![iterable]

All Things Retail

The Iterable User Engagement Report

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Introduction

Retail Therapy

The state of shopping in the U.S. is as healthy as it's ever been: retail sales are up, yearly sales have increased 2.3%, and consumer spending is growing at its fastest pace in nearly four years.

Although the outlook appears sunny, retail brands can't coast. Consumer habits never stop evolving and brands must keep up with their changing tastes. In the world of retail: the buck always stops with the consumer.

Consumers realize they can have it all. Today's digital consumer is increasingly connected, has more access to information, and expects businesses to react to all their needs and wants instantly. (Deloitte, 2019)

As technology continues reshaping business as we know it, retail brands must embrace the changing needs of the consumer if they hope to remain relevant inside the retail landscape.

While there's no recipe for retail success, the brands that tout convenience, product superiority, and a fundamental understanding of their customers are poised for success. Though many retailers talk a big game, who actually backs it up?

In this report, we analyzed cross-channel messaging strategies used by 50 leading U.S. retailers to study how they're using engagement as a catalyst for digital transactions..

We note what companies are doing across the board and what they can do to stand out from the crowd, citing examples and recommendations for optimizing your organization's cross-channel marketing strategy.

> Consumers realize they can have it all. Today's digital consumer is increasingly connected, has more access to information, and expects businesses to react to all their needs and wants instantly.
>
> **DELOITTE, 2019**
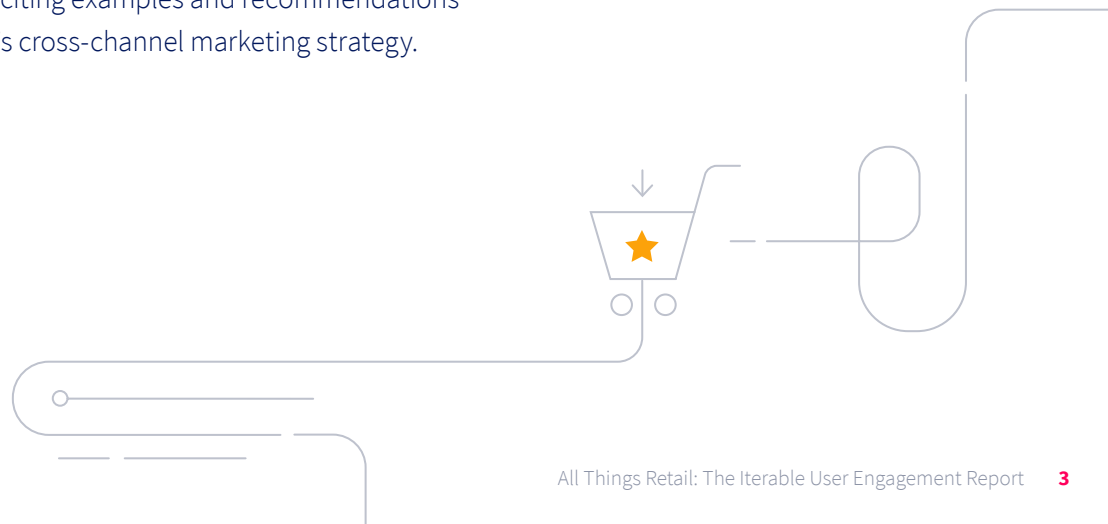
Report Overview

We examined all customer-facing messaging sent by 50 different retail companies over the course of two weeks in November—coinciding specifically one week before and after Black Friday and Cyber Monday. These companies were comprised of the top industry leaders, as well as their fastest growing competitors. The retail brands observed were comprised of the following categories: Apparel & Accessories, Electronics, Home Improvement, Housewares, and Mass Merchants.

We carefully evaluated the timing, content, and calls to action of each message as part of these brands' overarching campaign strategies. We also paid close attention how these retailers specifically addressed Black Friday and Cyber Monday promotions.
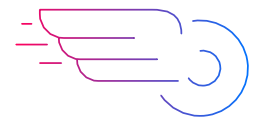
Top Companies vs. Fastest Growing: What's the Difference?

Top Brands
Retail brands boasting the highest compound annual growth rate over 5 years

VS

Fastest Growing Brands
Retail brands that drove the highest 2017 web sales growth

Here are our key takeaways after analyzing the messaging content sent from a wide range of prominent retailers.

- Cross-channel is gaining momentum—42% of major brands engage consumers across multiple communication channels.
- Email reigns supreme but mobile matters—41% of retailers leverage push messaging to regularly interact with a mobile audience.
- All campaigns are not created equal—70% of retailers welcome their new subscribers, 76% promote to them regularly, but only 44% attempt to reclaim abandoned carts.

This report is for marketers and go-to-market leaders interested in implementing high-performing, cross-channel marketing campaigns that can achieve these objectives.

- Activating consumer attention and interest
- Driving engagement that grows LTV
- Developing a loyal, captivated audience

Inside, we present valuable insights about the retail industry and include real-world messaging examples from the country's most beloved brands.

If this report piques your interest and you'd like to learn how to advance your own campaigns, please reach out to us for some one-to-one advice and best practices.

REQUEST A DEMO

Report Methodology

Activity Summary

DAYS 0-5

Created accounts, signed up for all company communication, downloaded mobile apps, and opted-in to all messaging, including email, mobile, and web push.

DAYS 6-10

Continued cross-channel engagement, filled and abandoned carts via both desktop and mobile app on Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

DAYS 11-14

Weaned engagement and halted activity.

We carefully selected 50 top U.S. retailers as recognized inside Internet Retailer's 2018 Top 500 E-Commerce Report for observation: those identified as leaders in their space determined by annual growth rates (25 Top Companies) as well as their perceived disruptors boasting the highest web sales (25 Fastest Growing Companies).

After creating new accounts with each of these companies, we tracked all messaging content over the course of two weeks during November 2018—the weeks before and after Black Friday and Cyber Monday.

This research report was designed to analyze select messaging tactics in a brief timespan for the purpose of evaluating user engagement from the leaders of the retail industry.

Readers should note that Iterable's recommendations for cross-channel

Companies were chosen from each of the following five categories:

- MASS MERCHANTS
- APPAREL & ACCESSORIES
- ELECTRONICS
- HOME IMPROVEMENT
- HOUSEWARES

engagement are based on the limited experience of this study, which is not meant to be scientific in its analysis and does not reflect the official positions of any company listed.

During our analysis, we studied how each company utilized cross-channel communication to engage users at two critical stages of the customer lifecycle—activation and nurture.

ACTIVATION

Early stage of the lifecycle where companies seek to **activate** consumer attention and interest

NURTURE

Ongoing lifecycle stage where companies **nurture** and engage consumers to strengthen relationships

REACTIVATION

Re-engagement stage of the lifecycle where companies **reactivate** customer engagement to drive retention and loyalty

The brief nature of our study focused on the early activation and nurture stages the full customer lifecycle.

Key Areas of Focus

Welcome Campaigns

Welcome messages are often designated by their targeted purpose of introducing a user to a brand's website, mobile app, social media platform or other business property.

Did the company send out a welcome email after a new user created an account, signed up to receive communications or downloaded an app? If so, how many welcome emails did each company send? Was this series extended across channels?

Promotional Campaigns

Most promotional marketing campaigns are typically high-volume, general-purpose communications that brands use to inform customers of sales, membership rewards, and other promotional events.

Did the company advertise their business with promotional messaging? How many promotional emails were sent in total by each company? Which companies tended to send more? What types of content were being promoted to customers?

Cart Abandonment Campaigns

Cart abandonment messages are reminders which encourage customers to finish completing their recent near-purchases.

Did the company send out any messaging after a cart was abandoned? Was this messaging sent out in a relevant time window? How many reminders were sent?

Cross-Channel Messaging

Cross-channel messaging can include marketing promotions, account notifications, as well as transactional confirmations across multiple mobile and web-based channels..

Did the company expand their campaigns across more than email? Which channels were used most frequently? Did interactions influence channel-specific messaging?

Welcome Campaigns

Data Analysis

Welcome messaging was used by the majority of retailers following account creation. We found that 70% of companies studied sent at least one welcome message after a new account was created via website or app. Nearly three quarters of the companies with welcome messaging chose to extend their welcome across multiple messages.

The top companies and fastest growing companies were just about equal in terms of welcome campaign usage. The top companies slightly edged out the fastest growing at a rate of 72% over 68%.

By the Numbers: Welcome Campaigns

70%
of retail brands used welcome campaigns

71%
sent more than 1 message

16%
of brands engage cross-channel

2.3
Average number of messages sent in a welcome campaign

30% of retail brands sent 0 messages

20% of retail brands sent 1 message

22% of retail brands sent 2 messages

28% of retail brands **rocked it** by sending 3+ messages

Who Used Them More?

Top Companies

**72%**

VS

Fastest Growing Companies

68%

Welcome Timing

An effective welcome series nurtures engagement at its highest peak. Capitalize on opportunity and put your best foot forward by welcoming and educating your customers about your unique products and services.

Following a consumer's first encounter with your brand is the perfect time to fan that early flame and reinforce your brand's unique value—whether that follows account creation, opt-ins for publications, or a purchase. This is a natural segue for rolling out the red carpet and securing engagement down the road.

With this in mind, message timeliness plays a critical role in how you shape the opinions of your customers. Most retailers understand this and kick off their welcome series typically within one day of account creation.

The majority of the companies observed triggered the primary message of their campaigns inside an appropriately timed window—somewhere between instantly to within a day. But with the good comes the bad—one company waited a full 12 days before sending us our first welcome message!
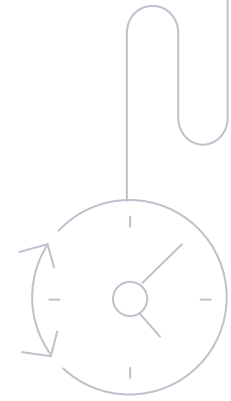
Message timeliness plays a critical role in how you shape the opinions of your customers.
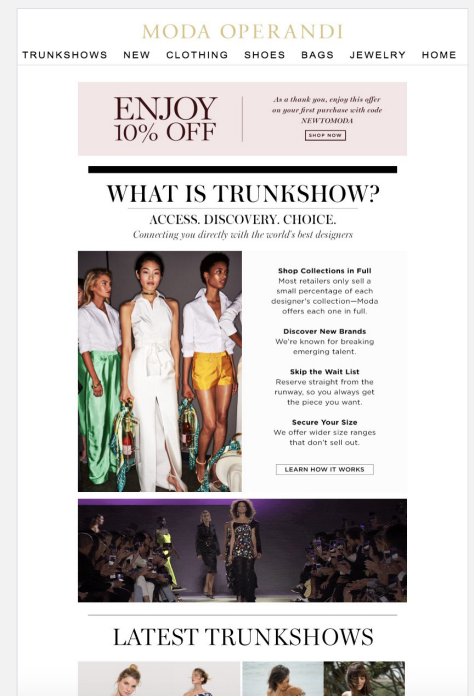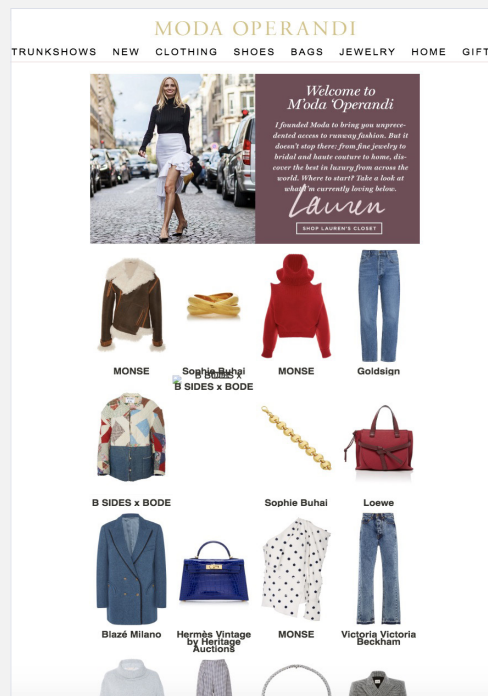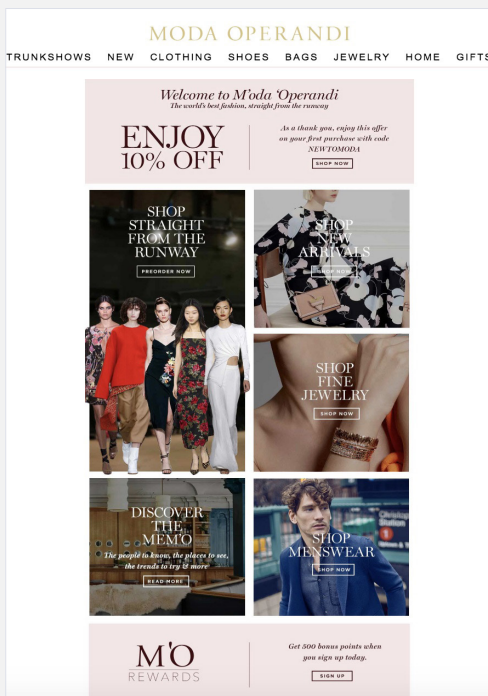
Fashion discovery platform Moda Operandi sends three welcome emails in the first three days of account creation.

