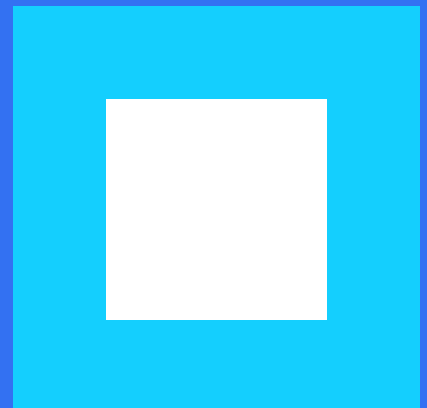


# Mobile Lifecycle Benchmarks: Engagement

Understanding **The Power**  
of **Repeat Customer**  
**Interactions**



# Instill a habit.

That's what brands try to do with their mobile app customers — keep them coming back because of the usefulness, convenience and, with any luck, sheer delightfulness of the app experience. It's the overall challenge of Engagement, which is the longest and most critical phase of the mobile app lifecycle.

**What constitutes a “habit” varies by app monetization type and category** — checking your stock portfolio has a different rhythm from ordering fast food — but it comes down to the number and length of visits during a defined period.

The Engagement phase can't begin until the customer activates their account. The [Activation](#) phase allows you to start to understand customer preferences. Typically, activation occurs within the first 30 days after download, if it occurs at all. If a customer activates, they've seen enough potential in the app's usefulness not only to download it but also to identify themselves, opt-in for notifications and start providing their preferences. **The question is, then, will they keep coming back? Interactions, perceptions, usefulness, convenience, experiences — now, it's all about engagement.**

Engagement problems can arise due to suboptimal interactions in the app, changes in customer needs or even changes in brand perception. Airship's research found that the [top reasons](#) customers delete an app include too many in-app ads (30%), expectations of the app not met (25%), confusing, broken or slow experiences (19%), too many notifications or in-app messages (18%) and replaced with a better app (18%). The antidote for customers abandoning or deleting the app is high-quality engagement.

In this ebook, we show engagement performance across industries based on three core metrics. Then, we summarize the characteristics of high performers revealed by these metrics. Finally, we explain how you can emulate high performers to improve your customers' progression through the engagement phase of the lifecycle.

