Mobile commerce:
What consumers
really want

→ Go!

Mobile is the new Standard!

Mobile is no longer a trend, or even just an opportunity; it is quickly becoming a new standard for consuming content. First, we asked 1,000 UK consumers to tell us about how they use and shop on mobile devices; their experiences of mobile web, apps - their expectations and frustrations.

Then we undertook a benchmarking study assessing the mobile sites and apps of some of the UK's top retailers, paying particular attention to some of the elements that we found were of greatest concern to consumers.

EPiServer produced its last report on mobile strategy in late 2011. The conclusion then was that the mobile web had very much arrived, and that some marketers had begun to capitalise, but there was still much work to be done and lessons to be learnt, such as how to make the most of customer's location.

Since then the consumer uptake of mobile continues to accelerate. Ofcom announced in December 2012 that smartphone penetration in the UK market had hit 58%, whilst 19% of British consumers are tablet owners. In addition to this, an average of over £1,000 per person is spent online. A figure, Ofcom says, is being 'increasingly driven' by the use of mobile devices.

This report presents our findings, showing how far retailers have come since our last report but also indicating some of the gaps that still exist between retailer's mobile strategy and consumer expectation.

£1,000
spent online
–each!

58%
use smartphone

19%
own a tablet
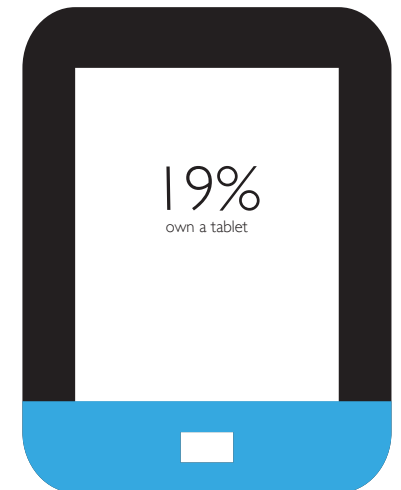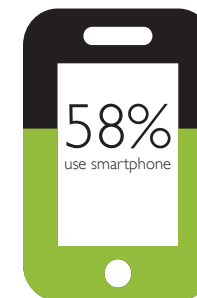
Methodology

Are you choosing to engage with mobile sites?

1

In order to assess how consumers are responding to the increasingly mobile nature of the internet and an app-based economy, we surveyed over 1,000 people in the UK about their views on:

- Whether they are choosing to engage with mobile sites
- The features that are important when consuming content on a mobile website
- How mobile apps are becoming accepted forms of mobile engagement

We then took this data and conducted a benchmark study looking at the mobile sites and apps offered by leading UK retailers.

Are you using mobile apps for mobile engagement?

What features are important when consuming content on a mobile website?

2

We selected 30 of the retailers from the IMRG Experian Hitwise Hot Shops List. We scored each using a range of criteria to provide an in-depth assessment of the mobile customer experience they offer consumers. The total points available to each retailer were 510 and this was then converted into a score out of 100%.

CRITERIA USED:
- Does the company have a mobile-enabled website?
- Does this appear automatically on a mobile device?
- Does the company have an iPhone app?
- Does the company have an iPad app?
- Does the company have an Android app?

FOR EACH OF THE ABOVE:
- Is the site/app easy to use?
- Does it load quickly?
- Does the width of the screen fit the device?
- Does the page navigate up and down instead of left and right?
- Is essential information easy to find (e.g. customer service numbers)?
- Are a map and/or directions easy to find?
- Does it support zooming?
- Are text boxes and the amount of typing on the page kept to a minimum?
- Does it match the look and feel of the main site?
- Are the calls to action (buttons or links) large/clear enough to see on the screen?
- Does the mobile site give the option to switch to the normal (desktop) version of the site?

The consumer survey was conducted in February 2013. The results of answers to the questions were translated into percentage values.

Each website and app in the benchmark study was analysed during February 2013. A weighting has been applied to the scores achieved by each retailer to award each one an overall score out of 510.

