

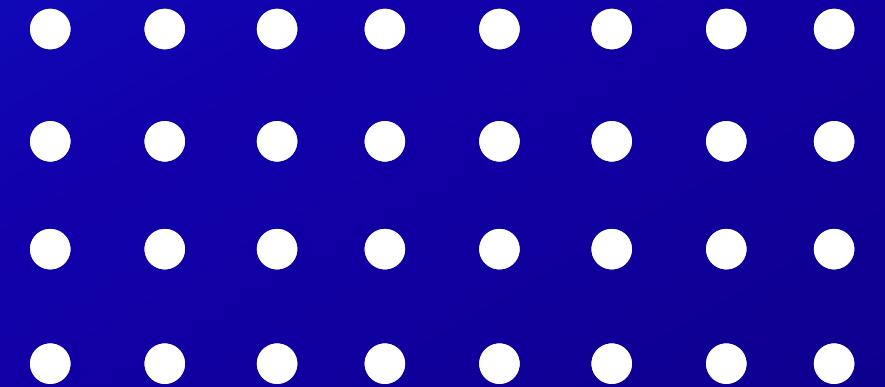


# 45 Ways to Boost App Engagement & Retention

Small Changes You Can Make  
Today to Drive Big Results

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# Introduction

In 2019, consumers downloaded a record 204 billion apps,<sup>1</sup> and even during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 has seen continued growth in downloads and in-app spending.<sup>2</sup> But with millions of apps vying for attention, your success depends on experimenting, testing and continually improving the app experience. That means taking steps today to optimize your mobile app for your brand and customers.

In this eBook, we'll share 45 ways to help optimize your mobile app for every stage of the customer lifecycle. Whether you're looking for a few fresh ideas or hoping to brush up on some tried and true tactics, this eBook is for you!



# Key Stats & Trends



STATS

# Mobile App Use, Spending & Downloads Hit All-Time Highs In Q2 2020

40%

growth in year-over-year  
mobile app usage<sup>(1)</sup>

\$27B

overall spending in apps  
in mobile apps<sup>(2)</sup>

35B

total app downloads  
in Q2 2020<sup>(3)</sup>

## But It's an Increasingly Crowded & Competitive Marketplace

**2.56M**

apps available on the Play Store as of May 2020, and 1.85M on the App Store<sup>(1)</sup>

**9**

number of apps used per day by the average user<sup>(2)</sup>

**24%**

of all apps are used only once<sup>(3)</sup>

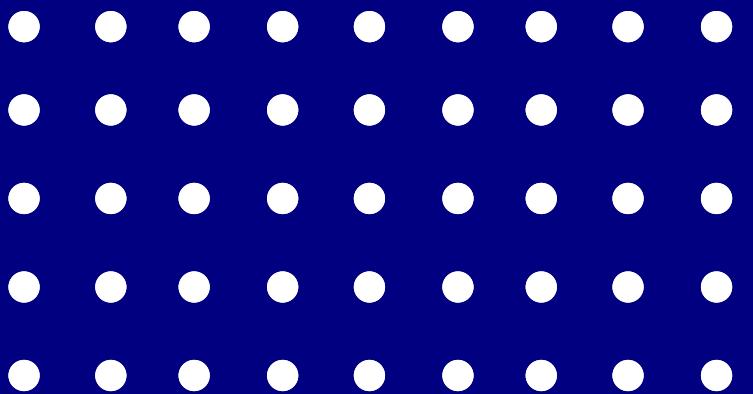
ACQUISITION

# Welcome & Onboarding

No matter your industry or competitive advantages, attracting new customers to your mobile app is expensive and time consuming.

What's worse, even after downloading your app, they're more than likely to delete it after just one use.

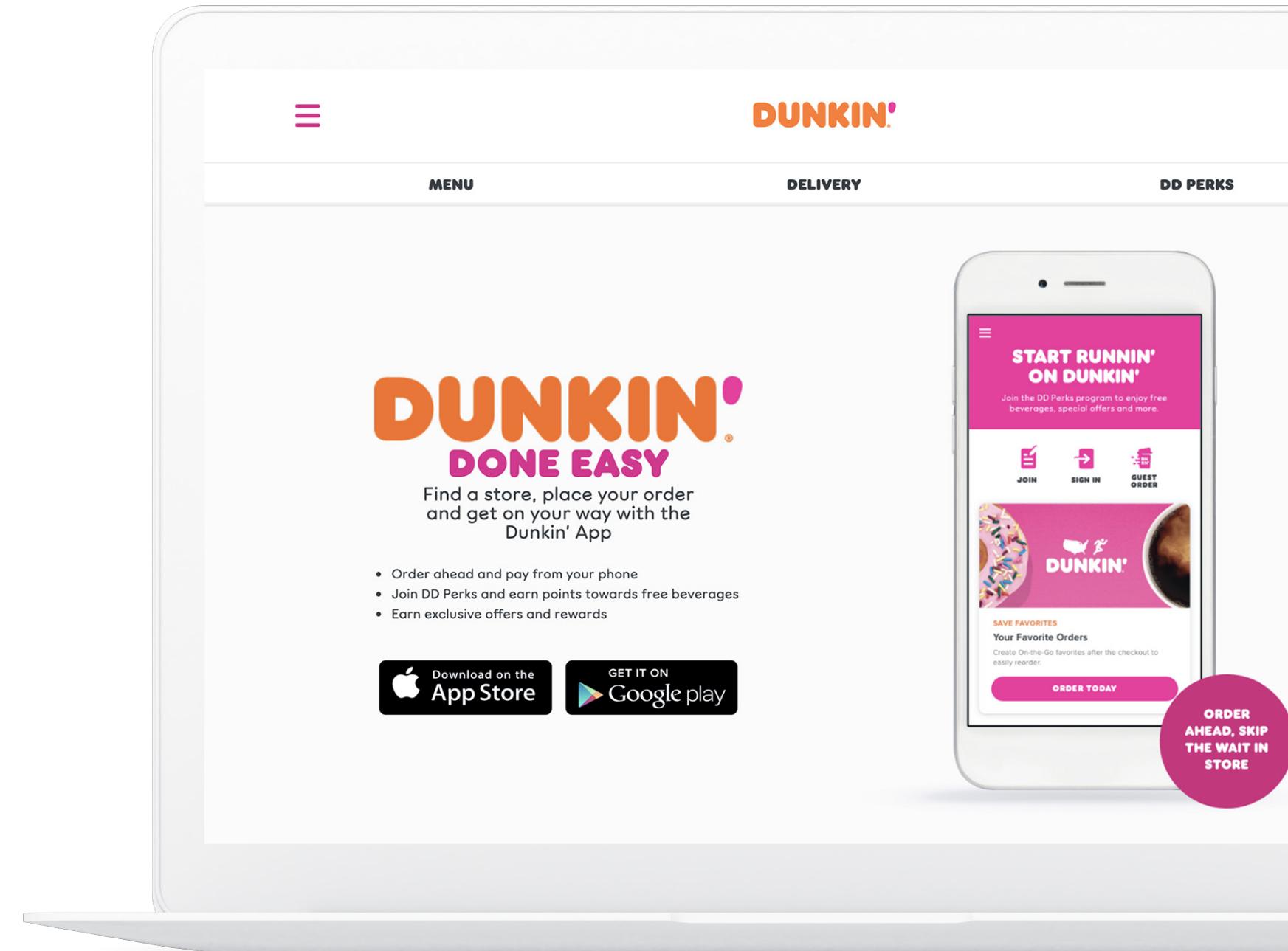
The key to overcoming these hurdles? Give your customers a warm welcome with a seamless experience that drives action and adoption. Try the following strategies to set a course for a long and valuable relationship.



# Go Omnichannel

Use all of your channels to promote app engagement and downloads.

- E-mail
- Mobile App
- SMS
- Website



# Let Customers Skip the Login

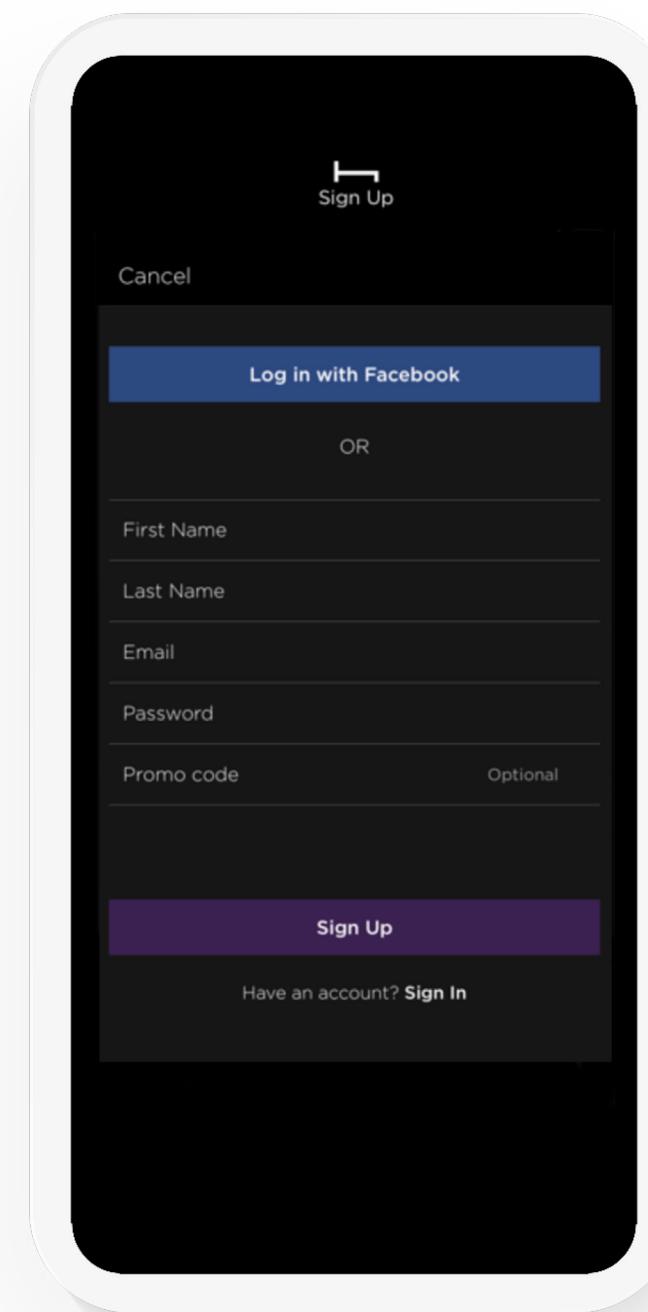
Allow customers to try the app before creating an account.

## CASE STUDY:

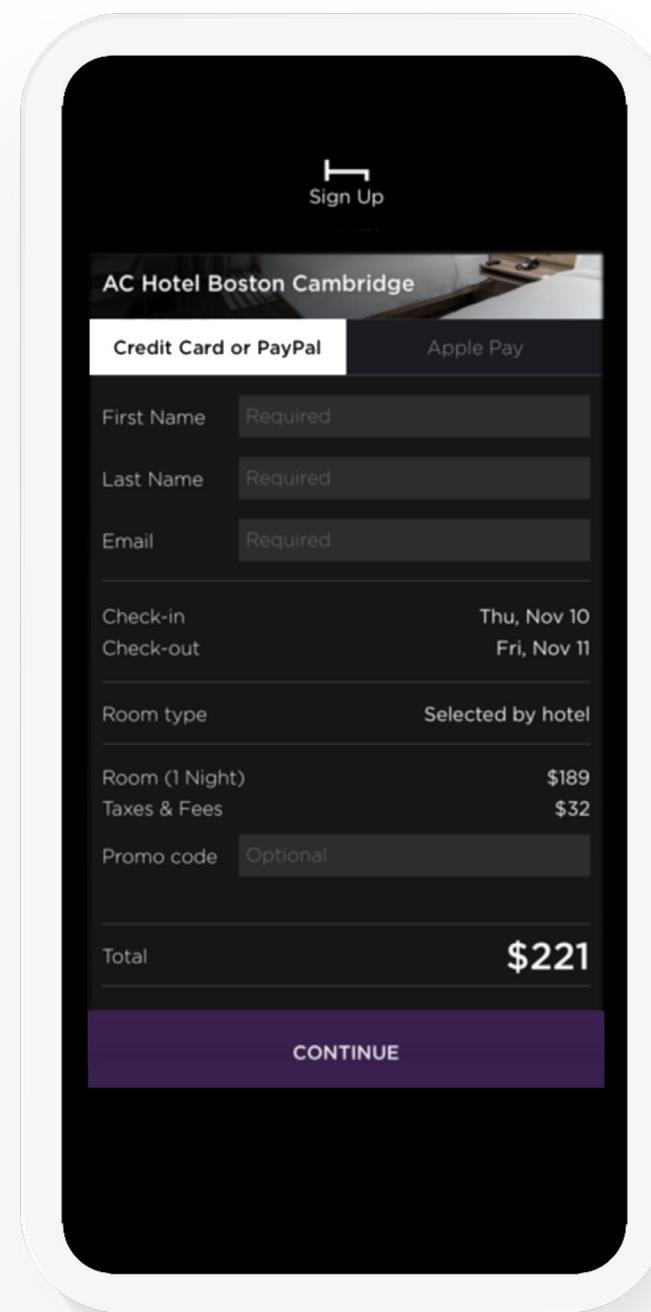
### HotelTonight

**15%** Increase in conversions by eliminating mandatory account creation.

Account Creation



In-line Checkout



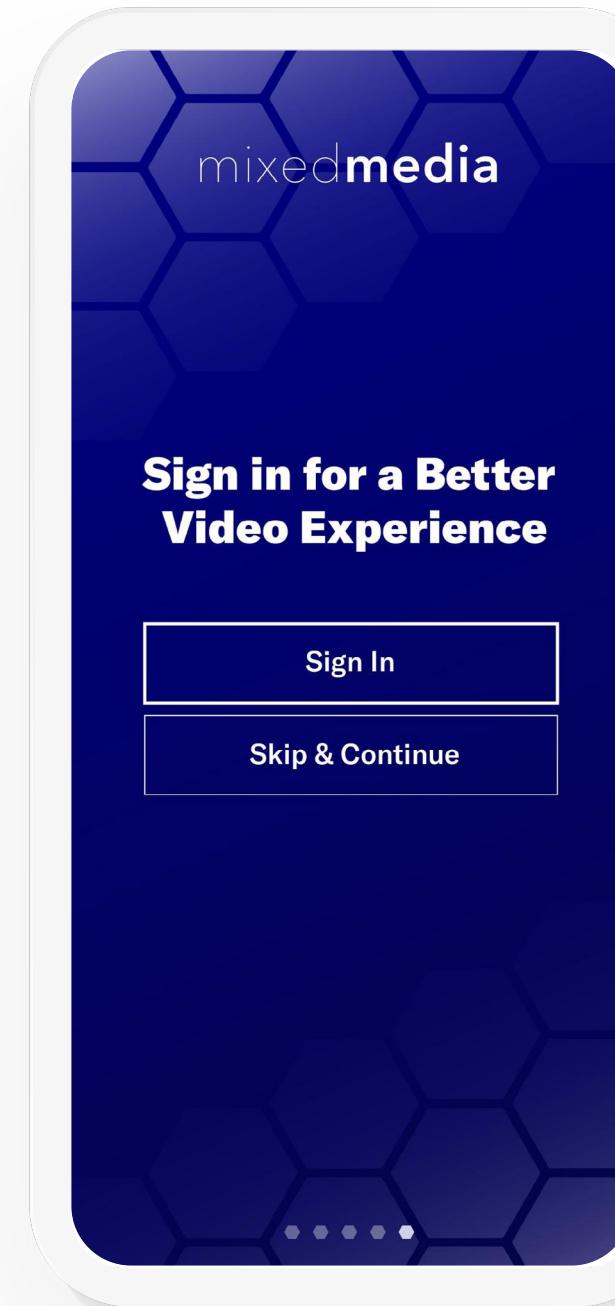
# Make Onboarding Easier

Increase app registrations by removing long onboarding tutorials.

## CASE STUDY:

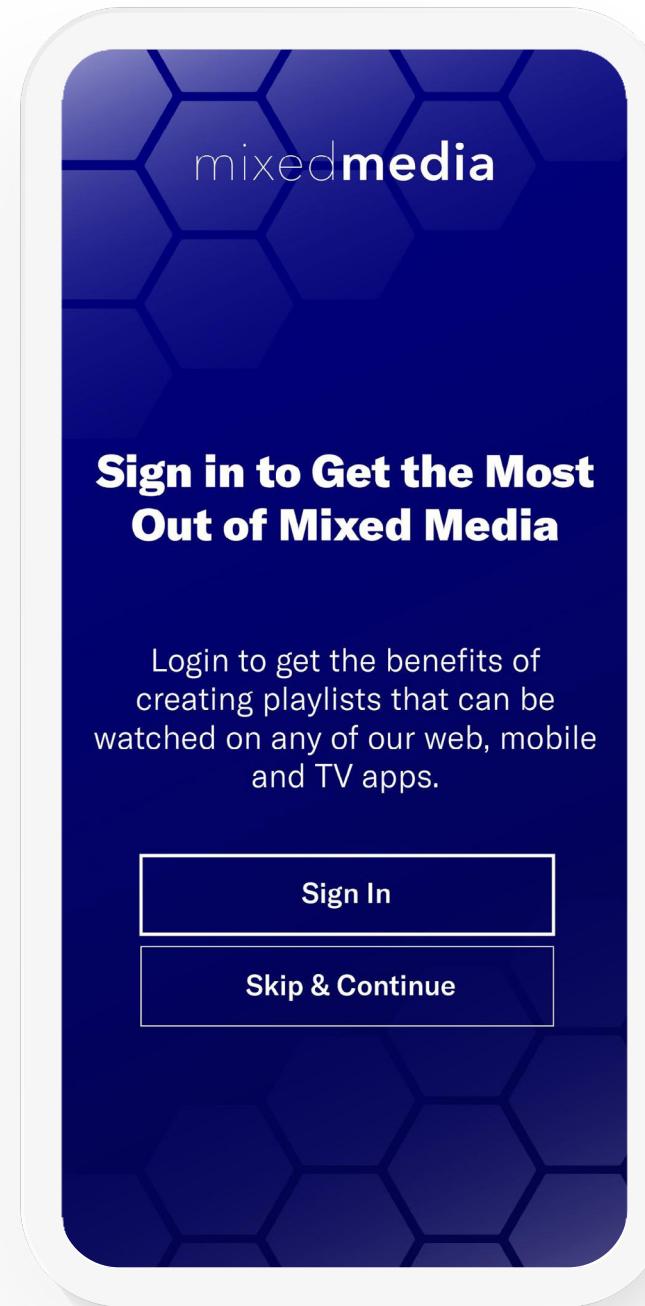
**10%** Increase in conversions and 6% increase in sign ups for a financial services brand.

Variant A



4 step onboarding flow

Variant B



No onboarding tutorial

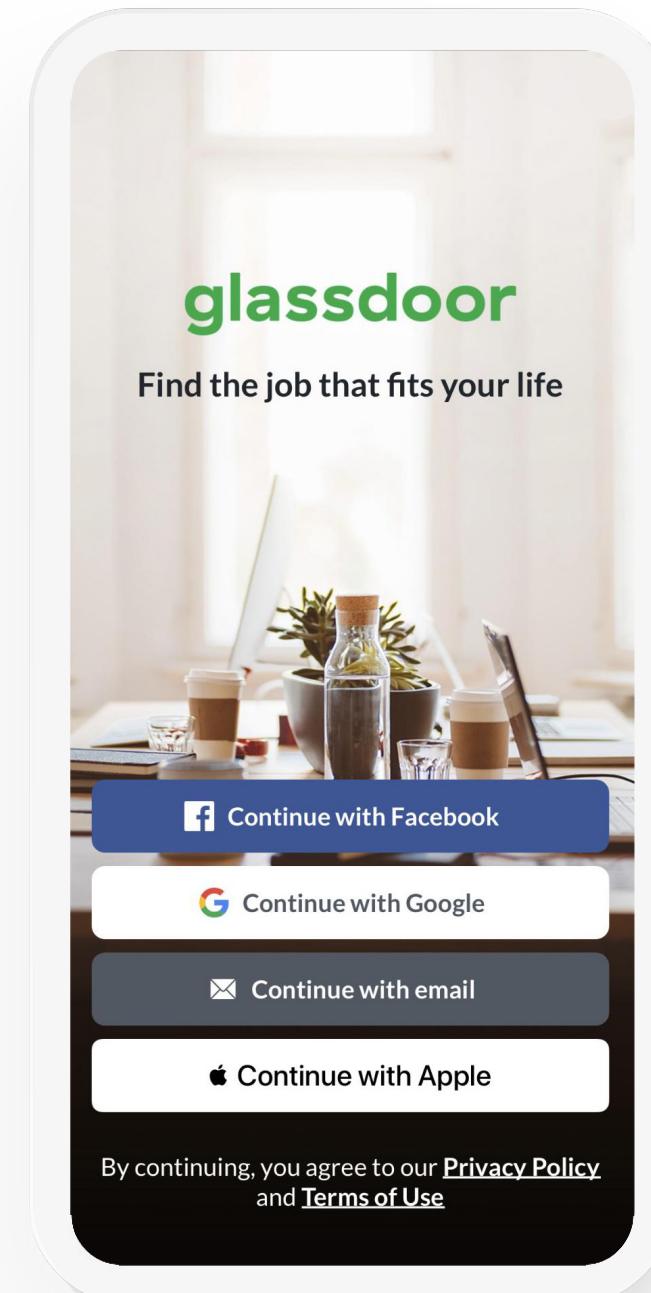
# Simplify Sign Ups

Decrease friction with simple sign up options.

