



2020 RETAIL EMAIL BENCHMARK REPORT



Table of Contents

- Introduction** 4
- Key Takeaways** 5
- Baseline Email Performance Benchmarks** 6
- Personalized Email Performance Benchmarks** 15
- Differentiated Email Performance Benchmarks** 18
 - How Average Order Value Impacts Email Performance 20
 - How Retail Vertical Impacts Email Performance 26
 - How Audience Impacts Email Performance 31
 - Spend Level 31
 - Purchase History 36
 - Lifecycle Stage 46
- Conclusion** 54
- Methodology** 54
- Glossary of Terms** 55

Introduction

Email is the most powerful channel for any digital retail marketer. Over the past several years, critical innovations have come to email that combined the channel's core tenet as a direct connection between retailers and customers with modern marketing goals around intelligent personalization.

Time and again, email has confirmed its ability to help retailers focused on a digitally dominant strategy double down on highly personalized, people-based marketing efforts, all while maintaining stringent new privacy standards. Email has also emerged as the most valuable channel to achieve these goals due to its ability to ignite engagement and revenue by providing retail marketers with direct access to customers and to act as the most addressable identifier.

Not only has email proven itself as an effective channel for building loyalty and driving both first and repeat purchases, but it also offers a highly efficient way to achieve key retail goals. Specifically, it delivers a higher return on investment than paid media channels, where changing ad algorithms continue to reduce the efficacy of acquisition-focused marketing spend. The most

modern email solutions also offer improved, automated workflows for developing highly personalized multi-touch campaigns.

All of these benefits came to a head in early 2020 and positioned the most forward-thinking retailers to remain agile as the COVID-19 pandemic forced a near overnight shift to eCommerce.

The purpose of Bluecore's 2020 Retail Email Benchmark Report is to provide an understanding of the extent to which retailers have embraced email for different types of communications, the level of personalization used across email and the effectiveness of those messages. To deliver on that promise, we analyzed performance data from more than 9.5 billion emails sent by a subset of Bluecore's global eCommerce brands from March 2019 through February 2020.

We specifically chose this timeframe to avoid any unusual activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic skewing the data, as this report is meant to offer a long-term benchmark against retail marketers can measure their performance.

Key Takeaways

PERSONALIZATION IS NOW MUST-HAVE, NOT A NICE-TO-HAVE

The data makes clear that the presence of personalization (and even the level of personalization within emails) makes all the difference in terms of performance. The more emails that retailers personalize and the more elements within those emails that get personalized to recipients' interests and behaviors, the higher engagement rates and revenue they produce. And the personalization tide lifts all ships, as the data reveals that retailers with a larger percentage of personalized emails across their entire program see better overall performance. Critically, retailers can only scale personalization to the necessary level if they (1) have access to automated, AI-driven workflows that can provide insights into individual customers and the products with which they engage or with which they are likely to engage and (2) the ability to act accordingly.

EMAIL PROGRAM COMPOSITION MATTERS — A LOT

Beyond the importance of personalization, which can't be overstated, the overall composition of the types of emails retailers send can make a big difference when it comes to program performance. Certain types of emails consistently deliver better results on different engagement measures (e.g. opens, clicks, conversions), particularly when working together with other emails as part of a mature marketing program. Retail marketing teams that aim to maximize certain areas of engagement should pay close attention to their email mix in pursuit of that goal.

CUSTOMER RETENTION OUTWEIGHS CUSTOMER ACQUISITION

The overwhelming majority of retailers' customer bases have never made a purchase or have only made one purchase, and these non and one-time buyers are far less valuable than customers who have already made multiple purchases. The data reveals that existing customers — even those who are considered at-risk or lost — are easier to convert and make higher value purchases when they do convert than non and one-time buyers. As a result, retailers who are focused on growing email engagement and increasing revenue are best served prioritizing customer retention over costly customer acquisition campaigns.

AVERAGE ORDER VALUE OFFERS A BETTER COMPARISON POINT THAN RETAIL VERTICAL

When evaluating benchmarks, many retailers are first interested in performance from brands like them. This interest makes sense, as there are many differences between brands that fall under the larger retail umbrella and retailers are vying for market leadership. However, the data reveals that what makes brands similar to one another is not always obvious. Retail vertical (e.g. apparel vs. home goods vs. luxury) is typically an easy characteristic to index on, but the data reveals that when it comes to consumer behavior, more similarities exist between retailers who have similar average order values — regardless of what type of goods they sell — than retailers who sell similar products (which may have very different price points).

BASELINE EMAIL PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

Bluecore has established a series of benchmarks for how different retail emails perform as part of growing email marketing programs. These baseline findings include an overall look at email performance for retailers broken down by type of email, including eCommerce **triggered emails** and **one-time sends**.

Triggered emails are automated emails that send when shoppers take certain actions (**behavioral triggers**) or when changes occur in the product catalog (**merchandising triggers**). These emails get sent at the individual level based on behavioral and merchandising events and are very targeted based on the products featured. These emails include:

BEHAVIORAL TRIGGERED EMAILS

(* denotes included in this report)

- Cart abandonment*
- Product abandonment*
- Search abandonment*
- Post purchase*
- Wishlist*
- Welcome*
- Homepage abandonment
- Birthday reminders
- Anniversary reminders
- Gift reminders
- Predictive at-risk
- Predictive replenishment
- Second purchase

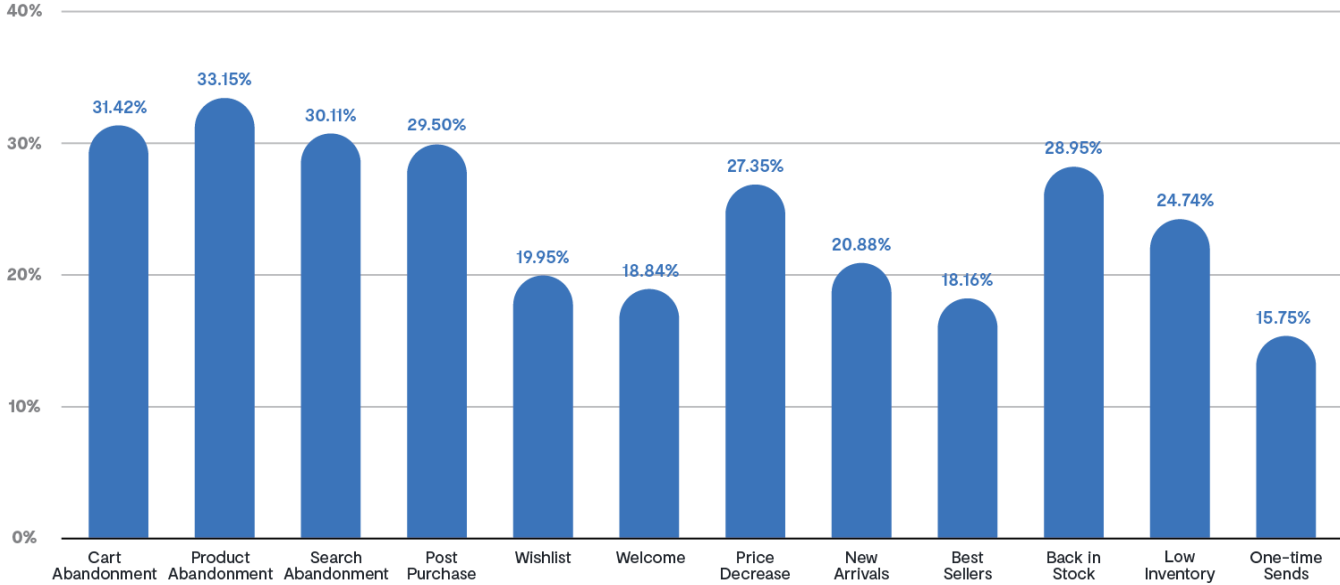
MERCHANDISING TRIGGERED EMAILS

(* denotes included in this report)

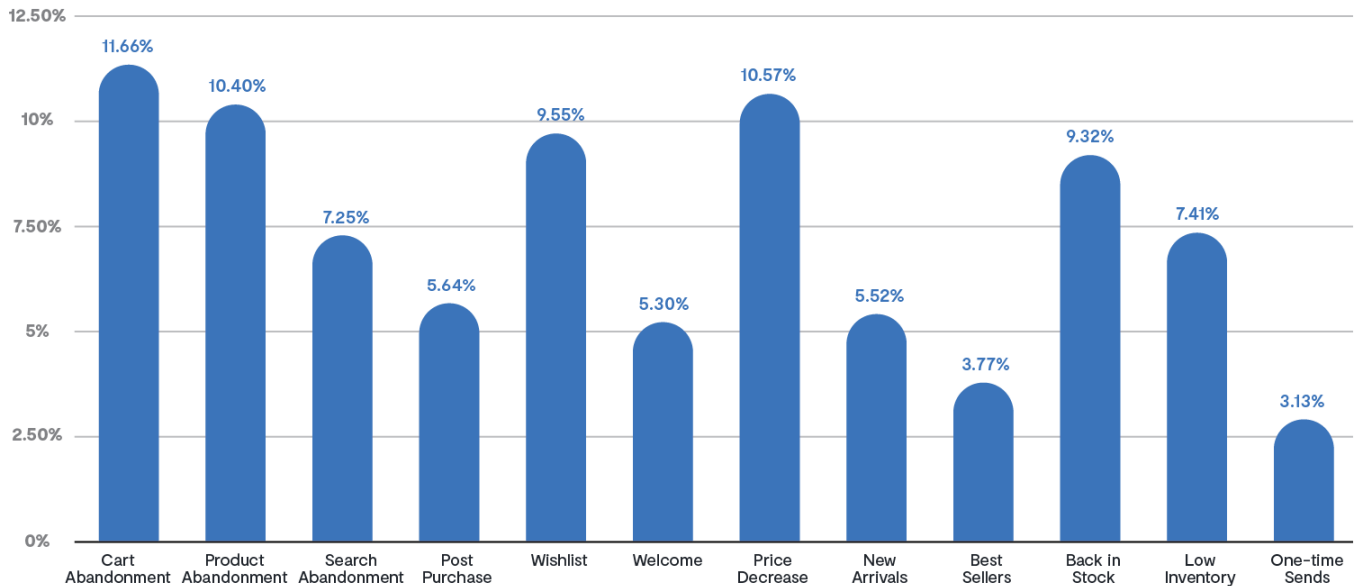
- Price decrease*
- New arrivals*
- Best sellers*
- Back in stock*
- Low inventory*
- New ratings
- New reviews

One-time sends are emails that are not tied to a specific change in behavior or product and focus on brand awareness, promotions and newsletters. These emails can be static, list-based emails, meaning the same exact email goes to all recipients, or personalized through the use of dynamic product recommendations, content and offers. Marketers can send these emails to their full list or get more personal by targeting a specific audience.

OPEN RATE



CLICK RATE

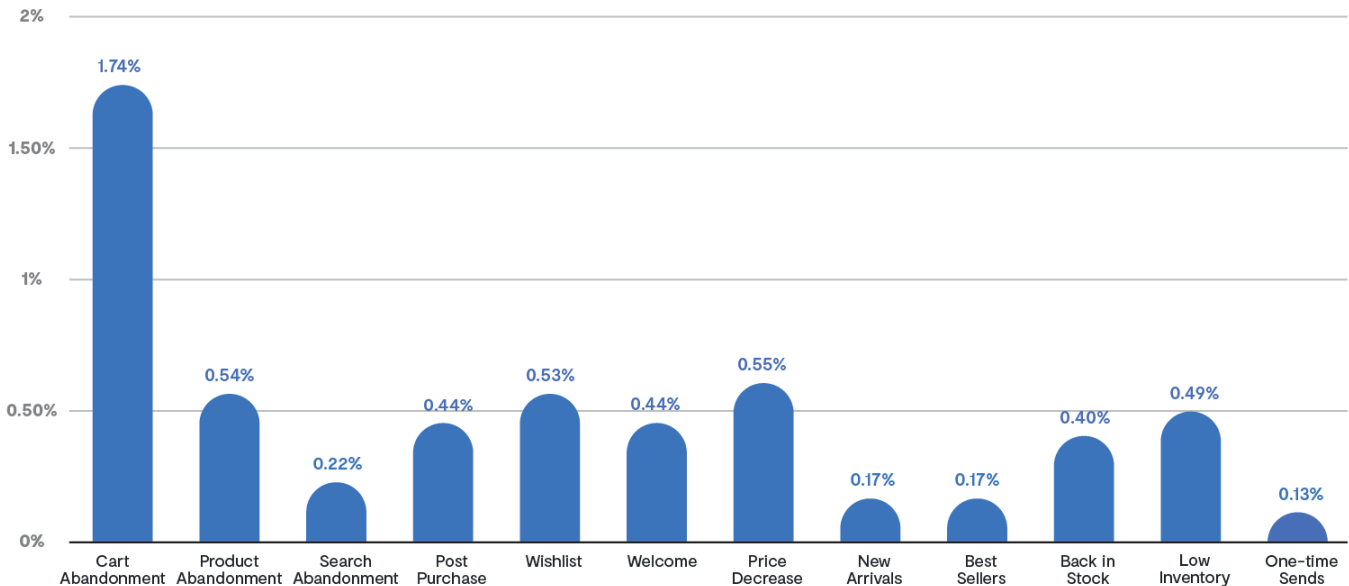


The above charts reflect the strength of emails that create a sense of urgency by capitalizing on high intent signals, most notably **cart abandonment, product abandonment, wishlist, price decrease, back in stock and low inventory triggered emails.**

The latter three are among a unique category of triggers, known as “merchandising triggers,” that automatically deliver a personalized email based on changes to product data rather than

solely reacting to a shoppers’ actions. The retailers that see the most success with these merchandising triggered emails layer in customer data to narrow down the audience of recipients to shoppers who have previously interacted with or have a predicted affinity toward but have not bought the featured products. In doing so, marketers have a strong opportunity to proactively engage customers in relevant ways, since they don’t have to first wait for those customers to take action onsite.

CONVERSION RATE



Most shoppers receive several emails before making a purchase. In the chart above, conversions are attributed to purchases that occur within five days of the email send. We chose this attribution window since approximately 80% of customers who purchase after engaging with an email do so within five days.

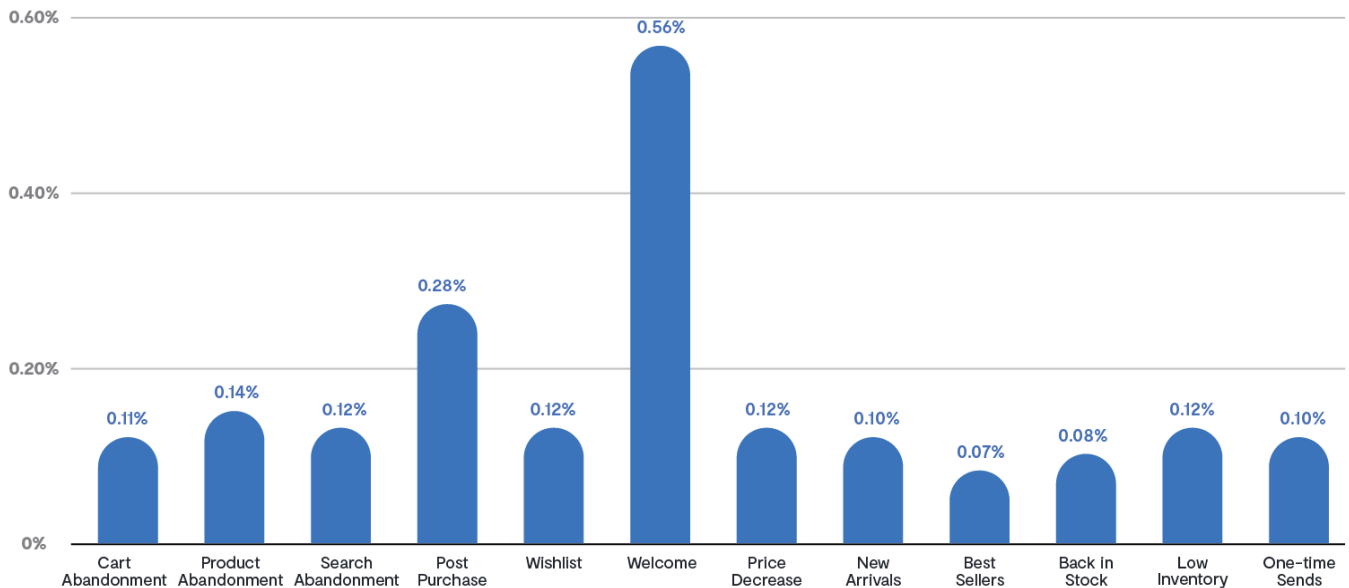
The exceptionally high conversion rate for **cart abandonment** emails is not surprising given that shoppers who add items to their cart are typically most ready to buy.

Product abandonment, wishlist, price decrease and **low inventory** emails also boast higher than average conversion rates. **Wishlist and product abandonment** emails see higher conversion rates because they target customers who have displayed a high

interest in a specific product, since they have viewed and interacted with it in some way. Meanwhile, we can attribute the high conversion rates for **price decrease** and **low inventory** emails to the sense of urgency that these messages create.

Finally, it's important to keep in mind that other factors influence the relevance and performance of these emails. Notably, timing, audience and products featured are also critical to success. The majority of the emails included in these benchmarks feature some level of personalization, which helps increase engagement. We see this impact most when looking at one-time sends, which deliver conversion rates on par with some triggered emails, despite the generally broader reach of these batch emails.

UNSUBSCRIBE RATE

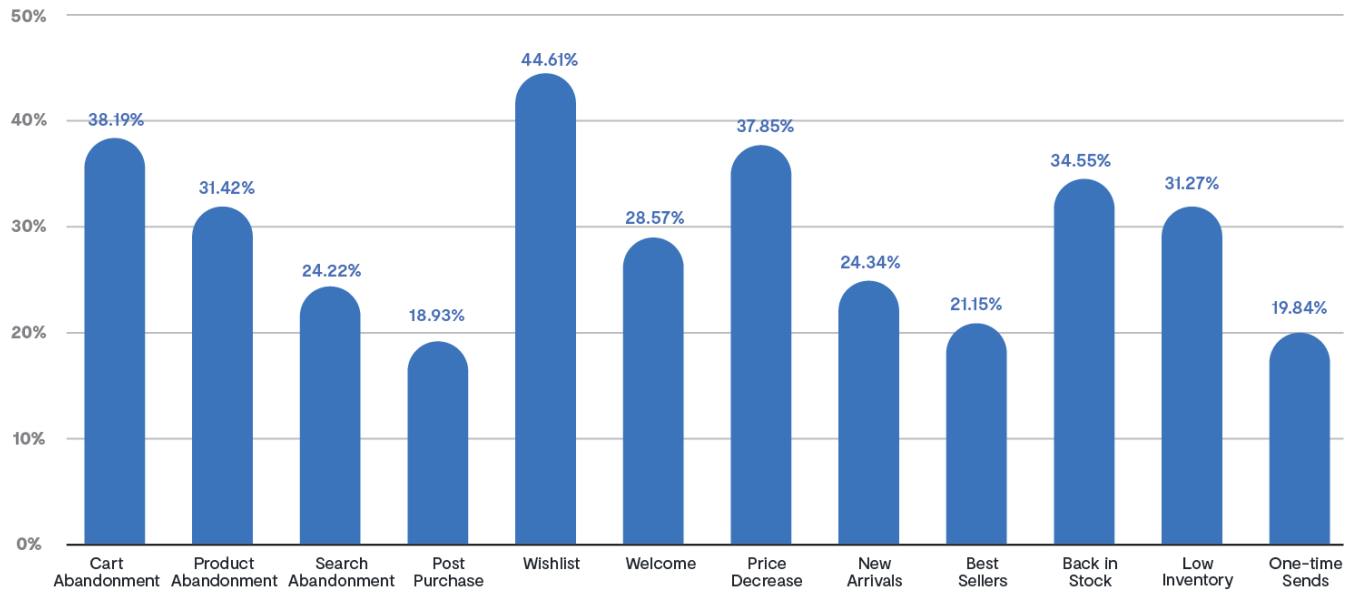


Unsubscribe rates for **post purchase** and **welcome** emails are disproportionately high. The higher than average unsubscribe rates for these particular emails are often due to shoppers who subscribe to emails to receive a discount and then promptly unsubscribe after receiving that discount. Unsubscribes from **post purchase** emails also include shoppers who may be happy with your product, but may not be interested in receiving emails.

