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WhatsApp, e-mail or SMS: advantages, disadvantages, risks and who each is for

WhatsApp & APIs

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WhatsApp, e-mail or SMS: advantages, disadvantages, risks and who each is for

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WhatsApp, e-mail and SMS all exist to talk to customers, and the question «which is best» has no answer - because they are for different things. This page puts all three side by side, with what each has that is good, bad and risky.

In brief, before the detail

Channel	In one line
WhatsApp	The best at **conversation**. Terrible at reaching people who do not know you yet, and the easiest to lose.
E-mail	The best at **telling a story** and at being kept. The only one that is genuinely yours.
SMS	The best at **arriving**. No internet, no app, read within minutes - and the dearest per message.

WhatsApp

For	Against
It gets read, and fast	Nearly everyone has it open all day. No other channel compares.
Real conversation	You can answer questions, send a photo and close the sale in the same thread.
It does not reach strangers	Writing first to people who do not know you is the shortest route to losing the number.
It is not yours	The account can be closed without warning, taking the history and the customer list with it.

Main risk: losing the number over messages to people who did not ask - and with it everything that existed only there. **Who for:** any business that serves customers; it is the channel of *reply*, not of acquisition. The risks in detail are in **WhatsApp for business: the risks**.

E-mail

For	Against
It is yours, and nobody switches it off	The domain is registered in your name. No platform takes it away.
It costs almost nothing per message	It is the channel with the best return per unit spent, by a wide margin.
Everything fits	Long text, images, attachments, links, an invoice. In the other two, none of that fits.
It arrives slowly, and not always	It can sit unread for hours, or land in spam. And plenty of people here barely use e-mail.

Main risk: burning the domain's reputation with a badly run campaign - after which even invoices stop arriving. **Who for:** anyone with something to say regularly, anyone selling to companies, and anyone who wants a list nobody can take away. See **e-mail marketing**.

SMS

For	Against
It reaches everyone	No internet, no app, no modern phone needed. It is the only one with this property.
It is read within minutes	For an urgent notice, nothing beats it.
Very little fits	160 characters - and 70 with accents. See **SMS marketing**
It is the dearest per message	And the most regulated: the sender has to be registered and local rules are strict.

Main risk: complaints to the regulator for sending to people who did not authorise it - and the sender being cut off. **Who for:** anyone who needs to *guarantee* the message arrives: confirmations, reminders, delivery notices, codes.

The rule that settles most questions

Choose by what the message **is**, not by what you happen to have:

If the message is…	Use
A reply to someone who wrote to you	WhatsApp. It is a conversation, and conversation belongs there.
A short notice that has to arrive	SMS. «Your order is ready.»
News, a detailed offer, a catalogue	E-mail. It fits, it is kept and it is reread.
A first approach to someone who does not know you	**None of the three.** Make the person come to you - **being found on Google**

The common mistake: using one channel for another's job.
A WhatsApp campaign to a bought list costs you the number. An urgent notice by e-mail arrives after it was needed. A catalogue by SMS does not fit. Each of these is seen every week, and none is about the channel being bad - it is about it being in the wrong place.

The three together work better than any one alone

1. **The website is the base**, because it is the only one Google reads and the only one that is yours forever.
2. **E-mail is the list**, because it is the only audience nobody can shut down on you.
3. **WhatsApp is the conversation**, and it is where the sale closes.
4. **SMS is the notice**, for what cannot be allowed to fail.

If you depend on one alone, the day it fails takes the business with it. It is the most practical reason to have your own domain and e-mail - see **how to choose the right domain** and **how to create an e-mail account**.

And if you would rather not handle the sending?
We do bulk e-mail sending and SMS with your own Sender ID, for Mozambique and Angola - with the domain authenticated, the list handled and delivery reporting. It is not an off-the-shelf product: it depends on volume, countries and frequency. Tell us what you need and we will come back with a proposal. See **e-mail marketing** and **SMS marketing**.

NEED A HAND?

Want help deciding which channels make sense for your business?

Talk to us →

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