

A Study on The Customers' Attitude Towards Branded Furniture in Salem District


COMMERCE
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ABSTRACT

Furniture has been one of the essential household items which make the family members comfortable to relax and to carry out domestic affairs. Offices and business houses are also equipped with furniture to accommodate visitors. Educational institutions, marriage halls, and meeting halls too prefer plastic furniture in order to increase their ambience. Modern world has been occupied by branded plastic furniture. The customers of branded furniture feel that plastic furniture are easily portable and look attractive. They increase the social status of the consumers as well. The wooden and steel furniture used in the early days caused certain difficulties for the users. However, the modern branded plastic furniture is free from all these difficulties. They are easy to maintain and occupy a little space to be accommodated. They are cheaper and durable also unlike the wooden and steel furniture. This paper has made an attempt to examine the customers' attitude towards branded furniture in Salem District.

INTRODUCTION

Modernization has been a common phenomenon from time to time. Wooden furniture used in the early days was replaced by steel furniture which in turn has been substituted by plastic furniture. People are accustomed with the plastic furniture which is economical, durable and portable. Plastic chairs, dining tables, etc. have occupied almost all the offices and households. Different varieties of models and sizes are available to cater to the needs of the customers. Since plastic furniture is made up of and molded with plastic materials, they are uniform in size and design. They are readily available in markets for the convenience of the customers. Branded furniture suits to the requirements of the customers. Many brands like Supreme, Nilkamal, etc. are available in the market. Online shopping has introduced Tablemate furniture to the customers which also attracts the customers at large.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The customers are attracted by branded plastic furniture. They are available in different sizes, models and prizes. Despite the competition from other brands, local brands and unbranded items threaten the branded furniture manufacturers. Since local made furniture is available at cheaper prices, there could be a possible change in the attitude of the customers. The minds of customers would be reflected on the preference and selection of brands available in the market. Thus it is necessary for the manufacturers to evaluate the customers' attitude towards branded furniture. Hence, the present study is undertaken.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the present study:

- To assess the level of awareness of customers towards branded furniture.
- To identify the factors influencing the purchase of branded furniture.
- To examine the level of satisfaction of customers towards branded furniture and
- To offer suggestions for branded furniture manufacturers to increase the market share.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The present study is mainly dependent on primary data. The data required for the present study are collected from 150 sample respondents by administering a structured questionnaire. The sample respondents have been selected on the basis of convenient sampling method. The data so obtained have been put through analysis by using chi square test, ANOVA and Garret Ranking. The level of awareness of customers towards branded furniture has been assessed by performing analysis of variance (ANOVA). Garret Ranking technique has been used to identify

the factors influencing purchase of branded furniture. The level of satisfaction of customers towards branded furniture has been examined by applying chi square test.

HYPOTHESES

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between demographic variables and level of awareness of customers towards branded furniture.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant association between demographic variables and level of satisfaction of customers towards branded furniture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to fulfill the first objective, the level of awareness of customers towards branded furniture has been examined. In this regard, the awareness of customers towards various brands of furniture available, different sizes available, different varieties available, price of branded furniture, durability of branded furniture and duplicate products in the market has been obtained from the sample respondents in a five-point scale. They were given five options and the responses given by the respondents were assigned scores as 5 for fully aware, 4 for aware, 3 for neutral, 2 for not aware and 1 for not at all aware. The minimum and maximum scores for the awareness on the selected six features of branded furniture have been ascertained as 6 and 30 respectively. The scores between 6 and 14 were considered as low level of awareness while the scores greater than or equal to 16 and less than or equal to 22 were regarded as medium level of awareness and the scores above 22 were termed as high level of awareness. The level of awareness of sample respondents has been compared with their demographic variables – gender, age, educational qualification, marital status, occupational status and monthly income. The results of analysis of variance have been furnished in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic variables v/s awareness and satisfaction

Factors	Awareness			Satisfaction				
	F value	P value	Result	Chi Square Value	DF	p value	Table Value	Result
Gender	0.758	0.752	N.S.	0.586	2	0.746	5.991	N.S.
Age	1.252	0.227	N.S.	21.720	6	0.001	16.812	**
Educational Qualification	0.937	0.539	N.S.	13.529	6	0.035	12.592	*
Marital Status	1.003	0.462	N.S.	9.303	2	0.010	9.21	**
Occupational Status	1.984	0.013	*	3.100	4	0.541	9.488	N.S.
Monthly Income	0.770	0.738	N.S.	32.699	6	0.000	16.812	**

N.S. – Not Significant

* Significant @ 5%

** Significant @ 1%

From the table, it is understood that the computed value of F stating the relationship between gender and level of awareness was found to be 0.758 while p value was 0.752. Since the p value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that there is no significant relationship between gender and level of awareness. The computed value of F stating the relationship between age and level of awareness and its p value were found to be 1.252 and 0.227 respectively. It implies that the age of the respondents and their level of awareness are not significantly related since the p value is greater than 0.05. It could be observed that the computed value of F indicating the relationship between educational qualification and level of awareness of respondents were found to be 0.937 and 0.539 respectively. Since the p value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted and it is concluded that the educational qualification of customers of branded furniture is insignificantly related to their level of awareness.

