RSPCA

UX Research Project

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Harness Projects, September 2024

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Executive Summary

The RSPCA Australia aims to enhance the effectiveness of its monthly Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) outreach to better engage approximately 120,000 supporters. The primary objectives are to understand audience behaviors, improve email engagement, and grow the subscriber base with quality, engaged users.

Key Insight & Solution

1. **Email Overload and Relevance**
   - **Insight:** Users prefer receiving emails no more than once a month and are more engaged with content related to pet care.
   - **Solution:** Limit emails to monthly updates and segment the email list to deliver personalized content based on user interests.
2. **Incentives for Engagement**
   - **Insight:** Subscribers are more likely to engage with emails offering tangible benefits, such as discounts or promotions.
   - **Solution:** Partner with pet food companies and local businesses to provide exclusive offers and promote community engagement events.
3. **Mobile Optimization**
   - **Insight:** Most users access emails via mobile devices and prefer a clean, visual-centric design.
   - **Solution:** Ensure email templates are responsive, simplify layouts, and use engaging images with concise text to enhance readability and appeal on mobile devices.

Next Steps

- Conduct A/B testing with a larger audience to validate findings.
- Develop engaging video content for the RSPCA website.
- Strengthen social media presence to attract followers.
- Explore further partnerships with local businesses.
- Regularly collect subscriber feedback to optimize email content.

Project Overview

Project Background

The RSPCA is an independent, community-based charity providing animal care and protection services across the country.
This project is for RSPCA Australia, the national body - so not the RSPCA's member Societies in each state and territory.

The Brief

This brief centers on enhancing the effectiveness of RSPCA Australia's monthly outreach to approximately 120,000 supporters, a key channel for disseminating vital animal welfare information and promoting the RSPCA's national partnerships, programs, campaigns and events.

RSPCA Australia has identified this monthly Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) as strategically important and we wish to grow our subscriber base (especially quality subscribers who are likely to engage with content). It's one of the best ways we have to speak directly to people we know are interested in the work of the national office. We are seeking to better understand our audience and explore ways of adjusting content and layout to deliver a more engaging EDM, all with the objective of reaching more people.
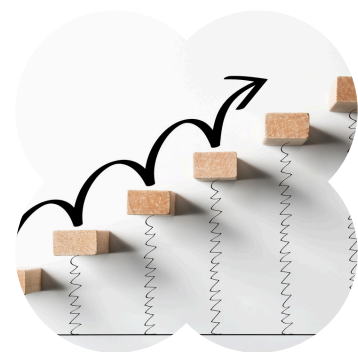
Project Objectives

Audience understanding

Better understanding of the user behaviors and preferences.

Enhancing email user engagement

Understand what the audience is seeking in email communication and how to increase engagement

Subscriber growth

Explore strategies for expanding the subscriber base and maintaining high engagement

Research Process

Step by Step

Stakeholder Interview
- We started by conducting a stakeholder interview.
- Reviewed the RSPCA project brief.
- Outlined the key goals and expectations for the project.

Research Planning
- Developed a detailed research plan.
- Wrote scripts for user interviews.
- Approached potential participants.

Research Methodology
- One-on-one interviews offered qualitative customer perspectives.
- Broad surveys enabled wider participation for numerical data.
- Usability testing found out the email layout and content issues.

Analysis
- Synthesised data
- Defined insights and found solutions
- Created User Persona to define target audiences' needs.
- DevelopedEmail template prototype
- Conducted A/B test between original and new email version for mobile.