Notably, the benchmark unsubscribe rate for **post purchase** emails (0.28%) has decreased by 40% compared to Bluecore's 2019 benchmark (0.47%). There are several steps retailers can take to continue this downward

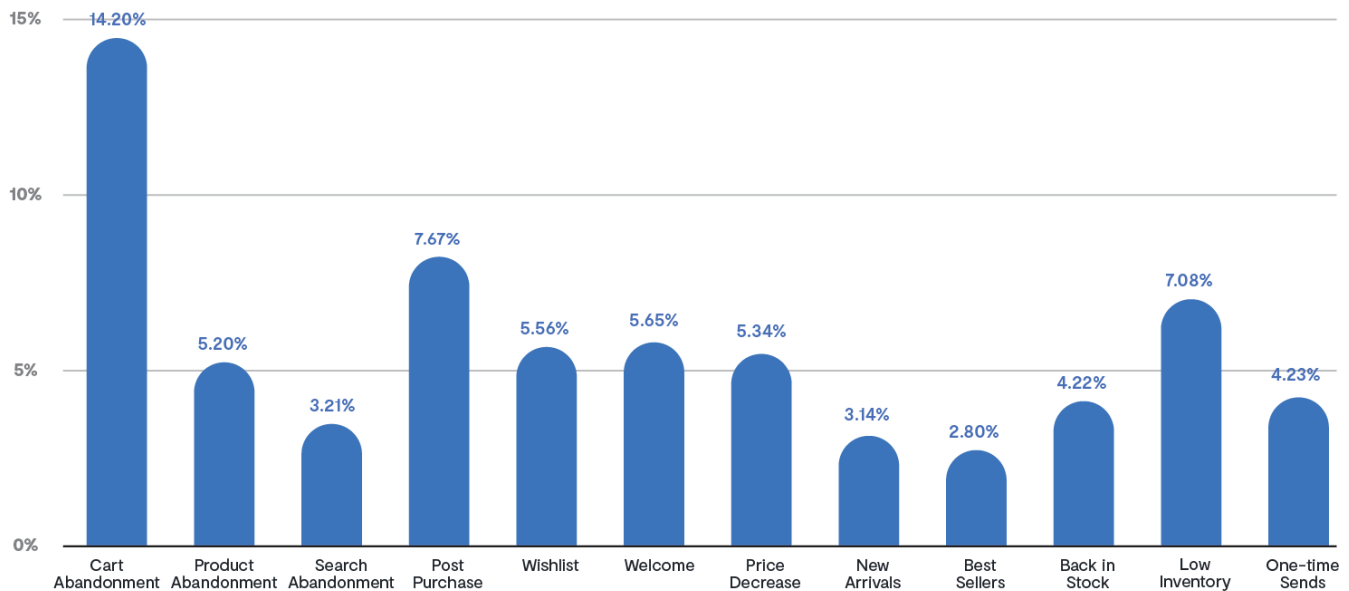
trend and see similar success in bringing down the average unsubscribe rate for **welcome** emails too. First, marketers should be wary of using promotions as a crutch for email capture, since getting shoppers to sign up for emails does no good if those same shoppers immediately unsubscribe. Instead, they should think through how to add value to these campaigns, for example by adding non-promotional messaging about brand values (**welcome emails**) and how to best enjoy certain products (**post purchase emails**). Second, marketers can look for opportunities to increase relevance by featuring personalized product recommendations based on past purchase behavior and/or predicted affinities.

CLICK-TO-OPEN RATE



Emails that create a sense of urgency and/or are specific to past interactions that a shopper had with a product receive higher engagement than general informational emails. This is why **cart abandonment**, **wishlist** and **price decrease** emails, which let shoppers know that a product with which they've engaged is now available at a lower price, perform better than other emails, such as those that inform shoppers about best selling items.

CLICK-TO-CONVERSION RATE

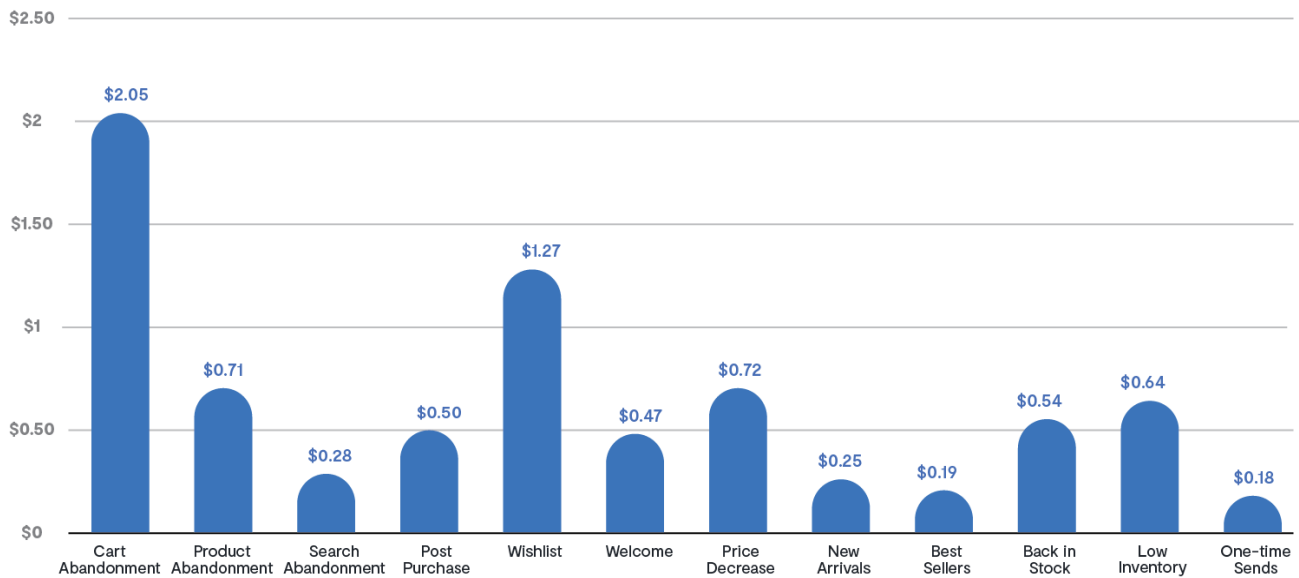


It's not surprising that **cart abandonment** emails deliver high performance in terms of both click-to-open rates and click-to-conversion rates. More surprising is the disparity between a **price decrease** email's effectiveness in generating opens and clicks (it boasts a high click-to-open rate) and its ability to drive purchases (its click-to-conversion rate is still among the best, but not as impressive as its click-to-open rate).

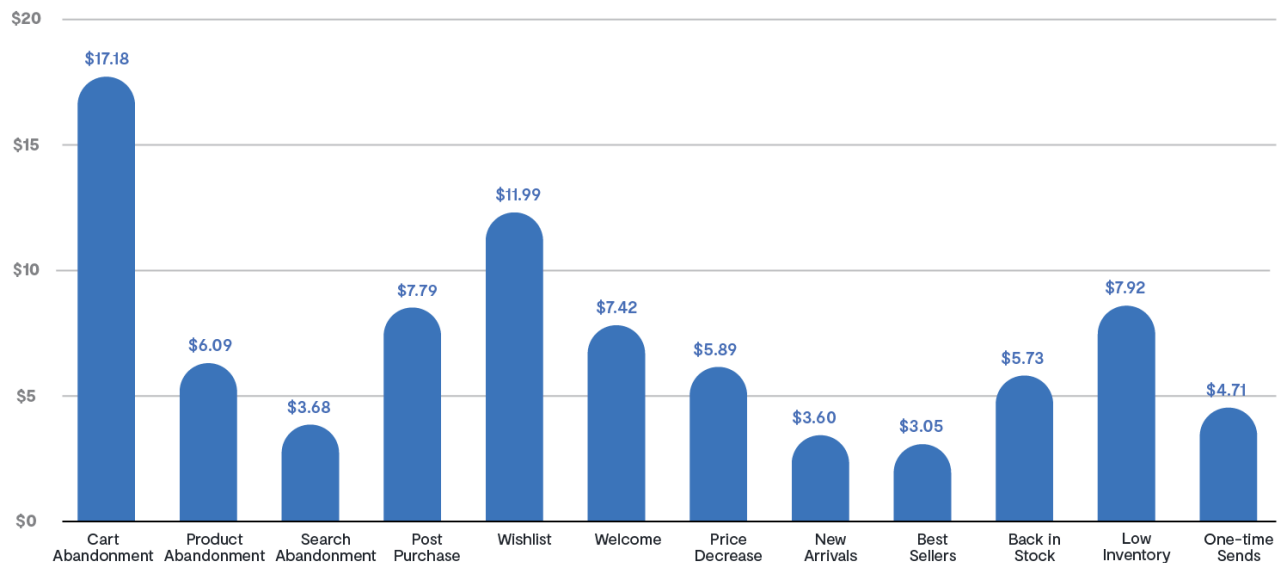
Low inventory emails also perform particularly well when looking at click-to-conversion rate, which speaks to this trigger's ability to create a sense of urgency to purchase that otherwise may not have existed.

Finally, although **one-time sends** lag behind triggered emails when evaluating open, clicks and conversions in isolation (this is typically because they are delivered to a larger audience and often feature an informational/awareness-driven message vs. a buy now message), they hold their own when evaluating click-to-open and click-to-conversion rates. The **one-time sends** that perform best include some level of personalization, whether that's in the audience selected or through the use of dynamic product recommendations.

REVENUE PER EMAIL



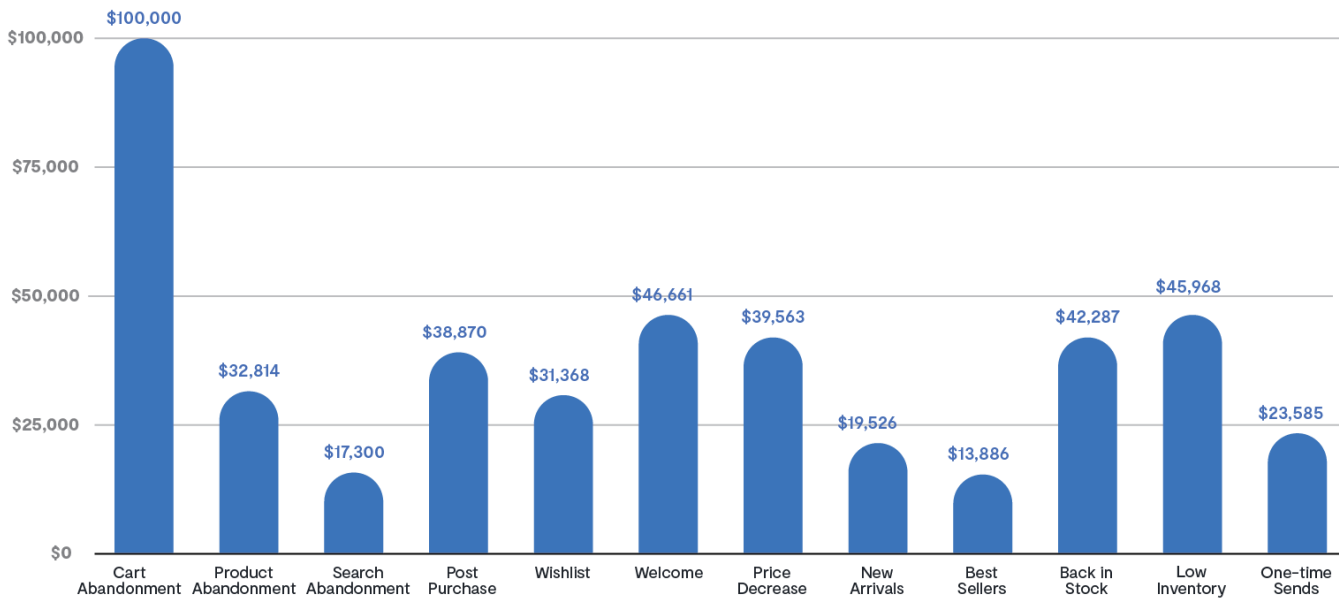
REVENUE PER CLICK



The two charts above highlight the revenue benefits of the various email campaigns included in this study. Whether evaluating results on a revenue per email or revenue per click basis, **cart abandonment** emails far outperform the rest of the field. That performance stems from the fact that these emails are extremely relevant to shoppers based on products featured and timing and that they target customers who have a high purchase intent.

Wishlist emails also perform extremely well from a revenue standpoint for similar reasons, since they target shoppers with products they have marked as something they want to buy at a later time, which shows high interest and future purchase intent.

REVENUE PER EMAIL RELATIVE TO CART ABANDONMENT



Since the combination of emails that retailers run impacts value and overall program send volume and since **cart abandonment** is the first type of triggered email that most retailers working with Bluecore adopt, we looked at the value gained by introducing new emails on top of **cart abandonment**.

While marketers should always test new strategies, the data indicates that **merchandising triggers**, including **price decrease**, **back in stock** and **low inventory** emails, as well as **post purchase** and **welcome** emails provide the largest revenue increases when combined with cart abandonment emails.

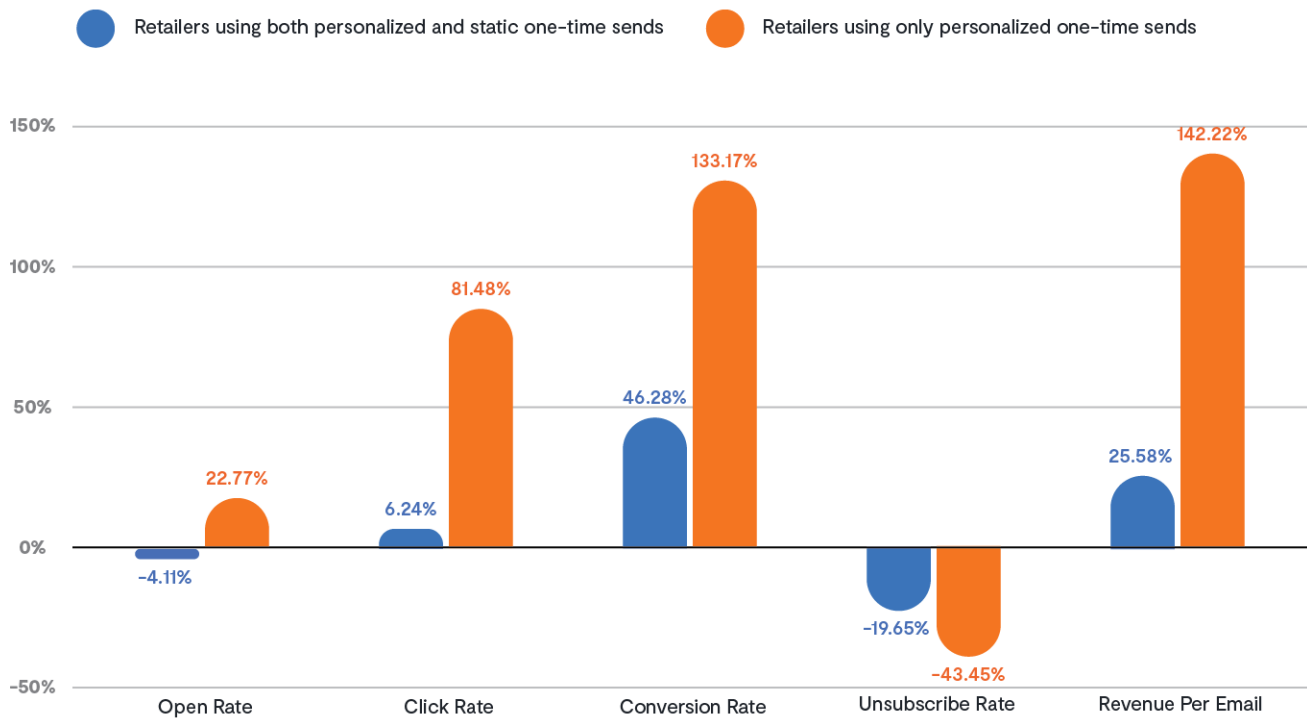
PERSONALIZED EMAIL PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

One-time sends can be static, meaning the exact same email goes to all recipients, or personalized, meaning that product recommendations, content and offers included change based on each recipient's interests or characteristics. Personalizing **one-time sends** has an enormous impact on performance.

Importantly, segmentation is not the same as personalization. Segmentation, which involves dividing customers into audiences based on broad factors like location or product interest, can help

improve performance, but the gains are not scalable and it is a very manual approach. As a result, Bluecore does not use segmentation as a baseline for personalization. Bluecore defines personalization as creating unique experiences for individual customers based on factors like product, content or offer recommendations and priority and timing of your communications. The emails featured in this report achieved this type of personalization through the use of automated, AI-driven workflows.

PERCENT INCREASE IN PERFORMANCE: PERSONALIZED VS. STATIC ONE-TIME SENDS



The graph to the left measures the percent increase in performance for key engagement metrics for retailers that use some level of **personalized one-time sends** vs. retailers who use only **static one-time sends**. Critically, Bluecore evaluated the performance changes for two types of programs:

- 1 Benchmarks from retailers that use both personalized and static one-time sends vs. benchmarks from retailers that use only static one-time sends
- 2 Benchmarks for static one-time sends vs. Benchmarks from retailers that use only personalized one-time sends vs. benchmarks from retailers that use only static one-time sends

Across the board, we see notable lifts in performance when any kind of personalization is added to the mix. The one exception to these gains is a slight decrease in open rate for retailers using both personalized and static **one-time sends**. We can attribute this decrease to the fact that **one-time sends** that are not personalized represent a more significant portion of these retailers' email mix, which drives down open rates. However, all follow-on points of engagement see positive changes in performance (noting that the decrease in unsubscribes is considered a positive change), which is important since those engagements deliver more benefits to email marketing programs than simply opening an email.

Although we see improvements across the board, the biggest gains come as more personalization is introduced. We can attribute these increases in performance to the fact that shoppers are more likely to engage with emails when the products, offers and content featured are relevant to their interests. Over time, this level of personalization can also help retailers stand out in crowded inboxes and make customers more likely to engage with emails because they know they will be interested in the content.

Overall, the continued performance increases alongside bigger transitions to personalization underscore the value for retailers in building a fully personalized email marketing program.

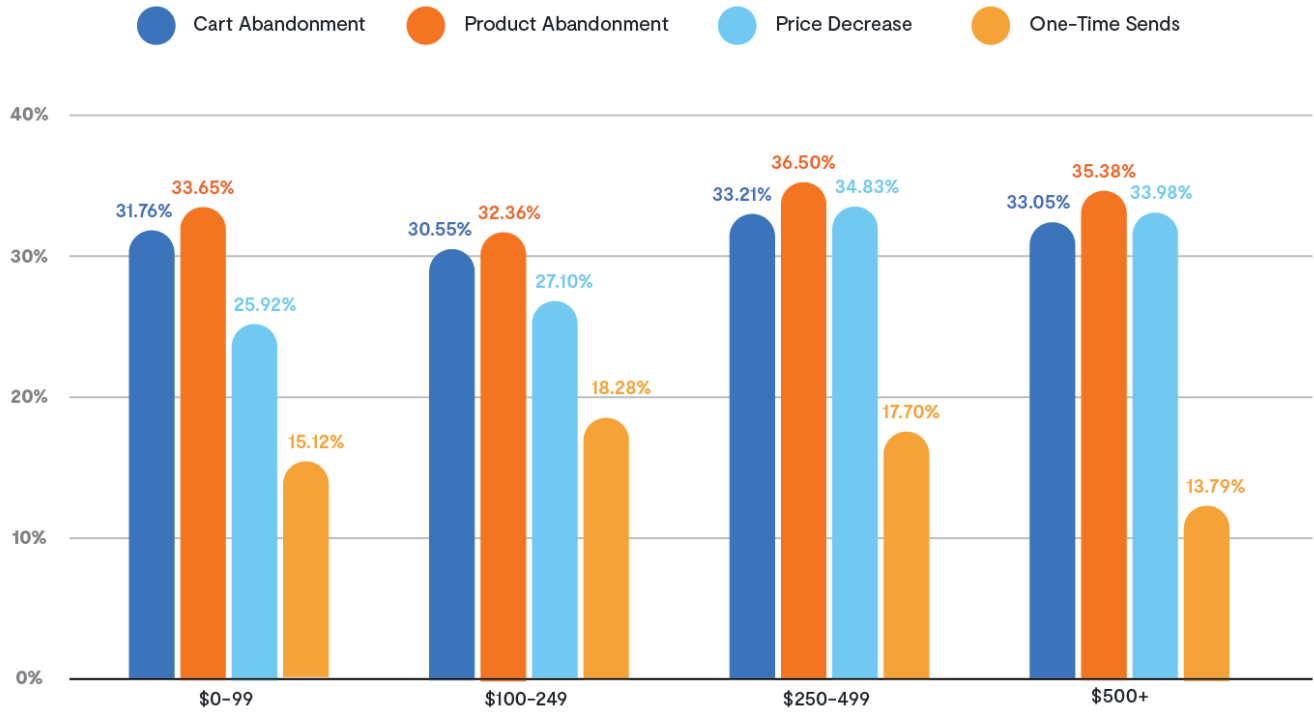
DIFFERENTIATED EMAIL PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

The baseline email performance metrics can help understand the effectiveness of different types of emails at large, but the reality is that numerous factors can impact email performance. Whether it's the price of goods, the type of shopper receiving the email or anything else, the circumstances surrounding any given email send can have an enormous impact on that email's performance.

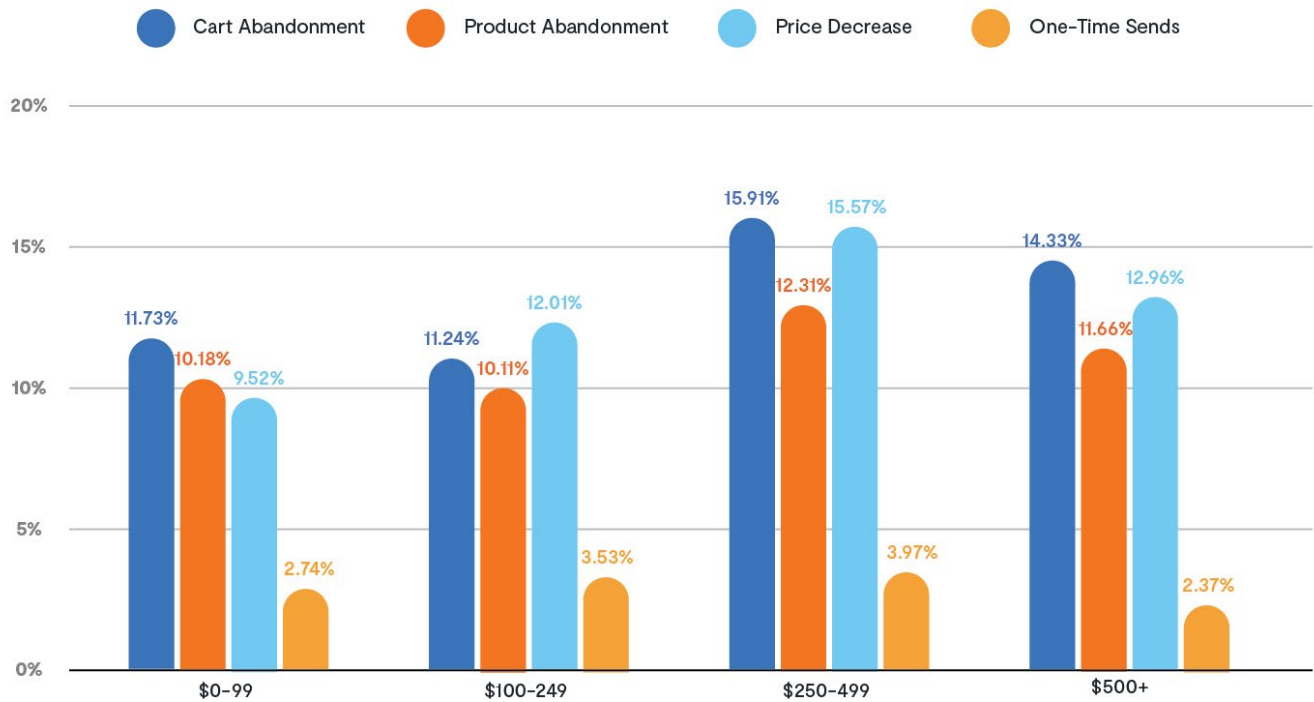
The following differentiated email performance benchmarks evaluate how a variety of circumstances impact engagement with eCommerce triggered emails and one-time sends.

