

# Proposal of E-mail Marketing Communication for fans of VBA

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Master's Thesis  
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 Tomas Bata University in Zlín  
Faculty of Management and Economics

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Tomas Bata University in Zlín  
Faculty of Management and Economics  
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# MASTER'S THESIS ASSIGNMENT

(PROJECT, ARTWORK, ARTISTIC PERFORMANCE)

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Thesis Guidelines:

## Introduction

Define the objectives and the application methods used in the Master thesis.

### I. Theoretical part

- Study the theoretical background of sports marketing and digital marketing with focus on email marketing communication.

### II. Practical part

- Analyze the behavior of the VBA fans and based on these research results identify the ways that the VBA fans purchase their tickets.
- Analyze the possibilities of e-mail marketing communication in order to address the VBA fans in an appropriate manner.
- Based on the research results suggest a project proposing an effective e-mail marketing communication with the VBA fans.
- Make appropriate recommendations to optimize e-mail marketing communication and mention the advantages and limits of the project.

## Conclusion

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Ve věku moderního trhu je e-mailový marketing považován za nákladově efektivní marketingový nástroj pro firmy, které uvádějí na trh své výrobky nebo služby.

VBA je nová basketbalová liga, která představuje ve Vietnamu nové trendy ve sportu. Cílem diplomové práce je navrhnout novou strategii expanze trhu a podpořit celkovou marketingovou strategii pro VBA tím, že navrhuje projekt e-mailového marketingu. Práce analyzuje marketingovou situaci VBA v předcházející sezóně a formuluje strategii e-mailového marketingového projektu, která VBA pomůže zlepšit vztahy se zákazníky a splnit specifické cíle.

Klíčová slova: basketbal, VBA, prodej vstupenek, e-mailový marketing, poskytovatel e-mailových služeb, seznam e-mailů, cílení, segmentace, akvizice.

## **ABSTRACT**

In the new age of modern market, email marketing is being considered as a cost-effective marketing tool for any businesses to market their products or services.

The VBA is a new professional basketball tournament and plays a new trend of sports in Vietnam. The purpose of this thesis is to suggest the new market expansion strategy and overall marketing strategy for the VBA by designing an email marketing project. The thesis will analyze marketing situation of the VBA in the previous season and formulate the strategy of email marketing project, which can help them to improve their relationship with customers and achieve their specific objectives.

Keywords: Basketball, VBA, ticket sales, email marketing, email service provider, email list, targeting, segmentation, acquisition.

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

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## INTRODUCTION

Today, marketing is an important effort in gaining prospects' attention to promote the flow of goods and services from business to consumers. With the development of Internet technology, marketers expect to shift budgets to other online channels especially email marketing, which continues to account for a great share of customer acquisition and retention. Email marketing can enable companies communicate either common messages for all customers or tailored messages to each customer's sectors much easier than other tools of direct marketing such as direct mail or telemarketing.

The purpose of this master thesis is to provide a guideline for the VBA to set up an email marketing strategy. Vietnam Basketball Association – VBA is the first basketball tournament in Vietnam organized in accordance with internationally professional standards.

The proposal of email marketing communication campaign for the fans of VBA consists of the following parts:

The theoretical part covers the introduction about sports marketing, ticket sales, email marketing, current email marketing trend which support the rapid development of email marketing. The main theoretical part focuses on introduction of email marketing, the fundamental principles of applying email marketing. These principles of email marketing serve as the basic for future applications discussed in the analysis part for the projects. The last part in theoretical part will give the process to establish a completed and effective email marketing campaign.

The analytical part will introduce the XLE company, the VBA and their current marketing situation. This analysis brings the overview how email marketing can help to improve the overall marketing situation for the VBA in the upcoming season. The last part deals with the email marketing communication survey which is conducted in order to gain worthy customers' insights and apply them in order to design an optimal email marketing project.

The project part is the last one which will concentrate on the email marketing strategy and action plan in order to achieve the overall objectives. Based on the principal of email marketing in the theoretical part, the overall strategy for email marketing will be formulated, including some critical factors which influence the success of the campaign. The project part then comes to break down the other important analyses in the email marketing campaign which is cost, time and risk analysis.

In conclusion, the project will present the overall strategy for the email marketing campaign for the VBA in order to improve its brand image, customer communication and increase the ticket sales in upcoming and further seasons.

## **OBJECTIVES AND METHODS OF MASTER THESIS PROCESSING**

**Objective:** The main objective of this thesis is, based on the research results of analysis, to create an optimal email marketing campaign. To meet the main goal of this thesis, the following sub-goals are set: The first sub-goal is to access and analyze current marketing activities of the VBA in the first season, as well as conduct an email marketing communication survey to gather insights into how email recipients, who are basketball fans, interact with and perceive marketing emails. Secondly, the thesis aims to develop the comprehensive project to embark on the email marketing campaign to increasing the ticket sales and maintain current supporter base.

### **Research Questions:**

To meet the main goal and sub-goals of the thesis, the following research questions are stated:

RQ 1: How were the marketing activities of the VBA in the previous season?

RQ 2: Why email marketing is necessary for the overall marketing strategy of the VBA?

RQ 3: How to optimize the email marketing practice in the case of the VBA?

RQ 4: What is the appropriate email marketing campaign that the VBA can implement in the next season?

### **Methodological Approach**

The methods used for collecting data, information and knowledge for this thesis are both from primary data, which were collected from the survey, and secondary sources such as books, reports, research paper, journal, articles, internet pages, and so on. The study is a descriptive, analytical, and reviewing of existing literature and knowledge in the field of digital marketing to develop a comprehensive project for putting into real practices.

The time analysis was processed by using free software WinQSB, PERT-CPM Module. The survey was conducted by mainly applying quantitative research. Besides, open questions also were used to overcome the limits of quantitative approach.

## **I. THEORETICAL PART**

## 1 SPORTS MARKETING

Sports marketing was first introduced in the 1860s when many businesses, recognizing the popularity of the new sport of baseball, began using photographs of the teams to sell their products and services. Since those first baseball cards, sports marketing has become a billion-dollar industry annually. It now includes diverse revenue streams such as sports equipment manufacturing, advertising, ticket and concession income, athlete endorsements, and product merchandising, and other components.

### 1.1 DEFINITION OF SPORTS MARKETING

Every year, corporations plan advertising and promotional campaigns built on sports celebrity endorsements such as LeBron James, Tiger Wood, Cristiano Ronaldo or David Beckham. Sports organizations offer hospitality events and fantasy camps for fans and corporate sponsors. Players nurture their careers to draw out the maximum amount of profit from endorsements, motivational speaking tours, and personal appearances. Businesses want to attract potential investors by organizing sports events. In short, a lot more is being done off the field in sports than just those on the playing field such as more community outreach programs and charity campaigns.

Pitts and Stotlar (2002) defined sports marketing as “the process of designing and implementing activities for the production, pricing, promotion, and distribution of a sports product”. These sports products run the gambit, from sport drinks to sports clothing with team logos, to ticket packages. The goal of this process is to satisfy the needs and wants of consumers, achieve the goals and objectives of the company in relation to their philosophy, mission, and vision, and stay ahead of the competition to maximize product’s and company’s potential (Eric C. Schwarz and Jason D. Hunter, 2008).

According to Lance Hatfield, University of Missouri, Director, Assistant Teaching Professor, Sports Venue Management, Columbia, Missouri, sports marketing is the application of marketing techniques that serve three broad-based functions within the context of encouraging purchases of sports products and services as well as foster customer moral support of the respective sports properties. The first function of sports marketing is to make prospective customers aware of the availability of products and services. The second function of sport marketing is to modify attitudes and behaviors of potential and current customers. In the case of potential customers who are not users but still aware of sports products and

services, sports marketers apply the strategy with the idea that customers will return once experienced. In the case of current customers, many sports properties engage in practices to encourage spending on ancillary products and services (e.g., concessions, merchandise), or increase levels of spending related to ticket-based products (e.g., upgrading from a mini-plan package to full season ticket package). Finally, sports marketing is used to encourage and reinforce the positive behaviors and attitudes.

Generally, sports marketing is the application of marketing concepts focus on the business of sports that reinforce the positive attitudes, awareness and behaviors as well as encourage the purchases from customers and fans.

Sports marketers handle the business side of sports. Some work for leagues or sports associations, such as the NBA or the England Premier League. Others work for teams such as the Real Madrid, the Sparta Praha, or the Zlín PSG. Some work on behalf of major companies such as Emirates, Red Bulls, or Vodafone managing promotional campaigns and sponsorships of national and international sports events. Others are employed as sports agents, representing professional athletes, negotiating contracts and endorsements, and otherwise handling athletes' careers. Still others run sports-related events on behalf of sports teams, organizations or companies. Many sports commission offices and convention and visitors' bureaus hire sport marketing professionals to attract key sports events and teams to town. Market researchers often conduct surveys for sporting goods manufacturers, athletes, local governments, public relations agencies, tourist groups, and sports retailers.

Marketers understand the popularity of sports and have made them a centerpiece of marketing campaigns for decades. As the size and popularity of worldwide sports have grown, the field of sports marketing has grown with it. According to Sapna Maheshwari of the New York Times, 30-second commercials during Super Bowl LI will cost advertisers an average of \$5 million. As long as sports continue to thrill millions of people, they will continue to be prime events in which to deliver advertising messages (Gary Bernstein, 2015).

## **1.2 MARKETING THROUGH SPORTS AND MARKETING OF SPORTS**

Shank (2005) defines sports marketing as the "specific application of marketing principles and processes to sports products and to the marketing of non-sports products through association with sports".

### 1.2.1 MARKETING THROUGH SPORTS – NON-SPORTS PRODUCTS

Marketers of non-sports products have used sports platforms or themes as part of their marketing strategy as well. Examples of non-sports products that have used sports platforms include automobiles, medical services, fast food, consumer electronics, and beverages such as milk, water, and colas, and many others.

The level of integration with the sport is one of the key consideration in addressing the marketing of products through sports. Non-sports products can be classified into two categories – traditional and sponsorship-based.

#### a. Traditional integration

Traditional integration represents processes to incorporate sports into the firm's marketing efforts through the implementation of appropriate and effective marketing tactics regarding the organization's price, product, distribution, and promotional strategies. This strategy using a sports overlay may simply involve an advertisement that features actors or models playing a sport, it may involve the placement of an ad in a sports publication that reaches the same target market, or it may utilize graphics on the packaging that feature a sports setting. For example, the Sony advertisement in UEFA Champion League featured the assertion that consumers can enjoy watching matches on TV even more if they watch them on a Sony high-definition television. Similarly, Pepsi implemented a sports platform by airing an advertisement during the EURO 2016 as a way of reaching an incredible number of audiences around the world. Another significant example is the relationship between Rolex and tennis that their partnership has started since Rolex became the "Official Time-keeper" of The Championships, Wimbledon in 1978.

#### b. Sponsorship-based integration

This strategy features a greater level of integration of sports within the marketing implementation. Sponsorship involves an array of activities whereby the marketer attempts to capitalize on an official relationship with an event, a team, a player, or some other sports organization such as the NCAA, NBA, or FIFA. The applications of sponsorship integration are represented by four strategies: traditional sponsorship, venue naming rights, licensing, and endorsements.

**Traditional sponsorship** generally involves the acknowledgment of the sponsor by the sports property and the ability of the sponsor to use the property's trademarks and logos in

its efforts to leverage the sponsorship and reinforce the relationship in the minds of members of the sponsor's target market. During the football matches, each sponsor was recognized with a display on the panels surround the field and through virtual advertising for those watching on TV. The traditional sponsorship can involve title rights; for example, the Emirates FA Cup or New York Red Bulls already show whom the primary sponsor is.

**Venue naming rights** are represented by the ability of a brand, product or business to have its name attached to the name of a physical facility. A recent example is Arsenal and Manchester City play their home games at the Emirates or ETIHAD Stadium. In this case, the stadiums of two giant English football clubs are designated by the name of two major airlines from the Middle East.

**Licensing** is a contractual agreement that allows a marketer to use valuable trademarks and brand names of a sports property. Noteworthy is the fact that licensing provides sponsors with the opportunity to maximize the value of their sponsorship rights. These sponsors are often granted the right to produce and sell logo apparel and a variety of other licensed products. The importance of this form of sponsorship is easily noted as Nike and Adidas now have intellectual property rights whose value far exceeds that of the products through their association with leading sports teams and events. For examples, Adidas now is the apparel sponsor of Bayer Munich FC, Real Madrid FC, Manchester United FC, etc.

**Endorsement**, popular athletes such as Tiger Woods and Cristiano Ronaldo often are used to gain attention and influence selective demand for a variety of products. According to Bobby McMahon (2016), Cristiano Ronaldo is Nike's superstar pitchman and is paid close to \$13M per year to promote the company's products. On the other side, Lionel Messi is the Adidas counter to Nike's Cristiano Ronaldo. Messi moved to Adidas from Nike in 2006 and has been with the German company ever since. His contract runs for seven years and pays over \$10M per year (He has just extended his contract in February 2017 but the details of the duration or the value of the new Messi Adidas deal are not known yet).

If the marketing decision maker wishes to integrate a sports theme into the marketing strategy, they may integrate sports in a formal manner by employing one or more of the four sponsorship strategies.

## 1.2.2 MARKETING OF SPORTS – SPORT PRODUCTS

There are a variety of sports products and services. From the most basic perspective, the

category of sports products and services is often presumed to be comprised of three subcategories, they are: spectator sports, participation sports, and a third wide-ranging category that is comprised of sporting goods, apparel, athletic shoes, and sports-related products (Sam Fullerton and G. Russell Merz, 2008)

#### **a. Spectator Sports**

From college sports to the highest level of professional sports, the key marketing objective is that of selling tickets. Yet, it is not only those who purchase tickets to a game or event who are important; sports marketers also work to increase viewership and listenership on a variety of broadcast media. This includes television options such as free-to-air TV, premium cable and satellite networks, pay-per-view for special events, enhanced access to a sport's broadcasts, and devoted networks such as the Basketball Channel and the Golf. Other media include traditional radio, satellite radio, audio/video streaming on the Internet, and an emerging emphasis on mobile technology such as the cellular phone and podcasts.

With this in mind, the spectator sports product can be viewed from two perspectives. First is the sale of access to events; that access may legitimately be viewed as the product. Second is the reality that access has no value without the support the competition on the field of play. Therefore, whether supporters are live or media-based, the game or event is considered as the product in the spectator sports market.

#### **b. Participation Sports**

The category of participation sports rightfully includes an array of activities that might not normally be perceived as sports. While organized sports leagues are recognized as participation sports, other activities that are finished individually are not always considered as sports. The absence of competition that identifies a winner and loser may be the basis for this reluctance. Individuals who jog around the neighborhood or who lift free weights at home or at the health club are not typically characterized as athletes. There is yet another tier of activities that represent participation and competition although only the most liberal definition would permit them to be classified as sports. The most recent addition to this category is poker; even sports networks such as Fox Sports and ESPN have begun to broadcast "Texas hold'em" poker tournaments. Other activities such as darts, fishing, competitive eating, and billiards are also noteworthy from a participation perspective.

In many cases, marketing's role is to increase the number of participants and the frequency of participation in a specific activity. For example, golf courses want to attract new golfers

while at the same time inducing current golfers to play even more. The primary benefit to these sports marketers is that increased participation keeps facilities such as golf courses, tennis clubs, swimming pools, and health clubs busy. A secondary benefit is that it creates demand for more sports equipment and apparel.

### **c. Sporting Goods, Apparel, Athletic Shoes, and Sports- Related Products**

This third category for the marketing of sports generally encompasses two types of products: those used in participation sports and those that represent keepsakes, replicas, venue-related purchases, and souvenirs from spectator sports events. Consumers might purchase a foot- ball in order to play games at their home playground or they might purchase a replica ball that includes the team and league logos or signatures of the players.

*Sporting goods* include tangible products specific to a participation sport or activity. These products may be sold to casual participants as well as those who take part in organized activities. Such as balls, bags, and gloves in golf or poles, goggles, sledges or ski set in skiing.

*Apparel* is clothing that falls into one of two categories. First and foremost, it may be purchased to facilitate participation. Then, the demand for new kits is increased at the start of a new season. Style changes may induce golfers to abandon last year's clothing in favor of new styles so that they look good on the game. The second category is based on the acknowledgment that sports apparel can be fashionable within certain market segments. These buyers may be fans who wear clothing that features the logos of teams they support.

*Athletic shoes* are an integral part of almost everyone's wardrobe. For participants, there are designs that are deemed appropriate for specific activities such as racket sports, basketball, football, running, walking, and cross-training.

The final component consists of *sports-related products*. These include souvenirs that may be purchased at event venues as well as a number of other official retailers. Consumers often purchase sports magazines, lessons to improve one's skill at sports like tennis or golf fit best within this category as well. But the broadest set of products in this category is comprised of venue-specific products. While these products are not tied to a sport, they are purchased by spectators in attendance.

## **1.3 TICKET SALES**

Ticket sales are critically important to the financial success of any team or event. The tick-

et sales not only contribute to gate receipts account but also generate attractive media contracts. The Major-League Baseball rely on ticket sales with just 29.82% of total revenue in 2015 (Statista, 2015), the same situations were seen in the English Premier League due to their media revenue and the fact that these teams routinely sell-out, contributing to the high demand for media coverage. Basically, the relationship is the higher the average attendance, the higher the revenue that can be generated from media and sponsorship sources. That brings us back to the point that ticket sales are the financial foundation of any sports team.

Sports tickets are generally purchased in one of three ways:

*Season Tickets* – Season tickets are offered for sale from the team or league prior to the beginning of a season. Actually, the season tickets always go on sale during playoff season, and before the specific schedule of games is confirmed. Teams often have a close relationship with their season ticket holder base – and appreciate the high level of “engagement” held by the season ticket holding fan. Season ticket holders will be offered the highest discount on tickets because of the high level of commitment that they make to a team.

*Individual Tickets* – Individual tickets are offered for sale by the team or league after season tickets. The “face value” of a ticket is normally based on the individual ticket sale price, which is set prior to the season, and is typically the same for all games. However, because the real value of any individual game can vary, this creates inefficiency – some games become very high demand (and can sell out), while others sell poorly. The team can deal with the “distressed inventory” of tickets for these low-demand games through the use of promotions (typically in conjunction with corporate sponsors or local charities) – but run the risk if promotional deals become so attractive that the season ticket holders feel that the promotional offer starts to devalue their season ticket purchase.

*The Secondary Market* – The “secondary market” is the general term for the marketplace in which sports tickets are resold. These are tickets that may have been purchased originally as season tickets or as individual tickets, but in either case, are now being resold to a second owner. Now, there are legal implications regarding the resale of tickets, and certain practices may be prohibited locally. For examples, in the UK, the resale of football tickets is illegal unless the resale is authorized by the match organizer (Alex Dietz, 2013).

## 2 EMAIL MARKETING

Regardless of the size or area, most of businesses nowadays are practicing Internet marketing, since the Internet performs as the most powerful connection channel over the world. Thus, it also has the capabilities to bring your business to millions of your target market worldwide. What makes this process one of the best solutions to the promotional effort is that it doesn't cost plenty of money.

Also, called online marketing, it is the process of promoting a brand, products or services over the Internet. Then, it is divided into different types: Affiliate Marketing, Display Advertising, Email Marketing, Search Engine Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Social Media Marketing, and many others.

### 2.1 WHAT IS EMAIL MARKETING?

Email marketing is a way to reach thousands of potential customers directly and with tailored messages (Noman Rana, 2009). While D.J. Waldow and J. Falls (2013) defined email marketing as “a marketing channel which allows companies to communicate with their customers, prospects, fans and subscribers.”

Basically, email marketing is the use of email to send messages and develop relationships with potential customers and/or clients. Its main goals are: attracting new customers, stimulating the business with valid customers, increasing their brand loyalty and trust (A. Charlesworth, 2014).

In conclusion, email marketing is a tool of direct digital marketing that use electronic mails as the marketing communication messages to reach the crucial customers, build their loyalty, convert company advertisements, communicate promotional offers and more.

Gaining popularity of email marketing went along with a significant increase in the volume of unsolicited commercial emails (spam). That situation requires setting a clear border between them: John Arnold (2008) defined spam as “unsolicited commercial email send to many recipients”. In short, Spam is the irrelevant or unsolicited messages sent over the internet, typically to a large number of users, for the purposes of advertising or spreading malicious objects (emails, messages, videos, software). Unlike legitimate commercial email, spam is sent without permission of the recipients, and then consumers can report your email as spam. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) including Yahoo, Hotmail, Gmail and AOL will automatically move suspected spam messages to Junk Mail folder and even-

tually block your email server from sending an email to customers. However, sometimes the filter is not perfect, unsolicited emails may end up in Inbox folder; in that case, ISPs allow users to mark unwanted emails as spam.

## **2.2 TYPES OF EMAIL MARKETING**

There are several kinds of email marketing that follow different goals and bring different results. According to MailChimp, email can be broken down into two categories: Informational email (one-to-many) and Transactional email (one-to-one).

### **2.2.1 Informational emails**

Informational emails are one-to-many emails marketer can send to folks to bring them up to speed in regards to the latest content, product announcements, and more. It is better to send them to people who have opted-in to receive emails from a business.

- New Content Announcement Email: This email is used to describe and promote a particular marketing offer – one single offer – with a call-to-action that links to a targeted landing page made for that specific offer.
- Product Update Email: Many companies choose to send weekly or monthly product digests to keep their customers or fan base up-to-date with the latest features and functionalities.
- Newsletter: Newsletters are sent on regular basis messages, such kind of emails are the efficient way for a company to reinforce their industry expertise, build loyalty and engagement with subscribers and grow a list of qualified customers.
- Event Invitation: Email can be a great vehicle for promoting an upcoming event. In order to invite audiences to an event and motivate them to register, it is extremely important to clearly showcase why that event is worth their attendance.
- Dedicated Email: Also, known as “sponsored email” or “email list rental.” A dedicated email is generally a commercial message promoting a product or service. Companies looking to promote their products will effectively rent out the email list from a relevant publisher in order to promote their product.

### **2.2.2 Transactional emails**

Transactional emails are one-to-one emails that are triggered by specific actions, such as completing a purchase or signing up for a newsletter.

- Confirmation Email: A confirmation email is automatically sent to participants after they register, purchase or take other actions completely, that will help the customers or registrants save the information, have peace of mind, and move on.
- Welcome Email: the welcome email is the perfect option for keeping information updating to people who have signed up for the newsletter, product trial or services.
- Lead Nurturing Email: this kind of email refers to building relationships with potential customers even if they are not currently interested in buying a product or service. Depending on their specific action, a marketer may want to enroll them in a lead nurturing campaign. Lead nurturing emails consist of a tightly connected series of emails containing useful, targeted content.

## **2.3 EMAIL MARKETING METRICS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

As a digital marketing tool, email marketing needs to be tracked and evaluated to ensure the best performance and outcome. According to Bruce Brown (2007), specific goals should be set already on the level of planning the marketing campaign, and improvement of marketing efforts can be done by comparing results with initial goals. In order to create an appropriate set of goals and take the efficient comparisons between campaigns, it is necessary to understand the key performance indicators (KPIs) which are the foundation of an email marketing practice.

