

The language of sales: behavioural communication in retail

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In our new era of work-from-home, the retail sector has had to adapt to and adopt a flexible approach with more innovative strategies to adjust to new customer habits and behaviours. This has meant a focus on consumer experience, with customer journeys increasingly occurring on online digital platforms.



A dominant channel for communicating retail messaging is through email marketing, which continues to evolve as businesses experiment with different tactics and approaches to make their emails more interactive.

The best in retail marketing

Everlytic, South Africa's largest digital messaging platform partnered with behavioural communications firm BreadCrumbs Linguistics to analyse the top 50 mailers sent by retailers through the Everlytic platform in 2021. The data was pulled from 2.4 billion bulk emails that retail clients sent during the year, with ranking done according to key engagement metrics, including open rates and click-through rates.

The report focuses on the linguistic elements that correlate with mailer engagement success using the framework of Behavioural Linguistics; a science that looks at how language influences action. In direct mailer marketing, the action wanted is for mailer recipients to a) open the mailer and b) engage with the communication by clicking at least one link in the mailer.

As part of the dataset, 15 organisations accounted for the top 50 emails sent – taken from a client database of 197 retail brands.

Key findings:

- The most **successful retail emails** were sent early in the week, towards the end of the working day. The best retail months for email engagement were January and November.

- Reference to incentives like **discounts, credits, and freebies** boosted consumer engagement, particularly where these were positioned as 'reserved' or 'waiting' for the consumer.
- **Language of exclusivity**, where consumers feel unique and special, drove better engagement rates.
- **Language of scarcity**, where there was reference to a limited time or quantity of the sales item, encouraged more urgency for action.
- Visual language that used **animated GIFs** to showcase the retail product increased interest and engagement.
- Retail emails that used a **secondary handwriting font** to elicit personalisation received better click-through rates.
- Sales communications with a single-minded message and **one call-to-action** button were more likely to get engagement.
- Call-to-action buttons that were a **bright, bold colour** received more click-throughs.
- Linguistic tools like **alliteration and onomatopoeia** made brand writing more interesting and attractive, resulting in more persuasive copy and boosted engagement.

Boosting business communications

Behavioural nudges have emerged as one of the best ways to improve sales while still maintaining an end user's freedom of choice. Communications that are framed with behavioural insights in mind benefit from the close link between language, behaviour, and decision-making.

Every type of marketing comes down to persuading a customer to give you a desired outcome: to pick your brand's product or service. Through email marketing, being able to use words to inspire a positive reaction and action is an invaluable skillset – giving your business a critical competitive advantage.

[Download your free copy of the report here.](#)

ABOUT THE REPORT:

This report was compiled as part of an Everlytic and BreadCrumbs Linguistics partnership. [Everlytic](#) is South Africa's largest digital messaging platform. It helps businesses communicate personally, reliably, and automatically via bulk email, SMS, voice broadcasting, and push notifications. [BreadCrumbs Linguistics](#) is an award-winning behavioural communications firm that uses Behavioural Linguistics to create marketing and communication that nudges action.

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