



YOU MAY NOT FINISH READING THIS ARTICLE

By IMD Professor Carlos Cordon and Pau Garcia-Milà – June 2015

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There is a big chance you will not finish this article if you are reading it on a mobile phone. And there is a big chance that that is indeed where you are reading it.

In 2014, 25% of all Internet connections were made from mobile devices. This means that within a short period of time (if not already), more than half the visits to your website will be via mobile phones.

So how does your company website look on a mobile phone? Remember, Google searches penalize websites that are not well adapted to mobiles. The bad news is that even if your website is well adapted and provides a version easily readable on mobile phones that will not be enough. A responsive website, one that adapts fonts, photographs and visual layout automatically to the mobile screen, will not in itself be sufficient to retain the customer's attention, sales will not grow and time per session from mobile phones will fall disastrously short of time per session from computers.

The good news is that Big Data can fix this. When a user accesses our website we gain a lot of information about them. By analysing this information, we can discover the type of user and, for example, whether they are potential buyers of our products, potential investors for the company or potential new suppliers (or just our mother looking for our office phone number). Instead of showing the same products to every customer, we can use the market knowledge provided by Big Data to offer each customer the products that fits them best.

How can we know all this? Let's take a look at the information we receive when someone visits our website. We know the browser they are using, the operating system and the screen resolution of the device. From the IP address we also get an idea of the geographical location. Someone using an Android 2.3.3 smartphone, with its default browser and a 300px widescreen device, might have paid less than USD 100 or even nothing. On the other hand, if a visitor is using the latest version of Safari mobile and an iOS 8 device, with a screen resolution of 1242 pixels, their phone cost USD 750 or more. We should offer different things to these people, shouldn't we?

Zero concentration

Once we grasp the importance of offering different information to different users, there is just one more thing we need to understand about how users employ mobile phones when surfing the Internet. Mobile browsing brings with it constant interruptions, which can lead to zero concentration. And we must deal with that.

Imagine you go to the office and you see the person you want to talk to looking carefully at a website on his or her desktop computer. You stick your head between them and the screen and start yelling: "You will stop reading right now because I want to talk to you". Sounds odd, right? Well, this is exactly what happens when someone is deciding whether to buy a product from a website they accessed on their mobile phone and they are interrupted by an incoming call. The website suddenly disappears and the phone starts ringing loudly, telling the user to stop reading and to answer.

And who is responsible for the potentially lost sale? There is only one guilty person: the website creator. Every second a user spends reading useless information on the site raises the chances that they will be interrupted by a call and that they will forget about our products and our website.

If you reached this part of the article and you are reading it on a mobile phone, we must say “Thank you”. Thanks to you and also to the 215 contacts on your phone, plus 30 insurance companies, 25 car companies and 15 strangers that did not call you in the middle of reading it. Thanks to the taxi driver who is taking you to the airport for not getting you to your destination before you had finished. Thanks too to the birds of the city for not getting up close to you and distracting you.

And for those who did not reach this point, “Don’t worry”, it is our fault: we wrote an article that could not be read in just a few seconds.

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