

# Impact of email marketing as a communication and online sales tool

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## *Impacto del e-mail marketing como herramienta de comunicación y venta online*

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### ABSTRACT

The present research study was carried out by means of a scientific manuscript corresponding to the Bachelor's degree in Marketing, focused on analyzing the impact of E-mail Marketing to determine its effectiveness as a communication and online sales tool, its purpose is to be able to provide to different stores, brands or websites advantages using distinct communication tools. For a more representative analysis, the scope was limited to Argentine consumers. Based on the background on the research, the perspectives of consumers, developers and entrepreneurs regarding the subject were analyzed, through the use of quantitative and qualitative research tools (surveys and in-depth interviews), achieving conclusive and generalizable results, among which can be highlighted that more than 43 % of consumers consider e-mail between 50-75 % effective as a communication and online sales tool, and that in general, companies can obtain great benefits by carrying out e-mail campaigns marketing.

**Keywords:** E-Mail Marketing; Online Consumer Behavior; Digital E-Commerce; Email.

### RESUMEN

El presente estudio de investigación se realizó mediante un manuscrito científico correspondiente a la carrera de Licenciatura en Comercialización, se enfocó en analizar el impacto del E-mail Marketing para determinar su eficacia como herramienta de comunicación y venta online, tiene como finalidad, poder brindar a las tiendas, marcas o sitios web diferentes ventajas utilizando esta herramienta de comunicación. Para un análisis más representativo, se limitó el alcance a los consumidores argentinos. En base a los antecedentes referentes a la investigación, se analizaron las perspectivas de consumidores, desarrolladores y empresarios respecto al tema, mediante el uso de herramientas de investigación cuantitativas y cualitativas (encuestas y entrevistas en profundidad), logrando obtener resultados concluyentes y generalizables, entre las que se pueden destacar que más del 43 % de los consumidores consideran entre un 50-75 % de efectividad al e-mail como herramienta de comunicación y venta online, y que en general, las empresas pueden obtener grandes beneficios realizando campañas de e-mail marketing.

**Palabras clave:** E-Mail Marketing; Comportamiento del Consumidor Online; E-Commerce Digital; Correo Electrónico.

## INTRODUCTION

“The first direct marketers (catalog companies, direct mail companies, and telemarketers) collected customer names and sold items primarily by mail and telephone”.<sup>(1)</sup>

Today, direct marketing has evolved due to rapid advances in database technologies and the emergence of new marketing media, particularly the Internet.

“Direct marketing consists of direct connections with carefully chosen consumers, often based on personal interaction.”<sup>(1)</sup>

One of the primary forms of direct marketing is direct mail, which, according to Kotler and Armstrong<sup>(1)</sup>, “consists of sending an offer, advertisement, reminder, or other material to a specific individual or entity at a specific physical or virtual address.” Marketers send millions of pieces of mail each year, such as letters, catalogs, advertisements, brochures, samples, images, and propaganda.

Kotler and Armstrong<sup>(1)</sup> point out that “direct mail is the largest medium for direct marketing”.

Direct mail is suitable for direct and personalized communication, as it “allows for high selectivity of the target market, can be personalized, is flexible, and its results are easy to measure”.<sup>(1)</sup> Although the cost of contacting a thousand people is higher than that offered by mass media such as television and magazines, the people who receive it have better prospects. Direct mail has proven successful in promoting a wide range of products.

Some analysts predict a decline in the use of traditional forms of direct mail in the coming years, as marketers use more innovative digital forms, such as email, which transmits messages at incredible speeds and at lower costs.

Email is an essential online marketing tool that is experiencing significant growth. “A recent study by the DMA revealed that 79 % of direct marketing campaigns use email.”<sup>(1)</sup>

When used correctly, email is a decisive medium for direct marketing. Thanks to email, these companies send highly personalized and targeted messages that foster relationships.

However, the growing use of email marketing also has its dark side. The massive increase in spam has caused anger and frustration among consumers. According to one research company, 90 % of emails sent are spam. Marketers walk a fine line between adding value for consumers and being intrusive.

To solve these problems, most honest marketers now practice permission-based email marketing, sending advertisements only to customers who “opt in.”

Over time, email has become increasingly important worldwide, evolving into an excellent ally for online marketing through the practice known as email marketing.

According to a study by Mdirector<sup>(2)</sup>, a leading email marketing company in Spain, it is defined as “a direct marketing discipline considered one of the most effective and economical when it comes to communicating with customers and users.” Email marketing utilizes email as a means of communication over the Internet, enabling messages to be personalized, sent immediately, and measured accurately.

