ADDICT MOBILE

WEB-TO-APP:

Turning Web Intent into App Performance



WHITE PAPER

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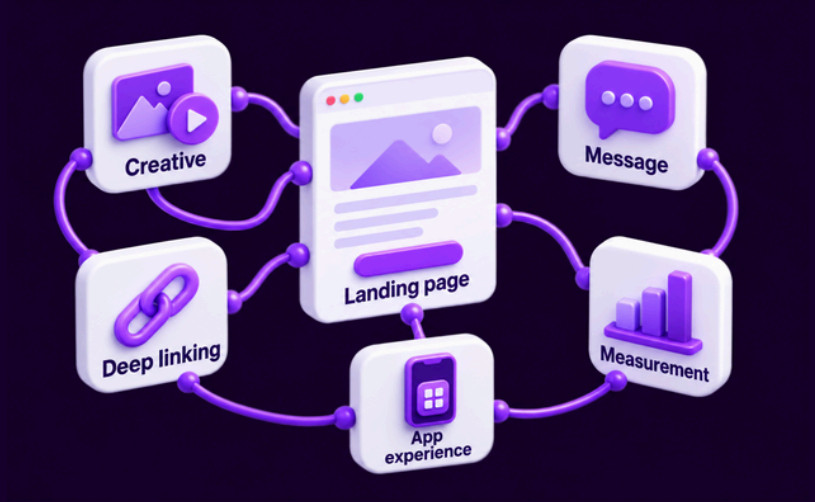
Introduction

Acquisition journeys are no longer linear. A user might discover a brand on social media, continue their research on the web, and ultimately convert in the app.
At the same time, privacy restrictions are making signals more fragmented and harder to leverage.

In this context, systematically sending users straight to the app store isn't always the right approach. Some offers need more explanation, some user intent needs to be better understood, and some users need more context before downloading.

> **Web-to-app creates that space between the ad and the app.**

But simply adding a landing page isn't enough to improve performance. Creative, messaging, measurement, deep linking, and the in-app experience all need to work together.

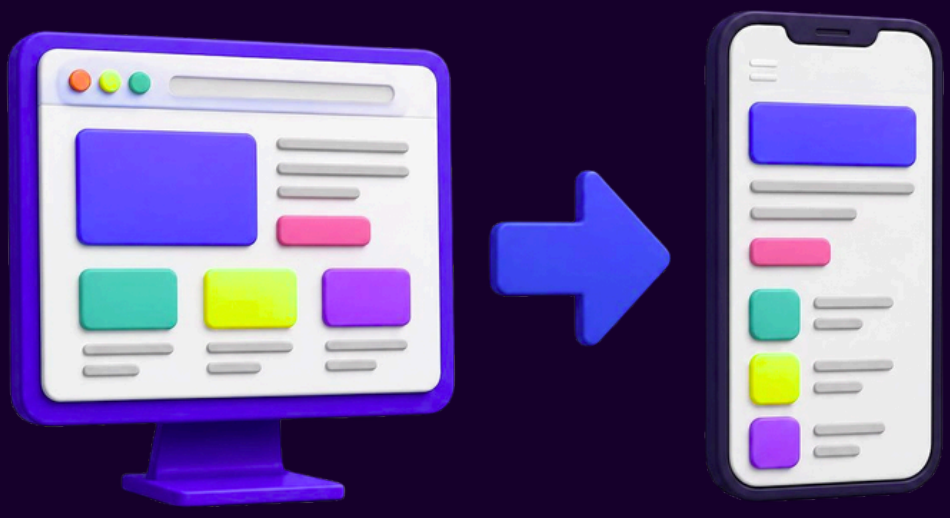


The goal isn't simply to drive more installs, but to attract users who activate, convert, and stay.

The question is when this journey makes sense and how to build it to generate more value.

