

# Webbmedia Group

## Research Note

### **Maturing Mobile**

**How Baby Boomers are using mobile phones for work, communications, content and entertainment.**

**By Chris Piel**



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## ***Executive Summary***

Americans have adopted the mobile web at a significantly faster rate than they did the desktop Internet in the 90s. This is due, in part, to growing access to 3G and 4G networks, which offer very fast, near-ubiquitous connectivity. Newer handsets are entering the market that offer most of the same features as the average computer.

At the same time, mobile technology is become a more interesting prospect to the 75 million U.S. Baby Boomers, aged 46-64. They're using SMS and Google for search. More than 22 million Boomers use Facebook, and they're starting to access their accounts increasingly via mobile phones. While Boomers want to use mobile web applications and read content from their phones, miniature buttons and complicated menus/ navigation structures discourage them. However, at the direction of their adult children or workplace colleagues, many Boomers are purchasing a new class of mobile devices -- iPhones, Android phones, iPads -- all designed to make the mobile web more accessible.

## ***About This Report***

In addition to gathering data on mobile device purchasing, data consumption, device specifications and carrier usage, we interviewed dozens of Boomers around the U.S. to learn more about how and why they use mobile devices. We wanted to know:

- What influences their buying decisions when it comes to mobile phones?
- How do they first learn how to use a new mobile phone?
- What are their frustrations using mobile phones?
- What drives their interests most: content (news, entertainment), short messaging, reading (books, magazines), watching videos, games, other applications?
- Where do they learn about features and applications available for mobile phones? Commercials? Word of mouth?

Ultimately, we wanted to present an overview of how and why Boomers are using their mobile devices so that our clients and make more informed decisions about application development, device form function, and content/ services delivery.

## ***Boomers Like Fast Networks, Lower Costs and Intuitive Smartphones***

Baby Boomers are adopting smartphones because newer devices contain Boomer-friendly features, the networks are faster and more ubiquitous, and because in many areas the cost of purchasing smartphones and data plans are going down.

### **iPhone: Indicator of Future Mobile Web Ubiquity**

The mobile web will reach ubiquity in the U.S. quicker than the desktop Internet did. One indication is consumers' tremendous early adoption of the iPhone and iPod Touch. The iPhone and iPod Touch experienced the fastest user growth ever in consumer technology product history over their first two and half years on the market, an honor traditionally held by video game consoles. In the first nine quarters on the market, the iPhone and iPod Touch's 57 million units sold was eight times greater than the 7 million subscriptions AOL acquired in its first nine quarters of its existence<sup>1</sup>. Netscape sold just 11 million units over the same relative period. Eventually, both Netscape and AOL more than doubled their users after being on the market for five years.



If Apple follows that trend, the company should sell 114 million mobile devices by 2013. Apple sold 8.75 million iPhones in the second fiscal quarter of 2010 -- its best quarter yet<sup>2</sup>. The numbers will only grow as Apple opens up its product to additional network providers.

### **Growing 3G Coverage**

The U.S. is the fastest-growing 3G market, and that's an important enabler of mobile media consumption. Using a smartphone without 3G coverage is similar to docking a speed boat in a pond. With 3G networks and now 4G networks, mobile users load apps, stream video and browse the web at a pace that is acceptable. By the end of 2009, 43% of U.S. mobile phone users owned a 3G phone, up from 32% a year prior<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Morgan Stanley Research

<sup>2</sup> Morgan Stanley Research

<sup>3</sup> comScore 2009 Digital Media Recap

Throughout the world, 3G networks are currently replacing the 2G networks that provided the first digital cellular signals. 2G networks enabled text messaging, mobile e-mail and mobile downloads for the first time. 3G networks introduced simultaneous voice and data, higher download speeds, mobile TV and location-based services.

4G networks enable mobile video chat, high definition video streaming, and significantly faster web-browsing. 4G will essentially bring the speed and power of the desktop web experience to mobile devices. As of June 2010, Sprint Nextel is offering the first U.S.-based 4G phone and service. During the next 1-3 years the other major U.S. network providers will begin to offer 4G coverage, either in the form of WiMax or Long Term Evolution (LTE). WiMax is like a giant WiFi provider but instead of blasting wireless Internet on an uncontrolled spectrum over a few hundred feet, WiMax blasts signals over a licensed spectrum (like a broadcast television station would) over 5-10 miles. WiMax is 5 times faster than 3G Internet. While Sprint currently uses WiMax, it will mostly be deployed in Africa, the Asian Pacific, and Latin America<sup>4</sup> by local carriers. Verizon and AT&T already adopted LTE for their developing 4G networks. LTE networks will be compatible with pre-existing 3G devices, while WiMax networks will not.

