

# Is the future of marketing the metaverse, gen AI or something else?

*Thomas Peham, VP of Marketing at enterprise CMS Storyblok, discusses which major tech trend businesses should consider investing their marketing budget.*

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Without doubt the last couple of years have seen some major innovation leaps in tech. Firstly, towards the back end of 2021, the world braced itself as Facebook announced its Meta rebrand as part of Zuckerberg's bold vision for the next iteration of the web. Cue everyone from Apple, Microsoft and Google through to Disney and even Gucci jumping on the metaverse bandwagon for a slice of the potentially-hugely lucrative pie that an immersive, 3D internet will bring.

Then more recently we saw Open-AI break the generative AI mould with the launch of ChatGPT - a new breed of chatbot with an uncanny ability to generate near-perfect human-like text. The result has been scope for vastly improved AI-generated emails, blogs, articles and the like, along with widespread debate as to what it all means for the future marketing.

But while both techs certainly constitute a watershed moment for tech, there are still many questions which remain unanswered for modern business. Principally, where's all going? - and, more importantly, where should businesses be hedging their bets?

Of course, these concepts are very different both in their scope and stage

of development. The metaverse is still essentially on the drawing board, whereas services such as ChatGPT and DALL-E are already being incorporated into tech platforms and being used to fulfil specific marketing functions. In fact, we quickly got a taste of generative AI being applied to our platform when our partner Virtual Identity created a plugin for our CMS to enable content creators to insert images generated by DALL-E while they are working on webpages. In one fell swoop, Virtual Identity had removed both the tedious nature of searching image libraries, and the need to buy stock photos. Creators could generate the most appropriate image they needed instantly, without even leaving our CMS.

What the metaverse and AI have in common is that they pose strategic questions to companies. Everytime a new 'hot' tech trend emerges, business leaders need to parse whether it is simply hype or a solution that provides a clear commercial opportunity which will require investment to realise. The metaverse itself may not ever arrive in the manner that Meta envisions, however, artificial and virtual experiences do present obvious and exciting new ways to engage customers. Businesses can invest in developing these experiences now and potentially carve out a competitive advantage and align their brand with innovation. On the other hand, AI presents a number of clear ways to both engage customers through, for example, chatbot experiences, and create serious efficiencies through automation. Combining both major trends opens the door to a mind boggling number of new use cases.

So what is the best course of action? Invest time and money on one, bank on both or do nothing until the best applications emerge? The answer to that is far from straightforward and will very much depend on the commercial strategy of individual businesses. What is universally true is that to use AI, AR/VR or indeed any new tech in your marketing effectively, you need to ensure you have the right modern tech platforms. Far too many businesses invest in experimenting with, or applying, new innovations when really their resources would be much better applied

ensuring the infrastructure they use is up to scratch. We regularly conduct research into the state of CMS in the UK and the findings show that the majority of businesses are still using outdated and inflexible CMS systems to run their marketing. For example, 55% said they had to use multiple CMS systems. Using more than one CMS can cause disorganised workflows, content siloing, and communication issues, as well as increasing costs and reducing efficiency.

Nearly a third said they were forced to do that because their infrastructure was outdated. 87% of the companies we surveyed said that modernising their content operations produced significant financial and productivity benefits.

To put it bluntly, if your business is struggling to efficiently run its existing website, produce personalised communications campaigns and effectively manage content on its channels as it is - adding in more complex advanced tech is never going to work. This doesn't just mean having, for example, a headless CMS platform - it also means ensuring that your data infrastructure is up to scratch. Effective marketing is run on data and that is even more true for AI and VR/AR experiences.

More so, the reality is that recent developments such as metaverse and ChatGPT are just beginning in terms of the future of big tech. Indicative of this, at Storyblok we recently partnered with UC Berkeley tasking the next generation of talent to develop concepts imagining what the future of websites and digital content will look like. The results point towards a future in which web decentralisation is commonplace (moving ownership away from big gatekeepers, such as Google and Facebook, to individuals), community robots roam cities to offer personalised local content and holographic wristbands are used to share concepts. While certainly much further in the future, these revolutionary ideas offer a clear indication of what could be round the corner and reiterate the importance of businesses taking heed of the pipeline.

Of course, Rome wasn't built in a day and we can certainly not expect the full evolution of the metaverse, generative AI or any other tech breakthroughs to be ready anytime soon. What businesses can do, however, is begin to consider it and prepare now. Ironically, this actually starts at the beginning - ensuring a solid foundation is in place with a good, modern tech infrastructure which will make your life much easier, save your team time and money, allow you to create more effective marketing campaigns, and ultimately enable your business to capitalise on any new tech trends and be ready for tomorrow, today.

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