Well-timed welcome messages help new users familiarize themselves with your capabilities and service offerings; assuming consumers can figure that out on their own is not a risk worth taking.

Behavior-Based Welcomes

Data-driven and behavior-based messaging is a key driver of marketing efficacy, but is often discussed more so in concept than executed in practice. While some messaging platforms have capabilities to do it, most marketers simply aren't equipped to leverage it—whether the culprit be a convoluted tech stack, data silos, or simply a lack of resources, most companies are slow-rolling their welcome strategies at the expense of the customer experience.

Unfortunately, most of the brands studied haven't yet overcome this personalization hurdle. Most of the welcome campaigns we encountered ran on a single channel with little responsiveness. Though we were regularly interacting and exhibiting signs of strong engagement, the messaging we received was relatively unreflective of our experience.

Common Behavior Override Triggers

- **FILLING CARTS**
- **COMPLETING PURCHASES**
- **APP DOWNLOADS**
- **REGULAR BROWSING/ INTERACTION**
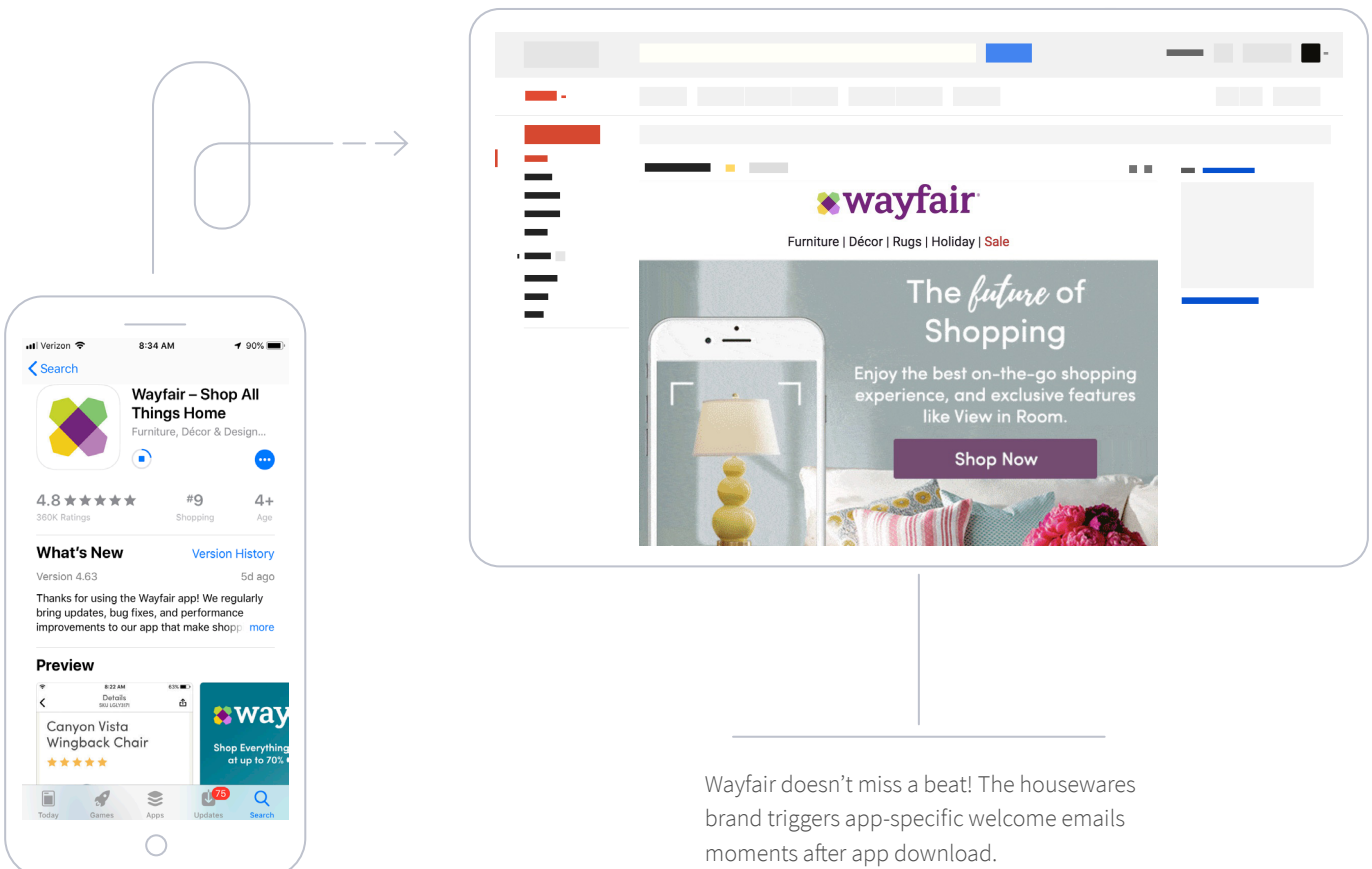
Wayfair doesn't miss a beat! The housewares brand triggers app-specific welcome emails moments after app download.

Not all companies limited themselves to pre-scheduled message content, however. We found that 17% of companies extended their welcomes by acknowledging our app downloads and responded with welcome content via email or push message.

Wayfair was quick to trigger an app-related welcome email very shortly after we downloaded their app. As a user new to their app, a informative email about what we could accomplish by using the app was a helpful arm of our general onboarding.

Bed Bath & Beyond took a similar, but cross-channel approach. We downloaded the app and logged in using our account credentials, linking our desktop and mobile instances. Ensuring we left a trail of interaction data behind us, we explored the app and browsed before eventually closing it and going about our day.
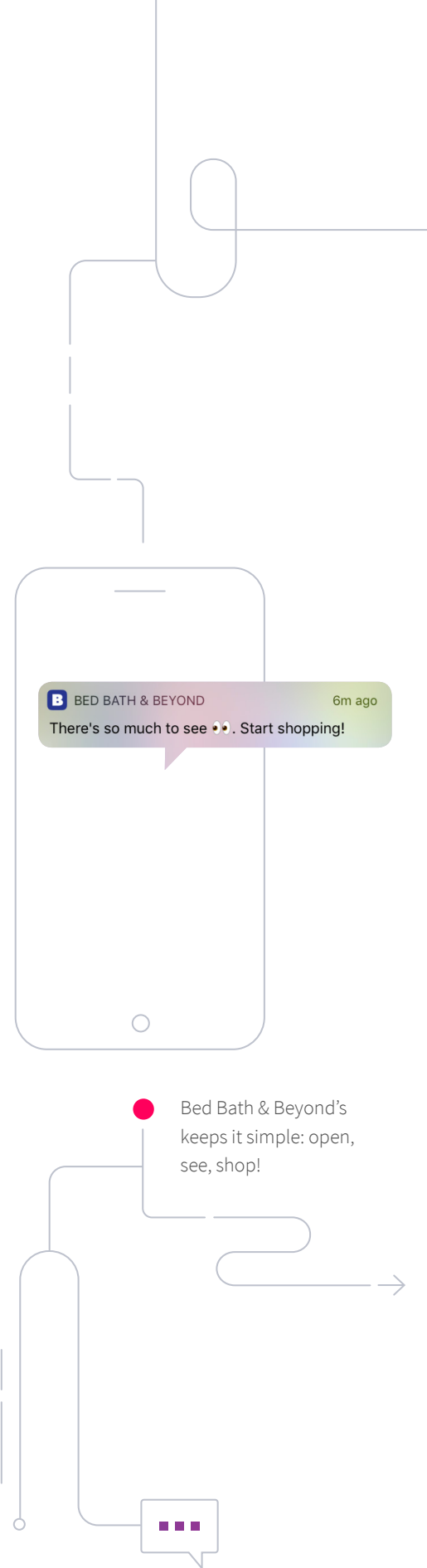
Hours later, Bed Bath & Beyond sent us our first push message prompting our return to their app. We appreciated Bed Bath & Beyond recognizing us as new app users and encouraging interactions on their mobile channel.

In the examples above, both Wayfair and Bed Bath & Beyond bolstered their welcome experiences using triggered messaging and preemptively addressed any onboarding bumps before our engagement waned.

Campaign Length

Like any campaign, there's typically a set window of time where messages are received and acted upon; once that time has passed, these messages all but lose their value.

We found that the average retail welcome campaign transpired over 3.3 days, consisting of 2.3 messages. Most messaging inside these campaigns shared discounts on first purchases, discussed account holder benefits, and demonstrated account maximization tips. These are all great first-touch tactics!

B BED BATH & BEYOND   6m ago
There's so much to see 👀. Start shopping!

Bed Bath & Beyond's keeps it simple: open, see, shop!

While we appreciated the coupons and validation of receiving these emails, some series ran much longer than the average three days after signup. With statically scheduled campaign content, brands run the risk of missing the relevance window we discussed earlier.

There were several brands who continued to send us welcome messaging into the second week of our study. On paper, this doesn't sound terribly out of line, but consider the following:

- **We had already received 1-2 welcome messages previously**
- **We were regularly receiving promotional content**
- **We had downloaded and engaged with their mobile apps**
- **We added and abandoned items in our carts**

Our activity reflected that of a highly engaged customer, and welcome messages about how we could "start shopping" were far from valuable to us at this stage. In these instances, our customer journey had progressed beyond the necessity of message three or four of the welcome series.

Static content is a valuable asset to marketers, but misaligning its use case is a misstep from the customer's point of view. Without the ability to process and understand customer behavior and activity data, retailers can't expect to support their customers' journeys to their full extent.
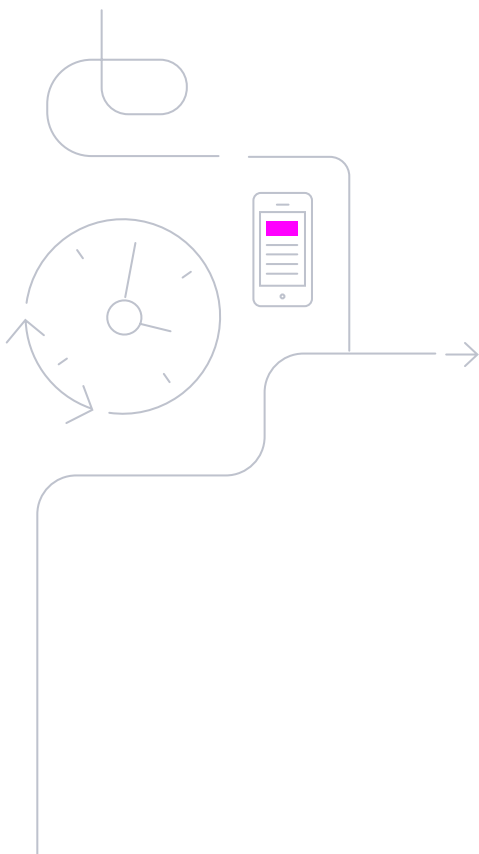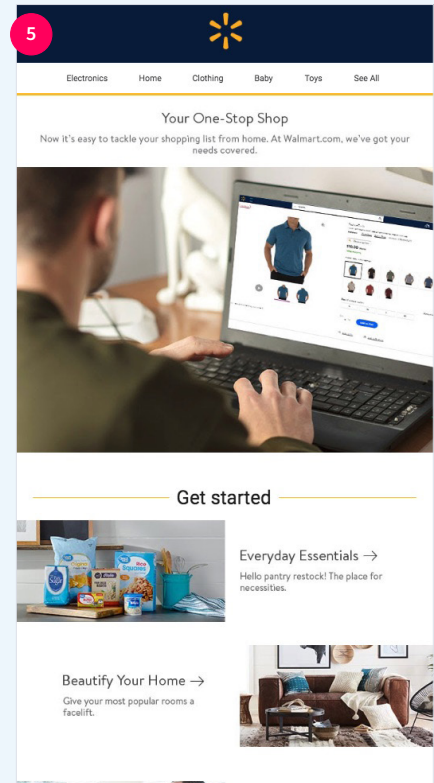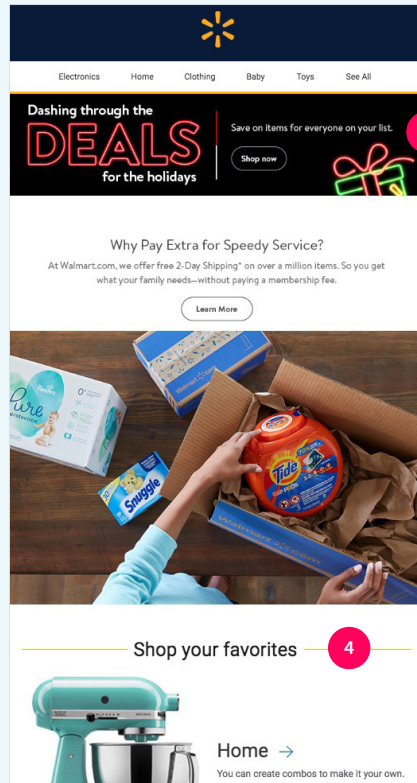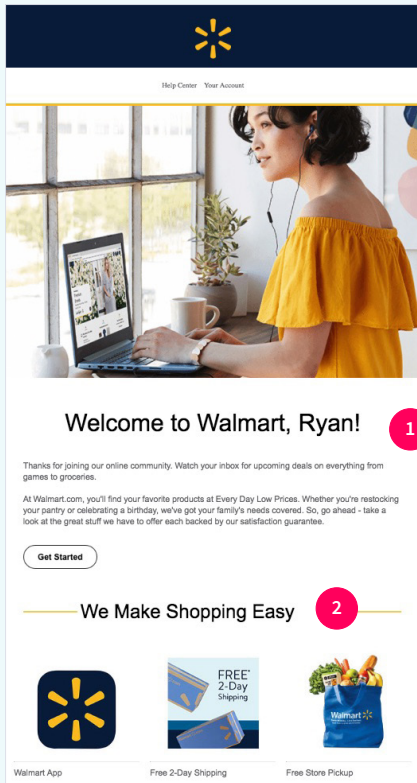
The average retail welcome campaign lasted 3.3 days, and consisted of 2.3 messages. Most messaging inside these campaigns shared discounts on first purchases, discussed account holder benefits, and demonstrated account maximization tips.

