Why your fashion brand needs a killer mobile strategy

BRIDGING THE M-COMMERCE GAP

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Introduction

Smartphones drove more than 56 percent of traffic to retailer websites last year. That's set to grow to 68 percent by 2022. Yet mobile traffic converts at less than half the rate of desktop.

Something's broken. More and more people are browsing products on their smartphones, but something is stopping them from following through with a purchase. All that traffic, but without the corresponding uptick in sales. What's up?

UX is part of the riddle. Some **85% of adults** think that a company's mobile website should be as good or better than its desktop version, while 57% of internet users say they won't recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile presence. Weak conversion on mobile responsive websites is evidence that those expectations aren't being met.

Another issue is failure to address all the different ways shoppers - and fashion shoppers in particular - interact with brands on their handsets. Sometimes this is framed as a binary choice: trade in outdated websites for updated apps. But the evidence shows that approach is too reductive.

Luckily there's a lot that fashion brands and retailers can do to boost mobile conversion, and even hit numbers that big brands with big budgets achieve.

In this white paper we'll show you how to build a mobile strategy that bridges the growing m-commerce gap. Effectively, and without breaking the bank.

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Mobile isn't the future anymore. It's right now.

It's been thirteen years since Apple launched the iPhone

Since then, smartphones have transformed how we work and play. They've upended sectors and wiped out categories.

Touch-screen handsets have paved over a landscape once dominated by feature phones and thumb typing, and grown a new tech commentariat dedicated to telling companies how mobile is going to re-shape their business models.

'How can fashion brands maximize the precious seconds mobile visitors give you?' Jim Lofgren CEO of Nosto

As far back as 2010, when desktop e-commerce was finally living up to its promise, those pundits assured the world that a handoff to mobile e-commerce was imminent. The m-commerce future was fast approaching. Any business selling directly to consumers had to meet the needs of an emerging generation of digital nomads – or face extinction.

From telecoms to music, banking to retail, the iPhone and its successors did transform entire industries – but while some predictions lived up to the hype, others have needed longer to materialize.

It took another decade for mobile web browsing to catch-up with desktop. Screen size, resolution, load time, mobile broadband speed, processing power, apps, and browsers all needed to improve. End users gradually warmed to the benefits of looking for things on their touchscreens, but performance issues and inconvenience kept weighing in desktop's favour.

PCs simply offered a better browsing and a better shopping experience. They had bigger screens, larger text, reliable internet connections, navigation by mouse - in today's terminology, better UX. If consumers were going to cross the next chasm to embrace shopping on handsets, they needed to see that mobile was the better – or at least equivalent – option.

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The latest indicators suggest they're primed and ready to make the final leap. In 2018 mobile internet traffic overtook desktop for the first time, accounting for 52 percent[1] of global website visits. Since then, numbers from Monetate show mobile consistently growing its quarterly share of web traffic, outstripping desktop globally by 60 percent to 31 per cent[2].

For retailers, mobile traffic is even more dominant – 70 per cent to desktop's 29 percent[3] – with 64 per cent coming from smartphones alone.

Consumers are doing their browsing on mobile-first, but they aren't seeing those visits through to a sale.

'But inside those numbers is another telling statistic: the yawning gap between traffic and purchases. When you compare site visits and actual sales by device, desktop is winning the battle for conversion hands down.'

Something is holding them back.

1 Statista: Percentage of all global web pages served to mobile phones from 2009 to 2018

2 Monetate: Ecommerce Quarterly Benchmarks Q2 2019

3 Statista: Distribution of retail website visits and orders worldwide as of 1st quarter 2019, by device

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The yawning gap between mobile visits and mobile sales

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Looking at the graph below, you can see the disconnect between shoppers' mobile browsing habits and their mobile purchasing behaviour. It's a discrepancy we call the m-commerce gap.

Smartphone's share of traffic sits at 64 percent, but smartphone purchases are only 46 percent. Desktop gets the same share of sales – with less than half the traffic. This pattern has been stubbornly consistent for the past two years.

So what's happening?

