



RetailWeek
CONNECT

WHITE PAPER

In association with

 **Bronto**
The Marketing Platform for Commerce

Opening up retail email engagement

How retailers can ensure their email marketing is well received by shoppers

FOREWORD

It's hard to remember a time before email – before instant information and immediate gratification. This everyday technology is now well past the age usually thought of as midlife, but it seems to have somehow skipped the all-too-common 'midlife crisis'. In fact, for most retailers, this old-timer still beats the newbie communication channels (social media and SMS) as a steady revenue-generating machine – when it's done right. But getting it right means getting mobile right.

Given the increased reliance on smartphones and tablets, we wondered what kind of data retailers need in order to craft a highly effective email marketing strategy for today's connected consumers.

That's why we paired with *Retail Week* to produce this white paper, which is based on data col-

lected from 1,400 UK consumers about their email preferences as they relate to mobile.

They were asked how often they check their email and on what device, what compels them to subscribe to your emails and what convinces them to send you a resounding 'unsubscribe'. We also asked if they purchase directly from emails and what types of messages they'd be willing to sacrifice a little privacy for.

You can probably guess at some of the responses, but others were quite surprising. Read on to learn what we found and how you can apply it to bring your email marketing strategy into its prime.

• **Waynette Tubbs, manager of content marketing, Bronto**



Email has evolved considerably since its inception more than two decades ago but, with the emergence of social, mobile and other digital communication channels, does it remain relevant in today's marketing landscape and, if so, what do consumers want from their retail-brand interactions via electronic mail?

To better understand these considerations, *Retail Week*, in association with commerce marketing automation provider Bronto, conducted a study of 1,400 UK consumers, from a nationally representative sample. The most relevant and compelling findings from the research are highlighted and analysed in this latest white paper.

APPETITE FOR EMAIL

The majority (74%) of consumers surveyed check their emails more than three times a day, in what is a powerful sign of the importance of email as an outright communication channel.

More than 20% report checking their email at least once a day, with a negligible proportion of consumers citing once a week.

The most noteworthy statistic is that 22% of those aged between 18 and 24 check their emails once an hour. Although the generally held consensus is that this social cohort is far more engaged with social

The most noteworthy statistic is that 22% of those aged between 18 and 24 check their emails once an hour. This finding highlights the relevance of email amidst all the noise related to social

as a communication channel, this research finding highlights the relevance of email amidst all the noise related to social.

A considerable 75% of those people surveyed aged between 18 and 24 have directly made a purchase via an email communication from a retail brand, with this proportion down slightly to 70% at the top-line level and therefore relatively representative across all age groups.

THE ROLE OF MOBILE

Mobile is the single biggest disrupter within technology and retail over the past five years, rewriting the rule book in terms of how to best engage with consumers across all demographics. It has inevitably had a major impact on email communications, from design and functionality to contextualisation. For retail brands such

66%

say receiving discounts is the **most important** reason for signing up to emails from companies seeking their business




The most likely reason to **open and read** an email from a retail brand is if the **subject line** mentions a **discount or special offer**

 **74%** CHECK THEIR EMAIL more than **3 times a day**

53% of **18 to 24 year olds** **mostly** check their email on **a smartphone**



 **70%** have made a **PURCHASE** as the result of an **EMAIL**

TWO-THIRDS of us **TRASH** a mobile email that **DOESN'T LOOK GOOD**



as Shop Direct, mobile now accounts for upwards of 50% of total revenue. At the top-line level, 23% of people surveyed for this study say they most often access and view their emails on a smartphone device, with 14% citing a tablet and a majority, 63%, commenting that desktop is their main email reading source.

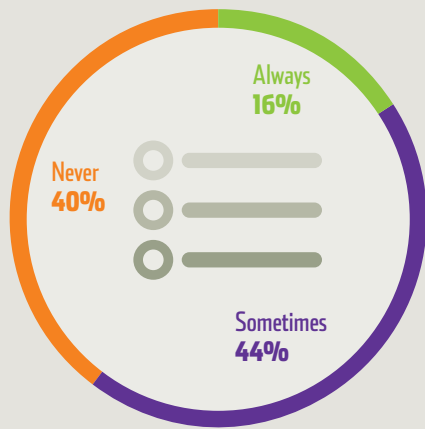
While 23% is a significant proportion overall, breaking down the data by age group shows more than half (53%) of those aged between 18 and 34 view their emails predominantly on a smartphone device.

The top-line finding is weighed down by those aged

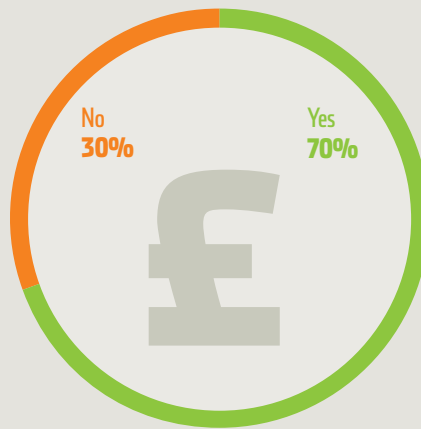
45 years and over – only 7% of consumers aged 55-plus most often access their emails via smartphone. With the younger generation heavily viewing email on mobile devices – smartphones and tablets – it's important that retail brands set up and deliver effective email communications tailored to these platforms.

