

A Proposed Model of Electronic Mail Communication: Content Marketing Channel among Generation Y

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Article Info

Volume 82

Page Number: 637 - 652

Publication Issue:

January-February 2020

Abstract

This research attempts to understand the challenges faced by marketers in the digital world, particularly in dealing with Generation Y. To understand their email behavior and to identify the factors that can lead to opting-in, and opening and forwarding email messages. The research is conducted using a qualitative approach in the form of in-depth semi-structured interviews. The opinion regarding email marketing and the factors regarding open, forward and opting-in have been investigated among marketing managers, HR managers, digital marketers and marketing researchers who are considered as generation Y in Malaysia. Furthermore, in respect of commercial emails, recommendations have been given after analyzing the collected data based on the thematic method to increase the rate of opening, forwarding and opting in among Generation Y. The findings of this research offer valuable guidance for marketers when dealing with Generation Y as customers in e-commerce.

Article History

Article Received: 14 March 2019

Revised: 27 May 2019

Accepted: 16 October 2019

Publication: 04 January 2020

Keywords: content marketing, email marketing, opt-in, forward, generation y

INTRODUCTION

The current trend of widespread globalization requires companies to explore new media channels for effective communication to reach customers, specifically in marketing communication. The recent marketing communication space provides “a wide and diverse choice of media channels through which to send marketing communications to customers” (Danaher and Rossiter, 2011). Danaher and Rossiter (2011) considered Internet channels, such as banner ads, email, and blogs, as the most significant marketing communication channels. They also mentioned that the Internet and emails had become a daily routine among people and workplaces around the globe. The collective movement to electronic communication has led to rapid growth of the phenomena of electronic marketing and email advertisements. Electronic marketing or email advertisements are considered to be one of the most significant marketing

communication channels (Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty, 2012). The findings for 2015 show that 1 billion Internet users (15% of the human population) from around the world generated around \$5 trillion in Internet commerce compared to \$354 billion in 2010 (Duffett, 2015). In Duffett’s study (2015) it was noted that, recently, Internet commerce activity in Asian countries significantly increased and that it could compete with the USA and countries in Europe. The majority of the studies in this area (Danaher and Rossiter, 2011; Ellis-Chadwick and Doherty, 2012; Duffett, 2015; Beibeik Hashemnia and Danaie, 2017) showed that electronic mail advertising is in wide use, but that the problem of unsolicited emails, better known as spam, are preventing emails from working as a productive marketing tool (Xin Xu et al., 2008). The current study is designed to review the influential factors that promote superior detection of the differences between spam and electronic mail advertising.

Nowadays, email marketing is a challenge for Electronic marketers. With numerous channels and emails competing for users' attention and overcoming noise, based on research in Britain and collected data, electronic marketer companies indicate that online users each have 260 emails that are not opened of which 56 are from brands (Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty, 2012). This means that online users are not paying attention to commercial emails that are sent to their inboxes, and, hence, turning these emails into spam mail. Different research, by Baltes (2015), shows that the achievement level or failure level of a company's online interaction is based on the level of quality of the content marketing strategies implemented by that company, which increases the sensitivity of the content marketing in digital or virtual space. A study in 2016 shows that Generation Y is not as patient as the older generation as they have grown up in the time of technology and immediate gratification, which leads to not reading the full page of the email, and only scanning the emails by their attributes, such as headlines, subject lines, and images (Soyez & Gurtner, 2016). Moreover, one of the industrial issues faced by marketers is "how to motivate and increase the intention of Y generation to open and forward the commercial emails sent to them?" Knowledge gaps exist in the literature regarding the most efficient factors to attract online users or customers, particularly among Generation Y, and increase and renew the efficiency of email marketing as a low-cost tool for marketers to capture a sufficient level of the target audience (Gupta, 2015).

