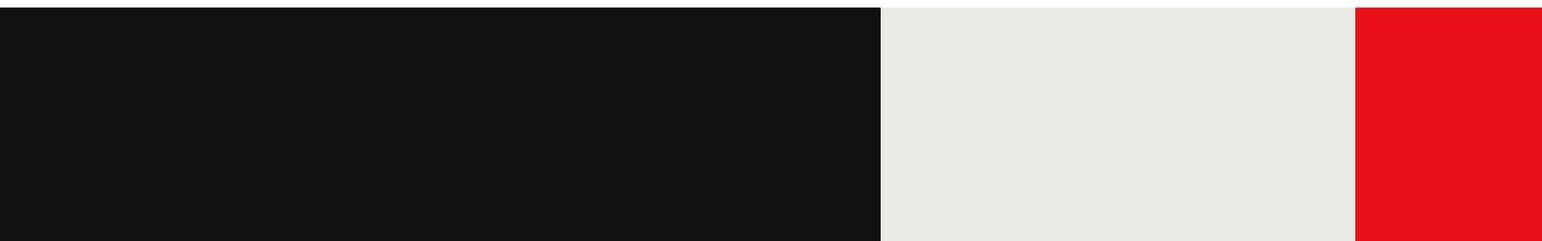


Has Big Tech learned its smart glasses lesson since Google Glass?

Article



The Trend: Smart glasses are attempting a comeback nearly a decade after **Google's** pioneering wearables fell flat. And **Facebook** is leading that charge with its recently released **Ray-Ban Stories**.

- The glasses feature twin 5-megapixel front cameras that can capture and store about three dozen 30-second videos and roughly 500 photos, per the Verge. They also have two built-in
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speakers to play audio over Bluetooth.

- What Ray-Ban Stories are *not*, though, are augmented reality glasses. They're more like glorified GoPros—a stepping stone on Facebook's path toward **AR glasses**.
- Not to be outdone, Chinese smartphone giant **Xiaomi** announced its own lightweight smart glasses, which it claims will be capable of taking photos and displaying messages, navigation, and translated text.

Why did Google Glass fail?

- **Price:** The device's limited AR functionality didn't match most consumer's expectations and made the **\$1,500 price tag** seem far too steep.
- **The aesthetics:** Put simply, Google Glass wasn't cool. Despite attempts to manufacture mainstream interest by working with Fashion Week models and influencers, Glass wearers came to symbolize the worst elements of tech, earning them the nickname "**Glassholes**."
- **Privacy:** Google Glass' recording features faced public backlash, and some businesses flat-out banned the device. A 2014 Rasmussen Reports **poll** found that **85% of US adults expressed major privacy concerns** about Google Glass.

So what now? Facebook's 2021 smart glasses solve some issues raised by Google Glass but leave the privacy question unaddressed.

- Facebook's glasses clock in at **\$299** (about \$100 more than a "dumb" pair of Wayfarers) and Facebook is letting Ray-Ban take on the bulk of branding, per the Verge, which could go a long way in addressing both the price and aesthetic issues that plagued Google Glass.
- But Ray-Ban Stories are arguably worse on privacy: Unlike other smart glasses—like **Snap's Spectacles**, which glow and flash lights while recording—Stories' feature only a single, pinpoint-sized white light that can easily be taped over and is difficult to see in bright lighting. Experts have also raised concerns that Facebook could use real-world data collected from these devices in the future.

How this could backfire: Consumers wary of stealthy recording devices may think the glasses are at odds with Facebook's stated "**pivot to privacy**," which could derail the company's efforts to build public trust.

- That trust is already abysmal. **Just 3.4% of US adults said they trusted Facebook with their personal information**, per a 2020 eMarketer and Bizrate Insights survey, and **46% of US**

adults said privacy and trust issues were the top reasons they don't use Facebook, **per** a Verge survey.

- Potential cases of misuse could also threaten Ray-Ban's brand.

The bottom line: Facebook's Ray-Ban Stories address many of the key concerns that plagued Google Glass, but consumer attitudes toward privacy have hardened in recent years, which will present all future smart glasses with a vexing problem: How do you make the public comfortable with indistinguishable roaming recording devices?

Source: Google and Facebook

