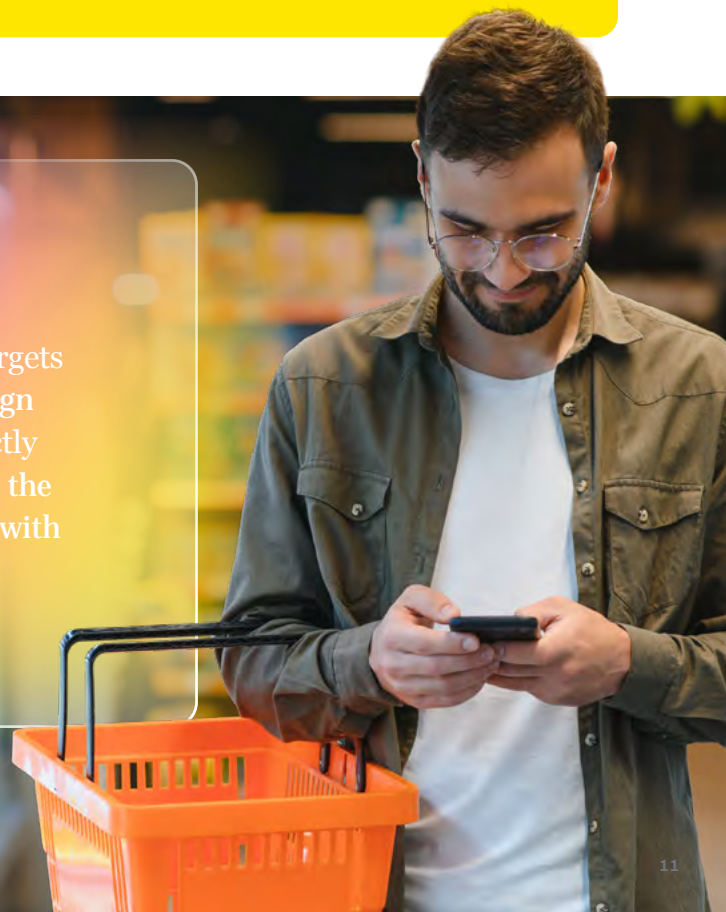
An untapped opportunity for brand marketers

Powered by data and the convergence of online and offline commerce, **RMNs have the potential to re-shape brand advertising.** However, they are still being used primarily as a digital equivalent of an in-store "end cap". Investments in RMNs are largely focused on lower-funnel tactics like search advertising and sponsored listings that influence shoppers closer to the point of purchase.

They are not being fully leveraged as a strategic channel for full-funnel brand marketing that goes beyond lower-funnel advertising. Often treated as trade or shopper marketing spend, RMNs are not considered a strategic full-funnel channel in a brand's media marketing plans.

Why not?

We sought answers by asking key questions to better understand full-funnel marketing capabilities of RMNs and how brands can use them to drive brand objectives. Those questions include:

- How well are RMNs able to help brands achieve their funnel brand marketing objectives?
- How can brand marketers assess their spend with RMNs relative to other channels?
- What are the ways in which brands can better work with and utilize these RMN capabilities?

RMN MARKET EXAMPLE:

Loblaw Advance™

EY was engaged by Loblaw Advance™ to answer these questions.

Loblaw Advance™ is part of Loblaw Companies Limited, Canada's largest omni-channel retailer that has a diversified portfolio spanning grocery, apparel, pharmacy, beauty and general merchandise. Loblaw also owns and operates Canada's largest loyalty program, PC Optimum™ that has over 17 million active members.

This provided EY with the opportunity to examine the capabilities that an RMN can offer to brand marketers, grounding our analysis in data and practical examples.

Deep dive: Examining how brands are using retail media networks to drive awareness and sales

Deep dive: Examining how brands are using retail media networks to drive awareness and sales

A brand marketer has objectives across the full shopper purchase funnel.
From awareness[ii], where the brand wants to capture attention and build recognition,
to consideration[iii], where the objective is to increase brand preference and finally to purchase.

Ultimately, the brand is looking to build loyalty with the shopper, which creates affinity and repeat purchases. **We focused our study on three key brand marketing objectives** across this purchase funnel as most common and relevant for brand marketers:

1. Building brand awareness

2. Driving market share growth and new product adoption

3. Fueling incremental sales growth

We identified and studied three specific examples where brands partnered with Loblaw Advance™ to address each of these objectives. For each example, we studied the brand's goals, success metrics, campaign strategy, its execution and results. In some cases, we compared these approaches to alternative methods. In the end, we uncovered practical insights brand marketers can use now.

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>
> Brands can create outsized impact by integrating RMNs into their broader, full funnel strategy to drive awareness, consideration and ultimately brand loyalty.
>
> **JAY DENNIS**
> Americas Marketing & Sales Leader
> EY Studio+

OBJECTIVE 1

Building brand awareness

Driving brand awareness is a foundational objective for marketers. It's often the first step in the shopper journey and a guiding metric for day-to-day brand strategy.

Brand awareness comes down to how well a brand is recognized and recalled by its target audience and is typically the focus of upper-funnel, awareness campaigns – setting the stage for future engagement, loyalty, conversion and long-term growth.