### **2.3.1 Open Rate**

Open Rate is the percentage of received emails which were opened by the recipients. It is calculated by dividing the number of opened messages by the number of delivered ones. It allows assessing how the subscribers are interested in the email information they see in Inbox – From and Subject fields. The purpose of these two fields is to convince the person to open the email. After that, role switches to the design and the content of email (L. Weber, 2009). Open Rate is a critical metric to both monitor and constantly improve the effectiveness of an email marketing campaign.

### **2.3.2 Click-Through Rate**

Click-Through Rate (CTR) in the context of email marketing is the percentage of recipients that clicked on a link within a specific email to a landing page. It is expressed by per-

centage and calculated by dividing the number of click through by the number of delivered messages. The higher CTR, the more effective campaign. Typical CTR can be very different depending on the specifics of the campaign (industry, environment, etc.). As we can see from the Table 1, Gambling and Sports have the highest CTR compare to the other industries.

Table 1: Email engagement rates by industries

<b>Open</b>	<b>Open rate</b>	<b>Click-through rate</b>	<b>Soft Bounce</b>	<b>Hard Bounce</b>	<b>Unsub</b>
Agriculture and Food Services	24.71%	2.98%	0.58%	0.43%	0.29%
Arts and Artists	27.23%	2.85%	0.61%	0.44%	0.29%
Business and Finance	20.97%	2.73%	0.66%	0.55%	0.23%
Computers and Electronics	20.87%	2.16%	1.02%	0.70%	0.31%
E-commerce	16.75%	2.32%	0.30%	0.24%	0.23%
Education and Training	22.00%	2.63%	0.55%	0.46%	0.20%
Entertainment and Events	21.21%	2.33%	0.49%	0.41%	0.28%
Gambling	18.75%	3.35%	0.39%	0.46%	0.17%
Games	20.82%	3.33%	0.44%	0.50%	0.25%
Health and Fitness	21.93%	2.57%	0.43%	0.44%	0.39%
Hobbies	28.46%	5.13%	0.31%	0.24%	0.23%
Manufacturing	21.74%	2.33%	1.41%	0.99%	0.36%
Marketing and Advertising	17.81%	1.92%	0.77%	0.61%	0.28%
Media and Publishing	22.14%	4.70%	0.28%	0.18%	0.12%
Medical, Dental, and Healthcare	22.43%	2.42%	0.72%	0.72%	0.30%
Restaurant	21.17%	1.25%	0.24%	0.22%	0.26%
Sports	25.41%	3.19%	0.46%	0.41%	0.29%
Travel and Transportation	20.69%	2.17%	0.65%	0.48%	0.24%

Source: Mail Chimp, 2017

### 2.3.3 Click-to-open rate

Click-to-open rate (CTOR) represents the number of unique click-throughs divided by the number of messages opened. Using CTOR removes the influence of Open Rate and clarifies the question: which design and content of the email are directing recipients to the links. The effectiveness of CTOR is evaluated depending on email type, industry, targeted group, etc. As an example, if a particular message had 100 clicks and 1,000 opens, the clicks per open would be 0.1 (10%), that's 100 divided by 1,000.

### 2.3.4 Conversion (Response) Rate

Conversion Rate represents the percentage of recipients who accessed a link in received email and did the desired action, such as filling out a lead generation form, download a document or purchasing a product. It is calculated as the number of desired responses divided by the number of delivered messages.

Conversion Rate is considered one of the most important indicators to measure the effectiveness of email marketing campaign because the conversion is directly tied to the call-to-action in the email. The rate itself mostly depends on the type of the desired action.

In order to measure conversion rate, we will need to integrate the email platform and web analytics. It can be done by creating unique tracking URLs for the email links that identify the source of the click as coming from a specific email campaign.

### 2.3.5 Bounce Rate

Bounce Rate – the percentage of total emails sent that could not be successfully delivered to the recipient's inbox. It is calculated dividing the total number of undelivered emails by the number of sent emails. An acceptable Bounce Rate should be kept under 2% in order to prevent deliverability problems (P. Smith and D. Chaffey, 2013).

There are two types of bounces:

- “Hard”, which are caused by a permanent error, like an invalid, closed, or non-existent email address. These emails will never be successfully delivered. It is necessary to pay attention to hard bounces since internet service providers (ISPs) use bounce rates as one of the key factors to determine an email sender's reputation. Having the high level of hard bounces can make the company look like a spammer.
- “Soft”, which are a result of a temporary cause with a valid email address, like full inbox, server failure or large size of the message. Email server on recipient side can store the emails to send them when the problem is cleared up or sender may try re-sending emails when the soft bounce is identified.

### 2.3.6 Unsubscribe rate

Unsubscribe rate reflects the ability of the marketer to hold subscribers' interest in long-term perspective. It is determined as the number of unsubscribes divided by the number of messages delivered.

Unsubscribe rate can be especially important to assess return on investment for purchased email lists from a third party. Normal unsubscribe rate lies in between 0.2 and 1 % for a single email (as describe in Table 1). As in the case of previously described indicators, this can vary depending on the addressed issue, time, etc. Bigger fluctuations of Unsubscribe Rate are characteristic for small email lists.

### **2.3.7 List Growth Rate**

List Growth Rate represents the rate at which the email list is growing. Aside from keeping track of direct performance indicators, marketer should keep tabs on growing the email list in order to extend his reach, expand audience, and position as an industry thought leader

It is calculated by the relation:  $[(\text{Number of new subscribers}) - (\text{Number of unsubscribes} + \text{email/spam complaints})] / (\text{Total number of email addresses on your list}) * 100$

It is the fact that there is a natural decay of email marketing list, and it expires by about 22.5% every year, which means that it's more important than ever to pay attention to growing subscriber list, regularly refresh the contacts and keeping it at a healthy size (Lindsay Kolowich, 2016). Otherwise, the foundation of marketing campaign risks being set on a dead-end asset.

### **2.3.8 Email Sharing (Forwarding) Rate**

It is the percentage of email recipients who posted the email content to a social network using "Share" button or forwarded the email to a friend. It is calculated by dividing the number of clicks on share or forward button by the number of total delivered emails (P. Smith and D. Chaffey, 2013).

This indicator is an important reflection of how new contacts are generated. It's is essential to encourage readers to pass along the email to a family member, friend or colleague if they found the content useful. That will be a wise strategy to start tracking how many new people can be added to the database or what kind of information tend to be forwarded through this type of message content. Then marketer can analysis and apply this consideration in the future marketing campaigns.

### **2.3.9 Overall ROI**

Generally, the overall return on investment is the total income divided by the total cost of the email campaign.

To calculate ROI for an email campaign, the general formula is:  $[(\$ \text{ sales attributed to email}) - (\$ \text{ invested in the email campaign})] / (\$ \text{ invested in the email campaign}) * 100$ .

Additionally, if the sales results of the email campaign are not being tracked but rather leads, signups, or downloads instead, marketers can still calculate their ROI. They need to value each lead, signup, or download. In order to efficiently evaluate ROI, a Service-Level Agreement system can be set to assign certain values to different types of leads, basing on their probability to generate income for the company.

## 2.4 EMAIL MARKETING STATISTICS AND TRENDS

### 2.4.1 Email marketing statistics

Despite whisperings of its decline in recent years, email remains a growing channel for marketers. According to Econsultancy (2016), three-quarters of companies agree that email offers "excellent" to "good" ROI. For an example, a June 2016 survey of US marketers conducted by the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) and Demand Metric found that email had a median ROI of 122% – four times higher than other marketing formats, including social media, direct mail and paid search (eMarketer, 2016). Besides, the number of email users worldwide is forecasted to rise to 2.9 billion users by 2019 (Statista, 2017).

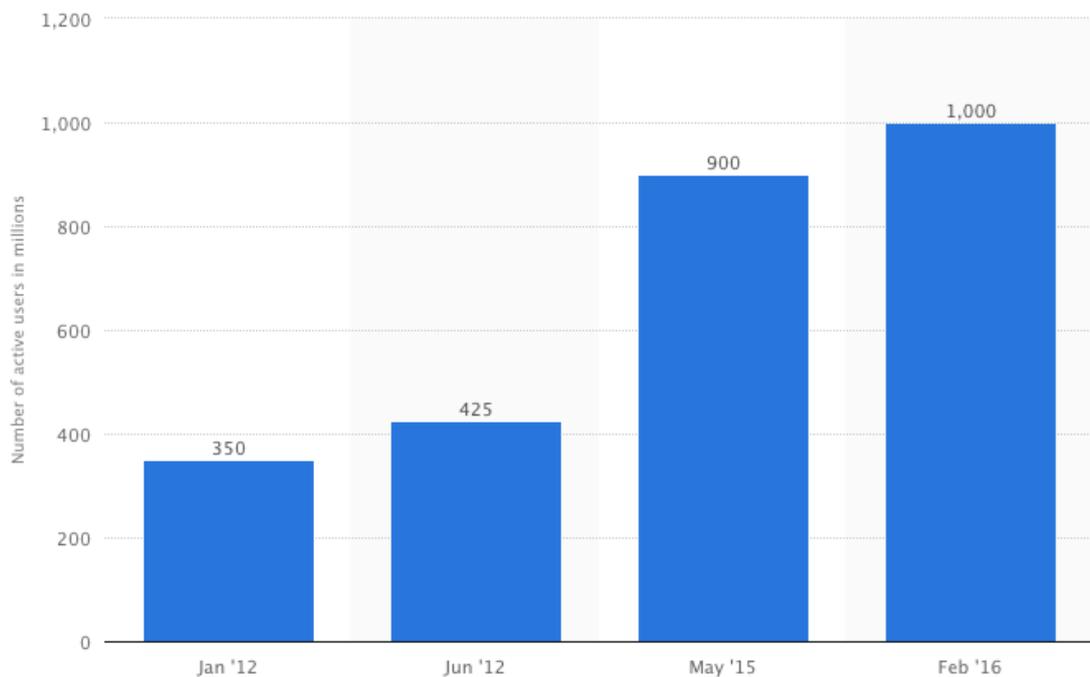


Figure 1: Number of active Gmail users worldwide from January 2012 to February 2016

Source: Statista, 2016

As a giant in the email technology area, Gmail has reached 1 billion active users worldwide in 2016 (from 350 million users in 2012).

In the term of reach, it is clear to see that email marketing far outperforms social media: “if you have 2,000 email subscribers, 2,000 Facebook fans and 2,000 followers on Twitter – this is what you will get:

- 435 people will open your email;
- 120 Facebook fans will see your message;
- 40 Twitter followers will see your message” – (Martin Zhel, 2016).

Additionally, Email is 40 times more effective at acquiring new customers than Facebook or Twitter (Nora Aufreiter, Julien Boudet, and Vivian Weng, 2014).

The report “The State of Email Marketing by Industry”, that was published in 2016 by GetResponse, gives an overview of engagement rates in email marketing, reveals such industry-based benchmarks and provides an opportunity to compare industries.

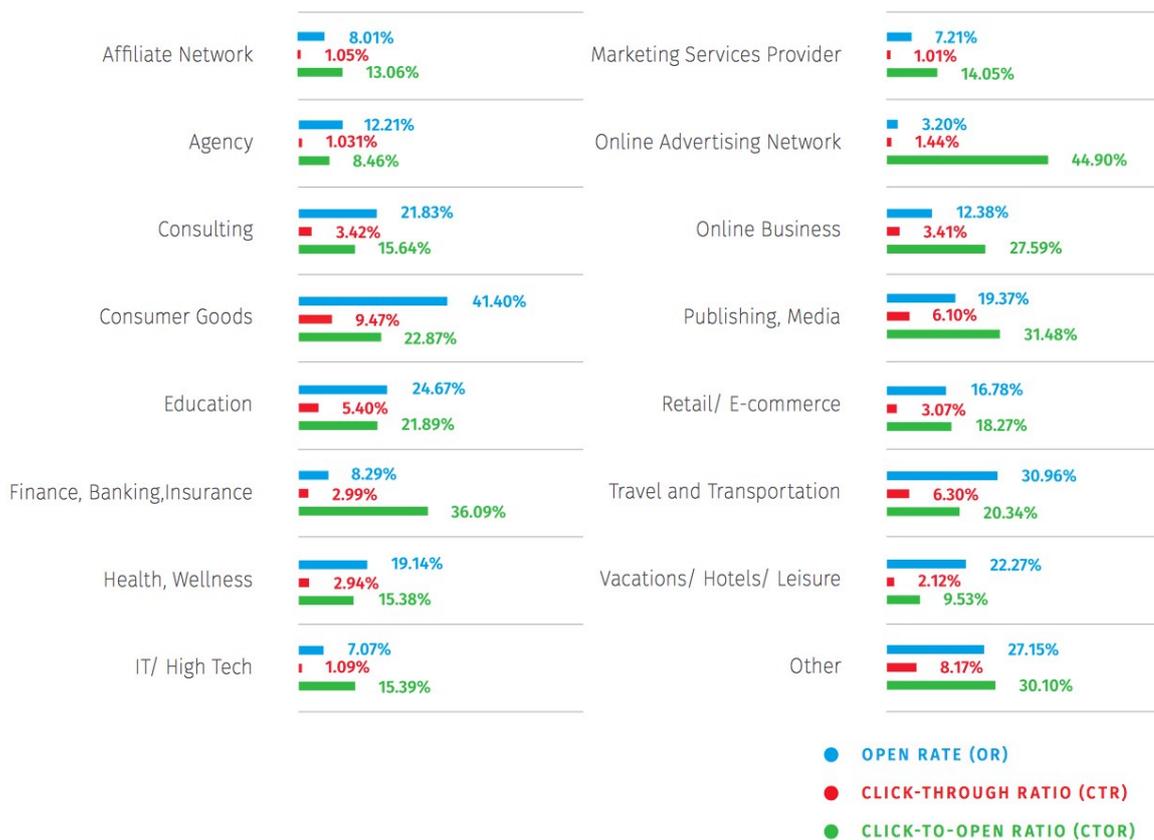


Figure 2: Global Stats, 2016

Source: GetResponse

As we can see from the Figure 2, the total Open Rate, Click-through Ratio, and Click-to-open Ratio vary greatly from industry sector to industry sector. It is challenging for Affiliate Network, Finance, Banking, Insurance, IT/High Tech or Marketing Service Provider to perform their email marketing practice as their Open Rates are low around 7-8%. On the other side, it is clear to notice that the low-tech areas or staple products such as Consumer Goods or Travel and Transportation have the highest Open rates (30-40%) with a positive Click-to-open ratio around 20% that can be understood as email marketing is a channel consumer rely upon for these products.

However, when it comes to Click-to-open, the highest ratio was marked by Online Advertising Network at 44.9%, even though they got the lowest number of Open Rate (at 3.2%), which means that the consumers in this area tend to act upon the email messages.

Regarding email market share in 2016, while mobile remained dominant, this year did see some changes for webmail and desktop. As described from Figure 3, Mobile began and ended the year at 54%, though it did jump to as high as 56% in July. Besides, Desktop began the year at 19% and dropped to 16%, while Webmail noticed an increase that began the year at 27% and grew to 30% in December. It is the fact that Mobile has dominated market share for several years now, with iPhone, iPad, and Android making up the bulk of mobile’s market share.

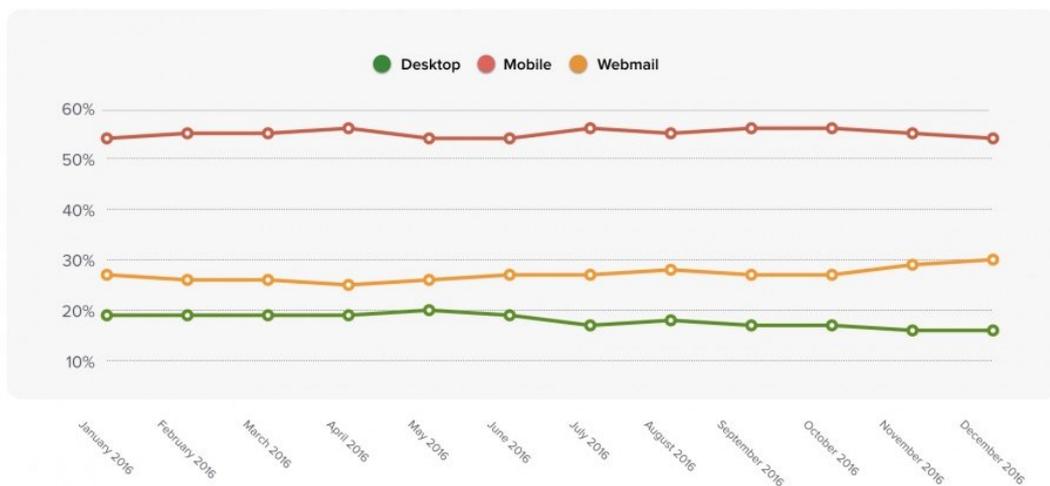


Figure 3: Email Market Share 2016

Source: Litmus

According to Kayla Lewkowicz (2017), the drop-in desktop (and subsequent rise in webmail) appears to be driven largely by growth in Gmail opens. While iPhone, iPad, Android

and Outlook remained the same throughout the year, Gmail has picked up some serious growth, now up to 20%. Gmail reports more than 1 billion monthly users, with 75% of them on mobile devices, as more and more users are choosing Gmail.

#### 2.4.2 Email marketing trends

Like any other strategy, email marketing is constantly evolving to reflect best practices. A number of upcoming trends in email marketing should be taken into consideration to help marketers grow the email list, engage with clients better or build the client base.

- **Interactive email:** Email interactivity brings some of the interactions that would normally take place on the landing page and pulls them into the email. By allowing more to happen inside an email, it reduces barriers to engagement and makes clickers have even higher intent. Take Live Shopping Cart as an example: Adding a live shopping cart in emails helps subscribers to not only remind subscribers of what they've left in their shopping cart but also makes it easier for them to edit their cart, without having to leave the inbox (Larisa Bedgood, 2017). It can also utilize this space to remind customers about orders they place on a regular basis.
- **Personalization:** also referred to as one-to-one marketing, personalization in email campaigns can range from simply greeting customers by name to tailoring email content based on their on-site behaviors and purchasing patterns to effectively meet individual customer's interests and needs at a right time (Andrea Wildt, 2016). Personalization is one of the most important ways to keep recipients opening emails and engaging with the organization. Plus, with the myriad of tools available through email service providers (ESPs) today, creating and sending personalized email messages is not as much challenging.
- **Automation:** Email automation is becoming an integral part of a savvy business' online marketing campaigns. In fact, many brands already have elements of automation included in their email programs and they will be adding to this in following years because of its clear importance. Through the automation process, customer data will be analyzed and brought together with all marketing channels. As a result, they create workflows to send personalized, timely, relevant emails to customers at the right time. Business needs automation for the number of reasons such as nurture customer relationships, gain new customer sales, turn new customers into repeat buyers or drive traffic (MailChimp, 2017).

- **Mobile Optimization:** The explosion of iPhone, Android, and tablet devices means that businesses must adopt a “mobile-first” mentality. It is the fact that people are increasingly checking email and reading blogs on their mobile devices. From the Figure 3, 56% of email users prefer opening their emails on mobile devices. And 42% of them delete an email if it doesn’t display correctly, according to Blue-Hornet report (2015). In order to improve conversions, click-through rates as well as generate the revenue, emails must be easily read on mobile devices. Otherwise, many users won’t be able to interact with your email marketing messages and will either delete emails or unsubscribe.
- **Integration of Email marketing and Social channels:** Widespread using of social media has in many ways made email an even more effective and powerful marketing channel. Firstly, social media users are likely to share their email-delivered content with their personal networks that helps to extend the reach of emails. In the other words, the more people share email, the more potential business has for opens, clicks and conversions. Additionally, social media usage actually makes consumers even more engaged with their email inbox. That provides an opportunity for new subscribers gain or list growth. Moreover, it is important to include the social channels options in an email in order to increase the chance that email subscribers will engage with the company or brand on different channels (Aaron Beashel, 2016).
- **Data regulation and privacy:** It’s clear that regulation is going in just one direction both in the EU and worldwide: permission is getting stricter; what marketers can do with data is going to be more tightly regulated Bettina Specht, 2016). Consequently, marketers are going to work harder at growth and find stronger reasons to gain permission. On the other side, email security is top of mind for many right now. With emails becoming more personalized and powered by data from many channels and internet devices, the call for greater security to ensure privacy will only grow.

### 3 CREATING EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Email marketing has evolved to a much more sophisticated way of communicating with customers. Thanks to advances in technology, entrepreneurs now have the ability to optimize the messages they send based on their customers' interests, preferences and purchase history, as a result, targeted e-mails bring greater results. Then, it is crucial to design and carry out a campaign while ensuring a successful return on your investment. Here are the 5 steps to consider when planning an email marketing campaign.

#### 3.1 SETTING OBJECTIVES

It is very important for the company to decide on goals for email marketing, so that the appropriate resources can be directed at achieving these goals (Chaffey and Smith, 2013). Specifically, every marketing plan is built around very specific objectives that a business intends to accomplish. The tools and resources that go into a marketing plan, therefore, depend directly on these goals:

**Increase sales:** E-mail can lead directly to a sale – a customer clicking a link to buy from your website – and can lead to potential sales as when someone replies with a request for an appointment or additional information, such as:

- Drive foot traffic to the store: People can use their mobile devices to show the offers or coupons in the e-mails to the salespeople in the store.
- Bring visitors to company's website: People can click links in the e-mail to visit company's website, blog, or social media site.
- Increase event attendance: People can click a link to register for an event online through a registration form.
- Ask for referrals: People can reply with the name of a good referral or fill out an online form.
- Generate phone or e-mail orders: People can use their mobile device to tap a phone number in an e-mail or reply with order information.

**Increase repeat purchase:** Sales increase when current customers are motivated and prompted to make repeat purchases because the marketer can link the audience directly to an online purchase process. For example, repeat customers will be rewarded with incentives based on repeat sales (free shipping, added points, etc.)

**Shorten a sales cycle:** Marketer can use e-mail to help shorten the sales cycle by sending prospective customers the following types of information:

- Information to help justify a decision
- Reminders to take action
- Incentives to take immediate action (a limited-time discount, for example)

**Lower costs:** E-mail is a cost-effective tool, email marketing permits company to dramatically reduce the marketing costs such as paper cost, postal costs, calling costs or printing and advertising costs, etc.

**Save time:** E-mail marketing can help business spent time more efficiently. These are some time-based objectives:

- Automate the tasks, for example: schedule email sending or even email campaign to run automatically in advance; use auto responders for some types of follow-up; direct prospects and customers to online information.
- Reduce administrative tasks that take business away from selling and interacting with customers and prospects. Some objectives: automate list management and reporting; use e-mail templates to save time designing messages; allows customers and prospects to keep their contact information up to date by including a link in every email to customer profile.
- Interact efficiently with customers by balancing electronic communication and personal interaction: link customers to online resources for support; use e-mail newsletter content to answer common questions; ask customers to use surveys and feedback forms; use e-mails to confirm purchases; etc.

## 3.2 BUILDING EMAIL LIST

It is undeniable that email will be your most reliable and effective channel for driving both traffic and sales, therefore, it is worth to invest time to build a high-quality email list. The great part about email list building is that it's not hard to get started. New email signups can be driven by those two main factors:

Firstly, create a signup form that is accessible, visible and easy to fill in. The most effective signup forms are email pop-ups, signup bars, and exit offers. These types of forms are engaging and highly effective at grabbing a visitor's attention.

