Why the Mobile Web is Disappointing End-Users

A study of consumers’ mobile web experiences conducted by Equation Research on behalf of Gomez, Inc.
Executive Summary

The mobile web is growing at an unprecedented rate. According to The Nielsen Company web visitors using a mobile device increased from 42.5 million in July 2008 to 56.9 million in July 2009. Due to the increased adoption, faster networks and more capable mobile devices, businesses recognize substantial value and opportunity from the mobile web.

Facebook currently has more than 65 million active mobile users — a staggering increase from just 20 million eight months ago. And the impact of the mobile web is not only felt by the media and entertainment industry. People are starting to use their mobile phones for everything from checking their bank balances to buying a $350,000 Lamborghini. According to eBay President/CEO John Donahoe eBay’s mobile sales volume is growing in the double digits every month with eBay’s iPhone application having generated a phenomenal $400 million since its launch in summer 2008.

One thing is clear — the mobile web has crossed the chasm — to the benefit of organizations everywhere. Yet what are mobile users' expectations and how do they characterize the current mobile web experience?

To find out, Gomez, Inc. commissioned Equation Research to conduct a study of consumers’ mobile Internet usage and perceptions. Interviews of 1001 mobile web users were conducted between September 16 – 21, 2009.

Key Findings

Mobile users have high expectations for mobile Web performance. Survey respondents overwhelmingly stated that if performance were better, they would access the mobile Web far more often. Ultimately, the majority stated they expect Websites to load as quickly, almost as quickly, or faster on their mobile phone, compared to their home or work computer.

The survey revealed how unsatisfactory mobile Web experiences can negatively shape a consumer’s opinion of an organization. It also discovered that mobile Web users do not have much patience for retrying a website that is slow or not functioning. In the survey:

- Two out of three have encountered problems when accessing websites on their mobile phones in the last 12 months — with slow load time the number one issue
- More than half are unlikely to return to a Website that they had trouble accessing from their phone, and
- 40 percent said they’d likely visit a competitor’s mobile website instead.

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1 http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=129875017130
Mobile Users’ Expectations Are High

Mobile Internet users expect a web-browsing experience on their phone that’s comparable to what they get on a home computer

The majority of mobile phone users expect websites to load as quickly, almost as quickly or faster on their mobile phone, compared to the computer they use at home. And those aged 35 – 44 are most likely to expect sites to load just as quickly or faster on their mobile phones.

Fig 1 — Web page load expectation — mobile vs. Home/laptop computer

Speed is crucial when accessing a website from a mobile phone

Ultimately, the majority stated they expect websites to load as quickly, almost as quickly or faster on their mobile phone, compared to their home or work computer. But in the meantime, half of mobile web users are willing to wait only 6-10 seconds or less for a web page to load on their phone before giving up, and only one in five is willing to wait more than 20 seconds.

Fig 2 — Amount of time willing to wait for a website to load on a mobile phone
If mobile Internet users can’t complete a simple transaction quickly, they’ll abandon the transaction

Almost three quarters of mobile web users expect to complete a simple transaction, like checking their bank balance in a minute or less, before giving up and exiting the site. Users over 45 years old are significantly more likely than their younger counterparts to only be willing to wait 30 seconds or less to complete a transaction.

Problems Accessing a Website from a Mobile Phone are Common

Slow load time the #1 issue

60% of mobile web users have had a problem in the past year when accessing a website on their phone and slow load time was the number one issue — experienced by almost three-quarters of those who had a problem. 51% of mobile web users also complained of mis-formatted content, and 43% complained of actions and links that did not work.
Poor Mobile Web Experiences Impact Consumers’ Brand Perceptions And Traffic

*Users are much less likely to return to, or recommend, a mobile website if they had a bad experience — many turn to competitive sites instead*

The majority of mobile web users would be less likely to visit a mobile website again if they had a bad experience, and two out of five would visit a competitive site instead. More than half of mobile web users are unlikely to return to a website that they had trouble accessing it from their phone, and more than two-thirds are unlikely to recommend the site.
Mobile users would access the internet more often if performance was better

More than 80% of mobile web users would access websites more often from their phone if the experience was as fast and reliable as it is at home. Those age 21 – 44 and heavier mobile web users are the groups that would most likely access mobile websites much more often if performance was better.
Maximizing the Mobile Opportunity by Optimizing Mobile Web Experiences

It is clear there are serious consequences for organizations who fail to deliver quality mobile web experiences. The mobile website that fails to perform a transaction at speeds that mimic mobile behavior (e.g., waiting in line, stopped on a sidewalk, or sitting in a bus) or that doesn't function as intended is unlikely to attract and retain users. According to AT&T’s Chief Technology Officer John Donovan, it’s not uncommon for iPhone owners to check a stock 40 times a day. “Anytime a Do Not Walk sign flashes in Manhattan, people pop on their iPhones for that 30 seconds,” he says.4

With the mobile web, people expect quick anytime transactions that work flawlessly. A mobile service that is slow — or worse — not functioning as intended, not only has a negative impact on your revenue but increases your customer support costs and damages your brand equity.

How do you evaluate the quality of the mobile web experiences you deliver? Ask yourself:

• Is your website performing to mobile users' expectations?
• Are your third parties delivering the performance and availability you expect?
• Do your mobile sites and applications perform as intended across the devices and networks your customers use?

The only way to get true answers to the questions above is to test and monitor your website from your mobile end-users' perspective — from the outside-in.

About Gomez

Gomez, Inc. is the leader in web application experience management, providing an on-demand platform that organizations use to optimize the performance, availability, and quality of their web and mobile applications. The Gomez platform identifies business-impacting issues by testing and measuring web applications from the “outside-in” — across all users, browsers, devices, and geographies — using a global network of over 100,000 locations. The self-service Gomez platform integrates web load testing, web performance management, cross-browser testing, and web performance business analysis. Over 2,500 customers worldwide, ranging from small companies to large enterprises — including 12 of the top 20 most visited US web sites — use Gomez to increase revenue, build brand loyalty, and decrease costs.

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4 http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/aug2009/tc20090823_412749_page_2.htm
Survey Methodology

Gomez, Inc. commissioned Equation Research to conduct an online study to understand mobile Internet usage and perceptions. Interviews were conducted from September 16 – 21, 2009. Survey results may have a margin of error of plus or minus three percent at a 95 percent level of confidence.

The survey sample equals 1001 total respondents who:

- Own a mobile/cellular phone.
- Must have used their mobile phone in the past 12 months to access/surf the Internet.

Survey invitations sent matched US census data representation for age, gender and income.

**Sample Profile**

![Sample Profile Chart]

Base: Total Sample (N=1001)
Source: Gomez, Inc.