



Under the skin

EMAIL MARKETING REPORT

RAIL TRAVEL



INTRODUCTION

The UK rail industry is growing at a quicker rate than in all other European countries, including France, Germany and the Netherlands. In fact, the UK is currently seeing the longest sustained period of growth in history. Since privatisation 20 years ago, the UK has experienced increased passenger kilometres and journeys have more than doubled. This has resulted in record numbers of passengers using the UK mainline railway network in 2014.

It is estimated that this growth is set to continue, with train operators and Network Rail planning to accommodate an extra 400 million rail journeys on the mainline network by 2020.

In order to achieve these ambitious objectives, email marketing can play an

important part from both a customer acquisition and customer retention point of view, especially as the industry continues to move into the digital age.

This Marketing Report looks at how rail operators in the UK are using email not only to generate sales, but also to drive traffic and build relationships. We have looked at how businesses who operate in this sector acquire new email addresses, what data they collect at subscription and how they welcome new subscribers to the brand. In addition, we explore the often controversial subject of email frequency, alongside the issue of responsive design, and also highlight some of our favourite emails.

METHOD

We have analysed the email marketing of 20 UK based rail travel operators.

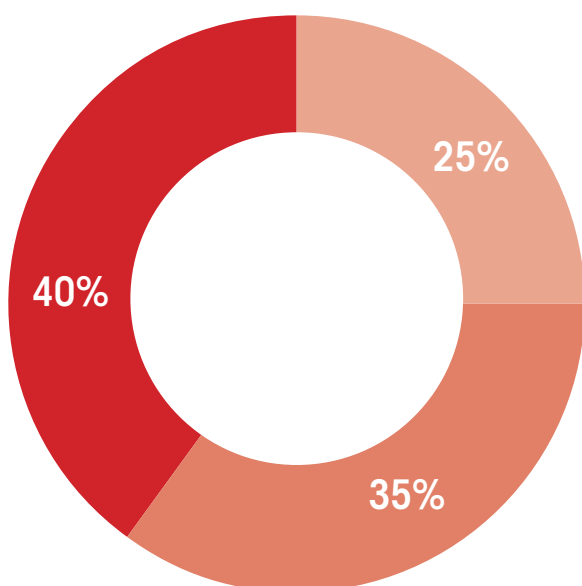


THE BRANDS





SIGN UP

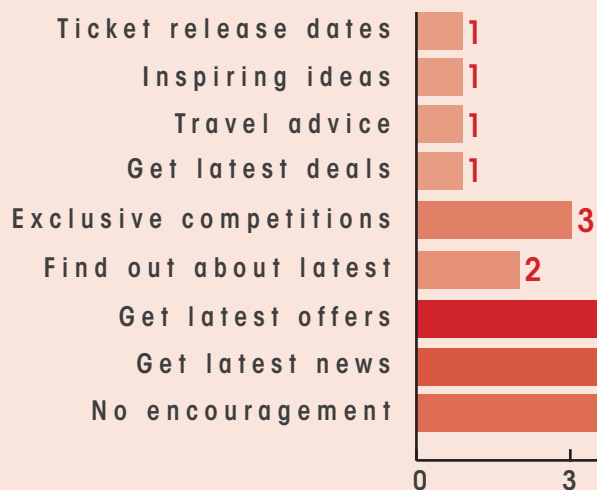


Where on the website do they ask for email 'sign up'?

- Top of page
- Middle of page
- Bottom of page

FACT: 1/2 of rail operators did not have a 'subscribe to our newsletter' section. Instead email subscription was part of creating an 'Account'.

We appreciate that there is a lot of competition for homepage real estate, especially above the fold. However, if you have a requirement for new email data then we would recommend that you promote email subscription in the most prominent position possible.



How do they encourage you to sign up?

Some brands promote more than one benefit of signing up to their emails.