The relationship between marital status of the respondents and their level of awareness has been measured by performing ANOVA and the results showed that the computed value of F was 1.003 and the p value was 0.462. It denotes that there existed no significant relationship between marital status and level of awareness towards branded furniture as the p value is greater than 0.05. It is evinced from the analysis that the computed value of F showing the relationship between occupational status and level of awareness of customers towards branded furniture has been 1.984 while its p value was 0.013. Since the p value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and a conclusion is drawn that the occupational status and level of awareness of customers are significantly related. It could be proclaimed that there is no significant relationship between monthly income and level of awareness towards branded furniture since the computed value of F and p value were 0.770 and 0.738 respectively.

Table 2: Factors influencing purchase of branded furniture

Factors	Price	Quality	Variety	Size	Colours	Durability	Availability	Social Status	Comfortability	Portability
Total Score	8754	8515	8804	8112	7284	6300	6229	6919	6458	6875
Mean Score	58.36	56.77	58.69	54.08	48.56	42.00	41.53	46.13	43.05	45.83
Rank	II	III	I	IV	V	IX	X	VI	VIII	VII

The factors influencing the purchase of branded furniture have been discussed in this study by selecting the variables – price range, quality of furniture, varieties available, convenient sizes, durability, availability in all places, status symbol, comfortability and portability. The sample respondents were asked to rank these factors according to their choice for preference of branded furniture. The responses given by them were analyzed by using Henry Garrett Ranking Technique. Total scores and mean scores for the factors influencing purchase of branded furniture have been generated from the Henry Garrett Table.

From the Table 2, it is evident that the total score and mean score of price was 8754 and 58.36 respectively while the total score of quality was 8515 and its mean score of 56.77. The total score awarded to variety was found to be 8804 and its mean score was 58.69 whereas the size was given the total score of 8112 and the mean score of 54.08. The total score of 7284 and the mean score of 48.56 were awarded to colours while the total score and mean score of durability were 6300 and 42 respectively. According to the Henry Garrett Table, the total score of availability was 6229 and its mean score was 41.53 while social status has got the scores of 6919 and 46.13 as total score and mean score respectively. The total score awarded to comfortability was 6458 and its mean score was 43.05 whereas the total score of 6875

was awarded to portability with the mean score of 45.83. From the total scores and means score of the selected factors, it is concluded that the variety of furniture available was the first factor influencing the customers to opt for branded furniture while the price and quality were the other factors influencing the purchase of branded furniture. Comfortability, durability and availability were considered as the least important factors while purchasing the branded furniture.

The satisfaction of customers towards branded furniture has been measured by obtaining the responses from the sample respondents for the selected factors – quality, price, colour, durability, size, variety and availability. The responses for these factors have been obtained in a five-point rating scale. The scales were assigned marks as 5 for highly satisfied, 4 for satisfied, 3 for neutral, 2 for dissatisfied and 1 for highly dissatisfied. The minimum and maximum scores for satisfaction on the selected factors were 7 and 35 respectively. The scores between 7 and 16 were considered as low level of satisfaction while scores greater than or equal to 17 and less than or equal to 26 were treated as medium level of satisfaction and the scores above 26 were regarded as high level of satisfaction. The association between demographic variable of the sample respondents and the level of satisfaction has been measured by applying chi square test. The results have been furnished in the Table 1. It is observed from the analysis that the association between gender and level of satisfaction towards branded furniture was not significant while age of the customers and their level of satisfaction towards branded furniture has been found to be significant @ 1%. There existed a significant relationship between educational qualification and level of satisfaction of customers @ 5% level of significance whereas the marital status of the customers was found to be significantly related @ 1% level of significance with the level of satisfaction. However, there is no significant relationship between occupational status and level of satisfaction of customers towards branded furniture. It is found that the monthly income is significantly associated with the level of satisfaction @ 1% level of significance.

KEY FINDINGS

It is found from the analysis that the awareness of customers towards branded furniture has been influenced by the occupational status while other demographic variables – gender, age, educational qualification, marital status and monthly income have nothing to do with the awareness.

The main factors influencing the purchase of branded furniture were variety, price and quality while comfortability, durability and availability were not considered by the customers for the purchase of branded furniture.

The satisfaction of customers towards branded furniture has been influenced by demographic variables such as age, educational qualification, marital status and monthly income. However, genders of the customers and their occupational status have no influence on the satisfaction of customers towards branded furniture.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the above findings, the following suggestions have been offered to the branded furniture manufacturers:

Since the customers expect more varieties of furniture, the branded furniture manufacturers have to invest more on the research and development so that they design different varieties of furniture in order to attract more customers.

The branded furniture manufacturers have to concentrate on determining competitive prices and increasing quality of furniture manufactured by them.

CONCLUSION

The branded furniture has occupied the minds of every human being invariably for domestic as well as official purposes. The level of utilization of branded furniture has been steadily increasing. However, the branded furniture manufacturers have been facing challenges in marketing their products due to stiff competition from other branded manufacturers and local brands. The level of awareness of customers in Salem District towards various features of branded furniture has been found to be quite convincing. Similarly, the level of satisfaction of customers of branded furniture in Salem District has also been relatively high.

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