80%

60%

64%

46%

Percentage

40%

46%

29%

20%

0%

Smartphone

Desktop

● Traffic share
● Order share
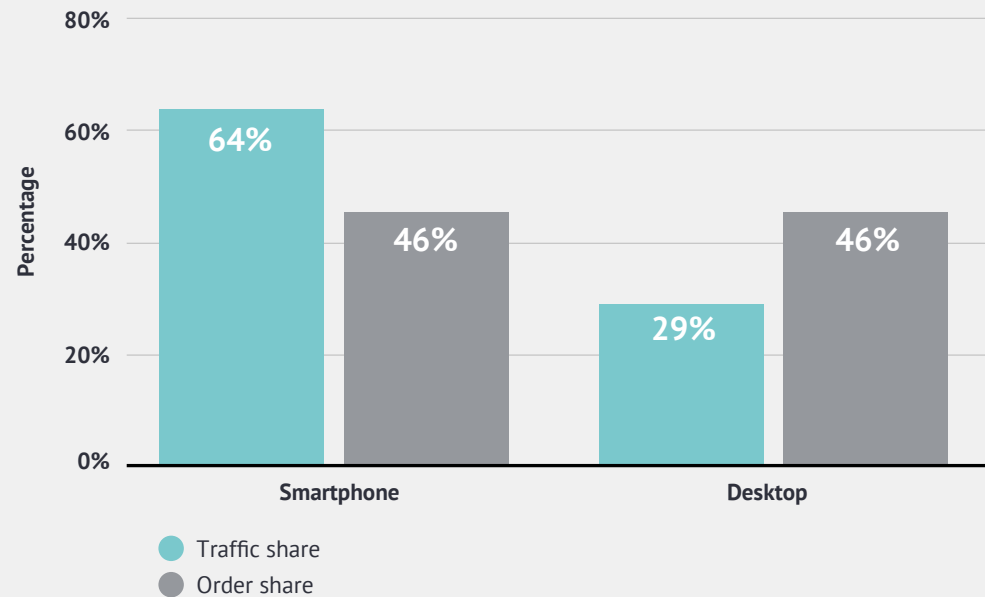
The m-commerce gap explained

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Smartphones (and to a lesser degree, tablets) have become much more potent since the first iPhone arrived back in 2007. They boast as much memory, storage, processing power and graphics capability as many high-end laptops.

Websites are now being built with mobile-friendly responsive technology as standard, and the software ecosystem of apps available for iOS and Android sits at over 4.4 million[4] and growing.

As good as smartphones have become, however, some vital ingredient is still missing – an X-factor that will help consumers make the leap from simple purchases like cinema tickets to sophisticated and higher-priced goods like clothing.

It lies in the sub-optimal m-commerce user experience (UX), and the awkward purchase journey that many mobile shoppers have to take in order to complete a smartphone purchase.

Responsive mobile sites that re-format web pages for the handheld touchscreen are a significant improvement on earlier initiatives like WAP. They're designed to make the mobile web browsing experience more seamless, and they've gained in importance since Google launched its mobile-first indexing policy in 2019.

The practices of responsive web design, however, often leave smartphone shoppers frustrated. They're a major contributor to mobile shopping cart abandonment.