How Average Order Value Impacts Email Performance

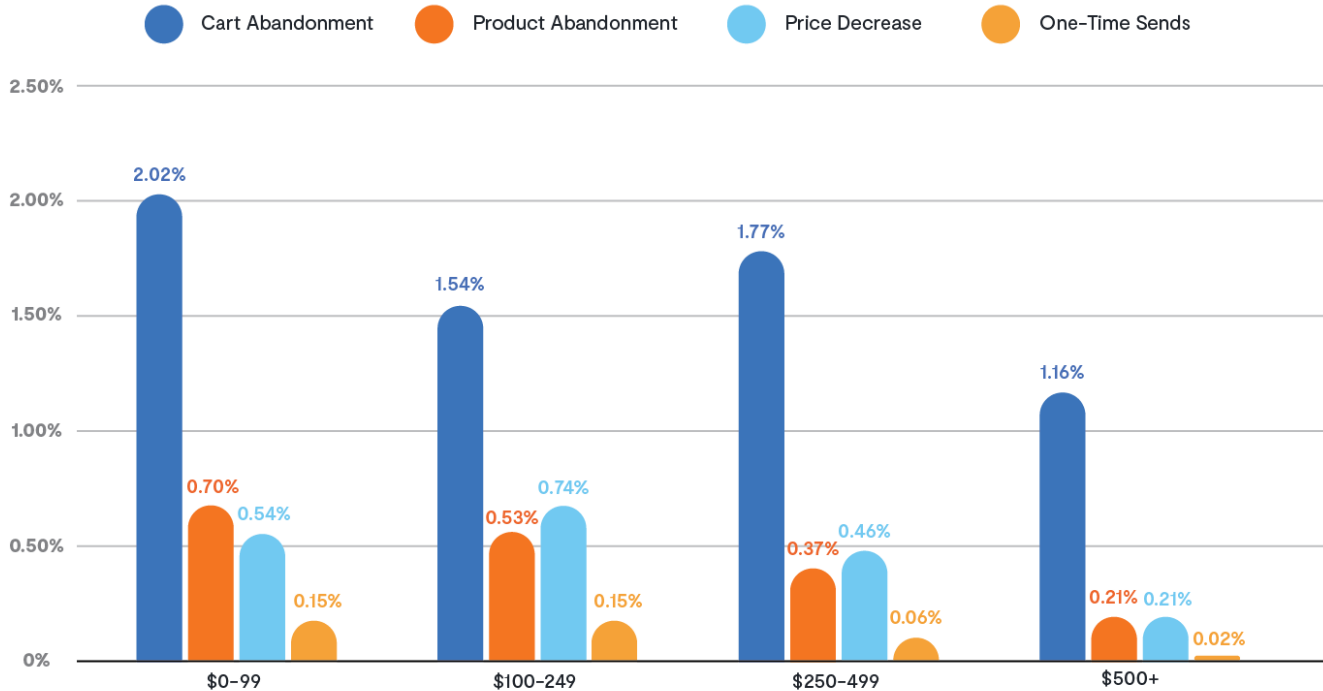
OPEN RATE BASED ON AVERAGE ORDER VALUE



CLICK RATE BASED ON AVERAGE ORDER VALUE



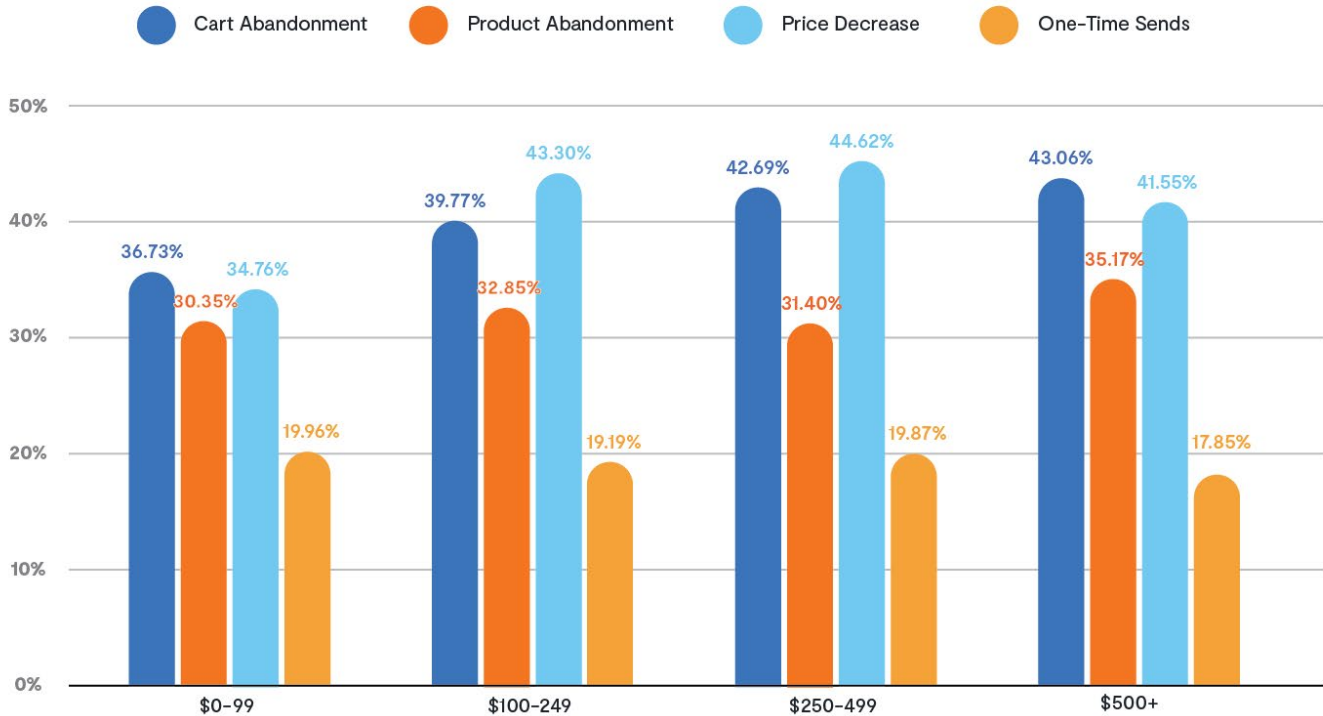
CONVERSION RATE BASED ON AVERAGE ORDER VALUE



With a few exceptions, particularly for **one-time sends**, the higher the average order value, the higher the open and click rates. However, this trend reverses when evaluating conversion rates due to the high level of consideration that goes into a more expensive purchase.

And although **product abandonment** emails see some of the highest open rates, **cart abandonment** emails deliver the highest click and conversion rates. This pattern underscores the importance of the **cart abandonment** email, which is designed to target shoppers with extremely high purchase intent.

CLICK-TO-OPEN RATE BASED ON AVERAGE ORDER VALUE

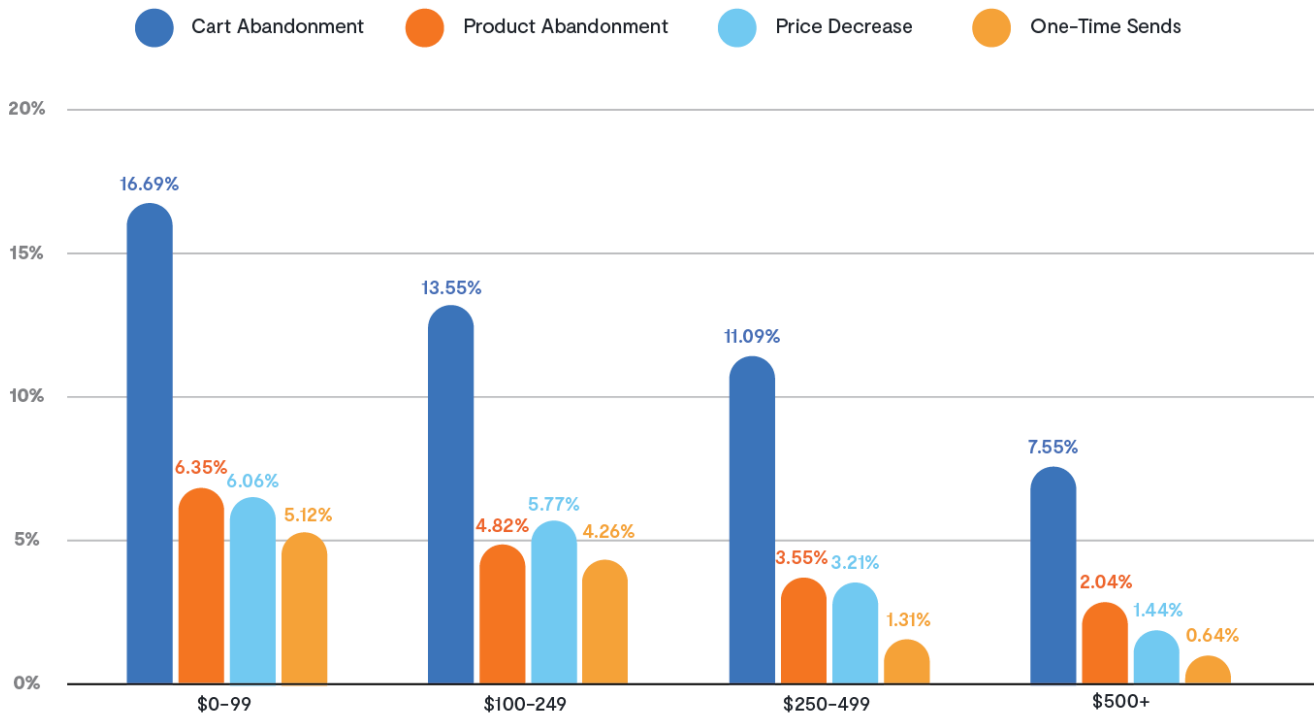


While click-to-open rates hold fairly steady for each type of email even as average order value increases, two key points stand out.

First, **price decrease** emails for average order values over \$100 see a comparatively higher click-to-open rate than they do for retailers with an average order value between \$0-99. This jump is likely due to the fact that a drop in price for items above \$100 is typically sizable, since 10-20% off for items above this price delivers a bigger dollar discount than items under \$100.

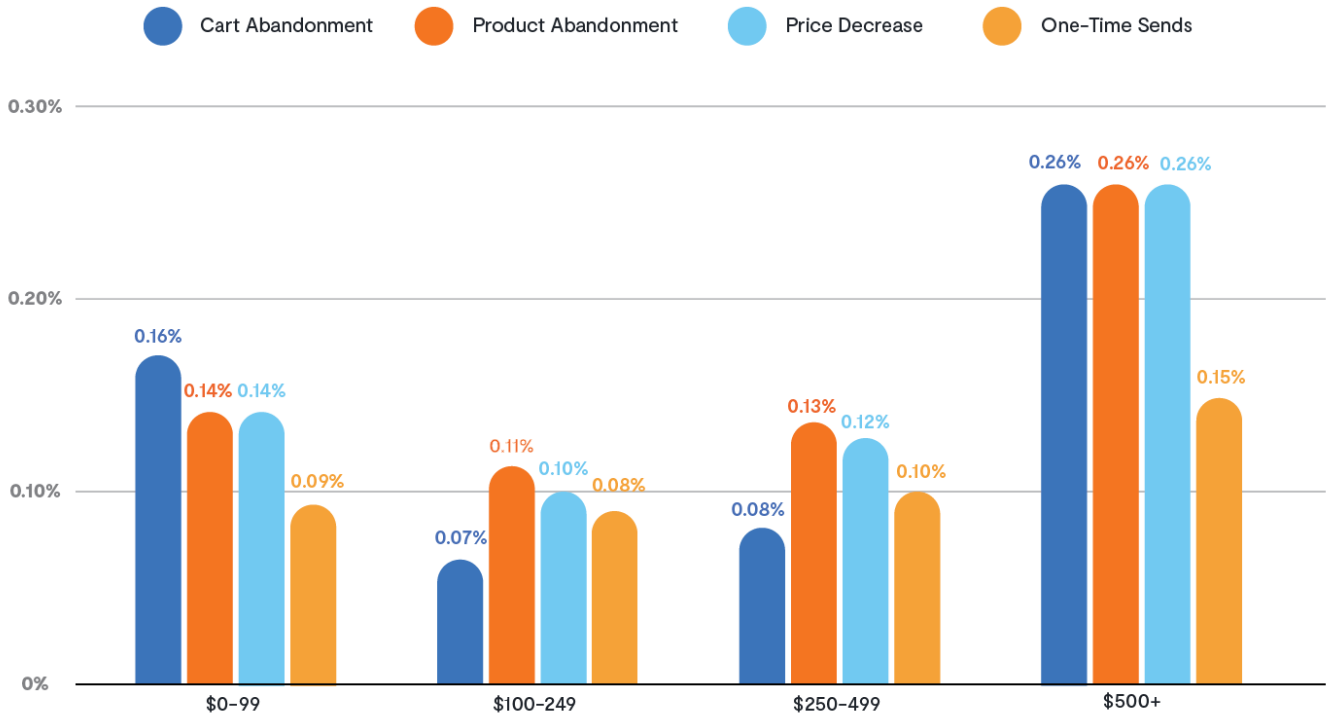
Second, **one-time sends** for an average order value of \$500+ see a comparatively lower click-to-open rate. This decrease can be attributed to shoppers who open emails featuring higher priced items for inspiration without the intention of actually buying. This type of behavior is particularly common for **one-time sends**, which can go to anyone regardless of past engagement, in comparison to **triggered emails**, which send only after someone has already engaged.

CLICK-TO-CONVERSION RATE BASED ON AVERAGE ORDER VALUE



Click-to-conversion rates decrease for each type of email as average order value increases. This decrease ties directly to the amount of consideration and research that goes into purchasing higher-priced items.

UNSUBSCRIBE RATE BASED ON AVERAGE ORDER VALUE



Unsubscribe rates jump significantly as the average order value crosses the \$500 threshold. This trend is common and occurs because higher-priced items tend to be one-time purchases. Retailers who sell these higher value items can combat this trend by focusing on cross-sell recommendations, for example by recommending a night table

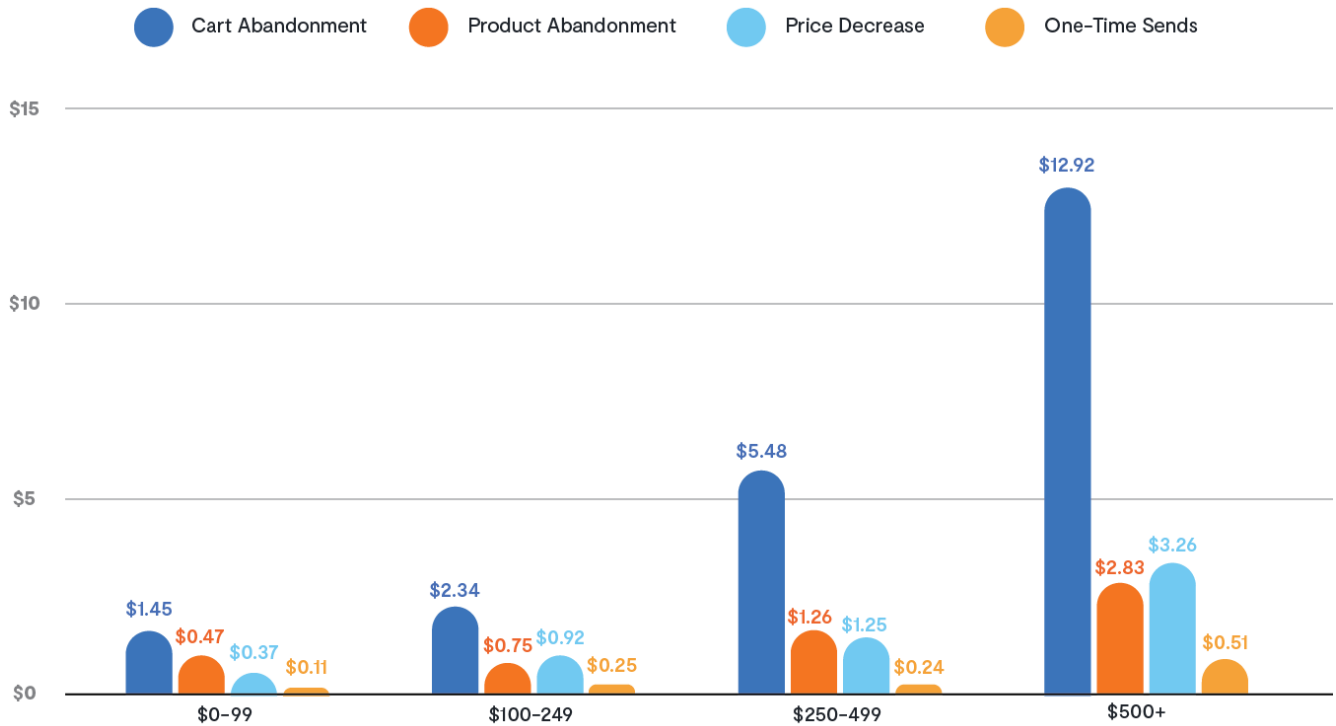
to a shopper who just bought a bed. Or in the case of luxury retailers, who may encounter shoppers who “splurge” on an expensive pair of shoes or a handbag, the best approach often involves first featuring educational resources like styling and cleaning tips before moving on to cross-sell recommendations.

Revenue per email and revenue per click increase as average order value increases.

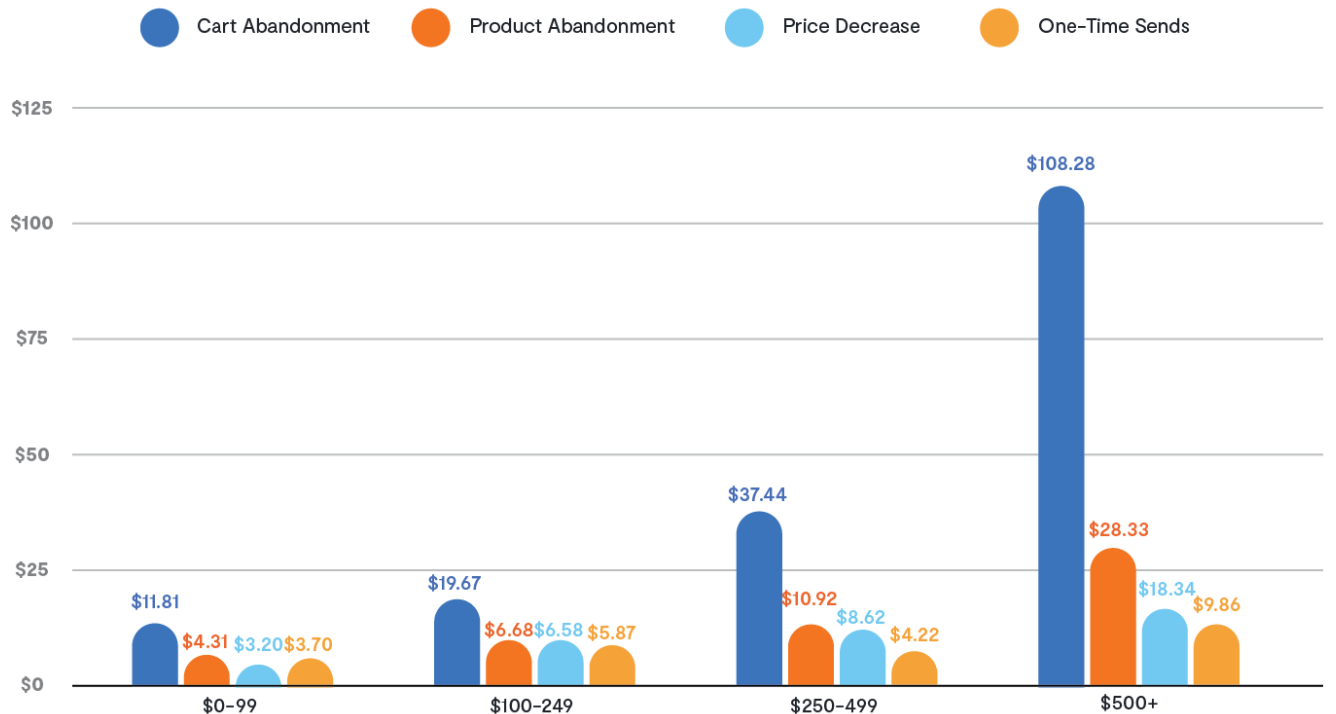
This is an expected trend, however it’s important for brands with a higher average order value to take note of this, since it means that looking at metrics like revenue per email and revenue per click alone may not be the best way to understand overall email performance compared to benchmarks.

Rather, this data is most useful for comparing email performance within the same program (and for similarly priced products) over time, since any increase in revenue per email or revenue per click in that measure will indicate positive program growth.