Elements of a Warm Welcome

1. Addressing new subscribers by name is a simple way to put a personal touch on initial outreach. 37% of retailers we studied used this approach as part of their welcome experience.

2. Walmart explains the basics of their service, keying in on their ease of use. Concise verbiage and intuitive imagery quickly help new subscribers understand the value of their accounts.

3. Cross-promoting sales content has strategic advantages inside welcome emails. Welcome emails are 86% more effective than newsletters, making them a great tool for awareness.

4. Eye-tracking studies show consumers carefully read information-carrying images. Half of all emails are read on mobile devices— consider the advantages of imagery for consumption.

5. Walmart sent their final welcome email on day 5 of our study—2 days longer than the average campaign, but their content was both informational and promotional and felt in-line with our customer journey.

Promotional Campaigns

Data Analysis

Companies must promote if they have any hope of keeping afloat with their customers. Opted-in subscribers willingly request branded marketing. and give retailers a chance to steer the customer journey.

With this in mind, we were a bit surprised to find that only 76% of the companies observed sent us promotional messaging! We found that 84% of the top companies sent promotional messaging while only 68% of the fastest growing companies did so.

Of those who promoted, the totals of these messages were incredibly variable—we received anywhere from a single message to more than 30 from each of these different brands.

The average number of promotions sent by these retail companies was 9.7 over two weeks. The top leading companies averaged 11.4 messages in contrast to the fastest growing average of 7.9.

By the Numbers: Promotional Campaigns

76%
of retail brands used promotional campaigns

47%
of retail brands promote cross-channel

9.7
Average number of messages sent in a promotional campaign

37% of retail brands sent 1-5 messages

21% of retail brands sent 6-10 messages

13% of retail brands sent 11-15 messages

29% maxed their frequency with 16-20+ messages

Who Used Them More?

Top Companies

84%

VS

Fastest Growing Companies

68%

We also noted that the top brands showed a greater tendency to promote cross-channel (52%) over their fastest growing competitors (41%).

When comparing the message volumes of the top companies and fastest growing companies, you can see the subtle divergence of strategies. We've noted the differences in the chart below.

Looking at these numbers, it could be inferred that the fastest growing companies may be edging out the top companies when it comes to message ROI—lower volume, higher customer value versus a steady diet of catch-all promotions.

The DNA of Retail Promo Messaging

Unfortunately for marketers, there's no fail-safe way to construct a promotional message that guarantees success. However, after carefully reviewing nearly 700 messages, we can share some insight into how the top and fastest growing retail companies are messaging millions of customers.

Say It With Smileys

42% of brands used emojis inside their subject lines—covering email, mobile push, and web push. Emojis can be a fun way to bring subject lines to life and offer a quick way for customers to recognize the emotional nature of your message content. The most commonly used emojis were alert-related, likely because of Black Friday's and Cyber Monday's timeliness.

VS

Top companies sent an average of **11.4** messages per promotional campaign, compared to just **7.9** messages sent by the fastest growing companies.

Top Companies vs. Fastest Growing Companies:

MESSAGE CADENCE

	1-5 messages	6-10 messages	11-15 messages	16-20+ messages
Top	33%	19%	10%	39%
Fastest Growing	41%	23%	18%	18%

|	
Wayfair	🙌 IT'S HEEEEEERE 🙌 - 72 hours. Up to 75% OFF. Don't miss this! FREE Shipping Over $49!
Panty Party from Vi.	TGIF 🎉 10/$35 PANTY PARTY!! - In stores only + $35 & under bras 🙌 View on browser VIC
Victoria's Secret P.	😱 30% OFF an Item AND 10 for $35 Panties - Plus $10.95 Sports Bras, $19.95 Wear Every
Wayfair	C|L|E|A|R|A|N|C|E E|N|D|I|N|G - 👋 Quick! Up to 80% OFF Cyber Week ends TONIGHT 👋 FRE
Samsonite	⌛ Only a Few Hours Left! 60% Off Select Items + Web Busters + Free Shipping - Final Day!
Lowe's Home Improve.	The 🕐 is Winding down on CYBER DEALS - But there's still time to save before these price
Walmart	CYBER WEEK DEALS ➡️➡️➡️ - Act fast to score these hot savings. My account Walmart -
Fashion Nova	LAST CALL Cyber Monday Ends In 6 Hours ⏰up to 90% OFF! Use Code: CYBER40 - Sale sta
Wayfair	CYBER. MONDAY. ENDS. TONIGHT. - ❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗❗
Wayfair	BEST 😃 CYBER 😃 MONDAY 😃 EVER - 💥💥💥💥💥💥💥💥💥💥💥💥💥
Wayfair	C-Y-B-E-R M-O-N-D-A-Y | LIMITED-TIME SALE - ⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡⚡
Zola	20% OFF for Cyber Funday 📕 - Just take 20% off til tonight. We're making it easy...what are
Walmart	💯 BuzzFeed Editor's top 10 Black Friday deals 💯 - See the items & savings they're excited
Fashion Nova	💥Biggest Sale of the Year! 💥UP TO 40% off EVERYTHING! 💥Use code: BLACK40 - You're
Wayfair	UP TO 80% OFF. BLK. FRI. - ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐ EV
Wayfair	Shop ⭐BLACK FRIDAY PRESALE⭐ for 1 more day! - ■■■■■■■■■■■
Fashion Nova	📕 Black Friday SALE Starts Now!!! 💥40-80% OFF SITEWIDE 💥Use Code: BLACK40 - Why

What can your emojis say that your copy can't?

Animation Domination

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, so animated pictures, like GIFs, must be multiplying that value, right? We found 62% of companies used GIFs inside their message content. Brands ran the gamut when it came to GIFs—everything from very subtle animations to flashing blocks of content.

One tried-and-true tactic multiple retailers used was the incorporation of countdown clocks. The countdown clock makes perfect sense around limited-time sales like Black Friday and Cyber Monday where deals are only valid for 24 hours.

This type of animation incorporates liveliness inside an otherwise static email and plays perfectly on the psychological trigger of scarcity. As that timer winds down, customers quickly see they're only moments away from missing out on the biggest sales of the year!
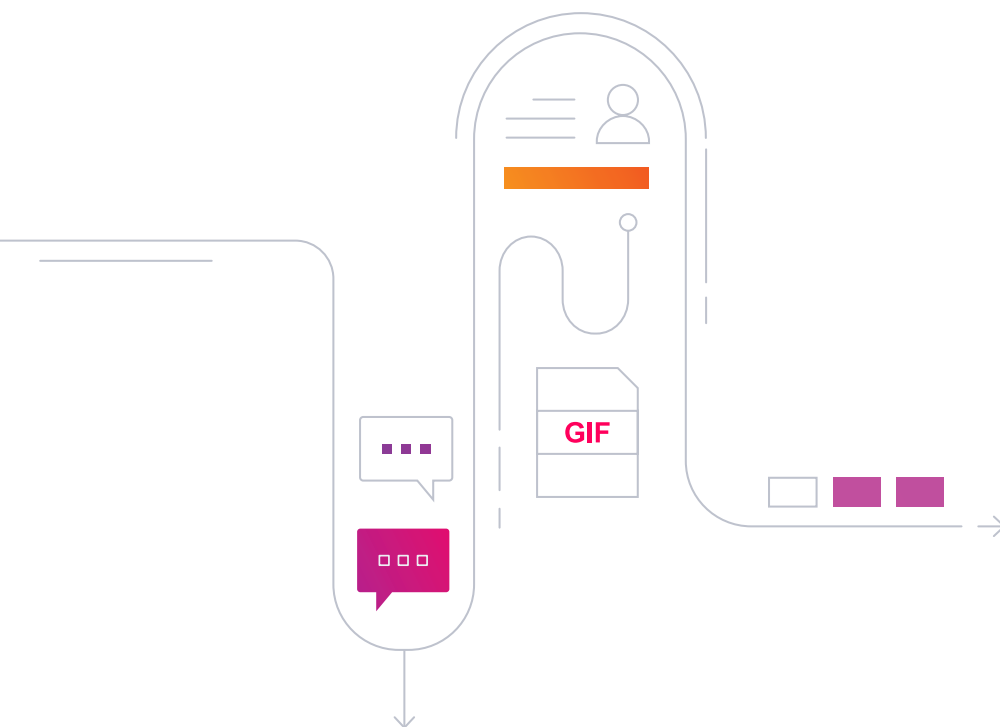
If a picture is worth a thousand words, what's the value of an animation? 62% of companies found out by using GIFs inside their message content.
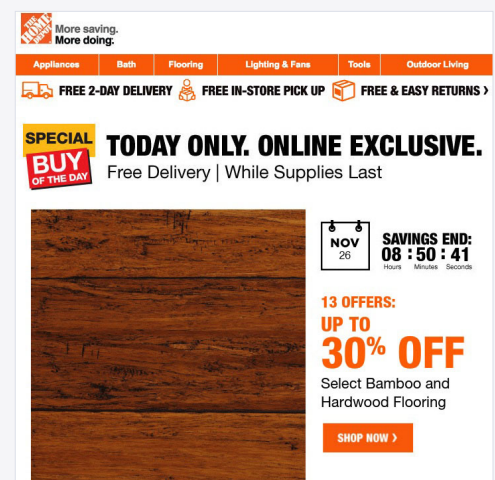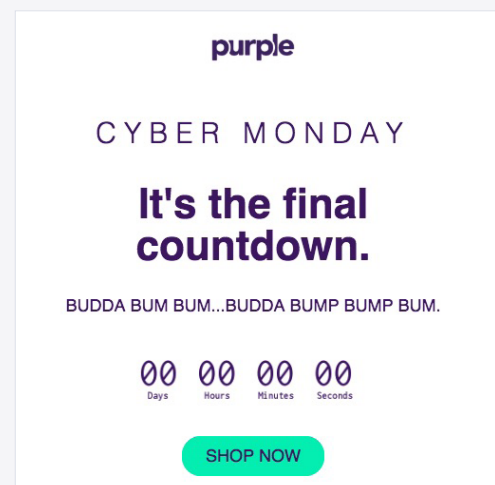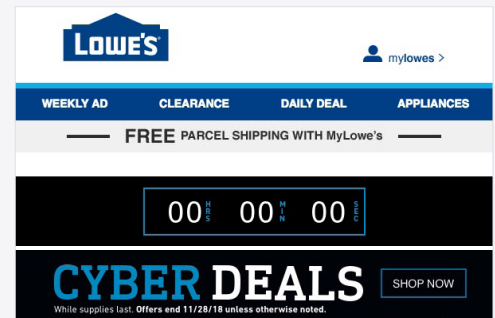
Clock in, cash out. Animated countdown clocks dial up the sale FOMO.

