

# Tulip Clienteling Benchmark Report

A channel-by-channel analysis of how retailers drive ROI



# Executive Summary

2024 has seen the explosion of customer communication channel options, and significant shifts in the channels customers prefer the most. This is reshaping how retailers' store teams interact with their customers. Following customers' lead and prioritizing personalized communications as part of their customer engagement strategy is table stakes for retailers.

This benchmark report examines the communication channels retailers utilize in their clienteling strategies for stores and store associates to communicate directly with their customers outside of the store in order to drive sales. It analyzes which channels drive higher conversion rates and sales values, along with how sales trends are influenced by clienteling strategies.

The analysis presented in this report helps retail stakeholders gain an understanding of how specific communication channels impact brand affinity, loyalty, and sales conversion.

Key findings of this report are that email has declined considerably as retail customers' preferred communication channel, and text and social media have emerged as preferred channels. More intimate channels such as voice calls, mail, and social media generate higher conversion rates and larger sales values. However, the scalability limitations of voice calls and mail have lead retailers to carefully consider customer preference, scale, conversion, and order values when selecting communication channels in order to maximize efficiency.

Influenced sales have experienced remarkable growth as a portion of total sales and drive significantly higher average order values. Understanding the impact influenced sales are having on conversion empowers retailers to develop targeted communications and sales strategies that resonate with customers.

Leveraging the in-depth insights presented in this report, retailers can quickly adapt to shifts in customer communication preferences and position themselves for success in the fast-paced retail landscape.



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# About Tulip

Tulip is the world's largest cloud-based retail customer engagement platform provider, with best-in-class Clienteling and POS capabilities that let retailers realize the full potential of omnichannel commerce. The world's most iconic retailers like David Yurman, Versace, Jimmy Choo, Mulberry, Saks Fifth Avenue, Ferragamo, COACH, and Michael Kors use Tulip to modernize the shopping experience, creating personalized shopping journeys that increase sales and improve customer loyalty across channels. Tulip enables retailers to build deeply personal connections with customers, fulfill orders, close out purchases, and maximize store associate productivity and performance.

**In many segments and markets, the store associate has evolved into a powerful omnichannel sales channel as they now can consistently communicate with 100's of customers daily in a personalized way.**

**Jordan Berke,**

Founder/CEO of TOMORROW, a leading global digital retail advisory firm that supports retailers to accelerate omnichannel growth and profitability.

## What is clienteling?

Clienteling is a personalized approach to a retailer's customer engagement strategy. It involves building long-term relationships with customers through tailored communications sent directly from the associate to the customer, on a regular basis. It often uses data from past interactions, conversations, purchases, their preferences and tastes, and important customer milestones like birthdays or anniversaries.

Store managers can also utilize clienteling solutions to promote exclusive products, invite VIPs to events, and tailor localized outreach with specific messages to their audience.

The practice of clienteling can be traced back centuries even before sophisticated technology, and has since been associated primarily with luxury brands, but has evolved to become more accessible to retailers across various sizes and price points.



# Definitions & terminology

## What are “clienteling communications”?

The term "clienteling communications" in this report refers to communications sent directly from store associates or managers to individual customers via the Tulip Clienteling app.

These communications are tailored to individual customer's preferences and shopping history. Once customers select their preferred communication channel, such as email, text, phone, or social media, associates interact with them accordingly. Communications may be inbound from the customer or outbound through a 1-to-1 or group messaging format. Inbound messages are particularly valuable as they often indicate a strong connection between customers and retail associates.

Through the Tulip Clienteling app, associates can track a customer's preferences and shopping history, and may proactively reach out when new inventory arrives that aligns with their interests, or to inform them about upcoming store events, promotions, etc. These communications can also be designed by corporate HQ but are always delivered through the store associate or manager via the Tulip Clienteling app.

## What are influenced sales?

An influenced sale is any sale that occurs within a period defined by the retailer after a store associate's communication to a customer through phone calls, emails, text messages, or social media. Influenced sales can also be attributed to the specific associate's communication, and can be used to track and reward their performance.

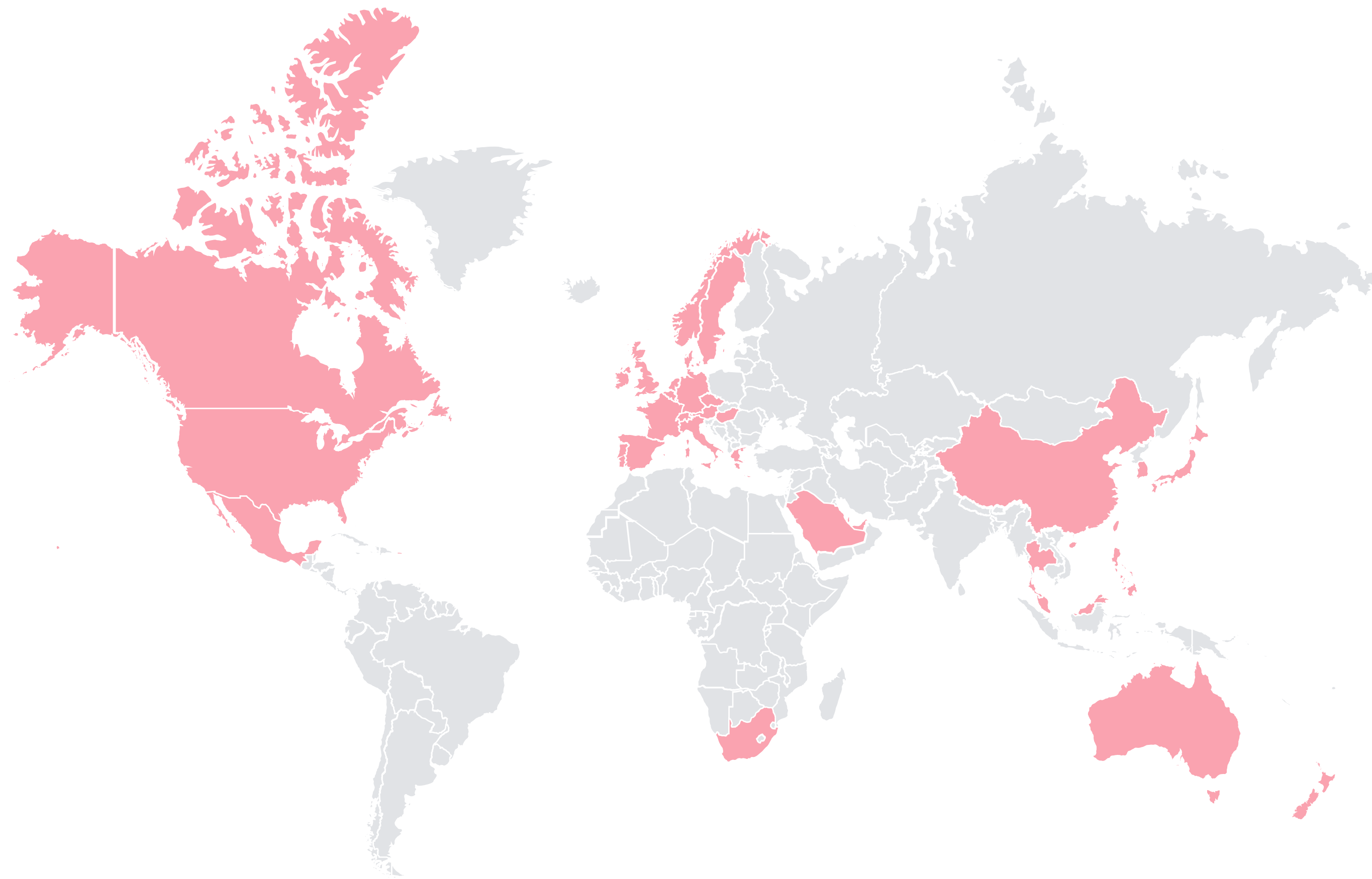
Tulip Influenced Sales (TIS) is the most important metric for tracking the effectiveness of clienteling communication efforts. Tulip's unique attribution model is based on a number of factors, some of which are configurable by the retailer.

