



Salons and Spas of 2020

Game Changing Design Trends

With customer experience being the operative word, the first impression of a salon or spa is always the game changer and holds umpteen opportunities for owners. The design philosophy and layout speak volumes about the brand's image. With innovative concepts ranging from minimalism, modernist, green salons, and more, renowned architects and interior designers forecast the ideologies which will be a hit in the new year

\\ by Aradhana V Bhatnagar



Reinvent the Design With People at its Core

BY AMIT AURORA

With absolute certainty it can be said that the way we see ourselves is perceived differently in a salon. The act of design exploration discovers perspectives through frames, reflections, translucencies, and perforations. Space considers how we are seen, or not, just as much as how we see. In the beginning, visiting a salon was merely an activity. Before the big brands entered the space, there existed only stand-alone salons and they were all the same – stations and rooms designed in a similar format. As individual salons, the investment in design was not a priority for the owner until ‘branding’ began as a mark of ownership, trust and quality, globally. Branding evolved into a more sophisticated symbol of differentiation and identification for the customers to recognise and choose – the new mother of inventions, economy and designing. Evidently, the foundational characteristics were valid for salon brands as well, as consumers and producers became more demanding.

The way a salon looks, feels and provides services, its core design idea becomes the key factor to democratise user experience with identification of the salon brands. Reverting back in time, the vintage design techniques had their own charm with a wide variety in décor styles, palatial elements and heavy ornamentation. Designers also coordinated the retro styles with rustic, industrial and eccentric furnishing, and elements. Soon, the era witnessed a tension between styles and periods in design, like ornamentation or minimalism, or contemporary fusion. Eventually, the idea of pure design became personal and boring.

When design became the source of branding and the practice of eschewing the aesthetic typically associated with beauty shops, the result has been elegant fusion of interior designing and bespoke elements signaling a new contemporary approach for designing salons.

While designing salons in today’s competitive market, it is imperative to identify the ‘desired’ brand image. Salon owners today, recognise its importance and have started to convey the upscale image in the minds of consumers through design of the space. The positioning, the targeted clientele, geographical location, its typology, and the cultural context now dictate the approach to design. However, over the last 10 years, we have witnessed a changing trend and it still continues to grow. As the big players have entered the space, they have felt the need to



develop a design language for their salons and outlets. The brand needs to speak about the quality and it is mandatory to have a recall value attached to it. The initial impact witnessed similar layouts, a specific colour palette, and similar materials.

Then came the much-anticipated change! With the continuously evolving lifestyles, the concept of luxury salons emerged. The clients were now looking at the interiors, and exteriors, to decide where they wanted to visit. Spending time at a salon took the shape of a recreational activity for both men and women. This steered the direction of design towards an engaging space, where the spatial arrangement and décor played an integral role in influencing client's behaviour and action.

With a growing awareness of customisation, designs were now being looked at contextually. Taking into account the location, the clientele, the services and the purchasing power, a design is developed that would be unique, functional and steer clear of standardisation. The space could be in a mall, a bungalow, a heritage property or a building.

To take cues from the surroundings and the environment, an approach is developed to ensure the space does not look mechanical. Keeping the clients in mind, and the character of the site, features are developed to ensure an experience, which is comforting and leisurely. Designs must respond to and coordinate with the building shell and acknowledge the physical location and social context of the project. While a salon always has a brand identity to maintain, these principles are adopted with utmost sincerity to respect the unique brand identity, its location and the clientele.

The salon space needs to have an environment that exudes a sense of privacy and comfort for visitors. As the area of a salon typically varies from 500 to 3000 sqft, the spaces are divided into four main parts such as the reception and retail, the styling section, hair and skin treatment zone, and lastly beauty, facial and spa rooms. Public yet highly intimate, comfortable while being vulnerable, these areas are functional and complex in terms of the multitude of activities that take place. Therefore, the zoning and functioning as well as practicality is critical right from conceptualisation, lighting, furniture, acoustics, reflections, materials, and the colour palette.

Lighting plays a key role in design, and to have a balance between ambient and task lighting that exploits natural lighting to its best. Integrating day lighting into a customised lighting system allows users to relax and connect with nature.

Today, a salon evokes an aura of peace and calm that attempts to create an indulgent space for the user. This is achieved through design and the materials used in the interior palette. Further, functionality and aesthetics in salon design must complement and balance each other to ensure that the unique, luxury quotient is enhanced to craft novel solutions more suited to contemporary, social lifestyles.

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