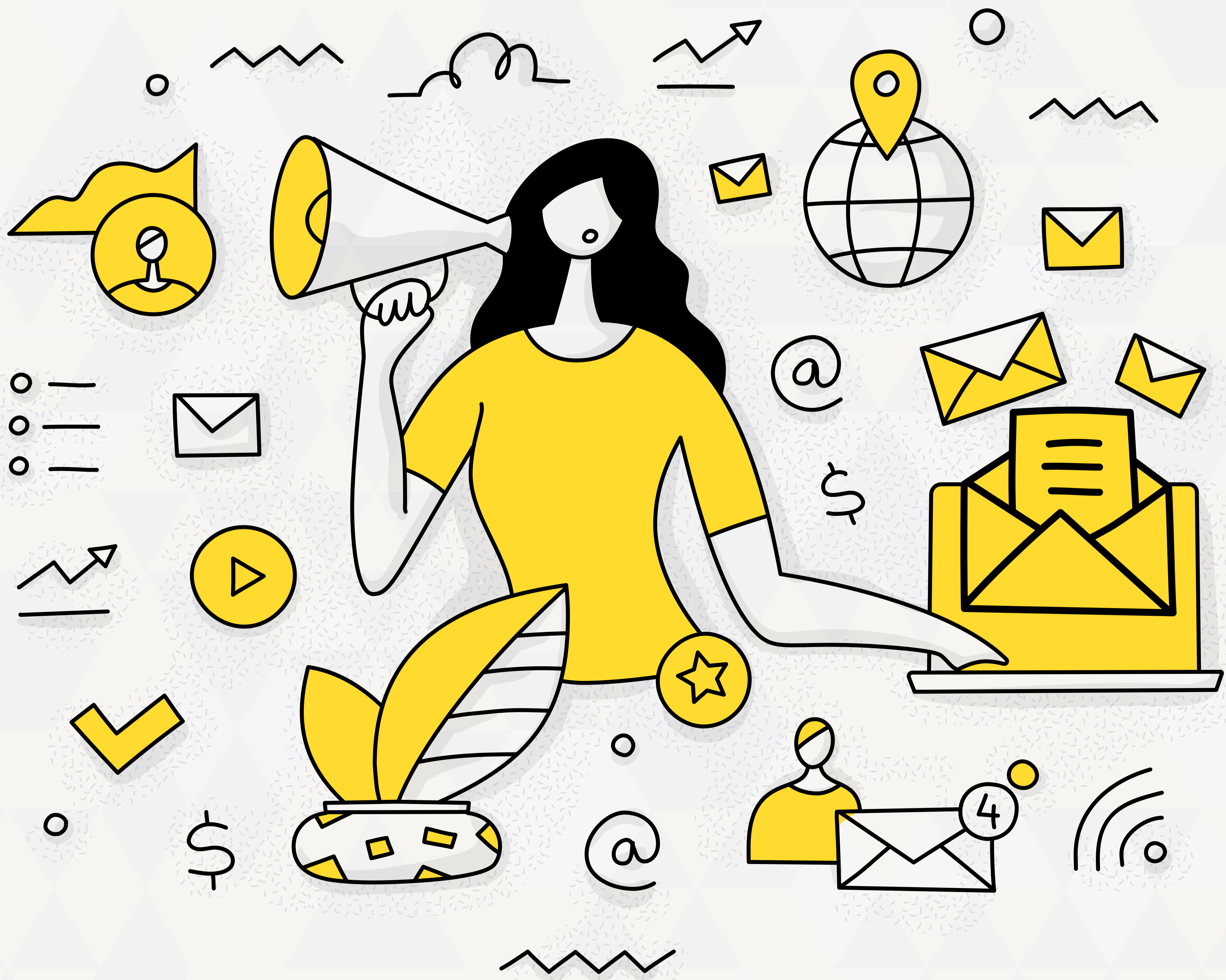


A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO  
**BENEVOLENT EMAIL MARKETING**  
**DURING THE COVID-19 GLOBAL CRISIS**





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## Introduction

The emergence of COVID-19 crisis has changed the way the wheels of this world rolled. The world is working remotely, communication is important, and as we rely heavily on digital communication, emails are playing a crucial role during these times of Coronavirus pandemic. Therefore, as a marketer it is essential for you to take a look at your email marketing strategy and recalibrate it considering the current consumption pattern and shopping habits of the customers.

In view of the uncertainty owing to the crisis, you should make sure that your emails reflect empathy, compassion, and humanity.

Let's start with some intriguing facts and figures on how email marketing metrics have changed in the recent times.



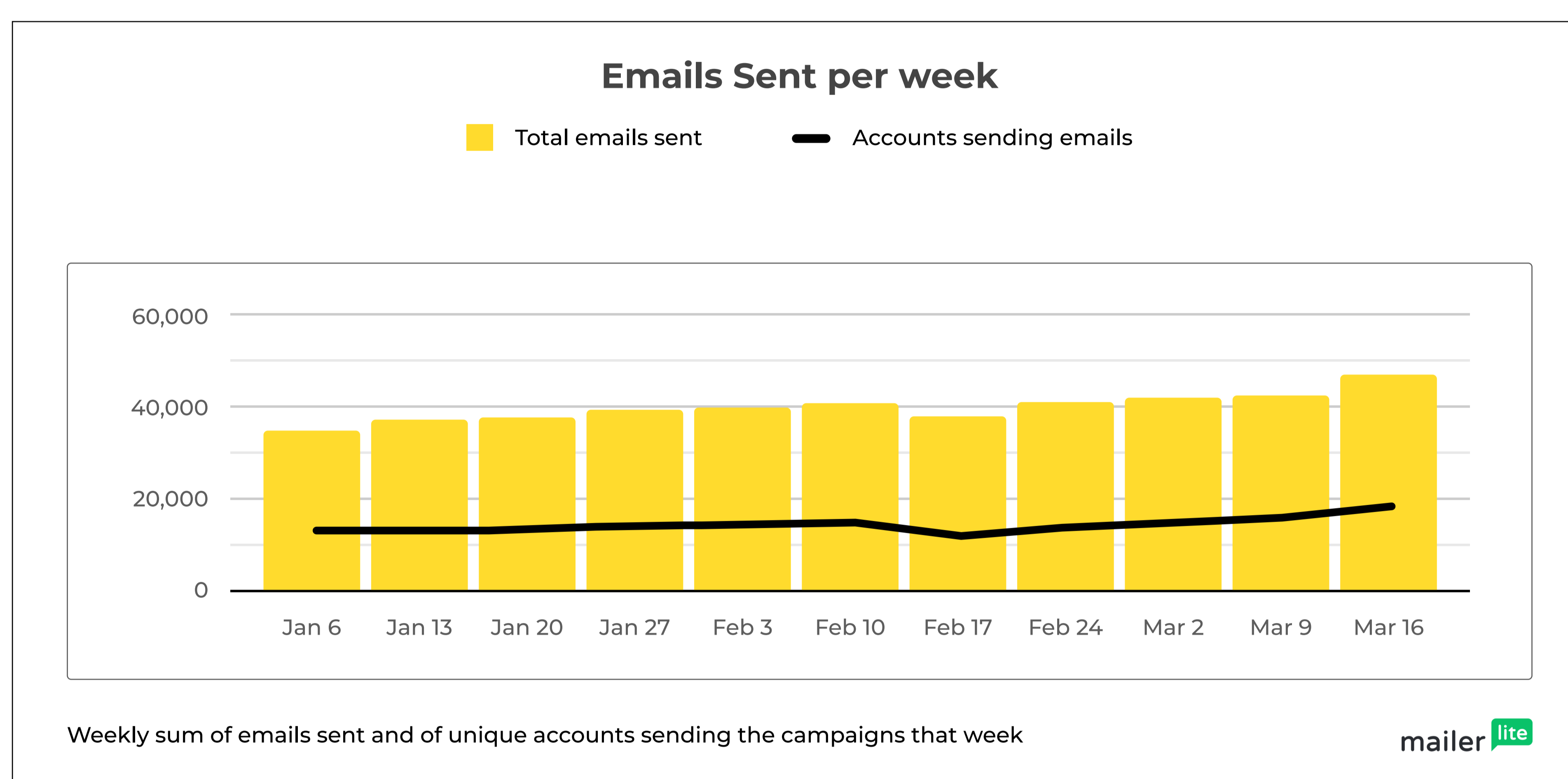




# Analyzing the effect of the pandemic on the world of email marketing

Email is thriving in the current times as it is one of the most convenient ways to reach the customers.

A report suggests that email sending volume has increased by 19% in March, as compared to January. Moreover, the number of accounts sending emails increased by 18%. These facts make it evident that email marketing volumes have increased and brands are constantly striving to connect with their customers.

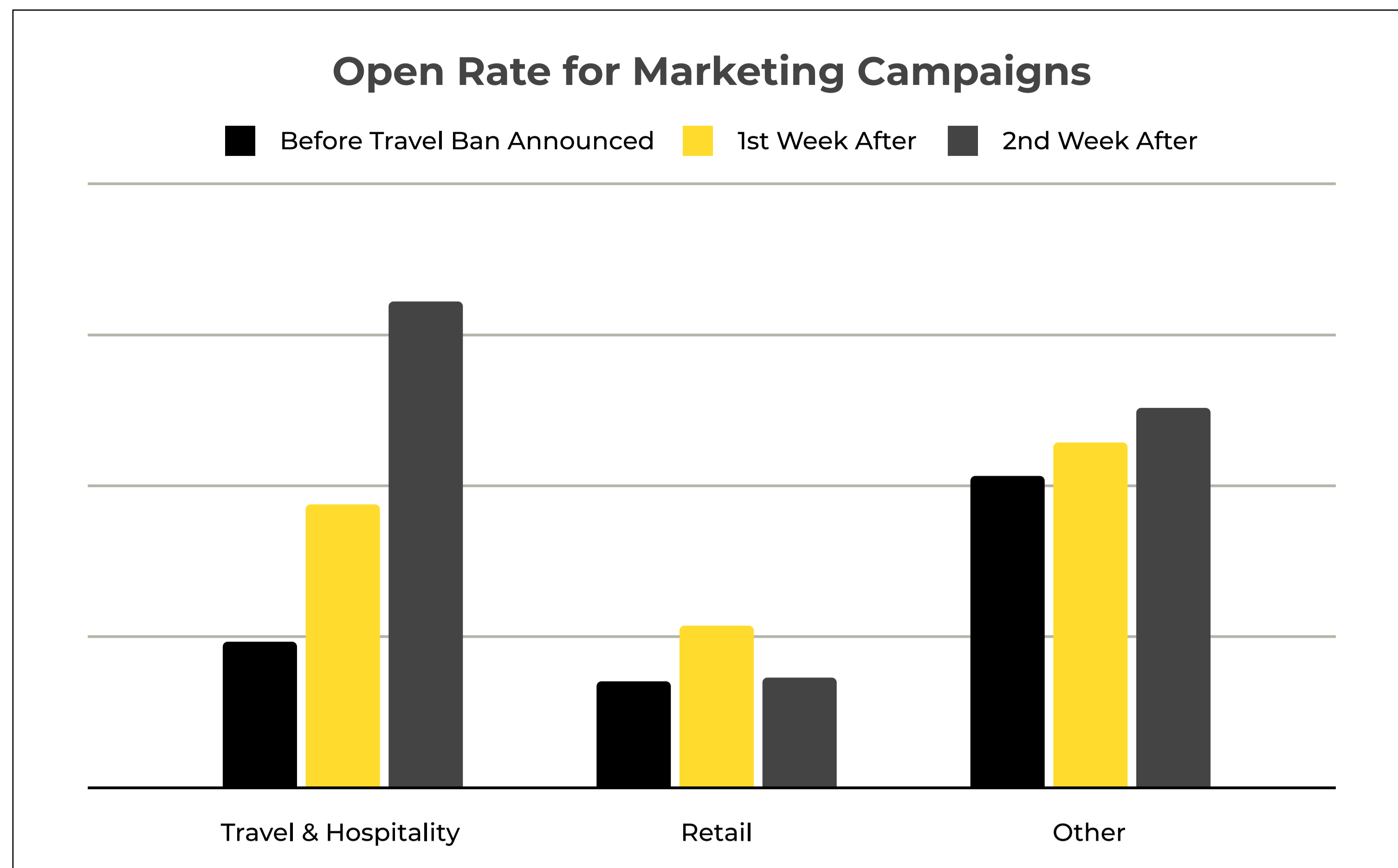


Message Gears also conducted a study to find that except for travel and hospitality, email marketing volume remains high in most industries.

Retail industry continues to see a rise in consumer demands. In addition to strong email volume, subscriber engagement is also at an all-time high for them without any significant unsubscribes.

