

Ten Inbox Secrets

What eye tracking reveals about
designing more effective emails



About Red C

A direct and digital marketing communications agency based in Salford Quays, Manchester, with significant experience of both email marketing and eye tracking research. The agency has been conducting eye tracking research studies on marketing material for over 15 years with Professor Alastair Gale and his team at Loughborough University. Recently Red C has installed a Tobii widescreen eye tracker in-house to facilitate studies for clients.

The agency also designs and builds email programmes for a number of blue chip UK clients, including the Swinton Insurance Group, European train operator Eurostar, photographic retailer Jessops and Freemans Grattan Holdings, the UK home shopping arm of Otto Versand. The agency has recently picked up several awards for its email work, including an Mi Gold Best CRM Strategy for its email programme for Jessops and a DMA Silver for Swinton's triggered emails.

About the Authors

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Chairman of Red C and of the Institute of Direct Marketing North, Adrian is an experienced direct and digital marketing consultant advising clients across a range of sectors. He was awarded Honorary Life Fellowship of the IDM in 2001 for exceptional services to the profession. His commitment to eye tracking as a research methodology can be traced back to an extraordinary seminar given by Professor Siegfried Voge at the 1985 Montreux Symposium.

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With a Masters in the Psychology of Advertising from the University of Lancaster, Lorenzo is well equipped to understand and interpret the findings from our eye tracking studies and his passion for Thai boxing means you don't lightly challenge his conclusions. He manages all aspects of the eye tracking service [that Red C offers to its clients.

Introduction

Back in April 2011, when we first conceived the idea of conducting a series of studies on emails by sector, we felt that it could prove a rich source of insight. The agency already had significant expertise in the area from writing, designing, building and analysing emails for blue chip clients. We knew a lot about what worked – we wanted to know more about why it worked.

One year later, with more than 50 emails studied among over 100 participants, this document represents a distillation of some of the most important findings. We wanted it to be useful for email marketing practitioners, and we have structured it for those at the sharp end, illustrating each point with examples we uncovered of both good and bad practice. It has given us some outstanding insights into the techniques that encourage recipients to engage with and respond to emails, and we hope you will find it useful in designing more effectively for the inbox.

Adrian Rowe

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First Impressions Count

We read emails one screen at a time – each new screen determines whether we continue to scroll or hit delete. So the opening 'screenful' is highly influential on the overall email performance. Direct mail letters work one sentence at a time, and a good copywriter knows that the reader's propensity to read the second sentence is based on the persuasive power of the first sentence. The principle is exactly the same for email. Sustaining attention in an email has its own 'engagement funnel' and the battle for a recipient's continued consideration starts at the very first screen.

A store environment provides a good analogy, and one that we will come back to again in this paper. If the subject header was the window poster that persuaded us through the doors, consider that the opening screenful is that first step through the doors, when we orient ourselves and search for the visual cues to draw us into the store environment. Finding helpful, relevant visual cues in the first screen of an email is just as important as in a store, perhaps even more so – you can't delete a store at the touch of a button!

Remember that recipients who open your email have many differing reasons for doing so. You must ensure that you cater for all of them to maximise your engagement funnel. In particular, bear in mind the different needs

products, but you're not the only option. The best-performing emails in our studies maximised clicks by accommodating both. Freemans do this well in their Style Bible email, illustrated here, by giving readers extra 'short-cuts' to sub-categories of womenswear (for those already in buying mode), but also making immediate eye contact and opening a

“It's vital to provide plenty of good content in the opening screen to maximise success, especially in the form of irregular shapes, compelling information and graphic offer elements.”

conversation about a latest fashion trend with compelling, personalised copy (for browsers). We found that engagement, and preference, was influenced significantly by the time spent viewing the email. In turn, time spent was influenced primarily by the success of the email opening screen in drawing readers through the second and third screens. It's vital to provide plenty of good content in the opening screen to maximise success, especially in the form of irregular shapes, compelling information and graphic offer elements. One fatal error in many of the least preferred and least successful emails from our studies was the use of a big image on the opening screen. It may be tempting to aim for the 'wow factor', but in the market sectors we studied, including fashion and holidays, opening on a big image left subjects



The exception to the rule – this big opening screenshot from Not on the High Street uses a busy tagged product shot, diagonal product placement and shallow depth of field

searching in vain for visual cues. Consistently, the most engaging emails worked hard in the opening screen to provide reasons to read on or click through in equal measure.

Design plays a big role in maximising engagement throughout the email, as we will demonstrate in the next section, but on the



opening screen it is important to structure elements to give readers pathways through the email and keep them scrolling. A good example of this, which at first glance appears to break the 'big image' convention, is this email from ecommerce site Not on the High Street. It defies the convention by providing a busy image packed with Christmas cookery products, arranged diagonally to subconsciously draw attention down, and shot with a shallow depth of field. What's more, each product is tagged, with product copy and pricing strategically placed below the image, resulting in high levels of attention and engagement as shown in the heatmap.

So here is our first secret of email success – make a good first impression – and some techniques on how to achieve it. Just like when your prospective customers first enter the store, you have to help them orientate – find their bearings, if you like – and skilfully steer them in the right direction. Now that we have made the first step into the engagement funnel, let's look at how we can continue on the right path.

ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

When first viewing an email, readers will typically focus their attention at the centre of the page while it loads and orient their attention from there. This orienting phase enables them to establish the page's identity and scan for visual cues as it becomes visible on the screen. As the elements on the page are loading, they form patterns that correlate with the rest of the content. From here, the reader is then able to exploit this information to aid them in search durations and navigation.

Subjects can easily become distracted by multiple stimuli presented to them in any given environment. As attention is selective, much of the information gets filtered out, leaving that which is interesting and visually engaging to the individual. In an email, this process occurs very quickly, requiring that the very first screenful performs effectively in the cognitive recruitment of those that view it.

As this opening screen is limited to the size of the email client or internet browser, it is crucial that the space is utilised effectively to encourage further viewing. Large screenful-sized images are viewed too quickly and do not provide enough visual encouragement to scroll down further. In our Cottage Holiday sector study, all of the emails opened with images that took up 20-30% of the area, but accounted for less than 5% of user attention. Additionally, large blocks of text pose a hindrance to attention levels as the task difficulty becomes too taxing.

A more effective way to make use of the first screen is to connect with the reader on an emotional level. This was apparent in several emails we studied that used full or partial figure shots, or addressed the reader directly with an introduction. Other studies have reported that individuals recognise

and react to faces faster than any other element on a page, and those that make direct eye contact have the greatest emotional impact of all. This instantly draws attention to the screen, and can also encourage attention to other areas using directional gaze techniques.

Introductory copy creates an intimate interaction between the reader and the email, particularly when personalised. This commands immediate attention and creates a positive association with the brand on a more personal level. Our studies have shown that this technique promotes further reading and higher preference rates over emails without. However, direct testing for this was limited as true personalisation testing would require the modification of emails to suit each participant.



How not to do it – Marsdens forced their readers to tackle a big block of copy in the opening screen to establish what was on offer

Key techniques

- Ensure the first screenful caters for multiple reasons for opening
- Combine irregular shapes, graphics and text elements to sustain attention
- Offer recipients 'pathways' down the email via text or graphic devices
- Avoid the temptation to use a press ad structure – design in 'screenfuls'

of 'purposeful' openers against those who are 'just dropping in'. Purposeful openers may head straight for the navigation to help them access the most relevant part of your website, or they may read what you have to say first. Make sure your navigation is clear in the opening screen. Openers who just drop in are in browsing mode – perhaps they like your brand or they're in the market for your

How to do it – An effective opening screenful from Freemans using eye contact to create engagement

Whether your email is a lengthy newsletter or a digital postcard, the underlying design structure is crucial in determining levels of subconscious engagement. We have observed a difference in email practice between UK and US marketers in recent years. US email programmes tend to favour high frequency, single minded emails – digital postcards – while the UK has generally evolved lower frequency emails with richer content – digital newsletters. Both strategies have their merits, but design and structure play a bigger role in sustaining engagement in richer content emails, where converting browsing into purchase intent is more important.

