RETAIL MEDIA MEASUREMENT STANDARDIZATION

AUGUST 2026

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Retail media continues to increase, with Emarketer projecting a 17 percent compound annual growth rate through 2028, reaching $90 billion. With the broader definition of commerce media, spend exceeds $100 billion. Further, over half of all marketers use five or more commerce media networks.

Despite record spend and growth, a strategic challenge remains: outcomes are not comparable. Fifty-five percent of advertisers cited lack of standardization as their No. 1 barrier in an ANA member survey. Inconsistent inputs drive inconsistent outcomes, such as attribution lookback windows, "new to" definitions, identity resolution scope, and varied deduping practices by networks, preventing reliable side-by-side ROI comparisons. Without an "Umbrella of Commonality," comparing performance on one network to another is mathematically impossible. Further, if these metrics are not built on baseline metrics that align with industry standards (impressions, clicks, viewability, invalid traffic, etc.), the resulting outcome measurements will not provide comparability or consistency. It is also highly recommended that independent third-party measurement companies be leveraged to perform these measurements.

In addition to the need for external measurement consistency, many brands are also facing internal challenges around collaboration, alignment, and decision-making. These challenges were the subject of ANA's "**Retail Media Internal Management Guidance**" report issued in September 2025.

This report on measurement standardization, based on insights and discussions with ANA member brands from the **ANA Retail Media Working Group**, which is part of the **ANA's Media &Measurement Leadership Council (MMLC)**, highlights key learnings and establishes an initial framework to help drive outcome comparability.

Executive Summary

Participating Brands from the ANA's Retail Media Working Group, Part of the ANA's Media & Measurement Leadership Council (MMLC):

Executive Summary

Participating Retail Media Networks:

- Albertsons Media Collective
- BJ's MediaEdge™
- CVS Media Exchange®
- instacart
- Roundel™ Media designed by Target
- sam's club connect
- Walmart Connect

Conclusions

- **Retail media has become too important to operate without common measurement standards.** Retail media and commerce media now represent a large and growing share of marketers' media mix, yet measurement practices have not matured at the same pace. As investment rises and marketers work across multiple networks, inconsistent reporting standards create a significant business challenge, not merely a technical one.
- **The biggest barrier is not a lack of data, but a lack of comparability.** Advertisers cannot make reliable network-to-network comparisons when core inputs vary. Differences in attribution lookback windows, "new to" definitions, identity resolution, deduplication practices, and product category definitions all distort reported outcomes. Without a common measurement framework, side-by-side comparisons across networks are inherently unreliable.
- **Baseline media metrics must be standardized before outcome metrics can be trusted**. Marketers cannot properly evaluate ROI, growth, or incrementality unless the underlying ad delivery metrics are measured consistently and in line with industry standards. Impressions, viewability, clicks, and invalid traffic form the essential foundation that must be aligned before outcome reporting can be meaningfully compared.
- **Independent third-party measurement should play a larger role.** Self-measurement by networks is not sufficient to build trust and comparability. Greater use of independent third-party measurement companies, along with third-party validation (e.g., MRC Accreditation, AAM Assurance), would strengthen confidence in baseline metrics and support more credible evaluation across networks.
- **Marketers need greater transparency into how retail media networks define and classify what they report.** Opaque or inconsistent definitions are a major source of confusion. This applies to product categories, audience definitions, "new to" calculations, attribution windows, and purchase types. Greater disclosure and more transparent reporting are essential to improving both interpretation and comparability.
- **Measuring retail media performance requires more than campaign-attributed outcomes.** Marketers need access to the broader commercial conditions that shape results, including sales volume, category movement, inventory status, pricing, and basket composition. Without that context, performance reporting can be incomplete and potentially misleading, particularly when marketers are trying to assess incrementality and compare outcomes across networks.
- **This is intentionally a first-step framework, not the finished end state.** This initial framework focuses primarily on inconsistent metrics and inconsistent definitions and methods, while future phases are expected to address outcomes and incrementality measurement, data sharing, integrations, and on-platform experimentation. The practical takeaway is to begin with a common measurement foundation and build from there.

