



## Spa interiors The business essentials

by Shikha Swaroop

For a spa or salon, the interiors and a cohesive layout play a pivotal role in the business growth and customer satisfaction, apart from the regulars like therapy and price. Today, where wellness is a promising industry in India and has been declared a robust ₹490 billion market as per FICCI report, the business fraternity is busy broadening their perspective on the design elements – right from the reception area to a shampoo station. *Salon India* takes a look



Left to right:  
Miriam Mathew,  
Dharmendra Manwani,  
Poonam Sharma,  
Tracey Poole



**O**f late, there has been an increased awareness about the architecture and at the décor as these elements have the potential to lure more business and patrons. Designing a salon and spa interior is an elaborate process, which not only involves in-depth market research, but also measures the relevant market factor and identifies its compatibility to the adjoining structure.

### Design element and planning

Indian interior design element has been subject to strong modernisation due to increasing appreciation for an epicurean environment. Yet the incorporation of motifs, geometry and colours rules the roost. Eclecticism is one such factor that strikes a chord between the

contemporary and classic elements and gives the designed area a unique identity. However, one can see the interplay of the contemporary and classic elements in spas like the Kaya Kalp – The Royal Spa in Agra, So Spa in Mumbai, Kenilworth Resort and spa, Six Senses Spa in Noida and many more. Kaya Kalp – The Royal Spa is a spectacular piece where the leitmotif of pomegranate fruit runs through the spa and can be seen on the carpets and walls as well. Embellishment is that of stone latticework, mother-of-pearl inlay and mirror work.

So Spa at Sofitel Mumbai BKC, which has been designed by Isabelle Miaja, the renowned French Designer from the Miaja Design Group, Singapore, has

played beautifully with the elements of interiors. While the entrance profusely uses soft sheer drapery dotted with decorative Indian posts, the spa area has a tree of life.

Miaja's personal favourite in terms of a design element remains the 'golden drops of luxury' that float above the water fountain and along the far wall. Her inspiration behind this element, she says, was the depiction of an exotic golden rainfall. Water features and landscaping elements are installed to create a harmonious feel with natural elements, soothing the senses while relaxing the mind and body.

Spa and salon designing is correlated to factors like business strategy, nature of services offered, target audience, brand positioning and the potential to generate revenue. Only when all these points are taken into consideration, the desired result is achieved where the interior is in sync with the brand's philosophy and strategy and the brand becomes capable of attracting discerning customers.

Miriam Mathew, Senior President, Wellness Projects, Land-



Visual appeal is one of the major area of focus at Sofitel, Banyan Tree, Kaya Kalp and Six Senses

marc Leisure Corp Ltd.(LLCL) says, "First step is the floor plan as it has to be work friendly layout. It should be as per the area, be it 500 sq ft or 50,000 sq ft. The interior designer needs to be knowledgeable about the specialty treatments as well as know how to create an impressive space. She adds further, "In case the architect is not a spa architect, then the spa expert needs to work in tandem with him/ her. You need to plan your spa in such a way that right from the reception to the wet area and the treatment room, there should be efficient flow of work, so that the client experience becomes memorable. When you design the spa you need to think what makes your spa different and better, and gives you an edge over competition. I believe, one should begin with the end in mind to create the perfect environment for your guest's spa experience and operation efficiency." Commenting on her projects Mathew says, "I work along with the current design, adding better ambience, décor; colours also make it more work friendly and ensures better experience to the clients. I advise my clients not to compromise with the interior fixtures, as once it is done, it will be very difficult, if not impossible and expensive to change them."

### Concept and value additions

Setting up any successful spa and salon includes the design and interior, the aesthetics, the functionality of specific areas, the ambience and the operational development including putting in place the systems, sourcing of materials, inventory and products.

