A Smart Fix

The genesis of smart homes and home automation is a natural evolution in an age of millennials driven by technology and gadgets. **CWDB** speaks to experts to unravel the certainties, uncertainties and benefits, as well as challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that this digital transformation is smart indeed.

Photo courtesy: GA Design

QUICK BYTES

- Smart systems are technology-driven and a lot depends on their precise implementation and use.

- The adoption of home automation will intensify due to 'ease of use.'

- Smart homes are the next step to sustainable living and also offer better RoI and resale value.
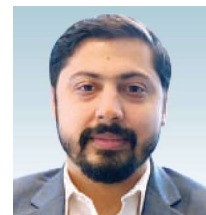
From standing in a queue to getting things done at the touch of a button, millennials have a better way of doing things. Technology has transformed certain aspects of a mundane existence into a utopian reality. Smart accessories and appliances, home automation is nothing short of salvation, especially for a generation that prefers smart over hard. Market gurus might argue that as far as penetration is concerned, home automation is yet to attain the required depth. However, the thrill of controlling different appliances and devices in a home with ease and the behaviour of millennials has made it evident that the demand for home automation is set to rise.

Individuals can implement smart technologies in their homes; likewise, builders and developers create smart ecosystems that impact the entire project or even township

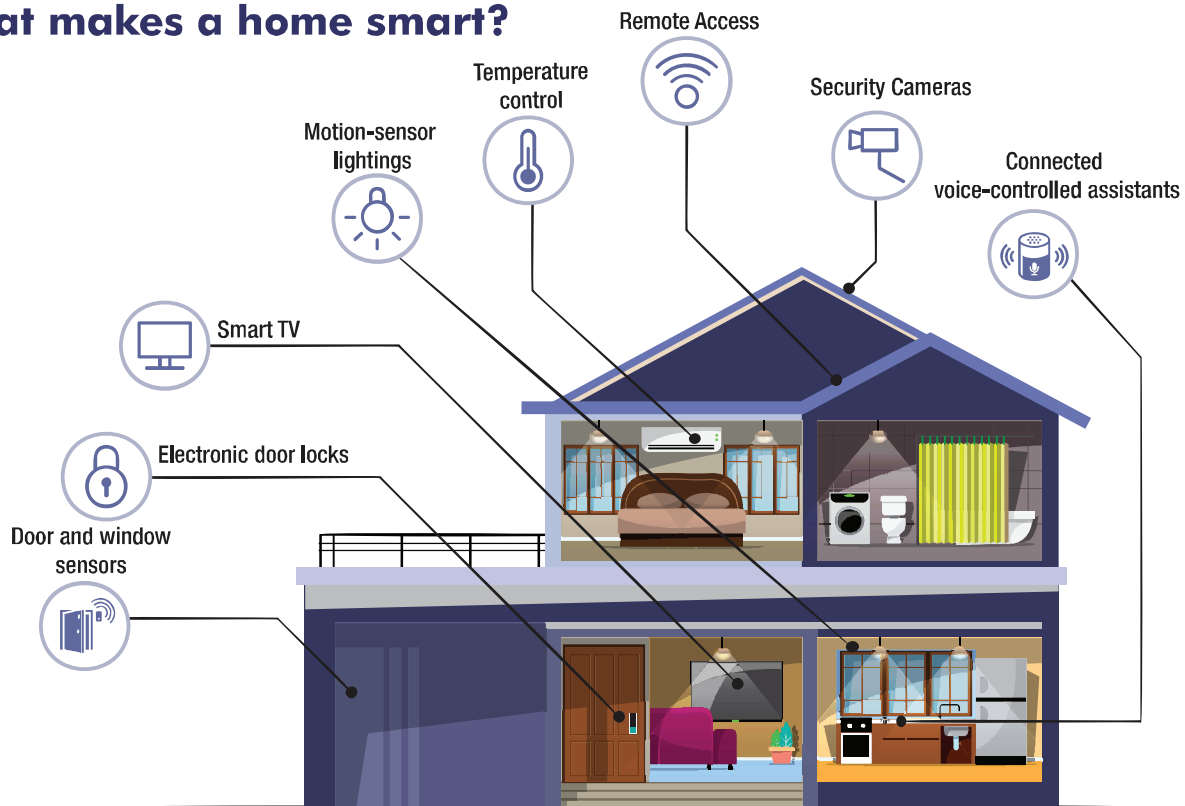**"The propagation of smart home automation depends on availability of proper equipment suppliers."**

- Venu Vinod, Managing Director, Cybercity Builders & Developers

"Smart homes or home automation in real estate should be intended for the entire community or ecosystem, not just for the apartments alone."

- Bhasker Jain, Chief Business Officer, The Wadhwa Group

CW **DESIGN** **BUILD** COVER STORY

What makes a home smart?

Remote Access

Temperature control

Security Cameras

Motion-sensor lightings

Connected voice-controlled assistants

Smart TV

Electronic door locks

Door and window sensors

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in question. "Safety, security, convenience and lifestyle are the guidelines that all our projects abide by, as smart systems are technology driven and a lot depends on their precise implementation and use; only then can they lead to a value addition in a project," elaborates **Bhasker Jain, Chief Business Officer, The Wadhwa Group.** "Smart systems are utilised by individuals. But in our projects, they connect an individual to the family and the larger community. For instance, family members are aware of one's arrival when the car reaches the gate of the property. Smart elevators know where you are going and the quickest way to get there, eliminating endless waits and crowded cars that stop at every floor. So, when it comes to smart homes or home automation in real estate, it should be intended for the entire community or ecosystem and not just for the apartments alone."