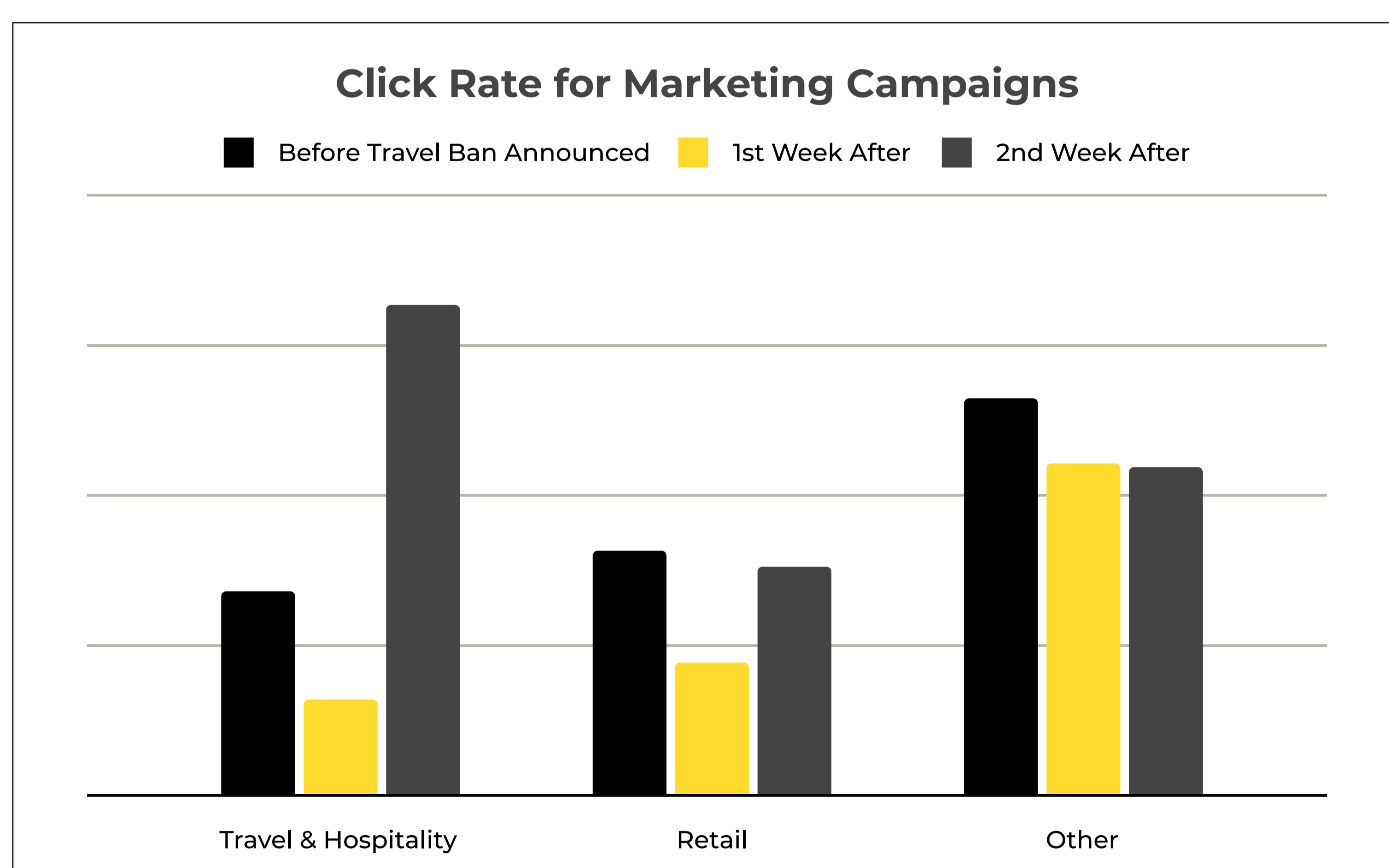
## EMAIL OPEN RATES

- If we are to talk about open rates for marketing campaigns before the announcement of travel ban, first week after the ban, and following the second week, it has steadily increased for the travel and hospitality sector and other industries along with a rise in spam complaints.
- For the retail industry, the open rate is almost the same before the travel ban was announced and after the second week. It remained slightly high in the first week after the ban was imposed.



## EMAIL CLICK RATE

- The click rate has significantly increased after two weeks of the travel ban for the travel and hospitality industry.
- For the retail industry, it has remained the same before the travel ban and two weeks after it. In the first week after the ban was imposed, it was a bit lower.

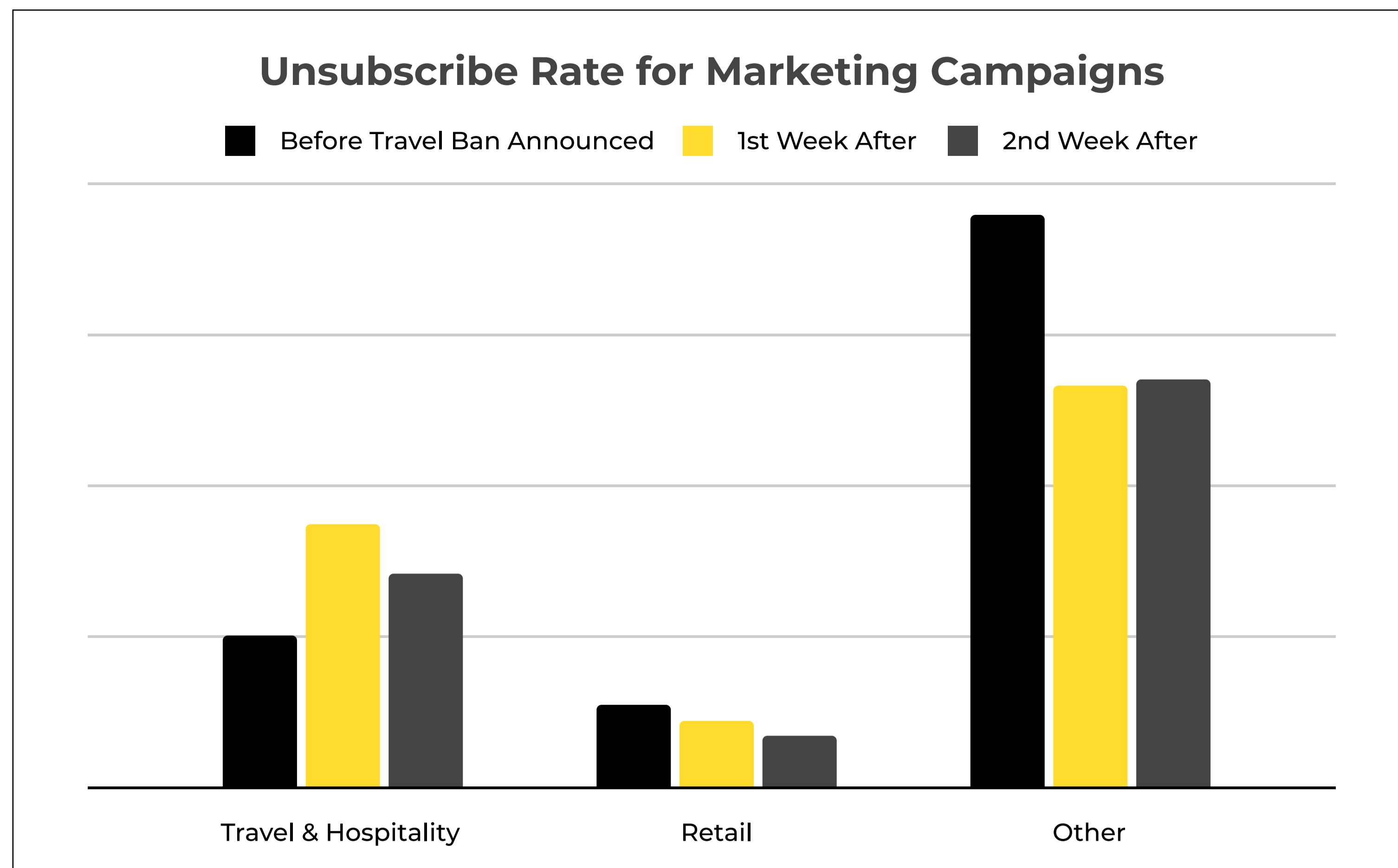


## UNSUBSCRIBE RATE AND SPAM COMPLAINTS

Unsubscribe rate is higher for the travel and hospitality industry and other industries while it is the lowest for the retail industry. It almost doubled for the travel industry because recipients are not looking forward to any travel plans currently. Contrary to that, recipients in the retail or ecommerce industry are more open to receiving emails in the time of self-quarantine.

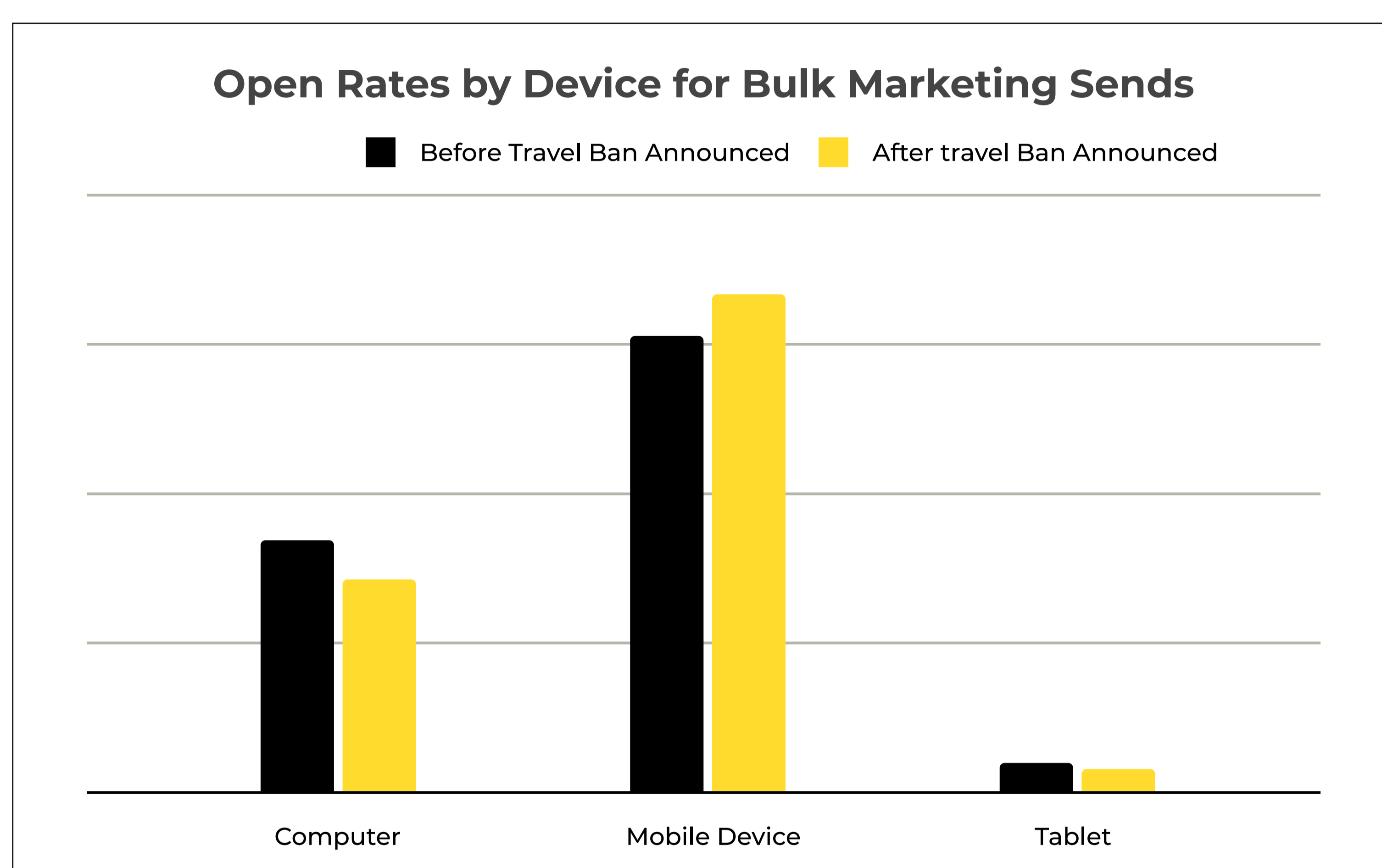
According to Marketing Charts, COVID-19 related emails are less likely to get reported as spam but they are driving more complaints. This is primarily because companies are sending updates to their entire databases which invariably comprises unengaged and disinterested subscribers.



