2023

Contentsquare

Digital Experience Benchmark Report

Data and insights to make every visit count.

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The dataset

The 2023 Digital Experience Benchmark report shares the most important digital KPIs driving growth and their impact on the digital experience and customer happiness.

161 billion
Page Views

35 billion
Sessions

2,942
Websites

26
Countries

9
Industries

Fast findings

Greater activity unlocks more revenue (cha-ching!)

Sites with higher activity (the share of time users spend interacting with content during a visit) enjoy **19%** higher conversion rates and **20%** lower bounce rates than sites with the lowest activity.

Find and fix friction before it bites your bottom line

Frustration is far too common across the customer journey. More than one in three visits **(36%)** cause frustration. Slow page load is the most frequent and impactful issue.

Save the session and boost revenue, with speed!

Pages that load in under 1 second, compared with those that exceed **2 seconds**, cut bounce rate by **5.5 percentage** points (**43.5% vs. 49.0%**) and average 1.2 additional page views per session. These additional views help boost conversion rate by **25%**.

Optimize traffic—paying a premium is painful

While digital traffic trended up, rising **+4.6%** YoY in Q4, paid sources accounted for more of it. Paid sources drove **31%** of all mobile traffic and **25%** overall, though paid conversion rates fell **-2.9%** overall.

Give love to MVPs: Most Visited Pages

Across industries, the pages that captured the most visits varied. Here's the page type that most visitors viewed by industry:

■ **Home Page:**
Travel | Media

■ **My Account:**
Financial Services | Energy

■ **Product Page:**
Retail | Manufacturing

■ **Category Page:** Telecommunications | Software | Services

Introduction

The digital landscape shifted dramatically in 2022—and not always in the most encouraging direction. As a result of global economic headwinds (and artificially high comparable results from 2021), the first three quarters saw an unusual traffic drop. The green numbers businesses like to see painting their analytics dashboards turned red for much of the year. Making matters worse, acquisition costs continued to rise.

The stock response to all this turmoil was to be heard echoing through boardrooms and Zoom calls throughout the year: **"We need to create a better experience!"**

We certainly agree with this. But while the business value of delivering great customer experience is understood by some businesses, many remain hampered by a limited conception of its importance to growth and are unsure how to achieve it.

While most acknowledge that data unlocks that much-coveted 'better experience', too many are focused merely on the beginning and the end of their customers' journeys, namely: traffic and conversion. Digital leaders know better, because they know—that the path to a better experience is guided not simply by the destination, but by the complete customer journey.

The success (or failure) of every customer journey is defined by both good and bad moments. These moments impact a customer's feelings towards a brand and can help or hurt their propensity to engage and spend. They embrace and feel delighted by moments of discovery, inspiration, education and entertainment across the journey. Good moments like these spur them on, whereas moments of friction and frustration cause them to stall and even abandon their journeys.

In other words, customer experience is an emotional, human experience. It's about understanding where customers are feeling engaged or frustrated by your experience—then maximizing engagement and minimizing frustration so they are free to arrive at the desired destination.

This year's Digital Experience Benchmark report deconstructs the on-site customer journey to explore how exactly the activity and frustration within online customer experience shapes important business outcomes.

> **"Today, customer preferences, buying habits and loyalties change overnight, making it critical for businesses not only to react to customer sentiment but also to predict what's next. This could include the use of social channels, buying patterns or even changes that need to be made to the website. The data is there; businesses just need to think differently and be willing to disrupt themselves."**
>
> Zeus Kerravala,
> Founder and Principal Analyst,
> ZK Research

Measure the digital experience:
The good, the bad and the frustrating

1. The good: Activity unlocks great outcomes
2. The bad: Friction frustrates

What do we mean by 'activity'?

Activity represents the share of a visit that a visitor spends engaging with the content, and is calculated as:

$$\text{Activity} = \frac{\text{Time spent interacting (e.g. clicking, swiping, scrolling, typing) during the session}}{\text{Total time spent during the session}}$$

What do we mean by 'frustration'?

Frustration includes the specific moments of friction observed during the on site experience, including:

Slow page load
Page loads that exceed **3 seconds**

Rage clicks
An element was clicked at least **3 times** in less than **2 seconds**

Multiple button interactions
A button was clicked at least **3 times**

Multiple field interactions
A field was clicked at least **3 times**

Multiple use target
An element was clicked at least **3 times**

The good: Activity unlocks great outcomes

Orchestrating a successful and productive digital experience is an exercise in motivating visitors. From the moment a visitor lands on a page, brands have to work hard to keep and foster their attention.

Measuring activity—the share of time a user spends interacting with your site (with typing, clicks, scrolls and swipes) during a visit—helps quantify the visitor's engagement across the journey.

While other metrics detail how much visitors consume (more on consumption later), activity is a metric that shows how well your site keeps their attention.

■ Activity during the journey, all industries
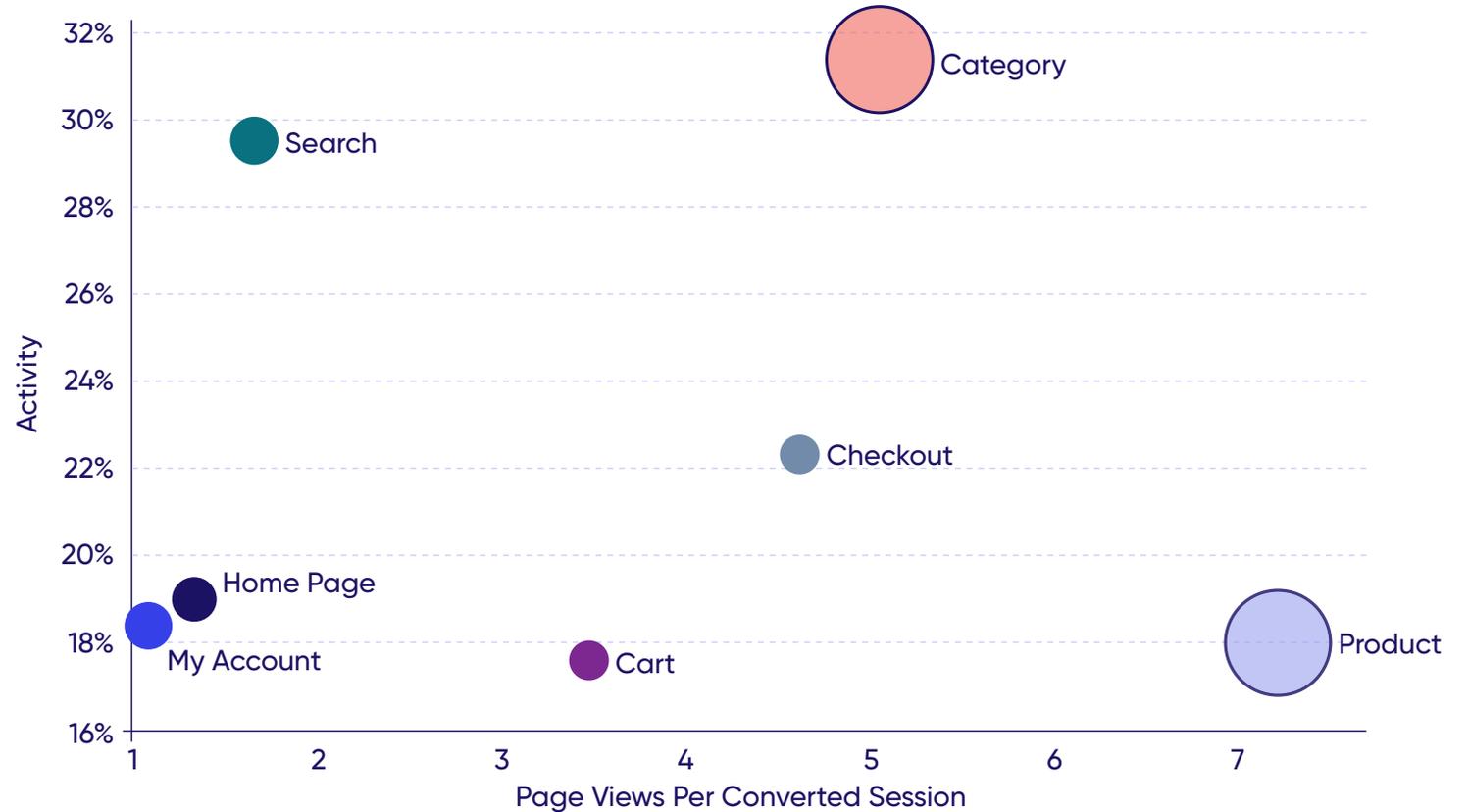
◯ Desktop

◯ Mobile

Activity peaks when visitors are presented with choice and assortment, explaining why it's typically highest on category pages and search pages. On category pages, visitors need to scroll and click to narrow their needs from many to one and advance forward. Search is the most surgical of activities, with the visitor entering search terms to explicitly share what they're looking for.

The all-important product page sees lower activity compared to its peer pages. This is likely due to a more passive mode of consumption, with customers pausing to weigh the 'act or not' moment that defines the page.

■ **Page-by-page view of activity and page consumption**
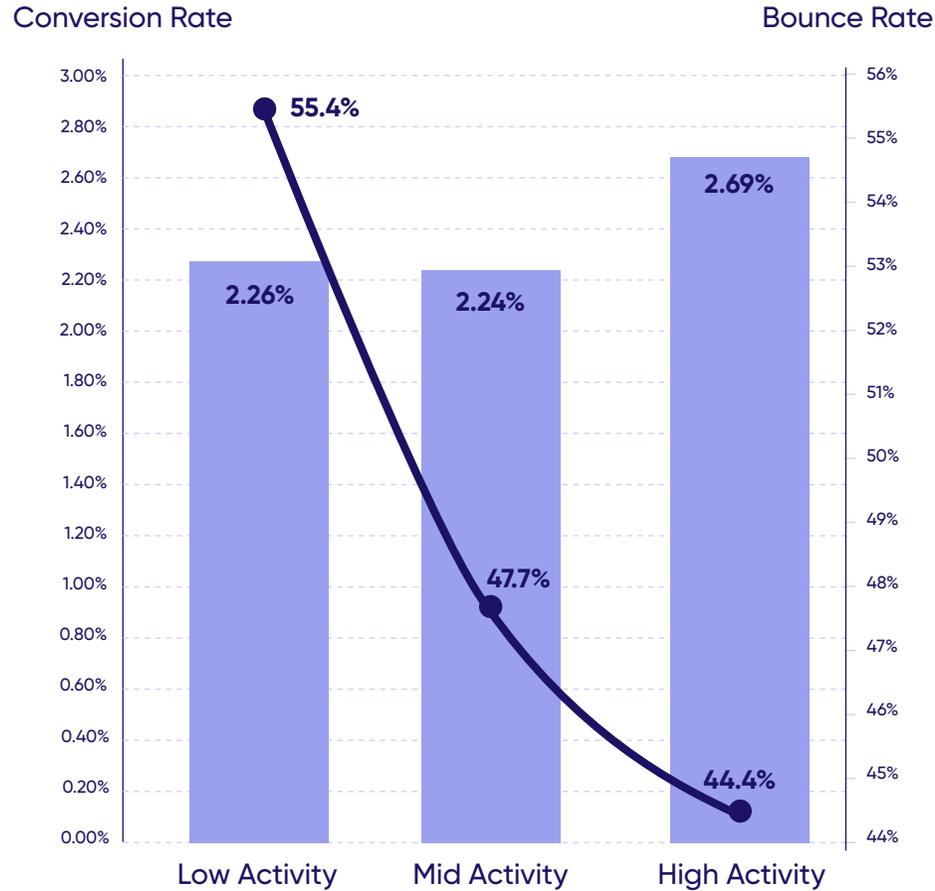Size of bubble represents share of session time

Activity

32%
30% — Category
28% — Search
26%
24%
22% — Checkout
20%
18% — Home Page
16% — My Account, Cart, Product

Page Views Per Converted Session
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Active customers reward sites
Sites with more active visitors deliver strong **Conversion Rate** and lower **Bounce Rate**

Legend:
- Conversion Rate
- Bounce Rate

Conversion Rate (left axis) / **Bounce Rate** (right axis)

| Activity	Conversion Rate	Bounce Rate
Low Activity	2.26%	55.4%
Mid Activity	2.24%	47.7%
High Activity	2.69%	44.4%

Customers' activity levels have a powerful influence over critical business outcomes—specifically, over whether they buy or bounce.

