A portrait of Aarti Bhaskaran, a woman with dark, wavy hair, smiling. She is wearing a red cardigan over a patterned top and a red necklace. The background is dark and out of focus.

# Marketing across Canada's multicultural landscape? Read new research from MediaCom Canada

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Opportunities to reach Canada's expanding audience of culturally diverse consumers are on the rise. Here, Aarti Bhaskaran, Head, Business Insights and Analytics at MediaCom Canada, shares her perspective on how marketers can effectively connect with these consumers.

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Canada is one of the most culturally diverse places in the world: [Currently, one in five Canadians are born outside of Canada](#). In fact, I'm one of them. I moved to Canada a year ago. I'm originally from India, but I've travelled to a lot of countries and worked in several markets, including Singapore, so this is a topic that's close to my heart.

Toronto and Vancouver, in particular, already consist of 49–51% of residents who were not born in this country but call Canada home.<sup>1</sup> And this culturally diverse segment is only getting bigger: approximately one-third of Canada's population will be a visible minority by 2031.<sup>1</sup>

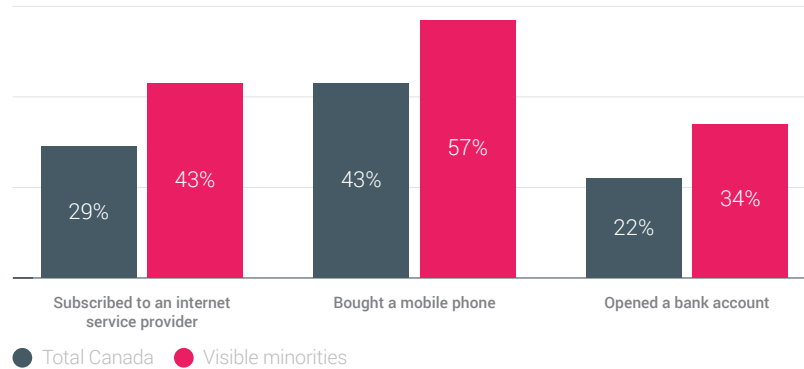
We wanted to learn more about the behaviour of Canadians who identify as visible minorities, so we conducted a study to find out how language and culture influence their media consumption habits, brand consideration, and purchase decisions. From June to July 2017, [MediaCom](#) polled self-identified minorities (called “visible minorities” in this article) and compared their responses against the rest of Canada. We also personally interviewed a number of Canadians who identify as visible minorities in September.

This growing segment of the population speaks to how critical it is for today's marketers to connect with culturally diverse communities. And yet crafting a marketing strategy that genuinely resonates with these audiences is more difficult than ever. Only 25% of people who self-identify as a visible minority feel that brands speak to people of their cultural backgrounds directly.<sup>2</sup>

## Finances and spending trends

One of the first things we looked at was finances. Many first-generation visible minorities are professionals with significant savings who want to establish a life here in Canada. And they want to buy all of the things that go along with it, like a house or car.

### % of population who in past 12 months...



While their household incomes are not higher than those of the average Canadian consumer, survey respondents who self-identified as first-generation visible minorities tend to spend more across a number of purchase categories—from personal care to electronics to automobiles.<sup>3</sup> These consumers make up 57% of those who bought a mobile phone, 43% of those who subscribed to an internet service provider, and 34% of those who opened a bank account in the past 12 months in Canada.<sup>4</sup>

### Culturally diverse consumers = mobile-first consumers

These groups are also mobile-first consumers. Why? Because most first-generation visible minorities come from countries that have often skipped the broadband phase and moved directly to mobile to access the internet. In fact, these consumers reported spending 42% more time on mobile, 20% less time watching TV, and 12% less time listening to the radio each week when indexed against the average Canadian consumer.<sup>5</sup>

With consumers spending more and more time on their smartphones, it's no surprise that they encounter more digital touchpoints than other Canadians. On average, first-generation visible minorities say they are exposed to 13 digital touchpoints per week, second-generation visible minorities say they are exposed to 12 digital touchpoints per week, and the average Canadian consumer says they are only exposed to nine digital touchpoints per week.<sup>4</sup>

## **Media helps with belonging and facilitates connections**

We also discovered that many visible minorities want to maintain a strong connection to their cultures, and they use digital media to stay in touch with their roots.

