



TRAVEL

Mobile Growth Playbook

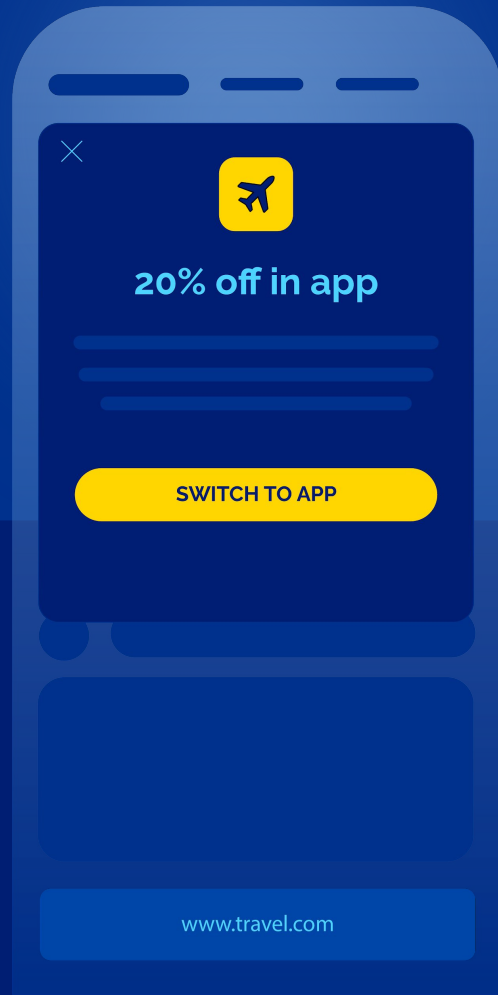


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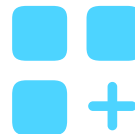
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Travel Mobile Growth Playbook

In this playbook, we explore ways that travel brands can cost-effectively grow their mobile app. With first-hand advice, industry data, and quick tips, we take the guesswork out of mobile growth and empower you to thrive.

Let's start with the state of travel today.



State of travel

State of travel

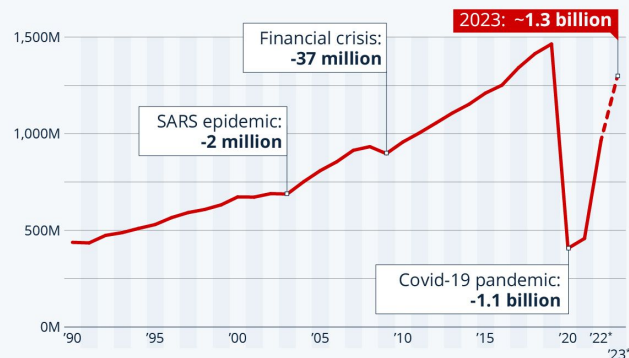
The travel industry is experiencing a resurgence, with international tourism nearly recovered from the impacts of COVID-19. In 2024, travel and tourism revenue is projected to grow at an annual rate of **3.47%**, reaching a staggering market volume of \$1.063 trillion by 2028.

Despite periods of high inflation and global unrest, travelers are eager to hit the road. **93%** of travelers expect to take a trip within the next six months, and **39%** say their 2024 travel budgets will be higher than last year's.

As the industry rebounds, travel brands must embrace digital solutions to meet the evolving needs and preferences of travelers. One surefire way to connect with customers is through mobile apps.

International Tourism Approaches Pre-Pandemic Levels

International tourist arrivals worldwide since 1990



* 2022 figure is provisional, 2023 figure as forecast in Nov. 2023

Source: UNWTO



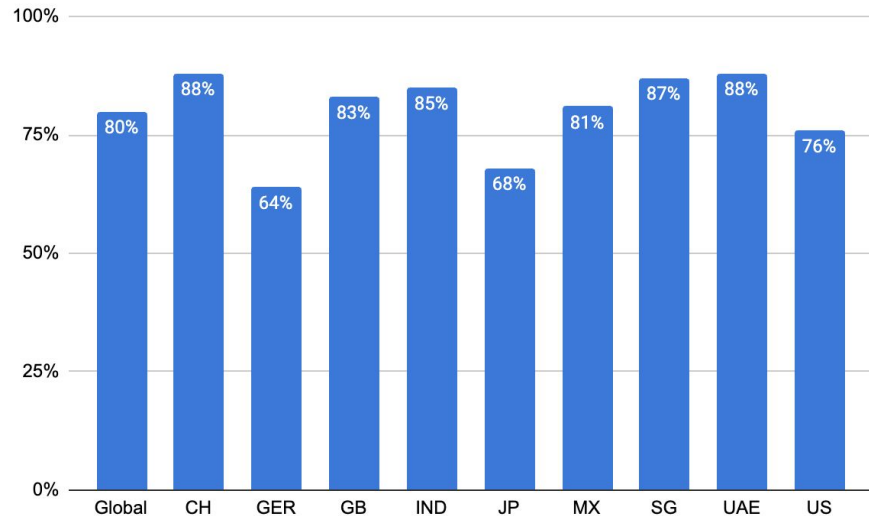
statista

State of travel: The world has gone digital

By 2028, online sales are expected to account for **76%** of total revenue in the global travel and tourism market.

Travelers now rely on digital platforms for nearly every aspect of their journeys, from planning and booking to car rentals and dining. **80%** of surveyed global travelers say being able to book a trip entirely online is important to them, and a significant **43%** agree that technology helps alleviate the stress associated with travel.

"Being able to book a trip entirely online is important to me"

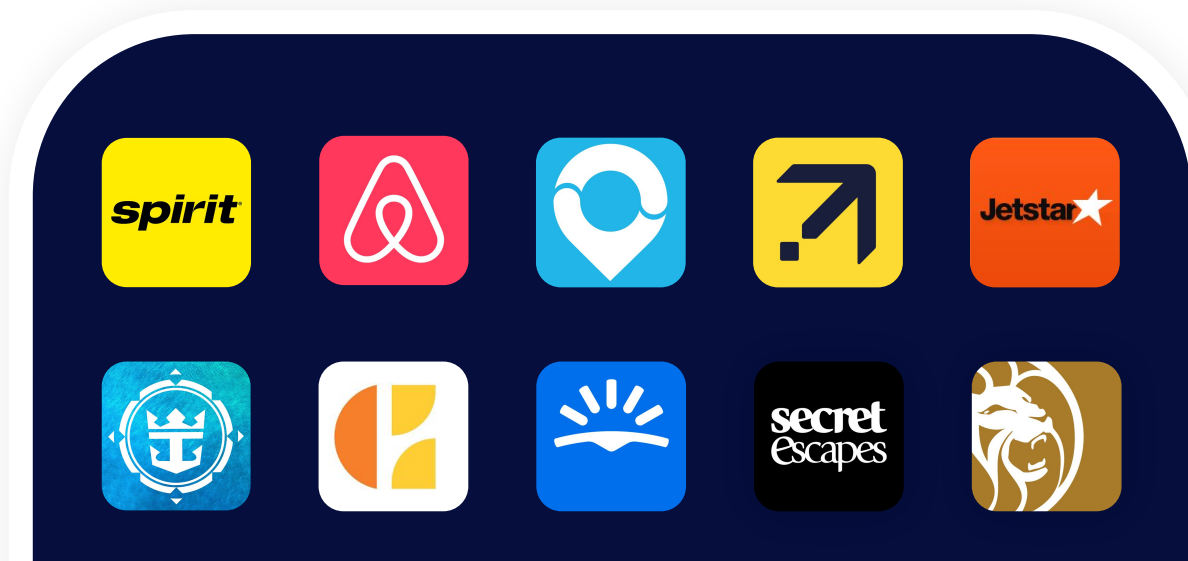


Source: Hilton/Ipsos

State of travel: Mobile is massive

With **70%** of digital time spent on mobile and **88%** of that time dedicated to using apps, travel brands cannot afford to ignore mobile. According to a Hilton/Ipsos poll, **76%** of global respondents say having travel apps that simplify their travel experience is important to them. And app users are better in every way.

Branch's **Mobile Growth survey** of mobile growth leaders all over the world conducted between July 2022 and January 2023 found that for every one dollar a non-app user spends, app users spend \$3.30 — **more than 3 times as much.**



Mobile drives value

Mobile drives value for travel brands

Mobile not only saves money but also drives value for travel brands — and perhaps more importantly, for your customers.

Mobile experiences are seamless and convenient.

Mobile apps have revolutionized how travelers engage with travel brands. With just a few taps, travelers can check in for flights, receive real-time updates, book rides, or rent a car — all within a single app. This level of convenience not only enhances customer satisfaction but also fosters loyalty and repeat business. Moreover, apps enable personalized interactions, ensuring travelers receive relevant offers and alerts tailored to their individual preferences.

Mobile creates opportunities for ancillary revenue.

Apps open doors to upgrades and upsells, allowing travelers to enhance their trips with easy access to premium services and amenities right from their phones. For brands, this means increased add-on sales and less unused inventory.

Apps make loyalty programs more effective.

With apps, travelers can track their loyalty points, stay logged in, and redeem rewards while on the move. By maximizing loyalty programs, travel brands improve retention of valuable customers and increase lifetime value. And with your app just a tap away, you have more opportunities to notify and encourage customers to engage with your loyalty program.

Customer service is better on mobile.

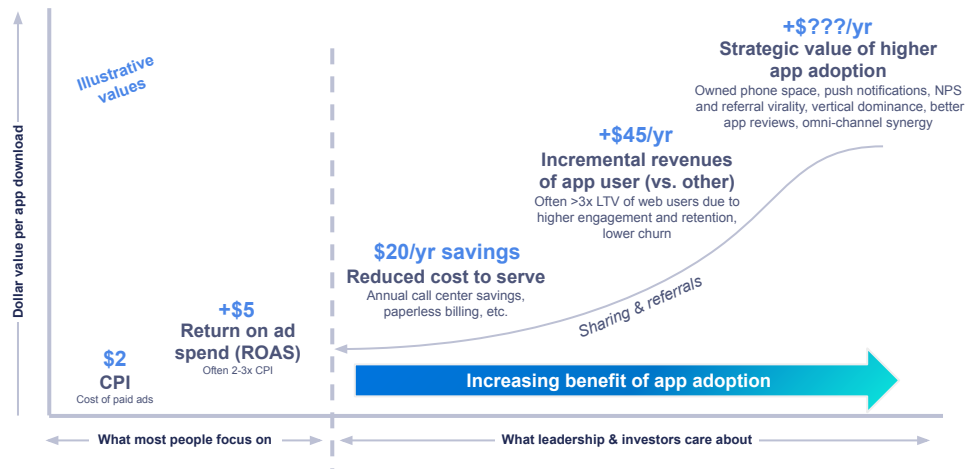
Mobile apps empower travelers to independently manage their journeys and access support as needed. With self-service options at their fingertips, customers are more likely to manage travel-related tasks on their own or turn to digital support options like chatbots, alleviating pressure on call centers and reducing cost to serve.

Mobile reduces costs

Despite the costs of building and maintaining apps, they have proven to actually help reduce business costs over time.

For instance, travel brands generate significant cost savings on staffing and infrastructure when customers make bookings through an app or opt for digital service instead of dialing into a call center. But the savings don't stop there. Transitioning to digital ticketing and boarding passes reduces the reliance on printed and physical materials. Plus, apps provide a direct channel for marketing and communication with customers, reducing the need for costly traditional advertising methods.

