ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES FOR WOODEN FURNITURE PRODUCTS: A CASE STUDY ON SARAWAK STATE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES EMPLOYEES IN PETRA JAYA

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ABSTRACT

The global furniture industry is becoming more competitive each day due to the borderless world created by globalization. As the result, the needs of global consumer market are becoming more standardized and similar in nature hence creating bigger market opportunities for the furniture businesses. In order to capture the international market and increase their market share in wooden furniture sector, Sarawak manufacturers should take advantage of these similar needs of global consumers by making their presence stronger in both the local and international markets. One way to achieve this is by inducing stronger demand for their products among the locals through enhanced furniture product offerings. As the attraction of a product lies in its attributes, this study therefore attempted at identifying the essential attributes that influenced consumers' decision when making the purchase for wooden furniture products. The findings from the analyses conducted successfully identified three factors or attributes that Sarawak State government departments and agencies employees perceived as important for wooden furniture products. The attributes were identified as brand, price and design.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the study

The global furniture industry is becoming more competitive each day due to the borderless world created by globalization. As the result, the needs of global consumer market are becoming more standardized and similar in nature hence creating bigger market opportunities for the furniture businesses.

In 2004, Malaysia exported RM5.4 billion worth of furniture mainly to the USA, United Kingdom, Japan, Australia and Singapore. Malaysia ranked the tenth largest exporter of furniture and the third in Asia after China and Indonesia, with exports to more than 160 countries *(MIDA, 2005)*.
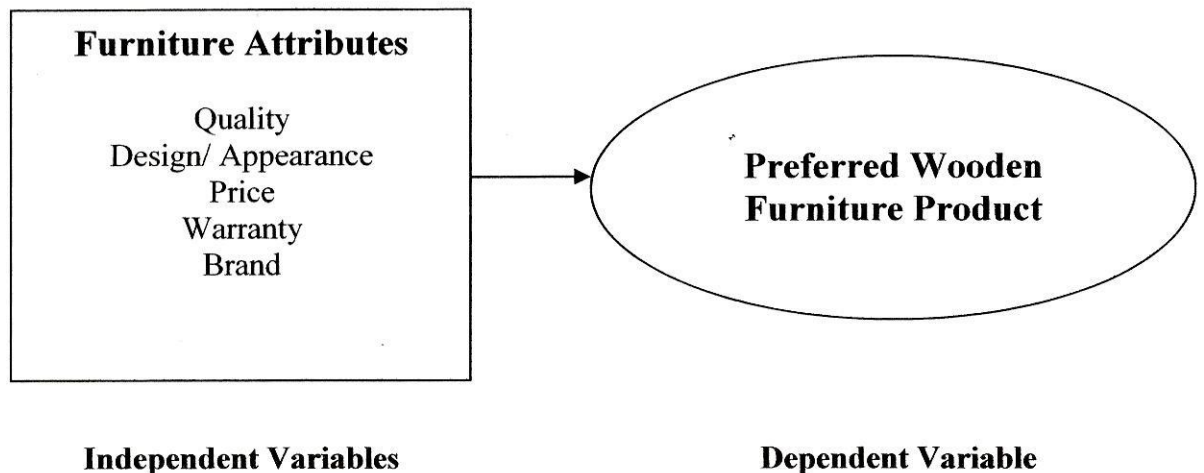
Although Sarawak's wood-based industries are the second largest contributor to the State's GDP after oil and gas, it is still however backwards in its furniture manufacturing sector. Out of the total export earning for furniture in 2004, only 1 % or RM60, 844,697 millions were contributed by Sarawak furniture industry *(Statistics Department, 2005)*.

Peninsular Malaysia furniture manufacturers have been monopolizing this sector and indeed a star performer in the field. The huge difference in terms of export performance by West Malaysia and Sarawak furniture industry should be noted with great concern by relevant governmental authorities and the industry as it

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual framework

Furniture Attributes
Quality
Design/ Appearance
Price
Warranty
Brand

Preferred Wooden Furniture Product

Independent Variables   **Dependent Variable**

The common product attributes in the diagram were identified as the independent variables in this study. They comprise product quality, design/ appearance, price, warranty/ guarantee, functionality and brand. They were identified as the independent variables due to the fact that they were the major factors influencing the consumers' decision in buying a product (*G. Tomas M. Hult Bruce D. Keillor, Roscoe Hightower (2000))*.

According to *Donald R. Lehman (2002)*, the Multi-attribute Model offered a concise and practical conceptualization of customer decision making that was useful in both consumer and industrial product context. It highlighted the importance of highlighting the four questions to develop their most preferred option; which attributes did consumers use to define a