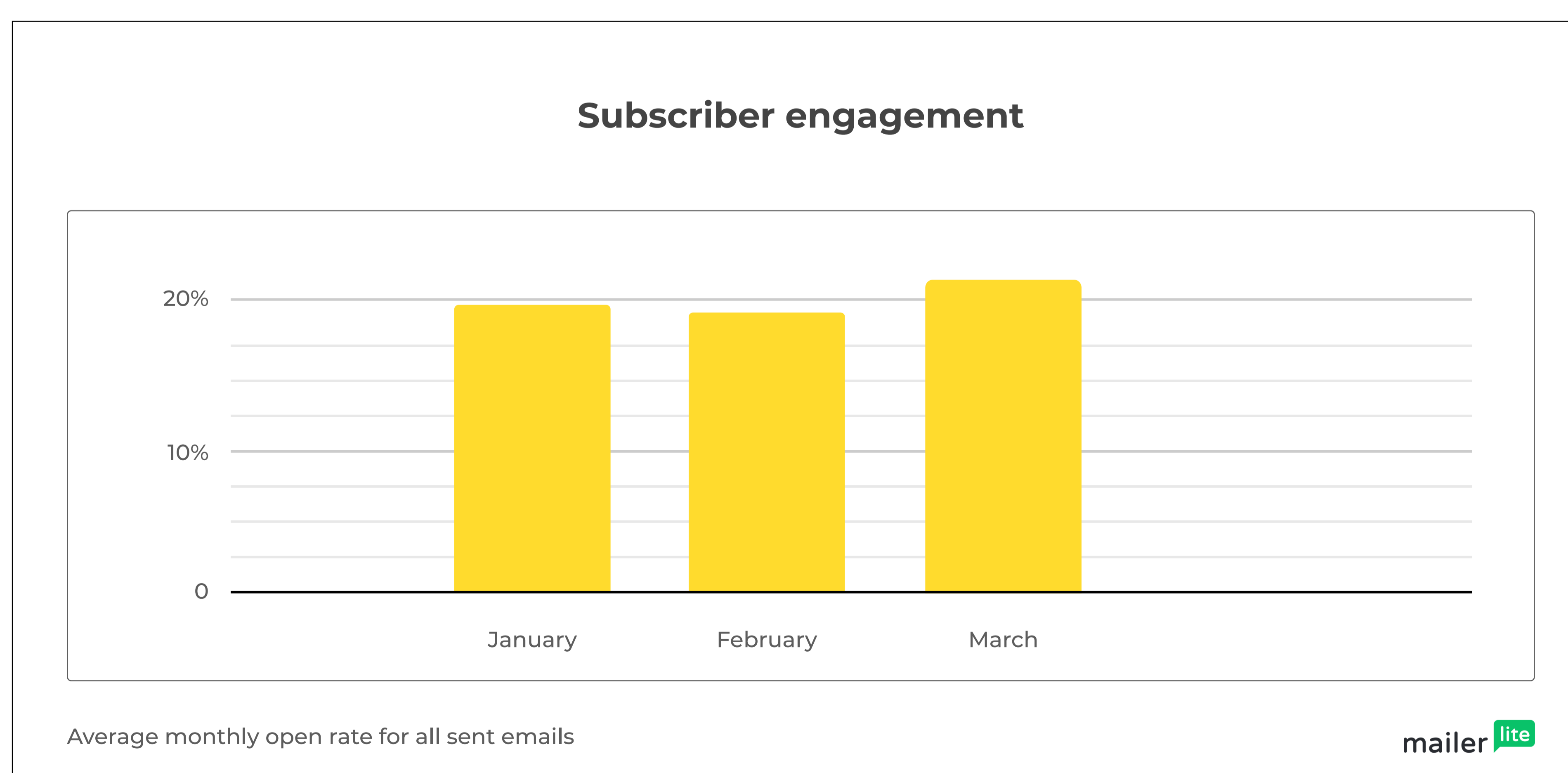


Let's talk about emails and their correlation with devices.

Maximum emails are being opened on mobile devices, followed by computers, another indication why creating responsive emails is a must.

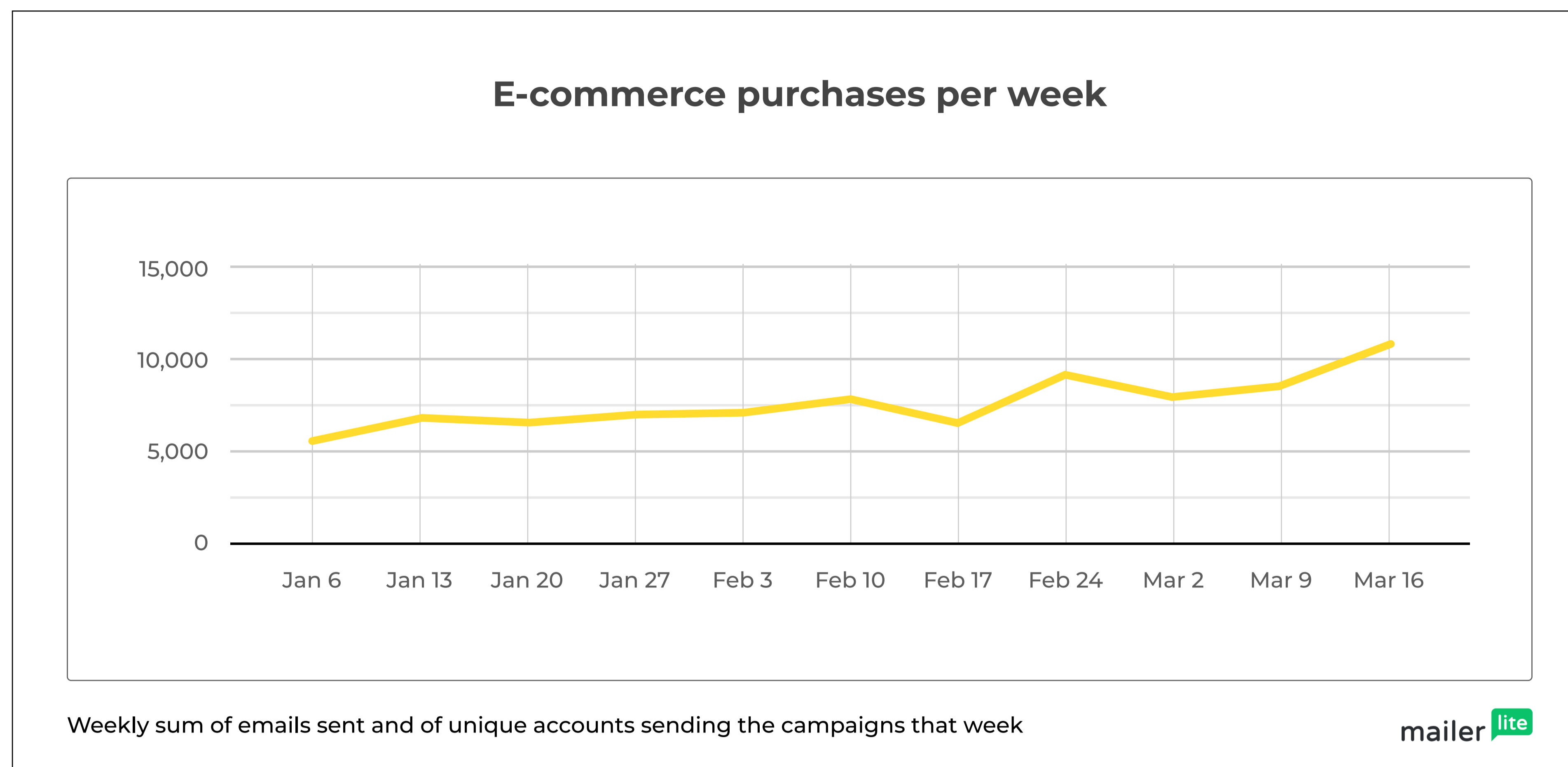


Mailerlite study backs the above research. The average open rate rose from 17.04% in February to 18.97% in March. The click rate increased to 2.72% in March while it was 2.57% in February.

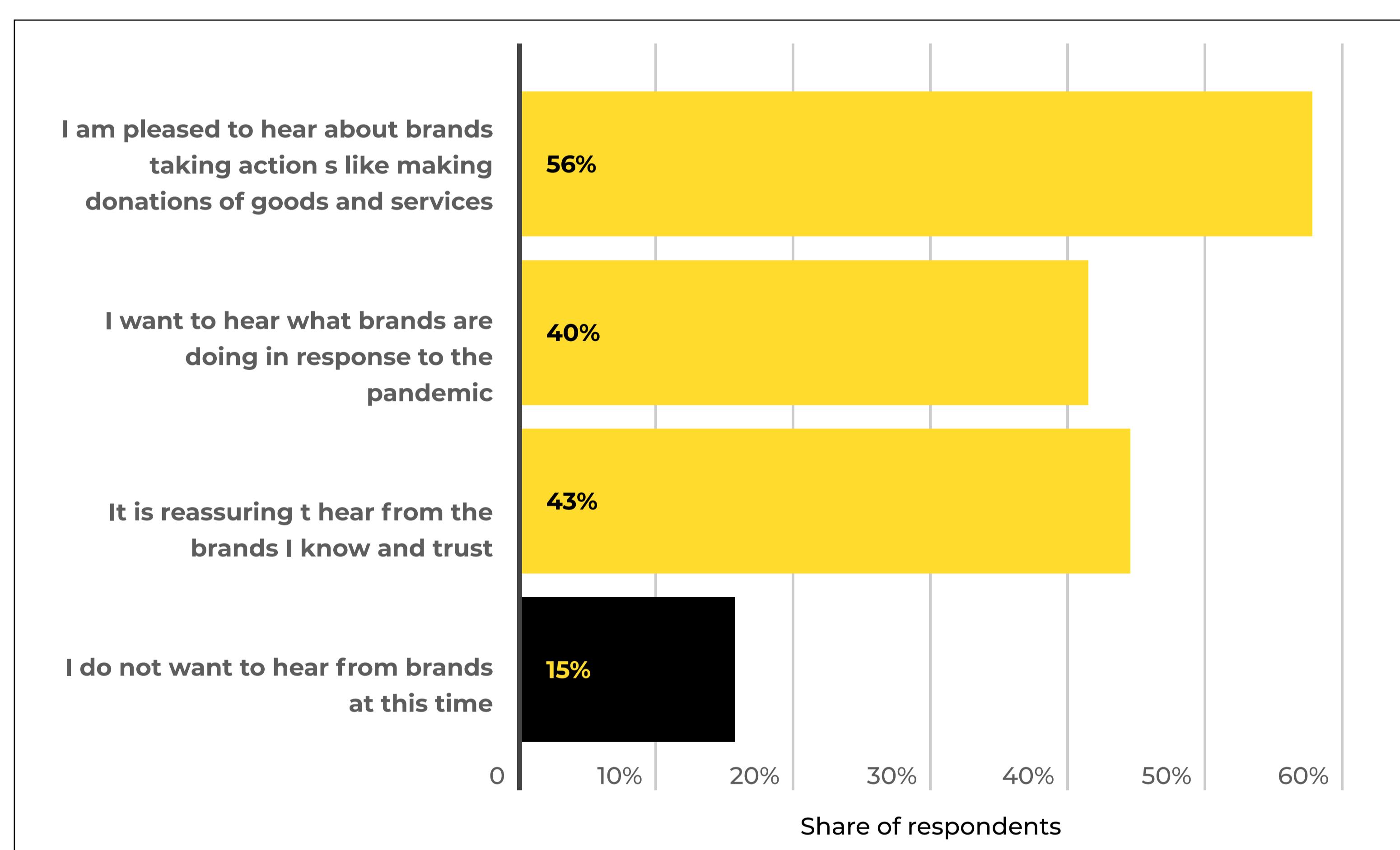


It has been noticed that with steady increase in the sending volume and email engagement, ecommerce purchases also increased through the emails.

Ecommerce purchases have increased to 12,154 from 6,179 which implies a staggering increase of 96.7%.



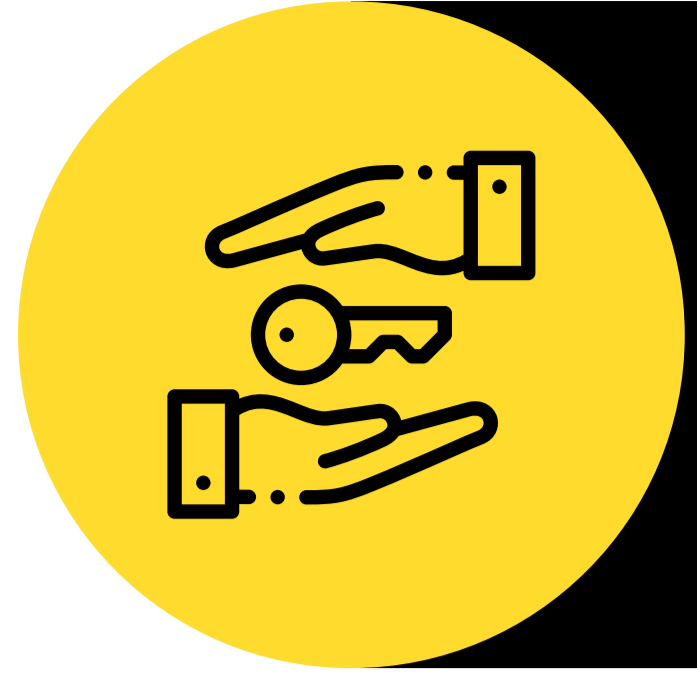
An important study in such times is to ask people whether they want to hear from brands at this time. It is interesting to know that Statista found that 56% of the respondents are pleased to know how brands are taking actions like donating goods and services. Only 15% expressed disapproval for receiving emails.



Talking about the “best” day and time to send emails, the current situation has changed these benchmarks. While previously, it was believed that early Tuesday morning or lunch time or commute hours were the ideal times to send emails, marketers will now have to look for new patterns by closely monitoring the performance of their email campaigns.

All in all, we can conclude that users are open to receiving messages relevant to them that would help them keep up with the changing times.