What is an app install worth?

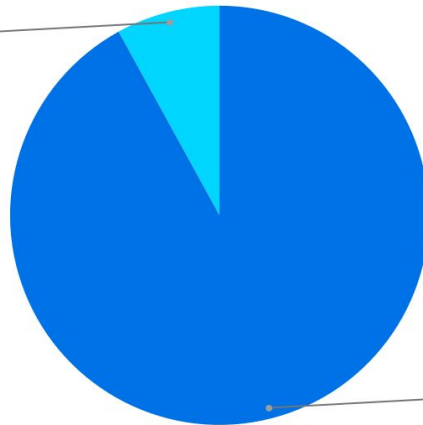


Mobile apps are the primary driver of customer growth and retention

92% of respondents to the [Mobile Growth survey](#) said their mobile app was either a very important or the most important platform when considering customer acquisition and retention.

How important is your mobile app to customer growth and retention?

Somewhat or not at all
8.0%



Most or very
92.0%

Source: Branch Mobile Growth Survey, 2022/23

State of mobile

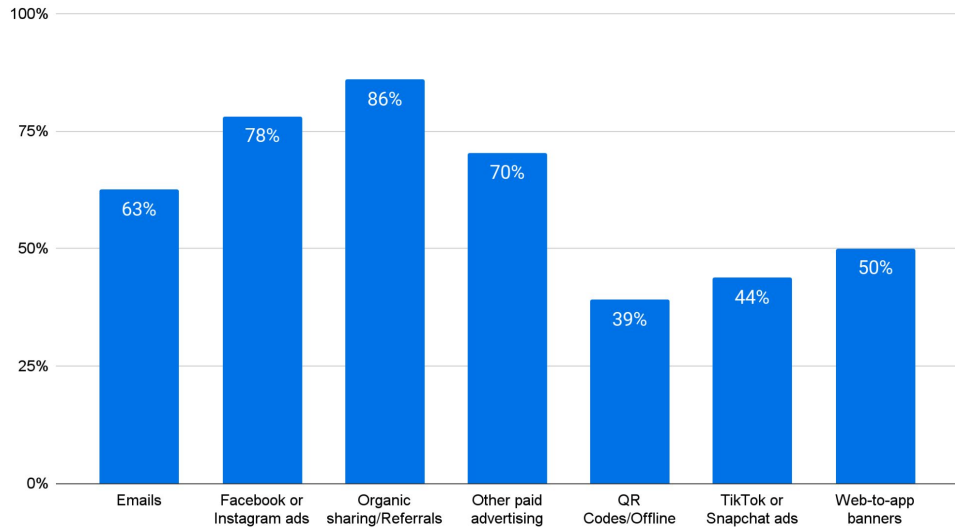
State of mobile: Acquisition

Branch **Mobile Growth Survey**

respondents reported significant investment in organic channels to acquire new app users.

Organic sharing and referrals were ranked the most successful app acquisition channel and were the most-used acquisition channel, leveraged by 86% of respondents. Facebook or Instagram ads were still ranked the second most successful app acquisition channel and also the second most-used acquisition channel, with 78% of respondents running ads on these platforms.

Acquisition channels used for new app users



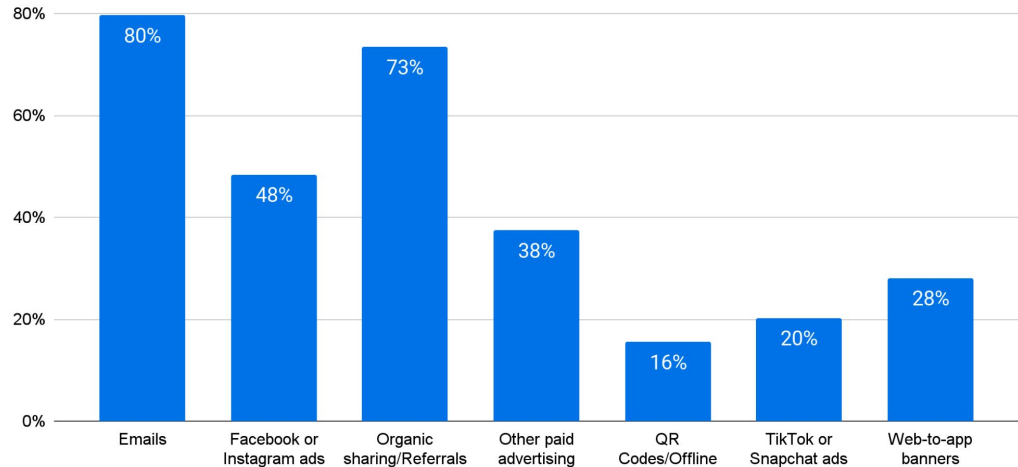
Source: Branch Mobile Growth Survey, 2022/23

State of mobile: Engagement

When it comes to engaging app users, only 36% use four or more channels to engage app users.

80% of respondents used email to engage app users, while 78% used organic sharing/referrals. Less than half of those surveyed used other channels like Facebook or Instagram ads (48%), other paid advertising (38%), web-to-app banners (28%), TikTok or Snapchat ads (20%), or QR codes and offline channels (16%) to engage app users.

Retention channels used to engage app users



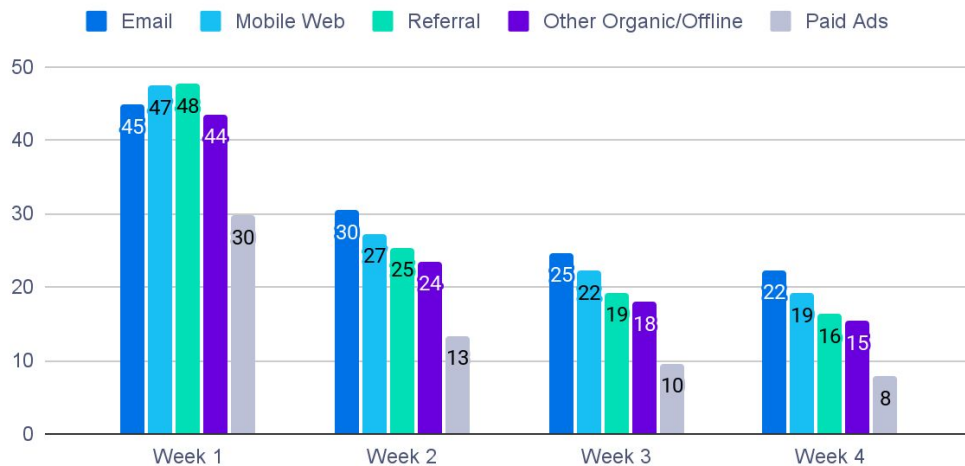
Source: Branch Mobile Growth Survey, 2022/23

State of mobile: Retention is the new bar

In the past, getting users to your app was pretty straight-forward: convince them to download the app. Then, they would keep coming back because it's right there on the homescreen. But today, it's more important than ever to make sure you find users who will *do* something in your app.

Truly profitable apps must develop deeper relationships with their customers. Engagement and retention, which hinge on organic channels, are the new bars for success. A Branch Benchmark study found that channels like email, mobile web, and referrals typically have around **2x or higher** retention rate than ads after four weeks.

Retention rate for acquisition channel



Source: Branch Benchmark Study, 2022

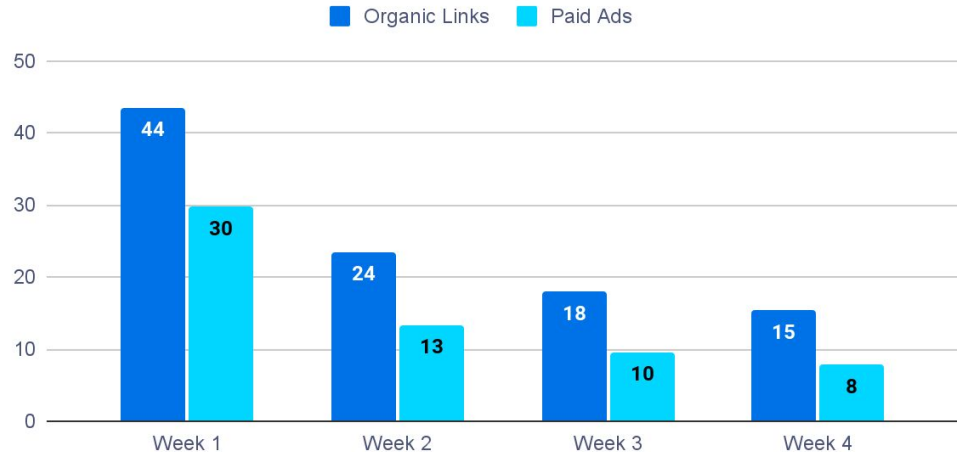
State of mobile: Advertising

Paid ads have historically been a predictable scale driver of user acquisition and conversion — and travel industry digital ad spending is expected to reach **\$7.24** billion in 2024, far surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

However, our data shows that this predictability comes at a cost. Users acquired through paid advertising maintain lower retention rates than users acquired through organic channels.

The good news is, many companies are diversifying their focus across channels. Among survey respondents, **70%** reported using four or more channels to acquire new app users, and just 5% of respondents reported paid ads as their only channel.

Retention rate for organic vs. paid links



Source: Branch Benchmark Study, 2022

State of mobile: What does it mean for travel brands?

Despite the clear benefits of mobile, the current state of the industry is deeply complex and challenging. Many new and ongoing roadblocks prevent brands from harnessing the true value of their app:

- Mobile measurement is increasingly complicated and fragmented.
- The deprecation of IDFA and [SKAdNetwork](#) requires vigilant attention and adjustments.
- [Privacy Sandbox](#) will limit the sharing of user data with third parties and the ability to operate without cross-app identifiers, including advertising IDs.
- Privacy is king, and users expect theirs to be protected.
- Advertising is less reliable in providing turnkey growth than it has been historically.
- Frustrating mobile experiences persist due to platform challenges, and users have no patience for broken experiences.
- Walled gardens continue to make it difficult to acquire new users, engage current users, and accelerate app growth.

But travel brands that embrace an app-first strategy and select the right partners enjoy a relatively simple solution — mobile linking and measurement — that not only takes the pain out of these challenges but also helps business grow.

Deep linking for growth

Drive users to your app from all channels

Inspire users to take action with powerful deep links that work on any channel and bring users to the in-app content they want. But what are deep links anyway?

Deep links take users directly to relevant content in your app or website, rather than a generic homepage. Once created, you can use a single deep link across all your channels: email, ads, QR codes, smart banners, in-app notifications, social media, and more.