- Apple
- Gmail
- Google
- Facebook
- LinkedIn

**88%**

Of U.S. consumers say they have used social logins, with the number one reason being to avoid filling out online registration forms.<sup>1</sup>



# Test for UX Success

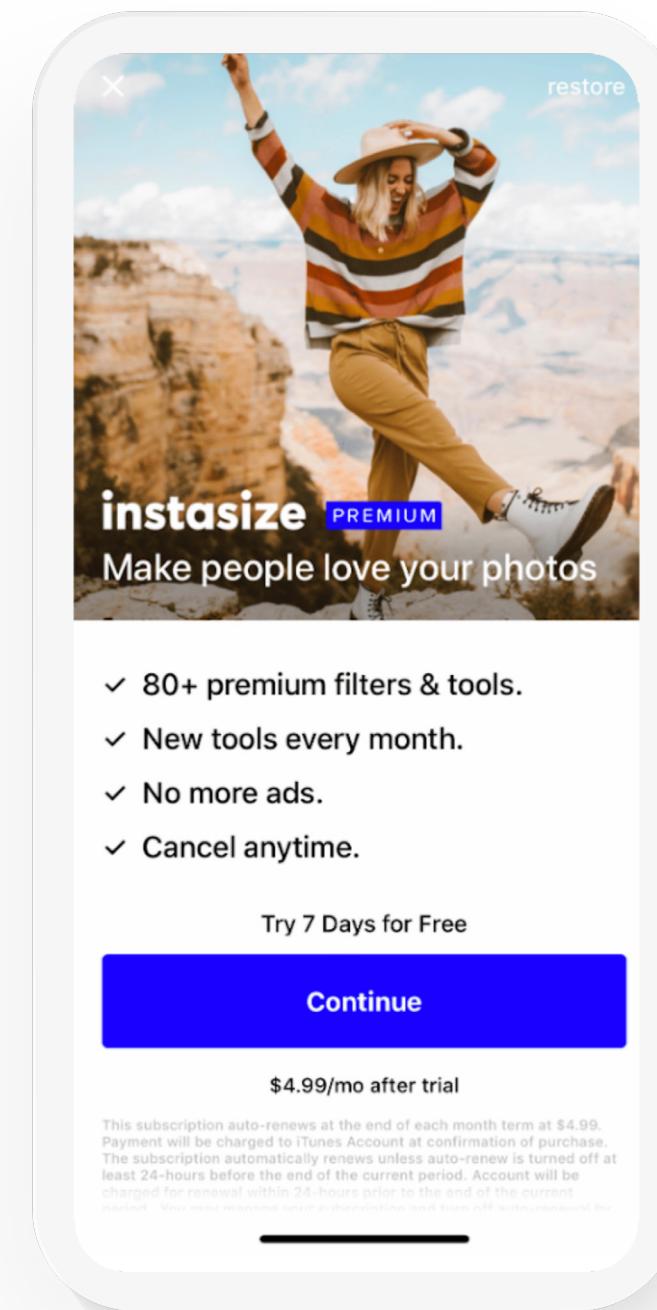
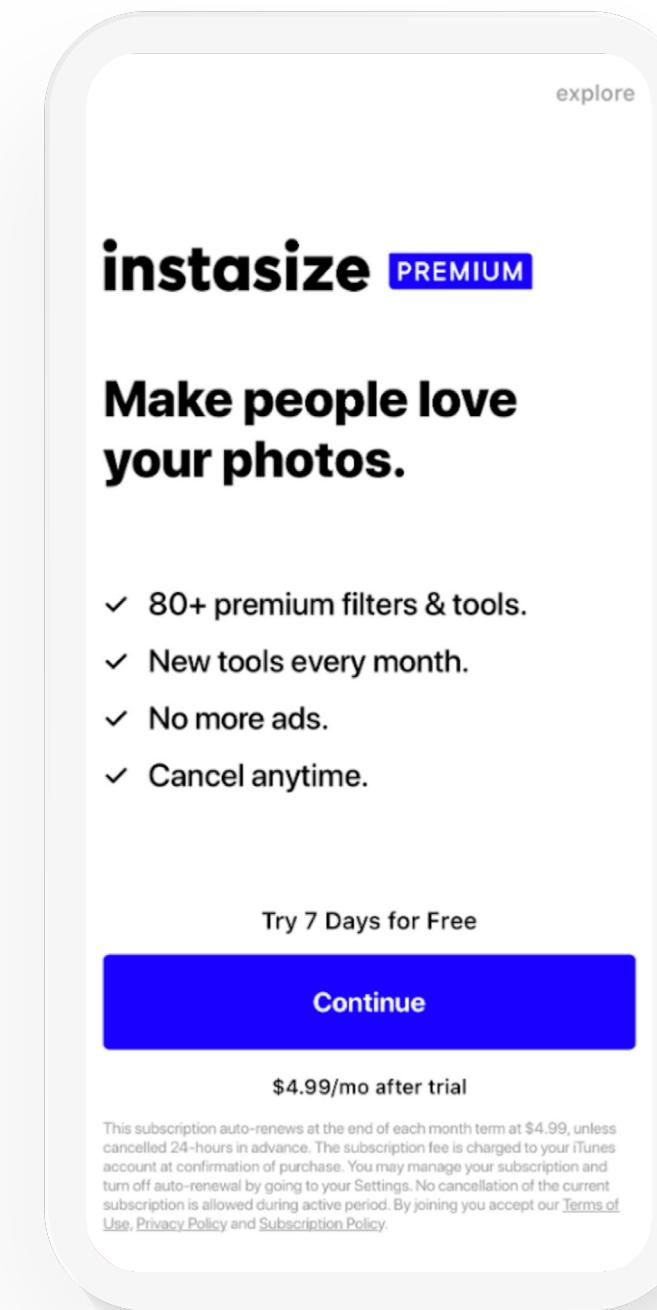
A/B test content and layout to drive registration and premium upgrades.

## CASE STUDY:

### Instasize

**16%**

Increase in premium conversions by A/B testing paywall layout and design.



# Test Your CTA Copy

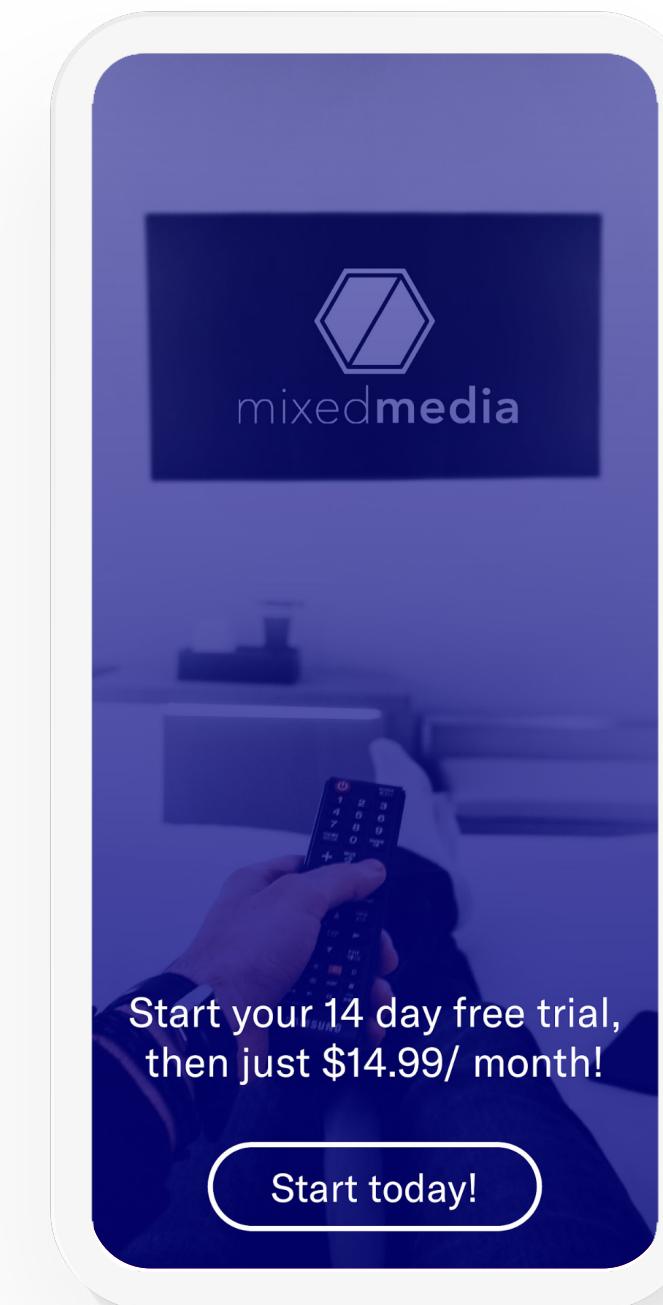
Accelerate conversion by A/B testing for key metrics.

- Start Today Button Clicked
- Email & Password Creation
- Accept Apple Subscription
- Start & Complete Free Trial

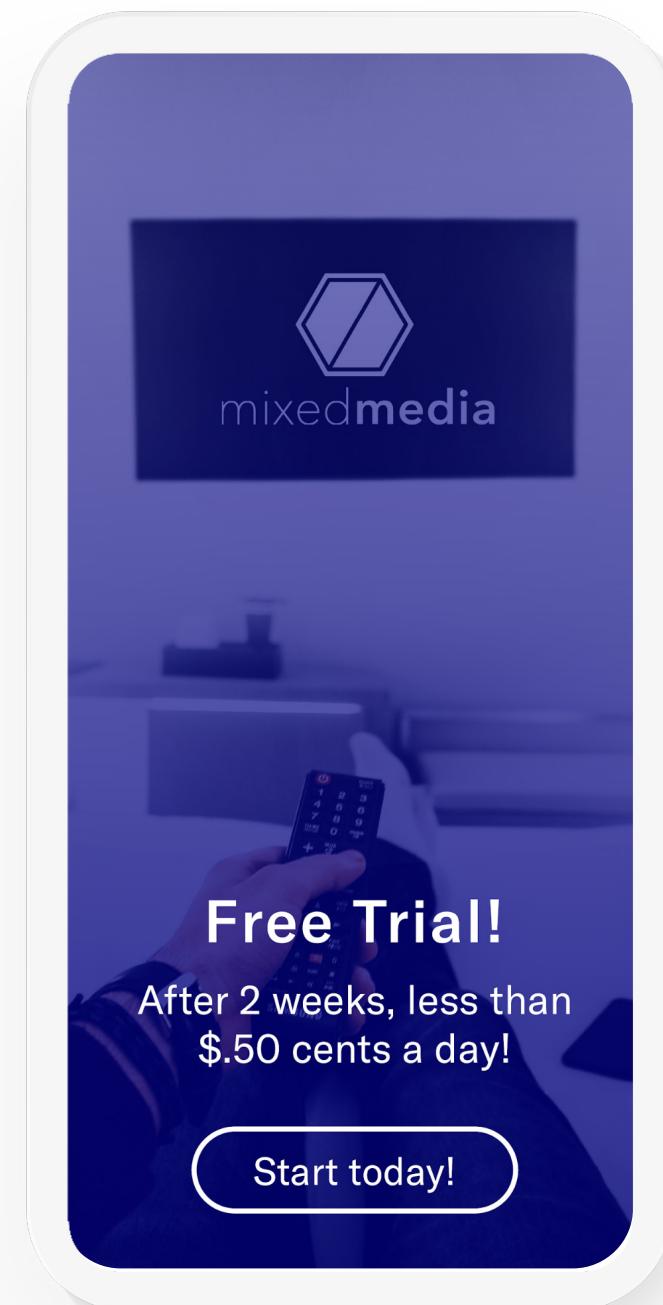
## CASE STUDY:

**9%** Increase in conversions for a media brand that used this approach.

Variant A



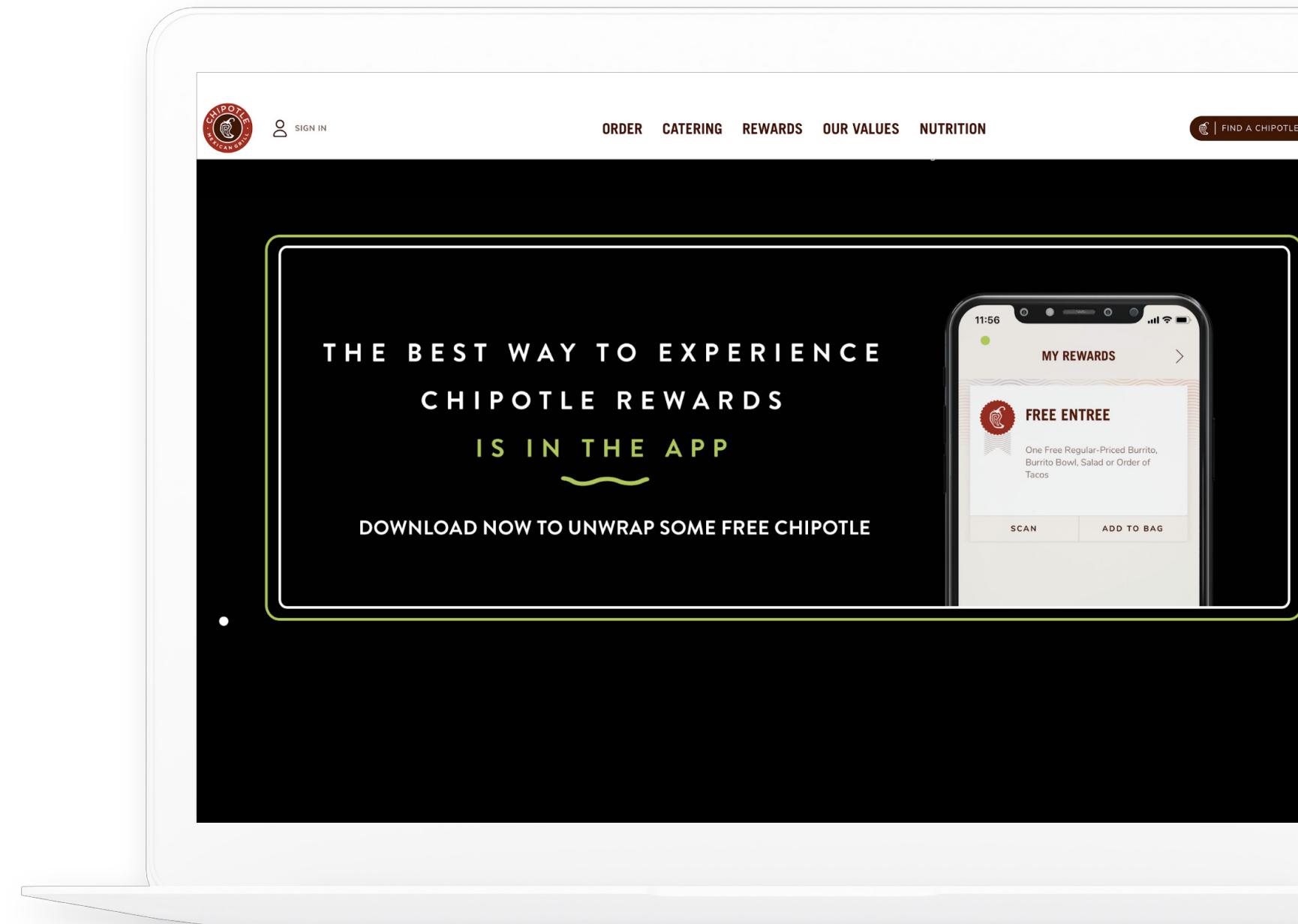
Variant B



# Incentivize the Download

Drive app downloads with incentives and rewards.

- Discounts & Rebates
- Free Items or Services
- In-App Rewards
- Cash Bonus

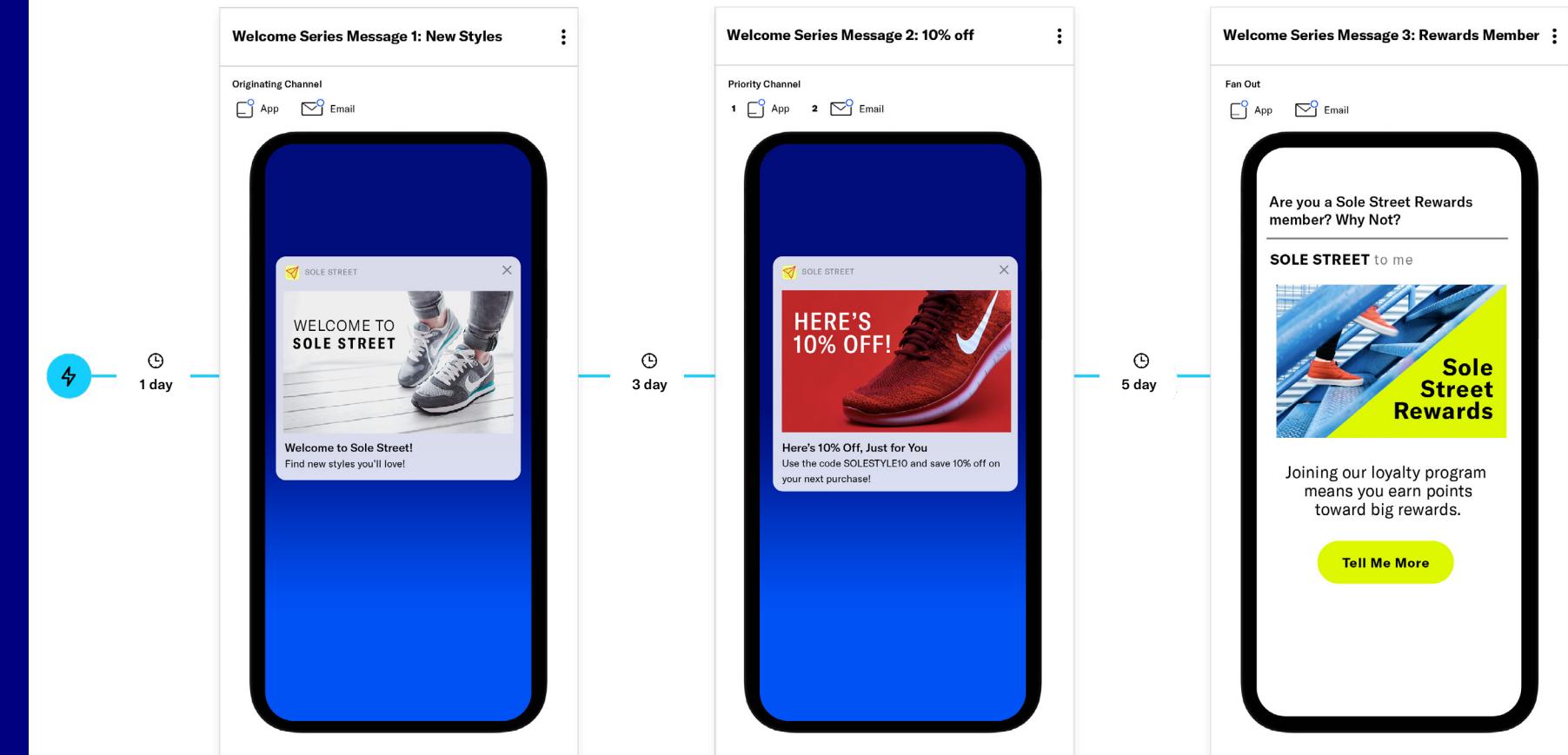


# Send a Warm Welcome

Deliver a seamless welcome experience for new customers with a cross-channel welcome series that leads users to action.

**95%**

Of new, opt-in app users churn within the first 90 days if they don't receive any push notifications.<sup>1</sup>



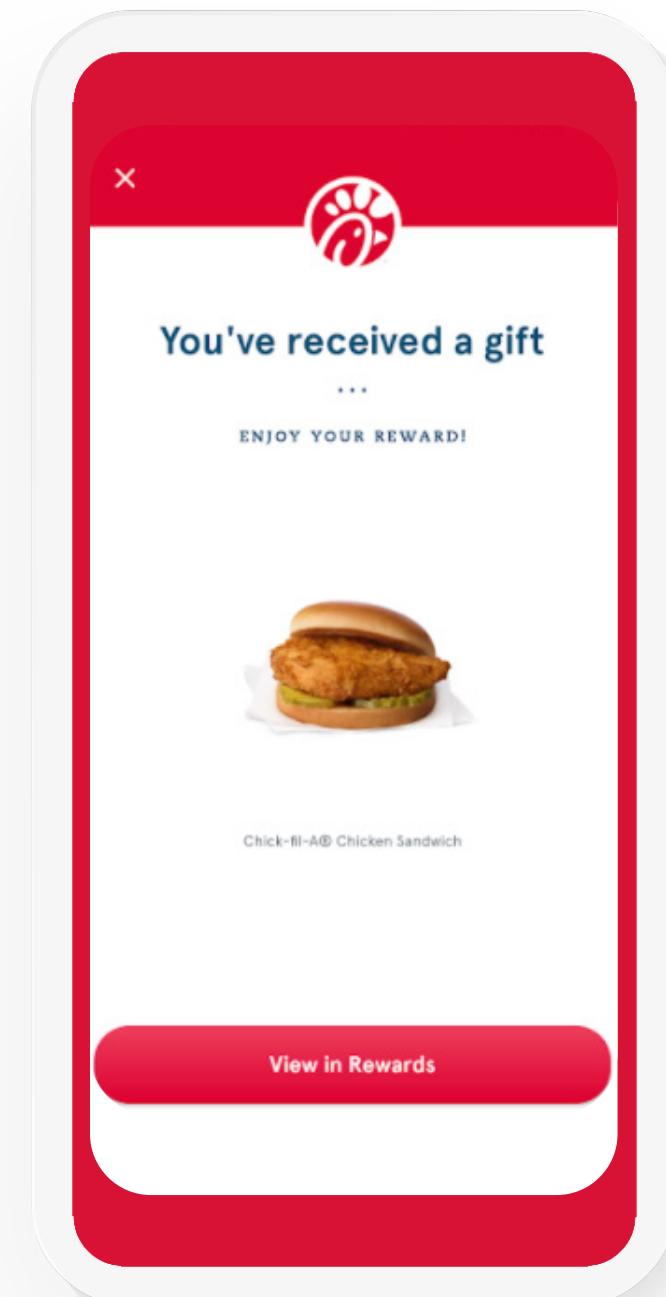
# Mobilize Your Loyalty Program

Drive user adoption of your mobile app by leveraging a loyalty program.

## CASE STUDY: Chick-fil-A

**6.1%** Increase in same store sales.

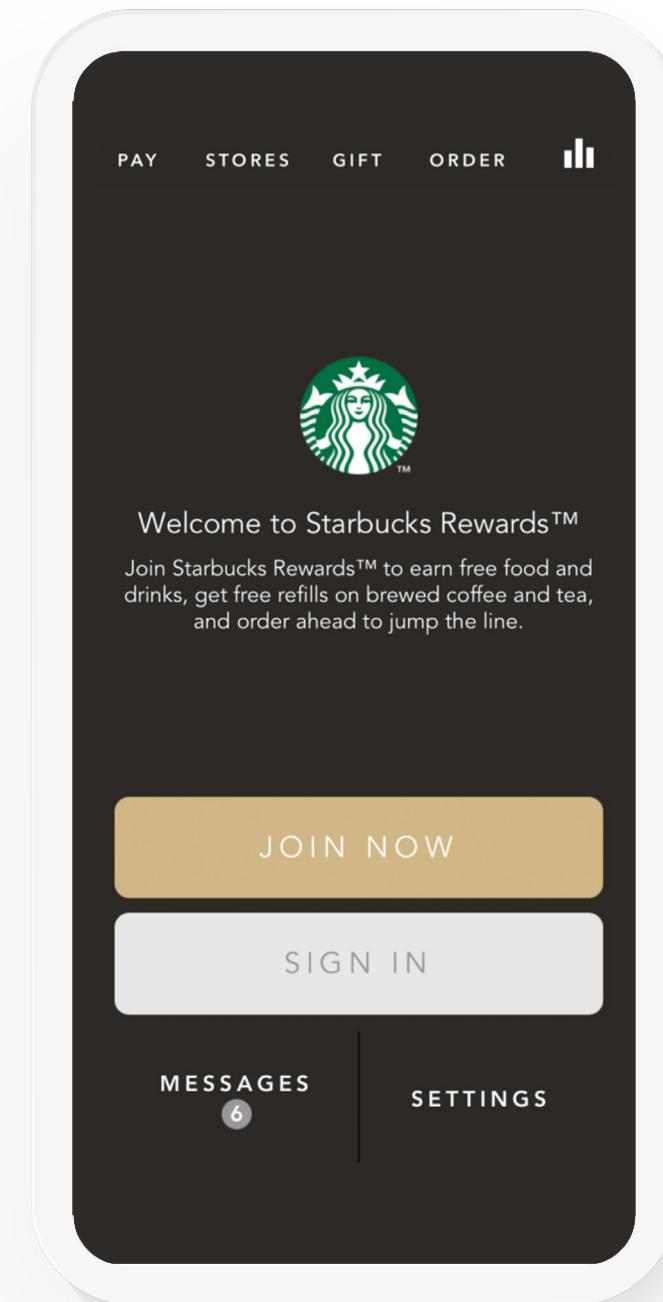
**25%** Increase in order sizes.



# Lead New Customers to Loyalty

Increase app adoption by sending new users loyalty-specific updates.

