

Gartner for Marketing Leaders

# Digital IQ: Email Marketing Benchmarks for 2022

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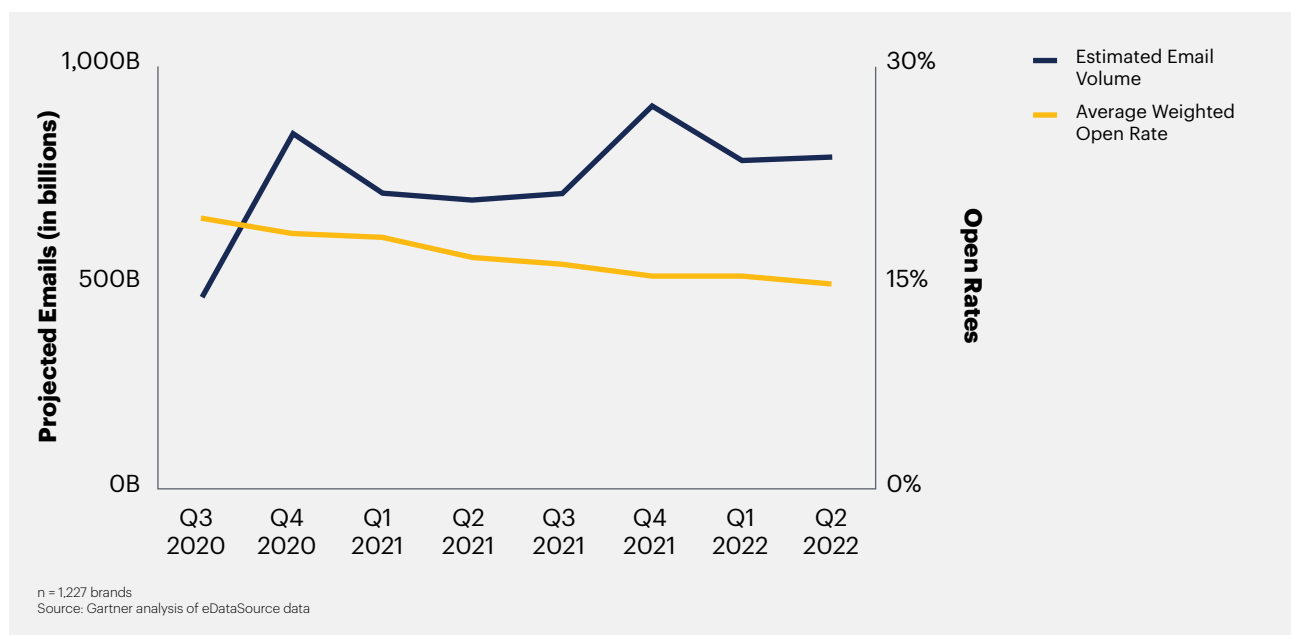
# Introduction

In the face of falling open rates, digital marketing leaders are sending more emails than ever before. But at what cost? Learn how 1,227 brands in our benchmark have adjusted their email marketing strategy to deliver best-in-class customer value, tailored help and content.

Email marketing remains a cornerstone channel among digital marketing leaders. According to the 2022 Gartner CMO Spend and Strategy Survey, 44% of CMOs say that email marketing is essential to their overall digital marketing strategy, allocating nearly 8% of their entire digital marketing budget to the channel.<sup>1</sup> Yet, despite marketers remaining faithful to this tried-and-true program, evolving consumer behaviors and preferences pose challenges.

When analyzing the email performance of 1,227 B2C and B2B brands, we found that brands continue to pump out more emails over time despite dwindling open rates (see Figure 1). This suggests that the emails themselves are not resonating with customers. In turn, 64% of consumers and B2B buyers report feeling overwhelmed by brand communications.<sup>2</sup> Marketers need to design an email marketing strategy that shifts from increasing the volume of emails to enhancing the value of emails for consumers. This includes providing a clear value exchange at email signup, giving customers agency over email frequency, prioritizing messaging relevance through personalization and balancing email campaign types (see Note 1).

**Figure 1: Email Volume and Open Rates**



Gartner's Digital IQ: Email Marketing Benchmarks for 2022 uncovers emerging trends and best-in-class examples in email marketing. Use this research and the accompanying on-demand Webinar: Email Marketing Benchmarks Digital IQ 2022 to learn the key themes taking place across email marketing today, and ways you can adapt your strategy and campaigns for better results.

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**For this report, Gartner analyzed email marketing activity among 1,227 brands across six sectors. This data captures brand-specific data from email open rates, site traffic from email and mobile optimization between July 2021 and June 2022. Refer to the Methodology section at the end of this report for more details.**

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## Key Findings

- Email open rates are declining as brands send more emails to customers. Consumers and B2B buyers alike feel overwhelmed by the volume of emails, with 67% indicating setting up a “junk” email account to dodge unwanted emails.<sup>2</sup>
- Brands assume that consumers understand the value and benefits of brand emails. Yet less than half of the brands in Gartner Index explicitly describe the benefits or content of their newsletters.
- Personalization is the key to ensuring the relevance of email content and messages. While nearly half of consumers reportedly “like” brands’ emails that reference various personal details about them, only 31% of brands’ emails use personalization.<sup>3</sup>
- Brands continue to deploy a variety of email campaigns. Product discovery email campaigns are the most heavily used among brands, but loyalty and rewards emails win the highest open rates.

## Key Recommendations

To optimize your email marketing strategy and execution:

- Improve subscription and engagement rates by articulating the value that customers can expect from brand emails at sign-up phases, and allow customers to control email topic preferences and the frequency with which emails hit their inboxes.
- Increase the resonance of brand emails by personalizing messages using carefully curated first-party data. Use this data to deliver tailored help through emails that contextualize business offerings and support purchase decisions.
- Maximize customer value by diversifying the types of email campaigns that your program delivers (product discovery, discount, trigger, etc.). At the same time, prioritize top-performing campaign types, like loyalty and rewards, that drive open rates.