PART 1

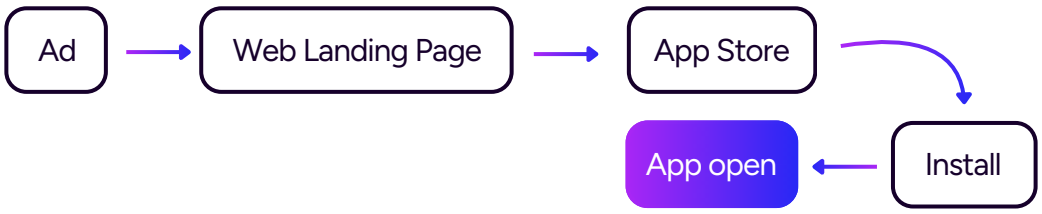
What Is Web-to-App?



What Is Web-to-App ?

Web-to-app refers to a journey that starts on the web and continues in an app.

In paid acquisition, this means adding a web step between the ad and the app store:



The goal is no longer just to drive an install. The landing page can present the value proposition, prepare users for the app experience, and better qualify their intent before they download.

> **Web-to-app isn't about creating the shortest journey. It's about making each step more useful.**

Direct-to-App vs Web-to-App: Two Different Approaches

In a traditional app campaign, users go directly from the ad to the app store:



The journey is short and designed to maximize volume. The trade-off is that brands have little room to explain their message or understand user intent before the install.

Web-to-app takes a different approach: adding a step before the app store to better prepare users for what comes next.

Direct-to-app journey

- Shorter journey
- Focus on volume
- Messaging limited to the ad and app store
- Few signals before download

Web-to-app journey

- Additional web step
- Qualification before install
- More control over messaging and experience
- Actionable intent signals on the web

Friction as a Filter

Web-to-app deliberately adds an extra step. This means not every user who clicks on the ad will continue through to the install.

That friction only creates value if the landing page serves a clear purpose: explaining the offer, building interest, or giving users a concrete reason to continue in the app.

Useful friction can:

- provide necessary information
- reinforce the value proposition
- address a hesitation
- highlight a clear benefit
- prepare users for the expected action in the app

By contrast, a slow, generic landing page or one that doesn't match the ad doesn't qualify anything. It simply adds another obstacle to the journey.

In banking:

+75%

of users abandon an app after a single session, *most often because of friction in the experience or a disconnect with the initial promise (AppsFlyer).*

> **The trade-off is clear: accept a potential drop in immediate volume in exchange for users who have already shown stronger intent.**

That potential increase in quality then needs to be validated through post-install results: activation, conversion, retention, and value generated.

When Does Web-to-App Make Sense?

Web-to-app makes the most sense when the web step adds something the ad and app store can't provide on their own.

It is particularly relevant when:

- the offer needs more explanation before download
- the app provides a clear benefit or a smoother experience than the web
- the brand already has significant mobile web traffic
- the desired in-app action has high value: purchase, subscription, booking, or account creation

For example, retailer END already had significant web traffic. After deploying smart banners on its mobile site, it recorded a 44% increase in quarterly revenue and a 105% increase in installs (Branch):

+44%
increase in quarterly revenue

+105%
in installs

By contrast, adding a landing page brings little value if it simply repeats the ad or if the app gives users no clear reason to continue.



Key Takeaways

- Web-to-app adds a controlled web experience before the install.
- The web step can qualify intent, but only if it provides real value to the user.

PART 2

Why Web-to-App Changes the Game



Why Web-to-App Changes the Game

The value of web-to-app isn't the additional step itself, but what it makes possible before the install. It gives brands more ways to test, measure, and qualify users before they download the app.

Take Back Control of the Journey

App stores provide a standardized environment. Customization options exist, but remain limited by their formats and rules.

A landing page offers more flexibility. It can be tailored to a specific audience, campaign, or value proposition, without waiting for store approval every time something changes.

