SOLVENNA

DIGITAL MARKETING STORIES: DEPARTMENT STORES



MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS SCORE EXAMPLE

March 2026

INTRODUCTION

The following example illustrates how the Solvenna Marketing Effectiveness Score uncovers high-value growth opportunities within a brand's digital marketing and e-commerce ecosystem. While every engagement is customized to the competitive landscape and strategic objectives of the individual brand, the methodology remains consistent.

Using market-based competitive intelligence, we identify the digital experiences, channels, and customer touchpoints with the greatest likelihood to improve customer engagement and revenue performance. Our team then validates these opportunities against your first-party metrics and data to confirm the findings, quantify the business value impact, and prioritize the initiatives most likely to drive meaningful results.

The outcome is a focused, execution-ready growth plan that makes adjustments to the MarTech investments you have already made - without requiring a costly technology overhaul. We partner with your team to implement the highest-impact opportunities, with the objective of delivering measurable improvements in customer engagement, conversion, and revenue within the first 90 days.

Numbers on a spreadsheet rarely tell a story by themselves, but read alongside the explanations behind the metrics, the third-party digital marketing data for Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's, Macy's, Belk, Dillard's, Neiman Marcus, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Kohl's begins to sketch eight distinct strategic personalities.... and growth opportunity.

Brands do not have equal budgets, priorities or talent and these differences manifest themselves in the outcomes.

BACKGROUND

Some of the familiar department store retail brands build loyal, habit-forming relationships with their customers; others are still leaning on new-visitor acquisition and paid media to fill gaps that a stronger owned-channel program would otherwise close. Some exhibit disciplined, well-segmented email programs that customers actually want to open; while others are sending too often, too broadly, and paying for it in low read rates, growing deleted message rates, and spam complaints. What follows is a narrative tour through each brand's digital marketing effort, told through the lens of what each metric in the source data is actually designed to reveal.

First, consider and refer back to the source data.

Metric	Nordstrom	Bloomingdale's	Macy's	Belk	Dillard's	Neiman Marcus	Saks Fifth Avenue	Kohl's
QuickLift Competitive Index Score	57.1	58.7	**59.3**	55.9	56.0	52.7	56.5	58.1
Conv %	**4.1%**	n/a	4.0%	2.8%	2.5%	1.7%	n/a	2.7%
Visits MM	45.4	20.2	**89.7**	13.0	13.7	9.5	16.8	51.8
Unique MM	19.2	7.7	**32.3**	5.6	6.4	5.3	8.0	21.3
% Multi Visit	57.7%	62.0%	**64.0%**	57.2%	53.3%	44.4%	52.8%	58.9%
New Visitors %	56.7%	55.1%	**52.6%**	58.8%	64.1%	65.5%	65.8%	56.4%
Return Visitors %	43.3%	44.9%	**47.4%**	41.2%	35.9%	34.4%	34.2%	43.6%
Bounce %	37.1%	**21.6%**	23.7%	37.6%	35.6%	22.3%	34.4%	25.8%
Page/Visit	6.35	4.27	4.98	**12.13**	4.43	3.25	4.41	5.84
SEO Visits %	30.3%	24.7%	21.2%	22.6%	**45.5%**	32.7%	30.9%	31.6%
Mail Visits %	0.06%	0.07%	0.07%	**0.08%**	0.04%	0.04%	0.04%	0.06%
Referral Visits %	**3.9%**	3.1%	3.9%	3.4%	2.3%	2.5%	2.7%	3.4%
PPC Visits %	3.0%	12.6%	11.5%	14.8%	2.3%	18.9%	11.8%	**11.3%**
Social Visits %	13.1%	**10.2%**	10.6%	10.9%	9.2%	7.7%	12.7%	7.8%
Display Ads Visits %	**1.15%**	1.20%	1.42%	1.46%	0.64%	1.22%	1.25%	1.00%
Owned Visits %	78.9%	**72.9%**	72.6%	69.4%	85.7%	69.7%	71.6%	76.5%
Owned Traffic Retention Index	68	65	73	69	71	63	67	**74**
Paid Visits %	21.1%	**27.1%**	27.4%	30.6%	14.3%	30.3%	28.4%	23.4%
Paid Traffic Retention Index	63	71	74	55	43	**75**	60	64
List MM	10.7	7.0	**45.8**	6.5	1.6	4.3	7.8	37.0
Read %	9.2%	8.0%	7.0%	7.4%	**13.8%**	5.2%	6.8%	9.3%
Del %	12.1%	8.2%	13.0%	9.0%	13.5%	**6.0%**	8.5%	14.4%
Spam %	1.7%	4.6%	5.3%	**0.8%**	5.6%	49.4%	2.7%	3.4%
LIST/UNIQUE Visits	55.6%	91.3%	142.0 %	116.7 %	25.0%	81.8%	**98.1%**	173.8 %
% List/Campaign	11.2%	9.3%	5.2%	**4.6%**	17.2%	31.6%	7.7%	9.5%
Read%/Segmentation	0.82	0.85	1.36	**1.59**	0.80	0.16	0.87	0.98
Email/User/Day	0.90	1.88	2.44	1.75	**0.65**	2.46	1.66	1.07
Read%/Email/User/Day	0.102	0.042	0.029	0.042	**0.212**	0.021	0.041	0.087
Del%/Email/User/Day	0.134	0.044	0.053	0.051	0.206	**0.025**	0.051	0.135

