



# How to build great travel mobile websites

...in 11 easy moves

An eBook for marketers

netbiscuits®



# Your customers are already mobile. Are you?

**If you don't modify your travel sites for mobile, your users will click away – and they won't come back. But don't panic, there's still time for you to fix this...**

As a hotel or travel marketer, you'll be aware that your customers are changing the way they use your websites.

The days when they browsed only from a desktop PC are gone.

Research from Google® says web traffic to hotel sites grew by 120 per cent in 2012 for smartphones and an eye-popping 306 per cent from tablets.

According to eMarketer™, **23 per cent of visits in 2012 to travel websites came from mobile devices.**

Now, consumers are set to embrace a new set of web-enabled devices such as games consoles, TVs and 'wearables'.

**To keep these customers happy, you must ensure they can view all your content, on all devices, at all times.**

If you don't optimize your sites for the vast array of devices, they will load slowly, display images that don't fit the screen and fail to run mobile-only features like touch and location.

You customers will hate this.





Now, you may think you have the solution to this: responsive web design.

This technology lets web designers build a single site using code that adjusts the content for different devices.

### Limits of responsive

Responsive is a start. But it is limited. Responsive web design sends virtually all assets to the device even if they are not used, which slows loading times. It's like packing bags for holiday and taking every item of clothing you own, just in case.

Any travel industry marketer with a significant number of sites to manage needs something better.

This is where adaptive web technology comes in.

### Know your device

This design solution builds intelligence into the server so it can identify the

device. It means the server can adjust what is sent based on screen size, bandwidth, connectivity type, input method (touchscreen or hard key), location and more.

This speeds up page loads, and ensures that every user gets a smooth experience appropriate to their device.

### 11 moves to mobile greatness

In this eBook, you will discover the 11 steps you must take to ensure your mobile websites delight and retain your travel customers.

And you will find out how adaptive web technology can:

- **Deliver a consistent look and feel for retail websites across all devices**
- **Save developer time and cost**
- **Build a future-proofed web strategy**
- **Delight customers with speedy, intuitive sites whatever the device**

# 01



**“Make it easy  
for customers to  
*book* from your  
travel sites”**



# 01

It should be obvious that travellers want to do more than just search and browse your mobile web site.

## **They want to make bookings.**

The facts back this up: comScore®'s 2012 Travel Advisor report found 18 per cent of US smartphone users booked flights on their phones.

This is part of a huge expansion of mobile shopping, which comScore says is averaging around \$5bn a quarter worldwide.

Clearly, travel firms that fail to build in a smooth booking option into their mobile sites are missing a huge opportunity.

The key is to **ensure that web layout, sizing and fonts are always legible on payment forms.**

Often, they are not. In a 2013 study by Harris Interactive 26 per cent of US shoppers described the mobile web check-out process as a 'pain'.

However, with a good mobile web strategy in place, you can ensure the payment process is easy. And then you can **use data mining to improve the shopping experience next time.**

It's now possible to analyze mobile web behavior for details such as: visitor numbers, session duration, page paths, basket abandonment, conversion and more.

This can help you to modify your sites to encourage users to buy more.

**Act now to make your sites mobile-ready. Email [info@netbiscuits.com](mailto:info@netbiscuits.com)**

### **How adaptive web design can help:**

With adaptive web technology, mobile sites can serve navigation items to users based on analysis of previous habits. It can modify check-out screens so the menu items are legible, drop down screens work well and so on. This should improve payment conversions.

# 02



**“Create mobile sites that properly integrate with your back-end systems”**



# 02

If the primary function of your mobile website is for bookings, then nothing is more important than using a platform that connects seamlessly with your back-end systems.

There are multiple requirements here. **Your mobile site should know real-time vacancy levels, use a payments system that harmonizes with existing transactional platforms, and integrate analytical tools** such as those that collate reviews and ratings.

The importance of real-time booking systems cannot be stressed enough. According to hotel.info, which operates across 190 countries worldwide, **50 per cent of mobile bookings are made for the same day as the stay.**

So you need a partner that can build these systems from scratch – or work with in-house developers to amend existing sites.

Of course, some in-house teams have never built a mobile destination. Others have. Either way, making these sites future-proof and integrating them correctly takes time and resources.

Ideally, you want your developers to focus on great design ideas, and let someone else worry about these issues.

