



## Attitude of Limkokwing Students toward Mobile Marketing in the Smartphones Era

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### ABSTRACT

The growing access to mobile internet, added to the arrival of smartphones, has caused a real technological revolution in the mobile marketing industry. This study aims to investigate the attitude of Limkokwing students toward mobile marketing in the smartphone era. A total of 281 students have participated in this study. The finding of this study confirmed that some incentives can not only change the negative attitude towards mobile marketing but also that it is accepted by users. On the other hand, the fact those users have control over permits also positively affects this issue, while at the same time creating an institutional trust that is perceived by consumers as a positive and relevant signal.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the new millennium mobile phones have experienced an explosive career, managing to get into people's lives, quickly becoming an accessory that is practically irreplaceable and essential for the majority of the population. At first, the mere fact of transforming communication and particularly telephony, taking it to a wireless, transportable and personal device, was a revolution; but for several years that this concept was widely overcome, evolving towards an integration of technologies that can be found today in these units, such as internet, mobility, communication, services, location and dereferencing, among many others, which has created a series of new business opportunities thus calling marketing professionals to investigate and learn about this new possible world that delivers the era of Smartphones (Cheung and To, 2017).

Several studies have provided data that support the enormous magnitude of this new era, showing that the scope of mobile marketing (or mobile marketing) is large and growing. Access to mobile networks is available to 90% of the world's population (Deville et al., 2014), while mobile internet connections are fast overtaking fixed connections, which is mainly explained by the increased penetration of smartphones, which at the end of 2012 reached 1.2 billion and it is expected that by 2018 there will be 4.5 billion smartphones worldwide, which in relative terms would be that for every three people that exist in the world, there will be two smartphones. The IDC consultancy estimated that by the end of 2013 there would be 6.6 million smartphones (Jahanshir et al., 2017), while Cisco projects that in 2017 the number of smartphones will reach 16 million (Index, 2015).

In addition, in the same report indicates that for that year there would be 35 million devices of any type connected to mobile internet, of which 45% of them will be smartphones, far exceeding functional or non-intelligent mobile phones, which would have only 20% of the share of this market. For its part, the Gartner company produced a report in which it indicates that by 2014 the global spending on mobile advertising will reach 18,000 million dollars, experiencing a growth of 38% compared to the previous year, where an expenditure of almost 13,100 million dollars, while for 2017 the market will reach almost 42 billion dollars (Doorey et al., 2017), which clearly shows that it is a nascent market of enormous potential which is still far from finding a ceiling.

The smartphones undoubtedly came to stay exhibiting an immense opportunity for the development of mobile marketing, which before its arrival, in 2007, presented a limited functionality to perform almost exclusively on text messages via SMS, while now the possibilities they are huge and the attraction immense (Gana and Thomas, 2016).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Prior to the arrival of smartphones, or even before a phone could be connected to the internet, mobile marketing focused and was mainly based on text messages or SMS, thanks to which companies or advertisers could communicate with consumers. In a personal and directed way, sending them information, publicity and even interacting with them (to the extent that this technology allows it) (Doorey et al., 2017). This was understood as a form of one-on-one marketing where communication was directed towards each of the clients in question and could be very customizable, through which brands could promote goods, services and even ideas through them. But not only to deliver an advertising message serves this technology, but has also been used in television and radio programs that interact with audiences, either through a contest, a survey or even for voting on live programs; to track deliveries or deliveries, consulting in which state is a shipment; or to remind customers that they must update their insurance or other personal account, that their balance is about to run out or that their subscription expires in a certain time.

However, the SMS-based approach has serious limitations that have influenced to create a negative perception on the part of the consumers, since often they feel that receiving these messages can be quite irritating, especially if they are received with a high frequency (Al-Allak, 2012), that could even cause them to perceive them as spam; to be an invasion of their privacy, since they see their devices as personal and are annoyed to see them interrupted by messages alien to their permission or control; they feel distrust towards this type of contents when seeing that their privacy was invaded along with the fact of thinking about the possible scams that have been realized by means of these means; and the fact that to answer a company and continue communication has a cost, such as voting in a live television program, creates a very strong rejection by the recipients (AL-ALLAK et al., 2011a).

