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BEHAVLY RESEARCH · REPORT

Do behavior-triggered emails work? What the published data shows

Automated emails are 2% of sends and 30% of email revenue. What the published data on behavior-triggered email shows, and what it can't prove.

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SUMMARY

Behavior-triggered email: what the published data shows

We read the largest published email datasets, SaaS conversion data and the classic study on response time, and traced each figure to its source. Emails sent because of what someone did are a small share of sends and a large share of results. Here is what holds up, and what the numbers can't prove.

KEY FINDINGS

1 **A small share of sends, a large share of results.** Across 27 billion emails in 2025, automated emails were 2% of sends and brought in 30% of email revenue (Omnisend[1]). Klaviyo reports the same shape: flows are 5.3% of sends and about 41% of email revenue.

2 **More clicks, not just more opens.** Triggered emails got a 5.02% click-through rate, against 3.84% for newsletters, in 4.4 billion messages (GetResponse[2]).

3 **The window is short.** In SaaS, trial-to-paid conversions peak in the first week (ChartMogul[3]). In sales, firms that reached a new lead within an hour were nearly seven times as likely to qualify it as firms that waited an hour longer (HBR[4]).

4 **None of it proves the email caused the result.** Triggered emails go to people who just showed interest. We found no public controlled study of behavior-triggered email in SaaS, so the honest way to know your own lift is a holdout group.

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Most lifecycle email still goes out on a calendar: a welcome on day 0, a tip on day 3, a reminder before the trial ends. The other way is to send because of something a person did, or stopped doing: they signed up, hit a plan limit, went quiet for two weeks. We wanted to know what the public data actually says about that second way, so we read the largest published datasets on it and traced every figure to its source.

This is a review of published data, not a controlled experiment, and the section on what the numbers can't prove matters as much as the findings.

01 Emails sent because of an action outperform their share of sends

The biggest public datasets come from email platforms reporting on their own customers. Three of them agree on the direction.

Omnisend analyzed 27 billion emails sent by 150,000 brands in 2025. Automated emails were 2% of email sends and 30% of email revenue. Per email, automated ones earned $2.87 and scheduled campaigns $0.18, about 16 times less (Omnisend, January 2026[1]).

2% → 30%

Automated emails' share of email sends, and their share of email revenue, across 27 billion emails in 2025.

Source: Omnisend 2026 Ecommerce Marketing Report[1]

Klaviyo's 2026 benchmarks show the same shape: flows, its automated emails, are 5.3% of sends and bring in nearly 41% of email revenue, with revenue per recipient nearly 18 times that of campaigns (Klaviyo[5]).

GetResponse looked at more than 4.4 billion messages sent in 2023 by senders with at least 500 contacts. Triggered emails had a 45.38% open rate and a 5.02% click-through rate. Newsletters had 40.08% and 3.84%, so triggered emails were clicked about 31% more often (GetResponse 2024 benchmarks[2]). Read the clicks rather than the opens: Apple Mail Privacy Protection opens emails automatically, which inflates every open rate.

Source	Data	Sent because of an action	Sent on a schedule
Omnisend	27 billion emails, 2025	2% of sends, 30% of revenue, $2.87 per email	$0.18 per email
Klaviyo	2026 benchmarks	5.3% of sends, about 41% of revenue	Revenue per recipient about 18x lower
GetResponse	4.4 billion messages, 2023	5.02% click-through rate	3.84% (newsletters)

02 The window after a signal is short

If emails tied to an action do better, part of the reason is timing: they arrive while the person is still thinking about the thing they just did. Two very different datasets show how fast that window closes.

In SaaS trials, ChartMogul's data from 2,500 SaaS companies (Q1 2024 to Q1 2025) shows trial-to-paid conversions peaking in week 1, with most conversions around day 7, when many trials end. By day 7, B2C trials had converted at 16% and B2B trials at 2.5% (ChartMogul SaaS Go-To-Market Report[3]). In ChartMogul's 2026 survey of 200 products, 62% use a 14-day trial and the median free-to-paid conversion rate is 8% within six months (ChartMogul SaaS Conversion Report[6]). The decisions happen early. A tip scheduled for day 10 can arrive after the person has already decided.

In sales, a 2011 study sent a test lead through the website of 2,241 U.S. companies. 37% replied within an hour and 23% never replied; the average reply, among companies that answered within 30 days, took 42 hours. Firms that tried to reach a lead within an hour were nearly seven times as likely to qualify it as firms that tried even an hour later (Oldroyd, McElheran and Elkington, Harvard Business Review, March 2011[4]). That study is about sales calls, not email, but it measures the same thing: how quickly interest cools.

03 What these numbers can't prove

It is tempting to read "2% of sends, 30% of revenue" as "triggered emails are 15 times better". The data does not support that, for four reasons.

Who gets them	A triggered email goes to someone who just did something: added to a cart, signed up, came back. Those people were more likely to act anyway. None of these datasets keeps a holdout group that matched the trigger and got no email, so they show an association, not the lift the email itself caused.

Mostly online stores	Omnisend and Klaviyo customers are mostly ecommerce brands, where abandoned-cart emails do much of the work. SaaS has its own moments (setup left unfinished, a plan limit, a trial ending), and they have not been measured at this scale in public.
Each platform grades itself	Every figure here comes from a vendor reporting on its own customers, with its own way of crediting revenue to an email.
Opens mislead	Automatic opens by Apple Mail make open rates higher than real reading. Clicks, revenue and people coming back to the product are the measures to trust.

We also looked for a public, controlled study of behavior-triggered email in SaaS trials, one that compares people who got the email with people who matched and didn't. We didn't find one. The published SaaS results are vendor case studies. If you want the real number for your product, measure it yourself: keep a random 10% of the people who match a trigger out of the email, and compare how many of each group come back or pay.

04 What we would do with this

1. **Start with three moments that already carry intent:** someone signed up but didn't finish setting up, someone hit a plan limit, and someone active went quiet for a couple of weeks.
2. **Send close to the moment.** The data on timing says hours matter more than the day of the week. Send when the signal arrives, not with the next batch.
3. **Measure clicks and people coming back,** not opens.
4. **Keep a holdout.** Leave a random 10% out of each triggered path for a few weeks. It is the only way to know what the email adds on top of the intent that set it off.
5. **Keep the calendar for news.** Product updates and announcements still suit a schedule. Follow-ups suit what people did.

TRY IT IN BEHAVLY

Start a path from what people did

In Behavly, a Trigger Campaign starts the moment your backend sends an event, and a Pattern Campaign takes in everyone who matches a behavior pattern, such as quiet for 14 days.

behavly.io — free plan, no credit card

REFERENCES

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Every figure in this report comes from one of these publications.

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ABOUT

About Behavly Research

Reports on lifecycle email and user behavior, built from published studies. Every figure links to its source, and each report says what the numbers can't prove. We publish no figures from Behavly customers' data. Every report is free to read online at behavly.io/research, and free to quote with a link to it.

About Behavly

Agentic analytics and lifecycle email for SaaS. Behavly shows what each person did on your website and in your product, and follows up with each of them by email based on what they did. It has a free plan, no credit card needed.

Questions or corrections: hello@behavly.io