As for effectiveness, marketers typically use two key metrics to measure awareness campaigns:

■ Brand awareness

■ Cost per mile (CPM), the cost an advertiser pays per 1,000 impressions or views

CPM is a core metric used to gauge the effectiveness of awareness campaigns and the cost to reach intended audiences. It's often coupled with measurement of advertisement recall ("ad recall"), which tracks an audience's ability to remember an advertisement after being exposed to it, serving as a key metric for brand awareness and campaign effectiveness.

How effective can RMNs be in helping brands drive more effective awareness outcomes? Let's look at an example of how a leading global brand worked with Loblaw Advance™ to drive brand awareness of its products.

MARKET CASE STUDY:

Awareness of health and wellness brand

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE

Loblaw Advance™'s client was a global company that develops, manufactures and sells a broad range of health and wellness products.
The company's goal was to drive awareness and consideration of its wearable technology with relevant brand and category shoppers.

Historically, they'd faced challenges increasing awareness of the brand. For this campaign, they partnered with Loblaw Advance™ on an upper-funnel brand lift campaign across multiple-channels.

STRATEGY AND PLANNING

Identifying specific audience segments based on first-party data

The campaign's target audience focused on three customer segments: historical purchasers in the category, related categories and other interest signals. Audiences were de-duplicated[v] to eliminate redundancies and single out distinct target customers to help optimize engagement efforts.

Creating broad reach through multichannel targeting

Marketing through connected TV was a key priority for the brand. Loblaw Advance™ proposed an approach that included offsite channels like display, video, Facebook/Instagram and YouTube, as well as onsite placements across the Loblaw website, app, PC Optimum™ platform and Shoppers Drug Mart in-store displays. Ads were contextually relevant and tailored to audience segments using first-party data, allowing for more precise targeting.
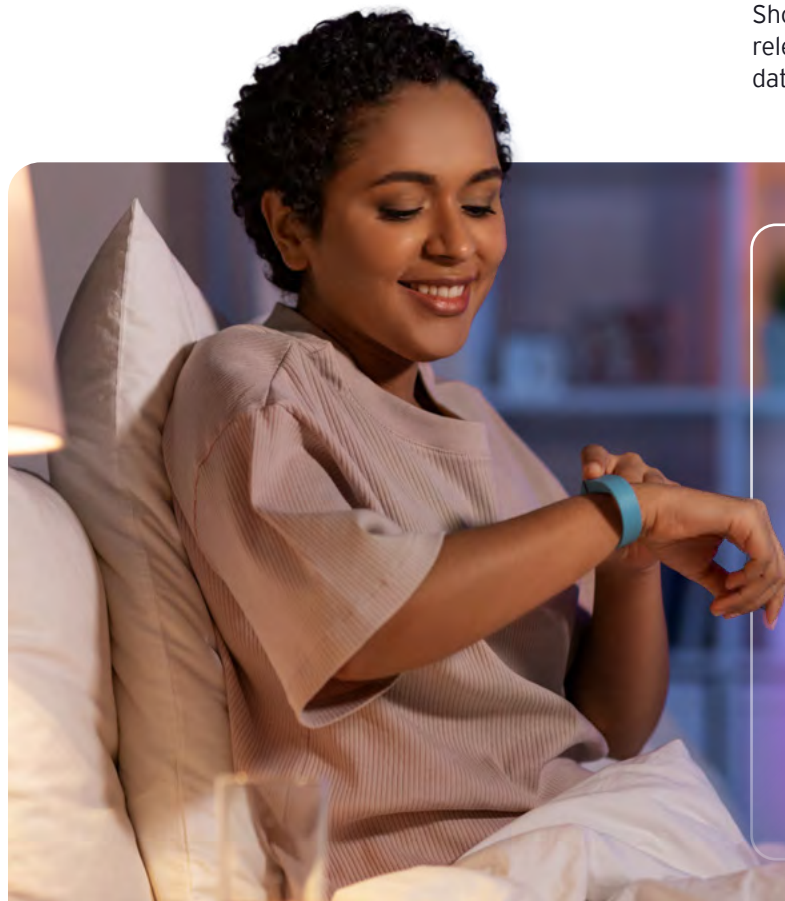
> "
> We have the ability to de-duplicate audiences, which allows us to generate incremental reach against the target audience of any campaign. This is a critical component of our effectiveness in reaching broad, yet targeted groups of shoppers.
>
> **LOBLAW ADVANCE™**
> Marketing Team

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RESULTS

The campaign focused on building upper-funnel brand awareness through on-site and off-site channels.

Awareness and CPM

It reached nearly 12 million shoppers with a CPM of ~$17 (based on off-site impressions). While CPM for this campaign is higher when compared to industry benchmarks of $5 to $10 for display or social media, CPM can vary significantly by channel, category and audience quality. That's part of considering the efficiency and effectiveness of a RMN, which we discuss in more detail in our perspective below.

Advertising recall

The campaign delivered an ad recall of 27% (with brand awareness growing the most among past category purchasers) – an impressive result that was achieved by reaching customers who had a need for the product and therefore were more likely to relate to and remember it.

27%
recall of brand message from advertising campaign

12m
Shoppers reached across Canada through on-site and off-site media during campaign

EY PERSPECTIVE:

Precise and meaningful awareness impact

RMNs have the unique ability to identify and scale qualified shopper segments to a broad audience.