One of the most commonly observed design techniques emerging from our studies was the use of diagonal structures among the most successful emails in terms of engagement and preference. The email from multi-channel retailer Next, illustrated here, provides a masterclass in design technique, maximising the engagement funnel by making good use of eye contact, with angled images supported by well-written fashion copy and connected by cut-out shots of the ideal shoes to accompany the dress. The aggregated heatmap shows clearly how our subjects followed the visual cues on a pathway down the email.



Terrific design structure from Next, using product cut-outs to draw the reader down

Excessive use of linear templates and rectangular panels create subconscious barriers to engagement, and were a common factor in many of the least successful emails we studied. It's not a hard and fast rule though – we found some very effective email designs that overcame a linear structure and maintained engagement using other

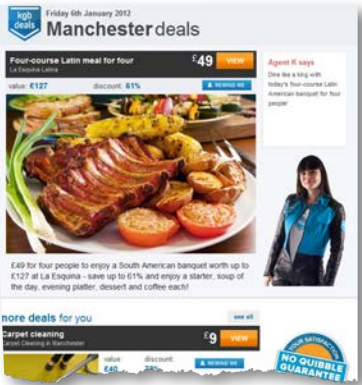
techniques, or combined linear and non-linear sections to create changes of pace within the email. This email from Top Man was well-liked by our male study subjects, despite being designed on a grid, because the cut-out shots contained in each section and the effective use of colour and text sustained attention right to the bottom and provided clear pathways through the email design.



Arcadia use design and colour to great effect to attract and sustain attention in this Topman email

Another email design that overcame linear constraints was the daily deal offer from KGB Deals, shown here, because the subject matter was high interest. Food shots are always attention grabbers, and the lead offer from KGB was no exception. However, the section with the highest level of attention in this email was

the middle, the second screenful. Encouraged by the leading deal, subjects were keen to view the other deals on offer and found it easy to navigate each deal from the intriguing picture consistently positioned on the left, reading right where the offer was of interest. There has been an explosion of growth in signing up for daily deal providers in the UK recently, and the personalisation of offers by region is undoubtedly an important factor. All the offers here related to Manchester and the North West, where our subjects were located.



Excessive use of linear templates and rectangular panels create subconscious barriers to engagement.

So a good overall design structure is the second secret of email success. But each element within the design also harbours secrets which can influence the click rate, and in the next section we examine the first, and perhaps the most important of these, the impact of navigation.



KGB Deals uses colour, images and graphics to overcome a linear design

Key techniques

- Diagonal design frameworks work especially well in a scrolling environment
- Design email outlines in screenfuls, mindful of enticing the reader down
- Avoid linear templates – they often subconsciously interrupt scrolling
- Mix colour, imagery and graphics to sustain attention and engagement
- Irregular shapes combined with non-linear placement are highly effective

ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

Keeping users engaged is highly dependent on design structure. Studies have shown that when looking for useful information, individuals have a tendency to scan for something engaging to attract them. Linear design structures can constrain this action to an extent, but can also hinder processing progression. In this case it is far more beneficial to adopt the use of diagonal design structures throughout the email.

By positioning elements in a continuous 'zig-zag' layout down the page, individuals are able to fixate on each one in turn, leading their gaze naturally down the page. Furthermore, as each screenful can only display a certain amount at a time, by having the elements in partial view at the fold, readers will feel they need to scroll further to view it in its entirety. This effective technique has been demonstrated to encourage reading of the whole email from the opening screen to the close. Taking these principles into account, designers can approach effective email design in screenfuls rather than as a whole.

From a design perspective, it is important to be aware that people will not always pay attention to all of the information displayed on the screen. Due to the repetitive actions users take, much of it often gets unconsciously filtered out, so that they only pay attention to what is important to them. Making elements more prominent where necessary (e.g. colourful graphics, product cut-outs), can aid in overcoming this 'exclusive saliency'.

If there is a lot of important copy to display on the page, it is better to break it down into smaller paragraphs. Individuals process information more easily this way and are much less likely to become overwhelmed by excessive blocks of text. As a large amount of cognitive processing is taken up reading text, the load can be lightened

by other means. These include incorporating visual elements such as images and graphics, that are quick and easy to process, or alternatively, one could feature additional motor elements (clicks and mouse movements) that create a break in reading and offer a less demanding activity. This makes reading the email much less of an arduous task and far more mentally engaging, which has been demonstrated in our testing to result in more efficient absorption and higher preference rates.



The gaze plot reveals clear pathways down the email

Good navigation can account for over one third of total clicks on a well designed email. What's more, we know from actual data on a number of email programmes that navigation clicks are more 'purposeful', with a higher propensity to convert. Best practice often advocates mirroring the navigation on your website within emails, but this is most certainly a poor piece of advice, and doesn't account for the very different objectives of website and email. Most commercial websites have the key objective of closing the sale - maximising the conversion to sale or desired action – visit the store, book the restaurant or sign up for the course. While email programmes have objectives much further up the sales funnel - creating purchase consideration, launching a new product, announcing a sale, or simply maintaining engagement and share of mind.

So good practice for email navigation is to accommodate the reasons for opening and support the themes and content of the email in the digital signposts. If your email is all about fashion, consider including secondary navigation for fashion sub-ranges, as Grattan do here. If your subject header announces a sale, give openers the choice of going straight there with a prominent button and clear taxonomy – 'Shop the Sale' – or browsing the email to



Grattan's secondary navigation highlights fashion categories, and supports the email content effectively

find out what's in the sale. For recipients, email navigation offers the promise of a short-cut to exactly where they want to be on your website – the more relevant the signposts, the better your chances of a click. Don't be bound by your website navigation – consider the most effective digital signposts on an email by email basis.

One important technique for improving visibility of - and propensity to click - navigation buttons is to avoid isolating your email navigation bar from other elements.

This happened most commonly in our tests with emails that made the mistake we highlighted earlier of opening with a big



The large image and colourful foliage isolate and hide the navigation in this Hoseasons email

image. Where this occurred, navigation bars often became separated from the higher attention elements of the email, and missed altogether. On a website page, visitors are attuned to the conventions and seek out navigation in familiar places – in an email, behaviour is quite different, as readers seek visual cues to establish what is on offer and whether it is of interest. The email from Hoseasons, illustrated here, demonstrates

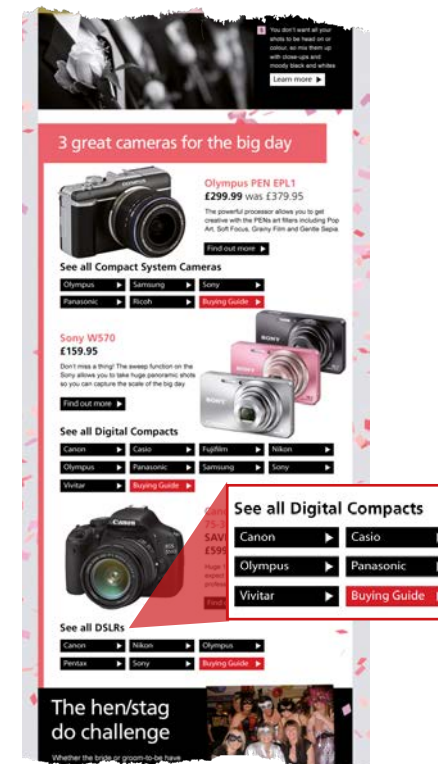
the dilemma. Not only is the navigation isolated by the full screen image, but it is difficult to distinguish in peripheral vision from the colourful shot.