What's In It For Me?

Discounting strategies are by no means a one-size-fits-all tactic for retailers and should be explored carefully through a fiscally responsible lens. That being said, there's no better way to catch your customer's attention than by offering up a sweet sale.

After looking through all of the content contained inside these 50 companies' promotional messages, we found 46% of companies used percentage-off discounts on sale items. Dollar-off discounts weren't as popular but were still used by 24% of companies. Offers of free items and free shipping were the least frequent and used by 18% and 16% of companies, respectively.
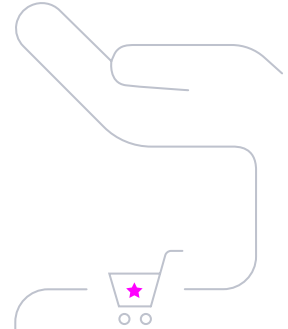
Cash credit or percentage off a purchase?
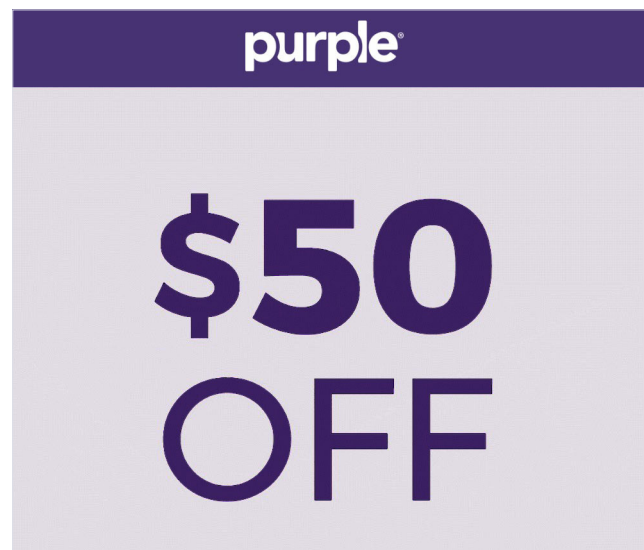
M.GEMI

WOMEN   MEN   ABOUT

COMPLIMENTARY SHIPPING & RETURNS—ALWAYS

ENJOY 25% OFF
EVERY PAIR

Make Your Wishlist *(And Theirs)* Happy

SHOP HERS   SHOP HIS

AUTOMATICALLY APPLIED AT CHECKOUT (PRICES AS SHOWN).
CANNOT BE COMBINED WITH OTHER OFFERS.

purple

$50 OFF

Gift Ideas   Toys   Electronics

All Philips holiday lights on sale

Shine bright

Save on, saver

Check out this week's top deals

WEEKLY AD

Ends today: **Save $25** when you spend $75 on holiday decorations, trees, lights & more.* ›

Golden State Warriors Stephen Curry, left, and Kevin Durant look on from the bench as the Warriors play the Dallas Mavericks during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Saturday, Nov. 17, 2018, in Dallas. The Mavericks won 112-109. (AP Photo/Ron Jenkins)

WATCH SPOTTING Stephen Curry Wearing A Cartier Santos Skeleton Courtside

EDITORS' PICKS

HODINKEE   12:29 PM

Watch Spotting: Steph Curry Wearing A Cart...
It turns out the Warriors star has some pretty next-level taste in horology.

Introducing: The Bamford London GMT

BY STEPHEN PULVIRENT

The British brand's first watch with a Swiss movement is built with travel in mind... (continue reading)
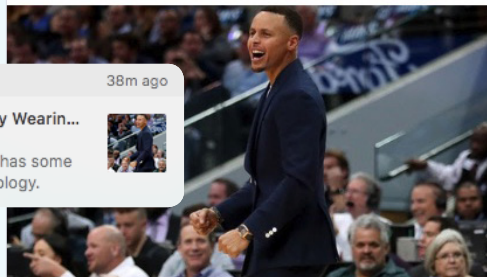
GOOGLE CHROME   38m ago

Watch Spotting: Steph Curry Wearin...
www.hodinkee.com
It turns out the Warriors star has some pretty next-level taste in horology.

Watch Spotting: Stephen Curry Wearing A Cartier Santos Skeleton Courtside

Adding Some Promotional Pop

1 On November 17, 2018 Golden State Warriors superstar Stephen Curry could only sit and watch as his team lost to the Dallas Mavericks. At the time, Curry's injury was eliminating him from MVP conversations.

2 After HODINKEE, an online watch enthusiast magazine, spotted Curry wearing a $57K watch, they profiled the watch inside their publication. An NBA household name sporting a high-profile watch quickly trended.

3 Upon publication, HODINKEE shared the story using a push message. If HODINKEE was to start using rich push notifications, they could add additional layers of interactivity to their watch-spotting.

4 The next day, HODINKEE re-shared the article inside their daily newsletter. The email newsletter has recently experienced a renaissance as consumers look for "less, but better" content.

5 One week after the newsletter publication, HODINKEE sent a web push linking to the original article. Spreading their article across three marketing channels effectively amplified their article's presence.

Black Friday

The phenomenon of Black Friday has been an incredible, ever-evolving social experiment throughout the years.

With roots tracing back to 1961, Black Friday represents peak consumerism; it's accounted for one of the busiest shopping days of the year since 2005 with few indicators of slowing down. Black Friday provides a massive opportunity for retailers and they're tasked with promoting their sales items effectively, lest they miss out on the annual shopping frenzy.

While 76% of brands used promotional messaging to drive sales, only 55% of that population specifically advertised Black Friday specials. We found that top companies were more likely to advertise their seasonal sales—80% of top companies spread Black Friday awareness in comparison to 47% of the fastest growing companies.

Even though more top companies participated in Black Friday promotional pushes, the fastest growing companies' campaigns were longer in sequence. The campaign lengths of the fastest growing companies averaged 4.8 messages versus the 3.5 of top companies.

Newegg.com	24 Hrs Only! 150+ Ultimate BLACK FRIDAY Deals: Don't Wait to Sa...	11/22/18
Costco Wholesale	One-Day Online-Only Deals! Black Friday Weekend Starts Now! Wh...	11/22/18
Walmart	⬤ Black Friday has ARRIVED! - Score top deals in electronics, toy...	11/21/18
Wayfair	Shop ⭐BLACK FRIDAY PRESALE⭐ for 1 more day! - ◼ ◼ ◼ ◼ ...	11/21/18
Helix Sleep	*EARLY ACCESS* The Helix Black Friday sale starts NOW! Up to $...	11/21/18
Fashion Nova	🚨 Black Friday SALE Starts Now!!! 🎉 40-80% OFF SITEWIDE 💥Us...	11/21/18
Benchmade Knife Com.	Black Friday Sale Coming Soon - Get your holiday shopping done t...	11/20/18
Samsonite	Black Friday Starts Now! Hurry In for Best Selection and Pricing! S...	11/20/18
Target	Plan your Black Friday shopping now: check out our ad. - Free shi...	11/19/18
Dyson	Get an early start to Black Friday offers. - Save up to $200 on sele...	11/18/18

Yo dawg, retailers heard you like sales, so they put pre-sales into their Black Friday sales to make sure you score some holiday sales.

Only a small portion of both the fastest and top companies promoted cross-channel. Emails, push messages, and web push notifications were the most frequent promotional channels used by these companies.

76%
of companies used promotional messaging to drive sales, but only...

55%
of that population advertised Black Friday specials.

80%
of top companies advertised seasonal sales, compared to...

47%
of the fastest growing retail companies

Promotional Tips for Black Friday

Give Yourself Enough Promotional Runway

Optimize your Black Friday sales by buffering in ample time for promotion. Even though this monumental sales event is only 24 hours long, many shoppers plan out their shopping strategy days before they step foot into a store. Ensure your store finds its slot on shopping itineraries everywhere by targeting consumers while they're planning their routes. Most retailers we studied started promotion 2-3 days before the event.

Interact Online, Transact Offline

Black Friday is a great opportunity for getting both first-time and loyal shoppers into your brick-and-mortar store. Incorporate localized content like special in-store sales, local aisle maps, or special holiday opening hours to help simplify your customers' shopping experiences. Going the extra mile by removing any potential blockers along the purchase path will help you keep your stores full.

3.5

Black Friday promos were sent by top companies, versus...

4.8

sent by the fastest growing retail companies
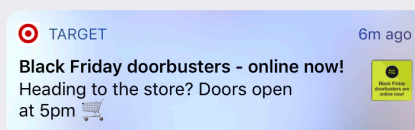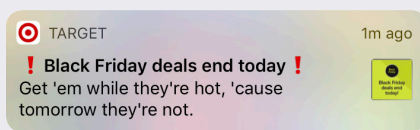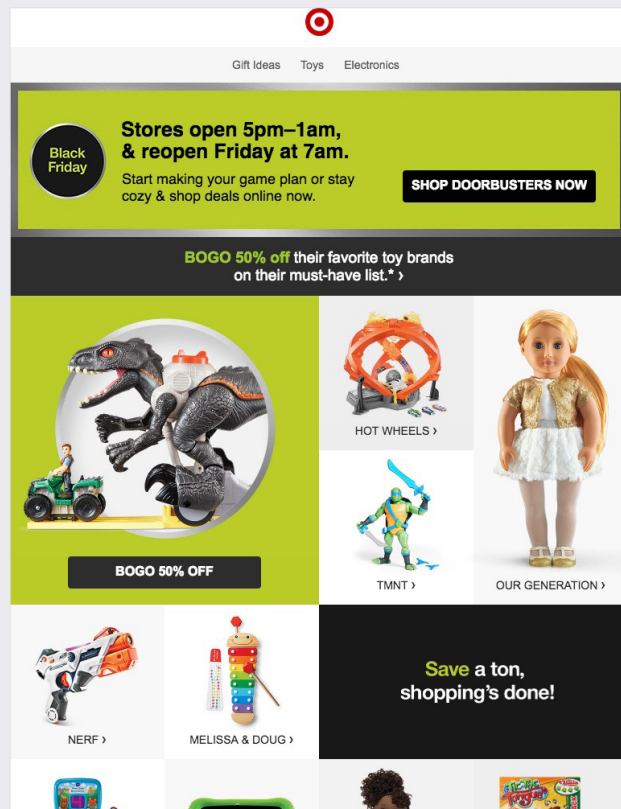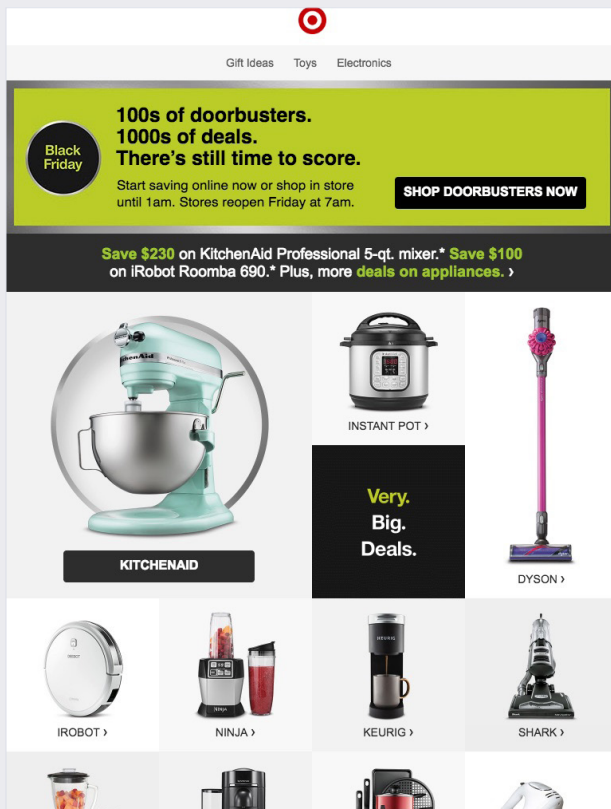
Target's Black Friday emails "show" their sales; their mobile pushes ensure customers "go" to their stores.

