

# **The Effects of Email Marketing on Customer Loyalty**

**A Survey of Young Vietnamese Consumers**

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Abstract  <p>The introduction of the internet and digital advances has opened new ways for marketers to accomplish their purposes, led by the expansion of marketing practices, including email marketing. Email marketing has been proved to be one of the most effective marketing strategy due to its low-cost, mobile and user-friendly nature. However, due to its popularity amongst marketers, not all email marketing campaigns are executed properly and email overload is creating more counter-effects on customers rather than delivering the marketing message.</p> <p>On the other hand, customer loyalty is at the heart of businesses and could be achieved by marketing activities. Studies have shown a tie between customer loyalty and the drivers of customer equity, making it possible to link the two concepts. The study seek to examine whether email marketing alone as a marketing activity could contribute positively to customer loyalty and to which extent, while also collecting in-depth data about the email using behavior of the target group in a time where email users are experiencing a major email overload, to examine the target group's attitude towards email marketing in general.</p> <p>The study adopted the quantitative research method, with data collected using a survey. The target group for this research was Vietnamese email users, aging from 18 – 30 years old. The questionnaire for the survey and the data collection processed were conducted with the help of Google Forms and analyzed with Excel. Then, the analyzed result is reflected against the research problems to come up with a conclusion.</p> <p>The attitude of Vietnamese email users toward email as a channel of marketing and communication were highly divided, ranging from mixed to negative. While the research results showed that email positively support brand awareness, its effectiveness in boosting value equity and relationship equity were not clear. Hence, the research concluded that email is not a highly effective for gaining customer loyalty. However, more researches on other target groups are recommended to clarify the relationship between email marketing and customer loyalty for better strategy practices.</p>		
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Miscellaneous ( <a href="#">Confidential information</a> )		

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The commercial Internet was introduced in the 1980s and World Wide Web was officially launched in 1990. The advent of Internet really opened the door to so many initiatives in communication, not only daily conversations but also business-related and professional communication. As the business world is expanding and growing every second, with the purpose of making one company, one product, one brand stand out from the rest, marketing was first introduced to the industry and ever since, marketing has played an important role in a business' growth. With the advent of the Internet, marketing shifted and gradually formed a new form of marketing: digital marketing, which does not cost that much of money as the word 'digital' may sound. Email marketing has been one of the most popular means of communication for business to their stakeholders. Even though more and more Social Medias have been introduced and used, email still remains one of the strongest and most frequently used social media by consumers. With the key features such as low cost, mobility, and user-friendliness, email remains the top choice of marketing communication methods and has been proved to help business grow. Email marketing implemented right can profit the company a lot from small investment. However, as the matter of fact, not all companies and agencies know how to do marketing right. The dialogue nature of email marketing communication can easily be turned into a monologue with spam emails, as the margin between email marketing and spam emails is extremely thin and must not be overlooked. In order to generate massive profit from small capital, it is utterly crucial for business owners and marketers to educate themselves with relevant email marketing knowledge.

## 1.2 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into 10 chapters with sub-chapters where relevant, including: Introduction, Literature review, Research problem, Methodology, Pilot testing and questionnaire evaluation, Data analysis, Discussion, Conclusion, Limitation and reflection, and List of reference.

In the introduction, the background of the thesis will be given as above, gives way to the literature review chapter, where information and findings related to the research are gathered and reviewed in order to lay out discussing points for the research problem. Digital marketing has been around for quite a while now and does not seem to stop growing in marketing field. Many studies have proved that digital marketing, in general, is more budget friendly, especially email marketing, than traditional marketing. Thanks to the internet, email marketing together with other social media marketing is growing strong, dialogues between companies and customers, where customers are asked to act upon receiving the email instead of the very original direct marketing – postal mail marketing, where only monologues were formed. In order to implement an effective email marketing strategy, ones should be well aware of a marketing email components and which drives the customer's tendency to open and read the emails. Among dozens and even hundreds of email in an individual's email inbox, researches have shown that subject line influences the most. For the second half of the thesis title, customer loyalty is also reviewed as well as customer equity. It is believed that those two factors really do have an impact on any business. Customer equity definition has not yet come down to one globally agreed term yet but certainly it is an intangible asset of the company, which is likely to make profit for the business in long run. Likewise, customer loyalty prompts existing customers to choose one company for many products instead of trying out new products from different companies.

The research problem chapter explained how the problem was address and what the sub-questions are to answer and to base on for the result discussion. Methodology chapter describes the pros and cons of the choices, leaving the authors drawbacks that to foresee and mitigate if possible. A set of questions were run for testing and problems are addressed in the pilot testing and questionnaire evaluation chapter, which helps finalize the survey used to collect valuable data. Data is then analyzed and studied in order to generate as much reasoning as possible in the data analysis chapter. They are then implied and discussed in the discussion chapter and the result is presented in conclusion chapter. It is inevitable that difficulties and obstacles occur during the thesis doing process, therefore, in order to have lessons learnt, all limitations are reflected in the limitation and reflection chapter.

### 1.3 Motivation of the thesis

Having read quite a few digital marketing journals, the authors came to realization of how customer equity can affect a company. However, besides customer equity, customer loyalty is also believed to play a crucial role in making the business profitable. As a matter of fact, while many studies indicate the positive impact of email marketing on customer equity, not as many have yet been done and established on customer loyalty. Moreover, as email marketing is more or less a 'common knowledge' to even a new-to-job marketer, customers have to face both good practices and malpractices of email marketing. There is no absolute guarantee that customers are willing to bear with dozens of irrelevant emails a day and will not turn their back on us. In consideration of the mentioned points, it came to the authors naturally that there should be more research on email marketing and customer loyalty, whether it has positive effectiveness on customer loyalty.



## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Digital Marketing

The birth of the Internet has opened ways for a massive amount of information to be collected and saved as digital form. Up till today, it is believed to be the fastest generated form of information, generally called digital information.

All digital information is interpreted into 'big data'. According to Arthur (2013), 'big data' is defined as the data collected by using both traditional and digital approaches from inside and outside of a company in order to serve the ongoing discovery and research of that company.

The term 'big data' is rather new and only started being used in the 2000s. However, its growth rate should not be underestimated because 90% of the data in the world was created within only 2 years – 2016 and 2017. In 2017, the current output of data was 2.5 quintillion bytes a day, a massive number that is hard to figure out how many zeros follow up. (Hale 2017.)

The world's economy is developing and changing days to days in parallel with digital improvements. It was proved believed those changes have encouraged marketers develop new techniques within marketing approaches, making digital marketing increase hugely in demand (Hoekstra & Zwart 1993, 30). Government administrators in European developed economies made use of the big data to cut down on cost and was able to save \$149 billion on operational costs, excluding reducing fraud and error activities and the collection of tax (Kumar 2017).

Digital marketing practices could be divided into two sets of tools that could independently work for different organizations. The first one includes digital marketing practices and tools that express a sense of commercial experience, namely email, search engines, affiliate marketing and other forms of online advertising. The second set is more relatable for the later generation as it includes social media, online gaming and virtual places. Additionally, digital marketing tools and digital

marketing channels should not be mixed together, given that mobile marketing is not considered a tool but still an effective channel for distributing email marketing and other display campaigns. (Reynolds 2010, 155-158.)

According to Jamalzadeh, Behravan and Masoudi (2012), online marketing activities enables businesses and marketers to make use of the intensive internet boost when developing new marketing strategies and methodologies. The range of activities involved in online marketing is wide and flexible, from banner advertising and sponsorship for content which are widely adopted around the web to other personal method such as emails and managing social media communities. Regardless, Gopal et al. (2005) commented, the fact that email marketing is a low-cost approach, immediate and could especially work for certain restricted market sectors makes it one of the best performing service sector and an excellent tool for online marketing. (131.)

## 2.2 Email Marketing

Ever since its first introduction, email and email marketing has been continuously praised as one of the most advanced and recognized communicating channel of the new century. Its role as both a tool and a channel of digital marketing have been recognized by several authors.

According to Hoekstra and Zwart (1993), in the 1990s, when email marketing was not as popular as it is nowadays, the original form of it, as known as postal mail was considered as direct marketing. The aims of email marketing were not only to establish new relationships with customers, but also to maintain them to create customer loyalty to the brand. (ibid., 30.)

According to Chittenden & Rettie (2003, 203-217), email marketing is recognized as the new and powerful way of digital marketing. It is great and convenient for attracting consumers by delivering advertising, promotional or commercial campaigns directly at targeted consumers' mailbox in no time or effort (The Balance 2016).

According to the Direct Mail Association's DMA Fact Book 2012, there are about 54.2% of the total value of US Mail associated with direct mail advertising across all classes (Dalzell, 2013).

The Email Statistics Report 2018 – 2022 of The Radicati Group (2018) reported that in 2018, the number of email users of the entire world will top 3.8 billion, which mean more than half of the global population have at least one email account. In the same report, 281.1 billion mails are sent every day and is expected to increase 4.4% to 293.6 billion in 2019 (ibid., 2018). This indicates that emails are continuingly used by everyone for different purposes from business to personal, with numerous providers like Gmail, Hotmail, Outlook, etc. Companies analyze the data and see emails as an opportunity and motivation to invest in their marketing strategy to reach out to more customers, together with traditional approaches and other practices.

According to Kendra (2017), e-mail marketing is 40 times more effective than social media marketing. Another research emphasized that e-mails were still the most efficient way of digital marketing compared to other social media mediums in term of acquiring customers (Aufreiter, Boudet & Weng 2014). Another article by Silva (2018) showed that, for every dollar company spends on email marketing, it will generate a profit worth of \$35 to \$45.

The figure below was adopted from McKinsey's website in order to provide a more profound evidence for the growth and credibility of email marketing.