Secondly, make the offer to join the mailing list attractive. Create value through providing promo codes, free content, entry into a contest, or even info on what makes your newsletter so great! Signup forms that offer a special value will see better email capture results.

### **3.3 CHOOSING AN APPROPRIATE EMAIL SERVICE PROVIDER**

An ESP is a service that hosts email marketing services on their servers, which are specifically optimized for this purpose. ESPs allow business to execute professional, organized email marketing campaigns. Refer from the articles of PC Magazine, Topseos.com and Top Ten Reviews who take the number of ESPs' features and functions into consideration for the benchmarking between them, there are several criteria that a business should consider when looking for a best-fit EPS.

#### **3.3.1 Packages, Setup and Support**

- Free trial, free plan: Most email providers offer a free trial, or free plan if the business has a small email list and only want to send a few emails. It is better to use the free services to see if it is appropriate to the campaign and fits the budget.
- Pay as You Go: This way, business will only pay for what they use. It's another way to give the provider a try before signing up for continued services. Once the business is on board, it will probably be more cost effective to sign up for a monthly plan.
- Monthly/Annual Plans: When it comes to high volume plan, most providers offer a monthly plan based on the number of people on the email list. Besides, some companies offer discounts if the business pays by the year rather than month by month. And a few of them offer money-back guarantees.
- Interface Quality: whether the application has a clean and easy-to-navigate layout, makes support easy to spot, and is updated often.
- Tech support: A good provider is the one that a provider has an excellent support team in place to help with any questions or concerns via both online and phone.

#### **3.3.2 List Management**

- Import List: Business can import a contact list using Excel or CSV files. Some services also allow importing contacts from third-party services, such as Google and Salesforce.

- Basic Contact Management: Services allow business to store more than simply a name and email address for a contact. Some services may allow more than basic contact information, such as physical addresses or social media names, and others let marketers add and track information such as the contacts' birthdays, career or purchase history.
- Segmenting: Business can create specific email campaigns for contacts that fit certain demographics, which helps them target their promotions to an interested group.
- Auto-Unsubscribe: Services offer a feature that allows the readers to opt out of emails from a business. Usually, the services create lists with those who want to stop receiving emails that marketers can review. Some services, though, count the unsubscribes as contacts unless they are manually removed.

### 3.3.3 Email Creation

- Responsive Templates: customers will probably open the email on their smartphone or tablet. Everyone is on the go, so the marketing emails have to look responsive and be optimized for mobile devices.
- Supports Custom Designs: These services allow business to import HTML-coded emails or newsletters that are created in a different program. If businesses already have a template they are using and are simply switching email services, this is an important feature, allowing business to maintain their brand image with the current contact list.
- Image Library: Services let clients choose exactly the photos they want to include as well as store assets such as logo or company photos.
- Unlimited Email: Some services do not allow clients to send unlimited emails at once, they have some strict limitations both for the number of messages and the number recipients that client can handle per day. This feature allows sending unlimited emails with no concerns, maximizing the delivery rate.

### 3.3.4 Email Sending

- Autoresponders: The email marketing service allows business to create automatic responses to certain actions. For example, marketers can set up the autoresponder to send a welcome message to contacts who sign up for their email or newsletter list, which saves time.

- Triggered Responses: Similar to autoresponders, these are automatic emails that are sent as a response to specific actions. One of the most common auto-generated emails is a birthday greeting sent to the contacts who are celebrating on that day. This is a helpful and time-saving feature that keeps business in contact with their readers automatically.
- Scheduling: business can set a specific time for their emails to be delivered to their contact list. This is helpful if they know when their audience is most likely to read their emails or newsletters. Some email marketing services allow business to set specific time zones as well so all of their readers can receive their email at a specific time for their location.
- Social Media Integration: Email and social media marketing go hand in hand, it is important to make it easy to share the emails on social media platform. For example, it will be great if customers can share a promotional email on Facebook without logging in and creating a separate message to post.

### **3.3.5 Campaign Tracking**

- Tracks Opened, Bounced & Forwarded: The email marketing service updates their clients with reports that show them how many of their email blasts recipients opened, how many the email client rejected and how many your readers shared. These reports can help business craft more effective email campaigns. Some services track this information per campaign, while others track over time.
- Google Analytics: The campaign tracking that integrates with Google Analytics.

### **3.3.6 Others**

- A/B testing: this is a way to test the email content, subject line, etc., to evaluate which version gets the best results. This also support to split up the list and compare results between segments.
- Survey: the ability of ESP to customize email surveys, send them to the customer and analyze the results.

## **3.4 CLASSIFYING AUDIENCE**

As any successful marketing campaign like the social media marketing or direct marketing, one of the most important step is to know who are being targeted and will be received the

email. According to Ira Kaufman and Chris Norton (2015), a company has to divide its customers into segments to easily target relevant offers to appropriate groups and boost the better response rates.

In order to create a relevant email marketing campaign, marketer needs to identify the target audience and understand their needs and preferences. This will allow the marketer to design an email creative that will engage customers and encourage them to respond or take an action.

It is better to think about what kind of message would be relevant to each group of customers and create the appropriate email around what they would like to know about rather than what business would like to tell them about. When the stats “across all segmented campaigns” were measured, segmented campaigns performed markedly better than their non-segmented counterparts, such as Opens is 14.31% higher, Clicks is 100.95% higher and Unsubscribes is 9.37% lower than non-segmented campaigns (MailChimp, 2017b).

### **3.5 CONTENT**

A subscriber opens an email expecting something of value to them. This could be in the form of a discount, product information, updates, or some other need. The level of fulfilling subscribers' expectations plays a key role in whether keep them as an active subscriber and also increase their loyalty to the brand. Therefore, marketers need to create a content reflects things that subscribers are interested in. In order for email marketing efforts to work, the content needs to be relevant and brilliant. Besides, it is usual to avoid spelling mistakes and make sure the email looks like it was written by someone who is a specialist in the relevant field with a good command of linguistic.

Those who read the email need to feel as if it is they who are being specifically spoken to. When thinking about content, marketers should ask themselves what is important to their subscribers. Think about their age group, interests, hobbies and the products they have recently purchased.

The bottom line is: Content ultimately can boot or break an email campaign so it is better to pay more attention to it and spend less time on trivial matters.

### **3.6 MEASURING PERFORMANCE**

Depending on the industry, measuring success down to the dollar value per email can be of

utmost significance. Keeping track of email performance is a great way to show executives and decision makers the value of email marketing efforts and validates marketing work. Furthermore, tracking campaigns' performance is a great way to figure out the areas that require improvement or the particular parts which are being performed efficiently so marketers can then replicate the process for other campaigns.

Email marketing is one of the most trackable marketing channels on the planet, and every E-mail Marketing Software System is able to provide marketers with literal numbers of different metrics or data points about the success of your campaigns.

There are several reasons that marketers should track their email marketing metrics:

**Understand how marketers should be spending their time** – most of the marketers probably get a lot of different things to do, therefore, the key success is focusing on the initiatives that really drive results and not getting distracted by those that don't. By measuring the ROI of email marketing, marketers can see how it compares to other channels (like social) and better prioritize their time and efforts to drive maximum results.

**Prove the ROI of efforts** – with the limited budgets of the whole campaign, it is essential for marketers to be able to prove the ROI of their efforts to show executives and decision makers the value of email marketing efforts and validates marketing work. By checking reports and measuring the performance of email marketing, a marketer will have concrete evidence that shows the impact of their efforts.

**Improve results** – By viewing campaign reports, marketers can answer the questions of which elements are working effectively and which is not during the email campaigns. It describes how subscribers are engaging with the campaigns, when they are most active and what types content they prefer, and these insights can be used to drive better results in the future campaigns.

Additionally, it is essential to choose the right E-mail Marketing Software System that can support the campaign effectively and efficiently. In fact, CRM systems can range from simple database models to more complex systems that include sales force management, shopping carts, affiliate programs and e-mail behavior campaigns. Marketers should decide what capabilities they want and use a checklist to compare between systems.

## **II. ANALYTICAL PART**

## **4 PROFILE OF XLE COMPANY**

### **4.1 GENERAL INFORMATION**

Company Name: XL Entertainment Company Limited

Trade name: XL Entertainment Co., Ltd.

Short name: XLE

Head office: 10th Floor, Phu Nu Tower, 20 Nguyen Dang Giai, Thao Dien Ward, District 2, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Email: info@xle.vn

Phone: (+84) 08 744 2468

Vietnamese people have a great passion for sport, however, the lack of quality entertainment has led many to fall into unhealthy activities. Facing society's need for a comprehensive, dynamic and organized sports system, XL Entertainment, a sports entertainment company, was founded in 2009.

### **4.2 COMPANY FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

In February 2009, the founding of XLE was initiated by the establishment of the first sports academy in Vietnam, Saigon Sports Academy – SSA. SSA specializes in training and training for children ages 3 to 18 with various sports. To date, the institute has been training and organizing sporting events for thousands of children from all over the world in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

By September 2011, XLE founded the first professional basketball team in Vietnam – Saigon Heat. Saigon Heat represented Vietnam to compete in the Southeast Asian Games (ABL) and was enthusiastically supported by Vietnamese fans. The appearance of the team has created a new excitement for basketball in Vietnam.

In March 2013, XLE held the VUG "Vietnam University Games", a tournament for Vietnamese students. Here the students from the university are taking part in three sports such as basketball, futsal and dance battle competitions. The tournament has attracted more than 60 leading universities from 4 biggest cities: Hanoi, Da Nang, Can Tho and Ho Chi Minh City.

In August 2016, the first domestic professional Basketball League was hosted by Vietnam-

ese Basketball Federation and XLE Group. Vietnam Professional Basketball Championship – VBA is the first basketball tournament in Vietnam built in accordance with the international standard professional model. VBA has the mission to establish the first platform to promote national basketball as well as Vietnam sports in generally. It is the professionalization of competency, athlete level, size and organization. In addition to the high-level matches, there are countless exciting side-scrolling activities under the new and modern sports and entertainment model.

With the slogan "More than a Match", VBA promises to bring fans and young people in the country unique experiences cannot miss.



Picture 1: XLE's main projects

Source: XLE website

## 5 VIETNAMESE BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION – VBA

Vietnam Basketball Association – VBA is the first basketball tournament in Vietnam organized in accordance with internationally professional standards.

### 5.1 VBA – THE FIRST PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP IN VIETNAM

In 2015, the President of Vietnam Basketball Federation – Mr. Nguyen Bao Hoang (he is the owner of Saigon Heat basketball club) said that a professional basketball league would be launched in Vietnam in next few years, the main purpose is that assisting people to pay more attention to basketball and lift basketball to the second most popular sport after football in Vietnam.

One year later, VBA 2016 was first launched nationwide at the start of the day 6<sup>th</sup> August 2016 and received a great love from the audience. The result of competition is not overwhelming as if the most important are serving supporters – the ones who buy tickets to watch the games and enjoy the entertainment trend.



Picture 2: 5 Basketball teams in VBA 2016

Source: VBA website

VBA 2016 took place from August to November 2016 in four major cities: Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho and Da Nang with the participation of five teams: Hanoi Buffaloes, Danang Dragons, Hochiminh City Wings, Saigon Heat and Cantho Catfish.

VBA 2016 is applied according to the model of American Basketball (NBA). In terms of expertise, each VBA team will consist of up to one foreign player, two Vietnamese players and 10 to 12 local players selected carefully to ensure a balance of forces between teams.

Teams play 8 matches each in the first stage (playing each team in the league 4 games, 2 home and 2 away). Then there will be the knockout phase and championship matches.

The referees' team will consist of 1 Philippine international referee, 3 referees on the pitch including 1 international referee, 2 Vietnamese referees, 5-6 point referees, 2-3 team members. Vietnamese referees team are appointed and trained by the Vietnam Basketball Federation.

## **5.2 VBA PLAYS A NEW TREND IN THE SPORT MARKET**

People always tend to follow the new trends; therefore, it is a wise play to create and boost a newly attractive trend in the sports industry. "There is a lack of sports events for fun, entertainment in Vietnam. In addition, people think that sports are just as playing on the ground. Actually, sport is for the whole community, if you create the environment, playground for everyone to join together. Sports have the power of being able to engage everyone in the community to cheer for a team. I hope to create a development for basketball to attract many fans." – said by Mr. Nguyen Bao Hoang.

In fact, VBA has brought distinction and special attractiveness, even compared to the king sport in Vietnam – football. The matches are always full of audiences and they fire together in the atmosphere of passionate. The most special thing is that the audiences are entertained, relaxed and fun to be part of the game, rather than sitting boring like watching football matches at V-Leagues or First Class.

At a basketball game in VBA 2016, the sexy cheerleading team dances beautifully to keep viewers entertained, warm up before the game and cheer up during the games. Moreover, there are games like throwing balls into the basket for the audiences to receive presents. Particularly those who buy VIP tickets are served food and drinks in the break. Not only interacting with the fans, VBA also makes efforts to facilitate sponsors. The space of the VBA expands like a miniature festival. Outside of the stadium, there is always a place

where food, drinks, clothes, sports gear and accessories will be available. Fans can also easily find their own shooting area and other recreational activities.

With the attention to serving the audiences and the modernity in organizing, VBA 2016 is becoming one of the most favorite entertainment of audiences, including those who do not love sports, especially young people. The young audiences are highly passionate and willing to pay for expensive tickets that many times higher than a V-League ticket. While the most expensive V-League season ticket is just over VND 1 million for 13 games, Saigon Heat Club sold more than VND 7 million / 8 home games at VBA 2016.

Although it seems to be hard to develop in Vietnam, basketball is transforming with VBA 2016 that was held for the first time with several first steps. The tournament is a combination of elements that includes: sports-entertainment-performance-business, it is a symbol of professional sports that can generate revenue itself with the support of PR and marketing. By the time, VBA develops strongly and firmly establishes its position in the audiences, it is necessary for Vietnamese sportsmen and Vietnamese football organizer to look at VBA to study, at least, at attracting the audiences.

In terms of sports spirit, the Vietnamese are willing to spend money for a high-quality sports game. The problem is how to serve and make them feel the most satisfying. Fortunately, basketball with VBA 2016 along the pioneering steps has proved and solved that problem, which can be the lesson for the other sports or entertainment activities.

### **5.3 MARKETING ACTIVITIES**

In term of branding, VBA is the new player in the sports market in Vietnam. However, VBA deserves to be considered the leading professional sports tournament in Vietnam as each match attracts a huge number of audiences to follow. With five professional teams (Hanoi Buffaloes, Danang Dragons, Saigon Heat, Hochiminh City Wings and Cantho Catfish) and nearly 50 top-flight matches in four major cities: Hanoi, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh City and Can Tho, VBA really gives fans a whole new experience with basketball. It is undeniable to say that this promising result is achieved thanks to the great contribution of effective marketing activities.

#### **5.3.1 Digital Marketing**

In the new generation of technologies, digital marketing is definitely important for business because it provides lots of opportunities to establish significantly more interactive

communication channels with consumers with a remarkably decrease in budget. It is not only a rapidly growing force in the current marketing playing field, it is set to be the future of marketing. Moreover, it seems likely that digital media is going to replace the roles of traditional forms soon.

Digital Marketing team is one of the most experienced and qualified team in XLE Company, who always do a great job and get lots of achievements on several channels such as Facebook, YouTube and Website.

**a. Facebook**

As the largest social network in the world, there are nearly 50 millions of Vietnamese Facebook users in 2016 (Internet World Stats, 2016). As the number of people explore social media increase rapidly, social networking sites have become some of the key online sources that they use to learn more about products, services, organizations, artists and world events. As a result, Facebook definitely brings great opportunities for any business to promote and advertise their products and services.

In fact, Facebook is the most important communication channel in VBA 2016. Even though it was the first season of VBA, the Facebook channel had recorded some achievements in performance, which are described in Figure 4.

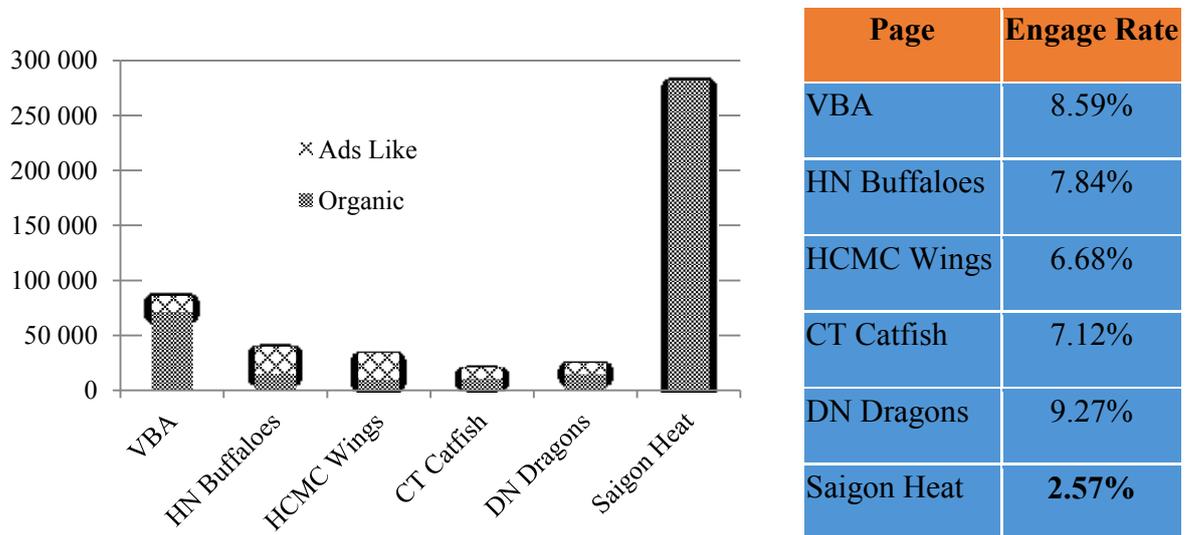


Figure 4: VBA & Team Fanpages analysis: Number of Likes and Engage Rate

Source: VBA 2016 Report

- **VBA Fanpage** generated a great number of organic Fans (82%) and maintained stable Weekly Reach as well as Weekly Engagement.

- All **Team Fanpages** exceed the KPI (5% – 15%), Engagement Rates are over expectation, especially of Danang Dragons, Hanoi Buffaloes & Cantho Catfish. Hochiminh City Wings also get their own fan base after difficult start (they have to compete with SGH in the same city).
- While other teams might suffer fluctuating traffic according to game results, Dragons & Catfish fans still engage stability with Fanpage regardless of team's result.

#### **b. Youtube**

YouTube are becoming more powerful forms of communication and more engaging than other types of less dynamic ads. Currently the official YouTube channel of VBA – **VBA Official** has more than 8000 subscribers.

It is effortless for the viewer, and often entertaining. Videos are a great way to connect with the viewers and provide more of a personal, hands-on feel than traditional marketing. Engagement is key to the success of a marketing campaign, therefore, platforms that display video content offer multiple layers of engagement. Beyond viewing of the video, VBA Official offers different ways to connect with the audience. For example, viewers are able to leave feedback and comments on the matches highlights or footages. This allows viewers to interact not only with each other, but also with the VBA. VBA admins are able to reply to comments, post questions, opinions, and engage with their audience. This will have a remarkable impact on VBA branding because new viewers will be able to see and read the back and forth communication between the league and other viewers. This humanizes the VBA and makes them appear as approachable, professional, and helpful.

Additionally, YouTube has the ability to be used as a search engine either by actively going to the site to use it as the search engine or being directed from links on social networks, e-mails, search engines such as Google, website, etc. For examples, fans easily reach VBA Official for the keywords “Vietnam basketball”, “Saigon Heat”, “Hanoi Buffaloes”, ...on YouTube. By embedding videos from YouTube channel on VBA's website (vba.vn), marketers can drive traffic to the VBA Official, in addition to traffic generated from search engines and other methods. This is a two-way street as well, as users can be directed to VBA website through the videos on YouTube.

As we can see from the Figure 5, VBA YouTube generates a variety of content to keep Fans being interested. VBA YouTube channels are categorized clearly into the playlists: Game, Highlights, Dancers, TV News, ...Overall, most of playlists attracted better organic

traffic than expectation, especially the Off-the-Court playlist with 7,600 views, thank the effective corporation with key Media partners’ channels, such as vovthethao, TienPhong online.

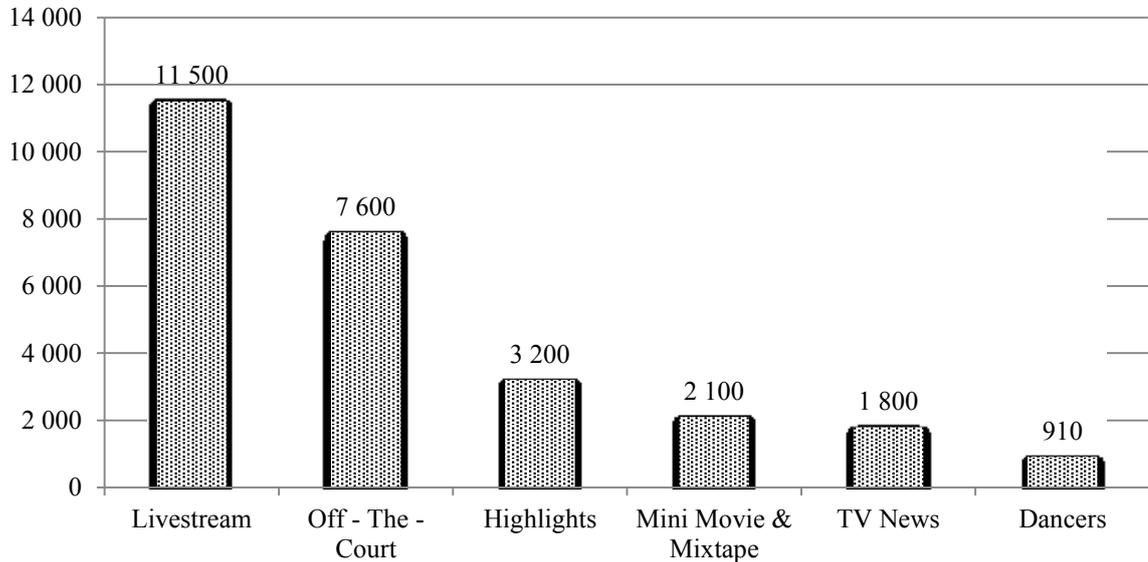


Figure 5: VBA 2016 – Average Views of Top Videos Category

Source: VBA 2016 Report

The highest number of views was recorded by Livestream (at 11, 500 views) because of the great interactiveness of livestream videos. Due to the significant shift in viewing attitudes from TV channels to livestream videos, together with the other events organisers, VBA is now adapting the way of approaching sports leagues. By teaming up with well-known broadcasters offering streaming services to deliver these events to viewers via OTT, such as HTV or VTV in Vietnam, VBA is able to make their games go live and deliver them through their YouTube channel – VBA Official.

**c. Website**

Today website is the most important tool for marketing a business, services or products. The website is that place where the audiences have the opportunity to communicate a brand, culture and maybe most importantly its story. This is often where the prospects will make the decision to interact with a company further and take the next step in the marketing cycle to immediately purchase a product, opt-in to receive regular content or pick up the phone and call the business.

Understand that importance of the website, vba.vn (VBA website) was continuously invested in designing, testing, optimizing and maintaining since the VBA project was confirmed. All aspects, from customized landing pages to compelling content that encourage visitors to be engaged with the brand – VBA, were analyzed and optimized to the most appropriate and effective appearance and performance.

