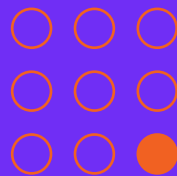


# 9 Experience Trends in 2022 for the Mobile Consumer

Global Survey Profiles the New Mobile Consumer



Top brands understand there's a new discipline they need to master. We call it **Mobile App Experience — MAX** — and it's transforming how businesses manage relationships with consumers in every conceivable way.

You'll be hearing a lot about MAX in the months ahead. In the meantime, here's a quick primer on nine important trends you'll want to understand.



As 2022 begins, we find ourselves at the intersection of an ongoing pandemic and an evolving technology landscape that prioritizes customer privacy, choice and experience. One way consumers and brands are coping is with increasing reliance on mobile apps. Consumers want more control over their interactions with brands. They're already gaining on that front through sheer competition for the best app experiences and an increasing focus from Apple and Android on digital well-being and user privacy controls. It's all about value, convenience and speed — a combination that mobile app experiences uniquely deliver. How will these play out in 2022?

- **Will customers continue to prioritize the mobile app over other channels?**
- **Will brands evolve customer experiences to meet new demands?**
- **What will be the long-term impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior and app design?**
- **How will consumers and brands negotiate reciprocal value exchanges that create greater value for everyone involved?**
- **How will brands respond to fundamental platform changes?**
- **What do consumers really, truly, care about?**

These are big questions. Here we try to answer them, with nine experience trends for the mobile customer in 2022, culled from surveys with 9,000 consumers across the world.

TREND 1

# Mobile Apps Are Becoming the Digital Center of Customer Experience

The customer experience in the app is what will determine the fate of brands going forward.

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of waking hours spent on mobile

+30% YOY in-app subscriptions

[App Annie](#) found that consumers spent one-third of waking hours on mobile in 2021, up 30% from 2019; and they spent 30% more dollars on in-app subscriptions YoY. [eMarketer reports](#) that app users produce 3.5x more revenue than other shoppers and are 3.5x more likely to make a repeat purchase. Airship's platform data across thousands of brands and tens of thousands of apps shows active mobile users increasing by 31% in 2020, nearly double the growth in 2019. The global pandemic accelerated the preference for apps. Airship's [latest survey](#) of 9,000 consumers globally found staying power as well, with 76% of respondents using retail apps more or about the same since the pandemic began.

Apps enable personalized exchanges wherever customers are. They can uniquely blend digital and physical worlds to provide complete brand experiences and streamlined conveniences, such as click-and-collect, loyalty and subscription programs, and direct-to-consumer commerce (D2C). Apps also create the kind of mutual exchange that is essential for any sustainable relationship. The best apps build reciprocity into the very fabric of their technology and brand promise. The customer experience — especially in preferred app destinations — is what will determine the fate of brands going forward.

As first-party data takes center stage in the wake of the so-called “cookie apocalypse,” more brands will lean into mobile apps to engage and delight their customers, while also collecting valuable first-party and zero-party information that allows them to optimize the customer experience at every touch point in the customer lifecycle.

Though mobile apps are primed to become a bigger part of the customer engagement equation, simply having a functional app will not be good enough. [According to leading tech analyst Benedict Evans](#), “there’s digital and there’s good digital,” and a poor app experience is equivalent to a poor in-store experience. Today’s savvy consumers “know what a best-in-class experience looks like,” says Evans. Brands will need to continue to adapt to meet the benchmarks set not just by their competitors, but especially by the mobile-first leaders, such as Amazon and The Home Depot.

In fact, “Forrester’s Customer Experience Index (CX Index™) data shows that companies that deliver superior CX grow revenues five times faster on average than their competitors with inferior CX. And companies with superior CX have customers who are willing to pay a higher price for products and services” (Forrester Research, Inc., Transform Customer Processes and Systems To Improve Experiences, February 22, 2021).

TREND 2

# App-Enabled Experiences Are the New Normal

For most countries and generations, the likelihood of using a retailer app while shopping in-store is only a few percentage points behind visiting the retailer's website, despite the need to first download the app from the App Store or Google Play.

The likelihood of using a retailer app while shopping in-store:



The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in massive changes in how brands and consumers engage. For example, [83 percent](#) of shoppers say the pandemic has changed the way they shop. And [50% of shoppers](#) plan to continue using services such as [curbside pickup](#) even after COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. In 2022, brands will continue to optimize the synergies of digital and physical experiences that customers have come to love.

