

THE ART OF THE CLICK

An email excellency report

2016



Adobe



Email on Acid

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The **STATUS QUO.**

When it comes to marketing, email is almost every brand's bread and butter. It's been around the block and back again over the past 40 years, and it's only gotten wiser. Its widespread use in marketing can be attributed to the fact that 91 percent of marketers believe email is the single most effective channel for driving revenue.¹ Indeed, it's no exaggeration to say that everyone monitors their email at all times of the day.

We're all glued to our email. The average person spends almost six and a half hours a day checking it and responding to it.² But despite this captive audience and the fact that email has proven itself as a revenue-driving workhorse of any marketing strategy, two-thirds of marketers are still less than satisfied with their email marketing efforts.³

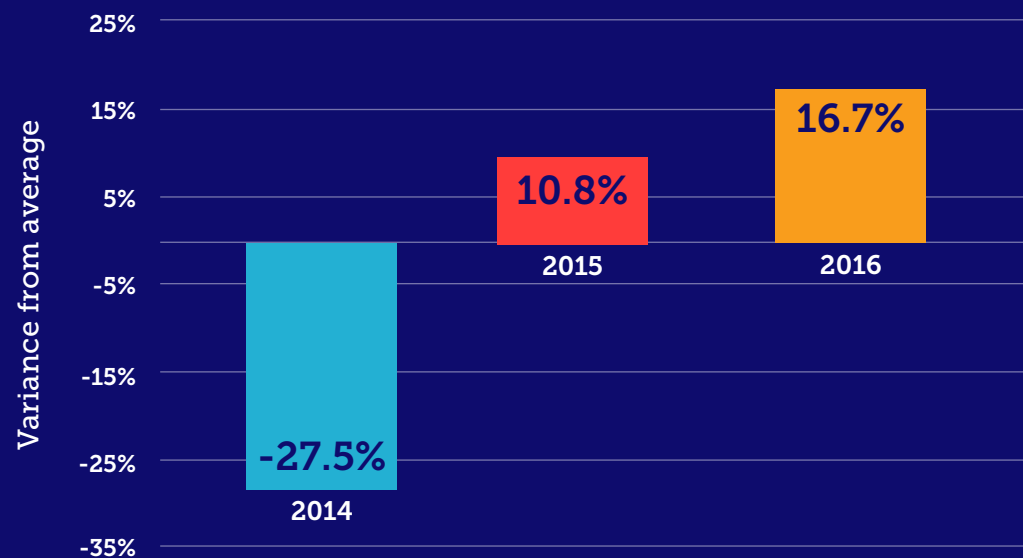
In order to create more satisfying email campaigns, start by understanding how, when, where, and why everyone uses it.

After monitoring more than 40,000 email marketing campaigns and millions of global transmissions over the last two years, Email on Acid shared their data with Adobe.⁴ Here's what we learned.

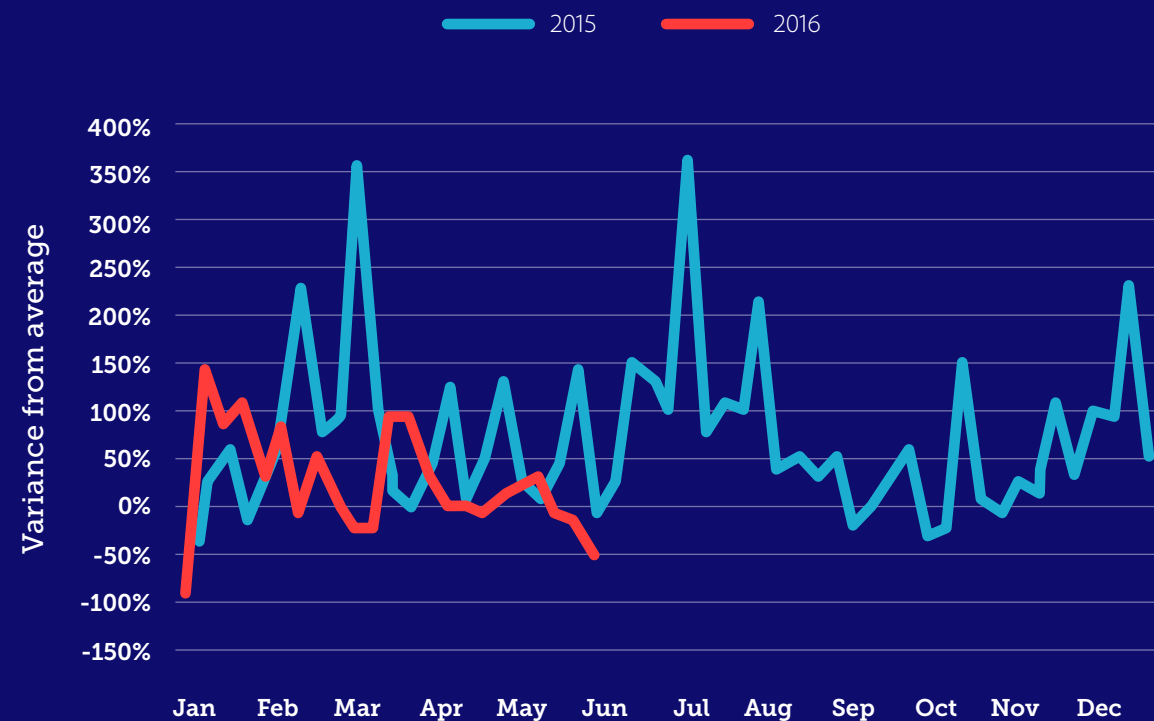
Email **VOLUME** has been turned up to 11.

There's more noise in our inbox than ever before. On average, consumers receive 61 percent more email today than they did in 2014. In particular, 2015 showed a tremendous (52.8 percent) increase year over year in email volume. While this growth has generally slowed in 2016, email volume is still climbing at a rate greater than 5 percent year over year.

Email List Send Size Comparison vs. Average
(Note: Unbalanced Sample)



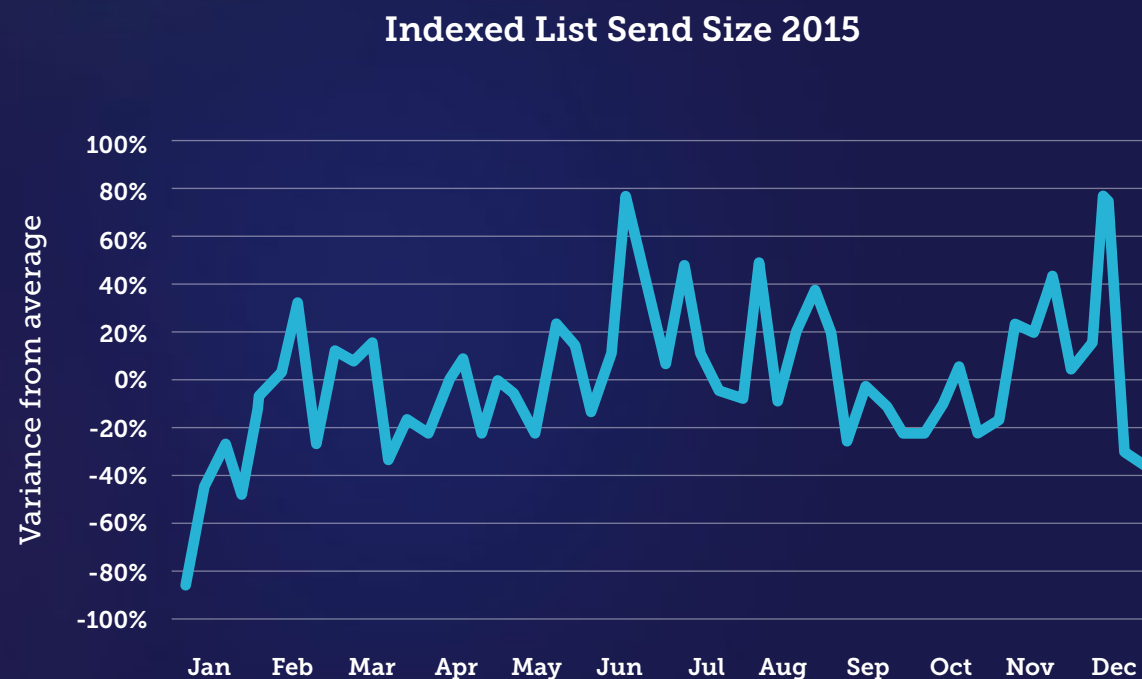
Percentage of Growth in List Size Send Over Previous Year



