

By KIRENNESH NAIR
kirennesh@thestar.com.my

IT used to be in the realm of science fiction, but is now a reality.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has gone mainstream now with ChatGPT, and it is scaring and exciting a number of people and companies.

The prospects of having AI solve tasks is thrilling. And it is sending the share prices of companies involved in AI skyrocketing.

Several companies, such as BuzzFeed Inc, C3.ai Inc, SoundHound AI Inc, and BigBear.ai Holdings Inc, have experienced significant spikes in trading volume and dramatic fluctuations in their stock prices.

The whole phenomenon is off the potential of ChatGPT, an AI chatbot developed by AI research and deployment company OpenAI, with the support of Microsoft Corp's multi-billion investment.

ChatGPT, in other words, is an AI-powered language model that is trained from vast amounts of data from the Internet to answer prompts by users in a human-like manner, but limited now to data up to 2021.

The traction it has garnered is staggering. As reported by *Forbes*, ChatGPT only took five days to achieve one million users compared to Facebook that took about 10 months, Netflix which took about three and a half years, and the iPhone that took about 74 days.

Moreover, a report by investment bank UBS, citing an analysis by data firm Similarweb, showed that ChatGPT is estimated to have reached 100 million monthly active users in January, just two months after launch.

In comparison, data from application analysis firm Sensor Tower showed that TikTok took about nine months after its launch to reach 100 million users, while Instagram took

ChatGPT, the future of AI

New model poised to revolutionise industry

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ChatGPT

more than two years.

Worry for Google

Anecdotally, ChatGPT usage has been able to aid students with their assignments or even help workers with their day-to-day job.

The runaway success of ChatGPT prompted Google's management to declare a state of emergency, or “code red,” in response to the launch of ChatGPT, owing to growing concerns regarding the future of the company's search engine.

Google's search engine is its largest business, where a bulk of its revenue is derived from.

The worries were fuelled by Microsoft's announcement that it will integrate ChatGPT into Bing and Edge, the company's search engine and browser, following its multi-year, multi-billion-dollar investment deal with OpenAI in late-January.

Acting promptly, just days ago, Google introduced Bard, a conversational AI service

powered by a language model for dialogue applications or LaMDA in short.

Bard has been unlaunched for trusted testers ahead of making it more widely available to the public in the coming weeks.

However, it couldn't get any worse for Alphabet as it lost US\$100bil (RM432bil) in market value, following inaccurate information shared by its new chatbot.

The disruption ChatGPT can cause is multifaceted.

ChatGPT has the ability to not only write codes for programming, but also debug codes, aiding software developers.

Apart from writing articles or even crafting ideas for content creators, it is able to explain a complex topic or also write music in a desired genre as well.

The extent of the ChatGPT's capabilities, however, are yet to be fully uncovered but many reckon it is a game changer in the AI world.

AI has been around but the level of AI in ChatGPT is said to be very high.

In a recent article, consulting firm McKinsey and Company said generative AI, which is leveraged by ChatGPT or other chatbot, has been revolutionising assistive technology, reducing application development time, and bringing powerful capabilities to nontechnical users.

The big worry is that AI will impact jobs.

If you ask ChatGPT what will the impact on Malaysian jobs be, it says this: “ChatGPT, as an AI language model, has the potential to automate certain tasks and make some jobs more efficient. However, it is important to note that AI technology is not expected to fully replace human workers but rather augment and assist them.”

In Malaysia, the impact of ChatGPT on jobs will likely depend on the specific industry and job function.

For example, in customer service, ChatGPT could be used to automate responses to frequently asked questions, freeing up customer service representatives to handle more complex inquiries.

On the other hand, in industries where creativity and human touch is important, ChatGPT is unlikely to replace human workers entirely.

It is important for workers and companies in Malaysia to continuously upskill and adapt to the changing technological landscape in order to remain relevant in the job market.”

Speaking with consultants, different views were obtained, but the exact impact of ChatGPT on the Malaysian job market remains blurry.

Crucial for business leaders to reallocate, retrain in a new era

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Deloitte South-East Asia consulting director Lee Yun-Han believes the chatbot has a high potential to disrupt how Malaysian businesses operate and how employees work.

Ernst & Young Consulting Sdn Bhd associate partner Yeap Bee Aik, on the other hand, says it is difficult to predict the exact impact of ChatGPT, or any AI technology, on Malaysia's job market specifically.

"The decision to use AI or to leverage the workforce in a particular sector will depend on various factors such as the cost of labour, the availability of skilled workers, and the specific tasks and jobs that can be automated by AI," Yeap says.

