

# A Thought Experiment

---

- 01 Visualize a Granny Smith apple. Now, visualize a tomato—the kind often sliced for a sandwich or a burger. Those two items are obviously different colors, right?

Not necessarily.

For people with red-green colorblindness, the most common kind, those two foods are remarkably similar in color value.

**Nearly 30% of the world population has a visual impairment.**

Our responsibility as marketers and as humans is therefore to consider these needs when designing assets and to understand what it means to be accessible.



# Defining Accessibility

---

- 02** One of my favorite definitions is this one by the Interaction Design Federation:

**"A product or service is accessible when it can be successfully used by everyone—no matter how they encounter it."**

Another way to think of it is:

Any product should be usable by as many people as possible. The goal is for everyone to be able to engage with a brand—to learn from it, enjoy it, and derive meaning from its outreach—with the same amount of ease.



# Societal Examples

---

- 03** A wide range of societal institutions that touch our day-to-day lives care about visual accessibility. Examples abound:
- **Metro transit maps** are designed to be usable by colorblind individuals
  - **Tactile paving**—the raised yellow bumps on the ground of some subway stations—signal to walkers of all visual needs: "Watch out! You're near the platform edge"
  - **Audible pedestrian signals** confirm when it is safe to cross the street with voice updates
  - The **U.S. government's website** enables users to change font size and font color on every page, so everyone can adjust whatever they need to make reading easiest



# Accessibility In Email

---

- 04** Why should we care about accessibility when it comes to the email communications we send?

Better design helps everyone, both those with and without specific needs.

The four Vs of Big Data (volume, velocity, veracity and variety) can apply to email marketing in this case:

The more thoughtfully we design our emails, the **more quickly** and **accurately** we can share **more kinds** of information with **as many people as possible**.



# Font Color & Font Size

---

- 05** In email marketing, two of the main (though not only) concerns around accessibility are font color and font size.

These elements have a complementary relationship: one we can quantify to determine if our emails are functional for as many people as possible. **That quantification or measurement is called the contrast ratio.**

For normal text (14pt or smaller), WCAG defines AA (acceptable accessibility) as a 4.5: 1 contrast ratio and AAA (excellent accessibility) as a 7:1 contrast ratio.

For large text, AA is 3:1 and AAA is 4.5:1.



# How To Audit Emails

---

- 06** **Step 1:** Identify all the interactions, i.e., all the places where font color and size is a foreground on a background.
- Step 2:** Get the hexadecimal codes for all the colors, either from brand guidelines, the Photoshop eyedropper or an online color picker tool.
- Step 3:** Input the hex codes for each interaction to an online contrast checker to calculate contrast ratio.
- Step 4:** Evaluate results, which will either be AA (fair), AAA (excellent) or sub-AA (not accessible).



# Concrete Action Items

---

## 07 WCAG. AA and AAA ratings. Contrast ratios.

It's a lot to take in. But here are four concrete actions email marketers can take today to improve the accessibility of their communications.

**Step 1:** Audit all interactions (Slide 6).

**Step 2:** Earmark bandwidth to improve sub-AA interactions.

**Step 3:** Add checking contrast ratios to your normal marketing QA process.

**Step 4:** Use the elevator pitch (Slide 8).



# The Elevator Pitch

---

- 08 Marketers who would like to inform and persuade other stakeholders about the need to create accessible content can focus on the following facts:
- Checking accessibility is **fast, free and easy**, thanks to the bevy of online contrast checkers available
  - An AA, AAA or sub-AA rating is a **clear, precise and definitive answer** to the question, "Is this accessible?"
  - Sometimes it is simple to improve an accessibility rating, e.g., by notching the foreground or background color up or down a few shades
  - It's not only good business (more people can engage with accessible content!); **it's also just plain good**

