

Should You Still Be Using Email Benchmarks?

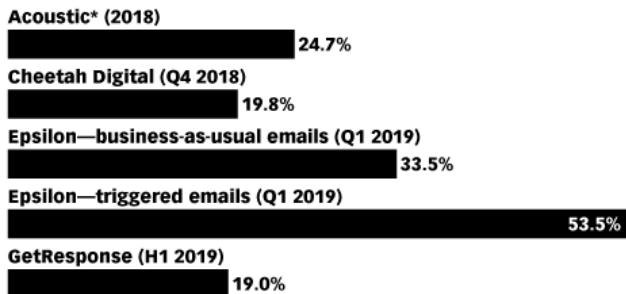
Article

Three of the most common key performance indicators (KPIs) for email are still open rate, clickthrough rate and click-to-open rate. But figures from email service and marketing technology providers show variations in those KPIs in North America depending on a variety of factors, including geography, industry, seasonality and the types of email messages being sent.

For example, in North America, open rates show the most variation in absolute terms. GetResponse reported an average 19.0% open rate, whereas Epsilon reported separate rates for business-as-usual (aka nontriggered) emails and triggered emails, with the latter

performing about 60% better. (Not all email service providers categorize emails the same way, but typical examples of triggered emails include abandoned cart notifications and retention emails triggered by a period of inactivity.)

Comparative Estimates: Average Email Open Rates in North America, 2018-2019



Note: *US only
Source: various, as noted, Sep 24, 2019

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Given the variation, should marketers still be using email benchmarks? The answer depends on who you ask.

Brad Simms, president and CEO of agency GALE Partners, conceded they were “important” but still called them “vanity metrics.”

“They’re easy to track, but to be frank, they’re also easy to manufacture,” he said, citing a marketer whose best-performing email was an accidental send with “TBD” in the subject line. “We like metrics like trailing visits to stores or trailing visits to sites. We like the ability to track offer-driven emails with serialized coupons or serialized links that allow you to understand if you’re driving revenue, or incremental revenue.”

Pauline Majer, head of email marketing at team management application Monday.com, was against using open and click rates as KPIs. “Your KPI is your end goal,” she said. “If I have a trial user, and I want to teach him how to use something in my platform, that is my KPI, and that is the number I’m going to look at.”

She also advocated looking further down the funnel to see what second- or third-order actions email recipients might take. “If my goal is for the user to attend a webinar, I would not only look at the webinar attendees, I would also look at the action they had taken after attending the webinar,” she said. “The email is also pushing this. A good email is an email that

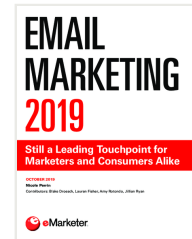
makes you want to show up to a webinar, but also makes you want to do things afterward. We do not stop at open or click rates; it makes no sense.”

The bottom line: While benchmarks can be useful guideposts, most, including eMarketer, suggest they be taken directionally at best and supplemented with more meaningful measures of success.

For more analysis on email marketing in 2019, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our recent report:

Report by Nicole Perrin Oct 10, 2019

Email Marketing 2019



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