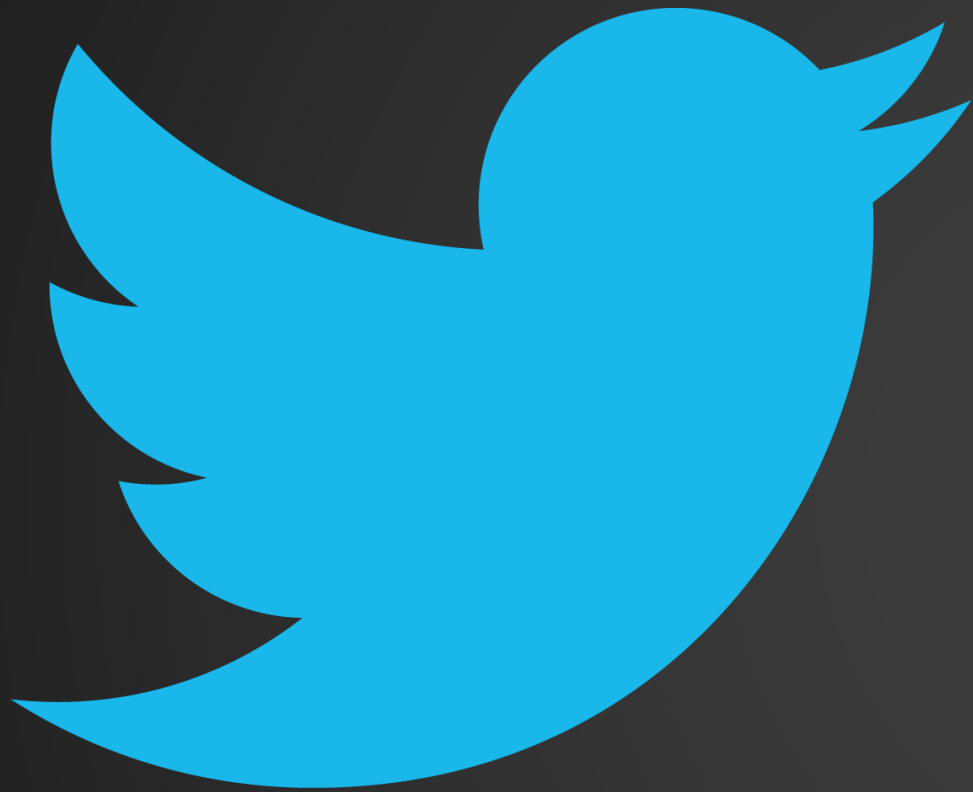




The Power of the Properly Sequenced Subject Line:
Improve email performance by using the right words,
in the right order



We're sharing on Twitter!
#WebClinic

Today's speakers



Austin McCraw
Senior Director,
Content Production
MECLABS Institute



Ben Huppertz
Senior Manager,
Research and Strategy
MECLABS Institute



Ken Bowen
Manager,
Partnership Content
MECLABS Institute

#WebClinic

 marketing**experiments**

Experiment #1: Background



Experiment ID: TP 20211

Record Location: MECLABS Research Library

Research Partner: *(Protected)**

Background: A regional marketing commission.

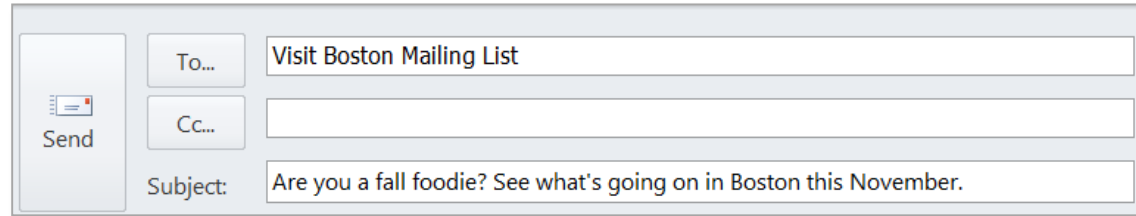
Goal: To raise awareness of local activities and events, increasing number of travelers and tourist spending in the area.

Research Question: Which subject line will generate the most opens and clickthrough?

Test Design: A/B split test

*Note: Test has been anonymized to protect partner confidentiality.

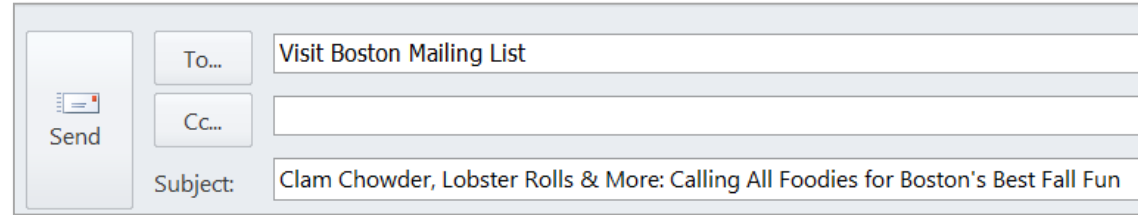
Experiment #1: Control



A screenshot of an email client interface. On the left is a 'Send' button with an envelope icon. To its right are three input fields: 'To...' containing 'Visit Boston Mailing List', 'Cc...' which is empty, and 'Subject:' containing 'Are you a fall foodie? See what's going on in Boston this November.'.

SUBJECT: Are you a fall foodie? See what's going on in Boston this November.

Experiment #1: Treatment



An email client interface with a 'Send' button on the left. To its right are three input fields: 'To...' containing 'Visit Boston Mailing List', 'Cc...' which is empty, and 'Subject:' containing 'Clam Chowder, Lobster Rolls & More: Calling All Foodies for Boston's Best Fall Fun'.

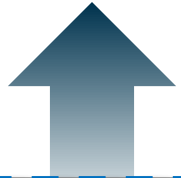
Send	To...	Visit Boston Mailing List
	Cc...	
	Subject:	Clam Chowder, Lobster Rolls & More: Calling All Foodies for Boston's Best Fall Fun

SUBJECT: Clam Chowder, Lobster Rolls and More:
Calling all foodies for Boston's best fall fun

Experiment #1: Which subject line will win?

Control

SUBJECT: Are you a fall foodie? See what's going on in Boston this November



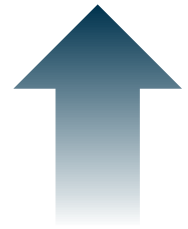
10% Opens

Treatment

SUBJECT: Clam Chowder, Lobster Rolls and More: Calling all foodies for Boston's best fall fun



Experiment #1: Results

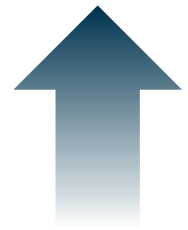


10% Relative increase in opens

Treatment resulted in a 10% increase in email opens.