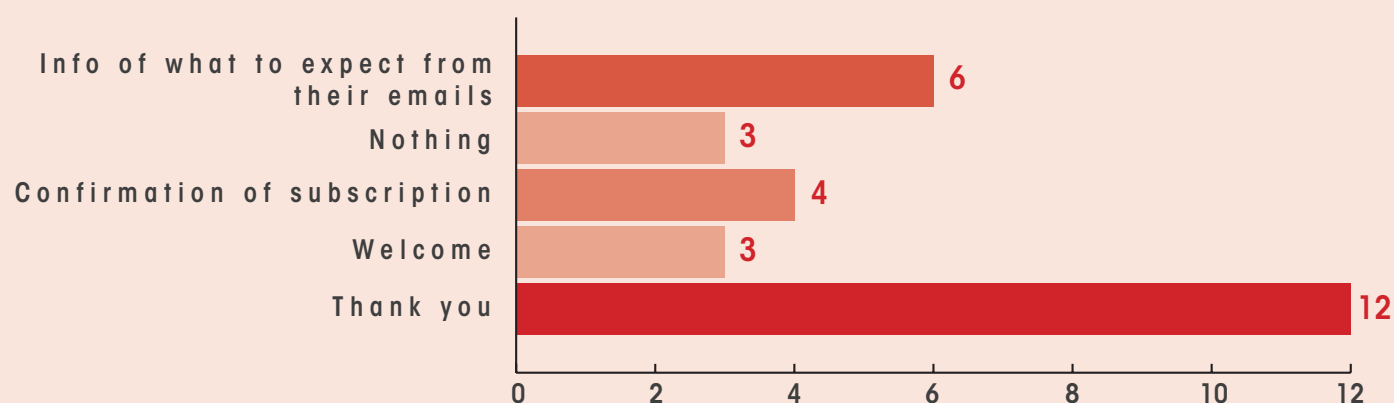
SIGNING UP FORM

What information was requested at 'sign up'/Account set up?

	First Name	Last Name	DOB	Address	Phone number	How often do you travel	Usage	Usual start station	Usual end station
Heathrow Express	✓	✓			✓				
Mersey rail	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
C2C	✓	✓			✓				
Chiltern Railways	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
East Coast	✓	✓							
Arriva Trains Wales	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
South West Trains	✓	✓		✓	✓				
First Scotrail	✓	✓			✓				
London Midland	✓	✓			✓				
Cross Country	✓	✓		✓			✓		
Northern Rail	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Southern	✓	✓			✓				
North Yorkshire Moors	✓	✓							
Abellio Greater Anglia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	

FACT: 14/20 rail operators had a registration form

What did it say on the website post 'sign up'/registration?



Some brands had more than one message

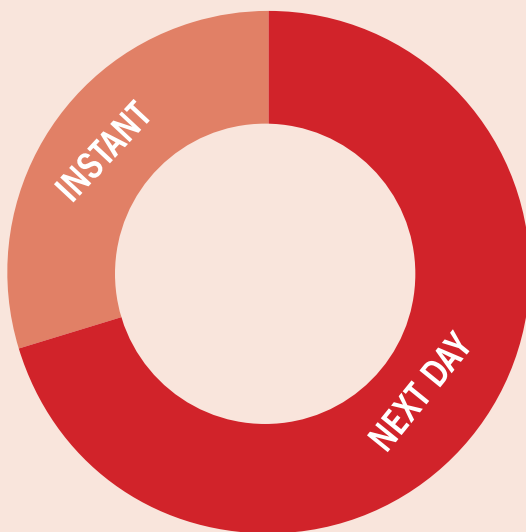
WELCOME EMAILS

13/20 companies sent a welcome email, no welcome emails were received from these brands:



As with any automated email, timing is everything. In our experience, we see better open and click-through rates when automated welcome emails are sent instantly at the point of subscription.

WHEN WERE THE WELCOME EMAILS RECEIVED?



59% of brands sent the welcome email the next day while 31% sent an immediate email

Instant

Next Day

FACTS:

11/13 emails were personalised

Welcome emails from these companies were not responsive:



DISCOUNT OFFER



Only one brand incentivised their welcome email:



FREQUENCY

How many emails were received in a month?



Clients regularly ask us how often they should send their customers emails, but for us, it shouldn't be a question of email frequency, instead a question of content and response. If you're sending valuable and relevant content to your email recipients and they're responding well, look to push the frequency as high as possible.

FACTS:

Total **26** emails from **20** companies in **30** days

8/20 Rail operators, Northern Rail, First Scot Rail, South West Trains, First Trans Pennine Express, Arriva Trains Wales, East Coast, First Hull Trains and Grand Central, have not sent any emails since sign up