According to [Forrester](#), “Customers have responded well to the accommodations (such as curbside pickup) and are more open than ever to remote solutions (such as telehealth). We expect many brands will keep the pandemic-era services that have become popular with customers, due to their profitability and to avoid disappointing their customers.” Forrester cites that three-quarters of US retail sales still take place in stores, but “post-pandemic, stores are thinly staffed, and more shoppers are used to mobile self-service.” As a result, “Retail fast followers and mainstream giants will learn from The Home Depots and Sephoras of the world and bring their existing commerce technology more deeply into the store, empowering store associates and shoppers alike” (Forrester Research, Inc., Predictions 2022: Digital Commerce, November 4th, 2021).

According to [Airship's survey](#), two-thirds of consumers worldwide will use retailers' apps to meld digital and physical experiences. For most countries and generations, the likelihood of using a retailer app while shopping in-store is only a few percentage points behind visiting the retailer's website, despite the need to first download the app from the App Store or Google Play. Indeed, 81% of millennials have used retail apps more or about the same since the pandemic began, followed by 77% of Gen X, 74% of Gen Z and 66% of baby boomers.

Younger consumers are much more likely to use their smartphones in-store – 75% of millennials, compared to just 46% of boomers. There is an opportunity here for brands to reach out and communicate to older generations, either in store or through an app, about the benefits of using a smartphone in retail locations to enhance shopping experiences.

Retail is often the go-to example of what the future holds for mobile-enabled experience. However, every industry included in Airship's survey has the potential to meld digital and physical experiences. Whether a sports stadium, movie theater, restaurant, hotel, airport, bank, geo-tagged social post, D2C product drop or physical retail store, they can glean rewards for doing so. Consider how quickly airline boarding passes on your phone became ubiquitous.

TREND 3

# Consumers Require Immediate Value to Opt In

The strongest motivation for opting in was “**immediate value**,” which topped the list among 35% of global respondents, whether *in the form of discounts or loyalty rewards*.

Top motivation drivers for opt-in:



One of the greatest advantages that mobile apps provide is the ability to reach consumers wherever they are and when it matters most through push notifications to their smartphone lock screens. The main challenge for brands is getting consumers to opt in to these notifications.

Our [data](#) shows that the strongest motivation for opting in was “immediate value,” which topped the list among 35% of global respondents, whether in the form of discounts or loyalty rewards. Tied in second place at 25% were alerts for “shipping, delivery, or curbside pickup” and receiving “order confirmations or receipts.” “Gaining early access to big sales events” was the third most popular motivation at 21%.

On the other end of the scale, personalized offers based on behavior or location are some of the least likely to motivate mobile users to initially opt in. Conversely, “information not relevant/personalized to my needs” is one of the most common reasons for opting out. In other words, consumers want personalized, individualized interactions, but first require immediate value to opt in. This would take the form of discounts or loyalty rewards, followed by white-glove services, including shipping/delivery/curbside pickup alerts, order confirmations/receipts and early access to big sales events.

TREND 4

# When It Comes to Sharing, Consumers May Be Quick to Opt Out

Brands must adapt to a new customer-first era of engagement where **people are becoming more selective about the information they provide to brands** and how, when and where they want to interact.

Consumers are more likely to stay opted in with controls



In what has become a new customer-centric era, consumers have more control than ever over their data and will shun brands that do not meet their needs.

Apple's current release, iOS 15, allows consumers to restrict when and how often they receive notifications, and offers anonymous email addresses, blocked email tracking pixels and hidden IP addresses. Before an Apple iOS user has even downloaded a brand's app, privacy nutrition labels disclose its data collection practices. Once the user has the app, a new App Privacy Report will detail how often it requests access to sensitive information, and where that information is being shared.

Likewise, Android 12's new privacy dashboard ["offers a single view into your permissions settings as well as what data is being accessed, how often and by which apps. It also lets you easily revoke app permissions right from the dashboard."](#)

These changes are a huge win for consumer privacy, but they also mean brands must adapt to a new customer-first era of engagement where people are becoming more selective about the information they provide to brands and how, when and where they want to interact.

A key element to retaining app users is giving them user-level control over their data and how they prefer to interact with a brand. [Airship's survey](#) found that consumers are more likely to stay opted in to brand communications if they have control over the reason (43%), frequency (41%) and channels (40%) with which brands engage them. The inability among app users to control the frequency and relevance of messages received are the top reasons they opt out. Across all countries, the most common reason for opting out of a brand's smartphone communications was receiving too many messages too often (51%). The second most common reason was "Information not relevant/personalized to my needs" (40%).

TREND 5

# It Takes More Than Wishful Thinking to Grow App Tracking Transparency Opt-in Rates

Tracking across unrelated apps is one of the **types of personal information consumers are least likely to share** — only surpassed by “information from their social profiles.”

