

MARKETING

Mobile apps outpace mobile Web commerce for first time: report

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Photo courtesy of jeweler Boucheron

By [Danny Parisi for Mobile Commerce Daily](#)

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Sales from mobile commerce are up 40 percent this year, making it the fastest-growing channel compared to ecommerce's 11 percent increase year-over-year, according to a new report from the e-tailing group, which was recently acquired by Astound Commerce.

Per the [report](#), mobile is by far the fastest growing digital commerce channel. Of those sales, mobile apps make up the majority of mobile commerce transactions, coinciding with mobile app visits surpassing mobile Web visits.

"Retailers need to be proactive in delivering a mobile first experience and it is all about speed," said Lauren Freedman, senior vice president of digital strategy and chief merchant of Astound Commerce. "They need to create a multi-dimensional merchandising experience that engages the shopper while ensuring that all functionality from search to checkout helps buyers quickly find relevant products; and where checkout is seamless and information is captured from one channel to the next.

"Capabilities that connect shoppers from one channel to the next such as retail locators and the ability to locate inventory are also critical as shoppers make choices based on convenience."

Mobile-first shopping

In the first quarter of 2016, online sales made up 40 billion dollars. Of that 40 billion, 26.6 billion came from mobile and 13.5 billion came from desktop commerce, making mobile the dominant form of online commerce.

Within the 26.6 billion from mobile, the makeup was almost even between sales that came from mobile applications and sales that came from the mobile Web. But for the first time, mobile apps just barely beat out the mobile Web at 13.4 billion to 13.2 billion.

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Mobile apps have just started to edge out the mobile Web

Despite the ubiquity of mobile, many consumers who responded to Astound Commerce's survey were still flummoxed by non-mobile-optimized Web pages and slow load connections. Forty-seven percent of respondents said that slow loading times were the biggest barrier to mobile commerce and 46 percent were affected by pages that formatted poorly on their mobile screens.

While some features such as high-quality images and nicely designed content are important for mobile consumers, the most important feature for a mobile site or app to have to encourage mobile transactions is a highly functional search capability.

As consumers come to expect more and more information to be at their fingertips when making purchasing decisions, retailers who lag behind in providing that information as efficiently and clearly as possible will fall out of favor with consumers compared to those retailers that can make that information readily available.

Astound Commerce and the e-tailing group notes some of the online retailers who do this right, singling out obvious contenders such as Amazon along with general retailers with strong mobile presences, including Best Buy and Walmart.

Research tool

But still, the most popular use of mobile devices in the shopping process is as a research tool rather than a purchasing tool.

Fifty-five percent of surveyed consumers research products on their phone before they buy five or more times a month, compared to 39 percent who make purchases through their mobile devices more than five times a month.

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Astound Commerce also measured consumers' comfort with various channels

Furthermore, using mobile to research products was the number one response to the question of what mobile behavior consumers are most likely to increase their time spent on. Forty percent of respondents said they would research products more in the coming year and 36 percent said they would buy more products through their phones in 2017.

This means that mobile apps that function as shopping companions, letting users research products and prices in store, are fertile ground for brands trying to leverage mobile to increase sales.

"Researching is a natural first step and it takes time for purchasing to follow suit," Ms. Freedman said. "What we have seen is that once a shopper is comfortable they quickly accelerate to purchasing."

"The numbers bear this out along with repeat purchasing behavior."

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