GREYFIELD DATA

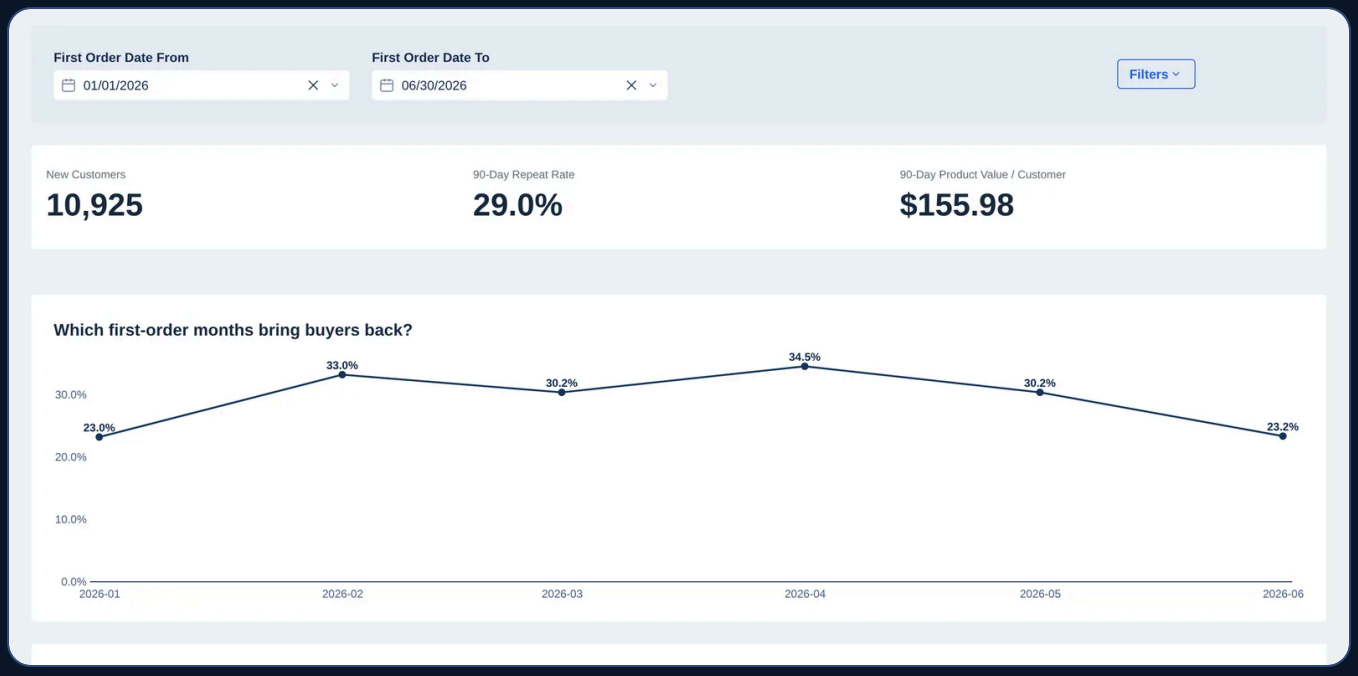
WHITE PAPER

RETENTION REPORTING FOR CONSUMER BRANDS

Customer Retention Reporting for Consumer Brands

Five questions, the metrics behind them, and how to build them.

Customer Activity | 90-Day Retention | 24-Month Frequency | Product Mix | Reactivation



Linus Tse, Greyfield Data
November 2026

All figures use synthetic data for Willow, a made-up menswear brand.

01

Executive summary

Most consumer brands already report a repeat rate. The trouble is that it changes depending on who you ask, because each team counts a different group of customers over a different window. This paper splits retention into five questions, defines the metric behind each one, and states exactly who is included.

It is based on the Consumer Brand Retention Starter Pack, a public Sigma workbook built on synthetic data for Willow, a made-up menswear brand. Every number in these pages comes from that synthetic data. None of it is a benchmark.