	Open Rate	Relative Difference	Level of Confidence
Control	19.8%	--	99%
Treatment	21.7%	10%	99%

Experiment #1: Results



15% Relative increase in clickthrough rate

Treatment resulted in a 10% increase in clickthrough.

	Open Rate	Relative Difference	Level of Confidence
Control	2.7%	--	99%
Treatment	3.1%	15%	99%

Experiment #2: Background



Experiment ID: TP 20219

Record Location: MECLABS Research Library

Research Partner: *(Protected)**

Background: A regional marketing commission.

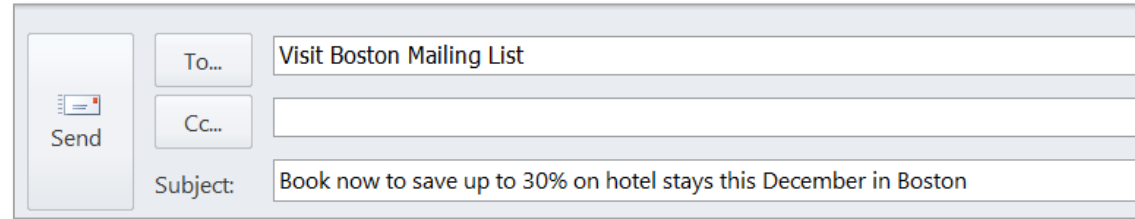
Goal: To raise awareness of local activities and events, increasing number of travelers and tourist spending in the area.

Research Question: Which subject line will generate the most opens and clickthrough?

Test Design: A/B split test

*Note: Test has been anonymized to protect partner confidentiality.

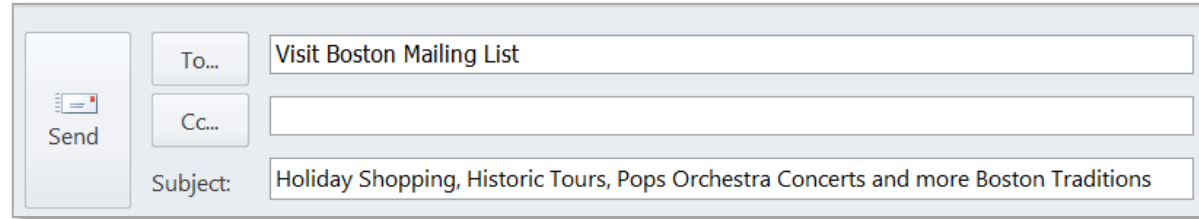
Experiment #2: Control



An email client interface with a 'Send' button on the left. To its right are three input fields: 'To...' containing 'Visit Boston Mailing List', 'Cc...' which is empty, and 'Subject:' containing 'Book now to save up to 30% on hotel stays this December in Boston'.

SUBJECT: Book now to save up to 30% on hotel stays this December in Boston

Experiment #2: Treatment



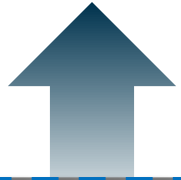
An email client interface showing a 'Send' button on the left. To its right are three input fields: 'To...' with the text 'Visit Boston Mailing List', 'Cc...' which is empty, and 'Subject:' with the text 'Holiday Shopping, Historic Tours, Pops Orchestra Concerts and more Boston Traditions'.

SUBJECT: Holiday shopping, historic tours, Pops Orchestra concerts and more Boston traditions

Experiment #2: Which subject line will win?

Control

SUBJECT: Book now to save up to 30% on hotel stays this December in Boston



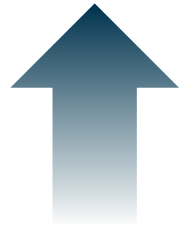
9% Opens

Treatment

SUBJECT: Holiday shopping, historic tours, Pops Orchestra concerts and more Boston traditions



Experiment #2: Results

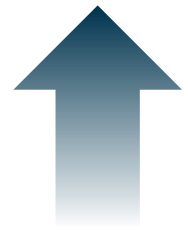


9% Relative increase in opens

Treatment resulted in a 10% increase in email opens.

	Open Rate	Relative Difference	Level of Confidence
Control	17.6%	--	99%
Treatment	19.3%	9%	99%

Experiment #2: Results



26% Relative increase in clickthrough rate

Treatment resulted in a 10% increase in clickthrough.

	Open Rate	Relative Difference	Level of Confidence
Control	2.5%	--	99%
Treatment	3.1%	26%	99%

What do winning subject lines have in common?

Losing Treatments

SUBJECT: Are you a fall foodie? See what's going on in Boston this November

SUBJECT: Book now to save up to 30% on hotel stays this December in Boston

Winning Treatments

SUBJECT: Clam Chowder, Lobster Rolls and More: Calling all foodies for Boston's best fall fun

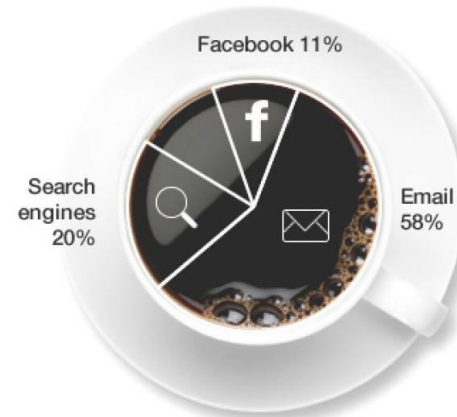
SUBJECT: Holiday shopping, historic tours, Pops Orchestra concerts and more Boston traditions

Why?

Email is still vital

- **91% of U.S. consumers check their email daily**, compared to 50% for social media.
- The growth of active email accounts is projected to **significantly outpace the growth of active social media accounts** for the rest of the decade.
- **82% of smartphone users read email throughout the day** on their devices.

1. Social media didn't kill email



where US citizens start their online day



Facebook + Twitter Accounts

BTW what do you need to join Facebook or Twitter? Right, email...

There are nearly 3 times as many email accounts as there are Facebook and Twitter accounts combined.

