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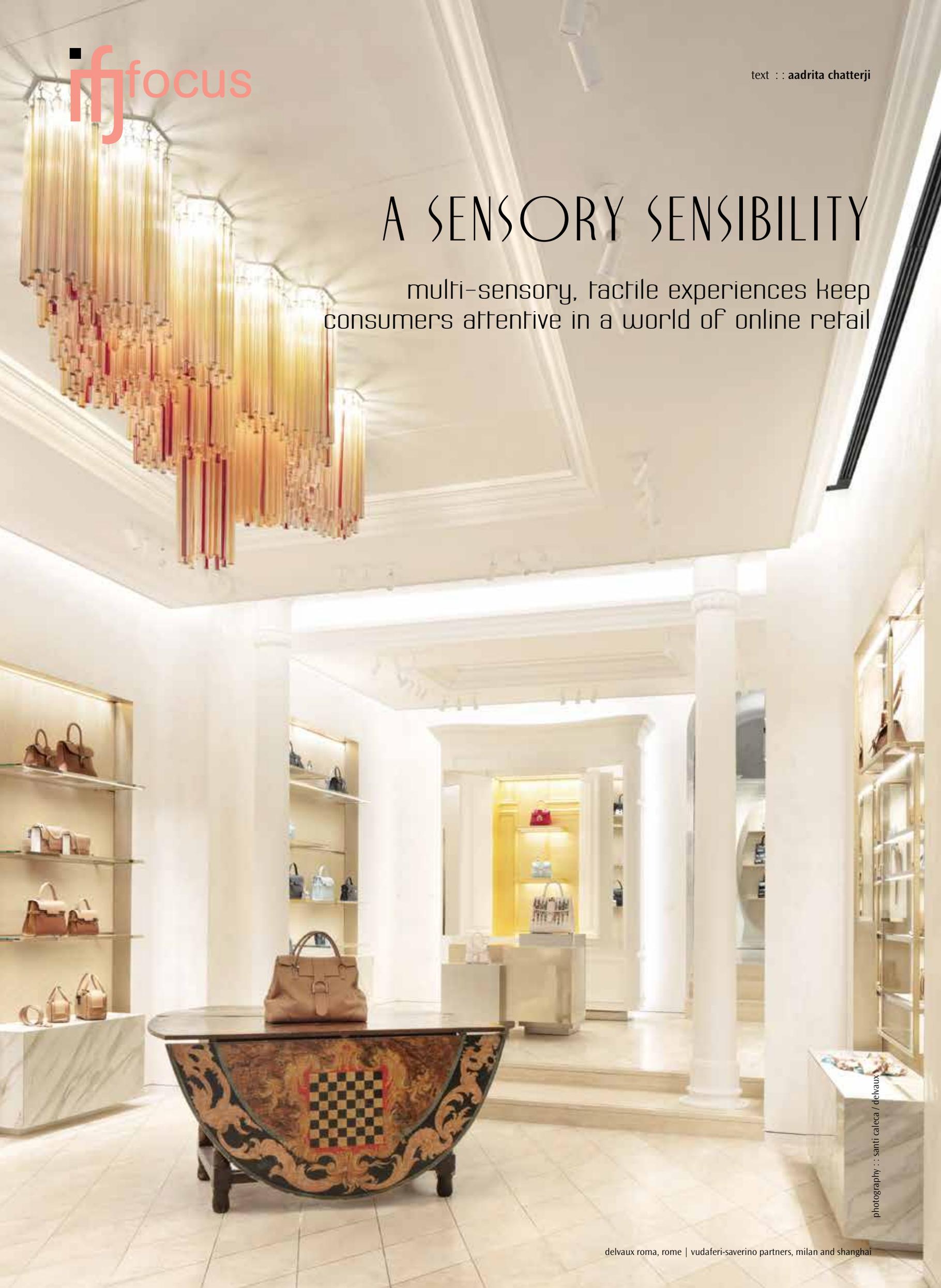
Whatever the keywords for this decade be, one needs to be essentially responsible and responsive towards architecture and the community.