### **3G Ubiquity and the Mobile Social Web**

As 3G coverage grows, so will mobile web activity. At least that's what happened in Japan, whose mobile phone market is more mature than North America's. Japan surpassed 20% 3G market penetration in 2004. The U.S. did not reach that mark until 2008<sup>5</sup>. Today, Japan has already reached 3G ubiquity, where penetration is expected to be 96% this year<sup>6</sup>. Some Japanese cities already have expansive 4G networks in place.

Mobile traffic to social networking sites is already growing in the United States. Facebook had more U.S. mobile visitors in February 2010, which was more than any other site besides Google<sup>7</sup>. In January 2010, 25.1 million U.S. mobile users accessed Facebook via their mobile browsers, according to comScore. That was a 112% increase from a year prior. Twitter had 4.7 million mobile visits in January, a 347% increase in mobile browser access from a year prior<sup>8</sup>. That doesn't include the nearly 6 million mobile phone owners who accessed the social networking sites exclusively through apps.

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<sup>4</sup> WiMax Forum April 2010 report

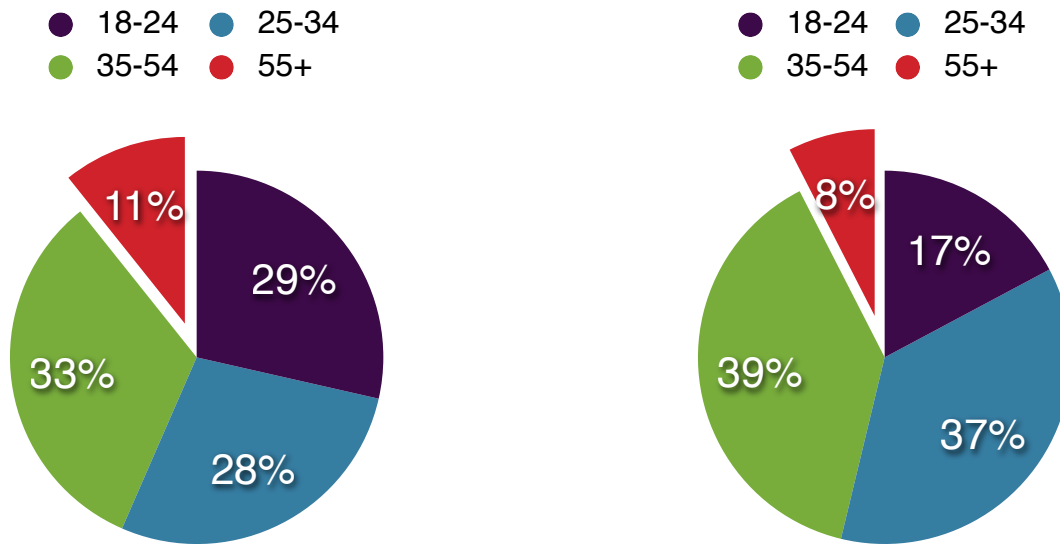
<sup>5</sup> Morgan Stanley

<sup>6</sup> Morgan Stanley

<sup>7</sup> State of the Mobile Web report by Opera Software

<sup>8</sup> Both social networking sites experienced greater overall user growth over the same period. Nonetheless, mobile social web activity trends upward.

### Web-based Facebook usage vs. mobile social networks usage



Data Sources: Nielsen, iStrategy

The increase was greatest among smartphone owners, 30.8% of which visited a social networking site via their mobile browser, up from 22.5% a year prior.

Boomers are helping drive the mobile social growth. In 2009, 46% of Boomers in the U.S. maintained a social networking profile, according to eMarketer. The 35-54 Facebook demographic grew 328% in 2009, while the 55 and older crowd grew by 922%<sup>9</sup>. Boomers accounted for 22.8 million or 18.3% of Facebook users in May 2010.

