



How to Supercharge Your Mobile Website User Testing Strategy



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The Situation

Mobile web traffic has grown explosively in the last two years, but mobile web testing hasn't kept pace. Although mobile accounted for a third of online shopping traffic at the end of 2013, mobile web testing accounted for only a few percent of total user tests. As a result, many companies are missing big growth opportunities in mobile sales, and are damaging their brands and businesses by releasing websites that don't function correctly on mobile or that leave customers cold.

The continuing growth of mobile means that companies need to embrace mobile user testing as a core part of their web development process in 2014. This eBook describes the size of the opportunity, and outlines the best practices for mobile testing used by some of the most successful web companies.

The Time is Now: Mobile Usage and Commerce is Booming

The facts:

- *A majority of Americans now carry smartphones.*
- *More than 40% of American adults own tablets.*
- *Almost half of Americans age 18-29 do most of their internet access via smartphone.¹*

Don't get left behind. Mobile now accounts for 26% of total Internet traffic in the US, and 35% of total commerce-related Internet traffic. Mobile traffic is rising 40% year over year.² Many companies that have invested in their mobile Internet presence report that a majority of their sales are now mobile, or about to cross over, according to Forrester Research.³ The social website Pinterest says more than 75% of its total Internet traffic comes from mobile apps, and Yelp says 59% of its searches come from mobile devices.

1. Pew Internet, September 2013.

2. Year end 2013. Total Internet traffic: StatCounter Global Stats.

Commerce traffic: IBM Digital Analytics. <http://www-01.ibm.com/software/marketing-solutions/benchmark-hub/newyear.html>

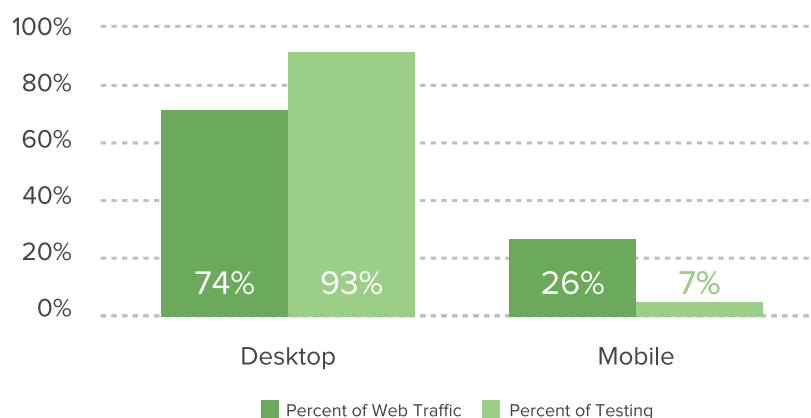
3. http://blogs.forrester.com/julie_ask/13-07-02-when_will_mobile_web_traffic_surpass_pc_traffic_for_you

The Risks: Fail to Test, Plan to Fail

To leverage the opportunities presented by the mobile boom, companies need to consider adding new planning strategies and user testing into their development process. Without taking these critical steps, a company's mobile site and apps can generate problems—not popularity or profits. Here are some of the top risks:

Risk 1. Playing catch up. The rapid growth of mobile has caught many companies off guard. Only 26% of companies have a mobile commerce strategy in place, and out of those that do have plans, half are so primitive that they don't even differentiate between smartphones and tablets.

Risk 2. Undertesting mobile. As a result of this planning gap, mobile testing lags far behind the growth of mobile traffic. Mobile accounts for more than a quarter of all web traffic in the U.S., but only about 7% of website testing:



A comparison of website traffic between desktop computers and mobile devices in relation to the percentage of testing for each.
(Source: StatCounter, 2013.)

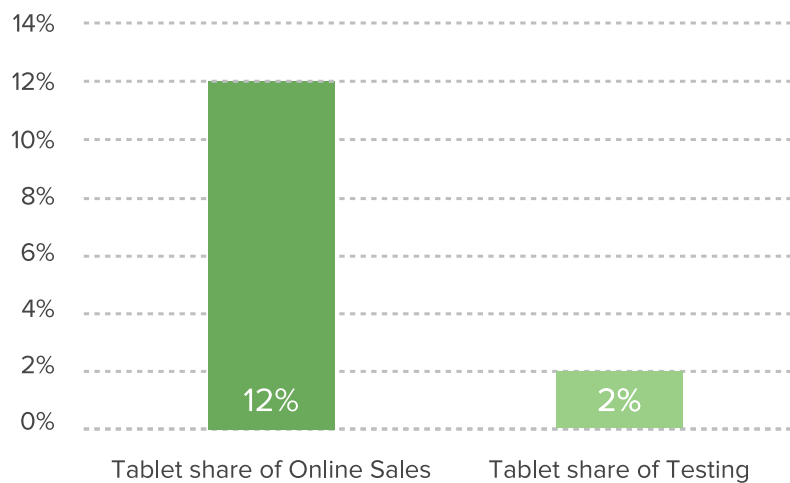
Risk 3. Losing revenue. The hottest growth area in online commerce is tablets. Companies are finding that many of their best customers prefer to shop via tablet, leading to high revenues and good conversion rates. If a site isn't optimized for tablets, customers tend to get frustrated and leave before they buy.