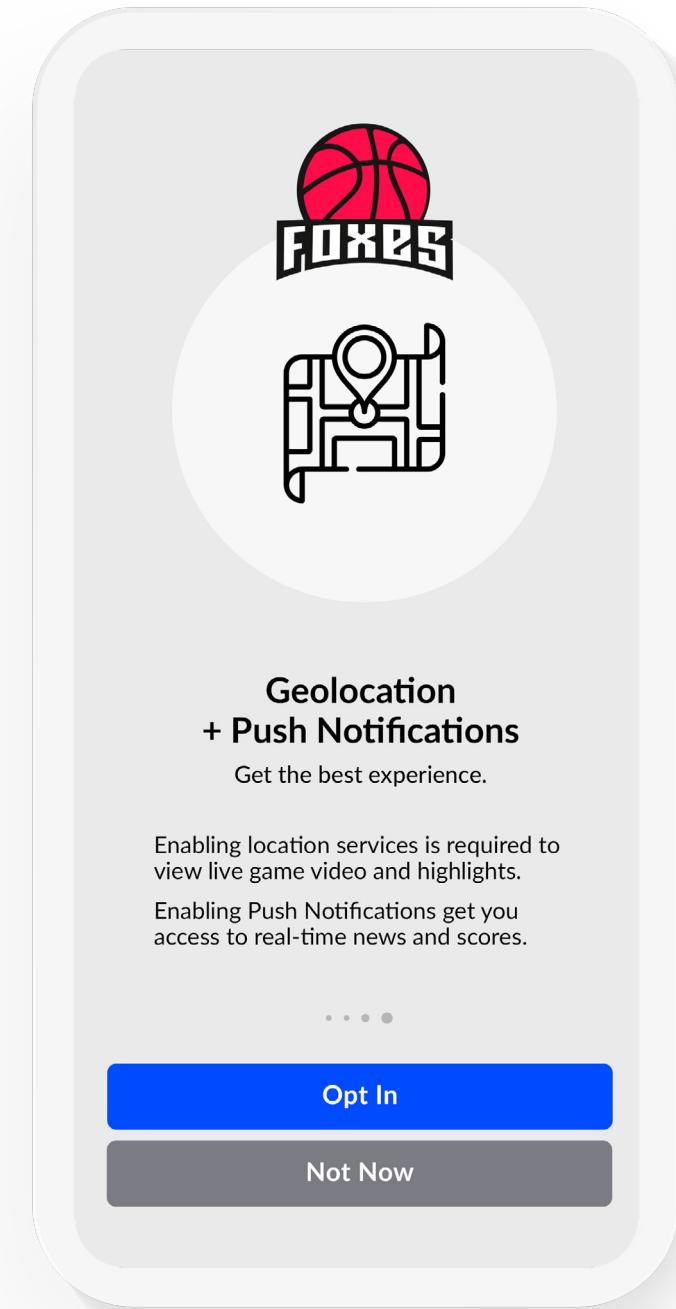
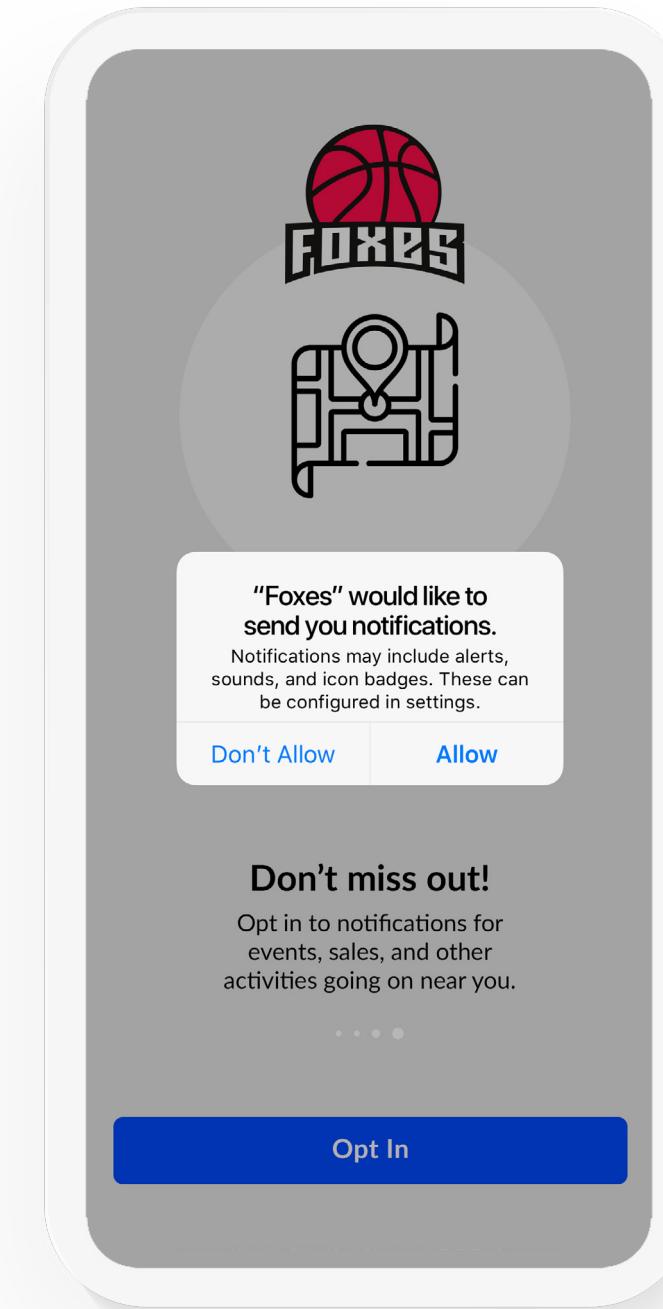
**50%** Of American consumers will join the loyalty program of a brand they make frequent purchases from.<sup>1</sup>



# Avoid Default Permission Requests

Use in-app notifications for soft asks to give your users more flexibility on when they take actions.

- App Store Rating
- Notification Opt In
- Location Sharing

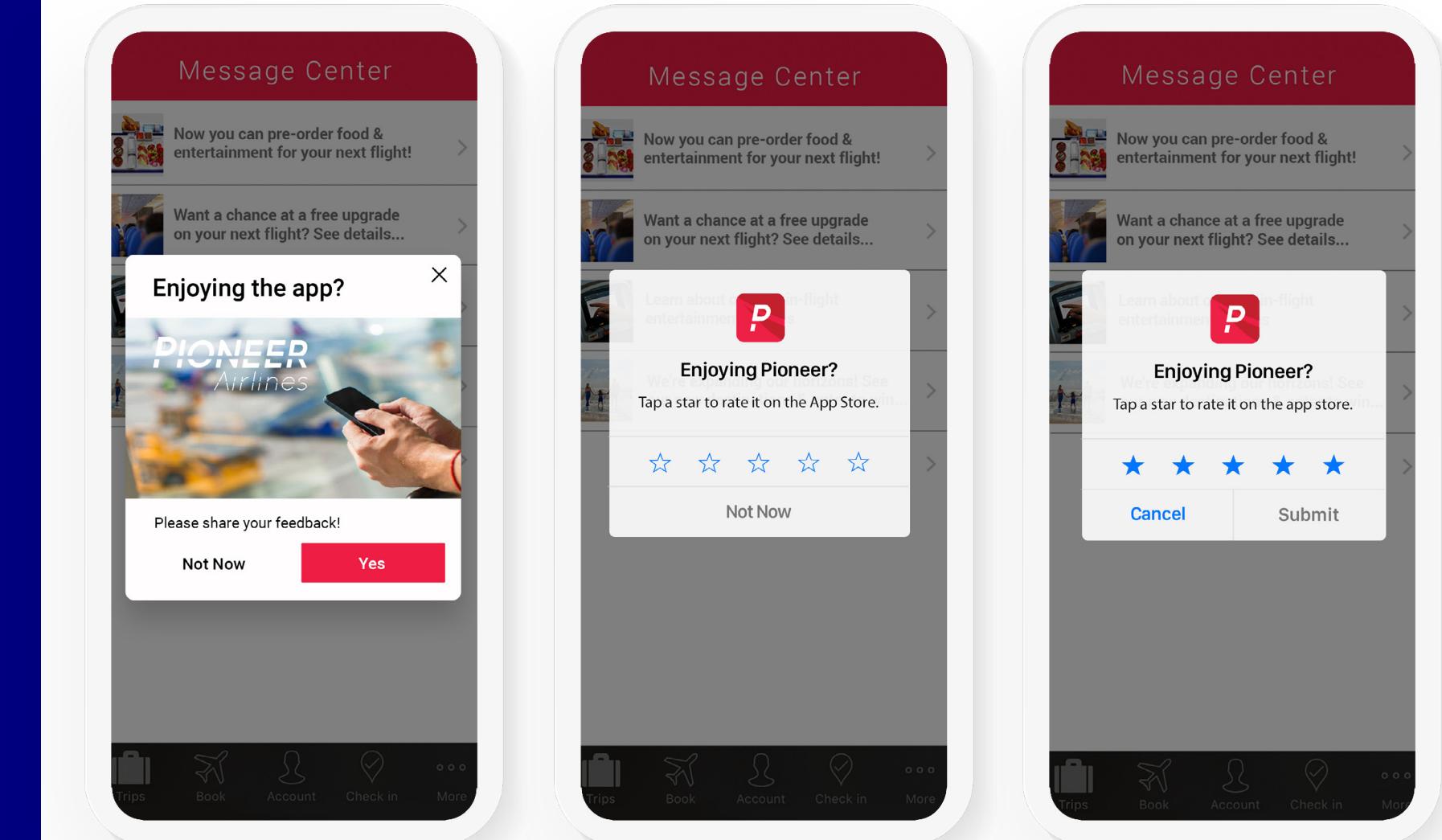


# Drive Positive Reviews

Stand out in the crowded app marketplace by using periodic or event-triggered interstitials to encourage positive reviews.

79%

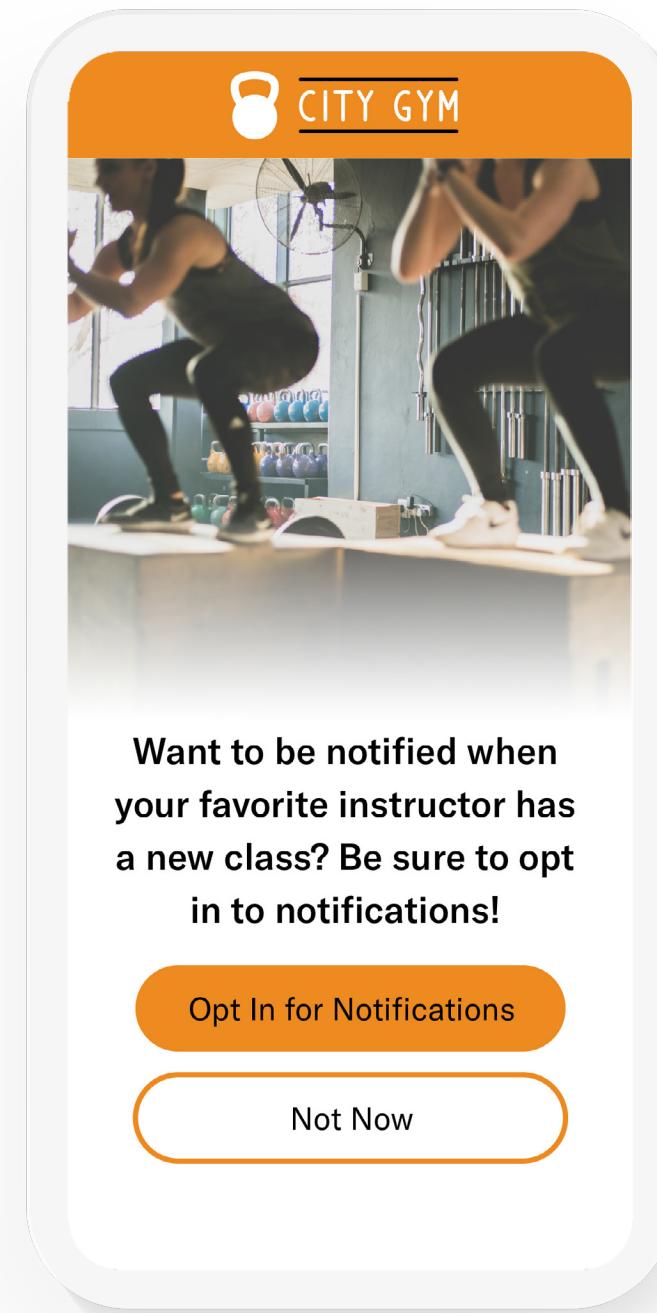
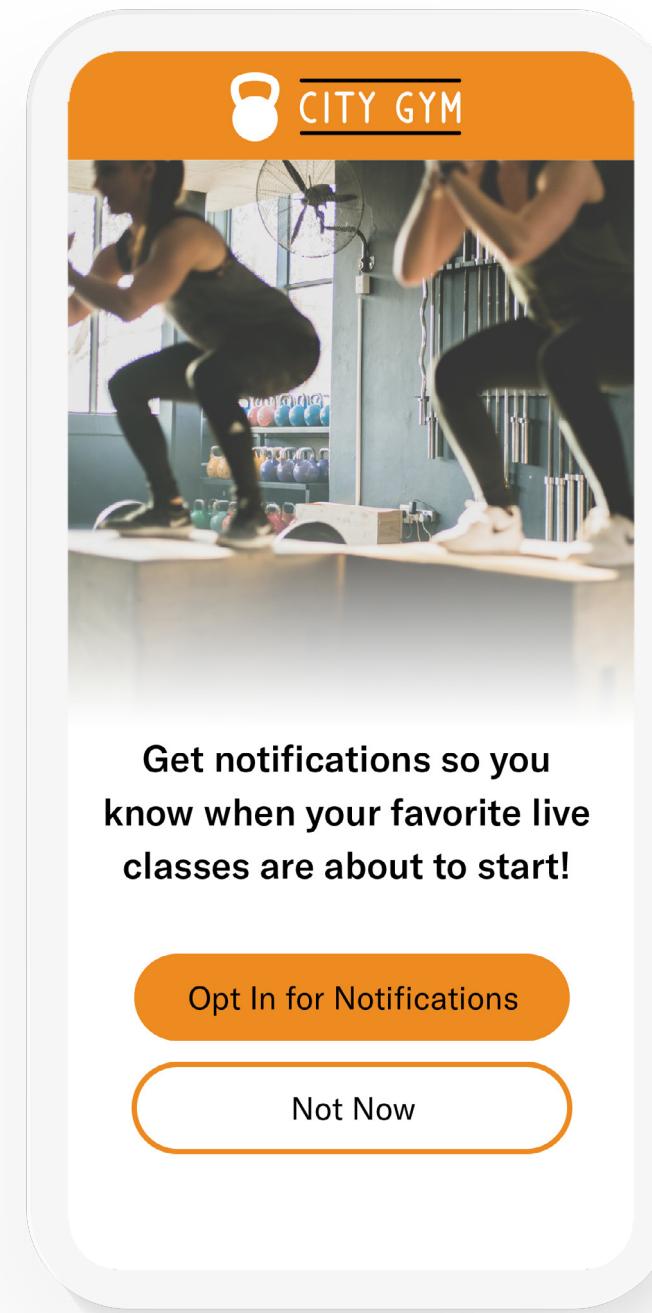
Of consumers check ratings or reviews before downloading an app.<sup>1</sup>



(1) "How to Improve App Ratings and Reviews," Appentive

# Iterate the CTA

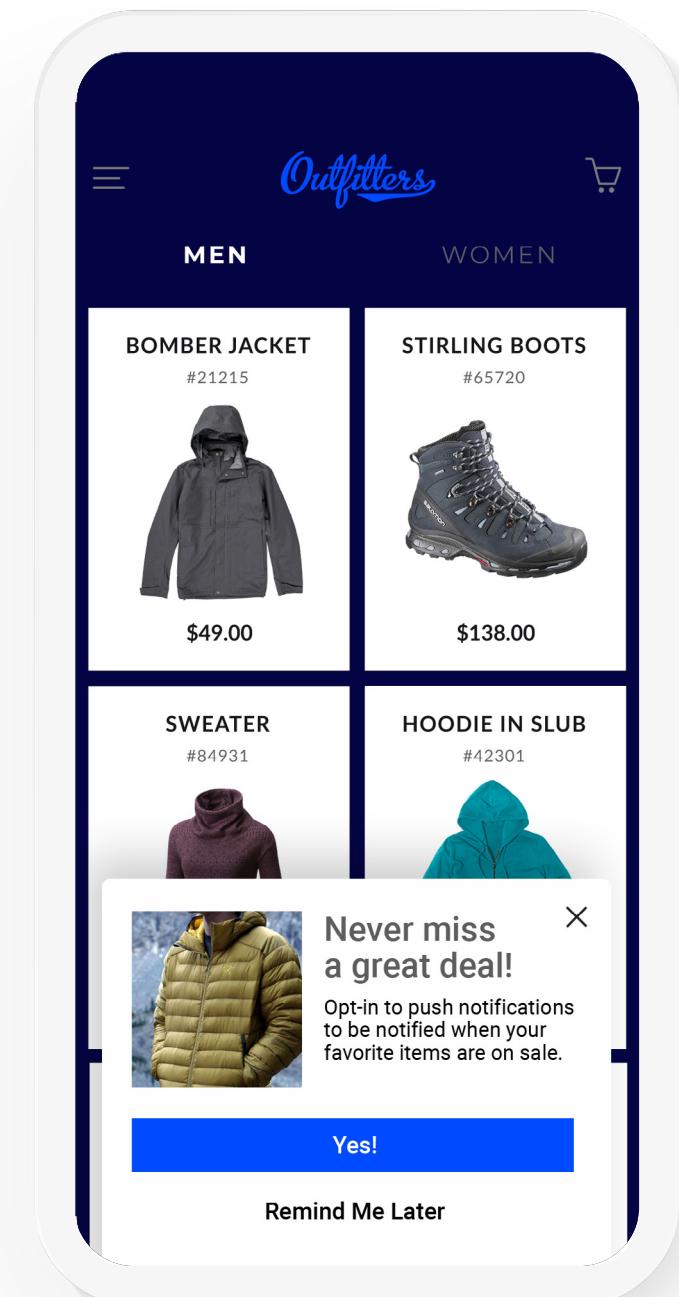
A/B test value-based messaging around the soft prompt to identify language that drives opt-ins to notifications and location services.



# Improve Your Opt-In Ask

If users opt-out of location or notification services, test for optimal times to ask again.

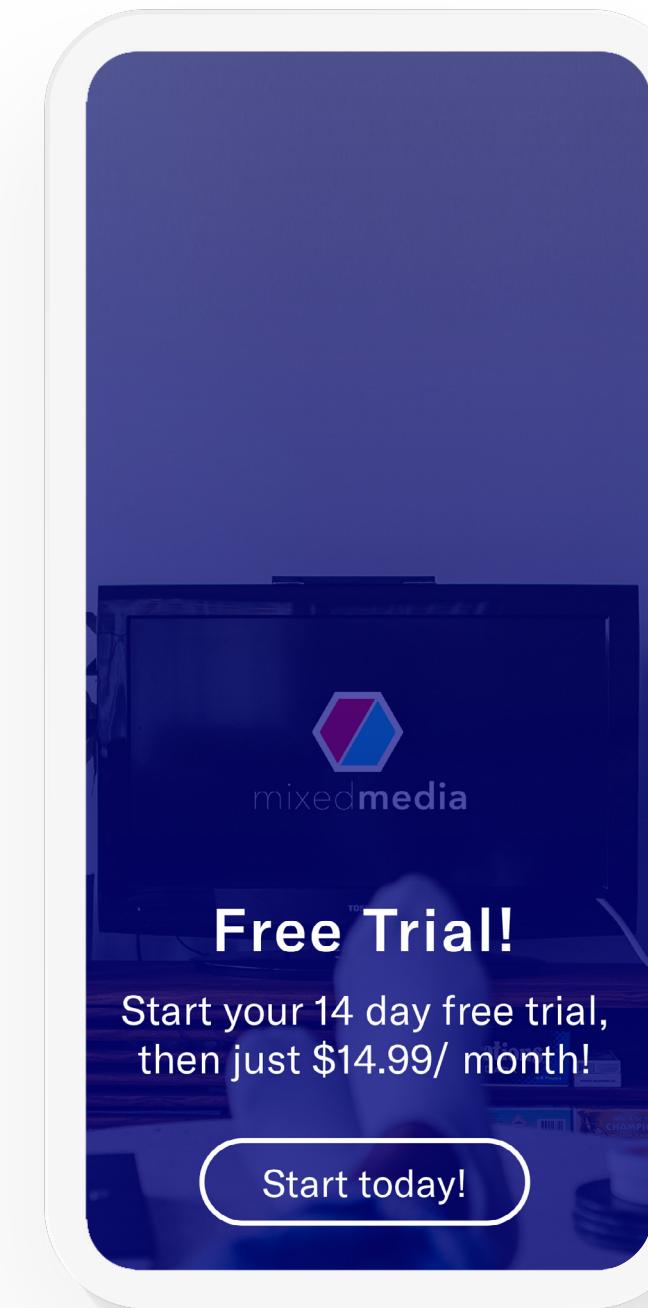
- **Retail:** After viewing an item
- **Media:** After reading an article
- **Other:** After a specific number of sessions



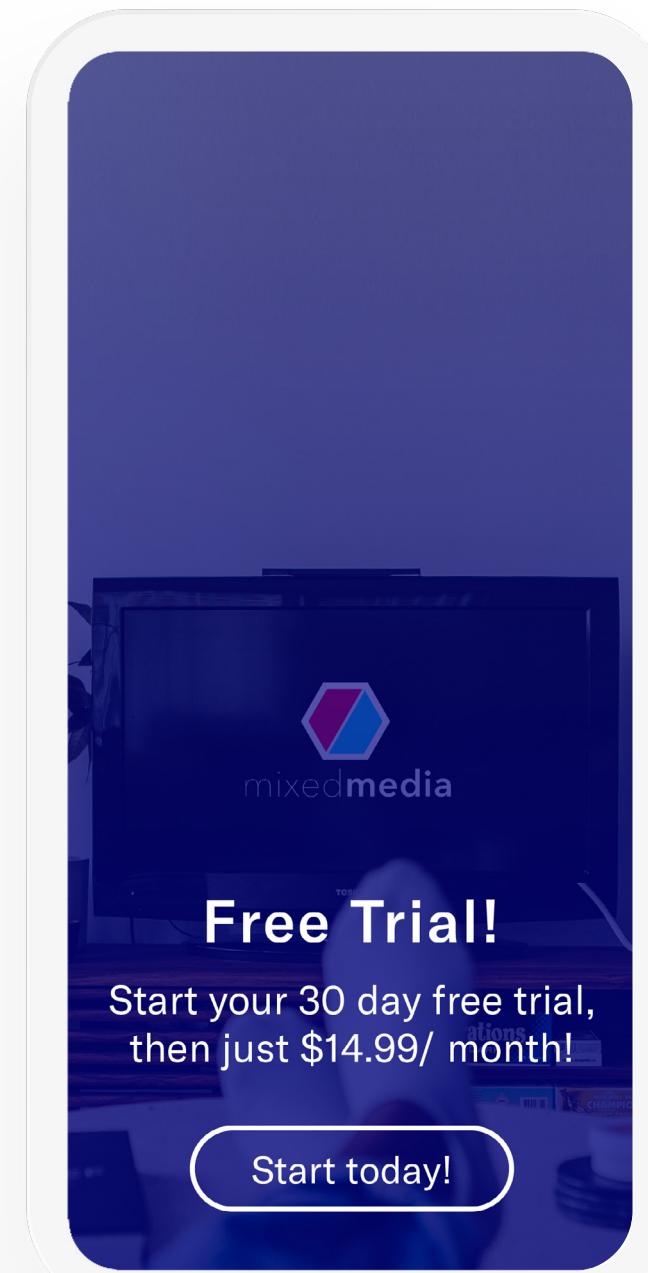
# Run Tests With Trials

Test different trial lengths to improve time to paid conversions and decrease subscription opt-outs for segments and users.

