

How many promotional emails a week is too many?

By Dan Berthiaume from Chain Store Age

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Consumers have spoken, and there is a definite number of retailer emails that crosses the line.

According to a new survey of more than 1,000 U.S. shoppers from customer targeting technology provider First Insight, the average consumer subscribes to 2.3 retailer email lists and receives 13.1 emails a week from these lists.

On the high end, 6% of respondents receive 40 or more emails a week. Two-thirds of the consumers who receive six or more emails a week said it was "too many." Six appears to be the magic number for annoying customers with weekly emails – only 21% of shoppers who receive five emails per week think it's too many.

However, retailers may want to consider cutting off weekly emails at a number far lower than five. Sixty-one percent of consumers say that their favorite retailers only send them one or two emails a week.

A relatively low 25% of retailer emails are opened. When asked why they don't open more retailer emails, the most common response from respondents was a lack of relevance. The average shopper said only about 5% of retailer emails they receive are personally relevant.

Only 18% of respondents said based on the emails receive, they feel retailers understand them. Forty-five percent have unsubscribed from a retailer's email list in the past six months.

But all is not lost, as 43% of consumers say they would be more likely to open emails from retailers if they knew those emails contained personalized suggestions of products or clothing that aligned with past purchases, rather than promoting products that were generally available or "on sale."

"Right now we're seeing a huge disconnect in the conversation that retailers think they are having with customers through email

marketing efforts," said Jim Shea, chief commercial officer of First Insight. "The communications are not only too frequent but are basically meaningless to consumers. What consumers really want is for retailers to take the time to know them and make recommendations about clothing or products that are in line with their personal taste."