“Merchants in m-commerce today say that ... tablets are mobile shopping machines.”

— *InternetRetailer.com*, 9/25/13

Unfortunately, tablet testing lags far behind tablet revenue:



Online sales via tablet compared to web testing on tablets. Source: IBM Holiday Benchmark: Cyber Monday 2013.

Risk 4. Damaging the brand. Because of the underinvestment in mobile, many companies are missing out on growth opportunities. What's worse, poorly executed mobile strategies and lack of mobile testing can damage a company's brand. Especially when the mobile website or app doesn't meet user expectations. The case on the next page proves the point.

Snapshot: Bad Mobile, Mad Customers

In late 2013, a major U.S. retailer released a new mobile shopping app without testing it adequately with users. The reviews on the app store were scathing. But the effects of the bad app went far beyond word of mouth. Users went to retail locations asking for help with the app, forcing sales clerks to try to be tech support reps. The company's brand image was damaged. Basic user testing, which takes only a few days, could have prevented this debacle.

And as you can see from the dates on the comments below, the damage continued for months because the company was not able to fix the problems immediately. Here are samples of the online comments:



October 15, 2013

★★★★★

Scanning does not work This app sucks. I am starting to dislike [redacted] because the one close to where I live now, sucks. None of the employees know anything about [redacted] products. I tried to figure out why the scanning does not work, but guess what? Apparently, no one in the store has heard of the app. Are they just not informed? Or are they just ignorant. I might consider other stores. I am starting to like Nordstrom.



November 19, 2013

★★★★★

False advertising Got a secret reward card that said to dl app and scan card. Scanner does not work and not to mention the app is incredibly slow. So much for bonuses that were falsely advertised.



December 7, 2013

★★★★★

The app doesn't work right when you get the error message asking you to report the problem. When they get thousands of complaints they will do something. I've already reported 4 times and will continue. Make sure to do your part.



December 10, 2013

★★★★★

Disappointed For such a big name, one expects more...



December 19, 2013

★★★★★

Doesn't load. Apparently is not optimized for my screen size...
On a Samsung Galaxy S4 - seriously, the most popular android phone and it doesn't work! Also does not work on my girlfriend's kyocera hydro elite for the same reason.



December 18, 2013

★★★★★

Worst app I have ever seen! Really bad app... Wow [redacted] put a little R&D into this. Not even in the Android format.



October 15, 2013

★★★★★

Abusive Why does this app have access to and can call numbers, also can change my calendar events? Uninstalled!!

Mobile Testing Done Right

Mobile testing helps companies avoid the risks associated with poorly executed mobile sites and apps. And adding mobile tests to your user testing mix doesn't have to be time consuming, expensive or complicated. If you're testing through UserTesting, web tests created for computers can also be assigned to mobile users, or existing tests can be modified to examine mobile-specific features.

Top Mobile Testing Takeaways:

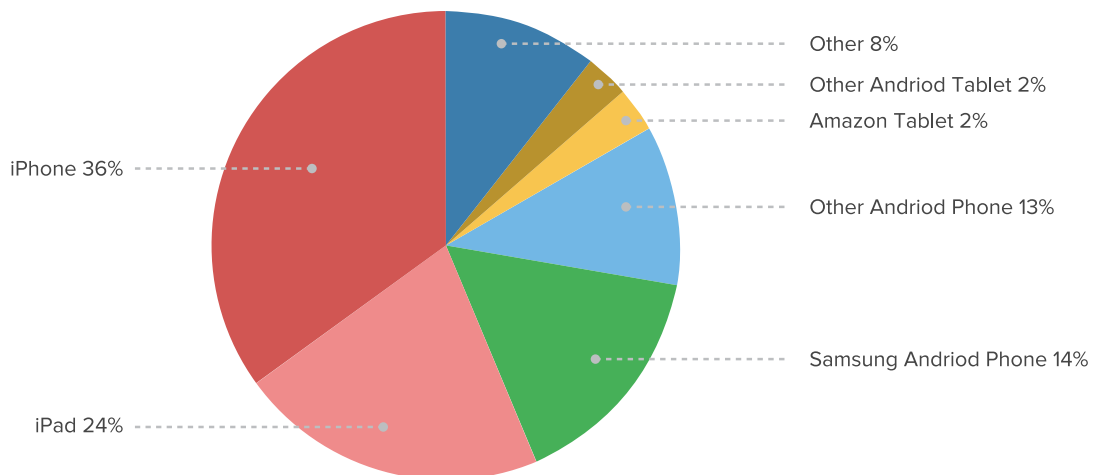
- About half of your total user testing volume should be on mobile devices.*
- If you're testing in the U.S., test your website on iPhones, Android smartphones, and iPads. If you can sample in more detail, specify tests on Samsung, LG, HTC, and Motorola Android phones, and Amazon tablets.*
- Test throughout the development process, while you still have time to act on the results. It's better to test frequently in small batches than to do a single large study.*
- Test for both usability and emotional engagement.*

