



Luxury brands find their way into homes

Swati Anand, TNN May 19, 2007, 12.20am IST

BANGALORE: When Sukanya Kumar began doing up her new Koramangala home two years ago, every single thing from LCD TV to furnishings had to be state-of-the-art. She imported most of her furniture from Italy — until she spotted some appealing German designs at the neighbourhood Nolte Home Studio.

"I travel abroad a lot and have cultivated a taste for European designs," says the entrepreneur who runs a finance and realty firm. Kumar often felt there aren't enough upmarket home brands in the Indian market. But that's slowly changing.

Be it furnishing brands like Glant or Joop! or furniture brands like Stickley and Hickory Chair, luxury brands are making a quiet invasion in home decor market.

"I often deal with clients who spend almost as much on interiors as they do on buying their homes," says interior designer Anjum Jung. "Although they don't mind cost of importing their favourite brands for their homes, it's a cumbersome process."

Given that the appetite for luxury brands is growing, isn't an organised market yet, these brands are retailing out of niche stores and boutiques.

"Home departmental stores cater to the masses, but a luxury customer would like a quiet, yet luxurious ambience," says J Sasidhar, CEO, Mon Chateau, a boutique which stocks some top linen brands like Sahelia, that draws inspiration from African designs and furniture brands like Hickory Chair and Stickley.

Customers at stores like Mon Chateau don't think twice about spending Rs 1.3 lakh on a personalised TV couch or Rs 4 lakh for a bed. Pleased with the response in Bangalore, Sasidhar plans to open outlets in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai over the next four years.

"Although it's difficult to peg a figure to luxury home segment, there are at least 60,000 households in India that are potential buyers. This class of customers know their brands, but unlike a lot of the 'new money' audience, they're not ostentatious," says an industry expert.

The logic is simple: If I can sport a Gucci, why not my home? "Customers are looking for a personalised touch combined with perfection. So it's important that we can offer variety," says Georg Nolte, deputy chairman Nolte Worldwide. Apart from having their own line of bedroom ware and kitchens, Nolte has also partnered with Joop! home collection. More brands are expected to hit luxury home market with advent of luxury malls.