In short, Boomers are flocking to social networks and are increasingly using their mobile phones to interact in that space. 35-54 year-olds generated 36% of mobile social activity on Twitter and Facebook last winter<sup>10</sup>. The 55-and-older users accounted for 7% of mobile usage. These numbers suggest that age does not affect mobile social activity. To put it plainly, the mobile social web is growing, due in large part to older users.

<sup>9</sup> Nielsen

<sup>10</sup> Nielsen

### **Smartphone Owners Consume More Mobile Media**

When people own 3G-enabled smartphones, especially iPhones and handsets running the Android OS, they use them to access the mobile web significantly more than non-smartphone owners. Combined, iPhone and Android phones only accounted for 13% of global mobile phone shipments in the first quarter of 2009, yet they accounted for 73% of mobile Internet usage in the month following that quarter.

### ***How Boomers Choose Their Phones***

While Boomers may not consume as much mobile media as younger people, they do not oppose adopting new technology.

Webbmedia Group held discussions with Baby Boomers across the U.S. to learn more about how they make decisions about technology purchasing and use. We learned that Boomers express a willingness to use tech that they find practical.

Boomers have a love-hate relationship with mobile devices. The hate relationship stems from the fact that Boomers really want to be in control of their time and they feel mobile devices can be intrusive. Those negative attitudes are subsiding as Boomers develop an appreciation for what mobile phones can do.

Below are excerpts from our conversations with Boomers.

## The Sensible Adopter

Michael Juilfs, 56, is a financial planner, financial divorce consultant and financial planning instructor at Western International University. Since he is busy juggling two businesses and a teaching gig, he uses Bluetooth whenever he is on the phone because it allows him to multitask, he said.

“I can’t stand to waste my time because there’s not a enough of it in the day,” he said. While we spoke on the phone, I could hear him *tap-tap-tap* away at his keyboard, trying finish a spreadsheet for a divorce settlement he was working on.

“To me it’s a tool,” he said. “It’s convenient because I can answer it in the car. Like last night, on my way home after class I called my mom. That’s increasing my time utilization that would normally be dead time driving. I can be a good son and talk to my mom.”

But he did not understand his 20-year-old stepson’s attachment to his new smartphone. Every time he gets a text, he jumps out of his chair to respond immediately, Juilfs said. The incessant contact is neither productive nor preferable, he said.

“I think about how much time people waste on mobile phones,” he said. “It just blows my mind. Like, how do you have any time to get anything done?”

Clients reach him exclusively via his mobile phone or e-mail, so when it comes to his phone behavior, Juilfs is all business. He does not text or e-mail on his phone for the same two reasons he does not use social networking sites. Juilfs feared that if clients could contact him via text or Facebook, he would never get anything done because they would expect him to always be available. He also feared that that he would violate industry regulations by communicating through those avenues.

Juilfs adopted Bluetooth because it made sense. It allowed him to multi-task. And just like his decision to use Bluetooth was *sensible*, he rejected texting and mobile e-mail due to rationale concerns, not a fundamental opposition to new or mobile technology.

A 2008 poll of white collar and legal professionals by LexisNexis found that 68% of Boomers considered the use of a laptop or PDA during a meeting “distracting.” Only 49% of Generation Y respondents felt the same. And while 35% of Generation Y considered the practice “productive,” only 20% of Boomers felt the same way. The difference between the generations’ perspectives and mobile behavior essentially regards whether or not they view the tool as useful. As Boomers encounter easier-to-use smartphones and apps that fulfill their needs, the differences in perspective and behavior should diminish.

### **Influencers: Purchasing, Apps and Content**

When purchasing and adopting new technology, Boomer’s children, younger co-workers and peers influence their behavior. Children and younger co-workers introduce and teach Boomers new technology but Boomers do not adopt it until they see a peer using it<sup>11</sup>. Watching peers use technology confirms its usefulness. Sometimes, Boomers will acquire a new technology because their job requires it. For example, two people we interviewed purchased a BlackBerry because their former CEOs mandated it.

### **Children**

When it comes to technology, Boomers and their children swap their traditional roles. Boomers transform from teacher to student, from imitated to imitator.

