# E-mail Marketing: Advantages, Disadvantages and Improving Techniques

E. Fariborzi and M. Zahedifard

*Abstract*—**E-Commerce changes the way organizations do business. Recognizing the significance of E-Commerce contributions to the nation's economic growth, the Iranian government introduced some solutions to increase the practice of E-Commerce. They effort to encourage public and private enterprises to adopt E-Commerce as a tool to be more competitive in global markets. One of tools regarding E-commerce is E-mail Marketing. E-mail marketing is a form of direct marketing which uses electronic mail as a means of communicating commercial or fund-raising messages to an audience. In this paper, there is a systematic review on its advantages and disadvantages. In addition, there are some recommendations to Iranian Marketing Company regarding to improving E-mail Marketing. More results are subsequently explained in the paper.**

*Index Terms*—**Advantages, disadvantages, E-mail marketing, E-commerce, improving techniques.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today's world of information not only as one of the main resources and assets are recognized organizations but also by literature and other resources and tools for effective management of assets (Financial resources, manpower, etc.) is also of importance and thus has special value. But this value will be achievable only if the researcher and their data at the right time, with quality and safety acceptable to the appropriate people and adhered to the optimal organization is established. Hence it is that the underlying information technology, transport, handling, use and management of effective information believers in the drawer is released, has been of crucial importance. Therefore, in line with Iran's twenty-year vision of a developed society with regard to the impact of ICT on various aspects of human life and it is especially crucial and sensitive aspects of cultural, economic, security, social, commercial and political, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology on the overall development action plan designed to offer comprehensive IT plan to the country in 2003. The agreement includes five major projects, development of large

IT projects, program executive tasks in the field of security (AFTA), create the database status information technology, information technology applications in developing countries and provide the framework and drafting bills and legal

regulations and preparing compute crimes and E-commerce laws [1]. One application of information technology is

E-commerce and E-commerce is "a general concept covering any form of business transactions or information exchange executed using information and communication technology, between companies, between companies and their customers, or between companies and public administrations. Electronic Commerce includes electronic trading of goods, services and electronic material [2]".

E-mail marketing is one of the subsets of the following: E-mail marketing is a form of direct marketing which uses E-mail as a means of communicating commercial or fund-raising messages to an audience. In its broadest sense, every E-mail sent to a potential or current customer could be considered E-mail marketing. However, the term is usually used to refer to:

1) Sending E-mail messages with the purpose of enhancing the relationship of a merchant with its current or previous customers, to encourage customer loyalty and repeat business
2) Sending E-mail messages with the purpose of acquiring new customers or convincing current customers to purchase something immediately
3) Adding advertisements to E-mail messages sent by other companies to their customers [3].

Researchers intend in this article regarding the important role of E-commerce in IT development in Iran to introduce advantages and disadvantages of E-mail marketing and also to introduce strategies that increase the efficiency of this tool will pay.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the recent past, e-mail marketing quickly became the preferred method of contact for businesses looking to cut expenses, connect with buyers and increase profits. However, as the dynamic world of marketing has progressed, analysts are have encountered some disadvantages to e-mail marketing that have made other alternatives like direct marketing campaigns or text campaigns look more appealing. In this section, the advantages and disadvantages were explained as below:

### A. Advantages of E-mail Marketing

**Most of what you invest, you get.** Recent research shows that for every dollar invested in E-mail marketing, you can expect that according to the Direct Marketing Association, E-mail marketing in 2009, acquired for $ 43.52. So E-mail Marketing has the highest return on investment than other marketing methods [4], [5].

**It is very meaningful.** You can customize messages for different customers and provide contents and promotions that are consistent with their profile. Finally, your customers

acquire what they want and thus they obtain better view about what each section of current business will respond. So you can continue to send more relevant E-mails [4].

**Measurability.** By E-mail marketing, you can easily find the number of E-mails sent, number of E-mails that have been opened and that those who have opened up, the number of people who are not registered, and click rate (which includes the link been effective and who clicked on it) [6].

**It is easy.** Creating a marketing message via E-mail is almost as easy as writing an E-mail [5].

**It is automatic.** E-mail marketing has a tool called an "autoresponder". For example, if you want to send a campaign message to your recipients on special days you just create the messages and schedule it [5].

**It is** fast **and efficient.** Timing is everything, so it can be said: this is a quick and efficient way. Offers promotions through E-mail with a clear call to action, can have tremendous impact on earnings. Channels cannot provide any possibility for you in a short period of time so as to obtain the customer directly [4].

