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Largely an urban concept, the smart bathroom epitomizes convenience in function, something that's become a necessity for the city dweller. With over 50% of the world population now living in cities and with 77% of new home owners looking for fancy home automation, the market is open for business!

The share of smart toilets and bathrooms in the overall Rs 7,000 crore sanitaryware market has risen from single digits to 10%, with a forecast for the global smart bathroom market to grow at a CAGR of 10.43% in the period 2016-2020.

The wonders we now take for granted took a while in the making, with cultural factors being as important as the technological. Pankaj Sharma, President, Johnson Bathrooms and Johnson Kitchens, H & R Johnson (India) puts it into perspective saying, "The privacy, comfort, luxury and extreme sanitary conditions that we associate with our bathrooms today are the result of thousands of years of civil engineering and social change. Indoor plumbing, flushing toilets,

heated water, water pressure, electricity and ventilation are features we take for granted, but have had a long history in the making. Although humans have always had the need to use toilet facilities and have used bathing as a way to cleanse themselves, it took centuries for our culture to bring these two important functions together into one convenient room."

Anna Viegner, Chief Development Officer & Shareholder, Viega, Germany carries the idea ahead saying, "The combination 'water and electricity' in the bathroom is no longer uncommon. Due to this, many things that used to be unthinkable are now possible."

The gifts of technology range from raising the lifestyle quotient to making spaces more eco-friendly and sustainable. Emanuela Tavolini, Director of Sales Europe, Graff, USA, says, "Technology is entering the home space more and more every day: to make houses more functional, reduce energy consumption and time wasting or, simply to make environments more

pleasant. The bathroom, may be more than any other space in the house, has witnessed the development of several technologies."

What used to be all about the product, is now more about functionality and comfort. Asutosh Shah, Managing Director, Duravit, India, says, "Nowadays, bathroom design is not only about well-designed products but also about modern technology that enhances comfort. Useful technology should be available to the user at all times but ideally, hidden from view; integrated, discreet technologies that improve comfort, ensure intuitive operation and deliver the highest standards in design and quality."

Speaking of the broader uses of technology and the infinite possibilities for the home, Alok Hada, Director, Anusha Technovision Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, adds, "Smart technology- does not mean you need to be a smart user! We are moving to a world where comfort and luxury and technology are all intertwined, and the bathroom is one area in the house that is central to this concept."

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evolution | innovation

While the transition from the outhouse to the indoor washroom itself is a big step, the evolution from mere functionality to a high tech space that contributes to wellbeing and comfort, has taken place in the last couple of decades, and the bath space has moved beyond touchless faucets and self-flushing WCs.

Anitha Sharma, General Manager – Marketing, Hansgrohe India, says, "Bathrooms have transformed from a space for quick wash to one of über relaxation and comfort. Technology and design innovations have played the major role in this evolution. Bathroom fittings have become more user and environment friendly, simple and ergonomic in design and function, electricity-free performs at par with digital products; cumbersome exposed fittings are replaced by the elegant concealed fittings. Focus is also on water volume control to save water and energy used to heat water."

Long-distance control of the environment has been a part of smart technology for the home, and the bath space too has benefited from this. Anna Viegener, says, "Many things that used to be unthinkable are now possible. One example is electronic fittings on the bathtub that can also be controlled by smart phone. The high-tech bathroom has long since become a reality and is no longer just a distant dream."

suppliers speak of the future

Suppliers say the future will bring even more to the table, or the bathroom, with product design, material advances and high technology working in consonance to up the offering. Each company has product offerings for the year ahead with USPs ranging from design-centric offerings to a focus on hygienic materials and low water and energy consumption. In their journey to providing the best products with the most innovation, to the customer, several suppliers have enlisted the services of leading product designers to add to what their own extensive R & D efforts have produced.

H & R Johnson's new range of sanitary ware combines anti-bacterial properties with aesthetics and hygiene and incorporates SilverNano technology. The Elite Collection is a collection of faucets and shower panels designed with high grade stainless steel and silicone nozzles, making it easy to clean while ensuring uniformity in water flow. The Johnson Senso collection of luxury bathroom innovations, with the Intellimate line offer high-end wellness bathroom products that combine luxury and entertainment in full-service bathing enclosures and Jacuzzis. The wellness experience continues to Rain Showers with a range of high end shower panels with water fall, body jets with multiple massage effects as well as colour changing LED chromotherapy and entertainment options for FM radio or MP3 using an LCD touch panel.



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Graff USA's new launch the Ametis Ring, which Emanuela Tavolini calls "simple but very refined" is a range of washbasin mixers in steel, with a full-spectrum LED RGB color therapy lighting system with 6 colors that change color according to the temperature of the water, designed by Davide Oppizzi. The showerhead is internally designed so that the rainfall flows in a perfect angle, merging exactly below the center of the ring.

Well-known for their collaborations with high level designers, Hansgrohe's Axor Starck V, Axor One & Rainmaker Select. The Axor Starck V is a basin mixer developed in collaboration with Philippe Starck and has a transparent detachable spout that comes in various designs and a powerful water vortex that is generated inside the spout. Axor One is a shower product designed by Barber Osgerby, where all showers are controlled intuitively via large paddles that also set the water temperature and volume of water. All products use Select technology, based on pressing rather than turning such as the Rainmaker Select, a large rain shower that delivers up to 3 different shower sprays all controlled by a single button.

