NEWS ARCHIVE - 2011
Usablenet Selected as One of the Top 10 Most Innovative Companies in Mobile by Fast Company.
March 1, 2011

Fast Company

Usablenet, a global technology leader for mobile and multichannel customer engagement, was recognized by Fast Company as one of the top 10 most innovative companies in mobile, along with Foursquare, eBay and Skype. Each year, Fast Company publishes a list of the most innovative companies by industry. Last year’s top innovative companies in mobile included Google, Apple and Amazon.

Fast Company is recognized as one of the leading sources in predicting the progressive leaders in business and technology. This recognition reflects the hard work and innovation of Usablenet over the past 10 years in establishing a mobile platform that powers one-fifth of the Fortune 1000, including Delta, Macy’s, JCPenney, Dell, Estée Lauder, FedEx, Starwood, and others.

Usablenet was also recently ranked at the top of the latest Mobile Commerce Vendor Matrix released by ABI Research. Vendors are assessed on the important parameters of “innovation” and “implementation”.

Usablenet’s technology platform extends all features, functionality, and content contained on clients’ websites (or other available sources) to their customers wherever they are -- including mobile phones, mobile applications, tablets, Facebook, and in-store kiosks. Multichannel integrations supported by the Usablenet platform enhance brand engagement, drive traffic, and increase revenue. About Usablenet

Usablenet is a global technology leader for mobile and multichannel customer engagement that works with 20% of the Fortune 1000. Usablenet’s transformative technology platform allows leading companies in all sectors to extend their brand to consumers across multiple channels, including mobile phones, mobile applications, tablets, Facebook, in-store kiosks, and other platforms -- with minimal impact to the client’s IT resources. Usablenet customers include Amtrak, Delta, Estée Lauder, FedEx, Hilton, Marks & Spencer, Sprint, JCPenney, Victoria’s Secret, and others. Founded in 2000, Usablenet is a private company headquartered in New York City with offices in Italy and London. For more information, visit us at http://www.usablenet.com or on Twitter@Usablenet.
Juicy Couture relaunched its m-commerce site to make it more commerce-friendly.

Women’s clothing retailer Juicy Couture launched a mobile commerce site just before the holiday season to satisfy the growing number of consumers who make purchases on their smartphones. The company, which until November had been operating a self-made m-commerce site, worked with technology provider Usablenet to build a mobile-optimized, commerce-friendly destination that had a similar look and feel to its e-commerce page.

"The mobile experience we were providing was subpar," says Devon Pike, SVP of Juicy Couture digital. "Customers who buy apparel find it important to see product details. Their purchases are more on-the-fly and impulse-centered so we had to make our m-commerce site more efficient and streamlined."

Prior to the redesign, Juicy Couture's in-house mobile site produced only 4% of its total Web traffic and just less than 1% of its online sales. Since the relaunch, the retailer’s m-commerce site has generated 15% of digital traffic and 6% of online sales.

Juicy Couture is studying customer behavior on its m-commerce site to determine how best to proceed with the production of a mobile app, says Pike.

Mobile-optimized websites are not the only mobile channel from which marketers sell. Multichannel retailers must also consider whether or not to launch a commerce-enabled app, or whether to do both or one at the exclusion of the other.

"Many retailers use mobile apps in addition to a mobile commerce site," says Michael Becker, North America managing director of the Mobile Marketing Association. "Some may only do mobile Web because they can develop the site once and optimize it for every type of handheld set. Going the app route is more challenging because you have to maintain the app for each specific device and each forces different technical considerations."

Steve Yankovich, VP of eBay mobile, argues companies can offer richer functionality on
mobile apps than they can on mobile commerce sites. "Our e-commerce site doesn't assume you have a built-in camera for your computer, but our iPhone app has camera integration," Yankovich says. "The browser on a phone can't get to the phone's camera, but within an app, you can do it. This functionality allows users to do a super rapid listing."

Yankovich says eBay's mobile commerce site, which is "upgraded and re-launched constantly," is better suited for consumers who don't have app-ready devices. Despite this, he claims the "number of unique visits, overall visits and page views [on the mobile site] would stun people. People would think [these numbers] are for a regular website." Though Yankovich wouldn't reveal traffic specifics, he noted the mobile app has surpassed 30 million downloads.

For Wahoo Fitness, an exercise and health products company, the mobile commerce site takes precedence over its mobile app. Wahoo's products are designed to enable smartphones to communicate with sports fitness devices. As a result, the company generates a good portion of its sales from partnerships with third-party software designers who can generate, store and reproduce exercise information. For example, when consumers download the RunKeeper iPhone app, they are prompted to purchase a Wahoo heart rate monitor.

"Because customers are usually introduced to our products via their iPhone, being able to quickly and easily make a sale on the mobile platform is critical," says Chip Hawkins, president of Wahoo Fitness. "If we don't have a mobile platform enabled, customers have to remember the product, go home, and buy it online. We want that impulse buy." Wahoo's mobile commerce and e-commerce platforms (both built by ShopVisible) are distinct in that Wahoo's mobile site, launched in November, serves only to facilitate purchases. Unlike the company's website and iPhone app, where consumers can research products, the mobile site is "about checking out as quickly as possible," Hawkins says.

Tina Chilip, marketing communications manager at Usablenet, asserts that regardless of whether retailers build m-commerce sites, mobile apps or both, each must have full e-commerce functionality. She says companies that have "watered-down versions of the website with template looking storefront sites need to stop treating mobile commerce as an afterthought."
Usablenet has announced the release of Usablenet Mobile 2.0, pitched as the industry’s first HTML5 mobile platform. The platform supports all major mobile operating systems, including Apple i0S, Android, BlackBerry, Nokia and Windows.

Usablenet Mobile 2.0 is already used by clients such as Expedia, ShopNBC, and ASOS to enhance the user experience, engage mobile users and simplify purchasing and making reservations via mobile. Features include: dynamic scrolling promotions on the homepage and sub categories that help brands to target mobile users with new offers; expanding navigation, collapsible menus and pop-up windows that improve site navigation and streamline purchasing by maximising the small screen design; high resolution image galleries, which allow retailers and travel companies to display multiple, high quality images so that users can scroll, swipe and zoom in on a product or property image; advanced GPS functionality that customises the mobile site experience to the user’s location.

As the platform supports all mobile devices, it intelligently outputs both HTML5 UI and HTML4 to ensure that devices that do not support HTML5 will still receive the best possible user experience. “With the introduction of Usablenet Mobile 2.0, our platform can power advanced features and a rich, app-like experience that users are demanding in the mobile space,” says Nick Taylor, president at Usablenet. “By supporting all mobile devices, we help customers save valuable resources otherwise spent on developing multiple solutions for each mobile operating system on the market.”
As consumers become more open to mobile commerce, retailers and brands need to work on ensuring that the mobile site experience matches that of the desktop PC.

Site testing has increasingly become more important due to consumers’ growing acceptance of mobile commerce.

Mobile users expect to make sacrifices – in content depth and its presentation – in exchange for anyplace, anytime convenience, but the one thing they will not sacrifice is speed.

“A recent survey found 58 percent of mobile phone users expect Web sites to load as quickly on their phones as on their desktops,” said Matt Poepsel, vice president of performance strategies at Gomez, Lexington, MA.

“This means – mobile sites must be fast, reliable and consistent,” he said. “In fact, the very nature of mobile commerce places an even higher premium on speed and reliability, since people often use their mobile phones to make quick purchases while they have a few spare minutes, or to augment the in-store shopping experience – for example, comparing a product price in one store to a competitive store.

“Simply put, if the mobile site experience you deliver is frustrating or disappointing, you risk alienating your customers or sending them straight to your competitors.”

Consider testing
Companies should take into account a lot of different variables when site testing.

First, companies should make sure that their end-users can find their mobile site and whether it is indexed by major search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Bing.

Companies should also see if the links displayed lead to mobile-optimized pages and if they are delivering the correct mobile-optimized content to all users – no matter what device they use.

Next, companies need to ensure that the mobile site content is displayed properly on the most
popular devices used by consumers that deliver the most return on investment.

“There are tools available to quickly show how your mobile site renders on several popular devices,” Mr. Poepsel said. “From there, you need to make sure mobile site downloads and transactions are as fast and reliable as they can be on your highest-priority devices.

“Mobile sites should load, ideally in three seconds or less,” he said. “You’ve also got to make sure that multi-step transactions can be completed quickly in the mobile context.

“Part of this is ensuring a mobile site that’s specifically designed for easy navigation by a mobile user, who may be in a rush or typing with just a thumb, for example.”

It is key to deliver a mobile site tailored to the capabilities of the device a customer uses.

For example, a site that is optimized for high-end devices can leverage the latest HTML5 features versus a site that is optimized for lower-end devices.

According to Mr. Poepsel, the most important piece is to test a company’s mobile site from the perspective of end-users.

“You need to look back at your site the same way your customers and users do by operating and running it from the outside in,” Mr. Poepsel said. “It means you need to test and regularly monitor your site the same way your customers use it.”

Growth of mcommerce
Mobile commerce represents a huge and growing revenue opportunity that is just beginning. Businesses that cannot deliver strong mobile site experiences will be slow out of the gate – and may never catch up.

“Site testing is important because site performance is all about offering a great shopping experience that is fast, secure and performs well,” said Adi Rustgi, director of product management at Digby, Texas.

“When the sites are thoroughly tested and performing well in both aspects of functional and performance testing domains, it helps establish an engaging experience between the retailer and the shopper,” he said. “That has direct effect on the transaction sales and the success of the retailer’s mobile commerce site.

Mr. Rustgi said that there are multiple components of site testing to make sure that consumers enjoy a mobile commerce experience.

The first is functional testing, which involves insuring that the retail shopping functions – navigating from categories to products, adding items to carts and check-out – perform per the
retailer’s business rules.

The second is performance testing that ensures that consumers get speedy access to the products they want to search, browse and buy at any time of the day with various levels of load on the Web site.

“Different tools and techniques are used for both of those aspects of site testing,” Mr. Rustgi said.

Additionally, the executive said that there are various techniques for cramming data in smaller packages and decreasing the page download time.

“All of this is done more effectively through the use of a mobile commerce platform that uses data feeds from the retailer,” Mr. Rustgi said.

Mr. Rustgi’s first tip for cramming data is understanding that customers are looking for easy access to content and an elegant and simple site design.

Companies should keep in mind not to go heavy on the images and JavaScripts. Smaller page sizes lead to reduced download time.

There should also be usage of a content delivery network for serving static content such as images, stylesheets and JavaScript.

This lets customers obtain their content from servers that are closer to them, thereby reducing download time,” per Mr. Rustgi.

“Companies should also be more efficient in presenting content through the use of schemes like pagination,” Mr. Rustgi said. “Also, being intentional in the amount of content that is relevant to a mobile user helps in ensuring that the page sizes are small and download times are fast.

“My final tip is zipping the network traffic before content is served,” he said. “Current modern mobile browsers are capable of unzipping content retrieved from the server.”

Evolution of mobile
According to David Brussin, CEO of Monetate, Philadelphia, site testing has evolved to encompass site architecture, experience interaction and targeted content – really any and all elements within a site.

“Testing has evolved beyond what works for all my visitors to what works for each of my key segments,” Mr. Brussin said. “This means that the ability to tailor content and messaging is key, and the mobile device user is a perfect example of a segment that requires a tailored
experience to maximize conversion.

“Testing shouldn’t be viewed through the prism of pass or fail, rather it should be viewed as learning and evolving,” he said. “Sites need to continually evaluate the experience and messages they are presenting to consumers and the more marketers are testing their sites, the more power they have to engage their audience and understand their wants and expectations.

“Testing is a key component to the ongoing conversation between a brand and its customers.”

Companies doing site testing want to ensure that all features and functionality run properly, that the user interface standards are met, that the site works on all devices and that it is light and loads quickly.

“Users have come to expect the same standards on a mobile site as they do on their desktop,” said Nick Taylor, president of Usablenet, New York. “If the mobile site doesn’t meet these expectations, brands run the risk of losing customers and potential purchases.

“Mobile sites need to be tested in the same way as Web sites – everyday, throughout the day and regression tested for any release,” he said. “If a page loads too slowly, users will likely leave the mobile site.

“If they read a marketing email on a phone and the link doesn’t take them to the mobile-optimized view, brands are losing out on potential purchases. A site that is consistently failing risks losing customers to competitors with better performing sites.”

Understanding the user experience is key to creating the best performing mobile sites.

HTML5 is extremely powerful and can help in reducing load times.

Additionally, functionality such as expandable navigation and scrolling promotional banners lets brands power the same exciting content and experience that they do on their desktop Web sites, while at the same time making the pages lighter and easier to navigate on a mobile device.

“Don’t wait until a mobile site is fully baked – in your mind – and ready to launch before you test,” said Steve Timpson, president of siteminis, Atlanta.

“Usability testing is an ongoing and iterative process,” he said. “Look at your competition for comparative usability testing.

“You don’t have to reinvent the wheel.”
Mobile Entertainment
Usablenet launches HTML5 platform
April 27, 2011

Makes app-like user experience available to its 200 plus clients.

Usablenet Mobile 2.0, its first HTML5 mobile platform, supports the following features:

* Dynamic scrolling promotions on the homepage and sub categories that help brands to target mobile users with new offers
* Expanding navigation, collapsible menus and pop-up windows
* High-resolution image galleries
* Advanced GPS functionality

This announcement marks another key moment in the progress of HTML5, and therefore the viability of the mobile web as a rich channel for mobile engagement.

Usablenet’s platform re-configures a full web site for mobile (or app) and requires no technical expertise from the customer. It delivers versions that work across any smartphone, feature phone or tablet, plus Facebook and other channels.

The firm works with 25 per cent of the Fortune 1000, and customers include Amtrak, Delta, Estée Lauder, FedEx, Hilton, Marks & Spencer, Sprint, JCPenney, Victoria’s Secret, and others.

“With the introduction of Usablenet Mobile 2.0, our platform can power advanced features and a rich, app-like experience that users are demanding in the mobile space,” said Nick Taylor, President of Usablenet.

“By supporting all mobile devices, we help customers save valuable resources otherwise spent on developing multiple solutions for each mobile operating system on the market.”
With the release of Usablenet Mobile 2.0, mobile web specialist which focusses on the retail industry, Usablenet, is claiming the industry’s first HTML5 mobile platform. The company says Mobile 2.0 will enable brands to an affordable cross-device solution thanks to HTML5. The platform supports all major mobile operating systems, including Apple i0S, Android, BlackBerry, Nokia and Windows.Optimized features supported by Mobile 2.0 include: – advanced GPS functionality that customises the mobile site experience to the user’s location.

Another feature aimed especially at retailers is support for high-res image galleries.

These allow retailers to display multiple, high quality images so that users can scroll, swipe and zoom in on a product.

Labelled as a ‘Tap Tap Zoom’ functionality, it enables shoppers to quickly and easily get a closer look at hi-res images by simply tapping image twice.

Plus the company says that, thanks to HTLM5, it requires no load time, whatsoever.

Usablenet Mobile 2.0 with HTML5

Tap, Tap, Zoom has already been deployed by ASOS, the online clothing supplier, on its mobile web site http://m.asos.com/ to improve the surfer’s viewing experience (see picture).

To help brands to target mobile users with new offers, Mobile 2.0 supports dynamic scrolling promotions on the homepage and sub categories.

Other benefits in this platform include; -expanding navigation; collapsible menus; and pop-up windows to improve site navigation and streamline purchasing by maximising the small screen design of a mobile friendly site.

To ensure that handsets that don’t support HTML5 still receive the best possible user experience, Usablenet Mobile 2.0 supports all mobile devices intelligently via HTML4.

“By supporting all mobile devices,” explained Nick Taylor, President of Usablenet,"We help customers save valuable resources otherwise spent on developing multiple solutions for each mobile operating system on the market.”

For more information about the power of HTLM5 see our own Guide to HTML5 made easy.
Usablenet has launched Usablenet Mobile 2.0, which it claims is the industry’s first HTML5 mobile platform. Delivering a rich, app-like user experience and improved UI, Usablenet Mobile 2.0 allows brands to leverage the power of HTML5 and benefit from an affordable cross-device solution, the company says. The platform supports all major mobile operating systems.

Usablenet Mobile 2.0 is already being used by clients such as Expedia, ShopNBC, and ASOS to enhance the user experience, engage mobile users and simplify purchasing and making reservations via mobile.

Optimized features supported by Usablenet Mobile 2.0 include dynamic scrolling promotions on the homepage and sub-categories that help brands to target mobile users with new offers; expanded navigation, collapsible menus and pop-up windows that improve site navigation and streamline purchasing; high-resolution image galleries; and advanced GPS functionality that customizes the mobile site experience to the user’s location. The platform supports all mobile devices, outputting both HTML5 UI and HTML4 to ensure that devices that do not support HTML5 will still receive the best possible user experience.

“With the introduction of Usablenet Mobile 2.0, our platform can power advanced features and a rich, app-like experience that users are demanding in the mobile space,” says Usablenet president, Nick Taylor.
Mobile technology provider Usablenet has released Usablenet Mobile 2.0 (News - Alert), the industry's first HTML5 mobile platform. Delivering a rich, app-like user experience and improved user interface (UI), Usablenet Mobile 2.0 allows brands to leverage the power of HTML5 and benefit from an affordable cross-device solution.

The platform supports all major mobile operating systems, including Apple iOS, Google Android, BlackBerry, Nokia (News - Alert) and Windows. According to Usablenet, Mobile 2.0 is already used by clients such as Expedia (News - Alert), ShopNBC and ASOS to enhance the user experience, engage mobile users and simplify purchasing and making reservations via mobile.

Optimized features supported by Usablenet Mobile 2.0 include dynamic scrolling promotions on the homepage and sub-categories that help brands to target mobile users with new offers, expanding navigation, collapsible menus and pop-up windows that improve site navigation and streamline purchasing by maximizing the small screen design, high-resolution image galleries, which allow retailers and travel companies to display multiple, high quality images so that users can scroll, swipe and zoom in on a product or property image, and advanced GPS functionality that customizes the mobile site experience to the user's location.

As Usablenet Mobile 2.0 supports all mobile devices, the new platform intelligently outputs both HTML5 UI and HTML4 to ensure that devices that do not support HTML5 will still receive the best possible user experience.

In a statement, Nick Taylor, president of Usablenet said, “With the introduction of Usablenet Mobile 2.0, our platform can power advanced features and a rich, app-like experience that users are demanding in the mobile space.”

“By supporting all mobile devices, we help customers save valuable resources otherwise spent on developing multiple solutions for each mobile operating system on the market,” added Taylor.

In other news, VSP Vision Care, a not-for-profit vision benefits and services company in the United States with over 56 million members, launched the mobile version of vsp.com to allow its members to access their vision care information from anywhere. VSP Vision Care entered into a one-year agreement with Usablenet, a technology provider for multi-channel customer engagement, to create a mobile version of vsp.com.
Retailer Pacific Sunwear placed its first quick response (QR) codes in stores and on print ads in March, linking to a mobile flipbook that allowed consumers to look at its new board short and swimwear lines. The codes allow retailers to enhance consumers’ in-store experience while collecting valuable consumer data.

"You can only say so much on a store display, and sales associates aren't always available — though, of course, we'd like them to be," says Tim Katz, senior online operations manager at the company, who added that PacSun will build a QR code scanner into its first mobile app in May to enhance the customer experience. "We definitely want to create a personal shopping experience by really empowering the customers to explore and understand at a deeper level what the story is behind the merchandising or the marketing. It just lends itself to a higher level of selling opportunity."

PacSun's campaign is indicative of how retailers are using QR codes to help them immediately communicate product information while a consumer is in a purchasing mindset. For retailers, the in-store initiatives are a step up from the way marketers have traditionally used QR codes to deliver content to consumers away from points of purchase.

Macy's helped consumers understand their fashion choices when it launched QR codes on in-store signage for clothing and cosmetics brands in February. When customers scanned the codes, they received fashion help from experts such as Tommy Hilfiger, Bobbi Brown and Rachel Roy, who demonstrated how to wear particular products.

The predominant goal of the "Backstage Pass" campaign was to facilitate the purchasing process, explains Orlando Veras, media relations manager at Macy's.

"People are browsing through the products and if they are looking at a print and don't really know how they would wear it, Rachel Roy is there to tell them how to do that," he says. "And then they'll feel confident in buying that item."

QR codes can also help marketers collect consumer data that can inform in-store merchandising, says Jason Taylor, VP of platform strategy at mobile services firm Usablenet, which worked with PacSun on its mobile initiative. "The thing that gets marketers excited about
QR codes is the ability to use them to create a sort of map of physical value," he says. "In-store gives them another indication of where and at what products people are looking."

Taylor adds that by affixing a unique QR code to each product, a retailer can "start to create demographics about what products consumers want to get more information about so you can begin to address that in-store for everybody else."

Pacific Sunwear hasn't yet used QR codes at that granular level, but Katz says "it's definitely something we're interested in exploring further."

Marketers can also collect data through in-store QR codes to enable targeted remarketing. Mike Wehrs, president and CEO of mobile barcode platform developer Scanbuy, says marketers can view when and where a product was scanned and what other items queried by a particular phone, as long as a consumer has opted in. When a consumer opts in, they can link their QR code reader with a loyalty membership, allowing marketers to tailor future communications to his or her past in-store browsing history.

Wehrs adds that it's also possible for marketers to harness a smartphone's location-awareness. "We know consumers are in a store," he says, "so perhaps in addition to the product information, you push a coupon saying, 'If you buy this in the next half-hour, you'll get a 5% off coupon.'"

Retailers are also continuing to use QR codes in their out-of-store marketing efforts. Late last year, Sears Holdings Corp. added QR codes to its traditional print holiday season Wish Book. Consumers were able to scan the codes for more production information and videos from the company. Sears said at the time that it added the technology to the Wish Book to give consumers more opportunities to interact with the brand and make it more fun to shop.

Home Depot takes work out of shopping

The Home Depot began to tag its patio sets and live goods products, such as plants and flowers, with QR codes in March to deliver product information and usage guides to consumers. The home improvement chain developed the QR code initiative to influence the purchasing process by giving consumers access to information that "could be part of a deciding factor in a purchase decision," says Mike Wehrs, president and CEO of Scanbuy, who helped develop the initiative.
Usablenet Launches HTML5 Mobile Platform and Announces Expedia, ShopNBC and ASOS as Early Adopters

May 03, 2011

As interest in HTML5 to create more app-like m-websites gathers pace, leading mobile retail site creator Usablenet has rolled out Mobile 2.0, its own HTML5 mobile platform to tap into demand from retailers – driven by their customers – for better mobile web experience.

Usablenet’s Mobile 2.0 platform is already being used by Expedia, ShopNBC and ASOS to enhance user experience, engage mobile users and simplify purchasing and making reservations via mobile, says the platform company.

Delivering a rich, app-like user experience and improved UI, Usablenet Mobile 2.0’s HTML5 capability allows brands to create mobile websites that are simply more slick to use, while creating an affordable cross-device solution on all major mobile operating systems, including i0S, Android, BlackBerry, Nokia and Windows.

For those without the latest mobile handsets, the platform will intelligently output both HTML5 UI and HTML4 to ensure that devices that do not support HTML5 will still receive the best possible user experience.

So what do you get with HTML5? Typically, HTML5 gives expandable navigation, collapsible menus and pop-up windows that improve site navigation and streamline purchasing by maximizing the small screen design – much as you get in an app. It also delivers, high-resolution image galleries, which allow retailers and travel companies to display multiple, high quality images so that users can scroll, swipe and zoom in on a product or property image. It also delivers dynamic scrolling, promotions on the homepage and sub-categories that help brands to target mobile users with new offers. Usablenet’s new platform also features advanced GPS functionality that customizes the mobile site experience to the user’s location.