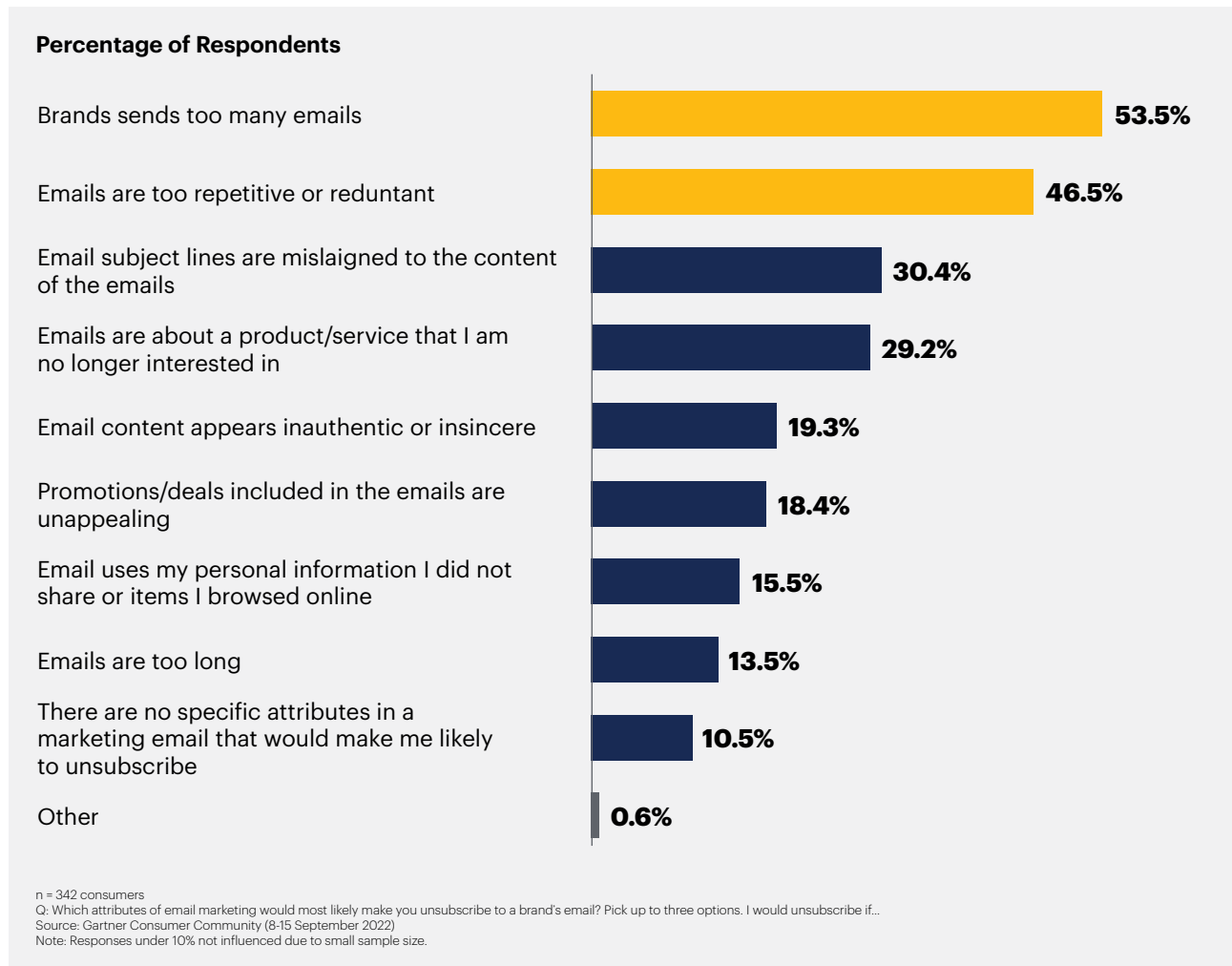
# Analysis

The Gartner Channel Digital IQ research compares brands' performance in one given marketing channel. This analysis gives digital marketing leaders insight into winning tactics by competitors and cross-industry peers.

## 1. Articulate the Value of Your Emails and Grant Subscribers Agency Over Email Preferences

When consumers feel that marketers send too many or repetitive and redundant emails, they are quick to punish brands by unsubscribing (see Figure 2). This attrition makes it harder for marketers to reach and engage relevant audiences.

**Figure 2: Attributes Most Likely to Trigger an Unsubscription**



Despite feeling overwhelmed by the number of emails received from brands,<sup>2</sup> consumers still report email as their second-most-preferred digital marketing channel for receiving communications from never-tried brands and their most-preferred channel for frequently bought brands.<sup>4</sup> Many marketers might increase the value of their email efforts by simply sending fewer, higher-quality campaigns. But they can win over (and keep) more relevant audiences by articulating a clear value exchange upon email signup and granting subscribers a sense of agency over what they receive — and how often.

## 1.1 Articulate a Clear Value Exchange Across Email Signup

Digital marketing leaders who don't clearly articulate the value of opting to receive brand emails risk building less relevant and engaged email lists. While it may be easy to collect email addresses forcefully through account signups, brands still need to build positive sentiment toward brand communications to increase the chances that those audiences remain subscribed.

Surprisingly, few brands demonstrate the value that customers and prospects receive when signing up to receive newsletters or setting up an account. Sixty-five percent of brands allow users to sign up for a newsletter on their website, but only 49% explicitly describe the benefits of signing up. A smaller 26% ask users to select topic preferences, and a dismal 1% ask users for email frequency preferences upon signup.<sup>5</sup> This gives marketers plenty of room to differentiate from competitors.



### Case in Point: Glad Outlines Key Benefits of Email Signup

In this simple yet effective example, Glad highlights a few key benefits and types of content that a user might expect to receive in their inbox after signing up for its newsletter (see Figure 3). Glad's value description further states that this is a monthly email signup and assures users that they are unlikely to get bombarded with emails from the CPG brand upon opting in.

