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The Meaning of Home

Bisser Georgiev

What makes a house a home? The meaning of home is shifting due to our changing lifestyle habits. Our home is becoming a space that sparks emotion. It's defined by our simple, blissful moments; ordinary rituals turned into special, mindful events.

The design world is looking to enrich such experiences by feeding the emotional needs of today's consumer. Furniture, accessories, plants and light are selected to complement your morning coffee or create a cozy ambience during dinner.

Home is a place where we foster relationships. It's a place where we come together to bond, to become closer. From the kitchen, which is the beating heart of the home, to our shared spaces where we connect, socialize and make memories. These rooms aren't just physical spaces; they're central to what home means and, inevitably, become the fabric of our life.

Even though the fundamental meaning of home hasn't changed much for thousands of years, there are always societal and generational trends that continuously transform how we feel about our living spaces. At LiveTrends, we live and breathe "what's next." Our curiosity to peek around the corner, with a small hope of glimpsing what the future holds, drives us forward every day.

So here's what we're seeing: In 2018, the meaning of home will be defined by "coziness, craftsmanship and ageless design." In 2018, we expect to see all key trends to be influenced by three main forces: Millennials' experiential buying habits, the Silver Shopper's youthful attitude and the increasing popularity of renting.

The Power of Millennials

Increasingly, Millennials wield sizeable spending power and no dependents. According to Cassandra's latest Shop report, Millennials will spend a forecasted $1.4 trillion annually by 2020 or 30% of all retail sales in the U.S. alone.

Millennials are comfortable moving back in with their parents, so they can fund a more premium lifestyle, full of enriching experiences, such as travel and dining out. Where young people in previous years aspired to buy a house or a car, today's Millennials are all about experiences. A new study by the U.S. Food Institute found that Millennials spend 44% of their annual food dollars on eating out.

Despite their appetite for experiences, Millennials have also embraced the nesting trend. Bolstered by their desire for a place to call home, they yearn for tactility and creativity in a sleek, digital world. Their preferred materials are rough, comfortable and honest, with a strong lean toward craftsmanship and natural manufacturing processes that remain untouched by technology.

A Boon in Boomers

Cash-rich seniors are one of the most important shopper groups for 2018 and beyond. Aged between 65 and 74, this growing consumer segment is enjoying a better quality of life for longer and is more active than ever. Often still in employment, as the average retirement age creeps upwards, they have a bigger bank balance than previous generations.

This age group have greater spending power than ever before, thanks to equity in their homes, generous retirement incomes and more free time.

Silver Shoppers' spending habits aren't hugely different from younger generations, particularly around experiences like dining out and travel. Research shows that 83% of them don't feel their age and retailers should be aware that most of this generation will think of themselves as young and vibrant. This requires a non-age-specific approach to targeting shoppers, instead focusing on universal truths that impact all.

The reality is there are some 25- year-olds that want to dress like 50-year-olds and there are some 50-year-olds who want to dress like 20-somethings. The key is to focus on design that all age groups share. Once we have that, then we can deal with solutions rather than pigeonholing them into an age.

The Rise of Renting

In the U.S., homeownership rates are at their lowest levels since 1965. This is due both to the higher prices of homes and the delay in buying by Millennials. It's not just Millennials who are renting. By 2020, it's estimated that over 5 million Baby Boomers will be renting their dwelling.

Though renting is becoming the norm for more people around the world, consumers still want to make the most out of spaces. They want to personalize, to nest and to feel at home. Renting presents unique design challenges, as landlords have their own set of rules and regulations for what changes can be made. For brands like LiveTrends, such regulations and design dilemmas provide unique white space opportunities for multifunctional products, services and small-space solutions.

As ownership makes less and less sense to consumers, retailers need to wake up to the "why buy?" generation who are ready to share or rent instead. The next generation of shoppers have a healthy appetite for designer home decor products, but they have to be portable and easy to move.

With minimal presence of natural light and shrinking apartment sizes, renters look for living decor that's multifunctional and super easy to maintain. Space-saving, flexible designs, hanging options and soft materials are becoming key ingredients in the rental home décor age of 2018.

2018 will be an exciting year for the home décor industry. As designers and marketers, we need to concentrate on

the feeling a home can provoke. For the design industry, this is all about making home feel like home. We need to focus on the senses to create spaces that feel warm, welcoming and human. For retailers, creating experiential retail environments, where shopping is more than a transaction, is key. Stores that encourage discovery and mind-wandering are on the rise as a new way to draw in shoppers, creating a more memorable experience around selling.

So what makes a house a home? At LiveTrends, we believe the answer is simple: "those we share it with." Good design has the ability to bring friends, families and nature together. **GP**

Bisser Georgiev is Founder and CEO of LiveTrends Design Group. He can be reached at
bisser@livetrendsdesign.com.