

# Patagonia Case Study

The Email Marketing Strategy Behind a \$1 Billion Brand





# Patagonia

## A brand unlike most

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Patagonia is unlike most consumer brands in existence today.

Since the beginning, the company has always stuck to its mission of creating products that defy the conventional way of doing things.

The company's founder, Yvon Chouinard, spent the majority of his 20s trekking across North America and the Alps, sometimes living on no more than 50 cents per day.

He would later become the founder of Patagonia and grow it to a \$1 billion brand with stores all across the U.S.

So how did it all happen? How did Patagonia go from a small company owned by outdoor enthusiasts to the iconic brand that it is today?

The answer to that question can be found in their email marketing strategy. In this case study, we'll break down their email marketing, explain things they do well, and what they can do to improve.

# Creating a brand by doing good

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Yvon Chouinard never had the intention of creating a company in his early years. His only passion growing up was climbing. He was drawn to the excitement and intensity of rappelling down the sides of cliffs and spent most of his youth going out on excursions all across North America.

As Yvon became more involved in climbing, he noticed the environmental impact of rock climbing. So he started creating his own line of metal spikes that he would sell for \$1.50 apiece to support his passion.

He was also known for wearing rugby jerseys while climbing. To him, it was purely functional -- it prevented hardware slings from cutting into his neck. But it didn't take too long before he knew he was onto something. His rugby jerseys quickly became a fashion trend among climbers, and he started to see clothing as a means to support his equipment business.

By 1972, his business had expanded further. And in 1973, Patagonia was born. The name was created to commemorate the glaciers, windswept peaks, and gauchos that were a daily scene during Yvon's climbing days.

From the very beginning, the company's mission was to create environmentally-conscious clothing using ethical working conditions. The brand also committed itself to teach and train the next generation of environmental activists.



# What makes Patagonia special

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Looking at Patagonia's brand and email marketing strategy, the first thing that becomes apparent is their emphasis on storytelling. Their entire brand is built upon the company's original mission and their involvement in environmental activities.

Taking a look at their website, you can clearly see elements of brand storytelling used throughout their key pages. For example, their company [history page](#) is one of the most detailed About pages you'll find on any e-commerce site.

For over 4,000 words, Patagonia goes into great detail about the company starting from the founder's early days to where it is now. This isn't your standard, "what we do, what we sell" type deal. It's a complete, emotional autobiographical story about the brand's evolution.

Another thing that stands out about Patagonia is that they aren't afraid to use their voice or audience to promote good causes. It's part of their brand DNA.

See for yourself in this email ➔

**Patagonia Action Works**



Hatcheries and open-water fish farms are key contributors to the catastrophic decline of wild Chinook salmon and Southern Resident killer whales in the Pacific Northwest. Now, a misguided plan to “feed the orcas” includes spending \$87 million to pollute our waters with 60 million more hatchery salmon each year.

Tell decision-makers to stop wasting money on failed plans and invest in science-based solutions to save endangered wild salmon and orcas.

# The significance of a single email

That email is designed to promote the company's "Action Works" initiative, which supports various grassroots environmental causes. In the email, you can also get a glimpse of Patagonia's excellent storytelling. They start the email by identifying a problem and then tell the user how they can participate in the cause.

The majority of emails have a nice clean design and layout, and they do a good job of showcasing new products. The company's welcome series also does an excellent job of introducing the brand, what they stand for, and the company's design philosophy.

Patagonia's emphasis on sustainability is a major driving force behind their growth. The company started a campaign to convince customers to buy less in 2012, something that's not too common when it comes to the eCommerce world.

\$543m increase in sales!

[Patagonia Action Works](#)



