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Retail Mobile Growth Playbook



Table of contents

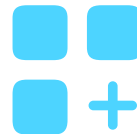
State of retail	4
Mobile drives value	13
Deep linking for growth	17
Accurate attribution for growth	20
Acquisition	24
Engagement	49
Conversion	75



Retail Mobile Growth Playbook

In this playbook, we explore ways that retailers can cost-effectively grow their mobile app. With first-hand advice, industry data, and quick tips — including insights from our partners at [Braze](#) — we take the guesswork out of mobile growth and empower you to thrive.

Let's start with the state of retail today.



State of retail

State of retail

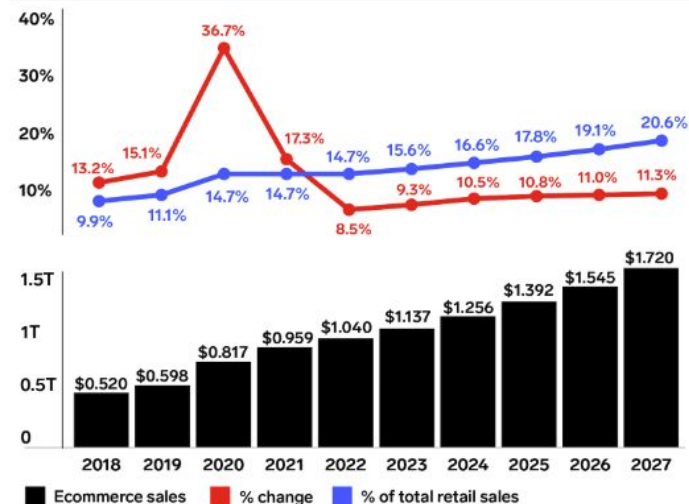
While the massive spike in e-commerce sales sparked by the pandemic — up almost 37% in 2020 — is leveling off post-pandemic, eMarketer still predicts significant growth over the next few years to the tune of \$1.7 trillion USD. Total retail sales are expected to increase steadily as well.

The trajectory means two things for retailers. There is still tremendous demand and opportunity for growth, particularly on the e-commerce front, but competition will be fiercer than ever. It will be important to understand not only how to reach your best customers, but also how to keep them.

One surefire way to connect with your customers is through mobile apps. Let's review the state of mobile and how retailers can tap into mobile and apps for acquisition, retention, and increased conversions.

US Retail Ecommerce Sales, 2018-2027

trillions, % change, and % of total retail sales



Note: includes products or services ordered using the internet, regardless of the method of payment or fulfillment; excludes travel and event tickets, payments such as bill pay, taxes, or money transfers, restaurant sales, food services and drinking place sales, gambling and other vice goods sales
Source: Insider Intelligence | eMarketer, June 2023

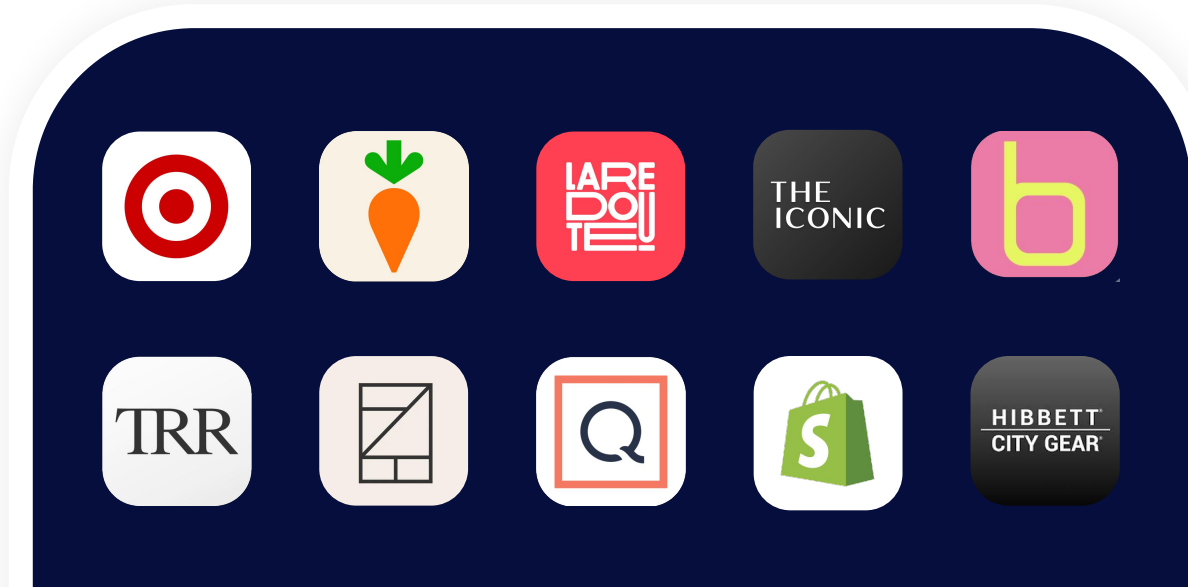
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Insider Intelligence | eMarketer

State of retail: mobile is massive

Mobile cannot be ignored, especially by retailers. [70%](#) of digital time takes place on mobile — of that, [92%](#) of time is spent in apps. 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, respondents reported that, on average, app users spend \$3.30 — **more than 3 times as much**.



**Mobile apps are the main
source of customer growth
and retention.**

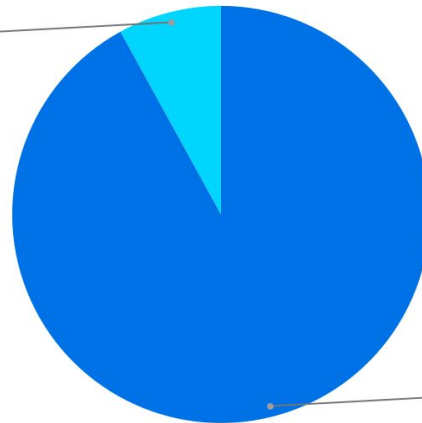
State of mobile: what leaders are saying

Mobile apps are the main source 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%

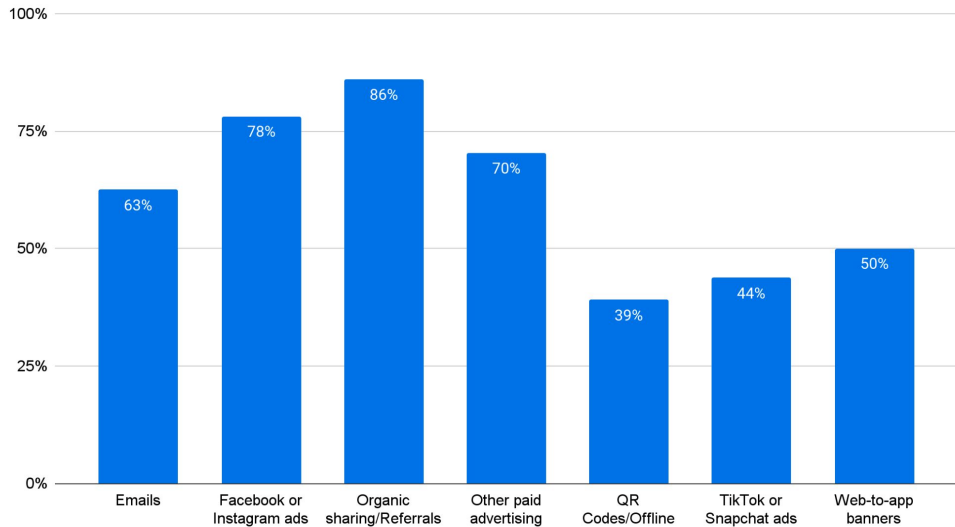
Source: Branch Mobile Growth Survey, 2022/23

State of mobile: acquisition

Respondents also reported significant investment and success in organic channels.