Use Available Channels to Your Advantage

Studies show [49% of consumers research](#) their Black Friday purchases online. Lead consumers to your store's specific sales using email and web push effectively. Since Black Friday remains a largely in-store shopping experience, relevant mobile pushes on the day-of provide a great reminder for shoppers to drop into your store.
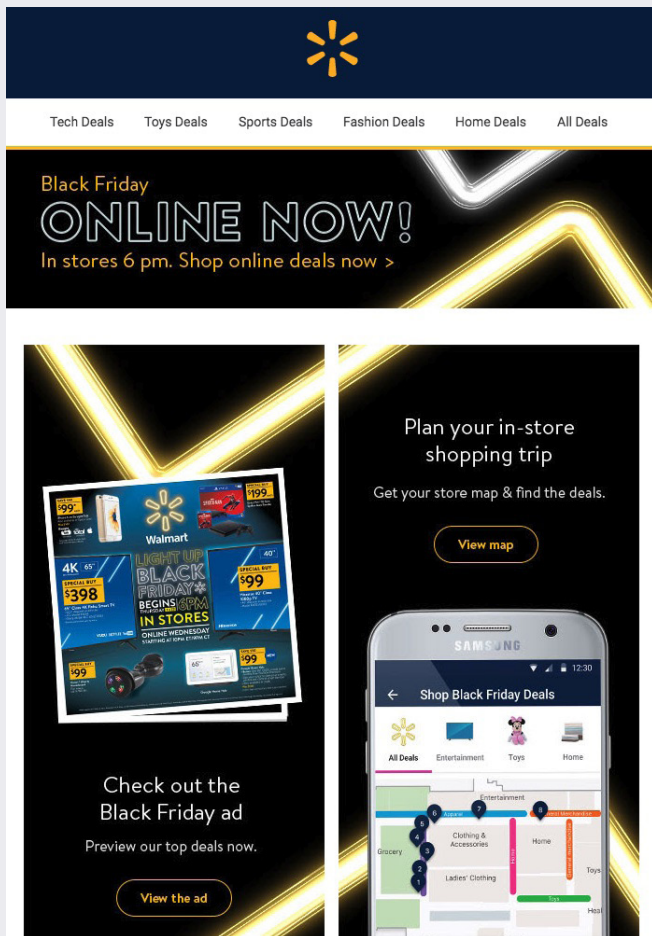
Walmart and Costco use emails online to push shoppers offline and into their stores on Black Friday.

Cyber Monday

Rooted in Black Friday's success, Cyber Monday's growth and relevance are a reflection of consumers' online shopping preferences.

Looking a few years back at total consumer spend, we've seen explosive shifts in online sales and the growing participation rate of retailers try and cash-in.

Of the 76% of companies using promotional campaigns, 74% of them are playing their hand in hopes of cashing in on Cyber Monday. 80% of the top companies sent Cyber Monday campaigns while only 53% of the fastest growing companies did the same. We expected to see more participation among the fastest growing companies considering the strong e-commerce nature of their business models, but this wasn't exactly the case.

Unlike Black Friday, top companies had longer Cyber Monday campaigns than their fastest growing counterparts. The average Cyber Monday campaign from top companies spanned 4.3 messages, while the fastest growing companies used 3.4 messages.

Cyber Monday brought out a little more cross-channel activity from brands than Black Friday did. Of the top companies with Cyber Monday promotions, 35% of them messaged beyond email alone. 22% of the fastest growing companies spread cross-channel Cyber Monday promotions.

Promotional Tips for Cyber Monday

Extend Your Sale Length When Appropriate

Transitioning straight from Black Friday into Cyber Monday promotions leaves little time to hype once-a-year digital sales. To stretch this tight window, we observed a good portion of companies extending their Cyber Monday sales as part of a longer Cyber Week promotion. Some brands insulated against customer message fatigue using these lengthier messaging windows.

80%
of the top companies advertised Cyber Monday, versus...

53%
of the fastest growing retail companies

4.3
messages per promotional campaign, versus...

3.4
sent by the fastest growing retail companies

Retailers cash in on the holiday shopping frenzy through the week of Cyber Monday.

Leverage Known Data Points for Enriched Content

Flexing the depth of your brand's inventory is a tried-and-true approach for building Cyber Monday hype, but don't let this be your overarching promotional tactic. Leverage the data you've accumulated about returning customers to align your Cyber Monday sales with items they've expressed interest in. Use this same approach when promoting popular or trending items to new customers with similar demographic profiles.

35%
of the top brands used multiple channels, versus...

22%
of the fastest growing retail companies

Push Your Point Across While Consumers Browse

Reel wandering shoppers back to your website using web and mobile pushes. Timed or behavior-based triggers will navigate shoppers directly to the URL and app targets you want them to see. Push notifications put your brand back into focus with a single tap or click—a valuable tool on a hectic shopping day.

Wayfair notes our previous interest in area rugs and highlights similar decor dynamically inside regularly scheduled messaging.

From subtle to striking, pushing your messaging across mobile and web can drive serious engagement.

Cart Abandonment Campaigns
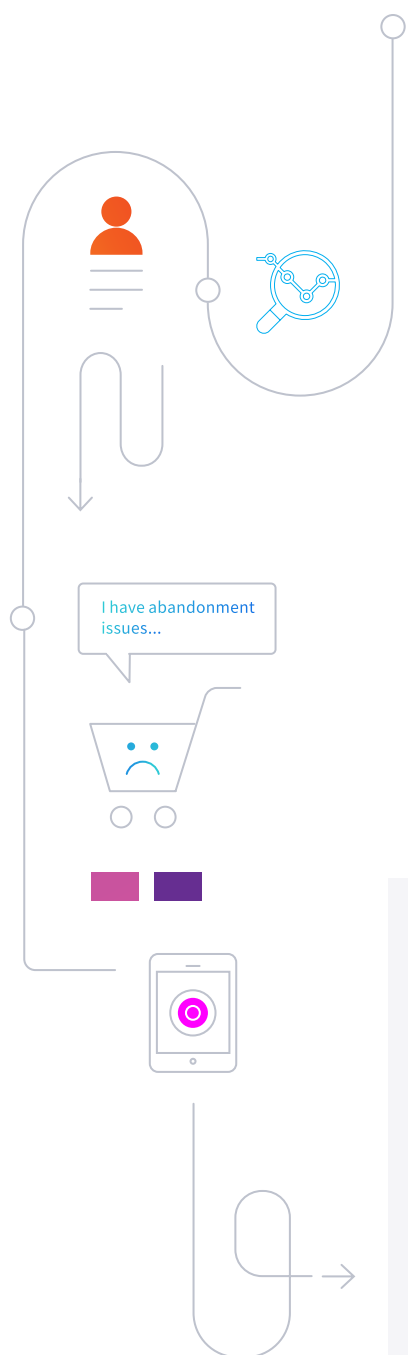
Data Analysis

Implementing a near-purchase conversion strategy is an easy way retailers can reignite that original shopping spark. Distracted shopping is a side effect of 24-hour buying power—consumers are free to browse, shop, or completely disengage on a whim.

Considering that cart abandonment emails are often the most engaging emails that brands send, incorporating an automated way to recover 40% of left behind merchandise should be a no-brainer.

And yet, we were surprised that less than half of the most prominent retail brands today weren't taking advantage of this—only 44% of all brands studied use cart abandonment campaigns.

The fastest growing companies triggered abandonment campaigns 2X more often than their top company counterparts, at a rate of 60% to 28%.

I have abandonment issues...

By the Numbers:
Cart Abandonment Campaigns

44%

of retail brands used cart abandonment campaigns

4%

of brands engage cross-channel

2.3

Average number of messages sent in a cart abandonment campaign

Who Used Them More?

Top Companies

28%

VS

Fastest Growing Companies

60%

Looking further into the nuts and bolts of these retail cart abandonment campaigns, only a meager 4% of brands take their campaigns across channels. On average, the typical campaign was comprised of 2.3 messages, starting 1.4 days after initial abandonment.

The fastest growing companies averaged 2.1 messages sent 1 day after abandonment, while top companies sent 2.9 messages after 2.3 days. Top companies sent more abandonment messages over time, while the fastest growing companies opted for fewer messages inside a shorter time window.

Picture Perfect

While reviewing the abandonment messaging of these various brands, we noticed a recurring trend of including imagery of the abandoned items inside each message's content. In fact, 82% of the brands with abandonment messaging were using this level of personalization as part of their conversion strategy.

As we noted inside our Benchmark Report, not all companies are ready for this level of sophistication—some brands, like 18% of the
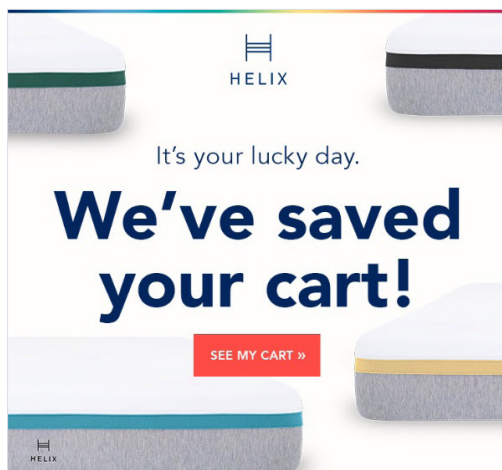
Whether simple or complex, any abandonment messaging is better than none.
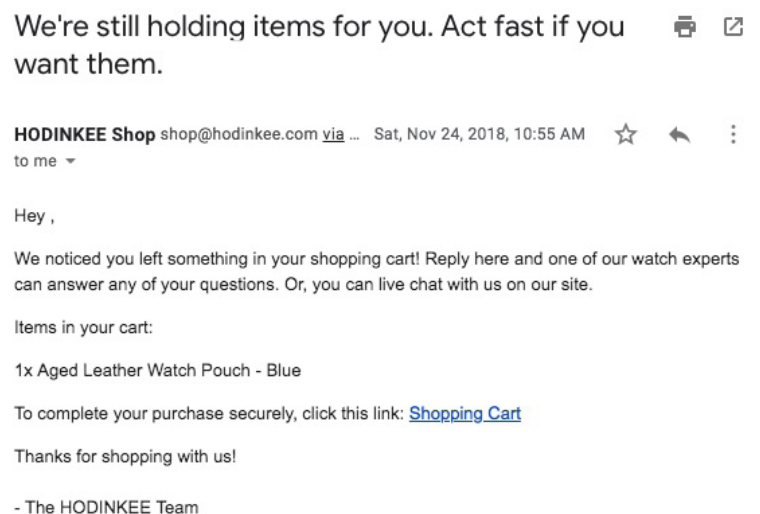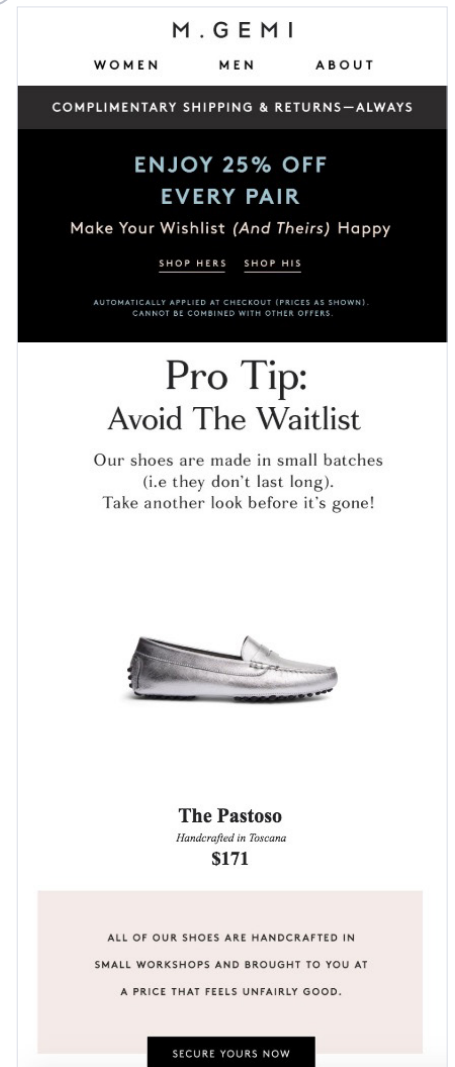
retailers observed, are only triggering simplified "you forgot something" messaging without further personalization.

This is a great first step to take and leaves the door wide open for further iteration. Look for strategic changes in things like design, cadence, and channels as campaign ROI warrants further experimentation.

Fashion Nova, a top online apparel store for women and men, demonstrated some savvy abandonment outreach via web push. They bucked the traditional email abandonment campaign and took their prompts straight to the browser.

Shortly after we headed away from our full cart, we received a web push notification prompting us to return and finish our checkout. Notice the clear text and supporting image that helped make the message feel less intrusive. Fashion Nova was using the visual cue of our abandoned jeans to quickly justify why they interrupted our regularly scheduled web browsing.
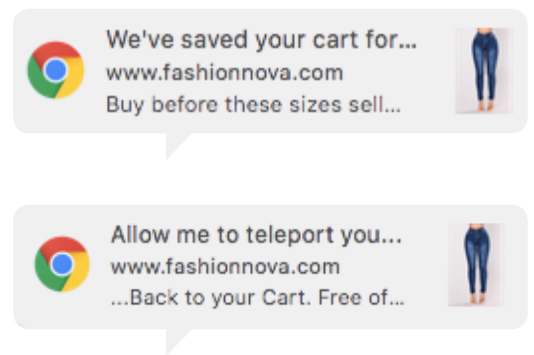
Fashion Nova shows that a gentle nudge is all it takes to complete a sale.

