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The State of Email Trends Report

Data and predictions about the email trends, tools, and tactics that email marketers should prioritize in the year ahead.

2024 edition

Meet the trends

With 2024 underway, you're deciding your priorities and goals of your email marketing program for the year. But what should you focus on? And what should you avoid? Which trends are the industry moving away from, and which ones are marketers doubling down on?

In this first State of Email Report of 2024, we partnered with Oracle on a survey between October and November 2023 to hear from email marketers about what works, what doesn't, and what they're looking forward to this year.

Over 480 email marketers worldwide shared their thoughts and how they'll map out the year ahead. Read on to see our full breakdown, but first take a quick peek at the 5 standout trends: 🔭

Meet the trends: What to watch in 2024

1

Content creation is the go-to generative AI use case for saving time.

Just over a third of all respondents use AI for copywriting tasks at least occasionally, making it the most common AI-assisted task.

2

Personalization is a proven winner with new tools to explore.

Subject line personalization, real-time content, and personalization using dynamic content improved performance for more than 80% of respondents. If you're looking for a sign to invest in advanced personalization strategies, this is it!

3

Email segmentation creates big results without a big budget.

More than 90% of the email marketers who responded to our survey said email segmentation boosts performance. That number is even more exciting when you realize that most teams, regardless of budget or tools, can use segmentation to some degree.

4

B2C brands are more experimental in the inbox.

B2C email programs were far more likely than their B2B counterparts to use a wide variety of tactics, including AMP for email, live content, multivariate testing, and loyalty programs. This huge disparity should be a call-to-action for B2B brands to branch out and try new tactics.

5

You can explore trends, tools, and tactics that may feel out of your league.

While large companies use more email marketing tactics and tools than their smaller peers, it's generally not by big margins. So, small companies shouldn't shy away from the trends that make sense for their business.

Chapter 1: Generative AI

Generative AI—artificial intelligence that produces content—has made a serious splash in the past year, but is it worth it? For time-savings, yes! For replacing email marketers entirely? Definitely not. Email marketers favor AI help for some tasks more than others, and we expect even more teams to dive into the tools in the year ahead.
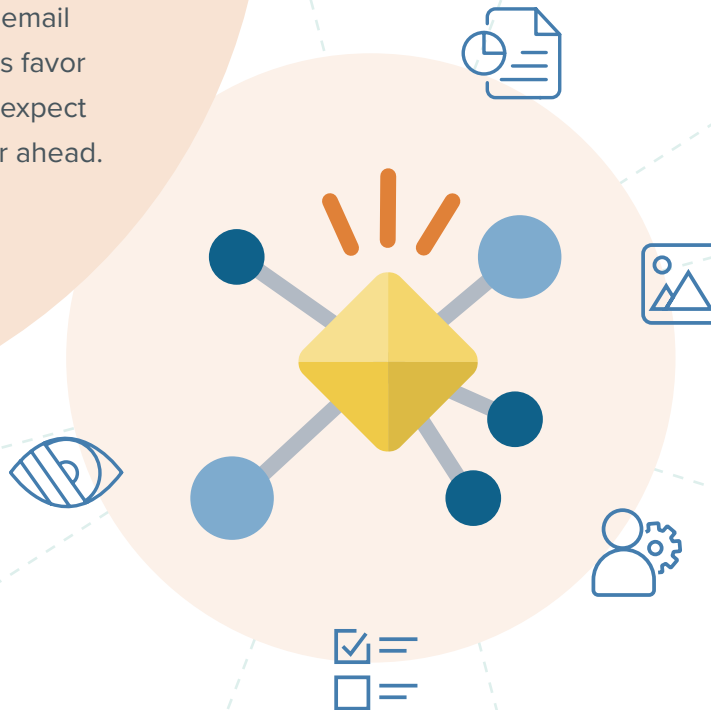
Generative AI Tactics
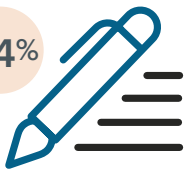
Written content

34%

Image generation

9%

How do email marketers use GenAI?

Of the email marketers who use generative AI, written content is the most popular. **34% of respondents use generative AI for copy at least occasionally**, making it more popular than video (33%) and CSS-based interactivity (26%).

