"A Study of Factors Influencing Customer Preference towards Hiring Residential Interior Designer in Pune City"

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Abstract: The research paper aims to study the preferences of customers towards residential interior designing. The paper highlights the influence of various factors on preference towards hiring a residential interior designer. It further analyzes the opinions of people towards the methods of charging by the designers, factors that impact the decision of choosing a particular designer and the influences of social media on viewers in terms of aesthetics, lifestyle and interior designing.
The secondary research elaborates various segments in the interior designing industry, classification in residential interior designing in residential interior designing in terms of design, area to be designed and its scope.
Key words: Interior designing, home interiors, customer preference, consumer behaviour, influence and real-estate.

INTRODUCTION

Interior designing is a form of art and expression which brings out the personality of an individual in the form of color tones, aesthetics and style. As there is variety of personalities in the world, the interior designing styles are also in abundance, satisfying the needs of all kinds of people out there.

India interior designing market reports that home interiors and renovation in India is estimated to be between USD 20 Billion-USD30 Billion. that is; 14,96,50,40,00,000.00 INR to 22,44,75,60,00,000.00 INR also estimated the number of interior designers in Pune to be 48 in the year 2017.
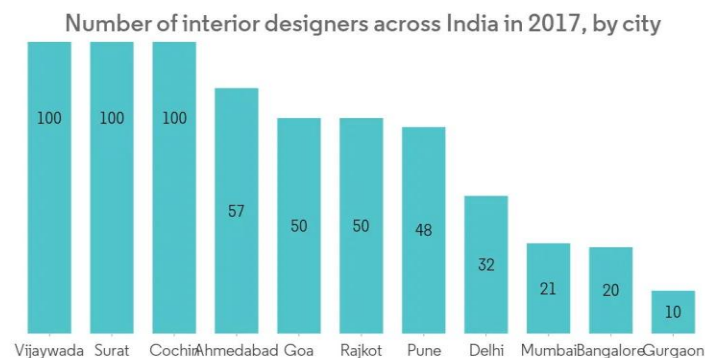
Figure 1. Number of interior designers across India in 2017, by city

The interior designing industry is segmented into Commercial and Residential interior designing. The designers providing with commercial interior designing include designing commercial spaces, anything related to trade or service, it involves designing offices, fit-outs, hotels and restaurants.

As the name suggests, residential interior designers are entitled to design or renovate residential spaces, like bungalows, penthouses, studio apartments and flats. There are designers who provide services to both, people looking for designing commercial space or residential spaces. Modern intelligence reported commercial interior designers to be hired more in comparison to residential interior designers in the year 2019.
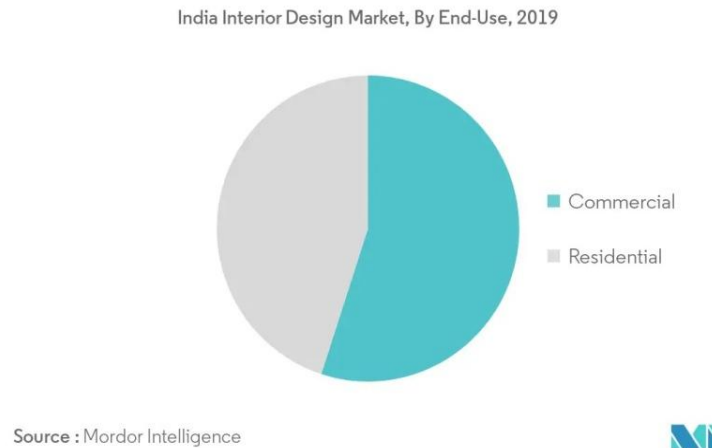

Figure 2. India Interior Design Market, By End Use, 2019

Payal Kapoor, Tanya Gyani, Aamir and Hameed Interior Designers & Contractors and Shabnam Gupta make it to the list of top interior designers in India in both residential and commercial sectors.

