

Data Analysis: Comparative Analysis Overview

Overview

The comparative analysis included a detailed features audit activity. A features audit allowed for the researchers to comparatively review how different email services manage tasks, present features and solve design challenges. During the exercise, each feature or task was awarded a quantitative score. This score was used to prioritize specific design and interaction-related features across platforms. Additionally, the audit qualitatively documented and collected observations during the analysis process. This information was used to help identify ideal features, functionality, visual style, labeling, navigation and taxonomy, as well as strengths and challenge areas.

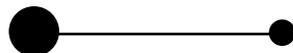
Variables and observations

During the comparative analysis, four email services were measured and analyzed. The observation provided feedback on each of the four platforms, identified usability and user experience issues and prioritized potential email service features for the new email application. Thirteen variable categories were identified, along with a series of features and tasks. Each feature and task was tested and measured using a rating score of 0 to 3 (0 – does not exist, 1 – poor experience, 2 – average experience, 3 – excellent experience). Finally, after the evaluation was completed, the average was scored to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each categorical platform.

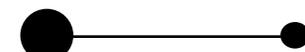
In addition to measuring the four platforms quantitatively, a series of notes and observations were collected for each feature and task. Collecting and compiling notes provided an opportunity to supplement and strengthen the quantitative data.

The following section includes a comparative overview sampling of four email platforms and various design tasks and features. A brief summary of the platform's performance is detailed, along with screen captures from the application.

For reference, below are logos for each of the email platforms.



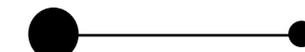
MailChimp
www.mailchimp.com



iContact
www.icontact.com

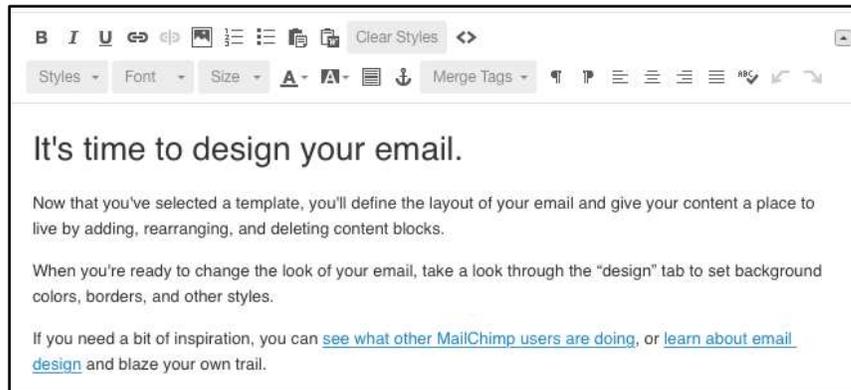


Constant Contact
www.constantcontact.com



Campaign Monitor
www.campaignmonitor.com

Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Adding Text - Contains a WYSIWYG Editor



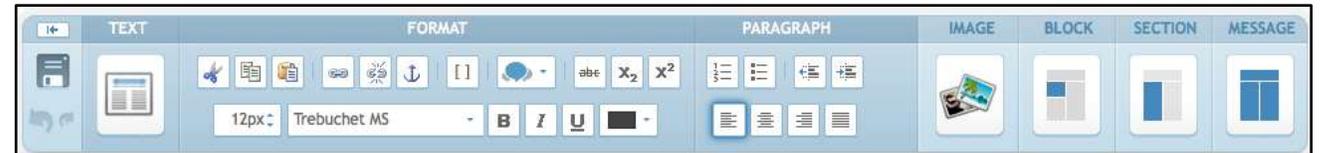
Positioned above the text

The WYSIWYG editor appears directly above the text box, which allows for quick access. The editor contains most standard text options. The editor is always located on the right side of the page, never above the email preview.



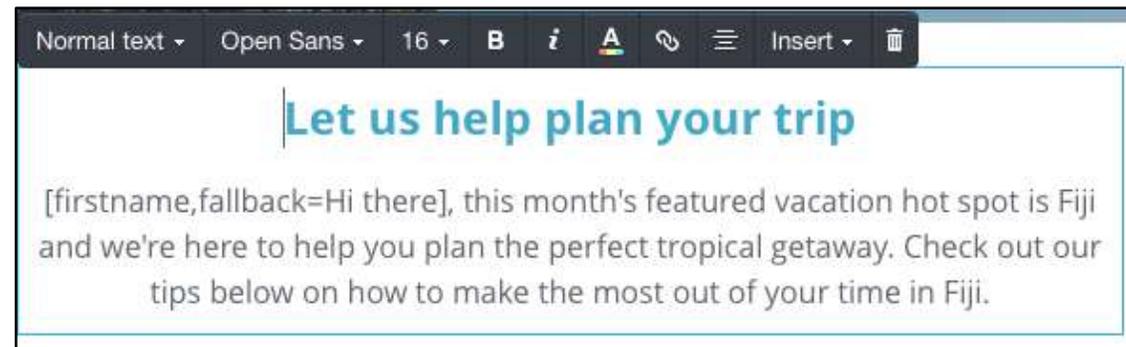
Positioned over the text

As a user clicks on a text box, the WYSIWYG editor hovers over the text and within the email preview itself. Overall, the editor offers a reduced number of features/options.



Full editor

The WYSIWYG editor not only includes text options, but also displays a feature for adding images, content blocks and content sections. The editor is fixed at the top of the page and is always positioned over the email.