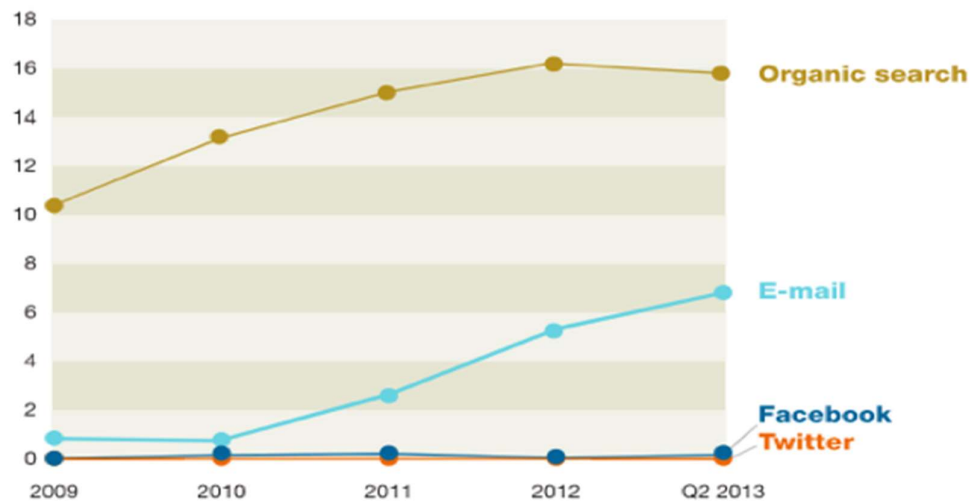


Figure 1 US customer-acquisition growth by channel, % of customers acquired (Source: Custora, E-commerce Customers Acquisition Snapshot, 2013; McKinsey iConsumer survey, 2012)

However, as the matter of fact, not all companies are getting positive results from running email marketing campaigns due to extended reasons.

The two terms 'email marketing' and 'newsletter' are really often mixed up. Newsletters have been commonly known as humble-brag letters about the company and its offerings and are often sorted into junk email box or deleted by the readers before opening (Silva 2018; Chapman 2011, 11). Customers disfavor newsletters because most of the time, they are annoyed by the neglecting content, which leads to the hesitation in companies when it comes to the idea of employing digital marketing (Silva 2018). Email marketing while features valuable and actionable content, on the other hand, is argued as a means of increasing sales (Kennedy 2015).

### 2.2.1 The Features of Email Marketing

Email has been around for decades and is surely not a new thing in either in our daily life or work life, since an email could be composed anywhere, sent free and edited on-the-go using small, portable devices (Chapman 2011).

Chittenden and Rettie (2003) pointed out that the internet has 3 features that make it appears appealing to marketers: easier, cheaper and quicker, and together with the availability of one-to-one marketing made possible by email, attract companies to make an investment. There is no doubt that thanks to the development of the Internet and emails, dialogues are established between business and its customers, way more effective than a monologue. It is undeniable that ever since the technological age, traditional marketing, or paper-based marketing has been put in competition with digital marketing. (ibid., 204.)

Jamalzedeh, Behravan and Masoudi (2012, 136) added that business could make more from spending less from email marketing activities by distributing valuable advertising content through emails to customers, which enables communication between the business and customers more direct and personal.

The research by Chittenden and Rettie proved that email marketing could be especially effective in helping with customer retention and acquisition, but more

likely to work better as a retention tool (2003, 204 - 216). Their study pointed out that emails with colorful images gain higher response rate and above all, emails that are relevant, anticipated and personalized are more welcomed by the existing customers (ibid., 207).

The components of a proper marketing email are not tricky to be listed. However, in order to have a solid foundation before getting deep into email marketing, it is crucial to go through the seven key elements of a marketing email: sent date and time, header, subject line, primary message, body, call to action, and the footer. (Hanna, Swain, & Smith 2015, 29-30.)

A research by Yudkin, Gutzman and Holland (2002) showed that around 40% of the recipients agree that email headers or the "From" line, which display the sender's address, are the main drivers of their intention to open or ignore/delete an email right away. The remaining 60% responded that it is the subject line that help them decide whether to take action. (ibid., 72-73.)

One thing which distinguishes a successful email newsletter from other spam emails is most likely the subject line (Chapman 2011, 11). Charlesworth (2009, 260) stated that content writers are worth hiring because they know how to get the crucial subject line right, it should be condense, precise and personalized to encourage receivers to open it instead of deleting and binning the whole campaign. Just like branding, email marketing is about expressing and selling ideas to prospective customers so that marketers want to do it properly, by putting effort into creating a high-quality content to the target group (Silva 2018).

Other researches show the same conclusion that subject lines play the dominant role in driving the recipient's decisions, on whether they should spare their tight schedule to open and read the email (Hanna, Swain, & Smith 2015, 29-30; Yudkin, Gutzman, & Holland 2002, 73; Tsai 2013, 80). Hence, researchers and professionals in digital marketing have suggested several tips on how to enhance the efficiency of marketing email usage by optimizing the subject lines of sent out emails, for instance, keeping it short, using numbers, asking a question or personalizing the email, etc. (Yudkin, Gutzman & Holland 2002, 75-76; Tsai 2013, 80-81.)

## 2.2.2 The Email Marketing Process

Before planning an effective email marketing strategy, it is crucial for marketers to study the essential components of an effective promotional email, including subject line, sender name, personalization, headlines, content (including words and images), call-to-action message and button, social sharing links, mobile device optimization and, last but not least, unsubscribe option (Goliger 2017; McEwen 2017; Rowley 2016; Martin 2014).

In order to do email marketing right, marketers should familiarize themselves with the common terms and the process. According to Kendra (2017), the following figure will show 5 main stages of an email marketing process.



Figure 2 Email marketing process (Source: Kendra, 2017)

The first stage of any email marketing process is collecting data for contact lists. There are many ways to complete this stage from blog hosting, registration to newsletters, to buying lists outside the company (Kendra 2017).

However, Chapman (2011) emphasized that collecting and creating a company's own database instead of purchasing for those available from other companies is highly important. This is because not all companies' strategies and target groups are the

same, and by sending irrelevant information to the wrong group of customers, companies will make their 'email marketing' appears like spam. (ibid., 11.)

One of the aims of practicing email marketing is to create relationships with customers, ideally long-term ones. Companies that use their own database to communicate with customers and this enables regular interaction between the two parties. Therefore, database plays an important role in practicing email marketing and should be generated properly. (Vriens, Hiek & Hoekstra 1998, 323.)

The next stage is to send some emails to the new comers in the beginning of a campaign, then using automation tools to find out who have opened sent emails and clicked some attached links. This allows firms to segment who are interested in their products (bottom of funnel) and who have not yet but still open emails (top of funnel), therefore, to develop different approaches to sectors, as known as the fourth step, putting them into a workflow. To close up a campaign, marketers should analyze the indicators in order to define deficiency that can be improved in the next campaigns. (Kendra 2017.)

Vriens et al (1998) also developed a previous model describing the basic process of responding to email marketing. This model relies on the characteristics of the email, the characteristics of the offerings and the characteristics of the prospective customer to determine the response process. (ibid., 323-339)

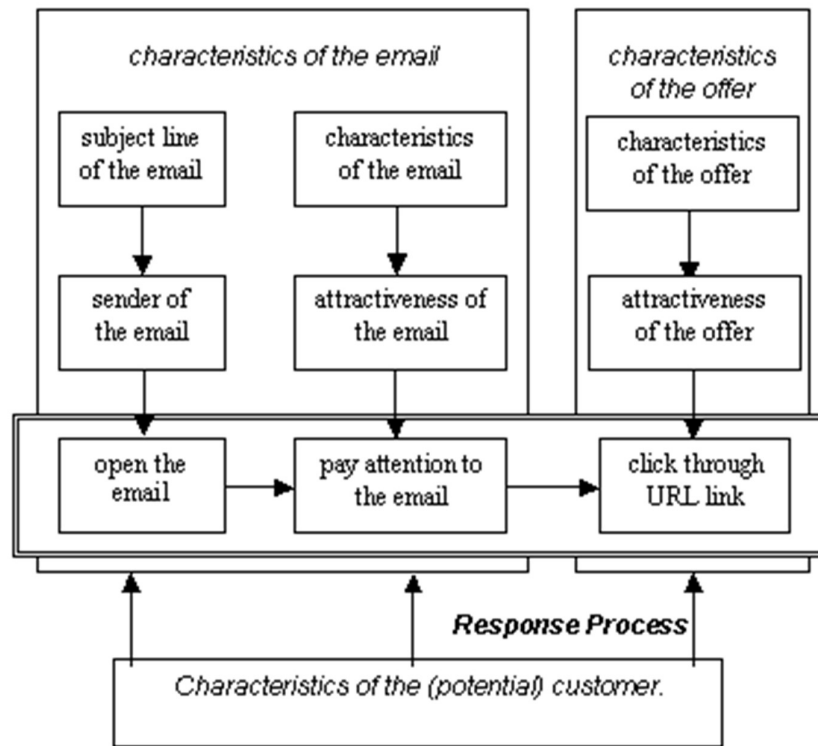


Figure 3 Basic Email Marketing Response Process (Source: Rettie, 2002)

### 2.2.3 Drawbacks

As email marketing is becoming more and more popular among firms, it is important that more methods are developed in order to increase the response rate, which indicates how effective the approach is (Vriens, Hiek & Hoekstra 1998, 323).

Deliverability is one of the issues that email marketing is still facing on its way to become an effective way of marketing (Email Marketing: Time to can spam and get personal 2008, 1).

It is suggested that specialist agencies can help with designing a marketing campaign with more creativity and quality in content, and most importantly, more personal (Email Marketing: Time to can spam and get personal 2008, 1). Everyone is capable of writing an email and sending it out, but composing an effective marketing email is not a task that can be done by everyone including the companies and marketers.