**Figure 3: Glad Outlines Key Benefits of Email Signup**

**Sign up for the latest from Glad.®**

Every month, hear about our newest products, get tips for decluttering, composting and recycling, along with helpful hints for storing and protecting food. We've got just what you need to make your home happier and your food healthier.

**REGISTER & SIGN UP**

Already Registered? [Sign in and do your thing](#)

[Continue with Facebook](#)

By clicking "Log in with Facebook" you confirm that you accept the [Terms of Use](#).

**First Name \***  Your first name **Last Name \***  Your last name

**Email \***  Enter email

**Password \***  Password **Confirm Password \***  Confirm Password

**Zip \***  Your zip code \* only registrations from US residents are allowed

Yes, I want the Glad Newsletter.

I agree to the [Terms of Use](#). [Click here](#) for our privacy policy.

**Register**

**It's all Glad news right to your inbox.**

We have lots of good stuff for you to enjoy each month.

- Facts about trash and tips for composting and recycling.
- Tips for storing and protecting food.
- Hacks for decluttering your home.
- Information about Glad's efforts to reduce our environmental impact.

Glad highlights the type of content customers can expect to receive in their inbox monthly.

Source: Adapted From Glad

## 1.2 Allow Subscribers to Tailor Email Preferences

Brands with complex offerings can take the concept of value exchange a step further by allowing subscribers to tailor their email preferences at account or email signup phases. By pairing customer profile data with email preferences, brands are essentially collecting data on what specific customer segments find valuable. This is a simple, yet effective, form of personalization that can boost engagement and prevent subscriber churn through opt-downs rather than opt-outs.



### Case in Point: Kia Tailors Emails to Customer Interest

Leading automotive brand Kia allows new email subscribers to select only the Kia models they're interested in and the type of updates they'd like to receive (e.g., emails on new vehicles, recalls, promotions or offers; see Figure 4). This helps current customers and prospective new car owners feel confident that signing up for Kia's newsletter likely won't result in much spam, helping to enhance new subscriber rates while at the same time ensuring that subscribers stay engaged.

**Figure 4: Kia Tailors Emails to Customer Interest**

KIA allows customers and prospects to select the vehicles they're interested in.

KIA then gathers information on types of emails users prefer related to select vehicles.

Source: Adapted From Kia

While less is often more when it comes to email marketing, every brand and its target audience is different. According to a recent Gartner Consumer Community survey, 57% of consumers prefer to receive emails from their most favored brands just a few times a month.<sup>6</sup> While the majority of people may prefer fewer emails, the same survey found that 22% of consumers are “super fans” who prefer to hear from their favorite brands multiple times per week. A few consumers wouldn’t mind hearing from those brands multiple times per day.

An effective yet straightforward way of maximizing the business value of your email efforts is by manually scheduling “frequency preference” touchpoint emails that allow users to select the frequency of receiving emails. This gives customers a sense of agency of their inbox and of being valued, strengthening their relationships with brands and incentivizing them to remain subscribed. In addition, if feasible, AI tools designed to automate A/B testing that alters subject headings, cadence and delivery time can take personalization a step further: They can ensure relevant and targeted communications by audience segments, while minimizing manual efforts.

## Recommendations

To lure new subscribers and keep them engaged:

- Focus not just on your product or service features when highlighting key benefits of email subscriptions, but also on how the email content can help customers achieve their goals and accomplish important tasks.
- Allow customers and prospects to select the type of emails or topics they would be most interested in receiving at account signup phases on your website. Keep track of key customer profiles and what emails they typically select as preferred content to continually fine-tune your email personalization strategy.
- Grant your email list control over the frequency with which they receive brand emails by regularly scheduling “frequency touchpoint” emails or piloting efforts that use automation and AI to deliver more contextually relevant emails and improve clickthrough rates (CTRs).

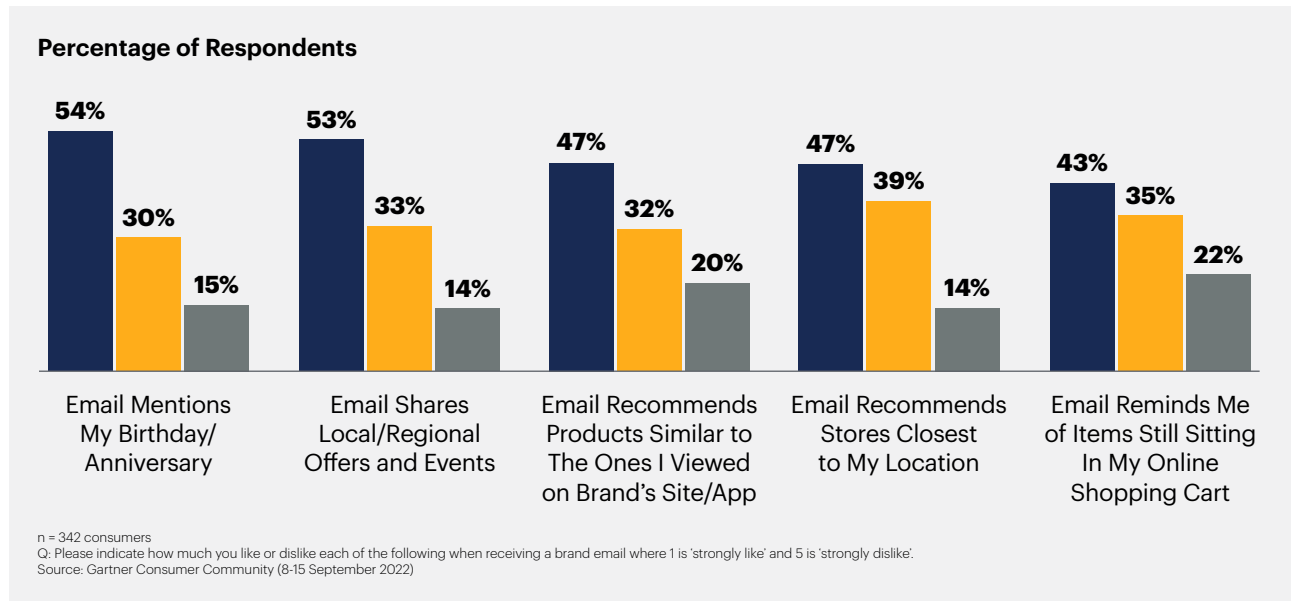
## 2. Deploy Personalization That Is Less-Invasive, Yet Relevant

