

WHY MAIL CUTS THROUGH

Measuring mail's effectiveness
with neuroscience



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INTRODUCTION

It's never been easier for marketers to target an audience. The rise of digital has created ample opportunities to reach consumers in real time. Ofcom reports that 88% of UK adults are now online and typically spend around 24 hours a week, or the equivalent of one day a week, online¹.

Conversely, it's also never been harder to make a message cut through. With the proliferation of digital touchpoints, on top of traditional media channels, people are exposed to thousands of brand messages a day. So it's easy for a single marketing message to get lost in all the noise.

It means that choosing the right channels to connect with people effectively has never been more important. Brand messages must work a lot harder to stand out and be remembered. And with GDPR to consider, all communication should aim to make consumers feel valued and respected.

The challenge for marketers is clear. How can you cut through the noise to engage an audience with a message that's memorable and inspires action? To see if mail could be the answer, we commissioned neuroscience marketing experts at Neuro-Insight to measure the subconscious effect of different media channels on consumers.

WHY NEUROSCIENCE?

We wanted to understand what happens at a subconscious level, when consumers process brand messages. With neuroscience, experts could also study the impact of media choice on how brand messages are remembered. This research report outlines our key insights and results. It highlights the pivotal role that mail can play to deliver real cut through in a complex multi-media environment.

THE RESEARCH

Neuroscience research is able to measure subconscious brain responses, which underlie our decisions and subsequent actions. It can help marketers to understand the impact of communication in order to optimise its effectiveness. Our study measured responses to branded mail, email, and social media advertising. Content was based on real brand campaigns with consistent messaging across the three channels. Research participants were recruited with an even spread across age and gender, and could choose to engage with or ignore each piece of content as they would in real life circumstances.

METHODOLOGY

Neuro-Insight uses a technology called SST (Steady State Topography), which identifies the parts of the brain that are active at a given time by measuring the speed at which signals travel to different parts of the brain. Participants were fitted with visors and headsets containing sensors that picked up electrical responses in the brain as they viewed the content.

No questions were asked of participants at this stage; brain activity was simply monitored and recorded. Research participants were not made aware of the specific subject or sponsor of the research, until after the research was completed. The study was conducted in a home setting to reflect the way in which study content is normally consumed. The stimulus material comprised mail, email, and social media advertising based on actual campaigns from brands across several different sectors.



MAIL

Participants were asked to bring their unopened mail from their homes, to which mail stimulus was added and placement order randomised. Participants were asked to browse mail just as they would at home and given the choice to engage with or disregard any piece of mail just as they normally would.



EMAIL

Participants were asked to browse their own personal emails and were then directed to a bookmarked email account with email stimulus. The email presentation order was rotated. People were asked to browse emails and open only those they would normally open at home. This part of the study was completed using tablets.



SOCIAL MEDIA

People logged onto their own Facebook accounts via an app developed for the study, which enabled stimulus to be delivered into participants' own live Facebook feeds. This was put in a randomised order, replacing the sponsored ads that would normally appear. This part of the study was carried out using smartphones.

MAIL IS REMEMBERED MORE

A message that's remembered is more likely to inspire action. Long-term memory encoding, the key metric in our neuroscience study, measures the strength of what's stored into memory as people experience a stimulus. 'Long-term' refers to anything that's stored for more than a few minutes. This is important for marketers, as it has been shown to influence decision making and purchase intent. Memory encoding is both an enabler and a predictor of likely future action.

