# Email Market Study: Acquisition and engagement tactics

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Email Market Study: Acquisition and engagement tactics

About this study
As an industry leader, Experian Marketing Services regularly consults and collaborates with the world’s most recognizable brands to help them improve campaign performance and increase customer engagement through digital-marketing programs.

Email marketing, specifically, continues to be the hub and a driving force in cross-channel integration, as marketers’ email strategies often act as connectors to Website, mobile, social and in-store channels.

To provide deeper industry insight and help marketers better understand how leading brands are using specific email marketing tactics, Experian Marketing Services surveyed email marketers across eight verticals about their email-marketing initiatives, including their strategies for subscriber acquisition, mobile and social marketing, testing and creative design.

Verticals represented

Forty-nine percent of respondents are retailers, while 53 percent represent multichannel retailers — companies that have both brick-and-mortar stores and ecommerce sites.

These survey results should provide you with benchmarks on which you can gauge your own programs, or they can be used as a factor when you decide to implement new tactics.
Email Market Study: Acquisition and engagement tactics

Key highlights
Today’s empowered consumers are becoming more vocal and more demanding in terms of what they expect from their favorite brands. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for marketers to engage their customers on more personal and deeper levels than ever before.

Email marketers are tackling these challenges head-on. They are leveraging traditional email-marketing tactics in more sophisticated ways, as well as advancing new methods to acquire new subscribers and create more engaging content.

Acquisition
Marketers continually look for cost-effective ways to acquire new customers. The continued efficacy of email marketing makes email address acquisition a prime tactic for high return on investment (ROI). Today’s email marketers are using multiple channels to acquire new subscribers:

• **Pop-up windows:** Many brands (22 percent) utilize pop-up windows on their Websites. That’s nearly one in four Websites.

• **Paper collection:** Thirty-six percent of brands still collect email addresses on paper. This practice exposes brands to a higher potential for bad addresses and input errors.

• **E-receipts:** More marketers are implementing e-receipts, as they can provide marketers and customers with benefits, including up-sell and engagement opportunities.

• **Required fields:** Thirty percent of marketers indicate that they make no fields in a registration form mandatory, suggesting that marketers are focused first on acquiring an email address and then using other tactics, such as preference centers and surveys, for acquiring more information about customers later.

Engagement
Subscriber engagement is assuming increased importance in email marketing. Marketers can no longer blast their list with irrelevant messaging without experiencing negative consequences, both from customers and ISPs. Email marketers are adopting more tactics to track behaviors and acquire subscribers’ preferences and interests in order to market to them more effectively.
Email subscriber acquisition
Subscriber list growth is an important component to ensure long-term health in any email-marketing program. In 2012, Experian Marketing Services recognized new trends and tactics in three channels of email address acquisition: point of sale, Website and sweepstakes.

Point of sale
We surveyed email marketers whose brands operate brick-and-mortar locations about their subscriber acquisition practices at point of sale:

• Seventy-eight percent of brands use sales associates to collect email addresses
• Thirty-six percent of brands collect email addresses on paper
• The majority of marketers (73 percent) source and track email addresses acquired at point of sale differently than other addresses
• Thirty-three percent of marketers report that more than 25 percent of their customers are willing to provide their email address at point of sale
Did you know?

Using an email hygiene service like Experian QAS on addresses acquired from point of sale can:

- Catch and correct syntax errors
- Confirm an email domain works
- Verify a mailbox exists
- Suppress spam traps and risky email addresses

Clients using Experian QAS for point-of-sale email hygiene have seen:

- Five percent to 15 percent marketable email address recovery
- Four times lower bounce rate
- Ten percent more opens
- Four percent more clicks

How do you collect email addresses in store?

- iPad: 14%
- POS by customer: 10%
- POS by sales associate: 78%
- On paper: 36%
Best practices

Use point of sale as an opportunity to acquire new subscribers.

Urban Outfitters prompts customers at checkout with an incentive to sign up for email.

This photo was taken at the cash wrap counter. A savvy shopper could sign up while waiting in line and receive his or her email discount on a mobile device in real time.
While many retailers use their representatives for entry, technology enhancements allow marketers to put the power in consumers’ hands. Starbucks, for example, recently announced it would use iPads® in stores for payments.

More retailers utilize similar technology to collect email addresses or to send e-receipts at point of sale.

Bloomingdale’s now uses its credit card machines to collect email and mobile numbers to send SMS texts, promotional emails and e-receipts if a customer opts-in for these types of messages. Additionally, confirming email addresses with this automated process may reduce human error when entering addresses at checkout.

What percentage of customers checking out (in store) provide their email address?

- Less than 25%: 67%
- 26%-100%: 33%
Did you know?

**Tracking the acquisition source is critical in order to:**

- Track, segment and market to customers differently based on the acquisition source.