Write down who is included
A 90-day repeat rate should only count customers who have had 90 days to come back. Otherwise the newest cohort always looks worst.

One question per report
Five focused reports are easier to trust than one page with every chart on it.

Separate reactivation from repeat
Customers returning after a long break need their own count, or win-back work disappears inside "repeat".

Put a price on a point of repeat rate
A short formula turns a change in repeat rate into revenue and gross profit, so retention work can be prioritized.

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02

Why retention numbers disagree

When finance, marketing, and the ecommerce team each bring a different repeat rate to the same meeting, the data is rarely wrong. The definitions are different. Four differences cause most of it.

1 **Eligibility windows**

A customer who first bought last week cannot have repeated within 90 days yet. Leave them in and the repeat rate drops every month, and the newest cohort always looks like the worst one. Only count customers whose full window closed before the data cutoff.

2 **Cohorts versus calendar periods**

"Repeat rate in March" can mean the share of March buyers who had bought before (a calendar view), or the share of customers acquired in March who later came back (a cohort view). Both are valid. They answer different questions and give different numbers.

3 **Partial periods**

The current month, and the latest acquisition year that qualifies for a 24-month view, are incomplete. Comparing them with full periods is the most common wrong comparison in retention reporting. Label them or leave them out.

4 **Reactivation hiding in "repeat"**

A customer who comes back after a long gap is counted as a repeat buyer in most reports. That makes loyalty look stronger than it is and hides what win-back campaigns contribute. Split orders into active repeat and reactivated using a lapse window you choose and write down.

THE RULE THIS PAPER FOLLOWS

Every retention metric carries three things next to it: **the starting group** (who is counted), **the window** (how long they had), and **the data cutoff** (the last date the data covers).

01 Customer Activity

Where are orders coming from: new, repeat, or returning buyers?