Survey Participants

One survey was conducted as part of this research, targeted at animal lovers and pet owners. we had a total of 70 participants, with 74% being female. The largest age group was 25-34 years old, which aligns well with RSPCA's target audience.
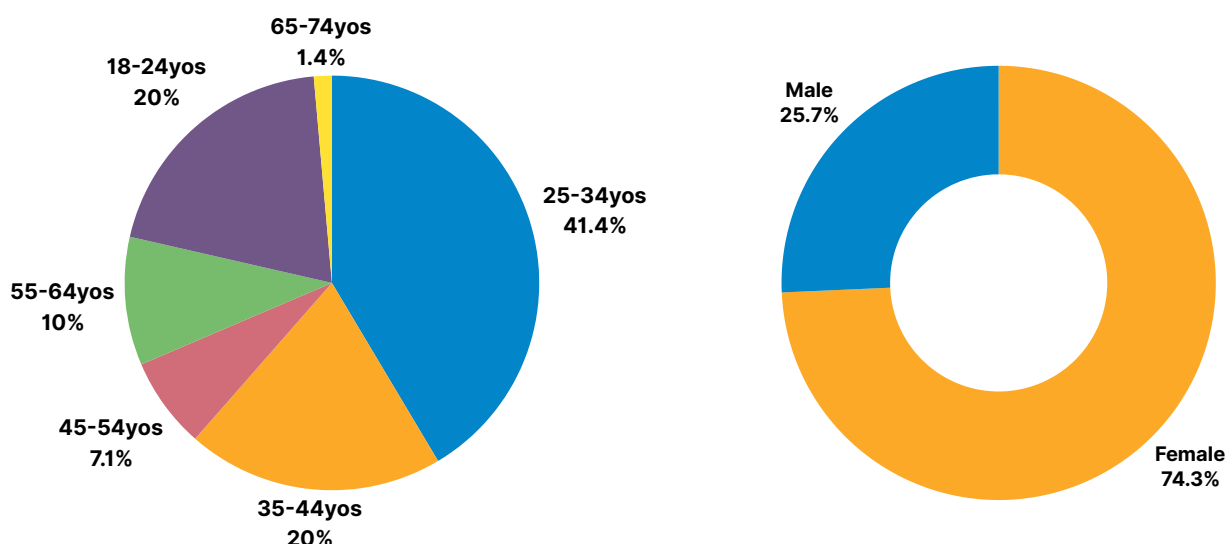
User Interview Participants

Interviews were conducted online via Zoom, with each session lasting approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Participants were asked to answer questions and review the RSPCA website and newsletter emails using their mobile phones. All participants are pet owners.

| Participants	Age	Gender	Occupation	Pets owned
Babette	36	Female	Teacher	Two cats
Wenp	40	Female	Student	Fish and bird
Emily	42	Female	Accountant	Dog
Jay	37	Male	IT Manager	Dog
Doreen	35	Female	Bank manager	Dog

Methodology - Survey

The entire class contributed to the survey, which consisted of 28 questions and received a total of 70 responses. The feedback provided valuable insights into the demographics, social cause engagement, and communication preferences of the participants.
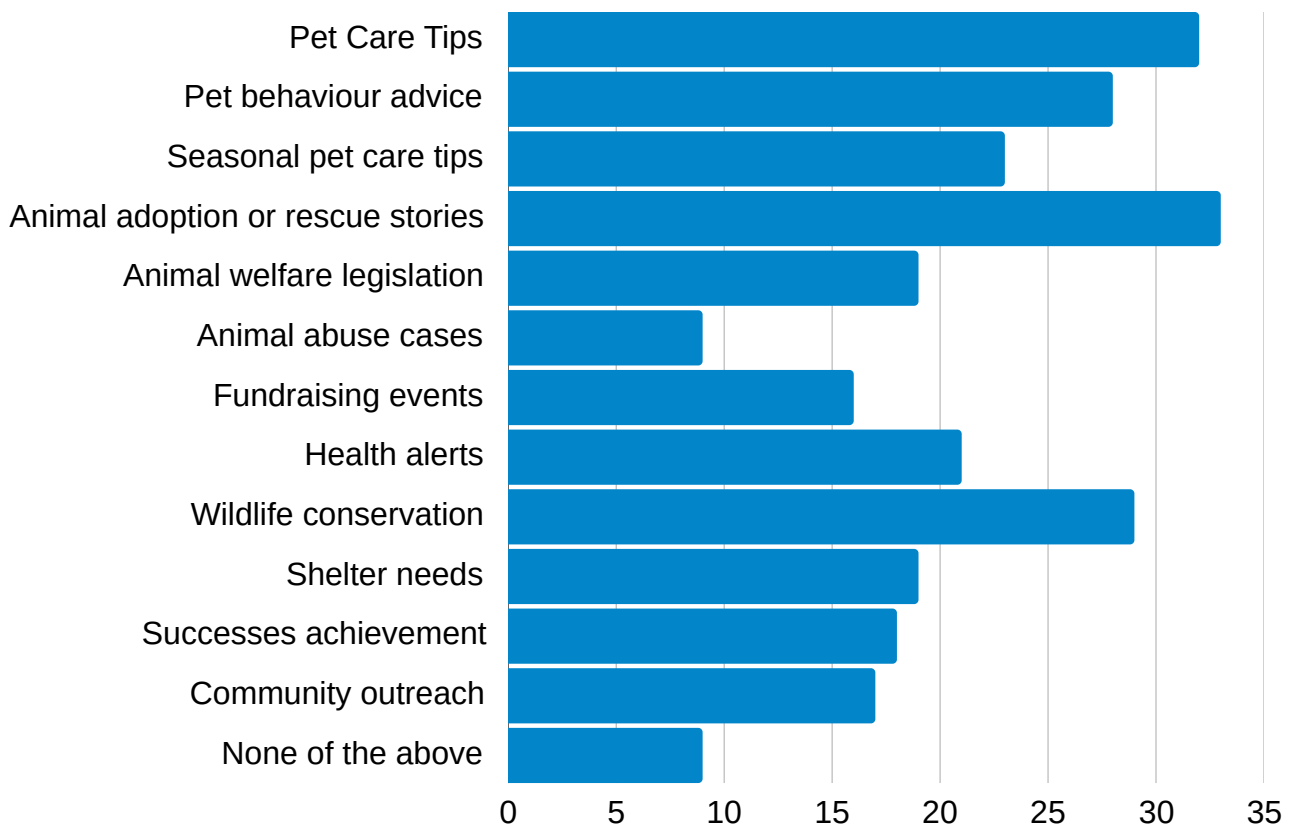
Participants' prefenrences

