

WHITE PAPER

Embrace a World That Reaches for Mobile First

by **Bree Basham**



There's no question that we live in a digital society. And not just digital, it's digital plus. Users want what they want—now, easily, and on their own terms.

It used to be you'd scroll through your phone if your computer or iPad wasn't handy. But now with larger phones and more apps, mobile isn't the lesser alternative. We are now a mobile-first world. Think about the last time you walked into a public space—ballgame, airport, or shopping center. How many people were scrolling on their phones? And think about

business—tablets are replacing print for presentations, and GoToMeeting is preferred over face-to-face much of the time. In many households mobile phones actually outnumber TVs and computers. And if you spend any time around children, you've seen kids under five navigating an iPhone as well (or better) than some adults. Millennials now use mobile phones as their primary device. This is the audience of our future, and as they make more, they'll spend more. Here's how to capture it.

With smartphone usage rocketing, brands are starting to think mobile-first. However, as with any major shift, while some brands are already there, it's going to take most others time to catch up. While having a good mobile experience is part of the overall brand experience, many brands are behind on getting the strategy in place to deliver excellent brand executions to customers. Any brand today that isn't going mobile is going backwards, and more important, losing to a competitor that is already there. Remember, your audience slips between traditional and mobile seamlessly and demands the same of your marketing. In a world that's now mobile-first, having a site with simple, friendly user experiences at the tablet and phone levels is critical. It would be folly to fail to create experiences based on these needs.

Add Apps or Adapt Website?

The way brands utilize mobile is shifting. A few years ago we saw many brands get on the app bandwagon. But in 2016 there's been a brand shift to investment in mobile web instead of mobile apps. That's because only the largest retailers have been able to find success with their own apps and recurring consumer engagement. For smaller retailers, traffic is driven to their website from Google searches, social media, and marketing campaigns, so an app doesn't make as much sense for them. Consumers must be very brand loyal to download your app, and they have to be able to get perks they can't get elsewhere.