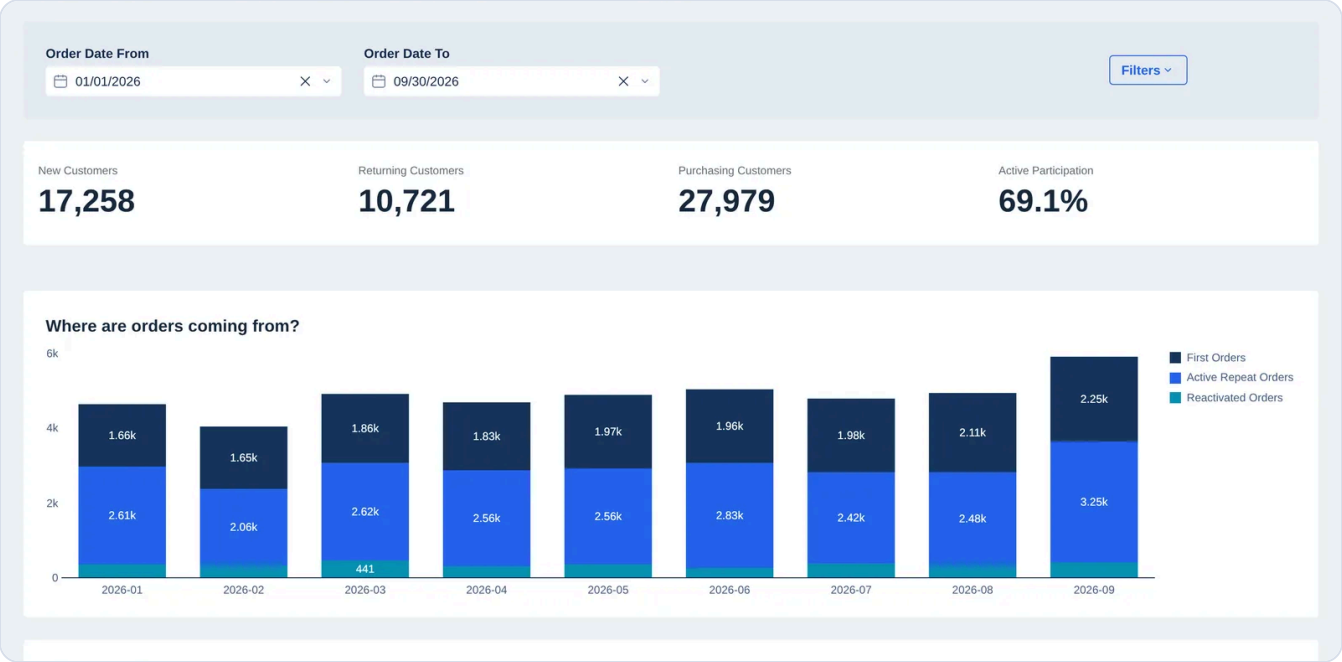
METRICS

Order type: every order is one of three. A **first order** is the customer's first ever order. An **active repeat order** comes from a customer whose previous order is within the lapse window. A **reactivated order** comes from a customer whose previous order is older than the lapse window.

Active participation = active repeat orders ÷ unique buyers in the trailing 12 months, calculated monthly

WHO IS INCLUDED

Everyone who ordered in the selected date range. Order type is worked out from each customer's full order history, including orders before the range, so a customer's first order in the range is not mistaken for their first ever.



Synthetic Willow data, January to September 2026: 17,258 new customers and 10,721 returning customers, 27,979 purchasing customers in total.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Whether growth comes from new buyers or from people who already know the brand. Stacked order types by month show it at a glance.
- A steady or rising active participation line: more of your recent customer base is still ordering.
- Spikes in reactivated orders, which usually line up with a sale, a launch, or a win-back email.

02 90-Day Retention

Do first-time buyers come back within 90 days?