“With the introduction of Usablenet Mobile 2.0, our platform can power advanced features and a rich, app-like experience that users are demanding in the mobile space,” says Nick Taylor, President of Usablenet. “By supporting all mobile devices, we help customers save valuable resources otherwise spent on developing multiple solutions for each mobile operating system on the market.”
Usablenet Inc., a mobile commerce and social commerce technology provider, has introduced a new version of its core m-commerce platform that uses HTML5 to create mobile web pages. Usablenet Mobile 2.0 employs the latest Internet programming language, which many industry experts say holds great promise for m-commerce, to create a richer mobile web experience that can run on all the major mobile operating systems, including Apple Inc.’s iOS, Google Inc.’s Android, Research in Motion’s BlackBerry and Microsoft Corp.’s Windows Phone.

There are big differences between HTML4 and HTML5. HTML5, for instance, enables programmers to cache web site content in the mobile web browser, thus allowing for more robust design because of fewer web server calls for content. The new language allows programmers to access some of the innate features of smartphones, such as a camera or GPS system. The goal of using HTML5 in m-commerce site development, retailers and developers say, is to make an m-commerce site look and feel more like a mobile app.

Usablenet Mobile 2.0 offers a variety of new features. For example, retailers can incorporate scrolling promotions on the home page, expand navigation through collapsible menus and pop-up windows that streamline an m-commerce site experience, add high-resolution image galleries designed for the swiping motion employed by smartphone users, and include GPS functionality that can customize a mobile site experience to a consumer’s location.

Usablenet Mobile 2.0 transmits HTML4 pages along with HTML5 pages for mobile phones that do not support HTML5.

“With the introduction of Usablenet Mobile 2.0, our platform can power advanced features and a rich, app-like experience that users are demanding in the mobile space,” says Nick Taylor, president. “By supporting all mobile devices, we help customers save valuable resources otherwise spent on developing multiple solutions for each mobile operating system on the market.”
Expedia, ShopNBC and ASOS are enhancing and simplifying purchase orders via a new HTML5 mobile platform.

The companies are among many brands that are currently using Usablenet’s new mobile service, Mobile 2.0. In addition to enhancing mobile purchasing, the brands are also letting customers make reservations in an easier way.

“Usablenet Mobile 2.0 is available as an upgrade to more than 200 mobile clients as well as new customers,” said Nick Taylor, president of Usablenet, New York.

“Usablenet clients Expedia.com, ASOS and ShopNBC have already launched enhanced mobile sites that leverage the new HTML5 platform,” he said.

**Mobile features**

Expedia, ShopNBC and ASOS can use the platform’s optimized features such as scrolling promotions on the homepage and using sub-categories that help them target mobile users with new offers.

Expedia.com is leveraging the Usablenet Mobile 2.0 platform to include advanced new features using the smartphone’s internal GPS to offer hotel options based on the user’s current location.

ASOS is using the new platform to support scrolling promotions on the homepage using image carousels, as well as tap-tap zoom to view products in detail.

ShopNBC has an expandable banner to allow for more promotional content, maximizing the use of small screens without sacrificing speed.
High five
Additionally, the companies can expand the navigation on their HTML5 mobile site via collapsible menus and pop-up windows that streamline purchasing by maximizing the small screen design.

The platform also lets companies use high-resolution image galleries.

For example, Expedia can display multiple images that let users scroll, swipe and zoom in on a product or property image.

The platform also uses advanced GPS functionality that customizes a user’s experience based on location.

“By offering rich app-like features to all Web-enabled mobile phones, the platform provides brands with a cost-effective service that creates app-like mobile sites across all major mobile operating systems, resulting in an enhanced consumer experience that increases customer engagement and drives sales,” Mr. Taylor said.
Retailers are trying to get customers to spend more than just time on Facebook Inc.

In the past six months, such companies as Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc., J.C. Penney Co. and GNC Holdings have invited customers to spend money by shopping on company fan pages without ever leaving Facebook.

The move to attract sales through social-networking sites comes as people are spending more time online and less time at the mall. E-commerce has been one of the biggest drivers of retail sales in recent quarters, with online sales rising 28% in the first quarter, compared with an increase of 4% for bricks-and-mortar stores, according to surveys by the National Retail Federation.

J.C. Penney launched a Facebook shop in December, allowing its 1.6 million fans to shop directly from the social-media site. The Facebook store offers the same products as Penney's mobile store, a company spokeswoman said. But the Penney Facebook shop lets fans "share" items they like with friends with a simple click.

Fans are able to browse categories in J.C. Penney's Facebook store such as women, shoes and baby, and then narrow down each department by the types of product they are seeking.

"We need to go where our customers are," says Jeff Hennion, chief branding officer at vitamin-retailer GNC, which has been directing fans to the Facebook shop it launched in February through emails and its Twitter feed. The company recently sent an email blast that said, "Why leave the social scene to shop? Get what you need right on Facebook!" and then prompted recipients to "like" its page.

Revenue from the GNC Facebook store is slim, but Mr. Hennion believes it could become a "significant" source of online revenue in the future. "We have a very young demographic that is multitasking, and this gives them the comfort that they aren't leaving Facebook behind," he says.

While the portion of overall retail transactions coming from Facebook remains small—Forrester Research estimates Facebook accounts for less than 1% of overall e-commerce—companies
like GNC believe so-called "social commerce" could become an important sales driver in the future. Americans spent 22 minutes and 10 seconds on Facebook in April, more than twice the amount of time they spent on the Web's top 500 retail sites combined.

Yet most analysts remain skeptical that consumers will want to spend money while they are socializing online. Forrester Research issued a report earlier this year that said there is little evidence that social commerce is a profitable growth strategy.

Without "measurable success" for large brands over the course of the next year, Forrester said, companies that herald Facebook as the next big thing in e-commerce have "the credence of a cultist who insists that the world will end next year."

Sucharita Mulpuru, the Forrester retail analyst who led the report, says people often don’t revisit fan pages after initially "liking" them, though she suggests that consumers might be lured back by offers of exclusive merchandise or special sales.

Mark Beccue, a senior analyst at ABI Research Inc., says that consumers buying goods online are very purposeful, and they typically rely on search engines or go directly to a company's website.

"People are just starting to engage with this concept and are testing it," concedes David Godsman, vice president of global Web services at Starwood, which added a shopping tab for its Westin brand in January after fans wrote on the company's Facebook wall suggesting the idea.

Mr. Godsman says only a handful of the hotel's branded "Heavenly Beds," which sell for $1,100 to $1,700, have been purchased through Facebook, but he says that smaller-ticket items like its $36 candles are gaining traction.

The Westin Facebook shop is identical to its online shop, but it doesn't have the same advanced search capabilities, Mr. Godsman says.

Visitors to Facebook fan pages can find shopping tabs on the left-hand side of the page, typically under the photo. Clicking the tab directs consumers to a shopping site built on the Facebook platform, which is often similar to a company's main e-commerce site.

Facebook doesn't charge retailers a fee to add the shopping function, nor does it take a cut of transactions that occur on its site. However, companies typically outsource the project to developers that charge at least $10,000 to add the feature.
"Rather than simply bringing their existing Web experiences to Facebook, we believe retailers who provide deeply social shopping experiences will see the most success," said a Facebook spokeswoman in an email.

Facebook also makes it easy for customers to trumpet their purchases by sharing them with friends in their personal news feeds. Most customers are given the option to post purchases to their news feeds automatically.

For retailers, selling on Facebook is also compelling as a market-research tool. Facebook offers retailers detailed information on customers, including "demographic information like age, sex, how popular people are and how much they share and 'like,' " says Jason Taylor, vice president of platform strategy for Usablenet, which develops Facebook shopping tabs for retailers.
The user interface was designed in-house, while the site was developed by Usablenet, which has also worked on mobile sites for John Lewis and M&S.

**Site search and navigation**

Mothercare has opted for a simple mobile site design, and one which has been optimised for smartphones. Visitors to the site from other devices will see a more basic version.

As well as a prominent search box, the site has very clear navigational options, represented by 12 'buttons':

This is a good approach for a site which will be accessed by people on touchscreen phones, as it avoid the problem of clicking on the wrong link.

As users navigate through the various sections of the site, filtering options allow them to narrow the available product range, and make the remaining results more relevant:
Product pages

Research suggests that people want the user experience on mobile commerce sites to match that of desktop sites, meaning the same level of detail, product information and functionality that helps them decide on and make a purchase.

Mothercare achieves this with its product pages. There is a good amount of detail (product specs, suitable ages, dimensions etc) for items such as prams and car seats, as well as multiple product photos:

Any product reviews from the main website are shown on mobile, and calls to action are nice and clear.

Checkout process

The checkout has been optimised for mobile users, and also avoids making new customers go through a registration process before checkout, only asking for an email.

The checkout is well-designed and works well, but it is split over several pages, which means more page loads for users who may be on less than perfect 3G connections.

The more page loads, the slower the process is for users, so having things like selecting delivery options on a separate page should perhaps be avoided.

Conclusion

Mobile commerce is growing, with 10m UK consumers conducting a transaction by mobile last year, but unfortunately, 83% experienced some kind of problem when making a purchase.

This means that retailers need to ensure that mobile commerce sites are usable and designed to make payments as easy as possible, and Mothercare’s site fits the bill.
Travel inherently lends itself well to mobile devices. As the market for business travelers continues to change, leaders in the travel industry are looking for new ways to enhance that experience using things such as location-based services, and mobile devices.

Perhaps one of the best-known names in travel arrangements these days is Expedia.com. Thousands of travelers worldwide use its online services to book flights, hotels, and rental cars, among other parts of their travel plans. A few years back the company took that experience mobile, launching its first mobile Website that helped travelers use mobile devices to book travel arrangements.

Darren Austin, the director of mobile for Expedia Worldwide, believes mobile is an essential piece of the company’s business in that it allows it to be there for travelers when necessary. Austin says of the wave of new mobile devices being used today by both business and leisure travelers, “These devices allow Expedia to be right in the pocket of our customers.”

While that first mobile Website was a great initial step for Expedia, in many ways it became a learning experience for the travel company as well. “It was a great solution for the Web,” says Austin. “During that time, though, we started to learn more about what our customers were doing with mobile. We took what we learned about that usage behavior and decided to launch a major upgrade.”

One of the key lessons learned by Expedia was the fact that today’s traveler tends to do more on the fly than ever before. “Your typical desktop user would tend to book their trip far in advance, but what we discovered was that with mobile, nearly three-quarters of these travelers booked a hotel in the next 24 hours,” adds Austin.

Taking this lesson learned, Expedia decided to include some location-based services in its latest rollout to the mobile Website. New features allow travelers to find hotels with vacancies near them that night based on the location service within their phone.

During the development process, Expedia came across a critical decision that many
companies face: build or buy? Expedia opted for the latter and is working with a company named Usablenet, www.usablenet.com, to build the mobile Website. The company was able to help Expedia optimize the experience for all smartphone platforms. Austin says the decision to go with Usablenet rather than build it internally was predicated on a few factors, including the need to go to market quickly so that it could measure and analyze results in order to better enhance the mobile experience going forward.

Such feedback will help Expedia Worldwide roll out smartphone apps that further aid the travel experience though a range of new services. Expedia acquired mobile travel app creator Mobiata back in November 2010. Mobiata, which created the widely popular FlightTrack app, will help Expedia enhance services by creating apps that allow customers to book services across multiple platforms.

The company is becoming very proactive in studying usage behaviors in order to best improve services for customers going forward. In an industry that focuses on being mobile, it’s important for companies like Expedia to find new ways to make the experience easier.
Customers who feel the urge to beef up their home storage solutions while they’re away from home can get the products they need over their mobile phones, now that national storage retailer The Container Store has rolled out an mcommerce site offering its entire inventory for purchase over mobile handsets.

The brand’s mobile incarnation ports over popular Web features such as customer reviews, Click & Pickup, and the ability to check in-store availability of an item. The launch earlier this month of a mobile-optimized Web site came about in part because The Container Store was seeing growing numbers of visitors accessing its main Web site via mobile handset. “We had definitely seen growth in people accessing our site over mobile devices in the past year,” says Catherine Davis, director of direct marketing for the Dallas-based chain, with 50 U.S. locations. “In fact, over the past year, the number of people doing exactly that had doubled.”

But in addition, taking Container Store’s Web sales mobile fit the brand’s mission and image neatly enough that it also made sense from a branding standpoint.

“We’re all about helping our customers get organized and ultimately saving them time, and this just fell in with a bevy of other services we offer to make it easier for people to shop with us,” Davis says. “We want to be there and available when a customer has an inspiration and requires a solution, and a lot of us these days are using our mobile devices in the same way we would have used our home computer in the past.”

As designed and managed by mobile platform provider Usablenet, the new Container Store mobile site automatically detects when someone is accessing the brand’s main Web site via handset and directs them to the optimized site. The home screen features a search box of the brand’s 10,000-SKU inventory, a large merchandising space for a product photo and current promotion at press time a “Love Your Luggage” Sale), and two large buttons that let visitors either shop buy category or shop within the Elfa line of storage products, Container Store’s most popular brand.
A store locator button at the bottom of the page lets users find a list of their nearest container Store outlets, with pictures, distances, directions via Google Maps and the ability to click to call the store. The relatively spare home page allows the site to load quickly—one early pain point at which mcommerce visitors sometimes fall out of a site.

Shoppers can view the product ratings and reviews contributed by others, and they can also take mobile advantage of the same Click & Pickup feature that the brand’s Web shoppers can now use. Mobile customers can also check on the availability of the product they want at the Container Store outlet of their choice.

To publicize its new mobile site, the container Store ran an ad in the New York Times earlier this month. The brand has also sent word of the new mobile site to its email opt-in list, is highlighting the mobile option on its Facebook page and in its corporate blog and will promote the site in bag stuffers throughout the coming summer.

Davis says that The Container Store deliberately chose to move its site to mobile rather than build an app that only smartphone users could access. “We felt like the foundation of our effort was really to make our entire site accessible to all our customers,” she says. “I wouldn’t rule out the possibility of an app in the future, but we felt that making the whole site more easily accessible on mobile was the right first step.”

Usablenet worked with The Container Store to port Click & Pickup, in-stock availability and other elements to a mobile presence. “Our approach is to work with clients to identify what key features and functions they want to bring over to the mobile user, and then to act as the presentation layer to make sure of the success of that mobile experience on every devices,” says Jason Taylor, vice president of mobile products for the solution provider.

Usablenet was able to integrate all the desired features from Container Store’s main site without requiring a special feed to the mobile site. “Our role is then to bring that mobile experience to every phone worldwide, and support a view that works well not just on an iPhone in the U.S. but on a Nokia device in Japan,” says Taylor.

Some of those Web features actually take on additional value when migrated to mobile, he adds. For example, The Container Store put a lot of investment into the in-store availability feature. It’s a complicated back-end process to keep track of inventory down to the store level; and if it breaks down, you risk very unhappy empty-handed customers.

“Because of our approach, all the feeds our clients get in their Web channel can simply be optimized for mobile,” Taylor says. “We don’t build a new mobile channel from scratch but
leverage what clients have already built. And that ability to check on in-store availability is, if anything, even more valuable in mobile than on the Web."

That’s because many units in the container Store chain allow users to order online and then call ahead for curbside delivery, according to Davis. Users can browse, order, pay for and pick up their purchases, all without leaving the driver’s seat if they wish.
As smartphones' share of the mobile marketplace rises, marketers have been quick to launch mobile applications that take advantage of the devices' capabilities. Unlike a mobile-optimized website, a mobile application can utilize a phone's camera and accelerometer. But the growth of dynamic coding language HTML5 has enabled mobile sites to match an app's ability to use smartphones' location-based services. Rather than offer exclusively an app or solely a mobile site, marketers such as Pacific Sunwear and Expedia provide both as companion pieces.

No doubt, mobile applications have unique advantages over a mobile-optimized site. On May 18 retailer Pacific Sunwear debuted its first iPhone app, which not only drives the company's mobile presence but its customers' in-store experiences as well. Unlike PacSun's mobile-optimized site, its app, developed with mobile services firm Usablenet, can call upon an iPhone's camera. PacSun employs the capability through an in-app barcode scanner that delivers offers and product information when users scan in-store QR codes. Also unique to the app is the ability to alert consumers of sales and events via push notifications and data collection opportunities.

While Pacific Sunwear does not currently feature any in-app consumer information forms, Tim Katz, senior online operations manager at PacSun, says that such data collection would allow the company to deliver more tailored promotions. "The more we know, the more targeted the push notifications can be," he says, adding that an app is better suited for such data collection than a mobile site because of its closed system.

But one challenge a mobile app may face is reach. Katz says that a majority of visitors to PacSun's mobile site use iPhones, but not all companies have such a homogeneous consumer base and could risk alienating certain segments.

"The one thing we can't forget about is that most of the users globally are using phones that are not necessarily capable of downloading applications, or are more suited to web-browsing," says Darren Austin, director of mobile at Expedia. Because the travel site has a global...
consumer base, a significant number of whom don’t sport iPhones or Androids, Austin says it’s important for Expedia to balance its mobile focus.

“The way we look at them, apps are really all about rich, engaging experiences and mobile web is about getting things done quickly,” says Darren Austin, director of mobile at Expedia. “So our approach in mobile web is making sure we understand the most important use cases for customers, and establishing that use case in a way that they can get in and get out as fast as they possibly can.”

Expedia and Usablenet began re-coding the company’s mobile-optimized site in HTML5 this April. Austin says while the site can’t use a phone’s camera, it can take advantage of location-based services to deliver more relevant airfare results and hotel information. For PacSun’s part, Katz says the company is also readying an HTML5 that will employ the geo-targeting capability. While for now PacSun’s iPhone app boasts more interactive features than its mobile site, Katz says he doesn’t see the former overshadowing the latter.

“We don’t say either-or. It’s whatever’s most convenient [for the consumer],” he says. “If you want to load up Safari on your iPhone and go to the mobile website, that works for you—or you can use the app. We’re not trying to downplay one or the other.”
Teen fashion retailer Pacific Sunwear of California Inc., better known as PacSun, has further bolstered its mobile credentials with the introduction of an iPhone application geared to handle everything from searching, shopping and buying.

The Anaheim, CA-based company added a fully native iPhone app after optimizing its Web site to mobile devices, aided by mobile commerce platform provider Usablenet, New York. The app will initially target PacSun's famed California lifestyle-inspired beachwear and casual clothing for the summer and then switch to fallwear as the seasons change.

“They’ve got a very young demographic and want to be involved in what they want to do,” said Jason Taylor, vice president of platform strategy at Usablenet, New York.

“Social-sharing and things like notifications and deals are very important to their user base because it skew’s a young demographic,” he said.

Founded in 1980, PacSun has more than 900 retail stores nationwide whose product are inspired by action sports, fashion, music and art.

Brands retailed at PacSun include Fox, Billabong, Element, Volcom, DC, Bullhead, Kirra, Nike 6.0, Hurley. Young & Restless, Quiksilver, Roxy, Lost, Rip Curl, Enjoi, Vans, Zoo York, Vurt, WeSC and Famous Stars and Straps.

Usablenet is the nation’s leading mobile commerce platform with clients such as Amtrak, Dell, Walgreens, J.C. Penney, Marks & Spencer, Fairmont Hotels, Expedia and Sunglass Hut.

**Sunny-side app**
For PacSun, Usablenet ensured that the iPhone app had daily deals, product wishlists and special promotions.

In addition, three features were created unique to the iPhone app.
First was the Outfit Builder that allows consumers to build their own outfit on the app and share the end result on Facebook via a post.

Next – and key for store-based retailers – is the integration of push notifications to recognize when a consumer is near a PacSun location via GPS. Such location-based targeting is designed to entice PacSun app users into the store with deals and discounts.

Finally, consumers can scan QR codes on PacSun window displays, in-store advertising or print ads and listen to music from New Zealand band, The Naked and Famous. The goal is to recreate on mobile the PacSun retail store experience.

For PacSun, the issue of mobile app versus a mobile site is a false debate. Indeed, the two-pronged approach to mobile is clear.

“The mobile site is the channel for everybody and the mobile app is about extending the brand and increasing brand loyalty,” Mr. Taylor said.

PacSun tasked Usablenet not just to work on the mobile site and iPhone, but also an in-store point-of-sale kiosk that lets store assistants gauge inventory and place orders for products not available on premise.

The in-store kiosk is backed by mobile technology and is Windows based.

“What we’re seeing from our clients is assistant–based kiosks in department stores and luxury stores are used to upsell in other stores,” Mr. Taylor said.

**Packs some**

In addition to creating awareness in-store, PacSun is offering a 15 percent discount on the next purchase to consumers who download the iPhone app directly from the [Apple App Store](https://appstore.com) or by scanning a QR code.
No doubt a retailer such as PacSun has to communicate in the language of its audience.

The company’s traditional Web site has strong imagery of surf, sun and fun. The site is fully ecommerce and is also a conduit to its Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flick and iPhone app channels.

As of 3 p.m. ET on May 21, PacSun boasted 875,551 likes on its Facebook page.

Plans call for integration PacSun’s mobile efforts tightly with Facebook.

Through all the offline, online and mobile efforts, PacSun’s goal is to deliver a uniform shopping experience across all mediums. And like many retailers, rather than reinvent the wheel – at least in the early years – it prefers an out-of-the-box but customized offering for mobile.

“The biggest challenge we address is to give a best-in-breed mobile experience that their customers expect without PacSun having built that knowledge in-house or without having PacSun building the infrastructure support in-house,” Mr. Taylor said.
PacSun unveils an iPhone app with plenty of powerful features
May 26, 2011

The retailer’s new iPhone app currently is highlighting its swimwear line and offers an outfit builder where customers can piece together apparel and accessories to see what an outfit will look like from head to toe.

Most retailers that build a mobile app enable shoppers to browse, search and buy products in a setting far richer than can be provided in an m-commerce site. Pacific Sunwear of California Inc., also known as PacSun, has done just that. But it has done more, adding powerful features and functionality that greatly enhance the mobile commerce experience, the kind that many mobile experts say help keep customers coming back for more.

The outfit builder in the app, built by Usablenet Inc., lets shoppers collect apparel and accessories from throughout the store in one place to piece together an outfit and see what the items look like together from head to toe.

“It makes sense with our demographic, the 18-24 space. And it adds an increased level of interactivity and excitement around the swim season,” says Tim Katz, senior online operations manager at PacSun. “Customers can choose different tops and bottoms and matching accessories and save it in our outfit builder to refer to it later. They can use it as part of their wish list or share it on Facebook or e-mail to a friend, which helps increase mindshare.”

Katz adds that the merchant will be building a special outfit builder in the app for the back-to-school season.
The application also includes a two-dimensional bar code reader for a type of 2-D codes known as Quick Response, or QR. 2-D bar codes, which appear as small squares with a design within, can contain much more information and link to the mobile web, unlike their 1-D counterparts. The common Universal Product Code, or UPC, is an example of a 1-D bar code, which appears as a horizontal string of vertical lines.

Customers can use the built-in QR code reader to scan codes that link them automatically to web content such as additional product information and videos. PacSun has placed QR codes in the windows of its 800 stores that connect customers to a mobile web-based promotion for a new band, The Naked and Famous, that gives customers a code to redeem for a free music download. PacSun has also placed QR codes in print advertisements and on store displays advertising new swimwear styles and linking to videos on YouTube that explain the qualities of high-end board-shorts.

