

Participant 1 – Male, aged 30, Octopus Energy customer - AB

The Scenario

As an Octopus Energy customer you have received an email reminding you that your Direct Debit payment is about to be taken. Please take some time to read the email and when you are ready I will ask some questions.

Variant A

1. Is there anything in particular that stands out to you in this email?

It's got a comparison with other providers. It's got a bit about my usage and its telling me my environmental impact.

2. What do you like and why?

I like to know that I'm making a positive impact to the planet.

3. What do you dislike and why?

It would be good to see exactly how much energy I did use. The Which? Award feels odd like its trying to sell it to me when I'm already a customer.

4. If you received this email what would you do next?

Probably nothing but I may be tempted to look at the smart meter. I might look into my usage to get a better overview.

5. Please rate how you feel about your experience from 1-5 with 1 being extremely negative to 5 being extremely positive. Why?

4 – Normally it's a really plain email to say they're taking your money but this is more personal which reminds me why I switched to Octopus in the first place.

6. What would you change?

It would be nice to have more info on my usage. Is this the first month I've saved or is it a trend I'm doing well on?

Variant B

1. Is there anything in particular that stands out to you in this email?

There's a big clear reminder at the top about the type of company Octopus are – renewable energy, ecological. It's interesting to see the chart of my usage. It's nice seeing year on year which makes it more meaningful.

2. What do you like and why?

It reminds me about the environmental factor but also gives me information that's useful beyond just taking my money. Its nice to know they are donating to WWF.

3. What do you dislike and why?

The text above the login button could be condensed down and it feels a bit detached from the usage chart above. It's not clear if by saving energy if my account is now in credit.

4. If you received this email what would you do next?

I'd be tempted to try out the referral scheme. I wouldn't normally share but the placement with the environmental impact message encourages me.

5. Please rate how you feel about your experience from 1-5 with 1 being extremely negative to 5 being extremely positive. Why?

5 – It no longer feels like its just reminding me they are going to take my money. Interesting but simple data.

6. What would you change?

Id be tempted to get rid of the Which? Award but it feels less of part of the email in this version so I can skip it if I want to.

Concluding questions

1. Having viewed both variants, which is your preferred version and why?

B – Because it tells me that I saved electricity in a visual way and that its good for the environment.

2. Please explain your perception of the Octopus Energy brand.

Renewable energy is key to the brand and not an afterthought.

Participant 2 – Female, aged 26, EDF customer -AB

The Scenario

As an Octopus Energy customer you have received an email reminding you that your Direct Debit payment is about to be taken. Please take some time to read the email and when you are ready I will ask some questions.

Variant A

1. Is there anything in particular that stands out to you in this email?

Saving the trees, that's a good thing to see as reducing carbon footprint. Clear and straightforward layout and images.

2. What do you like and why?

I like the emojis, very modern, like monzo. Its good it shows the percentage of energy your saving. I like the referral to save money. Its good to know I can get in touch if im having problems.

3. What do you dislike and why?

Nothing

4. If you received this email what would you do next?

Id look at the view your usage part. Id expect to see a pie chart. Id check out the tree saving thing. And the split £100 to see if that's worth doing.

5. Please rate how you feel about your experience from 1-5 with 1 being extremely negative to 5 being extremely positive. Why?

5 – because its set out in an easy way, it seems honest, its telling you that you need to pay but also telling you the benefits.

6. What would you change?

Options for better deals as a long time customer

Variant B

1. Is there anything particular that stands out to you in this email?

Its great to see the energy usage in the email already but you can also see more by logging in. The split £100 stands out more as its bigger. Its nice its got the charity WWF.

2. What do you like and why?

I like the energy is displayed already. Its easy to log in straight from the email. The charity bit, another benefit of using the brand. I really like the love and power at the end of the email, gives it a personal and fun touch

3. What do you dislike and why?

I might not neccessarilly notice it's a statement due to the large image at the top as it looks a bit like an ad.

4. If you received this email what would you do next?

I would look at the energy usage and log in. Split £100. If I had some spare time id look at the wwf info as its good to know the brand supports them.

5. Please rate how you feel about your experience from 1-5 with 1 being extremely negative to 5 being extremely positive. Why?

5 – theres nothing bad about it at all. They seem like decent emails with all the info you need, how you can get in touch.

6. What would you change?

The get in touch could be above the tree information so its not so far down.

Concluding questions

1. Having viewed both variants, which is your preferred version and why?

B – purely because it shows you information about your usage without having to dig for the information, otherwise it doesn't mean too much. Its written in a friendly way.

2. Please explain your perception of the Octopus Energy brand.

They seem honest, straight forward, not trying to screw anyone over. They seem to care about the environment. Its nice they have a blog, I wouldn't expect them to have a blog. A good star rating which is reassuring. The logo is cute with the little octopus.

