Responsive Web Pages VS. Mobile Apps

1st helpful site:

<https://www.smashstack.com/articles/the-pros-and-cons-of-mobile-apps-vs-responsive-web-design/>

**The Pros of Responsive Web Design**

Creating mobile responsive mobile websites is the older, and perhaps less fashionable, of the two options. In most cases, the benefits of responsive web design encompass two critical areas:

**Time:** Launching a mobile site is a faster process than designing an application. Nearly all businesses these days need mobile sites to stay competitive anyway, so creating a responsive mobile experience is the least that developers can do.

**Cost:** Responsive web design is comparatively cheap when measured against the costs of designing a native mobile app from the ground up.

**And the Cons**

As they say, you get what you pay for. Responsive mobile sites, while necessary in today’s business climate, aren’t as fast or as functional as native mobile apps. It takes a long time to navigate to a mobile site through a phone’s browser when compared with the convenience of an app, and once users are there, the platform usually performs slower.

**The Pros of Mobile Apps**

Mobile apps take longer to create and are more expensive, but they feature several advantages in other areas:

## **Functionality:** Apps feature greater functionality than mobile-oriented sites can allow due to the way each is custom built into the device’s OS. This means that apps can easily integrate with other features and tools in a device as well as support functions that aren’t possible with web-based HTML5.

## **Speed:** Mobile apps are designed top to bottom with efficiency in mind. Apps usually have faster loading times than web pages as they aren’t cluttered with unnecessary site elements. The user experience is optimized.

## **Brand Recognition:** Nothing beats a native app for brand awareness and marketing. With handy desktop shortcuts, mobile apps put you front and center on each user’s phone, and the custom code used to create apps can relay information back to businesses about user behaviors to inform future development decisions.

## **And the Cons**

Depending on who you have on your development team, designing mobile apps is tough. Building an application requires a different set of skills than modifying a site for mobile. When done poorly, the great brand awareness present in native apps can work against businesses: If consumers see a shoddy app, it makes the business seem amateur.

To combat this, most businesses pay top dollar for native app development that takes longer than building a mobile site. These are the two drawbacks of native app development: Investing the time and investing the money.

2nd helpful site:

<https://www.hswsolutions.com/services/mobile-web-development/mobile-website-vs-apps/>

When it comes to deciding whether to build a native app or a mobile website, the most appropriate choice really depends on your end goals. If you are developing an interactive game an app is probably going to be your best option. But if your goal is to offer mobile-friendly content to the widest possible audience then a mobile website is probably the way to go. In some cases you may decide you need both a mobile website and a mobile app, but it’s pretty safe to say that it rarely makes sense to build an app without already having a mobile website in place.

Generally speaking, a mobile website should be considered your first step in developing a mobile web presence, whereas an app is useful for developing an application for a very specific purpose that cannot be effectively accomplished via a web browser.

## **Advantages of a Mobile Website vs. Native Apps**

If your goals are primarily related to marketing or public communications, a mobile/responsive website is almost always going to make sense as a practical first step in your mobile outreach strategy. This is because a mobile website has a number of inherent advantages over apps, including broader accessibility, compatibility and cost-effectiveness.

Check**Immediacy – Mobile Websites Are Instantly Available**

A mobile website is instantly accessible to users via a browser across a range of devices (iPhone, Android, BlackBerry, etc). Apps on the other hand require the user to first download and install the app from an app marketplace before the content or application can be viewed - a significant barrier between initial engagement and action/conversion.

**CheckCompatibility – Mobile Websites are Compatible Across Devices**

A single mobile website can reach users across many different types of mobile devices, whereas native apps require a separate version to be developed for each type of device. Furthermore, mobile website URLs are easily integrated within other mobile technologies such as SMS, [QR Codes](https://www.hswsolutions.com/services/mobile-web-development/qr-code-marketing) and near field communication (NFC).

Check**Upgradability – Mobile Websites Can Be Updated Instantly**

A mobile website is much more dynamic than an app in terms of pure flexibility to update content. If you want to change the design or content of a mobile website you simply publish the edit once and the changes are immediately visible; updating an app on the other hand requires the updates to be pushed to users, which then must be downloaded in order to update the app on each type of device.

**CheckFindability – Mobile Websites Can be Found Easily**

Mobile websites are much easier for users to find because their pages can be displayed in search results and listed in industry-specific directories, making it easy for qualified visitors to find you. Most importantly, visitors to your regular website can be automatically sent to your mobile site when they are on a handheld (using device-detection). In contrast, the visibility of apps are largely restricted to manufacturer app stores.

Check**Shareability – Mobile Websites Can be Shared Easily by Publishers, and Between Users**

Mobile website URLs are easily shared between users via a simple link (e.g. within an email or text message, Facebook or Twitter post). Publishers can easily direct users to a mobile website from a blog or website, or even in print. An app simply cannot be shared in this fashion.

Check**Reach – Mobile Websites Have Broader Reach**

Because a mobile website is accessible across platforms and can be easily shared among users, as well as search engines, it has far greater reach capability than a native app.

**CheckLifeCycle – Mobile Websites Can’t be Deleted**

The average shelf-life of an app is pretty short, [less than 30 days according to some research](http://techcrunch.com/2009/02/19/pinch-media-data-shows-the-average-shelf-life-of-an-iphone-app-is-less-than-30-days/), so unless your app is something truly unique and/or useful (ideally, both), it’s questionable how long it will last on a user’s device. Mobile websites on the other hand are always available for users to return to them.

**CheckA Mobile Website Can be an App!**

Just like a standard website, mobile websites can be developed as database-driven web applications that act very much like native apps. A mobile web application can be a practical alternative to native app development.

Check**Time and Cost - Mobile Websites are Easier and Less Expensive**

Last but certainly not least, mobile website development is considerably more time and cost-effective than development of a native app, especially if you need to have a presence on different platforms (requiring development of multiple apps).

Check**Support and Maintenance**

The investment considerations of app vs website don’t end with the initial launch; properly supporting and maintaining an app (upgrades, testing, compatibility issues and ongoing development) is more much more expensive and involved than supporting a website over time.

## **When Does an App Make Sense?**

Despite the many inherent benefits of the mobile web, apps are still very popular, and there are a number of specific use scenarios where an app will be your best choice. Generally speaking, if you need one of the following, an app makes sense:

* **Interactivity/Gaming** – for interactive games (think Angry Birds) an app is almost always going to be your best choice, at least for the foreseeable future.
* **Regular Usage/Personalization** – If your target users are going to be using your app in a personalized fashion on a regular basis (think EverNote) then an app provides a great way to do that.
* **Complex Calculations or Reporting** – If you need something that will take data and allow you to manipulate it with complex calculations, charts or reports (think banking or investment) an app will help you do that very effectively.
* **Native Functionality or Processing Required** - mobile web browsers are getting increasingly good at accessing certain mobile-specific functions such as click-to-call, SMS and GPS. However, if you need to access a user's camera or processing power an app will still do that much more effectively.
* **No connection Required** – If you need to provide offline access to content or perform functions without a network/wireless connection then an app makes sense.

As with any project, when developing an app you want to ensure that your are getting an optimal return on your investment. What you want to avoid at all costs is the needless and expensive exercise of building an app to do something basic that can be achieved with a mobile website.