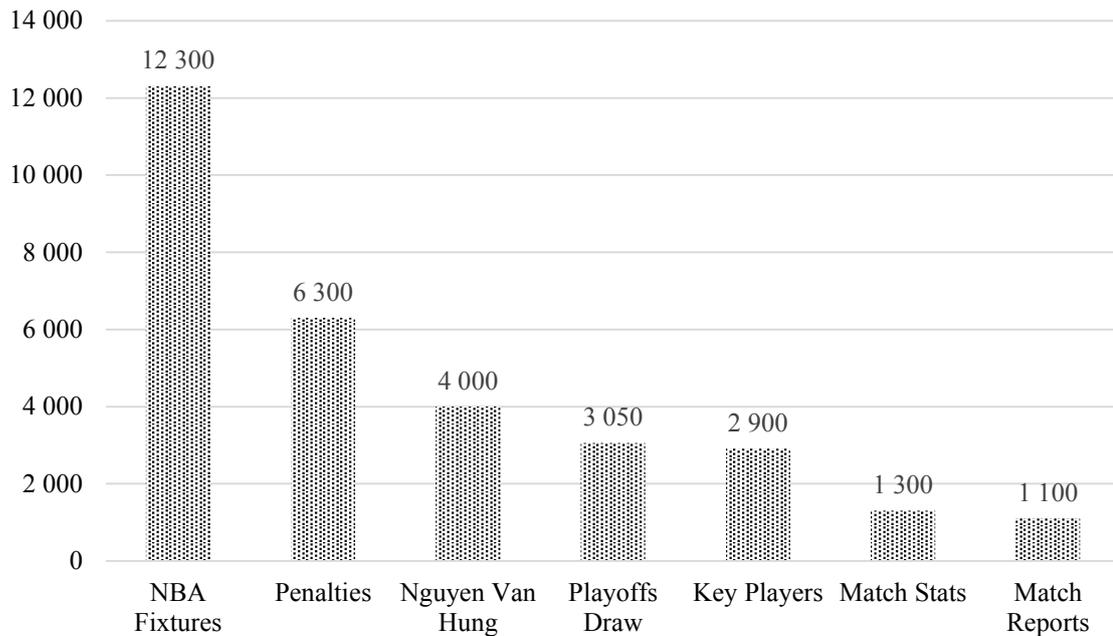


Figure 6: VBA 2016 – Average Views of Top Article Category

Source: VBA 2016 Report

VBA Website is well designed (for Desktop & Mobile) with full functions of Basketball Web (stats, schedule, standings, rosters, ...). In the 2016 season, the Daily visit was as promising as the expectation (more than 1.300 Visits/day), the Duration/Visit was good compared to standard duration (longer than 30 seconds). As described from the Figure 6, NBA contents seem to attract great traffic to VBA website with the highest number of 12,300 views, followed by the topics of Penalties, Nguyen Van Hung, Playoffs Draw and Hot Players with the figures of 6300, 4000, 3050, 2900 views respectively. While Match Stats and Reports articles were marked at the lowest average views (1300 and 1100 respectively).

Besides, the fanpages of VBA and teams, which are strong and active, become the secret and effective weapons of VBA website. Those fanpages could play multiple roles: from a marketing engine and a research/insight/lead generation platform to a customer service tool. The Facebook based on an incredible amount of interactions, which can provide VBA

with a wealth of data that they can use to improve their services or products on the website, as well as their overall business approach.

On contrast, the overall VBA timeline was not kept as planning and the website’s admins had to skip some functions, which negatively affected the website traffic due to poor user’s experience. In addition, the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) of VBA website had a poor performance as it is really hard to look for the VBA web pages and other related articles, information, contents in the primary search results from all major search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo.

**d. Email marketing**

The VBA use email as a channel which helps them to contact customers after establishing business relationship offline. Usually it is a tool which is used to send contracts, price lists, products catalogs, and other documents to company’s business partners.

Email was rarely used as a marketing tool in the VBA 2016, it was more used for simple business operations.

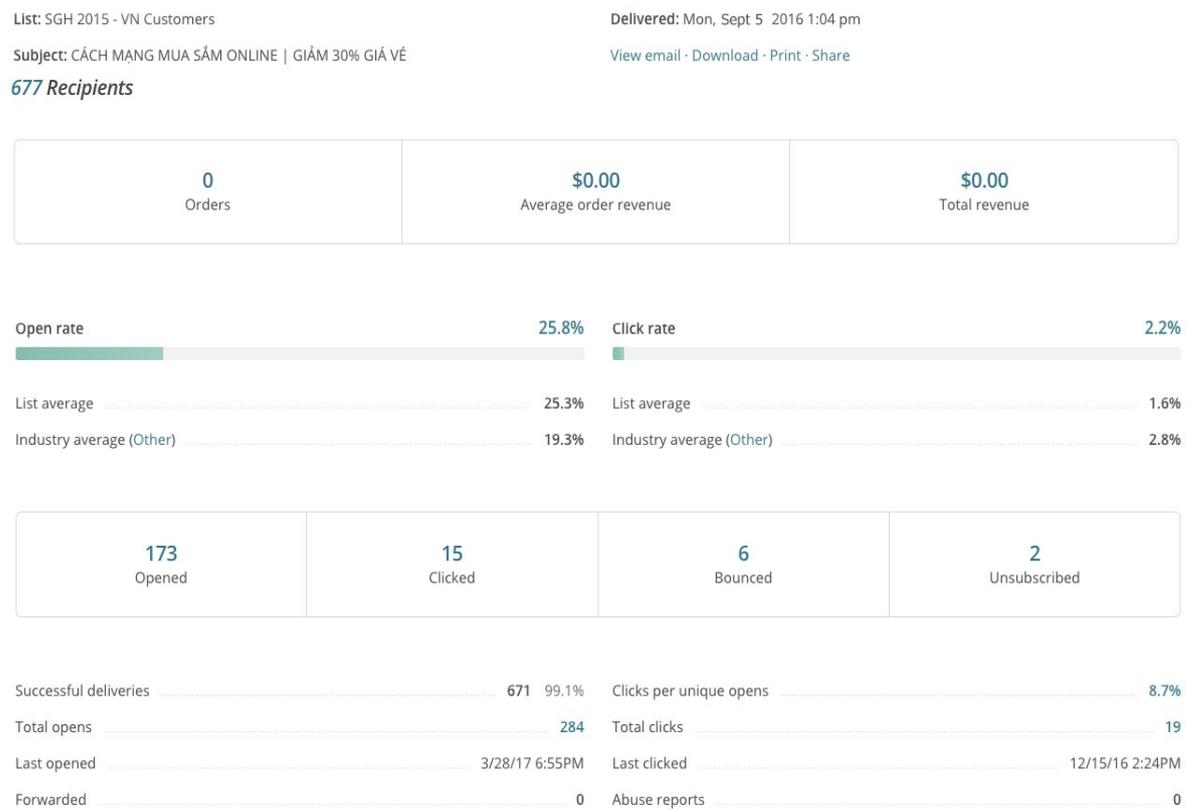


Figure 7: Saigon Heat Email Campaign Report – VBA 2016

Source: Saigon Heat – Maichimp Report

During the first season of the VBA, only Saigon Heat Team did send the emails marketing. However, it worked as the self-managed activity from the Sale team of Saigon Heat as the VBA did not execute a specific and unified email marketing plan for the whole tournament.



**[12.09] CÁCH MẠNG ONLINE | GIẢM NGAY 30% CHO TẤT CẢ CÁC HẠNG VÉ**

Bùng nổ ngày mua sắm online 12.12.2016, Saigon Heat kính gửi đến quý khán giả hâm mộ mã **GIẢM GIÁ 30% khi mua vé online HÔM NAY**, áp dụng cho tất cả các hạng vé. Mã giảm giá:



Saigon Heat chạm trán Danang Dragons

**ONLINE1209**

Sau bất cẩn trước đối thủ Hong Kong Eastern Long Lions vào Thứ Bảy tuần trước, Saigon Heat sẽ bước vào trận chạm trán đầu tiên với đối thủ khó chịu Danang Dragons vào **17:00 ngày 17/09/2016** tại Nhà thi đấu Lá phong trường Quốc tế Canada, Quận 7.

Trước đối thủ là đương kim vô địch ABL 2015, thầy trò Huấn luyện viên Anthony Garbelotto sẽ có chiến thuật gì để tận dụng lợi thế của tân binh Herbert Hill và lấy lại phong độ vốn có của cả đội? Hãy cùng đến và cổ vũ cho Saigon Heat.

Áp dụng mã **ONLINE1209** để được **GIẢM NGAY 30%** khi mua vé online hôm nay.

**BOOK NOW**

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Figure 8: VBA 2016 Saigon Heat Email Marketing Template

Source: Saigon Heat – Maichimp Report

**5.3.2 Public Relations**

Public relations are seen as a vital part of maintaining the organization’s image and of communicating its message to its customers, investors and the general public. In terms of sports marketing, fans and supporters are the highly visible representation of sport public relations and communications as they are the living and breathing representation – the heart and soul – of sport. Fans and supporters are the lifeblood of any sports organization, without their support the sports organization would arguably cease to exist and function. Therefore, fans and supporters are key public relations tools of VBA.

Public relations, in its ideal existence, help to provide audiences with information and knowledge they would not already enjoy. During the first season, huge numbers of communicating messages were being continually delivered to the supporters in order to effectively shape VBA’s image as the most interesting and challenging sports tournament in Vietnam. PR helped VBA develop the relationships with their fans professionally, boost the image of Vietnamese basketball and sports, promote the new style of enjoying and supporting professional sports as well as strengthen group’s reputation, supporters’ perception and positive public impressions.

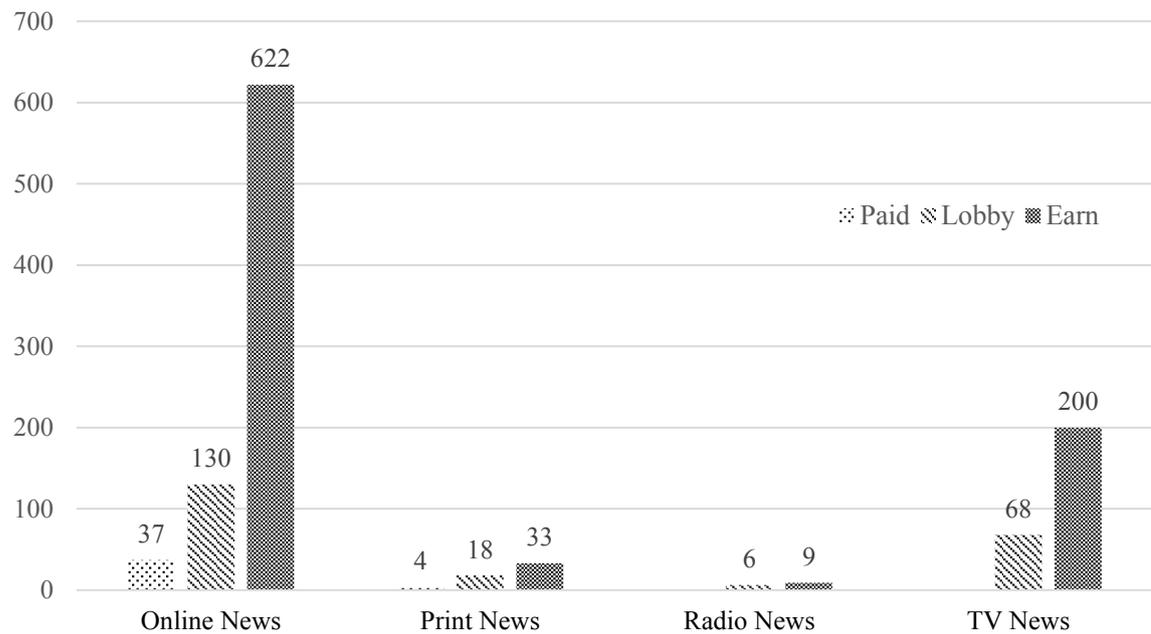


Figure 9: Number of PR news in each channel

Source: VBA 2016 Report

It is noticeable that VBA news was covered in all key media channels targeted and made a great growth in number, exceeded 30% KPI (VBA 2016 Report). To be more specific, the

online news is the dominant channel which accounted for 70% of all news, followed by TV News with the percentage of 24%. On the other hand, PR budget was optimized thank to enhancing media relationship and partnership, as a result, the quantity of Earned News reached 77% of all news. Although VBA news were published in several well-known and key newspapers (such as ThanhNien, TuoiTre, 24h.com.vn, TienPhong, HaNoiMoi, DaNang, CanTho), printed media team still need to pay more attention and efforts in order to maintain an effective PR performance not only in the upcoming season ahead but also during the off-season period.

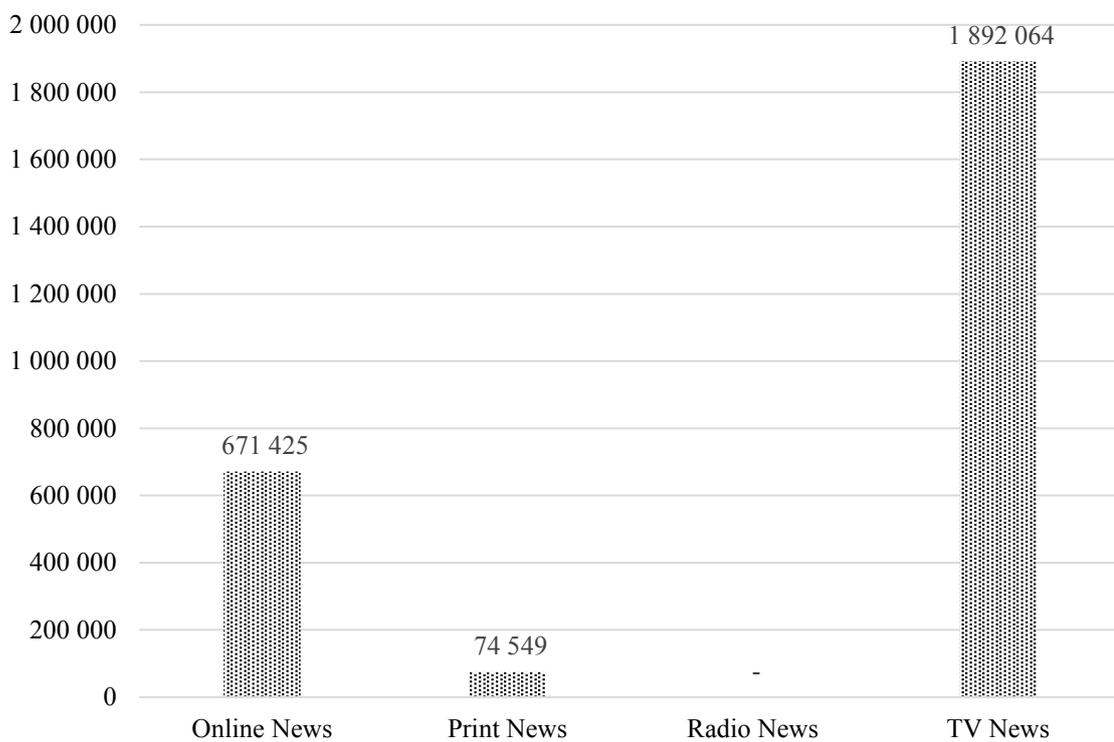


Figure 10: PR Value in each channel (in USD)

Source: VBA 2016 Report

According to VBA 2016 Report, the total PR value exceeded KPI with 20% greater, reached more than \$2.6 million (Radio value is not available). As can be seen from the Figure 8, TV News is the key channel that brought most of the PR value to VBA with \$1,892,064 (more than 70% of the total value), the following is Online News that accounted for \$671,425 (26%). PR team has been developing a good relationship with lots of major television broadcasters such as HTV, VTV, ThethaoTV, SCTV and VTC, those are always willing to support all of the VBA’s programs despite main games, weekly news, players’ information, fans engagement or other extra activities.

## 5.4 TICKET SALES AND ATTENDANCE

### 5.4.1 VBA tickets portfolio

There are five main kinds of VBA tickets in the first season, those include Courtside, VIP, Premium, Standard 1, Standard 2. Besides, because of being organized in 4 different cities, the price of the tickets varied based on the several factors such as the venue, the life costing, the average income, the sponsorships, and others.

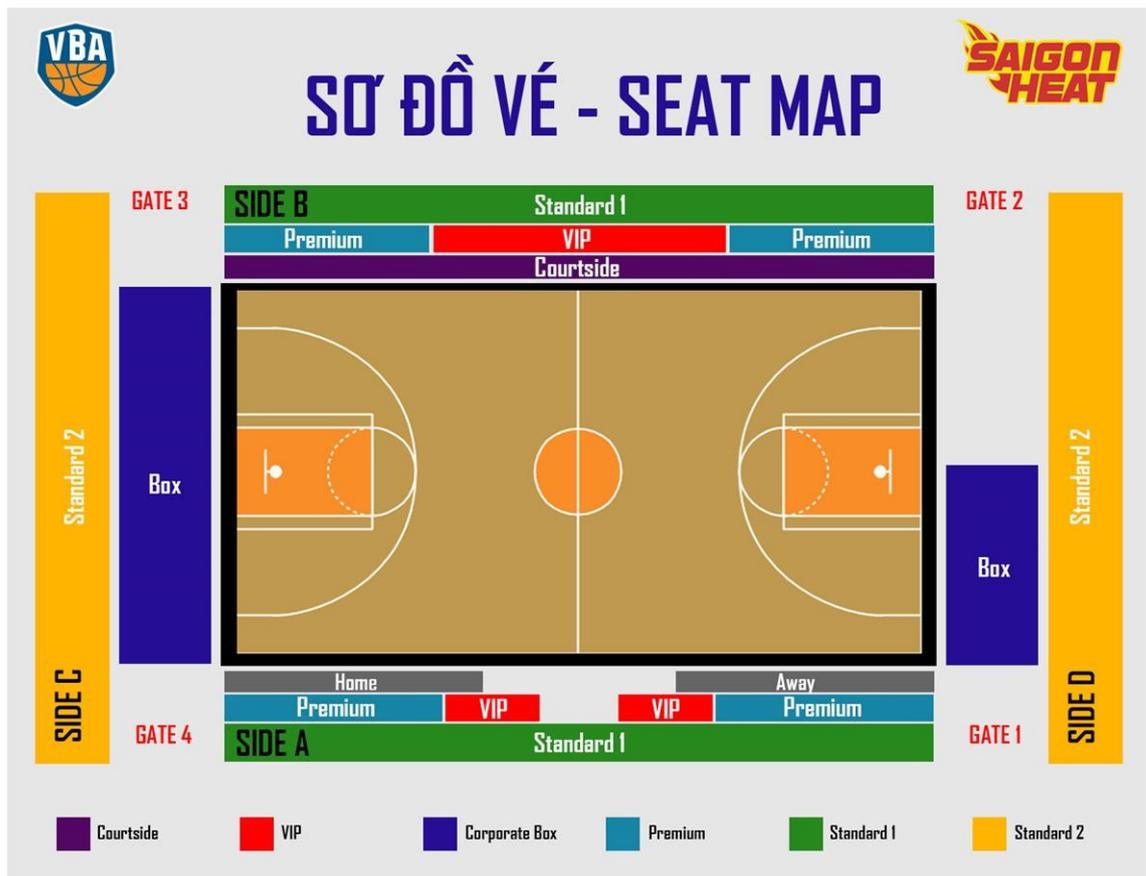
Table 2: VBA 2016 Tickets Price (in VND)

	Ticket Class				
	Courtside	VIP	Premium	Standard 1	Standard 2
	Single Match Tickets Price				
	900,000	500,000	300,000	150,000	70,000
	800,000	400,000	250,000	150,000	70,000
	800,000	500,000	250,000	150,000	70,000
	700,000	300,000	150,000	90,000	60,000
	700,000	300,000	150,000	-	50,000
	Seasonal Tickets Price				
	7,200,000	4,000,000	2,400,000	1,200,000	560,000
	6,400,000	3,200,000	2,000,000	1,200,000	560,000
	6,400,000	4,000,000	2,000,000	1,200,000	560,000

	5,600,000	2,400,000	1,200,000	720,000	480,000
	5,600,000	2,400,000	1,200,000	-	400,000

Source: Own research

*Courtside ticket:* ticket holders will have their own seats with the best views. In addition, they are also served food, drinks on the field, receive discount vouchers from Adidas or Nike, meet celebrities in the entertainment industry and have the opportunity to communicate with the coach and the players.



Picture 3: Saigon Heat seat map

Source: VBA Website

*VIP ticket:* ticket holders will have the best view from the field. Additionally, they receive vouchers from the Galaxy Cinema.

*Premium ticket:* ticket holders have a good side to support and enjoy the match. They also receive vouchers from the Galaxy Cinema.

*Standard ticket:* the most basic seat that has a bit restriction on view from the stands.

*Seasonal ticket:* the holders are able to access all matches in the season including playoff and championship matches. There are several advantages for seasonal ticket holders:

- Luxury hard-card tickets (All ticket classes)
- Serving food and drinks (Courtside / VIP)
- Promotional items, merchandises discount (Standard: 15%, Courtside / VIP / Premium: 30%)
- Prioritized name on seat (All ticket classes)

### 5.4.2 Attendance

In fact, the low live attendance rate in Vietnamese sports has been noticed for several years. Even the league of Vietnamese king sport – football (V-League) has declined or leveled off for the last three to five years. However, VBA 2016 has brought a significantly promising picture of sports not only from the battle field but also from the supporting on the stands. The average numbers of attendance and the fill-up rates are described as below.

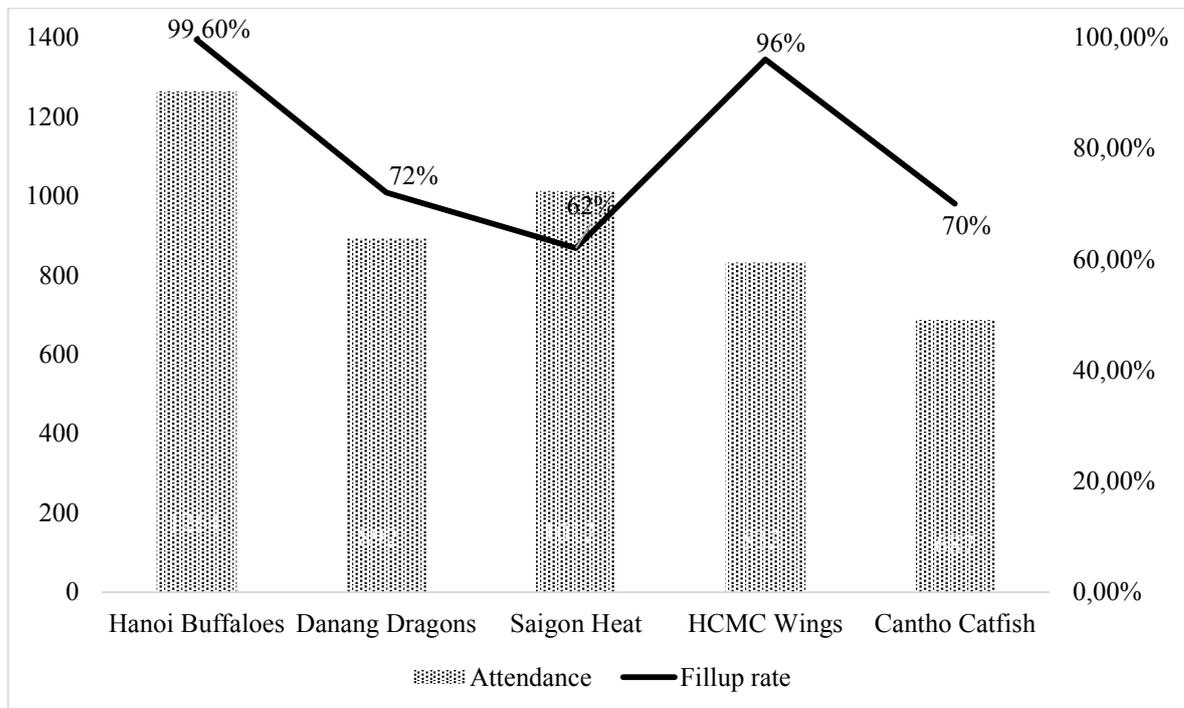


Figure 11: VBA 2016 Average attendance and Fill-up Rate

Source: VBA 2016 Report

From the Figure 10, Hanoi Buffaloes was the team who ran their venue and attracted spectators most efficiently in the tournament as their stadium used to be full of fans with 1,264 supporters per game and the fill-up rate reached almost 100%. The following number of fans per match is Saigon Heat (1,012 supporters/game), however, they had the lowest fill-up rate at 62% due to the high capacity of their home stadium – CIS. On contrast, Hochiminh City Wings was seen as one of the teams that have fewest supporters (832 supporters/game) but showed a high fill-up rate around 96%, that means this team should increase the number of seats in the stadium or change to the other one with higher capacity.

