# The Inside Look at Mobile Marketing

*An Iterable User Engagement Report*

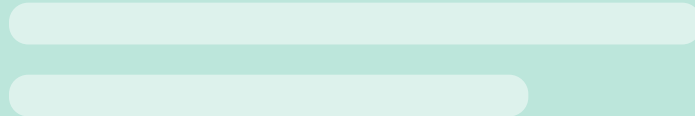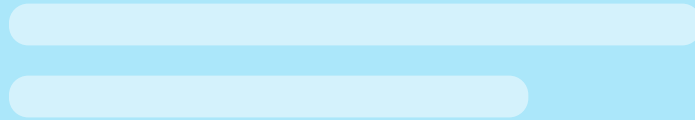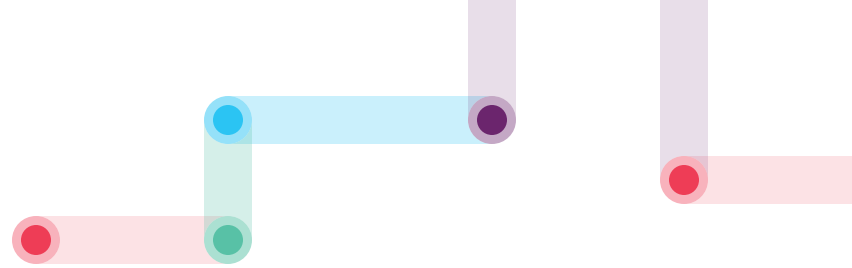# Table of Contents

# Marketing on the Go

If you grew up during the advent of cell phones, you might remember playing Snake on the old Nokia your parents let you borrow. Twisting and turning that ever-growing line of pixels until you crashed into a fatal ouroboros. For many, this experience was the precursor to the dawn of a new age: mobile apps.

Snake may not have been the first app, but it helped represent a monumental shift: combining devices—in this case, a gaming console and phone—into one, transportable item. In 2008, Steve Jobs envisioned a marketplace for the download of software, and thus the Apple App Store was born with 500 apps.

Fast forward 11 years—and 23 iPhone iterations—and in 2019 you're met with 2.2 million apps available in the Apple App Store and 2.8 million in the Google Play Store. In 2019 alone there were over 110 billion—with a "b"—mobile app downloads worldwide.

Needless to say, mobile usage by consumers and businesses has grown. And this growth inevitably brings changes, especially for businesses.

The way consumers interact with brands is fundamentally different. Since 2014, 88% of smartphone users say they have increased their usage of mobile coupons. People now view over four times as many products per session when browsing in apps versus on mobile browsers.

Active engagement such as this is indicative of the value and preferences of the modern consumer—not to mention the sheer amount of data this gives businesses. To capitalize, mobile marketers have to incorporate user behavior into campaign creation to stimulate further engagement and drive retention.

That's where the team at Iterable comes in. With mobile taking over usage rates more and more every year, we wanted to see how companies leading the pack in app downloads are marketing to mobile-first consumers.

In this report, you'll find marketing data from 30 companies across six industries: Fashion Retailers, General Merchandise Retailers, Restaurants, Cooking, Running, and Dating. We have identified four core mobile marketing channels, how these channels are utilized, and which trends are most common. Finally, we spoke with experts in each mobile channel for their take on where mobile marketing is headed in the years to come.
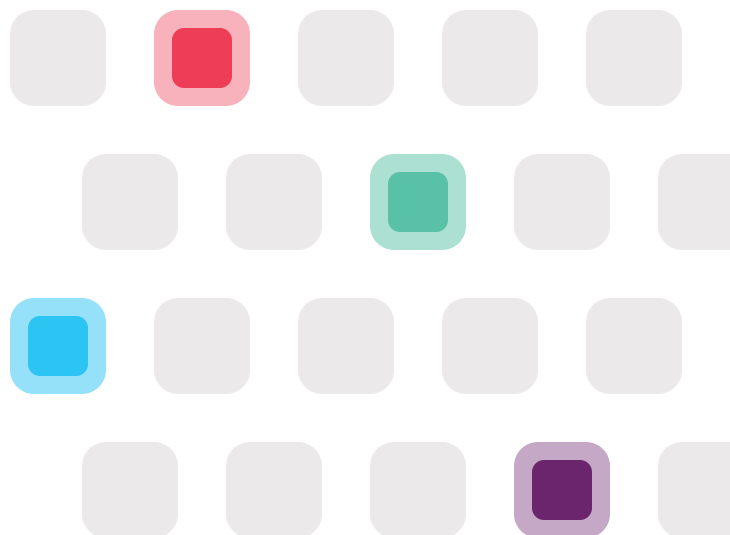
# Methodology

Over the course of three weeks in January 2020, we acted as mobile-first consumers for 30 companies across six industries. During this time, we initiated actions from our mobile accounts, rather than through email and desktop actions, in the hopes of triggering behavior-based marketing at each stage of the customer journey.

For example, downloading the mobile app and creating our account through mobile was our first interaction with the brands. Our full list of actions and the timeline for when they occurred is below.

All activity took place in free apps on iOS devices, requiring purposeful opt-in for all mobile communications. We also included one desktop-based action to see if that changed the organizations' communication strategies.

## The Companies

We identified six categories that display a diverse set of mobile marketing use cases. We adjusted our timelines and actions accordingly to approximate the experience across industry lines. In each category we selected leaders in downloads.
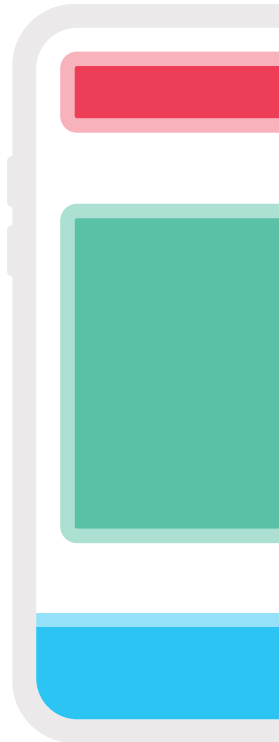
| FASHION RETAILERS | GENERAL MERCHANDISE RETAILERS | RESTAURANTS | COOKING | RUNNING | DATING |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bloomingdale's | Dollar General | ChefsFeed | Allrecipes | 5K Runner | Coffee Meets Bagel |
| Macy's | Kmart | OpenTable | Food Network Kitchen | Adidas Running | eharmony |
| Neiman Marcus | Kohl's | Resy | Food & Wine | All Trails | Match |
| Rent the Runway | Target | Yelp | Epicurious | Map My Run | OkCupid |
| Sak's Fifth Avenue | Wish | Zagat | NYT Cooking | Nike Run Club | Tinder |

## The Timelines

When applicable, we mirrored actions across industries. For industries that did not have a mobile cart, such as Cooking, Running, and Dating, we abandoned the purchase of a premium or subscription membership plan.

### Fashion Retail & General Merchandise Retailers

**Day 0:** Sign up and Opt-in to Mobile Communications

**Day 2:** Browse an Item on Mobile App

**Day 8:** Favorite an Item or Add Item to Wish List

**Day 14:** Browse an Item on Desktop

**Day 16:** Abandon Mobile Cart

**Day 20:** End Research

### Restaurant

**Day 0:** Sign up and Opt-in to Mobile Communications

**Day 2:** Browse a Restaurant on Mobile App

**Day 8:** Favorite a Restaurant or Add Restaurant to Wish List

**Day 14:** Browse a Restaurant on Desktop

**Day 16:** Make and Cancel a Reservation

**Day 20:** End Research

### Cooking

**Day 0:** Sign up and Opt-in to Mobile Communications

**Day 2:** Browse a Recipe on Mobile App

**Day 8:** Favorite a Recipe or Add Recipe to Wish List

**Day 14:** Browse a Recipe on Desktop

**Day 16:** Abandon Mobile Cart

**Day 20:** End Research

### Running

**Day 0:** Sign up and Opt-in to Mobile Communications

**Day 2:** Set Goals on Mobile

**Day 8:** Go for a Run

**Day 14:** Browse Desktop

**Day 16:** Abandon Mobile Cart

**Day 20:** End Research

### Dating

**Day 0:** Sign up and Opt-in to Mobile Communications

**Day 2:** Swipe and Like 3 Profiles on Mobile

**Day 8:** Adjust Preferences

**Day 14:** Like 3 Profiles on Desktop

**Day 16:** Abandon Mobile Cart

**Day 20:** End Research

# Key Findings

From our research it appears mobile marketing is somewhere between being adopted on a wide scale and being utilized to its fullest potential. The companies in the study have embraced mobile channels as a necessity, but they have yet to create a refined, cohesive cross-channel experience.

Mobile and email marketing are still occurring in a relative vacuum. Apart from the few who have connected mobile carts to their abandonment email campaigns, companies are still struggling to incorporate mobile behavior in their greater marketing efforts.

Our first actions as part of the study were to download the app, opt in to mobile messaging, and complete our profiles within the app. From there, our actions—such as browsing items or abandoning carts—were in the hopes of triggering either mobile or email messaging to reference our behavior.

**Here's what we found:**

- **Balance is key.** The overall messaging breakdown showed a balance between mobile and email with 53% of all messages coming via mobile.

- **Push is the preferred mobile channel.** Of the 30 brands in the study, 70% sent at least one push notification with an average of 8.4 push messages sent over the three weeks.

- **Email is going mobile.** Email may not be a mobile-specific channel, but brands are recognizing the breadth of mobile open rates for email. All 30 brands optimized their email designs for mobile consumption.

- **Data silos still exist.** Mobile data is not being incorporated into email campaigns—and vice versa. Despite having downloaded the app, almost a quarter of companies studied (23%) included a "download the app" prompt in their email campaigns and only 20% of companies had a cart or browse abandonment campaign.

Brands are willing to go mobile with their marketing. There is no doubt about that. Gaps arise when there are apparent differences in how mobile and email campaigns use data. In this situation, the story of the user's experience with the brand is incomplete. Marketers need a platform that organizes these data sets in an easy-to-use manner to go from cross-channel adoption to mastery.
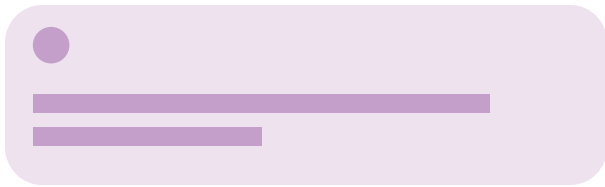
**53%**

of all messages came via mobile

**70%**

of the 30 brands sent at least one push notification

**20%**

of companies had a cart or browse abandonment campaign.

# Pump Up the Push

The push notification. It's that little message sitting on your lock screen or in your notification center. If you tap it, you're sent to an app to take advantage of a fantastic new sale or check out a new product.

If you're an Android user, you're already opted in to these types of messages each time you download an app. iOS user? Well, you'd have to actively opt in. This explains why the opt-in rates for Android are over double those of iOS (91.1% to 43.9%).

With just over ten years of usage under its belt, the push notification can be an effective way to engage users and keep them interacting with your app. When used incorrectly, they can be a little...well...pushy.

## What We Saw

A push notification can manifest in many forms for users.

- They can be simple text

- They can have emojis

- They can be rich push notifications that include media like images or videos

- They can even include push action buttons that encourage an interaction with your brand in some way to enhance the customer experience.
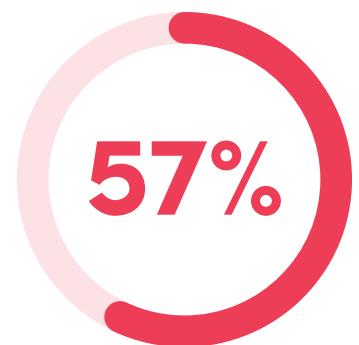
In our study we saw a variety of examples that run the gamut of design and usage possibilities. Let's dive in.