Tracking influenced sales also provides retailers with insights into how different forms of communication, messages, templates, store associates, and communication channels, etc. perform within their customer base.

**"Effective clienteling requires a combination of technology and human touch. The right tools allow associates to access customer data and preferences, but it's the personal connection that turns that into meaningful interactions."**

**Brendan Witcher,**  
VP and Principal Analyst at Forrester Research

# Methodology



This report is based on the data collected from the Tulip Clienteling app primarily between June 2023 and June 2024, though some of the report considers data from as early as 2022 in order to best analyze year over year trends. It represents retailers with physical locations in more than 39 countries, ranging in size from boutique chains to multinational brands.

The report analyzes communication channels and unique communications sent from stores and store associates to customers, and the influenced sales that resulted.

The analysis was conducted by Tulip's internal team of retail experts. Data was aggregated and anonymized for each retail brand, and all individual customer or associate information was stripped out.

To maintain consistency across the data set, the analysis of the data has accounted for fluctuations in the Tulip base. Any performance spikes are reflective of genuine operational improvements rather than changes in the number of retail brands in the Tulip customer base, or the number of locations using Tulip solutions. Due to the wide range of ticket prices and store counts among the retailers analyzed, the evaluation focuses on relative performance rather than absolute dollar values. Only unique conversations were counted when analyzing clienteling communications, so the number of back and forth messages between the associate and the customer did not impact the results.

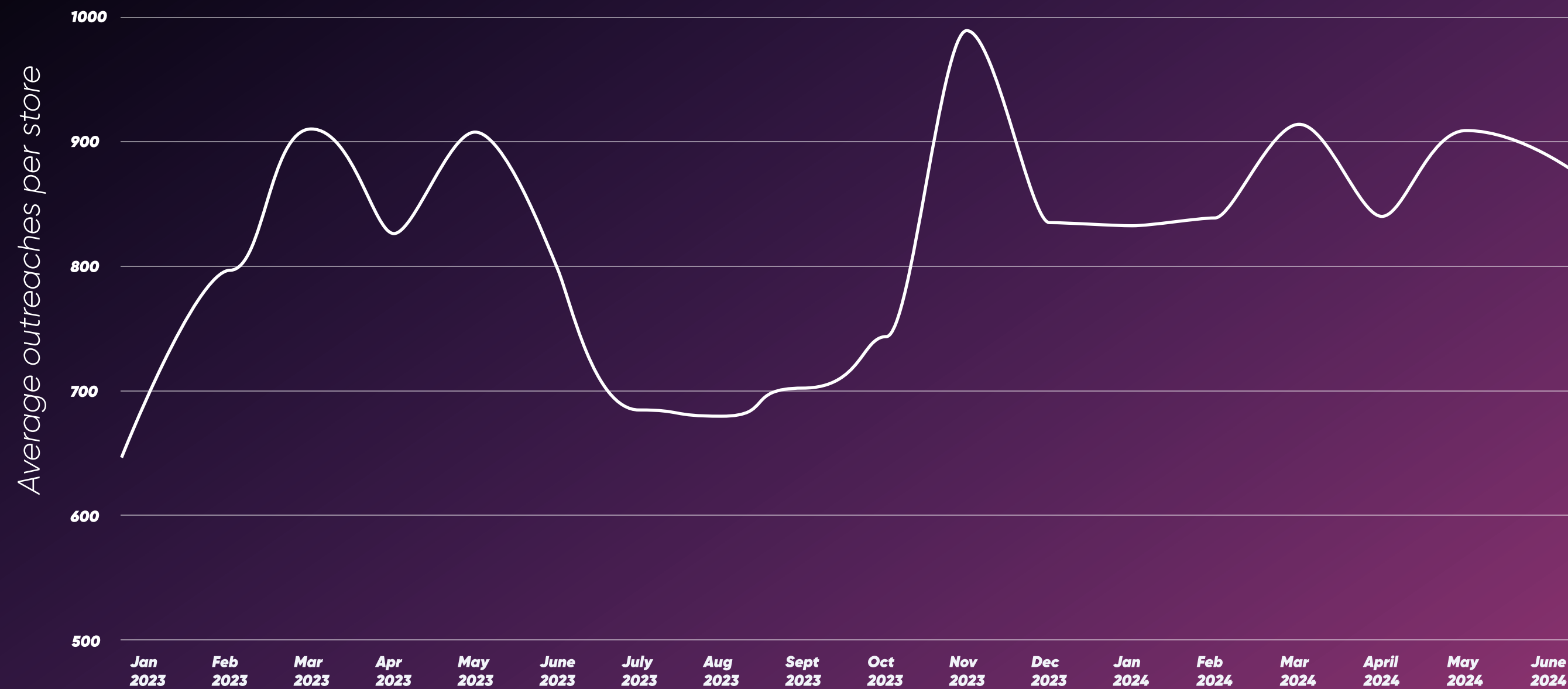


# Clienteling volume

The volume of associate-led communications is increasing.

