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NEW INTERACTIONS

The relationship between journalists and audiences mediated by Google Glass

John Mills, Eduardo Pellanda, and André Pase

From the first studies of wearables inside MIT's Media Lab decades ago to the smartwatches and smartglasses sold these days as consumer devices, wearables provide clues to better understand new paths to record and distribute information. Google Glass was one of the first immersive products, allowing users to capture and stream information to the Web, creating screen-based micro-interactions displayed in front of the user's eye or sent to their smartphone. The first-person perspective is not new, but network-enabled Glass creates a novel state of streamed information and images, potentially making the journalist an avatar of the audience. Possibilities also lay in the development of Glass-specific ambient or calm communications—providing users with seamless information updates. Our study explores how Glass, attached to the head of the journalist-broadcaster, creates alternative behaviours in those captured due to its almost-invisible camera. These and other aspects of Glass will be explored during this paper, recalling experiences made across multiple test beds in the United Kingdom, Porto Alegre, Brazil and the Sahara Desert. The lessons acquired from these experiences allow us to understand not only new ways to inform, but new relationships between journalists, newsrooms and the public.

KEYWORDS change agency; Glass journalism; Google Glass; innovation; mobile journalism; mojo; wearables

Introduction: Google Glass, Mobile Journalism and Connected Wearables

Wearable media devices are slowly moving into the public consciousness, and with Web connectivity, they offer new digital opportunities and digital interactions for audiences and content producers to explore. Merging mobile connectivity with wearable media capture and publication, Google Glass heralded a potentially mass-market and wearable multimedia device.

Prototyped in 2011 and launched as the “Explorer” in 2013, Glass combined a “wearable” with high-definition video capture and mobile connectivity, and harnessed, within the consumer electronics market, the relatively unique ability of overlaying images and live information into a user's field of vision. As such, Google sought to develop a unique and mass-market wearable offering audio and touch-controlled interactions, with functionalities extensively trialled in military and research environments.

From a journalistic perspective, Glass presented intriguing new opportunities for reporters, news editors and newsroom operations. Although self-consciously at an early stage of development, and tentatively seeking to engage with a broad range of users, when viewed as a new evolutionary strain of mobile media devices (otherwise known as “mobile journalism” or “mojo”) correspondents could, potentially, utilise Glass in similar