## How adaptive web design can help:

A cloud-based adaptive platform lets your developers build sites using the code they already know – standard development languages including XML, HTML5, CSS3 and JavaScript. They just need to add an API to make their systems ‘talk’ to the adaptive platform.

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# 03



**“Host sites that  
know where your  
customers are”**



# 03

Customer location data is a useful extra for many mobile website owners. But for those in the travel sector, it is absolutely central.

Knowing a customer's location can help a travel brand make the mobile web experience delightful and intuitive.

At the most basic level, it can bring locally relevant details to the top of the page or **deliver content in local languages with local currency.**

But this is just the start. A travel brand can modify its web offering to present a search and booking page on the first visit.

Then, when the customer arrives at the airport, for example, it can adjust to present information about boarding and offers.

Later, when the device knows the traveller has arrived at the final destination, it can suggest car hire options, currency exchange and more.

Of course, **customer location might also change the connection they're using.** Consumers on 3G will not expect the same rich content experience as those on Wi-Fi. So it's crucial your mobile sites can detect the connection to take account of these nuances.

## How adaptive web design can help:

GPS is one of the key features included in the device profiles used by adaptive web design platforms. So the system knows the device can run location services – and it can activate them so the user enjoys a fully localized web journey.

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# 04



**“Abandon your  
'apps for  
everything'  
strategy”**



# 04

There's no doubt that native apps have worked well for some travel brands. However, it is unrealistic to build an app for every new property or initiative.

Why? First there's the cost. Users demand a level of polish in their apps. This is why some brands spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on each app project.

Then there's discovery. There are over a million apps on iTunes™ and Google Play™. **How can you ensure yours is discovered?**

Finally, there's distribution. Native apps (in the case of iOS™) can only be available on the official store. You need approval to get yours listed.

**So you don't even control your route to market.**

Rather than download dozens of apps, mobile users will find you on the mobile web. Indeed, an Xcubelabs study found 81 per cent of smartphone owners use their device to browse the web, while 68 per cent use an app.

It makes commercial and strategic sense to make mobile sites a priority.

## **How adaptive web design can help**

Apps are expensive to make and update. If you're on iTunes or Google Play, you do not control your route to market. A mobile web strategy is cheaper and more adaptable. And if you use adaptive web design, your sites will deliver an experience tailored for every device, browser and data connection.

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# 05



**“Deliver a great mobile web experience to travellers who are offline”**



# 05

When do people use mobile travel sites? Well, much of the time when they are travelling themselves.

So it's your sites that consumers will be visiting when they're on a train going through a tunnel, or disappearing into remote countryside.

Unfortunately, **the customer who loses a connection to your site will not necessarily come back – even if it's not your fault.**

So make sure that when your customer is offline, your site is still accessible.

You can do this with caching, which pre-loads a certain amount of functionality into the device.

Imagine your customer is browsing your site on a train platform. With caching they can continue their session on the train, even when 3G drops out.

There's one more benefit. **With data cached locally, there's less to load on subsequent sessions, so page loading is faster.**

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## **How adaptive web design can help:**

Adaptive web technology can build in a caching feature that stores web content locally on the device. When a browser request is sent out, it loads the content directly from the local storage cache. In other words, there's no need to access the network. More caches can happen in the background when there is connectivity again.

# 06



**“Create travel sites for all your customers – not just iPhone users”**



# 06

Every travel company marketer will be aware that consumers are browsing and shopping from smartphones.

But within the 'smartphone' space, there are hundreds of models. Not every user has an iPhone™ or a Galaxy™.

In fact, when Netbiscuits analyzed its traffic in January 2013, it found the top ten devices accounted for barely half of all activity.

**Any brand building sites only for the top ten devices is alienating more than four in ten users.** And if you manage a global brand, the problem is worse: six in ten Middle Eastern and African users don't have a 'top ten' phone.

The rise of Android® is not helping. Today, 4,000 devices run on the platform. Then there are mobile OSs such as BlackBerry™, Symbian™, Windows™, Firefox™ – and mobile browsers like Safari™, Chrome™ and Opera Mini™.

Every one makes the mobile experience different. But don't forget. There are feature phone users too. Strategy Analytics says **five million people still use legacy handsets.**

Why would any travel marketer exclude customers by building web experiences that work well only on smarter devices?

