

18.1: Introduction

Direct marketing is all about communicating directly to customers rather than indirectly, via ads or billboards. Direct marketing via digital generally involves email, and to some extent, mobile channels.

At its core, email marketing is a tool for customer relationship management (CRM). Used effectively, this extension of permission-based marketing can deliver one of the highest returns on investment (ROI) of any digital marketing activity (the principles covered in this chapter can apply to any kind of permission marketing). Simply put, email marketing is a form of direct marketing that uses electronic means to deliver commercial messages to an audience. It is one of the oldest and yet most powerful of all digital marketing tactics. The power comes from the fact that it is:

- Extremely cost effective due to a low cost per contact
- Highly targeted
- Customisable on a mass scale
- Completely measurable.

Furthermore, email marketing's main strength is that it takes advantage of a customer's most prolific touchpoint with the Internet, their inbox.

In January of 2015, the number of emails opened on mobile phones overtook the number of emails opened via desktop. A large number of users first read their emails on mobile, according to Litmus, Desktop represents 19% of email opens, webmail represents 26%, and mobile represents 55% (eMailMonday, 2016). Depending on the market you're targeting, and lower-end markets are fast catching up, if you send an email, it will at some point be opened on a mobile phone.

In other words, you cannot think about email without thinking about mobile at the same time.

Like mobile-specific channels, email marketing is a tool for building relationships with both existing and potential customers. It should maximise the retention and value of these customers, which should ultimately lead to a greater return on investment.

Some people consider email marketing to be old fashioned, arguments about its demise have been going on for years, but it can be one of the most powerful tools in your digital arsenal.

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