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



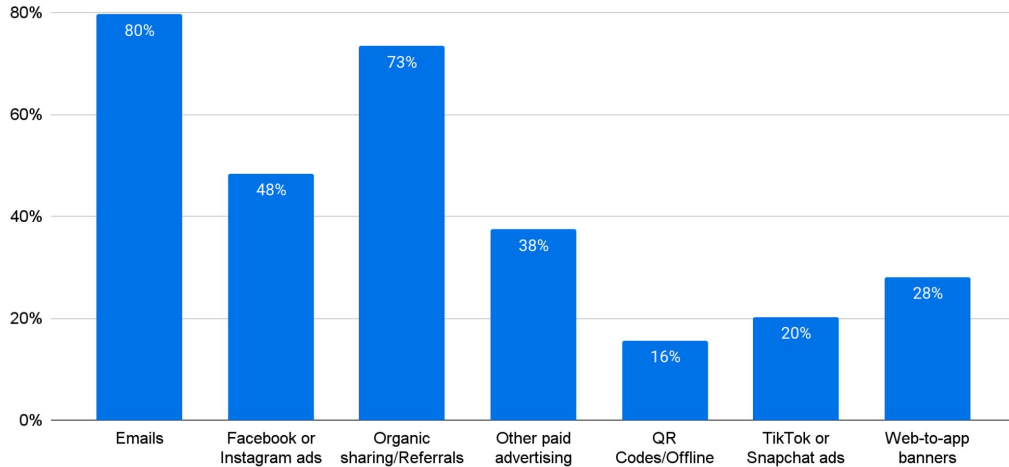
Source: Branch Mobile Growth Survey, 2022/23

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



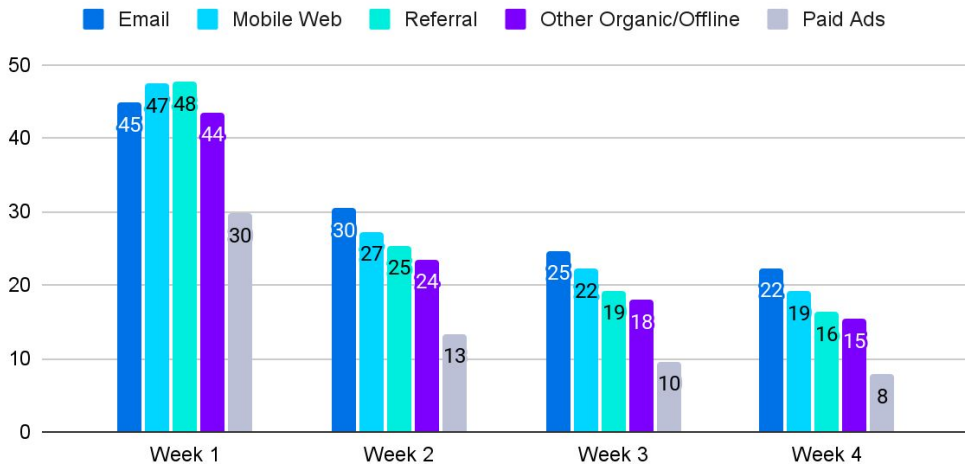
Source: Branch Mobile Growth Survey, 2022/23

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

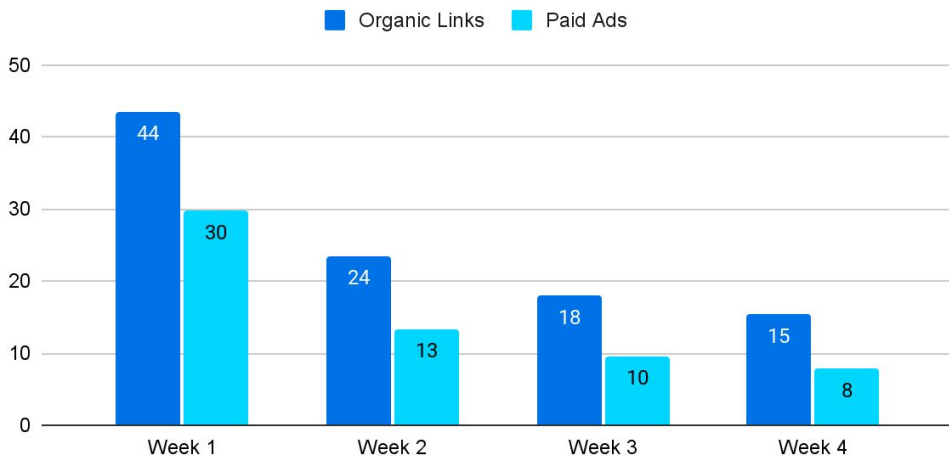
State of mobile: advertising

Paid ads have been, historically, a predictable scale driver of user acquisition and conversion — and according to [eMarketer](#), retail media ad spending will continue growing to reach \$55.31 billion USD in 2024.

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



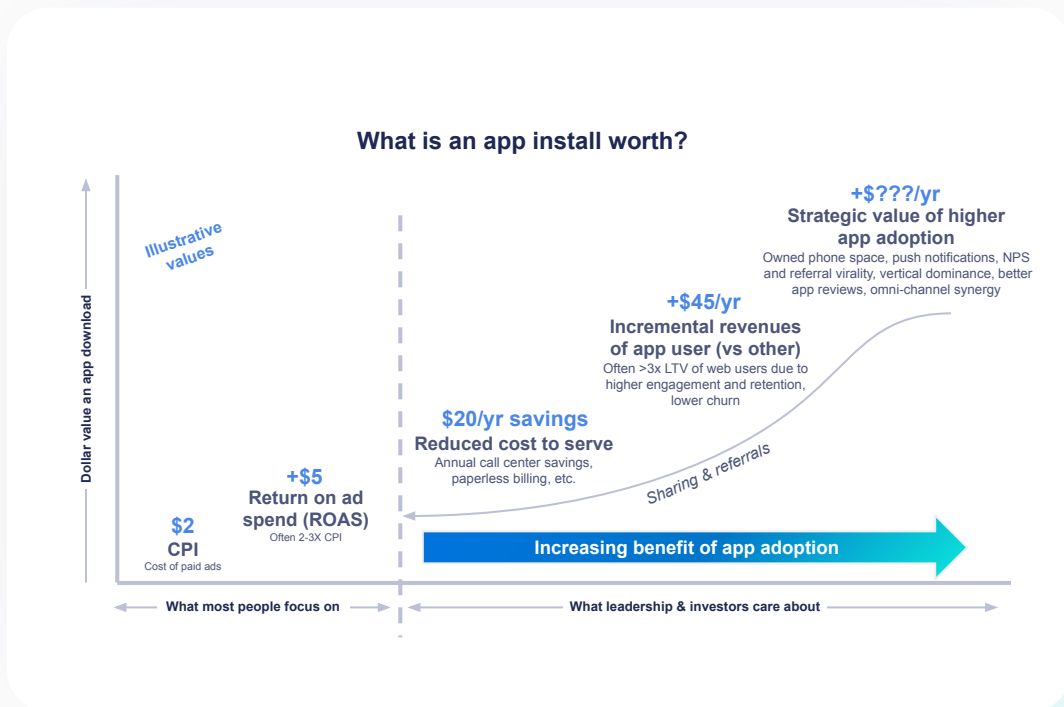
Source: Branch Benchmark Study, 2022

Mobile drives value

Mobile reduces costs

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

For instance, when customers spend time getting support, or when customers can order apparel via an app instead of from a person, that reduces personnel costs. Retail locations that allow customers to order specific sizes and colors via QR codes next to items of clothing, for example, not only streamline the customer journey, create a fun, personalized experience, and encourage more sales, but they also reduce cost to serve.



Mobile drives value for retail

There are a number of ways that mobile not only saves money, but also drives value for retailers — and maybe more importantly, for your customers.

Personalization is easier on mobile.

According to McKinsey, [71%](#) of consumers expect companies to deliver personalized interactions, and on mobile apps, it's easier to enable those experiences. Personalization via mobile apps ensures your customers receive relevant offers, updates, and alerts for favorited items or brands as well as a much better customer experience, including tap-to-app convenience and fewer clicks to order. For retailers, personalization means higher conversion rates, better customer tracking, and repeat purchases.

Ordering on mobile is more convenient.

Mobile apps give your customers more ways to order, the convenience of buy online pick up in store, or access to out of stock items. They also increase revenue streams from new ordering channels, decrease headcount and wait times, and produce higher customer lifetime value.

Apps make loyalty programs more effective.

With loyalty programs through apps, customers can keep track of points, remain logged in, and easily claim rewards. Apps can also provide a great way to add gamification, exclusive promotions, and early access. For retailers, loyalty programs increase retention of valuable customers and secure repeat business. Your logo is on their phone, so you can more easily retain valuable customers, create more power users, and enable viral growth.

Customer service is better on mobile.

Mobile apps provide better tracking, shipping perks, account management, and faster customer service for your customers. They also reduce support center calls and physical footprint overhead while driving feature adoption and self-serve functions.

State of mobile: what does it mean for retailers?

While mobile has clear upsides, the current state of the industry is also deeply complex and challenging. There are many new and ongoing roadblocks preventing you from harnessing the value of your app:

- Mobile measurement is increasingly complicated and fragmented.
- The deprecation of IDFA and [SKAdNetwork](#) requires vigilant attention and adjustments.
- [Privacy Sandbox](#) will limit 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 for retailers that take a mobile-first focus and select the right partners, there's a relatively simple solution to the complexity that can not only take the pain out of these challenges, but also help your business grow — mobile linking and measurement.

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.

