



Why changes in behaviour, not the phones, are the most interesting trend at Mobile World Congress

MOBILE

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Mobile World Congress will be a festival of new handsets but it's the changes that drive mobile behaviour that are most interesting.

The end of February in Barcelona is mobile's moment in the winter sun. It's a chance to reflect on how rapidly mobile has become essential to so much of our lives and also get an early look at what habits the sector is going to impact next.

Often the coverage goes to the large number of new handsets, and this year will be no different. With few handsets launched at CES, expect a glut of new baubles in Barcelona, including Samsung's S9, many Nokia variables expanding on last year's retro show stealer, the 3310, and the highly anticipated Sony XP range.

But while new handsets are nice – and an indication of the challenge Apple’s iPhone X faces from its Android rivals – it’s the way that they change, modify or adapt to our behaviour that should make them interesting to brands.

This new generation of handsets will come with much better screens. The same 4K OLEDs that we now expect in our TVs will be on our mobiles too. According to The Ooyala Global Video Index report, more than 60% of all video plays were on expected to be on mobile during 2017. That viewing increasingly includes long-form drama, justifying the investment in a cleaner, crisper screen.

All of this puts huge pressure on our mobile networks because video content is not data-lite so the new mobiles also come equipped with better antenna and faster processors designed to make much better usage of the current 4G network bandwidth.

And Barcelona won’t just be about video. It’s will also be about how mobile is taking on tasks that used to be desktop based. Dual cameras, à la iPhone X, will be all the rage, as will easy-to-use tools that allow users to edit to studio quality their photographs.

Augmented Reality will be increasingly native to camera app design to enhance take up, and make adoption a really seamless process, without frightening consumers about the potential cost of a Virtual Reality headset.

Two other trends that will matter to brands and their agencies will be the ongoing integration of voice into their brand architecture and the tools that drive brand presence on mobile.

While Amazon has focused on owning the voice to basket journey with 70% of the home market, Google Assistant is looking to become a more widely integrated assistant. Bose has added Google Assistant to its latest headphones, with 400m individual devices now carrying the Google voice assistant. The rise of voice challenges brands to find new ways to ensure their products surface in an audio-driven world.

Brands will see their drive for greater insight into consumer behaviour as well as greater

control over their mobile messaging recognised in two key areas during MWC. The first is data where we can expect platforms to announce news with third-party measurement partners.

Such data will give brands better understanding of how, when and why consumers engage with an application or service, most importantly when they abandon a basket or entire application and why.

At the same time, the much-in-vogue blockchain technology will also expand its role in mobile, with anticipated launches promising brands the ability to gain a further perspective on transparency and measurement by using a digital ledger as part of their campaign's transactional process.

As if all that isn't enough, the presence of SK Telecom and Intel will also be a welcome sight in Barcelona. They come fresh from the slopes of PyeongChang 2018, where there have been 5G trials and flights of drones demonstrating the future of mobile in Asia's most advanced market.

While we are just adapting to AR in the West, they will have much to say about how Virtual Reality has transformed the experience of the Winter Olympics and changed consumer behaviour once more.

Now, where can I ride the virtual Skelton bobsleigh run?

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