

The background is a solid blue color. On the left and right sides, there are large, abstract, wavy shapes that resemble liquid or smoke. These shapes are composed of many thin, parallel lines that create a sense of depth and movement. The colors of these shapes range from a light, almost white blue to a deep, dark blue.

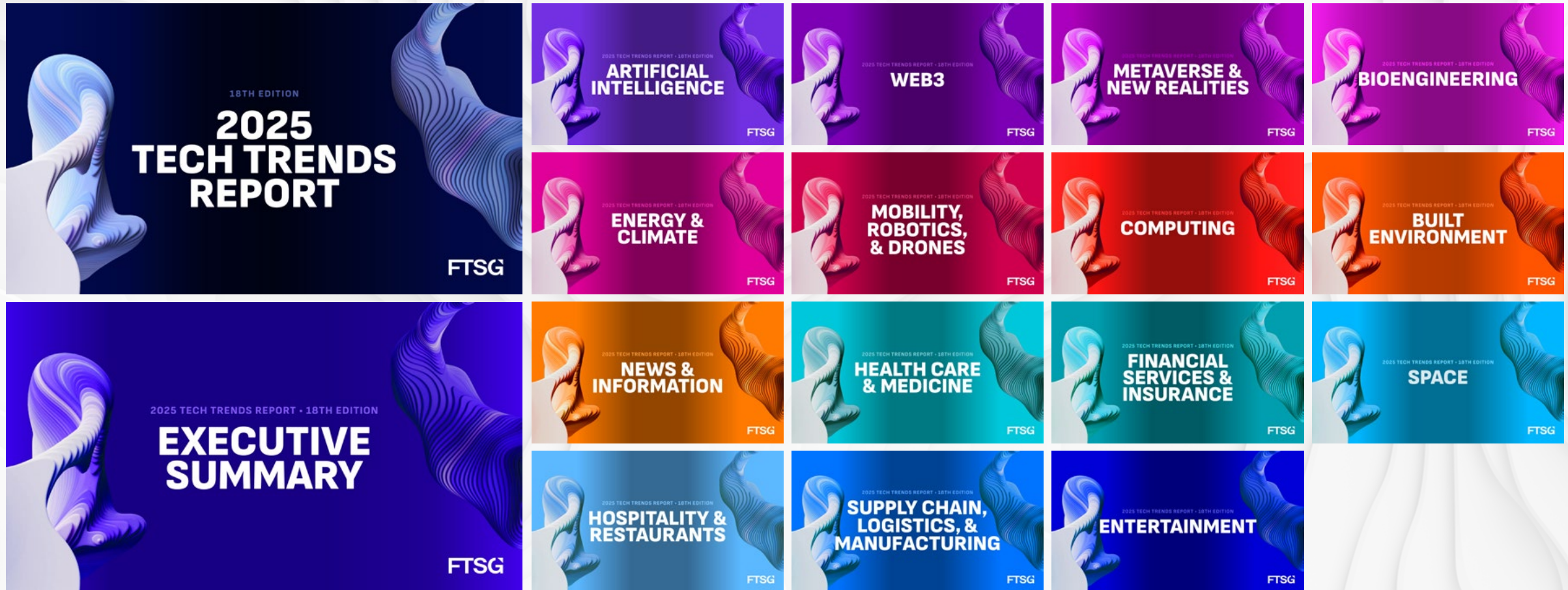
2025 TECH TRENDS REPORT • 18TH EDITION

ENTERTAINMENT

FTSG

Future Today Strategy Group's 2025 Tech Trend Report

Our 2025 edition includes 1000 pages, with hundreds of trends published individually in 15 volumes and as one comprehensive report. Download all sections of Future Today Strategy Group's 2025 Tech Trends report at www.ftsg.com/trends.



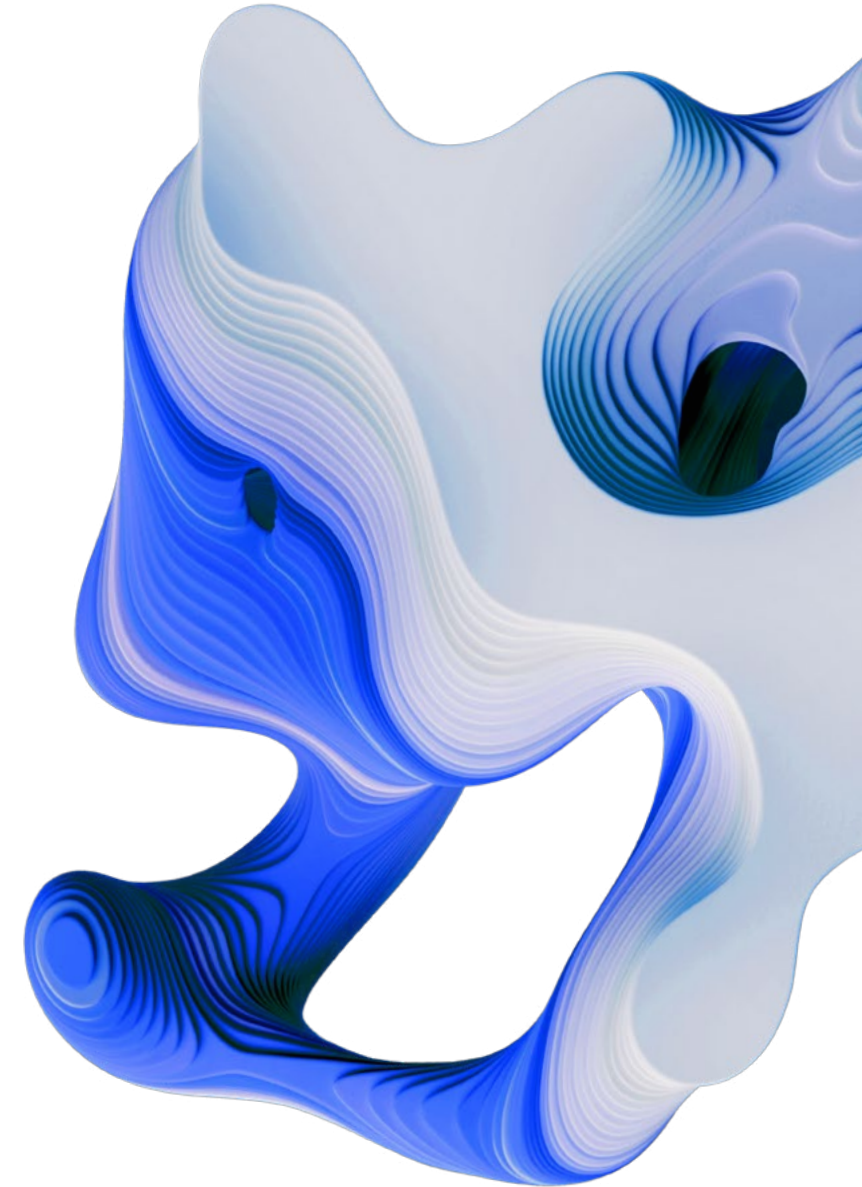
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**Victoria Chaitoff**

Director of Marketing
and Communications

Entertainment today is a boundless, tech-fueled ecosystem.

In her 2013 Golden Globes opening monologue, Amy Poehler joked that only there “do the beautiful people of film rub shoulders with the rat-faced people of television.” A decade later, that quip doesn’t ring so true. Meryl Streep is on Hulu, for crying out loud! Technology has leveled the entertainment playing field in such a way that the many once-distinct industries—film, television, music, gaming, sports, and performing arts, among others—have become nebulous. When all content has the potential to be high-quality and intellectual property reigns supreme, crossover is more appealing than ever to companies, creators, and consumers.

As we organized this year’s book, it was clear that viewing these industries as silos no longer makes sense. To better understand the forces shaping the future of entertainment, we have to look beyond. In doing so, a larger structural pattern emerges. Instead of falling neatly into traditional industry categories, trends tend to cluster around two key areas: the individual and the collective. The same technologies—augmented reality, extended reality, blockchain, wearables, and more—are driving both, but they’re deployed in unique ways to achieve different goals.

Trends centered on the individual focus on enhancing creativity, safeguarding artistic expression, and optimizing the user experience. On the other hand, collective trends emphasize community-building, shared experiences, and societal change. This duality raises an important question: If technology can be deeply personal or inherently social, how do companies choose where to play? These two clusters may seem diametrically opposed, but in reality they’re intimately linked. Companies that successfully navigate this intersection will understand that enhancing individual experiences inevitably impacts the collective, and vice versa.



Industry adopts AI applications, consumers engage while demanding regulations.

1

Daily routines become entertainment

Technology, from state-of-the-art portable gaming to improved 5G connectivity, has poised entertainment to become a bedrock of daily life. It can be integrated into any moment, including those that were previously occupied, and personalized to the consumer.