GOCO is a Thailand-based interior design company that has a reputation of designing well-known spas across the world like Claridges Spa Surajkund and Moevenpick Dharamsala Resort & Spa. Ingo Schweder, CEO and Founder, GOCO Hospitality, Thailand, says, "When GOCO reaches the stage of planning the interiors, firstly the active and passive spaces are separated due to their difference in requirements. We make use of bubble diagrams, also known as adjacency diagrams, which portray the spaces that are adjacent to each other, how they interact and the possible flow of movement of both staff and spa guests. Area programmes are also important when planning the interior of the spas as they determine the allocation of space needed for each specific area. It directly foreshadows the type of spaces that we suggests the project to incorporate. Like, in a number of spas the wet areas have been reduced in size due to space constraints. In other cases, gender-specific wet

areas are required due to cultural requirements." He adds further, "GOCO was one of the first to foresee that the era of traditionalist luxury is irreversibly changing. Today, both clients and consumers expect the unexpected. It takes an ingenious team of experts to bring this to reality. An example of this is our latest design the Finnish sauna. Rather than the traditional wooden space, we are designing a glass space that rests partially on water so that the guests while enjoying the sauna, can simultaneously have a view of the pool."

Internationally acknowledged luxury spa chain, Six Senses Spa, is now in India. The design concept of the spa, which is spread over 90,000 sq ft, revolves around nature and incorporates liberal use of wood, natural light and green. Tracey Poole, Director Spa, Six Senses, Jaypee Green Golf Resort, Noida says, "The Six Senses group have a project development team who are

proofing plays an essential role. Mathew elaborates, "Spaces are intelligently planned to marry functionality and relaxation. Lighting as far as possible is natural. Flooring in the spa is specially chosen for their durability and non-slip nature. Wherever water is present we ensure that there are safety grips and railing. Where possible we use recycled wood and in other places we use wood that is available locally. We use VOC free paints are used and flooring are natural stone finishes. Water is an integral part of any spa operation, however, we have practices in place to reduce the amount of unnecessary water usage in line with preservation of the environment." Schweder says, "Colour, space, lights and flooring work in sync and stimulate the guest's five senses. Depending on the location of the project or the type of space being created, different materials and textures are taken into consideration." GOCO places importance on every



involved from the initial stages of the spa to ensure the design and architecture is developed on line with the Six Senses brand. We also take into consideration the property and the location, the local cultures, traditions and environment." Ideally spas should be well articulated spaces with sufficiently broad circulation area. Each of the area have to lend functionality without giving a cramped feeling. Light, colour and sound

space of the spa and seeks to drive functionality of all corners. Whether actively or passively, every space aims to take a guest on a journey. For example, in an area where a guest is mostly bare feet, wooden floors are typically used as wood promotes warmth and smoothness. In a colder country, this would be complemented with heated flooring.

On lighting and colour he says, "In areas such as a





massage room, dim mood lighting. Neutral colours are typically as they evoke a soothing and calming mood, directly reflecting a spas ultimate guest objective.”

On sound proofing Dharmali Kusumadi, Sr. Vice-President, Design Services, Banyan Tree Holdings Ltd and Managing Director, Architrave Design and

and from within the spa itself. With a main purpose to relax, sound proofing rooms allow the guest to indulge fully in his or her treatment.”

On the use of paint, says Dharmendra Manwani, CEO, Jean-Claude Biguine Salon & Spa, India, “Low VOC (volatile organic) paint has been used in all our salons. It’s a healthy and



Planning Services, Pte Ltd in Thailand says, “Sound proofing is very important, as we need to block out noise from outside

comfortable option for human working conditions. MDF has also been used in joinery work, mostly in woodwork.”



### The location

While location plays a conspicuous role in the success of the spa and salon, steps taken after selecting one, proves to be a real litmus test. Says Schweder, "Once the location of the spa has been determined, we conduct market research, develop the project's concept and identify the relevant market factors. We also acknowledge the competitor landscape to assess the best way to approach each project and enhance the branding and marketing strategies to maximise each project's ROI."