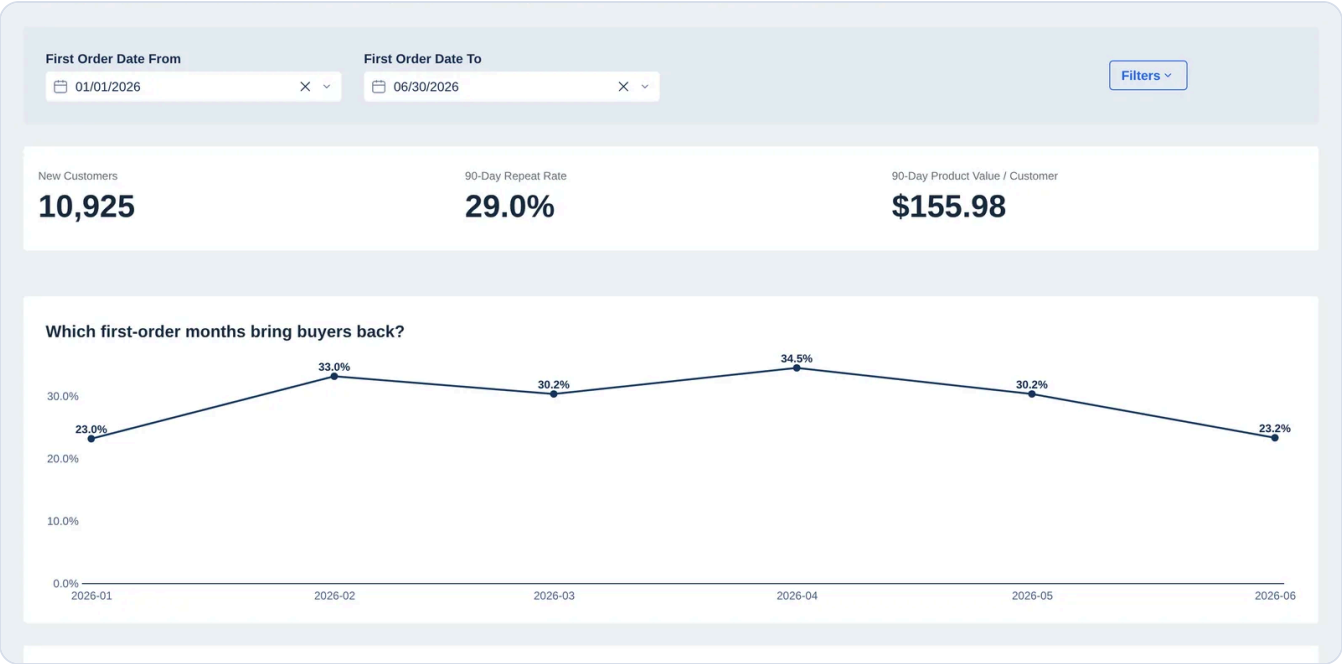
METRICS

90-day repeat rate = customers with a second order within 90 days of their first order ÷ customers whose first order is at least 90 days before the data cutoff

90-day product value per customer = product sales from a cohort's orders in the 90 days from first order ÷ customers in the cohort

WHO IS INCLUDED

First-time buyers, grouped by the month of their first order, who have had the full 90 days. Newer customers stay out until their window closes.



Synthetic Willow data, first orders January to June 2026: 10,925 new customers, 29.0% 90-day repeat rate, $155.98 90-day product value per customer.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- The spread between months. In the synthetic data it runs from 23.0% to 34.5%. Ask what launched, changed, or went on sale in the best months.
- Repeat rate by first product. It is often the quickest way to find an entry product worth promoting.
- Value per customer next to the rate, so a higher repeat rate with smaller baskets is not read as a win.

03 24-Month Frequency

How often do customers buy over two years: one order, or a habit?

METRICS

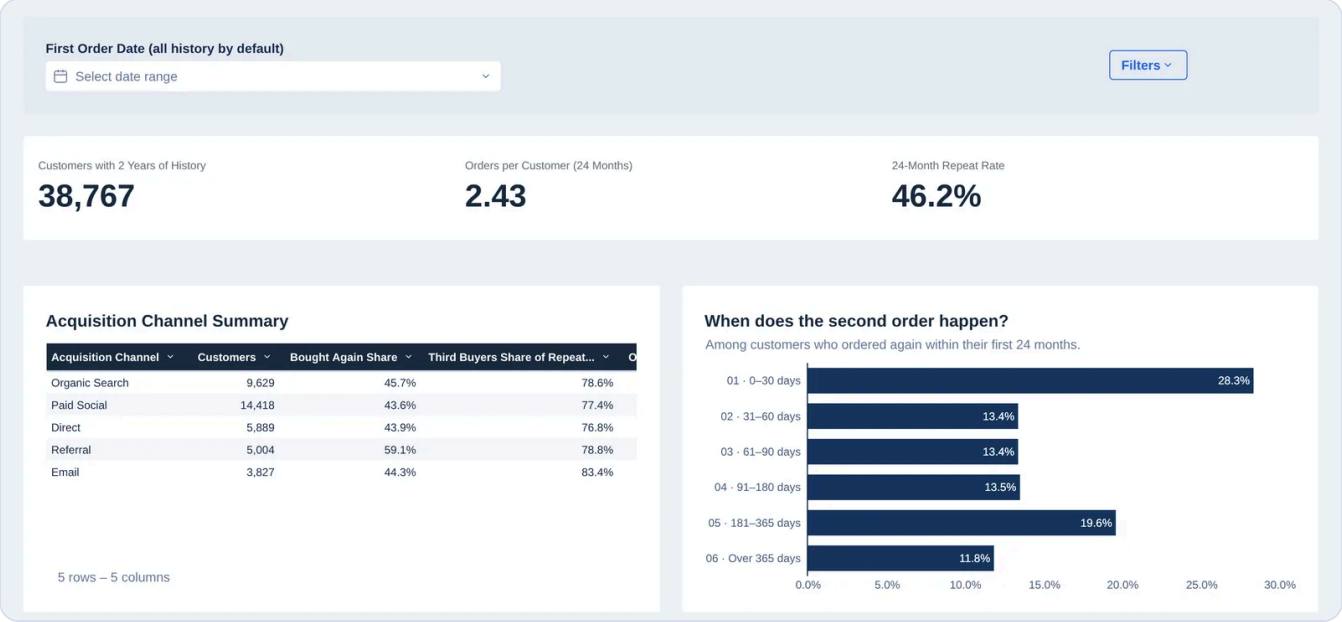
Orders per customer (24 months) = orders placed in the 24 months from each customer's first order ÷ eligible customers

