

# Even for Top Brands, There's Room for Improvement in Email Marketing

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Email marketing remains one of the most effective tools in digital marketing, and with a 4400 percent ROI (Campaign Monitor), it's no surprise. However, despite being around since the late seventies – a far more mature channel than its digital marketing counterparts, such as social media, SEO and PPC – many brands still struggle to effectively measure their email efforts.

Knowing this, RSR Research and Coherent Path set out to measure and create a benchmark for them in their new 'Measuring Email's Effectiveness' report. The research examined the strategies of 138 top retailers across three main categories – Email Frequency, Catalog Exposure and Email Content – and objectively identified the places where retail marketers are over- and under- investing in their subscriber list, and ultimately leaving money on the table. The report also ranked the retailers, analyzed and scored them accordingly, based on the average of values across the criteria, and how far from the average each retailer placed.

Overall, while there are some places where retailers are implementing smart email practices, there are many more areas where there's room for improvement. While Club Monaco scored the highest on the list with a 79.9, equivalent to a C+/B-, the average score across retailers was approximately 52 percent – otherwise known as a failing grade.

To truly evaluate the health of a retailer's email program, it is important to analyze the components that make up the overall score. By looking at Email Frequency, Catalog Exposure

and Email Content, we can begin to understand what really makes or breaks an email strategy, and which retailers are getting it right.

## **Email Frequency**

While there's no 'right' number, finding a cadence that works for your customers is vital to your email marketing success. Retailers must balance the need to engage with their audience and drive sales against annoying their list with too many emails, unintentionally driving valuable customers away. For email frequency, one email per day appears to be the most popular approach for communicating with consumers. Too many retailers appear to be relying on too many emails, rather than making sure the one per day they do send really counts. Old Navy was the victor in this category, scoring a 32.8 out of a possible 33.3.

## **Catalog Exposure**

Turning a subscriber into a buyer is dependent upon a brand's ability to find a topic or category that interests each individual consumer. Retailers who feature only a small subset of categories across all their emails risk never having the chance to figure out what attracts a consumer. According to the report, 25 retailers maximized their catalog exposure in their emails, but 45 exposed none. At that rate, it would take these retailers five years or more to get through the entirety of their catalog via emails. While many retailers struggled in this category, Hudson's Bay and Joss & Main scored a perfect 33.3.

## **Email Content**

While this category may be the most self-explanatory, there's a lot more that goes into creating good content than meets the

eye. Because of this, RSR measured email length, subject lines that matched featured content, how much a retailer relied on discounts to promote email opens, as well as mobile optimization. The good news: retailers aren't abusing promotional language. Ninety out of the 138 used an average amount of promotional language compared to the overall pool of retailers evaluated. The troubling news: only six retailers – Sport Chek, GNC, Timberland, H&M, Zappos and Beachbody – send 100 percent of emails optimized for mobile, which is a big risk with today's increasingly mobile consumers. Fingerhut was the overall winner in the overall content category with a score of 31.6.

Email is far too important a channel to simply coast by with tired tactics. By implementing some of the best practices from this report, retail marketers can begin to improve their grade – thus improving engagement rates, revenue and the customer journey.