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THE LUXE FEEL

Bathroom design is becoming an increasing focal point in hotels as architects, designers and hoteliers collaborate to create spaces that enhance the overall look and feel of guest rooms

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

As a space that is truly personal, bathrooms win hands down. Naturally, guests are looking at hotels that combine aesthetics and practicality seamlessly to ensure that bathrooms are becoming a key driver in enhancing the appeal of a hotel room.



A traveller expects more from his hotel bathroom than what he has at his residential bathroom. He expects it to offer him relaxation, personal time for wellness, while being him a feeling of sophistication. Hence, hotels are going all out to design bathrooms keeping these aspects in mind with factors like over-sized

bathtubs, his and her sinks, large cabinets and plenty of space. While additional space translates into more luxury for guests, it is also a luxury for most hotels. Raghav Kapur, city head, Bengaluru, SILA has some suggestions to offer.

“Increase your space vertically, as vertical height gives an impression of openness. If your space is square, have minimum physical barriers. Hotels should ensure that they comply with ADA standards and abide by all the codes while bringing in elements like a free standing tub, windows and manufacturing a view where all the creative components blend into an attractive bathroom,” he said.

Sreenu JS, housekeeping manager of The InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort stated, “Whether it is electricity or water, being efficient is of paramount importance. Lights are very important – natural light should be used during the daytime and electric lights should be used at night as these do not hurt the eyes. Also, the fixtures should be placed at the right spots.” He added that storage is a key element and space for linen and amenities should be evident, easily accessible and contemporary. Electrical outlets should be easily accessible with universal sockets and plumbing fixtures should be well concealed.

THINKING STRAIGHT

The core thought when it comes to designing bathrooms should be the guest’s safety, comfort and functionality, while offering a luxurious unit that fulfills their needs – that is what Kingsley Pereira, executive housekeeper of Four Points by Sheraton, Navi Mumbai believes. “Having anti-skid floorings and grab bars, high-quality bathroom fixtures and fittings, telephone connections, audio and video connectivity, mood lighting, international multi-use plug points in the bathroom are some key design features that are borne in mind,” he said.

Over a period of time, hoteliers have been investing a lot of time and energy to ensure that they pro-



➤ The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi.

vide the best and easy-to-use facilities in bathrooms. These facilities are extremely important, as according to an executive housekeeper, no guest wants to start their day with a lesson on how to use various faucets, spouts and bidet fittings. While sharing the brief to the architect planning and designing a hotel's guest bathroom, hoteliers look for functionality in terms of proper lay outing, right circulation space, spacing between fixtures and fittings, segregation of wet and dry areas and the like.

Along with this, the design experience and aesthetics must invoke a sense of visual delight. "From an aesthetic perspective, we usually provide few pointers like design should be beautiful and elegant keeping in mind the budget and client requirements, as well as practicality of its utility. Aesthetics is totally the personal choice of the client and architect, but functionality everything is a waste," said Sumita Mehra, co-founder of Space Symphony, an interior designer.

Talking about bathroom design, Bhawani Singh Shekhawat, executive housekeeper, The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi said

that the bathroom traditionally stands between the corridor and the bedroom acting as a sound barrier and insulator for the sleep area. This also allows access from the corridor to the services so that maintenance issues can be sorted without the engineers having to access the bedroom directly.

"Additionally, in some countries there is now a requirement that the toilet be in a separate enclosure than the rest of the bathroom and this is likely to become a de facto standard all across the globe. It is well said that managing design is



➤ Sumita Mehra, co-founder, Space Symphony.



➤ Bhawani Singh Shekhawat, executive housekeeper, The Leela Ambience Convention Hotel, Delhi.

a discipline as important and functionally necessary as the accounting process. We should emphasise the need to understand the likely guest profile of the target audience for hotel," he added.

