

Email Marketing as a communication tool of online Fitness company

Bc. Victoria Butuc

Master's thesis
2024

 **Tomas Bata University in Zlín**
Faculty of Multimedia Communications

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta multimediálních komunikací
Ústav marketingových komunikací

Akademický rok: 2023/2024

ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

(projektu, uměleckého díla, uměleckého výkonu)

Jméno a příjmení: **Victoria Butuc**
Osobní číslo: **K22537**
Studijní program: **N0414P180004 Marketing Communication**
Forma studia: **Prezenční**
Téma práce: **E-mailový marketing jako komunikační nástroj online fitness společnosti**

Zásady pro vypracování

1. Provide the theoretical background to marketing communications, with a focus on email marketing.
2. Define the main goal, state research questions, and choose adequate research methods.
3. Conduct primary research according to the goal of the work.
4. Evaluate and interpret the research results and answer the research questions.
5. Based on the research findings, propose an email marketing program for the online fitness company to enhance customer engagement.

Forma zpracování diplomové práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam doporučené literatury:

BAINES, Paul, FILL, Chris, ROSENGREN, Sara & ANTONETTI, Paolo. *Fundamentals of Marketing*. Oxford University Press, 2017. ISBN 9780198748571.

CHAFFEY, Dave & SMITH, P. R. *Digital Marketing Excellence: Planning, Optimizing and Integrating Online Marketing*. Sixth Edition. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2023. ISBN 978-0-367-44401-3.

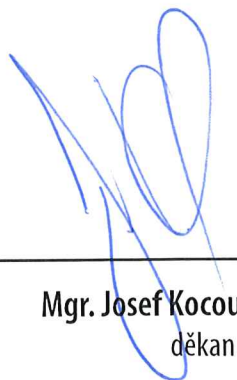
HANLON, Annmarie. *Digital Marketing: Strategic Planning & Integration*. SAGE, 2019. ISBN 9781526426673.

PELSMACKER, Patrick de, GEUENS, Maggie & VAN DEN BERGH, Joeri. *Marketing Communications: A European Perspective*. Pearson Education Limited, 2021. ISBN 978-1-292-32789-1.

WHITE, S. Chad. *Email Marketing Rules: Checklists, Frameworks, and 150 Best Practices for Business Success*. Third Edition. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017. ISBN: 978-1546910633.

Vedoucí diplomové práce: **doc. PhDr. Dagmar Weberová, Ph.D., MBA.**
Ústav marketingových komunikací

Datum zadání diplomové práce: **31. ledna 2024**
Termín odevzdání diplomové práce: **12. dubna 2024**



Mgr. Josef Kocourek, Ph.D.
děkan



doc. Ing. Mgr. Radim Bačuvčík, Ph.D.
ředitel ústavu

Ve Zlíně dne 2. dubna 2024

MASTER'S THESIS AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I take cognizance of the fact that:

- my Master's thesis will be stored in electronic form in the university information system and will be available for viewing;
- my Master's thesis fully adheres to the Act No. 121/2000 Coll. on Copyright and Related Rights and on Amendments to Certain Acts (Copyright Act), as amended, in particular to § 35 Paragraph 3;
- in accordance with § 60 Paragraph 1 of the Copyright Act, Tomas Bata University in Zlín is entitled to conclude a licence agreement on the utilisation of a school work within the scope of § 12 Paragraph 4 of the Copyright Act;
- in accordance with § 60 Paragraph 2 and 3 of the Copyright Act, I may use my work – Master's thesis – or grant the licence for the utilisation thereof to another party only with prior written consent by Tomas Bata University in Zlín, which is in such a case entitled to claim from me an appropriate contribution to the reimbursement of the costs incurred by Tomas Bata University in Zlín due to the creation of the work (up to the full amount of this cost);
- if a software was provided for the preparation of the Master's thesis by Tomas Bata University in Zlín or by other entities only for study and research purposes (i.e. for non-commercial use), the results of the Master's thesis cannot be used for commercial purposes;
- if the output of the Master's thesis is a software product, the source codes and/or the files of which the project is comprised are considered as an inseparable part of the thesis. Failure to submit this part may be a reason for failure to defend the thesis.

I declare

- that the Master's thesis has been solely the result of my own work and that I have cited all the sources I had used. In case of publication of the results, I will be listed as a co-author.
- that the submitted version of the Master's thesis and the version uploaded in electronic form in the IS/STAG system are identical in terms of their content.

In Zlín on: 12.04.2023

Name and surname of student: *Bubec Victoria*

Bubec

.....
Signature of student

ABSTRAKT

E-mailový marketing je trvalé a neustále se vyvíjející médium, a proto tato práce zkoumá jeho roli jako komunikačního nástroje v online fitness společnostech. Diplomová práce se zaměřuje na stále zřetelnější problém, a to rostoucí počet odhlášených odběratelů, kdy motivace pro tuto práci vychází z touhy marketéra řešit tuto výzvu. Vycházejíc z teoretických základů marketingové komunikace a tvoříc cestu konkrétně e-mailovému marketingu, se tato práce snaží najít osvědčené postupy pro efektivní e-mailový marketingový program. V návaznosti na druhou část práce je představen průzkum pro neodebírající. Jeho analýza odhaluje zkušenosti bývalých odběratelů s e-mailovou komunikací společnosti, hodnotí stávající strategie a identifikuje potenciální oblasti pro zlepšení. Zjištění vedou k hlavnímu cíli této práce - vytvoření vylepšeného e-mailového marketingového programu, který může sloužit jako praktický návod pro online fitness společnosti, které chtějí optimalizovat svou e-mailovou komunikaci pro lepší zapojení zákazníků.

Klíčová slova: e-mailový marketing, nástroj online komunikace, zapojení odběratelů, průzkum odhlášení, online fitness.

ABSTRACT

E-mail marketing is an enduring and ever-evolving medium; hence this thesis explores its role as a communication tool within online fitness companies. Driven by an increasingly evident problem - the growing number of unsubscribers, motivation for this thesis comes from a marketer's desire to address this challenge. Starting from the theoretical foundations of marketing communications and creating the way specifically for email marketing, this thesis seeks to find best practices for an effective email marketing program. Continuing with the second part of the thesis, a survey for the unsubscribed is introduced. Its analysis reveals former subscribers' experience of the company's email communication, assessing current strategies and identifying potential areas for improvement. The findings lead to the main objective of this thesis - the development of an improved email marketing program that can serve as a practical guide for online fitness companies looking to optimize their email communication for better customer engagement.

Keywords: email marketing, online communication tool, subscriber engagement, unsubscribe survey, online fitness.

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to those who believed in me more than I did.

I am deeply grateful for the help, guidance and understanding provided by my supervisor Dr. Dagmar Weberová both in this journey and in the Master's experience in general.

A special gratitude also to my dearest people, my family, my friends, my boyfriend who have supported and encouraged me unconditionally.

I hereby declare that the print version of my Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	9
I. THEORY	10
1 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS INTRODUCTION	11
1.1 DEFINITION AND SCOPE.....	11
1.2 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS MIX	11
1.3 EMAIL MARKETING.....	12
1.3.1 THE ROLE OF EMAIL IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS.....	12
1.3.2 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF EMAIL MARKETING	13
1.3.3 EMAIL MARGETING OPTIONS.....	14
2 BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES IN EMAIL MARKETING	16
2.1 RACE PLANNING FRAMEWORK	16
2.2 MEASURING EMAIL MARKETING.....	17
2.2.1 EMAIL METRICS AND KPIS.....	17
2.3 A/B TESTING	19
2.4 SEGMENTATION AND TARGETING	20
2.5 PERSONALIZATION	21
2.6 EMAIL DESIGN AND CONTENT.....	22
2.7 EMAIL FREQUENCY	23
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	24
3.1 MAIN GOAL.....	24
3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	24
3.3 RESEARCH METHOD	24
II. ANALYSIS	25
4 COMPANY CHARACTERISTICS	26
5 RESEARCH CHARACTERISTICS	29
5.1 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	29
5.1.1 DESIGN OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE.....	29
5.1.2 DATA COLLECTION METHOD.....	29
5.1.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING	30
5.1.4 RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS.....	30
5.2 RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY.....	31
5.3 SUMMARY OF THE KEY FINDINGS	40
6 ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS	42
III. PROJECT	44

7 CREATING AN IMPROVED EMAIL MARKETING PROGRAM	45
7.1 PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND GOALS	45
7.1.1 SETTING OBJECTIVES WITH RACE FRAMEWORK	46
7.1.2 SUCCESS METRICS AND KPIS	47
7.2 STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT AND GOAL ACHIEVEMENT	48
7.2.1 SEGMENTATION AND TARGETING STRATEGY	48
7.2.2 PERSONALIZATION STRATEGY	50
7.2.3 EMAIL FREQUENCY	53
7.2.4 A/B TESTING.....	54
7.3 EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM.....	58
7.3.1 MEASURING THE EMAIL METRICS	58
7.3.2 NEW RESEARCH AND ITS COMPARISON (AFTER 6 MONTHS).....	59
CONCLUSION	61
BIBLIOGRAPHY	62
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	63
LIST OF FIGURES	64
LIST OF TABLES	65
APPENDICES	66
APPENDIX P I: UNSUBSCRIBE QUESTIONNAIRE	67

INTRODUCTION

Email marketing has proven its effectiveness since its earliest applications and continues to be a powerful tool to engage with consumers, build long-term relationships as well as generate leads and sales. With its immense potential and relatively low implementation costs, it is today a vital element in the marketing activities of any type of company. And as the number of email addresses grows globally, so does email revenue. Therefore, to make the most of its full value, email marketing requires to be done in the most competent way.

This thesis will hence focus on identifying effective approaches to using email communication in the online fitness companies and address a frequent problem naturally encountered with email list scaling - unsubscribes. Thus, by going through the 3 main parts of which the thesis comprises: theory, analysis, and practice - a clear and targeted path towards the final goal will be created, i.e., the development of an improved email marketing program to raise engagement metrics, thus decreasing unsubscribes. To this end, an unsubscribe questionnaire will be carried out, focusing on uncovering reasons for unsubscribing and identifying areas for improvement.

Following the analysis of the questionnaire and the results obtained, together with theory-based practices, a new marketing program will be proposed. The improvements to be undertaken will be explained and exemplified in the project part. This program has a practical utility and can also be used as a guide or starting point for online fitness companies who want to review their email marketing strategy and make improvements related to customer interaction.

I. THEORY

1 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS INTRODUCTION

Marketing communications, a vital part of marketing, is constantly growing and changing because of the speed at which technology is evolving alongside customer needs and expectations. With a wide range of activities, marketing communications is primarily about promoting products, services and brands, and building and strengthening relationships with customers. Today's marketers need to be as adaptable and flexible as possible to keep up with new automated methods and techniques that are as useful as they are complex to implement. However, the benefits and systemization created are clearly worth the effort.

1.1 Definition and scope

Marketing communications is a place where companies interact with their target groups. This interaction delivers valuable messages to consumers and stakeholders and receives a response from them. Marketing communication uses a rich variety of tools to achieve marketing goals such as informing, persuading, differentiating, and strengthening relationships (De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van den Bergh, 2021, p.3). Thus, marketing communication is a widely used term in modern marketing and it essentially is one of the main four P's of the marketing mix, namely promotion (Baines, Fill, Rosengren & Antonetti 2017, p.412).

1.2 Marketing communications mix

The combination of various tools, media and messages employed to communicate with a company's audience assembles the marketing communications mix. There are 5 basic tools of marketing communications: advertising, sales promotion, public relations (PR), direct marketing, and personal selling (Baines, Fill, Rosengren & Antonetti, 2017, p.458).

- Advertising - the most visible of all tools, a paid way of promotion, used to reach a wide audience and create brand awareness, carried out both offline and online, in both traditional mass-media and digital media (De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van den Bergh, 2021, p.200).
- Sales promotion - the use of various marketing tactics (coupons, discounts, samples, contests) to stimulate rapid customer response and increase sales in the short term.

- Public relations - aims to create a positive image of the brand and nurture good relationships between the company and the customer, has a low cost but high credibility (press, sponsorships, CSR).
- Personal selling - face-to-face interaction between salesperson and customer, specific for complex buying decisions, with high potential for adaptability to customer needs, for selling.
- Direct marketing - a personal, unmediated, accessible form of communication aimed at eliciting an immediate response and specific behavior from the target audience, through means such as direct mail, email, telemarketing (Baines, Fill, Rosengren & Antonetti, 2017).