Responsive web design clutters-up mobile sites with content that on-the-go users don't need. Users reach a page and suffer info overload, or struggle to find what they want with touch-screen gestures.
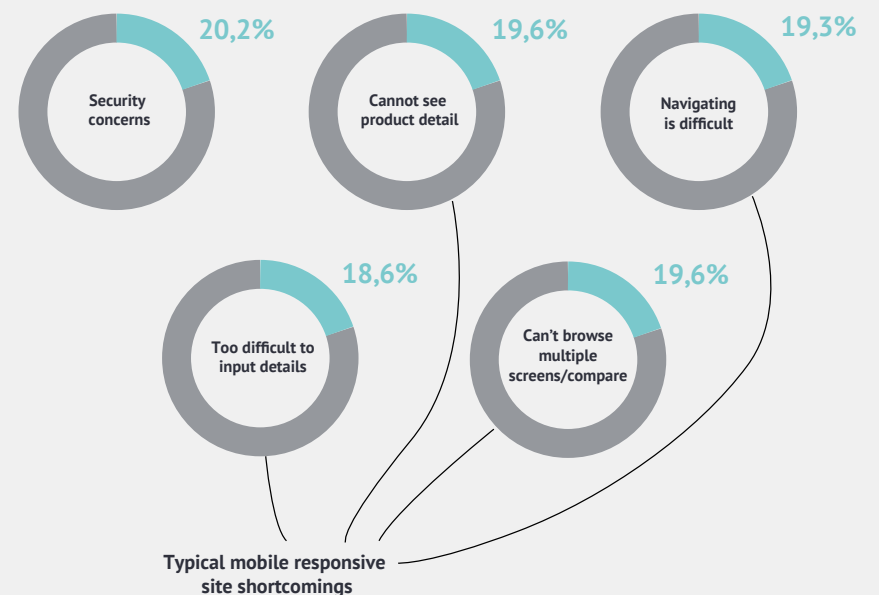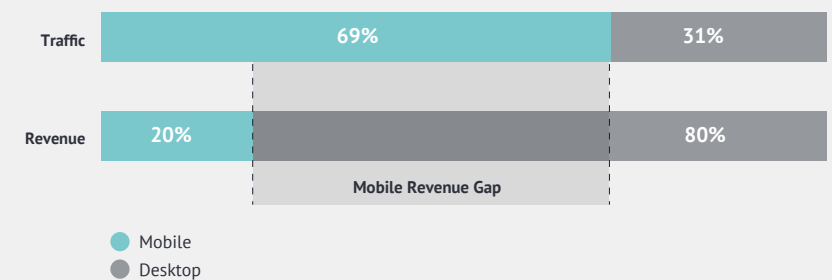
Page layouts on mobile can 'bleed' off the screen or simply take up too much of it. Others don't optimize image dimensions or file sizes. That affects page load times and slows down the browsing experience even more.

The result: potential shoppers get fed up and leave.

Responsive design also falls short when it comes to delivering the latest benefits and advanced features smartphone users increasingly take for granted. Purchasing can force the user to leave one screen and jump to another, scroll long pages of search results, pinch and zoom screens to see small print, and so on.

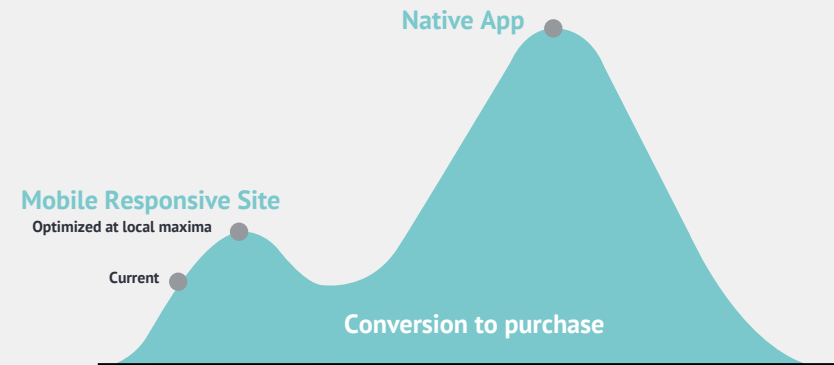## The m-commerce 'gap', and what's causing it

Mobile retailers have not fully capitalised on mobile share of consumer time, with a gap between share and dollar spend. Four of the top five reasons cited by consumers involve usability difficulties.

	Mobile	Desktop
Traffic	69%	31%
Revenue	20%	80%

Mobile Revenue Gap

● Mobile
● Desktop

20,2% — Security concerns

19,6% — Cannot see product detail

19,3% — Navigating is difficult

18,6% — Too difficult to input details

19,6% — Can't browse multiple screens/compare

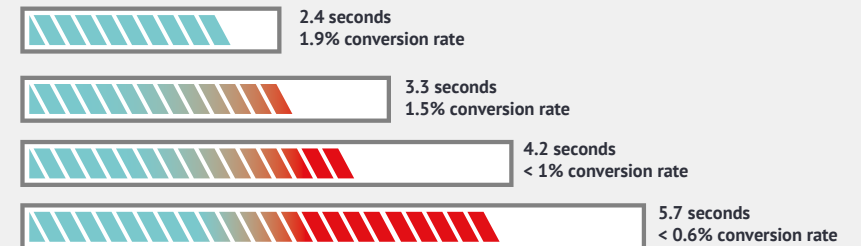**Typical mobile responsive site shortcomings**

But the real conversion killer is the absence of advanced m-commerce functions like easy access to saved customer profiles. Mobile shoppers can't rely on autofill to complete address, shipping, or payment information – straightforward, time-saving tools that make it easier for mobile shops to click 'confirm.' The alternative is tapping in credit card details manually – less than ideal if you're standing in a queue or sitting on a train as it enters a tunnel.