Written copy is the go-to for generative AI because of its accessibility—you don't need specialized skills to type a prompt into a large multimodal model (LMM) and get decent, usable results.

The least common generative AI use case for email marketers is image production. If you've ever seen AI struggle to create human hands, you'll understand why. But it also takes a lot of specialized graphic design knowledge to write prompts that produce images that are on brand and to spec.
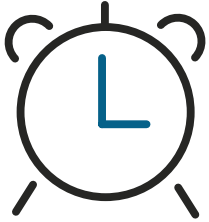
Traditional Tactics

Video

33%

CSS-based Interactivity

26%

Time-savings is the primary GenAI benefit

Generative AI is a compelling tool for email marketers, but it isn't sophisticated enough to dethrone tried-and-true performance boosters (that we'll cover in chapter 3).

Chad S. White, said this about generative AI:

> *"While usage is high for a new technology, the performance improvement reported by users is not. In fact, of all the email marketing elements and technologies asked about, respondents rated generative AI for copy and for images among the bottom three in terms of performance. GenAI is predominantly about time-savings, not performance increases—at least for now."*
>
> - Chad S. White, the Head of Research at Oracle Digital Experience Agency

How to start using GenAI

If you're curious about generative AI for time-savings and beyond, we've got you covered. Here's how to incorporate it into your email program, from quick wins to advanced strategies.

Easy ●○○

- Campaign idea brainstorming
- Generate subject line ideas with Litmus Assistant

Medium ●●○

- Adapt the tone of your email copy with Litmus Assistant
- Change the audience- or industry-focus of existing email copy
- Draft email copy from scratch

Advanced ●●●

- Leverage data from your ESP or CRM to serve custom content to subscribers, at scale, with Dynamic Content Automation in Litmus Personalize
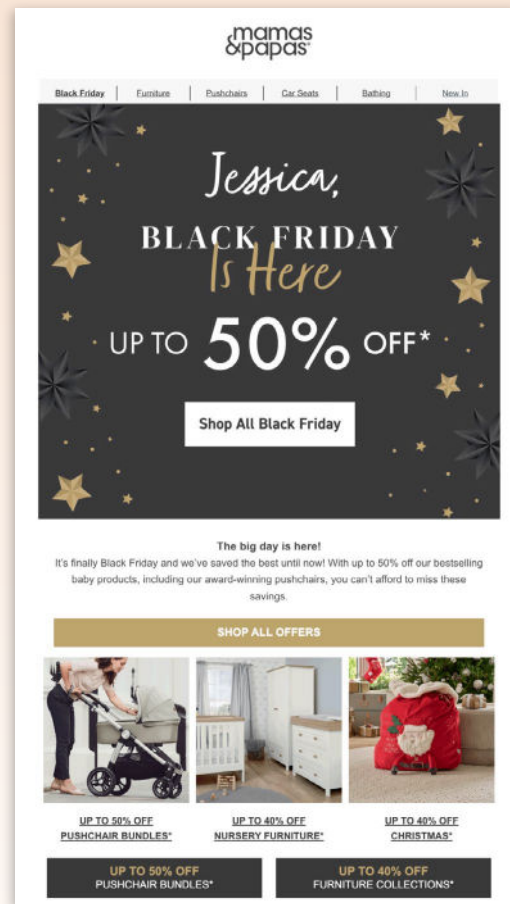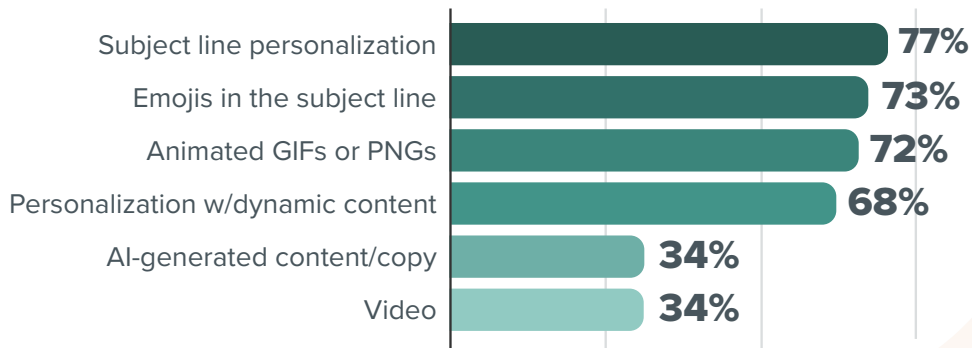- Image generation
- Video generation

Chapter 2: Email elements

Who is the captain of the callout? The MVP of the LTV? We asked email marketers which tactics boosted email performance, and there was a clear winner. But lots of other email elements are very much worth the effort, too. Read on to learn what email marketers plan to use this year.