How consumers are engaging with brands via mobile

This section analyses the results of the consumer research, pulling out all of the key findings with regards to how British mobile users interact with retail brands using their smartphones and tablets.

The first point to note is the huge increase in tablet ownership. In late 2011, this figure was just 18%, but of the 1,000 mobile device owners surveyed this year, a huge 53% now own tablets and only 8% are tablet owners without smartphones.
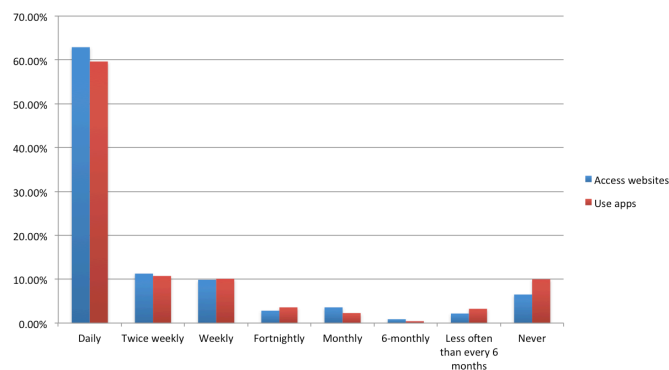
APPS VERSUS MOBILE SITES

The ever-present debate in mobile experience is apps against mobile sites, and the research gave us some interesting insights here.

Mobile websites proved to be marginally more popular than apps, with 63% accessing websites on their smartphone daily compared to 60% using apps. And when we look at actually making purchases via mobile, websites is more popular than apps with a total of 51% complete purchases on a website via their mobile on a monthly or more regular basis, versus 40% via apps. Interestingly, in the last report, mobile apps were more popular than mobile sites, showing that consumer attitudes are changing.

Age proved to be a differentiator when looking at consumer preferences for purchasing via mobile. Buying through a website is most popular with the over 55s, with 18% making monthly purchases, however the most popular age drops to 35-44 for purchasing through apps (14%). Daily purchases through websites are most likely to be made by 18-24 year olds (17%), rising slightly to 25-34 for apps (16%).

This disparity is amplified when looking at consumer behaviour on tablets, with 64% accessing websites daily versus 55% through apps, and 74% making purchases using websites against 60% through apps. This also shows that, generally, a customer is more likely to make a purchase on a tablet.

Usage of apps versus mobile websites on smartphones
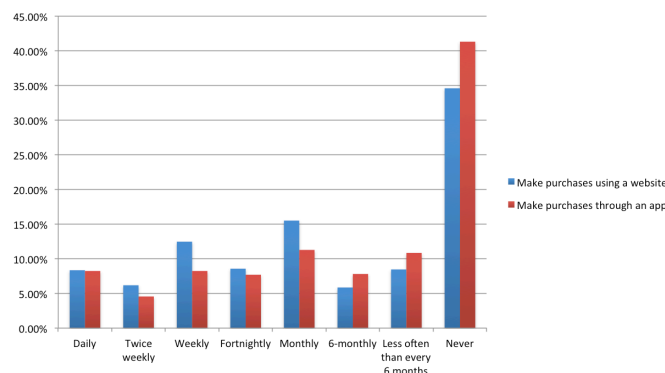
Purchases via mobile websites versus purchases on smartphones
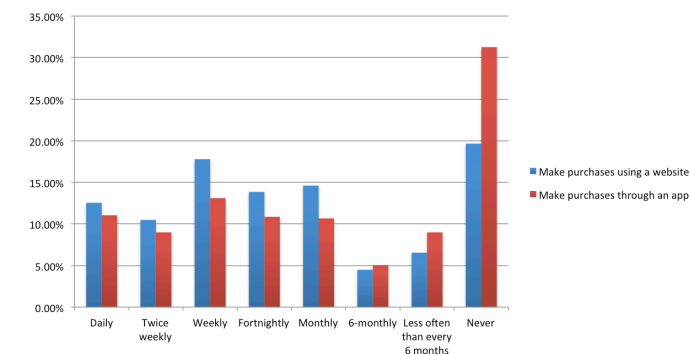
Purchases via websites versus purchases on tablet devices

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

We have mentioned that one of the opportunities that mobile affords retailers is when used in conjunction with physical location. So how important is location and what is consumer usage like in real life?