## Top Reasons Customers Delete an App

**30%**

Too many  
in-app ads

**25%**

Expectations  
NOT met

**19%**

Confusing, broken  
or slow  
experiences

**18%**

Too many  
notifications  
or in-app  
messaging

**18%**

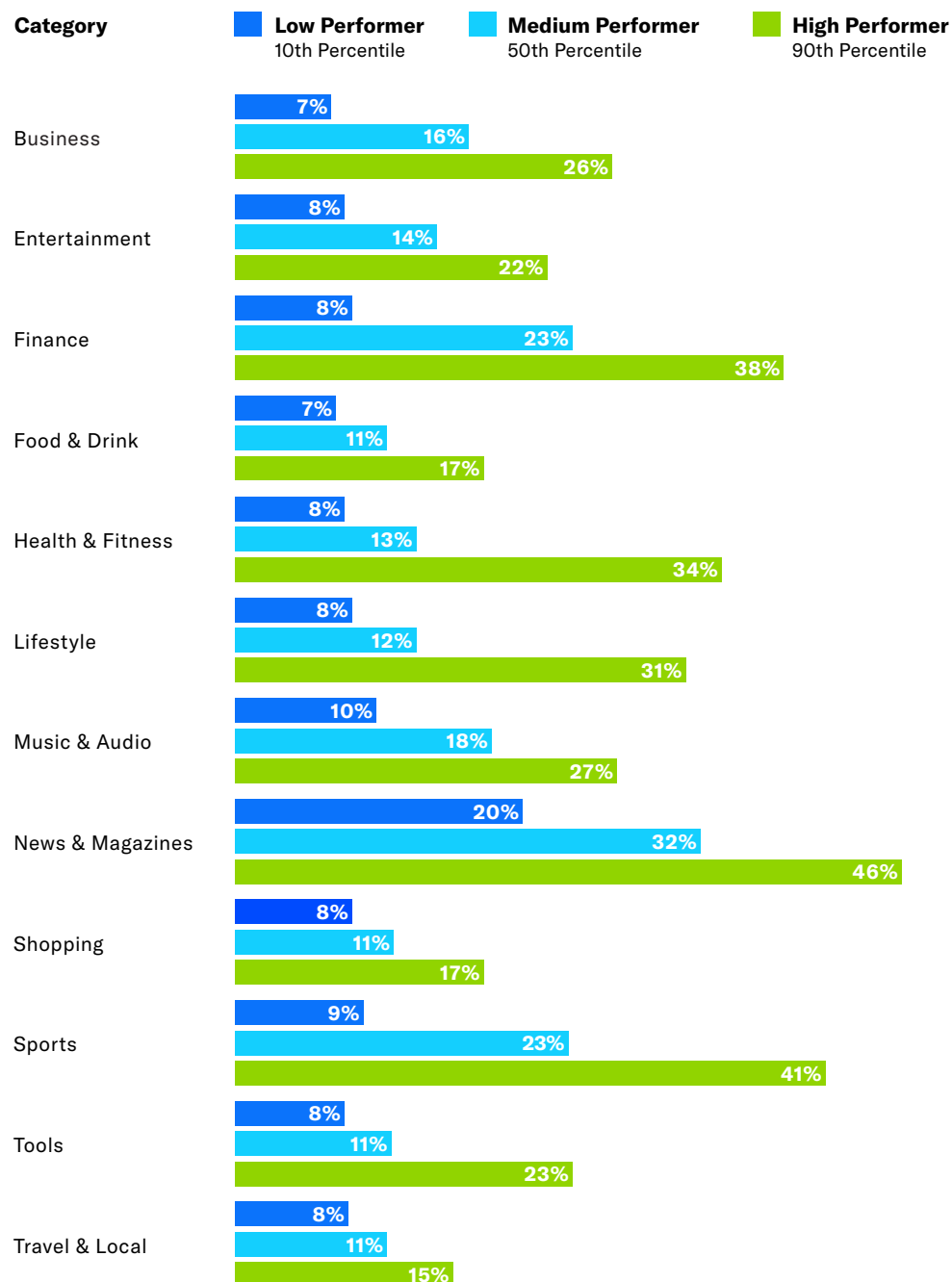
Replaced  
with a better app

# Engagement Performance Across Industries

Three core metrics for monitoring progress in the engagement phase are **engagement score**, **sessions per active user** (we define “active user” as a device that has had an app session) and **session length**. The following engagement results, organized by app store category, distinguish high, medium and low performance.

