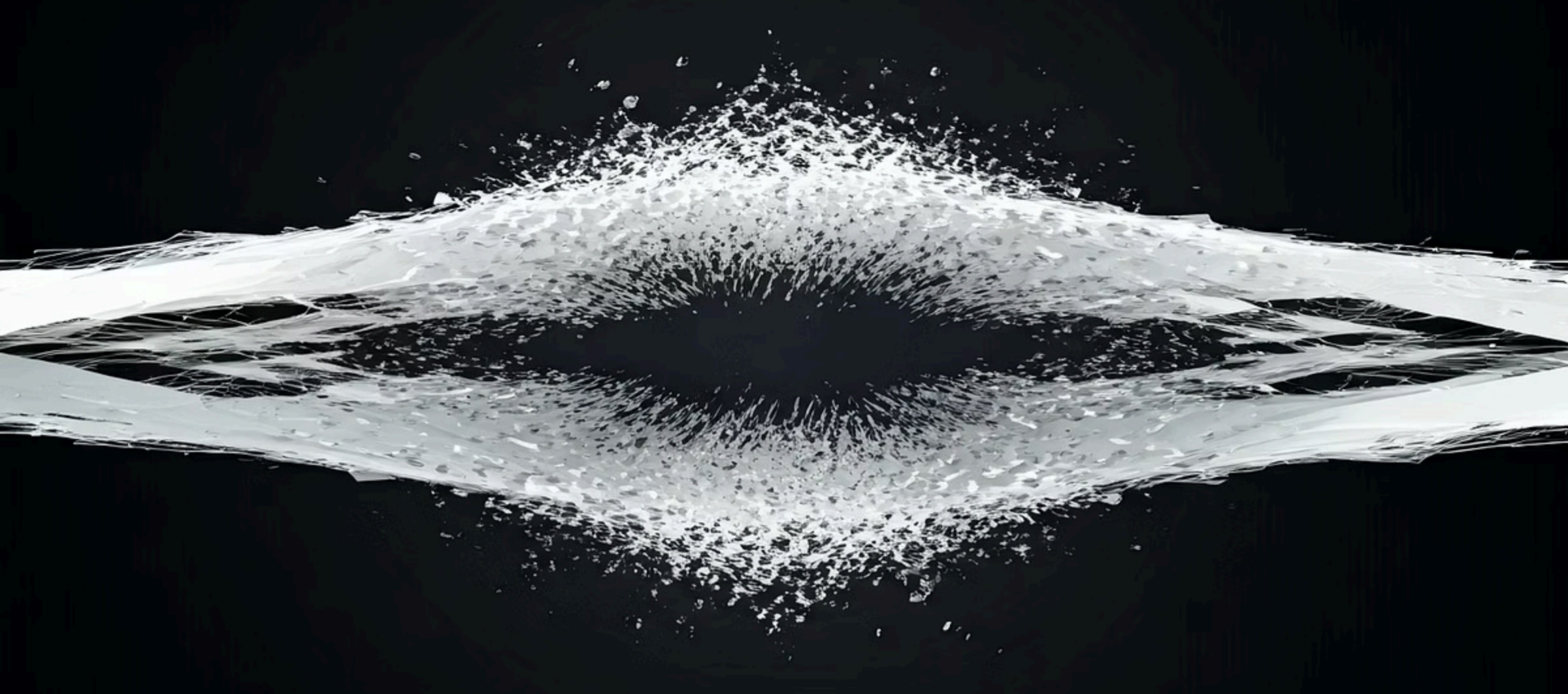




State of Deep Linking 2026

How mobile apps are winning (and losing) users at
the link layer



BREAKING NEWS

The infrastructure millions relied on is dead

FDL Shutdown

Google deprecated Firebase Dynamic Links in 2023, shut down August 2025.

Scale of Impact

1M+ apps estimated at peak. Teams discovered the dependency only when links broke.

The Gap

No Google-backed, free, at-scale deep linking alternative remains.

Most users experience deep linking every day (they just don't know it)

→ **Deep Link**

A URL that opens a specific in-app screen (not just the home screen.)

→ **Deferred Deep Link**

Survives install: user clicks, installs, lands on the correct screen.

→ **Without It**

Every install campaign dumps users on the home screen, killing conversion.

Used in: social sharing, email, QR codes, paid ads, push notifications, referrals.

BY THE NUMBERS

The link layer is a conversion lever

2–3x

Higher Activation

Install-to-activation rates with deferred deep linking vs. generic installs.

60%+

Abandon Rate

Users who abandon after a poor first-open experience.

5x

Higher LTV

Referral users via deep links arrive with intent (3–5x higher lifetime value.)



QR-to-install campaigns with deferred deep links convert **40–60% better** than QR-to-app-store alone.

Apple and Google keep moving the goalposts

iOS

Universal Links (AASA files) are standard. iOS 17+ tightened link interception rules.

Android

App Links (assetlinks.json) replaced intent schemes. Android 14 added stricter verification.



Both platforms require server-side files that **break silently** when misconfigured. Safari, Chrome, and in-app browsers all behave differently.


QR codes went from embarrassing to essential



433%

Scan Growth

QR scans grew 433% between 2019 and 2024.



30%

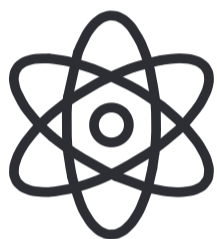
Branded Boost

Branded QR codes increase scan rates 20–30% vs. plain black/white.



A QR code **without** a deferred deep link is a wasted impression. Users who land on the home screen rarely find the intended content.

Most teams are no longer shipping native-only apps



Flutter & React Native

Flutter surpassed React Native in GitHub stars and new project starts (2024–2025).



Unity

Dominates mobile gaming: every "share level" or "invite friend" flow is a deep link.



The Deep Linking Tax

Teams stitch together 3–4 platform-specific SDKs. One abstraction layer is the ask.

IDFA is gone. Fingerprinting is dying. Deep linking is the last clean signal.

ATT Impact

Apple's ATT killed deterministic attribution for ~80% of iOS users.

Android Pressure

Google's Privacy Sandbox restricting Android attribution identifiers.

What Remains

Click-to-install deep links with first-party data — the most reliable signal left.

- ✓ Deep linking + owned channels (email, SMS, push) = the **privacy-safe growth stack.**

The gap between what teams need and what legacy tools deliver

Developers Want

One SDK, all platforms. Debug tooling. Reliable fallbacks. No vendor lock-in on link domain.

Marketers Want

Branded short links, real-time analytics, QR generation, UTM parameters that survive install.



The unmet need: Branch.io and Appsflyer are priced for enterprise. Indie devs and growth-stage startups have been underserved since FDL died.

Deep linking is becoming table stakes (but most teams still haven't got it right)

→ Consolidation

SDK-first, multi-platform providers are winning.

→ AI Personalisation

Deep links as the foundation for landing users in personalised in-app states.

→ Policy Risk

Tighter iOS/Android policies will punish hacky URI scheme workarounds.



Teams that migrated off FDL cleanly are ahead. First-party, branded link infrastructure = **competitive moat**.



The Firebase Dynamic Links replacement built for 2026

"ChottuLink is the Firebase Dynamic Links replacement built for what mobile teams need in 2026."

Free tier available — no credit card required.

app.chottulink.com

Share this with your mobile team. They need to see it.