5 KEY TAKEAWAYS



1. Biggest Wins Come From Optimization

The best opportunities come from maximizing existing MarTech investments-not rebuilding your stack.



2. Personalization Reduces Bounce

Lower landing page bounce rates are tied to more relevant landing experiences and better on-site personalization.



3. Email Quality Beats Volume

Disciplined email programs with better segmentation and cadence drive dramatically higher engagement and traffic.



4. Balance Matters

The highest-performing brands keep a healthy balance between owned (ag 75.8% and paid traffic (avg 24.2%).



5. Loyalty Drives Performance

Brands with more return visitors and stronger owned-channel retention consistently eam higher QLCI scores.

> *The leaders aren't spending more. They're creating stronger customer relationships through better personalization, owned marketing, and retention.*

COMPETITIVE SNAPSHOT

Overall Marketing Effectiveness Score



Why Performance Varies

All eight retailers have invested millions in MarTech. Most already own the capabilities to deliver personalized, data-driven customer experiences. The difference isn't the technology. It's how effectively it's activated.

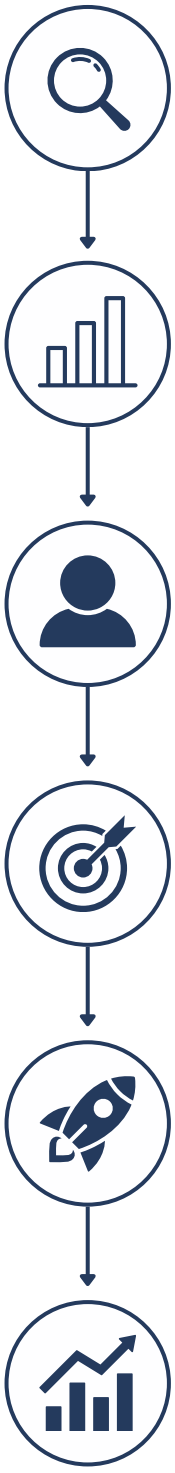
Solvenna helps brands maximize the technology they already own, not replace it.

TOP PERFORMERS BY CATEGORY

HIGHEST CONVERSION	BEST EMAIL PROGRAM	STRONGEST LOYALTY	LOWEST BOUNCE RATE	HIGHEST ENGAGEMENT
Nordstrom	**Dillard's**	**Macy's**	**Bloomingdale's**	**Belk**
4.1%	**17.26**	**47.4%**	**21.6%**	**12.13**
	Email POWER Index	Return Visitors		Pages/Visit

HOW SOLVENNA'S MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS SCORE WORKS

Our Proven 6-Step Process



01 Competitive Intelligence

We analyze digital marketing performance across leading department stores.

02 Digital Benchmarking

We benchmark 40+ metrics across traffic, engagement, acquisition and email.

03 First-Party Validation

We validate findings with your first-party data to uncover the biggest opportunities.