It seems that, as much as marketers talk about targeting consumers 'on the go' via mobile, at 62%, by far the most popular place fo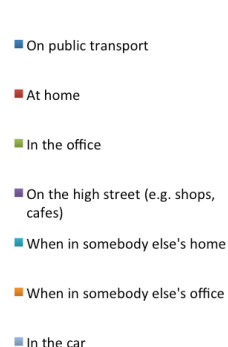r people to use their smartphones to access websites is in fact at home. This was followed by usage on public transport and in the office.

Legend:
- On public transport
- At home
- In the office
- On the high street (e.g. shops, cafes)
- When in somebody else's home
- When in somebody else's office
- In the car

Pie chart values: 33.08%, 62.26%, 30.80%, 23.43%, 17.90%, 2.82%, 13.12%, 4.23%, 7.59%

Where do you most often use your smartphone to access websites?

Once again this trend is compounded on tablet devices, where 80% said that 'at home' was where they most used their device to access websites with a relatively small 15% saying in the office. This might appear to be a clear sign that location is not the be all and end all of mobile strategy, however location based usage still has its place when looking at how consumers access the mobile web outside of the home. Looking up directions was the second most popular reason for browsing a website or using an app on a mobile device, stated by 49% as a main reason, following by social networking (54%).

In addition to this, when asked about what has triggered access to the web on a mobile device, boredom while travelling was the biggest cause (47%) followed by the need to find information when travelling (44%), so clearly travel is still a big use case for mobile.

With the home being the most popular location for smartphone and tablet use, it shows that, regardless of location, mobile devices are now the first port of call for consumers. Whether they are at home, in the office, or out and about, UK consumers are likely to use a mobile device to access the web before any other devices, making 'mobile first' a sensible strategy for any ecommerce business.

FRUSTRATIONS

In order to really gauge how well retail brands are doing at meeting consumer expectation, we asked consumers about their frustrations when using mobile sites and apps.

In 2011, 32% agreed that many mobile websites were hard to navigate. In 2013, this number now stands at 37%. consumers have low levels of patience with hard to use mobile sites and apps, and they are increasingly less forgiving of poor mobile experience, with 47% agreeing that if an app is hard to use they will stop using or delete it, compared to just 41% previously. Mobile sites get an easier ride, but 38% still said they would stop using a mobile site that is hard to use.

The biggest bugbear continues to be speed, with 49% citing slow loading times as the most common problem they encounter when browsing on mobile. Links being too small to click on a mobile screen also continues to be an issue for 35%.
Specific areas that make consumers frustrated, and that have grown since the last study, include having to navigate both horizontally and vertically to read text, an issue bothering 48% of respondents compared to 38% in 2011.

And more people responded that mobile sites are missing the functionality found on a desktop site now, at 42% versus 35% previously. This indicates that, increasingly, consumers are expecting mobile sites to offer all the functionality they are used to on desktop.

When frustrations do occur, 54% of users simply leave the site when they run into difficulty. Over a quarter (28%) will try a competitor, showing that retailers could risk losing significant business by not meeting consumer expectation.

How the UK's top retailers are approaching mobile

Having established consumer expectations in 2013 and some of their frustrations with regards to mobile experience, how are the UK's top retailers doing against these criteria?

We took 30 of the top online retailers, according to the IMRG Hitwise Hotshops list from February 2013 and benchmarked them against a set criteria across three popular devices: an iPhone, iPad and Android smartphone.

1.	Amazon UK	12.	LoveFilm	22.	The Train Line
2.	Apple	13.	Thomson	23.	Expedia
3.	Argos	14.	Currys	24.	ASDA Direct
4.	Amazon.com	15.	Tesco Direct	25.	B&Q
5.	Next	16.	easyJet	26.	British Airways
6.	John Lewis	17.	Thomas Cook	27.	ASDA
7.	Tesco	18.	New Look	28.	IKEA
8.	Your M&S	19.	Netflix	29.	Very
9.	Debenhams	20.	Cineworld Cinemas	30.	House of Fraser
10.	ASOS	21.	Top Shop		
11.	Play.com				

The top 30 retailers from IMRG Hitwise Hotshops list February 2013

HOW DID THEY DO?

