

# MOBILE AS A PEER: IMPROVE YOUR DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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# INTRODUCTION

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The current wave of change for businesses is the tectonic shift of consumers to mobile first and mobile only behaviors. While dealing with this shift via “mobile first” strategies has been a rallying cry for some, we see it as a much bigger issue. The consumer shift to mobile increases the need to not only get mobile right – but to get all the elements of the omnichannel retail ecommerce platform working together. In this paper, we will explain how thinking about mobile as a peer to all other digital channels and dealing with the technical and operational challenges that mobile uniquely brings to the forefront, you will gain the benefit of a better, more flexible and more effective overall digital ecosystem.

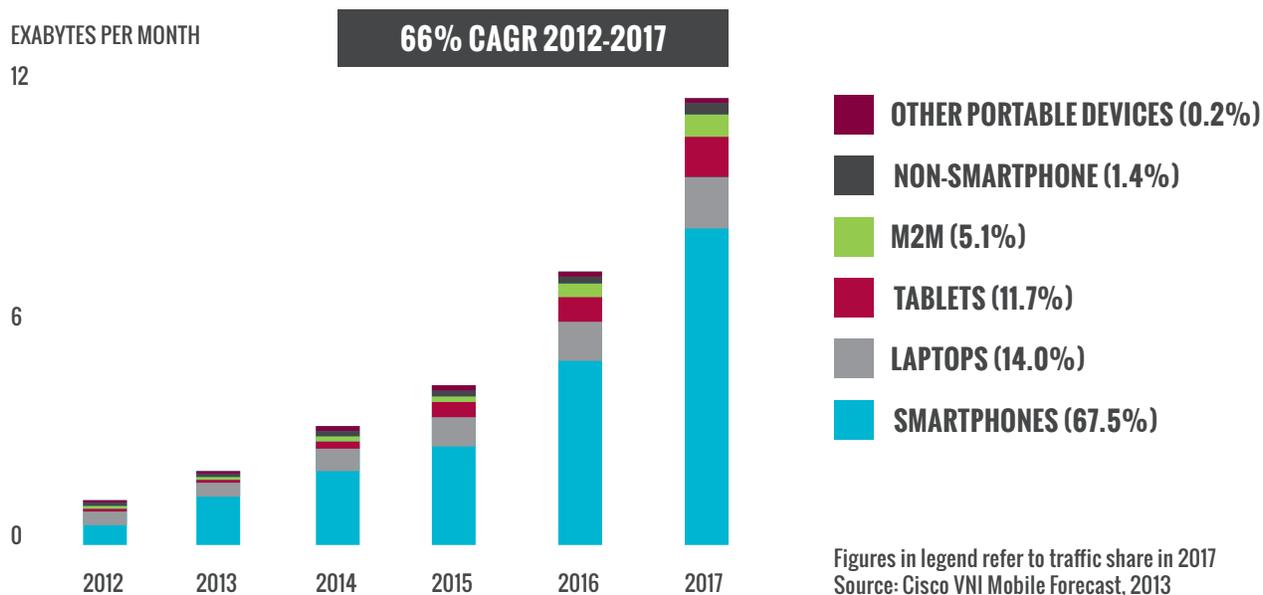


“Mobile First” is an approach to digital ecosystem design and development that assumes that the first, and sometimes only, device the audience will use is a mobile device.

No matter the source, all reports point to the explosive rise – and in many areas dominance – of mobile devices for everything from consuming media to online shopping. There is no virtually category where mobile Touch and Swipe devices (smartphones, tablets) are not rapidly growing past the old standard Click and Type devices (laptops, desktops). Last year, **IDC estimated** that in 2013 we would see tablet shipments surpass total PC shipments, a leap that seemed nearly impossible just four years ago, when Apple first released the iPad.

While many of us huff about spotty Wi-Fi connections on our flights, an entire faction of people live without Wi-Fi at home, relying on cellular networks for their digital contact. *In fact, 10 percent of adults in the United States access the Internet solely through smartphones.*

Increasingly, and inevitably, this portable access will define commerce. 2013 was the year Mobile Commerce became important. By 2017, **eMarketer predicts** that mcommerce sales will easily exceed \$100 billion, reaching over \$113 billion. That’s a 28% CAGR.



**FIGURE 1.**  
Smartphones: Lead Traffic Growth

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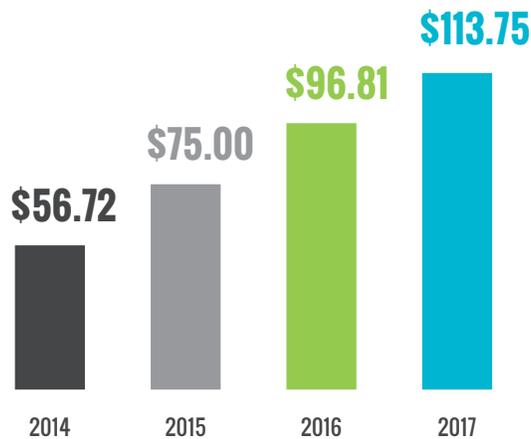


FIGURE 2.