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# Email Personalization



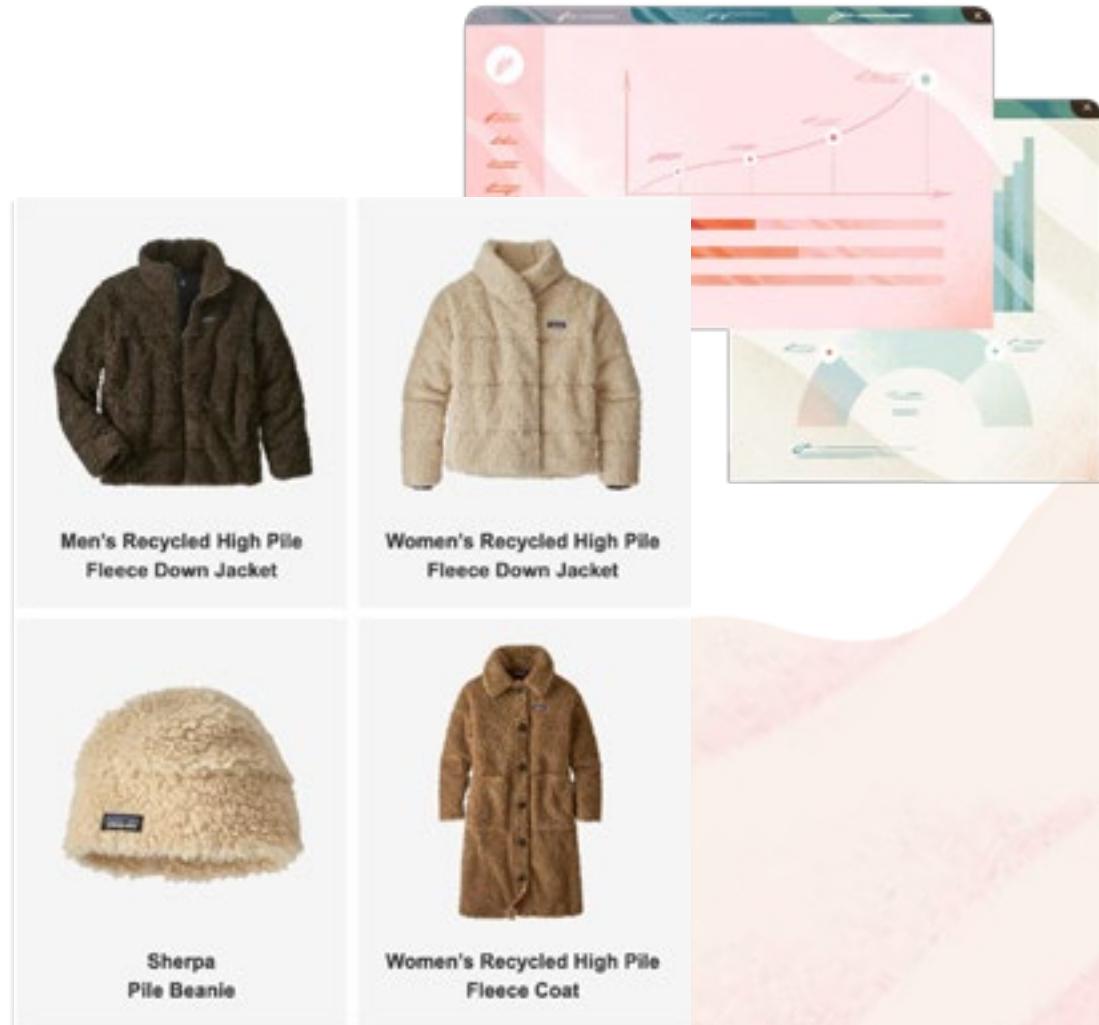
Personalization is always the first recommendation we make to brands.

Research shows that **74% of marketers** say targeted personalization increases customer engagement and that personalized emails also deliver **6x higher** transaction rates.

To see what Patagonia had implemented in terms of email personalization, we conducted a simple test that involved browsing men's clothing only, followed by women's clothing only. If there was personalization, then we would clearly see two distinct sets of emails for each browsing experience.

But that wasn't the case.

There were no personalization emails based on links we clicked in emails or products we viewed on their website. Male and female products were always shown in emails.



