

In-App Messages

What They Are, How
They Work, and Why
They Matter

braze

Introduction

We're living in a connected world. Every screen is a window of opportunity, a chance to engage with your customers. And if you want to keep the conversation going inside your app, there's no substitute for an in-app message.



In-App Messages 101:

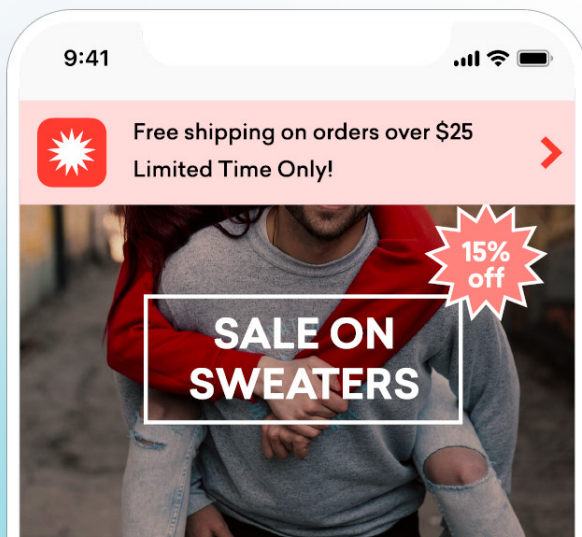
What Are In-App Messages, Anyway?

The tutorial that loads when you open a new app for the very first time after installing it, walking you through all the key features you need to know. The message that appears when you open a recently downloaded weather app, asking you to share your location settings to personalize the experience. The prompt you receive from a real estate app, wondering if you'd like to get alerts about new properties that match your saved searches. The notification that pops up when you open your favorite podcast app, offering the option to continue where you left off or start listening to a new episode.

In-app messages (IAMs) are so seamlessly integrated into our smartphones (and lives) that it can feel at times as though they're not even there at all. But in fact, they're the machinery working behind the scenes to guide how (and how much) we use our favorite apps. Because they can be customized and personalized to fit any user and any user journey, they're utilized to help guide everyone from individuals creating an account for the first time to seasoned customers looking to get even more mileage out of your app.

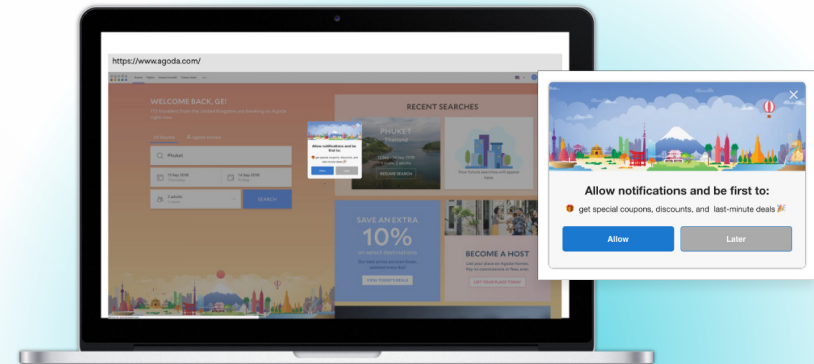
In-App Messages

As suggested by the name, [in-app messages](#) are notifications designed to reach people when they're actively using a mobile app.



In-Browser Messages

The web version of in-app messages—known as [in-browser messages](#)—are notifications that reach people when they're actively browsing a website, whether that's on mobile or on desktop. Just like mobile in-app messages, this channel is known for its flexibility, making it easy to fit the medium to the message.



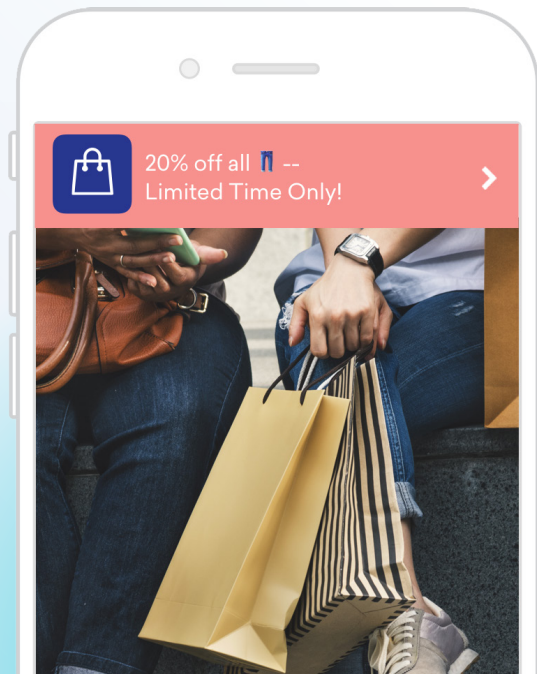
The Future of In-App Messages

Stay Tuned for...Connected TV Messages (Roku, Apple TV, Fire TV, etc.)

Expect to see [in-platform messaging](#) be the next channel to take off on platforms like Roku, Apple TV, Fire TV, and more, with the rise in popularity of these connected devices and trend toward multi-screen experiences. This will mean adapting design, copy, and creative to be optimized across various screen sizes. As with all [cross-channel strategies](#), adding another channel to the mix will require thought about the best channels to reach given customers on, at the best times, with the most appropriate outreach.