There are some valuable User Preferences we found from the survey, which helped me to find insights.
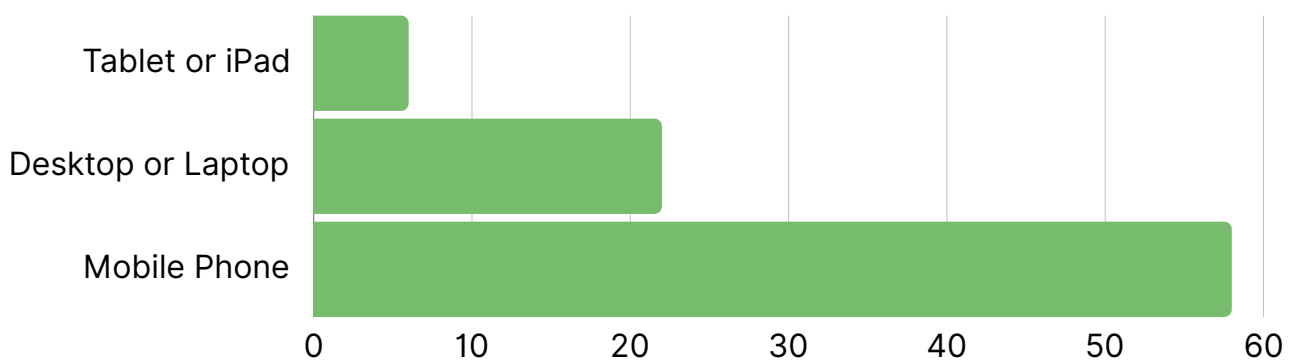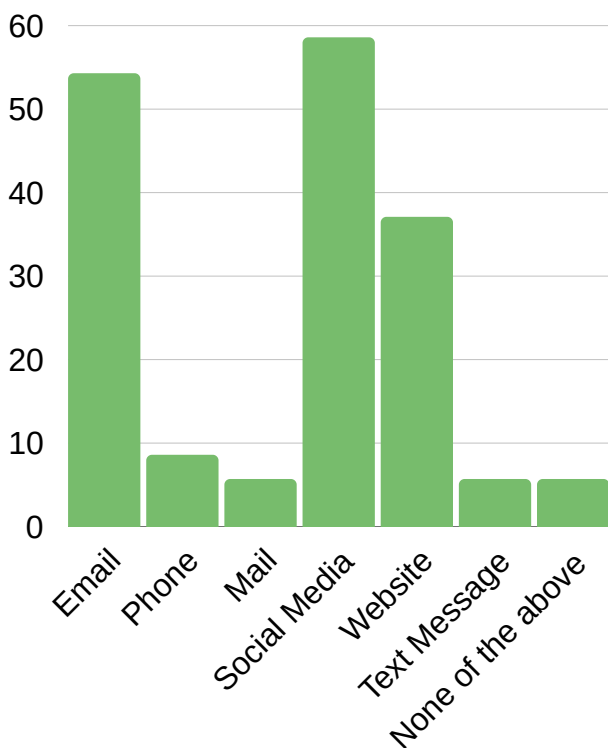