04 Opportunity Prioritization

We identify and rank initiatives with the greatest revenue impact.

05 90-Day Results

We activate high-impact opportunities using your existing MarTech and data and we will be able to show impact within 90 days.

06 Measured Revenue Growth

We deliver measurable improvements in engagement, conversion and revenue.

BRAND SNAPSHOT

macy's

MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS SCORE

59.3

The Scale Leader

Macy's dominates on both scale and customer loyalty, pairing the strongest return-visitor profile with a healthy acquisition mix. The opportunity now is to leverage that foundation through deeper personalization and higher email engagement, driving increased conversion, customer lifetime value, and more revenue from existing customers.

Stengths

- Highest traffic in the benchmark
- Highest customer loyalty (47.4%)
- Strong balance of owned, earned and paid channels
- Solid retention and repeat visits

Watchouts

- Email engagement below top tier
- Personalization opportunity across email and site experience
- Conversion rate below best-in-class

Key Metrics

Owned Traffic	Return Visitors	Conversion Rate	Email Power	Bounce Rate	Pages/Visit
73	47.42%	4.0%	1.81	23.73%	4.98

Solvenna's Recommendation

Macy's should leverage their massive, highly loyal customer base with deeper personalization across digital, email and merchandising to increase conversion. purchase frequency, and average order value. With an owned-versus-paid traffic mix already near the competitive sweet spot, focus on channel efficiency and customer lifetime value

BRAND SNAPSHOT

KOHL'S

MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS SCORE

58.1

The Loyalty Builder

Kohl's combines a strong owned traffic mix with healthy customer retention, creating a solid foundation for long-term growth. Improving conversion efficiency is the fastest path to unlocking additional revenue.

Stengths

- Strong owned traffic (76.6%)
- Industry-leading email read rate (9.28%)
- Strong owned traffic retention

Watchouts

- Conversion below benchmark
- Lower overall customer loyalty than Macy's

Key Metrics

Owned Traffic	Return Visitors	Conversion Rate	Email Power	Bounce Rate	Pages/Visit
74	43.62%	2.7%	2.76	25.8%	5.84

Solvenna's Recommendation

Focus on converting loyal customers more efficiently through personalized merchandising, product recommendations, and lifecycle marketing to maximize the value of an already-engaged audience.

BRAND SNAPSHOT

Dillard's

MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS SCORE

56

The Owned Channel Champion

Dillard's relies less on paid acquisition than its peers and generates the highest share of owned traffic, supported by the strongest Email Power Index. The next opportunity is improving onsite engagement and conversion.

Stengths

- Highest owned traffic (85.7%)
- Best Email Power Index (19.14)
- Highest email engagement

Watchouts

- Lowest repeat visitation
- Lowest conversion
- Highest bounce among peers

Key Metrics

Owned Traffic	Return Visitors	Conversion Rate	Email Power	Bounce Rate	Pages/Visit
71	35.9%	2.5%	19.14	35.62%	4.43

Solvenna's Recommendation

Leverage Dillard's exceptional owned audience by optimizing the onsite experience and personalization to improve repeat visits and convert high-intent traffic into more revenue.

BRAND SNAPSHOT

bloomingdale's

MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS SCORE

58.7

The Digital Luxury Leader

Bloomingdale's pairs premium digital commerce with the highest conversion rate in the benchmark, proving its ability to turn shoppers into buyers. The opportunity is expanding customer loyalty and retention to match its conversion performance.

Stengths

- Highest conversion (4.1%)
- Lowest bounce rate
- Strong digital revenue mix

Watchouts

- Owned traffic retention trails peers
- Email engagement has room to grow

Key Metrics

Owned Traffic	Return Visitors	Conversion Rate	Email Power	Bounce Rate	Pages/Visit
65	44.9%	2.9%	3.53	21.64%	4.27

Solvenna's Recommendation

Build stronger customer relationships beyond the first purchase through personalized lifecycle marketing, loyalty activation, and first-party audience growth.

BRAND SNAPSHOT

NORDSTROM

MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS SCORE

57.1

The High-Value Experience

Nordstrom delivers exceptional engagement through high page depth and premium digital experiences, but converting and retaining those shoppers remains the biggest opportunity.

