2023

The State of Direct Mail

Consumer Insights

Lob COMPEREMEDIA A MINTEL COMPANY

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Introduction

64%

of consumers say direct mail has inspired them to take action

The State of Direct Mail Consumer Insights 2023 provides invaluable insights into the perceptions and behavior of US consumers aged 18 or older regarding direct mail.

In partnership with Comperemedia, we surveyed 2,000 consumers to gain a comprehensive understanding of their usage, preferences, and engagement with direct mail. As with previous years, this report aims to equip businesses with current and actionable information to help shape and inform their direct mail strategy.

The findings of this groundbreaking report have the potential to drive increased response, conversions, and ROI, making it a must-read for anyone looking to gain a competitive edge in the direct mail market.

Methodology

Report methodology

2000

US consumers age 18+

Respondents are nationally representative of age, gender, income, education, and region.

~50

Questions & follow-ups

Respondents answered an online survey with ~50 questions and open-ended follow-ups.

5

Sectors

Among other questions, respondents were asked a series of questions around their preferences and satisfaction related to direct mail and within five specific sectors:

eCommerce
Retail
Healthcare
Financial Services
Insurance

Executive summary & actionable insights

01

64% of consumers say direct mail has inspired them to take action such as visiting a website or physical location to making a purchase.

02

65% say an offer or promotion caught their attention. Offers are key to get recipients to **open and read** direct mail.

03

68% of consumers are more likely to engage with a brand's message when it's **personalized** to them.

04

80% of consumers share direct mail with their friends and family making it more viral than you may think.

05

Nearly two-thirds of consumers say they receive **the right amount** of direct mail. Less than one in five are dissatisfied with the amount of direct mail they receive.

06

54% of consumers agree they are more likely to purchase from a brand that prioritizes **sustainability.**

KEY FINDING

01

64% of consumers say that direct mail has inspired them to *take action* including exploring websites and reviews or making a purchase.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Action-driven direct mail pieces are critical to response and conversion rates and ROI. Include calls to action that incentivize end recipients to take action.

FACT

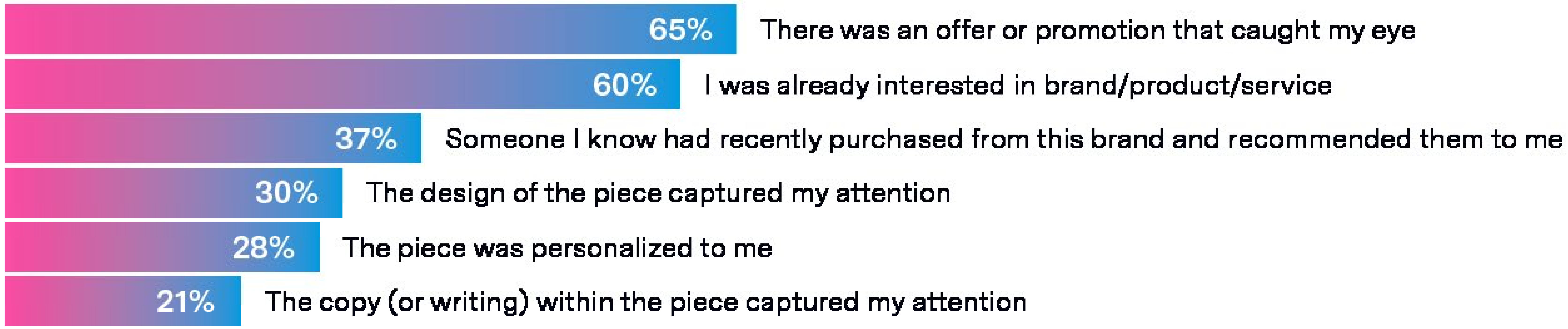
74% of marketers said direct mail delivers the highest response, conversion, and ROI of any channel they use.

Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: Has any piece of direct mail ever inspired you to take some kind of action? Action can include searching for the brand online, visiting a brand website, checking the brand's social media, looking up reviews of the brand/product, buying a product, or visiting a brand location. (Select one response.)

KEY FINDING

02

Offers are key to *motivating* recipients to open and read direct mail.



ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

2023 is the year to test direct mail *offer copy.* Use AI tools to generate multiple variations of offer copy to provide a variety of offers you can send to cohorts of your audience as tests.

Base 2023 n=2,000; 18-34 n=582, 35-54 n=696, 55+ n=722; Q: Imagine you were bringing in a piece of direct mail into your residence. Which of the following elements of a direct mail piece would inspire you to take action? Action can include searching for the brand online, visiting a brand website, checking the brand's social media, looking up reviews of the brand/product, buying a product, or visiting a brand location. (Select all that apply.)

KEY FINDING

03

68% are more likely to *engage* with a message/communication from brands personalized to them.

Over half (55%) of consumers expect direct mail to be **personalized** for them. **Images** that are personalized to the recipient stand out, especially from businesses located close to the recipient or images related to previous purchases.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Personalization means more than using someone's name. Use the data and insights you have to trigger direct mail based on behaviors and interests including prior purchases, website browsing, lifecycle milestones, and more.

Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: Take a moment to consider the statements listed below. Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with each. (Select one per row.) / Q: Which of the following types of images make a direct mail piece most appealing to you? (Select all that apply.)

KEY FINDING

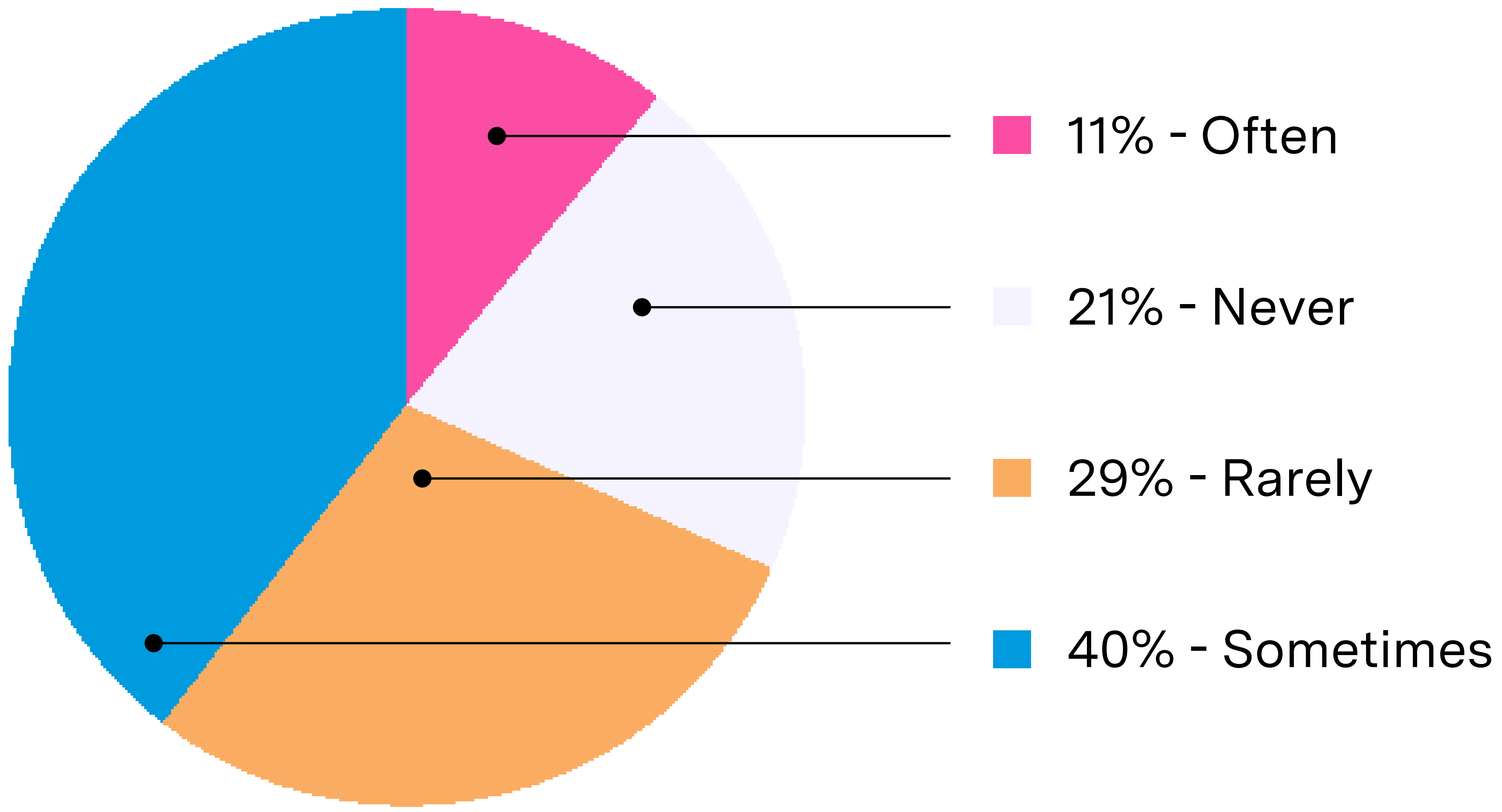
04

Over half of consumers *share* direct mail.

80%

of consumers share direct mail with family and friends, especially coupons and free offers

FREQUENCY OF SHARING DIRECT MAIL



ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Encourage consumers to share your direct mail offers and promotions by including "one for you and one for a friend," or use one, share one promo codes or QR codes to scan.

Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: How often do you share direct mail pieces or offers with your friends or family?

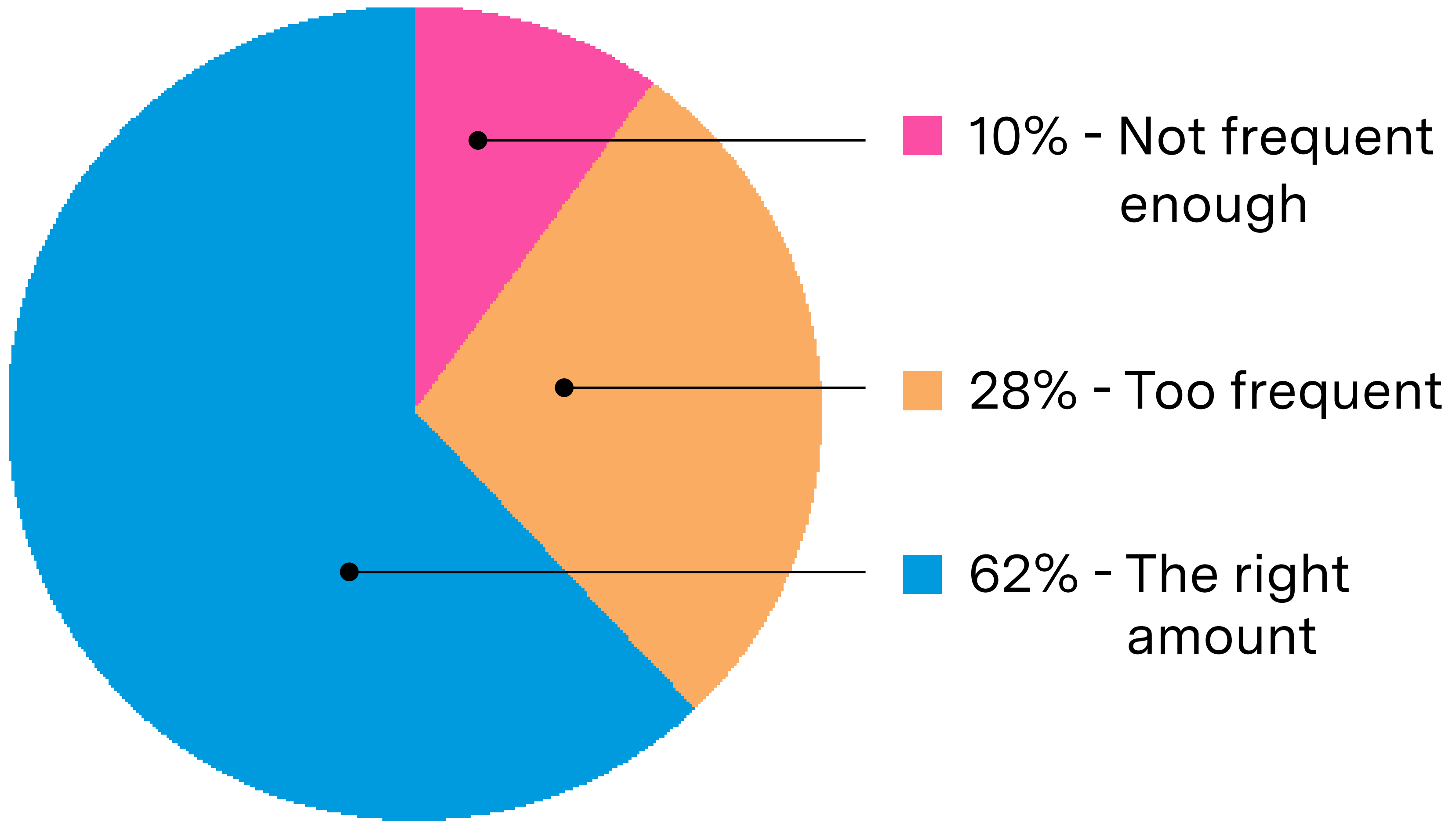
KEY FINDING

05

Nearly two-thirds of consumers say they receive the *right amount* of direct mail.

Less than one in five consumers are dissatisfied with the amount of direct mail they receive.