"Omnichannel retail requires that a retailer engage customers through all channels effectively – and the associate channel is quickly emerging as the most personalized, natural channel for customers to engage in many categories."

**Jordan Berke,**  
Founder/CEO of TOMORROW



The average number of **clienteling communications per store** increased by 28% between January 2023 and January 2024.

Communication volumes peaked in November 2023 and then to a lesser extent in March and May 2023 and 2024. These are the same seasonal peaks in clienteling conversion rates and volume of influenced sales that are covered later in this report.

This year over year increase in communications suggests that Tulip retailers are increasingly leveraging clienteling to **engage with customers and lift sales**. The relationship between clienteling communications and sales is also covered later in this report.

# 28%

Increase YoY in clienteling communications per store



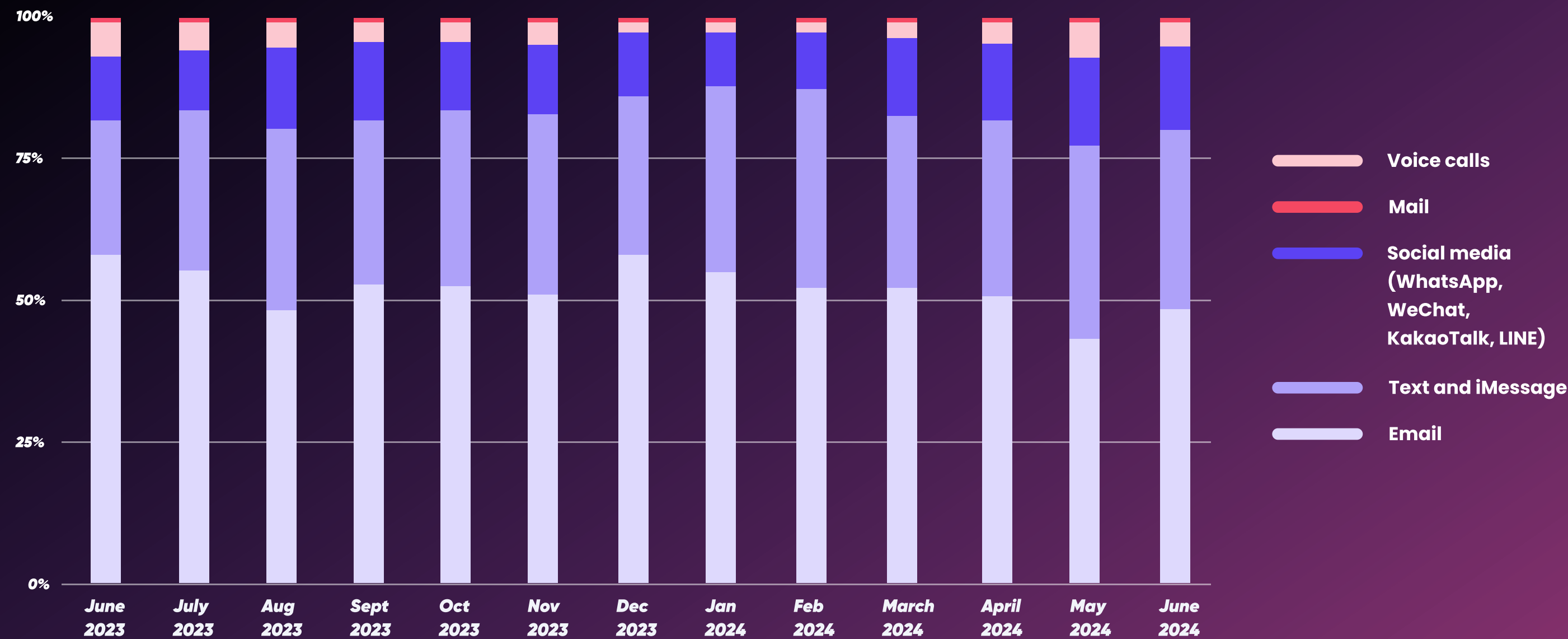


# Clienteling by channel

Email is still the most popular channel, but text and social are growing.

"Communication channels are in constant flux, along with consumer preferences. Staying ahead of these shifts is critical to successful clienteling."

**Carol Spieckerman,**  
President of Spieckerman Retail



Based on the volume of communications by channel via the Tulip Clienteling app, **email remains the leading channel**, but is experiencing a decline in volume. Its share of total communications has dropped from 59% in June 2023 to 49% in June 2024. Text messaging (including iMessage) has remained the second most popular channel, and had the **biggest increase**, from 26% to 31%.

Social media communications, which include WhatsApp, WeChat, KakaoTalk and LINE, increased from 11% of total communications to 15%. For both WhatsApp and WeChat, overall volume of communications increased 10x and 24x respectively. This shift indicates a **growing preference among customers** for more immediate communication methods.

