Email Deliverability: A Journey into the Inbox

2019

DM A

Data &
Marketing
Association

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/ Introduction

Email is the key touchpoint and central strand for any multi-channel marketing campaign, integrating seamlessly with both digital and physical channels.

We've proven that email is essential, once and for all, in our recent 'Marketer Email Tracker 2019' report, where marketers estimated ROI for the channel rising to £42.24 for every £1 spent in 2019, up from £30.03 in 2016.

Deliverability is the crucial first step in email's journey to the customer.

Before it arrives in the inbox, email requires transparent data management; dedicated time and resources; and continuous testing and monitoring.

Furthermore, as the consumer is the centre of our industry, engagement is the most crucial factor in email deliverability.

After all, emails directly impact the sender's reputation and the campaign's ultimate success.

Tim Bond,
Head of Insight and PR, Data & Marketing Association

/ Executive Summary

- Marketers show confidence about their knowledge of email deliverability best practices both personally (41%) and in regards to their organisations' intelligence (45%).

- Marketers should improve their work around 'Strategy' (8% gap), as perceptions of best practice and real-life actions significantly differ.

- In particular, the methods with the most significant differences between potential and actual effectiveness are 'Sending emails only to active recipients' (13% gap), 'Implementing re-engagement campaigns' (8% gap) and 'Using behavioural segmentation' (6% gap).

- Most businesses (79%) are measuring and monitoring their email deliverability effectiveness – only 17% neglect to watch it.

- 30% of organisations have been blocked/blacklisted within the last five years – the majority between two and five times (13%).

- Half of the marketers (47%) expressed their concerns about the low level of the reader's engagement, and (46%) are concerned about spam filters.

- About three-in -five marketers (56%) believe the quality of their email lists makes an impact on the deliverability of their email campaigns. Another 51% think that sender reputation and email content (46%) are valuable drivers.

/ Good Practices vs Reality

Marketers show confidence regarding their knowledge of email deliverability best practices, both personally (41%) and in regards to their organisations' intelligence (45%).

A small minority (10% and 7%, respectively) feel the level of understanding of these practices is 'Poor'.

How would you rate your/your team's knowledge about email deliverability best practices?

|	Poor	Average	Good
Personal	10%	49%	41%
Team	7%	49%	45%

- Poor
- Average
- Good
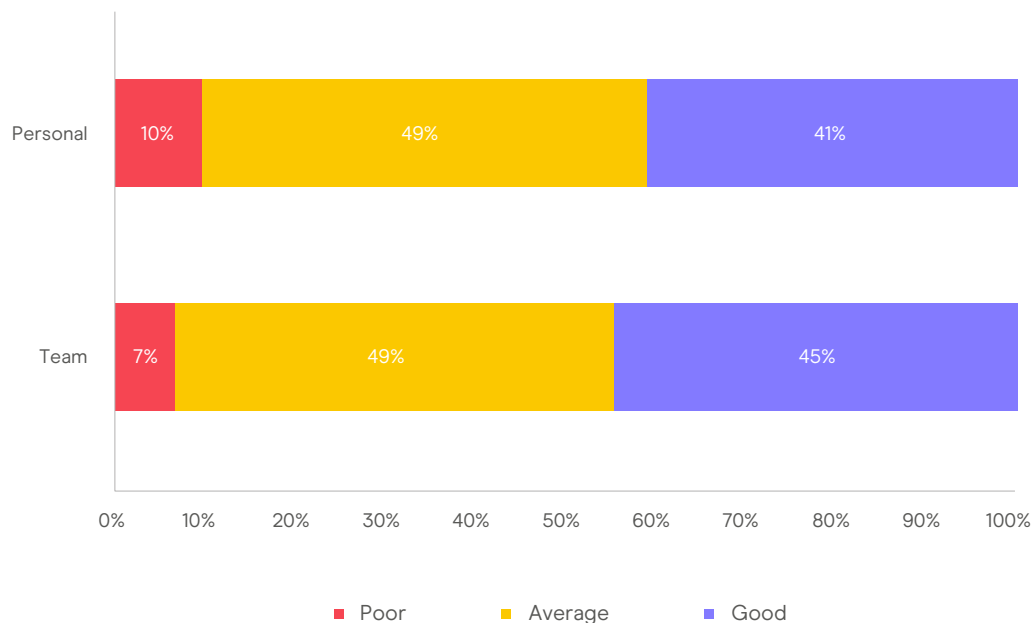
There are a few apparent gaps between what marketers feel is best practice and their actions.

