



News Release

Low-emission and aging-resistant coatings for a pleasant tactile sensation

The feel-good factor for cars

Soft-touch coatings also used in the Sports Car of the Year 2007, the Audi R8

Leverkusen, March 6, 2008 – The fingers explore the material, stroking the surface gently at first, then more forcefully. Hundreds of tiny sensory cells in each finger tip collect data each millisecond, measuring flexibility, roughness and temperature, then sending the information gleaned through the nervous system in the form of electrical impulses. The recipient, the brain, processes this information into a tactile sensation: high or low quality; soft, sticky, velvety or hard; cold or warm; pleasant or repulsive.

The astonishing thing is that a coating layer only a few hundredths of a millimeter thick can drastically alter the tactile perception of a material or a component. “Coating manufacturers can elicit just about any tactile sensation by varying the formulation and by their choice of raw materials,” says Dr. Christoph Irle of Bayer MaterialScience. The expert from the Coatings, Adhesives, Sealants Business Unit considers the variability and versatility of coating technology to be a major advantage over the use of plastic skins to improve the way objects feel, the sensation which experts refer to as “haptics.”

That feel plays a decisive role in “buy or don’t buy” decisions for consumer goods such as mobile phones or MP3 players is obvious. But car makers have long known that it is not just technology or appearance that determines how well a vehicle model is received. One prominent example: In its R8 sports car, named “Sports Car of the Year 2007” by a panel of experts at the “AutoBild” monthly, Audi uses “soft-touch” coatings formulated with raw materials from Bayer MaterialScience. Other car makers also use them to coat such things as consoles, door handles, door trims, arm rests and glove box covers to lend a feel of quality to their cars’ interiors. Customers consider these cars to be of high quality and feel good when sitting in them – often without really knowing why.

But pleasant tactile sensations – particularly in a car interior – are only worth something if combined with an equally pleasant “atmosphere”. “Waterborne soft-touch coatings formulated with Bayer raw materials have very low emissions. In addition, they are applied only in thin coats and, unlike some plastic skins, they contain no plasticizers,” adds Irle.

Today’s soft-touch coatings based on raw materials from Bayer MaterialScience stand out in comparison with the first generation introduced to the market in the 1990s by the fact that they hardly age at all. Their haptic characteristics and their resistance to cleaning agents change only minimally after years of exposure to moist, hot air. Light and contact with hand creams or sunscreens also have a much reduced impact compared with previous soft-touch coatings. “Thanks to intensive development work by our Business Unit, we can now offer raw materials for waterborne soft-touch coatings that satisfy even stringent requirements for resistance to moisture, yellowing and chemicals,” adds Irle. Good news for not just the fingers, but also the eyes and brain of every car buff.

About Bayer MaterialScience:

With 2007 sales of EUR 10.4 billion (continuing operations), Bayer MaterialScience is among the world’s largest polymer companies. Business activities are focused on the manufacture of high-tech polymer materials and the development of innovative solutions for products used in many areas of daily life. The main segments served are the automotive, electrical and electronics, construction, and the sports and leisure industries. At the end of 2007, Bayer MaterialScience had 30 production sites and employed approximately 15,400 people around the globe. Bayer MaterialScience is a Bayer Group company.

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