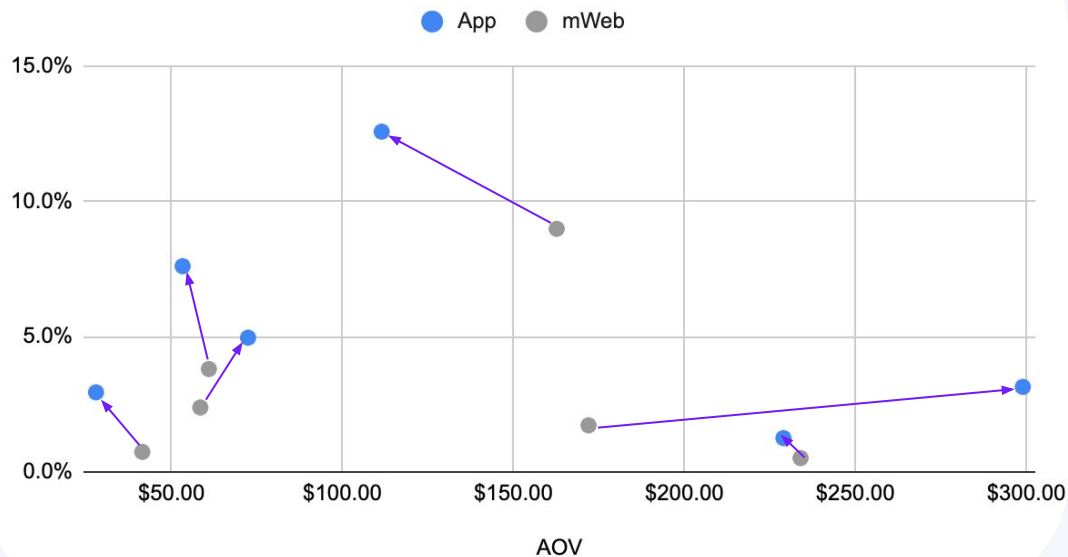
- **Deferred deep links** pass context through install. Deferred deep links can route users to specific content through an install. The link will first redirect to the App Store or Play Store, and once the app is downloaded and opened, the user will be taken to the content they expect.
- **Direct deep 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 retailers to better understand user behavior to continuously optimize user journeys. All of these benefits lead to business growth.

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

Branch data revealed that conversion rates for retail brands are **1.8x higher** in app vs. mWeb — with the **value of a deep link averaging \$3.94**

Order Value & Conversion US Non-Fashion Retail Brands



Conversions on apps are higher than on mobile web.

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 to understand 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, such as completing a purchase, installing a mobile app, or completing a survey and then credit a marketing tactic, such as a mobile ad or webinar, for its success.

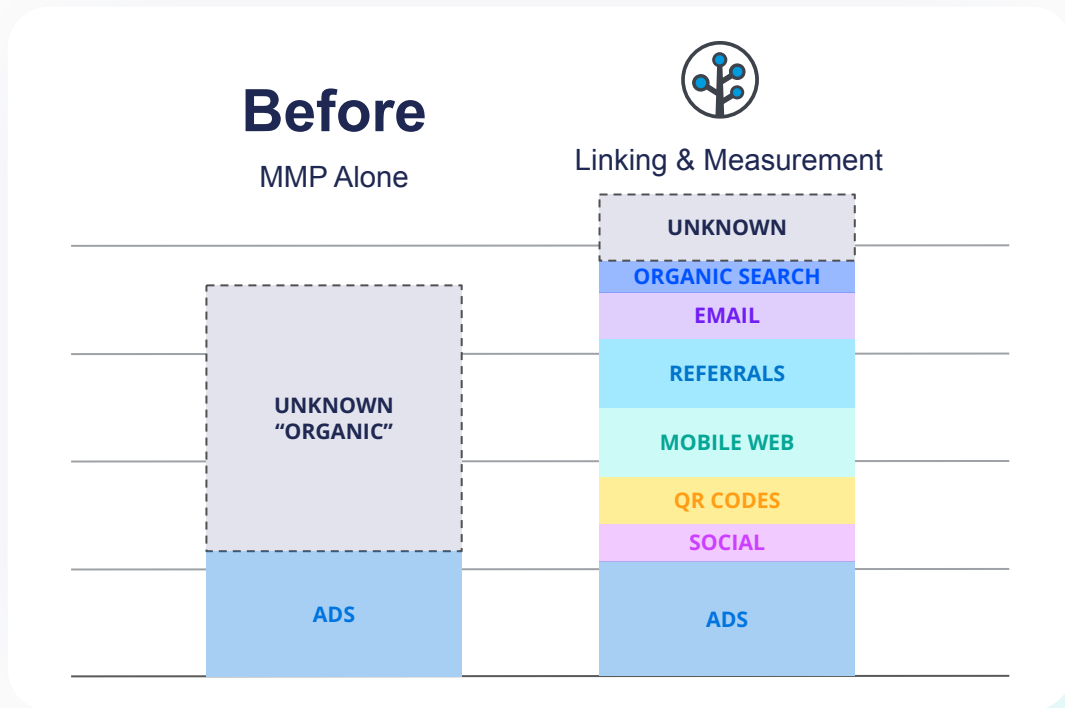
But as the number of marketing channels grows, it becomes even more important to pinpoint which ones drive results. Mobile app attribution providers are able to solve this mystery. They figure out where a user originated and track their future conversions. This data is a gold mine for retailers who need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

When retailers 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 not to invest in just one area, especially if your budget is limited. Diversify channels and tactics to reach more people and keep them engaged.

Measurement is the marketer'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 really the only way to understand what works and what doesn't, where to invest more or less, and how to optimize campaigns.



State of retail: what now?

The current state of mobile might seem overwhelming, but it also presents one of the best opportunities for continued growth; retailers just have to be mindful and grow efficiently.

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

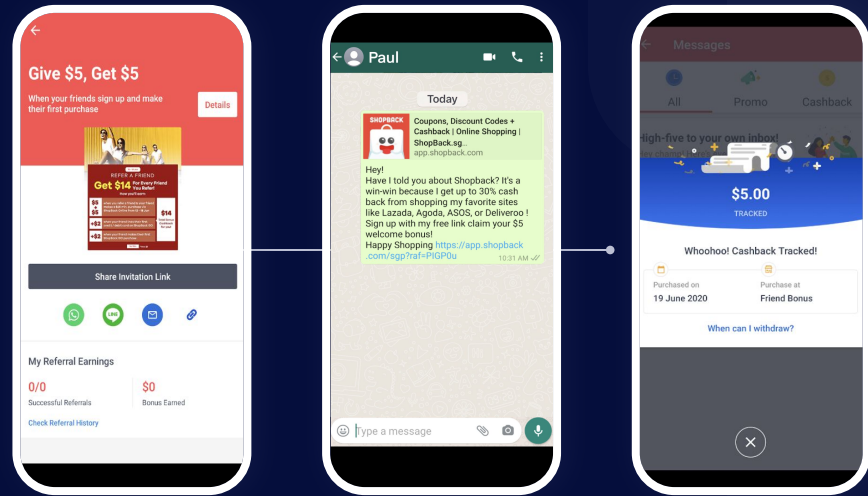
Acquisition: Get app users

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 this cost effectively?

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

- **User-to-user content sharing**
- **Offline-to-app via QR codes**
- **Web-to-app smart banners**
- **Email-to-app**
- **SEO app attribution**
- **Mobile influencer linking and attribution**
- **Mobile affiliate linking and attribution**

User-to-user content sharing



Encourage existing users to promote the app to their network

Acquire app users via user-to-user content sharing referral programs

A very efficient way to grow your user base is to encourage your existing users to share with their friends and followers. Many people buy things because their friends or people they admire tell them to. In fact, [92%](#) of people trust recommendations from friends and family.

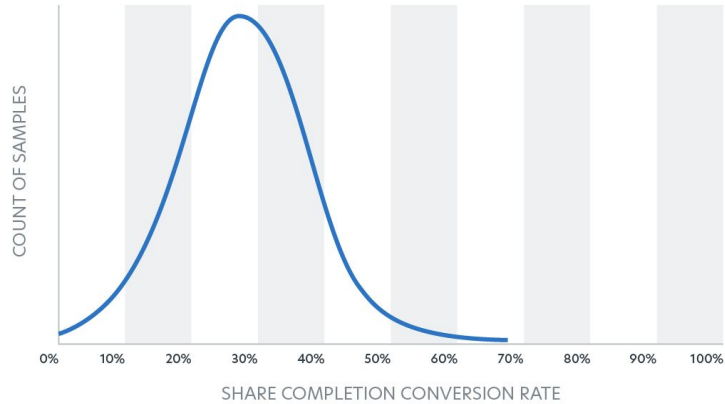
A [successful mobile referral program](#) requires accurate matching and attribution to credit the correct referring users and connect the dots to see which users are referring others. From there, having analytics on these links will allow you to keep track of referrals to offer appropriate incentives and close the loop with the person that made the referral.

Not only does this give your brand the reputation as one who invests in their 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.

