

SUSTAINABILITY IN INTERIOR DESIGN

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Abstract. *This article explores the idea of sustainability in interior design and the actuality of this term. Therefore, it analyses the various methods used by contemporary interior designers that creates spaces that are not only comfortable and energy-efficient, but also environmentally friendly. Additionally, it presents the impact those relatively new practices have on the environment and not only, since there are so many ways it affects us as well. The problems and issues that interior designers have to deal with while creating sustainable interiors and some causes for why they happen are also explored, because most of the time it is not that interior designers do not want a non-polluted environment, but it is out of lack of knowledge or because the clients desires make it a challenge.*

Keywords: *recyclable materials, green design, eco-friendly practices, energy efficiency, sustainable interiors*

Introduction

Nowadays, sustainability is a widely spread term, which has become a synonym for a friendly coexistence with the environment. Because it is such a serious topic for human development, sustainability is being applied more and more often in all industries, including interior design. Renowned names, such as Zaha Hadid, who claimed “Sustainability is a defining challenge of our generation”, have demonstrated the importance of sustainability through their work [6].

The process of creating interior designs by dealing with spaces and their internal components in an environmentally responsible manner, whereby energy consumption and harmful emissions that would jeopardize environmental security are reduced, through the use of renewable and environmentally friendly materials, and by utilizing environmental and design methods that achieve comfort, luxury, health, safety, and privacy [11]. But is sustainability in interior design something that is applicable or not?

Methods of creating a sustainable interior

Using materials for building and design that are energy-efficient is one technique. Windows, doors, toilets, and wood flooring from quickly renewable sources (repleted at a rate faster than people deplete the resource) like bamboo, as well as other ecologically friendly components, can all be used by interior designers to create spaces that are as energy efficient as possible [4].

The amount of energy or gas we consume in our homes can be reduced by using passive heating and letting natural light enter our houses for a few hours each day. By using less artificial energy, you will not only save a lot of money, but you will also help the environment by lowering the amount of harmful greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere. Solar-powered water heating and energy-saving appliances are two examples of things that might be equally useful [3].

Taking into consideration the characteristics of a material before using it in the design is essential when talking about sustainable interior design. The most important factors to look for in a material are biodegradability, chemical composition, longevity, and recyclability. Such materials are shown in Fig. 1.

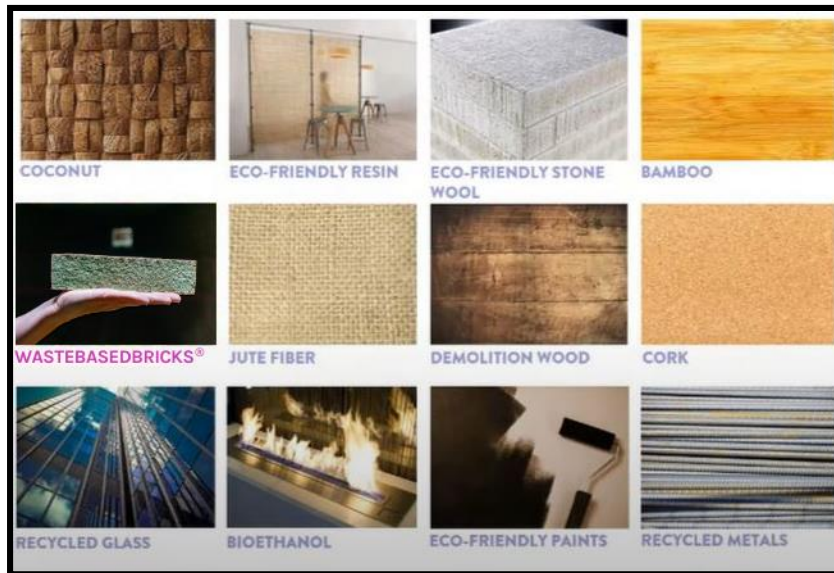


Figure 1. Most commonly used sustainable materials

Enhancing an interior's overall productivity requires thoughtful interior design. A room's functionality and aesthetics may be influenced by the size, kind, quantity, and arrangement of the furniture. The long-term sustainability of the space will be influenced by the material's lifespan and efficiency. Minimalist sustainable interior design techniques may help to cut waste and provide more ecologically friendly designs.

