

COLUMNS

Google's mobile-first index is made for these 5 sites

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Google's mobile-first index will be here in months, making Google prioritize mobile content for the first time in its history, and changing the indexing and ranking game for good. Will you be ready when it comes?

Not many brands are, honestly.

In examining dozens of award-winning mobile sites for this piece, I found these five that a) all have content optimized for mobile queries, b) do not have less content on their mobile site than they have on their desktop site, c) load quickly, and d) use progressive Web applications to generate engagement and links. But no site I found does all of these things at once.

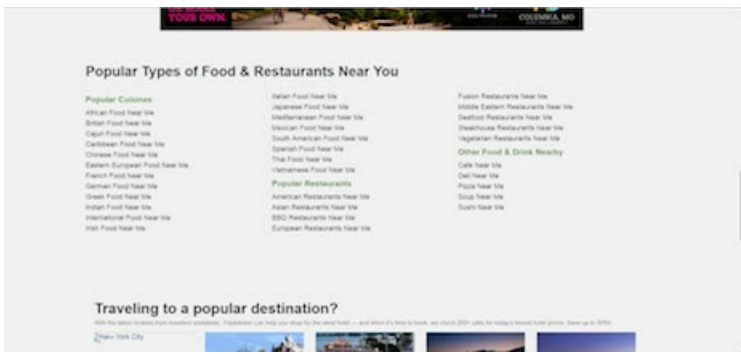
The five brands below do all or most of those things well, and should be fine when Google's mobile first change rolls around. Learn from what they are doing right to get your own site in order before it is too late.

1. TripAdvisor

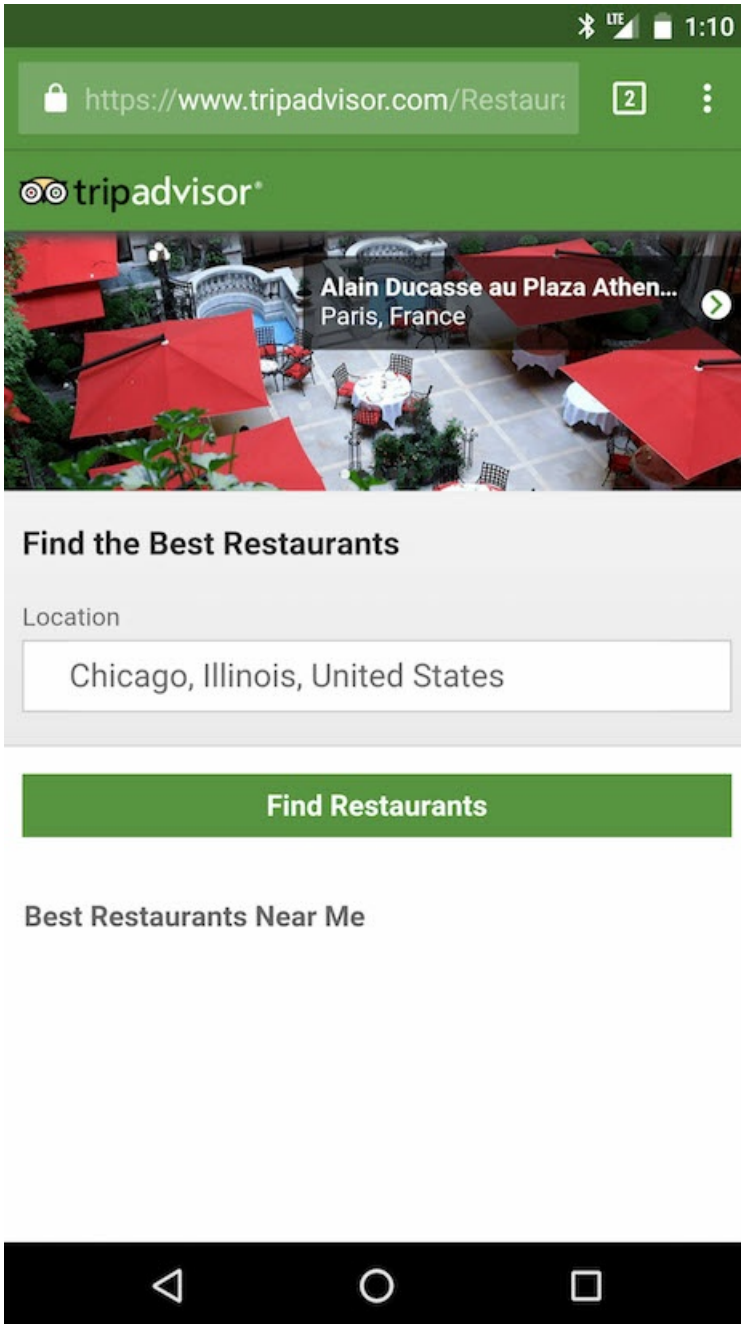
TripAdvisor takes search engine optimization (SEO) so seriously that the site has its own SEO University, and it shows in its site. It loads pretty quickly on mobile with a 61/100 on Google's mobile page speed tool, but the real strength as far as the mobile-first index goes is the content it has that addresses micro moments and near-me searches. And it is aggressively optimizing for these queries that Google said doubled from 2014-2015.

