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Innovating the Meaning of a Product

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Innovating the Meaning of a Product

Many IT companies claim they are innovative, but what are they innovating? I cross-examine IT product designers and ask them, among many other questions, why their products are innovative and how these differ from competing products. I find that some designers innovate technology, e.g., making thinner cameras for self-driving cars. Yet others innovate the meaning of the product, e.g., making smart speakers to create a modern and convenient home rather than aiming for perfect sound quality. Advanced technology is not always good and sometimes even hinders product innovation, that is because it can be too difficult to understand or too expensive. Mindlessly pushing technology might be a road without an exit. At the same time, designers cannot ignore advanced technology that might make products competitive. Thus, I study how designers strategically leverage advanced technology to innovate the meaning of a product.