

S I X P E R S P E C T I V E S

DID APPLE  
TAKE A  
BITE  
OUT OF  
PERSONAL-  
IZATION?

/ SEPTEMBER 2021 /



# HERE'S THE SITUATION

**Apple announced Mail Privacy Protection for their Mail app on iOS 15, iPadOS 15, and macOS Monterey devices due to release this year, between September and November.**

Changes include giving users the ability to render email tracking pixels, the backbone of open rate measures, useless as well as the ability for users with iCloud addresses to generate temporary fake email addresses that forward to their actual inbox.

Just when email marketers thought they were safe and were laughing at their cookie and device-based counterparts, new tracking restrictions stand to impact email marketing in three key areas:

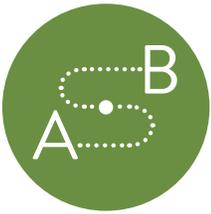
1. Campaign metrics
2. Customer journeys & testing
3. Dynamic content & personalization



# HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

## CAMPAIGN METRICS

- » How email campaign metrics are tracked will change, as tracking pixels will no longer be a reliable method for reporting open rates.
- » For consumers who opt-in for Mail Privacy Protection, mail content is expected to be downloaded automatically upon delivery by Apple servers rather than the users' device when it's opened – so your emails will appear to have been opened regardless if the user has read them or not.
- » Managing email list hygiene will become more challenging; all tasks that depend on open rates will be impacted such as testing, cleansing, and segmentation.



## CUSTOMER JOURNEYS & TESTING

- » A/B testing email subject lines at scale will no longer be possible. Subject line effectiveness will need to be inferred through CTA click-through data in the email itself. This will also impact marketing automation tools that test and select the best subject lines automatically.
- » Other forms of A/B testing will also be negatively impacted; for example, split testing particular days and times for opens will no longer be possible.
- » Marketing automation tools that test and select any of the above (i.e. best subject lines, days and times for opens, etc.) will no longer be reliable.
- » Sequential or triggered journeys that reference email opens won't necessarily reflect actual customer behaviors from Apple devices.



## DYNAMIC CONTENT & PERSONALIZATION

- » Apple is also introducing built-in VPN-like features (e.g. iCloud Private Relay) to obfuscate user IP addresses and locations across email as well as web browsing.
- » Geotargeting is not going away, but some forms of it will. Since IP addresses will be masked with this new privacy update, geotargeting based on IP will no longer be possible.
- » Dynamic email content based on time-of-day will become inoperable, such as countdown timers and in-the-inbox updates.
- » A new “Hide my Email” feature will enable users to generate random email addresses on the fly, which then forward mail to their personal inbox.
  - This will make deduplication a challenge as a user could be present in your database multiple times for each randomly generated email they’ve used, impacting lead generation activities.
  - Sales and conversion attribution will be impacted, as the email address you target with an email might not be the same as the one used to checkout or complete a purchase.
  - This will also have significant impacts on matching email databases for activation across external platforms (e.g. Custom Audiences), impacting match rates as the email address you have for a user probably won’t match the one they use for Facebook, Google, or any 3<sup>rd</sup> party platform, etc.



# HOW WE CAN PREPARE

Breaking our reliance on data points like open rates will impact some aspects of what we do, and while this privacy update adds a speedbump, it doesn't prevent us from achieving our goals as marketers. We can (and should) continue building deeper relationships with customers through greater personalization and more relevant messaging. Here are some ways to prepare for this privacy update:

- » **Determine Impact:** Start by understanding what portion of your subscriber base uses Apple Mail today. If you aren't already, begin tracking and evaluating the email client and device usage. You should also audit your programs for instances where you rely on open rates.
- » **Build Baseline Insights:** If a significant portion of your subscriber base uses Apple Mail, start A/B testing everything you can prior to the update. The insights around real opens you can build now can help define segments to use while planning how to measure engagement over time.
- » **Clean Up Mail Lists:** Clean up your lead quality, list hygiene, and sender reputation since you may not be able to rely on opens anymore as a sign of a deliverability problem.
- » **Increase Data Gathering:** Start to plan what you can gather across owned channels (website, app, etc.) that will help ensure you don't lose the 1:1 relationships you've created with subscribers. Optimize your email preferences centre and start shifting your focus to deeper engagement metrics like click-through rate instead of open rate.



# POSITIVE THOUGHTS

- » Mail users will feel more comfortable subscribing to email lists, as privacy improvements protect their personal information.
- » Replacing open rates with stronger intent metrics (e.g. click-through rates) will improve marketing strategies.
- » Although the “Hide my Email” feature creates an aliased email, Apple will still redirect it to the person’s real email address (paid iCloud users only).
- » The updates may scare away some brands from email. The brands that persevere and find creative ways to deal with privacy changes will beat the competition.
- » These changes will improve the relationship with consumers who desire a personalized experience from the brands they trust.
- » Marketing strategies will rely more on lead quality, list hygiene, and sender reputation than ever.
- » Brands will be more inclined to add new channels to their marketing strategies.
- » Apple can only cache images if the Mail app is running. This can be a great way to check if email addresses are valid and improve the health of email lists.
- » Analytics already plays a key role in marketing automation, but will become way more important as hybrid performance metrics will be the focus.
- » Privacy changes will boost AI and new deep learning prediction models, taking email marketing to the next level.

# MORE ABOUT US

FCB/SIX is a collective of 1:1 marketing specialists who use creativity to power personalized, connected experiences that fuel commerce and growth. Our approach unites the math and magic because the numbers don't lie; while our customer-centric products bring the magic to relentlessly drive conversion and loyalty. The result is transformative customer experiences at scale.

**SIX Perspectives** is a series created to assist marketers on their journeys to create and deliver personalized customer experiences. The focus of this paper is on data.



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# LET'S KEEP TALKING

Apple may be the first to the table, but data privacy realities are here to stay. Microsoft and others will follow, meaning that adapting to changes and evolving the way we measure success is a necessity.

We are here to help brands assess the impact of the new realities and evolve their measurement plans to be an accurate reflection of their investments and effectively guide decision-making. Talk to us about our **Measurement Impact Assessment**, which includes an audit of your current state and a roadmap of actionable recommendations to take you from crawling to flying.



## YOU CAN READ THE RELEASE AND OTHER RESOURCES HERE:

- » <https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2021/06/apple-advances-its-privacy-leadership-with-ios-15-ipados-15-macos-monterey-and-watchos-8/>
- » <https://www.theverge.com/2021/6/8/22525195/apple-mail-protection-privacy-pixel-tracking-newsletters-substack>
- » <https://www.macrumors.com/2021/06/10/ios-15-mail-privacy-protection-tracking-pixels/>
- » <https://www.litmus.com/blog/apple-mail-privacy-protection-for-marketers/>