Research Objectives and significance of the study: The broad objective of this study is to help marketers in the e-commerce industry, to increase the efficiency of email marketing as a tool to reach generation Y by resolving the issue of not opening, not "opting-in" and not forwarding the email messages by customers and thereby limiting the ability of marketers to promote their packages. The objectives of this study can be broken down into three

categories. The initial objective is to synthesize the most influential factors in the opening, "opting-in," and forwarding of email messages in the e-commerce industry among generation Y. The second objective is to investigate the perceptions of the audience in respect of opening and forwarding emails. Lastly, to propose a model for effective email marketing communication in the e-commerce industry based on the most influential factors detected. This research can enable marketers with the current economic situation and market trends to explore more effective and profitable ways to communicate with the generation Y.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Michael Brenner, the author of B2B Marketing Insider, stated that "content marketing is about supplying the content that your target audience is requesting in all the places they are searching for it. It is the efficient mixture of created, curated and syndicated content". As conventional marketing is about selling, content marketing is more about assisting the target market with relevant information. Effectively, content marketing is a fairly new concept for an age-old idea: by offering people valued info, they will get you out (Rowley, 2008).

The current trend in terms of globalization requires companies to feel the need to seek new channels with sufficient interaction with their target audience, particularly in marketing and advertisement communication. Email marketing is one of the instruments regarding electronic commerce. Email marketing can be an electronic form of direct marketing that uses electronic mail as a channel of communicating marketable or fund-raising messages to the target market (Fariborzi & Zahedifard, 2012). Email advertisements provide a profitable service, which can be categorized under inline advertisements. The reason for the profitability of this method is because of a certain target audience, instant reply (call to

action) and low-cost investment (Jamalzadeh et al., 2012).

The length of the email is an important factor for online users. They are more willing to have an overview rather than fully read and understand the content on the Internet. In a recent study on emails, by Labs, it was discovered that, on average, each individual spends between 15 and 20 seconds on reading an email. Therefore, if the email contains 2,000 words the chance of receiving any click is low (Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty 2012). The ideal length of an email has been extensively discussed, but, according to Boomerang's data, emails between 50 to 125 words receive the top reply rates at just over 50%. Brief and direct emails are the most likely to receive a response. Furthermore, the statistics showed that emails that were 10 words or shorter only received a reply 36% of the time (Renahan, 2016). The message objective can indicate the ideal email length for promotional activities. Different analysis should be undertaken to define the email length that is most applicable to a particular type of message.

It is critical to understand the scheduling of the email distribution, for instance, which day of the week and what time of the day is best for distribution. Frequency differs from 5% to 30% depending on the size of the email sent per quarter, and 35% of emails display evidence of usage of targeted scheduling (Quist, 2013). An investigation by a news provider discovered that 83% of its customers needed fewer than two emails per week, with an average of 1.72 among the respondents (Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty, 2012). Recognizing the right frequency is really significant and can be even more important than a product, service or subject line inside the email. For example, seasonal emails are critical for business at Christmas and Easter (Quist, 2013). A significant factor in email marketing is the timing and scheduling of message distribution and delivery because each industry and target market have specific

characteristics that can influence the selection.

Illustrations or visual content becomes more interesting for marketers and content publishers on different media because of a wide range of accessibility to mass communication, such as smartphones, that will support visual content (Sahni et al., 2016). A study by Manic found that loyal customers are reached and kept by using visual content, and that more than 90% of marketing emails use illustrations. The main element considered are pictures mixed with pieces of text, which are interrelated by following protocols in terms of marketing (Manic, 2015). Another study, in 2016, discovered that the willingness to read the content could be increased up to 80% by using colorful visuals. People only retain 10% of the information that they hear after three days, but if a related picture is harmonized with that same information, people still remember 65% of the information after three days (Rancati et al., 2016). Based on a study by Mawhinney (2016), 46% of marketers say that shooting is serious to their existing marketing and storytelling approaches, 65% of older marketers consider that visual content, such as photos, video, illustrations, and infographics, is the main cause of interaction for their brand.

In order to have eye-catching content, the subject line plays an important role, and 100 percent of emails that are used by marketers to promote products or services have subject lines to accomplish this aim. The objective of the subject line is to attract the attention of the reader as fast as possible. It has been assessed that subject lines with 50 characters or less lead with 12% greater opening rates and 75% greater click-through rates compared to emails with longer subject lines (Baltes, 2015). Online users filter out their electronic messages by reading a subject line in a second and identify and evaluate the email. If the subject field does not instantly take the online reader's attention, they shift to the next

message in their email inboxes (Calfano, 2016).