Fast-Growing-Trees.com waits an extra day before "bribing" customers with an extra 5% off discount.

Sweetening the Deal

The jury is split on choosing to attach some sort of offer to influence cart conversion. A recent survey of Iterable customers showed that roughly half (47%) of leading growth marketers say it makes business sense to incentivize checkout as part of their abandonment strategy.
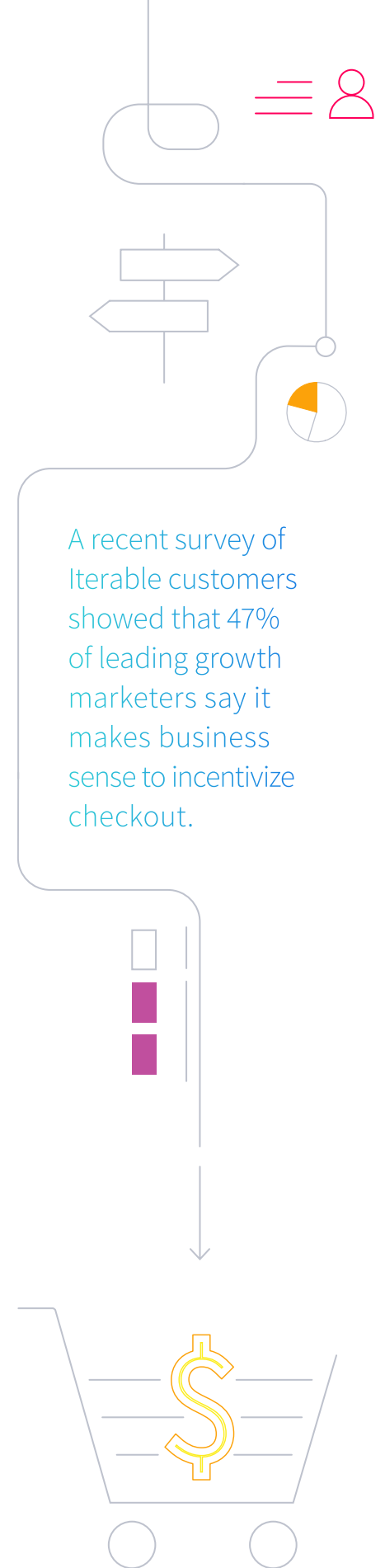
The retailers we followed generally chose not to offer discounts or incentives when converting carts. Only 27% of the brands studied currently engage in this practice.

There are communities of savings-savvy blogs which recommend that shoppers intentionally abandon their carts and hold out until retailers divulge checkout discounts. Thinking strategically about your abandonment discounting strategy ensures your margins won't suffer too much from intentional hesitation.

However, for some brands, net sales may supercede slight reductions in itemized profits. If discounted cart conversions take place, retailers actually gain new opportunities to grow longer-term loyalty from their newest customer.
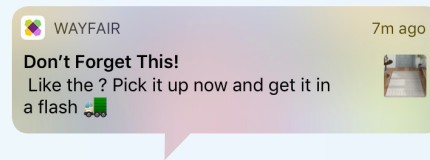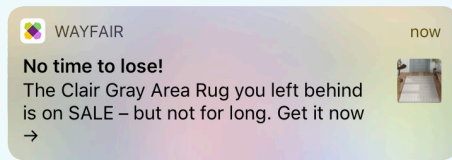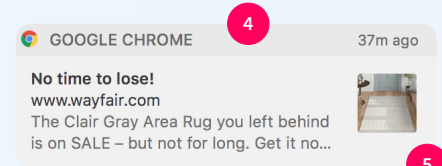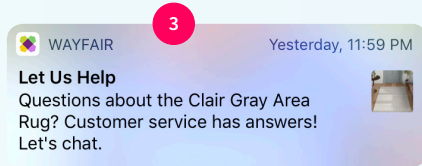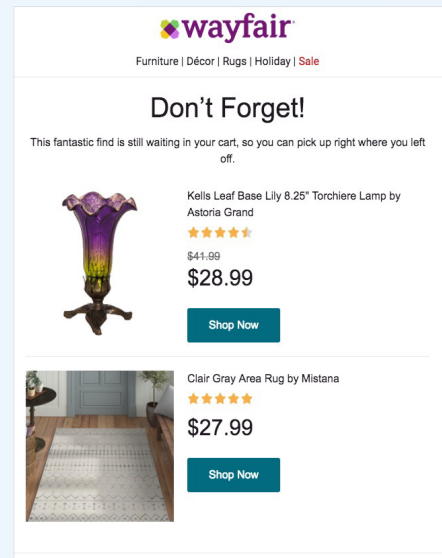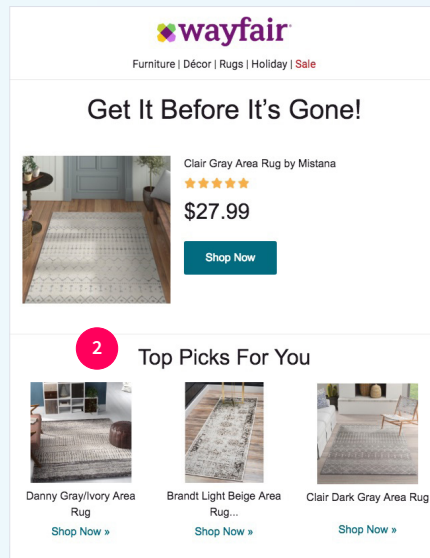
Following the sale, retailers have reason to differentiate their outreach and grow engagement: There are new post-sale opportunities to survey satisfaction, promote similar or complementary items and build a more robust customer profiles using known interests.

Completing a sale is one step further along the customer journey and offers intriguing ways to enhance the overall customer experience, when done correctly.

A recent survey of Iterable customers showed that 47% of leading growth marketers say it makes business sense to incentivize checkout.

Functional Forget Me Nots
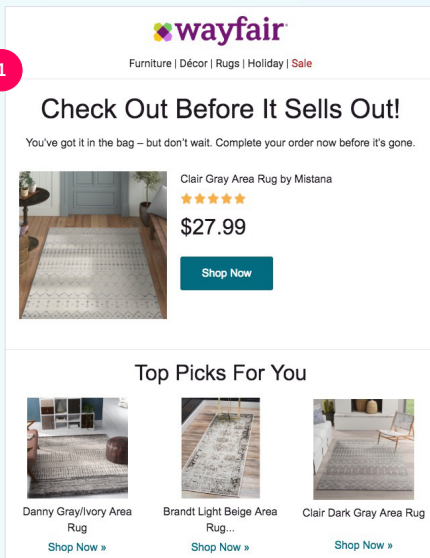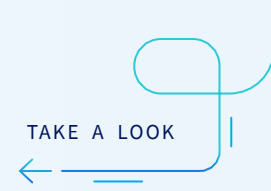
1 Wayfair sent us three similar abandonment emails. All messages used iterations of actionable copy that leveraged fundamentals of the "4U" formula, encouraging a timely call to action.

2 Wayfair recommends similar items to those we left behind in abandonment messages. Visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text and act as a quick trigger back into "shopping mode."

3 Using rich mobile push to support cart abandonment campaigns makes a lot of sense. Wayfair uses custom headlines, body copy, emojis, and item-specific imagery to make each message engaging and actionable.

4 On day 3 of cart abandonment, Wayfair sent us a web push as part of their cross-channel campaign. Robust, personalized campaigns are effective in converting sales inside oft-abandoned carts.

5 Wayfair's cart abandonment far surpassed those of many retailers—as did their total message count of 9. Their approach insulates against the typical pitfalls that most campaigns fall victim to.

Channel Messaging
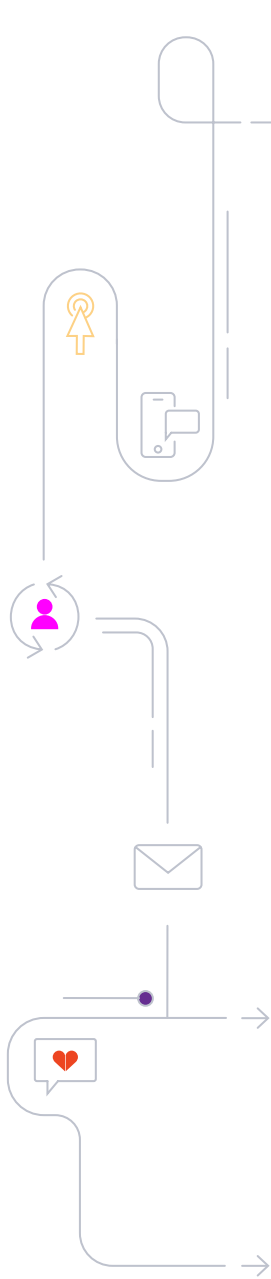
Data Analysis

Cross-channel messaging is an increasingly important mode of communicating inside our digital world. Consumers' native habits seamlessly span multiple channels, and brands must meet them on their terms if they want recurring sales.

Throughout our study, we encountered a wide range of communication approaches: most rely on email, some incorporate mobile, while few hop regularly between multiple channels.

Email was the most frequently used channel, comprising 74% of total message volume. Push messaging came in second place at 20%, followed by web push at 5%. The other mobile channels, in-app and SMS, made up the remaining 1% of received messages.

By the Numbers: Channel Usage Across All Campaigns

74%
of retail brands used email

20%
of retail brands used push

5%
of retail brands utilized web channels

<1%
of brands used text messaging

<1%
of brands used in-app messaging

By the Numbers: Channel Usage By Campaign Type

WELCOME CAMPAIGNS

74% of brands used email

2% of brands used push

PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGNS

84% of brands used email

47% of brands used push

11% of brands used web push

ABANDONMENT CAMPAIGNS

86% of brands used email

18% of brands used push

Welcome Campaigns

Retail brands leaned heavily on email for welcome campaigns at a usage rate of 74%. Of those brands who extended cross-channel welcomes, we found that only 2% of companies were using push and SMS messaging.

Promotional Campaigns

Email was the channel of choice for promotion, as 84% of retailers leverage consumer inboxes for driving sales. Many retailers are also mobilizing their messaging and using push messaging (47%) as a way of communicating can't-miss sales. We also observed 11% of brands breakthrough the web push barrier and experiment with in-browser promotions.

Abandonment Campaigns

Following suit with the above breakdowns, email (86%) remains the go-to channel for retailers using cart abandonment campaigns. Push notification was the secondary channel of choice and reflected at an 18% usage rate. Fashion Nova and Wayfair were the only brands that incorporated web push as a supplementary channel inside their abandonment campaigns.

Choose Cross-Channel and Convert

Wherever your customer may go, that's where you need to be. Most brands are already highly invested in their website experiences, and yet only a handful are leveraging web push as a shopping aide.
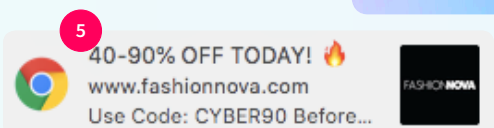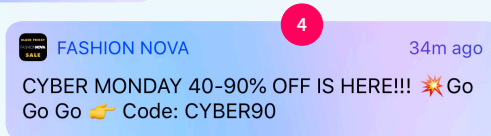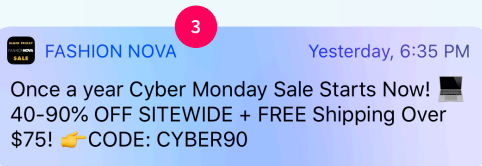
Similarly, 90% of the retail companies observed have mobile apps but only ⅓ of them message on a mobile channel. Last year, the DMA found that 43% of all online purchases were made on smartphones, generating $206 billion. Mobile is too important of a channel to keep ignoring!

Cross-channel engagement is anything but a fad—customer lifetime values have been shown to grow by 30% when receiving marketing on multiple channels. If your brand prioritizes revenue, then you need to prioritize cross-channel.