**30%**

**of companies in the study sent 0 push notifications**

**19%**

**of companies used images**

**57%**

**of companies used emojis**

# K.I.S.S. – Keep It Simple, Silly

Many organizations opted for simple, text-based push messages. These messages are straightforward in their design, as well as their purpose.
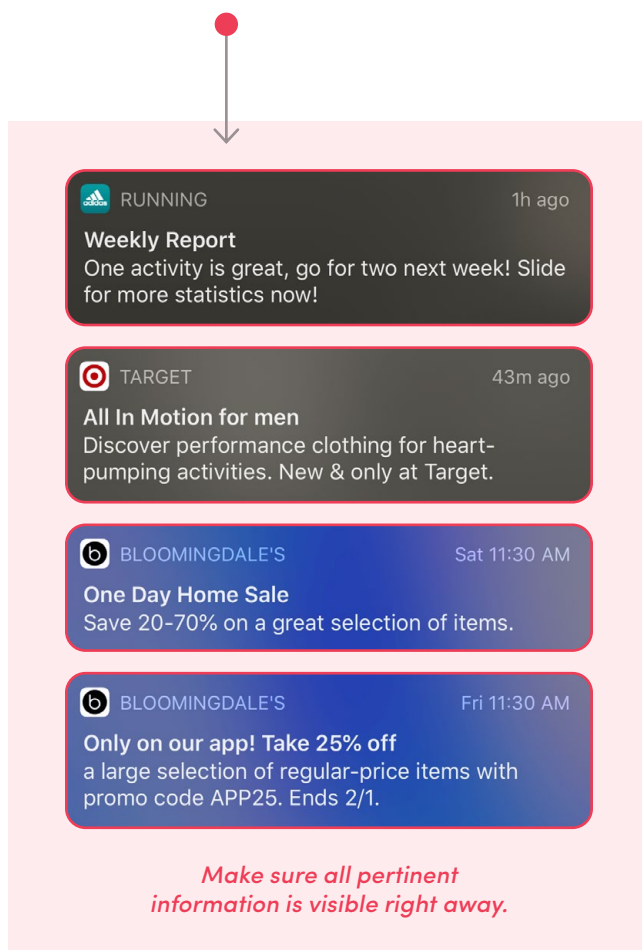
**5K Runner**, for example, is built to motivate you to run a 5K race. Their push notifications avoided complex messaging, opting more for a gentle nudge to get out and run.
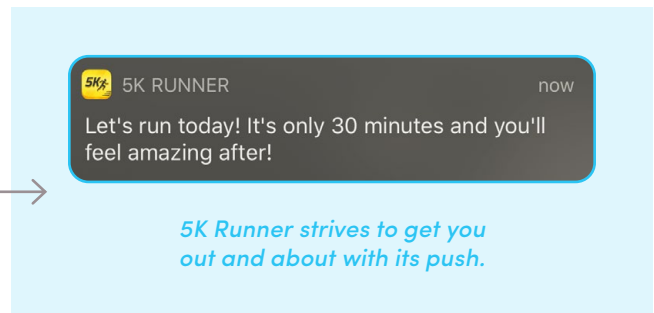
Whether it's an alert for a new match on a dating site or simply a reminder that a new issue or product has been released, a text-based push notification can be an efficient way to drive engagement.
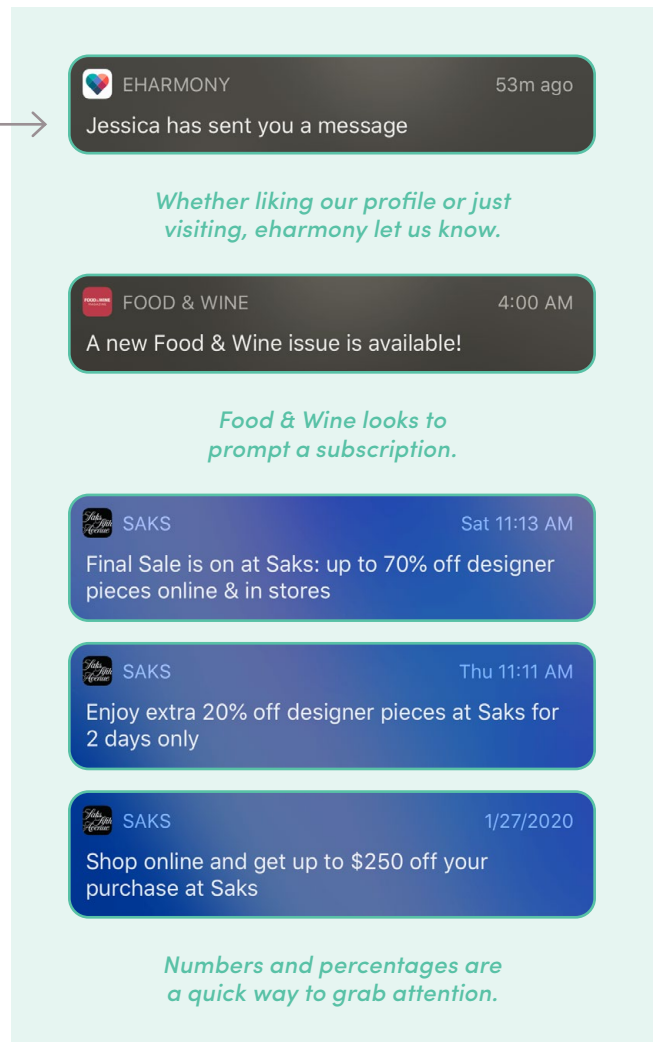
Going one step further, other organizations added a bolded header to their push notifications for a stronger visual appeal. Ultimately, it's about grabbing the user's attention and this slight adjustment can help.

**5K RUNNER** — now
Let's run today! It's only 30 minutes and you'll feel amazing after!

*5K Runner strives to get you out and about with its push.*

**EHARMONY** — 53m ago
Jessica has sent you a message

*Whether liking our profile or just visiting, eharmony let us know.*

**FOOD & WINE** — 4:00 AM
A new Food & Wine issue is available!

*Food & Wine looks to prompt a subscription.*

**SAKS** — Sat 11:13 AM
Final Sale is on at Saks: up to 70% off designer pieces online & in stores

**SAKS** — Thu 11:11 AM
Enjoy extra 20% off designer pieces at Saks for 2 days only

**SAKS** — 1/27/2020
Shop online and get up to $250 off your purchase at Saks

*Numbers and percentages are a quick way to grab attention.*

**RUNNING** — 1h ago
Weekly Report
One activity is great, go for two next week! Slide for more statistics now!

**TARGET** — 43m ago
All In Motion for men
Discover performance clothing for heart-pumping activities. New & only at Target.

**BLOOMINGDALE'S** — Sat 11:30 AM
One Day Home Sale
Save 20-70% on a great selection of items.

**BLOOMINGDALE'S** — Fri 11:30 AM
Only on our app! Take 25% off
a large selection of regular-price items with promo code APP25. Ends 2/1.

*Make sure all pertinent information is visible right away.*

**RENT RUNWAY**  Tue 2:23 PM

**Did you hear the news?** 🤫
Our most popular membership. Unlimited rentals. FIFTY PERCENT OFF. Better hurry, this offer ends soon!

*A secretive emoji can
help enhance the VIP feel.*

**RUNNING**  5m ago

**adidas Running**
🏅 💪 A new month is a great time to check out your goals. Got time to get active and make some progress today, Michael?

*Can't ignore the classic flex
emoji in fitness messaging.*

**FOOD NETWORK**  1h ago

**Pretzel-Coated Boneless Wings & Beer Chee...**
Jeff Mauro is the KING of game day grub! 🏈 With these boneless bites, who CARES who wins?!

**YELP**  12:00 PM

**Getting ready for tomorrow?**
Check out this Collection for wings, TVs, and pitchers of cold beverages. 🏈 Football's happening! Pro tip: call ahead.

*Food is arguably the second most popular
piece of the Super Bowl, trailing only the ads.*

**KOHL'S**  3m ago

They're here: Score Night 🍺 🍺 deals for your 📺 and 👨‍👩‍👧 during the Weekend Sale! Tap to shop.

**KOHL'S**  now

Psst ... Early 👀 👀 get the best savings during the Weekend Sale! Don't miss these deals. 🛍️ 🛒 🏃 Tap to shop now!

*Everyone gets it, but it still feels
like a fun, secret message.*

Emojis have been around for a [few decades now](#), but that doesn't mean they don't still add a bit of fun and appeal to messages—especially when considering the growing library of possibilities on iOS and Android.

Out of the 21 organizations that sent us push notifications, 61.9% used emojis at least once in their messaging. The most common use for emojis is supplementary in nature, adding excitement or emotion to copy.

In other cases, emojis help reinforce a theme, making it more easily identifiable before reading the message itself. A few companies took advantage of this near the Super Bowl.

**Kohl's** took a slightly different approach, placing emojis in for words. This is an interesting tactic. If words are missing and the message requires some interpretation, the customer might experience confusion and avoid engaging.

## One Step Further

Rich push notifications allow for a more visual and interactive customer experience. From static images and GIFs to videos and push action buttons, a rich push gives the customer ample opportunity to interact with the message in a more meaningful way.

Over the course of our research, only five companies included static imagery in their push notification campaigns and only one (**Match**) included push action buttons.



*Rather than send you to your mobile inbox, Match sends you straight to the profile.*
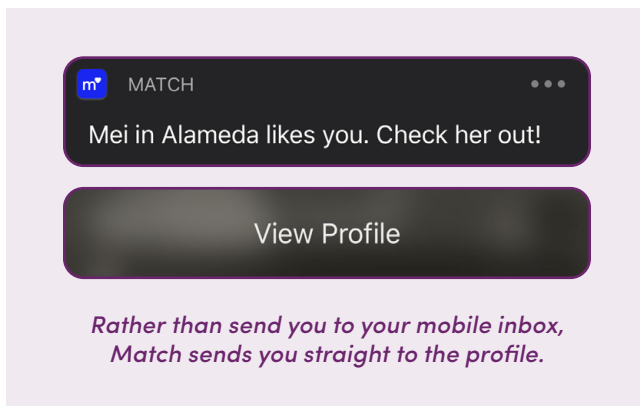
Push action buttons provide a crucial opportunity to encourage interaction with not only the notification, but with content of your choosing through deep linking, a link pointing directly to content. Without deep linking, users would have to go through extra actions to find the content referenced in the push notification.

Overall, the organizations in our study opted to focus more on messaging than interactive or visual elements.
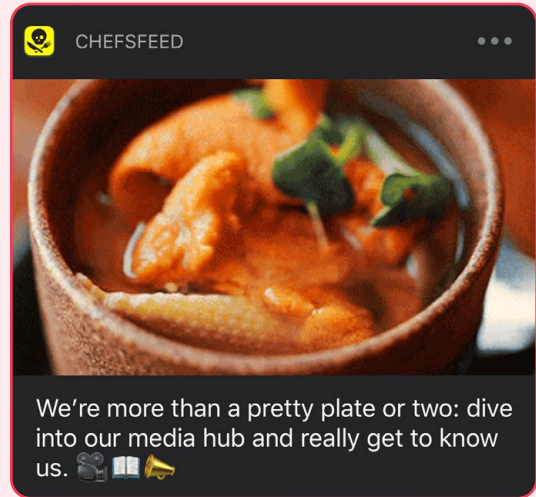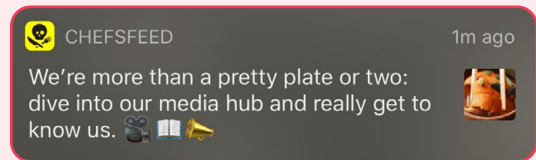


*Food is often a visual medium. Adding an image is a no-brainer.*
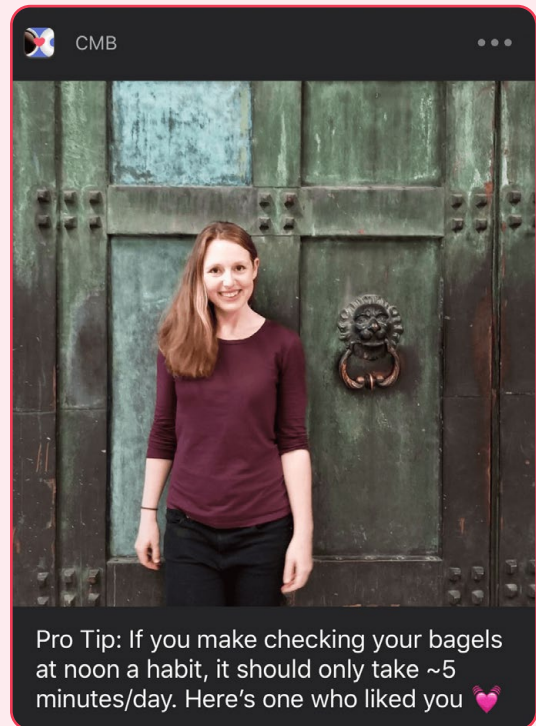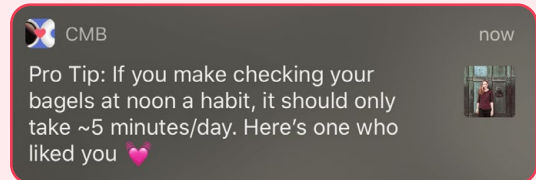


*CMB gives you a preview without requiring you to go to the app.*

# Make a Push for Better Mobile Marketing

For businesses with an app, push notifications are near-invaluable inclusions in your mobile marketing campaigns. These notifications showcase your brand and link back to wherever you want the customer to go.

**In our research we saw a variety of tactics used that worked to varying degrees. If you're looking to make the most out of push notifications, these are just a few things to keep in mind.**

1. **Make It Easy:** A lot of marketing is making it easier for customers to choose their path through your brand journey, ensuring they are finding the right spots for the greatest mutual benefit. Push action buttons are a prime opportunity to lead your customers straight to a feature you most want to highlight.

2. **Make It Engaging:** Similar to emails and, frankly, most content these days, visuals will have the greatest impact. Be bold. Use images and videos to your advantage. Adding visuals helps with understanding and retention of information which is key when reading messages on the go.

3. **Make It Relevant:** Rarely—if at all—during our research did we receive a push notification referring to our behavior. Utilize your data to keep your messaging as personalized and relevant as possible.

If users—particularly iOS users—are willing to opt in to your push notifications, make them count. Keep the journey straightforward, visually engaging and relevant to the user, and you're well on your way to higher conversions.
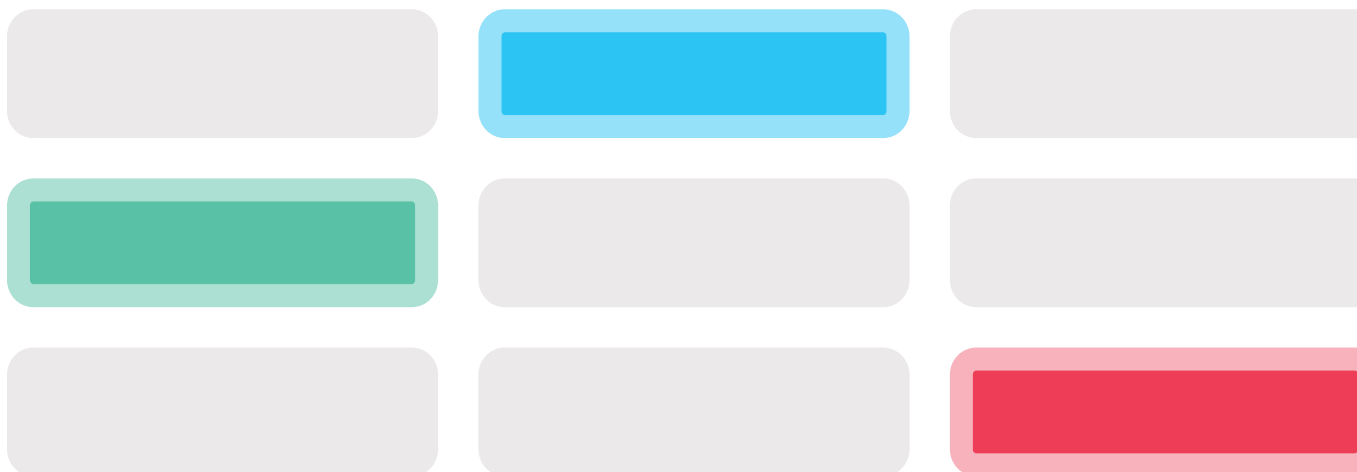
# Pro Tips From the Experts

Push notifications should be personalized and add value to the user. In other words, they should be based on user action and behavior.

