

Going MOBILE



UK brand and digital consultancy Nucleus recently published its fourth wave of research into the growth of mobile website browsing in the travel industry. The survey confirms that we have entered the Mobile Era, with iPads responsible for a huge change in user behaviour. With mobile traffic growing at 31.7% in the past six months, it will not be long before mobile devices account for the majority of website browsing. The findings are relevant for any luxury brand whose customers are browsing and buying online – in particular brands that are in any way connected to luxury travel. It's time for websites to offer finger-friendly, responsive design

Key findings

- » Mobile browsing of travel websites leaps to 27.1% of all traffic in the survey, up from 20.5% six months earlier
- » Growth rate accelerates over previous six months up 31.7% compared to 13.8%
- » iPad drives iOS to an all time high, with 88.3% share of all mobile browsing devices, up from 84.9% six months earlier
- » iPad Mini reinforces iOS dominance, with iPad now responsible for 61.9% of all mobile browsing. iPhone 5 impact less obvious
- » Android devices still failing to grow web browsing share (inferior web browsers?), with penetration steady at 8% of mobile traffic
- » BlackBerry slides to less than 1% of mobile traffic; Symbian in its death throes
- » Luxury websites show highest mobile traffic with several now receiving more than 30% of their traffic from mobile devices

Executive summary

Mobile web browsing has taken another leap forward since our previous survey in summer 2012, with penetration up 32.2% to 27.1% of all website traffic in the survey and iPad firmly established as the favourite browsing device.

We are not alone in observing this trend. In her 2012 'Internet Trend Year-end Report', Mary Meeker has also covered the subject, reporting that 24% of all US online shopping on Black Friday 2012 (the day after Thanksgiving) was made via smartphones and tablets, up from 6% just two years ago.

She also spotted the Android anomaly – why, with so many Android devices sold, hasn't Android grown its share of browsing since our first survey in 2011? While iOS increases its operating system share to a staggering 88.3%, Android is stranded on 8%.

WINNERS

Apple's iOS still dominates the market, averaging 88.3% of all mobile traffic to the 10 websites surveyed, but iPad is the real winner with share up 15.3%, following the launch of the new iPad Mini. iPad now represents 61.9% of all mobile browsing. iPhone traffic however has shown a -1.4% decline despite the launch of the iPhone 5.

STEADY EDDIES

While Android browsing has risen on the more price sensitive mass market websites, the average penetration of website browsing has remained at a steady 7-8%.

LOSERS

iPod, BlackBerry and Symbian smartphones together represent less than 1% of mobile browsing, with Symbian on its death bed. Nokia must also be worried as Microsoft's Windows Mobile 7 operating system has yet to register significantly in the survey. Will the launch of the BlackBerry 10 be enough to pull iOS users from their platform? Or will it be a case of too little, too late? Web browsing on existing BlackBerry devices is not a great experience...

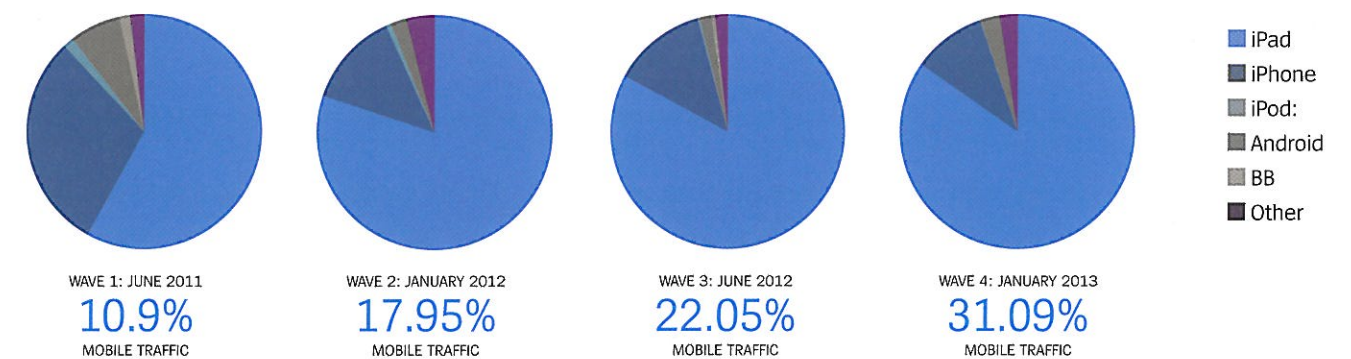
IPAD: WINNER TAKES MOST

Despite being outsold by Android, Apple's iOS grows its share of mobile browsing to 88.3% on the back of sustained iPad success, with even higher penetration on luxury websites. Microsoft is going nowhere, BB's share plunging, Symbian heads for oblivion...