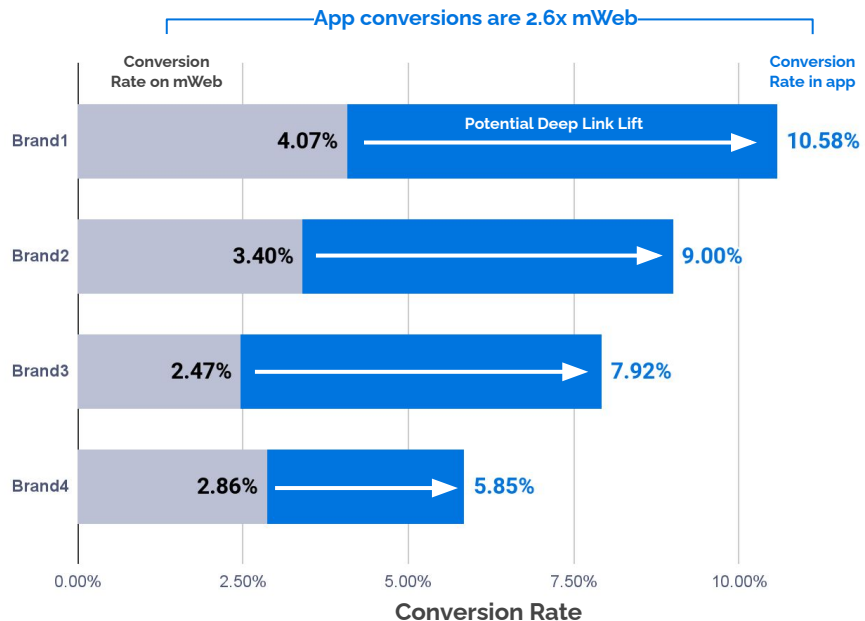
- **Deferred deep links** pass context and route users to specific content through an install. The link will first redirect to the App Store or Play Store, and once the app is downloaded and opened, the user will be taken to the content they expect.
- **Direct deep links** route users to the correct app content when the app is already installed.

Deep linking enables better user experiences by connecting users to their desired content, facilitating personalized experiences and interactions, and breaking down app barriers. Plus, data from deep links allows travel brands to better understand user behavior and continuously optimize user journeys. All of these benefits lead to business growth.

Conversions in apps are higher than mobile web

Deep links are an essential part of any mobile marketing campaign.

Branch's recent deep dive into four major hotel brands showed that conversions were **2.6x higher** in the app than on the mobile web.



Source: Branch Study, 2023

Accurate attribution for growth

Eliminate attribution blind spots

The only way to continue growing and optimizing your marketing strategies is to have the right data about what's working and what's not. That's where accurate attribution comes into play. Attribution assigns the value of a marketing effort back to the actual source that drove the desired action, such as a channel or campaign. For example, mobile attribution can determine where a user performed a desired behavior — like making a reservation, installing a mobile app, or completing a survey — and then credit a marketing tactic — like a mobile ad or webinar — for its success.

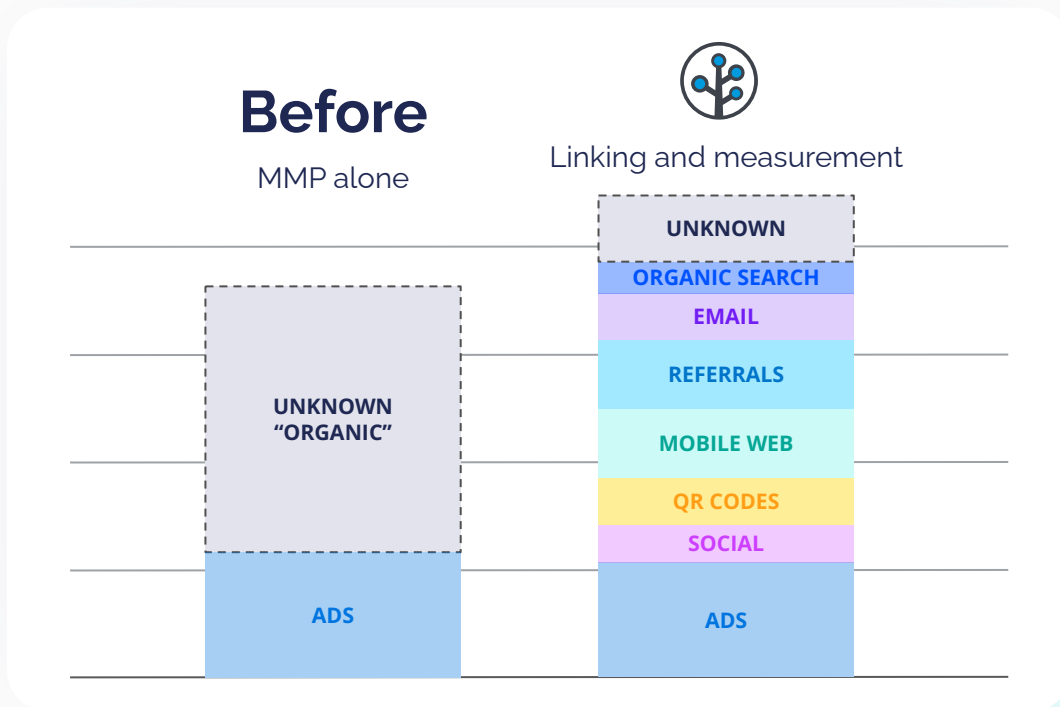
But as the number of marketing channels grows, it becomes even more important to pinpoint which ones drive results. Mobile app attribution providers are able to solve this mystery. They figure out where a user originated and track their future conversions. This data is a gold mine for travel brands that need to make their ad spent count.

When brands understand attribution in mobile marketing, they can also leverage these insights to improve user acquisition, user retention, and the user experience for their apps, which can also help build engagement and loyalty — all influencing increased growth.

Better together: Linking and measurement

Some of the best advice for efficient scale and growth is to invest in more than one area, especially if your budget is limited. Diversify channels and tactics to reach more people and keep them engaged.

Measurement is the growth leader's secret weapon. Measure it all with deep linking for your owned and earned channels, coupled with measurement and attribution for all your paid channels. Having true cross-channel, cross-platform measurement and attribution is the only way to understand what works and what doesn't, where to invest more or less, and how to optimize campaigns.



State of mobile: What now?

The current state of mobile might seem overwhelming, but it also presents one of the best opportunities for continued growth. To succeed, travel brands must embrace an app-first approach.

Let's examine some real-world, cost-effective examples of:

ACQUISITION

**How to acquire app users
cost effectively**

ENGAGEMENT

**How to drive in-app
engagement**

CONVERSION

**How to increase
conversions**

ACQUISITION

**How to acquire app users
cost effectively**

Acquisition: Get app users

While getting installs isn't the ultimate target it once was, it's still a necessary part of the mobile journey. And a huge majority — 92% of respondents to the Mobile Growth survey — said their mobile app was either very important or their most important platform when considering customer acquisition. Everything starts with acquiring new app users. But how do you do this cost effectively?

Let's dive into a few examples of practical app user acquisition:



**User-to-user
referrals**



**Offline-to-app
QR codes**



**Digital-to-app
QR codes**



**Web-to-app
smart banners**

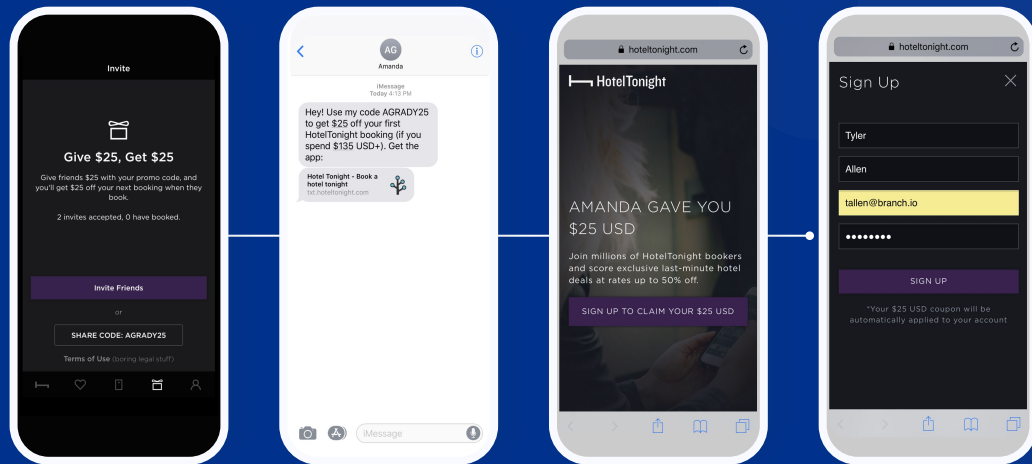


**Email-to-app
deep links**



**SEO app
attribution**

Referrals



Encourage existing users to promote the app to their network

Acquire app users via user-to-user referral programs

An efficient way to grow your userbase is to encourage your existing users to share with their friends and followers. Many people buy things because people they like or admire tell them to. In fact, **92%** of people trust recommendations from friends and family.

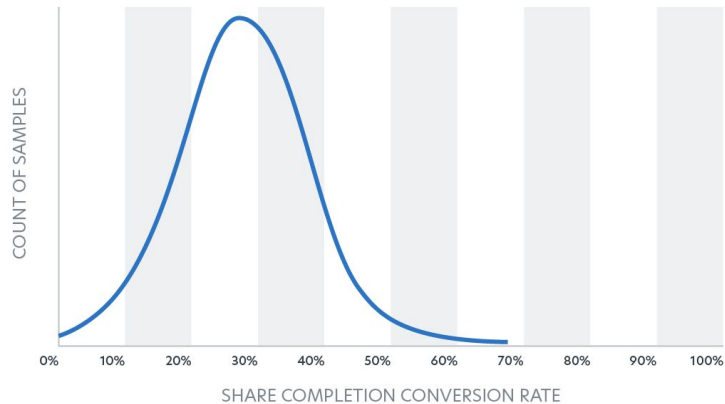
A **successful mobile referral program** requires accurate matching and attribution to credit the correct referring users and see which users are referring others. From there, link analytics will allow you to keep track of referrals, offer appropriate incentives, and close the loop with the person that made the referral.

Not only does this give your brand the reputation of investing in its users, unsurprisingly, incentive-based referrals perform better than non-incentivized ones. In a **Branch study** on incentivized vs. non-incentivized referrals, the "high converting bucket" made up of incentivized referrals had an average conversion rate of 70%. In comparison, the "low converting bucket" consisting of non-incentivized referrals had an average conversion rate of 30%.

An incentive can be wholly tailored to your brand, such as exclusive early access to items, a discount your users can't ignore, or more points toward a loyalty program. Bonus points if it encourages both your original user and the new one to increase their connection to your brand.