Blyth noted that sending emails with irrelevant content to potential customers could be considered as a new form of spam, like the act of sending random emails to a random group of people (see Mogos & Acatrinei 2015, 16). Paul Chapman suggested that it was worth paying money to get an expert, a copywriter from a specialized agency to create content and value for marketing emails, starting from getting the subject line done correctly (2011, 32).

During the process of running a campaign, in the stage of sending out emails, there are 2 major problems that are usually encountered. According to Alan Charlesworth (2009, 259 – 260), first of all it is technical problem where emails' looks are different according to which email system customers use. This not only affects the aesthetic of the email but also ruins the marketing message underlying the email since in some cases, images and layout play an important role in delivering the message. The second problem is textual content, it was advised that the subject line is something cannot be done wrong, because it's the customers' first impression and instant decision to whether open it or delete it. (ibid., 260.)

The one possible reason why customers hesitate when it comes to email marketing, or in specific, email to run marketing for online shopping, is the faulty products are sold and it is not rare to see (Akaah, Korgaonkar & Lund 1995, 211).

Aside from the huge advantages inherited from the internet, email marketing could easily be turned into spam if businessess overrun their email campaigns (Richardson & Otto 2008, 1100). By launching an enormous or frequent sending amount of emails, marketers risk getting recognized as spam emails in return of receiver's attaching cookies or web search history, and this issue could make communications in email marketing more difficult to get through to the customers, which consequently lower the effectiveness of emial marketing (Beldad et al. 2009, 559 - 566).

Specifically, according to Reynolds (2010), spam emails has created information overload, ability to deliver, negative impact on brand reputation and other legal considerations. There are 1.6 billion e-mailboxes around the world, and the fact that they receive a total of 200 billion emails per day makes it difficult for all information to get digested, while also require more effort from email marketer to make their messages

stand out from a crowd. Emails also get filtered by both the operating system and the customer by scanning, which means that any emails identified as spams will end up in a separate box away from receiver's sight or banned by customers. Additionally, researches has shown that spam emails tend to lower customer's trust in email in general. (155-158.)

## 2.3 Customer Equity

The ultimate purpose of applying marketing practices is to gain customer equity and maintain brand loyalty with customers, which consequently grant a boost in sales. Marketing practices could be branding strategies, traditional marketing mixes, direct marketing, digital marketing and other newly invented marketing phenomenon. (Vogel et al 2008; Keller 2008; Kotler and Keller 2007; Leone et al. 2006.)

There have been many efforts to define customer equity, but almost every definition considers customers as a type of asset to the company or the organization.

Lemon, Rust and Zeithalm (2001) defined customer equity as the worth of the firm's discounted customer lifetime value.

If a customer is contributing to the profit of a company over a period of time, the amount of profit created from this single customer is considered his or her lifetime value. Consequently, the gathered customer lifetime value contributed by the entire customer base of the company is the so-called customer equity. This suggestion indicates that there is a bonding connection between customer equity, customer lifetime value and brand equity. In such case, brand equity and customer lifetime value could then be evaluated under financial aspects by using the total revenue contributed by the total customer base, and this is particularly helpful for experts in calculating the brand value of a company, which is usually considered an intangible asset, into a specific financial number. (Fripp 2014, Relationship between CLV and Brand equity.)

However, according to Kumar and George (2007), customer lifetime value is unnecessarily the amount of profit created from each transaction made by a single customer, but rather the total potential profit could be received by the firm throughout the entire future relationship with that customer. This idea is also reasonable due to

the fact that it is never easy to predict the total amount of purchase made by a customer throughout their lifetime, which depends on many other factors.

### 2.3.1 Customer Equity Models

Since customer equity is one of the most important assets to the company and researchers claim that customer is largely related to and could be manipulated by adjusting customer lifetime value, many efforts have been made to create a solid working model that embraces every aspect that affect customer lifetime value. According to Lemon, Rust and Hogan (2002), the concept of customer equity was created in extended researches regarding direct marketing, relationship marketing, brand equity and service quality and how customer can be better managed as one of the most important assets owned by a firm.

Lemon et al. (2001) indicates that there are three key factors driving customer equity - value, brand and relationship (retention), which could be manipulated alone or jointly with each other:

- Value equity is composed of the quality, price and convenience of the firm's products that effectively response to customer's expectations and needs, which are mostly based on perceptions.
- Brand equity is built by the firm itself by leveraging brand awareness, attitude towards the brand and corporate ethics, which can either be used as an attraction for new users or a reminder for current customers that aspires to influence their purchase behavior.
- Relationship equity, or retention equity, is needed the most when the firm wants to immensely strengthen a customer's bond to a brand that they will never switch to another brand. This can be consolidated by memberships, reward systems, community building campaigns... (1-2.)

Leone et al. (2006) pointed out that the brand equity as described by Lemon et al. (2001) is not as broad as definitions provided by brand specialists, stating that it is "not consistent with the state of the art in branding theory and practice", but noticed that the use of these three components should be varied depending on the nature of the industry and the company as well. For example, products that result in low-

involvement purchase decisions should focus more on brand equity, while companies with a wide range of products and services but a narrow span of customers should develop relationship equity (Lemon et al., 2004).

Vogel et al. (2008) praised the customer equity model (Lemon et al., 2001) for being the first great effort to put brand equity on the same page with customer equity and open new paths for research on marketing spending optimization, however, criticized the model for leaving out the aspects of customer loyalty and not researching on behavioral factors.

Zhang et al. (2012) were also critical of the model introduced by Lemon et al. (2001) since it did not consider the factor of customer loyalty, instead praised a work by Vogel et al. (2008, 98-108). According to them, even though customer loyalty refers to the intention to repurchase and is usually driven by a more complex, dynamic and continuously changing factors, previous studies by Johnson et al. (2006, 122-132) and Vogel et al. (2008, 98-108) put forward the idea that the three key factors driving customer equity could drive customer loyalty as well. (ibid., 110-118.)

Theoretical works on customer equity indicates that perceived value contributes positively to customer satisfaction and loyalty, which consecutively enhances sales and chances of returning (Lam et al. 2004; Yang and Peterson 2004).

Studies by Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler (2002) and Ndubisi (2005) showed that relationship equity and relationship marketing activities have strong bonds with customer switching behavior and was concluded to have effects on customer loyalty intentions. Customers whose experience equals or exceeds expectations tend to gain more satisfaction and hence, become more loyal and comeback for more.

An effort of linking brand equity to customer equity by Leone et al. (2006) showed that by focusing on increasing brand equity, an increase in customer equity will follow. They added that brand equity usually plays the role of initiating marketing efforts, while customer equity proves to be more important at the end of marketing programs, which tend to be shown in sales figures.

When a customer first gets exposed to a brand, their judgmental thoughts and experience serve as a major factor in influencing this customer's affective commitment in

the future (Lemon, Bolton and Verhoef, 2004). The more positive the perceptions, the higher the brand equity (Donkers et al. 2007). According to Lemon, Rust and Zeithaml (2001), brand equity is what urge a customer to repurchase a brand and possibly, recommend a brand to another.

### 2.3.2 Customer Loyalty

When assessing the concept of customer loyalty, Moisescu (2014) emphasize the importance of customer loyalty in literature and practice, due to the fact that it is beneficial if used in retaining acquainted customers (McMullan 2005) and predicting long-term profitability (Salegna and Goodwin 2005).

According to Moisescu and Vű (2011), the significance of the concept of customer loyalty has not been properly considered by the American Marketing Association, since they define customer loyalty as “the situation in which a consumer generally buys the same manufacturer-originated product or service repeatedly over time rather than buying from buying multiple suppliers within the category”. Customer loyalty was emphasized by Javalgi and Moberg (1997, 165 - 179) to be “a very complex construct”. (1-2.)

Reichheld (2003, 46-54) shared the same point of view upon customer loyalty, stating that loyalty requires much more than continual purchases of the same product. Other factors such as indifference towards product types or convenience and other types of motives could be affecting purchasing decisions rather than loyalty alone.

According to Akin (2012), Gounaris and Stathakopoulos (2004) separated customer loyalty into four types based on characteristics of the purchase, social effect and emotions towards the brand:

- No Loyalty, when customers have no emotions for the brand and not even social effects could not drive them to make the purchase.
- Covetous Loyalty, when social effects create high emotions within the customers toward the brand but they do not make the purchase.
- Inertia Loyalty, when the purchase for the brand is habitual, based on convenience and other reasons than emotions or social effects.

- Premium Loyalty, when the purchasing decision is made based upon high level of emotions and social effects. This is also the highest form of loyalty. (160.)

Vogel et al. (2008, 98 - 108) attempted to explore the drivers of loyalty intentions by using the customer equity model introduced by Lemon et al. (2001), evaluating customer loyalty intentions and its correlation with the three key drivers, future purchase behavior and previous purchase behavior. Their research results revealed that value equity, relationship equity and brand equity positively influence customer loyalty, in which brand equity and value equity determine future sales and relationship equity plays dominant role in shaping loyalty intentions. The figure below describes the conceptual model. The results also imply that future sales are affected by combining past sales analysis and customer loyalty, which is driven by value equity, brand equity and relationship equity. (Vogel et al. 2008, 98 - 108.)

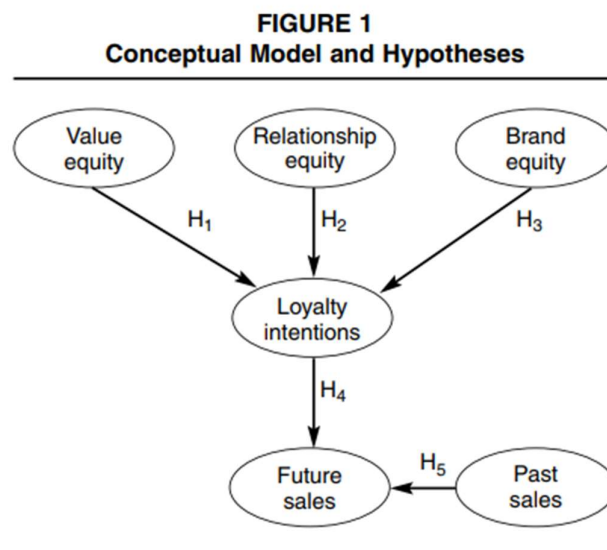


Figure 4 Conceptual Model and Hypotheses (Vogel et al, 2008)

### 3 The Research Problem

Rettie (2002) suggested that email marketing could be useful for customer acquisition and retention, which are considered foundational elements of customer equity. However, there were little researches on whether email marketing could play any role in increasing customer loyalty.