## Engagement Score

This ratio of Daily Active Users (DAU) to Monthly Active Users (MAU) measures how many monthly active users return daily. The higher your engagement score, the more often your active users are returning to your app.



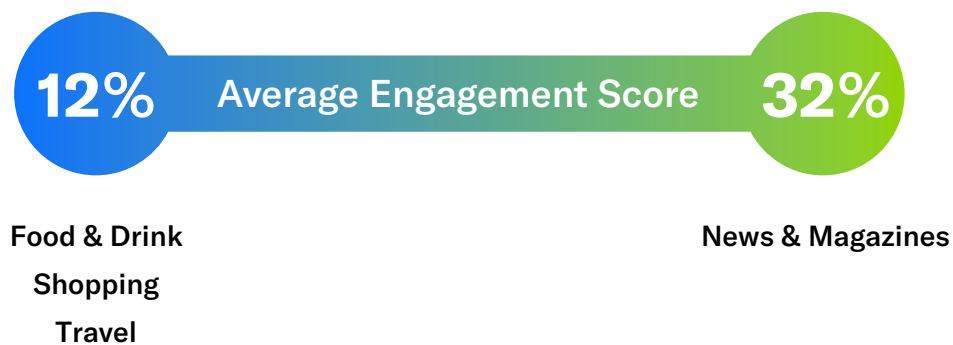
## Sample Calculations

For example - if you have 25 DAU & 100 MAU, your Engagement Score is 25%.

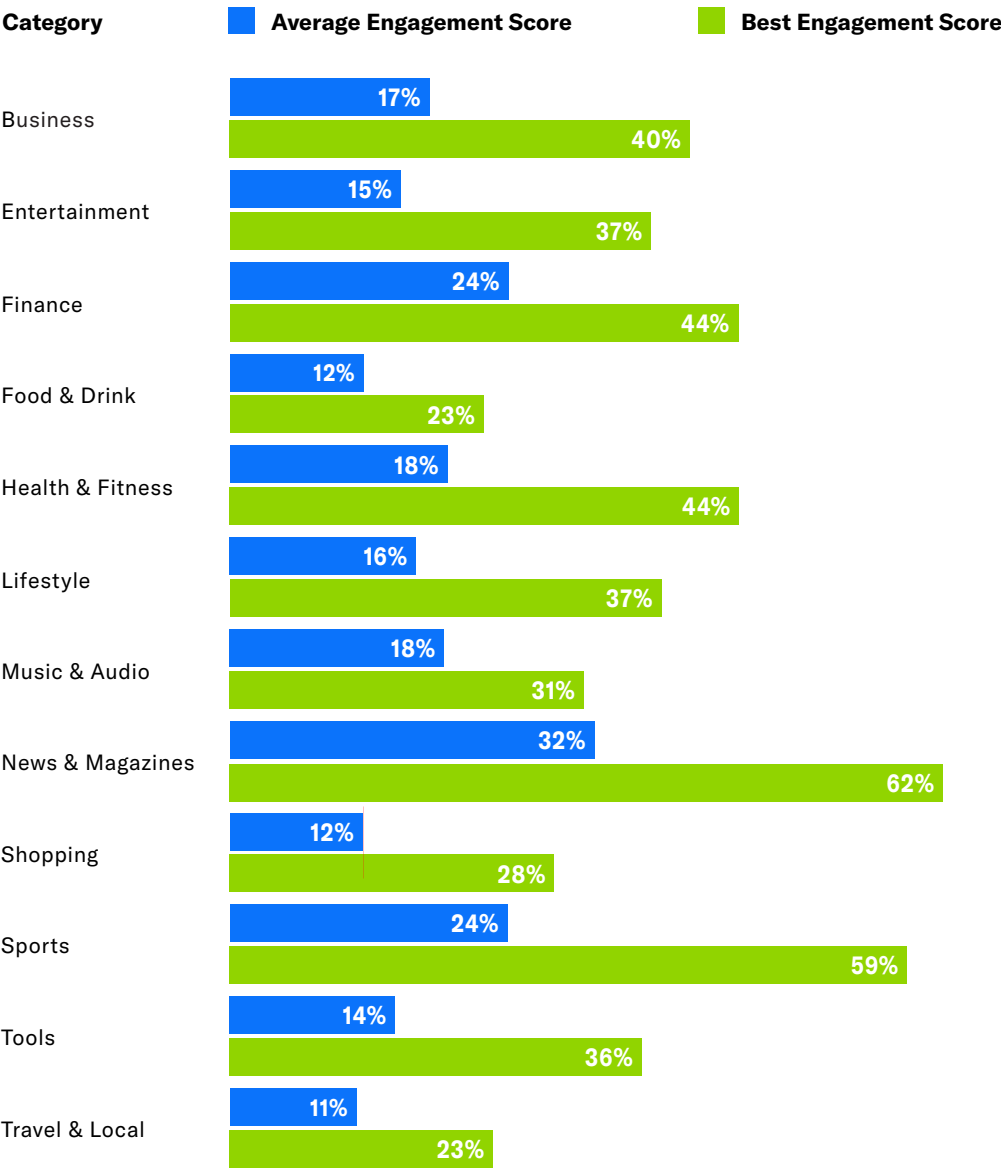
$$25 \text{ DAU} / 100 \text{ MAU} = \mathbf{25\% \text{ Engagement Score}}$$