The first and the top part of every email is known as the header. Extremely high consideration needs to be taken in order to include recognizable email components, such as the logo and color scheme of the sender, because the header is located at the beginning of the email and the reader will recognize the email by its header. The header is also presented in the preview panel, which makes it more important to make it distinguishable and attractive (Jamalzadeh et al., 2012). Three-quarters of commercial emails have a different headline in addition to the subject line. The headline of the email must be interrelated to the email as well as the content and the body of the message.

The recipient of the email can understand where the message was sent from by checking the name of the sender. Nowadays, marketers use the name of the company, some use the brand name or person's name at the same time, while other marketers only use an email address (Stories & Show, 2016). Although it looks like a small item, particularly because it captures less space than the subject line, the "From" or sender name is highly important. In addition, most online readers look at the "from" name first, and, if they do not recognize it, they will mark it as spam. According to Stories & Show (2016), the "From" line or sender name is highly important, the same as the subject line. Although the interest in email marketing has not decreased, the time spent on reading emails has, which means that marketers have less time to grab the attention of their target market using emails (McDonald, 2013).

A 'live link,' hypertext, or a 'hot link,' is a phrase in the online content and online marketing that, when clicked, will direct you to another web page with associated content. Research indicates that hyperlinks are able to make a huge difference in terms of the efficiency of content marketing (Manic,

2015). Based on the study by Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty (2012) concerning the content investigation of email campaigns, it was found that different strategies in terms of format, address, subject line, hyperlinks, and interactivity are implemented to primarily magnetize the attention of the clients, and, secondly, to encourage and motivate extra curiosity.

Emails can become more innovative and creative by adding interactive content to them and channel frequently observed to as static and dated. Interactive emails can make your content more convincing, advance your engagement and please your subscribers (Buono, 2016). The information processing and involvement of the user can be increased by interactivity, but there is possibly an ideal level of interactivity based on the different types of message. User interactivity inside the email and influential animations beyond animated GIFs, known as kinetic emails, allow marketers to generate attractive and engaging campaigns that can stay in a recipient's inbox. Kinetic emails provide companies with new ways to illustrate their brand uniqueness and engage with the target market (Khoo, 2016). According to Williams & Page (2011), generation Y believes that an Internet experience should be interactive.

According to the study by Wegert et al. (2016), personalized emails can generate higher transaction rates, and, in terms of income, six times more than non-personalized messages. According to research in Britain and collected data, electronic marketing companies indicate that online users have 260 emails that are not opened, of which 56 are from brands. In addition, 60% of online users say that they might open those emails if the subject line in the email was personalized based on the personality. Experian declared that personalized promotional emails had 29% greater opening rates and 41% greater unique click rates. Also, experimental research showed that, in general, personalized subject lines achieved 26% greater unique

opening rates (Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty, 2012). According to the study's findings, personalized promotional emails boosted the transaction rates and income of each email, six times greater than non-personalized emails (Gesenhues, 2014).

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Research design and sampling methodology

This study adopts the qualitative method for the research methodology. The questions for the interviews for the current research are designed as standardized open-ended questions (Gill et al., 2008). This type of question was chosen to increase the possibility of fulfilling the objective to compare the factors that influence the audience to "opt-in" and forward an email message in order to identify the most influential factors.

The non-probability sampling approach is a method used by researchers where the samples are collected through a procedure in which not all the population have an equal or the same chance of being chosen. Participants in this research are mostly chosen on the basis of their convenience or in accordance with the special objectives from the researcher (Cochran, 1977). After choosing the non-probability sampling method, the technique of convenience/haphazard, or accidental sampling was selected for this research. Convenience sampling is probably the most common of all sampling methods. One of the reasons for choosing this sampling technique is because the samples are reachable by the researcher. The inclusion criteria included participants who are a current employee of companies in Kuala Lumpur whose business is related to the current research. As the target audience of the current study is generation y, respondents aged 23-31 were chosen from Kuala Lumpur.

Data collection was conducted in July 2016. All the interviews were recorded via Dictaphone and transcribed verbatim. All the

participants were chosen and connected with the researcher without any recruitment from third parties. The participants were contacted by phone to explain the main principals of the research and make an appointment for a face-to-face interview. Additionally, all the participants were contacted accordingly, face-to-face, for a research overview discussion and the interview itself. All the interviews were carried out in the meeting rooms of their offices to create a comfortable atmosphere for the participants and to encourage them to be fully professional and productive in their answers.

Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were selected to conduct this research study, as this technique allows the participants to be more flexible and also elaborate on the topic that they want to discuss. This method helps the researcher to extract more information from the individuals who are participating in the interview session. Semi-structured interviews give scope for individuals to respond to questions beyond their own terminology and offer a more suitable structure for comparability over that of intensive or structured interviews (Gill et al., 2008). In the study by Bloor & Wood (2006), they explain that interviews are one of the most popular approaches for studying complicated and sensitive areas as the examiner has the chance to explain to the participant before raising sensitive queries and is able to clarify complex issues in person. However, although this approach enables extensive and in-depth data to be collected, it can be time-consuming and costly for the researcher (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis was conducted for each independent variable and dependent variable, and the results are shown below. By categorizing themes and subthemes, the analysis was introduced to the participants.

Message Opened

The respondents have a sufficient number of factors to consider when opening a commercial email, such as recognition of sender, subject line, message content, frequency, and timing.

Recognition of sender

The majority of the participants, three out of five, mentioned that they would open an email if they consider that inside is something they are interested in. Participant 1, "So, if I open certain types it will be basically in terms of something that I like..." Participant 2, "If I'm interested in the advertising product, such as makeup, I will open the email to see." Participant 3, "It is because I found them simple and interesting..." Participant 4, "Related promotions that can be of use to myself or I know the brand name can be the reason for that, and for me, I will notice by checking the sender name of the email or reading the first line of the email." The answer of Participant 5, "...very generic header I will not pay attention to", indicates the direct correlation between the variables Message Opened and Recognition of Sender.

Subject Line

All the participants refer to the benefit focus from the variable Subject Line when it comes to opening the promotional emails. Participant 1, "...I will open the email to see what the promotion is about, and, maybe there are free gifts. I will open to see what kind of promotions and benefits I can get from the advertisement." Participant 2, "...I will open the email to see what the promotion is about, and, maybe there are free gifts. I will open to see what kind of promotions and benefits I can get from the advertisement." Participant 3, "...and they maybe can be useful for me." Participant 4, "Related promotions that can be useful to myself..." "...and is not related to my personal needs, also, too much content without any straight point can be another factor for me to not pay attention." Participant 5, "...I would open an email if it has some kind of appeal inside, for

example, if they want to tell me about very big discount like "get 50% off on IKEA chairs" and then I will think that: "ok I'm going to open it!" Based on the answers above it is possible to infer that the Subject Line is a highly influential factor in opening the promotional emails. However, two out of four components of the Subject Line were not mentioned by any of the respondents. The effect of these two components – Localization and Scarcity – was not detected.

Message content

The Message content is considered to be one of the most influential factors and can include: length of email, illustration, hyperlinks and interactive features. The majority of the components were mentioned by all of the participants during the interviews. All the respondents commented that the message content was an influential factor for them when making a decision to open commercial emails. Participant 1, "...but then again, an email itself has to be in a way very attractive for me to make a decision at that particular moment or as play moment..." and "...if it doesn't have that or it is very simple: only words, no pictures, no information then I would say I would not pay attention to it." Participant 2, "Obviously to emails that are asking me to click on the link inside I will not pay attention to those." Participant 3, "It is because I found them simple and interesting..." "Some of them that are busy, congested and some gloomy things happening, and some things that are not really appropriate to promote something, so, I will not open that kind of email at all." Participant 4, "...too much content without any straight point can be another factor for me to not pay attention." Participant 5, "...an email with no pictures, no buttons, a lot of attachments and like very bland header, very generic header I will not pay attention to."