TripAdvisor might want to think about the large text footers that it puts on its desktop site to optimize for these queries that do not exist on its mobile site, as the power of those will likely be neutered once the mobile site is used as the primary source for indexing and ranking signals.

But, overall, I would not expect the mobile-first index to affect TripAdvisor negatively, given the optimization for predominantly mobile queries it has done to date.



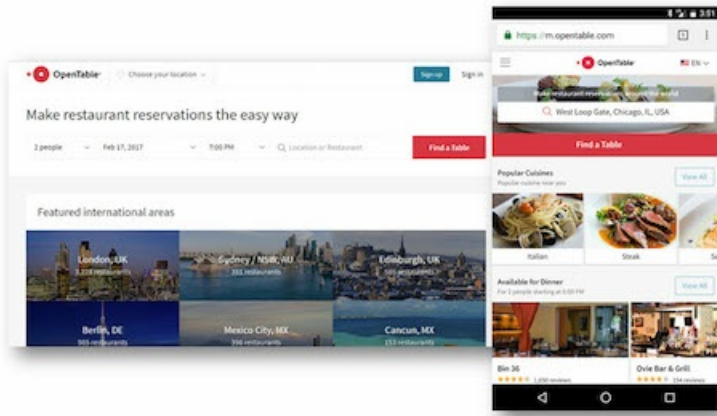
TripAdvisor desktop site



TripAdvisor mobile site

2. OpenTable

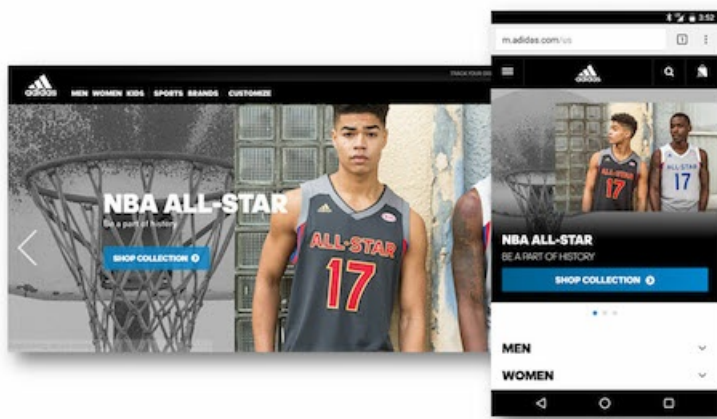
Figure 1 OpenTable desktop site (L) contains same essential content as mobile site (R)



OpenTable mobile and desktop sites

3. Adidas

Figure 2 Adidas mobile searchers can find a lot of the same content on desktop site (L) as mobile site (R)



