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Soft Signage Making A Mark In Retail





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The Power Of Soft

From friends forwarding viral videos, to being interrupted by an ad instantly to the buzz on your phone of a promo message and a zillion e-commerce mailers that block your mail every single day...we are living in a sensory overloaded environment today! Subconsciously, all of us are waiting to be disconnected from all this communication. Which probably can happen only when vacationing in an untouched island destination or during

a long haul flight. We are now appreciating the still and static sense of things around us. We could say that the power of simple and subtle, is catching up with many brands who have sensed this evolved human factor. Opting this approach towards marketing, communication, design and products too!



In this issue, we take a look at the growing demand for soft or fabric signage among the retail environments. A step not just towards sustainable spaces, but also appreciated for its aesthetic value and ease in execution/ replacement, making it a very suitable choice in retail.

As a follow up to our VM&RD Awards special issue in March, we now feature the talent behind some of the prestigious awards. Romesh Sapra and Percy Kutar, talk about their projects Harley Davidson - Red Fort and Anita Dongre store respectively, which bagged the Store Of The Year awards. We also take a look at how the art of storytelling came alive at In-Store Asia 2018 Expo.

All this and much more from the world of retail design and visual merchandising!

We look forward to hear from you.

Cheers

Chanda P Kumar
Advisory Editor



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Soft & Powerful



Signage is an integral part of any retail environment. Last year itself, VM&RD estimated that top 25 retailers that occupy about 75 million sq ft of retail space use about 15 million sq ft of signage fundamentally as façade, interior, wayfinding and merchandise signages. The overall signage industry is growing at a steady CAGR of 21% (Source VMRD 2017 survey).

Following a global tide of moving towards textile keeping in line with both sustainability and aesthetics in mind, Indian retail sector is fast embracing soft signage, which also uses nomenclatures like fabric or textile signages. However, soft signage industry in India is still at a nascent stage contributing about 5% to the total signage printing (Source : Chemarc). The tide is expected to turn owing to Government legislation banning PVC materials, the rising concern on sustainability of store set-ups, logistical ease and above all, the aesthetics

of the communication. VM&RD talks to leading brands and retailers, along with some of the leading vendors who are fast joining the changing curve of the signage industry.

The green concept

One of the leading brand house of the world, Inditex, name behind leading fashion brands like ZARA, Oysho and Massimo Dutti and with over 1300 eco-efficient stores worldwide since 2007, made an announcement last year to bring all its stores under eco-efficient model by 2020. The benchmarks included giving priority to recycled or re-used materials and locally-sourced materials that can save energy in the course of extraction, manufacture and transportation. Leading British retailer Marks & Spencer started this journey even before and has two LEED-certified green stores already here in India one each in

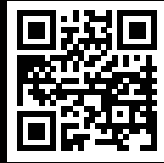
Delhi and Bangalore. The retailer's latest store design concept, Boutique, has been created to incorporate at least 20-25 fabric lightboxes inside a typical store premises (covering a space of about 20,000 sq ft -25,000 sq ft). To re-instate the use of fabric even further, the green-sensitive retailer is using these lightboxes even at branding outposts and at windows of their Lingerie & Beauty speciality store formats.

Swedish fashion giant H&M started their green store prototype globally back in 2013 to create store set up sustainability in terms of materials, construction, energy, operations and other aspects. Today, while many brands are yet to adopt fabric signage in their windows, H&M is effectively doing it.

The look-good value

Back in India, the aesthetics and installation ease of fabric signages seem to win over

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anything else. Sportswear brand PUMA, who brought the LEED-certified green store concept (only one store in Bangalore) right after Marks & Spencer did so in India, today uses 70% soft signages among their total signage proportion in a store. Keeping the sustainability part aside, Puma saw more dynamic communication coming through slim backlit visuals at category walls, in-store campaigns etc.

For a homegrown lingerie brand, Amante, with a relatively smaller store network with only 15 stores nationwide, soft signages made all the difference when the brand value was decided to be built around strong visuals. Apart from the main signage, Amante uses only fabric signages for sheer need of clarity of communication. Marginal difference in capex seems not to be an issue even for the brands who are looking at rapid and extensive rollouts. Slated to open 200 more exclusive stores by end of the fiscal, ABFRL's menswear brand Peter England is in the process to convert all its in-store signages and graphics into fabric materials at all its exclusive outlets.

Moving to one of the leading large format retail operators in India, Central revamped their store concept into a high-definition one with large store sizes. Central switched to "all-fabric" in September last year and today uses about 3000-4000 sq ft of signage in a typical store spanning between 1 lakh sq ft to 1.5 lakh sq ft overall.

Frontlit, backlit, the works..

There's huge demand of backlit signages specially the brands who are re-inventing their retail identity. For example, footwear major Bata, who has recently launched its Red Concept to make the old identity more exciting and sharp, is moving towards cleaner façade, newer headers and category signages. According to the brand, soft signage is vital to make these changes happen. Landmark's value fashion chain Max, when introduced their new identity last year, relied heavily on light boxes and backlit fabric way finding signages to revamp their stores. Future Group's path-breaking departmental store chain Big Bazaar, introduced its Gen Next concept about two years back and looked fresher and younger with substantial use of fabric signages. Reliance Trends, while on a fast expansion mode with around 435 stores across the nation, is using 70%-80% of soft signages of their total use of signage, owing to the aesthetics and flexibilities of the products.



Vidya Sagar, Head – Projects, Puma India

We have a mix of flex and fabric signages in our stores although the part of fabric is as good at 70% of total use. Though we started using it as sustainability as priority, but we realized that it's visually much more appealing. Interestingly, these options are more logistical as some of the in-store visuals come with new-age silicon sides as opposed to the earlier-used clip-on frames.



