



# The Email Client Experience



Analysis of where, when, and how subscribers  
are interacting with email

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# + Introduction

In 2017, email is projected [to surpass 3.7 billion users](#), which is almost half the world's population. No other marketing platform comes close to the unprecedented reach of email. This enormous audience presents a unique opportunity, but marketers must pay attention to how subscribers are consuming their messages if they want to maximize email's effectiveness.

Since our last email client study back in 2012, the way users interact with email has changed significantly. The widespread adoption of smartphones has increased our ability to access email, with [44 percent](#) of the world's population owning a smartphone in 2017. Mobile clients give users constant access to their emails, allowing them to quickly interact with incoming messages.

The ever changing email landscape makes it more important than ever to understand where, when, and how subscribers are interacting with email, allowing you to optimize your program in response.

In this report, we look at how subscribers interact with email, analyzing:



Which email clients subscribers are using to read email.



How much email is opened each day of the week on each email client.



How long subscribers spend viewing email on each email client.



## Where Are People Reading Emails?

In this section, we compare the breakdown of email opens between mobile, webmail, and desktop.



Mobile includes any smartphone, tablet, or e-reader that allows users to access their email. Over the period analyzed, mobile was the preferred method of opening email. On average, 55 percent of email opens were made on a mobile client. Summer and fall saw the most opens on mobile clients, with the highest percentage of mobile opens occurring in July (58 percent). Mobile opens dropped slightly in the winter and spring, with a low of 52 percent in February.



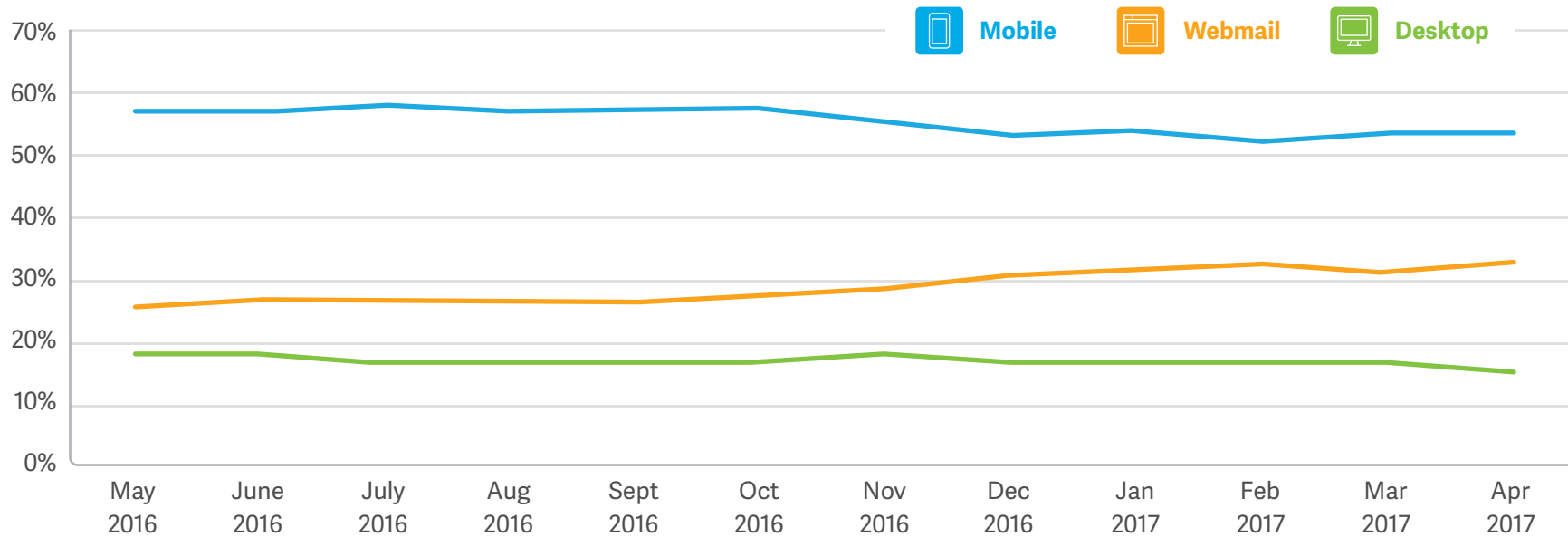
Webmail includes any email opened on an internet browser, such as Gmail.com or Yahoo.com. Webmail retained a significant share of opens with an average of 28 percent over the period analyzed. Unlike mobile, webmail saw the most opens in the winter and spring months, with the highest percentage of opens (32 percent) occurring in February and April. Webmail had its lowest share of opens in May at 25 percent.



