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Tech Decoded

17 April, 2026



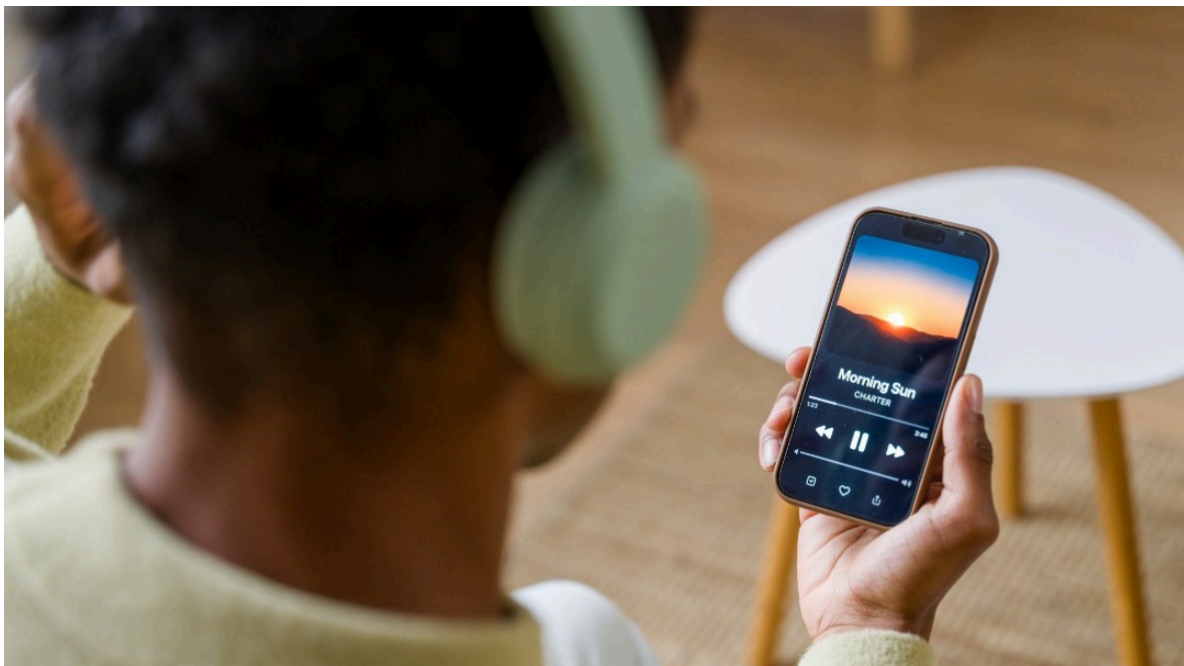
Daniel Thomas
Editor, Tech Decoded

Hello. This week I'm investigating AI-generated podcasts, which have flooded the market over the last year. There is not much evidence to suggest that listeners are embracing them yet, as trust in AI content remains low. But could that change as the tech improves? Plus, we look at how a data breach at travel giant Booking.com has led to a fresh wave of scams, and explore whether our increasing use of screens has weakened our capacity for critical thinking.

PS: We're sorry if you received this newsletter twice on Monday. That was an error, but we hope you enjoyed it all the same.

THE DOWNLOAD

Why AI voices are testing trust in podcasts



AI could struggle to replicate the strong bonds listeners form with their favourite podcasters. Credit: Getty Images

AI-generated podcasts have become so common on platforms like Spotify that detractors have given this burgeoning scene a nickname: "podslop".

It's a reference to what's said to be the often low-quality, mass-produced feel of many productions made using artificial intelligence.

Yet it also reflects a growing unease about potential disruption in this space, as big leaps in technology have meant synthetic voices are increasingly indistinguishable from real ones.

Many of the AI-made productions out there are short and niche, including AI-presented news bulletins or weather forecasts. The BBC itself is piloting a show that uses AI to offer regular and bespoke updates for fans of English football clubs.

Proponents say AI can speed up and cut the cost of producing a podcast, while allowing creators to innovate. But some shows have proved controversial, with critics saying they seek to undermine human creators.