This is crucial in driving effective marketing programs. In this example, the brand worked with Loblaw Advance™ to identify multiple audience categories, from core target group to non-core. The advertising messaging was tailored to each audience group so marketers could assess brand awareness, consideration and message association across all segments.

Large-scale RMNs can reach a large, qualified audience pool. Access to demand-side platforms and trade desks enable RMNs to scale up audience segments across offsite channels as well with contextually relevant ads. In this instance, through these media investment partnerships, the brand could deliver its media to 12 million people across off-site channels and an additional 1 million on-site - a large number in the Canadian market for this product segment. RMNs can go beyond their own ecosystems, tapping into channels like social media and connected TV, to effectively build brand awareness with qualified shoppers.

More precise measurement with reduced wasted advertising spend

Not all CPMs are created equal and it's important to contextualize channels when comparing them against each other. CPMs can vary wildly depending not only on product category, but also channel and audience quality.

Current CPM measurements don't account for "ad waste" – where money, time or resources are spent on marketing activities that generate impressions from *unqualified audiences*. This can lead to a highly inaccurate CPM, diluting relevance as a true performance indicator and potentially wasting valuable brand-building dollars. According to a recent study, the **gap between reported and true CPM could be as high as 38%.**[5] This signals that brands are overpaying for awareness campaigns that are not leading to meaningful impressions. Viewing CPM results and benchmarks through this lens is critical if you want an accurate view of the impact marketing investments are making. **Superior audience targeting reduces ad waste and increasing effectiveness of campaigns.**

This example demonstrates how the brand used Loblaw Advance™ to deliver a strong brand lift outcome to a vast qualified audience at an efficient (adjusted) CPM.
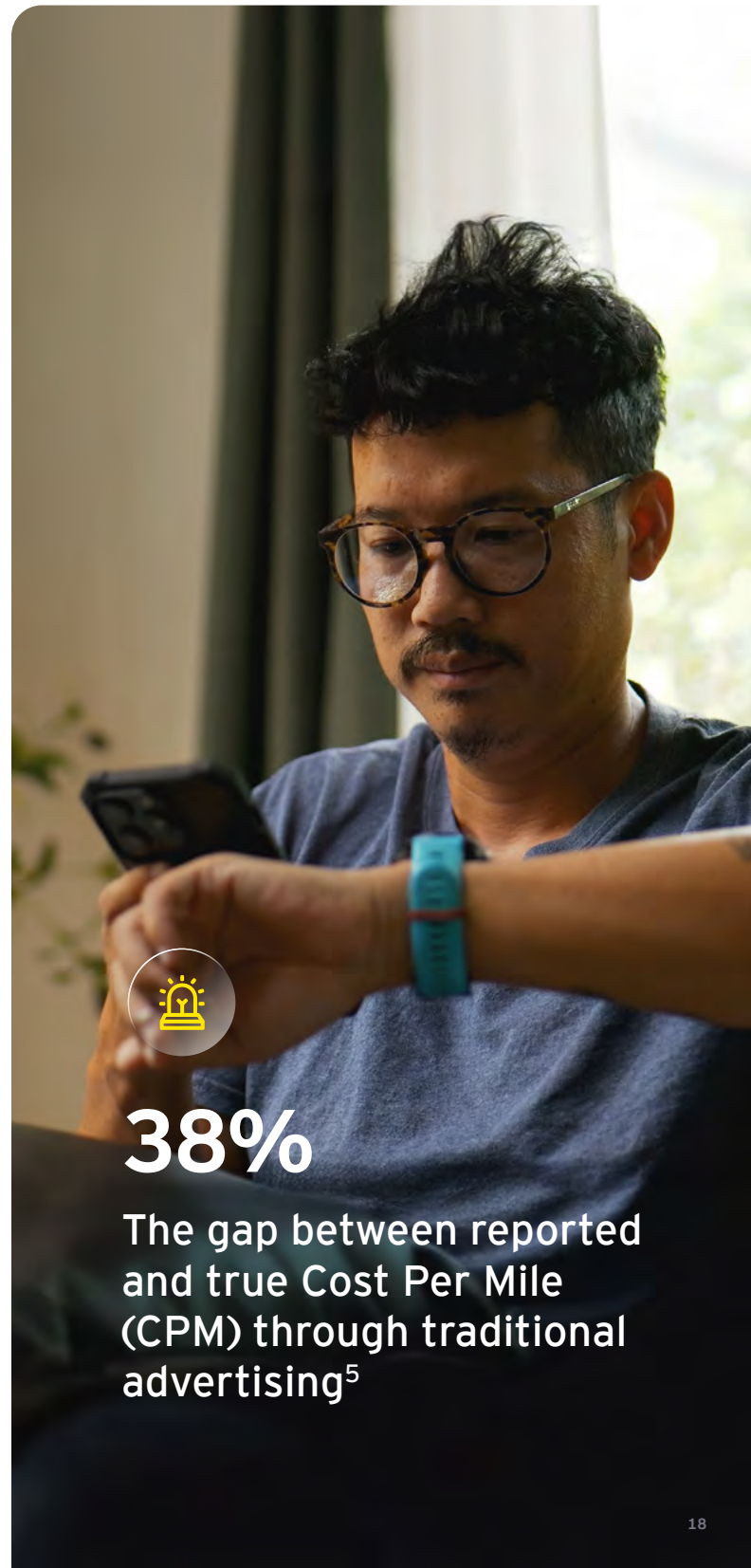
38%

The gap between reported and true Cost Per Mile (CPM) through traditional advertising[5]

TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTION:

■ **Understand and educate teams on RMN use for awareness campaigns:** RMNs have evolved beyond lower-funnel tactics and can support upper-funnel strategies enabled by omni-channel retail experience to drive awareness. It's important that brands become aware of case studies and look for ways to test RMNs for their awareness campaigns.

