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eBook

The Marketer's Field Guide for Selling to AI

How to reach and optimize for your customers' AI platforms,
assistants, and agents

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AI is the modern shopper's new best friend

When you're on the hunt for new clothes, you might bring your mom or a friend. When it's time for a new appliance, you and your spouse likely venture to the home improvement store together. Shopping with someone else has always offered the reassurance that you're making the right choice with your purchase.

Today, AI offers the same reassurance – and so much more – to shoppers at every stage of their buying journey. From research and product discovery to decisioning and action, consumers are exploring how to use AI to improve and simplify shopping experiences both online and in-store.

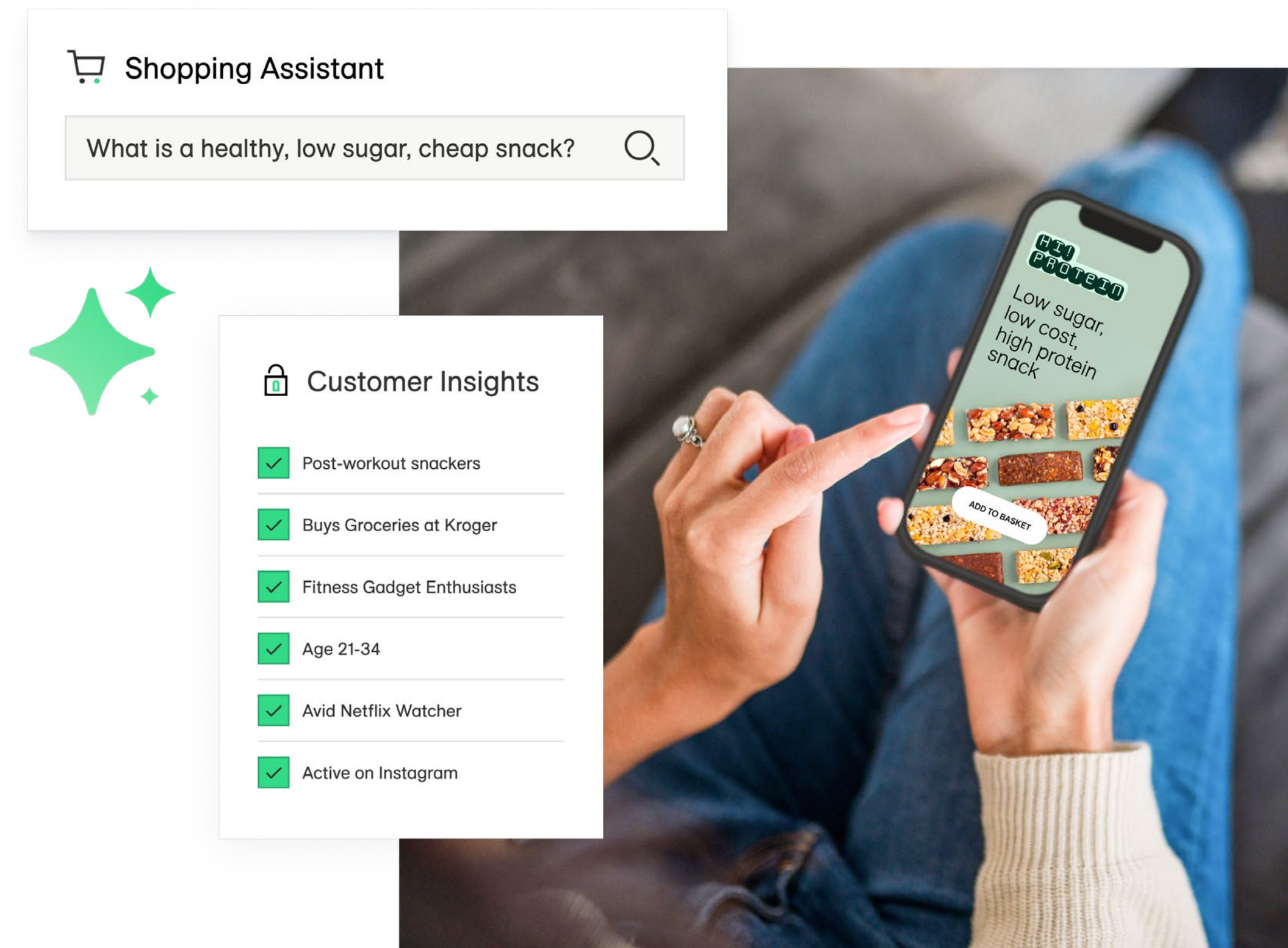
As a result, it's increasingly common that shoppers are not discovering your brand from an ad or your website. They arrive through an AI overview, a chatbot recommendation, a comparison generated by an assistant, or in a growing number of cases, an agent acting on their behalf.