Email marketing is used to establish and strengthen relationships with customers or potential customers, to conduct promotions, to inform them about news and products, and to facilitate direct communication with our own staff or internal customers.

What is the impact of email marketing on consumers, and how effective is it as a communication and online sales tool?

## Objective

To analyze the impact of email marketing to determine its effectiveness as an online communication and sales tool.

## METHOD

This research was conducted in two stages, employing a mixed-methods approach. First, exploratory research (a qualitative technique) was conducted, followed by descriptive research (a quantitative method).

The first stage was carried out using exploratory research. This type of study serves to “familiarize ourselves with relatively unknown phenomena, obtain information about the possibility of conducting more comprehensive research on a particular context, investigate new problems, identify promising concepts or variables, establish priorities for future research, or suggest statements and postulates”.<sup>(3)</sup>

The information available on the subject of study was based on an intuitive analysis by the researcher. The objective of this report was to conduct empirical research, carrying out a comprehensive investigation into the impact of email marketing on consumers.

The approach was qualitative, aimed at discovering and identifying new ideas, thoughts, feelings, preliminary knowledge, and understanding of concepts and objects.<sup>(4)</sup>

Primary sources of information were used, and the technique was direct, capturing, processing, analyzing, concluding, and reporting the data literally. In-depth interviews were conducted. These were personal meetings in which the interviewee was a consumer. According to Quivy and Van Campenhout, interviews help to uncover aspects that should be taken into consideration.

The study participants were selected from a non-probabilistic sample, that is, “a sampling process in which the probability of selection of each sample unit is unknown.” Specifically, through judgment sampling, “where participants are selected according to the belief of the researcher or other experienced person that they will meet the study requirements.”

Interviews were conducted with consumers, entrepreneurs, and professionals who are subscribed to various platforms and are exposed to a range of email marketing strategies.

The procedure employed a qualitative approach with an exploratory design. Participants were contacted via email, WhatsApp, or phone call. Before beginning, the research objectives were explained to them, and they were offered the option of anonymity for their responses.

The guideline (unstructured data collection instrument) was used as a tool.

In a second stage, descriptive research was carried out, “seeking to specify important properties, characteristics, and features of any phenomenon being analyzed.” In general, they describe trends in a group or population.<sup>(3)</sup> In this case, the approach was quantitative, as it provides concrete facts that enable decision-makers to make predictions about the relationships between market factors and behaviors, learn about those relationships, and verify or validate any existing relationships.

Primary sources of information were used, and the technique was direct. Surveys were conducted to “broaden the spectrum of initial information resulting from qualitative research.” These were personal response surveys.

The study participants were individuals susceptible to email marketing campaigns who reside in Argentina.

The sampling was probabilistic, specifically “simple random,” where each element of the defined target population has a known probability and equal opportunity, other than zero, of being part of the sample.

The study population consisted of people or individuals between the ages of 18 and 50 with internet access.

The sample size is 385, selected from a probabilistic sample, with a 95 % confidence level and a 5 % margin of error.

People were contacted by posting the survey on Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp groups. Google Forms was used to create the questionnaire.

The instrument used was a questionnaire.

## RESULTS

The results obtained in both the exploratory and descriptive research will be presented.

Once the data have been analyzed through the established research, the following results are presented from the perspective of their relationship to the objectives of the work.

We will begin with the contextualization and framing of the quantitative data analysis, followed by the qualitative data analysis.

The age range of respondents in the quantitative data was divided into three groups: 18 to 29 years old, 30 to 49 years old, and 50 years old and above. The first group consisted of individuals aged 18 to 29 years old, the second group of those aged 30 to 40 years old, and the third group of those aged 41 to 50 years old, as shown in the table 1.

**Table 1.** Ages of the different groups of respondents.

Age of respondents	Number	Percentage
18 to 29	207	53,8
30 to 40 years old	151	31,4
41 to 50 years old	57	14,8
Total	385	100

Considering the behavior of respondents, it is important to note that of the 385 respondents, 56,1 % (216) open their email at least one to three times a day, 18,4 % (71) between four and six times a day, 23,1 % (89) more than seven times a day, and 2,3 % (9) do not open their email. In addition, respondents determine how many marketing emails they receive per week, as shown in figure 1 below.