## Key considerations of email marketing during a crisis

It's for the first time in our lifetime that we are facing a pandemic of this magnitude and it is natural for marketers to be unsure about what emails you should be sending and what you should avoid during these uncertain times. Here's a lowdown:

### BEST PRACTICES EVERY EMAIL MARKETER SHOULD FOLLOW

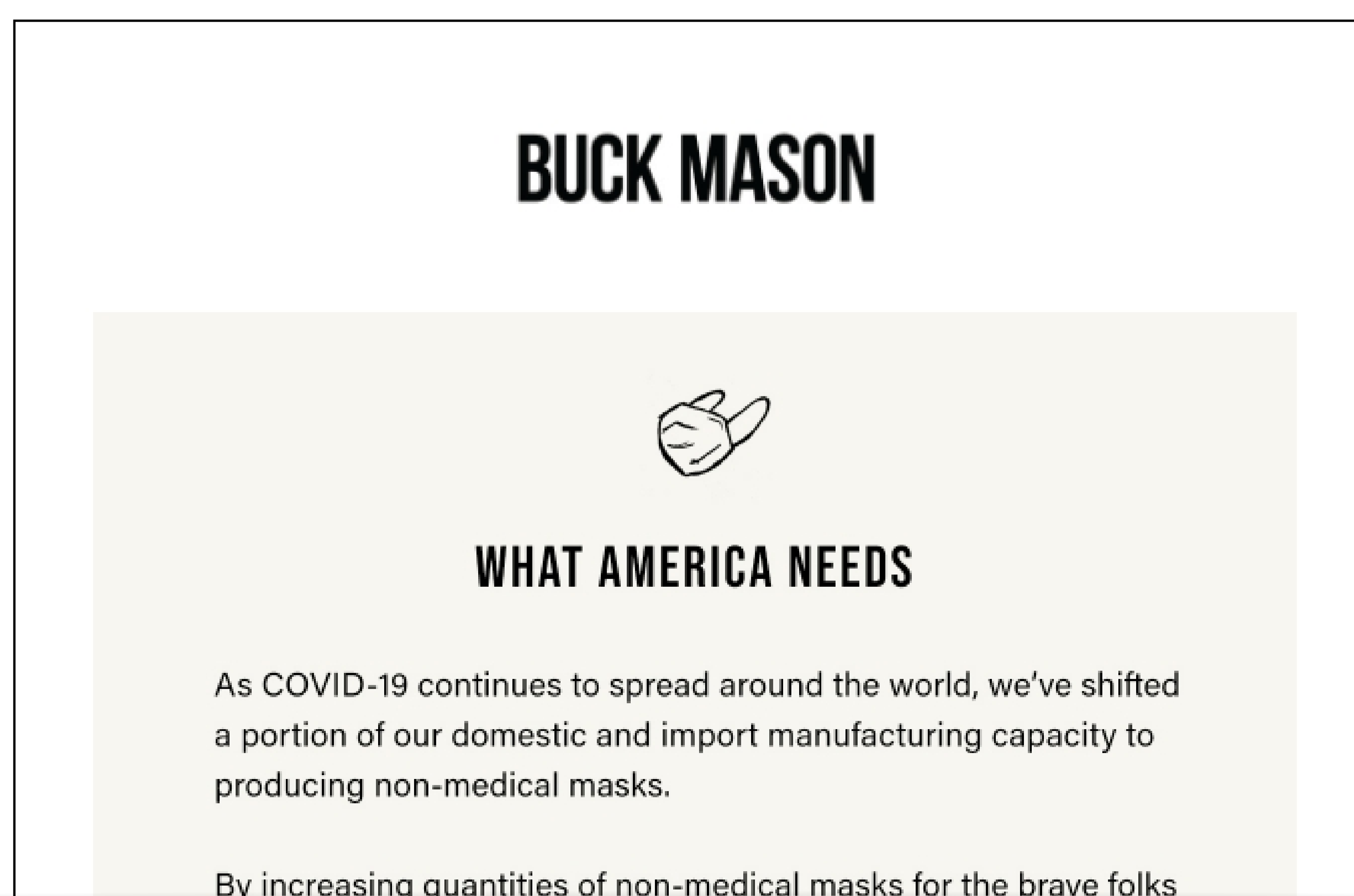
Although your email marketing is generally about sales, you should take a different approach during times of crisis.

Take a look at these best practices that would help you to send more humane emails that connect with your subscribers.

#### 1 Be empathetic

As obvious as this may seem, marketers often miss out on this aspect. Show your subscribers that you care. Do away with the robotic tone and humanize your emails to make it look more like a conversation rather than a formal message. Try to put yourself in the shoes of the subscriber before writing an email. Empathy will go a long way in building stronger relationships and customer loyalty, which will eventually drive your business growth.

Take a look at this email by Buck Mason. Their email communicates to the subscribers how they are trying to support the community by producing non-medical masks to curb the pandemic.



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## **2 Act on time**

Your subscribers might be looking forward to hearing from you in this trying time. Hence, it is imperative to communicate important information as soon as you can. Make your subscribers feel that you care about them and are serious about the entire situation.

## **3 Let your subscribers know what you are doing to fight against the pandemic**

Enlighten your subscribers about the support that you are providing to your community in view of the global crisis. It could be an offer, a donation drive, or simply the steps you are taking for the protection of your customers and employees.

Here are some questions that can help you figure out what you can send to your subscribers.

- a. Have you changed your operations time?
- b. What steps have you taken to ensure cleanliness and hygiene in your workplace?
- c. Has the crisis brought your customer services to a standstill?
- d. Should the subscriber expect any delay in the product delivery?
- e. Are there any alternative ways in which your customers can get in touch with you?
- f. Where can your prospects or customers find the information about how you are handling the crisis?

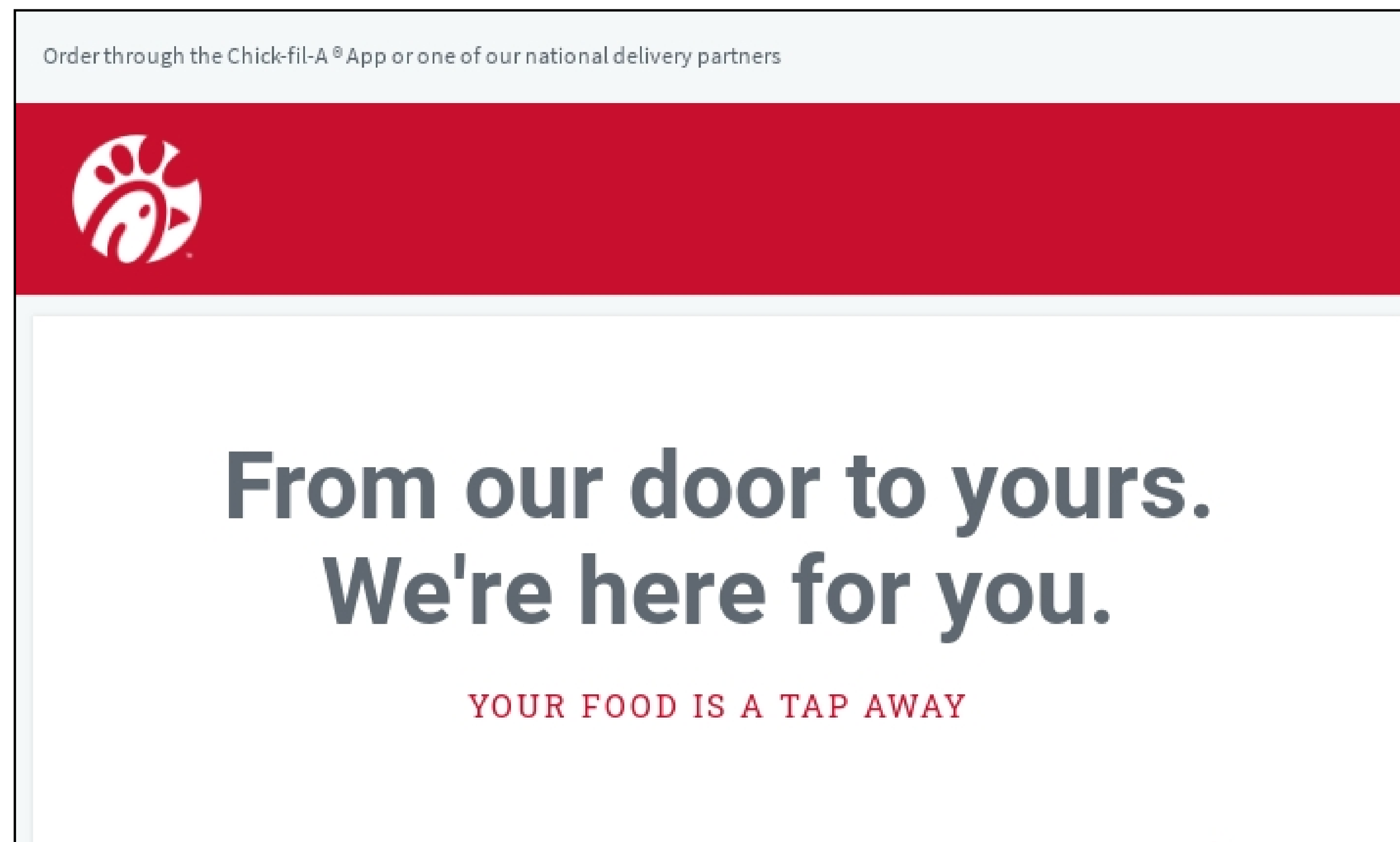
Your actions during such times will speak volumes about your business values and ethics. Your customers will appreciate your efforts, which will go a long way in bringing you business in the long run.

## **4 Send valuable content only**

Ask yourself - "What's in it for the subscriber" before sending any email. It is not advisable to send a COVID-19 email just because your competitors are doing so. Schedule an email only if you have anything important to say that would help the subscriber.

Considering the current scenario, you could send tips on working from home, remind the subscribers of the virtual services you provide, or share an update of shipping options or the safety protocols you are using.

In the email below by Chick-fil-A, they have informed their subscribers that they are expanding their delivery services through their App. The email also includes an actionable CTA that lets the recipient search for delivery options.



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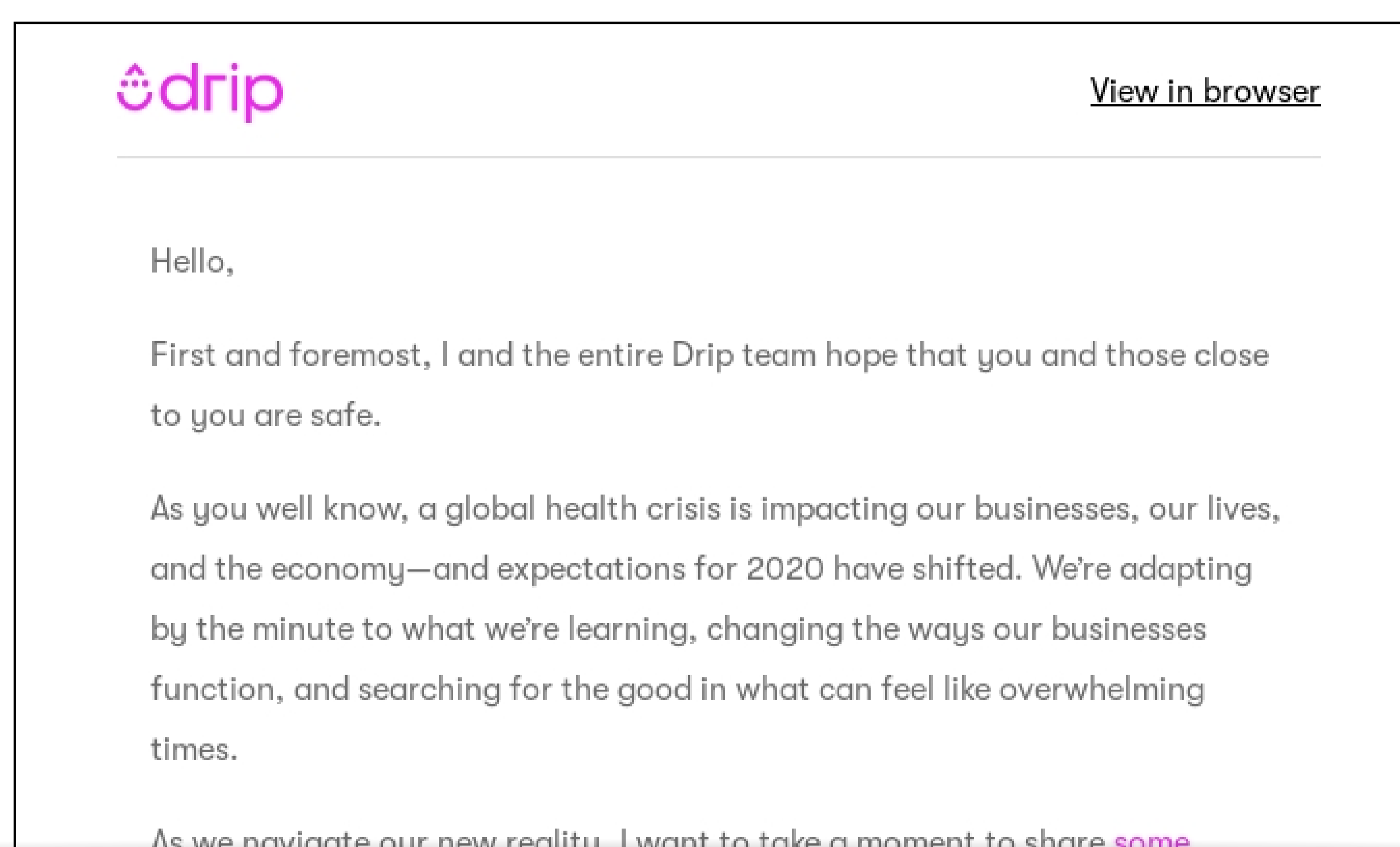
## 5 Make your emails concise and easily skimmable

COVID-19 emails in my inbox mostly look like a lengthy speech by the CEO or founder of the company and they all look the same.

So, what can you do to stand out and convey the message in a better way?

The key is to highlight key takeaways for the subscribers and break the email copy into easily readable chunks.

Check out this email by drip in which they have clearly divided the message into three points which give the subscriber a clear idea about their recommendations.



