

Making Your Bar or Restaurant Website Mobile Friendly

By Rieva Lesonsky



Use of mobile devices like smartphones and tablets is growing by the minute. In 2011, according to research firm eMarketer, there were 73.3 million smartphone owners in the U.S. Of those, according to Google Research, an astounding 89 percent use their device daily; 81 percent use it to browse the Web; and 68 percent of those who use their phone to search for local businesses actually end up visiting a business in person.

What do these figures mean to you? Potential customers are using their phones to search for local bars and restaurants, read reviews and decide where to go. But when they search online, are they finding your site—and if they find it, is it readable and easy to use on their mobile devices?

To see how your bar or restaurant's website measures up on mobile devices, go to mobiReady.com. If you don't like what you learn, try these tips to create a mobile-ready website:

Minimize images. On a mobile device, photos can take forever to download, causing customers to give up in frustration. To enhance the experience, try using fewer or smaller images on your mobile website. Keep in mind that mobile device screens are usually less than 200 pixels wide. Likewise, if you use images for buttons on your website, consider changing the images to text.

Keep it simple. Streamline your layout by using primarily headlines and limited content; then link to expanded text or articles from the headlines. Or start with a descriptive page to identify your website instead of the regular home page. Use simple icons instead of complicated illustrations.

Make it readable. Make sure your fonts and color combinations are readable on a small device and legible in different types of lighting. Users may be accessing your site in a dimly lit restaurant or on a sunny beach.

Be browser-flexible. Set up Google Analytics to see what browser most of your mobile customers are using and adjust your resolution accordingly.

Don't auto-refresh. Many websites include periodic auto-refresh, but on a mobile website auto-refresh will frustrate customers because it leads to extra downloading time.

Use a single column format. Most likely, your website has multiple columns, which makes it difficult for mobile users to get the full picture. Change your mobile website to a single column format for easier readability.

Be fat-finger friendly. Since clicking is less precise on mobile devices, set your clickable area larger for important buttons.

Once your site is mobile-ready, be sure to register it on local search engines that your potential customers will use, including Google Maps, Yahoo! Local, Bing, YellowPages.com and Google Places. Also register it with any niche search sites related to your business. For a bar or restaurant, that means Yelp! and any local bar or restaurant search sites customers might frequent. Last but not least, register it with the major in-car GPS navigation sites.

Talk to your [SCORE](#) mentor about making mobile marketing part of your bar or restaurant marketing plan. With your mobile-ready site available where hungry and thirsty customers can find it on the go, your bar or restaurant is sure to see an influx of new business.

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