### **Children As Teachers**

Jeffrie Story, 62, is a self-employed sales consultant. Previously, she worked for a national landline phone company for 25 years, where she finished as the director of product management. Story appears to be a thought-leader and an early technology adopter. She writes business columns for trade organizations. Co-workers at her last job approached her with questions about their computers. She thought it was funny because she does not consider her self tech-savvy. She signed up for Facebook four years ago. She bought TiVo before the local cable company offered digital video recorders. She has owned the web domain <http://Jeffrie.com> since 1998. Yet Story does not attempt to keep up with technology.

“I love technology, it’s just that i don’t want to do the research and the due diligence of it,” she said.

Story has two adult children with families. She appears to rely on the families for technology-related purchasing information. Her daughter lives in Phoenix and tends to “sell” Story on products that she likes, she said.

Her son is techie. He once ran a blog about South African politics and he currently attends Yale where he is pursuing a Ph.D. in nineteenth century frontier history.

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<sup>11</sup> Joint AARP/ Microsoft study

Story bought the TiVo because her kids kept telling her she needed it and now she cannot live without she says. She bought a flat screen high definition television a few months ago, which her son suggested and accompanied her to purchase.

Fed up with having to pay a service to debug her PC, she purchased a Macbook a year ago. She converted after her daughter, son-in-law and 17-year-old grandson made the case for it. The switch opened her up to more Mac products, she said. She would swap her BlackBerry Curve for an iPhone if Verizon offered it.

Juilfs, the financial planner, purposely keeps his cellphone usage simple. He disabled texting because he feared that clients would text him and he did not want to deal with the legal ramifications of texting clients financial advice. His wife Maureen demonstrates how technically inept he is, Juilfs said. She saves contacts to his phone for him. She picked it out for him -- he does not even know what brand or model it is. She is the type of person who uses all the apps and knows when her next upgrade is coming, he said. A month ago she purchased a new smartphone the first day she was eligible for the discount. How can she use her phone so differently from him, I asked.

"She does it because her kid does," Juilfs said. Her 20-year-old son -- Juilfs' stepson -- studies at Purdue University. Maureen and her son even use Skype together, which she enjoys a lot, Juilfs said.

Glenn Hines, 56, is an unemployed financial executive for the manufacturing industry. He considered his technology-use minimal. A year ago, Hines and his wife moved in with his parents, who live in a ritzy suburb. Before the move, his 22-year-old daughter taught him how to sell some belongings on eBay.

Hines owns a Samsung flip phone. He only texts in response to one from his 22 or 26-year-old daughter.



**Technology  
in the  
Workplace**

Rochelle Lebhar, 60, owns a business with her 39-year-old daughter. They introduce green-tech start ups to venture capitalists but business has been very slow lately. Because of the family venture, Lebhar's daughter actually becomes a hybrid influencer, combining the role of child and younger co-worker. They might get a Macbook laptop for the business because her daughter is dying for one, Lebhar said. They recently went to the Apple store to check one out. That is where the iPad struck a chord with Lebhar. Lebhar, whose most complicated technology-related behaviors originated at work and include e-mail and LinkedIn, saw the iPad as a conduit to modern times.

"I keep telling myself I need to get in the 21st century," she said. She liked the iPad touch menus and keyboard attachment, but she could not afford it. She will consider it more seriously when she has more money. At the moment she has to save for an eye surgery.

Story owns a BlackBerry Curve because the last company she worked for required it. The IT people set up her mobile e-mail or else she would not have done so herself she said.

Terry Gilbert, a 55-year-old accountant purchased an iPhone 3G recently. He had a Motorola Razor but the CEO of the rubber-manufacturing startup where he works made him switch to the iPhone. Gilbert stalled on buying it because a multinational company where he once worked required him to own a BlackBerry. He disliked it because the sun never set on his company; e-mails flowed in constantly from colleagues in North America, Europe and Asia.

"It was a pain in the tail," he said.

After dragging his feet on the iPhone purchase the CEO's directive turned into "Get the damn phone already!" So he did.

Now Gilbert uses the phone for pleasure. He loves board games so his 25-year-old daughter, whose partner has an iPhone, suggested he download some of the games he already played offline, such as Scrabble. He practices anagrams on an iPhone app so he can beat his girlfriend at Boggle.

Many Boomers adopt new technology because their job requires it or because they watch younger co-workers using it.