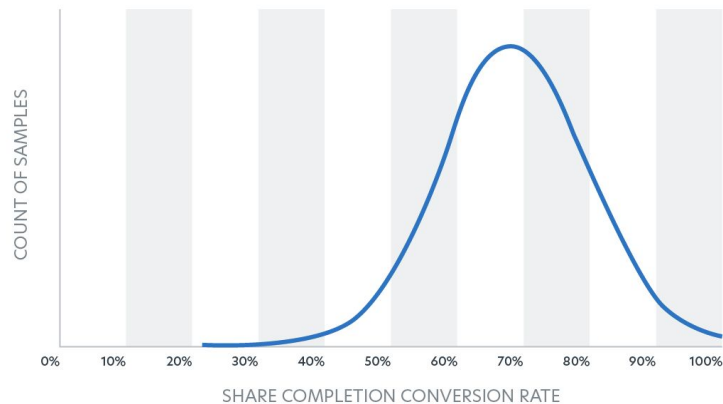
Incentivize links

Conversion from non-incentivized referrals
(low-converting bucket)



Source: [Branch Study](#), 2020

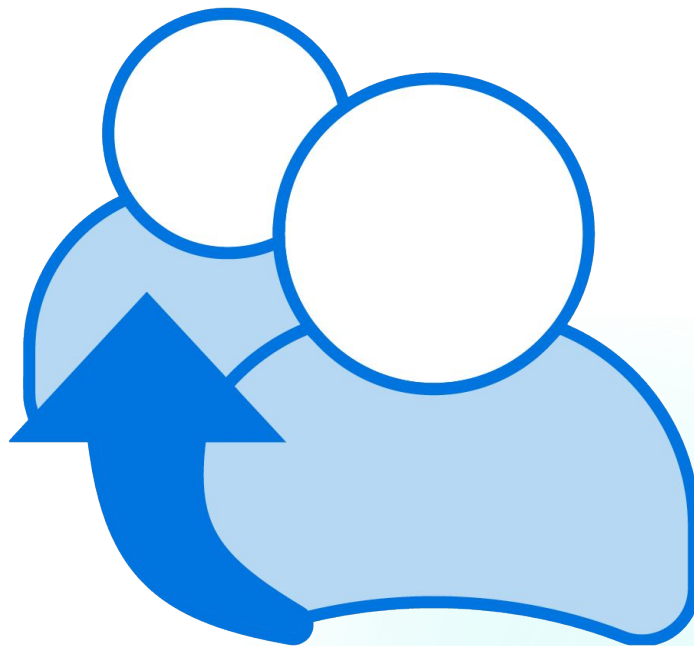
Conversion from incentivized referrals
(high-converting bucket)



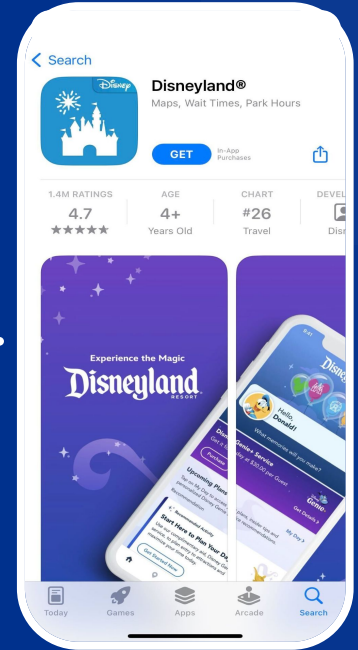
Source: [Branch Study](#), 2020

Quick tips

- ✓ **Make it easy to share**
Allow users to easily share referral deep links via a variety of platforms including social media, email, and text.
- ✓ **Utilize user-generated links**
Give users a way to create their own QR codes for referrals or user-generated content (UGC) to expand your reach.
- ✓ **Try custom share sheets**
Use custom share sheets so users can share links to content with friends via multiple social media platforms and text messages. Bonus: With deep links, recipients of the link are taken directly from the link to the specific content that was shared.
- ✓ **Show the referrer's name**
Foster trust and belonging by showing the name of the referrer and taking users straight to the content they wanted.



Offline-to-app QR codes



Drive users into your app from the offline world

Acquire app users via QR codes on billboards, ads, mailers, signs, etc.

The explosion of QR codes shows no signs of slowing down. Their ease of use from the end-user perspective, ability to measure offline-to-online journeys, and ability to convert existing offline users into your app — whether they're incorporated into travel brochures, displayed on hotel amenities, or showcased on digital screens in tourist hubs — make QR codes a must in any marketer's growth strategy. Now is the perfect time to start or [expand your usage of QR codes](#) to scale user acquisition and educate your customers on how your app fits into their daily life.

Offline channels offer a significant opportunity for app acquisition, but many QR codes are not optimized for apps. The key to optimizing your QR codes for native apps is the link behind your QR code. Just like any link you scale across your digital channels, a QR code link should be equipped with deep-link routing. When the user has your app installed already and scans a QR code, they expect to end up on the content inside your app, which is why a deep link is so critical. For users who don't already have your app installed, you can use your QR code campaign as an acquisition opportunity. Once you enable your QR codes with reliable deep linking, the links behind your QR codes can detect if a user has your app and then route them appropriately. Deep links can also detect whether users are on iOS or Android and then send them to the appropriate app store if they don't already have the app.

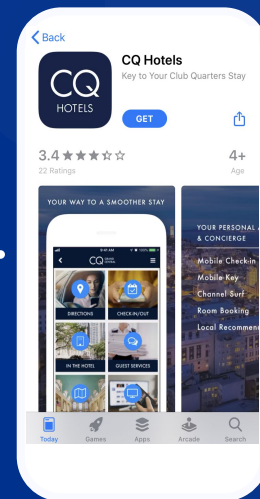
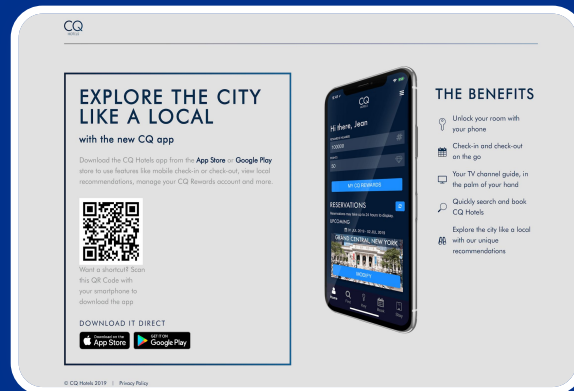
Perhaps most importantly, with deep links behind your QR codes, you can get proper attribution and measurement based on that data to drive better QR code campaign performance and more personalized experiences.

Quick tips

- ✓ **Use QR codes on signage**
Include QR codes on signage as well as at key travel points like airports and attractions to encourage app downloads.
- ✓ **Try physical ads**
Incorporate QR codes into print ads or other physical advertising like billboards.
- ✓ **Always deep link**
Prevent broken experiences and create cohesive user journeys through direct and deferred deep linking.
- ✓ **Include the option to update**
Ensure your link and/or QR code generator can update the link destination after deployment to keep up with evolving campaigns.



Digital-to-app QR codes



Move desktop users into your mobile app

Leverage QR codes on "Get the App" and install landing pages

In our increasingly digital world, you need to seize opportunities for brand affinity and connect with potential users across all touchpoints. With users already visiting your website, capitalize on this traffic by incorporating easy-to-create, cost-effective QR codes directly on web pages.

In the past, bridging the gap between desktop engagement and app downloads was challenging and often required multiple steps. But now, you can add a QR code to your desktop experience that eliminates unnecessary steps from the path to download and allows you to add nuance to your onboarding experience. For instance, if you know a user came from a QR code via desktop, you could customize their onboarding in a way that adds value and makes sense given the install source, for example, encouraging them to use a magic link to sign in.

Quick tips



Make it easy to update

Make sure you have the ability to easily update the link data behind your QR code as campaigns evolve over time.



Use deferred deep linking

Be sure to use deferred deep linking. This enables you to route a user to the in-app content they expect, even after install. It provides a great personalization opportunity that drives conversions and retention.

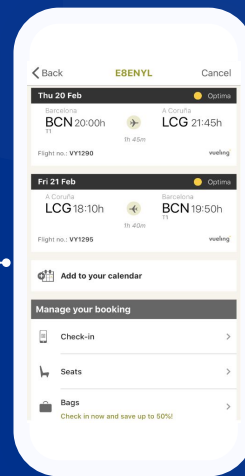
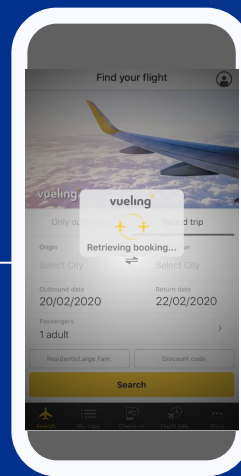
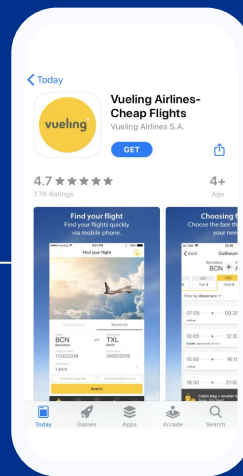
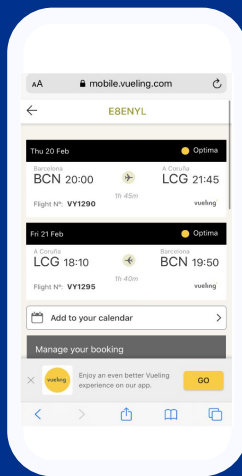


Optimize campaigns

With attribution data for QR codes, you can understand and optimize the performance of your QR code campaigns by viewing opens, installs, and downstream app events.



Web-to-app smart banners



Convert web browsers into engaged app users

Deploy smart banners for web-to-app user acquisition

Because **70% of digital time takes place on mobile**, you know you have users interacting with your brand on the mobile web, and they're primed for you to target as potential app users. You can display a smart banner for those users and encourage them to download the app with any number of incentives, including loyalty rewards, a discount if they purchase via the app, or any other benefits specific to your app.

As with any user interaction, personalization matters. You can personalize your smart banners at scale in a variety of ways, based on any number of attributes that signal specific user intent. App installs increase significantly when calls to action match intent. For example, Instagram says "View Photos in App" versus "Use the App" and DoorDash uses "Order Delivery in App" instead of "Continue." This approach substantially increases conversion.

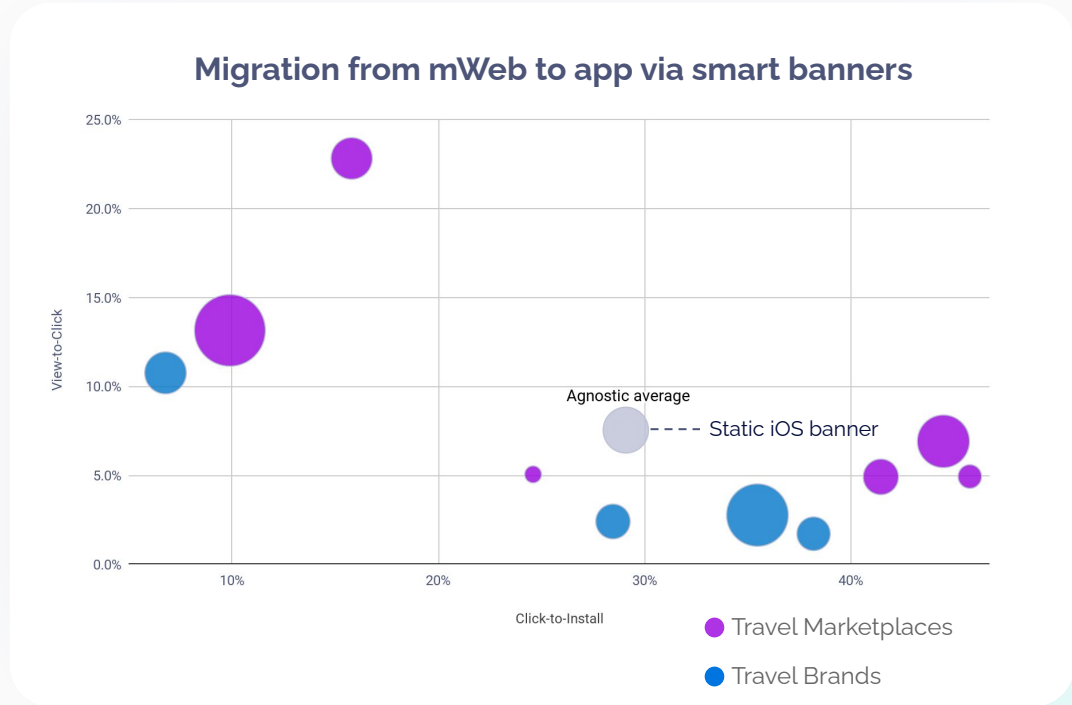
By driving high-value users into your app when they land on your mobile web, smart banners also help you reduce cost per install and ensure a seamless experience through deferred deep linking. This essentially matches the user who clicked a link in a paid or organic channel to the user who opened the app for the first time after installing it, so that user is taken to intended content after the entire install process.