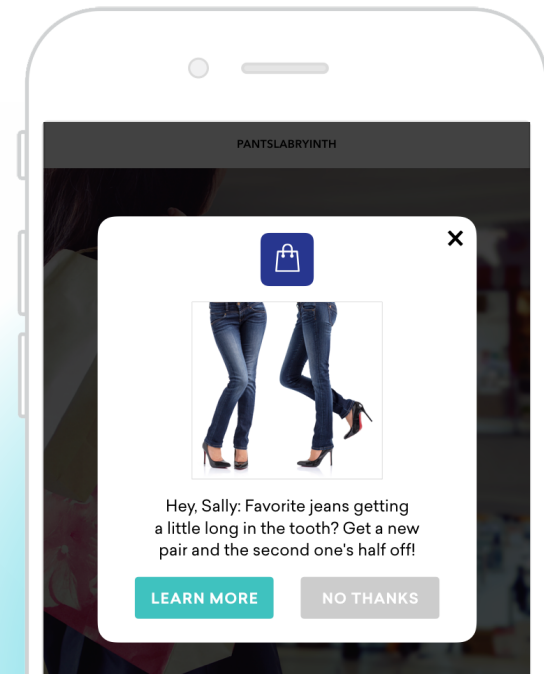
4 Types of In-App Message Formats

1. Slide-Up In-App Message



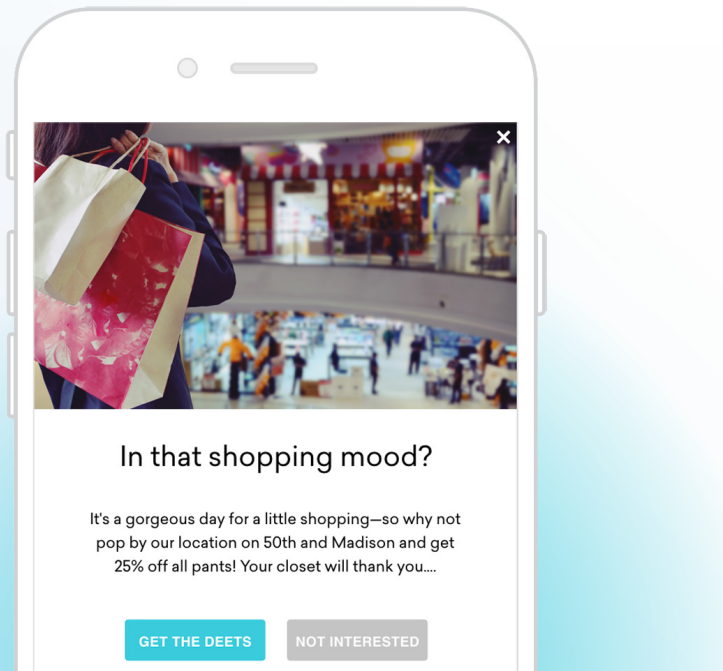
If a [push notification](#) were an in-app message, this is what they'd look like: Short, sweet, slick, simple, and soft-touch. Sometimes, customers need a nudge to read that article or make that purchase—a slide-up is the best way to make it happen.

2. Modal In-App Message



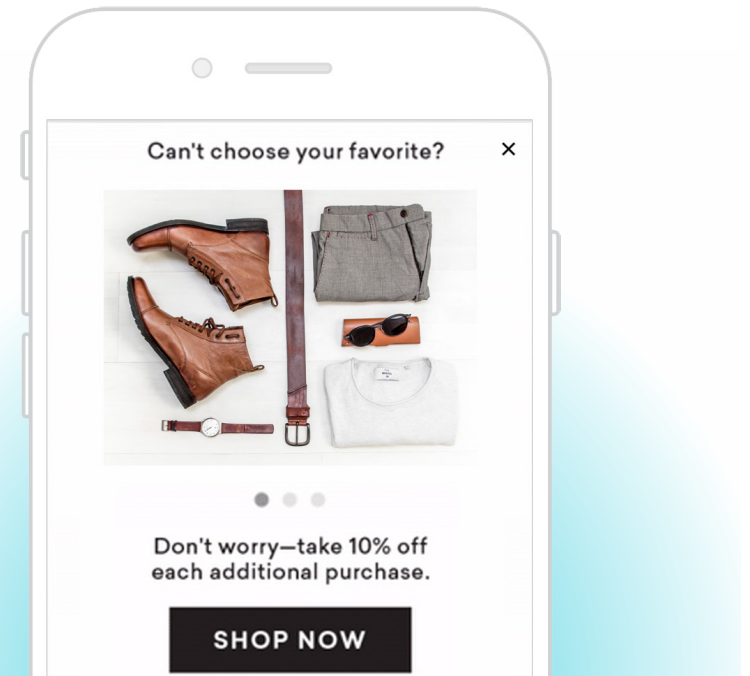
Modals give you room to dazzle. Add a picture, an animated GIF, or some clickable buttons, and watch the conversions roll in. Plus, modals don't cover the whole screen—so customers never lose their place.