Interior designing is a wholesome task, slightest of the changes leave a massive impact on the entire project. It comprises several components which individually have a great significance and tendency to bring a remarkable change. It's easy to get these things done individually, but the herculean task lays in bringing along all the elements together with respect to the space in a way that resonates with each other along with the resident's personality in an impeccable and meaningful symphony and that's what an interior designer excel in.
These components involve furniture, wardrobe, false ceiling, wallpapers, wall textures, modern kitchen, floors, etc. There are stores providing these products and services exclusively, as a result, they are often confused with being interior designers.

Research Gap: What the previous researches failed to analyze is, the preference of customers in terms of residential interior designing on various parameters and the factors influencing their preference towards hiring interior designers for their home.

One may give several reasons as to why you should hire an interior designer but there are various psychological as well as practical factors that dictate customer's decision of hiring a residential interior designer.

Factors influencing customer preference towards hiring residential interior designers:
Status symbol is one the reasons that has the ability to motivate one to consciously or sub-consciously hire an interior designer, depending on the society one resides in or to match the standards of the community .
People are often influenced to hire designers believing in the fact that it will bring change in their ways of living and will **enhance lifestyle and living standards.** Similarly with latest interior designs flooding the

social media and internet, many people may feel compelled to keep up with the latest **interior designing trends.** In big cities residents suffer with lack of adequate space, in order to tackle that people prefer hiring interior designers who can make the best of the limited space and **make their home functional.**

There are reasons that sometimes restrict people to design their own houses even if they want to, that involves having **access to right resources & contacts.** As it's a part of their business, interior designers have selected partners to supply material required. Having said that, interior designers are trained for the same and are professionals and many people therefore prefer hiring them because they believe **professionals can do it better.** They have knowledge of the slightest of the things a vase, frame or centerpiece, that have the tendency to leave an impactful impression on the overall aesthetics which normal people can only notice when its executed by the designers and such things **add value to a home.**

It is not easy to decipher our own requirements and expectations and put all of it together in a meaningful and pleasing way such that nothing looks out of place. Designers are creative beings with professional knowledge, talent and **unique ideas** and have the ability to bring different pieces of imaginations and requirements of people together and **make home aesthetically pleasing** according to the requirements of the clients.

In the urban cities where people have money but are extremely busy to do anything but work, prefer hiring interior designers for their homes, the reason being that it **saves time**. Hiring an interior designer also **simplifies planning and budgeting** as the designer completes the project sticking to the budget.

Impact of social media:

The expansive wave of social media engulfs everyone coming in contact with it and has revolutionized the numerous trends related to lifestyle, home interior and renovation. It lures and motivates people to innovate and elevate their living standards in various ways. Social media has a plethora of content based on interior designing and ideas which encourages people to invest in interior designers to design their homes and inform them about the variety of designs trending around the world. Social media also allows people to expand their horizon on creativity and designing without spending a fortune, "hacks" as they refer to them as and DIYs.

Unlike earlier where just used to be the family, friends and neighbors to suggest and from whose experiences we learnt from which was somewhat limited, today there are reviews and advice we can learn and be informed about from one corner of the world to another, hence more ideas.

Considering the rise in social media in the past five years, people have access to styles and designs from across the world, more to explore and more innovation. Interior designers bring to the table designs inspired by all different continents. These styles are classified differently by different designers, the most trending themes currently are: Scandinavian, industrial, modern, minimalistic, bohemian, mid-century modern and country side. The ways of charging also vary depending on the designers, there are basically three ways, on the basis of:

- Percentage: designers tend to charge a certain percent of the entire budget from the clients as their fee.
- Working hours: some designers prefer charging depending on the time taken to finish the project and number of hours invested in the project by the designers.
- Carpet area: charging on the basis of per square feet of the carpet are is another way many designers prefer to charge mostly because the area will remain same and it is easier to manage from both, client and designer.

JD Institute of Fashion Technology mentions Xclusive interiors, Red brick designs, Design addict interiors, CK interiors, Akruti interiors and Dreams interior and decoration as the top interior designers in Pune.