Much of this is led by a wave of digital natives that see their portable devices as their primary one. Prior to the 2013 holidays, *Google forecasted that 88 percent* of this generation (millennials) would use their smartphone for holiday shopping, with 31 percent using it for planning and research as well as purchases, versus a still noteworthy 20% for adults over 35.

Mobile is not where people are going; it is where they are. As a result, if you are still “getting ready” for an omnichannel future – you’re behind the curve.

But “Mobile First” strategies assume that everything else (desktop, other connected devices) does not matter as much as the mobile device – this is incorrect! We prefer to think “Mobile Also” – treating mobile as an equivalently important consumer touch point as all others. We also note something interesting about mobile:

# GETTING MOBILE RIGHT HELPS MAKE YOU BETTER AT EVERYTHING DIGITAL

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Delivering a great customer experience on a mobile device can be considerably more difficult than on the desktop. It strains the overall technology platform in ways other parts of the omnichannel components don't and there are many complex interface design engineering considerations, as well as product design and usability challenges. Even so, the benefit of solving these mobile challenges is that it can dramatically improve the overall omnichannel support ecosystem.

## KEY CHALLENGES THAT MOBILE PRESENTS

- **Supporting Heterogeneous Devices.** With the desktop Web, you are sure to get a mouse and keyboard. In addition, while there are different browsers and screen sizes, you don't really need to plan for that many combinations. With mobile, however, you have a vastly larger array of devices, screen sizes and interaction modes. This is not going to change – device fragmentation is the norm and it will never get any less disjointed than it is right now.

Learning to effectively manage consumer experiences and the necessary platform technologies for many devices better prepares companies for the next “smart gizmo” to hit the market – and to actually get out ahead of the curve a little bit. Rather than trying to figure out if it's even possible to support the latest new thing with your commerce platform, you'll be able to move directly into market-leading innovations on these devices.

- **Complex Use Cases.** It is not enough to define use cases as what the user does with mobile first strategies. For mobile devices, you need to factor in device capabilities and connectivity into your use case development. For example, the very nature of portable devices means that data connections are often interrupted and of variable speed. For instance, consider a person on a Wi-Fi connected device that leaves their home in the middle of a shopping session, switching to a 4G connection. It is an activity so familiar that you do not even notice it happens. Yet, back office systems must be able to deal with wildly variable network connectivity, changing IP addresses and more. There are many other cases. Using a phone one-handed, in bright sun is a realistic situation for mobile. Voice interaction is another. There are simply far more possible interaction types with mobile.

The “Mobile Also” approach requires better and more comprehensive thinking about planning customer experiences – it's not just marketing-led or technology driven – you have to think more about “situational” usage – to plan mobile right you are forced to work right at the intersection of technology and marketing – and that process and that benefit spans the entire digital ecosystem.

- **Heavy Server-Side Effort.** Although packed with capabilities, mobile devices still lag the desktop in terms of sheer computing power. More server-side processing and capabilities are often needed. For example, personalizing content based on the user’s location, accepting voice input, and sending different user experience HTML code based on what device the user has – all of these have a large server-side impact.

Many technology platform initiatives that were not seen as important or valuable enough become critical when trying to bring mobile into the overall omnichannel platform. Capabilities that are implemented to make mobile work properly have the bonus effect of strengthening the overall omnichannel platform – and making it more versatile on the whole.

- **Complex Measurement.** Measuring KPI’s is tricky on the desktop. It’s downright difficult on mobile. A great demonstration of the measurement challenge is ecommerce. The mobile buying experience is often fragmented. Using a computer, a phone and a tablet in the course of a single purchase presents challenges for business performance measurement. Currently, there is no one-stop way to follow a single purchase as a buyer moves from one screen to the next, even though the vast majority of marketers (73 percent) want a single set of metrics for all screens. For the time being, the only way to do this in mobile is for organizations to corral and analyze all data sources to create a multiscreen view of their customer’s activity.

While it is mobile devices that force this issue, everything desktop benefits from is getting a comprehensive omnichannel measurement plan in place.

- **Changes to the POS Systems.** A mobile device can be a payment tool, a loyalty card and more, but making that all work for the consumer requires making changes directly at the POS terminals to be able to communicate with a customer’s mobile device. Companies have been hesitant for obvious reasons – it is no small investment and changing anything at the POS terminal involves risk. Still, a few companies are paving the way, making it less burdensome for everyone who comes after them. And, as it turns out, the systems changes needed to deliver on mobile POS have the added value of enhancing existing customer loyalty programs.