Desktop includes any email opened or viewed on software that is installed on a laptop or desktop, such as Outlook or Apple Mail. While the vast majority of opens occurred on mobile clients, many people still rely on desktop clients to view their email. On average, 16 percent of email is opened using a desktop client. Unlike mobile and webmail, the percent of desktop opens remained relatively steady throughout the year.

# Where Are People Reading Emails?

Global monthly email opens by environment




Comparison of environment usage, 2012 vs. 2017

	2012	2017	Change
 <b>Mobile</b>	29%	55%	+26%
 <b>Webmail</b>	37%	28%	-9%
 <b>Desktop</b>	34%	16%	-18%

# Where Are People Reading Emails?

## Monthly email opens by environment: Country breakdown

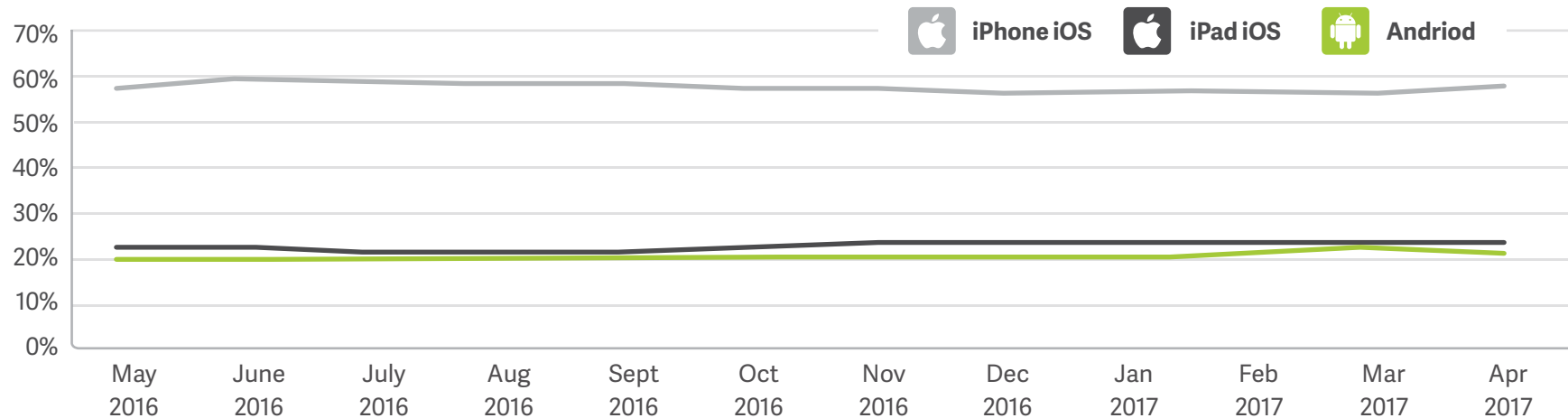
The United States, Canada, Great Britain, Singapore, and Australia saw higher mobile opens than the global average, each with mobile opens over 70 percent. China and Germany have retained many desktop users, with more than one in five emails opened on a desktop client. Brazil, where smartphone penetration is only at 38 percent, saw much lower opens (48 percent) on mobile clients compared to other countries. Brazil opens emails on mobile and webmail (46 percent) almost equally.