To help consumers over the m-commerce gap, retailers need a mobile strategy that addresses the weaknesses of responsive sites without losing the organic search traffic they deliver.

Our own research shows fashion app downloads spiked by 30 and 57 per cent in March and April, with transaction volume jumping by 18 and 28 per cent. Mobile has the momentum. Can fashion retailers keep it going?

Native App

Mobile Responsive Site
Optimized at local maxima

Current

Conversion to purchase

LOADING

2.4 seconds
1.9% conversion rate

3.3 seconds
1.5% conversion rate

4.2 seconds
< 1% conversion rate

5.7 seconds
< 0.6% conversion rate

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Why fashion retailers should care

Figures from Nosto show that fashion m-commerce has reached the tipping point.

Fashion shoppers now spend more on mobile than desktop: 46 per cent to 44 per cent.[5]

Our research shows fashion app downloads spiked by 30 and 57 per cent in March and April, with transaction volume jumping by 18 and 28 per cent.

But fashion's m-commerce gap is also on display. Mobile is driving nearly 60 per cent of traffic to fashion websites by some estimates, and others have it as high as 70 per cent.

According to Nosto's study, 58.1 per cent of the traffic to fashion retailer brands globally comes from mobile, nearly twice as much as desktop (31.5 per cent). Mobile's share of revenue in fashion e-commerce also beats desktop 46 per cent to 44 per cent (compared with 37 per cent vs 50 per cent in Q1).[6]
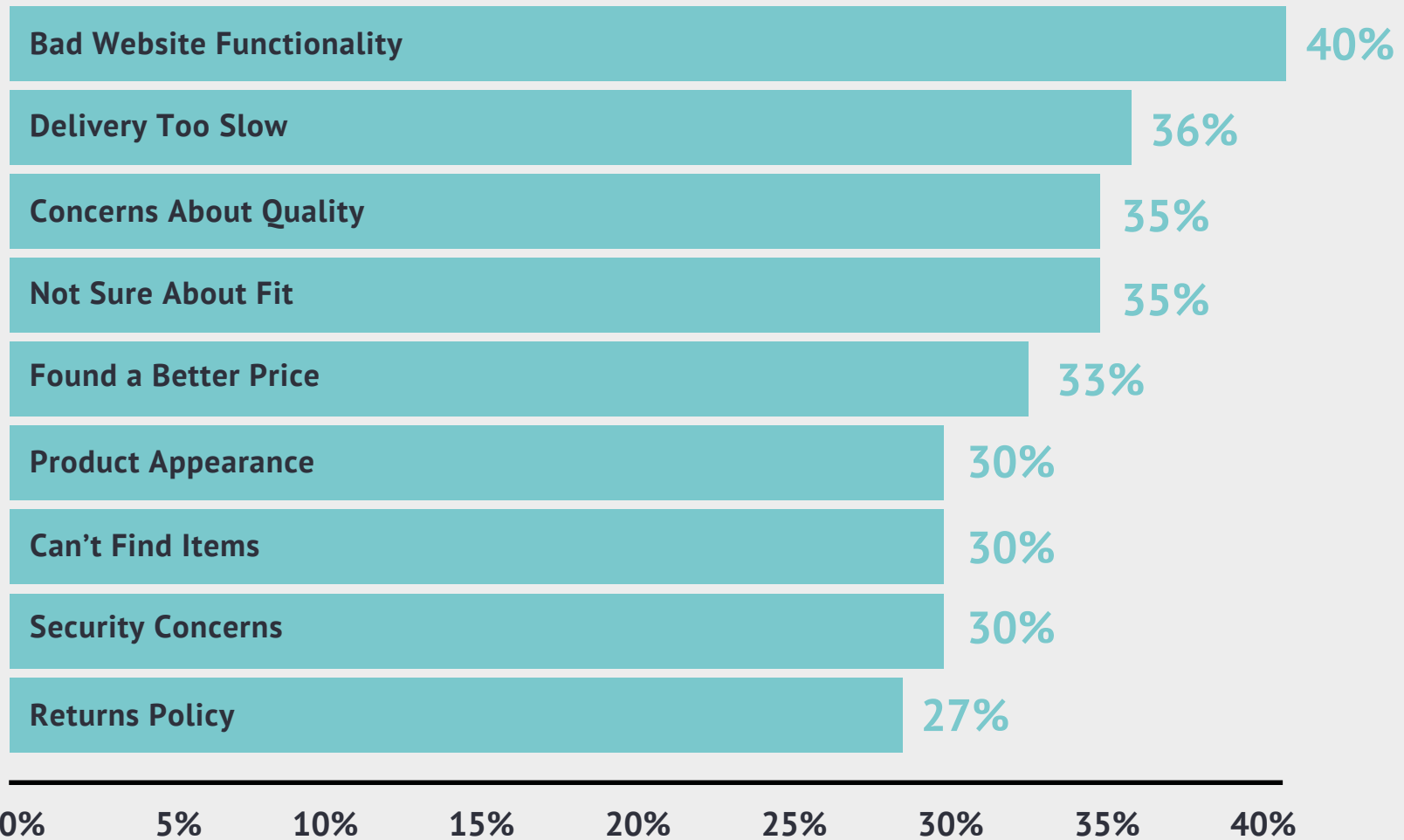
But mobile conversion still lags behind desktop.
Fashion brands turn 1.32 per cent of smartphone visits into sales, compared to 2.4 per cent on desktop. Average order value (AOV) takes a back seat too—$103 USD compared to $120.