1.3 Email marketing

Email marketing, a form of direct marketing, is the most widely used tool in digital marketing and believed to be the most powerful and effective. In short, email marketing is the combination of the internet and email to fulfil the purpose of direct marketing (De Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van den Bergh, 2021)

According to traditional marketing methods, email marketing communication can be divided into outbound (emails sent to consumers) and inbound (emails received from consumers). Thus, as a form of direct marketing to attract and retain consumers, outbound email marketing is used (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2022, p. 437). This method, in turn, applies to the email list strategy of opt-in - permission based marketing, where the consumer subscribes voluntarily, and opt-out, i.e., the option to unsubscribe (Baines, Fill, Rosengren & Antonetti, 2017, p. 583). Opt-in email is considered the most effective online communication tool, and in many countries, it is established as a mandatory legislative requirement.

1.3.1 The role of email in marketing communications

The purposes for using outbound emails vary depending on the specific activity of the company. For elaboration, we can take data from the DMA (2020) in the UK, which shows that the main scope of email marketing is selling. The following objectives are creating brand awareness, strengthening relationships and retention, increasing consumer engagement, producing leads (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2022, p. 437).

The validity of email marketing in a world where many wonder if email is “dead” is proven by the constant growth of email addresses and the way people spend their time online. Research in the US by Perrin (2020) shows that email is still the main activity people do on the internet, overtaking other applications that are considered more attractive and innovative (Charlesworth, 2021, p.4)

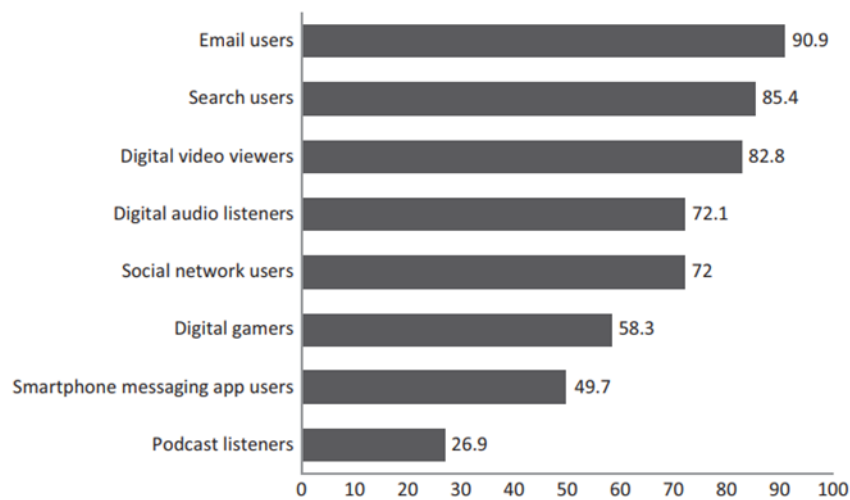


Figure 1 User participation in digital activities (source: Charlesworth, 2021)

1.3.2 Advantages and disadvantages of email marketing

Email marketing has a number of advantages over traditional forms of marketing, including:

- Relatively low cost - compared to direct mail, for example, it eliminates the physical costs of production and distribution
- Direct reach to consumers via personal devices, which encourages immediate response
- Easier and faster campaigns - having everything at your fingertips makes the creation of creative and the campaign in general more affordable.
- Greater personalisation - compared to physical media, even a website, email allows for easier personalisation and requires fewer resources.
- Measurability - email performance data is clearly displayed in ESP
- Testing - variations of email elements can be tested easily, quickly and at low cost, increasing efficiency

- Integration - with countless possibilities, campaigns that combine email marketing with other forms of media deliver higher performance by exposing the consumer to the marketing message from multiple perspectives, increasing recall and persuasion (Chaffey & Smith, 2023; Hanlon, 2019, p.55)

Marketing activities need to be carried out with skill and thorough and clear planning, email marketing is challenging because the advantages are as strong as the disadvantages:

- Deliverability - although access to email is easy and extensive, the way emails are displayed and managed can lead to inconsistencies due to different providers.
- Renderability - refers to problems that occur in displaying images as they were arranged in the original email, which erodes the efficiency and correct reception of the email message.
- The decline of email response - over the lifecycle of the subscriber, they become increasingly disengaged with emails, so that interaction that is at its peak at registration begins to decline after the first period.
- Relevant content - subscribers' communication preferences have a wide range, so it's a challenge for marketers to deliver offers, content and frequency adapted to impact consumer response.
- Resource-intensive - while email makes it easier to achieve goals in terms of targeting, personalisation, message delivery, it also requires more resources, both human and technological. And the costs multiply: paying for copywriters, images and design, costs for the email provider, data control, development of landing pages, etc. (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2022, p. 440, 442; Hanlon, 2019, p 56-57).

1.3.3 Email marketing options

Email marketing programmes can consist of different types of emails, and according to Chaffey and Smith (2017), marketers should consider the following:

Conversion emails - designed to persuade consumers who have taken the first step by expressing interest in a product and subscribing to the company's email list, but who have not yet made a purchase, to make one.

Regular e-newsletters - are a way to engage and relate with subscribers, can have a different frequency, should be tailored to the specific interests of the segments.

House-list campaign - this includes promotional emails to introduce new products, encourage repeat purchases or reactivation emails – for lapsed customers.

Event-triggered emails - automated emails that are sent when prompted by a specific customer action, with the aim of developing customer relationships.

In the literature (Charlesworth, 2021, p.71) there is a distinction between email as a medium for direct marketing and email as a medium for marketing messages. The latter refers to transactional or triggered emails, which are not part of direct marketing, but part of the buying process. Triggered emails have high open and engagement rates thanks to the precise targeting and immediate response to the action taken by the consumer. Examples of such emails include: welcome series, order confirmations, delivery, the abandoned cart email, reminders or updates and others depending on the purpose and triggered action.

2 BEST PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES IN EMAIL MARKETING

Email marketing is a communication tool that is as effective and productive as it is challenging to use to its best potential. For this reason, various sources highlight what should be the key aspects of a successful email marketing program. This chapter will explore practices and strategies that any marketer could implement in order to get the most out of their marketing efforts, reflected in high email metrics, and therefore on visibly improved ROI.

2.1 RACE planning framework

Designed to assist marketers in effectively planning and achieving marketing and marcoms goals, the RACE framework, developed by Dave Chaffey (Smart Insights, 2010), provides a clear roadmap for action throughout the customer lifecycle. Its foundation is that the relationship truly begins (not ends) with that initial transaction, which means it extends beyond AIDA -attention/awareness, interest, desire, and action (Chaffey & Smith, 2023).

The acronym RACE stands for the four stages of the planning framework for the successful engagement of prospective and current consumers:

1. **Reach** - the first step is to attract new consumers, by increasing brand recognition, promoting products and services, in this respect both online and offline media are used, ideally through an efficient integration of them. The outcomes are seen through the acquisition of new visitors on websites and social media pages.
2. **Action** - or interaction, involves engaging new contacts with the brand, this can be achieved, for example, through the email opt-in, which allows companies to learn more about the consumer, gain permission to send marketing messages and to drive sales.
3. **Convert** - this stage is primarily aimed at converting the sale into a conversion, often requiring offline contact after the order is completed.
4. **Engage** - it nurtures the long-term goal of building relationships with customers, encouraging repeat purchases and developing loyalty.

The RACE framework (Chaffey & Smith, 2023) refers not exclusively to the planning and execution of digital campaigns, but also to the integration of online and offline marketing activities for a multichannel approach. This framework supports a strategic approach at every customer touchpoint throughout the “path to purchase”.

2.2 Measuring email marketing

From the very beginning it is critical to set goals for email marketing - as with any marketing activity - and in order to measure the effectiveness of marketing programs, we need to set, track and measure certain performance indicators. Email marketing has specific KPIs, which will be deciphered in this section.

2.2.1 Email metrics and KPIs

Authors Jarboe, Bailey & Stebbins (2023) make a clear distinction between KPIs and metrics, terms that in practice are easily confused. KPIs are essential in directing activities in an organization, as tracking them talks about performance along the way and influences the next steps to take to improve processes. Metrics, on the other hand, represent numbers out of context, i.e., they can only give us an overview, not an indication of what needs to be undertaken.

The most used metrics and KPIs in email marketing are:

Open rate - represents in percentage how many opens there are out of the total number of sends. Due to recent changes, such as Apple's privacy policy, open rates are now less reliable than they were in the past, because the above shows that the email was opened regardless of whether it was opened or not, and other providers do not allow you to view open rates. Depending on the industry, the size of the mailing list, the quality of the mailing list, and opening rates can vary enormously. An average successful open rate would be between 15% and 35% (Paulson, 2022, p. 76-77). Some data across industries is presented in Figure 2. For example, in health and fitness, statistics are quite high in terms of open rate 37.06%, but with a significantly lower CTR - 1.86%.

Click rate or click-through rate - shows the total number of subscribers who clicked on a link in the delivered email, rates between 5 to 10 percent indicate an effective email marketing campaign (Paulson, 2022, p.77). Getting a good click-rate is determined by the clarity and strength of the call to action and relevant content (Kingsnorth, 2022, p. 223) To follow up on links in the email, UTM links are created that show the source of the lead.

Click to open rate - calculates the number of unique clicks of links in the email in relation to the number of unique opens, the difference from click rate being that it can show more accurate insight into the success of engaging the subscriber through content, message, CTA, after they have opened the email.

Bounce rate - shows the percentage of subscribers who just open the email but do not perform any action. A bounce rate higher than 2% indicates that measures such as cleaning the mailing list or fixing technical problems in the email domain are needed. (Paulson, 2022, p.76).

Unsubscribe rate - is the percentage of those who clicked on the opt-out option, which can be based on several reasons (change of preferences, uninteresting content, too high frequency), which need to be investigated to better engage and decrease unsubscribe rates.

Conversion rate - shows the number of sales that have been made via email. If the goal of the campaign was sales, then the conversion rate represents the level of success in achieving it (Kingsnorth, 2022, p. 223).

Table 1 Average email marketing campaign statistics by industry

Business Type	Average Open Rate	Average Click Rate	Average Unsubscription Rate	Average Hard Bounce Rate	Average Soft Bounce Rate
Government	40.55%	4.58%	0.12%	0.22%	0.72%
Media and publishing	34.22%	4.36%	0.09%	0.09%	0.34%
Hobbies	40.54%	4.11%	0.20%	0.09%	0.40%
Games	31.45%	3.21%	0.22%	0.23%	0.60%
Professional services	32.74%	3.04%	0.25%	0.39%	1.10%
Education and training	35.64%	3.016%	0.18%	0.22%	0.79%
Consulting	29.61%	2.91%	0.22%	0.37%	1.12%
Sports	41.84%	2.87%	0.24%	0.14%	0.52%
Medical, dental, and healthcare	34.64%	2.79%	0.24%	0.32%	0.92%
Business and finance	31.34%	2.78%	0.15%	0.25%	0.70%
Marketing and advertising	29.71%	2.30%	0.21%	0.34%	0.99%
Health and fitness	37.06%	1.86%	0.33%	0.17%	0.59%
Beauty and personal care	31.89%	1.30%	0.24%	0.14%	0.52%
Vitamin supplements	27.34%	1.19%	0.21%	0.14%	0.51%
...					
Average Totals	34.20%	2.66%	0.22%	0.25%	0.79%

(source: Mailchimp, 2023)

2.3 A/B testing

Applied in email marketing, A/B testing is an essential method to optimize campaigns and get improved rates through systematic experimentation. It is carried out by marketers to check and select which of the two or more options has the greatest potential to bring the desired result.

Also called a split test, it involves sending to one segment of subscribers one email variant (A), and another segment another variant (B) to compare their performance.

There are several testing possibilities depending on the volume of a company's email base. Thus, on a smaller basis, 50/50 testing will be performed, which involves splitting the base in half and sending each of them one version, to know in the future what works better for the company's subscribers and to act accordingly.

Another type is 10/10/80 testing, which allows sufficiently large email lists, for example from which test segments of 1000 subscribers can be created. In this way, a representative group of 10% will receive one email version, another 10% - the modified version, and after the results are comparable, the winning one will be rolled out to the entire remaining base, i.e., 80% (White, 2017).