24-month repeat rate = eligible customers with 2 or more orders in their first 24 months ÷ eligible customers

Order-count mix = share of eligible customers with 1, 2, 3, and 4+ orders in their first 24 months

WHO IS INCLUDED

Customers whose first order is at least 24 months before the data cutoff. The latest acquisition year that qualifies is partial, and the report says so.



Synthetic Willow data: 38,767 customers with two years of history, 2.43 orders per customer, 46.2% 24-month repeat rate.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- When the second order happens. In the synthetic data, 44.9% of customers who ordered again placed their second order after day 90 (91 to 180 days 13.5%, 181 to 365 days 19.6%, over 365 days 11.8%). A 90-day view alone misses them.
- Repeat behavior by acquisition channel. In the synthetic data, Referral customers bought again at 59.1% against 43.6% for Paid Social.
- The share of customers at 4+ orders: the group most worth protecting.

04 Product Mix

What do customers buy first, next, and later, and how soon?

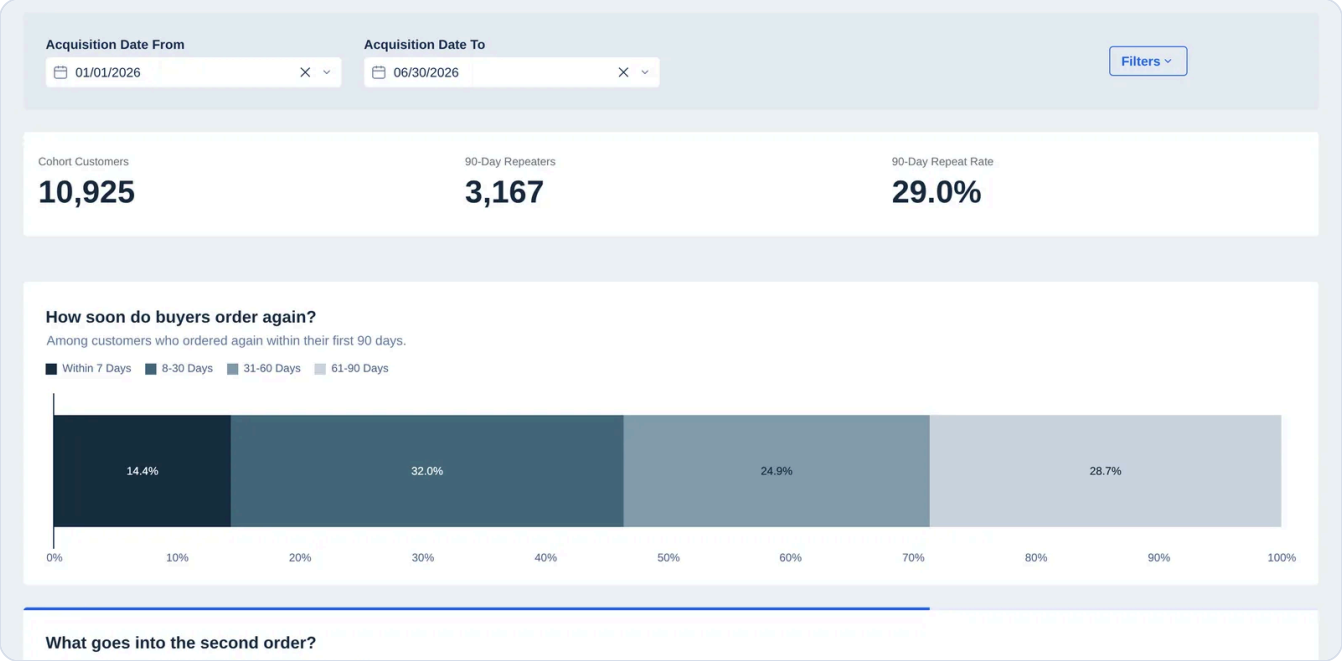
METRICS

Time to second order = 90-day repeaters whose second order fell within 7, 8 to 30, 31 to 60, or 61 to 90 days ÷ all 90-day repeaters in the cohort

