All about Dark Mode in Email

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data axle

All about Dark Mode

Table of contents

1

What is Dark Mode?

2

Where it exists & what does it do?

3

**Coding for Dark Mode?
@media & CSS**

4

**Recommendations:
Short and long term**

Nice to meet you

Matt Caldwell
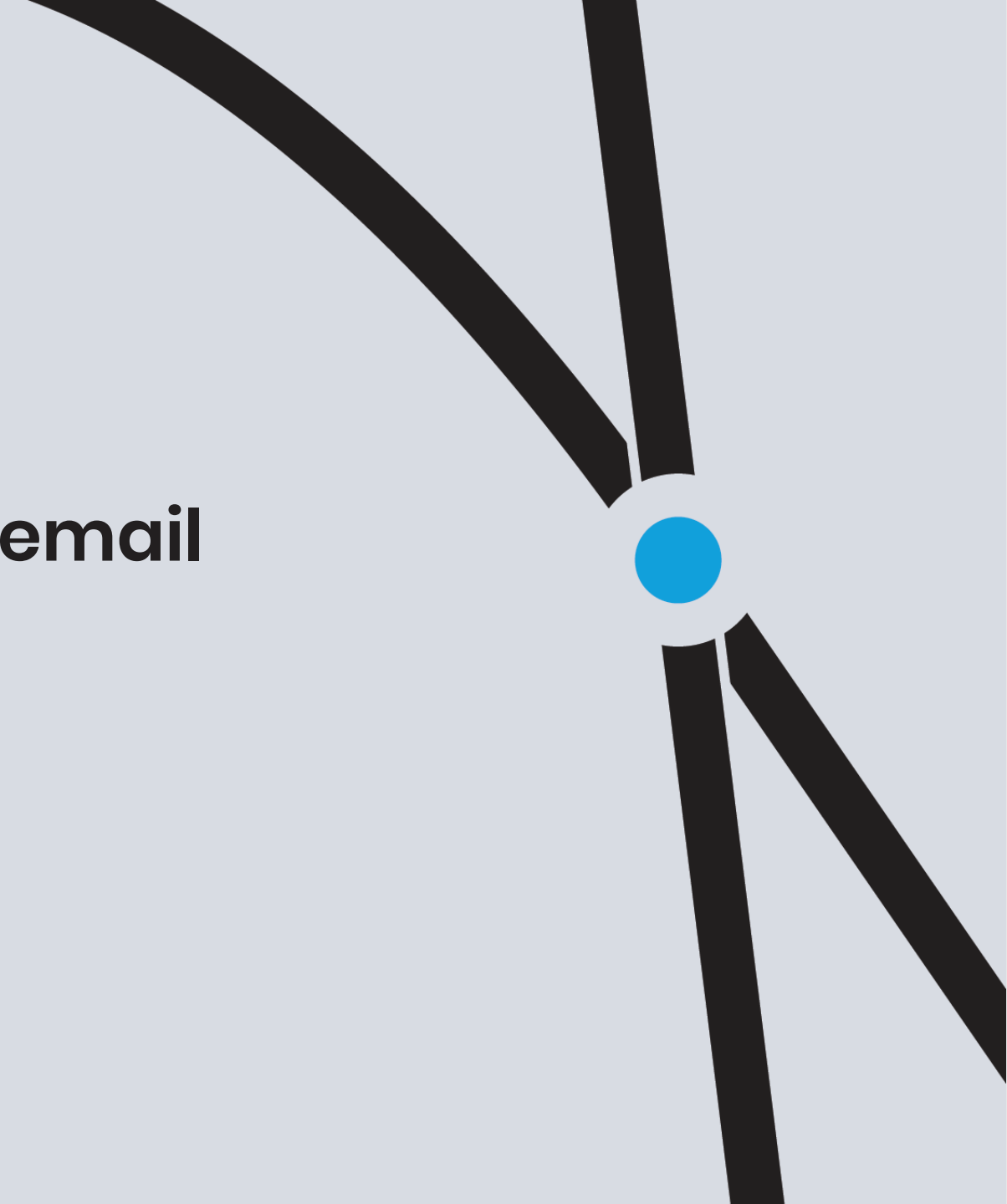*SVP, Creative Director*

Brandon Scheiner
Web Developer

Infogroup and Yes Marketing have merged to become Data Axle!
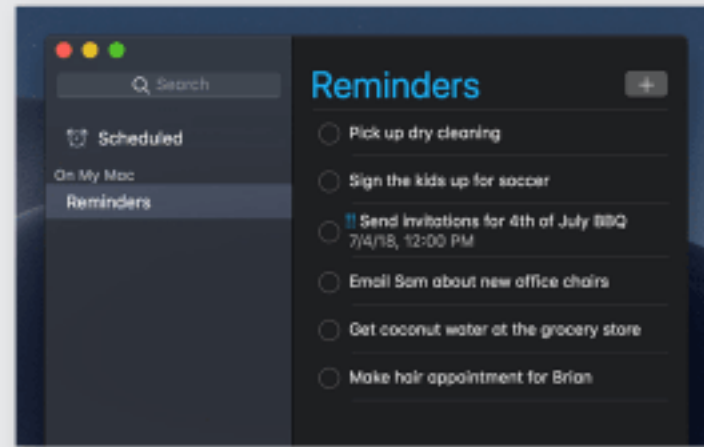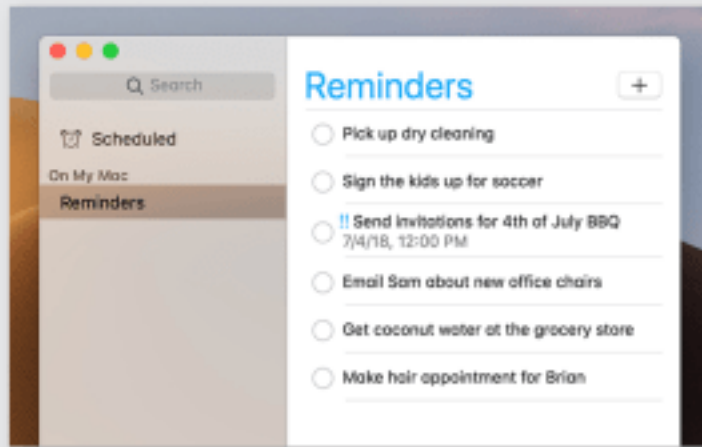
Overview of Dark Mode for email

When did it start?

2019 is the year that Dark Mode largely rolled out

All major operating systems

Most popular apps and programs

Where does Dark Mode exist?