Holiday list send size increased by **32.4%**

This trend is highlighted in particular by the 2015 holiday season (November and December), when email volume increased by 32.4 percent over the previous year.⁵

As a result, it's more difficult than ever for marketers to cut through the noise in the inbox and for our customers to find the value they're looking for.



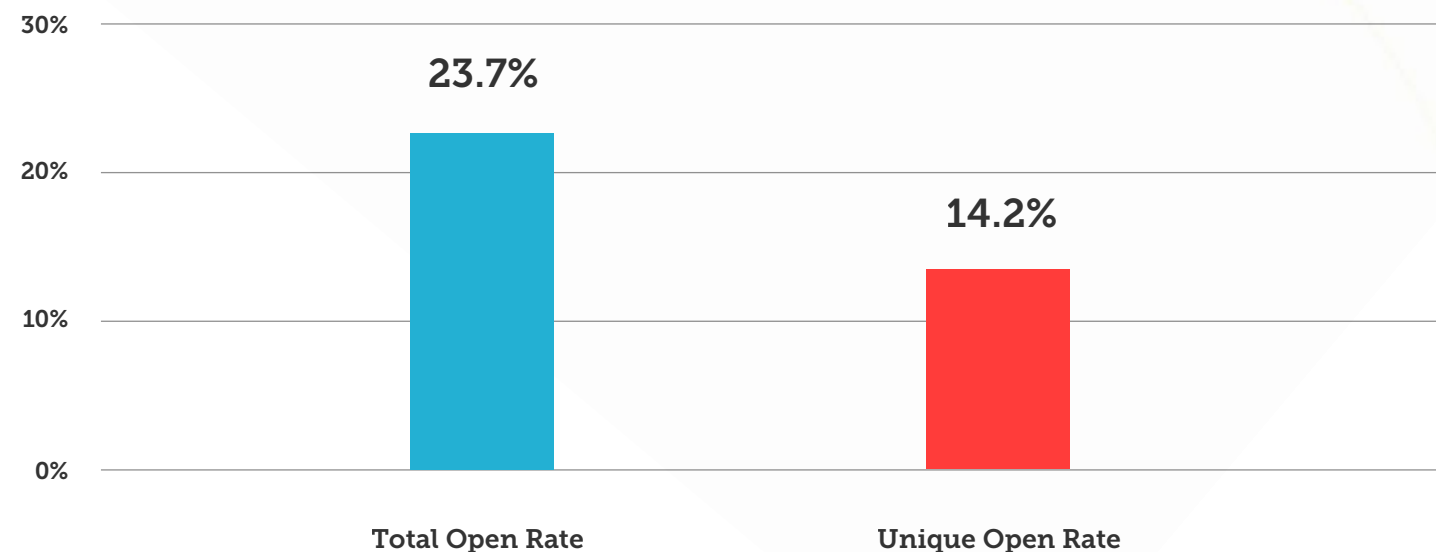
It's important to remember that mindlessly increasing email volume is not the answer, and more often than not, it only helps your messages fade into the background. What you should aim to send smarter emails and create a personalized moment that will catch your audience's attention.

Identify the traits and preferences of your best customers and learn how they've reacted to various email campaigns over time. Based on these insights, you'll be able to deliver the value they need—at the moment they need it—in order to make a strong impression, build brand loyalty, and ultimately increase customer lifetime value.

The unopened **MAJORITY.**

The potential effects of creating personalized impressions for your email marketing program can be huge. While average aggregate open rates show that only 14.2 percent of emails result in a unique open, almost half of these opened emails are read more than once. Coupled with the fact that nine in ten people check their personal email while at work, this suggests that if an email catches a consumer's eye, they may come back and open it later in the day.⁶

Overall Total vs. Unique Click Rate Comparison



Timing is (almost) **EVERYTHING.**

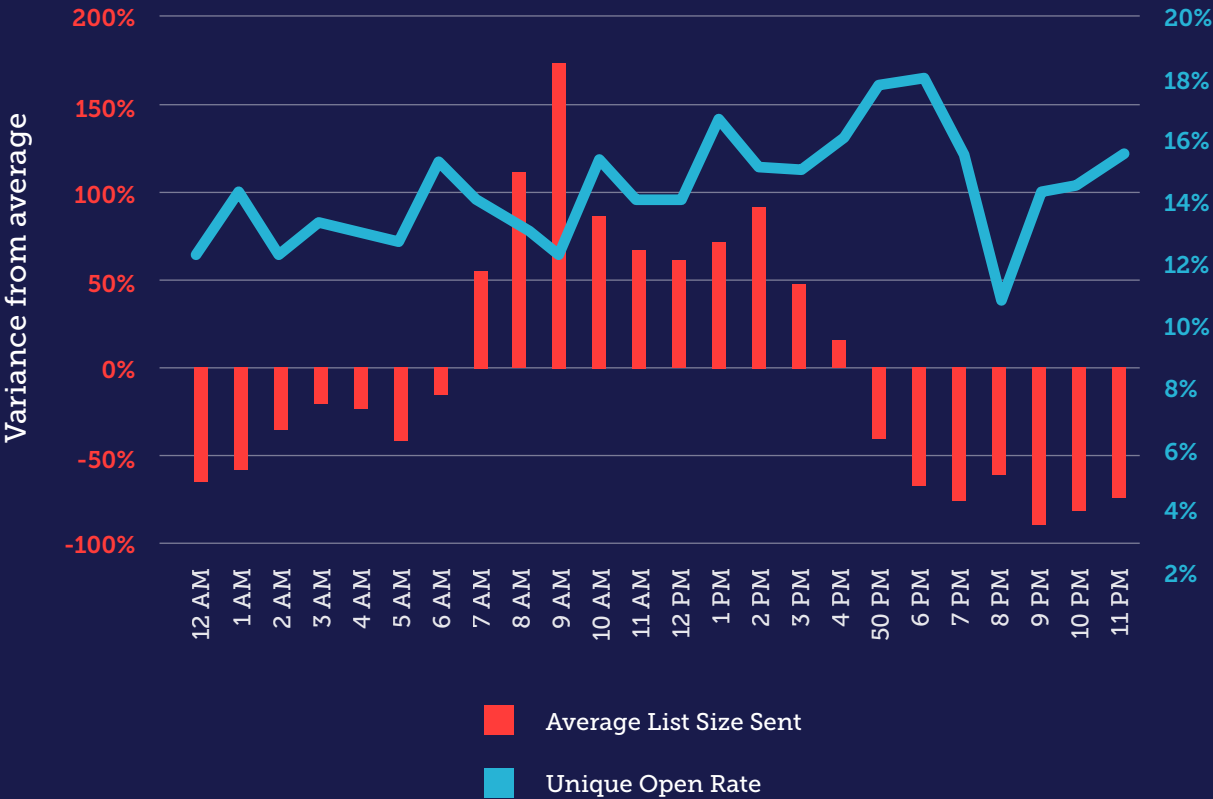
Email marketers tend to send emails in the morning. The vast majority of email volume is being sent at 9 a.m., prior to the start of the workday. However, customers at 9 a.m. open and read fewer emails than at almost any other point in the day. It's no wonder—these morning emails are not only competing with each other, but with consumers' start-of-day routines and activities. They likely only have time to skim through and delete the mass volume of email they've received and flag the most relevant or important messages for follow-up later in the day.

