



RELEVANCE OF EMAIL MARKETING IN THE CONTEMPORARY DIGITAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION MIX

Ella Anastasya Sinambela, Didit Darmawan

Universitas Sunan Giri Surabaya

correspondence: dr.diditdarmawan@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of email marketing as a direct communication channel in an era dominated by social media. Through a qualitative literature review approach, this research analyzes the fundamental characteristics of email marketing compared to social media, the role of each channel in the consumer journey, and the factors influencing implementation quality. The findings reveal that email marketing possesses distinct advantages including data ownership, high level personalization, guaranteed reach, and effectiveness in driving conversion and long term customer relationships. Social media excels in broad reach, virality potential, and brand awareness building. Both channels serve complementary functions within an integrated marketing communication framework. The effectiveness of email marketing is largely determined by implementation quality, including precise segmentation, substantive personalization, intelligent automation, and accurate measurement. Regulatory developments regarding data privacy and evolving consumer behavior strengthen email marketing's position as a channel aligned with transparency and consent requirements. This study contributes to the conceptual development of integrated digital marketing communication and provides practical guidance for marketers in allocating resources across channels.

Keywords: email marketing, social media, direct communication, consumer journey, integrated marketing.

Introduction

Digital marketing communication has undergone a very rapid evolution along with the development of information technology and changes in consumer behavior in accessing information. This is inseparable from how access to technology and digital skills have now become the primary bridge in opening various new opportunities in the modern era (Arifin & Darmawan, 2021). In the last two decades, the digital marketing landscape has been dominated by the emergence of various social media platforms that offer two-way interaction capabilities between brands and consumers. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and various instant messaging applications have changed the way companies communicate with their audiences, shifting the paradigm from conventional mass communication toward communication that is more personal and fragmented. This change also reflects the increasingly dynamic patterns of social interaction within today's virtual communities (Darmawan, 2021).

Companies are racing to build a presence on social media in the hope of reaching consumers more effectively through viral content and continuous interaction (Appel et al., 2020). Investment in social media marketing has increased significantly, while budgets for traditional marketing channels such as direct mail, print advertising, and even email marketing have declined. This shift in resource allocation reflects the belief that social media is a more relevant channel for modern consumer behavior, which spends a massive amount of time on digital platforms (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Niveditta & Padmavathy, 2017). However, questions regarding the actual effectiveness of each digital marketing channel, including whether email marketing still holds relevance amidst social media dominance, remain an issue that needs deeper examination. Shifting consumer preferences and constantly changing social media platform algorithms create complex dynamics in determining the optimal marketing communication mix.

Email marketing, as one of the oldest forms of digital marketing communication, has fundamentally different characteristics from social media (Gonxhe, 2016). This strategy often intersects with technical and ethical efforts in maintaining business visibility in the digital realm (Eddine & Darmawan, 2021). Unlike social media, which relies on algorithms to determine what content is seen by users, email marketing

operates in a space more controlled by the sender and receiver (Fariborzi & Zahedifard, 2012). Consumers who receive marketing emails have given explicit permission through an opt-in process, creating a foundation for a relationship that is more legally and ethically legitimate. Full ownership of audience data by the company, rather than a third-party platform, provides a significant strategic advantage in building long-term relationships with consumers (Hudak et al., 2017).

The ability to perform segmentation and personalization at a very detailed level allows senders to tailor messages to the preferences and behaviors of each individual. In an era where consumers are increasingly critical of irrelevant advertisements, this targeted approach becomes even more valuable. Moreover, understanding how consumers make spontaneous decisions in the digital market is a vital key to a brand's success (Darmawan & Gatheru, 2021). Additionally, mature and standardized performance measurement metrics for email marketing, such as open rate, click-through rate, and conversion rate, provide precise analytical capabilities to optimize campaigns. These characteristics indicate that email marketing has a different foundation than social media, which relies more on organic reach that is increasingly limited due to continuous algorithmic changes.

The effectiveness of email marketing as a direct communication channel needs to be understood within the framework of a complex and multidimensional consumer journey (Hartemo, 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Modern consumers no longer move linearly from awareness to purchase, but rather through various touchpoints scattered across different digital channels. Within this framework, email marketing functions as a channel capable of reaching consumers at the point where they are most receptive, namely their personal inbox, which is a digital space relatively undisturbed by excessive information noise. In contrast to social media news feeds that are crowded with content from various sources competing for attention, the email inbox provides a more structured environment and allows for more focused attention.