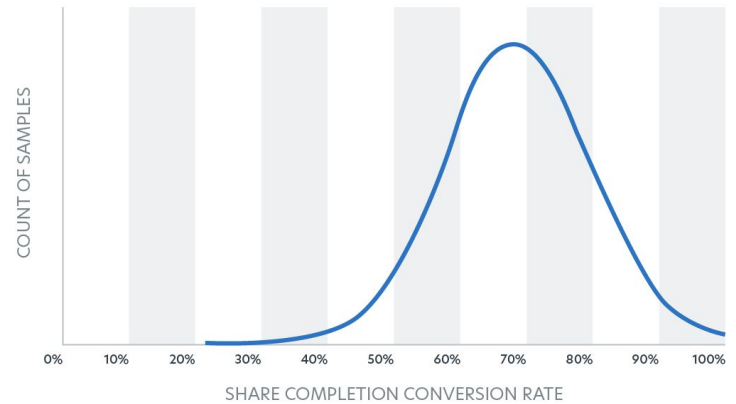
Incentivize links

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



Source: [Branch Study](#), 2020

Conversion from incentivized referrals
(high-converting bucket)

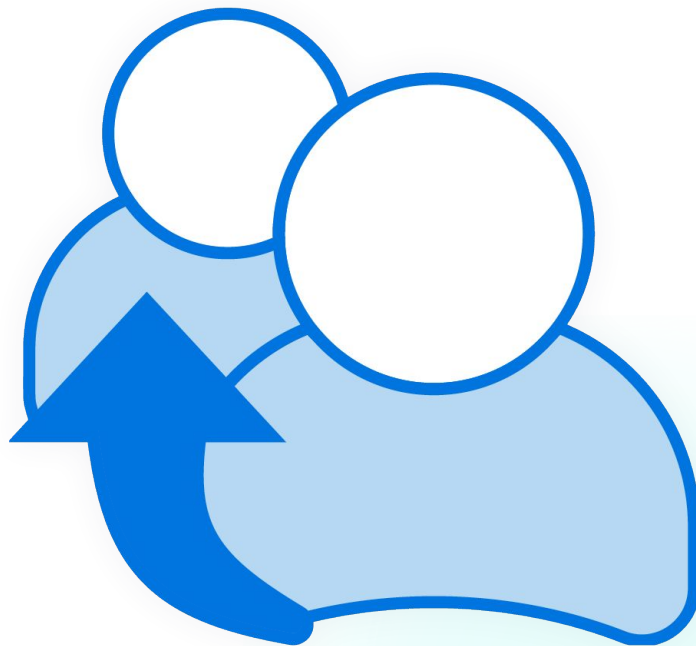


Source: [Branch Study](#), 2020

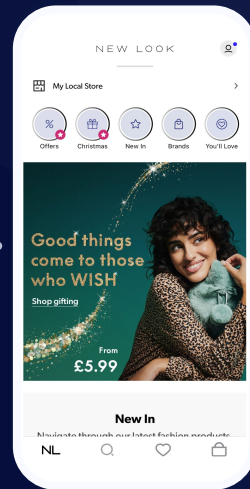
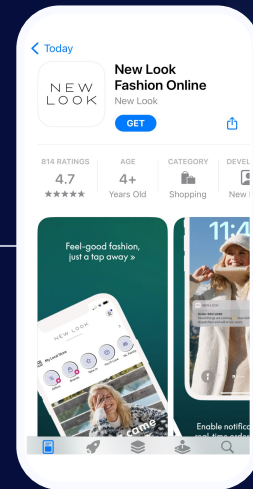
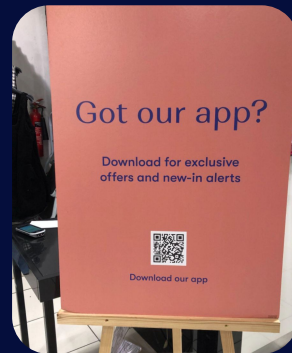
Quick tips

- ✓ **Make it easy to share**
Allow users to easily share referral deep links via a variety of platforms including social media, email, text, etc.
- ✓ **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 to enable users to 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**
Create shortcuts to trust and belonging by showing the name of the referrer and taking users straight to the content they wanted.

[Read the case study](#): A robust referral program helped marketplace app Rappi drive over 50 million total app installs.



Offline-to-app via QR codes



Drive users into your app from the offline world

Acquire app users via QR codes on products, 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 their ability to convert existing offline users —whether they're incorporated into a mailer, closing out an in-store brochure, printed on product packaging, or even on display in a store window — into your app, 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 or not 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 to drive better QR campaign performance and more personalized experiences based on that data.

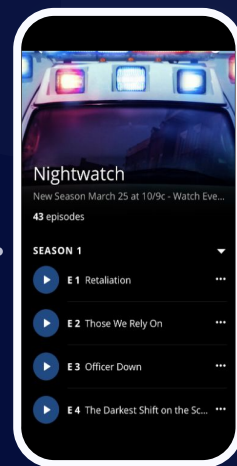
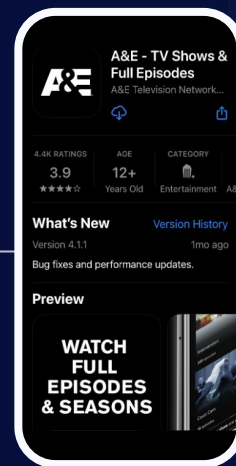
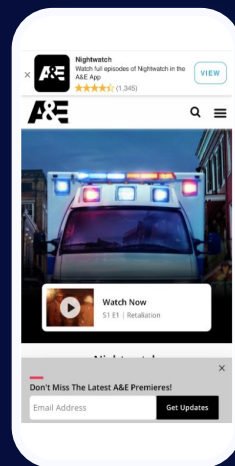
Quick tips

- ✓ **Use QR codes on signage**
Include QR codes on product packaging and inserts as well as storefronts and in-store signage to encourage app downloads.
- ✓ **Try physical ads**
Incorporate QR codes into print ads or other physical advertising like billboards or signage.
- ✓ **Always deep link**
Prevent broken experiences and create cohesive user journeys through direct and deferred deep linking.
- ✓ **Have 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.

[Read the case study](#): Retailer New Look drove 16k installs in the first month of launching in-store QR codes.



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 these users are primed 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 a discount if they purchase via the app, loyalty rewards, or any other benefits specific to your app.

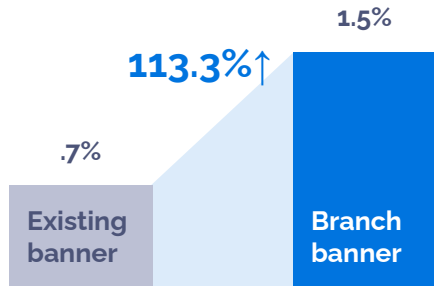
As with any user interaction personalization matters. You can personalize your smart banners at scale in a variety of ways, based on any number of attributes that signal specific user intent. App installs increase significantly when calls to action match intent. For example, Instagram says “View Photos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

Smart banners also help you reduce your cost per install by driving high-value users into your app when they land on your mobile web and ensure a seamless experience through deferred deep linking — essentially matching 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.

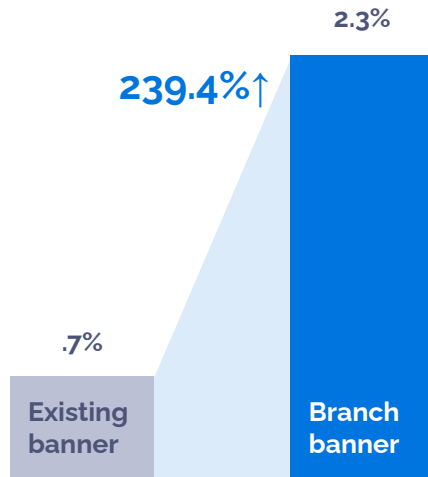
Smart banners can be part of every acquisition campaign because they are so customizable, highly targetable, and cost effective.

NEW LOOK + branch

% of Customers
Downloading App



% of Customers
Opening App



239%
uplift in app engagement

113%
increase in app downloads

NEW LOOK saw massive growth using Branch's Journeys smart banners.

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 in downloading in the moment.