One of email marketing’s most important roles in driving key performance metrics, like open rates and CTRs, is scaling the delivery of personalized content and experiences. However, this task is not without its challenges. Aside from the technical challenges — from securing data to automating triggers — rising customer privacy concerns are forcing personalization to find the balance between invasiveness and irrelevance. Digital marketing leaders are unsure how to deploy personalization in a way that helps differentiate the brand from competitors and delivers relevant messaging, without crossing the line and alienating customers.

To assess consumers’ receptiveness to email personalization, Gartner surveyed 342 consumers and found they lean toward liking personalized emails. A majority say they like emails that mention their birthday or anniversary (54%) and emails that share local or regional events and offers (53%). Meanwhile, close to half (47%) also like emails that recommend products similar to the ones viewed on a brand’s site or app, as well as emails that recommend stores close to their location<sup>6</sup> (see Figure 5).

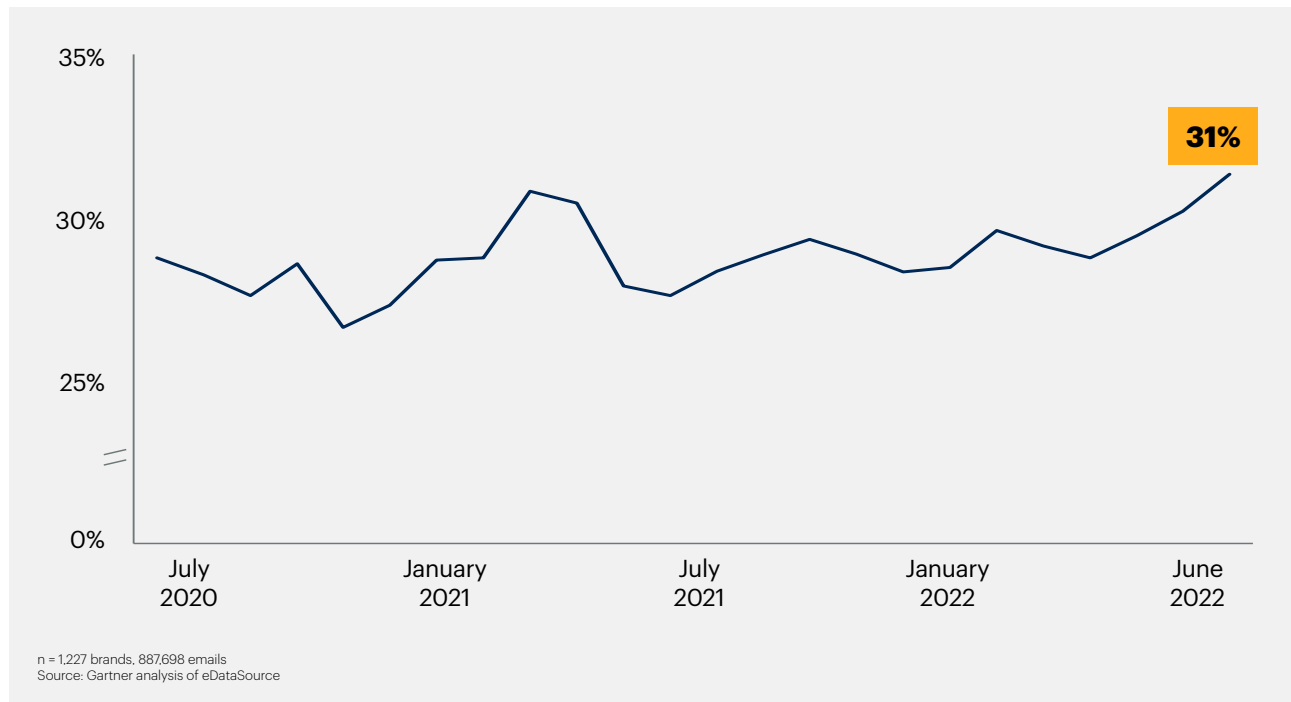


**Figure 5: Consumers Are Receptive to Email Personalization**



Yet, despite the importance of personalization, few brands personalize a significant percentage of their email campaigns. Gartner found that only 31% of brands used personalized subject lines in email campaigns, which serves as an indicator for personalization in the rest of the email<sup>3</sup> (see Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Percentage of Emails Sent Using Personalized Subject Lines**



