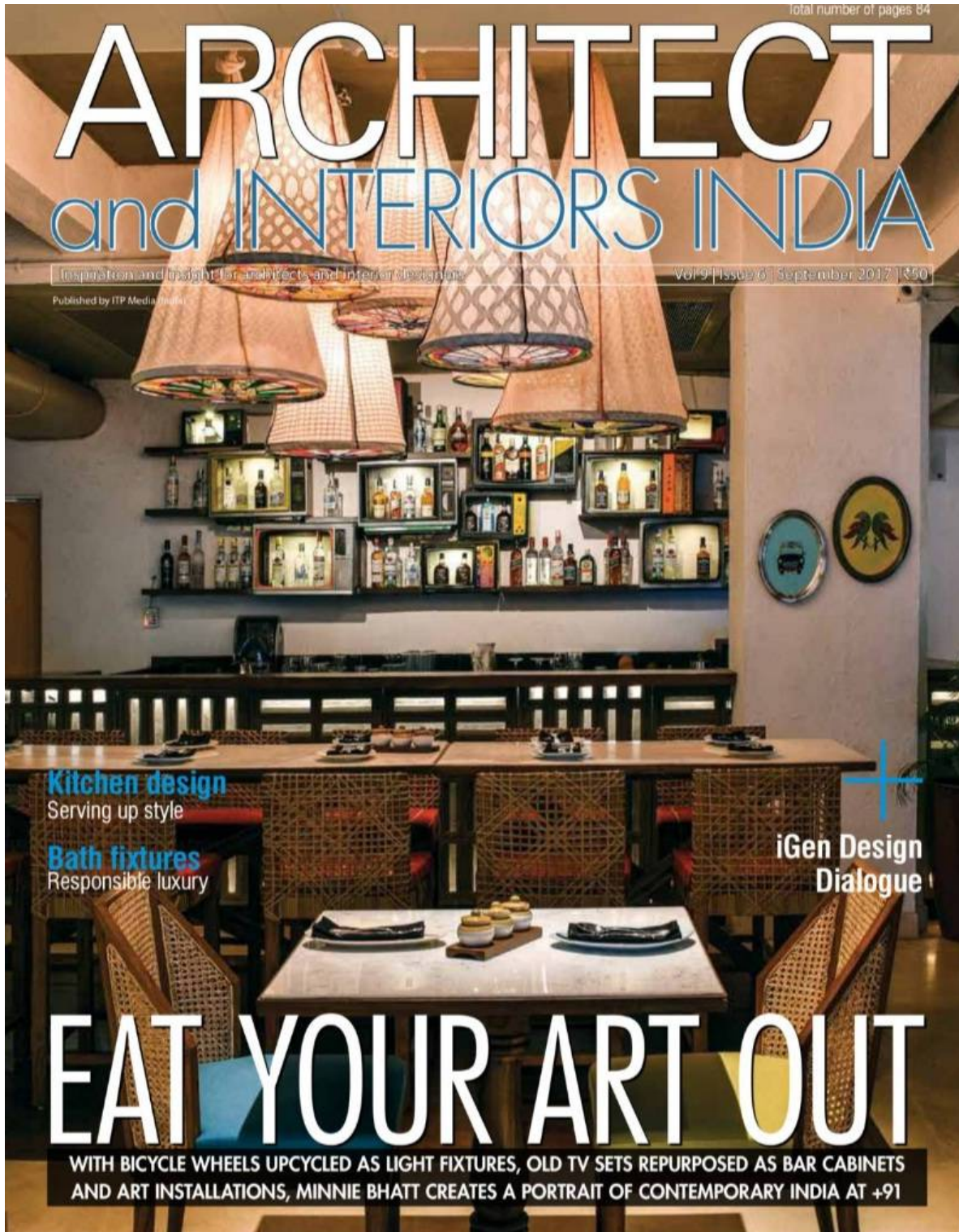


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FEATURE KITCHEN DESIGN

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WHAT'S COOKING

GOOD-LOOKING KITCHENS OF TODAY ARE VIRTUALLY THE REALM OF DIGITAL DESIGN SPECIALISTS

BY CAROL FERRAO

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As our life becomes more tech-driven, many in the architecture and design community wonder if technology will replace them in the coming future. While we hope, and even believe, that human ingenuity cannot be replaced easily, there is one design space that is undergoing a virtual transformation. Modern kitchens are being designed on apps and interactive software, and almost completely delegated to third-party suppliers by architects themselves. As a specialised field, it has evolved considerably, and the latest transformation has been the digitisation of kitchen design.

