

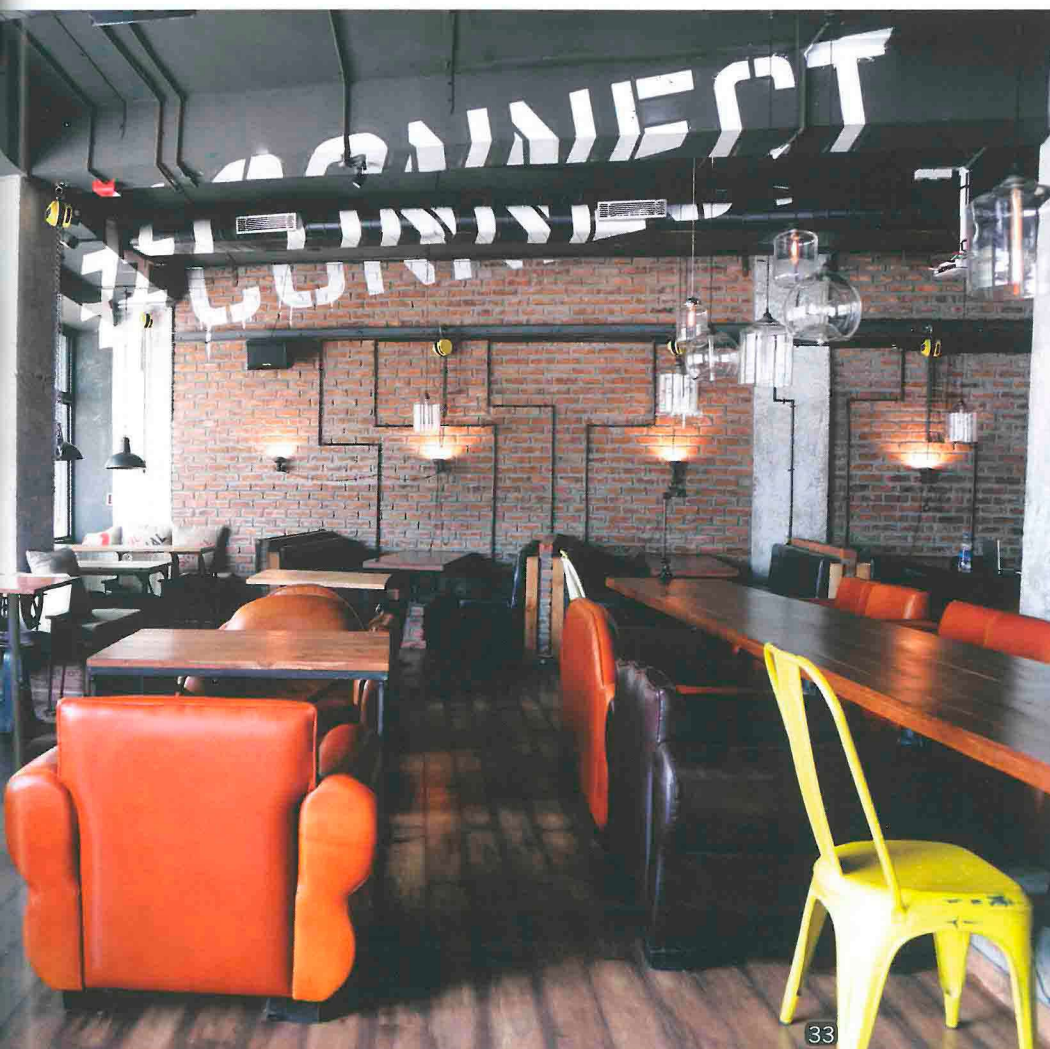
Go social in a virtually real space...

A hashtag is all it takes to connect people on the virtual platform in today's socially networked reality. Church Street Social in Bangalore now extends this idea to the physical realm.

Church Street Social, a new resto-pub at the every-busy Church Street in Bangalore, is a concept oriented place down to the most minute detail. It dwells on the idea that virtual conversations and similar social interaction can be extended onto the real world, and hence the name 'Social'. This is the first of a series of 'Socials', which are already in the pipeline.

"An air of comfort had to run through the space and a decision was taken that the space would not look new. For people to relate to it, it had to feel as if it's been there for a long time. A lot of start-up firms are nostalgic about cafes and prefer them, besides other social spaces, for their initial meetings. Church Street Social wants to be a space which draws a co-working atmosphere and works as a hangout zone as well," says Ayaz Basrai, Design Head, The Busride Studio of Smoke House Deli fame.





To give an aura of an old space, the colour palette and the elements used were quite neutral; but were given a quirky twist. The entry into Church Street Social is an all blank facade with the name carved out of a rusted metal sheet. Once you are inside, the whole space is barrier-less. Activities on all tables are open to public view and that was the whole idea. Also, along with being a 'happening' place, the servings at Church Street Social are quite a visual treat too. It could be the cocktails in a bag or the stacked up sandwiches; they do grab your attention. The nature of the space also gives the option to observe other orders and follow suit.

Further, extending the social concept, the center table is a huge piece designed to be a community table. It contradicts the idea of privacy which is very generic to restaurants. Different groups of people sit on the same table thus exploring the possibility of starting new conversations. The idea is to help you leave with more friends than when you came in! "We had to research on how social interactions happen online. There are various platforms which provide for such interactions. Communication patterns were studied and brainstorming followed as to how they could be created in the real world. Church Street Social is what you see as a conclusion," says Ayaz Basrai.



From the minute you enter Church Street Social, it is a clean line of vision and a chunk of slab from the 2-storeyed space has been removed to accommodate the staircase, which has also been strategically located to offer a full unhindered view of the space even during movements. The staircase constructed from crate wood also works as a shelving unit and incorporates the possibility of hosting Church Street Social merchandise which may be introduced at a later stage.

The social idea is reflected in every aspect of the design. The material template at the resto-pub is made up of simple ingredients which contribute to a raw look. Crate wood, metal, exposed brick walls and exposed concrete columns give the desired feel to the space. The distressed look that the materials render to the place give a stripped down vibe. When the space exudes the vibe of 'been there for long', it leads to instant comfort and greater fluidity of multiple interactions. This seems to be at the core of the design approach.

The zoning has been thoughtfully laid out. On both the floors, nearly equal space has been allotted to the smoking and non-smoking sections. This obviously stemmed from the group interaction concept the place is rooted in. Also, the community table idea extends

to the smoking zone as well. Besides, the bar located on both floors at the rear end of the space has space around it for live performances and gigs.

An important aspect of the space are the graphics and graffiti, created by artist Hanish Kureshi. They communicate the concept in ways easily understood by the online generation. They put the stamp on the brand essence. His role is in fact a very important one in curating the 'Social' concept from scratch to completion. His graphics beautifully balance the subtle and the obvious in a way that totally merges with the brand philosophy. They add to the interior statement, but do not take away from the 'coolness' of the space.

Speaking on the expansion plans of Social, Ayaz Basrai says, "Social plans to open soon in Mumbai and Delhi. We have ideas to use online solutions to connect Social outlets. One of them would be to project real time video feed between two outlets. This could work to have half a table in Bangalore and the other half in Delhi. Such a concept would help closing on the gap between intercity work meetings." Talk about connecting in a virtually real world! ●



Interior Designer
Ayaz Basrai, The Busride Studio