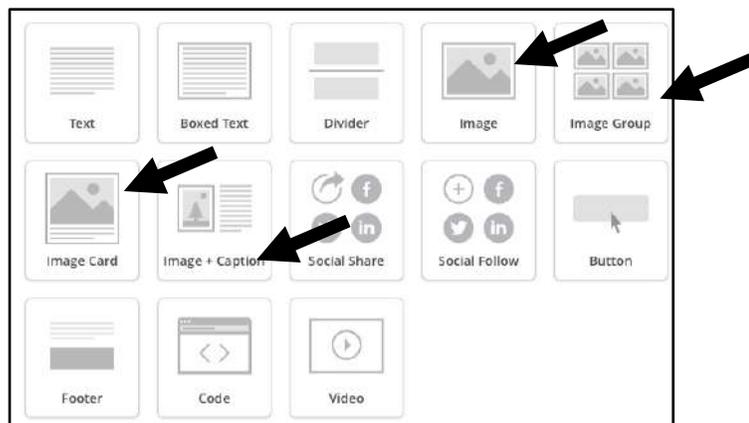


Minimal editor

The WYSIWYG editor is very minimal and non-obtrusive. When a user clicks on a different content component, the editor disappears completely.



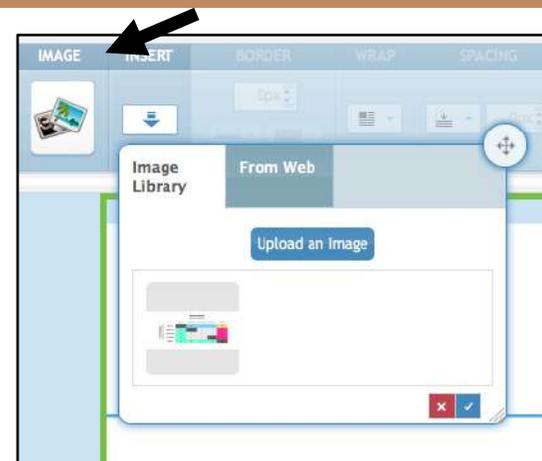
Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Upload Photos



Multiple upload options



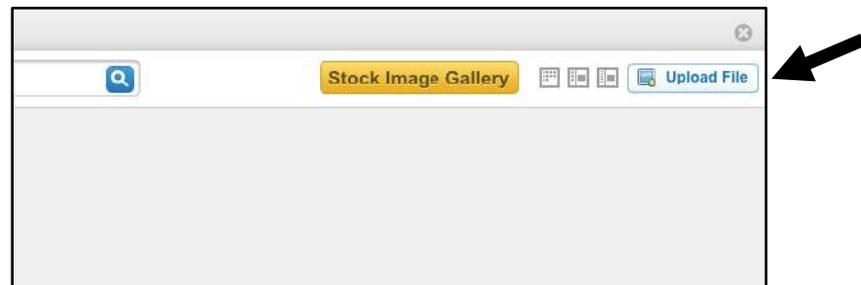
Users have the flexibility to upload single images, image groups, image cards and an image + caption. Each feature automatically determines the layout and functionality of the image.



Insert icon



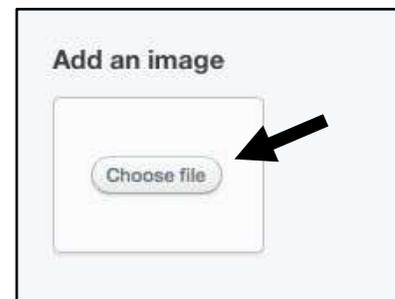
To upload a photo, users need to select the image block section and then click on the downward facing icon (insert). From there, a pop-up box appears, which allows users to upload a photo.



Upload bar



After a user adds an image content block, they need to first open the library, click the upload button and then drag and drop a photo or browse on their computer. This is a four-step process.



Quick upload



By clicking on the image icon, users are directed to immediately choose a file or click on the content block, which opens their image browser. Overall, this is a quick uploading process.

Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Photos - Edit Photo Dimensions



Common photo editor

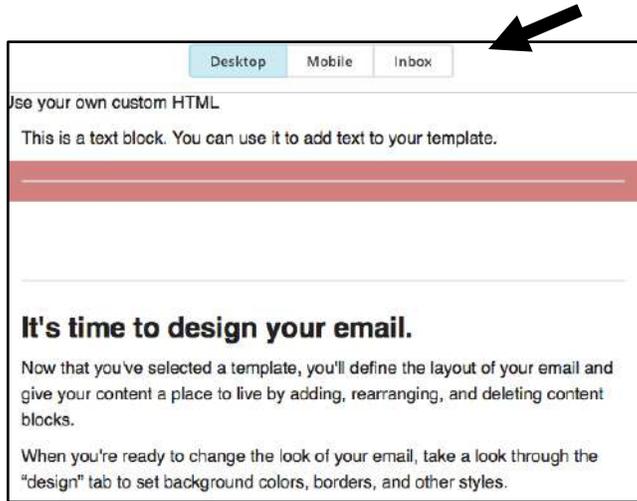
Three of the four platforms use a common photo editor tool, which allows users to re-size, crop, add effects, etc. Because the application tool is identical across platforms, it appears that a third-party vendor offers this functionality/platform.



Resizing images

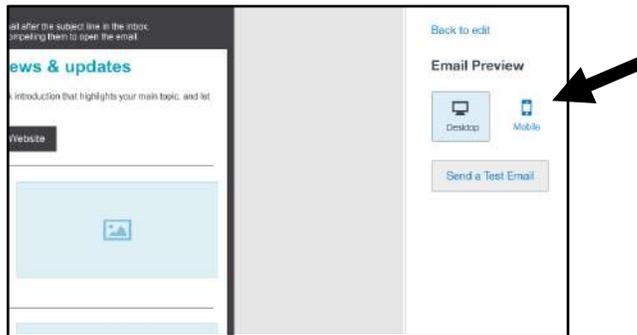
While the platform offers very limited photo editing capabilities (no editor tool), it does allow users to manually scale an image directly from within the email preview. As a result, there is no need to open a photo application tool.

Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Preview Mode - Preview Emails on Web and Mobile Platforms



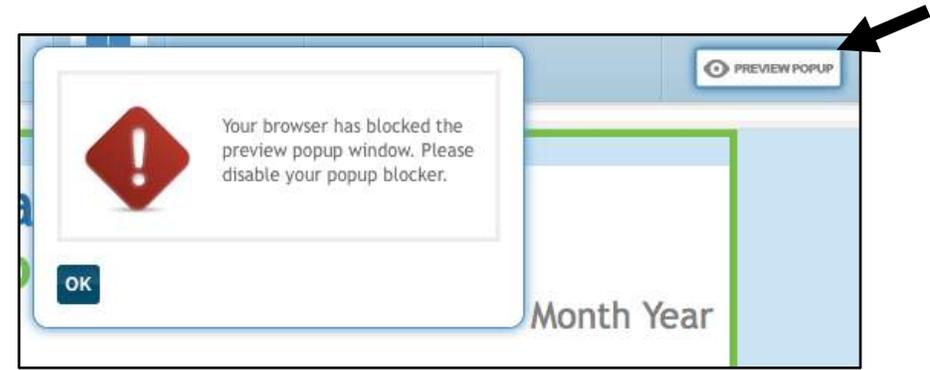
Multiple testing options

The platform allows users to test emails by viewing them on a desktop, mobile device and within different email clients (i.e. Outlook). Additionally, users can send themselves a test message.



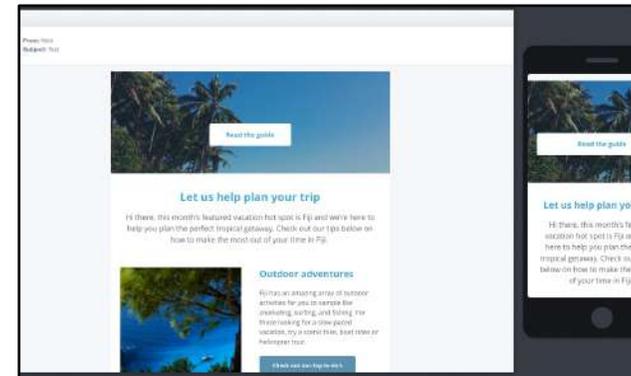
Desktop and mobile options

User can view their email on a browser using a desktop or mobile version. They can also send a test email.



Unreliable test preview

When testing an email, a pop-up window appears which asks the user to "disable your popup browser." As a result, I was not able to test the feature.

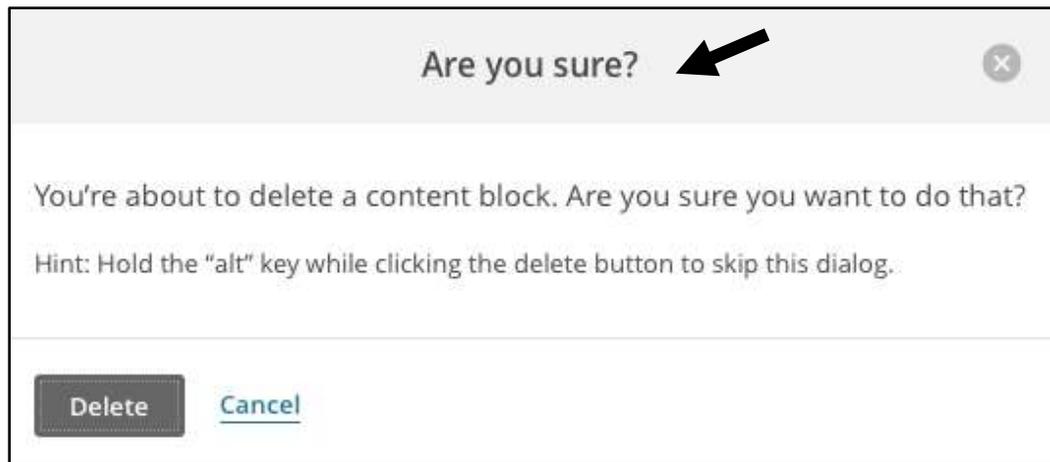


Mobile and web default

When a user tests their email, by default, the platform displays both web and mobile versions. Users do not have the ability to send a test from within the editor.



Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Help and Errors - Warning Message



Warning, no undo



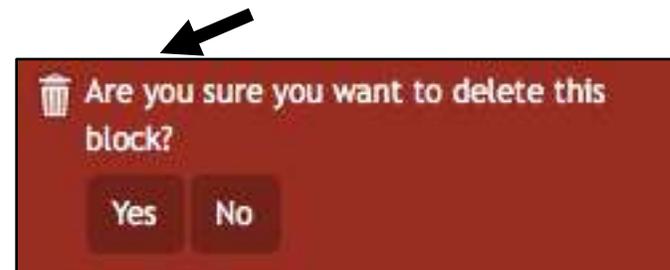
When a user tries to delete content, they receive a warning that reads, "Are you sure?" However, once the content is deleted, it cannot be retrieved.