For an effective campaign, Kingsnorth (2022) suggests the following key steps:

- 1. Hypothesis formulation:** strategic hypotheses need to be formulated to argue the reasons why one option might convert better than the other
- 2. Setting priorities:** often the temptation is to test a wide variety of issues, from subject lines, button colors to text changes. Prioritization is necessary because not all changes will bring value, so the best prospects should be selected.
- 3. Expanding on previous understanding:** improving conversions will not necessarily be achieved by all A/B testing, some may have no effect or even lower performance rates.

The important action to be taken is that the information gained from A/B testing is systematized and integrated into following email campaigns to generate more impact in the future.

2.4 Segmentation and targeting

Segmentation is a fundamental strategy in marketing, with Professor Doyle saying it is the "key" and "golden rule" in marketing. Underpinned by our underlying differences as humans, consumers have distinct needs and requirements - and segmentation is the way to satisfy them (Chaffey & Smith, 2017, p. 59). Hence, the use of segmentation and targeting in email marketing has the rewarding benefit of maximizing the impact of email campaigns and improving conversion rates.

Since its inception, marketing segmentation has evolved from 4 main methods of segmentation: geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral, to the ideal form of segmentation, every marketer's dream - "segments of one", made possible today by the implementation of digital technologies in marketing (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan 2021).

Segmentation of the marketing list means dividing it into specific, smaller lists, often reflecting the distinct interests of subscribers (Paulson, 2022, p. 83). Email segmentation ensures a greater efficiency of email marketing campaigns, due to the provision of highly relevant content to subscribers, resulting in increased response rates, open rates and click rates, engagement rates by minimizing unsubscribes (Jarboe, Bailey & Stebbins, 2023, p.355).

In addition to the aforementioned segments, various approaches are recommended for accurately targeting online consumers, relating to email marketing as well.

1. **Relationship with the company** - targeting throughout the phases of new contacts, new customers, existing and lapsed customers, the effectiveness of communicating with the entire audience, ensuring penetration and consumer loyalty. This is where tailoring content to customers is recommended, rather than creating separate communications (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2022, p. 368).
2. **Demographic segmentation** - this looks at characteristics such as age, gender, social group, occupation, geographic location, etc. and is a basis for further segmentation and profiling (Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan 2021, p. 144).
3. **Psychographic segmentation** - referring to early adopters, brand loyalists, or price conscious, represents how consumers perceive risk as opposed to value. (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2022, p. 369). In email marketing, it can be applied by identifying customer buying patterns and creating offers tailored to different attitudes.

4. **Behavioral segmentation** - through detailed database analysis, marketers can track a customer's purchase history including the recency, frequency, money spent, and from what category are usually the products bought, creating segments descriptors like "top spender" or "loyal fan". This data aids in understanding customer value, helping in crafting strategies to retain high-value customers and elevate the status of lower-value ones. The behavioral segments may include descriptors like "frequent flyer," "top spender," or "loyal fan," (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2022, p. 168; Kotler, Kartajaya & Setiawan, 2021)
5. **Customer lifecycle** - by mapping the distinct stages a customer goes through during their interaction with online services, combined with consumer value and behavior, businesses can effectively tailor their communication. This includes the use of personalized messaging, or the deployment of automated emails triggered by specific customer actions, such as first visits identified by registrations (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2022, p. 168).

2.5 Personalization

The concept of personalization refers to the idea that every customer should receive a marketing message tailored specifically for them. In other words, instead of being disseminated to a wide audience, some of whom may not be interested in that message, marketing is personalized. Emails can benefit from personalization in the context of digital marketing. Segmentation, targeting and positioning collectively constitute the notion of personalization (Charlesworth, 2021, p.5).

Personalized content in emails can be achieved by using personalization and dynamic content. Even mass emails can feel like one-on-one conversations with dynamic content and personalization. So, with the tools offered by email platforms, personalization of emails is easy to achieve by adding information and content specific to the recipient. A decade ago, addressing an email recipient by name was a common way to personalize communications. Today, personalizing by first name is so common that it can actually have the opposite effect on email performance when used alone. This is because a personalized trigger such as a first name in the email subject line creates the expectation that it is a truly individual message. Thanks in large part to the introduction of Big Data, marketers today have expanded their personalization efforts far beyond it (White, 2017).

Personalization can be added to emails by sharing what specific details are known about the recipient. There are hundreds of options and combinations, including:

- First name;
- Date and time of registration;
- User's region;
- The last time the recipient viewed or replied to an email from the company;
- Interests revealed from past behavior (clicks, registrations, purchases);
- Information from customer support interactions;
- Goods or services purchased/ordered (Jarboe, Bailey & Stebbins, 2023, p. 354-355).

Personalized emails frequently bring far superior results, being highly efficient in engaging the customer and receiving a response.

2.6 Email design and content

Developing the content of an email (which includes words and visuals) for an effective campaign is a specialized activity, because the sender must quickly convince the recipient that it is an intentional (not spam) and relevant email as well as encourage action (Charlesworth, 2021, p.70).

Because subscribers scan the content of emails rather than read them, it is essential to create an obvious hierarchy of content in email design, White (2017) recommends the following:

- Using headlines that are bold and significantly larger than the content that follows them;
- Enlarging the main message block or creative (with the hero image) and placing it right after or shortly after the header;
- Highlighting by color and size of buttons with primary action buttons, and for secondary CTAs - ghost buttons and text links;
- Use of bullet points for clarity and ease of understanding;
- For full sentences, avoid writing paragraphs longer than 5 lines (when displaying on mobile).

Once subscribers are already “inside” the emails, the goal is to provide good enough content to persuade them to the next step: click-through to the landing (sales) page.

2.7 Email frequency

Subscribers frequently report receiving too many emails and irrelevant content as the main reasons for unsubscribing. In this regard, companies should manage these issues through communications preferences. Thus, realistic expectations can be set with welcome emails, the sign-up confirmation page and messages during the sign-up process (White, 2017; Chaffey & Smith, 2023).

The optimal email frequency for brands is equal to the number of subscribers. Thus, all broadcast, seasonal, segmented, triggered, and transactional emails received by each subscriber represent the frequency of emails received by that subscriber. Choices for frequency should be made at the beginning of the registration process, but if this is not done, then it should be adjusted along the way by observing the subscribers' reaction to fluctuations in email volume (White, 2017).

As a pointer to the expected frequency of subscribers, it may serve the way they interact with emails. For maintaining the engagement rate, based on the tracked data segments could be created for individual frequency preferences.

The main task in email frequency optimization is to find the midpoint for broadcast messages, which are the most predictable at creating email fatigue and unsubscribes. To avoid damaging the performance of segmented and triggered emails, continuous profiling and individualization is the key towards an "ideal" frequency (White, 2017).

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, the fundamental aspects for carrying out the research for this paper's purposes will be presented and explained.

3.1 Main goal

The main purpose of this thesis is to investigate the factors that contribute to subscribers opting out of email communications from online fitness companies. By analyzing the reasons for unsubscribing, this study will identify areas for improvement to increase customer engagement in relation to e-mail marketing communications. The ultimate goal is to create an email marketing program that builds on the directions identified from the survey results and the ideas identified in the theory base to improve communication, reduce unsubscribe rates and enhance overall subscriber satisfaction.

3.2 Research questions

1. Why do subscribers to an online fitness company choose to unsubscribe from email communications?
2. What improvements can be made to the content of email communications to increase customer satisfaction?

3.3 Research method

To collect the necessary data for this study, participants will be asked to complete an online questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions. The collected data will be analyzed using the frequency analysis method, which involves automatically calculating the answers for each question and expressing them as percentages. This will provide a clear and easy-to-interpret visualization and comparison of the answers. Although the primary analysis method is quantitative, the internal context of the marketing strategy and the behavioral trends of the target group will also provide a complete picture. This allows for a qualitative interpretation of the data.

II. ANALYSIS

4 COMPANY CHARACTERISTICS

Case study company is an online fitness and nutrition project, launched in 2019, with a total customer base of 300,000. The project is targeted only at Romanian-speaking women, i.e., the core market is Moldova and Romania, but the online reach of the project is extended to over 23 countries (<https://en.fitnessmama.ro/about>).

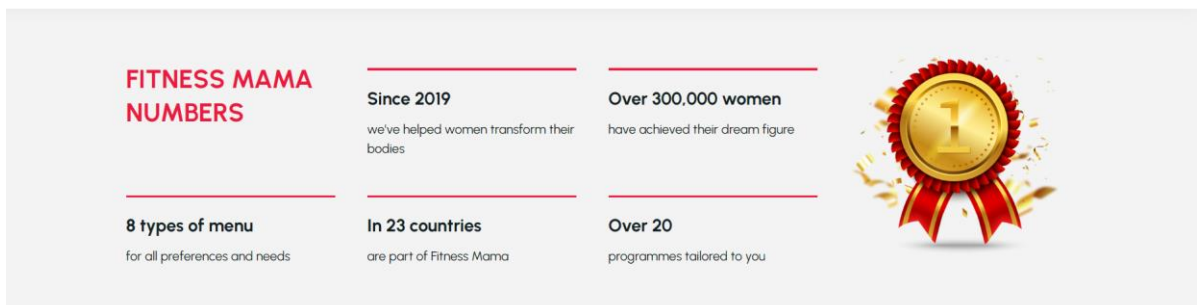


Figure 2 Fitness Mama numbers
(source: <https://en.fitnessmama.ro/about>)

The project offers more than 20 programs for specific goals: weight loss, toning, recovery after childbirth, etc. Regardless of the program, clients can choose from 8 types of menus that support fitness goals. In addition to the training program, there are also mini projects launched seasonally, for example, the detox or face massage program.

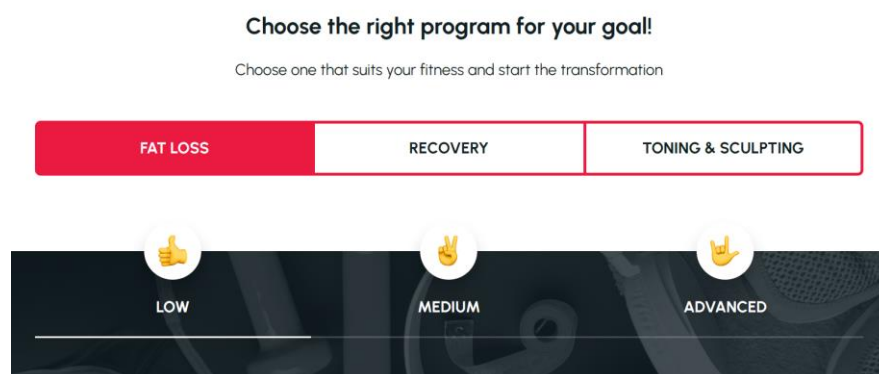


Figure 3 Fitness program offering
(source: <https://en.fitnessmama.ro/programe>)

Campaigns to promote the programs run monthly, with a different program chosen each month. Product relaunches as new and improved versions, as well as updated packages, are common. The communication channels the fitness company uses are social media platforms

- Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, instant messaging WhatsApp and Telegram, own website, and email.

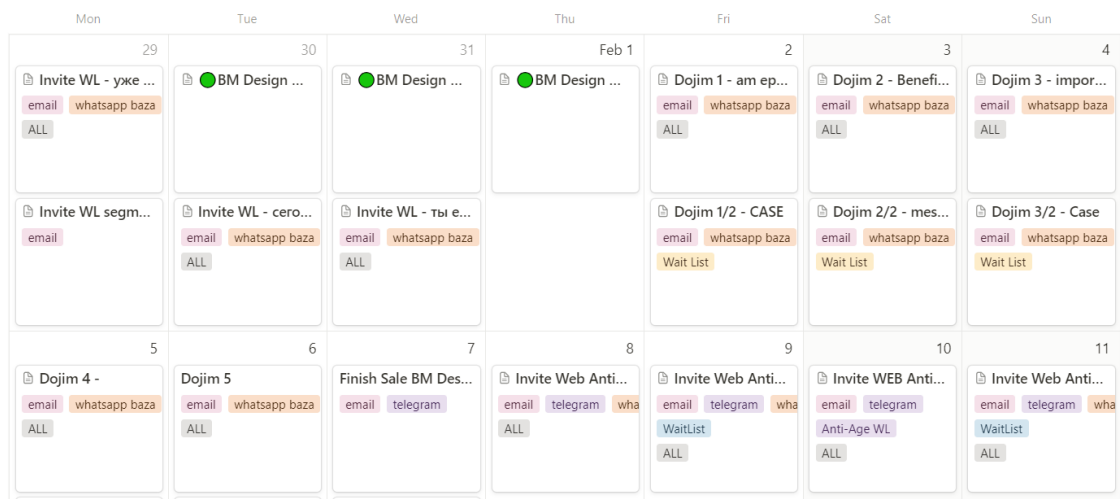


Figure 4 Email calendar

(source: Internal planning calendar)

Online sales are supported offline by a team of sales managers, who contact customers after they have shown interest through an action on the company's platform. Called Get Course, this platform ensures the creation and launch of online fitness courses as well as email marketing activities. The company's email marketing list is over 350,000 subscribers (Internal data).