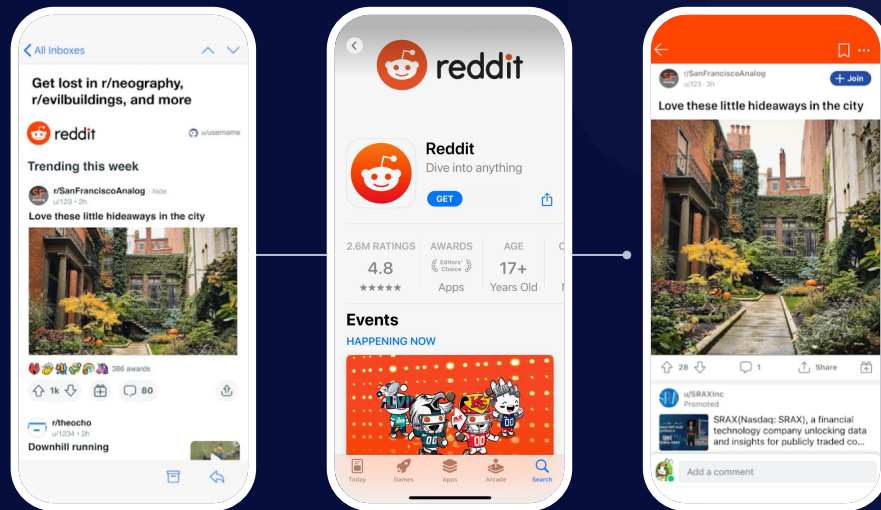
Be mindful of the customer journey

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](#): 97% cost-per-install cost savings with Branch's Journeys smart banners compared to the industry average cost for Sears and Kmart.



Email-to-app



Provide a pathway to download your app from email

Email-to-app for app user acquisition with email service provider integration

Did you know that about **70% of emails are opened 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 very possibly 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, the curiosity of your offer, or the 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 calls to action in emails 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.



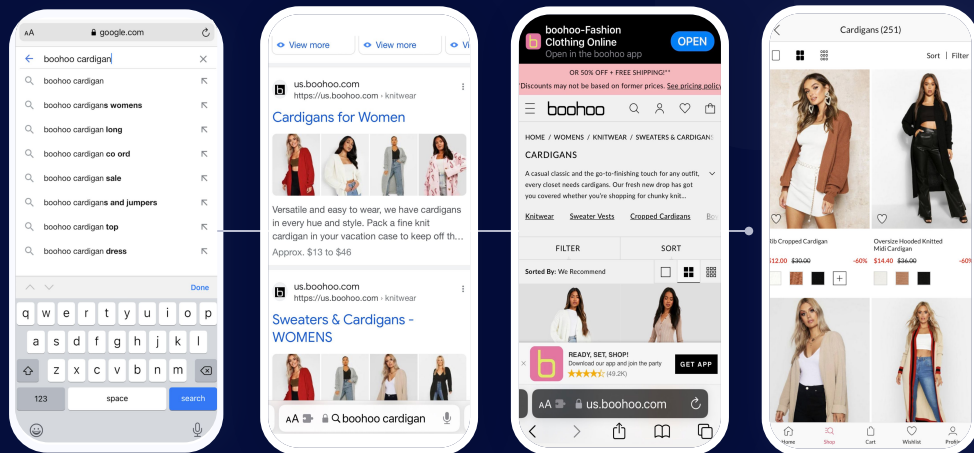
Brand your links

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

[Read the case study](#): Online retailer ZAFUL increased revenue from email marketing by 210%.



SEO app attribution for acquisition



Trigger a smart banner to users coming from SEO

App user acquisition from web search result, 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 and 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 channel 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 deduplicated and attributed to the corresponding search engine, which opens a window to SEO performance for a better understanding of SEO's value and a more complete cross-channel view.

Employing light-touch smart banners is a simple way to provide a pathway for users higher in the funnel to download your app from organic searches without losing SEO credit and also attribute app actions back to their source. A best practice here is that Google will penalize you if you show large, splashy banners to users coming in from organic searches. So for organic searches, banners should be small or just a button.

Quick tips



Target smart banners

Target smart banners to users that clicked on an SEO 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.



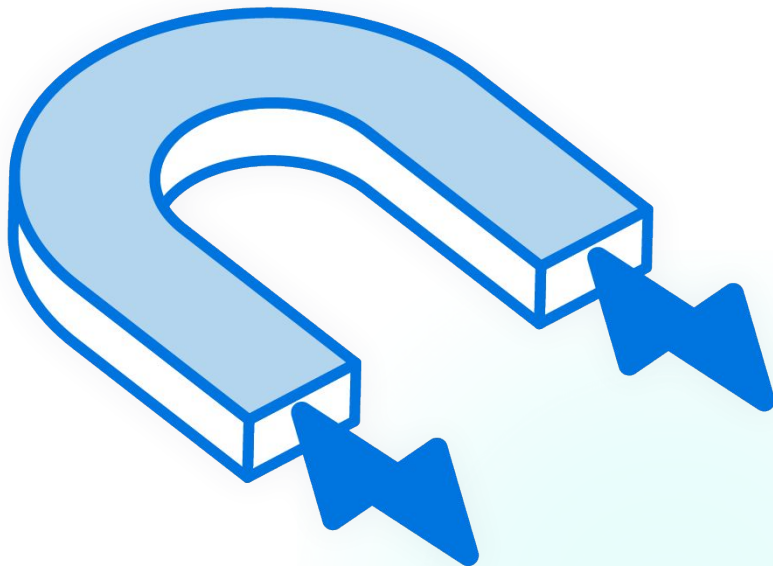
Be patient

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

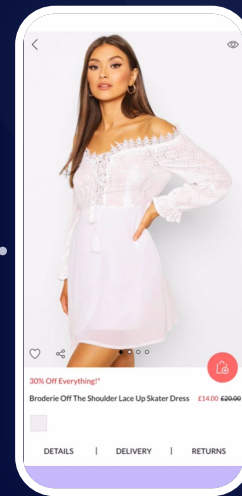
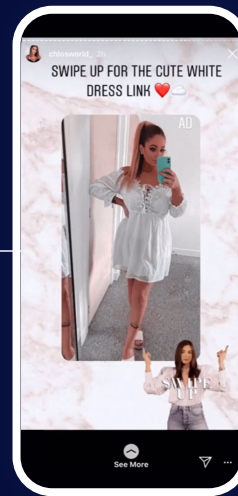
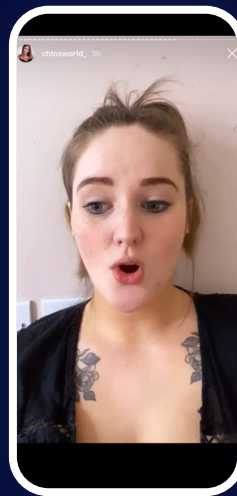


Attribute app traffic to search

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](#).



Mobile influencer linking and attribution



“Appify” influencer marketing campaigns to boost ROI

Acquire app users via influencer marketing campaigns

An influencer is a person with a following and audience who promotes your brand in order for you to achieve your business goals. Influencers can help you drive awareness, engagement, product sales, app installs, and other conversions, but most brands use influencers primarily for acquisition.

Influencer campaigns without the right deep links will probably lead to the web, which is fine, but to be most effective, you really want influencer campaigns to map back to the app. When routing users to the app, you can give each influencer specific links so you can evaluate influencer data points to understand the activities driven by each one. With app-level data, you can track performance by campaign or by influencer to make more informed decisions and unlock valuable insights about influencer programs as an acquisition channel.

Influencer initiatives can be used alongside virality practices when you have a product that can inspire others — but they work best when referrals and influencers are authentic. An influencer who is a good fit for your brand and has a similar target audience goes further than choosing an influencer who might have a large following but doesn't match your brand.

Some things to keep in mind when choosing an influencer are:

- Engagement
- Relevance and authenticity
- Demographics
- Cost
- Sponsored posts
- Professionalism

Quick tips



Provide deep links to influencers

Generate quick links for influencers to utilize across their social channels and direct users to the appropriate content in the app.



Customize each link

Give each influencer their own specific links so you can understand and evaluate the activities driven by each one. This will help you reduce influencer cost by focusing on only influencers that give you the best return on investment.



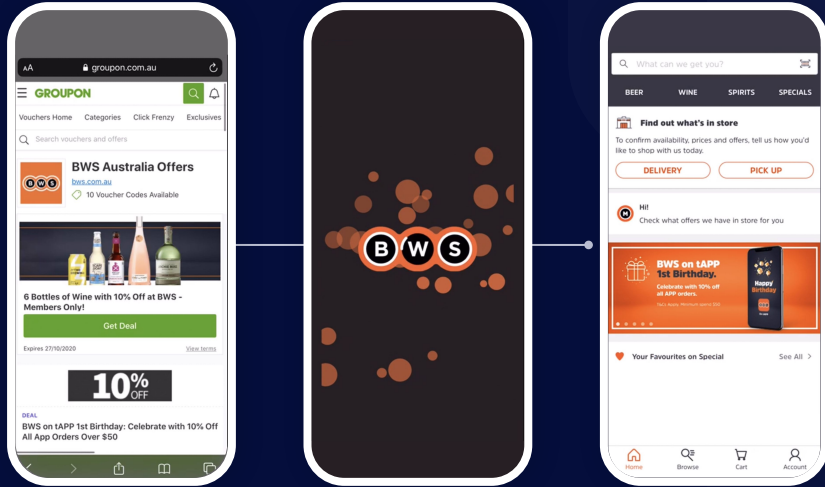
Set clear KPIs

Set clear key performance indicators with each influencer and allow the content creator to drive creativity while also being clear on brand guidance.