Aside from that, the increasing overload of emails and continuously changing consumer behavior is making marketers doubt whether the effective of email marketing is still great as it used to be.

In 2016, there were 52 million Vietnamese people had access to the Internet, which was 54% of the population the time (Thach Hue 2016). The number of email users has been predicted to surpass 3.8 million in the beginning of 2019 (Heinz 2018). These facts make this market highly attractive for email marketers, however, there has been little research on email behavior of this geographic group.

Hence, the purpose of the research will be reached when it can come to a conclusion whether:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What are the email using behaviors of young Vietnamese email consumers?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Does email marketing positively contribute to customer loyalty?

The literature review has revealed the relationships between the three contributing factors of customer equity, loyal intentions, customer equity and sales (Vogel et al., 2008). Following the previous researches by Kim & Ko (2011) on the effects of social media marketing on customer equity and customer loyalty, Cicek and Edogmus (2012) implied that if email marketing is proved to positively affects value equity, brand equity and relationship equity, it will also affects customer loyalty positively.

Hence, the hypotheses for RQ2 are as follow:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): email marketing has positive effects on value equity

Hypothesis 2 (H2): email marketing has positive effects on brand equity

Hypothesis 3 (H3): email marketing has positive effects on relationship equity

By proving the validity of the above hypotheses, RQ2 of “Does email marketing positively contribute to customer loyalty?” will come to a conclusion.

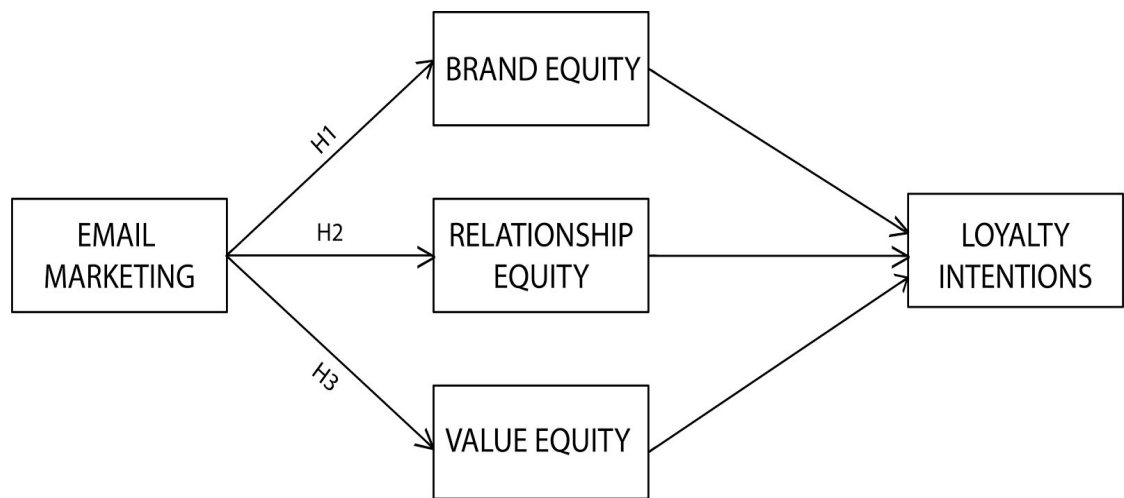


Figure 5 Hypotheses for Research Problem 2



## 4 Methodology

When conducting a market research, there are typically two main types of research method – qualitative research and quantitative research. Each of these method delivers unique qualities that differ one from another. The choice of which method to apply depends very much on authors' intentions while carrying out a research.

According to Guidelines for Qualitative Research (2011) as cited by McGivern (2013), qualitative research is a type of research involving observation, dialogue and evocation, with a flexible, unstructured approach that aims to provide highly valid, descriptive data for deeper understanding of a subject matter.

Procter (2005) points out several limitations when using qualitative research, stating that:

'Qualitative research does not pick out small differences quite as well as large-scale quantitative research ... Another limitation is that qualitative studies do not provide samples that are representative of the target population of the research ... Influential or dominant characters within a discussion group can also lead the group off on tangential discussions or bias the 'group view' ... [and] the problem of the discussion leader's competence.' (ibid., 222)

On the other hand, quantitative research is a research type which is based on positivism and neo-positivism methodologies (Adams et al. 2007, 25 - 26; Wang 2010, 2). They also pointed out that quantitative research is most likely to be strictly structured and designed prior to the real research. The name of this research type already suggests a sense of type of data collected, which will be statistics and hence, involves statistical analysis. (Adams et al. 2007, 25-26.). Quantitative research is proved to be more structured in approach, involves larger samples, can be easily replicated and produces statistical data that provide quantifiable insights into behavior, motivation and attitudes (Wilson 2013). The research on whether email positively contributes to loyalty intentions is conducted in quantitative method. This research method, however, has several limitations. Goertzen (2017) criticizes quantitative research as it

does not provide the logic behind participant's responses, its inability to reach specific demographic groups and how time-consuming the studies might be to collect the data.

When it comes to data collection, there are multiple methods that can be used to complete the task, which are generally called surveys. Commonly, the two most popular types of surveys are interviews and questionnaires, which belong to qualitative research and quantitative research respectively. (Kelly et al. 2003, 261 - 262.). Survey research is a method used to collect primary data, so the data is relatively 'fresh' and 'up-to-date' of what is going on in the real world (Kelly et al. 2003, 261 - 266). It is also argued that survey is capable of generating a large amount of data within short time-frame and at low cost (ibid, 263). For the mentioned advantages of survey research method, it is chosen as a mean of data collection. The survey will be created using an online tool, making it an E-survey. Even though E-survey encounter a number of factors that can cause poor results (Adams 2007, 128 - 140), when being compared to other mediums of data collection such as telephone interview and postal questionnaires, E-survey offers respondents a more interactive and user-friendly surface to work on (Dillman, Smyth & Christian 2014, 140). However, besides the convenience being stated, researchers should be aware of survey method drawbacks as well. The most likely to encounter drawbacks is the insecurity of response rate when it is very hard to control respondents' willingness to participate in a survey (Kelly et al. 2003, 263; Adams et al. 2007, 140).

The research purpose is to study the email behavior of the Vietnamese demographic and whether email marketing has effects on their loyalty intentions. Hence, the sampling was reduced to Vietnamese email users ranging from age 18 to 30 due to the fact that this demographic group is easier to reach for completing the survey and typically has more access to digital advances and are more online active. In fact, a survey (2012) reported that 95% of Vietnamese internet users ages from 15 to 24 years old (95% số người dùng internet ở tuổi từ 15 – 24! [95% of internet users ages from 15 - 24 years old] 2012).

Apart from that criteria, respondents are supposed to be currently living in Vietnam so that they truly experience the Vietnamese digital marketing, observe the changes throughout every day and react to those marketing activities. Vietnamese who live

abroad may still receive promotional emails from corporate senders from Vietnam but they will not react in the same way as if they were living in Vietnam, which affects the result from the survey. Last but not any least, all the respondents must have an active email account for the sake of the research as email marketing. It can be inducted from the two sources of info that it is safe to say a relatively large portion of Vietnamese people have at least one email account each.

For the sampling process, non-probability sampling technique was adopted, with the population of interest being random people who come across the online survey. The respondents are selected by their convenient accessibility to the researcher on the ground of convenience sampling method. Non-probability sampling technique refers to a set of sampling methods with the samples selecting procedure conducted subjectively, with smaller sample size and is faster and easier to conduct than probability sampling technique; however, exposed to risks of not knowing the representative level of the population drawn, incomputable sampling error and may leave the results more indicative than definitive. (Wilson, 2012.). This, along with the nature of convenience sampling, might produce biased results that turn to be invalid or unusable. Despite all the risks while using non-probability and convenience sampling methods, they bring along the best cost effectiveness and time efficiency, which encouraged the researchers to go with them.

Before starting the data collection process, a survey should be designed in advance, in either open-ended form or closed-ended one. For the purpose of ease at categorizing and processing answers, a closed-ended questionnaire is the best choice. According to Adams et al., closed-ended questions also enable researchers to compare and contrast answers in depth (2007, 132). However, while using this type of data collection method, researchers should be also aware of the possibility where respondents hesitate to answer or unwilling to participate actively. In fact, there are respondents who fill in the survey with no intention to complete it with true to one's self, which distracts researchers. (Adams et al. 2007, 132.)

Data collection process is planned to be done within 7 days, including the pilot testing phase and the actual survey. The actual survey will take place in 2 days when the first official questionnaire survey is published. Google Docs is used as a tool to create a questionnaire online for its user friendliness and convenience. A set of 18 questions

is designed and is expected to take about 5 to 7 minutes for each response. The questionnaire comprises of all closed-ended questions, varies from multiple choices to scaling answers. All 18 questions are marked compulsory to maximize the generation of answers. The questions are designed with the three hypotheses in mind, in other words, are expected to give answer to one of those hypotheses. The research subjects are email users aged from 18 to 30 who are currently living in Vietnam. The survey will be spread out on the authors' Facebook pages, with public setting so that everyone who has the link can click on it and will be taken directly to the survey. The reason behind the choice of communication medium is the massive number of Facebook users in Vietnam with 64 million users, ranked at the 7th country with the most Facebook users and they spend 2 hours each day on average to go online and use social media (Phuong 2017). The respondents are asked to help spreading the survey to even more people on their friend list. Because the authors are in the studied age range, it is very unlikely that anyone who is out of the group will attend the survey. In order to keep a record, the first question is to about respondents' ages and is entered manually. The link is made accessible for 2 days February 20 and February 21, 2018. The research expects around 80 to 100 responses collected during that 2 days.