3. Full Screen In-App Message



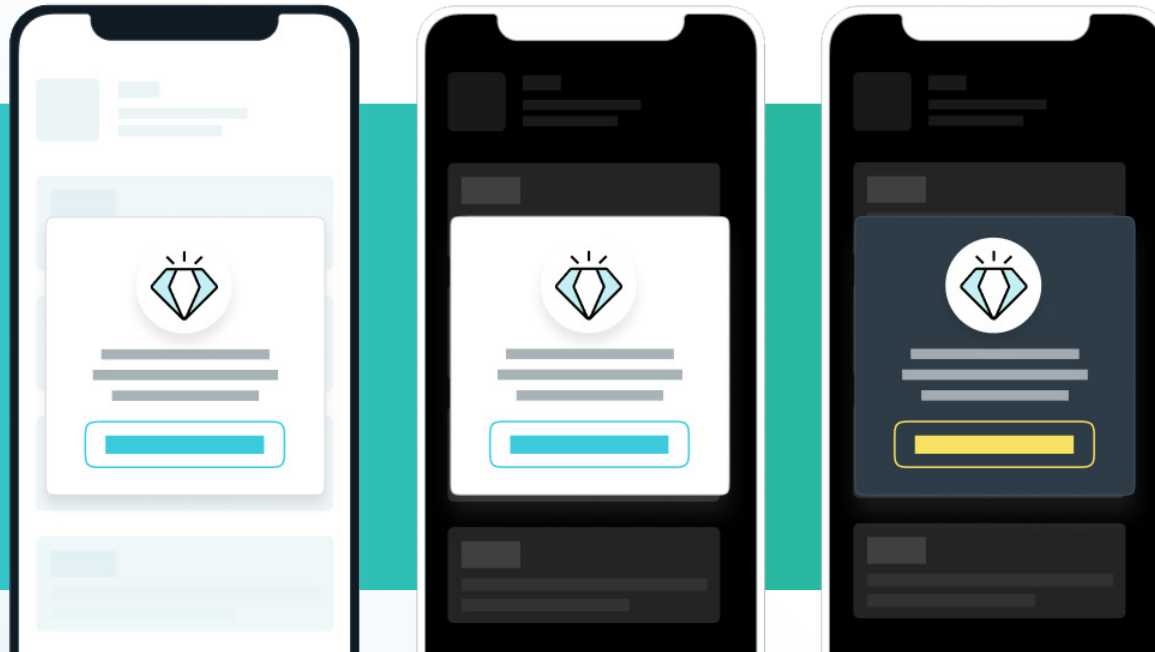
Immerse your customers in a vivid brand experience using full screen in-app messages—and give yourself the space to wow with eye-catching visuals and ignite curiosity with your copy. When they need to know, you need full screen.

4. Custom HTML



Custom HTML in-app messages let brands tinker to their hearts' content. Captivate customers with embedded video. Keep them immersed with easy in-message scrolling. Broaden your messaging options by adding an email capture. If you can dream it, odds are you can do it. (One Braze customer even developed their own digital scratch-offs using Custom HTML in-app messages—but more on that later...)

FYI: Light and Dark Modes



On both Android and iOS devices, individuals can choose to change their display from the default appearance, Light Mode (designed for daytime) to **Dark Mode**, which many prefer for nighttime phone browsing. When a device is set to Dark Mode, apps should follow suit. Apple and Google switch default push notification colors and assets to their darker counterparts

automatically, but that's not the case for in-app messaging. Messages in this channel need to be programmed to support both modes. The Braze platform's in-app messages support both Light and Dark and automatically display in the mode that matches individual users' preferences, adapting as they change their settings.

In-App Messages

Strengths & Weaknesses

Want to give customers some subtle encouragement? In-app messages are great for that. Need to grab their attention, no matter what they're doing in your app? In-app messages will deliver. Want to speak to active, engaged customers? This is your channel. Want to share content and build experiences that are as unique as your customers? Once again, in-app messages are the perfect choice.

By definition, someone who's seeing your in-app messages is someone who's choosing to engage with you, someone who's open to building a relationship. And that's powerful.

Still, like any channel, in-app messages do have their limitations.



Strengths

- In-app messages can **help you reach your audience when they are likely to engage**—right when they're using your app.
- Because they only reach active app users, in-app messages let you **speak directly with people who are primed to take action.**
- Unlike emails and push notifications, in-app messages don't have to take customers away from what they're doing. When used properly, **they work to deepen interactions with your brand by building on something they're already doing.**



Weaknesses

- The drawback is that **these messages won't be seen by the portion of your customers who aren't actively using your app** at any given moment.
- **If you're looking to lure back customers, this isn't the channel for you.** You need a channel that can reach beyond the app—think push, or email, or even web push.
- **These messages don't stick around. So they're not great for sharing important information like receipts or confirmation numbers.** If your users are going to need to refer to this information later, don't lean on in-app messages. Great as they are, they're built for messages that can be acted upon in the moment. Instead, lean on channels like email or **Content Cards** that are meant to stick around. Your (forgetful) customers will thank you.



Strengths

- In-app messages are built to support personalized and customized experiences that feel tailor-made and mirror the look and feel of your app or website. That means that **marketers can easily send in-app messages that feel like an organic part of their brand's app or web experience** with little to no help from their engineering team.
- Unlike key channels like email and SMS, **there's no marginal cost associated with sending additional in-app messages**, making it possible to use them for a whole host of different use cases (Looking to boost social sharing? Jumpstart revenue? Encourage deeper brand engagement?) without breaking your marketing budget.
- **In-app messages play nice with other channels, making it easy to build a cross-channel approach** that reaches more of your audience more effectively. Did they miss an email, or ignore a push? The next time they open your app, in-app messages will get them up to speed.



Weaknesses

- Having a flash sale? Hosting an in-store party tonight? Have some late-breaking news? In-app messages should be part of the mix—but if you use them alone, a lot of customers will miss out. **Channels like push and email complete the equation**, adding up to unmissable outreach.
- **When misused, in-app messages can disrupt customers when they're in the middle of something.** (Think about prompts asking you to rate an app right when you're opening it for the first time.)
- In-app messages are undoubtedly powerful, but **using them too often can lead to messaging fatigue**, just like with any other channel. If you're not thoughtful about when you're using it, this powerful channel can turn into a powerful irritant.

In-App Messages

Benefits For Customer Engagement

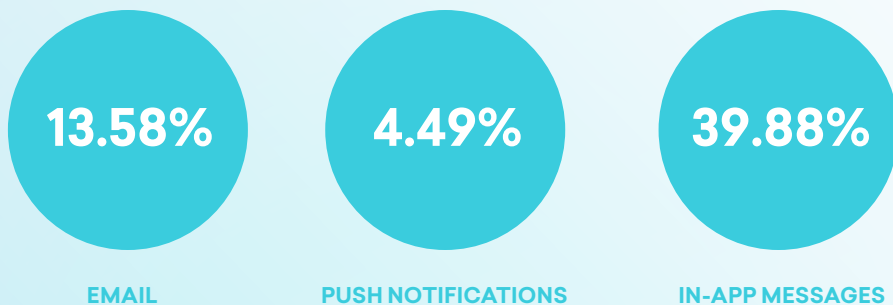
In-App Messages: Customer Engagement's Most Effective Channel

In-app messaging can drive customer activity at just about every stage of the user journey and for nearly every type of brand. In fact, [Braze research](#) has found that users who receive in-app messages have engagement rates that are 131% higher than those who receive no messages.