Just over a quarter (28%) find it too frequent—a decrease from 31% in 2022—potentially due to more targeting and segmentation by direct mail practitioners.



ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Direct mail practitioners should use audience data and intelligence to target and segment direct mail pieces, creating campaigns that deliver greater consumer engagement resulting in higher response and conversion rates and satisfaction.

Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: How would you describe the frequency of direct mail you receive from brands overall? (Select one response.) / How satisfied are you with the amount of direct mail you receive from brands? (Select one response.)

KEY FINDING

06

Over half (54%) of consumers agree they are more likely to purchase from a brand that prioritizes *sustainability.*

68% reported they still opt to receive at least some paper statements from brands

32% have opted in to paperless statements for every brand that offers it

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

Partner with a vendor that prioritizes sustainability, which includes:

- Using post-consumer waste paper stock certified for sustainable harvesting by the Forest Stewardship Council
- Purchasing carbon offset credits on your behalf for every step of the direct mail lifecycle — from raw materials to disposal
- Adding a carbon-neutral icon or statement to each mail piece showcasing your commitment to sustainability

Paperless statements are more common among younger consumers, especially those 25-44. Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: Take a moment to consider the statements listed below. Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with each. (Select one per row.) Q: Which of the following statements best describes your relationship with paperless statements? (Select one response.)”

How consumers *act on* direct mail

The majority of consumers read direct mail almost immediately.

Over half keep it two days or less.

71% reported they read direct mail the same day they bring it inside their residence

58% keep direct mail for less than two days

78% of ages 55+, report they read direct mail the same day they bring it inside their residence.

NEARLY **1 in 4** of those 18-24 keep their direct mail for two days but less than five days.

ACTIONABLE INSIGHT

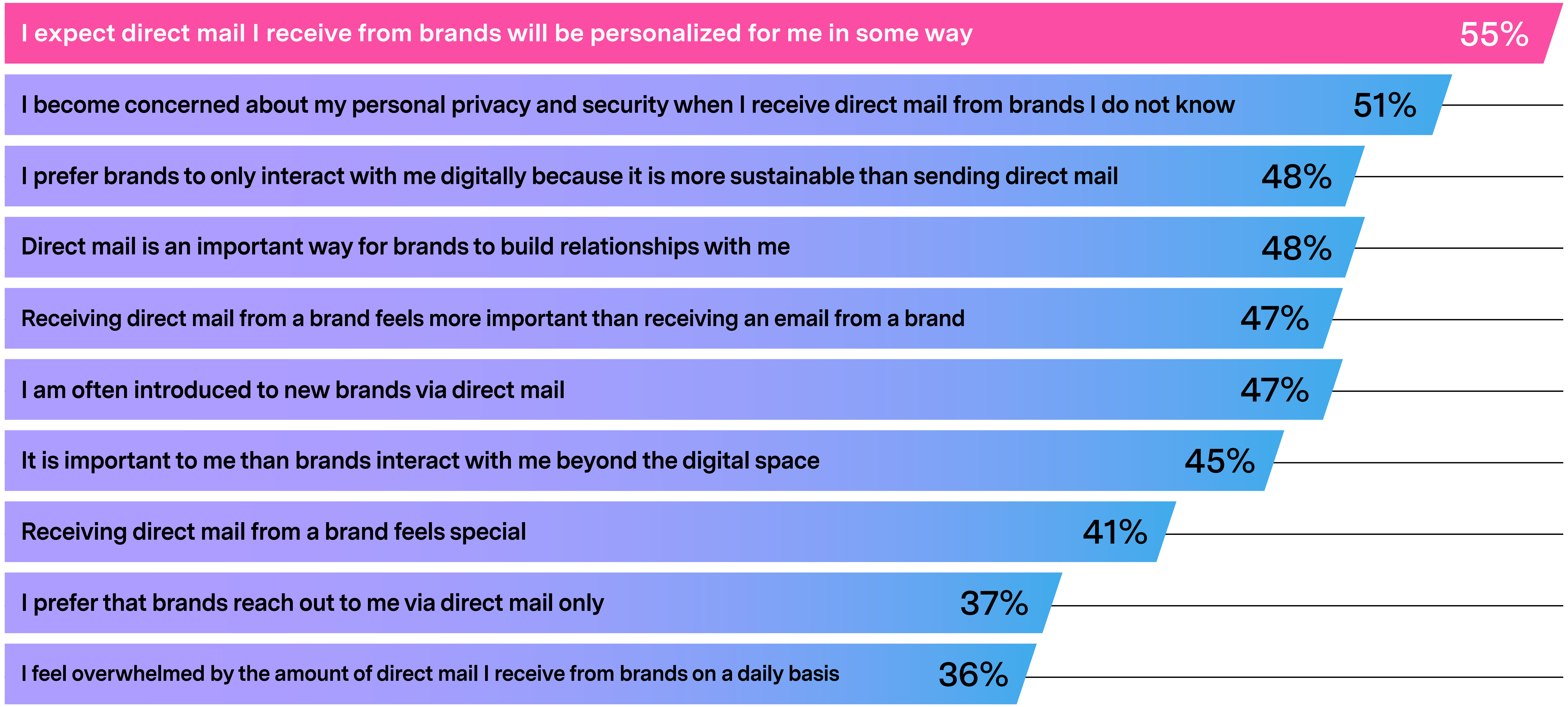
Direct mail practitioners should use audience data and intelligence to target and segment direct mail pieces, creating campaigns that deliver greater consumer engagement resulting in higher response and conversion rates and satisfaction.

Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: What do you typically do with direct mail you receive from any brand? (Select one response.) / How long do you typically keep direct mail from any brand? (Select one response.)

Direct mail is an important **relationship builder.**

Personalization is expected.

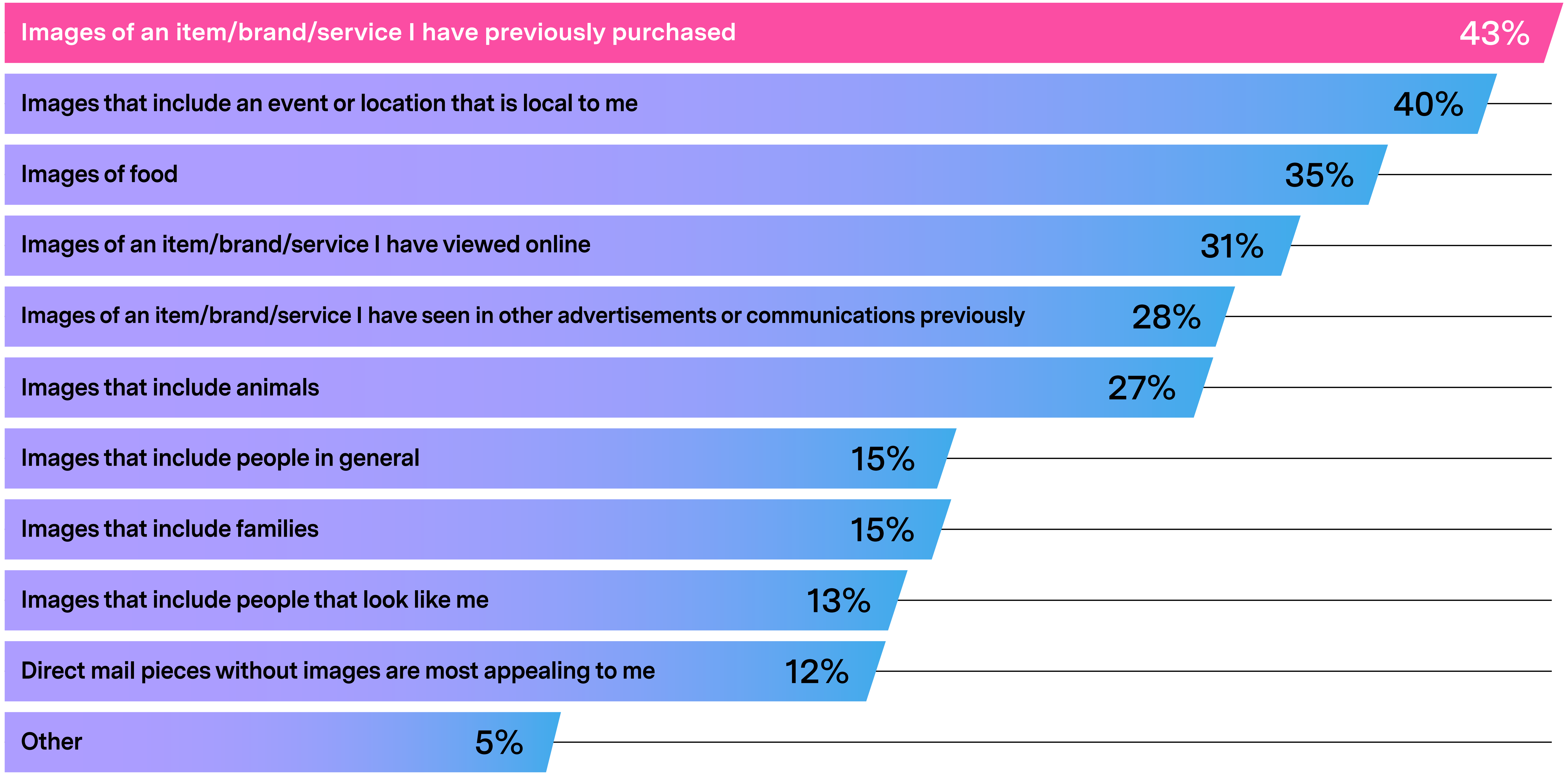
DIRECT MAIL ATTITUDES
(TOP 2-BOX)



Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: Take a moment to consider the statements listed below. Please state the extent to which you agree or disagree with each. (Select one per row.)

Images of **previously purchased items** or local events are most impactful for engagement.

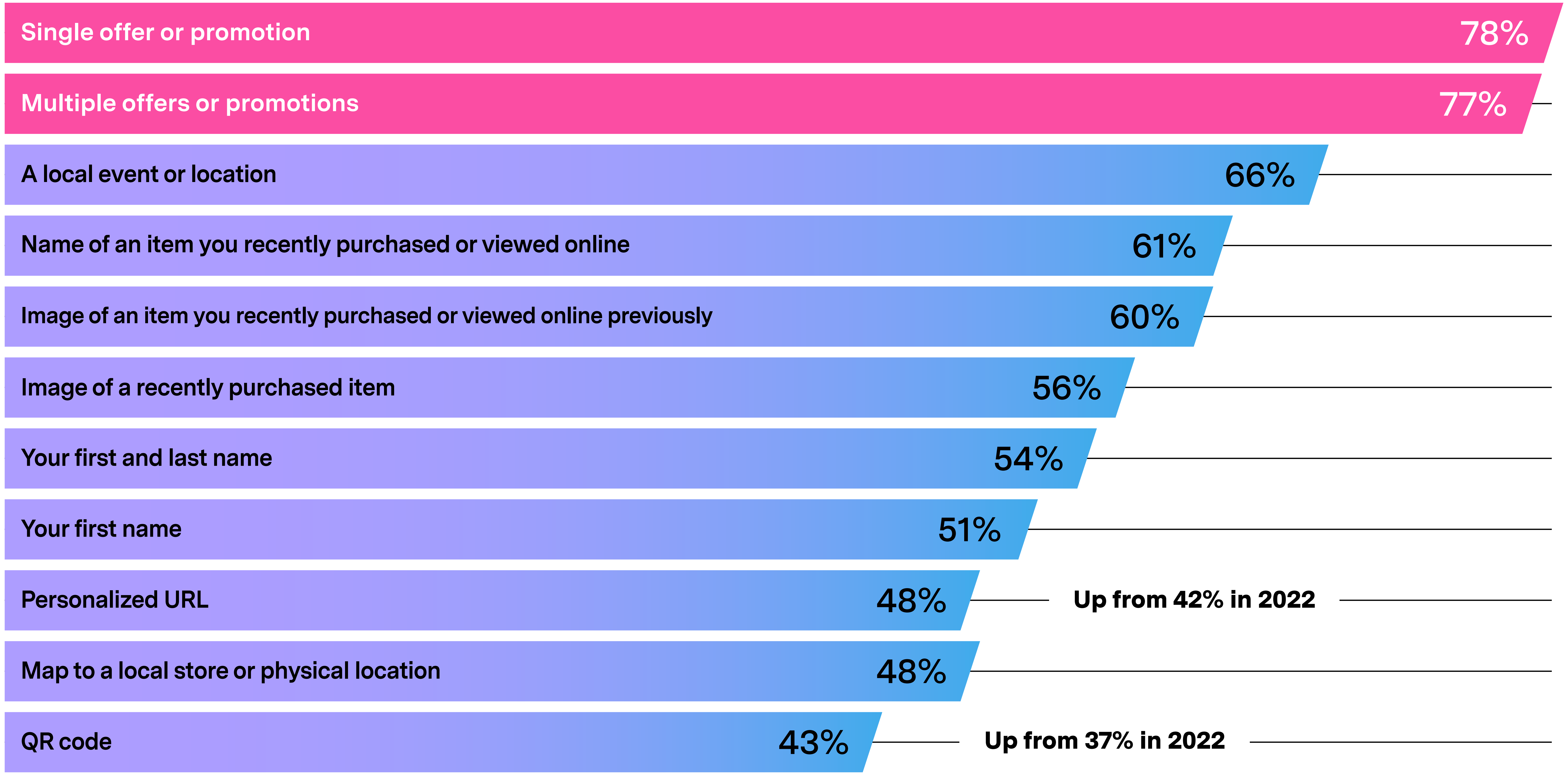
IMAGE APPEAL



Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: Which of the following types of images make a direct mail piece most appealing to you? (Select all that apply.)