Both first- and second-generation visible minorities utilize media as a means to connect. What's more, these consumers use media as a form of self-expression and inspiration. "I watch some YouTube videos—I watch how-to videos on barbeque pork," said one second-generation Chinese female, 46.

## **Different generations, different expectations**

There are a lot of commonalities in the way first- and second-generation visible minorities consume media—not just in terms of reach but the sheer volume of media they consume online. We also wanted to find out if there were any glaring differences.

We found that the motivation behind what they do and what they're looking for is quite different. This came out when we were conducting the qualitative interviews as well. For the first generation, it was more about the need to fit in after they've moved to a new country. These consumers are establishing themselves in Canada, and they appreciate that sense of acknowledgement when an advertiser speaks to them in their native language.

"When me and my friends see [an ad in our native language] all the attention is there," said one first-generation Southeast Asian male, 44.

**“I feel Canadian. Not culturally but in other ways. It's mostly because I've lived most of my life here, and I've been brought up with the values here.”**

For the second generation, many consider themselves Canadians first and visible minorities second. “I feel Canadian. Not culturally but in other ways. It's mostly because I've lived most of my life here, and I've been brought up with the values here.” said another second-generation Southeast Asian female, 30.

For many of the second-generation multicultural consumers we interviewed, it was more about inclusivity. Their native language is more about feeling connected to their culture.

“When I first got here when I was a kid, all I ever wanted to be was like everyone else. Growing up, I wasn't interested in being connected to my culture because all I wanted to do was fit in. Right now I really try super, super hard to stay connected. I found I really needed to embrace cultural things,” she continued.

## **Marketing in a multicultural world**

As the Canadian marketplace becomes more diverse, it's important for marketers to balance mass reach with specific targeting. Canada's multicultural groups are digitally savvy consumers, and they expect brands to reach them with meaningful messaging in the right context.

So what can brands and marketers do to reach this unique audience? Win these consumers over from the beginning as they make Canada their home. Make sure you're reaching them where they spend their time: on mobile. And ensure you are making an effort to have content for them in their native tongue: Nearly two-thirds of visible minorities say it is important to communicate in their native language in advertising because they feel closer and it makes the brand appear more meaningful.<sup>2</sup>

The way in which advertisers are approaching multicultural marketing—the message, the tonality—that’s where there are lessons to be learned. This group cannot be overlooked or underestimated. More than a third of consumers feel that if their ethnicity is represented, it is often done in a stereotypical manner.<sup>2</sup>

Marketers can serve an ad in a native language, but that is just the first step. They need to create content that accurately represents consumers of different cultural backgrounds. The longer-term goal would be to build culturally meaningful connections with these consumers that celebrates diversity. Brands need to make a sincere attempt to include visible minorities while also making an effort to understand the meaning behind any cultural nuances they want to portray in their advertising.

#### *Methodology*

*MediaCom recently conducted new qualitative and quantitative research around “people who self-identify as visible minorities” in Canada. They surveyed six ethnic groups: Chinese, South Asian, Latin/Central/South American, Black, Arab, and Southeast Asian (including Japanese and Korean). They compared the responses of these visible minorities to “Total Canada” (visible minorities + the rest of Canada), hence calling it “the average Canadian consumer.” Phase one of the quantitative research was conducted from June to July 2017, while phase two was conducted from September to October 2017 among a representative sample of n=2,062 visible minorities and n=4,105 “Total Canada” consumers. The qualitative research was conducted in September 2017 among visible minorities only. The total sample for the survey was 6,167. It was conducted in both English and French.*

## Sources

- 1 Statistics Canada 2017, Visible minority: People who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.
- 2 MediaCom Proprietary Research, Marketing to the Canadian Mosaic, base=1,150 visible minorities.
- 3 Vividata, Q2 2017.
- 4 MediaCom Proprietary Research, Marketing to the Canadian Mosaic, base=5,017.
- 5 MediaCom Proprietary Research, Marketing to the Canadian Mosaic, base=5,017, Vividata 2017 Q2, base=43,356.



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