The bar chart left shows shows Mobile phones are the primary device used to check emails.
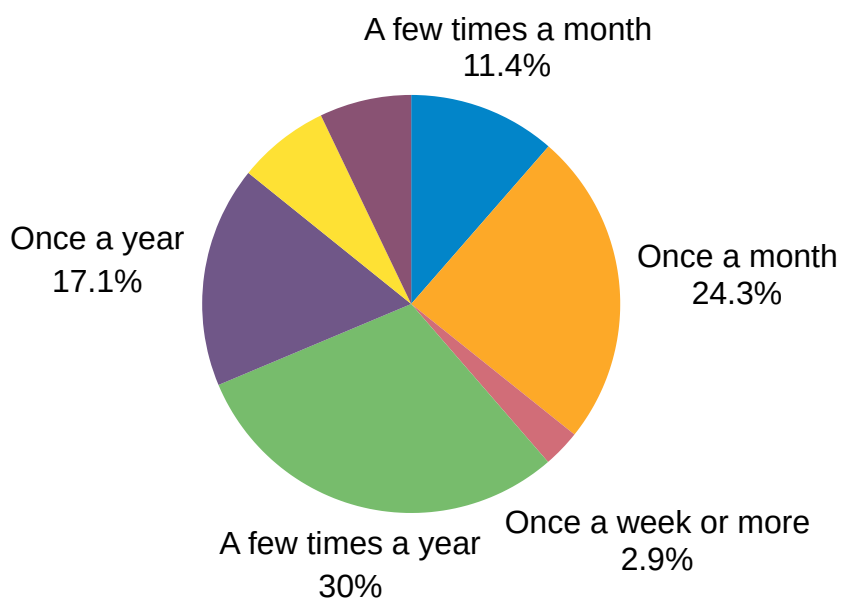
The pie chart above indicated participants how often do they want to hear from charities about fundraising or other ways to support In a typical year.

The bar chart above shows what animal topics participants interested to read in a monthly newsletter.

The bar chart above shows participants prefer to receive information or updates about about social causes
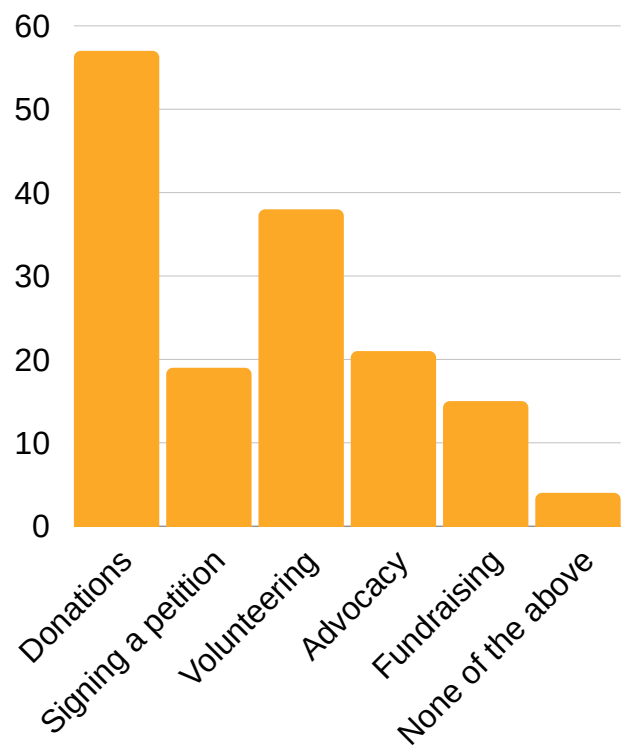
The bar chart above shows the ways participants want to show their support.

Limitation

The limitations of this research design included the following:

- **Sample Size:** With only 70 survey responses and a limited number of interview participants, the sample may not be large enough to fully represent the broader population of RSPCA supporters and potential subscribers.

- **Self-Selection Bias:** Participants were pet owners, which means the feedback might be skewed towards individuals already interested in pets, potentially limiting insights from non-pet owners who may still support RSPCA's broader mission.

- **Online Format:** Conducting interviews via Zoom may have impacted participants' comfort levels, potentially leading to less candid feedback. Additionally, participants needed to use mobile phones, which may have influenced how they interacted with the RSPCA website and emails compared to other devices.

- **Limited Scope:** The focus on reviewing the website and newsletter through mobile devices excludes how users may interact with RSPCA content on other platforms, such as desktops or tablets.

Insights & Solution

Persona: Based on the survey and interview results, I created two personas to represent the different user types that might engage with RSPCA. Personas are fictional characters that help us better understand our target audience' needs, experiences, behaviors, goals and pain points..

Persona 1

Jessica Evans

Age: 30
Location: Sydney
Occupation: Primary School Teacher
Family: Married, live with husband and their dog Momo
Tech Savvy: High, uses mobile devices

Motivation

- Interested in learning about the best ways to care for her dog, from diet to training.
- Values transparency and credibility in the organizations she supports.
- Interested in resources she can use to educate her students about animals and their welfare.

Pain

- Overwhelmed by the volume of emails she receives daily, making her selective about what she opens.
- Finds it difficult to engage with content that doesn't directly relate to her pets or her interests.

Quotes

"It's important to me that any organization I support is transparent and credible. I need to trust where my donations are going."

"I'm careful about where I give my email. I don't want to end up with a bunch of spam, even if I support the cause."