Yeap opines that it is sensible for AI systems to perform repetitive tasks, as it can be performed more efficiently and accurately by AI as compared to humans, and consequently, leading to cost saving and increased productivity.

However, Yeap adds that there are also tasks that may require human skills, such as creativity, empathy, and critical thinking, that may not be easily automated by AI.

"In short, the net impact of ChatGPT, or AI in general, on the Malaysian job market will depend on how it is integrated, the rate of adoption, and the actions taken by governments, businesses, and individuals to help workers acquire new skills," Yeap says.

Meanwhile, KPMG Malaysia head of technology consulting Alvin Gan believes the focus is more towards the scale of jobs being impacted.

Gan believes the debates about jobs being affected by automation intensified in recent years as the country increased its focus on using automated systems.

"To a large extent, there are parallels between the plausible impacts of ChatGPT and the technologies that had 'arrived' many years ago. Yes, ChatGPT is more intelligent and sophisticated compared to others – but the premise remains similar: automation and simplification of processes that have been used by

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Alvin Gan

humans for decades," Gan notes.

Gan believes the question that should be addressed is "how would business leaders resolve job displacement that is potentially caused by such AI models?"

"One way to address this is by conditioning the workforce to understand that their jobs are likely to be redesigned," Gan answers.

Gan suggests that this exercise can be less painful if leaders can find ways to reallocate and retrain in a new era of breakthrough technologies that will likely complement existing roles and operations.

"While job displacements will be inevitable in the short term, as with every technological revolution in the past, humans will adapt. I believe the jobs replaced by bots will give birth to new ones, and it will serve to complement the human workforce rather than replacing it completely," Gan opines.

When asked which industry will be affected the most by chatbots, Lee points out customer service, call centres, and copywriting sectors would likely be significantly disrupted by ChatGPT.

However, Lee believes there are clear limitations to ChatGPT as it stands today.

"It is unable to deliberately generate new knowledge, deliver creative responses with personality, or substitute human-to-human interaction," Lee highlights.

Yeap, meanwhile, believes ChatGPT will have some impact on all sectors, as language AI systems like ChatGPT have the potential to automate a wide range of tasks.

However, having a similar opinion, Yeap opines the sectors that are most likely to be affected by AI technology are those that involve repetitive tasks that can be easily automated and these include data entry, customer service, and certain types of content creation.

"Sectors that require higher-level cognitive skills, such as those in the medical, legal, and creative fields, are less likely to be impacted. This is because these jobs require human expertise and nuance, that AI technology like ChatGPT cannot fully replicate," Yeap says.

New jobs

While some jobs may be displaced by AI technology, Yeap points out that new jobs will also be created in fields related to AI development and maintenance, data analysis, and digital transformation.

"Therefore, the precise impact will likely vary from sector to sector, and it is important for organisations to carefully assess the potential benefits and risks of AI technology in their specific contexts," Yeap concludes.

While there are many advantages to utilising chatbots, Gan points out the downside of it.

On an individual level, Gan believes overutilisation may create high dependency on this technology to perform tasks and obtain information, which in turn will impact one's ability to think critically and rely on their own capabilities and skills.

"On a broader level, there have already been reports of ChatGPT providing misinformation,"

Gan points out.

Additionally, Gan says that the level of automation in Malaysia, as well as other developing countries, would ultimately result in structural transformation – an economic transition from low productivity and labour-intensive activities to higher productivity and skill-intensive activities.

"As Malaysia appears to be concentrated on labour-intensive manufacturing and service jobs, automation adoption would inevitably alter the nature of work and labour opportunities," Gan says.

Touching students' assignments that are being done by ChatGPT in universities, Gan says it is imperative for educators to consider different ways of educating and designing their curriculum.

"Assignments can be designed to demonstrate creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving. Skills for students to be able to adapt to future technologies and environments should be integrated into the curriculum," Gan tells.

He believes that the ball is now in the authorities' court to ensure that their governance and the resiliency of student development are upheld in institutions.

Explaining authorities' role, Gan says policies on the use of AI tools should be established and communicated to students, with consequences for violators highlighted and enforced.

"Additionally, higher education institutions should ensure constant awareness of the responsible and ethical use of AI, which impacts the integrity of the institution," he adds.

Lee believes that humanity needs to adapt to the never-ending technology advancements.

"Just like how we have adopted the usage of calculators and the open-book approach in examinations and assignments, how universities evaluate their students would also need to evolve accordingly," he says.

While there are technologies that can detect the usage of AI in completing assignments, Lee thinks it is a constant game of catch-up as AI sophistication evolves.