Another good strategy to increase incremental response from navigation is by including extra or repeated navigation, especially at the foot of emails. Most engaged readers will read to the foot of an email and, if persuaded by the content, consider visiting the website, so it makes

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sense to include extra or alternative digital signposts here. If your product ranges or services are deep, try using additional sub-navigation in relevant positions within the email. All can prove productive in capturing incremental purposeful web visits.

The middle section of a content rich email from Jessops, shown here, makes good use of extra navigation within the email at the point of consideration, promoting three different types of camera with a lead offer,



Camera retailer Jessops understand that many of their customers are loyal to a particular brand, and give them shortcuts to their favourite

and then providing useful extra navigation allowing readers to shop by brand. Jessops know that many camera enthusiasts are intensely brand loyal, and cater for this with good short-cuts to their favourite brand.

Finally, many good email marketers understand the value of using colour and icons in email navigation to draw attention to important signposts. Contrasting colours for important navigation elements, such as the use of red for the Sale link, or simple icons that improve absorption and understanding of the routes to the website, can be very effective in directing attention and capturing extra response.

ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

As people become more and more familiar with using email and the web, they become accustomed to the way web pages and emails are designed. They develop a mental model of where items are placed due to their prior experience and expectations. Upon loading a page, they are able to quickly identify what it is about by the familiar shapes and patterns that are captured through glimpses in their peripheral vision. This might include navigation elements such as menu bars and buttons, typically placed at the top to provide users with quick access to a specific area of a website.

Incorporating such design features in an email works well in this respect due to similarity in basic web design structure. However, for email the information is being 'sold' to the reader and is doing so in a very short space of time. Therefore, the rules need to be adapted to accommodate faster and more superficial scanning. The use of a simpler, quick-to-process taxonomy is an effective way to assist a user's navigation preferences, meeting objectives with little resistance and in a shorter time frame.

In one recent study we found that when users encountered ambiguity in a website's taxonomy, confusion ensued. For example, the link for a refrigeration page on the AGA website was titled 'Chilled AGA'. Eye tracking analysis revealed that this title caused a lot of confusion in participants, leading to the amended name 'AGA Refrigeration'. This change led to a much improved digital signpost and users were quickly able to identify the link and what to expect from it.

Once individuals are confident in what an email is about and where they can find information they are likely to engage with it for longer. In doing so they often reach the foot of

the email, where we have observed that secondary navigation can be effective. In placing navigation at the foot of the email as well as the top, the chance of encouraging a click-through is enhanced. It not only serves as a reminder but also provides one more easy-to-find call to action without having to scroll back to the top.



How to do it - Arcadia emails always follow good practice and this one from TopMan uses both good header and footer navigation.

Key techniques

- Avoid 'isolating' navigation from the high attention elements of your email
- Use navigation at the foot as well as the top – most engaged readers reach here
- Always use extra or secondary navigation when it will act as a useful shortcut
- Make navigation even more effective with icons or colour coding

Successful salesmen know that even the most skilfully crafted sales pitch is wasted unless they 'ask for the business'. In every sales conversation, inertia is the worst enemy – it's vital to close the sale quickly – but face to face, the salesman can tailor the conversation to the prospect's interest. In a digital environment, we don't have the same advantage. The most successful emails close the sale effectively by featuring strong calls to action at every point of consideration.

Clear winners in our test studies were those emails that featured multiple calls to action throughout the email, well-positioned to be in close proximity to the featured product or service. Longer emails took less than 60 seconds on average to be fully digested by subjects in our tests – shorter, digital postcard formats engaged attention for around 10 seconds. So decisions to click, or not to click, are made in milliseconds. What's more, while a High Street store can be revisited in a shopping trip, an email almost always has just one opportunity to

stimulate the desire to purchase before it's deleted. So it is vital to exploit the immediate vicinity of the product or offer by providing a well-worded call to action there and then.

The 'Go to Deal' button that features prominently on Frugaloo's daily deal email, shown here, is located in close proximity to the details of the deal and directly adjacent



How not to do it – this ASOS gazeplot reveals a hard-to-find CTA

to the price and savings panels, which we found to be very high interest elements, as the heatmap shows. The format of Frugaloo's call to action also demonstrates another of our consistent findings, which is that conventions for button design are well understood by viewers of emails and websites, and successful emails exploit this. Make clickable elements look clickable!

Contrast this approach with the dilemma faced by one of our respondents viewing an ASOS email. Having shown high interest in the summer dress she was being urged to 'Love, Want, Need', our test subject can be clearly seen in this gazeplot struggling to identify the button that would take her

“We have found the language of CTAs to be a decisive factor in many of our tests. Recipients do not want to be perplexed or intrigued, but they may not be quite ready to buy what is on offer.”

there. Good email marketing is about making it easy and removing obstacles to the sale in a digital environment where actions are taken – open, click, delete – in very compressed timescales.

Frugaloo also demonstrates another key success factor for enhancing clickability. Good use of colour and language. Each button is consistently positioned and uses a strong lime green which is absent from the surroundings, giving it prominence even in peripheral vision. Moreover, the language 'Go to Deal' is clear and unequivocal, with a strong sense of underlying urgency well-suited to a deal-based proposition.

We have found the language of CTAs to be a decisive factor in many of our tests. Recipients do not want to be perplexed or

intrigued, but they may not be quite ready to buy what is on offer. Many ecommerce brands use language that reflects the stage in the purchase funnel that the reader has reached – 'View the range' or 'Find out more' may prove more clickable than 'Buy now' for just this reason.

When considering call to action devices, the key implications from our study are about improving clickability. Proximity, colour, font, language, design and shape all play an important part in influencing recognition and propensity to respond.

In the next section, we look at some of the high interest elements of content that can create more digital footfall throughout the email.



Frugaloo's Go to Deal button is a prominent and unequivocal CTA

ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

Clickability incorporates the effective use and placement of call to action elements in emails and web pages. Studies have shown that task demands and stimulus information strongly influence cognitive strategy during visual activity, prompting users to plan and moderate their scanning of a visual field accordingly. Their ability to locate and act upon their task demands effectively is directly influenced by the presentation of elements. By clearly defining related elements such as a product image, text description, and button in close proximity to one another, we can direct the user's attention effectively (from image to text, and text to button). This allows for a swift transition of unconscious processing (implicit attraction from periphery), to conscious processing (controlled, focused attention).

Call to action elements should therefore be designed and implemented with care. While their placement and proximity are important, it is crucial that they are clearly visible as a call to action so as not to be missed completely. In marked contrast to the ASOS email illustrated earlier, which only two of our ten study participants spotted, another fashion retailer, Freemans, demonstrates a much more effective design structure for product links. With the use of three-dimensional buttons that are clearly defined and well positioned, it is evident in this gaze plot that the user has no trouble identifying the links in a natural gaze path from the text and images. The proximity of the button serves to eliminate visual confusion. In fact, eight of our participants noted the CTA buttons in this section of the email. Moreover, the fact that the link is a button rather than just text instantly reveals it as a clickable link and encourages action from the reader.

