AUDIENCES+

RETAIL REPORT

THE RETAILER'S GUIDE TO

First-Party Data Activation

Five Ways To Improve Media Performance And Prove ROI

A practical guide for retail marketing, loyalty and data leaders who want to put the customer data they already hold to work in their advertising, without moving it out of their cloud. From AUDIENCES, the independent activation platform.

INSIDE THIS GUIDE

01 The activation gap 2

02 Five ways to put first-party data to work 4

03 A measurement framework 6

04 Case study: Pets at Home 7

05 Retailer readiness checklist 8



PERFORMANCE MARKETING AWARDS
Best Use of Data & Audiences

FEATURING

The Pets at Home case study: Gold, Best Use of Data & Audiences

01 — THE ACTIVATION GAP

Your Customer Data Is Your Biggest Media Advantage

Retailers have invested heavily in customer data, loyalty programmes and cloud infrastructure. Yet much of that intelligence remains disconnected from the media decisions that drive acquisition and growth.

This guide sets out five practical ways to close that gap, how to measure the commercial results, and how to tell whether your business is ready to start.

<3%

of media investment is typically informed by customer data.

The intelligence retailers hold about their customers rarely reaches the campaigns that need it most.

Why The Gap Exists

A

Data Sits Apart From Media

Customer data lives in the cloud, while media is planned and bought in separate platforms, by separate teams.

B

Moving Data Creates Risk

Traditional onboarding models move customer data outside the business, creating compliance risk and commercial inefficiency.

C

Budgets Leak To Existing Customers

Without suppression, acquisition campaigns keep paying to reach people who already shop with you.

01 — A NEW APPROACH

Activate Data Where It Already Lives

As third-party data declines, first-party data has become a retailer's most durable media advantage. The challenge is no longer collecting it. It is activating it safely, quickly and at scale, without giving up privacy, control or performance.

DEFINITION

In-cloud activation

Building audiences from first-party data and sending them to advertising channels directly from your own cloud environment, so the underlying customer data is never moved or duplicated. Only signals are distributed, not datasets.

How AUDIENCES Works

1. CONNECT
Connect to the first-party data already in your cloud: Snowflake, Databricks, Google Cloud, AWS or Azure.

2. BUILD
Create audiences and suppression groups from customer, purchase and loyalty data.

3. ACTIVATE
Distribute signals in real time to search, social, programmatic, retail media, CTV and DOOH.

4. GOVERN
Your existing governance, security and access controls apply. You remain the data controller.

Then measure the results in your existing reporting. See the framework on page 6.

Where AUDIENCES fits: the independent activation platform. It runs inside your cloud, works alongside your existing CDP, has no media, ID or cloud lock-in, and carries no data tax, so you don't pay a fee each time your data is used.

02 — FIVE WAYS TO PUT FIRST-PARTY DATA TO WORK

From Customer Data To Commercial Results

Each of the five ways starts with data most retailers already hold. For each one, we set out the opportunity, how to put it into practice, the KPIs to track and, where available, real-world proof.

01 Stop Paying To Acquire Existing Customers

Suppression: make every acquisition pound reach someone new.

The opportunity. Acquisition campaigns often reach people who already shop with you. Every impression served to an existing customer is budget that could have found someone new.

1. Build a suppression audience from the customer and loyalty records already in your cloud.
2. Exclude it from acquisition campaigns across search, social, programmatic, CTV and DOOH.
3. Signals update in real time as new customers join, so recent buyers are excluded too.

KPIS TO TRACK

New customer CPA | Wasted spend | Share of new customers

PROOF

Pets at Home excluded existing customers from acquisition activity, reducing wasted acquisition spend through smarter exclusions.

02 Find More Customers Like Your Best Ones

Lookalikes: use your highest-value customers as the blueprint for growth.

The opportunity. Your best customers tell you who to look for next. Using them as a seed helps acquisition campaigns reach new prospects who look and behave like the customers you value most.

1. Identify high-value customers using purchase, loyalty and behavioural data.
2. Build a seed audience and activate lookalike targeting in the channels that support it.
3. Combine with suppression, so budget goes to genuinely new prospects.

KPIS TO TRACK

New customer CPA | ROAS | First-order value

PROOF

Pets at Home targeted high-value lookalike audiences as part of the in-cloud activation that delivered **+18% ROAS**.

03 Win Back Lapsed Loyalty Members

Reactivation: re-engage customers before they are lost for good.

The opportunity. Lapsed customers already know your brand. Re-engaging them can be more efficient than finding someone new, especially ahead of key trading moments like peak.

1. Define "lapsed" for your business, such as no purchase within a set period.
2. Build a win-back audience from existing purchase and loyalty signals.
3. Reach them at relevant moments, and exclude them once they return.

KPIS TO TRACK

- Reactivation rate
- Repeat purchase
- Cost per reactivation

PROOF

Pets at Home re-engaged existing customers with in-cloud audiences, strengthening retention performance.

04 Grow Baskets And Cross-Sell

Customer value: help existing customers discover more of your range.

