Web advertising: The role of e-mail marketing

Fiona Ellis-Chadwick, Open University, England

Neil F. Doherty, Loughborough University, England

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Abstract

This study examines a comprehensive range of executional elements in a sample of permission-based e-mail marketing campaigns. The sample comprised almost 1000 promotional e-mails sent over an 18-month period by twenty leading U.K. e-retailers. Content analyses of the e-mail campaigns reveal that different tactics of format, address, subject lines, hyperlinks and interactivity are applied to initially attract customers' attention and then encourage further interest. Interviews with nine of the twenty marketing executives who designed the campaigns pointed to managers' reasons for use of the tactical alternatives.

Keywords: E-mail marketing; web advertising; executional elements, electronic commerce

1. Introduction

Permission-based e-mails sent to customers is a form of marketing that is on the increase (Cho and Khang, 2006; Gopal, Tripathis, and Walter, 2006; Kim, Shin, and Lee, 2006; Kim and McMillan, 2008). According to Pavlov, Melville, and Plice (2008), e-mail marketing campaigns produce approximately twice the return on investment of the other main forms of online marketing such as Web banners and online directory adverts. Studies of e-mail marketing campaigns, however, are rare (see Cho and Khang, 2006).

The present study aims to fill an important gap in the literature by analyzing the executional tactics used in permission-based e-mail marketing campaigns designed by leading e-retailers in the United Kingdom. Executional tactics, such as the length, size, layout of an advert, are potentially very important, because in other contexts they have been shown to play the decisive role in attracting the recipients' attention (Rossiter, 1981).

The article is organized as follows. The next section outlines theory relating to permission-based e-mail marketing. This is followed by sections in which the research methods are explained and the findings of the study are presented. The final section points out the study's contribution and limitations, and makes suggestions for future research on e-mail marketing.

2. Permission-based e-mail marketing

E-mail marketing is an important medium of marketing communication especially for companies seeking to build and maintain closer relationships with customers (McCloskey, 2006, Chaffey, Mayer, Johnston, and Ellis-Chadwick, 2003). Widespread adoption of e-mail as a means of distributing promotional messages has the advantages of low setup and distribution costs, targeted distribution of promotions such as discounts and coupons, and

affordability by small and medium-sized businesses (Moustakas, Ranganathan, and Duquenoy, 2006).

Permission-based e-mails are in wide use because of widespread consumer complaints about unsolicited e-mails (known as "spam"). Now, in most cases, the recipient provides explicit consent to receive direct e-mails and, in some countries, this is a legal requirement (Worthy and Graham, 2002). The major incentive for consumers to "opt in" to a firm's e-mailing list is the prospect of receiving material that matches their interests (Grunert, 1996; Gengler and Thomas, 1995), as recipients are more likely to open and read such messages.

Previous studies of the Internet as a promotional medium are mostly about banner adverts and websites. Studies of online advertising rarely focus on e-mail campaigns (Cho and Khang, 2006). In particular, there is no published knowledge of the executional tactics that e-retailers employ in their e-mail campaigns. To help fill this gap in the literature, a study was initiated to both explore the ways in which executional tactics are used within permission-based email marketing campaigns, and to understand the factors that affect the choice of tactics.

To organize the findings the present study applies Rossiter and Bellman's (2005) guidelines for executional tactics in print adverts, of which e-mail adverts are a related subcategory.. These guideline tactics are supplemented by several other e-mail tactics, which the limited literature on this medium recommends. Table 1 lists the e-mail marketing executional tactics in this investigation. Note that, for example, the concept of the headline in traditional print advertising (Rossiter and Bellman, 2005) has been translated into two concepts for e-mail marketing, namely subject and headline. Another tactic transferred from print advertising is personalization (Pires, Stanton, and Rita, 2006) and a tactic transferred from cinema adverts and television adverts is animation (Wu, Wei, and Chen, 2007). The interactive capacity of the Internet, though, is very large, hence the inclusion of interactive features in e-

mail adverts (for interactivity in website adverts, see Sicillia, Ruiz, and Munuera, 2005; Wu, 2005).