Guidance: What Marketers Should Do

- **Push for a common baseline before accepting cross-network ROI claims.** Marketers should not assume that outcome metrics are comparable simply because they use the same labels across networks. They should first confirm that the foundational delivery metrics are being measured consistently and according to accepted industry standards. Without that, cross-network ROI comparisons risk creating false precision.
- **Require transparency into definitions, methods, and reporting logic.** Marketers should ask networks to disclose the logic behind what is being reported. That includes how product categories are defined, how audiences are constructed, what "new to" means, which lookback windows are used, what data signals are used in deterministic matching, and whether non-deterministic methods are being applied. Greater disclosure is a prerequisite for better interpretation and stronger buying decisions.
- **Advocate for standard reporting definitions across networks.** As a starting point, marketers can rally around a common 52-week "new to" definition, a common 14-day attribution lookback window, more transparent product category definitions, and clearer reporting of online versus offline purchase type and fulfillment method. These are practical areas where standardization can improve comparability in the near term.
- **Use third-party measurement and validation wherever possible.** Marketers should lean more heavily on independent third parties for both validation and consistency. This is especially important when comparing performance across networks, where self-reported results may reflect methodological differences rather than true differences in performance.
- **Ask for more complete performance context, not just attributed sales.** Retail media networks should incorporate a broader set of supplementary metrics into performance reporting. In addition to campaign outcomes, marketers should have access to product and category unit sales, period-over-period sales change, inventory availability classifications, gross and net pricing, and basket-size measures. These metrics provide the context needed to better understand performance drivers, improve interpretation of incrementality, and support more informed investment decisions.
- **Prepare for a phased approach to standardization.** This is the beginning of a broader standardization journey. The first phase is to establish a common measurement foundation and improve transparency. Future phases should extend into better data sharing, stronger interoperability, and more robust support for experimentation and incrementality. Marketers should support progress now rather than wait for a perfect end state.

Background: Retail Media/Commence Media/Media Networks

Today, how marketers engage with retail media is evolving as the medium continues to grow both in terms of networks available (roughly 200) and the depth of offerings. The majority of marketers report using five or more networks within their marketing spend. Across the offerings, whether called retail media, commerce media, media networks, or other terms (collectively referred to as "networks" or "media networks" throughout this report), there are four consistent categories that marketers tend to engage with:

1 On-Site Media/Advertising

- Advertisers purchase media/advertising inventory directly from the respective network and ads run exclusively within the network's own (owned and operated) digital properties, such as its website, mobile app, or other displays/screens.
- Common formats include sponsored products, sponsored brands, display ads, banners, and video advertising, providing the brand's message directly within the network's own environment.

2 On-Site and Offsite Media/Advertising

- A hybrid option in which advertisers purchase media/advertising inventory directly from the respective network, but placements within the retailer's properties (on-site) are combined with externally/other non-owned and operated digital publishers or platforms (off-site).
- This allows marketers to address network audiences externally or reach new audiences beyond the network's own digital channels.

3 Off-Site Activation Only (activated with retail media network data)

- Marketers leverage the network's first-party retail audience data to run advertising exclusively outside the network's own platforms, where they purchase the media from the external digital publisher or platform; the network does not, itself, transact the media purchase.
- Such channels may include programmatic placements across open-web publishers, social media platforms, connected TV (CTV), and digital audio.

4 In-Store Media

- When brick-and-mortar locations are part of a retail media network, the common industry term is "in-store retail media."
- In-store retail media refers to advertising and promotional placements within physical retail stores, including:
  - Digital signage and screens, shelf-edge displays or digital shelf tags, in-store audio ads, interactive kiosks or displays, endcap displays, and special merchandising areas.
- When combined with digital (online) advertising placements, networks that integrate both digital and physical retail environments often describe themselves as offering an "omnichannel retail media network."

