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Raising the Bar!

Tata Elxsi helped Tata Tiscon launch a first-of-its-kind retail-cum-customer experience space.



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When Tata Tiscon, a premium rebar brand from Tata Steel, wanted to improve home-building and construction practices in the country, it turned to Tata Elxsi, a design company that blends technology, creativity and engineering to help customers transform ideas into leading products and solutions. Part of the \$100-billion Tata Group, Tata Elxsi helped Tata Tiscon launch a “first-of-its-kind” retail-cum-customer experience space, the Tata Tiscon Experience Zone. The aim was not only to up the glamour quotient of a low-involvement category like steel pipes but to also allow the product to establish a strong brand connect with builders, home-owners and other stakeholders, **Narendra Ghate, Chief Designer, Service Design, Tata Elxsi, tells Tamajit Pain of Steel Insights.**

Excerpts:

Kindly explain how service design – a new field in India, impacts modern businesses?

A competitive edge or differentiator is the key to the success in businesses which is cluttered and highly competitive. In today's competitive world of business, what separates competition from the industry leader is really the service that comes with the product offering, ie, the buyer experience.

In order to provide a holistic experience, more and more Indian industries are turning towards service design. Simply put, service design is the activity of planning and organising people, infrastructure, communication and material components of a service in order to improve its quality and the interaction between service provider and buyer. A well-designed and efficiently delivered buyer experiences enables business success for the organisation. The design of the store can be used to simplify and enhance service value by creating meaningful interactions, spaces and products.

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Why is service design important in retail?

Today, retail designs have moved away from just displaying and educating customers about products, services and brands. It is now more about understanding consumers' requirements, providing extraordinary customer experience at every touch-point and addressing them through personalised interactions. This requires a new design philosophy which creates spaces that are friendlier to customer interactions whilst displaying products and services subtly and informatively.

More and more B2B businesses are turning towards design to create intangible experiences for their customers as they have understood it is crucial for businesses to show deep customer/user understanding. Understanding customers more holistically helps create better engagement with them as well as with the company's current product or service.

Hence service design today is really a crucial element for success in retail.

Is Tata Elxsi a pioneer in this space?

Tata Elxsi is a design company that blends technology, creativity and engineering to help customers transform ideas into world-class products and solutions. As part of the \$100-billion Tata Group, Tata Elxsi addresses the communications, consumer products, defence, healthcare, media & entertainment, semiconductor and transportation sectors.

At Tata Elxsi, we believe that a well-designed and efficiently delivered customer experiences enables business success for our clients. Together with our clients we simplify and enhance service value by creating meaningful interactions, spaces and products. We have a keen eye and skill for analysing problems, identifying opportunities, improving processes and creating unified solutions.

There are a couple of Indian boutique design agencies which have been providing service design services but on a very small scale. We are the only design company in India which can provide end-to-end design services to our customers. We have a team of ethnographers and research experts who not only have a keen eye for analysing problems, identifying opportunities, but our

team of designers and engineers also have the expertise to improve processes and create unified solutions.

Our team can address the gamut of areas, including processes and tools, designing of retail and spaces, signages and way-finding designs, designing experiences to designing digital signage solutions.

Thus, our capability to first identify the problem, analyse, design a solution and then implement enables us to align client's business efforts and processes to meet people's changing expectations.

This enables the delivery of a cohesive experience across products and services, building strong and long-lasting relationships with customers.

What strategies helped Tata Elxsi re-invent Tata Tiscon as a retail steel store?

Tata Tiscon, a premium rebar brand from Tata Steel (the world's sixth-largest steel-making company), wanted to improve home-building and construction practices in the country. It intended to launch a "first-of-its-kind" retail-cum-customer experience zone – the "Tata Tiscon Experience Zone", a one-stop solution outlet to offer customers quality support in building their "dream home" and provide a complete range of superior steel products.

We helped Tata Tiscon create unique



store experiences, implemented processes to make the store approachable, accessible, interactive and informative in the usage of steel for all those involved in a building project, right from the owner to the architects, masons and contractors.