**5.4.3 Ticket Sales**

The results that VBA achieved are beyond expectation, it is the first time a sports tournament has attracted a huge number of Vietnamese youth. In Hanoi, the VBA 2016, which was held at the Bach Khoa Sports Hall, became the primary need of young people who have the high passion on basketball. As a result, the stands are always crowded, active and crazy every weekend. More than three quarters of supporters are young people, basketball enthusiasts and even foreigners. Moreover, many of fans bought the seasonal ticket that gives them the permission to access more than a dozen matches. In Saigon, the tournament has become a target for young people to date every Saturday and Sunday. Despite the high prices (from VND 70,000 to 900,000 per match and from 400,000 to more than 5 million in an 8 season), tickets were sold out and the stadiums were full all the time.

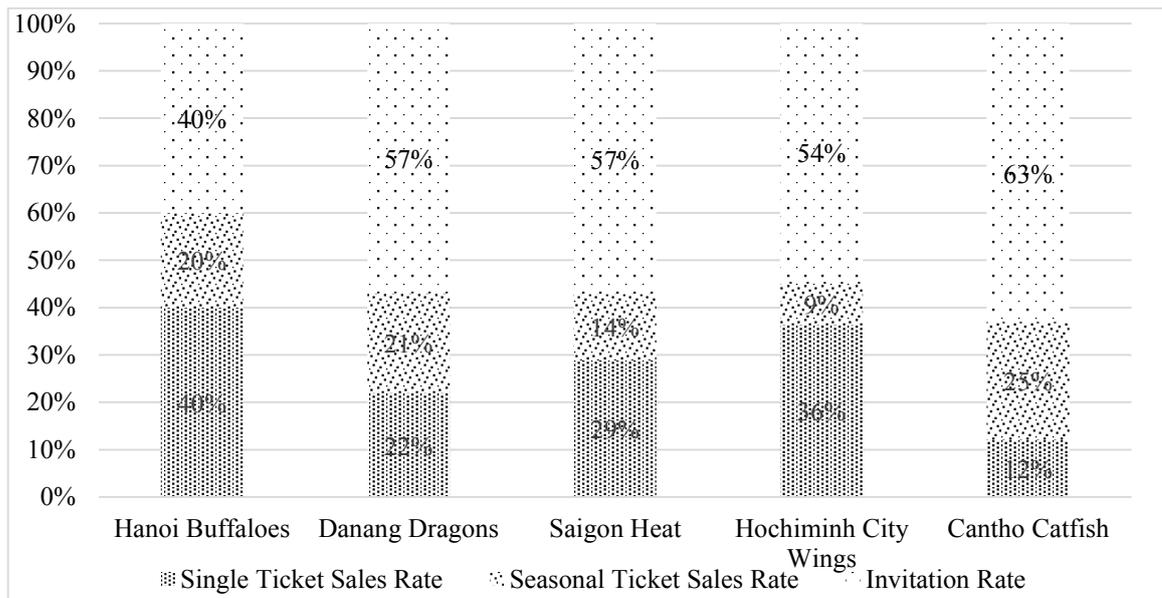


Figure 12: VBA 2016 Ticket Sales Rates

Source: VBA 2016 Report

It is the truth that in spite of remaining the high fill-up rate, the VBA has launched lots of invitation tickets during the first season in 2016 (40% – 63%). These invitation tickets are better to be converted to tickets for sale in order to increase the total revenue from the rise of gate receipt.

On the other hand, Saigon Heat and Hochiminh City Wings are paying efforts to improve their sale strategies as well as add more promotional offers in order to increase the rate of purchasing seasonal tickets, that will ensure the stable number of supporters and income in the whole season.

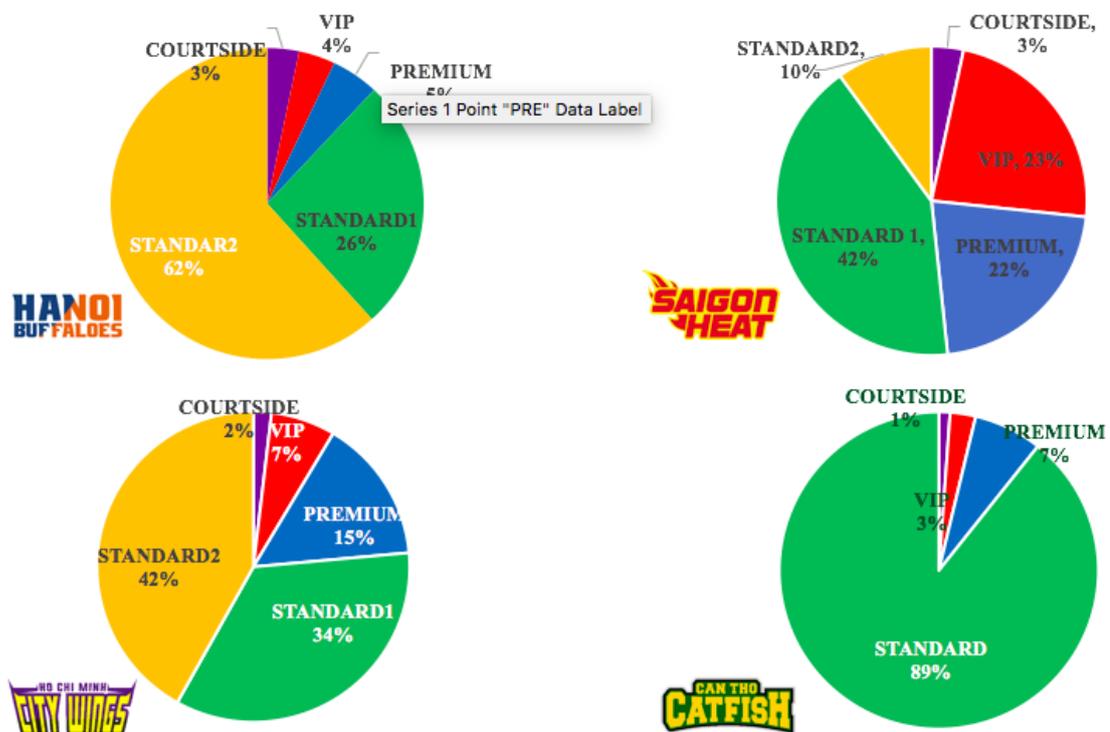


Figure 13: VBA 2016 Ticket Sale Quantity Breakdown per Type

Source: VBA 2016 Report

Because of the first professional basketball team, which was founded in 2011, Saigon Heat is the major catalyst of basketball’s development in Vietnam. Representing Vietnam in ASEAN Basketball League, Saigon Heat creates an aspiration that Vietnamese can compete athletically, professionally, and internationally. Therefore, Saigon Heat has built a strong fan club that secures them from the supporters’ attendance in all of the matches and ticket sales for all top classes (Courtside, VIP, Premium) with 48% of the total number.

In the case of other teams, there are 2 main reasons for the low sale of luxury classes. Firstly, it was the first season of VBA, the supporters were still wondering about the quality of

the matches for purchasing a ticket. Moreover, VBA tickets are considered a bit higher compared to the income of the Vietnamese. Secondly, the stadiums' capacity have the limited number of seats and it was difficult to arrange the top classes areas.

## 5.5 EMAIL MARKETING COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

In order to deeper understand about the situation that relates to the main project, the author decided to release Email Marketing Communication Survey, which was reviewed and supported to publish by VBA head office.

### 5.5.1 Research methodology

*Type of Research:* The main type of research that will be used in this study is quantitative research, which measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques (Earl Babbie, 2010). Along with questionnaires, the open question is also conducted in order to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior that covers the limits of quantitative research.

*Sampling Method:* The research sampling method that will be used in this study is stratified sampling to obtain a more scientific result that could be used to represent the most relevant stratum of the population and reduce sampling error. In the current research, the specific stratum are highlighted as the people who use email and have an interest in basketball.

Data collection was conducted throughout all of 5 stadiums at VBA 2016, VBA and Teams' Fanpages and some of the basketball fields in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

*Respondents:* The respondents in this research are the ones who are staying in Vietnam, specifically the random selection in four major cities: Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho and Da Nang due to the participation of five teams: Hanoi Buffaloes, Danang Dragons, Hochiminh City Wings, Saigon Heat and Cantho Catfish. The sampled respondents will be asked by the researcher or VBA fanpages and staffs for consent an approval to answer the questionnaire until the desired number of respondents is reached. The opinion of experts will also be sought in this research to provide explanations regarding the email effects on purchasing behaviors.

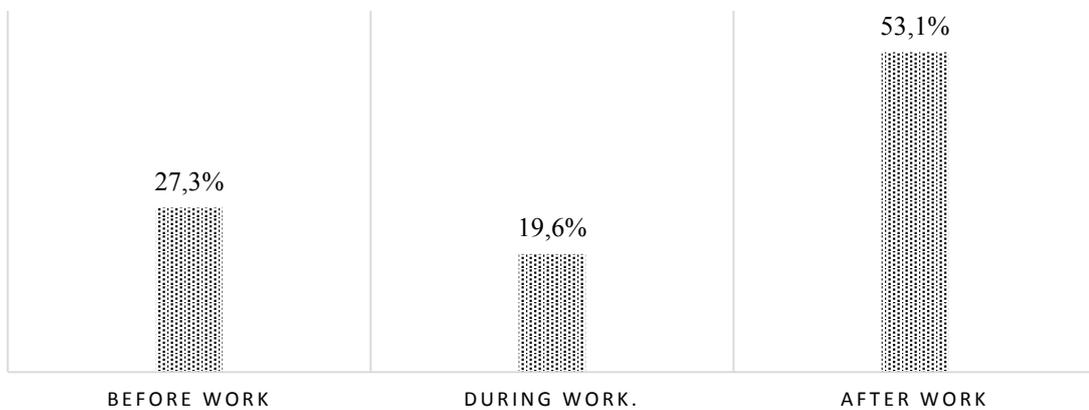
*Questionnaire:* The questionnaire requires information about the email marketing communication of the respondents who are interested in basketball (Appendix I).

Most of the questions were referred from the surveys of the email marketing experts – BlueHornet, which are: “BlueHornet Report: 2013 Customer views of email marketing” and “2015 Customer views of email marketing”.

**5.5.2 Research results**

The results highlight important findings of consumer behavior and sentiment toward email marketing as well as statistics about interactions with brands and their experience on VBA in the first season. The survey includes data from more than 400 people from 12 years old within Vietnam.

**Question 1:** When do you first check your personal email?



Graph 1: Checking personal email

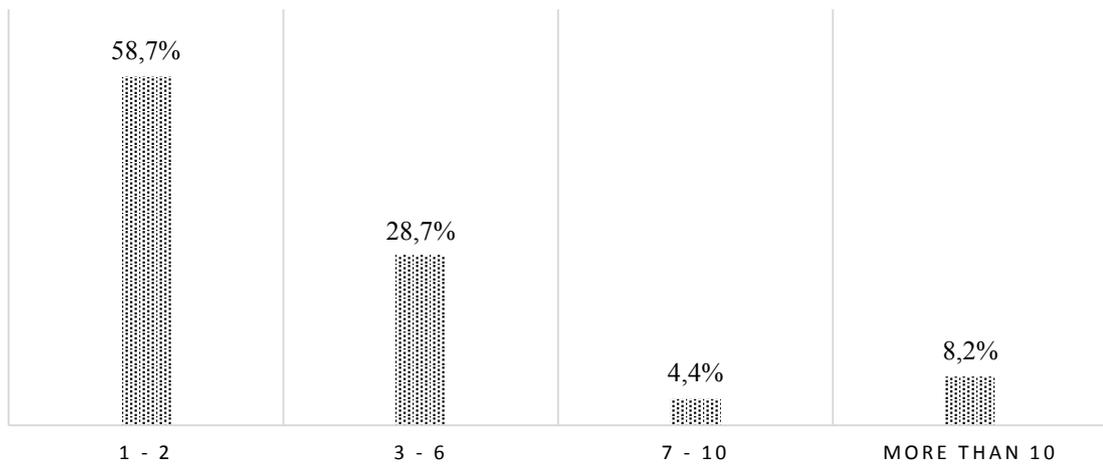
Source: Own research

More than half of the respondents (53.1%) first check their personal email after work. Following percentage is seen at first checking email before work with 27.3%. While just 19.6% of respondents said that they first check email during their working time.

Take action: it’s better to send the advertising email at the end of daily working time (4:00 – 5:00 p.m), then the VBA’s email will be able to appear in one of the top places in the inbox of the recipient when they start checking their personal email after work.

**Question 2:** How many times do you check your personal email per day?

Email continues to be a frequently used communications channel for consumers. A third say they are checking email actively throughout the day (3 – 10 times), and 8.2% say they are checking email more than 10 times a day. Mobile devices have enabled near constant communications and engagement, and nobody benefits more than marketers.

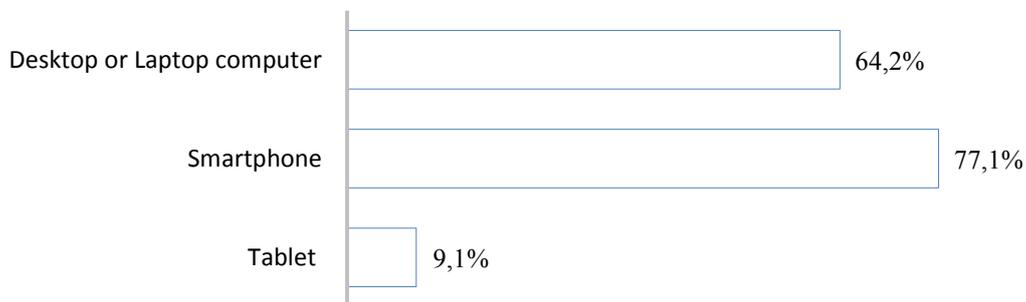


Graph 2: Frequency of checking personal email per day

Source: Our research

Take action: the VBA can design the contents for cross-device viewing and engagement, since a supporter may see their message any time of day and on different devices.

**Question 3:** Which device do you use to check email? - Select all that apply



Graph 3: Device used for checking email

Own research

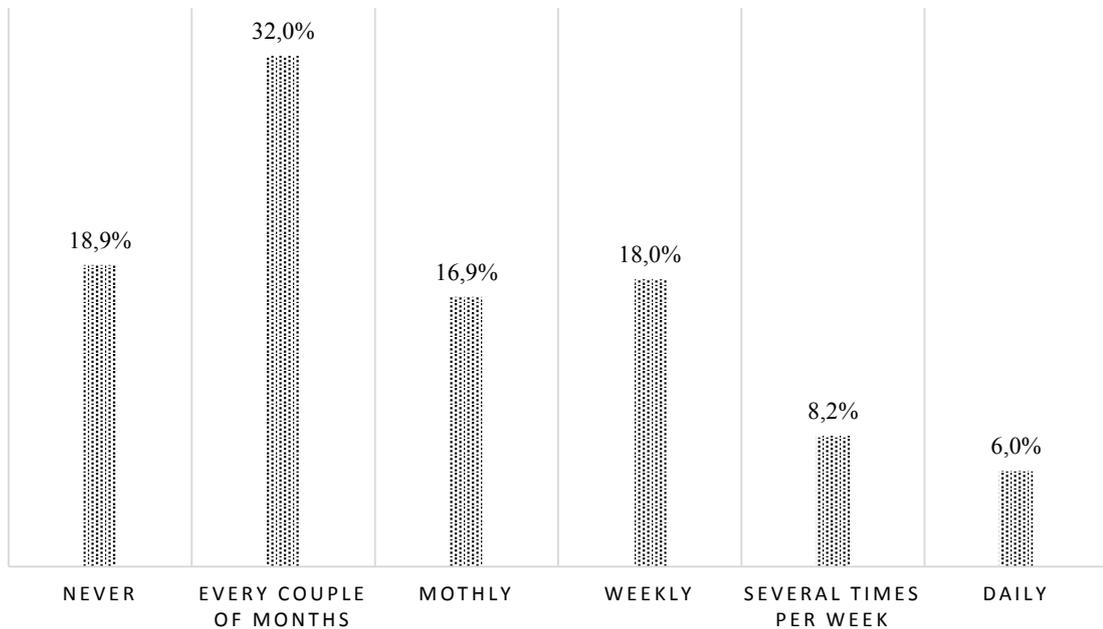
While respondents report using multiple devices to check email, the device they consider their primary device is a smartphone (77,1% state that they do use a smartphone to check email). In no way does this downplay the importance of mobile in the VBA email strategy.

Take action: It’s more critical than ever to optimize email design for viewing across devices. At a minimum, the VBA need to embrace mobile-first email design:

- Think skinny: Adopt a template 300 to 500 pixels wide to avoid making the reader scroll right to see your most important content.

- Worry about fat fingers: Make buttons at least 44x44 pixels for easy thumb-tapping.
- Enlarge those fonts. Make sure text is legible on small screens. (That typically means at least 14 pixels for body fonts and 22 pixels for headline fonts.)
- Shout it out: Provide a prominent call-to-action (CTA) above-the-fold. Tell the reader what action to take in the first 300pixels.
- Consider whitespace: Cut the clutter to get the campaign objective across.

**Question 4:** How often do you prefer to receive email from businesses (retailers, restaurants, shops, entertainment services, ...)



Graph 4: Frequency preference of receiving email from business

Source: Own research

One-third of the respondents prefer to receive marketing emails every couple of months. The VBA should take the frequency into consideration because it can be noted a low rate of consumers saying they preferred daily (6%) and several times per week (8.2%) emails. Next, the rate of consumers preferring weekly or monthly emails is around 17-18%.

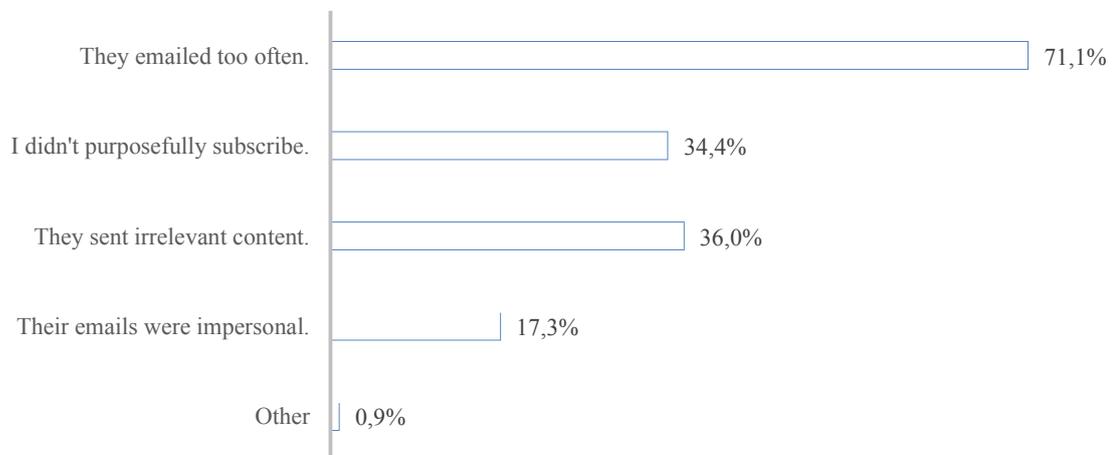
Take action: Segmentation, including inputs based on channel engagement, purchase frequency, click behaviors and closely monitoring performance, are all critical to email program success. Test frequently, and let the relevance of data and content – not marketing calendars – drive the contact approach.

**Question 5:** Why do you unsubscribe emails or flag emails as spam? - Select all that apply

Frequency seems to be more important as the primary reason of unsubscribing from an email program is that they feel they're getting too many emails those are irrelevant to their interests and preferences (they didn't purposefully subscribe). The following reason is that "The email is impersonal" which is chosen by 17.3% of respondents.

Take action: VBA should try to keep subscribers from deciding to unsubscribe by taking some, or all, of the following steps:

- (1) Assess performance by acquisition source and adjust accordingly
- (2) Use data to personalize emails
- (3) Conduct frequency testing at the segment level
- (4) Develop and deploy an automated reactivation plan for email subscribers
- (5) Give subscribers the option to not only receive fewer emails but to select the type of content they are most interested in, such as newsletters, deals, etc.



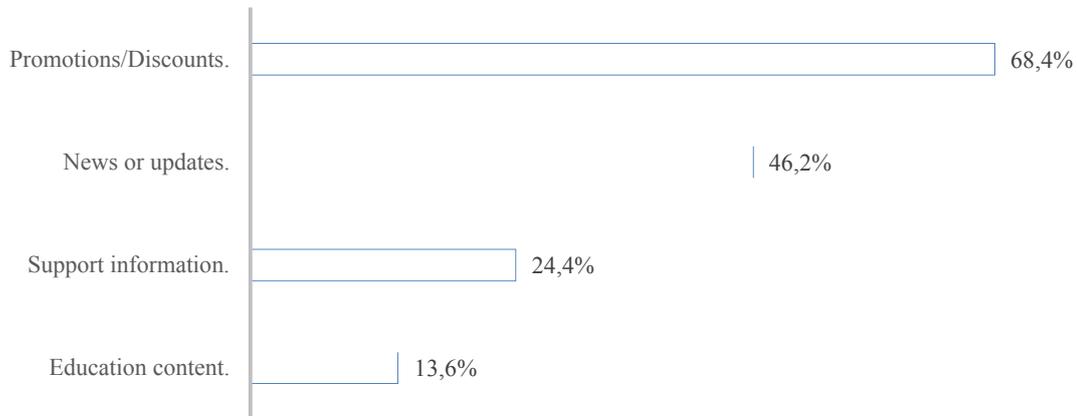
Graph 5: Reasons of unsubscribing email or flagging email as spam

Source: Own research

**Question 6:** Why do you read marketing/advertising emails? - Select all that apply

While most consumers subscribe to email to save money (68.4%), there are other reasons they join a brand's list. "News or updates" remains the top non-financial reason to subscribe, that means people wants to receive the update news or information relating to products, games or events, etc. In fact, people tend to prefer money-off offers from the newsletters in almost all of business areas. Nevertheless, it's still good to see that a sizable per-

centage of consumers sign up for email for non-financial reasons, such as support information or wanting to access the educational content.

