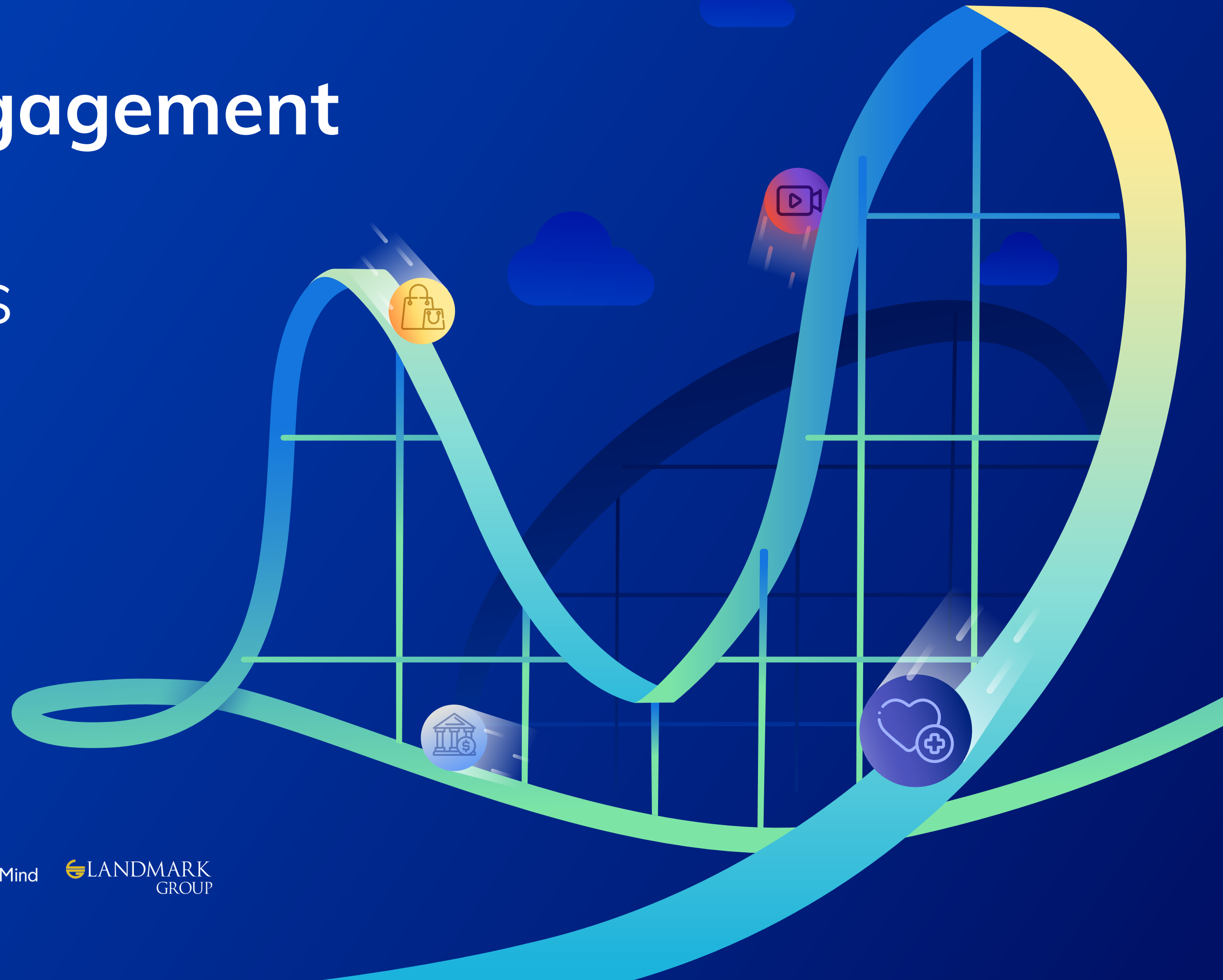


Customer Engagement Playbook During a Crisis



++ Insights and strategies gathered from



7Mind



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Introduction

Business in a Post-Crisis World

At the time of writing this playbook, the total number of confirmed COVID-19 positive cases worldwide stood close to 9.5 million and was steadily increasing.

COVID-19 is affecting individuals around the world in ways no one had ever fathomed. But the worst outcome of a crisis like this global pandemic is the growing **economic depression or Coronavirus recession** as it is being referred to.

This recession, however, hasn't impacted all industries in the same way. The **repercussions on some verticals have been negative whereas others have been observing unprecedented growth**. Brands across verticals such as e-commerce, online pharmacy, food delivery and cab-hailing, among others, are spreading awareness and educating their customers about safety measures by reaching out to millions.

During such a crisis when all verticals are affected in some shape or form, some businesses have prioritized helping the customer:



Some **e-commerce brands** are offering **express delivery** for urgent cases and offering safety equipment at slashed prices.



Food delivery brands are educating users about safety precautions taken while preparing meals viz. **ensuring regular hygiene and temperature check of cooking staff and delivery executives**, sanitization of work stations and other government-mandated precautionary measures.




Online **pharmacy brands** are making **COVID-19 tests readily available** and providing educational information on coronavirus to curb panic and the spread of misinformation.



Micro-mobility brands are ensuring that **vehicles are properly sanitized before every ride**, providing barriers between rider and driver, limiting the number of riders in each vehicle etc

Earlier, when we launched our COVID-19 Business Impact Report, our vision was to offer in-depth data points highlighting the impact of the pandemic on various industries across geographies. But after speaking with many experts from around the world — Southeast Asia, Europe, India, Middle-east and the United States, we realized that the **drastic shift in customers' buying patterns has affected the brand-customer interaction.**

With a new vision of providing customer engagement strategies catering to the changed rules, we set out to analyze businesses that are observing either growth or decline in numbers.



Consumers respond to crisis in different ways. To truly understand the impact of the current pandemic on your mobile app users, it is important to overlay the consumer mindset to the behavior data for your business. Through this eBook, we've tried to provide the tools and frameworks that will help you evaluate your current engagement score, and build razor-sharp strategies to serve your customers in the best ways that you can.

Akshatha Kamath
Head of Content Marketing

moengage

As soon as both UA and ASO are parts of the whole marketing strategy of each product, as well as other parts, they should have the same tone of voice. That is why it is important to coordinate these activities first so as not to create a gap between main points in your UA campaigns and your product store page (ASO). To avoid misleading users, keep an eye on what graphics and CTAs you use in your UA banners/creatives and your screenshot and store descriptions. A unified and clear vision of all marketing activities — the way to success

Anna Kochetkova
Head of Consulting

APPFOLLOW

Based on our analysis and expert insights, we have framed real-world business strategies that will serve as a playbook to help you navigate through the crisis.

This playbook is brought to you by a collaboration between MoEngage and AppFollow. It contains strategies from several industry verticals across Europe, India, Middle East and Southeast Asia. You can utilize these strategies to sustain your brand's growth, bounce back from an adverse position or accelerate the pace of growth at your organization.

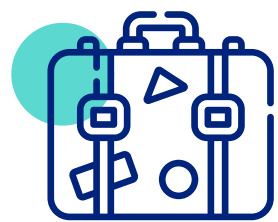
Impact of Covid-19 On Various Industries

After analyzing more than 1.5 billion users worldwide across 12 industry verticals, we found that the impact of **COVID-19 on businesses is far-reaching**. On one hand, there's a drop in overall DAUs and conversions for the travel and hospitality industry. On the other, there's a growth in overall engagement and DAUs for the healthcare industry. Furthermore, some verticals viz. online shopping and food delivery are observing different effects in different regions.

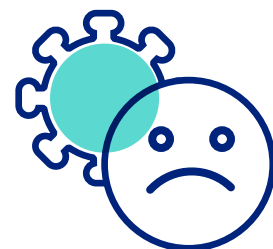
For instance, the food delivery industry is observing a slowdown in the EU, India and Middle East but is growing steadily in North America and Southeast Asia.



Various Businesses Noticing a Permanent Shift in Consumer Behavior



Travel and mobility sector is expected to have **a slow recovery with unavoidable business travel** likely to start sooner than leisure travel.



The change in behavior can be attributed to **dip in consumer confidence** combined with fears of second and third waves of the pandemic.



Businesses will need to change plans depending upon **recovery models viz. U, V or L shaped**



Investors suggest planning for 3-4 months of zero revenue, 3-4 months of 30%-40% recovery, 3-4 months of 80%, and 80-100% of pre-COVID-19 revenue after a year.

Various Businesses Noticing a Permanent Shift in Consumer Behavior



Brands bouncing back quickly such as China's Didi (revenue back to 80% of pre-COVID-19 peak) have done so by re-gaining consumer confidence.



Private mobility (self-drive vehicles) is expected to grow while shared mobility (taxis and public travel) will take more time to bounce back.



In the e-commerce space, certain categories such as **online grocery delivery are benefitting with increased digital interaction** between consumers and local vendors.



Similarly, with health concerns looming large, two-wheeler used vehicle purchase is expected to see a spike.



The **telemedicine industry has seen greater acceptance by doctors** now more than ever, as they feel safer with video-consultations, virtual waiting rooms, recorded online medical history, a library of drug combinations for diseases etc.



These **one-time shifts in user behavior trends are expected to stick** for a long time, unlike a fad.

The Paradigm Shift In Spending Pattern



Since the beginning of this pandemic, the ways in which customers engage with and consume products and services have undergone radical changes. Customers are prioritizing essential buying even with lockdowns getting relaxed in most countries around the world. As shown in a recent survey by McKinsey, customers who are optimistic about spending are from countries in the APAC region, whereas customers from Europe and North America are low to negative in optimism where spending intent is concerned.

Customers across the globe with easy access to online shopping have been opting to buy everything online. In addition, readily available OTT platforms are ensuring that customers are able to consume all forms of entertainment within the safety of their homes, changing the entertainment industry as we have known it. Movies are now being released directly to OTT platforms thus affecting the business of multiplexes and cinemas.

Yes, even with relaxation on many services around the world, customers are sticking to the shift from offline to online shopping. Other obvious changes are:

Focus on essentials and moving away from luxury expenditure.

An all-time high for emotional spends on services ranging from entertainment subscriptions to online workout and meditation subscriptions.

Increase in stocking up of medical emergency supplies and safety equipment.

