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Improve Your Mobile Experience,
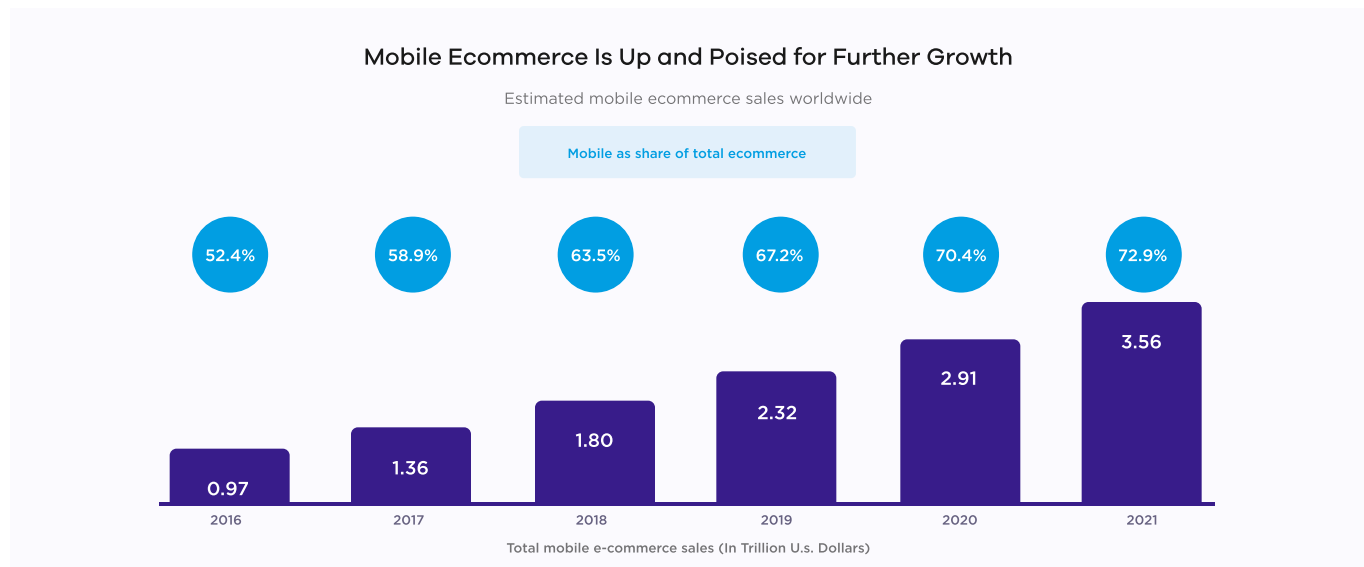**Increase Conversions**

2021

Why The Mobile Experience Is Important

Mobile shopping is expected to grow to a $3.56 trillion industry by the end of 2021.[1] Due to its increasing popularity, ecommerce merchants must find new ways to keep up with evolving mobile standards. However, there are many additional reasons for ecommerce merchants to invest in their business's mobile experience to propel customers through the customer journey.

Mobile Traffic Is Surpassing Desktop Traffic

Before the mid-2010s, the mobile shopping experience was little more than an afterthought for online retailers, whose sole concentration was on maintaining and improving their desktop sites. But smartphones have since transitioned from an indulgence to a necessity, resulting in an exponential increase in mobile traffic.

Mobile traffic has more than doubled since 2014.[2] Today, **more than half of all internet traffic comes from a mobile device**.[3] With this number only expected to grow, ecommerce businesses must pivot the focus of their online strategy from desktop to mobile if they want to survive.

Mobile Ecommerce Is Up and Poised for Further Growth

Estimated mobile ecommerce sales worldwide

Mobile as share of total ecommerce

Year	Mobile share	Total mobile e-commerce sales (In Trillion U.s. Dollars)
2016	52.4%	0.97
2017	58.9%	1.36
2018	63.5%	1.80
2019	67.2%	2.32
2020	70.4%	2.91
2021	72.9%	3.56

Includes products or services purchased via mobile devices (included tablets) regardless of the method of payment or fulfilment; excludes travel and event tickets. Data as of January 2018. - Source: eMarketer 2018

Google Prioritizes Mobile Sites In Rankings

Having observed the upward trend of mobile usage, the world's most influential search engine began hinting at the growing importance of mobile sites within their algorithm years ago. In 2016, Google announced through their Webmaster Central Blog that their developers were beginning to experiment with mobile-first indexing,[4] or taking the mobile version of a website into account first when indexing and ranking pages. Two years later, they revealed that after careful experimentation and testing, the company would be rolling out mobile-first indexing more broadly across the web.[5]

In spring 2020, Google announced that they would be **switching to mobile-first indexing for all websites starting September 2020**.[6] As the most widely-used search engine embraces mobile sites as the future of the web, ecommerce merchants need to follow suit so they can remain competitive in search.