COST CONSIDERATIONS

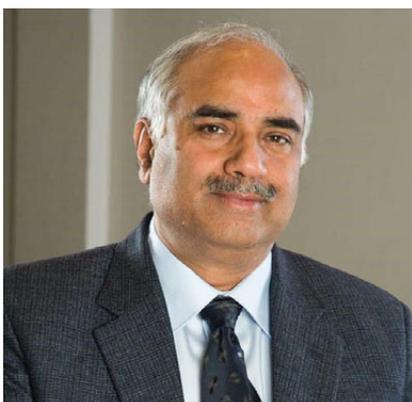
Unlike in a room, a bathroom is an area where there is very little room



➤ bathrooms from Four Points by Sheraton, Navi Mumbai.



➔ Satinder Chawla, MD, Span Floors.



➔ Rajesh Mehra, director and promoter, Jaquar Group.



➔ Emanuela Tavolini, director of sales, Europe, Graff.



➔ Raghav Kapur, City Head - Bengaluru, SILA.

to eliminate items as there is barely any scope to compromise on the type of elements and fixtures required. However, having said that, today the number of equipment suppliers in the market is vast and the primary way to save costs is to negotiate amongst vendors to get the best possible deal for the same fixtures.

“Hotels do generally pay great importance to aesthetics and would like to add an element of style to the bathroom but there are ways to meet these demands while curbing costs. What is more important for the guest is easy use of fixtures, good temperature control in faucets, comfort of space in toilets. Hence, changes that can help with aesthetics while keeping costs in check would be using cost-effective lighting techniques in the toilet, such as backlit mirrors or changing the shape of the toilet itself, which can save space and money. An case in point is ibis hotel’s curved bathrooms which are compact, but very practical and efficient in utility,” averred Kapur.

Value engineering is the key to cost control. Gerard O’Regan, operations manager, modular division at KEF Infra added, “It is essential that architects have in mind elements like natural lighting, building materials, green walls and roofs, electronic water faucets, water recycling, sewer treatments plants, rain water harvesting, solar systems, etc., to keep costs under control. As far as costing is concerned, it is the owner’s responsibility and none of the brands actually work on it.”

Most hotel brands usually pitch in with material selection along with the interior designer and guide them. For example, if the interior designer proposes a particular wallpaper, the brand might change it to depending on their hotel design standards, or even shift to vinyl, paint or paneling.

NEW VISTAS

Hotels are now seeking materials that are more attractive and elegant like natural elements that have high

performances in terms of resistance and durability. For this reason GRAFF developed Sleekstone, a patented, composite material that combines dolomitic stone with a resin that creates a solid surface product.

Another trend that is standing out is the use of Corian that has a malleable quality helping it mould in any shape. It can be used as a counter top, basin or cupboard. “We have introduced wood tiles with a special backing for the purpose of wet area usage. Made with teak from sustainable plantation forest, these easy-to-lay and remove tiles can be used in bathrooms, making them more appealing and comfortable. The use of a wood floor in the shower area provides a warm and slip resistant flooring surface that is easy to clean and maintain. The teak tiles can be oiled in various colour shades to go with the specific bathroom décor,” said Satinder Chawla, MD, Span Floors.

NOW TRENDING

The use of wood, veneer along with stones for wall claddings, mirror



➔ Graff Luna

cladded walls, tinted mirrors and etched mirrors defining new form of old materials is of additional interest. Illuminated surfaces like gemstones, acrylics or cutworks in metal acrylics or stones enhance the beauty and add richness to the whole scheme are now trending.

Rajesh Mehra, director and promoter, Jaquar Group said that a huge transformation has been noticed in the areas of bathing spaces in the current time, from just being a merely functional space they have now moved to being more of an experience zone. The trends these days emphasises on personalising the space and adding amenities that are more spa like.

“Extra-large showers offering a stress-busting, rejuvenating down-pour while the powerful flow of heavy drops serves to recharge the tired nerves are in. Faucets have also evolved over the years and come in different finishes. Apart from the traditional stainless-steel finish, they come in different color variants like matt black, gold and copper to complement the entire bathroom,” Mehra added.

MATERIAL MATTERS

From the guest's perspective, wood brings comfort in terms of relief from coldness while being slip resistant. It is also comparatively a softer surface as compared to a tile or stone and is now being increasingly used. Suchit Beria, principal architect at Atman Architects explained, “Marble and wooden texture dominates the list of the elements in a bathroom. Marble in various forms adds to the classic as well as a contemporary element with the perfect play of light. Guest bathrooms require all the accessories like a towel rack, accessories stand and potpourri to add the ideal essence. Nowadays, the use of glass has seeped through to bring about some transparency between spaces.”