Table 1 about here
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3. Research method

A pilot study was undertaken to ensure that the set of tactics identified in Table 1 is reasonably complete. The output of four U.K. retailers' e-mail marketing campaigns was collected over a 1-year period (January through December, 2004) and the content of this sample, comprising 56 e-mails, was thoroughly analyzed. Marketing executives from all four companies were contacted to see whether they would be prepared to comment on the provisional findings. Representatives of two of the four companies agreed to be interviewed. They provide reasonable confirmation that the taxonomy of e-mail marketing executional tactics is complete.

For the main study, the study includes selecting twenty medium to very large U.K. retailers who were regularly running permission-based e-mail marketing campaigns. As can be seen from the summary of these retailers' backgrounds (see Table 2), the sample was chosen on the basis that its representing a broad spectrum of on-line activities being undertaken within the U.K. (Doherty & Ellis-Chadwick, 2003). The researchers signed up to receive the promotional e-mails from each of these retailers over an 18-month period (October 2005 to March 2007). An electronic archive was set up to ensure that all the e-mails were stored in a consistent and secure manner. Over this period, these 20 retailers posted nearly 1000 separate e-mails, with the most active retailer sending 113 messages, which equates to one e-mail every five days, on average.

The researchers then content-analyzed the 957 promotional e-mails in terms of the executional tactics identified in Table 1. Afterwards, the researchers contacted the marketing directors of each of the twenty companies and asked whether they would be prepared to comment on the tactics they had employed. Marketing managers from nine companies agreed to be interviewed, either on the phone or by e-mail.

4. Results

Table 1 summarizes the executional tactics. Note that this section does not address the detailed content of each email message, as a sophisticated analysis of this material is beyond the scope of this paper. However, such additional analyses will be a rewarding avenue for future research.

4.1. Frequency and timing

Table 3 shows the frequency of e-mails sent during the study period. The number of -emails sent varies by seasonality: 13 of the 20 firms sent the largest number of e-mails in the fourth quarter, which includes the Christmas season. Another 5 firms sent most of their emails in the second quarter (Spring), which is traditionally the season of gardening and household cleaning. These results also suggest that the number of marketing e-mails being sent is increasing, in that 15 of the 20 firms sent more e-mails in the first quarter of 2007 than in the same period in 2006.

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Tables 2 and 3 about here

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The time of day marketing e-mails were received was also analyzed and the results are summarized here. The majority of e-mails (60%) were received during the working day

between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.; however, 28% were received between 4 p.m. and midnight and 12% were received after midnight and before 8 a.m. the next day, meaning that 40% were received "after hours." The timing of e-mails has not been studied from a marketing perspective and industry commentators have offered no practical guidance as to the optimum time to send an e-mail to gain the consumer's attention. However, it is possible that some companies have learned the best times to send e-mails based on analysis of hits and *click-throughs* on their e-mail adverts, clear timing preferences were detected for seven of the 20 retailers. One retailer [#8] sent the vast majority of marketing e-mails in the evenings and at weekends, whereas others [#6 & #13] favored Friday afternoons. Further research is required to determine whether e-mail timing is to suit the retailers, or is timed in response to consumer preference. Overall, of course, compared with direct mail, the receipt of e-mails is very fast, which is especially useful for short-term promotions.

4.2. E-mail subject line

The *subject line* in the e-mail is the first point of contact and acts as a trigger to encourage the message recipient to open the e-mail. There are two main components in the subject line: e-mail sender and the subject matter.

E-mail sender. It was expected there would be one approach applied to identify the sender but five alternatives were identified: company name only (12 cases); company name plus the word *newsletter* (3 cases); e-mail address including the company name (2 cases); company web address only (1 case); and company name and the key benefit claim of the brand (1 case). The inclusion of the brand benefit is quite surprising given that this is more usually included in the line headed "Subject."

The subject matter. Subject line topics are categorized in Table 4. More than half (56%) of e-mails offered an incentive in the subject line. The most widely used incentive was

the announcement of a discount or saving (28% of the e-mails) and second most frequent was the announcement of occasion or seasonal promotions, such as Father's Day gift ideas (10% of the total). Approximately 44% of marketing e-mails offered *no* incentive (in the subject line) and most commonly these were newsletters, product information e-mails, or "teaser" messages about forthcoming new products.

