

A STUDY

STUDENT SURVEY: HOW STUDENTS COMMUNICATE ONLINE

How High School and College Students Communicate Online - Results

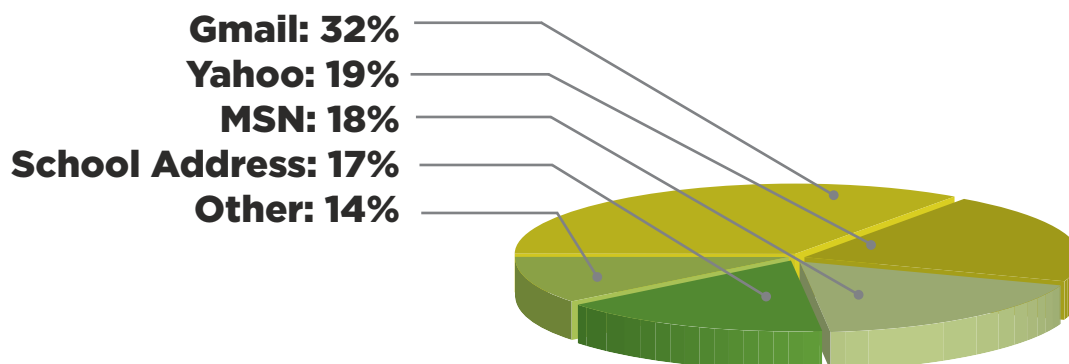
Our latest survey uncovers exactly how high school students, college students, and recent college graduates communicate online. 283 high school and college students participated in the study and 29 states were represented. These survey results reveal eye-opening trends and preferences of this demographic in how it communicates digitally. We also get valuable insight into the effectiveness of marketing messages received through email, and discover areas of opportunity for marketers to connect with this in-demand group.

STUDENT'S HISTORY WITH EMAIL

Today's high school and college students are hardly newcomers when it comes to email. The mean number of email addresses per student surveyed is 2.4. Most college students have had an email address for about 8 years, with the average student getting an initial email address at the age of 13.

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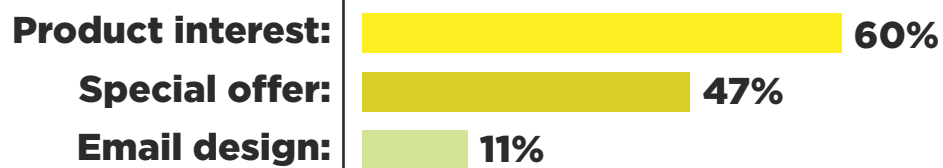
When students choose a primary email service, Gmail is the clear favorite. 32% of college students use Gmail as their primary email address, 19% yahoo, 18% MSN/Hotmail and only about 17% use their school email address as their primary address. If you're looking at marketing to this group through online channels, Google's advertising network is one to seriously consider.



EFFECTIVENESS OF EMAIL MARKETING MESSAGES

Students can be an elusive demographic for marketers. Staying on top of constantly evolving trends is the key to gaining trust and staying relevant to the student market, but another challenge in reaching them is knowing which channel will carry and present your message most effectively. Students, on average, read marketing emails on a “rarely to never” basis, with 61% falling into this category. Only 16% are reading marketing emails on a frequent basis, while 66% of students rarely or never take action on marketing emails. Most college students do not feel that companies are effectively speaking to them personally. The major reasons students take action upon receiving an email are that they are interested in the product (60%) or attracted to a special offer (47%). Email design is much less of a factor, with only 11% of students taking action because of the design of an email. This means that marketers do not do a good job of talking to students or are marketing products that are not relevant.

Major reasons students take action on email



STUDENT TRENDS - EMAIL VS. SOCIAL NETWORKS

It’s clear that students have adopted email, but students were also among the earliest adopters of social networks. Are students moving away from email and toward social networks as their preferred method of online communication? Articles published by DMNews, Bokardo, and a joint study by Skype & Harris Interactive have reported that email is a dying channel, especially among students. These reports have speculated that social networking has taken over and that students are now using email primarily to sign up for social networking sites and receive email alerts.

Our survey found that only about 36% of students use email alerts to keep up to date on what’s happening on their social networks and only about one-quarter of students originally got an email address for social networking purposes. Approximately one-quarter got an email address for the ability to buy online. The majority of students (81%) got an email address for communicating with family and 52% for communicating with friends.

We know that students are on social networks, but where exactly are they spending their time? 83% of college students use Facebook, 65% use MySpace and 21% use LinkedIn. With over one-fifth of college students using LinkedIn, this is one area of opportunity for marketers to reach students where their competitors may not be.

Overall there is a very minor increase in email usage since getting an initial email address. It appears that students had a real and determined need for email when they first set up an email address – not just for the purpose of setting up a social network.

What social networks do you belong to?

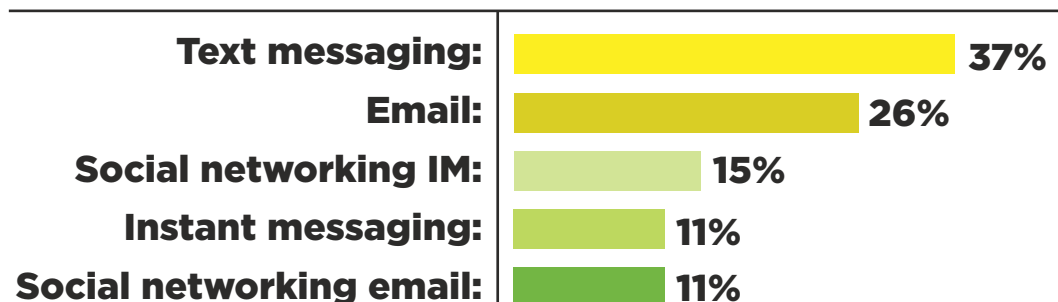


STUDENT TRENDS – COMMUNICATION HABITS AND PREFERENCES

Relevancy is more important than ever, considering the amount of Spam flooding the average student’s inbox. With over two-thirds of students checking email at least once per day, and 55% of those checking more than 3 times per day, there’s no doubt that students are aware of the emails that hit their inbox and are looking for those compelling emails that go above and beyond to resonate with them.

We’ve seen that it’s important to send the right message through the right channel, but besides email, what channels are students using most? Preferred means of communication for college students are text messaging (37%), email (26%), social networking IM (15%), instant messaging (11%) and social networking email (11%). Only about 12% of students check email on a mobile device. We see mobile device usage increasing, however it is still not at a mass adoption rate.

Preferred means of communication for college students



“ULTIMATELY, MARKETERS NEED TO ENSURE THEIR PRODUCTS ARE RELEVANT AND TAKE THE TIME TO CRAFT EMAILS THAT TRULY SPEAK TO STUDENTS.”

Overall, email plays an important role in college students' life as a personal communication device, but not as a major marketing channel. Ultimately, marketers need to ensure their products are relevant and take the time to craft emails that truly speak to students. Consider email in your marketing mix to college students, but creating a comprehensive marketing plan that is made up of social networking, email marketing and text messaging is going to be the most effective way to reach your audience and gain mindshare.

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