## 2.1 Boost Personalization With Tailored Help to Meet Customers' Needs

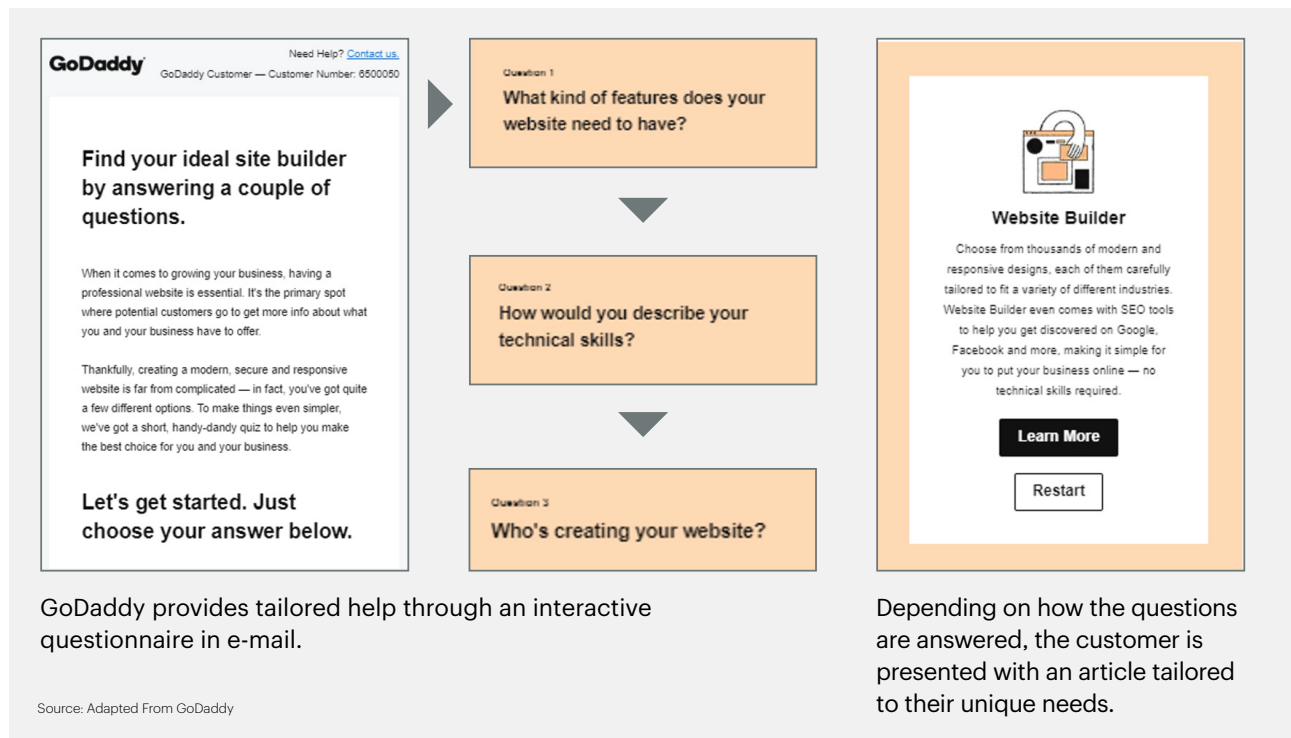
When done correctly, personalization provides tailored help that is highly relevant, mitigating the risk of invasiveness and supporting customers to feel confident in their purchase or subscription decisions. Tailored help delivers messages or content designed to provide valuable assistance or support, using data specific to the individual consumer.



### Case in Point: GoDaddy Emails Provide Tailored Help

GoDaddy contextualizes an interactive email, showcasing the importance of websites to business growth for its B2B customers. The interactive email then launches a questionnaire to collect information about the unique needs of the customer. After the customer completes the questionnaire, GoDaddy provides a set of personalized resources with the call to action (CTA) "Learn More." This kind of personalization allows the brand to collect more data to fuel future personalized email experiences for the customer, while delivering tailored help that assists customers in identifying the best website builder for their unique needs (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7: GoDaddy Provides Tailored Help Through Its Email**



## Recommendations

To make brand emails more relevant to target audiences:

- Deliver meaningful personalization through emails and subject lines by prioritizing first-party data collection at account signup phases, particularly key personal information points that customers appreciate brands referencing. For example, use birthdays and mailing addresses to craft personalized birthday discounts or to promote local/regional offers (see [How to Earn First-Party Data Through Loyalty Programs](#)).
- Enhance first-party data collection by regularly sending “personalization” touchpoint emails to your email audiences. These should emphasize your brands’ prioritization of delivering valuable messages and link to surveys where the recipients can provide supplemental personal information and preferences to help fine-tune future personalized communications.
- Contextualize the benefits that customers will receive when you deploy interactive tailored help emails, like quizzes, to incentivize engagement and boost complete rates. Store and utilize responses by customer profiles to inform future personalization strategies (see [What Digital Marketing Leaders Need to Know About Personalization](#)).

### 3. Balance Email Campaign Types to Drive Business Goals and Customer Value

It is often difficult for digital marketing leaders to plan email campaigns that both meet business goals and consumer preferences. But missing the mark on this balance can lead to high attrition and lower the ROI of email marketing.

Classifying emails by campaign type is an efficient way of organizing campaign content so that brands can track engagement KPIs and achieve a balanced email content strategy (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Email Campaign Types**

Email Campaign Type	Description	Business Goal(s)
Product Discovery	Emails promoting new and existing products/services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximize revenue</li> <li>Test and learn products/services with customer segments</li> </ul>
Discounts	Emails promoting limited-time discounts on select products/services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximize revenue</li> <li>Make room for new inventory</li> </ul>
Loyalty/Rewards	Emails meant to engage current customers and deepen their loyalty with your brand through rewards and gamification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grow customer lifetime value (CLV)</li> <li>Improve Net Promoter Score (NPS) and other attitudinal metrics</li> <li>Increase purchase frequency</li> </ul>
Trigger	Contextual emails triggered by an event in a customer's journey that's usually meant to provoke an action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maximize revenue</li> <li>Invoke a desired action (make a purchase, register for an event, etc.)</li> </ul>
Events	Emails meant to promote live or virtual promotional events where audiences can interact with a product or brand face to face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convert prospects</li> <li>Deepen relationships with existing customers and grow CLV</li> </ul>

Source: Gartner (January 2023)