These types of design structures are particularly important for first time visitors who are unfamiliar with the way new elements are displayed. Clear, coherent composition of inter-related elements enables the user to adopt a much more productive browsing behaviour. The separation of related elements has been shown to be detrimental to this behaviour and slows down processing. It is therefore crucial to keep related elements in close proximity to avoid conflict and allow for smooth peripheral to foveal shifts in attention.



How to do it – good proximity of the CTAs to the high attention elements in this Freemans email

Key techniques

- Using multiple calls to action throughout an email ensures proximity at the 'point of consideration'
- Button design conventions are well understood by consumers – make clickable elements look clearly clickable
- Colour, font, language, size and positioning of CTA buttons all impact on recognition and click propensity

Frugaloo's daily deal email makes economic use of space to attract attention and positions a prominent call to action in close proximity to each deal

It's often argued that websites without good, original content are more likely to fail – 'content is king'. And while emails do not have to compete for search engine rankings, good content is just as important, because they have to compete for attention in crowded inboxes. Email programmes that focus single-mindedly on selling may do well, but they are missing out on incremental business by failing to emotionally engage with recipients. In our tests, emails that included 'added value' elements – content not directly relating to the sale but valued by the reader – often scored highly for attention and preference.

The prime objective of any email programme is to maximise digital footfall – closing the sale is a task for the website – and the best eCRM programmes exploit this synergistic partnership. All things being equal, people buy from people they like, and the right added value content in an email can prove invaluable in creating a positive environment for the sale process. We found a number of examples amongst our study emails of content that did not directly sell, but was successful in attracting high levels of attention and increasing the propensity to visit the website.

Arcadia brands frequently use this technique in their emails to draw attention to their fashion ranges, offering advice and inspiration in a sector where both are much appreciated. Miss Selfridge includes a 'behind the scenes' video preview of the new season's fashion in the email shown here,

“Added value content not only acts to increase engagement with an email, but also has a big impact on preference and positive associations.”

Another email we tested, a rich content wedding photography email from Jessops, scored high levels of attention from head to foot by skilfully blending sales messages and advice and techniques for capturing better shots at weddings. 'Great cameras for the big day' were featured amongst 'Top 5 wedding photography tips' and some advice on coping with low light conditions on the hen or stag night.

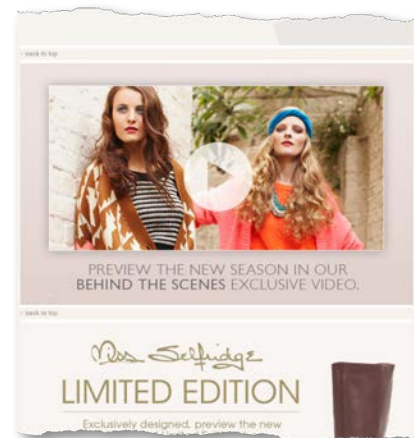
Added value content not only acts to increase engagement with an email, but also has a big impact on preference and positive associations, influencing propensity to open future emails from that brand and potentially reducing unsubscribe rates.

An email programme that consists purely of the latest offers is only likely to be opened and studied when the consumer is in purchase mode. A programme that provides a richer and more varied diet of content, including advice, humour, video elements or access to helpful online tools such as the one from Top Shop, helps to build a sustainable and engaged audience, and creates incremental digital footfall.

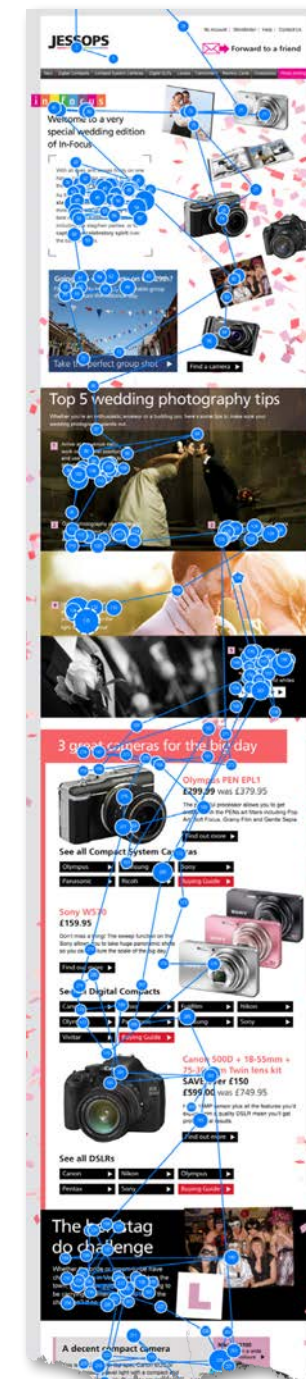
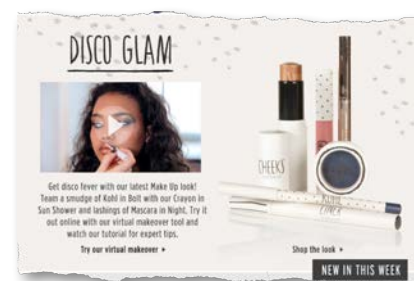
which was cited as a reason for preference by some of our respondents. Another Arcadia email, this time from Top Shop, offers an online virtual makeover tool which promises to help shoppers master the art of 'Disco Glam' makeup, accompanied by a video tutorial. Whilst clearly demonstrating how well these brands understand the motivations of their target audience, such content also enhances brand engagement and increases the likelihood of a sale. Both also use the 'triangle' convention which consumers readily recognise. We have seen this act as a very powerful call to action in our studies.

Key techniques

- Relevant value added content in emails can increase long-term engagement and reduce unsubscribes
- Headlining added value content in subject headers frequently boosts open rates
- Good examples include advisory features, hints and tips, humorous content and online tools
- Blending sales messages and advice in an integrated way is very effective in sustaining attention



Miss Selfridge and Top Shop, both using video content effectively to drive extra clicks and enhance engagement



This timely wedding photography email from Jessops sustains attention with useful tips for getting great shots on the big day and at the hen or stag night

ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

Among the 50 emails used in our research, there were only a select few that included what we would describe as added value content (AVC). This would effectively include additional information that was not a direct exhortation to buy, but offered something to the recipient for free. Examples included photography tips, fashion advice, product recommendations and useful or exclusive online video content. Irrespective of the market sector, our data consistently reported high engagement and preference rates with this type of email above those without any added value content.

Our findings also indicated high levels of attention to the AVC areas, and an increase in the number of fixations surrounding it. This 'halo effect' worked best when AVC areas were placed in close proximity to the product information, leading them through a path of natural viewing progression.

In the Jessops wedding email, for example, subjects were found to spend a longer amount of time reading the rest of the email and the product information if they had viewed the added value content. According to our qualitative data, the personal tips and recommendations provided the encouragement to read on and discover more of what the company had to offer. We encountered similar findings in some of our fashion emails, where style advice was highly valued by our test subjects.

It was clear from our research findings that consumers react positively to this kind of content stimulus. Perhaps unsurprisingly, women – and men – interested in fashion appreciated advice on style, colours and trends. Photography enthusiasts won't be in the market

for a camera every month, but retailers can stay front of mind by sharing their passion and offering useful tips and techniques. Prospective holidaymakers considering their next holiday cottage value information on things to do in the area, or which locations are best for those with children or pets.

All of our study participants had expressed an interest in the sector we were asking them to view emails for, and were recruited to an appropriate target demographic. These affinities could clearly be seen in the viewing behaviour and sustained attention levels that subjects exhibited towards added value content. For email marketers, the lesson is clear – emotional engagement with email programmes can be considerably enhanced by the use of such elements.