Smart banners can be part of every acquisition campaign because they are so customizable, highly targetable, and cost effective.

Branch Journeys: Over 5x conversion power

When it comes to converting web visitors to app users, smart banners are significantly more effective on average than static iOS banners — particularly in the travel industry.

One study of travel brands and marketplaces that implemented Branch Journeys showed a massive increase in conversions. Static iOS banners averaged a 0.8% view-to-click rate, whereas Journeys banners soared to 7.5%.



*Size of bubble=relative number of installs
Source: Anonymized Branch Data

Quick tips



Customize based on intent

Customize banners to consider the context of where your user is coming from and previous user behavior. Users who find your website through SEO are in a different mind frame than those who came because a friend sent them a link.



Create smart CTAs

Create calls to action that tease how the app is the next logical step, like "track your purchase in the app" or "download the app to get the most out of your subscription." This provides continuity and outsized results in getting users to understand the value of downloading in the moment.



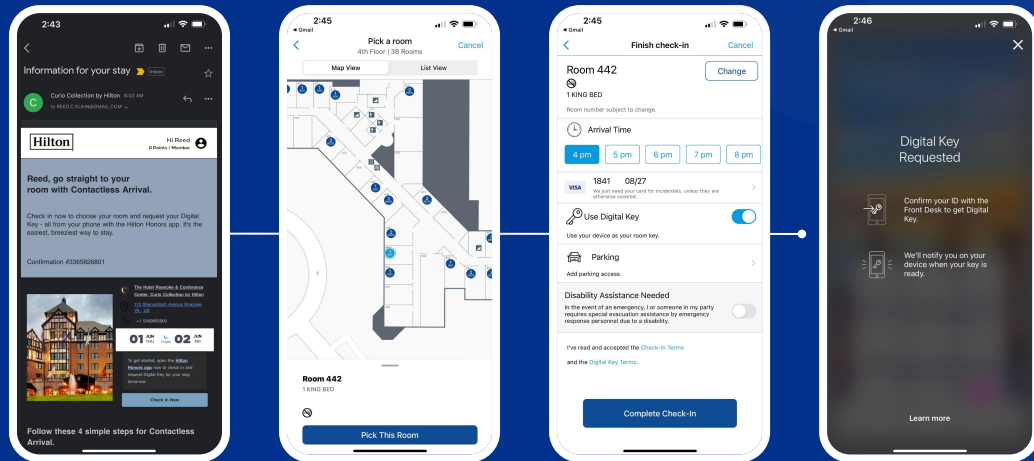
Be mindful of the customer journey

Larger banners should be reserved for users acquired from email or social media. For organic searches on your mobile website, banners should be small or just a button.

Read the case study: Airbnb boosts mobile app install rate by 19% with Branch links.



Email-to-app deep links



Provide a pathway to download your app from email

Increase email-to-app user acquisition with email service provider integration

Did you know that over **70% of people open emails on mobile**? That's a huge opportunity to turn already highly-qualified email subscribers into app users and gain a deeper understanding of post-click user behavior. But there is a **disconnect between email and mobile apps** that impacts the user experience and the ability to track clicks, especially on iOS.

When you send an email to your contacts, they read it, click on the CTA, and should be directed to the app store or your app. However, many email links are broken, and users end up in a vacuum. While it may look like you're acquiring users from email marketing, you may be losing out on a significant number of users and driving higher abandonment rates. To counter this, most successful email campaigns with high conversion rates use deep links throughout their emails — in the copy, images, and CTAs. This is particularly helpful because you want to direct your users to your app quickly without losing their interest, curiosity in your offer, or intent to purchase.

Quick tips



Use deferred deep links

Prompt users to download your app via email using banners, footers, dedicated welcome emails, etc. Then, route them to related content in the app via a deferred deep link.



Personalize the experience

Personalize email CTAs based on whether the user already has your app. For acquisition campaigns, show users who don't have the app a CTA like "Get the app" or deep link existing users directly to an in-app onboarding experience that explains the value of the app.

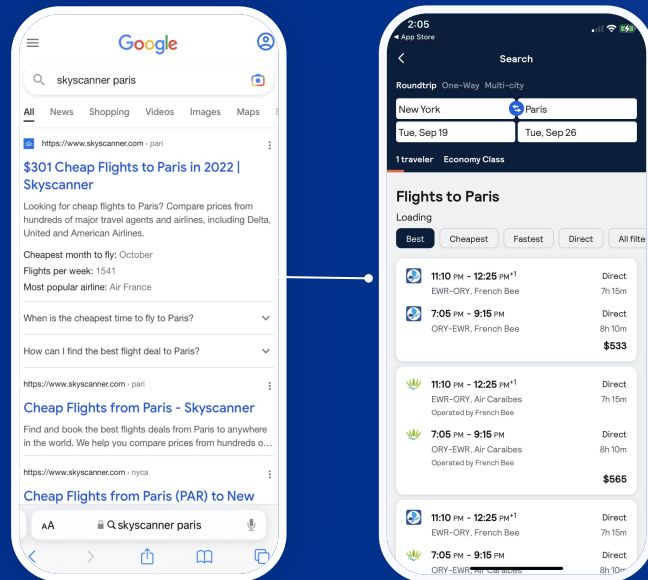


Brand your links

Use branded links to improve click-through rates, build trust, and increase confidence in your brand.



SEO app attribution for acquisition



Trigger a smart banner to users coming from SEO

Acquire app users from web search results with website passthrough

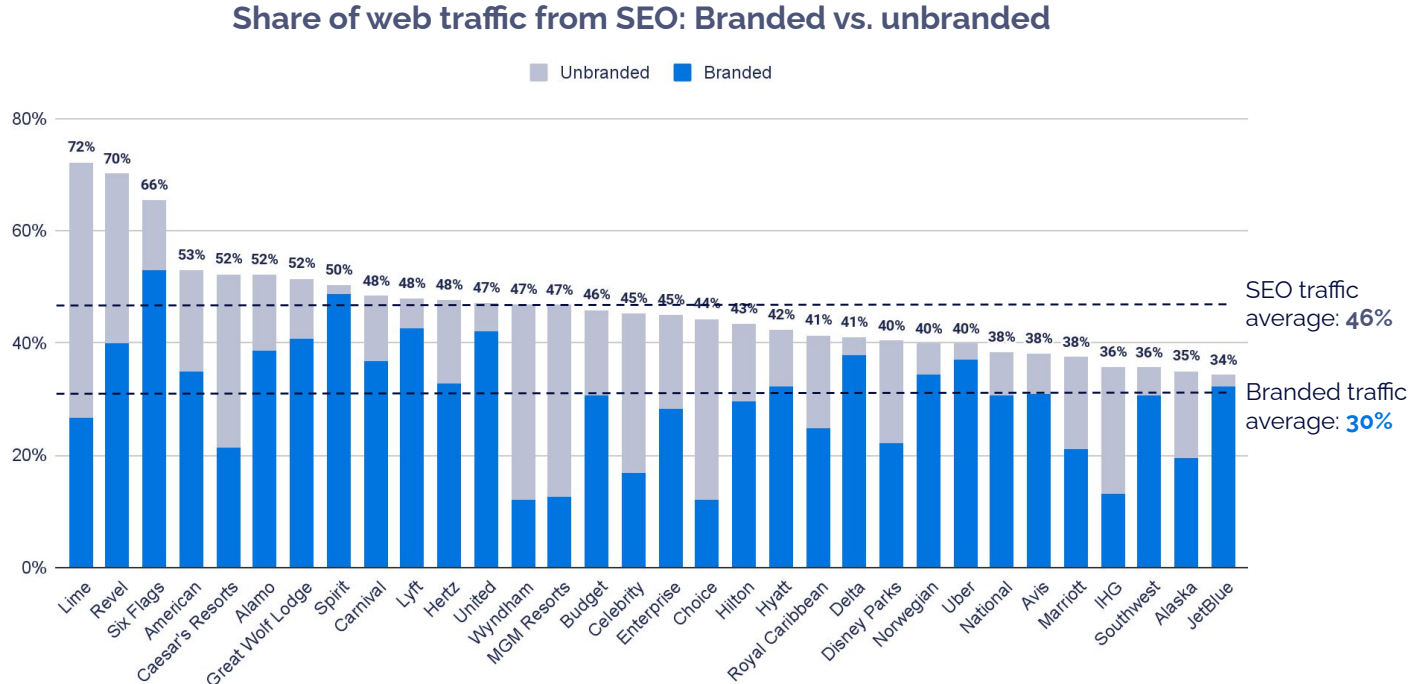
As a marketer, you're likely already leveraging some type of SEO strategy, but are you really able to understand how it affects app user acquisition? Attribution is notoriously hard to measure on mobile considering users interact with many channels before entering the app, plus most organic search occurs on mobile — that's a significant portion of your credit and insight that you're unable to report. With deep linking and attribution for owned and earned channels, you can unlock a key aspect of the user journey.

Proper SEO app attribution empowers marketers to attribute downstream funnel events back to the search engine that sourced the app session. App events can be de-duplicated and attributed to the corresponding search engine, which opens a window to SEO performance for a better understanding of its value and a more complete cross-channel view.

Light-touch smart banners provide a simple pathway for higher-in-the-funnel users to download your app from organic searches. You can employ these smart banners to attribute app actions back to their source without losing SEO credit. Google will penalize you if you show large, splashy banners to users coming in from organic searches. So for organic searches, a best practice is to use banners that are small or just a button.

Nearly 50% of web traffic to top travel sites originates from search engine results pages

With close to 50% of web traffic to popular travel sites originating from search engine results pages, and approximately 30% of that originating from branded searches, deep linking is a no brainer. It ensures that valuable traffic is funneled to your app, maximizing conversions and enhancing user engagement.



Quick tips



Target smart banners

Target smart banners to users that clicked on an organic search link and attribute that action back to the domain and URL that drove the install.



Limit large banners from search

Limit large banners for top-of-funnel campaigns like acquisition. Those should be reserved for users acquired from email or social media. For organic searches, banners should be small or just a button.



Be patient

SEO success can take a long time, but content ROI will stay with you for even longer



Attribute app traffic to search

Blind spots lead to inaccurate investments. On average, Branch customers have been able to attribute 16% of app traffic to organic search with [SEO App Attribution](#).



ENGAGEMENT

**How to drive in-app
engagement**

Engagement: Bring app users back

Because of increasing app usage and competition, to build and maintain truly profitable apps, travel brands must develop deeper relationships with their customers that keep them coming back. Engagement is increasingly important to be successful in any type of mobile growth.