Category share at an order stage = orders at that stage (first, second, later) containing the category ÷ all orders at that stage

WHO IS INCLUDED

A first-order cohort you choose. Timing uses only customers who ordered again within 90 days. Category shares can add up to more than 100% because one order can include several categories.



Synthetic Willow data, first orders January to June 2026: 10,925 cohort customers, 3,167 90-day repeaters (29.0%).

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- How soon repeaters come back. In the synthetic data, 14.4% reorder within 7 days and 32.0% within 8 to 30 days, so 46.4% of 90-day repeaters are back within a month. That sets the timing for post-purchase emails.
- What goes into the second order: the products to recommend after a first purchase.
- Categories that show up often in first orders but rarely later, which may be one-off purchases.

05 Reactivation

Who comes back after a break, and what brings them back?

METRICS

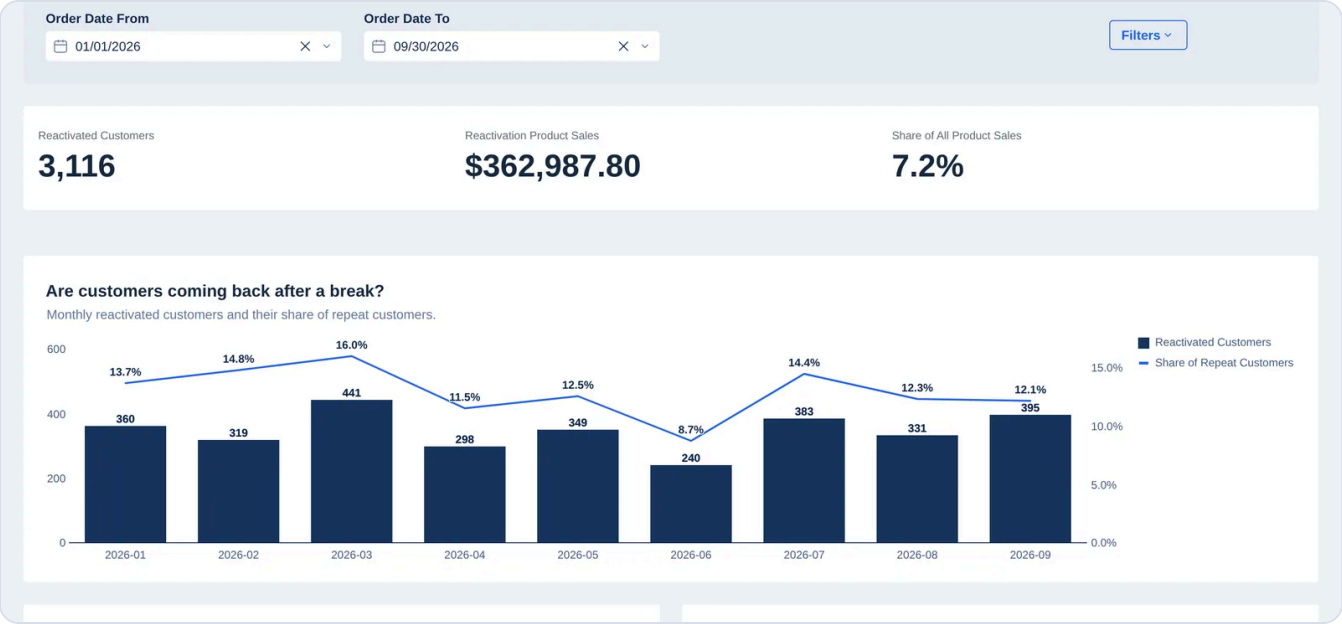
Reactivated customers = customers with an order in the period whose previous order is older than the lapse window

