Responsive Design
Provides the Perfect Fit
Responsive Design Provides the Perfect Fit

*Responsive. Adaptive. Mobile-First. Mobile-Optimized.* Ensuring a seamless and functioning experience for consumers using mobile devices can be confusing. The minefield of buzzwords and silver-bullet solutions can make you want to throw your hands up in frustration. But don’t do that. Your smartphone probably will not survive the toss.

Before you read the supporting data below, I recommend first accepting the fact that you will lose sales and frustrate your customers if your website and emails do not provide an enjoyable shopping experience when viewed on any combination of devices. The brand experience and ease-of-use must be maintained as your customers transition between smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers.

The path from awareness to purchase clearly involves multiple devices. A study by Google found that 85% of consumers will start shopping on one device and finish on another. Your customers are connected. According to “Why We Don’t Buy: Consumer Attitudes on Shopping Cart Abandonment,” a study by Bronto Software and Magento, 54% of consumers who buy online daily or weekly own a tablet and 64% own a smartphone. Your most active shoppers are tapping away. Your site and emails should help them every step of the way, from when they first see a product they are interested in, to submitting the order and on the path to long-term, repeat purchasing engagement.

Which of the following do you have in your household?

![Bar chart showing device ownership by shopper frequency](chart.png)

Multi-device possession is only part of the puzzle. Consumers consider transitioning between devices to be part of the normal shopping experience. Sixty-one percent of frequent shoppers and 41% of occasional shoppers (those who buy online at least once per month) will always or occasionally view items stored in a shopping cart on a different device. Marketers are no longer holding the reigns of the shopping experience. The inability to continue the shopping experience between devices or a poor experience in doing so can result in the consumer abandoning the shopping experience before they are even near your shopping cart.
How frequently do you use the online shopping cart to store items to view on a different device?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequent Shoppers</th>
<th>Occasional Shoppers</th>
<th>Infrequent Shoppers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This expectation of mobile friendly content extends beyond the site experience. With 48% of emails opened on mobile devices (according to Litmus), the inbox needs to be able to make the transition between devices. This can be tricky considering the coding limitations of email messages. Many of the tools used to ensure a device-optimized experience on your site are simply not available when building an email.

This brings us back to the buzzwords. To help you clarify any confusion, there’s a simple way to distinguish between the terms. That method is to simply remember your pants.

**Responsive Design:** For Responsive Design, think sweat pants. Nice and comfy with an elastic waistband that expands and contracts based on how often you’ve missed the gym and indulged in dessert. Emails and websites that are designed to be responsive will expand, contract and rearrange based on the space available to them.

**Adaptive Design:** Adaptive designs are like a closet full of pants. Whether you are going to a business meeting, a backyard barbecue or to the pool, there is a pair of pants that will be appropriate for the occasion. Adaptive-designed sites will detect the device that the person is using and serve a design specific to that device. Unlike the one-size-fits-all Responsive Design, each site is its own unique design and usually looks significantly different from the desktop experience. Adaptive Designs rely on two-way communication. A device tells a site information about the device and the site “adapts” by sending an appropriate version. The inbox does not have this two-way dialog. An email is received and the email client “responds” by rendering the code to the device. This means it is not possible to have an adaptive email.

**Mobile-First:** Mobile-First sites and emails are like skinny jeans. While Responsive and Adaptive Design are methods for producing sites and/or emails, Mobile-First is a strategy for approaching the design of sites and emails. Designers have long considered the desktop platform first when developing designs, often tackling the mobile version after the design is finalized. But the rapid growth of mobile and tablet use has impacted priorities and encouraged consideration of the smaller screens first. The result is very streamlined designs, where the content and accessibility take priority over design-heavy elements and eye candy. In the mobile inbox, some mobile-first emails are super skinny when viewed on a larger screen.

For this white paper, we conducted an audit of 106 retailers to better understand how common Responsive and Adaptive designed websites and emails are. In catering to today’s multi-device consumer, it’s possible for a site or email to be fully functional and render properly without incorporating responsive or adaptive design. But there are technologies available now making it easier for the marketer to customize the experience for the customer regardless of the device.

This paper will cover:

**Site Design:** Which design approach are most retailers choosing?

**Email Clients:** How do various mobile email clients, apps and operating systems display email messages?

**Email Messages:** How are retailers designing emails for mobile customers?
Site Design

The websites for the 106 retailers included in this study were viewed on a traditional computer, iPhone, iPad and Android phone using the device’s default web browser. Surprisingly, only 4% of sites used responsive design when viewed on a computer. While the difference in display size on laptops will not vary as much as it will for mobile devices, using responsive design would ensure that the site would be compiled to fit the viewer’s screen.

