

# Five things to look out for at Mobile World Congress

AWARD WINNING CLIENTS

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## What themes and trends will emerge this year from the world's biggest mobile conference?

Barcelona becomes the global city of mobile for one week each year. Traditionally the focus for agency and advertiser delegates alike has been looking at how technology and the ad ecosystem can be combined for best effect.

In 2017, by contrast, the major theme will be reassurance, making sure that marketers feel comfortable with mobile.

Here are five things to look out for at this year's Mobile World Congress:

1. Quality before scale

Over the last few years, much of the battle in the mobile ad space has been about scale. “How much of my target audience will your network reach?” was the first question most planners and regional and global marketers asked. It remains a critical question to determine whether brands can create bespoke- and platform-ready content cost effectively.

But thanks to new concerns about brand safety, the conversation has changed radically. When marketers enter the ad:tech heaven of Hall 8 this year, the first question they will ask is, “What is this ad network doing to ensure a brand-safe environment where I can be sure to reach the consumers promised?”

Exhibitors such as Voluum, which offers a proprietary App Intelligence Graph to ensure their supply is filtered for fraud before their programmatic systems bid for impressions pre-bid, will be hoping to take advantage of this new, more cautious climate.

The truth is that scale is only great if you reach people who are worth reaching.

## 2. If brands could talk

If Alexa was the star of the recent Consumer Electronics Show, then wider voice integration into branded content will be a hot topic in Barcelona. Early steps, such as Santander’s voice-activated payments for U.K. banking customers and Tesla’s introduction of voice recognition designed to cope with complex, non-linear queries, show where the market is going.

As voice-based search becomes more accepted and more a part of normal life, consumers will expect brands to provide the same type of in-app experience. In fact, according to a Google study from Northstar Research, already more than half of U.S. teens are using voice search daily.

Dazzle, for example, is a voice-activated personal assistant that sits in hotel bedrooms and answers requests, using artificial intelligence to answer guest questions, backed up by humans where the system can’t provide an answer or it needs a staff member to complete that step, such as arranging a late check out. Dazzle shows the potential of voice

recognition for brands seeking to boost customer service.

The key for many brands will be the ability to offer such services beyond the control of platforms such as Alexa, Cortana and Siri. Voice control is all very well but only if the brand remains in control.

### **3. Measurement**

Brands are increasingly looking for smarter, more authoritative metrics for mobile. Metric problems have reawakened brand disquiet about the numbers offered by both Facebook and Google, as well as across the wider mobile landscape.

In Barcelona, some of the most reassuring stands will be those offering in-app metrics so that brands can accurately measure consumer engagement, leading to a better understanding of life-time value.

Exhibitors such as Swrve, which offers analytics tools that allow brands to drill down beyond the top-level metrics, will be hoping to showcase their ability to help brands go beyond install data and better optimize their media planning.

### **4. A gap in the market**

Last year, Facebook and Oculus went big in Barcelona. This year, it will be sending a smaller team. Samsung, too, is reported to be scaling back its presence.

Still, Sony Mobile (a MediaCom client) will be launching a new Xperia smartphone, and you can also expect to see more Chinese brands, including Oppo, ZTE and Huawei, making a splash as they seek to build a consumer base beyond the emerging markets.

### **5. The comeback kids**

Much of the pre-MWC buzz has been about the rumoured return of the classic Nokia handset thanks to a licensing deal with Finish company HMD Global. Feature phones, of

course, never really went away — there are millions still in regular use — and smart global brands will be taking a “no handset left behind approach” to their mobile strategies.

Nokia won't be the only comeback kid at MWC. The show should also see the return of the Blackberry handset — now also manufactured under licence, this time by China's TCL.

MWC has grown dramatically in the 14 years I've been attending. An event that was once reserved for handset manufacturers and specialist content owners is now a must-attend event for advertisers and brands.

As mobile becomes the foundation from which all other digital channels are measured, it will only become more important.

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