## Guru Recommendation

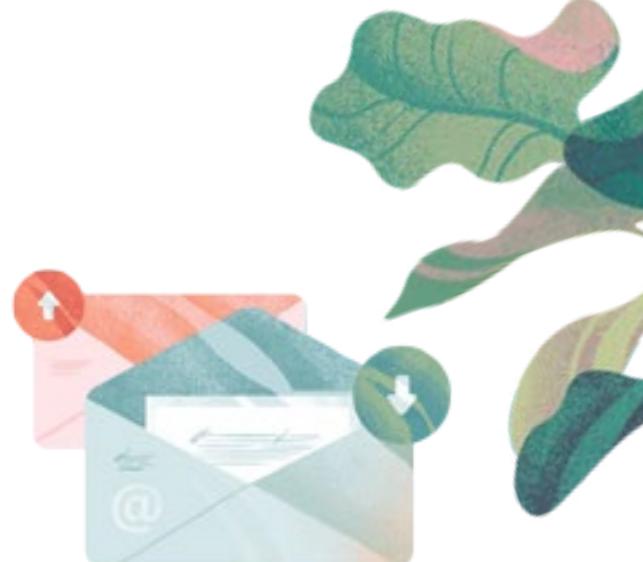
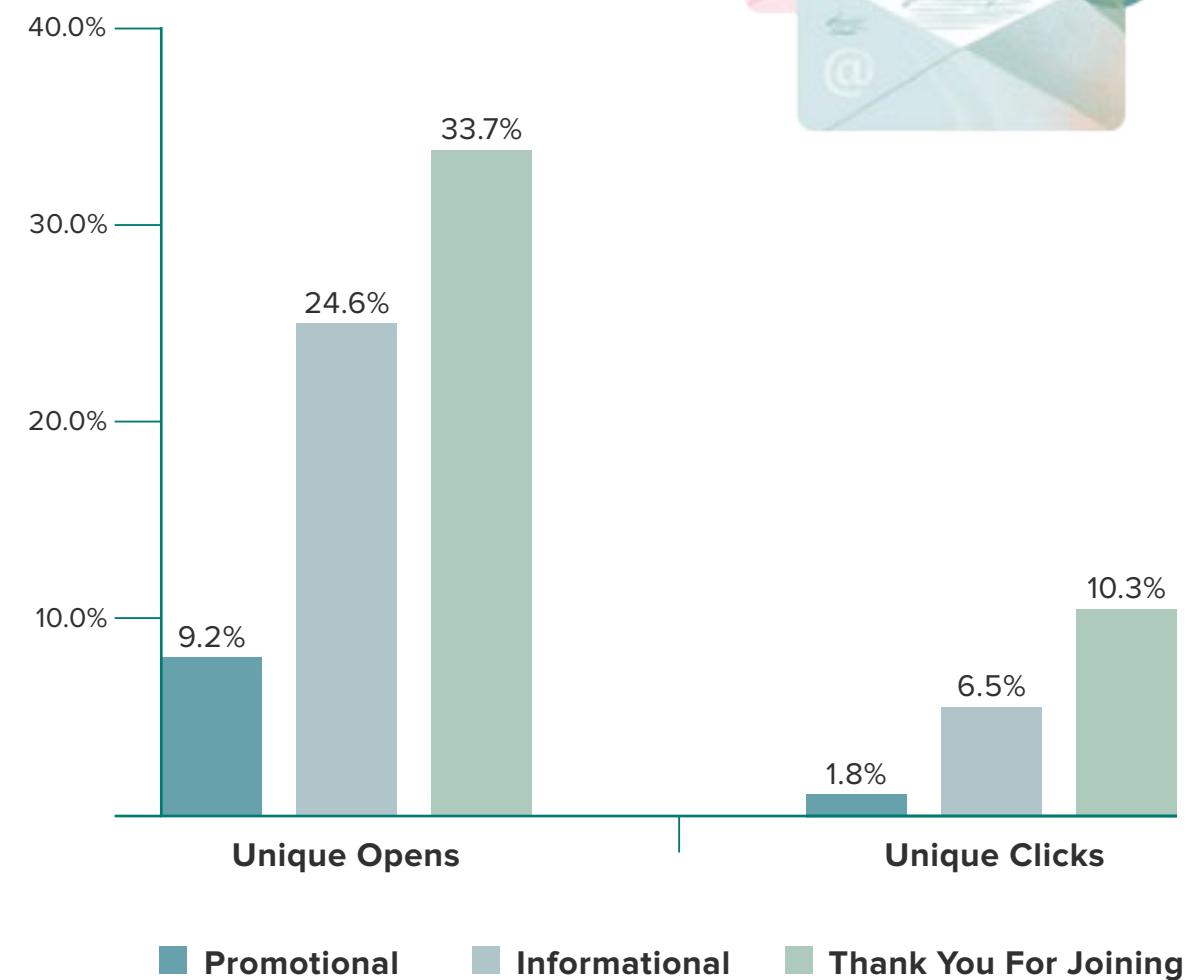
Besides segmenting based on gender, Patagonia can also use a variety of other segments on their email list. For example, they can segment users based on location/country, engagement levels, number of purchases, products purchased, and previously viewed content.

# Welcome Series

After looking through Patagonia's email personalization, we did some more investigating and tested out their welcome flow. One thing that immediately stood out was the fact that their welcome flow only had three emails.

Although, in this case, we could let the three emails slide due to them having a high volume of emails sent out to subscribers, the sweet spot when it comes to welcome flows is generally 6-8 emails. This length of emails allows you to gather as much information as possible on your subscribers so you can send them relevant emails and campaigns in the future.

Sharing tips, relevant information, and other valuable product information in welcome emails also leads to significantly higher open rates and click rates compared to regular email campaigns.