Consumers who voluntarily open marketing emails demonstrate a higher level of engagement compared to consumers who only view content passively on social media (Sahni et al., 2018). The ability to deliver longer and more informative messages compared to the character limits on social

media is also a distinct advantage for communication that requires detailed explanation. In the context of long-term relationship-oriented marketing, the ability of email marketing to maintain consistent communication with an existing customer base becomes a strategic value that cannot be replaced by social media, which is more oriented toward acquisition and broad reach. Ultimately, the appropriate utilization of technology and an understanding of user behavior will significantly determine the sustainability of a business in the future (Arifin & Darmawan, 2021; Darmawan, 2021).

Technological developments and data protection regulations have also helped reshape the landscape of email marketing and its position relative to social media (Sabbagh, 2021). In the midst of this situation, maintaining business visibility ethically and technically poses a unique challenge for every digital entrepreneur (Arifin et al., 2021). The implementation of various regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation in Europe and personal data protection laws in various countries has increased awareness regarding the importance of consent in the collection and use of consumer data (Martin et al., 2017). Email marketing, which operates based on opt-in principles, is inherently more compliant with these regulatory demands compared to social media models that often rely on extensive and sometimes ambiguous data collection.

Companies that rely on social media for marketing communication face a high risk of dependency on platforms whose policies can change at any time, including algorithmic changes that can drastically reduce the organic reach of published content (Bakhtiari, 2023). Such policy uncertainty requires business actors to have stronger survival strategies in facing managerial obstacles (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2021). The phenomenon of declining organic reach across various social media platforms has forced companies to allocate increasingly larger budgets for paid advertising to maintain visibility. On the other hand, email marketing provides higher reach certainty because the messages sent will go directly into the recipient's inbox without having to pass through complex algorithmic filters. The aspects of data ownership and independence from third-party platform policies make email marketing an increasingly important strategic asset in a company's digital marketing portfolio. Good management between management, technology, and business aspects will greatly assist companies in maintaining their operational stability (Darmawan et al., 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying acceleration of digitalization have changed consumer behavior in interacting with brands and influenced the effectiveness of various marketing channels. This digital transformation has also encouraged many sectors to optimize the use of big data for the smooth operation of supply chains and services (Putra & Arifin, 2021). During the period of mobility restrictions, consumers spent more time at home and significantly increased online shopping activities (Mason et al., 2021). The surge in the volume of emails received by consumers during this period created new challenges in terms of the battle for attention, but also proved the resilience of email marketing as a communication channel that remained effective amidst crisis conditions.

Email open rates and conversions from email campaigns showed relatively good resilience compared to other channels that experienced sharper fluctuations (Gu et al., 2021). Beyond technical factors, understanding consumer behavior in using personal data for more personalized advertising is the key to marketing success today (Fared & Darmawan, 2021). Experience during the pandemic also showed that email marketing plays a unique role in maintaining relationships with customers when physical channels are unavailable, as well as in conveying important information about business operational changes. The ability to communicate directly and measurably proved to be a valuable asset for businesses that had to adapt quickly to changing market conditions. While social media remains important for building brand awareness and public engagement, email marketing demonstrates superiority in terms of conversion and relationship maintenance with the existing customer base, reinforcing the argument that both channels have complementary functions rather than competing directly.

The main issue that arises in the discourse regarding the relevance of email marketing in the era of social media dominance is the erroneous assumption that social media has completely replaced the function of email marketing. This assumption often emerges alongside the rapid development of digital literacy among the younger generation (Kurniawan et al., 2021). This assumption is based on observations that the younger generation is more active in using social media and spends less time on email, as well as the trend of companies reducing their use of email as a primary marketing channel (Voorveld et al., 2018). However, this assumption ignores the fact

that digital media consumption behavior is multitasking and contextual, where consumers use different channels for different purposes.

Email marketing serves a different function than social media, where email is more effective for transactional communication, deep personalization, and long-term relationship maintenance, while social media excels in building brand awareness, public interaction, and viral reach (Stephen, 2016). Although the digital world appears global, there are sometimes clashes between the local values of traditional societies and the modern marketing strategies implemented (Mardikaningsih et al., 2021). Combining both channels under the assumption that they have identical functions will result in a strategy that is not optimal. This problem is complicated by a lack of understanding regarding the appropriate effectiveness metrics for each channel, where the use of metrics such as follower counts or engagement rates on social media is often not comparable to the more direct conversion metrics of email marketing. Without a clear understanding of the specific functions and strengths of each channel, companies tend to make resource allocation decisions that are not based on a comprehensive comparative analysis.

