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Luxury is in the Design



For those seeking the cutting edge of aesthetics — when money is not a consideration — flock to Dubai to see the latest trends. Among the sights that have been captivating visitors to the emirate is the Canopy of Lights at the Mandarin Oriental Jumeira. Fourteen trees in three sizes light up the lobby – literally – as they are made from hundreds of hand-blown Bohemian crystal leaves. Lighting in hotels has evolved from being simply functional to decorative, scoring a crucial role in the design, often adding the oomph factor.

The drama of lights

For Payal Kapoor, whose work includes interior design for Umaid Bhawan Palace (Jodhpur), The Imperial (Delhi), ITC Savoy (Mussoorie) and The Palace on Wheels, there has been a huge progression from when she started in 1991. From tube lights and bulbs to LEDs, it's been a sea of change. "Today, the hospitality industry is putting ample effort and money to stand out and achieve excellence," says lighting designer Vibhor Sogani. "As lighting effectively acts as the fourth dimension of architecture, it can bring about a dramatic change in the quality of the building's design and its perception." Contract or bespoke lighting and Light + Art installations are rapidly growing trends in the Indian hospitality space. More and more hotels are commissioning luxury chandeliers for their lobby, reception and speciality restaurants.

Hotel operators strive to differentiate themselves from their competitors, so, it pays to be aware of the trends that are influencing lighting design in hospitality venues, says Sandeep Kaushik, Country Head, India and Sri Lanka, Sans Souci. Its lights adorn global resorts such as Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, W Dubai - The Palm, Hotel Suzhou and The Four Seasons in Kuala Lumpur. "Lighting design is dependent on the theme that a hotel wants to forecast to its guest," say Dhruva Kakar and Udayan Kakar, Directors, LTECH, LED lighting specialists.

LED lights have been a gamechanger as they are so small, come in so many colours and offer cold lighting, says Sogani. He says that the hoteliers are putting the effort and money to stand out and achieve excellence. "Sometimes they call in a separate designer for the restaurant or the bar because they want to achieve higher standards in these spaces."

Lighting wasn't always considered crucial. As Michael Vasku, Creative Director for Preciosa Lighting, the company that executed the Canopy of Lights, explains, "In the past, it was often added to the design after the other elements had been set. Today, hospitality designers believe that lighting is just as important as other aspects of the space's design; knowing that light doesn't only serve a functional purpose, but can influence the mood and atmosphere of a space. Recently, we've even had light pieces installed first and other elements placed around it."

Shalini Joshi, Assistant Product Manager – Lighting, Häfele, believes that lights play an important role in enhancing interior spaces, especially furniture lighting. The use of lighting should focus more on creating a relaxed environment – warm white lights in furniture and bed covers can effectively create such an ambience. "The intent of light functionality (ambient, task or accent lighting concept) is also extremely important as the user interacts a lot more with a lighting solution."

Lighting in the hospitality space is complicated. A different kind is needed in each area, says TPS Padmasharan, Director of Engineering at the newly opened Four Seasons Hotel, Bengaluru. "We have incorporated flexible and controlled

lighting options to create different moods," says Padmasharan. The possibility of lighting enhancing the entertainment quotient in projects is enticing. This technology has enabled Hyatt Regency in Mumbai to simulate the effects of sunrise and sunset in their public areas by using intelligent control systems.

Sustainable lights

The growing pressure on sustainability and HLP (Heat Lighting Power) to become among the biggest cost drivers for the hotel opting for energy-efficient solutions is the need of the hour, stresses Victor Chen, General Manager, Le Meridien, Goa. "Over time, most hotels have shifted their focus on taking environmentally friendly decisions and are working towards getting a LEED Certification," says Prabhu Balaraman, Director of Engineering, Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield. "As lighting is accountable for a significant percentage of energy consumption in hotels, most properties have been making energy-saving changes and replacing LED lights with CFL lamps." In many hotels, lighting uses 10 to 20 per cent of the hotel's energy. Alok Hada, Director, Anusha Technovision Pvt. Ltd, which has worked with hotel groups such as The Oberoi and Hyatt, offers green technology solutions that include energy-efficient lighting management systems for corporate offices and buildings. "Dimmer compatible lights are a new addition to hospitality lighting solutions as they give the guests the liberty to adjust the lights as per their needs," he says.

Some areas such as the pantry, data centre, storerooms, bathrooms, etc are not required to be lit all the time. "Motion sensors come in handy here. These lights are highly energy-efficient and slash the electricity bills effectively, says Victor Soares, GM, Radisson Blu Resort Goa Cavelossim Beach. For ITC Hotels, adopting LED lighting makes sound business sense. An LED bulb uses only two-thirds the energy that an incandescent bulb does.

Mood lighting has opened a world of possibilities. "In a conference space, we have about seven different moods, and can be used for different occasions," says Sallaudin Shaikh, Director of Engineering, The Westin Mumbai Garden City.

"Earlier, architects would do the job. Now lighting designers are doing the job." Without involving professionals, there may be no cost savings, not to mention a high-quality result is almost unachievable, says Vasku. "When hotel lighting is done well, you don't necessarily notice it, but when it isn't, you most certainly do." For Vasku, lighting is moving into a more experiential realm. "Good designers will take advantage of the options now available to evoke a certain emotion." Just about everyone can look ahead to that part of our shared future. ■

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