Across all industries and all customers, in-app messages are the most effective channel for customer engagement.

In-app messages are the most effective channel for customer engagement, according to a [Braze analysis](#) of 29 billion messages sent in 2019.

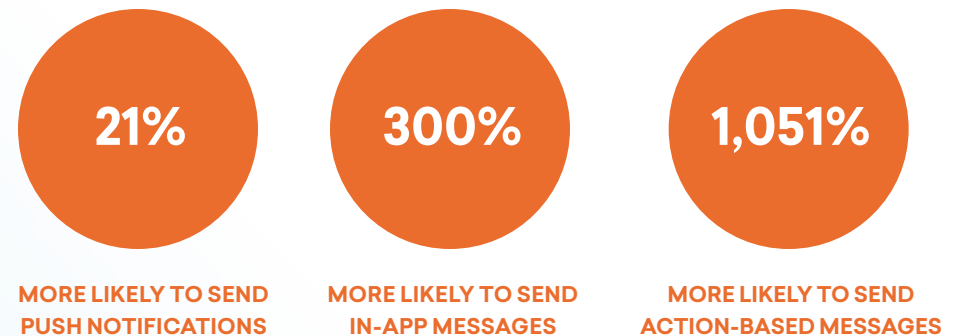
Interaction rates by channel:



In-App Messages: Streaming Services' Secret Weapon

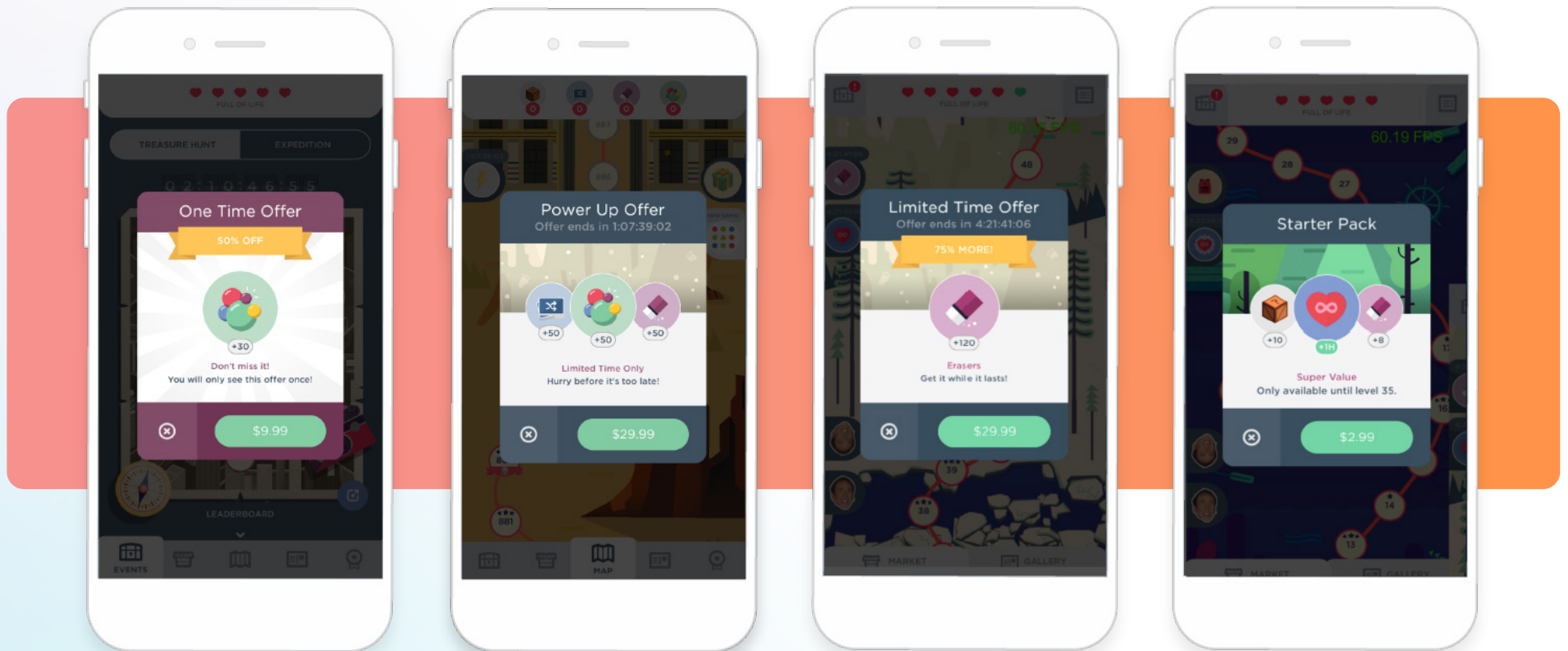
In 2020, Braze and Apptopia teamed up to analyze the KPIs of 35 streaming services. Those with the greatest success—in terms of high Monthly Active Users (MAU), Daily Active Users (DAU), and time spent in app—focused on creating personalized, relevant communication. Plus, these top-performing brands were 300% more likely to send in-app messages.