In addition, the qualitative research included three groups defined by consumers, professionals, and entrepreneurs aged 18 and over who are in direct contact with email marketing campaigns.

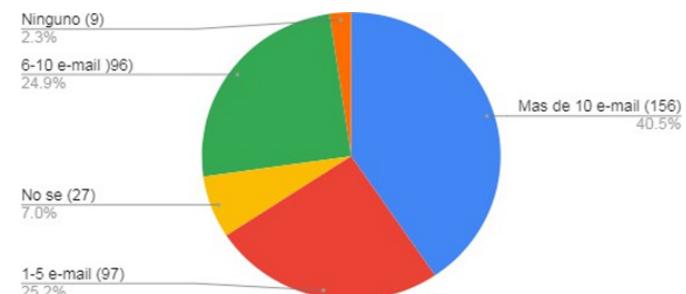
Moving forward, we will begin to consider and relate the data obtained to the general and specific objectives of the study, defining the relevant aspects to be taken into account in accordance with the quantitative and qualitative research.

The first specific objective is to understand how consumers behave when they receive emails during the purchasing process and notifications about their product. Figure 2 shows that the respondent emphasized the trust and positive image that this follow-up generates during their purchase.

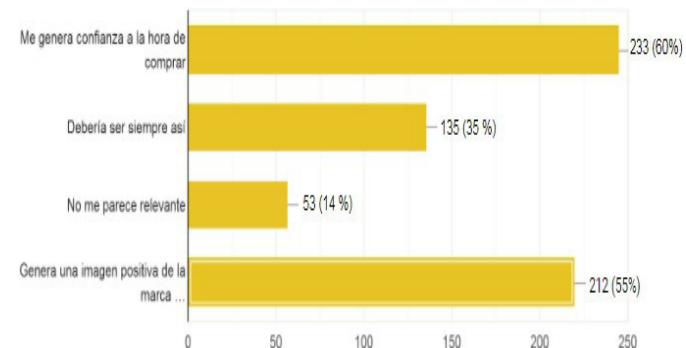
The respondents said that they consider tracking and notifications of the products purchased by the consumer to be an essential part of building trust with the customer, as well as reassuring them that their product will be delivered on time and in good condition, and that when communicating with the

consumer about any unforeseen circumstances, they choose to do so by email.

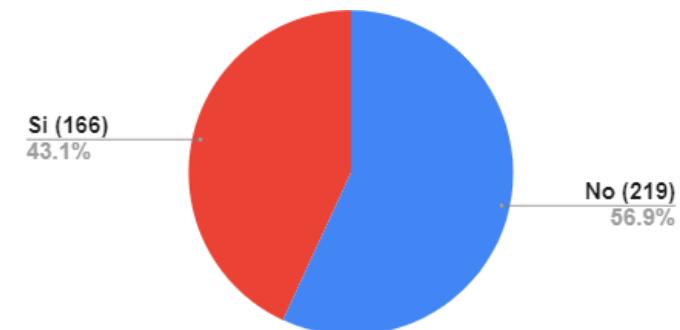
The second objective was to determine whether consumers are likely to subscribe and purchase through email marketing. Respondents gave their answers as shown in figure 3, starting with those who have ever purchased from an email marketing campaign.



**Figure 1.** Emails received weekly by consumers



**Figure 2.** Responses on what the follow-up of their purchase generates in consumers



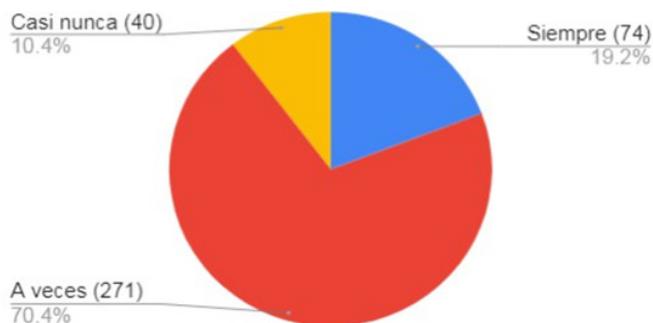
**Figure 3.** Details whether they purchased from an email marketing campaign

Second, when asked why they would subscribe to email marketing, 68 % said they would do so to receive offers and discounts, 36,3 % are interested in what the brand, store, or website provides, 32 % for newsletters and bulletins, 28,3 % because they are regular customers, 27,2 % for advance notice of new products/sales, and 6 % would not subscribe to any email.