Data reveals that marketers need to focus on improving their practices related to the area of 'Strategy' (8% gap).

Such a gap seems to suggest that marketers should dedicate more resources and effort to the so-called *Intelligent Marketing*.

'Intelligent Marketing' is used in the industry to refer to the power of data. Once they group customer information and behaviours, and how it helps businesses identify the best activation levers.

Which of the following would you categorise as email deliverability best practice, and which does your company currently do?
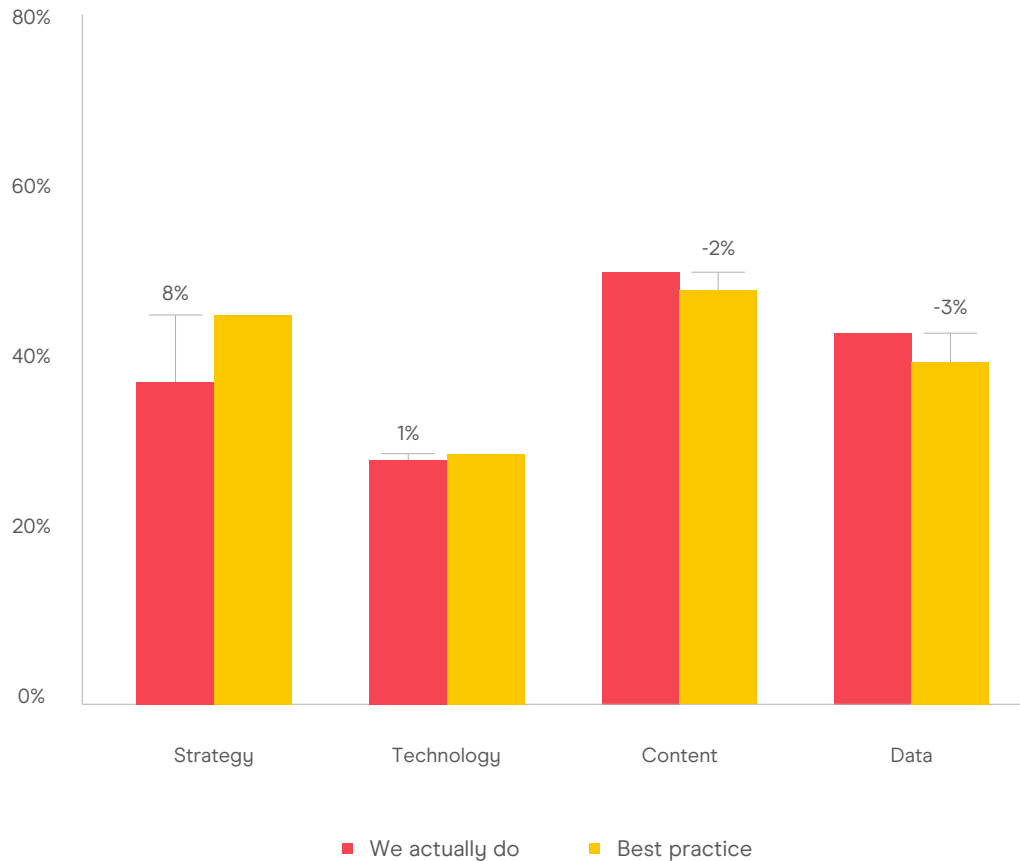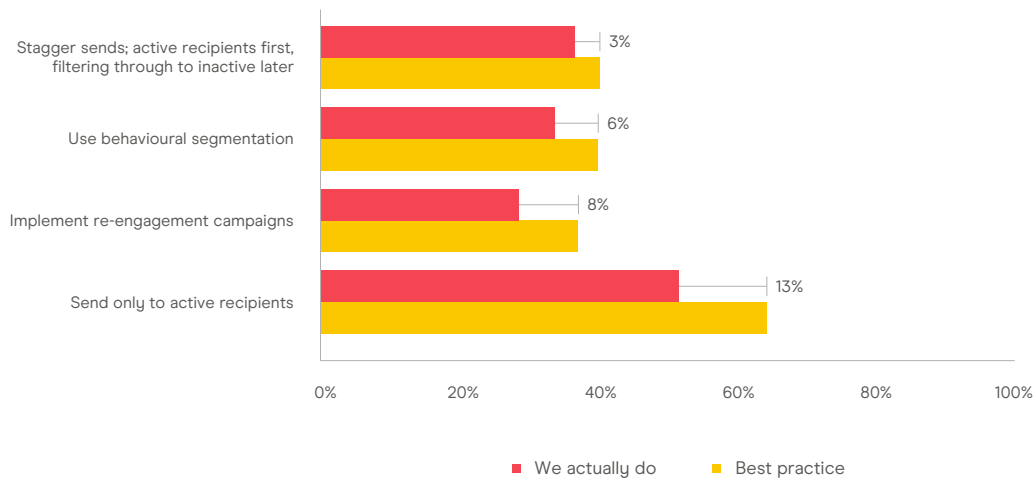