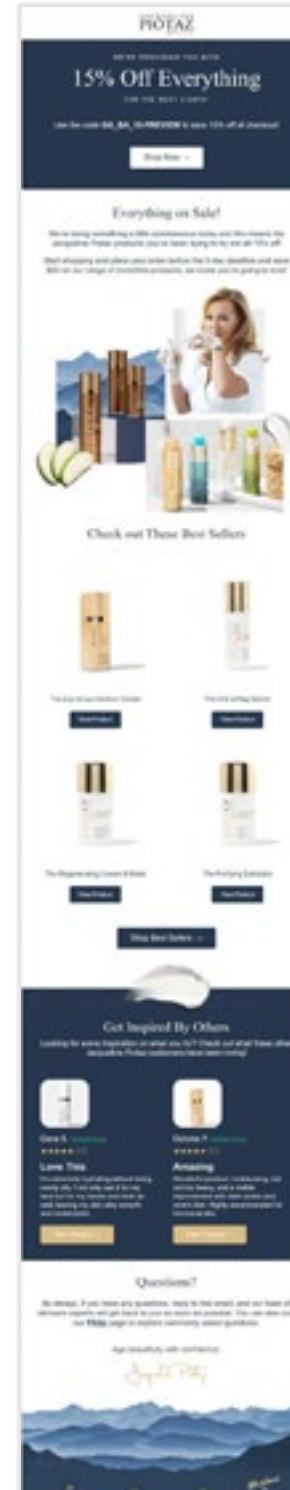
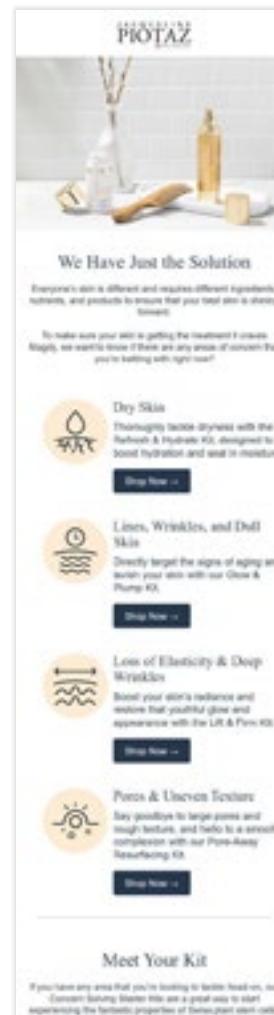


# Browse Abandonment Flow



We didn't get any browse abandonment emails after we viewed products on the Patagonia website. This was surprising, especially considering how important these emails are in re-engaging users.

Everyone knows how important Abandon Cart emails are for e-commerce. However, Browse Abandonment flows are also strategically important and can help to convert your customers at a critical decision-making stage. A simple flow can be just as equally effective as a longer flow as long as your flow strategy is well thought out and relevant.



Trigger  
Checkout Abandonment



Email #1  
Great Picks [name]



Email #2  
We have just the solution



Email #3  
Everything on sale!



Here is an example of a simple yet well designed Browse Abandonment flow for Malavara Skincare.

The first email is automatically sent **4 hours** after someone exits one of the store's product pages without starting checkout or making a purchase. The reason why this flow (and other browse abandonment flows) work, all comes down to the Zeigarnik effect.

According to the Zeigarnik effect, people remember uncompleted or interrupted tasks better than completed tasks. If someone gets distracted while browsing a site, a simple reminder is all that's needed to get them back on track.

Browse abandonment emails typically won't have a higher conversion rate than standard abandoned cart emails, but you'll have a larger pool of users to target with your emails.