There are a number of ways to personalize your push notifications.

Location-based or geo-triggered messages are excellent ways to tailor content to your user's environment.

A/B testing helps determine the best kind of messaging that gets your users to act and engage with your brand, but make sure to only test one variable at a time.

Deep linking ensures that the personalized pushes users receive take them to the right in-app content. If your push advertises a product similar to those the user has previously viewed or purchased, users should be taken to that exact product within the app.

Users have been trained to expect pushes to deep link correctly, which means failure to do so results in a poor experience and an increase in churn, leading to wasted spend and decreased ROI for you.

Your push notifications should also be measured in a single place with your other attribution and analytics reporting. If you're not tracking your push notifications' performance with your attribution provider, an action might get attributed to a paid ad 30 days ago when the action was actually caused by a push notification yesterday.

The ability to track push notifications in comparison to all your other marketing activities across platforms, channels, and devices will allow you to determine each activity's true ROI.

## Mada Seghete
*Co-Founder and Head of Marketing*

branch

# Sending Out an SMS

The importance of SMS in marketing cannot be understated from a customer experience standpoint. Not only are SMS engagement rates anywhere from six to eight times higher than email, almost 50% of consumers prefer receiving updates from a company via SMS.

SMS is arguably the peak of customer preference when it comes to cross-channel marketing. A majority of people (56%) would rather interact with an organization via SMS than speak with customer service. Perhaps that speaks to the average level of customer service...but it still speaks highly of SMS as a marketing channel.

Finally, SMS goes beyond standard updates. How many times have you been shopping in a store and texted or called a friend to discuss a potential purchase? Well, 59% of adults say they've done that.

SMS—and all of mobile marketing, for that matter—is about reaching the customer at their location in a timely manner. Let's take a quick look at how the companies in our study did in utilizing SMS to keep us engaged.

## What We Saw

A majority of the SMS messages we received were transactional in nature. For some, SMS communications began with verification codes, while others sent confirmations for bookings—particularly those in the Restaurant category. Lastly, we received promotional SMS messages with discount codes. Unlike push notifications, which were used for a variety of reasons throughout the study, SMS messages were highly limited in their usage.

**8%**

**of all mobile messages sent were SMS**

**20%**

**of companies sent at least 1 SMS message**

**4.9**

**Average SMS sent by company**

## Verified

The most common use for SMS messages over the course of our research was to verify an account or phone number.

**Resy**, a leading restaurant reservation app, made sure to remind customers that this verification was not a booking confirmation—these came later.

Interestingly, general merchandise retailer **Dollar General** and dating service **Coffee Meets Bagel** sent verification codes from the same source number.

Finally, dating service **Tinder** sent two verification codes. The first arrived after we signed up on mobile. The second arrived after we attempted to sign in to our account on the desktop later in the research timeline.

Rather than send a code, **Kmart** took an opt-in approach and requested our consent to continue contacting us via SMS.

918-473 is your Resy account verification code. This is not a booking confirmation.

*Clear messaging goes a long way in building trust.*

732-873 >

Your verification code from Dollar General is 3707395.

Your Coffee Meets Bagel login code is 4562
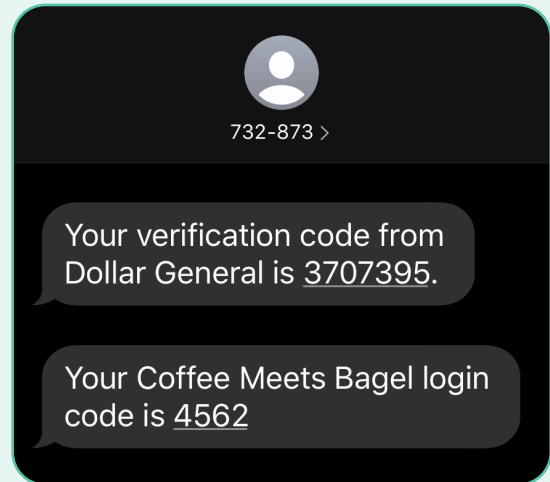
*This was the only overlap in the study.*

Your Tinder code is 430690

Your Tinder code is 036529

*Extra levels of security don't necessarily improve the customer experience.*

Reply Y to subscribe to Kmart mobile alerts. T&C: http://kmrt.cm/58cDMm Msgs sent by automated tech Consent not a condition of purchase.

You're now enrolled in Kmart Mobile Alerts! Recurring messaging. Msg&Data Rates may apply. HELP=help STOP=cancel

*The customer controls their journey.*

## See You Soon!

Another use case for SMS is a booking confirmation. Consumers might be more accustomed to these messages from airlines. When used in the right circumstances, these types of SMS can be beneficial for customers in keeping track of bookings. This process also streamlines the confirmation/cancellation process for business and consumer, as well.

**Resy** uses SMS for their booking confirmations. Others in the restaurant category opted for email-only confirmation messages.

Further simplifying the process, Resy takes advantage of iOS features to make it easy to save the reservation to your calendar by clicking the event ("for dinner tomorrow") or the time ("7:15pm").
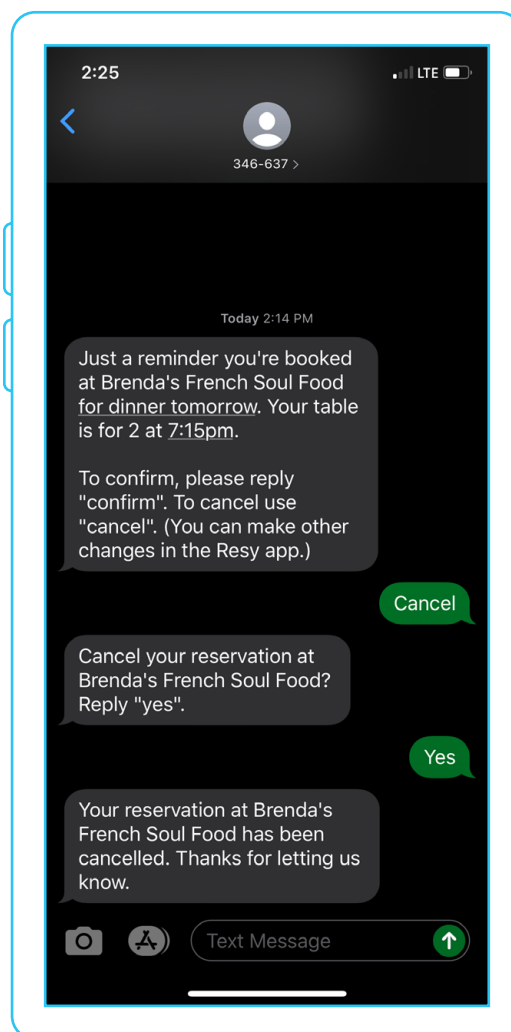


*All information is clearly expressed and easily understood.*

# Time's Running Out!

The last use case we saw for SMS in our study was promotional in nature. These messages included a percentage discount code, as well as a link that sends users to the mobile website rather than the app.

In total, the companies that used SMS for promotional campaigns—Bloomingdale's (10 SMS sent), Kmart (8), and Macy's (7)—accounted for the most SMS messages over the course of the study.
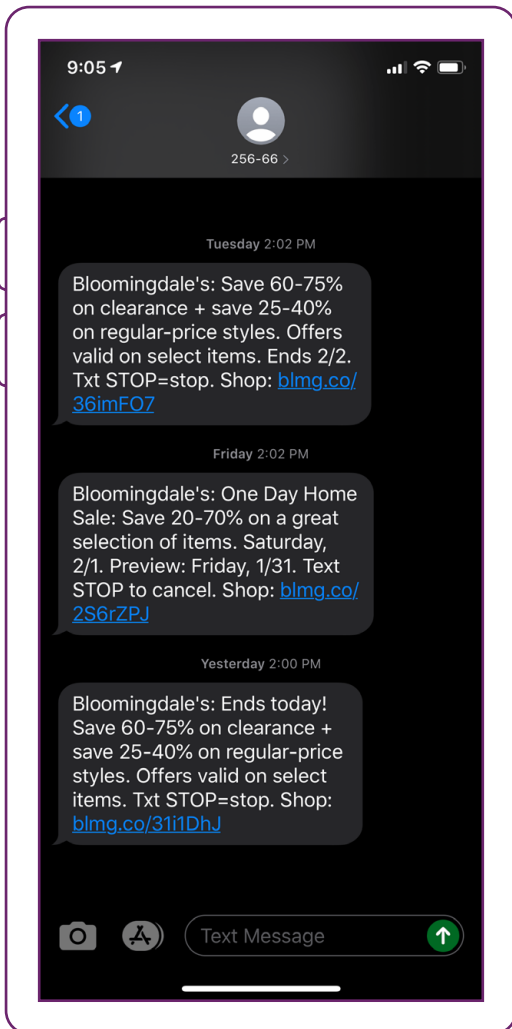


*Keep information clear and concise with relevant dates and discounts.*
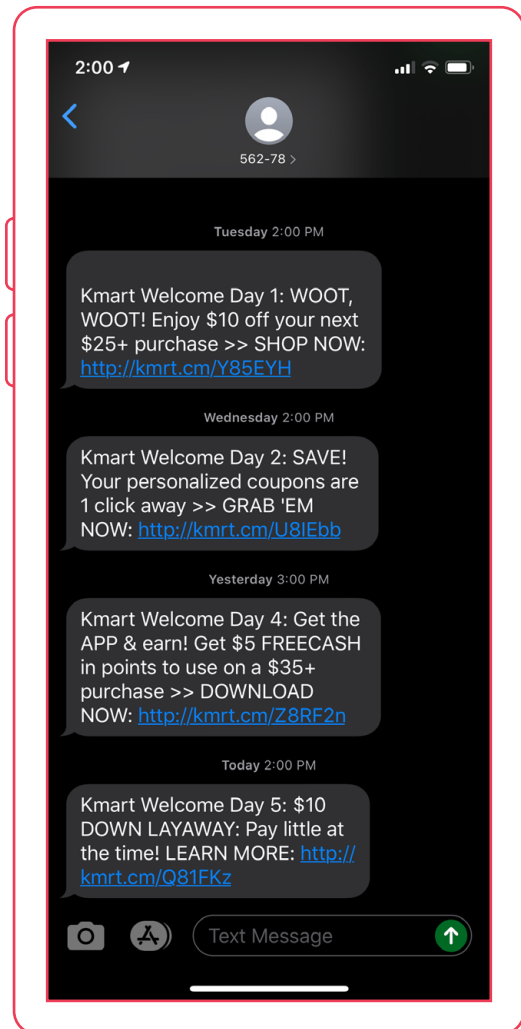


*Setting expectations is a great way to sustain engagement.*

**Macy's** and **Bloomingdale's**, which are owned by the same parent organization, focused heavily on the sale without getting into too much detail about which items would be discounted.

**Kmart** incorporated their promotions into a mobile welcome campaign with a different discount for each of the first seven days after signing up. However, a few of the days were missing. On Welcome Day 4, we were prompted to download the app despite having done so days beforehand.

# Expand Your (SMS) Mind

SMS in mobile marketing seems to be pigeonholed into a swirl of verifications and confirmations. Due to the relatively standardized format of these messages, SMS messaging can feel a bit stale, despite its potential for impact.

Text messages play a massive role in our daily lives. And for many, these are coveted simply because they are personal conversations. For users that have shared their phone number with you as a business, it is up to you to make it worth their time without violating their trust.

**Here are a few ways how:**

1. **Keep It Valuable:** Verifications and confirmations are valuable for businesses and consumers alike. Take your SMS marketing to the next level by adding cart abandonment or information on how to better take advantage of deals or your rewards program. If your customer learns something useful from your SMS, everyone wins.

2. **Keep It Conversational:** So much of text communication is informal between friends and loved ones. Consumers don't want to feel like they're interacting with a generic bot. A slight shift in tone can go a long way towards endearing your brand to customers—see Resy's gentle, friendly reminders above for an example.

3. **Keep It Transparent:** Like we said, a text message is personal. It's going to the personal number of a valued customer. Be honest with how often you'll reach out. If you follow the first two tips here, they may even begin looking forward to your messages.

Beyond engagements and conversions, the real goal from SMS marketing is to make sure the customer doesn't regret giving you their phone number. By diversifying the way in which you use SMS, you open up the chance to stand out from the crowd and create a meaningful one-on-one dialogue with your customers.

# Curology

## *Driving 5x Growth With SMS*

Prescription skincare provider Curology sets itself apart by offering customized treatments and one-to-one interactions with licensed dermatology providers. To achieve this level of service, the company strives for a more personalized experience for each customer.

By partnering with Iterable, Curology eliminated data silos between email and SMS and sent personalized daily SMS reminders to members to apply their treatments.

**Using personalized SMS, Curology increased:**

- Treatment plan compliance by 14%
- Customer engagement by 26%
- Revenue by 10%

# Pro Tips From the Experts

It's hard to make mobile applications that deliver value to consumers and businesses alike. In a 2019 Twilio study of 2,500 consumers in the U.S., U.K., Germany, and Australia, we found that while 7 out of 10 consumers curate their home screens, less than half of consumers say they put corporate mobile apps on their home screen.

When asked how they'd like to hear from businesses, only 12% of consumers said they prefer a company's mobile app. So, if apps aren't the answer for most businesses, what is?

For critical communications, SMS is unrivaled. Done right, it has the potential to create a sense of connection and builds customer loyalty; done incorrectly, it has the potential to annoy (or worse). Consumers are giving us permission to contact them on one of the most intimate communication channels out there, and it's up to every business to preserve that trust.

One way to show you're deserving of that trust and loyalty is to respond.

Market leaders are engaging with consumers in a conversational way, allowing them to respond in the same thread. While this may mean businesses must adapt to supporting a new support channel, intelligent assistants can address common issues and escalate to an agent with context.

Every message is an invitation to a conversation, and if your business is not listening and responding, you're losing an important opportunity to connect.

**Dave Esber**
*Sr. Product Marketing Manager*

twilio

# Crazy In-App Love

If a key tenet of mobile marketing is to reach the customer at the right time and on the right device, it stands to reason that in-app messaging would be a major strategic channel.