A bounce (a one-page-and-done visit) is the most damaging online behavior impacting businesses, especially at a time in digital when every visit is valuable—and expensive. A bounce means that sites are doing (and paying for) all the hard work of attraction, but missing out on the payoff.

The path avoiding these economically empty visits? **Encourage activity across the journey.**

Increasing visitor activity curbs poor outcomes while significantly improving the odds of great ones occurring. Sites with the strongest levels of activity enjoy conversion rates that are **+19%** higher than those with the lowest activity rates. And those journeys run deeper, too, with higher activity typically delivering an additional page view.

Page views: All sessions

Activity	Pages
High Activity	5.4 pages
Mid Activity	4.5 pages
Low Activity	3.7 pages
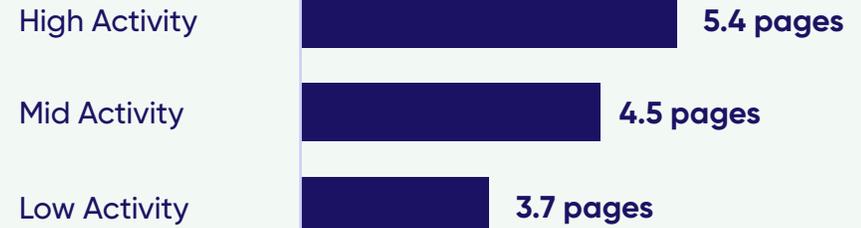
The bad: Friction frustrates (and causes bounces)

If activity is the hero of digital experience then the villain is frustration. And sadly, the villain is a long way from being thwarted. In 2022, moments of friction remained far too common a feature of customer journeys.

While removing friction along the customer journey is widely recognised as desirable, pinpointing points of friction has typically proven to be extremely challenging.
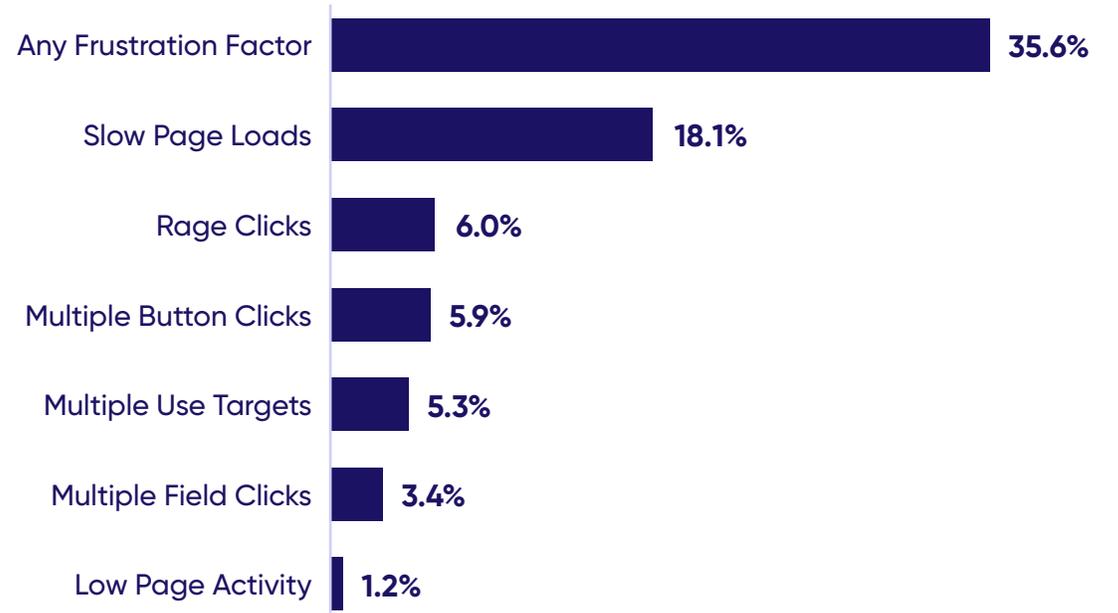
Our data can help you understand where you should be looking for friction in your customer journeys.

Although there is no single cause of friction, the data shows a set of common frustrations that hinder the visitor experience. This graph shows the **top 5 frustration factors** which create obstacles along the customer journey and can sour an experience:

- **Slow page loads**
- **Multiple button interactions**
- **Multiple field interactions**
- **Multiple use targets**
- **Rage clicks**

Collectively, these frustration factors impact **36%** of all sessions —more than **1 in 3**.

■ Top frustration factors in a session

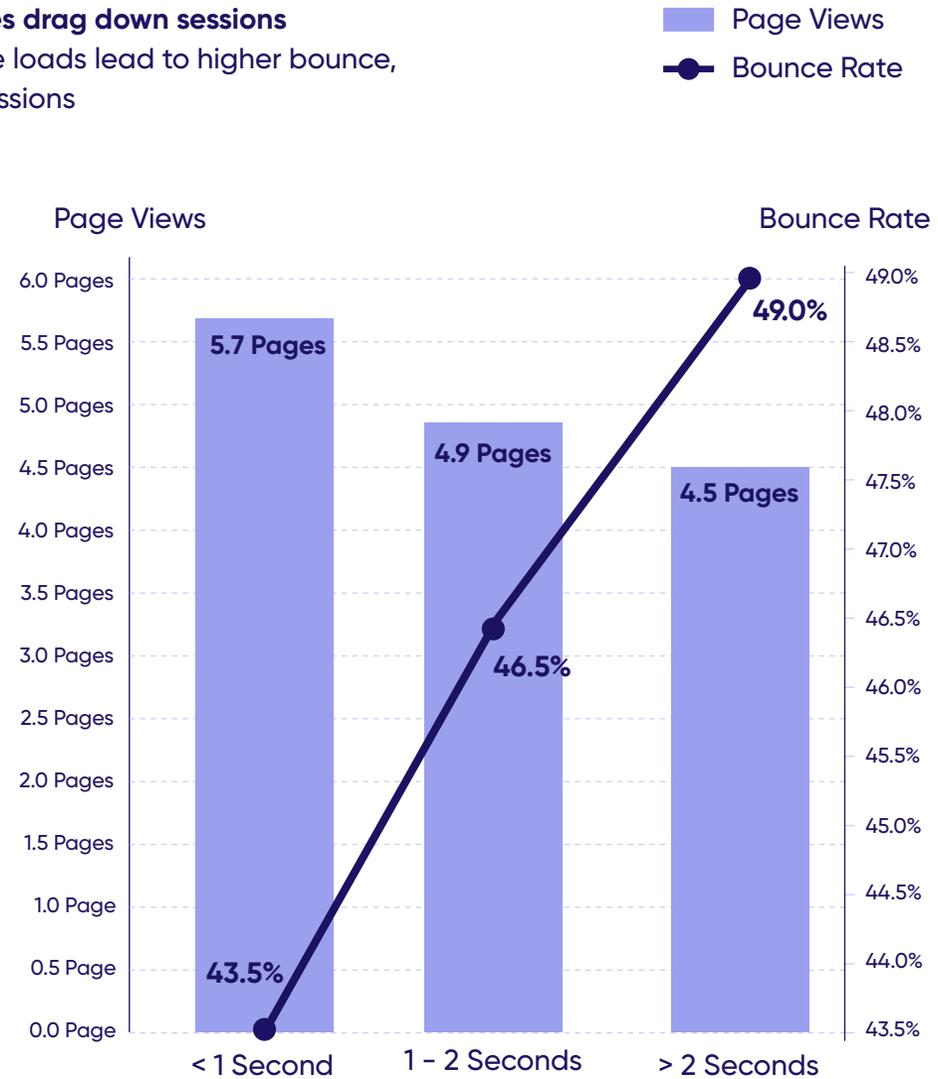| Factor	Percentage
Any Frustration Factor	35.6%
Slow Page Loads	18.1%
Rage Clicks	6.0%
Multiple Button Clicks	5.9%
Multiple Use Targets	5.3%
Multiple Field Clicks	3.4%
Low Page Activity	1.2%

🔴 The need for speed

Amidst all that friction, one factor stands out as the most impactful: slooooooow page loads.

The immediacy that fast loading pages provide is an underappreciated attribute of digital experience. Those that provide it earn the right to capture the visitor's attention and encourage more engagement. By contrast, businesses that force impatient visitors to wait while a page loads feel the consequences immediately.

When customers are forced to wait for pages that take more than **2 seconds** to load, bounce rates reach **49%**, with nearly **1 in 2 visitors bouncing.** And slow loading times have a negative effect on consumption, too. Customers exposed to slow page loads view **1 fewer page** on average.

▪ Slow pages drag down sessions
Longer page loads lead to higher bounce, shallower sessions

Page Views ▬ (legend)
Bounce Rate ●— (legend)

Page Views (left axis) / Bounce Rate (right axis)

Load Time	Page Views	Bounce Rate
< 1 Second	5.7 Pages	43.5%
1 – 2 Seconds	4.9 Pages	46.5%
> 2 Seconds	4.5 Pages	49.0%

Page load times by device and industry

Legend: ■ Desktop ▨ Mobile

All Industries
- Desktop: 1.34 seconds
- Mobile: 1.33 seconds

Energy, Utilities & Construction
- Desktop: 1.91 seconds
- Mobile: 1.75 seconds

Manufacturing
- Desktop: 1.32 seconds
- Mobile: 1.63 seconds

Software
- Desktop: 1.38 seconds
- Mobile: 1.42 seconds

Retail
- Desktop: 1.42 seconds
- Mobile: 1.34 seconds

Travel & Hospitality
- Desktop: 1.34 seconds
- Mobile: 1.29 seconds

Financial Services
- Desktop: 1.18 seconds
- Mobile: 1.25 seconds

Telecommunications
- Desktop: 1.06 seconds
- Mobile: 1.34 seconds

Services
- Desktop: 1.28 seconds
- Mobile: 1.17 seconds

Media
- Desktop: 0.85 second
- Mobile: 0.85 second

Average Load Time

Considering that product and category pages comprise the majority of page views, both that first page they bounce from and that next page they fail to view likely represent a missed opportunities to delight them and/or drive a conversion.

Speed is a primary determinant of not just how a customer's journey begins, but also how it ends—often, in the case of slow loading sites, all-too abruptly.

"Maintaining a speedy page load time is integral to boosting conversion rates and sales revenue. While a few extra seconds may not seem like a big deal, statistics show that as each second passes, the potential to lose out on prospective customers increases."

HubSpot, 2022

Key takeaways

High activity sites earn:

20%
Fewer bounces

47%
Deeper sessions

19%
More conversions

Top two leading causes of friction:

Friction effects
36%
of visits

Slow Page loads:
18.1%
of sessions

Rage clicks:
6.0%
of sessions

■ Activity is a harbinger of consumption and positive outcomes: reduced bounces, deeper sessions and boosted conversions. In a digital era characterized by grazing (customers making more frequent but also shorter visits) encouraging activity is the rallying cry digital leaders need to strengthen the experience and drive growth.