2

AI implemented at scale

Though AI continues to undergo experiments for public-facing use cases, it is becoming fundamental to back-end processes. It is both expediting and, at times, shaping development, production, and distribution of professional and amateur creative works.

3

Consumers reject isolation

Audiences are demanding immersive, community-driven experiences, from live events to interactive digital content, perhaps in response to decades of individually focused entertainment and recent pandemic isolation.

4

Growing demand for AI regulation

As the entertainment industry grapples with a surge of deepfake controversies, the proliferation of unmarked AI-generated content, and the exploitation of unlicensed material for AI training, creators and audiences alike are speaking out.

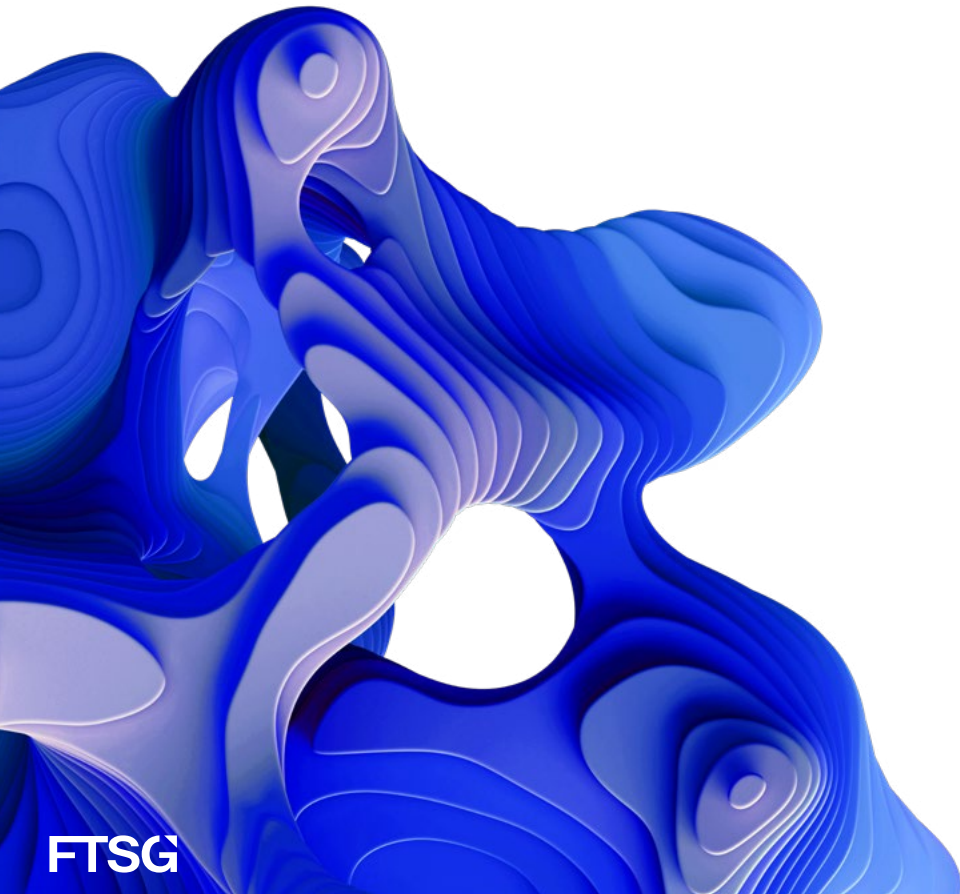
5

Personalized content redefines engagement

Advanced algorithms, user-driven platforms, and AI personalization are enabling hyper-specific content, reshaping how creators connect with consumers and fostering deeper, more interactive engagement.



The entertainment industry is lean... and a little lost.



More than a year has passed since the WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes ended, but their effects continue to ripple through the industry. AI, once a theoretical concern, has now become a central focus in contract negotiations; it played a role in 2024's video game industry strike and could be a factor when the American Guild of Musical Artists renegotiates its contract with the Metropolitan Opera in 2025. Expect to see more collective action as individuals unite to demand better protections.

Meanwhile, companies across entertainment continue to make major staff reductions. Gaming took the brunt of the reorganizations, with Microsoft laying off 1,900 gaming employees in January 2024 and another 650 in September; Twitch, Discord, Sony, Electronic Arts, and others followed suit throughout the year. Blame it, in part, on the rise of generative AI coinciding with the effects of a global pandemic—the latter spurred hiring that has been rendered superfluous as AI makes processes more efficient.

Companies are taking big swings on how to use AI in public-facing capacities because they don't want to be left behind, but few have succeeded in laying the foundation for its long-term value add; its larger impact has been in back-end optimization. The hype around AI echoes the hype around other recent “of-the-moment” areas of tech like blockchain or the metaverse. Once the buzz dies down, the hard work to realize the transformational potential of the underlying technologies begins. In the case of AI, however, that realization may be more rapid, and the potential more staggering and enduring than society expects.

Overall, 2024 was about regaining balance. Strikes caused months-long delays in production, while layoffs prompted periods of realignment—all against the backdrop of the US presidential election. This year, the experimental phase of AI seems poised to give way to more purposeful integration and more structured regulatory frameworks. As entertainment companies emerge leaner and more focused, success will hinge on their ability to win back internal and external confidence.

Amid industry upheaval, tech shaped both spectacle and controversy.

JANUARY 2024

Microsoft Cuts 1,900 Gaming Workers

Industry-wide cuts at major tech and media companies continue in gaming, music, and more.

MAY 2024

Met Gala Spurs Deepfakes

AI-generated images of absent celebrities, including Katy Perry, circulate.

NOVEMBER 2024

“Wicked” Hits Theaters

The record-breaking movie musical ran a full-press, immersive advertising effort that could make even “Barbie” green with envy.

APRIL 2024

Taylor Swift Album Release

“The Tortured Poets Department” notches a record-breaking one-day tally of 300+ million streams on Spotify.

JULY 2024

Paris 2024 Olympics Begin

The Games showcase cutting-edge tech, from AI commentators to solar-powered arenas.

← PAST

Tech will drive mergers and milestones in 2025.

MAY 2025

Paramount, Skydance Finalize Merger

Will a capital investment and new strategic direction breathe new life into a legacy media company?

OCTOBER 2025

Comcast Completes Cable Spinoff

Untethered from a waning cable business, NBCUniversal will focus on growth areas such as its theme parks.

JUNE 2026

North America Hosts FIFA World Cup

Quadrennial events are as much about technology as they are sports; Lenovo has signed on as tech partner.

FUTURE >>

JUNE 2026

SXSW Debuts in London

Austin's premier entertainment and technology festival will cross the ocean for its first event in Europe.

NOVEMBER 2025

"Grand Theft Auto VI" Comes Out

The follow-up to one of the world's best-selling video games will showcase Rockstar's proprietary RAGE engine.



These trends are reshaping audiences, advertising, and the future of work.

Entertainment Is Ubiquitous

Entertainment is everywhere, all the time—and everyone wants a piece. Northwell Health, New York’s largest hospital system, is even launching a studio division to develop film and TV content. Companies that fail to explore how entertainment relates to their product or service risk falling behind.

Audiences Are Growing

Companies have unprecedented opportunities to reach diverse global audiences. More than two-thirds of the world’s population has internet access, compared to one-third just a decade ago. AI-driven tools are breaking language barriers, while accessibility features open doors to a previously untapped set of consumers. The expansion of automation means that time previously spent on tasks like driving can convert to entertainment hours.

Advertising Strategy Will Shift

Entertainment is completely transforming the advertising industry. The mediums have changed: Instead of cable TV and physical billboards, it’s FAST channels and interactive virtual worlds. Brands are now content creators with the capacity to deliver narratives directly to audiences, and advanced AI tools, such as gaze tracking, offer novel consumer insights.

Consumers Are Mobilizing

Emerging technology, in combination with social media, is rendering fandoms increasingly capable of influencing cultural and social movements (think: #FreeBritney)—but it’s not always for good. Organizations need to recognize the impact of fandoms on consumer behavior and market dynamics, taking the appropriate steps to both nurture and moderate them.

Stakeholders Need Upskilling

The evolving entertainment landscape demands that both creators and consumers adapt to emerging technologies like AI. Companies can mitigate the fear of job loss by retraining their workforce; they must simultaneously educate consumers on how to navigate and interact with their products, processes, and platforms.

Work Processes Need Contemporizing

As entertainment integrates more into our daily lives, it may find a home in the workplace. It’s more than having video games in the break room; it’s about using tech to create engaging experiences within work processes. Incorporating elements of gamification and immersive storytelling, for example, can boost both productivity and overall well-being.

These innovators are driving new technologies in and around the entertainment industry.