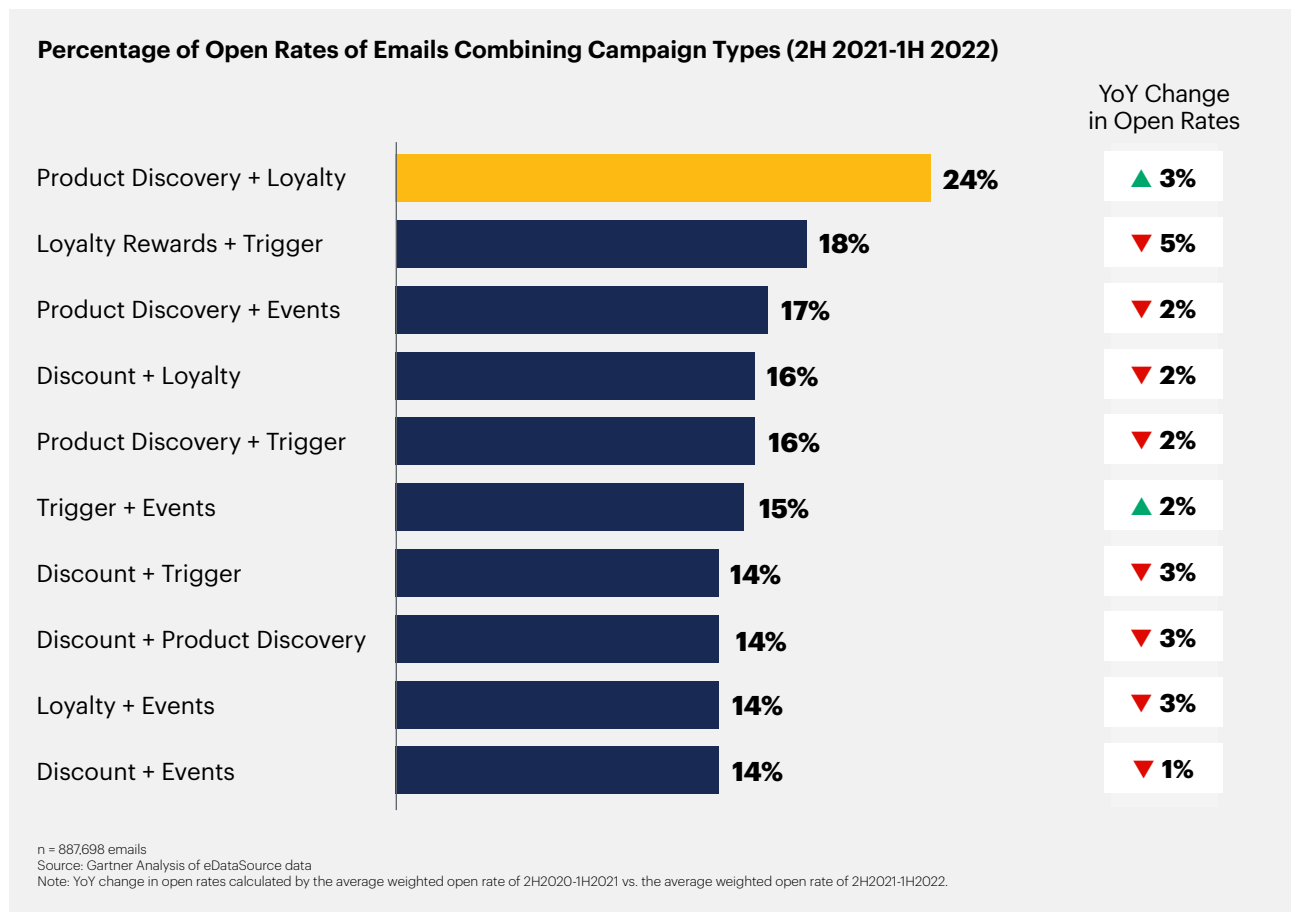
According to the Gartner analysis of eDataSource data, spanning 2H20 to 1H22, of the five email campaign content types, product discovery emails are by far the most sent out among brands, followed by discount and loyalty/rewards campaigns.<sup>3</sup>

While product discovery emails may be the most popular email campaign sent by brands, loyalty/rewards campaigns win the highest open rates among Gartner email campaign types, at 19%.<sup>3</sup> This signals a disconnect between the email campaign types that brands are sending out and the emails that customers are actually opening. Such a divide can potentially increase unsubscription rates.

### 3.1 Experiment With Crossover Email Campaign Types

When optimizing the mix of campaigns, a content strategy that experiments with crossover campaigns may sometimes prove effective. Gartner analysis of over 880,000 emails found that the email campaign types with the highest open rates merge product discovery and loyalty archetypes, delivering an average weighted open rate of almost 24% (see Figure 8).<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 8: Performance of Emails That Combine Campaign Types**