Offers are key to enticing recipients to **open** and **read** direct mail, with personalized URLs and QR codes growing in popularity.

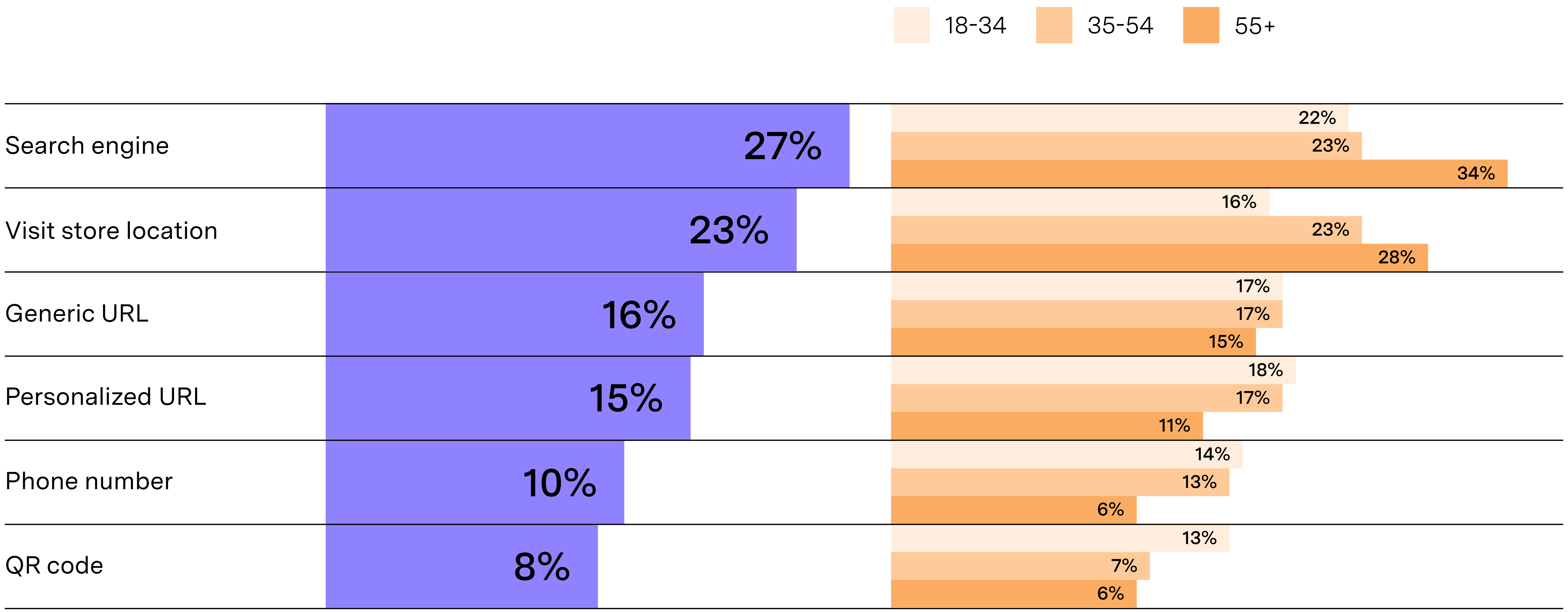
LIKELIHOOD TO OPEN/READ FROM BRAND INTERESTED IF IT INCLUDED…
(TOP 2-BOX)



Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: Imagine you receive a piece of direct mail from a brand you are particularly interested in. How likely are you to open/read this piece of mail if it had the following included?

The majority of consumers will use a search engine to **learn more about a brand** followed by visiting a store location.

METHOD TO LEARN MORE ABOUT A BRAND FROM DIRECT MAIL



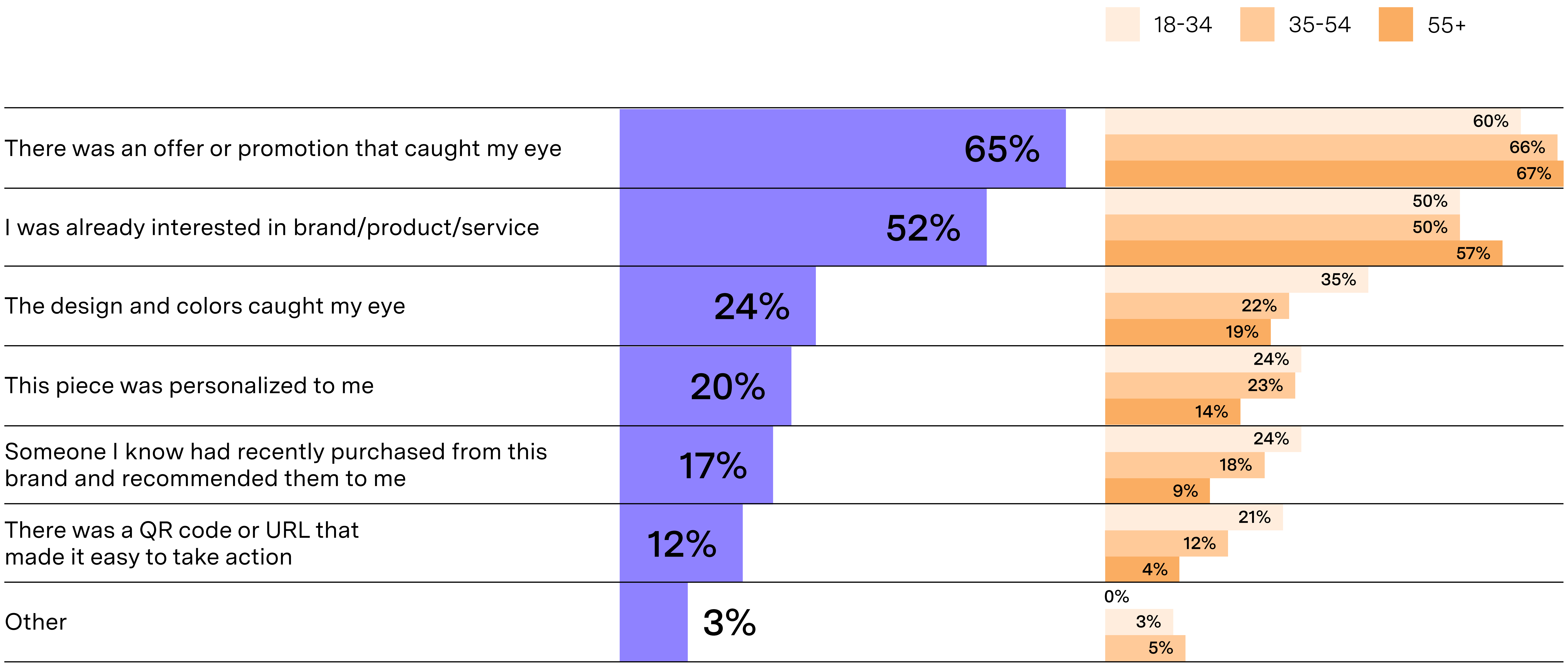
FACT

18-54 year olds are more likely than 55+ to learn more about brands from a personalized URL.

Base 2023 n=2,000; 18-34 n=582, 35-54 n=696, 55+ n=722; Q: Imagine you received a piece of direct mail from a brand you are interested in and want to learn more. Which of the following methods would you be most likely to use to get more information? (Select one response.)

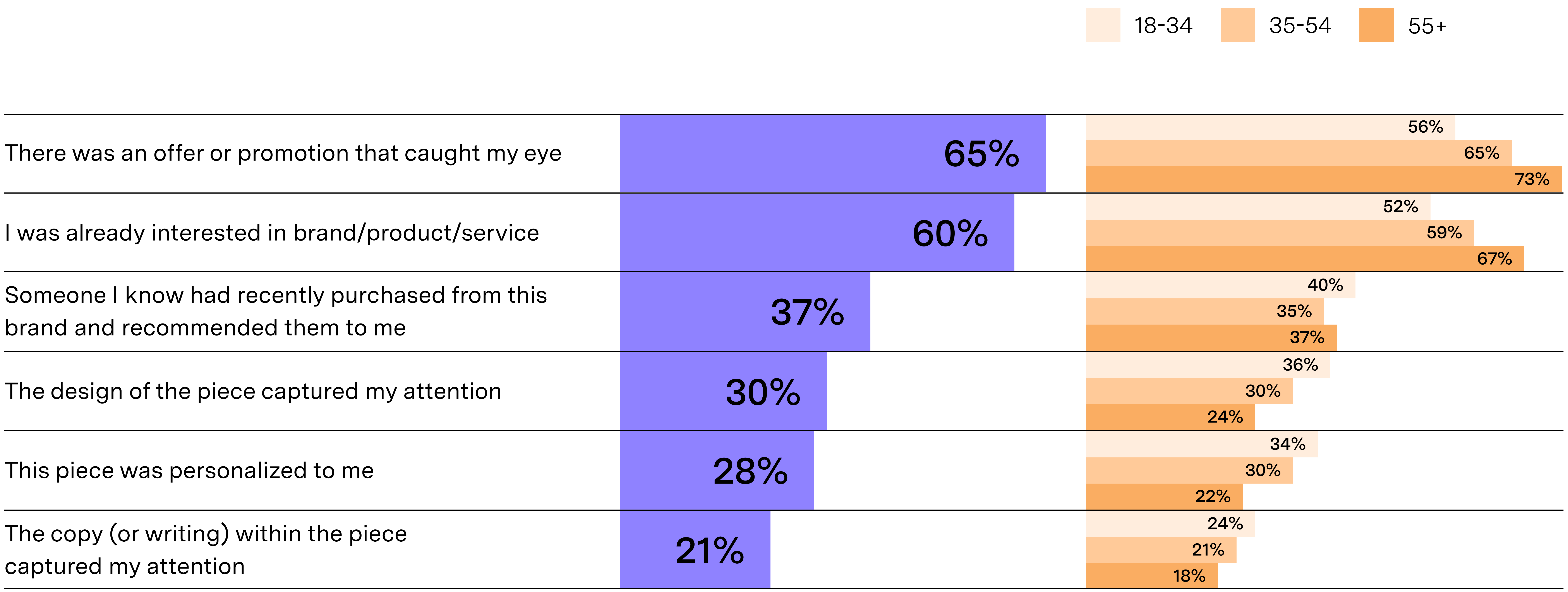
Offers and promotions motivate consumers to **take action** the most.

WHAT PART/ASPECT MADE YOU TAKE ACTION?



Offers and pre-existing interest are paramount as consumers move to action stage.

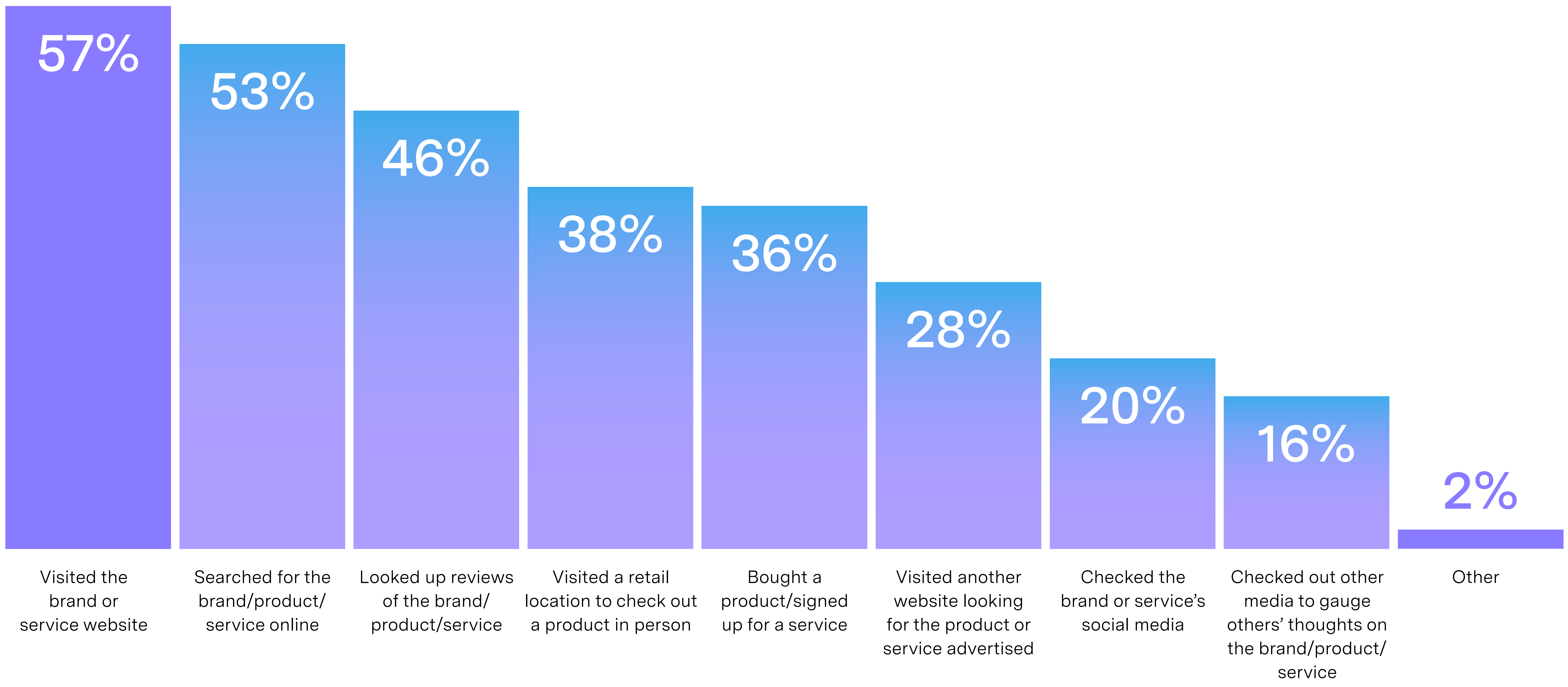
WHAT INSPIRES ACTION BY AGE



Base 2023 n=2,000; 18-34 n=582, 35-54 n=696, 55+ n=722; Q: Imagine you were bringing in a piece of direct mail into your residence. Which of the following elements of a direct mail piece would inspire you to take action? Action can include searching for the brand online, visiting a brand website, checking the brand's social media, looking up reviews of the brand/product, buying a product, or visiting a brand location. (Select all that apply.)