On the other hand, considering the respondents in the qualitative research, they state that consumers who are likely to subscribe do so either to download information to obtain discounts and offers, or to be offered new or innovative products. Consumers who generally purchase products through email are classified as emotional or impulsive when it comes to products that interest them. At the same time, those considered passive are more susceptible to advertising and offer little resistance to

email campaigns.

Continuing with the third specific objective, we analyzed consumer opinions on the relevance of advertising emails, with respondents evaluating the relevance or effectiveness of an email based on its information, wording, and design. Figure 4 illustrates the responses to the effectiveness and significance of an email for a consumer.



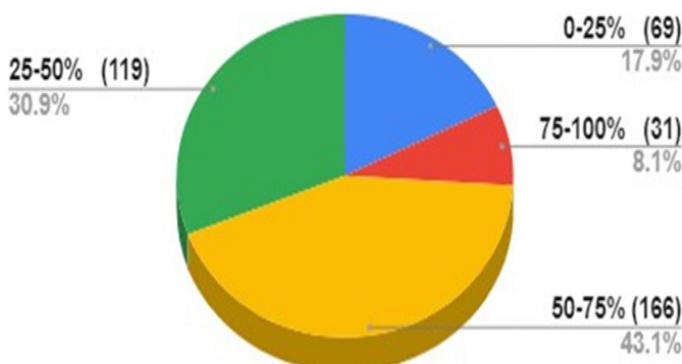
**Figure 4.** Analyzes how relevant emails are when consumers receive them in their inbox

In addition, respondents were asked what they thought an email marketing campaign should have in order to be effective. The most common response was that it should be attractive in design (65,1 %), followed by direct and short (59 %), well-written (44,4 %), and finally, relevant (29,3 %).

To conclude the third objective, respondents were asked about their perception of email marketing.

**Table 2.** Consumer perceptions of email marketing

Perception of email marketing	Percentage	Quantity
Provides useful information	40	156
I consider it an invasion of my privacy	12,4	48
It is a positive way to attract people	38,7	149
It doesn't have any significant impact on how I shop	35,6	137
I find the way it connects with customers interesting.	30 %	115
connect with customers		
Provides little relevant information	13,7 %	53
Total respondents	100	385



**Figure 5.** Percentage of email marketing as a communication tool

Within the exploratory approach, it was found that most campaigns often lack something to make them 100 % effective

and relevant. They are generally attractive to the customer but lack better segmentation. In addition, they stated that consumers typically unsubscribe because of the volume of emails they receive in their inbox and the lack of relevant content.

Concluding the specific objectives, we arrive at a question that accompanies the primary or general purpose of this research: to analyze the impact of email marketing and determine its effectiveness as a communication and online sales tool. In figure 5, respondents were asked to rate email as a communication and online sales tool, with values ranging from 0 % to 100 %, which yielded the result shown.

## DISCUSSION

The following section presents the discussion and the main conclusions drawn from this research project, along with its conceptual implications. It also considers the limitations of the study and future lines of research that will allow this research to be continued.

The overall objective of this research was to analyze the impact of email marketing to determine its effectiveness as a communication tool. Following the approach taken in the research problem section, which gave rise to two questions: first, how do consumers react to this tool? And second, what should brands, stores, or websites emphasize to generate a satisfactory experience in each email they send, based on the aspects that consumers consider relevant?

Continuing with the analysis of the variables in the first question, it was possible to establish, as an initial approach, that long before email was used as a marketing tool, it was a means of communication between people and therefore always received positive opinions from consumers. However, as brands, stores, or websites began to evolve, they started using different marketing strategies to establish direct contact with consumers. Customers reacted in various ways to this implementation, some favorably and others unfavorably. In this study, the majority of participants considered it favorable, both in terms of communication between people and with different brands, stores, or websites, because, as mentioned above, it facilitates contact between them.

A study conducted by DMA<sup>(5)</sup> found that 59 % of respondents prefer email communications from brands over any other channel, regardless of the context.

In the second question, several aspects need to be considered. First, they must take into account what consumers consider most important, which in this case is that they are attractive in design, direct, and short. Second, when making a purchase, customers feel more confident in the brand, store, or website when they receive follow-up emails. Finally, they must provide useful information, as disclosed in the results section.

Having addressed the research problem, we proceed to the primary and specific objectives.

