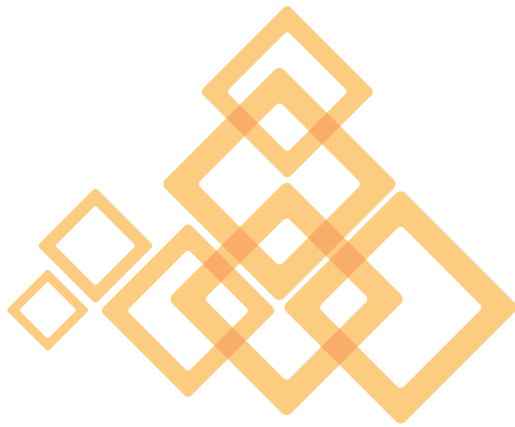# 10 M-COMMERCE BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Mobile commerce now generates more than 20% of e-commerce sales. Online retailers must ensure their sales work well across all devices and provide personalized experience to shoppers. This White Paper details the 10 best practices to perfect your mobile commerce strategy.

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Introduction

Mobile internet is growing by leaps and bounds. Already, more people access the Internet using their mobile devices, compared to their desktops. This reflects in ecommerce as well. ***E-marketer estimates*** 25% of all online retail sales to take place through mobile devices, by 2017. M-commerce sales are likewise expected to increase by 82% from, $24.81 billion in 2012, to $71.16 billion in 2015, and to $108.56 billion, by 2017.

Marketers seeking a slice of the highly competitive ecommerce pie cannot afford to take the mobile space for granted. Simply optimizing their websites for the mobile, or rolling out a responsive website is not enough. Marketers need to monitor the m-commerce space on a proactive basis, and make sure to incorporate the latest trends and customer preferences, to optimize their mobile strategy.
In this, the following ***best practices*** would help.

01

First Impression is the Best Impression

The time honored convention holds true for m-commerce as well. Marketers need to ensure that website visitors, who access the ecommerce page through the mobile devices, are delivered a powerful impression, which would captivate them, and induce them to linger. They also need to make sure the impression is consistent with the impression visitors get on the company's other digital assets, such as a conventional website.

Make the home page easy to decipher, offering the gist of everything that is inside. Make it attractive and eye catching as well, without bloating it.

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02
Keep Things Simple

The challenge before page designers is to reconcile making a powerful impression, with keeping things simple. For all the popularity of mobile devices, such devices are difficult to navigate. Mobile users are generally impatient as well. An m-commerce page would receive patrons only if it allows the user to conclude what they are doing, in a simple and quick manner.

Use the minimum number of pages from the start of the journey to conclusion of the purchase. Do not insist on registration. Allow guest log in, or social media sign in. Facebook Connect is a good option, worth considering.

Pre-fill information, to the extent possible. For instance, capture the pin code, and populate the town and state fields automatically. Never auto-correct the field customers input by themselves.

As a rule of thumb, the simpler the process, and lesser the effort and input required from users, better the conversion rates.

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03
Less is More

It is advisable to limit the number of visual graphics, to avoid confusions that clutter up the limited mobile real estate.

Resist the temptation to miniaturize things, especially using small fonts, to pack in more stuff. A font size of 14px is optimal. Users can always zoom in, but zooming in is uncomfortable, and most users would rather avoid it.

Also, use fewer fields and pages, capturing only the minimal required information. This reduces the effort required, and quickens the process considerably.

However, at the same **_time do not mistake_** "less is more" to mean reduced or impaired functionality. While it may not be a good idea to include all the features available in a full blown desktop website, mobile shoppers do expect all the functionality found in conventional desktop sites. Make sure to provide access to all the high value features, including flash offers, discount codes, returns processing, and more. In fact, mobile-only perks, not found in desktop sites have been hugely successful, overall. Limit the "less is more" concepts to unnecessary flab and the inclusions within the functionality offered.

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04

Make Navigation Easy

Leverage the power of simplicity, to keep navigation consistent. Using nested links, or a drill down menu, frees up clutter. It may also be worthwhile to give a prominent location to the most used links, and move non-essentials, such as "Terms of Service", to the footer, out of harm's way.