Brands can test:

- the value proposition and key messages
- the offer or incentive
- visuals
- CTA wording
- page structure



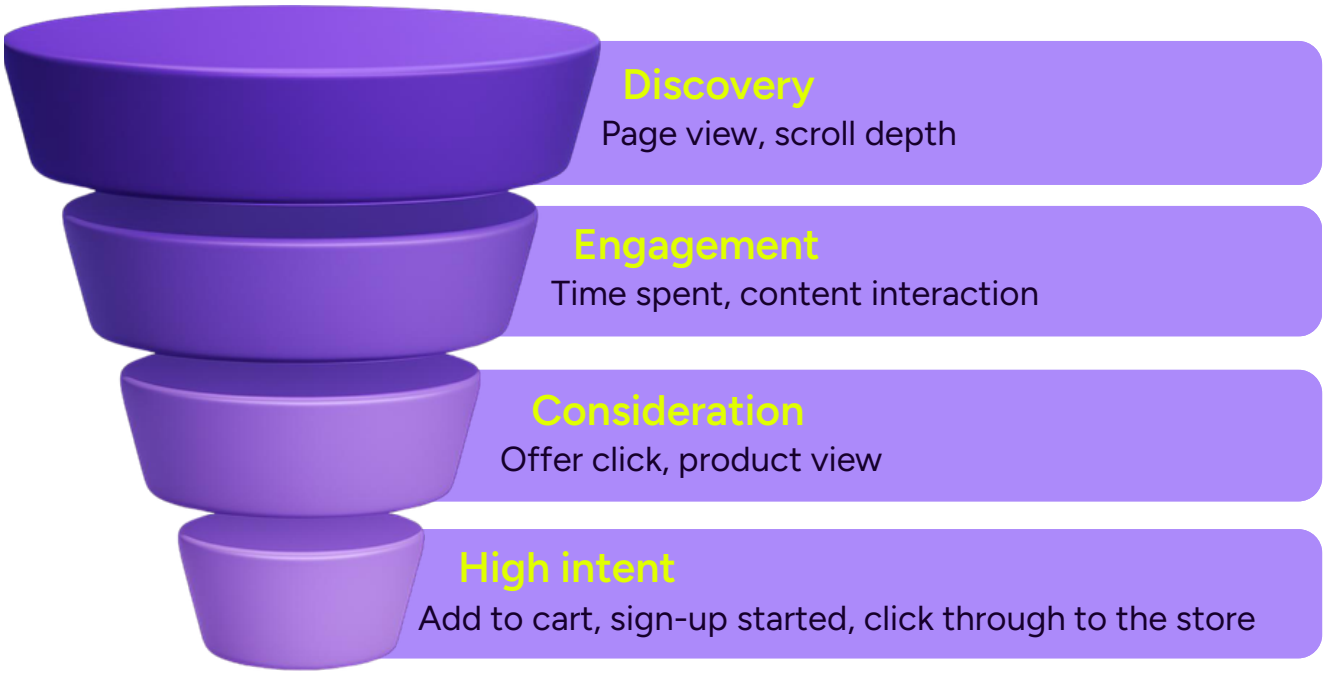
The goal isn't to test for the sake of testing. It's to identify what actually makes users want to continue into the app.

The app store remains essential. The landing page helps prepare users before they get there.

Collect and Activate Intent Signals

As some identifiers gradually disappear, advertising journeys have become harder to track. Web-to-app doesn't bypass these restrictions, but it adds a step where events can be measured, with user consent.

Not all behaviors indicate the same level of intent:



When properly tracked and shared, these events can help:

- compare audiences, creatives, and offers
- identify drop-off points
- enrich the signals sent to advertising platforms

They can also be used to tailor re-engagement based on how far the user progressed:

The user discovered the offer: reinforce the value proposition.

They viewed a product or started an action: follow up on the message or content that caught their interest.

They left before installing: address the final barrier and remind them of the app's benefit.

The goal is no longer to show every visitor the same message, but to continue the journey from where each user left off.

The landing page doesn't restore lost signals. It creates new ones, before the user even reaches the app.

Better Qualify Future Users

By getting a clearer understanding of the value proposition, users can make a more informed decision before downloading. This pre-qualification can lead to better post-install results: activation, purchase, subscription, retention, or LTV.

One thing to keep in mind: pre-qualification is not a guarantee. A drop in install volume only makes sense if it leads to higher user value.

> **13.6% of users acquired through these journeys made at least one in-app purchase within 30 days. (AppsFlyer)**

Results vary across markets and app categories. Above all, they highlight the importance of measuring performance beyond the install.



