

# Streamlined Shopping

The Body Shop optimizes its online experience

by DEENA M. AMATO-McCOY

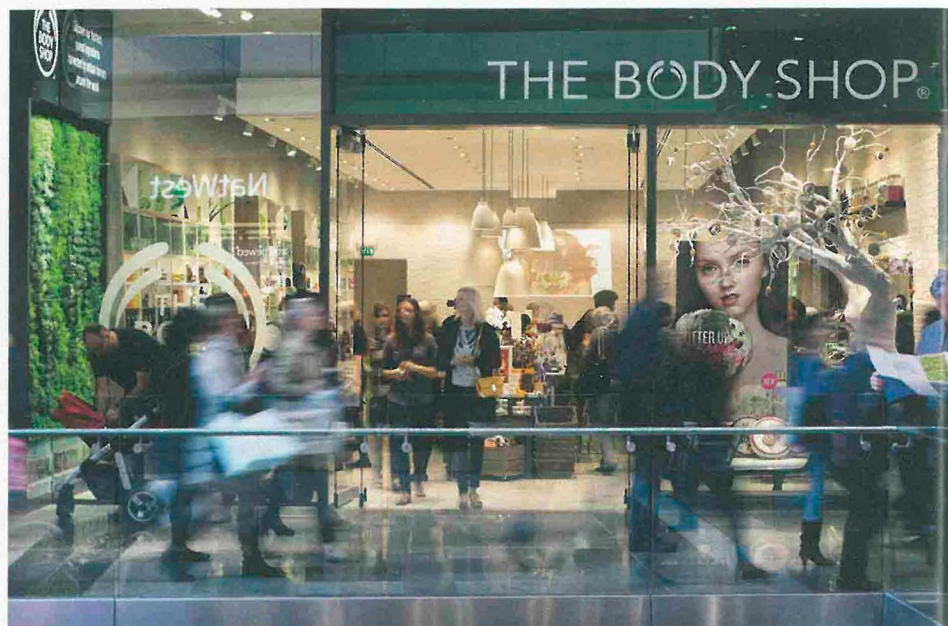
Mobile device ownership reached critical mass in the first half of 2012, according to a Nielsen Company report, *The Mobile Consumer: A Global Snapshot*. And mobile growth continues to climb: The number of tablet and smartphone users doubled in the course of a year, according to *Monetate Q1 2013 E-commerce Quarterly*, a report based on more than 500 million visits across e-commerce brands like Best Buy, Frontier Airlines, Aéropostale, The Sports Authority and Petco.

Armed with a mini-computer at their fingertips, mobile users can quickly and easily access websites at home and on the go. The experience of The Body Shop, a specialty retailer of natural skin and hair care products, tracks fairly close to those findings. “We have a lot of traffic driven by e-mail, and we are seeing that more than 50 percent of e-mails are being opened on a mobile device,” says Molly Dufner, the chain’s vice president of e-commerce. “This is an increase of between 30 percent to 40 percent.”

With more shoppers accessing its mobile site, “we are gaining more traffic on our e-commerce site overall,” she says. “This indicates how important mobile is to our e-commerce strategy.”

## OPTIMIZING THE WEBSITE

The 2013 holiday shopping season

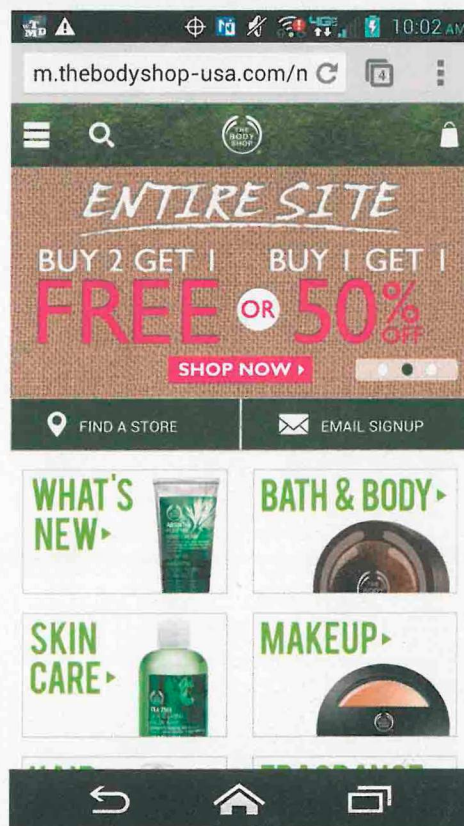


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showed that mobile is no longer a “nice to have” service — it is a “do or die” strategy. In the first quarter of 2013, the U.S. Department of Commerce estimated that mobile commerce reached between \$5.7 billion and \$8.75 billion. Mobile traffic accounted for 40 percent of all online traffic recorded on Black Friday 2013, a year-over-year increase of 34 percent, according to IBM’s Benchmark division. Mobile sales saw similar increases, with sales reaching 22 percent of all online sales, an increase of approximately 43 percent from the same period in 2012.

As more shoppers use their mobile devices to browse and shop online,



The Body Shop realized it was time to optimize the mobile shopping experience. For some companies, this could mean launching a mobile app or dedicated software that enables customers to interact electronically with a retailer directly through their smartphones



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or tablet devices. (The Nielsen report indicated that 53 percent of shoppers in the United States use apps to access their favorite retail brands.)

While The Body Shop has yet to launch a mobile app, it still needed to improve its mobile user engagement. "As shoppers try to navigate our traditional e-commerce site via their mobile device, it is clunky and not a smooth experience," Dufner says. "But our mobile traffic continued to increase, so it was the right time to create a dedicated mobile engagement strategy."

The first step was to create a mobile-optimized website. The chain created this presence with the help of Usablenet, a technology provider that assists companies in the creation of mobile web and multichannel presence. The Body Shop started its partnership with Usablenet two years ago when its U.K.-based division began transitioning to a more optimized mobile experience.

"Our U.K. division was already using the solution. Based on the volume of their e-commerce business and the increase in conversion of our mobile traffic, we knew it was time to make the transition," Dufner says. "Usablenet lets us convert those mobile users into mobile shoppers."

The solution transitions the e-commerce site into a fully interactive and easy-to-use experience from a personal device. Usablenet's platform streamlines the site load process, offers a user-friendly interface and still enables The Body Shop to maintain a consistent brand message and shopper experience.

## DRIVING TRAFFIC

The Body Shop leapt into mobile

optimization just before the 2012 holiday shopping season. With a year under its belt, the company was hoping for double-digit increases during the 2013 holiday season. While Dufner could not confirm specific growth, she says the retailer "had a strong holiday season, with more traffic and sales via mobile than previous years."

The company has also stepped up its game regarding marketing efforts that drive mobile traffic. "When comparing fall 2012 to fall 2013, we see more mobile customers are opening messages and accessing the mobile site," she says. To support this conversion, the company is using more dedicated landing pages associated with e-mail and marketing messages. "These efforts also drive traffic to our mobile site," Dufner says.

More mobile plans are on the horizon, including the improvement of mobile checkout. "This is a hurdle that is associated with mobile shopping overall," she says.

The Body Shop is currently evaluating how to enhance the checkout experience with a process that requires fewer steps and also includes a mobile wallet feature. Google Wallet and PayPal are two features the retailer is working on integrating into its mobile engagement strategy; it hopes to launch these services mid-year, Dufner reports.

"Overall, the key is to create an easy-to-use, intuitive mobile experience," she says. **STORES**

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