After all data is collected and analyzed, it will be taken to a cognitive process called reasoning, so that inferences can be drawn from the data set. Because in the beginning of the research, hypotheses were made, deductive reasoning will be used in order to test the validity of them. According to Vinod Goel and Raymond Dolan, while inductive arguments are never valid, deductive arguments are reliable in terms of testing the relationship between the collected data and the hypotheses (2004, B110). It was proven by Vogel et al. (ibid.) that relationship equity, brand equity and value equity have effects on loyalty intentions, so by providing the proof and evidence from the deductive reasoning process and compare it to the model, it is possible to conclude whether or not email marketing can affect loyalty intentions through the three hypotheses.

## 5 Pilot Testing and Questionnaire Evaluation

The first version of the questionnaire was brought to pilot testing in order to assure its suitability for the main survey. The pilot testing process was conducted with a pilot sample group that shared identical qualities as the population of interest but at a smaller scale of 5 respondents, with the same manner expected in the main survey (face-to-face).

During the pilot testing, the wording of the tasks, the timing and the validity of the data should be brought into consideration (Schade, 2015). Timing was recorded for each full response, which was approximately 4 – 5 minutes. Respondents were asked to rate the clarity of the questions and the following choices on a scale of 1 to 10. If any questionnaire receives a score lower than 8, the respondent would be asked to identify the troubling section and the wording will be reviewed. Pilot responses were analyzed to see if they were relevant enough for achieving research objectives.

Based on the result of the pilot testing, none of the questions and tasks in the survey was rated lower than 8. However, respondents suggested that the wording of the question should be simplified and shortened to help respondent recognize the main idea of the questions and task more easily and quickly. Additionally, when evaluating the pilot results, two questions appeared to provide nearly identical information, one of which was then removed.

The collection of data was conducted by the help of Google Form. A survey form was created accordingly to the platform and spread online. Collection of data was automatically done by Google and summarized as an Excel file for analysis.

The questionnaire version used in the main survey (see Appendix 1) was the final edit from the pilot testing. Since all questions were put as required when the online survey was created, none of the responses were counted as invalid.

At the end of the response collecting time span, there were totally 104 responses collected and the data analysis was conducted based on those responses.

## 6 Data Analysis

After the data collection period ended, all data were put into Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with an exceeding number of 104 respondents. The questionnaire was designed with 18 questions, 1 open-ended (age) and 17 closed-ended. It is foremost crucial to make sure at first only respondents' age is between 18 and 30 are considered 'adequate'. All 104 respondents met the criteria; hence, all the data was valid. Gender is another question that was asked but the all the results are opted out for the convenience of the research to not focus mainly on gender-driven factor. However, for the full record, the ratio of men and women was almost balanced, with 51% of the participants were men and 49% were women. Pivot tables and charts were created in order to process primary data into usable proof to support reasoning. Within this chapter, analysis will be made to study carefully all the collected data about customers and email marketing to conclude whether email marketing has positive effects on customer loyalty intentions. The first 4 charts are about general information about respondents as email users and related questions. Analyzing the last 5 charts will generate more arguments for the 3 hypotheses, regarding email marketing and value equity, brand equity and relationship equity.

When being asked about the frequency of mail checking act, most respondents chose 2 to 6 times a week, which is less than once every day, followed by 'more than 2 times per day' choice with the slight margin of 0.9%. It is easy to see that the frequency of mail checking on a weekly basis is changing and very much depends on each individual. The chart below shows the ratios of response choices for the question "How often do you check your mailbox in a week?"

### How often do you check your mailbox in a week?

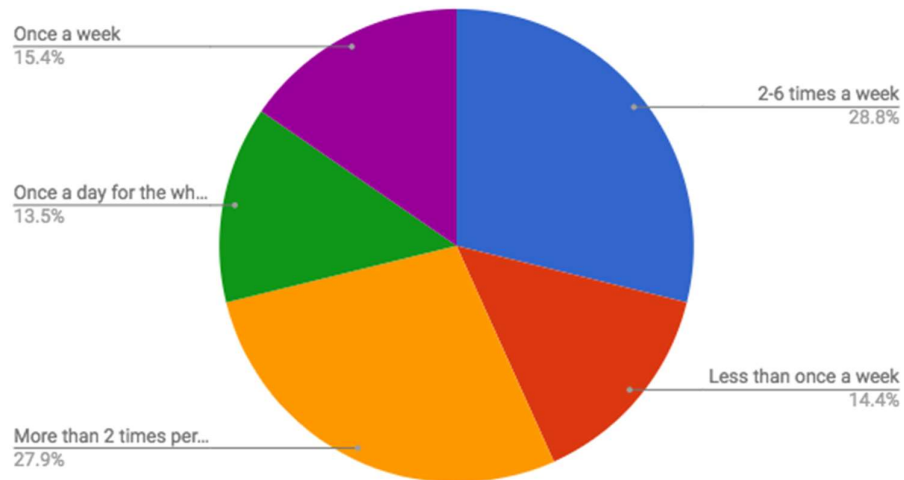


Figure 6 Result on How often do you check your mailbox in a week?

Generally, the percentage of respondents who check their mailbox at least once every day was only 41.4% in total. It is implied that the defined population's habit of email checking is not based on a daily basis. This can be explained as email, even though is still a popular mean of communication, there are other means that are no less convenient, such as telephone and social media. Surprisingly, even though hours of internet usage per a Vietnamese person on average are 2 hours every day (Phuong, 2017), 14.5% of the respondents replied they checked emails less than once a week, making it the second lowest in percentage answer.

As to study the impact of email in companies' marketing strategy, the respondents were asked to estimate the amount of promotional emails they typically got on a weekly basis. The figure below shows uneven ratios of all responses.

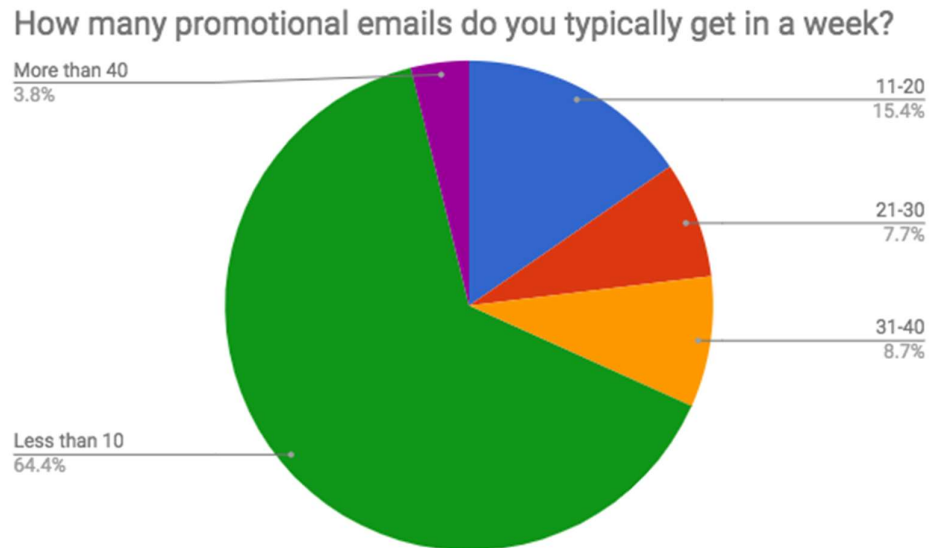


Figure 7 Result on How many promotional emails do you typically get in a week?

“Promotional emails” term in this research refers to newsletters, offers for subscribed members (discounts and early birds) and any kind of emails received from the corporate after purchasing a product or signing up in its subscription list. More than a half of respondents (64.4%) replied that they only got less than 10 promotional emails per week. This is probably either because they subscribe to not so many channels or the subscribed channels are not likely to send out a large amount of promotional emails. The majority of the second most chosen answer is 11 to 20 promotional emails per week, however, this number is only one-fourth compared to ‘less than 10’. Only 4 out of 104 participants reported that they received more than 40 promotional emails per week. In association with the regular amount of promotional email received per week, the survey also seek to see which number of emails sent out by a single company could trigger negative attitudes within receivers.



### Which amount of promotional email received from a single sender that likely to annoy you?

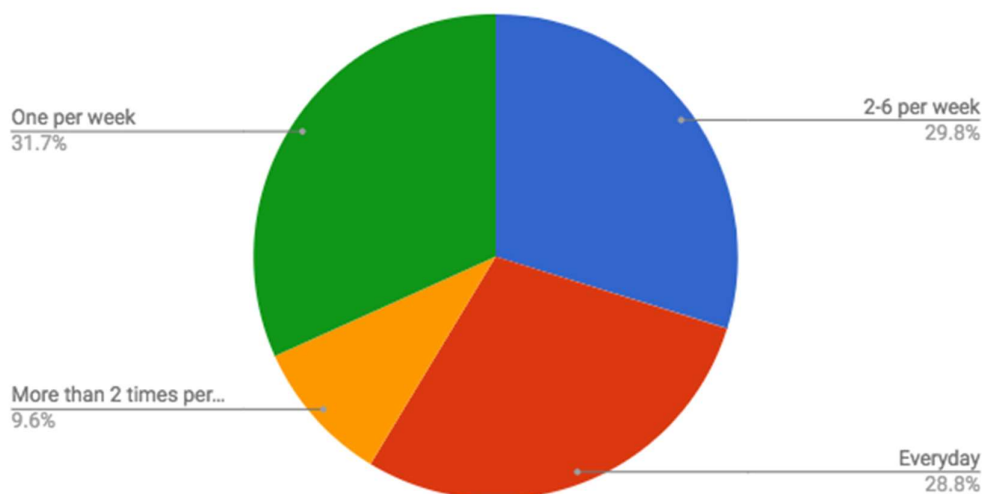


Figure 8 Result on Which amount of promotional email received from a single sender that likely to annoy you?

