Desktop Application Vs Mobile App Vs Web App

These are often used terms but not necessarily well understood and hence used in the wrong context or interchangeably. We shall attempt to demystify the different types of Apps in order to provide some clarity.

Desktop Application

A Desktop Application is a computer program that runs locally on a computer device, such as desktop or laptop computer. Desktop Applications have traditionally been limited by the hardware on which they are run. They must be developed for and installed on a particular operating system, and may have strict hardware requirements to be met to ensure that they function correctly.

The large Screen size with fixed navigation bars is quite effective for discoverability, since users may find new sections.

n make full use of cursor interactivity: hover text or cursor-triggered animations. This allows Desktop Apps to feature ent
scriptive text appearing on hover.

Desktop content can appear in a traditional multi-column format—just like print content in newspapers and magazines. This offers a lot of flexibility for designing layouts and positioning text, images and UI elements.

Judging by the results of a *Gallup Panel survey*, users prefer Desktop Application for longer, more involved tasks.

Mobile App

Native Mobile Apps are built for a specific platform, such as iOS for the Apple iPhone or Android for a Samsung device and is installed directly onto the device itself. They are downloaded and installed via an App Store such as the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store and have access to system resources, such as GPS and the camera function. Mobile Apps live and run on the device itself. Snapchat, Instagram, Google Maps and Facebook Messenger are some examples of popular Mobile Apps.

Mobile Apps must conserve screen space everywhere they can, due to their smaller screen size. Two interesting trends arose from this obstacle: *minimalism* and the *hamburger menu*. Both were so successful, they seeped into desktop design as well, where they are stylistic choices rather than necessities.

You can't hover or rollover on Mobile Apps, but you have an infinite slate of gestures literally at your fingertips. Swiping, shaking, or poking brings a whole new set of opportunities to Apps.

Once content reaches a certain length, Mobile Apps need to use long scrolling. And that's not a bad thing! Mobile users actually prefer continuous scrolling, and this technique conserves screen space while making interaction more fun with gestures. Like minimalism and the hamburger menu, long scrolling is another mobile design trend that has transferred over to desktop because of its popularity.

Unlike desktop screens, Mobile Apps can switch between portrait and landscape views at will. For designers and website owners, this is a blessing and a curse. Two screen orientations allow for more functionality and better user personalization, but it can often require twice as much design work.

What mobile lacks in functionality, it makes up for with ingenuity. Right now, mobile design is at the forefront of technology and offers tons of exclusive features that desktop just can't do.

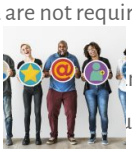
Some examples include;

- Virtual reality
- Augmented reality
- Multiple cameras
- Accelerometers and gyro sensors
- Mobile contact lists
- Magnetic sensors

Web App

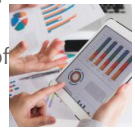
While some Mobile Apps and Web Apps look and work much the same way, with very little difference between them from the point of a mobile device user, the two are very different.

Web Apps, are accessed via the internet browser and will adapt to whichever device you are viewing them on. They are not native to a particular system, and are not required to be downloaded or installed. Due to their *responsive* nature, they do indeed look and function a lot like Mobile Apps.



n active internet connection in order to run, whereas Mobile Apps may work offline. Mobile Apps have the advantage of

t they do require the user to regularly download updates. Web Apps will update themselves.



Desktop App

Pros

- Standalone in nature and hence do not face any hindrances resulting from Internet connectivity.
- Less dependent on bandwidth usage than Web or Mobile Apps.

Mobile App

Pros

- Faster than Web Apps
- Greater functionality as they have access to system resources
- Can work offline
- Safe and secure — Mobile Apps must first be approved by the App Store
- Easier to build due to the availability of developer tools, interface elements and SDKs (Software Development Kits)

Web App

Pros

- Do not need to be downloaded or installed — Web Apps function in-browser
- Easy to maintain — they have a common codebase regardless of mobile platform
- Centrally updated
- Quicker and easier to build than Mobile Apps
- Do not require App Store approval, so can be launched quickly

Cons

- Needs to be installed separately on each computer. Also updating the applications is cumbersome as it needs to be done on every single computer.
- Confined to a physical location and hence have usability constraint.

Cons

- More expensive to build than Web Apps
- Compatibility with different platforms (i.e. iOS and Android) usually means designing and building the App from scratch
- Expensive to maintain and update
- It may prove difficult to get a Mobile App approved by the App Store

Cons

- Do not work offline

Mobile Apps, and less advanced in terms of features

s *discoverable* as Mobile Apps as they are not listed in a specific database, such as the App Store

- Quality and security are not always guaranteed — Web Apps do not need to be approved by the App Store

- Being internet dependent, they cost more on bandwidth usage.

Verdict

There is no clear winner. The Application domain and the environment in which it will be used would be the judge of this, having considered the Pros and Cons of each of the Platforms.

Content taken from:

Desktop Applications vs Web Apps

Desktop vs. Mobile App design: how to optimize your user experience

Difference Between a Mobile App and a Web App

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