Variant A



Variant B

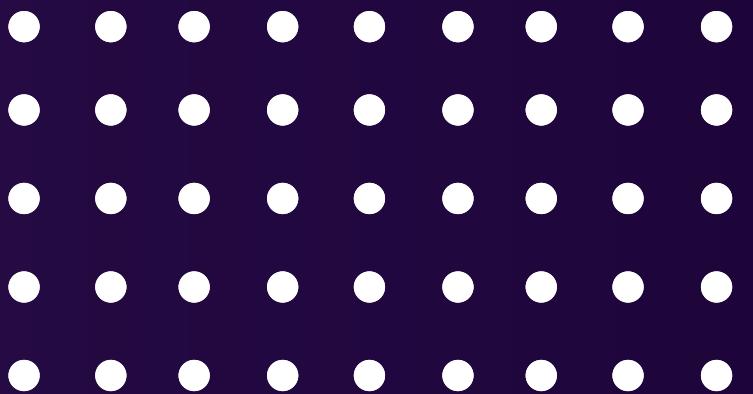


## RETENTION

# Keep Customers Engaged

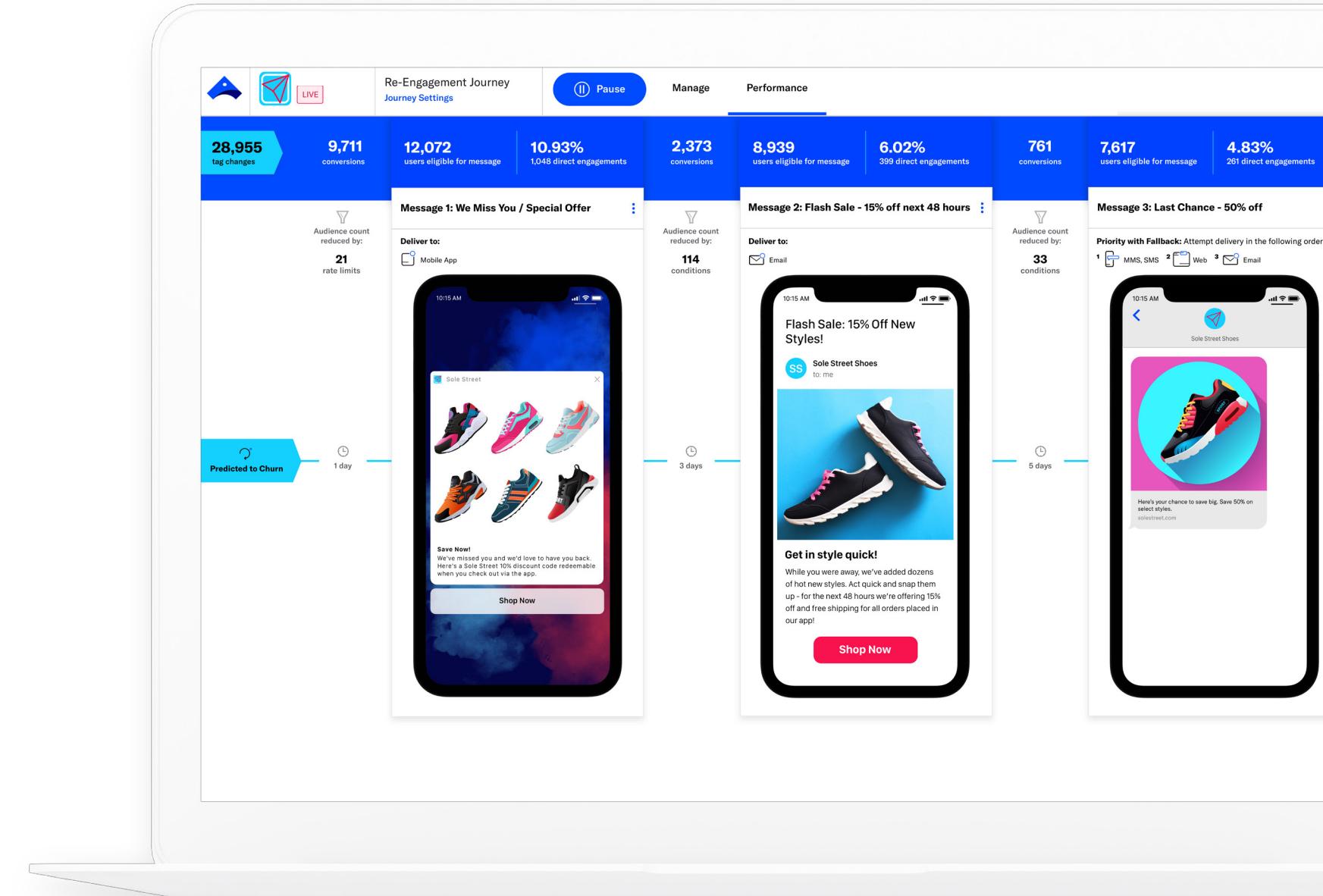
No matter how much you invest into acquiring app users, without a strategy for retention, odds are they'll eventually disengage. Plus, customer expectations are high, and rising, which makes every experience with your app even more critical.

During the retention phase, you need to be there with contextual and relevant content in the moments that matter most to your customers. Try these tactics to build loyalty and keep customers engaged with your app for the long-term.



# Communicate Across Channels

Drive users back to your app with cross-channel customer journeys. Simplify the process with Airship's next generation solution, Airship Journeys.

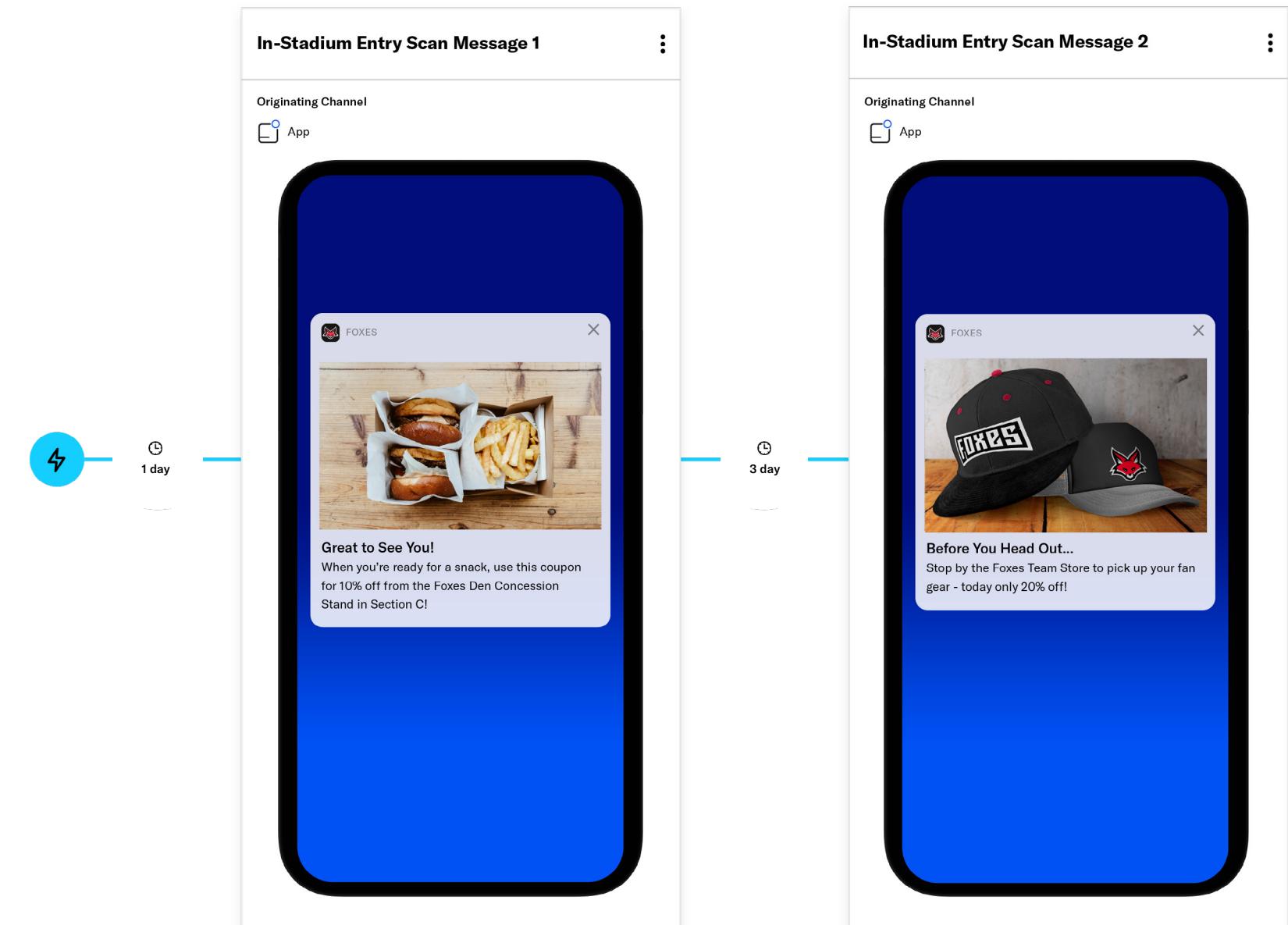


# Create Custom Events

Use custom event triggers to make messages more timely and relevant.

**5x**

Greater response from event-triggered marketing vs. mass marketing campaigns.<sup>1</sup>

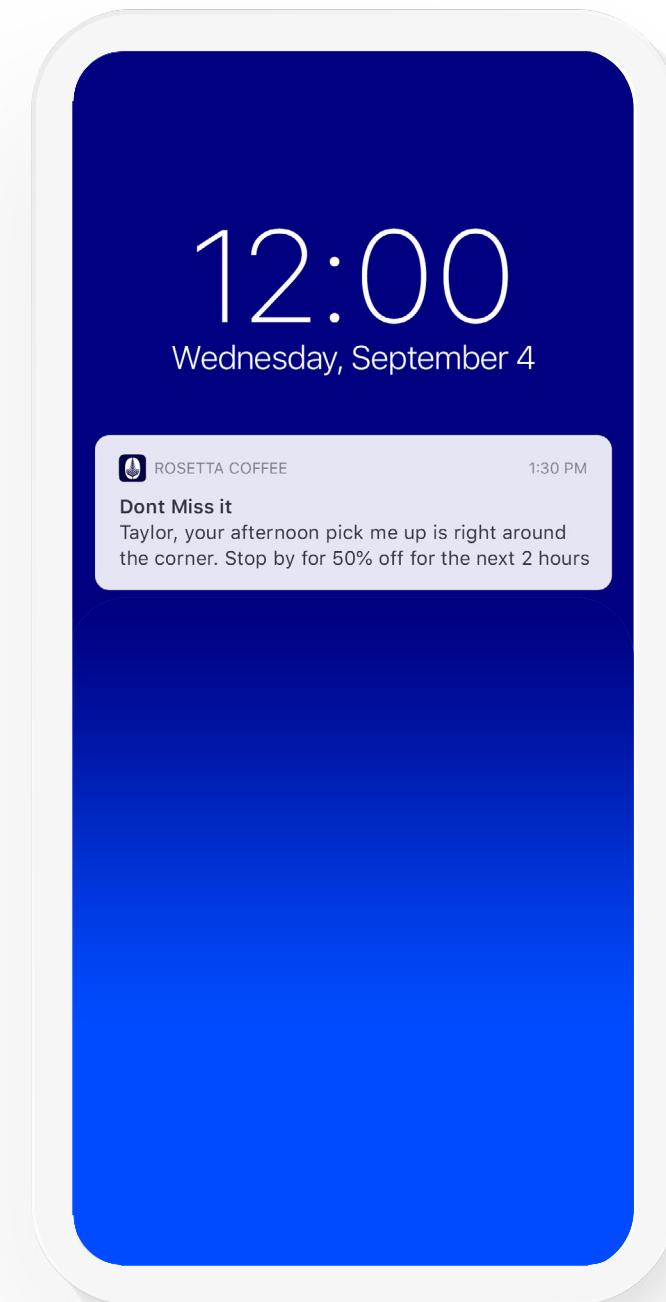


# Make It Personal

Drive action and engagement with personalized messages across all of your app channels.

- Push Notifications
- Web Notifications
- Message Center
- In-app Messaging
- Wallet

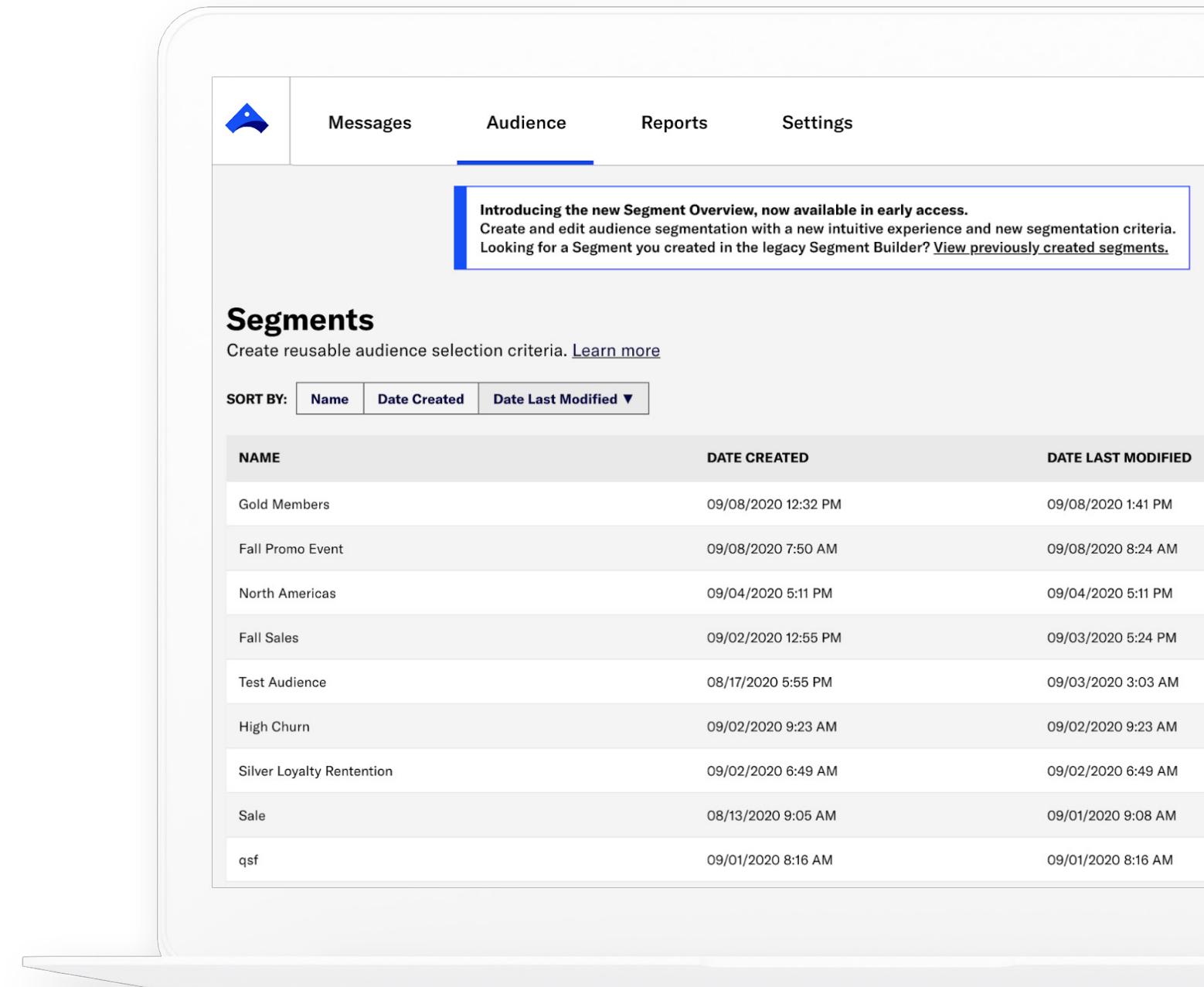
**52%** Of consumers say they'd switch brands if they didn't feel they were receiving a personalized experience.<sup>1</sup>



# Segment for Success

Segment your app users to provide better UX with personalized, relevant and relatable content.

- Names
- Users
- Tags
- Attributes



The screenshot shows the Airship Segment Overview interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Messages, Audience (which is highlighted in blue), Reports, and Settings. A banner at the top of the main content area reads: "Introducing the new Segment Overview, now available in early access. Create and edit audience segmentation with a new intuitive experience and new segmentation criteria. Looking for a Segment you created in the legacy Segment Builder? [View previously created segments.](#)" Below the banner, the title "Segments" is displayed, followed by the sub-instruction "Create reusable audience selection criteria. [Learn more](#)". A "SORT BY:" dropdown menu is set to "Name". The main content is a table listing ten segments, each with columns for Name, Date Created, and Date Last Modified.

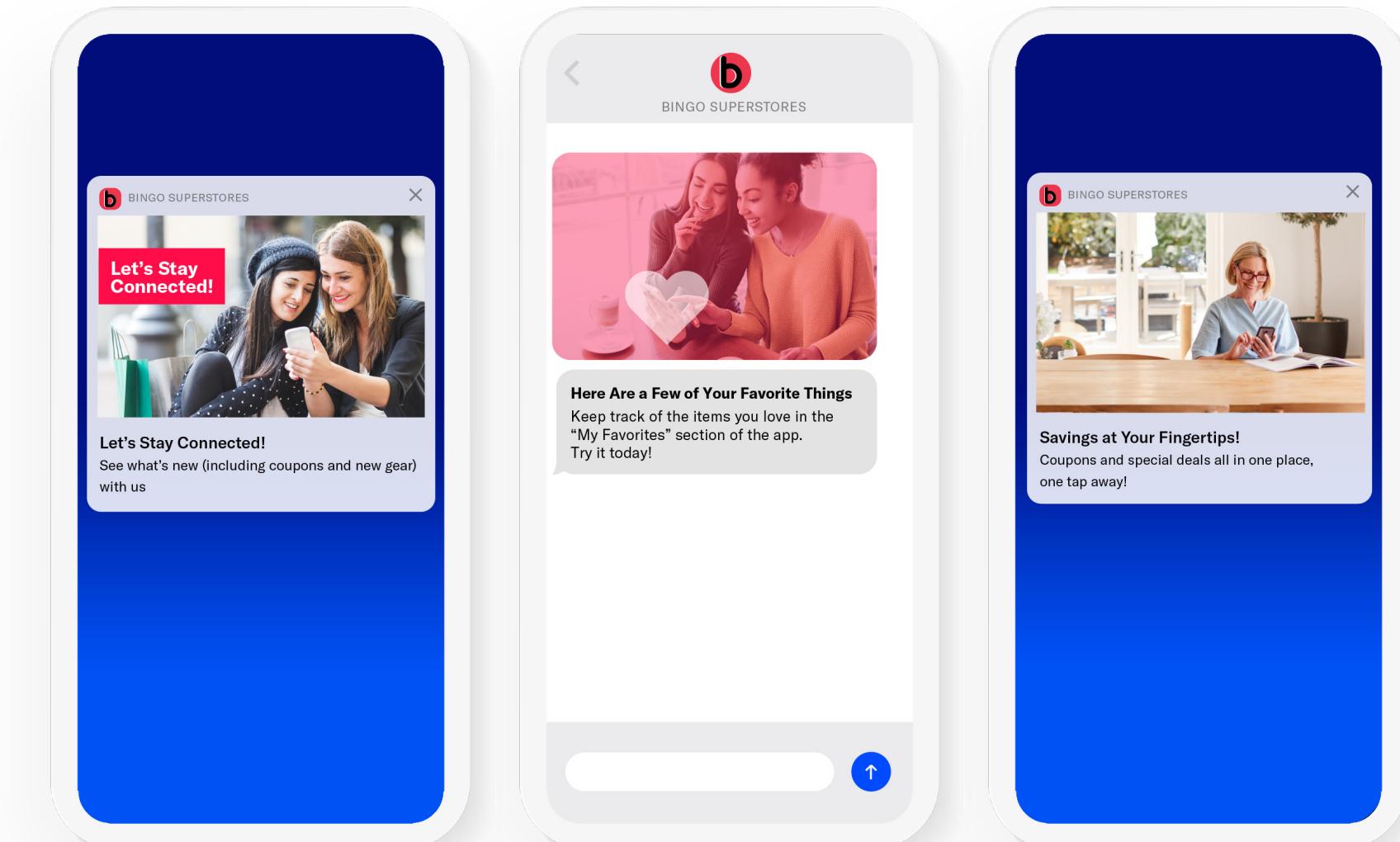
NAME	DATE CREATED	DATE LAST MODIFIED
Gold Members	09/08/2020 12:32 PM	09/08/2020 1:41 PM
Fall Promo Event	09/08/2020 7:50 AM	09/08/2020 8:24 AM
North Americas	09/04/2020 5:11 PM	09/04/2020 5:11 PM
Fall Sales	09/02/2020 12:55 PM	09/03/2020 5:24 PM
Test Audience	08/17/2020 5:55 PM	09/03/2020 3:03 AM
High Churn	09/02/2020 9:23 AM	09/02/2020 9:23 AM
Silver Loyalty Rentention	09/02/2020 6:49 AM	09/02/2020 6:49 AM
Sale	08/13/2020 9:05 AM	09/01/2020 9:08 AM
qsf	09/01/2020 8:16 AM	09/01/2020 8:16 AM

# Get Ahead of Churn

Leverage AI to predict which customers are at high risk of churn and re-engage — before it's too late.

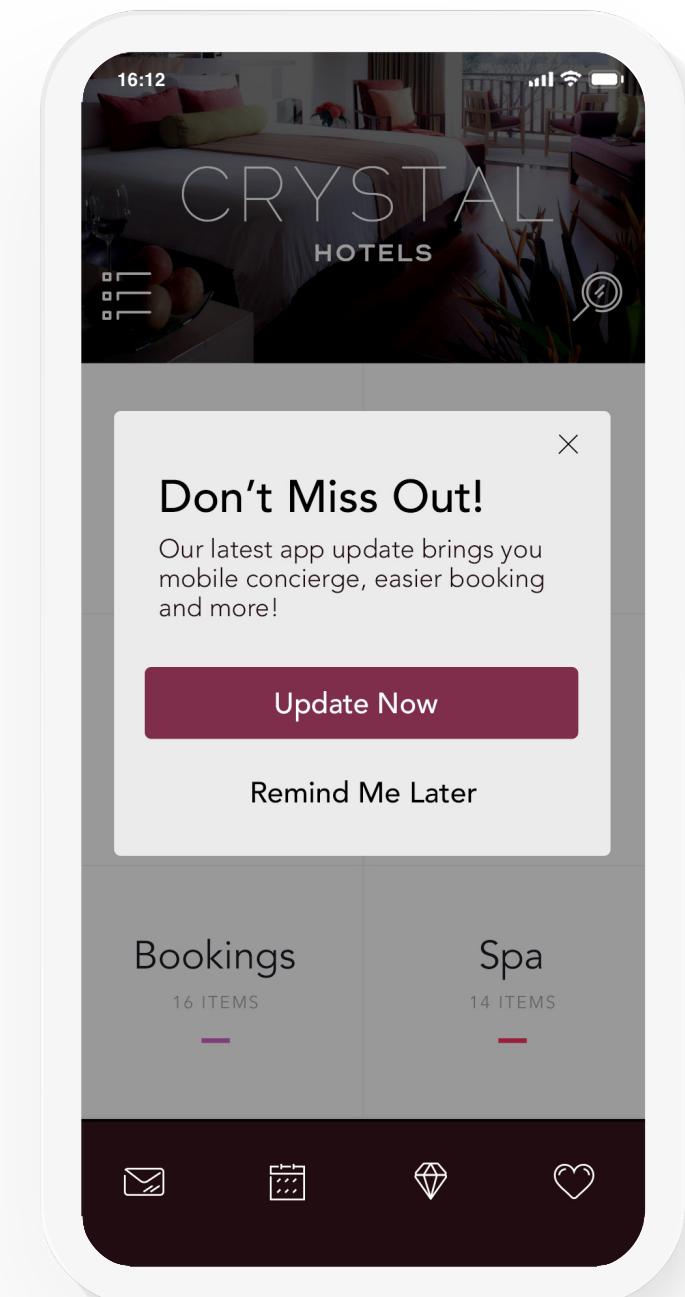
**25%**

Anticipated increase in profit for an increase in customer retention of just 5%.<sup>1</sup>



# Announce New Features

Use push notifications or in-app messages to educate users and help them discover new and valuable features.