In-app messages are exactly as they sound: messages users receive while interacting with an app. These can serve many purposes, which we will get into shortly, but one that is crucial to mobile success is retention. And there is perhaps no better place to encourage retention than within the app itself.

Almost 90% of time spent on mobile devices is from app interactions. With U.S. adults spending upwards of three hours on mobile devices per day and picking up their smartphones 150 times a day, that's a lot of opportunities to engage users.

For mobile marketers, the in-app message acts as a catalyst to educate and inform users about further benefits and features within the app. There is one catch though: for in-app to work as a marketing channel, users have to actually be in your app.

While not used as frequently as its mobile cousins SMS and push, in-app has the potential to drive conversions and stimulate continued engagement. Here's a peek at some ways in which the companies in our study utilized in-app messaging.

## What We Saw

In-app has, generally speaking, two design styles. One completely covers the screen and forces users to notice it before either interacting or closing it out. The second is interspersed throughout the app design to fit seamlessly within the user experience. We witnessed both in our research.

As for use cases, the majority of in-app messages we received were prompting upgrades to premium subscriptions. That said, we did see a few industry-specific examples that provided further value.

## 80%

of dating services
sent in-app messages

## 10

companies sent
in-app messages

**ITERABLE**

## *Let Me See You Upgrade*

For the 40% of businesses in the study that had a premium offering, a significant portion of their promotions were about upgrading our account.
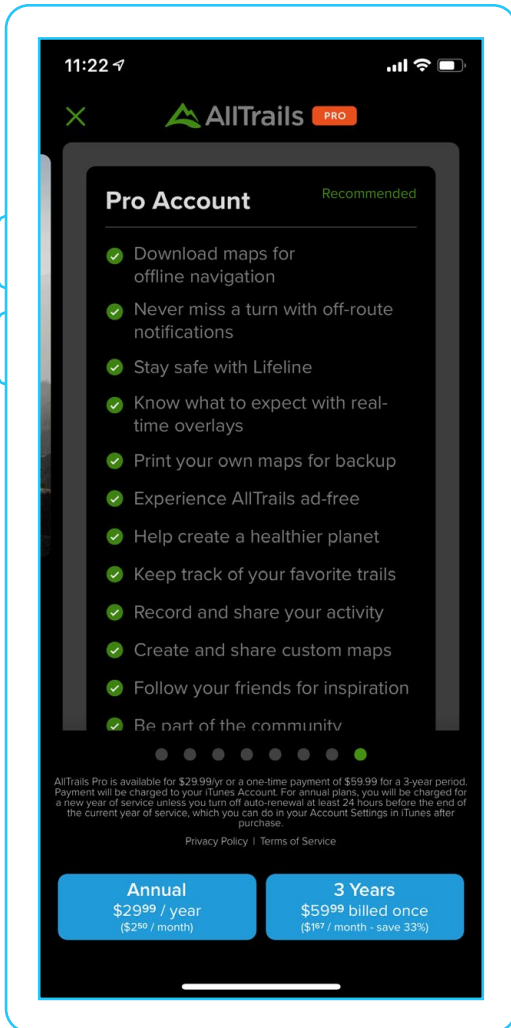


*Showing value is key and this is a simple way of doing just that.*



*This design more closely resembles an email.*

**AllTrails**, a leading running and hiking trail app, sent a full screen in-app message encouraging us to upgrade. The company did well to utilize this space effectively, filling the bulk of the screen with a list of benefits to signing up for a "Pro Account."

Also in the Running category, **Adidas Running** used a fullscreen in-app message to promote its subscription offerings as well.

## Hiding in Plain Sight

Many organizations took a different approach to sending out their in-app messages by incorporating them directly into the app design.
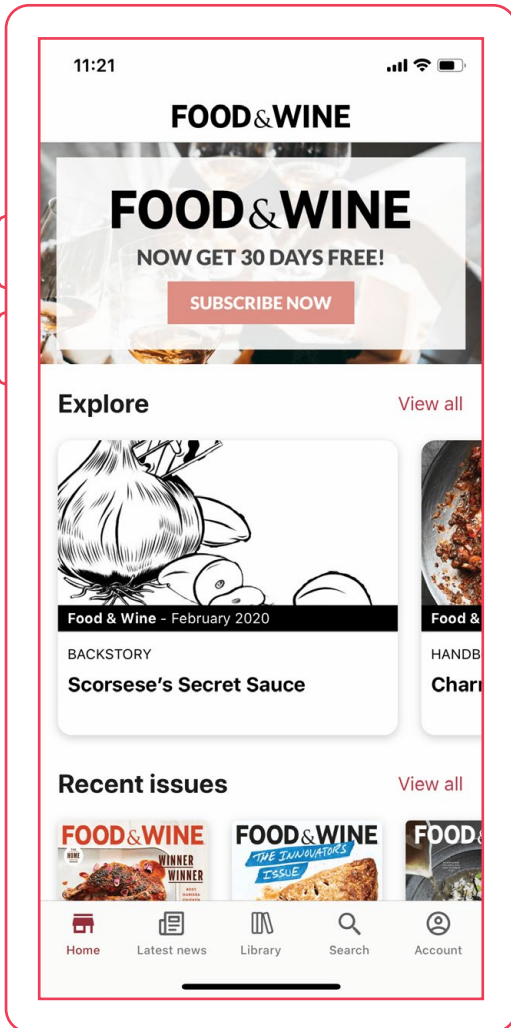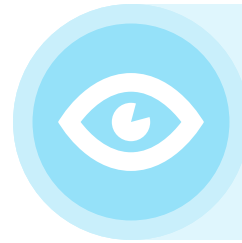


*Subscription is the main goal for Food & Wine so it comes at the top.*



*Allowing interaction with the app before the message lets users see value first.*

Popular food magazine **Food & Wine** integrated their message as a "Subscribe Now" button at the top of the app.

The **Food Network Kitchen** app placed their premium subscription in-app message further down in the home screen scroll. In this way, the user would already have to interact with the app to find the message.

## More Than Money

Beyond promoting a premium offering, in-app messages can and should be used to add value to the user's app experience.
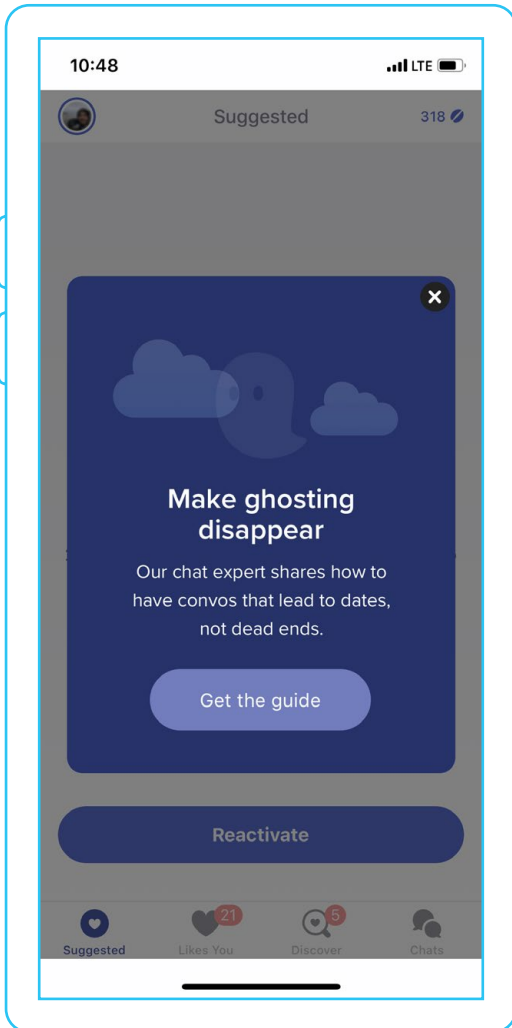


*Mixing up messaging keeps it from getting stale.*



*A good trainer motivates.*

Content, in particular, doesn't have to be limited to email nurture campaigns. Dating service **Coffee Meets Bagel** took this approach, providing a guide to ghosting.

The running apps, specifically **Nike Run Club**, used in-app messaging to incentivize users to join challenges and go on runs.

# Create a Welcoming In-App Environment

Users that are already within the app have shown an interest in what your business has to offer, so step one of getting them to the app is complete. The next step is using in-app messaging to provide some additional benefit to the user.

Whether you're pointing them in the direction of a new feature or your premium offerings, make sure the user leaves that message with useful information they might act on later.

**This can be done in a number of ways.**

1. **Be Specific:** Users are visiting your app for a specific reason and generally do not like to be waylaid in their mission. Be specific about which feature or function you want them to notice. You have the freedom here to reference specifics since there is less legwork needed as the user is already in the app.

2. **Be Timely:** In-app messages are limited to the app. Be careful not to send time-sensitive information that could be irrelevant by the time the user re-enters the app. Understanding your customer interactions with your app at a deeper level is crucial at this stage to ensure your messages ring true when seen.

3. **Be Flexible:** As we've shown, in-app messages can be full screen or integrated into your home screen. Don't limit your usage of in-app messaging to one or the other. Experiment to find the right use cases for each style. In the same vein, test what you send. In-app messages can also be useful for welcome campaigns, cart abandonment, and even user feedback.

When incorporating in-app into your mobile marketing strategies, look to your data. Here's where you'll find the most insight into how users are engaging with your app, making it that much easier for you to help them benefit the most from their time with you.

## uphabit

### *How UpHabit Builds Meaningful Relationships with In-App Messaging*

UpHabit makes it easier to maintain professional and personal relationships through customizable reminders and follow-up prompts. Since declining attention spans spurred the need for UpHabit, the company knew user experience needed to be a focal point.

And so, UpHabit turned to Iterable to help in building an engaging in-app user experience.

**The company:**

- Customized in-app messages to show seamlessly within natural app usage
- Utilized Iterable's data flexibility to send tips and tricks based on user behavior
- Provided a direct line of communication with UpHabit leadership

By adding Iterable and their new in-app messaging into new product enhancements, UpHabit saw a 718% increase in subscriber conversion and 42% drop in subscriber churn.

# Pro Tips From the Experts

While each business model differs, there are plenty of common best-practice strategies for in-app push notifications. Here is what we have learned over time engaging over 200 app clients:

1. **Make users aware of new features.** When engaging with an app, users can miss some of the great features your app has to offer. Build out an in-app messaging campaign to boost engagement with new product features, such as alerting users of a new program release for a VOD app, for example. Keeping in mind the cadence of your messages, these new feature prompts can really help boost your app engagement and increase your DAU/MAUs.

2. **App reviews play a huge role in converting new users.** Research shows that jumping from two stars to three stars in the app stores can increase conversion by up to 306%. Introduce in-app notifications to encourage users to rate your app when they've experienced a 'delight' moment. Again, a data-informed strategy will ensure that this is served at the right time in the user lifecycle and to the right audience.

3. **Utilize in-app to prime users opt-in to push as well.** Push messages are also vital in re-engaging your users. Utilize your data setup and mobile tool integrations to create a data-informed push priming strategy. Implement a custom prompt that is well-timed with copy that clearly states the value proposition of opting in. This will open the door to another channel of communication that will be vital to your app engagement strategy.

Leveraging engagement strategies is key in retaining your audience and driving conversion targets for your app, core pillars of Yodel Mobile's unique App Growth Programme.

## Mick Rigby
*CEO*

ym | yodelmobile

# The Check's in the Mobile Inbox

## A Few Words About the Mobile Inbox

You would be forgiven to think immediately of email when seeing the phrase "mobile inbox." The inbox is synonymous with email and over 60% of emails are opened on mobile devices.

In this instance, however, we are not talking about emails. No, this mobile inbox is within the app, storing all kinds of messages and notifications that update and inform users about the latest and greatest your brand has to offer.

While in-app messages in the vein of those we detailed in the previous section can be disruptive to a user's interaction with the app, mobile inbox messages are stored in a tidy notification center within the app for viewing at the user's leisure without interruption. As an added benefit, unlike push or in-app messages, mobile inbox messages can be revisited.

In our research, these types of messages were heavily used in one industry category: Dating. All five online dating apps had a mobile inbox storing our matches, those that had liked our profile, and our messages with other users.
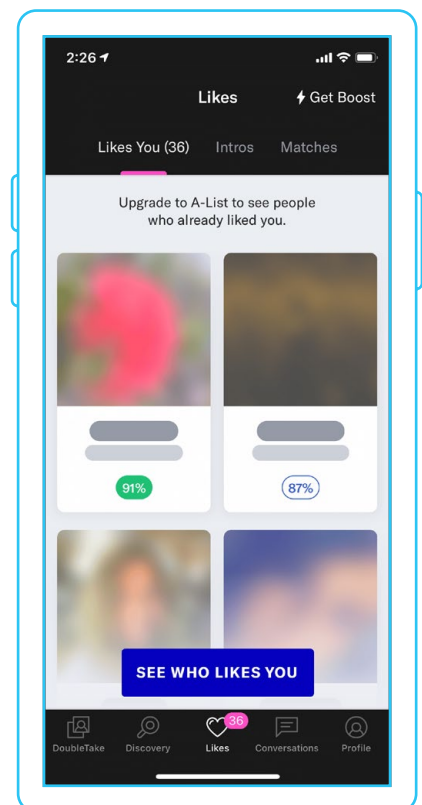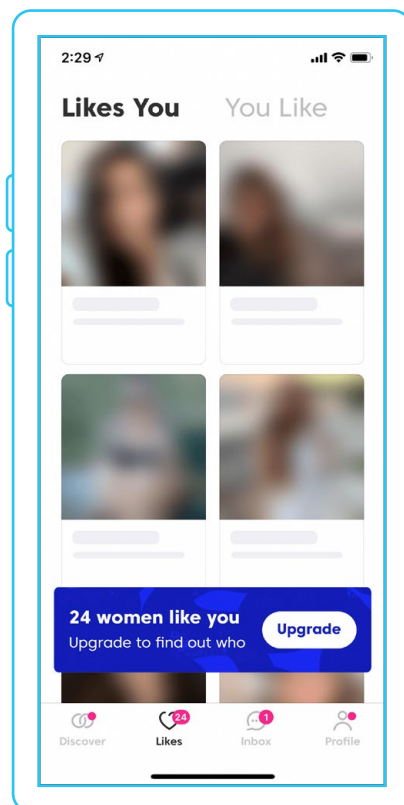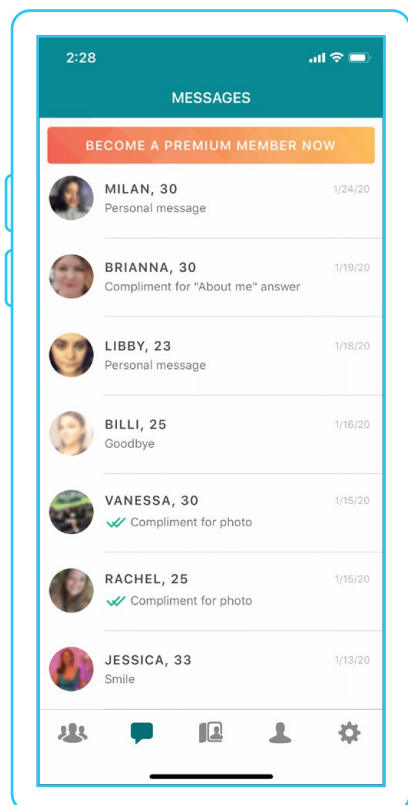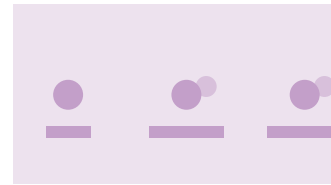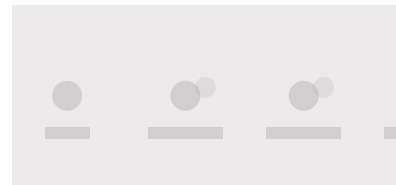
*Hard to get a date when you can't see them.*

The biggest user of the mobile inbox outside Dating was e-commerce general merchandise retailer **Wish**, which used its mobile inbox to highlight new discounts and deals.

