

MarketingSherpa Surveys on Consumer Marketing Preferences and Brand Marketer Practices Highlight Major Disconnects

Results indicate major differences in how consumers want to connect with brands versus marketers' actual practices

JACKSONVILLE, Fla., Nov. 2, 2015 [/PRNewswire/](#) -- In this era of data-driven marketing heralded by an exploding number of choices for brand communications and consumer targeting, it appears brand marketers may not be listening closely enough to consumers.

Email is the most preferred communication method for consumers to receive regular updates and promotions from companies they are interested in doing business with (60 percent). Email is also the top brand marketer medium for communicating with consumers at a nearly universal 90 percent. But differences emerge in how these emails are sent and received.

More than three quarters of brand marketers (76 percent) say they sent subscribers emails at a pre-determined frequency chosen by the brand while just a quarter (24 percent) of consumers say they desire to receive emails at a pre-determined frequency chosen by brands. Nearly half of consumers (49 percent) prefer to subscribe to emails at the frequency they choose, while only 14 percent of brand marketers report that they actually send out email updates based on their subscribers' preferences. These disparities may fuel the consumer belief that their email boxes are under attack by marketers.

The results are from a pair of consumer and marketer online surveys conducted by MarketingSherpa in preparation for [MarketingSherpa Summit 2016](#), being held Feb. 22-24, 2016 in Las Vegas. The consumer survey was fielded from Aug. 20-24, 2015 with 2,021 adult respondents, ages 18 and over. The brand marketer survey was fielded from September 15-28, 2015, attracting 455 marketer respondents.

"It's understandable that there are disconnects between marketers' practices and customers' preferences—marketers eat, sleep, live and dream their products, services, sales process and customer experience. Customers, on the other hand, are bombarded with choices and interact with products in highly distracted, highly interrupted micro-moments of time. That's why MarketingSherpa Summit 2016 is dedicated to customer-first marketing," said Daniel Burstein, director of editorial content, MarketingSherpa.

"The Summit will bring together successful marketers who will share their stories with industry experts and technology and solutions providers...so we can all get together for a few days, share our challenges, share what we've learned and work together to narrow this gap and, ultimately, better serve customers while improving company results."

Other survey findings:

Contrasting views on social media

Social media is hugely popular with brands—77 percent of brand marketers offer their customers the opportunity to follow them on social media. But one in five consumers (20 percent) want to receive regular updates and promotions from companies they are interested in by following them on social media.

Nearly one in three social media users (33 percent) say they connect with brands on social media because they are interested in buying their products. Thirty-one percent of social media users connect with brands via social media because there is an incentive such as a sweepstakes, discount, etc. Brand marketers, however, view sweepstakes and other incentives as their fourth most popular method (30 percent) of attracting consumers to their social media accounts; their top three methods of attracting consumers to their social media accounts are producing useful content (78 percent), prominently displaying social media icons (61 percent) and creating a brand that people want to publicly associate with (34 percent).

Consumers like snail mail; marketers not so much

Traditional postal mail remains popular with consumers; 54 percent indicate they want to receive physical mail updates and promotions from companies they are interested in. Yet, only 19 percent of brands provide print updates in the mail, likely due to their cost.

Improving consumers' shopping experiences

Another prime example of the disparity between marketers and consumers was highlighted by the 74 percent of consumers who say free shipping is their top choice for how retailers could improve their shopping experience; marketers (18 percent) selected free shipping as their ninth choice.

Another area of huge disconnect relates to the return process. Fifty-three percent of consumers say retailers can improve their shopping experience by making the return process easier; just 19 percent of brand marketers thought this was an important area to improve.

Product discovery

How do consumers like to learn about new products to purchase? More than a quarter (27 percent) say they discover new products through online advertising. But among brand marketers, online advertising is the most used method for informing consumers about new products—60 percent of marketers reported they use online advertising.

For questions regarding the survey or its methodology, including weighting variables, please contact Walker Ragland at walker.ragland@meclabs.com. Detailed information about participating in [MarketingSherpa Summit 2016](#) is available online.

About the MarketingSherpa Summit 2016

[MarketingSherpa Summit 2016](#) has expanded from its original email marketing orientation to become a showcase of research-based best practices in digital marketing programs for a broad spectrum of global marketing leaders and practitioners. Building off Email Summit's 10-year heritage, the three-day 2016 Summit will highlight some of the most successful digital marketing campaigns using email, data, mobile, social media and content, including award-winning case studies presented by brand-side marketers. There will be breakout sessions that offer interactive roundtables for marketing technology tips and advice from industry experts and brand-side marketers, as well as networking opportunities to exchange experiences.

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