In particular, the practices with the most significant gaps between potential and actual effectiveness are 'Sending emails only to active recipients' (13% gap), 'Implementing re-engagement campaigns' (8% gap) and 'Using behavioural segmentation' (6% gap).

Considering data best practices, marketers don't often use verification services to review their contact lists (6% gap). This gap exists, even though they are aware it's a highly recommended practice and can dramatically improve their email deliverability.
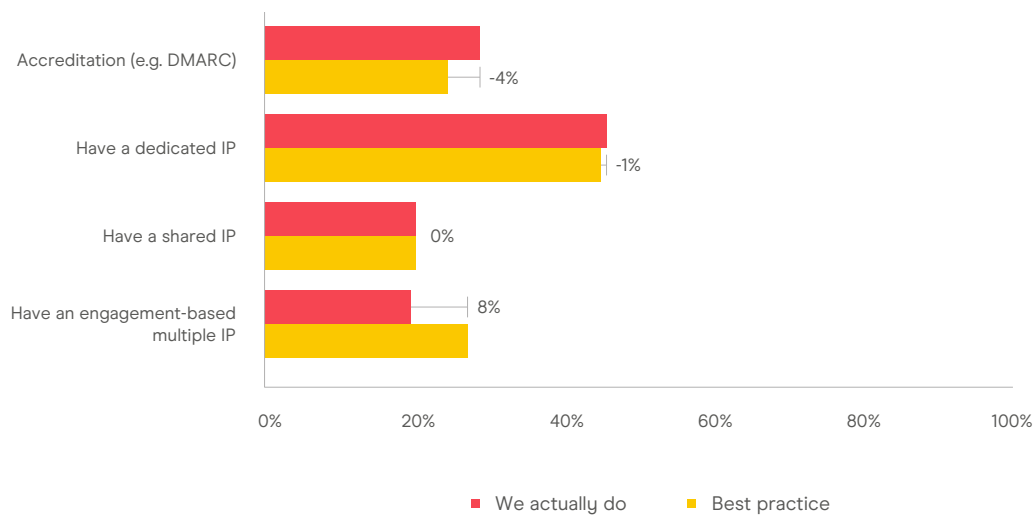
Furthermore, in terms of 'Technology', the use of engagement-based multiple IPs (8% gap) is not too common among the respondents' businesses.