Time spent on mobile Internet

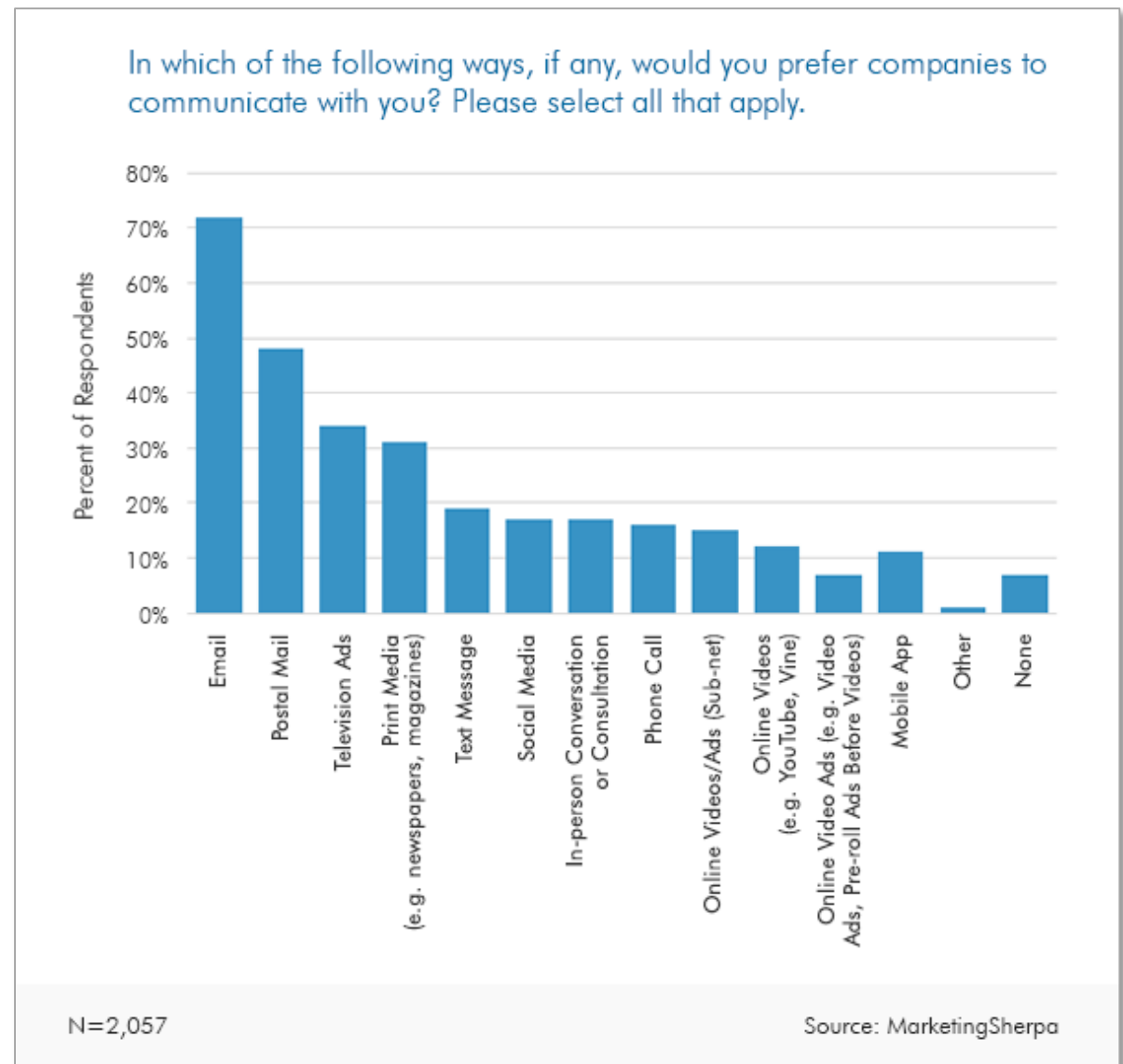


Email is the most popular activity among US mobile Internet users

Source:
wrike.com

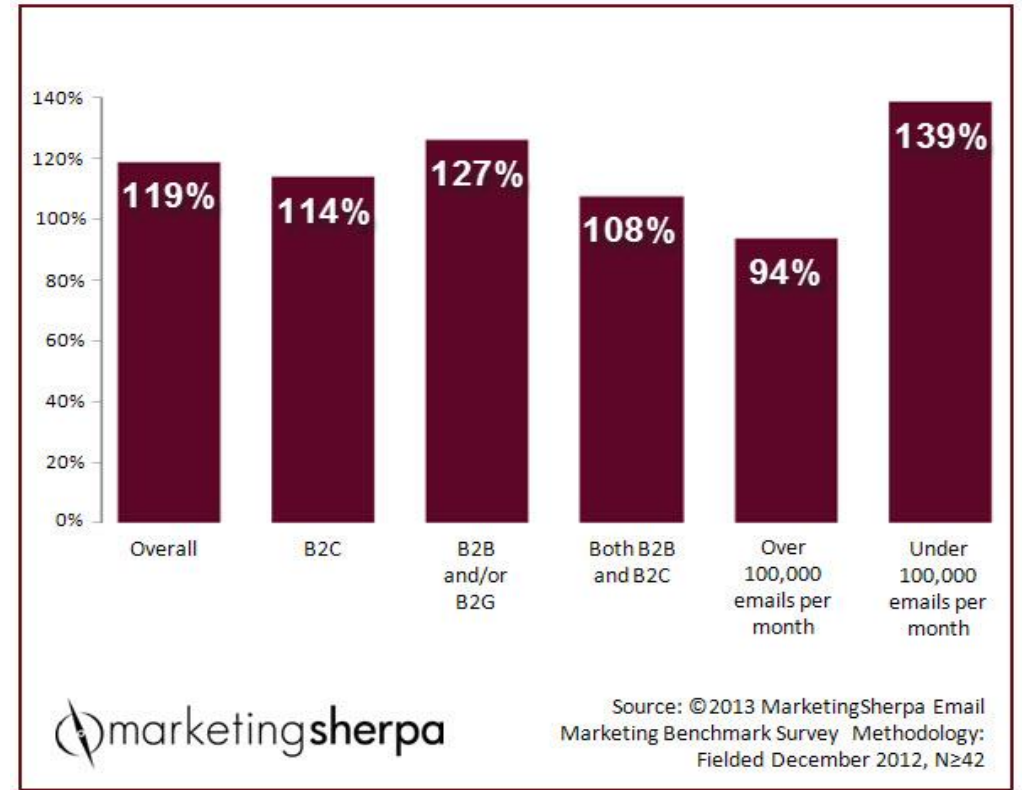
Email is still vital

- A recent MarketingSherpa survey found that the majority of consumers prefer to be contacted via email.
- **81% of U.S. digital shoppers** surveyed said they were at least somewhat likely **to make additional purchases** as a result of targeted emails.
- HubSpot research revealed that **66% of U.S. consumers have made a purchase** as a direct result of email marketing.



Email is still vital

- MarketingSherpa research found that businesses sending over 100,000 emails per month enjoy a **94% return on investment**. Companies sending under 100,000 emails per month see a **139% return**.
- **Email is 40 times more effective** at acquiring new customers than Facebook & Twitter (McKinsey & Company).
- Email is **the most effective channel** in terms of **customer retention** (HubSpot).
- Email yields a **similar response rate to direct mail, at 1/100th the cost**.



Today's focus

SUBJECT: Are you a fall foodie? See what's going on in Boston this November

SUBJECT: Book now to save up to 30% on hotel stays this December in Boston

Today, we will be looking at three simple observations from winning treatments that can be leveraged to strengthen our own subject lines.

