Mobile World Congress 2017 Trends

By Tom Goodwin, EVP, Head of Innovation, Zenith

Mobile World Congress (MWC) 2017 brought to life how connectivity will be the key element that empowers business transformation. Where SXSW annually shows the businesses that new technology allows and CES demonstrates the devices that will do this, Mobile World Congress projects the infrastructure that will make both happen. Four trends that took center stage:

The World of 5G: 4G enabled livestreaming, empowering anyone to become a content creator and accelerated the proliferation of mobile video consumption. At MWC, 5G standards were released, calling for at least 20Gbps downlink—enough to download two movies per second. 5G must support at least one million connected devices per square kilometer, a nod to the Internet of Things. With such speeds, security, low latency and capacity, we will see the development of smart cities, connected self-driving cars and new ways to leverage personal data to best serve ads in real time.

A Smarter World and More Intimate Data: Sensors are proliferating. From smartwatches to home monitoring devices to health trackers, the speed, accuracy and abundance of data is becoming richer. Combined with better connectivity and faster processing, we can now extract, analyze and obtain more meaning from data, ranging from feelings, intentions and beyond. Through advanced analytics and better data visualization tools, brands can make better inferences about people’s wants and needs—anticipating and even making decisions for consumers.

The Anticipatory Internet: Soon the Internet will surround the physical world. An ambient layer and screens will become entry points to a lattice connecting everything through an omnipresent Internet and a vanishing interface. Anticipatory computing will make constant micro predictions about what consumers will likely do, need and want. When screens vanish, consumers’ lives will become seamlessly assisted by contextual information and suggested options from artificial intelligence (AI) virtual assistants including Microsoft’s Cortana or Amazon’s Alexa.

New Screens Introduced: At MWC, Huawei launched a smartwatch phone, and Robert Scoble reiterated his prediction that Apple and Carl Zeiss are working on augmented reality (AR) glasses to launch this year. People now own personal device ecosystems, with the mobile phone acting as the sun in a device solar system. For advertisers, this is cause for revisiting every assumption. Smartwatch advertising requires capturing more intimate information to help consumers decide what to buy. If AR headsets come to fruition, this could create entirely new experiences. Marketers need to consider for both sharing marketing messages and providing utility to make life easier.
Driving Connection through Disconnection

By Stephanie Stopulos, SVP, Advanced Analytics & Insights, Starcom USA

Consumers are starting to truly see—and even feel—how the technology and devices they interact with every day have become fundamentally more human, and that was evident at this year’s MWC. While people often blame technology for the loss of one-to-one connections, technology is also increasingly becoming more personal—not simply limited to preferences, but anticipatory of surroundings and the human needs that arise from them.

The Humanity in Technology: Sony displayed the Xperia Ear personal assistant earphone that has the capability to lessen the sound of a crying baby on an airplane by sensing and adapting to its wearer’s personal reaction to the noise. The future of how consumers connect, communicate and transact could be through biometric recognition technology from their iris, fingerprint and voice, all bringing a richer dimension to their experiences. Brands must be ready to market through personalized experiences—both to the consumer and through smart technologies, like Google Home—as growing channels of demand.

A Non-Verbal Society: Procter & Gamble’s Olay brand made its debut at MWC, showcasing the global roll out of the Skin Advisor platform that uses AI and deep learning via selfie optimization technology to provide smart skin analysis and personalized product recommendations delivered right to consumers’ mobile devices. Amidst a countless number of skincare products on the shelf, Skin Advisor streamlines the experience of finding the best product for a consumer’s exact skincare needs. With AI, consumers no longer need to verbally communicate their needs to be introduced to a new experience with unprecedented personalization and real benefits to their lives.

Solving Real-World Challenges: Wearable technology such as smart shoes from Indian start-up Lechal Footwear allows runners to pre-program a course and then signal each turn via a shoe vibration. It works by connecting to the GPS tracker of a user’s smartphone. While this technology may not be for everyone, it has immense possibilities for people who are visually impaired or travelers looking to explore a new city. The brands that will succeed will work to solve real, human needs through technology. The more brands understand about the people they want to reach, the more they can optimize messages—and even products.
Six Coolest Things We Saw on the MWC Show Floor

**VR Transforms Everyday Interactions**

Last year saw hype around VR hardware but 2017 has seen companies pushing the technology to become a mainstream reality. **Visyon**, for example, showcased VR phone calls to add immersive dimension to communication.

**Implication for brands:** This not only indicates a shift towards using VR as a utility but offers brands a more personal customer service channel.

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**Image Recognition Creates Seamless Shopping**

Image recognition tech is increasing accuracy and practical uses. **Tracxpoint** developed a shopping cart embedded with cameras that scan products as they are placed in the cart, which then links to an online profile.

**Implication for brands:** Brands can reduce friction along the consumer journey, while also gathering data for better personalization.

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**Generation Z Defining Services**

Companies are turning focus toward Gen Z, using mobile behavior patterns to design relevant services. **Wattl** created a video content platform designed around teens’ search behaviors, making it interactive to find new content.

**Implication for brands:** As consumers become digital natives, understanding mobile behaviors is paramount for brands when designing products and services.

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**Continued Rise of Chatbots**

MWC exhibited a chatbot for almost every vertical including travel and banking. An impressive platform comes from Korean start-up, **1 the full platform**, which helps companies create a chatbot—for free—with its open platform.

**Implication for brands:** Chatbots become increasingly relevant as people move to non-human interaction for simple tasks so its vital that brands develop capabilities quickly.

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**Robots Enter the Consumer Journey**

As robots become more sophisticated, they will provide value outside of manufacturing. **Softbank** demonstrated Pepper the robot which could be deployed in airports or shops to provide flight or product information to customers.

**Implication for brands:** Robots can help brands today by providing services in busy areas or away from a staffed service desk, but expect them to become more sophisticated.

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**Any Car—Connected**

For consumers that are not ready to buy a new car, **Third Space Auto** has developed a voice-activated app that connects to all features of an existing car and learns users’ behaviors to make any model of the car Internet connected.

**Implication for brands:** An increasing number of connected consumer touchpoints means brands must develop seamless experiences across all platforms.
Disruption is not just a marketing term anymore; disruption is a business.
Leonid Sudakov, Mars Petcare

Brands are no longer just thinking mobile first. Mobile is the nexus of everything.
Lisa Donohue, Starcom Worldwide

Mobile is less about a screen to make phone calls on but about a philosophy of data and content and companies becoming ‘mobilized’ rather than mobile centric.
Tom Goodwin, Zenith

The customer journey has been rewritten. Traditional boundaries on the path to purchase have been blurred. We must raise the bar at every stage of the consumer experience.
Sophie Blum, Procter & Gamble

Post-digital audiences redefine luxury and performance based on connectivity, individual experiences and always-on demand.
Iain Jacob, Publicis Media

In today’s era of personalization, best practices cannot be the future of innovation in mobile.
Lou Paskalis, Bank of America

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