### Coworkers Suggest Apps, Too

Co-workers suggest apps too. One of Gilbert's coworkers, a former marine sniper, suggested a sniper game that Gilbert now plays. His boss likes to bargain shop so he suggested a barcode-scanning, price comparison app.

Friends do not suggest all of Gilbert's apps. He downloaded the National Public Radio app after seeing it advertised on its website. KTVK, a family-owned broadcast television station in Phoenix, advertised their news app during a broadcast that Gilbert was watching. He downloaded it for the local news. While he is not impressed by KTVK's stories, it is the only local news app he knew of. He only reads the text stories on the apps. He never watches the videos or listens to the audio.

Gilbert canceled his newspaper subscription seven years ago. He estimates that the news apps rank third among his most used news sources. NPR's radio broadcast ranks first, a result of his 45-minute commute to work every morning. NPR's website ranks second, even it is "too liberal," according to Gilbert.

He also uses the iPhone for essential work tasks. In the week leading up to our conversation he Gilbert used his phone to e-mail, retrieve client contact information online and to navigate to one of his company's locations via a GPS app.

Boomers use the Internet to research consumer electronics that they they plan to purchase nearly as much as younger generations. In addition to relying on their network more heavily, consumers 50 and older rely on in-store sales associates for product research significantly more than younger consumers. Some of the Boomers we interviewed expressed that they would use more advanced features if sales and service staff showed them how to use them.



**Salesman's  
View:**

**Do you read  
your daily  
horoscope?**

Andy Martinez is the National Sales Director for TalkMobile, an indirect dealer for T-Mobile. Before that, Martinez sold mobile phones for six years. When it comes to purchasing cellphones, Martinez made it clear that due to the economy, Boomers are sold on savings.

"People right now are really interested in saving money," Martinez said in an interview. "But they want to get something better than they currently have."

That includes smartphones. When Andy first started selling cellphones six years ago he made all his money on new activations.

"Nowadays I make a lot of my money on features," he said. Features such as data plans. "We actually try to get them a data device," he said.

Not only do data devices -- industry jargon for smartphone -- and data plans increase the salesperson's commission, but customers with data-devices have the greatest retention.

"The retention rate of someone getting a data device is really, really high," Martinez said. "Which benefits us as a company because the more things you can tie to your phone the more likelihood you're going to keep it."

With smartphones, the consumer becomes dependent on the device for e-mail, calendars and other features. That is why people rarely leave their BlackBerry, he said. If all those functions are tied to their phone, it is not worth switching for them.

Not only does Martinez's sales staff push smartphones, Boomers are growing curious about them. A lot more people "50 plus" are testing them out, Martinez said.

"The older generation is curious because they see all the young people using them," he said.

To convince older customers to go with a smartphone, Martinez's salespeople will discover the customer's interests and then project those onto the phone.

To demonstrate, Andy role-played: "Do you read your horoscope daily?" he asked an imaginary customer. "Oh you do? Okay so -- just so you know -- there's an app on here that gives you an update every single morning on your horoscope."

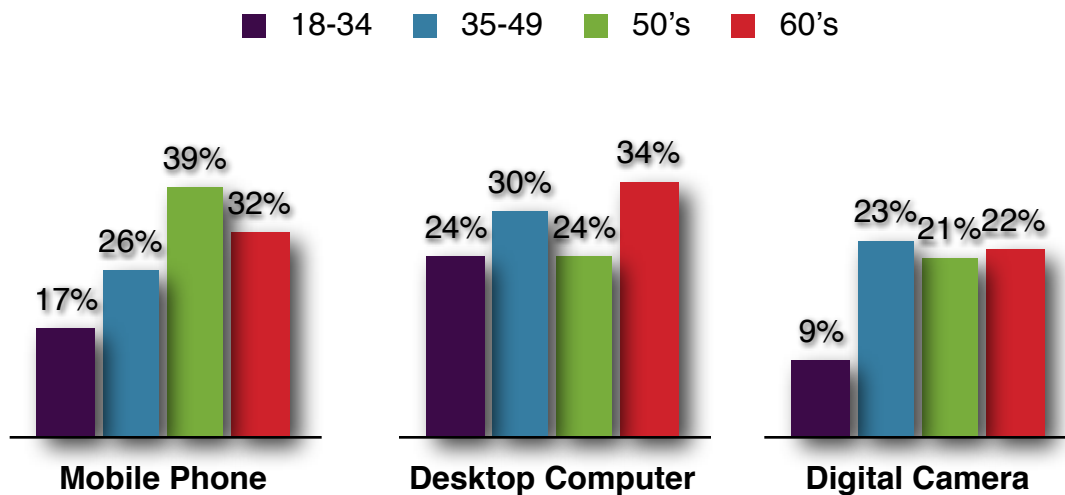
Once the customer is sold the salesperson ensures that they will use the retaining features.