For marketers, the question is now: **How do you connect with shoppers wherever they are in their AI-powered buying journey?** And how do you personalize the experience with AI as the middle man?

In this guide, we'll help you:

- Understand how AI is reshaping the customer journey and compressing the traditional marketing funnel
- Learn how to connect with shoppers to personalize and optimize their experience, even when AI is filling the shopping cart
- Prepare for measurement across AI platforms, assistants, and agents for smarter, faster optimization

How your customers are shopping with AI



Most consumers are beginning to use AI, but not the same way.

As shoppers explore platforms and agents, AI is changing how they discover, evaluate, and select products in their buying journeys. Tools such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Perplexity, and Google's AI Overview are becoming personal shopping assistants – and customers are still exploring how to use them.

More than 70% of US consumers rely on AI to learn about products and services, 60% ask AI tools to explain features and specs, and 61% have AI compare specific products, according to McKinsey's research¹. While some shoppers may only use AI-generated summaries at the top of search engines, others are asking agents to explain features, compare options, and narrow the field. At the leading edge, tech-savvy consumers are training agents to handle entire transactions autonomously, from product discovery to payment.

Kroger recently found that customers are using its AI Shopping Assistant to add more items to their baskets. The tool helps shoppers plan meals and build carts based on their budgets, dietary requirements, and preferences. As Kroger incorporates more of its loyalty data into the assistant, the brand can increasingly provide its AI assistant personalized recommendations that reflect a customer's shopping habits².

Here's a closer look at the spectrum of AI-powered journeys that are transforming customer shopping experiences right now.

The spectrum of AI delegation

	BEGINNER	INTERMEDIATE		ADVANCED
DELEGATION TYPE	Informed Buying A customer reads an AI overview or summary about your brand or product, then takes the next action toward the purchase themselves.	Assisted Buying A customer converses with a chatbot or AI assistant to discover and narrow buying options before moving forward with a decision.	Delegated Buying A customer takes assisted buying deeper, asking AI to research, compare, and recommend a product or service based on the buyer's needs.	Autonomous Buying A customer gives an agent the buying power to complete transactions on the customer's behalf.
BRAND ACTION	AI search and overviews make recommendations based on information retrievability and corroboration. Is your company's information findable, structured, consistent, and confirmed across digital sources?	AI assistants and chatbots select products based on relevance to a stated need within a conversation. Product discoverability is also enhanced by third-party endorsements and experiential evidence, such as customer reviews and influencer ratings. In this stage, framing, context, and product quality matter more than keyword coverage. Ensuring your product's benefits are clear and easy to understand across channels is key.		Agents select products based on evaluable criteria – structured attributes they can compare against a goal: price, availability, specs, terms, fulfillment. Autonomous agents need a secure, machine-readable path from product selection through purchase. Can an authorized agent access accurate pricing and availability, recognize the customer and their loyalty benefits, and complete the transaction honoring consent configurations in an addressable manner?

Every phase of an AI-powered shopping journey involves a different level of context about a customer. At the most sophisticated level, AI has enough insight to predict and act on your customer's preferences and needs, but the reality is, most consumers aren't there yet.

As people expand their usage of AI, now is the time for marketers to re-think how they'll reach shoppers at every phase of delegation, starting with the traditional marketing funnel.

The funnel consequence

AI is collapsing the traditional marketing funnel. Rather than using different touchpoints for awareness, consideration, and decision, AI powers all three moments in a single interaction.

Deborah Aho Williamson, Chief Analyst at Sonata Insights, pointed out that AI is offering brands more opportunities to have personalized conversations with consumers, faster.