Sai Prasad, Head of Projects, Amante

Today, some of the biggest brands, who stand out for their unique store design, count on soft signage. It gives us the clarity that vinyl and flex could never give us. Hence, apart from our main signage, we have been using only fabric from the very beginning.



Deepak Chakravarty, GM – VM & Retail Marketing, Bata India

As we are in the process of revamping 200 stores to our latest concept, cleaner façade and sharper in-store graphics will play a pivotal role. We have already started relying heavily on soft signages for our windows and in-store visuals, category headers etc.



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As fabric signages are winning applauds for typically being backlit, are all the leading brands and retailers using backlit? Leading fashion retailer chain Lifestyle thinks differently. The large format chain, by business strategy, does not encourage strong visuals in order to retain an uniform approach across all brands' SISs, except for beauty brands who are using several types of soft signages.

Inching towards infrastructure

The Indian retail signage industry has been growing at about 21% (incidentally, the same CAGR of that of the retail industry). Today, although a mix of soft and hard signages, there's an undeniable demand in the market and talking on infrastructural parameters, machine manufacturing companies like Colorjet is promoting



Mohit Saxena, Head-VM, Peter England

Currently, we have about 700 stores and we are dealing with a few lacs of square feet. We want to move into recyclable and fabric materials as we can see the opportunity of recycling almost 90% of our in-store visuals, campaign signages etc. Through this, we will not only support environment but will also bring down our operational cost.

various range of Latex and sublimation machines, which are required for soft signages. However, only some signage makers are warming up to the idea of fabric signages.

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Among some of the leading service providers in soft signage, Mumbai-based Signext Display System has witnessed the changing curve about 2 years ago. The company today is integrating various other elements like acrylic letters, shopfitting accessories etc into their range of fabric light-boxes. Going on the product development route, Chennai-based signage manufacturing company Sinex Systems is developing its aluminium profiles to further ease the installation process of their range of soft signage solutions. Another leading name in this category Macro Media Digital Imaging has disclosed their plan to invest about INR 7 crores in Q2 and Q3 of the current fiscal towards infrastructure building of soft signages. Meanwhile, Bangalore-based Supra Digital, one of the early entrant in this category, is seeing hope in sustainability and making investment towards it. Mumbai-based The Flag Company is setting a perfect example of make-in-India practices by manufacturing almost all parts of soft signages in India (except for the LEDs) and offers longest width of textile without any joint.



Kapil Yadav, Head – VM, Louis Philippe

We moved to soft signages about 4 years back for the sheer comfort of logistics and aesthetic value. Today, 50% of our premium stores use soft signages majorly (except for exterior signage), while remaining use vinyl and not flex. However, we are replacing fabric in those stores too, as soon as we are bringing them to the premium level.



Pawan Nagarwal, Chief – Experience Design and VM, Central

Apart from our exterior signage, we moved to complete use of fabric signage in September last year and we are using a mix of various types of fabric signs including backlit, frontlit and light boxes etc. These products contribute substantially to our high-definition concept.

The impact of “soft”

As we conclude, it will be interesting to throw some light on the power of signage and communication in an impactful retail environment. Do you know that 70% of consumers

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Akash Kumar, Deputy General Manager – Visual Merchandising, Lifestyle Stores

We are using only 10% of fabric among our total use of signages. The only category in our stores that is using fabric is the beauty section. As our business strategy doesn't allow us much to experiment with backlit signages, which are famous as fabric products, we have stayed away from it except for few experiments with lit visuals in the escalators.

entered a store for the first time based on the signage, while about 55% are deterred because of poor quality of store signage? About 65% of browsers are believed to have converted into shoppers based on the signs that caught their eyes and about 60% of stores have reported an increase of about 10% sales simply by enhancing the visibility of their signage (Source: VM&RD Surveys). All the data contribute to the ever-lasting power of signage quality and there's also no denial that soft/fabric/textile signage does it more effectively than other media. There are challenges of incorporating them into exterior signages and there has also been resistance because of the price point which is about 20% higher than regular media. The good news is that leading



signage players are investing towards it and more interestingly, Indian machine manufacturers are contributing to the growth trajectory. Though in infancy, the tide is sure to take a turn and, it's also a turn towards a more sustainable and hazard-free retail environment.

Key notes :

- If we look at an aggregate, 40% of total-used signages in a typical store are fabric variations.
- The price of fabric signages is about 20%-30% higher than its closest competitor - vinyl.
- Soft is yet to make a debut in exterior signage as it can't withstand outdoor weather.
- The main cause of switching soft is primarily for aesthetic value in India, while, globally, it's an environmental practice.

- Average Indian signage industry is about 15 years while it's steadily decreasing as more new players are entering the industry. Amongst all, a small part is doing the business of fabric signages owing to the large investments it requires towards frames, latex and UV machines.

- Materials, LEDs and machineries are largely imported. •

Images courtesy : Respective Brands & Signext Display Systems

Satarupa Chakraborty



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Grunge to Opulence: Creating Iconic Store Design Concepts

The prestigious title of “Store of the Year” at VM&RD Retail Design Awards 2018 was won jointly by two projects – Anita Dongre Flagship and Red Fort - Harley Davidson outlets. The two spectacular stores came with strikingly different design languages. The former turned out to be a curator of all things “Indian” while the latter re-invents the cult motorcycle brand’s imagery in the most unpredictable way. VM&RD speaks to **Percy Kutar, Founder, 4.4 Design** who has designed Anita Dongre Store and Architect **Romesh Sapra**, about Red Fort - Harley Davidson, on these iconic store design concepts.