The primary goal was not just to up the glamour quotient of an otherwise boring looking retail steel store but to build an experience so that the brand can enforce strong and constructive relationship with the builders and other stakeholders - like masons, architects and the home-owner, who aren't typically involved in the buying process. Service design was implemented to enhance the experience of building and achieving brand retention and recognition and showcasing the Tata Tiscon value and quality.

Based on the theme "Build for Life", a smart and invigorating environment was created to engage consumers across various touch-points, making the entire experience more meaningful, welcoming and informative. This new initiative would mark a major shift in providing world-class information services to customers who often are not too aware of the steel purchases required for building their dream home.

How has Tata Elxsi delivered a human-centered design perspective and helped Tata Tiscon understand its customers' needs?

Tata Elxsi acted as a researcher and translator, implementing best practices throughout the store. Tata Elxsi's

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ethnographic approach, coupled with its design and technology expertise plus insights gathered during observations led the team to craft a set of principles:

- We designed intuitive experience zones which would allow consumers to actually get a feel of the product and the basket of services that are available at the outlet.
- Steel is predominantly viewed as a commodity that needs very low involvement of the customer, and the point of sale is usually a run-down godown or warehouse! The focus, thus, was on creating processes and experiences which would provide a radical and fresh way of selling steel that would put the customer at the epicenter of the buying process.
- The aim was to also provide expert advice and information related to the product directly to the end-customers, including first-time home-builders, certified masons, contractors and others.

- The idea was to reflect the brand identity of the store based on the theme “Design to Build” in order to enhance the experience of building and achieve brand retention and recognition and showcase the Tata Tiscon value and quality.

How did the “successful experience design” enable families to get involved in the home-building process as well as engage with the Tata Tiscon brand?

As mentioned earlier, steel is mainly a commodity that requires very low involvement of the customer, and the points of sales are usually a run-down godown or warehouse. The end-customer would never visit this godown or warehouse as there wouldn't be any positive experience to be gained out of this.

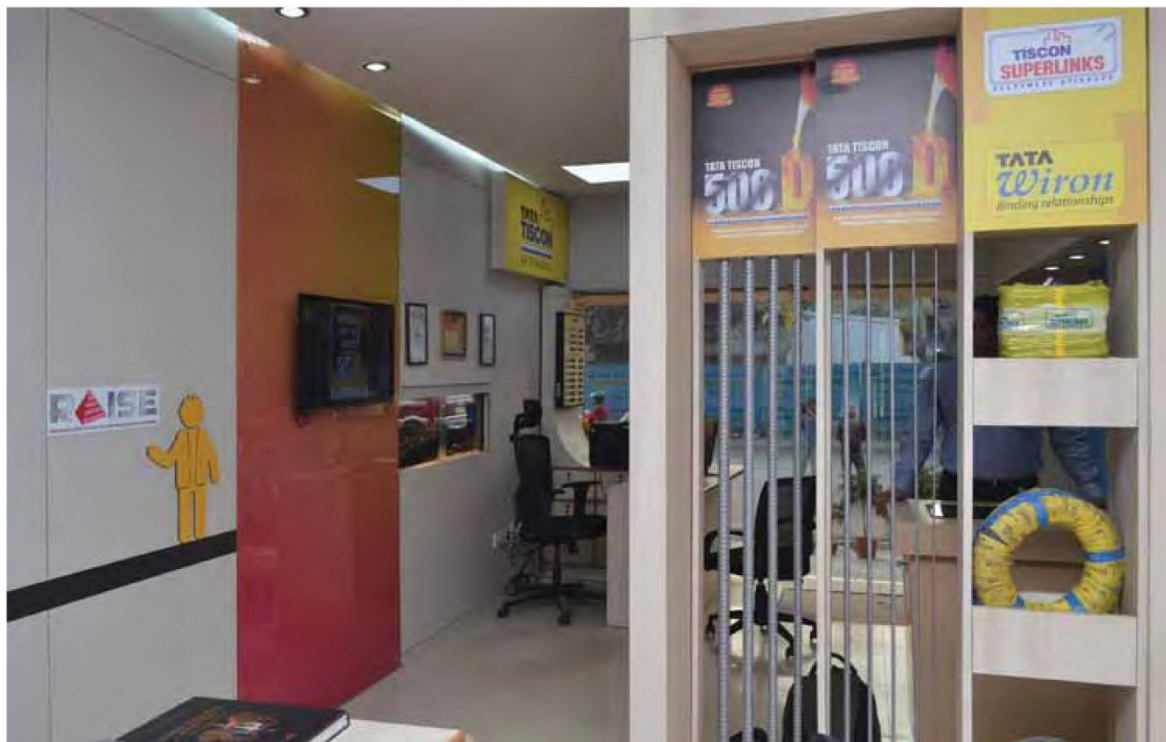
We were able to put together an experience for Tata Tiscon through which they were able to offer their customers quality support in building their “dream home” and bringing together quality