“What's fascinating for me is how the use of AI can not only enable consumers to get closer to brands, but also get to know them way quicker than you ever thought possible before,” Williamson said onstage at RampUp in the session “[Rethinking the Foundations of Advertising: How Conversational AI Is Reshaping How We Engage, Convert, and Monetize Customers.](#)”

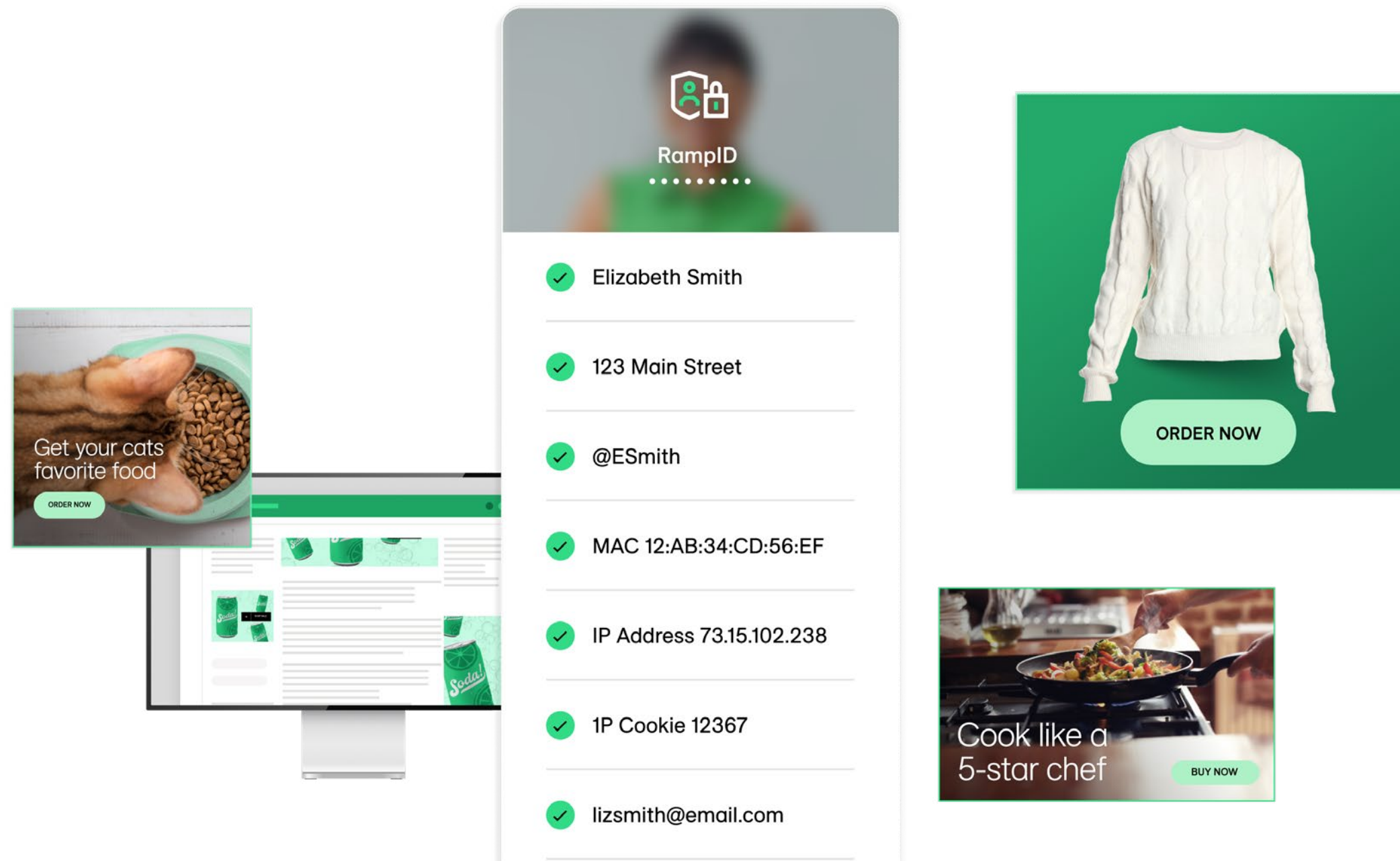
What does this mean for marketers? Teams that continue to plan around the traditional funnel will waste resources optimizing for a journey fewer customers take. As AI-powered advertising matures, more surfaces (anywhere a person interacts with AI) are becoming addressable, measurable media.

[OpenAI recently partnered with LiveRamp](#) to help marketers measure the effects of ChatGPT ad campaigns on conversions anywhere. As customer interactions expand across AI destinations and reshape buying journeys, marketers not only need connectivity with conversational search, agents, and other surfaces, they need access to the measurement infrastructure to power better marketing.

That's the direction AI is headed. But marketers today still struggle to connect the data they have across traditional touchpoints. In order to prepare for an addressable AI future, now is the time to get your data foundation in order.

