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Since Google co-founder Sergey Brin finally introduced Google Glass during I/O, Google's annual developer conference, last year the tech hype machine has gone into overdrive. A wearable technology, the device is jam-packed with Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, GPS, speakers, a camera, microphone and touchpad and runs on Android's operating system but controlled by voice and gesture.

But much more sophisticated than any smartphone, users can take pictures, record videos or ask a search question all by using the microphone to say a command and some have hailed it as revolutionary in the digital age. Tech guru Robert Scoble called it "the most interesting new product since the iPhone and I don't say that lightly."

Surprisingly, Google has announced that it is banning advertising on any apps on Google Glass, leading some to claim that the internet giant is transforming from an advertising-based company to a commerce-based company. Terms and conditions state that Glassware developers may not "serve or include any advertisements" and cannot charge users to download apps for the device either.

Currently, Google is pitching the device at \$1,500 but has only allowed 1,000 early adopters – dubbed 'Glass Explorers' – to test the prototype. Cue images of tech types posting pictures of themselves wearing the glasses and their surroundings as seen through the lens of Google Glass. And, of course, there's already a Tumblr poking fun at White Men Wearing Google Glass.

Price

The device is expected to go on sale to the public next year but opinion as to whether it will take off is divided, depending on price. Whilst some have compared it to the mobile phone – expensive and slightly laughable, only affordable and worn

by yuppies until lower device price saw mass adoption – others have likened it to the Segeway – again, expensive and slightly laughable but never dropping in price and therefore, so far, not becoming a mass commodity.

According to Scoble, each Google Glass unit would cost \$200 to produce with the components costing very little. "This has been designed for mass production. In other words, millions of units. The only way Google will get there is to price them under \$300," he said.

Rachel Clarke, head of engagement intelligence at Momentum UK, agrees that a lower price is necessary if the device is to go mainstream. "The price will have to drop considerably for a wide take-up, the same pattern you see with many consumer electronics," she says. "If that happens, then I do see adoption across a wide area of uses – often more functional than just pure 'play' which is what the early developers and adopters are doing at the moment."

Claire Stokoe, head of content marketing at Mediaworks, points to augmented reality which, whilst being around for some five years on the iPhone, hasn't taken off due to cost and lack of open source development. "Google Glass is set to invigorate augmented reality, but of course with this new technology comes a whole new set of issues," she says.

Privacy concerns

Price certainly isn't the only issue. Since making headlines, the privacy debate has gone into overdrive with many asking how they can protect their personal privacy when occupying the same public space as someone wearing Glass.

One campaigner from a privacy group Stop The Cyborgs, told the BBC: "We want people to actively set social and physical bounds around the use of technologies and not just fatalistically accept the direction technology is heading in."

Alistair Dent, head of PPC for Periscopix, said: "In the early days of mobile phone cameras people were worried about the ability to surreptitiously take a photograph anywhere. By and large there haven't been too many problems here, but I don't think anybody is comfortable with the idea they could be recorded at any time."

On the flip side of personal data privacy is the question of security. Recent reports claim that the device may be easily hacked because it has no PIN or authentication system. Jay Freeman, a programmer who specialises in cracking smartphone security, claimed in a blog post that Glass' 'root' capability can enable hackers to take control of the device's output and monitor everything the owner does.

"Once the attacker has root on your Glass, they have much more power than if they had access to your phone or even your computer: they have control over a camera and a microphone that are attached to your head. A bugged Glass doesn't just watch your every move: it watches everything you are looking at (intentionally or furtively) and hears everything you do. The only thing it doesn't know are your thoughts," he said.

Marketing revolution?

So, with ads currently banned, what will Glass mean for marketers?

Forrester analyst Sarah Rotman Epps has suggested that sensor-laden devices such as Google Glass are actually better suited to for engagement marketing or relationship marketing than advertising anyway.

In a recent blog post, she predicted that Glass-like sensor devices would encourage marketers to:

- Shift their priorities from acquisition to engagement: these technologies lend themselves more toward engaging customers you already have, building on trust you've already earned. This shift from acquisition to engagement requires marketers to rethink their priorities and redistribute their spending accordingly.

- Make better use of all the data they are collecting: sensor devices produce an enormous amount of data – up to thousands of data points per minute per person. Making use of all this data is a new skill for marketers. Acting on this data in a way that benefits the user and the company requires an enormous shift from the way they used data in the past.

- Reconfigure privacy practices to deliver contextually relevant services: current privacy practices are woefully inadequate for the age of smartphones and sensors. Today, marketers routinely collect more data than they need for service delivery. In doing so, they are assuming unnecessary risk (as we see in the near-daily hacking of major enterprises), and they also make it harder to recognise business opportunities obscured by mountains of data.

"Imagine a future in which marketers influence products, pricing and branding based on deep insights of how people actually use their product," she wrote. "A future in which marketers anticipate customer needs before they're expressed – while staying on the right side of the line separating useful from creepy."

Elsewhere, Dent believes that given Google's experience with mobile, location-specific marketing, we could expect developments in this field in the future. "Their platforms are getting

more location-based all the time. Well-labelled sponsored listings already make seamless appearances on maps, etc. So long as the results stay useful, Google will get value. It seems clear that Google will continue to (as now) prioritise the best quality, most relevant local ads for users."

And following this week's announcement that updates to Glass will integrate Google+ notifications, some have speculated that this could also have implications for location-based marketing.

Stokoe says hooking Glass up to the Google+ network would make sense as Google is passionate about their 'blossoming social space'. She says: "The idea that high paying Adwords clients will also be displayed along with those that match a Google+ users criteria makes sense. Hyper local geotargeting adverts will most definitely be a focus on Glass."

But there are also many that predict that Google will ultimately perform a u-turn on its commitment to zero advertising. Stokoe adds that based on Android's high advertising impressions in the first quarter of 2013 compared to iPhone, it would seem perfectly plausible that Google Glass will be utilised for advertising in the future given the initial mobile advertising uptake.

So, if these predictions hold true, will the Google Glass device change the marketing landscape as we know it? Does a Minority Report-style future await us, as Rotman Epps predicts?

Dent doesn't think so: "Google Glass is unlikely to revolutionise advertising in terms of the way we interact. Mobile advertising is still immature, but brands are already using the location-based abilities in some clever ways. What will be different is the level of takeover of the display. On a desktop or a mobile the ads make up a small proportion of screen real estate, but on Glass there isn't 'screen size' or 'resolution' in the way we currently know. The screen will likely be limited to one item at a time, so we may see that ad formats take over the entire device.

"How users will react to this remains to be seen, but even if every single person in the country had a Glass device (from Google or another supplier) all the time, it would still be a small proportion of the advertising they would be subjected to, and due to its potential invasiveness it would likely always be limited in volume."

Do you think Google Glass will take off and, if so, what will its impact be on marketing?