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CHANGING THE FACE OF RETAIL DESIGN

The days of a store just being a place to indulge in shopping will soon be gone. That's because retail design now makes stores 'experiential spaces'. STUDIO.J is one such company that is taking stores into the next generation of retail

By Jyotsna Singh

Organisations like Tesla and Nike are changing the face of the retail business by indulging in experiential retail design. Retail stores are no longer selling-and-buying space. They allow consumers to engage with the brand and experience the products before making a purchase. In fact, a major share of advancement in the retail business can be attributed to experiential retail design. And when it comes to this segment, Jenny Andrews, founder of STUDIO.J, has been doing innovative work for the past 7 years. Her company provides solutions for design thinking, experiential design, sustainable design, retail design, visual merchandising, system design, workplace design and hospitality. Commenting on the role of retail stores, she says, "It is shifting from purely a sales-driven space to an experiential one." In other words, it is becoming a breathing space for showcasing the product line and the brand ethos.

ENGAGEMENT IS KEY

Emphasizing the importance of going beyond the traditional selling experience to create strong associations, Andrews cites the example of Tesla, "It turns a simple walk-in store into a storytelling experience with sleek interactive displays and on-site demos that allow the customer to understand and learn more." She believes the focus should be less on selling and more on letting shoppers have a good time with the brand.



STUDIO J IS WORKING ON EXPERIENTIAL DESIGN PROJECTS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE EUROPEAN MARKET.

THE SHIFTING ROLE OF STORES

Social media and e-commerce have become the platforms where the initial research begins and buying decisions are influenced. Andrews, whose clientele includes brands like Jockey, Tesor, Enamor, Double Two, Kurlon, Coffee Day, Harshas, Kid Super Store, etc., says, "Even though e-commerce provides instant gratification through savvy search engines and easy one-click buying, there is still no replacement for the sensory touch-point provided by a brick-and-mortar location where customers can touch, feel and evaluate the product in person." A Time Trade Journal report also found that 85% of consumers prefer to shop at physical stores than online.

THE FUTURE

On being asked the way forward for retail design, Andrews suggests, "It lies in the expansion of interactive experience space and personalized shopping experience." Talking about her plans, she mentions that STUDIO.J is working on experiential design and sustainable projects in collaboration with the European market. She is also busy mentoring startup communities. Her advice to new designers: Instant gratification is only in the periphery, but one has to dive deep to understand what the future customer is looking at. ●●