AR. SOURABH GUPTA
Studio Archohm



A SENSORY SENSIBILITY

multi-sensory, tactile experiences keep consumers attentive in a world of online retail





photography : : ankush maria

hsj, lucknow | rmdk, new delhi

current scenario

Three factors have contributed to the success of modern retail –higher disposable income, the growth of the nuclear family and social media. Higher disposable incomes have inspired the increase of mom-and-pop shops and big-box retailers alike; while every high-end retail store has a social media presence, and a tech-savvy generation knows how to engage with its aesthetics and ambience.

The retail industry is largely dominated by the unorganized market (88 per cent), while the organized sector is valued at USD 95 billion – making up 12 per cent of the same (Retail Industry Update: Outlook 2020). Met by constant demand and innovation, Private Final Consumption (expenditure incurred on final consumption of goods and services by resident households and non-profit institutions) is expected to increase by 10-11 per cent year-on-year till FY21. Many factors have contributed to the prediction that the industry will show a growth of approximately 7.3 per cent in the same timeframe (Retail Industry Update: Outlook 2020).

A higher consumer demand, better jobs, and standards of living, greater participation of the producer, brand awareness and discounted pricing have contributed to this. There has been an increase in the earning population (between 15-60 years) from an average of 55.4 per cent in 1991 to 66.6 per cent in 2018 (Retail Industry Update: Outlook 2020). A higher female working population has opened up the doors for a one-stop-shop concept, where everything is available under one roof along with stores resizing supply chain operations, just-in-time techniques, warehousing, and storage.

Nuclear families have contributed to the present discretionary spending statistics, which had risen to 38 per cent in FY16 (Retail Industry Update: Outlook 2020). They have led to the growth of population, urbanization, and shortage of large real estate for retail purposes. The greater purchasing power has shifted the focus to luxury and semi-luxury products, which again has led to the emergence of luxury and specialty retail.

gaurav gupta flagship store, new delhi | studio lotus, new delhi



photography : : andre j fanthome

ekaya thanan, new delhi | studio lotus, new delhi



photography : : andre j fanthome

client engagement

These factors present myriad challenges when designing for retail spaces. Ar. Shifaa Kalra, RMDK, New Delhi, says, “The consumer is always in-charge or is the utmost priority. Retailers need to keep this in mind and reach out for a more social and emotional connection rather than the stores being just functionally efficient. They need to have a personal, visual and contextual identity that can connect with their target audience.

It is more and more about the experience rather than just the product that artfully combines human and digital engagement.”

As architects and designers create client engagement, they need information on the target audience, merchandise, location, footfall, budget, brand tonality, and future vision. Other aspects of the design such as material, color, lighting, texture, space planning, and ambience follow the client brief. Space is distributed to reflect brand identity and deliver customer experience. Ar. Akshat Bhatt, Architecture Discipline, says, “Being clear and distinct in communication and design language is foremost to developing an immersive experience for the consumer. As a designer, it is essential to understand the brand, its identity, what it is trying to communicate and then use that to develop a transcendental space. The experience has to be memorable and visually impactful. The essence of the brand has to be summarized visually and communicated across to the consumer.”

Des. Vivek Singh Rathore, Salient Design Studio, emphasizes the need for interiors that depict the retail store’s concept rather than simply combining dramatic, unrelated elements. He says, “Understanding the demographics of the clients and their purchasing power is the key. Reverse-engineering is employed to create a design that is suitable for the targeted audience.”

Rahul Bansal, Partner, Group DCA, agrees that context drives design. “At DCA, the context of the retail space is the biggest factor that drives its design. The location and the target clientele need to be identified to develop the most suitable design language. The city, locality and footfall and the purchasing power of the clients are factors considered while developing this language. Also, cues are taken from the product and the service to be provided to ensure that the interiors depict the story or relate to the same – rather than having irrelevant elements that come together.”

fancy pants, mumbai | quirk studio, mumbai



boutique priya, chennai | kumar consultants, bengaluru



photography :: andre | ianthome

challenges

Designing an impressive retail space is a challenge in itself. Ar. Leena Kumar, Kumar Consultants says, “The specific challenge is to be noticed by the target shopper in an oasis of shopping spaces, commodities, and competition. The design needs to convey the merchandise and the prices anticipated to the shopper, even before he/she enters the space, as this is very often the deciding factor.”