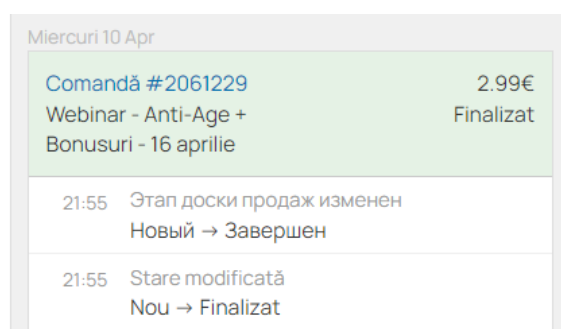


Figure 5 New order processing

(source: Get Course platform)

The company has around 40 employees and freelancers who can work remotely and in the office. The main departments are marketing, technical, and sales (Fig 6).

POSITION
Asistent CEO/ Operations
Specialist marketing / Copywriter
Campaign Marketer / Chief Copywr
Specialist marketing / Copywriter
Social Media Marketing
Email Marketing
Technical Director
Target/ Teh spec
Technical Specialist
Sales Supervisor
Sales Manager
Sales Manager

Figure 6 Positions in online fitness company
(source: Internal data)

5 RESEARCH CHARACTERISTICS

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets primary research results.

5.1 Research design

5.1.1 Design of the questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire is to address the issue of email unsubscribers. It has been developed internally within the company.

The questionnaire is structured as follows:

- Questions 1 and 2 aim to determine the relevance of the respondents and any potential correlation between their familiarity and engagement with the program and their decision to unsubscribe.
- Question 3 seeks to identify the perceived effectiveness of the program among those who have participated, which is a critical factor in ensuring customer satisfaction and retention.
- Question 4 focuses on understanding preferred communication channels and identifying whether duplication of communication on other channels contributes to email unsubscribes.
- Questions 5, 6, and 7 aim to assess subscriber satisfaction with email frequency to establish the optimal number of emails tolerated by consumers.
- Questions 8 and 9 aim to identify the interests of our subscribers and how well they align with our communication. The questions seek to identify the specific content that our subscribers would like to see in our emails.
- Question 10 is the most important part, as it addresses the specific reasons for unsubscribing.

The content of the full questionnaire, translated from Romanian into English, can be found in APPENDIX P I: QUESTIONNAIRE.

5.1.2 Data collection method

The process of collecting responses involved personal contact with the unsubscribed individuals via WhatsApp and sending them the questionnaire to fill in. The questionnaire

was created using Google Forms, for ease and familiarity of completion. When appropriate, respondents were given the option to select multiple answers. A reward of a PDF containing 7 immunity-boosting short recipes from the project's nutritionist was offered.

This questionnaire's purpose was explained to the respondents, along with an explanation of how their answers would be used. The survey respondents provided their consent by completing the survey.

5.1.3 Population and sampling

The study's population of interest comprises individuals who were previously subscribed to the fitness project email list but unsubscribed within the last 12 months. A convenient sampling method was therefore used, whereby the questionnaire was sent to the current list of unsubscribers, assuming they were willing to participate. In this way we have 184 respondents who are representative of the selected population.

5.1.4 Respondent characteristics

Demographic data was not collected for the respondents as their profiles were already available in our database. The project is exclusively aimed at Romanian-speaking women worldwide, with a focus on Romania and Moldova. Our client base primarily consists of women who are mothers and aged between 35-55 years old.

Age groups

According to the company's most recent survey, the largest majority are between 30 and 45 years old, with a specific distribution as follows: 31.3% in the 35-40 age group, and 21.2% - 40-45 years old. Therefore, the main target audience is women in mid-life, professionally and personally stable, they have a keen interest in fitness and nutrition and are looking to improve these aspects.

Income

The income range is quite wide, but the most common monthly income brackets are between €200 and €700, with 32.7% of respondents earning between €200-400 and 20.4% between €500-700. For this reason, the programs offered should be budget-sensitive, with affordable options and attractive value for money.

Occupation

The most common occupations in the responses collected are:

- Office employees (50%): This is the predominant category, indicating that most of the audience is professionally active and looking for fitness solutions that fit a busy lifestyle.
- Housewives (22.8%): A sizable proportion of women are stay-at-home spouses, interested in fitness programs that can be done at home around their daily responsibilities.
- New mothers on birth-related leave (13.9%): Women in this category are interested in postnatal recovery programs and getting back into shape in a healthy and sustained way.

For each category, the online fitness project already offers programs tailored for all fitness purposes, short and effective and to fit easily into a daily regime.

Fitness motivation

The main reasons women surveyed gave for exercising include improving health and avoiding illness (62.5%), wanting to be more energetic and productive (64.4%), and the need to increase self-confidence and self-esteem (54.7%). These motivations indicate a well-rounded approach to fitness, as it is focused not only on weight loss but also on improving overall quality of life.

5.2 Results of the questionnaire survey

Q1. How long have you known about us?

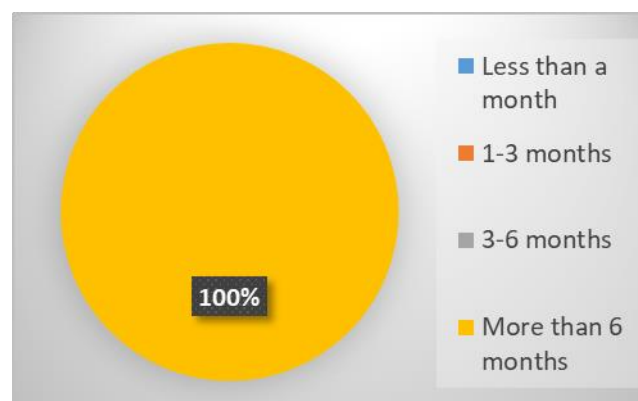


Figure 7 Brand recognition period

(source: own research)

From the first question, we found out that 100 percent of our respondents have known about our project for more than 6 months, which means a stable awareness of the project. At the same time, this shows the relevance of their answers in the questionnaire since the duration of interaction with our communication channels and messages is long enough.

Q2. Have you ever participated in one of our programs?

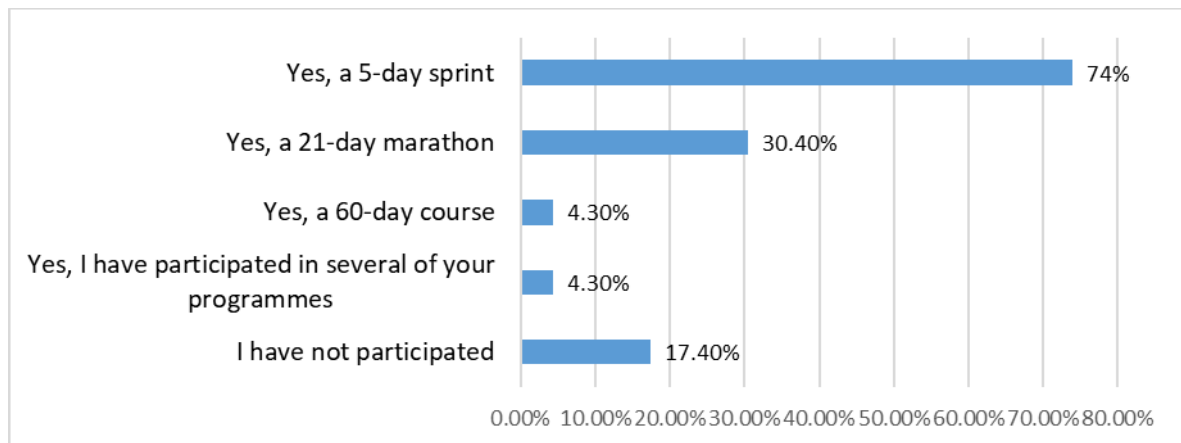


Figure 8 Participation in programs

(source: own research)

The majority (73.9%) participated in the free 5-day sprint, and only 30.4% purchased a 21-day marathon, meaning we have a low conversion from free to paid programs.

The free 5-day sprint is the top choice because it does not require a long-term commitment or investment and is a quick and uncomplicated way to try the product and see the first results.

To provide context, note that those who participated in the 5-day sprint are targeted with follow up emails to introduce them to the current campaign for our long programs.

But what it tells us about the biggest part of the unsubscribers, is that they are a specific segment who choose these free programs, take advantage of the benefits (daily workouts, nutrition guidelines and meal examples, community access and support, 2-day extended access), but do not choose to continue with a paid program. According to our data, they even choose several sprints in a row or repeatedly, because they get results. Thus, they stay comfortably in this trial position until they reach the limit of free programs allowed.

A small percentage - 17.4, did not even try the programs. This means that they got into our email base through the regularly organized free webinars but were not interested in continuing with a program from us. Hence, the reason for unsubscribing is obvious, they want to know how to lose weight (because that is the main theme of the free webinars), but they do not want to do that through exercise. Therefore, our emails are not of interest to this segment as the offers presented do not align with their fitness goals.

Q3. Do you think the program(s) you participated in were effective for your fitness goals?

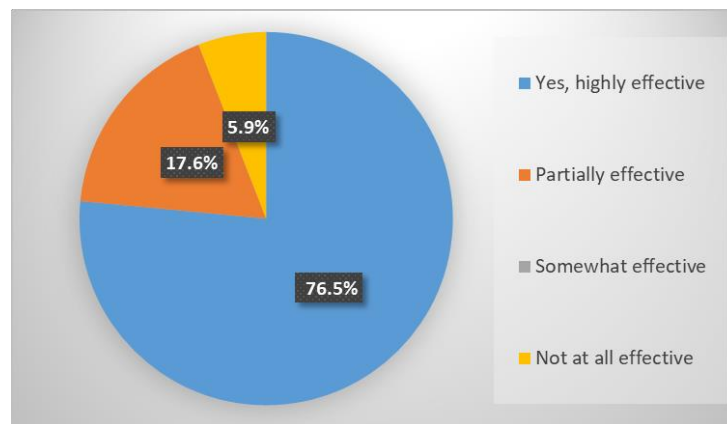


Figure 9 Participation in programs
(source: own research)

To this question, a substantial percentage - 76.5 - answered that the programs are highly effective, which is a strong indicator that our programs meet the needs of our customers. This level of satisfaction demonstrates that the programs are well-designed and bring clients the fulfillment of their fitness goals.

17.6% consider the programs partially effective, which means there is still room for improvement - the benefits are perceived, but not completely.

On the other hand, we have 5.9% who are not satisfied with the effectiveness of the programs. Here, research needs to take a deeper look to find the root causes. Since the peculiarity of our product is that the result depends directly on the client's commitment and motivation, compliance with all the recommendations and the regime of both exercise and nutrition, the reasons for not achieving the result can be vastly different.

However, our intent with this question was to identify whether the reason for unsubscribing would be connected to the level of dissatisfaction with our programs. That is, a high percentage of dissatisfaction would explain the high number of unsubscribes from the perspective that subscribers are no longer interested in our emails because they no longer want to receive offers with programs that they are already convinced do not bring results. But a significant percentage of satisfied customers shows that this is not the case.

Q4. Where do you hear most frequently about the latest updates in our fitness project?