Persona 2

Sarah Lee

Age: 34
Location: Brisbane
Occupation: Marketing Manager
Family: Single, live with two cats Milo and Simba
Tech Savvy: High, uses mobile devices

Motivation

- Wants to see how her contributions make a real difference in animal welfare.
- Prefers learning through images and videos.
- Finds emails more appealing if they include special offers or discounts, which adds value to the content.

Pain

- Finds it difficult to stay engaged with organizations that send frequent, text-heavy emails.
- Avoids content that focuses on sad or distressing animal stories, as it makes her feel anxious.

Quotes

"It's important to me that any organization I support is transparent and credible. I need to trust where my donations are going."

"I'm careful about where I give my email. I don't want to end up with a bunch of spam, even if I support the cause."

Insights & Solution

Following the data collection, I synthesized the information to define key insights and develop solutions. I created user personas, built prototype for email template, and conducted A/B testing between the original and new email versions, particularly focusing on mobile optimization.

Insight 1: Email Overload and Relevance

- The survey results indicate that most participants don't want to receive emails more than once a month.
- 5 out of 5 interviewees recommended that they prefer to receive emails once a month for any updates or newsletters from the charity organization.
- 4 out of 5 interviewees are more interested in receiving educational information on pet care.

Quotes from Interviewees

🐾 "I'm more interested about the content of how to train my dog." - Emily

🐾 "I prefer receive update email once a month." - Wenp

Solution

- **Personalized Content:** Segment the email list based on user interests and pet ownership (e.g., dog owners, cat owners). Send tailored content that focuses specifically on pet care tips, health advice, and related topics.
- **Monthly Email Updates:** Based on feedback, limit emails to once per month to avoid overwhelming subscribers. This aligns with both survey results and interviewee preferences for fewer emails.
- **Educational Resources:** Include links to downloadable resources or short videos on pet care, as well as quizzes or polls to engage subscribers and provide practical, actionable insights.

THE SMART KITTEN AND CAT BUYER'S GUIDE

We've recently refreshed our RSPCA Smart Kitten and Cat Buyer's Guide, so you can make the most informed choice when it comes to bringing home a new feline companion.

Download Now!

Email content example above is about guidance for cat buyers.

Insight 2: Incentives for Engagement

- During my user interviews, 3 interviewees expressed a willingness to open RSPCA emails if they included tangible benefits, such as discounts on pet food. This suggests that offering exclusive discounts or promotions related to pet care could significantly increase email open rates and engagement.
- 1 interviewee suggested that RSPCA could collaborate with local communities or pet-friendly cafés. She emphasized her own strong connection with her local community and believes this would be an effective way to boost subscriptions.

Quotes from Interviewees

"If RSPCA can provide some special discount for cats food, I'll be interested to open the email." - Babette

"You know what, there's a pet-friendly café close to my apartment where I take my dog for brunch on weekends. They even offer homemade pet food. If the RSPCA could partner with a café like this, I believe it would help raise awareness about their work." - Doreen

Solution

- **Partnerships with Pet Food Companies:** RSPCA has national partners like Royal Canin and Petbarn. We should consider exploring opportunities to secure exclusive discounts or promotions from these pet food companies for our subscribers and members.
- **Community Engagement:** Promote RSPCA's involvement in local events (e.g., pet adoption drives, charity walks) in partnership with local businesses. This builds a sense of community and encourages recipients to engage with the emails to stay informed about local initiatives.
- **Local Business Partnerships:** Collaborate with local pet-friendly businesses, such as cafés, parks, or pet stores, to provide exclusive offers, discounts, or special events for RSPCA subscribers. For example, discounts at a pet-friendly café or a "bring your pet" event could add personal value for subscribers.

Get 20%off when you shop on PETBARN.

Get Your Promo Code!

On the right, there is an example of how we could incorporate such offers into our email newsletters.

Insight 3:Mobile Optimization

- The survey reveals that the majority of participants prefer using mobile devices to access their emails.
- All five interviewees suggested utilizing mobile devices for checking emails.
- In user interviews, I requested participants to evaluate the RSPCA website and emails on their mobile phones. They pointed out several areas for improvement, including a cluttered email layout, excessive text, small font sizes, and unappealing email titles.

