

Nissan exploring premium-feel interior concept for cars

October 29 2012, by Bob Yirka



(Phys.org)—Nissan Motor Company has begun work on what it calls a premium-feel interior concept. The aim of the initiative is to create coverings for the interior of a vehicle that the company describes as delivering "...more joy in driving." Put another way, they want people who buy their cars to experience pleasurable sensations when they touch different parts of the interior. To further that goal they have been studying what people find pleasurable when they touch things.

The company has divided the interior of a vehicle into four areas of interest: the instrument panel, hard plastic surfaces (knobs, buttons, etc.), seat coverings and arm rests. They've discovered that each requires a

different type of material to create the most pleasurable possible sensation when touched. They have found, for example, that the amount of distortion of a surface that occurs when touched translates to degrees of hardness or softness in the human brain and that heat conductivity, quite naturally, is felt as warm or cold. Thus coverings for such surfaces as the dash, to feel good when touched, should have just the right amount of distortion and heat conductivity.

In a similar vein, they have found that the wider the finger contact with a surface, the softer it feels when touched and that the degree of friction present can create a wet or dry sensation when a finger moves across a surface. They've also found in touch tests that the closer a material mimics the human fingertip, i.e. the fingerprint, the better it feels when touched and that moist feelings come about due to stimulation of the bottom of the fingerprint, i.e. when the material fills in the valleys between the ridges.

To meet the goals of their initiative, the company has developed a new material for each of the main areas of interest. For dashes, the company has developed a material it calls, "Premium soft instrument panel" – a synthetic leather material it claims provides a soft feeling with high durability. For buttons and knobs, the company has developed a material it calls "Soft-feel texturing" which provides a soft moist sensation when touched. For the seat coverings, they have developed "Premium semi-aniline leather" (aniline leather with a thin protective coating.) For the arm rests, because they most often come in contact with human skin (after the steering wheel), the company has developed a material that is as close as possible in feel to human baby skin – they call it "Premium soft-feel material."

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