Stengths

- Highest pages per visit (6.35)
- Strong digital commerce mix
- High-quality browsing engagement

Watchouts

- Low conversion
- Weak paid traffic retention
- Bounce rate above peer average

Key Metrics

Owned Traffic	Return Visitors	Conversion Rate	Email Power	Bounce Rate	Pages/Visit
68	43.26%	4.1%	9.5	37.12%	6.35

Solvenna's Recommendation

Capitalize on high shopper engagement by improving conversion paths, optimizing checkout journeys, and increasing personalized follow-up across paid and owned channels.

BRAND SNAPSHOT

belk

MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS SCORE

55.9

The Growth Opportunity

Belk generates meaningful traffic but trails the competitive set across loyalty, conversion, and owned-channel performance. Strengthening customer retention and personalization represents its largest opportunity for growth.

Stengths

- Healthy paid traffic mix
- Competitive traffic scale
- Strong page depth (12.13 pages/visit)

Watchouts

- Lowest QuickLift Score
- Lower return visitors
- Email engagement trails leaders

Key Metrics

Owned Traffic	Return Visitors	Conversion Rate	Email Power	Bounce Rate	Pages/Visit
69	41.2%	2.8%	2.9	37.62%	12.13

Solvenna's Recommendation

Prioritize first-party customer growth through personalization, email optimization, and retention programs to increase repeat purchases and improve conversion efficiency.

Nordstrom: *A Conversion Specialist with an Engagement Problem*

Nordstrom's story is one of contrast. Site conversion rate, the data explains, is key because it shows how effective a brand is at moving customers through the purchase experience — and on that measure, Nordstrom is the clear leader among brands with reported data, converting 4.1% of visits versus a field that mostly sits in the 2.5% to 3.25% range. That is a real commercial advantage: more of every visit Nordstrom earns turns into a sale than at almost any competitor measured. But the same report card shows real friction once shoppers arrive. Nordstrom's Bounce % of 37.1% is the second-highest in the group, meaning more visitors land and leave without going deeper into the site than at all but one competitor — a pattern the data associates with weaker personalization. The net impression is a brand that closes the sale better than almost anyone once a visitor is engaged, but loses a larger share of visitors before that engagement happens.

The QuickLift – Alluded to above, the Nordstrom QuickLift addresses early-session abandonment by improving campaign and landing page relevance and on-site personalization, allowing more first-time visitors to reach the highly effective purchase journey that already delivers the strongest conversion rate in the competitive set. Because the brand converts engaged shoppers exceptionally well, even modest reductions in bounce rate unlock significant incremental revenue without requiring additional traffic acquisition. All of this can be accomplished using the MarTech they already have.

Belk: *Deep Engagement, Inconsistent First Impressions*

Belk's data tells two different stories depending on which part of the visit you examine. Once visitors commit to browsing, Belk wins decisively: its Page/Visit figure of 12.13 is nearly double the next-closest brand and almost four times Neiman Marcus's 3.25, meaning Belk shoppers who stick around explore far more of the site than shoppers anywhere else in the group. Belk's email program tells a similarly strong story — it has the finest list segmentation of any brand at a 4.6% List/Campaign ratio (lower is better here, since the data explains that finer segmentation drives more relevant campaigns), and that segmentation pays off in the best Read%/Segmentation score in the set, 1.59. But Belk's Bounce % of 37.6% is the highest of all eight brands, meaning more first-time landings end in an immediate exit than anywhere else. Read together, Belk looks like a brand whose deeper personalization and email targeting are genuinely strong, but whose landing-page experience or initial traffic quality is not yet pulling its weight — a large share of visits never get the chance to benefit from the deep engagement the rest of the data shows is possible.

The QuickLift – Meaningfully reducing its industry-high bounce rate by improving campaign to landing page relevance is the cornerstone of the Belk opportunity. This by definition improves traffic quality and with early-session personalization more visitors will experience the highly engaging shopping journey already proven by its market-leading pages per visit. With best-in-class email segmentation and exceptionally deep on-site engagement among retained visitors, even modest improvements in first-visit retention could significantly amplify the performance of Belk's existing digital marketing investments.

