The Apple tagline may state “There’s an app for that”, but with the popularity of mobile websites soaring, marketers are beginning to question whether an app is right for every business. With more than 425,000 available in Apple’s App Store alone, the glut of options available to consumers means most apps disappear without trace.

The future of the mobile app is dividing opinion amongst marketers. Some see them as a way to enhance the service they provide customers but others predict they will eventually become obsolete for marketing purposes. To avoid the latter, a mobile app must offer benefits above and beyond what can be expected from a desktop or mobile website. It must also be considered repeatedly useful and engaging – by patients, not you!

Apps may be innovative and fun but they’re not right for everyone. Consider the following:

Do build an app that...
- Makes use of the unique capabilities of the device, such as the camera, calendar, motion sensor or global positioning system (GPS)
- Emphasises experiences that can’t be replicated on a website, such as viewing rich media content on a tablet
- Encourage users to share content with friends through social media
- Performs a function that is actually useful to your patients

Don’t build an app that...
- Only has functions that are easier to use on a mobile website
- Focuses on transactions where patients will want to do research outside the app
- Requires huge amounts of data to be downloaded and updated on the move
- Is designed for a mobile platform your patients don’t use

Why mobile sites are taking over
Unlike apps, which must cater for the growing number of mobile devices and operating systems, each of which requires different app technology, the mobile web is open to everyone. One size fits all if you like. This alone gives mobile websites a far greater reach than mobile apps. Furthermore, mobile websites are generally less expensive than a single mobile app, bearing its own financial considerations.

General browsing capabilities are better served through a mobile-optimised version of a website - if you are just trying to find generic information, a mobile site will be quicker, easier and will not require you to store large amounts of info on your phone. Plus, you still benefit from the inbuilt functionality on mobile devices which make it easier for users to perform certain tasks. This includes the ability to make calls and get directions to your practice at the click of a button.

Already, between 15 per cent and 20 per cent of all searches originate on a mobile device and this number is set to rise exponentially in the next year. Until such time as apps make better use of the technology available, I would recommend a website optimised for mobile to any dental professional looking to exploit the infinite potential of the mobile marketplace.

Need advice on how to best capture the mobile market? Speak to one of the Dental Design team on 01202 238 469 or visit www.dental-design.co.uk – your marketing success is our priority.

About the author
Amy Rose-Jones is the Marketing Manager at Dental Design Ltd, the leading website design and marketing agency for the dental profession. With more than 9 years experience in a marketing capacity, Amy has helped hundreds of practices throughout the UK to build and develop a lasting web presence through a blend of creative and marketing skills.

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