Share of repeat customers = reactivated customers ÷ all repeat customers (active repeat plus reactivated) in the month

Share of product sales = product sales on reactivated orders ÷ all product sales in the period

WHO IS INCLUDED

Customers who ordered in the date range after lapsing. Pick a lapse window that fits your buying cycle, write it down, and use the same one in the Customer Activity report.



Synthetic Willow data, January to September 2026: 3,116 reactivated customers, $362,987.80 in product sales, 7.2% of all product sales.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- The monthly share of repeat customers. In the synthetic data it moves between 8.7% and 16.0%, which is enough to change how retention looks if it is folded into "repeat".
- Which styles, products, and channels bring lapsed customers back.
- Whether the share is large enough to run and measure a win-back program on its own.

03

Metric dictionary

Copy this into your own documentation. Add a column with your table and field names, and the lapse window you chose.

Metric	Formula	Who is included	Report
First order	The customer's earliest order across all channels you can identify them in	All customers	1, 2, 4
Active repeat order	Any later order where days since the previous order ≤ lapse window	Customers with 2+ orders	1
Reactivated order	Any later order where days since the previous order > lapse window	Customers with 2+ orders	1, 5
Active participation	Active repeat orders ÷ unique buyers in the trailing 12 months, by month	Buyers in the trailing 12 months	1
90-day repeat rate	Customers with a 2nd order within 90 days of the 1st ÷ eligible new customers	First order ≥ 90 days before cutoff	2, 4
90-day product value per customer	Product sales from the cohort's orders in the 90 days from first order ÷ cohort customers	First order ≥ 90 days before cutoff	2
Orders per customer (24 months)	Orders in the 24 months from first order ÷ eligible customers	First order ≥ 24 months before cutoff	3
24-month repeat rate	Customers with 2+ orders in their first 24 months ÷ eligible customers	First order ≥ 24 months before cutoff	3
Order-count mix	Share of eligible customers with 1, 2, 3, and 4+ orders in 24 months	First order ≥ 24 months before cutoff	3
Days to second order	Second order date minus first order date, bucketed	Customers who ordered again in the window	3, 4
Category share by stage	Orders at a stage containing the category ÷ orders at that stage (can sum above 100%)	A chosen first-order cohort	4
Reactivated customers	Distinct customers with a reactivated order in the period	Buyers in the period	5
Reactivated share of repeat	Reactivated customers ÷ (active repeat + reactivated customers)	Repeat buyers in the month	5
Reactivation sales share	Product sales on reactivated orders ÷ all product sales	Orders in the period	5

Decide once whether product sales are gross or net of discounts and refunds, and use the same choice in every row.

04

Data you need and how to model it

Retention numbers are only as good as the order and customer data underneath. Five sources cover the five reports.

Source	Fields you need	Why it matters
Orders and lines	Order ID, customer ID, order timestamp, status, product sales, discounts, SKU, product, category, style	Every metric starts from one clean row per order
Customers	Customer ID, email or hashed email, account and guest IDs, acquisition channel	Merging guest and account records stops one person counting as two
Subscriptions	Subscription ID, start, cancel, and pause dates, flag on renewal orders	Renewals are not the same as choosing to buy again; report them separately
Returns and refunds	Return or refund date, amount, order ID, reason	Decides whether a fully refunded order counts, and keeps sales net or gross consistently
Marketing	First-touch channel, campaign, UTM fields, win-back sends	Splits repeat behavior by channel and measures what brings lapsed customers back

MODEL IT IN THREE LAYERS

Bronze keeps the data as it arrived, silver cleans and matches it, and gold shapes it for business questions. There is a full walkthrough with one order, a duplicate, and a late refund at greyfielddata.com/blog/bronze-silver-gold-ecommerce-order-example.