But not everything is negative, and currently there are many merchants who see in SMS messaging opportunities and advantages that offer them considerable benefits. For example, given the high fragmentation of segments in which markets are located, SMS messaging allows access to niches that are difficult to access with other channels, such as younger ones, so this option allows reaching segments that are far away from it (Al-Allak et al., 2011b). Time that offers massiveness almost unthinkable compared too many other media. On the other hand, there are no studies that demonstrate significantly that campaigns carried out by email or through banners on internet sites have higher response rates than those posed by this technology, and what for many is really important, the economic nature shows that given its universality can be drastically reduced marketing costs to reach mass audiences (Bathmanathan & Hironaka, 2016; Lin et al., 2017).

Even though it is really important that consumers open up to mobile marketing, accepting it and changing their perception of it to something more positive than the aforementioned, little has been investigated about these issues (Rezaei and Valaei, 2017). The existing literature suggests that there are fundamental aspects to consider, such as relevance and context, so as not to irritate consumers; the personalization of content, making it relevant and important for them; and, of course, the utility and incentives that arise after having accepted this channel (Rezaei and Valaei, 2017). It is for this reason that one of the objectives of mobile marketing should be just to facilitate the delivery of this information to consumers, making a pertinent and intelligent communication, providing consumers with real utility, whether it is saving time, money or actually delivering information relevant to them, based for example on their location or on their personal profile (Jin et al., 2015).

A study conducted by Belkhamza et al. (2016) on consumer attitudes towards the economy and technology in this economic recession shows that 56% of adolescents say they would be interested in seeing mobile ads if they had an associated incentive, while in adults this percentage is reduced to 37%. On the other hand, the consultancy analysis states that many users prefer to receive ads on their mobile device, either because they want to be the first to hear about any new information, for the immediacy that comes with having their mobile phone with them and thanks to this they can have better access to interesting information and offers.

An important fact exposed in this report is that 68% of Internet users in the mobile would be willing to receive more publicity if it would obtain some benefit, which represents a huge gateway for some brands that today do not know how to get rid of the pre-existing negative perception of mobile marketing. In turn, at the local level, the annual study shows that 70% of Malaysians say they are worried about their internet security, but at the same time, 54% of them give personal information to companies to obtain some benefit, recognition or to be heard (Musa et al., 2016), which undoubtedly affirms the fact that giving some benefit or utility to consumers, will be willing to even leave their fears and concerns aside, to deliver something as important as their data personal, leaving them in the hands of the company.

A study of Chinese young people examined the acceptance of mobile marketing, and concluded that with significant incentives and attractive content, barriers such as the level of personal attachment or perceptions of risk can be overcome, which reinforces what was previously raised about the acceptance of Malaysians consumers (Tang et al., 2014). Therefore, it is really important to understand the value of incentives, since thanks to them can change the perception of consumers against mobile marketing, understanding that for sellers mobile devices represent having the brand in hand, but for consumers, and especially for young people, these devices are rather a friend in hand, so it is essential that they see advertising as part of this friend and not as an intrusion (Hua et al., 2017).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Taking into account that the intention is to profile behavior patterns and the factors that influence it, a quantitative approach to the survey was adopted. Likewise, the limitations of this approach are recognized, such as the low potential response rate and the non-response bias, which usually leads to a sample of convenience. For the study, a structured questionnaire with closed questions was used, where most of them were developed using a Likert scale of five points ranging from "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (5)", to measure different variables.

Demographic information was requested at the end of the survey to generate a profile of the convenience sample, and at the beginning of the survey they were asked if they had a smartphone and what were their frequent uses, in order to generate the profile of heavy users explained below, and be able to filter the respondents obtaining a select group of people with their respective answers. As was well explained in the beginning of this document, this study seeks to obtain answers from Limkokwing university students who classify as advanced users, or heavy users of smartphones, for which a profile was created that classifies them as such.

In addition to this, although the average users of this type of device are adolescents, young people and young adults, this study will focus on young people between 18 and 25 years old, with a high level of education, whether they are studying or have finished his university education, reason why the profile is complemented with the aforementioned demographic information. The questionnaires were distributed mainly through social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, both to personal contacts and on sites of communal groups and similar. The population of this study is the total students of Limkokwing University, which are 30,000, hence, the study sample is 379 participants based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample determinants table.