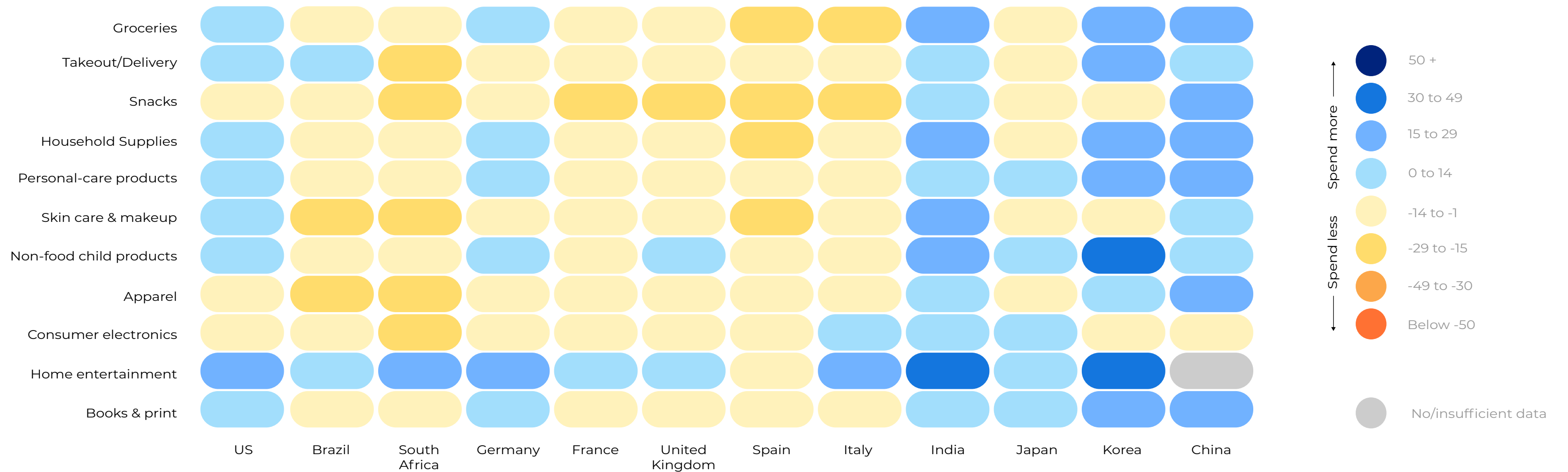
Growth in loan applications to get through uncertain economic conditions.

Rise in loan applications from women or female sex to spread the ownership of lending in the household.

Jump in applications for microloans in favor of personal loans.

Consumers across the US, EU, and APAC to spend more online across various businesses

Expected change in online shopping frequency per category over the next two weeks
Net intent percentage*



* Net intent is calculated by subtracting the percent of respondents stating they expect to decrease shopping frequency from the percent of respondents stating they expect to increase shopping frequency.

Source: McKinsey & Company COVID-19 Consumer Pulse surveys, conducted globally between March 15 and May 25 2020

What's your App Adoption Trend: Growth, Slowdown, or Unchanged?

With many countries planning a phased unlocking of restrictions, consumer buying patterns might shift again depending on consumers' comfort. The chances of out-of-home activities are still uncertain and many consumers might continue shopping from home.

Apart from this, the opening of restaurants, theatres, mobility services and flights is undecided in certain countries whereas they are already up and running in others. To understand this better, we spoke to many industry experts and leaders from around the world on how businesses might fare with lockdown relaxation.

Based on these discussions, we concluded that we can categorize businesses into three buckets going forward

Before you move ahead in this playbook, we would like you to answer a few questions that will help you map the right path for your business — growth path, slowdown path or unchanged path.

Growth

Brands that are observing **unprecedented growth**. Now looking towards strategies that will ensure they continue on the growth trajectory.

Slowdown

Brands that are bearing the brunt of the crisis, with severe drops in DAU/MAU, revenue, and LTV. Now looking towards bounce back strategies.

Unchanged

Brands that are **neither growing nor slowing down** but are stagnant. Now looking to either grow or bounce-back on the trajectory.

Path Assessment Checklist

1. What user trends do you notice on your app?

a. Increase in DAU

b. Decrease in DAU

c. Unchanged

2. How are your in-app engagement metrics performing?

a. Increase in engagement

b. Decrease in engagement

c. Unchanged

3. Is there any change in the interaction pattern of your users on social?

a. Increased activity

b. Decreased activity

c. Unchanged

4. Has your Cost Per Install (CPI) or Cost Per Acquisition (CPA)?

a. Decreased

b. Increased

c. Unchanged

5. Have your length and number of sessions?

a. Increased

b. Decreased

c. Unchanged

6. How has your email open/click rate been affected?

a. Increase in CTRs

b. Decrease in CTRs

c. Unchanged

Path Assessment Checklist

7. How frequently do users interact with your push notification?

a. Greater than March

b. Lesser than March

c. Unchanged

8. How has the engagement of your campaigns been?

a. Greater than March

b. Lesser than March

c. Unchanged

9. How is your conversion metric affected?

a. Increased in conversion

b. Decreased in conversion

c. Unchanged

10. Has your LTV?

a. Increased

b. Decreased

c. Unchanged

11. Has your ROI?

a. Increased

b. Decreased

c. Unchanged



If you answered mostly 'A's, then your app is a fortunate one and you managed to grow during the pandemic.



If 'B's then your growth has slowed down and you might need a pick-me-up.



If you answered most 'C's then you are neither growing nor slowing down, which means you need to accelerate the pace of your growth.

Remember, that each app category, each geo, and each platform has its own benchmark. It's best to keep in mind the market benchmark and beat it. So, to assist you, we have collated benchmark strategies for each category — growth, slowdown and stable.

- Brands with most As can take a look at our [Growth-sustaining Strategies](#) section.
- Brands with most Bs can take a look at our [Bounce-back Strategies](#) section.
- Brands with most Cs can take a look at our [Growth-accelerating Strategies](#) section.

Engagement Frameworks To Grow In A Post-crisis World

Path 1

Growth-sustaining Strategy

To continue on your current growth trajectory

Milestones

- Improve paid and organic growth.
- Understand evolving user behavior.
- Offer relevant, personalized engagement.

Path 2

Bounce-back Strategy

To alleviate the slump observed post-crisis

Milestones

- Re-look at the paid acquisition strategy.
- Audit users' app behavior daily to identify drop-offs.
- Engage customers using subcategories.

Path 3

Growth-accelerating Strategy

To accelerate the pace of current business operations

Milestones

- Examine unexplored organic acquisition platforms.
- Increase community engagement.
- Personalize user experience using segmentation.

Path 1

Growth-sustaining Strategy with Focus on Engagement

A crisis situation, such as a pandemic, has unprecedented and often far-reaching impact on businesses across geographies and verticals. While some verticals and businesses might be adversely affected, there are others who notice growth either owing to the nature of their business or how they add value to users.

If your brand happens to enjoy growth during the crisis, then congratulations are in order. But it might be time to put down that glass of champagne and start working on plans to sustain this growth.

A laser-sharp focus on engaging users and building long-lasting relationships will ensure that your growth trajectory continues well beyond the crisis.



Milestones for sustaining Growth

The aim of the Growth Sustaining Path is to help you plan ahead by providing actionable strategies to define engagement flows, revisit and rework value propositions, curate relevant content, streamline marketing communications and re-evaluate spends. Now that you are aware of which track defines your brand, the first step is to know how you can enhance your customer journey from the ground up.



How has your user acquisition been impacted?

- Establish ongoing industry trends (CAC, LTV)
- Establish an omnichannel approach to acquisition
- Review acquisition spends (prioritize organic/paid channels)
- Improve organic growth



How has your vertical been affected?

- Analyze current user flows — acquire, onboard, purchase and retain
- Create user behavior cohorts to understand user activity
- Understand evolving user behavior
 - Audit users' app activeness and search history
- Segment users based on app activeness and purchase history



How to engage with customers?

- Map a dynamic user flow for every customer
- Evaluate communication to ensure minimal spam and maximum relevance
- Examine value props/offerings to actively engage loyal users



How to sustain user confidence?

- Revise communication channels and frequency based on engagement metrics
- Identify the journey/path of the ideal customer and build campaigns to push users through that path (source, actions, assets engaged with)
- Offer relevant, personalized engagement using language localization

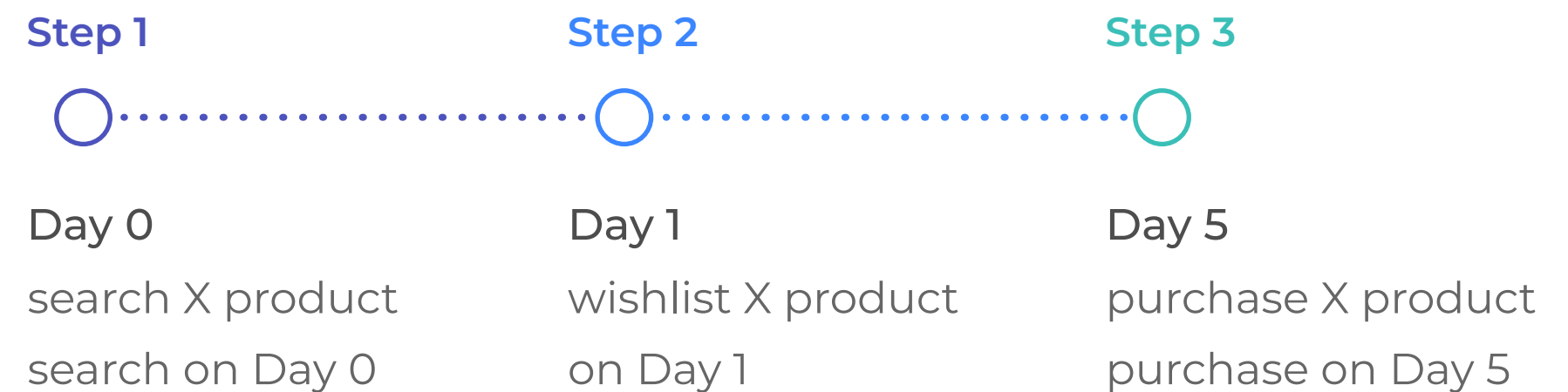
Growth-sustaining Strategies

1. Track User Events to Define Engagement Flow

To continue on your growth path, it is crucial to understand your current user events. Analyze the basics like app opens, product searches, product wishlists, purchases and so on.

Map a user-action flow based on recurring events across your user base and create an engagement flow to tie-in these findings.

For instance, if your current user action is:



You need to create a step-by-step workflow using this data for other users as well. So, let's assume the user completed step 1, i.e. product search. Then, you need to send a communication urging them to complete steps 2 and 3 as well. You can employ **MoEngage Flows** and use channels such as 'push' and 'email' to send triggered communication driving users to complete these actions. To enhance your workflows, you can use MoEngage's **Sherpa**, which will help you optimize the timing of your communication and localize messages to fit in with your target audience.

2. Offer Relevant Content to Increase Session Duration

Users tend to consume more crisis management content during an actual crisis. So, this is your golden opportunity to grab their attention by creating more in-depth and crisis-related content that will appeal to them.

Focus on producing both bite-sized content such as blogs, articles, and cheat sheets and in-depth content such as reports, checklists and how-to guides.