Which of the following would you categorise as email deliverability best practice, and which does your company currently do?
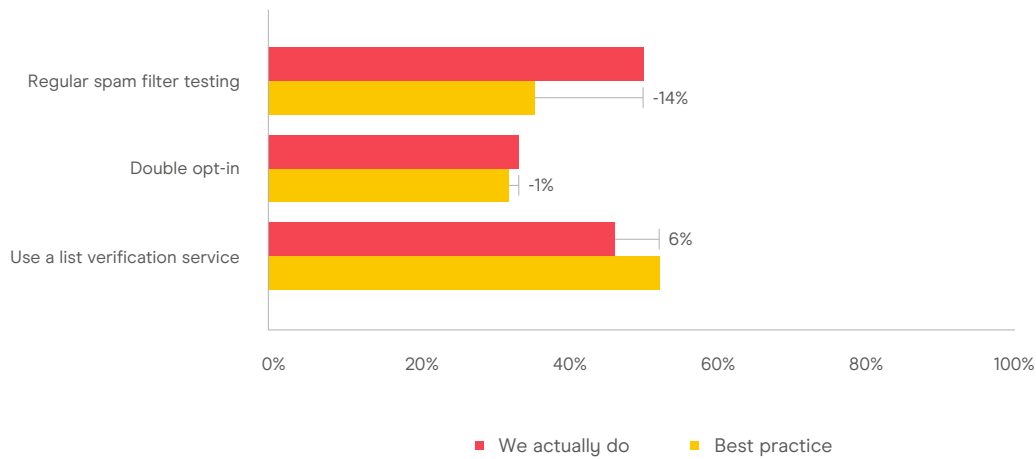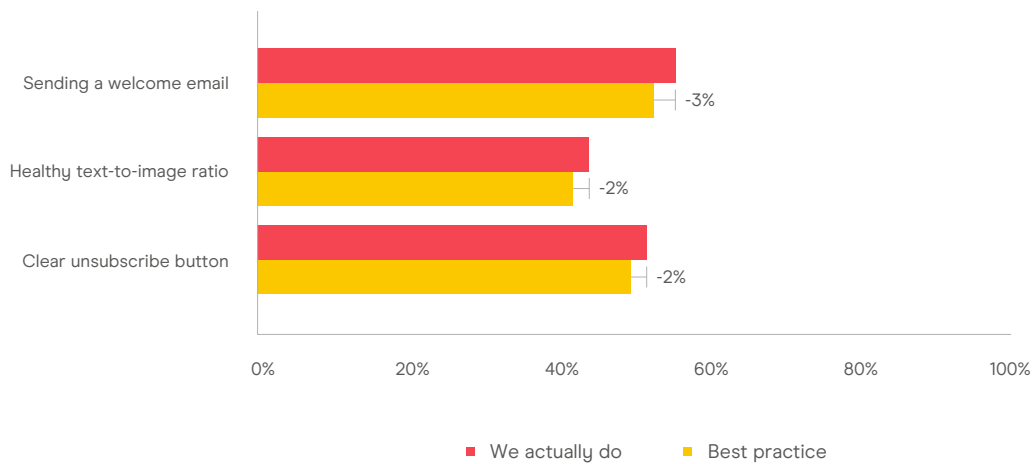
Strategy

| | We actually do | Best practice |

Technology

| | We actually do | Best practice |

Data

Regular spam filter testing — -14%
Double opt-in — -1%
Use a list verification service — 6%

■ We actually do ■ Best practice

Content

Sending a welcome email — -3%
Healthy text-to-image ratio — -2%
Clear unsubscribe button — -2%