Key Takeaways

- The landing page gives brands more flexibility over messaging and the pre-install experience.
- Web behavior provides a better understanding of intent and helps tailor re-engagement.
- Web-to-app quality should be measured after the install, through to the value actually generated.

PART 3

The Foundations of Web-to-App

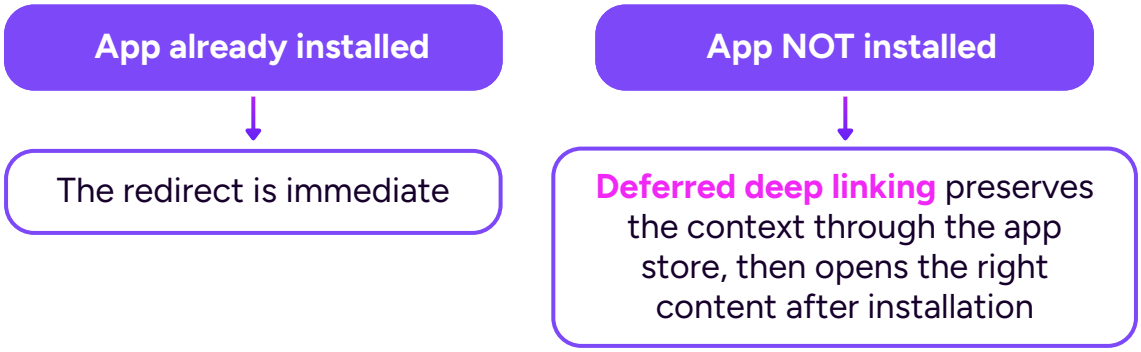


The Foundations of Web-to-App

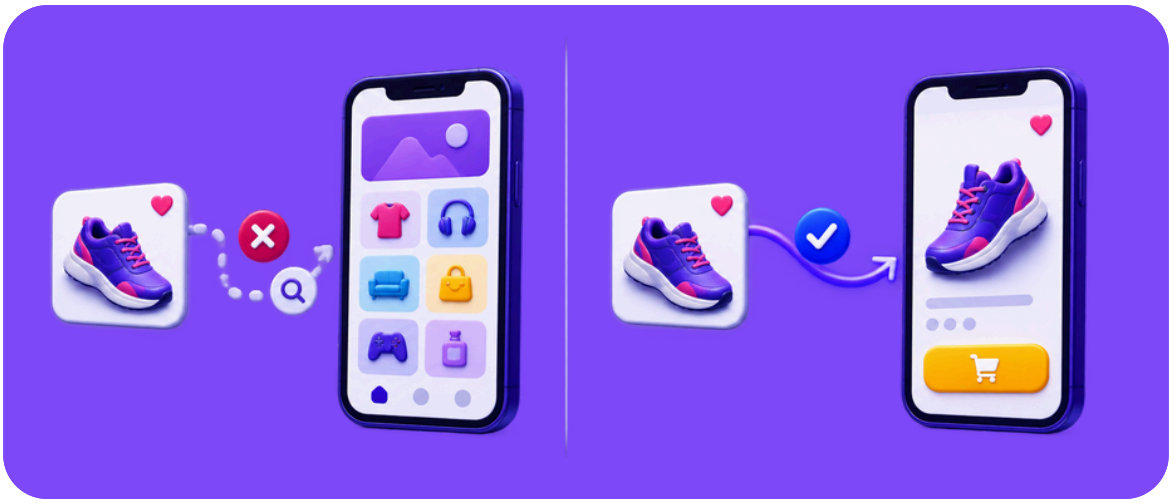
A landing page alone isn't enough to build an effective web-to-app journey. Deep linking, measurement, value proposition, web experience, and creative all need to work as one system. If one part breaks, so does the journey.

1. Deep Linking: Maintaining Continuity

Deep linking directs users to the right screen in the app: the product they viewed, the offer they discovered, the cart they started, or the content they selected.



Without this continuity, the app opens on a generic screen. The context of the click is lost, adding extra navigation steps before the expected action.
Before launch, links should be tested on iOS and Android, both with and without the app installed.