Fashion shoppers are also more impatient, spending an average 164 seconds on mobile sites against 239 seconds on desktop.

Talking about the findings, Nosto CEO Jim Lofgren said that 'fashion retailers are attracting nearly twice as much traffic from mobile as they are on desktop, but it creates a significant challenge. Mobile visitors spend less time on-site, spend less money per visit, and are less likely to buy something when they arrive. How do you maximize the precious seconds mobile visitors give you?'

How do you maximize the precious seconds mobile visitors give you?

5 Nosto: The State of Fashion Ecommerce in 2019
6 Nosto: The State of Fashion Ecommerce in 2019

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Why People Abondon Clothing Purchases Online

Bad Website Functionality	40%
Delivery Too Slow	36%
Concerns About Quality	35%
Not Sure About Fit	35%
Found a Better Price	33%
Product Appearance	30%
Can't Find Items	30%
Security Concerns	30%
Returns Policy	27%

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%   25%   30%   35%   40%

The fashion brands getting mobile right

Upscale Swiss beauty brand Sephora has been one of the fashion industry's m-commerce outliers, first winning accolades in 2012 when its revamped mobile strategy led to a 167 per cent jump in mobile orders.[7]

The company's approach to mobile shopping is focused on personalization, making the most of the individualized relationship people have with their smartphones.

Customers can use the Sephora mobile app to (virtually) try on products. The tool is accessible from product pages and can detect facial features to calculate how products should best be applied. Some 200 million[8] shades of lashes, lipsticks, foundations and more have been used by customers.

Fashion retailer Zara has also led the way in m-commerce innovation. Along with smooth and seamless browsing and one-click purchase, it's more recently added augmented reality (AR) to its arsenal, letting shoppers see the clothes they're browsing 'in real life'.

Whether online or in-store, Zara's AR app allows shoppers to see models wearing the clothes and observe the fit as they move around on-screen. The app recognizes coded signage at specific displays. Once they've seen the clothes in action, shoppers can buy them with a single tap on their smartphone screen.

While advanced applications like facial recognition and augmented reality might seem out of reach to some fashion brands, the mobile strategies Zara and Sephora have embraced are rooted in more basic concepts: simplicity, convenience, ease of use, anticipating needs, and addressing the preferences and habits mobile consumers demonstrate every day.

In an interview with Forbes earlier this year, eMarketer analyst Andrew Lipsman said **retailers don't need to over-engineer their shopping apps**. 'The maintenance and management of cutting-edge apps can be time-consuming and tedious,' he said, adding that **'simplifying the basics and focusing on converting the shopper to a purchaser' (with ease of app usage and basic personalization), should be the goal**.

7 *mcorp.cx: A Digital Customer Experience Case Study: Sephora's Supremacy*

8 *National Retail Federation: 5 ways Sephora creates a seamless customer experience*

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Success in fashion m-commerce isn't pegged to global brand recognition and million-dollar budgets. There are accessible tactics and technologies almost any fashion retail brand can adopt. And the simpler the approach, the better.