Impact of covid-19:

As the buying power of people is increasing and their preference towards investing in interior designers is also increasing. Though due to the current circumstances in which due to covid 19 there are lay-offs, salary reductions, interior designing may not be the primary concern of people and the estimate growth over the next five years by Interior designing industry from 2016 to 2025 according to which CAGR (Combined Annual Growth Rate) was Supposed to be more than 7% considering the base year 2019, may not match if the situation continues. On the contrary there is also the possibility of people who were not affected by the pandemic in the urban cities may consider hiring interior designers considering the rise in time being spent at home for working from home. The situation has left everyone in a dicey or unclear state.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Robert Haddad (2014): in his research paper elicits that considering much of the design process is intuitive and non-conscious, it's difficult for many designers to decipher design in words, hence relying on metaphors and implied knowledge rather than explicit and logical thinking.

He specifies three basic client concerns: Quality, schedule and budget, elaborating the significance of research in interior design
 "relies on the clients attitude to know who the firm is, what the firm does, how long it has been in business, where is the office located, what kind of services is the firm able to provide, and what types of consultants and other professionals would be brought to the project. They will want to know about recent jobs done that are similar to their project and how those projects were particularly successful." [1]

ILAM (2015): Institute of Logistics & Aviation Management enlightens us about The Interior Design industry which they says comprises of professionals engaged in the planning, designing, decorating the interior spaces. ILAM estimates the employment of interior designers to grow 5 percent over the next ten years, it believes that the market for interior designing in India is ready to absorb latest aspiring talent also that this profession has become one of the best ever emergent fields in India due to the rising significance of interior design. [2]

Floma (2017): Research conducted by CII (Confederation of Indian Industry) stated that there were 36387 Indian designers who took part in their study. Out of these designers, 10.17% were involved with interior design, landscaping and furniture design.

Many designers who once worked in architecture have moved towards interior design. [3]

Anuj Prasad (2018): elucidates that products that reflect empathy for people's desires and problems, customers tend to deeply incline towards such products. He defines design as "a great tool to solve consumer/user problems which have origin from their socio-cultural-economic background" along with imparting aesthetics to the products. [4]

Inventia, (2018): States, a taste for high-end lifestyle is getting developed amongst Indians and a well-designed home is the first step towards a good lifestyle and Indians nowadays like their homes to be

luxurious and comfortable. Hence, a rapid growth in the interior design industry in India can be noticed, especially the youth are very keen and choosy as homeowners.

Developmental trends and lifestyle changes with Indians are leading to a remarkable growth of the interior design industry in India. From the past few years, the industry has been expanding by 30-40%.[5]

Parushni Aggarwal, (2018): postulates that design does not exist in isolation. The design is all about people. Different people interact with design in different ways. Some want their home to reflect their own personality; some might want to keep the design according to a particular theme.
Consumer preferences, style trends all change rapidly. The only way to keep pace with it is to read. [6]

Livspace, (2018): For beginners, "interiors" is an often-misrepresented term. Many people associate home interiors with just buying furniture, painting the walls and designing a modular kitchen. However, nothing can be farther from the truth. Interior design is not only very expansive in what it entails-furniture and decor, modular kitchen, wardrobes, storage such as TV units, services like false ceiling, flooring, electrical and more-but also involves designing spaces that solve a functional and aesthetic purpose. [7]

Vicky Mc Clymont, (2018): Instagram is playing a vital role in how clients communicate their brief, and how users of said spaces interact with the environment around them. This is the Insta-interior.

Designers are now being challenged by their clients to create a space with very little direction other than it to be "Instagram worthy"

Interiors provide clients and consumers with a particular lifestyle, and Instagram is a method in which users portray a lifestyle (whether true or fabricated) to their audience[8]

Pooja Solanki (2019): shares her experience saying "it is no longer enough to just know design."

You have to recognize its place within the marketing industry and its impact on organizational behaviors. Designers have to broaden their education by including subjects like marketing, psychology, and anthropology.

Interior Designers like me and many others are relying on two most loved platforms: Instagram and Pinterest.