For instance, if you're an online health and fitness brand, you can offer best health practices. If you're an e-commerce brand, you can generate a checklist of essential products to be equipped with during a crisis. Ensure that the tone of communication and messaging is empathetic as the focus should be on serving and not selling, thus building long-term relationships with users.

ShemarooMe, one of India's leading OTT platforms, launched 'Ab Rumour Nahi Humour Phailega' campaign by including a good selection of comedy movies on the platform.

ShemarooMe also created a 'watch from home' tray in response to the increase in family viewing and communicated the same to users. The company went international with their content and made the library free for two weeks.

3. Identify Industry Trends To Better Prioritize Marketing Spends

While user engagement takes precedence during a crisis, it is very important to take stock of how acquisition costs (CAC) have been affected across your vertical. Organic growth is of utmost importance but if your brand is on a growth trajectory, you need to allocate marketing spends wisely.

The key here is to streamline your approach by identifying channels that generate the most ROI and continue scaling up.

Evaluate acquisition channels to identify patterns. For instance, if you notice that acquisition across a channel went up for the same cost (reduction in CAC), scale-up that channel. An example of a company that adopted this strategy is 7Mind, a Germany-based mindfulness meditation app.

Growth-sustaining Strategies

The app noticed a drop in CPI/CPS compared to the other acquisition channels. 7Mind then doubled down on these channels and structured an end-to-end integrated approach to acquisition and CRM with a focus on channels that work.

4. Offer Value Props to Keep Loyal Users Active

While a crisis might not seem like the right time to offer discounts, in reality, this is the perfect opportunity to provide value-added benefits to your loyal active users. This will ensure that your users remain active and continue to purchase on your app.

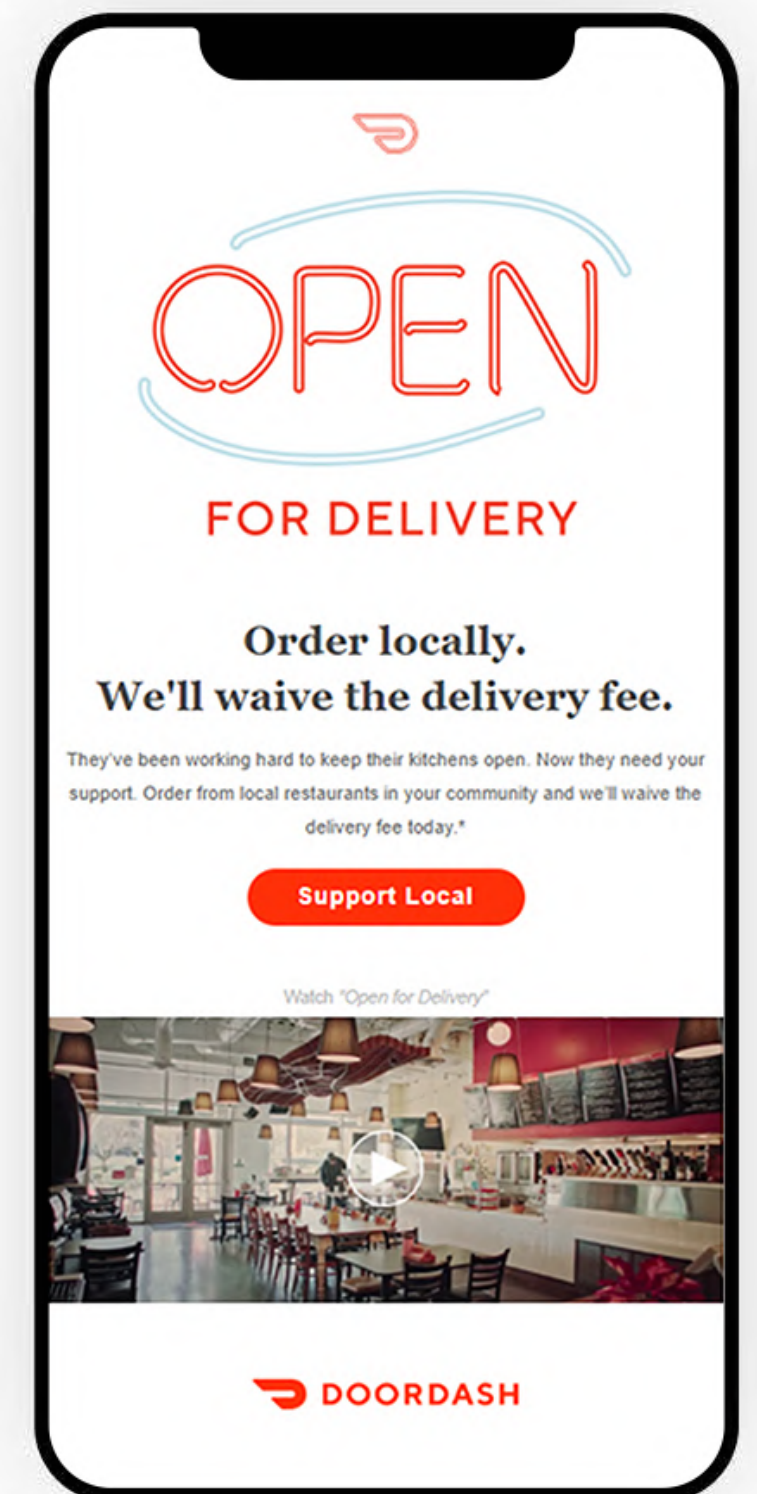
The value propositions that you offer can range from free delivery across the country to something as humble as priority delivery for certain products.

For instance, food delivery and online grocery brands across several geographies have delighted users by providing express delivery to their active loyal customers during these tough times.

One such example is from a North American brand called Doordash. This on-demand ready-to-eat food delivery service app has waived the delivery fee for their local users.



Another example is Disney+Hotstar, which plans to offer premium fitness content apart from their usual entertainment content. The brand has partnered with Sarva Yoga, Cult.Fit and Brilliant Wellness to provide tailor-made fitness videos for stay-at-home folks. Making this new type of content available will help the brand to keep its users active.



Expert Insights



Nina Pollex

Head of CRM, Babbel

+Babbel

Babbel has observed a massive boost in numbers with an upswing in DAU and installs. Babbel has scrutinized their communication viz. emailers, automated flows, and daily/weekly notifications to ensure there is no irrelevant information going out during these sensitive times to prevent being tone-deaf. Introduced personalization in their welcome flow, and point towards offerings like podcasts, free one-month for students, and one week of free trial for every user. Tweaked user acquisition and engagement strategy to increase the content frequency bearing in mind the engagement patterns.



June Le

Deputy Director of Marketing Department
Asus Vietnam

ASUS
IN SEARCH OF INCREDIBLE

Demand for laptops significantly increased during lockdown with more people working from home/learning and **increasing laptop consumption business to 35%** during quarter one of 2020 compared to the same time last year. The brand launched MyASUS app, an exclusive app portal for ASUS laptop users where they can get 1-on-1 support, update software, optimize PC performance, troubleshoot common problems instead of visiting an offline store or service center.

Republic of Gamers (ROG), a gaming specialized sub-brand of ASUS, kicked off their user engagement campaigns promoting work from home and game from home by asking gamers to post pictures of them playing COD & other game titles to win some giveaways from the brand.

Expert Insights



Rossana De Padova

Marketing Director, Compettia

COMPETTIA

Compettia (Atrivity) has reported good acquisition numbers while retaining a lot of the existing users. Most of the new users came from inbound efforts as more and more brands realize that the gamification app for learning is not just a bonus but a genuine need. Communication has evolved from ‘engaging employees who are working from home’ to ‘talking about bounce back strategy’ as the situation changes. Compettia is focused on adding value to the users through their content, as their users have ample downtime owing to the lockdown.



Lomit Patel

Vice President, Growth, IMVU



Execution process at IMVU were automated leveraging AI, thus no noticeable impact on managing and executing campaigns. **CPS and CPM dropping by 20-40%**. After adapting to new reality, IMVU **noticed an influx of organic users and had to ensure servers had operational capacity** needed to handle the barrage of new users. The brand changed messaging to empathetic and inspirational which has helped the brand stand out.

Expert Insights



Christinne Cuyugan

Global Mobile App Marketing Lead, Zurich



There's not one single strategy or tip because **the crisis has hit the mobile app industry in very different ways**. However, app marketers asking: "can we retain the users we acquired and the kind of engagement after this period?" need to measure it appropriately by having a **look on all of the users acquired as a separate cohort, and analyze** how they interact with the app further. Once this is done, they'll have the ability to **follow up with unique post-COVID19 campaigns strategies**, and prepare for mobile marketing in the "new normality".



Saket Toshniwal

Marketing Manager, Head of CRM, Lovoo



The **user acquisition has gone up with costs remaining the same**. The remarketing results have improved as Lovoo can now target and bring inactive users back to the app. **ASO has played an important part**, where the brand has optimised app store information according to the situation. Lovoo drives app updates to ensure increase organic growth. Based on the **changes in buyer persona**, Lovoo has made **significant changes to the app**.

Expert Insights



Dogukan Dag

Growth Marketing Manager, Lyrebird Studio



We provided more relevant content to our users who were ready to consume it as evidenced by the increase in average screen time. This, in turn, helped increase engagement and average session duration. Working on app store metrics helped drive more organic downloads.



Seif Tawfik

CRM Specialist, Landmark Group



We tailored our communication strategy according to the prevailing situation across countries, thereby reducing the number of notifications sent to users in some countries while focusing more on automating the flows, accordingly.

Polina Bogachenkova

Head of Performance Marketing, 8Fit



8Fit has noticed a positive change in the user activity curve, with users coming to the app multiple times every day. 8Fit is now more focused on providing quality content to the end-user, ensuring they stick to the platform. 8Fit changed its user acquisition strategy to ensure they allocate budgets where there is an apparent demand, and the app can provide a solution.