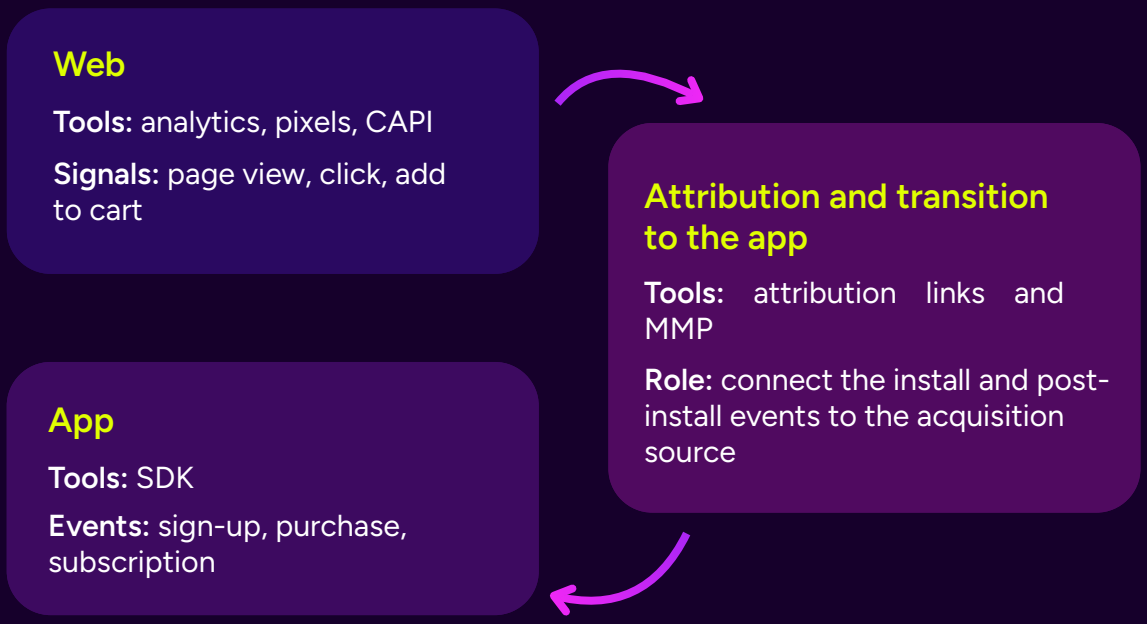
Deep linking isn't just about opening the app. It lets users pick up the journey where they left off.

2. Unified Measurement Across Web and App

Web and app rely on different measurement environments. On the web, events are tracked through analytics tools, pixels, and server-side solutions such as CAPI.

In the app, they are collected through SDKs integrated into the application. The MMP connects the install and post-install events to the acquisition journey that started on the web, helping link the different stages of the journey.

How do you connect web and app measurement?



For a consistent view of the journey, three conditions need to be met:

- select the events that are actually useful for optimization
- align the definitions and values of actions tracked across web and app
- check that events are being transmitted correctly before launching campaigns

A "purchase" can't mean a confirmed payment on the web and simply opening the checkout in the app. Otherwise, your tools and platforms aren't optimizing toward the same outcome.

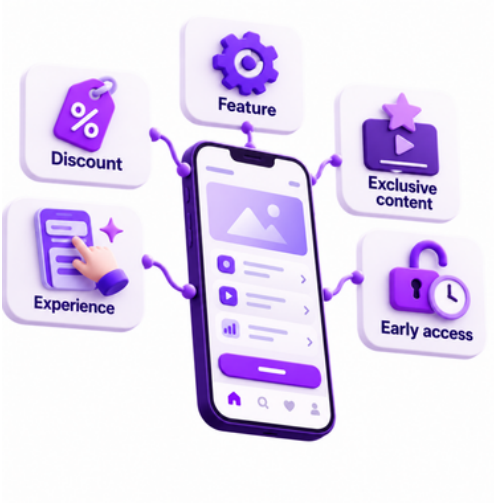
The goal isn't to collect more events, but to maintain a consistent signal from end to end.

3. A Clear Reason to Continue in the App

"Download our app" isn't a value proposition. Users need to understand what they gain by leaving the web and continuing in the app.