Frequency and Timing

All of the respondents mentioned several times that frequency and timing are influential factors. Participant 1, "If you are

talking about annoying, I would say I'm opening it for the sake of dealing with others. So, if I'm getting it, I will keep every time open I will see a lot of emails about the advertisement. I'm not going to go through it, and if I'm not going to go through it, obviously I have to clear my inbox. That is why I prefer it to be a monthly basis." "...If you are asking me about the time I prefer, after office hours is the best..." Participant 2, "So, because I already know about an advertisement they have no need to email me frequently. So, as I mentioned before, once in three days emailing is enough." "I think in the morning is ok, because I have time to forward to my friends and have time to think either I will forward it to my friends or not." Participant 3, "They are sending too much information in the emails in certain different parts of the day, which makes your inbox full and your phone ring all the time. That is something annoying that is happening." and "Actually, I prefer them to be sent around the time that I'm not busy, like 7-8 pm..." Participant 4, "The next reason can be filling my inbox, and, for sure, without checking, I will delete them because I don't like my inbox to be full." "For sure, timing is important, I prefer mostly to receive promotional emails in the afternoon and evening when I'm checking my emails more frequently. But if I want to forward the email to someone I prefer to forward emails during the day, not at night." Participant 5, "Yes, I will consider advertising emails annoying if they send it to me every day or every few days..." "I think in the morning is better because I check my emails in the morning when I get to work..." The results above indicate that there is a direct correlation between Email Opened and Frequency and Timing.

Message Clicked

Message clicked can be influenced by two components – Message Content and subject line.

Message Content

Message Content is considered to be one of the leading factors for the message to be clicked. The majority of the respondents confirmed that the content of the message in promotional email had an effect on whether they clicked. Participant 1, "The primary reason would be how the email looks itself, it has to look legit, it shouldn't look too good to be true, but, at the same time, it has to be straight forward it has to give you all or most of the information in a quick glance..." "It has to be in the way it catches my eye. The moment it catches my eye it motivates me. It is like looking through all the newspapers, you don't read all of them you only read that one that catches your eye. It is those keywords or that specific look that matter..." Participant 3, "I prefer they look simple and straight forward, in the way they will direct me straightly to the thing that I want." Participant 4, "it should not be too messy with different ads in the email, also not full of animations because data usage will be high and I don't want to spend my data usage on something useless. The links and hyperlinks in the email must also be in short form, and it should look simple." "...also, if I find new and creative content inside, which can get my attention I will subscribe surely." Participant 5, "Well, it should obviously have some kind of "call to action", especially, it would be easier for me to click a button than if it is a link or if it is an attachment..." "...maybe they will contain some articles, interesting content, and then, if I see that this kind of article is interesting, I want to read about this more..." The results of the interviews show a correlation between the Message Clicked and all of the components of Message Content.

Subject Line

The subject line, especially the component Benefit, is one of the leading factors that have an impact on the possibility of the commercial email being clicked. Participant 1, "...it is related to what I prefer, there is a preference list, ...if I'm requesting for car advertisements then I should get only about

cars...” Participant 2, “...I will subscribe to see what the promotion is about, what are the latest products they have...” “If I get a promotion... what we call it.. free gifts or benefits from that, so it is good...” Participant 3, “If they send me some appropriate promotions for sure, maybe I will take that thing and go to the website and check all the list.” Participant 4, “Because certain emails can be beneficial for me, from information perspective and moneywise...” Participant 5, “...I would press on “click here to get this discount” or “sign up now to get something.” As the results show, two components of the Subject Line – Personalization and Benefit – were mentioned by respondents during the interviews. Subject Line is identified as being a highly influential factor in terms of whether promotional emails are clicked.

Forward Message

Time and frequency, Subject Line and Message content, all three have a positive correlation with forward message.

Time and frequency

All the participants mentioned that they would forward the Message (email) when they receive an email during the proper time. Participant 1, “...if I receive a lot I would probably not go through it, but if you are asking me about the time I prefer, after office hours is the best...” Participant 2, “...no need to email me frequently. So, as I mentioned before, emailing once in three days is enough.” “I think in the morning is ok...” Participant 3, “It is because some of them are too much...” “...I prefer them to be sent around the time that I’m not busy, like 7-8 pm...” Participant 4, “...if they are sending lots of offers to me, I think they are lying about their offers...” “For sure timing is important, I prefer mostly to receive promotional emails in the afternoon and evening...” Participant 5, “...I will consider advertising emails annoying if they send it to me every day or every few days...” “I think in the morning is better because I check my emails in the morning when I get to work...”

