The Perfect Shower Experience

Understanding User Preferences, Performance and Technology

METHVEN

Introduction

Showers continue to serve a very specific purpose in your bathroom. Today, however, with advancements in bathroom technology, many showers are made to do more than just act as a place to wash up. A shower can purify the body, the mind, and the soul. It also has the power to calm and soothe you before bed or awaken and energise you for the day ahead.

There is no one perfect showering experience. Designing the “perfect” shower is about creating a tailored experience based on user needs and preferences. The process requires designers to understand how the shower will be used, the role of the shower in health and wellbeing, and the technology and functionality that will support those requirements.

In recent years, showerheads have undergone significant improvements and innovations. Owners now have the option to select luxurious shower heads for low pressure, high pressure and water efficient low flow showering options, as well as pair them with matching tapware to create a harmonious, calming and sustainable bathroom environment.

Showering experiences differ depending on the type of shower available. It is essential to specify showerhead technologies that can address the specific preferences of the user. Below we look at the various design and performance considerations that go into creating the “perfect” shower.

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Types of showering experiences

At its core, the showering experience is a highly personal one. The key to picking the right showerhead is to think about the needs and lifestyle of its users. A shower can fulfil different roles depending on personal preferences, time of day and the current mood of the user.

Below we look at different types of showering experiences, and the most common types of showerheads that enable them.

THE MORNING SHOWER

The morning shower has one key objective: to make the user feel clean. It is a purposeful shower that is focused on hygiene and setting up the user for the rest of the day. For this type of shower, a high-pressure showerhead is suitable. It can spray out water with more force than a standard showerhead, maximising the water flow, providing a complete cleaning experience. In a University of Bristol study, it was noted that ease of use and adjustability of the shower were key in promoting a quick, satisfying shower in preparation for the work day.[1]

THE RELAXING SHOWER

The evening shower is often a place to relax and unwind after a long day at work. In this case, users want a steady stream of hot water to promote a luxurious and indulgent showering experience. Full-coverage rain showers providing a steady stream of steaming water or showerheads with powerful massaging jets are commonly used for this type of shower. Designers can add soft lighting, acoustics, shower accessories and other design features to emphasise the spa-like atmosphere.

THE REFRESHING SHOWER

A short cold shower can help us feel more alert or to refresh after a tiring activity. Cold water has several physiological effects, including increased heart rate, blood pressure and respiratory rate, all of which create a sense of invigoration and alertness.[2] Research also indicates that both warm and hot showers can promote better and healthier sleep.[3]

THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL SHOWER

Users alternate between different shower experiences regularly; from a functional and efficient cleansing shower one day to a relaxing, drawn out shower the next. There are modern multifunctional showerheads that deliver a variety of spray patterns, allowing users to customise the shower to suit their needs. Aerating, mist, jet, and water-saving settings are also available on some models.

THE ECO-CONSCIOUS SHOWER

The modern consumer is mindful of their impact on the environment and want to live a more sustainable lifestyle. The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) ratings of showerheads will help you assess and compare the water efficiency of different products. Note that a low-flow showerhead does not necessarily mean a less-effective or comfortable shower.

What factors influence shower satisfaction?

Regardless of what type of shower experience is preferred, studies note that there are several common factors that influence the degree of user satisfaction in a showerhead. The University of Bristol study referred to above aimed to understand the performance criteria that informed users' expectations of a good shower experience.[4]

The degree of satisfaction of the performance of showerheads were rated based on adjustability of the showerhead, amount of water delivered to the body, consistent water pressure, ease of use, heat distribution and the sound of the water output from the showerhead. The findings demonstrated that ease of use, adjustability, temperature, acoustics, and amount of water delivered to the body derived higher levels of user satisfaction.