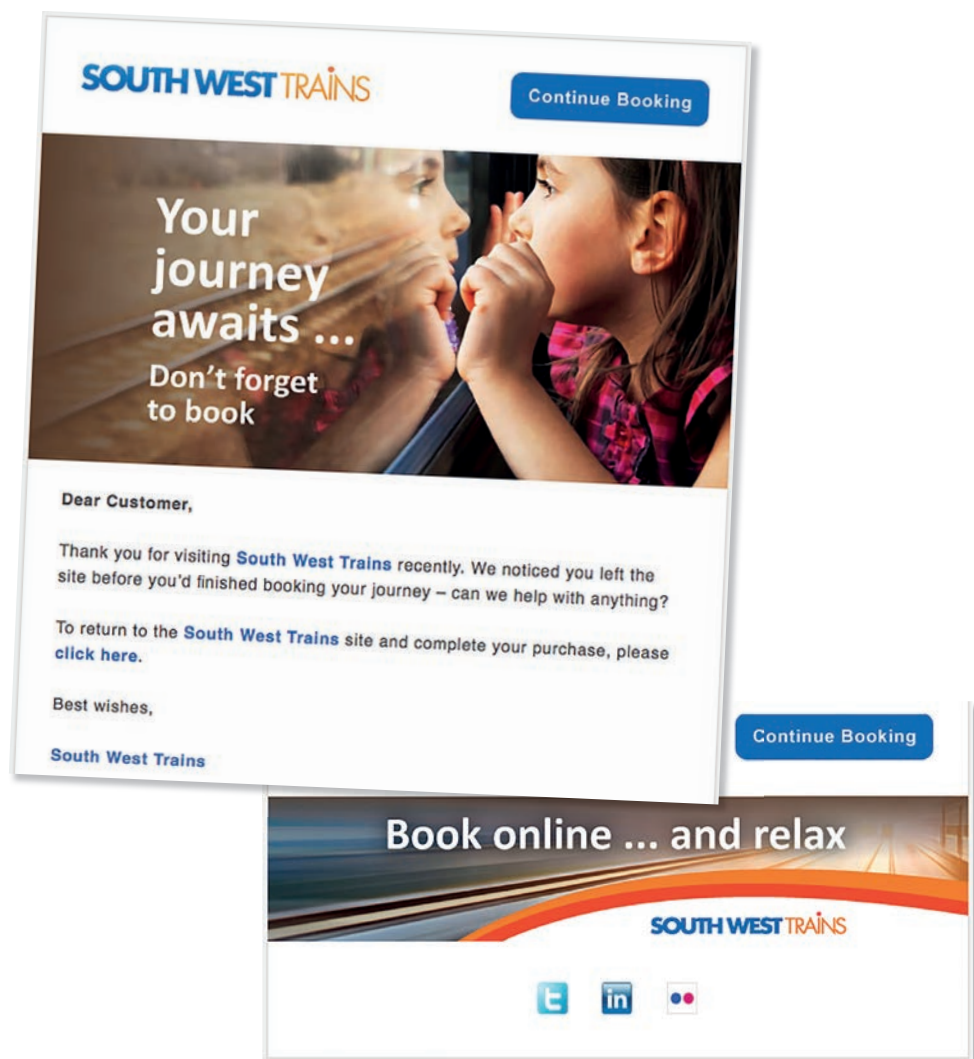
7/12 Rail operators send responsive emails

ABANDONED BASKET

Only one rail operator sent an abandoned basket email: South West Trains



South West trains sent an email 30 minutes after the basket was abandoned.



It surprises us greatly that only one of the 20 rail operators has an abandoned basket programme in place. Ideally, this should be the first automated programme that is implemented as the results can be so rewarding.