Top Shop's Disco Glam makeover video proved of high interest

The most engaging emails in our tests invariably combined copy and images effectively to attract and sustain attention. We are attracted by the images of products, just as we scan the shelves in shops to find something appealing, but we gain confidence and make purchasing decisions from the supporting information, perhaps on the price tag or the label. "How much is it, and is it in my price range? How does this product compare with other similar models I've seen elsewhere?" We have already set out our assertion that, in the main, it is difficult to complete the sale in the email alone – but we can enhance the likelihood of a sale by what we do in the email. We can send people through to the website with their wallets and purses out, if we use copy effectively.

There are two important factors that make for effective copy in an email – what you say, and where you say it. The 'boys toys' gift retailer Firebox does both well in the Christmas gift email illustrated here. The ten gifts featured in this email all attracted sustained attention using well-written and humorous copy, incorporating headline, sub-head and three to four lines of body copy in a short, newspaper style column. Positioned close to the product image and 'deal' graphic, and substantiated by the price, savings and prominent call to action, each

product box made efficient use of space and was easy for our subjects to scan, process and determine interest.

This Christmas themed email from Marks & Spencer proved even more effective in terms of copy engagement, integrating easily-absorbed snippets of copy into the overall design alongside high interest cut-out product shots. The design structure makes

“There is real 'click synergy' in integrating imagery, text, graphics and pricing information in close proximity.”

good use of text, graphics and imagery to maintain the reader's momentum whilst imparting persuasive sales messages quickly and efficiently. As we have already noted in this report, there is real 'click synergy' in integrating imagery, text, graphics and pricing information in close proximity and the M&S email is an excellent example with high preference scores in our study.

Another very effective copy technique is the use of hypertext links within blocks of copy – the convention is well-understood by

consumers, and is often treated as a potential 'deep linked' short cut, acting as an additional



Good integration of text with very high interest cut-out product shots in this M&S Christmas email

call to action. Substantial blocks of copy should be avoided wherever possible, as they can act as barriers to further readership. If lengthy copy is needed to explain a complex offer, devices such as hyperlinks, wrapping text around supporting images and using columns to shorten line length all help to sustain reader attention.

Key techniques

- Integrate copy elements with imagery and graphics to create a balanced email
- Text absorbs more attention but imparts more information – hyperlinks within text are easily understood and drive extra response
- Personalisation within emails attracts high attention levels and is a powerful directional device
- Bullet point lists work well by helping readers rapidly absorb relevant information



Hoseasons used a bullet point list of benefits for their city break apartments very effectively mid-email to substantiate and convince

Direct marketers are expert in the use of copy devices to tell a story, and one classic technique that we saw work well in our study was the use of a bullet point list. The middle section of a Hoseasons email marketing short break apartments, shown here, is an excellent example of the device. Having engaged readers with some attractive shots of the apartments and prices, the bullet point list below immediately begins to substantiate and convince with benefits such as 'lower prices per person than equivalent hotels', 'DVDs and home cinema often included' and 'Access to gardens and balconies in many apartments'.

This is the kind of good supporting information that helps to build confidence and create the environment for a sale. We'll return to this theme in the next section as we discuss the art of 'digital salesmanship'.

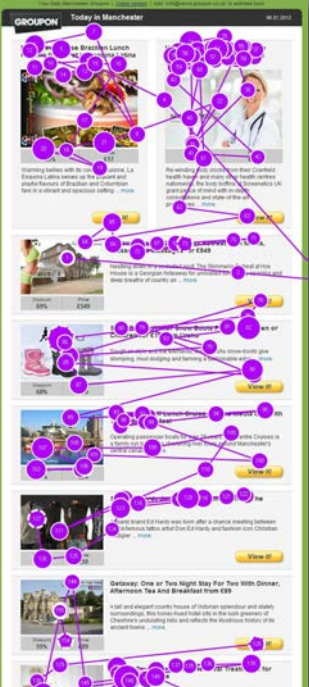
ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

When reading, a person's eyes move in a series of saccades rather than smoothly across the page, and consistently jump backwards and forwards over the text. Factors such as size, font, language and proximity all influence how the text is processed, which in turn affect the number of fixations and time fixated on it. Images on the other hand are not only quick to process, but they can also be viewed in peripheral vision requiring very little focus and concentration. This gives users the option to attend to or ignore them completely without directly focusing on them. Due to the speed of this process, the majority of time is typically spent on text elements for information retrieval.

While reading is more taxing and requires additional time, it does convey more information, helping readers determine where to look next. Moreover, text can serve to support image elements, cementing brand memory and recall. This can be achieved with titles and headlines that are meaningful and emotionally charged, as commonly used in daily newspapers. Additionally, the use of simpler language and fewer syllables helps to speed up processing and aid spontaneous recall.

How the text is displayed can also affect how it is received. Generally, large bodies of compacted text are shunned by viewers as they become overwhelmed by the reading task. This can be overcome by breaking up text into manageable chunks, separated with elements such as headings, bullet points, or imagery. This break in concentration level provides the reader with a variety of different elements to attend to, helping to achieve consistent engagement throughout.

Simple fonts work best. Complex or unusual typefaces can interfere with how readers recognise text patterns, which in turn can slow down comprehension. Line length can affect the speed at which text is read on a page. Studies report that people typically prefer to read in shorter columns – around 45-72 characters – as it feels easier to absorb. Several of our study emails supported this, including some of the daily deal, holiday and Christmas gift emails, where subjects seemed able to easily read and navigate multiple offers.



The gazeplot for this Groupon email demonstrates good text placement, following the product image and leading directly to the CTA. Readers can extract everything they need to know about the deal in a matter of seconds, and it's the systematically efficient design and neat concise copy that gets them there.



Firebox uses humorous copy in a column format to sustain attention to its range of unusual Christmas gifts

One of the best instructors we ever used in our company used to teach us that a good salesman or presenter got three things right in equal measure – the words (the content and language), the music (the tone of voice, pitch and emphasis), and the dance (the body language). In print and in online communication, just as in the physical world, there's a real skill in salesmanship but we have to use other communication techniques to make up for the limited range of sensory elements at our disposal. In a digital environment, the messages we display, the context in which we display them and how we exploit peripheral vision are the skills most needed to close the sale.

Among more than 50 emails in our test studies, a very small number seemed to exhibit something special in terms of engaging subjects in a particular product – the ability to sustain positive subject attention for an unusual length of time in the 'soundbyte' environment of email. In the same way that a charismatic salesman or market trader can command attention from a crowd, these emails presented products in a manner that created sustained attention and strong recall – we termed this effect 'digital salesmanship'.

this was a high interest product, one of a new generation of compact system cameras incorporating many of the features of higher end cameras – such as interchangeable lenses – but at more affordable price point. So it was not surprising that the product attracted sustained attention and had strong recall, but this product panel – which accounted for only 15% of the area of the email – commanded over half of all the time spent viewing the email by our respondents. Studying the gazeplots of our individual subjects, we observed a synergy of attention between the

a head and shoulders shot in the viewfinder is a clever device – throughout our studies we found subjects inexorably drawn to make direct eye contact with facial imagery.

retailers Freemans and Next included well-designed integrated product presentations that exploited digital salesmanship, and featured highly among the most recalled and most preferred for our test subjects.