■ **Leverage RMN first-party data to target shoppers:** As media consumption becomes increasingly fragmented, marketers face the challenge of reaching audiences with relevance across diverse touchpoints. While RMNs still offer broad targeting capabilities, their true value lies in delivering qualified audiences at scale. By leveraging RMN data, marketers can move beyond assumptions to better understand their target audience. This capability enables personalized messaging that resonates with real shoppers across the entire journey.

■ **Reframe awareness campaign metrics and results:** Traditional CPM doesn't fully measure the outcome of awareness campaigns. Marketers should adjust CPM "wastage" to account for audience quality and focus on metrics like brand lift, incrementality and customer lifetime value[iv] that link media spend more closely to brand outcomes.

OBJECTIVE 2

Launching a new product

A product launch or line expansion is a chance to grab attention, get products into carts and shape how new and existing shoppers think about that brand within a category.

In a crowded market, early momentum can be the difference between a product that thrives and gains long-term loyalty — and one that doesn't.

As we have discussed earlier, capturing early momentum has become increasingly difficult. Even with a strong product, breaking through the noise is a challenge. Success now depends on reaching the right audience with the right message at the right moment. In other words, telling the right brand story to the right shopper, at the right time within the purchase funnel.

Typically, brands measure success of new product launches using customer acquisition cost[i] (CAC), which reflects how efficiently a brand attracts new shoppers, and market or category sales share, which demonstrates positive impact on shopper preference.

So, what are best practices when it comes to using RMNs to capture market share of new products? Let's look at an example of how a leading global CPG worked with Loblaw Advance™ to launch a new product.

MARKET CASE STUDY:

Breaking through with a new product

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE

When a leading global CPG was looking to break into a category with its new meal kit product, marketers faced some significant challenges.

The target category had a deeply entrenched incumbent with dominant market share. In addition, they didn't know much about their shopper - who they were and how they made purchasing decisions.

The CPG brand team was looking to drive trial and repeat purchases while also building long-term brand loyalty with a whole new segment of shoppers they knew little about. They also wanted to gather shopper data to inform subsequent campaigns within the category.

In this campaign example, the CPG brand partnered with Loblaw Advance™ to execute one of their largest product marketing launches to date.

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>
> Loblaw Advance™ helped us build our shopper story, understand our target shopper, and take our ideas about what we wanted to do and execute on them effectively.
>
> **MARKETING DIRECTOR**
> Global CPG Company

STRATEGY AND PLANNING

Collaborating early and often

The brand team wanted to make a splash. They brought Loblaw Advance™ into their process very early and collaborated internally across their own media, sales and communications team to align on campaign goals and KPIs (sales and market share being the key outcome metrics supported by impressions).

With the help of Loblaw Advance™, the brand team identified target shoppers within the category and the story they needed to tell to resonate with this audience. Part of this was understanding nuances by geographic market, including those geographies in which the brand had much lower resonance and recognition. In working with Loblaw Advance™, the brand team was able to identify targeted shopper and audience segments as well as understand and use new capabilities that Loblaw Advance™'s digital product teams were building.

360-degree, full-funnel execution

Ultimately, they built a marketing plan that enabled digital and in-store channels in an integrated manner. On digital channels, the brand ran a first-of-its-kind PC Optimum™ app take-over and launched a digital landing page. This aligned with the launch of its products on store shelves, which was supported by in-store displays and shelf signage. The approach was new for both teams and Loblaw Advance™ helped support and coordinate with retail teams. Then, they deployed digital advertising tactics to target identified shoppers.

RESULTS: MARKET SHARE IMPACT AND SHOPPER INSIGHTS

Reaching incremental shoppers and expanding the customer base, this targeted approach generated over 15 million impressions within eight weeks – a significant number within the Canadian market context. During the campaign, the **brand doubled its category share and saw 20% new shoppers to the category** purchase their product.

In addition, this campaign's **customer acquisition cost was 40% lower than industry benchmarks** for new-to-brand customers.

Through this campaign, the brand gained crucial insight and learning about the category and started to get a better picture of their target shopper. They discovered which audiences converted and which did not. They also identified audiences with whom they could build longer-term loyalty and ways in which they could re-engage with them in future campaigns and activities.