No warning, undo button



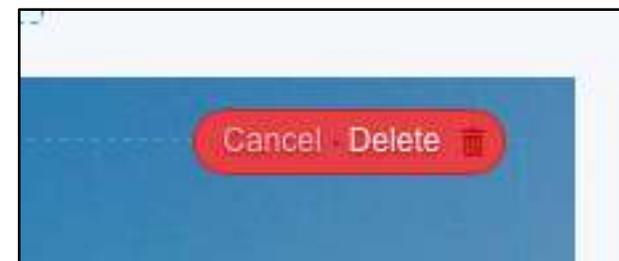
On the platform, content can be deleted with no warning. When a user clicks "delete," the content immediately disappears. However, users can undo or redo an action.



Color-coded notification



When a user tries to delete content, a red colored message appears. The message stands out from the other information on the page.



Quick alert



When a user tries to delete content, a small alert pops up over the content block asking if the user wants to delete or cancel the action. The icon is minimal and non-obtrusive.

Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Help and Errors - Save and Auto-Save Features



Save indicators



The platform offers users with multiple options to manually save their work. The save button is available within the content editor and through the global navigation. The platform also informs users that their work is auto-saved.



Save icon and text label



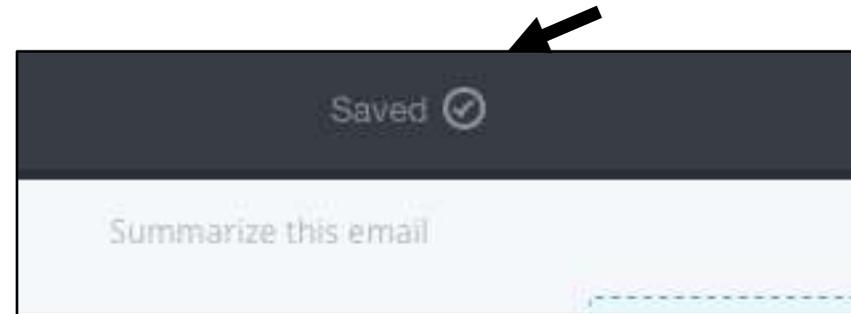
At the top of the page, a manual save feature is always available. The platform does not indicate if the email is auto-saved.



Save icon, no text label



A save icon is located within the email editor. However, the icon is not accompanied by text. Once a user saves their work, a message at the bottom appears, which reads, "Save successful." There does not appear to be auto-save.

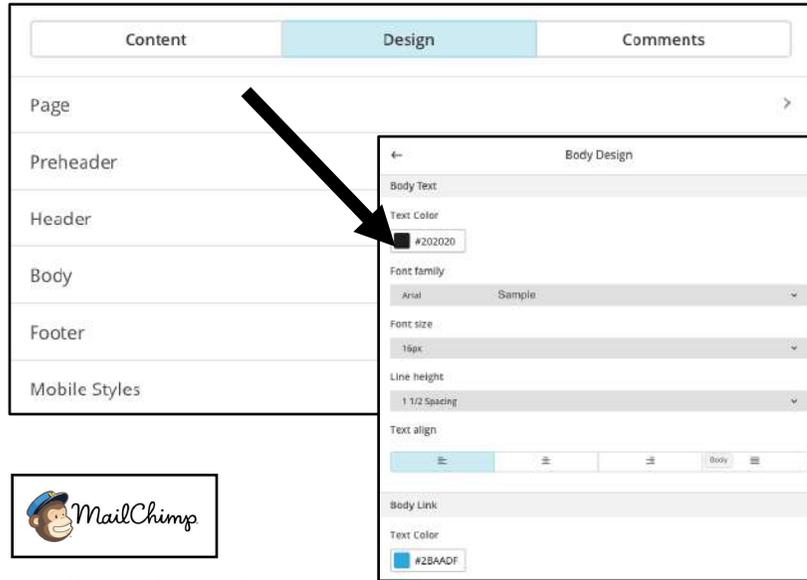


No save button



The platform does not contain a manual save button. All work is auto-saved.

Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Pre-header, Header, Body and Footer: Create Unique Styles for Each Section of an Email



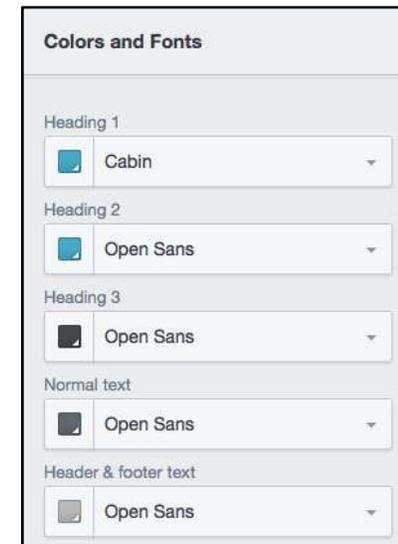
Style all sections

Users can stylize all design section attributes for the page, pre-header, header, body, footer and mobile devices. As a result, users do not have to repeat stylizing content.



Blocks

Users can set the background color, border and spacing for blocks of content, however, they must stylize individual content component text fields.



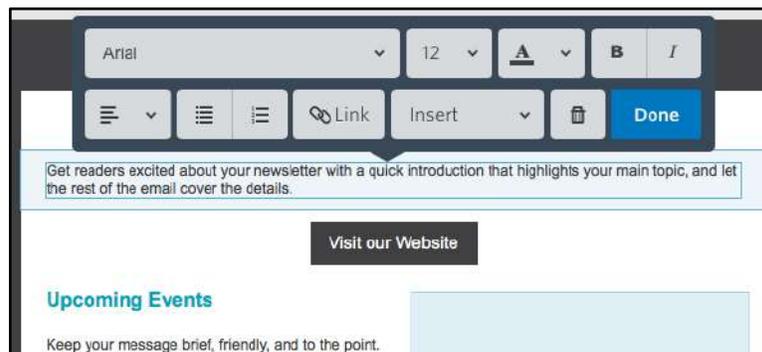
Colors and fonts

Users have the ability to choose colors and fonts for all text within sections – headers, body text, links, etc.

