

Reach your target

Mail openability study



Did you know?

- Consumers say they're more likely to open envelopes with colour text and graphics on the front
- New technology prints customised four-colour messages simultaneously with postage
- Businesses are constantly looking for cost-effective ways to give their mailings more impact

A recent study suggests that a new technology from Pitney Bowes can capture increased consumer attention for a modest incremental cost.

The study, by Leflein Associates of Ringwood, New Jersey, examined preferences, attitudes and behaviours about mail – both physical and email – as received at home by approximately 1,500 adults. The purpose of the study was to identify factors that could influence when and whether recipients would open their mail and read it.

Participants were presented with graphic depictions of envelopes to determine which features would make them most likely to open them.

Respondents examined an average of 16 screens, each containing four randomised envelopes, to test for variables including the presence of text, graphics and colour on envelope fronts and backs. A total of 1,503 opt-in research panelists (aged 18+) completed the online survey between 23 February and 3 March 2010, resulting in a sample margin of error of +/-2%.

Key findings

- People prefer physical mail to email for bills, invoices and financial statements as well as most catalogues and promotions.
 - 66% of participants preferred to receive catalogues by physical mail
 - 61% preferred to receive bills and invoices by physical mail
 - 59% preferred to receive financial or bank statements by physical mail.
- What's printed on the front of the envelope strongly influences when and whether people open it.
 - The study showed that participants were 69% more likely to open a mail piece with colour text and graphics on the front before opening pieces with no headline or graphic
 - Given a choice of colour graphics or black-and-white text, participants indicated they were 247% more likely to open envelopes with colour graphics first.
- What's printed on the back of the envelope is less influential.
 - 57% of participants indicated they hardly ever noticed what was printed on the back of the envelope when sorting through or opening their mail
 - However, as with the front of the envelope, the study indicated that the presence of colour text and graphics on the back was significantly more likely to influence their decision than black-and-white only.

Physical over email, transactional over promotional

Study participants were also asked a series of multiple choice questions to determine how they preferred to receive a variety of communications, both solicited and unsolicited (physical mail, email, telephone, or via text to a mobile phone).

The preference for physical mail over email spanned a wide range of content, both solicited and unsolicited, with the exception of appointment reminders and information from travel companies. Participants indicated that they were more likely to regard physical mail as safe, secure, private, confidential, and coming from a trustworthy source than email, as a means of receiving unsolicited communications.

Within the category of physical mail, respondents indicated they would almost always open transactional mail and personal correspondence before promotional mail. But when given a choice of how to receive unsolicited communications, they overwhelmingly preferred both physical mail and email to telephone or texting.



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Colour is king

The survey results suggest that colour text and graphics on the envelope can substantially increase the likelihood that recipients will open it and read it. But not all text and graphics are equal, and not all locations on an envelope are equal at improving the odds. Under almost every configuration tested, the front of the envelope has more than double the value of the back as a place for additional text and graphics. And four-colour text and graphics are more than twice as valuable as those using only a single colour.

Not shown: your company's message

To minimise subjective bias, the envelopes depicted in the survey showed a variety of address, label and window formats but a single, generic promotional message ("Great Fun and Savings Inside!"). While not demonstrated in the study, the use of a targeted message reflecting specific interests of the sender and the recipient could almost certainly be expected to yield a higher response rate.

With the Print+ Messenger™ Colour Inkjet System from Pitney Bowes, you can print high quality, variable, full colour text and images on envelopes inline, at production speeds, within your mail inserter. It is a perfect fit for your existing operations, taking cost out by eliminating pre-branded envelopes, giving you the ability to combine and presort mixed jobs prior to printing and streamlining or completely eliminating job changeover. You can also add value to each mailpiece by printing promotional messages on each envelope that match your contents on the inside. For further information please visit www.pitneybowes.co.uk

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