



A smart Portfolio doesn't need categories

How ZEISS SmartLife covers most consumers

October 2019 | Interview with Manuela Weinreich, Head of Product Management Lens Designs at ZEISS Vision Care, on ZEISS SmartLife as a complete premium portfolio.

One lifestyle for people of all ages requires solutions that go beyond the limits of traditional eyeglass lens categories. ZEISS SmartLife makes this possible. For eye care professionals, the portfolio approach holds a key benefit in that it caters to most consumer needs with just one solution.

Why was ZEISS SmartLife launched as a complete portfolio?

When ZEISS develops a new product, we always keep an eye on the latest scientific findings, draw on market observations and, most importantly, put ourselves in the consumers' shoes. At the very beginning of the development process for ZEISS SmartLife was the knowledge that almost everyone now leads a dynamic lifestyle. We're always connected, always on the move, always in touch with the world and our loved ones. And it's precisely this lifestyle that impacts our visual behavior and, ultimately, the lens design – no matter how old we are.

Launching a customized product like single vision or progressive lenses would not have done this justice. Consumers don't think in terms of such categories – they're simply interested in getting the best possible solution. So this is a great time to come up with a comprehensive portfolio in order to relax the traditional boundaries between single vision, digital and progressive lenses. Regardless of their age, everyone who qualifies for lenses from the latest ZEISS premium portfolio can say "These are *my* ZEISS SmartLife lenses and they will serve me well."

Does that mean categories like single vision or progressive lenses have been eliminated?

Yes and no. In our IT processes and ordering software, these categories will still be used because they are a traditional part of ophthalmology and remain an industry standard. However, eye care professionals no longer need these categories to explain the product to consumers.

Why is now the right time?

It's important to understand that ZEISS SmartLife was based on the latest studies and created to advance existing technologies as well as new innovations. We have expanded our expertise and leveraged brand-new findings. ZEISS launched digital lenses back in 2015, which created a bridge between single vision and progressive lenses. Initially, it was important that digital devices reduced the reading distance, for instance when reading an article on a smartphone. This remains true to this day and has taught us a great deal. Nevertheless, the world is developing rapidly, and so too is our lifestyle. These days, we read digital content all the time. Digital is the new normal – it's a hygiene factor, it's part of our everyday life and it hasn't just transformed our reading habits. Nowadays we interact with many devices simultaneously. This opens up completely new application areas. Take smart homes, communication with friends and family, streaming services, health-related data on a smartwatch, voice assistants, and a whole lot more.



I believe this is linked to reach and dynamism. This assertion is supported by the figures, as sales of internet-capable devices are rising. These days, we don't just use a tablet but in fact many devices, and often all at once. Many of us really are always on. That's why it's no longer about reading a lengthy article but shifting our focus between multiple devices, as well as focusing in several distance zones when out and about. So we have to factor all these aspects into our lens design. We are witnessing a blurring of the analog and digital worlds: We no longer check our smartphones at our leisure, we do it while we're on the move; we're available and connected anywhere – with family and friends and even with our refrigerators. Even when engaging in purely analog activities like cooking, we consult recipes on our tablets. We meet consumers who can't imagine a time when the world was any different.

That's why this is the perfect time to launch a modern lens that caters to precisely this lifestyle and the new visual habits of our adult consumers.

How does the ZEISS SmartLife complete portfolio benefit eye care professionals?

The biggest advantage concerns client consultations. At the end of the day, ZEISS SmartLife means eye care professionals only need to explain one product to most consumers who need everyday glasses, simply by tailoring a sales pitch to their particular case and only describing one technology package. Every coating, every color and a range of customization options are available in one product: ZEISS SmartLife. It facilitates consulting and sales like never before.

What's more, ZEISS has developed a new tool for taking a patient's history: the ZEISS Smart Guide, which was tested in collaboration with Aston University in Birmingham and Bayfields Opticians at several locations across the UK. This small communication tool uses three simple questions on a patient's age, visual impairments and current lens solutions to recommend the ZEISS SmartLife lenses that would be a good fit. I believe this is a great way of getting started with the new portfolio. The lenses themselves are packed with technology and innovations. We've now successfully condensed this in a way that allows eye care professionals to work quickly and assist consumers without delay. This makes it incredibly easy for novices to get to grips with the portfolio, because let's be honest: some of the technologies that go into modern ZEISS eyeglass lenses are highly complex and not always easy to explain. At the same time, people who are passionate about the technical details or who enjoy focusing on the innovative technologies can delve deeper.

That may sound like a lot to take in at once, i.e. a completely new portfolio. But ZEISS SmartLife is just as smart as it claims to be. We have integrated many aspects that eye care professionals are familiar with from the ZEISS portfolio expansion so that they can continue placing orders as before. The different customization and pricing levels have been retained. It therefore covers all common requirements of everyday glasses. And even those who aren't yet familiar with the ZEISS system will see we're doing our best to be as user-friendly as possible.

I believe the portfolio's greatest benefit is that eye care professionals continue to focus on their customers in a way that's not limited by the familiar categories and thus find the best solution for them.