Subject Line

Most of the participants (four out of five), mentioned that they would forward the message (email) when they receive an email that has a proper subject line that can be subcategorized under benefit: Participant 1, “Basically, the main reason would be the benefits.” Participant 2, “...promotion that I will share with my friends and forward to my friends.” Participant 3, “...if they give me some bonuses about that service and the forwarding message that they gave me for sure I will do that.” Participant 4, “...to share the benefits with my friends and my family...” From the data collected above, it is possible to conclude that “subject line” has a high impact on participant email behavior in order to forward the message received in their inbox. The answers support the correlation between forward message and subject line.

Message Content

Most of the participants (four out of five) mentioned that they would forward the message (email) when they receive an email that has proper message content that can be subcategorized under illustrations, thumbnails and images: Participant 1, “...has to be something very “eye catching” to make me stop scrolling. If it doesn’t have that or it is very simple: only words, no pictures, no information, then I would say that it is something that I would not pay attention to.” Participant 2, “...the email that is asking me to click on the link inside I will not pay attention to those.” Participant 3, “Some of them that are busy, congested and some gloomy things...” Participant 5, “This kind of email will be an email with no pictures, no buttons, a lot of attachments and like very bland header...” From the data collected above, it is possible to conclude that “Message Content” has a high impact on participant email behavior in order to forward the message received in their inbox. The answers support the correlation between forward message and message content.

Opt-in

Opt-in can get the most efficient form of message content and subject line.

Message content

All the participants mentioned that they would opt-in to certain advertisement websites in case they receive an email with attractive Message content: Participant 1, "...only read that one that catches your eye. It is those keywords or that specific look that matter..." Participant 2, "...If I get a promotion... what we call it. Free gifts or benefits from that..." "...so has to be something very "eye catching" to make you stop scrolling..." Participant 3, "...will send me some appropriate promotions for sure..." "...Some of them that are busy, congested and some gloomy things..." Participant 4, "...if I found new and creative content inside, which can get my attention..." "...There is unique content, which I can't find them everywhere..." "...also, too much content without any straight point can be another factor for me..." Participant 5, "...maybe they will contain some articles, interesting content, and then, if I see that this kind of article is interesting, I want to read about this more..." "This kind of email will be an email with no pictures, no buttons, a lot of attachments and like very bland header..." From the data collected above, it is possible to conclude that "Message Content" has a high impact on participant email behavior in order to opt-in or subscribe to certain advertising websites. The answers support the correlation between opt-in and message content.

Subject Line

Most of the participants (four out of five) mentioned that they would forward the Message (email) when they receive an email that has proper Message content, which can be subcategorized under illustrations, thumbnails and images: Participant 1, "...if I'm requesting for car advertisement than I should get only about cars..." Participant 2, "...I will subscribe to see what is the

promotion, what are the latest products they have..." "...If I get a promotion... what we call it.. free gifts or benefits from that..." Participant 3, "...If they will send me some appropriate promotions for sure..." Participant 4, "...be beneficial for me, from information perspective and moneywise..." "It's all about my personality, it must have some relation to my personal need...". From the data collected above, it is possible to conclude that "Subject line" has a high impact on participant email behavior in order to opt-in or subscribe to certain advertised websites. The answers support the correlation between opt-in and subject line.

CONCLUSION

As the findings of the current research have shown, only a few of the participants considered the factor of recognition of the sender or "From" name as a high impact predictor that could have a high effect on opt-in, opening and forwarding an email. This shows that this variable cannot be considered as a driving factor in this research. However, in the study by Stories and Show (2016), and Ingham (2003), and McDonald in 2013, all the researchers mentioned that recognition of the sender or "From" line is highly important and that online readers look to who it is "from" first, and when they do not recognize the name, they will mark it as spam. This is contrary to the finding of this research in which the focus was Generation Y. Hence, there can be a different attitude towards these factors by this generation.

The second factor, which was found to be influential by this research, is the Subject line. As elaborated upon in the research framework, the subject line has a few subcategories – personalization, localization, Benefit focus, and scarcity. The majority of the respondents were most concerned about two influential factors – personalization and benefits focus. Additionally, other studies (Baltes, 2015) (Calfano, 2016) have mentioned that online users filter out their electronic messages by reading a subject line in a second and identify and evaluate the

email. If the subject field does not instantly grab the online reader's attention, they shift to the next message in their email inboxes. The importance of the subject line has been identified similar to the studies by Patrutiu Baltes in 2015 and Calfano in 2016.