Dillards: *The Owned-Channel and Email Specialist*

If one brand in this data set has built its program around organic strength rather than paid spend, it is Dillard's. Its SEO Visits % of 45.5% is more than double Macy's and the highest in the group by a wide margin, and its overall owned-traffic share of 85.7% is the most owned-heavy mix among all eight brands — far above the 75.8% peer average. However, an owned percentage this high is not automatically good news: it can also signal a brand declining to invest in paid traffic, which caps how much total demand it can capture even when its organic program is strong. Dillard's email results, however, are unambiguously the best in the report. Its Read % of 13.8% is the highest of any brand, its Email/User/Day of 0.65 is the most disciplined send cadence in the group, and its Read%/Email/User/Day of 0.212 — the relationship between read rate and how often a customer is emailed — is also the best in the set. All of that comes together in the Email POWER Index, which measures how effectively email actually drives site traffic: Dillard's score of 17.26 is nearly fifteen points clear of the next-best brand, evidence that its disciplined, well-read email program is converting into real visits at a rate no competitor matches. The one weak spot in this otherwise strong owned-channel story is paid traffic quality: Dillard's Paid Traffic Retention Index of 43 is the lowest in the group, meaning the comparatively small amount of paid traffic it does buy is the least likely of any brand's to engage beyond a single page...no point in paying for bounces.

The QuickLift – Dillard's QuickLift opportunity is not to reduce paid media—it is to fix it. The brand has already proven it can generate exceptional demand through SEO and best-in-class email, but its Paid Traffic Retention Index is the lowest in the competitive set, indicating that the paid visitors it does acquire are the least likely to engage beyond a single page. Rather than pulling back on paid investment, altogether, Dillard's should improve campaign-to-landing-page relevance, audience targeting, and landing page personalization so every paid click has a realistic opportunity to convert instead of becoming an expensive bounce.

Kohl's: *The Balanced Operator*

Kohl's profile reads as the most evenly built program in the data set, without a single standout strength or glaring weakness. Its Owned Traffic Retention Index of 74 is the highest in the group, meaning visitors who arrive through owned channels like search, direct, and email are the most likely of any brand's to engage beyond one page — a meaningful signal of site relevance and personalization quality. Its Paid Visits % of 23.5% sits close to the peer average, in line with the data's guidance that a reasonable, moderate paid share is healthier than either extreme. Where Kohl's lags is on the email side: its Del % of 14.4% is the highest in the group, meaning more of its emails are deleted unopened than at any competitor, a pattern that can erode sender reputation over time even though Kohl's list size, at 37 million names, is the second-largest in the report. Kohl's overall story is one of solid, dependable execution across most of the funnel, with an email program that has scale but has not yet matched the read and retention discipline that Dillard's and Belk have built.

The QuickLift – Kohl's will increase revenue with a transformation of its scaled email program from a reach channel into a performance channel by improving message relevance, segmentation, and cadence to reduce industry-leading delete rates and increase meaningful customer engagement. With the strongest owned traffic retention in the competitive set and consistently solid performance across the digital funnel, even modest improvements in email engagement could elevate Kohl's from a well-executed program to one that consistently outperforms its peers.

The narrative is that the foundation is already there:

Great owned traffic retention ✔️
Balanced acquisition mix ✔️
Large email database ✔️

The missing piece is simply making its largest owned marketing asset work harder. That's a fundamental QuickLift because improving email engagement is one of the fastest, lowest-cost ways to improve revenue without rebuilding the rest of the digital experience.

Saks Fifth Avenue: *Strong on Email Capture, Thin on Customer Loyalty*

Saks Fifth Avenue's data points in two different directions depending on the channel. On the list-management side, Saks is the strongest performer in the report on LIST/UNIQUE Visits, the ratio of list size to unique visitors, which the data explains should ideally sit close to 100%: Saks lands at 98.1%, nearly a perfect match between the size of its subscriber list and its visitor base, suggesting an email capture program that is neither under- nor over-built relative to its traffic. On the loyalty side, however, Saks shows the weakest customer relationships in the group: its Return Visitors % of 34.2% is the lowest of all eight brands, and its New Visitors % of 65.8% is correspondingly the highest, meaning Saks depends more heavily on first-time traffic than any competitor measured. Because the data frames return visitors as evidence of stronger brand loyalty, this combination suggests Saks has built an efficient mechanism for capturing the email addresses of the visitors it gets, but has not yet built the kind of habitual, repeat relationship with its customer base that brands like Macy's and Bloomingdale's enjoy.