Subsequent opens suggest that timing and content relevance are key to competing in the crowded inbox. In order for your emails to be useful to consumers, they need to be sent at the right time with content that's relevant, engaging, and helpful.

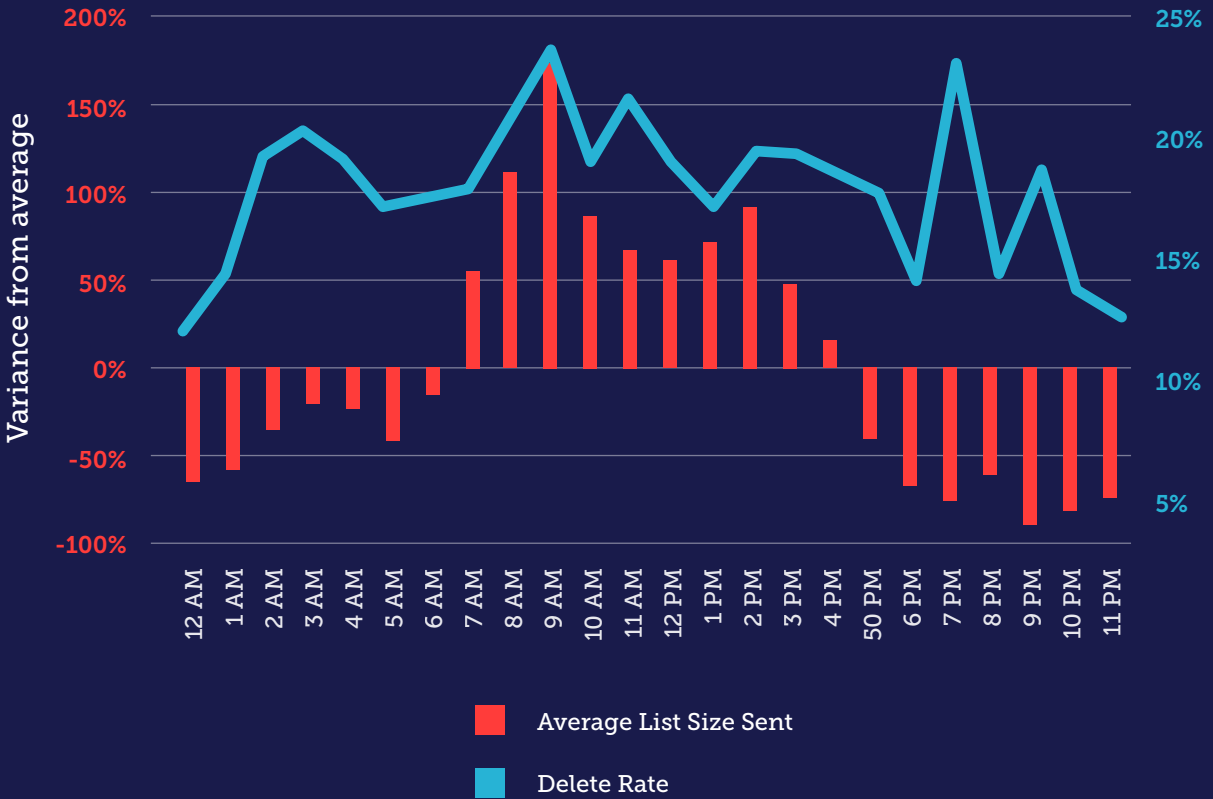


The more people on your list, the less likely the message will resonate or be read and the more likely it will be deleted.