Last but not least, the factor that was determined as having high impact and a significant effect on email behavior of Generation Y, as extracted from the participants' data, was the frequency and timing of the email. The answers showed that all the participants strongly believe that time and frequency are significant elements and can be considered as a driving factor among all the other factors. In addition, other studies (Quist, 2013) (Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty, 2012) observed the importance of frequency and timing, as they found that 83% of customers needed fewer than two emails per week, and concluded that it is critical to understand the scheduling of the email distribution. Therefore, the significance of frequency and timing is obvious, and the findings of different researchers support the findings of the current study.

The second objective of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the participants in terms of the opening and forwarding of emails. The results of the current research additionally prove the importance of visual content. All the respondents mentioned that the content of promotional emails, such as illustrations, hyperlinks, and interactive features, influence them in terms of whether they open, "opt-in" and forward commercial emails. Moreover, all of the participants are concerned about the bonuses or benefits that they can get from opening, "opting-in" and forwarding particular promotional emails. In this case, their perceptions mostly focused on the incoming benefits from promotional email compared to other factors.

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The ultimate objective of this research was to develop a model for effective email marketing communication in the e-commerce industry based on the most influential factors. The new model has a connection (Interest of sender and receiver to family and friends) between the sender and receiver, as the study found that there should be a link between the sender and receiver in order to forward the email. Also, the researcher defines feedback as any action of opening, opting-in and forwarding messages by the receiver. At the same time, the message between the sender and receiver is electronic mail. In addition, the high impact factors (subject-line (personalization and benefits focus), message content (length of email, illustration, hyperlinks, interactive features), frequency and timing) that are needed to get feedback from the receiver are included in the diagram.

Recommendations

After analyzing all the possible factors, there are a few factors for Subject line that need more consideration from marketers, which are personalization and benefits focus. The answers provided showed that the participants want their message to be personalized based on their characteristics. Also, all of them mentioned about benefits, and, when these elements are present, they will open, forward and opt-in. For message content, the most important factors include relevant pictures, email length, and related links (hyperlinks), which digital marketers must be aware of, as matching these will lead to higher efficiency in their email marketing activities. Finally, the most influential factor is in terms of frequency and timing. Most prefer after working hours, therefore, to increase the rate of opening of commercial emails, marketers must take time and frequency into consideration.

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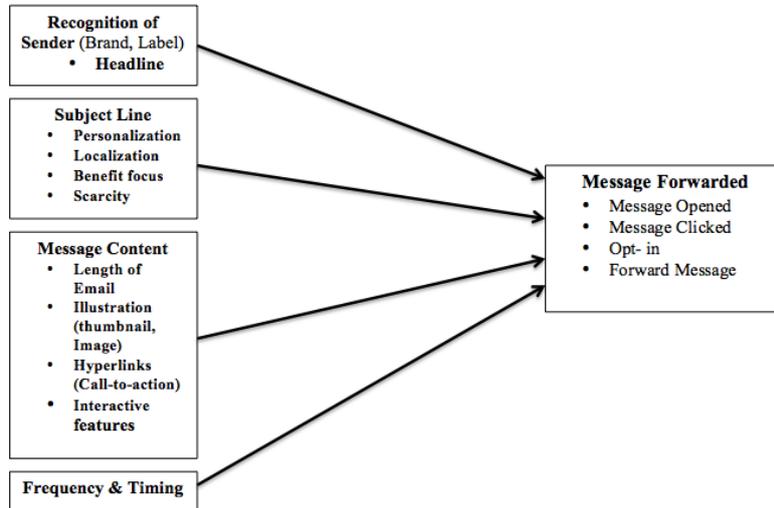
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Appendix Research framework