⬆ **20%**
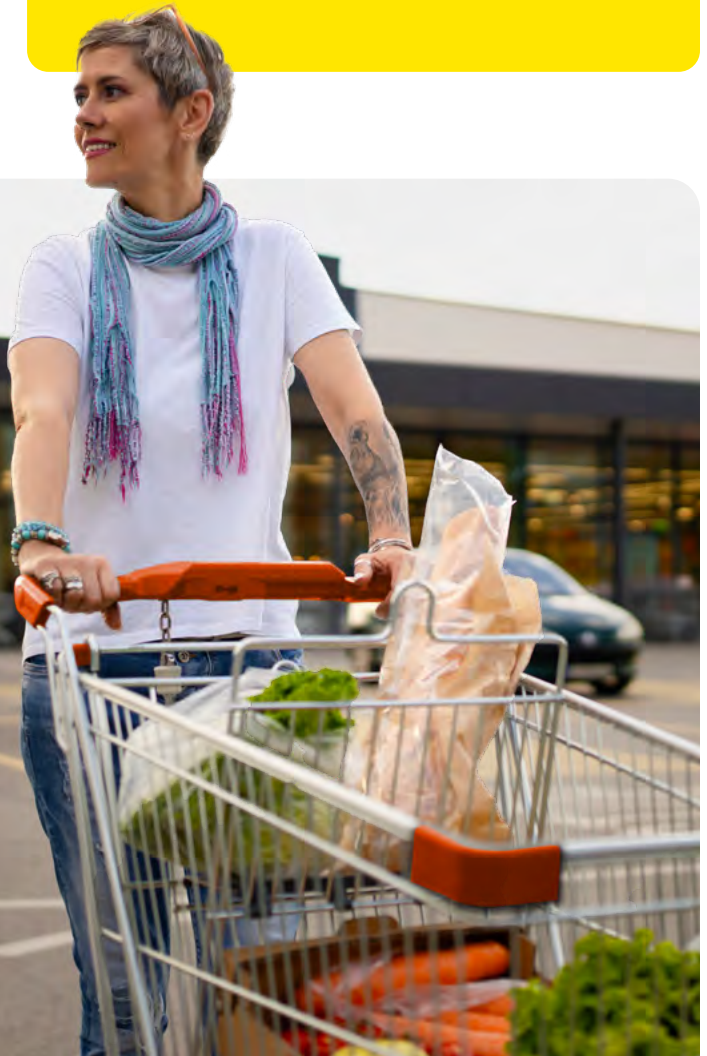new shoppers to this category

⬇ **40%**
lower customer acquisition cost than benchmarks

"

Loblaw Advance™ helped us bridge the gap by turning upper-funnel awareness into lower-funnel action through first-party targeting.

SHOPPER MARKETING ASSOCIATE
Global CPG Company

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EY PERSPECTIVE:

Going beyond sales, learning about shoppers

When a brand launches a new product in a category, scale matters. Even so, the real value lies in what marketers can learn about shoppers and consumers.

While RMNs are a valuable tool for driving sales, they're also a powerful tool for building upper funnel awareness while uncovering rich and specific audience insights.

This data goes beyond broad demographics and psychographics. RMNs can help brand marketers identify and understand who shoppers truly are, how they behave and what they prefer — crucial intelligence that can shape product and brand strategy.

> " Nothing can get us closer to the shopper than a retail media network with a strong loyalty program that they can use to dissect the audience segments and help us reach them.
>
> **SHOPPER MARKETING ASSOCIATE**
> Global CPG Company

TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTION:

- **Collaborate cross-functionally early and often:** Engaging both internal (sales, brand marketing, media) teams as well as RMN partners is crucial to identifying the right goals and ultimately building a campaign that drives better impact.

- **Use RMNs strategically to drive product adoption:** RMNs are highly effective at influencing purchase decisions because they engage customers at the point of sale. By collaborating with RMNs on campaign planning, messaging and in-store product launches, brands can better target shoppers when and where they're most ready to buy. Deepening this collaboration can also unlock new opportunities for reaching shoppers in innovative ways.

- **Inform product and brand strategy from RMN shopper insights:** Product launches are valuable opportunities to gain deep insights into shopper preferences and behaviours. This data from RMNs can inform not only future marketing campaigns, but also the product and brand strategy.

OBJECTIVE 3

Driving incremental sales growth

To stay competitive, brands must grow share faster than competitors.

With 35% of consumers no longer considering brand a significant factor in purchasing[3], the challenge is compounded by increasingly fluid shopper loyalty and heightened competition for attention and conversion.

Historically, marketers have relied on sales growth and return on advertising spend (ROAS) as the primary metrics to evaluate campaign performance. While these metrics offer useful insights, they often fall short of capturing the true incremental impact of marketing efforts. The key lies in understanding the extent to which the brand is successful in increasing category penetration, driving switching behaviour and increasing share of basket.

What are the right ways to measure and evaluate success of brand campaigns seeking to drive sales? Here's a look at how one multinational snack company worked with Loblaw Advance™ to create a campaign seeking to drive incremental product sales.

35%

of consumers no longer considering brand a significant factor in purchasing

**MARKET CASE STUDY:**

Convert awareness to incremental sales

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE

A leading multinational snack company (which produces and sells a wide variety of snacks, biscuits and confectioneries globally) wanted to roll out a seasonal campaign focused on turning its already strong brand awareness into measurable sales and conversion.