Colour shades like grey, nude and neutral colours are on rise as they give a touch of luxury and intimacy in the bathrooms and provide a sense of calmness. “Ergonomic and

minimal designs are chosen more by the users to make a compact bathroom feel larger than it actually is. Soft metal tones like brass, brushed gold and rose gold are also in demand as they add warmth to the bathroom scheme. Many users like a dash of organic elegance in their bathrooms for which many natural materials like stone, wood, etc., are available in the market,” opined Gaurav Malhotra, MD, Hansgrohe India.

TECH EDGE

D-foggers that help disperse fog from the glass and mirrors that are created while taking warm water shower or bath and intelligent WCs that come with specialised and integrated features like seat and water temperature control, adjustable spray shape, position, water pres-

sure, pulsate and oscillate functions are in. Towel warmers, motorised height adjustable EC, electronic smart glass that switches between clear glass and frosted glass with just a push of button, shower trays that have long showers with heavy rainfall effect without any waterlogging and chromotherapy or wellness shower experience are new age elements that use technology.

Jaquar has a new self-cleaning shower that solves the problem of unsatisfying water spray and unhealthy germs on the showerhead. GRAFF's Aqua-sense shower programme offers a wide selection of solutions for every need. The Aqua-sense multifunction system, for example, offers several additional and comfortable functions if compared with a normal showerhead.

“The RGB LED chromotherapy,





➔ Gaurav Malhotra, MD, Hansgrohe India.



➔ Kingsley Pereira, executive housekeeper, Four Points by Sheraton, Navi Mumbai.



➔ Sreenu JS, housekeeping manager, The InterContinental Chennai Mahabalipuram Resort.

for example, changes colour to the whole ambient, shaping diffused chromatic lines to produce a soothing effect of the bathroom environment. The system is controlled by a touch-screen with simple and intuitive interface controlling water functions, colour changes, music and videos. The music is easily uploaded by connecting an i-Pod to a wall-mounted USB port, while the speakers are ceiling-installed. The



➔ InterContinentalChennai Mahabalipuram Resort_Resort Deluxe.

system is well equipped with hand-shower and adjustable side body-sprays. From watching videos and listening to music to enjoying color therapy, the Aqua-Sense shower system provides a multimedia experience through the use of touchpad technology,” explained Emanuela Tavolini, director, sales, Europe, Graff.

VENDOR CONSIDERATIONS

While selecting suppliers, hoteliers seek those who are not just well established but can also constantly supply products or services and are flexible enough to allow changes in orders or product lines. Rajat Bagchi, executive housekeeper, The Pillazio Hotel, Gurgaon said, “We work with suppliers who have a wide range of products that suits not only your present requirement but can support your requirements in the near future. Also, suppliers who follow ethical practices at work and have a good service support system in place and a wide network in your city to reduce lead times of maintenance and availability of spare parts are preferred.”

SPACE, TIME SAVERS

To ensure optimum space utilization, it is vital to ensure that the standard spacing between fixtures

and fittings is maintained. Also, the door placement should be right not to hinder the smooth entry or exit or the free movement within.

Likewise, pre-fabricated hotel toilets are expected to catch on, especially due to the influx on investment from funds into the smaller boutique and business hotels space in India, which requires hotels to scale up and open several hotels in different locations in a shorter span on time.

Also, the material used in prefabricated bathrooms is highly durable, easy to maintain and no visible joints, ensuring that they will last longer and be more hygienic than traditional solutions. These are becoming an effective and valuable solution not just for budget properties but also where time overruns cannot be afforded.

As the curtains draw up on 2018, the market is all set to see new finishes and new materials, both for the faucets and the furniture elements inside the bathroom. As Barbara Sallick, co-founder and senior VP of design, Waterworks said, “Today, the bath is decorated with the same care and attention as the rest of the house. You can have music, furniture, textiles, and refrigerators; and if you want to drink champagne in the bath, why not?” ■