Another problem lies in the gap between the perception of email marketing's effectiveness and the reality of its implementation in business practice. Often, obstacles arise not because of the technology, but due to a lack of understanding in managing consumer reviews to increase product competitiveness (Negara et al., 2021). Many companies that have adopted email marketing are unable to optimize its potential due to various factors, including imprecise segmentation strategies, shallow personalization, and a lack of integration with consumer behavioral data from various sources (Zhang et al., 2017). As a result, the emails sent are often perceived as spam by consumers because they are irrelevant to their needs or preferences. This can certainly affect the public's perspective on the reliability of a digital service amidst the challenges of social integration (Fariz, 2021).

Negative experiences with irrelevant marketing emails then reinforce the perception that email marketing is ineffective, when in fact the problem lies in the quality of implementation, not the channel itself. On the other hand, social media often receives a more positive perception due to the ability of viral content to reach large audiences at a relatively low cost. The appeal of social media promotion has been proven to frequently

trigger impulsive buying behavior across various marketplaces (Mardikaningsih et al., 2018). However, high engagement metrics do not necessarily correlate with an increase in sales or customer loyalty (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). An unbalanced comparison between the potential reach of social media and the cost per conversion of email marketing creates a distortion in the evaluation of each channel's effectiveness

The study on the effectiveness of email marketing in the era of social media dominance lies in the need to provide clear guidance for marketing practitioners in allocating limited resources amidst the continuously changing dynamics of the digital landscape. Beyond business matters, the principle of providing the best for the interests of the parties involved, just as in family or parenting matters, is also very important to consider (Fajar et al., 2021). Investment in digital marketing continues to increase significantly; however, without an adequate understanding of each channel's contribution to business objectives, the risk of resource wastage becomes very high (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Companies that focus too heavily on social media may lose opportunities to build more valuable long-term relationships through email marketing, while companies that ignore social media may lose the chance to reach a broader new audience.

Furthermore, increasingly strict privacy policy changes and the decline of organic reach on social media create an urgent need to re-evaluate the dependency on third-party platforms (Bleier et al., 2020). In dealing with disputes or rights violations in the digital world, an understanding of the inhibiting factors in the legal process also becomes a crucial aspect of protection (Hardyansah et al., 2021). This study is important because it provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the role of email marketing within the framework of integrated marketing communications, and helps identify specific conditions where email marketing can provide a competitive advantage compared to social media. Without adequate understanding, companies will find it difficult to design optimal and sustainable digital marketing strategies.

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of email marketing within the framework of digital marketing communication by comparing its characteristics, functions, and performance metrics relative to social media. The analysis is conducted by tracing literature that discusses the fundamental differences between email marketing and social media, the

role of each channel in the consumer journey, as well as the factors influencing the effectiveness of email marketing implementation. The results of this study are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of integrated marketing communication concepts in the digital era, as well as practical contributions for marketing practitioners in designing an optimal channel mix in accordance with business objectives and audience characteristics.

Method

This research is a literature study with a qualitative approach focusing on the analysis of literature discussing email marketing and social media within the context of digital marketing communication. Singleton and Straits (2018) explain that research with a qualitative approach in the social sciences allows researchers to explore complex phenomena through the interpretation of various relevant written sources. The nature of this research is exploratory as it aims to understand in depth how email marketing functions as a direct communication channel and how its effectiveness compares to social media. In this study, the collected library materials include academic literature from the fields of marketing, communication, and information technology, as well as industry reports discussing email marketing and social media practices. Scheurich (2014) emphasizes that in qualitative research, researchers must be aware of their interpretative position in reading and understanding the sources studied. Therefore, the approach used is a conceptual analysis that seeks to identify key concepts, relationships between concepts, and the theoretical and practical implications of the existing findings. Lampard and Pole (2015) add that high-quality library research requires the ability to perform a synthesis of various sources that may have different perspectives, as well as the ability to identify gaps in the existing literature.