products, knowledge, design support and expert help all under a single roof. We were able to focus on creating processes and experiences which would provide a radical and fresh way of selling steel that would put the end-customer at the epicenter of the buying process.

The new store environment would also make the end-customer feel more welcomed apart from offering information, which would enable a customer to make an informed choice.

What measures helped to create brand retention and recognition for Tata Tiscon?

We developed the complete “retail identity programme” for Tata Tiscon. The brand guideline/manual which we developed ensured that all the outlets that get launched across the country will follow the same brand identity, design language and experiences so that it offers consistency and customers can connect to the stores similarly.



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Will this experience be extended to other Tata Steel brands in India or abroad?

Well, I am not the concerned authority to be able to comment on that.

Can this experience be a business opportunity for other steel companies in India?

Yes, definitely. Today the industry is witnessing a paradigm shift in store designs of low-involvement categories like capital goods and paints.

A brand which had used service design to provide a first-of-its-kind, touch-and-feel experience is Bosch Power Tools. Its new store format, Do-It-Yourself Square, located in Bangalore, is a first-of-its-kind, touch-and-feels experience, where customers often visit to create interesting objects of their choice with tools that are convenient and light to use. The compact DIY Square displays a wide range of tools under the Home, Hobby and Garden categories. Consumers get an opportunity to use these power tools to create different objects for their homes while exploring it as a new hobby as well. They are assisted by store officials to help them create what they want. In addition, the DIY Square also conducts regular workshops during weekends, where consumers are introduced to the various uses of the tools and are taught how to create exciting new objects.

Service design is thus not just for steel companies. Every brand can benefit through

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service design. The applications of design skills, knowledge, activities and processes seem to become wider every day. More and more industries are tackling complex issues, by applying service design to projects where it's needed the most.

How will experience-centric services drive the future of retail?

We live in a service economy and in most western countries, service accounts for more than 75 percent of the GDP – a share which will continue to increase in the coming years. Thus, the way an organisation or capital goods brand would offer a differentiated service offering would help to set them apart and attain success.

Empathy for our customers is a necessity. Only a nuanced understanding of our customers will allow us to understand their said/unsaid needs. This can lead to a revamp of our approach (be it store design, product re-design, positioning, sales/service processes, etc). And this will ensure success in the new age of hyper-customer awareness. Service design firms like Tata Elxsi can

help companies in this journey towards re-relevance.

How do you see the future of service design as an important tool for business growth for manufacturing companies in India?

It's incorrect to assume that service design is limited to only enhancing end-consumer experiences. Service design thinking can be extended to and applied successfully towards internal customers and business partner experiences as well. Empathy and extension of a customer's thoughts, to include his unsaid needs will drive change in the way he operates. For instance, a simple redesign of secondary packaging of a bag of bolts can improve efficiency at a customer's factory. A form, a process, a graphic description of a product can improve the safety at a customer's premises. Understanding a customer's issues can allow us to serve him better. A customer's products and services can fit in more easily. The productivity of the entire supply-chain can be improved. Thus, service design can be applied across sectors – manufacturing, urban transport, retail, hospitality, healthcare, aviation amongst others. ■