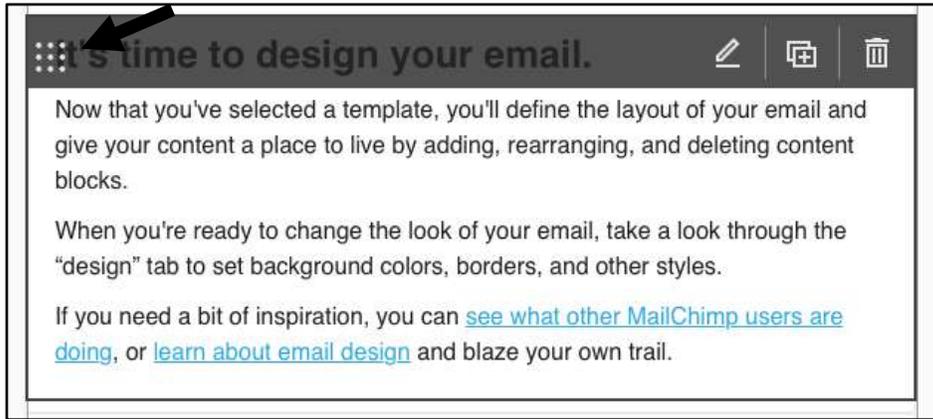


Customize individual sections

Users cannot select attributes for entire sections, however, they have the ability to customize content components.

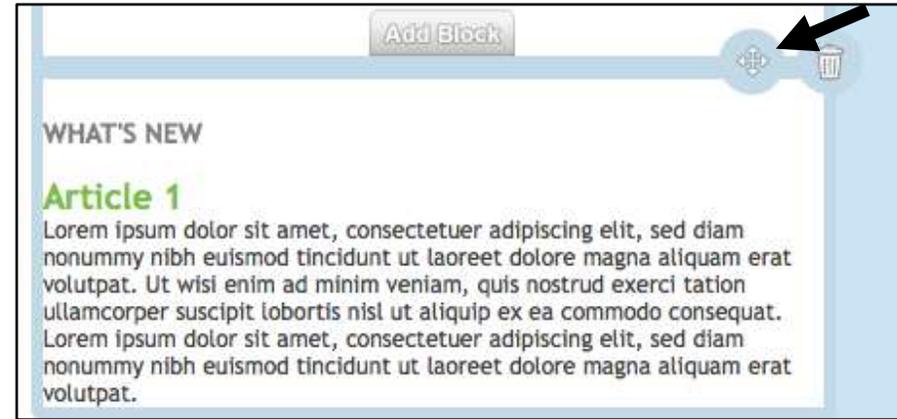


Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Pre-header, Header, Body and Footer: Customize and Reorder Components within the Body



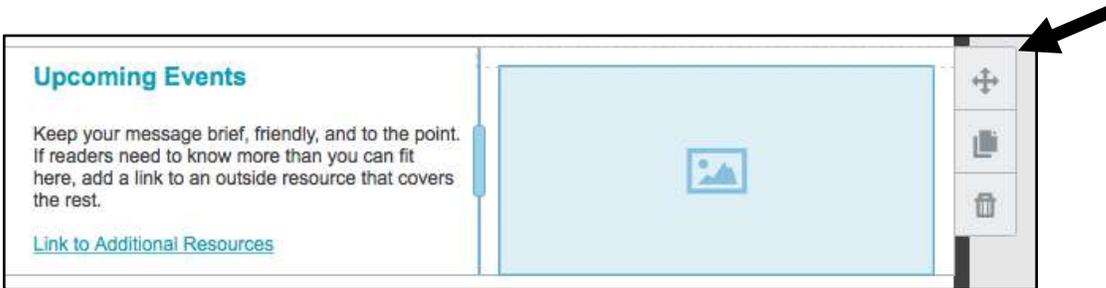
Display bar

A black display bar appears when a user hovers over the content block. Users can drag the content block to any section in the email.



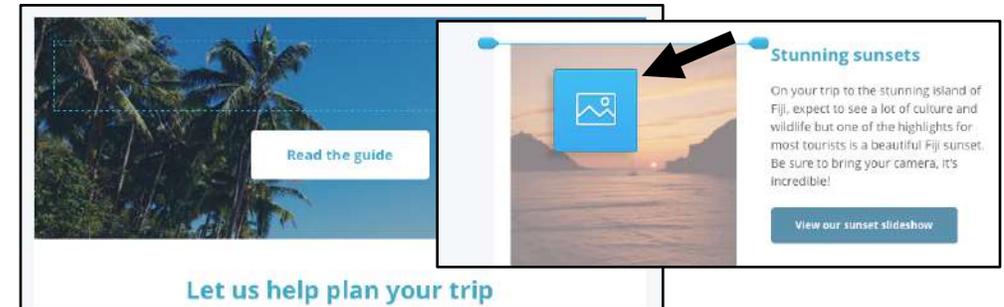
Re-scaled blocks

Users can click on the drag arrow to arrange content blocks. The block's dimensions automatically reconfigure to the size/shape of the content container.



Drag arrow

By using the drag arrow, users can arrange content blocks.