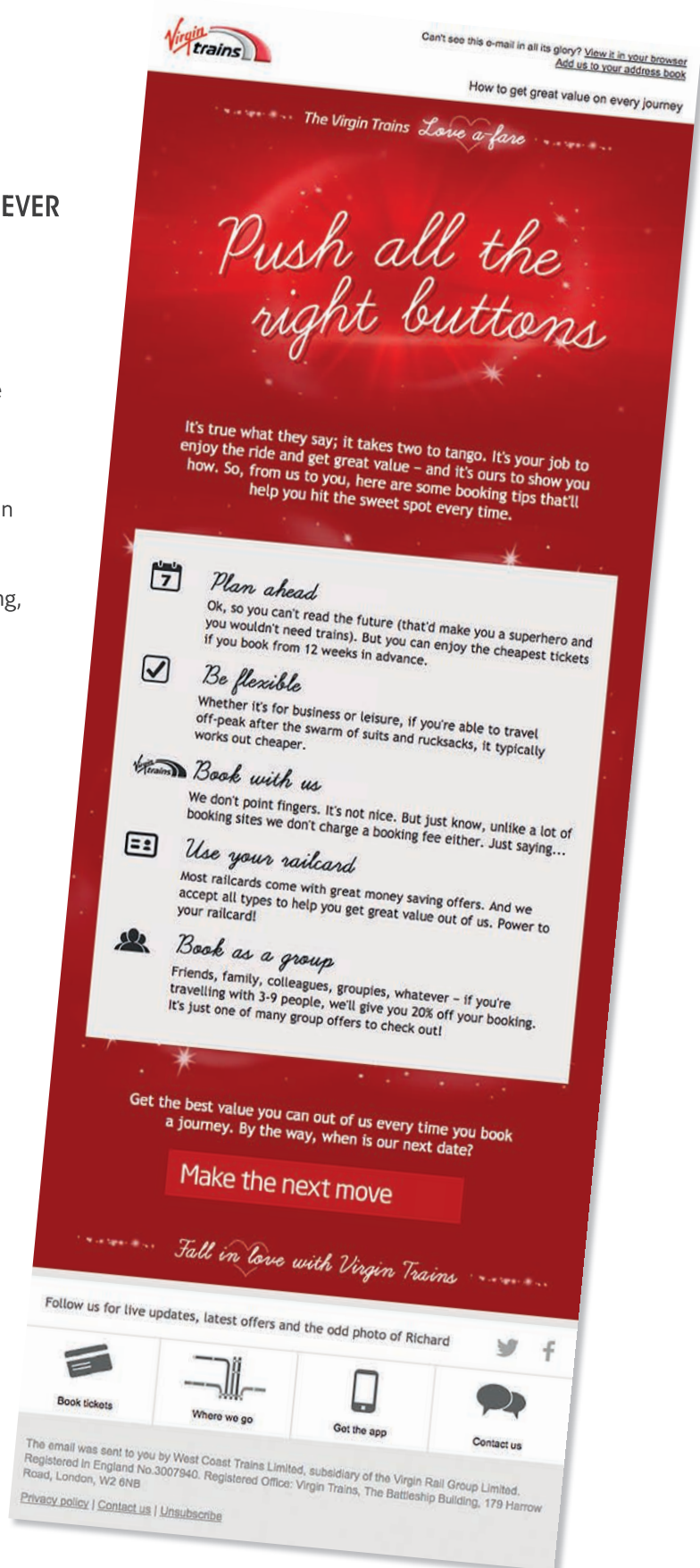
CREATIVE EXAMPLES OF BEST RECEIVED EMAILS



Date: 16th December 2014

Subject Line: 5 of the best booking tips EVER

Virgin Trains' tongue-in-cheek approach to booking tips is a welcome break from what could ultimately have been a very dry affair. The wordplay used throughout is the real stand-out aspect of this email, which is delivered under the clever heading of 'The Virgin Trains Love-a-fare'. The 'Make the next move' call-to-action makes it feel like the power is in the recipient's hand. There's no hard sell here, just your old mate Virgin helping you to get the best deal and to 'hit the sweet spot every time', as they put it. While the tips on offer were not necessarily ground-breaking, Virgin did enough to maintain our interest with an enticing subject line and novel header.



CREATIVE EXAMPLES OF BEST RECEIVED EMAILS


Date: 11th December 2014**Subject Line:** Bring the station to you – download our app now

While we are partial to a beautifully designed email here at Red C, we also recognise that sometimes simplicity can speak volumes. Although this email from thetrainline.com won't be winning any creative awards any time soon, that doesn't stop it being amongst our favourites for December. The email lists the benefits of thetrainline's app in a clear and concise way, as well as providing ample opportunity for the recipient to click through to download it. For those who frequently travel by train, phrases such as 'best chance of getting a seat' and 'avoid queues by getting tickets sent to your phone' will be music to the ears as thetrainline let's its app do the talking in this simplified, informative email.