E-mail marketing is known as a permission marketing and it is one of it's advantages because it allows customers to decide whether they want to be reached via E-mail [7].

mass customization are enabled by E-mail marketing so each message is unique to each customer, it helps marketers to inform the success of their promotions easily and quickly, it provides a major insights into the recipient's actions through measurable events such as message open, hyperlinks clicked [8].

### B. Disadvantage of E-mail Marketing

**Undelivered E-mail.** These days many ISPs use complex junk-mail filters. So there is no guarantee that your E-mails are getting into your audience inbox. Also, it is possible that individuals delete an E-mail from someone who is not in their contact list. This is increasingly becoming a disadvantage of e-mail marketing [9].

**E-mail response decay.** It's not easy to keep subscribers actively engaged with your company in the long-term [10].

**Renderability.** Difficulty of displaying the creative as intended within the in-box of different E-mail reading systems.. Your subscribers may want a message with "unsecured" items such as color, graphics and links that not all browsers will support them. Finally, your recipient will instantly close the window or you will have to just settle for the drab all-text E-mail [9], [10].

**Expenses.** Some people and technology resources are required to deliver a sophisticated E-mail newsletter that engages the consumer. Even though E-mail marketing is very inexpensive to propagate, the outcome could wind up costing a lot more if a judge deems your messages "useless spam" [9][10].

**E-mail** Overload**.** When an E-mail gets through to the consumer, there is so much E-mail that needs to be looked at sometimes it is difficult for the individual to distinguish between solicited and unsolicited E-mail, as well as have time to read through the E-mail [10].

Another disadvantage of E-mail marketing is to transmit many software viruses and it makes customers to become suspicious even to the trusted sources and market [7].

### III. METHOD AND FINDINGS

Based on the literature review regarding to E-mail Marketing, researchers have done a study for identifying the advantages and disadvantages of E-mail Marketing. This study was a systematic review on E-mail Marketing. A systematic review is literature review focused on a single question that tries to identify, appraise, select and synthesize all high quality research evidence relevant to that question [11].

### A. Steps on Implementation E-mail Marketing Based on Findings

The following steps are valuable during implementing E-mail marketing:

**Step One:** Define Email-based marketing. Before starting to create a marketing strategy based E-mail; you can specify what means E-mail marketing for your organization [12].

**Step Two:** Determine the purpose. The most important question you should answer: "What is the purpose of marketing via E-mail for your company?" Important questions to answer are: Why E-mail Marketing? How E-mail marketing through existing marketing efforts will help you? How your marketing efforts will be linked together? What is the current lead generation process? How E-mail marketing helps to generate leads? Are you in touch with your customers regularly? Does E-mail Marketing replace or complement any other communication strategies? [12]

**Step Three:** Building a customer database. Some of this information may include demographic data (e.g., age, gender, etc.), customer status and so on [12].

**Step Four:** Privacy Policy. Provide a privacy policy link that makes visitors sure their E-mail addresses will not be shared or sold without their permission [5].

**Step Five:** Organized by the Department or Group. The next step of building a marketing strategy is managing internal information of the organization. At this point, should be starting to find opportunities for organizing information to achieve their ultimate goal [12].

**Step six:** Projecting content. Now that you identify who you are communicating with and the type of communication you want to produce, you need to plan the real content for each item. To do this, you should build an editorial calendar. This will assist you prepare for the future and make you certain that each communication contain relevant content [12].

**Step seven:** From, to and subject Line. What you write in front of the from, to and subject line is the first step to communicate with your customer. It is very important to write smartly for encouraging them to open their E-mail [13].

**Step eight:** Test message**.** One of the profits of E-mail is the capability to test quickly and measure outcome before an entire E-mail campaign is launched [13].

**Step nine:** Tracking results of competition. At this stage we need a criterion for success. For each type of publication you should outline what will represent success. Sharing these metrics (such as the number of people who click) helps that all involved to recognize that how E-mail can truly impact on an organization. The most important metrics are: Delivery rate, Open rate and Clickthrough rate [12].

## IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study offer some advantages and disadvantages of using E-mail Marketing and showed how it can be decreased its disadvantages by using some improving techniques. There are some recommendations to Iranian Marketing Company regarding to improving E-mail Marketing. Based on the findings of this study there are as follow:

### A. Tactics for Improving Relevancy

Classification of E-mail competition based on audience behavior [14].