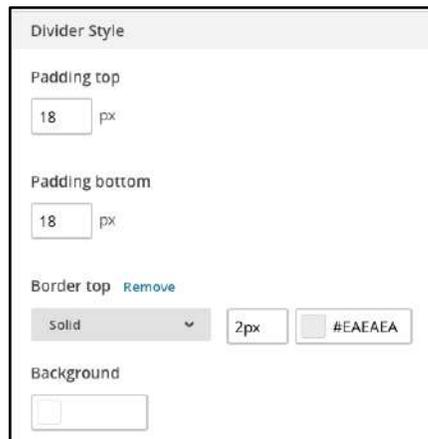


Rearrange icon

When users hover over the object, a blue bordered outline and drag arrow appears. After clicking on the item, an icon displays, which indicates to the user that they are moving an object.

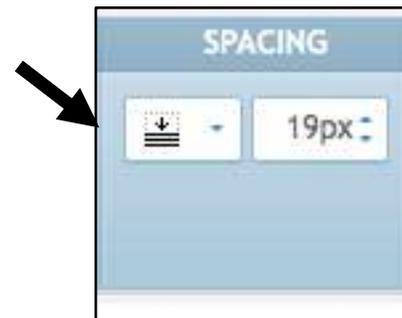


Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Dividers and Spacers



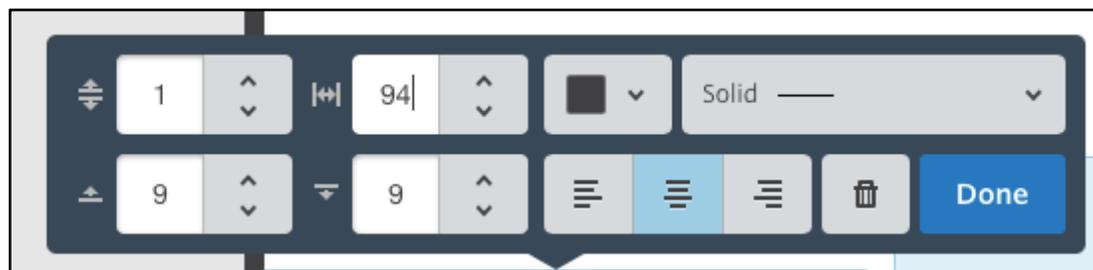
Robust dividers, no spacers

Users can customize dividers by adding padding, stroke, width, line color and background color. However, the platform does not include a feature for spacers.



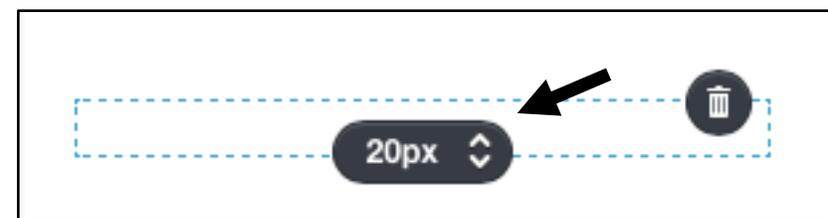
Limited spacers, no dividers

Users can add spacing between their content blocks and customize the height, however, there is no feature for dividers.



Full customization

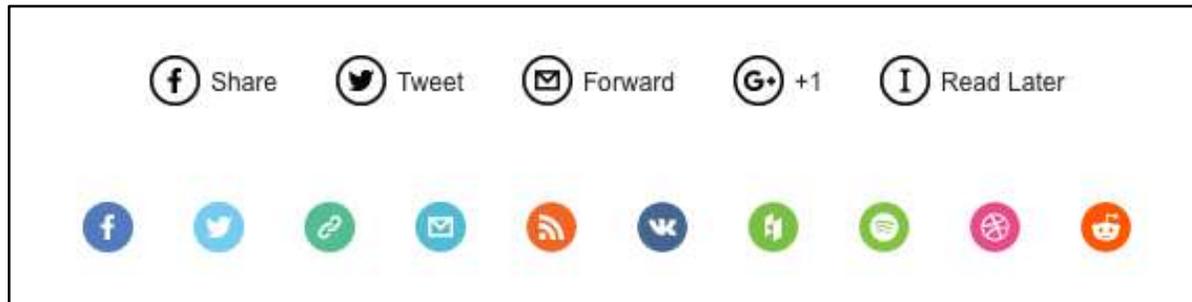
Users can add both spacers and dividers to their emails. When adding dividers, users can customize the padding, width, thickness, alignment, line color and stroke.



Inline spacer formatting

When a spacer is added to an email, users can change the height from within the email itself. While users can add dividers, they do not have the ability to change the width, line color, stroke or thickness.

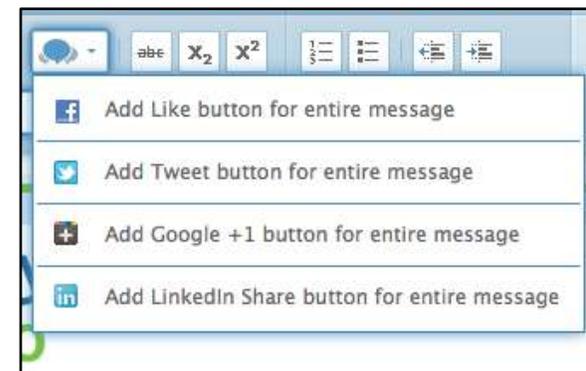
Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Icon and Image Library



Icon library



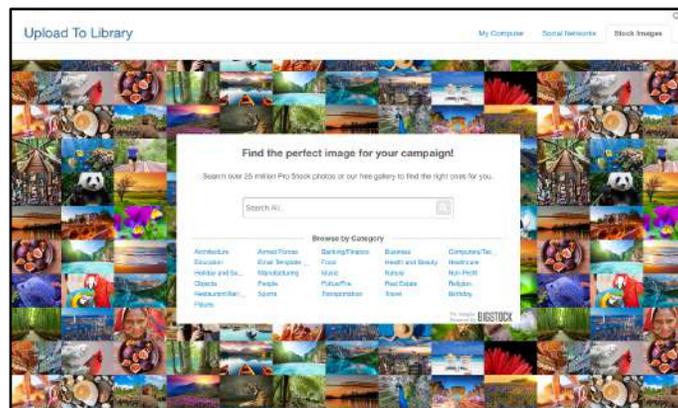
Users have the ability to select from a large library of commonly used social media and website icons. Icons can be configured to redirect to a website or to share via email.