		Mobile	Webmail	Desktop
	United States	71%	16%	13%
	Canada	70%	17%	12%
	Brazil	48%	46%	7%
	Great Britain	76%	14%	9%
	France	59%	28%	13%
	Germany	57%	22%	21%
	Spain	63%	25%	11%
	Italy	57%	28%	15%
	China	61%	16%	23%
	Singapore	73%	15%	12%
	Australia	71%	13%	16%


# Where Are People Reading Emails?

## Breakdown of mobile email opens

There are really only two dominant mobile platforms in the world: iOS and Android. Today, an overwhelming majority (79 percent) of mobile email opens occur on devices running iOS (iPhones and iPads). Despite this huge advantage, there has actually been a slight decline in iOS market share from its 2012 average of 85 percent. Android opens have increased six percent in five years to 20 percent of total mobile email opens.



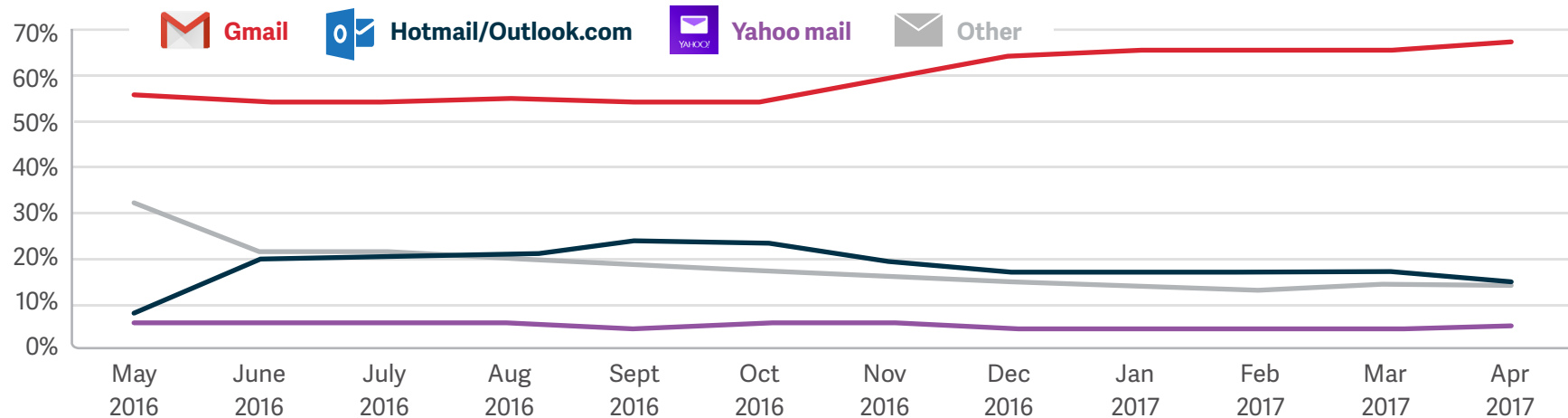
## Comparison of mobile email opens, 2012 vs. 2017

	2012	2017	Change
 <b>iPhone iOS</b>	61%	57%	-4%
 <b>iPad iOS</b>	24%	22%	-2%
 <b>Android</b>	14%	20%	+6%





# Where Are People Reading Emails?

## Breakdown of webmail email opens

In 2012, Yahoo Mail was the most popular webmail service, with Hotmail in second place and Gmail in a distant third. Today, Gmail is the clear winner with nearly three in five webmail opens. Outlook.com (formerly Hotmail) comes in second at 15 percent and Yahoo Mail, once the most popular webmail client, now sees only five percent of total webmail opens.