7 Mobile Testing Best Practices

1

Test the Right Platforms

Most of the mobile traffic in the U.S. is generated by three platforms: iPhones, iPads, and Android smartphones (majority are Samsung). Those are your first testing targets. If you have additional resources, add Motorola, HTC, and LG smartphones (the next leading Android smartphones after Samsung) and Android-compatible tablets (Amazon Kindle Fire is the share leader there).



Share of mobile internet traffic, U.S., year-end 2013. Source: StatCounter GS.

If you sell online, it's especially important to test on both smartphones and tablets, for two reasons. First, they often play different roles in the purchase process. Smartphones are often used for product research, while the actual purchase occurs on tablets. You need to test on both platforms (plus the desktop) to fully understand your usage cycle.

Second, you can't assume that because your site works on a smartphone it will also work on a tablet, or vice-versa. Screen size differences make for surprising incompatibilities, which often show up only on a single class of device.

2

Don't Depend on Responsive Design to Fix Everything

Responsive design, in which a website adjusts itself automatically for different types of devices, is very helpful, but keep in mind that it's a tool, not an outcome. Responsive designs still need to be tested on users to ensure that they work properly. We frequently see cases in which usability problems appear in a responsive site only when it's viewed on a particular platform. You may also find that the functionality of your site needs to be different on different platforms, and it's hard to achieve that with a responsive design alone.

3

Test Early, Test Often

You should be testing on mobile throughout the development process. That way, you can catch problems early, when they are easier to fix. The general rule is: test early, test often.

We've heard heartbreaking stories from companies that left mobile testing until the end of the development process. They found significant problems, but launched anyway because it was too late to make major changes.

A good approach is to test at each stage in the development process. Here's an example:

- ***Test competitor sites.*** Before you even start development, run some tests on your competitors. You'll learn your competition's strengths and weaknesses, and get ideas for your own product.
- ***Test your desktop site on mobile.*** If you already have a desktop web site, have testers try it on mobile devices, to see where they get stuck. It's especially important to test your desktop site on tablets, since the screen sizes are similar but other features are very different. Companies often assume their desktop site will work well on a tablet, and are surprised by the problems users experience.
- ***Test wireframes.*** Early in the design process, you can test wireframes of your main screens and button layout. If you have basic navigation problems, it's best to detect them early. You can also get good feedback on desired functionality and use cases, navigation structure, preferred design patterns, layout of content, and more, all without needing to swipe or tap anything.
- ***Test static comps.*** Test your visual designs before they've even been animated to make sure users can understand them at a glance.

- ***Test clickable prototypes.*** As you get your designs working, see how they come across to users. This is a great stage to test button and icon designs, and any interactive widgets you've created. Often this is the stage where you'll have passionate debates in your team about design details. You can use user tests to quickly settle those debates.
- ***Test pre-release.*** Before you go live, test to make sure everything is working correctly and that you've resolved all the problems you identified earlier.
- ***Test post-launch.*** As you get analytics on what your users are doing, you can employ user tests to figure out why they're doing it, and how they feel about it.

4

Test Frequently, In Small Batches

It's common for developers to want to complete a mobile site, and then test it all at once on a large number of users. We don't recommend this method. Instead, divide your testing into a series of small tests throughout the development process. As few as five users will generally be enough to surface most of the problems you'll find. Between five and ten users is even better. But more than ten users in a test round is usually overkill. Once you reach that number, it's best to do multiple rounds over time rather than to group them all together.

For example, suppose you can test a total of 30 users. A good plan is to test ten users each at three points in development. A great plan is to do six rounds of five users each.

5

Commit at least 50% of User Testing to Mobile

Every round of user testing should include mobile. Some companies use analytics to decide their mobile testing volume. So, for example, if you get 5% of your traffic from tablets, you'll do 5% of your tests on tablets. This is a major mistake, for two reasons. First, your mobile traffic may be low because your mobile site has problems. If you don't test it enough, you'll never find those

problems. Second, there are diminishing returns from testing more users on a single platform. Once you have five to ten respondents on a platform, you should move on to the next one.