Only disadvantage I feel is from the rise of the social media revolution, the design is being replicated and copied to recreate the look. This also brings about the unoriginality of design. [9]

Scott Peterson (2019): With online options being readily available, less people are coming into stores to look at products. However, it allows customers to show business exactly what they are looking for when they do arrive in the store which simplifies the shopping process and cuts down on the time customers need to spend in the store.
Social media can also be held responsible for the major increase in the number of people interested in aesthetics and design. [10]

Tilottoma (2019): The illustrious Bangladeshi interior design firm Tilottoma in residence style, explains the significance of ensuring customer satisfaction in interior design. It gives various points to be kept in mind for the same like:

1) Discuss the project extensively
2) Give them every chance to remain involved in the design project while it is ongoing
3) Respect the client
4. Keep a watch on your online profiles
5. Deal with reviews intelligently. [11]

FORBES (2019) Christiana Coop, who is the co-founder of Hygge & West explains that uniqueness should reflect individuality. To Forbes "People are designing their homes to reflect their personalities and creating spaces that tell their story. What makes you truly happy is more important than what you see in magazines or on social media." [12]

India today (2020): Due to rising population and a paradigm shift in family structures; joint to nuclear families, the per capita land consumption is decreasing day by day.
Therefore, effective and efficient use of the limited space is not just the choice, but the need of the people. With all these developments, interior designing is emerging as a booming career option for people with a creative bent of mind.

Several career opportunities in interior designing from which one can choose such
As furniture designers, exhibition designer, lighting designers, kitchen designer, architect, architectural technologist, product designer textile designer, stylist, production designer. [13]

Barton interiors: Referring to their clients, Barton interiors segment them on the basis of demographics and Psychographics.
On the basis of psychographic segmentation of the clients:
Interior designers are hired by for whom the appearance of home is a priority.
Entertaining and showing her home is important.
She perceives herself as creative, tasteful and able, but seeks validation and support regarding her decorating ideas and choices. [14]

JD Institute of Fashion Technology: mentions the scope of work in Interior design: designing properties, including homes and other commercial spaces, and then executing the designs to create a particular environment that is desired by the client/clients. [15]

India interior designing market: reports that home interiors and renovation in India is estimated to be between USD 20 Billion- USD 30 Billion. that is; 14,96,50,40,00,000.00 INR to 22,44,75,60,00,000.00 INR (14,96,5.04 crore to 22,44,7.56 crore) also estimated the number of interior designers in Pune to be 48 in the year 2017 and Small and medium-sized designing companies dominated the market. [16]

Décor Interiors: Purpose of this home decorating styles glossary

- Inform – Serve as a comprehensive repository of style definitions
- Inspire – Help clients visualize how various rooms and styles can be blended to create a personalized decor theme
- Empower – Make it easier for designers and clients to effectively communicate ideas

Decor Interiors: Interior design is able to change human perception through the strategic manipulation of different spatial configurations and treatments. [17]

RESEARCH PROBLEM:

There is uncertainty with respect to customer preferences towards hiring an interior designer and the significant factors to be kept in mind by the designers that have the ability to impact customer's decision of hiring an interior designer for their home.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. **PRIMARY OBJECTIVE:** To study the factors influencing customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer.

2. **SECONDARY OBJECTIVE:** To study the relationship between annual household income and customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer.

HYPOTHESIS

1. **Ho:** Customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer is not influenced by factors.
   Ha: Customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer is influenced by factors.
2. **Ho:** There is no significant relationship between the annual household income and customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer.

   Ha: There is a significant relationship between the annual household income and customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

   Descriptive research is used in this study.

Research Instrument:

   Survey research questionnaire.

Sampling:

   Non-probability convenient sampling

Sample size:

   100

Statistical Test:

   - Crosstab for chi-sq

   - Multiple Regression

   - Reliability test- Cronbach's alpha

DATA ANALYSIS

 Prefer Hiring * [Enhances lifestyle] Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.955ᵃ	12	.028
Likelihood Ratio	23.506	12	.024
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.295	1	.069
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 13 cells (65.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.