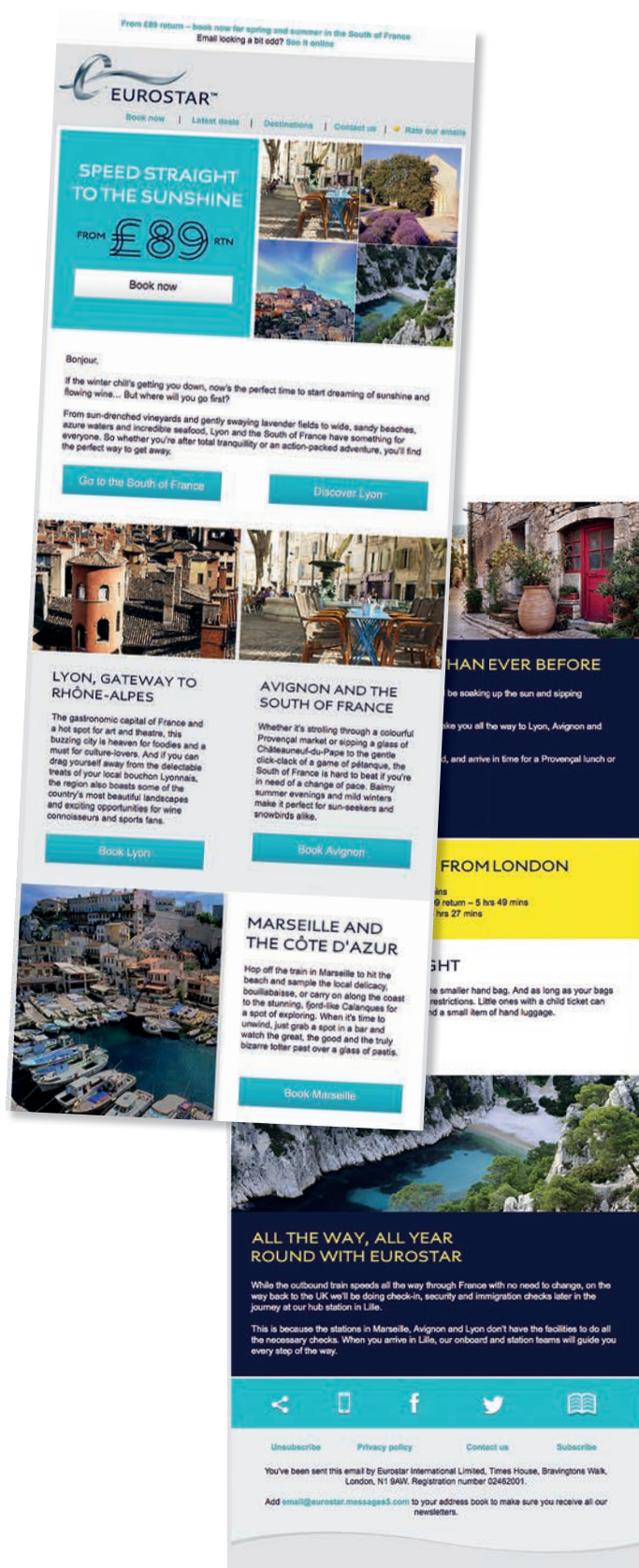
CREATIVE EXAMPLES OF BEST RECEIVED EMAILS



Date: 12th December 2014

Subject Line: Go further, faster for £89 return with our new routes to the South of France

Ok, so we might be a bit biased as this email was carefully crafted right here at Red C towers, but this offering from Eurostar stood out from other emails we received in December. While predominantly a sales email, promoting new routes to the South of France, the added detail is what made it stand out from the norm. By providing information on each of the cities in focus, such as Lyon 'the gastronomic capital of France' or Marseille's local delicacy of bouillabaisse, Eurostar manage to paint a picture and offer a real insight into the destinations. This, teamed with clear and prominent call-to-actions, had us reaching for our passports. Bravo Eurostar.



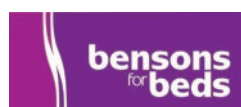
OUR AGENCY

At Red C, we believe producing effective advertising and marketing campaigns can only come from developing a deep and genuine understanding of a client's business, products and customers. We encourage staff to get 'under the skin' of every client's business. We sit in on call centres, accompany field sales staff, work in branches and stores and analyse and interpret client data online and offline to create real insight. It leads to robust, long-standing relationships with our clients.

Strongly analytical in approach, the agency comes from a direct marketing background, yet today 70% of revenue is from online channels, including email marketing, paid search and search engine optimisation, social media marketing and web development. A significant further proportion of revenue comes from TV – we will have completed around a dozen commercials by the year end. So the agency can offer expertise across a full range of channels, online, offline and broadcast, which helps us to tackle client challenges and develop integrated campaigns for a wide range of target audiences, products and services, in a media neutral way.

Our client base is blue chip. Alongside JD Williams and Swinton, we are also retained by rail operator Eurostar, leading Premier League team Manchester City, 270-store strong retail chain Bensons for Beds, leading pub company Spirit and top holiday operators Hoseasons and Great Rail Journeys. So everyday, our employees work with leading edge marketing teams in every relationship.

OUR CLIENTS



OUR SERVICES

Red C is a fully integrated agency which offers a wide range of services, including Strategic Consultancy, Email Marketing, Social Media Management, Search Engine Optimisation, Content Marketing, Paid Search, Television Production, Print Production and Analysis.