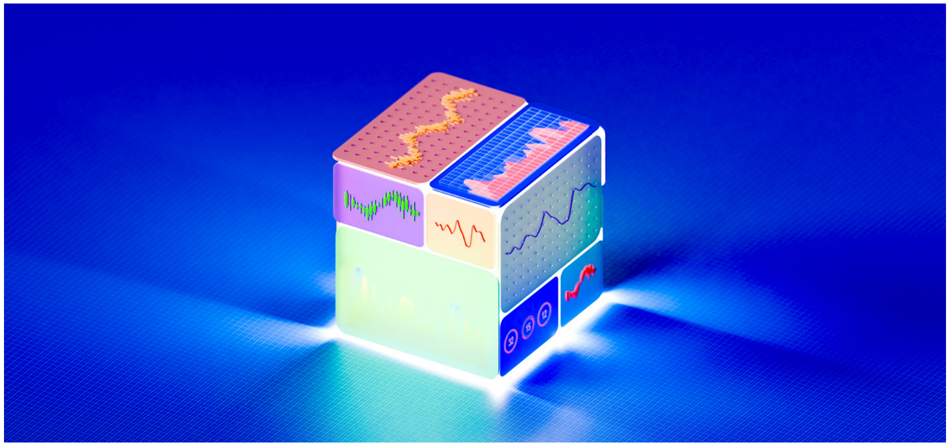
Key Areas of Focus: Challenges and Action Steps

The Retail Media Working Group identified several substantial issues that lead to inefficiencies and inhibit marketer ROI growth. These headwinds fall into the following categories:

- Inconsistent metrics
- Inconsistent definitions and methods
- Disconnected data (retail media network silos)
- Facilitation of data sharing (integrations)
- Lack of on-platform experimentation capabilities (incrementality)

This initial framework focuses on the first two categories and proposes baseline reporting across retail media networks to enable improved comparability across networks. The baseline reporting proposed in this report is intended to provide an umbrella of commonality, in addition to the metrics networks report today.

Future versions of this report will address the remaining three categories and will likely also include updates in the first two categories as networks begin to provide the baseline reporting framework discussed in this document.



Minimum Baseline Reporting Metrics

For marketers, purchasing media requires a solid basis or foundation, anchored in industry-defined metrics that establish the underlying delivery of advertising. Media networks are no different than other media in needing this established foundation. Marketers cannot (nor can their partners or vendors) effectively evaluate their performance, whether it be outcomes, incrementality, ROI, growth, or other methods, if the underlying foundation of delivery metrics is not established in compliance with industry standard measurement practices.

As such, it is critically important that all media networks fully adopt and adhere to industry standards, established by the Media Rating Council, for measuring the underlying advertising delivery, including:

- Impressions
- Viewability
- Clicks
- Invalid traffic (GIVT and SIVT)

Additionally, it is highly recommended that media networks engage and leverage independent third-party measurement companies to perform these measurements, rather than performing self-measurement of these critical baseline metrics; and that regardless of who is performing the measurement, these be subject to third-party validation.

Umbrella of Commonality

Only after the foundational metrics are solidified can marketers address the measurement and reporting challenges of evaluation performance. Further, marketers need the ability to perform reliable side-by-side ROI comparisons, or cross-network comparisons. The Retail Media Working Group identified the following initial metric definitions and methodologies that are necessary to begin to develop outcome comparability.

