

Google launches ChatGPT rival called Bard

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Online Desk: Google owner Alphabet Inc on Monday said it will launch a chatbot service and more artificial intelligence for its search engine as well as developers, an answer to Microsoft Corp in their rivalry to lead a new wave of computing. Microsoft, meanwhile, said it planned its own AI reveal for Tuesday. The cascade of news reflects how Silicon Valley is anticipating massive change from so-called generative AI, technology that can create prose or other content on command and free up white-collar workers' time, Reuters reports. The ascent of ChatGPT, a chatbot from Microsoft-backed OpenAI that could disrupt how consumers search for information, has been one of the biggest challenges to Google in recent memory. In a blog post, Alphabet Chief Executive Sundar Pichai said his company is opening a conversational AI service called Bard to test users for feedback, followed by a public release in the coming weeks.

He also said Google plans to add AI features to its search engine that synthesise material for complex queries, like whether learning guitar or piano is easier. Currently, Google presents text that exists elsewhere on the Web for questions where the answer is clear. Google's update for search, the timing of which it did not disclose, reflects how the company is bolstering its service while Microsoft is doing the same for Bing, embedding OpenAI's capabilities in it. Microsoft has said it plans to imbue AI into its all its products and on Tuesday plans to brief news outlets on developments it did not specify, with its CEO Satya Nadella, according to an invitation seen by Reuters. Sam Altman, the CEO of OpenAI, tweeted that he would also attend the event.

How Google aims to differentiate Bard from OpenAI's ChatGPT was unclear. Pichai said the new service draws on information from the internet; ChatGPT's knowledge is up to date as of 2021. "Bard seeks to combine the breadth of the world's knowledge with the power, intelligence and creativity of our" AI, Pichai said. Behind the new chatbot is LaMDA, Google's AI that generated text with such skill that a company engineer last year called it sentient, a claim the technology giant and scientists widely dismissed. In a demo of the service, Bard like its rival chatbot invites users to give it a prompt while warning its response may be inappropriate or inaccurate. It then bulleted three answers to a query about a space telescope's discoveries, the demo showed.

Google is relying on a version of LaMDA that requires less computing power so it can serve more users and improve with their feedback, Pichai said. ChatGPT at times has turned away users because of explosive growth, with UBS analysts reporting it had 57 million unique visitors in December outpacing potentially TikTok in adoption. Google also plans to give technology tools, first powered by LaMDA and later by other AI, to creators and enterprises starting next month, Pichai said.