One deterrent to the propagation

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– Amit Aurora, Partner, groupDCA

of smart homes and home automation is availability of genuine vendors. Developers are on the lookout for genuine companies who can offer a complete home automation suite as well as good after-sales service. "The propagation of smart home automation depends on availability of proper equipment suppliers, points out **Venu Vinod, Managing Director, Cybercity Builders & Developers.** "In Hyderabad,

existing suppliers tend to operate only for a defined time period. For me as a developer, it is not a good proposition. I and my smart home customers need dedicated after-sales service to ensure future issues, if any, can be addressed. We need some branded names to enter this market to ensure better quality of service. As a developer, I seek a reliable partner and dedicated set of experts who can not only offer the best products but also undertake the right kind of maintenance desired to keep these smart systems running efficiently."

Despite the odds, the smart home market is set to grow. As **Himanshu Jain, Vice President - Sales, Marketing & CRM, Satellite Developers,** says, "India currently has nearly 13 million smart homes with a 12.84 per cent increase in smart home solution penetration expected by 2025. Despite the fact that India has far lower smart home device penetration than

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western countries, the pandemic has undoubtedly accelerated the country's adoption of connected devices. Home automation will become more accessible and affordable for Indian consumers as technology advances, enticing even more people to invest. Home automation, with its numerous advantages, can make the lives of Indian consumers comfortable, efficient and secure."

The evolution of 'ease of use' in the smart home ecosystem is another reason why adoption of home automation will intensify. "Though the concept of smart homes is primarily driven by millennials, many decision makers in high-value homes are usually digital migrants in the age group of 45+ who are not really savvy with technology," says, **Prashaant Kochhar, Partner and Principal Architect, LTDF.** "Thus, they are keen to use systems that are easily operable. Other commonly requested features are

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cost-effectiveness and convenience."

The smart home standard 'Matter' is set to address a good deal of these concerns. Just like Android catalysed the use and adoption of smartphones, Matter is believed to do the same in the smart home arena. "Formerly known as CHIP (Connected Home over IP), the new smart home standard Matter is the talk of the town," explains **Hardesh Chawla, Founder, Essentia Environments.** "Consider an ideal smart home with different devices from the tech giants, be it Apple or Google, seamlessly connected by Matter, responding to all that you command and wish for. One wouldn't need to open a particular app for a particular function. By integrating appliances and controls, Matter will make operating our smart homes much easier. It brings a lot of promise to the future of home automation."

In the realm of design where minimalism is an increasingly popular option among millennials, home automation makes it easier to design minimalistic homes. For instance, with the use of smart home speakers and voice assistants, switches and control panels can be done away with as everything is voice-controlled. In a way, it wouldn't be wrong to say that smart homes and home automation are translating the traditional paradigm of form follows function in a modern and aesthetically pleasing way.

"With sleek-looking modules, home automation is definitely transforming the idea of form first in interior design," says **Rahul Mistri, Principal Designer, Open Atelier Mumbai.** "Tech brands and solutions offer customisable interfaces and smart-looking modules with equally efficient functionality that allow us, as designers, to explore extravagant elevations without compromising

Photo for representational purpose.

Home automation makes it easier to design minimalistic homes.

on the usage or performance of a certain device."

To this, **Gaurav Sanghavi, Co-Founder, Pentaspace Design Studio,** adds, "The shift in home automation is taking place where there are set functions for the homes. With this technology, one can have rooms designed according to their specific needs by using spatial divisions that are movable. These partitions come with a variety of designs that even style the homes. In the context of a building, the structure can have desired forms and we can worry less about factors like heat gain, because automation provides easy solutions for shading."

Apart from redefining the design concept, home automation has changed the way people perceive homes, according to **Amit Aurora, Partner, groupDCA.** "Technology and home automation have given rise to unique possibilities. Even in areas where people don't get proper daylight/sunlight, we can now mimic daylight that benefits its inhabitants and allows indoor plants to grow, which in turn has a positive effect on occupant health and well-being."

In a timeline when energy efficiency is being taken seriously, smart homes become an even more enticing prospect, says **Kunal Khandelwal, Partner, Studio Design.** "From solar panels and electric charging stations to smart thermostats and resource optimisation systems, smart homes look like the next step to sustainable living. The possibilities are endless when we have air-conditioners that can turn off when no one is in the room or the fact that we can operate our home systems through our phones, no matter where we are. Sensors can adjust temperature and humidity and remind us to water our plants or make an important call. Security surveillance

The smart home standard 'Matter' will enable devices designed by different tech companies in a seamless manner.

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has incorporated face recognition and is using our phones to monitor updates on the same. The world

is changing and in this fast-paced hustle, humans are finding ways and means to have a better future while working towards it in the present."

Apart from spicing up the look and feel of home interiors and aiding energy-efficiency, smart homes in real estate amount to better RoI and resale value. "The resale value of a product is an important factor in buying decisions, and this is more so for real estate," avers **Abbasali Ookabhoy, President-Design and Engineering, Puravankara.** "Customisation to suit varied needs is always in demand by those looking to buy a home. Hence, we can safely say that these homes attract a premium when they come up for resale as they are preferred over projects offering non-smart amenities. Currently, metro cities like Bengaluru, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune and Goa besides Delhi are smart home/home-automation friendly destinations in our opinion. However, the level of interest in purchasing smart homes is also increasing in places like Kochi, Coimbatore, Indore and Chandigarh."