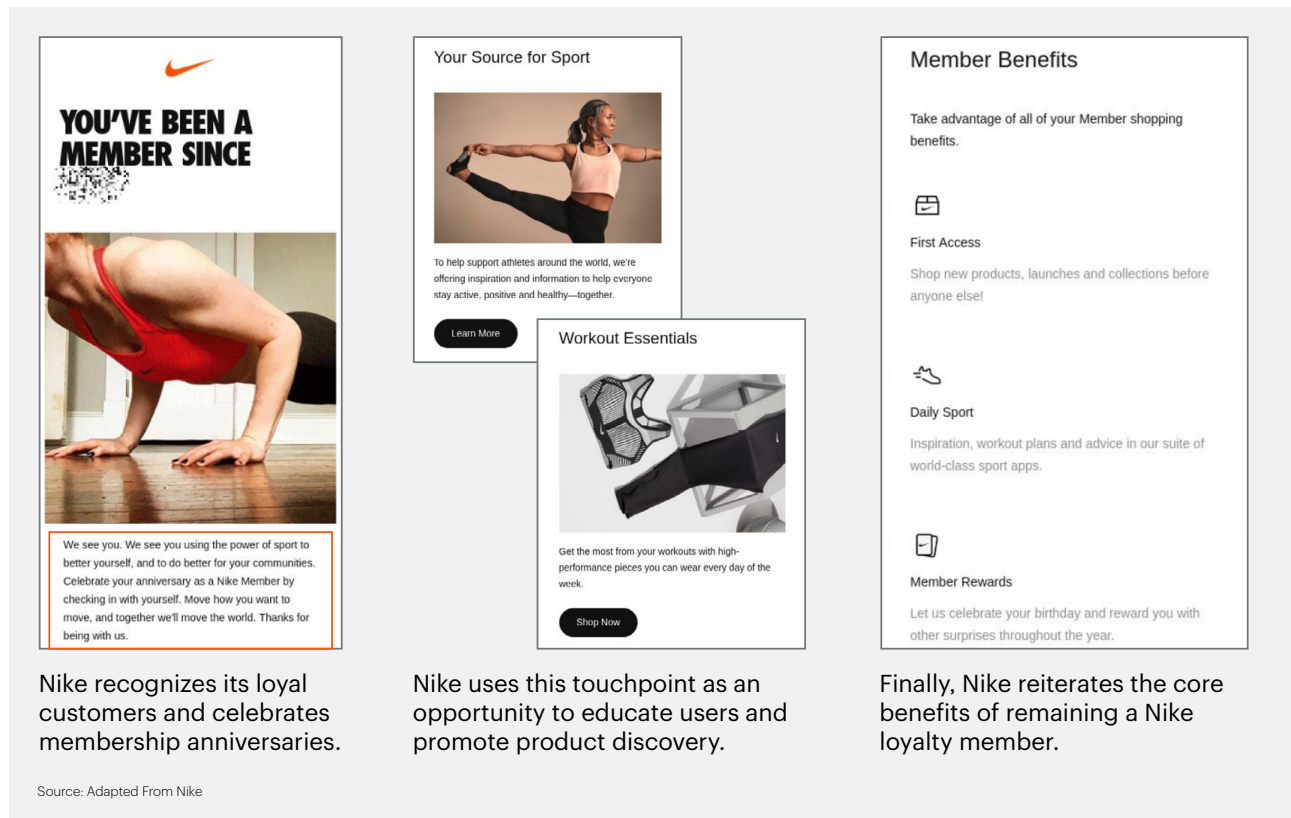
Product discovery and loyalty/rewards crossover campaigns not only emphasize rewards points or loyalty perks, but help spur clicks on new products or services that loyalty members can spend those points on, lowering concerns of the cost-conscious. They give customers compelling reasons to remain loyal with the brand, and emphasize the perks of remaining a member.



### Case in Point: Nike Celebrates Loyalty Anniversaries and Promotes Offerings

Nike expertly blends product discovery and loyalty/rewards content in a single crossover campaign (see Figure 9). Nike starts by personalizing the email for customers by recognizing their participation as a loyalty member and encouraging them along their fitness journey. Nike then takes this opportunity to highlight its fitness learning hub and promote new “workout essentials” that will help customers get the most from their workouts. Finally, Nike ends its email by reiterating the value proposition of remaining a loyalty member by emphasizing its Nike Member shopping benefits.

**Figure 9: Nike Celebrates Milestones and Promotes Offerings**



## Recommendations

To deliver email campaign types that drive customer value:

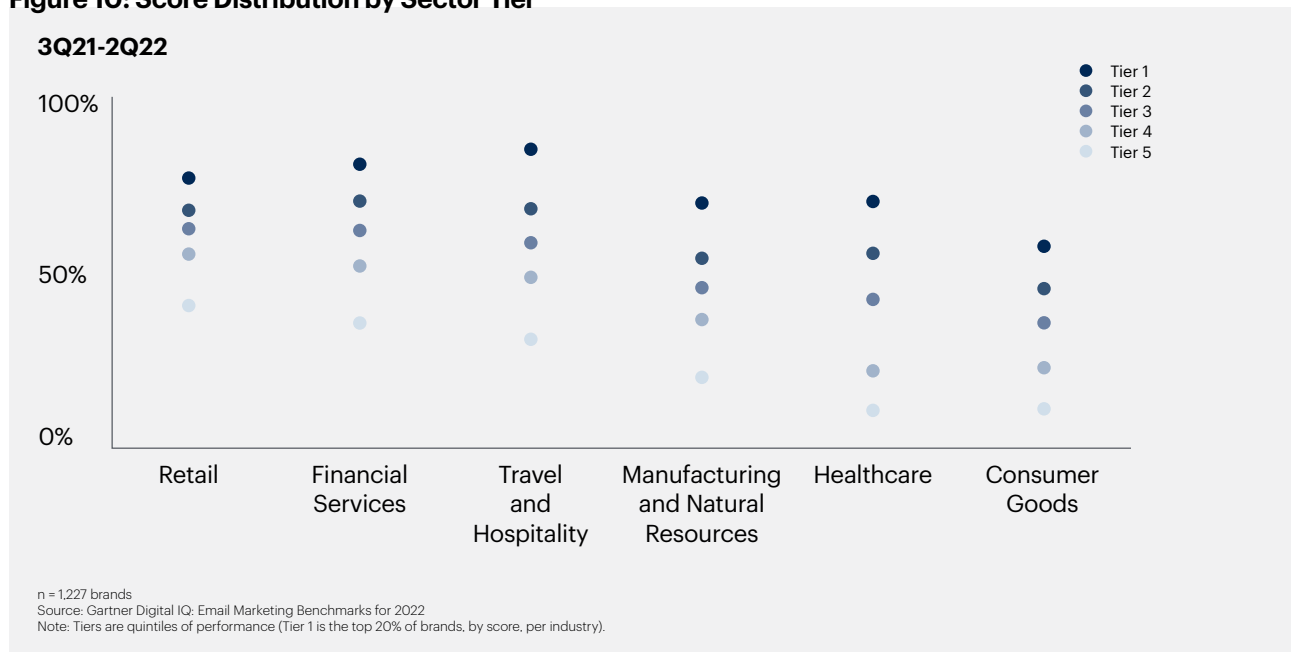
- Diversify and coordinate your email campaign portfolio by ensuring that all relevant email marketing teams and stakeholders work together to design email calendar schedules, and define KPIs to track progress against email marketing goals and objectives.
- Drive scale and performance by prioritizing loyalty/rewards email campaign archetypes to drive open rates, and investigate opportunities to tie loyalty and product discovery content together to drive both scale and performance.
- Track KPIs throughout campaign life cycles to ensure that the emails you are sending match what your customers are both opening and engaging with. This reduces email fatigue and delivers both value exchange and resonance to your audiences.