"Before the customer leaves we set up their e-mail accounts," Martinez said. "Download a couple of apps for them that they like. We get them so tied into that phone that they don't want to leave it." Not every cellphone company's salespeople do that, but it is the key to retention, he said.

## Mobile Device Features

### Features That Frustrate

Mobile Phones frustrate more Boomers than any other consumer electronic device<sup>12</sup>. Additionally, more people in their 50s are frustrated by their mobile phone than any other age group is frustrated by any other consumer electronic device<sup>13</sup>. The top reasons in general, and among Boomers include: “Too Many Features” (57%), “Confusing Terminology” (43%), and “Buttons Too Small” (35%). These topics as well as insufficient signal strength and menus were among the most popular topics during our discussions with Boomers.



<sup>12</sup> Consumer Electronics Association and Compete data

<sup>13</sup> Consumer Electronics Association and Compete data

## Buttons and Input

Boomers do not like typing with tiny keypads and touchscreens. The miniature scale of mobile input in general annoys them. One of our interview subjects said that she does not text on her LG Chocolate because the keys and screen are too small. And while she was an early adopter of the PalmPilot, she ultimately stopped using it in 2005 because she found the tiny interface difficult to use.

Two of our other interviewees said that they preferred the BlackBerry keypad to typing on the iPhone's touchscreen. However, both also preferred the iPhone's touchscreen menu selection to BlackBerry's trackball.

One said that he hates it when he has to use the pinch and zoom to read something on his iPhone. He speed reads, especially things on his phone, so he looks at the entire paragraph at once. The pinch zoom slows him down.

Boomer aversion to miniature input indicates that they probably will not produce as much mobile content (such as Facebook status updates) as younger mobile users. The more Boomers have to type, scroll or zoom to use an app, the less they will use it. That said, they are eager to consume mobile content: social network updates, news, entertainment, books, short stories, radio broadcasts, video broadcasts, email and maps.

## Menus

Mobile menus frequently confused the Boomers who were interviewed for this report. They describe getting lost on their way from one basic screen to another but have trouble articulating exactly what it is that frustrates them. Intuitive options, be it labels or icons, coupled with elegant organization would likely help Boomers navigate their menus and captain their devices.

For example, if a Boomer laid a screen-locked BlackBerry Curve and a screen-locked iPhone side by side and tried to find the score of last night's football game using ESPN's free mobile app, the following would occur:

Using the BlackBerry, she would make eight clicks to find the score and return to the phone's home screen. (The iPhone would require four clicks.)

All the while she would have to point the trackball -- the one that she has trouble with -- at her desired link and then click. To select her desired link on the iPhone she would just touch it with her finger.

She would use four different buttons on the BlackBerry. She would use just two -- the touchscreen and the back button -- on the iPhone.

To exit the BlackBerry app, she would have to punch the BlackBerry icon button and scroll through 20 separate options before selecting “close” at the bottom of the options menu. Then she would tap the back button to return to her home screen. From the iPhone app she would tap her back button and land back at the home screen.

### **Feature Creep**

While one common industry myth is that too many features confuse and perplex Boomers, our research shows that most Boomers actually desire more features, such as cameras. However, they do not want to read the lengthy instruction manuals that come with most smartphones. Since most Boomers view instruction manuals as the only means to learning product features, if the instruction book is thick, they might not even open it. They will also likely not try to engage any of the features. Instead, Boomers want an easy-to-use, intuitive system that works in a way that makes sense to them right out of the box.

Joseph F. Coughlin, Ph.D., directs the MIT AgeLab, where he researches how the convergence of demographic change and technology will drive innovation in business and government. He largely focuses on Boomers and older demographics. He recommended against limiting mobile device features to appeal to Boomers. Even though some Boomers express frustration with multi-feature devices, their frustration stems from the decreased usability that accompanies augmented function<sup>14</sup>. Instead he suggested giving the “me generation” control over the features by making devices customizable.

