
Functional or appealing? Traces of a long struggle

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Abstract

Smart-phones, tablets and video-game consoles are computing devices sold as mass market products. They are technological accessories that people buys not necessarily because of their functional purposes. The related marketing strategies are based on qualities like the external design, the name of the brand, the perception of the products as status symbols. The paper proposes few examples in the history of computing, mainly focused on Olivetti machines, which help to devise the long process in which appealing but functionally useless (and at times disadvantageous) characteristics became a relevant part of the design of computing devices. Sometimes with grumblings on the part of the engineers.

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