One production company attracting criticism is Inception Point AI, which is based in Los Angeles. In September, it told the Hollywood Reporter that it had more than 5,000 AI-generated podcasts across its Quiet Please podcast network and was producing more than 3,000 shows a week at a cost of just \$1 (£0.73) an episode.

It has its own line-up of artificial hosts, including the English garden enthusiast Nigel Thistledown and TV chef Clare Delish, but critics have been harsh, describing its shows as robotic and simply made to attract advertising.

Inception Point has pushed back, arguing that its model is the shape of the future.

But AI-generated podcasts face another, potentially bigger, challenge: listeners' readiness to accept them.

Podcasts are arguably one of the most intimate forms of media, with audiences often forming strong bonds with presenters they listen to regularly.

In that sense, how real an AI narrator feels may be besides the point.

"We're already seeing cases where audiences can't tell the difference between AI and human voices, yet in several instances they'll still stop listening once they learn AI is involved because that connection feels severed," says Laura Fisher, an entertainment and audio analyst at MIDiA Research.

The download: *Clearly we are only at the beginning of this experiment, but it seems that any use of AI voice generation will need careful handling to avoid alienating audiences.*

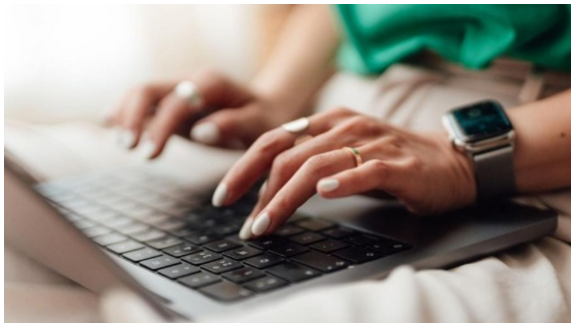
TOP STORIES



Booking.com users warned of 'reservation hijacking'

Scammers pretending to work for hotels have been contacting customers in order to trick them out of money.

[Here's how it works >](#)



Google to punish sites that use back button tricks

Google will target sites that interfere with web browsers so that the back button no longer takes users to the previous page.

[Why it's a problem >](#)



Allbirds shares soar 580% after pivot from shoes to AI

The struggling brand, once favoured by celebrities like actor Ben Affleck, now plans to provide AI computing power.

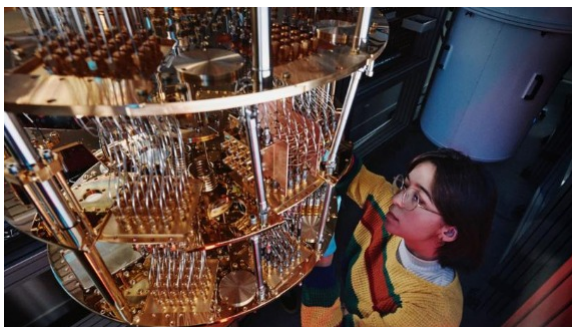
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Top bankers raise serious concerns about Mythos AI

Anthropic's latest AI model, which hasn't been released, found security flaws in many major operating systems.

[Here's why >](#)