Top Performing Streaming Services Were:



Dots Case Study

How the Gaming Brand Tapped In-App Messages to Drive LTV and Revenue

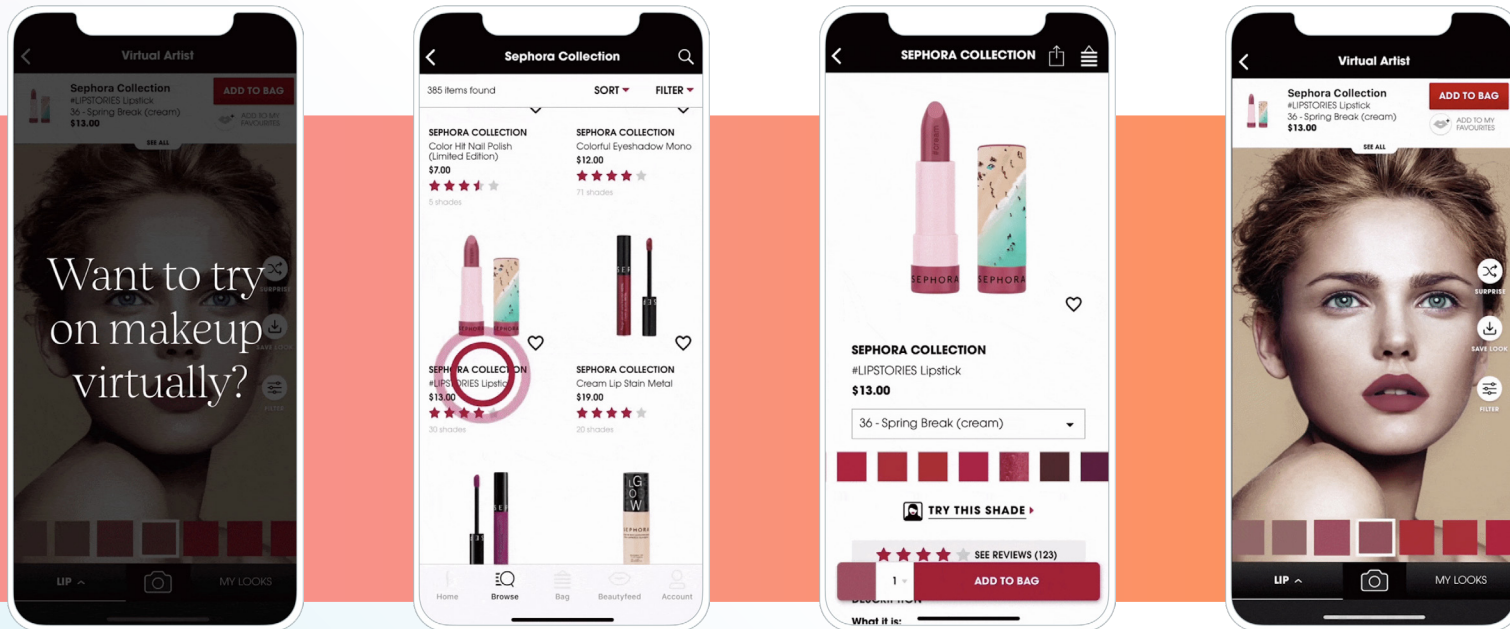


Mobile gaming titan Dots designed a powerful campaign that sent revenue skyrocketing, leveraging both in-app messages and audience segmentation. With discounts based on levels played and

previous purchases—and customizing offers to fit each person—**Dots drove up LTV by 25% and boosted revenue by 33%. That's a big win.** (Read the [full case study here.](#))

Sephora SEA Case Study

How the Beauty Brand Boosted Engagement with a New AR Feature by 28%

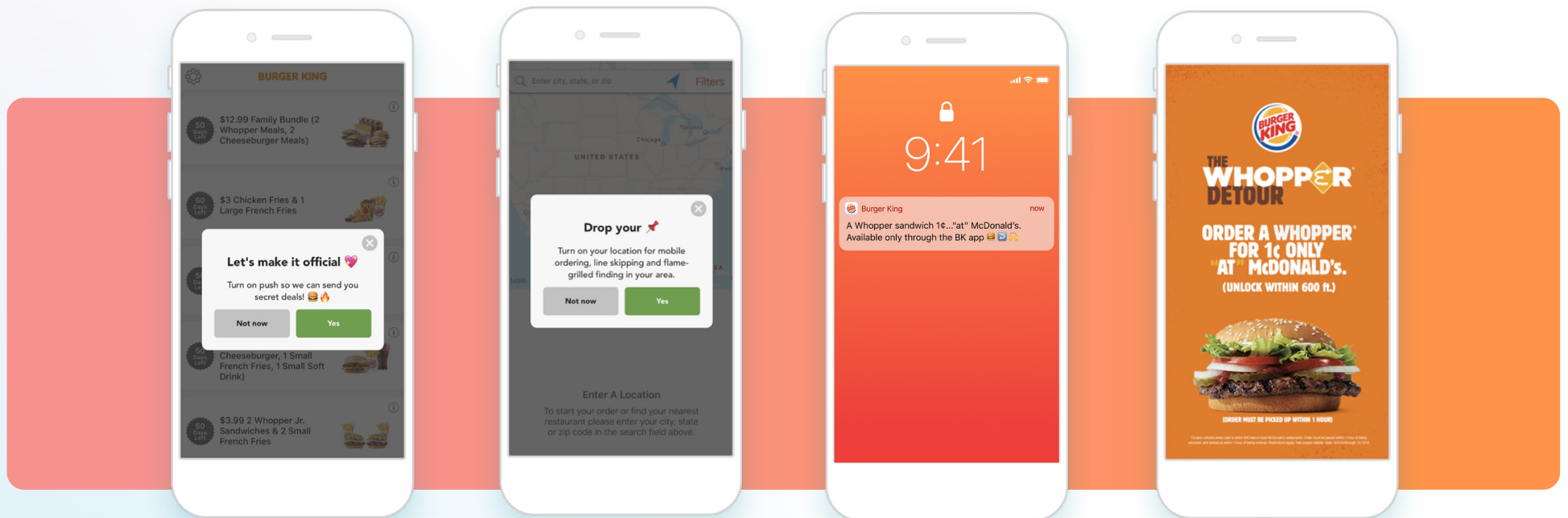


When Sephora SEA, the South East Asian arm of the global makeup leader, launched a new augmented reality (AR) feature within its app—allowing customers to “try on” its products virtually—they used segmentation to identify users who had viewed at least one makeup product page within the past 30 days, but hadn’t yet explored the AR tool.