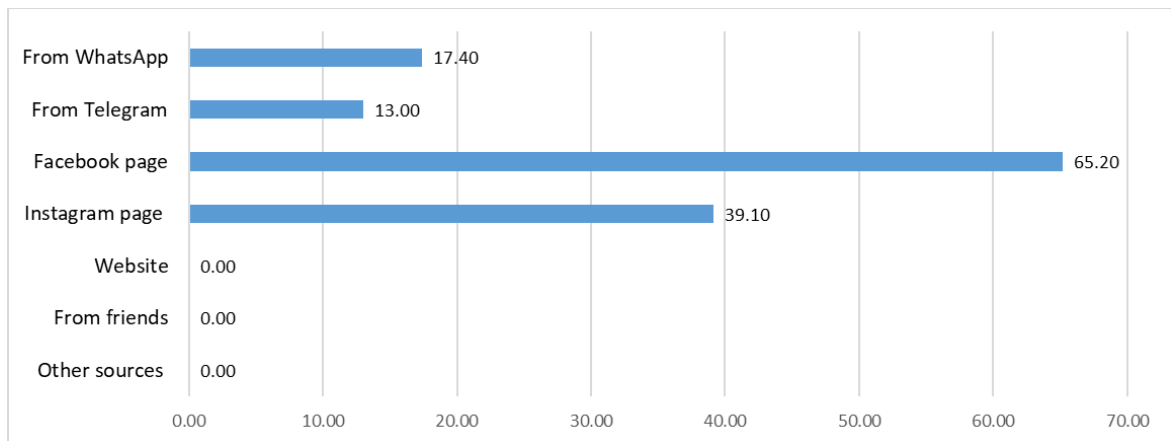


Figure 10 Main channel for updates

(source: own research)

For most respondents, our Facebook page is the main channel for receiving updates (65.2%). This would be explained by the fact that our target audience, women aged 35-55, is more likely to use this social media platform as opposed to Instagram, which is more popular with a younger age segment.

In our case, 39.1% chose Instagram as their preferred channel. Here, the approach differs because it is much more personal; the Instagram page is the personal profile of the lady coach, who is the face of the project.

As for emails, a substantial number still rely on email for updates, with 34.8%. This shows that there is a level of usefulness and effectiveness of emails regardless, however, consumers' decision to unsubscribe could be due to the frequency of emails, which we will analyze in the following.

WhatsApp (17.4%) and Telegram (13%) are used by fewer users for news, meaning that these channels are less meaningful for our communication strategy.

It is important to note that 1/3 still use emails to inform themselves about the project. Hence, we need to see how to improve our communication on this channel to be in line with subscribers' preferences and expectations. We also need to review communication on all our channels. A personalized and segmented approach could be effective, as diverse groups prefer different communication channels.

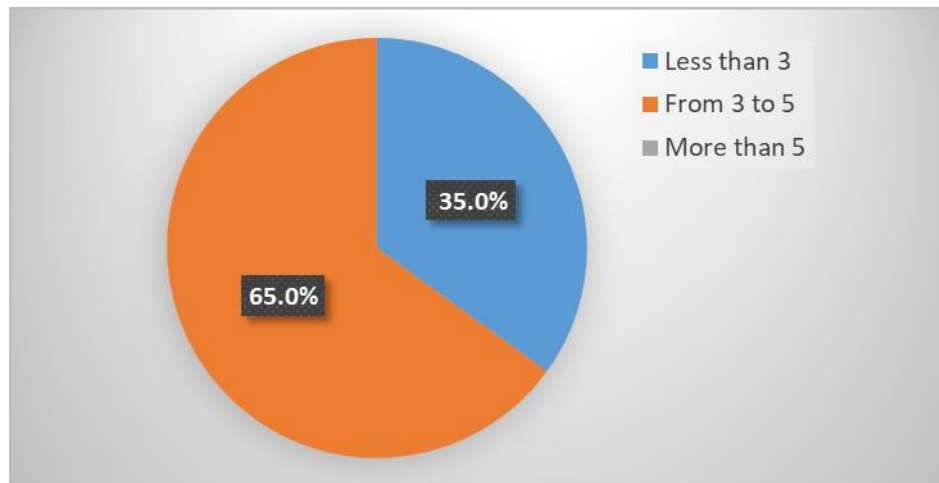
Q5. How many emails do you get from us in a week?

Figure 11 Emails received

(source: own research)

The findings show that 65 percent of users say they receive more than 5 emails per week, and 35 - receive 3 to 5.

Indeed, the number of emails can be different, because we send several types of emails, depending on the segment. Our email strategy includes a series of promotional emails, reminders, follow-ups, which are usually sent daily for about 3 weeks, after which there is a short break between campaigns. In the meantime, though, a specific segment of subscribers, those who do not have any active packages get about 2-3 invites for the free 5-day trial of the workouts.

Customers who have already taken up an offer obviously do not receive promotional emails from the moment of payment, hence 35% of respondents claim to receive up to 5 emails per week. But here, it is also worth acknowledging that not everyone checks their emails daily, so emails sent from us can easily be overlooked if they get lost in a full inbox.

Since we are evaluating unsubscriber responses, it was important to us to find out what frequency category they fall into, but it is more a question of customer perception than accuracy.

Q6. Do you think the number of emails you receive from us is:

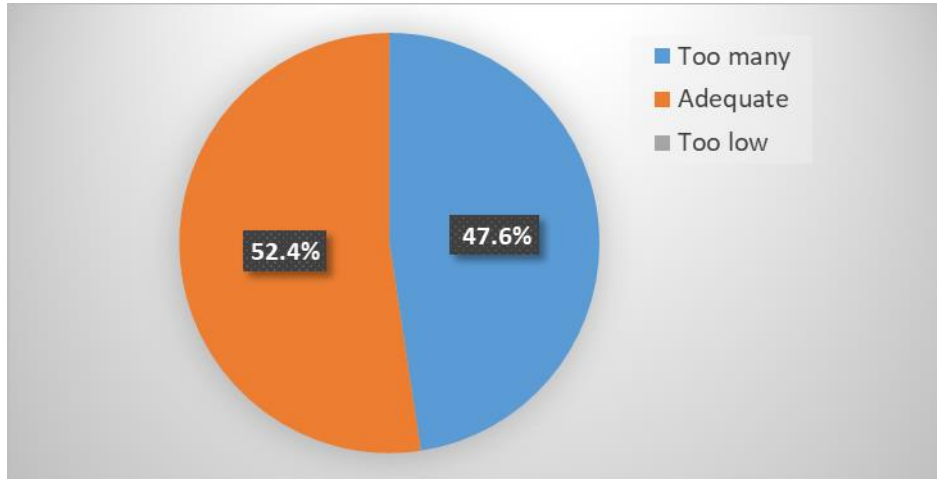


Figure 12 Perceived number of emails

(source: own research)

54.4% of respondents consider the number of emails they receive to be "adequate". This group resonates with our marketing strategy and finds our communication engaging enough to agree to receive frequent emails from us. Moreover, this group may appreciate not missing valuable information about offers, online seminar notifications or other online events.

At the other extreme, almost half of former subscribers (47.6%) believe they receive "too many" emails. This could be due to sales emails being sent to non-buyers daily for up to 10 days (about 1 and a half weeks) during the campaign period after the sales webinar.

Q7. How many emails would you prefer to receive from us in a week?

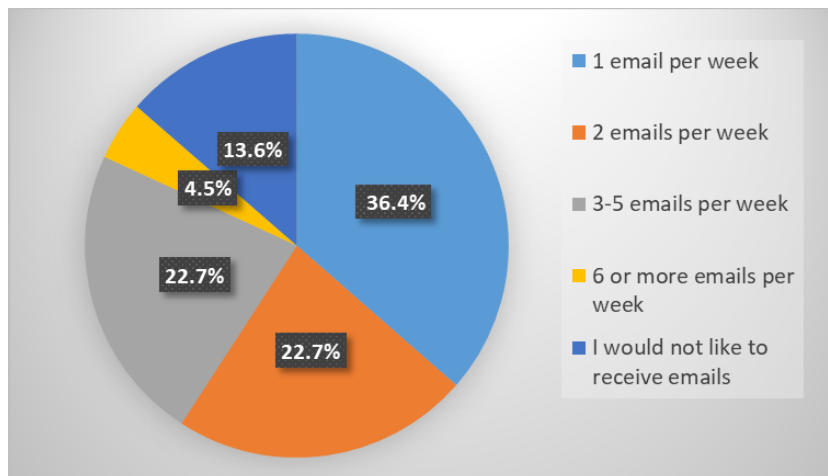


Figure 13 Email number preference

(source: own research)

The answers to this question reveal that the balance is tipping towards a customer preference to be addressed less frequently by email. The vast majority, almost 60% combined (36.4% opting for 1 email per week and 22.7% - for 2) would like to receive 1-2 emails per week - which is far from the goals of our communication strategy. But in order to keep our customers subscribed, we need to find the golden mean between achieving our goals and having customers satisfied with our communication.

A percentage of 22.7, which is okay with 3-5 emails per week, still indicates demand for a moderate reduction in the number of emails sent.

Even though 4.5% agree with 6 or more emails per week, which is our current - practically daily - frequency, this number is very insignificant, and it is evident that the general trend is the request to receive fewer messages.

A small segment, but showing dissatisfaction with our email communication, are the 13.6% who expressed a desire to no longer receive emails from us.

Q8. How do you rate the relevance of the emails you receive from us?

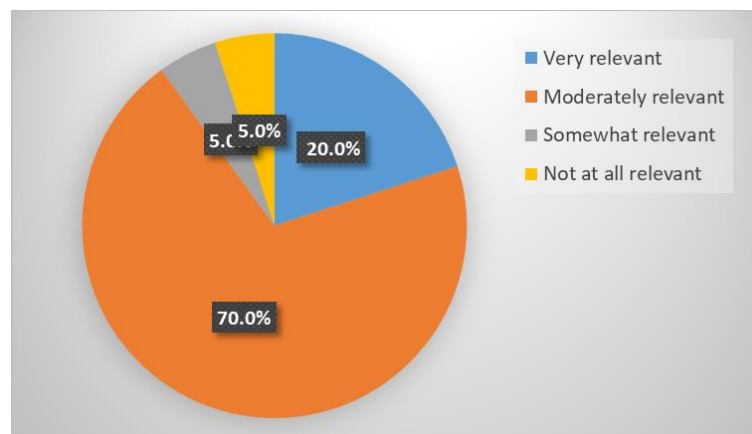


Figure 14 Relevance of emails

(source: own research)

The results of this question show that the vast majority, a significant 70%, find the content moderately relevant. This shows that the content is generally well targeted, but there is nevertheless room for improvement. This group finds value in our emails, but the content is probably not representative and useful enough for them. To better align with the expectations of our email subscribers, we need to gain a deeper understanding of their needs and preferences.

The next group, a fifth of respondents, is satisfied with the relevance of the emails, which means that we match their interests and that they find our content useful and valuable. This indicates a high engagement rate and successful targeting.

A small percentage consider our emails to be less relevant and not relevant at all (5% in both cases). This represents an inconsistency between the consumers' area of interest and what we offer them. The explanation may originate from different factors, for example a change in their fitness goals since they subscribed, a mismatch between the content of our programs and the workout experience they want (e.g. exclusively online, as we offer, vs. physical workouts, under the supervision of a personal trainer), or changing needs in general, depending on their life situation (e.g. pregnancy, childbirth, rehabilitation).

Q9. What type of content would you prefer to see in our emails?

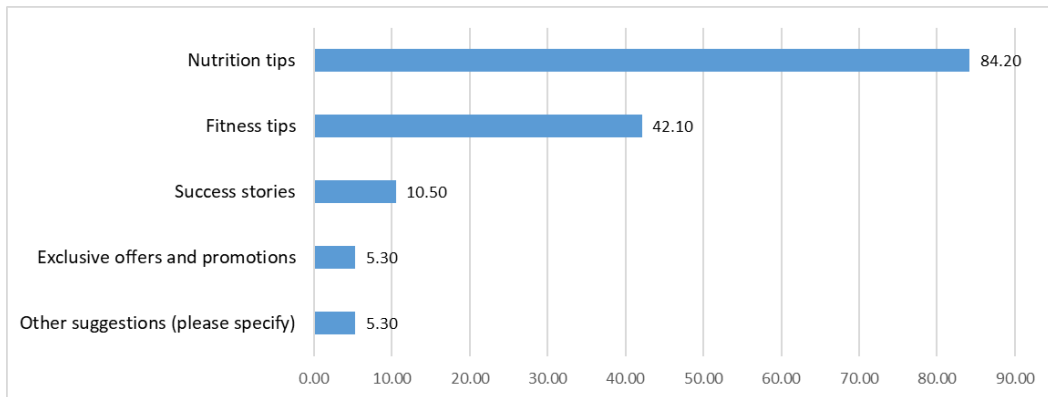


Figure 15 Content preference
(source: own research)

The results provide us with a clear picture of the interests of our subscribers.