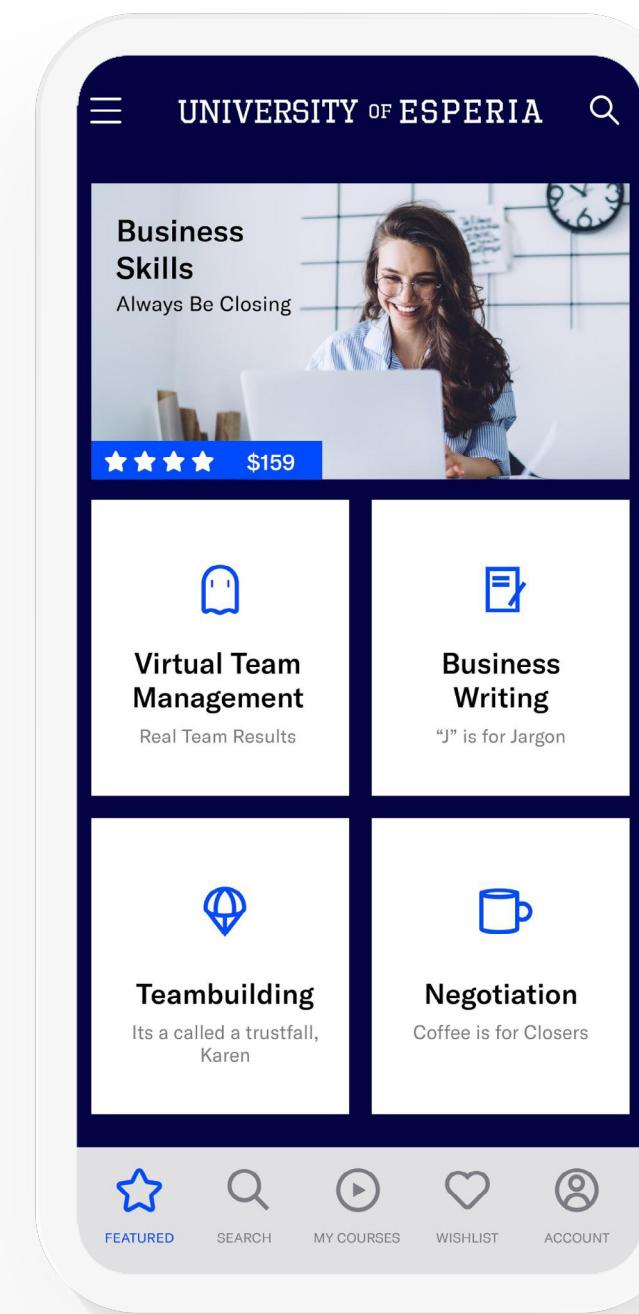


# Retest Audience Assumptions

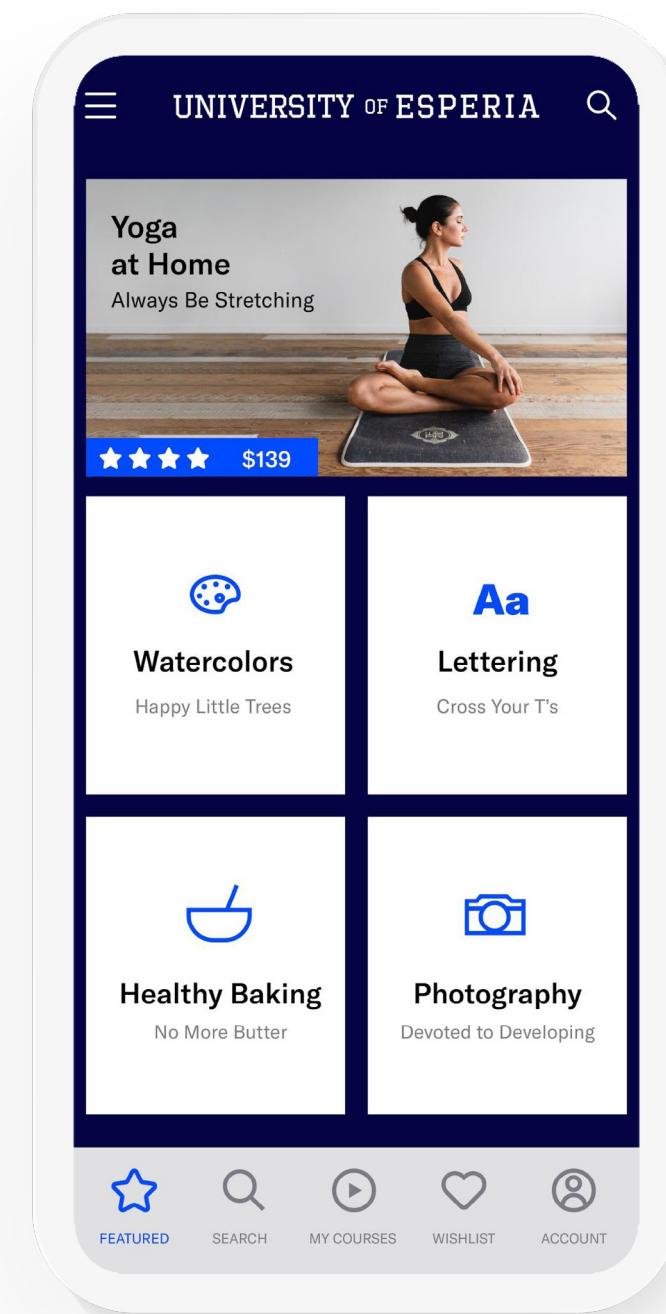
Stay abreast of your users' changing behaviors and goals by retesting old experiments — even the unsuccessful ones.

**2X** Organizations that prioritize testing are twice as likely to outperform their peers.<sup>1</sup>

Variant A



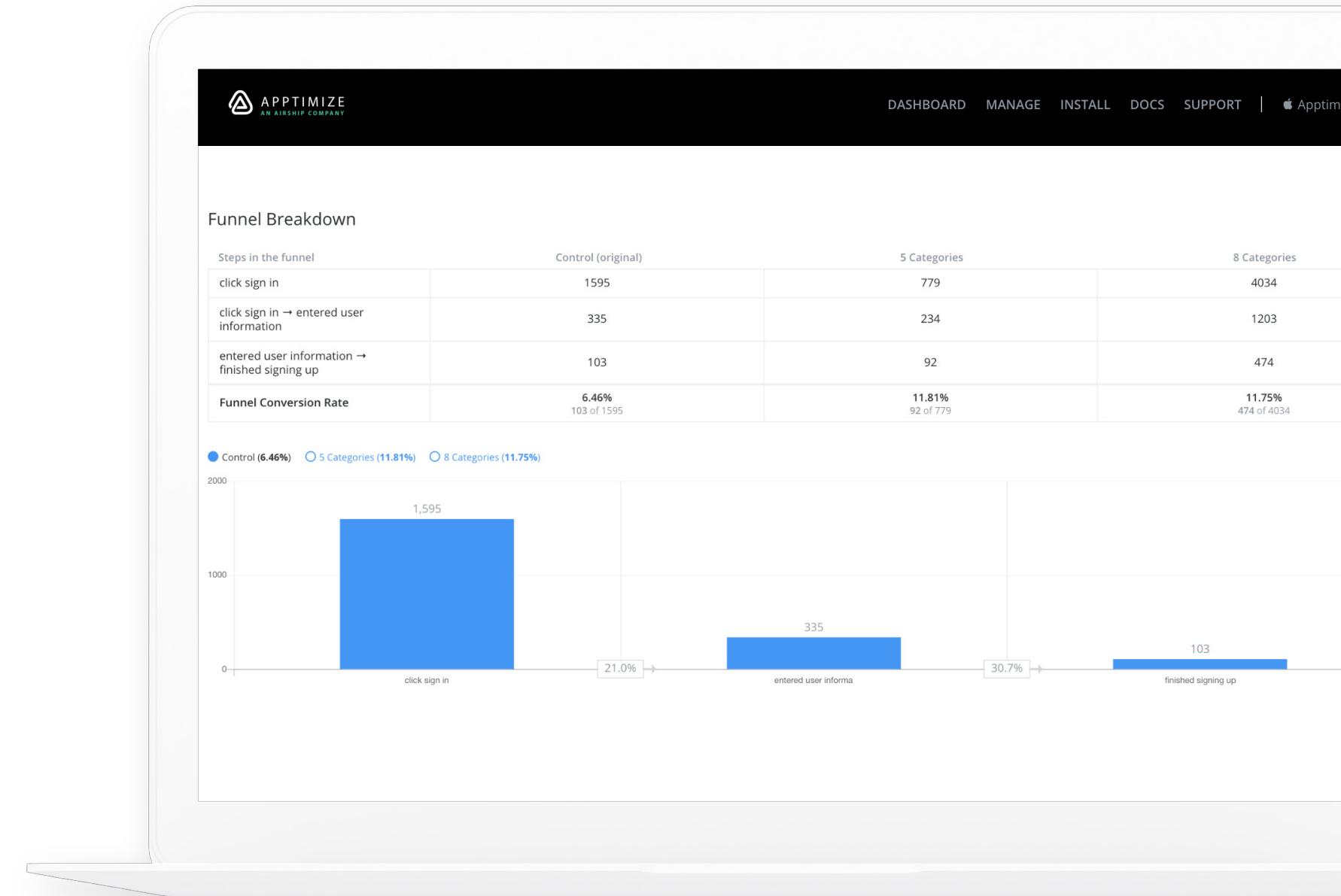
Variant B



# Find the Friction

Regularly analyze user flows within your app.

- Conduct quarterly or biannual analysis
- Identify where users drop out
- Prioritize areas with the most room for improvement



# Perfect Your Personalization

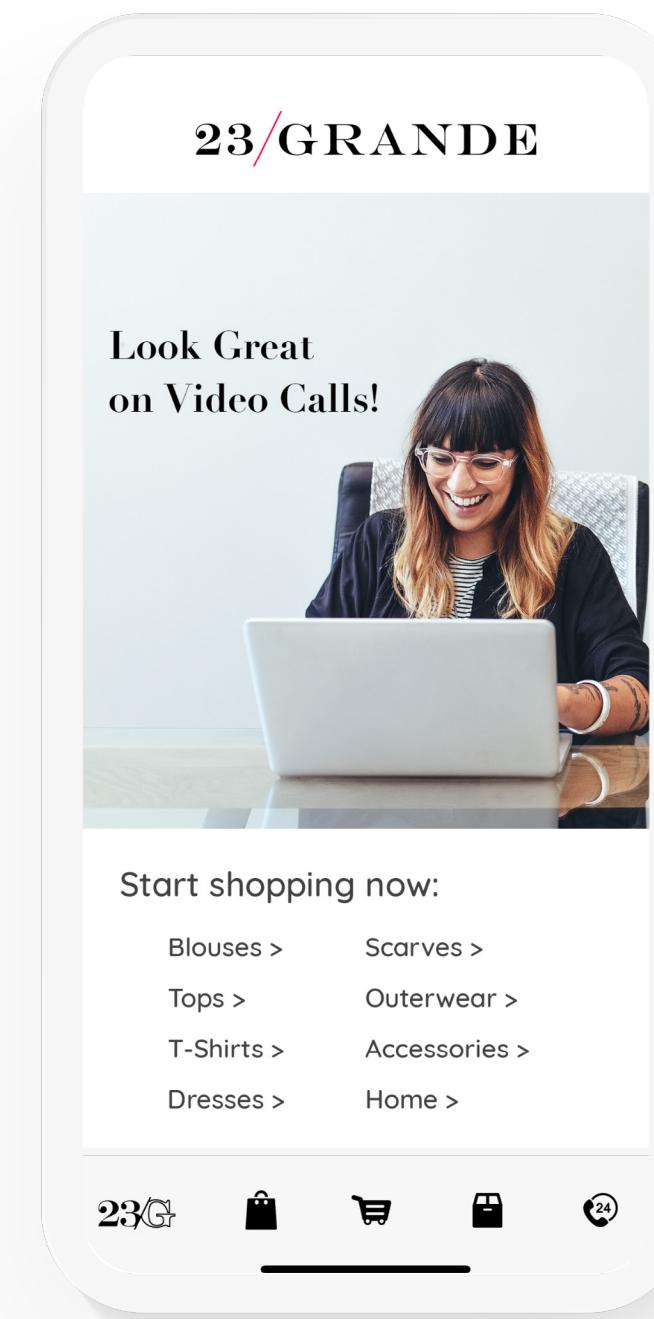
Test personalization algorithms based on customer intelligence.

- Location
- Current Events
- User Behavior
- Date & Season

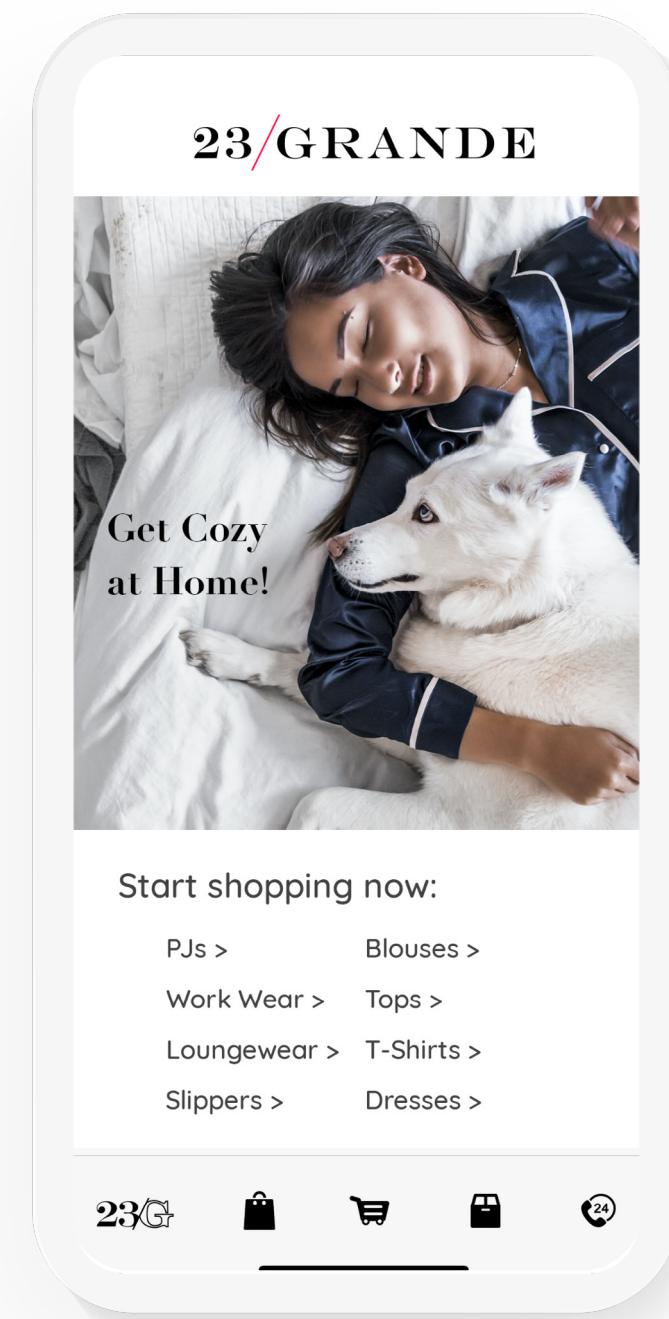
**81%**

Of consumers want brands to get to know them, and understand when to approach them.<sup>1</sup>

Variant A



Variant B

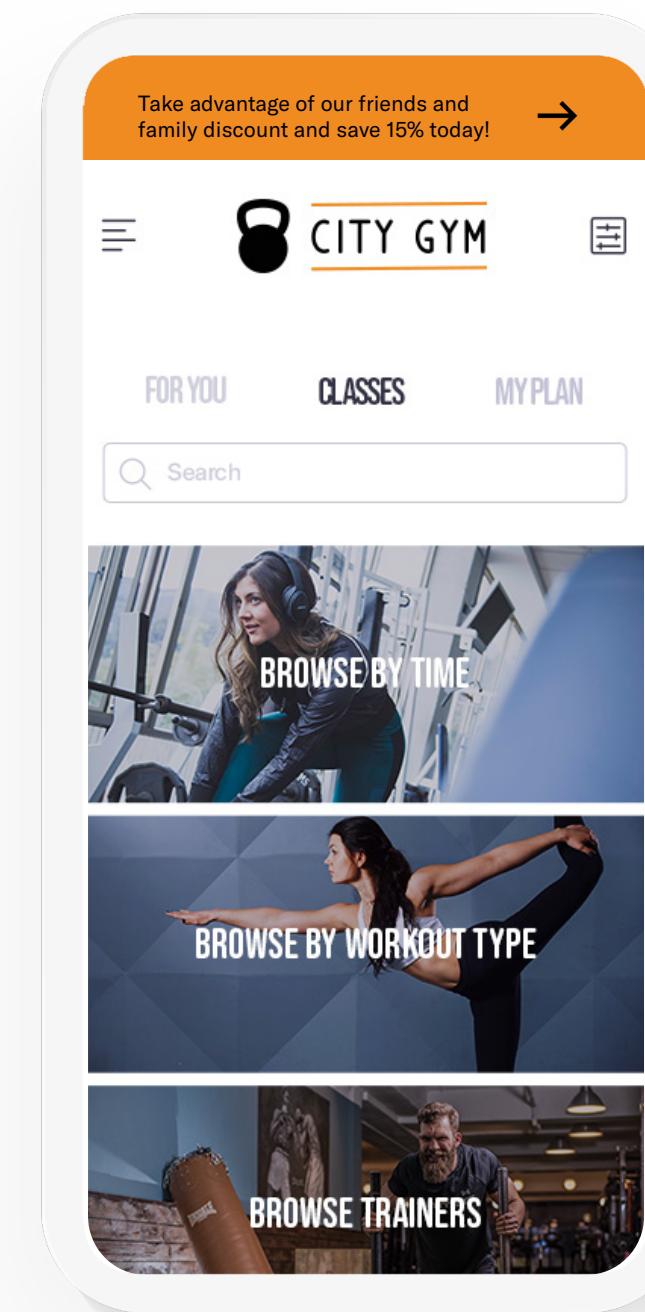


# Optimize In-App Ads

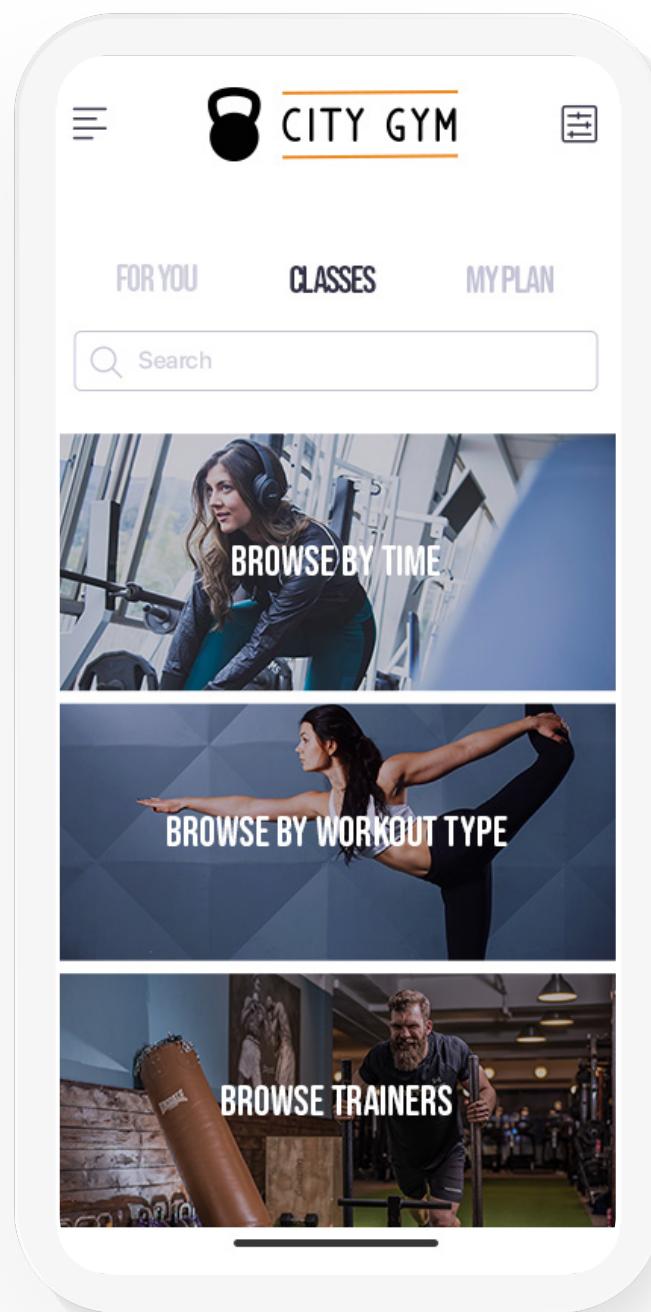
Increase ad revenue by A/B testing and optimizing ads within your app to drive engagement and impressions.

- Placement
- Length
- Ad Type

Variant A

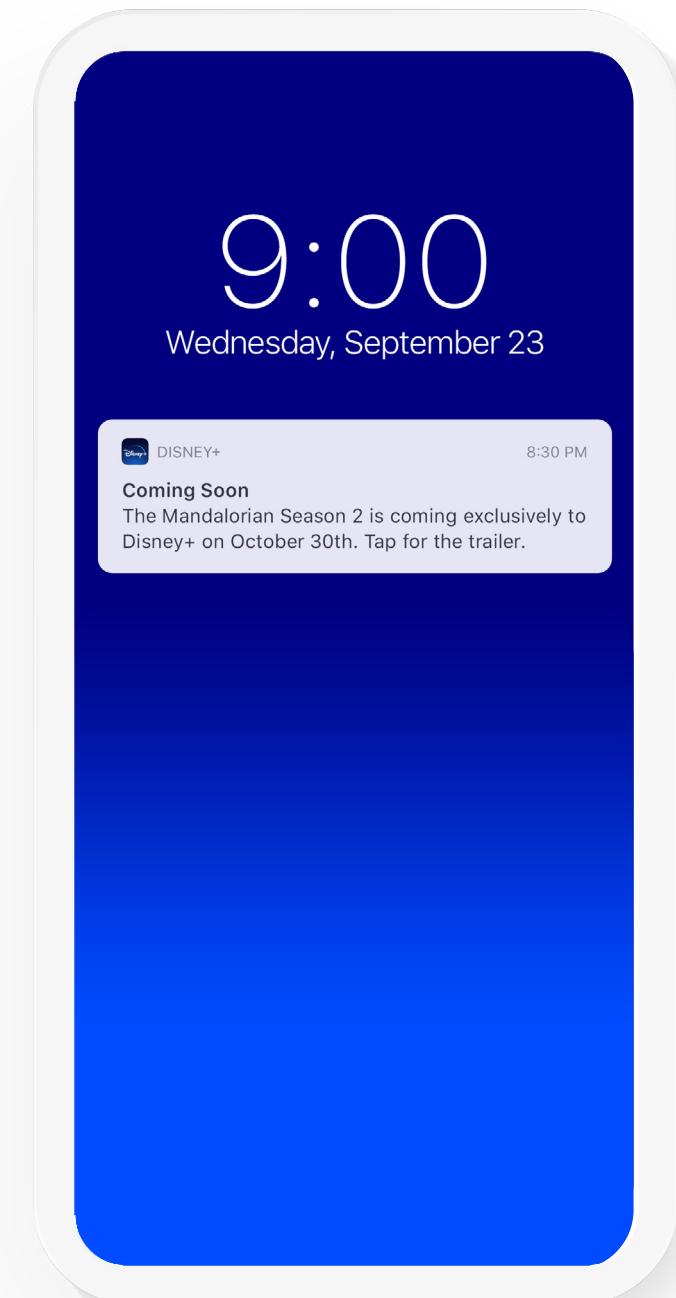


Variant B



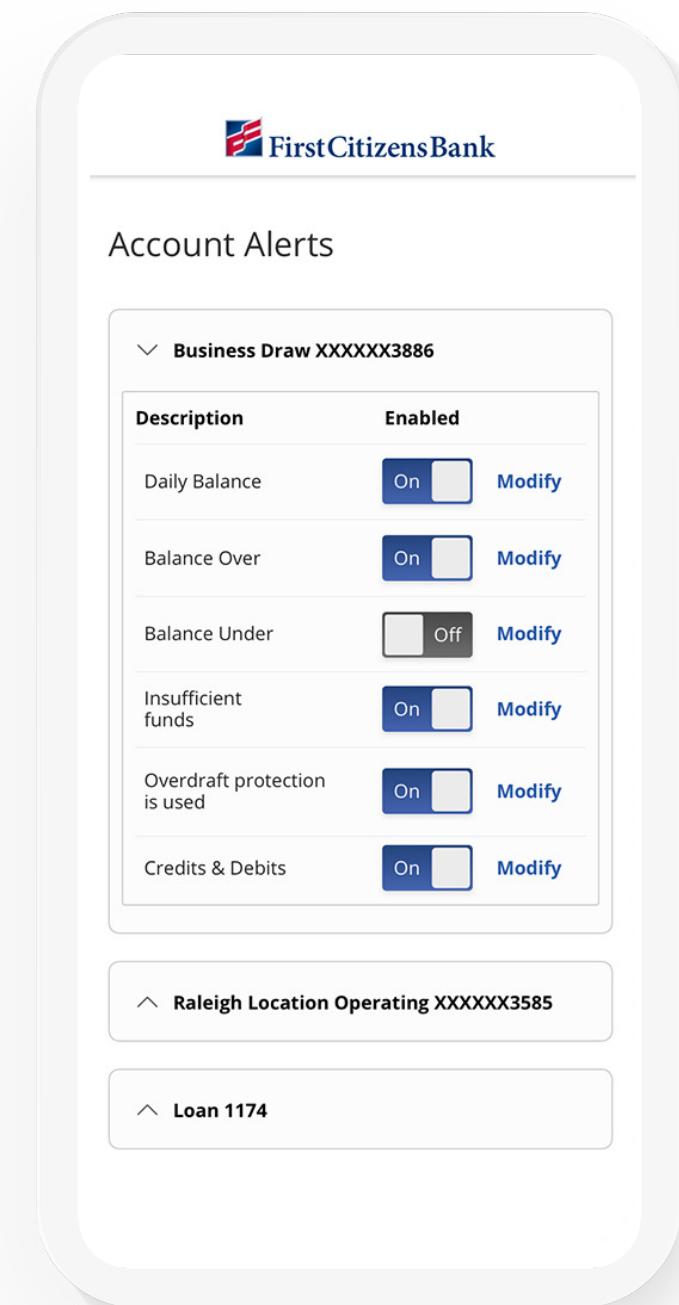
# Keep Customers Curious

Build excitement and anticipation with sneak peaks and highlights. Then analyze your messaging data to learn which messages drive the most engagement.