What characterised all of these high attention product panels was the use of cut-out product shots – whether fashion, cameras or Christmas gifts – soundbytes of product copy, strong headlines, subheads and price points, often with attention-grabbing graphics employed to link and integrate the elements. Every effective product offer we observed exploited the positioning of elements to maintain continuous engagement within the reader's peripheral vision. In maintaining eye contact like the successful salesman, each of these emails used a combination of persuasive techniques to ensure the best chance of closing the sale.

ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

When an individual fixates on a particular area, there are several processes that occur. These include encoding of the visual stimulus, peripheral sampling, and the preparation of where to look next. Each type of stimulus on the page (i.e. text/image/price) requires varying levels of attention, and is consequently attended to in a very systematic approach. Through eye tracking we are able to identify the order in which items are attended to and for how long before the user moves onto the next. Once these properties are established, elements can be subtly emphasised and arranged in a format to attract attention accordingly, and thus create shorter, more efficient scan paths.

In the example for Jacobs Cameras we found results to support this, demonstrating that users' attention is ordinal - fixating on elements in turn before moving onto the next. With an effective design format, the email takes users on a directed scan path from image to text, to price and click-through link, all in an order of close proximity. This creates a very balanced level of processing that produces an efficient absorption of information and sustained attention. We know that both are key factors in determining recall and preference and, by implication, propensity to consider and buy.

This process is identified in eye tracking analysis with the use of gaze plots where sustained attention is shown with illustrative fixation points. However, it is the balance of fixation duration and a steady path of little deviation that indicates processing proficiency. As images are quick to process, the use of detailed and angled shots provide high level detail and are therefore viewed for longer. The text is kept short and concise, resulting in an equal amount of time spent on them as the image,

creating a balanced level of attention overall. We found that images and body copy each received about 25% of fixation time in the opening screen, demonstrating the effective balance in the elements. The net result is a higher level of engagement with the email. Jacobs make effective use of detailed imagery and concise text, while reducing crowd factors (unrelated surrounding elements) in order to guide a steady gaze over the material that is focused and purposeful.



Superb design integration of product shots, copy, price points and graphics to create a high interest and well liked opening screen

Of all the examples we studied, by far the most finely crafted was this Bank Holiday Sale email from camera retailer Jacobs, which featured an Olympus Pen camera at a reduced price of £299 as the leading offer. According to our camera enthusiast subjects,

“Every effective product offer we observed exploited the positioning of elements to maintain continuous engagement within the reader's peripheral vision.”

product image, the price point and savings starburst and the product copy details.

There is an elegant efficiency about the design of the product panel. The use of cut-out shots for the camera and the lens helps integrate the feature into the Bank Holiday Sale message above and the alternative, higher-priced bundle deal below, and gives a three dimensional feel to the panel. The Save £80 starburst graphic neatly connects the product image with the body copy. The use of



A number of the other emails in our study had product features that demonstrated a similar 'synergy of design elements'. Both Marks & Spencer and Not on the High Street among our Christmas gift sector emails and fashion

Key techniques

- Exploit the synergistic relationship between product images, copy, price points and graphics to sustain attention
- Integrating the elements works better than imposing a grid structure
- Ensure proximity of elements to maximise message absorption - adjacencies
- Integrating the right call to action is vital to 'closing the sale'



In all kinds of marketing communications, good designers know how to exploit graphic devices to draw attention to important messages and dramatise key offers. Graphic devices can convey urgency or exclusivity, shout a special offer or whisper a subconscious brand attribute. For emails, where the timescales for consumer engagement and interaction are brief, graphics can be especially effective in visually conveying a hierarchy of messages and influencing the path taken through the email.

Once again, Top Shop provides a good example of the use of graphic devices to draw attention to offers – in this case Free Next Day Delivery in a roundel, positioned just above the navigation – and to provide a subliminal route down the email using three headers – Maxi Style, Midi Length and Pencil Perfect – deliberately positioned on a diagonal slope. The aggregated heatmap of our recipients' viewing patterns shows clearly how effectively these messages were absorbed while increasing the attention to the products.

A more overt directional graphic device is very effectively demonstrated in this monthly newsletter email from financial services



Top Shop draw attention to the offer and products and sustain momentum using colourful graphic devices

company Swinton. Insurance is a low interest product for most consumers, and Swinton have used cute cartoon robins to create engagement for this winter-themed email. But note how they have incorporated a scarf graphic to cleverly sustain reader momentum and connect elements within the email.

Another Arcadia fashion email, this time from Dorothy Perkins, makes novel use of a 'notebook and pen' graphic to support a set of New Year fashion resolutions, each resolution attached to relevant products. The angled presentation of the notebook and the diagonal sight line of the pen are both

Graphics are used purposefully to showcase the product, to direct attention and to create pathways.

important small touches in influencing eye movement in the direction that the designer intends – drawing attention to the product.

It's not just fashion emails that are exploiting graphic devices effectively – the opening screen of this Comet January Sale email also shows skilful use of graphic elements, from the use of arrows as an additional product CTA or to encourage scrolling, to the inclusion of small illustrations, such as photo prints, remote controls and snowflakes, to 'connect'

Key techniques

- Graphic devices are just as effective in email as in other forms of marketing
- Use price point and offer graphics near product images to aid fast absorption
- Graphic elements can also have a role in determining paths through the email
- Most importantly, the graphic elements set the tone – urgency, exclusivity, femininity, offer-based



Swinton makes highly effective use of graphics to heighten engagement and direct readers down the email

elements within the email and influence eye movement.

In all these emails, graphics are used purposefully to showcase the product, to direct attention and to create pathways, often helping to overcome the limitations of a linear underlying design structure. It is impossible for us to know what was in the minds of the designers, but in each case they have clearly demonstrated an instinctive grasp of the techniques to influence readership and aid absorption in a content-rich context.



Dorothy Perkins uses a New Year resolution notebook and pen to draw attention to their latest fashion products



Small graphic illustrations help to connect an otherwise very linear design structure

ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

People are motivated to keep seeking information, but don't like to work too hard for it. The easier it is for them to find it, the more likely they are to continue engaging in information-seeking behaviour. Without careful design consideration, content-rich emails can become confusing for readers, risking them closing the email in seconds as it becomes too bewildering.

Eye movements have been found to be affected by both the design of the page and habitually preferred scan paths. Through the effective use of graphics, it is possible to draw attention to items of importance, embellish on special offers, and subconsciously influence the path taken through the email. Bright colours, plain font, and concise text are all useful design tactics that we have seen attract attention effectively in our studies. By catching reader attention with a graphic first, they can quickly absorb the information and then move straight onto the neighbouring element it directs towards, resulting in more proficient processing of the email.

This process can be seen in action by viewing gaze plot data that indicates how users end up at elements with the use of graphic device leadership. The Burton email illustrated here positions the graphics in a diagonal layout between other elements, providing a natural progressive flow down the page. This helps to reduce uncertainty and improves the chances of absorbing other important information benefiting from the 'halo effect' of the graphic in peripheral vision. A relatively small graphic element in one of our study emails from Boden, a roundel offering an 11% discount, scored high attention and recall from all the participants. This email also incorporates several other good design practices to create good diagonals and paths

through the content. In emails that are constrained by design features (i.e. grid format), graphic devices that are meticulously positioned can overcome the boundaries and continue to lead a person's gaze where necessary.



The 11% discount roundel scored highly for attention and preference in this well-designed email from Boden



Burton have used graphic devices effectively to connect product elements in this menswear email

In a store, every square foot represents the opportunity for a sale. In an email, every pixel should be exploited to gain an extra click or increase the likelihood of conversion. What's more, unless you are Louis Vutton or Mulberry, where spacious ambience lends exclusivity, the more products you offer and the more benefits you can showcase the better. For every thousand readers who open your email, there are a hundred different reasons for doing so. The more you can cater for – within a well-designed, balanced structure, of course – the better your response rate.