- ◆ **Michelle Sanchez, Matty Ayers, Natalie Bruss, and Lillian Marsh, co-founders of MITH**, for fostering fan-artist relationships through a secure block-chain-based platform.
- ◆ **Tim Anderson, Scotty Coats, and Reyna Bryan, co-founders of Good Neighbor**, for creating an eco-friendly, high-fidelity alternative to vinyl records.
- ◆ **TJ Driver and Zach Nasgowitz, co-founders of Brick**, for developing a device that promotes more intentional smartphone use.
- ◆ **Jeb Terry Jr., president and CEO of Cosm**, for launching two immersive, “shared reality” venues for fans to experience sports and entertainment in a new way.
- ◆ **Dani Valevski, Yaniv Leviathan, Moab Arar, and Shlomi Fruchter at Google Research and Google DeepMind for developing GameNGen**, the first game engine powered entirely by a neural model.
- ◆ **Aleksandar Gecevski, Marco Colaco, and Neal Peters, co-founders of N3MUS**, for exploring a cost-effective and accessible entry into Web3 gaming.
- ◆ **Minyoung Kim, Vice President, Content for Asia (ex-India) at Netflix**, for bridging cultures by delivering groundbreaking Eastern stories to global audiences.
- ◆ **Karri Zaremba, Senior Vice President of Ballpark Experience and Ticketing for the MLB**, for her role in launching Go-Ahead Entry in baseball stadiums across the U.S.
- ◆ **Dr. Kimberly Voll, Natasha Miller, and Weszt Hart, the editorial team at the Digital Thriving Playbook**, for promoting trust, safety, and prosocial behavior in game development.
- ◆ **Andrew Hawkins and Troy Jones, co-founders of StatusPRO**, for ushering in a new chapter of VR sports gaming with the third installment of NFL Pro Era.
- ◆ **Daesik Kim, Head of AI and Data at Webtoon**, for enhancing the production, consumption, and monitoring of web comics using AI and machine learning.
- ◆ **Sarah Ellis, Director of Creative Innovation at the Royal Shakespeare Company**, whose technology-led projects push the boundaries of traditional theater.



Entertainment innovations are streamlining operations and fueling new creative possibilities...

OPPORTUNITIES

New Talent Makes a Breakthrough

Promoting creativity-enhancing AI tools, blockchain-driven platforms, and other democratizing technologies can break down traditional barriers to entry in entertainment, fostering new talent and innovative ideas from around the world.

More Efficient Content Creation

Integrating AI into production workflows can streamline traditionally time-consuming tasks, allowing creators to produce high-quality content faster and at reduced costs.

Improved Fan Engagement

Developing immersive entertainment with extended reality technology can drive long-term loyalty and engagement for fan communities, who can actively participate in and shape the content they love.

ESG for Entertainment

Investing in sustainability and regulatory initiatives, from reducing energy consumption in gaming to watermarking AI-generated content, can start to rebuild trust with a general public that is wary of emerging technologies.

...but long-term success hinges on building foundational safeguards.

THREATS

Ethical and Regulatory Standards are Required

Continuing to skirt regulatory and ethical rules—such as training AI on unlicensed materials or engaging in nonconsensual tracking—is likely to increase already intense backlash from consumers and creatives alike.

Technology-Borne Vulnerabilities

Depending on technology for large-scale world-building can create vulnerabilities, such as software malfunctions or data breaches, that disrupt the consumer experience and erode trust.

Potential New Competitors

Emerging technologies may invite not just individuals but established competitors from other industries to enter the market, potentially challenging incumbents.

Fan-Led Brand Disruption

Encouraging fan-led storytelling can help foster community and drive loyalty, but it may also challenge brand consistency and dilute the integrity of established franchises.

Companies must be purposeful in how they explore and ultimately integrate AI into their value chain.



Create and enforce a public-facing transparency policy around the use of AI-generated content, including deepfakes and synthetic media. Be a leader in educating your audience about the ethical use of such technology and clearly labeling AI-generated content. Upholding this policy will build trust with your audience and protect your brand from legal or reputational damage.



Explore innovations that are one step removed from entertainment, because they will indirectly shape the industry’s future. This could include autonomous vehicles, as entertainment companies stand to capture the attention that was once spent on driving, or efficient AI algorithms, which could help mitigate the rising energy costs of generating complex content like graphics and videos.



Invest in comprehensive AI education and training for your workforce. Equip your creative and technical teams with the skills to leverage AI in content creation, post-production, and audience engagement. The benefits are twofold: Learning how to use such tools can both increase efficiency in day-to-day operations and, equally as important, alleviate concerns about job displacement.



Define your long-term goals to drive short-term AI integration. The past five years saw entertainment companies investing in non-fungible tokens and half-baked metaverse projects, partially for fear of falling behind. Experimentation isn’t all bad, but aligning emerging technologies with your organization’s overarching strategy will help make sure you don’t spend resources on fleeting “trends.”



Examine communities around your product or service, and come up with a plan to nurture them. If fandoms typically form around fictional characters or beloved celebrities, how does the average company make their offering feel worthy of a fandom? Curate personalized interactions, deliver exclusive content, host special experiences. A loyal community is about identity, belonging, and empowerment.



Research how to effectively integrate into new regions and engage with global audiences. While tools like real-time translation can reduce geographic barriers, it is vital to maintain authenticity. Invest in understanding and reflecting regional nuances, from culture to preferences in storytelling and humor, in order to build a deeper connection with audiences and enhance long-term engagement.





ENTERTAINMENT TRENDS



THE INDIVIDUAL



6TH YEAR ON THE LIST

AI-ASSISTED CREATIVITY

WHAT IT IS

AI is enhancing human potential throughout the entertainment industry, pushing boundaries and offering tools that streamline and elevate the creative process.

HOW IT WORKS

Entertainment sectors from filmmaking to music are integrating AI, enhancing human creativity, and simplifying complex tasks. Artists who use AI tools find they can increase efficiency and experiment in previously unimaginable ways. One standout example is the 2024 release of “Our T2 Remake,” a full-length parody of “Terminator 2: Judgment Day.” Despite using AI programs like Midjourney and Runway, the film was far from a “push-button” operation: It took 50 creators months to meticulously craft the film, demonstrating that AI still requires significant human input.

Flawless, an AI-driven studio, has revolutionized dubbing with its TrueSync technology, mapping actors’ faces to deliver precise lip-synching for foreign-language films. Robert Zemeckis’ film “Here” used AI to de-age characters over several decades, combining makeup and AI tools like Metaphysic Live. In music, Randy Travis, who lost much of his ability to speak after a stroke, released a song with the help of AI. His longtime producer used a custom program to combine his voice from old recordings with that of another, consenting singer.

AI can also streamline traditionally cost- and labor-intensive behind-the-scenes processes, like hair and makeup. The LUUM Lash robot’s automated eyelash extensions are designed to be more precise, safer, and faster than traditional methods. LUUM still relies on a lash artist for the finishing touch, demonstrating how AI can supplement rather than replace human work.

WHY IT MATTERS

The incorporation of AI across entertainment is inevitable. It offers tools that save time, expand creative possibilities, and enable previously impossible projects. Artists who adopt AI will likely become more efficient and productive than those who avoid it; however, a niche market may emerge for “uncontaminated” works—live, acoustic, or improvised performances—offering a premium experience in an industry saturated with AI-driven content.

As AI becomes increasingly fundamental to creative processes, concerns about ownership and the legality of training AI on unlicensed material continue to grow. There is an urgent need for increased regulations for technology that is philosophically complex and thus difficult to regulate. In addition, workers across the industry are worried about job displacement. While many of these technologies are intended to enhance human artistry rather than replace it, intentions aren’t always honored.

Importantly, though, AI is not yet a perfect substitute for human intuition. A 2023 study found that generative AI models, like ChatGPT, outperformed humans on a creativity test; however, the best human responses still surpassed AI’s top answers. The results raise questions about whether AI’s performance equates to genuine creativity, as AI generates ideas based on its training data rather than original thought.



“

AI threatens to upend just about every aspect of cinematic production... But therein lies the opportunity. AI is likely to make high-quality filmmaking much less expensive and less logistically arduous, empowering smaller, nimbler productions by outsiders with few or no connections to the studio system.

Peter Suderman, Features Editor at *Reason*



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

DEMOCRATIZING CREATIVITY

WHAT IT IS

Advances in technology, particularly AI and blockchain, are making creative tools more accessible, lowering the barrier to entry for individuals who lack traditional skills or resources.

HOW IT WORKS

Startups like Bitmagic offer AI-driven platforms that enable users to generate fully interactive 3D games with simple prompts. By automating coding and design, Bitmagic allows individuals without programming skills to create complex games that are distributed on platforms like Steam. Similarly, RoEx's Automix automates music mixing and mastering, helping artists prepare tracks for streaming faster and at lower costs. RoEx's government-backed research project in the UK trains AI to replicate the unique production styles of mix engineers while ensuring they receive compensation. Discord, with its tech-savvy communities and robust content moderation tools, is increasingly acting as a testing ground for AI tools. With AI generators such as Midjourney (text-to-image) and Viggie (text-to-video), millions of users can create high-quality visuals and videos quickly and easily. Platforms like Decentralized Pictures (DCP) provide independent filmmakers with a new way to fund and distribute their projects. DCP's community of users evaluate and rank project submissions; filmmakers pay for these peer reviews through blockchain-based smart contracts, ensuring fair and auditable results. The Rights, a sync licensing clearance platform launched in 2024, simplifies the process of clearing music rights for small productions. Partnering with blockchain platform Dequency, The Rights enables multiple rights holders to be cleared in a single transaction, improving efficiency and making it easier for creators to secure music for their projects.