REVENUE PER EMAIL BASED ON AVERAGE ORDER VALUE



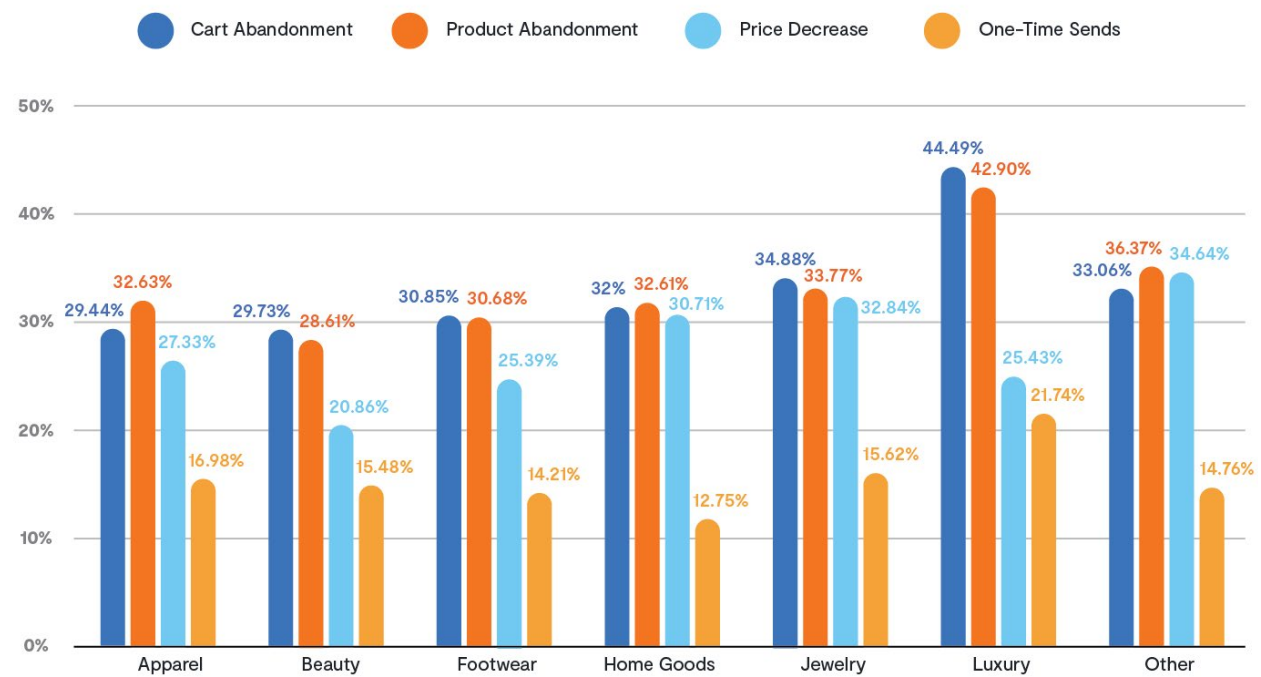
REVENUE PER CLICK BASED ON AVERAGE ORDER VALUE



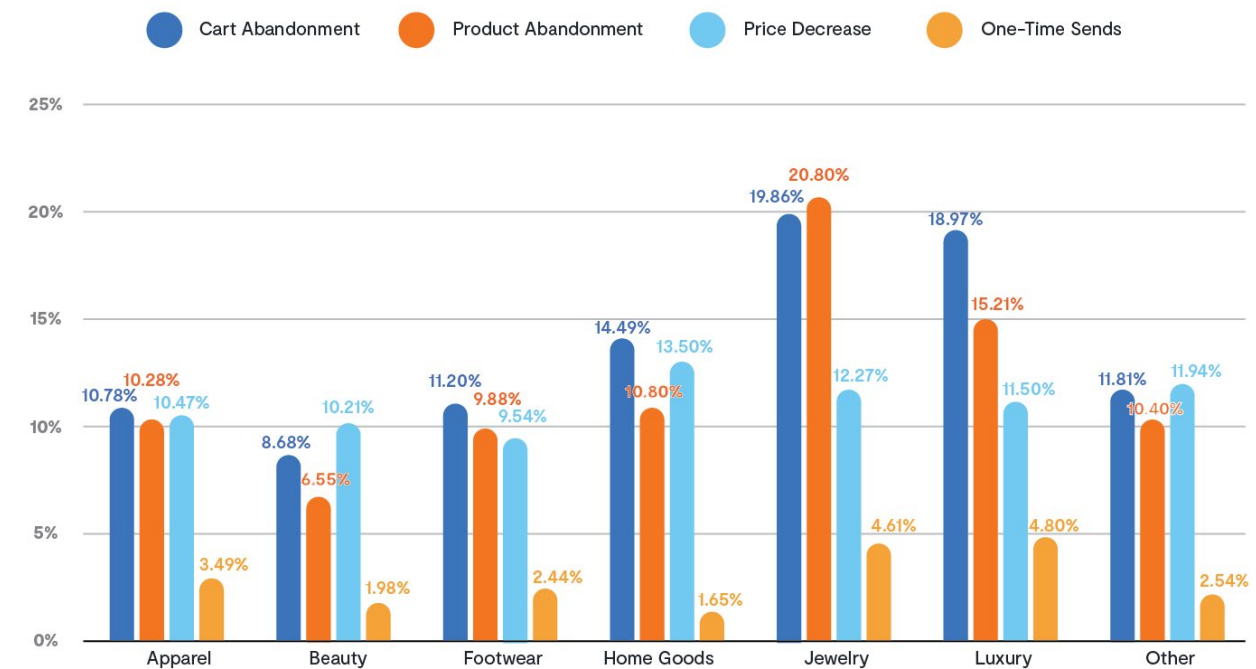
How Retail Vertical Impacts Email Performance

The types of products retailers sell also impact shopping behavior and, therefore, email performance. To better understand these nuances, Bluecore evaluated benchmarks for a handful of representative campaign types.

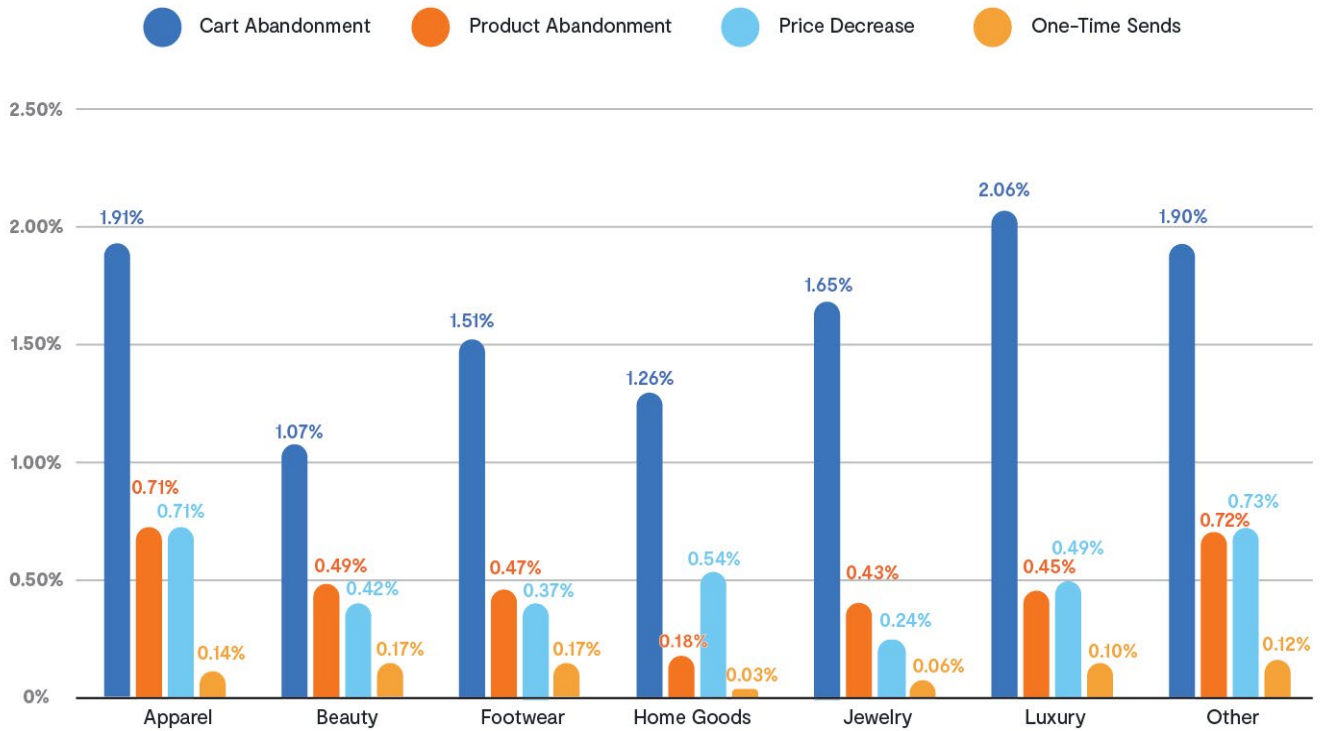
OPEN RATE BASED ON RETAIL VERTICAL



CLICK RATE BASED ON RETAIL VERTICAL



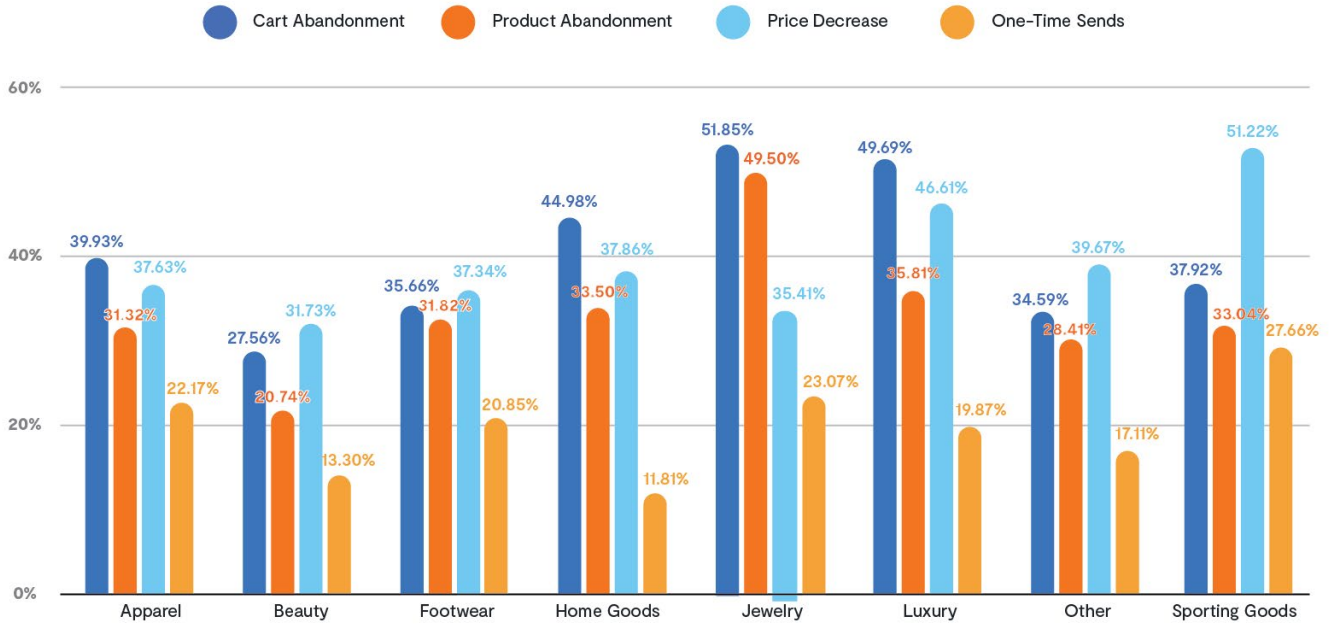
CONVERSION RATE BASED ON RETAIL VERTICAL



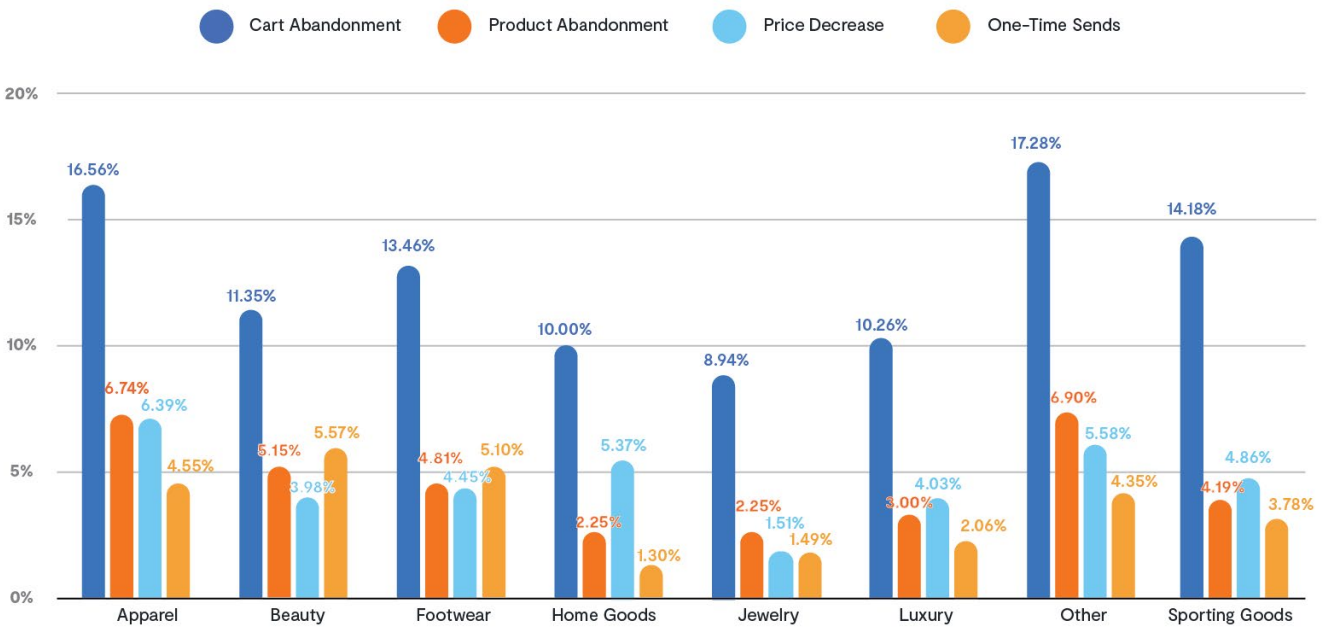
This data reinforces our previous assertion that order value impacts how much research shoppers do and the amount of consideration that goes into a purchase. Retailers selling higher priced items, such as home goods and jewelry, see some of the highest open and click rates but the lowest conversion rates.

Luxury retailers buck this trend, seeing some of the highest conversion rates as well. We can attribute this difference to higher levels of loyalty shoppers feel toward luxury brands and the premium customer experience luxury brands typically offer.

CLICK-TO-OPEN RATE BASED ON RETAIL VERTICAL



CLICK-TO-CONVERSION RATE BASED ON RETAIL VERTICAL

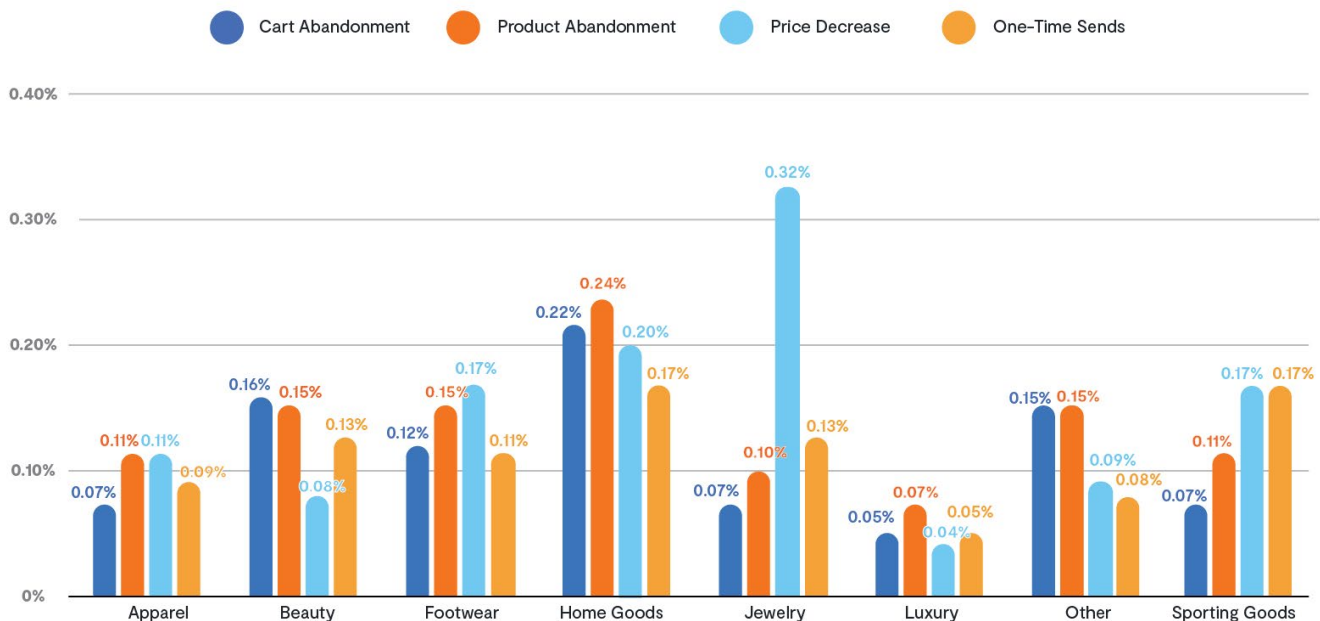


Once again, **cart abandonment** emails see some of the highest click-to-open rates and all of the highest click-to-conversion rates across the board, which speaks to the value of these bottom of the funnel triggered emails.

More notably, while **price decrease** emails see some of the highest click-to-open rates for all retail verticals, they also end up with some of the lowest click-to-conversion rates -- many of which are on par with or less than

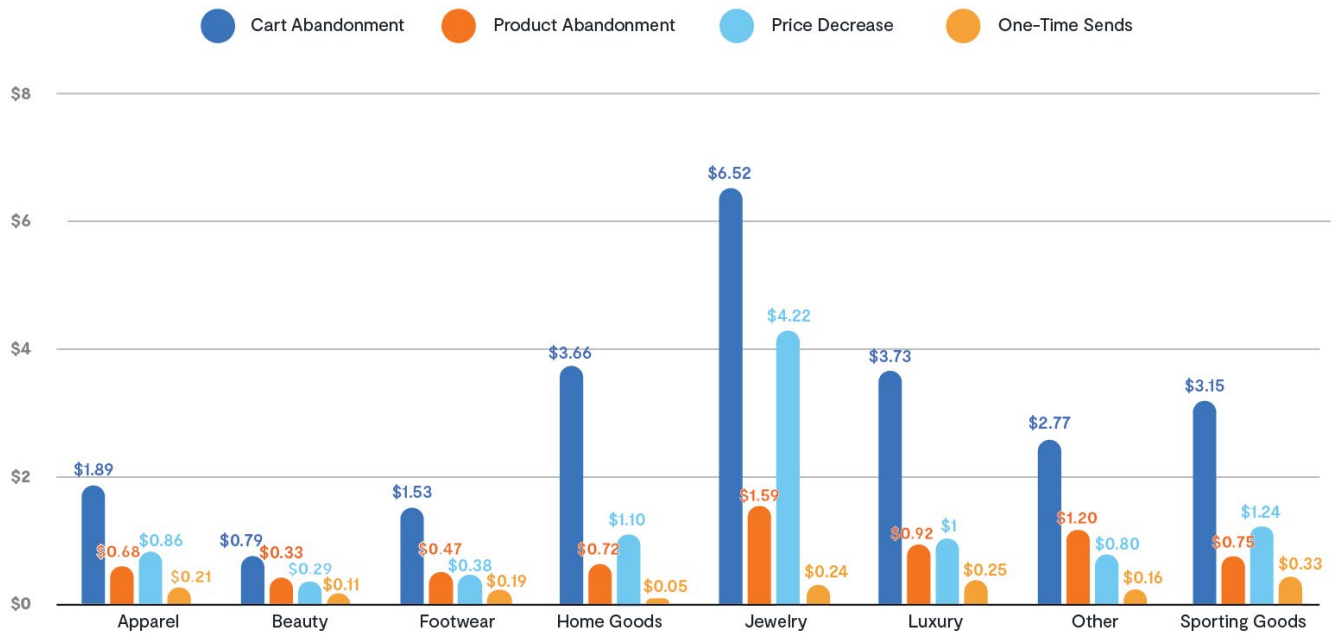
those of **one-time sends**. This performance for **one-time sends** is impressive because **price decrease** emails typically deliver some of the highest results due to the sense of urgency they create and their targeted nature. The fact that **one-time sends** deliver click-to-conversion rates similar or higher to those of **price decrease** emails across retail verticals demonstrates the value of personalizing these emails based on elements like send time as well as products, content and offers featured.