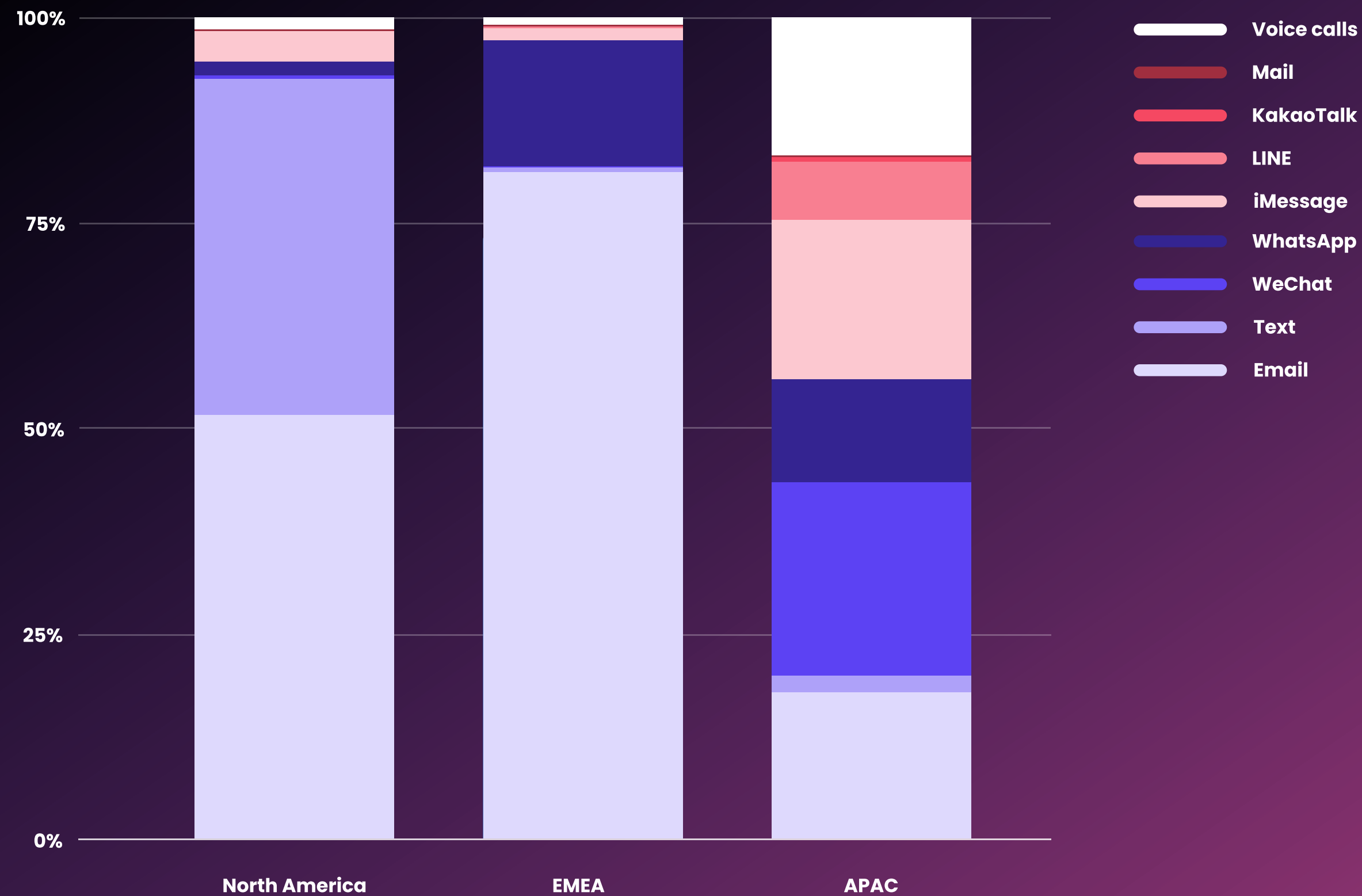
Individual retailer bases might vary in communication preferences compared to aggregated data. Given this, and given the evolution in customer preferences towards more immediate communication channels like text and social media, it is crucial for retailers to monitor their customers' channel preferences and performance closely. Retailers should also ensure they are offering these channels as options for associates to communicate with their customers.





# Clienteling worldwide

Customer channel preference varies widely between North America, EMEA, and APAC.



Associate-led communications vary significantly by region, reflecting the cultural differences in how customers connect with brands and retailers around the world.

In North America, email is the most common channel, accounting for 52% of all communications, followed closely by text messages at 41%. WhatsApp is less popular, at just 1.6%.

In Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA), email is by far the most popular channel, accounting for 81% of communications, followed by WhatsApp at 15%.

In Asia-Pacific (APAC), WeChat and iMessage are the most popular channels, accounting for 24% and 19% of all communications respectively. Email, voice calls, and WhatsApp are all between 12% and 18% of total communications.

When developing communication strategies, retailers should account for these variations in the different global regions' channel preferences to ensure they can offer communication options that are popular within those markets.