That reason could be:

- A discount or free shipping
- Exclusive content
- An additional feature
- A faster or more personalized experience
- Early access to an offer or service



An app-only incentive doesn't have to be promotional. Above all, it should answer one clear question: **"Why should I download the app now?".** This promise should be visible in the ad, reinforced on the landing page, and delivered in the app.

4. A Fast, Relevant Landing Page

The landing page needs to earn its place in the journey. If it simply repeats the ad or forces users to search for information, it adds friction without adding value.

It should quickly answer three questions:

1. What's the offer?
2. Why continue in the app?
3. What's the next step?

Designed mobile-first, an effective landing page:

- reinforces the promise made in the ad
- clearly presents the offer or product
- limits distractions
- loads quickly
- directs users to the right destination



53%

of mobile visitors abandon a page that takes more than three seconds to load (Google).

In a web-to-app journey, every second lost before the CTA means intent fading before the user even reaches the app store.

The landing page isn't a waiting room before the app store. It's where users decide whether the app is worth downloading.

5. A Consistent Creative Strategy

Creative captures attention and sets the initial promise. That promise then needs to remain consistent across the landing page and the app.

An ad promoting a product, feature, or discount can't lead to a generic page or a different experience. Every disconnect forces users to reconsider their decision.

Angles and formats can vary by platform, audience, or intent level. But the common thread should remain the same: what's promised in the creative should be delivered at every stage of the journey.



Key Takeaways

- Web-to-app works as a chain: each component depends on the others.
- Continuity needs to be maintained across the experience, messaging, and measurement.
- Before launch, the entire journey should be tested from the ad through to the final in-app event.

PART 4

The Media Stack



The Media Stack

Web-to-app doesn't require activating every available platform. What matters most is understanding the role each one can play in the journey.

Some create demand. Others capture existing intent or re-engage users who haven't completed their journey.

What Role Does Each Platform Play?

Meta	Drive volume, test different creative angles, and retarget users who interacted with the landing page
Google	Capture existing intent through Search and Shopping, and expand reach with Performance Max, YouTube, or Demand Gen
TikTok	Generate demand and reach new audiences with creatives tailored to the platform's codes
Snapchat Pinterest	Expand reach when their audiences and use cases align with the advertiser's industry

Retargeting or programmatic buying solutions can complement this core stack. They become most relevant when traffic volume, available audiences, and campaign maturity are sufficient to support them effectively.

The question isn't which platform is best, but where in the journey each one should play a role.

How Should Budget Allocation Evolve?

Rather than using a fixed split, budgets should evolve as the strategy matures.

1. **Web-to-app is just getting started**
   Priority: Focus the budget on one or two channels you already know well
   Objective: Validate the journey, landing page, and measurement

2. **The journey generates enough data**
   Priority: Compare audiences, creatives, and offers
   Objective: Identify the best-performing combinations

3. **Retargeting audiences are building up**
   Priority: Gradually introduce retargeting campaigns
   Objective: Re-engage users based on where they dropped off

4. **The model is profitable and stable**
   Priority: Test new channels and expand reach
   Objective: Find additional volume without compromising value

A brand with limited traffic will benefit more from concentrating its budget than spreading it across five platforms. Conversely, a journey already generating enough volume can diversify its channels and refine the role of each one.

How Should You Measure Media Stack Performance?

In a direct-to-app journey, CPI provides a relatively simple first read of performance. With web-to-app, it's no longer enough: several steps between the ad click and the install can explain changes in performance.

A web-to-app benchmark isn't a single metric. It's a conversion journey that needs to be analyzed step by step.

Stage	Metrics to Track	What They Measure
Ad	CPM, CTR, CPC	The channel and creative's ability to drive qualified traffic
Landing page	Engagement, CTA click-through rate, clicks to the app store	The page's ability to convince users to continue
Transition to the app	Install rate, first open	Continuity between the landing page, app store, and app
Post-install	Activation, purchase, subscription, CPA, retention, ROAS, LTV	The quality and value of acquired users

This approach helps avoid drawing the wrong conclusions.