UNSUBSCRIBE RATE BASED ON RETAIL VERTICAL

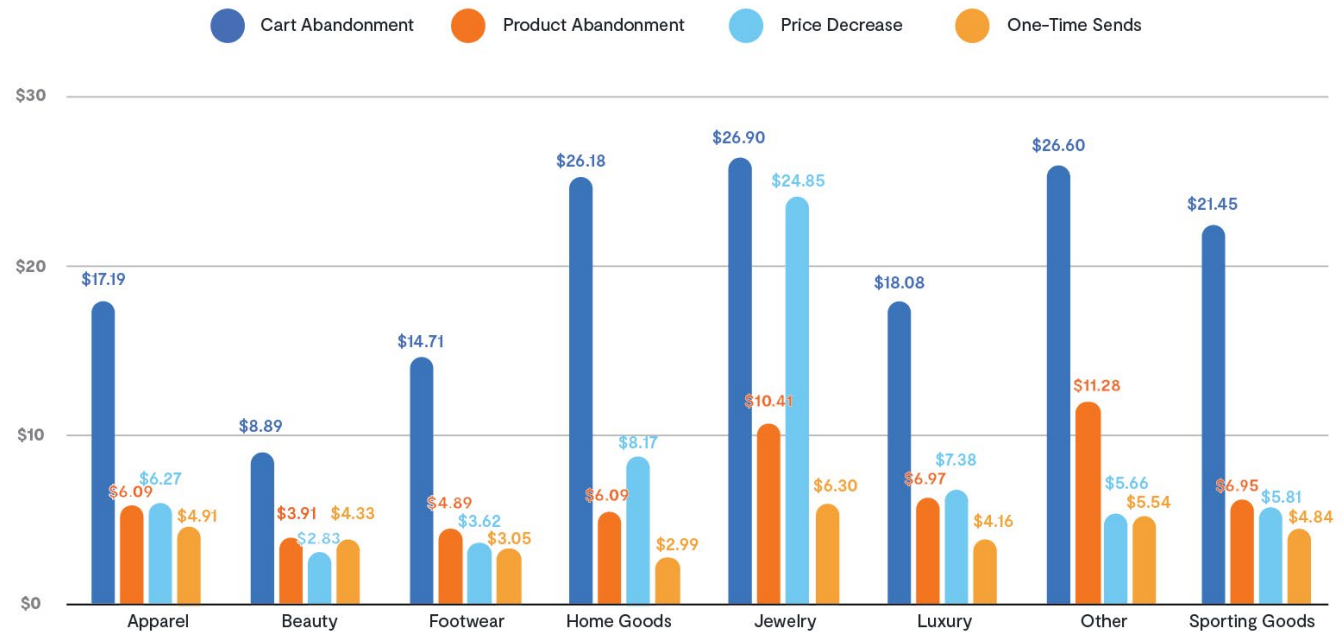


Unsubscribe rates vary across retail verticals, however several interesting points stand out. For example, home goods consistently sees some of the highest unsubscribe rates across email types, which we can attribute to the one-and-done nature of many home goods purchases. Meanwhile, luxury retailers see the lowest unsubscribe rates, which is yet another demonstration of the high levels of loyalty these brands create through their premium customer experiences. Finally, jewelry retailers see a comparatively high unsubscribe rate for **price decrease** emails, which may be due to the perceived value shoppers place on retailers in this category, especially those who sell higher end goods. As a result, jewelry shoppers may be turned off by the notion of a price decrease on these high end items.

REVENUE PER EMAIL BASED ON RETAIL VERTICAL



REVENUE PER CLICK BASED ON RETAIL VERTICAL



The price of goods also impacts revenue. Unsurprisingly given that home goods, jewelry and luxury products tend to be higher in price, retailers in these categories see the highest revenue per email and revenue per click. Once again, it's important for these types of retailers to remain aware of this pattern when using different metrics to gauge email performance.

How Audience Impacts Email Performance

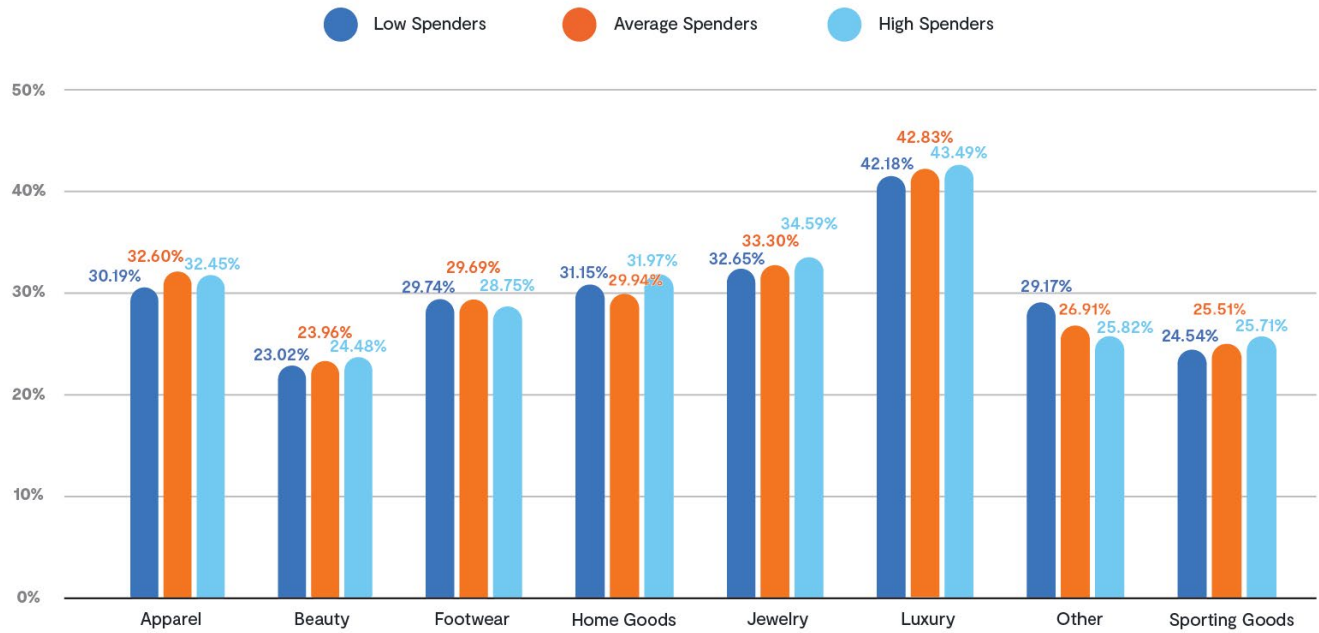
Factors specific to consumers, such as an individual's relationship with a retailer, can also impact email performance. Bluecore has determined email performance benchmarks based on three ways to differentiate among shoppers: Spend level, purchase history and lifecycle stage.

SPEND LEVEL

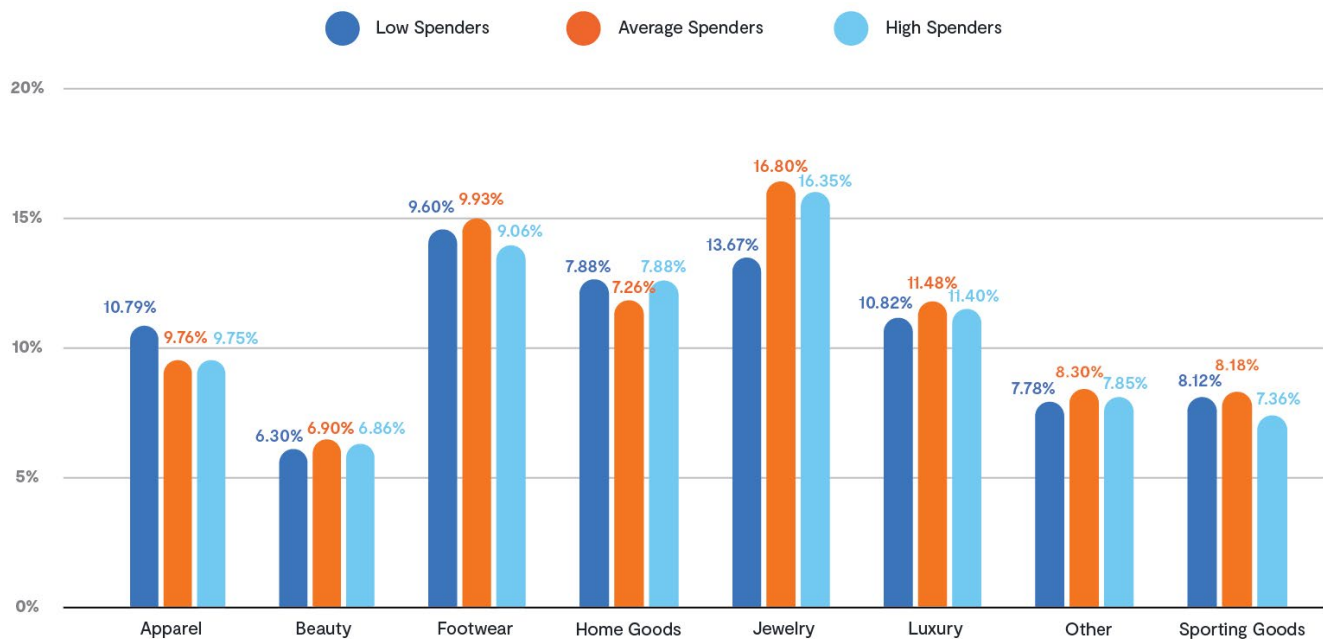
Every retailer has three different types of customers: Low spenders, average spenders and high spenders. It's important to note that spend level doesn't necessarily correlate with lifetime value. For example, a low spender might purchase more frequently than a higher spender, negating any differences in

overall lifetime value. Consider the case of someone who makes a \$50 purchase every month versus someone who makes a \$300 purchase every six months. That said, we do find a correlation between spend level and email engagement when looking across retail verticals.

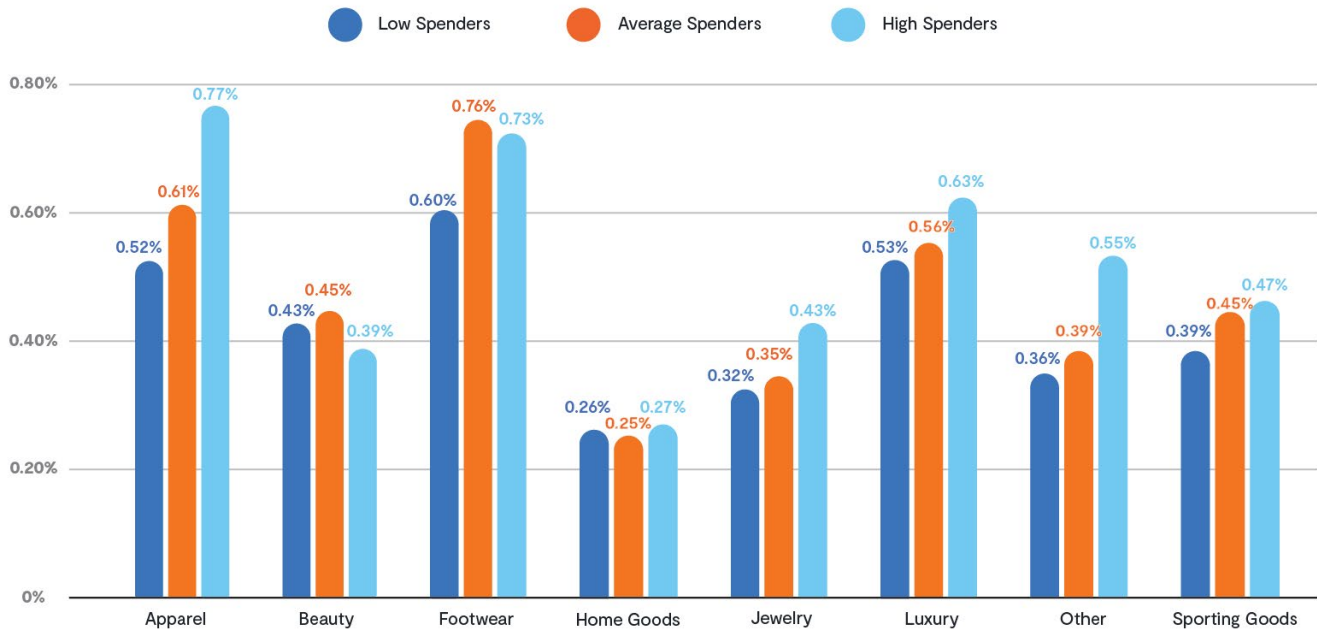
OPEN RATE BASED ON SPEND LEVEL



CLICK RATE BASED ON SPEND LEVEL



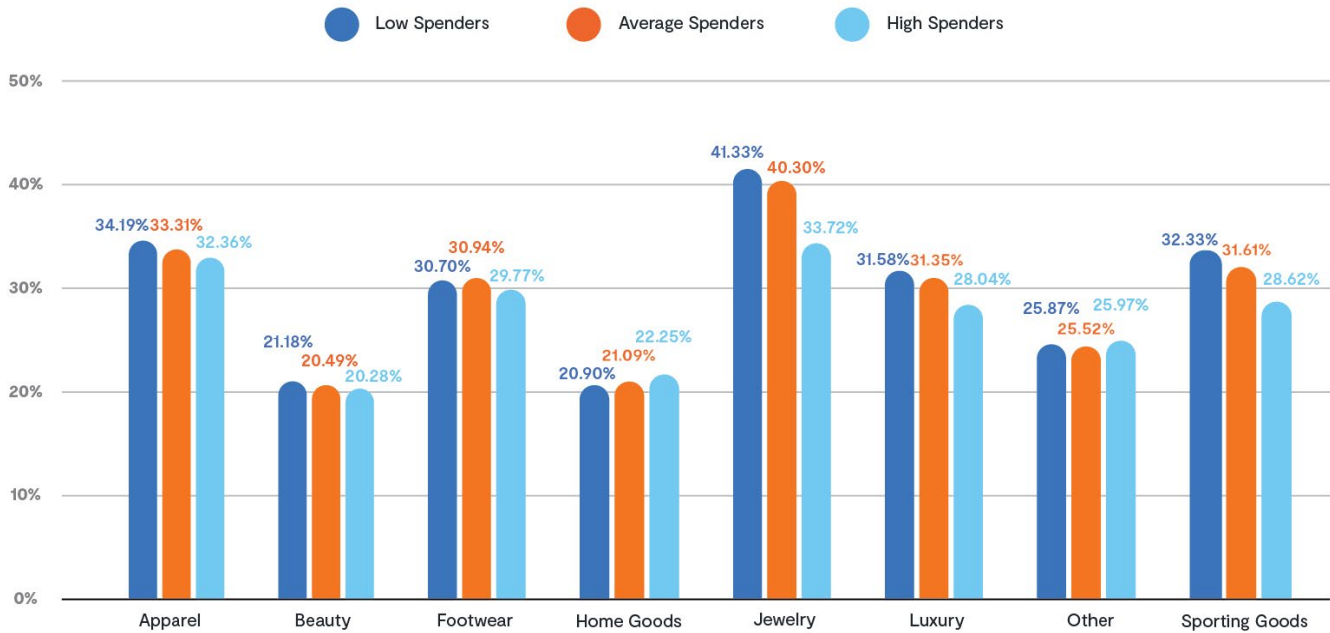
CONVERSION RATE BASED ON SPEND LEVEL



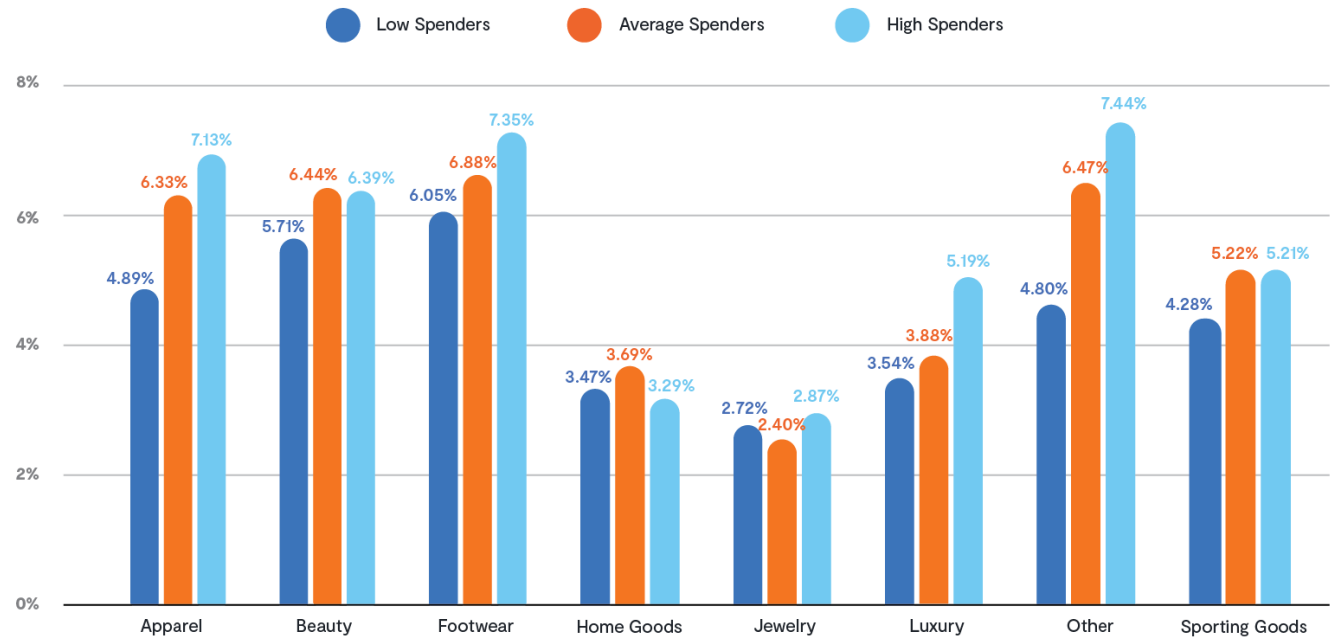
While shoppers of all spend levels open and click on emails at similar rates, high spenders deliver higher conversion rates for most retail verticals. We attribute this engagement pattern to the level of loyalty associated with spend. Specifically, the more shoppers spend with a brand, the stronger the connection they are likely to feel, which creates loyalty to buy time and again.

Beauty, footwear and home goods retailers buck this trend. In the case of beauty, the slightly lower conversion rate among high spenders may be due to these shoppers buying less replenishable products (e.g. more expensive equipment like hair dryers) or replenishing their beauty products less frequently. In the case of footwear and home goods, higher spenders may be purchasing higher quality products that last longer and create the need for fewer repeat purchases over their customer lifetime.

CLICK-TO-OPEN RATE BASED ON SPEND LEVEL

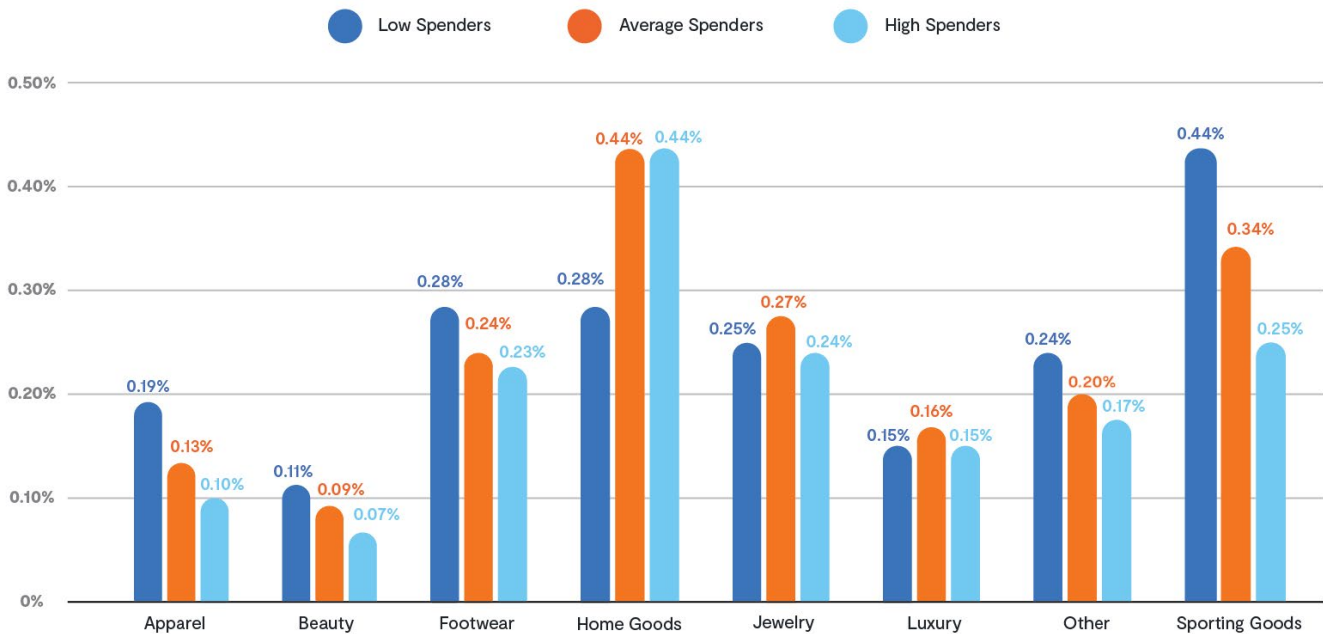


CLICK-TO-CONVERSION RATE BASED ON SPEND LEVEL



Notably, while low spenders tend to deliver similar or higher click-to-open rates than average and high spenders, this trend mostly reverses itself when looking at click-to-conversion rates. This analysis reveals that low spenders tend to do more research upfront before making a purchase, which leads to higher click and open rates, whereas high spenders are more likely to engage with emails when they are ready to buy. As a result, personalizing based on factors that impact the open rate, like the subject line and send time, are most important when retailers differentiate audiences based on spend level since doing so can continue to drive more engagement from lower spenders while encouraging higher spenders, who have a higher tendency to purchase once they do engage, to open more emails.