The identity gap: Who is AI actually shopping for?

AI is playing a role in the consumer journey that the ecosystem has never had to account for. Beyond becoming a helpful shopping companion, AI is beginning to control the cart, assuming your customer's authority to make decisions.



Imagine you manage the media network for a popular clothing retailer. The [first-party data](#) from your store's loyalty program has always provided the insights you needed to serve shoppers relatable ads on your app, website, and social media. But you begin to notice patterns suggesting more loyalty members might be delegating their online shopping to AI agents, such as:

- **Fewer recognizable touchpoints before purchase:** Loyalty members complete transactions without the usual sequence of website visits, email clicks, or ad interactions.
- **More direct or unattributed purchases:** Conversions increasingly appear without a clear referral source or attributable customer journey.
- **Shorter, more task-focused sessions:** Accounts move rapidly from search or comparison to purchase, with little exploratory browsing.

To your systems, the agents look like anonymous traffic or a bot that needs to be blocked. Your most valuable customer relationships suddenly become invisible as loyalty status, consent configurations, purchase history and fraud signals are blurred at the exact moment of transaction.

So, how do you serve your customers when they're being represented by AI? Build your data foundation on an [interoperable identity foundation](#) for a complete customer view.

Prioritize customer understanding

In the agentic shopping age, marketers still need to prioritize consumer understanding to deliver personalized, AI-powered experiences.

Dave Osborn, General Manager of Agentic Solutions at Microsoft Advertising, believes marketers who drive brand recall in humans will have the strongest success with AI. In the RampUp session, “[From Personalization to Prediction: How AI and Customer Intent are Reimagining Retail](#),” Osborn explained how people influence AI’s decisions. If a consumer who’s searching for a new car prompts AI to include Cadillacs in its query simply because they like and remember the brand, their assistant will prioritize Cadillacs in its search and report.

Shoppers also prefer AI results that pull from creators or influencers. In one IAB survey, 65% of consumers said they’re more confident in AI recommendations when they’re informed by credible creator reviews³.

“Remember that you’re still talking to a human at the end of the day and that human can cut through anything that the AI is going to otherwise steer them towards,” Osborn said.

Personalization will continue to nurture brand affinity. More than half of consumers say they’re more likely to buy from brands that personalize their experiences, and they report spending 30% more with them on average⁴. Now, brand loyalty is extending to AI as people train their assistants to choose their favorite brands first.

In his RampUp session “[The Journey Toward Sustained Brand Impact](#),” Nick Winfrey, VP of Data Science, Data & Measurement Strategy at The Walt Disney Company, reminded marketers that AI will ultimately be guided by shopper preferences and then create its own knowledge base to build on.

“When you look at this new ecosystem of different sources, agentic AI has to know your brand if someone’s typing something in and have brand recall...How do we quantify the impact of that first thing in the journey?” Winfrey asked.

To resonate with people and their AI shoppers, you need to know who you’re targeting. Building your data on an [identity foundation](#) is the first step to reaching target audiences, measuring campaigns, and strengthening customer relationships across surfaces.