Kalra adds, “Designing for retail spaces is challenging given the dynamic nature of the consumer market and the diversity of its users. No singular design works for all as every product is unique and carries its own set of requirements. As designers, we have to ensure a universal as well as global appeal while designing any project. Retail also demands precise planning and highly functional spaces, with an innovative visual appeal that can set each project apart from other stores.”

tribhovandas zaveri, noida | group dca, new delhi



photography :: saurabh suryan and lokesh dang

shakuntalam, noida | rmdk architects, new delhi

trends 2020

According to the Retail Potential Index of the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), there is untapped potential to be explored in Delhi, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Karnataka (Retail Industry Update: Outlook 2020).

There is also a shift within the organized retail market. A sense of hyper-personalization, convenience, and experience comprise the customer's experience of luxury.

Sustainable design, which is closer to nature, customized and inclusive is increasingly more important and incorporating local elements into the retail design has grown exponentially. However, the biggest trend in retail is social media-worthy and selfie-friendly aesthetics, which are spread word-of-mouth by the 'now' generation. Bhatt says, "This particular generation of users and viewers can grasp things very quickly. There is no space for superficial fluff in most design settings or design traditions. You need to be clear, direct and focused in your communication." Minor themes unrelated to the product are discarded, and the brand perspective is emphasized throughout the design.

Many high-end retail stores now offer café or other refreshment services to

expand to a wider audience, which opens up a multi-sensory experience. Bhavsar and Ajmera say customer experience is king. "The space should appeal to all six senses by incorporating a sense of smell, touch, music and visual aesthetics which would lead to a feel-good experience." They caution against not keeping up with the trends: "Competition has increased tremendously because of limited disposable income, ensuring the survival of the fittest. Therefore, people are pushing themselves to create brand recall and brand identity. Customer experience has taken the front seat and basic shops and stores have been forced to either drop out of the race or take that extra step towards creating a valuable customer experience."

Yasmin Al-Ani Spence, Director, WilkinsonEyre, London, concurs saying, "We are seeing more and more spaces which create fun and social environments. Customers can now use the retail space to meet, listen to music, eat, drink and socialize. Over the last few years, big brands have hosted in-store collaborations with contemporary and up-and-coming brands, further catapulting the physical space into the consciousness of their customers. It is this sense of place; being a part of something exclusive which will draw the customer back. Designers need to constantly reimagine the physical space to deliver engaging and customer-focused experiences."

Architects and designers face other unavoidable issues when designing projects, which intensifies the pressure on their creative skills. Designers Disha Bhavsar and Shivani Ajmera, The Quirk Studio, Mumbai, say, "We work with strict and non-flexible deadlines because the clients want to shift in without any delays that would jeopardize their work. The workspaces are usually acquired on lease by the clients who put a further budget and time constraint on the project. When designing a retail space, we have to work meticulously and make sure that the product is the hero and the interior design only adds to its value and does not take anything away from it. A balance between the aesthetic and functionality is crucial."

The uprising growth of the e-commerce industry has played a role in the seeming decline of brick-and-mortar retail spaces. Bansal explains, "Initially, the trend was to invest in a new design every five years. However, with interiors becoming more expensive as an investment and footfall reducing over the years, things have changed. Retailers now insist on sustainable design which has a long-lasting appeal and are focussed on deriving value for money."

