

# Retail media is the platypus of marketing

By Russ Dieringer // May 22, 2023 // Briefings, Research

May 22, 2023

While you've seen a lot written on retail media, no one has brought up the duck-billed platypus.

First, some insight on this incredible animal...

- It's one of five living monotremes (mammal species that lay eggs)
- It's not a dupe... *"The unusual appearance of this egg-laying, duck-billed, beaver-tailed, otter-footed mammal baffled European naturalists when they first encountered it, and the first scientists to examine a preserved platypus body (in 1799) judged it a fake, made of several animals sewn together."*
- It's venomous, featuring a spur on its hind foot that can cause some real trouble

A little duck, plus a little beaver, makes a distinctly new species.

## Next question...Is Facebook more like TV or a newspaper?

Well, sort of both, but not really either.

There's text and video, but also social connections, a Feed filled with UGC, and it's accessed and

engaged differently than those predecessors.

Ad copy and formats and performance and measurement were not 1:1 translatable from TV or print.

## **Third question...Is Retail Media more like retail or media?**

We know there are commercial realities that must go into retail media investment decisions. For instance, being a great partner is one, as is the need to be in stock.

But we also know that a Thursday Night Football game streamed on Amazon looks awfully like a game hosted by Fox. It's a TV commercial that just so happens to be aired by a "retailer".

Does the ability to granularly measure the impact at Amazon warrant classifying it as something else? Does it warrant drawing funding for it from somewhere else?

## **Leaning too far into either the retail side or the media side misses the unique nature of it.**

This is why many advertisers are transforming their organizational structure, ways of working together, and/or media, trade and shopper budgeting processes.

But if you're looking for a playbook, good luck!

We see super-sophisticated advertisers taking different approaches.

Conny Brams from Unilever was quoted as saying: “[Retail media buys] used to be very much handled by our salespeople because most of the time it was a tactical investment. And now, because of the size of it, and because consumers are using channels differently, we need to think about it more strategically,”

- I hear this all the time from CMOs - when sales teams are at the wheel, they’re not incented to grow the brand (i.e., reach) and they typically don’t have media experience.

Mick Drew from Coca-Cola was quoted as saying: “If I look at the way we were buying digital retail media activation sets, we had our typical marketing activation managers leading a performance investment – and they were not skilled for that. Very capable, amazing humans, but they weren't experts.”

- I also hear this all the time from VPs of Sales - when media teams are given full responsibility, they tend to ignore or underestimate the commercial realities and overly focus on upper funnel efforts.

What's retail media?



**“Salespeople” can’t do it, nor can  
“marketing folks”, because it’s a  
distinct opportunity.**

While there is no “one” right approach, the underlying principles are that the hybrid nature of retail media makes it unique, and we must account for the differing incentives given to our sales teams and our marketing teams if we want the right results for the company.

**Retail media questions to**

# consider:

1. Do you see something familiar or entirely new?
  2. Are you managing it within a familiar organizational structure or have you had to create a new approach?
-