

Three Email Trends Retailers Should Keep in Mind for 2020

Article



Email is still at the center of marketers' digital programs. No surprise there; it offers several benefits: It's an owned communications channel, it's permissioned—meaning consumers have opted in and indicated interest—and it's a traditional marketing channel that most marketers are thoroughly experienced with.

“We treat our email marketing program as an opportunity to strengthen and deepen engagement with our most loyal users,” said Lawrence Scotland, senior vice president of digital and brand marketing at frozen meal brand Luvo. “And we use it as an outlet to solidify and drive credibility in the nutrition and health and wellness space, which is the area that we play in.”

In our latest report on the topic, “[Email Marketing 2019: Still a Leading Touchpoint for Marketers and Consumers Alike](#),” we look at the trends shaping email marketing practices next year. Here’s what should stay top of mind for retailers.

Personalization

Personalization is a leading trend across marketing communications, as brands continue to turn to data to optimize all their marketing activities for maximum relevance and effectiveness. But the reality is that most emails are still not very personalized.

Cross-channel personalization software firm SmarterHQ has been tracking retail emails for a study, after signing up for dozens of top retailers’ email lists in July 2019. As part of the project, SmarterHQ also heavily browses the retailers’ websites and adds a couple of items to a cart to more fully test the retailers’ email programs.

Most of the emails SmarterHQ received weren’t personalized, but there was significant variation among retailers. For example, out of 25 emails Walmart sent the researchers in August, just one was personalized based on behavior. But Target sent 23 behaviorally personalized emails out of a total of 41 for the month.

Asked why retailers were still so behind on what the industry considers a best practice, Michael Osborne, CEO and president of SmarterHQ, pointed to inertia. “Either they find it difficult, or they're addicted to the way that they've always done it,” he said. “Every extra dollar of revenue counts, even if it's detrimental in the long term for their customer base and loyalty.”

Consumer Privacy Regulation

Email is a permissioned channel, and email marketers are used to working under regulations like the CAN-SPAM Act in 2003, which set rules for what constitutes that permission. But the recent round of consumer data regulations like the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) in the US can also affect email programs.

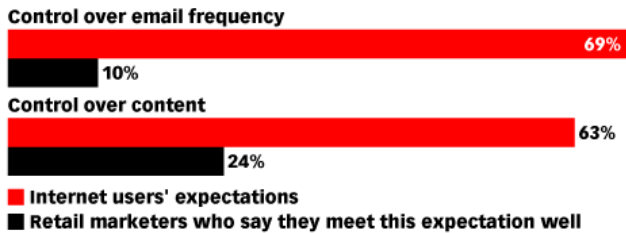
For example, if marketers are personalizing their email communications, they would need the proper consent to use the data inputs for that purpose. And if marketers are measuring the results of their email program by tying an individual's metrics to that same individual's data across other channels, they would need consent for that, too.

Frequency

In November 2018 polling by Alliance Data, the vast majority of US internet users wanted to control the frequency with which they received branded email. But just 10% of retail marketers said they met that expectation well.

US Internet Users Want More Control Over the Branded Content They Receive than What Marketers Currently Offer, Nov 2018

% of respondents



Note: ages 18+

Source: Alliance Data, "The Great Divide: Connecting brands to the real needs of today's consumer," March 12, 2019

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Most of the practitioners interviewed for the email marketing report said they determined messaging frequency through some type of data-driven approach.

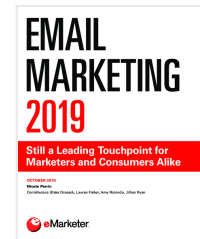
"We use email pretty heavily," said Lisa Craveiro, director of marketing at direct-to-consumer (D2C) clothing brand Indochino. "We definitely aim to send no more than two emails to a subscriber in any given day. One is really ideal."

Indochino determines message frequency based on a combination of settings in a preference center, past purchase behavior and email engagement metrics. Other senders that also took a data-driven approach found sending fewer emails worked well—different cadences make sense for difference lists with different audiences and expectations.

For more information on how to reach audiences through email, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our latest report:

Report by Nicole Perrin Oct 10, 2019

Email Marketing 2019



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