Nearly 60% visit a brand website after receiving direct mail and over one-third visit a location or purchase a product.

ACTIONS TAKEN FROM DIRECT MAIL



Base 2023 n=1,270; Q: You mentioned you have taken some kind of action after receiving a piece of direct mail. Which of the following describes which actions you have taken in the past after receiving a piece of direct mail? (Select all that apply.)

QR codes are used by over a third of consumers to take action.

39%

of consumers are likely to scan a QR code on a piece of direct mail and take action.

This figure rises to 44% for those aged 35-54 and over half (51%) for those aged 18-34

Scan to see what happens.

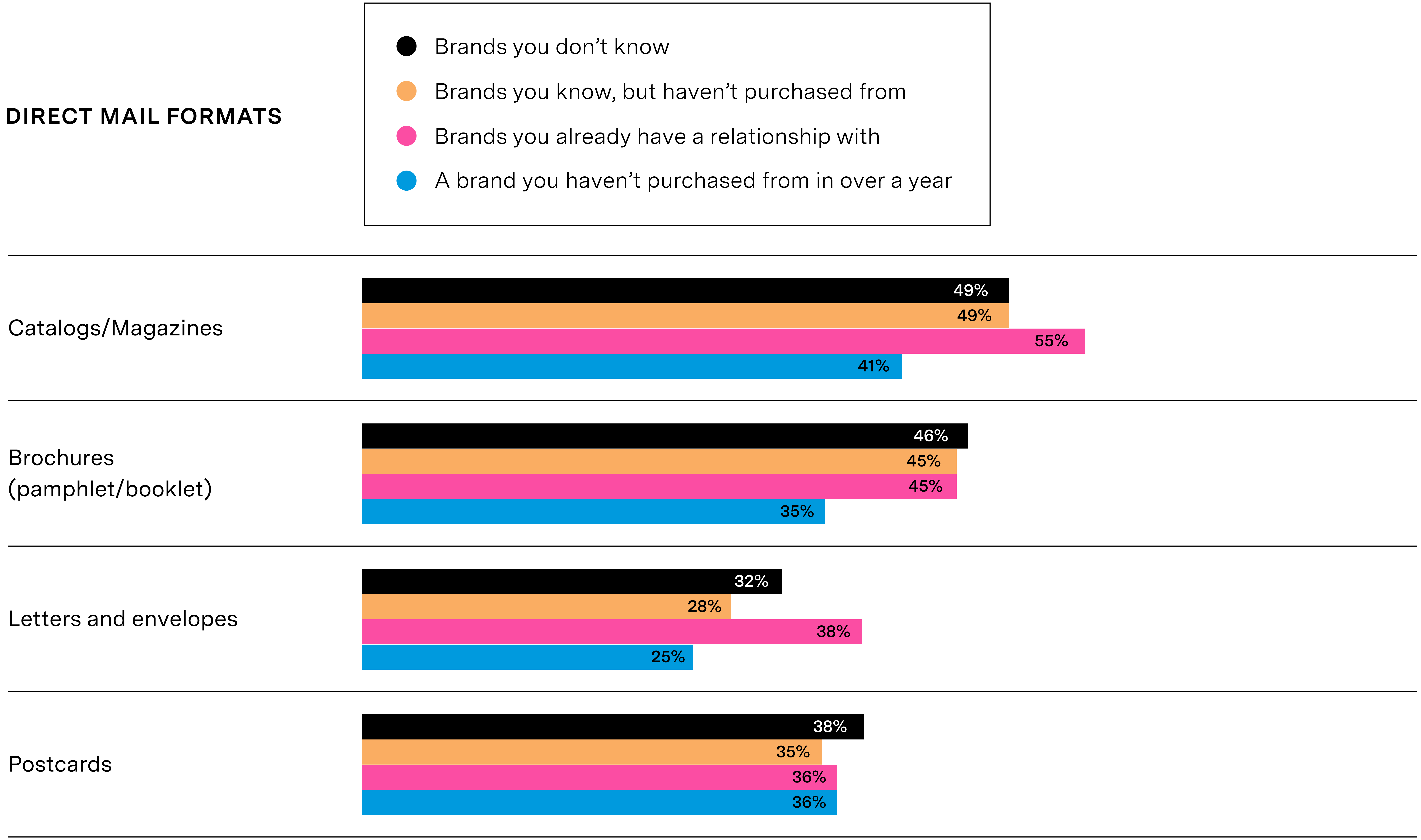
FACT

41% of marketers currently use QR codes to help measure the ROI of campaigns.

Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: How likely are you to scan a QR code on a piece of direct mail and take action? Action can include searching for the brand online, visiting a brand website, checking the brand's social media, accessing a promotion, looking up reviews of the brand/product, buying a product, or visiting a brand location. (Select one response.)

Direct mail format preferences & industry *insights*

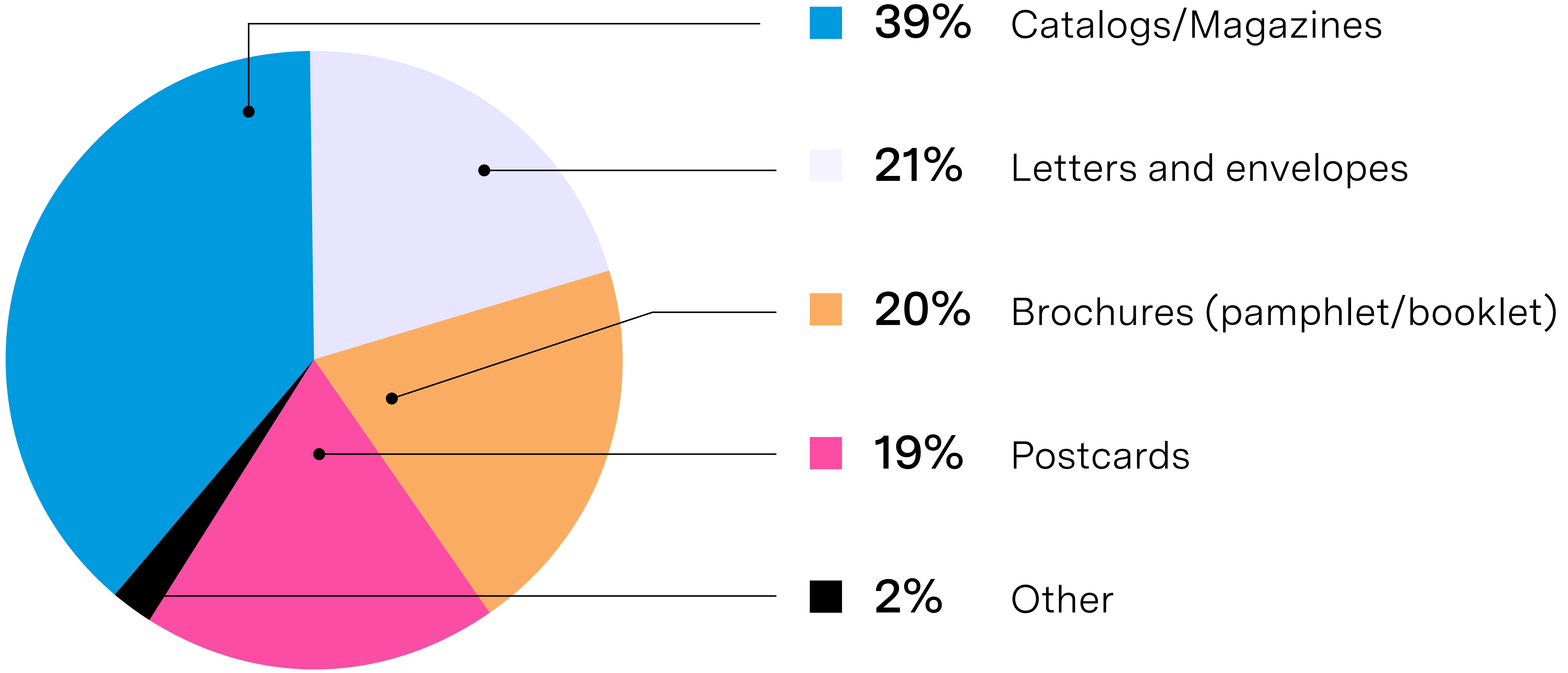
Catalogs and magazines are the most preferred direct mail format, **regardless of the relationship with a brand.**



Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: Which of the following direct mail formats do you prefer to receive from brands...? (Select all that apply.)

Respondents are most likely to read catalogs/magazines from brands with which they have an existing relationship, followed by letters and brochures.

DIRECT MAIL FORMATS FROM BRANDS WITH RELATIONSHIP: MOST LIKELY TO READ



FACT

Respondents ages 18-34 are significantly more likely to read letters compared to those than those 35+, potentially due to life stages.

Base 2023 n=2,000; Q: You mentioned you prefer to receive the following direct mail formats from brands you already have a relationship with. Which of the following are you most likely to read? (Select one response.)

Retail (Brick & mortar stores)

MOST LIKELY READ FORMATS

Catalogs/ Magazines	Brochures	Postcards	Letters and envelopes
55%	40%	35%	27%

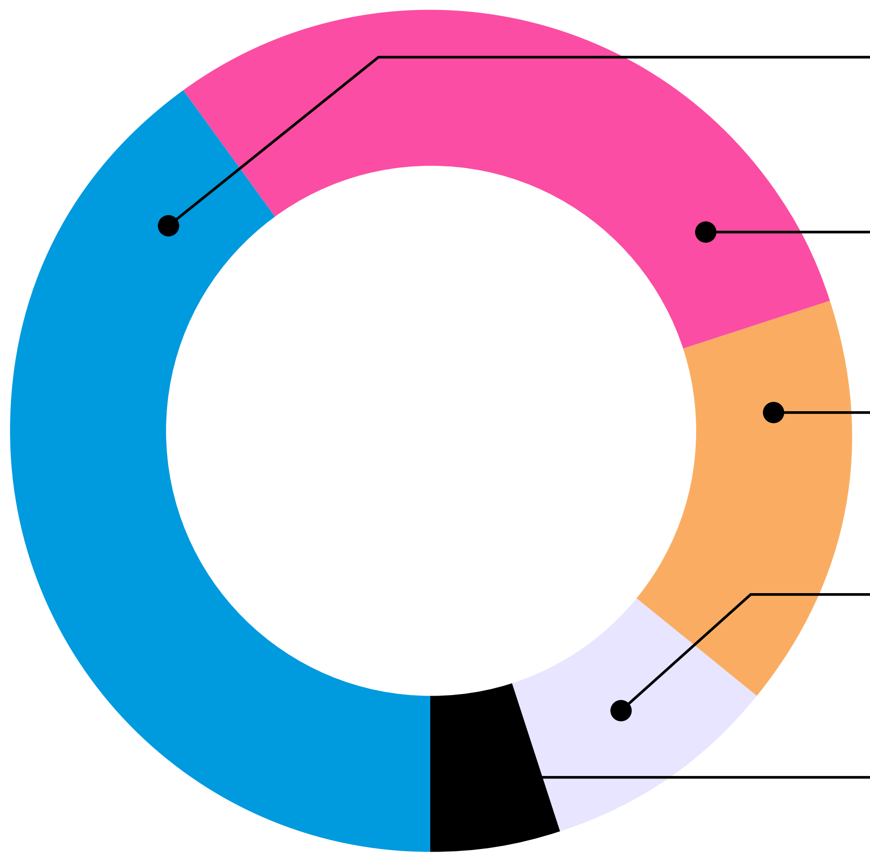
WAYS TO LEARN MORE

Visited the brand or service website	29%
Searched for it online	24%
Visited a retail location	15%
Looked up reviews	10%
Nothing	7%
Visited another website looking for it advertised	5%
Checked the brand or service's social media	4%
Checked other social media to gauge others' thoughts	3%
Bought	3%

93% read direct mail immediately and/or save it to read later.