The content that is most appreciated by our consumers, with a considerable percentage of 84.2 % - is nutritional tips. These tips include menus, meal ideas, information on vitamins and supplements, explanations, and solutions to various nutrition problems. This response strongly suggests that there is room for us to improve the value and relevance of the email with more nutrition-related content.

Almost half of respondents (42.1%) expressed an interest in fitness advice. Therefore, to improve engagement, we could include exercise routines, correct exercise execution techniques, information on what to do before and after working out, and more fitness-oriented content more frequently in our communication plan.

Only 10.5% of our consumers show interest in success stories. This may indicate that the recipients do not find sufficient motivation in the stories from other participants, or that the packaging of these stories fails to capture their attention and connect with them strongly enough.

Just 5.3% of survey respondents expressed a preference for exclusive offers and promotions, indicating a low level of interest. This type of content may be less useful and applicable compared to the top choice of nutrition and fitness tips.

Q10. What is the reason for unsubscribing?

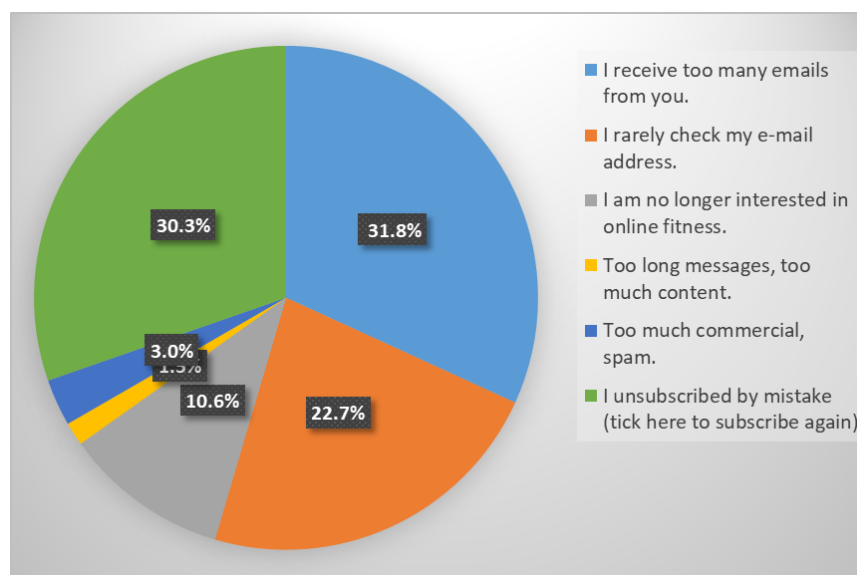


Figure 16 Reasons for unsubscribing

(source: own research)

The responses give us a clear insight into why subscribers choose to unsubscribe from our mailing list.

One of the most common reasons for unsubscribing, at 31.8%, is - as highlighted in the email frequency feedback above - that consumers receive too many emails from us.

Over a fifth of our unsubscribers - 22.7% - said that they rarely check their email address, which tells us that they use other communication channels and are harder to target with email marketing.

10.6% said that they are no longer interested in online fitness, which means that this group unsubscribed for reasons not related to our marketing strategy, but simply due to changes in lifestyle or how they want to achieve their fitness goals.

A small proportion (3%) felt that the content was too commercial or too spammy, suggesting that they would like to see a better balance between useful content and promotional content in the emails.

A surprisingly significant 30.3% chose the option that they had unsubscribed by mistake and would unsubscribe again. This is where we need to take a closer look at the unsubscribe option to make sure that we are avoiding this type of mistake in the future.

5.3 Summary of the key findings

Engagement and participation in programs

All respondents have known about the fitness project for over 6 months, and most have participated in the free 5-day program, which demonstrates that although our reach strategy is working effectively, efforts need to be directed towards converting participants from the free short-term programs to the paid, long-term ones.

Effectiveness of programs

Most participants acknowledge the high effectiveness of the programs, which indicates the high quality of the programs and the value in meeting the fitness goals of the clients. However, the effectiveness of the programs is not sufficient to prevent churn. This implies that the decision to unsubscribe is caused by factors other than program satisfaction.

Preferred communication channels

Facebook is the top source for updates, followed by email and Instagram. While social media is obviously a priority touchpoint for updating and engaging our subscribers, email remains an important source as well.

Frequency and volume of email communication

Subscribers receive a large volume of emails, especially during promotional campaigns, with a considerable portion finding the number of emails to be too high. However, just over half consider the frequency of emails to be adequate, indicating a divergence in subscriber preferences.

Preferred email frequency

There is a clear delineation of preference to reduce the number of emails, with most opting for 1-2 emails per week. This suggests that a less aggressive approach to emails would be received more favorably.

Content relevance

The majority of subscribers rate email content as moderately relevant, which argues the need for improvements in aspects such as personalization and tailoring content to be closer to subscribers' interests.

Reasons for unsubscribing

High frequency of emails is the main reason expressed for the unsubscribe decision. The second reason is the lack of interaction with emails, represented by those who responded that they do not check their emails often or no longer have an interest in online fitness. An important group are those who unsubscribed by mistake (and subscribed back).

6 ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Why do subscribers to an online fitness company choose to unsubscribe from email communications?

Following the results of the survey, we identified several main reasons why subscribers take the decision to opt out of the fitness project email list. Firstly, among the directly expressed reasons, the most common is the high frequency of emails - 31.8% claiming to receive too many emails. This factor was also highlighted in questions 5-7, which shows that the number of emails received is not in line with subscribers' preferences. This calls for an optimization of the frequency of emails to fit different segments. One thing is for sure, aggressive communication strategy is not suitable for a large part of the subscriber base.

Second, 22.7% of subscribers stated that they rarely check their email address, which was also indirectly reflected in question 4, where over 65 percent indicated a preference for Facebook as their main communication channel. Also, the fact that 70% find the relevance of emails only moderate indicates opportunities to improve on this aspect as well, through personalization and adaptation.

The third reason, reported by 10.6% of respondents, is the decline in interest in online fitness, which may reflect changes in personal life as well as changes in circumstances and preferences since the beginning of the subscription period.

Other reasons selected are perceptions that messages are too long, with too much content, and that emails are too commercial or perceived as spam.

A surprising reason is that 30.3% unsubscribed by mistake, which indicates that there is a navigation problem that needs to be fixed to reduce accidental unsubscribing.

2. What improvements can be made to the content of email communications to increase customer satisfaction?

Several improvement strategies have been outlined to increase subscriber satisfaction with email communication based on the research findings.

The first strategy, which is essential to implement, concerns adapting the frequency of emails according to subscribers' preferences. This could be done by offering options for individual choice of communication frequency. The majority of subscribers clearly expressed a preference to receive fewer emails per week. This needs to be implemented through a more selective and less intrusive approach to avoid causing subscriber fatigue.

Secondly, improving the relevance of content through personalization and segmentation can significantly contribute to increasing subscriber interest and engagement. From the preferences indicated for content, it is recommended to prioritize nutrition and fitness tips - which are of major interest. Equally important is a continuous updating and adaptation of the content. To this end, subscriber feedback and data collection will be integrated to deliver content that responds to evolving needs and interests.

Finally, to maintain a positive relationship with subscribers, to ensure an easy unsubscribe process, as recommended by legislation, but also to provide an easy re-subscribe process for those who have unintentionally unsubscribed.

III. PROJECT

7 CREATING AN IMPROVED EMAIL MARKETING PROGRAM

The imperative to create an optimized email marketing program for the online fitness company is supported by identified opportunities that have great potential to generate immediate and long-term growth. As seen from the research results, it is needed to review and make improvements in the frequency and content of emails. The goal is to increase the effectiveness of emails, which will be reflected in improved metrics and performance indicators for email marketing.

As one of the eight key activities of digital marketing - email marketing and marketing automation - it can apply the "sense and respond" concept, referred to by Chaffey as "the right touch" (2017, p. 16). In creating the enhanced email marketing program, the principles described below have served as a guide to address the critical areas that require further consideration.



Source: Dave Chaffey and PR Smith, 2017, p. 17

7.1 Program objectives and goals

To map the path towards where we want to reach by improving our current email marketing strategy, we start by identifying the direction. This will be done by setting SMART goals, using the RACE framework, and establishing related KPIs.

7.1.1 Setting objectives with RACE framework

The RACE framework is a planning tool designed to improve digital marketing strategies throughout the customer lifecycle. The four key stages of customer interaction, introduced and explained in the theory section, form the acronym for: Reach, Act, Convert and Engage. Each of these four steps is implemented in goal setting, providing a simple but effective way to increase leads and sales. (Chaffey, 2022, p. 10)

The principles of SMART goals - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound - are essential to setting goals in an efficient way that defines success.

- **Specific:** each objective set is formulated clearly and precisely so that it is known exactly what needs to be achieved at each stage.
- **Measurable:** targets are possible to be measured to make it easy to assess progress for marketing efforts (e.g., using KPIs or criteria to track success).
- **Achievable:** the objectives defined are achievable and within the project's capacity and resources.
- **Relevant:** the objectives are consistent with the overall, broader objectives of the project.
- **Time-bound:** each objective is assigned a deadline, to allow a stable concentration of effort and resources during this period, and to be able to evaluate results in a timely manner.

Thus, combining the SMART objectives with the RACE framework makes it easier to set clear and achievable targets for each stage of the email marketing program. Thereby, a well-structured and result-oriented program will be created.

The objectives assigned to each of the marketing activities are:

1. **Reach - growing the subscriber list**

Objective: to increase the subscriber base by 15% in the next 3 months, through free webinar registration and free digital gifts as an incentive for registration, also through new product promotion campaigns on our communication channels.

2. **Act - enhancing subscriber engagement**

Objective: to achieve a 10% improvement in average open rates and 5% improvement in click-throughs over 3 months through more specific segmentation of the subscriber base and more personalized content in emails sent.

3. Convert - increasing email conversions

Objective: to boost conversion rates by 20% over the next 4 months for new fitness programs purchases through promotional emails that have more personalized, time-limited offers with strong CTAs.

4. Engage - increasing loyalty and reducing churn

Objective: decrease unsubscribe rate by 5% and improve email interactions (e.g., email replies, completed surveys) by 10% over 5 months by providing relevant content, optimizing frequency, and requesting regular feedback.

7.1.2 Success metrics and KPIs

Some relevant key performance indicators for email marketing have been established in the formulation of the objectives in the previous section to measure their success and to evaluate progress. Ongoing monitoring of the indicators allows for timely adjustment of marketing activities to achieve maximum results. Therefore, the following metrics and KPIs are to be tracked for each of the objectives:

1. Objective "Reach" (for a period of 3 months)

- absolute number of new subscribers;
- webinar registration conversion rate (which represents the number of subscribers on the waiting list for the new campaign);
- number of subscribers acquired through promotional campaigns.

2. Objective "Act" (for a 3-month period)

Primary KPIs

- email open rate;
- click-through rate;

Secondary KPIs

- post click conversion rate;

- unsubscribe rate.

3. Objective "Convert" (for the following 4 months)

- conversion rate of email campaigns;
- email open rate;
- click-through rate;
- absolute number of sign-ups from email marketing campaigns.

4. Objective "Engage" (for a 5-month period)

- unsubscribe rate - primary KPI;
- interaction rate - secondary KPI (tracked by click-through rates for links in email that direct to surveys or feedback forms);
- number of responses collected (from emails, surveys, forms).

7.2 Strategies for improvement and goal achievement

7.2.1 Segmentation and targeting strategy

Segmentation is a cornerstone strategy that has been proven for decades, with the four basic segmentation methods in marketing being geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioral (Kotler, 2021, p. 143). These can therefore undeniably be applied to digital marketing, as well as: the relationship a customer has with the company, the value a customer represents, the customer's lifecycle stage (Chaffey & Chadwick, 2022, p. 369).

Segmenting the email list, based on the outlined criteria, allows for more accurate targeting and a message closer to the customers' expectations and needs. The benefits of segmentation in email marketing are directly visible in the performance of email campaigns, i.e., increased success metrics: open rate, click rate, response rate, including reduced unsubscribe rate (Jarboe, Bailey & Stebbins 2023, p. 355). Accordingly, the segmentation strategy ensures a significant impact in achieving the objectives set for the new email marketing program.

Current strategy

In the case of our online fitness project, the segmentation of the email base is carried out quite generally, according to the interaction of subscribers with the emails received and the

project platform, which gives access to the products that have been purchased. In this regard, the main groups, to which broadcast emails are sent, are segmented as follows:

- **active base** – those who have clicked on emails in the last 6 months or logged in to the platform;
- **semi-active base** - those who have opened emails in the last 6 months and are not part of the active base;
- **inactive base** - the remaining base, i.e., those with minimal interaction.

