

Impact of Marketing Mix on Consumer Buying Behavior of Household Wooden Furniture

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Abstract:- Wooden Furniture is one of the fiercest competitive industries in Sri Lanka. Improving sales on household wooden furniture of State Timber Corporation (STC) via consumers' insights on marketing is essential to survive in market and to gain market share. Hence, the objectives of this study was to investigate the consumer profile and home furniture purchase decision-making process and to find the factors influence of marketing mix on consumers' decisions to purchase wooden furniture products from STC. To realize previously mentioned objectives, 60 STC furniture customers from Boossa and Pallekake showrooms and another 60 household furniture customers near to those showrooms were conveniently selected. Primary data were collected through field survey by using pre-tested structured questionnaire and secondary data was utilized to increase the value of the findings. Wilcoxon sign rank test was employed to analyze the data. Consumer Profile information revealed that majority of respondents were married, males belong to middle aged category. In addition, income level, education level, and knowledge on timber of STC customers were higher than other household furniture customers were. Most of STC customers were government employees with large household areas. As per findings, most respondents recently required new or additional piece of furniture. Visiting showroom helped them to get an idea or information on furniture purchase. Most respondents usually visited approximately three stores before making their purchase decision by themselves. In basic merchandise, the function was considered as the most important product characteristic having a positive influence on the furniture purchase. Majority of respondents mentioned that they had good experience in furniture showrooms. It was also found main operational strategies that furniture shops should be improving their service image especially in delivery and warranty. Finally, this study suggests that in STC, e-marketing should be improved while reducing prices by cutting down costs and wastages in order to compete with the local competitors.

Keywords:- Consumer Buying Behavior, Marketing Mix, Wooden Furniture.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Sri Lankan furniture industry has historically relied on high-quality softwood and hardwood timber species, including jack, ebony, satinwood, kumbuk, mahogany, and teak, with Sri Lankan Ebony being particularly renowned for its evenness and intensity of color (Senewiratne, 2010). This industry, rooted in tradition, plays a significant role in the country's economy, employing around 28,000 individuals across urban and rural areas (Senewiratne, 2010). It encompasses various sectors, such as sawmills, furniture manufacturing, construction, parquet flooring, wood-based panel products, carvings, and wooden toys. Within this industry, the wooden furniture sector holds a prominent position, catering to both domestic and international markets (Senewiratne, 2010).

The furniture market in Sri Lanka is dominated by two major players, Doncarolis and A.T Cooray, who jointly account for 35% of the market share. Additionally, the State Timber Corporation (STC), a government-owned entity, plays a significant role in the industry. The STC operates regionally with offices, sales centers, forest working areas, furniture manufacturing facilities, impregnation and seasoning plants, and showrooms throughout the country. While furniture sales are a key source of revenue for the STC, it still faces challenges with a relatively low market share of 0.5%, as reported by the Central Bank in 2015. Furniture sales constituted only 6% of the total sales turnover in 2015 (Corporate Plan 2015-2018).

Despite the growth potential of the wooden furniture industry in Sri Lanka, it faces several challenges, including increased competition from international players, limited technological advancements, and a lack of innovative marketing strategies. The STC has struggled to compete effectively, primarily due to its inability to offer competitive products with modern technology and a failure to adopt innovative marketing approaches (Roshani, 2017).

To address these challenges, it is crucial to gain insights into consumer behavior and the factors influencing their brand choices. Today's consumers are more informed about price, quality, durability, timber species, and exhibit higher demands than ever before (Wijethilake et al., 2019). Brand selection, in particular, depends on product, price, place, promotion, and buyer characteristics (Kotler, 2009). Therefore, a study examining the impact of marketing mix strategies employed by Sri Lankan wooden furniture manufacturers and the factors

affecting consumer purchasing behavior in the local market can provide valuable insights into the industry's current landscape and potential areas for enhancement.

This study draws upon the theoretical foundation of marketing and consumer buying behavior, subjects well-researched in the academic literature. Marketing is defined as the process of creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings with value for customers and society, with a focus on exploring, creating, and delivering value to meet the needs of a target market at a profit (Kotler, 2009). Understanding consumer behavior is essential for delivering customer satisfaction and designing effective marketing strategies (Roy, 2000). The study's objectives include examining the consumer profile of wooden furniture, analyzing the household furniture purchase decision-making process, and assessing the impact of Marketing Mix on Consumer Buying Behavior of Household Wooden Furniture.

II. OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of consumers' perceptions and behaviors regarding the consumption of wooden furniture in Sri Lanka. By examining consumer profiles, decision-making processes, and the influence of marketing strategies, this study aims to uncover the key factors that drive or hinder the intention to purchase wooden furniture. Ultimately, the research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform strategic decisions within the industry and contribute to its growth and success in meeting consumer preferences and demands.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study targeted household furniture consumers, both STC customers and non-STC customers, in the Bossa and Pallekele areas due to the presence of STC showrooms and the potential for high sales. The sample comprised 60 STC customers (30 from each area) and 60 household furniture consumers near the STC showrooms (30 from each area), selected using convenience sampling. Primary data was collected through a pre-tested structured questionnaire during field surveys, while secondary data was gathered from various sources, including annual reports, journals, books, articles, web pages, and prior research. The questionnaire assessed personal, social, cultural, and psychographic factors affecting consumer buying behavior, along with factors influencing the choice of household wooden furniture, such as product, price, place, and promotion. The third section of the questionnaire specifically measured factors influencing STC household wooden furniture choice for STC customers, employing a five-point Likert scale.

➤ Data Analysis

Data collected, both primary and secondary, was tabulated using MS-Excel and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was utilized as an inferential statistical tool. The analysis was conducted with the SPSS software package, considering a significance level of 0.05.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Consumer Profile of household wooden furniture:

The study revealed that the majority of wooden furniture customers belonged to the 41-50 age group, with most respondents being male. Approximately 87% of STC customers and 92% of non-STC customers were married. Furthermore, nearly half of the respondents had an education level up to the advanced level, and the majority of STC customers were government sector employees. The income distribution of the sample indicated a considerably higher purchasing power among STC customers. The study also analyzed life stage characteristics of customers, including the number of household members, children, and household size distribution. Most STC and non-STC customers had at least two children, with larger households more prevalent among STC customers. These findings suggest that STC customers have greater purchasing power and prioritize quality products compared to younger generations. Additionally, STC's limited product range for smaller furniture has resulted in smaller households turning to other furniture showrooms.

B. Home wooden furniture Purchase decision-making process

➤ Planning Stage

During the planning stage, data showed that both customer segments primarily sought new or additional furniture rather than replacing or redecorating existing pieces. Most respondents identified their need or desire for furniture before making a purchase, with the majority purchasing new or additional furniture. Other reasons included moving to a new residence.

➤ Research Stage:

• Information sources of wooden furniture

The majority of customers relied on visiting furniture showrooms for information, while brochures were found to be ineffective for information search. A significant number of customers also referred to showroom websites for information.

• Awareness about the official website of STC:

Only 20% of customers were aware of STC's official website, indicating a lack of awareness regarding this online resource.

• Applicability of STC official website:

Analysis revealed that the majority of customers used STC's website primarily for design searches, indicating a low level of e-marketing in the wooden furniture industry.

• Number of stores visited before purchasing furniture:

Most customers visited multiple stores before making their purchase, with 40% of STC and non-STC customers visiting three stores. This suggests a thorough evaluation process, with STC customers potentially having higher purchasing power or faster satisfaction of their needs.

➤ *Shopping Stage:*

- *Customers purchase household wooden furniture more often by:*

The majority of respondents decided to shop for furniture at furniture stores or retailers, followed by furniture fairs/exhibitions, department stores, and STC showrooms.

➤ *Selection Stage:*

- *The Influencer:*

At the selection stage, customers themselves were the primary influencers in both customer segments. Most respondents could independently make the decision to purchase new furniture, while others were influenced by their spouses. Children's influence.

➤ *Store Experience*

Finally, the store experience was analyzed. The percentages of sharing good experience were higher than sharing bad experience

C. *The factors influencing on wooden furniture purchasing choice.*

Factors influencing wooden furniture purchasing choices can be grouped into four categories: product (12 factors), service (5 factors), price (1 factor), and store location (1 factor). Notably, color and brand name were less important (mean scores of 2.71 and 3.86, respectively). The most crucial factor was furniture utilization/functionality (mean score 4.91). In terms of service, warranty (4.68) and after-sales service (4.66) were top priorities, while personal customer care was less important (4.18). Price was significant (4.93), and store location also played a role (mean score slightly above average at 4.45).

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