SUBJECT: Clam Chowder, Lobster Rolls and More: Calling all foodies for Boston's best fall fun

SUBJECT: Holiday shopping, historic tours, Pops Orchestra concerts and more Boston traditions

Key observations



Key observations

1. **Observation #1:** The winning treatments both leverage words that are specific and tangible, rather than vague or “salesy.”

Experiment #1:

Control

SUBJECT: Are you a fall foodie? See what's going on in
Boston this November

- **Confusing**
- **Vague**

Treatment

SUBJECT: Clam Chowder, Lobster Rolls and More:
Calling all foodies for Boston's best fall fun

Experiment #1:

Control

SUBJECT: Are you a fall foodie? See what's going on in Boston this November

- **Confusing**
- **Vague**

Treatment

 **10% opens**

SUBJECT: Clam Chowder, Lobster Rolls and More:
Calling all foodies for Boston's best fall fun

- **Tangible**
- **Clear**

Experiment #2:

Control

SUBJECT: Book now to save up to 30% on hotel stays this December in Boston

- **Salesy**
- **Ambiguous**


Experiment #2:

Control

SUBJECT: Book now to save up to 30% on hotel stays this December in Boston

- **Salesy**
- **Ambiguous**

Treatment

 **9% opens**

SUBJECT: Holiday shopping, historic tours, Pops Orchestra concerts and more Boston traditions

- **Specific**
- **Valuable**

Customers respond to clarity

Additional research

- A MarketingSherpa study tested **20 different subject lines across 45,000 email sends**. Clear subject lines greatly outperformed creative subject lines across all channels:



617%

Site traffic



315%

Tweets



331%

Likes



1,107%

Comments



366%

Email subscription

541%
Average
across
all
channels

Subject Lines: Choosing your words

NOT THESE

- ✗ Hey! Check this out!
- ✗ Interested in optimization? Take a look inside ...
- ✗ Hurry [name], this offer won't last!
- ✗ Order Now: Buy our supplements to start losing weight

BUT THESE

- ✓ Grow Your Email List 99% Faster: How one site did it
- ✓ 6 Actions to Lift Clickthroughs: New data
- ✓ 43 Free Animated GIFs for Your Email Campaign
- ✓ Look Your Best: Get your free sample of our supplements inside

Subject Lines: Choosing your words

NOT THESE

✗ Hey! Check this out!

✗ Many marketers worry about their ability to write persuasive copy, but the marketer's art is not persuasion; it is clarity. Indeed, when the marketer represents an authentic value proposition, clarity is persuasion.

✗ Hurry [insert] this offer won't last!

✗ Order Now! Buy our supplements to start losing weight

BUT THESE

✓ Grow Your Email List 99% Faster: How One Site Did It

✓ 6 Actions to Lift Clickthrough

✓ 43 Free Animated GIFs For Your Email Campaign

Source: Marketer as Philosopher – Reflection #9

✓ Look your best: Get your free sample of our supplements inside

Key observations



Key observations

1. **Observation #1:** Both winning treatments leverage words that are specific and tangible, rather than vague or “salesy.”
2. **Observation #2:** Both winning treatments leverage a similar sequence of thought. They both lead with what the customer “gets” rather than what the customer must “do.”
3. **Observation #3:** Furthermore, the “ask” (an open) in both winning subject lines is implicit rather than explicit.

The Properly Sequenced Subject Line: Experiment 2

Losing treatment

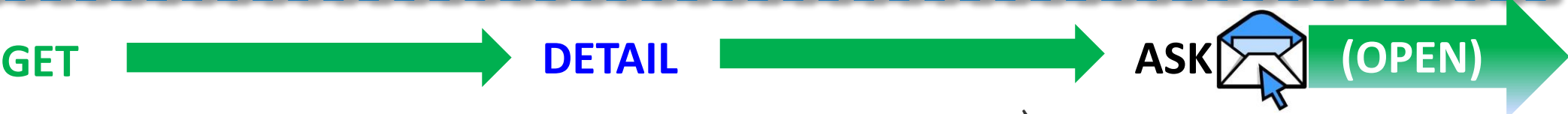
SUBJECT: [Book now] [to save up to 30% on hotel stays] [this December in Boston]



Winning treatment

9% Opens

SUBJECT: [Holiday shopping, historic tours, Pops Orchestra concerts] [and more] [Boston traditions]



The Properly Sequenced Subject Line: Experiment 1

Losing treatment

SUBJECT: Are you a fall foodie? See what's going on in Boston this November

ASK

GET

DETAIL

DELETE



Winning treatment

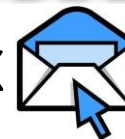
10% Opens

SUBJECT: Clam Chowder, Lobster Rolls and More: best fall fun Calling all foodies for Boston's

GET

DETAIL

ASK



(OPEN)

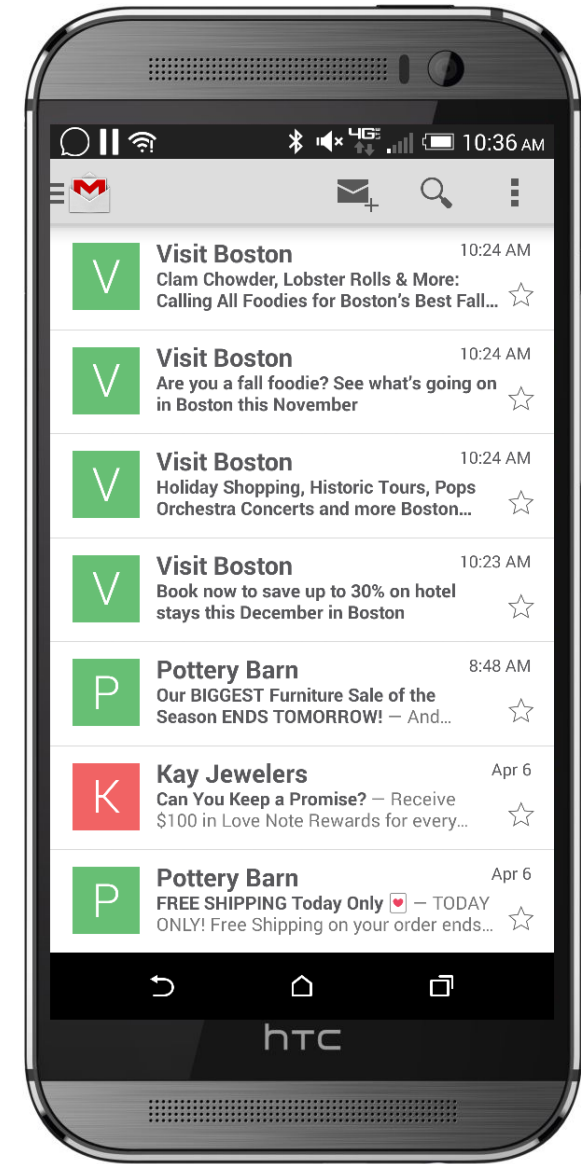
#WebClinic

marketingexperiments

Lead with value, not with an ask

Additional research

- Epsilon studied over 500 million emails and found that **point-first, informative subject lines had significantly greater impact** than variation in length.
- 40% of all emails are now opened on mobile devices, so the **first 20 to 30 characters must count**.
- Point-of-value should be introduced **within the first two words** in order to maximize results (MarketingSherpa).



