

THE POWER OF PAPER

# Reach your audience where they live. Literally.

Studies continue to show that mail-delivered print—direct mail and catalogs—reaches every demographic and spurs action more effectively than email marketing, consistently delivering significantly better returns.

90%

Direct mail boasts an open rate of 90% compared with email's 20–30%, with an average response rate of 4.4% that dwarfs email's 0.12%.<sup>1</sup>

Direct mail open rates not only surpass those of emails, but also show superior returns on investment (ROI). The proof is there: Print belongs in the marketing mix.

84%

of marketers rank direct mail as their top-performing channel, with an ROI at \$42 in sales for every dollar spent<sup>2</sup> and an average ROI of 171% for a house list<sup>3</sup>

It's 2025, and mail-delivered print is still here and strong as ever, delivering marketing results that are far superior to email. This may be a surprise to many, especially younger marketers.

Many in this younger group also would likely be surprised by how popular direct mail is among their own generation, and how print not only performs better than email, but also improves email engagement and overall results when included in the marketing mix. Don't believe it? Read on.

## YOUNGER CONSUMERS REPRESENT DIRECT MAIL'S STRONGEST DEMOGRAPHIC

Although all demographics respond well to mail-delivered print, the 18–29 year-old demographic enjoys direct mail the most.<sup>4</sup> This younger, digital-native generation sees something received in the mail as a needed break from a typical day spent immersed in screen-based communications.<sup>5</sup>

To be effective in reaching this generation, direct mail must be creative, relevant and personalized,<sup>6</sup> with personalization a key success factor. In fact, approximately 52% of consumers between the ages of 18 and 34 expect it, and repetition is important—an average of three items is the minimum, with 5–6 personalized items being optimal.<sup>7</sup>

## OLDER CONSUMERS APPRECIATE AND RESPOND BETTER TO DIRECT MAIL, TOO

People in older demographic segments also prefer direct mail to email, but for different reasons.

Middle-aged consumers, defined as between 35 and 54 years old, prefer tangible print over digital communications, often viewing it as more trustworthy than online media. They also tend to take action—approximately 55% of this group visit the sender's website after receiving direct mail.<sup>8</sup>

This preference for mail-delivered print extends to consumers 55 and older. Like younger generations, they like and put greater trust in the physical, tactile nature of print. This group also perceives creating and printing a direct mail piece as taking more time and effort than marketing delivered via online media, and they appreciate it.<sup>9</sup>

## THE DEMOGRAPHIC WITH THE MOST MONEY FEELS THE MOST LEFT OUT

A study conducted by Cheryl Overton Communications found that many in the over-50 demographic feel largely invisible in advertising and marketing. Only 3% felt “seen” in advertising and some 48% said they felt overlooked.<sup>10</sup>

Statistics have borne these feelings out. The study found that only 10% of marketing budgets target the 50+ demographic,<sup>11</sup> which represents a big missed opportunity, since this group represents 70% of all disposable income.<sup>12</sup>

Mail-delivered print outperforms email head-to-head across engagement and ROI measures, and improves overall results when included in a multiple-media marketing strategy.

CATALOGS: DIRECT MAIL’S STAR BRAND BUILDERS

Catalogs are an extremely effective form of mail-delivered print for helping brands strengthen their connection with consumers of all ages.

In a 2024 survey conducted by Keypoint Intelligence, more than half—54%—of all respondents agreed that catalogs still shaped their perception of brands, underscoring the effectiveness of a well-designed print piece in engaging with consumers.<sup>13</sup>

The study also indicated the younger demographic, aged 18–25, as the most positive in their views on catalogs. A whopping 71% said catalogs helped them feel more connected to a brand, followed by 57% with this belief among 26–68 year-olds.<sup>14</sup>

Attention span is another key measure of marketing effectiveness. Just 29% of emails that get past spam filters garner an attention span of more than 8 seconds (30% are viewed for less than 2 seconds).<sup>15</sup> By contrast, readers spend an average of more than three minutes with catalogs.<sup>16</sup>

THE KEY TO DIRECT MAIL SUCCESS: MAKE IT PERSONAL

Thanks to advancements in data mining/management and production inkjet printing, personalizing direct mail is easier and more cost effective than ever. And that’s a good thing, because personalization is showing itself increasingly to be a major factor in marketing and advertising success.

In fact, 88% of marketers report significantly improved direct mail response rates when they use thoughtful personalization techniques.<sup>17</sup> This makes sense, since 84% of consumers say they’re more likely to open mail that’s personalized in some way.<sup>18</sup>

To be most effective, personalization must go beyond using the recipient’s name in text and headlines. It should deploy techniques that use targeted messaging and relatable imagery, the latter including people in the right demographic and landmarks in the area.<sup>19</sup>

DIRECT MAIL BELONGS IN THE MIX

Yes, direct mail is proven more effective than online media across a number of key measures—open rate, response rate, brand perception and ROI—but it delivers its best results as part of a broader media strategy.

It’s interesting that direct mail actually improves the performance of other channels. Case in point: likelihood of opening an email. 70% of consumers aged 18–26 and 62% in the 27–68 age group say they’re more likely to open marketing emails from a brand that has sent them direct mailers or catalogs.<sup>20</sup>

And it’s not just open rates. A 10% lift in ROI when direct mail is in the marketing mix.<sup>21</sup> A 10% higher conversion rate.<sup>22</sup> Higher lifetime value per customer (according to 88% of marketers).<sup>23</sup>

Experienced marketers know it, and the numbers prove it—for better consumer engagement and results across all demographics, direct mail belongs in the mix!

— Source 1: “Direct Mail Marketing vs Email Marketing,” PostGrid, 2025  
— Source 2: Compere Media, 2024/“Direct Mail by the Numbers,” Thyse, 2025  
— Source 3: ANA Response Rate Report, 2024  
— Source 4, 22: “The Future of Direct Mail: Marketer and Consumer Insights,” sg360°, 2025  
— Source 5, 6, 7, 9: “State of Direct Mail 2025,” Lob, 2024  
— Source 8: “U.S. Consumers’ Responses to Direct Mail,” Statista, 2024  
— Source 10, 11, 12: “Only 3% of Americans Over 50 Feel ‘Seen’ in Ads,” MarketingDaily, May, 2025  
— Source 13, 14: “Customer Communications Consumer Survey,” Keypoint Intelligence, 2024

— Source 15: “The 2023 Spam Report,” Orbit Media Studios, DataProt 2023  
— Source 16: “The Time We Spend With Mail,” A JICMAIL Attention Study, June 2023  
— Source 17, 18: “Commentary: 5 Highlights from the National Postal Forum,” Printing Impressions, 2025  
— Source 19: IWCO, 2024/“Direct Mail by the Numbers,” Thyse, 2025  
— Source 20: Customer Communications Consumer Survey: Keypoint Intelligence, 2024  
— Source 21: Demand Metric, 2020  
— Source 23: “27 Direct Mail Marketing Statistics You Should Know,” Opizzi, 2025