The mobile inbox is frequently used for relaying information to users about app updates. But, in fact, this is where marketers can make an impact with promotions, recommendations, coupons, onboarding guides, feature announcements and more.

It's an unobtrusive way to ensure your engaged users are getting the information they need without slowing them down.
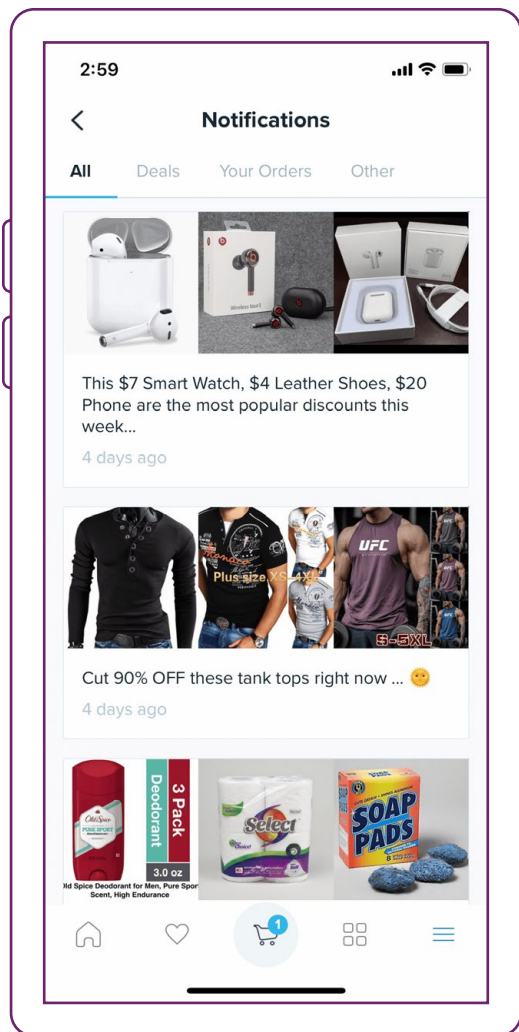


*Wish sends its daily deals to the mobile inbox so you always have them handy.*

## Pro Tips From the Experts

Mobile inbox is a great way to create a new engagement channel within your digital ecosystem, but is often not utilized in the optimal way, diminishing the user experience.

Ensure that your mobile inbox is never empty when users visit it, even during the first app session. Put a free coupon for your product or service in the inbox so users can complete the first growth loop (like placing an order from a restaurant or starting a conversation in a dating app) and move from "new" to "current" users.

Finally, your product and marketing teams must be aligned on this app feature. This helps the functionality and design of the app stay in line with customers' expectations, as well as the engagement messaging they see within the app.

The compounding effect of great content in your mobile inbox on the growth of your mobile application cannot be understated.



### Tim Duncan
*Product Growth Practice Lead*

**bottle rocket**

# Don't You Forget About Me

Revenue from mobile apps is expected to reach $189 billion in 2020. And the vast majority of this revenue is likely to come from free apps. The idea, presumably, being that consumers would rather try out an app to see its value up close and personal before committing to purchases.

All of the apps in our study were free to download. However, 12 organizations had a premium offering, while many others, especially retailers, showcased products for purchase within the app. Only a handful of businesses—mostly in the Restaurant category—did not have any options for purchase.

As part of our activity timeline, we first browsed an item without adding it to our cart and then went through the transaction process until the final step, abandoning our cart before buying. This process revealed how industry-specific the abandonment campaign can be.

Fashion Retailers and General Merchandise Retailers adopted a more traditional cart abandonment campaign, as one would expect. That said, 50% of brands across these two categories did not send an abandonment campaign—browse or cart—at all.

Overall, only 20% of brands in the study sent a cart abandonment message—only one of which was not in the Fashion Retailers or General Merchandise Retailers categories.

**Saks Fifth Avenue** made sure we remembered our cart one day after abandoning it. Their message included the item we abandoned, its price, as well as a few similar items that might be of interest. In doing so, Saks keeps our attention while also adding a more personal touch to fit our behavior.



*A friendly reminder is a great way to build loyalty and retention.*

**Rent the Runway** took a multi-message approach, sending two emails each for browse and cart abandonment. With clear subject lines, the company is quick to remind us of our prior actions and reactivate the feeling we had when browsing in the first place.



| Rent the Runway | You left this behind... - Limited ... |
| Rent the Runway | Don't Forget. - Ted Baker Lond... |
| Rent the Runway | Are you ready? - Own the day. ... |
| Rent the Runway | Remember me? - Make your m... |

*Reigniting the same interest in the item can incentivize a purchase.*
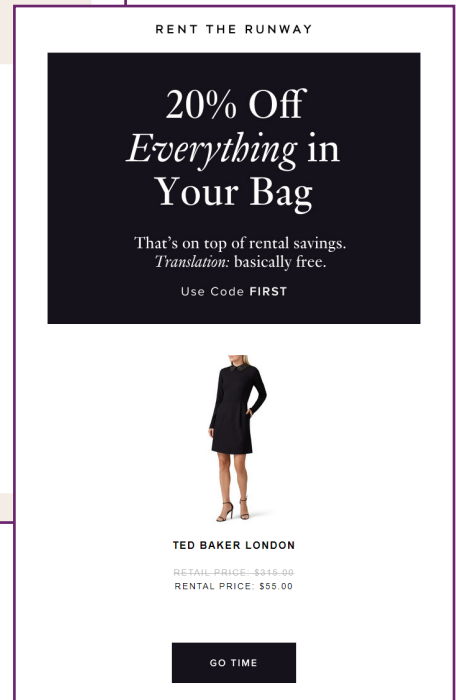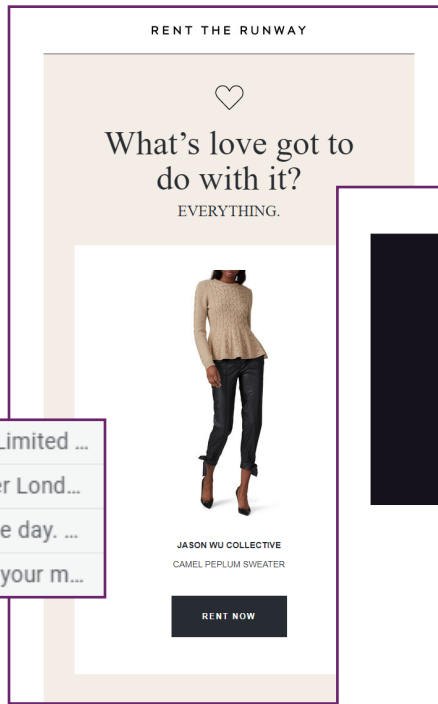


The process of abandoning a purchase proved difficult for certain industries due to the in-app purchasing process. On iOS for certain apps, there is no checkout screen. Instead, the user is sent to the below screens for immediate, expedited purchase.
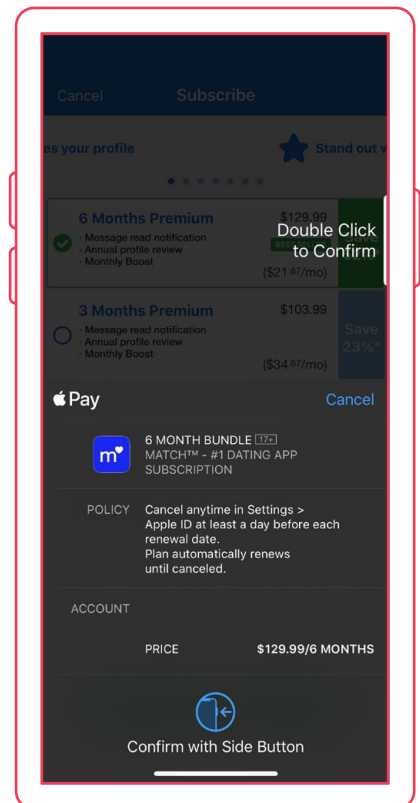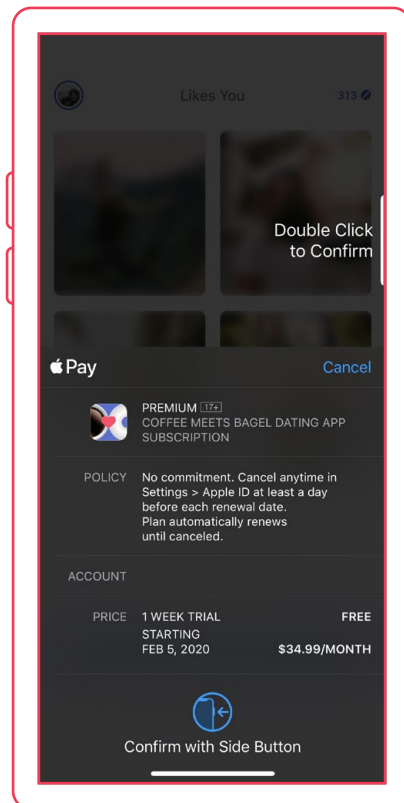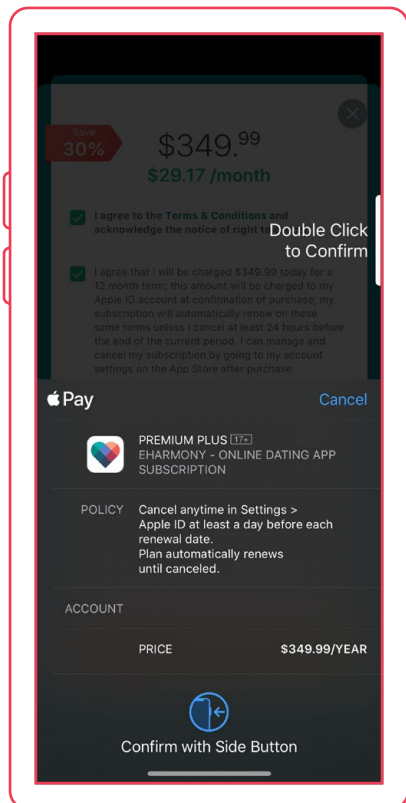


*Hard to have a cart abandonment campaign with no cart.*

In particular, all of the companies in the Dating category had mobile purchasing processes that went through this screen. While mobile-first interactions are not always situated for cart or browse abandonment, this does not mean businesses should ignore reactivation campaigns.

Dating, for example, already does this by reminding users of likes and matches in the app. **Match** switched up their messaging, but the goal remained the same: bring the user back.



*Reactivation messages show you're paying attention to behavior.*

While not strictly a cart abandonment message, these messages bring users back to the app where they will be met with the below image, encouraging an upgrade via an in-app message.

The abandonment campaign—of any type—is about that final step, that crucial conversion. For many industries the consumer is explicitly stating what they intend to buy. For others, like Dating or Running, the process is a little less straightforward, but no less impactful.

It boils down to this: the value consumers get from their free app experience has to pale in comparison to the value added by upgrading to premium.

How does one achieve that transition? Excellent messaging and real-time data.

Data is key here. You need a customer engagement platform that is able to capture behavioral data in such a way that empowers you to identify when users are reaching the purchase threshold. When they are liking more profiles but not starting conversations. When they've gone on four runs in one week but haven't committed to a coach-approved plan.

Consumers reacting to a reactivation campaign, such as a cart abandonment reminder, are engaged and familiar with your brand. They've used it before and have witnessed the value firsthand. That's why they keep coming back.