- Determine sources where hygiene issues may arise. This is imperative when experiencing deliverability issues and when segmenting your list for reactivation purposes. For more information on how to reactivate inactive subscribers, download Experian Marketing Services’ reactivation [white paper](#).
Do you source or track email addresses collected at POS differently from those collected elsewhere?

- 73%
- 9%
- 11%
- 7%

**Trend alert**

**More marketers are using e-receipts**

E-receipts offer email marketers additional opportunities to engage subscribers and drive in-store shoppers to their brand’s Website. With more than 66 percent of marketers currently offering or stating that they intend to or would like to offer e-receipt options to in-store shoppers, we expect more marketers to use e-receipts for promotional messaging in the next few months and years.

**Benefits of e-receipts**

There are many reasons why marketers may want to send e-receipts:

- They are Green and environmentally friendly
- They serve as an additional touch-point with customers
- They are a simple way to collect more information about customers, especially email addresses
Adding marketing messages to e-receipts also is a proven tactic to increase engagement and drive up-sells.

Experian Marketing Services’ 2012 E-Receipt Study benchmarks that retailers with up-sells in e-receipts created six times higher transaction rates and eight times higher revenue per email compared with bulk mailings.
Do you give customers the option of receiving their receipt via email (e-receipt)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but we’re working on it</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No, but we’d like to</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Website**

We surveyed email marketers about their subscriber acquisition practices on their brand’s Website.

- Almost a quarter (22 percent) of marketers reported utilizing pop-up windows on their Website.
- The majority of marketers use visit history to determine whether pop-ups should be displayed. Sixty-two percent of marketers reported only showing a pop-up to new visitors.
- Thirty percent of marketers indicated that they make no fields in a registration form mandatory.
- Mobile phone number (SMS/MMS) acquisition is still growing, although it still is not prominent as email.
- Only 15 percent of marketers ask for a mobile number on their registration forms, yet 30 percent ask for simply a “phone number.”
- Next to first and last name, ZIP Code™ is the most requested field, with 57 percent of marketers asking for ZIP Code.
As a percentage of your total subscriber acquisitions, how many email addresses come from your website (not through the checkout process)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25% or less</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%–75%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 76%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Website pop-ups are hot**

Twenty-two percent of marketers use pop-up windows on their Website to collect email address.

While pop-ups certainly are the most aggressive and successful method for email address acquisition, if that isn't an option for your brand (possibly due to site restrictions or even based on testing), consider using email opt-ins in various places on your Website. Experian Marketing Services’ has found that above-the-fold opt-in locations perform better than those below the fold.

How are email addresses captured on your site? (excluding checkout)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the home page</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a dedicated email page</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the header</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the footer</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop-up window</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you use a pop-up, pop-under and/or rollover for email collection, which of the following rules does it follow (if any)?

- Only shown to new visitors: 62%
- Pops up after X page visits: 18%
- Displays differently based on section of Website: 21%
- Does not follow any rules, is shown for all visitors on each visit: 23%

Maidenform offers email signup above the fold and at the bottom of the page.
Case study

**Sport Chalet scores more subscribers with pop-up email sign-up**

**Opportunity**

- Increase number of email subscribers
- Acquire a broader range of subscribers for online and offline marketing
- Encourage interaction with the Sport Chalet Website
- Improve customer experience with faster and easier email sign-up

**Solution**

A “Div Layer” pop-up window was placed on www.sportchalet.com. The Div Layer pop-up is a small, nonintrusive Web page that appears on top of the homepage, in the same window that the viewer has opened. This only appears when the viewer visits the site for the first time.

**Results**

- Eighty-four percent increase in the total number of valid email addresses
- Sixty-five percent decrease in bounce rate difference between regular registration process and the pop-up registration emails
- Thirty-nine percent increase in opens
What pieces of data do you collect in addition to email address?

Did you know?

The majority of marketers ask for data but don’t use it to personalize their emails.

In fact, 70% of brands are not personalizing emails sent to their subscribers. Remember that your customers are offering you access to this personal information and expect you to use it to market to them as an individual. Use the information you collect to send more targeted, relevant and personalized messages to your subscribers.

Note: If you are concerned about data integrity (users entering phony names), we suggest using personalization from sources like rewards programs, where a user is less likely to enter a fake name.
### Did you know?

**Asking your customers for a mobile phone number**

Regardless of acquisition channel, let subscribers know they will receive SMS messages on some frequency and about a particular program. Subscribers also should know the ways to opt-out of your program, how to get help from their handset, and where to reference terms and conditions. They also need to understand that message and data rates may apply when participating in an SMS program.
Best practices

Ask for basic information up front, such as email and ZIP™.