UNSUBSCRIBE RATE BASED ON SPEND LEVEL



Looking at retention based on spend level reveals several interesting patterns. In verticals like apparel, beauty, footwear and sporting goods that typically include lower priced products, high spenders not only tend to engage more over email, but they are also less likely to unsubscribe, making customers among this group more likely to be loyal. On

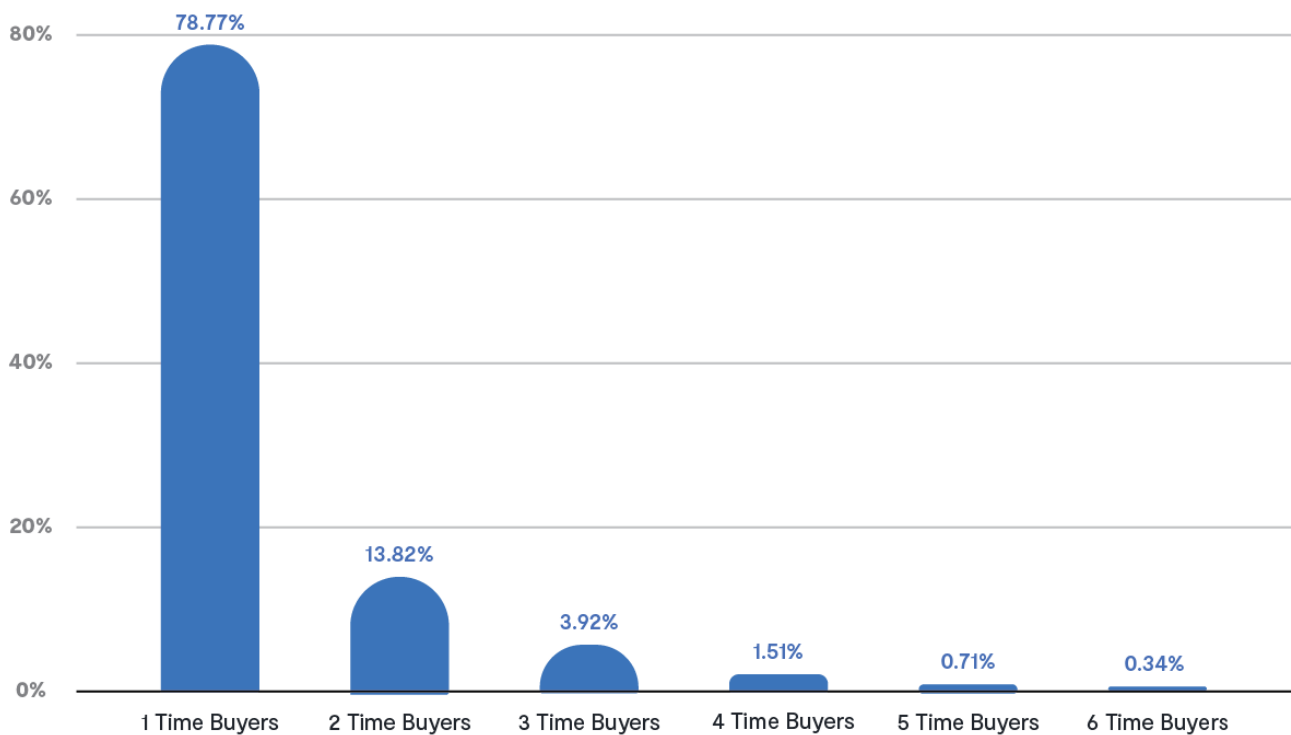
the other hand, in verticals like home goods, jewelry and luxury that offer higher priced products, low spenders are less likely to unsubscribe. This trend reinforces the idea that these retailers may have a one-and-done buyer problem, particularly among high spenders who may make several big purchases at once never to buy again.

PURCHASE HISTORY

Every retailer needs to understand the distribution of their customer base according to purchase history. This type of analysis is particularly important because purchase history correlates to lifetime value and loyalty. Specifically, the more times customers buy from a

retailer, the more likely they are to buy again, leading to increased lifetime value and loyalty. Unfortunately, retailers have a significant one-time buyer problem. This is often true of retailers who focus disproportionately on acquisition strategies compared to retention.

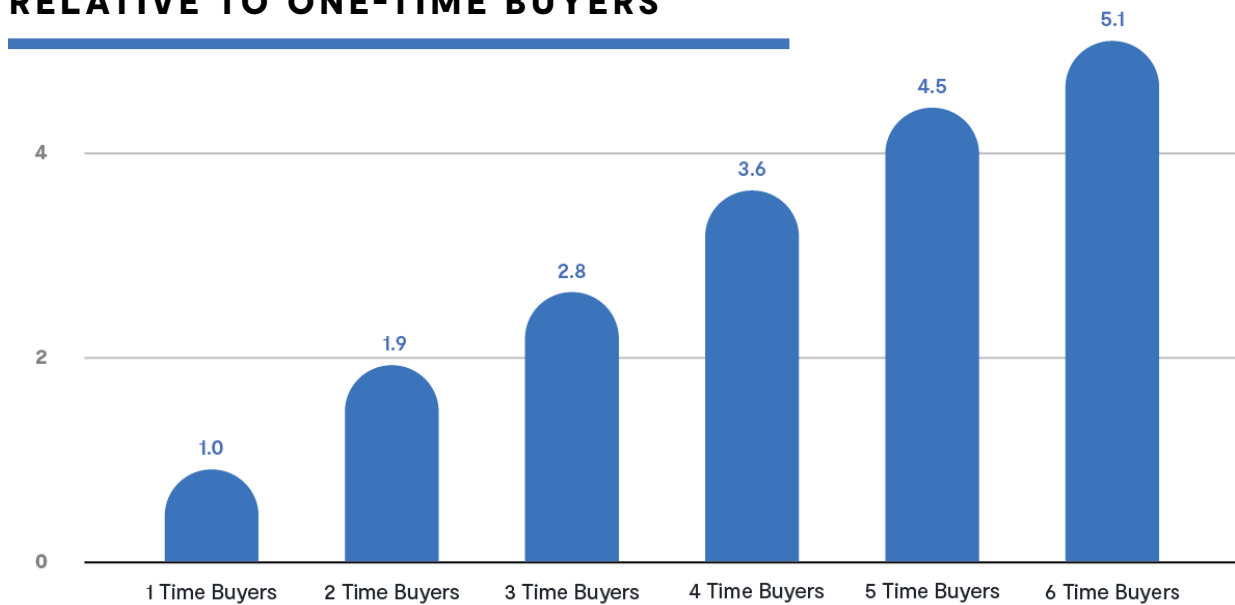
CUSTOMER DISTRIBUTION BY PURCHASE HISTORY



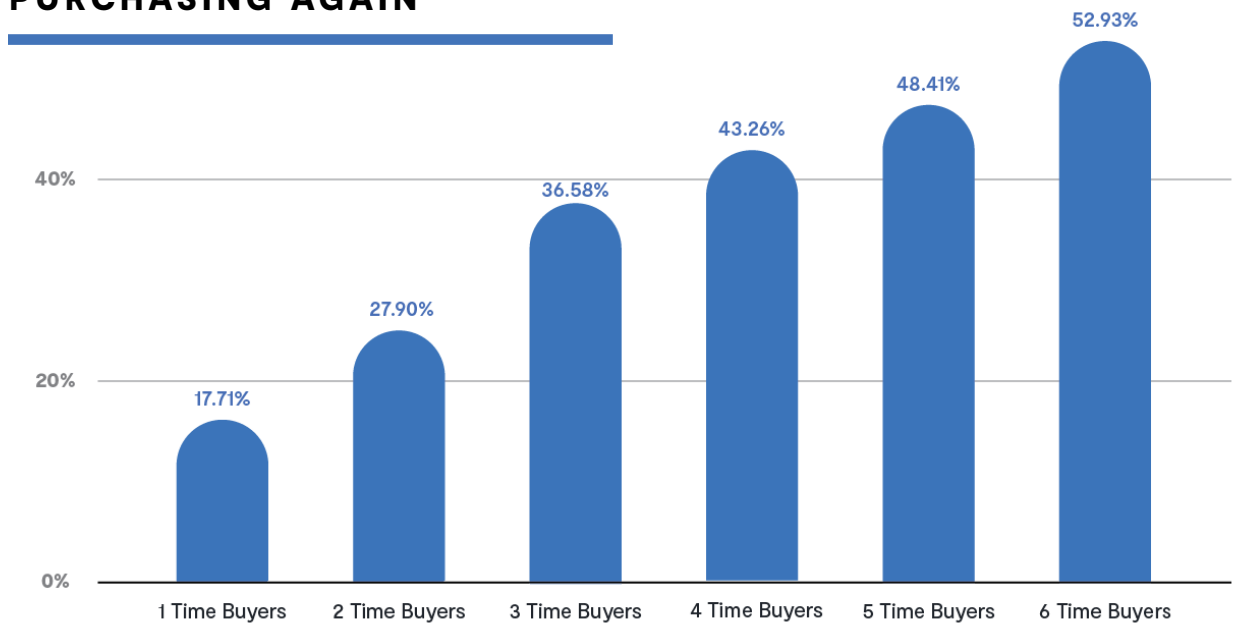
The one-and-done buyer situation forces retailers to prioritize expensive customer acquisition efforts over more impactful and less costly customer retention efforts.

Crossing the chasm from one-time buyer to two-time buyer unlocks many opportunities, as the differences in near-term revenue and likelihood to purchase again are most pronounced when moving from the first purchase to the second purchase (versus from the second purchase to the third purchase and so on).

AVERAGE PREDICTED LIFETIME VALUE RELATIVE TO ONE-TIME BUYERS



LIKELIHOOD OF CUSTOMERS PURCHASING AGAIN

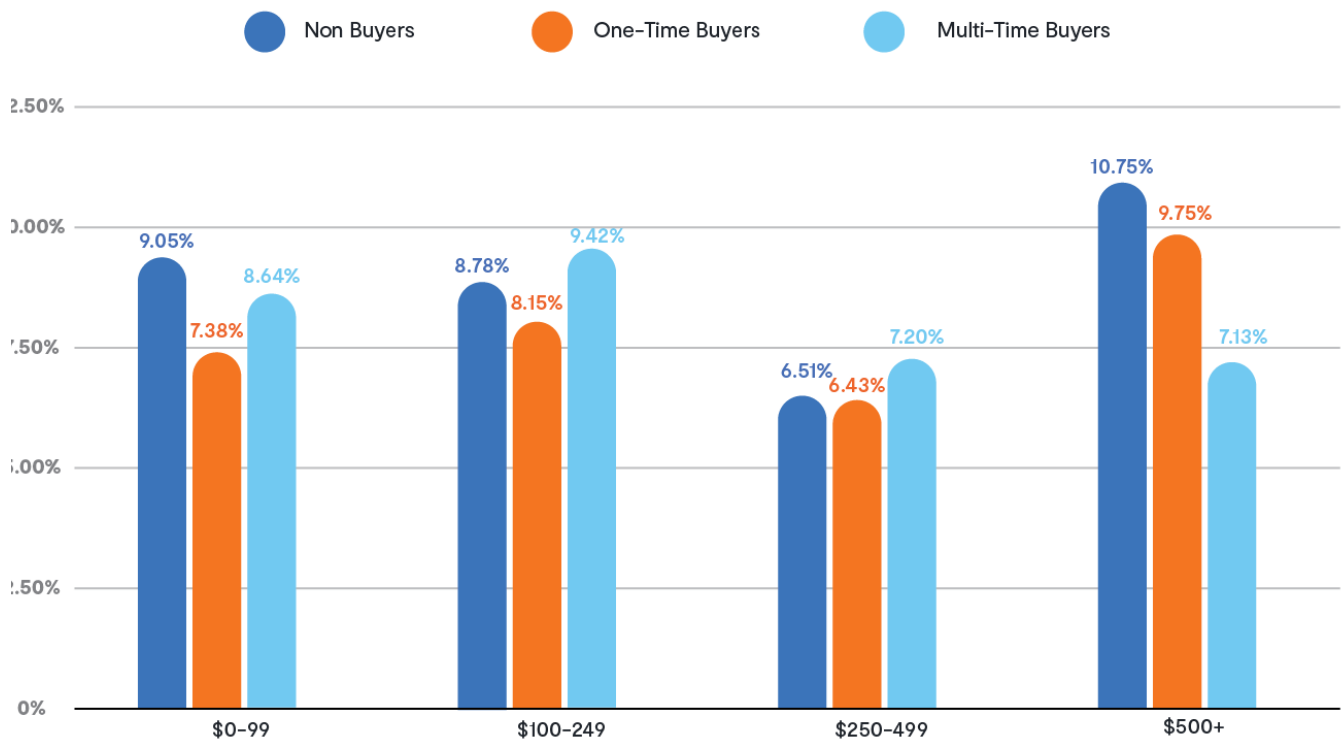


The loyalty that comes with making more purchases also manifests itself in email engagement. To simplify these measures going forward, we grouped buyers into three categories: Non buyers, one-time buyers and multi-time buyers. We chose these categories because the two biggest chasms for retailers to cross are customer acquisition (non buyer to one-time buyer) and customer retention (which starts with converting one-time buyers to two-time buyers, since getting more purchases after the second purchase only becomes easier). We also indexed these measurements based on average order value, since we see the price of goods has the biggest impact on email engagement compared to other measures like retail vertical.

OPEN RATE BASED ON PURCHASE HISTORY



CLICK RATE BASED ON PURCHASE HISTORY



CLICK-TO-OPEN RATE BASED ON PURCHASE HISTORY

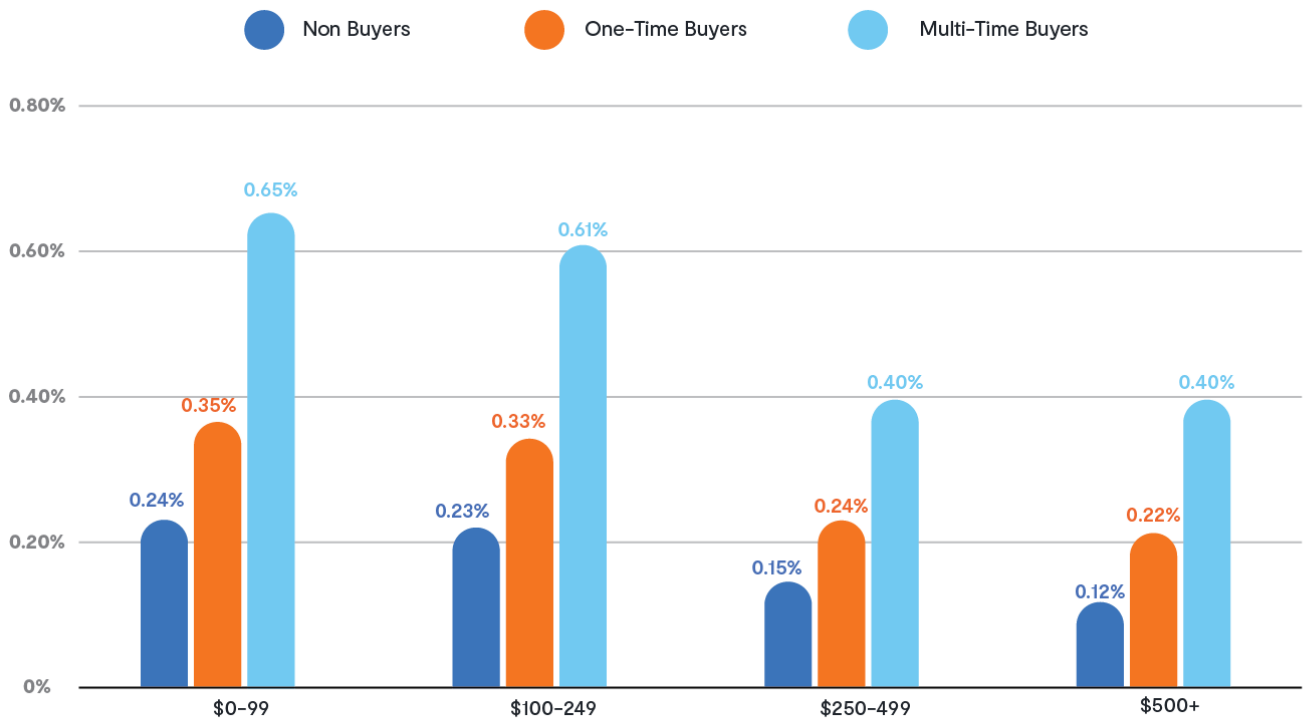


The data does not reveal much differentiation in open, click and click-to-open rates among non, one-time and multi-time buyers. This pattern indicates that each of these groups has a similar base level of interest in viewing products.

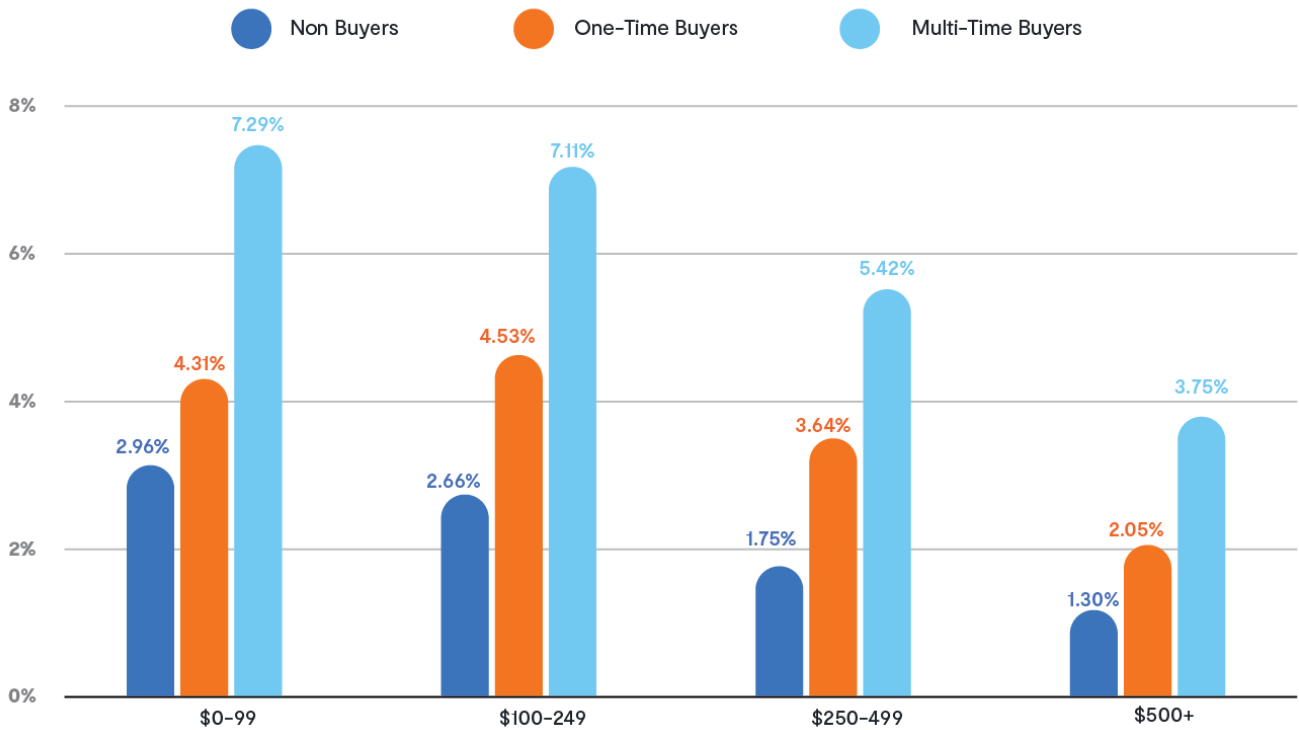
That said, we do see some differences in click and click-to-open rates among these buyer groups for retailers with average order values over \$500, with non and one-time buyers clicking more often than multi-time

buyers. We can attribute this difference to the type of “aspirational” shopping and longer consideration cycles that often occurs with higher priced items. Specifically, non and one-time buyers may be more likely to click on products as part of a window shopping experience, whereas multi-time buyers who have established more loyalty are more likely to click on emails with a higher intent to purchase. The following conversion and click-to-conversion data supports this pattern.

CONVERSION RATE BASED ON PURCHASE HISTORY



CLICK-TO-CONVERSION RATE BASED ON PURCHASE HISTORY



Although non, one-time and multi-time buyers open and click at relatively steady rates, that's where the engagement similarities end. The average conversion and click-to-conversion rates are notably higher for multi-time buyers compared to both other groups and for one-time buyers compared to non buyers. This shift reveals that customers' past purchase history impacts whether their interest in viewing products (as displayed by opening and clicking on emails) leans more toward curiosity and research or true purchase intent.