In the last mobile benchmarking report, we only analysed the top 10 online retailers, and the average score was 47%. The average for the entire top 30 this year was 55%, showing overall improvement by retailers as mobile becomes a more important part of their digital mix.

The top performer in our late 2011 report was Argos at 82%, but Debenhams shines through this year with a very impressive 90% in the new study. Argos continued to do well, improving on its previous score by achieving 85%, placing it a joint second with Expedia.

Debenhams achieved the high score by performing well across the board, having a solution for each platform and delivering a uniform good quality experience on all. It did particularly well with its app offerings, with the iPad and Android apps scoring a 100% full mark. However it fell short on its mobile site, where it only made 14th position with 78%, well behind the best mobile site we benchmarked, Your M&S, scoring 94%.

One significant improvement over the last study is in the number of retailers offering an optimised mobile site experience, in 2011 30% of the top 10 did not have mobile sites, now, only 17% of the top 30 do not.

	Retailer	Basic elements	Mobile website	iPad app	iPhone app	Android app	Overall
1.	Debenhams	88%	78%	100%	92%	100%	91%
2.	Expedia	100%	77%	83%	83%	88%	85%2
	Argos	88%	75%	76%	97%	97%	85%
4.	Tesco	88%	81%	59%	86%	89%	81%
5.	Amazon UK	100%	79%	61%	78%	84%	80%
6.	IKEA	75%	59%	78%	86%	82%	74%
7.	Asos	75%	88%	100%	87%	0%	73%
8.	John Lewis	75%	88%	0%	100%	81%	72%
9.	TopShop	75%	88%	94%	82%	0%	71%
10.	ASDA	75%	85%	0%	87%	79%	68%
11.	B&Q	75%	85%	0%	69%	77%	65%
12.	House of Fraser	63%	78%	83%	83%	0%	64%
	Your M&S	69%	94%	39%	91%	0%	64%
14.	British Airways	75%	55%	39%	78%	76%	63%
	The Train Line	75%	75%	0%	76%	78%	63%
16.	Netflix	88%	25%	67%	67%	73%	59%
17.	Cineworld Cinemas	88%	75%	0%	54%	59%	58%
18.	easyJet	75%	69%	0%	67%	67%	57%
19.	Amazon.com	100%	79%	61%	0%	0%	52%
20.	New Look	63%	78%	0%	83%	0%	49%
21.	Next	50%	64%	33%	30%	0%	40%
22.	Tesco Direct	75%	81%	0%	0%	0%	38%
23.	ASDA Direct	50%	93%	0%	0%	0%	37%
24.	Lovefilm.com	38%	0%	56%	61%	57%	37%
25.	Currys	50%	81%	0%	0%	0%	34%
26.	Thomas Cook	38%	0%	50%	69%	0%	27%
	Thomson	13%	0%	0%	70%	69%	27%
28.	Very	25%	0%	39%	74%	0%	24%
29.	Apple	13%	0%	0%	89%	0%	18%
30.	Play.com	13%	0%	0%	62%	0%	13%
	Overall average	66%	61%	37%	67%	42%	56%