Romesh Sapra

“BEING FUNCTIONAL AS WELL AS FLATTERING IS THE KEY TO GOOD RETAIL EXPERIENCE TODAY”

While retail is all about creating “experiences” today, there is also equal emphasis on store rollouts across the country. How does one create the right balance here?

Economy today is experience-driven. The customer has always been the king and now it has gone to the next level. One thing we all have to remember is that experience creates memories for the customer. It’s an irony that brands are looking at rapid rollouts which is the result of crucial

competition, downturn of economy, overall business case and the hurry to get the ball rolling to take care of the expenses and to eventually start making profits in a time span which is shorter than anticipated. “Customer Experience” is the key in assisting the brands in fulfilling their eventual goals.

Harley is a legendary international brand. What were the challenges to incorporate their sensibilities in the given set up? How did you re-imagine the space?

Harley-Davidson being a cult is a challenge in itself. To keep up with the

Demi-God image of the iconic brand, the designs, material and workmanship had to be flattering yet very functional. In the given set-up there were many and varied challenges - aesthetical as well as functional. Being a warehouse, we were gratified with shed height at 25 feet- which was a visual treat though disaster for air conditioning. The landlord was reluctant to put new columns within the shed to create a mezzanine - which turned out to be a blessing in disguise, when we kept 40 feet freight containers on the ground to use them as roof of the mezzanine. These containers then became the highlight element, to our surprise. One very unique and a rare challenge was to



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control the over excited client who is a big biker himself and wanted to have a unique retail outlet for this mega brand.

What are your views on 'digital' taking over the 'experience' factor at retail?

As much as "hi-tech" and digital overloading we want, there's a crucial need for any space to be rustic and functional. To my surprise, all of a sudden, the

requirements have changed from human interaction to digital touch points. The store experience relies heavily on various Gizmos for customer experience - apps as soon as you enter the store, touch screens with all required information, digital bike configurators to customize your purchase, photo kiosks and immediate transfer onto social media etc. VR - Virtual Reality / Mixed Reality will be coming to the stores

sooner than one gets to know. Customers are given the shopping comfort as well as it's becoming easier to train sales staff by the virtue of technology. With digital experiences, things like aroma, lights and sounds are also becoming more and more important to add dimensions to any retail experience.



Percy Kutar

"THE GRANDEUR OF A RETAIL STORE CAN BE EXPRESSED IRRESPECTIVE OF ITS SIZE"

Experience is in the heart of all store design concepts, while equal emphasis is on store rollouts across the country? Can these go hand in hand?

Retail design is all about customer focus and experience and this can be made available whatever the retail format is. So yes, you can have a rapid rollout and still offer the customer an experience in sync with the values the brand wishes to communicate. The retail experience is not just about the space but includes the product itself as well as the customer service that the brand provides.

The Anita Dongre flagship uses lot of Indian art and crafts. How did you stay true

to this core essence of the brand and how challenging was it in creating the store?

The Anita Dongre brand espouses traditional Rajasthani arts and crafts in the design of their fashion collections and so it was logical that this craft would also find expression within the interior design of the store. Appropriate applications of craft were identified along with their respective craftsmen and all crafts were painstakingly executed by hand in their traditional way, even if the design sometimes had a modern twist to it. The sourcing was more exciting than challenging and involved a lot of travel to various places to find the right craftsmen, interact and fine-tune the design with them to finally meld it all together as envisioned.

The store is spread over a large space whereas space today is the biggest

luxury with brands/retailers/designers. What are your suggestions to create similar engaging experiences in smaller store formats?

This store being a flagship store is large in terms of the area, however an idea can be expressed and communicated irrespective of the size of the space. We have created smaller Pret formats for the same brand in malls as well as high street with areas as small as 1200 square foot and have successfully conveyed the brand story through retail design.

Satarupa Chakraborty

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Xiaomi & HRX: Taking The Fitness Trail

Xiaomi, India's leading smartphone brand recently held its first marathon 'Run with Mi: Powered by Mi Band – HRX Edition' in Bengaluru. In September 2017, HRX and Xiaomi jointly forayed into the fitness wearable category in India with the launch of Mi Band HRX Edition. Founded upon a common philosophy of providing high quality, innovative products and aimed at cultivating a healthy environment, #RunWithMi is an extension of the successful partnership between the two brands. In an exclusive chat with VM&RD, **Manu Kumar Jain, VP, Xiaomi and Managing Director, Xiaomi India along with Hrithik Roshan, Founder, HRX** talk about the smart fitness wear category, brand expansion and store experience. Edited excerpts.



and values you need to apply to any aspect of life.

Your best retail experience in India

Manu Jain: A restaurant in Bangalore, quite unique, as its in complete darkness. So you experience food without looking at it. Sometimes we really take our life for granted, where all our senses are working properly. Through such experiences, we see beyond ourselves.

Hrithik Roshan: I don't visit many stores. But I would hope that the HRX offline store which is going to manifest this year becomes the number one. The idea of involving technology to enhance customer experience and make it fun... is what we are looking forward to. ●

Chanda P Kumar

How would Mi Band stand out in this competitive fitness wear category?

Manu Jain: We have four products in this range, wearable Mi Band, and the newly launched Mi Body Composition Scale, Xiaomi Smart Shoes, Mi Smart Watch. Right now, its a small market in India as against smart phone market but growing rapidly, we estimate a sale of 2-3 million of these devices annually. Our brand of smart phones itself sells 9 million devices every quarter. But definitely this smart fitness wear category is going to grow well. The Mi Band- HRX Edition has been very well received by Mi Fans and efforts to offer innovative products to all our customers will remain consistent.

Tell us about the growth of HRX and expansions plans of the brand in the future?