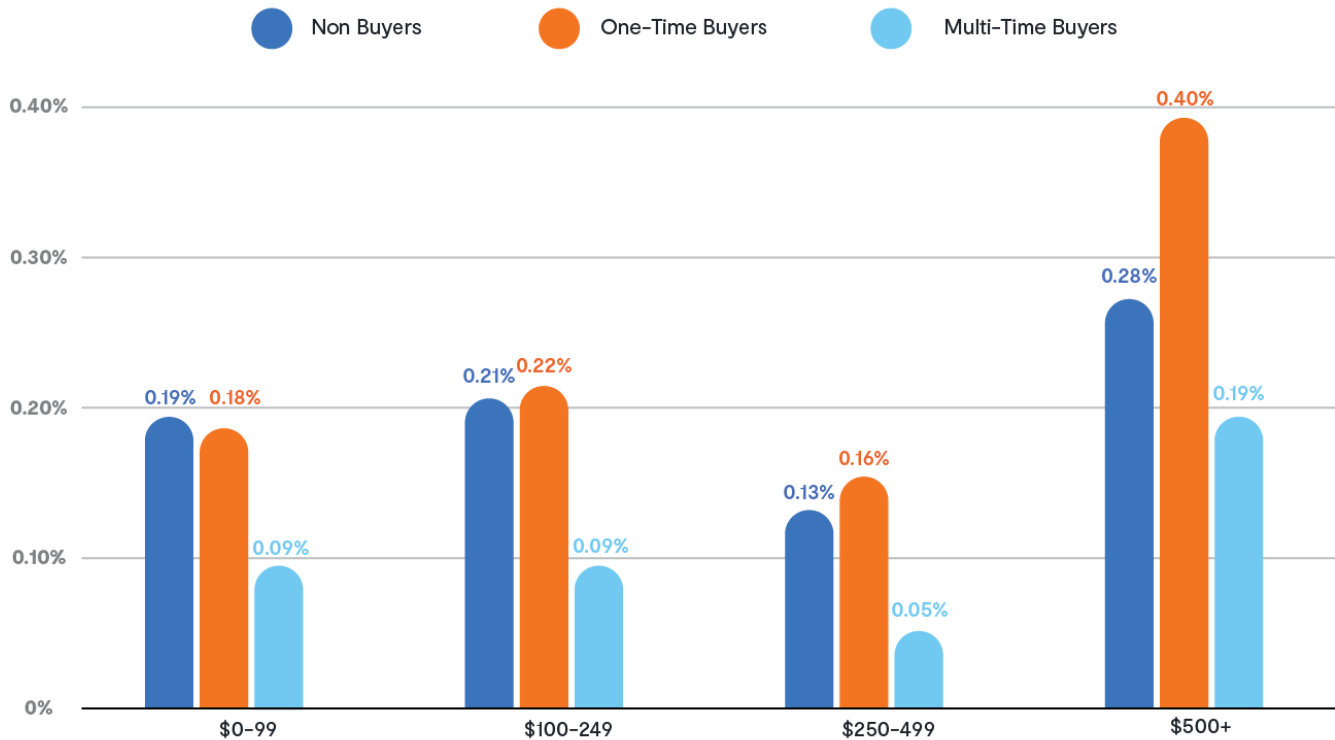
PERCENT OF NON AND ONE-TIME BUYERS CONVERTED BASED ON NUMBER OF PERSONALIZED EMAILS DELIVERED



Looking more closely at the ability to drive conversions that turn non buyers into one-time buyers and one-time buyers into multi-time buyers further underscores the power of personalization. While we see very slight upticks in the level of conversions from non buyers as the number of personalized emails received increases, we see big lifts in performance among one-time

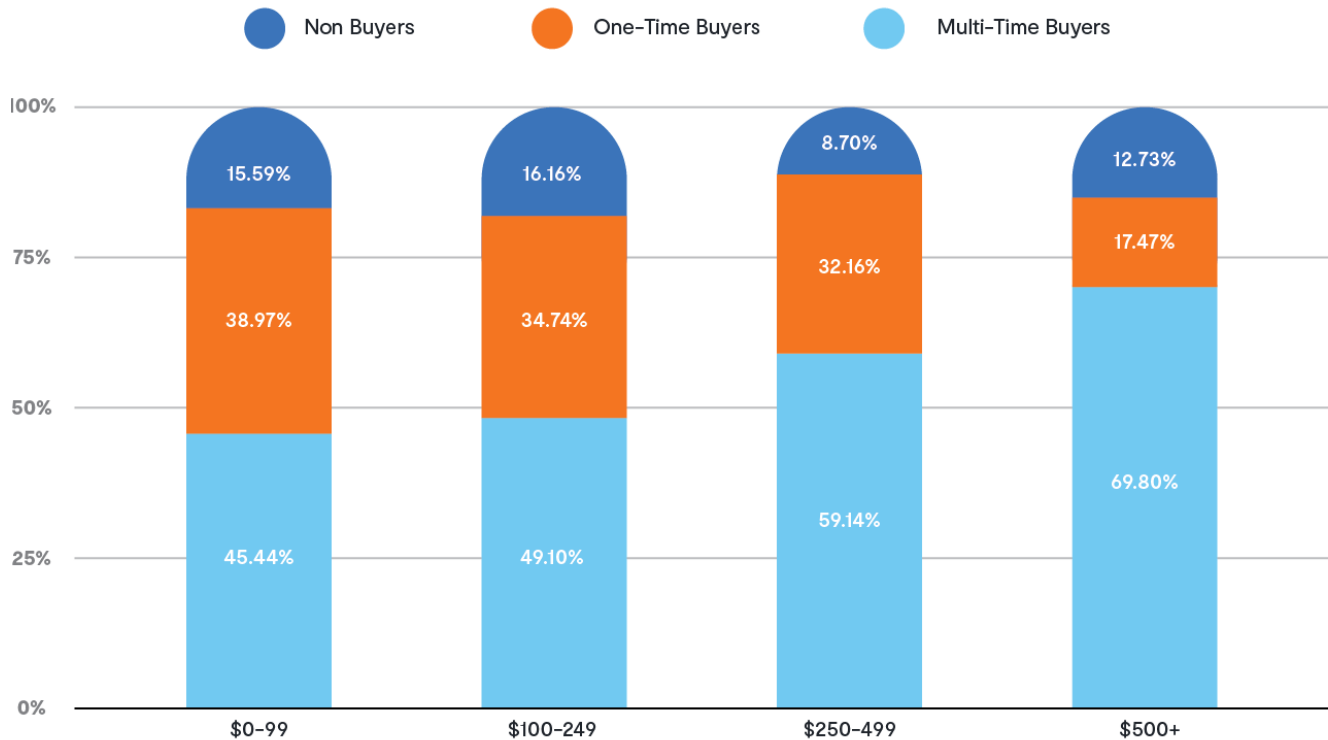
buyers. Specifically, retailers that send >10 personalized emails to one-time buyers see 135% more conversions among this group than retailers who send 1-5 personalized emails. Once again, this data illustrates the value retailers receive in scaling the level of personalization within their marketing programs.

UNSUBSCRIBE RATE BASED ON PURCHASE HISTORY



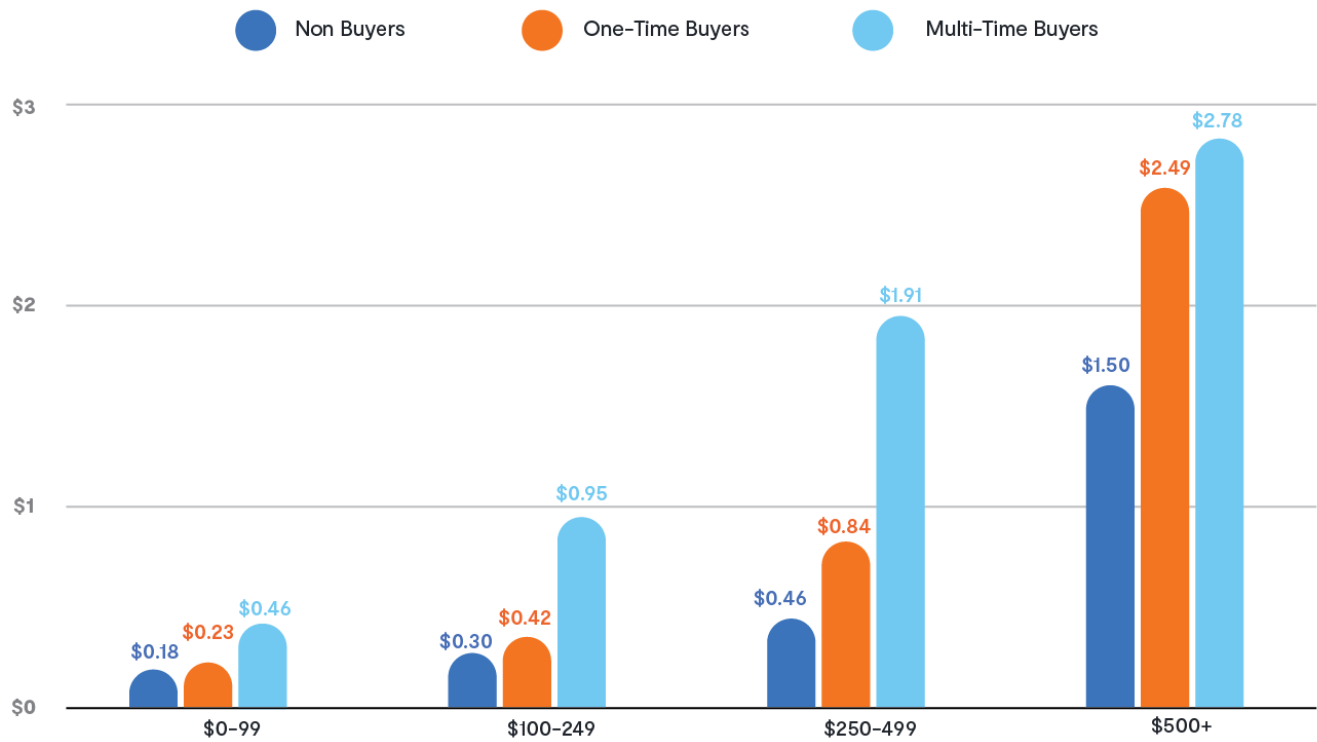
The above chart indicates that non and one-time buyers unsubscribe at the highest rates, which is not surprising given the level of loyalty associated with making multiple purchases. Additionally, the fact that one-time buyers typically unsubscribe at slightly higher rates than non buyers underscores the fact that retailers have a one-and-done buyer problem.

BREAKDOWN OF UNSUBSCRIBES BY PURCHASE HISTORY

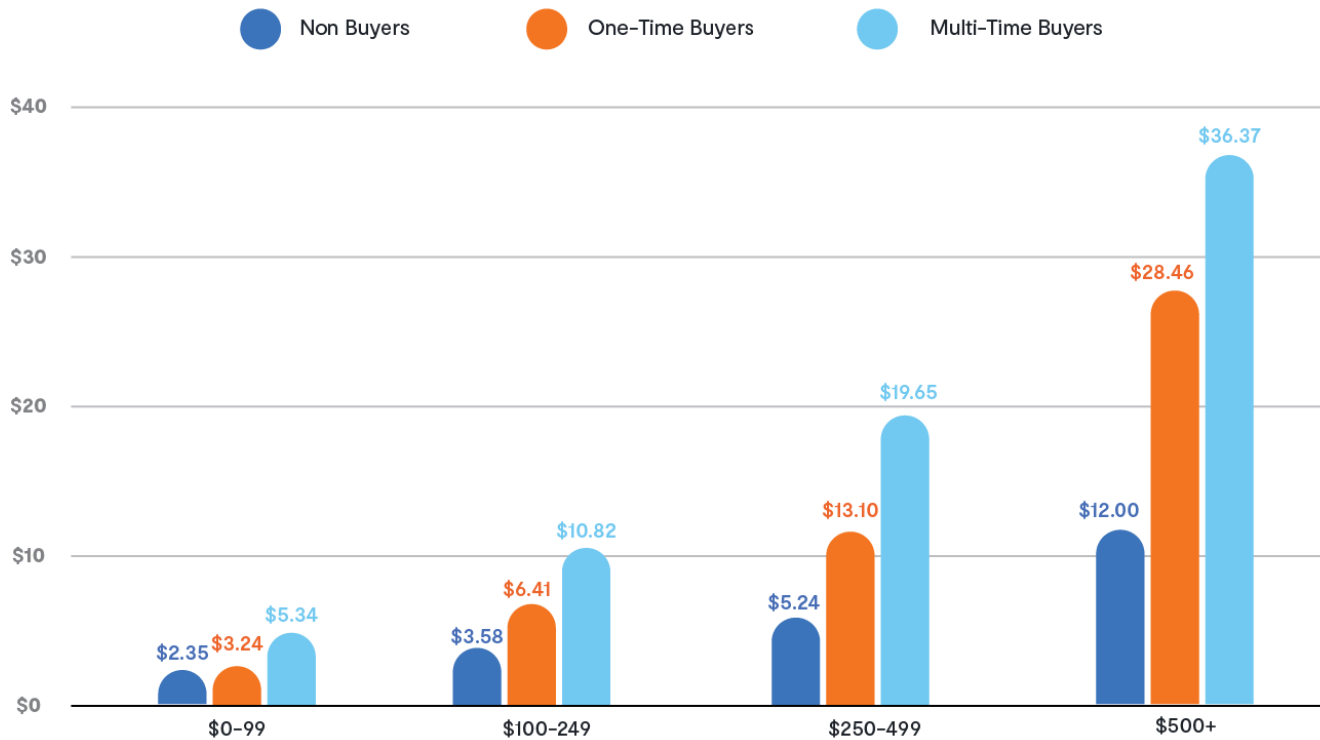


Despite the fact that one-time buyers unsubscribe at the highest rates, the majority of retailers' unsubscribes come from non buyers. This phenomenon happens because the majority of retailers' email recipients have never made a purchase and because most of these non buyers don't get personalized emails immediately after subscribing. Retailers who can personalize early on for these non buyers will be able to limit unsubscribes from this group and drive more first purchases.

REVENUE PER EMAIL BASED ON PURCHASE HISTORY



REVENUE PER CLICK BASED ON PURCHASE HISTORY



Purchase history also impacts spend, as the more purchases shoppers have made in the past, the higher revenue per email and revenue per click they deliver for retailers. This trend indicates that the loyalty of multi-time purchasers means they are not only more likely to buy again and engage

with emails, but they are also likely to buy more within each purchase. Multi-time buyers may spend more per purchase because they are no longer testing the retailer or brand itself and therefore feel more comfortable expanding their relationship with the retailer by testing new products.

LIFECYCLE STAGE

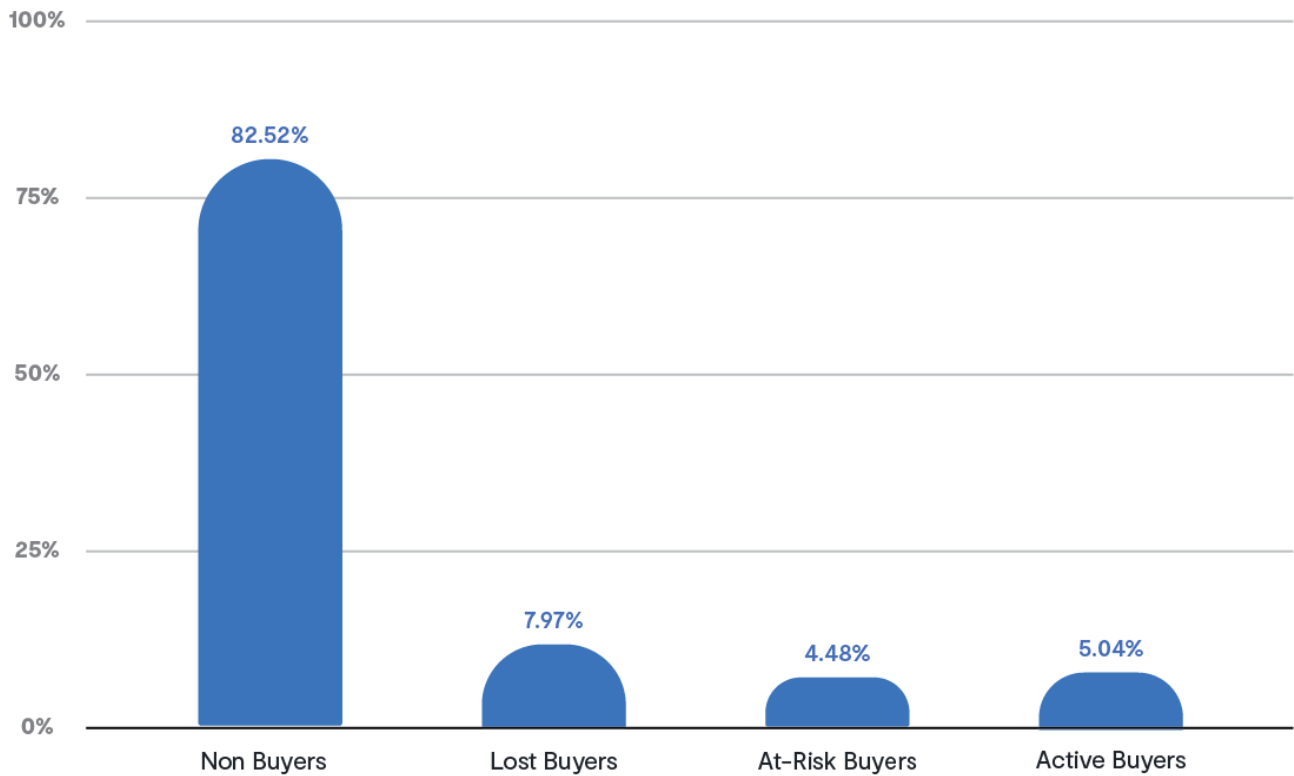
Understanding lifecycle stage allows retailers to add value for customers based on unique needs at certain points in time. For example, this type of breakdown allows retailers to save at-risk customers with “come back” messaging and offers. It also helps retailers time product recommendations strategically to keep active buyers in their normal buying cycle.

Critically, it's important to use a predictive lifecycle model to capture each

customer's unique buying cadence rather than using static benchmarks that won't apply to everyone (e.g. if one customer regularly purchases every 30 days and another customer regularly purchases every 90 days, a static benchmark for becoming at-risk after no purchases in 45 days wouldn't apply evenly).

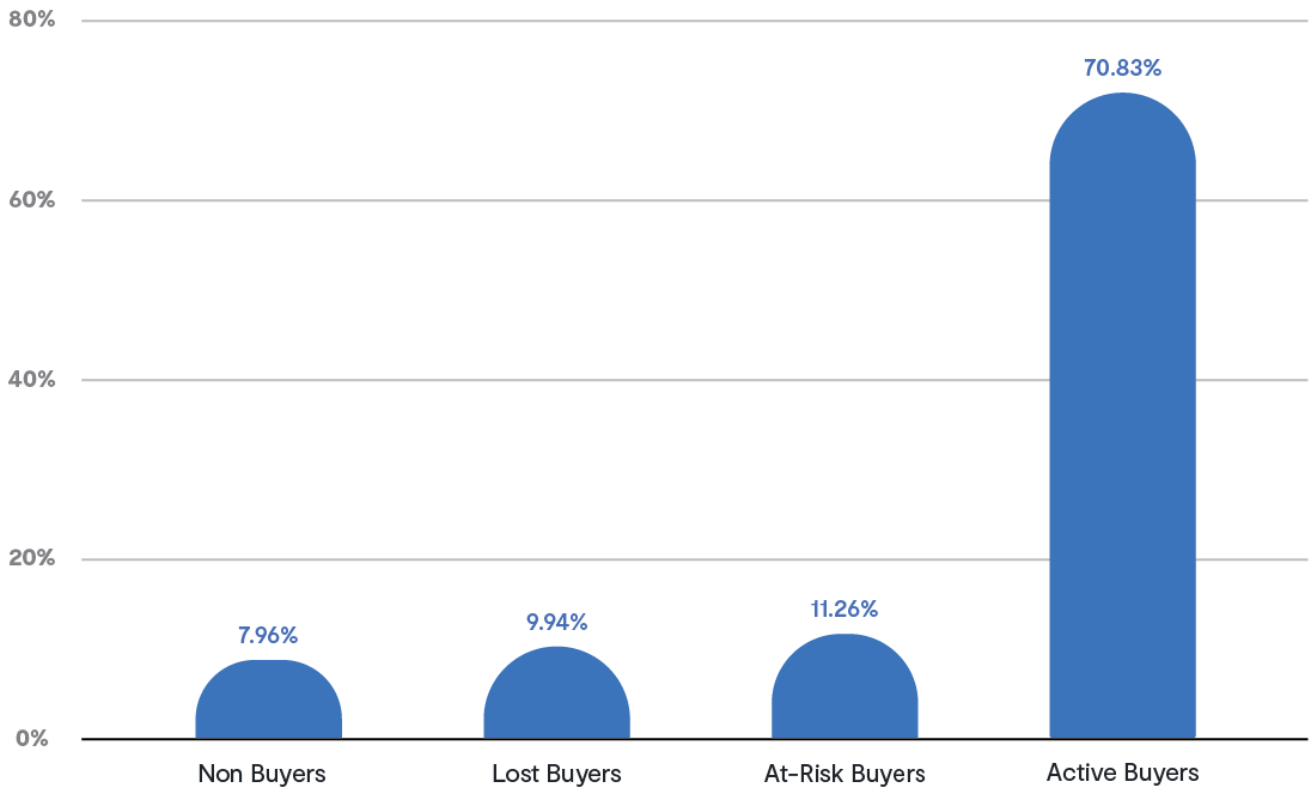
Using a predictive lifecycle model, on average, 95% of retailers' customers have fallen out of an active buying state or have yet to make a purchase.

CUSTOMER DISTRIBUTION BY LIFECYCLE STAGE



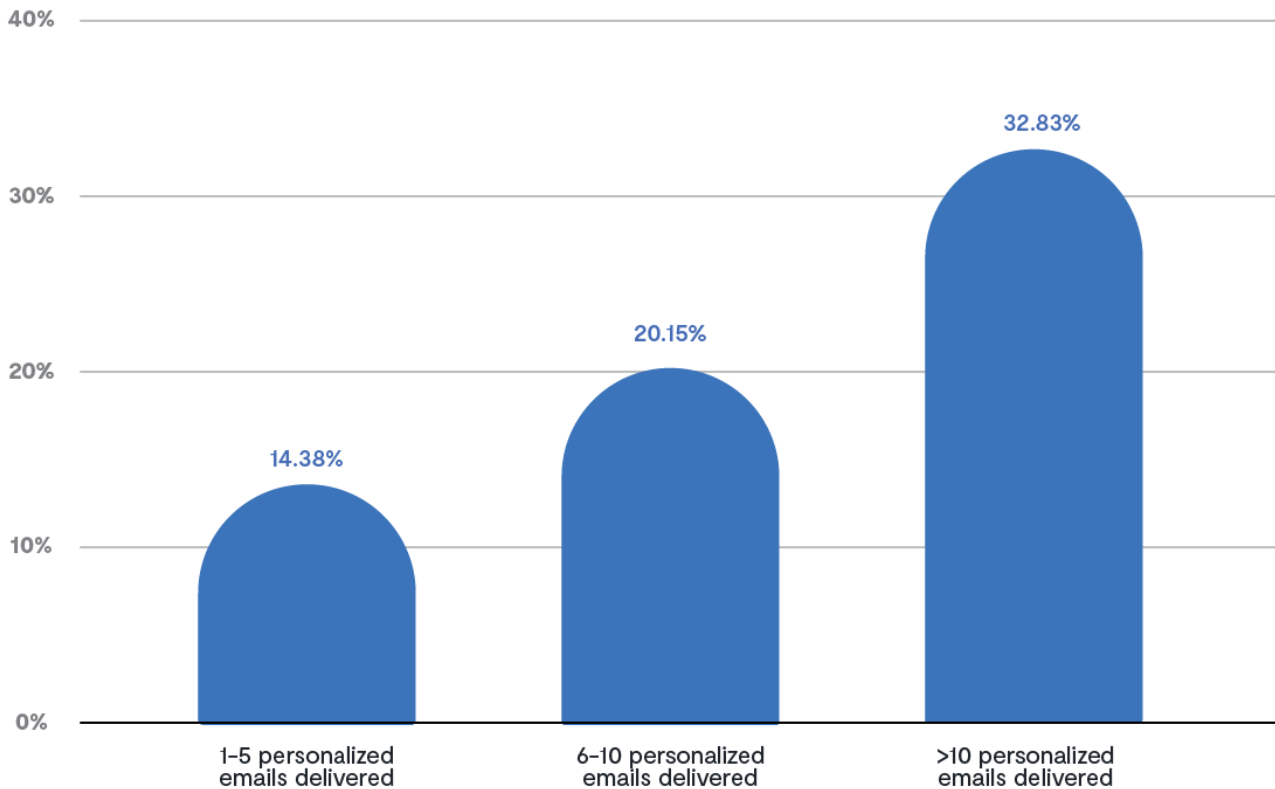
The good news is that the majority (70.83%) of predicted lifetime value (based on signals that evaluate future spend like frequency of site visits and browsing history), lies with those active customers. The bad news is that 29.17% of that future value lies with at-risk, lost and non buyers.