Katz says integrating QR code scanning into the app was easy because the retailer used a free, open source 2-D bar code scanner called ZBar. Open source code, as opposed to a proprietary system, made it simpler to manage, he explains.

And PacSun has included in the app push notifications triggered by the iPhone’s GPS technology. A push notification displays a window with a message on the smartphone screen whether or not the app is open. It also may activate a sound. PacSun is using in-app push messages and plans to take advantage of phones’ GPS capability to send out special discount and other promotions when a shopper is near a PacSun store. It uses a push system from vendor Xtify, which gives retailers a dashboard, similar to that used in e-mail marketing that lets merchants create and schedule notifications and target them by geography.

“We’ve been doing text messaging and location-based services with Foursquare and we thought location-based push notifications were an innovative way to engage with our customers through the app,” Katz says. “Xtify does the specific geofencing and geotargeting; we have all of our store locations and coordinates within the app, and using the GPS we can detect and push you notifications when you’re near a store. We can offer a percent off or a music video; the possibilities are really endless.”

PacSun is betting big on mobile commerce by deploying mobile marketing in virtually all its forms: a mobile site, an app, text messaging, location-based services and 2-D bar code scanning. It says mobile traffic accounts for under 10% of total traffic and is growing rapidly.
“M-commerce is the future of e-commerce,” Katz says. “Customers live and breathe their daily lives on their smartphones. So this is all about providing the best experience possible for whatever device they are on.”
Online fashion retailer ASOS.com has announced that it is using a new HTML5 mobile platform in an effort to improve the shopping experience for users on the move.

The firm is using Usablenet Mobile 2.0, which it says delivers an app-like user experience, and works across a selection of devices. The platform supports major mobile operating systems such as Apple iOS, Android, BlackBerry, Nokia and Windows.

"We were first to market with numerous advanced mobile web site technologies, with the goal of taking mobile user experience to the next level and helping users find the product they want as quickly as possible," he said. Nick Cust, user experience manager at ASOS, told Computing that the firm was ready to make the relatively early move to HTML 5 as it has a history of being a first-mover with new technologies.

"The goal here was to develop 'app-like' functionality for our mobile offering, providing our users with increase efficiency and experience."

He added that the firm chose Usablenet's solution as it did not require any data feeds or re-coding of the main site, and it was a scalable platform, enabling the retailer to add new channels and segments to enhance the mobile shopping experience.

Cust said that the decision to invest in a new mobile platform was a "no-brainer", due to the immense growth of mobile industry and smartphone penetration.
"However, this was only a small portion of the work that we did. It's not enough to simply develop a mobile site or app, you must nail the user experience," he said.

"Mobile is a brand new way of interacting with your business, so we focused on mobile being a completely different way of interacting with ASOS and have put much research into getting 'little things' and user experience right for our customers."

He said the implementation has already been a success, as the mobile site continues to attract positive feedback from the retailer's customers.

"Patterns of usage confirm the site is helping them to discover fashion where and when they need it, using multiple channels to browse and shop," added Cust.

ASOS is now developing localised mobile web sites in key regions across the world, and has several apps due to be launched this year.
Lifestyle Store PacSun Introduces Its Own App
June 02, 2011

Apps aimed at helping save shoppers money seem to be all the rage at the moment. So Pacific Sunwear (or PacSun as many consumers may recognise it as) has chipped in with their own effort.

PacSun offers quite a few features for its customers. There’s push notification which informs consumers when they’re near a PacSun location via the GPS integration. They are then sent targeted messages about any discounts or deals going on at the time. Users can also scan QR codes that are on window displays, in-store advertisements or in magazines. These QR codes then allow the user to listen to music from popular New Zealand rock band, The Naked and Famous, as well as take a look at behind the scenes videos and even acquire coupon codes.

Finally, users can search and buy PacSun products right from their iPhone. They can also create and save outfits made up of PacSun products to see how different combinations would work as well as share them with friends.

PacSun, powered by Usablenet, is available now as a free download and is compatible with all iOS devices.
Google’s Eric Schmidt recently noted that mobile search is growing much faster than desktop search. As mobile increasingly becomes a primary gateway to the Internet, it is crucial for companies to incorporate forward-thinking SEO practices into their mobile strategies to ensure their mobile sites are easily detected by search engines and found by consumers.

More than 60% of consumers search for brands from mobile devices before purchasing, and another 49% of mobile searchers made a mobile purchase in the past six months. Businesses must view mobile as a significant piece of their overall marketing campaigns that can drive substantial traffic and increase revenue.

Here are some high level SEO strategies that brands can implement into their overall mobile efforts to ensure they are getting maximum visibility.

1. Develop a Device Agnostic Approach

Search engines incorporate various criteria in mobile browsers to determine page rank. These factors include overall site performance, usability, download speed and screen rendering. A fully optimized mobile site that extends all functionality and key content from a website will rank higher in search results than a website that has simply been reformatted for a smaller screen.

For example, simply transcoding a webpage through the use of a cookie-cutter template will strip it of key content, leading to incomplete pages and decreased overall usability. Difficult navigation and broken pages will result in a lower page rank and a negative user experience that discourages repeat visits.

The type of devices that consumers use to search the mobile web also factors into site ranking. Different mobile web browsers render pages in different ways, which is why it is essential for brands to develop a device agnostic mobile strategy that supports the wide variety of available mobile operating systems.

For example, Staples’ mobile site was developed to support all web-enabled devices. To decrease bounce rate (when a user views only one page on a site, but then leaves), brands’ mobile sites must automatically recognize the consumer’s device as it loads, and render the page accordingly to ensure a view that is best optimized for the user’s particular screen.

2. Leverage Traditional SEO Practices on a New Platform
Brands will ensure that their site stands out in a crowded market by translating traditional web SEO practices to mobile. Common SEO tactics that should be incorporated into all mobile sites include:

**Appropriate Keywords in Headlines and Text**: Consumers use mobile for more focused and task-oriented searches (i.e. for a specific location or product). This is different from how most people search from a desktop computer. By understanding consumer behavior, brands can anticipate queries and incorporate key search terms into page text, increasing detection from search engines.

**Relevant Page Titles and Accurate Page Descriptions**: Page titles are one of the first factors mobile browsers use to determine where a page will show in results. Similar to traditional SEO, it is important that these titles reflect the terms that people use to search, increasing the likelihood that the site will appear relevant and receive better page rankings.

**Outbound Links**: Despite less real estate associated with mobile screens, incorporating outbound links to relevant sources provides a more complete user experience and associates the mobile site with other trusted brands.

**Standard Coding**: The wide variety of operating systems supported by mobile makes it extremely important for brands to follow valid HTML coding. Browsers parse through HTML code to determine search relevance. Any errors or invalid coding will result in broken pages and a lower ranking. Sites built in accordance to standards will ensure a consistent experience across all devices.

3. **Incorporate Linking and Digital Newsletters**

More than 20% of email marketing is read from mobile phones, which is why it is crucial for companies to test and support all incoming links from digital newsletters and other promotional materials. But how can brands make sure that their linking practices translate to mobile? In practical terms, these links provide one fully integrated experience while also allowing brands to cast a wider net by creating a connected presence across the mobile web.

Further, effective traffic driving tools such as email newsletters and social media allow consumers to share links faster than ever before. Links that are not tested or properly maintained will lead to a loss of traffic from redirects to the mobile site. Additionally, these links are important for a mobile site because they can be used by all Internet-enabled phones, including those with limited or no JavaScript support.

For example, Staples incorporates multiple links in its digital newsletters that lead consumers to different product pages or special offers on its mobile site. Consumers who click on “Hot Deals” are directed to the Staples homepage, which is different from users who click links for product promotions which lead directly to the specific product pages.

**The Future of Mobile Search**

The rapid consumer adoption rate of smartphones, coupled with increasing advancements in mobile technology, means that mobile SEO is a powerful tool to move the needle on mobile traffic. Next-generation coding languages like HTML5 can be incorporated into mobile SEO practices to enhance a mobile site’s usability and performance, resulting in higher page rankings in search engines.

Advancements in location-based search results and integrated real-time social search results will further impact how consumers use mobile search and how browsers position results. In order to increase traffic to mobile pages and drive revenue, it is essential for brands to think strategically about how to leverage common mobile SEO practices in order to increase brand loyalty and maximize traffic.
Crutchfield, an electronics and auto stereo retailer, has found that the easier a smartphone payment technology is for buyers to use, the greater the number of sales.

Crutchfield implemented a two-click mobile payment system from online payment provider PayPal last December. The system, called Mobile Express Checkout, eliminates the time and effort needed to input a shipping address and the payment source for a purchase, which are already securely stored with PayPal.

Crutchfield has seen a 34% increase in converting shoppers to buyers on its mobile Web site since implementing Mobile Express, said Todd Cabell, senior manager of e-commerce at Crutchfield in an interview. He didn't share actual sales figures.

Mobile sales are a relatively low proportion of tens of thousands of daily online visits to Crutchfield, "but growing extremely quickly," Cabell noted.

Because PayPal has more than 95 million users globally, that large customer base has helped Crutchfield. A full 65% of those using the PayPal Mobile Express Checkout were new customers to Crutchfield, Cabell said.

Mobile Express Checkout is supported on most mobile platforms, with iOS the most popular, followed by Android and then BlackBerry, Cabell said.

Many of the integration duties with Crutchfield's mobile Web site have been been handled by Usablenet, Cabell said.

Crutchfield still offers mobile check-out via a conventional credit card and sells its products online from desktop computers as well as over the phone from two Virginia-based call centers and through catalogs.

The electronics retailer has thousands of items for sale, including many of them costing hundreds of dollars. Customers commonly use online and mobile payments for their purchases, and the size of mobile orders is similar to desktop computer orders, Cabell said.

Even though mobile payment technology represents the future, Cabell said that the traditional call center is still considered essential to Crutchfield's business.

Crutchfield was founded in 1974 on the concept of offering technical insights by experts to amateurs. "A core part of our business is our call center experts who are sales advisors who each get 13 weeks of training," Cabell said.

Stephen Strauss, senior manager of PayPal Mobile Solutions, said it took about two weeks to integrate MobileExpress at Crutchfield. Hundreds of companies use the tool globally, including some large retailers in the U.S. such as Sears, Buy.com and 800 Flowers, he said.
HTML5 Report

Fashion Retailer ASOS Turns to HTML5
June 06, 2011

Online fashion retailer ASOS.com just made shopping a whole lot more tech-friendly as it announced that it is using a new HTML5 mobile platform in an effort to improve the shopping experience for customers on the go.

The retailer has chosen Usablenet Mobile 2.0 (News - Alert), which it says delivers an app-like user experience and works across a selection of devices. The platform is currently deployed by major mobile operating systems such as Apple (News - Alert) iOS, Android, BlackBerry, Nokia and Windows.

Nick Cust, user experience manager at ASOS, recently told Computing in an article that ASOS.com was ready to take advantage of the HTML5 wave early on as it has history of being an early adopter when it comes to new technology.

"We were first to market with numerous advanced mobile web site technologies, with the goal of taking mobile user experience to the next level and helping users find the product they want as quickly as possible," he told Computing.

"The goal here was to develop 'app-like' functionality for our mobile offering, providing our users with increase efficiency and experience."

The Usablenet solution was selected as the HTML5 platform among others as it did not require any data feeds or re-coding of the main site and it was a highly scalable platform, allowing the retailer to add new channels and segments to enhance the mobile shopping experience.

ASOS.com is currently developing localized mobile websites in key regions across the world, and has several apps due to be launched this year.

In related news, the HTML5 Development Conference, DevCon5, is almost here and David S. Rose, one of the nation’s leading investors in up and coming tech companies, is getting ready to deliver his opening keynote address.

The two-day conference, taking place July 27-28 in New York City, will explore the potential that HTML5 has to revolutionize user interfaces, challenge the status quo and change the future of both desktop and mobile Web experiences, according to conference planners.

Recently, TMC (News - Alert) and Crossfire Media announced that Rose will be holding a session entitled “HTML5 Opportunities for new Ventures,” on Wednesday, July 27, at 9 a.m., which will tie together business and technical issues, discussing what “Power of Story” means for businesses today, and why a company’s website is more important than ever in telling its story.
The payment option provides one location for payment information and billing and shipping addresses.

If Todd Cabell, senior manager of e-commerce at Crutchfield Corp., had any doubt about the wisdom of adding PayPal Mobile Express Checkout to the electronics retailer’s mobile commerce site, it vanished following testing that showed the payment option increased the mobile conversion rate by 33.7% in an April through May A/B test where some consumers were given the PayPal option and some were not.

He attributes that welcomed boost to the payment method’s simplicity. A mobile shopper using PayPal Mobile Express Checkout only need enter his PayPal user name and password to authorize transactions. PayPal stores its account holders’ PayPal and other payment card data, and the billing and shipping addresses. That is much simpler than entering a 16-digit card number, expiration date and verification code via a mobile phone, and possibly multiple addresses, Cabell says. “Clearly, a lot of our customers want to use it,” he adds.

Though Cabell declined to reveal total m-commerce sales or say what percent of Crutchfield’s sales come from its m-commerce site, he says they are growing. “It will continue to grow in the coming years,” he says.

“During that implementation process we had been thinking about how useful PayPal would be for people shopping on our mobile site,” he says. Crutchfield worked with technology provider Usablenet Inc. to incorporate PayPal Mobile Express Checkout. Usablenet and PayPal announced in January the two companies were working together to add PayPal’s mobile
checkout feature to Usablenet’s products. Integrating PayPal Mobile Express Checkout into the m-commerce site took two and a half weeks, in a process made simpler because Crutchfield completed PayPal integration into its e-commerce site in November, Cabell says. Crutchfield had not accepted PayPal transactions on either its e-commerce or mobile commerce sites prior to then.

PayPal launched Mobile Express Checkout in October 2010.
Mobile Marketer

Usablenet’s Jason Taylor Discusses The Future of Mobile Commerce
June 08, 2011

The world’s largest mobile commerce platform company has a bird’s-eye view of how brands, retailers and consumers are turning to smartphones and tablets for fulfilling searching, shopping and buying activity. Does Usablenet see a tipping point for mobile commerce on the horizon?

In this extensive interview, Jason Taylor, Usablenet vice president of platform strategy in New York, expresses optimism on the growth of mobile commerce in the United States as well as oversees. His view is informed by work done for 300 clients including Fairmont Hotels, Amtrak, Dell, J.C. Penney, Walgreens, Marks & Spencer, Expedia and Sunglass Hut.

“The worldwide smartphone market is rapidly growing, and consumers in Asia, Europe, and Latin America are often outpacing their U.S. counterparts in terms of mobile Web usage,” Mr. Taylor said.

“In particular, we have seen an exciting level of mobile commerce growth in the U.K., where it was recently reported that 63 percent of smartphone users have used their mobile phones for shopping,” he said.

Mr. Taylor discusses how consumer shopping habits have evolved, the argument over smartphones versus tablets, U.S. adoption compared with European, Asian and Latin American uptake and the one area where the world’s largest economy can take mobile lessons from others. Please read on.

Mobile is not a euphemism for mobile phones anymore, is it?

Exactly. Whereas for the last several years mobile referred specifically to mobile phones, we now view the consumer as mobile.

For brands to succeed in this new and rapidly evolving multichannel shopping environment, they must engage their customers wherever they are.

This means extending full Web site content and features, including ecommerce, to additional consumer touch-points including the mobile Web, mobile applications, tablets, social media sites like Facebook and in-store kiosks.
Mobile has arrived

The tablet does seem to have blurred the lines between commerce and mobile. What effect is this having on retail stores?
Digitally-savvy consumers are already using tablets to make purchases, and we expect this trend to accelerate as consumer adoption of tablets continues to rise over the next couple of years.

The tablet user is typically from a high-tech, affluent demographic, and for brand-conscious companies looking to target these consumers, tablets provide an engaging channel to repackaging their Web site content to create a unique brand experience for the consumer.

We see tablets being used by consumers as a tool to more deeply engage with the brand and inform purchasing decisions, and believe that they will ultimately be used by more brands and consumers alike to enhance the overall shopping experience.

Usablenet has more than 300 clients worldwide. What's their No. 1 expectation of mobile?
Usablenet works with some of the largest brands in the world, and customers of these brands expect the best mobile experience – one that is fast, robust, reliable, and provides compelling content that is a clear extension of the brand.

Beyond that, the brands we work with are also focused having the ability to scale.

For instance, Usablenet's platform provides the scale to handle large amounts of smartphone traffic, as well as the scale to support all International markets including Asia.

The Usablenet platform also provides the scale to handle all different types of output including mobile sites, mobile apps, tablets, kiosk interfaces and Facebook.

This whole argument over mobile sites versus apps versus tablet apps: it does seem rather small, doesn't it? After all, every channel has a role.
Every channel does have a specific role, and the brands that are leading the way in multichannel customer engagement are the ones that have figured out how to best maximize these various screens and touch-points in different ways.

For example, the mobile Web should be viewed as the primary way to reach all mobile consumers. It has the furthest reach, and with HTML5's increasing role, the mobile Web can now provide advanced app-like features that consumers crave.
Once brands have their mobile Web presence well-established, they should implement a mobile app strategy geared towards deepening brand loyalty. This means delivering unique features for the already loyal consumer to engage them on a deeper level.

**How far along is U.S. mobile commerce? Numbers are so hard to come by.**
Mobile commerce in the U.S. is gaining ubiquity and, by the end of this year, it is expected that over half of all mobile phones in use by U.S. customers will be smartphones.

In fact, PayPal recently reported that they experience $6 million in mobile payments per day, and by 2013 they expect total mobile payment volume to exceed $7.5 billion (see story).

As smartphones continue their huge consumer adoption rate and consumers use the mobile Web with increasing frequency, mobile commerce will continue its impressive growth.

**Any distinguishing features of mobile commerce in the U.S. compared with Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and Latin America?**
The worldwide smartphone market is rapidly growing, and consumers in Asia, Europe, and Latin America are often outpacing their U.S. counterparts in terms of mobile Web usage.

In particular, we have seen an exciting level of mobile commerce growth in the U.K., where it was recently reported that 63 percent of smartphone users have used their mobile phones for shopping.

**What lessons can U.S. retailers learn from their counterparts overseas in terms of mobile adoption and best practice?**
A great example of an effective mobile strategy that is far more advanced in Asia than the U.S. is the use of QR codes to drive customer engagement.

Asian consumers frequently scan QR codes in retail locations, printed advertisements, store window displays and more, and this practice has been effective in terms of increasing brand loyalty and driving traffic.

U.S. retailers should look to their Asian counterparts as an example of how QR codes can be used to improve the customer experience.

In fact, U.S. retailers like Best Buy, Macy’s, and Pacific Sunwear have all recently integrated effective QR code strategies into their overall mobile marketing efforts, and this is a trend that we believe will pick up steam in the U.S. moving forward.

**U.S. retailers are getting itchy and looking to expand overseas. Ecommerce and mobile commerce seem logical places to start. But it’s not as easy as it looks, does it?**
Overseas expansion is a key element for businesses to drive growth, and in terms of mobile engagement, they must ensure that their mobile site is optimized not only for the multitude of different devices that are common overseas, but also the different languages spoken in other countries.

The Usablenet platform provides the scale for brands to ensure that all consumers can access their mobile sites regardless of their device of choice or their native language.

**You and your team have turned Usablenet into the dominant player among mobile commerce platforms. Of course, you put in the sweat equity. What are your plans for the company?**

Usablenet is currently the largest mobile and multichannel engagement technology company with over 300 clients worldwide.

We’ve expanded our offices to the U.K. in the beginning of 2011, and currently already power the mobile sites of six of the top 10 U.K. retailers.

We’ve brought on 20 additional U.K. clients since then, and by Q3 we plan to expand to Asia as well.

**What can we expect from mobile commerce this year? And what do shoppers expect from the mobile experience?**

Shoppers expect the mobile Web experience to be just as good as the traditional Web, with additional features that maximize the capabilities of their phones such as location-aware services.

With a growing number of consumers using their mobile phones to research before making purchase decisions, and over 20 percent of email marketing being read on the mobile phone, it is necessary for brands to ensure that their site is optimized for the best mobile experience.

Shoppers expect core brand functionality to be extended to mobile, all mobile phones to be supported, and optimal usability in terms of speed and design.

Mobile commerce has grown exponentially over the last several years, and as consumer adoption of smartphones continues to skyrocket, we expect this significant level of growth to continue moving forward.
**Mobile Marketer**

**Multichannel Mobile Strategy Critical For Successful Father's Day Campaign**

June 08, 2011

**Northern Tool is promoting Father’s Day on its mobile site**

Retailers will be making mobile a bigger part of their overall marketing outreach this Father’s Day as they experiment with new tactics and look to mobile to help drive in-store traffic and sales.

Mobile retail services such as Foursquare, QR codes, mobile apps and Groupon were all still relatively new last Father’s Day. This year, however, savvy retailers are embracing these and other channels such as mobile commerce and SMS to help drive incremental sales.

“Mobile is a strategic new retail channel on its own that drives significant revenue and brand value, but it can also help all channel sales for Father’s Day,” said Dan Lowden, vice president of marketing at Digby, Austin, TX.

Retailers who embrace mobile strategically have the opportunity to engage with consumers at a more personal level, resulting in incremental sales, increased brand loyalty and measureable analytics that help retailers learn more about their customers shopping habits,” he said.

Many retailers are promoting special offers for Father’s Day via mobile.

Brooks Brothers, for example, has a special category on its mobile Web site for Father’s Day.

Northern Tool is heavily promoting Father’s Day on its main mobile Web page and offering a specific Father’s Day gifts product category.

Wireless Zone is betting on mobile social media.
“Last year there was a very small percentage of our stores that even knew about the social media technology available to them, but this year, a lot of them are engaged in Foursquare and Groupon,” said Bonnie Sharon, social media director for Wireless Zone, Middletown, CT.

“We’re not marketing to the dads, but to the moms and a lot of moms are on mobile and using it to engage with mobile social media,” she said.

Here are other ways retailers can use mobile for Father’s Day

Mobile apps
With the growth of mobile apps over the past year, one strategy for retailers this Father’s Day is to use outbound marketing via branded mobile apps to drive sales in-store.

“A retailer can incorporate QR codes in catalogs so consumers can scan the code with the retailer’s rich app on their smartphone and automatically be brought to the exact product page to buy it,” Digby’s Mr. Lowden said.

Consumers can also use the app to check-in when they are in the store, receive promotional offers, scan product bar codes to do product research and see product video demonstrations.

“All of these capabilities can be leveraged through outbound marketing campaigns that dads or families shopping for Dad see and will want to act on immediately through the convenience of their smartphone,” Mr. Lowden said.

SMS
Mobile offers for Father’s Day delivered via SMS text messaging is another tactic at retailers’ disposal.

SMS programs can be used as a springboard to loyalty programs rather than as a simple one-off coupon or discount, per Jeff Hasen, chief marketing officer of Hipcricket, Kirkland, WA.

“Through CRM, brands are using mobile to bring the most relevant information and offer possible,” he said. “The opt-in nature of SMS marketing builds in trust between the consumer and brands – and marketers will be rewarded by sending only compelling, relevant content to consumers.”

For example, a department store can look at a customer’s buying habits, information from the consumer and coupon usage to make the right offer on new suits or casual attire.

“We look at SMS as the base of the mobile marketing pyramid – it provides tremendous reach and significant results and is a building block for richer experiences via mobile apps, Web sites and more,” Mr. Hasen said.
Mobile Web sites
As smartphone adoption continues to grow, retailers should be looking to make mobile commerce a part of their special occasion marketing programs.