However, this segmentation is done primarily for technical reasons, to ensure that emails reach active users first, rather than to deliver personalized content. Therefore, when email campaigns are launched, the same email is sent to all three segments. This is due to resource constraints and the lack of a different communication plan for these distinct segments. First, it is about human resources, i.e., the availability of copywriters to create customized emails for each segment. In addition, there are technical limitations due to the large pool of emails, which makes accurate segmentation more difficult, but not impossible, especially if done step by step.

Proposed strategy

Segmentation of the email list is a complex and time-consuming process, but once achieved, the associated benefits will prove to be worth the effort and input. At the same time, it is not necessary to achieve as narrow a segmentation as possible all at once; instead, one can start with what is available and easily achievable at the time and gradually, over time, improve and segment more precisely.

Hence, given our resources, a complementary, more profound but achievable segmentation is proposed. In this regard, I believe that segmentation according to customer lifecycle stages is relevant and effective for personalizing communication and increasing engagement at each stage of the customer journey. For realistic implementation and easy management, four main segments would be formed:

1. **”new contacts”** - new users registered in the last 6 months who have not yet made a purchase – *onboarding stage*;
2. **”new customers”** - customers who have made their first significant commitment by purchasing a program in the last 6 months – *engagement stage*;

3. **”brand loyalists”** - customers who have made repeat commitments since registration, i.e., have made repeat purchases, or are still benefiting from active programs – *super-engagement stage*;
4. **”lapsed customers”** - customers who have not interacted with us in the last 6 months, have not opened emails or made purchases – *reengagement stage*.

To maximize the effectiveness of email marketing campaigns, these segments will be used to deliver messages that are relevant and tailored to the needs and behaviors of different customers. In this way a stronger relationship is created with subscribers, contributing to greater loyalty and conversion.

It is worth mentioning that these segmentations of the current and proposed email base are not exclusive, but rather complement each other. Depending on the purpose, messages can be sent to either each of the separate segments or combinations of them. For purposes that seek immediate results, for example, a rapid increase in engagement, segmentation from active to inactive may be most appropriate as it is simpler and faster. While for longer-term goals, such as building a relationship with subscribers, segmentation based on lifecycle stage may yield better results because of a more strategic and customized approach.

7.2.2 Personalization strategy

Email personalization means tailoring message content to be unique and personalized for recipients, based on the data available. It primarily ensures recipients recognition that the sender knows them, and the email was intended. Strong personalization is identified by how many specific and recipient-relevant details are included in the message. The benefits of personalized email campaigns are manifold, including improved response, open and click-through rates, as well as better retention rates indicated by fewer unsubscribes (Jarboe, Bailey & Stebbins 2023, p.353).

Another argument for changing the messaging strategy, is the fact that sending a series of broadcast emails with a universal - “one-size-fits-all” content can limit the impact and engagement for emails. Instead, strategically combining broadcast, segmented and automated emails, and applying personalization effectively, will generate greater program appeal (White, 2017, p. 283).

Since the first step was set - creating new segments on the lifecycle stage principle, it is now possible to implement the next essential improvement – content personalization. Again,

depending on the purpose, customization can also be done on the current segments, but for the purpose of this thesis, we will focus on the 4 proposed segments.

Current strategy

Important to note is that in the fitness project's email program there clearly exists some personalization, on a program level, enabled for automated messages, which are sent through a process created on the platform. Termed triggered messages, these cover welcome messages, registration confirmations, payment confirmations, reminders, cart abandonment messages and more. Nonetheless, the point I would like to address is the lack of personalization regarding the level of interest shown by subscribers, particularly in the case of promotional emails, given that the latter are simply broadcast across the entire base.

Proposed strategy

Personalization across the four segments will be based on the specifics of the lifecycle stage, expert recommendations identified in the literature and, of course, the most important and proximate factor - the results of the research conducted. Therefore, when launching a new campaign to promote a new product/fitness program, the following approach is recommended:

1. **New contacts** – For this segment, communications should aim to increase brand awareness and interest in fitness programs.
 - Considering that new subscribers are users who have already shown interest in a healthy lifestyle, either by signing up for a webinar on a specific topic or a free sprint, we can offer free materials related to topics of interest (guides, tests, nutrition tips, etc.) to add value.
 - In the content of the emails, it would also be beneficial to create a demonstration of what online fitness programs look like from the inside, with attractive images to pique curiosity, make sure to include an email that answers the most frequently asked questions that may arise, and of course, reviews and testimonials with compelling results from participants in our programs.
 - Furthermore, to encourage the first purchase, a special limited-time discount may be launched for this group. Other elements of personalization may include first name use, date of registration and whether the webinar was attended.

2. **New customers** – This segment is particularly important, mainly because they have already given us their trust. The focus of communication with this group is to strengthen the initial relationship and encourage repeat purchases.
 - To this end, the series of promotional messages would be the foundation for this. The copywriter's skill in persuading customers to make a second purchase is essential. In addition, it would be beneficial to gather feedback and encourage reviews both during and at the end of the program.
 - To personalize the content of the email, we can refer to the program chosen, the start and end date of the package purchased, the time spent/remaining in the program, details that we can provide in the email introduction. For instance, we can compare the previous offers with the new ones and highlight the benefits.
3. **Loyal customers** – This segment is highly valuable, and it is important to communicate our appreciation. The goal is to maintain loyalty and encourage repeat engagements.
 - According to CRM, one-to-one contact is recommended for loyal customers as it is more effective and appreciated. Our company achieves this through our management team. However, email communication remains valid and important for this group as well, at a more personalized level.
 - Exclusive VIP offers, subscription upgrades or extensions, and premium benefits can be created for customers. They can also be the first to know about new products, receive early bird passes, and receive invitations to dedicated events.
 - Additionally, the use of questionnaires and feedback forms will provide valuable information and contribute to the ongoing segmentation process for even more accurate targeting.
4. **Lapsed customers** – These subscribers require a special approach to keep them interested and engaged, and to prevent them from unsubscribing. This is known as the re-engagement phase and the strategies that can be used are as follows:
 - Targeted engagement emails - designed to reactivate interaction, with content that matches their interests. For this purpose, we can include more emails with nutritional information, as this was the top preference in the unsubscribed survey (84.2%). We

can also include a survey within these emails to find out what other topics would interest them and explore reasons for inactivity or disinterest.

- Reduce frequency - not only is this a common recommendation in literature to avoid subscriber overload, but it is also supported by the results of our survey, as a sizable proportion of subscribers unsubscribed due to the high number of emails. Further explanation will be given in the subchapter *Email frequency*.
- Message changes - to regain the attention of inactive subscribers, curiosity could be piqued by using different content with new elements to that used for active subscribers.
- Creating exclusive offers such as discounts on their next purchase, exclusive gifts for fast registration, or gifts for participating in the new program.
- Personalization of the email content can be achieved by using their first name and including details of their last purchase or interaction, such as clicking to learn more about a specific program. By referencing this information, we can highlight products and bonuses that may be of interest.

All these changes and suggestions are a reference point for creating the communication plan for the new email marketing program. When implementing them, it is necessary to align with the goals of each campaign and the current possibilities of realization, as well as continuously adapt according to the requirements and expectations of the customers.

7.2.3 Email frequency

New contacts

They will be exposed to the highest volume of emails due to the onboarding process. During this period also the interaction rate is typically the highest. However, after the first month, it would already be useful to monitor the engagement rate and adjust the frequency as needed. At opt-in we could inform them about our daily communication, but they can always ask for an option to reduce frequency.

New customers

Since subscribers have already made a purchase, they are no longer exposed to a high volume of emails, especially promotional ones. The daily emails for those who have an active subscription are intended to motivate them to do their training and are fairly standardized.

For better engagement with these emails, subscribers should have the option to choose whether or not they want such daily reminders.

Loyal customers

We know these consumers like our products, but the goal is to find out their email preferences. By tracking activity, we can see if the daily emails are still of interest to them, or are already being disregarded. That's because a loyal consumer might already be a disciplined consumer, who is doing the workouts without being influenced by emails. Users could be given the opportunity to choose their own frequency, to prioritize which types of emails are most important to them. And, for example to give consent to receive the coaching email if they don't do the morning workout, which can be tracked through activity on the platform.

Lapsed customers

Although we know from the unsubscribers' responses that most of them would prefer 1-2 emails per week, we need to expand the options as much as possible. Thus, we can start by reducing the number of emails to 2-3 per week, with content that is more tailored to their interests. And after one month, to adjust the optimal frequency, it would be useful to offer an option in the emails where the subscriber can choose the desired frequency (e.g., 3-4 times a week, 2 times, 1 time).

7.2.4 A/B testing

A/B testing, also called split testing, is a commonly used method to directly compare two marketing strategies. It is done by dividing the audience into groups and presenting two variants with a different specific element to identify which one is more effective (Spiller, 2020, p. 293).

There are several possibilities for A/B testing in email, such as 50/50 split testing (when testing is done by splitting the base in two) and 10/10/80 split testing - when 10% of the base gets one option, 10% gets the other, and the most successful version is sent to the rest of the base - 80% (Chad, 2017, p. 256).

A plethora of testing possibilities can be used to nurture the potential of the email program: subject lines, preview text and header text, images, text, copy, call-to-actions, subscribe/unsubscribe process, triggered messages etc. (Chad, 2017, p. 256-257).

Such tests can be carried out either instantaneously, before broadcasting messages to the base, or as part of a longer process of detecting which patterns work best. The fitness project is only testing subject lines, on 3 test segments, to select the title with the highest impact and send it to the base. My suggestion is to test several aspects, to analyze which elements can be improved to increase performance metrics.

Preview text testing

As the first elements a subscriber sees in their inbox are the sender, subject line, and preview text, it is crucial to test and optimize these components. Our large subscriber base allows for 10/10/80 testing, which we will employ. We will select two representative groups, each consisting of 1000 randomly chosen users from a specific segment of our base (e.g. new or lapsed customers).

For additional dynamism beyond titles, I propose to check the addressing variants, e.g. personalized versus generic, to see which reacts best to our base. The following variations can be tested: *{first name}*, *Dear {first name}*, *Hello, {first name}*, respectively *Good morning*, *Hi there*, *Hello, my dear*.

In the literature, there are polarised opinions: some say that personal names are currently overused and already bring a negative effect, whereas others argue that it is the most important element of personalisation. We will learn how our subscribers react in these cases by testing these two options. If using the subscriber's name leads to more email interactions, it should be used sparingly and only for important messages. On the other hand, it may allow us to detect any problems with the display of this code *{first name}* in the email.

Testing can last for 2 weeks, each day trying out different forms of greeting, then the best versions tested again among each other to reach a conclusive result. It is important to test only one element in each email, in our case just the change of salutation.

Since the preview text is extremely limited, and it automatically includes the greeting form, I suggest determining also whether the subscriber is more likely to open the message if they manage to read a larger part of the introduction. For this purpose, the same open form should be tested both with and without the greeting. This also indirectly shows how important personalization and greeting are to the customer. For example, a gmail user can only see the first few words in both the title and the preview text of the email, which is why I consider making the most of this limited space. Another option allowed by the email service provider

is to actually insert the preview text. Then, it is possible to test variations again using the same principles described above.

Email creative testing

The company's email service provider (*Get Course* platform) allows to explore different ways of changing the look and feel of the emails. As stated in the customisation chapter, a different design may draw attention. Therefore, it is advisable to conduct a test to determine if the changes are effective.

The design of the emails could be differentiated by colours, layout, images. The objective is to determine if a broader design would have a greater impact, allowing it to be used for high-priority messages (such as a new product launch, closing of registrations, last chance to complete payment, etc.).

After a month of regular testing, using the 10/10/80 formula or creating multiple segments and testing several variations at the same time, some of the elements and design combinations that perform best will emerge.

CTAs testing

The CTAs testing process could be performed from several perspectives. First, one can check different wording: *Sign up now*, *Sign up here*, *Get the package now*, as well as the distinct approach - high commitment versus low commitment: *Choose offer now* vs *I want details*.

Another aspect to consider is the colours of the action buttons - bright colours vs quieter colours, brand colours vs campaign colours, and so on. People perceive colours and what they convey differently, hence one colour might encourage action, while another might be ignored or dismissed.