Samsung.com uses a responsive design that resizes and rearranges based on the width of the viewer’s display. Try it yourself. Go to Samsung.com and resize your browser.

Adaptive design was more commonly seen on both iPhone and Android smartphones. The adaptive sites were seen slightly more frequently on iPhones (67%) compared to Android (66%). While this method will give a customized, nearly app-like experience to the consumer, this approach means one more site to maintain.
OfficeMax.com uses an adaptive design for mobile site visitors that is fully customized for smaller devices.
Responsive design is the least common approach for site design. The ever-changing site content elements, like featured promos, product pages and navigation would need to fit into the one-size-fits-all devices mold, but it would mean that there is only one site to maintain. As more sales and shopper engagement are attributed to mobile devices, the need to have one solution that works for all customers regardless of the devices will become more important.

Tools to build more sophisticated responsive sites are continually evolving.

### Website Optimization for Mobile Devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Responsive</th>
<th>Adaptive</th>
<th>Not Optimized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iPhone</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iPad</td>
<td>3% 5%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Android</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Email Clients

As mentioned earlier in this report, nearly half of all emails (48%) are opened on a mobile device. The mix of devices used to open emails is further fragmented between email apps (like Gmail’s app) and mobile web browser email clients (like gmail.com). For this study, the app and web browser versions of Gmail, Yahoo, Outlook and the device’s default email app were audited.

The results not only varied between the ISPs, there were also variations between the web and app inboxes for the same ISP. For example, the web version of Gmail on an Android phone did not scale the test email or process the responsive code. The app version of Gmail on Android did process the responsive code, thus providing a more optimized viewing experience for the subscriber. This rendering is not something marketers can control, though various approaches to coding the email may produce different results ISPs continually update webmail and apps which can change how content is rendered for better or worse. Being aware of how these ISPs are currently rendering responsive emails will help you to anticipate the optimal experience for your subscribers.

Screenshots show exactly how the email rendered. Some images may appear to be incomplete, but this is the actual email.
The default email app for both iDevices and Android provided the most consistent experience, with the smartphone versions processing the responsive code and iPad scaling the full-sized email to fit the screen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Email Client</th>
<th>Web</th>
<th>App</th>
<th>Web</th>
<th>App</th>
<th>Web</th>
<th>App</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gmail</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>not responsive</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>displayed in full (height and width scaled)</td>
<td>displayed in full (height and width scaled)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yahoo</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>displayed in full (height and width scaled)</td>
<td>not responsive</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>responsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outlook</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>displayed in full (width scaled)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OS Mail App</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>responsive</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>displayed in full (width scaled)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Variations of screen resolutions, email coding, OS version, browser type and app edition could lead to different results. Testing is always recommended.*
Email Messages

Only 8% of emails from the retailers in this study utilized a responsive design. Of those that were responsive, the creative variation for mobile devices ranged from subtle modifications to significant changes. While it is possible to send an email that does not utilize responsive design and yet renders and functions properly in a mobile inbox, with responsive design it is now possible for the marketer to gain more control over how the email is displayed when the subscriber is shifting between their mobile and desktop inboxes.

This email from Belle & Clive uses a responsive design to render two columns of featured products on an iPad and computer and a single column view of the same products for smartphones. This provides larger clickable spaces for mobile users and allows for images to been seen more clearly.
The responsive designed email from Rack Room Shoes drops the navigation and stacks the featured content into rows for mobile devices. In this case, smaller links which could be fat-fingered on a mobile device are removed and the vertically arranged content areas take up the full width of the mobile screens.
A more subtle example can be seen in this email from Nike. A few navigation items are ditched for mobile devices and one of the secondary content pieces is hidden when viewed on a mobile device.

A first step to providing a better experience for your multi-device customers is to better understand which devices they are using and where in the purchase path the devices are utilized. While responsive and adaptive designed sites and emails can provide more customized experiences for your customers, it is important to remember there is no silver-bullet solution. Testing responsive emails can be the first step to see how you can increase engagement and sales for multi-device customers. Simple design modifications can give you a better understanding of how your customers will respond to the customized experience. These insights will help you to develop more sophisticated emails and design your website to give your customers the best fit and smoothest shopping experience regardless of the device (or combination of devices) they use.
About Bronto

Bronto Software provides a cloud-based marketing platform for retailers to drive revenue through their email, mobile and social campaigns. The leading self-service email marketing provider to the Internet Retailer Top 1000, Bronto is used by top brands worldwide, including Armani Exchange, Timex, Samsonite and Gander Mountain. The company is headquartered in Durham, NC with an office in London, UK. For more information, visit bronto.com.