WHY IT MATTERS

As AI and blockchain lower the barriers to entry, more individuals can participate in the creative economy. This shift has the potential to disrupt established business models and alter the landscape for content creation and distribution. For businesses, this democratization presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, it enables new business models that support creators, such as subscription-based access to creative tools or platforms that share revenue with community evaluators. On the other hand, it threatens traditional industry structures, where major players have been in control. In gaming, for instance, companies may need to adjust their focus from producing and distributing a small number of high-budget games to fostering platforms that allow users to create and share their own.

Contradictorily, AI-generated content raises concerns about authenticity and intellectual property theft while blockchain, with its ability to create transparent and immutable records, offers a solution for proving the origin and ownership of creative works. This duality means that as AI enables more widespread creation, blockchain could serve as the safeguard ensuring that artists and creators retain control over their work. The issue of authenticity is critical, as seen in recent incidents involving AI-manipulated images. Companies and creators will need to invest in tools that guarantee the provenance of their content, particularly as AI-generated media becomes harder to distinguish from human-led work.



4TH YEAR ON THE LIST

RIGHTS AND REGULATIONS

WHAT IT IS

As emerging technologies continue to permeate the entertainment industry, there is an increasing call to protect both public figures and private citizens from exploitation, misuse, and manipulation in digital environments.

HOW IT WORKS

The SAG-AFTRA and WGA strikes highlighted growing concerns over AI's role in creative industries, underscoring the need for stronger protections for individuals whose likenesses, voices, and work could be replicated by AI. In 2024, Scarlett Johansson sued OpenAI, claiming a voice similar to hers was used in a ChatGPT update despite her refusal to authorize such use. Lawmakers are pushing efforts to combat these issues. The bipartisan No Fakes Act, currently under consideration in the US Senate, would allow individuals to sue companies or platforms that create or host deepfakes or digital replicas without permission.

Industry self-regulation is also gaining traction. Many tech companies now support the C2PA standard for certifying the source of media content. OpenAI added watermarks to images generated by DALL-E 3, while Meta labels AI-generated images across its platforms. New players are also emphasizing ethical AI use. Tech startup Futureverse has developed Jen, a text-to-music model trained on licensed music catalogs that uses tools like the "Jenuine" indicator to authenticate AI-generated content.

Another notable market under scrutiny is live entertainment and ticketing. In 2024, the US Department of Justice and 30 state attorneys general filed an antitrust lawsuit against Live Nation Entertainment/Ticketmaster. The lawsuit alleges monopolization that stifles competition and harms artists, venues, and consumers.

WHY IT MATTERS

The growing prevalence of AI tools capable of mimicking voices, images, and creative output without explicit permission could lead to a significant loss of control for artists and consumers alike. AI is still relatively unexplored territory, and regulations are still in development; however, businesses in entertainment and tech must adapt to an environment that is experiencing increased governmental intervention. For media companies, aligning with proposed legislation will be essential to maintain trust with consumers.

From a business perspective, the rise of ethical AI companies and platforms could offer new market opportunities. As consumers become more aware of the risks posed by unregulated AI, companies that emphasize transparency, fairness, and compensation for creators could build competitive advantages. Meanwhile, for companies like Live Nation/Ticketmaster, legal challenges may spur a reassessment of their market dominance, potentially opening the door for competitors to enter the space.

Tech and media companies should invest in developing tools that not only comply with legal standards but also foster innovation that respects creative ownership. Partnerships with ethics-led startups could help established players navigate the complex landscape of AI-driven entertainment, ensuring they remain both competitive and responsible.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

BEHIND- THE-SCENES OPTIMIZATION

WHAT IT IS

Emerging technologies are making subtle but powerful behind-the-scenes changes that streamline back-end processes, enhance content quality, and improve user experience.

HOW IT WORKS

Despite flashy news stories, some of the most frequent use cases of emerging technologies are invisible—automating behind-the-scenes processes that the average consumer might not even notice. Colourlab Ai, for example, uses AI to streamline the color grading process for film and television, making it more efficient without directly altering the visible product. A team of 1,500 artists used Autodesk Flow Capture, a fully cloud-based workflow system, to collaborate virtually on “The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power.”

In 2024, Netflix patented a method for selecting optimal thumbnails using AI to analyze facial expressions and character prominence. Electronic Arts has filed a patent for “curiosity agents” to use in playtesting; these models use reinforcement learning to explore games more thoroughly than human testers or traditional AI could. Disney Music Group announced its partnership with AudioShake to isolate individual instrumental tracks on older recordings that are missing their original stems, which will allow them to remix and remaster classic songs for new applications.

These “invisible” upgrades are particularly noteworthy in marketing. As traditional advertising methods decline, AI companies like BENlabs are embedding marketing directly within content to create more natural brand interactions. Their AI rapidly processes massive amounts of data in order to predict and optimize the entire sales funnel.

WHY IT MATTERS

Invisible upgrades are significant because they allow businesses to make substantial improvements in productivity and efficiency without disrupting consumer experiences. These advancements reduce costs, shorten production timelines, and improve the quality of outputs. Companies leveraging these technologies can allocate more time and resources to creative tasks, enabling innovation without sacrificing operational efficiency. Tools like Cinelytic, which is one of several AI-enabled platforms that provides data and analytics to support decisions across a film’s lifecycle, are helping studios make more informed decisions about projects—though too heavily automating such processes can eliminate the human “grit” and intuition that once drove creative risk-taking.

These upgrades also raise questions about the future of certain jobs. As automation takes on more roles traditionally held by humans, such as quality assurance in gaming, there may be a need to retrain or upskill workers to keep pace with the changing landscape. Additionally, while the invisibility of these upgrades is convenient for consumers, it does pose ethical concerns around transparency. How much should audiences know about the algorithms shaping their experiences? The most successful companies will strike a balance that ensures they can continue innovating while maintaining public confidence.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

INTANGIBLES-LED PERSONALIZATION

WHAT IT IS

The entertainment industry is moving beyond traditional personalization methods, leveraging AI to tailor experiences based on intangible factors such as emotions and memories. While new systems may offer deeper engagement, they raise ethical concerns around manipulation and privacy.

HOW IT WORKS

Personalization in entertainment, historically driven by demographics and behavior, is evolving into a new phase where artificial intelligence tailors experiences based on intangibles like emotions, intent, and memories. In 2024, Disney patented a system that uses AI to create personalized content by analyzing users' memories and predicting emotional states. The technology leverages machine learning to predict and match emotional features from stored memory data, ensuring that the content feels uniquely relevant to each user. This move shifts personalization from merely being about what users have done or liked in the past to understanding how they feel in real time.

Similarly, Hulu may be moving beyond basic keyword search by introducing semantics-based search systems. Its patented design interprets users' intent through natural language processing, delivering more meaningful search results by understanding not just what users are looking for but why they're looking for it.

The gaming industry is also embracing intangibles-based personalization, particularly in creating "flow states" for players. Recent research from the University of California, Riverside highlights how video games can induce this deep focus by balancing difficulty and immediate feedback, leading to enhanced mental well-being. AI systems are learning to dynamically adjust gaming experiences based on real-time emotional feedback, ensuring players remain challenged yet engaged.

WHY IT MATTERS

The shift toward personalization based on intangibles marks a profound evolution in how entertainment is crafted and consumed. AI-driven engagement promises to create experiences uniquely tailored to each user, fostering strong emotional connections.

For companies, this unlocks unparalleled loyalty and engagement; however, it also raises several ethical questions. As AI systems learn more about users' emotional landscapes, there is a growing concern about the potential misuse of this information—either for profit or unintended psychological influence. The more AI knows about personal memories and emotions, the more control it has over the content it delivers. This could lead to manipulation in subtle ways, influencing decisions from purchasing to political views, without the user's awareness.

As AI advances, the line between helpful personalization and invasive profiling may blur, triggering calls for regulations to protect users' mental autonomy. Video games' induced flow states, for example, may improve mental well-being, but as these tools grow more sophisticated, the risk of creating addictive or harmful experiences increases. The growing power of AI to guide emotional responses and behavior will likely prompt regulatory scrutiny.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

ON-THE-GO ENTERTAINMENT

WHAT IT IS

Entertainment is increasingly integrated into every aspect of daily life, as companies respond to consumer demand for constant, portable amusement. People expect high-quality entertainment options on-the-go, facilitated by advances in technology, connectivity, and AI.