Engagement Score expectations vary widely across categories. [Health & Fitness](#) brands want to encourage customers to return frequently, often daily, whereas Shopping brands anticipate less frequent customer engagement.

Finance and News & Magazine apps have the most success getting customers to return to the app throughout the month. They encourage habits like balance-checking and reading the morning news, which initiates a recurring interaction pattern within the app.

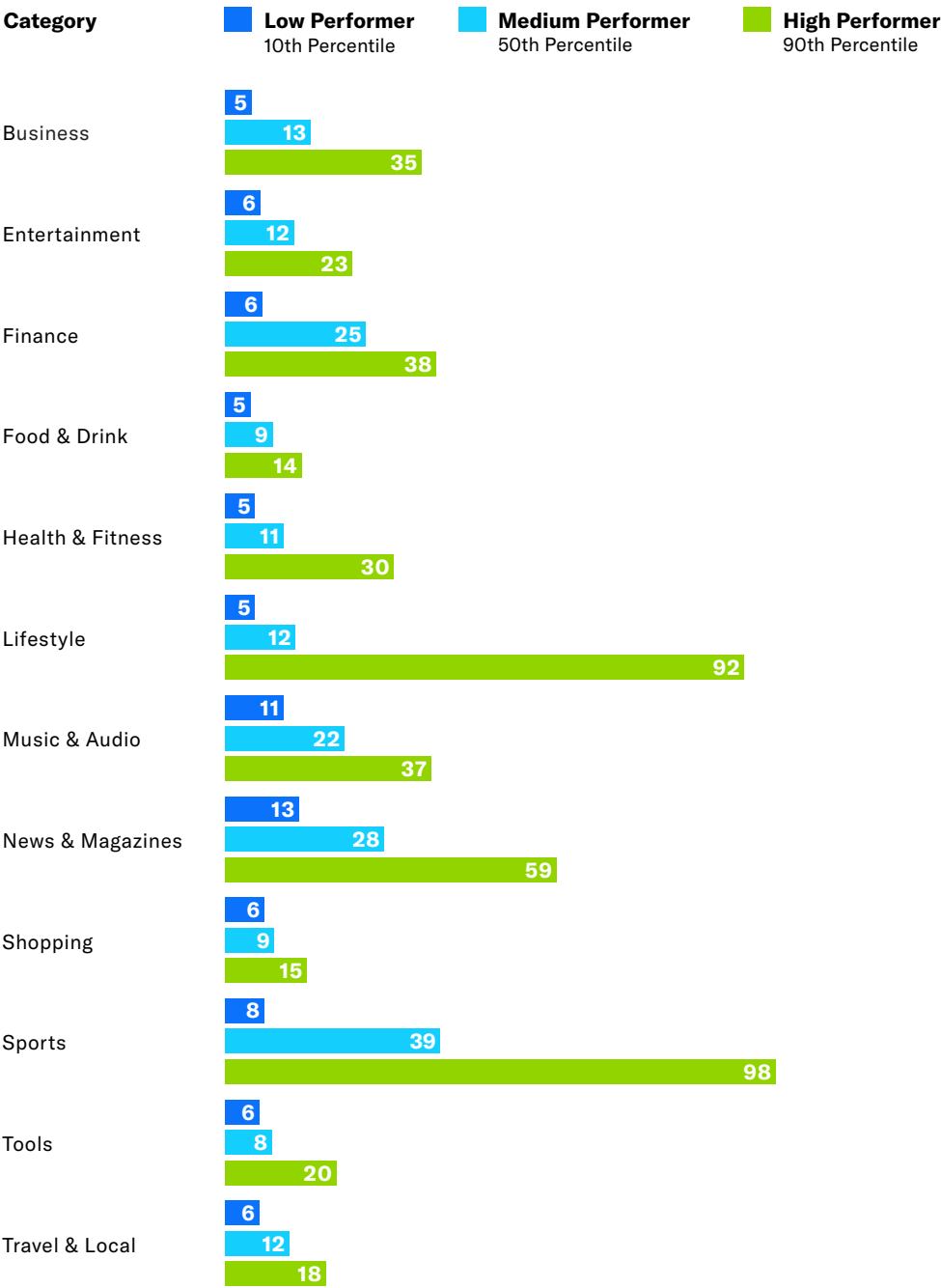


# Engagement Score Expectations



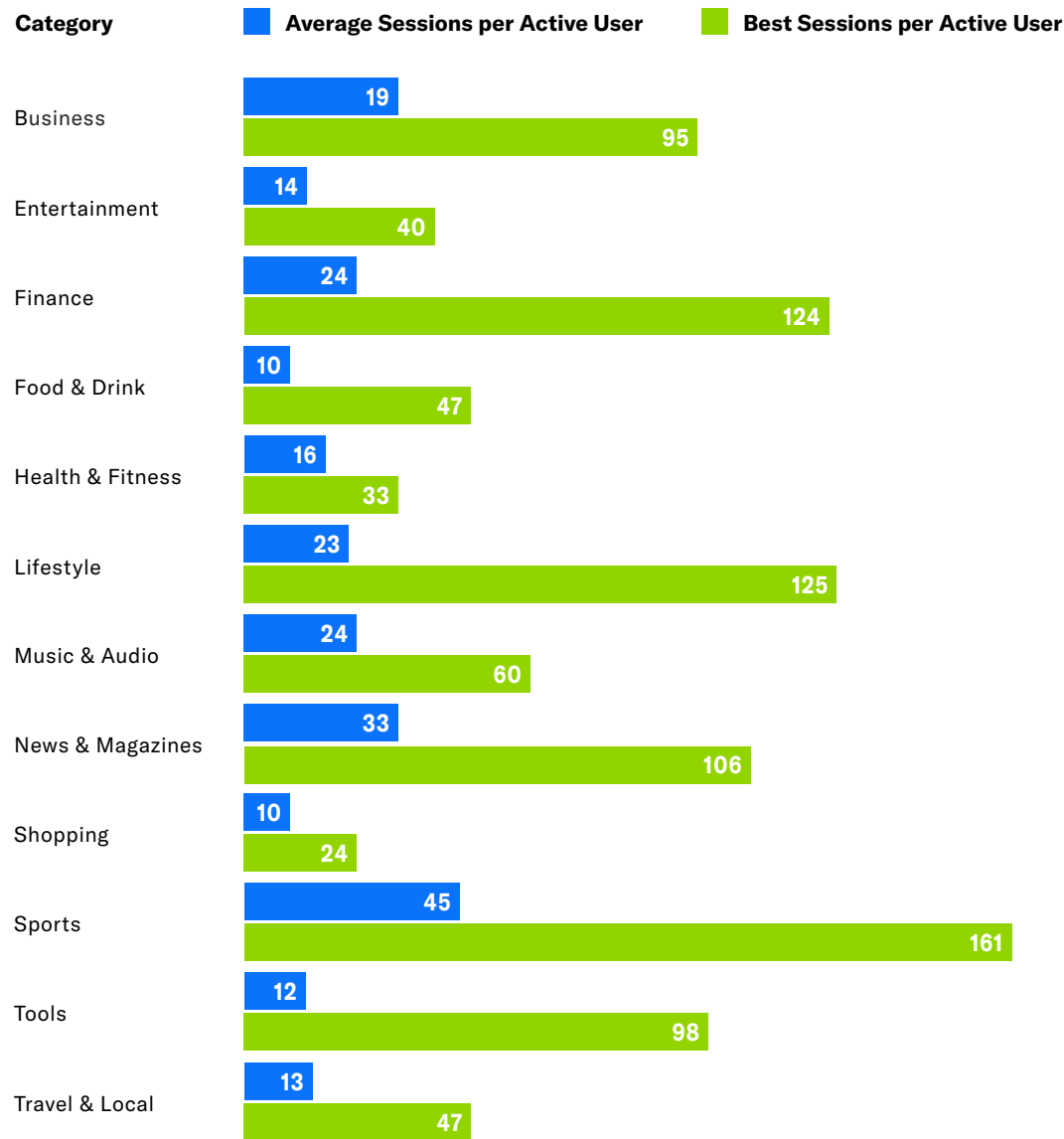
### Sessions per Active User

This measure shows the average number of sessions for active app users within a month, calculated as Total App Sessions / Total Active Users.