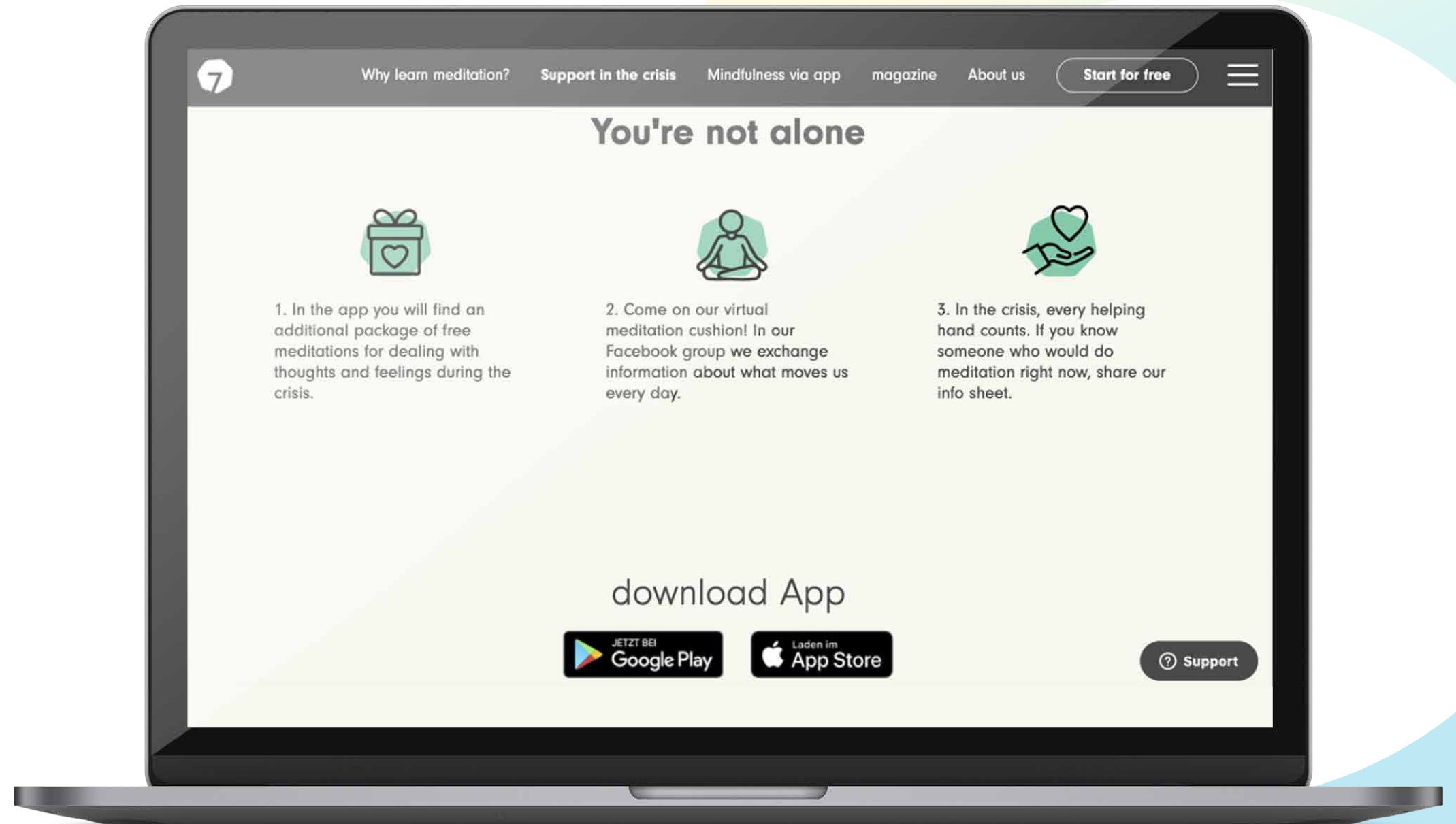


Success Story



7Mind

The mindful meditation app, 7Mind, recorded a massive uptick in user activity, installs, retention, session duration and LTV parameters. This was due to the adoption of a holistic approach to user acquisition, engagement and CRM. The brand quickly rolled out dedicated crisis content to help users unwind, relieve stress and deal with anxiety. This content is free and accessible to anyone at the time of downloading the app. The brand unlocked a meditation course, "Kids & School", available solely for members of 7Mind Plus to help kids and teenagers unwind. Single meditation sessions are also available for kids to help them fall asleep. To engage community users, 7Mind is conducting daily live meditation sessions across all social media channels (one of them being their active Facebook group), helping users meditate and relax together.



Marta Fogel

Head of User Acquisition

Path 2

Bounce-back Strategy with Focus on Retention

As a direct result of the crisis, some businesses have observed record low numbers for user activity and revenue leading to a sizable hit in the companies' bottom line.

If the crisis has negatively impacted your business, it's time to go back to the drawing board and reflect on what matters the most in the current situation - retaining existing users.

Being adversely affected, your business can't afford to lose any existing user. With purse strings tightened, acquiring new users won't be as easy either. This path is dedicated to helping you plan for a return to pre-crisis numbers.

The pragmatic strategies listed in this section are designed to optimize best-performing channels, leverage ASO for organic growth, strengthen user-brand relationships, invest in categories that are performing well and gain flexibility in your approach to digital transformation.



Milestones for Bounce-back

Now that you clearly understand which track defines your brand, the first step is to know how you can retain users and intensify your customer journey from the ground up.



How has your user acquisition been impacted?

- Analyze and optimize proven acquisition channels
- Take a re-look at the paid acquisition strategy.
- Shift resources to paid acquisition platforms.
- Examine unexplored organic acquisition platforms such as ASO and user in-app reviews.



How has your vertical been affected?

- Analyze product main/sub-categories that show changed trends
- Audit users' app behavior daily to identify cohorts of likely drop-offs
- Create acquisition cohorts to understand the drop in uninstalls and DAUs.
- Segment users based on engagement (with app notifications) level and actions completed.



How to engage with customers?

- Engage customers using subcategories that show promise
- Create actionable engagement tactics to move users down the funnel
- Re-think and overhaul value propositions, if required, to eliminate user pain points.



How to sustain user confidence?

- Take a re-look at notification frequency and reduce numbers based on region and preference
- Optimize effectively performing acquisition and engagement channels. Segment users based on lifetime value and retain loyal (high LTV) users by engaging them.
- Personalize user experience via predictive analysis and localization.

Bounce-back Strategies

1. Retain Existing Users by Optimizing Best Performing Campaigns

Even before you think about acquiring more, think about retaining existing users on the app. During a crisis, it is easy to lose out on an already existing user base if:

- You're not offering the right products/services
- Your user experience is not at par with that of the competition, or
- Your user base is not interested in spending

Any or all of these reasons can be applicable to your user base. The best possible way to solve this is to take a relook at your past best performing campaigns. These campaigns, if optimized to be relevant to the current situation, will help you activate the existing user base with high LTV. One such example is of a top Indian mobility brand that recently

evaluated their current and past campaigns and optimized them. Earlier, they ran a campaign using the messaging of 'why buy a car when you can rent' to boost their service subscription. This campaign helped them achieve more car rental subscriptions.

However, when the brand observed a dip in their subscriptions during the pandemic they decided to adapt and optimize the old campaign with a new message to activate their high LTV users:



First, they changed the messaging stating 'ongoing pandemic may not be the right time to purchase a new car. So why not rent instead.'



Second, they segmented the existing user base by targeting high LTV users through this campaign.



Third, they optimized their push notification delivery by employing MoEngage's Push Notification feature.

Another tool that you can employ if you're using MoEngage is the **Push Amplification +** feature that allows 40% more reach across smartphone OEMs.

Bounce-back Strategies

2. Focus on Organic Growth and Proven Paid Activities

Like other brands under this track, you are likely to be facing huge reductions in downloads and DAUs. The options to acquire new customers are few. So, the first thing to do would be to strengthen your organic reach by making necessary changes in SEO and messaging, and investing time in getting app reviews.



SEO changes can be simple tweaks such as localization to attract users and targeting more crisis-related keywords.



Messaging changes enable a natural approach towards the changing times and communicating how you'll always help your users.



Investing in app reviews will help you optimize your app store visibility; using this, your app can draw more attention.

Apart from this, you can also work towards getting more app ratings. But remember app review trumps app ratings. So, prioritize accordingly. If you are still considering paid avenues, one option is to focus on proven paid activities.

As a brand, you have invested in paid acquisition channels earlier so use that data to pursue paid activities. Pick up paid channels that offered almost 50-100% ROI.

This strategy of reviewing all paid channels and investing in the highest ROI ones will help you conserve spending and eliminate the 'shooting in the dark' alternative.

Bounce-back Strategies

3. Be Flexible to Switch App Adoption to Digital Transformation

The current pandemic has shown clearly how digital transformation is the key to growth. Many brands whose businesses were not on apps or focused little on their apps realized the true potential of going digital.

So, if you're the brand that is observing a downward trend in terms of DAUs and conversions, invest in creating an intuitive app. If you already have an app, invest in optimizing user experience.

This will allow products and services to be offered directly on the app. In addition, conduct A/B tests to observe the difference in ROI generated from website versus app-only purchases.



For an illustration of this approach, consider the real-estate brands Mahindra Lifespaces and Makaan.com. They noticed a downward trend for most of their business KPIs. However, these brands were able to accelerate their services by quickly adapting to digital technologies, and sell more properties without human interaction. They moved all their property scouting and buying activities online. They also migrated to an online search with a virtual walkthrough and in-app shortlisting with payment gateways.

Another brand example is Marriott International. The international hotel chain is making app usage mandatory for all its guests. The brand moved to mobile check-ins and check-outs, cashless payments, online a la carte menus, online gym booking, reduced banqueting and distant seating in restaurants.

Bounce-back Strategies

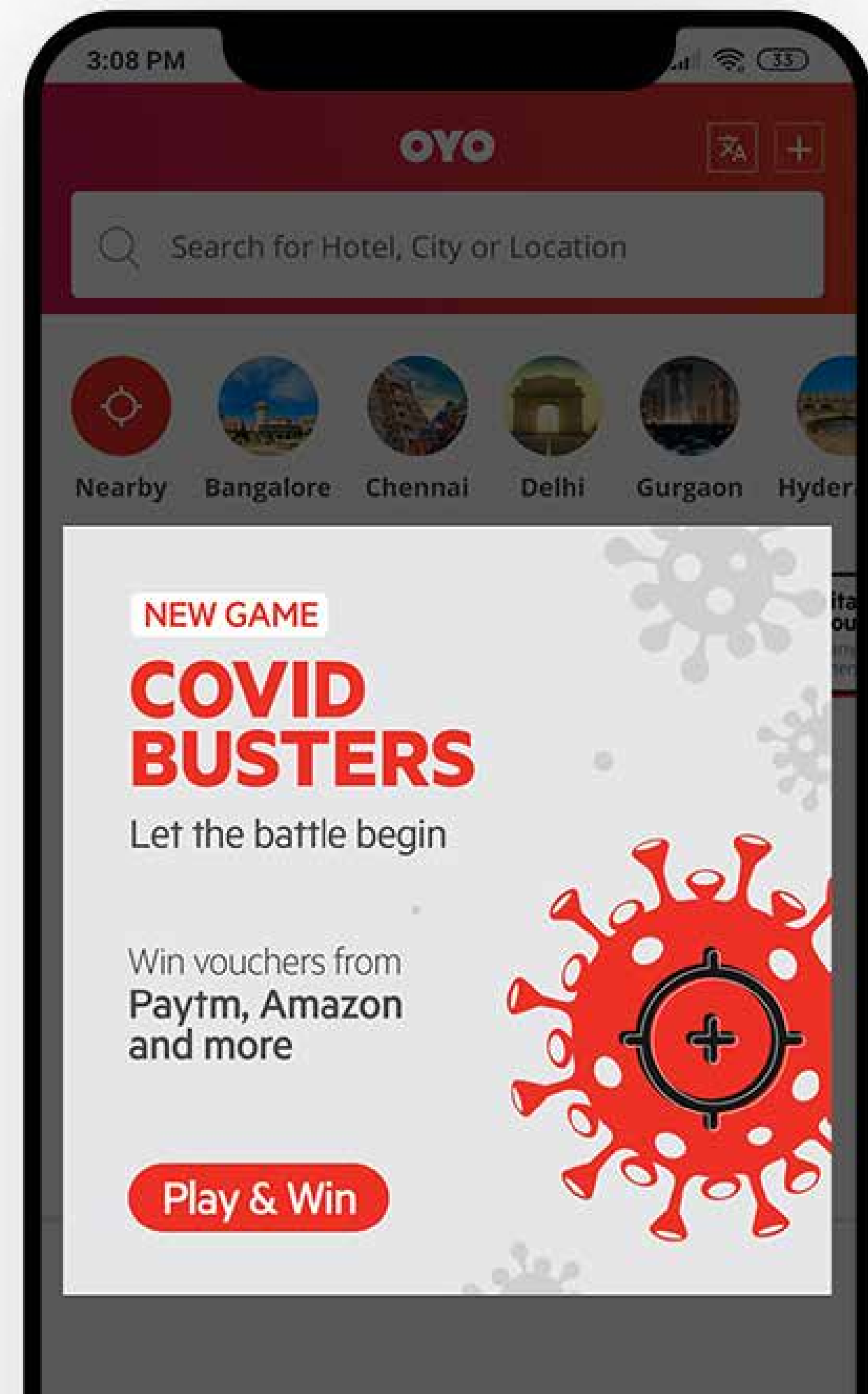
4. Improve Brand Connection using In-app Content