HOW IT WORKS

Entertainment is more accessible than ever, with companies meeting the growing demand for constant engagement. The Entertainment Software Association reported that 78% of players engage in mobile games. In 2023, about 19.3 million handheld gaming devices were sold globally. The rise of portable consoles like Valve's Steam Deck, Asus' ROG Ally, and Lenovo's Legion Go highlights the demand for ultra high-performance, on-the-go gaming. Even Sony recently reentered the portables market with its PlayStation Portal. These devices feature powerful processors, high-resolution screens, and robust cooling systems, making them capable of running demanding games smoothly.

In-flight entertainment is also advancing as internet connectivity improves. Companies like Panasonic Avionics and SpaceX's Starlink are increasing satellite capacity, while low-Earth orbit satellites promise faster, more reliable internet, narrowing the gap between on-ground and in-flight experiences. It's not just limited to planes—companies like Gameway are setting up gaming lounges in airports like LAX and DFW, giving travelers more ways to stay entertained in traditionally transient spaces.

Entertainment on the road is evolving too. In 2024, LG Display unveiled a 57-inch automotive LCD, offering both vehicle information and entertainment like movies and games. As AI automates more tasks like driving, entertainment can become a constant companion across all facets of travel.

WHY IT MATTERS

The demand for high-quality, accessible entertainment is poised to continue growing. The introduction of more powerful mobile devices and tech-enabled transit will continue to blur the lines between at-home and on-the-go entertainment, creating new opportunities for content creators and brands. To stand out in an increasingly saturated market, companies must balance innovation with personalization while exploring new frontiers for engagement. How can entertainment be more effectively woven into everyday activities like household chores, personal hygiene, or even sleep? Examining this untapped "real estate" may unlock the potential for deeper and more frequent engagement.

Meanwhile, as AI increasingly automates both the creation and delivery of content, this shift also raises questions about the growing passivity of entertainment consumption. The constant stimulation hand-delivered by digital devices poses potential risks. Psychologists have raised concerns about device addiction and overstimulation, especially the impact on mental health. Constant access to entertainment can prevent moments of quiet reflection or even boredom, which is critical for children in particular. Psychologists agree that boredom plays an important role in development, fostering creativity and critical thinking skills. Without these unstructured moments, children may miss out on opportunities to develop resilience, patience, and the crucial ability to self-entertain.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

INNOVATIONS IN ACCESSIBILITY

WHAT IT IS

Accessible entertainment is opening doors for people with physical limitations while also gaining popularity among broader audiences. These innovations are setting new industry standards, making entertainment more inclusive while enhancing the user experience for all.

HOW IT WORKS

Entertainment companies are increasingly recognizing the value of accessibility features that cater to both disabled and nondisabled audiences. For example, according to a survey by Preply, half of Americans now use subtitles most of the time. This shift is due to poor sound mixing, the growth of foreign media, and the need to watch content in noisy public spaces. In a more specialized application designed for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, XRAI Glass pairs with augmented reality smart glasses to subtitle real-world conversations in 76 languages and 140 dialects.

Gaming has also made significant strides toward inclusivity. “The Last of Us Part II” set a new industry benchmark by offering more than 60 accessibility options, including customizable controls, visual cues, and audio aids. Microsoft introduced its adaptive controller in 2018; in 2025, it plans to release the Xbox Adaptive Joystick, which will allow players to operate a controller with one hand.

Cutting-edge technologies like brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) are emerging as the next frontier in accessibility. In 2023, Blackrock Neurotech and Caltech researchers showcased BCIs that allow users to control computers with their thoughts. The technology was featured in the first-ever thought-generated art gallery, where individuals with physical limitations created digital art using BCIs.

WHY IT MATTERS

Accessibility in entertainment is no longer just about meeting the needs of disabled audiences; it’s about enhancing the experience for everyone. Subtitles, originally intended for hearing-impaired viewers, are now widely appreciated by all due to increased media diversity and noisy environments. Similarly, adaptive gaming options are not just about inclusivity but are setting a higher standard for game design. Companies can better reach a wider variety of new consumers—the disability gaming community, making up 13% of the population, represents a significant market—and foster deeper relationships with existing consumers through meaningful personalization.

These days, personalization isn’t just a buzzword or vanity tool; it’s about connecting to the core of how someone experiences and interacts with the world around them. Features like voice commands, eye tracking, and the rise of BCIs mark a bold leap into the future of accessibility. These technologies demonstrate how hands-free interactions may reshape the ways in which users engage with the entire entertainment landscape.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

SPORTS-LED STREAMING

WHAT IT IS

The streaming ecosystem is expanding with a major shift in sports content distribution. As exclusive sports contracts move from cable to streaming, both on-demand platforms and FAST (free ad-supported streaming television) channels are reshaping how and where viewers access live sports.

HOW IT WORKS

Last year's report focused on the increase of on-demand streaming platforms; this year, it's all about sports. NFL games accounted for 93 of the top 100 broadcasts in 2023, up from 82 in 2022. Cable is losing more subscribers as streamers pick up exclusive sports contracts: Amazon now holds exclusive rights to "Thursday Night Football," while YouTube, the top streaming platform with a 10.6% share of TV usage, has exclusive rights to "NFL Sunday Ticket."

FAST channels, which offer the familiar experience of linear TV and are free to watch, are also growing rapidly. Since they don't typically require original content, they're a cost-effective option for companies. In 2024, Major League Baseball became the first US sports league to air live games on a FAST platform (The Roku Channel), engaging both new and existing audiences while monetizing them through AI-enhanced targeted advertising. Projections indicate that FAST channel ad revenue will nearly double by 2028. CBS Sports also entered the FAST market with a 24-hour Champions League channel on Pluto TV, showcasing UEFA soccer matches.

ESPN, FOX, and Warner Bros. Discovery (WBD) announced Venu, an all-in-one sports platform offering live sports content from 15 linear networks—until it was blocked by a federal judge. WBD meanwhile, lost NBA rights to Disney, Comcast, and Amazon, as the league sought to maximize its reach across broadcast, cable, and streaming.

WHY IT MATTERS

The shift of live sports to streaming platforms is fundamentally reshaping the media landscape. As streaming becomes the go-to platform for exclusive sports contracts, traditional cable loses one of its last advantages. The growth of FAST channels in particular offers an appealing, low-cost alternative for both consumers and content providers. With live sports content increasingly available across multiple platforms, media companies have a significant opportunity to engage a wider, more global audience.

This diversification is particularly impactful for sports like soccer, which has seen explosive growth in the US. More than half of soccer fans are under age 45, and 40% are fans of color. Major League Soccer and the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) both set attendance records in 2022, with NWSL's championship game viewership rising by 71%. As sports distribution expands across streaming ecosystems, companies like Amazon and YouTube are poised to capitalize on this growing market.

As of 2024, 95% of US adults report using the internet—just a fraction of the 5.5 billion users across the globe. More people than ever can stream live sports from virtually anywhere. With such wide availability, streaming platforms can use data-driven, tech-enabled advertising to deliver personalized ads to a worldwide audience. Brands have more options than ever to engage fans with hyper-relevant, timely promotions.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

ADVERTISING AS ENTERTAINMENT

WHAT IT IS

As traditional product placements lose effectiveness and technology enables unique integrations, brands are starting to function as entertainment providers. From interactive TV ads to branded gaming experiences, companies are blurring the line between content and commerce.

HOW IT WORKS

Brands are shifting away from traditional ads and product placements to make advertising a form of entertainment, creating experiences that merge storytelling and shopping. Nike partnered with Superconnector Studios to launch Waffle Iron Entertainment, a content studio that has produced feature-length documentaries of Nike-sponsored athletes such as “Sue Bird: In the Clutch.” Similarly, LVMH has established its own media company, 22 Montaigne, to develop film, TV, and audio content across its 75+ luxury brands.

Paramount has partnered with Shopsense AI to launch a shoppable TV feature; viewers watching the 2024 CMT Music Awards could scan a QR code to purchase items similar to those worn by celebrities. Home Depot produced its own holiday miniseries that allowed viewers to buy featured home makeover products using embedded QR codes. Next up: brand-run platforms. In August 2024, Deadline reported that Chick-fil-A has a plan to launch its own streaming platform with a slate of original programming.

With the largest gaming market in history and platforms like Roblox that allow free-to-play, user-generated content, companies like McDonald’s and Hyundai are regularly creating their own games. Ikea’s “The Co-Worker Game” lets players virtually “work” at a digital store, blending recruitment, entertainment, and promotion. Also this year, Hasbro and London-based Path Entertainment Group brought their tech-infused “Monopoly Lifesized” live-action experience to the US.