## Comparison of webmail email opens, 2012 vs. 2017

	2012	2017	Change
 Gmail	6%	59%	+53%
 Hotmail/Outlook.com	29%	18%	-11%
 Yahoo Mail	37%	5%	-32%
 Other	28%	17%	-11%



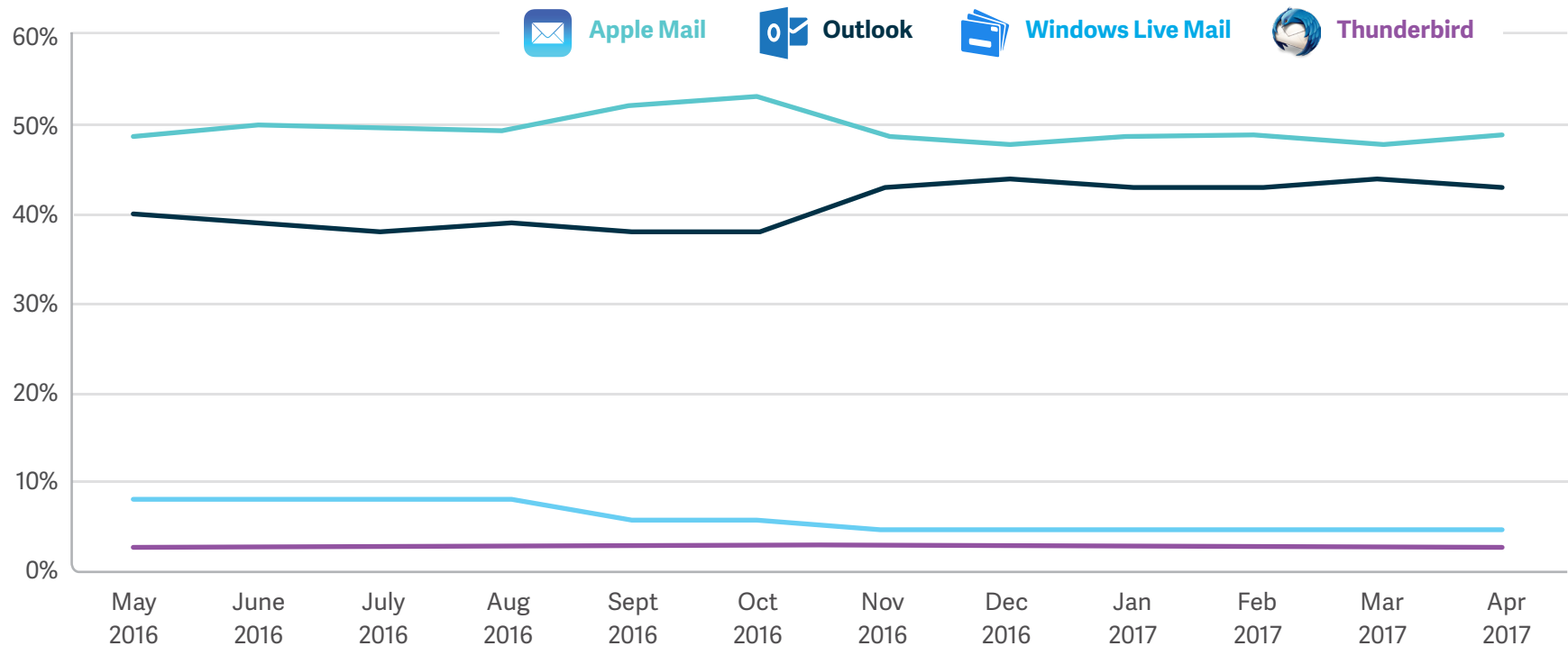
# Where Are People Reading Emails?

## Breakdown of desktop email opens

Until sometime in 2012, desktop email clients were the most popular way for people to view emails. Today, desktop comes in a distant third place. This shift is mostly due to the rise of the smartphone, but it also came about because more businesses are doing email “in the cloud,” allowing employees to access email via webmail interface (i.e., G Suite, Exchange Online, etc.) rather than requiring standalone software like Outlook.





In 2012, Outlook was the most popular desktop email client. Today, Apple Mail is the most used desktop email client with half of the desktop email client market share, while Outlook has fallen to second place with 43 percent.

Usage of Windows Live Mail declined throughout the period analyzed, and is likely to continue this trend as it was [discontinued](#) in 2016. In the future, we might see former Windows Live users switch over to Outlook.