Average List Size Sent vs. Unique Open Rate

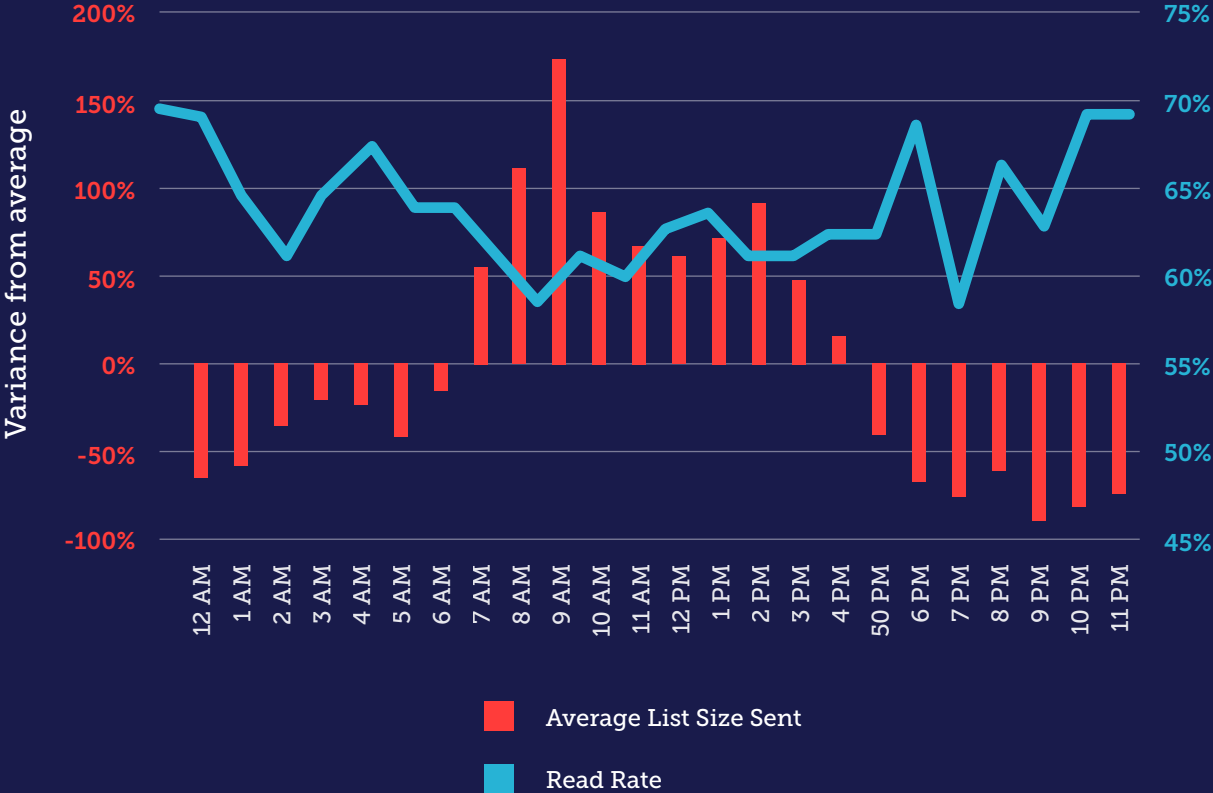


Average List Size Sent vs. Delete Rate

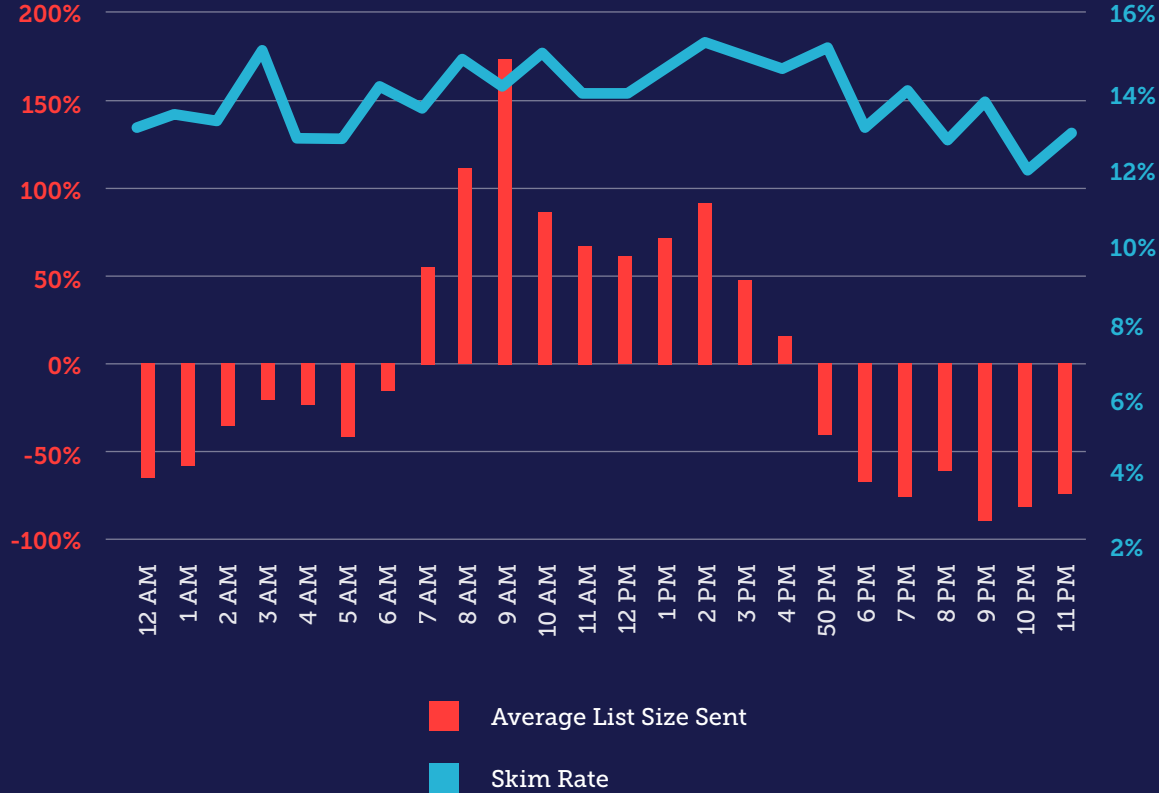


The more people on your list, the less likely the message will resonate or be read and the more likely it will be deleted.

Average List Size Sent vs. Read Rate



Average List Size Sent vs. Skim Rate

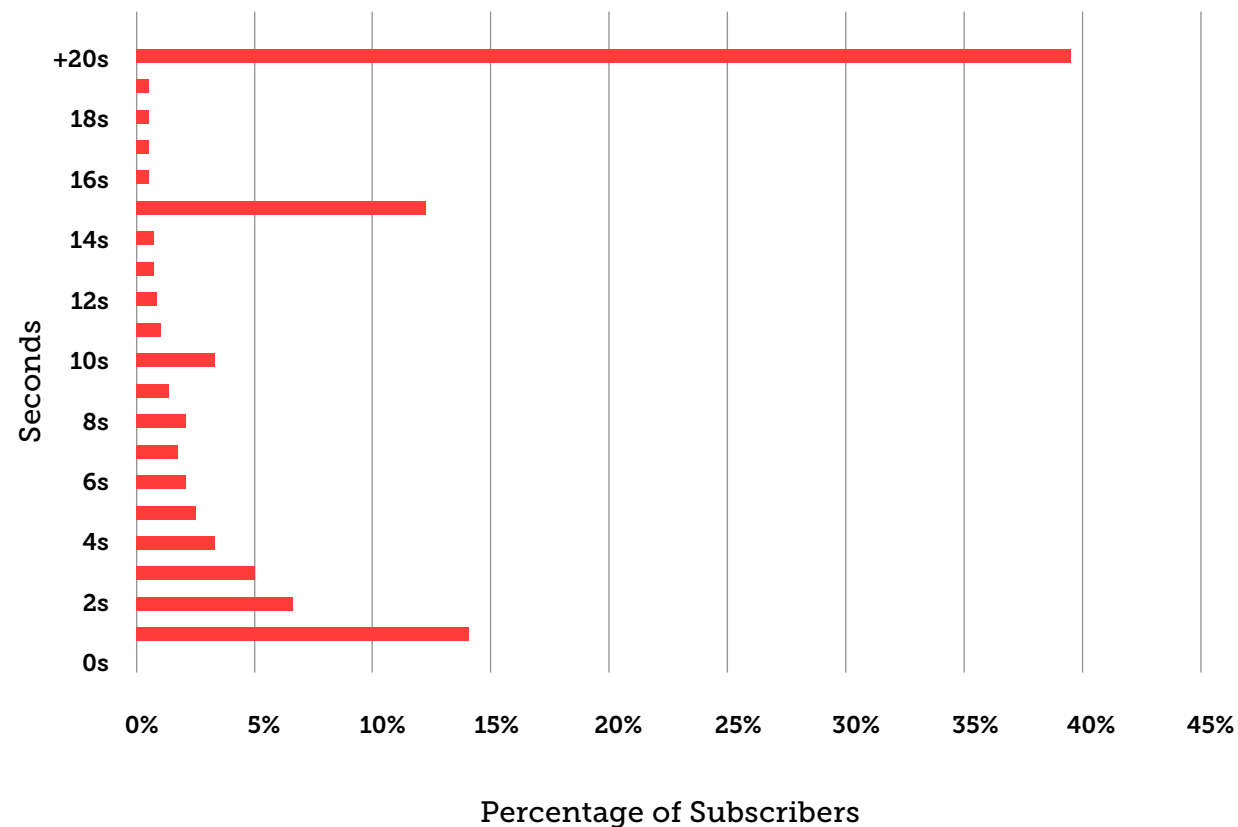


Although most email is sent in the morning, our data shows that email open rates are almost as high in the evening after 8 p.m. as they are in the afternoon hours. At the same time, delete rates are on average lower in the evening.

Simply put, in order for your emails to be useful to consumers, they need to be sent at the right time. Leveraging A/B testing can help determine the best time of send for your email campaigns, along with the right content—including best subject line, images, and offers. One time does not fit all.

We live in a fast-paced, 140-character-or-less world, so the value of your message to a consumer must be clear and concise. Once an email has been opened, the time consumers spend engaged with it is relatively constant throughout the day, no matter the time of send. Although nearly 40 percent of consumers spend 20 seconds or more reading a single email, the average read time is only 12.3 seconds. The vast majority only spend between one and 12 seconds on any opened email.