Personalization is nearly always worth the effort

It pays to personalize.

Elements with some performance improvement

Element	Percentage
Subject line personalization	77%
Emojis in the subject line	73%
Animated GIFs or PNGs	72%
Personalization w/dynamic content	68%
AI-generated content/copy	34%
Video	34%

80%

More than 80% of respondents reported seeing at least some performance improvement when using subject line personalization, live or real-time content, and personalization using dynamic content.

"Personalization is no longer a nice-to-have, but an expectation. Subscribers and customers expect personalized experiences in the inbox. There's a greater awareness from consumers about their data and how it could be used to improve their experience with your brand. Plus, with inbox service providers taking engagement into consideration for inbox placement, personalization is a proven tactic that will help you improve engagement to keep you out of the spam folder."

- Jaina Mistry, Director, Brand and Content Marketing, Litmus

Annotations, schema, and emojis lend less lift

Not every email element is such a reliable heavy-hitter, though. **Only 60% of respondents saw some performance improvement** from email annotations and schema, emojis in subject lines, and AI-generated copy.

There could be a few elements at play here. For starters, analyzing and reporting on email annotations and schema can be more difficult to track than other elements. Even elements that are easier to A/B test can have value beyond performance improvements.

Eddie Bauer   6:55 AM
Something New For The Trail
UP TO 50% OFF

"While marketers may not be seeing much lift, AI copy is still probably saving them time or helping them avoid the struggle of writing, so that's a win. And emojis may test as neutral and teams may use them anyway for brand or tone reasons."

- Chad S. White, the Head of Research at Oracle Digital Experience Agency

There's more to email than metrics

There's no getting around the fact that your emails need to engage your audience, make sales, and be an all-around good investment. But with an average ROI of $36 for every $1 spent, we can afford to do a few worthy efforts that don't necessarily boost the bottom line.

Case in point: email accessibility. Everyone should be able to enjoy your emails, and we stand by the push for inclusive coding. So what do we do when the survey says email accessibility isn't a top performance driver? We do it anyway, because it's what's right.

Measuring the ROI of accessibility may also be much more difficult than other investments, says Chad:

> *"It's worth recognizing that accessibility probably isn't demonstrating sizable ROIs because brands have already alienated those audiences that appreciate accessibility the most. Accessibility is an investment in your ability to retain future subscribers at a higher rate."*

Tactics like newsletters also fell lower on the list of most impactful email elements, but we aren't letting go of Litmus Weekly. Newsletters can be a place to test new strategies, like live polling, to learn about what your audience likes.

If a strategy isn't winning any gold medals, but still provides value in some form or helps humanize your brand, consider keeping it.

Litmus

Email personalization for all

Whether you're new to email personalization or a pro, you can tap into email marketers' most effective trends with Litmus.

You're invited
Phillip

07	21	59
HOURS	MINUTES	SECONDS

Every Litmus plan includes the tools you need to deliver the right message at the right moment—while making sure it's error-free and ready to drive results—empowering you to make every send count.

Get started today

Chapter 3: Tactics and technologies

Going beyond the basics in your email tactics and tools can come with a price—both in time required and budget spent. However, email marketers notice a boost in performance for some of these efforts.

Email segmentation is a proven winner

Among the tactics and technologies we asked about, **email segmentation was the only one that more than 90% of respondents said boosted performance at least some**. If you also consider that essentially anyone can use this tactic, then you have a compelling argument to focus on segmentation this year. Jaina Mistry, the Director of Brand and Content Marketing at Litmus, explained why email segmentation works so well for so many teams:

90% email segmentation "boosted performance"

"Email segmentation is the simplest way to ensure you're sending the right message to the right person at the right time. You don't need any technical skills to create segments of your audience, either. Most—if not all—ESPs will give you that feature out-of-the-box. The only thing you need to decide is what segments you want to create."