Table 4 about here

When asked about the tactics used in subject lines, most of the marketing managers said these were determined by the message purpose of the e-mail. For instance, one said: "*If it's a sale thing, then as short as possible but it's got to be relevant to the customer and has to grab their interest*" [#2]. Relevance to the customer and linkage between the subject line and the e-mail were deemed very important. A typical comment was: "*The strongest messages from the e-mail will be conveyed in the subject line. Once we have designed the e-mail we try to assess what will engage the customer the most and use that in the subject line*" [#5]. However, some managers said they used the classic "*split run*" testing method and selected the subject line with the greatest open-rate.

4.3. E-mail headline

The great majority of e-mails in this sample (76%) employed a distinct headline in addition to and underneath the subject line, as noted in Table 1 (earlier). However, the subject line will no doubt determine whether the customer will engage with the e-mail, before they have even seen the headline. As one manager [#8] said: "*People won't read any further unless the subject line brings them into the rest of the e-mail.*"

4.4. Length of e-mail

The length of e-mails ranged from 1 to 5 pages and the average length was 2.4 pages (see Table 1 earlier). When asked about multipage e-mails, two of the nine managers believed that length has a negative effect: "I think the longer the e-mail the weaker it gets at the bottom" [#20], and "If an e-mail is unnecessarily long the customer will switch off" [#12]. The other managers gave contingent answers that seem sensible. Examples are: "If it is a sale then it will be short, but a newsletter will be longer" [#17]; "If it has nice pictures the e-mail will be longer as it will need to have space to highlight our products" [#19]; and "We sometimes use a catalog approach as the more products we can get on the e-mail the more opportunities the customer has to buy" (pilot study interviewee).

4.5. Brand logo

Brand logos were used in 99% of the e-mails in this sample (see Table 1 earlier). In all these cases the logo was positioned in the top left-hand section of the first page. All managers interviewed confirmed this to be the most important position on the page. The typical rationale was [#2]: *"It's no secret that the top-left is important, the further an item is from the top-left the more it is likely to require scrolling, which requires the recipient to already have engaged."*

4.6. Use of illustrations

The great majority of marketing e-mails, 91%, included an illustration. In 57% of the e-mails, multiple illustrations of varying sizes were used, with the body text appearing above, below, or at the side of the illustrations. In 24% of the e-mails, a catalog layout was adopted, with multiple illustrations of equal size, and body text under each. A rarer executional tactic, 11%, was the use of a single large illustration, which is more suited to print adverts for low-

involvement products (see Rossiter and Bellman, 2005). The remaining 9% of the e-mails used the traditional letter format, with no illustration.

4.7. Number of hyperlinks

With regard to websites, rather than e-mails, Geissler, Zinkhan, and Watson (2006) report that complexity influences consumer attention and conclude that too much information, too many graphics, and too many hyperlinks have a negative effect. They conclude that there is an optimal level of complexity, which is sufficient to interest the consumer but does not confuse them. This view was highlighted during the pilot study interviews, in which one manager noted: "*If an e-mail is too complicated, the customer can feel overwhelmed or lost, which may cause them to lose focus and interest rapidly.*"

The optimal number of hyperlinks for a marketing e-mail remains unclear. Nevertheless, the data in Table 5 show how many hyperlinks are actually used in different types of marketing e-mails. The largest percentage of e-mails, 65%, have more than 10 links; and 35% have 10 links or fewer. There appears to be some relation between number of links and promotional aim. E-mails which focus on seasonal promotions, other sales promotions, and included action prompts were modally most likely to have 11 to 20 links. Newsletters and event invitations were the most likely to have 10 or fewer links.