[Read the case study](#): Marketplace app Rappi acquired 50% of their users through influencers and referrals.



Mobile affiliate linking and attribution



“Appify” affiliate marketing to drive conversions and campaign optimization in real-time

Acquire app users with affiliate links that go into mobile apps

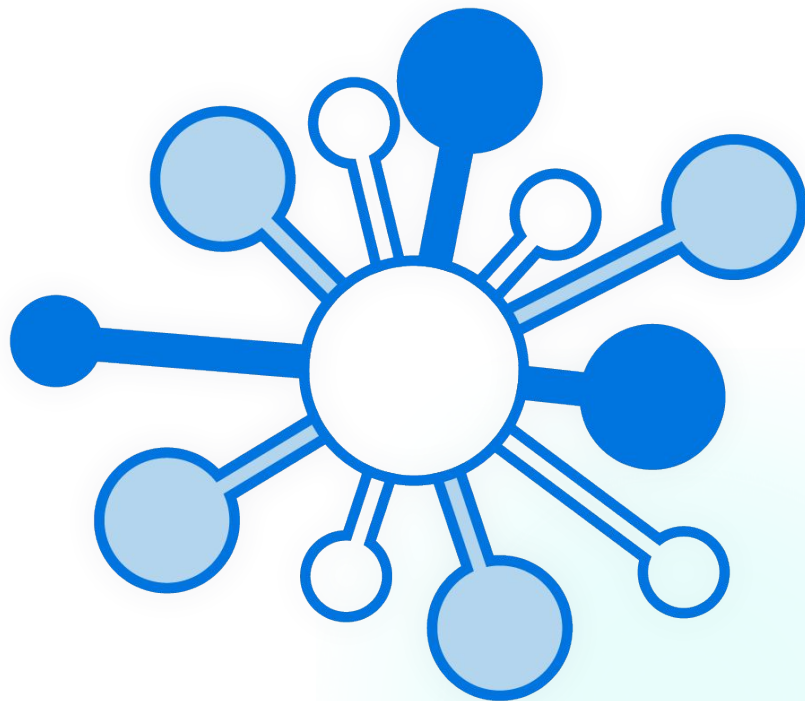
Affiliate campaigns have not historically been optimized for mobile, but “appifying” your affiliate campaigns can help you drive the best experience, get the highest ROI, make accurate payouts, and leverage real-time campaign data to boost campaign performance and improve reach.

Deep linking users from a campaign to the advertised product within the app, and subsequently attributing in-app conversions back to the affiliate source, optimizes both sides of this unique funnel. The end advertiser sees increased campaign impact by reducing friction to conversion. The affiliates/publishers/partners get credit for their true impact, including cross-platform user conversion paths, unencumbered by false positives or negatives. For well-aligned publisher/brand relationships, this typically results in higher payouts for the influencer by eliminating holes in attributing click-to-conversion rate and minimizing mid-funnel drop off. It also gives stronger signals about whether the brand and influencer pairing is a good ongoing fit. Finally, the end user gets a seamless transition into the app with fewer steps between them and the desired action, which reinforces trust with the influencer and mirrors some of that affinity onto the brand itself. Because the destination app preserves context of the user's click and delivers them directly to the content they expected, with any promised offers and coupons automatically applied, there is a continuity of experience and trust. This also reduces likelihood of churn and increases the opportunity for ongoing conversions.

Quick tips

- ✓ **Create a consistent experience**
Ensure a better user experience with deep links. Affiliate campaigns can be run on everything from email and social media to search and SMS, so it's important to have a consistent, convenient experience across all channels.
- ✓ **Deduplicate data with deep links**
Utilize deep links in affiliate campaigns to send clean, deduplicated conversion and revenue data in real-time and in the right format.
- ✓ **Appify your strategy**
Integrate your app into your affiliate strategy and leverage your affiliates to drive more app adoption.

[Read the case study](#): Blibli, the largest trusted online mall in Indonesia, secured a 10x increase in attributed sales and 150% increase in affiliate marketing campaign growth.



Engagement

Engagement: Bring app users back

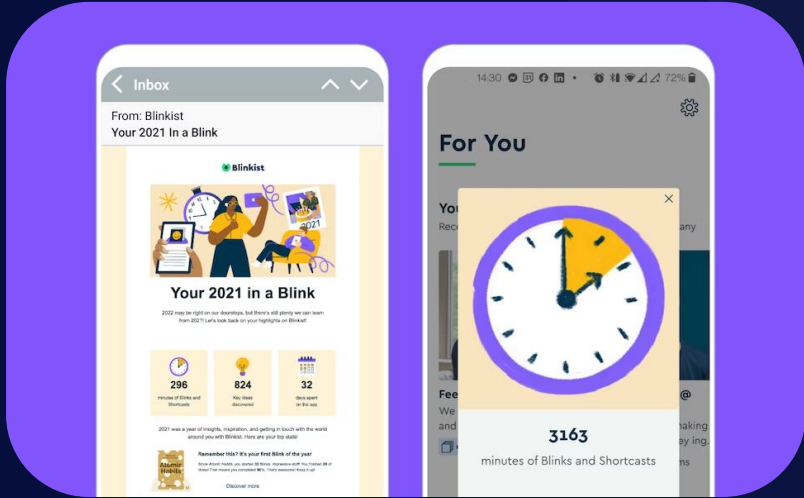
Because of increasing app usage and competition, to build and maintain truly profitable apps, brands must develop deeper relationships with their customers that keep them coming back. Engagement is increasingly important to be successful in any type of mobile growth.

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 via QR codes**
- **Email-to-app**
- **Deep linking in mobile ad campaigns**
- **In-app only experiences**

Personalization

Brought to you by: *braz*e



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, POS system data), 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.



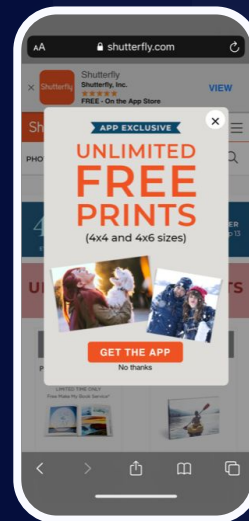
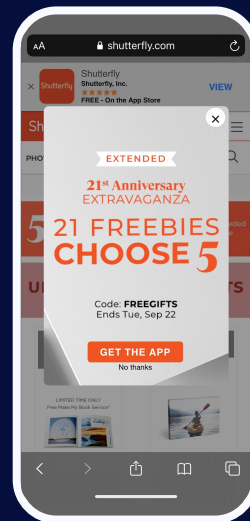
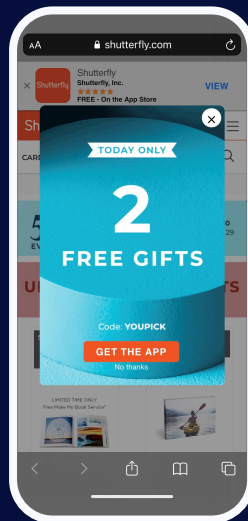
Leverage real-time segmentation

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](#): Blinkist personalized their “Year in a Blink” campaign and boosted reengagement by 15%.



Targeted web-to-app smart banners



Drive existing app users to specific app content from mobile web

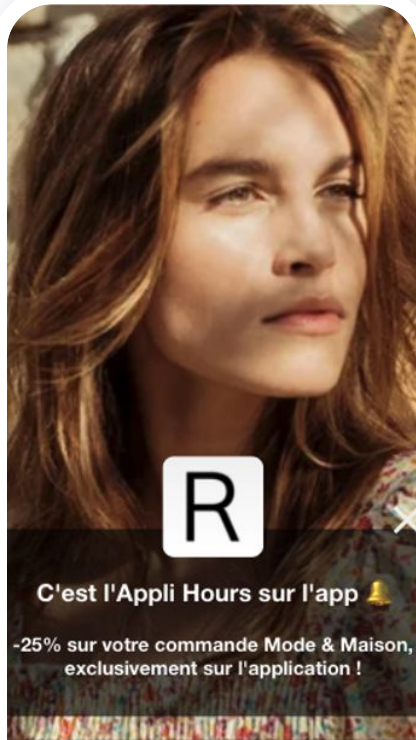
Show smart banners on your mobile website

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 who have already downloaded your app that you want to reengage, **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.

La Redoute + branch



29%

increase in retention

3x

increase in AOV

"By leveraging Branch's web-to-app smart banners, our marketing team finally has an efficient way to help our web customers discover or re-engage with our app. The level of customization Journeys offers allows us to constantly test and improve our approach."