OPERATING SYSTEMS

Mac OS

Apple iOS

Windows 10

Android OS 11

MOBILE EMAIL APPS

Gmail App (Android)

Gmail App (iOS)

Outlook App (Android)

Outlook App (iOS)

DESKTOP EMAIL CLIENTS

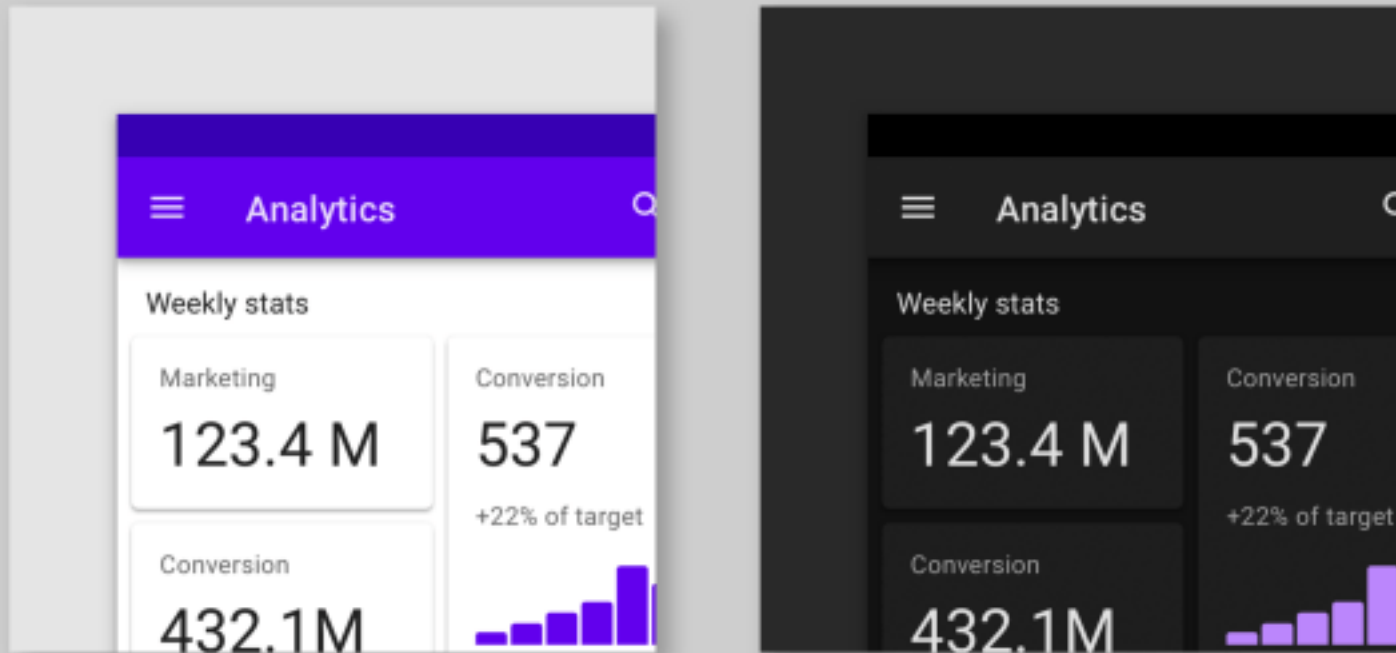Apple Mail

Outlook 2019 (Mac OS)

Outlook 2019 (Windows)

WEB EMAIL CLIENTS

Outlook.com

What does it do?

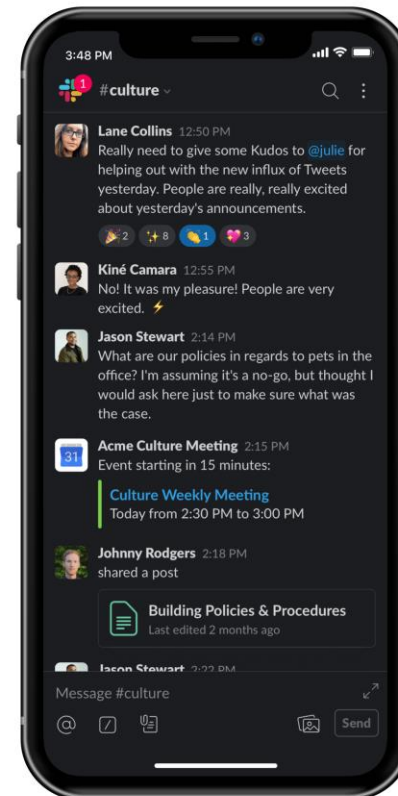Dark Mode – INVERTING colors to a dark palette
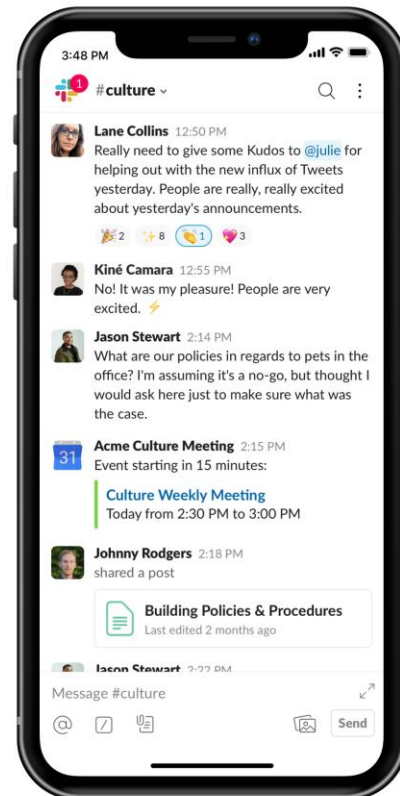
What does it do?