51%

of communications in North America are email

81%

of communications in EMEA are email

24%

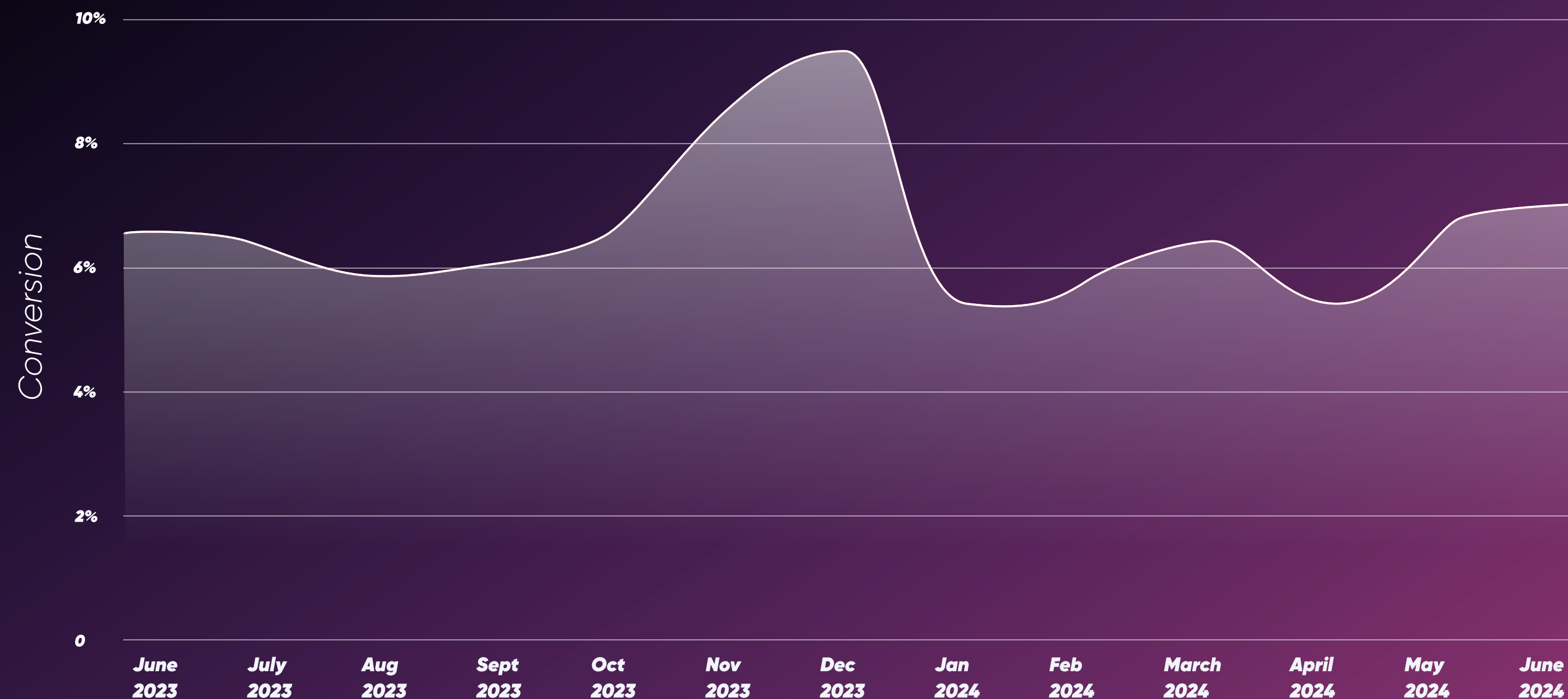
of communications in APAC are WeChat





# Clienteling conversion

Associate-led communications convert to sales at 5 to 10%.



Clienteling communications convert to a sale at rates ranging from 5% to 10%. Conversion rates peak around holiday times, which may reflect an increase in customer propensity to purchase at that time. Within the Tulip base, some retailers see **clienteling conversion rates as high as 15%** depending on the retailer's maturity in clienteling.

These rates demonstrate the lift in impact from clienteling communications in driving purchases, compared to corporate marketing campaigns, which typically achieve conversion rates between 2% and 5%.

The higher conversion rates associated with clienteling should encourage retailers to use it as a **high-impact strategy** for increasing sales.

**"Retailers who view their front-line store associates as their greatest advantage now have the ability to amplify this advantage through extending their influence beyond the store."**

**Jordan Berke,**  
Founder/CEO of TOMORROW



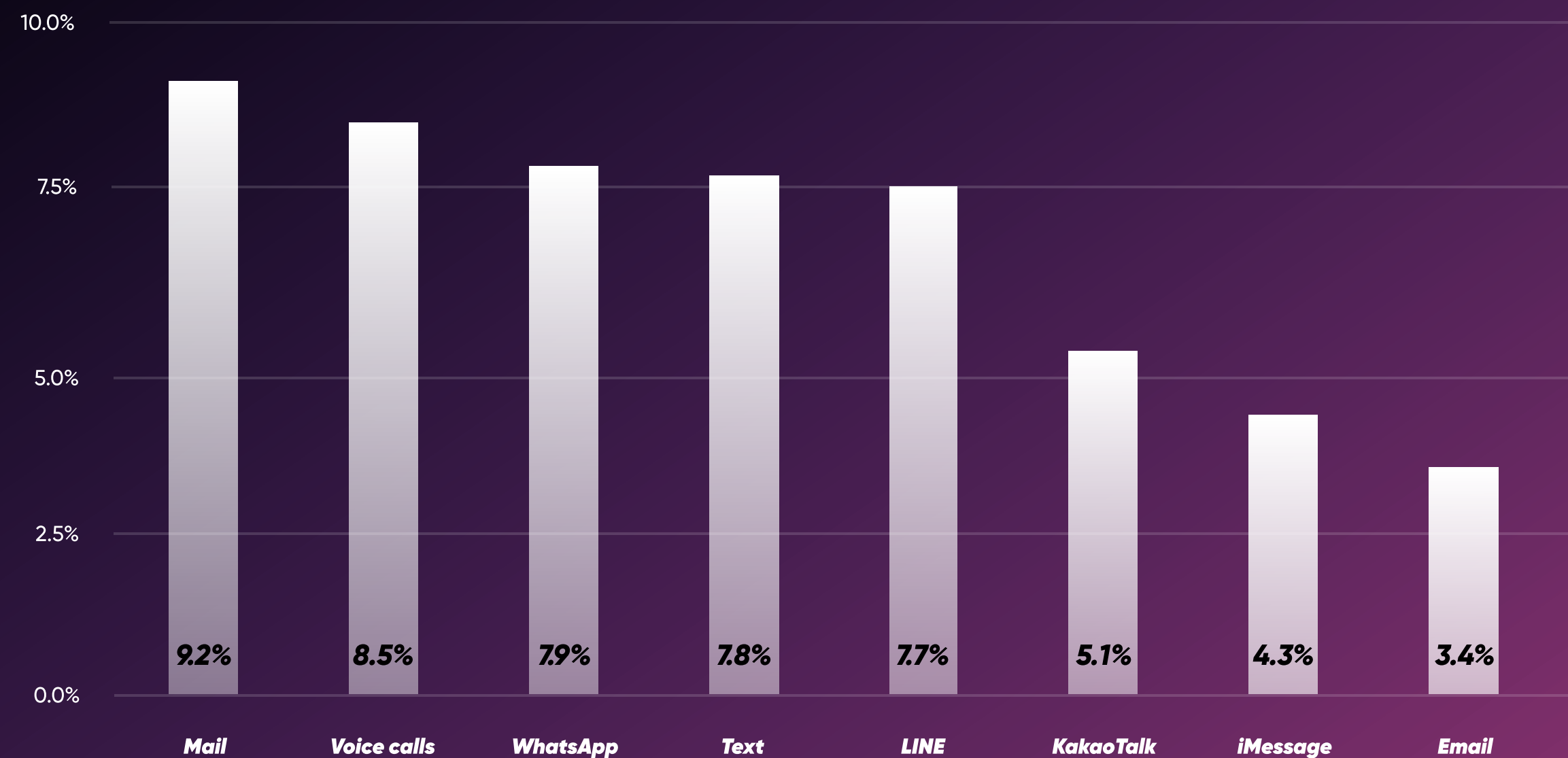


# Conversion by channel

Mail, voice calls, and WhatsApp are the highest converting channels.

"Choice and convenience are synonymous with shoppers, and that includes communication channels. Retailers that meet customers where they are will win."