Here are a few examples of how to bring users back to your app and keep them engaged:



Personalization



**Targeted web-to-app
smart banners**



**Break out of
walled gardens**



**Offline-to-app
QR codes**



**Email-to-app
deep links**



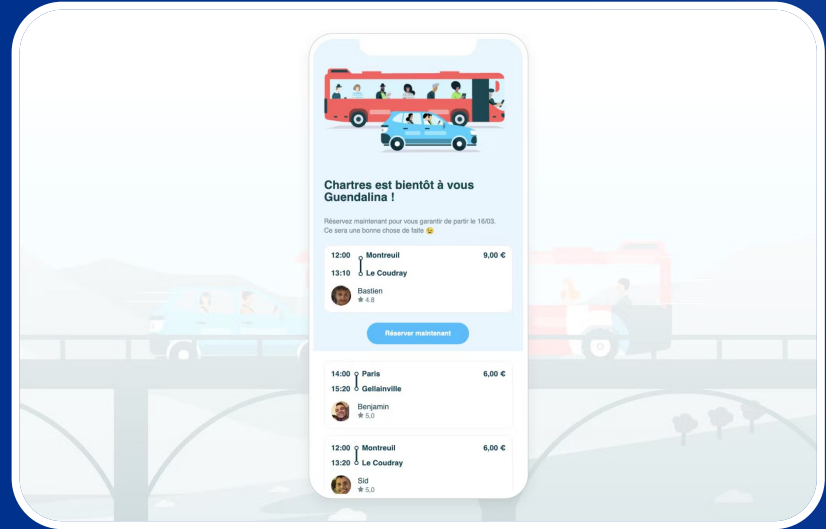
**Deep linking in mobile
ad campaigns**



**In-app-only
experiences**

Personalization

Brought to you by: *braze*



Leveraging personalization to bolster retention

Strengthen your customer relationships with tailored brand experiences

Every customer is an individual, but is your brand treating them that way? Modern marketing has evolved beyond campaigns blasted to the biggest possible audience. And as today's consumers move more of their activity online, brands are finding that personalization is essential if they want to hold onto customers for the long haul.

According to McKinsey, **71% of consumers** expect personalization from the brands they patronize. When your brand fails to deliver that, you're not just serving up a disappointing experience, you're signaling that you don't understand what they need. That can undermine an otherwise good relationship and hurt retention. On the flip side, embracing personalization can make your marketing more effective. Research conducted by Braze found that messages leveraging **Liquid personalization** were **15% more effective** at driving lapsing users back to a company's app or website, compared to standard messages.

Personalization is powerful, but to nurture sustainable customer relationships, you need to embrace it at every stage of the process. Take a step back and think about how to embrace personalization on a strategic level. One smart way is to build out responsive, multi-step messaging flows that feature not just personalized copy but also personalized journey pathing that auto-adjusts each individual's experience based on real-time insights into how they engaging and how their preferences have shifted.

Quick tips



Take advantage of dynamic personalization

Consider leveraging a dynamic personalization tool to pull in additional real-time information from your company's own internal servers (e.g., loyalty program info), as well as from third-party APIs (e.g., local weather data). Use it to further tailor the messages and images contained in your outreach and drive more impact.



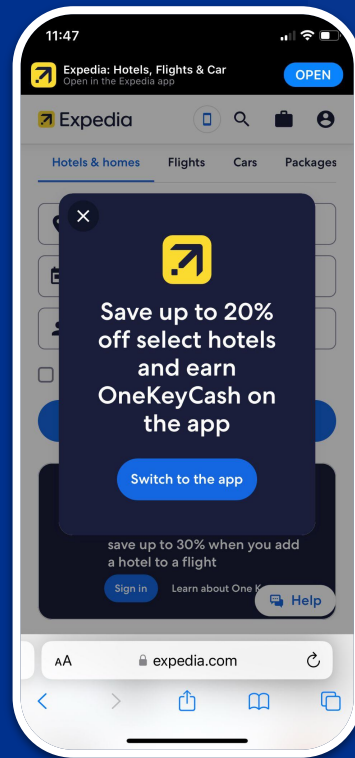
Leverage real-time segmentation

Personalization is about more than just adding recipients' first names to a message; it should be about serving up an experience that's truly relevant to their wants and needs. Segmentation makes that possible but only if the curation happens in real time, something that's true for only 33% of brands. After all, customers don't stand still, and sending messages based on each individual's behavior only pays off if those messages are timely enough to resonate with the recipient.

Read the case study: BlaBlaCar creates a powerful abandoned cart campaign that increases bookings.



Targeted web-to-app smart banners



Drive existing app users to specific app content from mobile web

Show smart banners on your mobile website

Because customers tend to convert more and have a higher lifetime value (LTV) when they use your app, it should be a major focus of any marketer to keep driving users back to the app. A simple and cost-effective way to do this is to use targeted smart banners to encourage app users to continue their journey in the app.

Typically, you should use a lighter touch with low-intent users at the top of the funnel. But for users you want to reengage who have already downloaded your app, **more pronounced and consistent engagement is welcome** — and can tip the scales toward conversion. Because these users are interested in interacting with your business, you can show larger banners or even full-page interstitials — most likely, visitors at this stage won't be scared away.

Smart banners can be customizable, highly personalized, and reflect a user's intent, making them the perfect addition to your engagement strategy.

Quick tips



Use smart targeting rules

Implement smart targeting rules to personalize web-to-app banners and interstitials.



Use larger banners

Reengage users with larger banners instead of the smaller messaging used in acquisition campaigns.

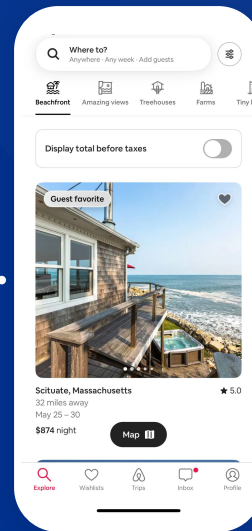
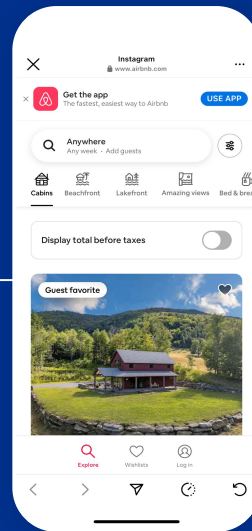
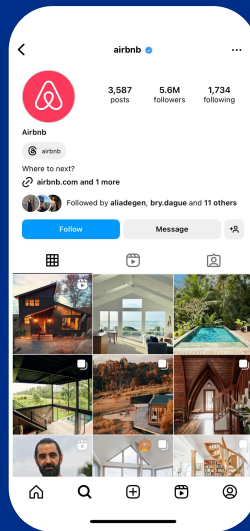


A/B test

Be sure to A/B test different banner variations and messaging to see which perform best for specific audiences.



Break out of walled gardens



Bring users into your app from organic social

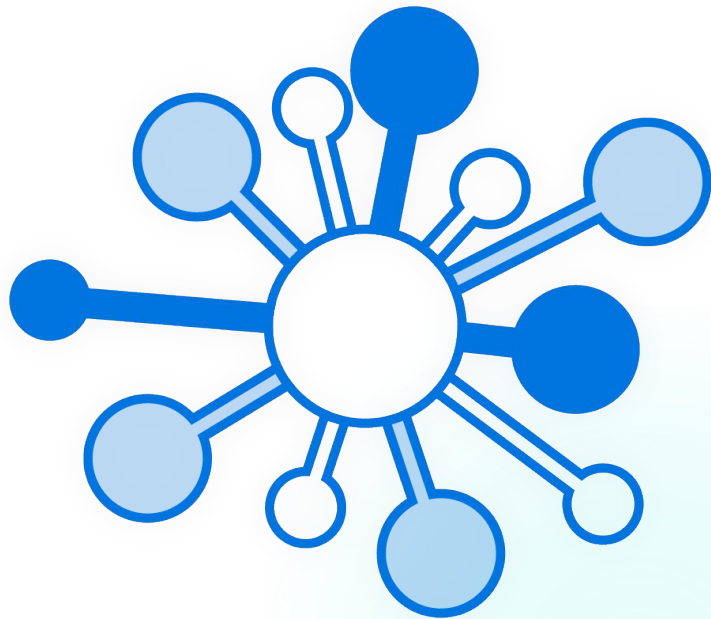
Use deep links to break users out of walled gardens

Social users have already shown an affinity for your brand, but many of them get stuck in walled gardens like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and LinkedIn. Each platform has **in-app internet browsers** that are designed to keep users in the social media apps for a longer period of time. By leaving users within social walled gardens, you're missing an opportunity to acquire and engage high-value users in your app. But with deep links, you can bypass the walled gardens and get users directly to your app.

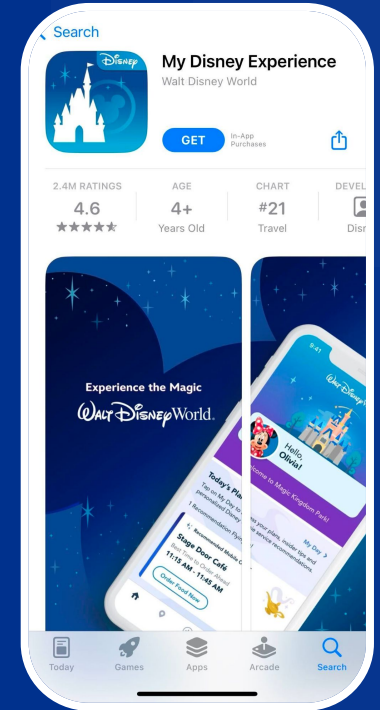
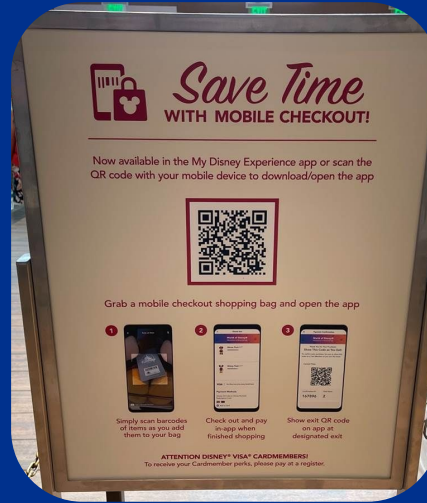
Deep linking increases **social media engagement** and — without any friction — gets users to the content they want to see. Deep links are vehicles that both ensure seamless user experiences and provide you with full attribution and analytics across every channel — email, referrals, paid advertising, social, organic search, and desktop-to-mobile. So with deep links, you can measure how each social media campaign performed and break free from walled gardens that keep users from engaging with your app.

Quick tips

- ✓ **Free users with deep links**
Create and deploy deep links in organic social campaigns.
- ✓ **Increase revenue with better experiences**
Bring users from a walled garden to the exact content they desire in your app with deep links. A superior experience like this can increase revenue, loyalty, and LTV.
- ✓ **Plan the user journey**
Wireframe your user journey ahead of time to ensure no visual snags appear while users are engaging with your links.



Offline-to-app QR codes



Bridge the offline-to-app gap

Use QR codes to deep link and drive in-app conversions

QR codes are a low-lift, high-reward strategy. Consumers expect to use your app at every stage of their journey, even when they aren't online. By employing QR codes in offline places like out-of-home advertisements, airports, direct mailers, and print ads, you can drive app engagement from the real world, meet rising consumer expectations, and understand how offline actions lead to app activities.

Attributing app installs back to the specific locations where QR codes are placed can also give your team insight into the categories that influence app usage the most and help you decide where to invest more in cross-promotion.