Survey result shows that 31.7% of respondents will feel negatively affected by promotional emails with only one received from a single entity in a week. This is rather shocking as it might reflect how a major portion of respondents has negative emotions towards promotional emails. Aside from that, 28.8% stated that they will feel annoyed if they receive a promotional email from someone every day in a week, while the other 29.8% perceive 2 - 6 promotional emails from a single sender in a week as uncomfortable. Only 9.6% of respondents find promotional emails sent out more than 2 times per day is annoying, however, this only indicates that only a few have their patients for emails, but most do not show much empathy with promotional emails in general.

The survey result revealed that more than 58% of respondents check their mailbox less than once every day and approximately 35% receive more than 10 promotional emails per week. The question for that caught researchers' attention was then what possibly made those receivers open a random promotional email. Participants were given 3 answers to choose from, minimum of 1 and maximum of 3 choices: name of

the sender, subject title and the first part of the email content. The pie chart below represents the percentage of each and every combination of choices.

Factor(s) that most affect your decision to open a promotional email

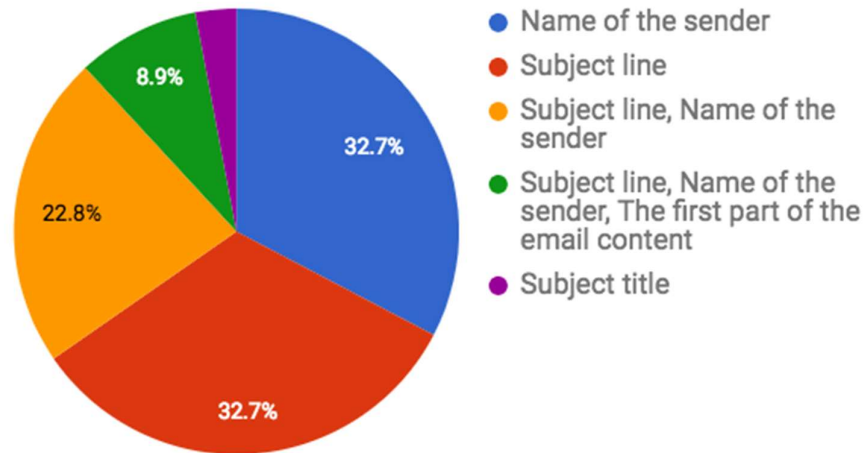


Figure 9 Result on Factor(s) that most affect your decision to open a promotional email. In calculation prior to the actual research, there could be maximum 7 combinations of choices, including 1 factor per answer, 2 factors per answer and all 3. Surprisingly, only 5 out of 7 combinations were made by the total of 104 respondents, which can be seen from the labels of the chart. Considering each factor acts as an individual, subject title was chosen in 34.6% of responses, associating well to what Paul Chapman said about the importance for subject line done right (2011, 11). Name of the sender follows closely by 3% less. This might be due to the consideration of receivers on their acknowledgement and interest towards the sender, which will be discussed later. Only 12 participants responded that they did consider the first part of the email content (less than 13% total), but the majority of them also chose the other 2 factors together as well. From the chart, it can be seen that it is remarkably important that companies pay attention to the process of forming an appealing subject line for their

promotional emails. In order to accomplish such task, going personal for the strategic email marketing is highly recommended. A simple example can be *“Hi one’s-first-name! Sick of the costly travel insurance?”* instead of *“Dear customer, we have a new travel insurance plan for you and your family”*. Using the customer’s first name can be seen as an initial act of personalization-oriented strategy. As it was not clear from the result for this question why name of the sender matters that much, it can be explained that either the receiver is unaware of the brand or they are aware of but not currently interested in what that channel has to offer. For the former reason, a possible solution is a change in their branding strategy so that brand awareness is well-spread. To deal with the latter problem is not any easier since companies will have to make their products and services more demanding and desirable.

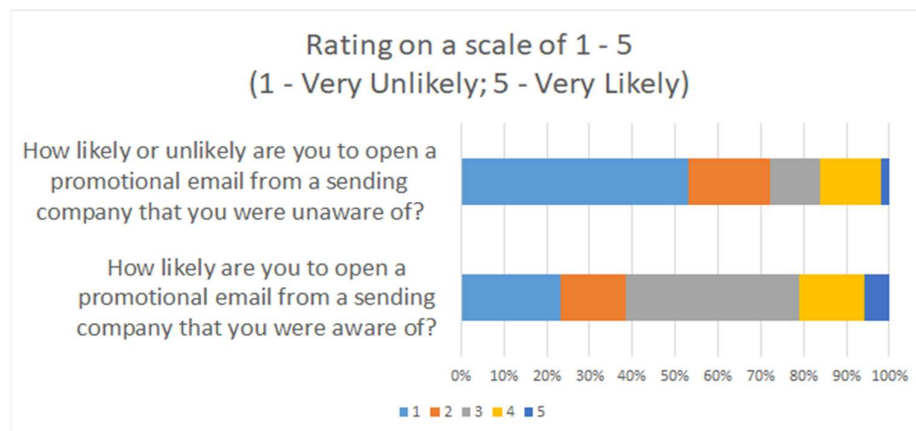


Figure 10 Result on how likely/ unlikely are you to open a promotional email from a sending company that you were aware/ unaware of?

Figure X summarizes respondents’ opinions on their likeliness to pay closer attention to an email basing on previous acknowledgement of the sender. Respondents were asked to rate their intentions to open an email by using a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very unlikely and 5 being very likely. Responses scoring 2 or lower are presumed to indicate a strong force of action; responses choosing 3 are presumed to indicate that the likeliness to open the email depends on other factors than the previous acknowl-

edgement about the sender by the receiver; while responses scoring 4 or higher indicates stronger likelihood. Results acquired show that more than 70% of respondents would not open promotional emails from a sender that they were not aware of. This might imply that getting the receivers to become aware of the sender before sending promotional emails could reduce the risk of emails being ignored by receivers.

However, this does not mean that all receivers would ignore the emails from stranger sender as results also show that nearly 20% of respondents would open an email even from a strange name. On the contrary, nearly 40% of respondents would not feel like opening promotional emails even from senders that they know. The likelihood to open is also relatively low, just over 20%. This finding is rather interesting, as the percent of respondents standing in between of opening and not opening promotional emails from acknowledged senders reaches roughly 40%. The scatterplot (see Figure 11) shows a weak relationship between the two variables derived from these two questions, with a correlation coefficient of approximately 0.45155. This indicates that awareness or familiarity of email receivers with sender is not a dominant factor in determining users' behavior towards emails.

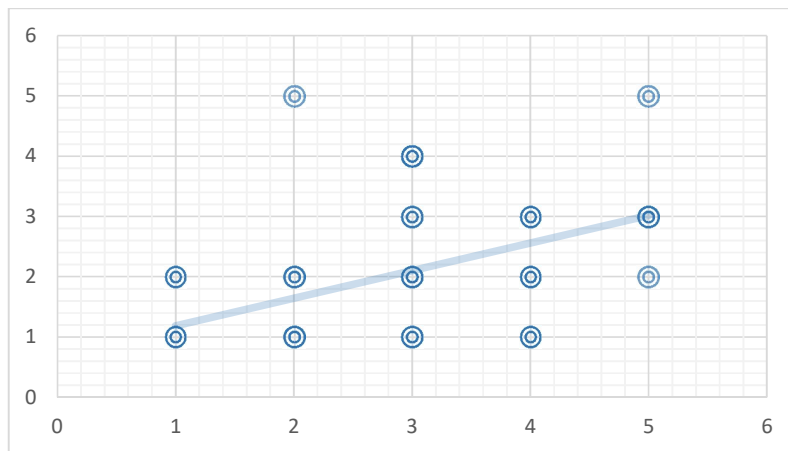


Figure 11 Scatterplot of 'how likely/ unlikely are you to open a promotional email from a sending company that you were aware/ unaware of?'

Even when the sender is known or expected, there are way further elements that trigger the intention to open promotional emails. These elements could be referred to the elements of the emails, the conditions of checking the mailbox, the mood of the receiver or their ongoing needs and wants.

As much as emails are perceived as an achievement of advancing the relationship with customers to the next stage, more efforts must be enforced to encourage customers to digest the content so that the message delivery is completely processed. Nonetheless, it is quite obvious that promotional emails from stranger senders receive a stronger sense of refusal to become open to information and content than those have been known.