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Another example is of Burberry in which they have used the power of ample white space, keeping the email copy as concise as possible.



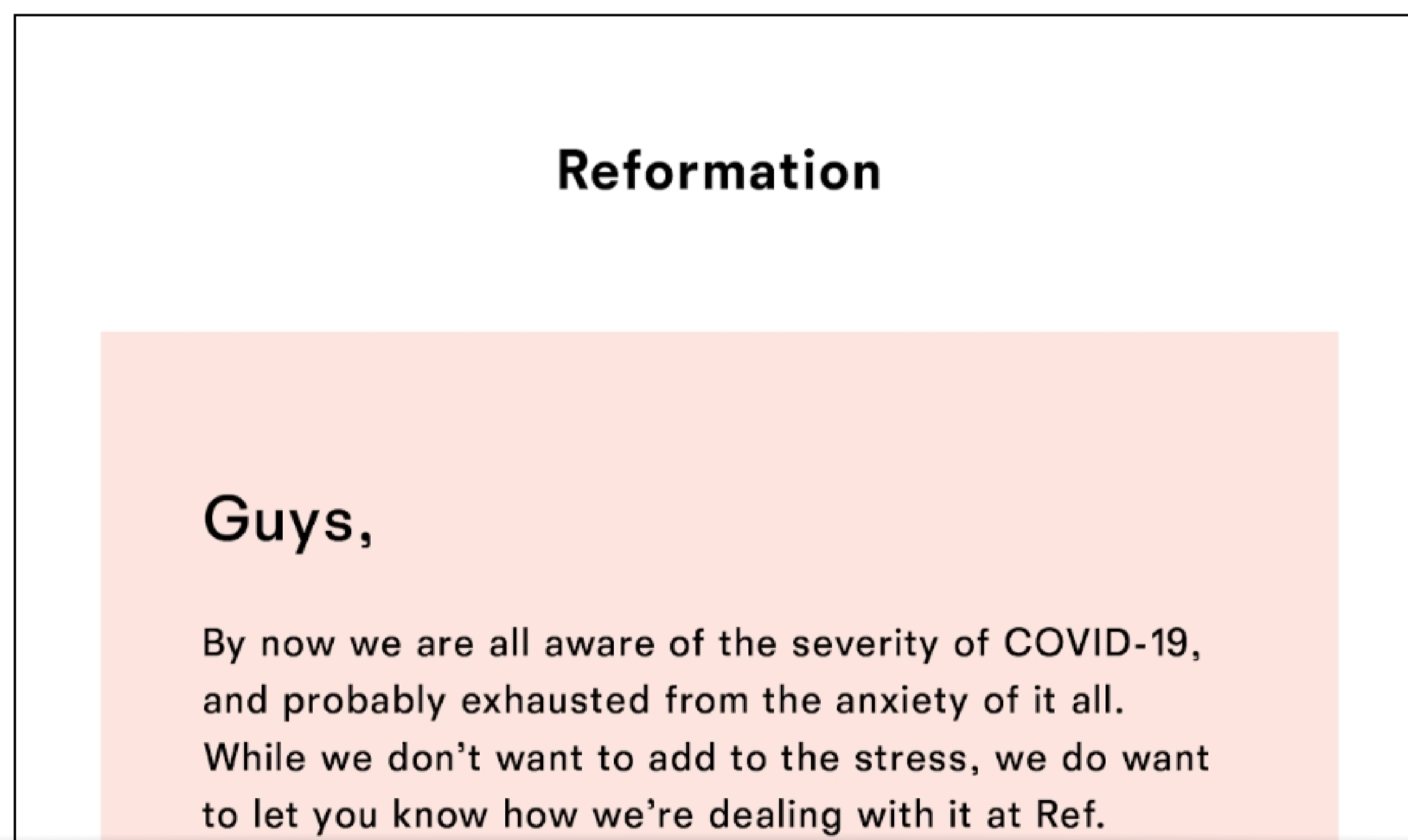


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## 6 Get feedback from the subscribers

In light of the current scenario, it is quite likely that your subscribers would not want to receive emails. They might be anxious and stressed because of health issues and financial burdens. Therefore, it would be a good idea to ask your subscribers about their preferences and allow them to take a break from your emails.

Take a look at this email from Reformation in which they have asked the subscribers whether they want to get email updates about the new collection launches and sustainability-related stuff.



## **7 Keep a close eye on the email metrics**

Whether it is the open rate, click-through rate, bounce rate, or unsubscribes, make sure you are tracking all these metrics closely. A sudden dip in open rate and click-through rate should be a cue that you need to work on your emails. If there's an increase in bounce rate, you should consider cleaning your email list and removing the invalid email addresses. Test your emails constantly and keep optimizing them according to the information retrieved through email analytics.

## **TIPS FOR SENDING EFFECTIVE EMAILS**

Having talked about the best practices, let's shift our focus to some tips to send emails that would enhance your subscriber engagement and make them look forward to receiving more from your end.

### **1 Segment your subscribers**

If you are an international brand operating in several geographical locations, you must monitor the situation in the countries you are functional in, and segment the subscribers accordingly. Give special consideration to subscribers in Italy, France, Spain, and the US as they are among the most severely affected ones. It is important to note that they might not be thinking about shopping at the moment.

Also, segment on the basis of past interaction with you. If the subscriber has not engaged with your content in the past 90 days, do not send them any emails. It would be prudent to re-engage with them once things get back to normal.

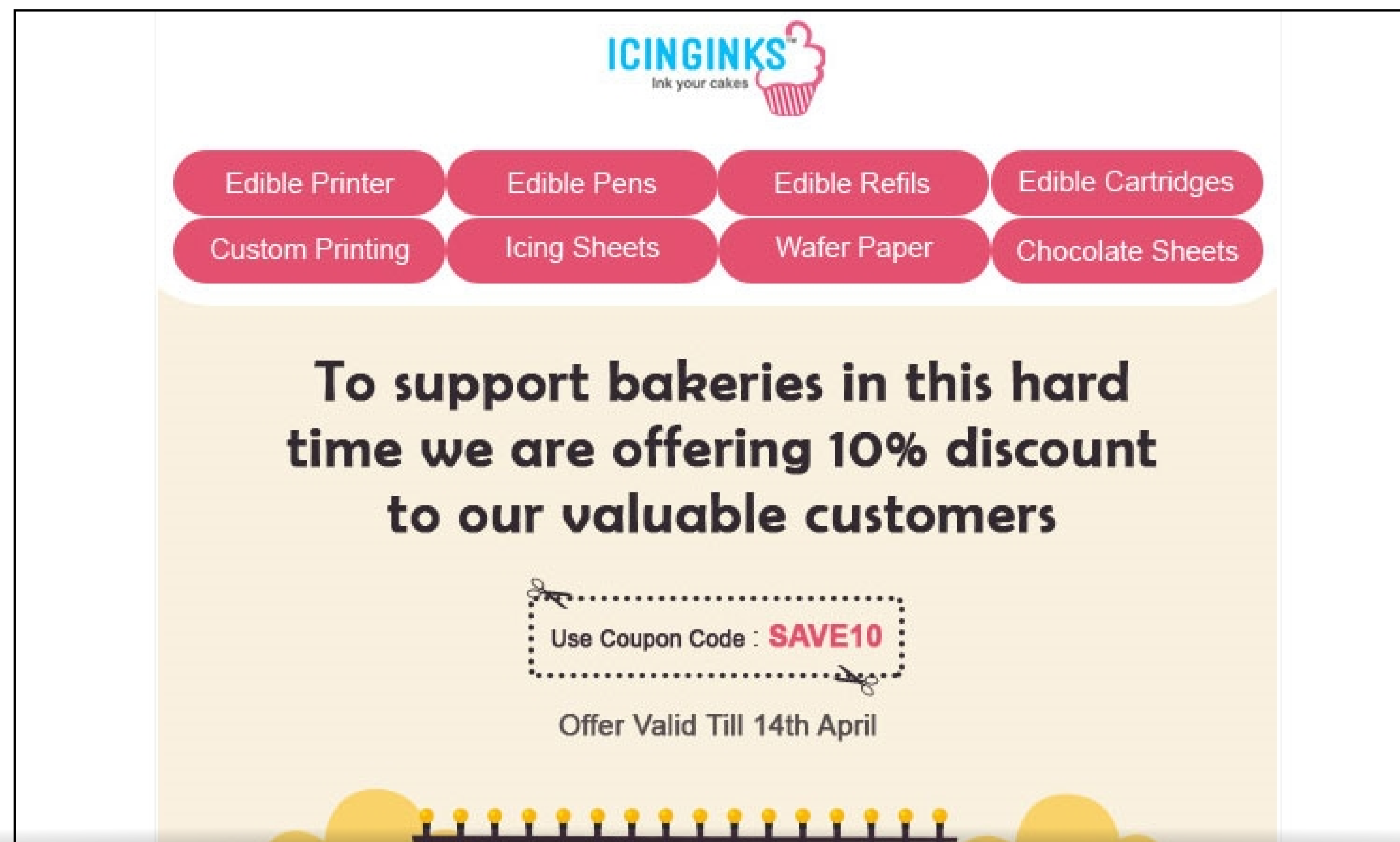
### **2 Try to bridge the gap for people**

As the Coronavirus pandemic continues to spread its tentacles across the world, it is of utmost importance to bridge the gap for people. They might be struggling to find products to sustain their life or business growth.

Icinginks has sent a nice email that informs the subscribers about their 10% discount offer to support bakeries and also lets them know about the safety measures they take at their stores and warehouse. Furthermore, it shares some tips to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection to ensure the wellbeing of their subscribers.

On the whole, it is a great email that covers all the aspects of an effective crisis email.



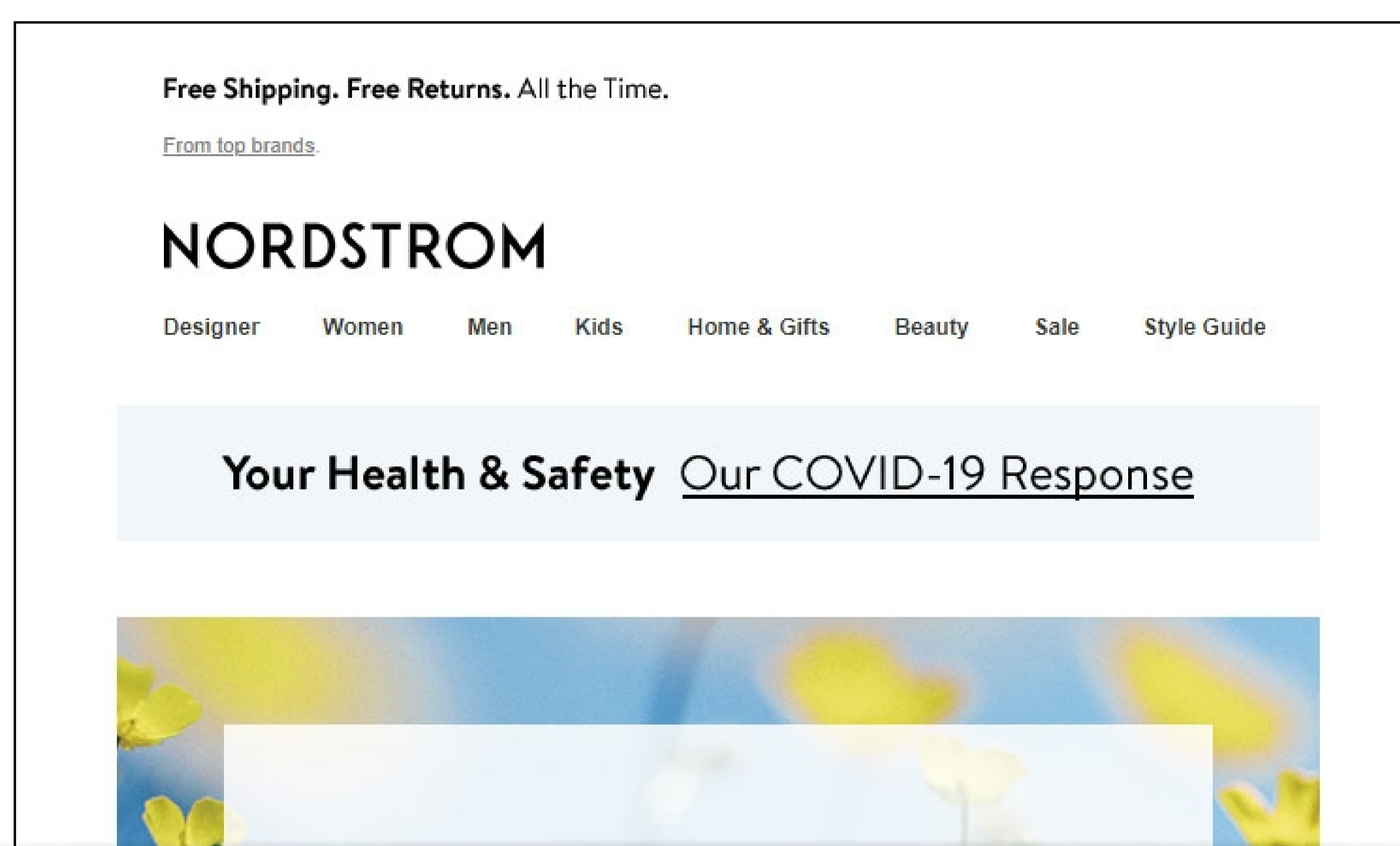


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### 3 Banner of coronavirus

Often, you might not have to send an email exclusively related to the COVID-19 crisis. In such cases, you can just include a note at the top of your emailer. Even if you have sent a dedicated email, it would be great to include a banner so that subscribers do not miss out on any update.