Both brands are using apps to beat shopping cart abandonment and drive loyalty.

Long and complicated mobile checkout processes are what drive 70% of mobile customers to abandon their shopping cart during checkout. Having a mobile app in the mix can stop that from happening.

M-commerce apps can save the user's credentials and preferred payment methods which makes the checkout even smoother.

x2

x1,5

Mobile Browser   **Desktop**   **App**

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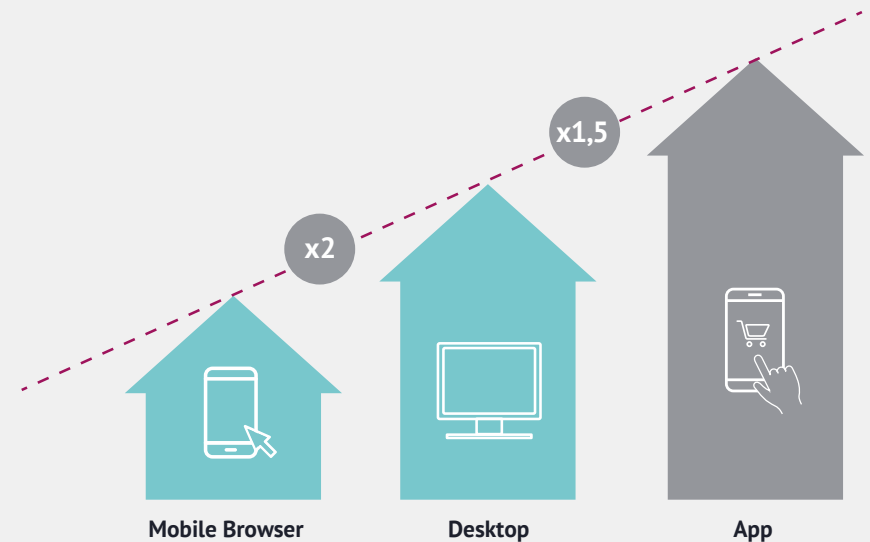
Success Story:
Marjon Snieders

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High-end fashion retailer Marjon Snieders successfully made the transition from pure bricks and mortar to e-commerce more than a decade ago, opening its first online store in 2010.

In that time the focus has shifted ever more to meeting the needs of smartphone shoppers.

In 2016 the company saw its mobile traffic rising and sensed an opportunity to strengthen its m-commerce capabilities, launching a mobile app to complement its responsive website.

'Our analytics were telling us that customers were increasingly leaning towards mobile,' says founder Marjon Snieders. '

Apps have a better user experience, and they help us connect on a deeper level with customers to increase loyalty and stay top of mind'.

Snieders says high-end fashion shoppers want to be in the know about new collections and have access to exclusive products and discounts. The company has been able to reach them effectively with push messages and personalisation. That, and the better user experience you get with an app has helped grow mobile sales.

Results? The app has attracted more than 7000 downloads and has a user rating of 4.8 out of five. Sixty per cent of the company's online sales now happen on mobile.

'We haven't promoted the app heavily but it's still improving our mobile results,' adds Snieders. 'App customers come back more often and the AOV is higher than on our mobile site.'

'For a very affordable price and little effort, you add a lot of ease-of-shopping for your customers. Pre-integration with popular e-commerce platforms makes adding an app a quick and easy way to cater to mobile shoppers.'

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'**With marketplaces getting bigger and bigger, it's important for independent retailers like us to protect margin.**