Real world examples

NOT THIS

SUBJECT: Get the NEW [Name] for 50% off

BUT THIS

SUBJECT: Save 50% on your choice of two new subscription options



33% Increase in Open Rate

Design	Open Rate	Relative Change
Get the NEW [Name] for 50% off	15.9%	--
Save 50% on your choice of two new subscription options	21.1%	32.7%

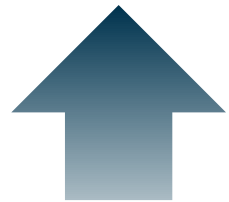
Real world examples

NOT THIS

SUBJECT: Buying or Refinancing? Check out [Name]

BUT THIS

SUBJECT: Own your home sooner with free biweekly payments



22% Increase in Open Rate

Design	Open Rate	Relative Change
Buying or Refinancing? Check out [Name]	17.2%	--
Own your home sooner with free biweekly payments	21.0%	22%

Real world examples

NOT THIS

BUT THIS



We are not optimizing subject lines; we are optimizing thought sequences. The most effective subject lines emphasize the “get” and imply the “ask.”

Design	Open Rate	Relative Change
Buying or Refinancing? Check out [Name]	17.2%	--
Own your home sooner with free bi-weekly payments	21.0%	22%

Summary: Two key principles

1. **Key Principle #1:** Many marketers worry about their ability to write persuasive copy, but the marketer's art is not persuasion; it is clarity. Indeed, when the marketer represents an authentic value proposition, clarity is persuasion.
2. **Key Principle #2:** We are not optimizing subject lines; we are optimizing thought sequences. The most effective subject lines emphasize the “get” and imply the “ask.”

Checklist: Crafting effective subject lines

- ☐ Are your words specific, rather than vague?
- ☐ Does your subject line emphasize clarity over persuasion?
- ☐ Does your subject line represent an authentic value proposition?
- ☐ Is your subject line point-first?
- ☐ Do you lead with the “get”?
- ☐ Is the point-of-value introduced in the first two words?
- ☐ Is the logical next step in the thought sequence to open the email?



Email Messaging

Online Certification Course

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using this discount code at check-out:

630-OC-3007

Email Messaging Optimization

4. Click

- Reducing Cost Force
 - Cost Force Activity
- Increasing Value Force
- Final Experiments
- Key Principles

UPDATED INTERACTIVE
HD VIDEO FORMAT

- Learn how to optimize your email message to **improve deliverability** and **increase open rates**
- Recently **updated content**, tailored to help you succeed in the year 2015
- Active participation through **interactive quizzes** and guided **live optimization** activities

To receive 50% off your certification, visit:

MarketingExperiments.com/EmailCourse

Live optimization

Live optimization


SUBJECT: Start a 14-day FREE trial — discover more

Company: Ancestry.com

Primary Audience: Potential clients

Email Purpose: Encourage free trial signups

Continue your search with free access to global records.
[Start your free trial*](#)


ancestry

FREE 14-DAY TRIAL

Uncover even more of your past with a free trial.

Your family story is beginning to take shape, but there's still so much more to discover. Start your 14-day free trial and continue to search for your ancestors from the UK and around the world, with access to our entire site—that's more than 15 billion global records.

[Start free trial](#)



*Only one free trial per person. Free trial requires registration with a valid credit or debit card. Unless you cancel before the end of your free trial, your chosen membership will begin and you'll be charged the relevant price. Your membership will automatically renew at the same price at the end of each membership period, unless you are notified otherwise. If you don't want to renew, cancel at least two days before your renewal date. Cancel by visiting the [My Account](#) section or by calling 1-800-Ancestry — see our [Terms and Conditions](#) for further details.

Live optimization

SUBJECT: Have you taken our survey yet?

Company: Managed IT Services

Primary Audience: Businesses

Email Purpose: Drive prospects to survey

Hi there,

I see you downloaded our Top Questions E-Book a few days ago, but have not yet taken our [Managed IT Services Survey](#). We modeled this survey off the content in the E-Book, so it should all be very familiar to you.

This survey will help you get a better grip on your company's IT needs and whether our services could be beneficial for you.

It's super short, and will only take a few minutes of your time.

TAKE OUR SURVEY
TO SEE IF YOUR COMPANY COULD BENEFIT FROM
MANAGED IT SERVICES

Thanks!



Trevor Akervik
Senior Director of Managed Services

© Marco, Inc.
4510 Heatherwood Road
St. Cloud, MN 56301

[manage your email preferences](#)
[unsubscribe](#)

Live optimization

SUBJECT: Get the money you need today

Company: Kickstand Lending

Primary Audience: Loan prospects

Email Purpose: Drive existing customers to open a new line of credit



Alyssa,

Great news! You are now eligible to apply for a new loan. Get the money you need directly deposited into your bank account the next day!*

It's easy - simply log in to your account and submit your information today.

[Log in to My Account](#)

Sincerely,

Customer Service

KICKSTAND LENDING

www.KickstandLending.com

E-mail: cs@KickstandLending.com

Phone: 1-855-500-KICK (5425)

Fax: 1-864-336-7257

Business hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time

*Funds are deposited as soon as the next banking day for transactions completed by 4:00 PM Eastern Time, depending on the efficiency of your bank.