■ We actually do ■ Best practice

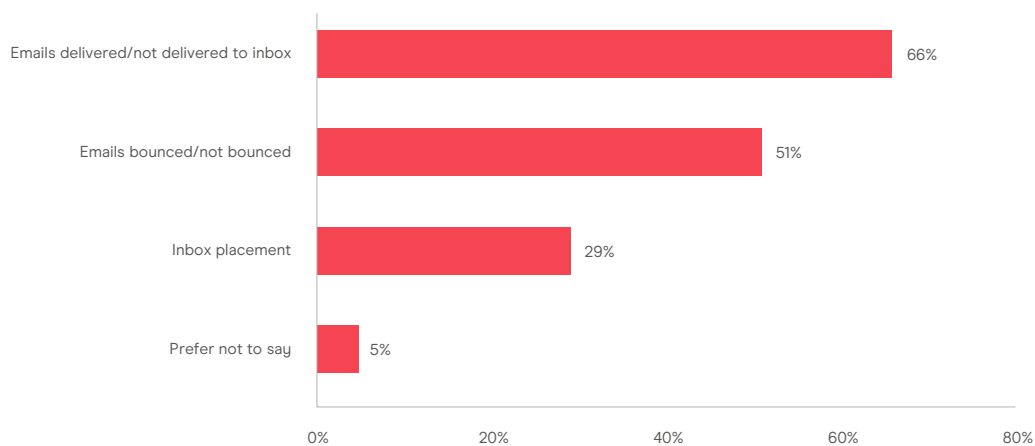On the other hand, there are also areas where marketers believe they are over-delivering.

Marketers become diligent when it comes to 'Running regular spam filter testing' (-14% gap); 'Adopting accreditations (e.g. DMARC)' (-4% gap), and in general, all those best practices related to the email 'Content' area (-2% gap).

/ Measuring Success

Most businesses (79%) are measuring and monitoring their email deliverability effectiveness – a mere 17% do not.

The most used metrics are delivery (66%) and bounce rates (51%).

Which of the following metrics is your organisation's primary measure?

Metric	Percentage
Emails delivered/not delivered to inbox	66%
Emails bounced/not bounced	51%
Inbox placement	29%
Prefer not to say	5%

Respondents reported that their businesses use engagement opportunities to build their contact lists – an excellent strategy for reinforcing brands' notoriety and for creating a stronger customer base.

Which of the following methods does your company use to build email lists and how often?
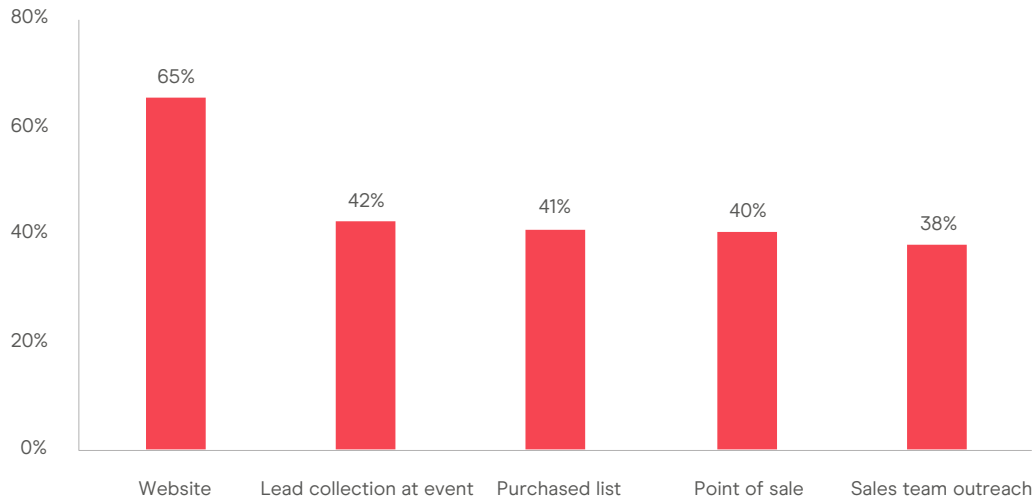

Many respondents also collect most of their data through a double opt-in, which shows brands have improved the quality of their email data. Just 12% of email lists seem to be inaccurate or invalid.

However, 12% of the marketers who use soft opt-in still run the risk of obtaining data that is less accurate.

Which of the following is your company's primary route for gaining permission for email marketing?