How to join your customers' AI journeys

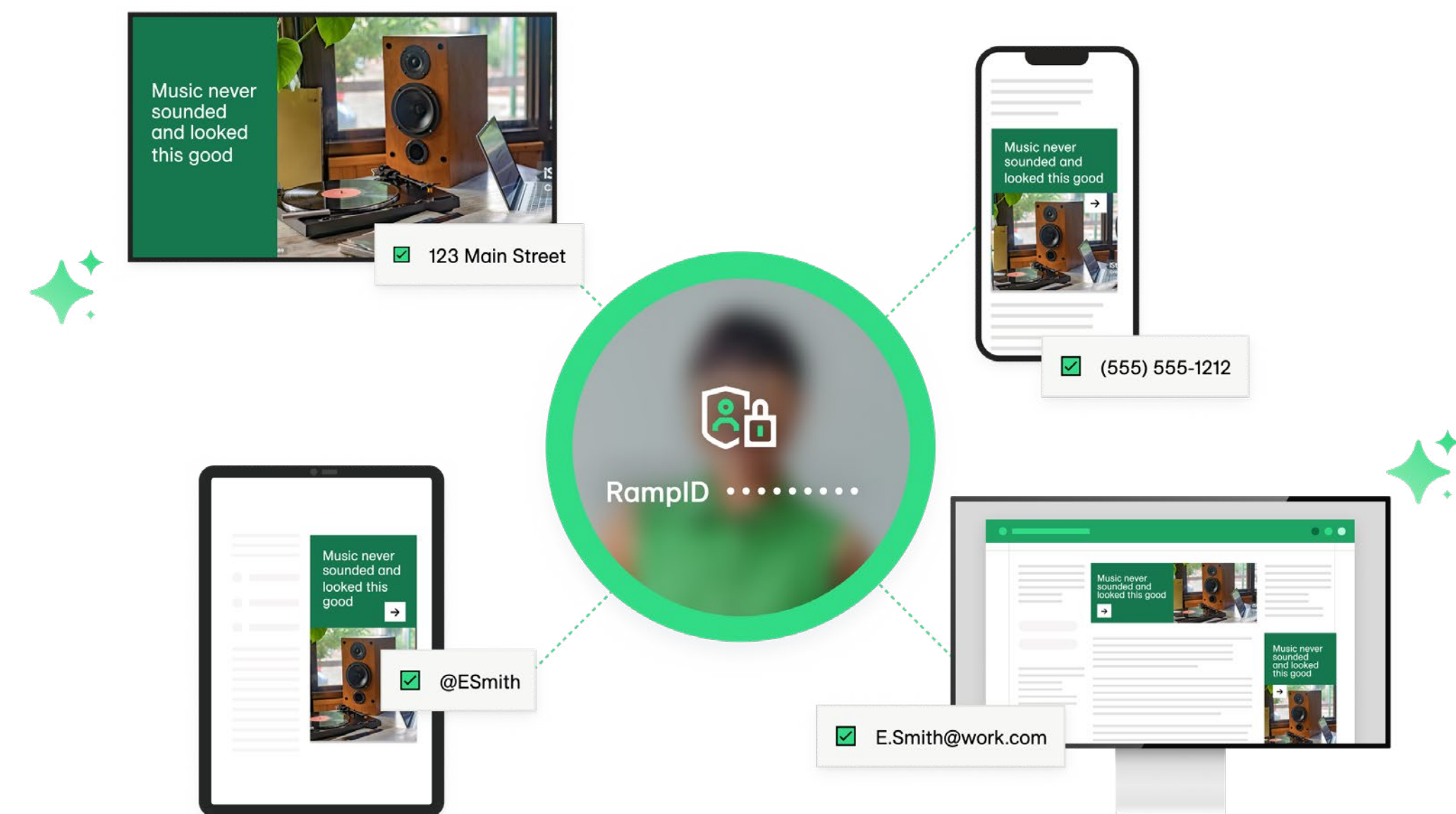
The only way to see consumers clearly, even as AI sits between you, is through [identity resolution](#).

Identity resolution connects the dots across a shopper's digital footprint to deliver a complete picture of their online behavior across devices, channels, and touchpoints. When your organization's data is built on a durable, interoperable [identity framework](#) that connects touchpoints across the digital ecosystem, you can begin to link AI interactions back to a known customer. That continuity gives you the context to personalize each customer's experience, even when an AI agent is acting on their behalf.

As AI evolves, an identity foundation is not only critical to reaching customers along their AI-powered journeys, but for your own AI-powered marketing. Erin Mitten, VP of Product Strategy at Publicis, pointed out that without a [deterministic foundation](#), what you get is “probabilities on top of probabilities that have compounded into something you can't even begin to track back.”

“I think it's a fantasy if you don't have deterministic identity driving [AI],” Mitten said onstage in the RampUp session, “[AI as the New Operating System: Preparing Your Media Strategy for an Agentic Future](#).”

AI will become addressable and measurable – the only open question is if you'll be ready for it. Without identity resolution, the AI era will complicate your existing data fragmentation and measurement issues, similar to laying broken tracks for a high-speed train. With a consistent identity foundation, your brand punches its ticket to join customers wherever they go next.