Classification of E-mail competition based on sale cycle [14].

Allowing audience to determine their preferences. By creating good preferences center that allow members to choose their preferences and change their needs, can increase the flexibility of system (e.g., members are able to choose the time of receiving E-mails) [15].

Sending especial E-mail automatically. By sending this E-mails, we noted that our audiences are valuable. Examples of this include messages that are created by clicking on certain links, when our audience changes profile information or fills it (e.g., Welcome E-mails) [16].

Personalize your content dynamically [14].

### B. Tactics for Growing E-mail Lists

**Through subscription.** Subscriptions are done in three ways: Subscribe to newsletters, purchase and register during the registration and download.

**E-mail forward-to-a friend.** "Word of mouth" is one of the most powerful viral marketing techniques. If members recognize that your content is useful and informative, certainly, it will forward, and this fact increases the number of readers and may even increase the number of registered users [17].

**Social sharing buttons.** Social network has very important role in your business as it can be passed to your subscribers' followers, their followers' followers and so on to expand E-mailing lists [18].

**Co-registration.** "Co-registration is a widely - used approach to increase the size of your e-mail lists. Co-registration works this way: After completing a subscription form or upon leaving a website, visitors are invited to subscribe to one or more e-zines. If yours is listed among these and the site gets a substantial amount of traffic, you'll begin to receive a number of subscriptions [19]."

**Offline event/tradeshows.** You can introduce your business through offline event such as tradeshow in order to absorb potential customer [17].

**Online** events / **webinars [17].**

### C. Tactics for Improving E-mail Marketing Deliverability

The first factor that ISPs use in recognizing is to block or continue messages is the reputation of your organization and domain. Internet services judge your messages based on how your customers respond to your messages send. When ISPs want to recognize your reputation, they usually consider factors that include: The number of complaints that your organization has received through the ISPs, the number of E-mails bounce or unbeliever, content of messages.

E-mail marketing deliverability tactics are including:
Remove **inactive members from the list.**
**Trim your template.**
Monitoring **and decreasing complaints rate.** Complaints management should always stop and let us consider the causes of these complaints [20].

**Tactics** for **supervision on sending E-mail.**
ISPs continuously review their laws as they should have some steps prior to the 'spammers'. It is essential that monitor your performance constantly. The following performance indicators for monitoring E-mail to:
1) Hard bounce. It is refer to messages that are sent to Inactive E-mail addresses [21].
2) Complaints of spam
3) Unsubscribe
4) Black lists that you've added to it
5) Inbox delivery rate by ISP.

It is certainly good practice for your data list to be screened on regular basis to identify poor data and it is a good idea to screen you list prior to it being used for the first time. Things to look out for:
1) Duplicate addresses
2) Junk entries (qwertyuiop@asdfg.hj)
3) Common miss-spellings ("Yohoo" instead of "Yahoo")
4) Irrelevant addresses [20].

**Con**tent: E-mail content is monitored for incorrect or non-standard code spammy content by spam filters. There are some ways for checking E-mail template before distribution.
1) It is good practice to screen the cods through HTML validator or spam content checker or Campaign Monitor [20].
2) It is suggested that display your E-mail in different browsers, such as, Google chrome, Firefox and so on [20].
3) It is suggested that create a dummy account in yahoo, Gmail, Hotmail. So you are the first one that can monitor how your E-mail loads [20].
4) If there are some problems in rendering E-mails, you should find the way in which you create your E-mails. For example, do not use assistance of a design program such as Dreamweaver because they may add some "dirty" html codes to your E-mails. Create your E-mail by hand without the helping from such programs [20].
5) Do not use Java script and Visual Basic or other Script languages in your E-mails [22].
6) 6. 50 percent of your audience turns off having images by default. So it is suggested that do not design your E-mails based on images [20].
7) Subject line

The subject line is very important factor to open an E-mail sending by your organization to a customer. The following tips help to improve the rate of its opening:

**Length of subject line.** Subject line with shorter length works better. Experiences estimated that the length of subject line is less than 50 characters and even it seems that this length decreases over time. B2B companies often need less than 20 characters, because the most of our readers check their E-mails on PDA or mobile devise. In fact, new research shows that more people in jobs and busy work, their E-mail

on their mobile phones. So be aware, how your audiences check their E-mail [4].

**Content.** Strong offers (for sale) and valuable content that send to customers will have great effect. Get excited them by highlighting the benefit of each E-mail in subject line. Your E-mails are labeled as spam by some words such as Free, afford, opportunity, save, earn money, eliminate and debt [4].

