

COLUMNS

SMS is not email

October 24, 2016



Gucci is one of the most prolific users of email, juxtaposing arresting imagery with colorful product. This latest email dropped Oct. 20 to push its GG Marmont ballet flats

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It is natural to compare SMS to email marketing. Both types of marketing involve sending messages to recipients who have opted in. This comparison, however, should not be carried too far.

If you think of SMS as email for mobile or something similar, you are missing some key distinctions.

To help clarify this point, let us look at both the similarities and differences between SMS and email.

Rise and decline of email marketing

Before the age of mobile marketing, email was widely considered to be the most powerful way to stay in touch with customers.

Many online marketers, in fact, believed and many still do that an email list was one of the most valuable assets a business could have.

An email list gives you the ability to send messages to your audience whenever you choose.

Another important advantage is that once you have a list, you are not dependent on Google or anyone else for your success.

Unfortunately, as email marketing became more popular, problems such as spam and saturation began to reduce its effectiveness.

Meanwhile, with the growth of mobile and text messaging, SMS marketing became a viable alternative.

SMS actually has all of the main advantages of email marketing without the drawbacks.

Mobile revolution

One of the major factors accompanying the growth of SMS is the widespread use of mobile phones.

Email was originally designed to send messages from one computer to another.

Today, people certainly use mobile devices to read and send emails.

However, the length of email messages is really more suited for larger screens.

Many people check their email on their phones and read the messages later at least the ones they bother to open and read.

Text messaging, in contrast to email, was created for mobile devices. It is perfectly suited for mobile phones and the mobile lifestyle, in which people carry around their phones practically everywhere.

This is not to say that email marketing is dead or ineffective. However, it is clearly not the cutting-edge platform it was in the early days of the Internet.

How SMS and email are different

Let us look at the most important ways that SMS differs from email.

SMS has much higher open rates. SMS open rates are around 98 percent, compared to 20 percent or less for emails. This is largely due to the amount of spam sent via email.

While as much as 90 percent of all emails sent are spam, only 1 percent of text messages are spam. This helps give SMS a much higher degree of trust and engagement.

People respond to text messages quickly. Not only do people almost always open text messages, they respond to them quickly.

Ninety percent of recipients read texts within three minutes of receiving them. This makes SMS extremely useful for time sensitive messages. Consumers are much more casual about reading their emails.

SMS has higher click-through rates. SMS has click-through rates that are about six times higher than email.

Text messages are brief. Emails were designed as an electronic alternative to traditional mail.

SMS messages have a 160-character limit that compels you to be brief and on-point with your messages. While this can be a challenge, it also means that there is no room for filler. This can actually help with conversion rates as there is nothing to distract the reader from the main point. It is also faster for marketers to compose SMS messages as opposed to emails.

SMS is better for coupons and vouchers. Recipients are far more likely to redeem coupons sent via text than ones they receive in email messages.

SMS is hip and contemporary. Many millennials consider email outdated.

Statistics reveal that email usage has been dropping among teenagers and young adults. For younger people, text messaging is the modern way to communicate.



A text from Bloomingdale's Registry. File photo

IT IS MOST useful to look at SMS, not as an updated version of email, but as a unique method of communication.

There will, most likely, always be a place for email, just as people still send physical mail via the post office.

Many businesses use a variety of marketing strategies, including email, social media, search engine optimization and SMS.

It is important, however, to recognize that SMS is not merely a new type of email. It is a newer, faster and more direct way for marketers to reach audiences.



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