Substantiating the correlation of location with the design element, says Raveela Sharma, GM Vedic Spa Mantra in Delhi, "Location is prime and once decided, then the conceptualisation begins. Of course, designing is a long procedure. If one agrees upon a ready-to-move facility, then Auto Cad Designing is the next step."

### Trends

With growing exposure to the global market, interior design in India is now at par with international standards. There has been a transformation from the glossy, black and white contrasts of the '80s to the warmer and softer wood tones of the '90s. Dr Bhavana Seth, Director, Kenilworth Wellness Retreat powered by Sohum Spa says, "The earth tones that embodied the designs of the early to mid-70s, have re-emerged in a contemporary way; yet they convey a warm and inviting feel. The emerging trend for the next decade is soothing work areas with fluid tonal contrasts that bask the client in an inviting and relaxing environment."

Revealing the growing trend, Kusumadi says, "Interior design in India has distinguished itself as a separate discipline and moved beyond just decorations and furnishings. Bold patterns, dark hues, beiges and blacks are being used often along with

dark wood." With the comfort of the guest being the prime concern, space has become a focus. Comments Kusumadi, "The spa design trend goes hand-in-hand with the operating concept. For example, if the treatments involve more Asian or Oriental-inspired techniques, the spa design will typically integrate an Asian theme."

### Furniture and accessories

Furniture's creates the first impression, especially when the spa or the therapy is theme based. Once the infrastructure changes have been made, an assessment is made of the type to be chosen as certain spa-salon furniture like Vichy beds need furnishing and superficial changes. Poole of Six Senses Spa says, "The furniture and accessories must be functional, safe and comfortable, both for the consumer and the host using the equipment. This must be combined with clever integration into the overall design and environment created to achieve the right ambience. Elements to be accentuated for any spa construction would be to keep within the basic ethos and philosophy of the brand but also incorporating a functional

facility that can be sustainable as a long term business."

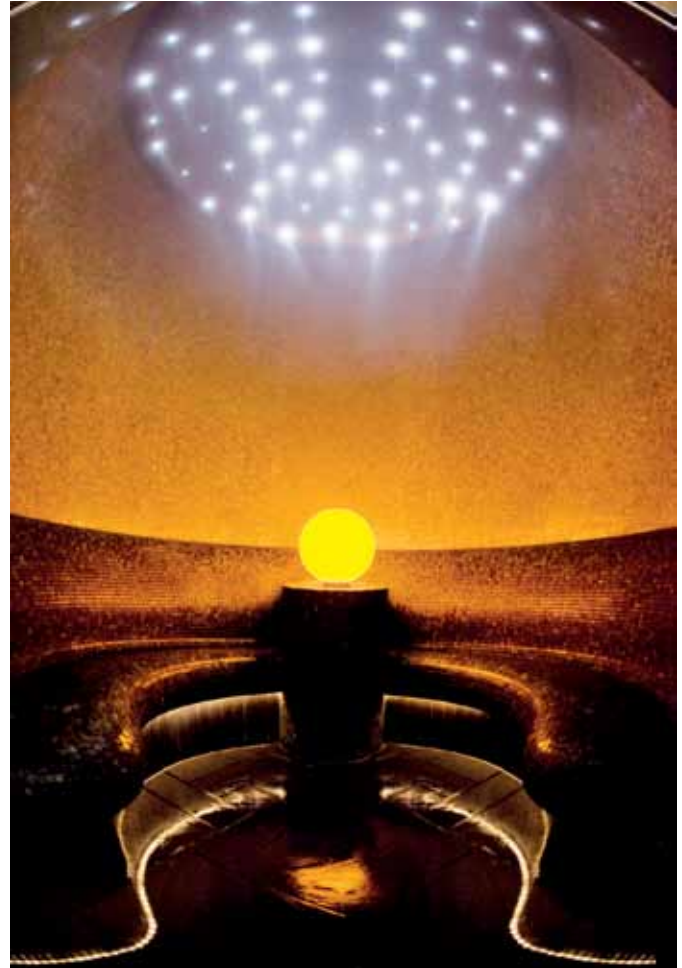
The furnishing and decorative items are necessary to maximise client comfort, promote relaxation and to create a soothing atmosphere. The equipment should be carefully chosen keeping in mind ergonomics safety, theme of the décor and the services that are offered.

