



“Smart Home has to become Smart Growth”

Nico Michler, Managing Director at designaffairs, calls for a rethinking in the sector for a sustainable economic success of the Smart Home concept.

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With the IFA Berlin, the trade show for consumer electronics and home appliances, just around the corner the topic of *Smart Home* seems to be on everybody’s mind. What is commonly represented as the *Home of the Future* does not correspond with the understanding of *smart*



that designaffairs stands for: Hardly any system is adaptive, responds reasonably to the users’ needs or truly supports and relieves the consumer in the end. Often the devices’ connectivity shoots far beyond the mark of useful communication. “Every person has a routine, a rhythm and lives according to

certain patterns. Real smartness of products has to start here. It has to understand me as the user and has to support me usefully – silently in the background. Users don’t want to take care of configurations or feel like they are controlled by technical devices”, says Nico Michler, Managing Director at designaffairs in Munich.

Michler is sure that most companies have already adapted to this thinking, turning in the right direction. But when it comes to the profitability of Smart Home concepts, many companies face an unsolvable problem. Therefore, the strategic design consultancy calls for their own approach of portfolio management called *Smart Growth*. “The portfolios of most of our clients are simply too big, too expensive and offer only a limited set of solutions to user needs”, explains Michler. “The amount of intelligent products increases constantly just like the emotional threshold to use them. Users want safety, comfort and control. The absolute worst a company could do is to overload their products with digital and smart functions and thus cause a downright coma for the users because they feel scared and a loss of control. This is why we are convinced that companies need to find a way to adjust to the new requirements and conditions. We are not necessarily talking about disruptive innovations, most of the time they’re not even needed. We rather see it as our task to make a balanced combination of trends and user needs economically successful. The future will show that new business models with a clear focus on a few products



with modular systems actually pay off. We help companies to focus on the really successful products and solutions and make them economically viable”, says designaffairs’ chief strategist.

To make sure that the wrong products are not developed, but instead combinations that target the users’ needs perfectly, the design agency applies its own tool HUX. HUX stands for Holistic User Experience and is an efficient method for obtaining a valid decision-making basis for strategic product planning. Unlike other established user experience or market research measurement methods, such as conjoint analysis, HUX provides specific action instructions for individual product characteristics. HUX ensures an optimal return on investment (ROI) by purposefully showing the right features and functions and consequently making the product setup more successful.

About designaffairs

designaffairs was founded in 1997 and is an owner-managed design consultancy for product and brand development with studios in Munich, Erlangen and Shanghai. The agency operates internationally and is among the most award-winning creative agencies in the world. designaffairs develops convincing design and brand strategies in close collaboration with its clients. It supports companies - regardless of industry - in all issues concerning industrial, interface, usability, color & material and packaging design as well as for research, analysis and engineering. Scientifically-based analysis and research methods are combined with the creativity and expertise of more than 80 employees. www.designaffairs.com

About HUX | Holistic User Experience

Which characteristics make products successful on the market? Which elements need to be optimized for a perfect user experience? The Holistic User Experience (HUX) measuring procedure provides certainty in the decision about which features to invest an innovation budget in. On an empirical basis, the parameters are identified that make products successful on the market. But HUX not only reveals which features arise the user’s interest, annoy him or are of irrelevance. It does far more: it shows which product characteristics can be used to increase the user’s enthusiasm and which minimum standards must be met for individual characteristics to ensure that indifference doesn’t turn into frustration. The result is specific action instructions for individual product characteristics and a clear basis for a decision as to where the highest return on invest can be realized. HUX is an efficient method for obtaining a valid decision-making basis for strategic product planning and successful portfolio management.

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