- Double opt-in
- Single opt-in
- Soft opt-in
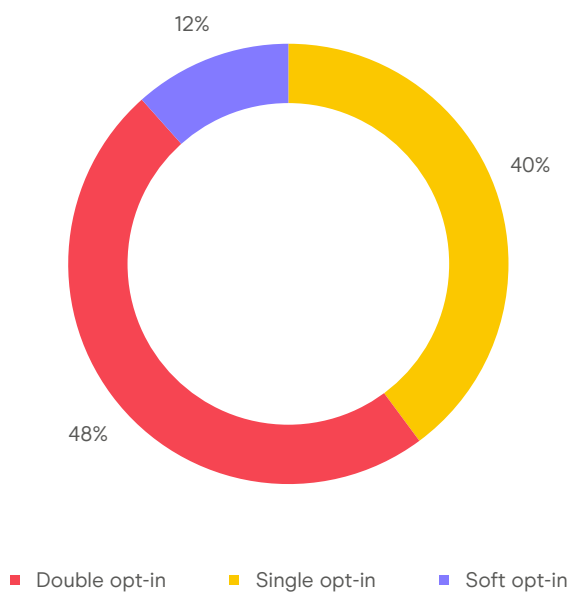
/ Key Concerns

30% of marketers declared they had been blocked/blacklisted within the last five years – the majority between two and five times (13%).

The main reason behind this seems to be related to the use of 'Invalid email addresses' (29%). As such, GDPR has raised data quality, but there is still room for improvement.

Despite this, we learned that the number of emails consumers receive in their inboxes each week has decreased (for more information consult Consumer Email Tracker 2019).

Indeed, the number of emails fell from 73, measured just one year ago to 57 emails in 2018 (with around 25 of these being from brands), 'Volume of sends' (23%) is still one of the top reasons that get brands to be blocked/blacklisted.

Has your email marketing programme been blocked/blacklisted in the last five years?

Don't know / prefer not to say
12%

2-5 times
13%

Yes
30%

6+ times
5%

No
58%

Only once
12%
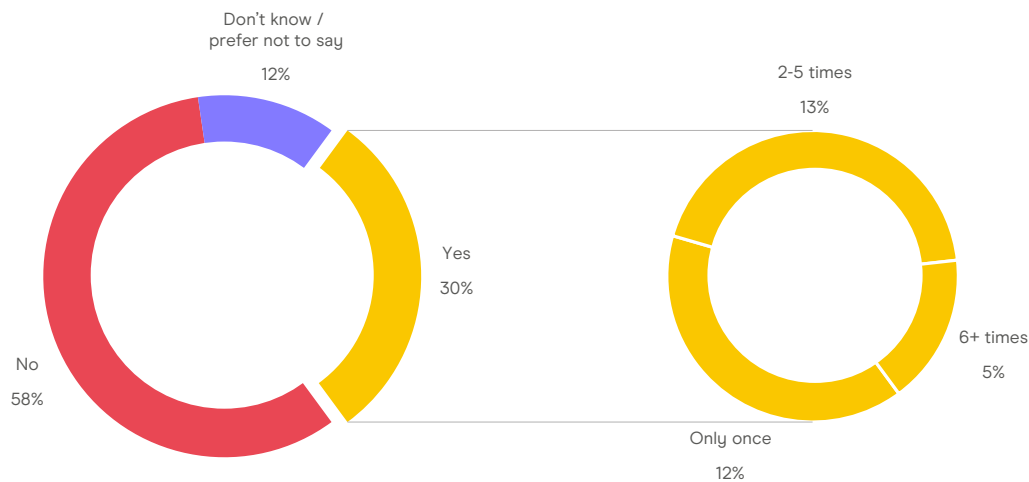
We also asked marketers what worries their businesses the most in terms of email deliverability. Half of them (47%) expressed their concerns about the low level of the reader's engagement as well as the impact of spam filters (46%).

Marketers also mentioned GDPR as a possible challenge – a perfectly understandable preoccupation given the time and effort requested to get to clear, transparent data – as well as the fines well known to the whole industry.

