

What to expect at Mobile World Congress 2026



MWC 2026, March 2-5 in Barcelona, will usher in the next era of smart connectivity and innovation.

To help you prepare for the event, Omdia's leading analysts have identified the key trends and technologies to watch, ensuring you stay ahead of the curve and focused on the major announcements that will shape the future of the industry.

AI Infrastructure, Software, and Services



At MWC26, APAC vendors will showcase regionally developed AI capabilities, leveraging open source for scale, interoperability, and compliance. For physical AI, cellular-connected humanoid robots will transition from concept to deployment, becoming the event's most visible and attention-grabbing highlight.

Lian Jye Su, Chief Analyst, AI

Automotive



At MWC26, automotive leaders will explore AI-RAN networks for edge computing, 5G-Advanced and cost-efficient RedCap replacing 4G, and hybrid satellite connectivity powering SDVs amid impending "soft sunsets". MNOs must unlock innovative, high-value B2B services to lead.

Steve Bell, Chief Analyst, Connectivity and Related Technologies

Channel



Channel partners must embrace AI now or risk obsolescence. Deploy AI-powered analytics to predict customer needs, automate routine tasks, and deliver hyper-personalized solutions. Without AI adoption, partners face customer churn and competitive displacement.

Alastair Edwards, Chief Analyst, Channels & Partner

Go to Market



Vendors are transforming partner programs into unified business platforms, orchestrating enablement, performance, and value creation. This shift drives differentiation, accelerates market expansion, and turns partnerships into sustainable revenue engines for long-term growth.

Rachel Brindley, Senior Director, Channels



Mobile cellular solutions for enterprise will be on display at MWC26, with progress expected in enabling AI by leveraging 5G-Advanced, private networking, and NTN services for improved resilience, efficiency, and business outcomes.

Jim Frey, Principal Analyst, Enterprise Networking

Media & Entertainment



Telco network providers recognized content's importance for retention, evolving from 90s triple-play bundles to content super-aggregators. Now consumer OEMs expand beyond hardware to content provision and advertising solutions, extending customer relationships post-sale and creating new revenue opportunities.

Daniel Sutton, Principal Analyst, Media & Entertainment

Mobile Infrastructure



5G-Advanced enables deterministic mobile network quality at scale, unlocking revolutionary AI-driven applications. At MWC26, intelligent devices and deterministic networks will debut, showcasing transformative experiences and catalyzing innovation as AI reshapes device capabilities and user expectations.

Ronan de Renesse, Research Vice President, Telecoms



At MWC26, major industry players will compete for control of the AI-for-networks narrative and position their respective flavors of AI-RAN as the key engine for 5G advancement and the future 6G.

Rémy Pascal, Practice Leader, Mobile Infrastructure



At MWC26, transformative AI discussions will highlight how 5G Core powers 5G-Advanced use cases, unlocking experience-based monetization while autonomous networks will drive cost-saving strategies through automation, heralding the IQ Era and revolutionizing industries through intelligent, connected solutions.

Roberto Kompany, Principal Analyst, Mobile Infrastructure

Service Provider Markets



MWC26 will spotlight operators trying to unlock new 5G consumer revenue through premium experiences, rich bundles, speed tiers, and AI-driven services. The shift from "more data" to "better experience" will define the next wave of monetisation.

Diana Gorelik, EMEA Service Provider Markets

Service Provider Strategy



AI sovereignty will take center stage at MWC26 as telcos and hyperscalers showcase sovereign cloud strategies and portfolios. Expect a strong focus on NTN, with terrestrial NTN convergence a key topic of discussion.

Julia Schindler, Principal Analyst, Service Provider Strategy



Telco-AI convergence is set to dominate MWC26, with a strong emphasis on AI agents, AI-infrastructure investments, and the emergence of new and AI-enhanced services. Key trends to watch include advancements in 6G, Non-Terrestrial Networks, and 5G-Advanced, alongside the transformation of customer engagement models.

Dario Talmesio, Research Director, Service Provider Strategy & Regulation

Smartphone



Facing the industry's biggest margin challenges, watch for leaders who redefine strategy: using 'experience-first' smaller devices not just as products, but as gateways to integrated service ecosystems - the new foundation for stable, future-proof revenue.

Nicole Peng, Research Vice President, Consumer



While smartphone vendors have entered what will be a disruptive 2026 defined by memory cost pressures, MWC remains a hub for showcase their cutting-edge innovations and strengthen partnerships. Agentic AI, foldables and camera innovation will define the space this year.

Runar Bjørhovde, Senior Analyst, Smartphones and Connected Devices

Telco B2B



MWC26 must prove without a doubt that cellular still has the potential to transform industries: from industrial campus 5G to NTN for sovereign verticals, the ecosystem must continue to evolve on what has built over the last 5 plus years.

Pablo Tomasi, Principal Analyst, Future Wireless, Telco B2B Solutions

Critical Communications



From reliable emergency services and resilient utilities to next-gen defense systems, 5G is addressing the needs of sovereign verticals in an AI-first world. At MWC26, telcos and technology vendors will unveil their solutions to become indispensable accelerators of their digital-transformation journey.

Ildelfonso de la Cruz, Senior Principal Analyst, Critical Communications

Telco Cloud



Telcos are shifting from AI trials to production, driving strategic AI infrastructure evaluations. At MWC26, operators adopting AI-native infrastructure will highlight owning key stack layers, enabling partner collaboration while retaining control over AI value creation.

Inderpreet Kaur, Senior Analyst, Telco Cloud and Network Automation

Telco Software & AI



This year, the focus should shift from AI pilots to production-grade autonomy. Telcos will showcase AI integration in OSS/BSS for agility and efficiency, while software providers highlight agentic AI transforming tools into strategic platforms for telcos.

James Crawshaw, Practice Leader, Service Provider Transformation

Want to explore any of these insights further at the show? Book your analyst meeting today.

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