## **How adaptive web design can help**

Adaptive web platforms build databases of thousands of devices, so they can identify virtually every different model connecting to the site. It means every user gets the optimum browsing experience – including the very first phones running WAP web pages from a decade ago.

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# 07



**“Remember, slow loading sites annoy users – and can cost you millions”**



# 07

We've all done it: clicked on a web page and then clicked away again if it doesn't load straight away.

Indeed, a survey by Smartbear in 2012 found **a one second increase in load time results in 11 per cent fewer page views.**

On sites where visitors spend money, slow loading is unforgivable.

Consumers **do** make payments at travel sites. Indeed, the comScore Travel Advisor report in 2012 found 18 per cent of US smartphone users booked flights on their phones.

No one knows the benefit of fast loading web pages better than the world's biggest e-tailer.

In a report, Amazon® revealed it increased its revenue by **one per cent for every 100 milliseconds of load time improvement.**

Clearly, a desktop site running on a mobile device will load painfully slowly.

And so, in many cases, will a site built with responsive design. Why? Because a responsive web site pulls in all of the site assets before it optimizes them for the small screen.

This is inefficient. It means the server sends unusable content to the phone – and sends such big files that pages load slowly.

## How adaptive web design can help

The fundamentals of adaptive web design are that it detects both the device capability and the connection speed before delivering web pages. This ensures that large files are only sent when appropriate. Result? Consistently fast loading sites.

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# 08



**“Ensure mobile  
web users can  
see the  
pictures and  
read the words”**



# 08

Pictures are important for any mobile site. But for travel sites, they are especially so. The consumer looking for a hotel to book will demand images in the best resolution possible in order to proceed to payment.

So it's essential for travel sites to serve images that fit the screen and display in a resolution that suits the capabilities of the device. **Without a proper mobile web strategy, images might not load at all.** And they will slow website loading times.

Type must be the correct size and in fonts appropriate for a screen held inches away (in the case of phones and tablets), or ten feet away (in the case of smart TV).

Images must fit the screen and display in a resolution that suits the capabilities of the device. Without a proper mobile web strategy, images might not load at all. And they will slow website loading times.

This will cost you money. In a Harris Interactive study, **46 per cent of U.S consumers had come across mobile websites with product images too small to make buying a decision.**

A customer who cannot read your descriptions or see your images is a lost customer.

## **How adaptive web design can help:**

Adaptive web design knows the screen size before rendering a site for the device in question. It will serve pages that fill the screen with legible text and images that can be seen in full – whether portrait or landscape. It also converts images on the fly so designers only need to produce one hi-res image file.

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# 09



**“Make certain  
Google loves  
your mobile  
travel sites”**



# 09

In the summer of 2013, Google® tweaked its guidelines to punish those with poor mobile sites – and reward those with great ones.

It changed its approach to ensure that when mobile users perform a web search or click through on a Google-enabled ad, they are more likely to land on a nicely optimized page.

**Websites that don't have a mobile-optimized version, or don't use SEO best practices, will be demoted in the rankings.**

Google also simplified device targeting, treating anything with a seven inch screen or below as a mobile device.

What difference does that make?

Well, it means the target device is now a relative unknown.

**So if Google does not specify the device, you have to.** That means sending consumers to sites that give the best experience to all users.

## **How adaptive web design can help**

The basis of an adaptive web platform is a 'device context service'. This delivers a correctly configured mobile website with the right content and the right experience to all devices. This is what exactly what Google wants from the mobile web.

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# 10



**“Remember that  
mobile, tablet and  
PC owners shop  
in different ways”**



# 10

It's tempting to see the screen size as the main difference between PCs, tablets and mobiles. But it's more complicated than that.

These users all behave differently. PC owners generally shop at home on a broadband connection, browsing rich sites for long sessions.

Tablets owners can be at home or on the move, on 3G or Wi-Fi. Phone users will be the most data-sensitive and browse for shorter durations. Indeed, according to Adobe™, **tablet users view 70 per cent more pages per visit than smartphone users.**

Then there's the input method.

Website design needs to take account of this to ensure that a site that works well with a mouse works equally intuitively with one or more fingers.

**But don't forget, the people using PCs, tablets and phones, are not mutually exclusive groups.**

They can be the same person. They may start an online journey with a session on the mobile. Later, they will check back on the tablet. And they may conclude on a PC.

