

What consumers want from email

And what brands should keep in mind

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eMarketer Editors

All too often, brands think about their desire to send out an email before they consider the recipient's desire to receive the message. Customer-centric emails often perform the best; for marketers to win, they must align their email organizations with that manner of thinking.

An August 2020 study from email production platform Dyspatch and SurveyMonkey found that relevancy trumps newness when persuading US consumers to purchase something from a marketing email. In fact, when asked what type of product recommendation in an email they would most likely act on, 59.4% of US adults cited product suggestions based on their purchase history, compared with just 22.7% who said they'd be most likely to purchase when presented with an email devoted to a newly launched product.

What Would Most Likely Result in US Adults Purchasing a Product Mentioned in a Marketing Email?

% of respondents, June 2020



Source: Dyspatch, "The Future of Email Marketing" conducted by SurveyMonkey as cited in company blog, Aug 7, 2020

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What matters the most to consumers tends to be relevancy, personal benefits, and the opportunity to take some action. Even when an email marketer does everything right, however, the consumer will often refrain from taking action: A September study from performance marketing firm Fluent found that 45% of US consumers said they hadn't taken any action upon receiving a promotional email in the past six months.

What Actions Have US Consumers Taken After Receiving a Promotional Email?

% of respondents, Sep 2020



Note: 62% of respondents were female; in the past six months; numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Source: Fluent as cited in company blog, Sep 16, 2020

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With respect to the relevancy of marketing emails, the glass is either half empty or half full: The same Fluent study found that 42% of US consumers said they considered marketing emails to be useful some of the time or all of the time, while 33% said these emails were never useful.

Unsurprisingly, 64% of US consumers said they were most likely to open an email if the subject line mentioned a deal or promotion, according to a February survey by email delivery platform SparkPost

and SurveyMonkey. In fact, emails that are actionable tend to do well, even if there is no direct personal benefit to the consumer; for example, 33% of respondents said they wanted to receive requests for product reviews.

“It may seem counterintuitive that consumers would be open to requests for help which would create work for them, but this is belied by the fact that consumers are looking for emails that have a clearly defined purpose,” said Jeremy Goldman, eMarketer principal analyst at Insider Intelligence and author of our latest report, “Email Marketing 2020.”

Brands must be judicious about what they communicate over email: What a brand considers to be essential information may not meet that bar for the recipient and may only present that recipient with an opportunity to unsubscribe. Only 19% of US consumers reported using welcome emails to learn about a new product, compared with 60% who said they turned to Google for such information, per the SparkPost and SurveyMonkey research. Consumers do expect brands to keep them abreast of major product changes, with 36% of respondents saying email was their primary way of learning about such changes. Ultimately, half of respondents said they unsubscribed from email lists because the emails didn’t contain useful or interesting content.

Brands must be mindful of their content—but mindful doesn’t necessarily mean overly cautious. In fact, consumers increasingly expect email marketing to take the lead on communicating brands’ stances on important issues. A strong email marketing program conveys what a brand is and isn’t, as opposed to being just a vehicle for offering deals and discounts.

For more on our estimates of consumer email usage, email performance benchmarks, and the pandemic's effect on email marketing, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our latest report:

Report by Jeremy Goldman Nov 11, 2020

Email Marketing 2020

EMAIL MARKETING 2020

The Pandemic Makes This
Touchpoint Increasingly Relevant
for Marketers and Consumers

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