- A stable CPC combined with fewer clicks to the app store probably points to a landing page issue, not necessarily a media issue.
- A strong install rate followed by low activation may reveal a disconnect between the ad promise and the in-app experience.
- A higher CPI can be acceptable if cost per buyer decreases and retention or LTV improves.
- A strong click-through rate means little if users drop off as soon as they reach the landing page.

To isolate the impact of web-to-app, compare it with a direct-to-app journey under similar conditions: same platform, audience, market, OS, and time period. The comparison should also use enough volume to avoid reacting to short-term fluctuations.

The goal isn't to optimize each step independently, but to identify the combination that generates the most value at the end of the journey.

PART 5

Pre-Launch Checklist



Pre-Launch Checklist

Before activating your campaigns, the entire journey should be tested under real-world conditions.



Journey and Technical Setup

- [ ] Deep links tested on iOS and Android, with and without the app installed.
- [ ] Redirect to the right content verified after installation.
- [ ] MMP, SDK, pixels, and server-side solutions correctly configured.
- [ ] Web and app events aligned.
- [ ] Consent correctly collected and passed on.



Landing Page and Experience

- [ ] Fast, mobile-first landing page.
- [ ] Consistent promise across the ad, landing page, and app.
- [ ] Visible CTA and clear next step.
- [ ] App-only offer or benefit actually available in the app.



Campaigns

- [ ] Priority conversion objective defined.
- [ ] Channels, audiences, and exclusions configured.
- [ ] Creatives adapted to each platform.
- [ ] URLs and attribution parameters checked.
- [ ] Direct-to-app journey kept as a benchmark.



Optimization

- [ ] Dashboard ready before launch.
- [ ] Owners identified for each component.
- [ ] Test duration, budget, and success criteria defined in advance.
- [ ] Full end-to-end check completed before going live.

If any step can't be tracked, tested or attributed, the journey isn't ready to launch.

Conclusion

Web-to-app isn't a step that should systematically be added to every journey. It becomes relevant when the web serves a clear purpose: presenting the offer more effectively, understanding intent, and preparing users for what they'll find in the app.

But the landing page can't work in isolation. Creative, messaging, measurement, redirection, and the in-app experience need to remain consistent from the first click through to conversion.

Success shouldn't be measured by install volume alone. A potential drop in volume only makes sense if it leads to better post-install results: higher activation, conversion, retention, or value.

The best place to start is simple:

test web-to-app on a specific use case → compare it with the direct-to-app journey → gradually increase budgets when the results justify it

Web-to-app isn't about driving more installs at any cost. It's about building a more useful, measurable, and effective journey from end to end.

Addict Mobile

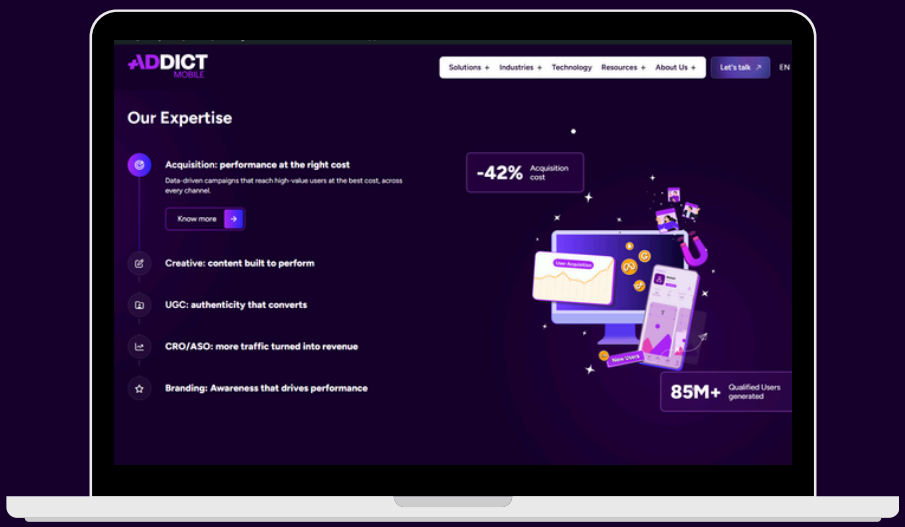
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