The QuickLift – Saks needs to stop optimizing for email capture and start optimizing for customer retention. Despite maintaining one of the most efficient email capture programs in the competitive set, Saks has the lowest percentage of returning visitors and the highest reliance on first-time traffic, indicating that its marketing is acquiring customers more effectively than it is creating loyalty. The priority should be strengthening post-acquisition engagement through personalized lifecycle marketing, loyalty activation, and on-site experiences that encourage repeat visits and long-term customer value rather than continually replacing customers at the top of the funnel. Collecting an email address isn't the finish line—it's the starting line.

Neiman Marcus: *A Program Under Strain Across Nearly Every Channel*

Neiman Marcus's story is the most cautionary in this data set, and it is consistent across nearly every section of the report rather than confined to one weak channel. It posts the lowest QuickLift Competitive Index Score (52.7), the lowest Conv % (1.7%, less than half Nordstrom's rate), the lowest traffic volume (9.46 million visits), and the lowest multi-visit rate (44.4%) of all eight brands. Its Owned Traffic Retention Index of 63 is the weakest in the group, meaning the organic, direct, and email visits it does earn are the least likely to engage beyond a single page. Its email program shows the same strain: Read % is the lowest in the set at 5.2%, segmentation is the loosest at a 31.6% List/Campaign ratio, and send frequency is the heaviest at 2.46 emails per user per day — a combination the data explicitly warns against, since over-sending to a poorly segmented list typically depresses read rates further, which is exactly the pattern visible here. It appears they are harvesting the final bit of value from their list asset. Not surprisingly, the most serious single number in the entire report belongs to Neiman Marcus as well: a Spam % of 49.4%, roughly sixty times Belk's rate of 0.8% and dramatically higher than every other brand measured. At that level, a meaningful share of Neiman Marcus's email sends are being flagged by inbox providers, which suppress deliverability for the brand's entire list. — a risk that compounds every other weakness already visible in its Conv %, Read %, and Email POWER Index (1.18, also the lowest in the group). Where Neiman Marcus does lead the field is Paid Traffic Retention Index (75, the best in the set), suggesting that on the rare occasions it does invest in paid acquisition, that traffic engages well once it lands — a bright spot inside an otherwise difficult overall picture.

The QuickLift – A full rebuild of its owned digital marketing before investing in additional demand generation is key. The brand combines the lowest conversion rate, weakest customer retention, and lowest-performing email program in the competitive set with an exceptionally high spam complaint rate, suggesting that over-mailing broad audiences has undermined both engagement and deliverability. With the strongest Paid Traffic Retention Index in the group, Neiman Marcus has clear evidence that relevant, well-targeted visitors will engage once they arrive; the priority is to apply that same precision to email segmentation, messaging, and lifecycle marketing so owned channels become an asset instead of a liability. Clearly, Neiman Marcus doesn't have an acquisition problem—it has an owned marketing execution problem. Until email relevance, segmentation, and deliverability are repaired, simply generating more traffic will do little to improve overall digital performance while wasting significant resources.

SOLVENNA QUICKLIFT IS THE ANSWER

Solvenna's program doesn't just identify opportunities—it helps brands turn competitive insights into measurable revenue growth. Once Solvenna reveals the highest-impact opportunities across your digital channels, our analytics team conducts a complimentary review of your first-party site analytics to validate our outside-in findings and prioritize the initiatives with the greatest potential impact.

Within two weeks, we return with a customized growth roadmap that highlights where your brand can outperform the competition, how we recommend activating the technology and data assets you already own, and exactly how success will be measured. If the strategy aligns with your goals, we move quickly into implementation with a singular objective: delivering meaningful, measurable business results that can be verified within the first 90 days.

See What's Possible Beyond the Benchmark
The data shows where you stand.
Solvenna shows you how to win.

Let’s set up an introductory meeting to discuss the overview report provided in this package.