We need to maintain a strong brand, offer great user experience, and have all channels available for our customers. Store, web store for mobile and desktop, and an app!'
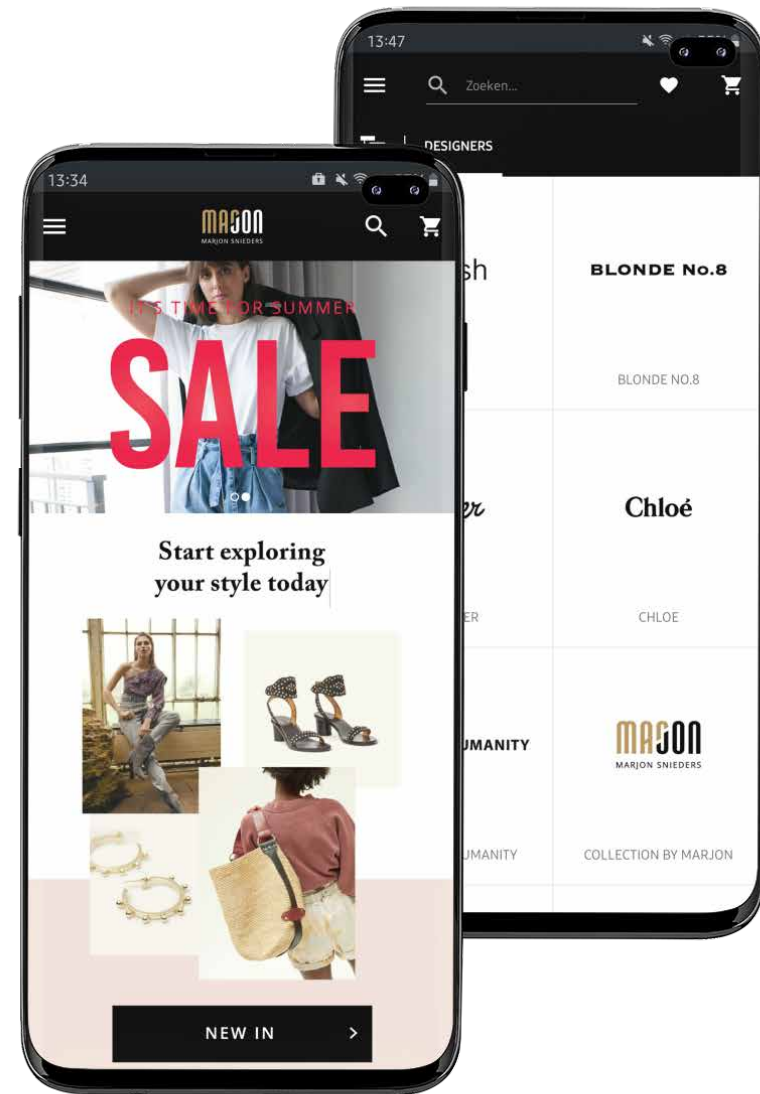
Refining the m-commerce channel mix

Rather than simply resizing desktop content onto smaller screens, fashion brands have to think bigger and look again at how they execute e-commerce strategies across all the touchpoints that mobile devices can offer.

The leading fashion brands realized long ago that responsive sites are just one channel in a complete mobile offering that includes:

01 Responsive websites to drive organic traffic and facilitate browsing

02 Progressive web apps (PWAs) accessed through a mobile web browser

03 Native apps installed locally on customer devices

04 Social shopping via the m-commerce features that Instagram and others let fashion retailers add to their social accounts.

Taken together, and applied with end-users' preferred devices and mobile operating systems in mind, these four pillars can drive organic traffic, app store traffic, downloads, and lead to a better mobile experience for customers when they arrive.

Channel Strategy: Quick Wins

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Find out what mobile shoppers want from you

Before spending time, effort, and money on any app, site, or social channel, it's important to look at what customers like and don't like about your current mobile presence. Use analytics to learn which pages users visit more often, where the traffic came from, and the points where people left the site.

You can also do ethnographic research – get customers in a room and watch how they use your site or app. Observe how they bounce back and forth between product pages and category pages, for example, or see how much time is spent wandering about looking at what's on offer.

Heatmaps are another great way to clarify how customers interact with your brand on mobile. Heatmaps can capture where clicks tend to accumulate (the 'hotter' a page element, the more clicks its received) and how far users will typically scroll down a page.

Make your responsive website better

For now at least, responsive websites will continue to be a cornerstone of mobile commerce. To overcome their technical weaknesses, fashion brands should look to improve the critical elements of mobile website browsing. That includes how quickly a site loads, and how quickly end-user action gets a response.

Figures from Google tell us that[9] more than half of smartphone users will quickly abandon a mobile website if they have to wait longer than three seconds for it to load, and half of mobile visitors expect mobile website pages to load in less than two seconds. To meet end-user expectations, consider doing the following:

Optimize images for mobile: If your pictures are dimensioned for desktop, they're larger than they need to be for mobile. The result is a large payload that slows down page loads and uses up customer data.

Automatically detect the screen size: Instead of relying on javascript queries which can be inaccurate, use server-side detection methods to accurately identify the type of device being used, its screen size, and other device or operating system elements that impact UX.