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Table 5 about here

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4.8. Interactive features

E-mail marketing messages incorporate many interactive features. The present sample of marketing e-mails contained 26 different types of interactive features. These features are

classified by type of e-mail (by message focus) in Table 6. The largest number of features used by a single retailer is 18, whilst the minimum is just two. The most popular interactive features are: Website landing page (100%), Unsubscribe (98%), Order online (54%), Send an e-mail to the company (54%), Interactive customer services (18%), Store locator (18%), and "Send the e-mail to a friend" (17%). The remaining 19 features occur in less than 10% of the e-mails and even a "blogging" invitation appears in one, recognizing that the sample period ended in early 2007 before blogs became popular. Inspection of companies' use of interactive features, over the 18-month study period, suggests that retailers introduce them over time, and then make a decision as to whether each feature should be continued or discontinued, indicating that experimentation is taking place.

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Table 6 about here

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E-retail managers had mixed views about the role of interactive features, though nearly half the interviewees said that interactive opportunities were important for retaining interest. For example, one manager noted that "It's a good way of creating stickiness" [#2]. However, the question of relevance was also raised: "It is no use having interactive features for the sake of making the page look attractive – the content has to be relevant to the recipient" [pilot study respondent]. Most managers pointed out that the real value of marketing e-mails was their ability to deliver the interactivity of the web to the recipient's mail tray by drawing the customer towards the company's website. As one manager said, "A prize draw generates lots of click-throughs and high response rates so we can get interplay bet*ween the e-mail and the website*" [#19]. A useful interactive feature for on- and offline retailers is the store locator; "*If you are looking to drive customers to stores then an interactive store locator is very important*" [#12].

4.9. Animation

Once an e-mail has been opened various executional tactics are used to attract attention. According to experimental research (Sundar and Kalyanaraman, 2004; Yoo, Kim, and Stout, 2004) animation is the most prominent attention-getting device in web advertising and is far more effective than static advertising. However, the present study reveals that only 2% of marketing e-mails used animation, and just one retail firm accounted for this result. Examples of this e-retailer's animations were "twinkling stars" around a Christmas sale feature and a "flashing heart" button for sending an e-Valentine card.

4.10. Personalization

The use and degree of personalization varied across companies in the sample. E-mails from 10 of the 20 retail firms, 50%, used no personalization. In the other 10 cases, the level of personalization varied from specific customer details such as title, given name, and family name (5 cases) to the nonspecific "Dear Customer" (3 cases). Five of these e-retailers used their chosen form of personalization and applied it in 100% of their e-mails whereas the other five personalized only a proportion of their e-mails (proportions varied from 13 % to 34%).

The majority of the managers interviewed believed that personalizing e-mails is important because they expect personalized emails to perform better than non-personalized e-mails. However, two of these managers were not, as yet, using personalization for technical reasons. As one manager said: "It is really important to personalize e-mails – however, we are not doing it at the moment until the new web site is launched" [#19]. Also, the specificity of personalization was believed to depend on the specificity of the promotional offer (see White, Zahay, Thorbjørnsen, and Shavitt, 2008). A typical summary comment that seems to reflect this, though obliquely, was that "It depends on the quality of the data – it is important not to be more specific in personalizing an e-mail than the richness of the data allows" [#8].

5. Discussion

This study presents a significant departure from previous studies by exploring the application of a comprehensive range of executional tactics in e-mail marketing campaigns, whereas previous studies have focused on web-page design tactics. The present study uses the literature to formulate a framework of executional tactics applicable to e-mail marketing campaigns (listed in Table 1 earlier), and then uses this framework to empirically explore the extent to which e-mail marketers have applied the tactics. A further important area in which this study makes a contribution is in exploring the strategic thinking that has influenced e-mail marketers' application of alternative tactics.

Recipients' initial attention to e-mail marketing campaigns depends on a number of executional elements, summarized as follows. The subject line of an e-mail must grab the initial attention of the customer and prompt him or her to open the e-mail; otherwise, there is no opportunity for sustained attention; the message can be deleted and never seen again, unlike print media messages, which can be returned to later. There are two parts of the subject line which have the potential to grab attention: (1) sender – is the e-mail from a source in which the receiver will be interested; and (2) subject – is the receiver interested, intrigued, or motivated by the subject matter?