1  
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of US consumers

ONLY

& **36%**

of global consumers are willing to share cross-app activities in exchange for personal interactions and special incentives

Third-party data is becoming scarcer as privacy regulations and mobile platforms require consumer consent for gather it. Google is planning to phase out third-party cookies on its browsers by 2023, while Apple has introduced a range of features that give users more control over their privacy and personal data. While Apple’s ID for Advertisers (IDFA) allows marketers to track a user’s activity across unrelated apps to better target and measure digital ad campaigns, apps must first ask users for permission.

As a result of this new requirement, [only 18% of US consumers](#) are opting in to be tracked across unrelated apps, per recent data from Flurry. Airship’s survey found tracking across unrelated apps to be one of the types of personal information consumers are least likely to share – only surpassed by “information from their social profiles” – and together these types of information make up the bulk of digital advertising approaches today.

However, there is hope: according to [Airship’s survey data](#), a third of US consumers and 36% of global respondents said they would likely share their activities across unrelated websites and apps in return for personalized interactions and special incentives. Brands first need to provide requisite value and utility to app users, giving those that have it an unfair advantage. To encourage “the share,” use onboarding tours, welcome series and soft prompts to encourage users to opt in, and continuously fine-tune those executions with ongoing multivariate testing to maximize lift.

TREND 6

# Values Matter More Than Ever

Apps can progressively, and unobtrusively, build on their understanding of what individuals care about and value.

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Almost half of consumers are willing to share their personal social values with brands, including environmental, moral, political, or religious values.

Airship’s survey found that almost half of consumers (46%) are willing to share their personal social values with brands, including environmental, moral, political, or religious values, which is significantly more than are willing to share information from their social profiles (35%).

According to [Forrester](#), “As values-based consumers become more prevalent and as their expectations of companies become more intense, brands will have to throw more weight behind connecting their impact initiatives with the everyday consumer experience. Brands can move from values in theory to values in practice by reflecting morality, inviting consumers to participate in specific action, changing awareness, nurturing a network, and reinforcing satisfaction” (Forrester Research, Inc., “The State Of The US Values-Based Consumer,” August 2nd, 2021).

Apps offer brands opportunities to understand their customers and form stronger direct relationships by tying together digital and physical activities and engaging them personally throughout their journey. Interactive app experiences — from onboarding and feature tours to app surveys and messaging interactions — can progressively, and unobtrusively, build on their understanding of what individuals care about and value.

Brands that align with customers’ personal values will stand a good chance of earning their trust. Gartner finds that “... customers who trust a brand more are willing to share more information and spend up to 20% more with that brand... through 2023, organizations that can instill digital trust will be able to participate in 50% more ecosystems to expand revenue-generating opportunities” (5 Privacy Imperatives for Executive Leaders by Bart Willemsen, October 18, 2021).



## TREND 7

# The Most Successful Brands Are Building Out First-Party and Zero-Party Data on Apps

Brands have an imperative to learn about user preferences during the onboarding experience and continue that effort throughout the customer lifecycle.

# 61%

of **growth leaders** are moving toward a first-party data strategy

The impending demise of third-party cookies, increasing data privacy regulations and greater consumer controls from Apple and Android create an imperative for brands to focus on creating direct customer relationships that improve their understanding of their customers and provide more opportunities mutual benefit.

More brands will invest in loyalty programs, surveys, quizzes and QR codes to collect more customer information, and use it to both personalize offers and lower advertising costs. However, rather than one-off executions, expect to see more brands focus on delivering these experiences through apps to create an ongoing value-exchange with customers that sustains engagement, improves the customer experience and drives critical business results.

Consumers are also becoming more selective about where, when, and how they share their personal information with brands. In fact, ahead of more traditional information like postal address or demographics, consumers are more likely to share their “interests relevant to a brand,” “their communication preferences” and “what they’ve browsed on a brand’s app or website” in order to receive personalized interactions and special incentives. This showcases the fact that brands have an imperative to learn about user preferences during the onboarding experience and continue that effort throughout the customer lifecycle.

This trend is supported by a recent [Deloitte](#) report, which found that high-growth brands are leading the shift toward first-party data. They found that 61% of those growth leaders are moving toward a first-party data strategy, a signal that “high-growth organizations more often recognize the pressing need to get ahead of a rapidly changing environment.”

In response, expect to see a bigger focus on mobile apps, surveys, preference centers and other mechanisms that allow you to interact with and learn more about your customers, so you can shape loyalty-winning mobile app experiences that respond to their interests and needs.