Quotes from Interviewees

The layout is messy, I don't like too many text content, I don't want to read." - Babette

"I won't open the email with this title, it's seems boring." - Jay

"the font size is too small for me, and the pictures are small too." - Doreen

Solution

- **Responsive Design:** Ensure that all email templates are fully responsive and optimized for mobile devices. This includes using larger fonts, concise text, and easily clickable buttons.
- **Simplified Layout:** Use a simple and clean layout that loads quickly on mobile devices.
- **Visual-Centric Design:** Use attractive images paired with brief, clear messaging to convey information. Ensure that any text included is essential and easy to read, making the email more appealing to users who prefer visual content over lengthy text.
- **Concise, Engaging Titles:** Create succinct yet compelling subject lines that captivate subscribers, encouraging them to open the email. Employ straightforward and impactful language to engage the audience effectively.
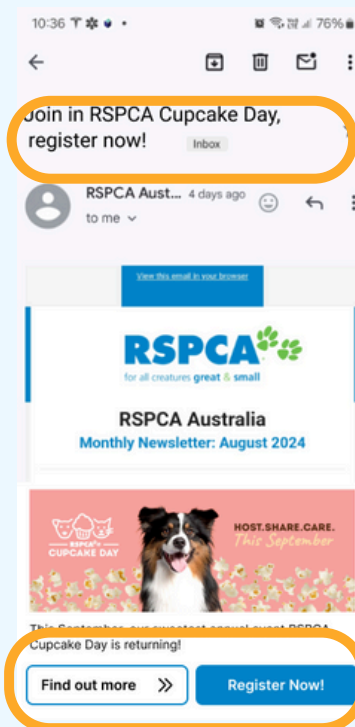
I have developed a new email version optimized for mobile devices. Let's compare it with RSPCA's August newsletter to see the improvements.

Initially, I revised the title, emphasise the main theme of this month's email. Additionally, I incorporated clickable buttons to enhance responsiveness.
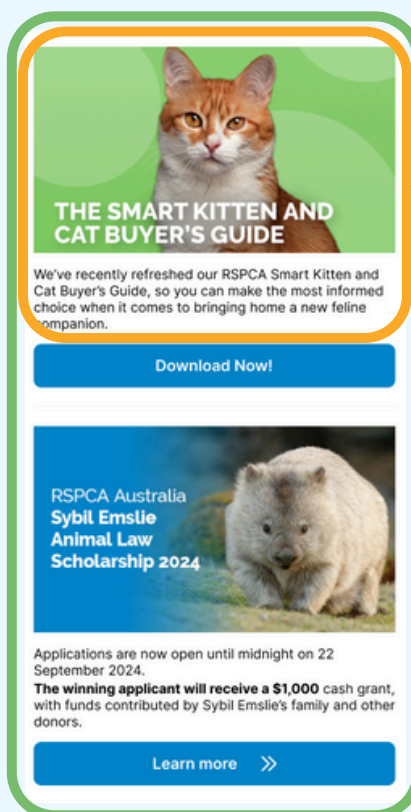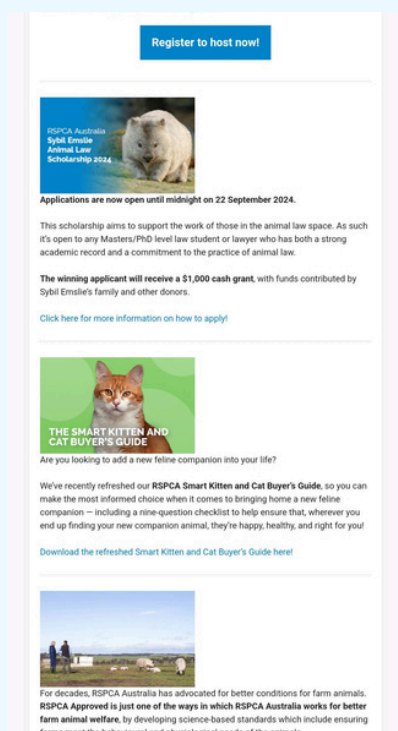
Original version
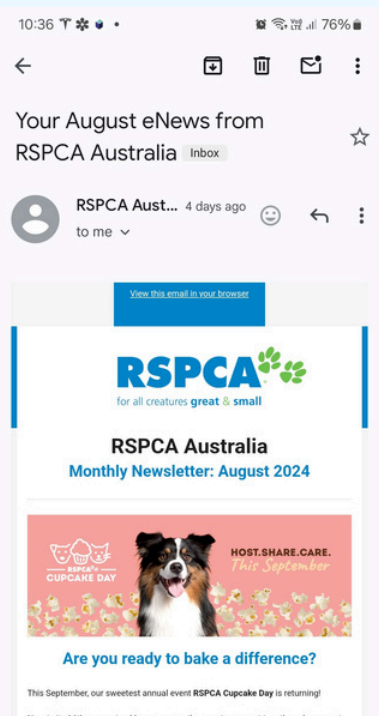
New version

Concise, Engaging Titles

Easily clickable buttons

For the main content, I utilized a large image alongside a brief paragraph of text. I adjusted the font to a larger size, ensuring that the content is easy to read, while maintaining a simple and clean layout.