# Where Are People Reading Emails?

Comparison of desktop email opens, 2012 vs. 2017

	2012	2017	Change
 <b>Apple Mail</b>	29%	50%	+21%
 <b>Outlook</b>	60%	41%	-19%
 <b>Thunderbird</b>	3%	3%	0
 <b>Others</b>	8%	6%	-2%



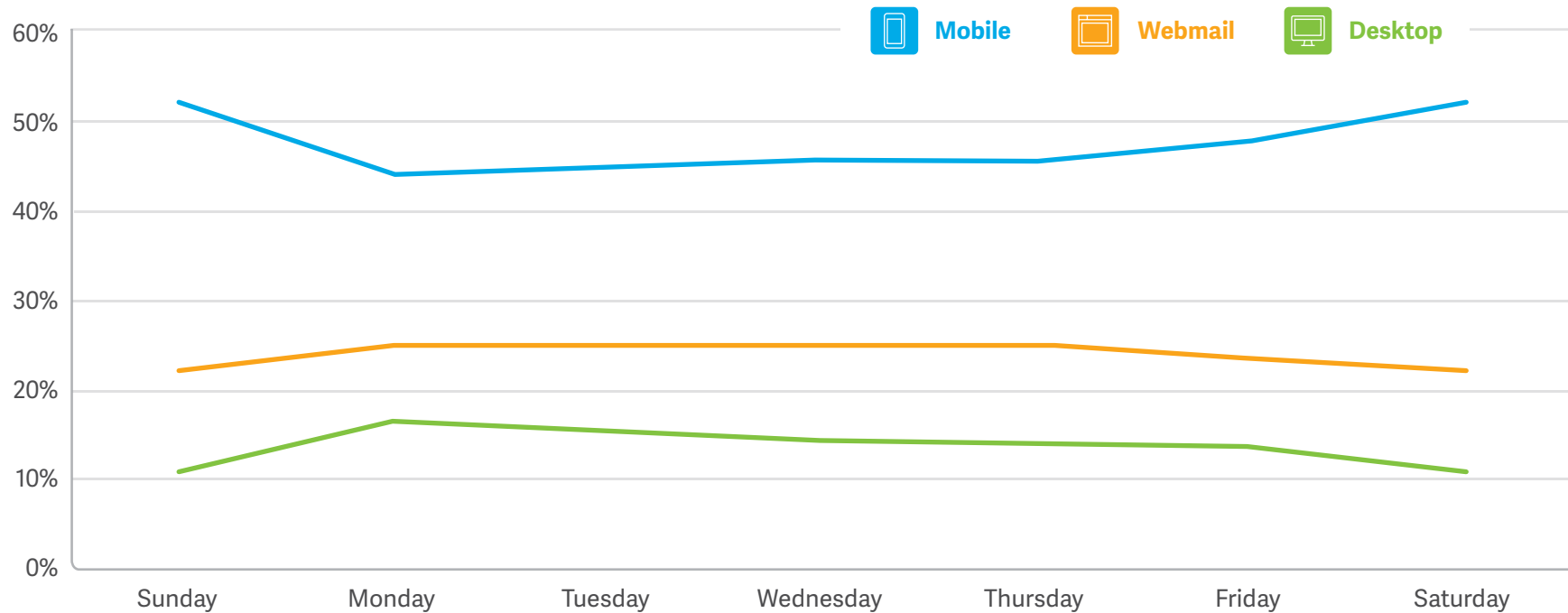
## When Are People Opening Email?

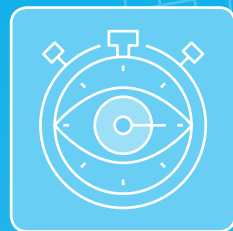
There is a correlation between the day of week and the environment that people use to open email. Not surprisingly, desktop opens occurred primarily during the workweek as people are situated in front of their computer, ranging from a high of 19 percent on Mondays to 16 percent on Fridays. Only 13 percent of total opens occurred on a desktop client over the weekends, on average.

