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Innovators tap into customers' emotions

Innovators from the region's small and medium-sized firms are set for a boost from a new £12 million programme to help them design products which appeal to customers' emotions.

The new International Institute for Product and Service Innovation (IIPSI) at WMG at the University of Warwick will ensure that the sound, look and feel of West Midlands-made products are appealing to users.

The scheme, which will give firms access to world-leading product and service design technology, is jointly funded by the European Regional Development Fund and the University of Warwick in a partnership brought together by regional development agency Advantage West Midlands. It will have its own dedicated building by the summer of 2012.

Warwick Manufacturing Group director Professor Lord Kumar Bhattacharyya said: "Today even the most low-tech of products benefit enormously from the latest design technology in creating them and fitting them for the marketplace. The best product design technology will ensure that even the sound, feel and look of a product is perfected and even tailored to the customer's desires.

"This new International Institute for Product and Service Innovation will allow Midland SMEs to find the technology they need to deliver that customer expectation."

The institute will offer expertise in areas like multifunctional polymers that enable advanced electronics and functionality to be embedded in 3D plastic moulded components, and digital design tools that will allow the creation of virtual products.