The process of collecting library materials in this study was conducted through a systematic search of academic databases and trusted sources discussing the topics of email marketing and social media. Singleton and Straits (2018) underscore the importance of careful source selection in library research to ensure that the analysis is based on literature with high credibility and relevance. The keywords used in the search include terminology related to email marketing, social media, digital

marketing communication, channel effectiveness, and digital consumer behavior. The collected sources were then analyzed using a thematic analysis method, which allows researchers to identify emerging patterns from various literatures. Lampard and Pole (2015) explain that thematic analysis in qualitative research involves a process of coding, grouping, and synthesis to develop a complete understanding of the phenomena being studied. In this study, the analysis was conducted by comparing different perspectives on the effectiveness of email marketing, identifying factors that influence said effectiveness, and formulating a conceptual framework that can explain the role of email marketing within the digital marketing communication mix. Scheurich (2014) adds that in postmodern research, it is important to question the underlying assumptions of existing practices, including assumptions about the superiority of social media compared to email marketing. The results of the analysis are organized systematically to answer the research problems while considering the complexities and nuances emerging from the various sources gathered.

Result and Discussion

The effectiveness of email marketing as a direct communication channel must be understood through the lens of fundamental differences between the working mechanisms of email and social media. In general, every business needs to understand how the right combination of marketing strategies can create an advantage over competitors (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021). Email marketing operates in an environment based on explicit permission from the recipient, where every individual receiving a message has given consent to receive communication from the sender. This opt-in concept creates a qualitatively different relationship foundation compared to social media, which often relies on algorithms to determine who sees the content (Hartemo, 2016; Sabbagh, 2021). Email recipients have demonstrated a higher level of initial interest in the brand or product, so they tend to be more receptive to the messages received. The email inbox is also a relatively private and structured digital space, unlike social media news feeds which are crowded with content from various sources competing for attention. This aligns with the observation that consumer behavior in choosing a product is often heavily influenced by how the marketing mix is delivered to them (Khayru & Issalillah, 2021). When

consumers open a marketing email, they do so in conditions that allow for more focused attention because there are no distractions from other content appearing simultaneously. This characteristic gives email marketing an advantage in terms of the quality of attention received, even though its reach might be smaller compared to social media. Additionally, the ability to send messages of unlimited length allows for the delivery of more comprehensive information, which is invaluable for products or services requiring detailed explanations or for communication aimed at building authority and trust.

The aspect of data ownership and independence from third-party platform policies becomes a crucial factor distinguishing email marketing from social media in the context of long-term effectiveness (Sabbagh, 2021). It is important for us to see that the success of a service is not just about promotion, but also about how to manage the marketing mix holistically to remain competitive (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021). Companies that build a customer email database possess an asset that is entirely under their control, independent of algorithm changes or social media platform policies that can change at any time (Katsikeas et al., 2020). The phenomenon of declining organic reach on various social media platforms has shown how fragile dependency on third-party platforms can be. Content that could previously reach tens of thousands of followers organically is now seen by only a small fraction of them, forcing companies to allocate increasingly larger budgets for paid advertising to maintain visibility. On the other hand, email marketing provides a much higher certainty of reach because the messages sent go directly into the recipient's inbox without having to pass through complex algorithmic filters (Chittenden & Rettie, 2003). This high delivery rate is a significant advantage when a company needs to convey important information or when conducting transactional communications that require a guarantee of receipt. Furthermore, data collected from email interactions can be used to build increasingly rich customer profiles over time, creating a data asset whose value continues to grow as the volume of interaction increases. Ultimately, a deep understanding of consumer shopping behavior toward specific products will greatly assist companies in determining their next strategic steps (Khayru & Issalillah, 2021). Within a long-term relationship-oriented marketing framework, the ability to own and manage

customer data independently becomes a strategic advantage that cannot be underestimated (Verhoef et al., 2010).

Segmentation and personalization are areas where email marketing demonstrates an advantage that is difficult for social media to match. The ability to divide a customer database into highly specific segments based on behavior, preferences, demographics, and interaction history allows for the delivery of messages that are highly relevant to each individual (Ansari & Mela, 2003; Beqiri, 2016). Personalization in email marketing can reach a high level of granularity, ranging from mentioning the recipient's name to tailoring product recommendations based on purchase history or browsing behavior. This high level of relevance directly correlates with increased engagement levels, such as open rates and click-through rates, and ultimately with conversion rates (Kumar et al., 2014). On the other hand, social media has limitations in terms of personalization because published content is generally "one-size-fits-all," despite the ability to target ads to specific audience segments. However, personalization in social media advertising remains within the boundaries set by the platform and cannot achieve the same level of specificity as email marketing. Additionally, personalization in email can be combined with marketing automation to create communication flows that are responsive to recipient actions (Hummel et al., 2021). For example, the email sent can change dynamically based on whether the recipient opened a previous email, clicked a certain link, or made a purchase. The ability to create an adaptive and contextual dialogue makes email marketing a highly effective channel for guiding prospects through the consumer journey toward a purchase.