“You will see a lot more sophisticated mobile commerce sites for Father’s Day this year,” said Tina Chilip, marketing communications manager at Usablenet, New York.

Retailers risk losing potential sales if consumers come to a site expecting mobile commerce and do not find it, Ms. Chilip said.

It is not only necessary that retailers have a mobile optimized Web site, but they also need to provide consumers easy access to these sites so if someone wants to buy a last-minute Father’s Day gift, the site is right at their fingertips.

This means making sure mobile users click through to a mobile-optimized Web site when they click on a link in an email or a promotional banner as well as when they scan QR codes.

“Consumers want to interact with a brand when it is convenient to them, whether it is online or on a mobile device,” Ms. Chilip said.

“For special occasions like Father’s Day, you want to be able to give consumers accessibility from every channel available to them,” she said.
Electronics retailer Crutchfield saw a 33.7 percent jump in conversion rates when it offered consumers PayPal as a method of payment on its mobile site versus not offering it.

Additionally, the company saw that 65 percent of PayPal mobile customers are new to Crutchfield. According to the company, the PayPal implementation is evidence that a fast and easy checkout is an integral part of the mobile shopping experience.

“Much like the early ’90s laid the groundwork for the ecommerce explosion, the next few years will be critical for mobile payments – businesses need to have a strategic mobile presence to be competitive and enable their customers to shop as they wish,” said Stephen Strauss, senior manager of mobile solutions at PayPal, San Francisco.

“PayPal launched Mobile Express Checkout last year so that retailers could give their mobile shoppers the best possible checkout experience,” he said. “With Mobile Express Checkout, customers can securely pay in just two clicks and don’t have to go through the cumbersome process of entering lengthy credit card and shipping information on their mobile devices.

“It’s a great customer experience and drives higher conversion on mobile sites.”

**PayPal integration**

Crutchfield saw that when it integrated the PayPal feature on its mobile site, there was an immediate impact on its sales.

Not only were they getting their loyal and repeat customers, but the company was attracting new consumers.

In the A/B testing conducted by Crutchfield, the company saw some great results that revealed how the product helped grow its mobile business.
Consumers can check out using PayPal’s mobile checkout service

In addition to Crutchfield, 1-800-Flowers also integrated a PayPal feature into its mobile site.

“We first announced the initial rollout of Mobile Express Checkout back in July of 2010 and then announced its general availability in October at PayPal X Innovate 2010, our annual developer conference,” Mr. Strauss said.

“Since launching, numerous large retailers such as Starbucks, 1-800-Flowers, Buy.com and BlueNile.com have signed on in order to take advantage of the mobile channel,” he said.
Staples Inc. has redesigned its m-commerce site, enhancing features and functions to better mirror its e-commerce site. To access the m-commerce site of the retailer, No. 2 in the Internet Retailer Top 500 Guide, a shopper types in the standard URL in her mobile browser and Staples web servers detect the device and automatically redirect her to the mobile-optimized site. Shoppers also can type in m.Staples.com.

The mobile site now features product ratings and reviews, an optimized Ink & Toner finder, store inventory lookup, and site search that includes an auto-suggest feature. Auto-suggest displays in a drop-down menu guesses at keywords a shopper is typing in based on the first few letters; it can greatly reduce the amount of typing a mobile shopper must perform.

“At Staples we’re always looking for ways to bring ‘easy’ to our customers, wherever they are, so they can research, shop and buy a wide range of products and services for their office,” says Steven Bussberg, senior vice president of Staples.com. “Mobile devices offer new and exciting ways for us to engage with customers whether they’re in their homes or offices, on the road, or in one of our stores.”

The m-commerce site, built by Usablenet Inc., also features a synchronized shopping cart, which allows shoppers to log in, browse items and add them to their carts; the items can be accessed later in the shopper’s e-commerce shopping cart.

And the m-commerce site addresses the growing importance in e-retailing of social media. The site allows users to share product reviews and become a fan of Staples on Facebook, or follow Staples on Twitter.

Staples also offers a mobile app for Apple Inc.’s iPhone and iPod Touch.
Specialty apparel chain New York & Co has launched its mobile commerce site, by teaming up with global technology company Usablenet.

It is compatible with Android, iPhone and Blackberry devices.

"Since we are always seeking fresh opportunities to reach our customers, the launch of mCommerce was the next natural step for us," said New York & Co EVP and chief marketing officer, Eran Cohen.

"As an increasing number of smartphone users rely on their mobile device to conduct product research before purchasing in store or online, it's essential for brands to develop an optimized presence across multiple consumer touch points," added Usablenet president, Nick Taylor.
Apparel and accessories retailer New York & Co. labels its fashion “polished, on-trend and versatile.” The same could be said for its new mobile commerce site, which features a polished home page filled with art, social media integration and text message functionality; follows the trend of retailers jumping into m-commerce with a site; and serves as a versatile tool for female shoppers anywhere, anytime.

“Since we are always seeking fresh opportunities to reach our customers, the launch of m-commerce was the next natural step for us,” says executive vice president and chief marketing officer Eran Cohen. “New York & Co. wants to engage with our customer however, and wherever, she wants to interact with the brand. Whether that’s through her smartphone, tablet, computer or in-store experience.”

At the top of the home page is the merchant’s logo and a tiny shopping cart that indicates how many items are within. Following that is a large promotional banner, then a larger hero shot announcing special deals. Then come—still above the fold—what experts agree are two key components of any m-commerce site: a GPS store locator and a site search box. Store locators are popular with consumers on the go who often use an m-commerce site to research and then decide to visit a store. Site search is crucial because many mobile shoppers are goal-oriented; in other words, they know what they want and want to get to it fast. The store locator and site search box appear at the top of every page other than the home page.
Ten bars, each for a different product category, fall beneath the store locator and site search box. Four smaller bars follow, for checking order status, contacting the merchant, viewing the full e-commerce site and signing up for e-mails. Then comes brief instructions to sign up via short code for text message alerts, and two icons for Facebook and Twitter activities. The four smaller bars, text message alerts and social media integration appear at the bottom of every page of the site. Product details pages feature large images and alternative images.

New York & Co. hired m-commerce technology provider Usablenet Inc. to build the site.

“As an increasing number of smartphone users rely on their mobile device to conduct product research before purchasing in-store or online, it’s essential for brands to develop an optimized presence across multiple consumer touch-points,” says Nick Taylor, president of Usablenet.
New York & Company Inc. is letting on-the-go fashion-savvy consumers shop their favorite looks via a mobile-optimized site, as well as opt-in to receive alerts for upcoming sales or offers.

The company decided to roll out the mobile site due to the overwhelming growth of consumers turning to their smartphones to make purchases. The company tapped Usablenet to power the initiative.

“Our new mcommerce site is an extension of our in-store experience and ecommerce site,” said Eran Cohen, chief marketing officer of New York & Company, New York. “As digital technology rapidly changes, New York & Company wants to ensure that our digital strategy remains flexible and stays current.

“Our new mcommerce site is the next step in the evolution of allowing our customer access to the NY&C brand wherever, whenever she wants,” he said.

“Our new mcommerce site caters to the modern woman with a life on the go.”

New York & Company is a specialty retailer of women’s fashion apparel and accessories. The company operates more than 550 stores in 43 states.

Mobile shopping
Consumers can access the mobile site by entering m.nyandcompany.com on their mobile browser.

The mobile site features the company’s full inventory and lets consumers shop by category such as latest trends and new arrivals.

Additionally, the company is currently running a City Summer Sale and lets consumers save money on some of their favorite looks.

The site features an accessible Find A Store tab, which lets customers find the closest location near them – no matter where they are.
“Our new mcommerce site is an integral part of our overall marketing and sales strategy,” Mr. Cohen said.

“By always providing our customers with the opportunity to reach the NY&C brand wherever, whenever she wants, we offer her a modern convenience while ensuring a seamless brand experience,” he said.

**Mcommerce effort**

Via the mobile site, consumers can also check their order status.

There is also an option that lets them sign up for email alerts and get $25 off.

Additionally, consumers can text the keyword SHOP to the short code 697895 (NYSTYL) to receive and opt-in for mobile alerts.

“New York & Company’s first mobile commerce site will provide its customers with an optimized mobile destination, consistent with the NY&Co shopping experience and accessible through any smartphone device,” said Nick Taylor, president of Usablenet, New York.

“The mobile site supports a speedy page load time, high-resolution product images and intuitive navigation – providing consumers with an efficient and reliable mobile experience and allowing full product catalogue search and browsing capabilities,” he said.

“Understanding that shoppers leverage multiple channels throughout the shopping experience, it is essential for the New York & Co. mobile site to be capable of leveraging the smartphone’s internal GPS to find nearby New York & Co locations in addition to providing full product search and purchasing capabilities.”
Coach, which boasts nearly 277,000 fans on Twitter and 2.1 million on Facebook — enters a new digital realm today: mobile commerce.

Developed through Usablenet’s technology platform, the feature will give customers the ability to purchase directly from their mobile devices and, if they choose, the option to pick up their merchandise at a local Coach retailer.

“It’s nice to provide instant gratification and link our online and offline businesses,” said David Duplantis, Coach’s senior vice president of global Web and digital media. “It’s all about demand. Our customers are mobile by nature. Building a site that allows them to easily browse and purchase our products on their mobile devices is a seamless evolution and way for us to provide excellent customer service.”

According to Duplantis, a double-digit percentage of users visiting coach.com come via smartphones, and he added that the brand has already seen an increase in m-commerce sales since the project’s soft launch on May 17. He expects to see significant growth in the category in the coming weeks and months.

“Mobile will continue to be an important channel utilized by consumers for shopping on the go,” said Nick Taylor, chief executive officer of Usablenet. “In the surge of smartphone use and mobile commerce, it is imperative for fashion retailers to stay ahead of the curve.”
American designer Coach is targeting new and existing fashion-savvy consumers via a mobile-optimized site that lets them shop their favorite collections.

The company tapped Usablenet to power the mobile site. Consumers can access it by entering http://www.coach.com on their mobile browser.

“It’s clear that our customers are mobile by nature,” said David Duplantis, senior vice president of global Web and digital media at Coach, New York.

“In fact, before we started developing the new mcommerce site we were seeing a double digit percentage of traffic to coach.com coming from visitors using smartphones,” he said. “We chose to address the demand by creating an enhanced, branded environment.”

Coach http://www.coach.com is an American designer brand and maker of lifestyle handbags and accessories.

**Mobile shopping**

Via the mobile site, consumers can browse and buy the full range of Coach products, as well as access special features

According to Mr. Duplantis, the site will offer users the same upscale shopping experience and efficiency as the traditional Web site.

The mobile site features a store Locator function that lets consumers find the nearest store and also helps Coach drive foot traffic to its location.

Consumers can also watch videos, manage their accounts and browse all categories, including handbags, wallets and wristlets, accessories, shoes, jewelry and apparel via the mobile site.

“We are running interactive banner ads and take-over units across various iPhone apps throughout the month of July,” Mr. Duplantis said. “Additionally, starting this fall, we will begin including QR codes in our print ads.”
“The new site will offer customers a user-friendly, upscale shopping experience where they can browse and shop anytime,” he said. “We are also very excited to offer in-store pick-ups on all mobile purchases.

“Our strategy is to integrate our online and offline businesses by giving brand loyalists the instant gratification they crave.”

**Consumer engagement**

Earlier this year, Coach drove engagement, brand support and influenced purchase decisions via a mobile campaign that promoted its new Kristin collection.

The company greeted iPhone and Android customers with in-store signage at all of its full-priced stores. Coach directed consumers to scan a QR code to view mobile-optimized content, which features exclusive details on the new collection ([see story](#)).

“We plan to continue evolving and improving our new site, like integrating our popular sharing function, the Wishlist, in the near future,” Mr. Duplantis said.
Coach Inc. has launched a mobile commerce site that keeps the emphasis on searching the site and checking out while providing a highly visual experience.

The luxury retailer and consumer brand wraps a site search box, a shopping bag and a Checkout button together in a box at the very top of the page next to the Coach logo. Site search is widely considered a central component of m-commerce as many consumers are on the hunt for an item when mobile. The persistent shopping cart, which shows the number of items a consumer has selected, has become a popular feature in e-commerce and is beginning to appear more in m-commerce.

Coach also uses large images throughout the site, images that can take up about half of a smartphone screen. The site displays these images with every reference to a product, including on product details pages, search results pages and sub-category pages.

“Our goal has always been to be where our customers are,” says David Duplantis, senior vice president of global web and digital media. “We fully embrace the recent shift to mobile and aim to provide yet another venue for our consumers to engage with us when and how they like. Ultimately, the mobile site will be a supplementary sales channel that will greatly enhance the user experience across the board.”

Shoppers on the mobile site can use a store locator, watch video, manage their accounts and browse all categories, including handbags, wallets and wristlets, accessories, shoes, jewelry, and apparel. They also can check inventory at their local stores and share product details via e-mail, Facebook and Twitter integration.
Outdoor gear and apparel retailer L.L. Bean Inc. has heard from customers for more than a year that they want a mobile site on which they can learn about products and shop the merchant’s entire inventory, a company spokeswoman says. Today it has answered the call with an m-commerce site that enables shoppers to browse, search and buy the retailer’s products.

While the retailer built the site so customers can shop from anywhere at any time, it also intends the site to fulfill customers’ needs while they are shopping in L.L. Bean stores. For example, a shopper looking at a shirt in a store can access the shirt’s product details page and read customer ratings and reviews. “The site allows them in stores to learn more about products so they can make an educated decision,” the spokeswoman says.

Further, the mobile commerce site, built by m-commerce technology provider Usablenet Inc., enables customers to sign in to and manage their accounts. For customers with an L.L. Bean-branded Visa card, this includes looking up how many points they’ve accumulated on their cards to see how much they can save making a purchase in-store or via the mobile site.

L.L. Bean says the rise of the smartphone will drive a growing number of customers into the mobile channel.

“Offering customers the convenience to shop the brand from their smartphones is one more way we can provide exceptional customer service,” says Steve Fuller, senior vice president and chief marketing officer. “We want to ensure customers can shop with us however they choose and whenever they want, whether that’s through our catalogs, web site, retail stores and now with mobile.”

Shoppers on mobile phones are automatically redirected to L.L. Bean’s m-commerce site when they enter LLBean.com in their browsers. Key features of the site, according to L.L. Bean, are site search, a GPS-powered store finder, L.L. Bean Visa Card coupon lookup, click-
to-call customer service, product ratings and reviews, e-mail sign-up, and complete product descriptions.

In the coming weeks, L.L. Bean and Usablenet will launch a mobile commerce site for the merchant’s L.L. Bean Signature brand, which also has a separate e-commerce site. The Signature brand is apparel with a different fit and style than L.L. Bean’s traditional offerings.

“We are continually evolving and improving our touch points with the customer,” says Terry Sutton, vice president of e-commerce. “Mobile commerce is just the beginning. We’ll continue to look for innovative ways to provide value and exceptional service to our customers.”
Outdoor apparel retailer L.L. Bean launched a mobile commerce website on July 7. The site, built on the Usablenet platform, is optimized for iPhone, Blackberry and Android devices.

Consumers who attempt to access L.L. Bean’s e-commerce site from a smartphone’s Web browser will be automatically redirected to the mobile website.

“We think of the site as an extension of our customer service options,” said Laurie Brooks, senior PR representative at L.L. Bean. “It made sense for us to be engaged in that channel.”

Functionality on the m-commerce site includes product searches, product browses, purchases and access to product ratings and reviews. Other features include site search, store finder, L.L. Bean Visa card coupon lookup, click-to-call customer service and email newsletter registration.

Brooks said L.L. Bean has worked on the m-commerce site for more than a year, and the company is exploring whether to develop a mobile app, as well.

L.L. Bean and Usablenet will launch an m-commerce site for the retailer’s heritage brand L.L. Bean Signature in the coming weeks, said Brooks.

In March, L.L. Bean introduced free shipping on all US and Canadian orders.
L.L. Bean has launched a mobile commerce website that allows shoppers the ability to search, browse, purchase and read product ratings and reviews from any Internet-enabled mobile phone.

Key features of L.L. Bean’s new mobile shopping experience include: site search, store finder, L.L. Bean Visa Card coupon lookup, click to call customer service, ratings and reviews, e-mail sign up and complete product descriptions.

The site, built by m-commerce technology provider Usablenet, enhances the mobile experience through consistent cross-channel messaging emphasizing customer service, value and L.L. Bean’s 100% satisfaction guarantee policy.
L.L. Bean is letting consumers shop its entire inventory of outdoor gear and apparel brand via a new commerce-enabled mobile site that was designed after much demand.

The company tapped Usablenet to power the mobile site. Consumers can access the optimized site by entering http://www.llbean.com on their mobile browser.

“We’ve dabbed our toe in mobile back in 2009 when we offered a free limited edition game,” said Laurie Brooks, senior public relations representative at L.L. Bean. “This mobile site is really an extension of customer service.

“It’s really to meet our customers where they want to shop,” she said. “We’re multichannel merchant.

“We were responding to what our customers were asking us – to have a shoppable mobile site.”

L.L.Bean, Inc. is a multichannel merchant of quality outdoor gear and apparel.

Mobile shopping
Via the mobile site, consumers can shop the company’s entire inventory.

Customers can browse products they want and read descriptions to get a better understanding of the items.

Additionally, the site features a customized product navigation based on category.

Customers can become a register L.L. Bean users and check their account status via the optimized site.

The mobile site features a search function, store finder, L.L.Bean Visa Card coupon lookup, click-to-call customer service, ratings and reviews, e-mail sign up and complete product descriptions.
“We are using traditional public relations and social media to get the word out about the site,” Ms. Brooks said. “We have several Twitter accounts and our Facebook page.

“It makes sense for us to be engaged in this channel and be where our customers are.

Mobile extension
According to Ms. Brooks, the company is exploring extending their presence to mobile apps.

In a couple of weeks, L.L. Bean plans to roll out a mobile site for L.L Bean Signature, its heritage brand.

“With over 70 percent of smartphone users using their phones to research products before making purchase decisions, and over 20 percent of email marketing being read on mobile phones, it is necessary for brands to ensure that their site is optimized for the best mobile experience,” said Nick Taylor, CEO of Usablenet, New York.

“Digital-savvy consumers expect core brand functionality to be extended to mobile, all mobile phones to be supported, and optimal usability in terms of speed and design,” he said. “With the continuing surge of smartphone use and mobile commerce, it is imperative for retailers to stay ahead of the curve and provide their customers the opportunity to search, browse, research products, and purchase via their mobile devices.

“This year, we expect mobile commerce to continue the exponential growth it has seen over the last several years. As consumer adoption of smartphones continues to skyrocket, we expect mobile commerce to become an essential component of the multichannel sales and marketing strategies of all retailers.”
With a focus on maintaining the same upscale shopping experience as its traditional website, Coach has launched its first mobile commerce site, powered by Usablenet.

The immediate goals for the site are to extend the customer experience. “The user experience is very important to us, which is why we chose to develop a look and feel that is elevated, original and consistent with our other branded environments online,” said David Duplantis, SVP of Global Web and Digital Media for Coach. “Our primary goal is to improve touch points with our brand loyalists and offer them exceptional customer service wherever they may be.”

In addition to the new mobile commerce site, Coach sells its line of handbags, accessories and gifts worldwide through 463 Coach full-priceretail and factory stores, 940 U.S. department store locations, 182 international department stores, through the Coach catalog, and via www.coach.com.

Following the launch of the mobile commerce site, Coach also is focused on integrating its online-offline business. “We’ve seen conversion from online browsing into our stores previously; the demand has been there all along,” Duplantis noted. “Now, with increased efficiency and accessibility and the option for in-store pick up on all mobile purchases, we expect to see even further growth in that channel. The decision to further integrate our online-offline business was natural.”

The Coach mobile commerce site includes a number of features including:

- Store locator
- Videos
- Account management
- Product browsing
- In-store pickup for all mobile purchases

“Coach customers can also register for a Coach.com account from their phones and begin
receiving updates on new styles, store openings and local happenings, instantly,” Duplantis noted. The retailer also plans to add its sharing feature, called the Wishlist, in the near future, he added.

Coach began planning for the mobile commerce site in 2010 and entered a soft launch in May 2011. “Mobile commerce is really just the beginning,” said Duplantis. “We’ll continue to look for innovative ways to deliver the Coach experience to all our customers.”
The traveler is inherently mobile. And since travelers carry their mobile phones with them 24/7, smartphones have fast become their essential device for on-the-go communication, organization, and planning.

Travelers have led the way in terms of using their mobile devices to interact with businesses for the better part of the last decade. In fact, travelers were the first to use mobile phones to access the Internet - visiting not just travel websites, but also other consumer verticals from retail to restaurants.

Given that the traveler is mobile, location-based services have become an essential way for travel businesses to create a true mobile experience for their customers. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that airlines, hotels, booking services and other travel companies are incorporating new location-based features as an essential element of their next-generation mobile strategies - making simplicity and functionality the hallmark of a heightened user experience.

Location-Aware Experiences are a Game Changer for Brands and Consumers

Contrary to the desktop experience, the traveler using their mobile device to search for local information is typically already on the ground in their destination city. They want to use their smartphones to find an address to a famous local attraction, directions to and from the airport, the check-in time of their hotel, and anything else that will improve their overall trip.

There is a huge opportunity for companies like hotels, airlines, trip planners and others in the travel industry to leverage location aware technologies to create entirely new experiences for customers. By incorporating the internal GPS that is ubiquitous in today’s smartphones into the mobile travel experience, brands can use the consumer’s physical location to their advantage - and more easily deliver localized information that pertains to their trip.
All travel companies should view location aware services as adding significant value to the customer by offering inherently relevant offers and information. By leveraging smartphones' GPS capabilities to enhance search results and overall communications, travel companies can both improve relevancy and open up new opportunities for customer interaction throughout the travel purchasing lifecycle. For instance, since hotels know where you are when you use a smartphone to check your reservation, they can easily deliver information like restaurant recommendations and local activities that will add value to the trip experience. Beyond improving the brand loyalty from travelers, hotels should view this as an opportunity to further their partnerships with local businesses.

**Mobile Travel Goes Local with HTML5**

Expedia.com is a great example of a travel company that is consistently innovative in both its overall mobile strategy as well as its use of location-aware features that add value to the traveler. The company has recently incorporated next-generation HTML5 technology into its mobile site - allowing location-aware features like push notifications to be more easily accessible to the traveler. Other new features recently incorporated into Expedia’s mobile site include using the phone's internal GPS to offer travelers the ability to search for hotels with same day vacancies near their physical location. Overall, Expedia’s optimized mobile site is able to leverage location-aware features to deliver more relevant airfare results and hotel information to travelers researching and booking trips on their mobile devices - creating a site experience that will add relevancy to the searching process.

**Brands Should Use Mobile to Separate Themselves from Competitors**

Despite the extreme advancements in mobile engagement among travel companies over the last several years, there remain huge unmet opportunities to fulfill additional consumer demands across the entire travel experience. The potential of location aware experiences will be game changing over the coming years, and the companies that leverage location to deliver compelling consumer experiences on mobile devices will be the ones that separate themselves from competitors.
Mobile Commerce Daily
Are retailers training consumers to shop on mobile?
July 15, 2011

With the proliferation of mobile-optimized sites and applications, more retailers are using mobile to their advantage to not only drive consumers in-store, but also get them to gradually start making purchases via their device.

Retailers are increasingly rolling out mobile sites and applications to stay on top of their tech-savvy consumers.

Customers always have their smartphone on them and are beginning to make purchases via their device as opposed to being chained down to a PC.

