



Consumer
Technology
Association



CES 2024

The greatest hits

Heading to CES this year, I had a few things on my mind. What sort of new hardware would we see on display? What role would generative AI play after a year of the greatest engineers in the world having a go with it? How would AI & hardware intersect? And finally, how would all of this impact media and advertising? We work in a constantly changing industry, so it was exciting to see some of the most cutting edge changes coming our way in the future. In this “greatest hits” recap, I outline three key areas of innovation prevalent at this year’s CES conference.

1 | HARDWARE INNOVATION

This year’s floor show featured a variety of technology across a number of different categories, some truly futuristic concepts and others feasibly coming in the next couple of years.

First, there were truly futuristic concepts on display, largely in the automotive industry. There was a flying car that became a large, 4 rotor drone that also looked like a high-end sports car. A concept from Hyundai, called Mobis, featured front and rear wheels that turned, enabling the car to move diagonally, side to side, or do a complete 180 in a tight alleyway to avoid traffic jams.



Screens from LG and Samsung once again had prominent placement at CES. This year they were each debuting transparent screens that could shift between high quality television viewing to a transparent window, or a hybrid of both that offered imagery (both static and video) while keeping the rest of the screen opaque or transparent. Nearly everyone stopped to stare, and the prevailing thought around me, at least, was “woah, that’s cool.”

It’s easy to see how these could be woven into interior decorating and homebuilding as they fill the roles of window, screen, or wall art simultaneously.



Additionally, their commercial applications were on display in the form of product display cases that offered dynamic, live information on the products they were encasing.

Paired with cameras and AI, the example on the floor showcased a bakery where the display delivered relevant product information (calories, allergens, flavors) on the glass in front of the croissants, tarts, and macarons. As these displays become more affordable and available, it will seem downright antiquated to think that we would need to pull out a separate device to look up product details, or, even worse for the introverts out there, ask a salesperson.

These screens will also usher in a new depth to advertising, especially digital out of home. The transparency feature will give creative teams an entirely new canvas to paint on, featuring the live world on the other side as an integrated part of the ad unit’s creative.

2 | AI INTEGRATION

AI was a major buzzword at CES this year, and for good reason. The key takeaway from this year's demonstrations is that AI is entering the real world. The focus was on showing what generative AI can do outside of our screens; how it interacts with live environments.

PERSONAL HOME ASSISTANTS

Both LG and Samsung debuted their home assistants at CES – named L9 AI Agent and Ballie respectively. Both of these cute robots can follow you around the house and use AI to understand your routines, make adjustments to your home routine like adjusting temperature, lighting, sound, and more. They will greet you at the door, monitor your pet while you're away, and recognize things that are out of the ordinary and send alerts and video, like if your pet knocks a vase off the counter or someone is trying to break in.

The L9 AI Agent can even read your mood and react accordingly, while Ballie can project onto a floor or wall to provide on-the-go video. In both instances, the AI is using external cues, visual and auditory, to understand its environment, including you, and react accordingly.



SMART HOME

The smart home space had ample coverage and was prominent in the LG & Samsung exhibits, though also featured by other manufacturers. These prototypes both primarily centered around kitchen appliances, though there were extensions into the laundry space and smart closets that would tell you what pairs with what – useful for someone who is fashion-challenged.

The centerpiece was an AI-powered connected refrigerator that was able to recognize what you were putting in or taking out, along with what is currently inside. Knowing what is currently in your refrigerator, it was able to suggest recipes, prioritize based on upcoming expiration dates, add missing items to a shopping list, and then coordinate with the other connected appliances, like preheating the oven or pre-setting the intensity level of the dishwasher based on how messy the meal will be.

Some of these features weren't solving any real problems (I've never felt the need to manage my dishwasher's expectations, for example), but the idea that my fridge can help cut down on food waste, save me money by making home cooking easier, and uses AI to learn my recipe preferences, was appealing.

SAMSUNG

Smart Refrigerator with AI Family Hub+



AUTOMOTIVE

AI was huge within the automotive world. The Hyundai Mobis, in addition to the new drive patterns enabled by hardware innovation, also aims to boost automation, pattern recognition, and external safety for pedestrians and other motorists.

Most of the cars included screens on the front and rear of the vehicle that offer visual and written prompts for pedestrians, indicating that the vehicle has recognized a pedestrian about to cross the street, indicates that it has automatically stopped the vehicle, and that the pedestrian is free to cross in front of the car. It even projects a crosswalk onto the street.

I'm not sure I would totally trust it with my life, quite literally, just yet. However, as the technology becomes more prevalent and people become more used to interacting with it, perhaps parents of the future will teach their kids how to cross the street not by making eye contact with the driver to make sure they see you, but instead to watch the car's front display for the crosswalk mode prompt.

3 | BEYOND THE SHOW FLOOR

Of course, a lot happens at CES outside of the official show floor. We met with multiple partners with a focus on emerging and innovative partnerships. There are three main groups these partners fell into.



EXPERIENTIAL

From drone shows to scaled digital out of home implementations, we identified ways to enhance a brand's impact in meaningful moments that felt like an experience, not an advertisement.



UNIQUE DATA

Location-based data from rideshare companies, concert venues understanding a customer's entertainment preferences, and companies leaning into their audience and device graphs so as to not miss a beat in a cookieless world, we met with them all.



FUTURISTIC CONCEPTS

AI-powered digital experiences that ranged from a digital model of a sports arena where a customer can interact with an AI customer representative to buy team apparel all the way to a fully rendered car dealership showroom where you can live chat an AI salesperson, spec out your ideal ride, and then take it to the racetrack to see how it performs.

There are immediate opportunities in the realm of advertising experiences and unique data partnerships that our clients can take advantage of today. The futuristic opportunities are not quite ready for prime time. The digital environments seemed a bit clunky, though much more advanced than prior years' iterations. The biggest barrier, however, is getting the populace used to interacting with AI and fully digital environments. Humans will likely take longer to train than AI.

...AND WE CAN'T FORGET, THE SPHERE

No recent visit to Las Vegas would be complete without mentioning the Sphere.

We were able to take in a viewing of Postcards from Earth, a film created specifically for the Sphere to showcase its capabilities. It's a tremendous experience with a couple of surprises (no spoilers here!) and well worth your time and money if you find yourself in Las Vegas.

It's a truly captivating sensory journey, and sets the tone for the future of immersive storytelling. Today it's concerts and movies; tomorrow Sphere-like technology could help bring your brand to life.



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