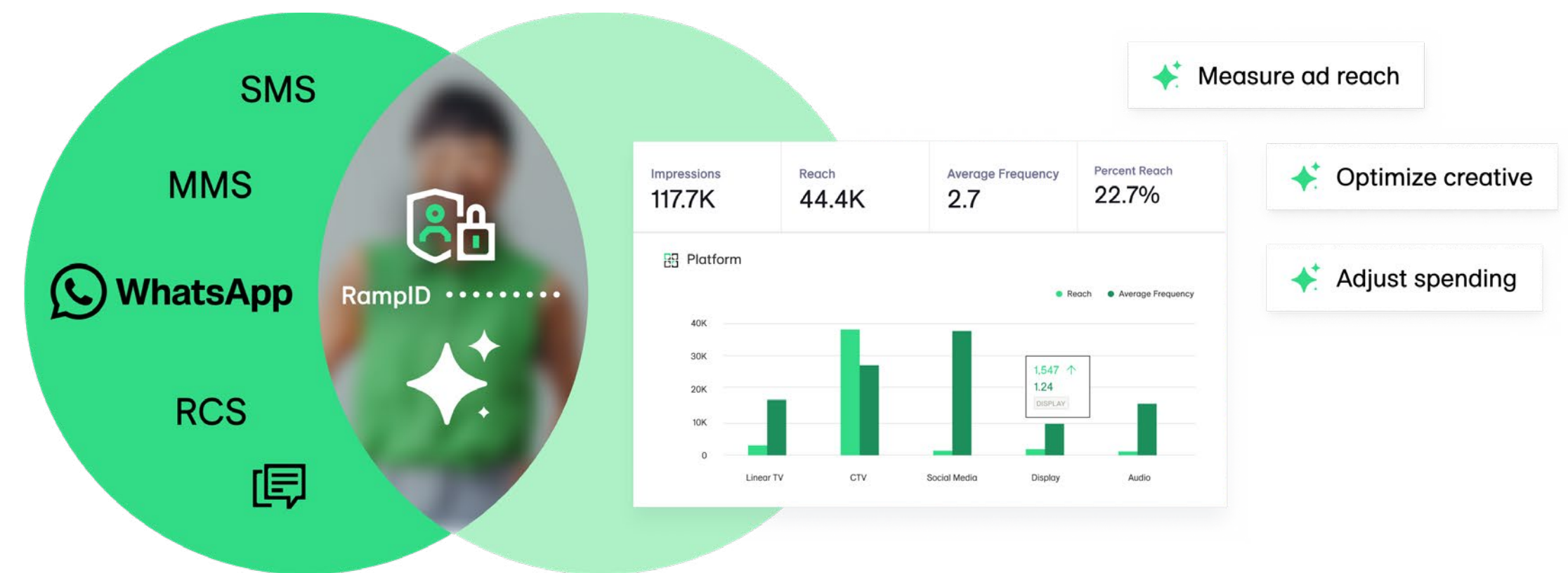


Ready to measure the AI-powered buyer's journey? You will be.

If AI feels more like a pain point than an opportunity, we get it. Personalizing the customer journey has never been more complicated. With scattered platforms and disconnected signals, you might be left wondering, am I reaching the customers I want where they're actually spending time?

Agents, platforms, and chatbots won't be siloed forever. They'll continue to follow the same path as every channel before them: unmeasurable, then partially addressable, then fully accountable.

Platforms like [Infobip](#) are working with LiveRamp to accelerate this progress. Through this partnership, Infobip ties in-chat authentications and conversational signals to [RampID](#), so marketers can resolve fragmented campaign data into a unified view and activate audiences across channels.



“To win in the AI era, brands need long-term customer loyalty,” explained Infobip’s Thais Chang, Solution Engineering Chapter Lead. “They turn to Infobip to connect with their audience everywhere – from SMS, MMS, and RCS to WhatsApp and nearly every other major messaging channel. Infobip’s agentic platform – powered by LiveRamp – gives brands the connections they need to succeed.”

When measurement arrives for these surfaces, it will resolve against identity. Brands with a connected data foundation will be able to dive into AI measurement for campaign insights, optimization, and greater personalization. Building a connected and governed identity foundation now will prepare you to measure and optimize across AI surfaces as the ecosystem evolves.

Your AI-ready data foundation checklist

Use this checklist to identify the strengths and gaps in your current data foundation.

✔	Accuracy
✔	Depth
✔	Scale
✔	Governance
✔	Speed



Accuracy

Is your customer data clean, connected, and consistent?

Can you bring together data from your CRM, loyalty program, website, mobile app and point-of-sale systems – including online and offline identifiers – into a consistent customer view? Look for fragmented customer records, duplicate identities, and inconsistent data collection practices. A consistent identity framework can help reduce mismatched and duplicated records, providing more accurate inputs for targeting, measurement, and recommendations.