CUSTOMER LIFETIME VALUE DISTRIBUTION BY LIFECYCLE STAGE



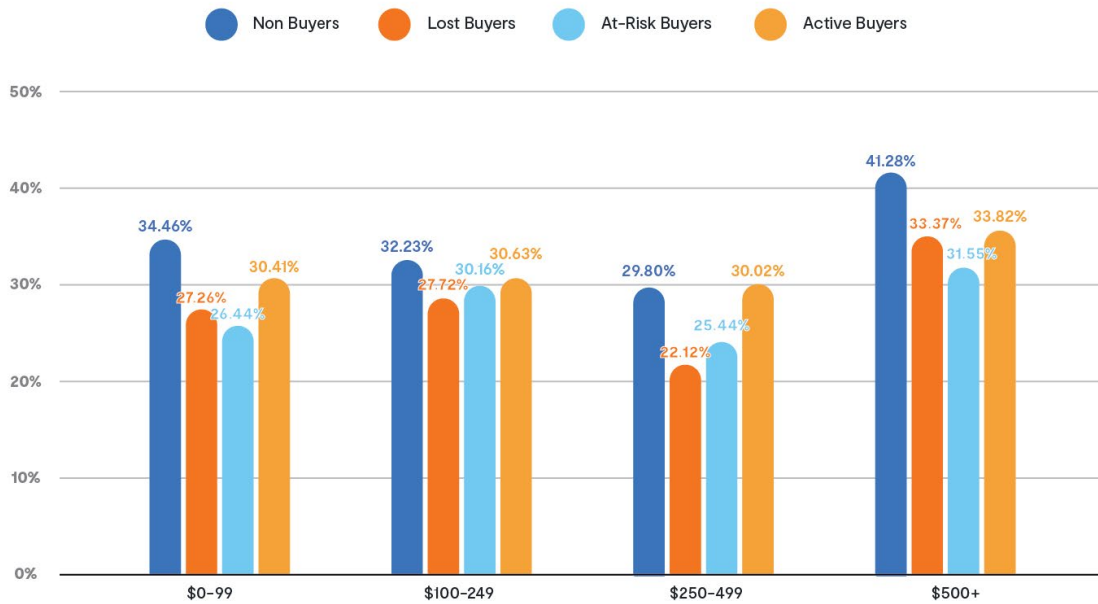
Converting at-risk and lost buyers into active buyers presents enormous opportunities for retailers, since over 20% of potential customer lifetime value sits with this group of shoppers and since retaining these customers and growing their loyalty over time is less expensive than acquiring new customers. One of the best ways to save these customers is through personalized outreach, and our data indicates that the more personalized outreach these shoppers receive, the more likely they are to make a purchase.

PERCENT OF AT-RISK AND LOST BUYERS CONVERTED TO ACTIVE BUYERS BASED ON NUMBER OF PERSONALIZED EMAILS DELIVERED

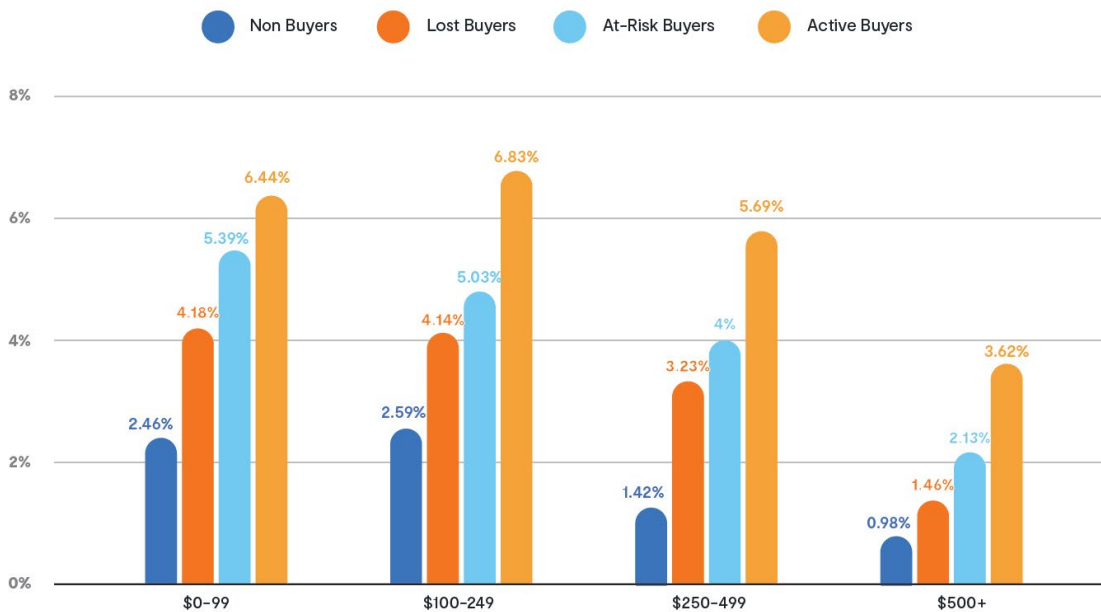


While 14.38% of at-risk and lost customers who received 1-5 personalized emails from retailers converted to active buyers, this number more than doubled for customers who received more than 10 personalized emails. This data underscores the value of personalization within email marketing, as it is that detail that helps retailers stand out in crowded inboxes and improve the product discovery experience for shoppers. The following data illustrates the value of using personalized emails to entice these at-risk and lost customers to begin engaging with emails and, ultimately, purchase again.

CLICK-TO-OPEN RATE BASED ON LIFECYCLE STAGE



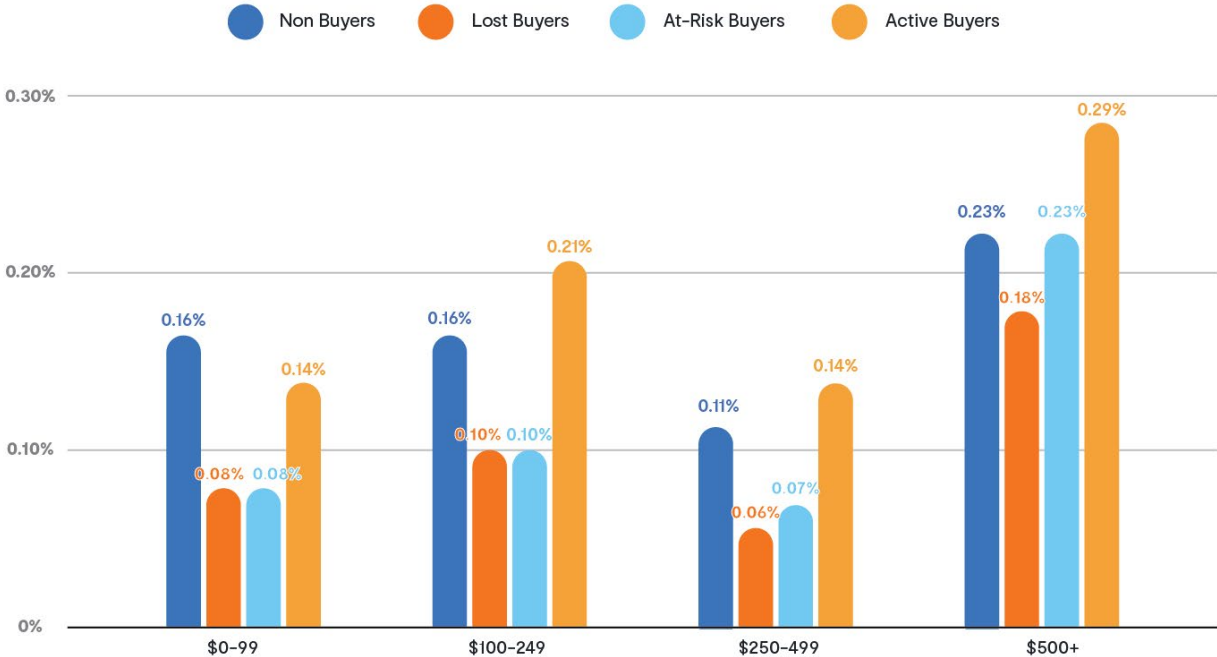
CLICK-TO-CONVERSION RATE BASED ON LIFECYCLE STAGE



Unsurprisingly, active buyers deliver some of the highest rates of email engagement across the board and consistently deliver the highest click-to-conversion rates. Interestingly, non buyers deliver similar or higher click-to-open rates than active buyers for retailers of varying average order values. We can attribute this trend to the product discovery experience, which occurs as shoppers evaluate new retailers and their products before buying. This discovery is particularly pronounced for higher priced goods, as we see the biggest difference in click-to-open rate between non and active buyers for retailers with an average order value over \$500.

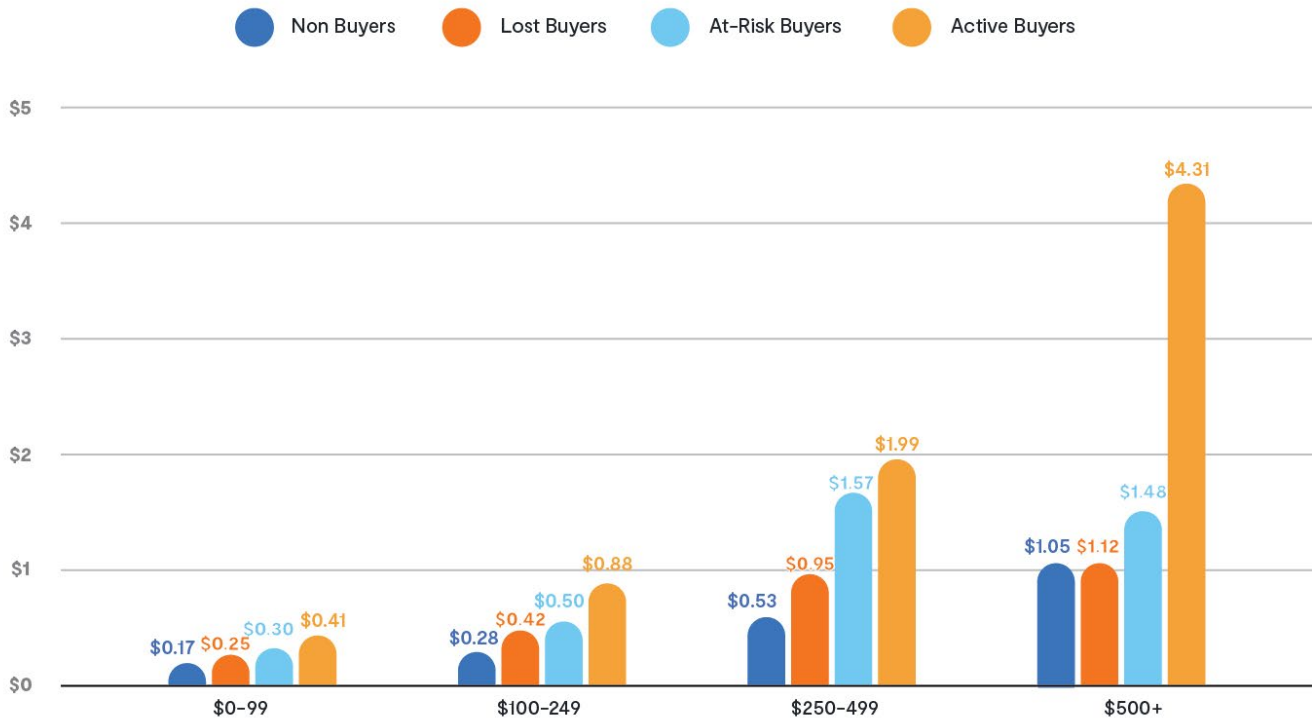
Additionally, even though non buyers are more likely to open and click on emails than past buyers that are at-risk or lost, once those at-risk and lost customers do click on emails, they are more likely to convert. This trend occurs because it is easier for retailers to retain customers than it is for them to acquire new ones. And as earlier data indicates, retailers can continue to increase this engagement and ultimate purchase behavior from at-risk and lost buyers by sending more personalized emails.

UNSUBSCRIBE RATE BASED ON LIFECYCLE STAGE



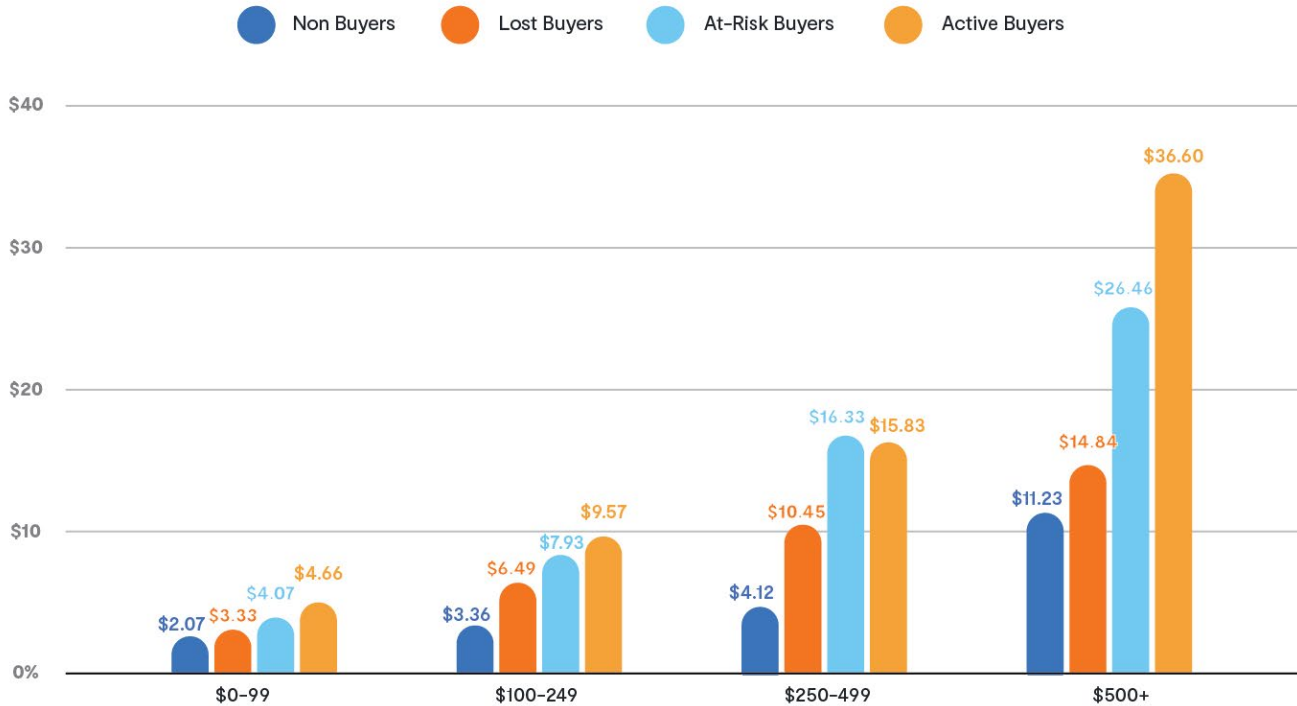
Given the high level of engagement from active buyers, at first glance it's surprising to see this same group unsubscribes at the highest rates. However, this trend supports the previous finding in this report that **post purchase** emails (which go exclusively to active buyers) and **welcome** emails (which typically go to active buyers and non buyers, who also deliver some of the highest unsubscribe rates) receive the most unsubscribes.

REVENUE PER EMAIL BASED ON LIFECYCLE STAGE



Active buyers deliver the highest revenue per email across the board, doing so with a particularly large margin at higher average order values. Additionally, at-risk and lost buyers deliver a higher revenue per email than non buyers for most retail verticals. This trend supports the findings in the previous section that the more times shoppers purchase, the more likely they are to spend more per purchase.

REVENUE PER CLICK BASED ON LIFECYCLE STAGE



Revenue per click metrics follow the same trend as revenue per email metrics with the exception of retailers with an average order value between \$250-499. These retailers actually see a higher revenue per click from at-risk buyers than they do from active buyers, indicating the value of getting these previously lapsed shoppers to re-engage by not just opening an email, but clicking on it as well. Once again, the best way to achieve that goal is through the use of highly personalized emails.

Conclusion

Email has solidified its position as the most valuable digital channel for retail marketers, particularly as ongoing innovations in technology introduce new levels of intelligence to email that power modern marketing efforts like personalization.

As retail marketing teams continue to take advantage of these modern email marketing solutions, the benchmarks for measuring results have changed. Specifically, retail email benchmarks are no longer one-size-fits-all, and it's important for retailers to have highly nuanced benchmarks against which to measure their various targeted email campaigns. The data in this report should allow retailers to do just that, while also providing a guide for how to continue to grow email performance and revenue along with it.

Methodology

Bluecore's 2020 Retail Email Benchmark Report is based on data from more than 9.5 billion emails sent by a subset of Bluecore's eCommerce brands from March 2019 through February 2020. Bluecore chose to use this timeframe to avoid any unusual email activity as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on eCommerce beginning in March 2020.

The report focuses on 11 types of triggered emails as well as one-time batch sends, offering insight into results across the board as well as results based on factors like average order value, retail vertical, customer spend level, customer purchase history and customer lifecycle stage.

Glossary of Terms

TYPES OF EMAILS

Cart Abandonment

The cart abandonment email sends to shoppers who added products to their cart but didn't complete the purchase.

Product Abandonment

The product abandonment email sends to shoppers who viewed specific products and then leave your site without taking further action.

Search Abandonment

The search abandonment email sends to shoppers who search for a specific category or a specific product and then leave your site without taking further action.

Post Purchase

The post purchase email sends to shoppers following a purchase they made on your site.

Wishlist

The wishlist email sends to shoppers who have added an item to a wishlist without taking further action.

Welcome Emails

The welcome email sends to shoppers after they sign up to receive emails.

Price Decrease

The price decrease email sends to shoppers who have previously searched for, viewed, carted or have a predicted affinity toward but did not buy a product to alert them that the product or a similar one has gone on sale.

New Arrivals

The new arrivals email sends to shoppers who have previously purchased, browsed or have a predicted affinity toward a certain category when new arrivals are available in that category.

Best Sellers

The best sellers email sends to shoppers who have previously purchased, browsed or have a predicted affinity toward items that are recent best sellers.

Back in Stock

The back in stock email sends to shoppers who previously searched for, viewed, carted or have a predicted affinity toward products that were sold out but are now back in stock again and available for purchase.

Low Inventory

The low inventory email sends to shoppers who have previously searched for, viewed, carted or have a predicted affinity toward but did not buy a product when inventory for that product or similar ones are running low.

One-Time Sends

One-time sends cover any and all non-triggered emails. These might be full file batch emails or more targeted batch emails that go to a specific audience. They may or may not include dynamic product recommendations.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Open Rate

Total number of unique opens within five days of the email send time as a percentage of total sends.

$$\# \text{ Opens} / \# \text{ Sends} = \text{Open Rate (\%)}$$

Click Rate

Total number of clicks on links from individuals within five days of the email send time as a percentage of total sends.

$$\# \text{ Total Clicks} / \# \text{ Sends} = \text{Click Rate (\%)}$$

Conversion Rate

Total number of purchases made as a result of a given email within five days of the email send time as a percentage of total sends.

$$\# \text{ Purchases} / \# \text{ Sends} = \text{Conversion Rate (\%)}$$

Click-to-Open Rate

Total number of clicks on links in a given email as a percentage of the unique opens.

$$\# \text{ Total Clicks} / \# \text{ Unique Opens} = \text{CTOR (\%)}$$

Click-to-Conversion Rate

Total number of purchases made as a result of clicking through a given email expressed as a percentage of total clicks.

$$\# \text{ Purchases} / \# \text{ Total Clicks} = \text{CTR (\%)}$$

Unsubscribe Rate

Total number of individuals who unsubscribe through a given email as a percentage of total sends.

$$\# \text{ Unsubscribes} / \# \text{ Sends} = \text{Unsubscribe Rate (\%)}$$

Revenue Per Email

Total revenue generated through emails using a five day attribution window.

$$\text{Total Revenue} / \# \text{ Sends} = \text{RPE}$$

Revenue Per Click

Total revenue generated through total clicks in an email using a five day attribution window.

$$\text{Total Revenue} / \# \text{ Total Clicks} = \text{RPC}$$