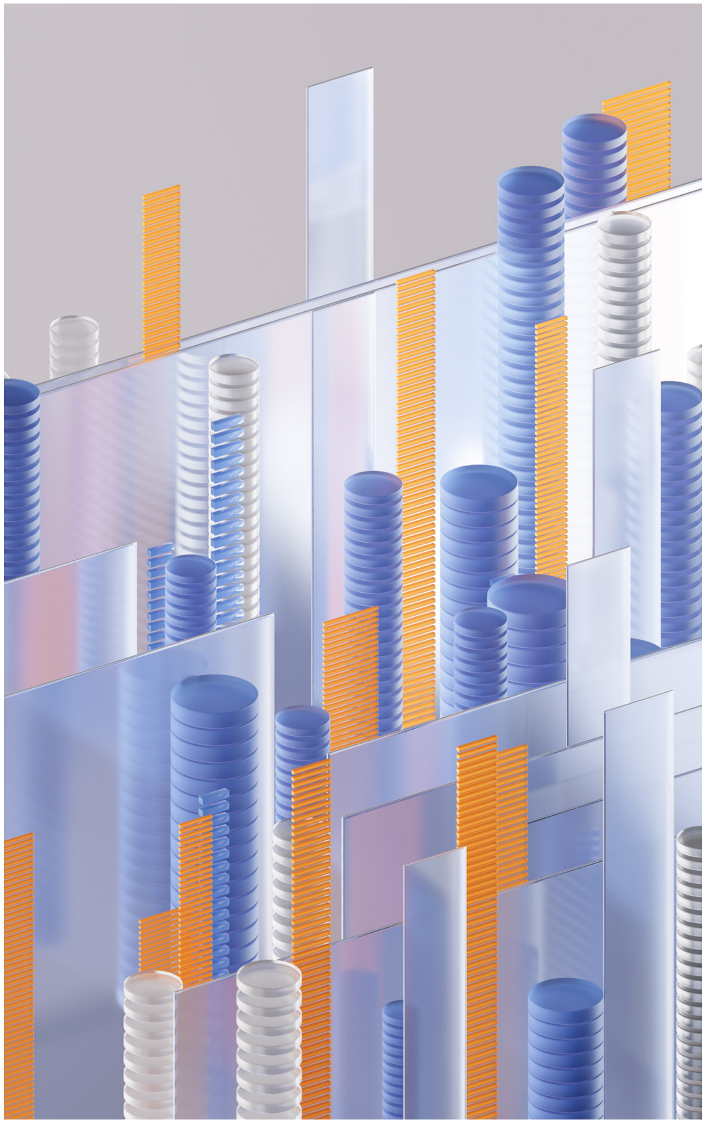
Product Category Definition

Today, media networks generally develop their own definition of a product category, identifying the specific products within a product category (e.g., a list of SKUs that together comprise the product category). These category definitions differ from one media network to another, effectively making cross-network comparisons of category performance impossible. To address this challenge, the following steps are recommended:

As an initial starting point, media networks should provide transparency into the product categories being utilized in their environment by disclosing to marketers the current category definitions at a product level. This will allow marketers to understand differences in category definitions among media networks and consider the impact of those differences in evaluating results across media networks.

To provide consistent definitions across media networks, media networks should also leverage product category definitions used and reported by well-established third-party measurement services and provide marketers the set of definitions to be used in reporting. Recognizing that adopting a third-party standard for category definitions may present certain operational challenges, particularly for those operating brick-and-mortar stores, doing so will allow marketers to apply the same product category definitions in reporting across media networks for consistency and direct comparability.

To further enable marketer analysis, it is recommended that media networks consider developing the ability to allow marketers to define custom categories to be used in reporting. That is, product category definitions should be defined by SKUs as provided by the marketer. This will allow marketers to more precisely establish the comparison set used in such reporting based on their objectives.



“New To” Reporting Definition

When evaluating performance, marketers may consider their acquisition of new customers. For comparability, using a consistent definition of a new customer based on the time since their last applicable purchase across media networks is necessary, but not currently in place. To address this challenge, the following steps are recommended:

As an initial starting point, if not currently provided, media networks should provide “new to” reporting based on a common definition of “last 52 weeks,” meaning that any applicable purchase within the past 52 weeks would exclude the current purchase from being considered a “new” acquisition.

- For analyses based on acquiring consumers that are new to the product category, the prior recommendation related to product category definition is directly applicable.
- For analyses based on acquiring consumers that are new to the brand, or specific product, product tier (e.g., to identify an upgrade/upsell), complimentary product set (e.g., to identify a cross-sale), or other classification sets, it is similarly necessary that marketers understand the definition of the respective set through transparent disclosure of the set by the media network.

Consumers that have not made an applicable purchase within the past 52 weeks should be segregated between “lapsed” (those that have made a previous applicable purchase, but not within the last 52 weeks) and “new” (those that have not made a previous applicable purchase at all). This is a key input for marketers when considering Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC) rates. When “lapsed” reporting is provided, networks should disclose the length of their historical time period used in identifying “lapsed” consumers.

To further enable marketer analysis, it is recommended that media networks consider developing the ability to allow marketers to define custom “new to” definitions (number of days, weeks, and/or months) to be used in reporting and “lapsed” reporting should change accordingly. This will allow marketers to more precisely establish the comparison set used in such reporting based on their objectives.

Attribution Lookback Window Reporting Definition

In evaluating performance, it is important for marketers to understand how media networks are linking a consumer's advertising exposure to the purchase of the product. In performing this linkage, media networks generally consider the time between exposure and purchase (the lookback window), but there is a lack of consistency among media networks in how those lookback windows are defined, leading to different definitions across networks. To address this challenge, the following steps are recommended:

As an initial starting point, if not currently provided, media networks should also provide reporting based on a 14-day lookback window definition. This will provide a common definition based on marketer's feedback that will allow comparability across media networks.