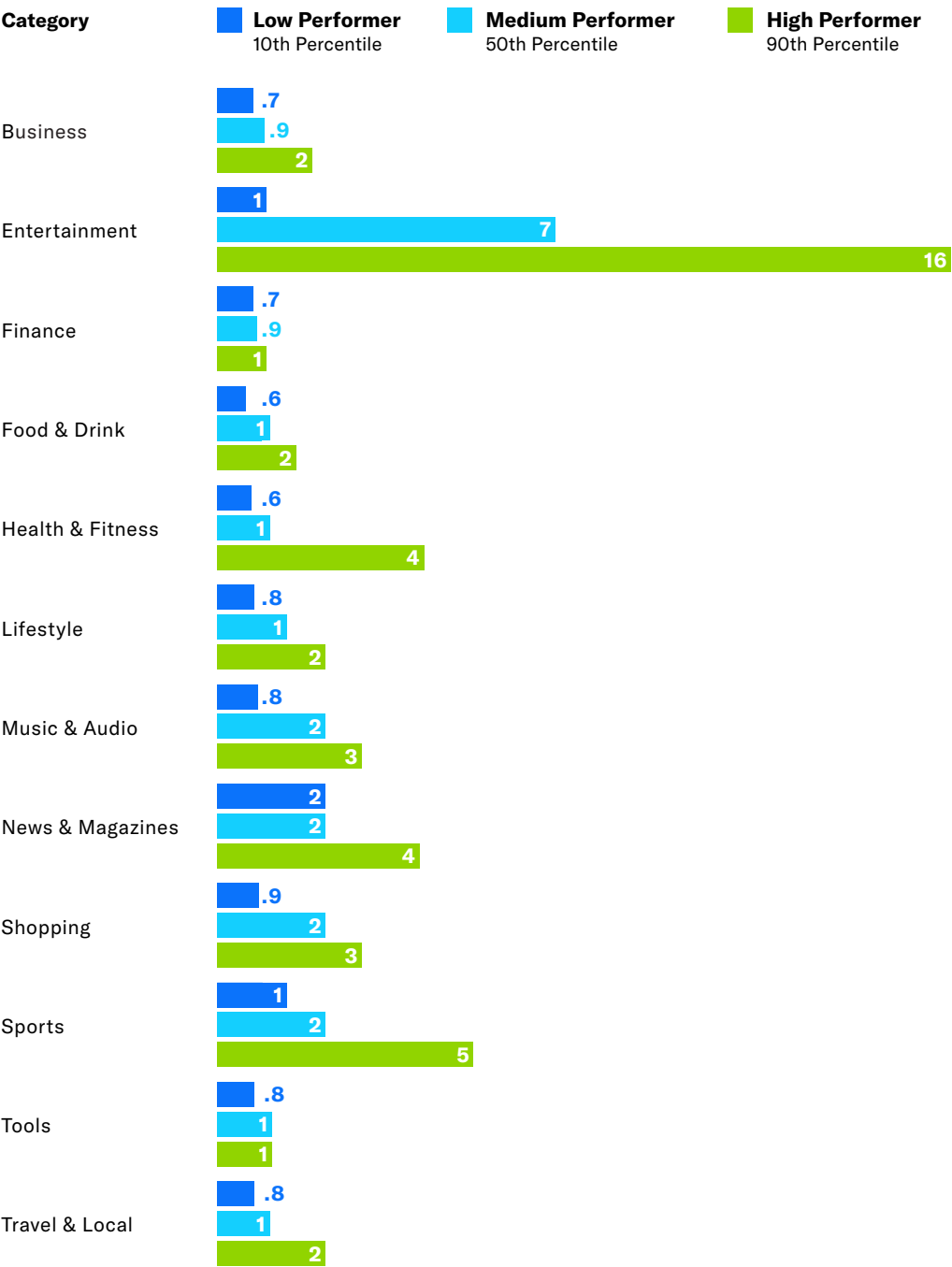
# Sessions per Active User

Results of this metric vary widely across app categories, from less than 10 (Shopping) to nearly 45 (Sports).



# Session Length

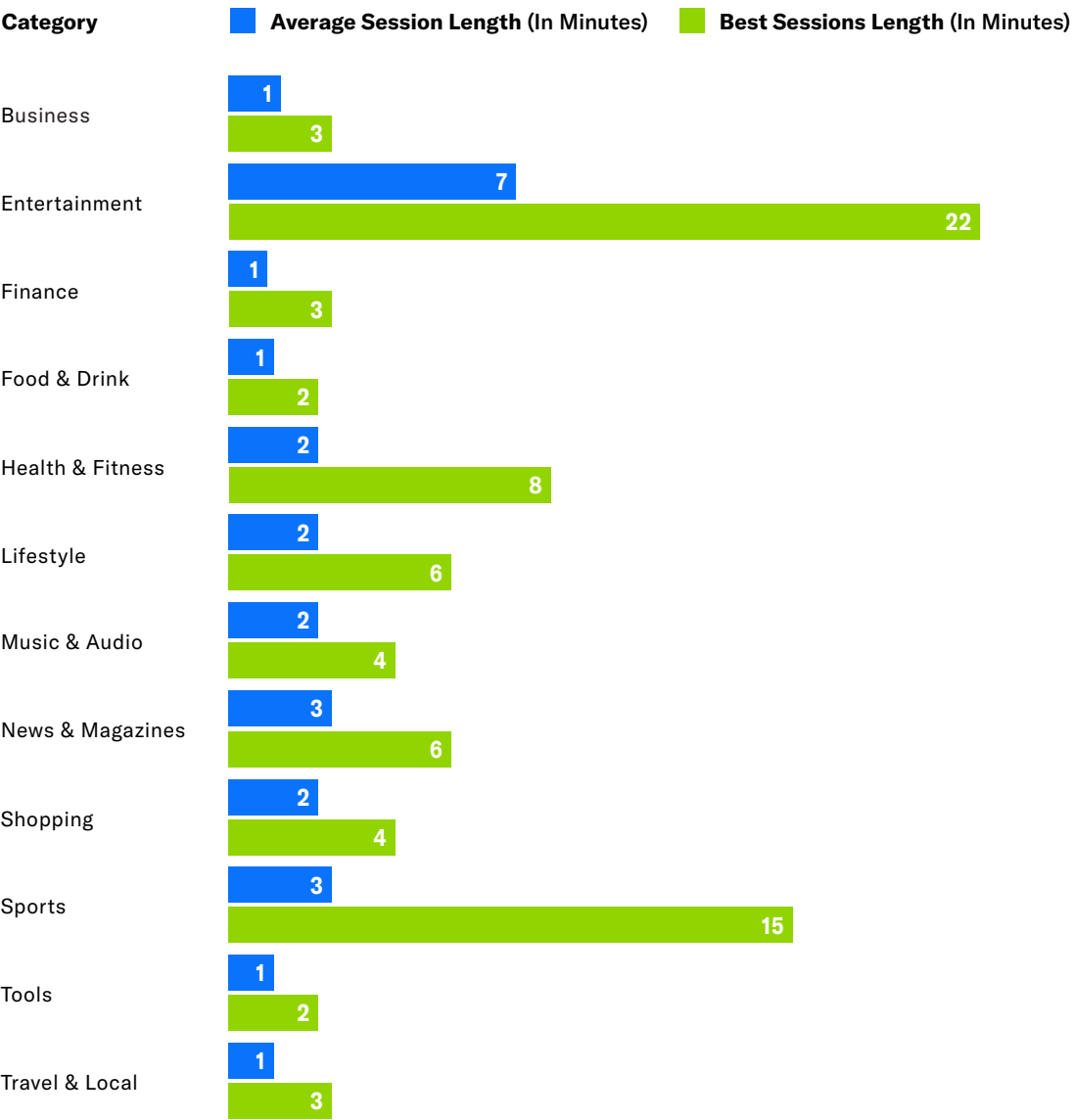
This measures the average time users spend in an “active” app session — that is, when the app is running in the foreground. Each app session has a start and finish. Session length is measured by subtracting the start time from the finish time.