SIMPLIFIED

BACKGROUNDS   **white -> black**
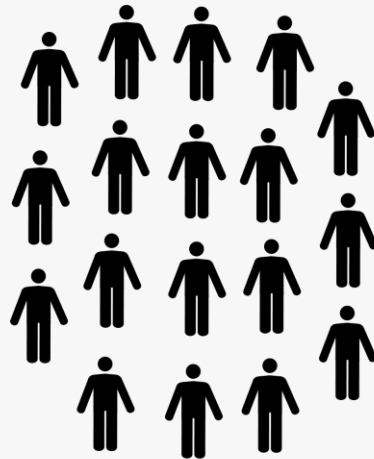
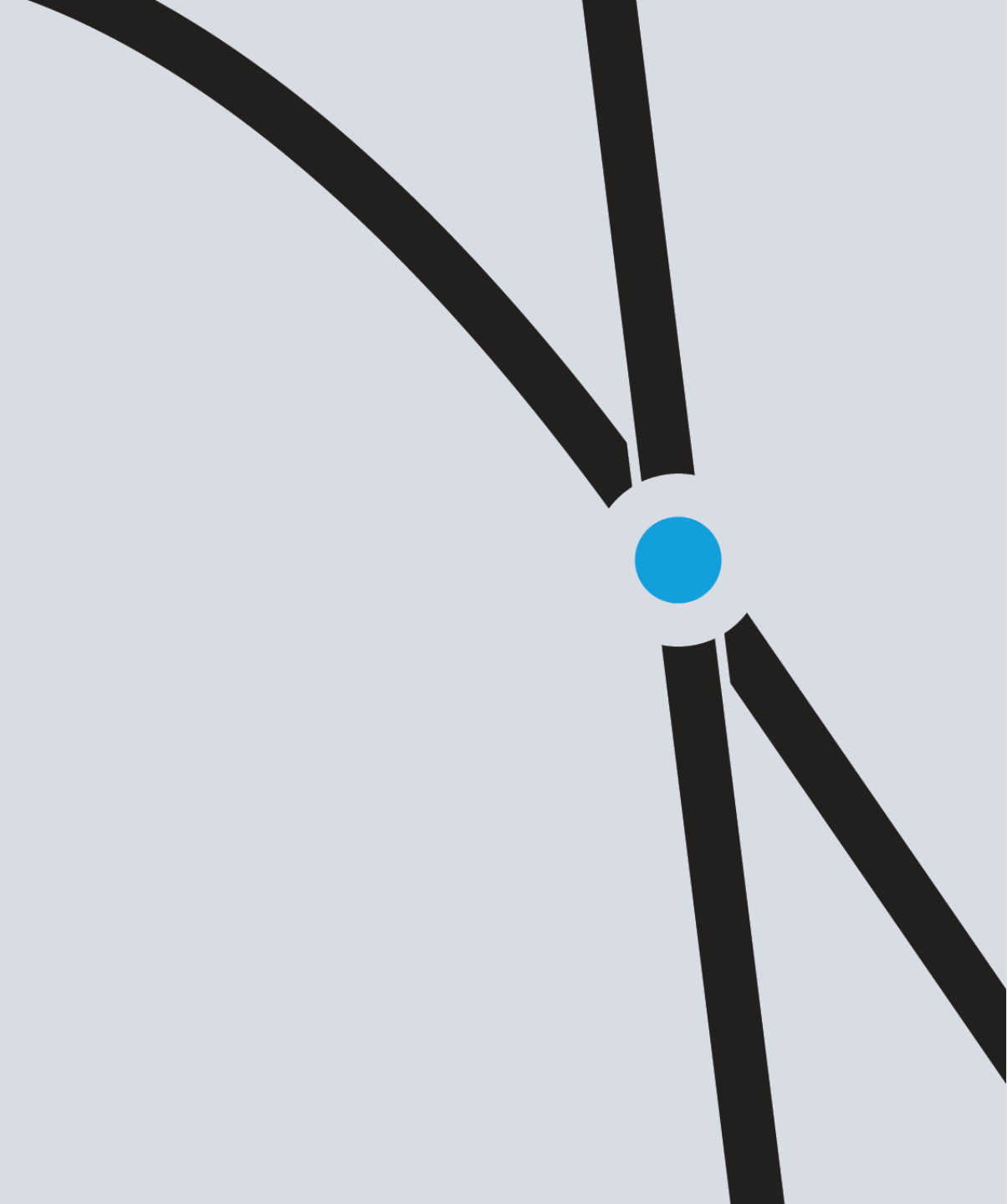**FONTS**   **light -> dark**

How many people are using it?

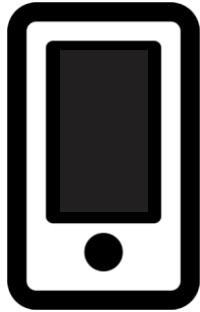The question millions of developers are asking!

We have NO idea

There are simply no metrics or code-detection to get that information
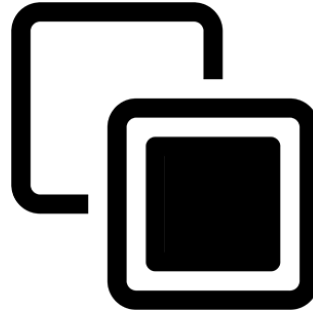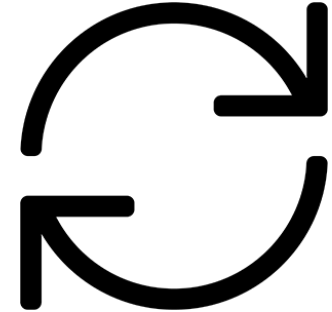
Breaking down Dark Mode
and the Inbox