Attention has to flow from the subject line into the message, as it will not happen the other way round. Pictures (illustrations) may be the most powerful way to attract the attention of a consumer towards a print ad (Rossiter and Bellman, 2005) but pictures alone will not work for an e-mail campaign. This proposition may seem obvious but the proposition has vital implications for the planning and development of e-mail marketing campaigns. In line with theory proposed by Rossiter and Bellman (2005), more than three-quarters of subject lines

have a "lead-in" headline (as appropriate for print adverts for high-involvement products) and few have "complete" headlines (which are more appropriate for low-involvement products).

Moving on to developing sustained attention or "engagement" with an e-mail message, personalization, interactive features, and hyperlinks to web pages seem to be the most effective tactics. Comparatively, the verbal text, especially the body copy, seems to be less important for e-mail marketers who choose to adopt a catalog approach, where body-copy text is often reduced to a brief description of each product. Personalization also influences the style and layout of e-mail marketing messages. Some retailers design short, snappy, anonymous promotional messages designed to elicit an immediate response, whereas others develop long, complex, sender-identified messages aimed at engaging the prospective customer in a more involving interaction.

Sundar and Kim (2005) report web-based advertising to be lacking in interactivity, and suggested such advertising still follows many aspects of the traditional print advertising model. Despite their many similarities, marketing e-mails are much more complex than newspaper or magazine adverts. E-mail marketing messages are delivered using a range of approaches – such as web page in the mail box, product catalog, and newsletter – and depending on the chosen format, the e-retailer may elect to include a broad range of interactive features and hyperlinks in order to sustain prospective customers' attention. The application of the capabilities of interactive technology to e-mail campaigns has broadened the scope of online marketing messages and offers the potential to not only develop the sustained attention of the customer to the message but also to facilitate a direct response.

However, e-retailers may well be overlooking important attention-gaining and attention-sustaining executional tactics for e-mail marketing. Some "split-run" testing of tactics is taking place but this empirical trial-and-error route is costly and slow. Consequently, it is important that e-retailers take heed of the latest academic research, including this new

study, to guide the design and implementation of their e-mail marketing campaigns. Table 1 (earlier) includes a comprehensive set of recommendations for how each executional factor might be deployable effectively.

Whilst this study provides important new insights into the executional tactics used in email marketing campaigns, it suffers from a number of limitations. In particular, it was not possible to explore the actual effectiveness of such campaigns, from either the consumers' or the retailers' perspective. Consequently, further research is now required to understand which combinations of specific executional elements offer the greatest potential for effectively attracting the consumers' attention. Investigate how retailers actively monitor and revise their email marketing campaigns, on an on-going basis, is necessary to enhance their effectiveness.

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Table 1: Executional tactics in e-mail marketing messages

Executional factor	Prevalence of executional factor	Recommendation	Managers' comments
Length of e-mail	Page length is a dimension of all e-mails, but differences in length are found. The average length is 2.4 pages and only 18% are less than a page in length.	The message objective should determine its ideal length. Variant testing should be used to determine the length that is most effective for a specific type of message.	*Sales e-mails are short but new fashion e-mails tend to adopt a catalog approach as the more products in the e-mail the more opportunities to buy.* [#8] *If it's promotional it will be short but is it's a news letter it will be longer.* [#4] *You've got to test it.* [#2]
Frequency and timing of e-mail	Frequency varies from 5% to 30% of volume of e-mail sent per quarter; 35% of e-mails show evidence of use of targeted timing.	Frequency of sending e-mails is an important part of building customer relationships: too many might irritate and too few could lose the recipient's interest. It is important to consider the timing of the e-mail delivery in terms of day of the week and the time of day when planning an e-mail campaign.	*Getting the frequency right is really important. It can be more important than the product or the subject line.* [#1] *Seasonal messages are important for us especially Christmas and Easter.* [#14]
Illustrations	Over 90% of marketing e-mails use illustrations. These vary from a full-page illustration to many thumbnail shots of products.	Pictures help engage the readers and sustain attention.	*Nice pictures can help to make it more interesting.* [#19]
Subject line	100% of marketing e-mails use a subject line.	Content of subject line is critical for grabbing attention. Use variant testing to determine which subject line is most effective.	*The strongest messages will be conveyed in the subject line. Once we have a final e-mail we will try to assess what will engage the customer most.* [#4]
Headline	Three-quarters of marketing e-mails have a distinct headline in addition to the subject line.	The e-mail headline should link to the subject line of the e-mail and to the body copy.	*If it's a sale we will lead with the word 'sale' in subject and e-mail headline. If it is product based it will be longer.* [#17]
Message content	In over 75% of the marketing e-mails, a clear link could be traced from subject	The body copy of the e-mail should be aligned with its subject and headline.	*What is important is that everything should flow from the subject line, into the message headline and the*