Carol Spieckerman,  
President of Spieckerman Retail



While email is the most commonly used communication channel, it has one of the lowest conversion rates. Conversely, mail, voice calls, and WhatsApp have higher conversion rates relative to other channels. Mail, which could include thank-you notes to individual customers, is the highest converting channel. It's also one of the lowest in volume.

Voice calls and social media are more intimate communication channels, as they are the channels that someone will most likely use to interact with friends and family. If an associate communicates with a customer in these channels, the communication is **more likely to result in a sale.**

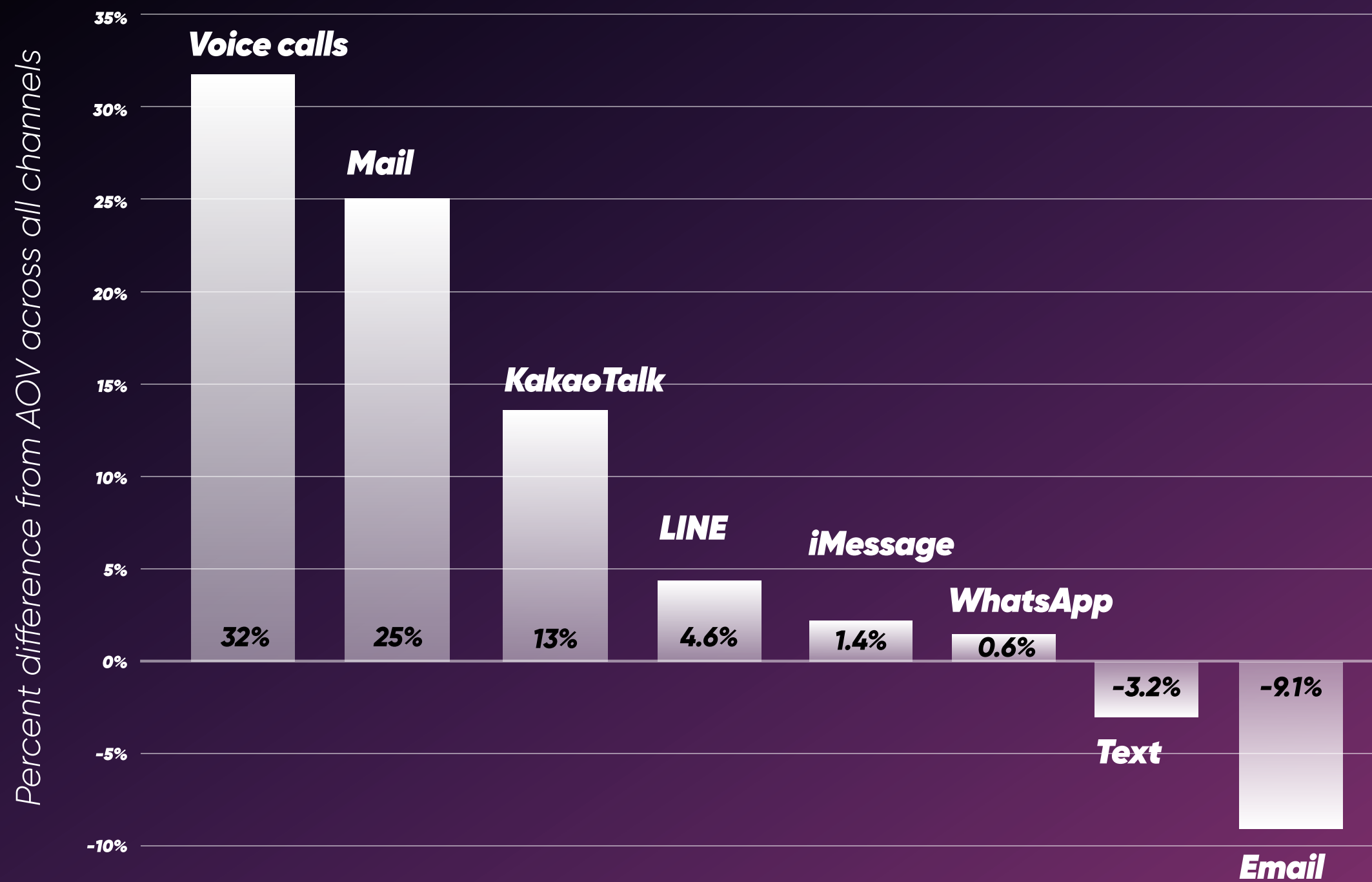
When considering which channel is best for boosting sales, retailers should look at both the scalability of the channel and the average conversion rate of that channel. Highly personalized 1-to-1 communications, particularly through voice calls or personalized mail will have high conversion rates, but the barriers to these channels are cost, time, and effort.





# AOV by channel

Voice calls, mail, and social media result in sales with higher AOV.



When compared to the average influenced sales order value, email and text result in transactions that are lower in value, though they make up the majority of the volume of transactions. Voice calls and mail generate the highest average order value (AOV), followed by LINE, iMessage, and WhatsApp.

These more intimate 1-to-1 forms of communication that can be highly personalized **yield higher value sales**, similar to the conversion rate trends. As mentioned, voice calls and mail are difficult channels to scale, so retailers who want to use clienteling to lift sales should consider volume of communications that can be expected, as well as the channel conversion rate and AOV.

Retailers will have to determine the right mix of highest converting and high value 1-to-1 communication targeted at a smaller group of customers, with more scalable channels like text and email, that will **still convert better** when delivered via clienteling than through corporate communications.





# Appointments

Appointments convert to sales at 53%, and are higher value sales than other influenced sales.

Retailers that offer appointment bookings to their customers through the Tulip Clienteling app saw a 53% conversion rate for appointments into sales between June 2023 and June 2024. The high conversion rate for appointments can be attributed to the customers' strong purchase intent, as scheduling an appointment signifies an interest and readiness to purchase.

Appointments average order value was 27% higher than influenced sales AOV, which includes sales attributed to clienteling communications through email, text or social media. This may be due to a few factors: First, higher-value customers may be more inclined to book appointments, and second, the associate has more opportunity to upsell the customer during the appointment.

Retailers should consider appointments as a strategic approach to generate more **predictable and higher-value sales**. Further, retailers should consider inviting customers to an appointment as a call to action in their clienteling communications, given the high conversion and AOV.