They don't need to know the benefits anymore; they just need a little push...or SMS.
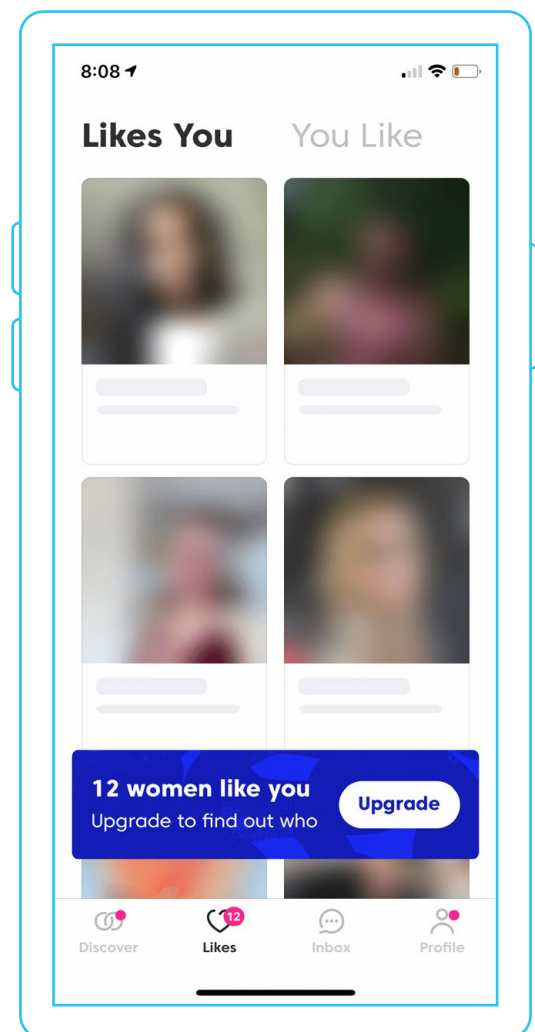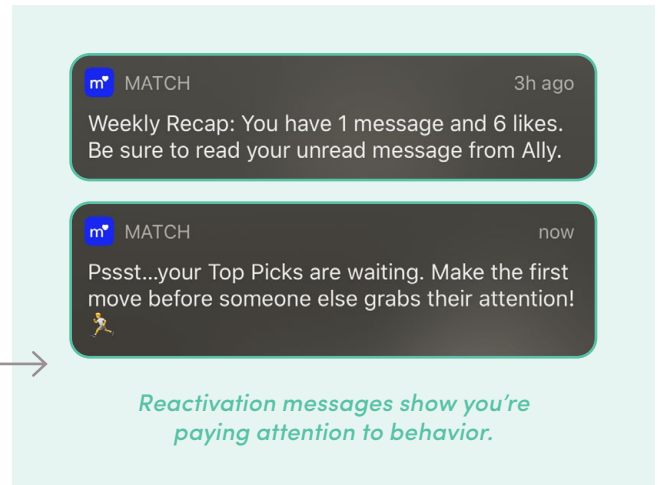


*If you want to see your likes, it's time to upgrade.*

# One More Bridge to Cross-Channel

We would be remiss to not mention the elephant in your inbox: email. While mobile marketing may be on the rise in both breadth and impact, email is still the dominant method of communication by many marketers and consumers.

Email marketing is undeniably vital to a successful marketing program and there are excellent resources available to make an email marketer's job easier. In this space, however, it is necessary to call out the relationship—or, more often, the lack thereof—between email and mobile marketing programs.

## What We Saw

In a small nod to the mobile-centric shift in content consumption, every brand in our study optimized their emails for mobile viewing. Single, narrow columns with distinct content blocks were the norm without many strong deviations—as seen in this welcome message from **Dollar General**.

Our first action as part of the research was to download the app and complete our profile on our mobile device. Despite this, almost half of the companies in the study (13) sent fewer than five mobile messages, such as push notifications, SMS, or in-app messages, with five of those brands sending none.

In the same vein, seven companies (or 23.3%) sent emails with content in the body of the email prompting the download of their app. This does not include the call-to-action buttons often found in the footers of emails linking to the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

The space "above the fold"—anything in an email that can be seen before scrolling down to see the remaining content—is immensely valuable. It's the first thing—beyond the subject line—your audience sees. Devoting a significant portion of this to information that is outdated or irrelevant to the user is missing out on a huge opportunity.
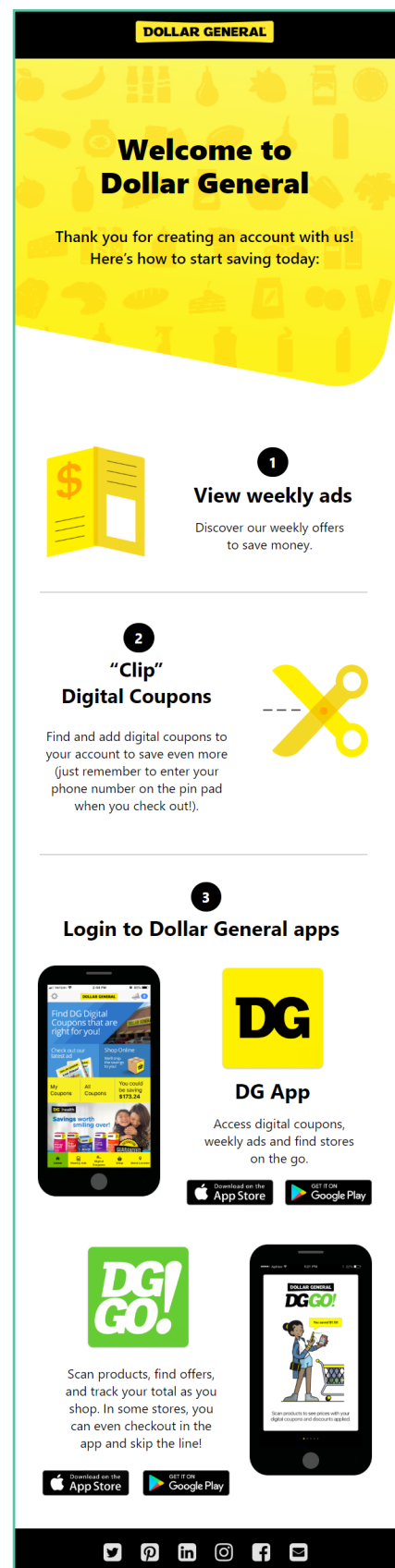


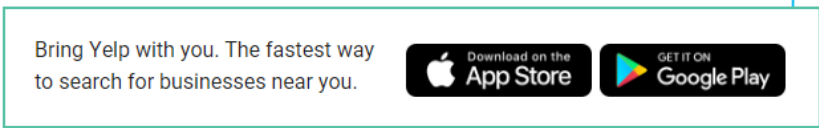*Easy scrolling makes it simpler for readers to focus on the messaging.*

**The New York Times Cooking** devoted an entire email to the download of their app. This email arrived 15 days after we downloaded the app.

**ChefsFeed** also devoted an entire email two days into our research highlighting the benefits of using the app.
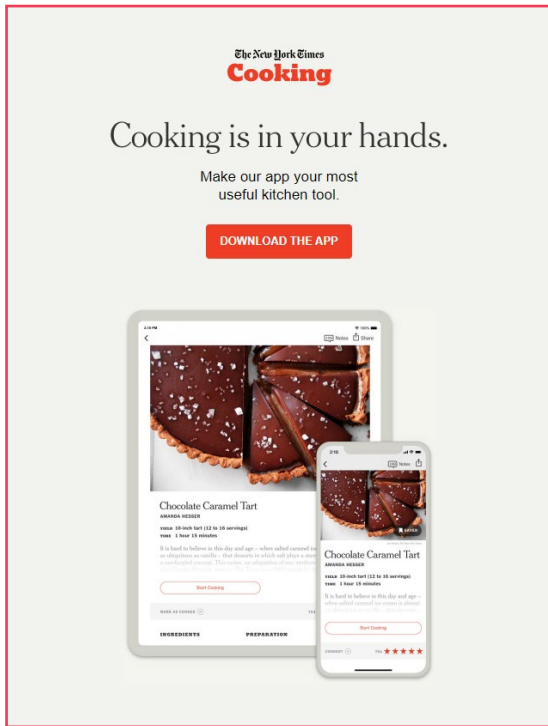


*Ignoring user behavior can quickly make your messaging irrelevant.*
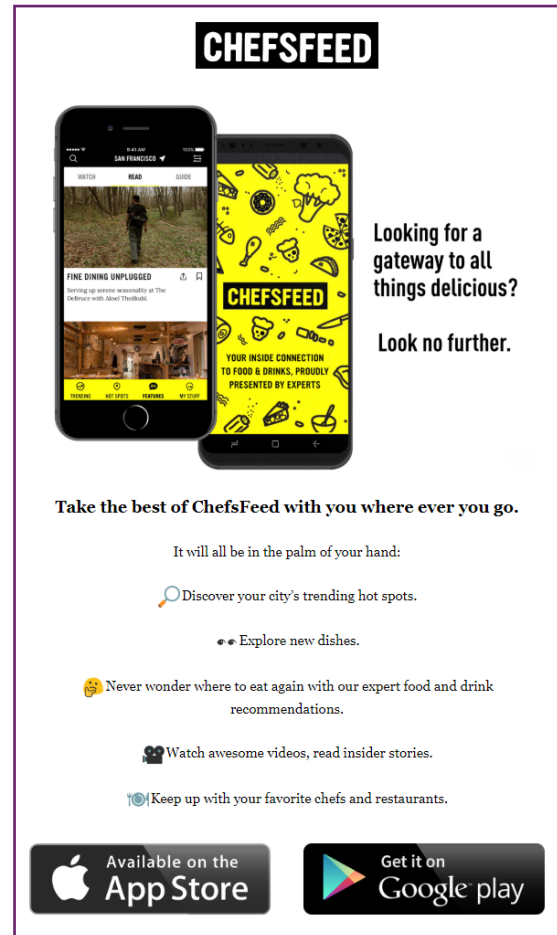


*Your audience has the power to ignore messages. Don't give them a reason to.*

**Yelp** took a slightly different approach. While not devoting space above the scroll to promoting the app, they did incorporate a full content block for the app.

However, after the first instance of this content block, future emails displayed a more subtle version to still push for mobile downloads without taking up as much email body space.
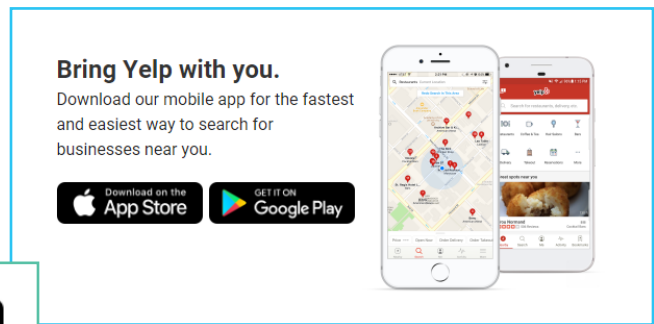


*Incorporating such a message later on serves as a reminder for some while not being a focus for all.*



*A personalized footer goes a long way.*

Finally, **Bloomingdale's** showed a way to seamlessly include the app download request into a larger message. The app download prompt still appeared above the scroll, but was contextualized by the header that specified there would be seven content blocks to view.

**Adidas'** marketing program came in two distinct segments. First, we received promotions and messages from the overarching Adidas campaigns. These messages, while optimized for mobile viewing, were not related to our download and use of the Adidas Runtastic app.



*Always look to add more value when possible.*



*Be transparent about which business unit is sending the message.*

ITERABLE

The communications from Adidas's running app, **Adidas Runtastic**, not only came from a different sender name and address, they also were heavily mobile-friendly, going so far as to say "View Web Version" at the top. These emails were short and to the point for easier mobile consumption.

The only brand to recognize and call out our actions on the app was **Target**. In their welcome email, Target specifically identified that our account had first been created on their app. This was the first and only email to reference our mobile activity explicitly.
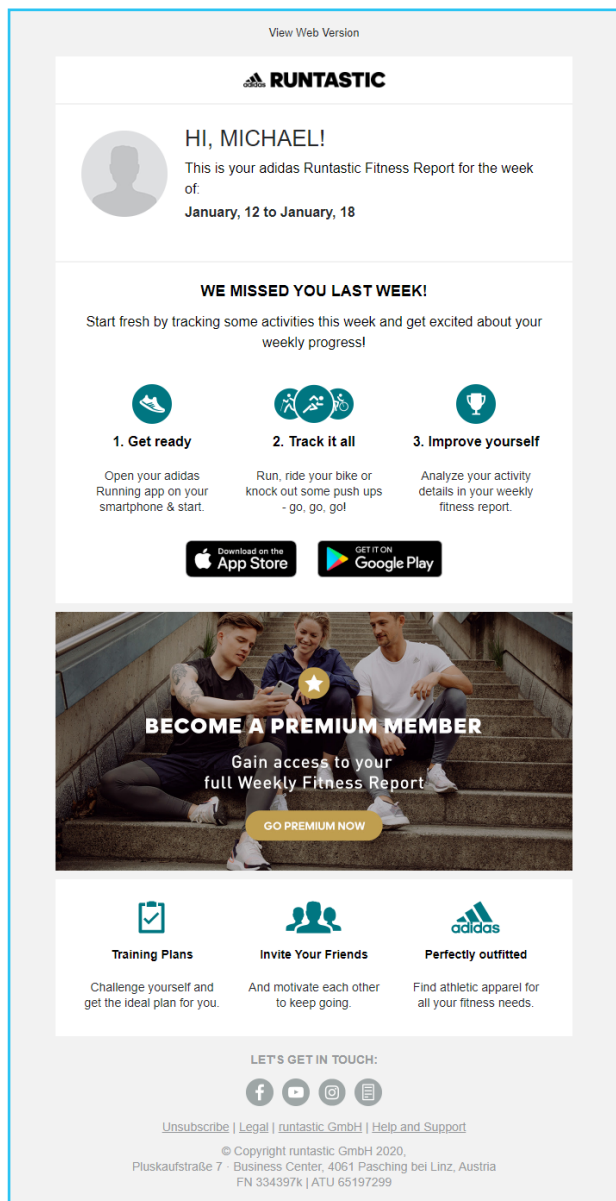