What are your company's most significant concerns in terms of email deliverability?
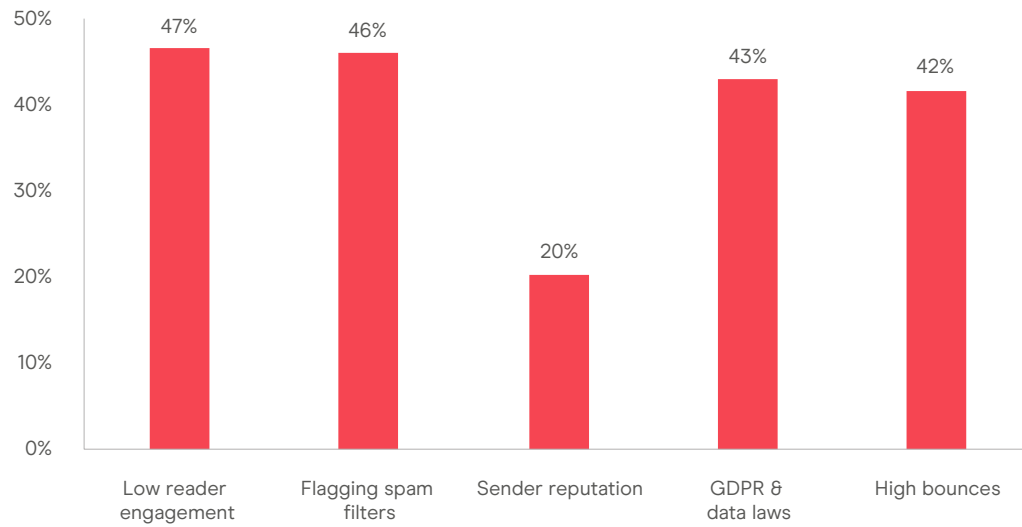
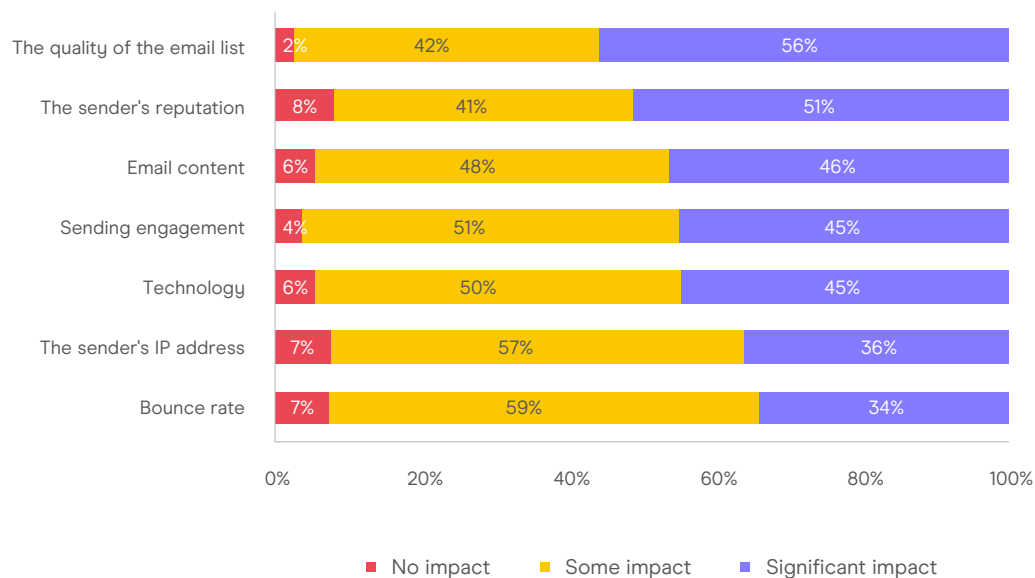# / Email Deliverability Drivers

1. Impacting Factors

The majority of marketers agree that there are a range of factors that affect email deliverability.

About three-in-five marketers (56%) believe the 'Quality of their email lists' make a substantial difference to the deliverability of their email campaigns.

One-in-two marketers (51%) thinks that sender reputation is also an impactful factor.

In your opinion, what's the impact of the following factors on email deliverability?

Factor	No impact	Some impact	Significant impact
The quality of the email list	2%	42%	56%
The sender's reputation	8%	41%	51%
Email content	6%	48%	46%
Sending engagement	4%	51%	45%
Technology	6%	50%	45%
The sender's IP address	7%	57%	36%
Bounce rate	7%	59%	34%

■ No impact   ■ Some impact   ■ Significant impact

There is an agreement between customers and marketers about this latest aspect. In the latest DMA's 'Consumer Email Tracker 2019', we found that 46% of the customers ranked brand reputation as the key factor in their decision to open an email.