Sites that can offer visitors a chance to play an active role in the experience earn the right to connect more deeply with that visitor—to share recommendations or advice, provide guidance or simply resolve an issue.

Simply put, increasing activity extends the session and opportunity to engage the visitor.

■ Conversely, frustration threatens to destroy session outcomes. While a 'good' digital experience can sometimes seem intangible, those plagued by frustration are universally labeled 'bad'. And unfortunately, there is no shortage of frustration to be found out there—with more than a third of all visits including at least one frustration factor.

Frustration can be a clear villain for digital teams to unite against, but only if they can put a face to the enemy. Knowing the top factors of frustration is the first step in eradicating frustration from your customers' journeys and improving their overall experience.

Digital experience KPIs

1. Traffic segmentation
2. Session consumption
3. Session outcomes

Looking at KPIs across the full visitor journey is critical to understanding the customer's digital experience. In this section, we highlight three digital experience KPIs that help you track your customer journeys from start to finish.

First, **traffic segmentation** looks into the composition of visitors and how the share of traffic and conversions change by source, device and industry. Next, **session consumption** measures how much more or less engagement happens during the journey. Finally, we share details about the **session outcomes**—how conversion and bounce have trended over the last year, by device.

Traffic segmentation

Digital has reached a stage in its maturity at which counting on significant traffic gains alone to carry growth is unwise. The traffic mix is undergoing significant change and brands must understand what that new mix means for their business and growth. This requires an understanding, and often a reset of expectations, based on traffic segmentation (including by marketing channel and visitor composition).

Insights inside

- Traffic growth

- Traffic and conversion share by source

- Traffic and conversion share by type

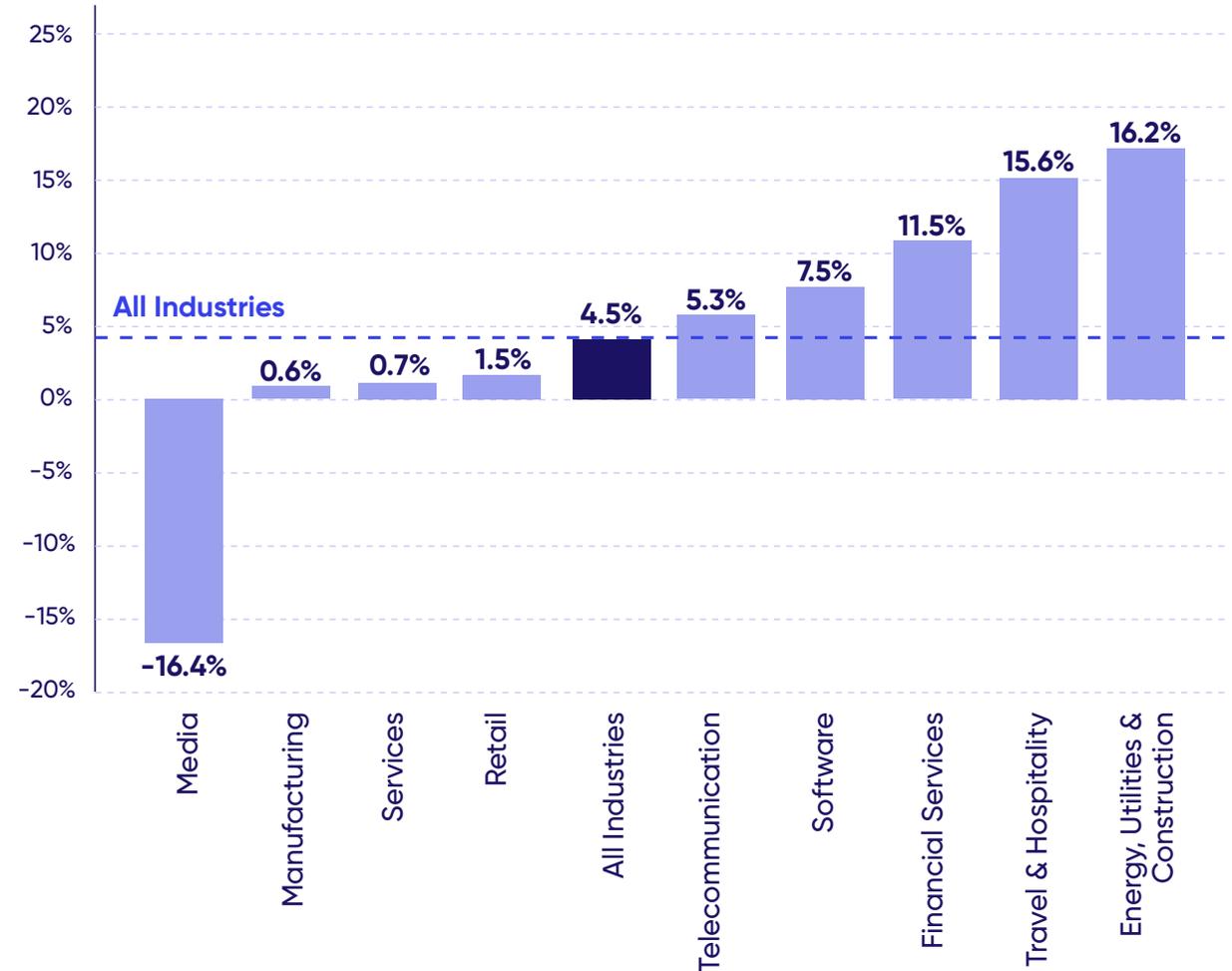- Traffic and conversion share by visitor type

After a drought, traffic turned positive in Q4

With digital coming off its Covid-induced peak, all eyes have been fixed on the twists and turns of traffic.

For much of 2022, those eyes were watching traffic fail to meet, let alone beat, the previous year's outsized numbers.

Fortunately, the story changed in Q4, with a bump that has nudged traffic out of its jam. Despite its happier ending, 2022 was overall a volatile year for attracting visitors across all industries.

■ Change in traffic by industry YoY

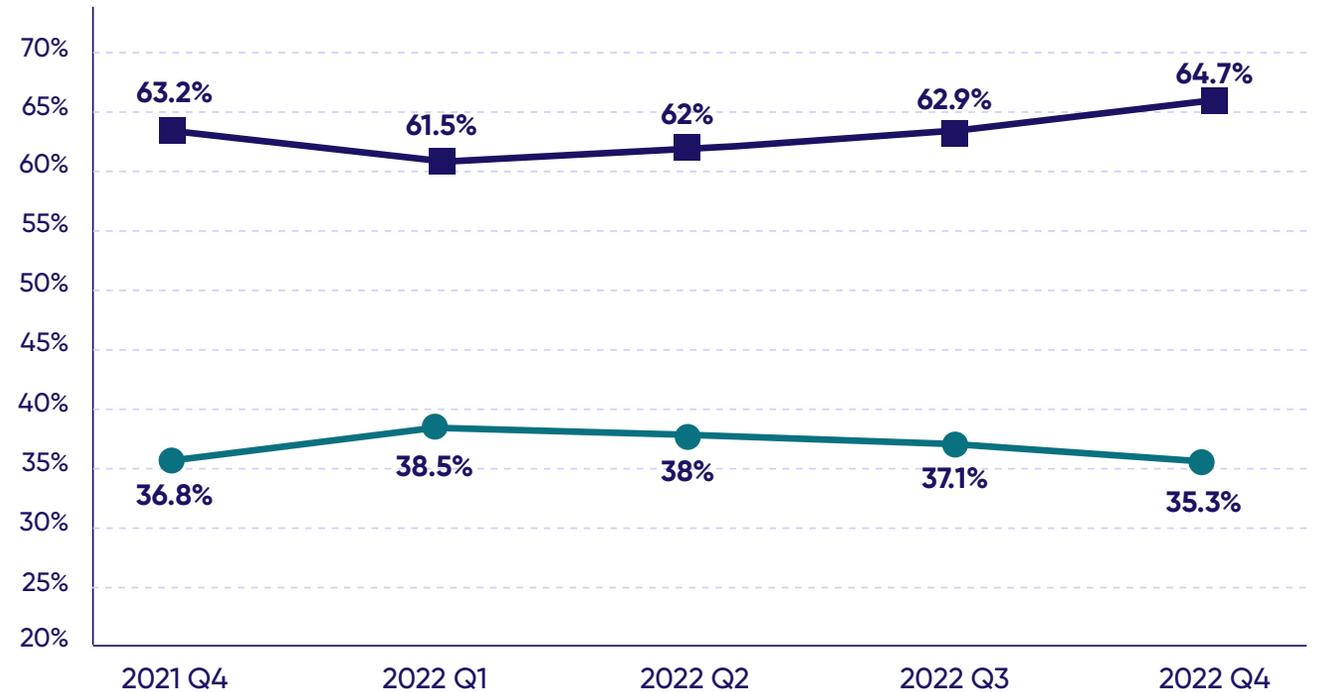| Industry	Change
Media	−16.4%
Manufacturing	0.6%
Services	0.7%
Retail	1.5%
All Industries	4.5%
Telecommunication	5.3%
Software	7.5%
Financial Services	11.5%
Travel & Hospitality	15.6%
Energy, Utilities & Construction	16.2%

Is mobile mature... or still evolving? That depends.

Device splits provided the most stability of the year, with mobile share edging up only slightly year on year. Before concluding that we've reached a device traffic share plateau, though, we should pay attention to industry segments, which clearly show that the context matters.
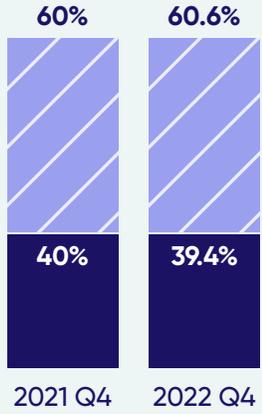
Some industries (most prominently retail and travel) migrated to mobile-first years ago and now have a near 3:1 mobile to desktop traffic split. Desktop traffic remains meaningful—and a near-majority in other sectors, including services and software.

The mobile data shared here includes mobile web traffic.
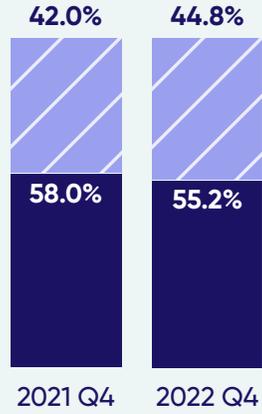
■ **Traffic share by device**   ▬■▬ Mobile   ▬●▬ Desktop

	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4
Mobile	63.2%	61.5%	62%	62.9%	64.7%
Desktop	36.8%	38.5%	38%	37.1%	35.3%

Traffic share by device, by industry, YoY — Desktop / Mobile

Energy, Utilities & Construction
- 2021 Q4: Mobile 60%, Desktop 40%
- 2022 Q4: Mobile 60.6%, Desktop 39.4%

Financial Services
- 2021 Q4: Mobile 39.8%, Desktop 60.2%
- 2022 Q4: Mobile 38.9%, Desktop 61.1%

Manufacturing
- 2021 Q4: Mobile 42.0%, Desktop 58.0%
- 2022 Q4: Mobile 44.8%, Desktop 55.2%

Media
- 2021 Q4: Mobile 54.0%, Desktop 46.0%
- 2022 Q4: Mobile 71.1%, Desktop 28.9%

Retail
- 2021 Q4: Mobile 71.7%, Desktop 28.3%
- 2022 Q4: Mobile 73.5%, Desktop 26.5%

Software
- 2021 Q4: Mobile 22.7%, Desktop 77.3%
- 2022 Q4: Mobile 25.3%, Desktop 74.7%

Telecommunications
- 2021 Q4: Mobile 63.0%, Desktop 37.0%
- 2022 Q4: Mobile 64.0%, Desktop 36.0%