- Jaina Mistry, Director, Brand and Content Marketing, Litmus

Segmentation ideas:

Demographics like identity, company size, role, or age: Send relevant content and test new messaging or offers

Geography and **time zone**: Customize your language and send time

Purchase history: Send special offers to top customers or boost engagement with potential buyers

Email engagement: Focus on engaged subscribers to maintain healthy deliverability

Devices and **email clients**: Experiment with more or less text-heavy messages between devices

Self-selected preferences: Let subscribers opt-in and out of content for holidays, events, or product categories

There are plenty of solid bets, though

More than 85% of respondents said that omnichannel marketing, multivariate testing, action-triggered email, advanced performance analytics, and customer data platforms generated performance improvements. In other words, there's plenty of ways to add value in the inbox.

Tactics and technologies that showed much improvement

Bar chart showing tactics and technologies ranked by percentage that showed much improvement:

- Email segmentation — ~53%
- Action-triggered emails — ~43%
- Universal holdout groups for testing — ~42%
- Advanced performance analytics — ~41%
- Machine-triggered emails — ~38%
- Operations-triggered emails — ~38%
- Omnichannel marketing — ~38%
- Loyalty/reward programs — ~37%
- A/B testing — ~37%
- Website pop-ups for subscriber acquisition — ~37%
- Multivariate testing — ~37%
- Date-triggered emails — ~37%
- Customer data platform (CDP) — ~36%
- Inaction-triggered emails — ~29%
- Modular emails (Using snippets and partials) — ~29%
- Progressive profiling — ~28%
- Newsletters — ~27%
- Co-marketing for subscriber acquisition — ~27%
- Send time optimization — ~25%
- Account-based marketing — ~25%
- Subscriber re-engagement program or inactivity management — ~24%
- Preference centers — ~21%
- Inclusive and/or accessible coding techniques — ~19%
- Dark Mode coding techniques — ~18%
- BIMI (Brand Indicators for Message Identification) — ~16%

Chapter 4: Email across organizations

Email marketers may all be in the same inbox ocean, but we are not all in the same boat.

While there are shared challenges (here's to you, pervasive white lines in Outlook), our survey revealed clear differences in B2B vs. B2C teams and large vs. small organizations. But what can we learn from each other in the year ahead, and are there opportunities to test new waters?

Top B2C tactics B2B companies should use

- Loyalty or reward programs
- Live or real-time content
- Operations-triggered emails
- Date-triggered emails

B2B vs. B2C

It's always a good idea to tailor your email strategies for your audience, and there seems to be a clear line between B2B and B2C audiences—at least for now. While **B2B survey respondents reported using more video in email than B2C brands**, the B2C email marketers use more of... basically everything else.
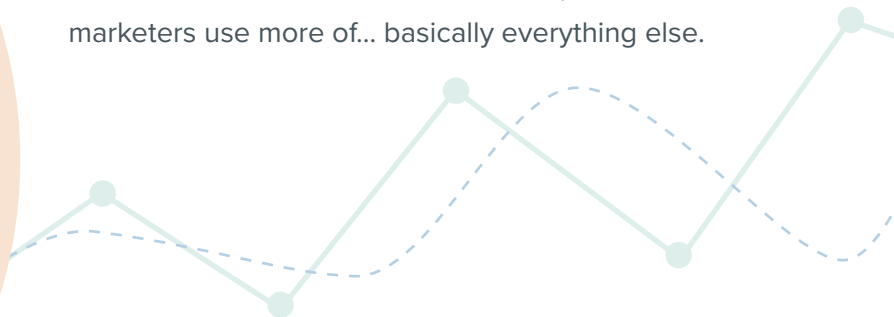
"B2C brands are more likely to use nearly all of the email elements, tactics, and technologies we asked marketers about," Chad noted. "B2C brands were more than twice as likely as B2B brands to use CSS-based interactivity, live content, multivariate testing, universal holdout groups, and most automated emails. They were more than **three times more likely** to use loyalty programs and content recommendations."