Targeted users received push notifications that explained how to try out the new AR feature, paired with in-app messages designed to drive users through the process. Overall, the campaign produced a 28% uplift in user adoption in their AR feature and a 48% increase in overall traffic to the feature. (Read the [full case study here.](#))

Burger King Case Study

How the Fast Food Giant Leveraged Mobile Messaging to Increase MAUs by 50+%



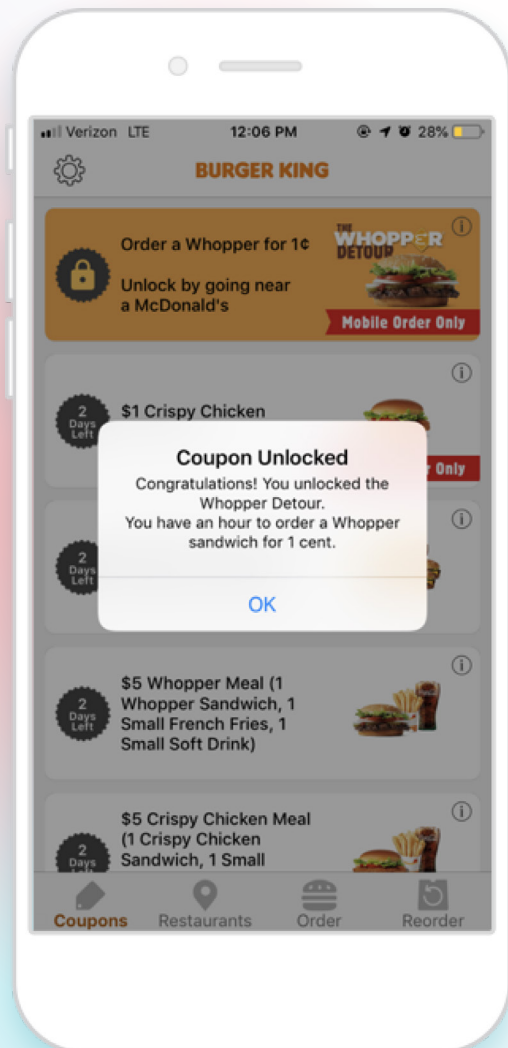
Outsmarting the competition is one way to describe this Cannes Lions Festival [award-winning](#) campaign, known as the “The Whopper Detour.”

Burger King had the genius idea to use the geographic footprint of its number-one competitor’s locations (i.e. McDonald’s

restaurants) as an opportunity; an opportunity to drive traffic to its own locations. The strategy: It would lure customers away from the competing chain with the enticing offer of one-cent Whoppers. The catch: The deal was only available to customers who downloaded Burger King’s app and opened it within 600 feet of a McDonald’s.

Burger King Case Study

How the Fast Food Giant Leveraged Mobile Messaging to Increase MAUs by 50+%



Central to the campaign's success was mobile messaging. First, in-app messaging prompted customers to opt into receiving notifications and location services to be able to unlock this unique, creative deal. Then push notifications were sent, alerting users of this deal, and driving them to the app. (Read the [full case study here](#)).

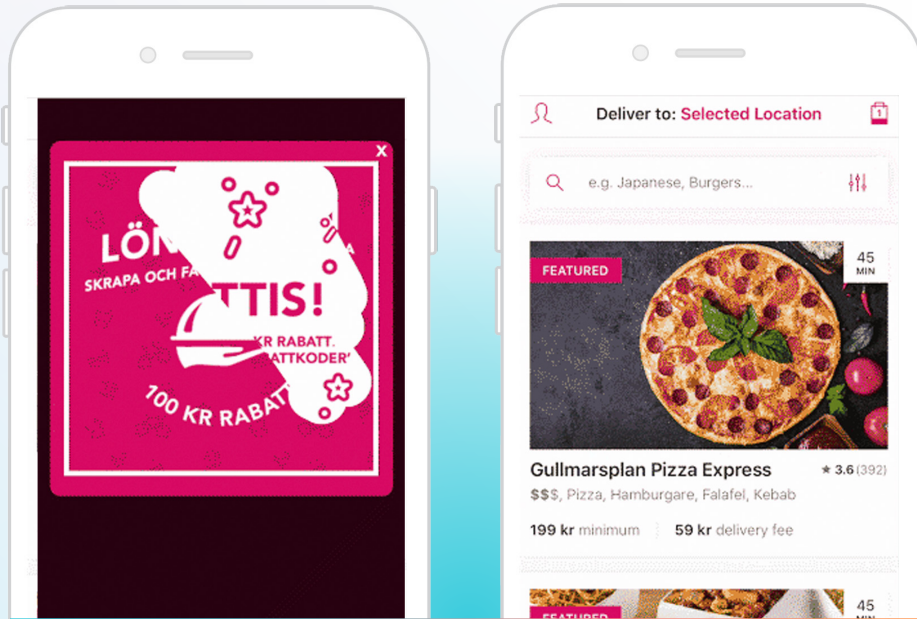
A 100% Satisfying Mobile Messaging Success Story

Burger King's campaign resulted in...