*Icons make for quicker, easier reading.*
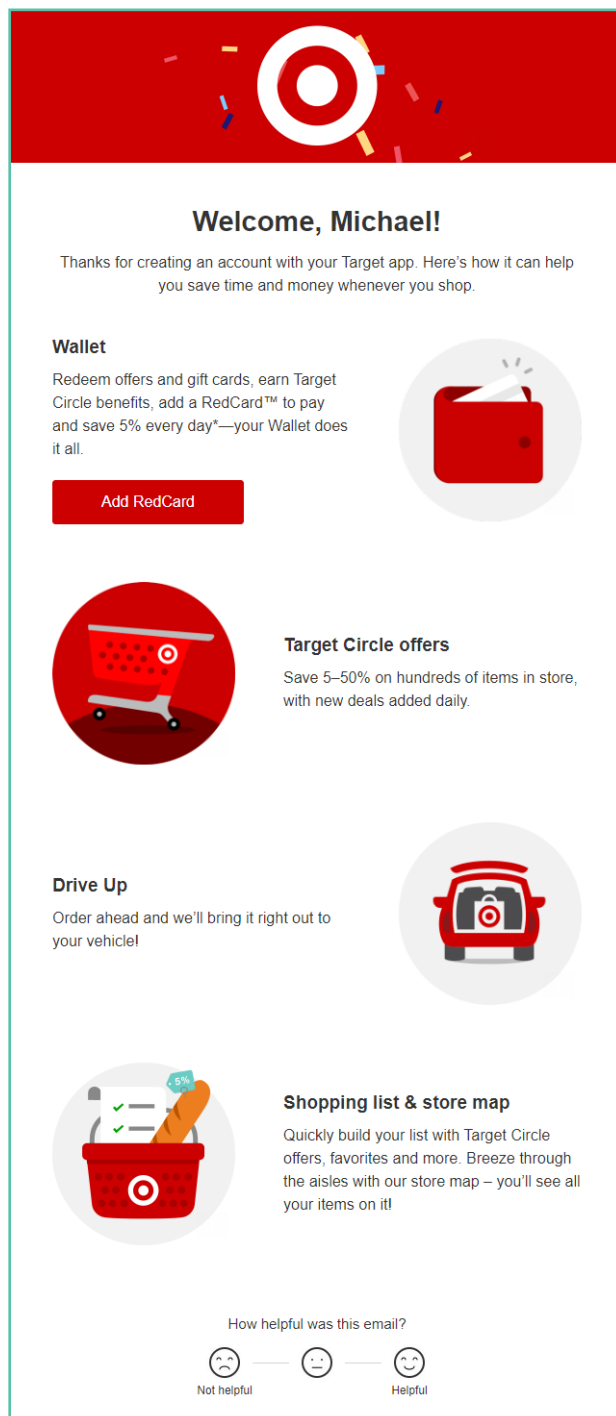


*Target identified our behavior and adapted messaging to be relevant.*

# Key Differences to the Email and Mobile Journeys

As mentioned above, our interactions with these 30 brands began through their mobile apps. Since there are many customers who do not follow this path, we partnered with email intelligence provider, MailCharts, to see how the customer experience differs if you were to sign up via email first for some of the same brands in our study.

In doing so, the discrepancy in collection and usage of mobile and email data becomes clear.

Some brands provided a drastically different experience. **Zagat**, a popular restaurant review site, does not collect profile information within its app, opting instead to allow users unfettered access to reviews. This tactic meant we received zero marketing messages from Zagat throughout our research.

On their website, however, you can sign up for their newsletter. In doing so, MailCharts began receiving numerous newsletters over the course of their research.
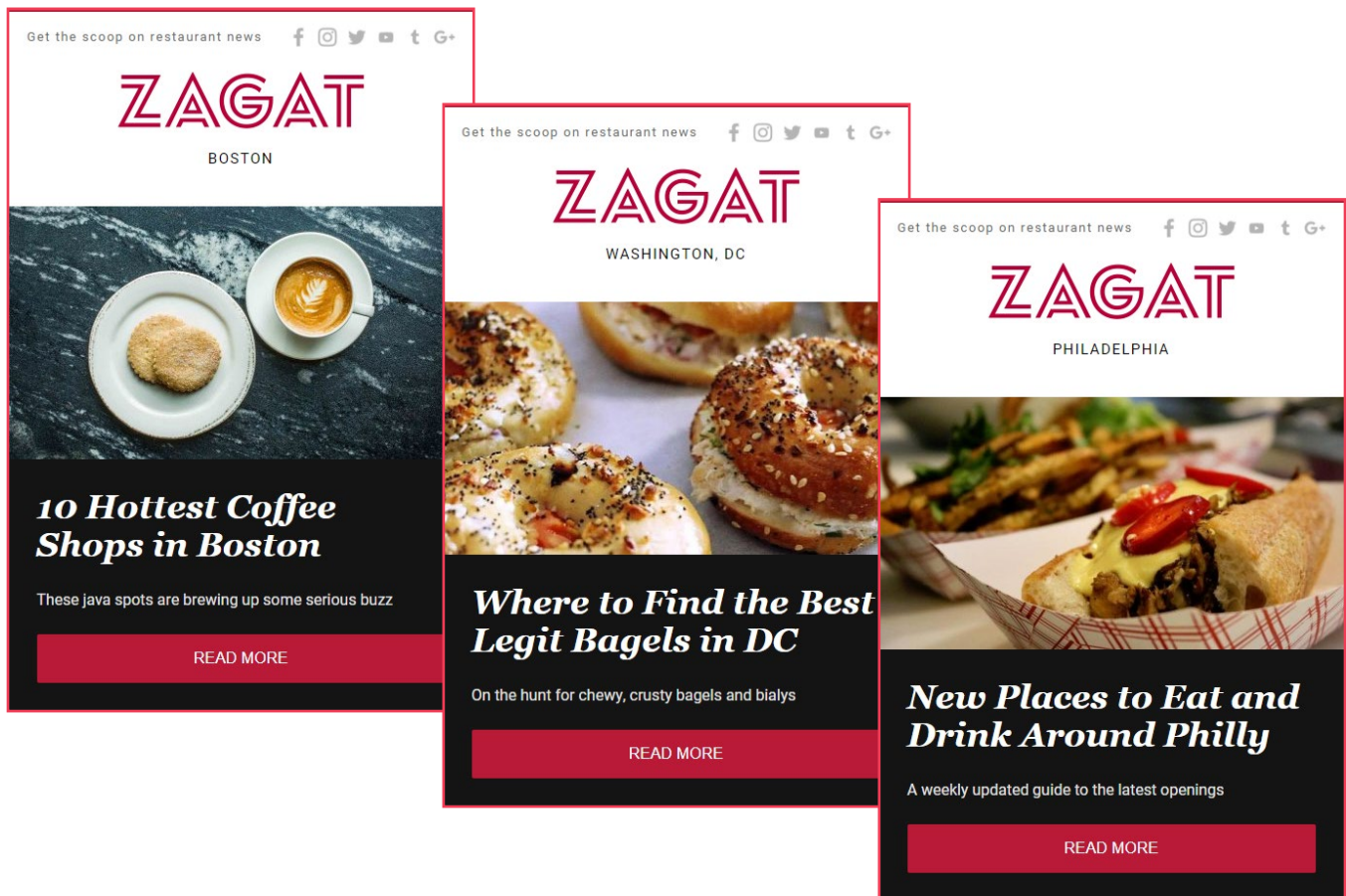


*The Zagat desktop journey differs greatly from the mobile journey.*
*Source: MailCharts*

Profile information is utilized differently as well. **Saks Fifth Avenue** collected our email address on mobile, but only sent us a welcome email and a cart abandonment email. The remaining messages came intermittently as push notifications.

While these show a good connection between mobile behavioral data and email campaigns, it also shows a disconnect when incorporating mobile-first customers into larger cross-channel campaigns.

MailCharts, on the other hand, received multiple promotional emails per day, showcasing a contrasting experience for the email-first user.
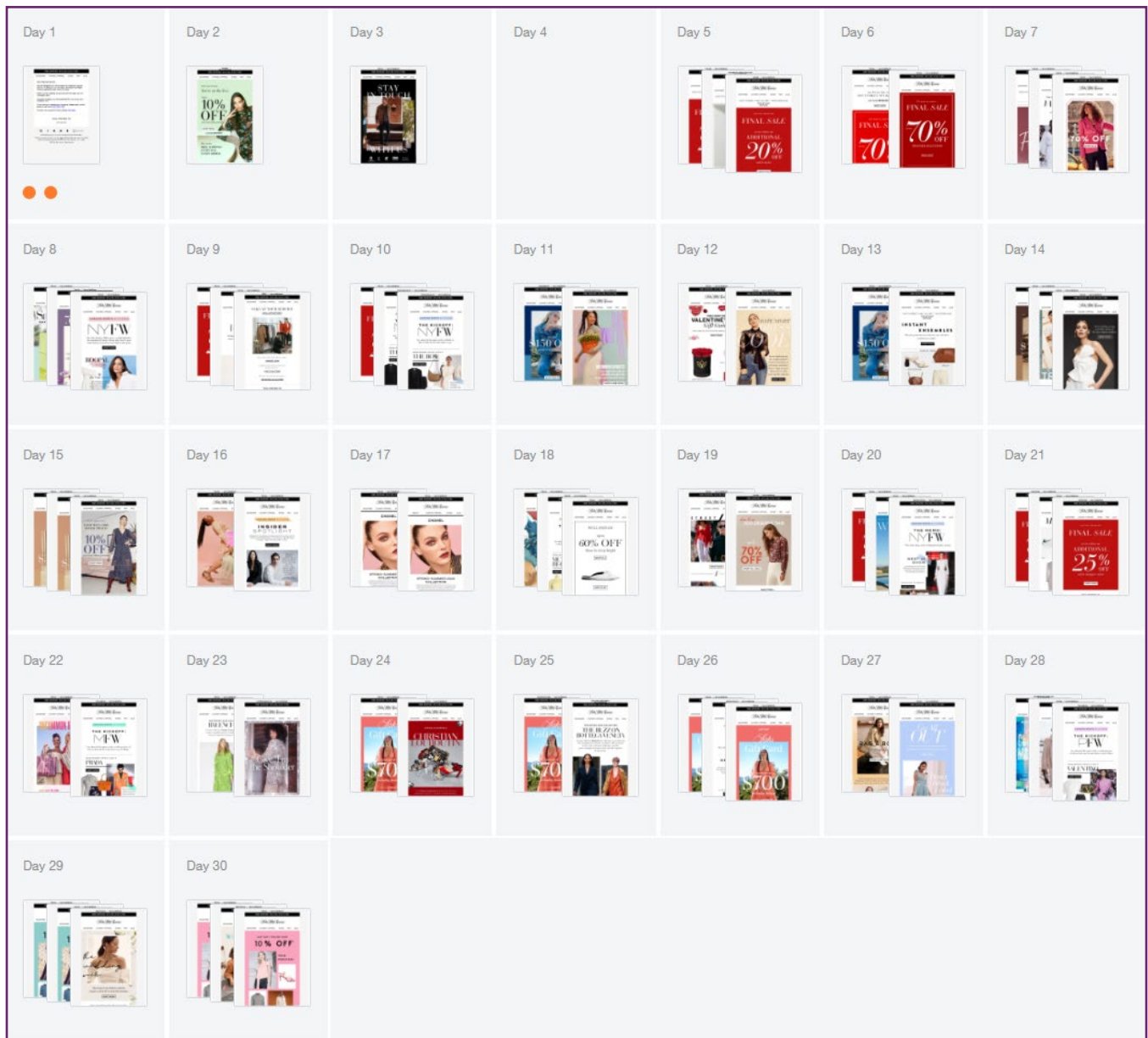


*Saks treats email-first and mobile-first customers differently.*
*Source: MailCharts*

Lifecycle stages are impacted by the consumer's channel of entry as well. In particular, due to the restrictions of the mobile cart on iOS devices, the cart abandonment campaign is seen more frequently via email. Dating service **eharmony** provided a good example of this.

Their mobile cart is restricted to the quick purchase option. Meanwhile, their desktop cart kickstarts an abandonment campaign.
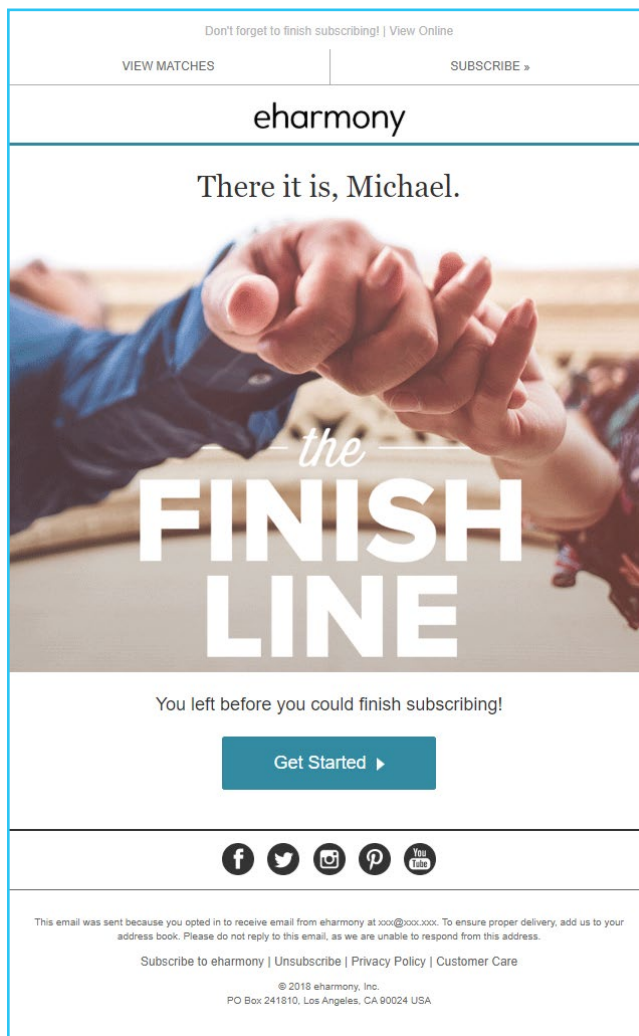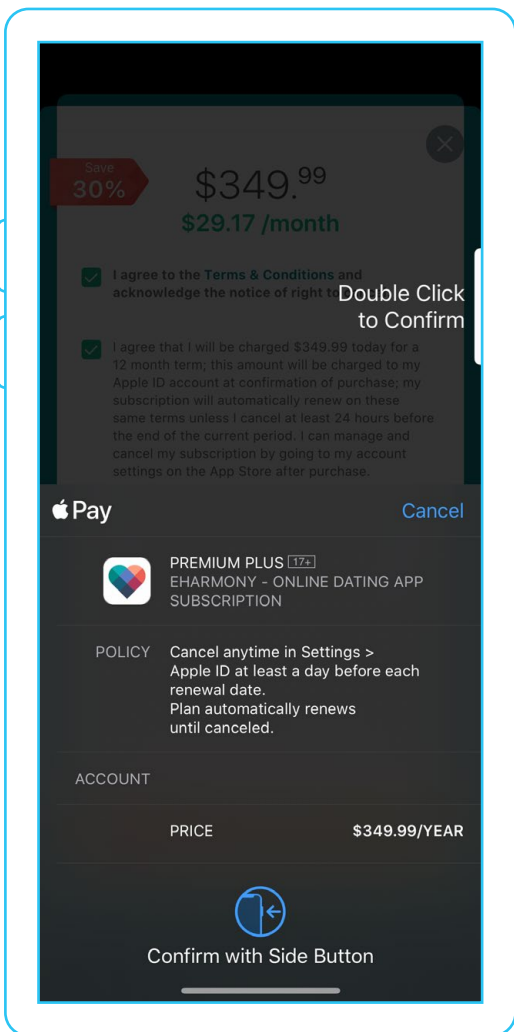