Faster Mobile Sites Have Lower Bounce Rates

Getting found online is one hurdle, but keeping a customer's attention once they've clicked on your page is another. This is especially true when it comes to mobile devices, thanks to a constant flood of notifications. Lowered attention spans pose a huge issue for online retailers in the form of mobile bounce rates, which are **typically 16% higher than desktop bounce rates**.[7]

As page load times go from:

1s to 3s, the probability of bounce **increases 32%**

1s to 5s, the probability of bounce **increases 90%**

1s to 6s, the probability of bounce **increases 106%**

1s to 10s, the probability of bounce **increases 123%**

Think with Google
Source: Google/SOASTA Research, 2017.

Arguably the biggest factor in mobile bounce rates is speed. Google determined that when page load time increases from 1 to 3 seconds, the probability of bounce increases by 32%, and when page load time increases from 1 to 5 seconds, the probability of bounce increases 90%.[8] However, they also found that **70% of existing mobile pages take over five seconds to display visual content above the fold**.[9] Online merchants who want their growing mobile traffic to convert will need to improve their mobile site speed so that their bounce rates don't suffer.

Better Mobile Sites Have Higher Conversion Rates

While mobile commerce traffic is on the rise, conversions still trail those on desktop devices by almost half—**mobile conversion rates are around 2.25%**, while desktop rates are at 4.81%.[10] This trend exists in part because, despite growing smartphone usage, many online merchants have still not upgraded their mobile sites to lighter and less complex interfaces. Older, more complex mobile pages impact conversion rates significantly—Google reports that **as the number of elements on a page increases from 400 to 6,000, conversion probability drops 95%**.[11]

Ignoring the framework and performance of mobile sites is a poor choice in the ecommerce world—**67% of mobile users say that when they visit a mobile-friendly site, they're more likely to buy a site's product or service.**[12] In fact, 62% of brands increase their sales by investing in a more mobile-friendly site.[13] By prioritizing their mobile experience, merchants can avoid missing out on sales and, in turn, increase their revenue.

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Positive Mobile Experiences Build Credibility For Brands

A good mobile site can do a lot to elevate the image of a business in the eyes of the general public. 85% of adults expect a company's mobile site to be as good—or better—than their desktop site,[14] and Google research indicates that **73% of consumers will switch from a poorly-designed mobile site to one that makes purchasing easier**.[15]

Deprioritizing mobile sites and, in turn, providing a subpar mobile experience has been shown to alienate customers—48% of users say they feel frustrated and annoyed when on sites that are poorly optimized for mobile.[16] On the flipside, **61% of consumers have a higher opinion of companies that provide a positive mobile experience**.[17] The higher the opinions of site visitors, the more likely a business is to garner repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth.

How To Upgrade Your Store's Mobile Experience

The three most effective ways to prepare your online store for a mobile-first world are by increasing your site speed, improving your SEO strategy, and enhancing your user experience. We explore the best methods for addressing each of these points below.

Improve Your Mobile SEO Strategy

Many business owners assume that a few seconds of load time will have minimal impact on the health of their ecommerce site. However, those extra seconds can have a colossal effect on a business's bottom line. **53% of visitors will leave a site that takes longer than three seconds to load**,[18] and a delay of just one second in mobile load time can cause a 20% decrease in conversions.[19] In fact, one in three smartphone users have purchased from a company other than the one they originally intended to patronize because the other company provided them with what they needed more quickly.[20]

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↓ ## 20%

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Clearly, customers value businesses that waste as little of their time as possible. Faster sites help shoppers address their needs in a more efficient manner, which reflects well on the brand that assisted in the process. Here are a few ways you can speed up your mobile site to keep site visitors engaged and encourage conversions:

Host on a Major Content Delivery Network: Rather than relying on private servers, which are smaller and less powerful, make sure that your site is hosted on a major CDN. Using Google Cloud Platform or another CDN ensures that spikes in site traffic won't result in slower load times. One site reported that migrating to GCP cut their load time in half, while sites who migrated away saw an increase in load time by 50% or more.[21]

Use Server-Side Rendering: Many sites rely on browsers to render site content. This forces the browsers to do the heavy lifting of downloading and executing JavaScript, meaning that they take more time to display content for the user. Rendering on the server instead avoids this issue and helps achieve a faster Time to Interactive (TTI).[22]

Compress Images & CSS: While vital to selling products that customers can't physically examine, images are complex and can greatly increase load times. By optimizing and compressing them along with other page elements, you can reduce load times while still displaying high-quality content. Google and leading analytics company SOASTA report that lighter, less complex pages lead to more conversions.[23]

Eliminate Flash & Pop-ups: As a general rule, avoid any add-ons that get in between your customers and your product listings, as customers who can't see what you have to offer quickly will leave your site. Flash and pop-ups take substantial time to load on their own, increasing the probability of bounce. Additionally, Flash was discontinued in December 2020.[24]