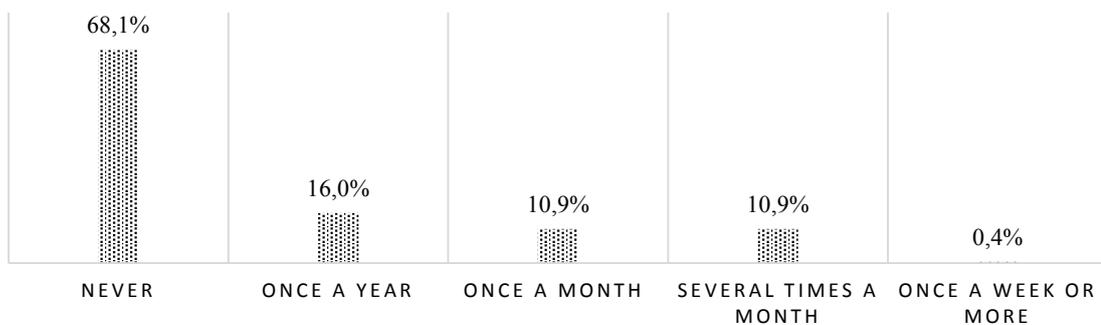


Graph 6: Reasons for reading marketing/advertising emails

Source: Own research

Take action: Test different offers such as Money off, Free shipping, Percentage off, Group purchase, Loyalty (additional points), Free gift with, Referral program, rewards among the various age groups, as well as other segments and demographics, so VBA will understand which ones are the most impactful. Offer testing remains an important part of every email program. Besides, keep reminding the supporters about all the great benefits they receive by being a part of VBA’s email program. Leverage content to build VBA and teams’ brand affinity, share ideas, or generate inspiration. Send follow up emails after purchases or games to solicit feedback and gauge satisfaction.

**Question 7:** How often do you buy products and services from marketing/advertising emails?



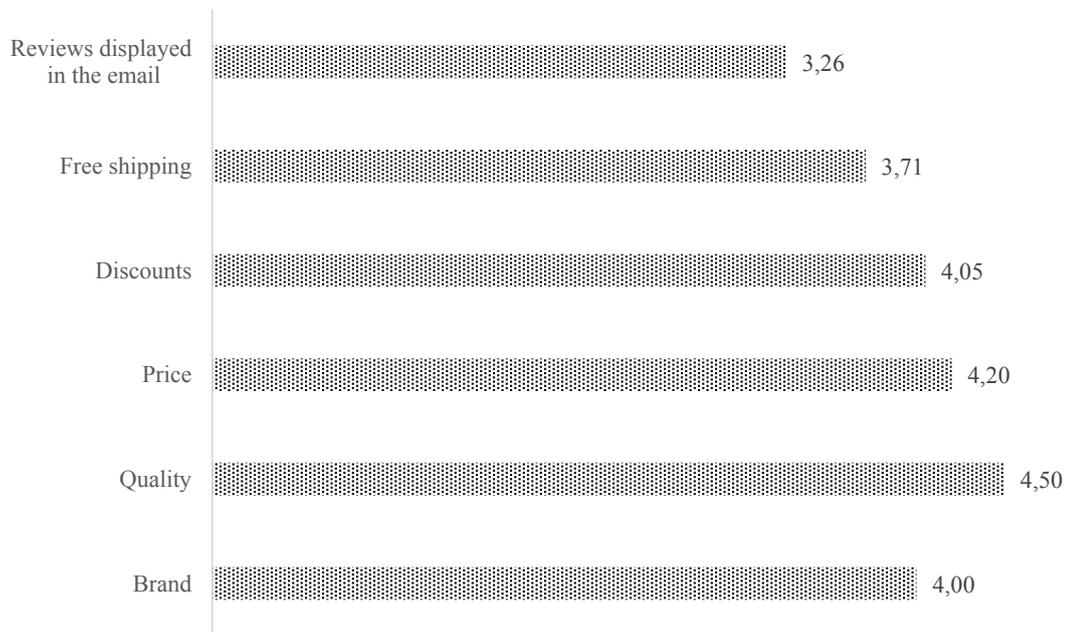
Graph 7: Frequency of purchasing products and services from marketing emails

Source: Own research

Although emails are widely used in daily, purchasing products from marketing/advertising is still an awkward experience in the case of Vietnamese customers as 68% state that they never buy products from advertising emails. There is just 11% of respondents say that email campaigns drive them to purchase multiple times a month or more.

Take action: Not just the VBA, it is the challenge as well as the opportunity for all Vietnamese businesses to improve their impact and effectiveness of email marketing and leverage email marketing to become one of the key-driven channels for purchasing decision. Some resources and appropriate tools can be taken into consideration: data, content, personalization, frequency, multiple device rendering, etc. It's deserved to keep fighting for a well-performed piece of the digital advertising pie in order to optimize and grow continuously.

**Question 8:** How much influence does each of these factors have in causing you to make a purchase from an email? (Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means very little influence and 5 means a great deal of influence)



Graph 8: Average influence-point of each factors have in causing to make a purchase from an email

Source: Own research

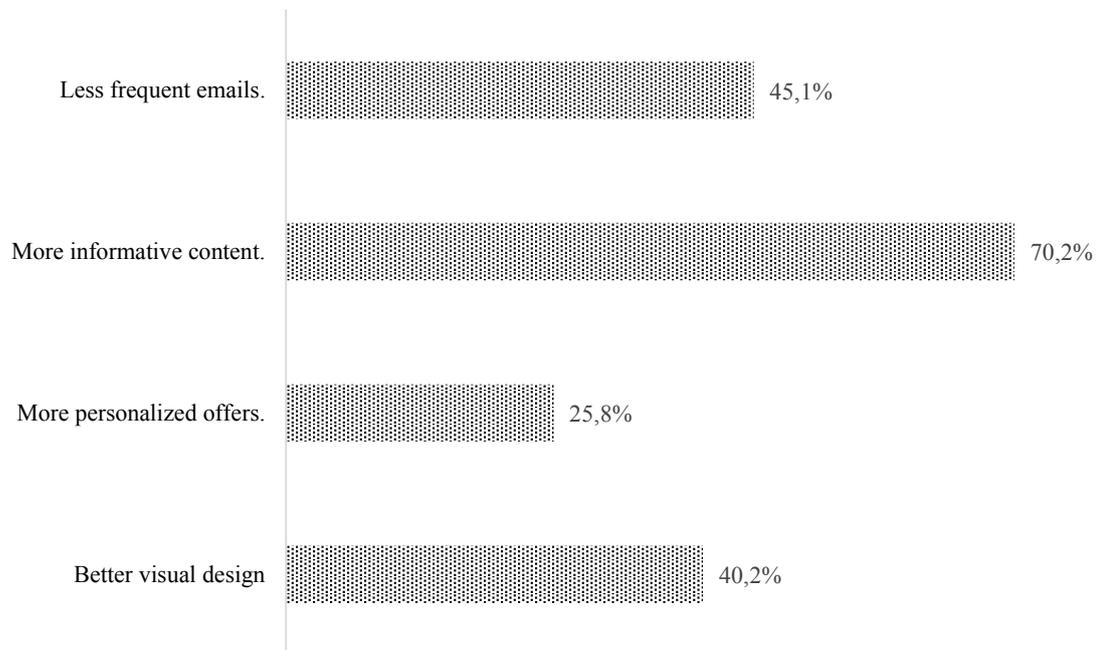
The way people buy products and services online has dramatically changed over the years –and these days, the customer has more power than ever. Question 8 highlights 6 factors

that influence purchase decisions from an email. That may help broaden the understanding of customer mindset. Here are some worth stats from the survey: Quality is the most important factor (4.5 points of influence) that customers consider to make the purchase. Price is the second-highest factor influencing purchasing decisions (4.20), right after product quality, followed by Discount and Brand.

Take action: It makes sense that VBA should focus on enhancing the quality as the key objective of the organization. The ideal value is organizing a high-quality game at the good price of tickets combine with appropriate discount and branding strategy.

**Question 9:** How businesses could improve their email efforts? – Short answer

This is an open question that aims to collect the own thoughts and opinions of respondents. Most of the respondents say that businesses should develop the content to be more informative in order to improve their email efforts. The following ideas are “Less frequent emails” (45.1%) and “Better visual design” (40.2%), which mean businesses need to spend more resource and effort in designing the email marketing and set an effective timeline to send those attractively visual emails. Besides, the importance of personalization has to be taken into consideration as 25.8% of the respondents state that businesses are better to send more personalized offers.



Graph 9: Suggestions to improve businesses' email efforts

Source: Own research

### 5.5.3 Discussion of the results and outcomes for the project

Base on the finds from the research results, there are a number of worth outcomes for the project part as described below.

**Design:** VBA can design the contents for cross-device viewing and engagement, since a supporter may see their message any time of day and on different devices especially the mobile ones. In addition, it's necessary to pay more efforts to create the more attractive emails or newsletters visual design.

**Content:** Email content can convince the readers to stay focused on the email or newsletter. Therefore, it is crucial to improve the content of emails sent to the supporters by applying those insights:

- Use data to personalize emails and give the subscribers the option to select their interesting content.
- Test different offers among the various groups or segments of customers and keep reminding the supporters about all the great benefits they receive by being a part of VBA's email program.
- Leverage content to build VBA and teams' brand affinity, share ideas, or generate inspiration.
- Send follow up emails after purchases or games to solicit feedback and gauge satisfaction and keep the information updating.

**Timing:** timing plays a crucial role in the success of email marketing campaign. Those finding can be taken into consideration when setting the timing strategy:

- Send the advertising email at the end of daily working time (4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.), then the recipient could start checking their personal email after work.
- Allow subscribers to choose the options of receiving fewer emails as well as specify the preference of email receiving frequency of each segment and drive an effective timing strategy.

**Manage email list and customer segmentation:** in the email marketing campaign of the VBA, it is important to classify different segments based on typical characteristics for the target customers such as favorite team, household income, type of purchased tickets, the number of children, purchases history, gender etc.

#### 5.5.4 Answering the research questions

The valuable results from the survey also help to answer 2 main research questions, which are:

RQ2: Why email marketing is necessary for the overall marketing strategy of the VBA?

Answer: Email is an established channel that consistently affects consumer behavior – driving increased purchases and increasing spend. With high ROI and the ability to easily test and optimize, email deserves all the attention and resources that the VBA can devote to it.

RQ3: How to optimize the email marketing practice in the case of the VBA?

Answer: From the recipients' perception and interaction with marketing emails that was gained from the survey results, there are two main aspects that the VBA should consider in order to optimize the marketing campaign:

- Mobile Priority: survey reinforced that it is a mobile world and the VBA must focus their efforts on assuring their email programs and strategies. At a minimum, email should be optimized for mobile device viewing and interaction, especially on smartphones. Responsive design is an important consideration since most consumers view email across multiple devices. Beyond the email itself, the VBA have to be sure that their entire mobile experience is also easy for consumers to use such as landing page, purchasing process.
- Personalized Content and Frequency: Consumers expect personalized content and meaningful choices. The VBA can apply triggered programs based on a variety of lifecycle-related data points for maximum relevance and optimal timing; for calendar-based marketing emails, leverage supporters' data to create segments and messaging strategies based on relevant attributes; start with simple programs and tactics, test often, develop more advanced future campaigns.

### **III. PROJECT PART**

## **6 PROJECT OF EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN FOR THE VBA**

The main objective of this project is describing the essential step to formulate email marketing strategy and plan for the VBA. With the email marketing tool, they have more channels to enhance the VBA brand in the customers' preference. The project also evaluates some other important factors which determine the success of the email marketing campaign for the VBA.

The first part of the project is the identification of email marketing campaign's objective, followed by the steps of building the email list. Then, there are the parts of classifying audience along with the way to develop the content of campaign and performance measurement. Those five aforementioned parts play the key role of forming the email marketing plan for the VBA. After that, the project evaluates some key factors which influence the email campaign such as timing, testing, which will help to run the campaign and get done in time as well as give the instruction on the order to execute all steps in the project. All of these parts are important to formulate the email marketing strategy and plan inconsistent with the overall marketing strategy for the VBA.

Then, risks management is another significant factor that highly influences and assure the success of the whole campaign. In addition, the project will be more applicable and practical to the current situation of the VBA thank to the analysis of time and costs.

### **6.1 EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN PLAN FOR THE VBA**

As already mentioned in the analysis of VBA digital marketing, email marketing is only used occasionally by Saigon Heat's Sale Team for several matches. Therefore, email marketing for the VBA is currently not taken its full advantage in term of marketing objective and ticket sales. This problem can be explained by the lack of investment on email marketing from the association and the consistent of using email as contacting purpose only. Firstly, the company did not take email marketing into consideration as a good channel in order to keep in touch with the supporters, build the brand or promote the ticket sale.

Moreover, the sale personnel use email contacting to the customer on an individual basic. Consequently, the themes, templates, contents and offers are used differently by personnel to seek the customers. It is useful in the case of personalization and targeting as each personnel has the better and more specific knowledge and experience on his/her customers.

However, it decreases the effectiveness and efficiency of the whole marketing campaign for the VBA because of not setting a long-term approach and strategy.

Therefore, an email marketing plan is an essential tool for business. Email marketing plan will be the map to guide marketers toward their goals – one that will get the result on time and with minimum stress. A plan will help marketers coordinate all of the efforts and know what are the key factors influenced to the campaign and how to control them. With it, companies are more likely to be realistic about their time and energy. Moreover, a good plan let the marketing campaign stay organized and on track throughout the long term.

### 6.1.1 Setting Objectives for Email Marketing Campaign of the VBA

It is important to for all marketing activities, including email, to have an overarching goal. Specific objectives are essential to the success of an email marketing campaign because they help to create and adjust the strategy and tactics towards the end goal.

The VBA can set the objective for email marketing for the next season based on the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) framework:

- **Specific** – The detail in the information sufficient to pinpoint problems or opportunities. The objective is sufficiently detailed to measure real-world problems and opportunities.
- **Measurable** – The quantitative or qualitative attributes are applied to create a metric and evaluate the campaign's performance.
- **Achievable** – The company has assessed its capabilities in which it is set to ensure the objectives are achievable.
- **Relevant** – The information is applied to the specific problem faced by the marketer.
- **Time-bound** – Objectives are set for different time periods as targets.

Once a business has decided clearly its objectives, the top management should also define how objective can be achieved and measured by using KPI. KPI is used for benchmarking that enables the organization to measure some aspects of the process compared against actual result to determine the level of success.

Then, some of the objectives with the specific KIPs in the next season of the VBA are described as below:

- Generate leads from the supporters. These email marketing activities are used as advertising tools which the goal is to reach as many fans as possible. This email will mainly deliver the introduction of the tournament, matches, tickets, hospitalities, or about some viral marketing sports event. Offer or incentive for click on the link is an important factor which had to include. More specific:
  - 98% email delivered (Delivery Rate)
  - 35% of prospects received email open the mail (Open Rate)
  - 10% clicks through the link (Click Through Rate), 28% clicks per unique open (Click-to-open Rate)
- Convert leads to registered customers. Follow up email with the offer can be used to encourage supporters who open the mail to register or subscribe to the VBA website to received news about the tournament, games, players, tickets, club kits, promotion or other events.
  - 25% more new subscribers will be gained, that keep the email list growing 10% (List growth Rate)
- Generate sale. This is the most important objective of this email campaign. In order to complete this, the VBA and each team need more email followed up after getting the permission. It can be regular email to remind fans about the VBA schedule or inform customers about the new promotion program.
  - 10% registered customer generate sale within next season (Conversion Rate)
  - To generate awareness of web offering to 80% percent of existing email list in next season.
- In addition to the relative indicators above, email marketing also generates many other results such as: build the traffic to the website and social network pages substantially.
  - Generate 10% of total visits to the website and social networks (150 visits, which are driven from email, on average 1500 visits on website per day)
  - More than 1000 new registered supporters within one year.
- Email marketing is not only used for sale objective only, another crucial goal for email marketing in the next season is to support for researching and analyzing customers and supporters of the VBA teams.
  - Within the next season, email marketing campaign should deliver at least one survey for the VBA and 5 specific surveys for 5 teams.

- Invite customers to take part in online discussion to listen to customer about the VBA 2017 (next season).
- Increase the brand awareness.
  - Increase brand awareness and interaction with the teams' and VBA's brands by viral marketing through email.
  - Deliver customer service by answering frequently asked questions through email.

In conclusion, identifying objectives and setting KPIs will give the management board the clear and specific direction to better come up with effective email marketing strategy and drive the process that lead to a success in the new season of the VBA.

### **6.1.2 Building the Email List**

As a long-term payoff, a strong email list is one of the most valuable assets a company can have in order to growth their business, therefore, healthy email list should be one of the business's top priorities.

A good email list can be defined by both quantity and quality. The effectiveness of an email marketing campaign will increase if the email list contains a large number of email addresses, which means there are lots of potential customers who have the interest in the business. Besides, the quality of an email list refers to the accuracy and valid of email addresses. Moreover, the level of targeting (of that email list) is also an important measure for the quality of the list. Therefore, when it comes to collecting the email addresses, it is better to consider both the quantity and quality of an email list for the VBA.

#### **a. Create an email list**

Regarding establishing a new email list, it seems to be a good option to rent or purchase an email list as VBA and their teams are the new brands in the market. However, it is very challenging to find a good email list provider, especially in Vietnam, where email marketing is a quite new tool so that the service supporting for email marketing is limited, weak, as well as not well targeted. Although it is very quick and cost-effective to get a rented email list and start the email marketing immediately, the VBA and teams are doing the email house list building which refers to acquire the email addresses by itself through both online and offline channels. It is essential to design a structured approach to collect and maintain supporters' data and information.

There are a number of ways that the VBA will employ in order to growth a healthy and effective email database in the upcoming email marketing campaign:

### **Using Email**

- 1) Create remarkable email content. The content plays an important role if the VBA wants supporters to stay subscribed and forward the emails to their family members, colleagues or friends, who are not already on the email list.
- 2) Encourage the current email subscribers to share and forward the emails by including social sharing buttons and an "Email to a Friend" button in the marketing emails. That way, the VBA will gain access to fresh networks, friends, and colleagues who might have interest and sign up for the list. At the bottom of the emails, include a "Subscribe" Call to Action as a simple text-based link so that those receiving the forwarded emails can easily opt-in, too.
- 3) Promote the online contests, like a free kit giveaway, basketball photo contest or guessing game, and have entrants sign up or submit using their email address. (It is even more effective to promote the contests on social)
- 4) Create multiple email subscription types that the VBA use to send more targeted content to specific segments of marketing personas, for examples, the VBA should create different email subscriptions for each team (Hanoi Buffaloes, Danang Dragons, Saigon Heat, Saigon Wings, Cantho Catfish). The emails that have been well targeted are more likely clicked through by email recipients, therefore if the VBA create multiple, targeted subscription segments, they will increase the chance that visitors will subscribe to one of them.
- 5) Add a link to the employees' signatures that leads people to a landing page where they can sign up for the VBA's mailing list.

### **With New Content**

- 6) Create a new lead generation offer – like an album that includes high-quality photos of entertainment shows, players or supporters, a basketball tactical guide or a set of full seasonal fixtures – and require visitors to provide their email address in order to have the permission to download it.
- 7) Create a free, online tool, or resource and have users sign up with their email address. For example, the VBA can create a basketball skill online training to gather the email addresses.

**Using Social Media**

- 8) Promote the lead generation offers on Facebook or Instagram. Create a Facebook campaign to promote a free resource or training to the subscribers that require an email address to redeem.
- 9) Use VBA's and teams' Facebook Pages to promote an offer or contest that requires an email address submission. The VBA can promote offers on the social media as well as create social sharing buttons in the landing pages in order to encourage the leads to share those offers.
- 10) Add a call-to-action button (Sign Up) to the top of all Facebook Pages and link the CTA button to a landing page that requires an email address for access.
- 11) Publish links to gated offers on the VBA's LinkedIn or in appropriate and relevant LinkedIn group discussions.
- 12) Leverage the VBA's YouTube channel. Add calls-to-action and URLs in the videos to encourage people to subscribe to VBA's list, and include links to relevant landing pages in the videos' text descriptions.
- 13) Promote offers and email sign-up through the VBA's Google+ Page by making use of the Google+ updates and the Google+ "About" section.

**Through Telemarketing**

- 14) From interacting with customers and prospects on the phone, VBA's staffs can ask if their customers would like to join the email list, then give them a brief statement of the benefits of enrolling – for example, exclusive offers and discounts only available to email subscribers.

**On the VBA's Website**

- 15) Optimize the VBA's website for opt-ins, link to offers that capture email signups throughout the VBA's website. Keep the offers upfront, and include calls-to-action on just about every page of the website. Key places to consider are the website's homepage, the 'About Us' page, and the 'Contact Us' page.
- 16) When it comes to creating content for guest blogging or commenting opportunities, marketing team will include a call-to-action as well as a link for readers to subscribe to the VBA's site

**Co-branded Email**

- 17) Run a promotion on a partner website or email newsletter that targets a new but appropriate audience to collect email addresses from a fresh source.
- 18) Consider sharing email lists with the neighboring businesses and partners. Offer them the space in the VBA's newsletter in exchange for including the VBA's opt-in form in their newsletter.

### **With Traditional Marketing**

- 19) Collect email addresses at the VBA's games or other offline events like fans meeting and import them into the database. Then, it is necessary to send these contacts a welcome email that confirms their opt-in to the list.
- 20) Encourage prospects in a traditional marketing campaign, like direct mail, to opt in to receive email communications instead. Include a shortened URL with UTM (Urchin Tracking Module) parameters to an online signup, and allow readers to opt out of direct mail.
- 21) Host an online webinar and collect email addresses at registration.
- 22) Leverage paid search ads to link to a landing page with an email sign-up.
- 23) Add a QR code to the print tickets or other marketing collateral that people can scan to opt in to the VBA's email database.

#### **b. Email list management**

List maintenance has become a necessary practice for email marketing success. Hard bounces, soft bounces and unengaged subscribers can have a negative impact on email deliverability, plus they negatively affect the email marketing KPIs.

The majority of email marketing services will allow users to create multiple lists and manage them separately. This is great for businesses that want to develop extremely targeted email lists. In the case of the VBA 2017, the email list will be separated into categories and have a different opt-in form for each section, such as different teams, ticket categories, attendance frequency, etc. If a supporter completes the opt-in form on the web page that features "Saigon Heat" then there is a very good sign that he/she is a fan of Saigon Heat team, so sending him/her targeted emails about Saigon Heat news, specials and promotions will be more effective than just a general email.

#### **c. Subscription management**

The subscribers are allowed to customize the content they prefer to receive from business and manage the frequency of the emails. From the subscription management, the VBA are

able to stay compliant with CANSPAM. The good news is that most reputable email service providers (ESPs) or marketing automation platforms have subscription management functionality built in, so that the VBA just need to be set up and enabled.