The focus of brands under this track is to retain as many users as possible. This is because a decrease in downloads means fewer data to fall-back on. Furthermore, experiments with new user acquisition avenues might not be completely effective. So, the best way to activate existing users will be to focus on creating brand-user relationships using in-app content. Remember, when the crisis subsides, it is the user+brand relationships that will remain.

To make that relationship stronger, you can invest more time and resources on creating bite-sized in-app content.

These content can vary from short how-to videos to in-app games relevant to your products or services.

With no travel on the horizon, OYO Rooms observed a drop in DAUs and conversions. However, the brand made sure that they continue to interact with their users and checked-in guests. For guests stranded in their properties, OYO Rooms created a Gaming Zone on their app to keep them entertained. For inactive users, they create OYO Quizzes around the current pandemic.



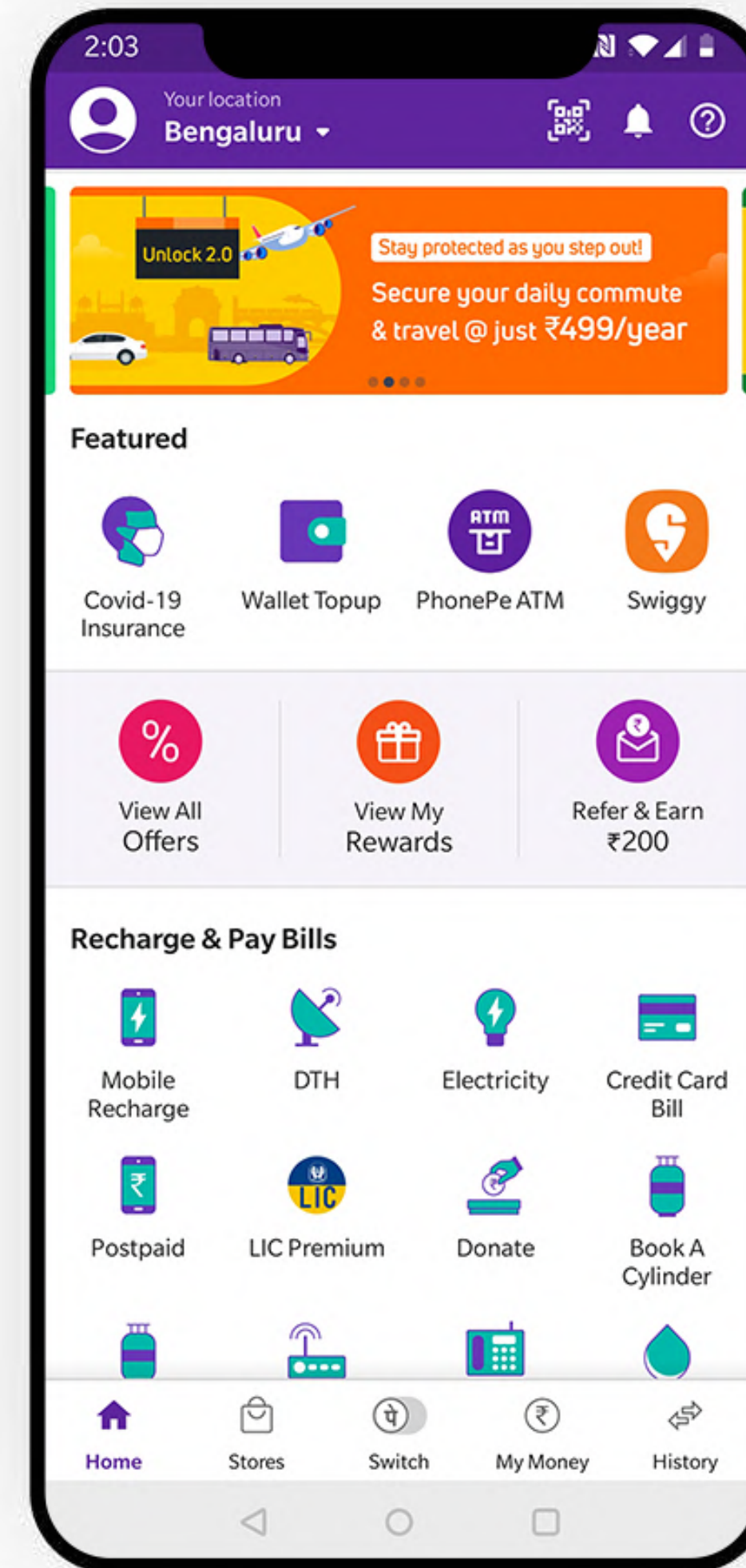
Bounce-back Strategies

5. Analyze Performance of Sub-Categories to Focus on those Showing Promise

During a crisis, users tend to prioritize essential spending that often results in a shift in behavior and how they interact with your app. Anticipating the changed behavioral shift and solving for new user needs is the only way to retain them. Cut all the clutter and provide the bare essentials to help users. You can achieve this by focusing on and highlighting app categories that provide value with no frills. Ensure that users can find what they need without any hassle.

₹ PhonePe

PhonePe, one of India's leading e-wallet and payment apps, noticed a spike in activity volume and order value for essentials such as online bill payment, grocery and medicine delivery. The app promptly reoriented the home page to focus on essential services, viz. recharge, DTH and grocery, and pushed rewards and offers to make the platform more relevant to users.



Expert Insights



George Natsvlishvili

Head of Organic Growth at Glovo



Food delivery, the main category of our on-demand courier service, took a hit as restaurants shut down owing to lockdown restrictions in Barcelona. Without any delay, our brand shifted focus to grocery delivery. This category was gaining popularity, with massive orders coming in from users unable to step out to buy essential supplies during the peak of the pandemic.



Ilia Kukharev

Head of Organic Growth, Aviasales



All paid marketing activities have been paused. The focus is now on the local travel market, as people are afraid of traveling abroad. All organic traffic experiments have been paused amid a huge decrease in downloads, thus making data-driven decisions difficult. Focusing on people-brand connection is essential as the crisis will subside one day but people and brands will stay. To enhance organic growth, our app's metadata is updated to focus on local and safe travel. Apart from building strong relationships with users, Aviasales has turned on paid marketing activities, but with a focus on domestic travel.

Expert Insights



Gianluca

Performance Marketing Manager, Oval Money



Our all in one, intuitive financial services app has reduced the marketing budget being and is optimizing the best performing campaigns across platforms. The plan is to increase the marketing mix and to avoid overspending on certain channels.



Sunu Nair

Vice President, INDIABULLS Yaarii



The entire lending industry is circumspect at this time. As soon as the economy reopens, INDIABULLS Yaarii will go back to providing loans to interested customers. We foresee a huge demand for credit in the retail and business segment. We intend to tighten pre-qualification criteria for customers, with delinquency being a big factor going forward.



Manan Bajoria

AVP – Growth & Marketing, Ixigo



Ixigo stopped sending sale communication i.e. cashback offers and instead focussed on travel safety advisory, a checklist to follow while traveling via flights/trains.

Introduced dedicated section for COVID-19 news, live tracker to keep the user engaged by providing legit information about policy changes, booking delay or change via WhatsApp.



