

The remote control as physical interface to the user in trend

From plastic block to intelligent design object

- „technology and design in synergy“: the remote control as a work of art
- ruwido as trend and competence centre of the CE industry
- glossy black and shiny ivory: the trend colours of tomorrow

Neumarkt – He who has the remote control also has the power. Already an unwritten “law” in many living rooms, this situation could well intensify in the future. This is because remote controls are increasingly leaving the terrain of insignificant switchboxes to which they have wrongly been assigned and are more and more becoming technical jewels and highly sought-after design objects. In an ever greater “virtualised” entertainment world they are the physical embodiment or the “fingerprint” of the brand. More and more manufacturers in the CE and IT industry are therefore opting for a remote control that tangibly underlines the design and lifestyle claim of their brand in addition to optimum handling: form, colour, value perception, material appearance and weight through to audible and tangible key feedback of the remote control determine whether a device is felt to be positive and harmonious. It is against this background that ruwido, specialists for remote controls and leading system supplier to the CE industry and pay TV operators, researches and develops far more than just the technical insides of the devices. The owner-managed company in Neumarkt near Salzburg has established itself as a competence centre for design, material, operating logic and innovative production procedures, and also anticipates future trends in the industry in terms of form, colour and appearance.

As a sum total of the experience in design and intuitive operation, ruwido has presented an exclusive universal remote control at the Berlin Consumer Electronics Trade Fair (IFA) which will be launched in October in the specialised trade. With its minimalist design, the VEXO currently has the “last word” in form and function of remote controls. A coin-key of silver-coloured aluminium, set into the cool surface of black polycarbonate glass, controls up to 16 devices using the thumb only. Offering a surface contrast, the housing has a soft matt black finish.

Co-operation with international trend researchers and universities

The VEXO is a pioneer of a new device platform based also on studies conducted by international trend researchers (such as Matthias Horx and Faith Popcorn). The trend towards "simplicity", the combination of simple operating logic for complex functional breadth provided ruwido with the framework for development. But colours, touch through to acoustics were also the subject of intensive research. ruwido even looks into the colour and material trends of the future. Ferdinand Maier, Managing Director of ruwido, therefore believes the high-gloss black finish of the VEXO to be one of the coming mega-trends in the CE and IT device industry – no longer "paint on" colour in the traditional sense but inseparably linked with the good looks of the materials themselves.

According to Ferdinand Maier, another trend colour of tomorrow is similarly difficult to outline: a mother-of-pearl-like shiny ivory is set to take the place of white as trend surface in the years to come. The self-developed and patented colour therefore decorates the trade fair stands in which ruwido presents itself at international trade fairs.

"In addition to touch, colours provide people with the strongest impressions of an object, simultaneously characterising its intrinsic value", explains Ferdinand Maier, Managing Director of ruwido. "Accordingly, we pay attention to even the smallest detail in the development of remote controls in the premium segment represented by VEXO that could have an impact on the overall psychological perception of the remote control. It is our declared objective not only to provide the user with highly intelligent technology but also to impart a harmonious overall experience."

New technology requires new thinking

It is not only the design but also the progressive technological development that increasingly calls for a departure from the classical "stupid" to the intelligent, versatile remote control. In addition to the research and development work in the ruwido "usability studio", ruwido also seeks to exchange experience with the scientific world. Joint research projects are therefore in progress with the Information and Communication Technologies & Society (ICT&S) of the University of Salzburg and close

contacts also exist with the Joanneum Technical University in Graz, whose graduates often find their first jobs with ruwido.

The core element of the new technical developments in the industry is therefore the interaction of the viewer with the television programme. Numerous TV broadcasters, device manufacturers and platform operators are therefore currently testing quite different technical concepts of interactive television. Since real interactivity emanates from the viewer and from the television programme to only a limited extent, the viewers should be accustomed to using the devices with which they shape their interactivity. This applies to the remote control using which viewers communicate quite naturally with the television.

ruwido is therefore involved in the development of interactive remote controls which, for example, provide a back channel via Internet or by W-LAN or Bluetooth, for example.

First consumer studies are more than promising. Together with a cable network operator, ruwido put the interactive remote controls through a first field test during a voting show on television. The result: within this relatively still small consumer panel already five times as many viewers cast their votes by remote control than by telephone.

“Trend is not simply a buzzword for us”, underlines Ferdinand Maier. “The focal element of our far-reaching research and development work is rather to pinpoint trends both on the technical and on the design side and to merge them in a refined combination true to our claim of ‘technology and design in synergy’, whilst always focussing on the simplicity of operation for the user”.

About ruwido

ruwido is Europe's largest manufacturer of remote controls and infrared technology. At its headquarters in Neumarkt am Wallersee (Austria) ruwido researches, develops and produces remote controls for the retail trade as well as for leading brands in the CE sector, including Loewe, Metz and Sony. In equal measure Europe's pay TV and platform operators such as Canal+, Premiere, Virgin Media, ONO, telenet, UPC, Deutsche Telekom, Telecom Italia, Swisscom, KPN and Telekom Austria rely on the customised operating concepts and solutions from ruwido. The company was founded in Austria in 1969 and in 1975 presented the world's first infrared remote control. Since an MBO in 2003 the Managing Director of many years' standing, Ferdinand Maier, is also the owner of ruwido. The company employs 190 people of whom more than 20 percent work in research and development. ruwido products, technologies and services are available in all European countries. For further information in English please go to: www.ruwido.com

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