Percentage of Subscribers and View Duration

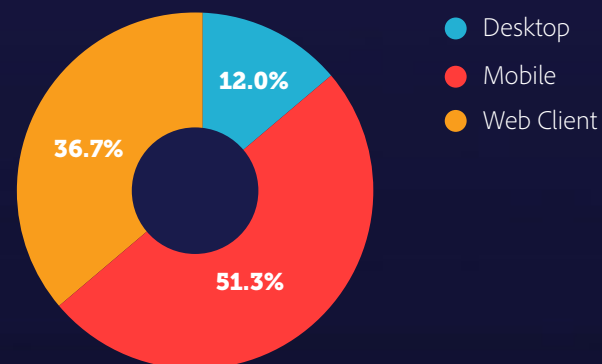


The device CONUNDRUM.

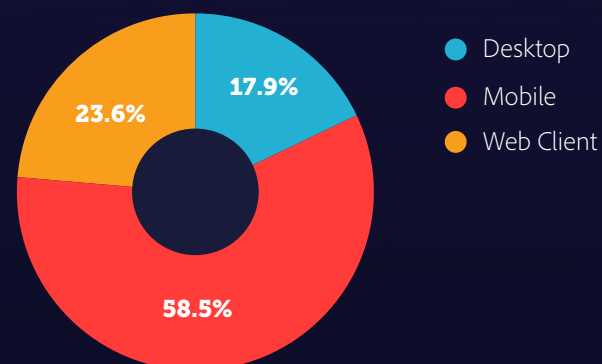
It should come as no surprise that mobile is a power player when it comes to email: Just over half of all emails are opened on mobile devices. Inherently, mobile also sees higher delete rates than desktop or web clients. In comparison, web clients show the best performance, with the percentage of opens outweighing the percentage of deletes. As many opened emails are reopened multiple times, they can also be opened on multiple devices throughout the day. Customers who used their mobile device to open email in the research phase of their customer journey may ultimately reopen the same email on their web client when they're ready to convert.

As a result, mobile has the highest proportion of read emails, but also the highest number of skims. Marketers should be aware of this and determine how to accurately retarget email content of interest. Web clients get the next highest number of reads, and skims are much lower.

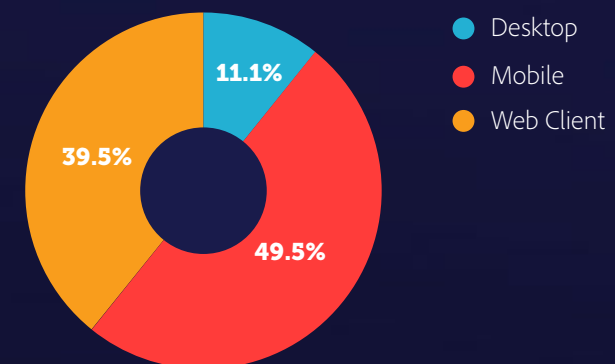
Percentage of Opens



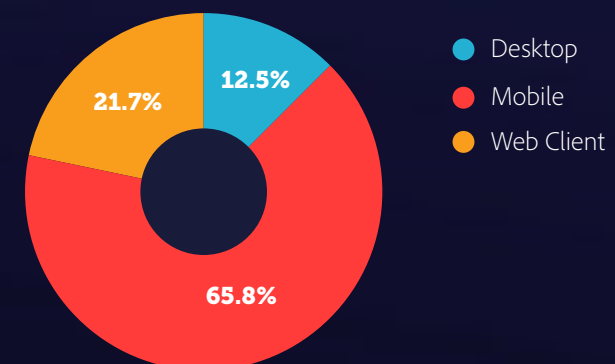
Percentage of Total Deletes

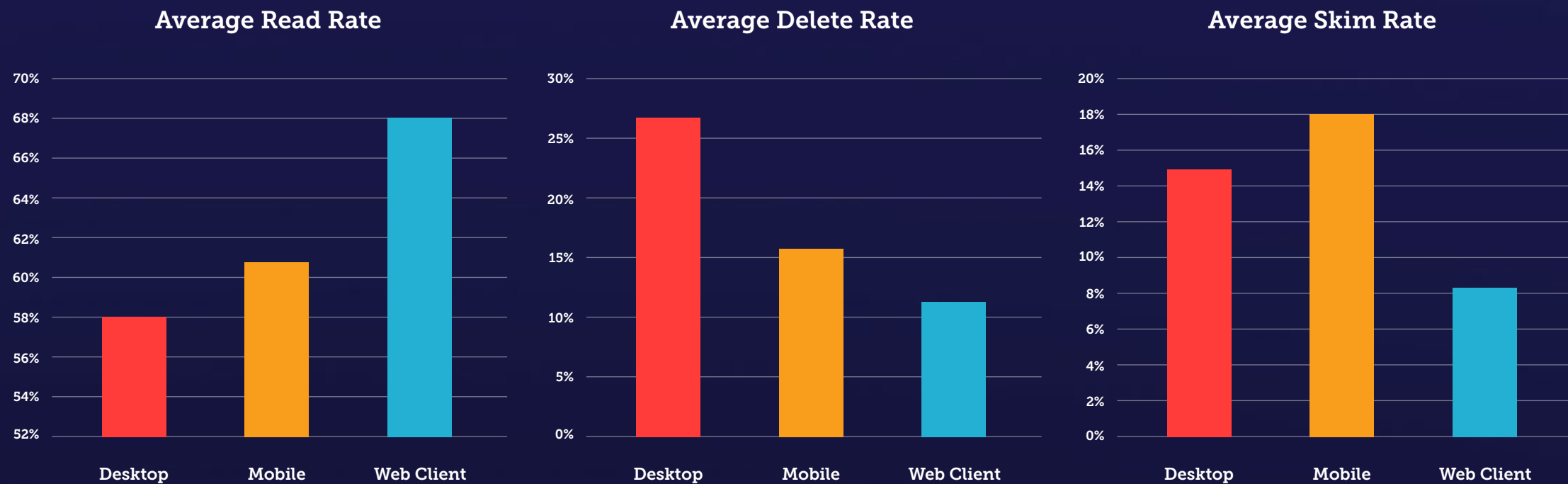


Percentage of Total Reads



Percentage of Total Skims





Proportionately, email opened on web clients receives the highest read rates. Finally, email opened on desktop email clients receives the highest delete rates. Therefore, responsive templates are only one factor marketers need to take into consideration when designing an email campaign.

If your customers mostly open email on their mobile device, the overall content and structure of your email campaigns should be molded around a mobile-first strategy to ensure your message is getting through. Take your customers' overall device habits into consideration when creating email campaigns to ensure that you're delivering your message in the most effective way possible for your target customers.

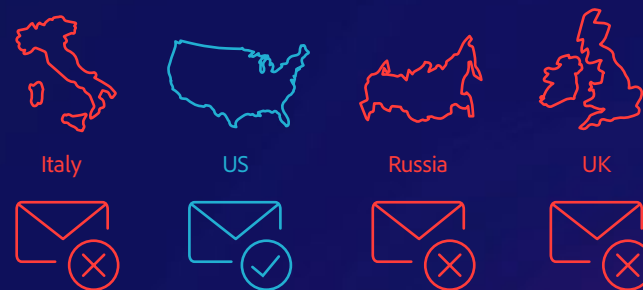
**Mobile communication is where your customers live.
Be sure to meet them there.**

All **CLICKS** are not created equal.

Habits differ by country, so when creating an email campaign that spans borders, it's important to keep these differences in mind.