“Retailers are clearly embracing mobile as a powerful sales channel that can deliver impactful results to their bottom lines, and this is largely because digital-savvy consumers are becoming increasingly comfortable browsing and purchasing items on their mobile devices,” said Nick Taylor, CEO of Usablenet, New York.

“As the number of retailers that offer core services to consumers via mobile continues to increase, mobile purchases will continue to experience rapid growth,” he said.

**Rise of mobile**
Whether it’s a holiday season or a specific marketing campaign, retailers are using some aspect of mobile.

Many brands are using mobile ads to drive consumers to their mobile sites.

For example, Target recently debuted a new mobile campaign that not only highlights key supplies students need when they go back to school, but also lets them buy products straight from their devices.

Consumers are no longer spending their days stuck to their PC and searching for products there.

Nowadays, customers are becoming more tech-savvy and are beginning to heavily rely on their mobile device – it is always with them.
Retailers are seeing this trend and are catering to their on-the-go consumers.

“Brands are using mobile sites and apps as an essential part of their overall sales and marketing efforts, and this has led to strong consumer desire to use their smartphones during the shopping experience,” Mr. Taylor said.

“We expect the trend of consumers shopping on mobile to continue, and as tablet devices gain more and more market share, shopping on these devices will become more popular as well,” he said.

**Mobile purchases**
Retailers are actively supporting the growing trend of consumers turning to their smartphones to search, browse, buy their products because it provides shoppers with anytime, anywhere access to the brand.

Companies are seeing consumers shop via their mobile devices while they are at home, on the go and even in the retail store.

This effectively increases sales, brand awareness and customer loyalty.

“To increase awareness of their mobile optimized site or apps, retailers are incorporating their mobile channel into their overall marketing strategy by putting callouts on their ecommerce site and Facebook pages, in their catalogs, on in-store signage, and in email and SMS campaigns, with many offering special offers and incentives for those who download the app or order from the mobile site,” said Dan Lowden, vice president of marketing at Digby, Austin, TX.

“With predictions placing a smartphone in one out of every two American’s hands by the end of 2011, retailers are seeing a dramatic increase in traffic coming to their sites from mobile devices,” he said.

**Strategy**
Retailers are realizing the demand for a mobile-optimized version of their Web site.

Nowadays it is a necessity, especially if they do not want to lose consumers to other brands that have a strategic mobile offering.

Brands that have implemented a mobile-optimized site and app are seeing an even further increase in traffic coming to their site from smartphones resulting in increased incremental revenue, sales, brand awareness and customer satisfaction and loyalty.
“The best strategy for retailers to develop a loyal mobile following is to first enable a mobile optimized Web site and then a rich app,” Mr. Lowden said. “It is through the mobile Web that consumers will initially interact with a retailer from a mobile device.

“Mobile Web allows customers to benefit from a fast, easy-to-use interface for browsing, searching and buying while on the go,” he said. “The retailer can then engage and transform the customer from occasional visitor to loyal customer by having them download the app for faster, more frequent and higher value experiences whether they’re in the store or on the move.

“In doing so, the retailer can drive incremental sales, increase customer loyalty and learn more about consumers’ buying behavior to serve them better in the future.”
Sainsbury's has launched a mobile version of its non-grocery, order-and-collect website, and plans to add groceries to the service "soon".

The site adds to Sainsbury's existing order-and-collect app aimed at mobile users, which has been available for iPhone, Android and Nokia since August 2010, and which the firm said has been downloaded more than 250,000 times.

The new mobile shopping site allows users to order, pay for and collect items from nearly 500 of its stores, with shoppers able to choose from a list of 15,000 products, including sofas, electrical goods and sporting equipment.

The site enables shoppers to use their handheld devices to search by product type and brand name. Customers who reserve an item before 2pm will be able to collect it the next day. The supermarket is also planning to roll out the service to grocery products, which a spokesman said would happen "soon".

Tanya Lawler, Sainsbury's director of digital and cross channel, said: "We know that our customers are increasingly looking to engage with us digitally and this new mobile shopping site is a big step towards Sainsbury's becoming a true cross-channel retailer."

The service will be extended to cover 800-plus stores by Christmas 2011.

The mobile site was developed in conjunction with agency Usablenet.
Retailer Sainsbury’s has launched a mobile version of its website to extend its commerce platform to mobile device users.

The optimised mobile site is built using a mobile platform provided by Usablenet. The platform provides access to over 15,000 Sainsbury’s products for purchase.

Other companies using Usablenet include Asos, the online fashion retailer, Fedex Mobile and Marks and Spencer.

The site can be accessed by any mobile device and operating system.

Tanya Lawler, Sainsbury’s director of digital and cross channel, said: "We know that our customers are increasingly looking to engage with us digitally and this new mobile shopping site is a big step towards Sainsbury’s becoming a true cross-channel retailer."

"Mobile commerce is a growth market opportunity for the retail industry and we are always looking at ways to better serve our customers and make their lives easier," added Lawler.

The site builds on Sainsbury’s mobile app which it launched in August 2010. The app has had 250,000 downloads across iPhone, Android and Nokia operating systems.

Jason Taylor, vice-president of platform strategy at Usablenet, said the platform operates as a live proxy, which replicates and optimises Sainsbury’s website for mobile devices.

"Pages have to be light for fast load times, but still giving consumers the core functionalities they’ve come to expect from a brand. Understanding the needs and behaviour of customers when accessing a mobile site will determine what functionalities have top priority within the small screen size," said Taylor.

He added: "The mobile platform can also take advantage of the capabilities of the phone that a desktop browser wouldn't have - for instance, leveraging the smartphone's internal GPS to find the nearest store."
According to the latest annual IT in Retail report by Martec International, **UK retailers plan to spend almost a quarter of IT budgets on implementing and improving e-commerce and mobile commerce platforms.**

The report shows the UK’s top 100 retailers’ IT investment in e-commerce and m-commerce has grown from 17% last year to 23% in 2011.

The **latest figures by the British Retail Consortium** show online retail search volumes grew 27% in the second quarter of 2011 compared to the same period in 2010, driven by a 216% year-on-year increase in mobile retail searches.

The British Retail Consortium (BRC) said the number of UK consumers searching for overseas retailers grew by 76% in the quarter while London accounted for 36% of all retail search volumes in the UK.

Fashion retailer **New Look launched a mobile commerce site** in April 2011 using CSS3, Javascript and HTML5 technologies.
How travel became a barometer for wider mobile adoption

July 20, 2011

By Jason Taylor, VP of platform strategy at Usablenet

The travel industry has found itself as the benchmark for mobile, with early adopters among business travelers driving the overall market forward for other verticals.

How travelers have embraced smartphones has influenced other sectors such as retail, healthcare, insurance, energy, and beyond.

Business travelers were the first to rely on their mobile phones to access the Internet for productivity purposes, and importantly, this demographic was also the first that could afford smartphones – with companies subsidizing the cost of best-in-class mobile devices to keep their employees productive while on the road.

The reality of business travelers using the mobile web in large numbers resulted in travel companies being the first to optimize specifically for the channel – with airlines to hotels to all companies in the travel ecosystem devoting significant resources to develop mobile sites and apps.

While the business traveler blazed the trail, the rest of the world quickly caught up.
Today, in large part thanks to the travel industry paving the way, it is hard to remember a time when consumers did not rely on their smartphones to book and manage travel reservations, research restaurants when on the ground in a new city, and even make purchases.

In fact, smartphones now represent an essential device for millions of consumers when it comes to productivity, entertainment, gaming, and more.

**Important mobile milestones among travel companies**

There are many notable travel companies that have consistently pushed the ball forward in terms of mobile innovation, with each step forward leading to a better customer experience for travelers and new ways for travel companies to more effectively separate themselves from competitors.

Among the numerous milestones travel companies have produced in mobile are as follows:

1. **Mobile commerce**

   Amtrak, the US national passenger rail company, is a true mobile early adopter.

   In June 2006, they became the first travel company to launch an optimized mobile site that offered transactions to all Internet-enabled mobile devices.

   Today, consumers have come to expect all ecommerce companies to provide an optimized purchasing experience from mobile phones.

2. **Reaching a global mobile audience**

   Northwest Airlines (acquired by Delta in 2008) recognized the importance of providing all of its customers a positive mobile experience, regardless of their country of origin.

   That's why, in 2007 it became the first truly international mobile site by introducing support of 13 Asian languages. Now, it is a common need for all businesses to provide essential services to international consumers through all channels, from traditional web, to mobile applications, and beyond.

3. **Leveraging mobile apps for increased brand loyalty**

   Once travel companies master their optimized mobile web experience, it is important not to stop there. A crucial part of any travel company’s mobile initiative is the development of a distinct native app strategy to deepen brand loyalty and offer features that the mobile web can’t on its own.
In the hotel industry, Omni Hotels was the first to offer mobile applications for the iPhone and BlackBerry – recognizing the need for dedicated native apps on the major mobile platforms.

4. Location-aware features enhance the mobile travel experience

This year, Expedia was among the first to incorporate location-aware features into its optimized mobile site by leveraging new HTML5 technologies – allowing features like push notifications to be more easily accessible to the traveler.

Other ways Expedia is innovating in location and mobile is by leveraging the smartphone’s internal GPS to offer travelers the ability to search for hotels with same day vacancies near their physical location.

Overall, Expedia has recognized the value location-aware features can provide by delivering more relevant airfare results and hotel information to travelers researching and booking trips on their mobile devices.

The company has successfully incorporated location-based functionality to deliver a site experience that adds relevancy to the travel searching process.

The future of mobile innovation

The early adoption of mobile throughout the travel industry, as well as the numerous mobile innovations travel companies have driven, has further accelerated mobile adoption in other verticals.

Retail and high luxury are good examples, since many companies in these verticals also cater to the affluent business traveler.

Despite the extreme advancements in mobile engagement among travel companies over the last several years, there remain huge opportunities to fulfill additional consumer demands across the entire travel experience.

The companies that continue to deliver compelling consumer experiences on mobile devices will be the ones that separate themselves from competitors.
Sainsbury’s has launched a mobile version of its general merchandise shopping website, allowing customers to shop for home and garden, appliances, technology, toys, games, sport and leisure products on their mobile devices.

Designed by Usablenet, and available via any browser-equipped mobile device and operating system, Sainsbury’s mobile shopping site is at the usual URL (http://www.sainsburys.co.uk), with a redirect to the mobile site for users arriving on a mobile device. It allows customers to search for the item they are looking for or simply browse the 15,000 products available including many from top brands such as Apple, Sony and Le Creuset.

Tanya Lawler, Sainsbury’s director of digital & cross-channel, says: "We know that our customers are increasingly looking to engage with us digitally, and this new mobile shopping site is a big step towards Sainsbury's becoming a true cross-channel retailer. Customers can now browse a fantastic range of products and shop at their convenience. We are confident that the ability to shop on mobile devices with Sainsbury's will be a real success with our customers."

With Sainsbury's Click & Collect service, customers can place a non-food order using their mobile by 2pm for next-day delivery or collection from the store of their choice. The service is now available in nearly 500 stores and the rapid rate of expansion means customers will be able to take advantage of the facility in over 800 store by Christmas.

Since launching its Sainsbury’s mobile app in August 2010, Sainsbury’s says it has seen demand for mobile shopping increase, with apps for the iPhone, Android and Nokia operating systems now downloaded over 250,000 times.

The launch of the mobile site comes at a time when Sainsbury's general merchandise offer is playing an increasingly prominent role in its business, with non-food sales growing at around three times that of food. Indeed some parts of its general merchandise range such as books and home textiles have been growing at over 20 per cent.
DM: So Jason, give us the Usablenet story if you would please.

JT: Sure, we’ve been going for 11 years. We were originally focused on web accessibility, so our first service platform allowed us to create an accessible, text-only version of a website, to comply with Section 508 ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) in the US and DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) laws elsewhere.

Today, we are very much focused on integration and multichannel. Retailers have been doing multichannel for 10 years, but only in the sense of having an online store, catalogue, phone and a bricks & mortar store; they have not integrated them, but they need to, when you look at stats from Forrester saying that 27 per cent of smartphone users use their phone in store as part of the purchase process. So we want to become the multichannel platform partner for our growing client base and we think of two companies in this respect – IBM and Oracle; that’s where we are aiming to be.

DM: And we’re in your London office, how long have you had this presence?

JT: We’ve been in London six months, and we have 35 staff here already. We have 31 clients now in the UK, out of 220 mobile clients and 300 across all systems globally, so we needed a presence in London to service this business.

DM: You certainly seem to be picking up a lot of business, particularly mobile sites for retailers. How are you doing it?

JS: Well our first client on the mobile front in the US was Amtrak, and in the UK, it was British Airways. I think this was because business travellers led the way in terms of smartphone usage, having data plans, that kind of thing. Then the iPhone came along and made the rest of the world change their perception of what they could do with a phone. Before the iPhone, people would only do the most important stuff, but the iPhone changed this.
Today, we do have a lot of retail clients. In the UK, those 31 clients include seven of the top 10 retailers, including Tesco, M&S, Mothercare and Sainsbury’s. In the US, most are Fortune 1000 companies. They come to us, I believe, because of our unique, transformative technology platform. Clients want four things: agility, scale, security and innovation, and our platform delivers these.

DM: So talk us through each of those if you would please Jason.

JT: Agility is all about being able to do lots of things quickly. The web used to be quick, but now, if you’re looking to perform a major change on an eCommerce platform, it is typically a 6-12 month project. We deliver agility, in that there is no systems integration required. It’s an 8-week implementation. Companies tell us which features they have on their website that they want on their mobile site. The important part is that we can work from web services, but also from the website itself.

DM: What’s the significance of that?

JT: If you want to build a mobile version of a website, you need a data source to re-present back out, which is a web service. The way to build a website is to build is using web services, so you have a web service for store availability, an a web service for payment systems, etc. But over the years, the lines between the two have moved, so lots of these things have not been delivered as a web service, but have been built into the website itself, and most mobile platforms can’t handle this. This is why most apps are not transactional, because the web service to enable that has not been built. But we can deliver it from the website, which is what makes us unique. It enables us to deliver functionality quickly to our clients.

DM: So tell us about scale.

JT: When you are working with Fortune 1000 clients, you need scale, and the ability to support global brands. We have just launched FedEx in 141 countries and 47 languages, for example. You need scale for testing, for quality assurance, the ability to know different devices. Companies like BA and Tesco are global companies, and mobile will be a global component of their offering.

You also need the ability to combine sources, such as the website and web services, and you need a platform that can support not just mobile sites and apps, but in-store kiosks and
Facebook stores. Client need to be everywhere; it used to be about offering support for users on their mobile device, but now it’s about supporting them, wherever they are.

DM: And what about security?

JT: We typically handle 5 - 10 per cent of a client’s online traffic via mobile, so we have a deliberate process for security that is PCI compliant and HIPAA compliant. Nothing is stored, cached or databased, it’s all done on the fly. So whatever security is built into the PC website is maintained when it goes out to mobile or to a kiosk.

DM: And innovation?

JT: We have built an HTML5 mobile platform to enable us to deliver distinct optimised experiences for mobile, for kiosks and for Facebook stores, so you will start to see some really cool features, such as scrolling banners on the ASOS mobile site; expandable navigation, where you drill down to the next level, without a page refresh); MiniCarts that give you a 5-second pop-up showing you the last product you added to your basket, or that you can call up at any time to see what’s in your basket, without having to navigate away from the page that you’re on.

DM: That all sounds great, but it’s by no means the norm at present is it, in terms of what you are delivering for your clients? I do hear people saying that a lot of your sites have a templated, ‘me-too’ feel about them. What’s your response to that?

JT: Whatever the client wants, we build it. We can build a very bespoke look and feel and functionality, but that needs a UI (User Interface) team and a UX (User Experience) team to implement it. It’s no different from a lot of websites looking the same – people are doing it to a cost.

DM: So if that’s the case, what the difference, in terms of cost, between having a basic, ‘me-too’ site and an all-singing, all-dancing HTML5 one with scrolling banners, expandable navigation and everything else. 2x? 3x? 4x?

JT: You’re looking at 50 per cent more for the better site.

DM: Really, is that all?
JT: Yes, and I think you will see more companies going for more bespoke solutions now as mobile becomes less of a pet project and is seen as a real channel that makes money. If you look at what ASOS are doing, for example, they are trying to create this social interaction through Facebook, where people can review their stuff on Facebook. So the next step is a social catalogue, where people on Facebook can see the ASOS stuff their friends like or have bought on Facebook. The limitation on Facebook is that it is not a great infrastructure platform, but this is where they are going with it.

We will also see brands using apps much more for brand loyalty and brand-building, looking at how they can use apps as a tool they can use in their stores, hotels or wherever. Then you will have the kiosks or assisted kiosks; sales assistants with iPads selling to people in store, there’s a lot of great stuff to come in the next couple of years.
Most consumers enter a mobile commerce web site through the home page, as opposed, for example, to coming in via a paid search or display ad, m-commerce experts say. This is why the time it takes for an m-commerce site home page to successfully load is key.

But there’s another area in m-commerce where speed is equally as important: site search. Mobile shoppers tend to be hunters not browsers—they typically know what they want and want to find it fast. This is why the time it takes from when a shopper hits search to when the search results page is fully loaded is important.

Mobile and web performance measurement firm Keynote Systems Inc. last week studied the search results page load time for the retailers on the Keynote Mobile Commerce Performance Index and found that on average the pages successfully downloaded in 9.7 seconds.

“It’s just as important for a retailer’s mobile site to have good search performance as it is to have speedy home page performance,” says Herman Ng, mobile performance evangelist at Keynote Systems. “Both are critical elements in reducing user abandonment, keeping users engaged, and ultimately increasing both mobile and in-store sales.”

Keynote last week performed multiple searches on the retailers in the index using a Motorola Droid X smartphone on the Verizon wireless network from four locations in the U.S. Macy’s Inc. achieved the quickest load time at 3.86 seconds. However, the m-commerce site of Macy’s does not return a list of items; rather, it categorizes the search results page and
requires a shopper to first refine results by selecting a category. Walgreen Co. came in second at 6.40 seconds. Walgreens returned six items on the first page of its search results, the lowest number compared with other retailers.

On average, retailers returned 15 items on the first page of search results. Three merchants—Buy.com Inc., Overstock.com Inc. and Walmart.com—use a page construction technique called “infinite scrolling,” Keynote says. Using this technique, a retailer lets shoppers click a Load More button at the bottom of the initial search results; to show more results on the same page. This also can be achieved by swiping the bottom of the page, which automatically loads more content.

“Infinite scrolling is an interesting strategy retailers should look into,” Ng says.

When it comes to m-commerce site home page performance, the metric measured every week on the index, the average load time for all 30 retailers on the index was 9.08 seconds and the average success rate was 98.25%, for a score of 763 out of 1,000.

Click here and then click on Keynote Mobile Commerce Performance Index Part 1 and Part 2 to see this week’s complete results for all 30 retailers on the index.

Keynote Systems measures 30 representative m-commerce sites exclusively for Internet Retailer. The sites include merchants in various categories and channels, and of various sizes, ranging from such giants as Amazon.com Inc., Sears Holdings Corp. and 1-800-Flowers.com Inc., to midsized retailers like Sunglass Hut, Toolfetch.com LLC and Your Electronic Warehouse. Keynote tests the sites in the index every hour Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. through midnight Eastern time, emulating four different smartphones on four different wireless networks: Apple Inc.’s iPhone 4 on AT&T, the HTC Evo on Sprint, the BlackBerry Curve on T-Mobile and the Droid X on Verizon. The HTC Evo and the Droid X run Google Inc.’s Android operating system.

Keynote combines a site’s load time and success rate, equally weighted, into a single score. Given both performance and availability are important, the score reflects the overall quality of the home page; a higher score indicates better performance. Scores also reflect how close sites are to each other in overall quality. The index average score is the midpoint among all the sites’ scores.
Scribbal

Aeropostale Launches Fully Integrated Facebook Store, Share Products And Purchases With Friends

August 01, 2011

Clothing retailer Aeropostale has announced the launch of its fully integrated Facebook store, which allows you to browse and purchase items from the company’s entire online catalog. In addition, you can Like and share products and purchases from the store with your Facebook friends.

The store was developed in partnership with mobile technology company Usablenet. Through the store, you can search through products on the “Shop” tab, review products and finalize transactions without having to leave Facebook.

Aeropostale has also launched a mobile shopping app for Android, with an iPhone app to follow in the next few weeks.

“For brands to succeed in this new and rapidly evolving multichannel shopping environment, they must engage customers wherever they are,” said Nick Taylor, CEO of Usablenet. “With the launch of its fully integrated Facebook store, as well as native applications for the top mobile operating systems, Aeropostale is demonstrating its strong commitment to delivering the best digital shopping experience for all consumers.”

This is just the latest instance of a commercial retailer creating a store on Facebook. Brands such as Express, GameStop and Lands’ End have created storefronts on Facebook, while VeriSign has launched the VeriSign Trust seal for Facebook commerce stores to indicate that the store has secure payment facilities.

You can check out the Aeropostale Facebook store for yourself now.
NYC-based apparel retailer Aéropostale, Inc. has launched a fully integrated Facebook Store, powered by Usablenet’s technology platform, that combines shopping and social media and extends full e-commerce functionality to the Aéropostale Facebook community. In addition to being able to purchase from among Aéropostale’s entire inventory, the integrated Facebook e-commerce store allows users to easily "like" and share items and purchases with their Facebook network - leveraging the viral nature of Facebook’s news feed.

“Aéropostale has 5 million Facebook fans that are engaged and connected to our brand,” says Scott Birnbaum, senior vice president of marketing and e-commerce. “The next logical step is to give them the opportunity to shop while in this environment.”

Developed by Aéropostale in partnership with leading mobile technology company Usablenet, consumers can use the Aéropostale Facebook store to search through a "shop" tab, "like" and "share" with their friends, review products and complete transactions all while staying on Facebook.

"For brands to succeed in this new and rapidly evolving multichannel shopping environment, they must engage customers wherever they are," says Usablenet CEO Nick Taylor. "With the launch of its fully integrated Facebook store, as well as native applications for the top mobile operating systems, Aéropostale is demonstrating its strong commitment to delivering the best digital shopping experience for all consumers."

Continuing to strengthen its relationship with its consumers, Aéropostale has launched an Android mobile application and will introduce one for iPhone users in the coming weeks. The company has also recently unveiled an HTML5 upgrade to its optimized mobile site through the Usablenet Mobile 2.0 platform that delivers a rich, app-like experience in the mobile browser environment.

For more information, visit www.aeropostale.com.
Aeropostale Inc. has rolled out an Android application that lets fashionable consumers shop their favorite looks no matter where they are.

The company is planning to introduce an iPhone application in the company weeks. Aéropostale tapped Usablenet to develop its mobile offerings.

“We have over 5 million Facebook fans that are engaged and active with our brand on a daily basis,” said Scott Birnbaum, senior vice president of marketing and ecommerce at Aeropostale.

“Creating this shop was a natural step in completing the experience of liking and sharing with friends to then being able to buy right in this environment,” he said.

Aéropostale, Inc., is a mall-based, specialty retailer of casual apparel and accessories, principally targeting 14 to 17 year-old young women and men through its Aéropostale stores and 7 to 12 year-old kids through its P.S. from Aéropostale stores.

Usablenet’s platform lets companies in all sectors to extend their brand to consumers across multiple channels, including mobile phones, mobile applications, tablets, Facebook, in-store kiosks, and other platforms – with minimal impact to the client’s IT resources. It’s clients include Amtrak, Delta, Estée Lauder, FedEx, Hilton, Marks & Spencer, Sprint, JCPenney, Victoria’s Secret, and others.