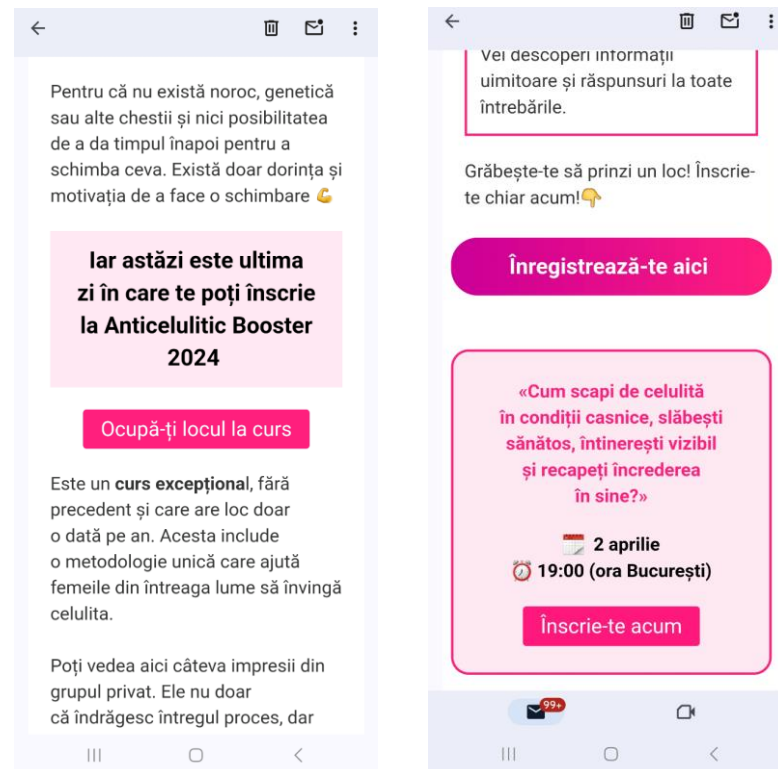


Figure 17 CTA A/B testing

Similarly, the positioning of buttons may influence consumer action. For example, we usually place the button at the end of the email, but we could investigate whether placing it in the middle or even in the first part of the email copy, where it would immediately be visible when opening the email, would generate a higher click-through rate.

Other testing suggestions

Further testing can be designed to find out which email banners/images work best: more detailed or more minimalist, focusing on trainer image or product benefits, highlighting brand colours or different combinations, etc.

Sending times can also be tested, either by finding peaks that give the highest visibility, or by first segmenting by geographical region. The online project has customers from all over the world, but the messages are sent according to Romanian time because that is where the highest concentration of subscribers is.

Subject lines are a key issue, here I consider continuous testing essential, to identify the ideal number of words, length, themes, wording that appeal best.

Finally, A/B testing is a powerful marketing experiment which, used accurately, can leverage the potential of marketing efforts, and reveal insignificant aspects that can contribute to greater email reach.

7.3 Evaluation of the program

The effectiveness of the marketing program will be evaluated through systematic data tracking and analysis. Initial data and trends will be recorded each month from the start of the program to compare progress against established KPIs. At the end of the program, the initial and final situation will be compared, along with the performance on track.

The online fitness company's platform allows data to be collected in dashboards, but to collect and compare all the indicators, it is also necessary to enter the data manually, for example into an optimized formula table.

The results of the A/B tests also need to be fixed so that when we identify the emails that had the best indicators, we can easily detect if they were influenced by the changes made in the test.

Finally, a performance report will be created with all the results and observations to compare performance with subsequent periods in the future. It is also a good place to identify items worth exploring further through A/B testing.

7.3.1 Measuring the email metrics

Data collection, analysis and interpretation of the email program results will facilitate effective measurement of metrics and KPIs, evaluating the program's success. Final data can be collected, calculated and compared according to the table created. An additional column of achieved % of KPI should be considered.

Table 2 Monthly recording of email metrics and KPIs

Objective	Metrics	Calculation formula	KPI target
Reach	Number of new subscribers	Total number of new sign-ups	+15%
(3 months)	Webinar conversion rate	(Webinar sign-up / Page visits)*100	
	Subscribers from promotional campaigns	Total subscribers gained through promotions	
Act	Email open rate (OR)	(Emails opened / Emails sent)*100	+10%
(3 months)	Click-through rate (CTR)	(Link clicks / Emails opened) *100	+5%
	Conversion rate	(Post-click conversions / Clicks)*100	
	Unsubscribe rate	(Unsubscribes / Emails sent)*100	

Convert	Email campaign conversion rate	$(\text{Conversions} / \text{Emails opened}) * 100$	+20%
(4 months)	Email open rate (OR)	$(\text{Emails opened} / \text{Emails sent}) * 100$	
	Click-through rate (CTR)	$(\text{Link clicks} / \text{Emails opened}) * 100$	
	Number of sign-ups from email campaigns	Total number of sign-ups generated by emails	
Engage	Unsubscribe rate	$(\text{Unsubscribes} / \text{Emails sent}) * 100$	-5%
(5 months)	Interaction rate	$(\text{Interaction actions} / \text{Emails sent}) * 100$	+10%
	Number of responses collected	Total number of responses collected	

(source: own research)

Thus, for daily tracking, one can fill in this data for the emails sent, in order to have the final data at the end of the measurement period, since the project ESP does not have the built-in option to automatically create dashboards with results.

Table 3 Daily recording of email metrics

Segment	Date	Campaign	A/B Test Element	Emails Sent	Emails Delivered	Bounces	Opens
---------	------	----------	------------------	-------------	------------------	---------	-------

Views	Unsubscribes	Bounce Rate (%)	Open Rate (%)	Click Rate	Click-Through Rate (%)	Unsubscribe Rate (%)	UTM Link
-------	--------------	-----------------	---------------	------------	------------------------	----------------------	----------

(source: own research)

7.3.2 New research and its comparison (after 6 months)

To further develop and improve the email marketing program, new research can be conducted within 6 months. This research will compare the effects of different targeting and personalization strategies implemented in the proposed program.

Firstly, the impact of the audience segmentation strategy based on the consumer lifecycle stage will be investigated for a further 3 months. We will measure conversion and engagement rates again to see the performance and conclude whether the additional marketing effort for this segmentation method is delivering the expected results, i.e., continued progress in this area. However, continued subscriber profiling is recommended as it is an incremental and long-term process that will shape the future of marketing programs.

Second, the impact of email personalization will be further studied to compare the metrics of highly personalized emails with those of standardized emails. The most successful personalization elements, identified after the launch of the program proposed in this thesis, will be now strategically applied, and ranked by performance.

Regarding the frequency of emails, a period of less than a year is not sufficient to draw conclusions, we need to monitor the long-term effects. However, we can continue to observe consumer behavior according to the number of emails received, varying the frequency during different campaigns. Depending on the open rate, click rate and unsubscribe rate, the frequency is to be continuously adjusted. We will also do satisfaction surveys to find out which segments could benefit from frequent emails.

This research aims to analyze the efficiency and progress of the proposed changes 6 months after their implementation. The long-term effects will be revealed and areas where resources are worth investing in because of their significant impact will be identified.

CONCLUSION

This thesis addressed a widespread problem in email marketing, that of unsubscribes. This is directly related to the value delivered by email programs. Subscribers are all different and have unique needs, and how these needs can be met has been explored through several proposed strategies. One imperative direction to pursue would be advanced segmentation and targeting, supported by the automation capabilities that the email service provider offers. Equally powerful and important is personalization and offering relevant content to subscribers. Among the main reasons for unsubscribing were too high frequency and irrelevant content, and by implementing the mentioned strategies, it will directly impact these issues in a beneficial way.

All these strategies will together form a comprehensive email marketing program. Its effectiveness will be measured by comparing the objectives and KPIs set initially against the final situation. Repeated research will be launched to track long-term performance. Thus, from the choice of segmentation method, targeting and personalization, adaptation of content and frequency, performance of A/B tests, performance measurement, the thesis justifies its importance by providing a practical and simple to follow plan for creating a new email marketing program. Marketers in online fitness companies can address the challenges associated with email marketing through the solutions presented for the purpose of this thesis. Likewise, they can gain insights into common reasons for unsubscribes and subscriber expectations. Therefore, the thesis presents a guide for improving email marketing programs for online fitness projects and thus achieving high performance and decreasing unsubscribes.

In conclusion, this thesis has succeeded in answering the research questions and fulfilling the main goal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baines, P, Fill, C, Rosengren, S. & Antonetti, P. (2017). *Fundamentals Of Marketing*. Oxford University Press.
- Chaffey, D. & Chadwick, F.E. (2022). *Digital Marketing*. 8th edition. Pearson.
- Chaffey, D. and Smith, P. (2017). *Digital Marketing Excellence*. 5th edition.
- Chaffey, D. and Smith, P. (2023). *Digital Marketing Excellence*. 6th edition. Routledge.
- Charlesworth, A. (2021) *Absolute Essentials of Digital Marketing*. Routledge.
- De Pelsmacker, P, Geuens, M. & Van den Bergh, J. (2021). *Marketing communications: a European perspective*. Seventh edition. Harlow: Pearson.
- Hanlon, A. (2019) *Digital Marketing: Strategic Planning & Integration*. SAGE.
- Jarboe, G., Bailey, M. and Stebbins, M. (2023). *Digital Marketing Fundamentals*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Kingsnorth, S. (2022). *The Digital Marketing Handbook Deliver powerful digital campaigns*. Kogan Page Limited.
- Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H. and Setiawan, I. (2021). *Marketing 5.0*. Wiley.
- PAULSON, M. (2022) *Email Marketing Demystified: Build a Massive Mailing List, Write Copy that Converts and Generate More Sales*. Third edition. American Consumer News.
- White, C.S. (2017). *Email marketing rules: checklists, framework, and 150 best practices for business success*. Third edition. North Chareleston, Createspace Independant Publishing.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

DMA – Data & Marketing Association

ESP – email service provider

KPI – key performance indicator

CTR – Click-through rate

UTM – Urchin Tracking Module

CTA – call to action

CRM – Customer relationship management

OR – open rate

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 User participation in digital activities.....	13
Figure 2 Fitness Mama numbers.....	26
Figure 3 Fitness program offering	26
Figure 4 Email calendar.....	27
Figure 5 New order processing.....	27
Figure 6 Positions in online fitness company.....	28
Figure 7 Brand recognition period.....	31
Figure 8 Participation in programs.....	32
Figure 9 Participation in programs.....	33
Figure 10 Main channel for updates	34
Figure 11 Emails received.....	35
Figure 12 Perceived number of emails	36
Figure 13 Email number preference.....	36
Figure 14 Relevance of emails.....	37
Figure 15 Content preference.....	38
Figure 16 Reasons for unsubscribing.....	39
Figure 17 CTA A/B testing.....	57

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Average email marketing campaign statistics by industry 18

APPENDICES

Appendix P I: Unsubscribe Questionnaire

APPENDIX P I: UNSUBSCRIBE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you known about us?

- Less than a month
- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- More than 6 months

2. Have you ever participated in one of our programs?

- Yes, a 5-day sprint
- Yes, a 21-day marathon
- Yes, a 60-day course
- Yes, I have participated in several of your programs
- I have not participated

3. Do you think the program(s) you participated in were effective for your fitness goals?

- Yes, highly effective
- Partially effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not at all effective

4. Where do you hear most frequently about the latest updates in our fitness project?

- Information emails
- From WhatsApp
- From Telegram
- Facebook page
- Instagram page

- Website
- From friends
- Other sources

5. How many emails do you get from us in a week?

- Less than 3
- 3-5
- More than 5

6. Do you think the number of emails you receive from us is:

- Too many
- Adequate
- Too low

7. How many emails would you prefer to receive from us in a week?

- 1 email per week
- 2 emails per week
- 3-5 emails per week
- 6 or more emails per week
- I would not like to receive emails

8. How do you rate the relevance of the emails you receive from us?

- Very relevant
- Moderately relevant
- Somewhat relevant
- Not at all relevant

9. What type of content would you prefer to see in our emails?

- Nutrition tips
- Fitness tips
- Success stories
- Exclusive offers and promotions
- Other suggestions (please specify)

10. What is the reason for unsubscribing? Please tick one of the reasons

- I receive too many emails from you.
- I rarely check my e-mail address.
- I am no longer interested in online fitness.
- Too long messages, too much content.
- Too much commercial, spam.
- I unsubscribed by mistake (tick here to subscribe again)