

# Emerging tech trends for 2024: deepfakes, AI wearables and more

**There have been some seismic technological shifts over the past 12 months. Each new week seemed to bring fresh, often baffling and sometimes nerve-wracking news from the tech world: Meta unveiled a pair of AI-enabled glasses; ChatGPT being endowed with a voice and the ability to analyze images; crypto wunderkind Sam Bankman-Fried's conviction for fraud; the boardroom coup, interregnum and counter-revolution at OpenAI; Google's release of multimodal AI system Gemini.**

And that's just scratching the surface. Behind the scenes, deep-pocketed tech companies are continuing to push forward with tech research and development that could soon transform our world much more profoundly than anything we've seen in the past year.

The point is this: If you're still struggling to wrap your mind around all of the technological advancements that have been made in 2023 – while simultaneously working to prepare yourself for the forthcoming changes that nobody can predict with perfect accuracy – you're not alone. It can at times feel a bit like running on an accelerating treadmill. This is what it's like to live in a time in which the exponential nature of Moore's Law is transforming from an abstraction into a felt, everyday experience. Welcome to the age of AI, folks.

The good news is that, while the pace of change might occasionally feel daunting, AI and other emerging technologies have the potential to enhance the quality of human life in ways that we can scarcely imagine.

All the same, it can be easy to feel powerless. And in many ways, we are:

ever-more powerful technologies are coming, whether we like it or not. But we still have the ability to look ahead to the future, try to come to grips with where emerging technologies might lead us, and strategize accordingly. Or we can move forward into the future blindly, which is never a winning strategy. As the old adage has it, failing to prepare is preparing to fail.

With all of that in mind, let's now take a look at some emerging tech trends that we can expect in the new year.

## **The internet's about to become much more confusing**

The rise of deepfakes – AI-generated video, images or audio that appears to be uncannily similar to real people or events – has made the boundary between truth and falsehood blurrier than ever before. Remember when [images of a dripped-out Pope Francis](#) made waves on social media earlier this year, and it then turned out that they had all been created using Midjourney? That's just a taste of the kind of uncertainty that will soon spread throughout the internet, thanks to increasingly powerful and accessible generative AI tools. And with the upcoming US presidential election – which has already been impacted by deepfakes – the stakes will be higher than ever.

In an interview with The Drum, futurist and author Daniel Burrus said that our society is in the midst of "a global trust crisis," which he believes "is just beginning because of where we're going with AI."

## **More efforts to label AI-generated content**

As deepfakes continue to flood and confuse the information ecosystem, new methodologies aimed at discerning the real from the fake are likely to come

into widespread use. Some big tech companies have already begun to introduce [labeling systems](#) in the hopes of mitigating the spread of misinformation on their platforms. Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta, for example, recently [introduced a new policy](#) that will require the disclosure of the use of AI or other digital technologies in politically charged advertisements published on the company's platforms.

Sandy Carter, chief operating officer of software company Unstoppable Domains, believes blockchain technology could also be of use. Harkening back to the example of the deepfake images of Pope Francis, she envisions a system in which the Pope himself, had the pictures been real, could have verified their authenticity using a blockchain digital signature. "That would have been a way for you to know that that's a real picture versus a fake picture," Carter says. "You [could] use your digital identity to 'sign' pieces of content about yourself to validate that it's real. That technology exists today, and I think that it'll grow in importance in 2024, for sure."

Carter envisions this blockchain-based "trust verification" tool being used not only for images, video and audio, but also for quotes used in news articles. News outlets that leverage such a system would inevitably, in her view, be regarded by readers as more trustworthy as the spread of online misinformation continues to escalate in 2024 and beyond.

## **AI wearables will become a thing**

If you happened to tune into Paris Fashion Week in September, you may have caught sight of a strange, squarish device fixed to the clothing below some models' left shoulders; it looks a bit like a mini version of the cheap calculator you had in middle school. It's called the Ai Pin, and it was developed by a company called Humane. At \$699, it's being marketed as the future of both smartphones and wearable tech devices like the Apple Watch.

Around the same time that the Ai Pin made its debut, Meta unveiled the new generation of its Ray-Ban Smart Glasses, through which wearers can livestream directly to Facebook and Instagram and interact with an AI assistant.