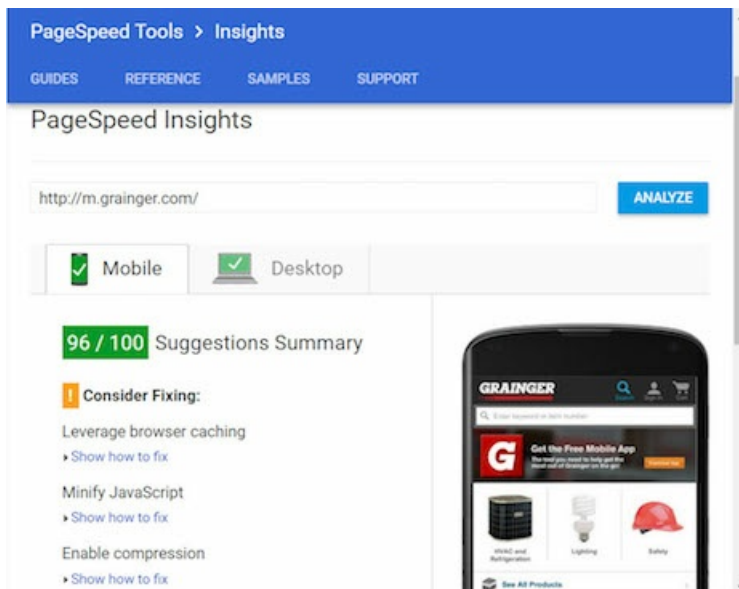
Adidas desktop and mobile sites

Speaking of not limiting content across devices, OpenTable and Adidas use adaptive design to basically mirror the content that potential customers see from their laptop or desktop computer, achieving content parity across devices.

Using adaptive or responsive design to ensure that much of the same content, including structured data, can be found on many screens has been important for a while, but becomes even more so with this change.

4. Grainger

Faster than a speeding bullet, Grainger.com clocks in at 96/100 in Google's page speed test for mobile.



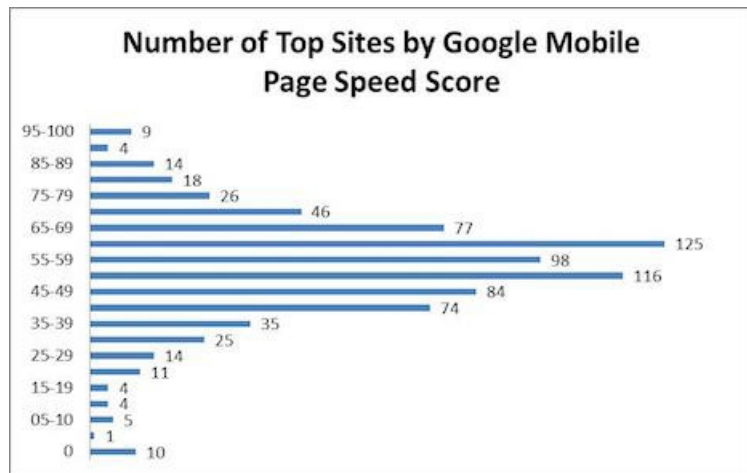
Grainger page speed

Page speed has been a minor Google ranking factor for years, but Google has always used the desktop page speed, which could vary dramatically from mobile.

With the mobile-first index, Google will start using mobile page speed instead.

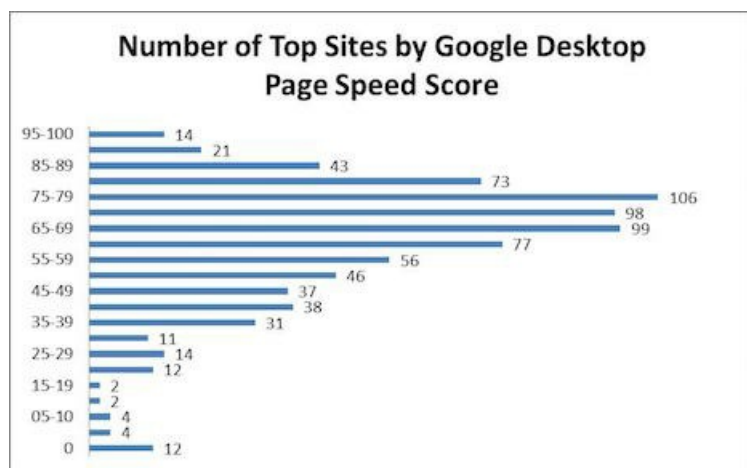
Grainger is ready for it with its speedy score, but when I ran the same test for 800 of the top-ranking sites in Google according to SEMRush, only 1 percent of the sites had a similar score. Seventy-two percent of the sites had a mobile score between 40 and 70.

By contrast, sites were faster on desktop, with 57 percent of sites having scores between 60 and 84.



Top sites by google mobile page speed score

Sites such as Grainger that load quickly on many types of devices should see little negative impact from this new mobile-first index.



top sites by google desktop page speed score

5. The Washington Post

It is difficult to find a large brand that is building the same innovative features that it has put into its native apps on the mobile Web with progressive Web apps, but the Washington Post deserves a lot of credit for experimenting with a PWA.

Now that Google is going to use the mobile site for indexing and ranking signals, it is time to think about putting the same innovative features on the Web that you could previously only see in native apps with progressive Web apps.

Links are still critical for ranking, and progressive Web apps can give sites another reason for other sites to link to them.

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