photography :: lara swimmer



filson seattle, seattle | heliotrope architects, seattle

In terms of technology, smart shopping carts, touchless transactions and checkouts, and automated product delivery have made an appearance – which has led to a seamless shopping experience for all. Today, robots analyze various human factors such as DNA, eye movement, mood analysis, image recognition and other emotional data to customize product packages. The use of smart speakers and chatbots has increased from 14 per cent in 2017 to 27 per cent in 2018 (Retail Trends, 2019). Approximately 78 per cent of the millennial generation spend on the experience itself and buy purchases corresponding to the same – as compared to 39 per cent of the older generation (Retail Trends, 2019). Spence says, “Millennials and Generation Z are the target market for a high number of brands and how they shop

is greatly influencing the retail experience. Unlike generations, before them, they do most of their shopping online. They want to feel that their experience and their purchase are unique. This has made designers work even harder to pull customers to an in-store purchase... The shops take the customer on a targeted, stimulating journey, something which is hard to capture online.”

Rathore is pleased to note that the retail store is flourishing in tier 2 and tier 3 cities. Real estate is more affordable there, which allows for impressive façade designs and larger showrooms. Also, such cities boast a higher disposable income, which motivates the development of larger retail spaces anticipating more footfall.

photography :: jeetin sharma



forest essentials, jodhpur | architecture discipline, new delhi



photography :: timothy chase

fornasetti, london | brinkworth, london



the terramater, amritsar | renesa architects, new delhi

photography : : niveditaa gupta



the good suit co.,chandigarh | rmdk architects, new delhi

photography : : niveditaa gupta



my paperclip flagship store, gurgaon | sync design studio, gurgaon

photography : : rohan dayal



hsj, lucknow | rmdk, new delhi

photography : : ankush maria

future

Kumar says shopping has become a comfortable addiction in the age of fragile human relationships. The emergence of by-appointment visits and chatbots heightens the luxury experience as well. Retail is expected to reach USD 1.1 trillion by FY20 and revenue via brick-and-mortar experiences is expected to increase by Rs 10,000-12,000 crore by FY2020 (Retail Industry in India, 2019).

In spite of the impending threat posed by e-commerce, most architects believe that offline retail stores are not in danger. Bhatt says, "The physical experience of a space is a memorable one. Nothing can compete with that. To me, it's analogous to drawing by hand on paper vs drawing on a computer. There will always be an endearing quality to a physical space. It's the same as when you get a brand-new book and you flip through it. Physical books remain an extremely popular medium for the consumption of literature. The same applies to retail spaces. Physical spaces if done well and in a non-generic memorable manner will be able to give you a transcendental experience of whatever it is you are trying to sell or expose the world to." ifj

DELVAUX ROMA, ROME

Vudaferi-Saverino Partners, Milan and Shanghai

Design brief and aims

To design the flagship store of this Belgian luxury brand, in Rome, blending the spirit of an ancient Roman house with an ironic and modern twist.

How this was accomplished

Located in a historic building in the Piazza San Lorenzo, Lucina, the Domus Romana, or typical Roman house of upper-class Romans in ancient Rome, is the motif of the 135 sq. m. flagship store. Requiring a balance between the boutique and this traditional layout, the design is divided between the atrium (entrance), tablinum (living room), peristilum (the inner courtyard) and the triclinum (formal dining room). The entrance floor is done in Travertino Navona marble in a lozenge pattern with brass inserts.

The customer is welcomed into the first two rooms of the 'domus': the atrium and the tablinum, where a rare, original Venini chandelier stands out. The chandelier is made of 500 hanging glass rods in the shape of Fiocco di Neve, and illuminates a wooden sculpted and painted Italian gaming table from the 17th century. Accessories from the Delvaux collection are arranged around the rooms, recalling a modern Domus Romana. A pale gold patina on the interior walls by the artist Filippo Falaguasta emanates warmth.

The shopping experience continues in the Triclinum, the dining room, which has

been revamped into a VIP room. Guests are welcomed with vintage sofas and armchairs upholstered in grey velvet and a 1950s FontanaArte coffee table.

Happily ever after

The Delvaux Roma is a warm and friendly store, full of references leading guests to discover their home collection as well as appreciating Delvaux's Belgitude.