Hrithik Roshan: We have a lot in the pipeline, HRX will venture into new product categories such as sunglasses, underwear, apparel and some in surprise categories. But what is really great is that a thought in my mind, has resonated so beautifully. Seeing HRX fly like this is something awesome. I'm not a businessman, but to see a desire for spreading the word on the benefits of fitness is amazing. I want everyone to know that this is one aspect of life that they own, and if they conquer this ... life is much easy. Fitness teaches you discipline, consistency, taking initiative

The Best of Lighting & Interiors

With the belief that good design can be great with effective lighting, Mumbai-based Align Grid is now focusing on providing lighting concepts and design for retail spaces.

Blending the best of interiors and lighting, Align Grid, primarily involved in interior design is now providing lighting concepts & design for Retail Lighting, Residential Lighting, Facade Lighting, Landscape Lighting. The company is now offering complete turnkey lighting solutions from design to execution, that aims to bring out the best of store design and retail environments.

Started in 2014, the company is spearheaded by Pravin Kadam, Principal Designer - Lighting, a professional lighting consultant with over 14 years experience in the field, ranging from Product Design to Conceptual Lighting design & consultancy for payback on opex and capex.



Speaking to VM&RD about the company's latest offering for the retail industry, Kavita and Pravin Kadam, say, "We are now offering complete lighting solutions, specially with LED product for retailers. We can work on product design, raw material to vendor development, sourcing, pricing. The idea is to provide complete turnkey solution for retail lighting in India."

The team at Align Grid come with expertise and experience in a wide range of disciplines including Interior & Lighting. Their continued success comes from the fact that every designer, each uniquely talented, shares a common vision and passion for making each project as successful as possible, both artistically and in relation to the needs of the client.



**Kavita Kadam
MD, Align Grid**



**Pravin Kadam
MD, Align Grid**

Countering the influx of retail lighting products coming from China, Align Grid plans provide these products & solutions from Indian manufacturers itself. "We see the import of Chinese lighting products running to over 1000 crores annually. But if we provide these solutions locally from Indian manufacturers of LED products, we can reduce the import of LED products from China. We can solve many issues related to cost competitiveness, product availability, topped with great finished product and reliable service to clients," says Pravin.



While Align Grid is primarily an interior design company, they are now looking at designing projects along with lighting concepts, and also work on sourcing the light fit-outs as a professional LED consultant. "With this, the objective is to

KEY STRENGTHS

- RETAIL STORE DESIGN CONCEPT
- INTERIOR DESIGNING
- LIGHTING DESIGN – CONCEPTUAL
- PRODUCT DESIGN – FURNITURE FITOUT
- PRODUCT DESIGN – LED PRODUCTS
- TOOL DESIGN – LED PRODUCTS
- PROJECT MANAGEMENT
- TURNKEY INTERIORS
- LED LIGHTING SOLUTION
- LED PRODUCT DESIGN
- TOOL DESIGN

deliver a good project where interiors & lighting are integrated, great finish and reduce the overall cost for the retail client. We are in talks with some brands at present. We look forward to collaborating with LED manufacturers, lighting companies and lighting brands to offer complete package of lighting solutions - design to execution." concludes Pravin. •

The Business of Design in Retail Experience



Surender Gnanaolivu

HONEY, I SHRUNK THE CRE!

The impact of technology on customer service in connected retail

Retail Technology has become an integral part of customer service today. Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, IoT, augmented reality and virtual reality combine with data analytics to deliver predictive personalized experience to consumers. This has given both the shopper and the customer relationship executive (CRE) the power of information literally in their hands.

Undoubtedly, the biggest disruption of this age that enabled this paradigm shift is the mobile phone. Who would have thought that this hand-held device, invented by Motorola in April 1973, would one day be our around-the-clock personal CRE? With this, consumers have the power to choose their shopping journey in terms of place, product and price at any time they choose to do so.

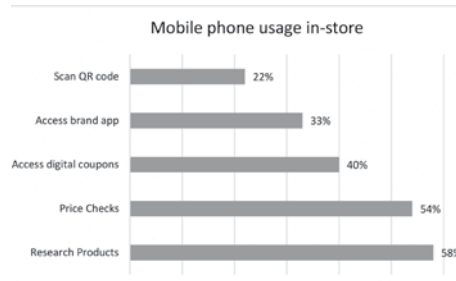
Today data is indeed gold! With Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence, the more we engage with this digital CRE, the more the data. The more the data, better is the predictive service. On the flip side, someone sitting on some cloud, who is not God, knows all about us and predicts our likes and dislikes based on our past behaviour! For those who fear data misuse, there is blockchain and cryptography that carries the hope of survival for humanity.

The sci-fi like Amazon Go store in Seattle brought imagination to life by showing how the digital CRE, in the hands of the customer, works right from customer recognition to billing when leaving the store. Their patented sensor fusion tech billing help deliver the promise of 'no lines, no check-out' for its connected customers. Jack Ma followed suit closely with the same concept in its Hema stores in China.

Augmented reality, in the hands of the consumer, helps offer unimaginable decision making tools to connected customers. Customers can see virtual models on their phone screens wearing the fashion garments

they choose, access product information by merely pointing their smart phone cameras at the product or get style tips from an interactive virtual stylist on chat bots.

This tech innovations are slowly becoming the new normal of service expectations from brands and their stores. The Retail Drive Consumer Survey, fielded by Google Survey highlights the key behaviour of connected



Those who think that technology is something for 'customer engagement', often interpreted by many as 'time-pass', and not for assisting in sale are in grave danger of soon becoming disconnected with the connected customer. Its time to realize that the CRE has shrunk into a palm sized interactive device that can deliver intelligent and empathetic service anytime and anyplace. I am not discounting the advantage of a live CRE using technology to enhance human touch to deliver the ultimate customer service. This phenomenon has impacted the way retail design and display is looked at today.