When a visitor completes the opt-in form they will receive an email asking them to click a verification link, acknowledging their request to be added to the VBA’s list. Each email sent out will also have an “unsubscribe” option at the bottom of the communication. This not only keeps the VBA’s campaign compliant, but it also saves time from manually removing contacts from the list.

**d. Plan for event-triggered email campaign**

In addition to opt-in form, the VBA will also develop a general plan for the event-triggered email campaign, which is the automated follow-up emails that can be sent out to persuade the recipient to act, such as make a first or subsequent purchase.

The great benefits of event-triggered emails are that once set up and tested for effectiveness, they are a low-cost method of boosting response. Business can let the technology take the strain since there are too many triggers and layers of segmentation to manage manually. The VBA’s plan for the event-triggered email campaign is described in Table 3.

Table 3: The VBA's plan for event-triggered email campaign

	<b>Message type</b>	<b>Interval/ Trigger condition</b>	<b>Outcomes required</b>	<b>Medium for message/ Sequence</b>
1	Welcome message	Immediate after a visitor has registered for the membership sign-up or opt-in for further email communication.	Encourage trial of the VBA’s site information.  Increase awareness of range of commercial and informational offerings.	Email
2	Engagement message	After the welcome message 1 month and with the inactive registered customers,	Encourage use of forum (good enabler of membership)  Highlight top content	Email, home page,

		who have less than 2 interactions with the VBA in the last three months		
3	Initial cross-sell message	1 month active registered customers	Direct tailored message to offer a call to action in urgent to generate sale.  Ask for feedback	Email or SMS
4	Order confirmation email	Immediate after customer making purchase	Confirm the order information and Thank you statement for purchasing.	Email
5	Survey email	Five days after purchasing, or two days after game day.	Asking about the feedbacks after purchasing ticket and enjoying the VBA's game, recommendation for next purchases and next games.  Asking for further information to profile customer better (reason for buying, status of employment and average income).	Email or direct mail
6	Reactivation message	6 months to 1 year active	Give option to re-engage through: Feedback/ Customer satisfaction survey; Related offers; If no responses, reduce message frequency.	Email or direct mail
7	Regular newsletter	Based on the options which customers choose. At least quarterly a newsletter will be sent to customers.	Update the VBA's news, tickets.  Remind customers about the benefits of membership program.  Supply to customer valuable information about training, edu-	Email

			cation, etc.  Asked for updated  information profile.	
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Source: Own Research

A super-intelligent event-triggered email plan can assist the VBA to assess the value of the customers and their propensity to convert and then follows up with the most appropriate medium to gain conversion

### 6.1.3 Choose an Appropriate Email Service Provider

There are a number of ESPs that provide email marketing service globally, each ESP has their own niche and specializes in different aspects of email data and marketing. In order to choose the right ESP, the VBA execute a benchmarking analysis that will evaluate all main criteria, which was aforementioned in the theoretical part, from top 10 ESPs in 2017.

As the suggestion from the VBA’s marketing team combines with the valuable insights from the benchmarking analysis, the VBA will use email marketing service from Mailchimp for several reasons:

- Mailchimp is known as one of the most recognized international outstanding players in the email marketing world and their experience has encouraged them to keep things simple
- Mailchimp provides a wide range of features to create effective campaigns.
- Unlike other ESPs, Mailchimp has created a collection of well-designed templates, tailored for the specific industry.
- MailChimp offers very competitive pricing and a range of monthly plans. New users can take advantage of a free account offered for up to 2,000 subscribers and 12,000 sends. The VBA’s staffs have already tried out the service in the first season of VBA.
- MailChimp is simple user interface and easy-to-use features
- MailChimp offers a number of support options, including email support, a customer forum, live chat, and an article page.

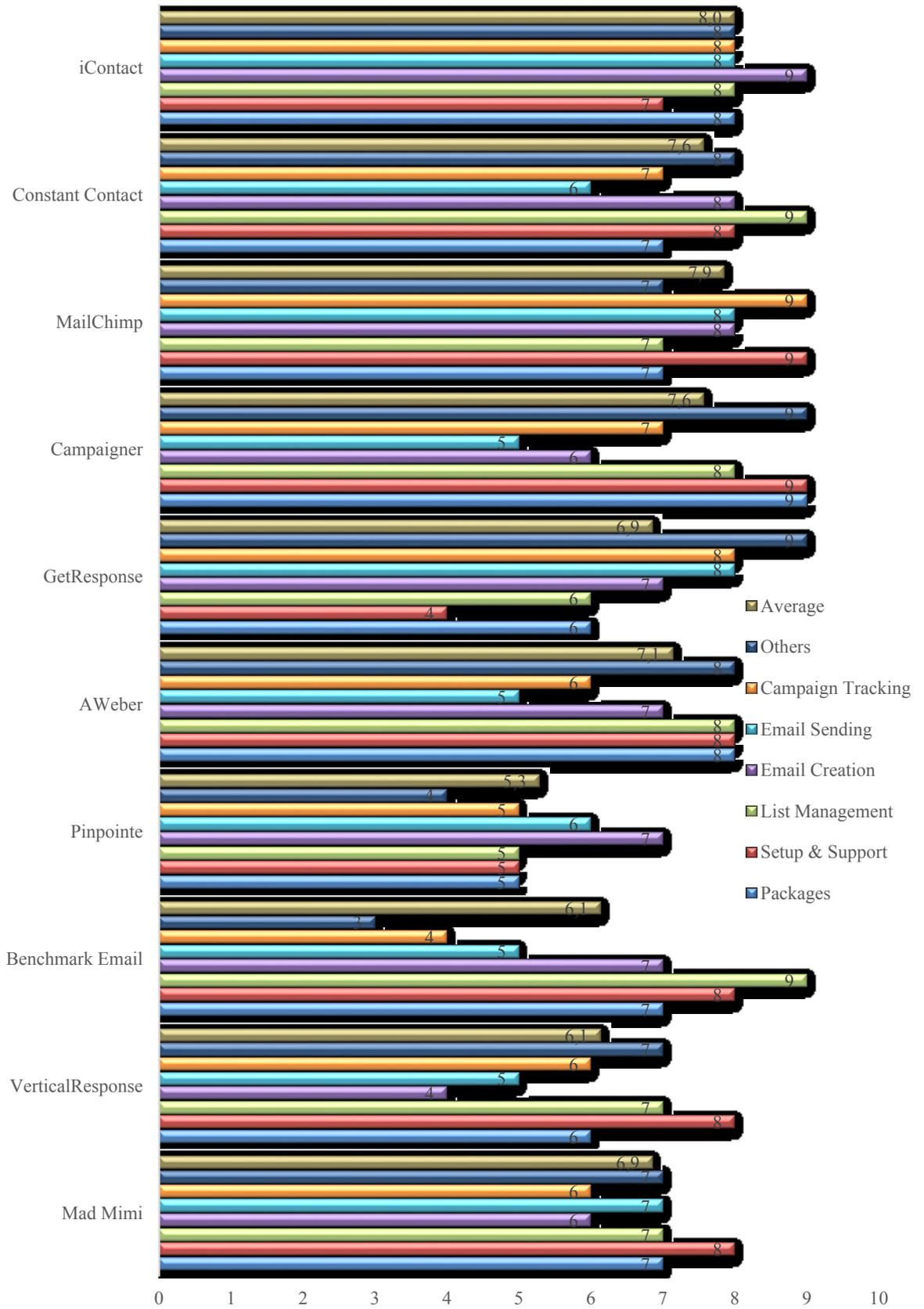


Figure 14: ESPs Benchmarking 2017

Source: Own Research

#### 6.1.4 Classify the Audience

It is fact that sports fans don't have the same needs and preferences. That is why the VBA should handle each one of them with a different way, by splitting them into different groups. Customer targeting is usually segmented based on typical characteristics of the target customers, which are: Customer profile characteristics (demographics), Customer value - current and future, Customer lifecycle groups, Customer behavior in response and purchase, Customer multi-channel behavior (channel preference) and Customer personas including psychographics.

To be more specific and applicable, a list of different segments in the email marketing for the VBA could be classified as: favorite team, household income, type of purchased tickets, number of children, purchases history, gender etc., to find commonalities and trends, and target them with customized ads and seasonal offers.

##### Favorite Team

- Hanoi Buffalos
- Danang Dragon
- Saigon Heat
- HCMC Wings
- Cantho Catfish

##### Monthly Income

- Low (up to VND 8 million)
- Medium (VND 8 – 20 million)
- High (VND +20 million)

##### Purchase History

- First time buyer
- Repeated customer (2-4 tickets)
- Loyal customer (4-8 tickets)
- Top customer (+8 tickets or seasonal ticket)

##### Type of Ticket

- Courtside
- VIP

- Premium
- Standard 1
- Standard 2

Number of Children: 1, 2, 3, 4, +4

Gender

- Male
- Female

After collecting the specific information from the customers, seven major types of wine consumers are identified in order to perform customer’s segmentation: Team loyalists, Basketball fanatics, Corporate consumers, Image seekers, Opportunistic viewers, Star-struck spectators, Basketball newbie consumers.

Table 4: Customers segmentation for the VBA

	Segmentation	Characteristics	Description
1	Team loyalists	Average to high income; Male, Female; Age 30 – 65+.	Tend to be very loyal to a particular team;  Most likely to attend sporting event and spend significant money on team-related products and services both at the venue and in associated stores.
2	Basketball fanatics	Average income; Male, Female; Age 25 – 35.	Share a persistent interest in the basketball;  Tend to be most loyal to their team;  Follow news and scores and have significant knowledge of basketball, team, and facility statistics;  Use multiple media and new technologies during their attendance at the stadium to enhance their experience;  The majority of the money they spend on sport is related to merchandise and associated peripherals.
3	Social viewers	Average to high income;	Use sports as a tool for social interaction – mainly as a place to be seen by those who matter;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Male;</li> <li>- Age from 18 to 35;</li> <li>- High position or education.</li> </ul>	<p>And for meetings by corporate consumers who use sports events to meet with clients or business friends;</p> <p>Not necessarily loyal to any team, but they are happy to spend significant money – for corporate suites and related facility services – on behalf of their company.</p>
4	Image seekers	<p>Average to high income;</p> <p>Male; Female</p> <p>Age from 18 to 35.</p>	<p>Status symbol;</p> <p>Have basic basketball knowledge;</p> <p>Like to buy hot games’ ticket;</p> <p>Open to innovative packaging;</p> <p>Prefer Courtside or VIP seat.</p>
5	Opportunistic viewers	<p>Low to average income;</p> <p>Male, Female;</p> <p>Age 18 – 45.</p>	<p>Typically consume sports through traditional channels such as television or the Internet;</p> <p>Will attend a sport event when asked by friends;</p> <p>Sports are simply one form of entertainment;</p> <p>These consumers will take the VBA’s match, if they think their money is best spent on it.</p>
6	Star-struck spectators	<p>Average to high income;</p> <p>Male, Female;</p> <p>Age from 18 to 35.</p>	<p>Tend to follow a superstar rather than a team or the VBA;</p> <p>The goal is to capture the hearts of these consumers and transfer it to a team or a sport before the star retires (or moves on to another team).</p>
7	Basketball newbie consumers	<p>Low to high income;</p> <p>Male, Female;</p> <p>Age 18 – 45.</p>	<p>Not really interested in basketball teams or the VBA;</p> <p>Only attend or read about the VBA that everyone seems to be interested in;</p> <p>The VBA seek to market the experience in the facility to these consumers so that they might return for other events of interest in the future.</p>

Source: Own research

All of the segments mentioned above could be used in order to tackle a great email marketing strategy for the VBA's fans.

### 6.1.5 Content

Email marketing is considered to be one of the top and cheapest means of maximizing ROI with clients/fans. Thus, it is crucial to make it easy for the fans to sign-up to the VBA's newsletter and at the same time giving them an incentive to do so. Then it turns to the mission of email content to convince the readers stay focused on the email or newsletter. There are several mandatory content elements of a good marketing email from a sports league.

#### a. Welcome to our Team/League

Welcome mail is one of the best ways to interact with the VBA's fans while they are still eager to. It is crucial to think of using the welcome email as a cross-selling tool or informing recipients of any other ways that they can interact with the team. This can also be used to promote products from the Team's online shop or any social media campaigns currently running.

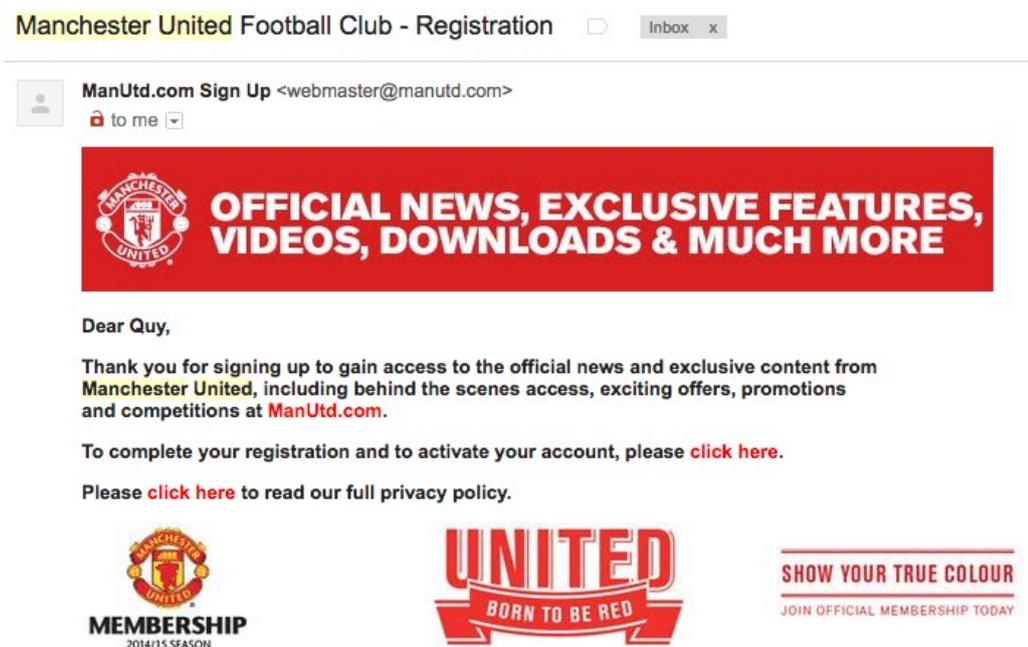


Figure 15: Manchester United's Welcome Form

Source: Own email

#### b. Good email subject

The whole point of the subject line of the email is to encourage the reader to open it. It may be an unfinished sentence, a fragment taken out of context tempting subscribers to learn

more about it. It may also be a promise articulated directly or in a slightly vague way. What’s important is that you avoid subjects like “April 2015 Newsletter” - it says nothing about the value that awaits the fans inside.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	For your chance to win a signed 16/17 Home Shirt, share your story -	5 Apr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Vidić, Rooney and more confirmed for Carrick's Testimonial Match - , alon	5 Apr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Ticket News: Don't miss the European quarter-final - left until United t	3 Apr
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Mourinho braced for a busy April - United Uncovered: Read Jose's tho	31 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Ticket News: Show your support at our quarter-final home game - Co	27 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Vote for United's Player and Goal of the Month - United Uncovered: Vote f	24 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Unveil The Magic To Recovery - by: Manchester United, Sir Matt Busby	22 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Ticket News: Sir Alex Ferguson set to return to Old Trafford - closer. I	20 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	ManUtd.com Sign Up (2)	Inbox	Manchester United Football Club - Registration - membership for Manche	20 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Manchester United Password Reset Request - Regards, Manchester Unit	20 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Ticket News: UEFA Europa League Quarter-Final - closer. Manchester	17 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Reds march on in Europe - United Uncovered: Mourinho's pleased as Iv	17 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	me, Quyen (2)		HDV Du lịch - Hi em, Cảm ơn em đã gửi CV. Em có thể giới thiệu kỹ hơn về nhữn	13 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Mkhitaryan previews Chelsea test - United Uncovered: Mkhitaryan scor	10 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Initial players confirmed for Carrick's Testimonial match - his former l	8 Mar
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Manchester United	Inbox	Ticket News: Buy now for United v FC Rostov - United vs. FC Rostov In ui	6 Mar

Figure 16: Manchester United's Email Subjects

Source: Own email

The subject line should also be written with the language of benefits in mind. Major benefits (“discount”, “sale”, “bonus”) which teams can offer should usually be included at the very beginning of a sentence – most readers read from left to right and these are the first words they should see. An approach where a sense of urgency is created also works well – subject lines with phrases like “today only”, “only 30 tickets left”, “last chance to win VIP tickets” will improve the open rate.

**c. Personalize**

The VBA’s teams are competing with hundreds of other emails in the recipient’s inboxes so it is needed to get the VBA teams’ message noticed. Before sending the next e-mail to the VBA’s fans, following elements will be considered:

- Mention the first name of the recipients in the subject line of the newsletter;
- Make sure to also mention his first name in the body of the main email;
- Reference the last game that particular fan went to;

- Try sending a personal birthday wish to a fan-subscribed, signed by a player;
- Offer him an exclusive ticket discount for Court-side or VIP position based on his purchase history.

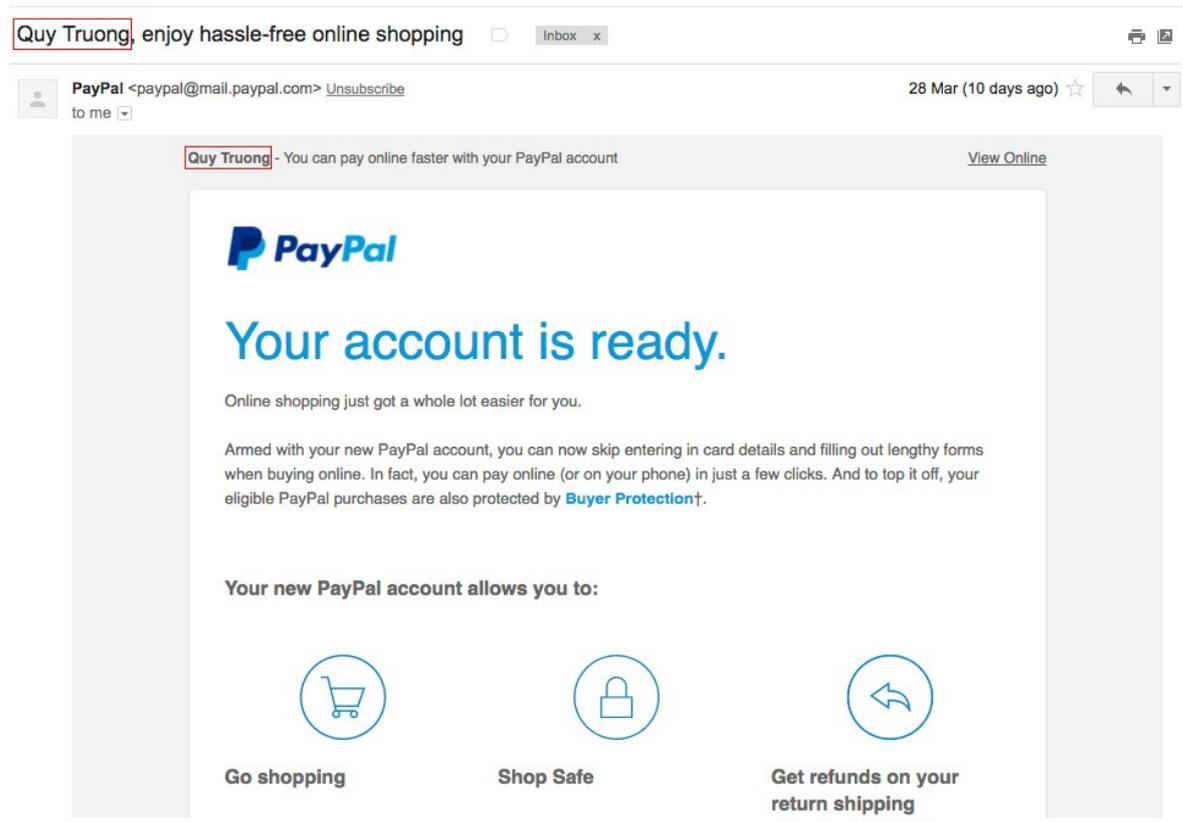


Figure 17: Paypal's Email with Personalization

Source: Own email

It is also important to send him a reminder 1 – 2 days before the next match, including crucial details about the Team's roster, program and keynotes.

Try using dynamic email marketing, based on the behavior of the VBA's fans within the teams' site. It would be great to mention items they have clicked on the past but have not bought, during the stage of the abandonment card.

#### d. Design

When it comes to sports, the email has to match the overall brand of the teams. Logos, colors and text need to match the brand's guidelines and feeling. Mobile responsiveness is rewarded, when at the same time marketing team have to take into consideration the fact that alt-text should be inserted all over the images. The reason for that is because when recipients open an email, most of the images are not displayed which means that the recipi-

ents don't know where to click. This leads to lower CTR as well as lower engagement.



Figure 18: VBA 2017 Template

Source: VBA

**e. Specific Call to Action**

The purpose of the message in each email or newsletter is to gain enough attention to make someone follow through to landing website to read further or make the conversion.



Figure 19: Part of Manchester United Newsletter

Source: Own email

In order for the reader to get to the landing page, they have to click on a specific link. The best way to make sure this happens is to link the website to the graphic elements of the newsletter or section titles and subject lines of particular paragraphs. With this in mind, the VBA also include a call to action button (simple text usually isn't visible enough), which will clearly encourage the reader to click on the link and make it clear what will happen when they do.

It's a good idea to say more than just "more" on the call to action button, saying "READ MORE", "FIND OUT MORE" etc. will work much better. If we want someone to buy a given ticket or product, it's a good idea for the button to actually say "GET TICKET" or "BUY NOW".

#### f. Brief Sentences, Vibrant Message

People don't have the time or interest to read complex sentences. An email should include short, direct sentences. There's no place for spinning elaborate metaphors, complicated ideas or forcing the reader to decode the author's thoughts. Texts will be written in a way, which is easy to read, nice to hear, and simple to remember.