WHY IT MATTERS

As consumers become more discerning about advertising, brands are embedding themselves into the very fabric of entertainment. Younger audiences in particular are demanding transparency; brands must either integrate in a way that feels natural and authentic or be explicitly upfront about their involvement. Clunky, obvious product placements can be counterproductive. Brands are adopting either ultra-subtle or boldly honest approaches.

The shift goes beyond just using third-party entertainment. Brands are no longer merely showing up in TV shows or video games; they are the shows and the games. While that’s not an entirely new phenomenon—Coca-Cola and Nike launched their own branded games as early as the Atari 2600 era—advancements in technology now allow companies to produce high-quality content that can reach global audiences instantly, enhancing brand recognition across diverse markets.

Ultimately, interactive and brand-produced content gives consumers more agency in how they engage with products. By integrating entertainment and commerce in innovative ways, brands can foster deeper engagement and emotional connections. As this trend continues to grow, the brands that succeed will be those offering authentic, immersive content that enhances the consumer’s experience rather than interrupting it, blending entertainment with value-driven interactions.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

COUNTERING OVERSTIMULATION

WHAT IT IS

As consumers grow fatigued from digital devices and constant notifications, there's a rising demand for simpler, more mindful tech use. Companies are responding with products that limit overstimulation and encourage intentional engagement.

HOW IT WORKS

In 2024, a viral meme about taking long flights without any entertainment highlighted an underlying trend: the growing desire to unplug. For years, the tech industry focused on adding features and streamlining usability, but now, as people feel overwhelmed by constant connectivity, there's a shift toward products that promote disconnection.

TinyPod turns an Apple Watch into a mini iPod-like device, allowing users to access essential features like messaging, calls, and music without the distraction of a smartphone. HMD (Nokia) partnered with Mattel to release a Barbie-branded flip phone without internet access, appealing to Gen Z's desire for a "digital detox." Retro-modding, where old devices are upgraded to improve functionality, is also experiencing a revival. People are turning to older technology not just for nostalgia but for a scaled-back, more intentional entertainment experience.

Analog entertainment is seeing a resurgence as well. The board game industry, which boomed during the COVID-19 pandemic, is projected to grow from \$13.06 billion in 2023 to more than \$32 billion by 2032. Board games offer a way to unplug from digital life and engage in meaningful, face-to-face interactions. Social media influencers have helped promote these benefits, driving further interest. Companies like Hasbro aim to balance the appeal of classic games with new offerings that cater to shifting consumer preferences.

WHY IT MATTERS

The trend toward countering overstimulation represents a significant cultural shift in how people engage with technology. For years, devices were designed with a "more features, the better" mindset. Now, consumers are increasingly aware of the side effects of digital overuse, such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and sleep issues. Research from Virgin Mobile indicates that smartphone users now receive 427% more notifications and send 278% more texts than a decade ago.

As these concerns rise, consumers are seeking alternatives that allow them to disconnect while retaining essential functionality. These tools reflect a growing demand for more mindful engagement with digital content, providing users with a sense of agency. For a long time, companies wanted to make everything as easy for the consumer as possible and friction was seen as a pain point that needed to be eliminated—but "good friction" can actually help by making the user feel involved in the process.

Big tech is still focused on optimizing performance and maximizing convenience, opting to add features to counter overstimulation over new product lines; however, companies paying attention to these concerns may find success in niche markets with consumers who are eager for mindful tech solutions.



SCENARIO YEAR 2035

ENTERTAINMENT TAKES THE WHEEL

As vehicles become increasingly autonomous, traditional manufacturers find themselves struggling to remain relevant in an industry where entertainment has replaced driving as the primary in-vehicle focus. Disney becomes one of the first media companies to enter the automotive space, with its purchase of longtime partner Hyundai marking a pivotal moment in the shift from cars as tools that enable travel to personalized, mobile entertainment hubs.

In this future, the car is no longer a means to an end. It's more like an immersive clubhouse, with every drive transforming into an AI-tailored experience. Gone are the days of needing separate devices. The car itself is the system. Dashboard screens, equipped for extended reality experiences, stretch from door to door and spill onto the windows. Content-aware haptic seats rotate 360 degrees. These vehicles are accessible to people across a spectrum of ages and abilities, thanks not only to self-driving technology but also their modular interiors and digital customization options.

Unfortunately, it's not all fun and games: this reality raises questions about overstimulation and perhaps even isolation. Moreover, the car is not just a vehicle—it's also a data-collecting machine, and the content that passengers consume is deeply commercial. Where on-road advertising was once limited to radio spots and billboards, it's now woven directly into the experience. AI generatively inserts Disney products into scenes, whether it's subtle placements within a game or characters in films sporting "Toy Story 8" merchandise.

The data Disney is collecting—everything from a passenger's media preferences to their emotional responses to specific content—begins to inform far more than just entertainment. Car insurance companies start to factor content consumption habits into their risk assessments. A passenger who regularly indulges in high-adrenaline action movies or survival video games, for example, may find themselves paying higher premiums, their habits considered risk factors for potential accidents even in primarily autonomous vehicles.





THE COLLECTIVE



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

WORLD BUILDING

WHAT IT IS

Consumers are seeking deeper emotional engagement with stories and experience. World building lets people feel like part of something larger than life yet tangible, creating immersive environments that foster a sense of belonging.

HOW IT WORKS

Companies are creating location-based immersive worlds that consumers can physically and emotionally inhabit. Warner Bros. Discovery and NEON debuted “Harry Potter: Visions of Magic” in 2023 and expanded it to Singapore in 2024. The multisensory art exhibit blends video content, original soundscapes, and interactive elements. Immersive Gamebox utilizes tech like touch-sensitive walls and motion tracking to create in-person experiences based on “Squid Game,” “Ghostbusters,” and more.

Amusement parks such as “Super Nintendo World” and “Minion Land” (Universal Studios) are evolving from “themed” attractions to fully immersive environments. They make the guests a “character” in a given world, offering layers of interactivity with leaderboards, customization, and evolving content. Last year, Universal filed a patent for virtual reality (VR) rides that incorporate riders’ physical reactions, like facial expressions, into the virtual world. Previously, Disney published a patent for a new technique that uses machine learning to automatically generate augmented reality (AR) content by combining the layout of a physical space with digital elements, making it easier to create immersive experiences on the go.

World building also extends beyond IP-based content. Moment Factory is a multimedia entertainment studio that creates immersive experiences like Astra Lumina, a series of night walks set in botanical gardens that combine projections, lighting, and music.

WHY IT MATTERS

World building reflects a need for immersive, emotionally engaging experiences that go beyond passive viewing or participation. It taps into the need for meaningful connections with stories, communities, and environments. People want to belong to worlds where they can explore, interact, and connect on a deeper level. Physical spaces like amusement parks are an ideal medium to make fiction reality, since they can combine real infrastructure and cutting-edge technology to create a tactile world. That said, world building doesn’t have to be confined to in-person experiences. Even with passive entertainment, companies should keep this desire for world building in mind. After all, world building is fundamentally about richness of storytelling, depth of imagination, and strength of community—all elements that can be combined digitally.

Ultimately, though technology facilitates these experiences, the core of the trend lies in the emotional investment consumers make when they engage deeply with a narrative or environment. As companies expand their IP into real-world, location-based experiences, they open new revenue streams and foster long-term relationships with consumers. IP provides established fan bases and can drive initial interest and engagement; however, overreliance on it can lead to high costs, creative constraints, and the risk of losing relevance as the popularity of the IP wanes. Balancing IP-based projects with original content is crucial for staying creative and adaptable to changing preferences.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

FAN-CENTRIC TECH

WHAT IT IS

As fandoms become powerful hubs for identity and community, brands are leveraging AI, blockchain, and extended reality (XR) to cultivate deeper connections and drive new business opportunities.

HOW IT WORKS

As media companies struggle with the high costs of producing large-scale, IP-based shows, startups like Fable Studio are fostering interactive storytelling experiences. Fable's Showrunner platform allows fans to engage with the universes they love by using AI to write, voice, and animate original episodes of their favorite shows. Fable will pay studios to license the content and collaborate on appropriate restrictions.

Web3 platforms MITH and Medallion host decentralized fan communities, offering exclusive content and interactions while bypassing traditional distributors. Blockchain provides a tamper-proof ledger of fans' interactions, creating new ways for musicians to reward loyalty through unique digital collectibles, tickets, and more.

Sports have traditionally enjoyed strong fandoms, but a 2024 survey found that only 23% of US respondents aged 18-29 identify as die-hard sports fans—while 35% said they aren't fans at all. Leagues, teams, and venues are now leaning into digital interactions geared toward younger audiences. Nickelodeon and CBS Sports partnered for a Super Bowl alternate telecast, which included AR-enhanced visuals, virtual filters, and original on-field graphics. The NBA worked with Meta to bring live NBA League Pass games to Xtadium on Meta Quest; digital avatars, decked out in official team apparel, could experience games together via Watch Party.