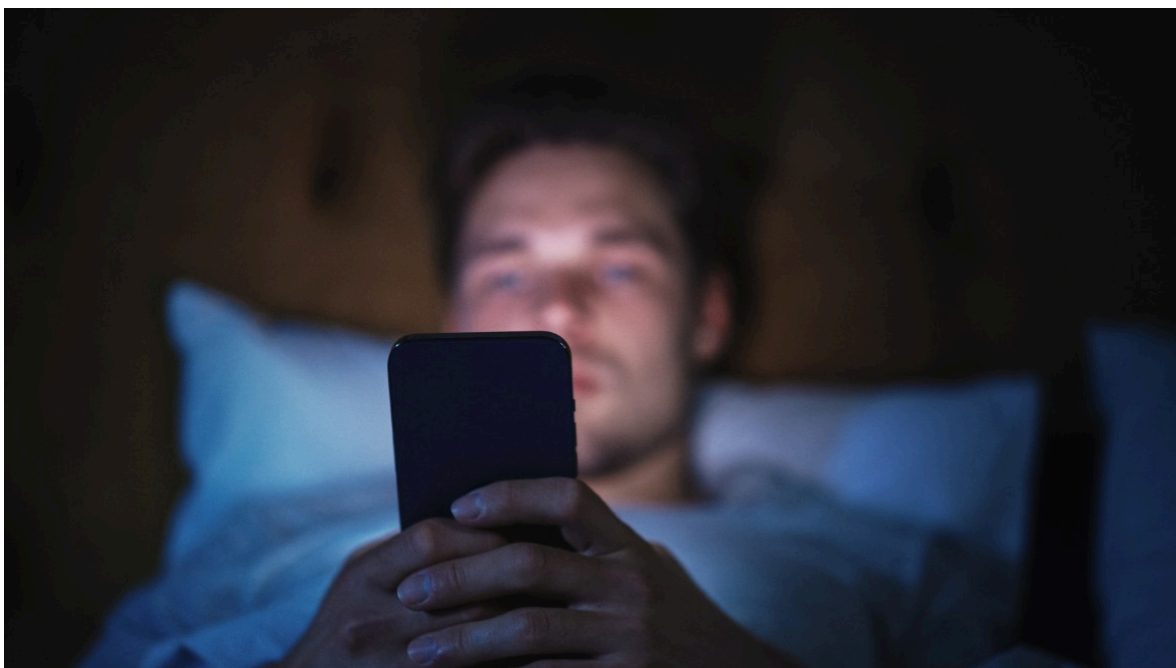
How Europe could beat the US in the quantum race

The prize for the first company to build a reliable quantum computer at scale could be huge. Will a French firm win the race?

[Learn more >](#)

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Are screens making us less intelligent?



By one estimate, UK adults spend almost 7.5 hours a day watching screens of all types. Credit: Getty Images

The writer James Marriott argues that reading books helps with the spread of information, encourages critical thinking and forces us to structure our ideas logically. But he's concerned that a shift from deep reading to digital skim-reading – driven largely by screens – is weakening our ability to think in complex, reflective ways. **He spoke to the BBC's Radical podcast** about the political consequences of a less literate, more screen-dependent public.

- **Back to books:** Why Sweden's schools are **cutting back on digital learning**

VIDEO PICK



'We came back as best friends'

The Artemis II crew have held their first press conference after completing a historic 10-day mission around the Moon.

[Watch here](#)

And finally...

We've all been there: a long car journey, a sudden need for the toilet and nowhere to pull over. Now the Chinese carmaker Seres says it has found a solution. It's been granted a patent for what it calls an "in-vehicle toilet", which would slide out from the bottom of a passenger's seat with a push or through voice-activated commands. [Here's how it would work.](#)

MORE BBC NEWSLETTERS



News Briefing

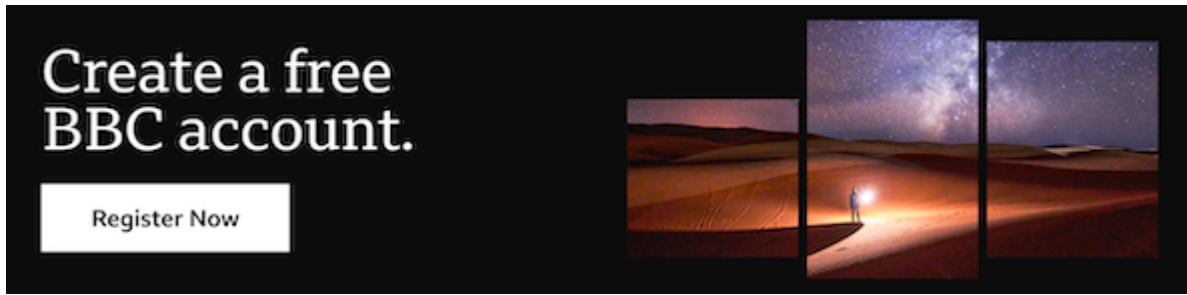
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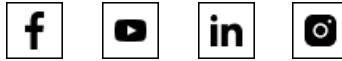
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