It has definitely added 'Tech' to its conventional

definition of being an 'Art and Science'. This has brought on the collaboration of design, display, digitization and data to enable the digital CRE to engage meaningfully with customers.

The new digitized Zara store in London is a great case study of the transformation of store experience impacted by the digital CRE using mobile digital tools for ultimate convenience and styling. This collaborated impactfully with brick and mortar embedded technology encouraging Inditex to focus on opening more omnichannel stores serviced by the digital CRE.

No more can retail design and display professionals ignore digitization, data and technology on their drawing boards. The digital CRE is here to stay to deliver truly engaging shopping journeys and I think there is no option for retail designers but to embrace this reality. Soon I see store designers and visual merchandisers designing environments directed by the objectives of a digital CRE to ensure stores they create attract and engage with the connected shoppers of today. How cool is that?



Doodle by: Surender Gnanaolivu

Surender has an experience of over two decades in the Indian retail industry in Retail Strategy, Store Design, Planning & Development, Retail Marketing, Visual Merchandising, Roll-out management, Retail Audits, Training, Writing and Retail Event Management. His career encompasses holding of senior positions as Executive Vice President & Head Marketing, Brand Experience, Store Design, Planning & Development at leading retailers like Shoppers Stop, Reliance Retail and Mahindra Retail and also as a senior retail consultant working with leading retailers and brands in India. He is currently a Sr Retail Experience Consultant. He can be contacted on surenderg.retail@gmail.com



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Keep 'em coming back for more

By Marthy Barmejo, Deputy General Manager – VM, Home Centre

The most important objective of visual merchandising and overall retail businesses is to engage and inspire shoppers, to encourage them to buy more of the products than they intend to thereby increasing sales, margin and return on space.

That engagement process of course starts even before they have set foot in your store. Creating a unique shopping experience in the stores and figuring out ways to keep customers coming back is no easy feat and I start first by identifying the strengths and weaknesses. If we look at this year's S/S'18 store revamp as a case study, updating the stores' appeal and revamping store layout and design - a major amount of inspiration comes from the fresh colour palette and themes that bring life to the store. Heading the VM team at Home Centre, I believe in constant change and my inspiration starts from the film that I watched, or the places that I travelled to or simply from streets' light colour and some inspirational VM stories that retail giants like Bloomingdale's or Crate & Barrel create.

The strength and range of creativity never ceases to amaze me. Being in this field requires you to honestly abide by the quote that says "There's more to this than meets the eye" and "see the extraordinary in the ordinary". They say, "Creativity has a wild mind and a disciplined eye". Portraying the brand at its best, we always focus on both convenience and proximity as consumers are always looking at ease and speed of browsing the store as well as the ability to spot merchandise that they are looking for. The role of good VM is to take these as cues and make "visibility" the king of your job. Pick up any product – we make sure of making it alluring by creating a story around it. We need to come up with constant newer ideas, which are often supported by detailed studying of the current trends around.

Doing everything with perfection and focusing on efficiency are important to make sure that the time spent by the customer in the store is worthwhile. Coming back to the SS '18 VM representations, the overall store ambience underwent a process of change this season - from coming up with unique inspiration to implementing the



I always make it a point to ensure ample interactions by conducting VM workshop in all the stores, involving the local VM teams. It is aimed to understand the store layout, design, adjacency and team work.



Marthy Barmejo (extreme right) with his team of visual merchandisers at Home Centre

ideas in reality. Creativity is experimenting, growing, taking risks, breaking rules, making mistakes and most importantly having fun. Change is expected to create a feel of instant gratification amongst the customers so that they find their purchases valuable. This season breaks all monotony with the introduction of the fresh colour palettes uniformly throughout the store. The combination runs from being subtle as teal and beige to bold as red and off-white and also soothing as green and white. The bedroom VM representation has been through a major makeover as we have moved from simple vinyl backdrop to interesting 3D patterned backdrop. The planograms are all created keeping the latest trends in mind and for the customers to experience the products in the best way possible. The focal points, windows and planograms are done as discovery of solutions to the problems faced in the previous season's layouts.



We always focus on both convenience and proximity as consumers are always looking at ease and speed of browsing the store as well as the ability to spot merchandise that they are looking for.

Every corner might have a planogram to be followed but we have always ensured that the personal touch makes it complete. The beautification of an area is a result of a lot of trial and error. The whole process is a give and take process where everyone inspires everyone, of course under the guidance of me as their mentor. Some of the footsteps I ardently follow in order to create impactful VM are understanding the theme, the importance of color, balance and functionality and welcoming individual wit and creativity. We merge all of that while believing the dictum, "You will never learn until you make mistakes". ●

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Macy's brings the floral grandeur

Macy's iconic Flower Show that was started more than 70 years back as a tradition to welcome spring at the store at Herald Square involves a ostentatious presentation of flowers that run in their in-store VM and window. The presentations also depict some of the classic fairytales and offers experiential opportunities inside the store.



Following a trend that lasted more than last 70 years to welcome Spring as a season, Macy's brings its Flower Show at their Herald square outlet involving over-the-top presentations of lavish gardens that showcase millions of live flowers, plants and trees from around the globe. Native to many different landscapes, Macy's Flower Show features floral material blooming in unison despite their unique climatic DNA. Taking root in unexpected settings such as store countertops, windows, and specially-designed architecture, including grand bridges, columns and topiaries, Macy's Flower Show is staged in distinct fashion at each of the three flagship locations nationwide.

