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The promise and pitfalls of OpenAI's new reasoning model

Article

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OpenAI has released o1-preview, its first AI model with reasoning abilities, giving marketers a glimpse of what the next evolution of AI tools could offer.

"Actual reasoning skills I think could change everything really," our analyst Jacob Bourne said on a recent episode of EMARKETER's "Behind the Numbers" podcast. "So far we've seen impressive AI models, but really they're creative and very linguistically skilled, but they're also ... not great at critical thinking and multistep reasoning."

Here are three key implications of AI models that "think:"

1. Potential for more autonomous AI

Models with critical thinking and advanced mathematical abilities could enable more sophisticated AI applications. "I think that could help spur agentic AI, AI that can operate autonomously on behalf of humans in the background," Bourne said. "We might see that become more of a realistic technology."

AI agents can operate independently, making decisions and taking actions with minimal intervention. They're being embedded into marketing tools like Salesforce's new Agentforce features.

2. Tradeoff between speed and quality

The o1 model takes longer to process answers, sometimes up to 30 seconds, which it says results in better outputs for queries that require more reasoning. "OpenAI is posing the question, 'Would you wait longer?'" analyst Grace Harmon said. "And I think some people maybe not, maybe they're just not patient enough."

While simple queries for drafting email responses or social media posts might not benefit from the extended reasoning time, for nuanced queries like analyzing data or drafting workflows, that reasoning ability might mean more marketers leverage the tools.

3. Concerns over AI humanization

Describing AI models with human characteristics like "thinking" may fuel concerns about AI's prominence. Pew Research found that from 2021 to 2023, the share of people more concerned than excited about AI in daily life increased from 37% to 52%.

"I think that the five models or five steps that OpenAI has laid out—chatbots, reasoners, agents, innovators, organizations—it can read as the steps to AGI [artificial general

intelligence], it also can read as the road map to developing AI that can completely replace a human worker," Harmon said.

Consumers are not in favor of that level of replacement, with some 64% opposing AI use in customer service, [a Gartner survey found](#).

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