# Session Length Expectations

Expectations on session length depend on the monetization type of each app and the utility they provide to customers. Banking apps want customers to finish tasks quickly (so do customers). Shopping and media apps want customers to spend more time exploring and consuming content.



# Characteristics of High Performers

Apps that are high performers in the engagement phase have 3 things in common:

- **First, their engagement score is above their category average by 13%. This means customers return to the app more frequently within a month compared to other apps in their app store category.**
- **Second, their MAU growth is significant. High performers had a 4% higher increase in MAU than the average across all apps.**

4%

higher MAU growth

Finally, the number of sessions per active user exceeds their category average. High performers saw a 72% average increase in sessions per active user compared to their category average.

72%

average increase in sessions per active user

# Engagement in Action – Customer Spotlight

North America-based media company Warner Media focuses on the engagement stage of the customer lifecycle by getting the right message to the right user during March Madness™

## WarnerMedia

### Use Case:

Engaged customers consume more content. **By being strategic about who, when and where a customer receives a notification, Warner Media increased fans' time on the mobile app.** The media brand used predefined audience segments in combination with in-app messaging and push notifications to engage customers when it was time for bracket picks, game starts and must-see moments.

### Results:

**Warner Media drove a 28% increase in opens and a 25% increase in streaming time** among fans who engaged with push notifications, and they found these numbers doubled for fans who used Live Activities.

# How You Can Improve Your Engagement Performance

The engagement phase is the relationship-building phase of the mobile lifecycle. It's when high performers focus on driving traffic to the app, gathering preferences and delivering on the value proposition.

## Drive Traffic to the App

All brands need to drive traffic to their apps, but how frequently depends on the app category.

A banking brand wants to create a habit — ideally, a daily habit — of interaction with the app. That's realistic since bank customers need to know their balance, check recent transactions and pay bills several times a month. A quick-serve restaurant (QSR), on the other hand, will likely plan on less frequent interaction.

High-performing brands draw app traffic and establish their unique pattern of interaction in two ways: **direct action** and **brand awareness**. Brand awareness messaging helps remind customers about the value of a company in their lives without necessarily requesting any immediate action. For example, entertaining, educational or inspirational content. Direct action messages through push notifications, SMS and email provide specific, timely and actionable information. For example, a banking brand's low balance alert provides information and links to the app's transfer page so the customer can address low funds; a QSR brand typically sends an alert when an order is ready for pickup.

## The Goal is to Keep the Brand at the Top of Customers' Minds ...

Brand awareness is spread through various channels, **inside** and **outside** the app. The goal is to keep the brand at the top of customers' minds. Many brands mention the app in their TV commercials and social media accounts and promote it on store signage.

## Gather (More) Preferences

The preference-gathering that begins in the activation phase continues in the engagement phase. As you learn about customers' behaviors, you should continue to ask for explicit preferences.

It's called **"progressive profiling"** because the process is incremental: the brand avoids bombarding the customer with too many preference questions up front but continues to gather information about what customers are interested in. As brands learn more about customers, they can segment and personalize content in a more targeted way.

Using explicit preferences not only peaks customer interest but also improves potential revenue. Twilio Segment found that customers [spend more \(38% on average\) when their experience is personalized](#).

## Reiterate the Value Proposition

**The engagement phase is about a continuous exchange of value between the brand and the customer.** The brand provides products or services that fulfill a customer's needs. Customers who perceive value in one of those products or services continue returning to the brand.

For example, imagine a grocery store app that allowed customers to add items from their previous shopping trips to the cart without searching for them again. This feature would be convenient for the customer, and the positive experience would make them more likely to return for their next grocery order.