Table 4.1 Chi-Square Tests

Prefer Hiring * [Professionals can do it better] Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	37.450ᵃ	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	37.796	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.940	1	.047
N of Valid Cases	100		

a.   13 cells (65.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .28.

Table 4.2 Chi-Square Tests

Prefer Hiring * [Designers have unique ideas] Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.876ᵃ	12	.001
Likelihood Ratio	36.096	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.816	1	.051
N of Valid Cases	100		

a.   13 cells (65.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .14.

Table 4.3 Chi-Square Tests

Prefer Hiring * [To keep up with the designing trends] Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.983[a]	12	.006
Likelihood Ratio	30.061	12	.003
Linear-by-Linear Association	.017	1	.896
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 13 cells (65.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .35.

Table 4.4 Chi-Square Tests

Prefer Hiring * [Makes home functional] Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.761[a]	12	.002
Likelihood Ratio	35.337	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.780	1	.182
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 11 cells (55.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .21.

Table 4.5 Chi-Square Tests

Prefer Hiring * [Adds value to home] Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.307[a]	12	.001
Likelihood Ratio	36.464	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.648	1	.421
N of Valid Cases	100		

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.307ᵃ	12	.001
Likelihood Ratio	36.464	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.648	1	.421
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 12 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.

Table 4.6 Chi-Square Tests

Prefer Hiring * [Makes home aesthetically pleasing] Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.684ᵃ	12	.006
Likelihood Ratio	27.455	12	.007
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.369	1	.242
N of Valid Cases	100		

a.   13 cells (65.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .28.

Table 4.7 Chi-Square Tests

INTERPRETATION: In all the above cases, value of $p < 0.05$ that shows there is a relation between the variables. Hence, we will reject the null hypothesis that is, customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer, is not influenced by factors. We will accept the alternate hypothesis, customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer is influenced by factors.

Prefer Hiring * Income Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34.516ᵃ	12	.001
Likelihood Ratio	39.105	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.065	1	.799
N of Valid Cases	100		

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	34.516[a]	12	.001
Likelihood Ratio	39.105	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.065	1	.799
N of Valid Cases	100		

a. 9 cells (45.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.05.

Table 4.8 Chi-Square Tests

INTERPRETATION: In the above case, value of $p < 0.05$ that shows there is a relation between the two variables.

Therefore, we will reject the null hypothesis i.e; There is no significant relationship between the annual household income and customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer and accept the alternative hypothesis i.e; There is a significant relationship between the annual household income and customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designe

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.925	.926	7

Table 4.9 Chi-Square Tests

INTERPRETATION: A Cronbach's alpha up to .7 is considered to be acceptable. Here it is .925 which indicates that it's highly reliable.

MULTIPLE REGRRESSION:

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.199^a	.040	.030	.859	1.726

a. Predictors: (Constant), 9 [Professionals can do it better]
b. Dependent Variable: Prefer Hiring

Table 4.10 Chi-Square Tests

INTERPRETATION: Durbin-Watson indicates "Autocorrelation" which measures the relationship between a variable's current value and its past value. Value between 0 to less than 2 indicates a positive autocorrelaton whereas, value from 2 to 4 indicate negative autocorrelation. Here, the value of Durbin-Watson is 1.733 which is more than 0 and less than 2. Therefore, there is a positive autocorrelation.

Adjusted r = 3.0% of the variance in dependent variable is explained by the independent variable

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2.997	1	2.997	4.062	.047^a
	Residual	72.313	98	.738		
	Total	75.310	99			

a. Predictors: (Constant), 9 [Professionals can do it better]
b. Dependent Variable: Prefer Hiring

Table 4.11 Chi-Square Tests

INTERPRETATION: The p value < 0.05 Therefore, it's significant

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.274	.308		10.637	.000
	[Professionals can do it better]	.153	.076	.199	2.015	.047

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.274	.308		10.637	.000
	[Professionals can do it better]	.153	.076	.199	2.015	.047

a. Dependent Variable: Prefer Hiring

Table 4.12 Chi-Square Tests

Excluded Variables[b]

Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance
1	[To keep up with the designing trends]	-.134[a]	-1.140	.257	-.115	.708
	[Enhances lifestyle]	.102[a]	.849	.398	.086	.678
	[Makes home functional]	.029[a]	.243	.809	.025	.672
	[Adds value to home]	-.076[a]	-.594	.554	-.060	.598
	[Designers have unique ideas]	.113[a]	.837	.404	.085	.540
	[Makes home aesthetically pleasing]	-.032[a]	-.237	.813	-.024	.543

a. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), 9 [Professionals can do it better]
b. Dependent Variable: Prefer Hiring

Table 4.13 Chi-Square Tests

Residuals Statistics[a]

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	3.43	4.04	3.87	.174	100
Residual	-2.040	1.573	.000	.855	100
Std. Predicted Value	-2.544	.977	.000	1.000	100
Std. Residual	-2.375	1.831	.000	.995	100

a. Dependent Variable: Prefer Hiring

Table 4.14 Chi-Square Tests

INTERPRETATION: The Standard Residual value should lie between -3.29 and +3.29 to insure there are no outliers.
In this case, data shows that: Std. Residual minimum (-2.375) and maximum (1.831) lie between -3.29 and +3.29 (the standard criteria) hence, there are no outliers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

FINDINGS:

- 45% respondents agree to the fact that hiring an interior designer would save time whereas, only 5% people strongly disagree for the same.

- It was found that 42% of the respondents agree that the interior designers have access to better resources and contacts with respect to interior designing on the other hand only 7 % strongly disagree to the same.

- 61% people agree and 4% strongly disagree on the fact that interior designers simplify planning and budgeting.

- Only 9% of the respondents prefer the designer charging on the hourly basis where as 48% would prefer to be charged on the basis of sq feet rate of carpet area and 43% prefer charging on the percentage basis.

- 43% respondents prefer their house to be designed in a manner that it's warm and homely where as only 15% people prefer the luxury of hotels at home.

- Goodwill of a designer in the market significantly impacts the preferences towards hiring that designer over others.

- Major influencing factors in hiring an interior designer are family and friends (68%) along with the latest social media (54%) trends of lifestyle and home aesthetics.

- There is a significant relationship between the annual household income and customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer
- Customer's preference towards hiring a residential interior designer is influenced by factors:
    - To keep up with the designing trends
    - Enhances lifestyle
    - Makes home functional
    - Professionals can do it better
    - Adds value to home
    - Designers have unique ideas
    - Makes home aesthetically pleasing
    - Status symbol
    - Access to right resources & contacts

LIMITATIONS

- Due to lack of personal interaction with respondents, the exact idea of the respondent's mindset cannot be figured out.

- The research being specific to Pune city, the results cannot be generalized for the rest of the country.

- Sample size was too small (N=100) due to time constraint.

- There is a lack of previous Indian based research regarding interior designing from customer's perspective.

CONCLUSION

The research paper encapsulates the essence of interior deigning, its classification into commercial and residential interior designing with the special focus on residential interior designing and its various components. It analyzes the various factors like status symbol, keeping up with the latest trends of home interiors, adding value to home, etc that influence people's preference towards hiring a residential interiors designer.
The paper also analyzes the preferences of customers towards the type of ambience they desire their homes to have, the way of charging by the designers along with the factors that they would consider while hiring a designer. We recognize the relationship between income and the willingness of people to hire interior designers for their residence. As interior designing requires high involvement decision making and is not an inexpensive business therefore, higher the income, higher is the probability of hiring a designer.

FURTHER RESEARCH AND DIRECTIONS

Interior designing as an industry, is a less explored subject especially in India. There is an extensive scope for research and investigation.

- The researchers can further research on the comparison amongst the market leaders in the industry.
- The research conducted in this research paper is specific to residential interior designing, the researchers can further explore the commercial interior designing.
- The survey conducted was precisely directed towards customer perception therefore, research from a designer's perspective can also be conducted.
- Lastly, research concentrated in any region can be conducted too.

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