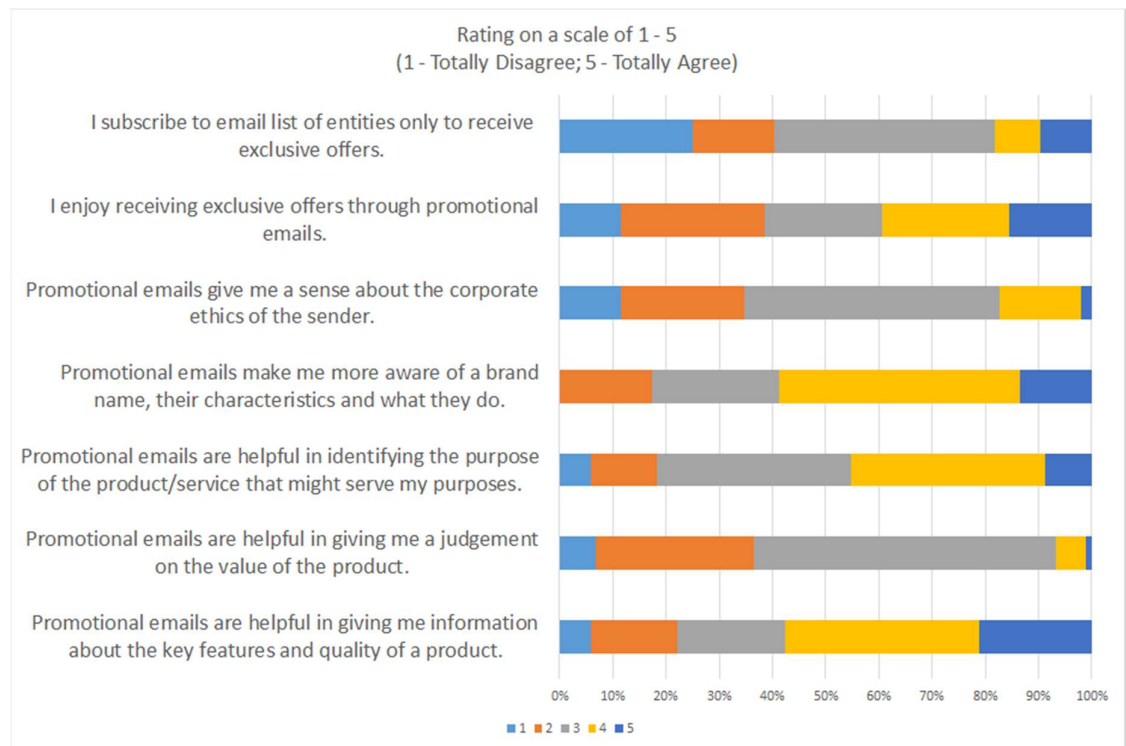


Figure 12 Results on Customer experience towards promotional email

The figure above summarizes responses from statements where respondents were asked to rate their agreement basing on a scale of 1 - 5, with 1 being totally disagree and 5 being totally agree. These statements are related to how respondents perceive several aspects relating to the relationship between email marketing and customer equity elements - value, brand and relationship.

In terms of value equity, approximately 93% of respondents does not agree that promotional emails are a valuable source of helping them evaluating the value of the product. A majority of scorings for this statement seem to not know what to think about this quality as nearly 60% chose to stand in between, but the little amount of people who does agree with this statement indicates that emails are not generally seen as a great means of delivering the message of value. However, this result might also be due to the fact that respondent perceive the term value in several definitions, which led them to not knowing which aspect of value the survey was pointing to. As a consequence, respondents chose to give a 50/50 opinion on this matter.

The same pattern goes to the statement about the connection between promotional emails and corporate ethics where only 18% of respondents agree that corporate ethics could be sensed through emails and the other 35% disagrees. The neutral responses could either because the respondent not sure what to think about this opinion, never really paid attention to these details in a promotional email, or because they were not sure what the meaning of the term corporate ethics was. Regardless of what the matter was, it could be concluded that email marketing does not have great ability to positively enhance customer perspectives on the perceived value of products/services or the corporate ethics of the sending entity.

While promotional emails are not seen as a great tool for delivering values, they are seen as a useful source of providing information about the key features of the product (58% approves) and how it triggers thought regarding how the product/service might be used to serve the purpose of the email reader (45% approves). The results suggest that readers do recognize and appreciate the informative purpose in terms of features and suitability for purposes of promotional emails, implying that emails do have their positive edge on improving value equity for customers. This also indicates how emails could be particularly helpful for individuals who already have their

need recognized or for usage of stimulating needs. The disapproving respondents are quite a few - approximately 20% for each.

Another notable pattern among respondents is how they are able to become more aware of a brand name and what the brand does thanks to emails. This could be referred to how most respondents rely on the name of the sender the most when choosing to open emails, which indirectly help them memorize the brand name and the characteristics of the brand. This result is suggesting how emails are having exceptional great performances with elevating brand awareness equity. The correlation coefficient of 0.3724 shows little relationship between the variables of awareness of brands and their corporate ethics (see Figure 13).

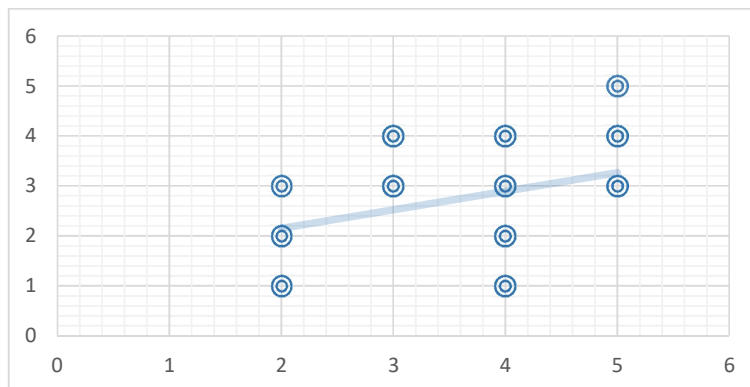


Figure 13 Scatterplots of brand awareness and corporate ethics awareness using emails

Aside from brand awareness, the elements of emotions towards a brand is highly important when evaluating brand equity. Regardless of how most people are receiving awareness about the brand, it is unknown whether this awareness come along with positive or negative feelings. For example, respondents might be aware of a brand name, but mostly because of the fact that the brand is sending an enormous amount of email to the receiver. If this amount exceeds the person's comfortable level of emails, this could attach the brand with negative emotions rather than what

the marketer originally wants. So, while emails are generally a good means of raising brand awareness, the sending volume should be carefully crafted for target receivers.

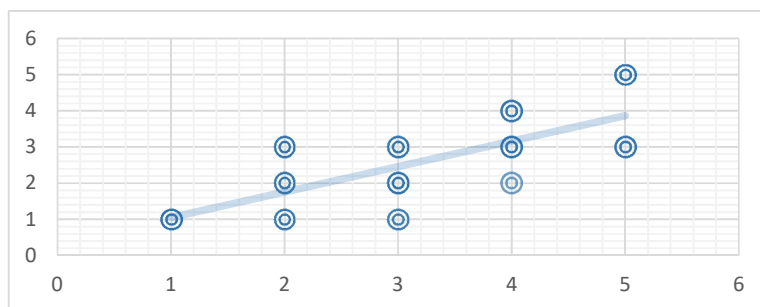


Figure 14 Scatterplot of exclusive offer enjoyment and willingness to subscribe for exclusive offers

The opinions on whether respondents enjoy receiving exclusive offers through emails are much divided, so it is hard to identify a pattern here. However, we find it interesting that only 19% of respondents agrees that they subscribe to mailing list of entities to receive exclusive offers. This is opposite to the common strategy that is often seen to collect email address by digital platforms across the internet. The correlation coefficient off these two variables is 0.6413, indicating a moderately strong positive relationship between the two questions (see Figure 14). This could imply that email users who enjoy receiving exclusive offers through emails are likely to subscribe to mailing lists and vice versa.

In terms of relationship equity, the survey asked the respondents to rate the helpfulness of emails in terms of customer retention. A large majority of respondents (38%) find emails unhelpful for receiving post-purchase customer service, while 44% find emails not affecting their decision to repurchase (see Figure 15). Respondents were not asked to state which aspect of emails will affect their decision to repurchase, and how. For example, whether a bad experience with post-purchase emails stop the



customer from purchasing the brand again, or even a good experience with emails afterwards cannot change their intention to not buy again.

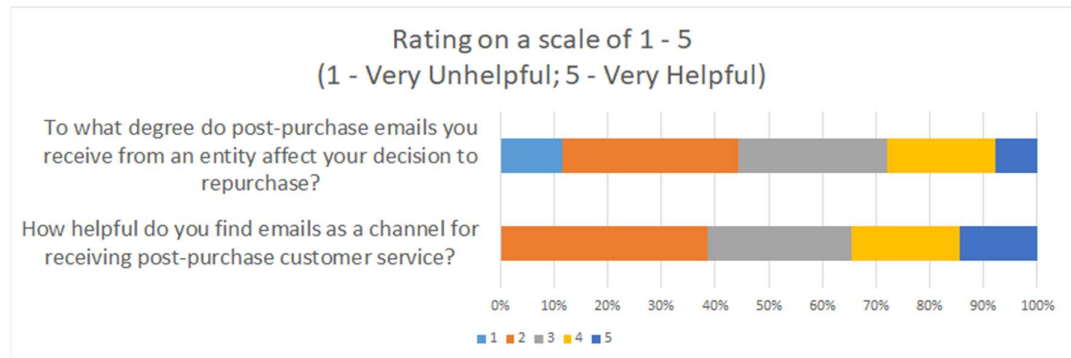


Figure 15 Result on Customer experience towards promotional emails (2)

However, correlation coefficient calculation indicates a weak linear relationship between the two factors, indicating that post purchase emails and customer service through emails do not necessarily affect customers' intention to repurchase, hence do not hugely affect customer loyalty (see Figure 16).

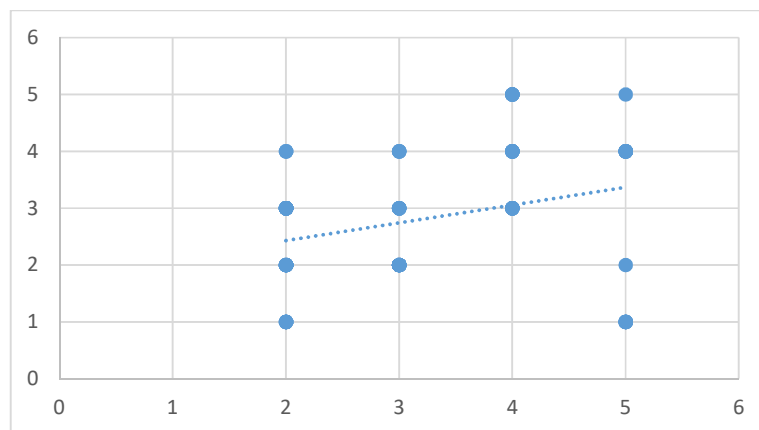


Figure 16 Scatterplot of the relationship between post-purchase emails and decisions to repurchase

However, from the results of only 28% approve the helpfulness of emails in affecting their decision to repurchase and of 35% claiming positive experience with email, it is not possible to conclude that email marketing can play any major role in positively enhancing the relationship equity of customers.