Trigger  
Checkout Abandonment

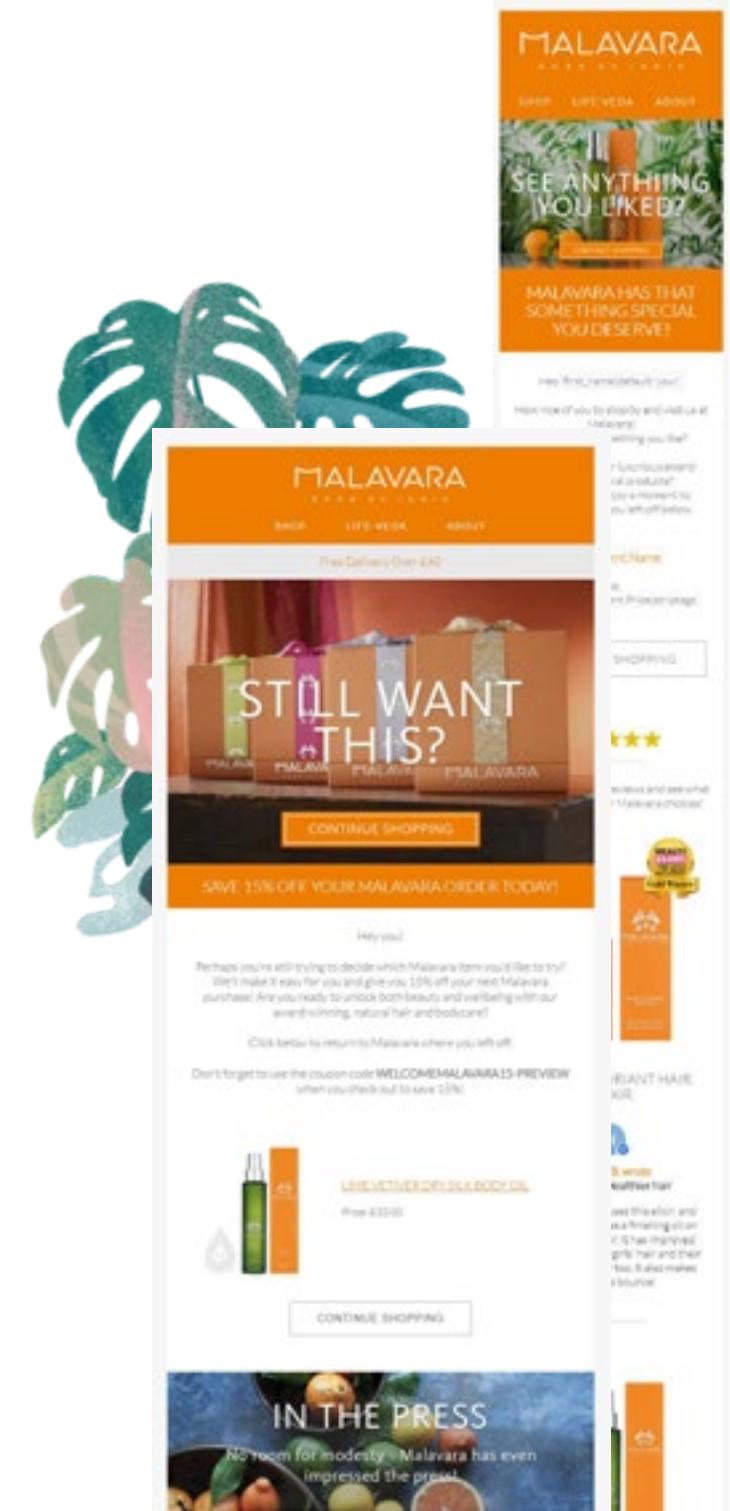
Wait 4 Hours

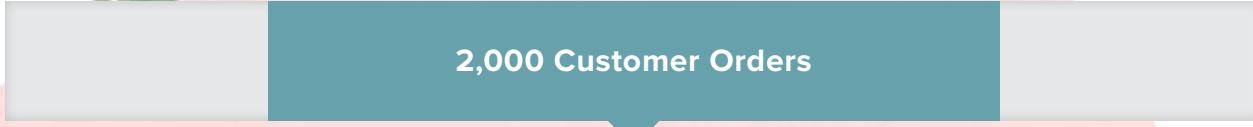
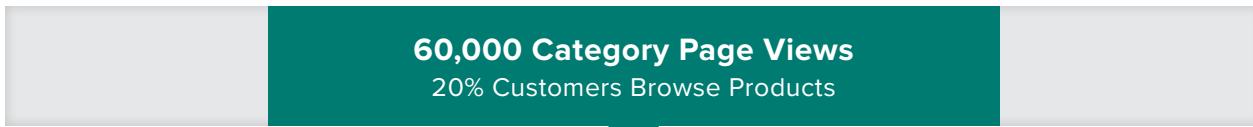
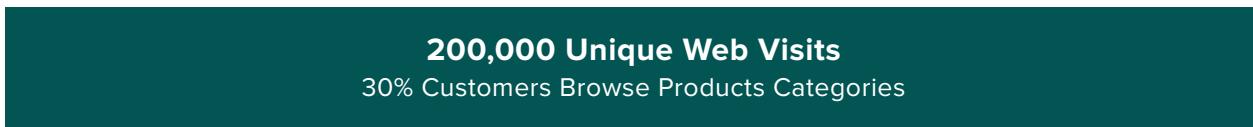


Email #1  
See anything you liked?



Email #2  
Still want this?





## Lets talk numbers

Assume you have 200,000 unique visits on your site and 30% browse products. If your overall conversion rate from visit to order is 1%, then you could potentially have over 2,000 extra orders completed just by sending a couple of browse abandonment emails.

For the best results with browse abandonment emails, you'll need to have the right automation enabled across your site. Klaviyo allows you to send these emails whenever a user visits a product page and doesn't complete checkout. But because product page visits don't always indicate purchase intent, you'll need to adjust your browse abandonment emails so that they're secondary to your abandoned cart flows

# Post-Purchase Emails



We weren't able to test post-purchase emails on Patagonia's site, but we recommend that you have these emails in your email marketing strategy.