- 49% Read immediately
- 44% Keep and read it at a later time
- 13% Rarely read and typically throw out

MOST LIKELY READ FROM A CURRENTLY USED BRAND



- 40% Promotions from products/ services I already have
- 30% Promotions from products/ services I don't already have
- 16% Catalog showcasing products/services
- 9% Announcement of a new products/service
- 5% Newsletters or letters

N=793

Healthcare

MOST LIKELY READ FORMATS

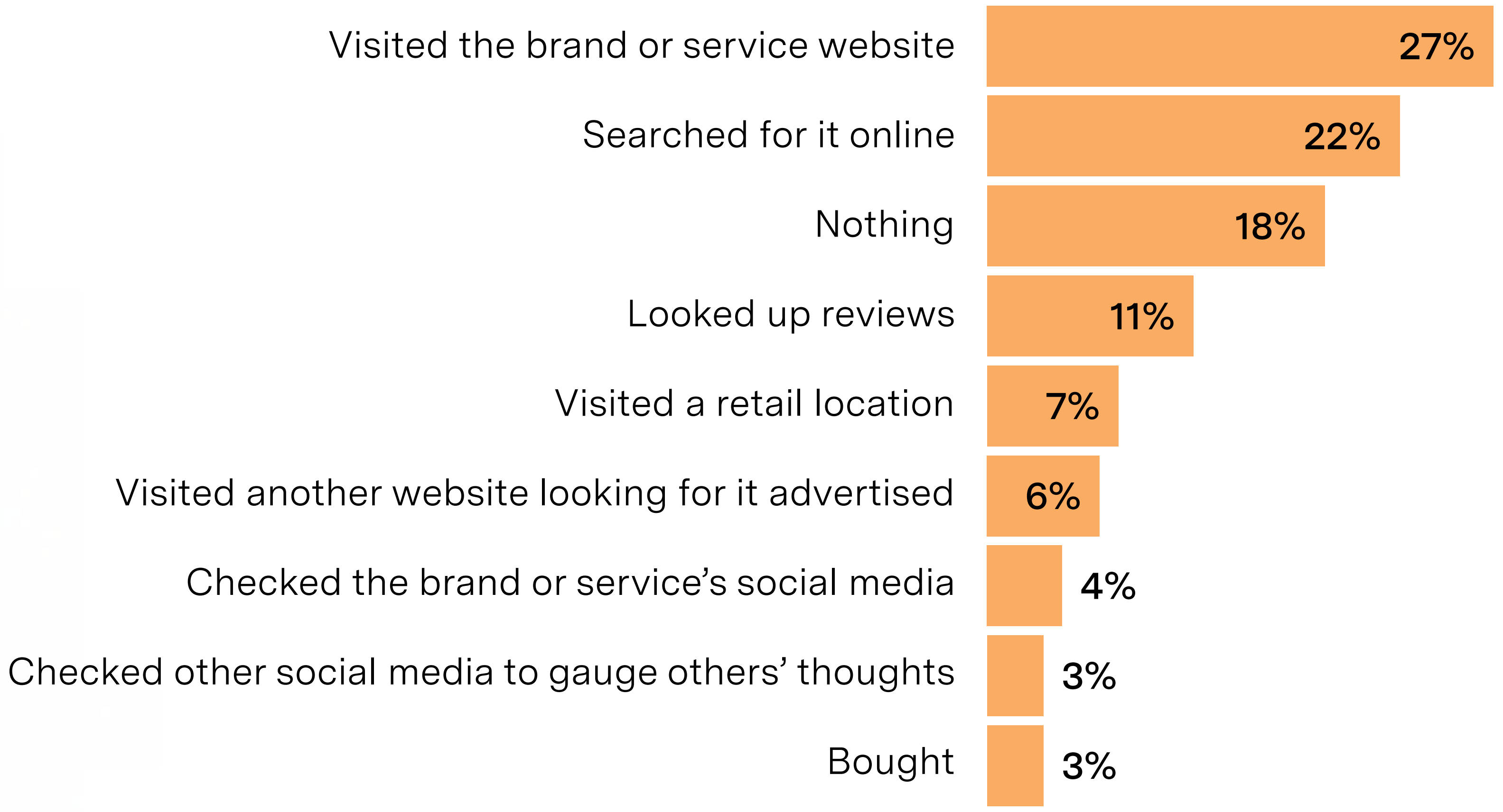
42%
Letters and envelopes

40%
Brochures

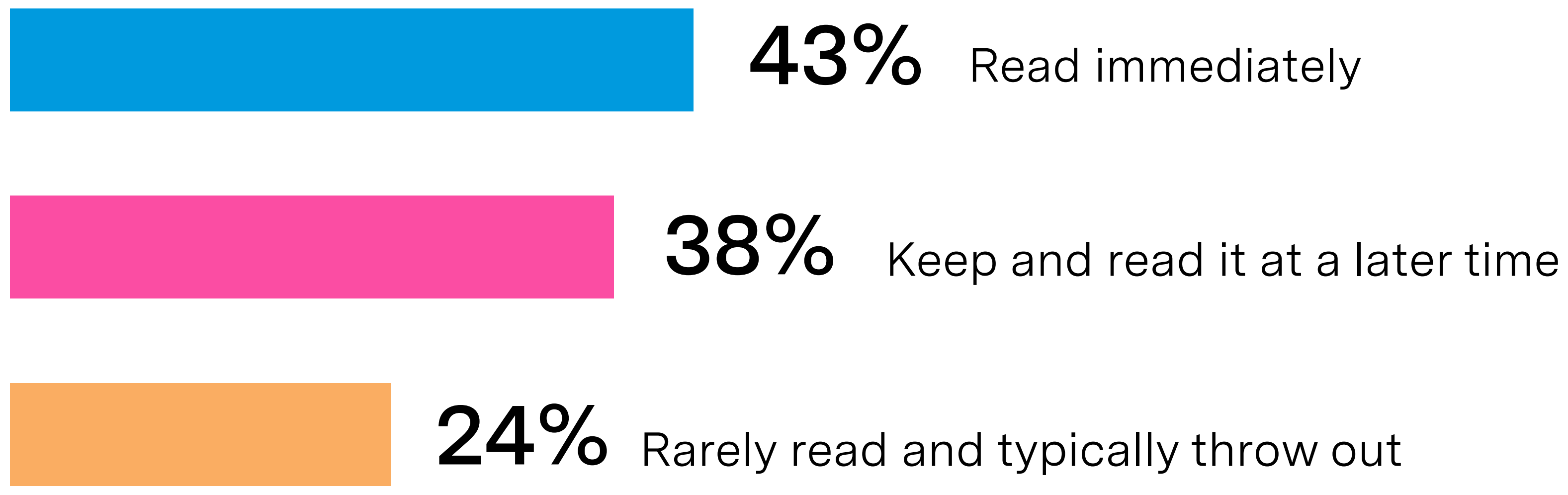
32%
Postcards

24%
Catalogs/ Magazines

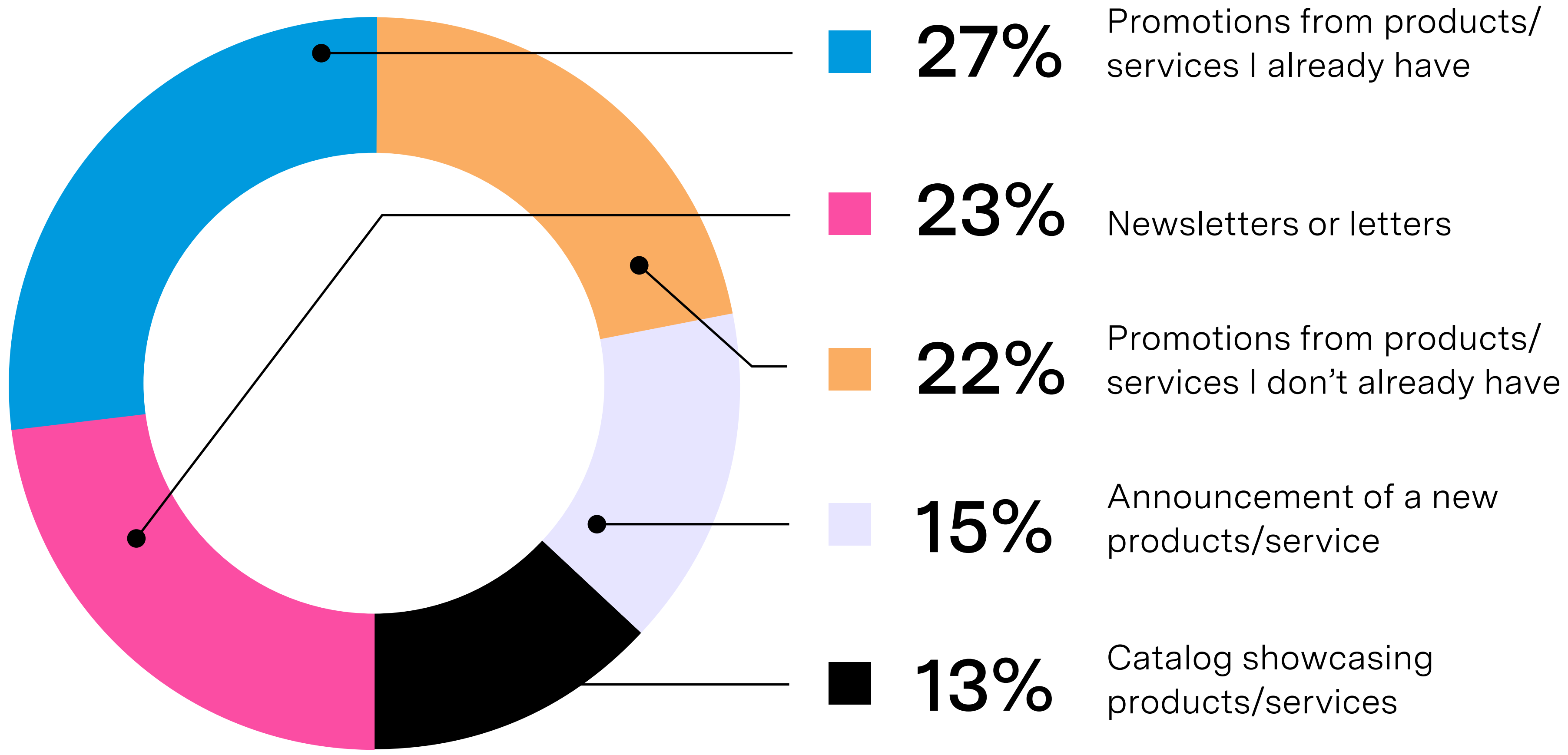
WAYS TO LEARN MORE



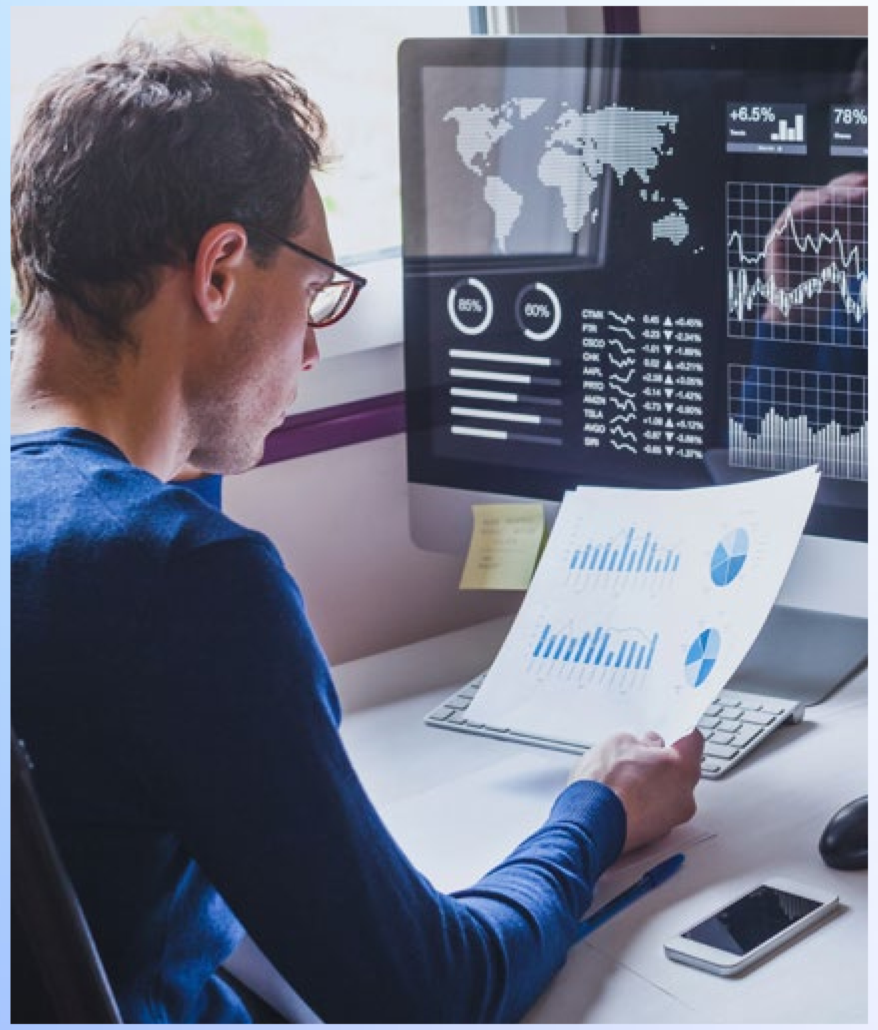
81% read direct mail immediately and/or save it to read later.



