HOME AUTOMATION AIDS IN ENERGY CONSERVATION

Sameer Saxena, Vice President, Marketing & Sales Legrand India

What are the current trends in Home Automation in India? Has the concept captured enough interest in India compared to global market? What are the roadblocks?

The home automation industry in India is now evolving towards a converged offering with integration of comfort & convenience, safety & security and entertainment features. Advances in the areas of apps is also changing the user interface and it is becoming much more user friendly and simple for users to manage, even on their handheld devices. Trends like fine lighting, standalone dimming, collective dimming, and scenario control are the upcoming in the automation segment.

The home automation market here in India is still evolving. When it started off, it was primarily focused on the safety and security products. Gradually the home automation market has evolved, perceptions have changed and it has now also become a lifestyle quotient for the end users opting for the luxury homes. However, the organised home automation offering is limited to the luxury and premium segment in India. When we talk about home automation at the global market level, the acceptance is high, especially in the European and North American markets. Even consumers who fall in the middle income group opt for basic automation and the market is not just restricted to the luxury segment. Thus the home automation market scenario in India is different from the one globally.

What is the significance of Home Automation with respect to energy efficiency, comfort and safety?

Smart living and energy efficiency have evolved as major concerns with end users over the past few years. Various builders and contractors have started showing interest in designing green buildings/ energy efficient buildings/smart buildings. Home automation/ Office Automation provides these functionalities and beyond. Now even the government has also accepted the idea of including home automation in India in the concept of Smart Cities

Home Automation aids in energy conservation by automatically controlling the lighting and HVAC in your house and optimizing the use of electronic and electrical devices. Home automation, enables you to completely transform a single room by creating the ambience of your choice all the while just sitting on your chair. One touch of an icon on the touch–screen and your living room metamorphoses into a cosy home theatre room with dimmed light, et al. Another touch of the finger and now you have a reading room where silence reigns, the curtains drop down and the lighting matches the mood. Various intelligent tools of home automation technology enable you to keep an eye on the kids or pets while you are away. They also make it possible for you to give access to your house to guests in your absence.

What are the current demands of smart home buyers? How is Legrand catering to these demands?

With rapidly increasing purchasing power allied with the exposure to technology and better lifestyles' Indians (HNI, rich and upper middle class) are increasingly experimenting with various available forms of home automation - stand-alone/ completely integrated/mixed. These are the opportunities where we see growth coming from in the future.

Home automation still remains an expensive offering, hence the demand is mainly from luxury and premium properties (personal, hospitality, luxury residential projects). We have been seeing a lot of demand from Tier II and Tier III cities in India like Surat, Vadodara, Jaipur, Surat, Kochi, Coimbatore, and Indore which have a high concentration of HNIs. Legrand in India has experienced and well informed system integrators who form the face of the company. Once the user's interests are expressed, our team of 'product specialists' exchange information in connection with the client's expectations. This is followed by an interaction with the end user, the architect, the product specialist and our system integrator. During this interaction, we clearly define the scope and extent of the work and present detailed commercials for the project. Once the buyer has agreed to the commercials and the scope of work, our system integrator works on the designs and the various layouts (electrical, ELV, lighting, etc.).

What is the architectural significance of home automation? What products and solutions Legrand offers to make homes look architecturally more beautiful?

Design is rooted in the culture and values of the clients for whom we plan projects. Design in trends and parameters around the globe is very dynamic and clients expect you to have that. Also to offer international designs at economical costs, we have to be able to re-invent. Consumers are now

opting for home automation technology in their homes not just for the safety and security concerns but also for the looks, design and as a lifestyle quotient. Keeping in mind the requirement of the end users Legrand India has brought in the product ranges of Arteor and Axolute to meet the consumer demands.

Arteor: Arteor is an innovative range that excels by its unique aesthetics and rich choice of designs and finishes that create a floating impression on the wall. With its versatility, Arteor is the ideal choice for every kind of premium project, anywhere in India ?