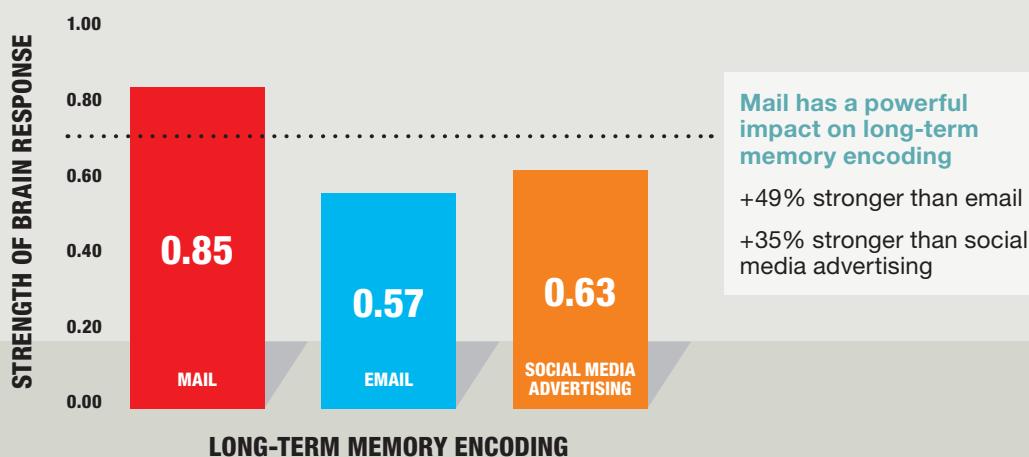
WITH MEMORABLE RESULTS

Results show that mail activates areas of the brain responsible for long-term memory encoding 49% more than email and 35% more than social media advertising. This reveals the pivotal role mail can play within the media mix to boost memorability and potentially increase purchase intent.

Data from JICMAIL (The Joint Industry Committee for Mail, which delivers industry-standard audience measurement data for mail), shows that 31% of all addressed advertising mail leads to a commercial action such as visiting a sender's website or making a purchase¹.



MAIL MAKES A LASTING IMPRESSION



A reading of 0.70 and above indicates a response that is likely to be powerful enough to impact future behaviour.

Social media advertising tested was a single-image ad with text, appearing in participants' Facebook news feed.
Source: Royal Mail MarketReach, Neuro-Insight, 2018.

