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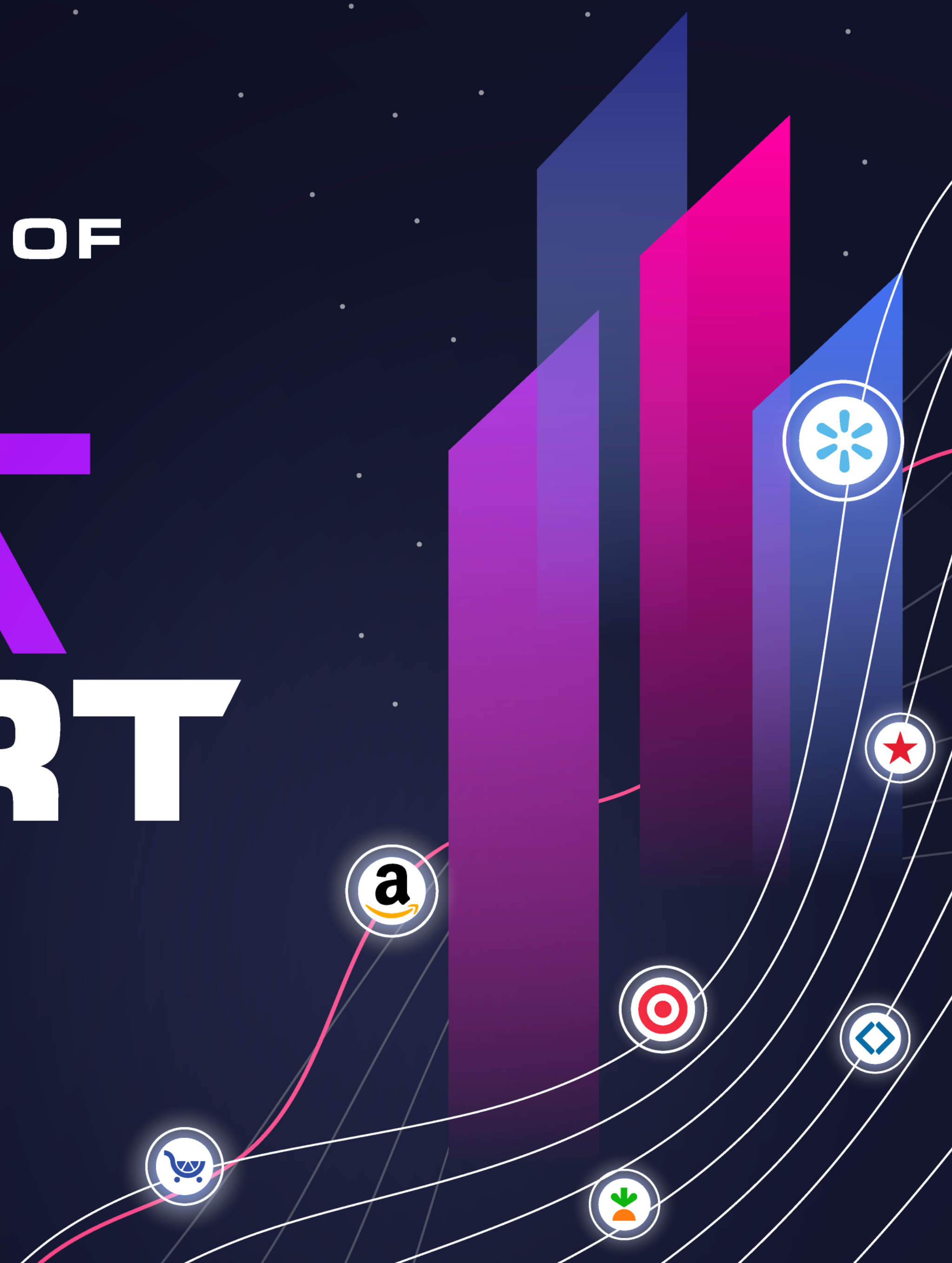
THE STATE OF RETAIL MEDIA REPORT

2026



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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE FIFTH ANNUAL STATE OF RETAIL MEDIA REPORT, THE LONGEST-RUNNING SURVEY OF RETAIL MEDIA MARKETERS IN THE INDUSTRY.

When we launched this survey at the end of 2021, US retail media ad spending sat at $36.7 billion. This year, that figure will nearly triple to $107.6 billion. What started as category experimentation has become infrastructure.

Retail media now commands roughly 30% of all US digital ad spending. And the stakes are rising fast. Agentic commerce and GenAI-driven shopping journeys are changing how consumers discover and buy products. AI agents that compare prices, read reviews, and make purchase decisions on behalf of shoppers will bypass traditional discovery paths entirely. Brands that can't orchestrate seamlessly across retail media, search, social, and on-site experiences risk getting filtered out before a human ever sees them.

Consumer goods marketers continue to grow their spend in the channel year-over-year, but three-quarters admit their measurement capabilities are weak or just adequate. Leaders are pulling ahead with sophisticated operations while laggards struggle with basic coordination. New technologies like AI promise transformation but create integration headaches. The performance gap between those who've built the right capabilities and those still figuring it out continues to widen.

This fifth annual State of Retail Media study reveals what separates leaders from everyone else and where the next competitive advantages will emerge.

THIS YEAR'S STUDY TOPICS:

Omnichannel strategies redefine retail media's role in the marketing mix

Budget allocation patterns reveal maturity rather than size as the performance driver

GenAI adoption increases as agentic commerce advances

Amazon's operational advantage expands through AMC and DSP capabilities

Performance gaps widen between retail media leaders and laggards

Infrastructure needs to keep pace with network proliferation

Brands measuring incrementality report tangible results, though challenges persist

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SURVEY

OMNICHANNEL STRATEGIES SEPARATE TOP PERFORMERS FROM THE PACK

Retail media has evolved beyond lower-funnel tactics. Brands now allocate a third of their paid search and social spend to drive retailer traffic, treating retail media as the hub that connects channels rather than an isolated commerce execution. This integration becomes critical as AI-powered interfaces and platforms transform shopping behaviors and create non-linear purchase paths for consumers. Brands need unified orchestration to stay visible regardless of where the journey starts or how AI reshapes it.

AI ADOPTION IS WIDESPREAD AND AGENTIC COMMERCE WILL GO MAINSTREAM

GenAI is being deployed for every area of retail media, with marketers increasing usage for campaign management, optimization, and analytics & insights over creative and content production. An even bigger shift is coming from the consumer side. Agentic commerce, where AI assistants shop on behalf of users, will force brands to optimize for algorithmic recommendations, not just human attention.

PERFORMANCE IS STRONG – AND LEADERS ARE PULLING AHEAD

Seven in ten brands meet or exceed retail media goals, but the others are falling further behind. The divide isn't budget size, but executional capability. Leaders who've invested in measurement infrastructure, cross-channel integration, and optimization resources are pulling away while laggards struggle with fragmented systems and weak analytics.

MORE THAN HALF OF BRANDS SHIFT DISPLAY BUDGETS TO RETAIL MEDIA DSP'S

We found that 52% of advertisers are reallocating display spend from open web DSPs to retail media DSPs, driven by closed-loop attribution (57%) that traditional programmatic can't deliver. This migration reflects mounting frustration with measurement gaps in open web buying. As retail media DSPs mature their targeting and reporting capabilities, expect acceleration among brands prioritizing measurable sales lift over reach metrics that can't prove incrementality.

AMAZON'S ADVANTAGE CONTINUES TO EXPAND WITH AMC AND DSP

Amazon's competitive advantage keeps widening. AMC adoption has hit 56% despite technical complexity, and retail media DSPs gain traction through closed-loop attribution that other platforms can't match. But that advantage demands constant optimization work that most brands aren't staffed to handle. The gap between what Amazon enables and what brands can execute explains why efficiency stays elusive even as capabilities expand.

COMPLEXITY IS OUTPACING INFRASTRUCTURE

Marketers plan to manage 8+ retail media networks by the end of 2026, yet only 12% have integrated media and commerce operations. Internal resource constraints dominate every barrier to performance improvement. Brands keep adding networks and budgets without building the unified systems needed to optimize across them, creating a coordination crisis that turns scale into a liability rather than an advantage.

TRENDS

HOW RETAIL MEDIA WILL EVOLVE IN 2026

The data tells a clear story: retail media has reached an inflection point. The channel is established, budgets are committed, and technology capabilities have advanced dramatically. But strategic capabilities haven't kept pace with investment growth.

What we're seeing isn't just evolution, it's stratification. Brands are splitting into two groups. **Leaders** treat retail media as mature infrastructure requiring systematic discipline, builds measurement that steers decisions in real time rather than reporting on what already happened, deploys AI with clear strategic intent, and invests in infrastructure that supports advanced execution. Meanwhile, **Laggards** still operating reactively, treating measurement as a dashboard problem, experimenting with AI without integration plans, and trying to layer sophisticated tactics onto legacy structures that can't support them.

The gap between these two groups is widening fast. It shows up in performance outcomes, operational efficiency, and the ability to prove incremental value. The four trends that follow explain why this divide is happening and what it takes to land on the right side of it. They're not separate challenges to tackle individually but connected capabilities that either reinforce each other or collectively undermine your program.

COMPETITION ESCALATES AS RETAIL MEDIA MATURES

Retail media commands nearly 30% of US digital ad spending, and every CPG brand is now fighting for the same placements, audiences, and shelf space. As more advertisers pile into the channel with bigger budgets, the cost to compete keeps climbing. Auction pressure intensifies. CPCs rise. What delivered strong ROAS six months ago might barely break even today. Winning in 2026 means outbidding, out-optimizing, and out-maneuvering competitors who've closed the knowledge gap and are executing the same strategies you are.

MEASUREMENT SHIFTS FROM POST-MORTEM TO IN-FLIGHT INCREMENTALITY

Only 15% of brands report strong confidence in measurement. The shift happening now isn't better reporting after campaigns end; it's building infrastructure that steers decisions while campaigns run. Leaders have moved from "did this work?" to "what should we change right now?" That distinction explains most of the performance gap in this year's data.

AI STRATEGY SEPARATES EARLY MOVERS FROM LAGGARDS

GenAI adoption is widespread, but its impact remains unclear. Today, marketers use it mainly for creative and content, but in 2026, they will use it across the campaign lifecycle. Trust barriers keep agentic AI stuck in approval mode. Winners aren't just testing tools; they're building and implementing systematic capabilities with clear use cases and operational integration.

LEGACY OPERATIONS HINDER ADVANCED TACTICS

Internal constraints rank as the top barrier to retail media success ahead of budget, measurement, and platform complexity. Only 12% have integrated media and commerce operations despite heavy retail media investment. The bottleneck isn't what brands want to do; it's whether organizational infrastructure can support it. Scale without infrastructure doesn't create advantage; it creates chaos.

BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

STATE OF RETAIL MEDIA SURVEY

Stratably and Skai conducted a survey of **166 brand and advertising agency marketers** on a variety of retail media topics, including:

- Leveraging generative AI for retail media
- Amazon Ads and Amazon Marketing Cloud
- Retail media measurement and incrementality
- Retail media adoption rates and allocation levels
- The integration of broader media channels and commerce operations
- And more

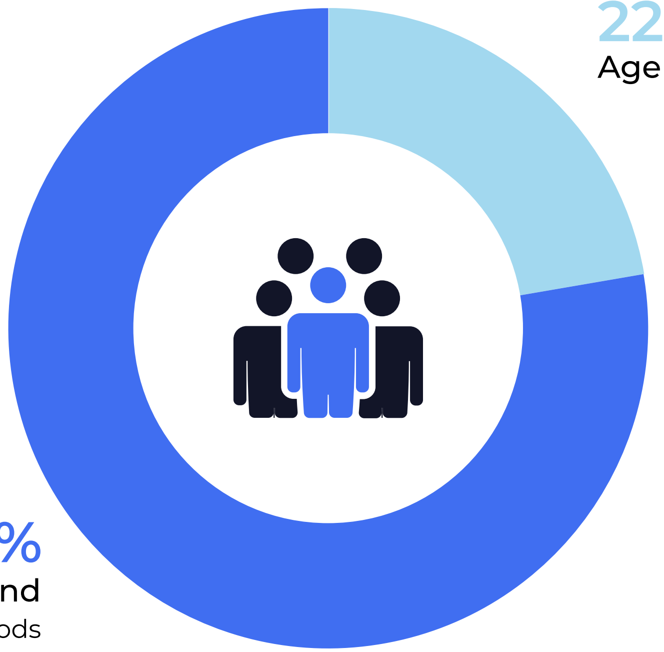
Participants span product categories, business sizes, and retail media maturity. Where relevant, this report calls out notable differences between different survey segments.

Additional Qualitative Insight

Stratably conducted 1-on-1 interviews and focus group discussions with **40 retail media leaders** for additional context on the topics covered in our quantitative survey. You will find quotes from some of these discussions throughout this report.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

Organization Type



Job Level of Respondent

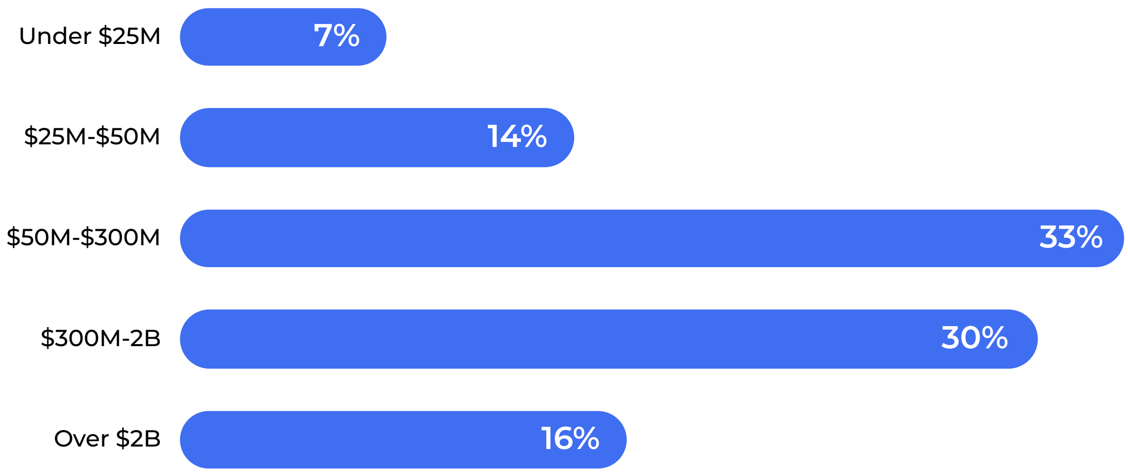
35%	Manager
34%	Director
19%	Senior management (VP, SVP, CMO)
8%	Head of business (CEO, President)
4%	Other

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=166

RESPONDENT PROFILE

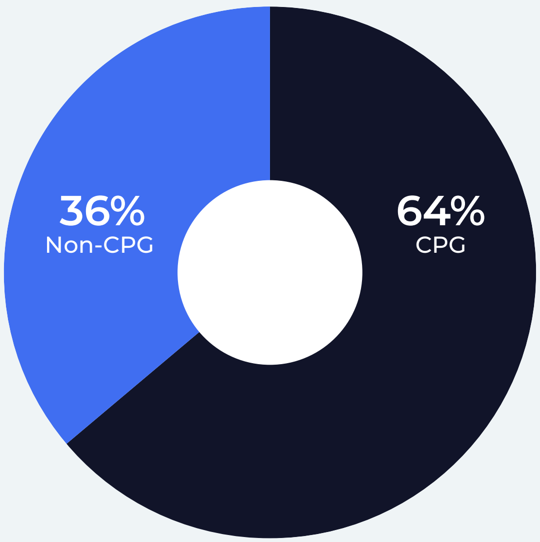
Business Size (Annual Revenue)

Weighted Average: **$800M**



Broad Category

For agencies, this represents the client category that respondent spends the most time with.



Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
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KEY SEGMENT: LEADERS VS LAGGARDS

To identify performance patterns beyond industry averages, our analysis segments brand-side respondents into retail media **Leaders** and **Laggards**.

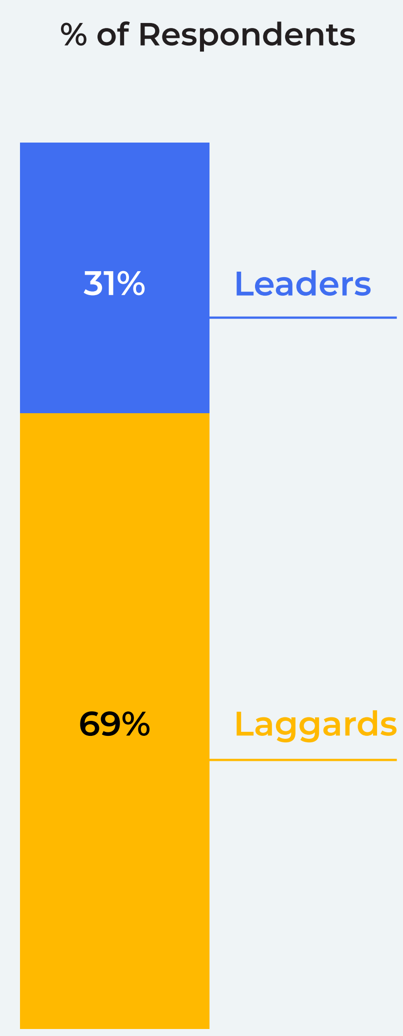
Leaders meet all three criteria:

Ecommerce growth
Outpacing their category average

Retail media maturity
Rated "above average" or "extremely sophisticated" on Amazon and/or other networks

2025 retail media results
Meeting or exceeding KPI goals

These brands demonstrate the operational maturity, execution capability, and measurable business impact that separate high performers from the rest. By analyzing how Leaders approach strategy, budget allocation, platform management, and measurement differently than Laggards, we can identify the specific behaviors and capabilities that drive superior brand-side retail media performance.



Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
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RETAIL MEDIA NETWORK INVESTMENT LEVELS AND ALLOCATION

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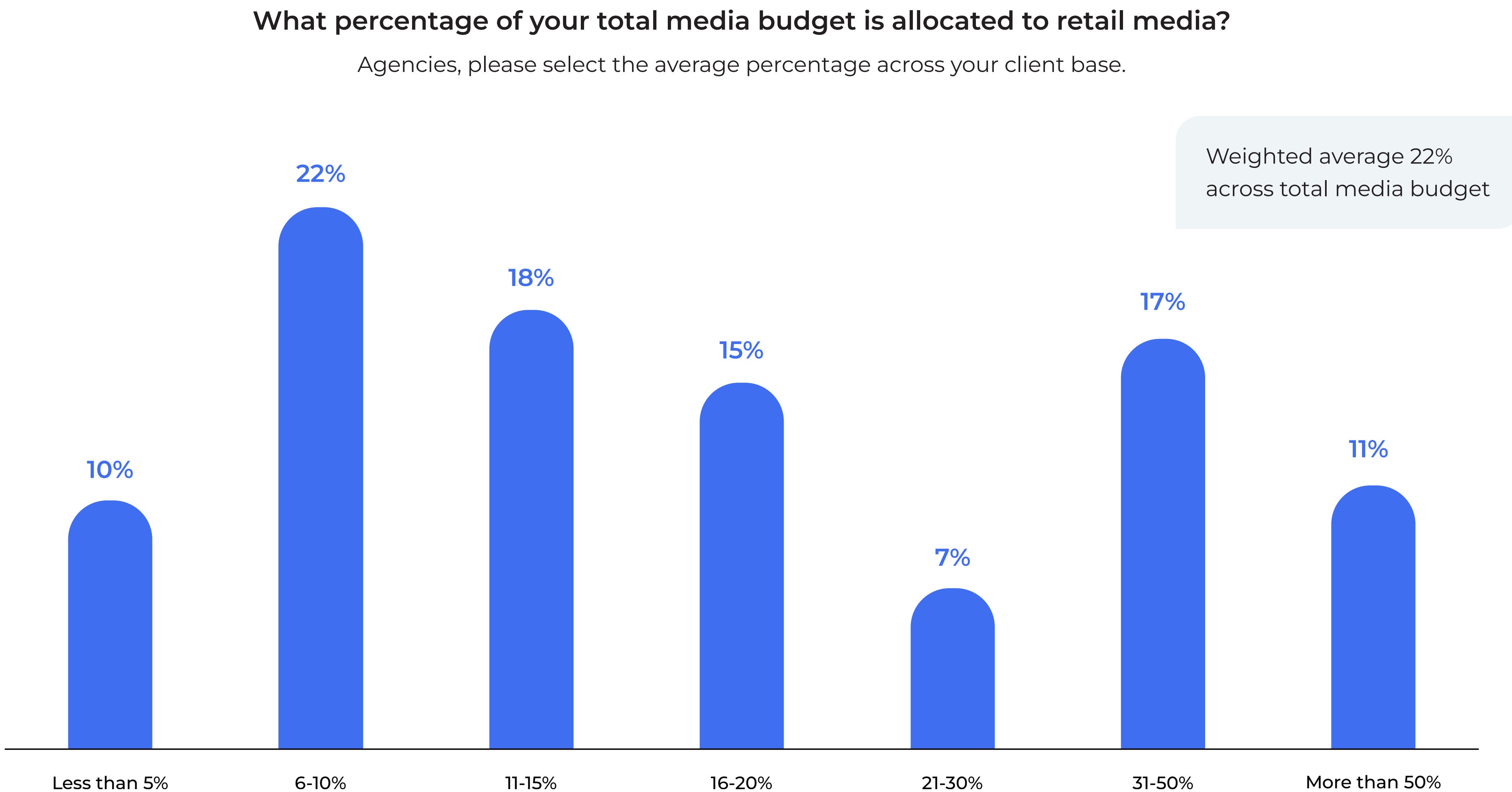
RETAIL MEDIA BUDGET ALLOCATION



Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
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Retail media commands 22% of total media budgets on average (and 30% of total digital advertising budgets as per eMarketer). Allocation patterns reveal brands are at vastly different stages of adoption. The wide distribution suggests some organizations have fully committed while others still lack the infrastructure to scale.

BUDGET ALLOCATION – BY SEGMENT

What percentage of your total media budget is allocated to retail media?

BROAD CATEGORY

Apparel, DIY/Home/Garden, Household Products, and CE are heaviest investors

Above industry average:

- Apparel (29%)
- DIY/Home/Garden (25%)
- Household Products (25%)
- Consumer Electronics (24%)

In line with industry average:

- Alcoholic Beverages (21%)
- Food and Beverage (21%)
- Health and Beauty (21%)

Below industry average:

- Other (e.g., Kid/Family, Office, Pet) (15%)

BUSINESS SIZE

The smaller the company, the bigger the allocation to retail media

Allocation by business size (brands only):

- Under $50M: 24.2%
- $50M-$300M: 22.7%
- $300M-$2B: 22.6%
- Over $2B: 22%

MATURITY AND LEADERSHIP

Retail media leaders allocate more budget to retail media

Allocation by retail media maturity[1]:

- Extremely sophisticated: 32.1%
- Above average: 25.1%
- Average: 21.7%
- Struggling to keep up: 22%
- Just getting started: 15.1%

Allocation by retail media leadership

- Leaders: 27.2%
- Laggards: 23.1%

Budget allocation clusters around 21-25% across most segments, but the outliers tell the real story. Extremely sophisticated brands allocate 32.1% while leaders invest 27.2%. Brands stuck at lower maturity levels aren't just behind on capabilities, they're likely missing the performance that would unlock budget to catch up.

1) Retail media maturity excluding Amazon Ads

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
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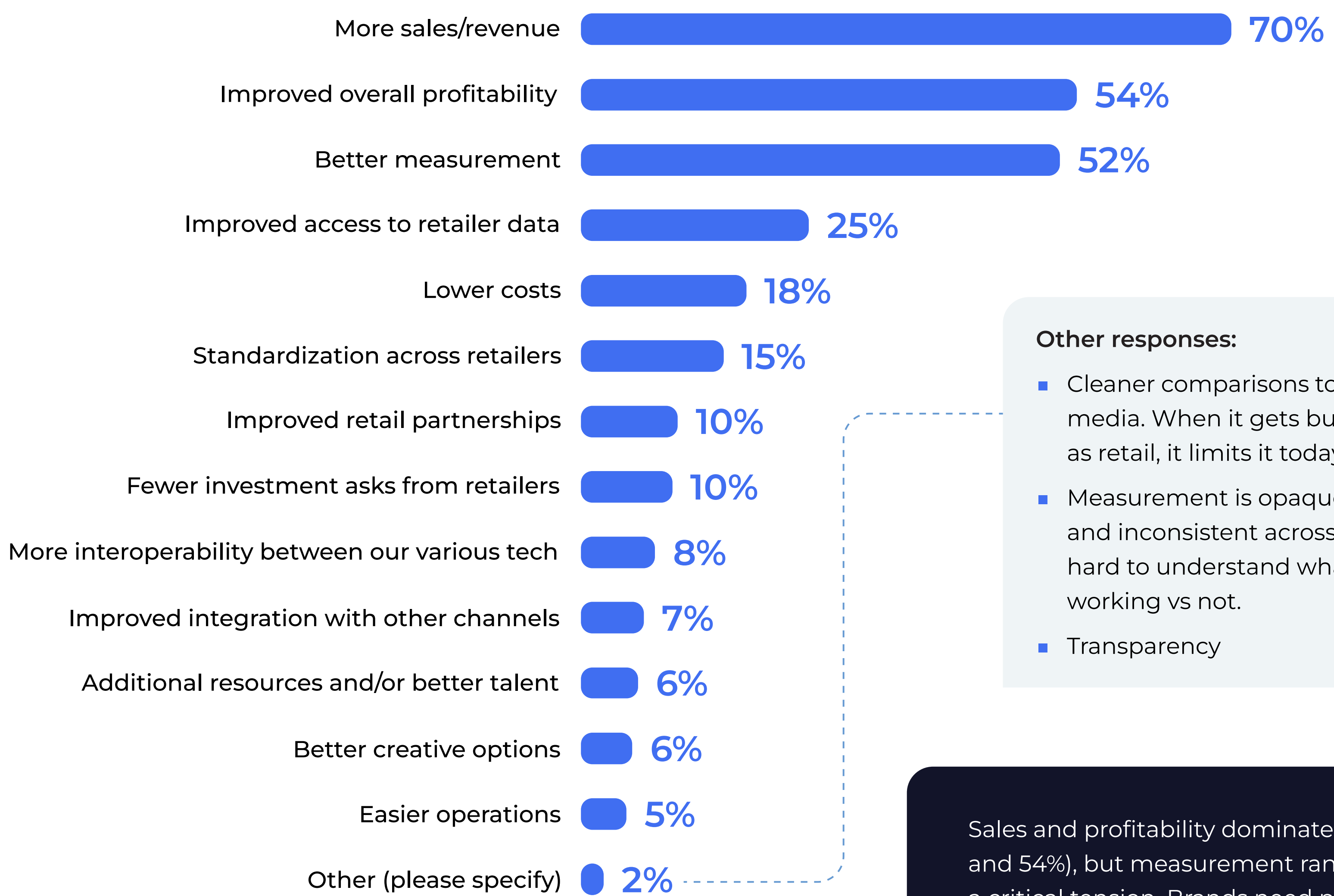
INVESTMENT ACCELERATORS

What would accelerate your organization's investment in retail media in the future?

Select top 3.



Other responses:

- Cleaner comparisons to national media. When it gets bucketed as retail, it limits it today.
- Measurement is opaque today and inconsistent across RMNs, hard to understand what's working vs not.
- Transparency

Sales and profitability dominate as investment drivers (70% and 54%), but measurement ranks third at 52%, signaling a critical tension. Brands need proof that retail media works before they'll scale spend, yet without investment in sophisticated measurement frameworks, brands can't validate performance well enough to justify the budget increases that would fund better measurement.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=162

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INVESTMENT ACCELERATORS – BY SEGMENT

What would accelerate your organization's investment in retail media in the future?

Select top 3.

RETAIL MEDIA LEADERSHIP

P&L-driving factors matter most to leaders; less concerned with imperfect measurement, standardization, integration

Leaders over-index to:

- More sales/revenue
- Improved overall profitability
- Improved retail partnerships
- Fewer investment asks from retailers
- Additional resources and/or better talent

And under-index to:

- Improved access to retailer data
- Lower costs
- Standardization across retailers
- More interoperability between our various tech
- Improved integration with other channels
- Better creative options

ORGANIZATION TYPE

Brands are most influenced by P&L factors while agencies focus on data and measurement

Brands over-index to:

- More sales/revenue
- Improved overall profitability
- Lower costs

Agencies over-index to:

- Better measurement
- Improved access to retailer data
- Standardization across retailers
- Improved retail partnerships

JOB LEVEL

Misalignment between senior leaders and practitioners suggests retail media goals and incentives need to be revisited

Senior leaders over-index to:

- Better measurement
- Improved access to retailer data
- Improved retail partnerships

Directors and managers over-index to:

- More sales/revenue
- Improved overall profitability

The gap between what senior leaders want (measurement, data access) and what practitioners prioritize (sales, profitability) suggests retail media goals and incentives need realignment across organizations. Leaders are asking for proof to justify investment while front-line teams are being measured on performance they can't fully validate.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=166

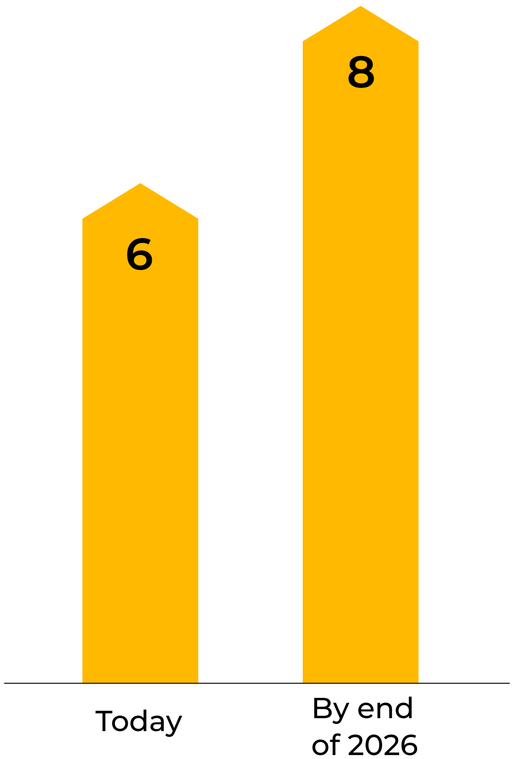
RETAIL MEDIA BUDGET DECISION FACTORS

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=162

Incrementality ranks third in budget importance yet 75% of advertisers struggle to measure it effectively. This gap creates real risk: overinvestment in underperforming tactics or missed opportunities in high-impact areas. As retail media matures, expect mounting pressure for measurement frameworks that can deliver on the metrics already driving budget conversations.

RETAIL MEDIA NETWORKS (RMN) – USAGE

How many retail media networks do you work with today, and how many do you expect to work with in the future?



Segment	Today	By End of 2026
Organization Type		
Agency	5.2	10.1
Brand	6.1	7.6
Broad Category		
CPG	7.0	9.4
Non-CPG	4.0	5.8
Business Size - Brands Only		
Under $50M	4.2	5.6
$50M-$300M	5.2	6.6
$300M-$2B	5.9	7.9
Over $2B	10.0	10.7
Retail Media Allocation (% of Total Media Budgets)		
10% or Less	4.4	7.5
11-20%	5.7	7.4
21% or More (Above Average)	7.6	9.1
Retail Media Leadership - Brands Only		
Leader	7.2	8.5
Laggard	6.2	7.6

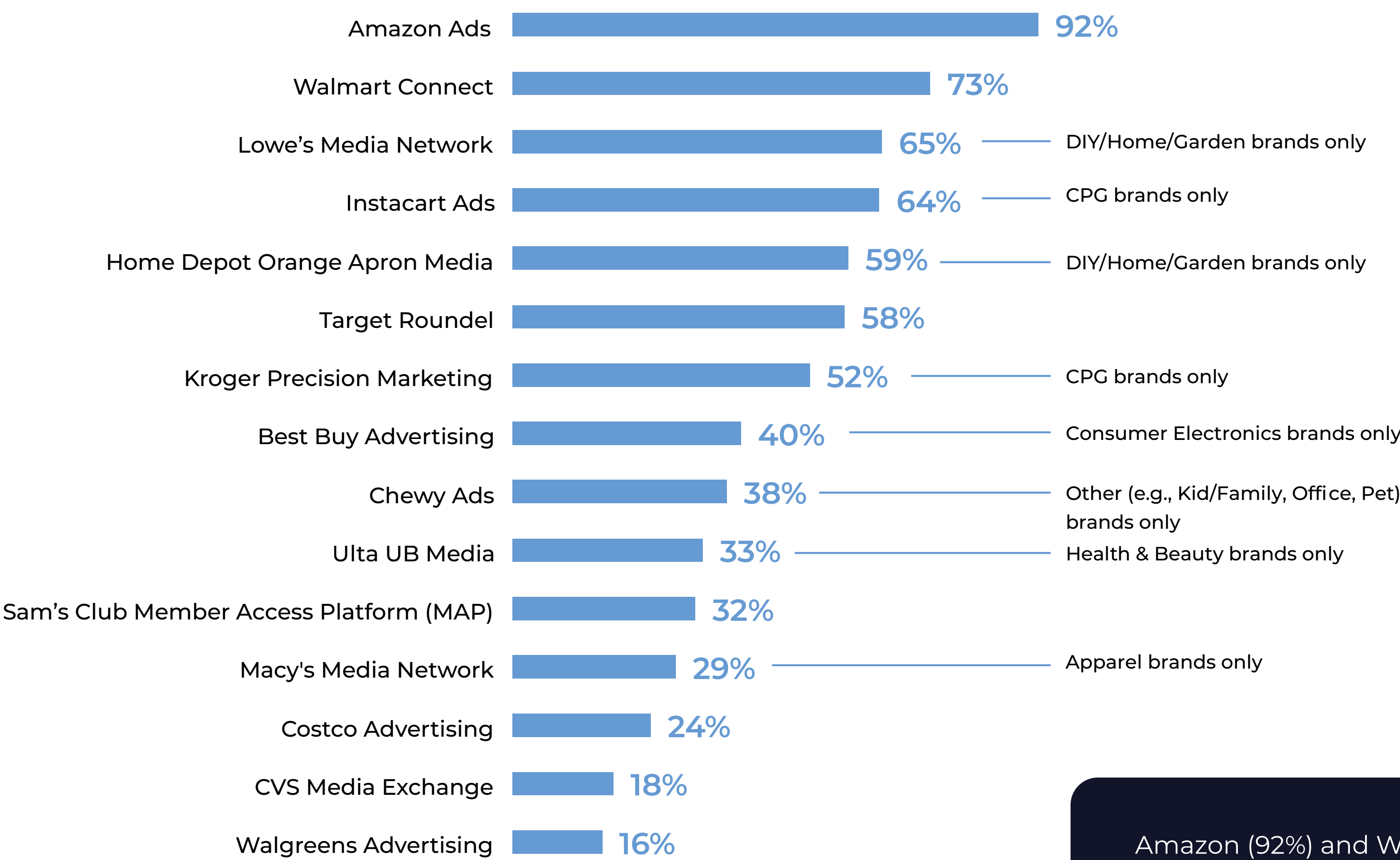
Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=143

Brands plan to expand from 6 to 8 retail media networks by end of 2026, but this growth creates a management challenge that many aren't prepared for. As the retail media landscape fragments further, the gap will widen between brands that can efficiently orchestrate multi-network strategies and those drowning in platform-by-platform execution.

