

Sony steps up in wearable space with SmartEyeglass

February 17 2015, by Glenn Chapman



Sony began taking orders for SmartEyeglass, which connects with smartphones and then superimposes text, images or other information onto whatever real scene is in view

Sony on Tuesday began taking orders for SmartEyeglass Internet-linked eyewear, moving ahead in the market as Google steps back to revise its Glass strategy.

The offering from the Japanese consumer electronics comes amid

growing interest in wearable computing, but also questions about whether consumers will warm to connected eyewear.

SmartEyeglass connects with smartphones and then superimposes text, images or other information onto whatever real scene is in view.

A version of the eyewear tailored for software developers will be available in Japan, Germany, Britain, and the United States on March 10. The price in the US will be \$840. In Europe it will be 670 plus applicable taxes.

SmartEyeglass for enterprises will also be available in March in France, Italy, Spain and elsewhere.

Along with the hardware, Sony will release an upgraded software development kit "to tap into the ingenuity of developers to improve upon the user experience that the SmartEyeglass provides."

Sony is encouraging software makers to develop fun, hip, or functional applications for SmartEyeglass so people will be enticed to buy the eyewear on track for commercial release in 2016

Sony said that it "has its eyes set on the future of wearable devices and their diversifying use cases, and it hopes to tap into the ingenuity of developers to improve upon the user experience that the SmartEyeglass provides."



A prototype model of the SmartEyeglass, produced by Sony, at the company's headquarters in Tokyo on September 19, 2014

Sony said it sees a wide range of uses for the eyewear, beyond the obvious display of information at eye level without having to turn attention to another device.

It sees "considerable implications for AR (augmented reality), which holds great potential in the domain of professional use as well, such as when giving instructions to workers at a manufacturing site or when transmitting visual information to security officers about a potential breach," the Sony statement said.

Google Glass sidelined

Google in January halted sales of its Internet-linked eyewear Glass but insisted the technology would live on in a future consumer product.

The technology titan put brakes on an "explorer" program that let people interested in dabbling with Glass buy eyewear for \$1,500 apiece.



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Glass became available in the United States in early last year to anyone with the money and desire to become an "explorer." The Glass test program was later expanded to Britain.

Instead of being part of the Google X lab working on innovations such as self-driving cars, the Glass team became a separate unit.

Microsoft last month introduced HoloLens eyewear that may hit a sweet spot between Google Glass and virtual reality headgear, immersing users in a mesmerizing world of augmented reality holograms.

Microsoft executives said the holographic capabilities built into Windows 10 operating software—to be released late this year—would open doors for developers to augment tasks from complex surgery to motorcycle design.

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