Entering a high-traffic seasonal window, the brand aimed to identify key moments of influence and uncover nuanced shopper behaviours. They wanted the campaign to drive incremental sales growth and gains in market share converting high-intent shoppers and reinforcing brand preference at critical touchpoints.
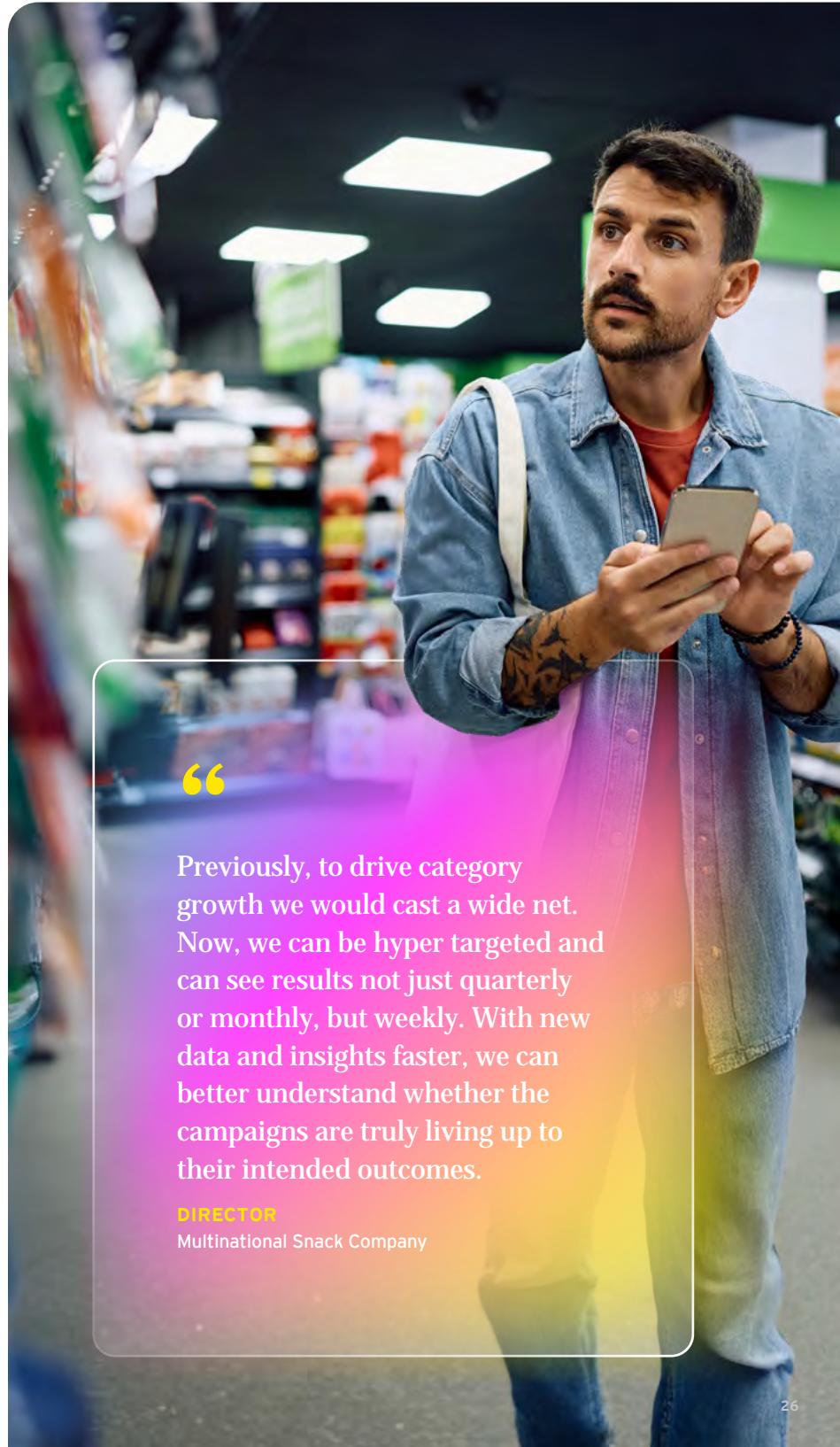
SPECIAL OFFER
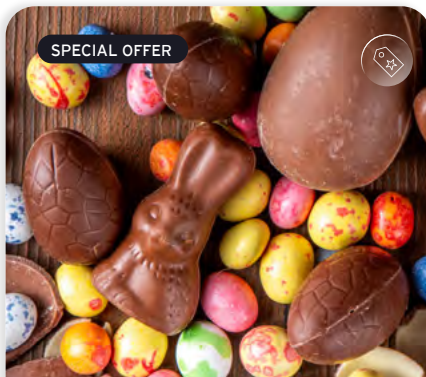
$9.99

ADD TO CART +

" Previously, to drive category growth we would cast a wide net. Now, we can be hyper targeted and can see results not just quarterly or monthly, but weekly. With new data and insights faster, we can better understand whether the campaigns are truly living up to their intended outcomes.

DIRECTOR
Multinational Snack Company

STRATEGY AND PLANNING

Hyper targeting by using first-party data

In working with Loblaw Advance™ and through its first party shopper and loyalty data, the brand was able to craft target shoppers segments and audiences. Through this process, they created several segments, including already loyal shoppers, those shopping the category regularly and infrequent category shoppers.

Omnichannel, full-funnel campaign execution

The campaign was executed using a broad omnichannel strategy that combined offsite and onsite media with a goal is increasing unique reach and channel synergies. Offsite channels included Meta, YouTube and MediaAisle™ (Loblaw Advance™'s self-serve programmatic media buying platform). Onsite digital placements included sponsored listing, integration into personalized shopping experience and shopping mobile app push notifications. The goal? Target the identified shopper segments with contextually relevant advertising, both offsite and onsite.