Explaining its merit, Rakesh Kaul, president and chief executive, Consumer Products Division, HSIL Limited, says, "With multiple design inspirations available through platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest and interior decor magazines, home owners have an array of options to decide on the theme, colour and material. However, all this information is fragmented and unorganised, which makes the buying process cumbersome. This is where these platforms step in as expert companions to hand-hold the consumers through their entire kitchen design journey. Also, they will help brands reach out to the tech-savvy audience to help them in their decision-making journey."

This technological transformation in the marketplace has also brought in new players to compete in this arena. Take, for instance, Intex Technologies, which expanded its business portfolio consisting of mobiles and consumer durables and IT accessories to include furniture and interior solutions. The intention is to blend technology, innovation, contemporary design and aesthetics with consumer-friendly pricing. Which is why Rajiv Kapoor, vice-president, Intex Technologies - Furniture Division, sees great benefits in the digitisation of the design process. "Virtual platform helps in presenting a number of designs with good floor plans. Customers can view the options from different angles. It also enables us to marginalise complaints and other issues related to measurements, placement and workability."

For solution providers, this is an appropriate step forward that will take design to the masses in the most convenient and accessible manner. "The shift minimises the space for error, gives more control to the consumers, and helps move the sector to being a more advanced and organised one. We want technology to empower people, to help take designs to the next level. We are coming up with a concept room soon, which will help customers design and see the visual in 3D," says Alok Duggal, COO of homestudio.com, an e-commerce company that promises the design, delivery and set-up of a German design kitchen to customers in 10 days, with a lifetime of service and five years' warranty.

With technology touching every aspect of our daily life, designing a perfect kitchen customised to specific needs and desires could become a "cakewalk" - as Subodh Mehta, head, Home Furniture Business, Godrej Interio, puts it. "Virtual platforms can help you to ensure that you are not hindering the flow, accessibility and organisation of a well-designed kitchen. It is a behavioural shift in consumers which will still take time to spread across India as a common practice."

VIRTUAL CHALLENGES

Making the design process more efficient and reliable, a virtually designed kitchen can avoid dependability on multiple sources to arrive at one self-fulfilling result. It can improve product presentation, and a variety of designs with colours can be showcased with different viewing angles and

1. A light-filled kitchen envisaged by homestudio.com, an e-commerce company.

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2. Godrej Interio offers modular steel kitchens that are geared for cooking Indian cuisine.

3. Steel kitchens by Godrej Interio come in several designs and with a variety of accessories.

4. Pure, clean lines characterise GRAFF's ME 25 kitchen series. With two spout styles and designer handles, ME 25 finds a perfect harmony between aesthetics and function.

effects. But on the flip side, Kapoor warns, over-dependency on software designs could also prove to be less practical, possibly resulting in disasters during execution. "More design options may hamper the process, as showing a variety means that the customer may decide on any colour, shade, hardware and accessory," he points out.

There is also the question of developing the right kind of design softwares, which will require regular upgrades with more reliable tools. Software and apps don't come cheap. "There are still no dedicated softwares for kitchen design available in the market, and developing one at your own cost will prove to be expensive. [But] yes, it will stand; as we are moving towards technology advancement, these apps will give better performance with improved accuracy," Kapoor believes.

Given that they can save on manpower, time and energy involved in a project, Mehta sees clear-cut benefits for these solutions in the long run. "The virtual platform creates a transparent approach that makes the consumer more aware and involved in the design process without losing his share of interest," he explains. However, he also notes a certain down side to it. "It requires skill development. Not everyone is up for this change, since they have been practising using old techniques. It does not offer the 'touch and feel' which the consumers prefer before choosing any product. It is also a one-time investment — cost of the technology and studio set-up [need to be considered]."

Advancements will need to acknowledge that kitchen de-

NEW IN THE MARKET

HSIL: Suited to the Indian market, HSIL's newly-launched models of auto-clean chimneys are paving the way for smarter kitchens. Zavia 90 Auto Clean Chimney, with a titanium hood and double metal blower, was voted Product of the Year by a survey conducted by Nielsen. Theo 90 Auto-Clean Chimney, on the other hand, contains a unique motion-control mechanism which allows one to switch on the chimney with the wave of the hand.

Häfele: For a discreet solution, Häfele's new range of ceiling hoods by Falmea flush into any standard suspended ceiling and are hardly noticeable. These hoods perform the same functions as cooker hoods, but with reduced noise. Its innovative designs show a bold new approach to extraction design with typical Italian flair.