For example, consumers in the UK may not respond as well to an email campaign as consumers in Argentina. That's because UK consumers open and read fewer emails than average and tend to skim through their inbox, while deleting more emails than consumers in any other country except Italy. The challenge for email marketers in Argentina is different, on the other hand, since Argentina has higher open rates on average than most other countries—surpassed only by Singapore—and has the highest read versus skim rates as a country. Like the Argentinians, Singaporean consumers also delete far fewer emails than average, but mostly skim through email rather than taking the time to read it. Finally, Russia has the lowest average open rate of any country evaluated, but also the highest read rates. These stats suggest that while Russian consumers are selective, they're more likely to take the time to read an email once they have opened it.

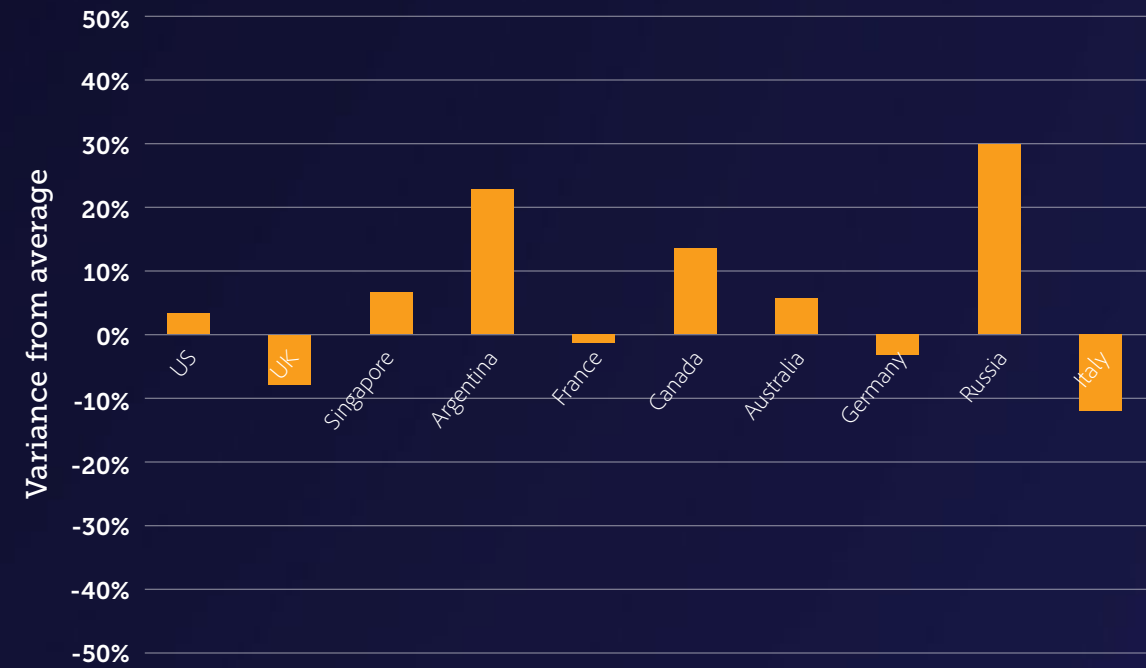
The best time of day to send and the most compelling content, subject lines, images, and offers can all change from country to country. Therefore, the A/B testing and learning that has made you successful with a certain customer segment at home won't necessarily help you with a similar segment abroad. Treat each country as an individual by evaluating, A/B testing, and segmenting for every new market you enter.