# Get Personal With Preference Center

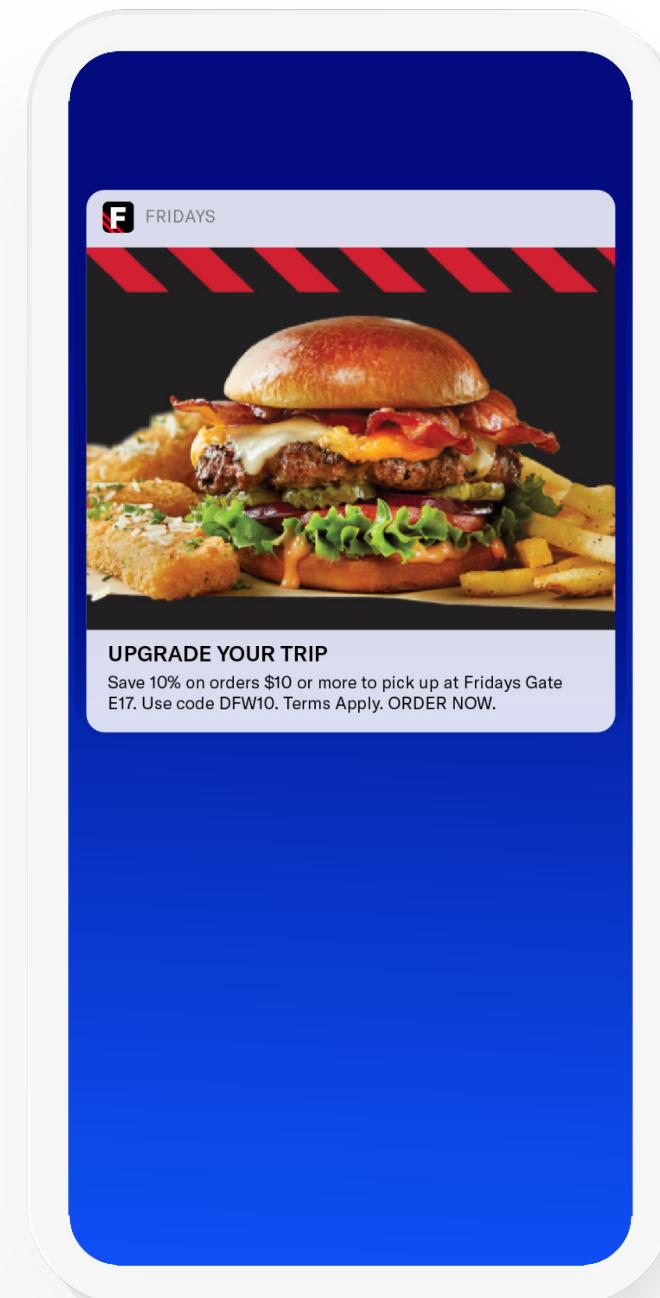
Use a mobile preference center to give customers more choices in how they share their preferences – and reward them with a more personalized experience.



# Make It Visual

Drive significantly more engagement with rich push notifications.

**56%** Increase in open rates for push notifications with pictures.<sup>1</sup>

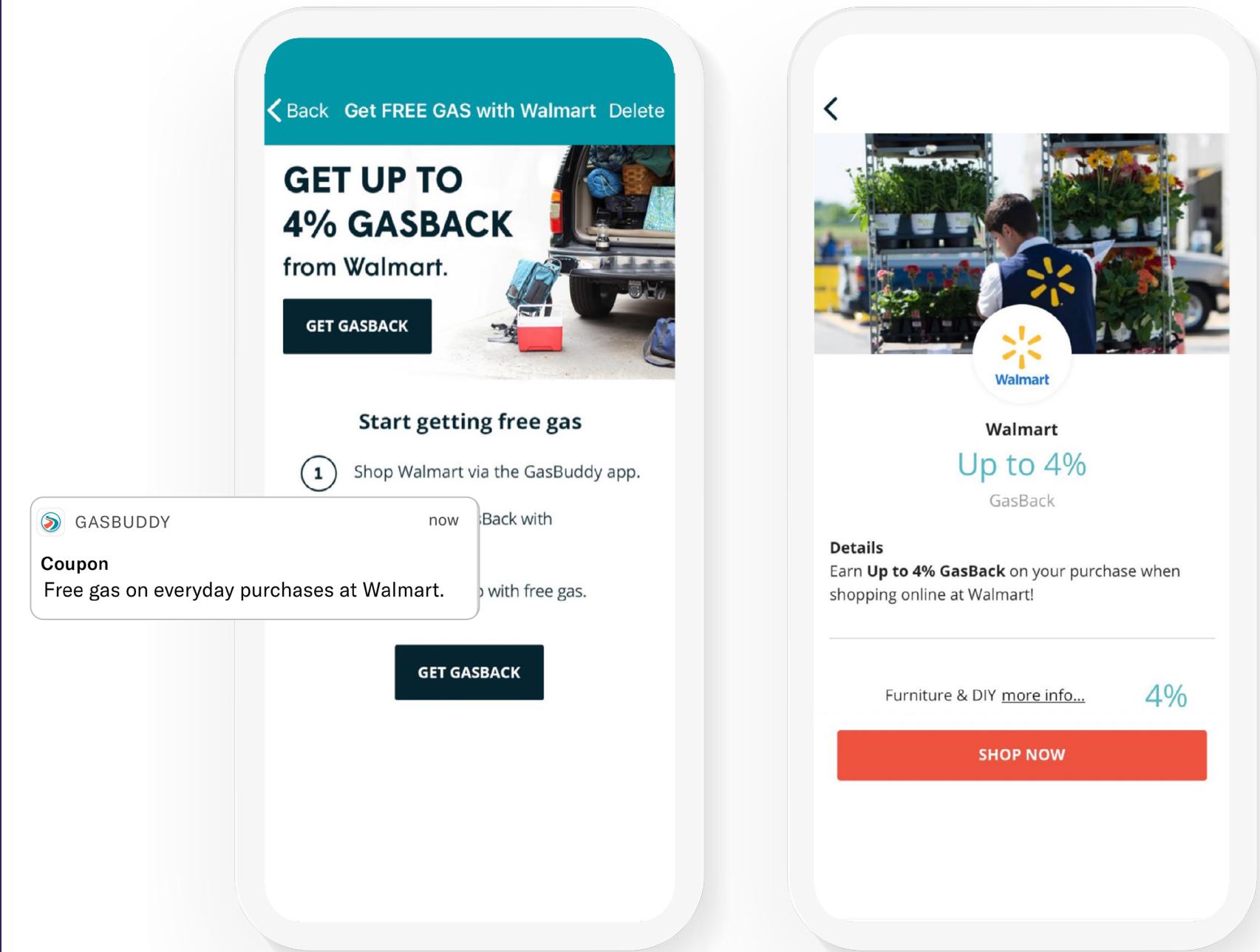


# Make It Actionable

Drive user adoption of your mobile app by leveraging a loyalty program.

## CASE STUDY: Gas Buddy

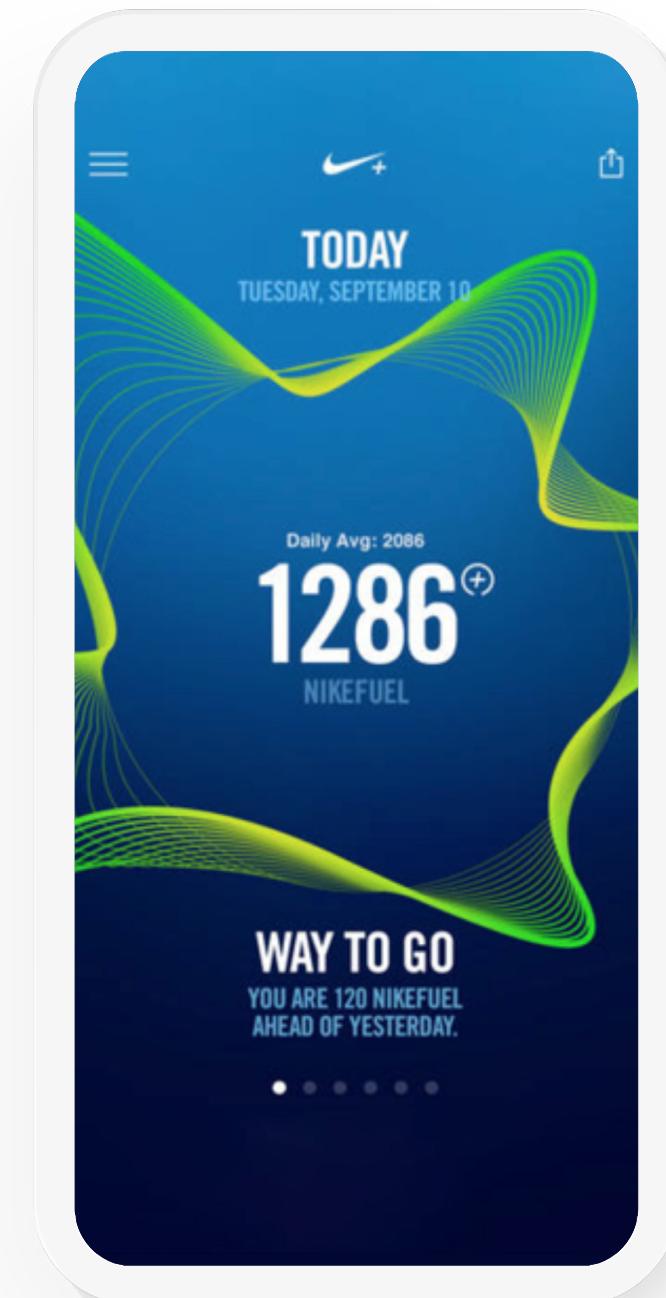
**24%** Boost in daily active users on days they send an Airship notification.



# Gamify It

Incentivize and reward engagement with gamification.

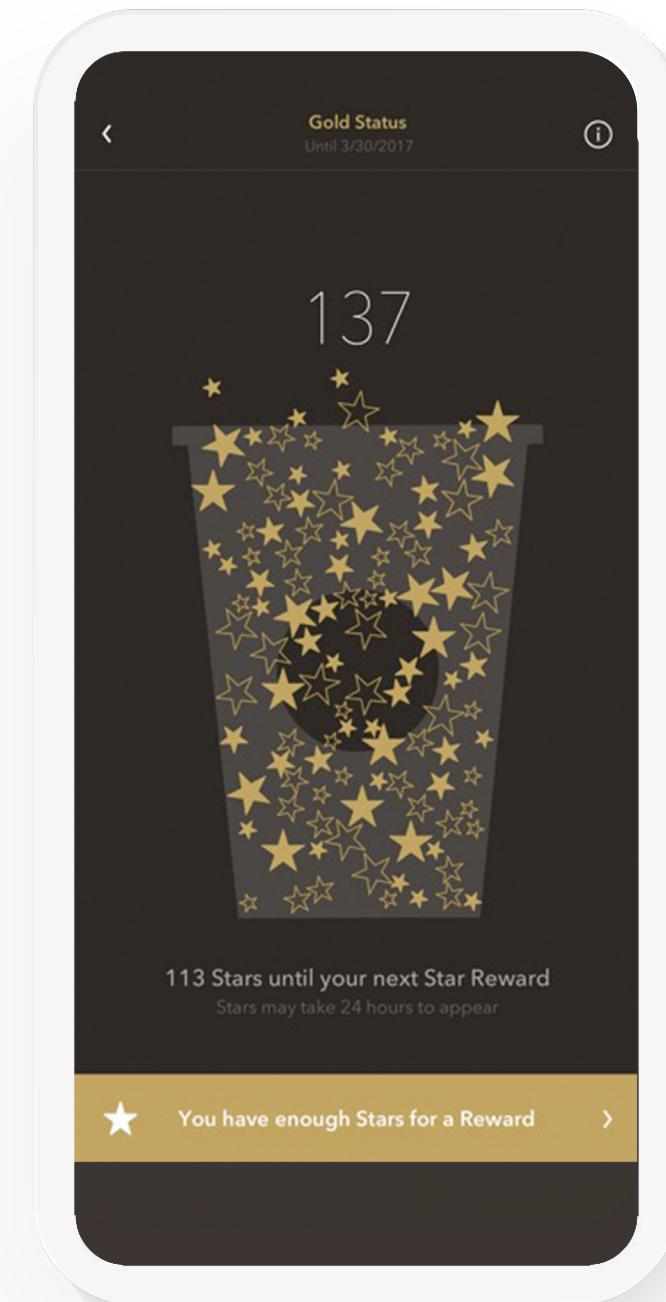
- **Fitness:** Remind users to log meals, weight
- **Finance:** Send updates on savings goals
- **Retail:** Notify when watched items go on sale



# Entice With Rewards

Identify users' goals and use notifications to help them get there.

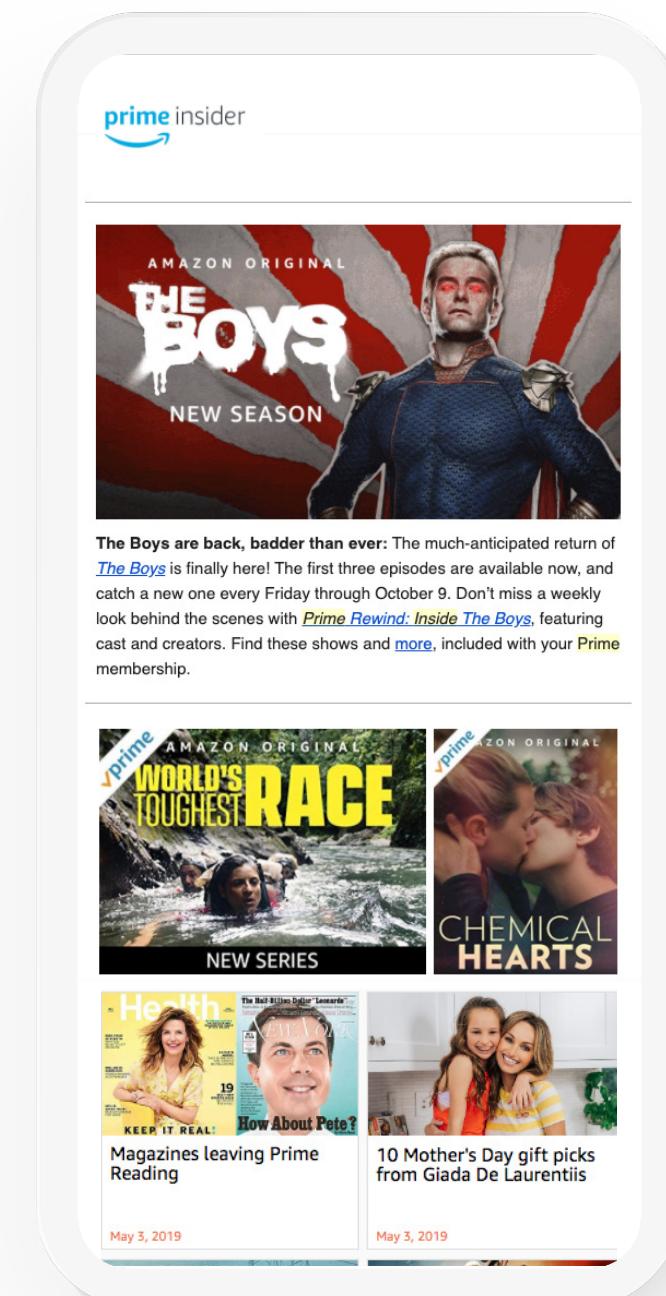
**1.6x** Lift in brand satisfaction for customers who redeem incentives, vs. customers who don't redeem.<sup>1</sup>



# Automate for Action

Stay top of mind and drive action with automated daily or weekly messages.

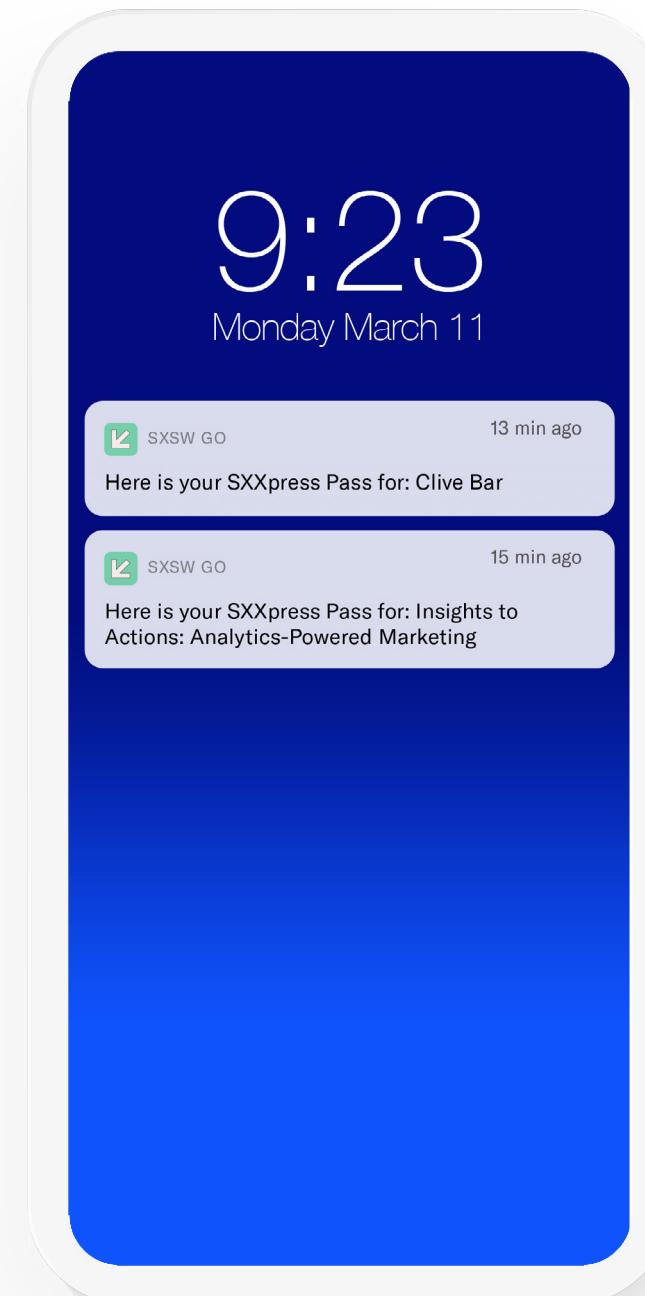
- Daily Deals
- Transactional Notifications
- Reminders



# Increase Value With Geofencing

Set geofence triggers to engage customers who are near a physical location.

- **Entertainment:** Lead them to concessions or merch
- **Transportation:** Entice with last minute upgrades
- **Retail:** Encourage walk-ins with sales or support
- **Finance:** Offer perks for visiting a branch

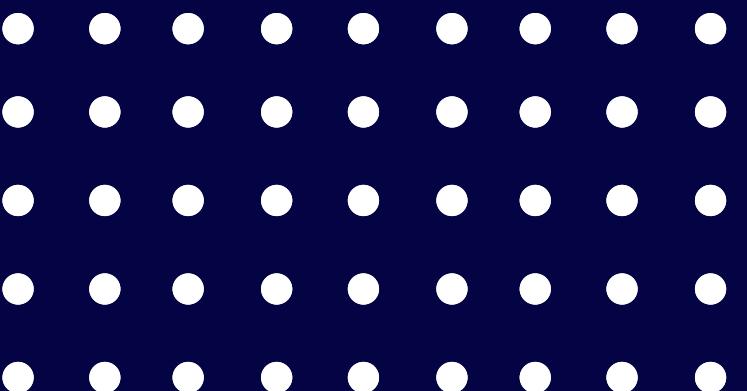


GROWTH

# Keep Customers Growing

Once you've established rapport with your app users, you need to grow those relationships. Get it right and you can create incredible value for both your brand and your customers, making their lives easier while driving toward your KPIs.

To continue growing your customers' lifetime value, you need to show that you "get them" by engaging on the right channel, at the right time with personalized and contextual content that matters. The following strategies will help you get there.

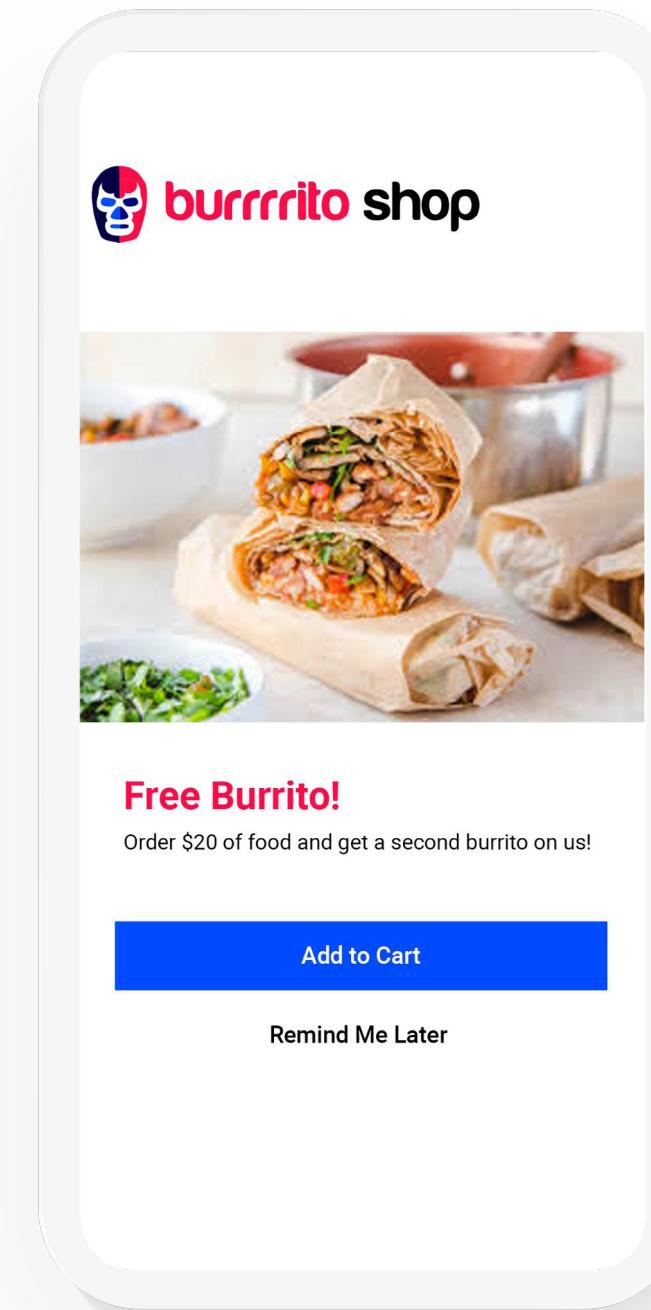


# Fine Tune Promotions

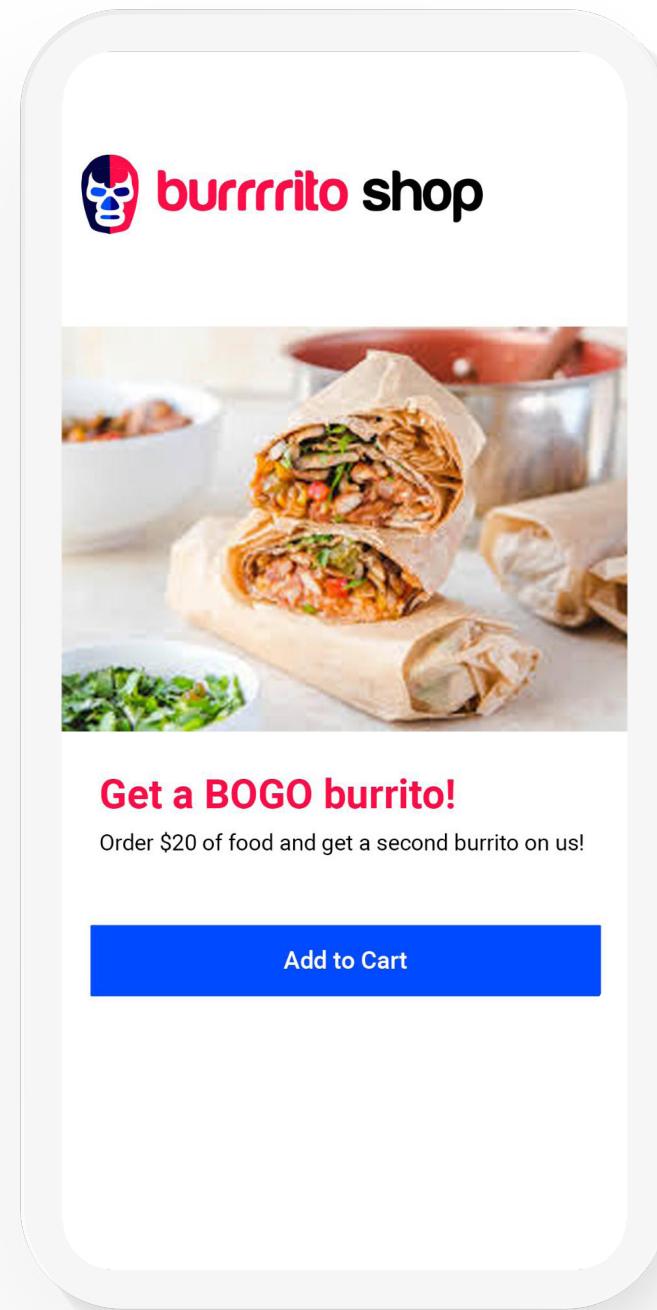
Quickly learn which promotions drive the highest conversions and revenue by A/B testing.