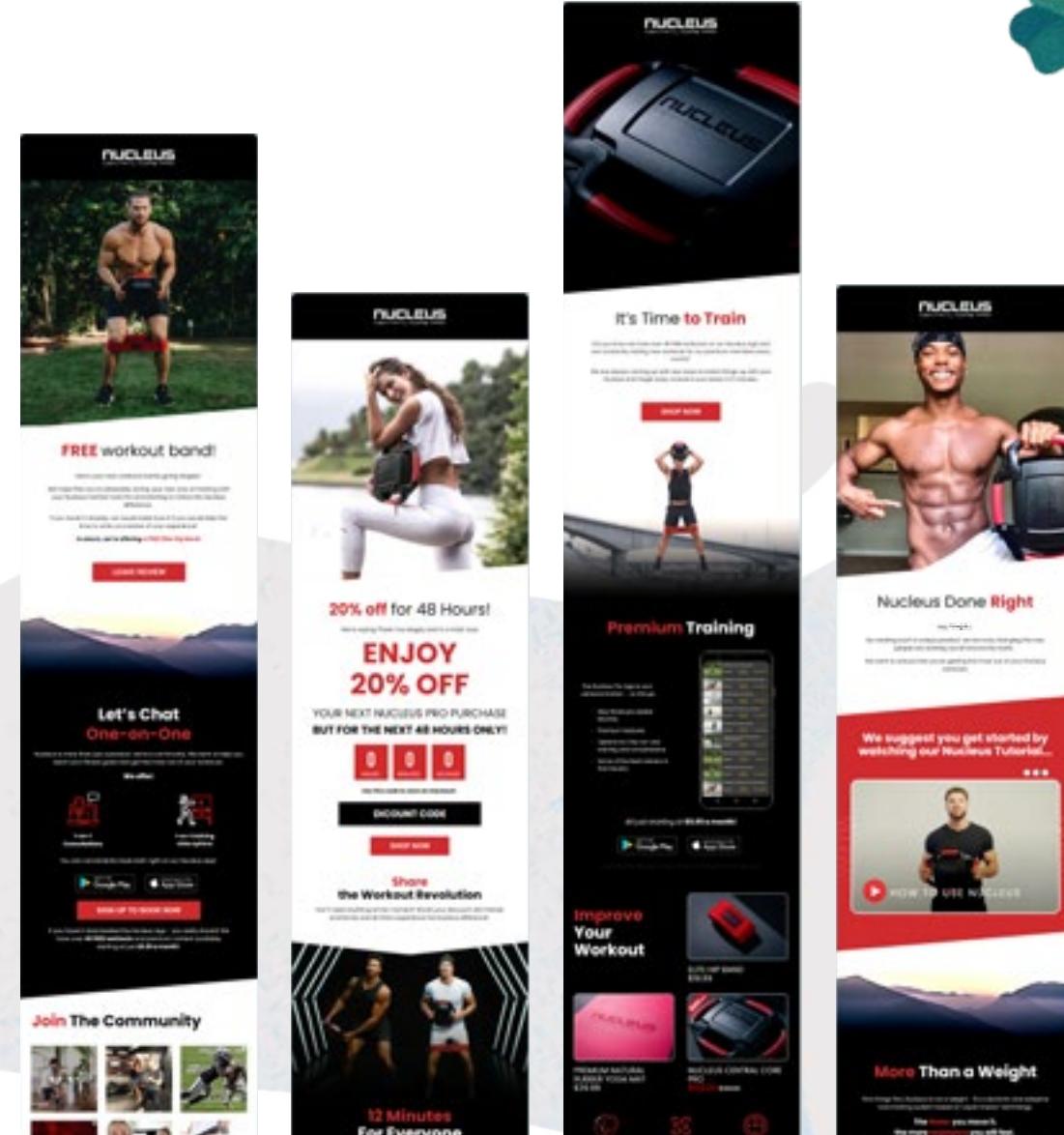
As the name implies, post-purchase emails are the emails that you send after you make a sale.

Product reviews are a key aspect of social proof, a factor that is extremely influential to consumers making a purchase or not making a purchase. The post-purchase flow is the ideal time to ask for a review and referrals, but it's also a great time to ensure you stay on top of mind for when they're ready to repurchase.

Customers also respond really well when you include other valuable information such as tips and tutorials that are related to the purchase. For this particular example, Patagonia could send a series of emails

explaining how to care for hiking gear properly or best practices when it comes to washing their jackets.

Here's an example of a post-purchase email series we built for a client, Nucleus Central Core Pro.





The winback emails follow a similar design pattern to the post-purchase email we shared above. It contains a personalized message at the beginning explaining the benefits of the products as well as the special offers available.

The image displays two mobile screenshots of Mito Redlight's winback emails. The left screenshot shows a woman in a white tank top with a red light device on her arm, advertising a 25% off offer for all mobile devices. The right screenshot shows a man sitting at a desk with a red light device, advertising a 25% off offer for 48 hours. Both emails include a discount code, a 'Mobile Preview' button, and a 'Share the Benefits with Friends' section. The right email also features sections for 'WHAT'S NEW', 'YOUR PAST PURCHASES', 'ATTACHABLE MACHINES', and 'MOBILE DEVICES'.

