

21ST-CENTURY DISRUPTION

A look at some of the companies, products and services that have disrupted the way we do business, consume, connect and live since the year 2000. (Unsurprisingly, most of them have been fueled by the rise of the internet and technology.)

BROWSER HISTORY

Kindle

Amazon's first Kindle sold out in less than six hours. It changed the way many around the world read and was one factor contributing to the downfall of big-box bookstores.

Airbnb

Two words: Sharing economy. Airbnb not only helped form a new way of doing business, it also disrupted the multibillion-dollar hotel and travel industries.

Blockchain

This technology, a ledger-based database, which keeps records of transactions that are extremely difficult to alter or remove, was first developed for bitcoin. It could fundamentally change the way people handle money, impacting more than just the financial industry.

WHAT IS NEXT?

3-D Printing: The most recently explored applications of 3-D printing are in car customization and fine dining, but the technology's potential across all industries is unlimited.

Ezetap: This India-based payment device maker wants to turn the country's 1 billion cellular phones into mobile point-of-purchase terminals and serve a large unbanked population throughout emerging countries.

Telemedicine: Electronic communications advancements have made it possible for doctors to interact with and treat patients via phone, email and webcam. The recent breakthrough has the potential to vastly increase global access to health care and lower patient costs.

Driverless Cars: In a few short years, cars sans drivers could be a common sight on streets around the world. The technology is forecast to disrupt everything from auto manufacturing to health care.

Virtual Reality (VR): Experts predict that VR could be an \$80 billion industry by 2025. From short star-studded films to "mixed reality," new possibilities for VR are constantly being explored.

Zipcar

Zipcar changed the way we rent cars and helped to spawn a business model that inspired future disruptors like Airbnb and Uber.

Yelp

The social review site's influence spans a plethora of industries, from retail to restaurants to health care. It has reshaped how consumers make purchases and how businesses are marketed—while boosting the revenues of companies that receive good reviews.

Netflix

The company's streaming model is what truly made it a disruptor, putting the final nail in Blockbuster's coffin and inspiring a string of competitors. With its foray into original programming, it started disrupting the TV and cable industry.

Warby Parker

The primarily online eyeglass designer and retailer reimagined the way the product is sold by cutting out the middleman to reduce customer prices.

Gene Therapy: Researchers are testing different approaches to this experimental treatment method for genetic disorders to determine how and whether it can be safe and effective.

Space Tourism:

Executives such as Elon Musk (with SpaceX) and Jeff Bezos (with Blue Origin) are working to prove that commercial space travel is possible—and affordable.

Live-Streaming: Platforms like Facebook Live and Periscope allow users to make the news themselves, thereby removing media organizations from the equation. Some have suggested live-streaming could do to TV broadcasting what news websites did to print journalism.

iPod

After the iPod debuted, the music industry (and Apple) were never the same. Despite many attempts, no other company could come close to competing with those iconic white headphones.

Facebook

The ubiquitous social media platform took down MySpace and changed the way the world connects, communicates, consumes content and views privacy. And there is no end in sight. As Mark Zuckerberg once said, "If we don't create the thing that kills Facebook, someone else will."

BuzzFeed

The media outlet's strategy was designed for the social media age: Publish content designed to go viral, and cash in with native advertising. It continues to expand into new countries and business lines.

WeChat

What makes this Tencent-owned app so game-changing is its capabilities beyond messaging. Once inside, users can perform multiple tasks, from paying bills to hailing a cab. It also allows users to create their own app within an app.

Music Streaming

Streaming services like Spotify and Deezer may not make money (yet), but they have revolutionized the music industry. CDs and digital downloads are becoming history. In 2015, for the first time, music streaming surpassed downloads in terms of revenue.

Artificial Intelligence (AI):

AI is already being used in several industries, but as more investments are made, the biggest disruption may be in the labor market. The World Economic Forum says AI, along with other disruptors, could contribute to a net loss of over 5 million jobs in developed and emerging economies by 2020.

Cognitive Computing: IBM chief Ginni Rometty believes that by 2021 cognitive computing, which includes applied AI, machine learning and the famous Watson, will impact every business decision made in industries such as education, manufacturing and financial services.

Skype

Skype spearheaded the rise of voice over internet protocol (VoIP) technology, which allows users to make calls all over the world for free. Not good news for telecom companies used to making money on long-distance telephone calls.

iPhone

The iPhone ushered in the smartphone age and the app economy, and continues to drive a shift in user preferences from desktop to mobile content.

Uber

The ride-sharing service directly challenged the taxi industry's business model and is now expanding into new realms such as food delivery.

Electric Vehicles (EV)

EVs have yet to be adopted by the masses because of cost, but that could soon change as General Motors and Tesla unveil affordable options.

4-D Printing:

Researchers at institutions such as MIT and Harvard are working on technology that would allow 3-D printed objects to change shape over time.

Smart Materials:

In July, Washington State University researchers developed material with smart capabilities such as shape memory, light-activated movement and self-healing.