Services
- 2021 Q4: Mobile 36.4%, Desktop 63.6%
- 2022 Q4: Mobile 43.6%, Desktop 56.4%

Travel & Hospitality
- 2021 Q4: Mobile 65.5%, Desktop 34.5%
- 2022 Q4: Mobile 64.4%, Desktop 35.6%

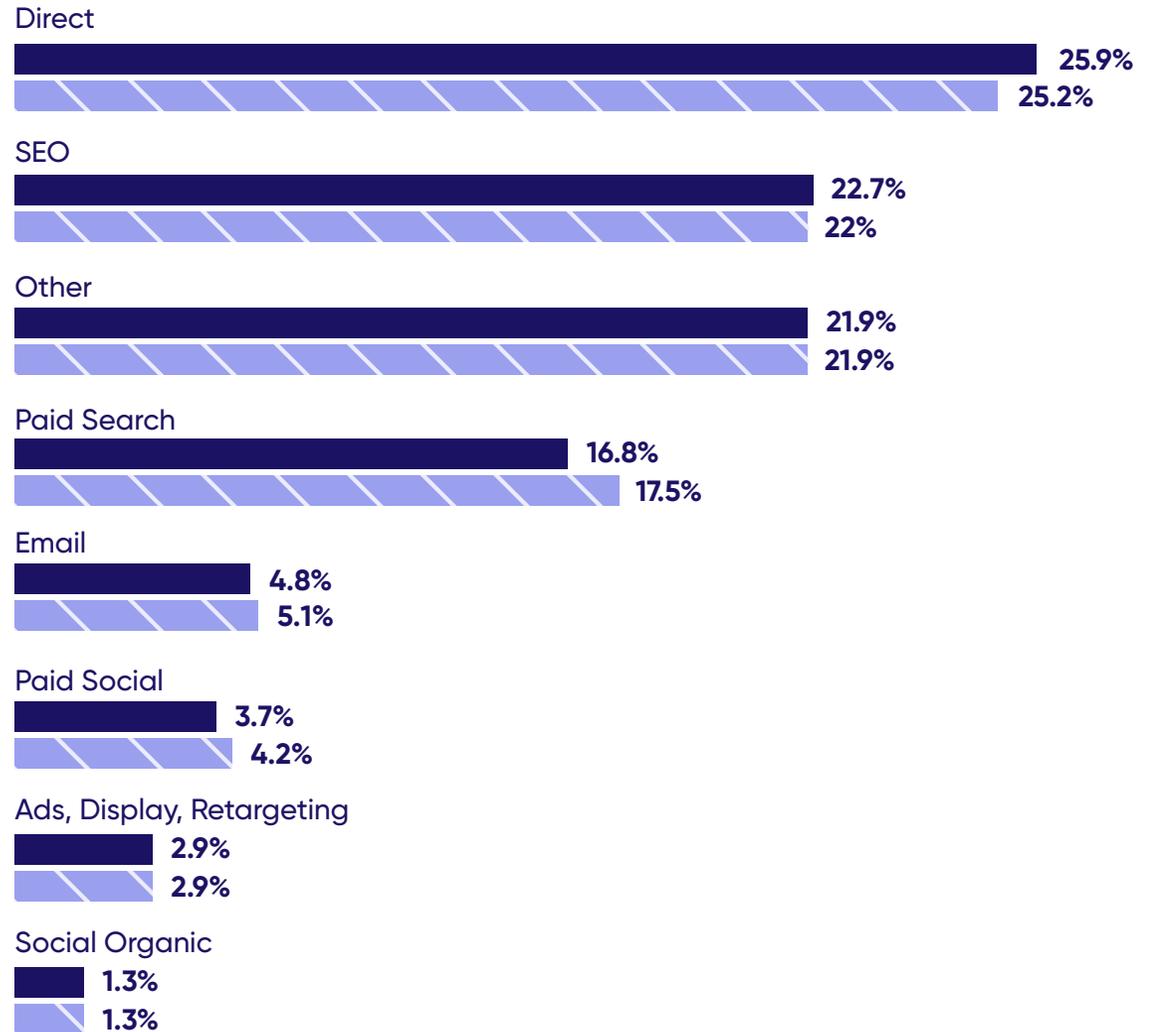## Search continues to dominate traffic—but social still matters

Paid and organic search continue to be the channel heavyweights for driving traffic. Combined with direct, these three sources account for **2 of 3 visits** to digital sites.

Social—paid and organic—now account for nearly double digit traffic share (and earn that traffic almost exclusively through mobile), and have earned the largest share growth over the past year.

It's worth considering, though, that social's impact may be felt more inside its walled gardens, where brands continue to experiment heavily with experiences.

Paid traffic sources include these primary traffic driving channels: Paid Search (SEM or SEA), Paid Social, Ads/Display/Retargeting

Traffic share by source

Desktop ■ Mobile ▨

Direct
- Desktop: 25.9%
- Mobile: 25.2%

SEO
- Desktop: 22.7%
- Mobile: 22%

Other
- Desktop: 21.9%
- Mobile: 21.9%

Paid Search
- Desktop: 16.8%
- Mobile: 17.5%

Email
- Desktop: 4.8%
- Mobile: 5.1%

Paid Social
- Desktop: 3.7%
- Mobile: 4.2%

Ads, Display, Retargeting
- Desktop: 2.9%
- Mobile: 2.9%

Social Organic
- Desktop: 1.3%
- Mobile: 1.3%

Paid channels tend to drive more traffic than conversions

But this doesn't mean that paid traffic is inherently more or less valuable. In analytics as in life: 'Consider the source.' You can't set the same expectations for every marketing channel; it's critical to understand what traffic will actually deliver for you, depending on the channel it arrives through.

An easy way to see this at-a-glance is to compare the share of traffic contributed to the share of conversions contributed. Those channels that deliver more conversion share than traffic share are overperforming.
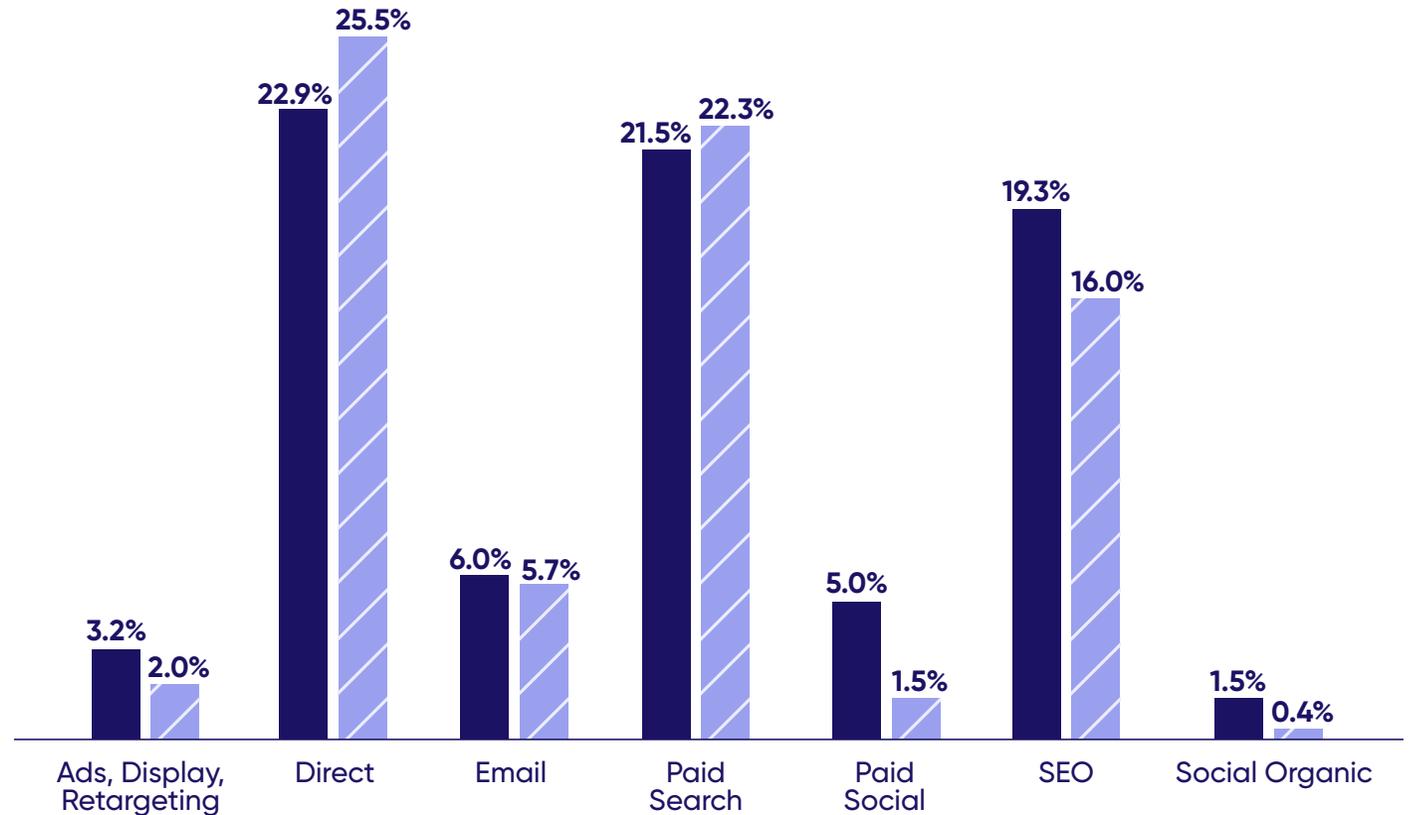
Typically, direct and owned channels (such as email and SMS) will overperform, as visitors who arrive on your site through those channels tend to already be familiar with your brand, and have likely forged a relationship with you directly. Paid social is underperforming on this measure, while paid search is overperforming.

That said, successful marketing is ultimately about how various owned, earned and paid channels work together to attract, engage and convert customers.

How productive is each marketing channel?
Comparing session and conversion share

- Session Share
- Conversion Share

Channel	Session Share	Conversion Share
Ads, Display, Retargeting	3.2%	2.0%
Direct	22.9%	25.5%
Email	6.0%	5.7%
Paid Search	21.5%	22.3%
Paid Social	5.0%	1.5%
SEO	19.3%	16.0%
Social Organic	1.5%	0.4%

Paying a premium

While digital traffic trended up, the unfortunate news (from the point of view of your budget) is that paid sources accounted for more of it than in 2021, accounting for **25%** of all visits, up from **23%** the prior year.

There is a significant variance, though: mobile sees far more paid traffic than desktop. **31%** of all Mobile traffic comes from paid channels—led by paid search, which far outpaces organic search on mobile.
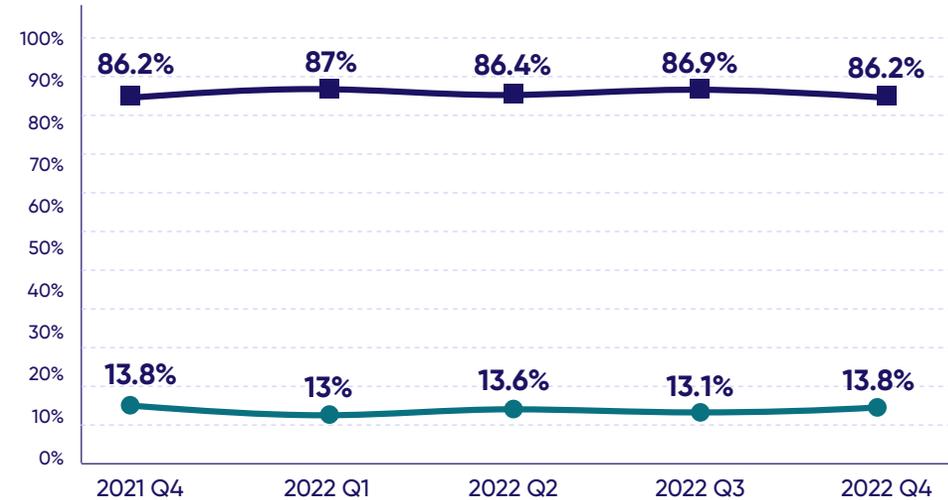
Two forces strained budgets in 2022: More traffic was sourced from paid channels and the cost per visit generally rose across the most significant sources of traffic. Instagram costs rose **+21%** in Q3 2022, while Google rose **+7%***, a trend that has extended since early 2020.