Claire Lecherf
Senior Traffic Manager, La Redoute

Quick tips



Use smart targeting rules

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



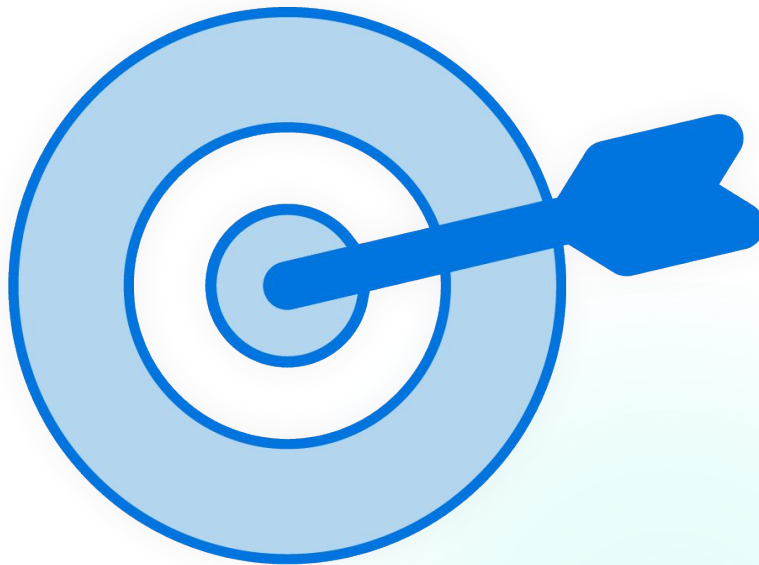
Use larger banners

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

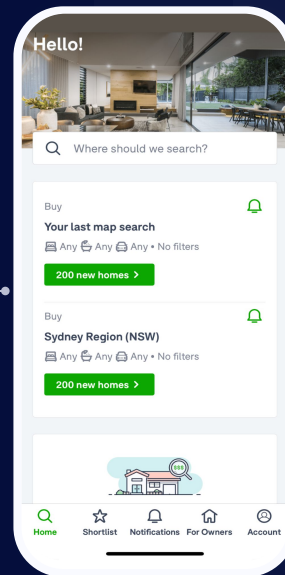
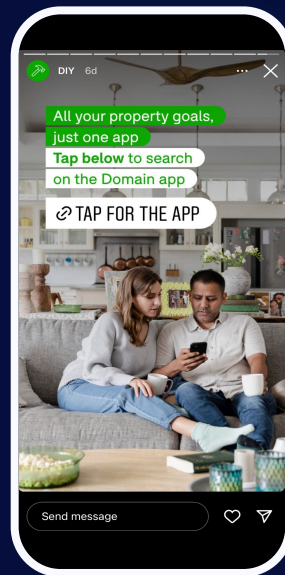


A/B test

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 effectively keep users from engaging with your app.

HIBBETT®
CITY GEAR®

+ **branch**

46.4%

click-to-install rate

69%

increase in MAUs

228%

increase in DAUs

51%

increase in NEW users

“Partnering with Branch has allowed us to optimize user flows from almost every touchpoint. With deep linking and Journeys, we were able to create a unique, seamless mobile experience across all platforms and channels for our customers.”

Sarah Sharp-Wangaard
VP of Marketing, Hibbett | City Gear

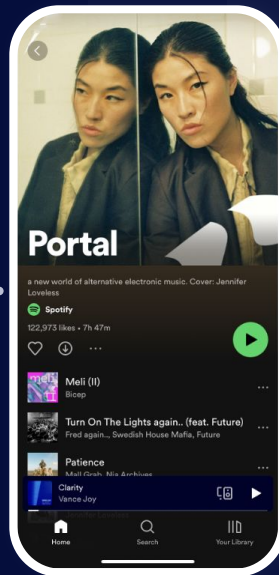
Hibbett | City Gear saw significant growth in a variety of metrics by using Branch deep links in marketing campaigns that helped their users break out of social media walled gardens.

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 via 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 even online. By employing QR codes in offline places like out-of-home advertisements, storefronts, direct mailers, and print ads, you can drive app engagement from the real world, meet rising consumer expectations, and understand how real-world actions lead to app activities.

Attributing app installs back to the specific products 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 they are engaged with in the physical world, out of context, people will know they originate from your brand.



Get additional ROI

QR codes can be great for paid campaigns — and adding a QR code to real estate you're already paying for adds an additional layer of return on that investment.

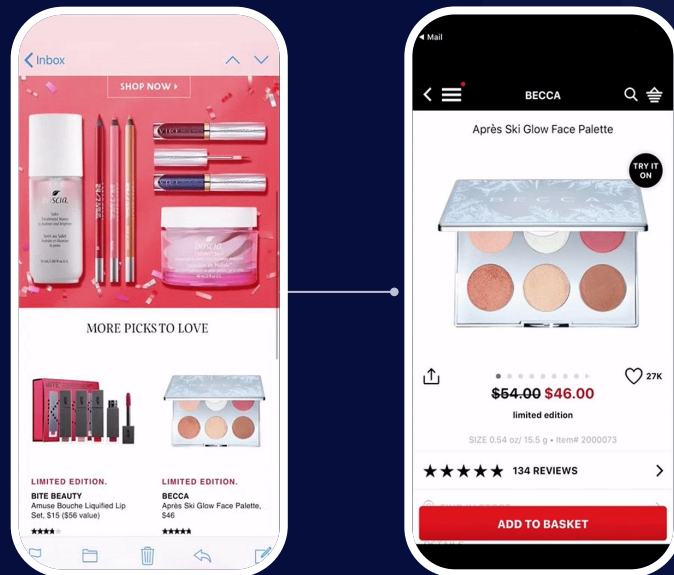


QR codes aren't going away

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



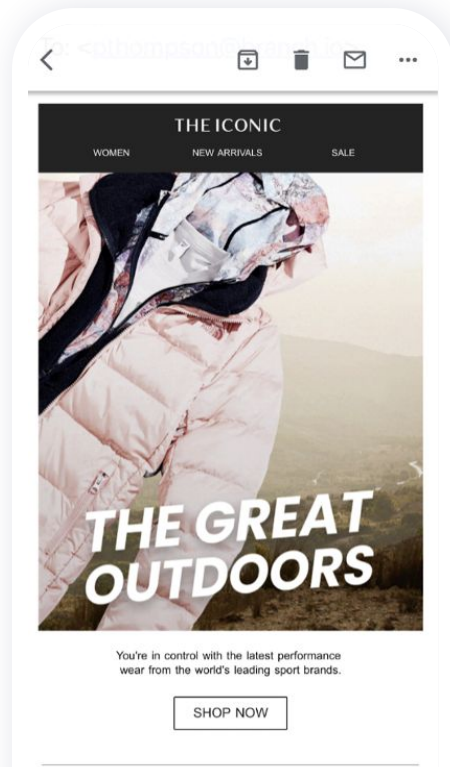
Route users from email to the corresponding content in your app

Email-to-app via ESP integration for recapture of 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 product announcements to discount offers and content recommendations — 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.

THE ICONIC + branch



70%
lift in email-to-app traffic

"We've leveraged journeys across key points of our customer's path to purchase with relevant calls to action. Once we get customers to our app, we see higher engagement across our entire ICONIC offering. This includes increased repurchase rates."

Melle Staelenberg
Director of Customer Marketing, THE ICONIC

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 segment in order to help increase engagement and conversion rates.



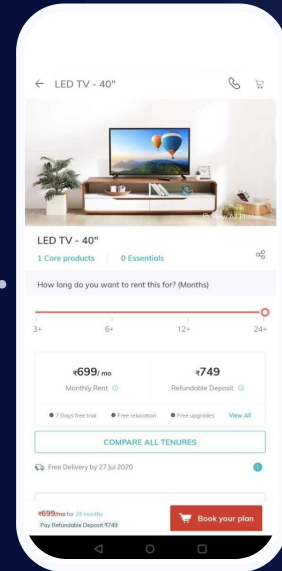
Try in-app only offers

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

[Read the case study](#): With deep links in their email campaigns, Rent the Runway saw total mobile revenue grow by 200%, alongside increased engagement.



Deep linking in mobile ad campaigns



Route existing users to app content from paid campaigns

Run reengagement ads to drive conversions in 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 is especially critical with channels where the accessible audience for a brand's organic outreach can get lost in the noise or lack the requisite scale to reliably achieve holistic growth goals.

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 advertised products 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.



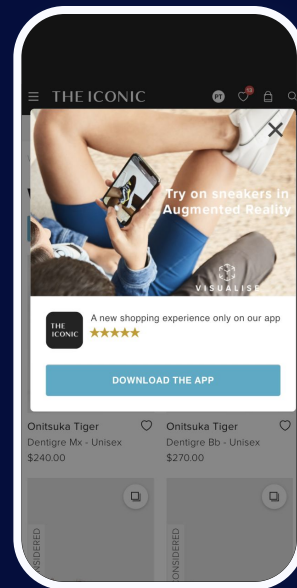
Deep link to compelling content

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](#): Leading rebate app Checkout 51 drove a 10% increase in conversion rates and a 93% click-to-open rate by deep linking their ads.