If you're a B2B brand who wants to lean into video this year, Chad has a few ideas. "There are lots of great opportunities for B2B brands to use video—for demos, how-tos, testimonials, and talking directly to users. Video is great for explaining complicated things, and for humanizing brands. Both of those are issues that many B2B brands struggle with."
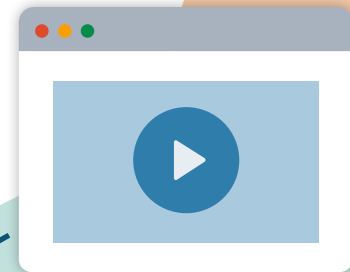
Large vs. small organizations

Large organizations—those with 500 or more employees—use their larger budgets for more technologies and tactics than smaller companies are typically able to do.

"Most notably, larger organizations use **progressive profiling**, **customer data platforms (CDPs)**, and **universal holdout groups** at more than twice the rate of smaller organizations," Chad noted. "That's an indication of the greater data complexity and demands that larger organizations have."

Don't for a second doubt the efforts and ingenuity of smaller companies, though. The survey revealed that **organizations with fewer than 500 employees** use some tools even more than their corporate counterparts, **like generative AI and website pop-ups for subscriber acquisition**.

Define it -

Progressive Profiling:
Progressive profiling enables email marketers to gather data to build individual profiles based on the customer's behavior. This strategy allows you to create more robust customer profiles about their demographics, interests, needs, and pain points.

Customer Data Platforms:
A CDP (Customer Data Platform) is a tool that provides a central location for customer data gathered for multiple sources. The aggregated data is organized to create a single customer profile that can be used in marketing initiatives.

Universal Holdout Groups:
A universal holdout group is a randomly sampled small percentage of customers that are held back from receiving or experiencing certain marketing initiatives to help overcome the limitations of traditional A/B testing.

Chapter 5: How to get on board with 2024 trends

Generative AI, personalization, segmentation, live content, and all of the other trends we asked marketers about are a treasure trove of opportunity this year—and will be for years to come. As exciting as new developments and ideas are, you have to narrow down what you try.

Here's how to try the year's top trends without going overboard.

☑ ## Goal: Save time during email production

62% of email teams spend two weeks or more to produce a single email, and it's common to have multiple emails in production at the same time. If you want to increase production without sacrificing quality, add these ideas to your email marketing workflow.

1. Let AI brainstorm your subject lines and email copy

2. Use Litmus Assistant to translate your email across languages using generative AI

3. Optimize your email design system and automatically monitor every template with Litmus Email Guardian

Goal: Boost email performance with personalization

Personalization—beyond using a subscriber's first name—popped up in multiple places throughout our trends research. Here are standout elements to try this year:

1. [Add live content](#) like personalized images, countdown timers, nearest store maps, local weather, and progress bars
2. Use dynamic content to include personalized product categories and relevant thought leadership articles

Goal: Experiment with emerging technologies

Want to try one of the email elements, tactics, or tools that email marketers love? Here are some of our favorite resources for getting inspired and learning the ropes.

1. [Free email templates](#)
2. [Example Email Gallery](#)
3. [Litmus Community](#)
4. [The Litmus Blog](#)
5. [Litmus Customer Success Stories](#)

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About Us

Hi! We're Litmus, and we offer a complete solution for email optimization and personalization that helps email marketers like you create, personalize, test, protect, review, and analyze every email to create exceptional brand experiences for every subscriber.

To learn more about us, please check out litmus.com or connect with us on LinkedIn and X.

If you're ready to start 2024 on the right foot in the email department, you're in the right place. From solutions for effective email personalization to an airtight QA process monitored by cutting-edge emerging email technology and more, Litmus is here to help your email team make every send count™.

Ready to start sending better emails? Start your free trial with Litmus today!

Special thanks to **Chad S. White** and **Oracle**

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Chad S. White is the Head of Research at Oracle Digital Experience Agency and the author of four editions of *Email Marketing Rules* and nearly 4,000 posts and articles about digital and email marketing. Featured in more than 100 publications, including *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, Chad was named the ANA's 2018 Email Marketer Thought Leader of the Year.