3 questions to ask about Dark Mode

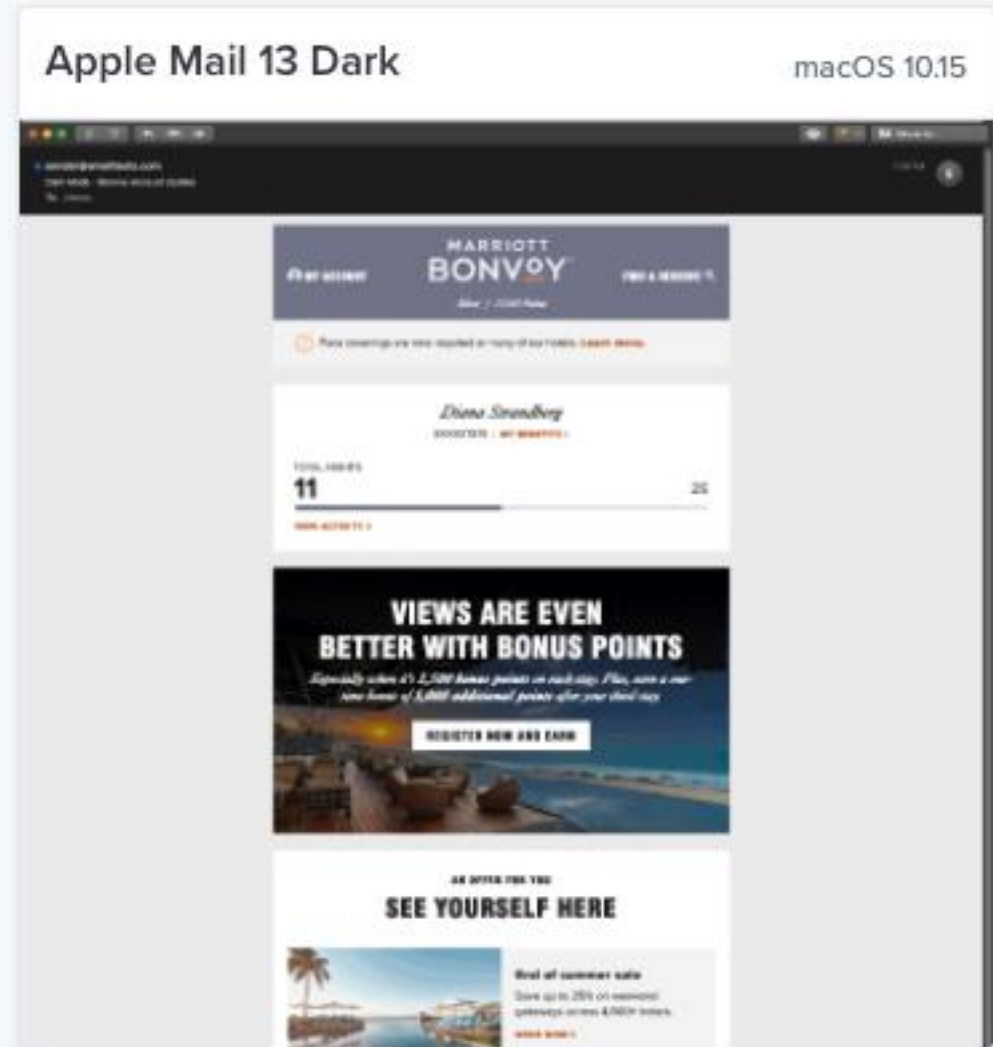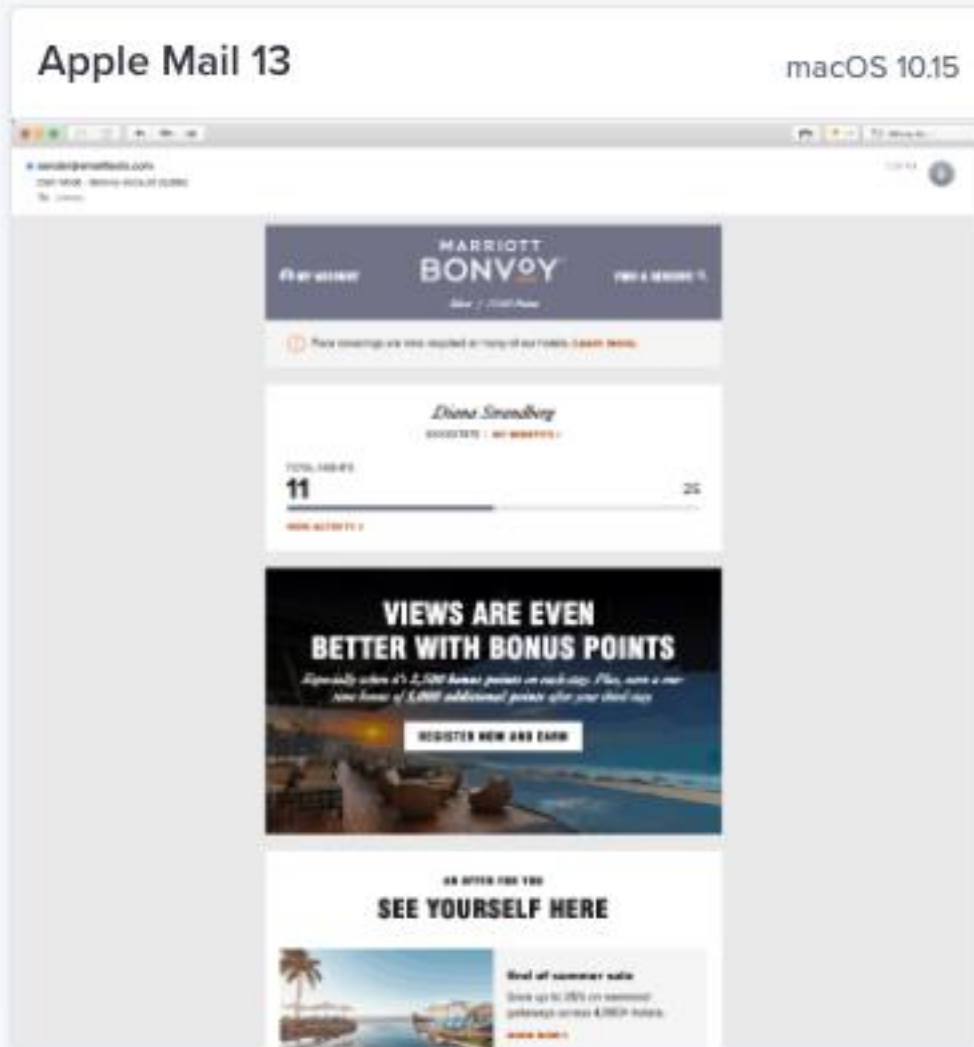**1. Does it have a Dark UI?**