WHY IT MATTERS

Superfans have long been valuable, but recent examples emphasize their power in driving revenue and loyalty. Just look at Taylor Swift—an NFL game that she attended in 2023 saw a 63% increase of female viewers from the previous week; meanwhile, boyfriend Travis Kelce saw his jersey sales skyrocket 400%. According to one study, “70% of fans say their fandom... [is] part of their everyday life.” They are drawn to these communities for escapism, empowerment, identity, and a sense of belonging.

Today's fans want to be part of the narrative, which is increasingly possible through immersive technologies like AI, blockchain, and XR; however, it's not just about the gimmick—it's about understanding fan communities and purposefully integrating into the worlds they care about. The same study indicated that 54% of fans recognize authentic brand integration. For companies, this means understanding what drives fan loyalty and building experiences that feel personalized.

Notably, younger fans engage with entertainment differently than previous generations. Much of Gen Z consumes sports, for example, through social media, where they feel more connected to individual athletes than to teams. Several viral moments from the Olympics focused on personalities rather than performances—like a Norwegian swimmer's love for chocolate muffins. Brands that invest in understanding these evolving fan behaviors will be well-positioned to foster their fandoms.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

COMMUNITY AUDIO

WHAT IT IS

Audio is evolving beyond passive consumption and becoming a key tool for community building. Consumers are seeking more than just sound—they crave purposeful audio experiences that foster connection and interaction.

HOW IT WORKS

Audio has emerged as a preferred medium for multitasking, ease of access, and emotional engagement. Voice messaging—a text message alternative that instead uses short audio clips—has become a key form of communication, providing a more personal connection than text that is less demanding than video. A 2023 poll found that 62% of Americans have sent a voice message, with 43% of 18 to 29-year-olds using them at least weekly. WhatsApp reports more than 7 billion voice messages are sent daily on its platform.

Social audio platforms like Clubhouse saw a brief boom during the COVID-19 pandemic; though these faded as influencers and celebrities moved away, signals show the format remains relevant. Rune, a San Francisco-based gaming startup, raised \$8 million in 2024 for a platform that integrates multiplayer gaming with voice chat. Stationhead offers artists like Megan Thee Stallion and BTS a way to connect with superfans through live audio sessions. With upward of 15 million users, the average listener spends more than two hours a day on the platform.

Discord, known for its voice channels, continues to grow rapidly, increasing from 45 million users in 2017 to 563 million by 2023. In 2024, Discord partnered with TuneIn to bring live radio to its platform, expanding its audio offerings with live broadcasts and curated music collections. Similarly, Spotify is leaning into real-time shared audio experiences with features like its Jam sessions.

WHY IT MATTERS

While traditional platforms like terrestrial radio are losing relevance, purpose-driven audio platforms are tapping into the growing demand for interactive and meaningful engagement. This shift represents a broader transformation in how people consume and interact with entertainment. Audio, which offers a unique balance between personal connection and flexibility, is driving a more collective, community-driven model of entertainment consumption.

This trend will likely lead to more tailored content creation and innovations like voice-based AI interfaces, where users have greater control over their audio experiences. As younger generations increasingly adopt voice- and audio-centric formats, companies may need to adjust their communication methods in order to remain relevant and accessible.

Meanwhile, brands will have new opportunities for integration within these ecosystems. As audio platforms evolve and generative AI tools become more practical, sonic branding is reemerging as a crucial tool for reinforcing brand identity through sound. By developing distinctive jingles or sound signatures, brands can create memorable auditory experiences that resonate with users on an emotional level. This also presents an opportunity for brands to explore voice-driven advertising that feels more natural and integrated into the user's audio environment.



3RD YEAR ON THE LIST

PERFORMING ARTS EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY

WHAT IT IS

Technologies like 5G, AI, VR, and wearables are expanding the creative possibilities of the performing arts, improving accessibility, diversity, and audience interaction.

HOW IT WORKS

The performing arts, traditionally slow to evolve, are increasingly integrating technology into performances and venues. In 2024, pianist Lang Lang performed a concert featuring his holographic digital twin, created using 4K cameras that captured his performance in real time. The data was transmitted via 5G, ensuring synchronization. His jacket was equipped with sensors that visualized his heart-beat through LED lights, and the audience used cellphones to form chords.

The Doris Duke Foundation offers grants and support to explore innovative uses of digital tools in jazz, contemporary dance, and theater; last year, it announced its inaugural Performing Arts Technology Lab. The foundation received more than 700 applications from across the US, with projects spanning AI, virtual reality, accessibility for disabled artists, and more.

Accessibility is a common theme. The Lyric Opera of Chicago became the first opera company in the world to offer wearable technology during live performances when it introduced the SoundShirt, which uses haptic actuation to translate music and voices into touch sensations on the wearer's upper body. "Sensorium Ex," an opera slated for a 2025 debut, aims to democratize voice-recognition AI for people with voice-related disabilities and speech impairments. Sensorium AI will be used within the opera and as part of an interactive art installation.

WHY IT MATTERS

The increased use of technology is positioning the performing arts to compete with other entertainment industries, offering experiences that appeal to tech-savvy audiences. Immersive tech in particular helps performing arts compete with digital-native entertainment platforms. Hybrid productions that incorporate elements such as holographic actors or virtual set extensions will reshape the audience experience and expand what is possible in live performance.

The convergence of tech and the arts is also creating opportunities for cross-industry collaborations. Entertainment giants like Netflix are bringing popular screen content to the stage with high-tech Broadway productions ("Stranger Things: The First Shadow" is due in 2025). These collaborations reflect a shift toward performances that will appeal to a generation that has grown up with video games, social media, and interactive content. In embracing this evolution, performing arts organizations will remain relevant to contemporary audiences.

Such enhancements transform not only how performances are created and experienced but also who can access them. The industry is moving beyond traditional boundaries to create more immersive, interactive, and inclusive experiences. This democratization of the arts opens the door for broader participation, helping the sector reach underserved communities.



3RD YEAR ON THE LIST

MULTI-USE SPACES

WHAT IT IS

Advances in technology are transforming multi-use spaces into dynamic entertainment environments that can adapt to various needs, boosting efficiency, creativity, and sustainability.

HOW IT WORKS

Adaptable spaces are leveraging technologies such as LED displays, AI-powered camera tracking, and intelligent audio systems to maximize flexibility without requiring extensive physical modifications. The Toranomon Hills Station Tower in Tokyo is a 266-meter, 49-floor tower that integrates business, cultural, and entertainment facilities, including the Tokyo Node Hall. The hall is designed for hybrid events, supporting XR technologies and offering features like a lift for large exhibits and moveable steps to accommodate varying audience configurations. The Tokyo Node Lab includes a volumetric studio for XR live distribution.

In Paris, Aura Invalides showcases how historic sites are embracing multi-use functionality. The nighttime experience inside the Dôme des Invalides, created by Moment Factory in collaboration with Cultival, employs 28 projectors to display more than 45 million pixels and 568,000 lumens of light. The setup provides a 360-degree immersive experience while preserving the building's architecture.

Dozens more mixed-use projects are progressing, from a \$1 billion proposed entertainment district in Norman, Oklahoma, to the Grand Stade Hassan II stadium complex in Casablanca, Morocco. Sunset Pier 94 Studios, expected to open in 2025, will be Manhattan's first purpose-built movie studio. Featuring six multifunctional soundstages and 145,000 square feet of support space, the building will be equipped with virtual production infrastructure and is designed to run on renewable energy.

WHY IT MATTERS

Multi-use spaces bring a level of flexibility to industries that have traditionally been confined by physical limitations. As urban environments become more crowded and real estate prices rise, making efficient use of space is increasingly important. The rise of flexible environments that can easily adapt to different needs maximizes both utility and profitability. Multi-use spaces are particularly valuable in the entertainment industry, as they provide venues that can accommodate multiple types of performances, screenings, or exhibitions with minimal turnover time. State-of-the-art sound systems, adjustable lighting, modular staging elements, and other advanced technologies allow for quick changes in setup.

These spaces also offer sustainability benefits, as smart technologies like energy-efficient lighting and dynamic HVAC systems reduce energy consumption. Plus, facilities designed with multi-use adaptability in mind are more efficient and can host diverse types of events without the environmental cost of building new spaces for each function. On a broader scale, multi-use spaces are able to merge historical architecture with modern immersive experiences, ensuring that existing infrastructure and cultural sites remain relevant—and economically attractive—in today's digital landscape.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

GLOBALIZATION

WHAT IT IS

Streaming and social media, as well as AI tools, are fueling the globalization of the entertainment industry, making diverse content more accessible worldwide.

HOW IT WORKS

High-speed internet and social media platforms allow for real-time sharing and viral trends that transcend geographic borders, while streaming platforms make entertainment accessible to audiences everywhere. Luminate reported that multilingual music listeners are more likely to discover music via movie soundtracks, TV shows, and video games than the average US listener, underlining how the availability of multiple platforms can boost international reach. Globalization is evident in the success of genres like Afrobeats in the Nordics, K-pop in South America, and Dance/Electronic in Asia.