To further enable marketer analysis, it is recommended that media networks consider developing the ability to allow marketers to define custom attribution lookback window definitions (number of days) to be used in reporting. This will allow marketers to more precisely establish the comparison set used in such reporting based on their objectives.

Audience Definitions

Marketers need to understand the methods used by media networks to determine or define consumers/audiences. Currently, these methodologies vary widely and are generally not disclosed. This lack of transparency, coupled with the varied approaches across media networks, leads to marketers' inability to evaluate and understand the performance of their campaigns and to compare their performance across networks. To address this challenge, the following steps are recommended.

As an initial starting point, media networks should fully disclose their audience definitions and methodologies, including:

- Disclosure of the data attributes leveraged (logged in users, shopper IDs, device IDs, shipping addresses, payment information, etc.) for any deterministic methods.
- Disclosure of the use of any non-deterministic methods, and if used, the methodology utilized in those non-deterministic methods.
- Disclose the percentage of attributed purchase events that are based on deterministic methods.

Media networks should evaluate and consider leveraging uniform and deterministic definitions and methods to the extent possible in their environments.

Purchase Type Reporting

Marketers need to consistently understand how the purchase occurred (online versus offline) and how the consumer received the product. As such, transparent reporting of the purchase and delivery type is recommended, including:

- Online (website, mobile application, etc.)
- Offline (brick-and-mortar store, telephone order, etc.)
- Delivery type (physical in-store purchase, pick-up in store, local delivery, shipping, etc.)

Supplementary Metrics for Performance Evaluation

For marketers to better evaluate the performance and impact of their advertising, certain additional or supplementary metrics will allow marketers to consider other factors that are key to their analysis of incrementality, which are frequently not made available to marketers. To address this challenge, the following data and metrics are recommended for inclusion in standard reporting available to marketers:

- The number of transactions that contained the marketers' product or offering, in total and those that were attributed to the campaign.
- The average order value, calculated as the ratio of net revenue to number of orders
- The number of units sold (of the marketer's product or offering) during the evaluation period, within the applicable comparison set (e.g., product category), whether attributed to an advertising campaign or not
- Total units sold during the evaluation period, across the comparison set (e.g., product category)
- Increase or decrease in the number of units sold (of the marketer's product or offering) during the evaluation period, within the applicable comparison set (e.g., product category), whether attributed to an advertising campaign or not
- Increase or decrease in total units sold during the evaluation period, across the comparison set, as compared to the immediately prior and year ago equivalent period
- Inventory availability of the marketer's product or offering and across the applicable comparison set for the evaluation period
    - These may be provided within classifications such as "excess inventory," "normal inventory," "reduced inventory," "low inventory," or "scarce/sold out inventory," with definitions included in reporting.
- Average gross (listed) and net (after sales, discounts, or coupons) sale price of the marketer's product or offering during the evaluation period
- Average basket size (number of items and total dollar amount) of sales in which the marketer's product or offering was included

Future Updates

This report represents the initial guidance, establishing a baseline of certain definitions and processes that will allow marketers to better evaluate the performance of their campaigns and compare the performance across media networks. Better understanding the relative performance of their campaigns across networks allows marketers to align campaigns and objectives with media networks to further drive growth.

This guidance will be updated in future versions to expand the list of metrics and definitions, and to evolve those to reflect changes in the industry. It will also be updated to include further focus on outcomes and incrementality measurement, data sharing and facilitation guidance, and guidance for activating on-platform experimentation.

Acknowledgements

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Media and Measurement
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Citi	eos	Hershey's	Kenvue	Mondelēz		

Retail Media Network Contributors Included

- **Albertsons Media Collective**
- **BJ's Media Edge**
- **CVS Media Exchange**
- **Instacart**
- **Sam's Club Connect**
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About the ANA

The Association of National Advertisers (ANA) is the definitive voice of the marketing industry. Since 1910, we have set and advanced the agenda for marketing transformation, connecting over 1,600 member companies to an influential global network, insights, and resources that drive growth. Our members represent 20,000 brands and $400 billion in annual marketing investment. Through industry-leading research, the CMO Growth Council, and our proprietary Growth Agenda and Practices, the ANA empowers marketers to shape the future of marketing and create lasting impact for their organizations and the industry.

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