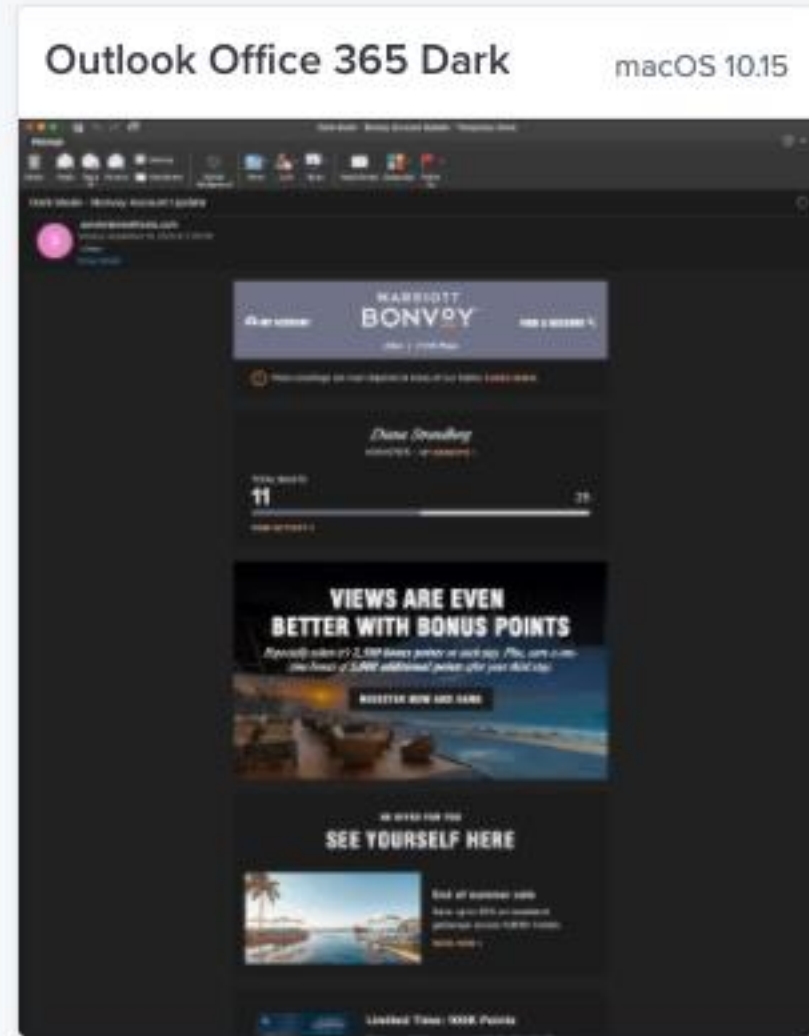**2. Does it INVERT my email?**

3. Can I use @media queries to alter it?

DARK UI

INVERT EMAIL
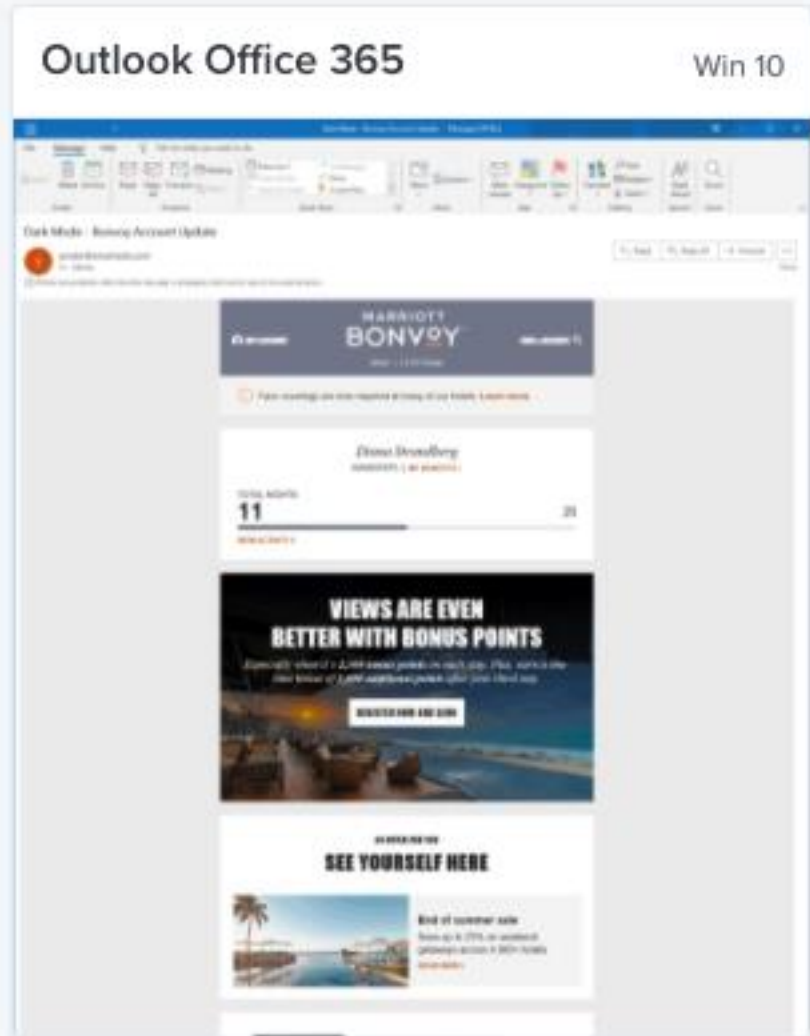
@MEDIA QUERIES – DARK

Prefers-color-scheme CSS media query allows email marketers to detect and adjust specific elements within the email based on the user's light or dark theme setting

SIMPLIFIED – We make our emails dark and control exactly what it looks like

Media Query - What is it?

`@media (prefers-color-scheme: dark)`

html

```
@media (prefers-color-
       scheme: dark)


    CSS: Logo black


    CSS : fonts


    CSS :  colors


    CSS: buttons
```

IF,
Media query detects that you want it dark

THEN,
change elements like fonts, background color
and buttons to dark mode styles

Dark Mode for email

Email client	Dark UI	Auto-invert email colors	Supports @media (prefers-color-scheme*)
Apple Mail			
iPhone + iPad	Yes	No (but it can with @media)	Yes
macOS	Yes	No (but it can with @media)	No
Gmail			
Android 10 app	Yes	Yes	No
iOS 13 app	Yes	Yes	No
webmail	Yes	No	No
Outlook			
iOS 13	Yes	Yes	No
Android 10	Yes	Yes	No
Windows 10	Yes	Yes	No
macOS	Yes	Yes	Yes
Outlook.com			
webmail	Yes	Yes	Yes
Windows 10 Mail			
Windows 10	Yes	Yes	No
Yahoo!			
webmail	Yes	No	No
AOL			
webmail	No	No	No

Confused? Here is all you need to know
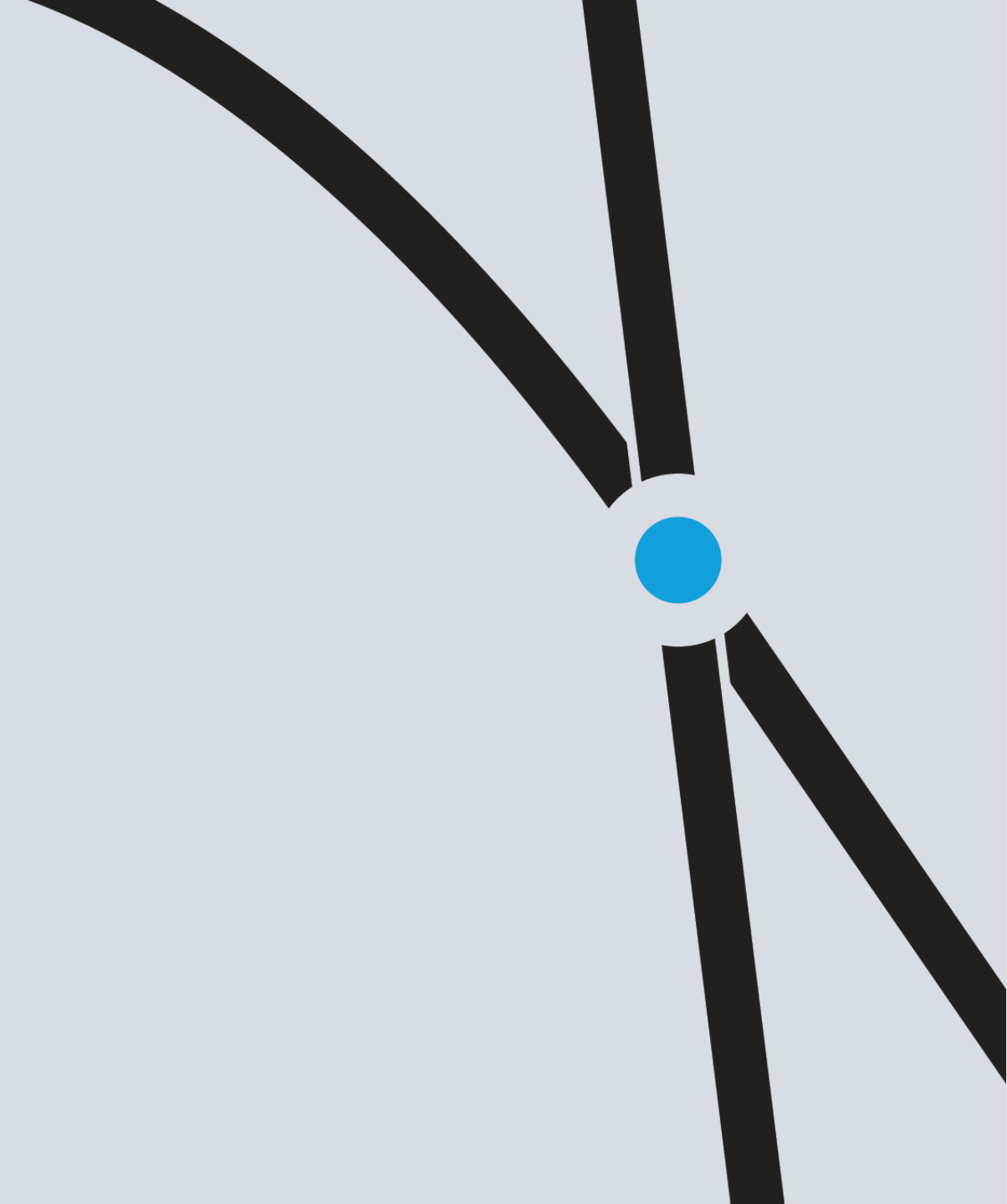
ONLY Outlook & Gmail Apps