Allow search functionality, and display results in an endless list, rather than paginate it.

Make sure to keep category navigation highly visible, for users to scan immediately. It may also be worthwhile supporting browsing by category, to quicken up things for the user. Never assume users will not make a mistake, and always offer a back button. Users would rather go elsewhere than redo the effort from scratch.

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05

Make Things User Friendly

In addition to making things simple, make things user friendly as well. A case in point – while it is a good idea to limit the number of menu options on a page, it is also important to ensure the available options are easy to access. Use large icons, suitable even for fat fingers.

Likewise, enable users to verify the input fields. Input into mobile devices are always error prone, and the best practice is to allow users an easy and convenient way to correct it, without going back to the input form, or doing it all over again.

Typing on mobile devices is at times clumsy, and many users worry about losing their data. For instance, users would be put off if the credit card number they painstakingly entered is lost because the page reloaded in the meantime. Ensuring **data persistence** requires investing in technology to store data temporarily on user's device, and also testing the page thoroughly.

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The Need for Speed

Make sure the m-commerce page loads fast. Most users leave the site if it fails to load properly within 3 seconds! There are many best practices to speed things up.

There are **many time-tested conventions** to speed up a mobile website. Cutting down on unnecessary content, and limiting the number of images on a page, are the basics, which work in all situations. Undertake a thorough evaluation of all text, image, CSS, tracking tokens, and all other elements, and eliminate whatever is not essential. It may be also worthwhile replacing image buttons with HTML. Google's **Accelerate Mobile Pages** (AMP) may also be worth a look-in.

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07
Reconcile Images

Conversions may boost by **_up to 9%_** if images are more prominent than text. However, at the same time, an overload of images can slow up the load time, and become counterproductive. The trick is to keep the number of images to a reasonable number, and make sure such images load fast. As a standard practice, remove text from images, and use vector-based images. Make sure images are web optimized, such as in .JPG format, before uploading. Also make sure the images are user friendly. For instance, navigation buttons are cumbersome, and it is better to allow swipe for the image carousels.

08
Have Clarity of Purpose

Remember, a webpage is not the end in itself. It is always a means to an end. For a m-commerce website, the underlying objective is conversion, or making the visitor purchase the product. Towards this end, make sure the page has a clear call to action, and make sure to give a prominent place to such call to action. Visitors cannot make the purchase if they cannot find out exactly how to make the purchase!

For instance, always feature an "add to cart" and "Checkout button" prominently, on all pages. Use a large button to lead to the shopping cart, with an action word, such as "BUY NOW." Give this button a contrast color, with the rest of the page, for easy visibility.

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09

Be Credible

None of the above tips would work, if there is no credibility associated with the m-commerce site. While credibility comes with time, the web designer can do his or her part as well. For starters, make sure to include a contact number, to call for any glitches or help. Provide reassurance about site security.

10
Trial and Error

All these pointers notwithstanding, it is important to remember that success in the ecommerce, and by extension, the m-commerce space, is at best trial and error. Today's customers are both highly unpredictable and fickle. No one can predict with accuracy what clicks, and what will not click, and even when something clicks, there is no guarantee the success run will sustain. Marketers cannot afford to rest on their laurels. They need to always remain on tenterhooks, and never be afraid to innovate.

The mobile is the future of e-commerce, but marketers who do not sit up and face the latent challenges head on, face the risk of losing the race.

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About Suyati

Suyati provides marketing technology and integration services for companies that wish to combine the best of breed solutions and create a unified approach to customer acquisition. This unified digital marketing approach requires system integration between various CMS and CRM platforms, and a slew of e-commerce, marketing automation, social media listening, email and social marketing, and customer service systems. Our specialized knowledge in Salesforce, open source and .Net based systems enables us to build effective custom integrated solutions for our clients.

Suyati's custom technology solutions have been deployed in companies in the US, Western Europe and Australia, and have helped many enterprises leverage the web/cloud/mobile technologies to acquire customers through integrated digital marketing. Suyati is based in Chicago with product engineering capability out of the US and India.

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