The Darwin Sliding System, also by Häfele, is a one-front sliding system that works efficiently to expose or hide mono-block kitchens. All one has to do is open the fronts and then slide them into the cavities created on either side of the kitchen. Once the kitchen is not in use, the fronts can be pulled out from the cavities and slid back into the closing position — thereby hiding it.

Pfusch: The company has brought the German kitchen brand Eggersmann's Work's concept to the Indian market. The Work's kitchen emphasises on the functionality of the kitchen in addition to the aesthetics. The collection is crafted in black striped glass with modules in real wood veneer. It also has units in laminate with nano finish and soft touch effect.

nansgrone: nansgrone's kitchen mixers now feature the select technology in combination with pull-out spouts. Metris Select and Talis Select increase the operating range around the sink, making work in the kitchen considerably easier. The Select button is located at the top of the pull-out spout, and the swivel spout has a 150-degree range and can be turned in any direction.

GRAFF: The ME 25 kitchen series, with two spout styles and designer handles, finds a perfect harmony between aesthetics and function. Coordinating kitchen and bar faucet options give this minimalist series an added bonus.



KITCHEN DESIGN FAUX-PAS

Often, in the designing process, a few essential components get overlooked or completely ignored. Kitchen experts list some of those misses as well as the must-haves:

- Provision for fire extinguisher and smoke alarms needs to be taken care of
- A pull-out extended chopping counter can be a very important addition
- Trendy roof hangers can be used to hang small utensils
- A small blackboard for writing recipes, to-do lists, important tasks, etc, can help
- External gas pipeline is mostly not considered by designers and customers
- Most clients don't prefer the built-in microwave due to cost and space factors, but it makes the kitchen look better organised
- Separate sinks for washing hands and food should be considered for hygiene reasons
- Not considering electrical points for chimney and hob prior to designing, is a common issue
- Most of the time, false ceiling is not considered as customers don't want to spend more — but it helps with the concealed lights, cove lighting and exhaust vent.

Information: courtesy Rajiv Kapoor, vice-president, Intex Technologies - Furniture Division

sign is a combination of space planning, ergonomics, storage planning and aesthetics. As Jürgen Wolf, MD, Häfele India, explains, "Customers need to have an understanding of dynamic elements like ergonomics, thus an intervention of a consultant is always needed. Having said this, most customers are driven by aesthetics and, therefore, 3D visualisation tools will become more important. Some international kitchen brands have already started using virtual reality tools to give the customer a virtual walk through their personalised kitchen design. There is also a trend of showcasing life-sized projections on a wall via a projector, through which the customer can view their personalised design and can gain an understanding of how it will actually turn out."

These platforms should ideally be developed by kitchen appliance companies so as to help consumers make more sound decisions, according to Kaul. However, it could affect the business of offline traders — unless it is also implemented in the stores. "The balance between the online and offline platforms has to be maintained and, in fact, online tools should be able to drive consumers to offline channels for picking up the products in one place. While we are looking to do this in the near future, we would like to implement the same at the showrooms to benefit all parties involved," he states.

THE LATEST TRENDS

Design-delivery aside, appliances are defining modern kitchens with advanced functionality and sleek exteriors. Auto-clean and motion-sensor chimneys constitute a substantial chunk of the chimney sales, points out Kaul. In

the case of hobs, there has been a drastic shift in demand for Italian-type designs to brass burner designs that are more suitable for Indian cooking. "Customer are moving towards glass elements in their kitchen as that adds to the decor. This has increased the sales of chimneys, cooktops, hobs, built-in oven, refrigerators, etc. While walk-in or built-in pantries will be a norm for modular kitchens, coloured appliances are also becoming increasingly popular and helping to anchor a kitchen visually," he adds.

When it comes to colours, Mehta believes that modern greys will be the most sought-after for kitchens. While white cabinets will continue to stay popular, grey will also dominate in 2017 for cabinets and doors. "We will also start to see more copper-coloured handles, accessories and appliances coming through, as people try to find alternatives to stainless steel and black to complement their cabinets," he believes. Additionally, he sees colourful sinks becoming a focal point in neutral kitchens with the backsplash matching the selected hue.

Better organisation systems and compact solutions are also changing how kitchens are designed. Highlighting this trend, Duggal states, "Closet kitchen is now popular among

5. Hygiene solutions from Häfele include telescopic bins that allow efficient segregation of waste.

6. Hansgrohe's Matrix Select kitchen mixer offers unpreconceived freedom of movement. The water is turned on or off with the push of a button.

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7. Hindware's Zavia cooker hood has a double metallic blower, a double-layer conical SS baffle filter, one-touch control and superior-finish titanium hood.