**Personalization.** Personalization in your subject line can be influential [4].

**Use** top **lists [23].**

8) From line

The first question that comes to customers mind after receiving E-mail is: "Do I know you?" So it is a critical step to E-mail success. From line is composed of two parts:

1. From name   2. From address

It is possible that your audiences notice first part, second part or both of them. So how can you ensure you're from line is well-known? Two following ways can help you be familiar:

**Be consistent.** Audiences are familiarized you by communicating and looking for your special from name or address name.

**Make it meaningful.** You must be introduced by from name and from address and also they can reveal the relationship between you and your audience. Avoid the generic name, such as info @. By doing this you just wasted your valuable space with characters, it will tell something about the sender. Furthermore, this type of non-personal names often seems to be considered as junk mail. Here are some examples of From lines that range from highly recognizable to not at all recognizable: beneton@beneton.co, sara@sarashopservice.co,chef@restaurantname.co, info@officename.co and sale567@ pnb.com [24].

*D.   Testing E-mail*

For testing an E-mail, there are some types of tests that include A/B and Multivariate testing. In this paper A/B testing selected to explain.  It is:

A/B testing is creating two different versions of an E-mail and  send each version to a small segment of your list to see which one gains the best result (e.g., open rate, clickthrough rate, etc.) [25].

**Subject line.** Subject line is one of the most important parts of an E-mail. You can use this method to test your E-mail. Factors that can give consideration include: 1. Add personalization in the subject line 2. Call to action 3. The subject line 4. Words used in the subject line.

**E-mail design.** It is suggested that have a main template of your E-mail and create probably the same template with less differences. However, you can test the main factors that influence on your unsubscribe rate, click through rate or aim of the E-mail.

**E-mail content.** There are some factors that you can test in your E-mail content. A/B testing is the best way in this area.

a) **Headline.** The first thing that can be observed after opening the mail and should be consistent with the subject line is headline. You can consider it as a link or simple text and then check the click through rate and decide which way is better; **2. Position of content**. Test your E-mail by moving content in different part of

E-mail body. But you consider that place the most important content in the beginning of your E-mail;**3. Types of content; 4. Position of social media icons; 5. Number of images; 6. Number of links; 7. E-mail length; 8. Call to action; 9. From name and From address [26].**

REFERENCES

[1]   A. Riazi, Strategic document of information technology system in Iran," Access on: 10 Dec. 2011, [Online]. Available: http://ictc.isti.ir/download/docuumentr/nezam.pdf.

[2]   D. whitely and E-commerce: "Strategy, Technologies and Applications," USA: Mc Grow-Hill, pp. 20, 2000.

[3]   S. VanBoskrik, C.  S. Overby, and S. Takvorian, US Interactive Marketing Forecast, [Online]. 2011 To 2016, Access on: 20 Oct 2011, Available: http://www.forrester.com/rb/Research/us_interactive_marketing_fore cast%2C_2011_to_2016/q/id/59379/t/2.

[4]   S. Jenkins, *"The Truth about Email Marketing,"* USA: FT Press, pp. 2-4, pp. 104-106, 2009.

[5]   GetResponse by implix. 2009. Email Marketing Secret Guide, Access on:    13    Feb.    2012,    [Online].    Available: http://www.getresponse.com/learning-center/white-papers.

[6]   Email Brain. 2006. Why email marketing, Access on: 16 Jan. 2012, [Online]. Available: http://www.emailbrain.com/eb/docs/why_email_marketing.pdf.

[7]   J. A. Davis, *"COMPETITIVE SUCCESS, HOW BRANDING ADDS VALUE,"* United Kingdom: John Wiley and Sons, pp. 311, 2010.

[8]   B. Nussey, *"The Quiet Revolution in Email Marketing,"* USA: SMTP Press, pp. 15-18, 2004.

[9]   J. Fusion, the Disadvatages of E-mail Marketing, and Access on: 21 Dec.    2011,    [Online].    Available: http://www.superhostingdeals.com/the-disadvantages-of-email-marke ting-1445.html.

[10]   Business Marketing Plan. 2011. The Advantages and Disadvantages of E-mail Marketing, Access on: 2 Apr. 2012, [Online]. Available: http://www.businessmarketingplan.net/email-marketing/advantages-a nd-disadvantages-of-email-marketing.html.