> "
> It wasn't just about impressions or clicks. We were able to tie media exposure directly to sales, which is the kind of commercial impact we want to see.
>
> **DIRECTOR**
> Multinational Snack Company

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RESULTS: INCREMENTAL SALES IMPACT

The campaign's targeted approach generated meaningful incremental sales that landed well within industry benchmarks for ROAS. In fact, the brand achieved 35% incremental sales growth during the campaign period over and above the lift in category sales. Most of the lift came from reactivated buyers, showcasing the strength of RMN targeting capabilities in reaching lapsed shoppers and expanding the brand's customer base.

Beyond media efficiency, the campaign demonstrated RMNs' ability to drive real commercial revenue — connecting media exposure to measurable sales outcomes. When projected CLV was factored in, the return more than doubled, reinforcing the lasting impact of engaging high-potential audiences.

Going forward, the brand intends to focus on re-engaging and converting audiences, as well as continuing to build market share through precision targeting.

35%

incremental lift in brand sales during campaign

EY PERSPECTIVE:

Sophisticated targeting and measurement

By tapping into first-party data – such as loyalty programs, online accounts and in-store purchases – RMNs can directly connect media exposure to actual sales, offering a more complete and actionable view of campaign impact. In addition, RMNs can measure performance in more meaningful ways.

While ROAS is a commonly used metric, it doesn't reflect the incremental effect of media investments. **Incremental ROAS (iROAS), on the other hand, reveals a more accurate picture of the true lift** and behaviour change. Sophisticated RMNs can estimate a campaign's iROAS by estimating the incremental sales, comparing sales results between target audience control and test groups and geographies that were exposed (or not) to the campaign. This can also reveal an estimate of incremental (new) shoppers to the brand.

RMNs also present the ability to layer on and estimate a campaign's incremental customer lifetime value (iCLTV). This brings into focus sales from shopper segments beyond the immediate campaign. How? By layering on predicted, post-campaign incremental sales by shopper segment. Given the predictive component, these estimates should be reviewed using actual post-campaign shopper spend to get a more accurate picture of true campaign performance, improve prediction models and update iCLTV.

With RMNs, closed-loop data helps advertisers isolate incremental impact and identify which audiences, creatives and tactics are truly driving results.

TURNING INSIGHTS INTO ACTION:

- **Use RMNs' unique measurement capabilities to assess impact:** As marketing strategies and campaigns evolve, marketers must re-think how success is measured. ROAS alone is no longer sufficient, so a layered approach of metrics like incremental sales, iROAS and iCLTV that RMNs can provide helps create a more accurate view of true campaign impact.

- **Let first-party data guide your targeting strategy with high-intent shoppers:** RMNs offer closed-loop measurement that connects media exposure to real sales. Leverage this first-party data to move beyond surface-level metrics and build smarter, more accountable media strategies. Shopper loyalty is increasingly fluid. Use iROAS to isolate lift and understand which audiences and tactics are driving growth and avoid over-investing in loyal shoppers.

> " If done right, retail media can drive conversion at the point of consideration like never before.
>
> **STEVEN BAILEY**
> EY Partner

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Conclusions: Observations and recommendations for brand marketers

Conclusions: Observations and recommendations for brand marketers

Retail media networks offer brands a full-funnel marketing channel

With the convergence of online and offline channels and the emergence of RMNs, the divide between digital media and in- store marketing is disappearing. This creates new opportunities for brand marketers to use RMNs to engage with shoppers and drive full funnel brand objectives.

Across the full purchase funnel, RMNs can help brands:

- **Build awareness:** RMNs aren't just for bottom-funnel tactics. Brands can use RMN reach, targeting and full-funnel capabilities to drive awareness amongst qualified shoppers that can be tracked to sales.

- **Grow sales:** RMNs connect media exposure directly to purchase behaviour, making it easier to connect tactics to sales conversion. Brands are working with RMNs to build personalized and targeted experiences that tell a cohesive brand story.

- **Improve effectiveness:** With layered audience targeting and full-funnel execution, RMNs can help brands reach the right shoppers with the right message at the right time, reducing wasted advertising spend.

- **Inform brand product strategy:** First-party data gives brands deep insight into shopper behaviour, fueling marketing strategies and better product development.

- **Measure what matters:** It's time to move beyond impressions and ROAS. RMNs unlock metrics like IROAS, CLV and adjusted cost per mile (aCPM), providing a more sophisticated view into brand and campaign performance.

> "
>
> There is no more specific audience than one that is coming through a retail media network.
>
> **MARKETING DIRECTOR**
> Global CPG Company

Implications for brand marketers

Unlocking the value RMNs offer requires an integrated approach to brand marketing. Traditional divisions between brand marketing, trade spend, and shopper marketing are quickly becoming outdated.

As brand marketers, it's critical to embed RMNs within brand marketing and media strategy – not only for conversion, but as a strategic tool for targeted mass reach, full-funnel engagement and consistent brand storytelling.

To take advantage of this channel, brand marketers need to:

■ **Foster awareness, education, alignment:** Brand marketers must educate themselves on RMN benefits. Start by identifying an RMN and running full-funnel campaigns to experiment, learn and share results broadly across the organization. This builds internal understanding and alignment around the role of retail media.