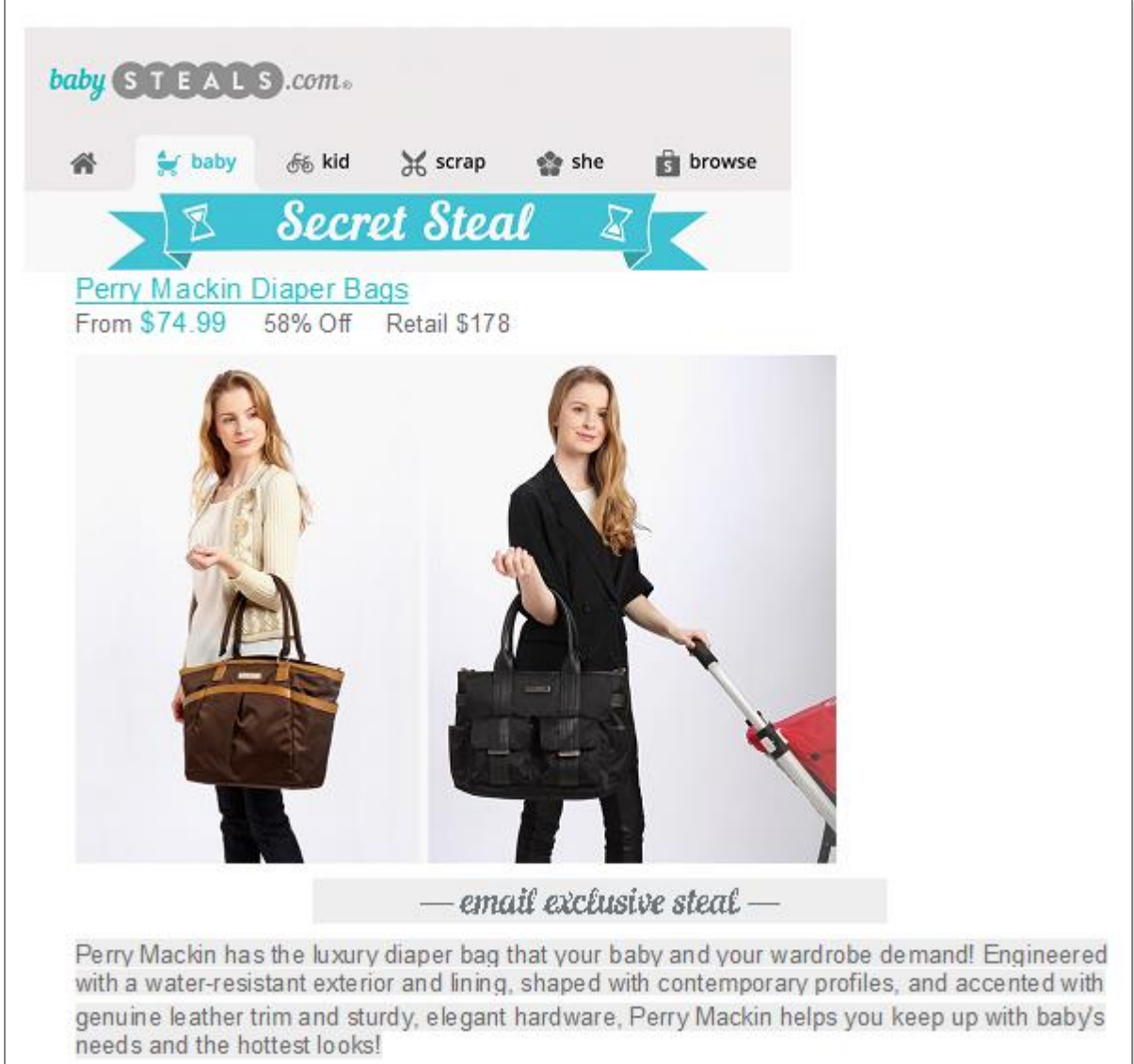
Live optimization

SUBJECT: ☆ Psssst! Luxury Diaper Bags
— Quantities Limited ☆

Company: BabySteals.com

Primary Audience: Mothers

Email Purpose: Product sales



The screenshot shows an email from baby STEALS .com. The header includes navigation links: home, baby, kid, scrap, she, and browse. A teal banner with a clock icon and the text "Secret Steal" is prominently displayed. Below the banner, the product "Perry Mackin Diaper Bags" is featured with a price tag: "From \$74.99 58% Off Retail \$178". Two images of women holding the bags are shown: one in a light-colored top and dark pants holding a brown bag, and another in a black top and pants holding a black bag while standing next to a red stroller. Below the images, the text "— email exclusive steal —" is centered. At the bottom, a paragraph describes the bag as a luxury item with a water-resistant exterior, contemporary profiles, and genuine leather trim.

baby STEALS .com

home baby kid scrap she browse

Secret Steal

[Perry Mackin Diaper Bags](#)
From **\$74.99** 58% Off Retail \$178

— email exclusive steal —

Perry Mackin has the luxury diaper bag that your baby and your wardrobe demand! Engineered with a water-resistant exterior and lining, shaped with contemporary profiles, and accented with genuine leather trim and sturdy, elegant hardware, Perry Mackin helps you keep up with baby's needs and the hottest looks!

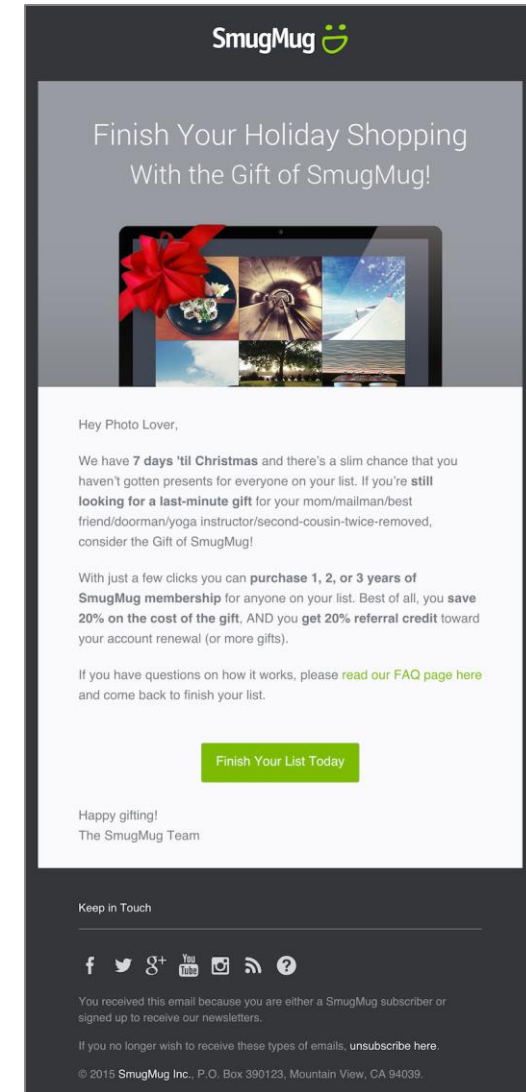
Live optimization

SUBJECT: [NAME], Here's the Answer to Your Last-Minute Holiday Needs

Company: SmugMug

Primary Audience: Current subscribers

Email Purpose: Increase sales of the Gift of SmugMug



Next Clinic: Experiment background



Experiment ID: TP 1548

Record Location: MECLABS Research Library

Research Partner: *(Protected)**

Background: A national bank.