Indeed, when we asked consumers what they would do with a mobile email that is not aesthetically pleasing, 67% say they would delete it straight away. This compares with 18% who would unsubscribe, while just 5% say that they would read it anyway. ▶

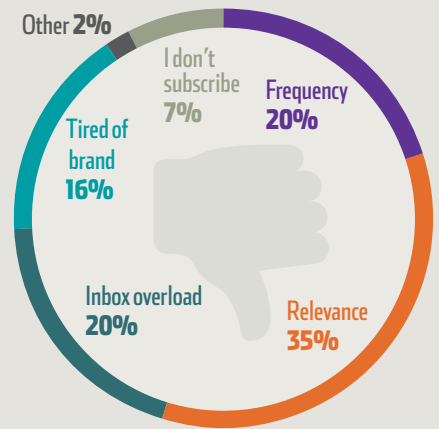
Do you use your mobile device to sort through your emails before you read them on your desktop?



Have you made a purchase as a result of an email?



When you unsubscribe, what is the primary reason?



Mobile is not just a platform leading to desktop email engagement, with 40% of those surveyed for this report noting that they never use a mobile device to sort through emails before reading them on desktop. For reference, 16% say they always do this, with 44% saying they do sometimes.

INFLUENCING EMAIL SIGN-UP

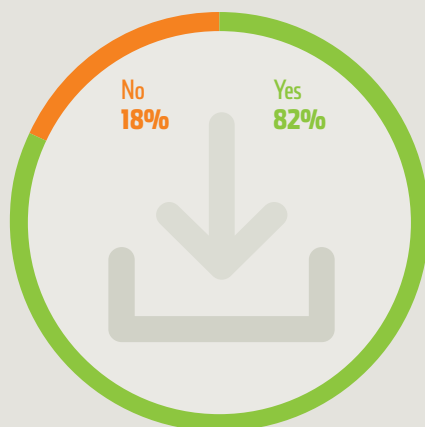
From a retailer standpoint, what are the factors driving consumers to sign up to email communications?

Do consumers sign up because they want to receive discounts, because they love the brand, or to be notified of product updates? A better understanding of this dynamic is important if retail brands are to build successful email marketing campaigns.

Our research shows receiving discounts is the most important factor to consumers when they sign up to email communications from retail brands, in an effort to derive more value from spend.

Two thirds (66%) of survey participants cite this as

Do you like receiving information on promotions/products etc from retailers via email?



What is most likely to cause you to open and read an email from a retail brand? If the subject line...





Many consumers sort emails on their mobile before reading them on a desktop

the most important factor. Next, at 17%, is to receive product and service updates, followed by to participate in product research, at 9%. Meanwhile, 8% of consumers say that signing up to email communications because they love the brand is the most important factor. This proportion is slightly higher for those aged 18 to 24, and reduced for those aged 35 years and over.

DRIVING EMAIL ENGAGEMENT

The rate at which consumers unsubscribe from emails is a key metric for brands wanting to measure the effectiveness of email campaigns and communications. Understanding the primary reason behind this metric is therefore imperative for those retailers that are looking to engage effectively with an increasingly digital-savvy consumer.

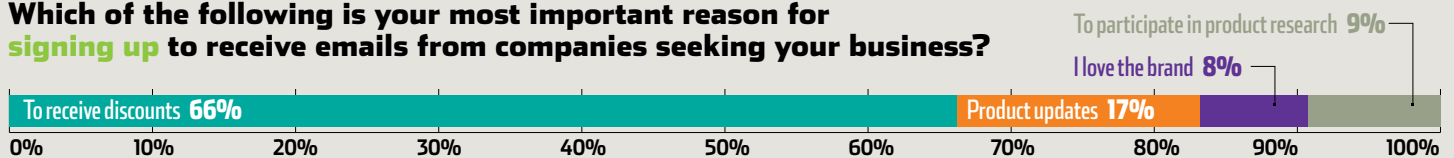
According to research conducted for this report, the primary reason people unsubscribe is lack of relevance, with 35% noting this as the case.

Frequency is the second highest reason people unsubscribe, scoring 20%, followed by inbox overload at just shy of that.

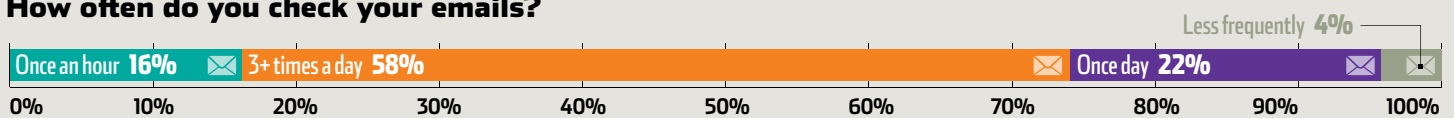
This highlights the importance of brands taking a more personalised approach to email communications, ▶

The rate at which consumers unsubscribe from email is a key metric for those brands looking to measure the effectiveness of email campaigns and communications

Which of the following is your most important reason for signing up to receive emails from companies seeking your business?