This year's themed celebration takes inspiration from classic fairytales, princesses, evil queens, fairy godmothers and noble knights through a world of personified





flora and fauna. As visitors enter the show, they will have the ability to choose their own adventure, based on how they begin their trip through the floral fantasy land. In addition to the magnificent landscaped gardens, Flower Show spectators will have the opportunity to enjoy a host of special in-store events including floral, food, and fashion demonstrations, celebrity appearances etc during the show which will be showcased for two weeks.

The show is supported by Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Homewood Suites by Hilton and Sinclair Oil Corporation. •

Photographs

Diane Bondareff for AP

Satarupa Chakraborty

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Our world is driven by stories. From blockbuster movies that keep us on the edge of our seat to that intense short film on Youtube that went viral to the hilarious boomerang video shared with friends over Insta. Besides the social space, storytelling has always been big in the retail industry too, where brands engage the consumer with their story - one that he relates to, aspires to or simply loves it.

But very recently, I saw the power of storytelling at In-Store Asia 2018, the largest retail trade fair in the country, where B2B retail solution providers for the industry connected with the visitors in a more impactful way through storytelling. Stepping away from the conventional exhibition stall format...where 'It's all about the product', some of the exhibitors at In-Store Asia 2018 in Mumbai drew

in the footfalls by showcasing design concepts and philosophy, product relevance, abstract themes to just a social hangout space... that built in the curiosity among visitors in a brilliant way.

Here are some of the stalls that blended the power of design with the magic of storytelling to create inspiring stalls at In-Store Asia 2018:



4D

Multi sensorial concepts came alive at leading design agency Four Dimensions Retail Design stall, with elements that triggered the five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell and taste too! From various flavoured chocolate treats to recognising the divine smells of cinnamon and a tabletop with material palette which when pushed resulted in a video being played... it was great way to communicate the power of multi sensorial design in retail.

FOCUS LIGHTING

Focus Lighting, leaders in tech innovations in lighting, created their stall that offered an immersive guided tour of their solutions. The stall was spatially bifurcated clearly into the 'open stall' for product display and the 'closed stall' 'experience studio' for demonstrating their lighting solutions. The open display featured their innovations in light fitting construction and engineering, like the Invisible and the Array series, supported with phy-gital diagrams and description. The experience studio allowed visitors to experience in person futuristic concepts like the, wifi and bluetooth enabled, Tunable, Multiple-users and the Dimmable lighting solutions.



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CENZER

Hundreds of colourful butterflies caught my attention in Aisle B. Popping in, I expected to see a VM consultant or Prop company. But I was pleasantly surprised that this lighting company, took this creative approach to showcase how their product brought out the best of each colour. It was indeed a lighting stall in a totally new light!

MUTED SPACE

While a lot of design today is mechanical, there is a sense of beauty in anything made by hand. Muted Space, a young and vibrant design agency showcased their skills in varied design thinking, using common materials in the most unique way and also urging visitors to take the stand for adopting sustainable design practices through a sticker wall art. What's more they even made it simple for interested clientele by placing brochures of various design packages! Now that something cool!



02 JUNE DESIGN STUDIOS

Design thinking came out in the most vibrant and creative way at the 02June Design Studio stall, where the theme a fun, abstract and contemporary setup came alive with plants, telephones hanging off the ceiling, a revolving bug and more. Its was interactive, memorable and super fun!

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DISHA RETAIL

A leading player in the Indian shopfit business today, Disha Retail Fixture's pavilion at the expo was inspired by spacial design concept of visual connectivity and openness. The grid work and orange symbolised the brand, while the liner grid work creates a sense of space without visual barriers. Known for their customised fixtures, Disha Retail's stall was customised and fabricated at their facility showcasing their expertise in fabrication.



DOVETAIL

Well-known fixture & furniture maker and popular among the retail design community for three decades now, Dovetail created an abstract stall design. It was not about showcasing products but rather the abstract patterns on walls emphasised the strength of the company in producing fixtures with myriad materials, finishes and powered systems too!