Starting with the specific objectives, which are to understand how consumers behave when they receive emails during the purchasing process and notifications about their product, it was established that this provides consumers with a high level of security and also enhances the brand's, store's, or website's positive image. It should be considered an important option when selling products online. It was also noted that, for the most part, both consumers and sellers use email as a means of communication before, during, and after the purchase, thereby giving this medium greater relevance. A notable finding in this research is that social media has established a significant role as

a channel of communication. DMA<sup>(6)</sup> stated that the preferred way for consumers to hear from brands throughout the customer journey is email.

In the next specific objective, to determine whether consumers are likely to subscribe and purchase through email marketing, it was stated that they are willing to do both of the above through email, the first saying that most do so to obtain discounts and offers, followed by those who are interested in what a brand, store, or website offers typically. DMA<sup>(6)</sup> concluded in its research that “the key factors for signing up for an email are, first and foremost, to receive discounts and offers,” and in the second action, less than half of those surveyed purchased through email marketing. This specific objective identified by the interviewees emphasizes what was pointed out by DMA<sup>(7)</sup>, stating that “trust” is the main factor in persuading consumers to subscribe to the brand’s emails.

Concluding with the specific objectives that highlight analyzing consumer opinions regarding the relevance of advertising emails, it was established that the vast majority of respondents determined that the significance of the various email marketing messages they receive is not always practical, either due to a lack of content, poor design, or because they do not provide helpful information to the consumer. Sendinblue<sup>(8)</sup> stated that 86 % of consumers consider more than half of the emails they receive to be unhelpful, and more than half would not open an email if they did not think it relevant to their needs. This means that brands, stores, or websites need to do a better job of developing email marketing campaigns to reach their target audience with relevant information. Within the theoretical framework, the design of email campaigns was explained, revealing characteristics of how to put together effective communication campaigns. And to highlight Neetwork Digital

Business School<sup>(9)</sup> noted that 59 % of consumers claim their purchasing decisions are influenced by email marketing, and 50 % reported making purchases from email marketing at least once a month.

Returning to the main objective, email marketing generally has a favorable impact on both the consumer and the brand, store, or website. In the results section, it was seen that the majority of respondents, on a scale of 0 % to 100 %, view email marketing as a communication tool with an effectiveness of between 50 % and 75 %. For brands, stores, or websites, it is an excellent tool for establishing direct contact with consumers. As pointed out by the DMA<sup>(6)</sup>, email remains “important” or “very important” to the majority (95 %) of marketing specialists, and based on the theoretical framework, it offers a significant advantage in terms of return on investment for companies.<sup>(8,9,10)</sup> Furthermore, regarding data protection, most respondents are not concerned about the information they provide to brands, although some still express dissatisfaction with how companies obtain their email addresses.

Email marketing serves as a valuable tool, bringing significant benefits to the brand, store, or website in terms of the inflow of consumers. As highlighted by Neetwork Digital Business School, individuals who purchase products or services as a result of being exposed to a promotional email spend 138 %

more than those who do not receive email offers.<sup>(11,12,13,14)</sup>

Two limitations arose in terms of the work: first, the data obtained from other research is very general at the global level and not very specific in comparison to data from Argentina or Latin America; second, not many specialists in email marketing campaigns were found, so consumers and businesspeople with in-depth knowledge of the subject had to be interviewed.<sup>(15,16,17)</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of this research, as evident from how consumers view, interact with, and perceive this communication channel, demonstrate its significant importance, with considerable potential to boost sales, foster customer loyalty, and complement products and experiences. This channel is one of the most preferred by both the majority of consumers and various companies for communication purposes. It is worth noting that, although consumers select this channel, they do not define it as their preferred channel, which is why, as highlighted in the theoretical framework, brands should combine this channel with other communication channels, such as email. When it comes to profitability, it remains one of the most effective tools in terms of return on investment (ROI). However, it takes time to learn how to segment, enhance content and design, and fully exploit its potential. It is essential to consider the number of emails sent to consumers and their relevance, as this can hurt our brand, store, or website. Email is a great way to maintain customer loyalty to the company.

Marketing must evolve as an exchange of value between the company, which seeks to prosper, and customers, who seek to benefit. As an industry, we can only achieve this by putting the customer at the center of everything we do. Only then can companies grow prosperously to be enjoyed, valued, and ultimately sustained.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

*Conceptualization:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Data curation:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

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*Research:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Methodology:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Project management:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Resources:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Software:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Supervision:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Validation:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Display:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Writing – original draft:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

*Writing – revision and editing:* Marcos Pedrol, Javier Romero.

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