### 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1 shows the respondent’s profile of the study, most of the respondents belongs to the age category (25-35) with score of 74.7%, and for age category (36-45) with score 25.3%. The educational levels of the respondents shows that 76.5% of them belongs to the Bachelor level, 5.7% to Diploma level, 13.2% to master level, and 4.6% belongs to PhD level. In income level, 41.3% within the income level Rm500-Rm1000, 34.2% within the income level Rm1001-Rm1500, 14.6% within the income level Rm1501-Rm2000, and 10% within the income level RM 2001 and above. In term of gender, most of the respondents belong to male category 63.3% and 36.7% for female category.

**Table 1: Respondents profile**

Demographic	Numbers and Percentage of Respondents	Demographic	Numbers and Percentage of Respondents
Age		Income level	
25-35 years	(210), 74.7%	RM500 – RM1000	(116), 41.3%
36-45 years	(71), 25.3%	RM 1001- RM 1500	(96), 34.2%
Educational Level		RM 1501- RM 2000	(41), 14.6%
Diploma	(16), 5.7%	RM 2001 and above	(28), 10%
Bachelor	(215), 76.5%	Gender	
Master	(37), 13.2%	Male	(178), 63.3%
PhD	(13), 4.6%	Female	(103), 36.7%

There are many uses that can currently be given to smartphones, which work almost as if they were pocket computers with which you can also call and take pictures, and while it is true that there are immense differences between one and another level of software and hardware, while they can connect to the internet (either through mobile internet or with access to a Wi-Fi source), the basic functions tend to be quite similar. Therefore, the use given to these devices will depend to a greater extent on the user that is controlling it, according to the knowledge it has on how to take better advantage of the characteristics and variables that this technology offers. For these purposes, a market segmentation is suggested which contains three groups according to their level of use of these devices. These groups are composed of: Basic users, who only use their devices to make and receive calls, and rarely the camera; - Intermediary users, who in addition to performing the calling and camera functions, use their smartphones to perform between one and two of the additional functions detected as belonging to this type of device; - Advanced users or heavy users, which like the previous users also use their devices to make calls and take pictures, but perform three or more additional functions characteristic of smartphones. It is precisely the latter that the present investigation has focused on, since they are envisioned as quality informants regarding the use of smartphones given their greater closeness and understanding with the device. And in relation to this group, as

shown in Figure 1, it can be seen that only 10% use their smartphone for three additional functions, while 42% of them say they use it for all of them.

■ 3 Additional functions ■ 4 Additional functions  
 ■ 5 Additional functions ■ 6 Additional functions

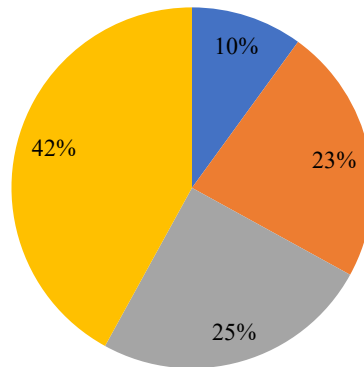


Figure 1: Number of additional functions performed by heavy users

Now, the data about the distribution of these functions are really striking, since as can be seen in Figure 2, four of these six activities have more than 90% completion, among which the interaction in social networks stands out with 99%, which indicates that practically all heavy users of smartphones use them for it, while visiting websites, checking email and searching for addresses and / or services on maps are the other three functions with very high percentages