Quick tips



Brand your QR codes

Customize and brand your QR codes so when people engage with them in the physical world, out of context, they will know the QR codes originate from your brand.



Get additional ROI

QR codes can be great for paid campaigns — and adding them to real estate you're already paying for increases return on that investment.

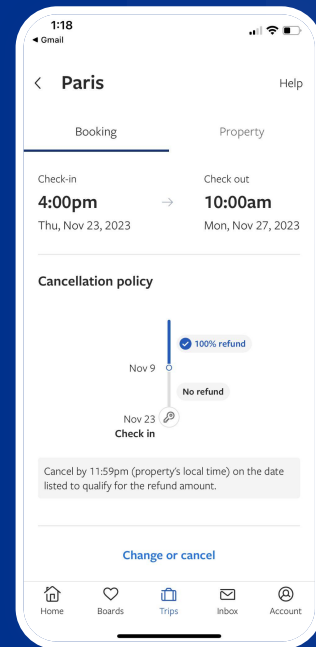
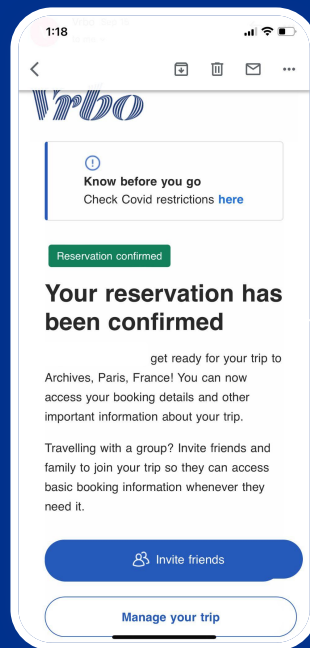


QR codes aren't going away

59% of smartphone users plan to keep using QR codes in the future, so they are still a good investment for app engagement.



Email-to-app deep links



Route users from email to the corresponding content in your app

Use email-to-app deep links via ESP integration to recapture existing app users

The highest-value users are those who have already shown a strong interest in your brand. Therefore, they are the most likely to be influenced by your engagement campaigns. Email is a great way to reach lapsed or slightly engaged users and bring them back to an app because they already signed up for that type of connection with your brand.

Covering everything from newsletters and destination updates to exclusive travel deals and personalized itinerary suggestions — email can highlight unique, new value propositions that remind users of, and entice users back to, your app. Make sure your winback and reengagement emails deep link users into the app for a seamless experience; you don't want users to churn again because of a broken link and fragmented experience that was entirely preventable.

Quick tips



Personalize CTAs

Personalize email calls to action for users who already have your app but haven't used it in a while. Show them a CTA like "Explore the app" or ask them to try a new feature to reengage them.



Segment users

Segment users and tailor CTAs to each specific audience in order to help increase engagement and conversion rates.

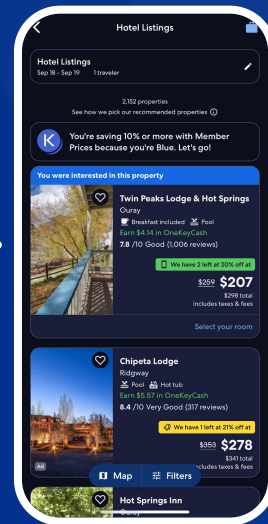
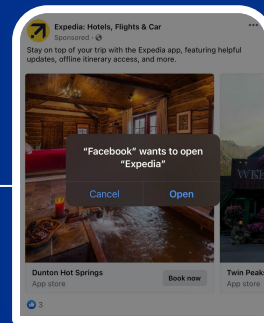
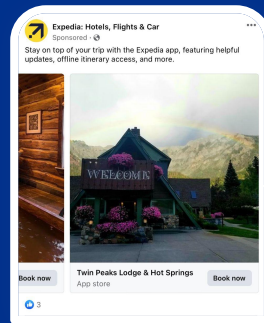


Try in-app-only offers

Promote in-app-only offers, discounts, or loyalty rewards in emails to entice users back into the app.



Deep linking in mobile ad campaigns



Route existing users to app content from paid campaigns

Run reengagement ads to drive conversions in an already-installed app

Just because a user downloaded your app doesn't necessarily mean that they will keep coming back. Many brands rely on paid ads to reengage their audiences because paid media reliably broadens a brand's reach at every stage in the funnel, from awareness to conversion to winback. Place a dynamic bid and you can reach a uniquely tailored audience at exactly the right time. This becomes particularly crucial in channels where a brand's organic efforts might be overshadowed by the noise, or where the audience size may not be large enough to consistently meet the brand's growth objectives.

Retargeting is another way to engage users who have already downloaded your app. Many networks support showing retargeting ads to custom user segments based on time since last engagement. These ads can be particularly effective on a cost per acquisition (CPA) basis because they do not have the drop-off rates of install ads, where a user must first download the app to transact. To optimize your CPA, make sure that ad placements take users with the app directly to the advertised offering and content with minimal friction. Deep linking users directly to the intended content will improve reengagement spend and keep your existing users coming back.

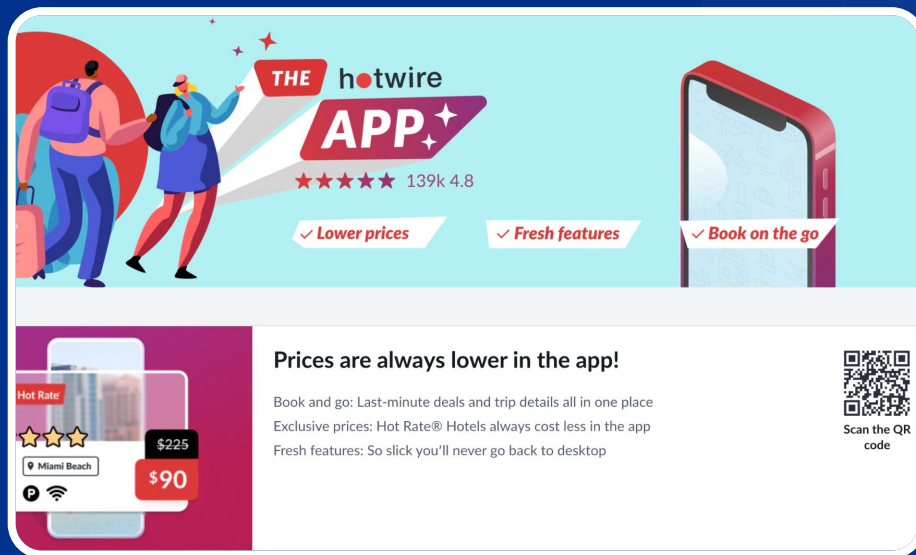
Quick tips

- ✓ **Better understand user behavior**
Deep link app users to specific content from paid campaigns and capture attribution, which will help you understand the user's path to conversion, even when it's long and complex.
- ✓ **Retarget lapsed users**
Test retargeting ads specifically with lapsed user segments.
- ✓ **Deep link to compelling content**
Reengage users with ads that link directly to compelling content in the app instead of sending users who already have the app to an app store.

Read the case study: Hostelworld supercharges user growth and sees a 101% increase in bookings.



In-app-only experiences



THE hotwire APP
★★★★★ 139k 4.8

✓ Lower prices ✓ Fresh features ✓ Book on the go

Prices are always lower in the app!

Book and go: Last-minute deals and trip details all in one place
Exclusive prices: Hot Rate® Hotels always cost less in the app
Fresh features: So slick you'll never go back to desktop

Hot Rate
★★★★★
Miami Beach
\$225
\$90

Scan the QR code

Drive users to the app for enhanced functionality

Engage app users with experiences only available in the app

Another interesting way to engage your users is to offer in-app-only experiences that will entice users to try out new features, enhanced actions, or even just app-only coupons or rewards.

For example, entice travelers to revisit your mobile app for exclusive post-booking itinerary management tools or immersive virtual tours of destinations they've booked. Offering augmented reality experiences of hotels or landmarks enables users to virtually explore accommodations and attractions before their trip. These advanced features not only spark interest but also enrich the overall app journey, motivating users to return for more.

However, it's important to be thoughtful of how users will learn about enhancements and get to the app to experience them. With deep links, you can be sure that any promotions will have the correct attribution and lead users directly to the right experience within the app. Deep links can be instrumental in driving cross-platform engagement and create a better overall experience for all your app users.

Quick tips



Deep link directly to new experiences

Use deep links to enhance functionality within the app and promote to existing users through social media, email, smart banners, etc.



Promote features with smart banners

Try a mobile website banner to highlight app-only capabilities, such as virtual destination tours or augmented reality features.



Diversify content

It doesn't have to be only experiences; you can also promote in-app discounts, offers, loyalty rewards, etc. as an incentive to reengage with an app.



CONVERSION

**How to increase
conversions**

Conversion: Get app users to do something

Even when you have highly engaged new users, you still need them to convert — to do something that you want them to, whether that's book a stay, sign up for a loyalty program, or simply log into the app. Many successful conversions actually start with exceptional user experiences from the very first open.

Here are a few ways to ensure you're providing the best possible user experience:



**Cross-channel
experiences**



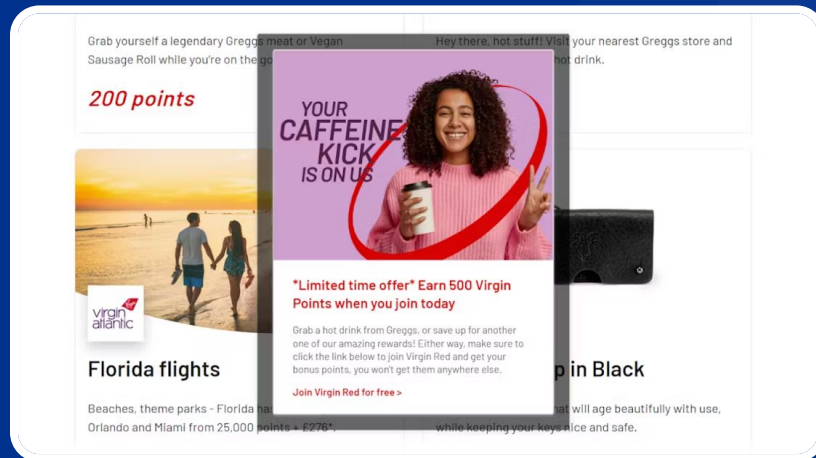
**Personalized
onboarding**



**Deferred
deep linking**

Cross-channel experiences

Brought to you by: *braz*e



Creating cross-channel experiences that drive conversions

Enhance the impact of your marketing programs by creating cohesive experiences across channels

With the rise of mobile and connected devices, there's no longer any single channel that brands can leverage to engage and convert the entirety of their customer base. Today's customers have so many devices and platforms at their disposal that it has become possible for them to curate their experience of each company they choose to engage with. That makes it essential for every brand to ensure it's using the ideal mix of channels to reach customers in a complementary, cohesive way, while maximizing each channel's strengths.

Embracing a cross-channel approach can be one of the most impactful ways for today's marketers to drive real results. Research conducted by Braze found that top-performing brands are **66% more likely** to be using 3+ channels to engage their customers, and every additional messaging channel used led to an **3.2X average increase** in purchases per user. That said, it's important to be thoughtful about which channels you use and why. In a successful cross-channel strategy, each interaction you have with your customers should align with your brand story, ensuring that your users feel understood, valued, and nurtured by your brand throughout their customer journey.