## TREND 8

# The Effectiveness of Email Will Continue to Erode

Brands can **no longer rely on a spray-and-pray approach**, where a large email list combined with a low-single-digit conversion rate made email marketing the marketer's go-to channel.

# 78%

Ignore or delete a brand's emails without reading at least half of the time or more

Globally, more than three-quarters of respondents (78%) ignore or delete without reading a brand's emails half of the time or more, according to our [survey](#).  
Frequently unsubscribing from brand emails is the most common method (41%), while 35% delete emails by scanning who it is from, and 34% delete emails by scanning the subject line. These behaviors are consistent across age groups, with some critical differences.

Younger generations are more likely simply to ignore emails altogether: 27% of Gen Z do not often check emails, and the same percentage use a secondary email account that they rarely check. Compared to boomers, Gen Z and millennials together are more than four times as likely to use anonymous or fake email addresses and more than twice as likely to say they do not often check their email.

In addition to these consumer habits of ignoring or deleting email marketing, there are secular trends in the industry that are rendering brand emails less effective. For instance, Mail Privacy Protection in Apple's Mail app prevents senders from using pixel trackers in email to collect information, such as whether the email was opened or not. Not only will that cut into data that marketers like to have in their CRM, but it will stymie efforts to perform email list hygiene, which could put sender reputation at risk and create deliverability problems.

These are strong signals that brands can no longer rely on a spray-and-pray approach, where a large email list combined with a low-single-digit conversion rate made email marketing the marketer's go-to channel. A decade of mobile experience has conditioned consumers to expect immediacy, relevancy and simplicity, and email simply cannot keep pace. The app is fast becoming the consumer's preferred destination for a transparent and functional value exchange with brands that understand this new customer imperative.

## TREND 9

# Empathy From Brands Is Becoming the Norm

Consumers' patience for irrelevant, distracting and potentially upsetting marketing communications is razor-thin, risking opt-outs and complete brand abandonment. This presents brands with a massive opportunity to give customers preference controls, making every interaction more personalized and relevant.

PRIVACY

EMPATHY

MENTAL WELLBEING

In 2021, millions of consumers received emails from brands offering them the chance to opt out of Father's Day- and Mother's Day-related marketing emails in a bid to reduce painful reminders for those who have lost loved ones. Brands such as Lush are turning to activism and putting highly publicized pressure on social media platforms to create more positive, less harmful environments for young and vulnerable users.

As we have seen, recognition and acknowledgment of consumer preferences — including the option to simply be left alone — became a major trend in 2021. Apple first gave users greater control of their data, disrupting the advertising and marketing sector's status quo. Since then, both Apple's iOS 15 and Android 12 have taken pre-emptive action to give consumers greater transparency, choice and control in how brands communicate with them, making "privacy," "empathy" and "mental well-being" more than just buzzwords.

We expect this movement to flourish and pick up pace in 2022 and beyond. Consumers' patience for irrelevant, distracting and potentially upsetting marketing communications is razor-thin, risking opt-outs and complete brand abandonment. This presents brands with a massive opportunity to give customers preference controls, which will help make every interaction more personalized and relevant and improve long-term retention of opt-in audiences. By collecting preferences early in the onboarding process and across multiple app experiences — from message interactions and preference centers to tutorial walkthroughs and in-app surveys — enables brands to continually adapt to the topics, interests, channels and frequencies that customers prefer to create greater mutual value.

Whether prompted by lockdowns and the subsequent surge in screen time, or simply the steady evolution in volume of mobile communications, these steps towards a kinder, safer, more empathetic world of engagement are undoubtedly a good thing — infusing much-needed humanity into our increasingly digital lives.

### Airship's Consumer Mobile Survey

Airship's report, The Mobile Customer Imperative, reveals the growing role of apps in consumers' lives and must-know shifts in how they want to engage with brands, including how these preferences differ across countries and demographics. Our report also highlights some of the ways in which brands can leverage these insights to deliver the experiences your customers demand.

[Download the full report](#) for more valuable insights and recommendations.

### About Airship

No one knows more, does more, or cares more when it comes to helping brands master mobile app experiences than Airship. From the beginning of apps, we powered the first commercial messages and then expanded our data-led approach to all re-engagement channels (mobile wallet, SMS, email), app UX experimentation and now rich in-app experiences that business users can create and adapt on their own — with no ongoing developer support or app update required.

From the trillions of mobile app interactions we've powered for thousands of global brands, our solutions and expertise have helped apps become the pinnacle of elegant customer experiences and winning brand loyalty strategies.

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