8. With Intex Technologies' virtual platform, consumers can visualise a number of different designs from various angles.

bachelors, as they could just close the entire kitchen when they finish cooking; and it doesn't consume much space as well." These hideaway kitchen solutions respond to the space crunch in most urban homes and can also be an effective tool in creating seamless, clutter-free kitchens. Elaborating on this solution, Wolf states, "The cooking and washing areas can be contained inside one cupboard, which can be placed anywhere within the kitchen/living space. Hidden sinks, hidden storage and hidden cooktops – seamless designs can be created with sliding counters that fit over cooktops and sinks to hide kitchen elements. Kitchen island lifts can raise the counter to reveal hidden shelving storage underneath and clever cabinetry can conceal the appliances panel."

CHANGING LIFESTYLES AND DESIGNS

Kitchen trends will soon need to cater to aspects other than colour and better storage solutions. Modern home-

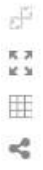
owners, especially urban folks, are developing a whole new approach to living – from composting at home, wanting a kitchen garden, to accepting the latest 'revolutionary' diets. These changing lifestyles will, sooner or later, affect the way kitchens are designed – making way for newer (and more) appliances, and unique storage options to meet such diverse choices. Indoor wall-hung planters might soon nudge in and demand a prominent place in the kitchen. If the new hydroponic gardening solutions are any indication, then the farm-to-table concept might have many urban seekers. All these changes could invariably alter how kitchens are perceived and designed.

With more and more people taking up cooking seriously and semi-professionally – from amateur foodies to bloggers, Vasant Vasudeo, managing director, Metrika, sees potential for gourmet kitchens. "Gourmet kitchens are equipped with professional appliances, sturdy and easy-to-clean surfaces, and storage for specialty items. Although this design may be as grand and opulent as the state-of-the-art decorated kitchen, you could bring some of these features that you love into your kitchen at home," he suggests.

Kaul warns about blindly accepting trends, saying Indian consumers can often get carried away and end up ignoring some practical problems they would eventually face. He cites the growing trend of open kitchens. "With the Indian style of cooking, cleaning is a challenging task, as the kitchen can easily collect grime. A closed layout will be less of a hassle to manage, since the fumes, smells and grime will be restricted to your kitchen and will cut down on unnecessary cleaning. Hence, consumers and designers have to keep the family size, habits, preferred cooking style and the location of the home in mind while designing kitchens," he explains.

Probably the most defining change affecting the kitchen segment is how accessible modern 'luxuries' have become.

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THE FUTURE OF KITCHENS

Moving forward, Rakesh Kaul of HSIL believes we can expect automation to become a defining element of modern kitchens. "Many devices will allow you to run your home from your smartphone. Also, people are becoming more sensitive about food waste and manufacturers are using [the latest in] technology to develop 'smart storage' that can keep track of all the items in the kitchen and their expiry dates," he states.

In a similar vein, Godrej's Subodh Mehta mentions innovations such as Smart refrigerators "delivering unparalleled level of connected functionality, food management/organisation and seamless family connections." No need to wonder and guess if there is milk in the fridge; instead of over-buying and wasting food, simply check the Smart app and find out exactly what you need and when you need it. "VUX (virtual user experience), the new control system by means of light projection, introduces a new era of appliance control in the field of kitchen appliances. Dishwasher, hob and hood can be controlled with this UI," he points out.

Food has its own culture, its own ceremonies in every society and group, asserts Vasant Vasudeo of Metrika. Eating brings people together, initiates discussions, bridges or separates people based on differences in taste. He predicts, "The mom will use a smart knife to cut carrots, the little boy will use a food sensor to know whether the bread in front of him contains gluten. The family will possess a 3D-food-printer able to print out dad's favourite four-cheese pizza; (there will be) a Smart scale, Smart fridge and all kinds of useful kitchen gadgets." That's a futuristic scenario, indeed!

9. Metrika offers a wide range of modular kitchen solutions to the Indian home-maker.

10. Trendy roof hangers from Eggersmann kitchens, brought to India by Plüsch.

11. Nüffe's range of lift systems primarily consists of Blum AVENTOS Lift Systems (with the option of installing handle-less lids).



Luxury is no longer restricted to the select few, but is being used for mass marketing, observes Vasudeo. "People have become richer, and luxury is a blurred genre that's no longer the purview of the elite. These people do not follow any set patterns and defy stereotyping. The source of their riches can be unclear, but they contribute the maximum to the purchase of luxury brands." Given the accessible EMI schemes, most people can accommodate luxurious kitchen designs that fit into their evolving lifestyle. Designing innovative solutions is only the first step, but making these solutions more accessible is what's changing modern kitchens for good. ■