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A fresh look at ironing uncovers innovation opportunities

Morphy Richards, a leading UK domestic appliance brand, wished to identify opportunities for real innovation in ironing that would also offer benefits of greater sustainability. The market for irons is of course a mature one. Little genuine innovation has taken place in recent years with the main narrative in the market focused on the raw power of wattage rather than finding ways to enhance the experience and solve real consumer problems. Against this backdrop Morphy Richards engaged *new experience* to gain useful insights that might inspire true innovation that could help solve consumer problems while also helping to protect the planet.

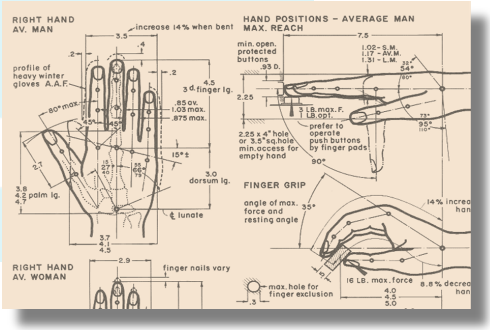
Observational, ethnographic research approach and ergonomics analysis

Consumers are not very good at telling you what they need. Henry Ford famously said "If I'd asked people what they wanted they'd have said faster horses". Similarly in the ironing market people might say 'more crease-busting power'.

Uncovering opportunities that people can't themselves articulate requires an observational, ethnographic approach.

We recruited participants in different parts of the country, experiencing water of different levels of hardness, and with different attitudes to ironing. Then we spent time with them in their homes discussing their garment-care routines and observing them doing their ironing. We also talked to them about their attitudes and behaviours towards sustainability, and the brands they valued in this space. We were accompanied into the field by members of the Morphy Richards product innovation team and representatives from their industrial design partners.

When we got back from the field we supplemented our findings by conducting an ergonomic analysis of the video recordings, helping to expose further areas of opportunity for enhancing the experience.



Co-innovation 2-day workshop with client and industrial designers

By identifying how the *real* ironing experience differs from that intended by manufacturers we were able to uncover a range of opportunity areas for transforming experience, and achieving sustainability benefits, that have implications for comfort, safety, performance and product longevity. We used these findings as basis to facilitate ideas generation with the client and their industrial design partner, to break out of some of the conventional notions of ironing.

What Morphy Richards had to say about our research

"The insights we gained from *new experience*'s ethnographic research were highly actionable allowing us to prioritise a range of ideas for our product roadmap" *Mike James, Director of Product Development, Morphy Richards.*

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