How often do you check your emails?

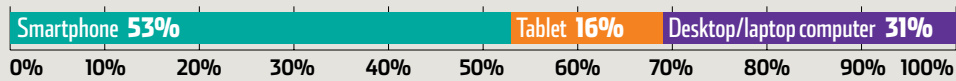


Where do you most often check your emails?

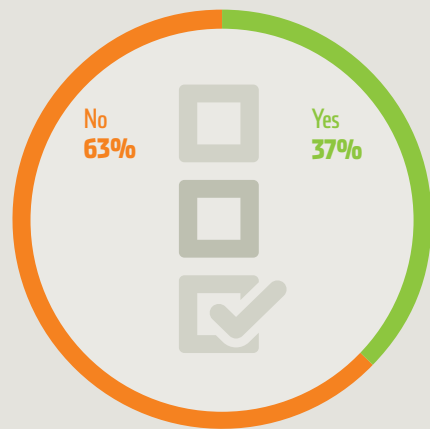
ALL AGE GROUPS



18 to 24 YEAR OLDS



Do you believe that it's OK for a company to start sending you promotional emails if you have purchased something from them but you didn't specifically sign up to receive emails from them?



These findings highlight the difficulties retail brands face in walking the line between offering relevant email communications and respecting privacy

in order to cut through the noise generated by cluttered inboxes and deliver real value to the consumer.

To this avail, we asked our consumer base what subject line would prompt them to open and read an email from a retail brand.

The results centred on the discount/special offer proposition outlined earlier in this report, with almost half of respondents saying they are most likely to open and read emails with subject lines mentioning discounts.

Around 32% cited a subject line that promotes a

product they're interested in, with 9% mentioning a line that refers to a product they recently looked up. Just 3% and 4% respectively cited a subject line that is humorous, and one that includes their first name.

A QUESTION OF PRIVACY

With all customer-brand engagement, the question of privacy is a key consideration in today's age of frequent data breaches and increased connectivity. As highlighted previously, consumers are demanding relevance from their email communications, but at what cost to their privacy?

The majority (63%) say it is unacceptable for a company to start sending promotional emails when they purchase something from them but haven't specifically signed up to receive such emails. This is broadly consistent across all age groups.

A noteworthy 35% of consumers, meanwhile, comment that they would not sign up to receive location-based offers on mobile, in order to gain real-time notifications, because of privacy concerns.

Just 5% say they would sign up, with 40% willing to do so if they trust the brand. Meanwhile, 20% report that they wouldn't sign up, but for reasons other than privacy.

These findings highlight the difficulties retail brands face in walking the line between offering relevant email communications and respecting privacy.

Interestingly, concerns around privacy were consistent across all age groups, shunning the traditionally held hypothesis that those in younger social cohorts are more willing to share data than older generations.

CONCLUSION

The research conducted for this report presents some striking findings. The most evident relates to the reasons people sign up to receive email communications from retail brands – discounts and promotions – with a noteworthy 66% of survey participants citing this as the most important factor overall.

The importance of mobile as a format to read, sort and interact with email communications is another key finding, especially with regards to those consumers aged 18 to 24, while the balance between relevant email communications and privacy stood out as a consideration that retail brands need to think about clearly and carefully.

BRONTO KEYPOINTS

- 74% of consumers surveyed check their email more than three times a day, with 22% of those aged 18 to 24 checking email once an hour
- At least 70% of those surveyed say they have directly made a purchase from a retail brand via an email communication
- 53% of those aged 18 to 24 say they check email mostly from their smartphone
- 66% of consumers cite the number one reason for subscribing to emails is the offer of a discount, and 33% say the primary reason for unsubscribing is lack of relevance
- 35% of consumers would not sign up to receive real-time, location-based offers on mobile because of privacy concerns

CONTACT DETAILS

Bronto Software, 3rd Floor, 21 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HA
Bronto.co.uk | blog.bronto.com | europe@bronto.com | +44 203 640 2040



RETAIL WEEK CONNECT: CONNECTING RETAIL WITH CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE

Head of Research

Alex Hamilton 020 7715 6387
alex.hamilton@emap.com

Commercial Production Editor

Tracey Gardner 020 3033 2769
tracey.gardner@emap.com

Commercial Sub-Editor

Abigail O'Sullivan 020 3033 2940
abigail.osullivan@emap.com

Contributors

Dan Harder
Chris Young

Production Manager

Paddy Orchard 020 3033 2679
paddy.orchard@emap.com

Senior Account Manager

Dan Capel 020 3033 2914
daniel.capel@emap.com

In association with



RetailWeek
CONNECT

WHITE PAPER