Brief, clear messaging paired with large images to convey key messages visually.

larger fonts, concise text, and easily clickable buttons

To subscribe to RSPCA newsletters via mobile, you have to scroll all the way down to the bottom of a lengthy page, which can be quite frustrating. I suggest adding a subscribe button in the top right corner for easier access. Alternatively, placing a subscribe button within the hamburger menu would also provide a simple solution for users to find it.
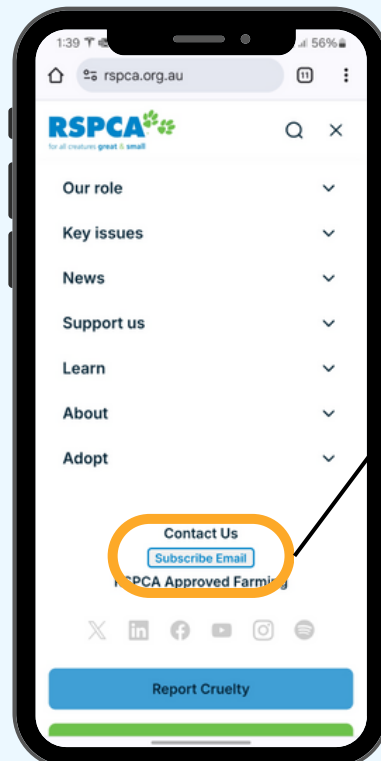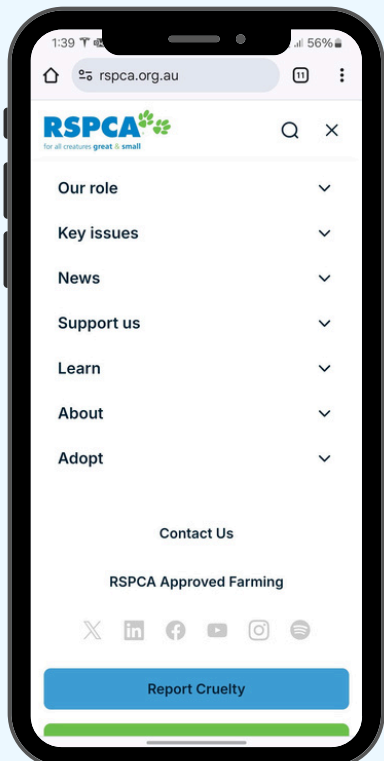
Original version

New version
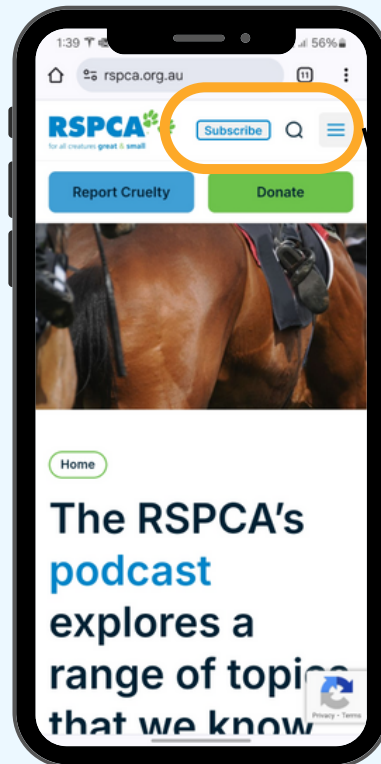
Subscribe

Add 'Subscribe' button which allowing users to quickly and easily subscribe to the RSPCA's content.

Subscribe Email

Add 'Subscribe Email' button which allowing users to quickly and easily subscribe to the RSPCA's content.

Next Step

Due to time constraints, I was only able to develop solutions for the three insights I mentioned earlier, but there are many additional steps we can take moving forward.

- **Expand A/B Testing:** I conducted an A/B test comparing the original and new email versions with my interviewees, and 5 out of 5 preferred the new version. However, the sample size is too small to draw definitive conclusions, so it's essential to conduct an A/B test with a larger audience to validate these findings.

- **Develop Video Content:** Incorporating short videos on the RSPCA website to provide engaging, visual content, as people tend to be more attracted to visual media. This could enhance user interaction and engagement.

- **Enhance Social Media Strategy:** As the survey results show that most participants prefer using social media to get information. So focus on building a stronger social media presence by sharing engaging content, including stories, tips, and community collaborations, to attract and retain followers.

- **Explore Further Partnerships:** Continue exploring partnerships with local businesses, cafés, and pet-related organisations to offer more exclusive content and discounts for subscribers.

- **User Feedback Collection:** Regularly collect feedback from subscribers to refine and optimize both the email content and other communication channels.