MOST LIKELY READ FROM A CURRENTLY USED BRAND



Financial Services



MOST LIKELY READ FORMATS

46%	34%	31%	19%
Letters and envelopes	Brochures	Postcards	Catalogs/ Magazines

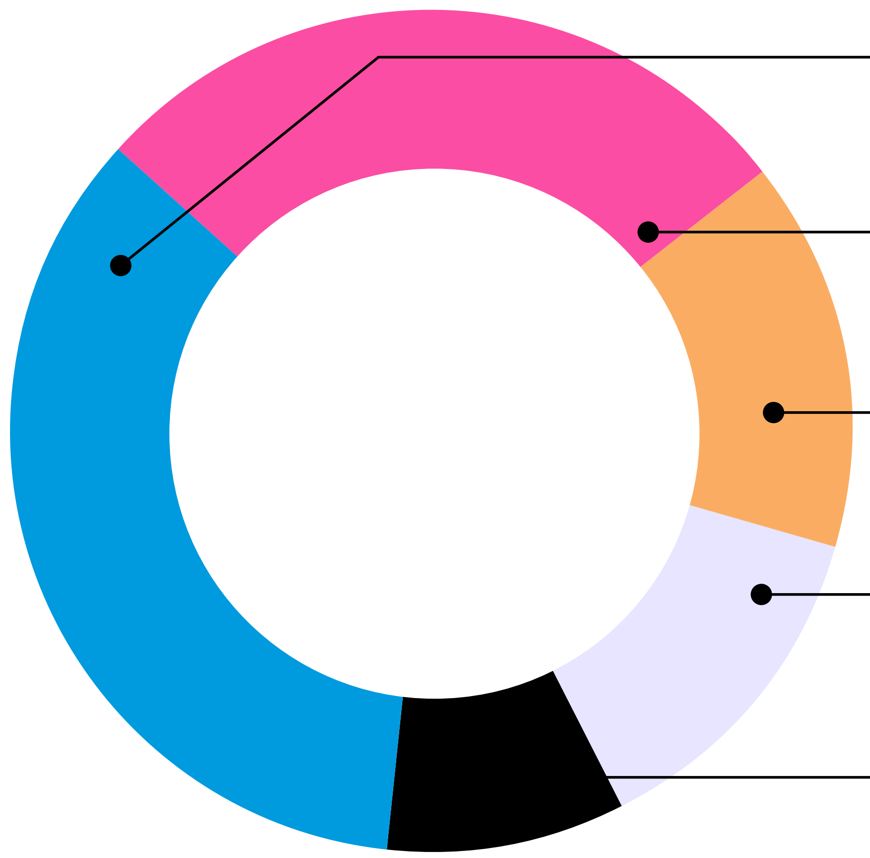
WAYS TO LEARN MORE

Visited the brand or service website	26%
Searched for it online	21%
Nothing	20%
Looked up reviews	9%
Visited a retail location	8%
Checked the brand or service's social media	5%
Visited another website looking for it advertised	4%
Checked other social media to gauge others' thoughts	3%
Bought	3%

79% read direct mail immediately and/or save it to read later.

45%	Read immediately
34%	Keep and read it at a later time
27%	Rarely read and typically throw out

MOST LIKELY READ FROM A CURRENTLY USED BRAND



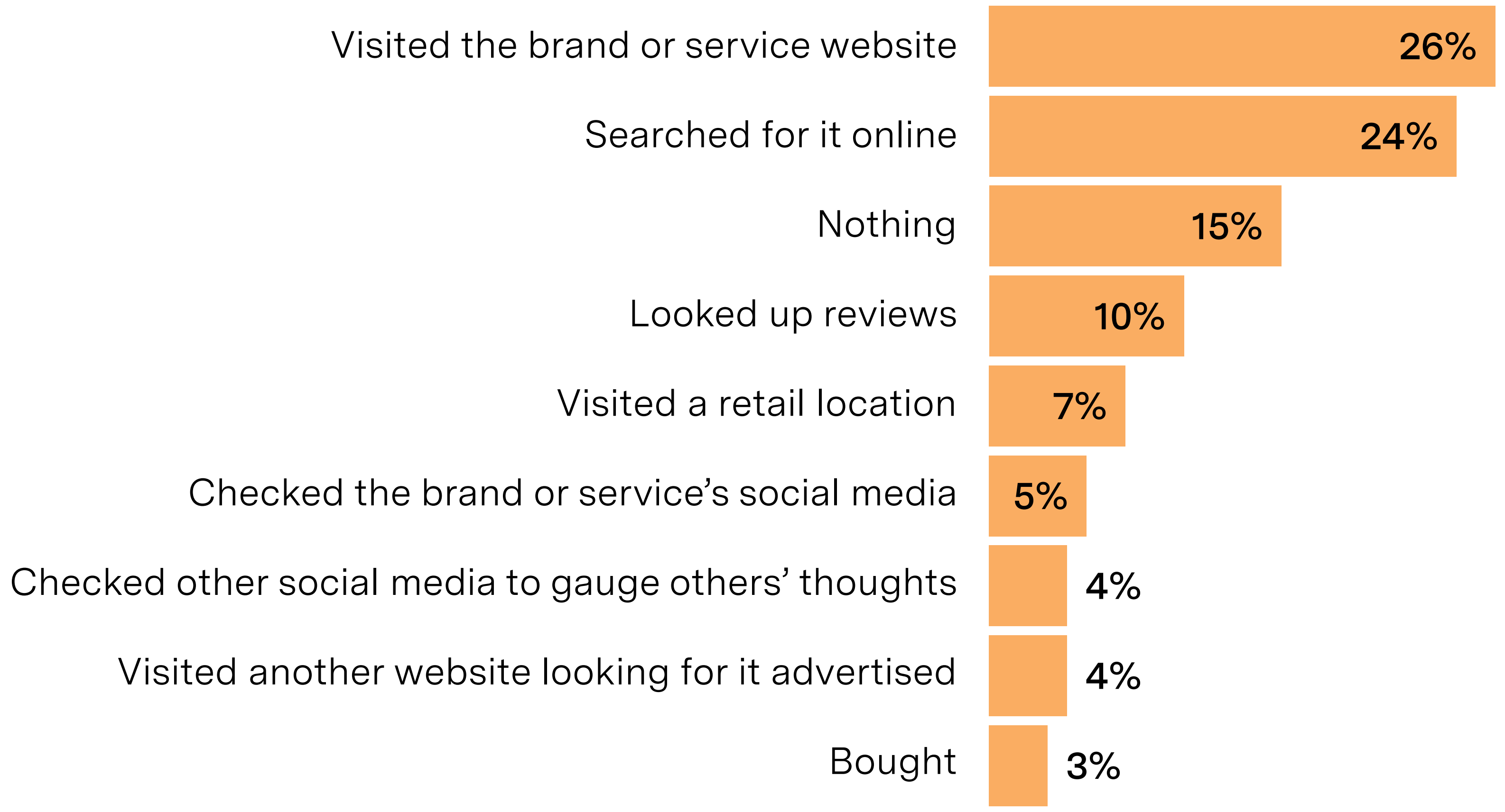
35%	Promotions from products/ services I already have
28%	Promotions from products/ services I don't already have
15%	Newsletters or letters
13%	Announcement of a new products/service
9%	Catalog showcasing products/services

eCommerce

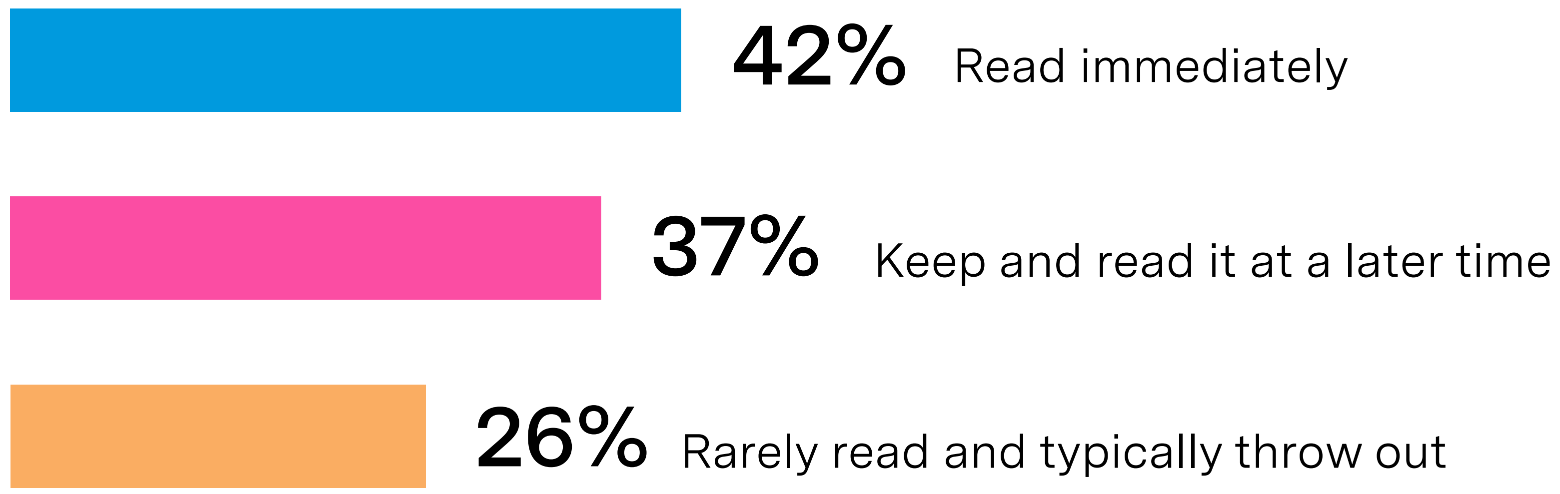
MOST LIKELY READ FORMATS

37%	35%	35%	31%
Catalogs/ Magazines	Brochures	Postcards	Letters and envelopes

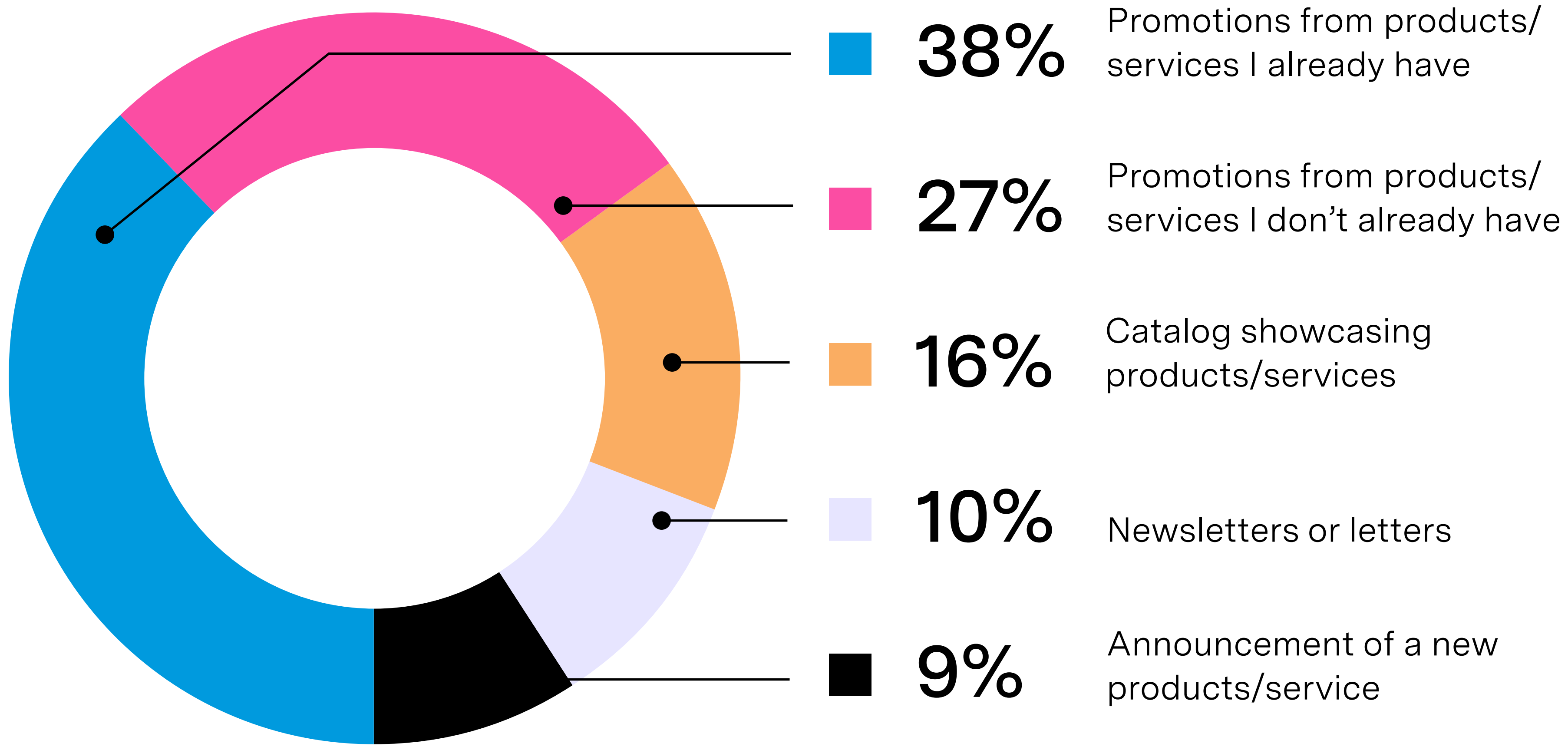
WAYS TO LEARN MORE



79% read direct mail immediately and/or save it to read later.