Mobile shopping
Via the mobile app, consumers can shop by category, such as girls, guys and sale.

Consumers browse in-store coupons and see if there are any available.

The mobile app lets consumers track their order, find the nearest location and see what’s currently in their cart.

Shoppers can also use the search function when they are looking for a specific item.
Additionally, the company’s mobile site is being relaunched in HTML5 as part of the Usablenet Mobile 2.0 platform.

Aeropostale had a mobile optimized-site previously, but now it includes advanced features enabled by the HTML5 redesign like enhanced image galleries with “tap tap zoom” functionality and location-aware features.

**Facebook integration**

In addition to rolling out new mobile apps, Aéropostale is letting users complete transactions with its new fully-integrated Facebook Store.

In addition to being able to buy from among Aéropostale’s entire inventory, the integrated Facebook ecommerce store lets users to easily ‘Like’ and share items and purchases with their Facebook network – leveraging the viral nature of Facebook’s news feed.

“Aeropostale is a leading teen fashion retailer with nearly 1,000 stores,” Mr. Birnbaum said.

“We are always looking for ways to engage and excite our customers and we know that social media is part of their every day lives and we are happy to be a part of that,” he said.
Aeropostale, the mall-based US specialty retailer of casual apparel for young women and men, has launched a fully integrated Facebook Store.

Powered by Usablenet's technology platform, the store combines shopping and social media and extends full e-commerce functionality to the Aeropostale Facebook community which now numbers 5 million.

In addition to being able to purchase from Aeropostale's entire online inventory, the integrated Facebook e-commerce store allows users to easily 'Like' and share items and purchases with their Facebook network - leveraging the viral nature of Facebook's news feed.

"Aeropostale has 5 million Facebook fans that are engaged and connected to our brand," says Scott Birnbaum, senior VP of marketing and e-commerce. "The next logical step is to give them the opportunity to shop while in this environment."

Developed by Aeropostale in partnership with leading mobile technology company Usablenet, consumers can use the Aeropostale Facebook store to search through a 'shop' tab, 'like' and 'share' with their friends, review products and complete transactions all while staying on Facebook.

"For brands to succeed in this new and rapidly evolving multichannel shopping environment, they must engage customers wherever they are," said Usablenet CEO Nick Taylor. "With the launch of its fully integrated Facebook store, as well as native applications for the top mobile operating systems, Aeropostale is demonstrating its strong commitment to delivering the best digital shopping experience for all consumers."

Continuing to strengthen its relationship with its consumers, Aeropostale has launched an Android mobile application and will introduce one for iPhone users in the coming weeks. The company has also recently unveiled an HTML5 upgrade to its optimised mobile site through the Usablenet Mobile 2.0 platform that delivers a rich, app-like experience in the mobile browser environment.
Aéropostale has joined forces with technology platform provider Usablenet, a company that focuses on multi-channel customer engagement, for a fully-integrated online store on Facebook.

Usablenet’s technology platform is known for combining e-commerce and social media, and now it will extend full functionality to Aéropostale’s Facebook ecosystem, turning the retailer’s fan page into a one-stop shop for all clothing needs. The new store also allows users to Like and share items and purchases with people in their networks and to instantly review products.

Usablenet has helped numerous organizations extend their brands and websites across multiple channels, including mobile phones and apps, tablets, Facebook, in-store kiosks and others. Among the company's distinguished clients are Macy's, Walgreens, Tesco, FedEx, Victoria's Secret and Coach.

With Aéropostale, however, Usablenet has helped the clothing retailer put its entire inventory up for purchase on the world's largest social network.

“Aéropostale has 5 million Facebook fans that are engaged and connected to our brand,” says Scott Birnbaum, Aéropostale’s senior vice president of marketing and e-commerce. “The next logical step is to give them the opportunity to shop while in this environment.”
Off-site parking facilities company Fast Park has debuted a mobile-optimized site that lets consumers browse parking rates and amenities.

The company worked with Usablenet on the mobile site.

“Fast Park went mobile because we recognize that our valued customers are on the go and need information in the palms of their hands,” said Melanie Chavez, development and branding executive at Fast Park.

“Fast Park is the only parking service company to bring its customers true mobile convenience,” she said.

“The mobile site includes Google or Mapquest maps to Fast Park facilities, daily Fast Park parking rates, facility amenities, and other useful information to improve a traveler’s parking experience.”

Fast Park is an off-site airport parking facilities company, with 16 convenient parking facilities in 12 cities.

Members only
The Fast Park mobile site is also optimized for Relax for Rewards loyalty program members.

Members can log in to review their personal parking history, apply for receipt credit for expense reports and to contact a rewards representative.

Additionally, the mobile site includes features such as reporting a lost card, and how to redeem points for free parking certificates.

“Yes, in today’s business world everyone is using smartphones,” Ms. Chavez said. “With 16 parking facilities in 12 markets, we knew we needed to provide our core customers, the
business travelers, with a condensed mobile site featuring the Web site components that they rely on the most.

“For instance, customers can access our free Relax for Rewards loyalty program where members can log in to review their personal parking history, apply for receipt credit for expense reports and to contact a Rewards Representative,” she said.

“There are even features for reporting a lost card and to redeem your points for free parking certificates.”

**Social integration**

The company is getting the word out about its new mobile site through social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as our Relax for Rewards email program.

“Fast Park is constantly evolving to make sure we are providing our customers with the best services,” Ms. Chavez said. “We are already in the process of developing a mobile app.

“Among other features, the app will show customers where the shuttles are in the terminal,” she said.

“This way, when customers get off their plane they will know in real-time how close Fast Park shuttles are.”
UK retailers’ mobile web offerings have topped both the download speed and availability charts in July out of 24 top retail mobile sites across eight countries monitored by Keynote Systems. Next achieved the fastest average time of 4.80 seconds and John Lewis an impressive 100% availability for the month.

Keynote Systems has monitored the performance of top retail sites from Australia, France, Germany, Japan, Sweden, UK and USA throughout July, and found that the UK sites performed well in July, with all of the sites monitored – John Lewis, Tesco, Marks and Spencer and Next, all incidentally powered by Usablenet – all scoring in the top third of the response time index.

All of the UK sites achieved download times of less than seven seconds compared to the French site, Carrefour, which had an average download time of 51.91 seconds. The UK sites monitored also all had over 99% availability for July.

All of the UK sites improved on their performance from June, demonstrating a concerted focus on mobile as a retail channel as the proliferation of smartphones, the sophistication of their capabilities and the increased speed of networks has led consumers to reach for their mobiles before turning to their laptops for online browsing.

“It’s great to see UK retailers making positive changes as they realise the importance of mobile retail,” says Robert Castley, Lead Solutions Consultant, Keynote Systems. “John Lewis’ mobile site achieving 100% average availability is extremely impressive and it’s also notable that all of the UK sites had download times of less than seven seconds this month. As smartphones continue to become more popular and bespoke apps and mobile sites are more commonly used for browsing and purchasing online, retailers must maintain a high level of site optimisation in order to continue to attract and retain customers.
“To prepare for the Christmas shopping season, retailers also need to load test their mobile Websites to make sure that they can cope with the increased demands of high volumes of traffic and transactions,” he warns. “Leaving this to the last minute can result in disgruntled customers in the run up to the festive season, so it’s fantastic to see that UK retailers are certainly moving in the right direction when it comes to mobile site performance.”
As smartphones continue their exponential growth and consumers get increasingly comfortable with using them to book travel, conduct research and make purchases, it’s essential for organizations to leverage next-generation mobile technologies into their overall marketing efforts.

A comprehensive mobile strategy that incorporates advanced HTML5 mobile Web capabilities, while simultaneously maximizing their reach with a native application strategy is essential for companies hoping to secure brand loyalty.

That’s a tall order, but it’s one that will help you win in the mobile field, which is increasingly becoming crucial to businesses.

Up first: Leveraging HTML5 to reach users. The advancements of HTML5 mobile development provides businesses with a reliable mobile Web platform that delivers faster speeds and more flexibility on next-generation broadband networks. By leveraging advanced features supported by HTML5, you can deliver an app-like experience without forcing people to hunt through an app store, then download the software. Further, HTML5 sites are search engine friendly, potentially increasing your exposure.

There are a few key HTML5-enabled features you’ll need to leverage to enhance the consumer browsing experience:

- **Dynamic scrolling banners** provide brands with the ability to further target mobile users with the latest products, special offers and relevant promotions on the mobile homepage
- **Expanding navigation, collapsible menus and pop-up windows** can improve site navigation and allow more content to be incorporated – maximizing the smartphone’s small screen design without sacrificing crucial page download time
- **High-resolution image galleries** display multiple, high quality product images in a gallery format; and allows users to scroll, swipe and zoom in on a selected image
- **Advanced GPS functionality** can customize the mobile site experience to where the user is located. A great example is Expedia, a company that delivers mobile search results and hotel room availability based on the user’s location
Predictive Search can cut down the time it takes for users to access search results on a branded mobile page – similar to the way Google delivers its search results.

Mini-Carts on transactional mobile sites allows users to easily call up their shopping cart at any time to see what’s in their basket, without having to navigate away from the page that they’re on.

Using HTML5 doesn’t mean you should ignore traditional apps, though. These can offer consumers a more personalized mobile experience. Because there is a customer discovery element, though, it’s best to view them as a tool to more deeply engage your most faithful customers.

By complementing your mobile Web strategy with native apps, you can encourage customers to become evangelists for your brand. Since mobile apps provide the ability to leverage smartphones’ unique capabilities, they are able to deliver unique interactive features. Examples include:

- **Leveraging the smartphone’s camera:** The smartphone’s camera can be used in-app to deliver experiences not available in the mobile browser, like providing the ability to read QR and other bar codes. Integrating QR Codes into a mobile app strategy allows brands to implement innovative new marketing and advertising options and deliver unique, exclusive content to consumers.

- **Push notifications:** This ensures you remain in direct contact with your most loyal customers through an open line of communication. In addition, push notifications provide another unique broadcast platform to disseminate targeted promotions and other branded news.

- **Deliver unique, brand-appropriate experiences:** The mobile application format presents brands with the opportunity to deliver unique, engaging features to their most loyal customers that are not available in the mobile Web experience. For example, Pacific Sunwear’s iPhone app features an ‘Outfit Builder’ that allows users to piece together a complete outfit from apparel available in PacSun’s inventory.

As mobile and marketing experts continue to debate the advantages of HTML5 mobile web versus the mobile app, it is time for brands to view these mobile tools not as competing entities, but rather as complimentary pieces to develop the most comprehensive and effective mobile strategy possible. By leveraging both, you’ll more effectively engage with your consumers.
Jewelry and diamond retailer Zales has rolled out a mobile-optimized storefront to better address the needs of its on-the-go customers. The m-Commerce site, which was developed in a partnership with Usablenet, was designed to provide customers with instant access to inventory, along with mobile payment capabilities.

“Zales sees the mobile site as a bridge between our stores and our web site that consumers can use while on-the-go,” said Roxane Barry, Director of Investor Relations for Zales.

“Irrespective of where they are or their immediate intent, we wanted a mobile experience that allowed our customers to quickly and easily interact with our brands.”

The m-Commerce storefront is fully optimized across all smartphone brands and features a variety of tools to enhance customer engagement and increase mobile purchases. Features include a search engine to sift through Zales’ inventory of more than 1,000 jewelry types and styles, a browsing area, and an account registration area to manage shopping cart items and view purchases. Registered users and guests also gain access to a mobile checkout option.

“With simpler navigation and condensed information, the m-Commerce site is not intended to replace our in-store or online experience, but rather give our customers the opportunity to interact with our brand whenever and wherever they are,” Barry said.

Developed as a reflection of Zales’ e-Commerce platform, the mobile store contributes to the retailer’s initiative to track the success of shoppers’ cross-channel interaction with the brand, according to Barry. “Zales strives to provide a great cross-channel guest experience every day so we are consistently evaluating each experience — in store, online and mobile — to ensure that we exceed our guests’ expectations.”

The Usablenet platform is designed to enable retailers to provide shoppers with a media-rich experience by uploading catalog information, rich product images, transactional information, social engagement and extensive analytics across platforms such as mobile web and applications, kiosks and Facebook storefronts. Through the solution, retailers can deliver full web site content and functionality across these channels without in-house IT support.
Since the majority of dealers have smartphones nowadays, ADESA on Tuesday announced the creation of a mobile solution for its U.S.-based and Canada-based websites.

The company explained ADESA’s mobile optimized website now can enable users registered on DealerBlock to bid on vehicles, buy vehicles and conduct the entire checkout process — all from their smartphones. DealerBlock is the company’s online platform that hosts bid-now sales events and buy-now pricing.

“We partnered with a trusted third-party source that specializes in mobile technology platforms to provide a user-friendly mobile experience,” explained Jason Ferreri, ADESA’s vice president of e-business.

“We recognize that customers have unique buying preferences, and our new mobile solution allows them to buy vehicles how they want, when they want, from virtually anywhere,” Ferreri continued.

Registered dealers can now search and review inventory, add vehicles to their Watch List and even review condition reports and vehicle history reports on their smartphones.

Additionally, the mobile-optimized site enables users to view DealerBlock purchases and review AutoBids instantly from any Web-enabled mobile device.

Along with sourcing and purchasing inventory directly from their smartphones, users can also view run lists, access market guides and locate auction information for ADESA’s 70 auction locations nationwide.

“ADESA understands the important role mobile plays in today’s marketplace,” Ferreri stressed about the capability now connected with ADESA.com and ADESA.ca.
“The nature of the remarketing business demands that our dealers be mobile, and we will continue to develop innovative mobile solutions to support their individual business needs,” Ferreri went on to say.

Usablenet is ADESA’s partner for this mobile availability.

“In this new era of digital commerce it is imperative for brands to maximize their customer engagement on every channel available,” stated Usablenet chief executive officer Nick Taylor.

“Focused on providing the best user experience, ADESA’s optimized mobile site offers customers and partners the most efficient way to browse from among ADESA’s entire auction inventory, wherever they may be,” Taylor added.
Retailer Boots has launched a mobile version of its website to expand its multichannel portfolio.

The Boots mobile site uses a mobile platform provided by Usablenet and is a streamlined version of the retailer’s website, which can be accessed from any web-enabled mobile device. The site has achieved 300,000 unique visitors since it launched in August.

Marc Sbardella, senior digital marketing manager at Boots, said mobile is an increasingly important channel for the retailer.

"We were aware of our customers’ need for a mobile-optimised channel from Boots and we wanted to make it as easy as possible for our customers to browse and shop our ranges regardless of where they are. It is important for us to deliver a mobile experience that allows our customers to quickly and easily interact with our brand," he said.

Sbardella added that customers are using the mobile site to search store locations, browse products and make purchases by credit and debit card or Paypal.

The mobile site took around 10 weeks to implement and does not require back-end integration.

"Usablenet's technology platform detects the user down to the exact device they’re using, live proxies a content source (in this case the original Boots website), and dynamically outputs a page that ensures a successful mobile experience based on the capabilities of the user's mobile phone," said Jason Taylor, vice-president of platform strategy at Usablenet.

Other companies using Usablenet include Sainsbury’s, online fashion retailer Asos, FedEx Mobile, and Marks & Spencer.
Neal’s Yard Remedies has launched a mobile-optimised website. The site, created by Usablenet, is a streamlined version of the Neal’s Yard Remedies website that is optimised for all web-enabled mobile phones.

Neal’s Yard Remedies specializes in organic natural health and beauty products. It opened its first store in Covent Garden in 1981, and was the first company in the UK to sell certified organic essential oils.

The new mobile site features full browse and search functionality, ecommerce capability, and a sleek UI design that works on all web-enabled phone. Other features include a store locator; Contact Us and Feedback; ‘Join our mailing List’ option; product description pages; advanced Google Analytics; and a secure checkout facility.

“With so many people now shopping via their phones, a mobile site was the next step for us in terms of delivering organic excellence,” says Kate Hodgkinson, head of CRM at Neal’s Yard Remedies. “We’re excited to make our site more accessible to both new and existing customers.”

The mobile site can be accessed at: www.nealsyardremedies.com from any web-enabled mobile device.
Pass the gravy and the smartphone. It turns out Thanksgiving Day, the day before the so-called Black Friday bricks-and-mortar shopping melee, is a big day for mobile shopping, according to m-commerce technology provider Usablenet Inc. After five Thanksgivings—the company has been providing services since 2000—with scores of retailer and travel company clients, it reports an average 200% increase in traffic on Thanksgiving to m-commerce sites compared with traffic on a typical day.

“The traditional big shopping days, whichever you pick, ones when stores have big days, the days before those days are big for mobile commerce,” says Jason Taylor, vice president of platform strategy at Usablenet. “A lot of people, for example, are not at their normal location on Thanksgiving, so mobile becomes a very important device for them to use on that day, and they do some mobile shopping.”

Usablenet has its hands full preparing for this holiday season: It is readying m-commerce sites for 30 new retailer clients, and it’s upgrading the sites for 30 existing retail and travel clients. Retailers and travel companies, Taylor says, are pushing to be ready for a mobile holiday season.

The upgrades center on version 2.0 of Usablenet’s m-commerce platform, which uses the up-and-coming web programming language HTML5 to do things that HTML4 can’t do. And these new features and functions resemble those found on a mobile app, which today enables consumers to shop in a richer setting than a site. But that’s changing because of HTML5.

Retailers and travel companies are selecting from a variety of Usablenet HTML5-enabled options for their m-commerce sites. For instance, shoppers on upgraded Usablenet sites are able to log into their accounts and have the site reoriented to their location, the HTML5 reaching into the smartphone and using the device’s GPS technology. The site then presents the retailer’s closest store and presents regional deals.
Upgraded sites also can include expand-and-collapse menus. A shopper can touch a category on a home page which then expands a window showing a list of subcategories. Touching a subcategory menu can expand a window to show more options. This is significant because expand-and-collapse does not require the site to make a web server call to load another page—everything happens on the existing page, no extra time needed.

Another HTML5-enabled addition is high-resolution photo galleries with double-tap zooming. Taylor says this is important to mobile retailers because mobile shoppers expect to access the same features and functions they do on an e-commerce site.

“Pictures are very important in the retail market on a regular site—how many product views you have, how detailed you can get,” Taylor says. “Bringing that same capability to mobile is an important enhancement this year.”

For Usablenet, which powers the m-commerce sites of 51 of the Internet Retailer Mobile Commerce Top 300, m-commerce is not a tough sell, it says. Retailers have caught on.

“Up to 10% of total traffic is coming to them from mobile devices,” Taylor says. “Using the e-commerce site on those devices is at best cumbersome and in a lot of cases just lost revenue. Our clients recognize that mobile is increasingly the device, the chosen way of accessing content on the web, and it is not going away.”
ShopNBC.com turns smartphones into portable TVs
October 13, 2011

TV and online retailer ShopNBC.com has taken its iPhone and Android mobile apps to the next level by incorporating live television broadcast video streaming technology. Now app users can watch the cable TV shopping channel on their smartphones.

“Our customers are loyal and engaged with ShopNBC. They have an active lifestyle and are always on the go,” says Carol Steinberg, executive vice president of Internet, marketing and human resources. “To best meet their needs, ShopNBC introduced live streaming of our programming to create an easy platform for them to interact and engage wherever and however they choose. This enhanced mobile experience provides them with an experience that is consistent with our user-friendly ShopNBC.com platform.”

An increasing number of retailers are building video into their mobile programs. Merchants using 2-D bar codes, for examples, often link shoppers who scan the codes with their smartphones to videos on m-commerce sites.

M-commerce technology provider Usablenet Inc. worked with ShopNBC.com to create the live TV functionality. It used web programming language HTML5 to bring live video to the mobile apps. HTML5 passes information about the device to the video streaming platform to ensure video is properly encoded for rendering on a smartphone.

ShopNBC.com, No. 64 in the Internet Retailer Mobile Commerce Top 300, reveals to Internet Retailer that it soon will launch its first app for Apple Inc.’s hugely popular iPad tablet PC.

“This app will be targeted to one of ShopNBC’s key merchandise categories,” Steinberg says, “and will provide a compelling and engaging way to interact with our products and brand.”
15% of all web traffic at BuyCostumes.com is coming from mobile devices. BuySeasons Inc., which operates the e-commerce site, concluded a few months ago that it was time to provide these shoppers a way to search, browse and buy optimized for smartphones. And it needed to get a mobile commerce site up and running fast as the peak shopping season of Halloween was fast approaching.

The need for speed was one key reason why BuySeasons opted to have an m-commerce technology provider build its site, especially because its technology team was busy with other projects.

“From concept to site launch it took approximately two months. Quality of the user experience, time to market and resiliency of the solution were all important factors,” says Terry Rowinski, chief operating officer. “We partnered with Usablenet to re-allocate some of the resources of our internal technology team, given that we were conducting major enhancements to our main e-commerce sites in the third quarter. And, we have admired the work that Usablenet has done with other world-class retailers.”

M-commerce vendor Usablenet Inc. has launched many retailers into mobile commerce quickly, and it is the top m-commerce vendor in the Internet Retailer Mobile Commerce Top 300, with 51 clients among the leading mobile retailers.

“A fast implementation is really important for us to help our clients ramp up for the holidays or other specific occasions,” says Usablenet CEO Nick Taylor. “BuyCostumes’ new mobile site is a perfect example of a timely launch for the expected increase in traffic during Halloween, demonstrating their commitment to serving their customers’ needs during the busy season.”

Shoppers access the m-commerce site by typing in the standard URL, BuyCostumes.com, in a mobile web browser; BuySeasons servers automatically redirect the mobile shopper to the mobile site. There they can browse and purchase more than 20,000 Halloween costumes,
accessories and decor. The m-commerce site allows users to narrow down their search based on costume category and view numerous high-resolution images for each costume.

BuySeasons is a unit of Liberty Media Corp., No. 8 in the Internet Retailer Top 500 Guide.
Usablenet is a leading mobile and multi-channel platform company that serves 25% of Fortune 1000 companies including FedEx, British Airways, Target, Delta, Nestle, Marriott and Nissan. Overall, the company claims more than 300 clients in its roster.

The company provides far more than social commerce technology. It ensures that clients’ websites are usable (hence the name) and functional on all mobile phones, mobile applications, tablets, Facebook, in-store kiosks, and other platforms — with minimal impact to the client’s IT resources.

Usablenet was recently named one of the top 10 most innovative companies in mobile by Fast Company and ranked as the top Mobile Commerce Vendor by ABI Research.

Usablenet Platform UVP

Usablenet claims the platform distinguishes itself in three key areas: Scale, Strength, and Innovation.

**Scale** – According to the company, the platform is designed to scale in every direction, from its own infrastructure capacity to support for the full range of functionality on its client’s websites, to support for any and every device their customers may be using.

**Strength** – The Usablenet platform supports the largest, most intricate multi-channel sites in the world including: FedEx Mobile, American Airlines Mobile, Expedia Mobile, Hilton Mobile and Macy’s Mobile.

**Innovation** – The mobile phone is no longer all that is mobile. The consumer is mobile. The Usablenet platform is crafted to support its client’s objectives of supporting core constituents — customers, employees, sales forces, shareholders, prospective customers — wherever they are.

**Usablenet Platform**
Usablenet’s platform supports all forms of output including:

- **Mobile** – Usablenet can extend mobile site functionality to the iPhone, Blackberry, Android, or Symbian app markets.

- **Custom Apps** – Usablenet also builds discrete apps with unique user interfaces and functionality, separate from the client’s existing site.

- **Kiosks** – The Usablenet platform dynamically transforms and optimizes website content and functionality for a touchscreen kiosk or point-of-sale terminal without the need for any client IT resources.