Mobile efforts can make planned changes to POS systems to accommodate things like “in-store pickup” more strategically relevant and create good justifications for long-needed and wanted updates.

## GOING WALLET-FREE AT STARBUCKS



Perhaps the most well known use-case for mobile payment is Starbucks, who made the leap in technology back in 2010 with 7,000 of their stores. They also, notably, tossed a \$25 million investment to Square, their partner in the effort. The rollout of Starbucks Square Wallet means that their customers can complete a transaction, start to finish, using just their smartphone. Customers download the app, find their location in a list of nearby places and tap the icon to pull up a QR code. They then scan their phone at a matching terminal inside the store, and they’re done. While simple, this effort required significant investment in technology, hardware, time and training. Described as buggy at launch, the technology today is generally considered easy-to-use and accessible. (image: techhive.com)

## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR LEVERAGING MOBILE ALSO STRATEGIES IN YOUR OMNICHANNEL DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

A mobile strategy is complex. Organizations who plan to take on mobile as a peer to other elements of their omnichannel strategy need to spend time understanding the often-overlooked considerations that are unique to mobile and multiscreen development. Only then can a step-by-step plan be created.

- **You are in the Digital Product Business Now.** The vast majority of mobile experiences today are delivered as scaled down versions of their desktop counterparts. Yet, mobile behavior is different by its very nature. To create successful digital and multiscreen experiences, businesses must ditch deeply ingrained patterns of design and development. Mobile experiences today are more like software products than websites. Digital Products (think: Facebook, Amazon and Gmail) are never “done.” There is a nonstop product roadmap of features, fixes and changes.

Because mobile development is often the same as software development, the practices honed there translate perfectly to managing an overall suite of digital products that are deployed to mobile and desktop platforms.

*Adopt the practices of digital product management for all faces of your omnichannel strategy, starting with your mobile experiences.*

- **Mobile is a Series of “Now Moments.”** Mobile is all about “now moments,” not just engagement or pageviews. When it comes to mobile, people tend to have a need in the moment, as in, “I need a gas station right now,” or a restaurant, or a specific store or item. Think of mobile as a connecting-of-the-dots – moments of usage at points of need for the consumer. This connect-the-dots concept translates into the desktop Web in the form of being able to create new, and sometimes syndicated, desktop experiences that fulfill the same now-moment-need that customers might be in online.

*Begin to define customer experiences as “moments” not just “a journey” or an “experience” – plan for many “moments” across many devices in many places over time – and define how your omnichannel platform makes those moments connect.*

- **Speed Can Define The Experience.** Successful experiences are often predicated on how quickly information is served up. Anyone who has ever tried to map a destination from a mobile device can attest to how important it is to get information quickly in the middle of the decision making process. Implementing things like Content Delivery Networks, Database Optimization and Business Process Optimization to make a better mobile experience naturally improves the overall desktop experience.

*Performance bottlenecks are tightened with mobile – it's necessary to take the needed steps to correct infrastructure deficiencies in technology platforms in order to make mobile work as a peer in your omnichannel digital ecosystem.*

- **Simple is Not to Oversimplify.** There is a stark difference between simplifying experiences and dumbing them down into something unusable. Good mobile design is about making complicated Web experiences simpler and easier to use, not stripping away so much that the experience itself is sabotaged.

*Mobile requires sophisticated user-centric, business-appropriate experiences. So does the desktop. Learning what's essential, and when it's essential, for the mobile experience can deeply refine your desktop experience as well as all other interfaces to your omnichannel platform.*

# CONCLUSION

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Mobile is an important facet of your overall omnichannel ecommerce experience. Sometimes it will be the only interface consumers have or even want! Getting the mobile experience right has the wonderful add-on bonus of making a better, more flexible and more adaptable digital ecosystem.

## **Three Key Takeaways for Developing Your Mobile Presence:**

- 1.** Mature your mobile product management expertise and get a bonus of an improved omnichannel digital ecosystem. With mobile, you are releasing digital products to the marketplace. They are never done, never quite perfect and always in competition with other companies. That's good! Because that is actually the way the entire omnichannel digital ecosystem works now. And with each mobile deployment, your overall digital ecosystem gets stronger and more resilient.
- 2.** Back-office systems cannot be neglected. You can't have Web servers with nine-second response times when deploying mobile; you can't have databases that can't be queried at high rates; and you can't be missing a way to collect secure data via an API. The back office makes mobile work, and a better back office makes a better desktop experience as well.
- 3.** CTO and CMO harmony. With mobile, there is no clear line between product and technology, and both the CTO and the CMO groups have a degree of ownership for mobile initiatives. Any issues between those groups need to be worked out for mobile – if that happens, it will only help other digital initiatives for an organization.



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