

Customers Respond To Sites Whipped Into Mobile Shape

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Mobile-optimized sites drive sales, return visits

The shift to mobile may seem to have happened overnight, but that doesn't mean that consumers are cutting retailers any slack when it comes to adapting to the mobile web.

According to a July 2012 survey of US adult smartphone internet users conducted by market research and consulting firm SmithGeiger and Sterling Research on behalf of Google, about two-thirds of respondents said they were more likely to purchase something from a mobile-optimized site, while three-quarters said they were more likely to make a return visit to the site.

Consumers' desire for mobile-friendly sites stretched across pretty much all verticals. But its use was often closely tied to obtaining information about physical business locations—the first or second most important task identified by consumers in all industry categories was getting directions to a store or obtaining store hours.

Retail customers were no exception to these behaviors—74% of smartphone users named obtaining the location or operating hours of a physical store as their most important mobile retail task. That was followed by contacting the store (64%), getting information about products (61%) and then making an online purchase (50%).

Unsurprisingly, travelers using the mobile web expressed a desire to get information about the details of their trips. Almost eight in 10 surveyed used their device to check on the status of a flight. The next most important task was getting directions or operating hours, at 74%, followed by flight check-ins/reservations (69%), finding a business location (65%), account log-ins (64%) and then searching for flights, hotels and car rentals (63%).

Bank customers listed as their most important tasks checking account balances (77%), getting directions/store hours (65%), logging into accounts (61%), paying bills (51%) and transferring money (51%).

For businesses, getting a website into mobile shape should be a no-brainer. Google found that failing to design sites for mobile had spillover effects, potentially damaging the reputation of the company. And consumers' adoption of the mobile web is only going to continue. eMarketer projects that the number of US mobile internet users will hit 198.8 million in 2016.

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