# Rankings

## Digital IQ Ranking

Different Gartner sectors saw different levels of relative performance (see Figure 10). Digital marketing leaders should use these sector rankings to identify brands to emulate and understand where they rank within their respective sectors. Retail sector brands performed the best across the Index, while healthcare brands saw the highest score variance.

**Figure 10: Score Distribution by Sector Tier**



**Table 2: Top 25 Brands for Email Performance**

Digital IQ Rank	Brand	Parent Company	Digital IQ Score
1	Bank of America	Bank of America Corporation	4.69275
2	United Airlines	United Continental Holdings	4.68693
3	Discover Bank	Discover Financial Services, Inc.	4.66834
4	American Express	American Express Company	4.62494
5	Chase Bank	JPMorgan Chase & Co.	4.6135
6	American Airlines	American Airlines	4.59727
7	Lufthansa	Lufthansa	4.59509
8	Delta Air Lines	Delta Air Lines	4.49466
9	Progressive Insurance	The Progressive Corporation	4.44569
10	Alaska Airlines	Alaska Airlines Inc.	4.41026
11	British Airways	British Airways	4.38943
12	Barnes & Noble	Elliott Management Corporation	4.35584
13	JetBlue Airways	JetBlue Airways	4.3498
14	State Farm	State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company	4.34226
15	Hilton Hotels & Resorts	Hilton Worldwide Holdings Inc.	4.33495
16	Huntington Bank	Huntington Bancshares Incorporated	4.32164
17	Marriott Hotels & Resorts	Marriott International, Inc.	4.30551
18	lululemon athletica	lululemon athletica	4.29582
19	Navy Federal Credit Union	Navy Federal Credit Union	4.27318
20	Crate & Barrel	Otto GmbH	4.26987
21	TD Ameritrade	The Charles Schwab Corporation	4.25473
22	Air Canada	Air Canada	4.24711
23	Kohl's	Kohl's Corporation	4.21653
24	Southwest Airlines	Southwest Airlines Co.	4.21256
25	Costco	Costco Wholesale Corporation	4.2018

Note: The full list of brand rankings for email performance can be accessed by Gartner clients in the original research document.  
Source: Gartner



# Methodology

Gartner's Digital IQ: Email Marketing Benchmarks for 2022 measures and scores the email marketing performance of 1,227 brands across six sectors: Consumer goods, financial services, healthcare, manufacturing and natural resources, retail, and travel and hospitality. These benchmarks evaluate brands' email opens, open rates, site traffic from email and mobile optimization of email content from the second half of 2021 through the first half of 2022 (see Table 2).

Note 1: Our data on open rates comes from eDataSource panel data and is not impacted by Apple's Mail Privacy Protection (MPP).

# Evidence

<sup>1</sup> 2022 Gartner CMO Spend and Strategy Survey: This survey looked at top-line marketing budgets and identified how evolving journeys, C-suite pressures and cost challenges impact marketing's strategies and spending priorities. The research was conducted online from February through March 2022 among 405 respondents in North America (n = 190), Western Europe (n = 181) and the Nordics (n = 34). Respondents were required to be involved in decisions pertaining to setting or influencing marketing strategy and planning, as well as have involvement in aligning marketing budget/resources. Seventy-four percent of the respondents came from organizations with \$1 billion or more in annual revenue. Respondents were from various industries: financial services (n = 66), tech products (n = 38), manufacturing (n = 49), consumer products (n = 42), media (n = 35), retail (n = 40), healthcare providers (n = 57), IT and business services (n = 35), and travel and hospitality (n = 43).

<sup>2</sup> 2021 Gartner Personalization Survey: This survey includes data from 1,499 B2B and B2C customers from the U.S., Canada, the U.K., Australia and New Zealand. To qualify for the survey, respondents must have considered purchasing from a brand or supplier and recalled a recent communication from that brand or supplier. B2B customers must have worked for an organization with at least \$250M USD in annual revenue and have been involved in a significant purchase decision on behalf of their company (i.e., a decision involving multiple potential vendors and more than one decision maker). The survey was designed to explore buyers' and consumers' behaviors and expectations regarding personalized communications. The survey was fielded in October 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Gartner analysis of eDataSource data.

<sup>4</sup> 2022 Gartner Consumer Cultural Attitudes and Behaviors Survey: The purpose of this survey was to understand consumer lifestyles and motivations. The research was conducted online from 30 August to 27 September 2022 among 1,501 U.S. respondents. Of those, 1,036 respondents were selected from respondents who had completed the Gartner Consumer Values and Lifestyle Survey in August 2022. The remaining 465 respondents were selected from those who have volunteered or registered to participate in online surveys. Respondents were required to be at least 15 years old.

<sup>5</sup> Gartner analysis of brand mobile websites.

<sup>6</sup> Gartner Consumer Community (n = 342, 8-15 September 2022). While the Gartner Consumer Community (n ≈ 500) resembles the U.S. general population, the data cited is based on the responses of community members who chose to take each activity. These samples may not be representative of the general population, and the data should only be used for directional insights.

Disclaimer: Results of the Gartner surveys do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

Disclaimer: The organization (or organizations) profiled in this research is (or are) provided for illustrative purposes only, and does (or do) not constitute an exhaustive list of examples in this field nor an endorsement by Gartner of the organization or its offerings.

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