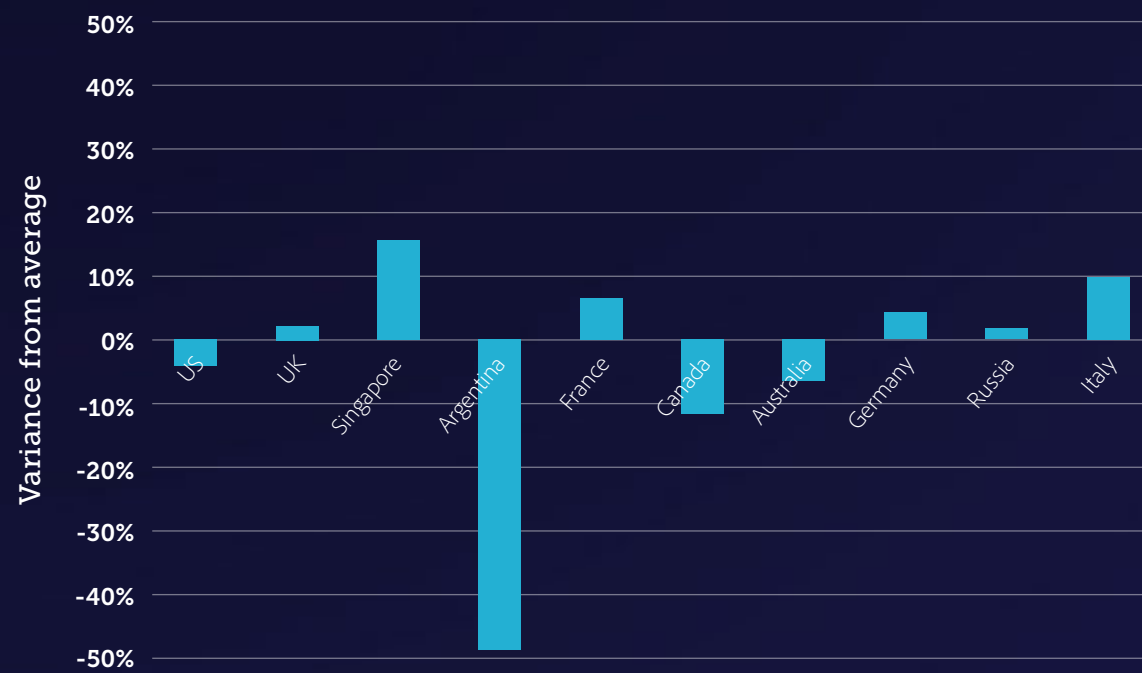
Open Rate by Country



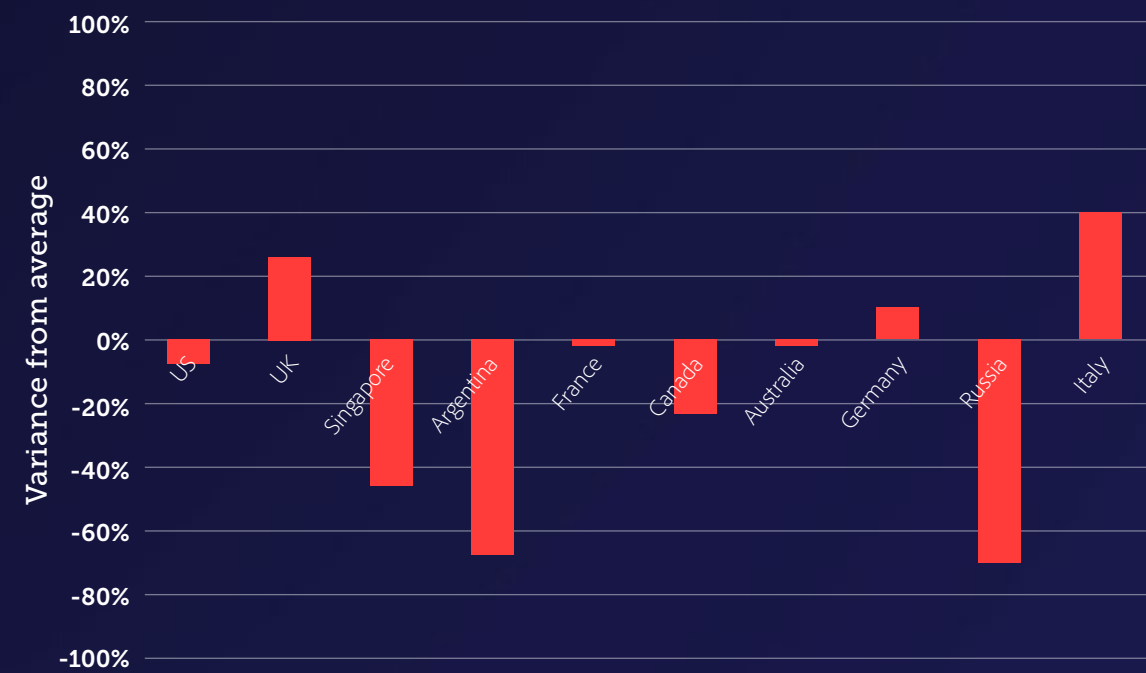
Read Rate by Country



Skim Rate by Country



Delete Rate by Country

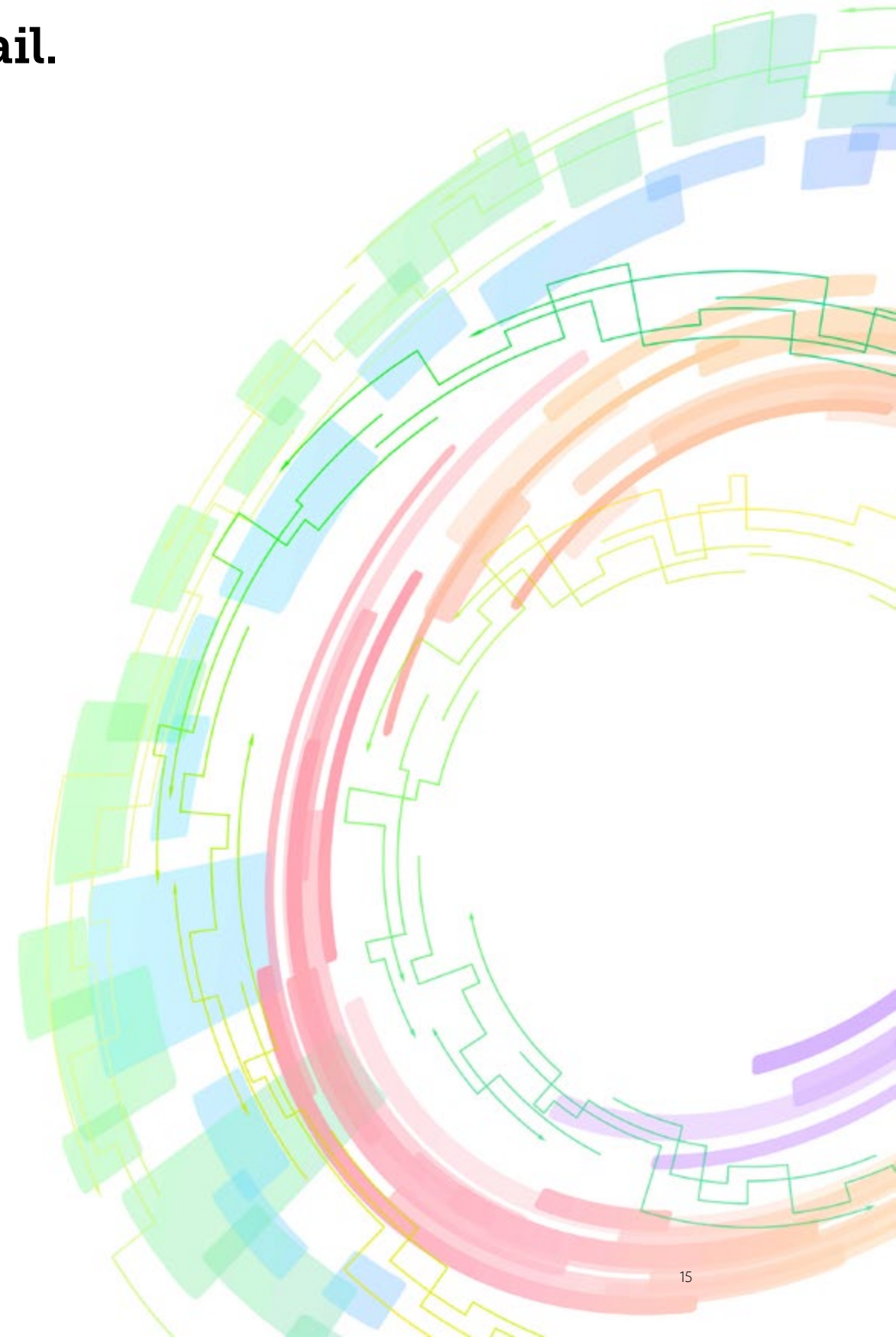


EXPERIENCE enhanced email.

Today, an email marketer's world revolves around creating a unique experience and building trust, as customer expectations soar higher than ever. Building these experiences and trust helps to define and strengthen your brand in your customers' eyes. But how can you create these experiences through an email marketing program?

All great experiences share four critical qualities:

- **Compelling**—Capture your customers' attention and draw them in. Emails need to look beautiful, be dynamic, and display seamlessly across devices. Leverage progressive enhancement to ensure that content and offers are displayed in the best possible way for the device they're opened on.
- **Personal**—Show your customers that you understand who they are and what they like. Of the pieces of customer information you already have, determine which can be best leveraged in the email strategy, what additional information could improve the customer experience, and how quickly you can leverage such information based on individual profiles.
- **Useful**—Help your customers accomplish something quickly, wherever they are, so they can move on to the next thing. Maybe a 40 percent off offer is useful, but perhaps a well-considered product or service recommendation based on an abandoned web activity or prior purchase would be more useful.
- **Contextual**—Ensure that each email communication is sent only after considering what touchpoint came before and what will come after that email message is sent, received, and read. Ensure that email is the appropriate channel for the message, given customer preference, content of message, and consideration of prior and subsequent communication.



It's all about the **CUSTOMER.**

Most marketers today aren't able to determine how a customer engages with email differently during off-hours and holidays compared to when they're sitting at their desk. They also have difficulty understanding the percentage of emails that receive two or more reopens.

Many marketers use a reactive strategy, sending email campaigns throughout the day and waiting for a customer to download their app. Or they use a beacon to determine if a customer is in the vicinity of their store to trigger an email.