[11]   J. H. Littell, J. Corcoran, and V. Pillai, *"Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis",* USA: Oxford University Press, pp. 1, 2008.

[12]   Bronto. 2005. Building an Email Marketing Strategy, Access on: 12 Jan.    2012,    [Online]. Available:http://www.b2bemailmarketing.com/files/building-an-emai l-marketing-strategy.pdf.

[13]   Persona, Inc. 2011. 10 Steps to Email Marketing Success, Access on: 16    Dec.    2011,    [Online].    Available: easternontarioknowledge.ca/index.php/how-to-documents/marketing- a-sales.html

[14]   Marketing Sherpa. 2011. Special Report :  4 Key Sessions Form Marketing Sherpa's Email Summit 2011, Access on:  2 Apr. 2012, From:  http://www.marketingsherpa.com/freestuff.html.

[15]   T. Sutton, A. 2011. Email Marketing: Good Preference Centers can hold onto subscribers even as they change Marketing, Access on: 5 Dec. 2011 [Online]. Available: http://sherpablog.marketingsherpa.com/email-marketing/email-marke ting-preference-centers-hold-subscribers-that-change/.

[16]   Email Marketing Guide. 2011. Trigger Based Email, Access on: 12 Nov.    2011,    [Online].    Available: http://www.email-marketing-guide.com/tips-advice/trigger-based-em ail.html.

[17]   Get Response by implix. 2010. How to Grow your Email Marketing List,    Access    on:    13    Feb.    2012,    [Online].    Available: http://www.getresponse.com/learning-center/white-papers.

[18]   Benchmark email. 2011. Creating an Email Marketing Plan, Access on: 21    Nov.    2011,    [Online].    Available: http://www.benchmarkemail.com/resources/manualinfo/email-market ing-plan.

[19]   D. Clifton, Building Traffic Using Co-registration, Access on: 20 Jan. 2012,    [Online]. Available:http://ezinearticles.com/?Building-Traffic-Using-Co-Regist ration&id=1853898.

[20]   S. White, 2011. Under The  Skin of Email Deliverability, Access on: 20 Oct. 2011 [Online].Available:http://www.redcmarketing.net/wpcontent/themes/r edc/6_pdfs/SW14098EmailDeliverability.pdf.

[21] Benchmark email. 2011. Cleaning House: How to Build Healthy Email List, Access on: 21 Jan 2012, [Online]. Available: http://www.benchmarkemail.com/download/CleaningHouseLists.pdf.

[22] J. Wilson, 2011. Guide to Boosting Email Deliverability, Empoweism.com, and Access on: 15 Nov 2011, [Online]. Available: http://go-mail.com/emaildeliverability.html

[23] Benchmark email. 2010. Creating an Email Marketing Plan, Access on: 21 Nov. 2011, Complete Guide to Email Marketing, Access on: 18 Oct 2011, [Online]. Available:http://www.benchmarkemail.com/resources/manualinfo/email-marketing.

[24] E. Groves, "*The constant Contact Guide to Email Marketing*," USA: John Wiley and Sons Inc, pp. 2009.

[25] Get Response, 2011, Split Testing Message, Access on: 10 Oct. 2011, [Online]. Available: http://www.getresponse.com/documents/core/pages/marketing/learning-center/product-tutorials/split_testing.pdf.

[26] K. Cunningham, 2011. 5 Email Marketing Testing Best Practice. Hubspot, Inc. Access on: 2 Jan. 2012, From, [Online]. Available: http://learning.hubspot.com/Default.aspx?app=LeadgenDownload&shortpath=docs%2F5-email-marketing-best-practices.pdf.

**Elham Fariborzi** joined the Department of Computer Sciences in 1998 and has been actively involved in teaching and research since then. She taught, supported and supervised students in different universities. Her PhD is *Multimedia Based Teaching & Learning* and as interdisciplinary field permits her to work in Educational studies, Information Technology, and Computer Sciences Departments. She published 11 books. She participated and presented in various national and international symposia/conferences and has chaired various sessions. Her research interests are: E-courses effectiveness, interdisciplinary studies on cyber space, and automatic content analyzer for web-based courses.

**Eng Morvarid Zahedifard** joined the Department of Computer Sciences in 2007 and has been actively involved in Learning since then. She finished her study at 2011. Her bachelor is *information technology* engineering and currently she studies Master in Software Engineering field at Islamic Azad University, Mashhad Branch, Iran. She wrote one under published book in the field of E-commerce.