The top 30 retailers ranked by overall mobile strategy performance

# How the UK's top retailers are approaching mobile
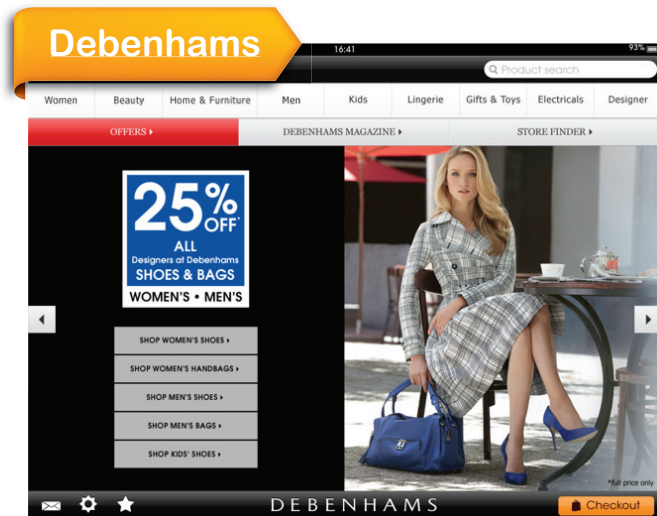
Debenhams iPad app

Your M&S mobile site

As mentioned, Debenhams performed best on app strategy, rather than its mobile site.

The Debenhams iPad app in particular is impressive. Easy to navigate, it delivers superior shopping experience as well as a good store finder function. What particularly stood out was the effort to incorporate Debenhams' store magazine into the app, giving users a engaging browsing experience and more in depth content when they need.

Other retailers taking advantage of the browsing experience offered by iPad include British Airways, which publishes its in-flight magazine High Life. Whilst Thomas Cook and IKEA offer brochure viewers as iPad apps, only Debenhams combined the shopping experience with a more enriched content-based approach within the same app.
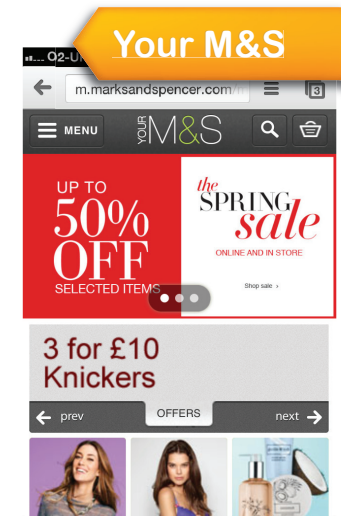
Your M&S had the best performing mobile site and a very well designed HTML5 experience. One of the most impressive aspects of the site is how quickly it loads despite being relatively image heavy – something that the results of our consumer study show to be very important.

Whether it is for casual browsing, searching for particular products or just looking up the nearest high street branch, the site delivers, and delivers quickly.

Maps are easy to find, as are contact details for nearest stores and customer services. The call to action buttons are large and clear and the site makes use of vertical browsing while making the main navigation horizontal.

M&S echoes much of the mobile site in its similarly well performing iPhone app, though the retailer missed the chance to offer a more content rich experience by limiting the availability of brochure only to home department in its iPad app and by not having an Android app.

Seven steps to the perfect mobile commerce strategy

Having established some consumer behaviours and assessed how some of the UK's top retailers are addressing their mobile strategy, what are the practical steps that online retailers can take to improve their mobile offering?

1 MOBILE SITE FIRST

The accepted line on mobile site versus apps is that there is no 'one size fits all'. The platform you choose depends on many factors including your sector, customers and sales volume. However, our research does indicate that on the whole, consumers use mobile sites more than apps and are in fact more likely to make purchases via mobile sites. So make sure you start with an optimised mobile site and get the basics right before jumping on the app wagon.

2 APPLY YOUR DESKTOP KNOWLEDGE

Not having the functionality of a desktop site is one of the biggest frustrations consumers experience with mobile sites. Don't let screen size limit you in terms of functions and features, and apply the knowledge you have about user behaviour on desktop on mobile. Just because a customer is using a mobile doesn't mean they want to compromise on the functionality they receive, they simply want it in a mobile friendly format that's relevant to them. Ensure that your mobile site echoes the look and feel of your desktop site and offer a similarly high quality experience.

3 SPEED MATTERS

Whatever you build, make sure it runs quickly. The number one consumer frustration with mobile sites is speed, and although the current roll out of faster 4G networks may address this to some degree, don't rely on the customer's network speed. Ensure that your site is optimised for mobile and that images and other assets are automatically scaled depending on the device the consumer uses.