In-app only experiences



Drive users to app for enhanced functionality

Engage app users with experiences only available on 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, get users to come back to your mobile app for post-purchase order tracking or augmented reality shopping where users can virtually try to clothes. Enhanced functionality not only raises curiosity, but also makes the app experience worth coming back for.

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 user engagement and create a better overall user 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 banners to highlight app-only capabilities, such as a sneaker-try-on augmented reality feature.



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 re-engage with an app.

[Read the case study](#): How retailer THE ICONIC built a best-in-class user experience to supercharge growth across platforms.



Conversion

Conversion: Get app users to do something

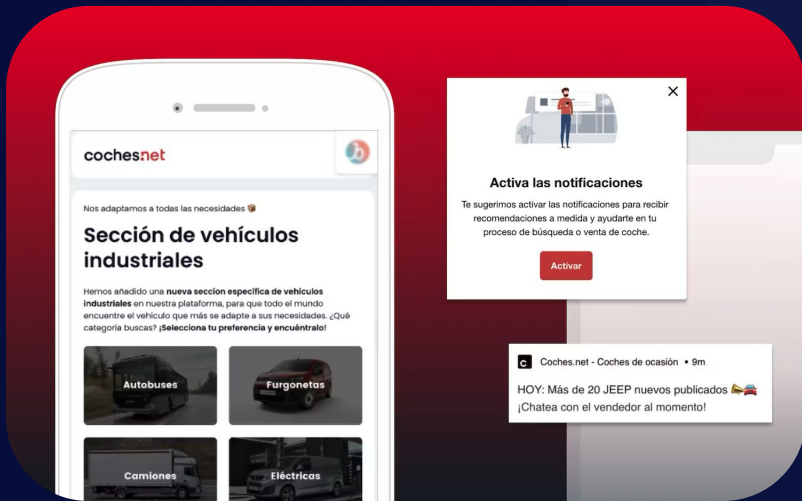
Even when you have highly engaged new users, you still need them to convert — to do something that you want them to, whether that's make a purchase, sign up for a subscription or loyalty program, or simply log into the app. So much of successful conversion actually starts with an exceptional user experience from the very first open and beyond.

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 effectively 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 — and that makes it essential for every brand to make sure that they're using the ideal mix of channels to reach customers in a complementary, cohesive way, with an eye toward making the most of each channel's strengths.

Embracing a cross-channel approach can be one of the most impactful ways for marketers today 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 that every additional messaging channel leveraged led to an **3.2X average increase** in purchases per user. That said, it's important to be thoughtful about what 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 every 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.



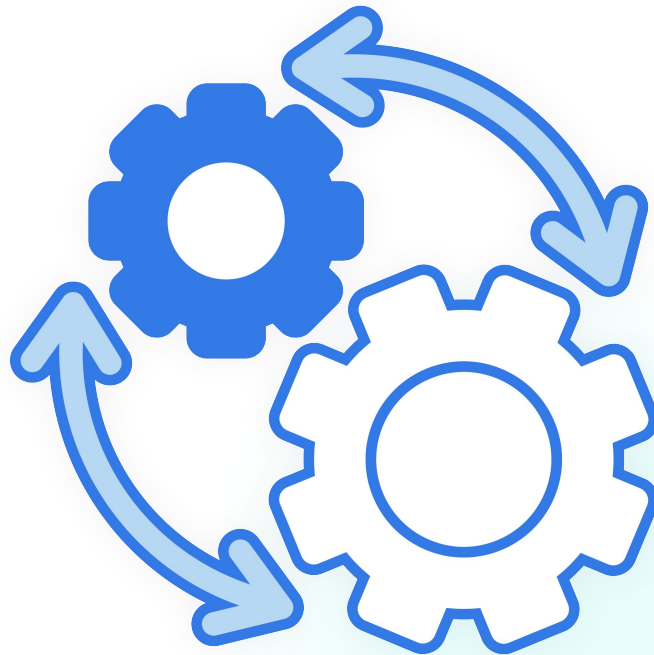
Combine in-product and out-of-product channels

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.



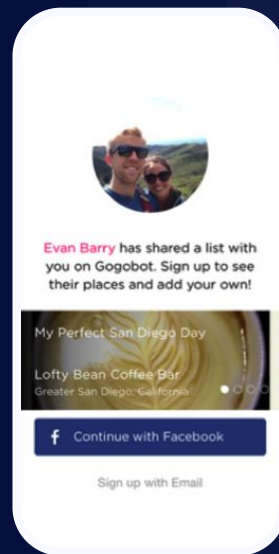
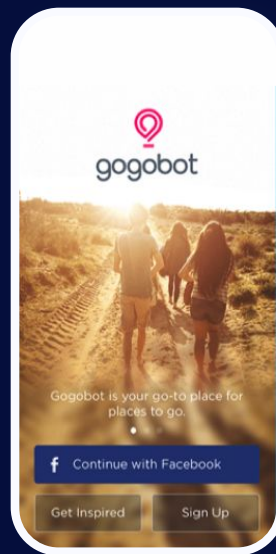
Test and optimize your cross-channel flows

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](#): How Coches leverages cross-channel messaging flows to increase conversions by 1500%

Personalized onboarding



Gogobot increased conversion to signup by 78%
with 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 go check out this song," 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.



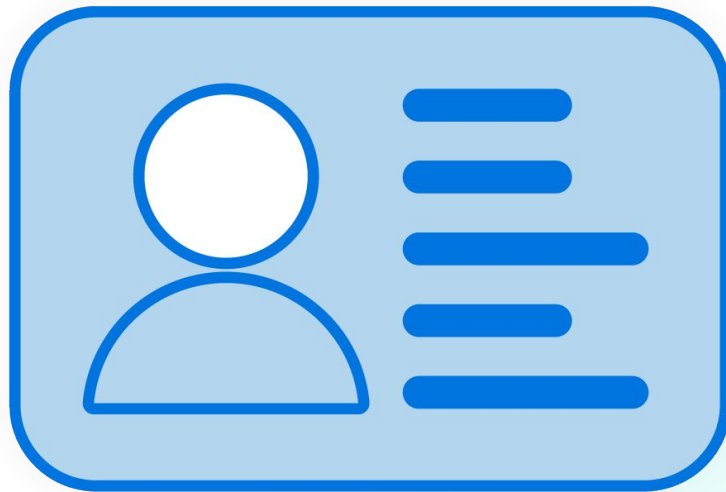
Curate the journey

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.

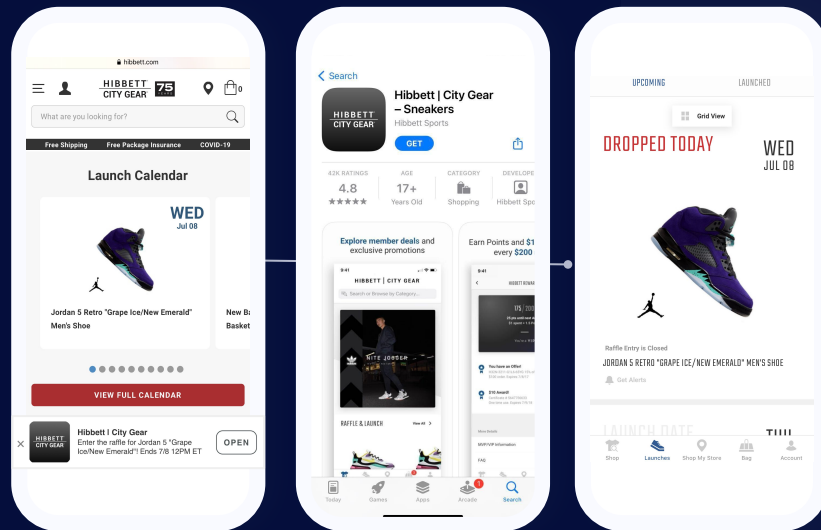


Show value up front

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

Deferred deep linking for new app users

By creating content and designing 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 be to visit a web page or purchase a product. Trust is important. Make sure that you fulfill their needs and don't preemptively bombard them with aggressive messaging or content, such as an immediate sign-in box, if it does not 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, so it's imperative that the user experience is as expected, 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. These types of links basically match 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. Then they automatically show the content that was clicked before the app install, thereby creating a seamless, convenient user experience.

A deferred deep link might help a new user complete a purchase or ensure a new shopper is enrolled in a loyalty program and that they get credit for their very first purchase. Deferred deep links ensure that customers now 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 a more loyal and engaged customer that's more likely to convert.

Quick tips

- ✓ **Serve exceptional experiences — no matter what**
Set up deferred deep linking to relevant content for both direct deep linking users who have the app installed already as well as routing users without the app immediately 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.

[Read the case study](#): Instacart saw a 6x increase in purchases from email, using deep links to direct users to desired in-app content rather than mobile webpages.



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!](#)





Retail Mobile Growth Playbook

branch.io