### **Features That Please: Control and Voice Input**

Boomers like any feature that gives them greater control over their time, their media, their social interactions and their lives in general. When it comes to mobile-centric technology, audio commands resonate most with Boomers. Verbal commands eliminate the need for finger dexterity and typing on small buttons, and it also could help solve the navigation/ menu problem that frustrate Boomers.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.disruptivedemographics.com/2010/04/personalization-new-language-of-design.html#>

## *Implications*

We discovered a number of trends:

- Baby Boomers are poised to use the mobile web because it is finally easy enough for them to access with devices such as the iPhone and Droid. They like technology products that give them control over media.
- Smartphones with apps tailored to an individual's interests and needs give him/her more control over their experience. Boomers are beginning to recognize this but tight budgets currently prevent Boomers from purchasing new smartphones.
- Complicated menus and interfaces as well as slow Internet connections on the majority of Boomers' current devices prevent them from accessing the mobile web. However, 3G and 4G networks are becoming more ubiquitous.
- Adult children, co-workers and peers strongly influence what mobile products Boomers acquire.
- While many of the Boomers interviewed for this report no longer subscribe to his/her local daily newspaper, they are eager to consume news using their mobile devices.

### **Product Design**

When considering the baby Boomer, mobile product designers should strive for the characteristics that make any technology product (especially the iPhone and iPad and their apps) popular. High usability, intuitive layout, elegance and simplicity appeal to Boomers. The more complicated a product is and the more it requires a Boomer to interact with it via miniature interfaces the less likely it becomes that they will use or enjoy it. The less a Boomer has to scroll, pinch, zoom, click, squint and search to find what they came for, the better. If a product requires instructions, they probably won't read them.

The ideal mobile device for a Boomer would have a touchscreen to navigate menus but a keypad for typing. This describes the Verizon Droid, the flagship phone for the leading network provider in the U.S.

### **Privacy**

Boomers care about privacy. If an app uses their personal information -- maybe so it can customize their content -- it should simply and concisely tell Boomers how and why it needs their information.

### Customization

Boomers like technology products that offer control over media and communication. Giving Boomers easy-to-use customization tools puts control in their hands. Boomers already using apps do this whenever they download an app based on their interest and needs.

### Voice Command Systems

Give 'em HAL<sup>15</sup>. Boomers have spoken into phones their whole lives. Voice input is familiar. They want simple voice input and voice commands on their mobile phones. It circumvents the miniature interfaces and menus that they dread using. If appropriate, incorporate voice commands and queries into apps.

Consider how content interacts with voice-powered search tools. The Android browser allows users to conduct a Google search with voice input. Take into account that people speak differently than they write. Voice activated mobile searches are more likely than desktop-based text searches to be timely, conversational and posed as a question. Consider the mobile-centric long tail of search queries when search engine optimizing, content. Suppose a news organization publishes a breaking story on a warehouse fire in Memphis. In addition to optimizing for “warehouse fire memphis,” consider “where is the warehouse fire in Memphis?” People in the vicinity might see the smoke and go for there phones: “What’s on fire in South Memphis?”

