




Testbirds Whitepaper

The keys to success in mobile commerce: 10 hints on optimizing usability

The phenomenon of smartphones and tablets flooding the market has created a new and impressive economic force known as m-commerce. To reach this emerging market's full potential and to satisfy its tremendous customer base, retailers are now required to optimize their products and services for mobile usage. Issues related to usability must be kept in mind when doing so, as is explained in the following whitepaper: "The keys to success in mobile commerce: 10 hints on optimizing usability", written by the crowdsourced testing specialists, Testbirds.


1. Go mobile with your online shop

The most common mistake made when it comes to m-commerce is ignoring the unique characteristics of mobile devices. A singular version simply does not work any longer. Those who believe that a regular desktop view is sufficient for smartphones and tablets will find themselves unsuccessful in the long run. Whether it is a shopping app or an interactive mobile website, it is an absolute necessity to optimize one's online store with mobile device usage in mind. The method in which to do this, however, has to be decided on a case-by-case basis. Each of the options has its own benefits as well as disadvantages. For example, it's essential that if a user is accessing your platform from a mobile browser it's automatically detected. Pre-existing apps should be highlighted and it is equally necessary to integrate a direct link to the App Store.

 **Recommendation:** One should carefully evaluate both of the alternatives, that is to say the app and the website optimized for mobile usage. There is no one solution. Instead, it is essential to investigate the individual requirements with functionality and budget in mind and it is a must to analyze the previous behavior of users during the development process.


2. Carefully define application scenarios

Not all of the features that can be found on the desktop website need to be automatically offered on the mobile version. What are the application's core functions? What are the aspects that are most used in the standard web shop? It is extremely important to define what the app or mobile website has to offer and what features it does not. The focus has to be on primary issues; additional information and features are an afterthought and should only be included when required.

 **Recommendation:** More often than not, less is more. Therefore, a developer's attention must be directed towards essential features and the shortening of loading times. This creates a requirement where not too many functions should run simultaneously.

3. Structure and transparency are crucial

The screens of smartphones and tablets are significantly smaller than those of regular PCs and consequently they offer less space for content. Even though the trend is leaning towards bigger screens with higher resolutions, they are still not comparable with their desktop alternatives. If we take this lack of space into consideration, it is especially important to avoid overloading pages with content when developing applications for mobile devices. In addition, click history and menu navigation have to be designed even more intuitively in order to make the usability of the application as simple as possible.

 **Recommendation:** Apps or websites which are already in the early stages of development should be tested with a small group of potential users to find out if usability is intuitive as well as easy.


4. Review text content

In general, a reader's behavior on the web tends to be extremely selective. Long texts are skimmed through instead of absorbed and even though headlines and highlights are used in an attempt to orient the reader, often only the first words of every paragraph are read. Consequently, complex texts and issues are generally less understood and not as well remembered. The smaller the screen, the more difficult it is to include content. For this reason it is paramount to reduce the content in mobile applications to its very basics.

 **Recommendation:** Omit redundant and excessive filler words, shorten the text radically and formulate content in a concise manner with understandability as a primary focus.


5. Looks are (also) important

In order to enjoy shopping, aesthetics are crucial. Design should be functional and emphasize the corporate message. Regardless of individual preferences, the focus on high contrast cannot be neglected. The design should be clear and not too playful - the skeuomorphic style found in Apple products is a great example of this, where objects on the screen resemble real objects. For example a single letter can function as a symbol for a longer message.

 **Recommendation:** Define brand messages and from there derive your design. Do not use images if they are not considered relevant to the content as they increase loading times significantly.


6. Fingers are not mouse cursors

Touchscreens are very different from computer mice. Finger tips are never as accurate as a mouse cursor. Just because a button looks good, does not mean it's a good idea to use it. Additionally, customers are used to special features such as swiping or the horizontal reorientation between two or more elements.

 **Recommendation:** Create symbols in a way in which they are easy to click even with a user's thumb. As links are generally hard to click, they should be avoided.

7. Help the user

An application should be as simple as possible. No customer likes to spend a long time searching, clicking through numerous categories or filling in online forms. Users should always be able to easily orient themselves and know which elements they can interact with. It's pertinent to use widely known icons such as a "Burger Button" to introduce a menu.

 **Recommendation:** Smart filters and search functions are game changers when it comes to usability. Auto-complete or click-to-call-buttons that are connected to customer service can also be employed as helpful components.

8. Use device-specific features wisely

Not only are Smartphones and tablets powerful and portable, they also have features which can be exploited by online shops. If your shop also has an offline alternative, an automatic GPS location service is a useful tool that assists your customers in finding their way to your store. In addition, people who tend to shop wirelessly may also want to track other services with their smartphones or tablets, such as: When is my delivery arriving? Will the postman arrive soon?

 **Recommendation:** Test in the real world with actual users to find out if the functions also have day-to-day applications.

9. Optimize the shopping cart

A core element of every online shop is its shopping cart. It should be visible to users at all times as well as include the opportunity to be saved for several days. The option of deleting or changing already chosen products is essential. Finally, if a product cannot be immediately delivered, customers should be notified of this prior to adding it into their shopping carts.



Recommendation: Synchronize the shopping carts with users' desktops. This allows the customer to continue shopping when they switch from their wireless device to their personal computers.

10. Payment functions and easy registration

The payment function is an online shop's heart. Customers must be able to choose between different payment options. The more choices, the better. If the online shop is directed towards customers with low purchasing power or low credit rating, the possibility of paying in cash can have a positive impact on the transaction rate. Furthermore, the purchase process should be designed with as much ease and clarity in mind as possible. A long registration process or extensive forms can quickly lead to a higher dropout rate.



Recommendation: It's important to find a harmony between security and usability. Shortened registration processes, the option to purchase without registering altogether or automatic log-ins with stored payment information for frequent customers can be smart ideas, however, they should not be made at the expense of data security.

Conclusion:

Usability is a vital criterion to producing quality in m-commerce. Even though developing user-friendly mobile alternatives can be challenging, when companies invest their time and effort into this endeavor, it pays off. The use of mobile devices is still significantly growing. The turnover rate in m-commerce has increased steadily over recent years and there is no end in sight. Now it is on the retailers themselves and their platforms' quality and usability to get a slice of the cake.

About Testbirds GmbH

Testbirds is a crowdtesting service provider headquartered in Munich, with offices in the UK, the Netherlands and Hungary. The company specializes in the testing of mobile apps, websites and other software for the entire device landscape (mobile, desktop, smart TV, wearables etc.) on all major operating systems.

Testbirds uses crowdtesting to facilitate software testing in today's fast-growing world of technology. They hold a worldwide network of testers (crowd) consisting of experts as well as consumers to test software under real world conditions. The crowd finds bugs and gives critical usability feedback, ensuring the highest-possible user experience before launch.

Extensive device ecosystems as well as increased user expectations challenge conventional testing methods. Testbirds offers in-depth and cost-effective quality assurance for web applications and mobiles apps through the crowd on any device, with any target group, at any time. Today, crowdtesting is fast becoming a necessary tool for developers to help improve functionality and overall usability of any application.

Testbirds was founded in 2011 and supported by different institutions and partners.

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