DEVICE SHARES:

- » iPad: +15.3%
- » iPhone: -1.1%
- » iPod: -56.7%
- » Android: -1.6%
- » BB: -79.7%
- » Symbian: -85%

Below: Results from one of the websites analysed by Nucleus, showing the increasing percentage of traffic that came by mobile, and how that mobile traffic broke down. This luxury brand has yet to optimise itself for mobile, retaining Flash for its maps and video players. Even so, the growth in mobile traffic is hugely significant, especially for the luxury leisure market. Time to tune the experience for mobile users...



Implications for brands, digital marketing and design

Three out of the 10 websites in the sample are now showing mobile traffic levels of more than 30%. Eight out of 10 have 25%+ mobile traffic.

Luxury brands attract the highest levels of mobile browsing and also the highest level of iOS users – online conversion must now be addressed for mobile users, especially iPads.

Providing mobile-friendly web browsing brand experiences is now key for all website owners, especially in the travel and e-commerce sectors, where online conversion is already vital for business.

Brand owners need to decide whether to develop a single website that responds or adapts to different devices (responsive design like www.toppingrosehouse.com - see right) or separate smartphone websites with simplified content (www.haven.com).

However, the challenge is about to get even more complex with connected tv due to become mainstream from later in 2013, posing designers with the challenge of designing websites that scale from 4.5 inch screens to more than 10x that size.

Study methodology and sample

This is our 4th wave, six-monthly snapshot study of mobile browsing of travel websites. The sample comprised 10 travel websites from mass market to high-end luxury, including both UK and international brands with global audiences.

Total unique visitor sample for the 10 websites was 1.7m unique visitors during fieldwork for the month of January 2013, compared to 2.2m in June 2012.

Android market share includes specific Android devices plus 'unspecified devices' which may inflate the statement of Android OS share.

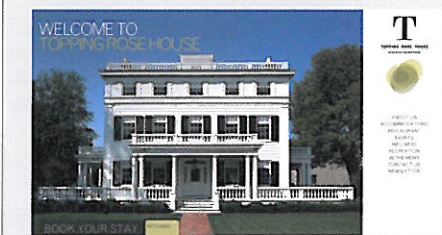
Some analytics packages, such as Google Analytics, include various 'mobile' devices in its mobile tracking, such as Xbox and Wii. These and all minor mobile operating systems and devices, of which there are many, are consolidated in 'other.'

Conclusions

Mobile website browsing has leapt once more as previously forecast, now accounting for an average of 27.1% of total browsing. This is an increase of 32.2% since June 2012 and accelerating over the previous 6 months.

Apple's iOS platform has never been stronger with iPad becoming the web browsing device of choice, accounting for an average of 62% of all mobile devices and has demonstrated that the new iPad and iPad Mini have a commanding lead in the tablet market, which even Samsung is unable to make significant inroads on.

As anticipated, three of the luxury brands in our study have recorded more than 30% of all traffic coming from mobile devices, on track for >50% penetration by end-2014. Clearly, we now live in the mobile era.



A glimpse into the future of luxury hotel marketing

New York's most talked-about luxury hotel opens this month in The Hamptons, but even if you can't visit yet, you can see why everyone's talking about Topping Rose House by visiting its innovative website: www.toppingrosehouse.com.

Built in 1842 as a mansion for one of Bridgehampton's most prominent citizens, Topping Rose House was bought by its present owners in 2005, who have spent years restoring it. The restaurant, run by acclaimed New York chef Tom Colicchio, opened to rave reviews in November 2012.

The website has been designed for the mobile digital era, with Nucleus bringing it to life using cutting-edge responsive design which ensures that the brand experience is equally enjoyable on a smartphone, tablet or PC.

There has been much talk about whether mobile websites or mobile apps are the way forward for luxury brands, but Nucleus is clear that it is mobile websites that will deliver the greatest ROI for most luxury brands. Peter Matthews, Nucleus's founder and CEO, commented, "Our own surveys of customer behaviour show mobile web browsing growing by a third every six months. Topping Rose House demonstrates how the need to cater for multiple devices in a single 'responsive' website design can lead to a beautiful simplicity."

Responsive design is a term for websites that sense which device is being used and serves up a template specially optimised for the device or screen size.

Co-owner, Simon Critchell, commented: "We are delighted with the result, which we think sets new standards for hotel websites."

Nucleus mobile website capabilities

Nucleus is the world's only integrated brand+digital+intellectual property consultancy, specialising in creating and capturing value integrated projects in the travel, luxury and financial services sectors. With leading-edge experience of mobile websites and apps, Nucleus can provide insight and advice on digital strategy, brand experience and mobile development. For details of Nucleus's mobile and digital capabilities please visit www.nucleus.co.uk or call +44 20 8398 9133.