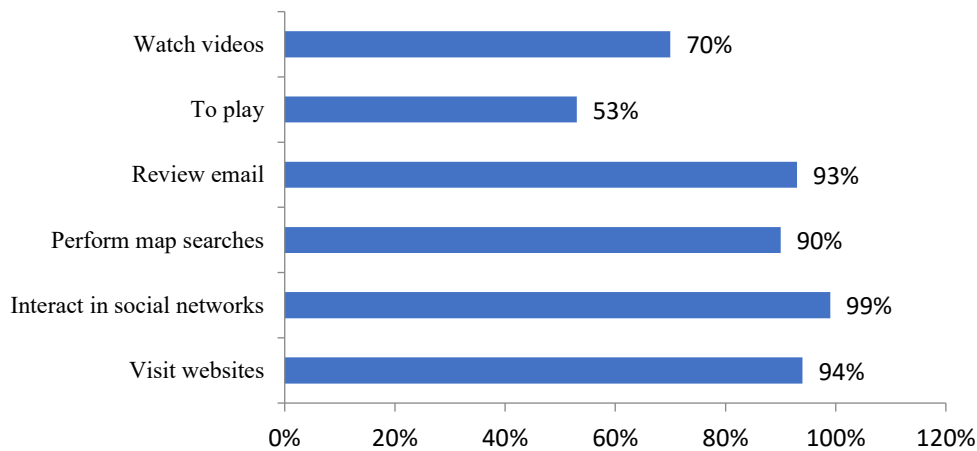


Figure 2: Distribution of additional functions performed by heavy users

These data confirm the idea that smartphones are increasingly important and central to people's lives, being considered by young people as "a friend in hand" (Bosomworth, 2015). That is why its adoption manifests a very important social change, marked by the dependence on these devices to communicate, inform and even entertain (Rowles, 2017). Mobile phones, and even more so smart phones, have entered to be part of people's daily lives, establishing themselves as an almost inseparable and indispensable personal accessory.

Taking into account the penetration level presented by smartphones, where studies say that by the end of 2014 there would be around 6.6 million smartphones, while it is estimated that by 2017 this number would amount to 16 million devices (Cisco, 2014), is that you can see the importance of the data collected, supporting for example the results of the annual study of Wave 7 conducted in 2013, which states that Malaysian Internet users they are addicted to social networks, searching on platforms such as Facebook or Twitter for factors such as recognition and fun, while indicating that smartphones are considered useful mainly around three uses: use of GPS (84%), to socialize with others (80%) and to have fun (70%). This confirms the need to conduct more in-depth research on all issues related to consumer attitudes to mobile marketing communications, since the most frequent use of these

devices, added to the familiarity and closeness shown towards them, reliably suggests that the perceptions towards this channel could have changed.

The first part of the study investigated the perception and attitudes of consumers regarding mobile marketing based on text messages, evaluating in this way if there is still the negative relationship previously detected or had a change of perception in this new era of smart phones. Table 2 shows the summary of the responses associated with the attitudes presented by students' consumers regarding the sending and receiving of text messages, where it can be clearly seen how the trends have been maintained, with highly dissatisfied and dissatisfied consumers receive messages that qualify as annoying and intrusive.

95% of the respondents agreed either partially or totally with the fact that they prefer to be contacted by their friends and not by companies, which together with the 90% who agree or strongly agree with preferring that his mobile phone is only for personal use, fully supports the idea that consumers perceive this type of communication as something intrusive that invades privacy (Cantrell et al., 2017). In addition, it has that 85% of the people consulted consider that the majority of text messages and announcements of the companies are annoying; and 92% of them agree or strongly agree that they tend to eliminate or ignore most of the text messages of the companies, which fully demonstrates the belief that these messages are irritating and annoying, and very easily arrive to be considered as spam (Tojib et al., 2015), losing all attention from consumers.

*Table 2: Attitudes towards being contacted by companies through mobile phones (%)*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
I prefer to receive text messages and calls from friends and not from companies	3%	1%	1%	20%	75%	4.63
I think that most of the text messages and ads on mobile phones of companies are annoying	3%	3%	9%	29%	56%	4.32
I tend to eliminate or ignore most of the text messages of companies	1%	0%	7%	25%	67%	4.57
I generally prefer my mobile phone only for personal use	2%	0%	8%	26%	64%	4.50

In relation to the study on which this research is based (from now on the base study or original study), the data are distributed in a very similar way to the one obtained, presenting a variation with respect to the averages of between 0.09 and 0.15 points, while the percentages of agreement in each case do not fluctuate beyond 2.5 percentage points. The second question section was designed to identify attitudes to different types of messages (Table 3), evaluating the reasons why the interviewer would like to receive a text message from a company.

The results are quite striking, since reasons such as receiving a ticket to the mobile4, receiving discount coupons or receiving a gift were evaluated quite positively (with averages of 3.52, 3.93 and 4.29 respectively), which agrees with approaches previously seen. For example, some researchers proposed the fact that incentives related to gifts and discounts could improve perception (Shankar et al., 2016), as it happens here, since they see how these messages will have a direct benefit for them, translating into a concrete economic saving.