By threading a common identifier from targeting through measurement, Citi built a connected view of the customer that became the foundation for smarter media decisions and measurably stronger acquisition performance. “We’re getting as complete a view of the customer as we can – we didn’t have that before,” said Kinjal Parikh, Head of Media Sciences at Citi.



Depth

Does your data provide a complete view of the customer journey?

Your first-party data is valuable, but limited. Determine where signals from trusted publishers, platforms, and complementary brands could add intent and context across more customer touchpoints. Then assess whether that data is accessible at the depth and granularity your AI use cases require.

Haleon, CVS, and Reddit partnered to combine contextual signals from Reddit’s health communities with CVS’ deterministic purchase data. The result, measured through the LiveRamp Clean Room with configured governance controls that met each customer’s guidelines, was 600% higher unit sales growth for the category during the closed beta versus the same period the year prior. The signals that drove that outcome did not exist inside any one company’s data set. They emerged from collaboration.



Scale

Can you connect customer data across platforms, devices, and trusted partners?

A unified customer view becomes more valuable when it can work across millions of customers and a broad partner network. Assess whether your identity foundation can maintain accurate connections across channels, platforms, and partners as signals change and support broader activation as your data and partnerships grow.

Whirlpool uses LiveRamp’s RampID to unify fragmented customer data across internal silos, connecting online, in-store, sales, and call center touchpoints while enriching insights with third-party partners like Circana. By scaling its identity foundation across platforms and partners, Whirlpool achieved an unprecedented 5x increase in addressable audience reach. “LiveRamp has been a huge resource – the power comes with the network,” noted Kellie Jones, Director, KitchenAid Small Appliances D2C & Digital Marketing at Whirlpool Corporation.



Governance

Is your data permissible for each intended AI use case?

Confirm that customer data is used only in the intended ways consumers expect. Your foundation should preserve data governance controls across AI workflows, platforms, and partners, with the data lineage and auditability needed to use that data responsibly..

For SemantIQ Health, deploying AI agents directly inside a LiveRamp Clean Room ensures that automated workflows execute within governed boundaries. “Because healthcare data is heavily regulated and sensitive, and governance is extremely important, we bring the data infrastructure to where the data lives,” said Manik Khanna, CEO of SemantIQ Health.



Speed

Can your data infrastructure support timely activation, measurement, and optimization?

Reimagine workflows that require weeks to onboard each new data source or leave teams spending more time reconciling reports than acting on insights. Interoperable workflows, built-in governance, and lower-risk, agent-supported use cases can help your team move faster while maintaining oversight.

To overcome the data fragmentation that forces analytics teams to spend countless hours manually joining datasets across platforms, General Motors transformed its marketing strategy by taking direct ownership of its data pipelines and identity infrastructure. With LiveRamp, GM stitched together household and individual signals behind the scenes and enabled its data scientists to focus on performance optimization rather than manual reconciliation. “The platform takes all that extra complexity out,” said Marc Tolchin, Technical Enablement Strategist within Marketing Applied Sciences at General Motors. “If it takes 30 steps for me to look at my CTV versus this platform, we can find a way to integrate those data sources so it takes three steps.”

If you answered no to more than one of these questions, you’re not alone. There’s still time to strengthen the data foundation your AI marketing strategy will depend on.

Conclusion

AI-powered customer journeys are evolving fast, and the path ahead may still feel uncertain. What is clear is the need for a durable identity foundation to succeed both today and tomorrow. By taking the steps to connect and enrich your data foundation with identity resolution now, your brand will have the capabilities to build better customer relationships, even when AI does the shopping.

Ready to get started? Discover how LiveRamp, the data collaboration network for the AI era, connects every signal, platform, and agent, to power and prove intelligent marketing.

[Take the platform tour, or reach out today.](#)

Endnotes

- 1 Silliman, E., Boudet, J., Kelsey, Robinson, Oppong, D., & Shah, N. (2025, October 16). [New front door to the internet: Winning in the age of AI search](#). McKinsey & Company.
- 2 Zulhusni, M., & Zulhusni, M. (2026, September 23). [Kroger says AI shopping assistant is driving bigger baskets](#). Marketing Tech News.
- 3 IAB. (2026, September 9). [The Creator Signal: How AI Systems Interpret Influence in Commerce](#).
- 4 Kandi, T., & Crawford, L. S. (2026, September 29). [2026 Personalization Trends](#). Deloitte Insights.

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