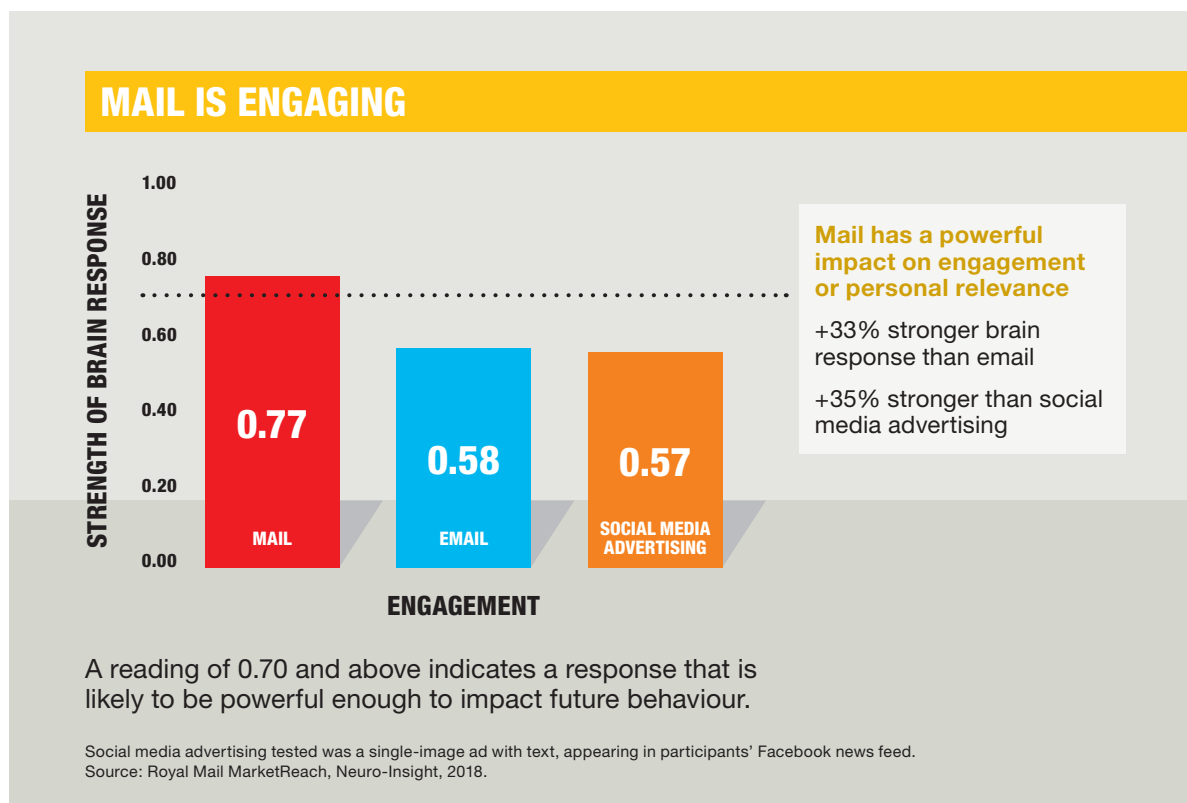
BOOSTING ENGAGEMENT

If something feels personally relevant, our brains are more likely to put it into memory. So engagement, as measured in our neuroscience study, is important because it drives memory encoding.

Engagement indicates how involved people are with the stimulus they are experiencing and is generally triggered by material that is of personal relevance.

In the study, using our branded content stimulus, we found mail has a powerful impact on engagement.

Mail is 33% more engaging than email and 35% more engaging than social media advertising.



BUILDING YOUR BRAND ROOM

Neuro-Insight uses an analogy of a Brand Room, which helps to visualise how our brains process and store information about brands.

For everything we encounter over our lifetime, including people, places, ideas and brands, our brain builds a corresponding neural network of associations that grow over time as we learn more about or interact more with the subjects in question. We can think of these networks as being like rooms in the brain, each representing a particular thing.



The 'room' of a brand we've only just heard about starts out bare and has no existing associations. But subsequent encounters help to furnish and distinguish the room from others. Whilst some brands will never be important to us and always live in sparsely decorated rooms, those that we engage with will become more richly populated with associations. These can be positive or negative depending on the nature of our brand experiences, so if we have a lot of great experiences with a brand we'll accumulate a lot of positive associations in our minds.

Brand communication can play one of two roles in relation to the Brand Room. The first is to help furnish or decorate the room, by adding or changing associations. This is a long-term job and can be achieved by media delivering an engaging and memorable narrative.



However, no matter how well decorated they are, Brand Rooms tend to sit in darkness most of the time. It's only when something flicks a metaphorical light switch that the associations and sentiments within the room can have any impact. Therefore providing a shortcut to the emotions and perceptions already stored from previous encounters with the brand in a way that can start to affect people's actions. These 'light switches' usually comprise elements of brand iconography: logos,

shapes, sounds and colours which are strongly associated with a brand. These can be delivered by media triggers close to the point of purchase.

Mail can have a powerful affect on furnishing the Brand Room and switching on the light. Brain response shows that mail impacts strongly on long-term memory encoding and engagement. In this way, mail can also build brand equity.

It also works well as a tangible prompt to action. For example, in consumer research we regularly find people putting mail somewhere visible in their home as a reminder to act. Or taking it out with them to act on (64% say they do this*), such as to redeem an offer, to refer to when buying something, or to share it with others.

THE POWER OF TOUCH

Mail is the touchpoint that people actually touch. While it's getting harder for marketers to cut through, the power of touch can make a real difference.

Mail reaches people directly in their homes and gains their full attention. JICMAIL data shows that 94% of mail is engaged with in some way¹. And that addressed advertising mail is interacted with four times on average¹.

In our qualitative research², consumers told us that compared with other media, mail has their undivided attention – “when you're reading a letter, it's the only thing you do”. Mail gives them a sense of control as they can choose when to engage with it.

This was also seen in a recent study³, where people said they are likely to give mail (65%) rather than email (35%) sent from companies their full attention. In the same study, 72% of people said they often read and review some of their mail at a time when they can give it their full attention, even if they have already opened it.