- New Offers
- Sales
- Discounts

Variant A

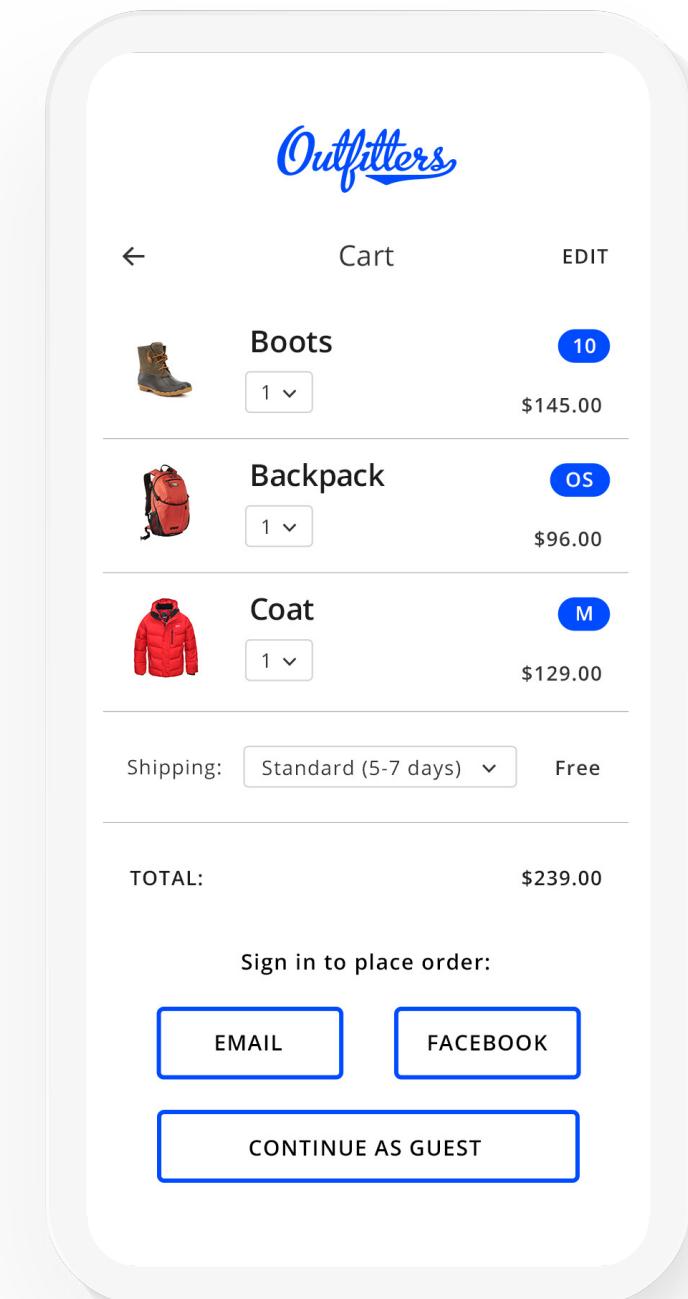


Variant B



# Simplify Checkout

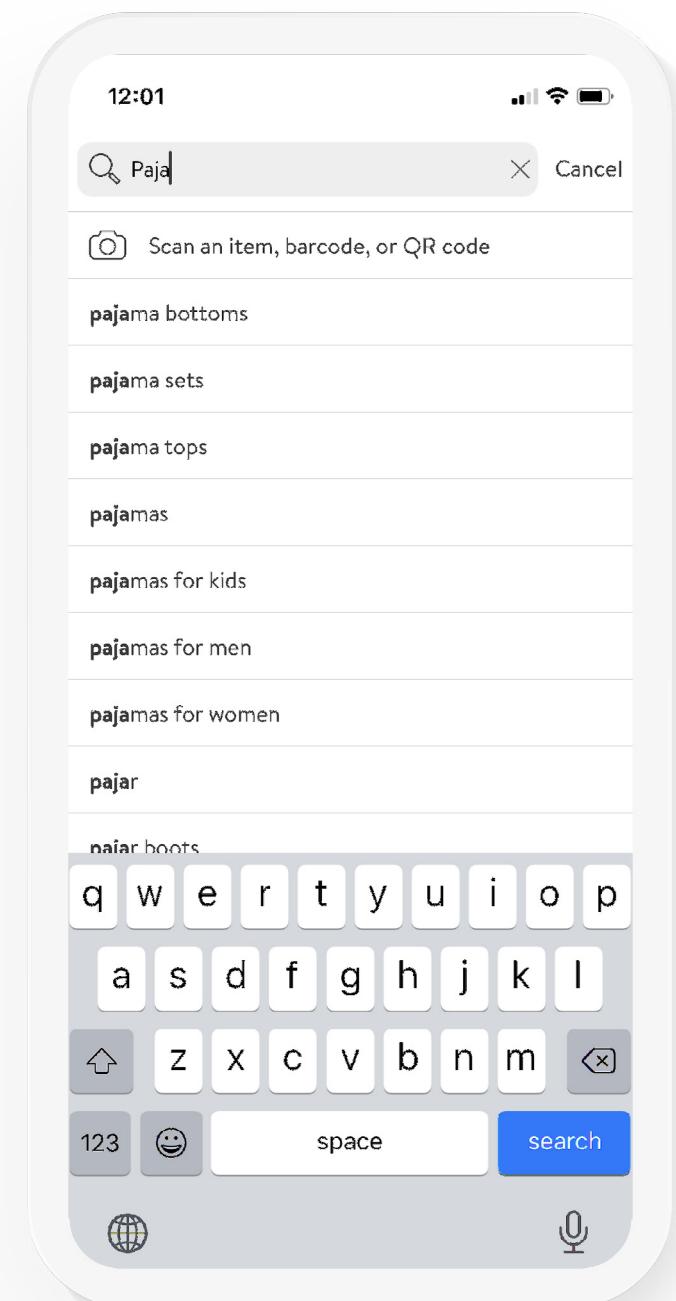
Improve UX with autofill forms and guest checkout options, making it easier for customers to checkout and complete key actions within the app.



# Enhance Search

Optimize search for users by testing your search functionality.

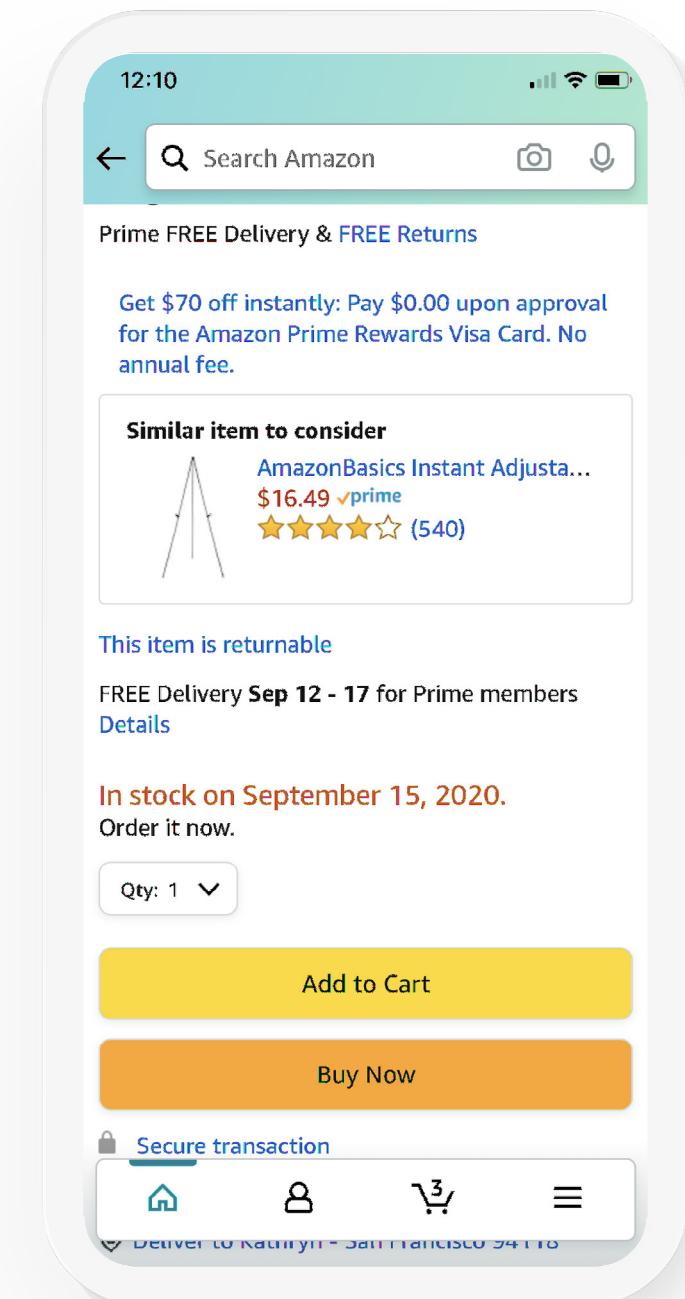
- Autofill Options
- Categories
- Personalization



# Make Conversion Easier

Add “buy now” options to make life easier for your customers by decreasing the steps in a checkout flow.

- Placement
- Copy
- Flow



# Offer Flexible Payment

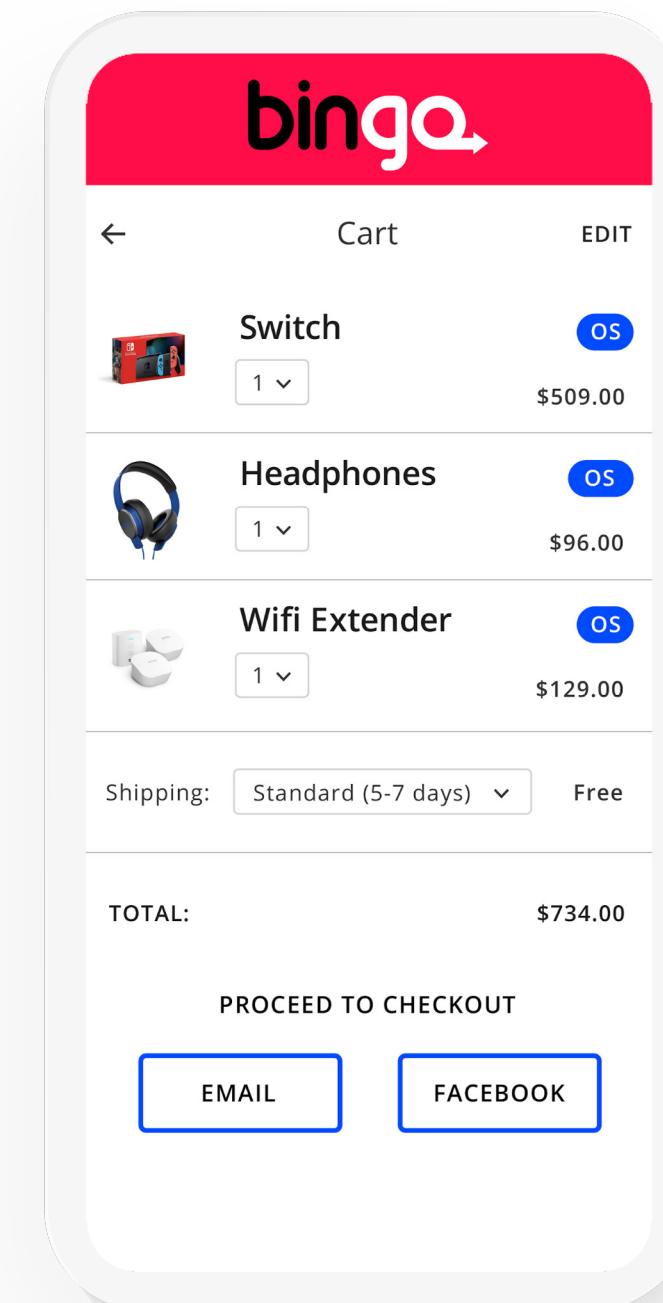
Drive more conversions with flexible payment options.

- Online Payment Apps
- Buy-Now-Pay-Later
- POS Installment Loans
- Social Media Payment

**35%**

Of consumers say they are more likely to buy if you offer monthly installments.<sup>1</sup>

Variant A



bingo

Cart

EDIT

Switch OS \$509.00

Headphones OS \$96.00

Wifi Extender OS \$129.00

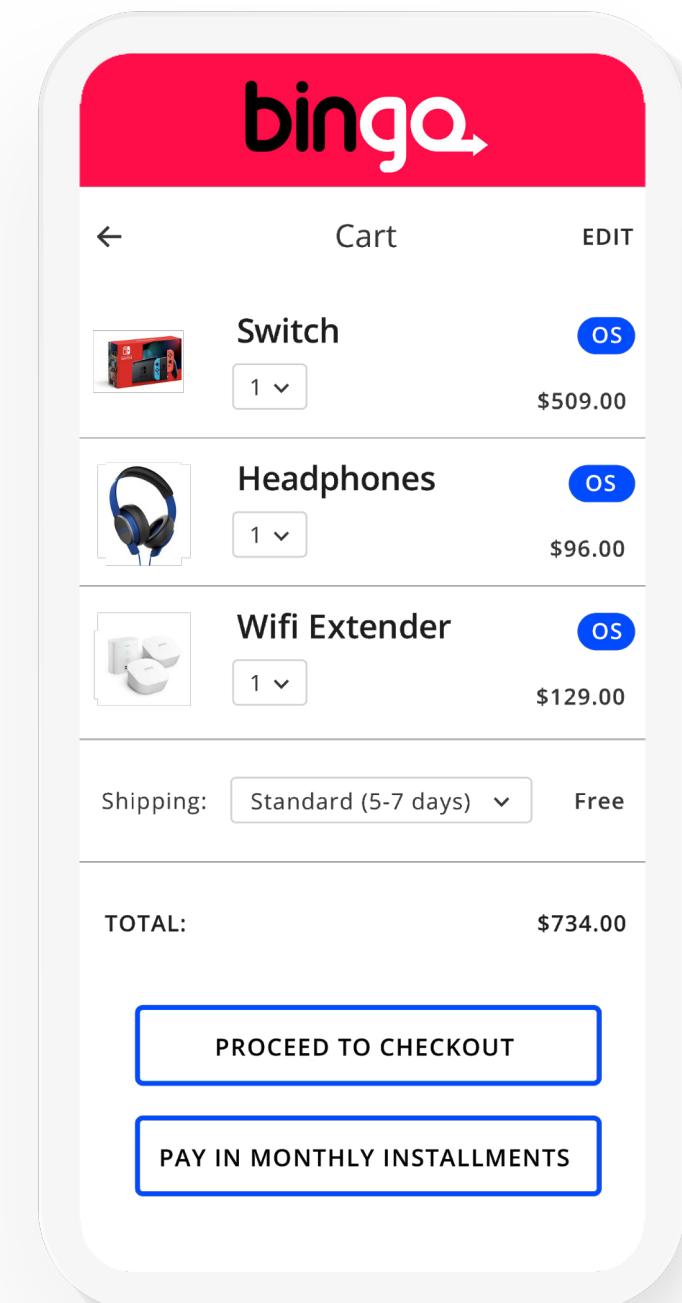
Shipping: Standard (5-7 days) Free

TOTAL: \$734.00

PROCEED TO CHECKOUT

EMAIL FACEBOOK

Variant B



bingo

Cart

EDIT

Switch OS \$509.00

Headphones OS \$96.00

Wifi Extender OS \$129.00

Shipping: Standard (5-7 days) Free

TOTAL: \$734.00

PROCEED TO CHECKOUT

PAY IN MONTHLY INSTALLMENTS

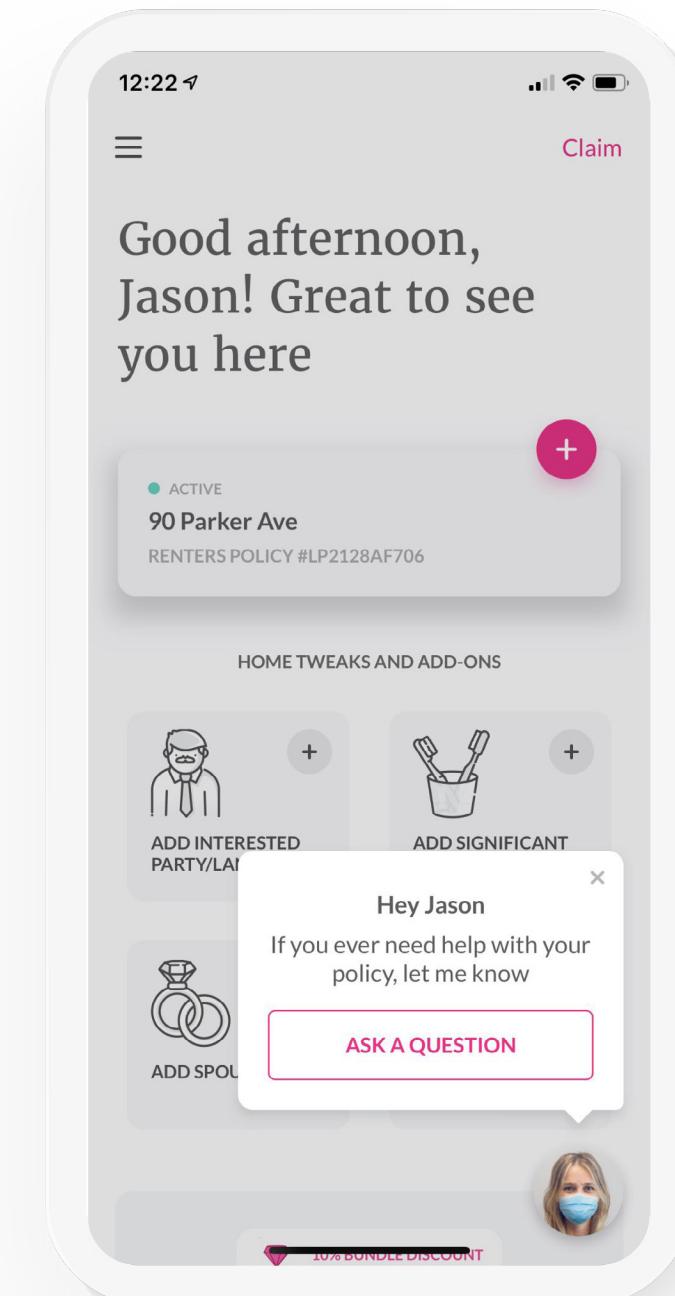
(1) "35% of Consumers Say They Are More Likely to Buy if You Offer Monthly Installments," Small Biz Trends

# Promote Self-Service

Add a chatbot or improve in-app messaging to increase self-service and decrease costs.

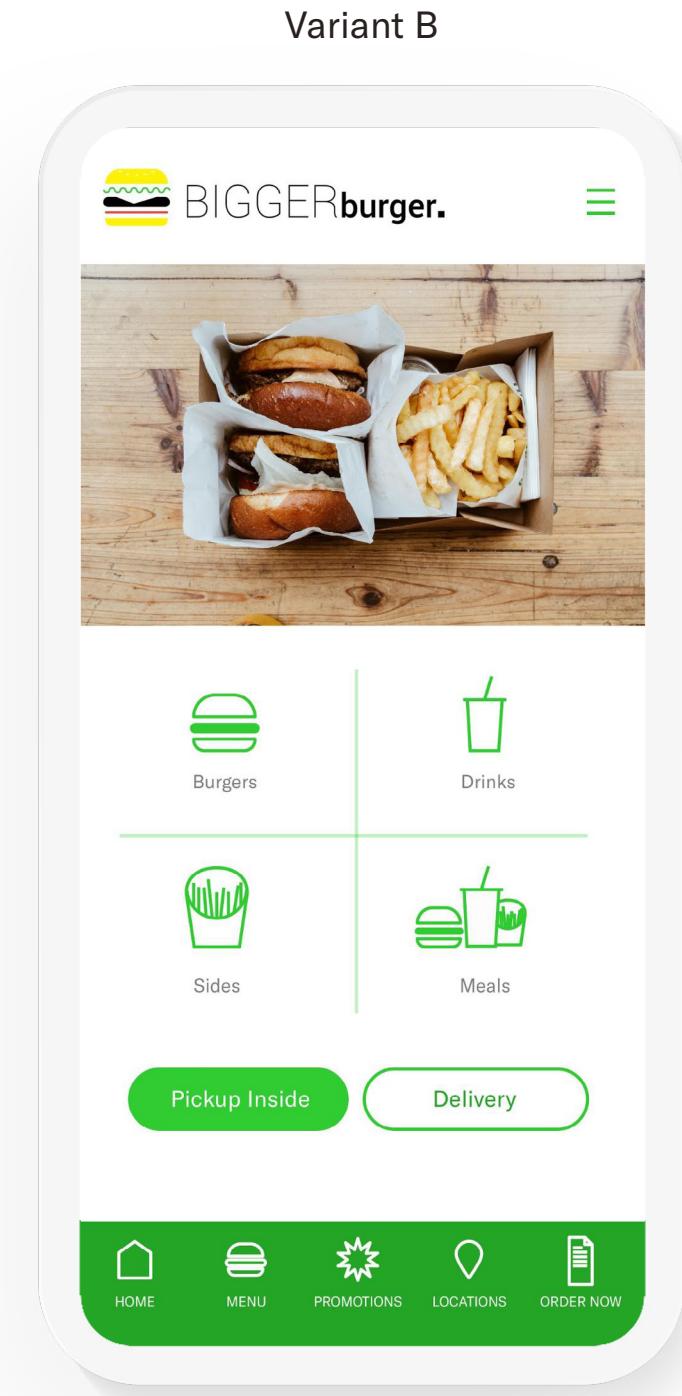
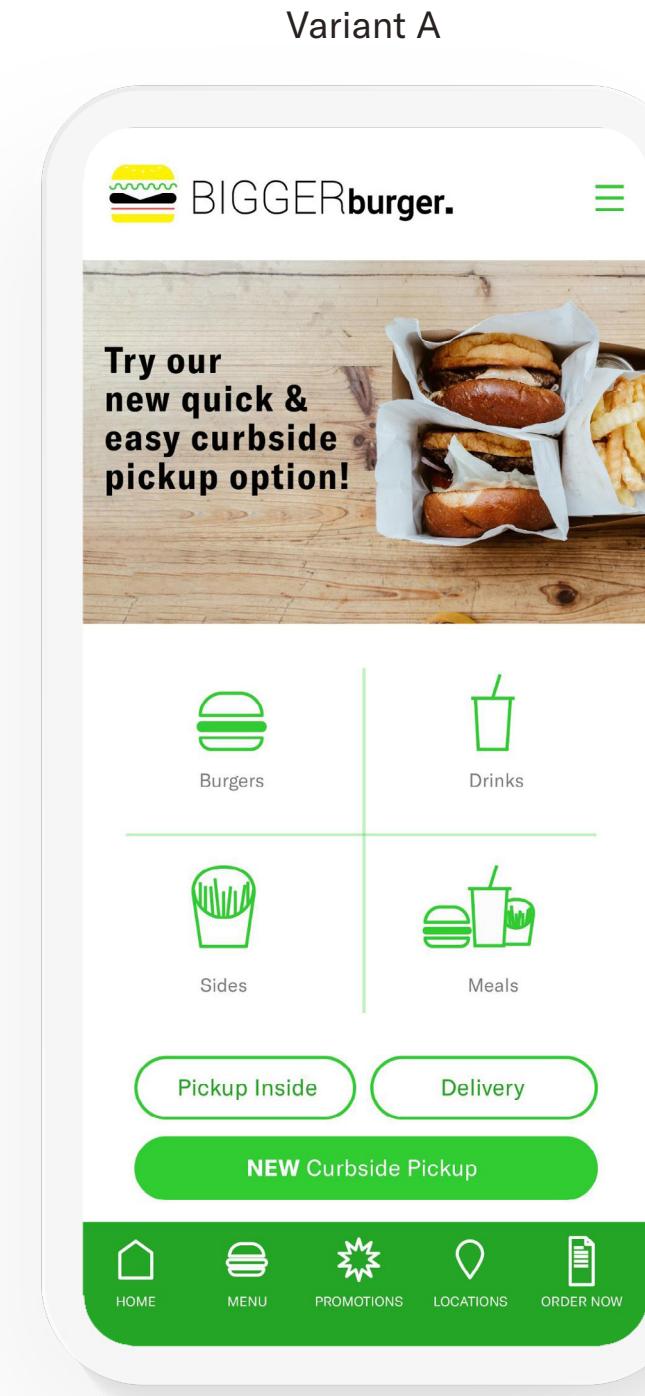
**69%**

Of consumers prefer chatbots for quick communication with brands.<sup>1</sup>



# Fly Your Feature Flags

Use feature flags to accelerate growth and mitigate risk by testing new features before rolling them out to your entire app audience.