4 MAKE SEARCHING EASY

The fact that the there's no place like home for consumers using their mobile devices shows that phone or tablet is the first port of call to access the web. In this instance, they often know what they are looking for, so make it easy for them to find. Put search front and centre, and ensure your mobile site search works just as well so that customers can find the products and information they want quickly.

5 CONTEXTUALISE YOUR CONTENT

Usage in the home is even more pronounced on tablets than smartphones: 80% of respondents in our study said they use their tablet devices most in the home. This indicates more than simply grabbing a device to check some information quickly, people are using their mobile devices to browse leisurely too. Take the opportunity to offer them more engaging content by incorporating social networking, video or editorial to make your site or app more sticky.

6 HELP CUSTOMERS ON THE GO

Although mobile use is big in the home, maps, directions and location still have an important place when out and about. Consumers are using mobile sites and apps to find your store and check stock lists before they visit, so make it easy for them. Location based targeting not only drive footfall to retailers' physical stores it can also help to trigger purchase on the spot and in after-sales care. ASOS is a good example, as it includes a map function within its iPhone and iPad apps to find the nearest location to take products for returns.

7 ALIGN THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the multitude of channels a customer will be able to interact with you, but try to see web, mobile and tablet as one channel, but in multiple screens. This is because when you separate mobile from web, customers become confused by the disjointed experience and diluted brand message. So only with a 'one channel' approach you'll be able to make the experience of interacting with your brand universal across platforms. To further improve the customer experience offer innovative ways of connecting online and offline such as order online and pick up in store, or allow customers to interact with products in store via mobile. And just as you would on desktop, ensure that you use analytics to see how customers are interacting with mobile content in order to improve experience over time via personalisation.

Conclusion

In the 2011 EPiServer mobile benchmarking report, we concluded that mobile represented a huge opportunity and that many retailers were struggling to realise its potential. Since then, there has been significant improvement, with overall scores rising across the board.

This is against a backdrop of the mobile marketplace getting increasingly more complex, with an ever-greater variety of devices, particularly with the increase in Android market share and huge surge in tablet use.

It is for this reason that, in our steps for mobile strategy, we have chosen not to point out some of the obvious requirements. Make call to action buttons larger, reduce text entry, don't use pop up windows, match the branding from your main site – these were all steps we included in the previous report that we are happy to say were addressed by the retailers we looked at this time around.

One special mention, however, has to go to the issue of automatic redirects. One retailer in our benchmarking report had built a fully functional mobile site, but the user is not automatically redirected to it when visiting on a mobile device. So you would have to know the specific address of the mobile site in order to find it. We scored the site regardless, but really, if you aren't going to send your customers there, you may as well not have a mobile site at all!

Since the 2011 report retailers have really grasped the mobile opportunity and thought about the best approach to make the most of it. Looking into the future, we think companies will continue to step up their mobile game. Areas of growth such as mobile coupons, self-scanning in super-markets, NFC and e-wallets mean that there are more options than ever to maximise mobile strategy. With the vast majority of consumers having an internet-enabled device with them at all times, now is the time to really refine brand mobile experience.

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EPiServer connects ecommerce and digital marketing to help business create unique customer experiences which generates business results. EPiServer's platform combines content, e-commerce and multi-channel marketing capabilities to work full-circle for businesses online, from intelligent optimization, lead-generation through to conversion and repeat business.

Sitting at the centre of the digital marketing ecosystem, EPiServer empowers online and IT professionals to create superior customer experience for more than 20,000 websites worldwide. Built on .net, and supported by a pioneering partner network of over 630 partners in over 30 countries, EPiServers platform gives customers the ability to deliver the right content to the right person in the right format at a time that suits them. This approach means customers can maximize their investment in digital marketing and increase ROI. The company was founded in 1994 and has offices in the United States, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, The Netherlands, South Africa, Australia, Spain, UAE and the United Kingdom. EPiServer is controlled by the IK2007 Fund. IK Investment Partners is a European private equity firm with Nordic roots, managing €5.7 billion in fund commitments.

24/7 support

We been around since 1994 so we know what we are talking about

Our CMS is used daily by more than 130,000 web editors in 30 countries.

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