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It is the architect's role to shape the ideas of the client. Hence, design is a dialogue and it should be intensely communicated.

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INSIDE:

而 FOCUS : AIRPORT LOUNGES | 而 INDUSTRY FORUM : COMMERCIAL LIGHTING

而 PERSONALITY : AR. RAVI SARANGAN | 而 TECH+DESIGN : SWITCH

CLICK TO CONTROL!

in the age of smart devices and automation, the humble electric switch is changing. not only are the modern versions beautifully designed and more pleasing to the eye, they now allow the savvy user to bring an entire house under control with just the flick of a switch!

With over 500 brands manufactured by more than 100 major companies, the electric switch sector in India is rapidly becoming more organized. Anchor, Havells, MK, Legrand, Philips, Wipro, GM, Honeywell, GE, and Orpat, among many others, are now designing products of impeccable quality and superior aesthetics, which cater to the evolving demands of the discerning user.

With technological innovation, all modern-day comforts are now related to 'smart' gadgets, from lighting, fans and kitchen appliances to entertainment systems. And switches, which play a vital role in making these gadgets function effectively and safely, have had to transform from simple pieces to more advanced devices bearing a range of options that allow customers to do exactly what they want (and its more than just turning things on and off). So today, apart from their basic function, switches can do a lot, including accenting the interior décor of a home, offering safety and energy efficiency of their loads. Sameer Saxena, Director-Marketing at Legrand India says: "Switches, too, have come a long way from the white board and enormous sizes, to sleek, modular forms which complement and blend with the interior of a house or building."



new technology for smart products

The journey of evolution has been relatively slow compared with other products, as switches have retained the same look and function for years. It's only the recent drive towards technology, and recent trends in décor, that have influenced an improvement in switches. Companies have had to innovate making switches all about contemporary design, higher operational efficiency, ease of installation, advanced functionality and low maintenance with people being more selective about what they want in their homes. 'Sleek and smart' is the base-level necessity: switches now must be multi-functional, operating the lighting, the curtains and entertainment hubs; there must be diverse color, texture and operating options, such as 'one touch', 'soft touch' and 'push button'. Alok Hada, Director, Anusha Technovision Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, says: "We have various colors now, as well as glass, wood or stone-finish switches, so they can blend in better. We even have 'designer' switches in fashion statements of gold or crystal, which look nothing like switches. But about ninety-nine per cent of switches are still the same 'toggle up and down' variety."

Going a step further, switches are now being imbued with various green and energy-efficient qualities as well. Some come equipped with humidity or occupancy sensors that use infrared, ultrasonic and multisensing technology to turn off when there is no one in the room, while others have lighting controls such as dimmers, timers and keypad panels. Legrand's Saxena adds, "The wide range of wiring devices from Legrand include products across functions, such as USB chargers, lighting control, remote-controlled units, skirting lights for passage areas or staircases, and sensitive switches which operate in on/off mode with a mere wave of the hand."

But switch manufacturers are not resting on their laurels. They foresee a lot of design-oriented changes in switches in the coming years, and are preparing for them. "The year ahead is going to bring two types of trends," says Anusha Technovision's Hada, "First, 'designer' switches are going to increase in terms of choice and price. Exclusivity demands a premium. So while new players (particularly from Europe) are going to enter the market, the existing



players are going to bring a higher-end range to cater to the market. Second, the automation keypad is going to replace the current bank of switches for lights in many homes, as people become more aware, and accepting, of automation."

It's not enough to disrupt on design and function. Safety must keep up, especially with electrical products. The new 'advanced gliding technology' eliminates interference from possible sparks from other appliances; insulated looping in the wiring offers extra power, comprehensive child safety options and triple-protection technology that makes switches safe to touch with wet hands, among other things. At a minimum, the new switches are shock and fire-resistant, and use materials such as high-quality polycarbonate material, now a must for high-end, modular switches and touch and motion-sensitive switches. This implies a continuous R & D process as Legrand's Saxena says, "The Legrand product design is rooted in an ongoing analysis of societal trends and technology trends that influence user-behavior."



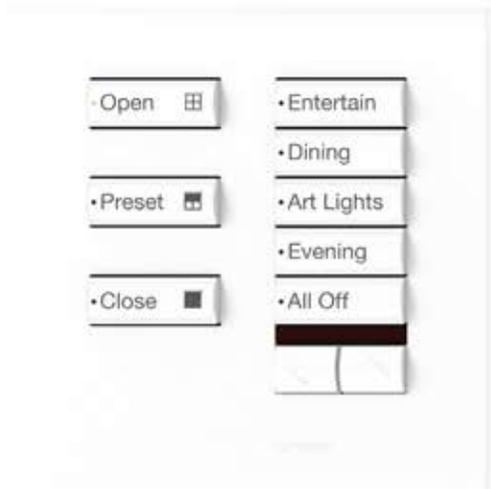


design disaster to design enhancer

From being an embarrassing necessity, to being seen as a design product, its been a long path for the basic switch. Designer and modular switches are used to enhance the visual appeal and interiors of homes and are available in a swathe of color options and a range of mounting plates where many customized combinations may be created to suit the decor. "Our automation keypads come in a variety of finishes," says Hada. "They are easy to understand as each button is custom-engraved and linked to the lighting automation system, and hence achieves the perfect ambience by providing preset lighting controls."

The collaborative effect of technological advancement, updated electrical and safety codes, design innovation and sustainable practices have led to the creation of a whole new world of switches. Adherence to international standards and design and the use of cutting-edge technology has resulted in noiseless and effortless products. Lutron offers a keypad comprising eight buttons in a three inch by three inch square that can replace a bank of switches, where one button can turn operate the lights, another the fan speed, a third can turn on the music in the room, and the fourth can lower the shades. The keypad is available in multiple finishes of glass, metal and plastic, and in multiple colors, with backlit buttons.





Legrand too offers versatility and global vision in a design inspired by modern technological devices, such as flat-screen TVs and digital photo frames which offers a wide choice of finishes and all control functions in two shapes of rocker switches, square and round. The two latest products from GM Modular comprise a collection of switches, dimmers and fan regulators, where customers can either use a single switch to control one light or pair it with a second switch or dimmer to control the light from two different locations. Another product uses wi-fi or 3G or 4G technology to control and monitor lights, fans, blinds and other electronic devices mobile connection through the GM i-Fi app, from practically anywhere in the world. Anchor offers a residential automation system equipped with a feather-touch interface, enhanced aesthetics and stylish designs for all of the accessories.



These high-end products with their elegance and advanced tech options have shown that technology can work wonders when incorporated with design. And the future will only demand more and more of this: more efficiency and enhancements in IoT-enabled wiring devices, for instance, which can connect and operate via Bluetooth and Wi-Fi; remote-access switches that are compatible with, and operated by, smartphones. As Hada sums up saying, "Switches will be nicer looking and would work, not as standalone, but be a part of an 'eco-system' of gadgets in the house." if