RETAIL MEDIA NETWORKS (RMN) – ADOPTION

Which of the following Retail Media Networks do you use?

Select all that apply

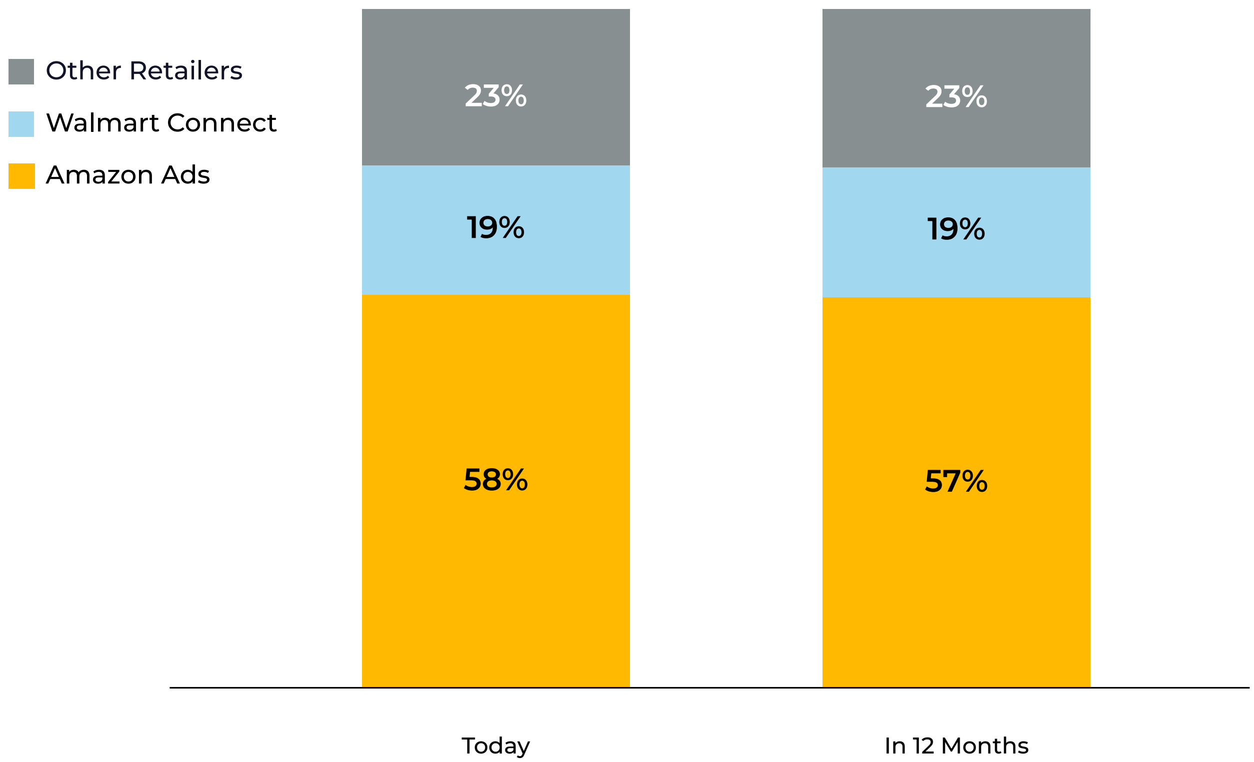


Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=153

Amazon (92%) and Walmart (73%) dominate adoption, but the steep drop-off reveals most networks remain niche players. Category-specific patterns suggest brands pick networks based on channel relevance rather than building comprehensive strategies, which works short-term but creates scaling problems as mid-tier networks mature.

RETAIL MEDIA NETWORKS (RMN) – BUDGET ALLOCATION

How are you allocating retail media budget across Amazon, Walmart, and other retailers TODAY and IN 12 MONTHS?



By survey segment:

- CPGs over-index to Walmart and other RMNs while non-CPGs over-index to Amazon
- The smaller the brand, the bigger the investment into Amazon relative to Walmart and other RMNs, and vice versa for larger brands
- The lower the retail media allocation as a percentage of total media budgets, the bigger the investment into Amazon relative to Walmart and other RMNs, and vice versa for respondents with above average retail media allocation

Note: Figures don't add up to 100% due to rounding

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=120

Budget allocation in 12 months looks strikingly similar to where it is today. This concentration creates risk as competitors build advantages on maturing networks while leaders stay Amazon-first, suggesting many lack the operational capacity to reallocate effectively across platforms with different capabilities.

RETAIL MEDIA BUDGET ALLOCATION – BRAND PERSPECTIVES

JBPs serve as the foundation of allocation decisions

A lot of our retail media allocation starts with joint business planning (JBP) partners. We allocate a bucket of money for them, and those **conversations then drive the overall budget allocations** between paid search and non-paid search ads.

VP, eCommerce, Mid-Sized, High-Growth Pet Food Brand

Retailer-level nuances are considered in allocation decisions

Each retailer is different with different competition, product mix, objectives, etc. We evaluate if our **retail media is meeting the goals for the particular channel** to guide investment allocations.

Retail Media and Content Lead Mid-Sized Personal Care Brand

Amazon Ads is head and shoulders above its retail media peers

It's difficult because so many retailers are building new platforms, so their expectation is for us to add money into them. But Amazon is clearly the **share gaining channel** and becoming so **much more competitive** – it's increasingly pay to play, and that's **where the data is**.

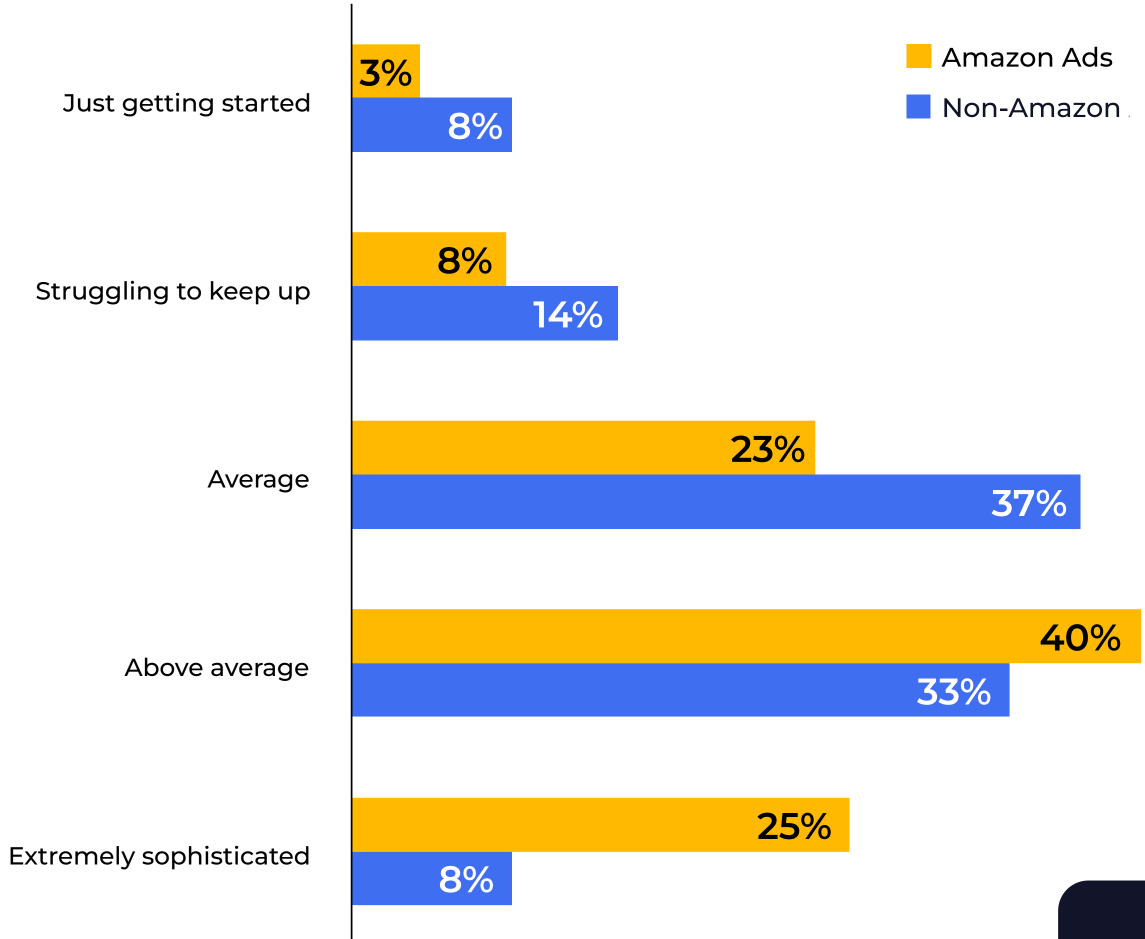
VP, eCommerce, Mid-Sized, High-Growth Pet Food Brand

Source: Stratably State of Retail Media Interviews and Focus Groups, November 2025

RETAIL MEDIA MATURITY

Which of the following best describes your maturity with retail media networks?

Select one for Non-Amazon Ads and one for Amazon Ads. Excludes “N/A”.



By survey segment:

- Managers report higher maturity than their more senior colleagues with non-Amazon RMNs; less variability with Amazon Ads
- CPGs report higher maturity than non-CPGs with non-Amazon RMNs; less variability with Amazon Ads
- $300M+ brands report significantly higher maturity with non-Amazon RMNs; the smallest (under $50M) and largest (over $2B) brands report the highest maturity with Amazon Ads

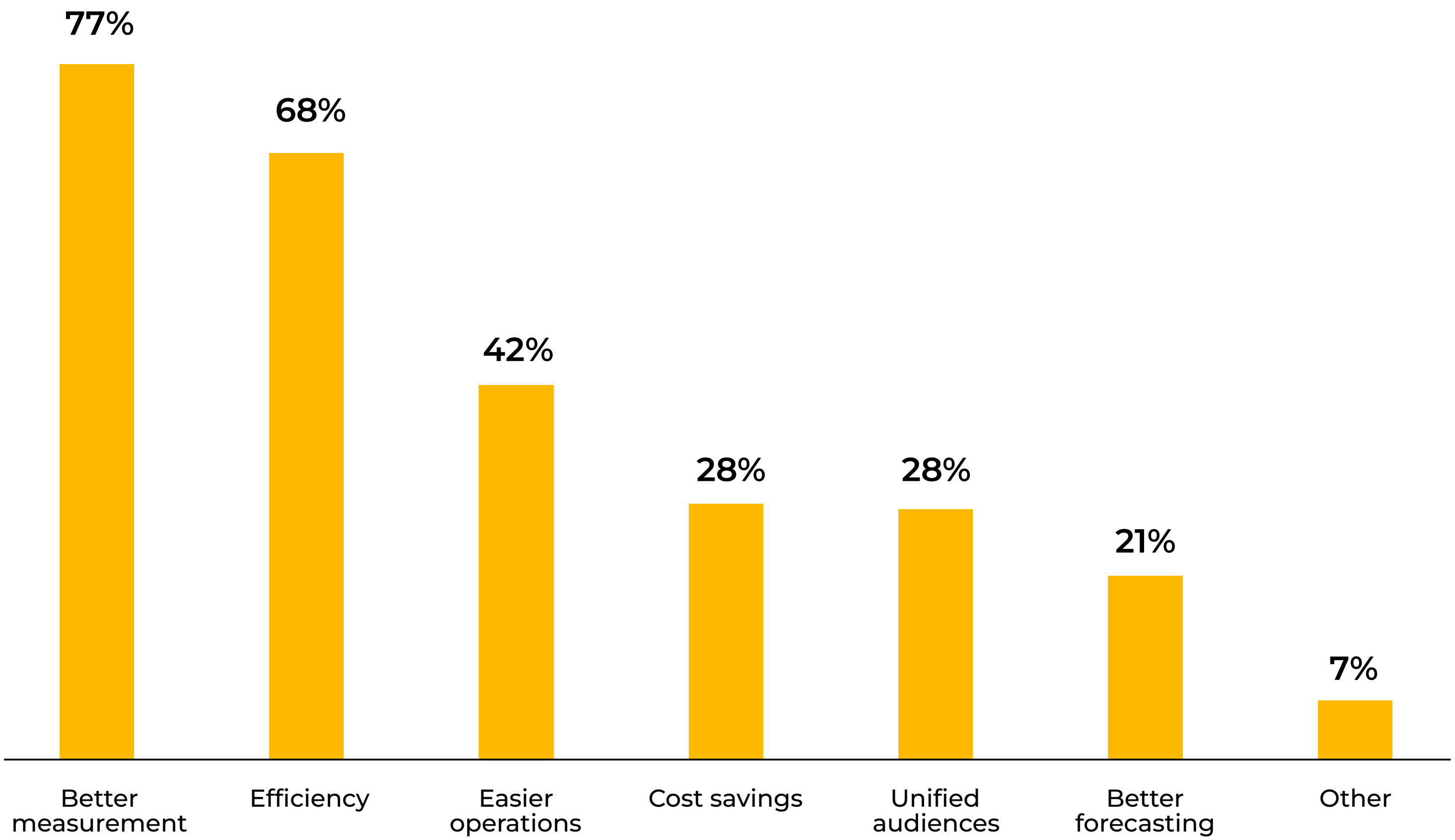
Advertisers report 65% maturity with Amazon Ads versus 41% on other networks. This gap directly impacts performance as lower maturity means underutilized targeting and suboptimal bidding. Brands can’t replicate their Amazon playbook across Walmart, Target, and other RMNs and expect the same results.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=117

PLATFORM CONSOLIDATION – KEY OBJECTIVES

What would you aim to achieve by consolidating your retail media programs into a single management platform?

Select up to 3.



Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=151

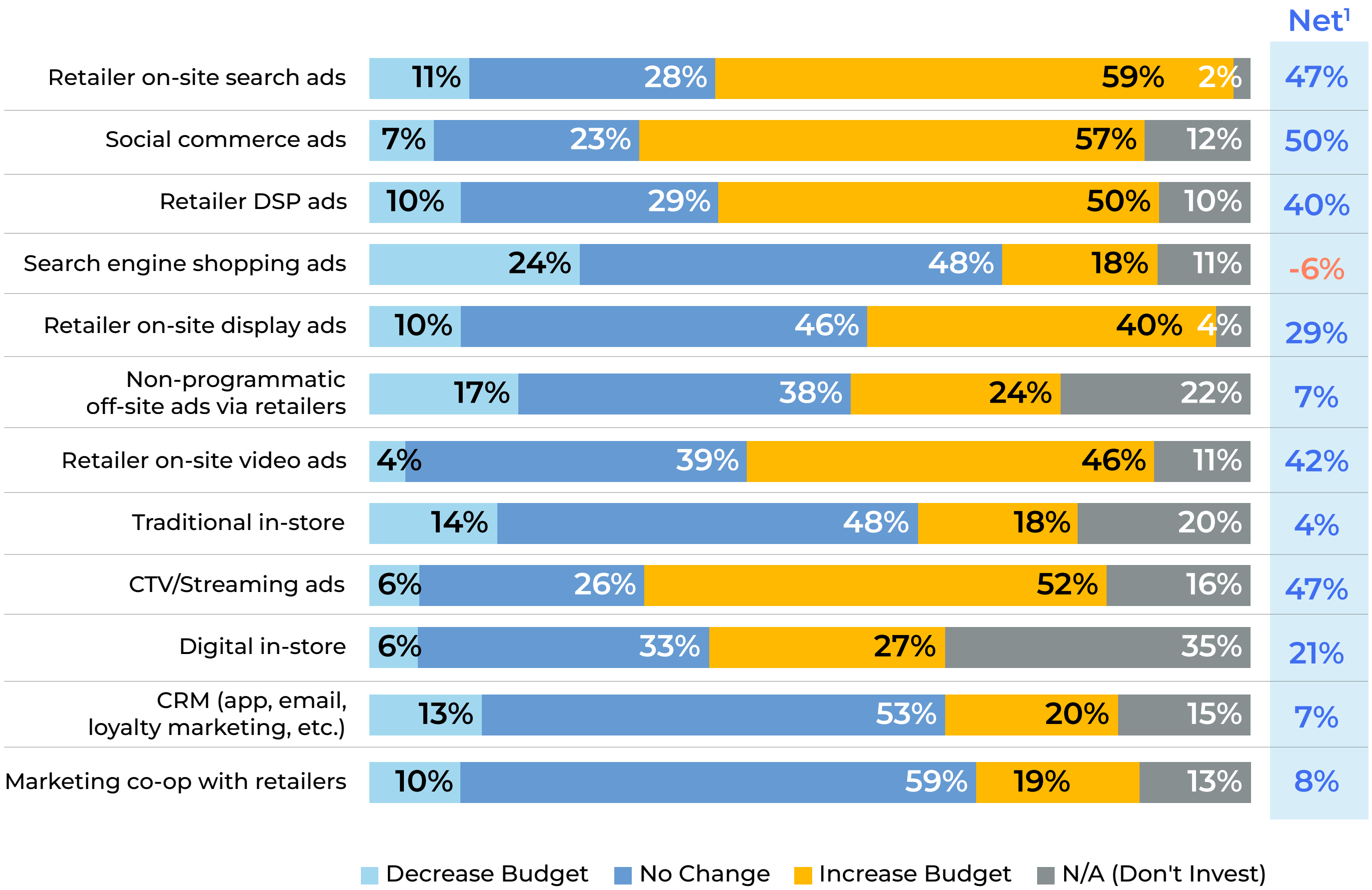
Better measurement (77%) and efficiency (68%) top the list, revealing brands are drowning in fragmented data and manual workflows. As retail media networks multiply, the operational burden of managing campaigns platform-by-platform is becoming unsustainable, pushing brands toward unified systems that can normalize performance data and automate execution.