Often we'll see companies run about 80% of their web tests on computers and 20% on mobile. Although this strategy seems reasonable at first glance, this ratio proves to be problematic, as illustrated by this chart:

	# Test Sessions	Percent
Total tests	50	
Computer tests	40	80%
Mobile tests	10	20%
iPhone	3	6%
iPad	3	6%
Android phone	2	4%
Android tablet	2	4%

If a company is doing 50 test sessions and divides them 80-20, they end up with 40 computer tests (more than is necessary) and only two or three tests on each of the major mobile platforms (dangerously low).

An optimal testing strategy should feature the majority of tests on mobile. Since the personal computer is the most common, it's usually fairly easy to find problems with desktop websites. But there are several very different platforms in the mobile space, and because they're not well understood, it's very common to have surprising problems on one or more of them.

The largest sources of mobile traffic in the U.S. are iPhones, iPads, and Android smartphones, so it's tempting to say that mobile testing should focus on those three platforms. But we're also finding frequent usability problems on Android tablets. If you want to be safe, test at least on the leading Android-compatible tablet, the Amazon Kindle Fire.

6

Test for Usability and Emotional Engagement

Two factors are critical to the success of a mobile app or website: usability and emotional engagement. You should test for both.

Usability means the ability of a typical user to easily figure out how to use your mobile website. Mobile users are notoriously impatient; if a site confuses them, they will probably move on to something else. You can't assume that what works on a computer will also work on mobile; it's a different usage pattern. Some technologies that work on computers are not available in mobile (for example, pop-up tooltips), and the screen sizes are very different.

The usability issues you test will change depending on your development stage. Early in development, you should test the basic flow and key features of your mobile site. Do users understand what they're supposed to do? Have you made the most important features easy to find?

Later, in development, you should focus on fine-tuning navigation and user flow. Do all of the buttons and icons make sense? If you're testing a commerce site, do users flow easily from research to purchase?

Emotional engagement addresses the user's motivation to use your site. Are you providing features that users actually need, and have you made it easy to get to them? Do people feel rewarded enough by your site that they want to return?

You need to get inside the heads of your users, to understand how they view the world and how your site fits into their lives. User testing helps you learn how your users think and what motivates them, and that helps you plant emotional hooks with them.



Test User “Journeys”

Companies that are new to mobile testing sometimes struggle to figure out exactly what tests they should have users perform. They'll either create elaborate comprehensive test scripts that exercise every aspect of a site, or they'll throw testers into the site with no guidance at all. Both approaches can result in muddled results that are hard to analyze. Often the best results come from testing a particular “journey,” or the process of using a specific aspect of the site. For example, test the user flow from the first screen to the shopping cart, or from the first screen to researching a product. Choose the key journeys in your site, and start by testing them. By focusing the test, you'll get more actionable feedback.

Mobile Testing Checklist

Take your mobile testing strategy to the next level. You'll instantly gain the upper hand on your mobile website testing approach with our Mobile Usability Testing Checklist. This handy checklist includes everything you need to plan, implement, and analyze your tests.



Download Now »

This FREE checklist includes:

- ✓ *Pre-test planning suggestions*
- ✓ *Recommendations for making each test count*
- ✓ *Ideas for determining your testing outcomes*
- ✓ *Tips for making the most of your metrics*
- ✓ *Pointers for analyzing the results of your tests*

bit.ly/MobileWebUXChecklist

How Mobile Web Testing Works at **UserTesting**

If you've never done a user test before, you may be surprised by how easy and inexpensive it can be. You design your test online, specifying the tasks you want users to perform and the questions you want to ask them. You specify the type of people you want tested. Then, you give us a URL to access your mobile site. That's it. We field your test to our panel of mobile users, who record themselves doing the test and describe what they think and where they get confused. It's like watching over the shoulder of someone as they explore your site.

The resulting videos are usually returned within hours, enabling you to test a new feature in the morning and get feedback that afternoon (if not sooner).

In addition to testing mobile websites, you can test both released and unreleased mobile apps. On iOS, you don't have to manage UDID numbers; we take care of that for you.



Now What?

Planning and testing are key to creating effective mobile websites. UserTesting can design a mobile testing program tailored to your customers and your development process. Then, we'll execute the plan and give you actionable results in no time. Want more info?



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Call us at 1-888-877-1882

About **User**Testing

UserTesting provides the fastest and most affordable website and mobile app testing in the market. Watch videos of your target market using your site and gain the insights you need to increase your organization's customer retention, conversion, and profitability. Improve customer experience and boost your company's success.