Anna Viegner The focus is on remote controlled high tech with the new range from Viega, German with electronically controlled bathtub fittings in the Multiplex Trio E range, which fills the bathtub, fully automatically, to the desired temperature and desired water volume and guarantees comfort at the press of a button. It also saves the values for up to three people so they can be called up again, even with a smartphone. Also new is the height-adjustable pre-wall element for WCs where the height of the WC can be smoothly adjusted upto a range of 8 cm at the touch of a button and without any electronics at all. The Vision for More and Vision for Style series pair glass and metal WC actuating panels.

Sanitaryware too has upped the design and tech quotient as Asutosh Shah says, "HygieneGlaze is an innovative new ceramic glaze that kills an unprecedented 99.9% of germs and bacteria, while the SensoWash Slim shower-toilet delivers the combined benefits of a toilet and bidet with many additional extras such as electronic controls, night-light function and automatic seat open and closing. These three innovations are available on the wall-mounted ME by Starck and P3 Comforts toilets from Duravit".

what's on trend

Despite claiming to hate the word, most people fall willingly or otherwise, into a pattern, often following what's 'on trend', or quite often, guided by architects or designers, who also suggest that what the world likes might be a good choice for the individual as well.

Continuing the overall design theme of a home, into the bath space is increasingly popular. Pankaj Sharma says, "Minimalism has long reigned supreme in the bathroom. With a growing population directly impacting the trend of compact housing, design with the minimalistic approach of "Less is More" is a favorite. Keeping it simple yet making a bold and stylish statement is the trend of the season."

Emanuela Tavolini concurs saying, "Today's bathrooms are more spacious and include features and design elements that recall and characterize other rooms in the house. This trend can be seen in the Graff Dressage series, a furniture collection

designed for the bathroom but suited, in terms of design and materials, to any other environment in the house."

Combining sustainable features with design and broad usability, Asutosh Shah, says bath furniture extends the quality attributes of home furniture to the bath space. "With the trend for greater individuality, comfort and hygiene in the bathroom, we are skilfully combining form and function, with products characterised by consistent sustainability in terms of materials, processing and design. Our new furniture, Darling New C-Bonded with L-Cube furniture for the bathroom, is now as good (if not better) as anywhere else in the home."

Anitha Sharma says, "The market today is full of varied offerings. The use of natural materials like glass, cross-generation designs, uncluttered bathroom fittings, luxurious finishes like gold and rose gold, and products that save space, time, water and electricity, large rain showerheads, etc. are in demand. At present, push



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button technology to operate showers, faucets, thermostats and other bathroom fittings is trending as the button operation requires minimum effort and contact with the fittings. The mechanical buttons also don't need electricity making the products safe for every family member."

Viega's Anna Viegner, sums up saying, "Every customer wishes to have a special bathroom and ought to get one. Apart from this, there are three current trends whose impulses are influencing the development of new product concepts: 'Bathroom Architecture' as the bathroom is on the one hand a room with various functions (washing, showering, WC) and on the other a room that opens itself – mostly towards the bedroom. The products are no longer merely just placed along the wall with clinical precision; they now act as room dividers and help to fulfil the desire for comfort and relaxation.

The second trend: 'Comfort Bathroom' The aim here is to design and realise a bathroom that makes life easier for those of all ages. A bathroom that is so ingeniously appointed that it can be regarded as a designer bathroom both at 40 and at age 55 and technology plays an important role here. 'Sustainable Bathroom Design' is the third trend. We define this as being environmentally aware without having to compromise comfort. This is also a major reason why globally as well as in India more and more green products are being introduced."



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greening the future

Sustainability is no longer something a company can choose. It must now be an integral part of both their product offerings and their processes. H&R Johnson's new 'Care' germ-free tiling concept has been designed with an aim to fuse the latest style trends with hygiene that provides a long-term solution to reduce use of disinfectants.

With an eye to the processes involved, all Graff products are manufactured in accordance with the innovative concept of Lean Manufacturing Management, which aims to eliminate excess consumption of time, energy and materials, so that each process achieves substantial efficiency standards. Even in the casting process, and in the finishing and galvanic treatments, Graff utilizes a zero discharge system that recycles 100% of the brass and paper used. In line with the strong commitment to environmental sustainability, Graff has publicly expressed willingness to actually eliminate its impact on the environment in the near future.

Asutosh Shah says, "Sustainability and water saving products have a very important impact on bathroom design. In general, the contemporary bathroom has to meet sustainable design, green production and ecological usability.

The upcoming challenge will be to develop innovative solutions and to optimize existing technologies that are already on a very high level today. That includes water saving as well as energy saving and environmentally friendly production processes." He says continuous R & D activities such as using simulation software to optimize flushing technology, make the difference and that modern technologies provide the structural framework for sustainability efforts. The Duravit Rimless® technology and the ME urinal offer a flushing technology that delivers optimum flushing results with small water volumes of only 4.5-litres.

Anna Viegner, sums up pointing to the importance of a long-term plan for sustainability, for the sector, saying, "Ideas for sustainable bathroom products are mainly aimed at reducing water consumption. Energy can also be saved, as water for the bathroom is often heated. These parameters gave rise to water-saving fittings, an economy button on the WC, and a general questioning of the ecological footprint of bathing as compared to showering. There is no doubt that cost-optimised bathrooms require advanced products. But sustainability as a whole means more. What we need are sustainable materials and long-lasting design." 

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