Some of the most successful emails among those we studied frequently contained more than 30 clickable links – product links, offer links, hypertext links, multiple calls to action, secondary and tertiary navigation – for the reader, the clear implication was that they were being offered a great deal of choice. The choice to buy now, or find out more. The choice to view a specific product, or shop the whole range. The choice to look at only Canon cameras, or just Nikon models. The option to view a video about the latest catwalk trends.

From a customer's perspective, presenting options is empowering – and of course, as we have observed elsewhere, it demonstrates classic sales psychology – not so much 'do you want to buy or not?', but 'which do you prefer, the red or the blue?'

Freemans recognises the dilemma that older women face in choosing a swimsuit to suit their shape in the email illustrated here, and offers a video for each shape, such as Apple, Pear and Hourglass, which proved of high interest to our test subjects. They make optimum use of the email space –angling the shots to provide pathways, dramatising the key benefit within the copy soundbyte, and



Freemans makes optimal use of the space around featured product videos with multiple calls to action

providing a small but helpful shape illustration near the 'Watch video' call to action. This hard-working email space incorporates several of the techniques we have described in this paper, including the use of 'Zoom' as an additional call to action on the product image, rather than 'Buy' or 'View More'.

“
From a customer's perspective, presenting options is empowering.
”

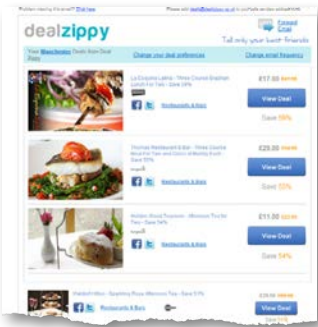
Many of the emails we studied incorporated integration with social media, either by encouraging sign-up at the foot of emails, like this one from Firebox, or by integrating the option to 'Like' or 'Tweet' products throughout the email, as DealZippy do. Fewer, though, offered readers a concrete reason for doing so.

As a general rule, emails that allowed too much space between 'points of interest' gained little engagement from our test subjects, and as a consequence were rarely positively recalled. This camera email from Currys, with elements widely dispersed in a linear structure, was not effective at sustaining attention or attracting preference, despite the fact that the subjects in this case were all interested in cameras. Almost without exception, the emails best received in our

tests left no stone unturned in attempting to engage and sustain interest and exploit every opportunity for incremental responses.



Firebox take the opportunity to encourage readers to 'Like', 'Follow' and 'View' on social media at the foot of their emails



DealZippy feature social media links against all the deals in their email to tease out opportunities for valuable referrals

Key techniques

- Successful emails frequently contain 30+ clickable links – hypertext links, multiple calls to action, secondary navigation and footer links all drive incremental clicks
- Consider multiple calls to action for a single product – 'Zoom', 'View the Range', 'Find Out More'
- Provide deep links that get the recipient directly to their area of interest

ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

Design and layout affect all aspects of the interaction between the email and the user, from ease of use to overall feelings towards the brand. While it is important to not overcrowd the page, it is equally important not to create too much empty space. When used correctly, space can signify areas of importance, lighten the cognitive load when processing, or serve to point out call to action links.

The Miss Selfridge email illustrates an effective way of using space to accentuate images and encourage users to follow a clear path to the bottom of the page. This is a good way of making sure nothing is easily missed by the viewer. The spacious layout gives the reader the sense of unhurried browsing, allowing for detailed viewing and ensuring more time is spent on consideration. It is also very clear to see how the fashion products relate and co-ordinate as a result of the care taken with product positioning and presentation – the digital equivalent of window dressing. Our female test subjects reacted well to this email, remaining engaged and demonstrating high recall of the featured products.

In marked contrast, empty space can also be ineffective and even detrimental to attention when poorly executed. In this Farm & Cottage Holidays email, images are small, linear and widely dispersed. Considering that images are very quick to process, this design approach is counterproductive as they are hastily scanned over and much less likely to be recalled or affect preference and purchasing decisions. The dispersed structure encouraged our subjects to assimilate the contents of this email very quickly, and resulted in very low recall and preference scores. In effect, the design structure has ensured that readers rapidly lose interest in the content.



Although overall this Miss Selfridge email seems spacious, good use of diagonals and multiple calls to action ensure sustained attention right to the foot



Lack of substance in the content, coupled with a poor positioning of elements, resulted in low attention, recall and preference for this cottage holiday email



How not to do it – this email from Currys loses engagement rapidly with an uninspiring, widely dispersed design

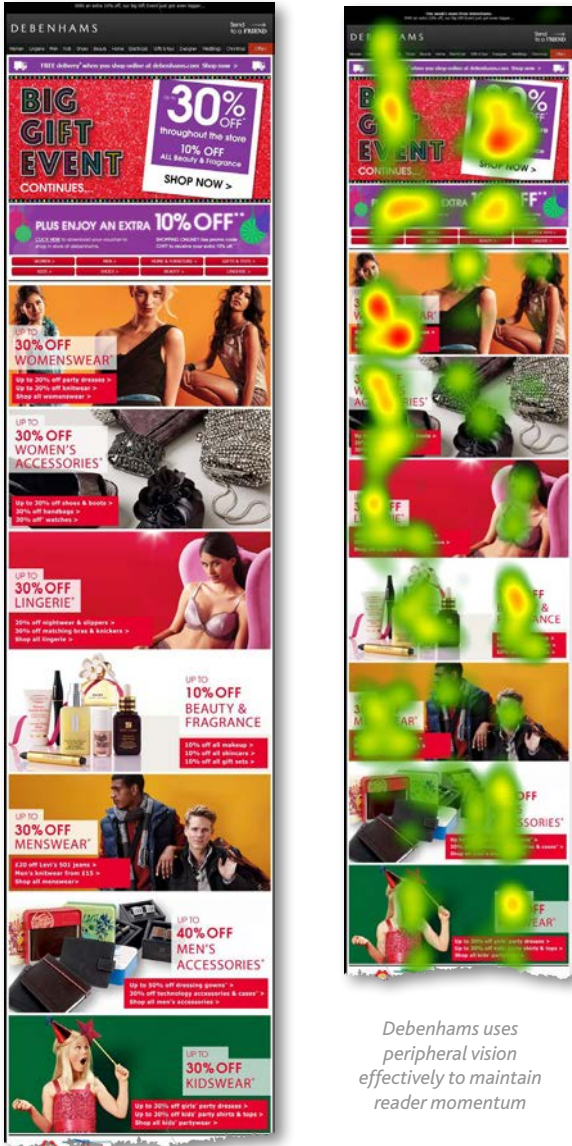


We interpret what we see differently depending on the context and environment. What might seem an exceptional bargain in a department store would be perceived very differently in a discount store. In emails, the use of elements in peripheral vision, and imagery especially, can reinforce positive perceptions and aid understanding. Throughout this paper we have discussed the importance of positioning and integration for a marketing channel that is like no other in its dependence on scrolling to sustain attention. For email design to be successful, it is vital to factor in near and peripheral vision.

This Christmas gift email from Debenhams illustrates the principle very effectively. By positioning a secondary set of navigation buttons between a discount graphic and the irresistible subliminal attraction of eye contact, the email measurably increases the likelihood of noticing, and acting on, the buttons. The diagonally structured 'Big Gift Event' headline can still be assimilated in peripheral vision at this point. The email continues to use eye contact to attract, and discount offers to substantiate, throughout the email, maintaining reader momentum, as can be clearly seen from the heatmap.