Improve Your Mobile SEO Strategy

One of the best ways to ensure that your site is seen by as many people as possible is through speeding up your site, as mentioned above. Researchers found that mobile pages ranking in positions one through five on SERPs loaded measurably faster than those in positions six through 10.[25] Additionally, nearly **one-third of the top-five mobile search results for the keywords examined loaded within a second**, whereas less than one in four pages ranked six through 10 loaded that quickly.[26]

Aside from speeding up your site, other SEO tactics must be employed to aid in expanding reach. Unfortunately, setting up an SEO strategy for your desktop site and expecting it to translate seamlessly to your mobile site will not suffice under mobile-first indexing. And since **87% of smartphone owners use search engines at least once a day**,[27] ensuring that your mobile site ranks high in SERPs is as important as ever. Here are a few steps you can take in addition to speeding up your site to improve your mobile SEO:

Implement Technical SEO Practices for Mobile: Every authority site has their own list of the best technical SEO best practices. Moz lists a variety of helpful examples, including mobile site design, optimized metadata, and Schema markup, among others.[28] Additional impactful technical SEO practices you can implement include using sitemaps, SSL certificates, and header tags.

Use Accelerated Mobile Pages: AMP optimizes web pages for mobile browsing in part by speeding up mobile sites. One business reported that after implementing AMP, "our site traffic increased by almost 50% over the past year, and the majority of the increase was due to AMP and mobile page views."[29] Since AMP was created by Google, it's no surprise that it has a positive impact on Google search rankings in particular.

Optimize for Voice Search: One often overlooked aspect of mobile searches is the voice search abilities of smartphones—in fact, over 20% of searches in the Google App are now done by voice.[30] When customers search using speech, they tend to ask questions and use more conversational language. Make sure that your site includes metadata, blog posts, and other content that answers questions in layman's terms.

Perform Mobile Keyword Research: Because shoppers use search engines differently on their phones, mobile keyword targeting is very different from its desktop counterpart. For example, searches for "best place to buy" grew over 70% from 2016-2018 on mobile specifically,[31] so businesses targeting that keyword string in relation to their products likely saw a boost in mobile site traffic. Conduct your own mobile keyword research to identify trends and determine how you can adjust your strategy to capitalize on them.

Enhance Your Mobile User Experience Design

Design is one of the first things visitors notice when they land on a new website. Unfortunately, the best desktop designs don't always render well on mobile devices. That doesn't bode well for business owners who deprioritize their mobile sites—57% of internet users say they won't recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile website.[32] Additionally, **50% of people said that even if they like a business, they will use them less often if the website isn't mobile-friendly**.[33]

That doesn't mean you should create a new site from scratch—your mobile site should feel similar to your desktop site while being tailored for a smaller screen. While 62% of people expect brands to deliver a consistent experience every time they interact with a brand, only 42% believe brands actually do provide a consistent experience.[34] If you want to retain customers and get them referring your business to their friends, here are a few steps you can take to enhance your mobile design while keeping the experience comparable:

Design for Mobile First: The importance of mobile-friendly sites cannot be overstated—in addition to mobile traffic surpassing desktop traffic, when it comes to search engine rankings, mobile-friendly pages can generate 30% in gains, while non-mobile pages experience only 20% in gains.[35] To avoid missing out on conversions, focus your efforts on your mobile site before working on the desktop version.

Implement Responsive Design: Of the options available for your business, responsive design in particular ensures that your site will translate well across devices with different sized screens. This is relevant because 65% of people surveyed stated that it was important for a site to display well on the device they're using.[36] With several generations of smartphones from countless manufacturers in use today, implementing responsive design ensures that each smartphone user sees the best version of your site.

Use Large Fonts: Smartphone screens are much smaller than desktop screens. It's important to keep this in mind when designing your site for a mobile viewer so that they aren't forced to squint, hold their phone closer to their eyes, or zoom in on their screen. As a rule of thumb, when it comes to mobile fonts, the default standard is 16px.[37]

Make Navigation Straightforward: Each page of your mobile site needs to provide easy access to other pages throughout your site. The Google Developers blog lists many helpful methods for keeping your navigation mobile-friendly, including focusing on CTAs, shortening menus, incorporating easy homepage access, and more.[38] Additional best practices include using hamburger menus, filters, and visible search bars.

Final Thoughts

Ecommerce merchants have been slow to invest in quality mobile versions of their sites. Unfortunately for these retailers, consumers have been proven to leave poorly-designed mobile sites for alternative options that make mobile purchasing easier. Brands that have invested in a more mobile-friendly site have experienced a marked increase in sales. To do so, companies must speed up their mobile site, improve their mobile SEO strategy, and enhance their mobile user experience.

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About Volusion

Volusion is an all-in-one ecommerce solution that helps entrepreneurs build and manage successful online businesses. Since 1999, our dedicated team of developers, marketers, designers, and technical support experts have been passionate about helping merchants operate and grow their stores, whether startup or established. Two decades later, Volusion has earned dozens of accolades and powered over 150,000 successful online businesses.

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