	line, through the headline, to the content		*creative copy*. [#1]
Brand logo	99% of marketing e-mails have a brand logo prominent in top left hand corner.	Position the brand logo prominently.	*It's no secret that the top-left is important. The further an item is from the top left the more it is likely to require scrolling, which requires the recipient to already have engaged.* [#2]
Hyperlinks	99% of marketing e-mails contain at least one hyperlink to another web page. The number of links varies from 1 to over 50.	Complexity potentially influences attention; too many links might obscure the message. Number of links should be tailored to communication objectives.	*We keep our e-mails simple we are a trading business* (retailer using e-mails to sell online) *not a content provider*. [#2]
Interactive features	While the e-mails analyzed contain some form of interactivity, 26 different types of interactive features are apparent.	Interactivity can lead to more information processing and increase user involvement, but there is potentially an optimum level of interactivity based on the nature of the message to be communicated.	Interactive features in e-mails are *very important*. [#19] *A good model is that e-mail delivers the web to the inbox*' and ultimately *gets more click throughs*. [#8]
Animation	Only 2% of marketing e-mails use animation.	Animation has the potential to attract attention, but its effectiveness must be questioned given its rare use.	*We've tried animations but it didn't make a noticeable difference to click-throughs.* [#13]
Personalization	Just over a third, 35 %, of marketing e-mails are personalized.	Personalization should improve click-through rates, but there is an appropriate level of personalization which is dependent upon the stage of the customer relationship and the personal data volunteered by the customer.	[Personalization] *is very important – we get far better response if the e-mail is personalized*. [#8] *It's important not to be more specific than the richness of the customer data permits.* [#1]

Table 2: E-mail marketing campaigns investigated

No.	Type of retail firm and main products	Size of retailer	Retail industry classification	No. of e-mails	Interview contact
#1	Wine & Alcoholic beverages	Large retail firm: T/O £50- 100m	Multiple retailer	113	Telephone interview: Head of e-commerce
#2	Wine & Alcoholic beverages	Very large retail firm T/O £100m+	Multiple retailer	87	E-mail interview: E-commerce manager
#3	Fashion wear, household & electronic goods	Very large retail firm: T/O £100m+	Home Shopping	82	
#4	Clothing & household goods	Very large retail firm: T/O £100m+	Department store	79	E-mail interview: Direct Marketing coordinator
#5	Clothing & household goods	Very large retail firm: T/O £100m+	Department store	66	
#6	DIY and Gardens	Very large retail firm: T/O £100m+	Multiple retailer	61	
#7	Food	Very large retail firm: T/O £100m+	Multiple retailer	54	
#8	Clothing, household goods	Very large retail firm: T/O £100m+	Home Shopping	48	Telephone interview: Head of e-commerce
#9	Art and craft materials	Medium sized firm: T/O £20- 50 million	Multiple Retailer	45	
#10	High quality fashion	Medium sized firm: T/O £20- 50 million	Department store	44	
#11	Wines, spirits and speciality beers	Very large retail firm: T/O £100m+	Multiple retailer	43	
#12	Speciality foods & confectionery	Very large retail firm: T/O £100m+	Multiple retailer	39	E-mail interview: E-marketing manager
#13	Home & Garden	Medium sized firm: T/O £20- 50 million	Multiple retailer	22	Telephone interview: Marketing executive
#14	Speciality foods	Small/Medium sized: T/O £10- 20	Multiple retailer	38	
#15	Toys and Games	Medium sized firm: T/O £20- 50 million	Multiple retailer	31	
#16	Clothing & household goods , toys and games	Medium sized firm: T/O £20- 50 million	Department store	26	
#17	Footwear	Medium sized firm: T/O £20- 50 million	Multiple retailer	24	E-mail interview: E-marketing manager
#18	Menswear	Medium sized firm: T/O £20- 50 million	Multiple retailer	24	
#19	Speciality foods & ceramics	Medium sized firm: T/O £20- 50 million	Multiple retailer	21	Telephone interview: Head of online marketing
#20	Jewelers	Large retail firm: T/O £50- 100m	Multiple retailer	10	Telephone interview: Head of branding