Mail's physical quality reflects the care and effort used in the message. People told us that it is mail (70%), rather than email (30%) from companies, that makes them feel valued. And the same percentage told us that mail, rather than email, gives them a better impression of the company that sent it.

As one respondent describes it, mail feels “human and real”.

“When you're reading a letter,
it's the only thing you do.”

¹JICMAIL, Kantar TNS, Q2 2017 – Q1 2018.

²Royal Mail MarketReach, Murmur, 2017.

³Royal Mail MarketReach, Kantar TNS, 2017.

BOOSTING OTHER CHANNELS

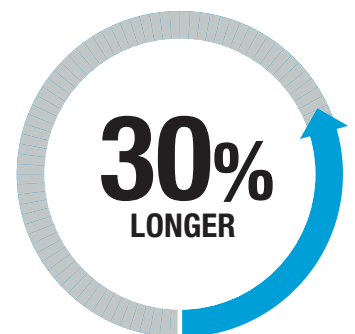
Our previous neuroscience study¹ revealed that mail has a stronger impact on long-term memory encoding and engagement than TV advertising. We also saw evidence of interaction and priming effects between mail and TV, which suggests that mail sent out during the run of a TV ad could enhance its impact and generate a better response.

In our latest neuroscience study, we found evidence of how mail interacts with social media advertising.

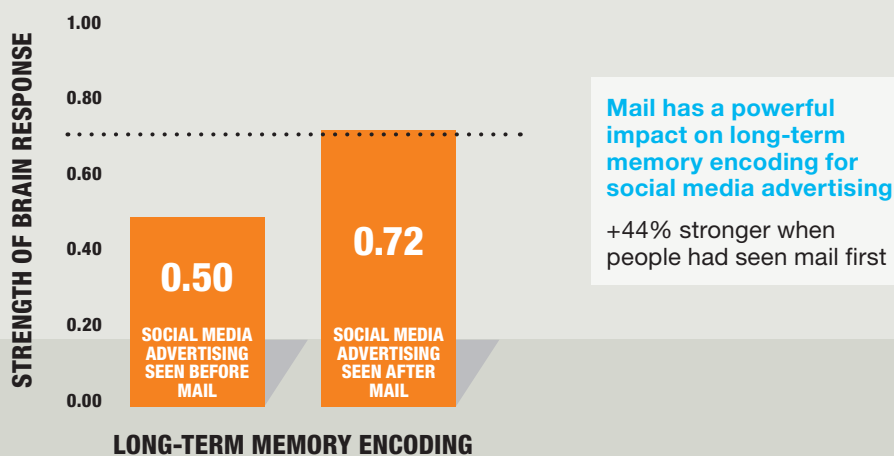
Participants who saw social media advertising before mail, recorded relatively low memory-encoding, but high visual attention to the social ads. (Visual attention is a measure of how closely people are paying attention to what they are seeing, but indicates a transient focus rather than a lasting impact.) However, for those who saw mail first, their brain response to social media advertising was very different, recording much lower visual stimulation, but much higher memory encoding. Which shows people who were primed by receiving mail first, remembered more from social media ads.

Memory encoding for social media advertising was 44% higher when people had seen mail first. And, when primed by mail, people spent 30% longer looking at the social ads. The time spent looking at social ads increased from an average of 3.3 seconds for those who had not seen mail, to 4.3 seconds for people who had seen mail first. This suggests that mail sent out before social media advertising can make it work harder, by priming the viewer to associate and remember more, which could increase response.

Mail clearly has a strong interaction with other channels, which means it could help to boost overall campaign effectiveness.



MAIL BOOSTS MEMORY RESPONSE



A reading of 0.70 and above indicates a response that is likely to be powerful enough to impact future behaviour.

Social media advertising tested was a single-image ad with text, appearing in participants' Facebook news feed. Source: Royal Mail MarketReach, Neuro-Insight, 2018.

DRIVING COMMERCIAL ACTIONS

We know that long-term memory encoding influences decision making and is also linked to purchase intent. This is good news for marketers, because while it's essential to deliver cut through, engagement and memorability, it's also important to drive response and boost ROI.