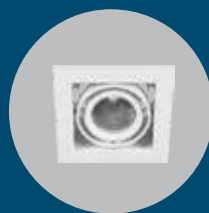
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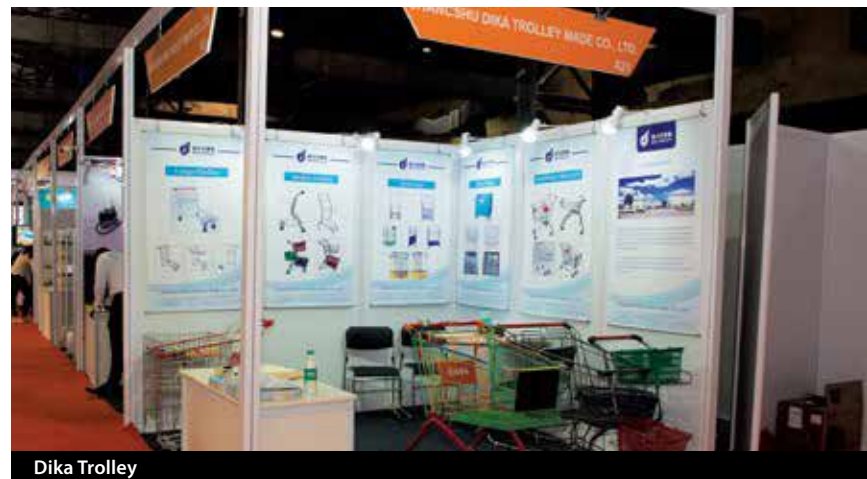
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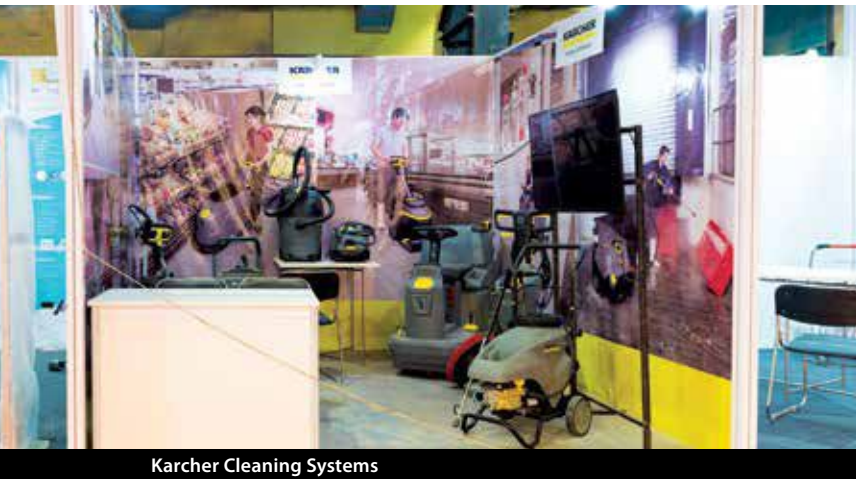
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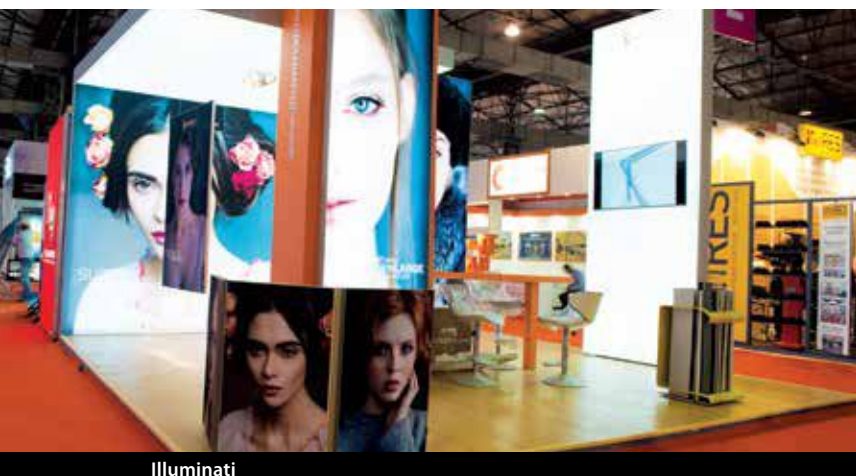
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Exhibitors Feedback

Charanjeet Singh, Director, Abstract Mannequins



We had a fantastic experience in In-Store Asia. We managed to get good clients in the show. Some of the big brands visited our stall. Every aspect of the expo was fantastic and the service was good from the organisers.



Sourav Banerjee, Director, Aditac Solutions



We have been participating in In-Store Asia for the last 10 years now. The experience is really good and the outcome of the participation has always been proved positive. The most interesting observation in these many years is the way we have developed our company, In-Store Asia has also developed itself – both towards excellence. I would like to see even In-Store Asia travelling beyond India as we, the service providing companies in retail, are pursuing global excellence in every way and we should get a chance to cater to even global brands and retailers.



Ankur Shah, CEO, Ankur Lighting



We are a debut-participant for In-Store Asia. The experience was good in terms of the walk-in. A feedback for the organizers is to provide a café sort of experience inside the venue would be great.



Ankita Karwa, Marketing Manager, BenQ



The quality of visitors at In-Store Asia 2018 has been very good and we hope to convert the enquiries into serious business.



Hitesh Jain, Director, Cenzer Industries Ltd



This is the first time we are participating at In-Store Asia. Apart from good number of visitors, what amazed me is the kind of efforts that the participants are putting to stand out, in terms of stall design and representations. We look forward to increase our space next year with even better stall design to attract more visitors.



Sidharth Teckchandani, Director, Creations



In-Store Asia was a focused expo which was also planned well. However, on the exhibitor point of view, we want more corporates to participate in the exhibition so that it can attract even bigger names in retail to visit the show. Probably, the expo organizers must reach out the people from traditional retailers.



Tejasa Purandare, Executive Director, Cosign India



It is very exciting to participate in In-Store Asia. People with good taste from some good brands visited the expo. We got some good leads and it is up to us to take it further.



Balasubramanian Jayam, Head of Marketing, India & SAARC, Dahua Technology



We have got so many visitors across India and some of them seem to be a valuable customers for us in the future. We think this will help us in the future.



Abhishek More, President and CEO, Digikore



We are participating for the first time in In-Store Asia. The experience is fantastic and we had some quality crowd visiting our stalls. And in the coming years, we are looking forward to some of the top brands in the country. We need to increase the footfall both from national and international markets.



Tanisha, Project Head, Ensemble



At In-Store Asia 2018, it was good to catch up with new clients. At the same time, we learnt a lot about new vendors and their new facilities. The ambience at In-Store Asia 2018 is good and the organizers have done a good job.



Anurag Sehgal, Founder & CEO, Experiential Design Lab



In-Store Asia 2018 had been visited by most relevant professionals from the industry. Though we are not into direct retail store elements, it helped us open many dialogues.



Shyam Menon, General Manager, Focus Lighting Ltd – Brand Plus



In-Store Asia has done a great job and clearly achieved an international benchmark. This has truly given us the experience of visiting any trade show abroad which has targeted audience and decision makers of the industry in attendance.



Shyam Sundar, Founder and Partner, Four Dimensions Retail Design Pvt Ltd



This was, by far, the best version of In-Store Asia. They have brought the best experience focusing on the user experience of retail environments. The association with Euroshop has added its edge to bring this unmatched experience. The In-Store Asia App deserves a special mention as it made experiences for all of us much more comfortable.