The role of email marketing in the customer lifecycle differs fundamentally from the role of social media, so comparisons of effectiveness must consider the stages of the consumer journey that are the focus of each respective channel (Soegoto & Fahreza, 2018). Social media has an advantage in the early stages of the customer lifecycle, namely in the awareness and consideration phases, where broad reach capabilities and viral potential allow brands to reach new audiences on a large scale. Engaging and shareable content on social media can create a digital word-of-mouth effect that expands reach exponentially. However, once consumers have entered the conversion and loyalty phases, email marketing demonstrates a significant advantage (Hartemo, 2016). At this

phase, consumers have shown enough interest to provide their contact information, and personal as well as relevant communication becomes the key to driving purchase decisions and maintaining long-term relationships (Chittenden & Rettie, 2003). Email marketing also plays a crucial role in the post-purchase phase, such as order confirmations, product information delivery, review requests, and complementary product offers. This transactional communication requires guaranteed delivery and a high degree of personalization, which are primary strengths of email marketing. Thus, a comparison of effectiveness between email marketing and social media cannot be done simply by comparing the same metrics, as each channel serves a different function and is optimal for different stages in the relationship with the consumer.

Measuring marketing effectiveness requires an understanding of the appropriate metrics for each channel, and the use of unsuitable metrics can lead to erroneous conclusions about relative effectiveness (Páramo et al., 2021). Email marketing has relatively mature and standardized metrics, such as delivery rate, open rate, click rate, conversion rate, and revenue per email (Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty, 2012). These metrics provide the ability to precisely calculate the return on investment for every email campaign. On the other hand, social media metrics such as follower counts, engagement rates, and impressions often do not have a direct correlation with business outcomes like sales or customer loyalty (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). A high engagement rate does not necessarily mean an increase in sales, as consumers can engage with content without having an intention to buy. Furthermore, social media metrics are often influenced by factors not directly related to marketing effectiveness, such as algorithm changes that can drastically alter organic reach without any change in content quality. In the context of measuring effectiveness, email marketing provides greater clarity regarding the contribution of each campaign to specific business goals. The ability to accurately track the consumer journey from email to purchase allows for more precise revenue attribution. Meanwhile, conversion attribution from social media is often more complex because social media's role in the consumer journey may be indirect, such as building awareness that later leads to brand searches through other channels.

Psychological factors influencing how consumers respond to marketing communications also differentiate the effectiveness of email marketing and social media (Tomás, 2015). The email inbox is perceived by consumers as a more intimate personal space compared to social media news feeds, which are public in nature (Sahni et al., 2018). When consumers receive an email from a brand they know and trust, they tend to give it greater attention compared to when seeing the same brand's content on social media. This difference in perception relates to the concept of permission in marketing communication, where consumers who have granted permission to receive emails feel they have a more personal relationship with the sender (Marinova et al., 2002). On the other hand, social media content is often perceived as part of a broader flow of public information, so consumers tend to give it shallower attention and easily switch to other content. Additionally, the factor of social media content fatigue which increases with the amount of content consumed daily can affect the effectiveness of marketing messages delivered through that channel. Consumers who feel overwhelmed by the volume of content on social media tend to develop defense mechanisms in the form of mindless scrolling. Conversely, email provides a space where consumers are in a state more ready to receive and process information, especially if they open emails at a time of their own choosing. This psychological aspect shows that the effectiveness of a marketing channel is not only determined by reach or frequency, but also by the mental state of the recipient when receiving the message.