To encourage repeat high-value actions, **brands must provide continuous value to the customer.** Continuous value depends on both the usefulness and convenience provided by the app and the app's ability to convey that value. Brands must reiterate their value proposition with the right messaging and in-app content to the right audiences. That requires targeting. When content is targeted, recurring value tends to be higher.

# Engagement in Action – Customer Spotlight

Driving customers to engage consistently takes work. Brands like Olio are improving their engagement rate by deploying in-app surveys with Airship.



“Olio is an app that lets people pass on food and household items to others nearby. **With over 7 million users and 120k tons of CO2 saved so far, it helps avoid waste by encouraging people to share or borrow instead of throwing things away or buying brand new,**” said Gareth Main, Chief Customer Officer at Olio.

“**Our mission is to drive behavior change at scale; for this, a deep understanding of users is crucial.** Airship has played an essential role in allowing us to build that understanding, enabling us to rapidly deploy in-app surveys without involving developers.

With consistently high completion rates, these surveys give us invaluable data at multiple points across the user lifecycle.”

Want to see how your app compares to others in your app category?

[Try Airship Now](#)

[Talk To An Expert](#)

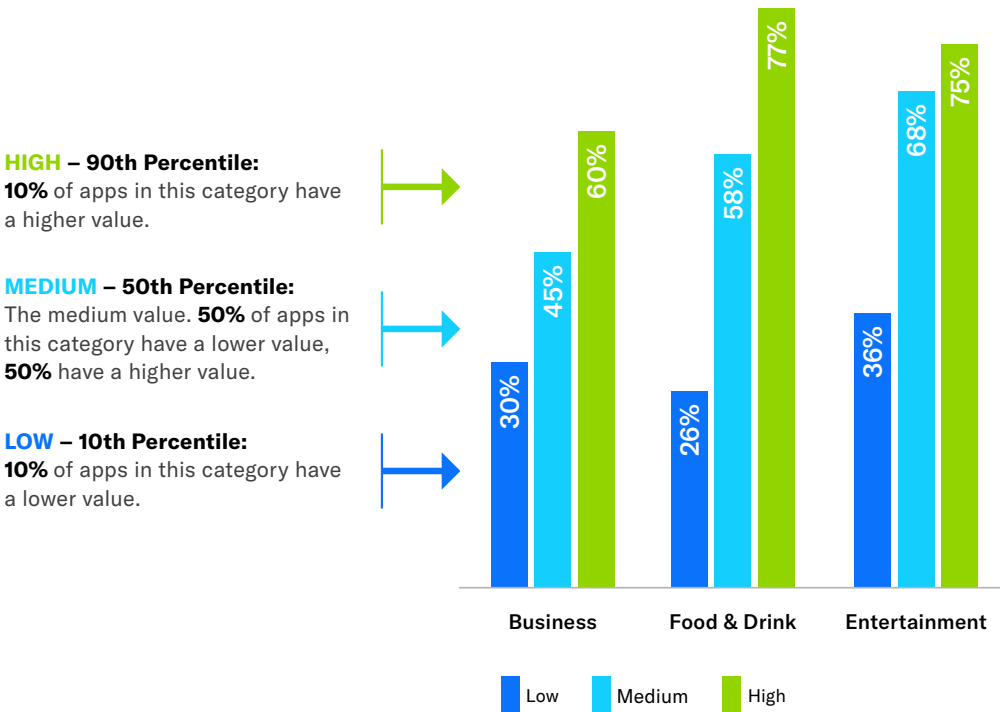
# Methodology

Airship analyzed customer data in aggregate of apps with at least 100,000 monthly active users from January to June 2023. That group included approximately 2.6 billion devices across 12 app categories. Benchmarks are based on calculations across the entire 6-month evaluation period.

The benchmarks were broken down into high (90th), medium (50th), and low percentiles (10th). The 50th percentile is the median for the app store category. The 10th percentile number means that 10% of the apps had a lower value, while the 90th percentile means 10% of the apps had a higher value. This provides additional context for businesses to understand high- and low-performance, rather than just average or median rates.

## Benchmark for High, Medium & Low Performers

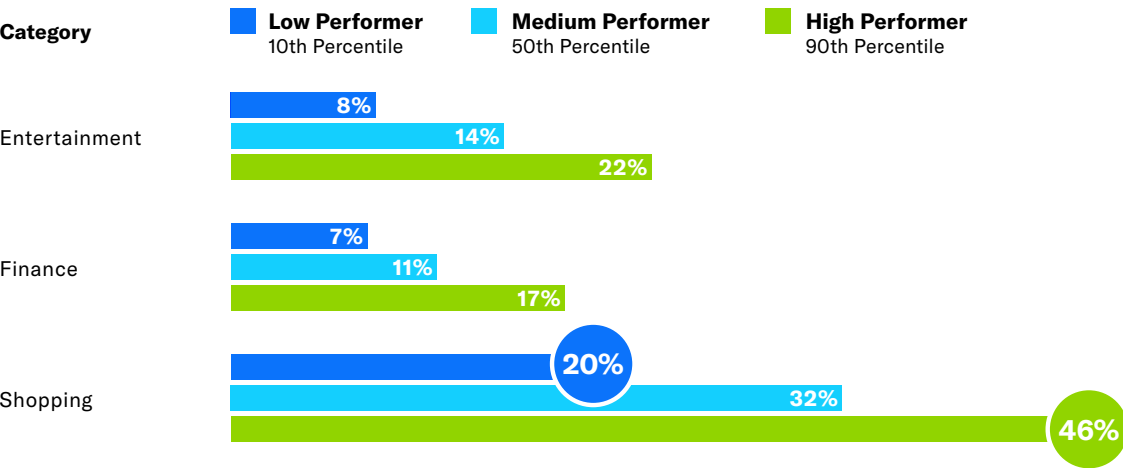
To offer performance benchmarks, we reported results on the 90th, 50th and 10th percentiles for all apps and verticals.