- **Tablets** – The platform understands the unique size and functionality of tablets and creates an experience that optimizes content to conform to that environment.

- **Facebook** – With Usablenet’s integrated Facebook application, client’s can offer any product, service, feature, and functionality currently available on their websites, all within Facebook. Users can engage with the brand – including purchasing a product, booking a reservation, paying a bill, reviewing products and sharing them with their friends, or providing feedback – without leaving Facebook.

**Facebook Commerce**

Usablenet currently powers the Facebook commerce (f-commerce) pages of [ASOS](#) (the first European fully integrated Facebook store), [Aeropostale](#) and [JC Penney](#). These Facebook shopping pages offer full ecommerce capabilities, product browse and search features, the ability to easily like and share items with friends in a customer’s network, product reviews, as well as social discovery by viewing items in the news feed and seeing product pages all within the retailers’ Facebook page.

The company’s integrated Facebook application combines shopping and social media and extends full e-commerce functionality to the brand’s Facebook community. For example, during their earnings call on April 13, 2011, ASOS noted that UK sales grew 24 per cent to £44.8m for the quarter to March 31, in spite of difficult economic conditions facing consumers and me

**Product Screenshots**
Usablenet HTML5 Gallery example
Usablenet HTML5 GPS example

Company Information
Usablenet was founded in 2000 to improve website usability and accessibility across disparate platforms.
Based in New York, Italy, and the UK, Usablenet is a global leader in extending companies’ online brands to their customers, wherever they are: on mobile, on Facebook, at an in-store kiosk, on a tablet, and more.

For more information or to contact the company, go to [http://www.usablenet.com](http://www.usablenet.com). You may also call the following numbers:

New York office: +1.212.965.5388
Los Angeles office: +1.310.260.9900
London office: +44.20.7903.5290
Jewelry retailer Zales rolled out a mobile-optimized storefront to better address the needs of its on-the-go customers. The m-commerce site, which was developed in a partnership with Usablenet, was designed to provide customers with instant access to inventory along with mobile payment capabilities. “Zales sees the mobile site as a bridge between our stores and our website,” says Roxane Barry, director of investor relations for Zales. The site is fully optimized across all smartphone brands and features a search engine, browsing area and account registration area to manage shopping cart items and view purchases. Modeled on Zales’ e-commerce site, the mobile store contributes to the retailer’s initiative to track shoppers’ cross-channel interactions with the brand.
Picture the new digital-savvy American consumer walking through Times Square. When a cool item on an interactive promotion catches their eye, they want to whip out their smartphone, take a picture of the item, and be immediately directed to a page with product information where they can buy, share with friends, write a review and send a tweet.

New technology has turned every billboard, window and surface into a potential interactive store or extension of an organization’s services, and every device into a vehicle for consumers to transact, purchase and pay bills. This changing behavior in American consumerism requires businesses to develop an agile multichannel strategy that supports screens ranging in size from smartphones to large digital displays that wrap subway cars or even buildings – all with the scale to support a global consumer base.

Last year CIOs were primarily concerned with ensuring content and services were optimized for mobile devices. But now the consumer is increasingly “mobile”, moving between their smartphone, tablet, and computer – in and out of stores – on Facebook and other social networks. Increasingly the new digital consumer wants to engage with companies and brands on their own terms, and in order to remain competitive in a business environment that is facing significant disruption, CIOs have to make their business accessible across all channels in a scalable, secure and innovative fashion.

**The Challenge**

Over the past two years, the need for CIOs to extend core brand services to the multitude of new devices available on the market has exploded. A recent survey from comScore finds that nearly 7% of all digital traffic in the United States is driven from smartphones and tablets. Smartphones account for two-thirds of this traffic and tablets have been picking up speed.
Overall more than 116 million Americans (half the U.S. population) use mobile media, up 19% over the last year.

The multichannel stampede began with organizations optimizing their Web sites to function properly on the small smartphone screen, and recent advancements in HTML5 technology have created an oasis of innovation where brands are empowered to deliver even better mobile experiences for the customer. Furthermore, over the last 12 months the number of channels that must be accounted for has greatly increased to include mobile apps, tablets, social media outputs and screens like digital TVs and large flatscreen displays on subways or buildings – important real estate for brands to establish themselves.

While the business need seems to have developed overnight, when combined with a slowing economy and an increasingly mobile workforce, the demands on the CIO have never felt more immediate. However, the new mobile and multichannel reality provides an opportunity for forward-looking organizations to make strategic investments that extend their brand into the 21st century. CIOs that move strategically can maximize an early market revenue opportunity by making a strong impression on digital consumers that have shown deep loyalty to brands that effectively deliver core business functions and a positive customer experience – regardless of how the consumer chooses to engage.

**The Opportunity**

Getting the cross channel strategy right offers brands huge upside. Consumers are clearly trending towards engaging brands on their own terms, and organizations that deliver a consistently positive user experience regardless of device are being rewarded with heightened brand loyalty.

Recent research by global business consulting firm L.E.K. Consulting estimates that more than 50% of U.S. consumers will be regularly using mobile devices for shopping within the next 5 years. In fact, L.E.K. reports that two-thirds of smartphone owners today have used their devices to make purchases and over 80% have used smartphones to assist in purchasing decisions through product research at least once in the past year. These numbers suggest that delivering a user-friendly, seamless and fast mobile experience is a necessity for brands that want to remain relevant with a new generation of consumers.

As the boundary between buying patterns across channels continues to blur, it becomes incumbent upon organizations to ensure a consistent message across all their customer channels – which exerts downward pressure on prices for the consumer. In the retail environment, for example, any inconsistencies in prices online and in-store can now be
identified quickly, and younger customers are demanding the lowest price from any channel. In fact, L.E.K.’s research shows that younger customers are generally prepared to use their phones to compare prices while physically standing in a store, and 20% of this group will drive to another store to buy the same product for less.

**The Tablet Emerges as an Essential Channel**

According to [recent data from IDC](#), worldwide tablet shipments reached 13.6 million units in the 2011 second quarter, and based on an improved outlook for the rest of the year IDC raised its shipment forecast for 2011 to 62.5 million units, up from a previous projection of 53.5 million units. Gartner recently released a bullish forecast that projects tablets will outsell PCs by 60% over the next four years, demonstrating that the tablet is poised to continue its major role in modern digital life.

As tablets continue to spike in marketshare, their ability to become a highly profitable revenue stream for e-commerce is emerging. In a recent [report on the tablet’s promise for e-commerce](#), Forrester points to characteristics such as the large screen, portability, and the ability to deliver richer content as primary reasons for the tablet to become an important sales channel moving forward. As such, CIOs must strive to deliver their customers a highly usable tablet experience that takes advantage of the device’s unique functionality.

**New Screens Offer Real Value**

Forward-looking brands are already experimenting with new ways to reach customers on large displays outside of the home. One of the most [innovative uses of a non-traditional display](#) to engage consumers was recently deployed by global grocery chain Tesco in South Korea, which installed out-of-home storefronts in subways with QR codes that allow people to shop for groceries with their smartphones during their commute. After scanning the codes and filling their virtual carts, Tesco employees deliver the goods directly to the home, sparing the shopper a trip to crowded South Korean grocery stores and making the daily commute infinitely more efficient.

With more and more devices entering the market and consumer adoption rates surging, businesses must be prepared for additional disruption to the way their audience consumes content. It’s clear that mobile is fast becoming a significant channel that requires continued investment just like the Web, and with the ascension of the multichannel consumer, businesses must adapt to this new reality or risk being left behind.
Xoom Corp., a 10-year-old service that lets U.S. users send money online to persons in 30 countries, on Monday introduced a mobile version of its service. The new Web site, optimized for the mobile Web, works with any mobile device with a browser and an Internet connection. “Our customers have always been able to send money at any time, now they can send money from anywhere,” said Xoom president and chief executive John Kunze in a statement.

While the mobile service just launched, early results have been “overwhelmingly positive,” says Julian King, Xoom’s senior vice president of marketing and corporate development. “Our customer base is delighted, but it’s super early.” The new service relies on technology from mobile-commerce vendor Usablenet Inc., New York.

As with Xoom’s PC-based service, senders can fund transfers with a bank account or credit or debit card. Recipients can receive their payments in cash or have them deposited into a bank account. Except for cash pickups at financial institutions or retail stores that support Xoom, the money transfers occur entirely online, unlike the case with traditional remittances. Bank-account deposits can be available for withdrawal in “minutes,” says King, as a result of agreements the San Francisco-based company has forged with financial institutions in its overseas markets.

The service, which charges $4.99 per transfer, allows users to track the status of their remittances and calculate how much recipients will receive given local exchange rates.

King tells Digital Transactions News the company introduced the mobile service to add to its convenience over brick-and-mortar remittances. Some 10% of Xoom’s user base was already using mobile devices to access the company’s service, he adds. “It’s so easy to send money online as opposed to going to a store on the store’s hours,” King says. “To send from anywhere makes a ton of sense.”
For that reason, the company is starting with a mobile Web version of its service, which can be used with any device equipped with a browser, including but not limited to smart phones. “An app might be coming,” King says, though he adds the company is not committed to this course.

King refuses to say how many users Xoom has. The service, which handles money transfers exclusively from senders in the United States to recipients in other countries, has seen its transaction volume nearly double each year over the past three to five years, King says without disclosing numbers. While Xoom early on relied on distribution agreements with banks and retailers in the U.S., it now markets its service directly to users. “The direct-to-consumer model has really taken off over the last five years,” says King.
Retailers understand the importance of having a mobile commerce-enabled site that does more than just give store hours and locations, with functionality such as personalization, social media and SMS integration, mobile coupons and video playing a big role on the mobile Web in 2011.

Here are some noteworthy sites that have launched in 2011, in no particular order.

Jewelry retailer Zales has rolled out a mobile commerce-enabled site that lets consumers browse and buy products from the company’s entire inventory. Consumers can access the mobile site by entering http://www.zales.com on their mobile browser. The mobile site is powered by Usablenet.

“Zales sees the mobile site as a bridge between our stores and our Web site that consumers can use while on the go,” said Roxane Barry, director of investor relations at Zales.

“They may be standing in our own stores looking for more product information or browsing the new collections, such as Vera Wang and Jessica Simpson, while on their morning commute,” she said "Irrespective of where they are or their immediate intent, we wanted a mobile experience that allowed our customers to quickly and easily interact with our brands.”


L.L. Bean is letting consumers shop its entire inventory of outdoor gear and apparel brand via a new commerce-enabled mobile site that was designed after much demand.

The company tapped Usablenet to power the mobile site. Consumers can access the optimized site by entering http://www.llbean.com on their mobile browser.

“We’ve dabbed our toe in mobile back in 2009 when we offered a free limited edition game,” said Laurie Brooks, senior public relations representative at L.L. Bean.
“This mobile site is really an extension of customer service. “It’s really to meet our customers where they want to shop,” she said. “We’re multichannel merchant.

“We were responding to what our customers were asking us – to have a shoppable mobile site.”


New York & Company Inc. is letting on-the-go fashion-savvy consumers shop their favorite looks via a mobile-optimized site, as well as opt-in to receive alerts for upcoming sales or offers.

The company decided to roll out the mobile site due to the overwhelming growth of consumers turning to their smartphones to make purchases. The company tapped Usablenet to power the initiative.

“Our new mcommerce site is an extension of our in-store experience and ecommerce site,” said Eran Cohen, chief marketing officer of New York & Company, New York. “As digital technology rapidly changes, New York & Company wants to ensure that our digital strategy remains flexible and stays current.

“Our new mcommerce site is the next step in the evolution of allowing our customer access to the NY&C brand wherever, whenever she wants,” he said. “Our new mcommerce site caters to the modern woman with a life on the go.”


Office products giant Staples has unveiled its mobile-optimized commerce-enabled site that not only lets consumers buy products, but also scan them for information while in-store.

The company tapped Usablenet to power its mobile site. Consumers can access the site by entering m.staples.com on their mobile browser.

“We’re committed to bringing easy to your office and we see mobile as a vehicle with unlimited possibilities on how to do that,” said Brian Tilzer, vice president of ecommerce and business development at Staples. “Our customers, especially small business owners, are constantly on the go, and are looking for ways to shop when it’s convenient for them.

“They’re increasingly turning to their mobile devices for product information, store hours and locations and customer service,” he said. “Staples knows that having a robust mobile offering
will make it easier for them to restock their office, so they can get back to running their business."


Specialty retailer Garnet Hill saw a 300 percent increase in mobile sales since the company rolled out its mcommerce site in mid-December.

Users can shop women’s apparel, children’s clothing and home décor. The mobile-optimized site was built and is powered by Usablenet.

“As smartphone adoption continues to grow significantly and mobile users become increasingly mcommerce savvy, it is necessary for retailers to have a mobile presence that extends full ecommerce,” said Nick Taylor, president of Usablenet, New York.

“Usablenet supports Garnet Hill in keeping up with the demands of their customer base by creating a new powerful channel for their customers to connect with them in the most convenient way possible,” he said.

http://www.mobilecommercedaily.com/2011/02/16/garnet-hill-mobile-sales-increase-300-percent-in-two-months
Customers of CVS/pharmacy who own a smartphone no longer have to traipse to the druggist to refill their prescriptions. CVS recently updated its iPhone and Android apps so that simply holding the smartphone’s camera above the bar code on the prescription bottle will send the refill notification to the user’s preferred CVS store.

CVS also updated its mobile commerce site, enabling consumers to manage their ExtraCare Reward accounts, a feature also included in the revised apps. Consumers can view their available loyalty points balance and ExtraCare eligible transaction history, and load ExtraCare coupons they receive via CVS emails. Users redeem the coupons in stores by tapping their ExtraCare cards against a scanner on the point of sale terminal. The card numbers are linked to their CVS accounts.

The updated m-commerce site, created by mobile technology vendor Usablenet Inc., also enables consumers to view their photo albums and to order prints to pick up in stores.

The iPhone and Android apps also include a bar code scanner function, which uses a smartphone’s built-in camera, to scan product codes to get additional information. The apps also enable users to locate a nearby CVS store by using the smartphone’s global positioning system technology.

“Our iPhone and Android apps, as well as our mobile sites, are increasingly popular among our customers,” a CVS spokesman says. “These latest mobile enhancements make it easier for those ExtraCare cardholders using smartphones to access and manage their accounts while on the go.”
Mobile is growing as a medium for ecommerce, with users sourcing deals from their phones and tablets before visiting physical stores according to a new study by Usablenet, The company which powers mobile sites for 100 top U.S. retailers including JCPenney, Aeropostale, and REI tracked 18 million page views and 1 million mobile users over Thanksgiving and Black Friday. It saw mobile traffic to its clients was up 60% from the same period last year, with Thanksgiving sending more traffic than the following day. Usablenet also found that iOS devices accounted for 42% of the traffic, trumping Android, and trouncing the tiny traffic from Windows and Nokia devices.

Earlier today, Leena reported that Black Friday online retail spending was up 24.3% this year, and that mobile increased it share of total traffic and sales. In addition to driving sales directly, though, mobile is facilitating offline sales and product pick-ups. Usablenet tells me, “Thanksgiving activity focused on finding and purchasing deals such as deals of the day, driven from email marketing along with high usage of the purchase online and pick up in-store option.”

On Black Friday, mobile usage centered around finding store locations, browsing reviews, and accessing previously saved wish lists while people walked aisles at their local merchants. These insights can help retailers plan for next year. They should look to send out email marketing and deal notices early on Thanksgiving, as that’s when people make decisions of where to shop. This could work better than distributing promotions right at the start of Black Friday when customers may have already set a shopping agenda.

Traffic by mobile operating system also mirrored sales, with iOS taking the biggest cut, but less than last year. Android is creeping up, accounting for 34% of mobile traffic up from 28% in 2010. BlackBerry still represents a respectable 15% of mobile traffic, while Windows and Nokia each made up less than 3%. If this trend continues, by next year it may be just as important for big retailers to offer Android apps as iOS ones.
New figures released by mobile platform firm Usablenet underscore the need for retailers to have mobile-optimized websites.

More than 100 leading US retailers’ mobile websites are powered by Usablenet, including the likes of JCPenney and REI, and data from recent days shows that mobile traffic to these sites was heavier on Thanksgiving Day than on Black Friday.

Mobile traffic was found to be up 160% from the same period in 2010.

Why? Because, says the mobile platform firm, people were spending the day seeking out deals ahead of visiting stores on Black Friday.

The statistics further push the message to retailers that a mobile-optimized website is essential. However as Jason Taylor, Usablenet VP of technology, told Econsultancy, just 25% of the top 200 retailers have one.

It won't be long before Cyber Monday figures are released. The number of shoppers who planned to use their smartphones or other mobile device on Cyber Monday continues to rise, as does device adoption.

In just two years, the number of Americans saying they would use their mobile device to shop on Cyber Monday has nearly tripled from just 3.6 million (3.8%) in 2009 to 17.8 million (14.5%) in 2011.

While many of the newer smartphones and, of course, the iPhone, render standard websites with no real issue, most consumers still require a mobile-specific option.

Here are five tips to ensure your mobile website meets expectations.

1. Keep it simple

The golden rule of mobile website content is "less is more". Cut out unnecessary images, or give visitors the option of whether to view them.
2. **Cut down clicks**

Make information is easily reachable without the need for excessive clicks or typing.

3. **Hone the homepage**

Consider what features customers find most important to the mobile shopping experience and highlight them on the homepage.

4. **Be finger-friendly**

Touch screens are becoming more widespread. Users will be using their fingers to navigate. Make sure content and links are large and clear to make navigating the site hassle-free.

5. **Test**

What looks great on one device may be a complete turn-off on another, so test mobile websites on as many platforms as possible.
As consumer adoption of smartphones continues its meteoric rise, organizations are now confronted with the challenge of developing a comprehensive mobile strategy that reaches a new generation of global consumers who are increasingly using the mobile Web as a primary gateway to the Internet. In August 2011, for example, five global markets (Singapore, UK, U.S., Japan, Australia) had more than 5 percent of Internet traffic coming from non-computer devices, with Singapore leading the way at 7.2 percent, according to the recent Comscore Digital Omnivores report.

To capitalize on this global opportunity, businesses must overcome various international differences to effectively scale their mobile presence and reach a large, global audience. These include differences in devices and networks, the need to support different languages, and methods of payments for mobile commerce, as well as the infrastructure required to support a global mobile presence.

This article will explore how organizations can successfully scale their mobile websites for a global audience as well as the factors they need to consider when doing so.

**International Differences in Devices and Network Infrastructure**

First and foremost, it is important for businesses to recognize the international differences in both mobile devices and wireless networks. There are a lot of inexpensive, basic devices in use by consumers in emerging markets, with less power, options and lower browser capabilities than smartphones like the iPhone — with many devices based on Android, Windows and Nokia Symbian operating systems. When conducting market testing, it’s imperative to identify these different devices and make sure you are optimizing your mobile site to fit them.

Another important factor to consider when developing a global mobile strategy is that wireless network infrastructures vary depending on country, causing mobile sites to interact differently based on the network and location. For instance, wireless networks in the U.S. are run predominately on CDMA technology, whereas GSM enjoys a nearly 82 percent market share.
globally. In Japan, for example, the predominant wireless network is NTT’s DoCoMo, an entirely different network than what is found in the U.S. and other countries, with unique format.

Global hotel chain Hyatt is a great example of a company that has scaled its international mobile presence along with its business. The Asian market is extremely important for Hyatt, and it recently demonstrated the primary role the mobile Web plays among consumers in those markets by extending Chinese and Japanese language mobile sites that support DoCoMo’s iMode mobile Internet service and other top networks in Asia.

**Language Support**

When developing a global-friendly mobile strategy, it is imperative that the phone’s GPS immediately recognizes a visitor’s physical location, and in turn, displays the corresponding language. With smartphone usage at an all-time high, it is crucial that organizations make their mobile sites available in multiple languages to reach their global consumer base. Without support for multiple languages in the top international markets, businesses are limiting the number of potential customers that can access crucial information about their products and services, potentially alienating those speaking languages that are not supported and leading to lost revenue.

Shipping giant FedEx is a great example of a company that has executed multiple language support on its mobile site to allow its global customer base to handle all their shipping needs, no matter where they are in the world. In fact, FedEx’s mobile optimized site currently supports 205 countries and 22 languages worldwide, a number that signifies the importance FedEx places on having a first-rate international mobile presence.

**Payment Options**

We’ve seen a huge shift in consumer behavior as more and more global shoppers are researching products and purchasing items on their smartphones. For example, four out of five U.S. smartphone owners use their devices to help with shopping, according to a 2011 Google/Ipsos study. And recent data published in October highlights the growth of the mobile commerce sector in the UK. During Q2 2011, visits to e-commerce sites from mobile devices accounted for 7 percent of overall traffic, up from an average of 1.4 percent in 2010.

With this global consumer shift comes the need to provide a seamless mobile shopping experience that is able to process transactions from international shoppers that use different currencies. One very important way to do this is by offering payment options that accept
multiple currency types, especially for customers located in a country where the currency differs from common standards such as the EUR or USD.

PayPal is a great example of a company that offers its users multiple currency types, allowing global customers to send money in their native currency. PayPal’s mobile-optimized site allows users to send money in 190 countries and supports 24 different currency types, reflecting the experience users are accustomed to on the traditional PayPal site.

**Mobile Is the Future**

As more and more consumers around the world continue to use their smartphones for essential tasks on a daily basis, it is crucial for organizations to scale their mobile presence to support a plugged-in, global audience. Doing so will allow organizations to set themselves apart from their competitors and continue to scale their global user base. With differences in devices, network infrastructure, payment options and more, it is essential for organizations to ensure their mobile sites are equipped to perform to their optimal capabilities regardless of country or region.
Catalog and online retailer Oriental Trading Co. recently launched a mobile site in time for the holidays to make it easy for on-the-go shoppers to purchase party supplies and gift items.

Oriental Trading wants to enhance the shopping experience for the growing numbers of busy consumers who shop via their mobile devices. The retailer’s new mobile site features quick navigation that enables users to browse products by category and make purchases from the brand’s entire inventory.

“As our customers have expanded their use of smartphones when shopping, we developed a mobile site to support these devices and provide a best-in-class shopping experience,” said Angela Drew, a spokeswoman for Oriental Trading, Omaha, NE.

“Our mobile site provides a better search, browsing and shopping experience compared to viewing the full site on a smart phone,” she said.

“Our goals is to be where our customers are in their shopping experience and drive incremental revenue as the percentage of customers using smartphones increases.”

**PayPal support**

The new Oriental Trading mobile site also features check-out support from PayPal and other payment options as well as a Catalog Quick Order option so users can easily search and purchase items based on their catalog product number.

Customers can also log in to manage their account and check their order status.

The new mobile site was designed in partnership with mobile platform company Usablenet.

Oriental Trading sells value-priced party suppliers, arts and crafts, toys, school supplies and giftware.

As smartphone penetration continues to grow and more consumers shop via mobile, it is important for retailers such as Oriental Trading to have a mobile site to reach a broad mobile audience.
“Consumers are now mobile in the sense that they are engaging with retail brands on their own terms, from any device, and with smartphone adoption in the U.S. surging toward 50 percent and more shoppers turning to their mobile devices to research products and make purchases, it’s essential for retailers to offer their customers a seamless way to shop on-the-go,” said Nick Taylor, CEO of Usablenet, New York.

“By introducing an optimized mobile site with seamless navigation and functionality, Oriental Trading is now able to deliver convenience and value to smartphone users anywhere, anytime,” he said.
Thanksgiving Weekend Retail by the Numbers
November 28, 2011

Analysts have been predicting holiday sales increases of 3 percent for the 2011 holiday season—and they’re sticking to those forecasts—but there’s no denying that Black Friday started the season off with a lot of swagger.