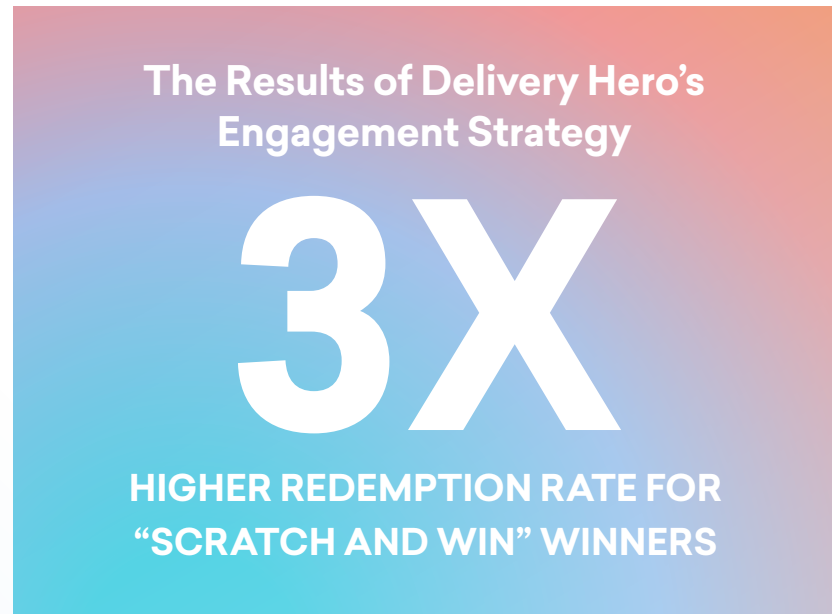
- **3.2 million new** Burger King app downloads
- Burger King's app landing in the **#1 spot** on Google Play and Apple's App Store
- A **53.7% increase** in monthly active users (MAUs) for the Burger King mobile app
- A **143% increase** in users sharing their location data with Burger King
- An **incredible 37-1 ROI**

Delivery Hero Case Study

Leveraging In-App Messages to Increase Redemption Rates



Food and delivery app Delivery Hero wanted to kick off a fun gamification campaign letting customers try their luck at winning a promotion worth \$9 off their next order through in-app messages, with the special offers unveiled on the 25th of every month.



This “Scratch and Win” campaign was a hit, generating 3X the discount redemption rate compared to other similar offers. (Read the [full case study here.](#))

7 Powerful Opportunities to Increase Engagement with In-App Messages

1

Onboarding Campaigns

Some mobile brands code their customer onboarding process directly into their apps. While that can work, it tends to take a lot of engineering time and resources. In-app messages, on the other hand, can match the look and feel of your app but can be put together by marketers, making it easier to create and adjust your app's onboarding experience and tailor it to individual users and drive successful sign-up completion rates, return visits, and long-term retention.

2

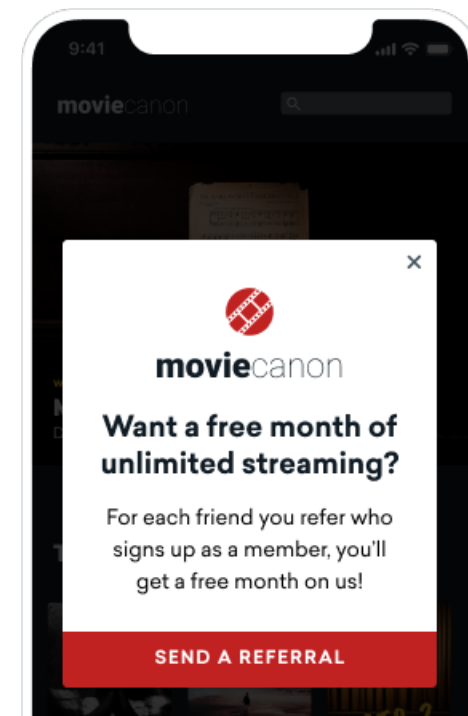
Action-Based and Triggered Campaigns

The pop-up message that tells you you've successfully booked an appointment, completed a purchase, or rated a movie. The alert that congratulates you for advancing to the next level in your game, logging an extra mile, or learning a new vocabulary word. These are all a specific kind of in-app message, namely messages that are triggered based directly on (and usually immediately following) a given customer activity. In our [analysis of 534 billion messages](#) sent between 2017 and 2019, we found that these kinds of real-time [action-based](#) and [API-triggered](#) generate up to 5x higher conversion rates than traditional, scheduled campaigns.

3

Retargeting Campaigns

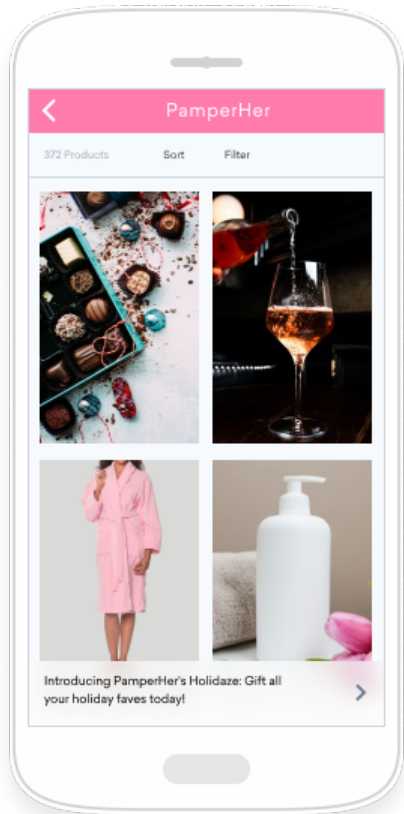
You've sent them emails that have gone unopened. Push notifications that get ignored. Still, these customers remain loyal app users. Retargeting campaigns offer you a chance to send the message you want your audience to receive by delivering them on the channel where they're active, in this instance via an in-app message.