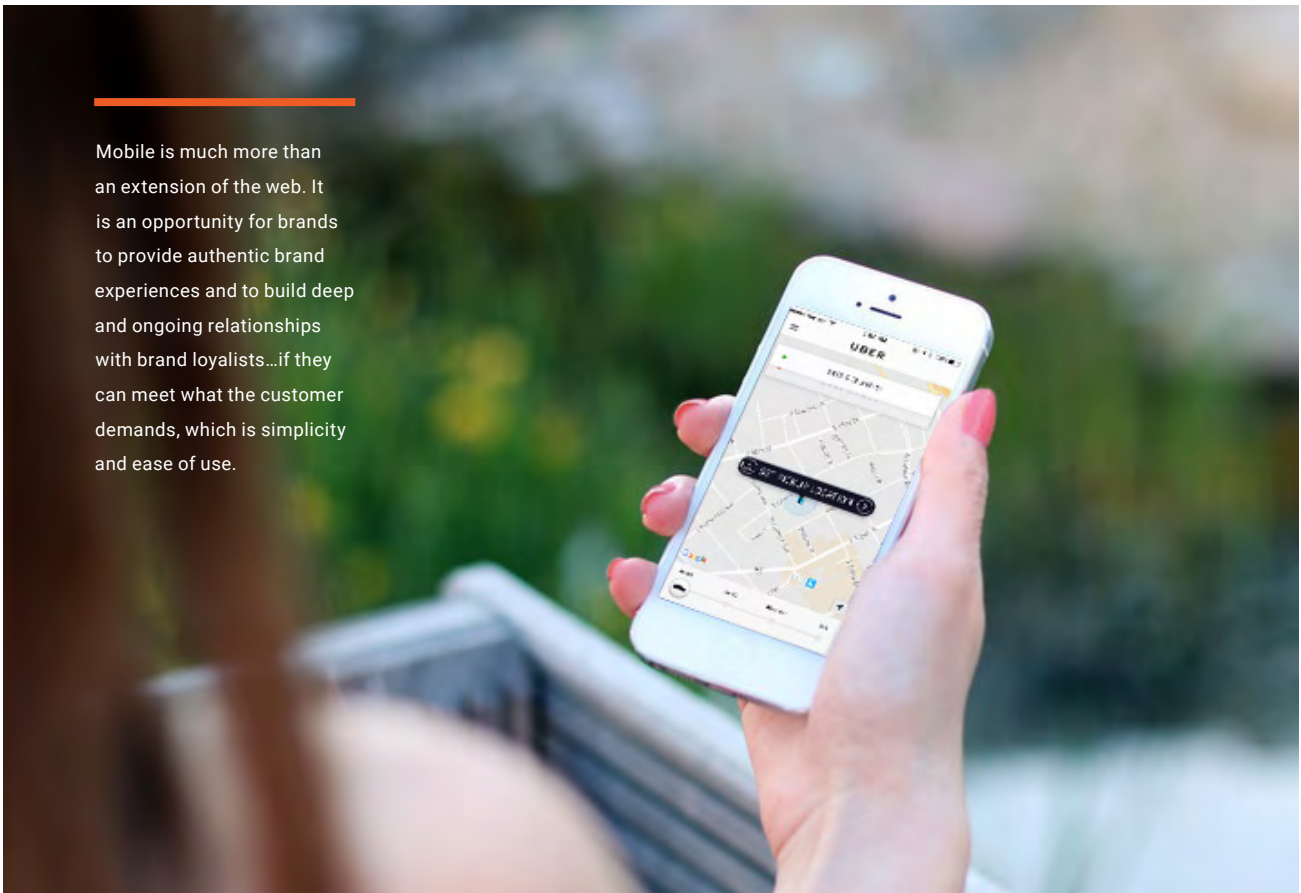
Turning Intent Into Sales and Loyalty

Sure, people still aimlessly scroll on their phones, but they are also looking for opportunities to know, go, do, or buy. Recent research shows that almost one-third of online shopping transactions are made on mobile phones. And that number is on the rise. Yet conversion is still the biggest problem for mobile commerce, as mobile checkout remains a major pain point. On smaller screens, product details are hard to see and credit card form fields are overwhelming, making it easy for shoppers to give up and go elsewhere.

People used to shop at certain times and shopping activity was expected in certain locations. But we're in a demand-driven environment now where you get anything you want with a tap and a swipe. We are becoming loyal to the brands that use technology to simplify our lives. The brands that do it best will create experiences that have you asking how you ever lived without them.

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Mobile-first companies have completely redefined our expectations—not just in the mobile world, but in life. They've trained us to demand immediacy and seamlessness. When we think of mobile, we expect the over-the-top easy experience we get from Uber, Venmo, or DoorDash. In fact, companies like this, especially Uber, who was an early influencer, have completely changed the landscape of what consumers demand from their mobile experiences.

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What's the First Priority in Mobile-First?

The most vital imperative for a brand today is to deliver a seamless site experience across all devices. Responsive design evolved alongside mobile use, reaching mainstream popularity several years ago, and should now be built into every website. A responsive site design simply means it has been crafted for optimal viewing and interaction across a range of devices—desktop, laptop, tablet, and mobile. When

a user accesses a site on their desktop, they are getting the full view of the site. At the smartphone or tablet level the site will convert to fit the smaller screens. However, just having the site convert using a "one size fits all" formula is not enough—we need to start creating the right experience for the right screen.

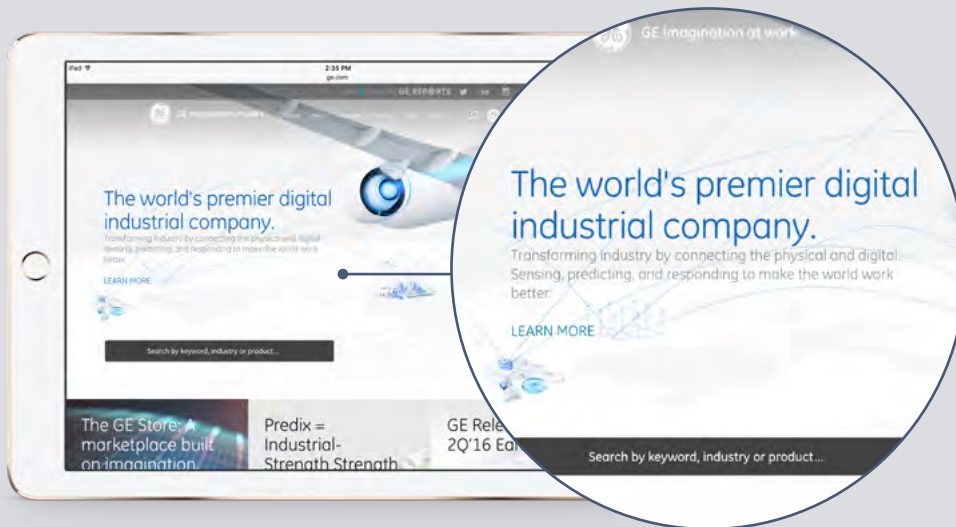
Job number one is making your website mobile-friendly. Don't know if it's mobile friendly? Companies like Google make it easy to tell with handy little tools like [this one](#).

