



thinktank CONSUMER ATTITUDES

Consumer Attitudes: new homes

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In today's new homes consumers want... What key factors affect homes of the near future?

What can social housing teach the global consumer? How do new homes meet the needs of a contemporary family?

What technologies will change the domestic environment? How can consumers future-proof their homes?

Why is the kitchen so important? Facts and figures

How do new homes meet the needs of a contemporary family?

Constantly changing needs

The way we live is changing and increasingly 'family' means the community you live with rather than 'home' being the place where your relations live.

This has affected what needs to be done in a home and what combinations of people homes need to cater for. As with any product today new homes must respond to a complex layering of niche consumer desires.

- "The belief in the myth that the housing industry can - and should - model itself on the car industry has been the biggest failure in the building of new homes over the past 30 years. It's a fallacy that has justified a total disregard for public space, context, community, place-making, vernacular, local skills, timelessness, landscape....I could go on." (Isabel Allen, HAB Housing, UK, WGSN interview, December 2008)
- There are 12 parking lots across Santa Barbara that have been set up to accommodate the growing middle-class homelessness. These lots are believed to be part of the first programme of its kind in the United States, according to organisers.

Nancy Kapp, the New Beginnings parking lot coordinator, said the group began seeing a need for the lots in recent months as California's foreclosure crisis hit the city hard. She said a growing number of senior citizens, women and lower- and middle-class families live on the streets. (CNN.com, May 2008)



The Nest by Benjamin Verdonck

Housing Italy exhibit, Venice Architectural Biennale 2008

Consumers want...

Houses that expand and shrink to suit our needs and products that address the new family. For most people this will rely on products and technology that allow you to easily manage

your space - bringing together or keeping apart family members when needs be.

- "Houses have to be more adaptable. With the current credit crunch, someone at the age of 21 can't afford to own their own home. People are staying in the family home longer." (Wayne Hemingway, Hemingway Design, WGSN interview, October 2008)

- People are tiring of the fact that the family does not sit down together as a family and consume television. There is no chance for a parent and child to interact around the content in the way that there was before the narcissism or the hedonism [of today]...

Most parents are uncomfortable with some of the games we put on to the Xbox 360 [and] they're uncomfortable with the content that is on television. [Microsoft] needs to not just follow but lead in some ways the unmet needs of families not only [in the US] but in Western Europe and in Asia. (Jeff Bell, Microsoft VP Global Marketing, 3 Minute Ad Age, April 10, 2008)

- And remember, families are constantly changing - lone parenthood is not a permanent state for most people. It's a phase, usually lasting about five and a half years. (BBC.co.uk, 11 April 2007)

Example solutions

- [Extra]ordinary furniture is a collection of objects for domestic experiences... Designed to evolve slowly over time, each object proposes a different level of interaction.

Made of an accumulation of layers to be removed, one after the other, the Mille-feuille table's multilayered top is an invitation to change the look of the table every time you wish. In a second time, each removed layer can be reused for decorative purpose, as a wall ornament for example, thanks to removable adhesive. (aureliemosse.com, 2008)



Mille-feuille table by Aurelie Mosse, aureliemosse.com



Wallpaper by Aurelie Mosse peels back to reveal new patterns, aureliemosse.com

Need to be at home

As global recession hits cuts in nannies, home help, nurses, cleaners, after-school classes and eating out will come into play. We'll need to stay at home.

- Nearly half (47%) [of those surveyed] expect to reduce home help and daycare. (The Culture of Recession, Faith Popcorn's Brain Reserve, 2008)

Consumers want...

Homes designed by people that understand their situation - the realities of family life in all its senses. Brands that have consulted the right expert for their product and listened to detailed feedback from consumers.

- "There has been a great deal of innovation in the provision of housing for young professionals but I would argue that many of the 'advances' actually work against the requirements of family life.

Designing houses with showers instead of baths sounds like a great idea: it saves money; it saves water; it saves space. But I defy anybody to get small children washed/relaxed/generally ready for bed by giving them a shower. (Isabel Allen, HAB Housing, UK, WGSN interview, December 2008)

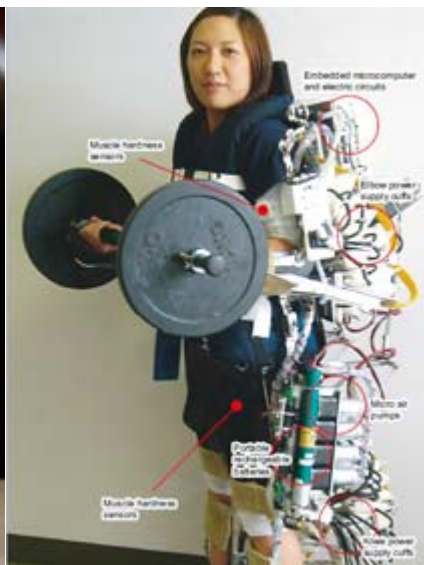
Example solutions

- Power Assist Suit by Keijiro Yamamoto (Department of Robotics and Mechatronics, Kanagawa Institute of Technology) is a battery-powered exoskeleton suit that addresses a real problem in Japan - the low number of healthy people available to take care of its ageing population.