RETAIL MEDIA IN RELATION TO BROADER MEDIA INVESTMENTS

2026 BUDGET – FORMAT SHIFTS

How will your organization's 2026 media budgets differ from 2025 across the following media types?

Excludes "Not sure".



By survey segment:

- Retail media leaders are far more likely to be increasing budget on nearly all media types
- CPGs are more likely to be increasing budget on retailer on-site search, social commerce, retailer DSP, retailer on-site display, and CRM
- Respondents allocating 21%+ total media budgets to retail media (above average) are more likely to be increasing budget in CTV/streaming and digital in-store

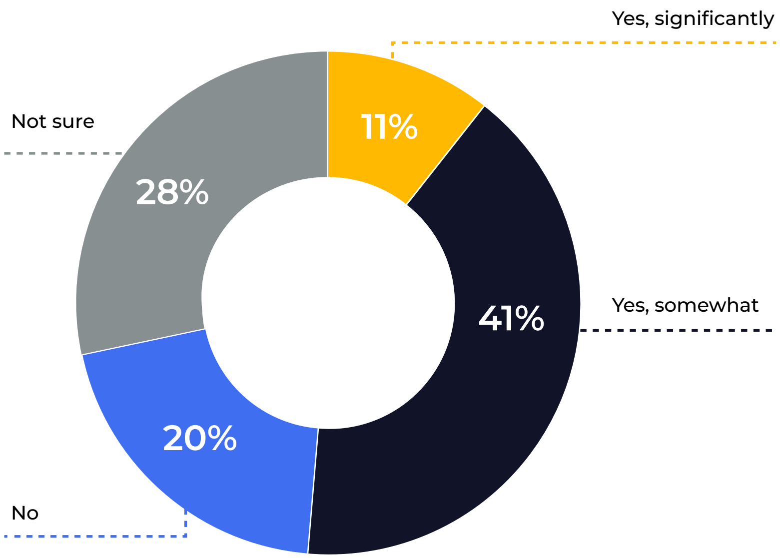
1) Net figure represents the percentage of respondents increasing budget minus the percentage decreasing budget
Note: Figures don't add up to 100% due to rounding

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=166

Budget patterns continue to shift to full-funnel strategies, with social commerce, retail media search, and CTV/streaming all seeing strong growth while search engine shopping ads decline, perhaps due to the shifting nature of search engine results pages due to AI. This reflects brands moving beyond lower-funnel conversion tactics toward strategies that capture consumers earlier in the journey.

RETAIL MEDIA DSP ADOPTION

Do you anticipate shifting retail media display budgets from open web DSPs to retail media DSPs in the next 12 months?



Survey segments most likely to be shifting to retail media DSPs:

- Leaders
- Agencies
- Brand over $2B in size

In what ways do you view retail media DSPs as superior to open web DSPs?

Select all that apply.

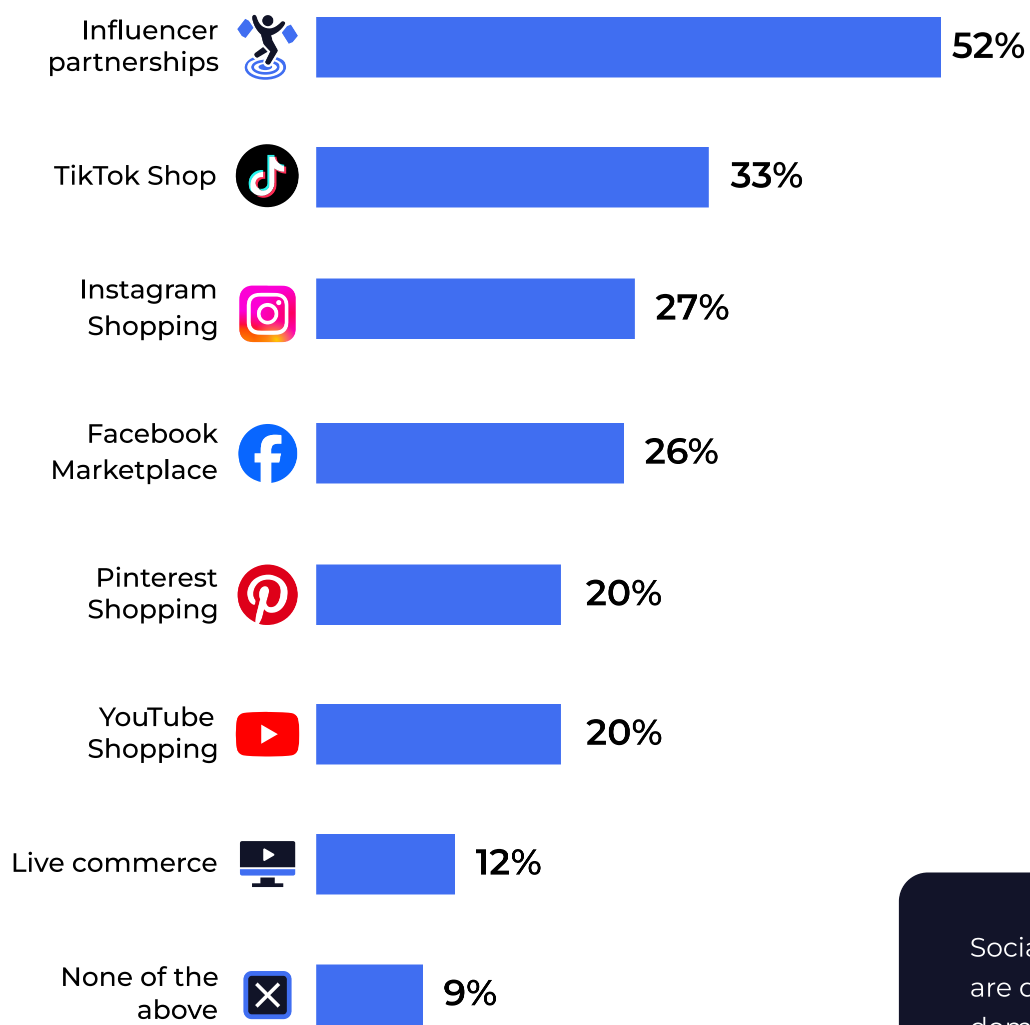
Closed-loop attribution	57%
Better use of commerce/transaction data	36%
Audience quality	35%
Strengthens our retail partnerships	33%
Access to onsite + offsite inventory	29%
ROI performance	27%
Audience reach	21%
Not sure	14%
Lower cost	12%
Other (please specify)	5%
N/A - I do not view retail media DSPs as superior	7%

This is the biggest shift in programmatic display since its inception. More than half of brands plan to shift DSP budgets toward retail media DSPs, driven primarily by closed-loop attribution (57%) and better commerce data utilization (36%). This migration reflects growing frustration with audience targeting and measurement limitations on open web DSPs.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=114

SOCIAL COMMERCE ADOPTION

Which forms of social commerce do you utilize?



Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=113

Social commerce and retail media, once seen as converging, are diverging into distinct strategies. Influencer partnerships dominate at 52% while native shopping features struggle to gain traction, suggesting brands view social platforms as discovery and awareness channels rather than transactional endpoints. This fork reflects fundamental differences in consumer behavior and platform maturity between social and retail environments.

SOCIAL COMMERCE ADOPTION – BY SEGMENT

Do you currently use these social commerce tactics?

For each tactic, identify your current usage.

Broad Category

- CPGs over-index to TikTok Shop, Pinterest Shopping, and Live commerce
- Non-CPGs over-index to Instagram Shopping and Facebook Marketplace

Retail Media Allocation

- Respondents allocating 21%+ of total media budgets to retail media (above average) show higher adoption of Instagram Shopping, TikTok Shop, and influencer partnerships

Business Size

- The larger the company, the more likely it is to be leveraging TikTok Shop and Pinterest Shopping; to a lesser degree, live commerce
- Brands under $50M and over $2B are most likely to use Instagram and Facebook

Retail Media Leadership

- Compared to laggards, retail media leaders report higher adoption of Facebook Marketplace, TikTok Shop, and Pinterest Shopping
- Leaders under-index to influencer partnerships

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=113

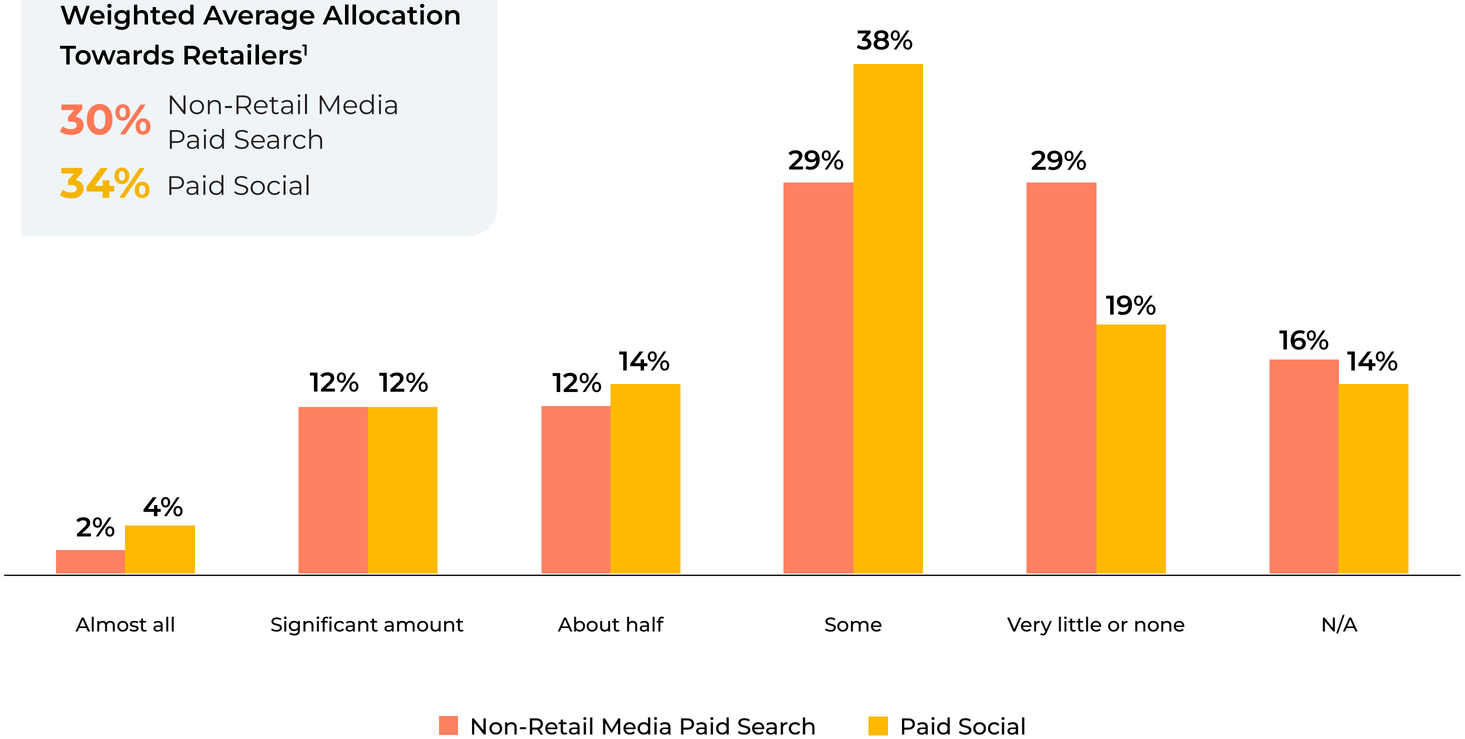
PAID SOCIAL AND SEARCH ALLOCATION – TRAFFIC TO RETAILERS

Approximately what percentage of your non-retail media paid search and paid social programs are used to drive traffic to retailers?

Weighted Average Allocation Towards Retailers[1]

30% Non-Retail Media Paid Search

34% Paid Social



By survey segment:

- On average, CPGs allocate a greater percentage of their paid search and social budgets towards retailers
- Retail media leaders allocate a slightly greater percentage of their paid social budgets towards retailers

Brands allocate roughly a third of paid search (30%) and paid social (34%) spend to drive traffic to retailers rather than owned properties. This reflects the growing reality that conversion happens at retail, not on brand sites. CPGs over-index to this approach, suggesting categories with strong retail presence are accepting retailer dominance in the purchase journey.

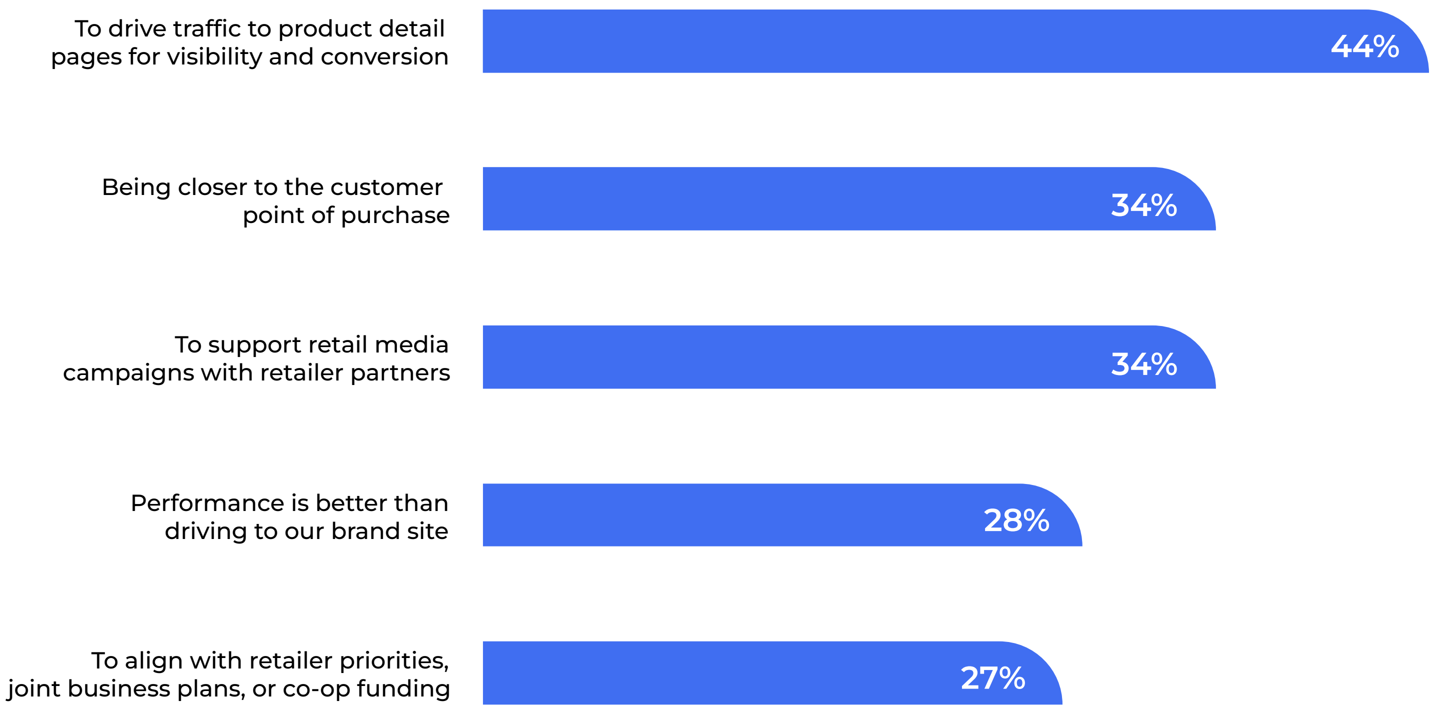
1) Weighted averages exclude respondents selecting “N/A”

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=113

PAID SOCIAL AND SEARCH ALLOCATION – BENEFITS

What are the main reasons your non-retail media paid search and paid social budgets are allocated toward driving traffic to retailer partners?