*The presence of a cart makes this campaign much easier to run.*

Looking a bit more granular, we even noticed a difference in messaging between our mobile and email experiences. **Target**, which we previously pointed out called attention to our mobile activity, did the same for MailCharts' email activity.
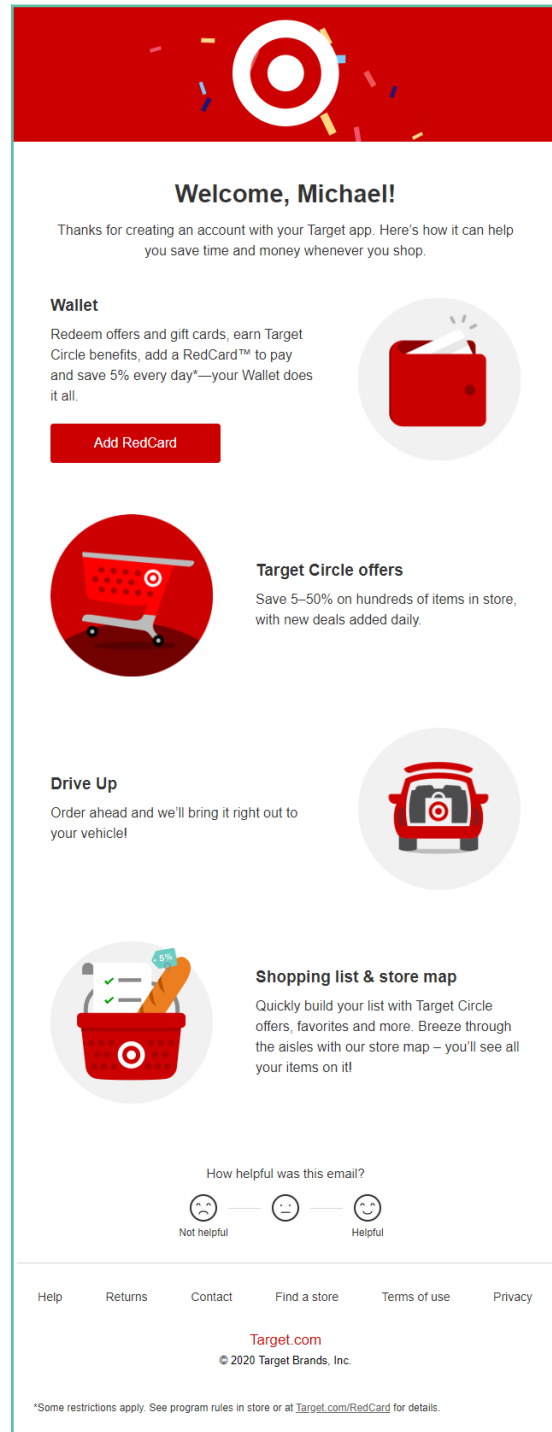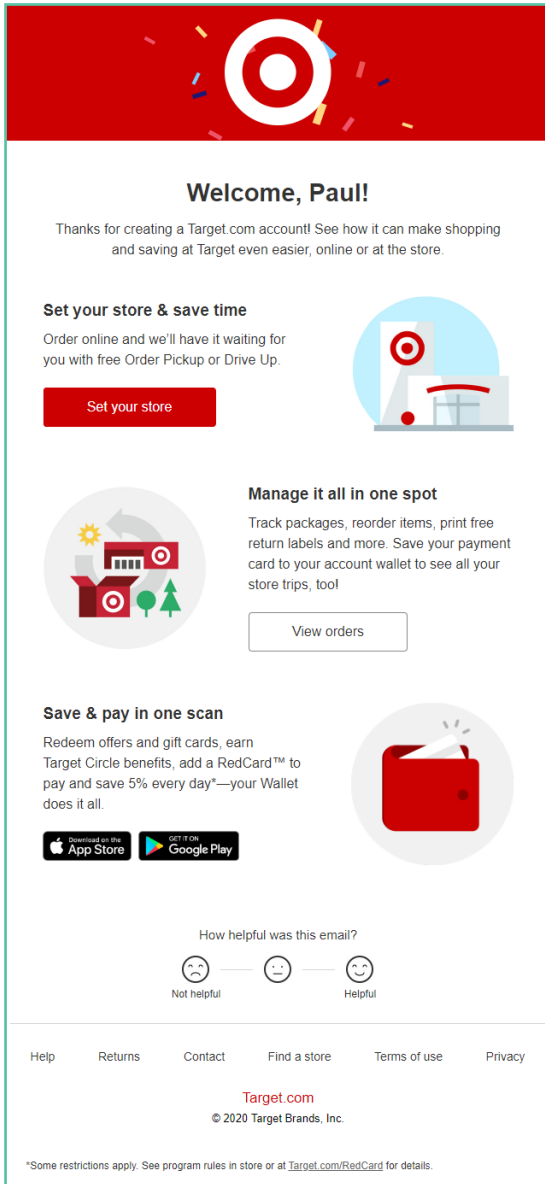




*A targeted welcome campaign starts the relationship off on the right foot.*

Mobile and desktop experiences have inherent differences, so there is no problem in providing channel-specific experiences for your customers. Issues arise, however, when these experiences are so different that one channel is missing out on potential benefits the other receives.

## *Fulfilling the Promise*

In developing an app, organizations are expressing a willingness to give customers a more comprehensive experience. There is a promise of a seamless customer journey from desktop to mobile without a drop-off in quality.

Simply having an app does not fulfill that promise. Brands have invested the time to execute email marketing campaigns, while others have invested in mobile marketing communications. Rarely are customers receiving the same attentiveness across channels.

For that to happen, there has to be a flow of data that feeds all campaigns equally. Key behavioral information can slip between the cracks and the customer experience suffers as a result.

Over the course of our study, we received only one email directly referencing our mobile behavior (the above email from Target). To be fair, cart and browse abandonment messages showed a connection between mobile and desktop cart data. However, we did not receive similar abandonment messages on the devices in which we selected or browsed the items.

Moving forward, to fulfill the promise of an enhanced customer experience, marketers should be searching for systems that allow for seamless data integration and flexibility. One that brings mobile and desktop data together to provide deeper insights and craft a customer journey that identifies key touchpoints to drive conversions.

Data that communicates across channels means mobile-first customers no longer receive email prompts to download the app. The content is tailored, more personalized and likely arriving via mobile channels.

With this platform in place, the marketer knows exactly what content to send to customers, when, and via which channel.
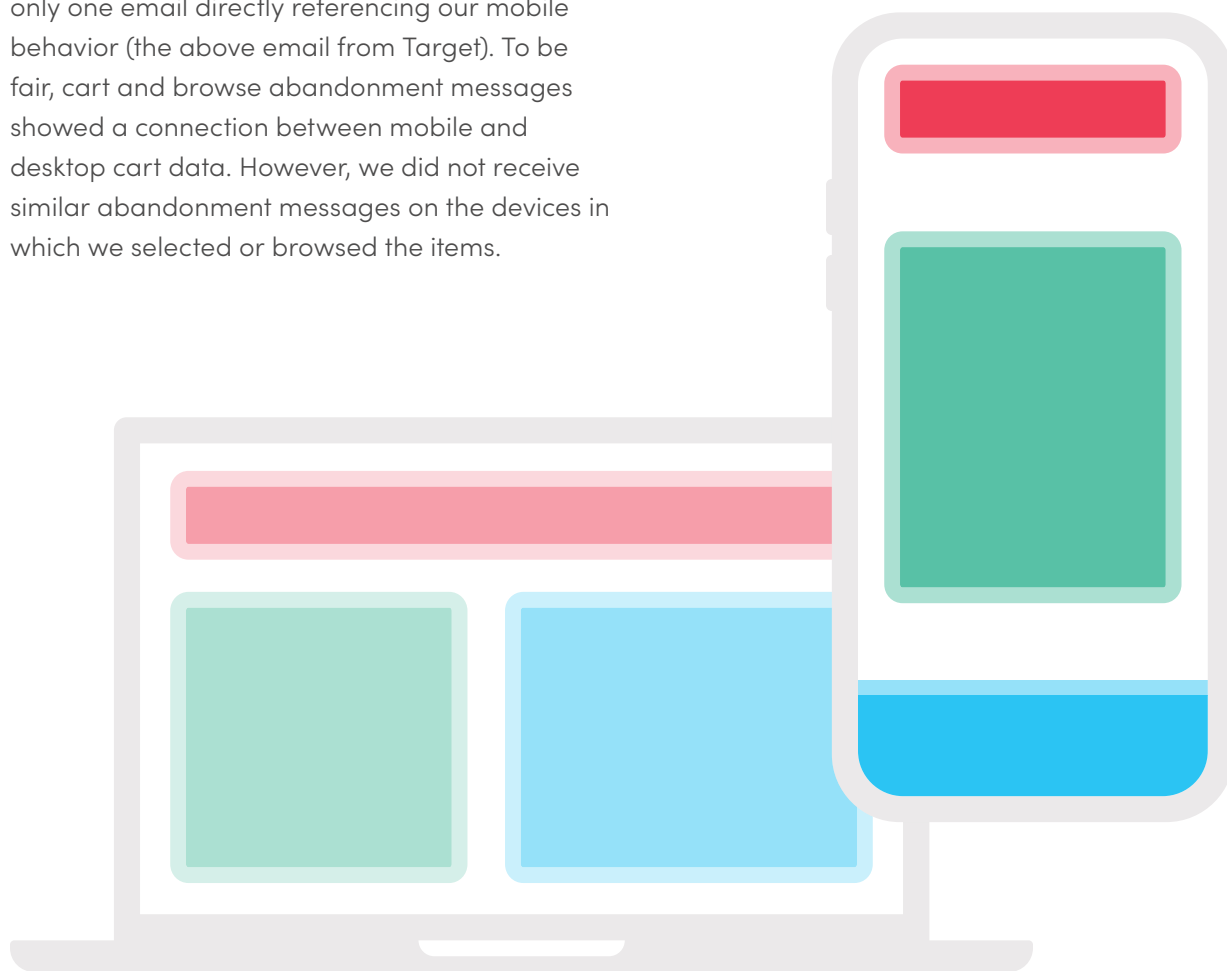
## Pro Tips From the Experts

Mobile marketers shouldn't settle for basic or decorative personalization. You have the opportunity to help users solve real problems, so don't waste touchpoints on generic, redundant, or confusing messages that don't help them see more value from your business.

If you want to create valuable touchpoints, you need to know who the user is, what they're doing, and where those actions are taking place. This information must be stitched together and accessible immediately so interactions build on—and don't compete—with each other.

One of the best ways to make this happen is by using one platform to collect every user event across desktop, mobile-web, and mobile apps.

With your data unified together in one place, it becomes much easier to run campaigns across channels and ensure that you use the full context of a user's experience to offer up a reason for taking the next step.

Even better, as users experience your multi-channel journey and convert, you'll have a much easier time attributing value to the channels and actions that really make a difference.

**Kevin White**
*Head of Growth*

# U Up? It's Me, Your Favorite Brand

It's a near-undeniable fact that mobile usage is going to grow in the coming years. New regions and new network technologies are going to make it easier for businesses to reach a wider global audience.

Consumers want personalization and will be increasingly turned off by irrelevant messages. As the adage goes, modern problems require modern solutions. For cross-channel marketers, this means full visibility into how each user is interacting with their brand.

From the website to the app and every channel in between, marketing is at its best when messaging is consistent and relevant at every step of the way. And marketers are at their most effective when they have a comprehensive look at behavioral data across channels.

Mobile appears to still be treated separately from desktop-based marketing. As mobile transactions and engagement rise, there comes a time when it's necessary to adapt. One of the fastest ways to adapt is through technology.

The right customer engagement platform empowers marketers with personalized data from all cross-channel campaigns, allowing marketers to identify which messages to send and which channel is best on an individualized basis.

The good news is it's not too late. By addressing the gaps identified in this report and choosing the right technology to enable your team, the unforgettable mobile—and subsequently, cross-channel—experience is at your fingertips.

# 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 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.
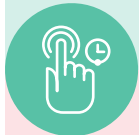
### Agile Iteration & Optimization

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.

**Trusted By:**

box

fabfitfun

Fender®

SeatGeek

STRAVA

Zillow®

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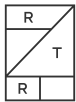
**Request Demo**

ITERABLE

# Appendix

Full list of the companies analyzed in this report, in categorical and alphabetical order:

## Fashion Retailers

bloomingdale's

★macy's

Neiman Marcus

R T R
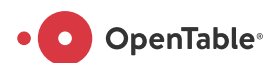
Saks Fifth Avenue

## General Merchandise Retailers

DOLLAR GENERAL

Kmart

KOHL'S

Target

wish

## Restaurants

CHEFSFEED

OpenTable®

RESY

yelp

ZAGAT

## Cooking

allrecipes

epicurious

Food Kitchen

FOOD&WINE

Cooking

## Running

5K PRO

adidas

AllTrails

MAPMYRUN

NRC

## Dating

CoffeeMeetsBagel

eharmony

match

okcupid

tinder