The suit helps carers carry bedridden patients by electronically sensing how much extra strength they need and delivering the help through a pneumatic system of actuators powered by inflatable mechanisms. (Innovative solutions: best future products, WGSN report, 10 April 2008)



Consumers want homes designed by people that understand their situation - the realities of family life in all its senses



Power Assist Suit by Keijiro Yamamoto

Single

Ideas for new ways of living must address varied demographics like never before, such as houses and towns designed for single people. Don't forget though about connection and in this case loneliness, particularly for the elderly.

- I live in the most ordinary American household - I live alone. Knock on any door in the nation and you are more likely to find a household like mine than a household with mom, dad, and the kids, or a household with a married couple and no kids, or a single-parent household, or any other kind. (Bella DePaulo, The Huffington Post, August 21 2008)
- Government figures estimate that there will be nearly 13 UK million people over 65 by 2021. Best estimates on social isolation, which is defined as not having weekly contact with friends, family or neighbours, suggest that 17% of over-65s are currently socially isolated. (Home Alone: Combating isolation with older housebound people, 30 June 2004)

Consumers want...

Information for their niche - no matter how small.

- Singleedition.com is the website of a designer and a business marketing consultant who found themselves within the growing population of singles just loving their independence. Like all the other singles out there, the singleedition.com founders had hard times finding relevant and updated information and resources to support their lifestyle and so the site was born. (Singleedition.com)

Example solutions

- By 2026, a third of all of us in developed and developing countries will be living alone. How can we be at home alone in the modern world? The Dutch collective Droog Design, in collaboration with the advertising firm KesselsKramer, has collaborated to create a prototype community for singles. "S1ngletown" is an abstract representation of an urban space consisting of cocoons, implements, connective technologies and wearable signs singles need in order to inhabit our atomised environment. It is a network of solitary nodes in a spatial network architects, designers and artists must weave in order to create a social alternative to a landscape of alienated individuals and static objects. (DROOG & KESSELSKRAMER, Project S1NGLETOWN, Venice Architectural Biennale, 2008)



DROOG & KESSELSKRAMER, Project S1NGLETOWN, Venice Architectural Biennale, 2008



Singleedition.com

Tribes

Virtual and real-time tribes are key to today's open source world as is the physical realisation of shared interest groups such as eco-towns.

Experts are concerned that we are drawing into cultural and ethical shells and even within one country or state you can live in your own little pocket. Brands and retailers need to understand the balance between this withdrawal and greater global communication enabled by the internet.

- At the Winkreative 10 Year Conference 2008 Nader Mousavizadeh, executive director of Goldman Sachs, spoke about his thoughts on 'the new global archipelago'.
 "...a world of parts is emerging - of states drifting farther away from each other into a global archipelago of interests and values; and that in an archipelago world appeals to freedom, democracy and human rights must compete with aims of stability, resource security and the projection of national power." (The Times, August 2008)
- "I think it's clear there's currently a reaction against the notion that technology allows us all to be self-sufficient and a real demand for a return to face-to-face contact and good old-fashioned communities.
 Certainly, the best housing projects are putting an enormous emphasis on community facilities and public space." (Isabel Allen, HAB Housing, UK, WGSN interview, December 2008)

Consumers want...

The support of a community and the ability to tell their story. Products that allow for this and reintroduce the positive attributes of a tribal existence.

- Irrespective of demographic or age group, protagonists of the future want their urban oases to offer both a tribal connectivity with like-minded individuals...
 The innate sense of tribalism will have developed in two decades to have a far more international perspective across cultural and religious barriers than now. Individuals will still seek out and desire to be with like-minded beings. Filtering of such tribes will, however, still be influenced strongly by wealth. (Future Hotel Trends, WGSN report, December 2007)

Example solutions

- Located just 20 miles west of London, and more importantly, only five from Heathrow Airport, Slough is becoming accepted as the gateway to the UK for tens of thousands of immigrants, most from the former eastern European countries.
 Many stay on and this huge influx is forcing Slough into the front line, facing up to the challenges presented by the post-Cold War multi-cultural "New Britain". The town has to move fast to ensure the cultural integration of its diverse communities. (3dreid.com)



Consumers are increasingly getting involved in independent community home building



Designs for the heart of Slough by 3DReid

Things to think about

- New emphasis on becoming an active part of the community
- The family is no longer just nuclear
- React to a super-niche consumer
- How to reach different tribes and let them tell their story

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