



PAYWALL CONVERSION

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Paywall Conversion Metrics/Benchmarks

This month, we look at the conversion funnel (the path users take from anonymous visitor to paid subscriber) and the performance at each stage of the funnel. There are four primary parts of the conversion funnel that are common across most publishers:

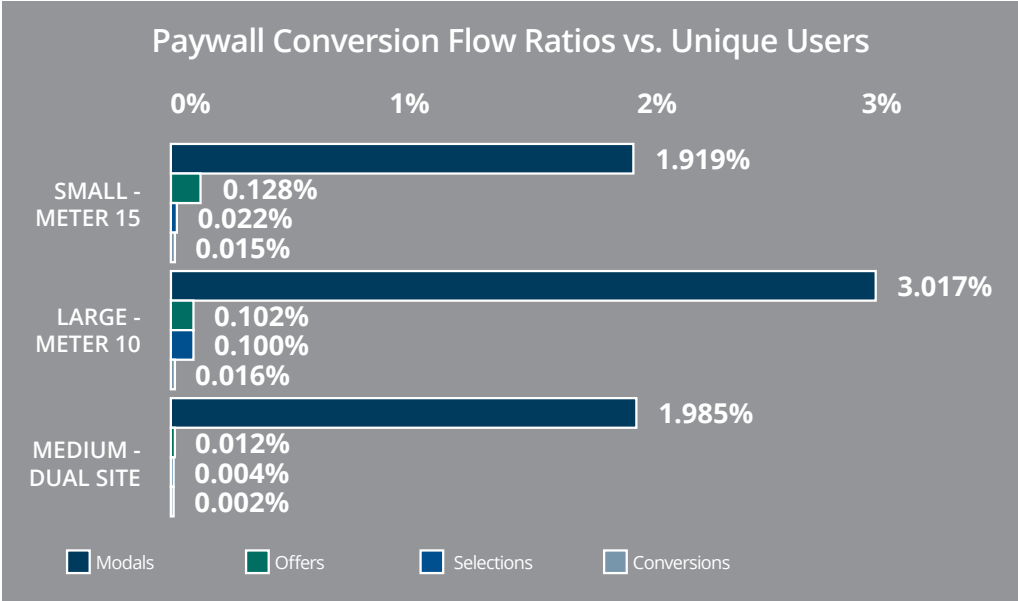
1. **Modal** – usually a pop-up, lightbox, or any other method of blocking access to content
2. **Offers** – multiple products are presented to the user to choose
3. **Selections** – the user chooses one product and moves on to the billing/checkout phase
4. **Conversions** – the user pays and becomes a subscriber



To compare performance, we took a snapshot of three very different markets in different parts of the country with different paywall strategies. The three markets are anonymized and all stats are monthly:

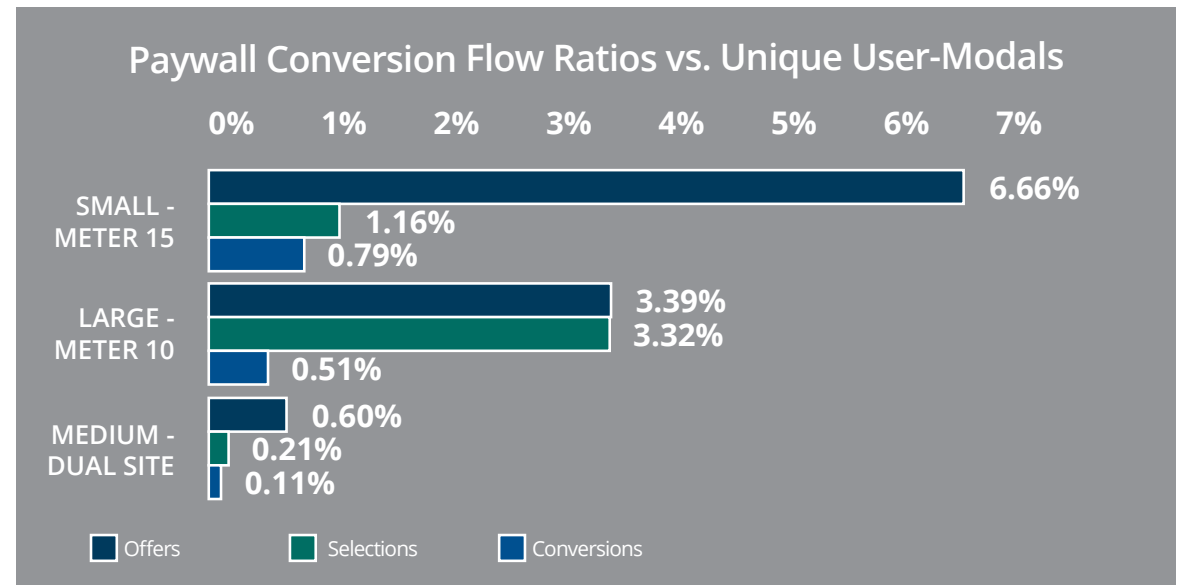
- **Small size West coast**
 - 6.5M page views and 1.5M visitors
 - Meter of 15
 - \$9.99 digital-only offer with \$0.99 4-week free trial
- **Large size East coast**
 - 22M page views and 5M visitors
 - Meter of 10
 - \$12.95 digital-only offer with \$0.99 4-week free trial
- **Medium size Midwest**
 - 16M page views and 2.5M visitors (500K PVs and 135K visitors on premium site)
 - Dual-site free/premium
 - \$9.99 digital-only offer with no free trial

- *The lower meter setting for the large market triggers the paywall for over 3% of all users vs. less than 2% of users for the smallest market*
- *However, a similar conversion rate is observed for both the largest and smallest market (0.016% and 0.015%, respectively)*





- Hypothetically, the smallest market could lower the meter from 15 to 10 articles per month and grow volume but the conversion rate would likely drop slightly due to a lesser engaged audience encountering the 10-page meter
- Compared to the users who trigger the paywall (exhausting their meter count) the smallest site shows a conversion rate of 0.79% compared to 0.51% for the largest market
- Even though the largest site moves more users from “offers” to “selections”, their conversion rate is lower than the smallest site





- *The largest market shows that over half of all new subscribers from the website actually don't trigger the paywall but rather voluntarily click the Subscribe Button*
- *Similarly, the medium sized premium site shows that 2/3rd of all new starts are initiated by a voluntary click of "subscribe now" rather than following the traditional conversion path*
- *The lesson learned is though the paywall conversion flows are important, digital subscription success should be measured holistically*