The net result: Brands spent more to attract less— further emphasizing the requirement for brands to measure the performance of each channel throughout the entire experience.

*Source: Tinuiti Triopoly Reports

Share of traffic type by device   ■— Unpaid   ●— Paid

Desktop

	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4
Unpaid	86.2%	87%	86.4%	86.9%	86.2%
Paid	13.8%	13%	13.6%	13.1%	13.8%

Mobile

	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4
Unpaid	71%	72.5%	71.4%	71.7%	69.5%
Paid	29%	27.5%	28.6%	28.3%	30.5%
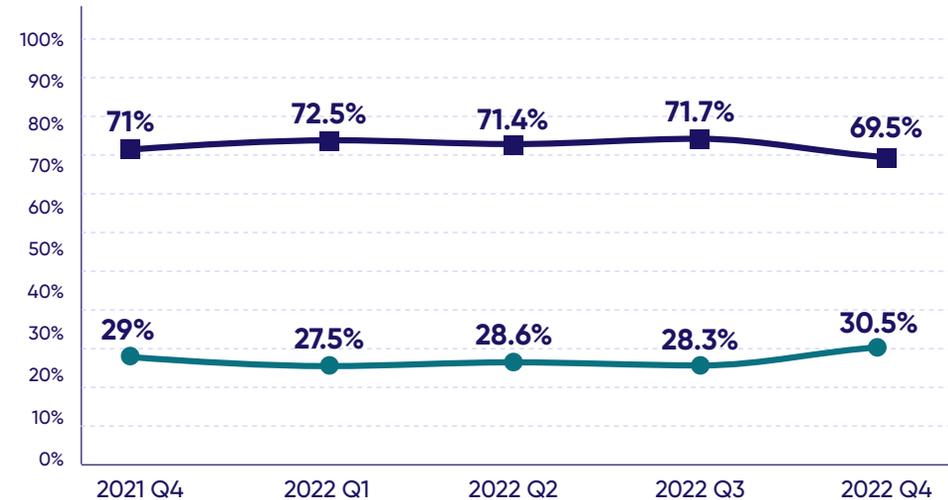
■ Share of new v. returning visitors by device

■ New Visitor Share
▨ Returning Visitor Share

Desktop

2022

41.8%	**58.2%**

2021

41.1%	**58.9%**

Mobile

2022

54.8%	**45.2%**

2021

51.8%	**48.2%**

◤ **New visitors choose mobile**

Mobile hosts more new visitors than returning visitors, with **55%** of all mobile traffic coming from new visitors.
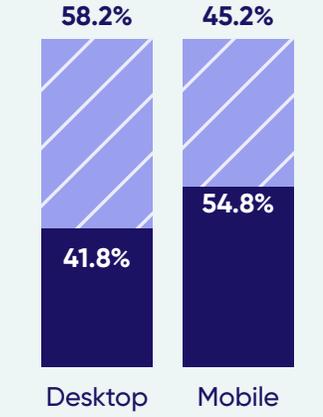
This cements mobile's growing reputation as a discovery mechanism for many customers, and begs for sites to consider developing unique web and mobile experiences for new shoppers.

Think: guided selling, edutainment and a clear path for new-to-you visitors to search and discover, from whatever device they're on.
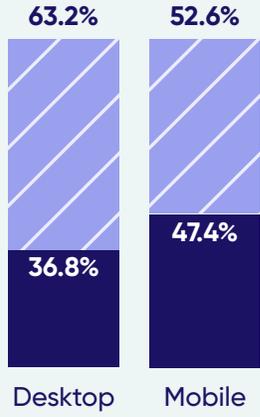
Traffic share by device, by industry, YoY ■ New Visitors ▨ Returning Visitors
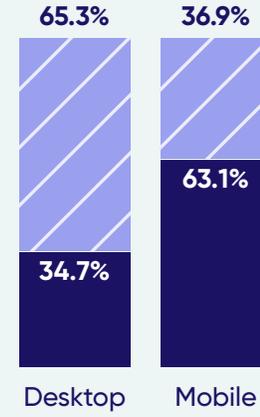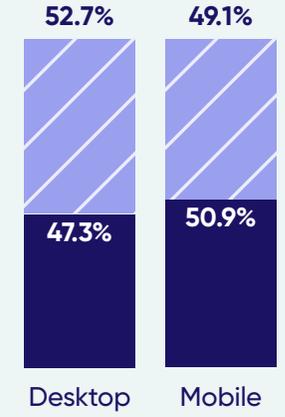
All Industries

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	58.2%	45.2%
New Visitors	41.8%	54.8%

Energy, Utilities & Construction

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	63.2%	52.6%
New Visitors	36.8%	47.4%

Financial Services

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	67.1%	39.7%
New Visitors	32.9%	60.3%

Manufacturing

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	65.3%	36.9%
New Visitors	34.7%	63.1%

Media

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	52.7%	49.1%
New Visitors	47.3%	50.9%

Retail

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	50.9%	44.6%
New Visitors	49.1%	55.4%

Services

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	61.6%	28.8%
New Visitors	38.4%	71.2%

Software

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	58.5%	42.3%
New Visitors	41.5%	57.7%

Telecommuncations

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	68.8%	50.5%
New Visitors	31.2%	49.5%

Travel & Hospitality

	Desktop	Mobile
Returning Visitors	53.6%	46.8%
New Visitors	46.4%	53.2%

Key takeaways

A one-for-all site strategy is harmful. Spotting and reacting to different visitor types is likely the second biggest determinant (after page load speed) of whether a visitor bounces or keeps browsing. Site segmentation must, therefore, be a pillar in your customer experience.

You need to treat every visitor type uniquely to satisfy them all. Perhaps most importantly, you need to cater to both new and returning visitors.

Traffic from new visitors increased

10%
YoY

Traffic from returning visitors was essentially flat at

-0.4%
YoY

Those visitors that are new-to-you have far different needs than returning visitors. Show that you know your visitors by:

- Highlighting site tools and guides for new visitors
- Reminding returning visitors of search history or previous pages viewed

Typically, paid traffic is the single largest line item across digital spend. And that budget is well spent—so long as the promise of performance pays off. But the dynamics of paid vs. unpaid are shifting.

Paid traffic is skewed towards mobile and attracts more new visitors. Paid traffic accounts for **31%** of mobile traffic, up from **29%** last year, and yet... mobile conversion rates from paid traffic fell **-2.3% YoY**

Digital teams must gear up to make the most of paid traffic, specifically by testing landing page content and where to land that visitor. The more advanced digital teams will consider multivariate tests incorporating additional segmentation variables such as new vs. returning, traffic source and buyer v. non-buyer.

Mobile traffic share reached

65%
of digital traffic in Q4, up from **63%** the prior year

Mobile-first means not only creating a great mobile experience, but also creating organization processes around mobile and paying attention to the second-order impacts that mobile will have on ALL of your KPIs.

Session consumption

The digital experience is the collective sum of all your customer journeys. And every customer journey consists of the atomic unit of digital experience: page views.

Each page offers a chance to forge a connection between your brand and your customers. The signals that customers send along their journey—the clicks, taps, hovers and time spent performing these actions—provide the digital body language that helps you understand how the experience is resonating with them and how you need to react and adjust your experience.

The following consumption metrics provide a baseline of key on-site measures that help determine a session's outcome—and help you keep the pulse of your customers' experiences.

Insights inside

- Scroll rate
- Session depth
- Buyer session anatomy
- Time per session

"Declining attention spans and high mobile traffic were driving new patterns of customer behavior. Optimizing our digital customer experience became an essential next step for us to stay competitive."

Florent Champigny,
Ecommerce & Digital Customer Experience
Director Center Parcs & Innovation
Pierre & Vacances Center Parcs Group

Scroll rate shortens

Across an average session, visitors shortened their scrolling this year. The overall scroll rate fell from **52%** to **50%**, anchored by the more heavily-trafficked mobile experiences, which see slightly shorter scrolls.
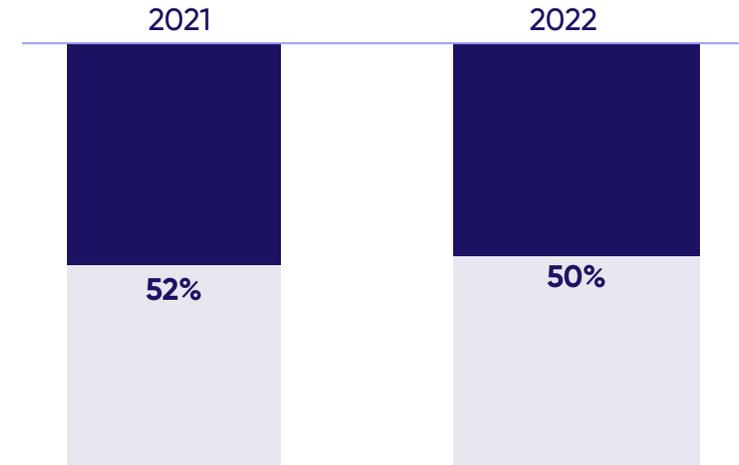
Don't let this measure mislead you, though. The nuances involved in determining scroll rate, including page length and page type, make it difficult to compare performance in aggregate.

The real value of scroll rate comes with using it as a primary test results metric. This helps you ask questions such as: Do different page flows and arrangements encourage visitors to consume more than others?