Automatically INVERTS your layout

(and you can't do anything about it)

Mac / iOS / Apple

Can INVERT if you have the @media code, but will not automatically

Recommendations for Dark Mode for email

Short term & Long term

REMEMBER: only the OUTLOOK & GMAIL APP inboxes automatically change the colors for us, but....

Can we alter our layouts so that we can control the dark mode changes?

Yes, with @media queries, but we are taking a cautious approach. Here's why...

So, should we use dark mode media queries?

The dark mode OUTLOOK & GMAIL APP inboxes already INVERT it for us

For those that do not automatically invert…

We are being cautious about adding too much coding complexity:

- Increased message weight (120-160%)

- Media-queries are used now for mobile, if we then use them for dark mode too, we may increase the formatting complexity

- Remember – email CSS are inline, we have to apply it many times to all object, not just once in a header style, like the web

With NEW templates we're considering it. Re-coding existing templates… not so much.

So, should we use dark mode media queries?

We'd say <u>yes</u> if:

- You're doing it for single emails

- You have a simple email template system

- You're starting a new template from scratch

Probably hold off if:

- You have a large, complex template system

- You have a large number of individual emails

Alter your code to create a "dark mode" version emails?

Yes we can use @media queries to darken our layouts

- @media (prefers-color-scheme: dark)

We would then alter every object – colors, font-color, background

BUT…

This will more than double our code

We would need to put a "dark mode" style on every single object

Significant increase in coding complexity
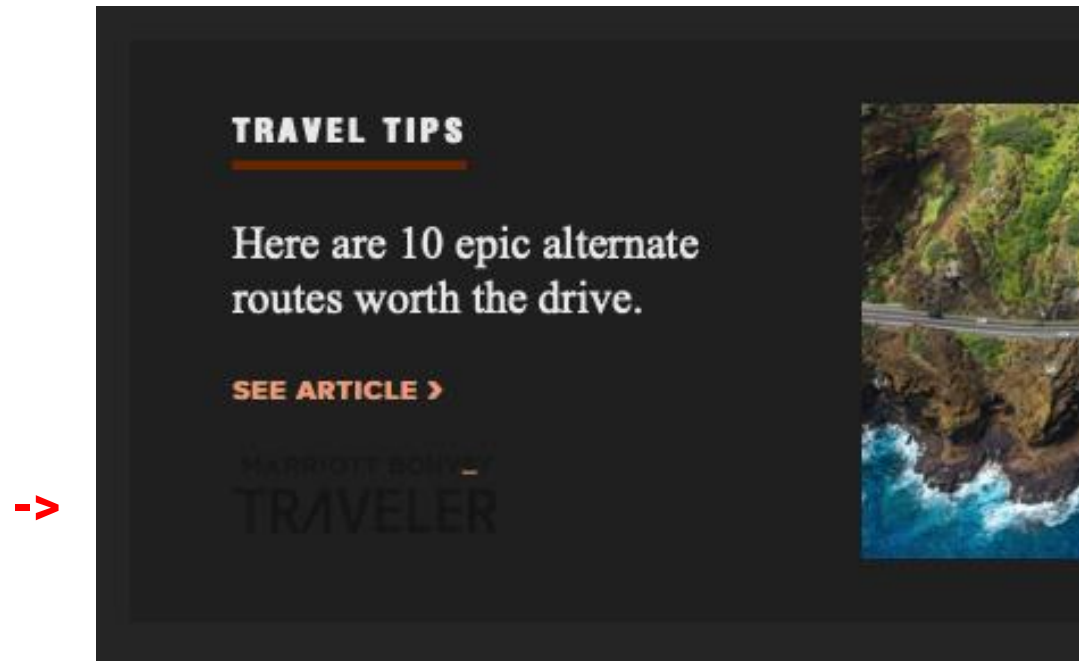
Tips

Easy things you can do now
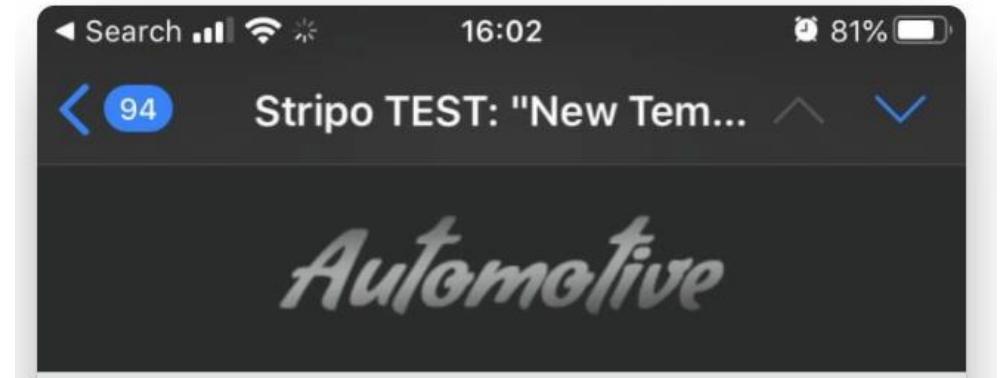
Avoid "dark on dark" & "islands of white"

