Mobile World Congress 2017: From AI and VR to IoT and 5G

This report explores the views of senior AdTech and MarTech figures after the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, which centred on the use of data and artificial intelligence systems to better understand audiences.

- Much of the discussion focused on the software collecting the data and how marketers can incorporate AI to analyse insights that are too complex for the human brain to dissect.
- Speakers were prioritising discussions about IP geolocation and realising the potential of non-opted in geolocation solutions to help build useful relationships with mobile consumers.
- P&G's Marc Pritchard spoke out, followed by Unilever's Keith Weed – both voicing their concerns about the lack of clarity around media quality measurement.
- The IAB Tech Lab Coalition for Open Measurement – with support from the likes of MoPub, Google, and the Media Ratings Council – is working to bring accountability to the industry and create a global standard.

With mobile set to account for **over half** of total media ad spend by 2020 it's no surprise Mobile World Congress (MWC) is now a magnet for marketers looking to make the most of this rapidly expanding channel.

While the discussion at last week's Barcelona-based event was largely around the use of data and artificial intelligence (AI) to better understand audiences and deliver meaningful user experiences, there were many other trends and concerns on the agenda. Immersive virtual and augmented reality ad formats (VR and AR) were showcased and pressing industry concerns around measurement, viewability, and ad fraud were addressed. And the big question still to be answered? What will the impending arrival of 5G mean for marketing?

To better understand the wider industry response to MWC we asked representatives from advertising and marketing technology companies in attendance for their unique viewpoint on the event:

Estelle Reale, Marketing Director EMEA at Sublime Skinz

"Once again, Mobile World Congress provided marketers with a clear view of how the digital advertising industry is developing to offer brands new and exciting ways to connect with customers.

"AI was a central focus of the event and marketers were keen to understand how this technology can be used to better understand their audience - enabling them to deliver personalised and targeted mobile advertising campaigns. Much of the discussion focused on the software collecting the data and how marketers can incorporate AI to analyse insights that are too complex for the human brain to dissect.

"It was also interesting to see how (VR) is being explored with mobile ad formats. The rise in VR and its expansion into the B2B market is very exciting but we need to be sure that these new technologies will improve the user experience rather than be an unnecessary obstruction."

Floriana Nicastro, Manager, Mobile Product Strategy at MediaMath

"This year's Mobile World Congress offered a vision of how the latest tech advances are set to expand the future scope of mobile advertising; from VR and AR to the Internet of Things (IoT), AI, and location-based targeting. For now, activity is focused on apps and networks, especially incentivised networks, as advertisers seek to connect with mobile users by providing a better value exchange. We are still at the early stages of leveraging new data sources to build more effective advertising and it's clear there is still some way to go before the potential of emerging insight, and tech, is realised.

"But we're moving in the right direction; more companies are looking to access carrier data, manufacturers are starting to

appreciate the value of the insight they hold, and data-driven approaches like location-based advertising are gaining ground. While the industry has many challenges to face - from fraud to accurate attribution - it is continuously working to meet them by enhancing its data capability. The dream of outcome-based mobile advertising is alive now, and it's getting better all the time."

Andrew Bloom, SVP International Sales and Business Development, Sizmek

"With over 100,000 attendees and 2,300 exhibitors, on the face of it, Mobile World Congress signalled a thriving industry. But when it came to mobile advertising, quantity greatly overshadowed quality. The glut of point solutions all after their piece of the pie simply isn't sustainable, particularly as they are all operating within the shadows of a landscape dominated by the likes of Facebook and other giants. By next year's conference, many of these start-ups will have been acquired by larger players to enhance their stacks, or most likely, cease to exist altogether. Consolidation along with the removal of excess middlemen is key to the maturity and evolution of the market."

Kate Owen, Vice President, Northern Europe at Digital Element

"More people than ever before were prioritising discussions about IP geolocation and realising the potential of non-opted in geolocation solutions to help build useful relationships with mobile consumers. Another key subject on our stand was combatting fraud and the importance of utilising quality IP data for fraud detection on mobile devices, as well as for tracking and targeting.

"The marketing industry is becoming more aware of what can be achieved with mobile, and more specifically IP geolocation, if the right type of data is used in the correct way."

Jason Cooper, General Manager, Mobile at Integral Ad Science

"In the run up to this year's Mobile World Congress (MWC), global brands were leading the conversation around accountability and transparency across advertising. Firstly P&G's Marc Pritchard spoke out, followed by Unilever's Keith Weed - both voicing their concerns about the lack of clarity around media quality measurement. MWC 2017 provided a great platform to bring these issues to life and discuss how transparent and standardised metrics can be effectively implemented across mobile.

"The future is clear - a single, uniform measure for brands and agencies to gauge viewability in-app and across all devices and screens. Mobile measurement needs to be transparent, universal, and independently verified. The IAB Tech Lab Coalition for Open Measurement - with support from the likes of MoPub, Google, and the Media Ratings Council - is working to bring accountability to the industry and create a global standard. In the wake of MWC, we will start to see more advertisers asking to trade based on viewable impressions in a bid to optimise their mobile campaigns and achieve a unified approach to measuring viewability in-app."

Ken Parnham, General Manager Europe at Near

"Mobile is the nucleus of today's most important technological innovations, so it's little wonder that this year's Mobile World Congress took a considered view of everything from VR to robotics. The potential of IoT was widely discussed, particularly in relation to smart cities, which will use the analysis of real-time data to provide greater efficiency and a better quality of life for citizens. These innovations were considered alongside the potential of AI, which is enabling huge datasets to be crunched for more targeted and personalised interaction with consumers. This year's event also speculated on the possible arrival of 5G, a development that will enable consumers from wider global regions to be brought into the data fold. Overall, MWC delivered exciting innovations to look forward to, particularly in relation to how data and technology will work together to power the consumer experience."

Javier Lopez, Business Development Manager at Tealium

"The most talked about topic at Mobile World Congress is something that is yet to be created - and that speaks volumes about its importance. The excitement around 5G was palpable, and it's unsurprising given the opportunities this advancement will create for marketers.

"Without doubt, the technology will become an integral part of any mobile advertising strategy. It will bring super-fast connectivity to

smartphones, improve networks through low latency and high security, and enhance the ubiquity of IoT and connected devices - to name just a few benefits. But marketers must not forget the importance of unified data in any targeted personalised omnichannel campaign. Connecting silos and using a centralised data hub to bring together insights from several touchpoints in real time, remains just as important for audience based marketing."

Maggie Mesa, VP, Business Development - Mobile at OpenX

"Discovering new techniques for effective mobile advertising always rates highly on marketers' agendas at Mobile World Congress. This year, they were keen to increase their knowledge of the latest ad formats, especially how VR and AR can deliver exciting, innovative campaigns.

"The impending arrival of 5G was one of most discussed topics at event. Marketers were overwhelmed by the opportunities it could bring the industry. By creating a super-speed network, many predict it will trigger a generational leap - bringing new opportunities for advertising through autonomous cars, connected homes and even smart cities. And video advertising - one of the most popular formats - will be delivered seamlessly to devices, offering marketers the opportunity to provide richer content without hampering the user experience."

It might not be as sensational as VR experiences, super-fast 5G, or the smart cities of the future, but data was undoubtedly the underlying theme of MWC from a marketing viewpoint. From employing AI to analyse complex data sets, to the use of geolocation data for audience targeting, the right combination of data and technology will underpin the ongoing expansion of mobile marketing and drive the evolution of the consumer experience.

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