# Popups

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The last element of Patagonia's email marketing that we looked at was its email collection method. Most eCommerce brands capture emails through email signup forms, contests, and email popups.

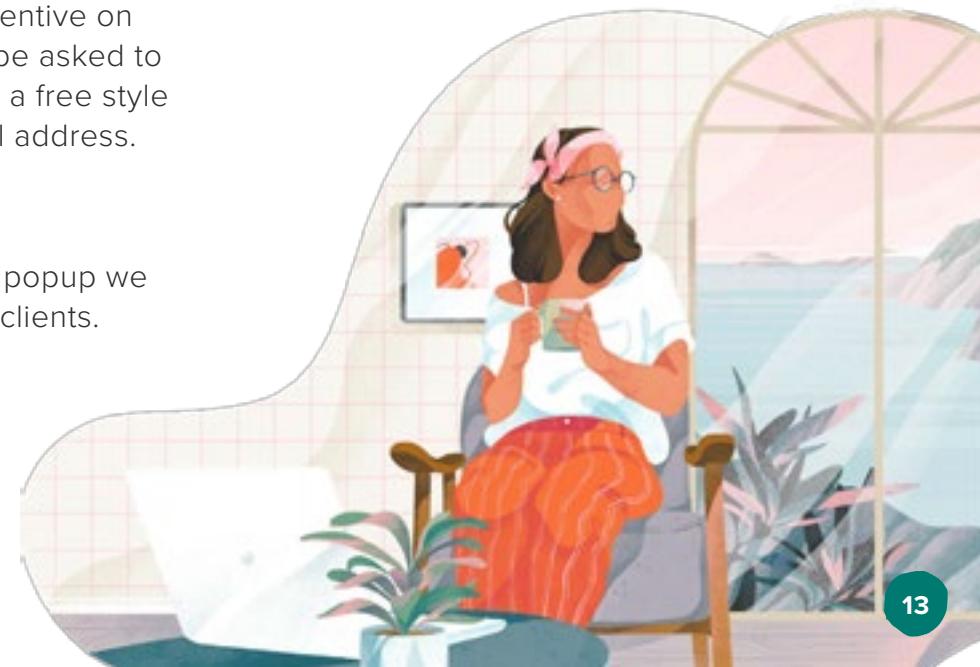
Email popups are one of the most effective ways to capture emails on a website because they show up above a webpage that the visitor is viewing, usually darkening the content behind it. Patagonia doesn't use email popups on any of its pages, which suggests there are a lot of opportunities to improve their email conversions.

They could create a popup with exit intent to capture emails before they leave the site forever and also have category-specific popups (fishing, surfing, hiking), regional targeting based on events and weather, visitor/returning subscriber, and endless other options that can then be used to tailor the emails further.



