

Email Is Highly Effective Branding Tool

Email is on the rise and should not be overlooked as a highly effective branding tool in any marketing communications campaign conducted by small business.

Three years ago, research by Quris, an integrated email agency, revealed four key findings, still relevant today. First, email plays a powerful role in branding perceptions. Second, email appears to be most effective at developing trial and repeat business. Third, transaction confirmation messages are the single most popular type of permission emails. Fourth, permission or opt-in email resulted in greater loyalty and more frequent online shopping.

In December, 2005, DoubleClick Email Solutions issued its Sixth Annual Consumer Email Study. Its findings indicate that email is still on the rise and that there is constant “checking” of email at work and at home. In other words, there is “no perfect day or time for deploying email campaigns.”

Further, the average consumer receives 361 emails per week, a 17% increase over 2004. Two-thirds of this email is considered spam, with only 6% considered opt-in mail. However, this opt-in mail is what is opened by most consumers.

Not surprising is the fact that the “from” line is the most compelling reason to open permission-based email, reflecting the power of sender recognition and brand names.

Finally, email is once again proclaimed “critical” for loyalty marketing, with 94% of consumers expecting emails to confirm orders.

In fact, “viral marketing,” coined to describe a new kind of exponential, word-of-mouth campaign, is often conducted via email.

Unilever's latest campaign, "Sprays of Her Life," is an example of how a major corporation went so far as to desert its traditional TV spots in favor of "viral marketing" via email. The messages pitch soap-opera-spoofing Webisodes about starlet Spraychel, the jealous Buttricia and the handsome Dr. Cobb on a dedicated site (www.tasteyoulove.com), in efforts to spread the word of its product "I Can't Believe It's Not Butter!"

The idea, according to Javier Martin, brand manager at Unilever United States in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, is that consumers, especially women, will forward the emails to their family and friends because they find the tongue-in-cheek spoofs "engaging" and "entertaining."

The fact that more and more women are internet savvy tipped the company in favor of the email Webisodes, said Mr. Martin.

Any business eager to initiate an email campaign should heed two tips, offered by EmailLabs. First, keep subject lines shorter than 50 characters in length. When analyzed, the open-rate was 12.5% higher than for those with 50+ characters. Click-through rates jumped to 75% higher than the 50+ character group.

Second, identify the time period when the target audience will most likely open and act on an email. For example, studies show that a higher percentage of males versus females are online during prime time television viewing. In contrast, a good time to reach teens is in the late afternoon after they get home from school.

Branding is about building perceptions. These perceptions are built over time, as a result of numerous interactions. What quicker, more efficient way to brand could there be for small business than via email.

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