Participant 4 – Female, aged 59, Ovo Energy customer -BA

The Scenario

As an Octopus Energy customer you have received an email reminding you that your Direct Debit payment is about to be taken. Please take some time to read the email and when you are ready I will ask some questions.

Variant B

1. Is there anything particular that stands out to you in this email?

Mostly the emphasis on renewable energy. Its clear and grabs my attention. It makes me feel positive about the bill.

2. What do you like and why?

I like the message that its renewable that's important. I like that im paying 14% less than average and that ive saved 14% on my bill and 213 trees, that's great!

3. What do you dislike and why?

I don't like the 'love and power' I think it's a bit childish and not business like, can I take them seriously?

4. If you received this email what would you do next?

Probably nothing. I might log in to check my usage.

5. Please rate how you feel about your experience from 1-5 with 1 being extremely negative to 5 being extremely positive. Why?

4 – purely because I don't like the love and power.

6. What would you change?

Just the love and power. Id change it to kind regards.

Variant A

1. Is there anything particular that stands out to you in this email?

Save 213 trees which is good. It doesn't quite have the same impact as the other one about renewable energy.

2. What do you like and why?

I like that its showing electricity and gas in the same bit but it doesn't tell me how or why its down. I like the icons.

3. What do you dislike and why?

Its not very clear, what does the usage mean? In monetary terms or consequence of changing supplier.

4. If you received this email what would you do next?

I might look my usage. Id probably just ignore it.

5. Please rate how you feel about your experience from 1-5 with 1 being extremely negative to 5 being extremely positive. Why?

3 – it giving me how much my direct debit is going to be but its not as clear as the other one.

6. What would you change?

You need to qualify the figures in order for them to be relevant.

Concluding questions

1. Having viewed both variants, which is your preferred version and why?

B – because it gives me all the reasons I should be staying with the company.

2. Please explain your perception of the Octopus Energy brand.

Ethical company, concentrating on renewable energy and also seem to be getting a good deal which suggests it efficient. It appears to be innovative and appealing to younger people with the green message and emojis.

Participant 4 – Male, aged 61, Ovo Energy customer -BA

The Scenario

As an Octopus Energy customer you have received an email reminding you that your Direct Debit payment is about to be taken. Please take some time to read the email and when you are ready I will ask some questions.

Variant B

3. Is there anything particular that stands out to you in this email?

The graph stands out as a useful thing to see, kits good to compare one year to the next.

4. What do you like and why?

I love the look of it, the colours, it feels friendly. Talking about the environment is very topical, people want to see that. Social media icons and link for referrals is good. The difficulty paying is nice and clear. The bit about the donations are good, nice graphics.

5. What do you dislike and why?

Im not a fan of the emojis. The look a bit thrivalous. Maybe if there were less it would be better. The graphic by split £100 is a but small, I cant tell what it is.

6. If you received this email what would you do next?

Id be interested in how much ive got to pay, have a look at the comparision on my usage. Id have a look at the renewable energy as a point of interest.

7. Please rate how you feel about your experience from 1-5 with 1 being extremely negative to 5 being extremely positive. Why?

3.5 – the emojis let it down. The usage table is perhaps better viewed through a link than in the email itself. You don't want to be bombarded with facts in an email.

8. What would you change?

Should there be a phone number to get in touch? Personally I think the background colour is too dark.

Variant A

7. Is there anything particular that stands out to you in this email?

Compared to the first one its a lot more consise and to the point. It doesn't have the comparision but I like the graphic that's showing my usage is down.

8. What do you like and why?

I like that it gets straight to the point. I like the tips about saving money which the other one didn't do. That's what I want as a customer. I like the signature is at the bottom is at the bottom of this one and I actually like the emojis on this one. I like the colour the buttons, its friendly and clear what theyre leading to. Its not as busy as vB but can find out more if I want it or not.

9. What do you dislike and why?

Don't like the darker blue, looks wrong, maybe solid black would be better.

Over use of emojis. I don't like to bother other people with reffereals.

10. If you received this email what would you do next?

I would make a note that ive got to pay and click on my usage to get more detail. Id click to find out about renewable energy. Id click on smart meter if I was thinking of getting one.

11. Please rate how you feel about your experience from 1-5 with 1 being extremely negative to 5 being extremely positive. Why?

4 – its because of the emoji situation, theyre a bit irritating. Content wise id give it a 5.

12. What would you change?

Icon on the referrals, make it bigger and more relevant. Id make the whole panel stand out more. The text could be a bit bigger in the letter, it's a bit weak next to the icons. Add unsubscribe.

What do the social media icons do? Thought whatsapp whas a phone number.

Concluding questions

9. Having viewed both variants, which is your preferred version and why?

A – Its more straight to the point of what the customer wants from their account – how much theyre pay, how much theyre saving and how theyre saving the environment.

10. Please explain your perception of the Octopus Energy brand.

I have no positive or negative views about them. They have a fun image with the logo which I like. That would attract me more than more formal branding.