Shreesh Sharma, Director, GKW Retail Solutions Pvt Ltd



Our experience of In-Store Asia 2018 so far has been great, we got to meet a new set of clients as well as old customers. Our clients so far knew our expertise and entity as GV Display but here, with GKW Retail, we have showcased wood, acrylic products and so on. Thus we have tried to innovate in terms of different raw materials which are in high demand in the market. Also today, the clients are looking for a single display unit which can be reused for different purposes and we have showcased such unique solutions as well.



Harjee Gandhi, Director, HG Graphics



We are a regular participant of In-Store Asia. We are receiving good response in terms of footfall. What I like most with In-Store Asia is the structure. The responses are good here and the organizers are making a fabulous event. We are looking for the same in the following years too.



Chetan Nahalni, Brand Manager, Hybec lighting



This is the first time we participated in In-Store Asia and what makes it stand apart is its targeted footfall and audience. We plan to come back with bigger space next year.



Exhibitors Feedback



Inderjeet Singh, Director, Inderjeet Bros

In-Store Asia had very good footfall and the overall experience was good. We are coming back next year.



Hardeep Singh, Managing Director, ILC Lighting Solutions

This is the first time that we have participated in this In-Store Asia exhibition. We got a mix footfall with old and new clients walking in. Though we did not have much time before the exhibition to prepare but we are planning to come up with much bigger space next time. Also, we have showcased few innovation in terms of our products and the clients really liked them.



Amit Kanodia, Proprietor, Illuminati

I am participating in In-Store Asia since 2015. The two things I like most in this expo is the newer group of customers and seriousness of the visitors towards doing business. We will be participating in the coming years too. I would request the organizers to expand the footfall even further.



Huzefa merchant, Founder and CEO, Insync Shopfittings

We have participated in In-Store Asia after 3 editions and we are extremely happy to see the standard that the show has achieved in terms of exhibitors, sessions and speakers. I can infer that the show peering towards being a true counterpart of Euroshop. I am specially excited about the app and hope to see further upgradation with it. Going forward, some training in terms of stall design, showcasing etc for the exhibitors will truly be appreciated.



Darshita Thaker, Founder, Kreo Design & Innovation

We exhibited for the first time at In-Store Asia 2018. Apart from the encouraging responses that we received, the event also turned out to be a platform for knowledge sharing. I observed lot of good innovations from different exhibitors and especially in the lighting segment. We got the advantage of launching Kreo as a brand and took the visitors through our entire portfolio. It is really a great platform to connect and know what lies in the future of retail solution providers industry



Sameer Sangvi, Director, PMEA

This is the first time we are participating at In-Store Asia and we feel that the show had the most relevant audience. Though the footfall was not uniform at all hours, we could meet some of potential leads and we are highly optimistic on converting them. We plan to come back here almost every year.



Ranjit Yadav, MD, Reliable Hub's Engineering

We are getting the ground feedback on where and how the retail market is moving and what the brands and retailers are actually expecting. These are our key takeaways. The responses from the visitors have so far been very good.



Manish Jain, Co-founder and Director, Shark Shopfits

This year, at In-Store Asia, we had brought two innovative products. It has always been a pleasure to be associated with the expo. This is our seventh year of participation in this fantastic platform. We are pretty satisfied with the way the exhibition is organized.



Hrushikesh Kelkar, Director, SIGNext India



In-Store Asia has proved to come a long way to make itself much bigger and better. The key takeaway is the quality of visitors that we received this year. We managed to showcase as many applications as possible. I wish In-Store Asia all the best and expect it grow in leaps in bounds in years to come.



Shakeel Ahmed Syed, COO – India, sm+d



Our company is a well-established architectural consultancy firm from Dubai and we have just started our operations in India. It's a pleasure to learn that a platform like In-Store Asia exists that brings all the stakeholders of the retail industry to one platform. However, the participation magnitude could be bigger, given the fact that India is a large and competitive market. With the expertise of Euroshop coming in, we can expect lot more in future editions.



Namrata Nandrazog, Head – Business, Strategic Design Pvt Ltd



This is the first time we have been associated with In-Store Asia and we have received very good footfall. As for betterment, the exhibition can develop its infrastructure towards becoming a bit more user-friendly. The overall design of the exhibition could be more preppy to engage the clients more with the show.



Deepak Magar, Director, Supra Digital



This is the first time that we have participated in In-Store Asia and we have got some really good quality of visitors which was beyond expectations. I think that in terms of mix of clients and categories, it is much better than the previous editions and every participant has showcased their work very nicely and beautifully. We have showcased cloud-based content display items as people are tilting towards more digitized solutions. Also, we have showcased battery operated table top units for which were show stealers. Overall, a terrific experience is achieved at In-Store Asia.



Khushboo Agarwal, Client Servicing, Svarn Infratel



We have met new clients and prospective clients too at In-Store Asia. Footfall was good on the first day and the overall exhibition was organized well.



Tabrez Pasha, Managing Director, Squadron Graphics



The overall experience of In-Store Asia 2018 has been really good. We have got good set of clients and they really liked our work. We got queries for tie-ups as well and if pursued, it will be a great opportunity for us to grow further. The corporate clients appreciated our new innovations. The exhibition covered a impressive gamut of retail solution providers giving different set of services.



Sankalp Sahu, Founder, 02 June Design Studio / Few Steps Ahead



It's the second time we are participating after the last edition. It has always been a pleasurable experience for us and we look forward to the anticipation built around the exhibition and convention. This year's expo has been exciting for us and we have received some serious enquiries. Any such big affair calls for a constant progression towards betterment and we would like to see In-Store Asia embracing excellence in years to come.



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