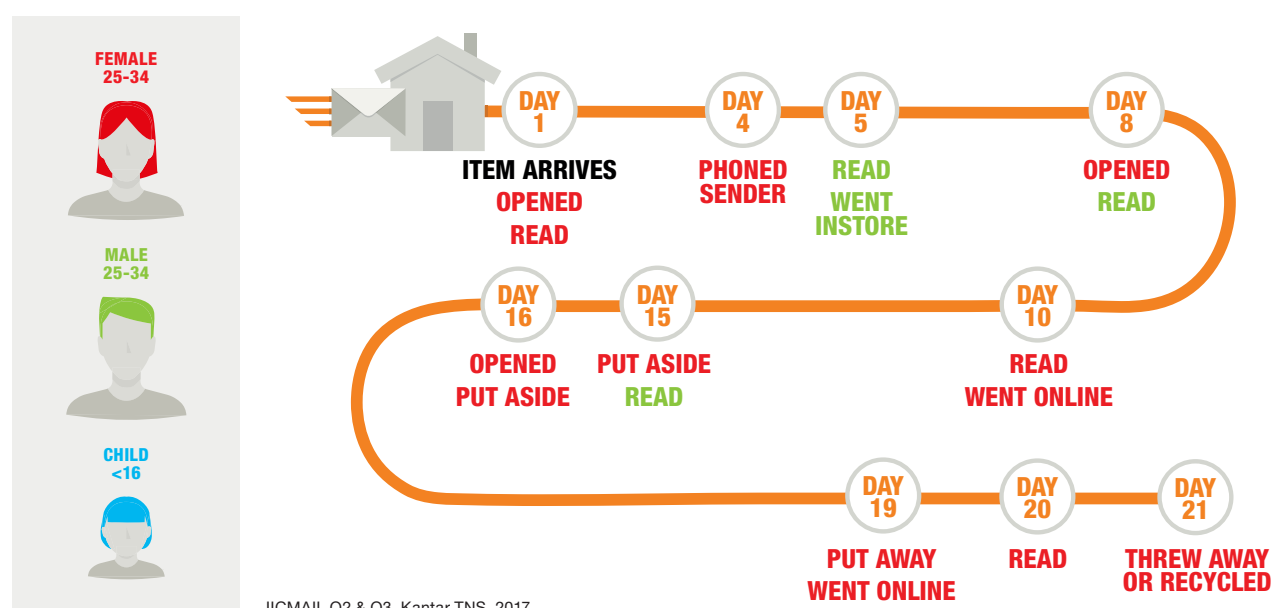
IPA Touchpoints reported that 37% of people bought or ordered something in the past 12 months, as a result of receiving mail¹.

Independent JICMAIL data demonstrates that mail delivers multiple actions, many of which are commercial, for example:

- VISIT THE COMPANY'S WEBSITE
- BUY SOMETHING
- MAKE A DONATION
- PLAN A LARGE PURCHASE
- USE A VOUCHER/CODE
- VISIT THE COMPANY'S SHOP
- ORDER A CATALOGUE
- TELL OTHERS ABOUT IT

Examples of mail from the JICMAIL panel reveal the ways and frequency in which people use mail. Panelists record the mail they receive for a week; and subsequent actions taken by them, or anyone in their household, for three weeks.

The example below is a mailing from Virgin Media, landing in a household with two adults under 35 and a child. Here we can see that the mail item was revisited several times by both adults and generated multiple actions, including going online, making a purchase, going instore and contacting the sender.



To discover more insights from the independent JICMAIL data, visit marketreach.co.uk/insight-engine

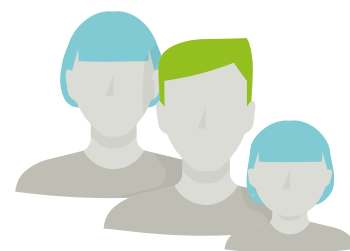
¹IPA Touchpoints, 2017.

AGE IS NO BARRIER

Mail makes a lasting impression, even among a younger, more digitally-engaged audience.