Axolute: Axolute range of products from Legrand are known for their sophistication which give a luxury finish to the interiosr. Bticino from Axolute has introduced Swarovski elements switches range, which comes into two shades – aluminium and anthracite, which in itself is a clear indication of the sophistication and luxury aspects.

There is a lot happening in the space of automation of commercial projects as well, what we call digital building infrastructure. Kindly throw some light on this?

Legrand India is the global specialist in the electrical and digital building infrastructure and considers commercial and residential markets as its main foundation for business.

In commercial building projects (hospitals, hospitality, offices, multiplexes) security demand is on the rise, and so is the trend of Integrated Lighting Management. Sensor based lighting controls which sense human presence and regulate electrical devices (lights, curtains, HVAC) accordingly are something which have become very popular.

How has been the journey of Legrand so far in India? What are your biggest achievements?

The history of Legrand goes back to 1865 in Limoges, France (where the group headquarter is still located.) Back then in 1919, the company expanded its business by creating a light switch made from porcelain, and had an 'electrical wiring devices' branch. Over the years, the low voltage electrical wiring devices were to gradually become the company's main activity. With over a century of company

history, Legrand is now looking forward to the future. The historic background is an asset for the group, which has always demonstrated its ability to adapt to changes in the market. Something that started out at just a porcelain workshop, gradually became a world leader in electrical and digital building infrastructure.

Today, Legrand offers integrated solutions for lighting, heating, energy, and network and access management in buildings. It designs, develops and markets electrical and digital systems that are both simple and innovative. Legrand has been in India for more than 18 years now. We have been leaders in the protection business in the country for the last four decades with a range of circuit breakers and distribution boards. Taking advantages of this strong position and the expertise of the group, Legrand India has progressively developed additional product ranges like wiring devices, home automation, door entry, lighting management system, cable management and structured cabling.

In less than a decade after introduction of our first range of wiring devices in India - Mosaic, we have been able to acquire a dominant share of the midscale, upscale and luxury market in wiring devices. Also, in a very short span we have been able to be a challenger in the home automation and cable management systems' marketplace in India.

What is the current market size of home automation for residential and commercial projects? Are these products only meant for high-end projects? How much they add to the total cost of project and what is the return on investment?

The home automation marketplace is expected to touch around 7,000 MINR by the end of the year and expected to grow around 18% in coming years.

Home automation has reached to the next level in the Indian market. More than from the safety and security aspects home automation is now focused on the comfort level of technology. The past few years have seen progressive growth and evolution of the segment. Home automation demands are highest from residential sector followed by the hospitality sector. Previously automation was mainly installed in the high end commercial buildings and super luxurious properties. Gradually it entered

into the mid-segment market and thus the market size is expanding. There is vast range of product offerings in the market space.

Defining an investment for home automation is an extreme challenge as each home is developed by an individual's aspiration and dreams. However, to provide a very basic framework – base level home automation by Legrand starts at around a lakh of Indian rupees per area/ room.

ROI in residential space is directly connected to the social indicators and our Axolute and Arteor ranges are aligned to that.

What are the core operational areas of Legrand and what are the USPs of your products that makes you stand out? Quality & R&D ?

Superior aesthetics, robust products and a strong network of support functions.

How does an efficient cable management system help in smooth functioning of the building?

Legrand has always been among the first to bringiin innovative solutions in the market. In the area of cable management, Legrand offers complete range from under floor to wall and overhead cable management solutions.

Improper cable management can result in cable damage and failure. This can lead to data transmission errors and performance issues as well as system downtime. This becomes all the more important in India with its scenario of power outages and low voltages.

An efficient cable management system prevents crosstalk due to incorrect placement of power and data cables. It helps in reduced signal interference and reduces maintenance costs. Proper cable management prevents chances of damage to the cable infrastructure resulting from sharp bends, and movement.

10. What is the future of electrical and digital buildings in India?

Going forward, the electrical and digital infrastructures for a home are going to become more integrated. The leading trend towards Smart Homes, where your equipment's speak to you, understand your usage patterns and automate themselves is a good example of the same.