MOST LIKELY READ FROM A CURRENTLY USED BRAND

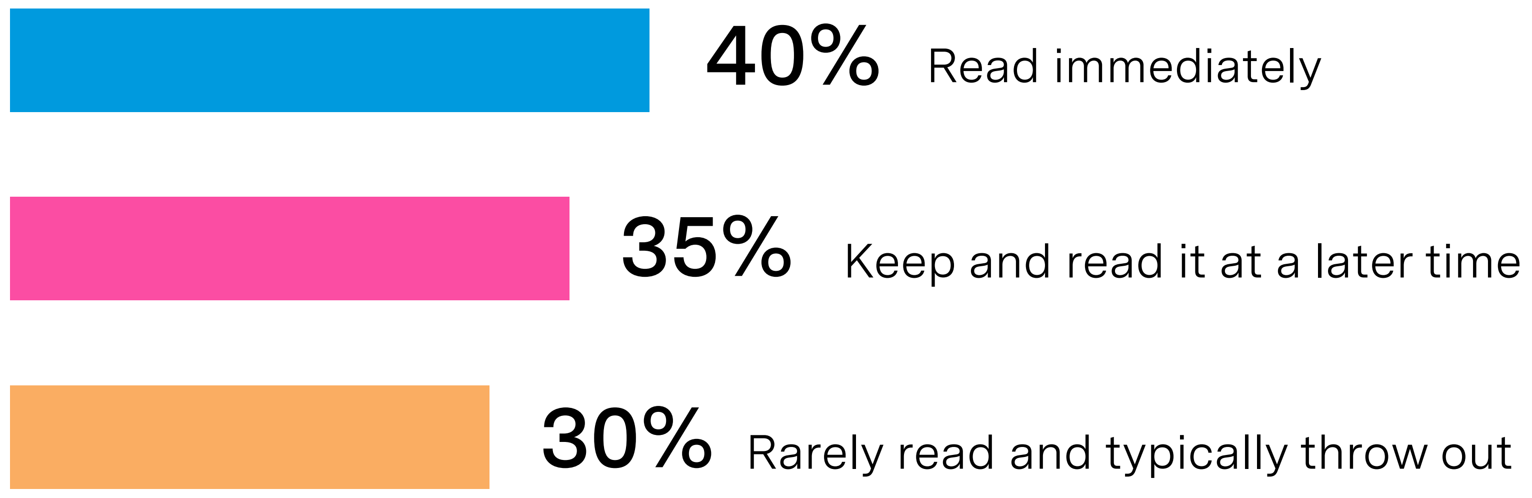


Insurance

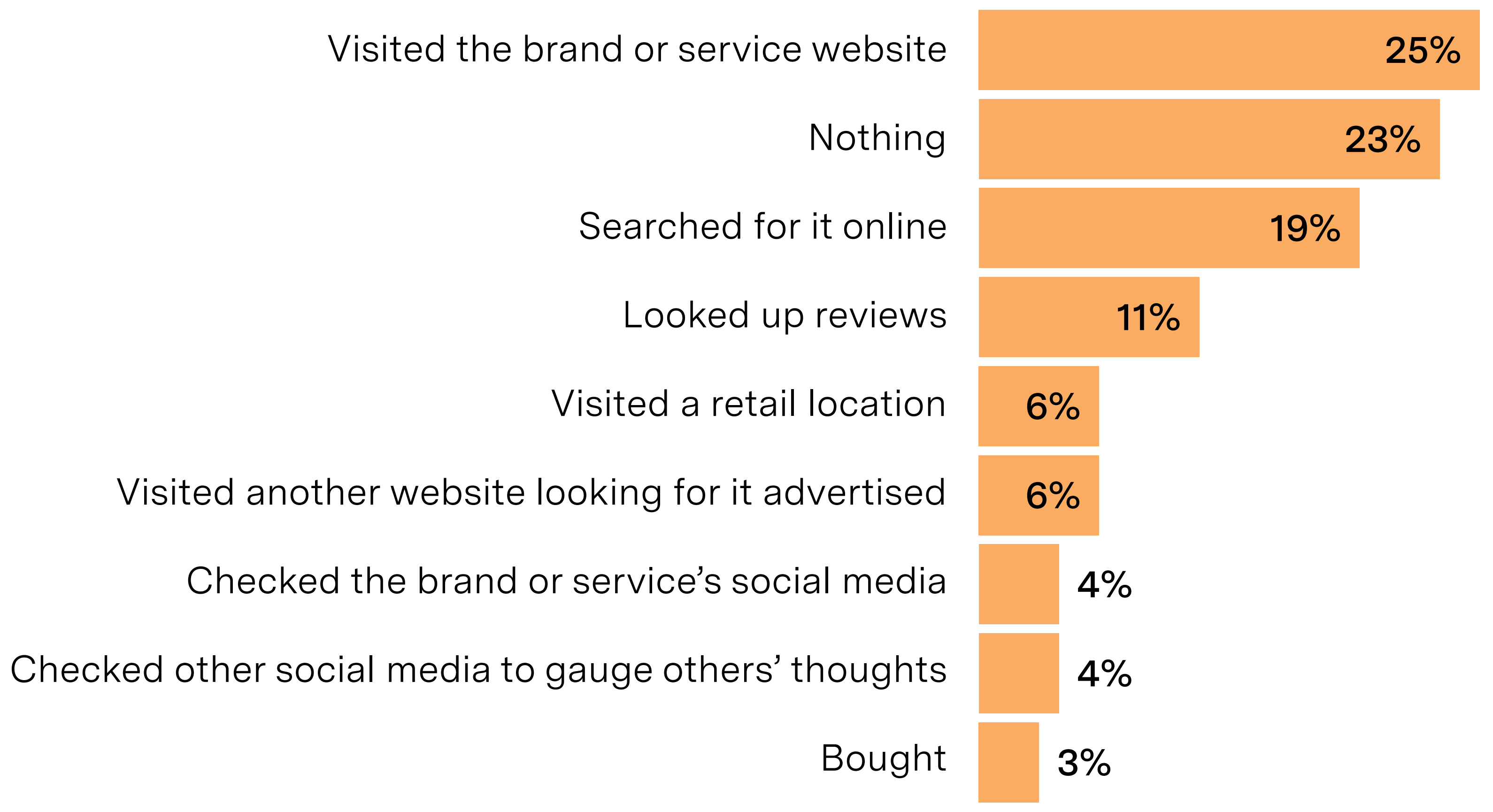
MOST LIKELY READ FORMATS

44%	32%	30%	15%
Letters and envelopes	Postcards	Brochures	Catalogs/ Magazines

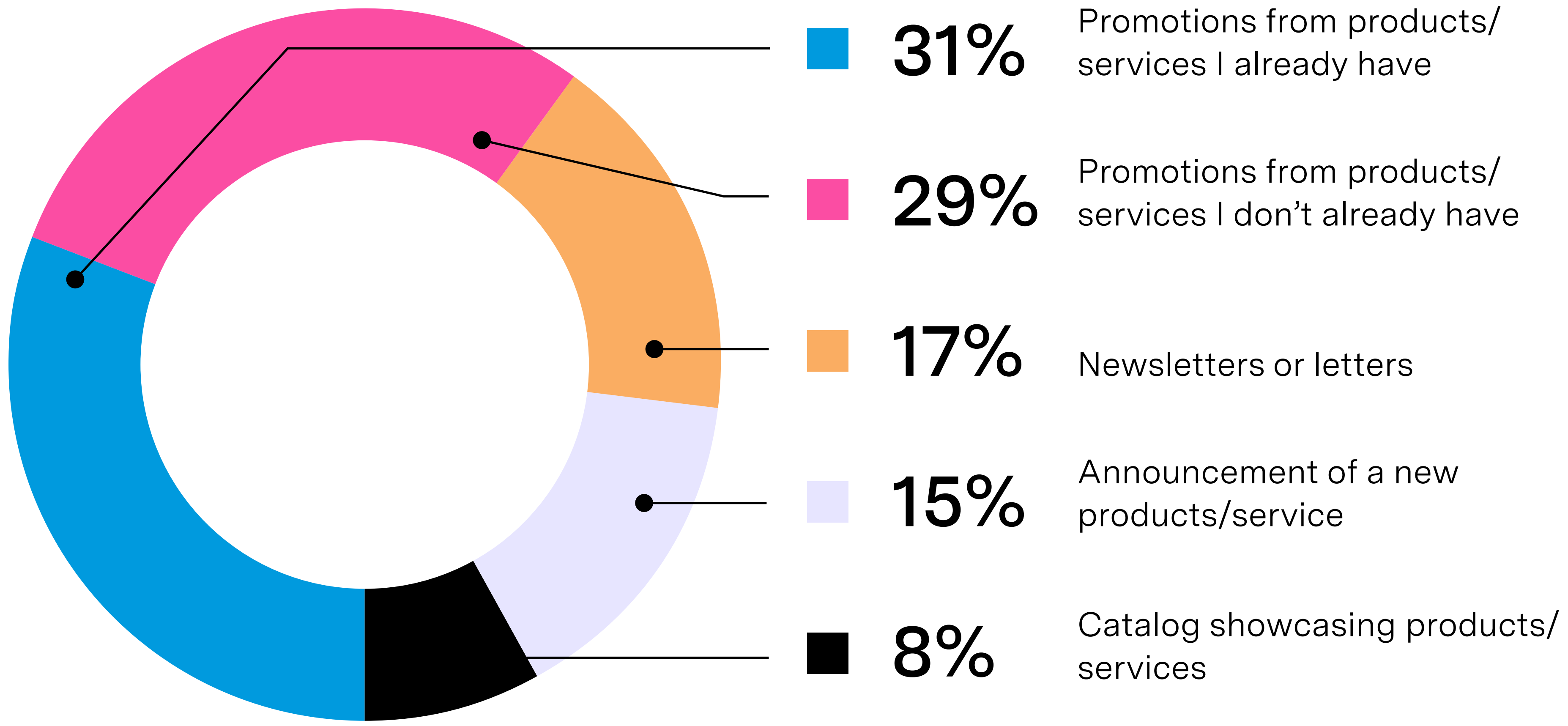
75% read direct mail immediately and/or save it to read later.



WAYS TO LEARN MORE



MOST LIKELY READ FROM A CURRENTLY USED BRAND



N=789

Demographic *insights*

Ages 18-34

PREFERRED BUSINESSES TO RECEIVE DIRECT MAIL FROM

51%
Local business

40%
Healthcare

38%
Banks/Financial Services

DIRECT MAIL ATTITUDES

57%
I expect direct mail I receive from brands will be personalized for me in some way

51%
Receiving direct mail from a brand feels more important than receiving an email from a brand

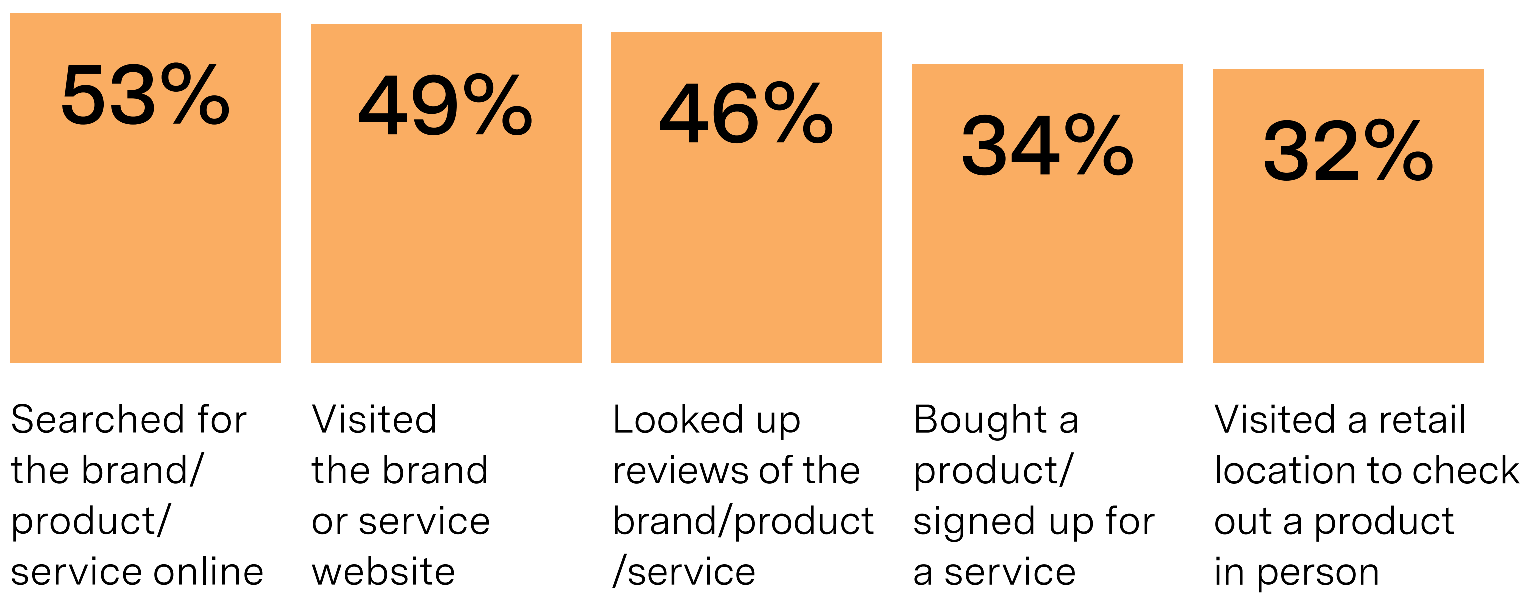
49%
It is important to me that brands interact with me beyond the digital space