The development of personal data protection regulations has fundamentally changed the digital marketing landscape and influenced the relative effectiveness of various channels (Beqiri, 2016). Regulations such as the General Data Protection Regulation in Europe and personal data protection laws in various countries establish strict standards regarding how companies can collect, store, and use consumer data for marketing purposes. Email marketing, which operates based on opt-in principles, is inherently more aligned with this regulatory framework, as explicit consent becomes a strong legal basis for conducting marketing communications. On the other hand, social media business models that rely heavily on collecting consumer data to target advertisements face increasing regulatory challenges. Changes in privacy policies by Apple, which allow users to block cross-app tracking,

have significantly reduced the effectiveness of ad targeting on social media. The ability to target ads precisely based on user behavioral data is becoming increasingly limited, which in turn reduces the return on investment from social media advertising. Meanwhile, email marketing is relatively unaffected by these changes because the data used for personalization is sourced directly from consumer interactions with the brand, rather than from data collected by third parties. In a landscape that increasingly emphasizes privacy and consent, marketing models based on direct relationships with consumers who have granted permission become increasingly valuable. This indicates that email marketing possesses better regulatory resilience compared to social media in facing ongoing privacy policy changes (Bleier et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2017).

The effectiveness of email marketing also needs to be understood in the context of its integration with other marketing channels within an integrated marketing communication framework (Hartemo, 2016). Email marketing functions optimally when used as part of a broader strategy involving various touchpoints with consumers. For example, social media can be used to build awareness and drive email sign-ups, which then become the entry point for more personal communication via email (Valos et al., 2016). Email can be used to convert prospects who have been attracted through social media content, while social media can be used to reinforce messages delivered through email. This integration allows each channel to leverage its unique strengths and compensate for the weaknesses of other channels. Within this framework, the question of relative effectiveness becomes less relevant than the question of how to combine channels optimally to achieve business objectives. Companies that are able to effectively integrate email marketing and social media can create synergies that produce greater results than using each channel separately. For instance, data regarding consumer behavior on social media can be used to refine email segmentation and personalization, while data from email interactions can be used to target more relevant ads on social media. The ability to connect data from various channels is a key factor determining the overall effectiveness of a digital marketing program.

The quality of implementation is a highly significant determining factor in the effectiveness of email marketing, often more decisive than the choice of the channel itself. Many companies adopt email marketing but are

unable to optimize its potential due to various implementation weaknesses. Imprecise segmentation strategies lead to emails being sent to irrelevant recipients, resulting in low open rates and increasing the risk of spam complaints. Shallow personalization, such as merely mentioning the recipient's name without more substantial content adjustments, is insufficient to create the relevance necessary to drive engagement (Sahni et al., 2018). A lack of integration with consumer behavioral data from various sources causes the emails sent to not reflect the context of the consumer's relationship with the brand at a given moment. A/B testing that is not conducted systematically results in companies missing opportunities to optimize various email elements, such as subject lines, content, send times, and calls to action. On the other hand, companies that implement email marketing well are able to achieve very high levels of engagement and conversion, demonstrating that this channel remains highly effective if managed professionally. It is this gap between potential and reality in implementation that often leads to erroneous perceptions regarding the effectiveness of email marketing. Comparisons of effectiveness between email marketing and social media must consider that the effectiveness of each channel is highly dependent on the quality of implementation, not just the inherent characteristics of the channel (Zhang et al., 2017).

Consumer behavior in managing email and social media has also undergone changes that affect the effectiveness of each channel. Modern consumers tend to have different strategies in managing these two channels, which influences how they receive and process marketing messages. Email is often managed with a more structured approach, with consumers creating folders to categorize emails, deleting irrelevant ones, and setting aside specific time to read emails deemed important (Reinecke et al., 2017). On the other hand, social media consumption tends to be more impulsive and carried out in short durations scattered throughout the day. These differences in consumption behavior affect the level of attention that can be obtained from each channel. Emails opened when consumers dedicate specific time to check their inboxes have a greater chance of receiving serious attention compared to social media content consumed while performing other activities. Furthermore, consumer strategies in managing information noise also differ between the two channels. Consumers who feel overwhelmed by the volume of emails

received may unsubscribe or block certain senders, while consumers who feel overwhelmed by social media content tend to reduce the frequency of opening the application or scroll without serious attention. These behavioral shifts indicate that the effectiveness of marketing channels is not static but continues to change along with changes in how consumers interact with technology (Appel et al., 2020).