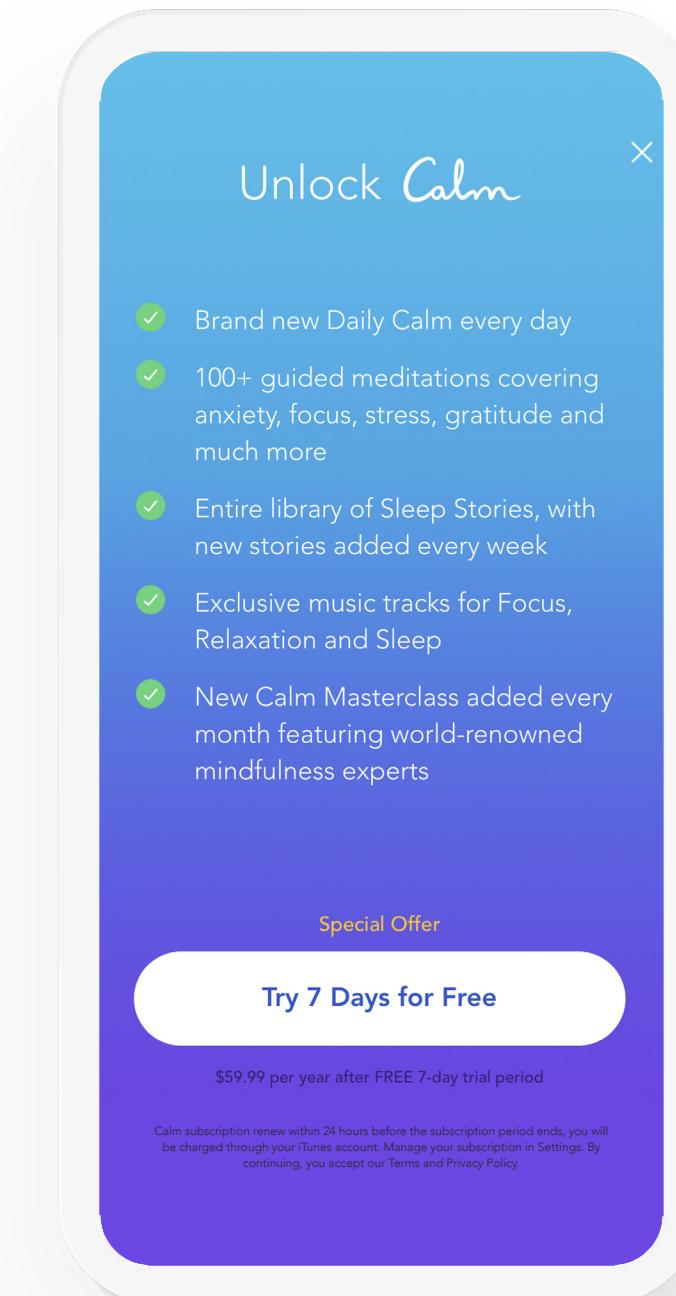


# Test Your CTA Copy

For subscription-based apps, give customers flexibility by offering free trials, monthly and annual subscription options.

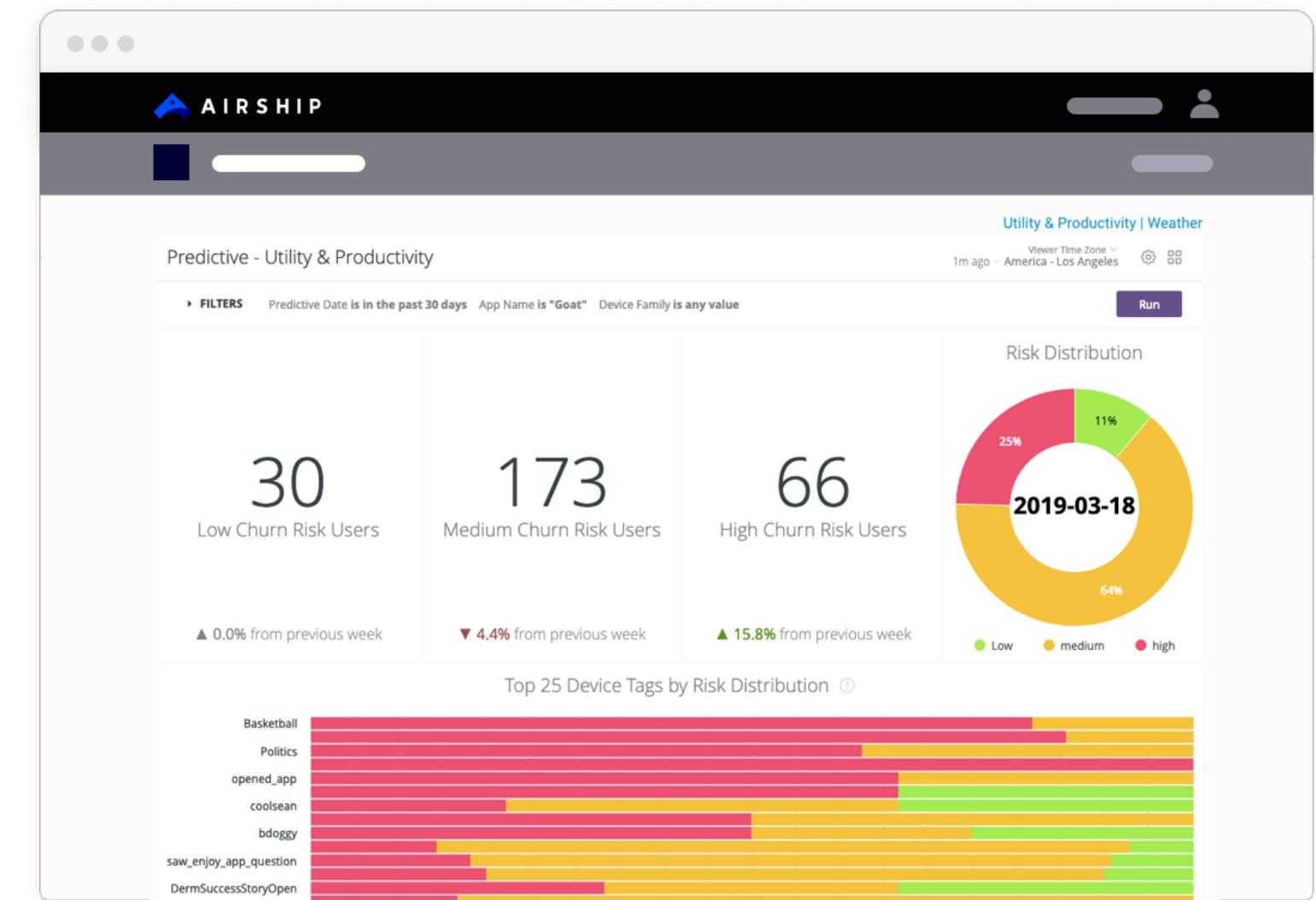
## CASE STUDY:

**5.5%** Increase in premium transactions resulting from an experiment testing quarterly vs. yearly subscriptions for one sports app.



# Amp Up Your Analytics

Use BI tools, like Airship Performance Analytics, to monitor and analyze app performance and identify areas for improvement.

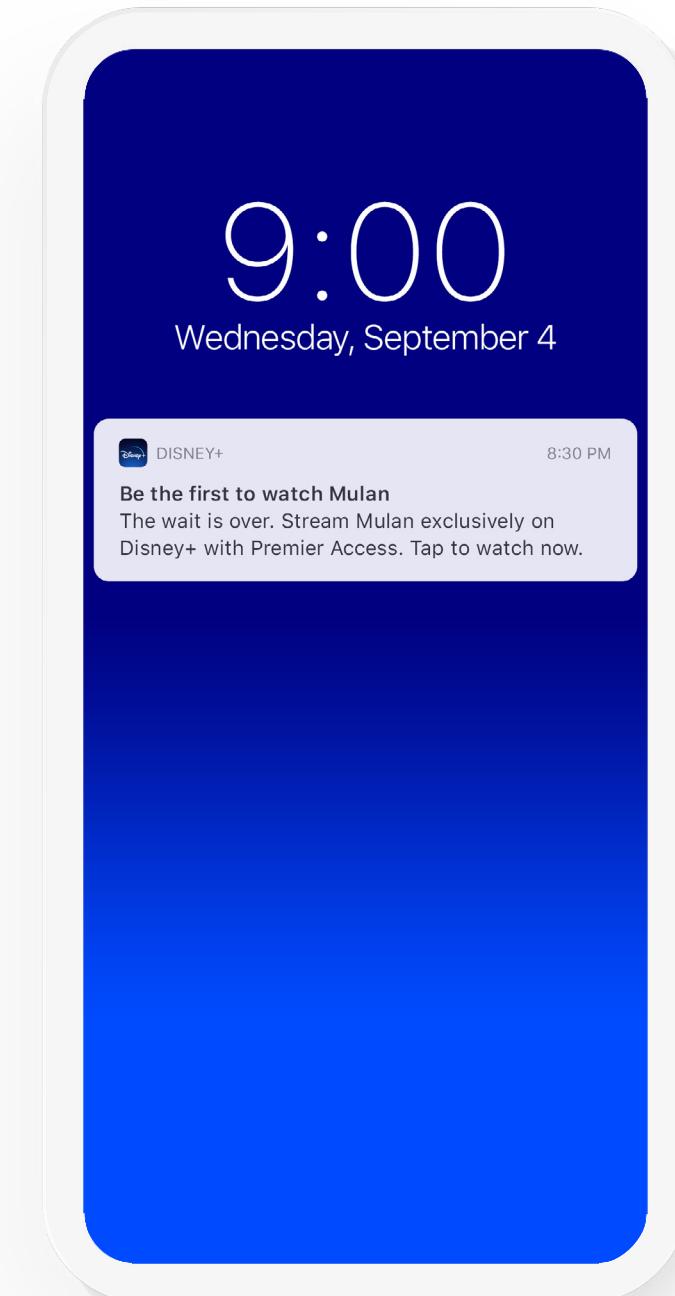


# Amplify the Urgency

Create urgency through your app with limited time offers, exclusive deals and quantity-limited sales.

**65%**

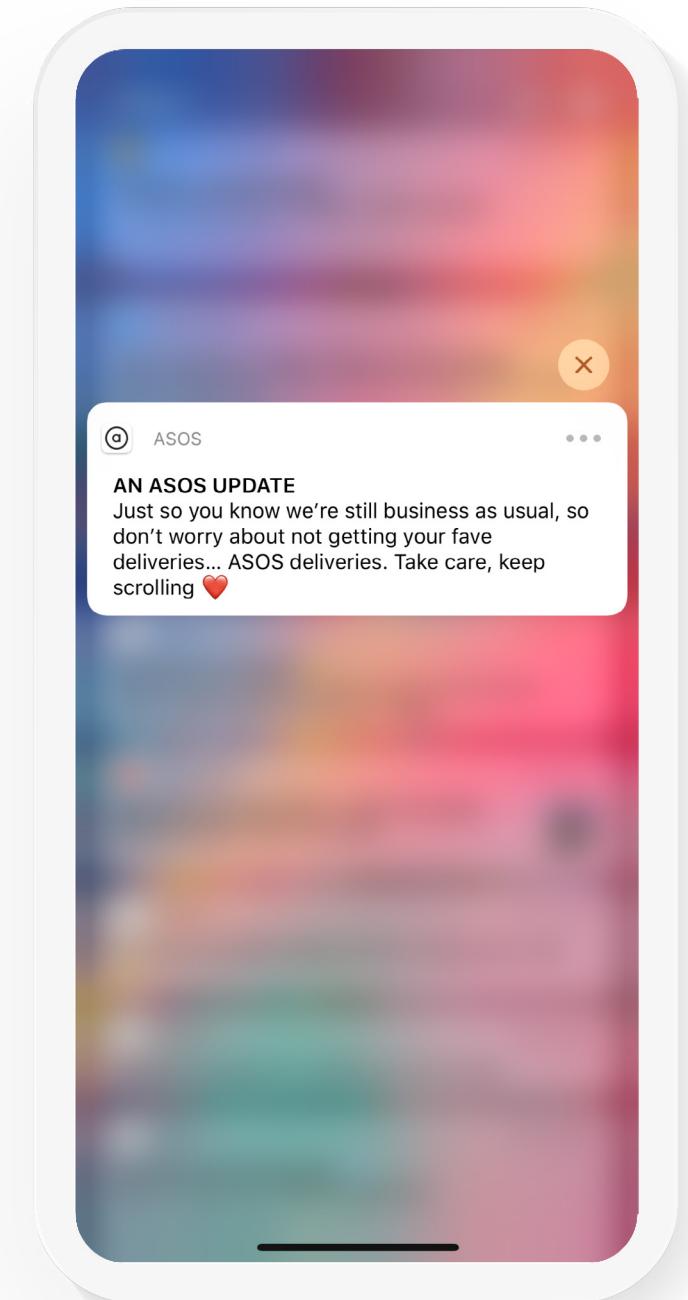
Of shoppers use mobile e-commerce apps primarily to get deals and offers exclusive to the app.<sup>1</sup>



# Have a Conversation

Speak directly to customers with contextual and personalized messages.

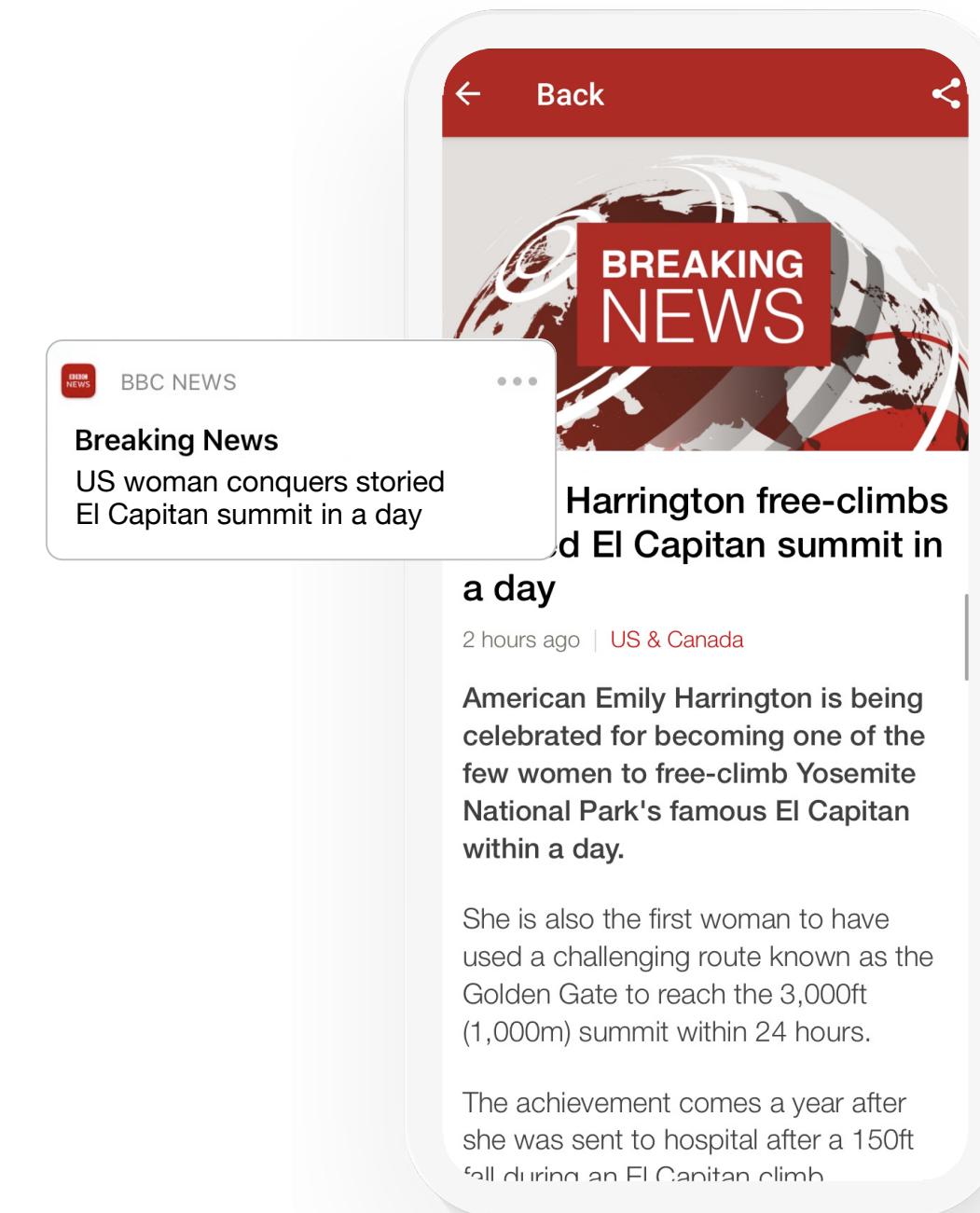
- Current Events
- Shipping Issues
- Common Concerns
- User Specific Tips



# Message With Facts

Show your value to customers with timely, fact-based messaging.

- Breaking News
- Informational Content
- Weather Alerts



# Additional Resources



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

With these 50+ ideas, you're ready to take the next steps toward building incredible value, loyalty and engagement through your mobile app. Not only will a continuous optimization strategy help your app stand apart in the crowd, you'll create stronger and more valuable connections with your customers.

Want to learn more? Check out the following Airship resources:

Blog Posts:

[20 Push Notification Strategies for Customer Retention](#)

[Innovate Faster and Mitigate Risk with Apptimize's Free Feature Flags Solution](#)

Webinars:

[50+ Ideas to Optimize Your Mobile App](#)

[Creating Extraordinary Customer Journeys with a Culture of Experimentation](#)

Other Resources:

[eBook: 9 Strategies to Build, Grow and Retain Your Audience with Airship Journeys](#)

[Report: The Life-Changing Magic Of Simplifying Your Mobile App](#)

# About Airship

Marketing and digital experience teams at thousands of the world's most admired companies rely on Airship's Customer Engagement Platform to create deeper connections with customers by delivering incredibly relevant, orchestrated messages on any channel.

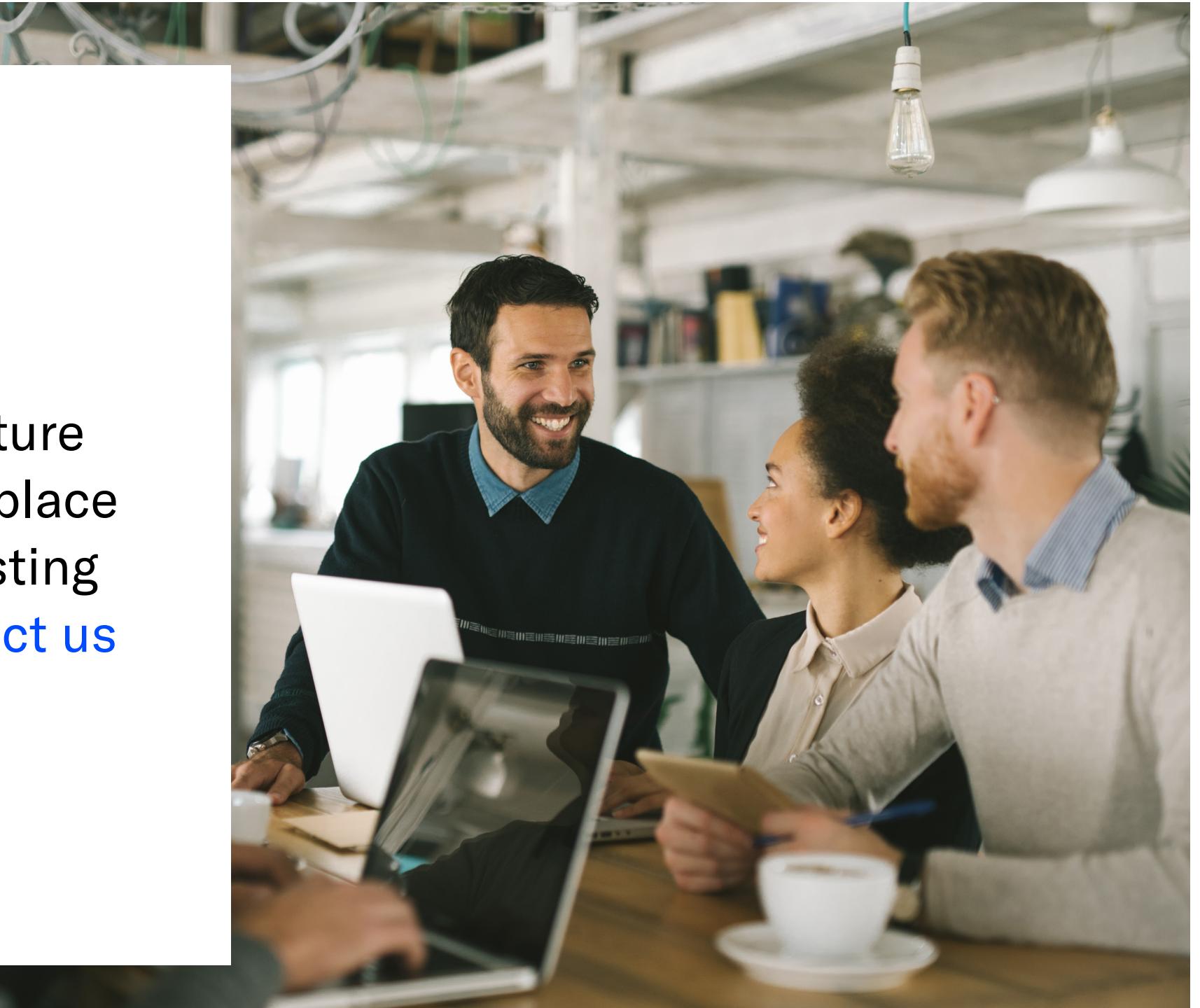
Founded in 2009 as a pioneer in push notifications, Airship now gives brands the user-level data, engagement channels, AI orchestration and services they need to deliver push notifications, emails, SMS, in-app messages, mobile wallet cards and more to exactly the right person in exactly the right moment — building trust, boosting engagement, driving action and growing value.

For more information, visit [airship.com](http://airship.com), read our [blog](#), and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



# We're Here to Help

Whether you want to build a culture of experimentation at your workplace or need help creating an A/B testing strategy, we want to help! [Contact us](#) or [request a free demo](#).





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