In this email by Nordstrom, they have included a banner with a link at the top to inform the subscribers about their COVID-19 response.



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## DELVING INTO THE 'STRICT DON'TS'

This is not the right time to cash in on the opportunity to make money. It is the time when your subscribers need you to be sensitive and helpful.

So, what are the don'ts of crisis email marketing? Here are the answers.



## **1 Forget about your automation workflow**

More often than not, marketers do not pay heed to their automated emails and that can prove to be a disaster for your brand. Imagine your subscriber receiving an irrelevant promotional email during these days. It will tarnish your brand reputation and in the worst cases, lead your subscribers to unsubscribe.

## **2 Capitalize on fear and paranoia**

Selling overpriced masks and sanitizers considering it a lucrative business opportunity would make things more difficult for your subscribers. That's the last thing you can do during this time. Instead, try to make things hasslefree for the customers.

## **3 Send irrelevant emails to the entire database**

As mentioned in the previous section, do not send your emails to everyone on your list. Reassess the situation for your customer base before sending out any email. Things have changed and you cannot run on "business as usual" policies.

## **4 Ignore what others are doing**

Although you must not follow the herd and do what everyone is doing, it is important to keep an eye on the initiatives taken by other brands. Subsequently, according to your industry and target audience, you can modify the strategy and roll out the one that suits your business the best.

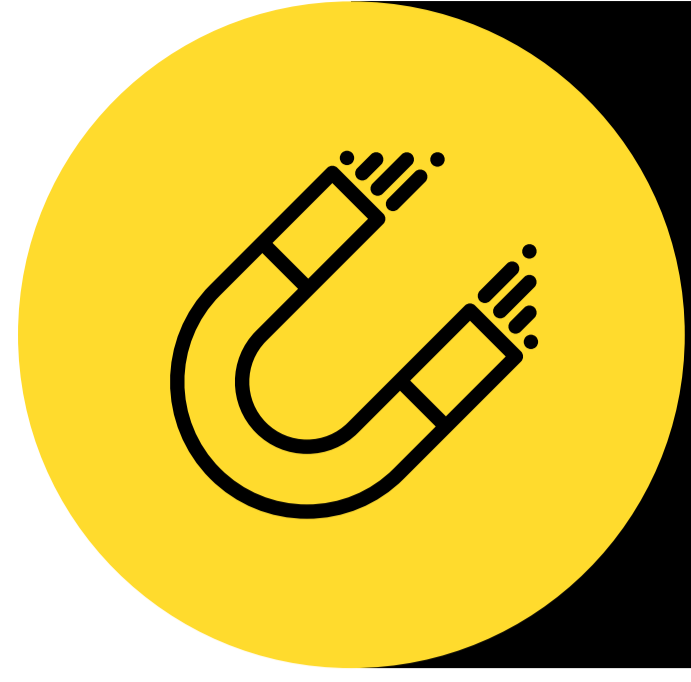
## **5 Stop sending emails altogether**

Let your subscribers stay in the know of how you are dealing with the pandemic instead of going into hibernation and ghosting them. Make them feel that you are there for them. If you have any product updates to assist them better in such times, make sure you share it with them. It would make way for building a stronger rapport with them.

## **6 Send misleading facts**

You should not send any misleading facts that would add to the stress and anxiety of your subscribers. Send verified information only and double-check everything that you send lest you might land your subscribers in trouble. If you are not a medical entity, do not send any medical advice that has no evidence yet.





## A look at the approach adopted by various brands

According to the target audience, every industry would need to send different types of emails with a different message during the Coronavirus crisis.

We have shared some examples to help you get going with your COVID-19 email marketing.

### BFSI (BANKING, FINANCIAL SERVICES, AND INSURANCE)

Taking into consideration the economic setback and financial constraints on everyone worldwide, it is important to let people know that you are there to assist them.

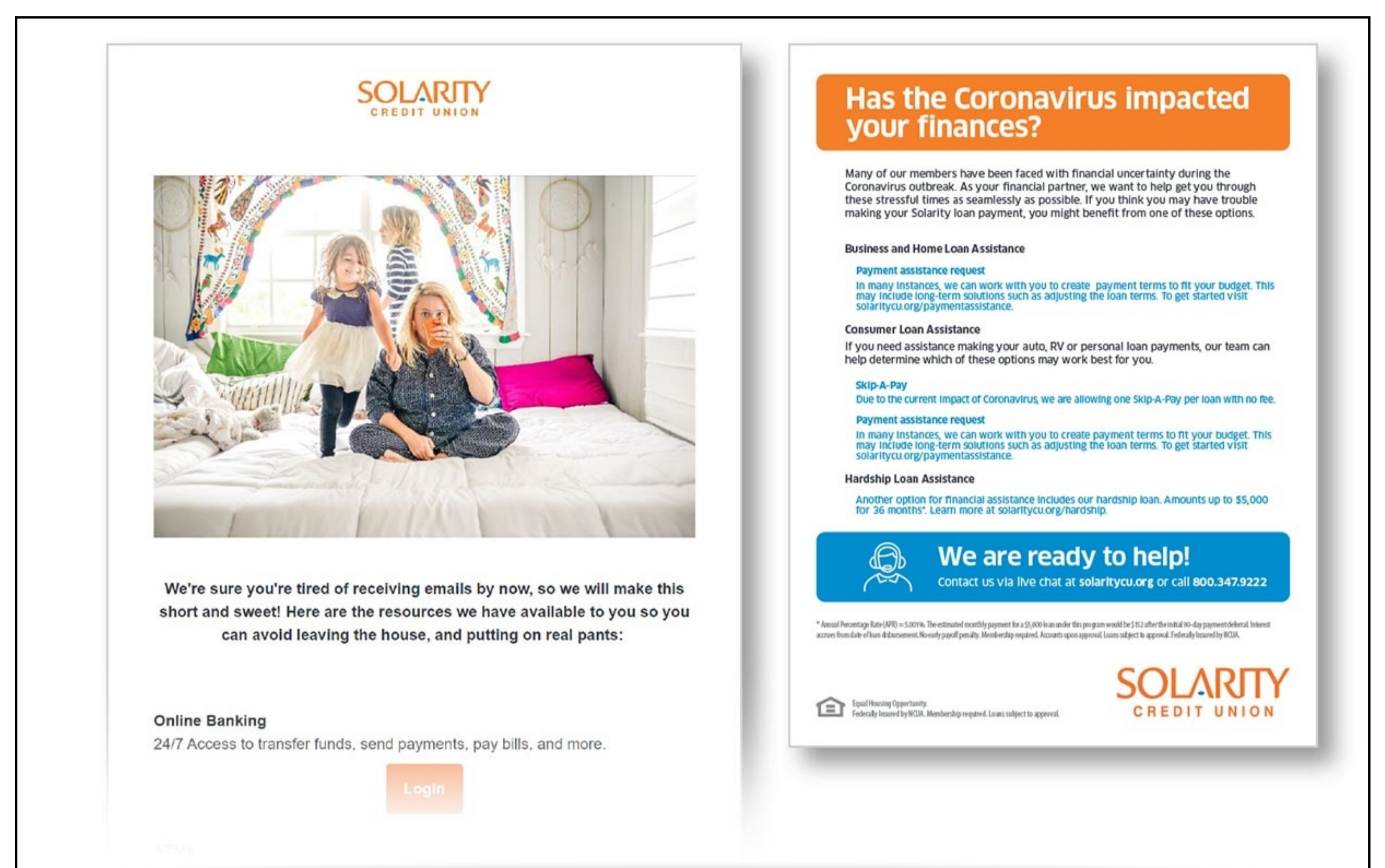
Here are two emails from Solarity Credit Union for your reference.

In the first email, they inform the subscribers that they can avail the online banking services, eliminating the need of stepping out of the house.

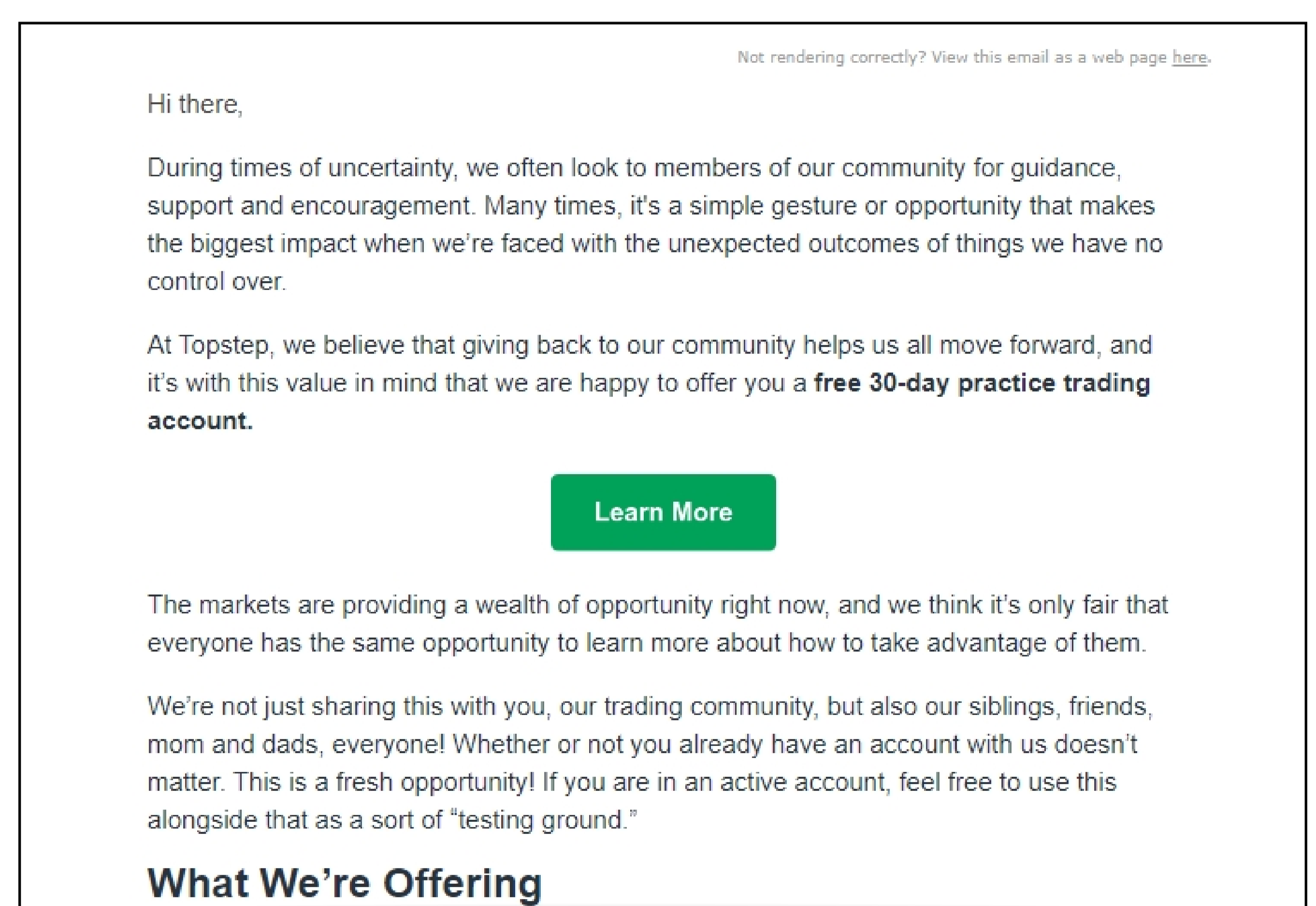
The second email asks the subscribers about the impact Coronavirus has had on their finances. It gives the subscribers information about their loan assistance to relieve them of the monetary pressure and also shares their availability on live chat and phone call.

TopStep Trader, LLC sends out an email offering a free trading account for 30 days. It is a kind gesture for the members of the community that will certainly leave a profound impact on them.

**Note:** Email marketers from the banking, financial services, and insurance sector should pay special attention to their emails during these times as cybercrimes are on the rise. It is particularly important to include a disclaimer in these emails to reflect credibility and authenticity.



