

Start thinking in a 'mobile first' mindset

 By [Graham Du Plessis](#)

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According to the latest November stats from Effective Measure, 'South Africa Online', a whopping 67.38% of unique browsers came from mobile itself.



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Mobile has long been held as a trend that is due to break at any moment, one that certainly seemed to have taken a bit longer in practice than. However, that being said, I think it's safe to now reclassify mobile into the 'way of life' category (if there was one) as being a 'trend' suggests there is end-point, which is certainly not going to be the case.

It goes without saying that brands should be playing in the mobile space by now. The evidence is compelling enough that we are spending more and more time on our devices, performing an array of activities from mere browsing to specific searches to solving those 'in the moment' problems. From localised issues of requiring a locksmith after hours to looking up where to get that perfect wedding outfit.

Truly becoming 'mobile first' brand starts with a mindset change, I liken it to the design principle known as 'design thinking' which puts the needs of the end user as the primary focus. Mobile is no different, how you approach your business and customers need to be approached from a mobile mindset first and foremost, then with full company buy-in from across the stakeholders.

The data pointing to mobile prominence doesn't lie and you just need to reflect on your own daily lifestyle to see the increasing weighting we give to this device in the palm of our hands. In fact, come to think of it, I wonder within a 24 hours period how often your device would not be within an arm's length reach? My bet is almost never.



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Mobile and context are good bed-fellows

This is where context is becoming even more of a key variable and a brand or business needs to a.) Look deeper and understand the audience they are looking to attract b.) Understand how the said audience wants to engage with and ultimately convert as both don't always relate to the same thing and c.) When are they engaging, on what device and at what time?

In our local context here in South Africa, mobile penetration is growing exponentially. Smartphones have begun to take more market share away from feature phones due to low-cost devices in the market, with the natural offshoot of this being an easier way to access the internet. With the longed hoped for and seemingly inevitable drop in data prices to come not to mention city initiatives as what's happened in the City of Tshwane with Project Isizwe and similar setups set for Cape Town and a proposed rollout of affordable fibre into low-income areas – access has only one way to go and that is up.

With this being the context in mind, it's prudent to approach how you design these first interactions and touch points from the users point of view, for example, is your target market coming from the lower LSM groups where data prices are a factor with no access to internet in the household, or is it a LSM group that can access anytime anywhere with data or Wi-Fi interchanging?

Design for the experience first

The user ultimately dictates how they want to engage with your brand and property be it desktop, mobile web or app and it's important to note that while mobile devices are primarily used by many consumers it's not the only one that matters.



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Designing for the experience first is the approach that makes the most sense, as a brand and business you have to put your best foot forward no matter what the context your customer or target audience choose. Let's be frank about it, a customer doesn't care. At the moment of transaction, they simply want to be able to access the service, product or feature by whichever way they choose and expect it to be a good experience and hassle-free every time – no distinction – if not you'll possibly miss out on the opportunity.

The design is not limited to in this context solely towards that of the user experience, this being where a bit of context comes in, it also applies to the size of the app to be download, the speed of web page loading, data usage and the like. Options to tackle these are the well-touted AMP (accelerated mobile page) and Progressive Web App's (web app using modern web capabilities to deliver an app-like experience).

The challenge is not an easy one, and consumers are not known for their patience on any device and a common hurdle that keeps creeping up is trying to design from desktop to mobile rather than the reverse. Starting with the smaller screen

forces **focus** and **attention** to the users' direct needs and requires the brand to really zero in on what is most essential about the content, product or service. It's a great chance to strip away all the distraction down to what really matters. The beauty then moving on from mobile-first design is the scalability it offers, moving from mobile to desktop you are afforded more screen space and more options for all those rich features.

Designing for mobile first should be seen as a solution that meets the user's immediate needs in the present moment with the website taking care of the rest.

ABOUT GRAHAM DU PLESSIS

Experienced digital and marketing professional, with an interest in ecommerce, product development and customer experience. Started in the martch environment before moving into the retail environment at Zando, rising quickly into the management space first as the head of mobile and then heading up the groups marketing initiatives. Currently at one of South Africa's leading performance agencies, Incubeta, managing a client portfolio within the financial and retail space.

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