In a comparable Hong Kong study, spray velocity and flow rate were found to be the two most influential factors determining shower comfort.[5]

Another study sought to examine the physical parameters that define the technical efficiency of showerheads against user satisfaction.[6] This is an important consideration given the growing consumer preference for water-efficient fixtures to save energy costs and reduce emissions. Low-flow showerheads, while saving on water, were linked to low user satisfaction. Restricting the flow of a showerhead on its own, without considering the design of the showerhead itself, can be detrimental to user adoption and make it difficult to deliver an adequate shower.

Based on the above research, it is clear that beyond water efficiency there are several performance factors that will affect the shower experience from a user's perspective:

- spray force;
- spray coverage;
- temperature consistency;
- adaptability; and
- ease of use.

What do the regulations say?

Showerheads are covered by the WELS scheme and are subjected to extensive testing. Testing must be conducted at an accredited laboratory in accordance with relevant Australian standards.

Showers are tested for:[7]

- angle at which water sprays from the head (to be between 0°and 8°);
- drop in temperature between 150 mm and 750 mm below the shower head (no more than 3°C);
- endurance of the flow controller by being turned on and off around 50,000 times;
- spray force and coverage (4/5-star showers only);
- watertightness; and
- water consumption.

The minimum spray force and coverage requirements highlight the importance of a satisfying shower experience to the adoption of water-efficient products.

Showerheads with a 4-star WELS rating and a flow rate of 6.0L/minute or less were considered the most water-efficient.[8] This was the case until the WELS standard increased the star ratings available for showers to 5 stars.[9] The 5-star WELS rating applies to high-pressure showers with a nominal flow rate of more than 4.5L/minute and not more than 6.0L/minute.[10]

Going with the flow

The water efficiency rating and labelling standard, AS/NZS 6400, currently views showers with a flow rate of less than 4.5L/minute to be ineffective because they are below the recommended flow rate, even if they pass extra spray force and coverage tests.

Designers and specifiers should note that flow rates alone present an incomplete picture as an indicator of the water efficiency of showerheads. Low-flow showers are thought to be ineffective at providing a satisfactory showering experience. In the past, this substandard level of performance was frequently attained by upgrading an existing high-flow shower with a more constrained flow controller.

However, with recent technological advancements, there are showers specially designed to operate efficiently using lower flow rates that can achieve 4 or 5-star shower certification, meeting the additional requirements for spray force and coverage.