Only 2% of brands were using push and SMS messaging for their welcome campaigns

47% of retailers are using push messaging to promote sales, with 11% experimenting with in-browser promotions

Cross-channel shoppers have 30% higher LTV than single channel shoppers

Channel Surfing Like a Pro
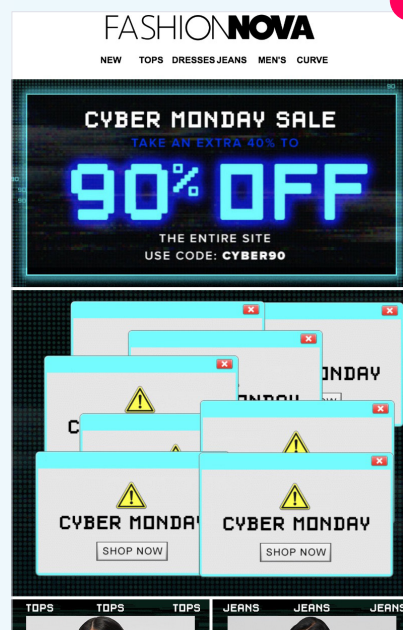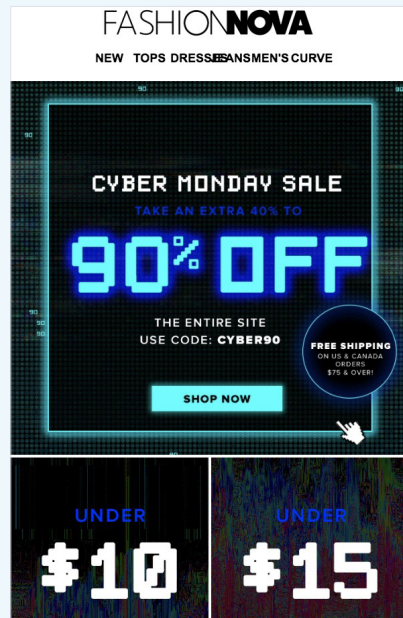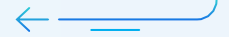
1 Fashion Nova was the most active cross-channel promoter observed during our study. Their Cyber Monday "CYBER90" campaign spanned across email, mobile, web, and social media.

2 The "CYBER90" emails started the Sunday evening prior to Cyber Monday. Fashion Nova's emails use a continuous theme (design, colors, decoration, and discount code) to differentiate from other campaigns.

3 The first promotional push message was received three hours after the initial campaign email. The next two pushes arrived Monday morning, before 11am—messages after this time promoted a different sale code.

4 Fashion Nova benefits from the visual power of emoji-laced messaging. Emojis help Fashion Nova sprinkle a touch of emotion and immediacy into every one of their push messages.

5 Fashion Nova deployed their 24-hour "CYBER90" cohesively across every channel including web push. Since 96% of consumers shop online, distributing captivating, uniform messages on every channel is a winning tactic.

Takeaways

A brand's ability to effectively engage customers is a proven forecast metric for evaluating ongoing success. After carefully analyzing and categorizing nearly 700 marketing messages of all shapes and sizes, we've provided a full breakdown of our findings.

With a growth mindset, there's always room for improvement—there are key lessons to learn from the rising-star retailers and established giants. The adjacent data provides a unique view into the minds of marketers at the tops of their games.
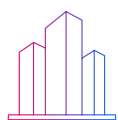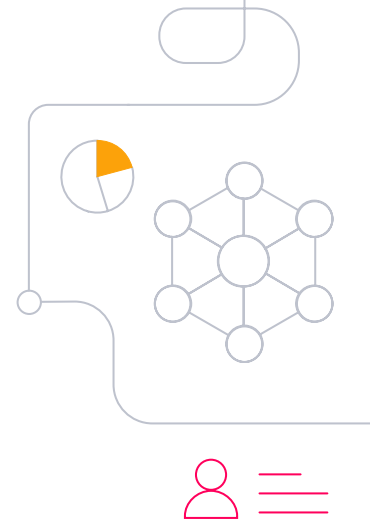
Welcome Campaigns

72%	**OVERALL USAGE RATE**	**68%**
72%	MULTI-MSG CAMPAIGN RATE	71%
.3	CAMPAIGN KICKOFF TIME (DAYS)	1.5
2.4	CAMPAIGN SPAN (DAYS)	4.3
2.2	AVERAGE MSG TOTAL	2.5
64%	**CROSS-CHANNEL WELCOMES**	**12%**

Promotional Campaigns

84%	**OVERALL USAGE RATE**	**71%**
5.3	CAMPAIGN KICKOFF TIME (DAYS)	4.3
1/1.5	CADENCE (# OF MSGS/DAY)	1/2
48%	EMOJI USE	35%
62%	GIF USE	65%
19%	FREE ITEMS	29%
76%	DISCOUNT (%)	41%
24%	DISCOUNT ($)	41%
14%	FREE SHIPPING	29%
52%	**CROSS-CHANNEL PROMOTION**	**41%**
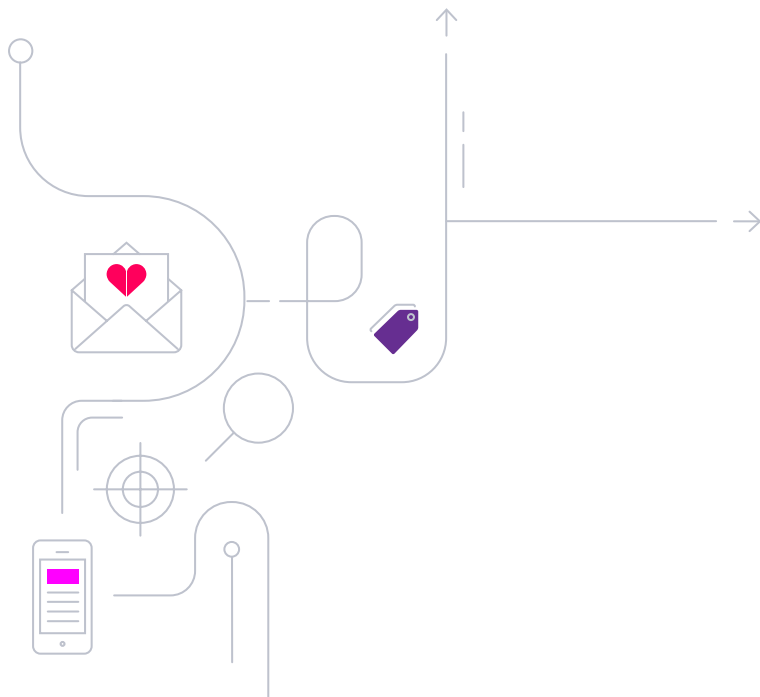
Black Friday Campaigns

81%	**OVERALL USAGE RATE**	**47%**
2.4	AVERAGE MSG TOTAL	2.4
18%	**CROSS-CHANNEL PROMOTION**	**25%**

Cyber Monday Campaigns

81%	**OVERALL USAGE RATE**	**47%**
3.3	AVERAGE MSG TOTAL	2
35%	**CROSS-CHANNEL PROMOTION**	**22%**

Cart Abandonment Campaigns

28%	**OVERALL USAGE RATE**	**60%**
71%	MULTI-MSG CAMPAIGN RATE	60%
2.3	CAMPAIGN KICKOFF TIME (DAYS)	1.0
2.9	AVERAGE MSG TOTAL	2.1
86%	SHOW ABANDONED ITEM	80%
0%	ADDING CHECKOUT INCENTIVE	40%
14%	**CROSS-CHANNEL PROMOTION**	**7%**
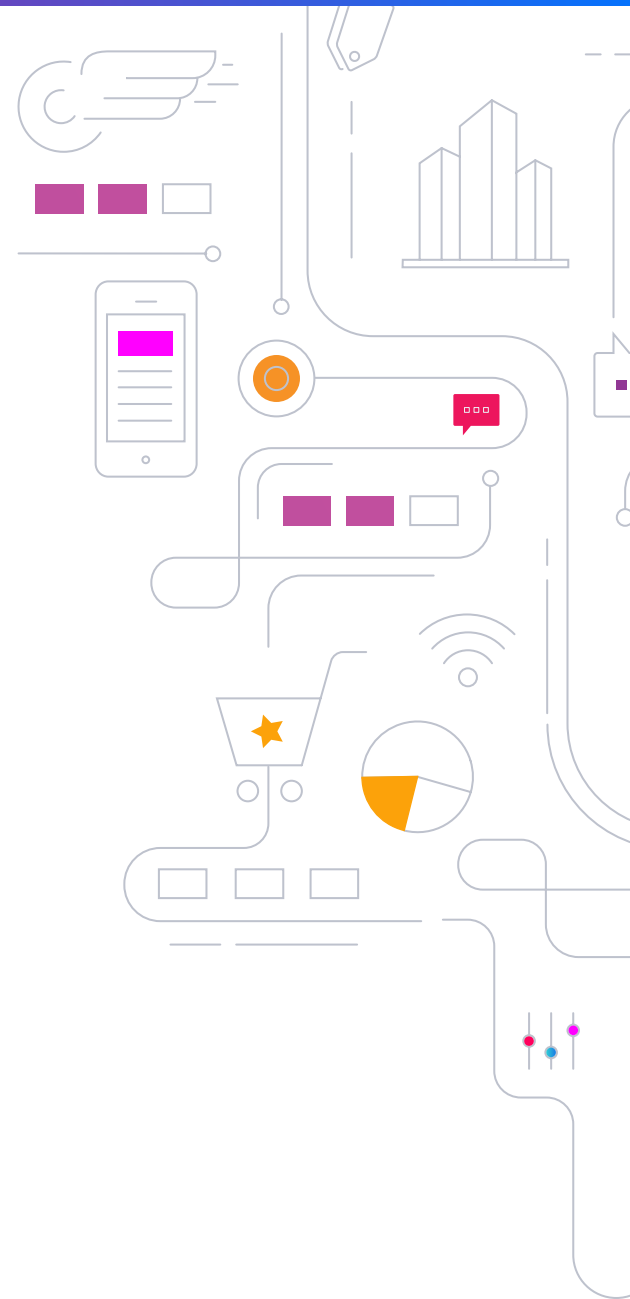
Iterable's Observations

Numbers don't lie, but they benefit from context. We've compiled our own takeaways based on the metrics above to provide a deeper understanding of the current state of retail marketing.

Welcome Strategies

What We Saw

> Most brands studied similar approaches when welcoming new customers. Retailers generally deploy 2-3 emails over the first few days following account creation.

> Top companies that highlight their mobile merchandising were 5X more likely to mix their messages across communication channels, primarily around mobile push.
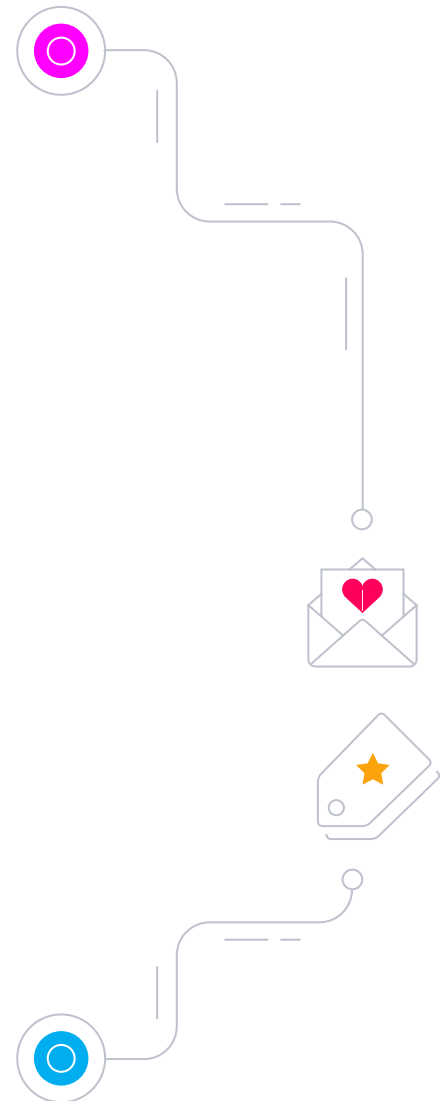
What We'd Like to See

> Behavioral-based welcomes were a nice touch from the few companies that did so. Dynamic customer behaviors should dictate all-things-messaging: cadence, content, and channel.

> Transactional, receipt-like messages are still commonplace among retailers following account creation. We'd like to see brands use their initial emails for welcome messaging or educational onboarding, in lieu of auto-generated text with little actionable value.

Promotion Strategies

What We Saw

> We were pleased to see most retailers spreading promotional content across different channels. Top companies, however, were more likely to engage regularly using mobile. Push messages from top companies had high instances of campaign continuity between mobile and email messaging—a big step toward seamless experiences.

> The fastest growing companies displayed more agility when adding subscribers into their regular promotional streams. All companies leaned heavily on image- and inventory-heavy emails, though top company emails were often longer and required more scrolling.

