

# .mobi Tourism

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A DISCOVER ANYWHERE MOBILE WHITEPAPER

MAY 2010

## Introduction

### Audience

This whitepaper intended for DMOs / CVBs considering building a "mobile optimized" website or modifying the their existing website to display well on mobile devices.

We'll refer to either or both of these activities as "mobilizing" your DMO / CVB.

### What is .mobi?

We use ".mobi" as a shorthand for giving access to your DMO / CVB content via hand-held mobile devices via the Internet.

In particular:

- access is via so-called "smartphones", capable of displaying HTML (the language of web pages);
- access is via the phone's browser - the user can enter your .mobi URL directly, click on another page's link to get to your .mobi page, or use a bookmark; and
- .mobi sites are **not** (per se) "apps" - that is, dedicated applications downloaded to your visitor's mobile phones

### What phones can use .mobi sites?

There are hundreds of Internet-enabled phones, but of particular interest are:

- iPhones,
- Androids (such as from HTC or Google),
- Palm Pre,
- BlackBerries,
- Windows Mobile, and
- Symbian.

## Business Case

This section discusses the Business Case for building mobilizing your destination.

### The primary purpose of a .mobi site is about experience

The emphasis of a .mobi site is **not** marketing. The typical user of a .mobi site is someone who is "in-destination" and who is looking for immediately relevant information. We expect that pre-trip research, for the most part, will still be done via the web.

Because the user is "sold" on your destination - they're *there* - the goal of your .mobi site should be to allow users to rapidly navigate to information *they're* interested in consuming in the most convenient possible way.

### Why am I doing a mobi site at all?

Because there's a lot of travelers using smartphones, there's going to be a lot more in the future, and they're visiting to spend money:

- Nearly 70 percent of frequent business travelers have a smartphone somewhere on their person ([link](#))
- 1 in 7 computer owners currently own a smartphone ([link](#))
- over 40% percent of consumers will make their next mobile phone a smartphone ([link](#))
- more than three quarters of smartphone owners said that they will either be planning or taking a trip in the next 6 months ([link](#))
- smartphone owners demographically skew wealthy ([link](#))
- as of January 2009, there are about 18m iPhones and about 13.6 iPod Touches in use ([link](#))
- iPhone and BlackBerry sales are expected to increase 25% this year ([link](#))

## Benefits to mobilizing your existing website

Your existing website is your primary face to the world. When using mobile devices, Google and other search engines are going to return this site. As mobile devices increase in popularity for surfing the web, it's important that this site will perform well on mobile devices:

- if you do not create a .mobi optimized website, it will be difficult for users to find the information they are looking for
- if you do create .mobi optimized website, there is still likely to be lots of information that is only available on your existing website (see the next section for why) that may occasionally need to be accessed by mobile

Well designed websites can often be mobile optimized with a simple change of CSS<sup>1</sup>.

## Benefits to a new .mobi optimized website

A .mobi optimized website is about provide the data most likely to be need by mobile users in the best possible way for them to consume it.

- it's important to ask "*why are people looking at our site via the mobile web?*" - in travel / tourism / hospitality, it's likely users are accessing your site because they're looking for a particular experience, an address, hours of operation, a phone number, or a way of booking
- providing this data from a .mobi optimized site increases the odds users will find the information they are looking for before abandoning the search and trying elsewhere, resulting in lost revenue for your destination and your partners
- providing a .mobi optimized site signals to users that you care about their needs, that you're providing the information they need the way the wanted, thus leading to increased engagement with visitors

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<sup>1</sup> See your web designer

## Does this replace the need for an app?

Places with large event calendars, many properties or listings, wanting to provide interactive features, or with many visitors should consider developing custom apps.

Apps:

- provide a superior experience to what is achievable in a mobile web browser
- reduce dependence on having an Internet connection in order to be able to achieve tasks
- provide “wow” factor
- enhance loyalty, the chances of repeat visits, and create word of mouth

The primary targets for your apps should be the iPhone, the iPod Touch and Android. BlackBerry is another platform, though users tend not to be so app-centric.

Windows Mobile<sup>2</sup> and Palm are losing market share rapidly and probably are not viable app development targets: your .mobi site can serve these users.

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<sup>2</sup> Windows Mobile 7 may be worth reconsidering in 2011

## Technical Issues

### What Domain Name do I use

If your site is [www.destination.com](http://www.destination.com), your best options are:

- **m.destination.com**
- **destination.mobi**

Google recommends the first option ([m.destination.com](http://m.destination.com)) for SEO reasons. Remember when choosing your name **that length matters** - they're going to be typing this on a little tiny mobile phone, often without a real keyboard.

In addition, DAM recommends:

- get the other option (say [destination.mobi](http://destination.mobi)) and **DNS redirect** it to your standard address - not only will this catch people just typing in the domain in directly, it will stop others from "squatting" on your domain name
- Make sure your DNS setup also includes **www.** variants, just in case

### What are our constraints?

When building your .mobi website, you must keep the follow points in mind at all times:

- in many places in the US and Canada, the cellular network is slow, somewhat unreliable or overloaded during parts of the day
- foreign travelers are likely to be paying much higher data rates than domestics (BBC link)
- the network download is slow (like an old modem)
- the network latency - the time it takes to send a request and get it back - is high (like an old overseas long distance call)
- there is limited memory on mobile devices
- there is limited storage (for caching) on mobile devices
- mobile screens come in many different sizes, all small
- there are many different types of mobile browsers
- mobile browsers have fewer features than computers, often lacking JavaScript and full CSS support

## Should I building a new .mobi optimized website?

Yes.

