



Should you choose a ‘Mobile’ app or ‘Web’ app to showcase your business?

In April 2010, Global Intelligence Alliance (GIA) published the results of a month long in depth industry survey of 87 mobile publishers and service providers worldwide. The survey was entitled “Native(mobile app) or Web Application? How Best to Deliver Content and Services to Your Audiences over the Mobile Phone.”

Mobile Apps versus Web Apps

A web app is basically a website that is specifically optimized for the mobile device.

By contrast native apps or ‘mobile’ apps are installed on the mobile device and have access to the hardware of the device (speakers, GPS, accelerometer, camera etc.)

Currently, user interface and hardware capabilities dominate demand for mobile apps. Top mobile app content categories are lifestyle, entertainment, travel/local information and social networking. Top web apps are subscription based news and weather apps.

The following table illustrates the key differences between the two approaches and the results of the GIA survey.

	Native App	Web App
Key Features		
Number of apps for mobile devices	More	Less
Market share	Higher	
Optimized for the specifics of the device.	Key Driver	✗
Installed on the phone.	✓	✗
Available in the iTunes App Store and Android Marketplace	✓	✗
Can access device hardware e.g. GPS, camera, accelerometer	Key Driver	✗
Superior User Interface/Interface effects	Key Driver	✗
Internet access – no network dependency/roaming charges.	Key Driver	✗
Push notifications	✓	✗
Distribution Control		Key Driver
Launch speed	Quicker	Requires internet access

User Behaviour (GIA Survey)		
User Experience	More superior	
User Volumes	Higher	
User Adoption	Higher	
User Engagement	Significantly Higher	
User Sessions	50% Longer, 30% twice as long.	
User Discoverability	Higher due to App Stores	Relies on web distribution
Advertising Performance - CTR (Click-thru-rate)	30% Higher, 20% twice as high	
User stickiness	Push notifications & app updates etc. improve stickiness.	Stickiness can be high on subscription based apps – e.g. news, weather apps .
User Analytics	Yes	Yes
Development Characteristics		
Return on investment	Higher	
Development Costs	Improved design approaches significantly reduce development costs.	May be Lower. Less specialised development skills needed.
Runs on multiple devices	Yes, but requires adaption.	Yes, requires no adaption
Deployment	iPhone apps need pre-release approval by Apple.	No QA controls so can be quicker.
Development	Outsourced	In-house

Future

Currently the primary drawback of web apps is their inability to access the hardware features of the mobile device. Some progress has been made with the development of browser APIs such as the GPS API and the development of the new HTML 5 standard. It should be noted however that it is thought to be still 2 to 3 years away before web-apps will be able to communicate with all the hardware components of a mobile device.

Survey

A webinar of the GIA survey results can be found here:

www.globalintelligence.com/insights-analysis/white-papers/native-or-Web-application-how-best-to-deliver-cont