Our neuroscience study showed similar results for mail, regardless of age. For people under 35 and people over 35, brain response readings were notably different in levels of memory encoding and engagement response from social media advertising in particular, and email. Mail's powerful effect on these key measures, however, remained strong and surpassed the benchmark for impactful communication across both age groups.

In our previous Life Stages of Mail study we also found that young adults living in shared accommodation, were 75% more likely to buy or order something as a result of door drops¹. This points to an opportunity for using mail to engage younger audiences.



Young adults living in shared accommodation, were 75% more likely to buy or order as a result of door drops.

CONCLUSION

Within an increasingly fragmented media landscape, and with GDPR now being enforced, brand messages need to work harder to cut through the noise and connect with consumers in a way that is engaging and makes the recipient feel valued.

Mail adds a unique and tangible dimension to the media mix. It is tactile, personal and reaches people in their homes.

Mail's tangibility feels 'human and real' against a backdrop of fleeting, competing communication vying for people's attention. It's engaged with, and remembered by, people of all ages – even younger and more digitally engaged audiences.

Our research shows that people respond more strongly to mail, and together mail and digital are a powerful force to make your campaigns work harder.

Find out how we can help you deliver cut through with mail and improve your marketing effectiveness. Just call **0333 456 1395** today.

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The neuroscience research results were fascinating. It was interesting to understand what goes on in the brain when a person consumes DM, versus simply relying on linear metrics. This is a completely new angle for us, so it has opened up some interesting conversations.

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Sam McClements
BTL Lead, BT

“

The way that people touch and interact with mail, combined with its personal relevance, drives a strong memory response which in turn impacts their future behaviour.

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Heather Andrew
CEO UK, Neuro-Insight

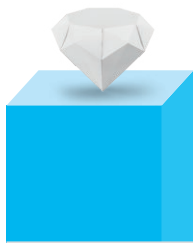
HOW CAN **MARKETREACH** HELP?

DISCOVER OUR RANGE OF FREE SERVICES, DESIGNED TO HELP YOU DELIVER COMMERCIAL SUCCESS WITH MAIL.



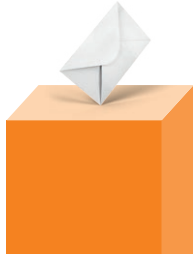
REACH CUSTOMERS 1-TO-1

- Build the best plan using our audience insights, market expertise and the latest research.
- Work with us to plan and optimise your mail and door drop targeting.
- Get the most from your data. We'll ensure it's clean, accurate and up-to-date.



GET MORE FROM YOUR MEDIA MIX

- We can help you understand how mail best integrates with your other channels to give you maximum value.
- Optimise your mailings using our creative insight, research and tools.
- Discover fresh insights on mail's reach, frequency, and the commercial actions it drives.



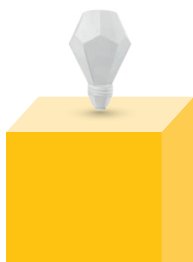
ACHIEVE MAIL EXCELLENCE

- Access our knowledge centre for mail best practice and case studies.
- We'll provide you with expert advice on the design of your mail, as well as technical support.
- For high-quantity mail customers, we offer free effectiveness workshops to help you develop and maximise campaigns.



MAXIMISE COMMERCIAL OUTCOMES

- We have a range of unique tools and data that shows how consumers use and respond to mail.
- We can help you measure and evaluate the commercial impact of your campaigns.
- Our range of financial incentives is designed to help you get the most from your budget.



BE INSPIRED

- We share the latest mail innovations from around the world and help you put them into practice.
- We work with partners who are leading the way in mail innovations – across programmatic, augmented reality and near field communication.
- Work with us to develop bespoke mail solutions for your marketing needs.



As the UK's leading expert on the power of mail, we help organisations to achieve their goals by unleashing the magic of mail.

Whether you need broad market insight or have a question about making mail work for your organisation, we've got it covered. And our advice is always available for free.

For more information, visit marketreach.co.uk

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