The opportunity. Many customers buy from only part of your range. Reaching them with relevant products, categories and services they don't yet buy can grow basket and lifetime value.

1. Map which categories each customer segment buys, and which they don't.
2. Build audiences for the most natural next category or service.
3. Activate across channels, suppressing customers who already buy it.

KPIS TO TRACK

- Average order value
- Cross-category sales
- Lifetime value

SIGNALS TO USE

Category purchase history, basket composition and loyalty tier.

TIP The five ways work best together. Suppression stops budget leaking to existing customers, lookalikes point it at valuable new prospects, and win-back and cross-sell grow the value of the customers you already have.

05 Open Up New Retail Media Revenue

Retail media: build premium audience products for the brands you stock.

The opportunity. The brands you stock want to reach your customers. Premium audience products built from your retail insights attract advertiser demand, help brands run more relevant campaigns and create additional revenue for your business.

1. Build audiences that matter to supplier brands, such as category shoppers.
2. Activate them across relevant media channels for brand campaigns.
3. Distribute signals, not datasets, so customer data stays in your cloud. Brands can also bring their own data.

KPIS TO TRACK

- Retail media revenue
- Brand campaign ROAS
- Repeat brand partners

SIGNALS TO USE

Category and brand purchase history, shopping frequency and loyalty data.

03 — A MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

Prove The Value Of Every Audience

Measurable business outcomes, not just more impressions. Evaluate each way in your existing reporting.

OBJECTIVE	WHAT TO MEASURE	WAYS
Acquisition efficiency	New customer CPA and reduced wasted spend	01 · 02
Campaign performance	ROAS, conversions and media efficiency	All
Customer retention	Reactivation rates and repeat purchases	03
Customer value	Average order value, cross-sell and lifetime value	04
Retail media	Retail media revenue and brand campaign performance	05

Four Habits Of Good Measurement

1

Agree success metrics and a baseline before launch.

2

Use control or holdout groups where possible to see incremental impact.

3

Evaluate against your own sales and loyalty data, not just platform reporting.

4

Review by audience and channel, and reinvest in what works.

04 — CASE STUDY

How Pets at Home Won Gold With First-Party Data

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The challenge. As third-party data deprecation accelerated, Pets at Home needed to activate first-party data from its 8m+ Pets Club members without compromising privacy, control or performance.

The approach. An in-cloud, native activation model with AUDIENCES, segmenting and activating first-party data entirely within Pets at Home's own cloud.

- 01 Suppression
- 02 Lookalikes
- 03 Re-engagement

+18% ROAS improvement

8m+ Pets Club members

Plus less wasted acquisition spend and stronger retention performance.

"A genuinely rare feat — solving the complex 'privacy vs. performance' puzzle."

"This project didn't just improve efficiency; it established a new standard for data governance and ownership."

Performance Marketing Awards 2026 judges

Read the full case study →

MORE RESULTS RETAILERS HAVE ACHIEVED

42%
lower CPA and over £1m incremental revenue
RETAIL & SERVICES BRAND

£3.4m
incremental revenue, live in three weeks
TRAVEL & LEISURE RETAIL BRAND

74%
lower cost per appointment, year on year
VETERINARY SERVICES BRAND

22% average ROAS increase across AUDIENCES clients

05 — RETAILER READINESS CHECKLIST

Are You Ready To Activate Your First-Party Data?

Tick each statement that is true for your business today. Not sure about some? That's normal, and we can help.

Your Data

- [ ] Customer data sits in a cloud platform such as Snowflake, Databricks, Google Cloud, AWS or Azure.
- [ ] You hold purchase, loyalty or behavioural data you can segment.
- [ ] The data is approved for use in marketing activity.

- [ ] **I don't know yet.** That's OK: we can help you find out.

Your Team And Governance

- [ ] Your data team can grant approved access to the data needed.
- [ ] Privacy and security stakeholders are involved early.
- [ ] There is a named owner across marketing and data.

Privacy by design: because AUDIENCES runs inside your cloud, DPIAs and security and legal approval can be simpler.

Your Media

- [ ] You run acquisition campaigns where suppression could reduce waste.
- [ ] You advertise across search, social, programmatic, retail media or CTV.
- [ ] Your in-house team or agency can apply audiences in those channels.

Your Measurement

- [ ] You have agreed the KPIs that matter most.
- [ ] You have a baseline to compare results against.
- [ ] You can evaluate results in your existing reporting.

Mostly ticks?

You're in a strong position to start with one or two of the five ways, such as suppression and lookalikes, even with a few unknowns.

A few gaps or unknowns?

That's common, especially on data questions. We can help you find the answers and map the quickest route forward.

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Ready To Put Your First-Party Data To Work?

Book a 20-minute demo to see how AUDIENCES, the independent activation platform, could support your retail growth plans, and which of the five ways to start with.

Book a 20-Minute Demo

weareaudiences.com/contact-us

Scan to book a demo

22%
average ROAS increase across AUDIENCES clients

+18%
ROAS for Pets at Home, PMA 2026 Gold winner

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Gold, Best Use of Data & Audiences: Pets at Home × AUDIENCES