If you're looking for candidate pages to perform scroll rate tests on, look no further than product pages. These tend to be long and (particularly on mobile) demand a thoughtful and informed understanding on your part of how to keep visitors engaged from top-to-bottom.
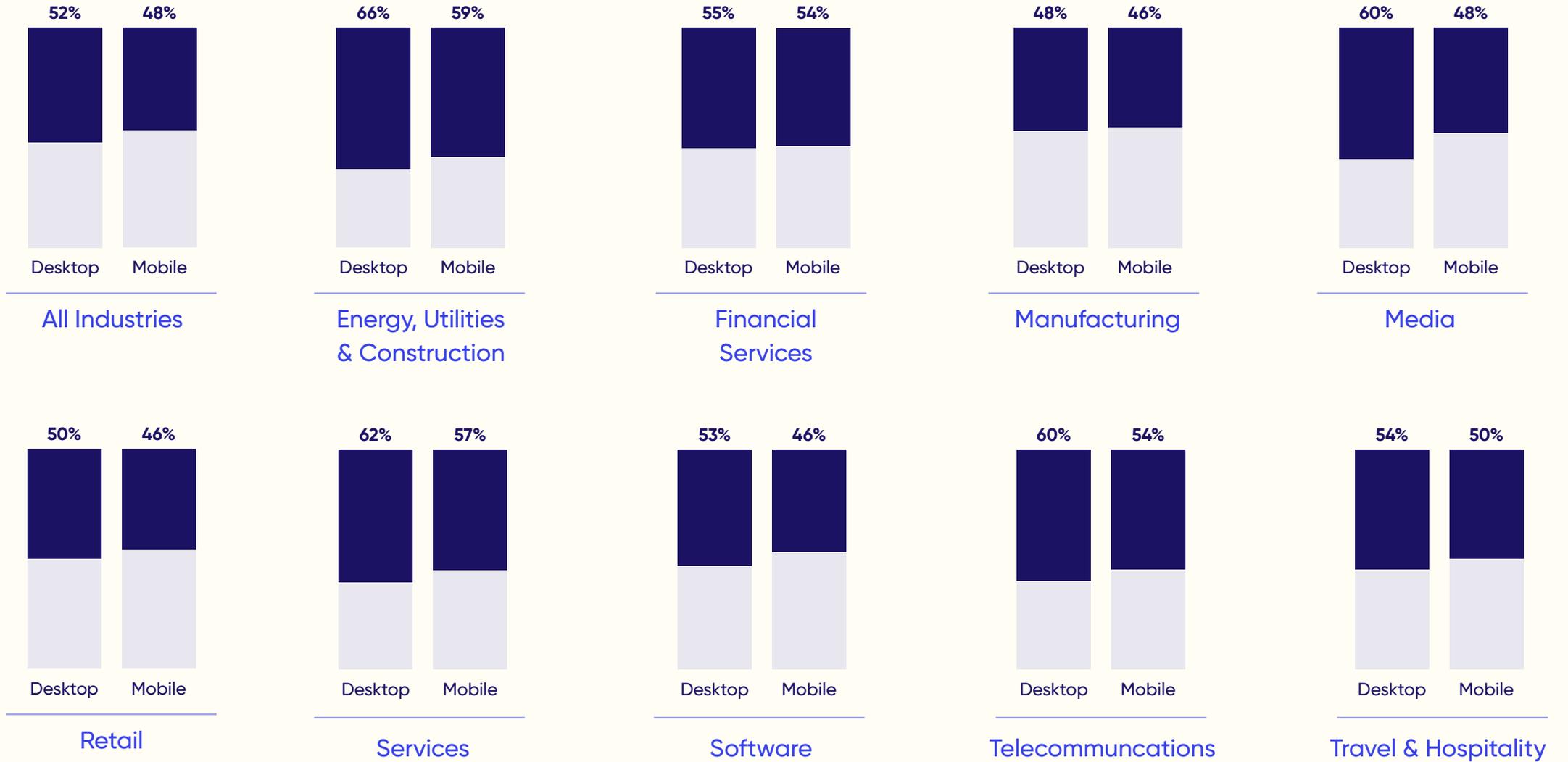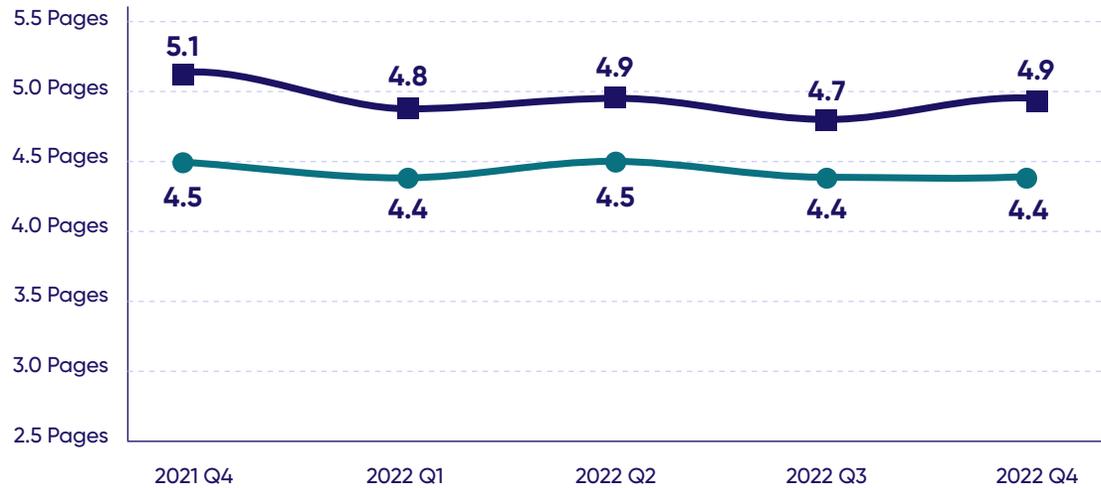
■ **Scroll rate by device YoY**   ■ Scroll Rate

2021	2022
52%	50%

Scroll rate by device, by industry ■ Scroll Rate

All Industries
	Desktop	Mobile
	52%	48%

Energy, Utilities & Construction
	Desktop	Mobile
	66%	59%

Financial Services
	Desktop	Mobile
	55%	54%

Manufacturing
	Desktop	Mobile
	48%	46%

Media
	Desktop	Mobile
	60%	48%

Retail
	Desktop	Mobile
	50%	46%

Services
	Desktop	Mobile
	62%	57%

Software
	Desktop	Mobile
	53%	46%

Telecommuncations
	Desktop	Mobile
	60%	54%

Travel & Hospitality
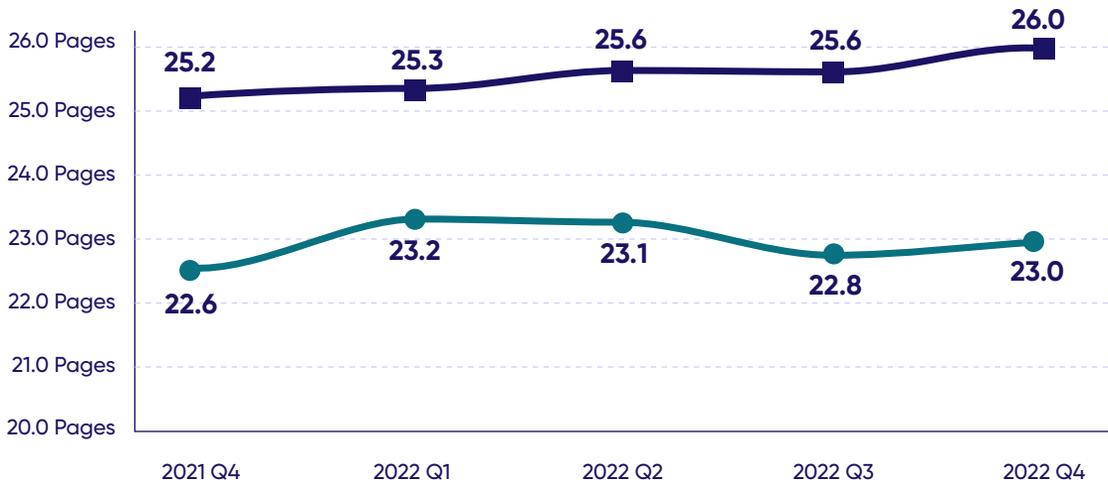|	Desktop	Mobile
	54%	50%

■ Page views per session   ■ Desktop   ● Mobile

■ Page views per converted session

▰ Session depth falls

Converting sessions see **5x more page views** compared to a typical visit. This offers brands the ability to uncover the hidden challenges and opportunities across the journey that contribute to higher vs lower conversions—especially when examining deeper visits and analyzing those that convert to those that do not.

Given journeys are generally not deep (**5 pages** per session and **50%** scroll rate), companies need to identify high performing content and pull these assets, offers and CTAs higher up on the page. Additionally, knowing which content is never seen and which under vs. over-performs, enables teams to invest in content more effectively, while improving conversion rates.

🔶 Anatomy of a buyer's journey

No two customer journeys are the same. But while visitors should be able to choose their own adventure once on-site, brands still carry a responsibility to provide direction, by signposting pathways for search and discovery.
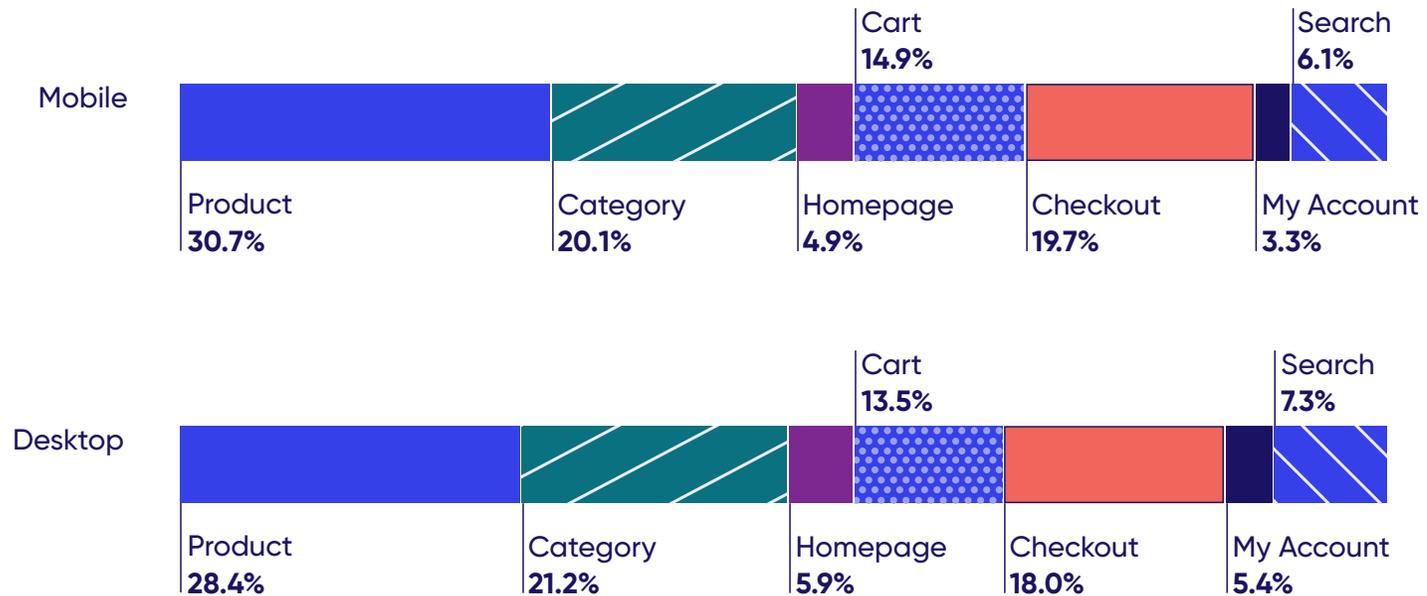
Equally, there is no singular buyer's journey. While some buyers are surgical, seeking and finding exactly what they are looking for, others graze, waiting for a moment of inspiration or connection to make a purchase.

In aggregate, the anatomy of a buyer's journey is telling and helps brands assess where to direct their energy for optimization. A buyer typically consumes

more than **20 pages** on each leading device, with two pages leading the charge in terms of page consumption: Product detail pages and category pages.

These two pages should be candidates for ongoing testing—and seen as ideal locations for innovation.