Individuals want their surroundings to change and evolve as they do because it helps them reflect how they have changed. In order to prevent the furniture from being constantly thrown out and replaced with the newest trend, interior designers should take into account a space's adaptability to the changing demands of those who use it [5]. After all, the ultimate goal of interior designers while planning an interior is to create spaces that go beyond time and remain fresh as it flows.

The importance of sustainable interior design

From its definition, sustainable interior design is connected with the idea of protecting and using resources in a responsible manner, so that nature isn't harmed. As with any other domain, eco-friendly materials are a must, because they are recyclable and/or biodegradable.

However, sustainable interior design is not only about how eco-friendly the materials used are, but also about the efficiency of how the resources are being used. For instance, a well-designed space consists of an eco-friendly interior design and sustainable materials that are used skillfully in ways that reduce your costs without compromising comfort or the aesthetics of the house [2].

A major concern with today's traditional interior design is that it has become too dull and strayed away from nature too much. Therefore, another advantage of sustainability in interiors is that it brings nature into our houses and it rebuilds the innate connection we have with nature, which is called Biophilia. Even the famous architect, interior designer, writer and educator, Frank Lloyd Wright recognised this trivial relationship between humans and nature, saying: "Study Nature, love Nature, stay close to Nature. It will never fail you" [7]. By promoting the use of natural systems and processes in design, we can increase our exposure to nature, which benefits our health and well-being. It was proved that reinforcing our connection with nature brings us several advantages, such as: decreased blood pressure and pulse rates, reduced heart rate variability, and greater nervous system activity, to name a few.

Nature is a universal language and, thus, interiors that make use of it can speak to people of all cultures, ethnicities, and ages. Such spaces touch a sensitive innate string in our hearts that boosts our creativity and productivity [1].

Problems that interior designers encounter trying to approach sustainability

According to Alisa Templeton's thesis, the majority of interior designers have a generally optimistic opinion of the environment and are in favor of the trend toward sustainable design. Yet, there are less interior designers who are actively engaged in sustainable interior design than there are those who claim to have a favorable opinion of it. The same phenomenon can be observed with interior design students. They are also, on average, expressing positive views concerning sustainability in their field. However, fewer interior design students are ready to take responsibility in order to implement more green elements in interiors.

Traditional interior designers are unlikely to do so out of any hostility toward the environment. It is more probable that they are just acting out of habit, are ignorant, or are afraid to try new things [8].

Moreover, this type of issue is not limited only to interior designers, but to the clients too. Many clients would not want the beauty of their interiors to cause any harm to the environment, but not so many opt for a sustainable interior. One of the causes for why that happens is that sustainable materials are generally a novelty, which leads to them being expensive and not accessible. Additionally, not every material that is claimed to be green is so. As a trend almost every service provider has claimed its share in being eco-friendly. One needs to be as researched as possible to ensure that the materials that are used are green and that they do not waste their money.

Another issue is that the overall aesthetics of green design might not match the preferences of the client. As it was mentioned, sustainable interior design relies on a more minimalistic approach, using less furniture and neutral natural tones (for example Fig. 2). While this might be found as relaxing by some, others might want their personal space to have a more energetic and active aura.



Figure 2. Example of sustainable interior design

It can be difficult to implement sustainable design principles within the time restrictions and project deadlines. The effects of architectural design practices that produce waste were examined in a UK study. They discovered that client design changes made at the last minute, additional design adjustments, and detailing mistakes were the main causes of design waste [9].

Conclusion

Although sustainability in interior design seems to be something easily achievable with today's technology, there is still a long way till that can be reality. It can be concluded from the information presented that both the interior designer and the client have the responsibility of promoting and adopting sustainable practices in this domain [10]. Consequently, the solutions to this problem should not be one-sided. Instead, they should apply to both parts, by learning about sustainability in this domain so that there would not be any information misleading the parts and, thus, in the end, the result of the design project should meet the standards and expectations the client has formed, while also having all the benefits that sustainability involves. In the end, sustainable design is the one that connects utility with ecology and it once again reminds us of the strong relationship we have with nature [11].

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