Next, to meet consumer expectations and provide a positive brand experience, your brand needs to focus on things like convenience, speed, and security. Your consumers don't expect the brand experience they love to fall apart when they access it via mobile. They expect to have the same great experience no matter what size device they are using.

Third, but not last, consider how easy is it for people to understand your position and take action on your site? Is it made-for-mobile or just a shoe-horn adaptation of your larger website?

More tips to maximize your mobile:

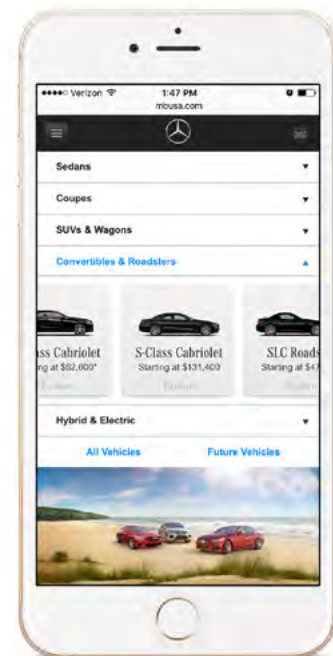
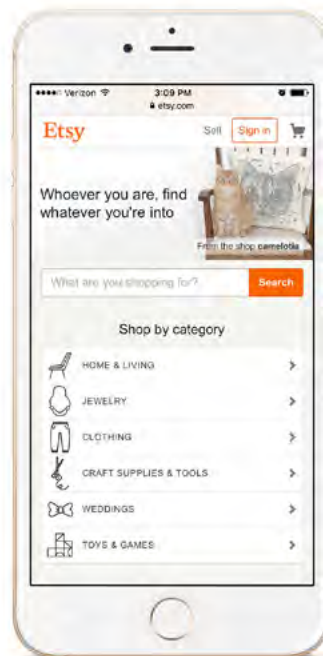
SPEED. Get users in quickly and with focus. Don't make them wait for a slow site load. (Here's another great tool where you can test page speed.)

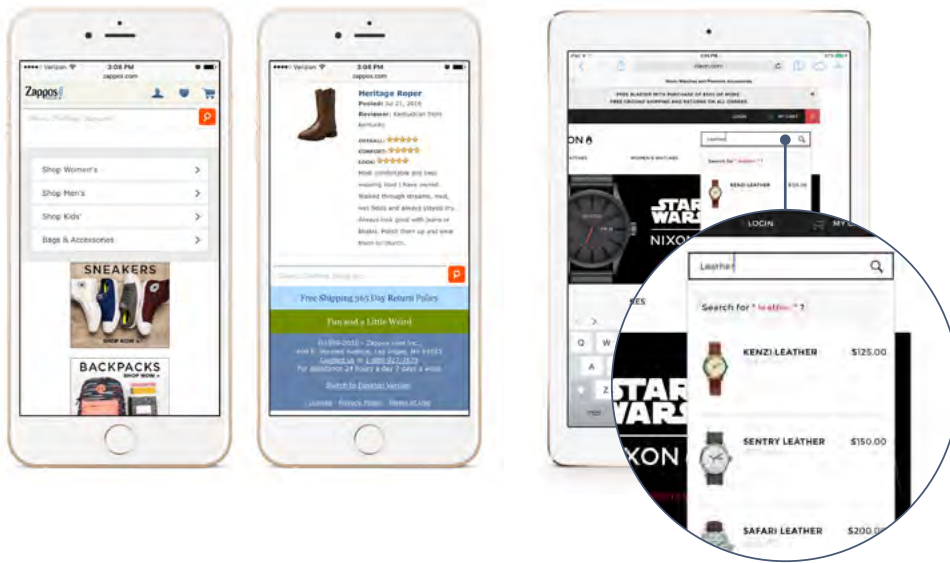


CLARITY OF MESSAGE.

Let customers know on your homepage what you're offering, whether it's your positioning or a call to action. On the GE site shown, it's very easy to understand who they are upon arrival.

SIMPLICITY OF UI. Keep your menu simple. Really simple. That will be the best welcome you can give a visitor. Etsy and Mercedes do a great job of this, offering up easy-to-enter categories for consumers to browse. Mercedes takes it to the next level with photos to enhance the differentiation between models.