Select all that apply. Excludes those that are not allocating search and social budgets towards retailers.



Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=113

Visibility and conversion (44%) lead the reasons, but the tight clustering across motivations reveals a broader strategic shift. Brands are rethinking upper-funnel media strategies to connect with consumers where transactions actually happen, even if it means surrendering traffic to retailers rather than owned properties.

PAID SOCIAL AND SEARCH ALLOCATION – BENEFITS BY SEGMENT

What are the main reasons your non-retail media paid search and paid social budgets are allocated toward driving traffic to retailer partners?

Select all that apply. Excludes those that are not allocating search and social budgets towards retailers.

Broad Category

- CPGs over-index to better performance than driving to brand site and being closer to the customer point of purchase
- Non-CPGs over-index to aligning with retailer priorities, joint business plans, or co-op funding

Retail Media Allocation

- Respondents allocating 21%+ of total media budgets to retail media (above average) over-index to being closer to the customer point of purchase and aligning with retailer priorities, joint business plans, or co-op funding

Organization Type

- Brands over-index to better performance than driving to brand site
- Agencies over-index to driving traffic to product detail pages for visibility and conversion and supporting retail media campaigns with retailer partners

Retail Media Leadership

- Compared to laggards, retail media leaders over-index on all reasons, most notably over-indexing to being closer to the customer point of purchase, supporting retail media campaigns with retailer partners, and aligning with retailer priorities, joint business plans, or co-op funding

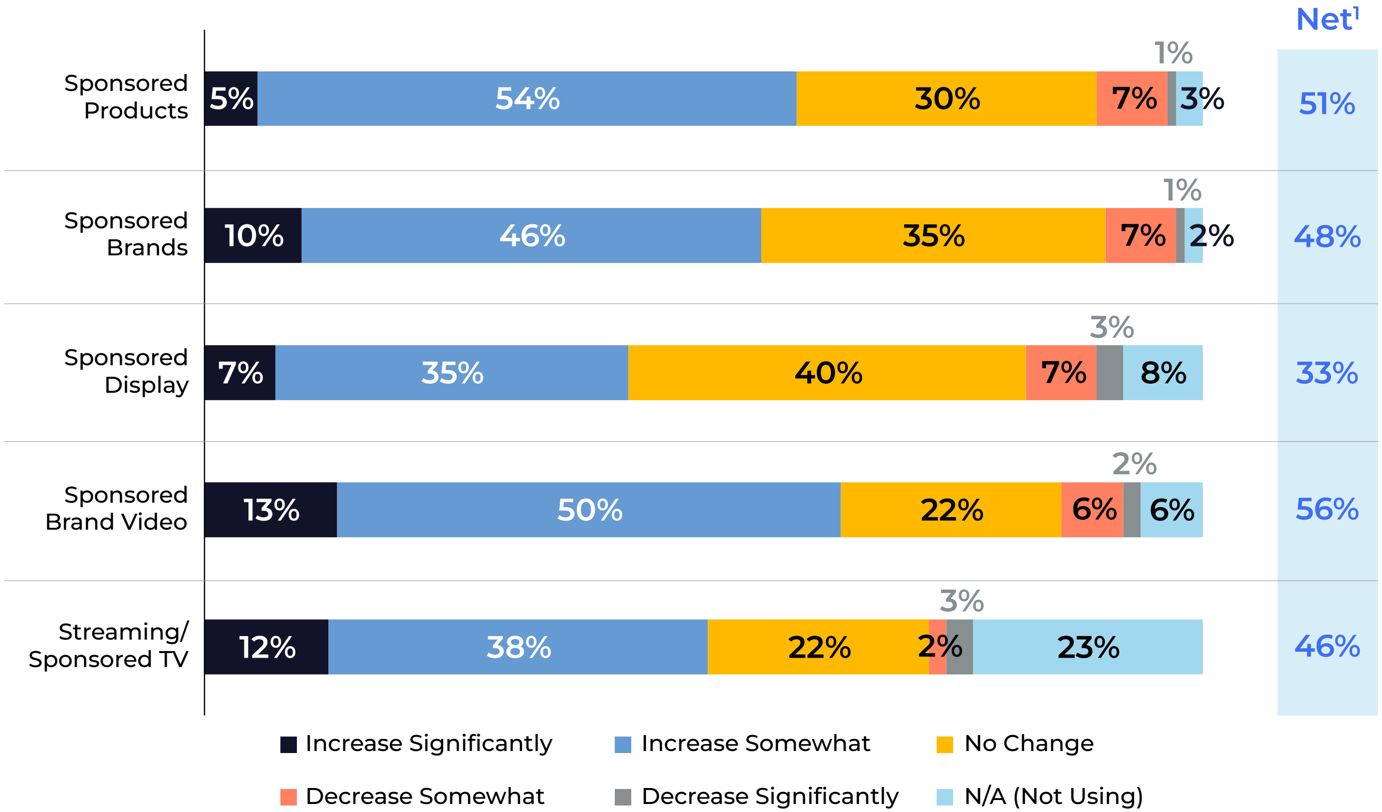
Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=113

AMAZON ADS

AMAZON ADS 2026 BUDGET SHIFTS

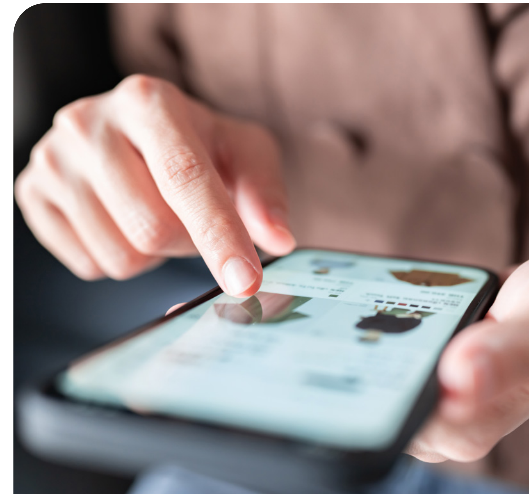
How will your 2026 budgets differ from 2025 across the following Amazon ad types?

Select one per row.



1) Net figure represents the percentage of respondents increasing budget minus the percentage decreasing budget

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=113



Every Amazon ad type shows net positive investment intent for 2026, reinforcing that retail media is delivering results across the entire marketing funnel. The strongest enthusiasm clusters around video formats (Sponsored Brand Video and Streaming/ Sponsored TV) lead in “increase significantly” responses, aligning with broader industry momentum toward video-first advertising strategies.

AMAZON ADS BRAND PERSPECTIVES

Amazon Ads outperforms its retail media peers on several dimensions

Across retail media networks, Amazon is the **most mature**, **most data driven**, and its tech stack is the **best and easiest** to use.

Director, Digital Marketing, Mid-Sized, High-Growth Food Brand

Amazon requires constant testing and learning

In my opinion, if you aren't doing something different **every month or quarter** on Amazon, you're leaving opportunity behind. You need to be **constantly tweaking and testing**.

VP, eCommerce
Mid-Sized Health Brand

Multi-touch attribution guides Amazon Ads allocation decisions

Amazon's **multi-touch attribution (MTA)** tells us what is working and what's not across the funnel.
It helps us make decisions.

Retail Media and Content Lead
Mid-Sized Personal Care Brand

Brands view Amazon as operationally superior to other retail media networks but acknowledge that advantage demands constant optimization work. The emphasis on monthly or quarterly testing cycles and multi-touch attribution reveals a maturity gap: brands know Amazon requires sophistication but many lack the infrastructure to act on cross-funnel insights at the pace required to stay competitive.

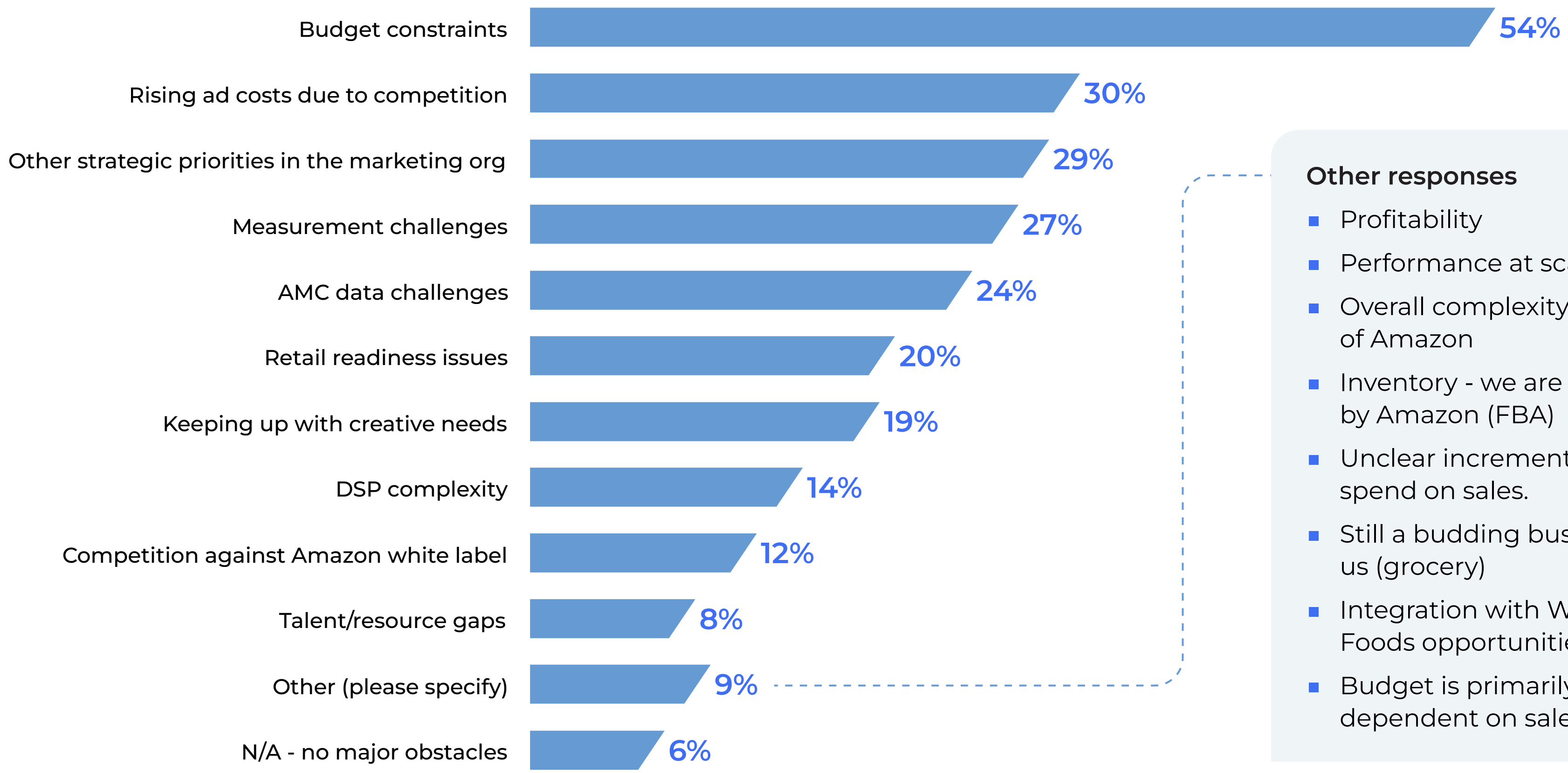
Source: Stratably State of Retail Media Interviews and Focus Groups, November 2025

skai

BUDGET CONSTRAINTS ARE THE #1 OBSTACLE IN SCALING AMAZON ADS INITIATIVES

What have been your biggest obstacles in scaling Amazon Ads initiatives?

Select top 3.



Other responses

- Profitability
- Performance at scale
- Overall complexity of Amazon
- Inventory - we are Fulfilled by Amazon (FBA)
- Unclear incrementality of spend on sales.
- Still a budding business for us (grocery)
- Integration with Whole Foods opportunities
- Budget is primarily dependent on sales volume

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=112

Budget constraints dominate, but notice what's missing: only 8% cite talent gaps. The bottleneck isn't expertise or headcount. It's organizational friction around budget allocation and proving value against competing channels. Amazon requires constant optimization to stay profitable, but internal systems aren't built to fund that kind of iterative, test-heavy approach at scale.

AMAZON ADS PRIORITIES

What are your top priorities for Amazon retail media in the next 12 months?

Select top 3.

Improving ROI/efficiency of existing spend	50%
Aligning retail media with broader brand/media strategy	46%
Advancing use of Amazon Marketing Cloud (AMC)	35%
Shifting budget mix (e.g., paid search vs. display vs. CTV)	32%
Enhancing product detail page (PDP) content to improve retail media efficiency	23%
Expanding use of DSP/offsite and/or Amazon CTV media	20%
Improving cross-functional collaboration (media, sales, eCommerce)	19%
Scaling audience targeting and retargeting strategies	18%
Developing better performance measurement frameworks	13%
Improving campaign automation/workflow efficiency	12%
Building stronger internal capabilities/teams for Amazon Ads	8%
Coordinating creative across PDPs and media campaigns	3%
Other (please specify)	6%

Other responses

- Inventory
- Understanding and aligning with Rufus impact
- Strategic choices on scaling business on Amazon in general

Efficiency and broader media alignment dominate, signaling a shift from growth-at-any-cost to profitability and integration. The gap between wanting better performance and investing in the tools to achieve it reveals most brands are still optimizing manually, which explains why efficiency gains stay elusive despite being the top priority.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=112

AMAZON MARKETING CLOUD (AMC) ADOPTION AND IMPACT

Which of the following describes your current use of Amazon Marketing Cloud (AMC)?

Select all that apply.

HOW ADVERTISERS USE AMC TODAY

We use AMC today	56%
Our internal team has the technical skills and bandwidth for AMC	25%
We access AMC through a third-party platform	38%
Building and maintaining AMC queries is a bottleneck	36%
We have recurring AMC reports and/or dashboards	45%
We have a mature AMC practice with standardized processes	28%
We're interested in extending clean room analytics beyond Amazon	24%

REPORTED IMPACT OF AMC

AMC gives us product-level insights we act on	25%
AMC has improved our campaign performance	21%
We have a clear understanding of ROI from our AMC investment	11%
AMC insights directly drive our bid, budget, and/or targeting decisions	21%
We activate AMC audiences and measure their impact	36%
AMC helps us understand the full customer journey	38%
We measure new-to-brand with AMC	45%

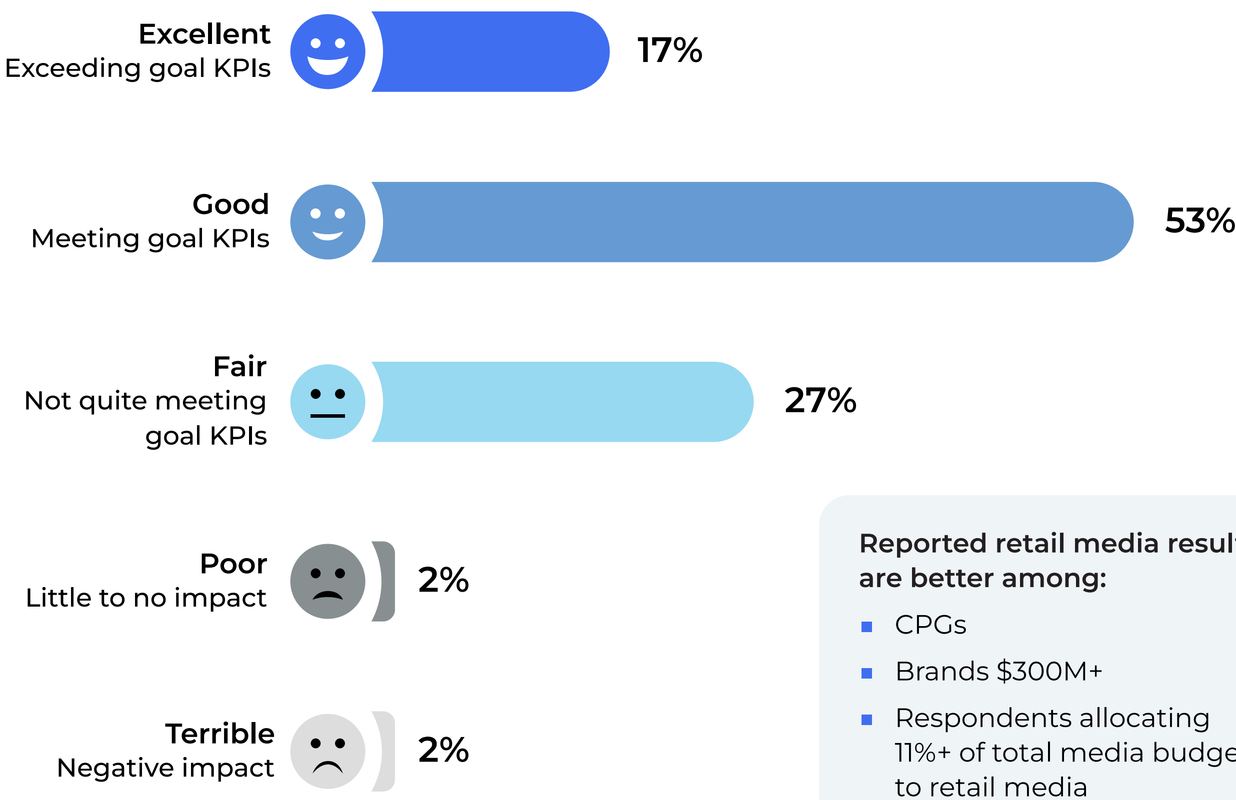
Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=112

For all of the benefits of AMC, adoption at only 56% is somewhat shocking — and even those using it aren't using it to its full capacity. Third-party platform reliance and low ROI clarity suggest the technical lift is real, and the gap between those using AMC for measurement versus optimization reveals it's becoming another dashboard instead of a decision engine. Note - Amazon announced at its 2025 unBoxed event new support to help advertisers utilize AMC more in coming years.