# When Are People Reading Emails?

## Opens by environment and day of week

The majority of email opens occur on a mobile client regardless of the day, but the weekends see a boost in mobile opens. Smartphones and tablets accounted for 60 percent of all opens on the weekend, as people are out and about or just relaxing on the couch.





# How Much Time Do Subscribers Spend Reading Email?

In December, we enhanced our Email Client Monitor product with the new dwell time feature that classifies the amount of time subscribers spend viewing an email into one of three categories: **abandoned**, **skimmed**, and **read**.



## Abandoned:

An email is classified as abandoned if the subscriber views the email for less than two seconds, because it takes approximately two seconds to open an email and delete it.



## Skimmed:

A skimmed email is viewed for two to seven seconds, giving a subscriber enough time to quickly look at images and a few lines of text.






## Read:

An email is considered to be read if a subscriber views it for more than seven seconds, which allows them to read six or more lines of text.




# How Much Time Do Subscribers Spend Reading Email?

## Breakdown of time spent viewing email

From December to April, the majority of emails (61 percent) were fully read regardless of environment. But fully read email was more common on mobile (64 percent) compared to desktop (45 percent) or webmail (61 percent). Skimming emails is relatively consistent across environments, with 22 percent of emails being skimmed on average. Abandoned email occurred most frequently on desktop applications (30 percent), and only about half as often on mobile (15 percent) and webmail (18 percent).

	Mobile	Webmail	Desktop	Average
 <b>Abandoned</b>	15%	18%	30%	17%
 <b>Skimmed</b>	22%	21%	24%	22%
 <b>Read</b>	64%	61%	45%	61%

Subscribers behaved much differently in December, abandoning 10 percent more email than average. People opening emails on mobile or webmail clients were nine percent and 11 percent less likely, respectively, to fully read email in December compared to the five month average. This is likely due to an increase in email volume over the holidays, causing subscribers to be more selective with their time.

	Mobile	Webmail	Desktop	Average
 <b>Abandoned</b>	21%	39%	38%	27%
 <b>Skimmed</b>	21%	11%	21%	19%
 <b>Read</b>	57%	50%	41%	54%

# How to Apply This to Your Own Program

The global trends described in this report are helpful for marketers to understand the current state of the email ecosystem, how it's changed, and how it is likely to shift in the future. But marketers also need to continually assess where, when, and how their own subscribers are engaging with their program. This allows marketers to identify gaps in their program and optimize their content to provide a better email experience.



## Know which email clients your subscribers are using

In this report, we show which email clients are used most on a global average. However, there are a number of additional email clients in use around the world. You need to identify which [email clients your subscribers are using](#), in order to help your team to focus their efforts on the email clients that matter most.



## Ensure your content is rendering correctly

Though mobile accounts for more than half of global email opens, people are still accessing email on webmail and desktop—and they shouldn't be neglected. That's why it is important to ensure that your [email creative renders](#) correctly on each email client your subscribers are using. A broken or poorly rendered email will not spark engagement and it may just turn subscribers off future messages.



## Understand where your customers are

Further optimize your programs by discovering [where your customers are located](#). This will give you the ability to create geographically relevant content tailored to your subscribers and gain a deeper understanding of how content is resonating with customers based on where they live.



## Discover how captivating your messages are

While each open improves your open rate, it doesn't tell you whether subscribers are truly engaged with your email content. [Knowing how long subscribers](#) spend viewing your messages will give you insight into whether your content kept subscriber attention.



## Keep up to date with the latest benchmarks

How users access email is constantly shifting. Make sure to continually track your own data and compare it to the most recent benchmark. To help you out, we launched [a new site](#) where you can see the latest email client data.

# Methodology

To conduct this study, we looked at more than 27 billion email opens between May 2016 and April 2017 using our email tracking solution, Email Client Monitor. Email Client Monitor gives you insight into what clients subscribers use to view emails, when and where they're opening emails, and how long they are reading. In addition to Email Client Monitor, we analyzed data from our free tool, Geo Email Monitor, which offers access to client and geolocation information for up to six campaigns per month.

## Looking for more email insight?



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