What We'd Like to See

- All companies generally displayed little in terms of personalization during the course of our study. We know that 75% of consumers choose brands which personalize messaging, offers, and experiences—interaction data from web and mobile can help retailers effectively hone in on consumer interests and tastes.

- Dynamic content is a key component of scaling personalized outreach and the sooner more companies begin using it, the sooner their customers will derive additional value from their messaging.

Abandonment Strategies

What We Saw

- We were surprised at the disparity in campaign usage rates between the fastest growing and top companies. The fastest growing companies appeared to emphasize winning the near-sale. Their faster turnaround times inside tighter windows of relevance made for more effective messaging.

- Cross-channel abandonment campaigns are not yet widely adopted, but the few instances demonstrated by recognizable leaders from both retail groups studied indicate more brands will follow suit in the coming years.

What We'd Like to See

- Simply put, retailers with poor cart abandonment experiences are leaving money on the table. Abandonment happens at an alarming rate—between 60% to 80%. Customers often abandon carts without meaning to do so and it only takes a few timely messages to bring them back to checkout.

- As retailers up their marketing game, we would like to see more brands formalize view abandonment strategies. These types of campaigns slot in prior to cart abandonment along the customer journey but share a similar principle—your customer expresses interest in specific items (e.g. repeat views) and could benefit from a nudge toward checkout.
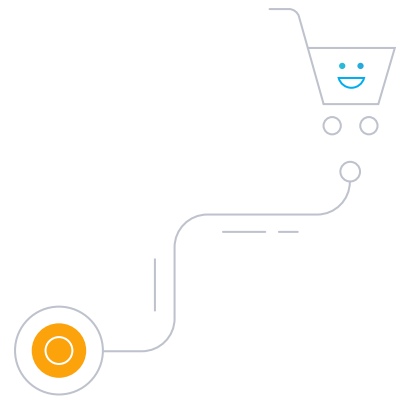
Conclusion

Many brands have taken big strides to personalize every touch of their customer experiences. Forward-thinking marketers are paving the way for a new standard of what it means for consumers to engage with their favorite brands.

Those at the forefront will continue creating responsive, customer-driven retail experiences, and those who hesitate will stray further behind. The marketer's job is never done in this time of disruptive technology; all brands will be tasked with improving engagement across all communication channels.

The path forward for brands is reliant upon ample customer data and powerful tools capable of wielding it. Brands must meet the expectations of a digitally native audience lest they get usurped by the next generation of companies vying for their market share. Many of the 50 leading U.S. retailers we observed are making the right strides, yet others are due for enhancements and overhauls.

Brands must meet the expectations of a digitally native audience **lest they get usurped** by the next generation of companies vying for their market share
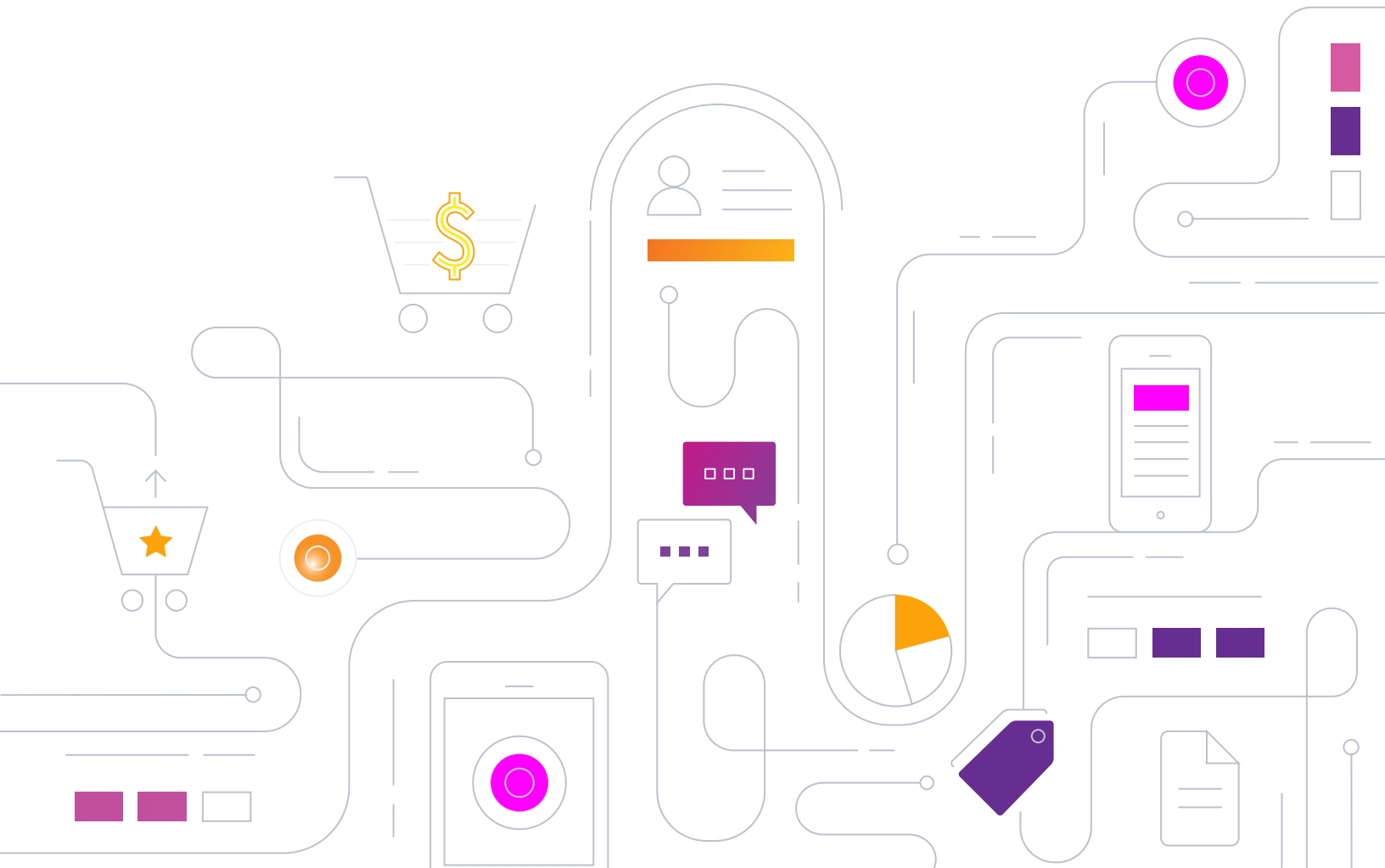
About Iterable

Iterable is the growth marketing platform that enables brands to create, execute and optimize cross-channel campaigns with unparalleled data flexibility. Leading brands, like Zillow, SeatGeek, DoorDash, and Box, choose Iterable to power world-class customer engagement throughout the entire lifecycle.

Data Flexibility at Your Fingertips

Access real-time user, behavioral and event data to trigger personalized messaging at virtually unlimited scale. Support an audience of millions while appealing to each subscriber's unique preferences.

Unified Brand Experience

Orchestrate seamless customer engagement across email, mobile push, SMS, in-app, web push, direct mail and more throughout every lifecycle stage, from activation to re-engagement.

Agile Iteration & Optimization

Launch, measure and fine-tune campaigns with ease to deliver more relevant messaging faster than the competition. Experiment and iterate on-demand to determine the right content, channel and cadence for each user.

Customer Journey Mapping

Visualize the entire customer journey and build sophisticated, cross-channel segments and campaigns with Iterable's intuitive, drag-and-drop Workflow Studio.

If you want to learn more about Iterable, please request a demo.

REQUEST A DEMO

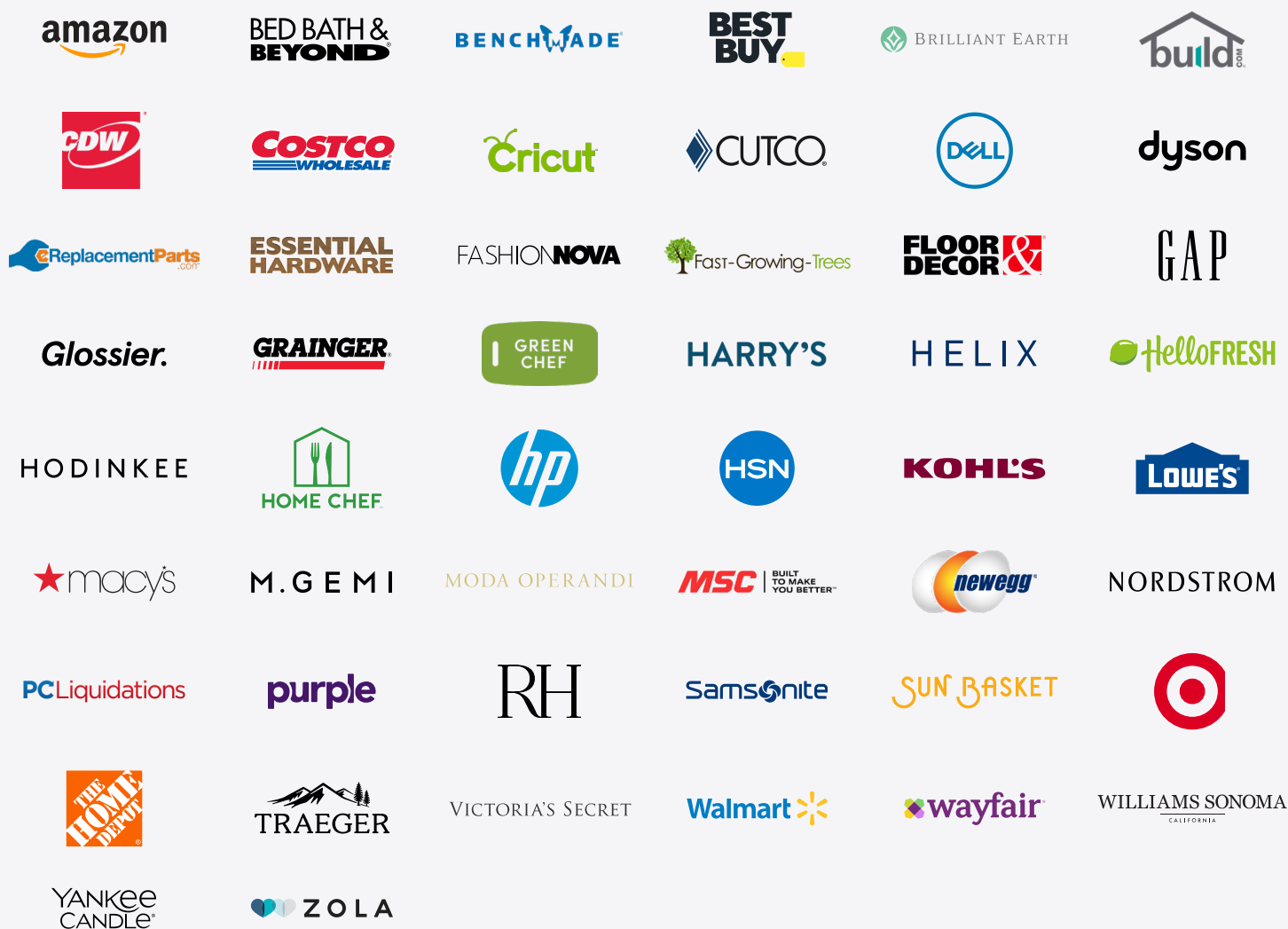**TRUSTED BY**

box

SeatGeek

DOORDASH

imge.

fabfitfun

asics

Zillow

Appendix

Full list of the top retail brands analyzed in this report, in alphabetical order:

amazon · BED BATH & BEYOND · BENCHMADE · BEST BUY · BRILLIANT EARTH · build.com

CDW · COSTCO WHOLESALE · Cricut · CUTCO · DELL · dyson

eReplacementParts.com · ESSENTIAL HARDWARE · FASHION NOVA · Fast-Growing-Trees · FLOOR & DECOR · GAP

Glossier. · GRAINGER · GREEN CHEF · HARRY'S · HELIX · HelloFRESH

HODINKEE · HOME CHEF · hp · HSN · KOHL'S · LOWE'S

macy's · M.GEMI · MODA OPERANDI · MSC BUILT TO MAKE YOU BETTER · newegg · NORDSTROM

PC Liquidations · purple · RH · Samsonite · SUN BASKET · (Target)

THE HOME DEPOT · TRAEGER · VICTORIA'S SECRET · Walmart · wayfair · WILLIAMS SONOMA CALIFORNIA

YANKEE CANDLE · ZOLA

Additional Resources

Explore more industry-specific findings inside our recommended content:

- Top Home Decor Brands
- Black Friday: Amazon vs. Walmart
- The Cross-Channel Benchmark Report
- Curology Case Study