Futurist Cathy Hackl believes that the era of wearable technologies – like the Ai Pin and Meta's Smart Glasses – could soon arrive. "In 2024," she says, "we will continue to see more companies unveil more hardware in a race to replace our computers and then our mobile phones. The post-smartphone future is heating up."

The wearable AI devices that have already been released, Hackl says, are "transitional equipment on our way to the hardware that will eventually replace our mobile devices... the battle for this wearable world is just getting started."

## **Suggested newsletters for you**

### **Daily Briefing**

#### **Daily**

Catch up on the most important stories of the day, curated by our editorial team.

### **Ads of the Week**

#### **Wednesday**

See the best ads of the last week – all in one place.

### **Media Agency Briefing**

#### **Thursday**

Our media editor explores the biggest media buys and the trends rocking the sector.

## **Search and SEO will (continue to) be transformed**

Generative AI has had a big impact on the online search industry over the past year. Thanks to Google's Bard, for example, users can now receive detailed and personalized responses to search queries. A similar experience is now available on Microsoft's Bing search engine thanks to the integration of OpenAI's GPT-4 large language model (LLM).

Heated competition between Google (along with its subsidiary DeepMind) and Microsoft (which has invested many billions of dollars in OpenAI) make it highly likely that the search and SEO experience will change in the coming year. As The Wall Street Journal reported earlier this month, Google is currently testing an AI-enabled search function which provides users with text responses to complex search prompts, pushing links to the margins. It could result in huge losses for news publishers reliant on Google's search algorithm for traffic.

Pallavi Naresh, group product manager at Google Ads, expresses confidence that generative AI-enabled search will empower advertisers: "In the new year, AI will continue to deliver more helpful products that will fundamentally improve the customer experience when they interact with search ads online," she says. "It won't just be about showing ads, but also about creating personalized journeys that seamlessly blend with the intents of businesses and customers alike. With more powerful predictive capabilities, we'll see AI continuing to help anticipate needs and understand intent during the customer search experience, leading to new discoveries and building deeper connections with brands."

## Space marketing

Given the headline-dominating innovations in AI that have been taking place over the past year, it's been easy to overlook another tech sector that's been rapidly lifting off (terrible pun intended): private space travel. Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin have been working hard towards their goal of making humanity a multiplanetary species; Musk has hinted that a manned SpaceX flight to Mars could happen as soon as 2029, and Blue Origin has been sending non-professional astronauts to space since the summer of 2021.

As the private space industry grows, attracting initially only über-rich customers, advertisers are likely to follow. "In 2024, we'll start to see more brands slowly enter the commercial space sector," Hackl, the futurist, predicts. "We'll see everyone from beauty brands to hospitality brands start to look to the cosmos for ways to make a marketing splash."

## Enjoy a lunchtime read

### AI sensationalism will yield to pragmatism

There has been a lot of emotionally charged chatter, and not much room for nuance, in and around the AI space this year. At the same time, the breakout success of ChatGPT has prompted a huge number of brands to launch their own (sometimes gimmicky) AI-powered marketing campaigns.

McCann's global head of applied innovation Elav Horwitz expects a more pragmatic approach from observers and users in the new year. "After a whirlwind of experimentation, 2024 stands as the turning point where tech transcends hype to make real impact," she says. "[2024 will mark] a shift towards a more practical, grounded tech landscape, where innovations are

not just exciting but also bringing tangible benefits to our daily lives."

This shift was evident at the recent [AI Summit New York](#), where many speakers focused in large part on the technology's more humdrum business applications. Software company SAP also sought to capitalize on this transformation in a recent [marketing campaign](#).

## The end of 'digital agencies'?

Historically, digital agencies have defined themselves as experts there to aid addled marketers through a complex digital world. But according to Forrester principal analyst Jay Pattisall, this particular type of agency specialization could soon be made redundant and disappear.

"As generative AI shapes more conversational, personalized experiences, this will effectively recast all marketing as 'digital marketing,'" Pattisall writes in a recent Forrester report. "This means that there will be little need for specialized 'digital' agencies."

**For more on the latest happenings in AI, web3 and other cutting-edge technologies, [sign up for The Emerging Tech Briefing newsletter](#).**