Success Story



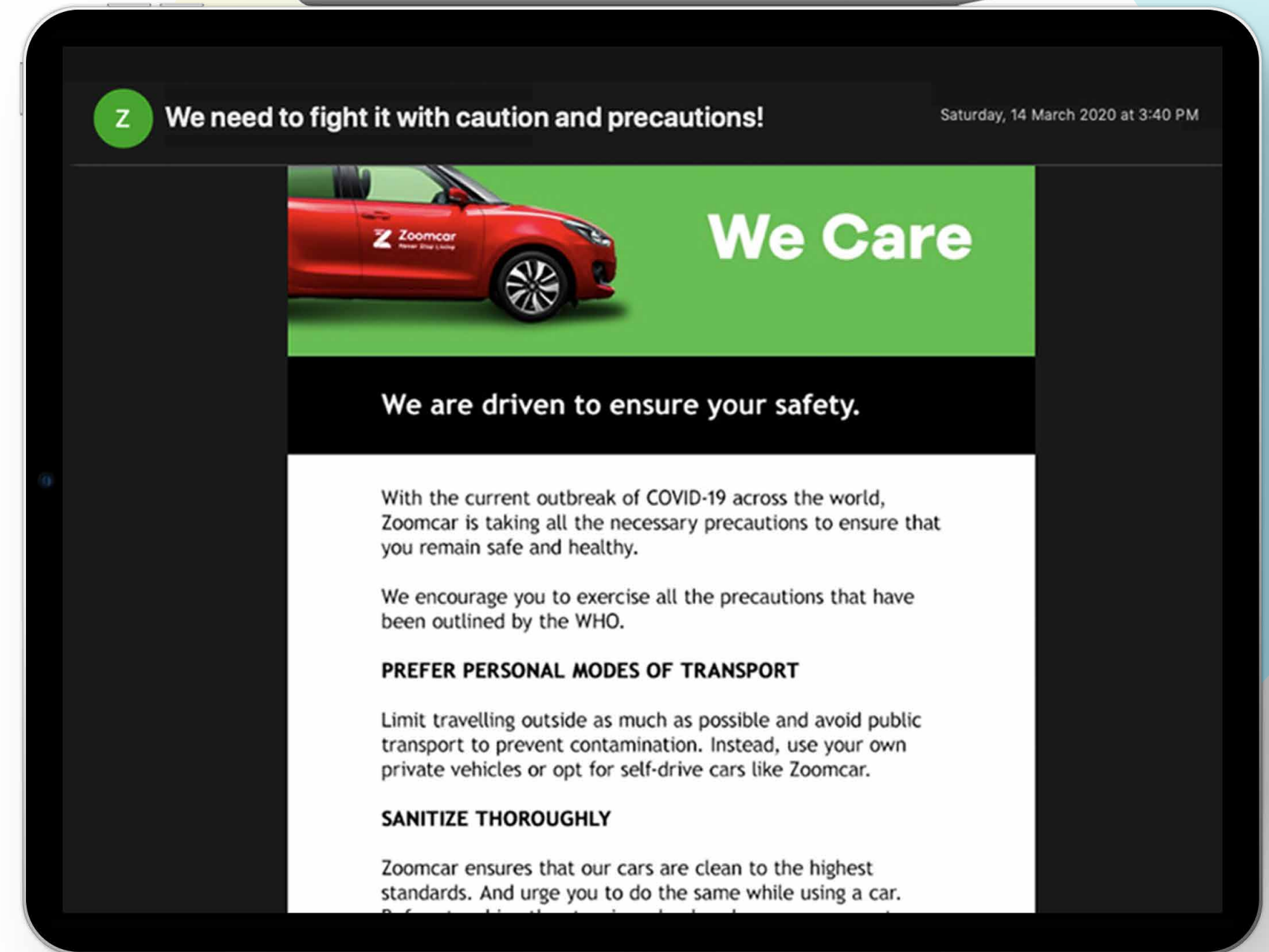
One of India's popular self-driven car rental brands, Zoomcar, bounced-back after an initial slowdown during the two-month pandemic related lockdown which restricted availability of car rental services. Zoomcar's team used this downtime to take a relook at their campaigns and optimize them once the lockdown lifted. The brand has revised its subscription model to offer extended and flexible subscriptions from a minimum of 1 month up to a maximum of 36 months. It added a nominal cost of subscription that is free of maintenance and other expenses.

Zoomcar is ensuring that patrons of the brand remain safeguarded from risks by inspecting each car that is hired. During the inspection, every Zoomcar is completely sanitized and cleaned, including the keys, steering wheel, gears, front and back door handles and pocket door hand rest. The brand has also introduced a keyless entry feature to minimize physical contact. Zoomcar is using push notification campaigns to spread awareness, educate, and inform users about these safety initiatives.



Krishnan VR

Head of CRM & Retention



Path 3

Growth-accelerating Strategy with Focus on both Engagement and Retention

Operating a stable business with neither burgeoning growth nor unforeseen decline during a crisis is not a bad place to be in. There is no better time to grow your business by building long-lasting relationships with your users.

During a crisis, users follow every move your brand makes very keenly.

Businesses showcasing empathy are thus guaranteed to win over user goodwill which eventually translates into increased usage. Thereby adding to the top line and the bottom line.

You can achieve such a high level of brand loyalty by creating offerings and experiences primarily aimed at easing crisis-related pain points.

Unlike industries/businesses in the growth or slowdown trajectory, you need to adopt a different approach to grow your business. This path brings you just that - a potent, ready to implement a combination of strategies that are derived from Paths 1 and 2 and essential to achieving your business goals.



Milestones for Accelerating Growth

Now that you clearly understand which track defines your brand, the first step is to know how you can intensify your customer journey from the ground up.



How has your user acquisition been impacted?

- Analyze and optimize both organic and paid campaigns
- Focus more on ROI generating avenues for both organic and paid
- Examine unexplored organic acquisition platforms



How has your vertical been affected?

- Audit users' app behavior daily to understand drop-offs in the user flow
- Create acquisition cohorts to segment users based on drop-offs
- Analyze daily engagement campaigns to understand app activeness



How to engage with customers?

- Create actionable engagement tactics to move users down the funnel
- Increase community engagement using social media channels
- Move offerings to online channels to better engage users



How to sustain user confidence?

- Revise and adapt the current engagement strategy to stay relevant during the crisis
- Personalize user experience by segmenting users based on app interactions.
- Fall back on user behavior analysis to keep messaging focused

Growth-accelerating Strategies

1. Strike a Balance between Paid Acquisition and Organic Channels

If your brand best aligns with Path 3, it means there isn't much change in your app and business KPIs. However, this shouldn't stop you from acquiring more users as it would eventually help in building your app ROI.

The best way to acquire new users would be by:

- Adding a healthy balance of paid and organic sources to your acquisition channels. So, if you have two paid channels to acquire new users then find two organic channels as well. This is to ensure that you are not putting all your eggs in one basket, which would eventually affect your ROI.
- Investing in channels that are actually working for you instead of experimenting. A crisis is not the time to

experiment but to explore channels that will offer 50%-100% ROI. So go back to your paid and organic acquisition channels and employ the ones that offer the best results.

- Finding the low-hanging app evaluation options that will offer optimum ROI. These could be app ratings, app reviews, third-party reviews or paid social with the right target audience (age, job title and region).



An example of a brand that used this strategy is Indiabulls Yaari, a personal loan provider that observed an increase in women applicants compared to the usual male applicants during the pandemic. The brand's assumption is that while men of the household are borrowing elsewhere, the women are applying to spread the ownership of lending. This observation allowed Indiabulls to revise its paid user acquisition to target audience demographics. The brand also noticed a drastic decrease in the acquisition and saved as much as 2.5X of their previous acquisition costs.

Growth-accelerating Strategies

2. Allow Limited Access to Premium Features

Offering free access to certain premium features upfront is a known strategy adopted by brands to entice users and gradually move them to a paid subscription. But during a crisis, this strategy can ensure your existing users (both paid and free) remain in the pipeline. This not only helps in attracting users but also improves your subscription rates.

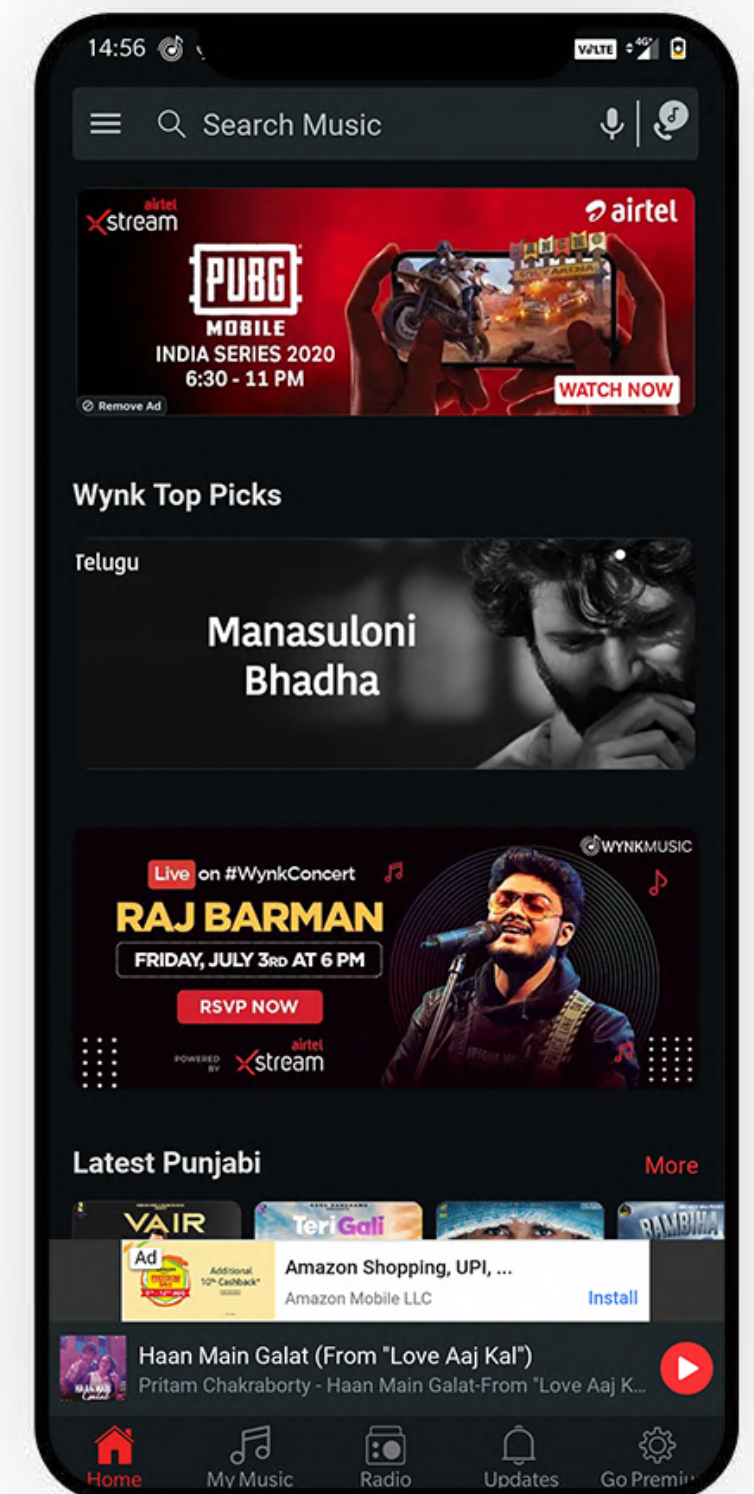
Additionally, once the user realizes the value of the features, they'd be willing to purchase the paid subscription.

3. Move Offerings to Online Channels to Better Engage Users

If your business has an offline offering that suffered because of the crisis, it is time to consider online avenues. During the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, a lot of businesses offering offline services were losing customers.

Amid the crisis, some brands decided to quickly move those offerings online to provide easier access to users, thus engaging them better.

One of the brands doing this effectively was Wynk Music. The app is pushing the adoption of virtual concerts through its platform. The initiative comes at a time when lockdown restrictions are forcing performers to explore virtual concerts or live streaming options to share new content and engage with fans. The app is using push notifications to inform users about live concerts and performers, and share playlists. The app is also curating personalized playlists to engage users working from home.



Growth-accelerating Strategies

4. Build Strong Relations With the User Community

As your path is largely unchanged, you need to focus on building a strong user-brand connection. You can achieve this by:



Engaging users through email and social media channels where you can offer articles, quizzes and bite-sized content, i.e., how-to videos, polls on relevant topics and more. You can also use these channels to get feedback from your users on your products and services.



Adding essential products that are outside your purview but are in need during a crisis, based on user feedback.