The aspects of cost and return on investment provide an important perspective in evaluating the effectiveness of email marketing relative to social media. Email marketing has a relatively stable and predictable cost structure, with the main components being email marketing platform fees, database management costs, and human resources for content creation and strategy. The cost per message sent is very low, especially once the database has been built and automation has been implemented (Tomás, 2015). On the other hand, social media has a cost structure increasingly dominated by spending on paid advertising, as organic reach continues to decline. Companies wishing to maintain visibility on social media must allocate significant budgets for content promotion and ads. In comparisons of return on investment, email marketing consistently shows higher results in various industry studies, with the revenue generated per dollar spent often exceeding other digital marketing channels. Higher conversion rates from email marketing, coupled with lower costs, create greater efficiency in the use of marketing resources. However, it is important to note that cost comparisons must also consider the cost of building a quality email database, which is a long-term investment requiring time and resources. Meanwhile, social media can provide faster results in terms of reach and brand awareness, even though direct conversions may be lower. In the context of resource allocation, an optimal combination of both channels will yield the best results, with email marketing used for activities requiring conversion and loyalty, while social media is for awareness and reach (Hanna et al., 2011).

The ability of email marketing to adapt to changes in technology and consumer behavior demonstrates remarkable resilience as a communication channel. Since it was first used for marketing purposes in the early 1990s, email marketing has undergone various transformations that allow it to remain relevant to this day. The development of marketing automation technology enables the delivery of emails triggered by

consumer behavior in real time, creating highly responsive and contextual communication (Tomás, 2015). Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning allow for personalization at a level impossible to do manually, such as send times optimized for each individual and personalized product recommendations based on complex behavioral patterns (Katsikeas et al., 2020). Interactivity within emails also continues to evolve, with the ability to include interactive elements such as surveys, quizzes, and expandable content without having to leave the inbox. Meanwhile, social media also continues to evolve, but often with changes that are more disruptive for marketers, such as algorithm changes that drastically alter organic reach or the emergence of new platforms requiring significant strategy adaptation. The resilience of email marketing largely stems from its decentralized nature and independence from any single specific platform. As long as email protocols remain the standard for digital communication, email marketing will continue to have a stable foundation to operate. This adaptability makes email marketing a reliable channel in the long run, unlike social media which may experience a decline in popularity as consumer preferences shift to new platforms (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Foroudi et al., 2017).

The role of email marketing in B2B or business-to-business communication exhibits different characteristics compared to B2C or business-to-consumer communication, yet it still demonstrates high effectiveness. In the B2B context, the decision-making process tends to be longer and involves more stakeholders, thus requiring consistent and informative communication over an extended period. Email marketing provides an ideal channel to nurture relationships with prospects throughout a long sales cycle by gradually delivering educational and relevant content (Soegoto & Fahreza, 2018). The ability to track individual interactions with the sent content allows sales teams to identify prospects who are most ready for personal engagement. On the other hand, social media in a B2B context plays a more limited role, primarily in the awareness stage and for building credibility through thought leadership. LinkedIn, as the primary B2B platform, has higher effectiveness compared to consumer social media platforms, yet it still cannot replace the role of email marketing in maintaining deep and personal relationships. Conversion rates from email marketing in a B2B context also tend to be

higher compared to social media, as prospects who have provided their email addresses and accepted communication demonstrate a more serious level of interest. In this context, email marketing functions as the primary channel for building relationships, while social media serves as a complement to build awareness and credibility (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016).

The effectiveness of email marketing also needs to be understood in the context of its changes in response to challenges arising from social media. Email marketing practices have evolved significantly in recent years, with many marketers adopting more sophisticated approaches to increase relevance and engagement. The application of account-based marketing principles, where emails are personalized not only for individuals but also for the organizational context in which they work, enhances relevance in the B2B context. The use of interactive content within emails, such as videos playable directly in the inbox, polls, and interactive calculators, increases engagement levels by providing added value to recipients. Smarter frequency strategies, taking into account recipient preferences and previous interaction behavior, reduce the risk of fatigue and increased spam complaints. Integration with customer relationship management systems allows for the synchronization of email communication with interactions through other channels, creating a cohesive experience for consumers (Hartemo, 2016). The development of these practices shows that email marketing is not static, but continues to innovate to maintain its effectiveness amidst competition with social media. Marketers who successfully adopt these latest practices can achieve significantly higher effectiveness levels compared to traditional email marketing approaches. Thus, the effectiveness of email marketing in the era of social media dominance is heavily determined by the marketer's ability to continuously learn and adopt innovations in email marketing practices (Kumar et al., 2020).