Four options



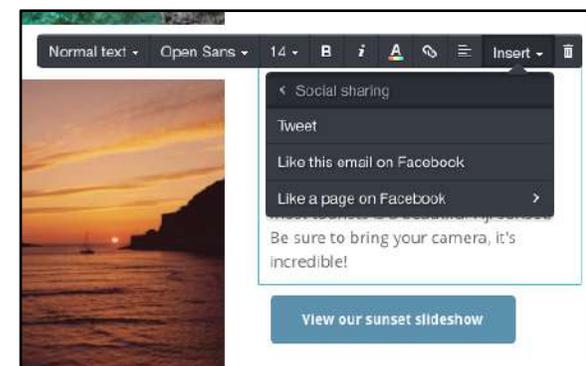
Users can select square shaped icons for Facebook, Twitter, Google and LinkedIn.



Stock photo library



Users can access, search and download from over 25 million Pro Stock photos. Some photos are free, while others require payment or subscription.

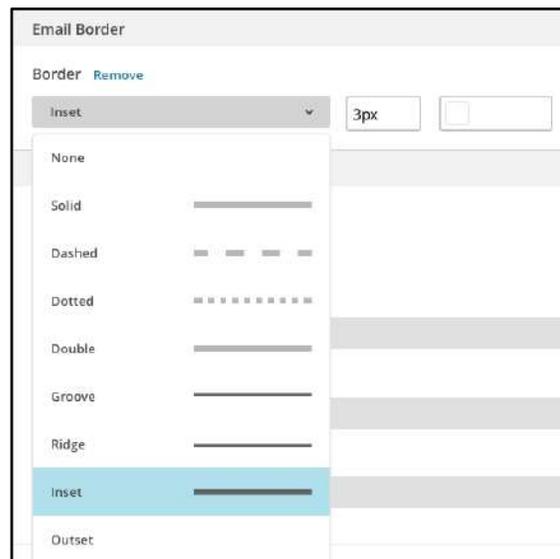


Three options



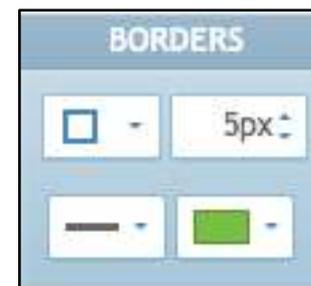
Users can select one Twitter icon and two Facebook icons. The icons can only be inserted into a text box.

Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Background Colors and Borders



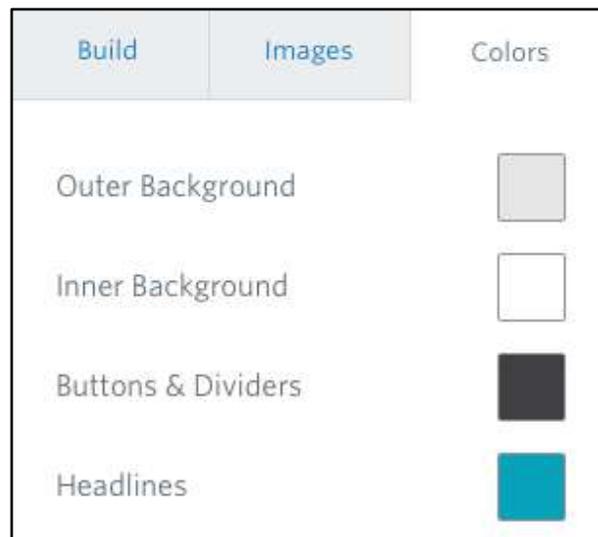
Border outline

The platform offers users the ability to select from eight border outline options, as well as change the width and color. Users can do the same for the email's background color.



Minimal display

When adding a border, users have minimal border outline options to choose (three in total – solid, dashed and dotted).



Outer/inner colors

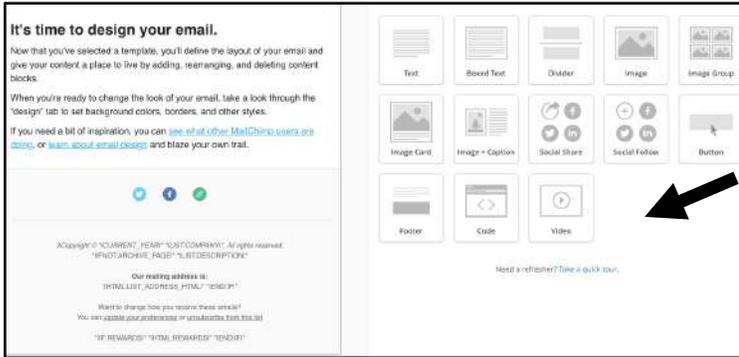
Users can change the color of the entire outer background, as well as inner content blocks. However, if a user adds a color to the content block, the color is applied to the entire email.



RGB color picker

All four platforms have a standard RGB color picker. The picker also contains a list of commonly or recently used color schemes. Users can either select a color or enter the hex code.

Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Layout and Navigation



Evolving editor



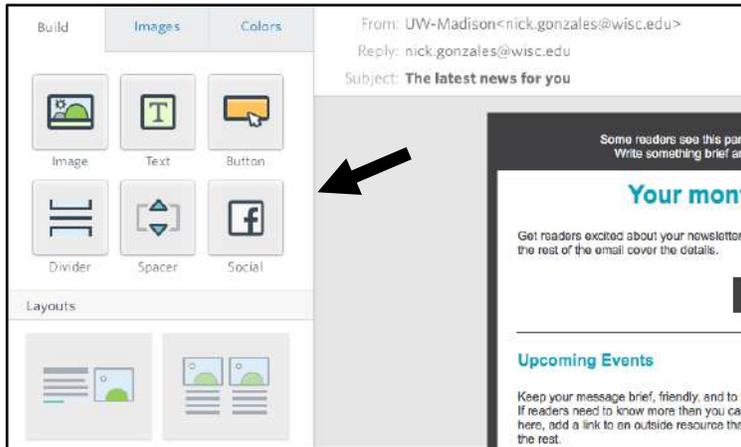
When a user adds a new content block type to their email, the editor's view changes, which allows the user to configure the new content. However, the editor feature is always present on the right.



Feature heavy editor



The platform's editor is always located at the top of the page and moves down as the user scrolls. The editor uses internal tabs, which means that some features are hidden from the display when not in use.



Unchanged editor



The editor icons always stays in one place, despite the task that the user is working on. The editor is available on the left.



Hidden editor



While the editor is accessible from the left side of the page, users can hide the editor by double-clicking on the vertical border line.

Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis): Layout and Navigation - Breadcrumbs

< Back

Recipients > Setup > Template > Design > Confirm

Next >

Navigation bar



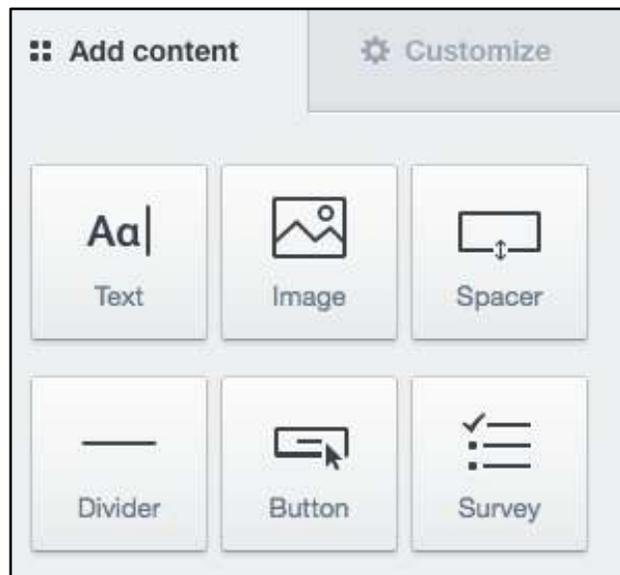
The platform has a persistent local navigation bar at the bottom of the page, which allows users to navigate back and forward. The bar also contains a five-step process for creating/sending an email.

(none of the other platforms have an email navigation feature)

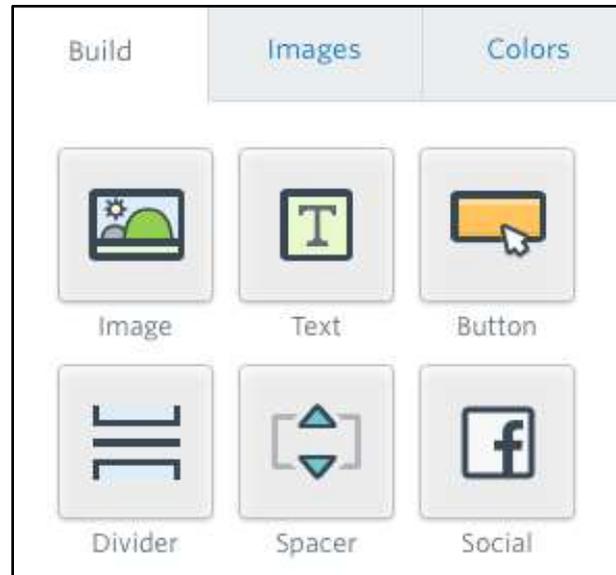
Data Analysis (Comparative Analysis and Survey): Preferred Visual Layout

Ten survey participants were asked to: **Indicate which drag and drop design they prefer.**

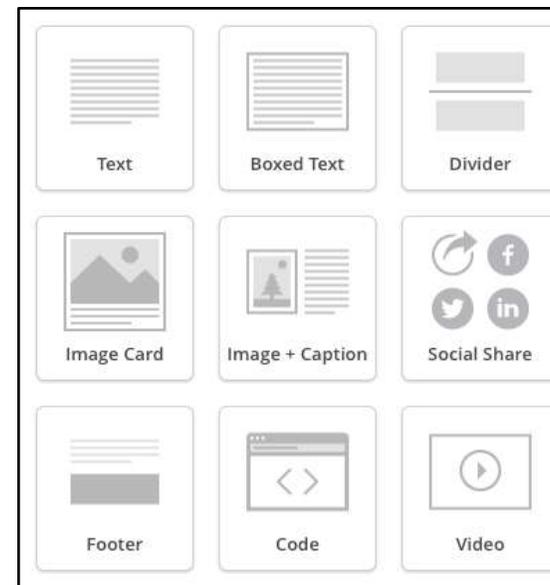
Below are their responses:



80%
Prefer Campaign Monitor's layout



10%
Prefer Constant Contact's layout



10%
Prefer MailChimp's layout