Table 3: Frequency of e-mail marketing messages

Retailer	4th qtr. 2005	1st qtr. 2006	2nd qtr. 2006	3rd qtr. 2006	4th qtr 2006	1st qtr. 2007	Total e-mails sent	Average sent per month
#1	12	12	49	10	19	11	113	6.3
#2	12	11	26	12	14	12	87	4.8
#3)	14	14	12	12	15	15	82	4.6
#4	13	8	14	15	19	10	79	4.4
#5	6	11	8	13	15	13	66	3.7
#6	14	9	12	8	10	8	61	3.4
#7	10	9	4	13	10	8	54	3.0
#8	1	7	15	7	13	5	48	2.7
#9	8	8	9	4	7	9	45	2.5
#10	5	7	9	8	9	6	44	2.4
#11	5	6	9	7	9	7	43	2.4
#12	10	5	6	2	11	5	39	2.2
#13	4	1	5	3	6	3	22	1.2
#14	6	7	6	5	6	8	38	2.1
#15	5	4	6	3	8	5	31	1.7
#16	3	5	4	3	7	4	26	1.4
#17	5	2	5	3	6	3	24	1.3
#18	4	2	4	5	6	3	24	1.3
#19	1	4	3	3	6	4	21	1.2
#20)	2	1	2	1	3	1	10	0.6
Totals	140	133	208	137	199	140	957	

Table 4: Subject line topics

Subject line topic	No. of e-mails	(%)
Discount/saving	268	28.0
Product details	191	20.0
Newsletter	142	14.9
Occasion or seasonal promotion	98	10.2
Teaser	83	8.7
Action prompt	44	4.6
Sale	37	3.9
Contest	23	2.4
In-store events	22	2.3
Money off	17	1.8
Free gift	16	1.7
Bonus offer	10	1.4
Other	6	0.6
Total	957	

Table 5: Number of hyperlinks per e-mail by type of message

Type of e-mail message	≤ 10 links	11 to 20 links	21-30 links	31 to 40 links	41 to 50 links	> 50 links	Total number of e-mails	%
Sales promotion	132	141	48	16	9	13	359	
Product information	57	51	60	12	11	4	195	
Newsletter	70	37	35	3	3	1	149	
Action prompt	32	55	30	6	5	2	130	
Seasonal promotion	23	42	26	4	0	2	97	
Event invitation	19	2	0	0	0	0	21	
Totals	333	328	199	41	28	22	951*	
Percent								100

* Six e-mails devoted to registration and administration were excluded from this analysis.

Table 6: Interactive features by type of marketing e-mail (% of total)

Interactive feature	Message focus				
	Information	Pre-purchase activities	Incentives	Purchase mechanism	Post-purchase support
Unsubscribe (98%)	Search for specific information (12.6%)	Website landing page (100%)	Contest (5.1%)	Order online (54.4%)	Interactive customer services (18.0%)
Send an e-mail to the company (54.2%)	Find out what's on in store (6.6%)	Store locator (17.9%)	Collect voucher (1.5%)	Interactive catalog (9%)	Web/advice chat line (1.0%)
Send the e-mail to a friend (16.5%)		Order a catalog (9.0%)	Collect reward points (0.6%)	Gift ordering service (4.8%)	Leave feedback (0.1%)
Join the club (5.3%)		Book an appointment or event (4.8%)	Complete a quiz (0.2%)		
Send a card (1.9%)		Check availability of stock (1.9%)			
Complete a survey (0.4%)		Register for price alert/get a quote (1.3%)			
Contribute to a blog (0.03%)		Create a shopping list (0.5%)			