In each case, they will expect the same quality of experience. This is important for your brand equity and your sales.

## **How adaptive web design can help**

The device profiles built into an adaptive web design system include details of the input system. This means that, for example, sites served to tablets include swipe. Meanwhile sites served to phones with a hard keypad require a button press.

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# 11



**“Prepare travel customers for the next generation of internet-ready devices”**



# 11

Can you imagine your customers booking flights or hotels from a games console? A watch? A pair of glasses?

Well, start planning. Because **the web has already gone from PC to phone to tablet. Now, it's moving to smart TVs and 'wearables'.**

This new generation of web-enabled devices will bring new challenges. Google Glass, for example, can read web content out loud to the user. Will your site be future-proofed to do the same?

Of course, there's lots of innovation to come in the devices we already use. **Phone makers are already working on a new ideas such as voice recognition, QR code reading and NFC.**

Barcodes and NFC could be immensely important for travel companies, by helping to bring the physical and the digital worlds together.

Some firms already give consumers the ability to buy directly from a poster or magazine ad via a 2D barcode.

Meanwhile, NFC can offer 'tap to pay' but can also be deployed to let users 'check in' at your locations and access useful information.

Any travel brand with a mobile web strategy needs to take account of these changes and ensure its sites are optimized to support them.

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## How adaptive web design can help

When a new device comes out, any adaptive website that uses device detection services is covered – from a testing perspective. New device profiles can be added to the library within 24 hours of launch. Typically, there are around 750 device features for each profile.



# Too busy to read the whole piece? Here are those 11 steps at a glance...

## **1. Make it easy for mobile users to book from your travel sites**

Mobile commerce is so important. Don't ruin it by serving unusable payment pages.

## **2. Create mobile travel sites that properly integrate with your back-end systems**

A great travel website should give access only to products that can be booked immediately.

## **3. Build travel sites that know where your customers are**

Location-aware sites deliver a better user experience. Your audience could be at an airport or even in your hotel's lobby.

## **3. Abandon your 'apps for everything' strategy**

The mobile web is where your customers are.

## **5. Deliver a great travel web experience to users who are offline**

Use caching to keep users engaged in a tunnel, or when behind a thick wall...

## **6. Create mobile travel sites for all your customers - not just iPhone users**

If you only build for the top ten mobile devices, you're excluding half your users

## **7. Remember, slow loading sites really annoy users - and can cost you millions**

People will abandon your site if it loads slowly. And take their bookings with them.

## **8. Make sure mobile web users can see the pictures and read the words**

Don't serve hotel room pictures that fall off the screen or display text in illegible fonts.

## **9. Make sure Google loves your mobile travel sites**

Beware, Google's new search policy punishes sites that are not mobile-ready.

## **10. Remember that mobile users browse differently from tablet and PC owners**

The session times vary; the input controls are different...

## **11. Prepare travel customers for the next generation of devices**

Smart TV, wearables, games consoles...they're coming. Are you ready?

Act now to make your sites mobile-ready. Email [info@netbiscuits.com](mailto:info@netbiscuits.com)



# Switch on your mobile web strategy now!

By downloading this eBook, you've proved you're serious about making your travel websites work beautifully on any device.

And by getting to the final page, you've learned exactly what's needed to ensure this happens.

You can start that process today with a **free, no obligation, mobile health-check** to help you find out how your current site can be optimized.

Simply complete this **form**, and we'll get you on your way to mobile readiness.

Alternatively, just email [info@netbiscuits.com](mailto:info@netbiscuits.com).

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# About Netbiscuits

Netbiscuits is the global leader in software solutions for adaptive mobile web experiences used by brands worldwide. The Netbiscuits solution is powered by the Netbiscuits Cloud Platform. This technology helps reduce the cost, time and risk involved in developing mobile web applications that deliver a customized, superior mobile user experience across all connected devices.

Netbiscuits hosts in excess of 300,000 mobile web applications, supported by a comprehensive eco-system of web infrastructure vendors and systems integrators. The Netbiscuits Cloud Platform efficiently and securely delivers a tailored mobile web experience through industry-leading testing and software detection services. Intuitive shortcuts that are part of the Netbiscuits Development Framework create and deploy rich web browsing features for both legacy mobile devices, as well as the latest tablet and smartphone releases.

**For more information, please visit: [www.netbiscuits.com](http://www.netbiscuits.com)**

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