RETAIL MEDIA MEASUREMENT

2025 RETAIL MEDIA PERFORMANCE

How would you describe the results retail media has driven for your organization so far in 2025?



Reported retail media results are better among:

- CPGs
- Brands $300M+
- Respondents allocating 11%+ of total media budgets to retail media

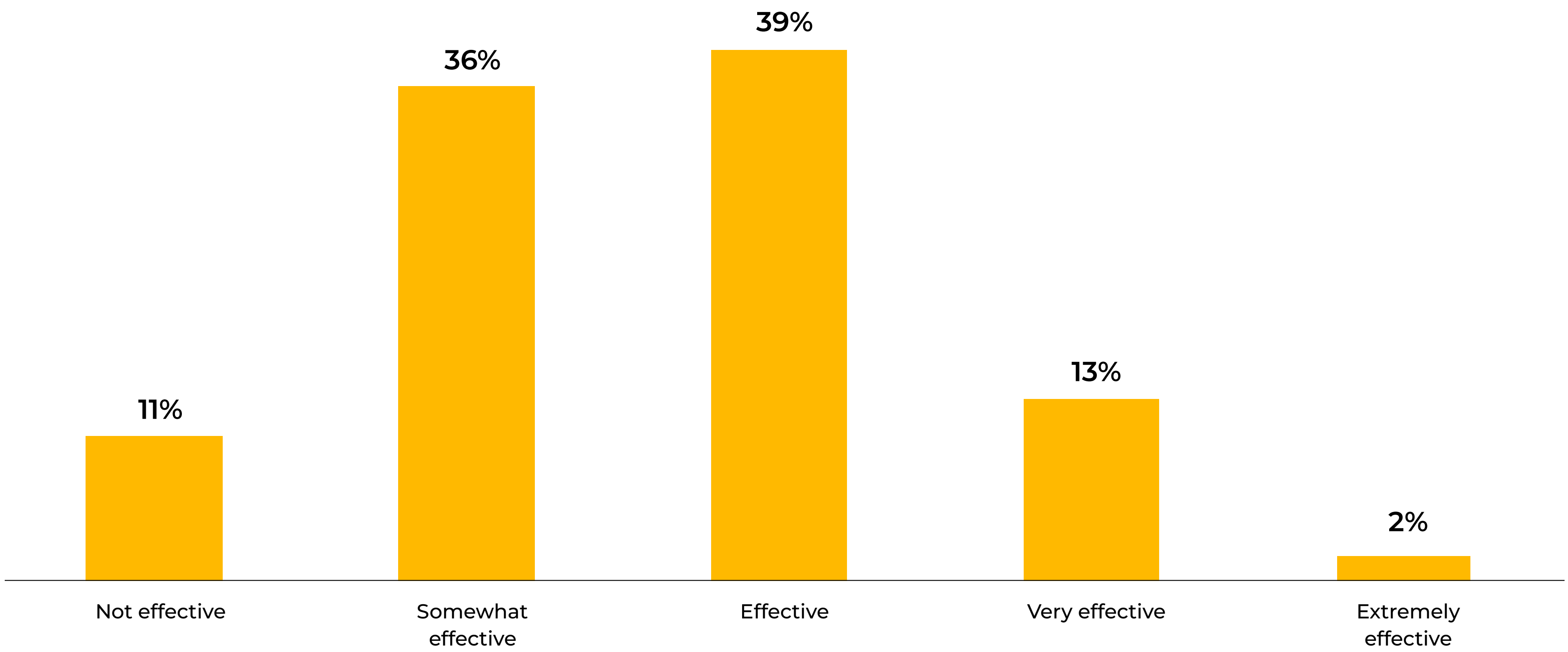
Note: Figures don't add up to 100% due to rounding

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=112

Seven in ten brands report meeting or exceeding goals, with CPGs, larger brands, and heavy investors skewing even more positive. But that 27% in "fair" territory matters more than it looks. These are brands stuck between justifying current spend and unlocking more budget, which means they're likely underinvesting in the capabilities needed to move from mediocre to strong performance.

RETAIL MEDIA MEASUREMENT – EFFECTIVENESS

How effective is your organization at measuring retail media performance overall?



Note: Figures don't add up to 100% due to rounding

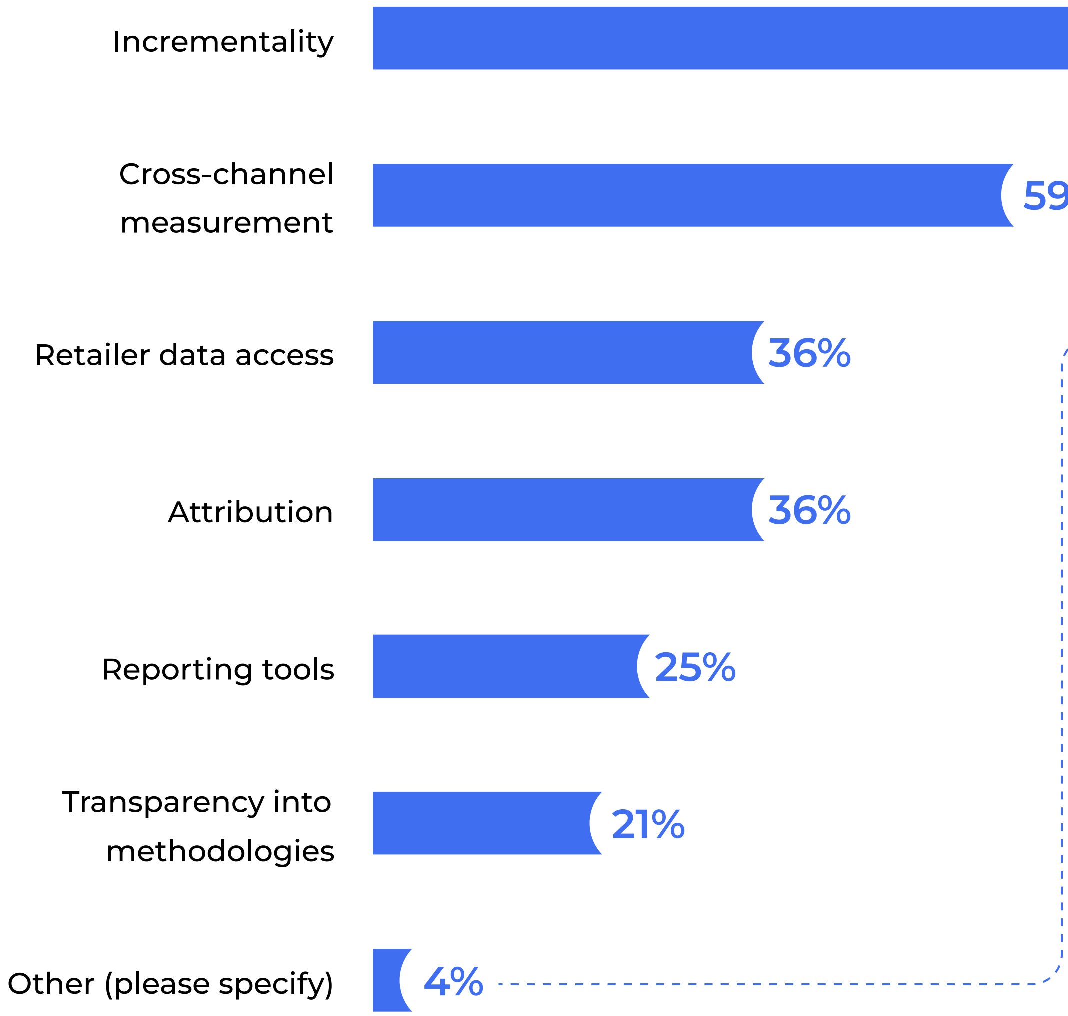
Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=114

Only 15% report strong measurement confidence, while three-quarters admit they're somewhere between struggling and just getting by. This explains why budget conversations stay difficult and why efficiency remains the top priority but keeps feeling out of reach. You can't optimize what you can't measure reliably, and most brands are still flying blind on cross-retailer performance and true incrementality.

RETAIL MEDIA MEASUREMENT – CHALLENGES

What are your biggest challenges with retail media measurement today?

Select top 3



Other responses

- Internal skill sets
- Inventory and budget constraints
- Consistency across RMNs allowing for comparison
- Stewarding performance across the organization and upskilling cross-functional teams

Incrementality and cross-channel measurement dominate the pain points, which explains why so many brands report weak measurement confidence despite investing heavily in retail media. Without unified visibility into what's driving actual lift versus capturing existing demand, brands stay stuck proving value campaign by campaign instead of building systematic performance frameworks that unlock sustained growth.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=114

RETAIL MEDIA MEASUREMENT – PERSPECTIVES

No consistent measurement parameters

Retail media is still an untapped landscape with **no real measurement parameters**. The attribution is different, measurement capabilities are different, and if a retail media network isn't full funnel, it's **harder to put them into an MMM**.

Associate Director, Retail Media and Commerce Capabilities Enterprise CPG Conglomerate

Minimum spend required to unlock reporting

[Retail media networks] say they have incrementality reporting they can provide. But everyone has a **different definition**. And you have to hit **different spend thresholds** to unlock those reports. And I'm still **skeptical on how accurate** the reporting is.

Senior Director, Omnichannel, Small, High-Growth Food Brand

MMM lacks visibility into total incrementality

We have an MMM but the part I'm still missing is that zero return on a given tactic may not mean zero impact in another area. The MMM is highlighting the inefficiency but the **total incremental is not being fed into it**. We haven't found a solve for this yet.

Sales Director and Retail Media Lead, Mid-Sized Health and Wellness Brand

Walled gardens limit interoperability across networks

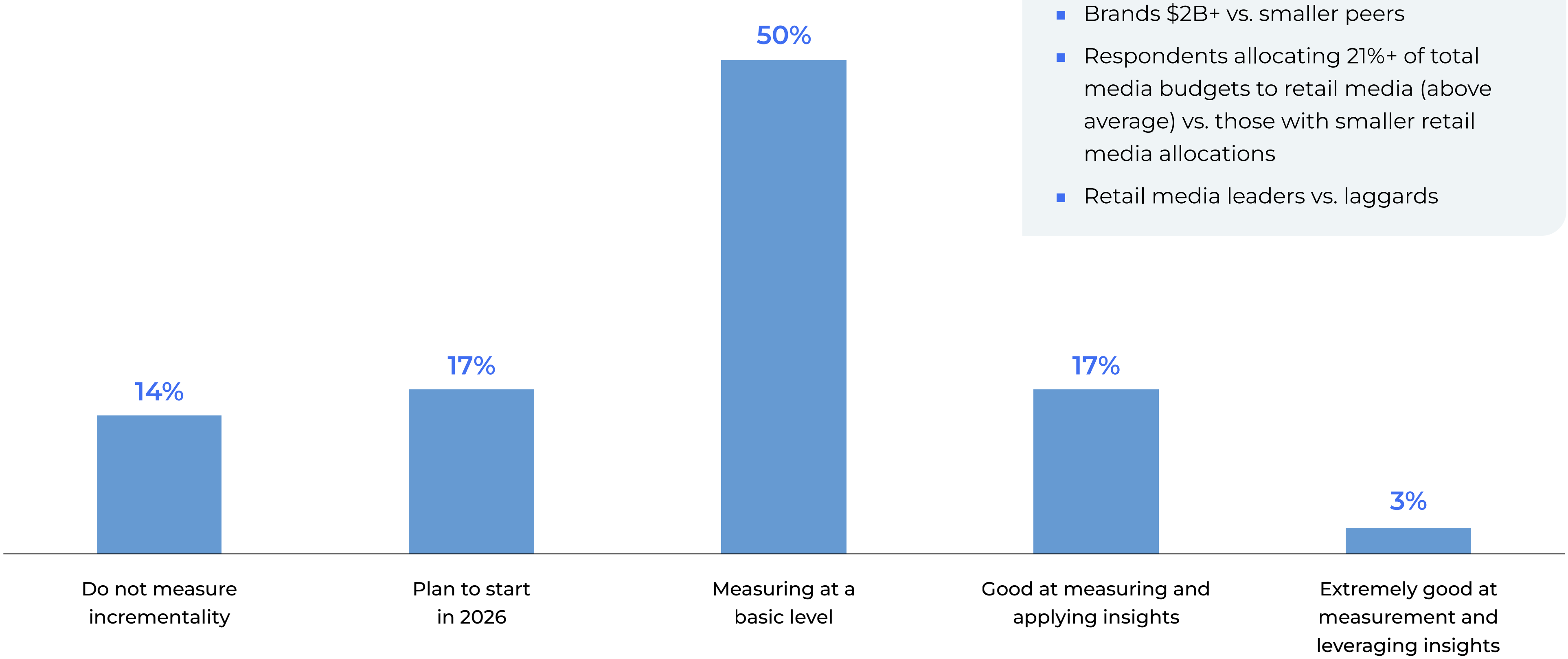
It's tough to understand **how all your media is performing together** with so many walled gardens. Our biggest challenge with retail media measurement is that there's **no interoperability** across retail media networks.

Associate Director, Retail Media and Commerce Capabilities Enterprise CPG Conglomerate

Source: Stratably State of Retail Media Interviews and Focus Groups, November 2025

INCREMENTALITY MEASUREMENT – PROFICIENCY

Which of the following best describes your organization's proficiency in incrementality measurement?



Adoption and proficiency of incrementality measurement is highest among:

- Agencies vs. brands
- CPGs vs. non-CPGs
- Brands $2B+ vs. smaller peers
- Respondents allocating 21%+ of total media budgets to retail media (above average) vs. those with smaller retail media allocations
- Retail media leaders vs. laggards

Note: Figures don't add up to 100% due to rounding

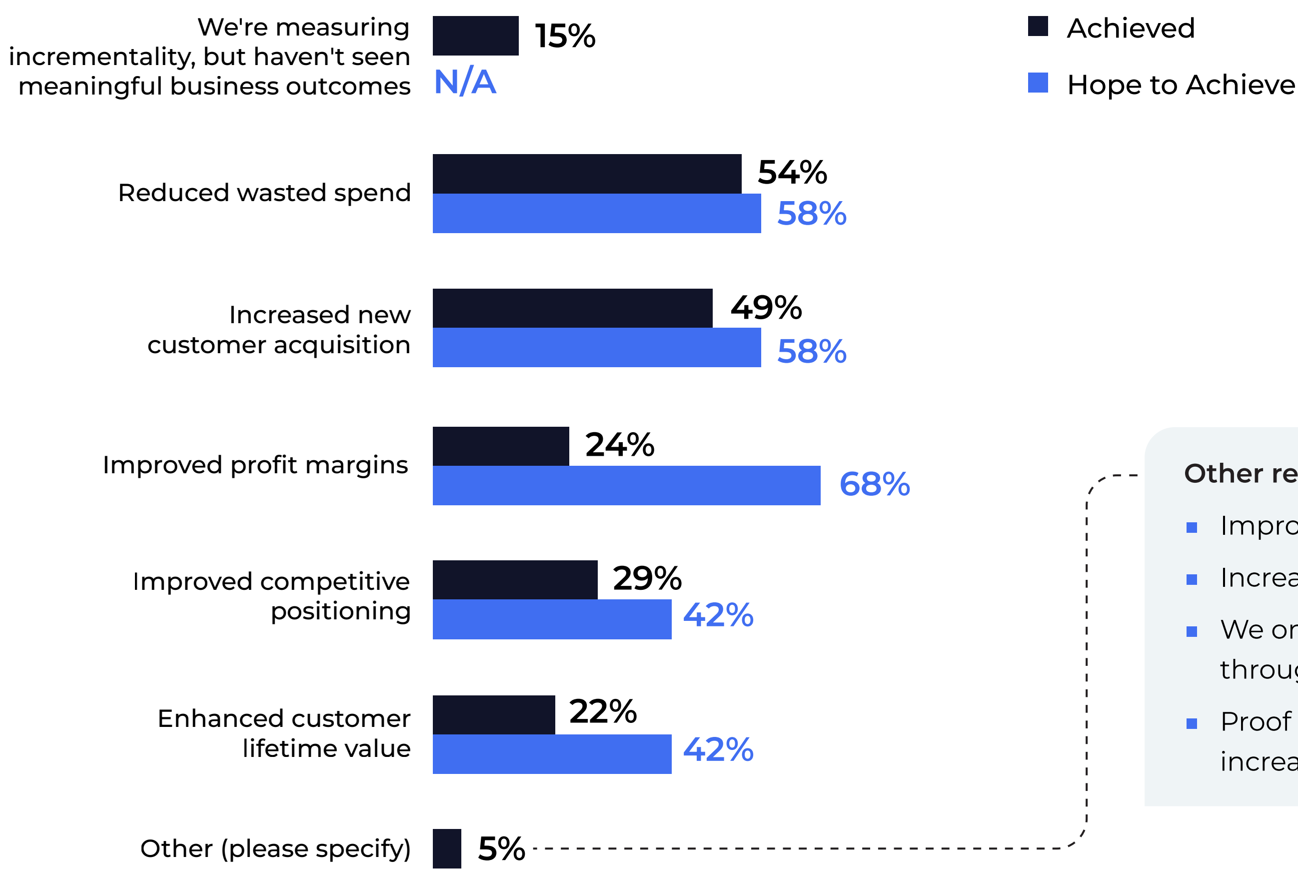
Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=114

Half of brands measure incrementality at a basic level, but only 20% apply those insights to decisions. The gap reveals the real issue: brands have the data but lack operational frameworks to act on it. Agencies, CPGs, and heavy retail media investors lead here, suggesting incrementality fluency requires both scale and sophistication.