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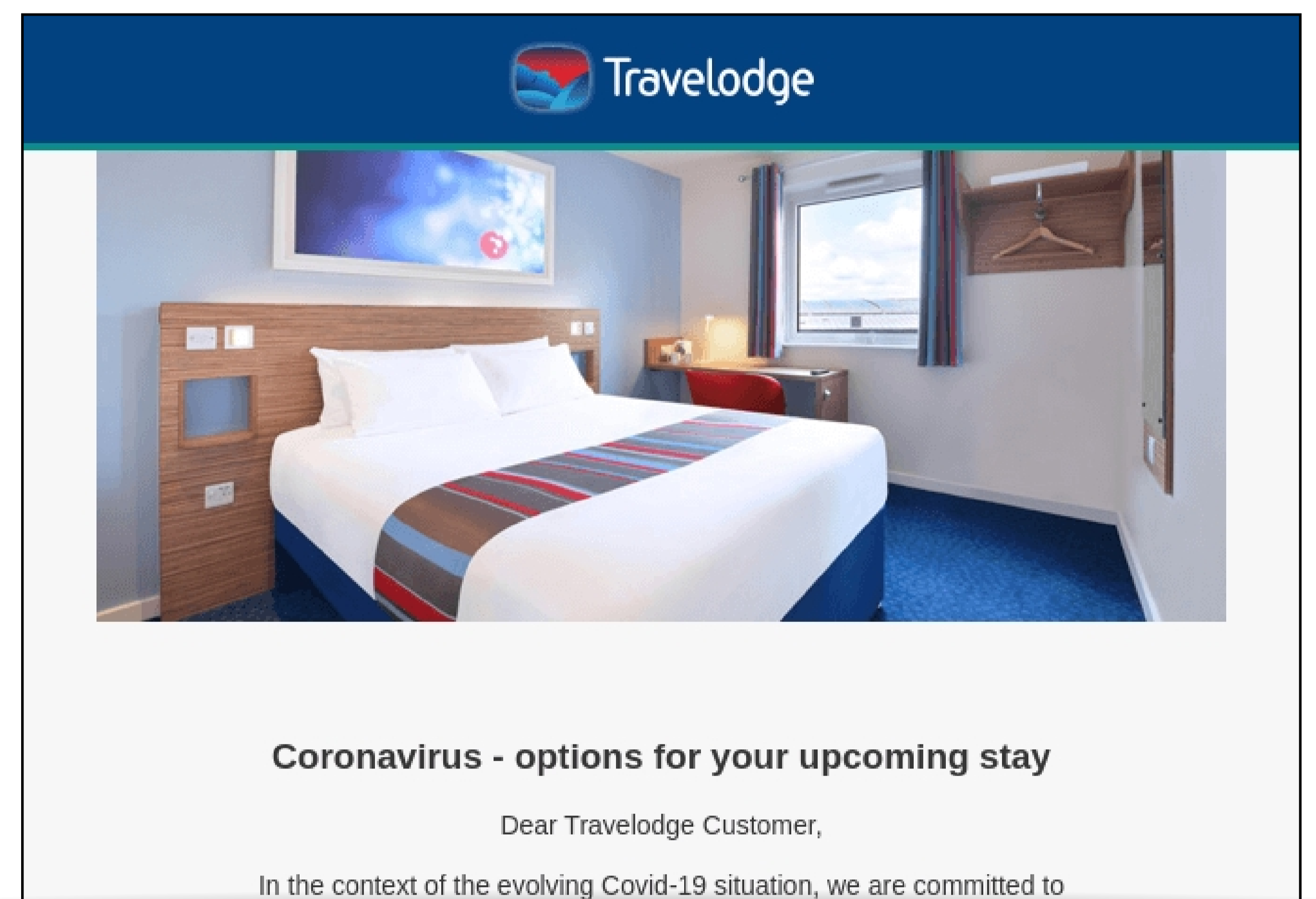


## TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Travel and hospitality industry has been hit really hard by this pandemic. It is even more unfortunate that after the crisis ends, people will be apprehensive about traveling. Leisure traveling would take a backseat and people wouldn't prefer to travel unless it is for business purposes.

Travelodge, a company that offers great value hotels throughout the UK and Ireland has sent out an email that notifies the subscriber about their offer of travel planning flexibility. It will work as an assurance and encourage the recipient to make a booking. What's even more commendable is that they have waived off their usual amend fees for Saver Rates booking until 31st December 2020. It will allow the traveler to rearrange the trip for a future date without any extra charges. They have also shared their website URL where the reader can get updates on any additional measures taken by the company.

Avis Rent A Car, LLC has emphasized on the precautionary measures they are taking to clean the vehicles after every rental to fight against the crisis. They have also shared the steps they are taking to ensure the wellbeing of the employees. Also, they will be allowing the user to change the reservation or cancel it due to Coronavirus-related travel bans. The tone of the email reflects empathy and sensitivity that would instil positivity in the subscriber and build goodwill for the brand.



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## FOOD

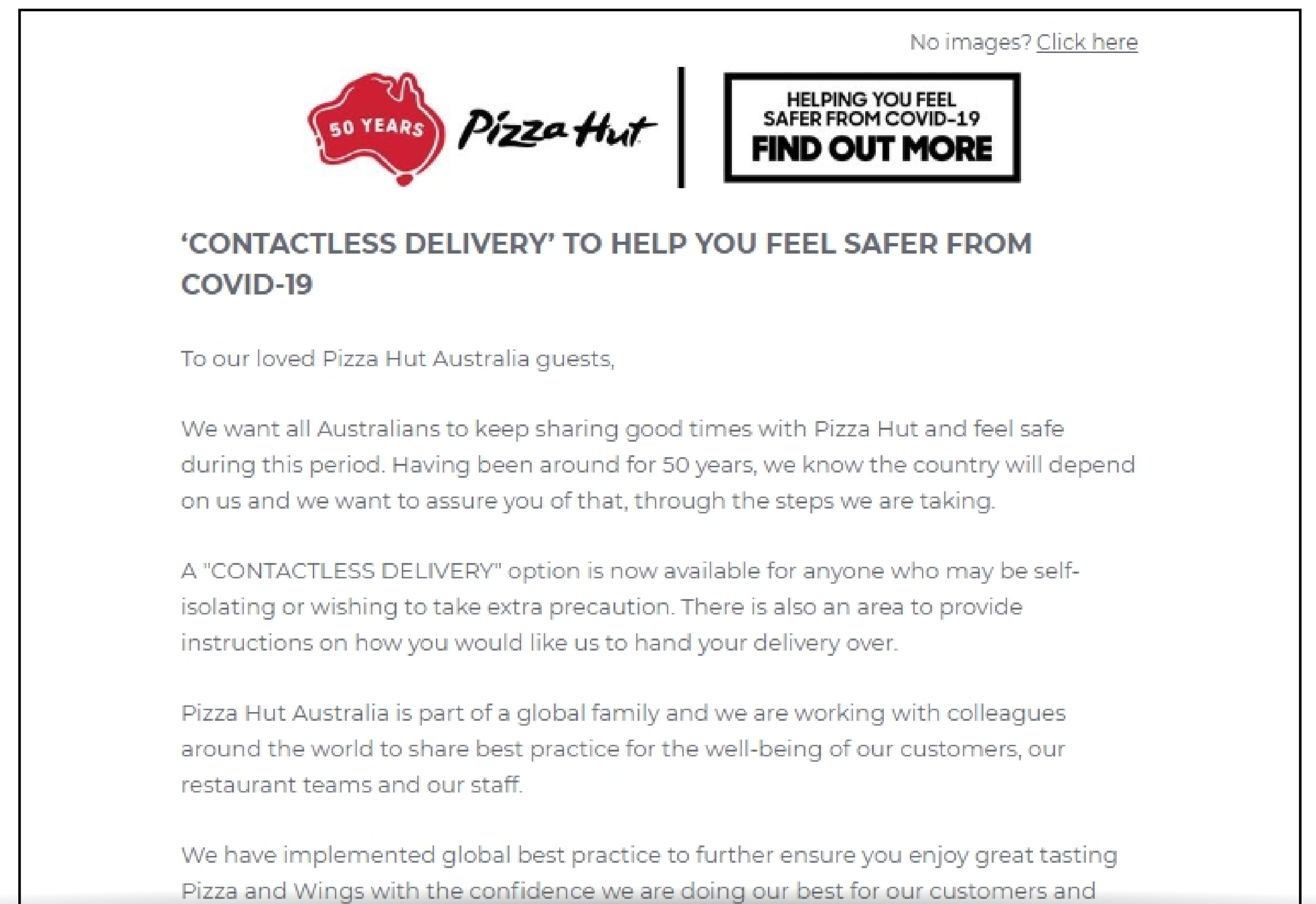
Food industry is another industry that has faced a significant impact on their operations.

Pizza Hut sends out an email that lets the subscribers know that they can avail contactless delivery in case they are self-isolating or willing to take extra precaution. It will encourage the customer to order from them without getting paranoid.

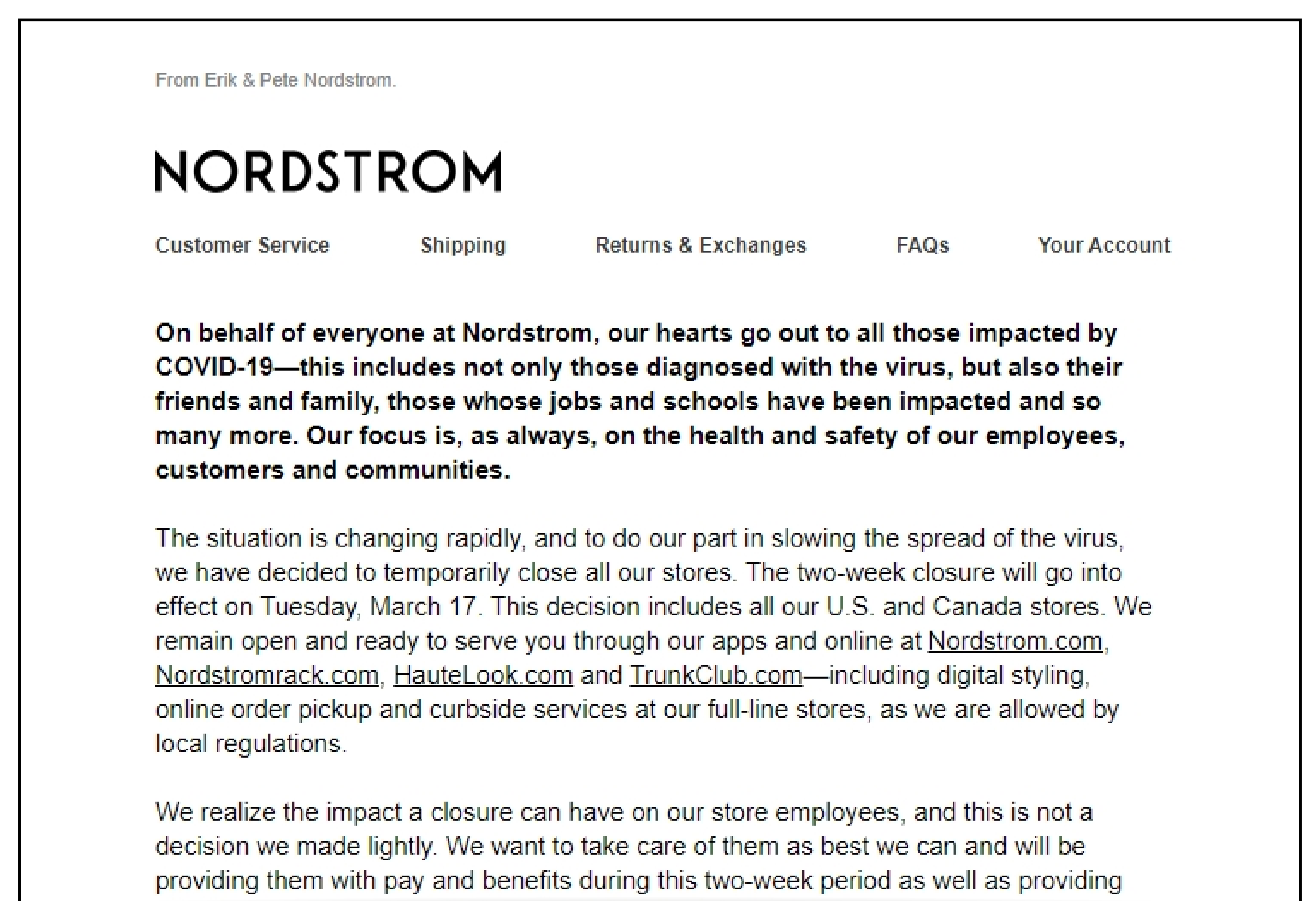
An Indian food delivery platform Swiggy has launched Swiggy Genie to cater to the growing needs of customers while letting them stay indoors. Whether you need help with picking up medicines for your near and dear ones or send a lunchbox to a senior family member, Swiggy would help you with all of those tasks.

## ECOMMERCE - RETAIL

It is daunting for the ecommerce and retail sector to keep their operations going, more so because of the high susceptibility of getting infected. Amidst such times, Nordstrom writes a compassionate email to all their subscribers to let them know about the closure of their stores. Their apps and websites will continue to run according to the government guidelines.



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Like so many other brands. GAP sends out an email sharing the safety measures they are taking in their stores. It also reflects concern for their employees as well as the customers.