Sports are also becoming more international thanks to digital streaming services. Global sports revenue reached \$159 billion in 2023, with soccer accounting for nearly a third. The NBA reported record-breaking fan engagement in Europe and the Middle East during its 2024 season, with a 220% year-over-year increase in watch time on the NBA Europe YouTube channel. Younger fans prefer highlights, which they can watch online, over full games; social media then encourages them to form attachments to individual players over teams.

AI is playing a pivotal role in breaking down barriers, like language, that have limited the globalization of entertainment. Meta's Seamless Communication AI model, for example, provides real-time translation while preserving the speaker's vocal tone and emotion, making cross-cultural content consumption more immersive.

WHY IT MATTERS

The globalization of entertainment is reshaping how content is created, distributed, and consumed. Streaming has become crucial for introducing audiences to new sounds and stories. For the music industry, the success of multilingual genres signals a shift in consumer preferences and opens new opportunities for collaboration across cultures. Algorithms on streaming platforms can curate personalized experiences based on a user's preferences, blending global content into their recommendations.

Major TV and film platforms are increasingly focused on local and regional content, including sports. This shift is broadening the reach of international leagues and tournaments, making global fan engagement a critical growth strategy for franchises. The meteoric rise of sports betting is further driving international interest in various leagues. In addition to sports, Eastern media has had a particularly notable influence in the US. Crunchyroll has passed 15 million paid monthly subscribers, while companies like Netflix continue to invest in anime, K-drama, and more.

The economic implications are vast. As the entertainment industry becomes more interconnected globally, there are new opportunities for revenue growth through licensing, distribution, advertising, and merchandising. AI will further reduce production and localization costs, allowing more content to reach global audiences without sacrificing quality or cultural nuances.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

SUSTAINABILITY TECH

WHAT IT IS

Sustainability is now central to the entertainment industry, as companies adopt green initiatives and innovations to meet consumer demand, comply with regulations, and reduce costs.

HOW IT WORKS

Sustainability tech in entertainment applies to both the physical and digital worlds. The Aquatics Centre, the only permanent sports facility built for the Paris 2024 Olympic games, features 11,000 spectator seats made from 100 tons of recycled plastic, as well as one of France's largest urban solar-energy farms with 5,000 square meters of photovoltaic panels. Lollapalooza's 2024 event in Chicago was entirely powered by a hybrid battery stem; it deployed more than 1.5MWh of battery storage capacity, minimizing the run time of biodiesel generators, providing fuel and emissions savings.

Meanwhile, the UN launched the Playing for the Planet Alliance in 2019 in order to encourage the gaming industry and community to "Promote, Protect, and Play for the Planet." As of November 2024, it consisted of 32 major gaming companies, 12 trade associations, and several support organizations. Though digital platforms like Steam reduce the need for physical media, lowering production and shipping emissions, gaming hardware remains energy-intensive. Epic Games, through its Fortnite optimization initiative, found a method that would save approximately 200MWh per day of savings across its total player base. Microsoft's Xbox Developer Sustainability Toolkit provides developers with real-time analytical and visual tools to measure and reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions of their games.

WHY IT MATTERS

A sustainability-first mindset is no longer optional but a critical concern for entertainment companies, especially as climate change intensifies and consumers become more eco-conscious. Events like the Olympics and other major live events serve as showcases for green innovation, signaling a future where sustainability will shape both physical infrastructure and digital experiences.

Despite progress throughout the entertainment industry, the rise of energy-hungry technologies like AI and blockchain present a significant challenge. Training AI models, such as OpenAI's GPT-3, can generate substantial carbon emissions—in GPT-3's case, the equivalent of 500 tons of carbon dioxide. Blockchain technology, particularly cryptocurrency mining, also has a massive environmental footprint. As of 2023, Bitcoin alone consumed around 110TWh annually, comparable to the electricity consumption of small nations like Sweden.

These technologies offer transformative benefits but come with considerable environmental costs that must be addressed. Solutions to mitigate these impacts, from regulation to innovation, will define the future of the entertainment industry. Without concerted efforts to reduce their environmental footprints, technologies like AI and blockchain risk exacerbating the very issues they could help solve.



1ST YEAR ON THE LIST

APPLIED GAMING

WHAT IT IS

Gaming mechanics, software, and hardware are being used to solve real-world challenges across industries, unlocking new avenues for innovation and collaboration.

HOW IT WORKS

Everything from exercise to banking to insurance has been gamified. The oversaturated trend will likely continue, because it makes mundane activities engaging and rewarding. Applied gaming focuses less on driving consumer behavior and more on leveraging game mechanics and software for meaningful outcomes.

McGill University's "Borderlands Science" project has engaged 4.5 million "Borderlands 3" players to map the human microbiome through minigames, generating data that surpasses computational algorithms. Researchers at Lancaster University developed a modified version of "Cities: Skylines" to involve citizens in urban planning. By integrating real-world data into the game, users can design and manage urban spaces, helping planners generate data-driven insights.

Both game engines and peripherals are being used for non-gaming purposes across industries. NASA employs Epic Games' Unreal Engine to simulate lunar environments for planning space missions. BMW partnered with Unity to create an in-vehicle AR experience that displays navigation cues, road hazards, and parking assistance directly in the driver's field of view. Companies are also using engines to enhance digital twins, simulating everything from smart cities to manufacturing processes using detailed, interactive virtual replicas. Meanwhile, the US Department of Defense has introduced a familiar form factor for certain advanced weapons systems: a modified video game controller.

WHY IT MATTERS

The rise of applied gaming demonstrates the potential of game mechanics to transcend entertainment and impact diverse sectors. In urban planning, for example, applied gaming bridges the gap between public engagement and policy-making. It could lead to more inclusive and informed urban design, fostering community participation and ensuring that infrastructure developments better reflect public needs and preferences.

In health care, applied gaming might mean more scalable and cost-effective solutions to mental health care, rehabilitation challenges, and even chronic disease management. The success of projects like "Borderlands Science" may open pathways for research collaboration, where the public becomes an active participant in solving scientific challenges. The integration of gaming with AI and machine learning may accelerate breakthroughs in life and climate sciences, among other areas.

Furthermore, industries from aerospace to manufacturing may increasingly rely on these tools such as game engines to simulate, optimize, and visualize their processes, leading to more efficient designs, better decision-making, and the acceleration of innovation cycles. Ultimately, gaming mechanics, software and hardware may provide businesses with new avenues for innovation and engagement.



“

A lot of games are released with high budgets, and they're not selling nearly as well as expected, whereas other games are going incredibly strong. What we're seeing is a real trend where players are gravitating toward the really big games where they can play with more of their friends.

Tim Sweeney, CEO of Epic Games



SCENARIO YEAR 2040

BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE

What happens when every seat is a front-row seat? Rising real estate prices and advanced immersion technologies have intersected to create digital-first entertainment experiences. Major concerts, political rallies, sporting events, and more are staged for largely virtual audiences. Real-time translation and increased 5G connectivity mean that culture is no longer bound by geography. A fan in Seoul can experience a live-streamed Taylor Swift concert in New York with the same clarity and emotional intensity as someone down the street.

The in-person experience, on the other hand, becomes an extravagant luxury, accessible only to the highest-end consumer. As companies shed their physical footprints, the few remaining production facilities are relocated to strategically remote areas. Only a handful of flagship venues, often hidden away in scenic or exotic locations, remain. Attending a live event is now a monumental, often unattainable, occasion. Modular in design to allow for maximal flexibility, these venues are enhanced with haptic and interactive mixed-reality technologies.

Like audiences, performers and athletes begin to travel less. The environmental impact of constant travel and maintaining large-scale physical infrastructures fades as the digital world becomes the primary arena for entertainment. But this shift comes with an interesting paradox: Companies that reduced their physical footprints now rely on enormous amounts of energy to power immersive environments and AI-driven personalized content. Companies that lead in reducing digital energy consumption and carbon emissions skyrocket in value.

Soaring property values may also push people toward communal living, where they share both space and virtual experiences with like-minded individuals. Ultimately, these curated spaces have the potential to become ideological echo chambers. Despite the hyperconnectivity, people start to feel more isolated—and while the world is closer in some ways, it's more divided in others.





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Victoria joined FTSG with nearly a decade of professional experience in the media and entertainment industries. She most recently worked in public relations at Warner Music Group, shaping earned media strategy for a roster of award-winning artists and spearheading corporate communications for the Nashville division. Victoria also established WMG's annual company-wide day of service, an initiative that resulted in hundreds of volunteer hours dedicated to nonprofit organizations across North America. She holds a degree in English Literature from the College of William and Mary and a Master of Business Administration from New York University's Stern School of Business.

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