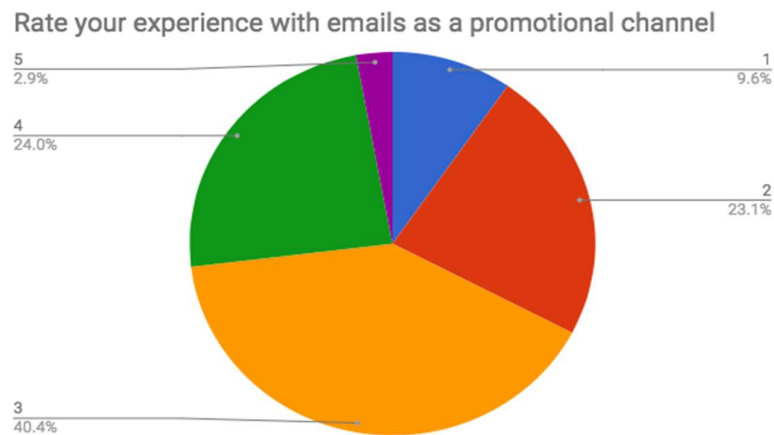


Figure 17 Result on Rate your experience with emails as a promotional

A large portion of respondents choose to stand in between of most opinions. This is a pattern spotted throughout the analysis of the survey results that followed way till the end, with 40.4% of respondent not having a strong point on their experience with emails as a promotional channel. However, with the total score of negative experience being 32.7% over 26.9% of those who approve positive experience, it could be implied that emails deliver a bit more negative experience than positive. But for the demographics who stand 50/50 on this, it could be other elements that decide whether their experience with email promotions are good or bad. Those elements could be the volume of emails received, the content, subject lines, etc.

## 7 Discussion

Regarding RQ1, the research results show that the email using behavior of the young Vietnamese demographic, aging from 18 – 30 are highly divided, from enthusiastic to indifferent using behavior. Most people receive emails at a very low volume, however have very little interest or positive attitude toward a total amount of email as little as less than 10 emails per week. As predicted, subject lines and the identity of senders play a major role in grasping the attention and engagement of the email receiver as they are subjectively the first features of the email come into contact with the receiver. In fact, almost 50% of respondents claim that they would not open an email if it was sent from an unknown entity. However, it does not mean that known sender will get through, as research result show that the likeliness to open an email between an unknown and known sender is very much the same. The only difference is that for unknown senders, the negativity towards them is relatively higher. Overall, respondents experience with emails in general are mixed to positive.

In RQ2, the research outcomes are mixed. Research results show that respondents do not consider emails helpful in identifying the values of the products/ services, however could serve as a useful informative source. It is not clear whether emails could contribute positively to value equity (H1), due to the fact that respondents could use the information provided in the emails but not using those information to come up with any solid judgment or decision.

On the other hand, most respondents thinks that emails make them more aware of the brand and what it does, which proves that H2 is correct. However, efforts to establish relationships and consequently enhance relationship equity. Research results show that most respondents are not highly interested in using their emails for 'exclusive offers' anyhow, and their experience with post-purchase emails are showed to be mixed to negative. Hence, it is not possible to conclude whether emails could positively enhance relationship equity. This could mean that email marketing is particularly useful for increasing brand awareness, despite it is a negative or positive impression. Emails stand alone could not trigger customer loyalty or loyalty intentions amongst receivers, however when combined with other online marketing practices, the results might appear different.

## 8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has attempted to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: What are the email using behaviors of young Vietnamese email consumers?
- RQ2: Does email marketing positively contribute to customer loyalty?

The literature review discovered the aspects of email marketing: its features, the email marketing process and known advantages as well as disadvantages. It also unveiled the importance of customer equity and furthermore, customer loyalty. In the age of digital where information and industries are overloaded everywhere, loyalty is an issue of existence for businesses or organizations. The research discovered two useful models for applying and managing customer equity, which happens to be correlative to customer loyalty. Hence, in order to answer RQ2, the hypotheses were developed as follow:

- Hypothesis 1 (H1): email marketing has positive effects on value equity
- Hypothesis 2 (H2): email marketing has positive effects on brand equity
- Hypothesis 3 (H3): email marketing has positive effects on relationship equity

The research results has created a big picture about the email behaviour of Vietnamese email users aging from 18 to 30 years old, with most keeping their email life low and enjoy it being that way, while their experience with it remain mixed to positive. On the other hand, it was hard to identify whether email marketing could contribute positively to customer loyalty as research results seem to go against the advantageous claims about emails as a tool of marketing. It appears that Vietnamese users have experienced the downside of email marketing more often, so the results received were mixed to negative. Regardless of that, we discover a positive relationship between email users who enjoy exclusive offers and their likeliness to subscribe to mailing lists for exclusive offers.

However, due to certain limitations throughout the conduct of the research, more researched should be conducted before any conclusion could be made about the

relationship between email marketing and customer loyalty. Recommendations are that, this type of research should not be conducted within the 18 – 30 years old Vietnamese group alone but also in other demographic groups around the world.

## 9 Limitations and Reflections

When starting the research, some limitations were forecasted and the authors tried their best to minimize but unfortunately some remained throughout the whole time. In addition, there were limitations that only came into light when the whole process of designing research and survey, collecting data, analyzing results and concluding were done. The authors, during the research, were able to fully focus on the method, on the other hand, since questionnaire survey was the only type of quantitative research method used, the information gained was not round full.

Some of the questions in the survey, had it been an open-ended question, respondents would have been able to further explain their choices. For example, when being asked what are the factors that affect the decision of email checking, a majority of participants replied "subject line" with no explanation because the option were not given. This prevented the researchers to study about the response in-depth, whether it was because of brand awareness or personal interest in the company. However, researchers has agreed from the beginning of the research that the nature of this aspect could be more clarified by conducting other qualitative studies.

Furthermore, choosing the non-probability and convenience sampling method has a number of drawbacks which can lead to questions about validity of data and unbiased choice of sample. The language used for making the questions were rather subjective than objective at some points, for example, 'annoyance' should have been expressed under the form of negative attitudes to further generalize the idea of the question.

The survey was shared on the authors and their friends' Facebook pages and shout out emails, even though that helped reaching "qualified" respondents (age 18-30), it mostly shrank the population down to only acquaintances of the authors. This brings up the question whether the sample group could fully represent the population of Vietnamese people from 18 to 30-year-old. There was a mistake in the questionnaire where the participants had to identify themselves as either male or female. It could

appear frustrating to people who refuse to reveal their gender. By addressing all the limitations, not only the authors can learn their lesson for the next possible research.

Comparing to the massive population of nearly 94 million in the January 2018 (A 2018), 104 participants are definitely not a proper sample but it provided relatively enough information to draw patterns to the defined population. During the analysis stage, interferences were made not only to state facts from the findings but also to address the values of data. Together, they gave answer to the research questions and problem as discussed above.

There are certain ethical criteria followed closely when designing an online questionnaire. The first and foremost important aspect of the research was confidentiality. The respondents were assured and guaranteed that their IP address and information will not be leaked or used in any commercial purposes. The survey was done anonymously without any requirement for the respondents' identities and such. Before starting the survey, participants were informed of the survey's objective and purpose, research mechanism, confidentiality and related problems that matter to them.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. E-survey questionnaire form

#### Thesis Questionnaire

Email Marketing and Customer Loyalty Intentions

\* Required

How old are you? \*

Please enter your age (e.g. 18)

Your answer

---

What is your gender? \*

- Male
- Female
- Other:

How often do you check your mailbox in a week? \*

- Less than once a week
- Once a week
- 2-6 times a week
- Once a day for the whole week
- More than 2 times per day

How many promotional emails do you typically get in a week? \*

- Less than 10
- 11-20
- 21-30
- 31-40
- More than 40

Which amount of promotional email received from a single sender that likely to annoy you? \*

- One per week
- 2-6 per week
- Everyday
- More than 2 times per day

How likely are you to open a promotional email from a sending company that you were aware of? \*

1      2      3      4      5

Very Unlikely                  Very Likely

How likely or unlikely are you to open a promotional email from a sending company that you were unaware of? \*

1      2      3      4      5

Very Unlikely                  Very Likely

Choose factor(s) that most affect your decision to open a promotional email: \*

- Subject title
- Name of the sender
- The first part of the email content

Rate your experience with emails as a promotional channel. \*

1      2      3      4      5

Very Bad                  Very Good

Choose one answer that describe the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following sentences:

Promotional emails are helpful in giving me information about the key features and quality of a product. \*

1      2      3      4      5

Totally Disagree                  Totally Agree

Promotional emails are helpful in giving me a judgement on the value of the product. \*

1      2      3      4      5

Totally Disagree                  Totally Agree



Promotional emails are helpful in identifying the purpose of the product/service that might serve my purposes. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally Agree

Promotional emails make me more aware of a brand name, their characteristics and what they do. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally Agree

Promotional emails give me a sense about the corporate ethics of the sender. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally Agree

I enjoy receiving exclusive offers through promotional emails. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally Agree

I subscribe to email list of entities only to receive exclusive offers. \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally Agree

How helpful do you find emails as a channel for receiving post-purchase customer service? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very Unhelpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Helpful

To what degree do post-purchase emails you receive from an entity affect your decision to repurchase? \*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very Unlikely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very Likely

**SUBMIT**

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.