48%
Receiving direct mail from a brand feels special

45%
Direct mail is an important way for brands to build relationships with me

44%
I am often introduced to new brands via direct mail

TOP ACTIONS TAKEN



65% reported they read direct mail the same day they bring it inside their residence

36% have opted in to paperless statements for every brand that offers it

Ages 35-54

PREFERRED BUSINESSES TO RECEIVE DIRECT MAIL FROM

54%
Local business

54%
Brick-and-mortar retailer

37%
Healthcare

DIRECT MAIL ATTITUDES

60%
I expect direct mail I receive from brands will be personalized for me in some way

50%
Receiving direct mail from a brand feels more important than receiving an email from a brand

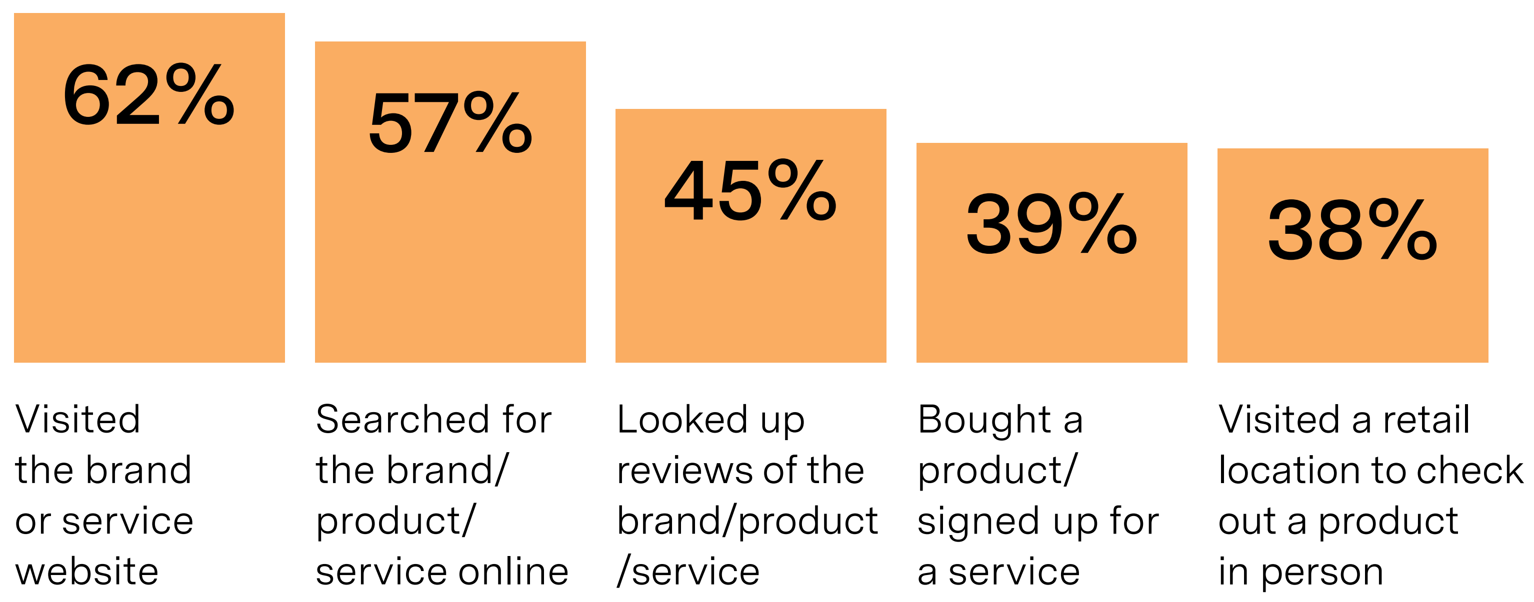
46%
It is important to me that brands interact with me beyond the digital space

46%
Receiving direct mail from a brand feels special

52%
Direct mail is an important way for brands to build relationships with me

46%
I am often introduced to new brands via direct mail

TOP ACTIONS TAKEN DIRECT MAIL



70% reported they read direct mail the same day they bring it inside their residence

36% have opted in to paperless statements for every brand that offers it

Ages 55+

PREFERRED BUSINESSES TO RECEIVE DIRECT MAIL FROM

67%
Brick-and-mortar retailer

66%
Local Business

27%
Healthcare

DIRECT MAIL ATTITUDES

47%
I expect direct mail I receive from brands will be personalized for me in some way

41%
Receiving direct mail from a brand feels more important than receiving an email from a brand

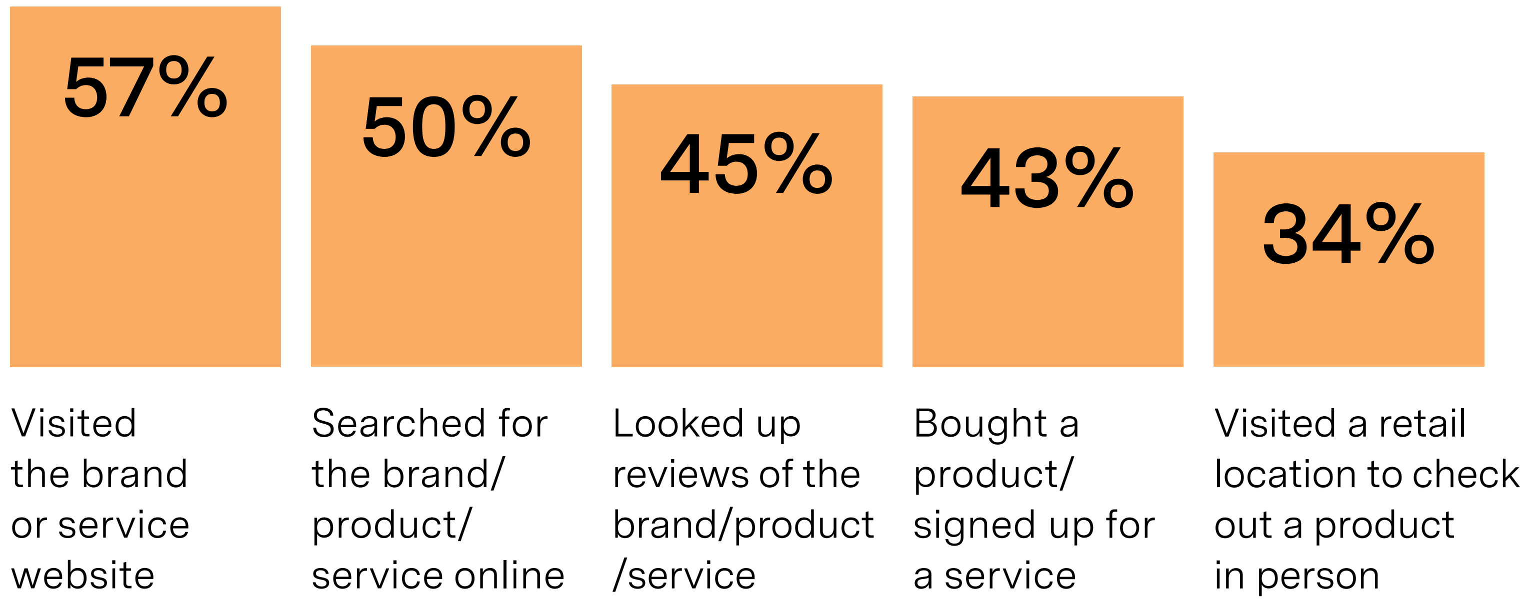
41%
It is important to me that brands interact with me beyond the digital space

30%
Receiving direct mail from a brand feels special

48%
Direct mail is an important way for brands to build relationships with me

52%
I am often introduced to new brands via direct mail

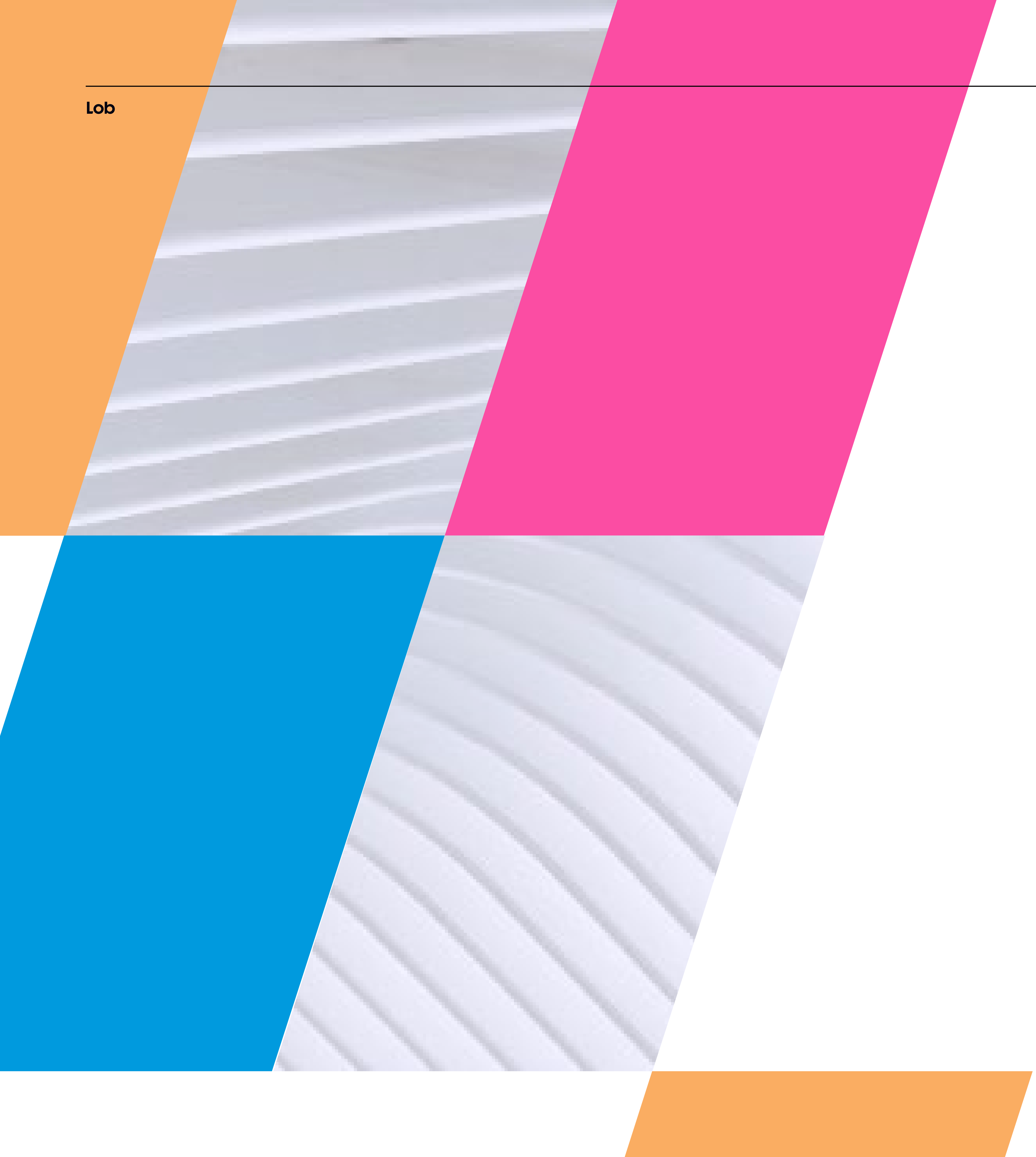
TOP ACTIONS TAKEN DIRECT MAIL



78% reported they read direct mail the same day they bring it inside their residence

27% have opted in to paperless statements for every brand that offers it

N=722



Conclusion

The State of Direct Mail Consumer Insights Report reveals that direct mail is relevant and effective in driving consumer engagement, building relationships, and motivating action. By leveraging personalization and consumer data, marketers can create intelligent direct mail campaigns that cut through the noise of digital communication and resonate with consumers.

As marketers seek to combat digital fatigue and improve customer acquisition and retention strategies, intelligent direct mail has emerged as a critical component of a fine-tuned omnichannel approach. By engaging consumers at every stage of their journey with relevant content and offers, brands drive business results and satisfy consumer needs.

74%

of marketers agree that direct mail provides the best ROI of any channel they use.

To stay ahead of the curve and tap into the power of intelligent direct mail, join the 12,000 brands already using Lob. Read the 2023 State of Direct Mail to discover the latest insights and strategies for leveraging this channel to drive success.

Request a Demo

ABOUT LOB

Lob's mission is to connect the world, one mailbox at a time.

Lob is the only direct mail automation platform for the digital age. Lob's platform automates the direct mail execution process for enterprises at any scale - from creation, printing, postage, delivery, and sustainability with end-to-end analytics and campaign attribution. Over 12,000 businesses trust Lob to transform their direct mail into intelligent mail.

Founded in 2013 and based in San Francisco, Lob is venture-backed by Y Combinator, Polaris Partners, Floodgate, and First Round Capital.

Find out more about Lob's automated direct mail marketing at Lob.com.

ABOUT COMPREMEDIA

Comperemedia is an industry-leading competitive marketing intelligence agency serving the United States and Canada. A Mintel Company, Comperemedia provides solutions for decision-makers in the marketing industry with world-class marketing intelligence technology, expert insights, and custom consulting services. Visit welcome.comperemedia.com for more information.

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