Fix image compression issues: Manually re-sizing images can be a tiresome process that doesn't always deliver the desired results. It's better to use dynamic re-sizing techniques to automatically detect devices and compress images quickly and accurately.

9 CXL Institute: Mobile Conversion Optimization: Common Mistakes & How to Fix Them

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Make mobile purchases seamless with a mobile app

Once you've improved your responsive site and made it easy for customers to find you and browse your products, you need to think about the point in the journey where they're ready to buy. To help them cross the m-commerce gap it makes sense to have an app in the mix with the latest shopping capabilities.

Mobile cart abandonment tends to happen at the point where customers are asked to enter data. It's often just too awkward to type credit card details when you're on the move.

In many cases, they'll either go back to desktop to complete the purchase, or just move on as the impulse to buy evaporates.

The ability to add one-tap buy via services like Apple Pay, Google Pay, and Samsung Pay dramatically simplifies the mobile shopping experience by eliminating most data input, using the info already stored in the phone's mobile wallet instead.

Taking that a step further, enabling biometric payment confirmation from a thumbprint or Apple's Face ID adds another level of ease and convenience to the experience.

In a highly visual category like fashion, getting the virtual display and merchandising of products right is vital. It takes three seconds for the human brain to process a headline, but as little as 13 milliseconds to process a photo.

Fashion brands can use this to their advantage by building visual category trees into their apps, and respecting gesture-based navigation for tapping and swiping over drop-down menus.

Apps also give fashion brands access to new marketing channels. Much like SEO for the web, App Store Optimization (ASO) techniques can be applied to increase your visibility in app stores and place at the top of the app store search results.

Add social shopping to the mix

M-commerce features added to Instagram in 2018 have transformed the social network into an e-commerce powerhouse.

With the arrival of Instagram Shopping, fashion brands gained the ability to tag products directly in posts and video stories. Tapping a tagged product takes a user directly to the item, and thanks to the checkout feature incorporated last year, end-users can complete a purchase without leaving the app.

Tagging a product. With social shopping this is as easy as tagging a person, but more powerful. Product tags can display additional details like descriptions, prices, and benefits while linking back to the brand website.

Store credit card and shipping addresses. Instagram is immersive and users tend to spend a lot of time with the app, so letting them make a purchase without leaving the app makes sense.

While some may worry about the impact on brand loyalty, for conversions, it makes sense. The fewer steps it takes to complete a purchase, the less likely customers are to abandon their cart.

10 mcorp.cx: A Digital Customer Experience Case Study: Sephora's Supremacy

What's the value for fashion brands? Sixty per cent of Instagram users actively seek out new products each day[10]. That's one reason why Facebook is banking on Insta to drive 70 per cent of its new revenue by the end of this year.
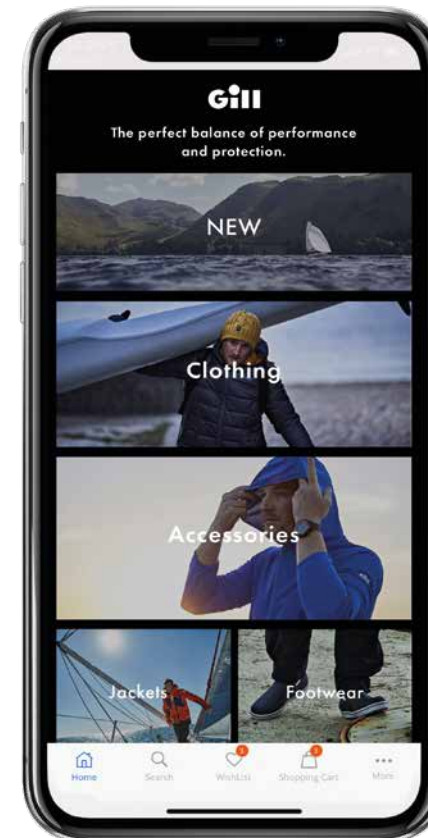
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Ask for expert help

If your fashion m-commerce strategy isn't delivering the desired results, JMango360 can help you find the optimal balance between mobile channels. Want to ensure your responsive site can attract and hold visitors? Do you need to build a progressive web app or native app to maximise conversions and offer cross channel experiences?

Contact us today