JIMMY BRINGS

An example of a brand doing this effectively is JimmyBrings, an Australian online alcohol delivery service that added delivery of toilet paper to its prime offering. In March 2020, the brand noticed a huge surge in demand for toilet paper and not enough supply. JimmyBrings saw this as an opportunity to solve a real problem their users faced - acquiring toilet paper. After an internal decision, the brand decided to partner with a toilet paper provider to store their products in their warehouse. The user reaction came in the form of stock being sold out within 24 hours; the brand continued to stock more toilet paper.

Expert Insights



Timothy Perchey

VP Digital Marketing, Clark

CLARK

“ We noticed an initial dip in sales for 1-2 weeks as our customers in Germany focused on food, shelter and essentials in favor of other expenditures. This unusual behavior has stabilized since. Our company focused on educating users about the importance of being insured during the crisis. We created content to show how the current situation affects insurance cover and used this information to make users feel more secure in these uncertain times. We have been agile in our user acquisition strategy, shifting budgets to avenues such as podcast/influencer advertising, which is where our users are. At the same time, we have considerably reduced offline and TV spends. Our users have neither engaged more nor less but there has been a slight improvement in our business performance.

Expert Insights



Ramalingam Subramanian

Head of Brand and Communications, CoinDCX



“DCryptocurrency in India and globally has been affected the least owing to the small size of its market. After the Supreme Court lifted the banking ban, industry-wide adoptions have increased. CoinDCX saw a **10x increase in user signups** and witnessed **47% growth in trading volumes in Q1 alone**. In addition, CoinDCX has also launched and pledged **USD 1.3 million** for the **#TryCrypto campaign** and invested in user education, influencers and community efforts. The aim of the #TryCrypto campaign is to onboard and increase the number of Indians using crypto from **5 million to 50 million**.



Ketan Patel

CASHe, CEO



“CASHe has recorded upswing in the number of loan applications as a result of the economic uncertainty and subsequent stockpiling of capital.

CASHe changed their communication strategy from loan repayments query to user awareness, education and CASHe support. As a result, 40% of people prepaid their EMIs compared to an average of 30%.

Expert Insights



Jamie Gagliardi

Head of Marketing, JimmyBrings

JIMMY BRINGS

I think in March where this random panic made consumers buy toilet paper. No one could understand why as it hardly has any correlation with COVID. Everyone was unsure of what was going on. That's when we, as a brand, decided to source this product and deliver it. For us, that campaign is a perfect example of why brands need to be really reactive and adaptable to any crisis situation. To have this adaptability in their culture to make changes and create opportunities because if you are not that brand then there is a competitor out there striving to be that. And you have to do it quickly because it's always going to be who is the first to do it and they are going to be winners.



Success Story



Healthcare startup Cure.fit revolutionized the way Indians approach health and fitness by offering a holistic mix of cardio, yoga, sports, dance, healthy meals and mindfulness sessions led by athletes, nutritionists and celebrity trainers.

However, due to the pandemic induced lockdown, several offline Cure.fit centers had to be closed. To engage users and help them workout from home, the brand has rolled out live classes under its Cult.fit banner. These classes cover different fitness formats and can be accessed by people of all age groups/fitness levels. Since most users are working out from home, the online sessions consist of body weight exercises that do not require any equipment.

The aim of the classes is to offer a gymming experience similar to the offline format, where users work out with others and see how they measure up in comparison using the energy meter feature. As a result of this enhanced online experience, the brand observed a 100X increase in DAU and sessions, along with a 5X increase in organic app downloads and very good user retention trends.



Akshay Rajwade

Head of Product & Growth





How To Boost Your Engagement With AppFollow



APPFOLLOW



How To Get Started

Before you begin any work on promoting your product in the app stores, try to analyze where you need to invest the resources first. AppFollow's smart dashboards allow you to get mobile app data, reputation management insights, and organic growth data. Analyze and track changes that your competitors are making, see where the gaps are in your performance and address them with the right actions.

I ASO Analytics

Track your Search Visibility score, compare with other apps and improve it via AppFollow tools by employing a wide range of research instruments such as the Keyword research, trends and dynamics analysis and more. You can also set and measure ASO KPI's.

II Ratings & Reviews Dashboard

AppFollow can help you with more than just answering reviews. Get every insight from your user feedback. Use Semantic analysis to better understand the reviews' sentiment score and discover popular discussion topics. You will have a full overview of the effectiveness of your customer support team.

III Mobile App Data

Tracking your app's sales performance is a piece of cake - get downloads, revenue, purchases and other sales metrics in a single dashboard, with breakdowns by countries or release versions. Export the data the way you like via API, CSV, and email reports with a summary of your performance.



How To Boost Your Engagement With MoEngage



moengage

By employing MoEngage, you can quickly create and offer a dynamic user engagement. You'll be able to get a single view of your users and work on a more customer-centric engagement approach.

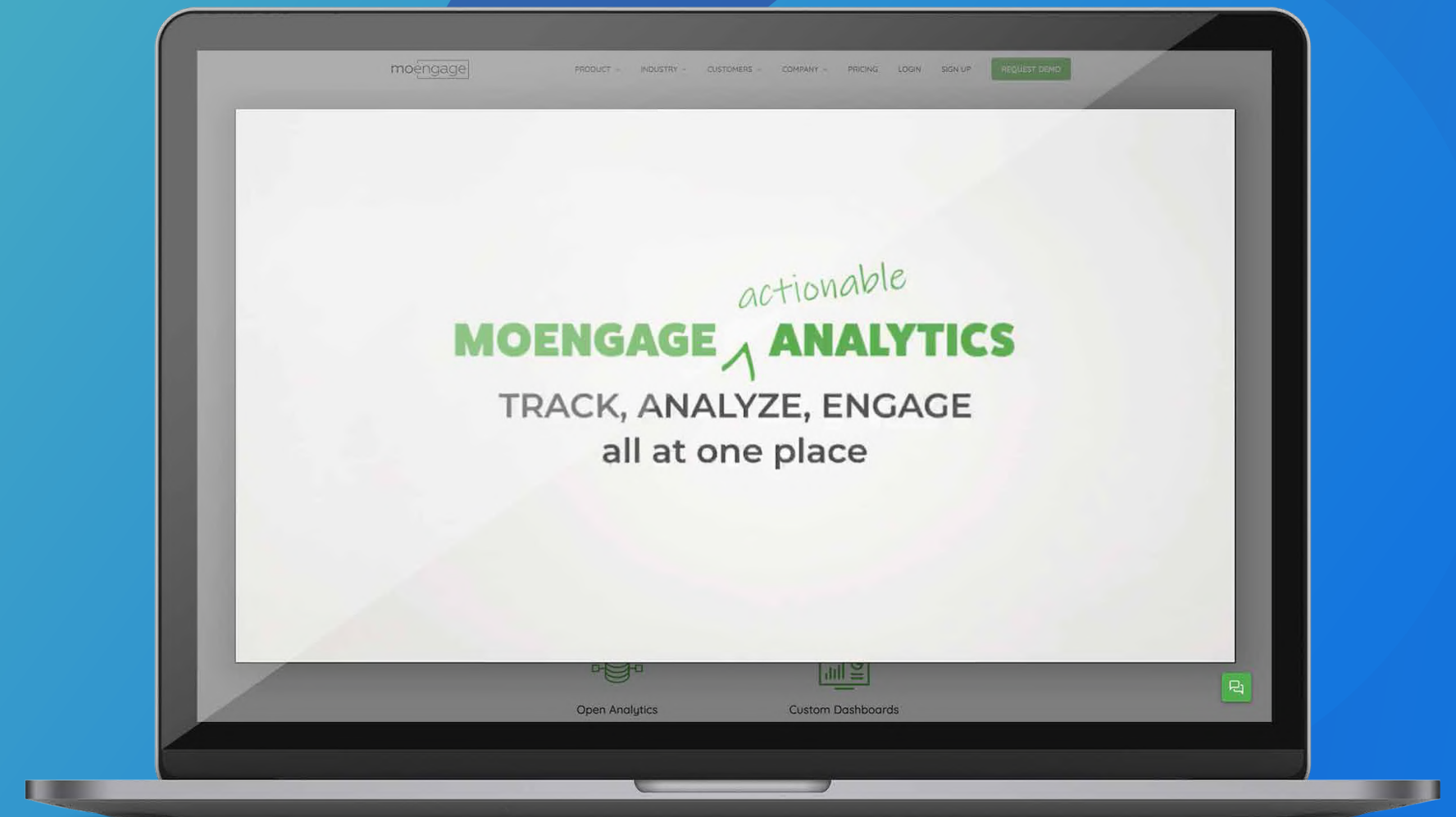
You can analyze, engage, personalize and optimize your engagement strategies.

How You Can Analyze

Once you acquire users, you need to get an overview of user behavior across multiple channels and develop robust customer engagement strategies. You can do this by:

- Monitoring user interactions (click rate, open rate and last activity).
- Measuring engagement levels.
- Identifying the range of your users — from most engaged to most dormant.
- Building cohorts based on properties such as sign-up, daily activity, user events and more.

Know More 



MoEngage Analytics lets you accomplish this by using:



Behaviour Trends

Deep dive into user data and analyze the behavior of a specific segment.

Cohorts

Analyze user patterns to measure time-to-conversion and understand churn rate.