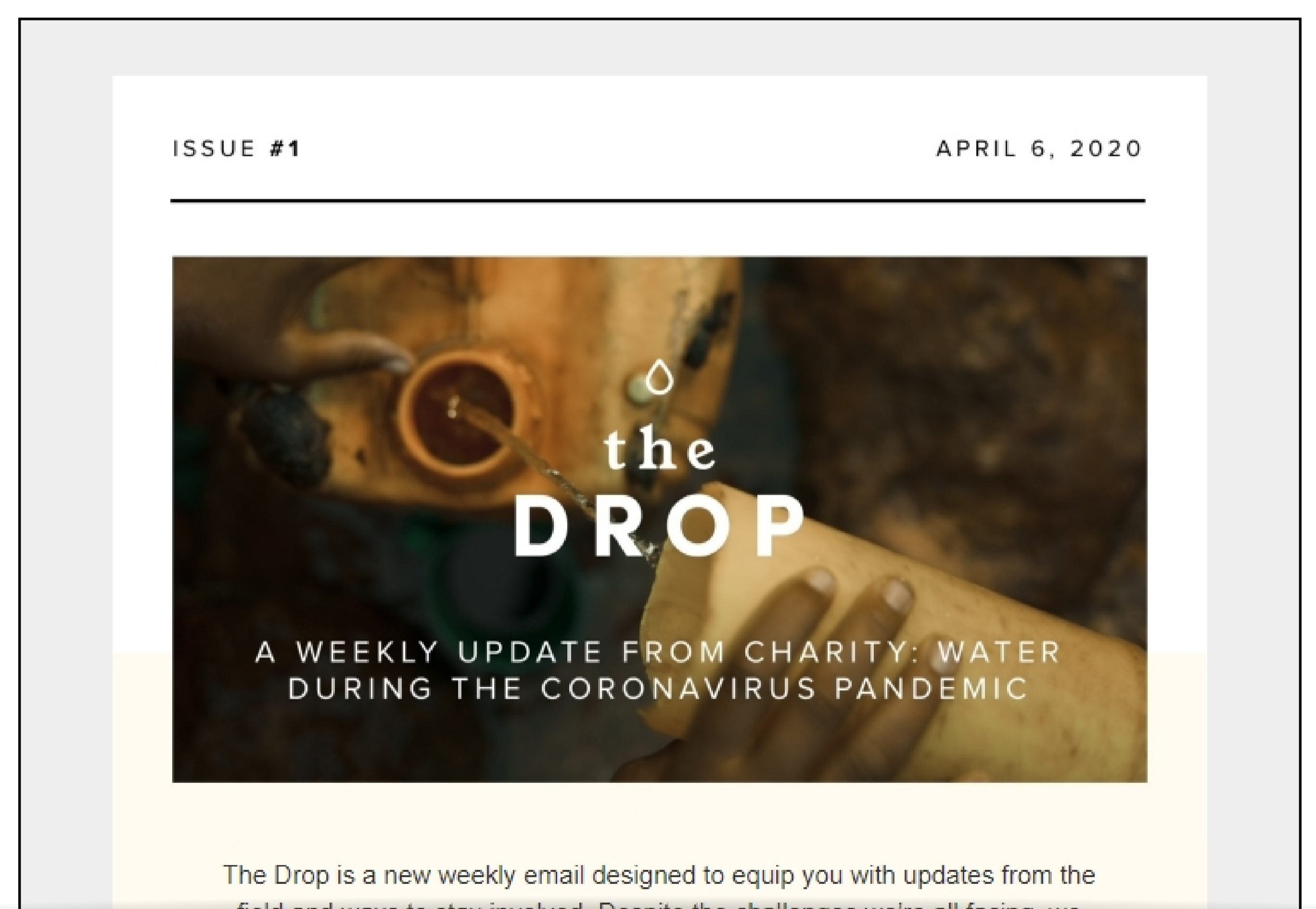
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## NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Many of the non-profit organizations have tried to generate donations for the COVID-19 victims and their families. They can send out engaging emails to inspire everyone to come forward and do their bit.

### • **Charity Water**

Through their email, Charity Water shares a weekly update from the fields so that the subscribers can stay involved in the activities despite the lockdown. The sole purpose of the email is sharing information with the subscribers. The best part is that it ends with a little good news that would warm the reader's heart and bring a smile on their face.

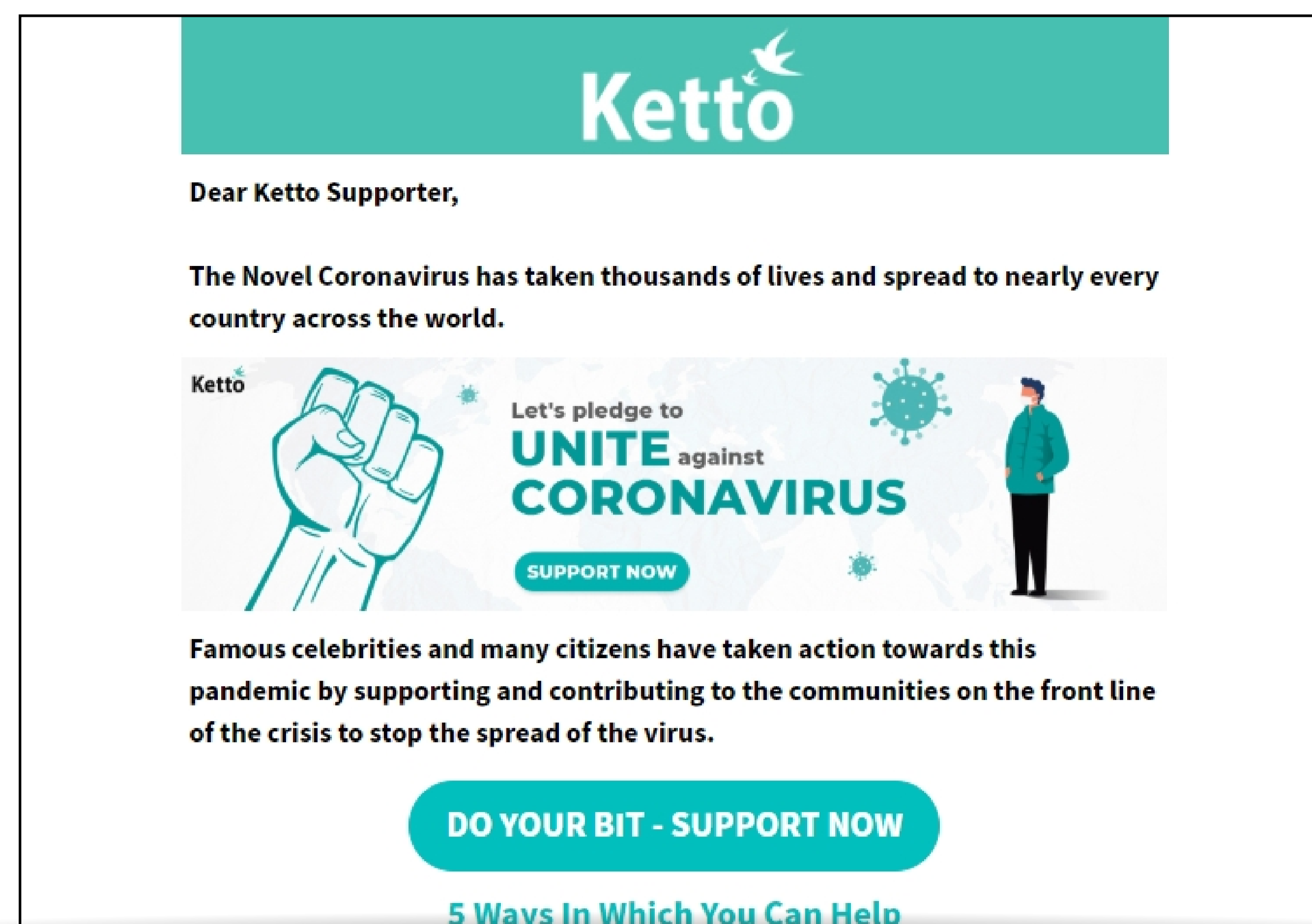


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## • Ketto

Ketto.org has launched an initiative to help vulnerable and underprivileged people or distressed animals during lockdown and sent an email urging people to show their support by donating food, clothing, and other essentials. The email includes two CTAs to garner maximum click-throughs.



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## EDUCATION

Education industry can promote online courses and virtual learning platforms to ensure the health of the students by practicing social distancing. Besides, they can also share the dos and don'ts for the students to make sure that they do not contract the infection.

Arizona State University sent an email informing the students, faculty, staff, and families about a case of 2019 Novel Coronavirus in their community. It also includes ways to prevent the spread of the virus, thereby ensuring the wellbeing of their people.

ASU is working closely with MCDPH to investigate any contacts that this individual may have exposed while infectious. **Those who have been exposed will be notified directly by either ASU or Public Health and given specific instructions on monitoring for symptoms.** If you have not been notified, you have not been identified to be at risk of developing symptoms. Currently, no commercial testing is available and there is no vaccine. MCDPH is working with those exposed to get

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Coursera has promoted free courses that they have introduced to help the students worldwide during these difficult times. Kudos to them for the great initiative.



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## SERVICE-BASED COMPANIES

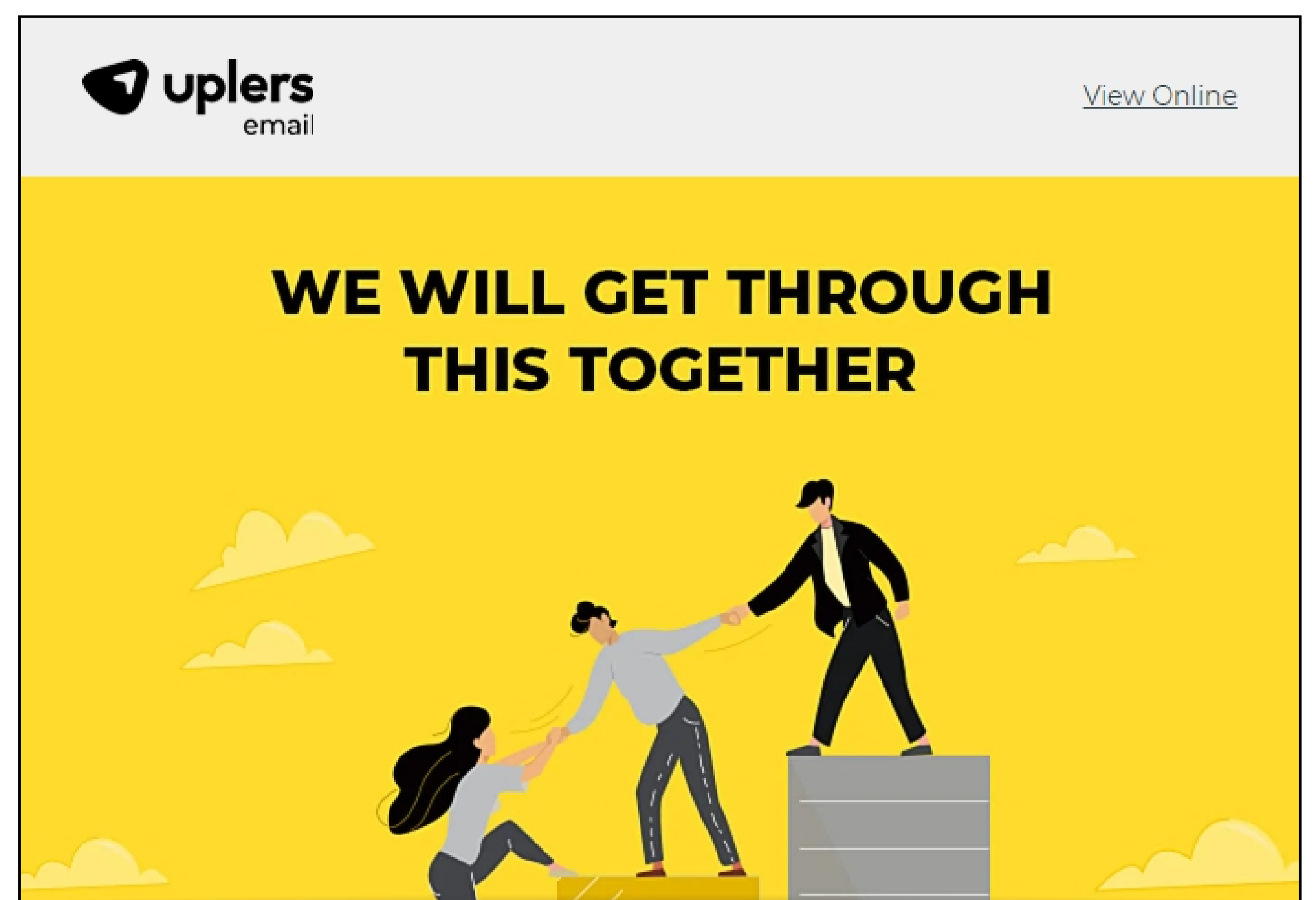
Companies offering services to streamline the business operations can send out emails with COVID-19 offers that would relieve the consumers of financial stress.

For example: Email on Acid has extended help to the most impacted industries by offering complimentary subscriptions of their tool.



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With so many industries affected by the pandemic, Email Uplers is also doing their bit by providing a \$300 complimentary email design and coding service .



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## How email marketers can make the most of this time

As email marketers, apart from modifying your email marketing strategy during this time of crisis, you can make the most of this time by indulging in activities that would prepare you well for the post-COVID world.

- 1** First of all, prune your email list to have active subscribers who engage with your emails. It will ensure optimum deliverability rate with minimum bounces and unsubscribes.
- 2** Think of out-of-the-box email marketing tactics that would help you stand out from the noise in the inbox. Consider training your staff for technologies like AMP that are already being used by reputed brands like AWeber, Booking.com, Pinterest, and Doodle.
- 3** You can even take certification courses from HubSpot, Skillshare, and Coursera to hone your marketing skills and reach out to your user base more effectively.
- 4** Work on building brand collaborations and getting featured in the newsletters from other brands. It can be a symbiotic business relationship which will benefit both the companies.
- 5** Try to get Marketo and Salesforce Certifications to gain expertise over the platform and set up the email workflows in a better way. It will take your business to new heights.





## Wrapping Up

We have tried to compile everything you must know about email marketing during the crisis. If you have a COVID-19 email to send next time, you surely have enough ideas to get the ball rolling.

Do share your feedback about this ebook with us on [hello@uplers.com](mailto:hello@uplers.com).

We would love to hear from you.

---We hope you stay safe and composed.---