Quick tips



Personalize which channels you use

Just because you have multiple channels at your disposal doesn't mean you should use each one every time. Adjust your channel mix to make the most of each one's strengths and consider using a [channel optimization tool](#) to send outreach in each recipient's preferred channels.



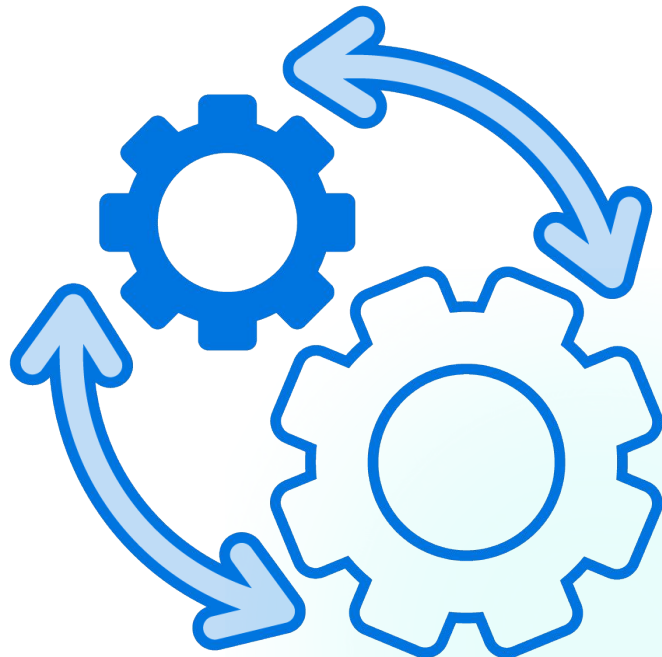
Combine in-product and out-of-product channels

By combining both in-product channels (e.g., in-app messages) and out-of-product channels (e.g., email), brands can both capture the attention of users who aren't currently on their app or website and also nudge active users to take key actions.



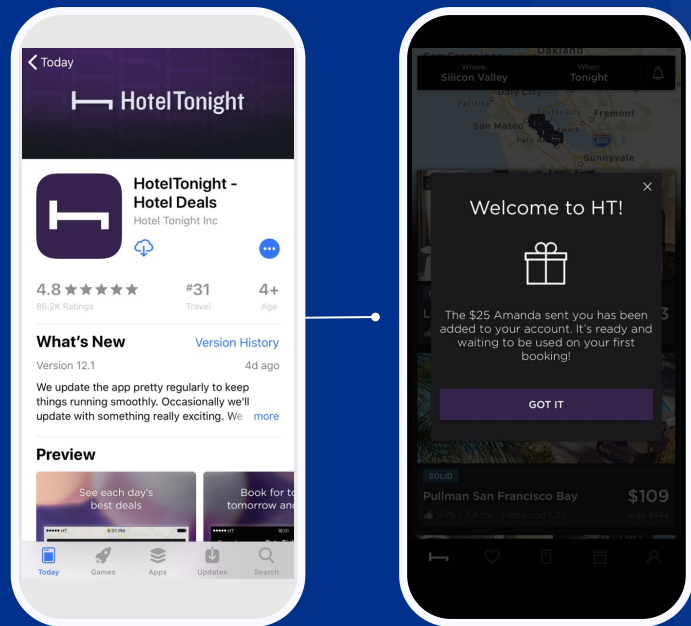
Test and optimize your cross-channel flows

Consider testing different channel combinations to see the strongest possible performance, and establish a check-in cadence to review results and update elements like channel mix, timing, and copy/creative to stay up to speed on what's resonating with your audience.



Read the case study: Virgin Red leverages Braze and Snowflake to simplify operations and drive acquisition.

Personalized onboarding



Provide a custom onboarding experience to increase app retention

Use deferred deep linking for customized onboarding

So, how do you take users to that golden moment of conversion? A lot of it rests on your onboarding process, which can determine whether a user stays or leaves. Just like a first date, making a good first impression on your user is critical. It takes just **50 milliseconds** for a user to form an opinion about a website — and an app isn't much different. Woo your users with frictionless onboarding that entices them to stay the course and convert.

If you carry the context from wherever a person came from on the web into your app, you're creating a profound personalized first experience. For example, if someone shared an app with a friend via text, and the friend entered the app with a message, "Amanda recommended this app for you to book a stay," that's an exceptional first experience. This makes it less likely that they will drop off and more likely that they'll take the next action and convert in the app.

A highly personalized onboarding process will likely minimize drop off.

Quick tips



Keep users informed

Balance minimizing required steps while maximizing up-front value by asking users more tailored preference questions and telling users why and how the information you collect during onboarding will enhance their experience.



Curate the journey

Only show the features that are most important for users to get started. Show more features as the user moves deeper into your app and uncover what they need when they reach appropriate stages of their journey.

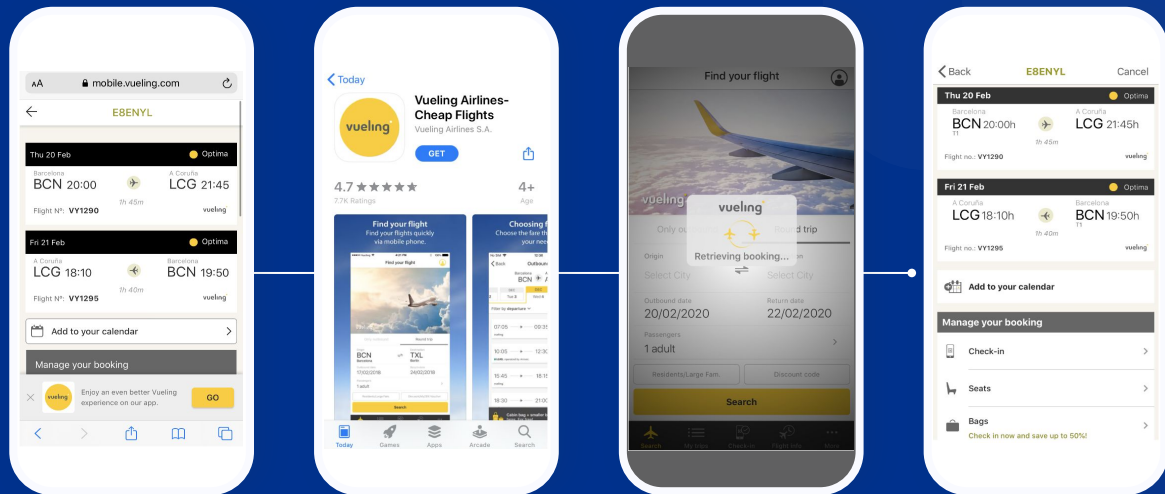


Show value up front

Remind users why they signed up — include your value proposition during onboarding to reinforce why your app deserves their attention.



Deferred deep linking



Take new users to the right content after they download

Leverage deferred deep linking for new app users

If you create content and design the user experience specifically around the intents and desires of the user, they're more likely to take the action you want them to — whether it's to explore a destination guide or book a flight. Trust is important. Make sure you fulfill their needs and don't preemptively bombard them with aggressive messaging or content, like an immediate sign-in box, if it doesn't build value by fitting their intent.

Once you have the right content, users who download your app are more likely to stick around if they are taken to the content they expect. That's why it's imperative to build experiences that users expect, and the best way to do that is with deferred deep links. **Deferred deep links** take the user to the intended content through the install process. This type of link basically matches the user who clicked a link in a paid or organic channel to the user who opened the app for the first time after installing it. Deferred deep links automatically show the content the user clicked before the app install, thereby creating a seamless, convenient user experience.

A deferred deep link might help a new user make a reservation or ensure a traveler is enrolled in a loyalty program and that they get credit for their very first booking. Deferred deep links ensure that customers have a direct pathway to engage with a brand and can do so in the easiest way — from the app on their phones. Brands then have more loyal and engaged users who are more likely to convert.

Quick tips

- ✓ **Serve exceptional experiences — no matter what**
Set up deferred deep linking to relevant content for users who have the app installed already as well as users without the app to immediately route them after the first install. No matter who the user is, they will get an exceptional experience.
- ✓ **Store custom data parameters**
You can even use customized or branded URLs and store custom data parameters in link data with deferred deep links.
- ✓ **Track LTV with deep links**
Deferred deep links also help track customer lifetime value and can provide insights into what channels drive better performance.

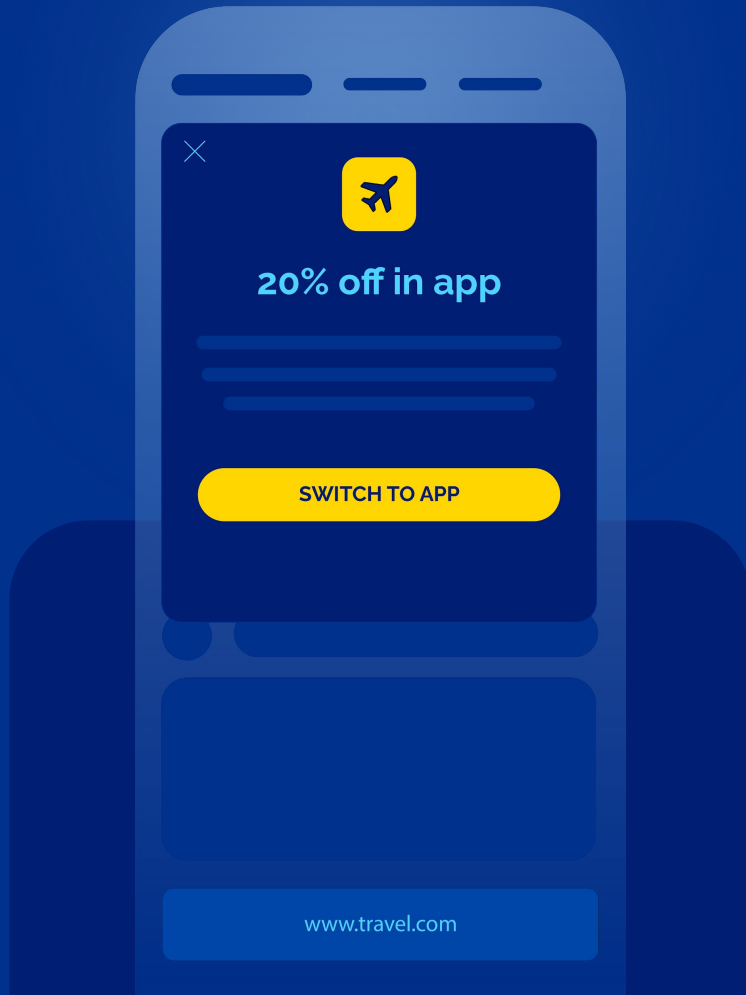


Conclusion

As with many things in the marketing world, mobile growth is sometimes more of an art than a science, but there are tried-and-true ways you can grow your app — now and into the future. Hopefully, you learned a few in this playbook.

With smart experimentation, the right measurement, and a few tweaks to your marketing strategies, growth is still very much on the horizon.

The world of mobile is a world of possibility. [Let's get started!](#)





About Branch

Branch is the linking and measurement partner for growth-focused teams, trusted to maximize the value of their evolving digital strategies. World-class brands like Instacart, Western Union, NBCUniversal, ZocDoc, and Sephora rely on Branch to acquire users, retain customers and drive more conversions.

branch.io

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