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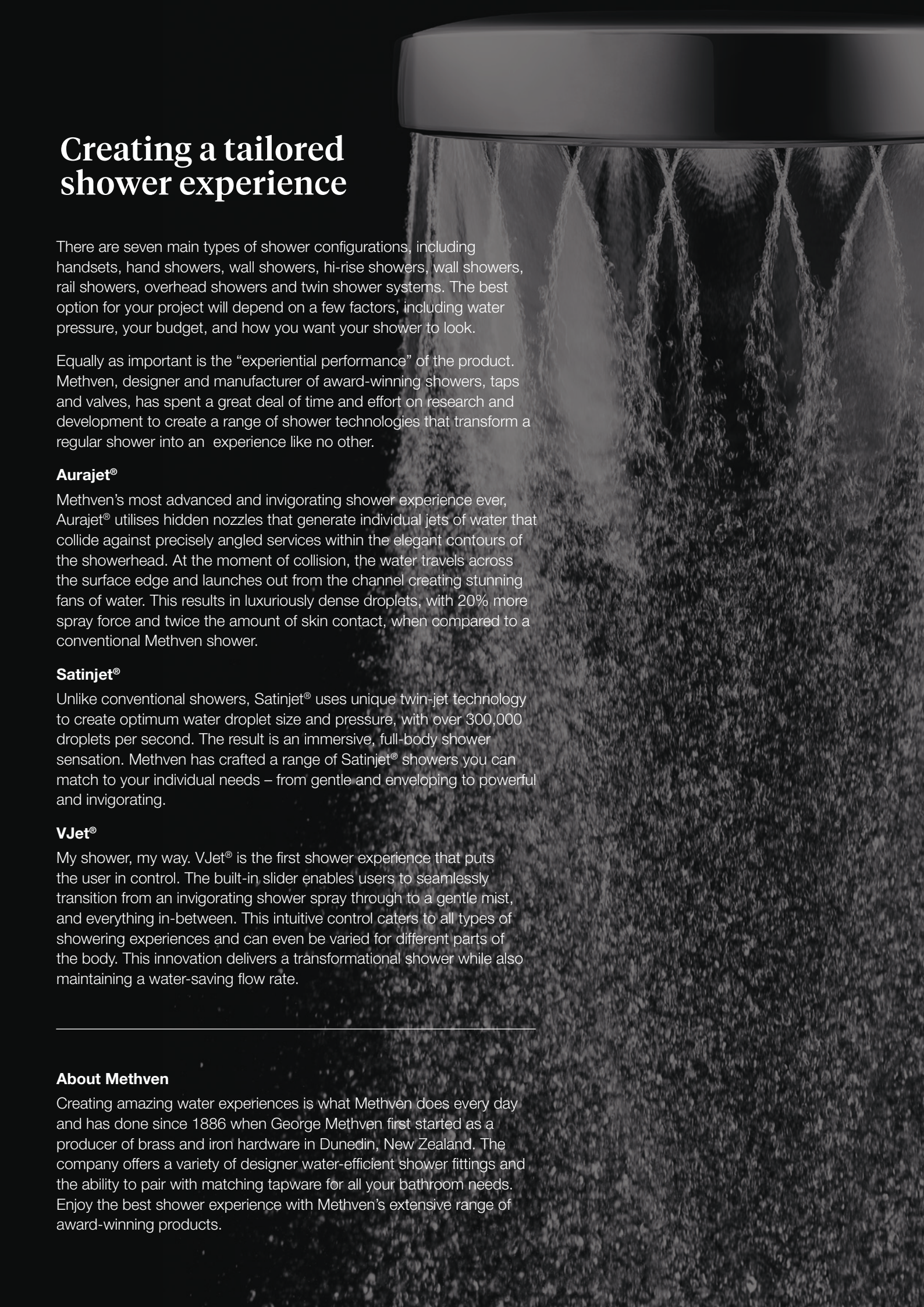

Creating a tailored shower experience

There are seven main types of shower configurations, including handsets, hand showers, wall showers, hi-rise showers, wall showers, rail showers, overhead showers and twin shower systems. The best option for your project will depend on a few factors, including water pressure, your budget, and how you want your shower to look.

Equally as important is the “experiential performance” of the product. Methven, designer and manufacturer of award-winning showers, taps and valves, has spent a great deal of time and effort on research and development to create a range of shower technologies that transform a regular shower into an experience like no other.

Aurajet®

Methven’s most advanced and invigorating shower experience ever, Aurajet® utilises hidden nozzles that generate individual jets of water that collide against precisely angled services within the elegant contours of the showerhead. At the moment of collision, the water travels across the surface edge and launches out from the channel creating stunning fans of water. This results in luxuriously dense droplets, with 20% more spray force and twice the amount of skin contact, when compared to a conventional Methven shower.

Satinjet®

Unlike conventional showers, Satinjet® uses unique twin-jet technology to create optimum water droplet size and pressure, with over 300,000 droplets per second. The result is an immersive, full-body shower sensation. Methven has crafted a range of Satinjet® showers you can match to your individual needs – from gentle and enveloping to powerful and invigorating.

VJet®

My shower, my way. VJet® is the first shower experience that puts the user in control. The built-in slider enables users to seamlessly transition from an invigorating shower spray through to a gentle mist, and everything in-between. This intuitive control caters to all types of showering experiences and can even be varied for different parts of the body. This innovation delivers a transformational shower while also maintaining a water-saving flow rate.

About Methven

Creating amazing water experiences is what Methven does every day and has done since 1886 when George Methven first started as a producer of brass and iron hardware in Dunedin, New Zealand. The company offers a variety of designer water-efficient shower fittings and the ability to pair with matching tapware for all your bathroom needs. Enjoy the best shower experience with Methven’s extensive range of award-winning products.

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