INCREMENTALITY MEASUREMENT – BENEFITS

What business outcomes have you achieved / do you hope to achieve through incrementality insights?

Select all that apply.



Other responses:

- Improved iROI
- Increased product authorizations
- We only measure incrementality through IRI data
- Proof point to leadership for increased investment

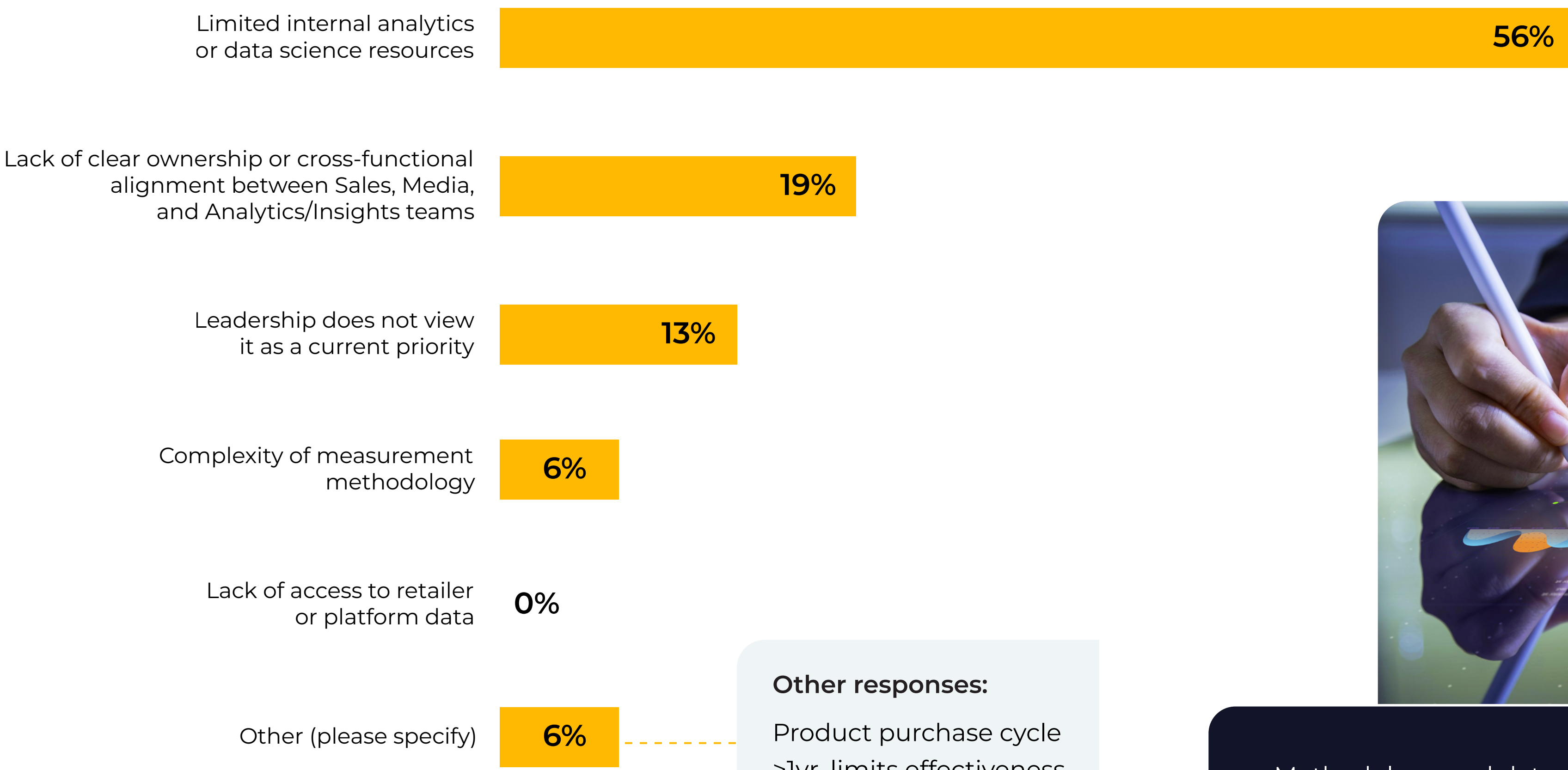
"Achieved" illustrates observed outcomes from respondents already measuring incrementality today (n=79); "Hope to Achieve" illustrates aspiring outcomes from respondents planning to start measuring incrementality in 2026 (n=19)

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study

Aspirations massively outpace reality across every outcome, with the biggest gaps in profit margins and customer lifetime value. Brands expect incrementality measurement to unlock strategic wins, but most are still stuck using it as a tactical efficiency lever. The 15% admitting no meaningful outcomes yet signals that measurement without operational integration delivers reports, not results.

INCREMENTALITY MEASUREMENT – BARRIERS

What is the primary reason your organization does not currently measure incrementality in retail media?



Other responses:

Product purchase cycle >1yr. limits effectiveness of reports

Methodology and data accessibility barely register; brands know what to do but can't staff it. This points to a fundamental misalignment: organizations are pouring budget into retail media while starving the analytics infrastructure needed to optimize it, creating a cycle where spend grows but performance insight doesn't.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=16

RETAIL MEDIA AND COMMERCE ALIGNMENT

RETAIL INTELLIGENCE USAGE

Which of the following retail intelligence insights does your organization currently use?

Select all that apply.

Detail page views	78%
Share metrics (e.g., Share of Voice)	74%
Category share	69%
Organic sales	68%
Units & revenue share	64%
Sales trends	64%
Inventory health	58%
Pricing & promo	58%
Share of sales	57%
Digital shelf	55%
Buy box	55%
Add to carts	45%
Aggregated performance by brand/seller	38%
SERP visibility	26%
None of the above	1%

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=110

The sheer volume of metrics brands are tracking reveals the complexity of managing retail media performance. With over a dozen signals to monitor beyond the media metrics, staying on top of category dynamics requires constant vigilance. But brands who can connect the dots of these signals into actionable intelligence gain a decisive edge, turning data overload into competitive advantage while others drown in dashboards.

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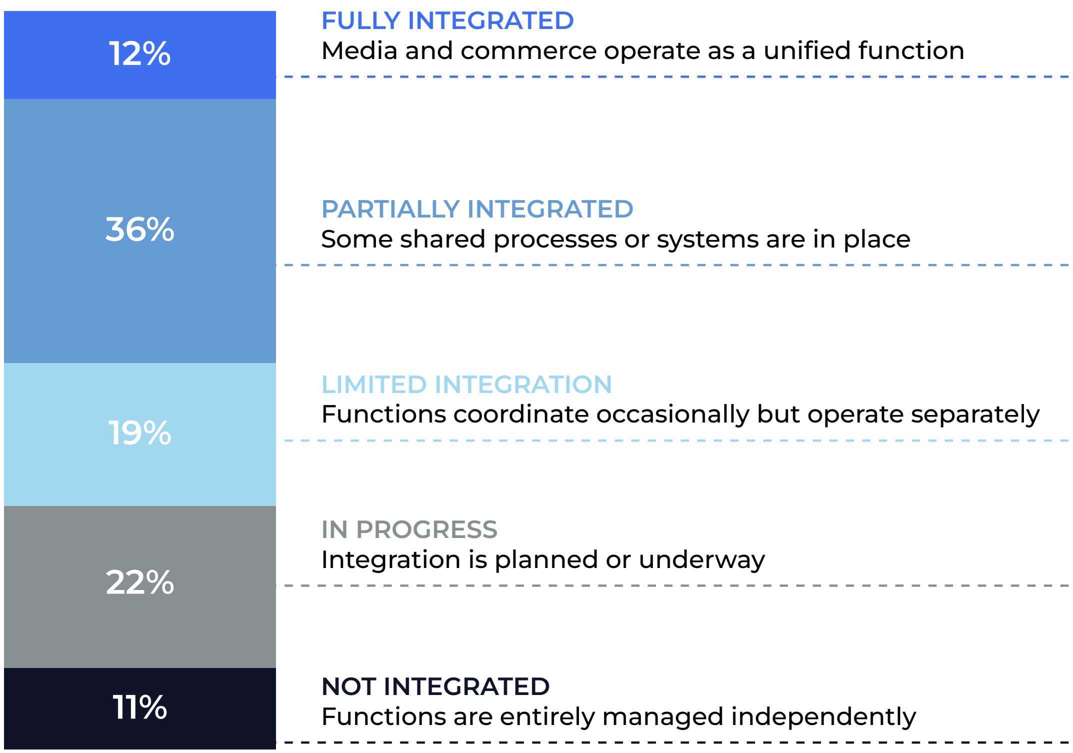
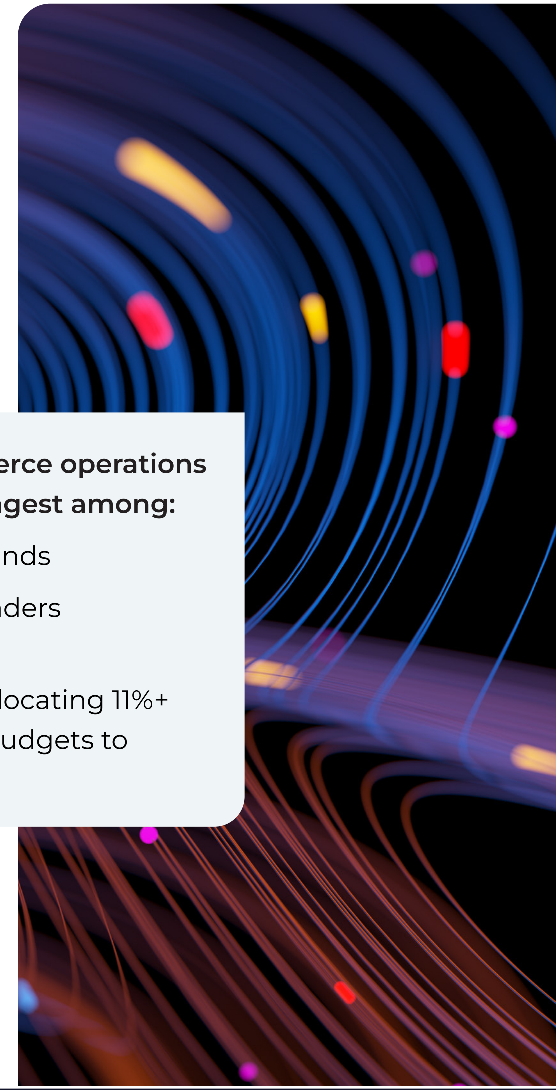
MEDIA AND COMMERCE OPERATIONS ALIGNMENT

Which of the following best describes your organization's current level of integration between media and commerce operations (e.g., revenue recovery, ticketing automation, content optimization)?





Media and commerce operations alignment is strongest among:

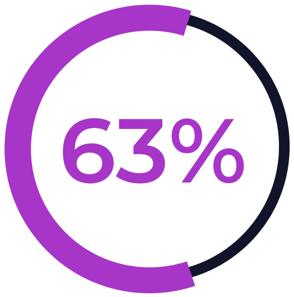
- Agencies vs. brands
- Retail media leaders vs. laggards
- Respondents allocating 11%+ of total media budgets to retail media

Full integration remains rare at just 12%, but it's not coincidental that agencies and retail media leaders over-index here. Connecting media and commerce operations isn't just organizational tidiness, it's what separates performance leaders from everyone else. Brands optimizing campaigns without visibility into inventory, pricing, and promotions are fighting with one hand tied behind their back.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=109

GENERATIVE AI FOR RETAIL MEDIA

GENERATIVE AI – ADOPTION AND RESULTS

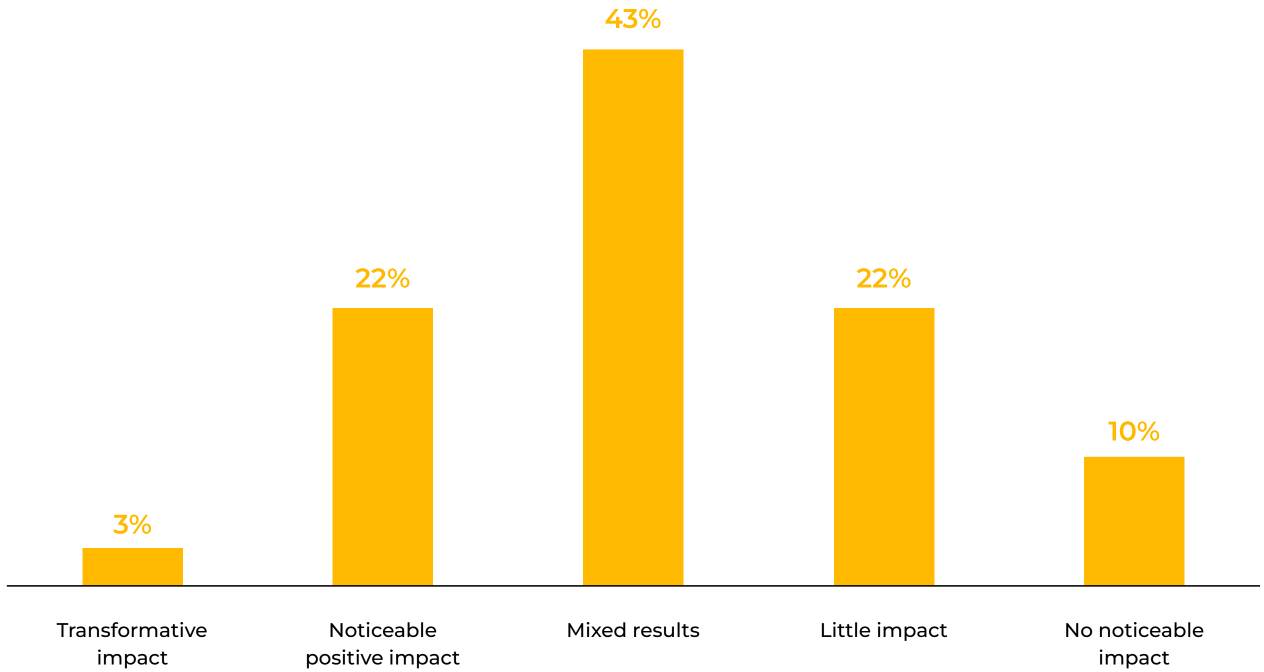


of advertisers are **using generative AI** in their retail media programs today

Highest adoption among:

- Retail media leaders
- Agencies versus brands
- Brands under $50M and over $2B

How would you describe the results from using generative AI in your retail media programs so far?[1]

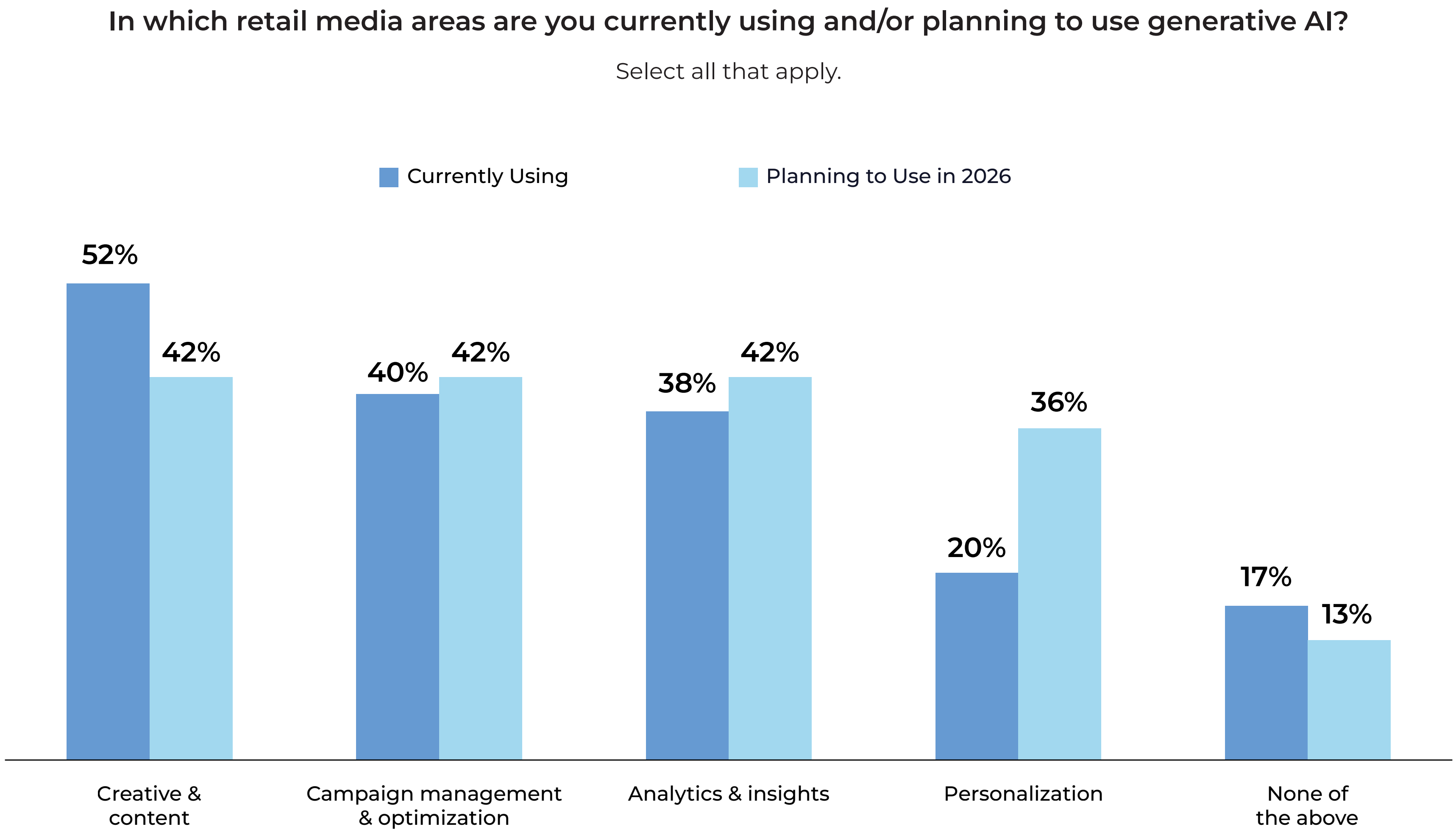


1) Excludes respondents not using AI in their retail media programs

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=108

Adoption is widespread but impact remains unclear for most. The heavy clustering around mixed and minimal results suggests brands are experimenting without clear use cases or success metrics. Retail media leaders adopt faster, but even they're still figuring out where GenAI actually drives performance versus just adding another tool to the stack.