A focus on logo treatments
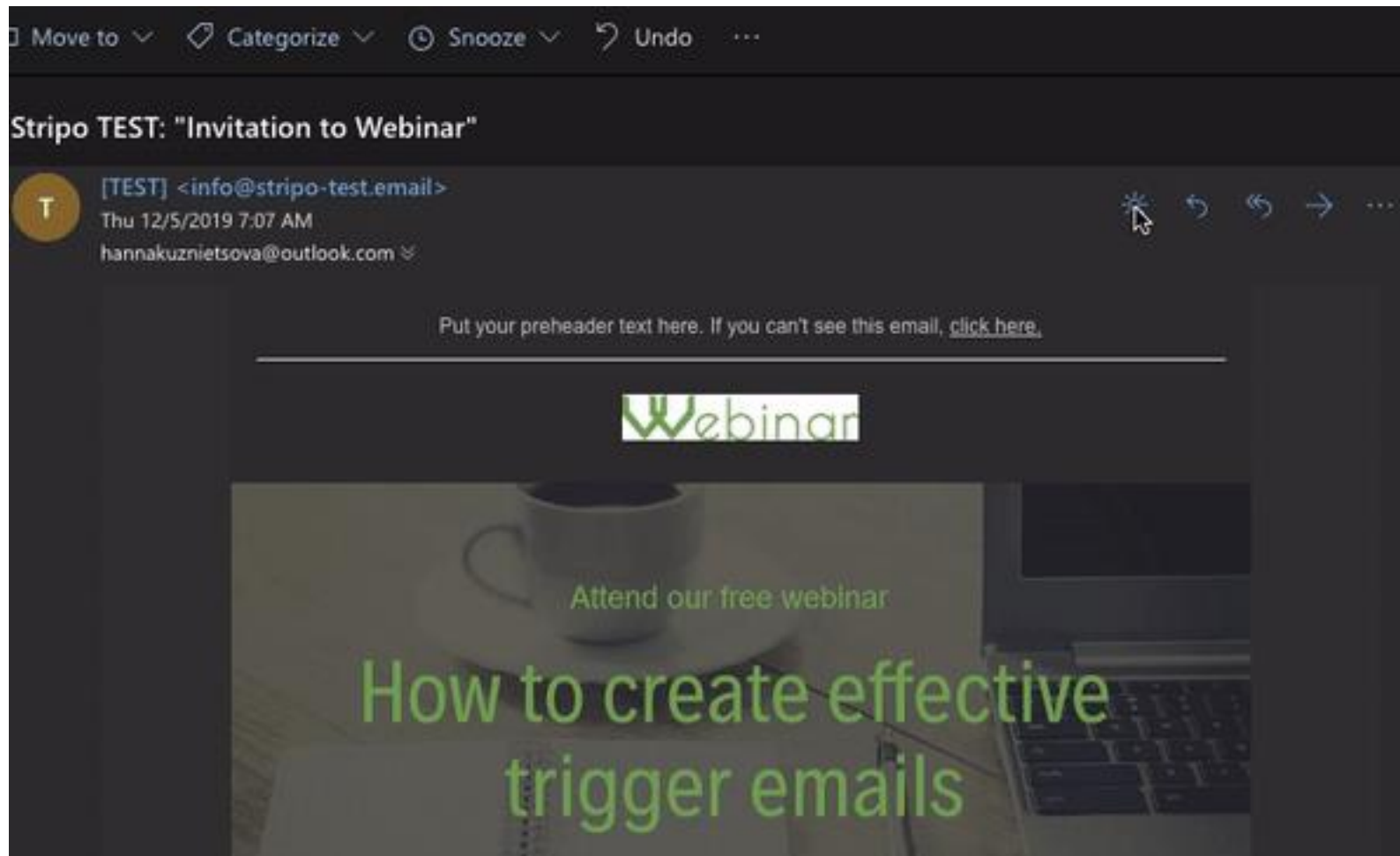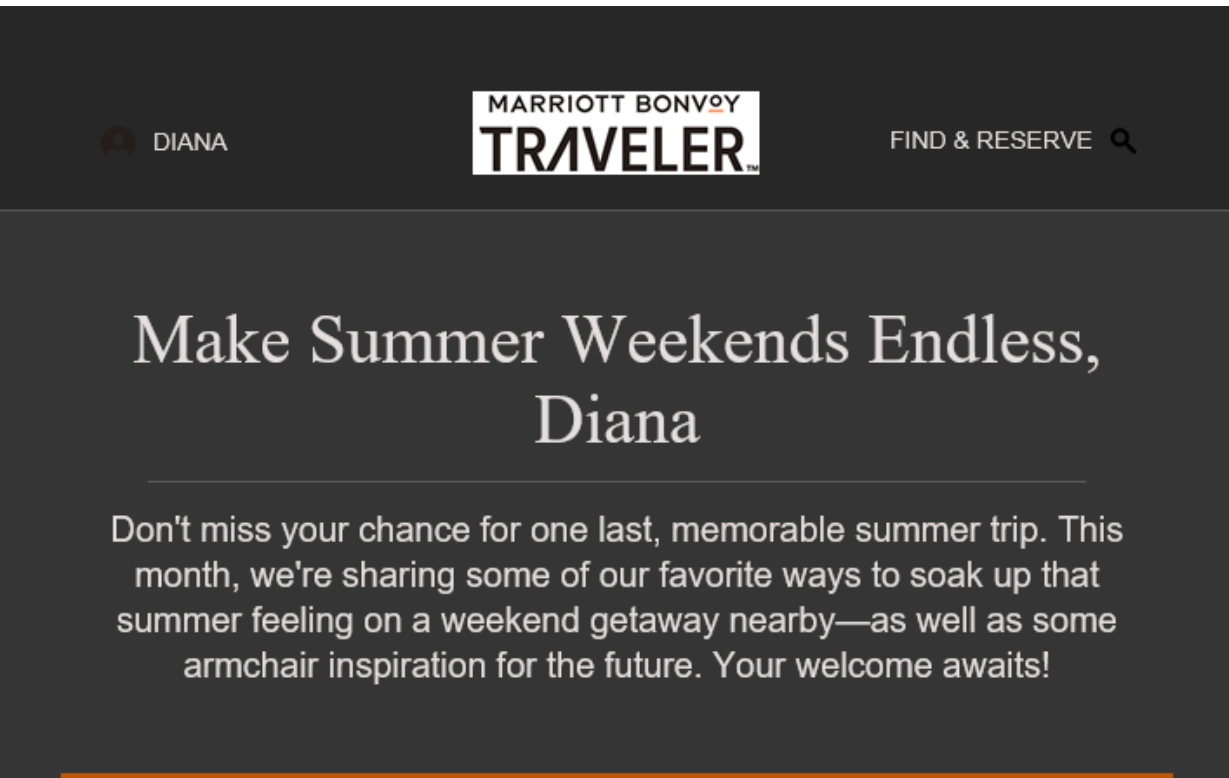