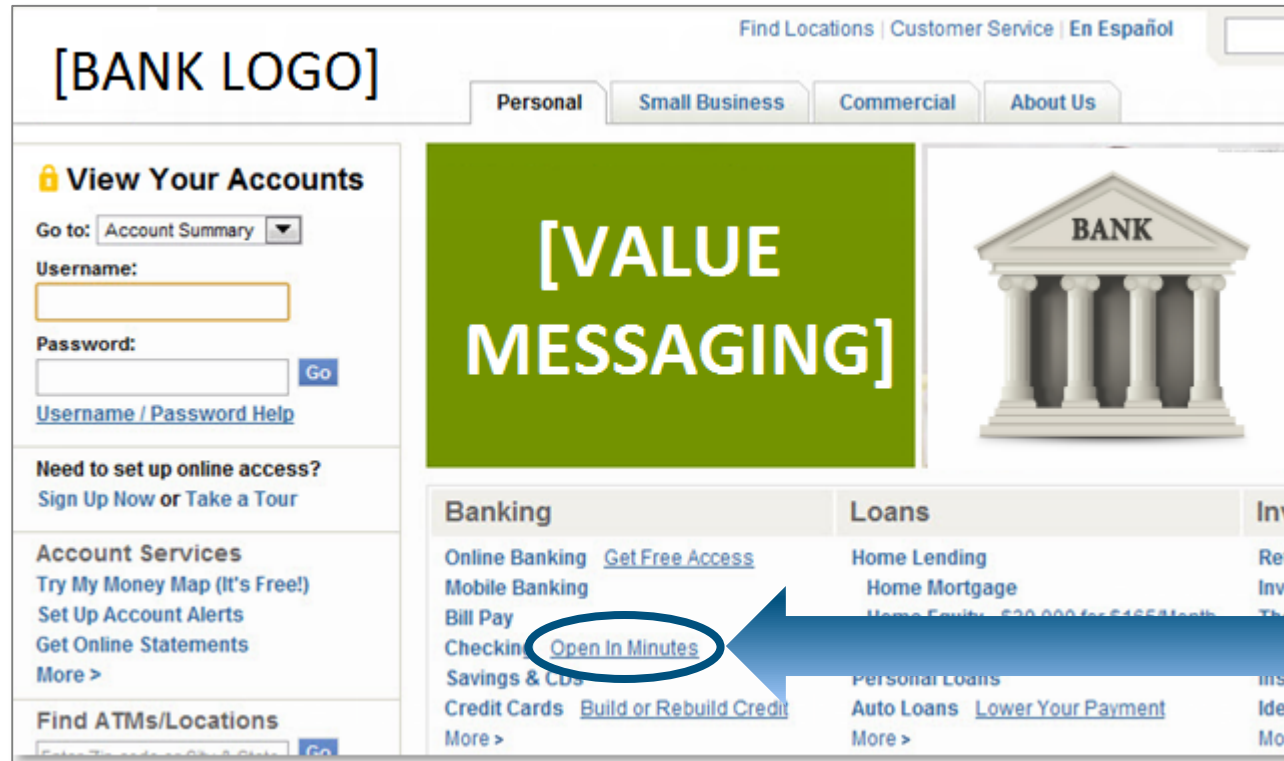
Goal: To increase the number of signups for new checking accounts.

Research Question: Which sales funnel will produce the highest conversion?

Test Design: A/B variable cluster split test

*Note: Test has been anonymized to protect partner confidentiality.

Experiment: The customer



For this test, the customer for both the Control and Treatments have arrived at the homepage of [BANK] and clicked on the “Open in Minutes” checking deeplink.

Next Clinic: The Control

Checking selector tool

- Checking selector tool requires visitors to answer four questions before being given an account recommendation.
- Customers click through and are presented with a preferred package, along with a second choice.
- Customers must select the account they are interested in to begin pre-registration, or they can go back and change their answers or manually browse other checking options.

The diagram illustrates the user journey through the 'Checking selector tool'. On the left, a form titled 'Find Your Checking Account' asks four questions: 'Where do you live?', 'What kind of checking account are you looking for?', 'How much money do you plan to keep in your account?', and 'Are you a student?'. A green arrow points from this form to a recommended account page on the right. Red dashed boxes and arrows highlight the 'Best Choice' and 'Second Choice' buttons at the top of the recommendation page, and the 'Go back and change answers' and 'Other Checking Options' links at the bottom.

Find Your Checking Account
Let us do the work of finding the account that fits your financial situation.

Where do you live?
Select One

What kind of checking account are you looking for?
Select account type

How much money do you plan to keep in your account?
Select Amount

Are you a student
☐ Yes ☐ No

Get a Checking Account Recommendation

Best Choice Second Choice

Recommended Preferred Package

Account features and benefits

- 24-hour online banking
- Free checks and checkbook
- Free money orders
- No-fee ATM withdrawals
- No-fee deposits
- No-fee transfers
- No-fee bill payments
- No-fee direct deposits
- No-fee wire transfers