GENERATIVE AI – USAGE



Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=108

In 2026, retail media leaders plan to shift GenAI investment away from creative and content generation toward campaign management, optimization, and analytics. This evolution suggests early adopters have moved past novelty applications and are now focused on using AI where it can drive measurable performance improvements at scale.

GENERATIVE AI – PERSPECTIVES ON ADOPTION

Sales-driving use cases are top priority for proof of concept

At this stage with GenAI, I'm focused on the lowest hanging fruit use cases that will be **most impactful on sales**. At the end of the day we are business owners and accountable for business performance. Especially when organizational buy-in isn't there, I need to start with something that can **drive sales to provide proof of concept**.

Director, Digital Marketing Mid-Sized, High-Growth Food Brand

PDP optimizations for resource-strapped teams

For me, my curiosities with GenAI are around efficiencies in **optimizing PDPs more frequently**. Given my limited resources, I can't do this more than maybe two times per year, if that. It's usually prompted by a packaging or branding change versus proactively updating content.

Senior Director, Omnichannel, Small, High-Growth Food Brand

Have yet to find meaningful retail media outcomes

We have GenAI as a tool in our toolbelt, but **can't figure out a way to use it for retail media** to help drive solid outcomes.

Director, Digital Commerce Marketing Enterprise CPG Conglomerate

Amazon's creative AI tools getting better but still lacking

Amazon's creative AI is **getting better over time**. I'm constantly using it for PDPs, but it's **not there yet for anything authentic** or areas where we need to pull on consumers' heart strings.

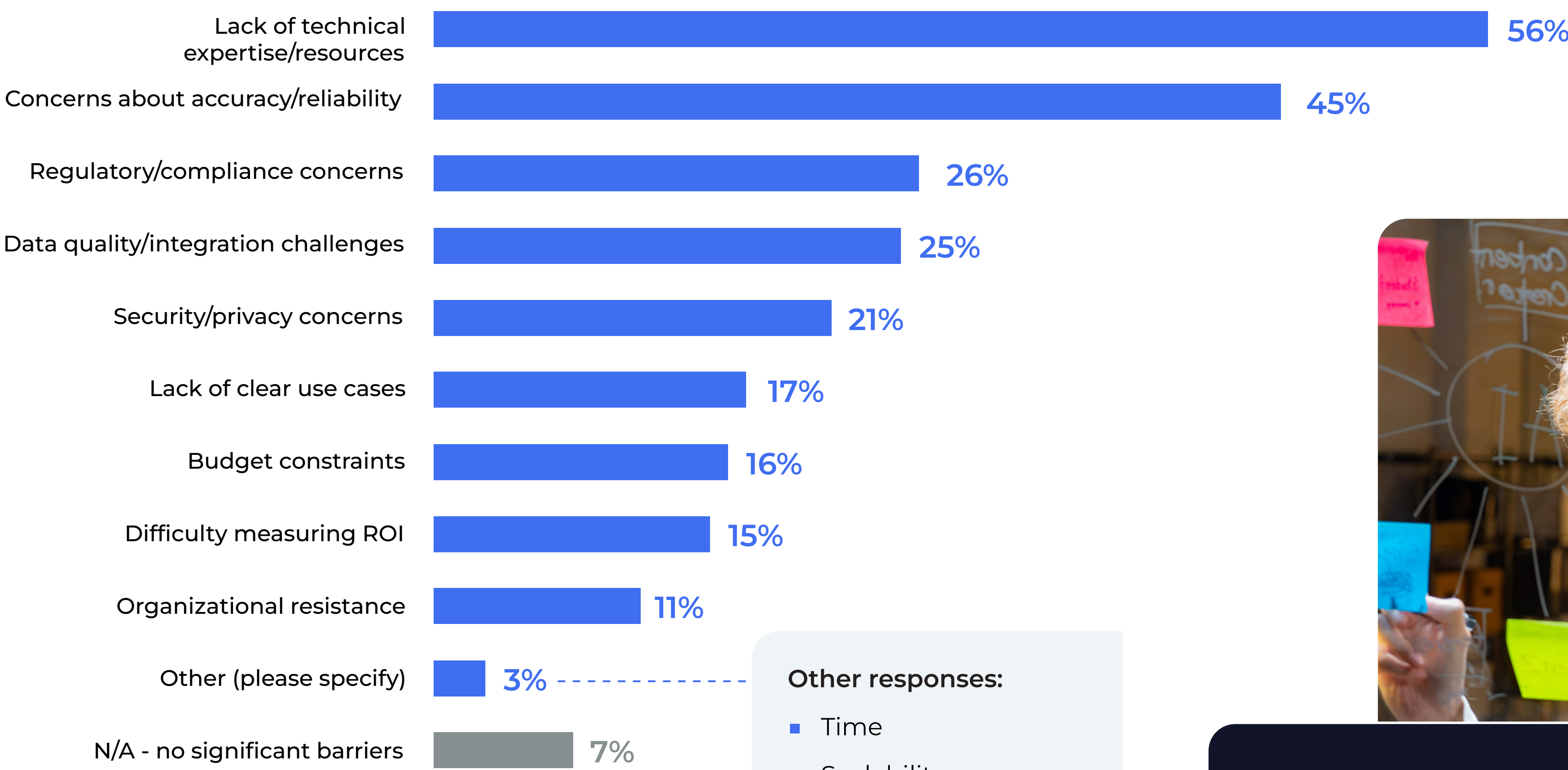
Digital Director, Large Home and Kitchen Brand

Source: Stratably State of Retail Media Interviews and Focus Groups, November 2025

GENERATIVE AI – BARRIERS

What are the biggest barriers to generative AI adoption in your retail media programs?

Select top 3.



Other responses:

- Time
- Scalability
- Being comfortable with lack of approvals or oversight

Brands want to GenAI it, but don't trust it yet and lack the in-house skills to deploy it confidently. This combination keeps adoption stuck in low-risk experimentation mode: creative and content where mistakes are visible but not catastrophic, rather than campaign optimization where accuracy directly impacts spend efficiency.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=108

GENERATIVE AI – PERSPECTIVES ON BARRIERS

Lack of consolidated data is seen as a non-starter for retail media generative AI use

We are investing heavily in AI as an organization but on the retail media front, the **struggle is having consolidated data**.

Director, Digital Commerce Marketing Enterprise CPG Conglomerate

Internal buy-in limited given knowledge gap and job security concerns

My biggest challenge is getting **internal buy-in** to do more with GenAI as others in the organization **don't understand exactly how it works** and some are worried about their own jobs if we start to use AI more.

Director, Digital Marketing, Mid-Sized, High-Growth Food Brand

Regulatory and compliance concerns holding up large organizations

With AI, I'm envious of smaller startups that are able to move more quickly without as much **governance**.

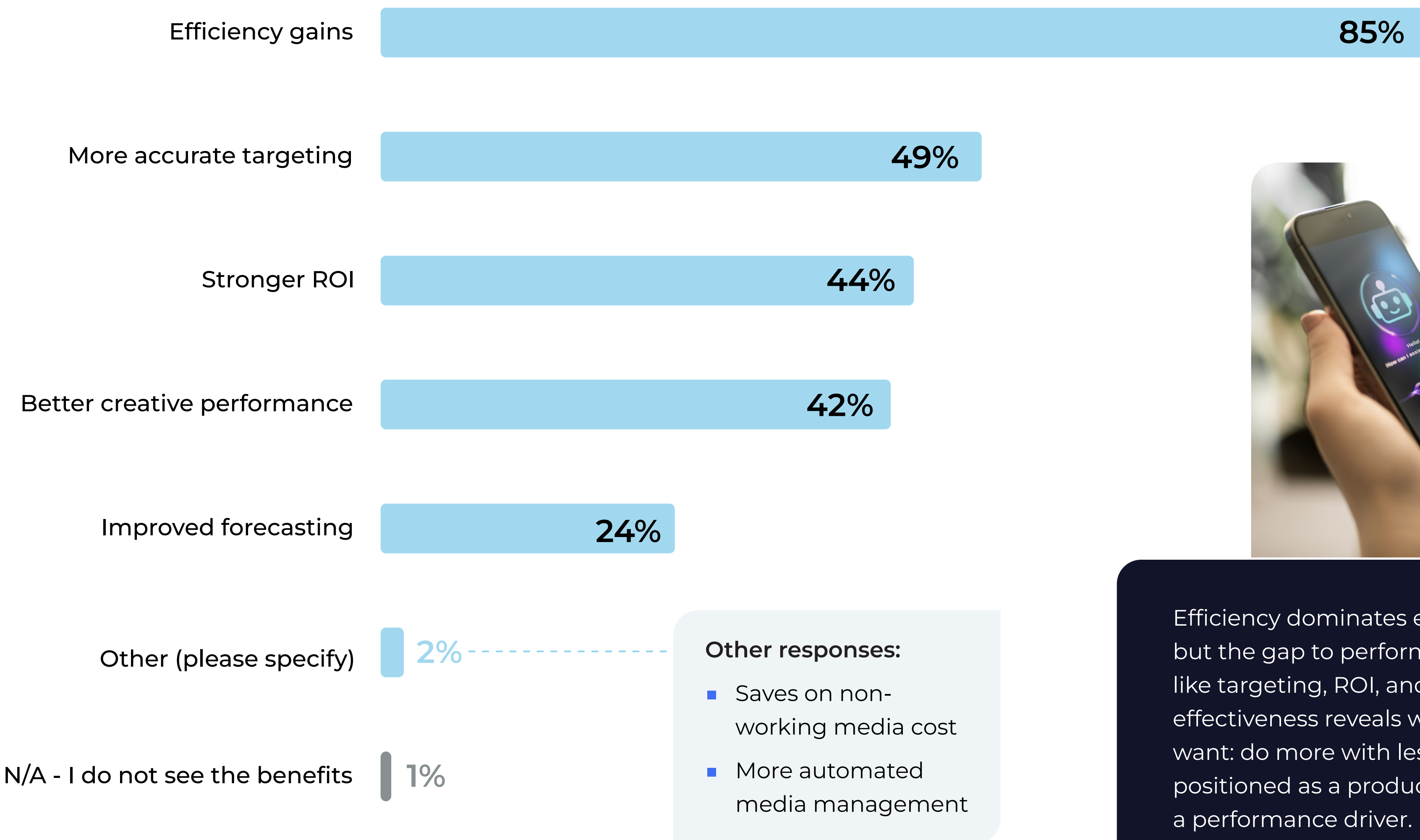
Director, Digital Commerce Marketing Enterprise CPG Conglomerate

Source: Stratably State of Retail Media Interviews and Focus Groups, November 2025

GENERATIVE AI – BENEFITS

What do you see as the main benefits of incorporating generative AI into your retail media programs?

Select top 3.



Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=108

Efficiency dominates expectations, but the gap to performance benefits like targeting, ROI, and creative effectiveness reveals what brands really want: do more with less. GenAI is being positioned as a productivity tool, not a performance driver. Until brands see clear evidence that AI improves outcomes beyond just speed, adoption will stay focused on operational tasks rather than strategic decisioning.

TRUST IN AGENTIC AI – MARKETING TASKS (%)

Looking ahead, how comfortable would you be with agentic AI managing the following areas of your marketing?

Select one per row.

	Insights Only	Recommendations with Approval	Autonomous with Guardrails	Full Autonomy
Forecasting & planning *(e.g., budget allocation)*	31%	54%	12%	3%
Audience targeting & segmentation	18%	55%	25%	2%
Content creation *(e.g., ads, copy, creative assets)*	21%	68%	9%	2%
Creative testing & iteration *(e.g., variant testing, rolling out winners)*	13%	64%	17%	5%
Campaign optimization *(e.g., bidding, keyword, placement adjustments)*	12%	48%	37%	3%
Cross-channel orchestration *(e.g., coordinating retail, search, social)*	23%	61%	13%	3%
Budget pacing *(e.g., in-flight adjustments to stay within allocation)*	15%	50%	29%	7%
Customer journey personalization *(e.g., offers, messaging, real-time tailoring)*	16%	59%	21%	4%
Measurement & reporting *(e.g., performance dashboards, attribution)*	18%	42%	24%	15%
Post-campaign analysis & insights *(e.g., learning extraction for future planning)*	21%	44%	23%	13%

Scale:

- **Insights only:** AI provides analysis or guidance for human use
- **Recommendations with approval:** AI suggests changes requiring one-click sign-off
- **Autonomous with guardrails:** AI makes changes within strict oversight/limits
- **Full autonomy:** AI executes with minimal oversight

Trust scores cluster tightly around "recommendations with approval" across all tasks, revealing brands want AI assistance but aren't ready to hand over control. This conservatism makes sense given accuracy concerns dominate adoption barriers, but it also means agentic AI stays stuck as a productivity tool rather than an autonomous optimization engine.

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=106

In your own words, how would you describe the differences between **Retail Media** and **Commerce Media?**

“RETAIL MEDIA” VS. “COMMERCE MEDIA”

In your own words, how would you describe the differences between Retail Media and Commerce Media?

Commerce media is the broader umbrella

Many respondents view commerce media as the broader umbrella, while retail media is a subset focused on retailer ecosystems. Commerce media can include retail media along with social commerce, DTC, influencer, and any channel tied to commerce behavior.

Retailer-specific vs. retail-agnostic

Many reported that retail media uses retailer 1P data and targets audiences in retailer-owned environments, while commerce media uses broader data and spans multiple platforms.

Consumer journey and intent difference

Many view retail media as typically lower-funnel and conversion-oriented, reaching high-intent shoppers. In contrast, commerce media is full funnel, focusing on discovery, demand creation, and cross-channel influence.

Where conversion happens

According to many respondents, retail media drives shoppers to transact at the specific retailer, while commerce media can drive shoppers to multiple destinations (e.g., brand site, multiple retailers, social checkouts, etc.).

No clear difference

Several respondents either view retail media and commerce media as the same thing or admitted they “don’t know” the difference

Source: Skai x Stratably 2026 State of Retail Media Study
n=113

ABOUT SKAI

Skai is the leading omnichannel advertising platform for commerce media, combining advanced digital marketing capabilities with commerce insights and operations to drive growth for brands and agencies. Powered by unified data and proprietary GenAI, Skai delivers full-funnel media planning, optimization, and measurement, as well as insights and automation that help brands improve digital shelf performance, retail execution, and revenue recovery. This integrated approach maximizes sales, profitability, and market share across media and commerce touchpoints.

Trusted by over 8,000 brands and agencies, including PepsiCo, Sanofi, and Estée Lauder, Skai integrates with 300+ publishers and retail media networks such as Amazon Ads, Walmart Connect, Criteo, Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and TikTok. Headquartered in San Francisco with nine international offices, Skai empowers brands to connect media and commerce for measurable growth and efficiency.

Visit skai.io for more information.

ABOUT STRATABLY

Stratably is an independent research and advisory firm helping consumer brands drive profitable growth through digital and omnichannel excellence. Our research analysts provide objective benchmarks, proprietary assessments, and practitioner-focused insights across omnichannel retail, the digital shelf, retail media, and more. Trusted by leading global brands, Stratably delivers unbiased guidance that helps brands make better decisions, avoid costly mistakes, and accelerate their path to digital commerce leadership.

Visit stratably.com for more information.

Stratably