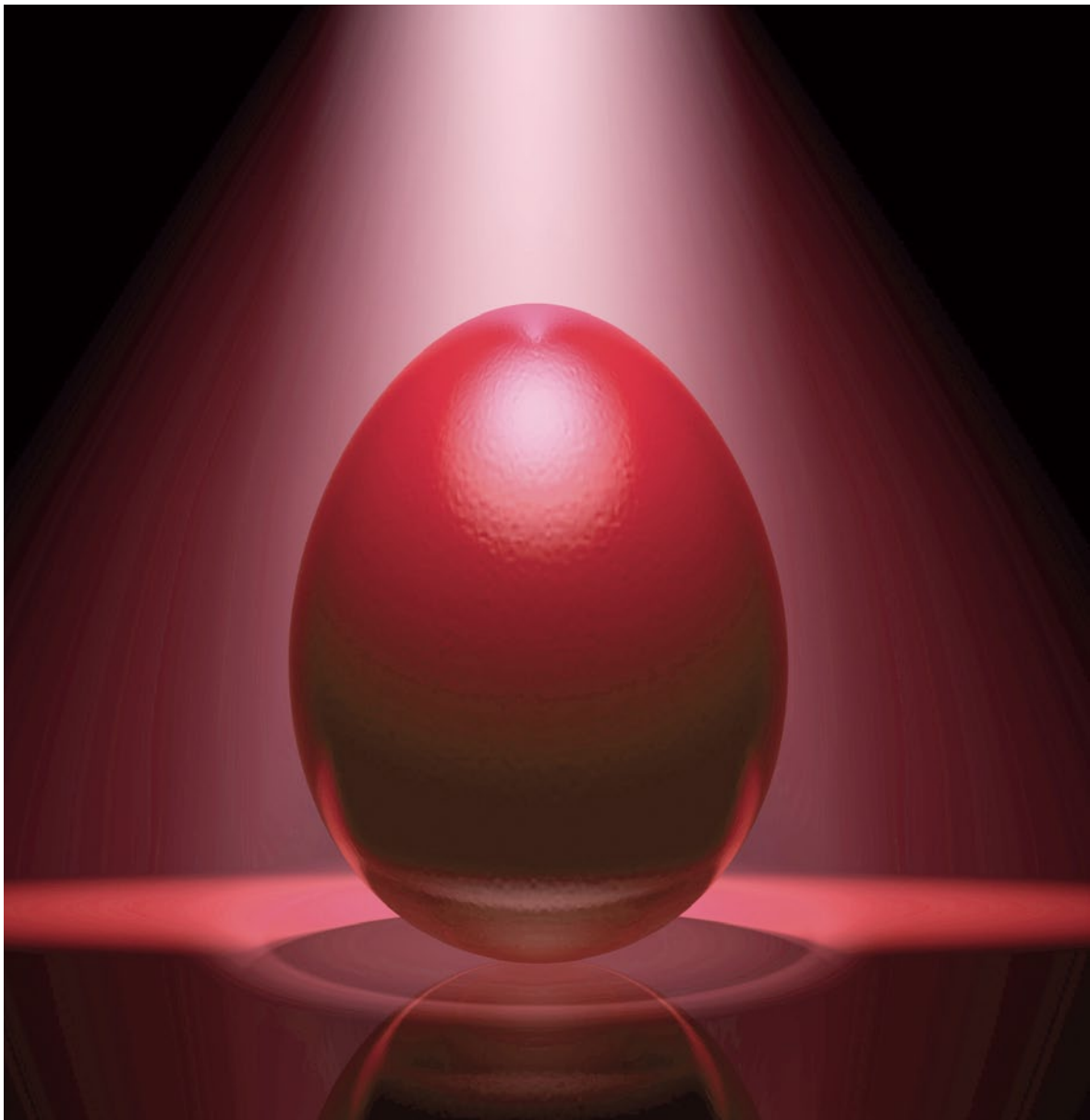




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Innovative Design – Follow your emotions



Innovative design is highly emotional and sexy, appealing to the senses involved in the decision-making process, from the initial idea right through to the purchase.

Even early on at the idea generation stage it is a matter of listening to one's emotions. Successful entrepreneurs use their gut to make decisions regarding design and therefore also with regard to the capital they are investing. However, even salaried directors and managers should not base all their decisions on market research but should also follow their intuition. This is because investing in innovative design means entering uncharted territory and taking conscious risks. The risk doesn't have to be uncalculated, but it does require courage and perseverance. The bigger the measure of individual character a product possesses, the greater the potential for its success.

A case study of an independent, successful design would be the COLUMBUS thermal flask, shaped in the form of an egg. Despite some imitations, the form of the product remains unique in its category – no two eggs are the same. The fact that new customers continue to be attracted to it demonstrates the sustainability of this innovation.

An innovative design first engages those people open to new things. All other target groups compare the shape to those designs lodged in their memories and are often irritated at first when the new design neither fits into their concept for this product category, nor corresponds to current trends. Only with extended and more frequent confrontation will the new design gain wider acceptance. To this extent, an innovative design anticipates future taste trends.

Learning is based not only on design, but also experience. Therefore, disappointing products or bad service have made customers more sensitive. This means that the senses are becoming even more significant for unconscious buying decisions.

Buyers in the trade often make the first purchase decision. A design must be all the more innovative to elicit the enthusiasm necessary to conquer this first hurdle. Alongside this, the emotional expertise inherent in the design and the relationship between buyer and retailer are also of vital importance. Finally, it is important to have the ability to neither see personal taste as representative nor to set it aside completely. What is essential is to have the right balance between personal taste and the ability to make correct judgements about market appeal.

When viewed purely from an optical perspective, potential clients often register upon first glance whether they are seeing something of quality. In this process even the finest material differences are perceived. So, for example, an apparently identical plastic material produced and distributed in different regions by a manufacturer will be perceived differently despite its technical specifications.

Beyond the optical, the feeling when touching the product becomes an unconscious decision-making criteria, even when excess plastic on connecting parts only leads to minimal differences.

The emotional world of products is not necessarily just about the look but also about the feel; with the first touch, the feel becomes a decision criterion. This can also mean that even minimal excesses in terms of the synthetic materials used for components and assembly parts can lead to negative subconscious evaluations.

If customers testing a product first hold it in hand, most of them will check out its functionality as much as possible. Usually sounds then enter into the equation which will likewise influence the purchasing decision. It is not in vain that the automobile industry employs sound engineers to deal with engine and exhaust noise. Often, one sees potential customers kicking car tires in the show room and paying attention to the resulting sound.

Eroticism is sometimes implied with products, particularly with perfumes. The same thing that is true for the cosmetics industry differentiates the marketing of durable goods. Cake pans reeking of compressor oil are not exactly convincing that they will produce sweet-smelling cakes.

Due to the brands' designs and emotional values, emotional involvement with them is very high. Rational arguments and price points are eclipsed by these highly emotionally charged brands. How then can the display of emotions at the launch of a new iPhone or iPad be explained?

Apple's success is not just a matter of user-friendly hardware and software, but also the selection of material and color combinations which stimulate the senses and thus form emotional bonds with the brand. Apple's products are innovative because of their total design; after all, computers and telephones predate Apple.

Ultimately, product design is a part of Apple's corporate design and the philosophy of innovation it embodies. This is reflected in the design of the products and how the senses perceive them.

Because design is so highly emotional, it requires a high level of emotional intelligence from decision-makers involved in the innovation process, and strong personalities to carry out the implementation. If emotions are understood, there is great potential for success.

Dietmar Menze, April 17, 2012