■ **Take a strategic, focused approach to RMN engagement:** Brands should determine which RMNs to engage with more deeply. This requires evaluating RMNs objectively based on brand objectives, platform capabilities and the strength of the partnership.

■ **Integrate marketing and commercial efforts:** Brands need to develop more integrated strategies and planning across marketing, sales, e-commerce and media teams. As a channel, RMNs should be included and embedded early in the planning process.

■ **Reframe measures of success:** Leverage RMNs' rich, full-funnel data and measurement capabilities to define and track metrics that align with brand objectives and measure impact more accurately, from upper-funnel brand building to consideration and conversion.

Brands that lean in, test, learn and evolve using retail media networks will be better positioned to navigate this shift and unlock the full potential of the next era of commerce.
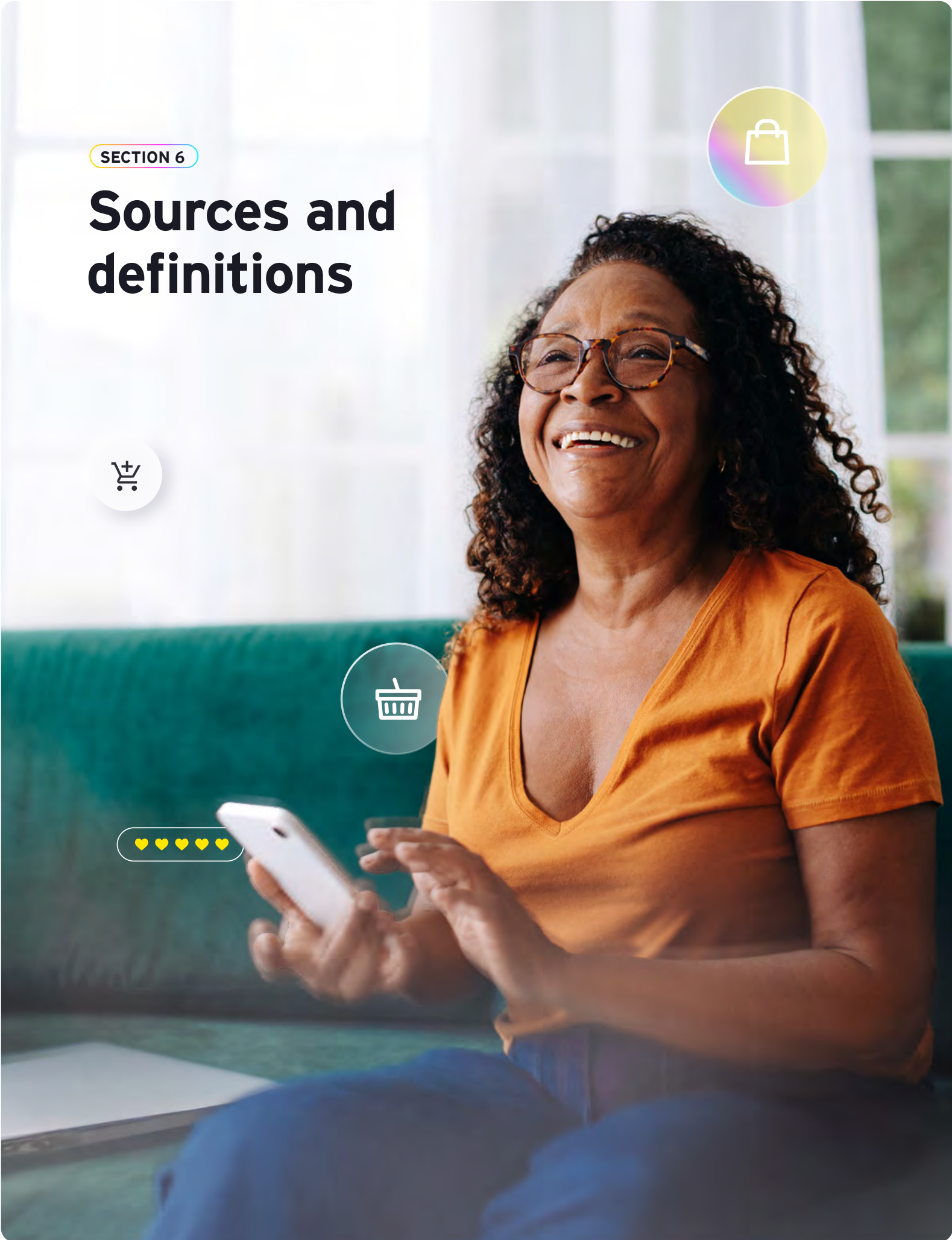
> " Retail media is evolving fast, and it's reshaping how brands connect with shoppers. Brands that start integrating RMNs into their media planning—experimenting, learning, and adapting—will be better positioned to connect with the right audiences.

JAY DENNIS
Americas Marketing & Sales Leader
EY Studio+

Sources and definitions

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Definitions

i. **Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC):** The total expense to attract and convert a customer.

ii. **Awareness:** The extent to which a consumer recognizes or is familiar with a brand.

iii. **Consideration:** The extent to which a consumer actively thinks about a brand or product as a choice when making a purchase decision.

iv. **Customer lifetime value:** an estimate of total value (e.g., revenue) that can be expected from a customer from their first purchase to their last.

v. **De-duplicated:** Removing the same shopper from multiple audience segments to create unique shopper data sets across each segment.

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