■ Share of page views by page type

Mobile

| Product 30.7% | Category 20.1% | Homepage 4.9% | Cart 14.9% | Checkout 19.7% | My Account 3.3% | Search 6.1% |

Desktop

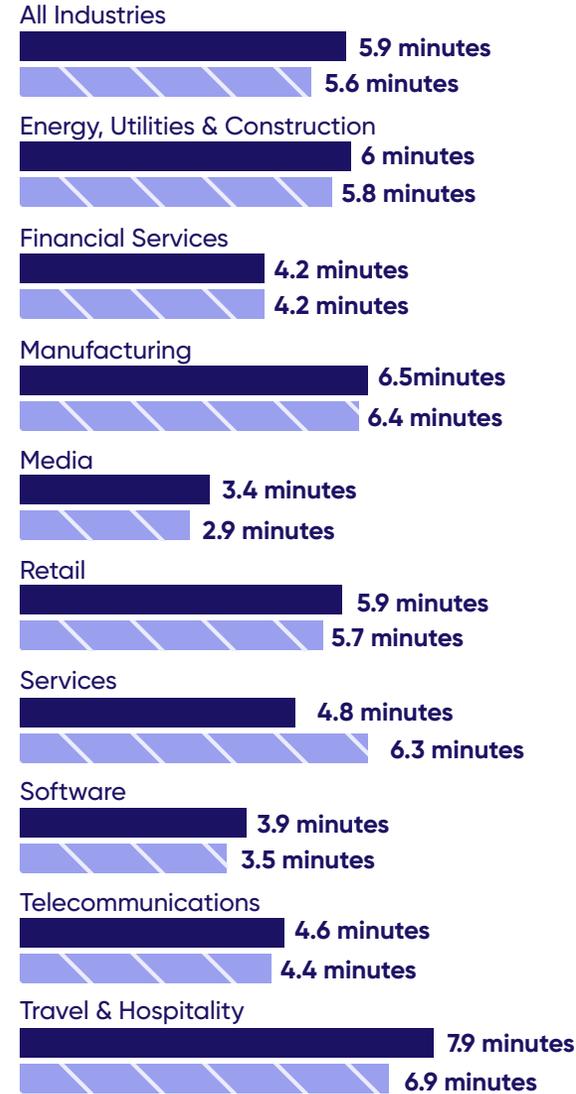| Product 28.4% | Category 21.2% | Homepage 5.9% | Cart 13.5% | Checkout 18.0% | My Account 5.4% | Search 7.3% |

Session durations shrink

There is a clear consumption trend towards more, yet shorter visits. While the notion of a visitor's time being constrained is not new, this year's reduction is another clear sign that visits are short-lived. This is most clearly seen with the nearly-unanimous drop in time spent per session, and per page.

Across both devices, and nearly all industries, the amount of time spent is quickly evaporating, with desktop session durations dropping **-5.4%** and mobile sessions falling **-8.9%**. With session times falling **-7.5%** overall, digital teams must prioritize keeping the limited attention of each visitor.
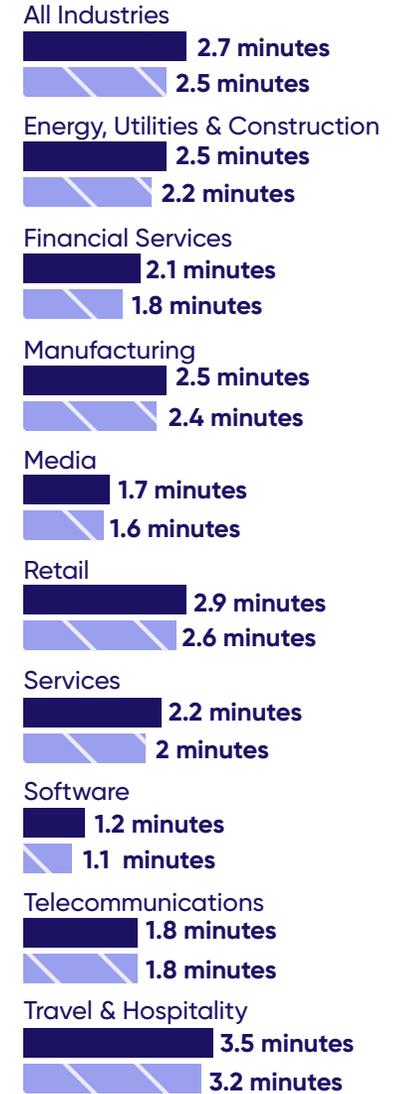
■ **Time spent per session, by device and industry**

■ 2021

▨ 2022

Desktop

All Industries
5.9 minutes
5.6 minutes

Energy, Utilities & Construction
6 minutes
5.8 minutes

Financial Services
4.2 minutes
4.2 minutes

Manufacturing
6.5 minutes
6.4 minutes

Media
3.4 minutes
2.9 minutes

Retail
5.9 minutes
5.7 minutes

Services
4.8 minutes
6.3 minutes

Software
3.9 minutes
3.5 minutes

Telecommunications
4.6 minutes
4.4 minutes

Travel & Hospitality
7.9 minutes
6.9 minutes

Mobile

All Industries
2.7 minutes
2.5 minutes

Energy, Utilities & Construction
2.5 minutes
2.2 minutes

Financial Services
2.1 minutes
1.8 minutes

Manufacturing
2.5 minutes
2.4 minutes

Media
1.7 minutes
1.6 minutes

Retail
2.9 minutes
2.6 minutes

Services
2.2 minutes
2 minutes

Software
1.2 minutes
1.1 minutes

Telecommunications
1.8 minutes
1.8 minutes

Travel & Hospitality
3.5 minutes
3.2 minutes

There is hope, though, as visitors average **47 seconds** per page view, with desktop garnering a staggering **69 seconds** and mobile securing **34 seconds** per page. This underlines how critical it is to identify and showcase your most compelling and engaging content to increase its consumption and contribution.

"**Customers are human. Sometimes we treat them like they're just marching through our customer journeys, but that's not reality. It's not one linear experience.**"
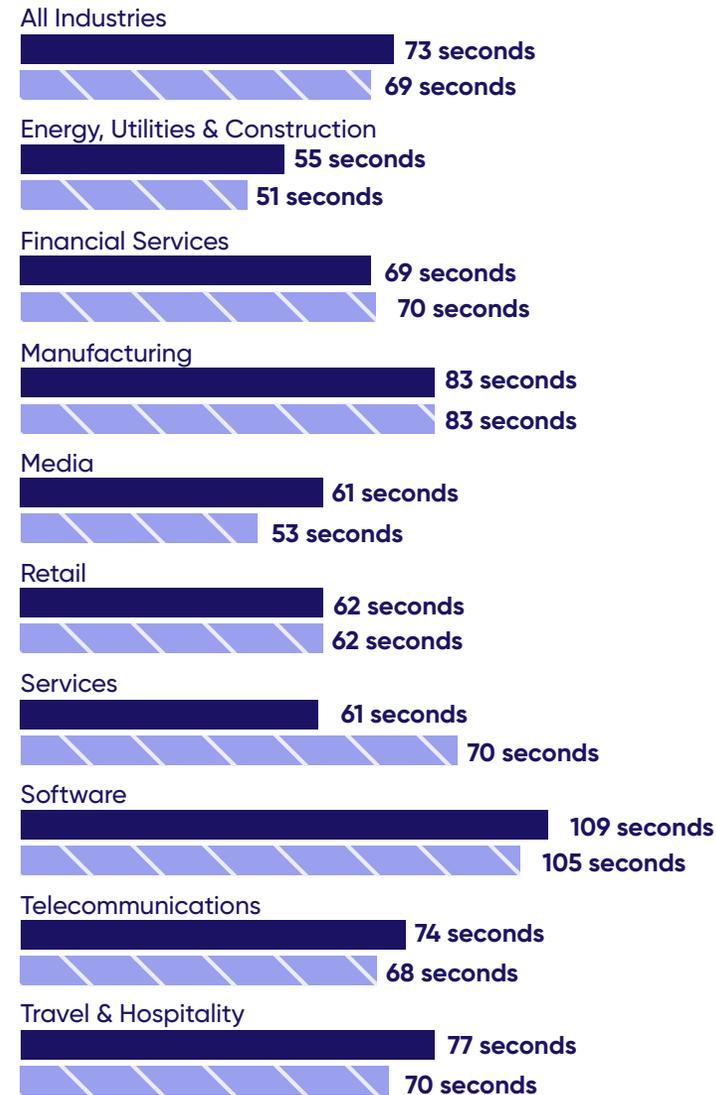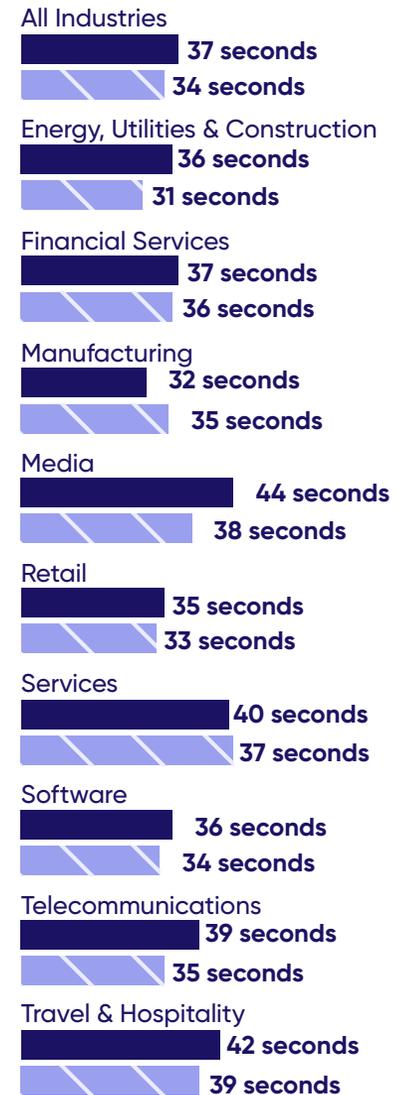
Jeannie Walters,
CEO, Experience Investigators

■ **Time spent per page, by device and industry**

■ 2021
▨ 2022

Desktop

All Industries
73 seconds
69 seconds

Energy, Utilities & Construction
55 seconds
51 seconds

Financial Services
69 seconds
70 seconds

Manufacturing
83 seconds
83 seconds

Media
61 seconds
53 seconds

Retail
62 seconds
62 seconds

Services
61 seconds
70 seconds

Software
109 seconds
105 seconds

Telecommunications
74 seconds
68 seconds

Travel & Hospitality
77 seconds
70 seconds

Mobile

All Industries
37 seconds
34 seconds

Energy, Utilities & Construction
36 seconds
31 seconds

Financial Services
37 seconds
36 seconds

Manufacturing
32 seconds
35 seconds

Media
44 seconds
38 seconds

Retail
35 seconds
33 seconds

Services
40 seconds
37 seconds

Software
36 seconds
34 seconds

Telecommunications
39 seconds
35 seconds

Travel & Hospitality
42 seconds
39 seconds

Key takeaways

Scroll rate fell to 50% overall and **48% on mobile**

**Session depth fell -2.3% YoY** and **time spent shrunk -7.5%**

■ As scroll rate's shortening shows, more than half of a typical page is unseen and untouched by visitors. Along with a re-rationalization of the sheer amount of content that sites are putting before a visitor, this should harden the case for content testing and the use of zone-based heatmaps.

Put simply, the most compelling content needs to appear high on the page, with the call to action placed above the fold.

■ The decline of session depth and duration provides another lesson—don't wait to provide value to your visitors. With visitors spending less time in sessions and viewing fewer page views per session, digital teams will be well served to emphasize relevance and wayfinding within the experience to keep visitors engaged from the first page they land on...

■ Relevance: Personalization has long since been a component of digital, but it's typically been nestled too many scrolls (and pages) deep. To provide next level, end-to-end relevance, you need to unlock customized and contextual content beyond basic recommendations.

■ Wayfinding: Providing clear guidance to help visitors traverse the site—not just the navigation bar—is increasingly important. Sites with high page counts may rely more heavily on search and AI-infused clienteling solutions, while more curated sites can develop unique persona paths.
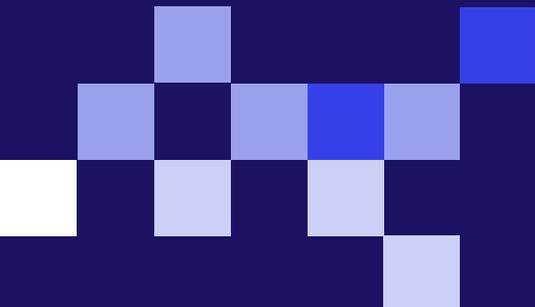
Session outcomes

Fittingly, we've reached the last of our rundown of digital experience KPIs—the session outcomes.