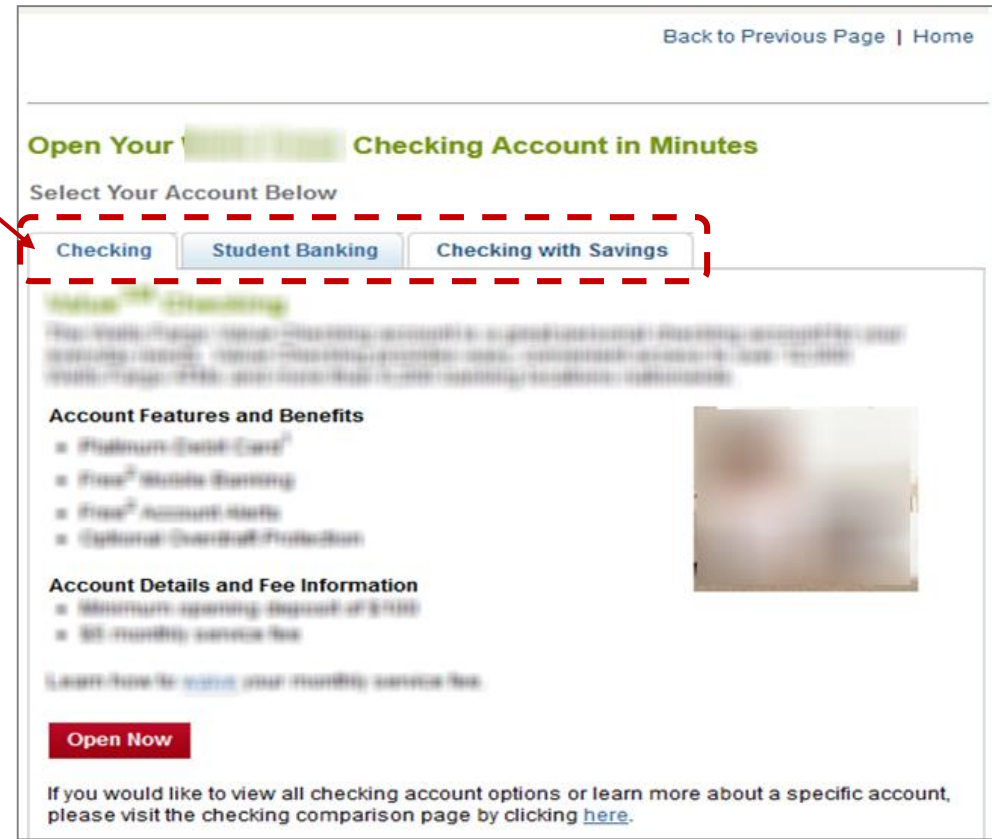
Account detail

Learn More Open Now

Next Clinic: Treatment #1

Three-product tab

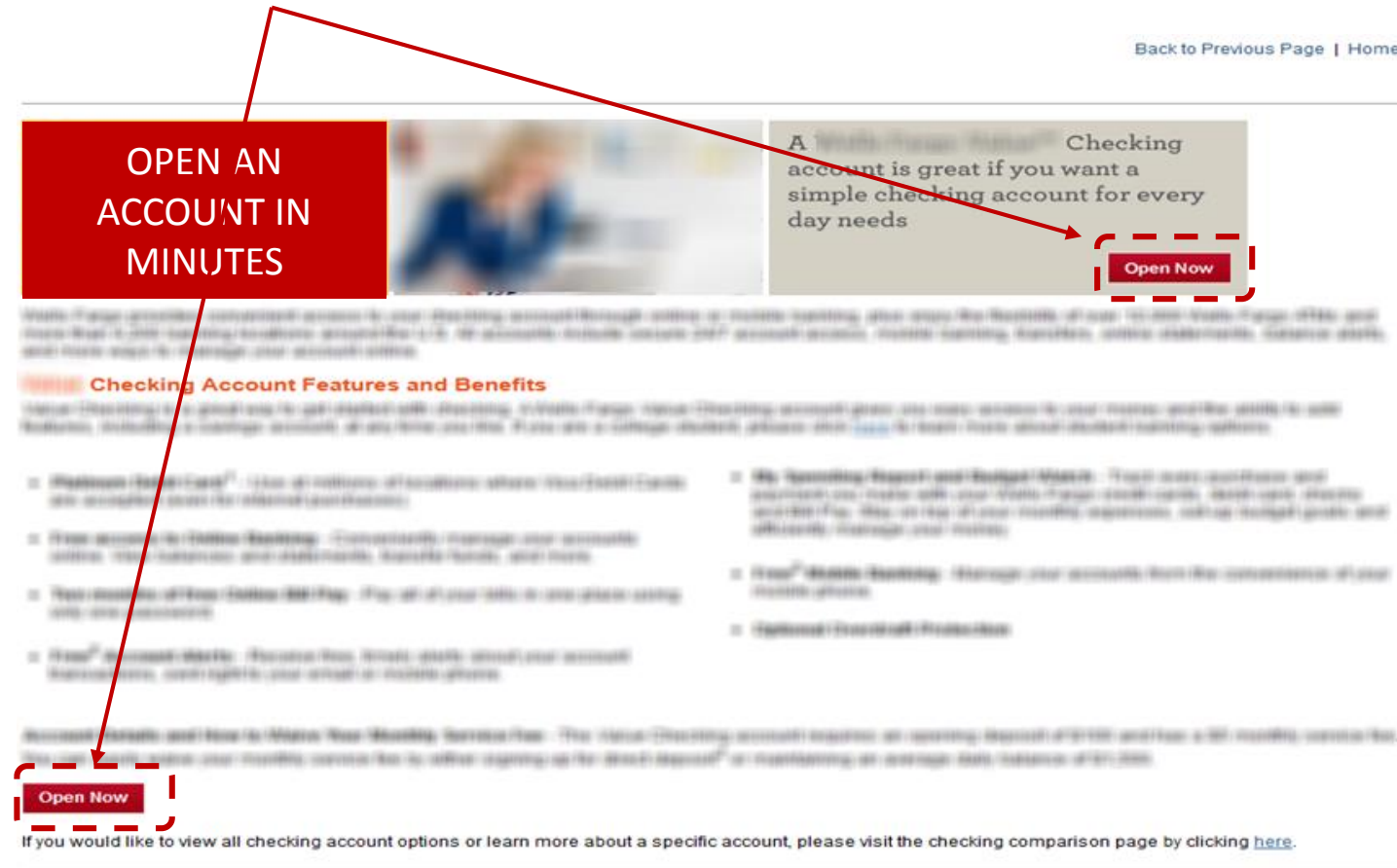
- The checking selector tool is removed, and instead, customers are presented with three account options from which to select.



Next Clinic: Treatment #2

Single-product

- Single product email with “Open Now” CTA at both the top and bottom of the page



Next Clinic: Side-by-side comparison

TREATMENT #1

Back to Previous Page | Home

Open Your **Value Checking** Account in Minutes

Select Your Account Below

Checking **Student Banking** Checking with Savings

ValueSM Checking

ValueSM Checking is a great way to get started with banking. It's a simple, easy-to-use account that gives you everything you need to get started. It's a great way to get started with banking. It's a simple, easy-to-use account that gives you everything you need to get started.

Account Features and Benefits

- PlatinumSM Credit CardSM
- FreeSM Mobile Banking
- FreeSM Account Alerts
- Optional Overdraft Protection

Account Details and Fee Information

- Minimum opening deposit of \$100
- \$5 monthly service fee

Learn more about our [monthly service fee](#).

Open Now

If you would like to view all checking account options or learn more about a specific account, please visit the checking comparison page by clicking [here](#).

TREATMENT #2

Back to Previous Page | Home

OPEN AN ACCOUNT IN MINUTES

A **ValueSM Checking** account is great if you want a simple checking account for every day needs

Open Now

ValueSM Checking is a great way to get started with banking. It's a simple, easy-to-use account that gives you everything you need to get started. It's a great way to get started with banking. It's a simple, easy-to-use account that gives you everything you need to get started.

ValueSM Checking Account Features and Benefits

- PlatinumSM Credit CardSM - Use all features of our PlatinumSM Credit Card with everything you need to get started.
- FreeSM Mobile Banking - Conveniently manage your account online. View balances and statements, deposit funds, and more.
- FreeSM Account Alerts - Stay up to date on your account activity with our alerts.
- Optional Overdraft Protection - Pay all of your bills in one place using only one account.
- FreeSM Mobile Banking - Manage your account from the convenience of your mobile phone.
- Optional Overdraft Protection

Account Details and Fee Information

- Minimum opening deposit of \$100
- \$5 monthly service fee

Learn more about our [monthly service fee](#).

Open Now

If you would like to view all checking account options or learn more about a specific account, please visit the checking comparison page by clicking [here](#).

Which treatment won?

To see the results



Live May 13 at 4:00 p.m. EDT



Join us for the next live 35-minute Web clinic to discover:

- The exact changes that achieved a 65% increase in account applications
- Why each of those changes improved performance
- How you can apply the same principles to your pages
- Key strategies from the underlying theory of customer motivation

To join live, register at the link below:


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