Marketers also value 'Email content' (46%) as a factor able to make a mark on their emails deliverability' effectiveness.

Also, in this case, we had a confirmation from the consumer point of view. As part of the 'Consumer Email Tracker 2019' survey, respondents addressed the topic of emails from brands that they 'like to receive' and why.

The results revealed they prefer emails that contain offers (51%), followed by relevant messages (42%) and providing useful information (39%). Moreover, just 14% of consumers said more than half of the emails they receive from brands are useful, confirming the importance for marketers to deliver good and relevant content through their email campaigns.

2. GDPR Impact

Almost six times as many marketers are positive about the impact the new privacy laws had on their email marketing programmes than those who feel it had a negative effect.

Respondents were also asked to specify the reasons why they felt GDPR had a positive or negative impact.

Those who believe the new data privacy laws improved their email marketing programmes reported better procedures; more accurate customer data; higher-quality emails, and increased levels of engagement.

On the other hand, respondents who expressed a negative opinion explained that the new laws had made their processes slower and marketers more hesitant.

What impact has the GDPR had on your current email marketing programme?

Could you briefly explain the reason/s behind your answer?

Negative (5%)

"The business is hesitant to go back to emailing post-GDPR."

"We've had to purge our data."

"We have to be careful how we have obtained information."

"It slowed down the whole process."

Positive (28%)

"We have now put into place a system that clearly shows email preference of the recipient and we regularly monitor preferences of our recipients."

"Deliver rates have gone up and bounces are going down. Engagement is up. Long way to go, but it's much better than it was."

"GDPR has made us to reasses the quality of our emails."

"I estimate list was 50% inaccurate/outdated before GDPR."

/ Methodology

'Email Deliverability: A Journey into the Inbox' is an initiative undertaken by the DMA.

In February 2019, the DMA conducted an online survey consisting of a maximum of 26 questions.

There were 164 respondents, and they represented a balanced range of industries, business types and sizes.

Respondents were mostly senior-level marketers (46%) and mainly worked for mixed B2B-B2C business (51%). Unless referenced, all data included in this report is taken from this survey.

The data was collated and analysed by the DMA Insight Department.

The report was written by the DMA Insight department, proofed and designed by the DMA's in-house Brand and Content Team.

If you have any questions about the methodology used in the report, you can contact the DMA's research team via email: research@dma.org.uk.

/ About the DMA

The Data & Marketing Association (DMA) comprises the DMA, Institute of Data & Marketing (IDM) and DMA Talent.

We seek to guide and inspire industry leaders; to advance careers; and to nurture the next generation of aspiring marketers.

We champion the way things should be done, through a rich fusion of technology, diverse talent, creativity, insight – underpinned by our customer-focused principles.

We set the standards marketers must meet in order to thrive, representing over 1,000 members drawn from the UK's data and marketing landscape.

By working responsibly, sustainably and creatively, together we will drive the data and marketing industry forward to meet the needs of people today and tomorrow.

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/ About the Customer Engagement Campaign

We put the customer at the heart of everything we do – especially when it comes to our Customer Engagement campaign.

This campaign uses research and insight to help you maximise your engagement for the benefit of marketers and consumers alike.

If you build a rapport with your customers, and you have something they want, then they will buy from you again and again.

We want to know what builds this rapport. We know creativity, data and technology are factors, but we don't know how the interplay works.

This campaign aims to discover what makes brilliant engagement.

Check out our popular Marketer Email Tracker and Consumer Email Tracker, and explore our engaging infographics which are breaking down key ideas.

We also run events to encourage better Customer Engagement. Keep an eye on your emails, or visit our events page to book your spot.

Tap into DMA research, insights, thought leadership, and networking events on offer by visiting the DMA online and discover how you can get involved with and get the most out of our Customer Engagement campaign.

Better engagement means better business.

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