53%

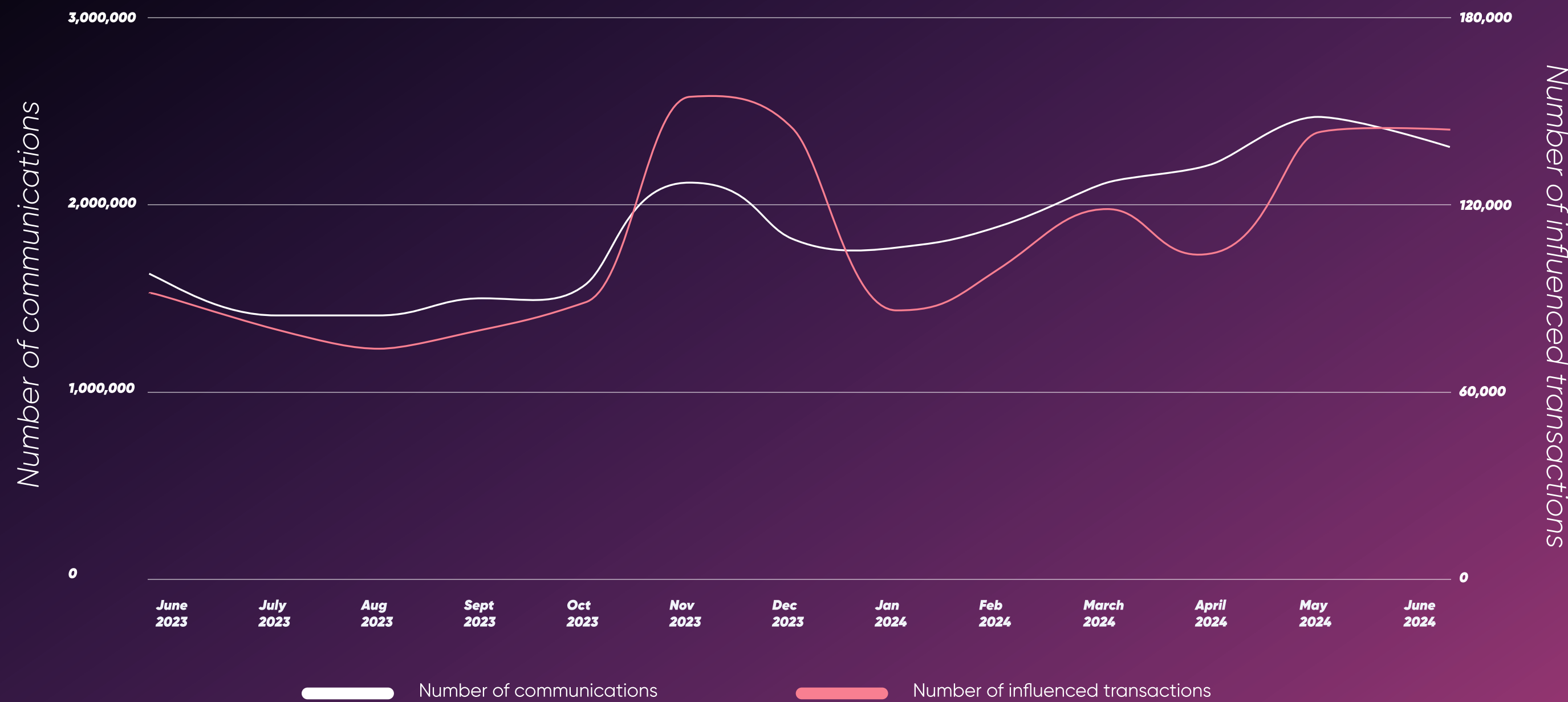
Conversion rate on appointments

27%

Higher than Tulip influenced sales AOV

# Clienteling & influenced sales

An increase in associate-led communications results in an increase in influenced sales transactions.



Between January 2024 and May 2024, there was a 41% increase in the volume of clienteling communications across the whole base of Tulip retailers. During that time, there was a corresponding 64% increase in Tulip influenced sales transactions.

The data shows a clear relationship between clienteling communications and influenced sales. Specifically, **as the number of clienteling communications increases, so does the number of influenced sales.** While many retailers recognize the importance of clienteling and have it as a business practice, they may not have a way of tracking influenced sales and cannot see the impact of their efforts in clienteling.

Retailers who don't use clienteling communications can use the data above to build the business case for implementing it as a regular selling practice. If retailers already use clienteling as a way to increase sales, they should consider doing more of it, given the direct impact clienteling has on sales.

**41%**

Increase in number of communications

=

**64%**

Increase in influenced sales transactions





# Influenced sales & AOV

The value of an influenced sale is more than double of an average sale.

Tulip influenced sales AOV is 136% higher than total AOV, which includes in-store and online sales, in 2024. This gap has been growing in recent years, with Tulip influenced sales AOV moving from 113% higher than total sales AOV to 136% in the last 12 months.

This trend shows that a sale generated through clienteling is at least **twice as valuable as an average store sale**. In fact, Tulip influenced sales AOV has been at least 100% higher than total sales AOV since at least the start of 2022. Given that, it's reasonable to assume that the value of an influenced sale will continue to be at least double the value of an average sale.