4

Promotional Campaigns

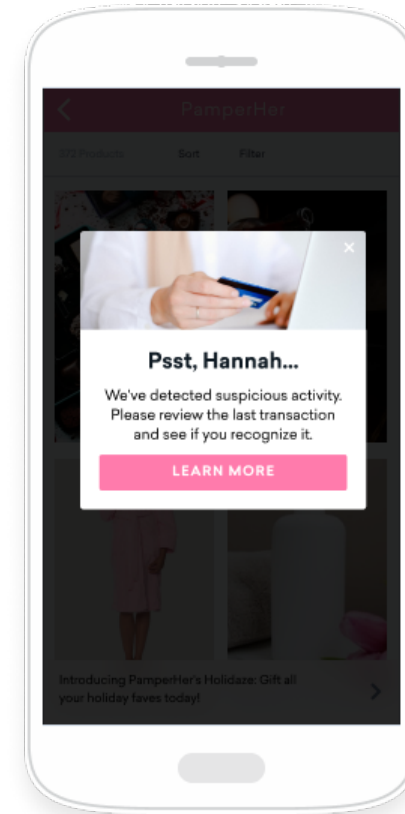
For many brands, their most-engaged users are also the most fruitful when it comes to driving conversions and revenue. That makes in-app messages an invaluable asset when it comes to communicating about sales, discounts, and other promotions within your app experience—you can speak to them where they are, trigger messages based on in-app behavior and nudge people from passive interest to a completed sale in subtle, engaging ways.



5

Timely, Urgent Messages

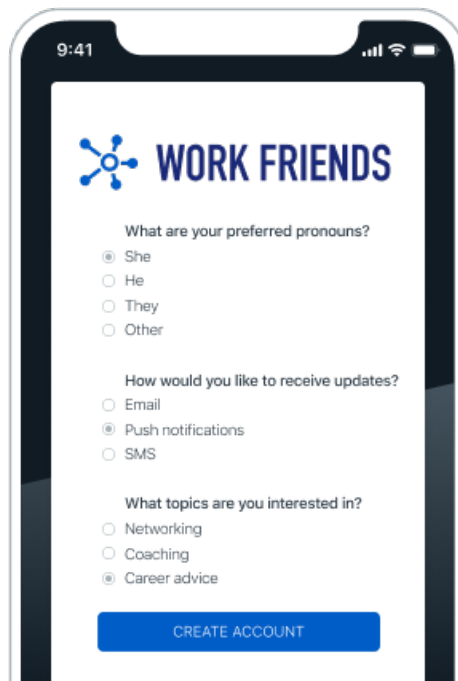
Have a product update announcement to share? Has there been fraudulent activity detected in your banking customer's account? In-app messages are designed for delivering need-to-know information the moment someone opens your company's app. (That said, if you're looking to reach a customer who doesn't engage regularly, you're likely better off leveraging email, push, or other outside-the-app channels.)



6

Collecting User Preferences

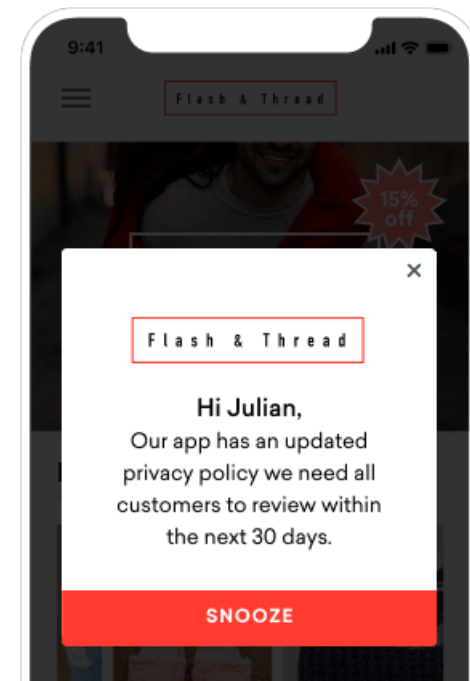
Preference centers are useful for keeping track of the topics customers are interested in receiving updates about, the channels they have opted into receiving these updates on, and their preferred customer details—the kinds of information that make it possible to deliver personalized messages that resonate. (When you send people the information they've told you they want, they're more likely to open, click, and engage.) The problem is, preference center details are often hidden away within web accounts and apps or buried at the bottom of email footers. With in-app messages, you can use this front-and-center outreach to gather customer input on their preferences on an ongoing basis.



7

Adding Snooze Buttons

While in-app messages see the highest engagement of all other channels, they can still show up at inopportune times when people aren't able to focus on or take action upon the information being shared. There's now a solution for this: Brands can add "snooze" buttons to in-app messages to allow recipients the option of reading them at a later time. This extends the temporary nature of in-app and in-browser messages, prolonging their shelf-life and allowing users to signal that they're interested but can't engage right now. If timing is half the battle, then letting users pick the time that works for them to read them is a win-win.



Conclusion

Dating back to mobile's earliest days, in-app messages have demonstrated an impressive staying power. That's because they're incredibly effective when it comes to increasing engagement. Companies that are proactive in adopting in-app messaging see impressive gains.

When brands engage customers via a single channel, like in-app messaging, they can see up to a 131% increase in customer engagement. By combining in-app messaging with email, the results are even higher, with an average 315% jump in activity.

When companies invest in the optimal cross-channel strategies and outreach for users, they can experience an up to 844% uplift in engagement. That's more than a nice boost—that's transformative. Get the full details on how in our [Cross-Channel Data Report](#).

Outreach channel(s)	Boost in customer engagement (compared to no outreach)
In-app messages	131%
In-app messages + emails	315%
In-app messages + emails + push notifications	543%

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