In this section we'll explore the two most definitive, established (and polar-opposite) digital outcomes: the dreaded bounce—and the celebrated conversion.

Insights inside

- Conversion rate, trend and YoY

- Bounce rate, trend and YoY

Conversion rate falls

With increasing bounce rates and falling consumption measures, the **-3.1%** decline in conversion rate seemed inevitable. This is a tale of two devices, though: While desktop conversion actually increased **+2.5%**, mobile's **-4.2%** drop carries far more influence on the overall conversion rate, since far more traffic is on mobile.

Together, the increase in traffic and drop in conversion rate essentially canceled each other out in Q4. However, with more traffic share from paid sources, a lower conversion rate takes an even larger toll on the cost of customer acquisition.

Conversion rate by device ■—Desktop ●—Mobile

Quarter	Desktop	Mobile
2021 Q4	3.36%	2.06%
2022 Q1	3.08%	1.85%
2022 Q2	3.16%	1.88%
2022 Q3	3.03%	1.86%
2022 Q4	3.44%	1.98%

Bounce rate swells across the board—and is particularly high in B2B

Some potentially concerning news: bounce rates rose to **49%** in 2022, compared to **47%** in 2021. Don't let this seemingly small number fool you, though—this two percentage point increase in bounce rate means that there are **4%** fewer visitors progressing forward towards a possible conversion.
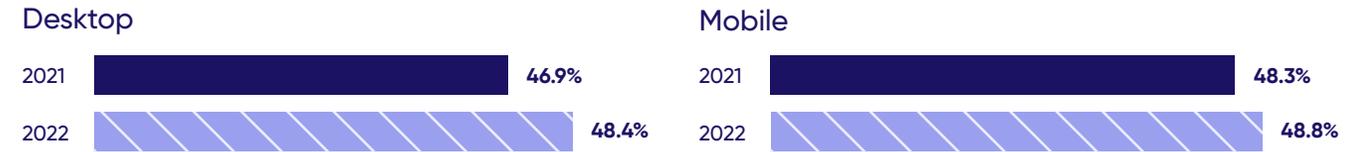
When visitors bounce, there's little for companies to fall back on in order to hook them back in, with no further consumption possible beyond the page the bouncing visitor landed on. Since they likely offer zero return on investment, bouncers are the most expensive visitors to serve—a cost burden that weighs down the return on digital's traffic investment.

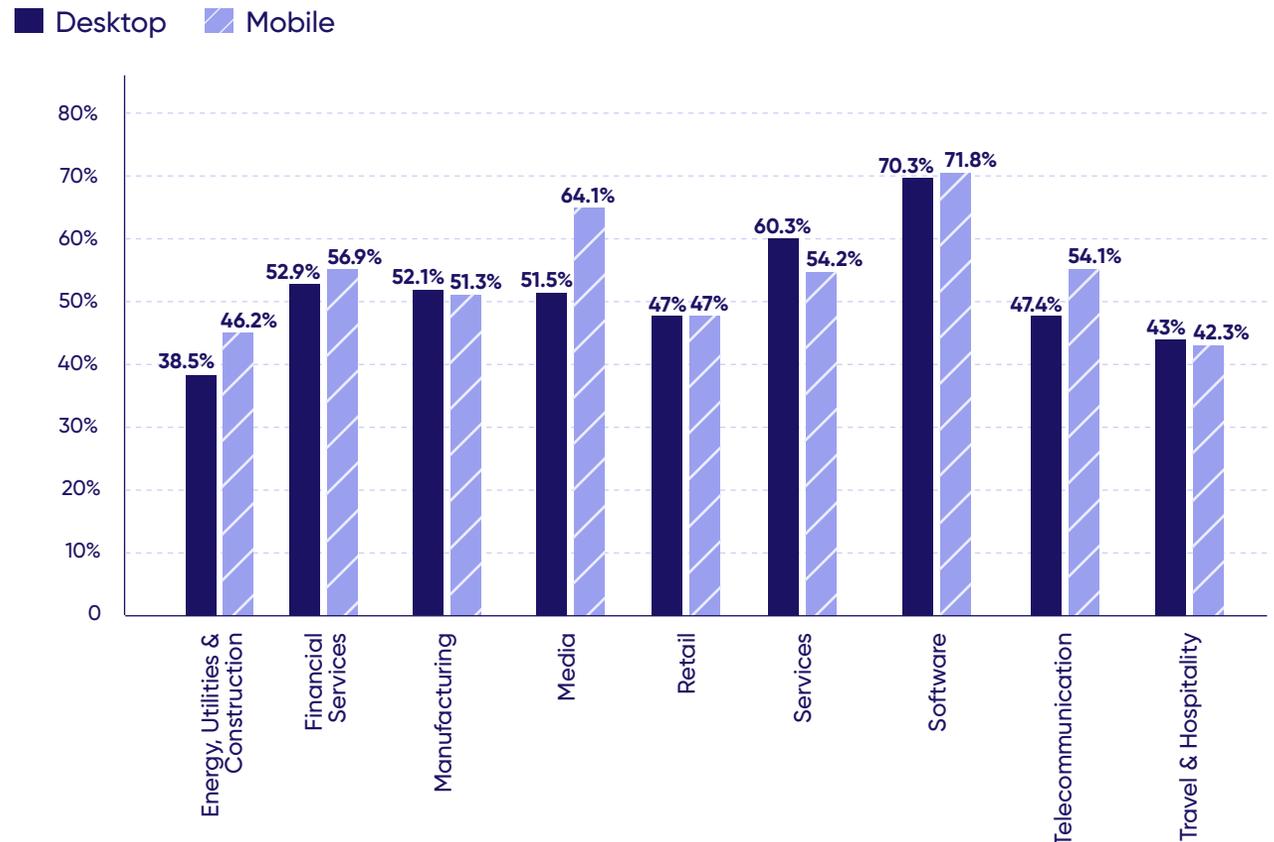Bounce rates vary across sectors, with bounces far more commonplace in certain industries.

Consumer sectors see lower bounce rates, with travel and retail achieving bounce rates below **50%**. B2B-like industries like software, services and manufacturing, by contrast, tend to see far higher bounces, especially on mobile. At the high end, bounce rates in 2023 exceeded **60%** and even **70%.**

For all sectors, but especially those in B2B, a deeper look into page-specific metrics, such as exposure rate and scroll rate, as well as content performance, is absolutely essential in 2023 to optimize experiences and beat the bounce.

Bounce rate by device

Desktop

2021	46.9%
2022	48.4%

Mobile

2021	48.3%
2022	48.8%

Bounce rate by device, by industry

Desktop   Mobile

Industry	Desktop	Mobile
Energy, Utilities & Construction	38.5%	46.2%
Financial Services	52.9%	56.9%
Manufacturing	52.1%	51.3%
Media	51.5%	64.1%
Retail	47%	47%
Services	60.3%	54.2%
Software	70.3%	71.8%
Telecommunication	47.4%	54.1%
Travel & Hospitality	43%	42.3%

Key takeaways

Although session outcomes grab the most attention, the two most tracked and discussed of the outcomes, conversion rate and bounce rate, are actually dependent on session consumption and visit segmentation.

■ Bounces filter out nearly half of all traffic, narrowing the funnel in a matter of moments. Such a large session loss coupled with a relatively scant set of visit details makes bounce visit investigation particularly urgent.

Digital teams should scrutinize bounce scenarios, including content exposure, visit segmentation and frustration factors to identify opportunities to reduce attrition and save more sessions.

■ Conversion rate's nemesis, abandonment, is not a singular moment, but a collective set of points that can and must be used for remarketing. Digital teams that collect and connect the data from across the journey prior to abandonment can develop real re-engagement plans that reach past the standard abandoned cart or search campaign. Those that use the full digital footprint to design outreach for their lost traffic will be positioned to reclaim far more visitors.

Summary

Measuring the milestones along the digital experience

The primary role of the digital experience is to advance the relationship between brand and customer. For business across industries, superior digital experiences are central to supporting engagement, conversion and growth. To succeed and deliver on this intention, digital leaders must focus on and measure according to three critical tenets of the digital customer experience:

Capture attention

The digital journey is not a passive pursuit. Whatever you want visitors to your website to do—whether that's adding items to a cart, planning and booking a trip, or opening an account (we could go on)—success depends on getting them to play an active role. Understanding and measuring activity during a session lets you know whether your site is earning a visitor's attention and engagement. Those sites that are best at fostering activity within a session earn **5.4 pages** per session, compared to **3.7** from the least active sessions. Deeper journeys provide higher consumption during a visit, allowing for a site to share and connect more during the experience.

Avoid frustration

Frustration stunts even the most compelling site content. While more than a third of journeys include some degree of frustration, it's slow page loads that prove to be the primary experience saboteur. When page loads reach past **2** seconds, bounce rate soars to **49%, +20%** worse than pages with snappy sub-**1** second loads. Knowing where frustration lies (and how to quell it) throughout the customer journey will keep your visitor sessions alive.

Know your pages

Why is the 'anatomy' of a session so important? Because knowing which page types are most trafficked and how visitors progress through their journeys allows digital teams to make meaningful investments by testing and optimizing the most trafficked or impactful moments along the typical customer journey. Journey analysis provides a means to view the anatomy of your visitors' journeys, and with that, an opportunity to pinpoint issues or opportunities that arise from those journeys.

Make every visit count

Forrester finds 602% ROI with Contentsquare in new Total Economic Impact™ study

If these benefits weren't enough to persuade you of the importance of digital experience, we'll also call out that having a superior digital experience has been shown to fuel growth. In a recent commissioned Total Economic Impact™ study conducted by Forrester Consulting, companies achieved a 602% return on investment* using a (well-ah-hem-our) Digital Experience Analytics Platform.

Get the study

* Forrester's study is based on the aggregated interviewees' experiences and the results combined into a single composite organization over three years.

About Contentsquare

Contentsquare moves beyond traditional analytics to enable an unprecedented understanding of the customer experience that transforms your business. With intuitive technology that reveals the behavior, intent and feelings of any and every user, we allow businesses to deliver more human experiences quickly, while ensuring privacy and accessibility. This results in faster growth, greater agility and happier customers.

With Contentsquare, you have the power to make the digital world more human.

602% ROI
with payback in just
6 months

2,914 hours
reclaimed from
productivity gains

20–30%
more conversion

$3.32M
in profit from site
optimization

$805k
in savings in redundant
software

$3.28M
of income recovered

Want even more data and insights?

This year's Digital Experience Benchmark includes an interactive explorer which puts the most relevant benchmarks for digital customer experience (CX) in your hands.

Check out Benchmark Insights Explorer

Methodology

The Digital Experience Benchmark report is a set of aggregated and anonymized insights of digital performance. Strict aggregation measures are employed to ensure anonymity. These measures include requirements on analysis set size, diversity, and consistency, in order to present credible and reliable information that is insulated from concentration risk.

To qualify for inclusion in the year-over-year analysis, each site must have operated throughout the entire analysis period, in this case October 2021 through December 2022. For current period analyses, the analysis period is Q4 2022. Additional data hygiene factors are applied to ensure accurate metric calculation.

This edition of the Digital Experience Benchmark analyzed more than 35 billion sessions and 161 billion page views across 2942 websites.

Data may not be exact due to rounding.

Data footnotes are noted throughout the report to provide additional clarity on analysis.

The Digital Experience Benchmark is not directly indicative of the operational performance of Contentsquare or its reported financial metrics. The performance metrics shared within this report are calculated based on the analysis set, and should not be taken as a guarantee of site performance.