

Design for Product Care

Product care is defined as all activities initiated by the consumer that lead to the extension of a product's lifetime. It includes repair and maintenance, and also preventive measures, such as protective covers for smartphones, or a general careful handling of the product. Product care is one possibility to extend the lifetime of a product, because it keeps the product in a usable and appealing state for a longer period of time, thereby postponing its replacement by new products.

An issue of product care is that it heavily relies on consumers' behaviour once the product is in use. Research has shown that consumers recognize the need to take care of their products. However, consumers often fail to include these activities in their daily lives. As a result of this value-action gap, consumers do not make optimal use of many products' potential lifetimes thus retaining a less sustainable way of consumption. Aiming for a Circular Economy, consumers' product care behaviour should ideally increase. The design of products and services can be a valid approach to achieve behaviour change.

Therefore, the main research question of this thesis is: How can design foster product care among consumers?

The thesis presents the current state of product care among consumers, which serves as a basis for design strategies to foster product care. We also developed a scale to measure product care, and explored product care in access-based product-service systems. Based on the insights of this PhD project, designers can adjust their design in such a way that care activities are more likely to be executed.