Looking at the graph below showing **Engagement Score**, if you are a Shopping brand with a 46% (or higher) engagement score, you compare to the top 10% of apps in this study and can feel great that you have some of the best engagement within your app store category.

However, using that same chart, if your Engagement Score is less than 20%, you're in the bottom 10% for your app store category, so there's significant room for improvement.

### Engagement Score





# About Airship

At the dawn of mobile apps, Airship powered the first commercial push notification messages and then expanded its data-led approach to all re-engagement channels (mobile wallet, SMS, email), app UX experimentation, no-code native app experience creation and App Store Optimization (ASO).

With the Airship App Experience Platform and Gummicube’s ASO technology and expertise, brands now have a complete set of solutions to optimize the entire mobile app customer journey — from the point of discovery to loyalty — driving greater value for everyone involved.



Having powered trillions of mobile app interactions for thousands of global brands, **Airship is proud to be at the forefront of what has become the digital center of customer experience, loyalty and monetization – mobile app experience (MAX).**

No one knows more, does more, or cares more than Airship when it comes to helping brands master MAX.

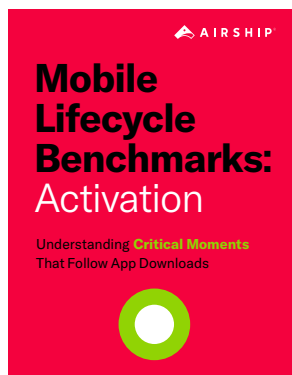


## About this Report

This benchmark report was created by Airship’s Customer Insights team, led by [Jennie Lewis](#), a mobile experience researcher who helps brands with guidance and economic impact for their mobile strategies. Lewis also created the Mobile Lifecycle Measurement Framework, which is a series of metrics that analyze app activation and engagement.

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Airship Lifecycle Benchmarks-Engagement 2025-EN\_02152025

# Recommended Reading



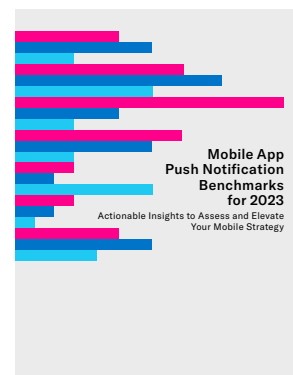
This report, the first of its kind for mobile marketing, is designed to help your organization understand **critical benchmarks associated with the Activation phase of the customer lifecycle.**

[READ NOW](#)



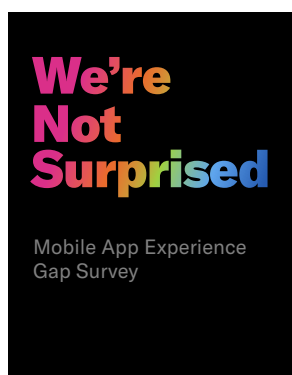
Consumers are downloading more apps than ever, **but the leading reasons for ongoing use might surprise brands** — Airship's 2023 mobile consumer survey.

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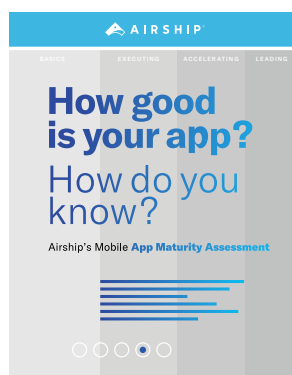
Airship analyzed more than 665 billion push notifications to more than 2.5 billion users across 13 verticals — **the most robust benchmark data available anywhere.**

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**7 Operational Gaps** limit the value companies gain from mobile apps.

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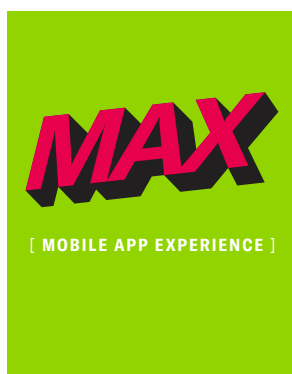
**Mastering MAX™ is a step-by-step progression**, from implementing basic elements to developing advanced app experiences. Taking Airship's Maturity Assessment is your first step.

[READ NOW](#)



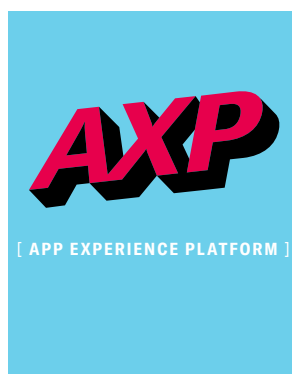
Opportunity often hides behind fear, uncertainty and doubt, and 2024 seems to layer it on. Airship spoke with 20 business leaders about **trends critical for the year ahead.**

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Top brands understand there's a new leading practice they need to master. We call it **Mobile App Experience – MAX** for short.

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The Airship **App Experience Platform**. Built through engagement with millions of your most important customers.

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**8 privacy principles and practices** for building better Mobile App Experiences.

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