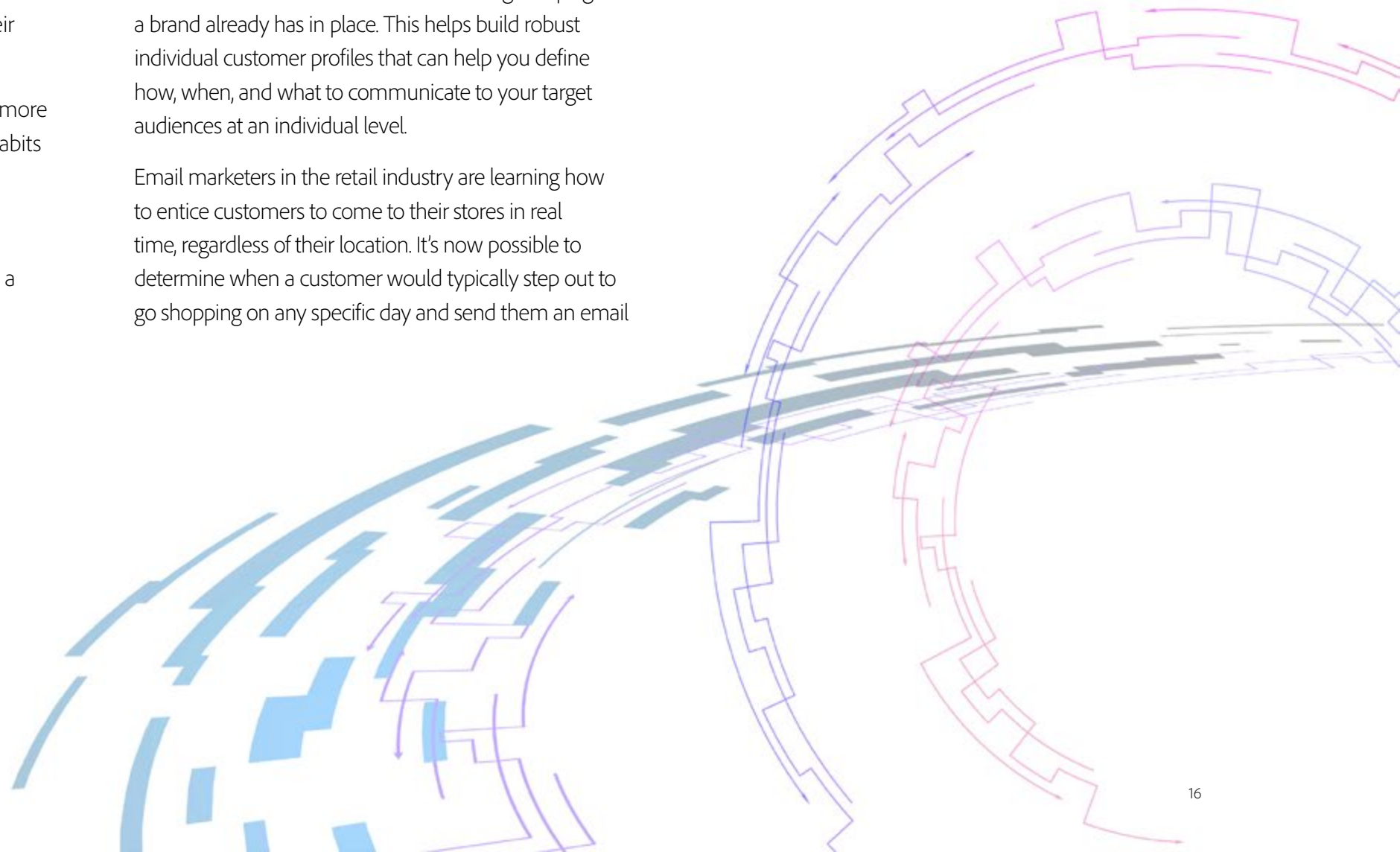
Yet we as customers voluntarily share more and more data about ourselves, our preferences, and our habits every day. This means you as a marketer have the unique opportunity to transform your email marketing programs into a foundation on which you can build incredible experiences throughout a customer's journey.

For example, by enabling location services in applications on our mobile devices, we are sharing more information about our daily routines with brands than ever before. With this data, brands can easily determine things like which area we live in, where we like to shop, and at what time of the year or hour of the day we're out making purchases.

These location- and time-based insights can be paired with data derived from the email marketing campaigns a brand already has in place. This helps build robust individual customer profiles that can help you define how, when, and what to communicate to your target audiences at an individual level.

Email marketers in the retail industry are learning how to entice customers to come to their stores in real time, regardless of their location. It's now possible to determine when a customer would typically step out to go shopping on any specific day and send them an email

at that moment with the most contextually relevant offer possible. Then when a customer responds by visiting the store, you can use an email triggered by a beacon to welcome them and guide them toward a purchase.



The **FUTURE** of email marketing.

Making your email program the cornerstone of a delightful customer experience isn't easy. But it all boils down to one word: data. And data is only as useful as it is actionable. Gone are the days when an email program could live only in its own technology, and email marketers didn't have to look beyond opens and clicks to determine the next best message. Gone are the days when an email marketer would ask the database administrator or the web analytics team for a segment and receive it a week later.

To advance your email marketing programs, your organization will likely need to make some programmatic changes and consolidate some of its technology systems. But there are tactical things you could do today to move the needle. Think about dynamic content, which will play an ever more important role in an email marketer's world. Email marketing must remain relevant no matter the time of day, location, or weather or what inventory is currently available at the time the customer reads it. While the ability to include dynamic content in email

has been around for a few years, the barriers are finally coming down, allowing email marketers to deliver the right message or offer to the right person.

Using the full potential of dynamic content is only the first step. Consider a US\$5 million Super Bowl ad that ends with a hashtag. The game continues, the conversation moves online, and marketers high-five each other because people are talking about their products during the game. Then everyone goes to sleep. The cross-channel opportunity of the year has passed as the conversation wasn't kept alive through a consistent email experience that serves as the backbone of any cross-channel campaign.

Ultimately, the key is using the full power of a brand's own customer data to drive meaningful experiences and deliver a holistic, contextual email marketing program, not just a one-off email tactic or message. Brands should incorporate email into more of their campaigns, using multiple channels to keep the conversation from dying.

This helps engage their most passionate fans—to keep the fire burning and the experience unique, no matter where the next touchpoint occurs.

If you're interested in understanding more about what makes a truly engaging email marketing program, take five minutes to go through our [self-assessment tool >](#) You'll be able to see how your program stacks up against a benchmark of your peers. More importantly, you'll be able to use the questions, responses, and suggestions to drive a discussion in your organization about how to elevate your email marketing game within the context of the broader experience your customers have with your brand.

Methodology

This report was produced by Adobe and based on data gathered by Email on Acid from January 2014 to June 2016. The report presents the findings from 40,000 email campaigns for all non-industry data and about 31,000 campaigns for industry data. Note that the majority of the subscribers are primarily based in the United States.

About Adobe

Adobe Marketing Cloud is the most comprehensive and integrated marketing solution available, helping marketers measure, personalize, and optimize marketing campaigns and digital experiences for optimal marketing performance. With its complete set of solutions—including Adobe Analytics, Adobe Target, Adobe Social, Adobe Experience Manager, Adobe Media Optimizer, Adobe Primetime, Adobe Audience Manager, and Adobe Campaign as well as real-time dashboards and a collaborative interface—marketers are able to combine data, insights, and digital content to deliver the optimal brand experience to their customers. And it gives you everything you need to get deep insight into your customers, build personalized and unified customer experiences, and manage your content and assets. www.adobe.com/marketing-cloud

About Email on Acid

Every email client displays email differently. Email on Acid provides an email-testing platform that will show you how your email looks in each client and mobile device. Not only do they have email previews, they also offer the most advanced email analytic platform on the market. Founded in 2009, Email on Acid has helped more than 100,000 companies worldwide to test and track their emails. For more information, visit www.emailonacid.com.

1. Nick Einstein and David Daniels, "Assessing the Return on Email Marketing Strategy," Relevancy Group, September 2015.
2. Kristin Naragon, "Subject: Email, We Just Can't Get Enough," Adobe Blog, August 25, 2015, <http://blogs.adobe.com/conversations/2015/08/email.html>.
3. DMA and Adobe Study of 263 email marketers in North America, 2015, <https://www.adobe.com/content/dam/acom/en/marketing-cloud/campaign-management/pdfs/adobe-campaign-email-marketing-book-v2-1.pdf>.
4. Email on Acid data from January 2014 to June 2016 based on 40,000 email campaigns for all non-industry data and about 31,000 campaigns for industry data.
5. Ibid.
6. Kristin Naragon, "Subject: Email, We Just Can't Get Enough."



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