The greatest challenge faced by email marketing in the era of social media dominance is the battle for attention in increasingly crowded inboxes (Sabbagh, 2021). The volume of emails received by the average consumer continues to increase year after year, creating tighter competition to capture the recipient's attention. Strategies to overcome this challenge include improving content quality, better personalization, and optimizing delivery times (Ansari & Mela, 2003). The email subject line becomes a critical factor determining whether an email will be opened or ignored; therefore, marketers

need to invest significant resources in testing and optimizing subject lines. The sender's name is also an important factor, as consumers tend to open emails from senders they know and trust. Using a consistent and easily recognizable sender name can significantly increase open rates. Furthermore, strategies to manage sender reputation through good sending practices are becoming increasingly important to ensure emails do not end up in the spam folder. Marketers also need to pay attention to technical aspects such as email authentication and good list management to maintain high delivery rates. This challenge of the battle for attention shows that email marketing effectiveness cannot be achieved with a "send-and-forget" approach but requires a careful and sustainable strategy. Companies capable of overcoming these challenges will benefit from a highly effective communication channel, while those who fail will view email marketing as a channel that does not yield adequate results (Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty, 2012).

The COVID-19 pandemic has become a turning point that strengthened the relevance of email marketing as a reliable communication channel in the midst of a crisis. During periods of mobility restrictions and economic uncertainty, email marketing became the primary channel for many companies to communicate with customers regarding operational changes, new policies, and available support. Email open rates increased significantly during this period, as consumers sought reliable information amidst a confusing flood of information. Emails from brands that had built relationships with customers through consistent communication prior to the pandemic showed higher levels of engagement. The experience during the pandemic also demonstrated that email marketing possesses better resilience compared to social media in facing crises, as communication via email is not disrupted by potential changes in algorithms or platform policies. Companies with a strong email database could continue to communicate with customers directly, while companies overly reliant on social media faced difficulties when organic reach dropped drastically. This experience provided valuable lessons on the importance of diversifying communication channels and having channels that are fully under the company's control. Email marketing proved to be a highly valuable strategic asset in crisis situations, reinforcing the argument that this channel remains relevant and even increasingly important amidst rising uncertainty (He & Harris, 2020; Wang et al., 2020).

The future prospects of email marketing indicate that this channel will continue to evolve and remain relevant even as social media continues to dominate consumer attention. The development of artificial intelligence will enable increasingly sophisticated personalization, with the ability to predict consumer behavior and adjust content dynamically. The integration of email with other communication channels such as instant messaging and apps will create a more seamless experience for consumers (Tong et al., 2020). The use of real-time data to optimize delivery times and content will increase relevance and reduce the risk of consumer fatigue. On the other hand, social media will continue to face regulatory challenges and privacy policy changes that may affect its effectiveness as a marketing channel. Companies that invest in building and maintaining a quality email database will possess an increasingly valuable asset in the future, where the ability to communicate directly with consumers who have granted permission becomes increasingly rare. The evolution of email marketing will also be influenced by changes in how consumers interact with technology, including the increased use of mobile devices requiring responsive email designs optimized for small screens. Marketers who can anticipate and adapt to these changes will be able to maintain the effectiveness of email marketing as a highly valuable direct communication channel. Thus, although social media will continue to be an essential part of the digital marketing landscape, email marketing will still hold a strategic role that cannot be replaced (Hadi et al., 2019; Mogos & Acatrinei, 2015).

Conclusion

Email marketing remains an effective direct communication channel in the era of social media dominance, with effectiveness that is contextual and dependent on specific objectives, the quality of implementation, and integration with other channels. Email marketing holds advantages in terms of data ownership, high-level personalization, guaranteed reach, and the ability to drive conversions as well as maintain long-term relationships. Social media excels in broad reach, viral potential, and building brand awareness. Both channels perform complementary functions, rather than competing ones, within an integrated marketing communication framework. The effectiveness of email marketing is heavily determined by the quality of implementation, including precise segmentation, substantial

personalization, smart automation, and accurate measurement. The development of privacy regulations and changes in consumer behavior actually strengthen the position of email marketing as a channel more aligned with the demands for transparency and consent.

The implication of this study is the need for companies to view email marketing as a strategic asset requiring continuous investment, rather than an obsolete channel that can be ignored. The suggestion that can be proposed is that companies need to develop email marketing strategies integrated with social media, leveraging the strengths of each channel for different stages of the consumer journey. Companies also need to invest resources to build and maintain a quality email database with a focus on obtaining explicit permission and good sender reputation management. Continuous testing and optimization of various email elements, including subject lines, content, send times, and personalization, are necessary to maintain effectiveness amidst increasingly tight competition. Further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of email marketing in various industrial contexts and different consumer segments, as well as to explore the integration of email marketing with new technologies such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things.

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