Many of the most effective emails we tested employed the technique of ensuring that the 'attractor' (most often an image or graphic) was in close proximity to the 'substantiator' (typically copy on product benefits, prices or savings), together with one or more calls to action. The daily deal sector emails in our study all used this approach effectively to present multiple 'deals' in a standardised format that was easy for our subjects to absorb rapidly – important for a high frequency email programme – and determine which were of interest. As you would expect in this context, price and savings are the 'substantiator', and Frugaloo used a series of eye-catching images combined with prominent price and savings boxes, in close proximity to the 'Go to deal' call to action.

Peripheral vision is an important influence on eye movement and direction, and can be a decisive factor in encouraging email recipients to maintain engagement – to keep scrolling. Designers can judge the effectiveness of their designs quite simply using the 'thumb and fist' technique. If the thumbnail at arm's length is a good representation of the immediate focal point, making a fist will indicate the nearby elements that will guide the reader's next move. Considered placement of all the elements in the email design structure can significantly increase attention throughout the engagement funnel.



Key techniques

- Good placement of elements aids visual processing and increases the likelihood of a response
- Always combine the 'attractor' (often an image or graphic) in near proximity to the 'substantiator' (typically copy) and the call to action to optimise success
- Use the 'thumb' and 'fist' at arm's length when judging design to predict paths through the email

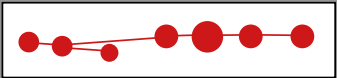
ANALYST'S PERSPECTIVE

When an individual views an object in their environment, they do so with varying levels of perception in their visual field. In broad terms this includes three regions: 1) the fovea – typically consists of several degrees of the visual field where visual activity is centred and of high-level detail; 2) the parafovea – around five degrees either side of the fovea, where acuity becomes gradually reduced; and 3) the periphery – the area on the furthest part of the visual field, which is of the lowest detail, but provides information on where to orient foveal recognition.

As our highest level of attention is located at the foveal region, the surrounding areas serve to support this by providing information which can be viewed from the 'corner' of the eye. An example of how we use these regions effectively can be demonstrated when we identify a potential hazard in our environment. Something catches our eye in peripheral vision, our brain then alerts us to it, and we subsequently focus on it in order to avoid possible danger.

In recent psychological studies, the parafoveal region has also been shown to significantly contribute to the process of reading. In doing so, it allows the reader to absorb text at

a much faster rate, viewing multiple words at a time rather than focusing on each individual word. On a web page, this region might also allow for attracting attention to elements in close proximity to the text (i.e. images or buttons), diverting the gaze from the foveal region and repositioning to the new area of interest for focusing on.

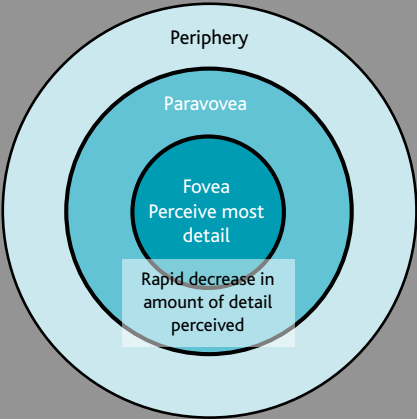


The saccadic movement of reading

With regard to imagery, as it requires less processing to extract information from, much of it can be viewed in the peripheral visual field without even being focused on. This can be utilised for optimising the amount of information transfer by placing pictorial elements in close proximity to important text elements. When an individual is attracted to an area by the image they might then be encouraged to read the neighbouring text, whereas this may have been less likely without the image.



This grouping of text with neighbouring image and button works well in directing attention



The level of visual processing can be affected by stimulus design features, such as layout, colour, contrast, pattern, animation and proximity; and eyes become attracted to aspects that are attractive, distinctive and informative. Therefore, by carefully crafting the design of a stimulus (i.e. a web page or email), and taking these factors into account, one can optimise users' attention levels when viewing

the stimulus. The more salient an element is, the more likely it is to attract attention to the viewer for focusing on. This would result in a reduction in cognitive load, allowing for more efficient processing across the page, and deliverability of information.

An effective example of this in an email might include an attractive image which is in close proximity to important and relevant textual information, followed by a clearly defined button which would lead the user to the point of purchase. The correct placement of such elements is essential to aiding this process with minimal difficulty for the user. The peripheral field of vision is therefore a vital construct to bear in mind when designing an effective marketing email.



The circles on these two emails represent parafoveal vision, and clearly show how this influences the subject's gaze path

Ten Inbox Secrets Revealed

Email design is not a science – success requires creative flair, good customer knowledge and, of course, great products – but the insights from our study reveal some powerful techniques that you can employ to tease out extra clicks and conversions. From creating good first impressions with opening ‘screenfuls’ to maintaining momentum and engagement using graphic assets and digital salesmanship, we uncovered dozens of examples of effective practices that transcend market sector and customer demographics. Distilled into our ‘ten inbox secrets’, we hope that you will find this research paper a rich and practical source of ideas and inspiration. Email is an exciting and flexible channel that yields a wealth of measurable data. Testing is simple and very fast to implement. And like all digital media, email is constantly evolving – as email marketers, it’s vital that we continue to hone our digital design practices.

First Impressions

Create enticing and effective opening screens to maximise engagement

Words that Paint 1,000 Pictures

Sustain attention and substantiate interest using integrated ‘soundbyte’ copy

Email Anatomy

Use design & structure techniques that maintain scrolling momentum

Digital Salesmanship

Integrate offer elements to optimise product presentation and close more sales

Digital Signposting

Convert browsing into action using navigation to drive purposeful clicks

Graphic Assets

Use graphic devices to overcome inertia, create momentum and drive response

Clickability

Always ‘ask for the business’ with multiple, well-designed calls to action

No Stone Unturned

Win incremental clicks by exploiting every email pixel to advantage

Content Kings

Use added value content to increase emotional engagement and participation

Peripheral Vision

Exploit the relative proximity of design elements to reinforce positive perceptions

Methodology

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were recruited locally via posters and email responses and were screened according to the demographic required per email sector (e.g. camera enthusiasts for camera retailer emails). Between ten and twenty participants were used for each email eye-tracking test. Participant age range varied depending on the test but typically comprised ages between 18 and 55 years. An equal balance of both male and female subjects was used for the entire study.

MATERIALS

The Tobii Eye Tracking T60 XL system with high-resolution 24-inch TFT wide screen monitor was used to carry out the eye-tracking procedure. Tobii Studio analytic software was used to display stimuli and produce results data.

A basic questionnaire was given to participants at the start to establish general personal information and to determine demographic. An example includes the following: How would you go about choosing a UK cottage holiday?

A total of 50 different emails across eight different sectors were used for the eye-tracking stimuli. Each email was carefully selected to present a diverse range of designs for each sector, with the purpose of providing detailed conclusive eye-tracking results.

PROCEDURE

Participants were briefed and given the questionnaire to fill out prior to testing. Following this they underwent eye-tracking calibration to establish eye position and movement. They were then given a short instruction and presented with each email on the screen in turn.

The final stage required a concluding set of questions detailing their experience and email preferences. An example question includes: Out of the emails, which one did you like the most? Participants were then debriefed and given a monetary incentive for taking part.

The Sectors Studied

Photographic Retailers

Women's Fashion (35-55)

Mens' Fashion (35-55)

Women's Fashion (18-35)

Daily Deals & Vouchers

Christmas Gifts

Holiday Cottages

Short Break Holidays