However, the fact of accepting tickets in the mobile is a signal that consumers will also admit messages that have a utility not only translatable economically, but also as a way of saving time, comfort or delivery of relevant content for them. But just as these factors presented rather positive results, most of them found an opposite scenario, with relatively low averages especially in aspects such as receiving alerts from commercial stores (with an average of 2.19) or receiving online auction alerts (with an average of 2.15 points), which shows that companies still have much to understand with respect to customizable content, relevant communication and delivery of real utility for consumers (Hossain and Amin, 2015).

With respect to the base study, the results are not so coincident, since although it has similarities in factors such as receiving a mobile ticket, with a positive charge (3.65); and receive commercial store alerts as a fairly disowned factor (with an average of 2.16), the other extreme values are not coincidental, which may be due to the perception of utility that each market possesses, so in Malaysia the prices would be more valued messages with gifts and discounts, while in developed countries it would be the reminders via SMS.

**Table 3: Attitudes regarding the acceptability of different types of text messages from companies (%)**

	Very unhappy	Unhappy	Neither happy nor unhappy	Happy	Very happy	Mean
Participate in a contest	21%	18%	44%	11%	6%	3.93
Receive discount coupons	2%	4%	19%	49%	26%	4.29
To receive a gift	2%	1%	12%	36%	49%	3.52
Receive a ticket to the mobile	9%	4%	32%	36%	19%	2.92
Receive SMS reminders	13%	22%	34%	22%	9%	2.19
Receive alerts from commercial stores	32%	28%	29%	11%	0%	2.15
Receive online auction alerts	37%	20%	35%	7%	1%	2.83
Receive alerts from social networks	19%	16%	37%	19%	9%	2.52
Receive alerts from news websites	22%	21%	42%	13%	2%	2.69
Receive alerts according to the location (notices of stores, promotions or advertising)	26%	13%	33%	22%	6%	2.63

Other research has stressed the importance for the user to feel with the control of the relationship with companies, which is an opportunity for organizations to reduce the negative perception of mobile marketing via SMS. That is why this series of questions tries to elucidate what the key factors with respect to the control sought by consumers could be, throwing answers as the great concern they have about the use or misuse that companies can give their personal data, where more than 84% tend to agree or strongly agree with it, delivering an average of 4.31 points. They also positively assess direct control factors associated with the ease of stopping such messages and regulating their frequency (with averages of 3.90 and 3.71 respectively).

On the contrary, only 13% prefer that they contact them by mobile phone instead of their email or postal, yielding a fairly low average of 2.22 points. In turn, it is reflected that the recommendations of friendships have no major influence, presenting an average of only 2.48 points. On this occasion, the data obtained are quite similar to those found in the base study, following the same positive and negative trends.

The most noticeable difference is that the two first factors studied are given a higher average score, such as the importance of the permit and the trust towards the brand, with averages of 3.79 and 3.61 respectively, in contrast to those of this investigation which are more than half a point below, being 3.14 and 3.11 respectively.

In any case, although for these cases the difference is significant, it does not represent a considerable change in the analyzes that tend to be the same. In this section, we can validate the majority of assessments exposed by previous research, where factors such as institutional trust are of great importance and the lack of it would affect, for example, the willingness of users to receive messages from companies, and with greater emphasis, to deliver their personal data (Berman, 2016).

Another very important factor is the direct control that users may have either when allowing the arrival of certain messages, controlling their frequency (Gana and Koce, 2016) or having the possibility of unsubscribing, those that end up being key in the increase of trust and loyalty towards a brand. However, opposite results were found in comparison to previous studies on personal trust as a relevant factor, since aspects such as recommendations from friends and close associates did not show a strongly positive relationship with the acceptance of messages from companies (Kim and Law, 2015).

**Table 4: Attitude towards authorization and marketing based on SMS (%)**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
I would be happy to receive marketing text messages on my mobile phone if they had asked for my permission	16	11	25	39	9	3.14
I would be happy to receive marketing text messages on my mobile phone if I liked and trusted the company	16	15	21	38	10	3.11
I would be happy to receive marketing messages from a company if my friends recommend it	23	26	35	12	4	2.48
I would prefer to sign up for mobile marketing text messages if I knew I could easily control the frequency of alerts	5	8	21	43	23	3.71
I would prefer to sign up for mobile marketing text messages if I knew I could stop them easily	7	4	15	40	34	3.90
I am concerned about trusting a company with my mobile phone number in case there is a misuse of my data or deliver it to a third party	3	5	8	26	58	4.31

## **5. DISCUSSION**

The objective of this work was to contribute to the understanding of the attitudes of students' consumers against mobile marketing, decreasing both the opportunities of their development as well as the limitations or barriers that exist with respect to their acceptance and perception. Thanks to this, it will be possible to begin to detect the critical factors for the success of strategies directed towards these approaches. Technologies have evolved and their development has caused a significant change in the perception that people have towards their mobile phones, transforming them into an indispensable accessory, part of their daily life and even for some it is considered to be a "friend in the hand".

