

Study: Spam more annoying than direct mail

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A U.S. study suggests most people find spam more intrusive and irritating than they do direct mail.

Mariko Morimoto, assistant professor of advertising at the University of Georgia, and study co-author Susan Chang, assistant professor of advertising and public relations at the University of Miami, randomly assigned 119 college students to a survey that asked about either spam or direct mail.

On a scale of one to seven, where one is most intrusive and seven is least, students gave spam an average intrusiveness score of 1.93 compared with 4.24 for direct mail. For irritation, the average score was 2.46 for spam compared with 3.87 for direct mail.

The researchers determined people find spam more intrusive than direct mail because it's harder to get to legitimate and wanted messages.

And while spam often contains adult content or other inappropriate material, direct mail pieces often contain potentially useful items, such as sales promotions and easy-to-use coupons. E-mailed coupons must be printed, which is an extra step that consumers would rather not have to take.

The study appears in the fall issue of the Journal of Interactive Advertising.

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