Open Analytics

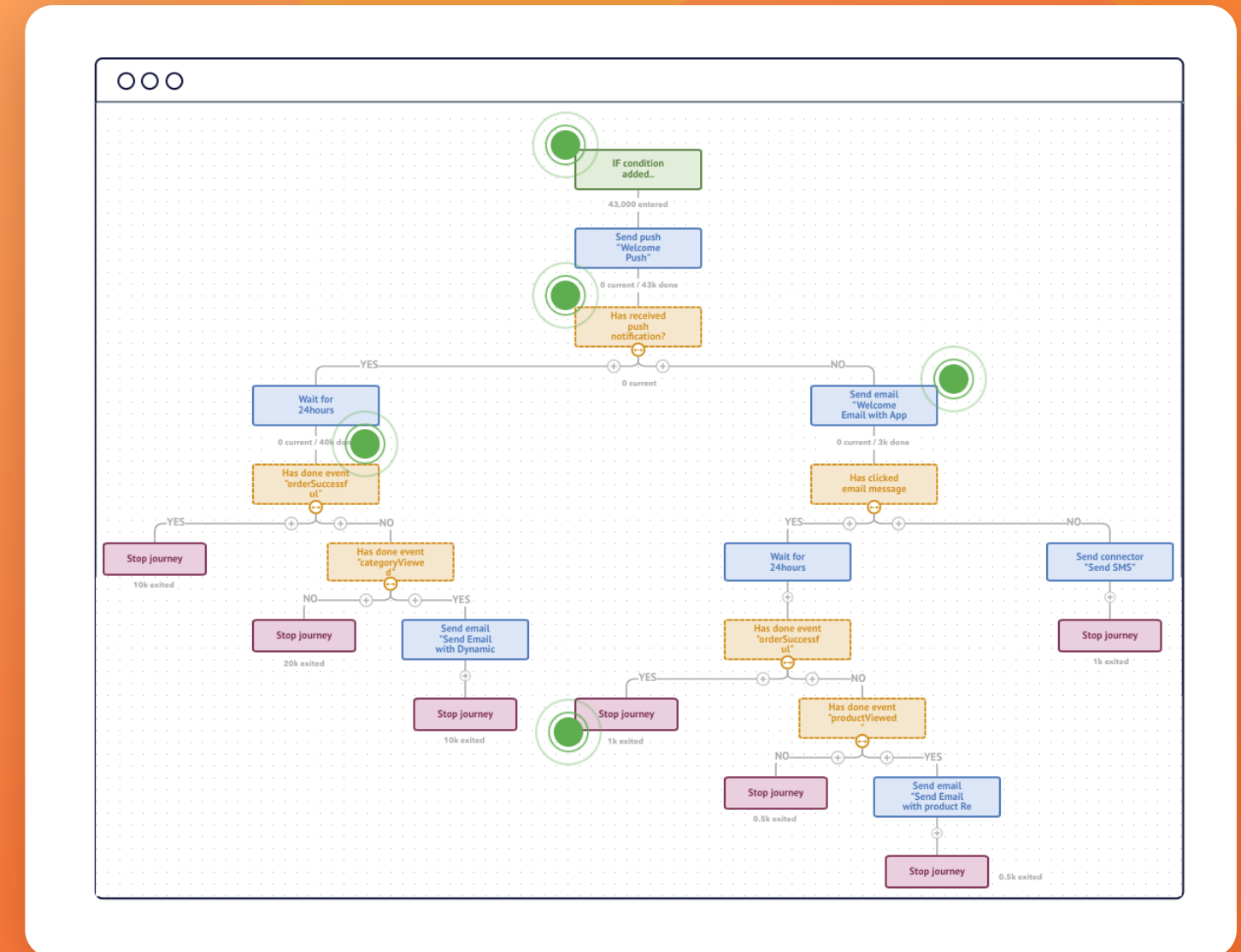
Centralized data from multiple sources like Tableau and Google Data Studio to get a unified user view.

How You Can Engage

Once you analyze user behavior and events, you need to create marketing flows that will tie in all marketing channels. You can do this by:

- Creating workflows that automate user engagement and retention
- Segmenting users to allow customization of workflows based on user events and attributes
- Triggering communication on the basis of user app activity and actions completed
- Automating engagement campaigns that are dynamic and AI-powered

Know More 



With MoEngage Flows, you can create omnichannel workflows, pre-set conditions and target various channels.

Omnichannel Flows

Create marketing flows using a drag-and-drop editor to drive ROI.

Add Conditions

Add pre-set conditions like 'notification clicked' or 'order completed' to automatically drive users to the next step.

Target Multiple Channels

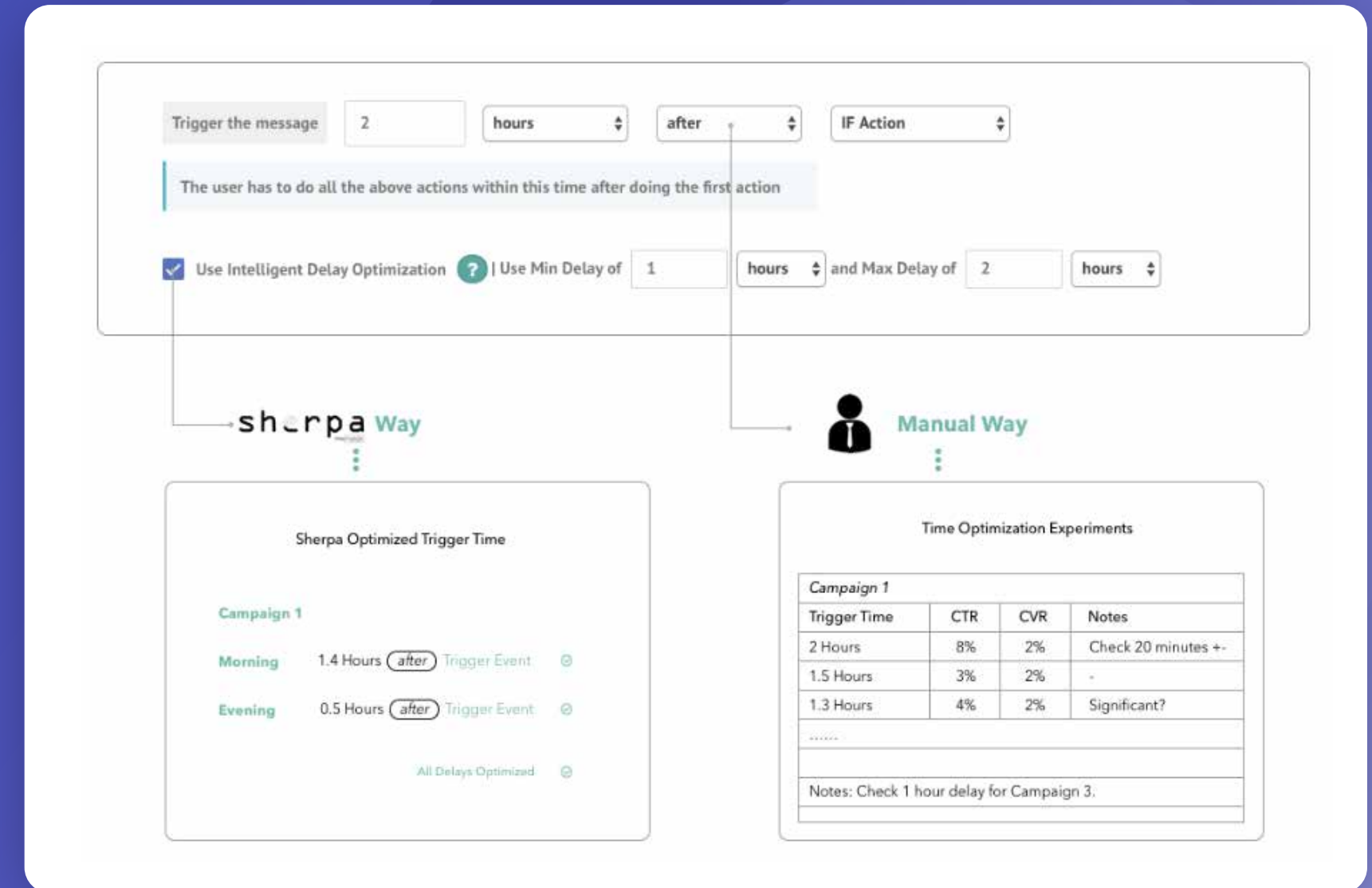
Use push notifications, emails, in-app messages, web push, social retargeting and SMS messages.

How You Can Optimize

Once you have created omni-channel workflows with automated engagement campaigns, it's time to optimize them. You can do this by:

- Improving messaging and communication to maximize conversion and ROI.
- Amplifying push notification delivery rates using an efficient push system.
- Personalizing product or service recommendation.
- Analyzing the perfect timing and tone of the message to be sent to user(s).

Know More 



The screenshot shows a workflow configuration interface. At the top, there are settings for 'Trigger the message' (2 hours after) and 'IF Action'. Below this, a text box states: 'The user has to do all the above actions within this time after doing the first action'. A checkbox for 'Use Intelligent Delay Optimization' is checked, with 'Use Min Delay of 1 hours' and 'Max Delay of 2 hours' set. Two options are shown: 'sherpa Way' and 'Manual Way'. Below 'sherpa Way' is a 'Sherpa Optimized Trigger Time' section for 'Campaign 1' with 'Morning' (1.4 Hours after Trigger Event) and 'Evening' (0.5 Hours after Trigger Event) options, and a note 'All Delays Optimized'. Below 'Manual Way' is a 'Time Optimization Experiments' table.

Campaign 1			
Trigger Time	CTR	CVR	Notes
2 Hours	8%	2%	Check 20 minutes +-
1.5 Hours	3%	2%	-
1.3 Hours	4%	2%	Significant?
.....			
Notes: Check 1 hour delay for Campaign 3.			

With MoEngage Optimization, you can boost ROI with AI-driven marketing:

Sherpa

Maximize campaign performance by predicting the right message and sending it at the right time.

Push Amplification +

Engage and convert more users (up to 40% more) via a dependable push notification delivery system and get accurate delivery rates.

Dynamic Product Messaging

Send personalized product recommendations and dynamic content tailored to each user's preferences.

Conclusion

An unprecedented crisis often has a drastic impact on consumer behavior and spending pattern which directly affects the way they engage with brands and businesses. Such an impact was observed with the COVID-19 pandemic as well. But as governments across the world relax lockdown restrictions, and businesses from various industries open up,

it is important to understand changed user behavior and consumer confidence, and accordingly choose your path ahead.

We hope that the strategies covered in this handbook will help you chart a course towards sustaining your growth or bounce back from declined numbers. Please remember the key focus areas for any business while handling a crisis - engaging and retaining existing customers. Once you have engagement and retention strategies nailed down, you can proceed with user acquisition.

| Here's a quick recap:

Being customer-centric is the need of the hour, especially when dealing with a crisis. So, make sure your engagement strategies are focused on solving customer needs.



If you're on a growth curve, you need to focus on engaging your existing and new users. You can do this by rethinking your current engagement strategy and personalizing it to incorporate crisis-related messaging.



If your business is experiencing a slowdown, you need to focus on retaining your existing users. You need to refer to the strategies which have worked for you in the past and pause all test campaigns. Concentrate on high LTV users by running user-event based marketing workflows.



If your business has been stable, work on both engaging and retaining your high LTV users. Be flexible in moving your products/services online, and create marketing workflows to drive users to make purchases.

About MoEngage



MoEngage is an intelligent customer engagement platform, built for the mobile-first world. With AI-powered automation, optimization capabilities, and in-built analytics, MoEngage enables hyper-personalization at scale across multiple channels like mobile push, email, in-app, web push, on-site messages and SMS. Fortune 500 brands across 35+ countries such as McAfee, Samsung and Vodafone use MoEngage to orchestrate their omnichannel campaigns. MoEngage has been featured on Gartner's Magic Quadrant for two consecutive years and is the youngest company on the list.

moengage

About AppFollow



AppFollow is a single platform that benefits everyone involved in running a mobile app: customer support, marketing, product and analytics teams. Its range of tools and services allow you to drive organic downloads, analyze and respond to user reviews, increase app rating, and research competitors to stay ahead of the game.

APPFOLLOW

moengage

APPFOLLOW

For any questions related to the playbook, reach out here
content@moengage.com