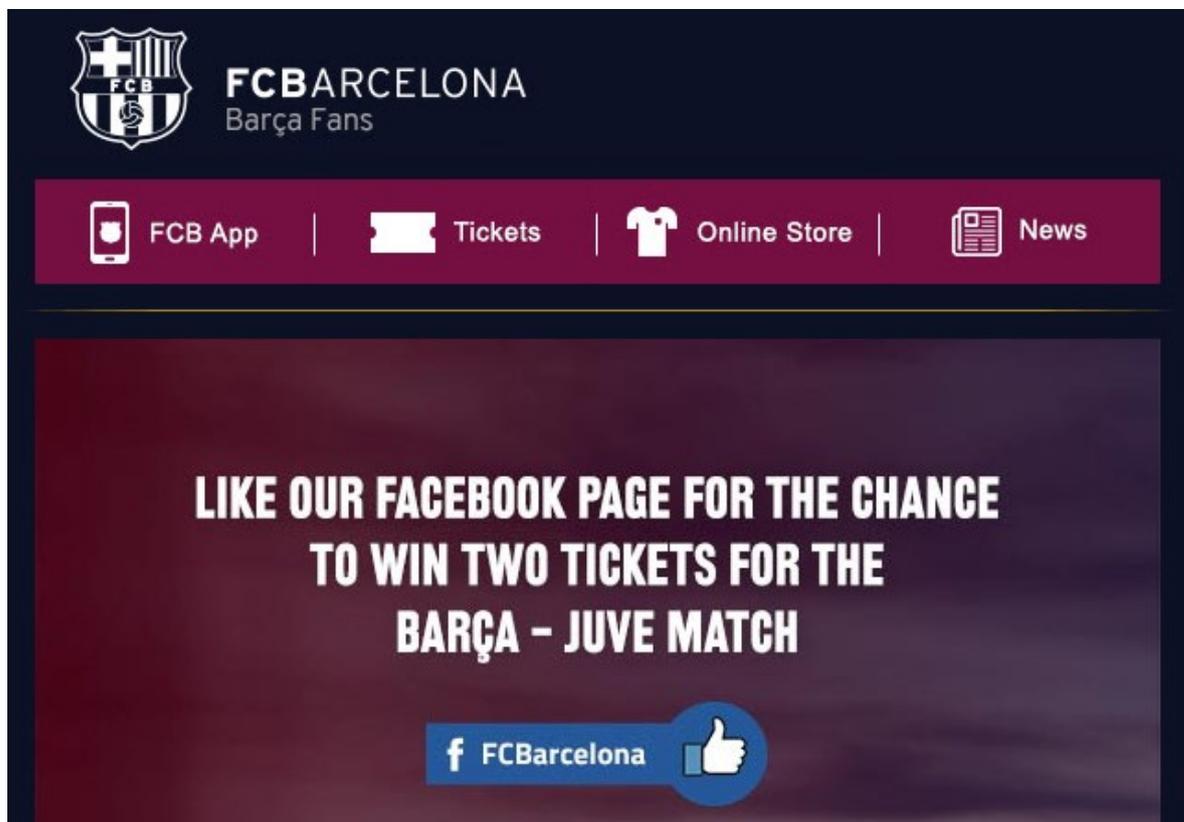


Figure 20: The Clear Message from FC Barcelona

Source: Own email

**6.1.6 Other steps**

**a. Timing**

Today almost all of marketers appreciate that the timing of the marketing efforts plays a crucial role in its eventual success. In order to get the users to open an email, the day and time that an email will be sent are also incredibly important.

In order to sell tickets, the VBA need to be armed with an event email marketing strategy that effectively promotes the VBA’s games to the target audience. Therefore, VBA’s tournament email marketing timeline will be set to achieve specific goals and drive ticket sales.

Table 5: VBA's email marketing timeline - Event Marketing Approach

	Period	Action
1	Pre-tournament	Provide pre-tournament information.  Introduce pre-tournament pages, hashtag.
2	Tournament launch	Blast out to all of the potential supporters, subscribers.  Focus on main benefits of attending, date, location, price.  Ask the partners for their marketing support as sending the email to their customers to reinforce the message.  Utilize the ‘early bird discount.
3	Game-to-game	Deliver high value, interesting content that the target fans will appreciate and find valuable: create interesting infographics, gifs or other visual assets; write about ‘what’s hot’ and breaking trends; or share a series of YouTube videos, or podcasts.  Reinforce main benefits of attending.
4	Last call	Take on a more urgent, sales-focused message: discount, promotion, gifts.  Confirm the attendance of stars or KOLs.
5	After games	Thank you letter for the support.  Information updating: results, statistics, players of round, impressive facts.

Source: Own research

Additionally, the VBA will also adjust different time frequency to each individual segment base on the combination of their characteristics and worth findings from the email communication survey.

Table 6: VBA's email marketing timeline - Segmentation Approach

	Newsletter	Tickets offer	Special offers	Promos + Vouchers	Information
Team loyalists	1 time per month	1 time per month	Every week	Every week	2 times per month
Basketball fanatics	2 time per month	Every week	Every week	2 times per week	Every week
Social viewers	2 times per month	1 time per month	Every week	Every week	Every week
Image seekers	1 time per month	2 times per month	2 times per month	1 time per month	Every week
Opportunistic viewers	1 time per month	2 times per month	Every week	Every week	Every week
Star-struck spectators	1 time per month	2 times per month	Every week	Every week	Every week
Basketball newbie consumers	Every week				

Source: Own research

### b. Testing

A/B Testing Campaigns allow the VBA to test different versions of a single campaign to see how small changes can have a big impact on the results. "Email marketers need to test everything, including subject lines, featured content, creative and send times," says Meghann York, director of product marketing, Salesforce Marketing Cloud. "For example, one of our customers, Loxa Beauty, was trying to adapt its email content to appeal to a younger audience, so it used A/B testing to determine what resonated with that audience.

Through A/B testing content and send times, the company found its customers were in buying mode Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, but engaged with content most on Sundays – critical information that helped it increase open rates.”

Therefore, the key elements for testing which the VBA will choose to consider in testing will be:

**Images:** Test to see if images have an effect on the open rates, click-through rate, and the number of leads generated.

**Subject Lines:** Elements of a subject line should be tested include: Adding personalization to the subject line, the subject line length, call-to-action in subject line, words used in the subject line, adding [brackets] to the subject line.

**Email Design:** test certain elements of the design to see if it impacts the click-through rate, unsubscribe rate, or goal of the email. Design elements the VBA can test include: Bolding, capitalization, font size, font colors, images, HTML versus plain text emails.

**From Name and From Address:** test who are sending the email and the address that the emails are coming from, use new from name and address to see the effects.

**Call-to-action:** test the wording of the CTA, the placement, and the style.

**Email content:** the content of the email is a great place to test a variety of things: Headlines, placement of content, type of content, placement of social media links, the number of images, the number of links, the length of email.

**Timing:** test in regards to time are the and the time during the day to send the email. The other element can be tested is the number of emails that is sent to people during a given week or month.

### c. Measure Performance

To assess the email marketing performance, it is crucial to conduct ongoing trend analysis of several key metrics. That way, the VBA will be able to evaluate and compare each campaign’s performance to figure out whether a specific campaign underperformed or outperformed the KPIs and internal email benchmarks.

The email service provider (ESP) already provide a wealth of reporting on each campaign and on the ongoing email performance. Here are the most important email metrics to measure in the email marketing program overall, which have been already defined in the

theoretical part: Open Rate, Click-Through Rate, Click-to-open Rate, Conversion Rate, Bounce Rate, Unsubscribe Rate, List Growth Rate, Email Sharing (Forwarding) Rate, Overall ROI.

While monitoring these metrics carefully, the VBA will be able to identify problems of the email marketing campaign in time for necessary action that can improve the campaign performance and reach the better result.

## 6.2 COST ANALYSIS

A successful email marketing campaign for the VBA has to be cost-effective. In the other words, the return of the campaign should at least equal the cost investment. The ROI measure will be used to assess the overall cost and return for the campaign. The ROI index is calculated as:

$$\text{ROI}\% = 100 \times [\text{Campaign revenue} - (\text{cost of goods sold} + \text{campaign cost})] / \text{Campaign cost}$$

In the email marketing campaign for the VBA, different types of cost will be considered: fixed costs, variable costs and other cost

### 6.2.1 Fixed costs

Fixed costs are the costs which are not dependent on the number of emails sent. These costs are usually seen as initial investment cost and usually be taken in advance of campaign starting. Fixed costs include:

- Landing page creative and database integration costs;
- Set-up cost for sending;
- Mailchimp Service Fee.

### 6.2.2 Variable costs

Variable costs are costs which are dependent on the number of email sending or responses received. Typical variable costs are:

- Email creative cost: copywriting, photo shooting, design;
- Sending cost;
- Fulfillment cost;

Regarding the offer from Mailchimp, the package has already included the Sending, fulfillment, HTML design and many other functions.

**6.2.3 Other costs**

This category of cost is also significant; however, they are not applied for all company in processing email marketing campaign:

- List building cost for house list;
- Email list management;
- Database management;
- Testing;
- Measurement;
- Reporting.

In the case of the VBA, database management, email list management, testing, measurement and reporting cost are charged by the email service which the VBA will outsource some tasks for email marketing campaign so that they will be included in the cost of paying for Mailchimp. On the other side, list building cost for house list will be the cost for revising the VBA website’s function in order to collect new email addresses and the cost for collecting email addresses from the supporters who will attend at the VBA games, VBA offline or other events.

Based on these analyses above, the VBA develop an overall plan for the cost in email marketing campaign.

Table 7: Cost analysis forecast for the email marketing campaign of the VBA

		<b>Best case</b>	<b>Worst case</b>
<b>Email campaign measurement</b>	Number emails sent from list	Unlimited	Unlimited
	Number of recipients	2500	1700
	Delivery rate	98%	90%
	Open rate	35%	30%
	Click through rate	10%	7%
	Click-to-open Rate	28%	23%
	Conversion Rate	7%	5%
	New registered supporters	1800	1000

	Cost	Best case	Worst case
<b>Variable cost</b>	Copywriting	\$ 150	\$100
	Photo shooting	\$ 200	\$ 150
	Design	\$ 100	\$ 50
<b>Fixed cost</b>	Mailchimp Service Fee	\$ 180	\$ 150
	Landing page/ microsite creative	\$ 300	\$ 300
	Set-up cost for sending	\$ 100	\$ 100
<b>Other cost</b>	List building for house list	\$ 200	\$ 150
	Campaign management	\$100	\$100
<b>Total cost</b>		<b>\$ 1330</b>	<b>\$ 1100</b>

Source: Own Research

### 6.3 TIME ANALYSIS

In the process of setting up an email marketing campaign for any companies, there are many tasks that require different period of time and depend on each other in order to complete the campaign. Therefore, it is necessary to have a specific plan which indicates clearly the key tasks and activities, and the critical order in which these tasks and activities are implemented and finished. Understand the importance of a time-plan, the VBA will apply the Critical Path Method (CPM) to identify which tasks are critical, non-critical and the shortest time by which the campaign could be completed. The table below indicates all activities with the required predecessors:

Table 8: Key tasks and activities with predecessors for VBA's email marketing campaign

Tasks	Description	Predecessor	Time (week)
A	Analysis the current marketing situation for the VBA		1
B	Setting the marketing strategy for the VBA in the next season.	A	1
C	Setting objectives of email marketing plan for the VBA	B	1

D	Creating the overall plan for email marketing campaign.	C	1
E	Building the email list.	D	1
F	Customer segmentation.	D	2
G	Designing the email sending plan for customer acquisition.	D	2
H	Preparing the offers for customer.	D	1
I	Designing the email creative for each group of customers and for each purpose.	D, F	1
J	Revising the website and create the landing pages for each group of customers to support email marketing.	F, H	2
K	Finding the suitable Email Service Provider which provides necessary services and features.	D	1
L	Testing.	E,F,G,H, I,J	4
M	Calculating the budget for the email marketing campaign.	K, L	1
N	Adjust the email marketing plan, design, and budget after testing.	M	2
O	Launching the campaign in the full scale.	N	2
P	Campaign measurement and analysis.	O	1
Q	Campaign improvement.	P	2

Source: Own research

Figure 22 represents the optimum solution of PERT method for the completion time for RD wine email marketing campaign. The earliest start, earliest finish, latest start and latest finish, time slack of all activities are also mentioned.

As we can see, the critical path of this project is: A – B – C – D – F – J – L – M – N – O – P – Q, total time of the critical path is 20 weeks. At the end, the Precedence graph and Gantt chart of email marketing campaign activities solved by WinQSB are presented in Appendix II and III.

Activity	Activity time	Early Start	Early Finish	Late Start	Late Finish	Slack
Project	20					
A	1	0	1	0	1	0
B	1	1	2	1	2	0
C	1	2	3	2	3	0
D	1	3	4	3	4	0
E	1	4	5	7	8	3
F	2	4	6	4	6	0
G	2	4	6	6	8	2
H	1	4	5	5	6	1
I	1	6	7	7	8	1
J	2	6	8	6	8	0
K	1	4	5	11	12	7
L	4	8	12	8	12	0
M	1	12	13	12	13	0
N	2	13	15	13	15	0
O	2	15	17	15	17	0
P	1	17	18	17	18	0
Q	2	18	20	18	20	0

Figure 21: Project Management (PERT/CPM) Results

Source: Own research

### 6.4 RISK ANALYSIS

Despite the great benefits of email marketing far outweigh the main drawbacks of using it, the VBA have to take risk analysis into consideration when processing an email marketing campaign. Consequently, the VBA can minimize and eliminate the risks accordingly.

There are several risks which are necessary to identify and consider:

**Email list quality:** it is always a challenge to create the email list itself. With inbox clutter on the rise and subscribers becoming more sensitive toward any unwanted communication, the VBA should develop their subscriber lists with relevance and care. There are several simple and effective ways to get over the risk of email list quality and create a healthy email list:

- Using these tactics responsibly: traditional online, offline tactics, paid search, direct mail, events and special offers.
- Complying with all legal requirements.

- Respecting subscriber preferences.

**Spamming:** the increase of spam-prevented technology accordingly raise the number of spam recently, that make the business really hard to deliver their message to the customers or supporters. The main reasons that the VBA's email will be marked as spam are:

- Inbox sorting by users: the users will identify what email is unsolicited and mark as a spam
- The CAN-SPAM act states: email can be identified accompanying the same characteristics as spam, such as lack of physical address; subject line is misleading; inaccurate "from", "to", "reply-to" and routing information; ...
- Sending without custom authentication: the recipient's system or administrator if the email is the real deal or fraudulent.
- Domain blocking: abuse report ratio will rise and mark the IP address blacklist.

The VBA have to figure out their email's characteristics in order to ensure that they are not as same as a spam at all. These simple steps can take into implementation:

- Building a healthy email list: that will ensure high email deliverability and avoid being marked as spam.
- Instruct supporters to whitelist the VBA's emails: This will ensure that the supporters are receiving the important emails they signed up for. Also, having more people whitelist the emails will help to increase the VBA's sender reputation. The following is a sample of instructions to whitelist email address with Gmail (Mary Fernandez, 2017):
  1. Open the email
  2. Click on the drop-down arrow next to the "Reply" button
  3. Select "Add to Contacts List"
  4. Click on the "More" button above the email header
  5. Select "Filter messages like these"
  6. At the bottom of the search window, click "Create filter with this search"
  7. Check the box that says "Never send it to Spam"
- Control the Use of Domain: be authenticated as legitimate senders of emails, be sure that the domain vba.vn, and the VBA and teams name are protected and trademarked as needed; run a perfectly legitimate email program.
- Avoid the CAN-SPAM act states: make the Unsubscribe options easy-to-use; man-

- age the subject line; include the physical address; clearly “From” and “To” field; ...
- Minimize Images Overall: Write enough text because using a large image to encompass the entire email may experience spam filter issues.

**Tough frequency:** Deciding on the best frequency for sending emails is challenging since businesses always aim to optimize response, but avoid “over-mailing” which can lead to an unacceptable rate of unsubscribes and an increase in inactive since the audience may feel being spammed. With over-mailing, the VBA may have email delivery problems that messages aren't getting through to the inbox. There are some solutions the VBA can apply to eliminate this risk:

- Testing options to choose the best email frequency.
- Decrease email frequencies automatically for lower responding supporters. Set a database for engagement level of each subscriber to apply this tip.
- Differentiate frequency between segments: because of the different characteristics, it will be more effective to use a different frequency that fit each segment.
- Allow subscribers to decide on the frequency, give them options to change content and frequency preferences through profile or survey.
- Increase the relevance of message by matching them with respond approach that emails are sent in response to customers.

**Reputation:** Depending on the segmentation, the VBA may have multiple groups receiving multiple different types of emails. It can be an embarrassment to the VBA when the wrong group receives the wrong type of mail. This kind of mistake makes the businesses look like they do not pay enough efforts, or that they do not really care about their customers and the messages that they are receiving. Therefore, this mistake causes the negative effects on business reputation. In order to cover this risk, the VBA must deliver useful, informative and relevant content according to the target audiences. Moreover, the content must keep trust and context, customers will engage easily with relevant, interesting and personalized content. Furthermore, it is important to offer right content to right people.

## 6.5 EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT EFFICIENCY

With the aim of creating an overall proposal of using a highly useful, supportive, cost-effective and easy monitoring marketing tool which is email marketing, the project is focused on two main parts. The first part mentions the analysis of the VBA marketing situa-

tion which includes: company background, mission and vision of the VBA, the new trends in the sports market, the marketing activities in the previous season of VBA, the ticket sales and attendance, and the email marketing communication research. From the result of the first analysis part, the second part is processed to design the project of using email marketing for increasing the VBA's ticket sales in the upcoming season. This part describes the main part – campaign plan that consists of campaign objectives, building the email list, choose the appropriate ESP, classify the audience, the content of email sending, timing, testing and performance measure. This part also discusses the cost analysis, time analysis and risk analysis for the project.

## CONCLUSION

The main purpose of the thesis is to develop the project of email marketing campaign for the VBA in the upcoming season. In the high competitive market, the VBA need to develop new channels and concepts to increase the effectiveness of communication with the fans and enhance brand awareness. Email marketing is a promising opportunity for the VBA to boost the ticket sales and maintain current supporter base. In order to develop an effective email marketing project, those following goals were set from the beginning of the thesis:

1. Analyze and evaluate the theoretical background of email and sports marketing.
2. Perform internal analysis of the VBA regarding marketing practices and conduct a research to gather insights into how email recipients interact with the marketing emails.
3. Develop an appropriate email marketing campaign with the main aim of increasing the ticket sales and maintain current supporter base.
4. Draw the conclusions based on the overall project.

The first goal was covered in the theoretical part of the thesis. During this step, there were a number of main theoretical issues which contributed to the marketing analysis, campaign goals setting and the overall project development.

The second goal was accomplished in the beginning of the practical part of the thesis. During this step, the main marketing activities of the VBA, and the Vietnamese sports market analysis were identified. This part helped to understand that email marketing is able to incorporate with overall marketing strategy. Moreover, from the result of the email marketing communication survey, lots of worthy customers' insights were found and then applied to design the email marketing project in the next part.

From all of the theories and analysis above, the email marketing campaign was suggested as an appropriate marketing strategy aim to increase the ticket sales.

At the end of the thesis, time, cost and risk analysis were performed in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the suggested campaign and complete the project.

In conclusion, the project of email marketing campaign for the VBA is realistic and applicable. According to the current situation, it is the suitable time for implementing the project of the email campaign to improve the marketing competitive advantages and increase the ticket sales. The research questions were answered and the goal of the thesis was met.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ABL	Asian Basketball League
CIS	Canada International School
CRM	Customer Relation Management
CTA	Call to Action
CTOR	Click-to-open rate
CTR	Click-Through Rate
EPL	English Premier League
ESPs	Email Service Providers
EU	European Union
ISPs	Internet Service Providers
KOL	Key Opinion Leader
KPIs	key performance indicators
NFL	National Football League
NHL	National Hockey League
OTT	Over the top
PR	Public Relations
QR Code	Quick Response Code
ROI	Return on Investment
SEO	Search Engines Optimization
SSA	Saigon Sports Academy
UTM	Urchin Tracking Module
VBA	Vietnamese Basketball Association

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## **APPENDICES**

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APPENDIX III: GANTT CHART SOLUTION FOR RD WINE EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

# APPENDIX I: EMAIL MARKETING COMMUNICATION SURVEY

## Email Marketing Communication

Thank you to take part in this survey.

This research is conducted to gather insights into how email recipients interact with and perceive marketing emails. That will help us acknowledge the impact of email marketing on purchasing behavior, improve email communication and increase fans support for Vietnamese Basketball Association (VBA) via email marketing. If you use email and have an interest in basketball, we would love to hear your opinions on email marketing.

It only takes 5 minutes to fill in all the questions, and your responses are completely anonymous. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact us at: [quytruong.ftu@outlook.com](mailto:quytruong.ftu@outlook.com)

\*Required



**Question number 1 to 9: Please leave us your experience on email marketing.**

**1. When do you first check your personal email? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Before work.

During work.

After work.

**2. How many times do you check your personal email per day? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

1 - 2

3 - 6

7 - 10

10+

**3. Which device do you use to check email? - Select all that apply \***

*Tick all that apply.*

Desktop or Laptop computer.

Smartphone

Tablet

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

**4. How often do you prefer to receive email from businesses (retailers, restaurants, shops, entertainment services, ...) \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Never
- Every couple of months
- Monthly
- Weekly
- Several times per week
- Daily

**5. Why do you unsubscribe emails or flag emails as spam? - Select all that apply \***

*Tick all that apply.*

- They emailed too often.
- I didn't purposefully subscribe.
- They sent irrelevant content.
- Their emails were impersonal.

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Why do you read marketing/advertising emails? - Select all that apply \***  
*Tick all that apply.*

Promotions/Discounts.

News or updates.

Support information.

Education content.

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

**7. How often do you buy products and services from marketing/advertising emails? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Never

Once a year

Once a month

Several times a month

Once a week or more

**Question 8: How much influence does each of these factors have in causing you to make a purchase from an email?**

Please use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means very little influence and 5 means a great deal of influence.

**8a. Brand \***

*Mark only one oval.*

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

**8b. Quality \***

*Mark only one oval.*

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

**8c. Price \***

*Mark only one oval.*

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

**8d. Discounts \***

*Mark only one oval.*

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

**8e. Free shipping \***

*Mark only one oval.*

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

**8f. Reviews displayed in the email \***

*Mark only one oval.*

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

**9. How businesses could improve their email efforts? \***

*Write down your own opinions*

---

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---

---

## Identifying information

**10. How old are you? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

12 - 17

18 - 24

25 - 34

35 - 54

55 - 64

65+

**11. What is your gender? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

**12. What is your nationality? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Foreigner

Vietnamese

**13. Where are you currently locating? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

Hanoi city

Danang City

Hochiminh City

Cantho City

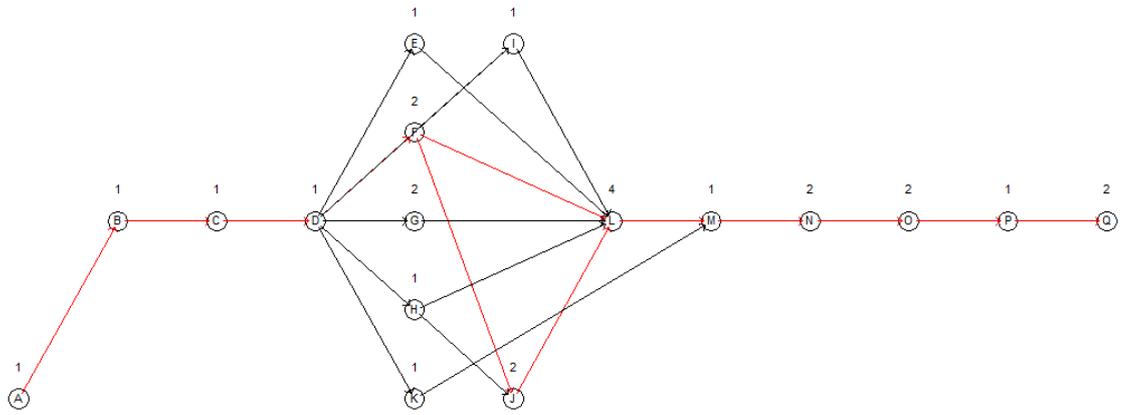
Other

**Thank you very much for your contribution. Your insights are valuable to our research.**

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## APPENDIX II: PRECEDENCE GRAPH FOR RD WINE EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN



# APPENDIX III: GANTT CHART SOLUTION FOR RD WINE EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