Kusumadi of Banyan Tree

asserts, "Furniture has an important role, because it gives a relaxing, comforting feeling to the spa. Accessories, such as our signature oil or incense burners, enhance the spa's ambience while demonstrating careful attention to detail."

Schweder adds, "We focus on optimising spaces and areas within a salon and spa so as to increase the functionality of these spaces. Spas and salons require large amounts of equipment, which need to be stored while altogether ensuring a sleek and smart creative design. Moreover, the furniture and accessories need to be carefully selected on an individual basis to ensure their durability, practicality and quality. GOCO Hospitality chooses accessories and furniture that promote multiple usage as well as those items that hold hidden functions, such as all-purpose trolleys and expandable trays."

On sourcing of the accessories Kusumadi says, "Since the aesthetics of the spa is imperative as it helps to convey the essence of the business and forms part of the entire ambience, feel and environment of





the Spa we select the decorative items carefully. We sourced most of our candles, carpets, curtains, drapes, art pieces, murals and decorative furnishings locally.”

Informs Sudheesh. M.R, Manager, Sohum Spa at Madhubhan Resort “At our resort furniture and accessories are the key elements that portray the theme and concept of the spa.”



**Use of natural, native materials**

With the green building concept slowly catching up, several spa are stressing upon the conservation elements where there is a greater tilt towards the use of disposable products and use of renewable energy. On eco-friendly ventures Poole says, “Six Senses is committed to ensuring eco-friendly practices as much as possible throughout our spas, worldwide. We have global eco-standards, green policies and initiatives which are implemented in all the spas. Moreover, our robe design is made from pure light high quality cottons is designed such that it require less energy to wash and dry than the traditional bulky and thick robes.”

Suggest Mathew, “It is always advisable to make the spa eco-friendly. We need to

educate the spa owner on the same. Feng shui based spas are based on the five Chinese elements of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Guests should be provided with complimentary organic fruits, fruit water and tea. One should use battery operated candles and recycle all the plastic bottles. Organic and vegan nail polishes can be used. Organic cotton linen, towels and robes should replace the non-biodegradable ones. Use of natural lighting and recycled paper can help us to work in tandem with the nature.”


Advising the ways to reduce one’s carbon footprints, Mathew asks to recycle, reuse the products, turn off lights when leaving a treatment room, add plants, turn off power strips, grow own herbs and vegetables, green products, conserve water and manage waste properly. There are huge savings in heat, light, ventilation and energy requirements if the spa is aligned with nature, direction of sunlight and wind is kept in mind.”

Seth from Kenilworth Resort and Spa says, “The equipment used at Kenilworth is bought from the local sources, the electrical fixtures follows CE certification norms, the lighting is

CFL/LED based wherever possible, energy is conserved using intelligent building management systems to reduce the carbon footprint, the water generated is recycled for other uses, the solid wastes are segregated and disposed. The products in the spa are from natural origin and much more.”

**Future prospects**

In the times to come, there will be an effort to incorporate elements that ensure cosiness and a rejuvenated feeling. Nature will have a greater influence where there will be an incorporation of natural materials like stone and clay. Equipment will change to being innovative where a holistic room décor is incomplete without ergonomically designed relaxation beds, multimedia technology, sound systems, use of aroma candles and impressive lighting. It is true that salons and spas need to be visually appealing to attract clients and take the business a notch higher, it is also true that ignoring a few challenges in the line will do more damage than good.

Hence all eco-friendly measures need to be adhered to, which is a common thread which runs across all spas and salons spread across the world. 

Top to bottom: Dharmali Kusumadi, Dr Bhavana Seth, Raveela Sharma and Ingo Schweder