# 136%

Higher Tulip influenced sales AOV than total sales AOV in 2024

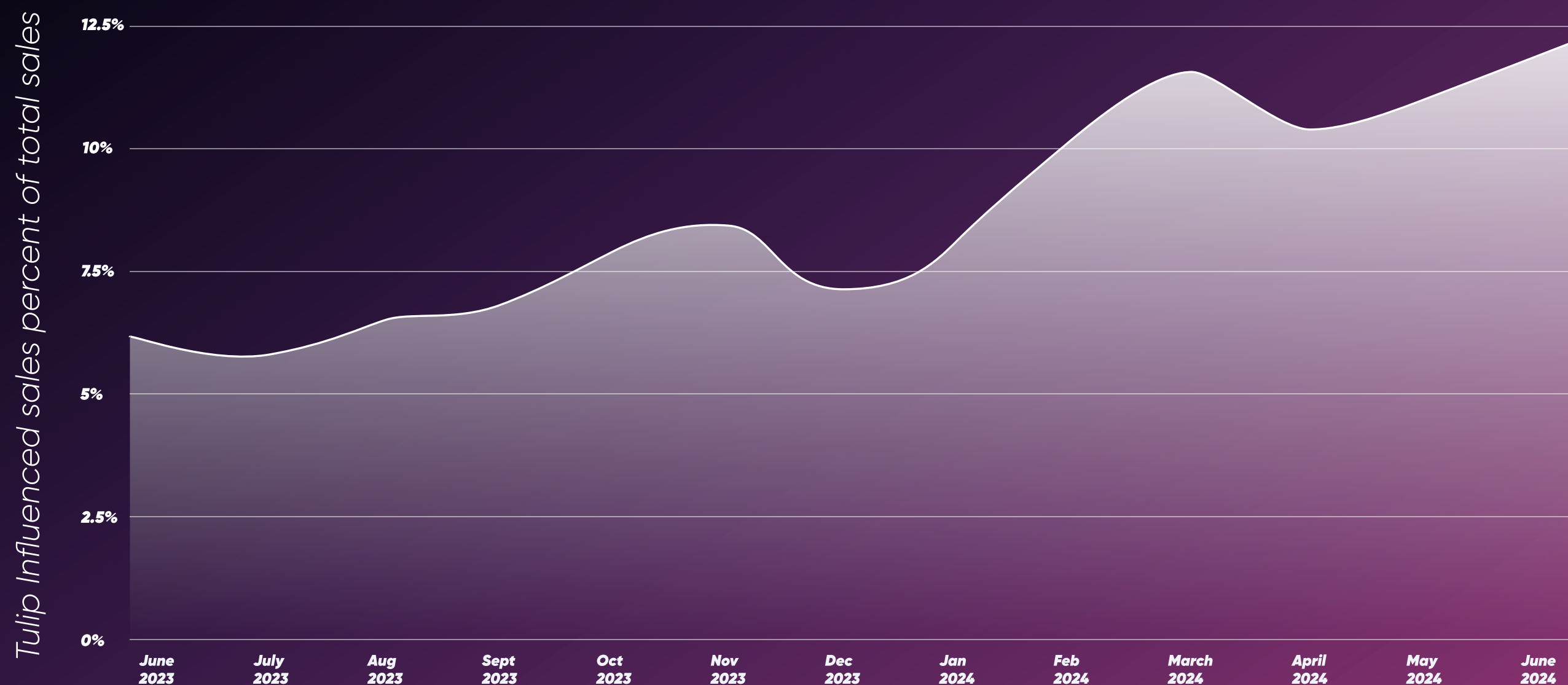
As a retail associate, you get out of clienteling what you put into it. If you spend the time to really connect with customers, you'll reap the rewards of higher spend and loyalty.

**Dan Gingiss,**  
Chief Experience Officer at The Experience Maker



# Influenced sales & total sales

Influenced sales are growing dramatically as a percent of total sales.



Within the Tulip base, retailers are able to **track and measure the source of at least 12% of all sales**, and 10% to 30% of all store sales.

Tulip influenced sales as a percent of total sales, which includes store and online sales, has doubled over the past 12 months, from 6% in June 2023 to 12% in June 2024. This growth in Tulip influenced sales reflects an increased adoption of clienteling among Tulip users, which mirrors the increase in communications per store that occurred in the same 12 month period. The increase in Tulip influenced sales as a percent of total sales has grown significantly over the last few years, increasing 5x from January 2022 to June 2024.

When comparing Tulip influenced sales to total in-store sales, and removing online sales, influenced sales is an even higher percent of sales, ranging from 10% to 30%.

Clienteling communications that are managed through the Tulip Clienteling app enable retailers to monitor, measure, and accurately attribute sales to specific clienteling efforts. By tracking influenced sales, retailers can track exactly what led to the sales. They can identify the most successful communication channels, top associates, messages, and customer segments that generate the most and highest-value sales.

Additionally, by tracking and measuring the effectiveness of clienteling communications, retailers can hold their stores, managers, and associates more accountable. This is also an effective way for sales associates in commission-based store environments to be rewarded for more sales.

# 5x

Increase in influenced sales vs total sales from January 2022 to June 2024





# Takeaways

## 1 Overall increase in clienteling

There was a 28% increase in the average number of clienteling communications per store in January 2024. Retailers are increasingly leveraging clienteling to engage customers and lift sales.

## 2 Communication channel trends

In the last 12 months, the use of email has declined and text and social media has increased as a way for stores to connect with customers. Around the world, the most popular channels are email in EMEA, email and text in North America, and split between voice calls, text, and social media in APAC.

## 3 Channel conversion rates

More personal and intimate communication channels, such as voice calls, mail, and social media, lead to higher conversion rates and larger sales values. Retailers need to be flexible to allow their customers to dictate how they want to be communicated with, and consider volume of communications when deciding the best channels to lift overall sales.

## 4 Impact of clienteling

Communication efforts through clienteling have a conversion rate of 5% to 10%, this is higher than corporate marketing communications which is 2% to 5%.

## 5 Importance of appointments

Appointments convert at 53%, and have a 27% higher AOV than Tulip influenced sales AOV. Retailers should consider appointments as a strategic approach to generate more predictable and high value sales, and can invite customers to book an appointment as a call to action in their communications.

## 6 Influenced sales growth

An increase in clienteling communications correlates with a rise in influenced sales. Across the Tulip retailer base, a 41% increase in clienteling communications resulted in a 64% increase in influenced sales transactions.

## 7 Value of influenced sales

An influenced sale is 136% higher value than an average sale, and the gap between Tulip influenced sales AOV and total sales AOV is widening.

## 8 Rising percentage of influenced sales

Influenced sales are now over 12% of total sales and continue to grow. By tracking influenced sales, retailers can track exactly what customer engagements led to the sales and drove business growth, and can reward associates for the sale.

In a competitive marketplace, the world's most iconic retailers differentiate themselves by establishing a personal connection between their associates and customers through clienteling.

Clienteling communications results in **higher conversion rates** and **higher value sales** compared to average store sales.

With the increase in clienteling communications through the Tulip Clienteling app in 2024, the resulting influenced sales are becoming a higher percent of overall sales. Given its high conversion and high value, it's no surprise that Tulip retailers **leverage clienteling** in order to **maximize their sales**.



# Learn more

Want to learn more about Tulip Clienteling?  
[Book a demo today.](#)



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