Appendix

Research Plan

Introduction	• Title: UX research project of RSPCA • Author: Grace Lu, UX designer, gracelu8167@gmail.com • Stakeholders: RSPCA Tim • Date: 18/07/2024 - 09/09/2024 • Project background: The RSPCA is an independent, community-based charity providing animal care and protection services across the country. This project is for RSPCA Australia, the national body - so not the RSPCA's member Societies in each state and territory. • Research goals: figure out whether ordering flowers online is easier than offline, does the app help users save time. Does customized bouquet function is easy to use.
Research Objective	• **Audience understanding:** Better understanding of the user behaviors and preferences. • **Enhancing email user engagement:** Understand what the audience is seeking in email communication and how to increase engagement • **Subscriber growth:** Explore strategies for expanding the subscriber base and maintaining high engagement.
Timeline	**Week 1**: Stakeholder meeting. **Week 2**: Finalize research plan, create surveys and interview scripts. **Week 3-4**: Conduct surveys and interviews. **Week 5-6**: Analyze data and insights, compile research report. **Week 7:** Finalize presentation, represent presentation to stakeholders.
Participants	• Find 4-6 participants for user interviews, target audience are 18-60 years old and have pets. • Collect as many responses as possible for the survey.

Methodology	**Surveys** • **Purpose**: Gather quantitative data on email frequency preferences, content interest, and user engagement patterns. • **Target Participants**: RSPCA subscribers and potential subscribers. • **Key Metrics**: Preferred email frequency, content types, incentive preferences, engagement with visual content. **User Interviews** • **Purpose**: Explore user motivations, pain points, and preferences in more detail. • **Method**: Conduct 30-40 minute online interviews via Zoom. • **Target Participants**: Pet owners who are current or potential RSPCA subscribers. • **Key Topics**: Email content preferences, response to incentives, use of mobile devices for email, interest in community partnerships. **A/B Testing** • **Purpose**: Compare the effectiveness of different email designs in real-world scenarios. • **Method**: Test different email versions (e.g., original vs. redesigned) with a large sample size. • **Key Metrics**: Open rates, click-through rates, engagement with specific content (e.g., discounts, pet care tips). **Usability Testing** • **Purpose**: Assess the user experience of the RSPCA website. • **Method**: Conduct usability tests where participants interact with the website and email newsletters both via laptop and mobile devices. **Key Metrics**: Task completion rates, user satisfaction.

Interview script

Introduction (5 minutes):
Greeting: "Hi [Participant's Name], thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. My name is Grace, currently I'm doing a project with RSPCA. It is about to understand how we can improve our email newsletters."
Purpose: "The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experiences with RSPCA's monthly EDM, what you like, what you don't, and any suggestions you may have for improvement. There are no right or wrong answers; we're just interested in your honest opinions."
Consent: "I'd like to record our conversation so that I can focus on our discussion and accurately capture your feedback. Is that okay with you?"
Confidentiality: "Your responses will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes."

Interview Questions:
General Perceptions (5 minutes):
"How long have you been subscribed to RSPCA's email newsletters?"
"What initially motivated you to subscribe to our newsletters?"
"How would you describe your overall experience with RSPCA's emails?"

Content Preferences (10 minutes):
"What types of content do you enjoy most in our newsletters? (e.g., animal stories, tips on pet care, updates on campaigns)"
"Is there any content you find less interesting or tend to skip over?"
"If you could add more content to our newsletters, what would it be?"

Engagement Behavior (10 minutes):
"How often do you open RSPCA's emails when they arrive in your inbox?"
"Can you recall the last time you took action based on one of our emails? What prompted you to do so?"
"What typically prevents you from opening or engaging with our emails?"

Pain Points (5 minutes):
"Have you ever experienced any frustration or difficulties with our newsletters? If so, can you describe them?"
"Is there anything about the format or design of our emails that you think could be improved?"

Improvement Suggestions (5 minutes):
"What do you think RSPCA could do to make their newsletters more engaging or useful for you?
"Would you like to see any changes in how often we send out our newsletters?"
"Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with our emails?"

Closing (2-3 minutes):
Summary: "Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with me today. Your feedback is incredibly valuable and will help us improve our newsletters."
Goodbye: "Thanks again for your time, and have a great day!"

Email Template Prototype Link:

Dhttps://www.figma.com/proto/MrtgB3i62MSnSYIyWxm0FA/RSPCA?page-id=0%3A1&node-id=1-4&node-type=FRAME&viewport=1281%2C480%2C0.63&t=R44a8nx1YgBL2Zki-1&scaling=scale-down&content-scaling=fixed

Survey Data Link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ljxFlnHU2YyBTqB4lkErVGkV10mls2Mo9MJPgT2Hn8g/edit#responses