Here’s a look at five surprises that took place over a shopping weekend that while marred by violence, was a good one overall for retailers.

A big Thanksgiving Weekend Increase

Gas prices might be up, but consumers seemed undeterred from spending. Drawn in by deep discounts and early store openings over Thanksgiving weekend, retail sales were up 16.7 percent over the same four-day period a year ago to $52.4 billion, according to the National Retail Federation. People spent an average of $398.62 over the four days, up significantly from $365.34 last year, the NRF said.

Turkey, Stuffing, Shopping?

Thanksgiving remains a day to get together with family and friends to feast, but it's also increasingly becoming a day to shop. According to IBM Coremetrics fourth annual Black Friday Benchmark, Thanksgiving 2011 online sales were up 39 percent over Thanksgiving 2010. The NRF reported that 28.7 million people shopped online and at stores on Thanksgiving Day, up from 22.2 million last year. What’s more, according to Responsys, 75 percent of major retailers sent promotional emails on Thanksgiving Day, up from 60 percent in 2010 and 45 percent in 2009.

Department Store Coup

Online sales for department stores, spurred by deals and promotions, were up 59 percent on Black Friday compared to last year. That’s according to IBM Coremetrics fourth annual Black Friday Benchmark which tracks more than a million transactions a day, analyzing terabytes of raw data from 500 retailers nationwide.

Going shopping on Facebook
According to online comparison shopping site Nextag, 5 percent of shoppers spent Black Friday doing their shopping on Facebook.

**Mobile Shopping**

PayPal saw a six-fold (516 percent) increase in global mobile payment volume on Black Friday 2011 compared to Black Friday 2010. During the two-day period of Thanksgiving and Black Friday, Usablenet, which powers the mobile sites for more than 100 top U.S. retailers including JCPenney, Aeropostale, PacSun and REI, said mobile traffic was up 160 percent from the same period in 2010 with mobile usage heavier on Thanksgiving day than Black Friday, as consumers used mobile devices to find the deals online Thursday.
Early figures from US online retailers show that mobile traffic over Thanksgiving was up 160% on last year.

The statistics from mobile platform company Usablenet show that traffic was actually heavier on Thanksgiving day than on ‘Black Friday’, which is traditionally seen as the busiest shopping day.

Usablenet, which powers the mobile sites for more than 100 US retailers (as well as M&S, John Lewis and others), says this is because consumers were searching for deals on Thursday before heading to the shops on Friday.

Black Friday usage turned to supporting instore activity such as find locations, reviews and to access saved wish lists.

Jason Taylor, Usablenet VP of technology, said that the figures should be a wake up call for retailers who don’t have mobile optimised websites:

"Even now about 25% of the companies in the top 200 retailers don’t have mobile sites, so they are missing out on traffic and conversions."

Usablenet doesn’t track the amount of transactions that take place through its mobile sites, but Taylor said reports suggest that mobile payments are increasing as consumers become more comfortable with the technology.

Though the statistics are for US retailers, Taylor believes the growth rate for mobile traffic on UK sites is likely to be even higher.
"We tend to find that the number of UK retailers with mobile sites is 18 months to two years behind the US, but the number of consumers ready to use mobile is rocketing so the demand is there."

Statistics we reported earlier this month show that 70% of UK companies are yet to launch mobile optimised sites, though 38 out of the nation's top 50 retailers are already mobile optimised.

And in the run up to Christmas several retailers have started to utilise mobile to drive traffic to their websites or attract consumers into stores.

House of Fraser has announced a tie up with O2 to launch a multichannel campaign which utilises a range of O2’s services, and John Lewis is currently trialling a virtual shop window in Waitrose Brighton that uses QR codes to link consumers to its website.

Usablenet took a sampling of 120m pages and 8m users that its platform servered over the two days, and these stats are further evidence that a comprehensive mobile strategy is integral to a retailer’s marketing activities.
M-commerce technology provider Usablenet Inc. is the power behind the throne of the top performers on this week’s Keynote Mobile Commerce Performance Index. Four of the top five retailers on the index—Dell Inc., Walgreen Co., CVS Caremark Corp. and Victoria’s Secret Direct—are Usablenet clients.

Mobile and web performance management firm Keynote Systems Inc. measures the load time—the amount of time it takes for a page to travel from a server to a smartphone and load completely—and success rate—the percentage of the time a page loads successfully—of the m-commerce site home pages of 30 representative retailers. This week, however, two retailers—Dell and Walgreens—presented splash pages first instead of the home page. A splash page promotes a special deal or a new feature; in both cases this week, the splash pages promoted the retailers’ mobile apps. Splash pages typically are lighter in the total number of kilobytes and thus may load faster than some home pages, depending on design.

Dell Inc. came in first on the index for the week ending Nov. 27 with a load time of 3.82 seconds and a success rate of 99.35% for a score of 993 out of 1,000. Sears Holdings Corp., which builds its m-commerce offerings in-house, came in second with a load time of 3.49 seconds and a success rate of 98.90% for a score of 968. Walgreens came in third with a load time of 5.65 seconds and a success rate of 99.33% for a score of 953. CVS came in fourth with a load time of 5.19 seconds and a success rate of 98.99% for a score of 938. And Victoria’s Secret came in fifth with a load time of 6.67 seconds and a success rate of 99.23% for a score of 925.

The index average load time was 9.39 seconds, the average success rate was 97.61% and the average score was 750.

Usablenet says its sites perform well because of the way it handles JavaScript and Cascading Style Sheets through its cloud mobile commerce platform. JavaScript is a web language used in designing sites. Cascading Styles Sheets define where elements such as images and text
appear on a web page. A cloud is a group of web servers used to store data or perform functions.

“The Usablenet platform moves the majority of JavaScript needed on its mobile sites to the server side within the cloud. This results in the mobile end user getting a very light, fast page with limited need to download heavy JavaScript,” says Jason Taylor, vice president of mobile products. “In addition the Usablenet cloud-based platform determines the device being used and adjusts the image type and size according to the specific phone, along with optimized Cascading Styles Sheets so the pages are maximized for mobile device use.”

Click here and then click on Keynote Mobile Commerce Performance Index Part 1 and Part 2 to see this week’s complete results for all 30 retailers on the index.

Keynote Systems measures 30 representative m-commerce sites exclusively for Internet Retailer. The sites include merchants in various categories and channels, and of various sizes, ranging from such giants as Amazon.com Inc., Sears Holdings Corp. and 1-800-Flowers.com Inc., to midsized retailers like Sunglass Hut and Toolfetch.com LLC. Keynote tests the sites in the index every hour Monday through Sunday from 8 a.m. through midnight Eastern time, emulating four different smartphones on four different wireless networks: Apple Inc.’s iPhone 4 on AT&T, the HTC Evo on Sprint, the BlackBerry Curve on T-Mobile and the Droid X on Verizon. The HTC Evo and the Droid X run Google Inc.’s Android operating system. Keynote runs the tests in Chicago, Dallas, New York and San Francisco.

Keynote combines a site’s load time and success rate, equally weighted, into a single score. Given that both performance and availability are important, the score reflects the overall quality of the home page; a higher score indicates better performance. Scores also reflect how close sites are to each other in overall quality. The index average score is the midpoint among all the sites’ scores.
Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority enhances mobile site for easier access to information
November 29, 2011

The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority has rolled out a new mobile-optimized site to let consumers stay on top of transportation information.

MBTA decided to refresh the mobile site after seeing a significant growth in mobile traffic over the past year. The mobile site is powered by Usablenet.

“Web traffic to MBTA.com has grown dramatically in recent years – especially when there is a major event,” said Joshua Rubin, director of innovation and special projects at the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, Boston.

“The MBTA wanted to freshen up its mobile site and improve customer’s access to information on the go,” he said. “Over the last few years, the MBTA has worked to release a lot of data to independent developers to build apps and services.

“This site is a piece of the MBTA’s strategy to get customers information where they are, when they need it – and the site is a great way to connect with customers via the new mobile customer comment form.”

Mobile information
Consumers can access the mobile site by entering http://www.mbta.com into their mobile browser.

The mobile site provides a list of trip planning apps, which were created by outside developers.

The mobile site also features Google Maps integration to enhance the user’s ability to plan a trip.

Consumers can stay up-to-date on travel information via the mobile site

“The previous version of our mobile site had not been upgraded since late 2006 – an eternity in mobile,” Mr. Rubin said. “The MBTA was looking for a site that would leverage modern Web technologies.
“MBTA.com already has extremely high traffic so our goal here was to give people a better product when they come to the site,” he said.

**Features**
The enhanced mobile site also features a Mobile Customer Comment Form that lets consumers report concerns such as buses that fail to show and issues with the transit stops.

Via the new feature, consumers can send comments while on the go.

“A big piece of the MBTA’s strategy is making it easier for customers to get information where they are,” Mr. Rubin said.

“We know our customers increasingly have mobile device and want to leverage those device to get riders quality information,” he said.
Lacoste is letting fashion-savvy consumers browse and buy the season’s latest looks via a new mobile-optimized site.

Via the mobile site, consumers can search, browse, research and buy products no matter where they are. The mobile site is powered by Usablenet.

“We wanted to give our customers the opportunity to experience the brand in a new way,” said Steve Birkhold, president/CEO of Lacoste.

“We’ve given our social properties a great deal of prominence to ensure that customers can quickly discover what’s happening in the world of Lacoste,” he said. “One key element, the Store Locator, is strongly featured so that customers browsing and researching our new collection can easily find a location nearest to them and view the collection in person.

“The site’s transactional function is obviously important as well, but was a secondary concern in our development.”

Lacoste, built on its genuine sporting roots, offers a wide range of products for men, women and children.

On trend
Consumers can access the mobile site by entering m.shop.lacoste.com on their mobile browser.

According to Lacoste, the new mobile initiative bridges users’ online and offline brand experiences.

Via the mobile site, consumers can shop by category such as men’s, women’s, kids and accessories.

There is also a search function at the top of the mobile site that helps consumers filter down their search to a specific product.

The function is essential for those that are on the go and are looking for something specific.
The mobile site also features social integration such as Twitter, Facebook and foursquare. Consumers can share the products they like with friends and family and also check-in to the store.

“10 years ago customers were online while sitting at their computers,” Mr. Birkhold said. “Today, they’re online when they’re walking down the street.

“As a retailer, we need to be where they are, and mobile gives our customers the opportunity to quickly and easily browse and research product, find the nearest retail location and interact in social.”

**Word of mouth**
Lacoste is getting the word out about the mobile site to consumers via an email blast. Additionally, the company is using Twitter and running mobile ads to get consumers engaged with the mobile site.

“Considering the close tie-in to the retail business, we’ll also be updating our listings in Google Places shortly,” Mr. Birkhold said. “In the past the question has been, ‘what are doing to drive our online business?’

“We now ask ‘what are we doing online to drive our entire business?’” he said. “We’re building a bridge between the online and offline worlds so that our customer can interact with the brand no matter where they are.

“Our new mobile site is a big part of that strategy.”
British retailers make up three of the four top-ranked m-commerce sites in Keynote System's latest Mobile Retail Index World Edition. All three are powered by mobile platform firm Usablenet.

Yesterday I reported on new data illustrating the need to optimize email messages for mobile. Today a new report highlights the need to optimize websites for mobile users, too.

Keynote Systems’ Mobile Retail Index World Edition ranks global m-commerce sites based on key performance indicators such as load time and success rates. The latest index shows that British retailers are leading the way in m-commerce.

Marks & Spencer is the number one ranking retailer with a load time of almost half that of the average - 4.86 seconds versus an average 9.55 seconds. The department store also registered a 100% success rate (average 92.72%).

In third place globally is supermarket Tesco with a 5.88 second load time and another 100% success rate.

Mobile platform company Usablenet powers the above British retailers plus many more in US. The firm released mobile retail figures from across the pond in the US earlier this week. Their data shows that mobile traffic to many of the retailers they manage, including REI and JCPenney, was heavier on Thanksgiving Day than on Black Friday.

Mobile traffic was found to be up 160% from the same period in 2010.

Why? Because, says the mobile platform firm, people were spending the day seeking out deals ahead of visiting stores on Black Friday.
4 Ways to Make Mobile Site User-Friendly for the Holidays
December 05, 2011

By Jason Taylor

Mobile commerce is exploding due to the growing number of consumers who are turning to their smartphones to browse, research and purchase products. However, it is over the holidays when we see an extreme spike in activity on mobile devices as a result of last-minute shopping and traveling. To maximize conversion from the staggering amount of traffic that retailers receive from mobile devices over the holidays, retailers must continue to innovate and invest in a mobile strategy that fully engages consumers.

According to the 2011 Deloitte Annual Holiday Survey, among the 42% of consumers who own smartphones, 27% will use their devices when shopping for the holidays. We are progressively seeing consumers turn to their phones as a way of both staying informed and saving money — especially during the holiday shopping season. Whether it is finding store locations, price comparisons, product information, product reviews or even making purchases, customers are increasingly relying on their smartphones, tablets and other connected devices as a go-to resource for all their shopping needs.

Retailers should use the mobile Web to further engage with consumers by creating a convenient shopping experience that offers the same features and functionalities as the desktop Web. Here are the top ways that retailers can make their mobile sites user-friendly in time for the holiday season.

1. Elevate the Site's Aesthetics Customers are attracted to visually appealing websites that are easy to navigate and maintain consistency with the overall brand aesthetic. To accomplish this, retailers should take advantage of next-generation HTML5 technologies that enhance the overall look-and-feel of the mobile site, including:
• Dynamic scrolling promotions: Retail brands should incorporate scrolling banners on their homepage that target shoppers with specific promotions or special offers that are designed to simplify the mobile shopping experience and maximize the smartphone’s small screen.

• High-resolution image galleries: Online shoppers want to see high-quality images of products they are considering purchasing, and the image browsing experience on smartphones is continuing to improve. For instance, next-generation HTML5 mobile sites allow retailers to display high resolution images galleries that enable users to scroll, swipe and “tap-tap zoom” to get a closer view of individual products.

2. Expedite Purchasing with Next-Generation Carts To further expedite mobile purchasing during the busy season, retailers can incorporate new innovative shopping cart functionality that displays a slide-down notification window of items in a shopper’s cart when items are added to cart. Shoppers can view totals, edit quantities and manage their cart without leaving the page they are currently on. This removes additional steps, reducing the number of pages loaded, and encourages a seamless checkout experience — all leading to increased conversions for retailers. The notification window disappears after a few seconds, allowing shoppers to continue shopping without disruption; or choose to check-out if they decide to do so.

3. Incorporate Social Sharing Capabilities The Deloitte study also shows that 45% of consumers use their smartphones to read product reviews and 35% of consumers use their smartphones to access social media. This makes it crucial for retailers to incorporate the ability to read and write product reviews, as well as social sharing features via Facebook and Twitter, to their mobile sites. Incorporating social features like product reviews gives consumers the ability to easily share products with their social networks, enabling them to become champions for your brand.

4. Offer Mobile-Only Discounts Exclusive discounts that are available only on mobile apps or sites are a great way to further engage with consumers and make them feel valued. Searching for better prices via mobile phone is becoming more and more common, especially around the holidays, and offering savvy shoppers discounts will lead to more mobile purchases. To encourage increased in-store traffic, retailers should also incorporate location-based functionality into their mobile sites and apps that push special offers to customers based on their physical proximity to the store. The PacSun iPhone app is a great example of a retailer that is using the smartphone’s internal GPS to offer shoppers targeted events and sales based on their physical location.
By incorporating these mobile Web optimization tactics, retailers can deliver consumers a seamless mobile shopping experience during the chaotic holiday season. Additionally, the emergence of HTML5 allows retailers to deliver consumers a next-generation mobile experience that makes mobile shopping easier and more engaging than ever before.

Jason Taylor is head of platform strategy and innovation at Usablenet.
National discount retailer Dollar Tree recently launched an optimized mobile commerce site to enable shoppers to make purchases via their smartphones. Powered by Usablenet, the new Dollar Tree mobile site offers users the ability to browse and purchase from Dollar Tree’s inventory with the option to pick the order up from the nearest store or have the items delivered to their home. The e-Commerce site utilizes HTML5 features such as expandable and collapsible menus that improve site navigation while maximizing the smartphone’s small screen design.

“Dollar Tree understands the importance of extending its brand to mobile and creating another way for consumers to engage with them on the go,” said Nick Taylor, CEO, Usablenet. “As more and more shoppers are using smartphones as a tool to research, browse, and purchase products on their own terms, Dollar Tree has partnered with Usablenet to offer consumers a seamless mobile shopping experience that takes advantage of the smartphone's small screen design and unique capabilities. The new mobile site is intended to provide the substantial traffic visiting Dollar Tree from mobile devices an optimized experience.”
John Lewis today launched its new iPhone app, following the retailer’s announcement last month that it will provide free wi-fi in all of its stores.

Created in partnership with Usablenet, Red Laser technology and The Drum’s top digital agency of 2011, Sapientnitro, the app lets users scan barcodes in-store to access product information, read and compare reviews and browse the full John Lewis catalogue.

Out of stock products can be ordered for collection or delivery using the app, and there is GPS functionality to locate the nearest John Lewis store.

Sean O’Conner, head of online delivery and customer experience at John Lewis, said the new app is part of the retailer’s joined-up multichannel approach, that it will complement rather than replace physical aspects of the John Lewis business.

“We recognise that up to a third of customers using our mobile website research shop information and even more research products online before buying,” said O’Conner.

“This app is designed to ensure they have everything they need to make an informed purchase, whether they are in-store, on the train to work, or at home on the sofa.”
Beyond the app and mobile web strategy -- what else should brands do with mobile?
December 19, 2011

This is a guest article by Jason Taylor, head of platform strategy and innovation at Usablenet.

Because travelers are inherently “mobile”, it’s natural that travel companies have been early adopters in mobile, often blazing the trail in the mobile industry.

They were the first to have a transactional mobile site, first to leverage mobile apps, first to reach a global audience, and so forth.

By understanding the mobile traveler’s behavior, companies can leverage different mobile technologies to create new experiences that ease a traveler’s journey.

A notification strategy, for instance, is a great way to capitalize on existing technologies that can benefit the mobile traveler.

This article outlines top tips on how travel brands can use push notifications, SMS, and email notifications to maximize their customer engagement in the travel space.

1. Pushing information to plugged-in users

Push notifications is a native functionality in an app, where data can be sent to a user’s smartphone based on their location. Even if the app is closed, these messages can pop up on the user’s home screen to alert users with targeted messages.

This provides an effective way for travel companies to notify consumers of the latest travel warnings, deals, offers, flight changes, and more.

Delta Airlines is a great example of a travel company that has not only been successful in its overall mobile presence but has also effectively used push notifications that add value to the traveler.

In the era of smartphones, Delta recognized the importance of providing their customers with up-to-the-minute travel alerts, incorporating push notifications into their native app that immediately updates travelers with relevant flight information, warnings, deals, and more.
2. Texting campaigns have a real impact

With the rapid expansion of mobile broadband and wireless technology, travel companies have found that SMS allows them to effectively communicate with consumers in both a personal and timely manner.

Consumers must opt in to receive SMS alerts, ensuring that travel brands only send messages to consumers who are receptive to receiving them. SMS is an extremely effective means for travel companies to interact with consumers on an ongoing basis to deepen brand loyalty.

The Hilton Hotel Group has successfully leveraged text messaging to increase guest numbers to its hotels and build customer loyalty. SMS enables Hilton to instantly send out important marketing messages such as on-site specials and promotions, at the most appropriate time of day.

As a result of their text messaging efforts, the hotel has seen a 10-25% increase in offer redemptions, an increase in conversion that is a direct result of putting relevant content in front of the right people.

Similarly, Delta Airlines uses text messages as a way to keep travelers up to speed on crucial flight information. Users can choose to subscribe and get updates on all flights, or receive a one-time alert on a specific flight.

Both options provide users with up-to-the minute alerts on flight cancellations, delays, and schedule changes.

3. Maximizing email notifications in mobile

With more than 20% of email marketing messages read on mobile devices, it’s essential for travel brands make sure that all links users visit from their smartphones direct them to a mobile optimized view of the site.

Additionally, deep links, which are links that bring users to a subsection of the website beyond the homepage, must also be optimized for mobile in order to maximize the traffic that is driven to the site from mobile devices.

For example, if a smartphone user follows a link from an email campaign that directs them to the standard desktop page view, they are likely to be discouraged by the slower load time and having to zoom in to properly engage with the promotion.

This reduces the change that the customer will convert and will decrease the likelihood of them engaging with the brand via mobile in the future.
US Airways is a great example of a travel company that has been leveraging the advantages of notifications. Through its flight notification system, BeNotified, travelers can sign up to receive emails with up-to-the minute departure, arrival, delay and cancellation information.

With email marketing messages increasingly read from mobile phones, all travel companies must ensure that their email notifications support links that direct readers to a version of the site properly formatted, regardless of the device they’re using at the time.

4. Use mobile to deliver timely content to travelers

Simply offering an optimized mobile site is no longer sufficient in fully engaging and retaining customers. In order to set themselves apart from competitors, travel companies must find new ways to actively engage and add value to their customers who are constantly on-the-go.

Offering an optimized mobile presence is a first step, but travel companies can build on this by actively delivering relevant information to the customer in a timely and effective manner.

Strategically incorporating tactics like push notifications, SMS, and email notifications allow travel companies to do just that.
Watch and jewelry retailer Ashford.com is aiming to increase its sales this holiday season via a new mobile-optimized, commerce-enabled site.

The company decided to launch a mobile site after it saw more consumers accessing its Web site via a mobile device. The mobile site is powered by Usablenet.

“Our business is booming,” said Joel Katz, chief operating officer at Ashford.com, New York. “With increased traffic and transactions – and the approaching holidays – we knew we had to offer a mobile-optimized experience this year.

“We turned to Usablenet due to its strong reputation and commitment to deliver in time for the holiday rush,” he said. “We have successfully implemented their solution for mobile devices and will create a tablet-friendly version of the site after the New Year.

“Although our site has many robust features, we focused on keeping the experience simple, elegant and easy to use.”

Ashford.com is a luxury retailer of watches and jewelry that sells up to 80 percent off retail prices.

Mobile shopping
Consumers can access the mobile site by entering http://www.ashford.com on their mobile browser.

Consumers can shop by brand, specific jewelry, new arrivals and clearance.

Additionally, there is a search function at the top of the site that helps consumers look for a specific item, which is great for users looking for something specific.

“Watches and jewelry, our primary product categories, are popular gift items and an emotional purchase,” Mr. Katz said. “We’ve found that gift givers and our broader customer base like to research and view watches multiple times, often while on the go.”
“By giving them another touch point and greater access to our products we’re helping them get comfortable that they are making the right purchase and giving the right gift,” he said.

“Our mobile traffic is approaching 10 percent of site visitors we knew we wanted to make it easier for shoppers receiving our emails and finding us online to quickly research and complete their purchases.”

**Key features**

Other features of the mobile site include a full mobile checkout with PayPal and Vault Promo pricing for members.

Ashford will also be launching a version of its site for iPads and tablets after the New Year to reach its growing population.

“In the last year, we’ve been heavily focused on improving the customer experience, including major design updates and overhauling our checkout process and on-site search,” Mr. Katz said.

“The mobile experience lagged, however, due to our lack of a mobile-optimized site,” he said. “We’ve changed that with our mobile launch, and plan to take it one step further with our upcoming tablet-optimized version.”