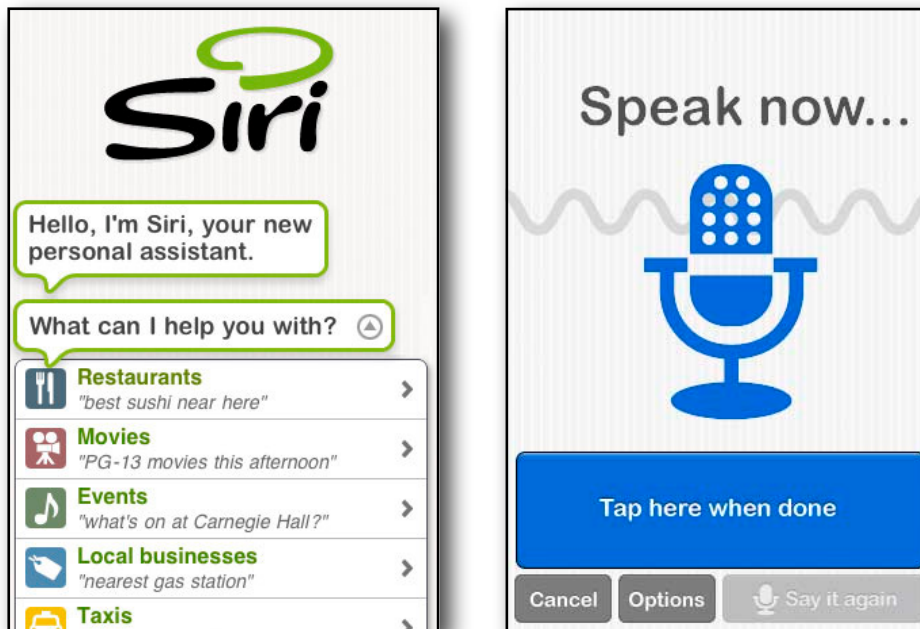


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<sup>15</sup> HAL 9000 is the voice-activated on-board computer of the spacecraft in Arthur C. Clarke's fictional *Space Odyssey*.

## Content and Applications

Consider how your app interacts with other voice-powered apps. Apple recently purchased Siri, a mobile virtual personal assistant application, and one perfectly suited for Boomers. Users ask Siri a question: “Where is a fun Mexican restaurant to take my family?” Similar to how Google catalogues web pages, Siri catalogues iPhone apps and uses them to answer questions. Instead of having to download all the apps themselves, Siri figures out which combination of apps will best answer the question and presents users with the answer. For the Mexican restaurant query, it would likely use Yelp to find a restaurant and then Google maps to get the user there. It could even call the user a cab if they did not have a car. Since Siri is task oriented, it does not catalogue media apps. But imagine an app that used the same voice and app-coordinating technology to create a real-time news encyclopedia. Users could instantly receive breaking stories with national significance from first-responding, local journalists without having to seek out the local news apps. It would broaden local news organization’s exposure and give them ownership over stories in their backyard. An app like Siri could benefit Boomers by offering health/ medical information. In fact, Plerts<sup>16</sup> is a new personal alert service that can simultaneously notify family members and friends using email, SMS, Facebook and or/Twitter if medications have been skipped or if a user is in physical danger...all via an iPhone.



<sup>16</sup> <http://plerts.com/>

## *Projections*

Boomers will shift to using mobile devices as a primary source for information. Boomers will prefer short, text-based news stories on their phone, and offered the right interface, they will consume news, entertainment, books and other content on their mobile devices.

If current U.S. trends indicate future mobile web behavior, Facebook will be the most prominent mobile web activity. Users will access Facebook more from their mobile devices than from desktop computers. About 30% of Boomers use Facebook, 90% of which signed up in the past year and half. Age segments tend to claim approximately the same amount of social mobile space as they do overall membership. Boomers use and will continue to use Facebook on their mobile devices.

Boomers and the larger consumer population will begin to pay for mobile content and services. They are accustomed to paying for mobile ringtones and apps.

Google will lead the way in Boomer-centric handset and application development. The smartphone platform that provides superior voice input functions will attract more Boomers. Android currently leads iPhone on this front. Android phones have voice search capabilities. Android has voice to text apps that allow users to send a text message without typing. It even has an app that translates voice input to text in a different language. Google has been working on voice recognition since before releasing its 1-800-GOOG-411 service<sup>17</sup>, a free mobile information directory service launched in 2007. In August 2010, Google erected phone booths in major U.S. markets and allowed anyone to make free calls using Google Voice, the company's phone service<sup>18</sup>. Experts say that Google offered the service to further test and enhance its mobile phone capabilities.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.google.com/goog411/>

<sup>18</sup> [http://news.cnet.com/8301-17938\\_105-20014815-1.html](http://news.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-20014815-1.html)

## ***About the Author***

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## ***About Webbmedia Group***

Webbmedia Group is an international digital strategy consultancy that offers mobile, platform, social and emerging tech/ media strategic services and workshops to Fortune 500 companies, media organizations, mid-sized businesses, governments and universities worldwide.

Webbmedia Group provides insider access and tech insights to our client base. Our detailed analysis, tech trend reports and quarterly tech wrap-ups help our clients learn about new industries and gain better expertise in those they already know.

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