Once you have that information, other fields can be collected through a secondary collection page, follow-up emails, surveys, preference centers or other channels. Always ensure you aren’t overwhelming your customers.

Eastern Mountain Sports utilizes a simple email address sign-up form and then follows up with a welcome email encouraging subscribers to update their preferences.
Did you know?

**Automatically opting in subscribers to your email program could negatively impact your deliverability rates.**

The deliverability landscape is rapidly changing, with ISPs and consumers taking more control over the inbox. We advise our clients who have the opt-in check box pre-populated to “yes” to make sure to send a welcome email as quickly as possible to these new subscribers and to include a clear unsubscribe option.

Urban Outfitters offers several clear unsubscribe and preference update options.
During the check out process, are your customers implicitly opted in to receive your marketing communications?

- Yes: 61%
- No: 39%

Email engagement trends
Email engagement is now more important than ever. Not only does email engagement prove your subscribers are interested in your brand and the content you are delivering, it also plays a significant role in email deliverability. Email marketers are using new methods for email engagement and also improving upon tried and true methods for greater understanding of their customers' needs and wants.

**Surveys**
- The majority of marketers do not offer incentives for filling out a survey, with 59 percent stating that they send no offer
- Regardless of the offer, marketers are seeing strong completion rates, with 38 percent reporting 10 percent or higher completion rates

Do you collect input from customers via surveys?

- Yes: 71.50%
- No: 28.50%
What types of surveys do you support within email?

Did you know?

Surveys are still an efficient way for marketers to engage customers, create dialogue and gather additional customer data.

Surveys are simple, cost-effective and show your customers that you are listening to their opinions.
What is the completion rate for your surveys (as a whole)?

- Greater than 20%: 11–20%
- 10% or less: 62%
- 10% or less: 20%
- Greater than 20%: 18%

Kate Spade creatively incented customers with 25% off their next purchase for completing a survey.
Best practices

Surveys can be used to find out more about an individual subscriber or to discover if there is an issue with a larger set of users.

Opt-out surveys
These surveys are used after a customer opts-out of your emails; they can help identify why your customers are dropping off your list.

• Do they not like the time of day they’re receiving emails?
• Have they had a life change that would make them unsubscribe?
• Do they not like the frequency with which they receive your messages?
• Do they find your content interesting or useful?

The answers to these questions can help steer your program in the right direction.

Always make sure the questions you ask in your survey are actionable.
Experience feedback surveys
Surveys also can be used to acquire feedback on products and services. Data from these surveys can help to provide a better overall customer experience.

Hotels and airlines commonly send these types of surveys immediately following a stay or trip.
Targeting and segmentation
Surveys also can be used to target users based on interests or segment them based on clicks or responses.

Did you know?
Many email clients (Microsoft® Outlook®, for example) will not render radio buttons or allow submission of surveys within email.

It’s best to create a link to the survey or use click data to view results (similar to the Ice example above). In addition, while incentives are always welcome, many people enjoy filling out surveys and voicing their opinion without any offer given. We’ve seen up to 75 percent of users fill out unsubscribe surveys. So start without an incentive, analyze your capture rates, and go from there.
Testing

**Trend alert**

**Subject line testing**
We are big proponents of testing, and our clients agree that this is an excellent way to improve their programs. Subject line testing wins in both frequency of testing, as well as in results. Over time, we’ve seen that when subject line testing is done correctly and consistently, open rates can improve significantly. Subject line testing can be accomplished very easily, especially with Experian Marketing Services’ automated A/B testing capabilities. Every marketer should make this type of testing a common practice.

For tips and ideas on how to craft compelling subject lines, [download our white paper](#) *It’s all in the wording: A guide to optimizing your email subject lines.*

**Creative testing**
Creative testing is the second most frequently used test parameter. This can be accomplished in several ways and can test many different creative elements, including but not limited to:

- Animation versus no animation
- Banner placement
- Lifestyle imagery versus product shot

Tests can be performed by splitting your file evenly and measuring which performs better, or you can employ creative optimizing technologies. Here, your file still may be split fifty-fifty, but the most-clicked-on creative can be updated across your file in real time. This helps to optimize your creative and clicks.

For more ideas on creative testing, [view our Taunton Press case study on real-time creative optimization](#).
What types of testing do you perform on your email campaigns?

- Subject line: 92%
- Creative: 81%
- Frequency: 39%
- Time of day: 50%
- Day of week: 36%
- HTML versus text: 11%
- Call-to-action: 43%
- Product placement: 21%
- Number of products: 28%
- Friendly from: 11%
- Multivariate: 11%

Of the tests you perform on your email campaigns, which have the most impact?