Bronze

Raw orders, customers, refunds, and subscriptions as each system sent them.

Silver

One row per order, duplicates removed, refunds matched, one ID per person.

Gold

A customer order table that every retention report reads from.

Gold customer order table: one row per order

```
customer_id · order_id · order_date · customer_order_number · previous_order_date · days_since_previous_order · order_type · first_order_date · cohort_month · acquisition_channel · eligible_90d · eligible_24m · product_sales
```

05

Common mistakes checklist

Run through this list before a retention number goes into a board deck or a planning model.

- [ ] **Customers without a full window are left out**
  The 90-day and 24-month metrics only count customers who had the whole window.
- [ ] **Partial periods are labelled**
  The current month and the latest qualifying acquisition year carry a note, or are excluded.
- [ ] **Reactivated customers are split from active repeat**
  The lapse window is written down and used the same way in every report.
- [ ] **One person is one customer**
  Guest checkouts, accounts, and changed emails are merged before anything is counted.
- [ ] **Orders are not counted twice**
  Orders that reach the warehouse from two systems are deduplicated in silver.
- [ ] **Cancelled and fully refunded orders are handled on purpose**
  Decide whether they count as orders, then apply it everywhere.
- [ ] **Subscription renewals are reported separately**
  Automatic renewals do not inflate the voluntary repeat rate.
- [ ] **Gross and net sales are not mixed**
  Value per customer uses the same revenue definition as finance, or says why it differs.
- [ ] **Exploratory filters stay away from headline numbers**
  A product or basket selector never silently changes the brand-wide KPIs.
- [ ] **Definitions are written next to the chart**
  Starting group, window, and data cutoff are visible where people read the number.

Related: why Shopify, finance, and marketing report different revenue and avoiding double-counted orders across channels.

06

Putting a dollar value on retention

A repeat rate is easier to act on when you know what one point of it is worth. The free retention value calculator uses this formula, with your own inputs.

Extra repeat customers	New customers a year × (target 90-day repeat rate − current rate)
Extra repeat orders	Extra repeat customers × repeat orders each in a year
Extra revenue	Extra repeat orders × average order value
Extra gross profit	Extra revenue × gross margin (after product cost, shipping, and payment fees)
Value of one point	New customers a year × 1% × repeat orders each in a year × average order value, then × gross margin for profit

WORKED EXAMPLE WITH ILLUSTRATIVE INPUTS

These are the calculator's default inputs, not a benchmark: 20,000 new customers a year, a 25% repeat rate raised to 28%, $85 average order value, 1.6 repeat orders each in a year, and a 55% gross margin.

600
extra repeat customers (20,000 × 3%)

960
extra repeat orders (600 × 1.6)

$81,600
extra revenue (960 × $85)

$44,880
extra gross profit (× 55%)

$27,200
revenue from one point of repeat rate

$14,960
gross profit from one point

Read it as an estimate, not a forecast. It counts only the extra repeat orders in the first year, not longer-term lifetime value, and the repeat rate in it is the same eligible-only 90-day rate defined in this paper.

GREYFIELD DATA

Want these five reports on your own data?

Greyfield Data is Linus Tse's analytics consultancy. I build reporting for consumer brands in Sigma and modern data warehouses: the order and customer models underneath, and the dashboards people open every week.

If your repeat rate changes depending on who you ask, a short call is a good place to start. Bring the definitions you use today.

Book a call with Linus | **greyfielddata.com**

Explore the workbook
Consumer Brand Retention Starter Pack on Sigma Public

Price a point of repeat rate
greyfielddata.com/tools/retention-value-calculator

Read the walkthrough
A customer retention dashboard in Sigma, in five reports

All figures in this paper use synthetic data for Willow, a made-up menswear brand, or the retention value calculator's illustrative default inputs. They are not benchmarks and do not describe any real company. Sigma is a product of Sigma Computing.