Now smartphones provide a permanent connectivity, combining the ubiquity provided by mobile devices with the immediacy of response provided by the internet, generating a field of infinite possibilities. At the same time, more and more demanding users have been formed, so companies must search for content that can attract them, either through useful information, from the users' interest, exclusively or instantly; or entertainment that manages to stand out among the many options available in the market.

There are few studies that inquire about the attitudes and perceptions of consumers against mobile marketing, a figure that is increased if it is sought at the local level, so that an exploratory investigation like the one proposed help to understand to a certain degree the new scenario, besides establishing the pillars for future related explorations. In any case, it confirms some existing theories about studies carried out in the "pre-smartphones" era, such as the negative perception associated with mobile marketing, which was mainly carried out by sending text messages (SMS). Users identify the mobile phone as a personal device, so any marketing action was associated rather with an intrusion or invasion of privacy, becoming considered annoying and irritating.

Although there were some limited exceptions, such as messages considered useful by consumers, associated in some cases to a saving or profit in monetary terms or as a way of saving time, comfort or delivery of relevant content for them. It is for these reasons that consumers are concerned about providing data to companies, who would prefer that there be more control options where the content or the frequency with which the companies contact them may be regulated, or even unsubscribe from these services.

This in turn generates institutional trust, an important factor in the willingness to receive such messages. With regard to other content, it is vital to understand the need to adapt to the "mobile" environment, being no longer an option but an obligation, for example, to have a website compatible with mobile devices.

## **6. RECOMMENDATION**

This study offers a series of ideas and concepts about consumers' attitudes towards mobile marketing in this new era of smartphones, however, it needs more in-depth research, with more evidence to generalize its results in order to generate strategies that unequivocally help to improve the effectiveness of the actions carried out in these channels. In any case, the data presented here serves to outline the general guidelines that must be followed to obtain a more positive attitude (or at least revert the pre-existing negative), taking into account the indicators useful for the success of communications in mobile marketing. The evidence is clear in this regard, consumers see their phones as something private and for personal and social use, so the professionals of the companies in charge of the marketing areas must:

1. Know their clients, developing an understanding about the motivations or reasons why they would accept the entrance to their privacy through mobile marketing. What benefits are important, relevant information, content or entertainment that encourages acceptance and adoption. Knowing them will allow them to generate the right incentives to start not only to deliver messages, but to establish a positive relationship with them. It is important to segment them correctly, since one of the benefits of this channel is the possibility of reaching different segments with personalized content and at a low cost.

2. Perfecting competencies about the granting of control to clients with a marketing approach based on permits, which will generate greater institutional trust towards the brand. The desire of consumers to have control is important, because if they trust the company, they can more easily grant access to their private space and deliver their personal data.

3. To develop the different channels of mobile marketing, such as websites, applications or others, taking care of the offered content, facilitating their access and improving their stay. To the extent that users feel comfortable is that they stay in touch, stay longer on the site and have a greater chance of converting that stay into a sale. On the contrary, if your experience is bad, not only will they leave the environment where they were, but there is a high probability that they will look for what they want in other places, giving a customer to the competition.

## 7. CONCLUSION

As already mentioned, consumers are becoming increasingly demanding, so they expect high quality content with respect to the information delivered, but also to the functioning and design of websites and mobile applications, having high expectations about the speed, simplicity and ease of use. Therefore, this raises that to attract users on the mobile one must have an optimized site, where a good mobile experience delivers a double benefit: users will be more active during the visit and will return to the site with a higher probability; whereas if the site is not optimized, the negative impact is also double, since users are less faithful and action-oriented, so they will most likely access a competitor's site, in addition to having a negative impact on image and reputation Of the brand.

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