Interview Questions Design

No	Formulation of the Question	Extracted Variable/Value
1	How can you describe email marketing?	General value.
2	Why from your perspective should companies spend their budget on email marketing?	General value.
3	How will you feel if you receive an email advertisement on a permanent basis?	General value.
4	Why will you open certain types of advertising emails?	DV Message Forwarded • Message Opened IV Message content (general content)
5	Why will you forward certain types of advertising emails?	DV Message Forwarded • Forward message IV Subject Line IV Message content (general content)
6	What should advertising emails look like to make you click on the link provided inside?	DV Message Forwarded • Message Clicked IV Recognition of Sender IV Subject line IV Message content (general content)
7	Why will you subscribe to certain advertising emails?	DV Message Forwarded • Message Clicked • Opt-in IV Recognition of Sender IV Subject line

		IV Message content (general content)
8	How can an advertising email motivate you to subscribe to an advertised resource?	DV Message Forwarded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Clicked • Opt-in IV Recognition of Sender IV Subject line IV Message content (general content)
9	Why will you consider too frequent advertising emails annoying?	DV Message Forwarded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Opened • Forward message IV Frequency & Timing
10	How does the time of receiving an advertising email affect whether you open and forward the message?	DV Message Forwarded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Opened • Message Clicked • Forward message IV Frequency & Timing
11	How would you describe an advertising email that you would not pay attention to?	DV Message Forwarded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message Opened • Message Clicked • Opt-in • Forward message IV Recognition of Sender IV Subject line IV Message content IV Frequency & Timing

Characteristics and role of the participants

No of Participant	Job Title	Role in the Interview	Extracted Value
Participant 1 (Male, 31)	Senior Marketing Manager	An experienced representative of Generation Y from a company related to the research field, which is a leading regional provider of mobile network engineering services in Malaysia and other countries. Customer-receiver of email advertisements.	An expert opinion from a representative of a common industry, and perceptions of a receiver of email advertisements who is knowledgeable in the area being investigated. The gender of the participant is Male, which will help to cover different areas of the e-commerce industry preferred by men (cars, electronic devices, etc.)
Participant 2 (Female, 29)	Senior Human Resource Executive	An experienced representative of Generation Y from the HR department of a company that is related	The opinion of a representative of a common industry and perceptions of a receiver of email advertisements who is

		to the research field, and is a leading regional provider of mobile network engineering services in Malaysia and other countries. Customer-receiver of email advertisements.	knowledgeable in the area being investigated. The gender of the participant is Female, which will help to cover different areas of the e-commerce industry preferred by ladies (cosmetics, household products, etc.)
Participant 3 (Male, 25)	Young Entrepreneur (Restaurant Industry)	A mature member of Generation Y, entrepreneur (Kuala Lumpur) who is interested in new ways of developing businesses and utilizing the high demand of current technology. An active customer-receiver of email advertisements.	The opinion of a person from Generation Y who is interested in finding new productive ways to adopt digital interactivity in a business development in Kuala Lumpur, and perceptions of a receiver of email advertisements who is interested in new incoming offers. The gender of the participant is Male, which will help to cover different areas of the e-commerce industry preferred by men (cars, electronic devices, etc.)
Participant 4 (Male, 23)	Master Student in Marketing Management	The current researcher among Generation Y in Kuala Lumpur in the marketing area, including e-marketing, with an interest in the e-commerce industry and new ways to advertise. An active customer-receiver of email advertisements.	The opinion of the current researcher among Generation Y in the marketing area in Kuala Lumpur with a marketing background, and general knowledge and perceptions of an active supporter of the e-commerce industry, and receiver of email advertisements. The gender of the participant is Male, which will help to cover different areas of the e-commerce industry preferred by men (cars, electronic devices, etc.)
Participant 5 (Female, 26)	Digital Marketing Executive	A representative of Generation Y from a company related to the research field, which is the second largest web hosting provider in Malaysia.	An expert opinion of a representative of the e-marketing industry (including email marketing), and perceptions of the receiver of email advertisements who is knowledgeable in the area

		Customer-receiver of email advertisements.	being investigated. The gender of the participant is Female, which will help to cover different areas of the e-commerce industry preferred by ladies (cosmetics, household products, etc.)
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Main themes and sub-themes

Main Themes themes	Sub-
Recognition of Sender	Brand Label Headline
Subject Line	Personalization Localization Benefit focus Scarcity
Message Content	Length of Email Illustration (thumbnail, Image) Hyperlinks (Call-to-action) Interactive features
Frequency and Timing	Time

Proposed model