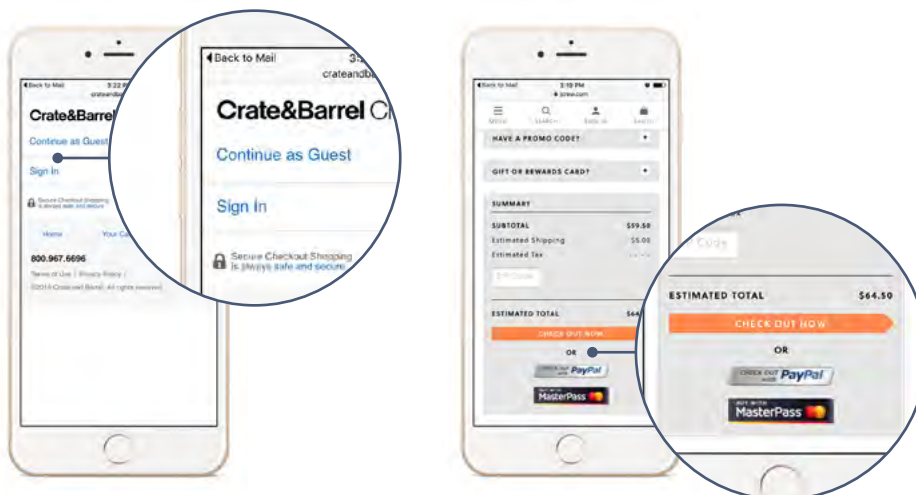
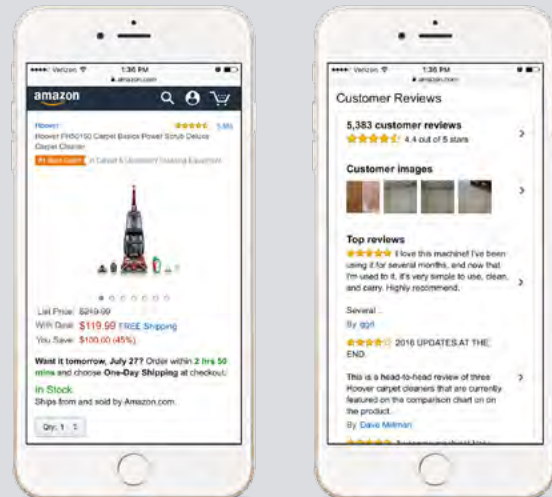




SENSITIVITY.

Enhance customer experience by helping people find what they are looking for with smart search. Zappos (far left) offers search bars at both the top and bottom of their site, so you're never far from a quick query. Sites like Nixon offer predictive search, letting the site assist you in finding what you need.

CONTENT RICHNESS. Encourage content contributions and relate content for consumers. Sites like Amazon rely heavily on consumer-to-consumer recommendations, and reading a review from a peer adds authenticity and reinforces the decision. Just make sure to offer related content at the right times, like at the point of purchase.



KEEP IT SIMPLE AND SECURE.

If offering e-commerce, allow guest check out, as seen on many sites, like the Crate and Barrel examples (far left). Third-party payment options such as PayPal and Apple, as seen on retail sites like JCrew.com, offer even more simplicity as users can skip filling out tiresome check out forms.

What's Next with Mobile First?

As mobile becomes a given for everyone, we will see a transformed focus on mobile user experience beyond the device. Marketers will harness mobile to create more personalized user experiences and to solidify brand loyalty.

Your brand must focus on integrating mobile with other channels so you can collect information in real time about mobile interactions and personalize the entire customer experience, not just what comes across on the website.

It's no secret that online commerce has physical stores worried. But look at it this way—many who use mobile to source local products are also likely to visit the retail store. Mobile can be a powerful way to connect customers to stores, channel information to them, and assist them once they're in the store. Brick-and-mortar stores are not only supporting the mobile surge, but also finding ways to work in tandem with it.

Technologies that enable even more accurate and precise location identification, like beacons, will make the retail relationship more powerful. Brands will aggressively innovate to support more seamless location experiences. This brings more benefit to customers. Consider a customer who can easily pull up product reviews and details based on where they're standing in the store. On the flip side, consider how the retailer can then understand how people move through their stores. Retailers are starting to let you place an order on your mobile phone, pay for it, drive to the location, have the store realize you have arrived, and bring the order out to your car.

This is only going to get bigger and better. We're just beginning to see the full implications of these technologies. Look out for more augmented reality and virtual reality in mobile marketing, as well as a development in video, including live-streaming, 360-degree videos, and shoppable videos.

When thinking about mobile, think about the customer experience and what can support that experience. Realize where your customers are and how you can be there with them. Be out front in embracing mobile first. ■

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MEET BREE

With over 15 years' experience in advertising, brand strategy, brand building, and marketing in CLT/NYC/LA both on the client side and in large and small agencies—Bree Basham leads BOLTGROUP's creative team. Her varied experience includes work in B2B and B2C for industries ranging from manufacturing to consumer goods to fashion retail. Bree is active in the design industry and gives back to the community by mentoring, volunteering, and serving as President of AIGA Charlotte.