DARK ON DARK

ISLANDS OF WHITE

Avoid "islands of white"
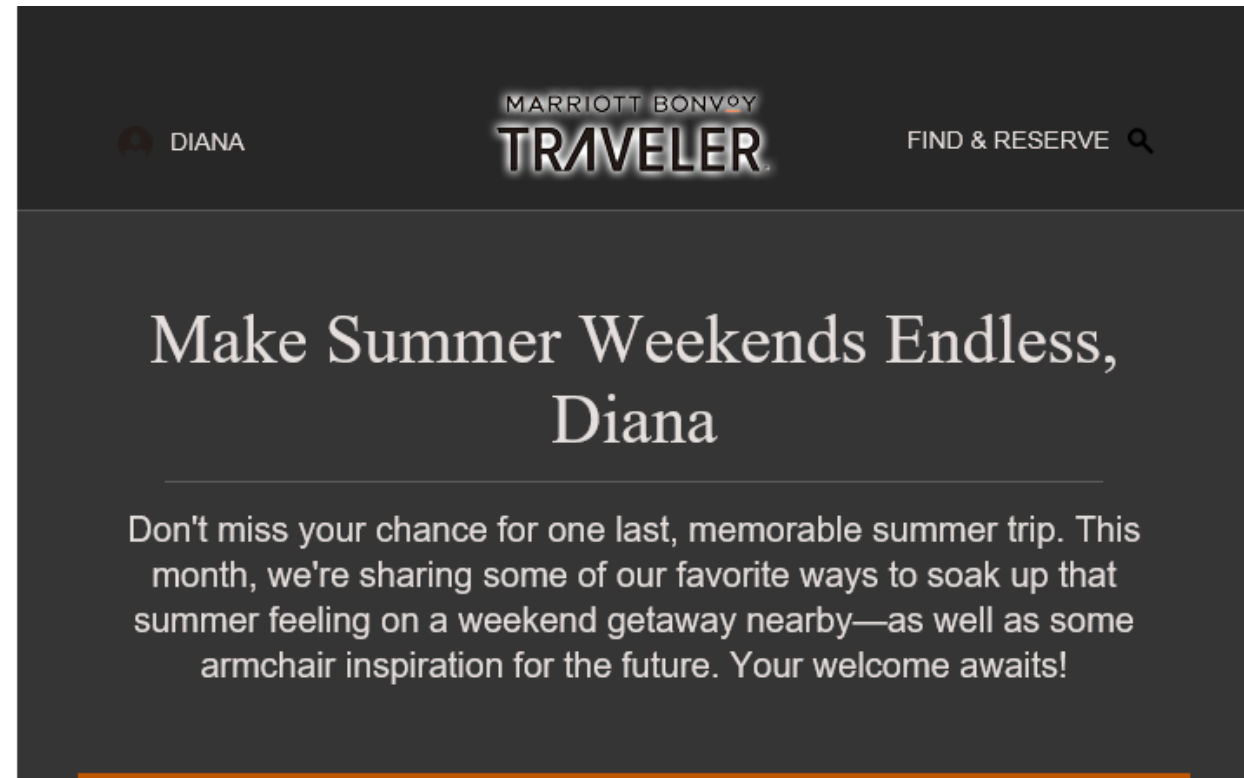
Make all logos and objects TRANSPARENT

Avoid "islands of white"
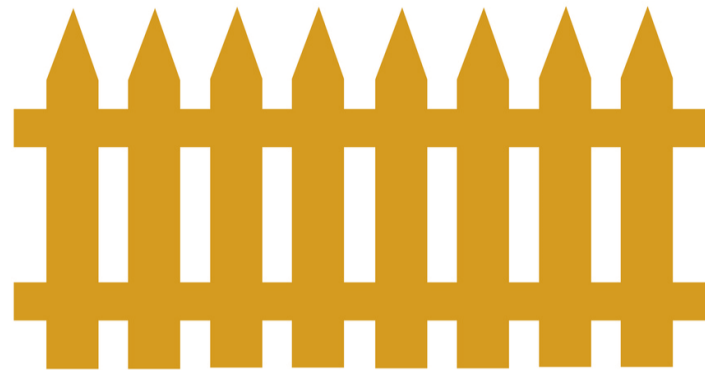
Make all logos and objects TRANSPARENT & GLOW

NO

YES

Can we force our layouts to stay light?

This is often called "fencing" your layout – coding it so it can't go dark

Yes, we can do this but we probably shouldn't.

If a user wants it dark, give it to them

Recommendations

Short term

Let OUTLOOK & GMAIL APPS change our layouts to dark mode automatically

Let all the rest of the environments see the REGULAR / WHITE version

Avoid the "islands of white" & "dark on dark"

- ✓ By making them TRANSPARENT
- ✓ And by OUTLINING or GLOWING
- ✓ Main logo, footer logos specifically

Recommendations

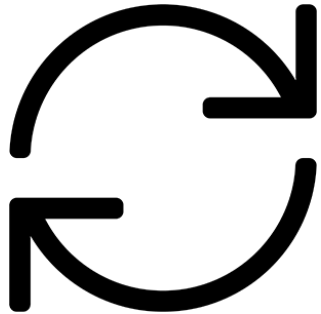Long term

When undergoing a email template overhaul...

Use @Media-queries to change to dark styles

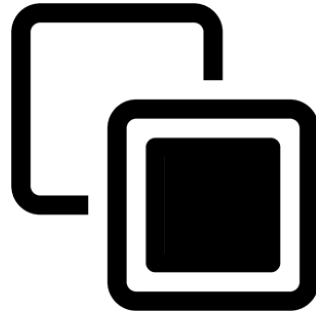This will allow INVERT on Mac / iOS / Apple

But this is a major step up in complexity and code weight

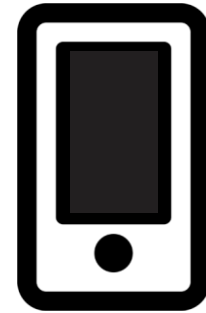So we only want to do this when we know more inboxes will show it

Summary

Only OUTLOOK & GMAIL
APPS automatically inverts

Take actions to avoid
"islands of white" and
"dark on dark"

Get ready for using @media
to execute dark mode views

Thank you

Matthew Caldwell