You should build a .mobi optimized site for your visitors **so they can get to the content they need as quickly as possible.**

- .mobi users have very little screen "real estate", extra information such as descriptive text, photo albums, what conferences you went to last year, etc. are getting in the way of navigation
- .mobi users are "deeper in the sales funnel" - they aren't deciding on your destination, they've decided on it. You don't need to overly brand or sell your destination - you need to facilitate them getting the most out of it
- .mobi users have slow - and sometimes, expensive - connections. Data is what they need, not gloss

Your new .mobi site should:

- get users to listings, events and coupons as quickly as possible
- provide a search function
- provide a way to contact the destination
- take advantage of built in features, such as GPSes and access to mapping - visitors need to know how far away things are, what's the closest things to me right now, and how to get there

This would be an appropriate place to mention: Discover Anywhere Mobile cost effectively creates software to do all of these tasks! Although some web designers think they can "grab a free template" to implement this for you, remember:

- doing it right requires programming, to deal with GPSes, favorites, etc.
- "free" means "free like puppies", not "free like beer"

## Do I (also) mobile optimize my existing website?

As mentioned above, well designed websites can be .mobi optimized by a few simple CSS changes. If your site cannot be modified this way, ensure that the designer of your next website uses modern webdesign techniques and is aware of your need for mobile access.

## What about WAP/WML?

WAP/WML<sup>3</sup> is no longer important in the Western world's mobile market, due to the rapid adoption of modern smartphone technology.

## Page size and features

Page load speed is as critical as possible.

- minimize JavaScript, as there's probably not a lot of value in clever browser tricks or the CPU cycles to do it.
- minimize page size, as that corresponds to time-to-download and also cost to the user. In any case, do not exceed 25K for a page ([why](#))
- put CSS and JS in separate files to optimize caching
- minimize images. 0 is a good number; 1 is OK; 2 is too many. It goes without saying that any images should be small both in dimensions and bytes.

Since the traveler is likely not to be using their normal carrier, they'll appreciate the effort.

## Page design

Because of the mobile constraints:

- ensure that all your HTML "validates", which will in turn ensure that your site works on as many browsers as possible. It is not likely you'll be able to test many mobile browsers, so this is your best shot. Validation can be done here: <http://validator.w3.org/>
- do not add "style" tags to your HTML - depend on stylesheets linked by **id** or **class** attributes
- make sure your page doesn't depend on stylesheets to work properly (easily tested by removing the stylesheet)
- don't overuse on **table**, **frame** or **iframe** elements. Do use **ul**, **ol** and **li** elements, as lists are the primary way mobile users see data
- minimize images. 0 is a good number; 1 is OK; 2 is too many. It goes without saying that any images should be small both in dimensions and bytes
- don't depend on Javascript being there: in fact, assume it is not there. Use the **noscript** tag

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<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wireless\\_Application\\_Protocol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wireless_Application_Protocol)

- make pages small. 25K is the max, you should be aiming for 1-5K
- do out JavaScript and CSS in separate files to take advantage of caching, but don't include more than one of each
- squeeze every bit of unneeded data out of each page
- make sure your webserver can handle **gzip** content encoding

## How do we get people to our mobile site?

We recommend Method #4 below.

### Method 1 - just link to it

Place a link on your site, in the sidebar or other prominent place, saying "Visit our Mobile Site/Download our apps". When the user clicks on the link, they will be brought to your .mobi site, which will also have links to the iPhone & BB apps.

### Method 2 - just link to it + mobile detector

Add a detector to see if the user is on a mobile browser. If they are, add something at the very top of the page saying "visit (etc)". This should be combined with Method 1.

### Method 3 - autoredirect

Add a detector to see if the user is on a mobile browser. If they are, redirect them to the mobile site.

### Method 4 - redirect + cookie

Ideally Method 3 should be combined with a cookie mechanism, so that the user can get to the main site if they really want to. This would work as follows:

- the visitor goes to www.example.com
- the user is on a mobile device
- if there is no SITEPREF cookie (or it's the value "mobile"):
  - set SITEPREF to "mobile"
  - redirect to example.mobi
- if the user wants to go back to the main site
- send them to www.example.com?SITEPREF=main
- change the cookie to "main"
- do not redirect back to the mobile site

Discover Anywhere provides all the sample code to do this:

- <http://tools.discoveranywheremobile.com/mobiledetect/>

## About Discover Anywhere Mobile

Discover Anywhere Mobile creates iPhone, BlackBerry, Android and mobile web applications DMOs and CVBs. Our applications will ensure that your visitors make the most of their destination experience and will let them share that experience with everyone else.

With Discover Anywhere Mobile, your visitors are always connected to the information they need when they need it: your events, conferences, shopping, accommodations, transportation, restaurants and more. We'll give you almost complete coverage across all Internet-ready smartphones and will take full advantage of advanced features such as: GPS location tracking, integrated mapping, itinerary planning, social media tracking and "Share My Trip" with Twitter, Facebook and Flickr, augmented reality, events calendar, thematic listings, "what's nearby", search, featured listings, slideshows, picture galleries, audio and video tours, coupons, comprehensive user behavior tracking and banner advertising campaigns to deliver a simple and compelling user experience.

We build all our applications using the data you're using today. Our goal is to be as time and cost efficient for your destination as possible – once we've set up a relationship with you, we'll do everything else needed to maintain the applications, ensuring that no changes or additional work have to happen in your team. Apps are fully branded to your destination's style, ensuring your message gets out exactly on target.

To find out more about Discover Anywhere Mobile and how we can quickly get your destination mobile, contact us and we'll schedule a web demo to show you all the great features of Discover Anywhere Mobile.

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