- Subject line: 68%
- Creative: 50%
- Frequency: 25%
- Time of day: 17%
- Day of week: 10%
- HTML versus text: 0%
- Call-to-action: 12%
- Product placement: 6%
- Number of products: 5%
Creative trends

Trend alert

Fifty-two percent of marketers have used animated gifs in their email campaigns

Including animation in an email, whether it is subtle or the main feature, is a great way to get a viewer’s attention. Subtle animation is also a great way to draw the reader’s eye to a specific area in the email, such as a call-to-action button or a special promotion.

See animation in action here.

Which of the following features have you used in your email creatives?

- None of the above: 45%
- Video (through LiveClicker, etc.): 16%
- Animated GIF: 52%
- Horizontal or multidirectional scroll: 16%
- Cinemagraph: 7%
- Video (through LiveClicker, etc.): 5%

Fast facts

Animated gifs and cinemagraphs produce higher transaction-to-click rates

We’ve seen that 72 percent of clients who’ve utilized animated gifs or cinemagraphs experience higher transaction-to-click rates.
Which of the following, if any, have you used to optimize your email creatives for mobile viewers?

- Media query: 12%
- Optimized email dimensions: 18%
- Rich text mobile version: 36%
- Promoting mobile applications: 21%
- We don't do any of these: 24%
- We don't do any of these, but we're planning to in the next year: 22%

More than 50 percent of email marketers currently are optimizing or planning to optimize emails for mobile viewers. Marketers currently optimizing or planning for mobile are using a variety of tactics, the most popular being a rich text mobile version.
Trend alert

The highest percentage of emails are opened on mobile devices. Based on Experian Marketing Services’ June 2012 study of Litmus Email Analytics results, 44 percent of total opens occur on mobile devices, 29 percent on desktops and 28 percent on Webmail.

Follow a mobile-friendly approach with a very basic principle of putting mobile users first. Consider modifying your existing template to the following specs:

• Reduce the overall width of your email to 560 to 580 pixels wide. We’ve found this size to be a good width when factoring desktop, mobile and tablet.

• Increase the point size of all subcopy to at least 14 to 16 points. Since your email still will be reduced on mobile, you want to be sure the text size does not start out too small.

• Space out all your calls to action so they are at least 40 pixels apart. Too many links situated right next to each other could be frustrating to users, causing them to accidentally tap on the wrong one.
Have you used symbols (such as hearts or stars) in a subject line of any of your emails?

Fast facts

**Symbols in subject lines can provide up to a 15 percent lift in open rates**

Using symbols in your subject lines can be a great way to stand out in your subscribers’ inboxes and to spark interest from those who may have previously been unengaged.

Remember, the same subject line rules still apply when using symbols. The more relevant they are, the more your subscribers will understand and enjoy them. If you test using symbols in your subject lines and see great results at first that then taper off, perhaps the “newness” has worn off. Try testing new symbols or testing symbols against no symbols.

Experian Marketing Services’ 2012 *Symbols in subject lines* study found that compared with regular promotional emails, symbols in subject lines provide up to a 15 percent lift.

For more information on symbols in subject lines, [download our white paper](#).
Social media

Fast facts

**Pinterest mailings**
Based on Experian Marketing Services’ 2012 Q2 Benchmark Study, words like “Pinterest”, “Pin us” or “Pin it” in subject lines generate open rates that are 11 percent higher than other mailings and unique click rates that are almost 25 percent higher.

Which social networks do you display or promote in emails?

- Facebook: 98%
- Twitter: 91%
- YouTube: 45%
- Google+: 12%
- Pinterest: 32%
- WordPress/Blogger/other blog: 17%
Case study

Ballard Designs email marketing goes viral on Pinterest

Opportunity
Ballard Designs wanted to leverage the viral value of Pinterest and incorporate “Pin It” functionality from within the body of an email, making it easy for Ballard Designs’ enthusiasts to rave about the products they love.

Experian Marketing Services “Pin It” email functionality is easy to set up and can be done in a matter of minutes. Brands can use it to incorporate an interactive component into their email campaigns.

Solution
Ballard launched a Customer Spring Favorites promotional email to consumers. The email included six individual products with “Pin It” icons.

Results
The Pinterest-enabled Customer Spring Favorites email delivered excellent results. Ballard Designs saw:

- A 2.8 percent increase in click-to-open rates
- A more than 15 percent increase in Pinterest followers within the first week of deployment
- A 33 percent increase in pinboard activity
- Up to 180 percent lift in pins by product
Conclusion

Whether you are looking to grow your list through organic subscriber acquisition or create more engaging campaigns that produce higher ROI, the preceding findings can help you gauge which programs would work best for your business.

These survey results should provide you with benchmarks on which you can gauge your own programs or that can be used as a factor when determining new tactics to implement.

If you are looking for strategic or tactical guidance in implementing email acquisition or engagement programs, contact your Experian Marketing Services account team, email us or call 1 866 626 6479.