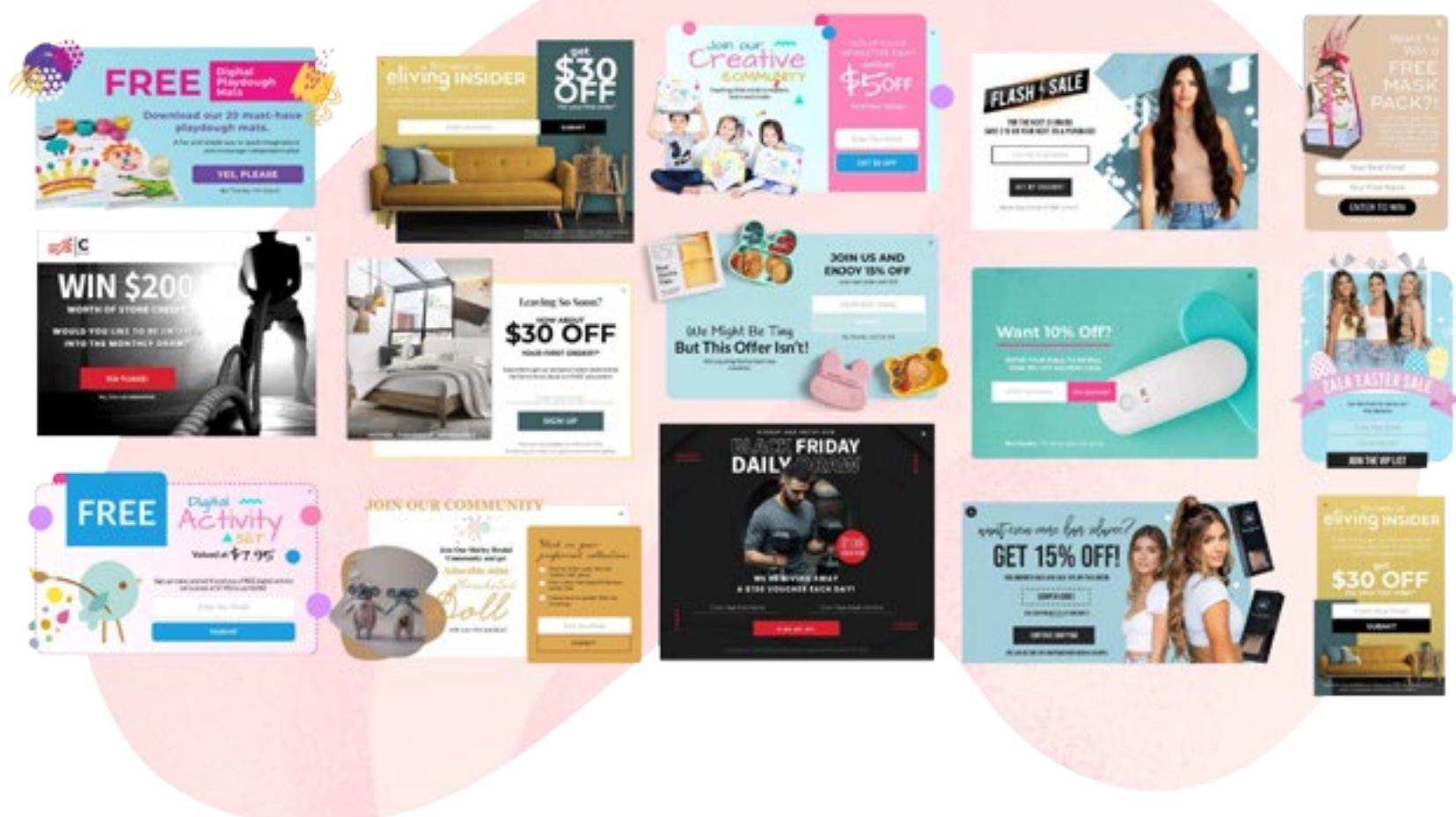
The effectiveness of each popup would ultimately come down to the incentive on offer. For example, users could be asked to redeem a discount or download a free style book in exchange for their email address.

Here's an example of a Justuno popup we created for one of our previous clients.





As you can see, popups don't have to be complicated to be effective. All you need is a compelling offer and a clear call to action. We have also combined the popup and contest together to increase the effectiveness even more



# Conclusion



Clearly, there are many things that Patagonia is doing right when it comes to their overall marketing strategy. The company has grown significantly over the last few years and much of that growth has been driven by its email marketing.

The recommendations we pointed out throughout this case study would make their emails even better. They would also help to increase the company's overall conversions and retention rates.

If you would like to know more about the emails and flows we've created for our clients, contact us at [scale@growthgurus.io](mailto:scale@growthgurus.io)



# Testimonials



## Joovv

The Growth Gurus leverage a rich understanding of strategy and the underlying drivers of growth, and bring deep creativity to help you chart a path to achieve it.

Scott Nelson,  
Los Angeles, USA

## We Might Be Tiny

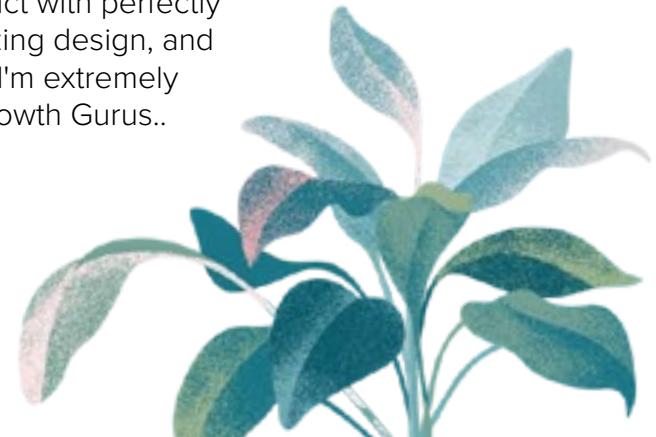
Working with Growth Gurus has really helped to move the needle in my business. I went from quite a modest email list to growing around 4x times the size through their recommendations. Email marketing has now become the highest revenue generator for my business – I can't thank the team enough.

Eleanor Cullen,  
VIC, Australia

## Preferred Elements

I've dealt with a couple of email marketing companies, but none of them were as competent in every area... Then I was referred to Growth Gurus. They have an amazing team of professionals capable of creating a turn-key product with perfectly built flows, amazing design, and engaging copy. I'm extremely satisfied with Growth Gurus..

Alex Surzhko  
New Jersey, USA



Like our approach?  
Let's talk!

**GrowthGurus.**

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CEO & Founder

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