Consumer Attitudes and Buying Behavior for Home Furniture

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides detailed information concerning consumers' attitudes and buying behavior for home furniture. For organizational purposes, information is categorized according to the five stages of the consumer decision process: (1) problem or need recognition, (2) information search, (3) alternative evaluation, (4) outlet selection and purchase, and (5) post-purchase evaluation. Specifically, the topics of recognizing the need for new furniture, influencers of the decision, important evaluative criteria, information sources, brand and store loyalty, shopping for furniture online, and cognitive dissonance that may be felt after a purchase are included. Results and recommendations are based on a nationwide survey of 2,007 adults participating in an online consumer research panel.

While not purchased with great frequency, furniture is viewed as central to one's self-concept; therefore, item selection is seen as a very important decision. Furniture is an emotional purchase for many people because it facilitates sharing and a sense of togetherness among friends and family in the home.

Quality ranks as the most important evaluative criterion when furniture is being considered for purchase. In general, furniture made in the U.S.A. is a stronger criterion than environmentally-friendly furniture, but this is not the case for members of Generation Y. Brand and store loyalty are not experienced by most furniture consumers. They like to search for information and conduct research online, and are increasingly more willing to purchase furniture online (even more so over the past five years). Social media also play a role in searching for information about furniture. This is especially true for Generation Y. Fortunately, consumers appear confident in their decision-making skills and are not likely to experience buyer's remorse after making a furniture purchase.

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Introduction

Many changes have occurred in U.S. society over the past decade that either directly or indirectly impact the home furniture industry. Technological changes, the rise of social media, evolving demographics, and the increasing purchasing power of women are just a few factors that furniture manufacturers and retailers must consider in their marketing efforts (York 2013). As the economy continues to show signs of modest recovery (Miller and Matthews 2013; Coy 2012), furniture makers are trying to determine the best ways to adjust to these changing consumer demands.

In order to implement a successful marketing strategy, a keen understanding of consumers is needed, particularly with respect to how they shop for and purchase home furniture. According to Dewey (1910), consumers move through five stages as they contemplate an impending purchase decision: (1) problem or need recognition, (2) information search, (3) alternative evaluation, (4) outlet selection and purchase, and (5) post-purchase evaluation. For routine products that are purchased often (i.e., grocery or toiletry items), the entire decision process is quite short, and often there is little or no consideration of the different options that are available. This is not the case, however, for home furniture. Furniture is a product that requires extensive problem solving, as it is expensive, durable, and not purchased with great frequency. Further, many consumers view their homes and the furniture in them as an extension of themselves, so it can be considered an emotional purchase (Perry 2007). Thus, as consumers do not necessarily have a lot of furniture buying experience to rely on, they typically move through these stages of the decision process slowly, methodologically, and purposefully, to try to ensure that the right piece(s) of furniture will be purchased.

Problem Identification

The goal of the current research is to gain a better understanding of the factors involved in consumer decision making for home furniture. A similar study of consumers' attitudes towards home furniture was conducted five years ago with a survey of 2,012 U.S. consumers (Ponder 2008), so the current research will allow for comparisons to determine to extent to which attitudes and behaviors towards home furniture have changed over the five year period. Specifically, the current study uses both primary and secondary data to assess:

- When consumers recognize their need for new furniture, and who acts as influencers of this purchase decision
- The extent to which consumers view furniture as an important part of their self-identity and lifestyle
- Attitudes and preferences toward furniture made with environmentally-friendly materials as well as furniture made in the U.S.A.
- How consumers search for information before making a furniture purchase, including the use of traditional media, the internet, and social media
- Factors that may influence consumers to spend more money for their furniture
- Specific attitudes and behaviors concerning purchasing furniture, including brand loyalty, store loyalty, and online purchasing
- The level of confidence consumers have in their ability to select and purchase furniture, and any feelings of cognitive dissonance (or "buyer's remorse") that consumers may experience after a furniture purchase

Of particular interest to furniture manufacturers and retailers are the attitudes and opinions of people across different generations. The Baby Boomers, currently between the ages of 48 and 66, represent 42% of all furniture buyers and 45% of the total dollars spent on furniture (French 2013a). While this generation currently accounts for a large portion of furniture sales, manufacturers and retailers should also consider the attitudes of younger adults – specifically Generation Y (hereafter Gen Y) or the Millenial generation. Members of this generation, currently between the ages of 18 and 34, experience life changes that precipitate the need for home furniture, such as getting married, having a first child, and buying a first home (French 2011; Evans 2008). While many members of Gen Y chose to move back with their parents after graduating college, there is evidence that they are finally moving away from the nest (Hudson 2013). Additionally, this group represents an attractive market segment because they are large in number. At approximately 71 million people, this generation is second in size only to the 80 million Baby Boomers. Throughout this report, comparisons in attitudes and behaviors will be made across generational groups, comparing attitudes and behaviors of four generational groups listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Generational Groups Compared in this Report

Generation	Year Born	Age in 2012*	Number of respondents	% of total sample
Generation Y	1978-1994	18-34	501	25%
Generation X	1965-1977	35-47	539	27%
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	48-66	850	42%
Depression & Pre-Depression Generations	Prior to 1946	Over 66	116	6%

*Represents age at time survey data were collected.

The Depression and Pre-Depression generations are in fact two separate groups, with Pre-Depression members born prior to 1930 and Depression generation members born between 1930 and 1945. However, the data set used here contained only four respondents who fell into the Pre-Depression generation (ages 83 and older). Therefore, these two generations were combined for analysis purposes.

To accomplish the objectives outlined above, a literature review was conducted to compile secondary data regarding consumers' perceptions of home furniture. Additionally, primary data in the form of quantitative research (specifically an online survey) were collected and analyzed. In the following section, the method used to gather the primary data is explained.

Research Method

Survey Development

Table 2 on the following page contains the topics covered by the extensive 123-item survey. Many survey items were similar to the questions included in the 2008 study to allow for comparisons of responses over the five year time period, and additional topics such as self-image congruity, confidence in buying furniture, and the use of social media were also included. Prior to data collection, expert judges consisting of marketing Ph.D.'s with knowledge of measurement and survey development and individuals who have knowledge of the furniture industry reviewed the questions and suggested changes to improve readability. The survey was also analyzed by Qualtrics representatives who specialize in survey development; they provided suggestions to optimize the survey for online execution. The final draft of the survey appears in the Appendix.

In the survey, statements were presented and respondents indicated their level of agreement with each statement by selecting the category on a seven-point scale that best represents their feelings. The categories range from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Some open-ended questions were also asked to allow respondents to provide more in-depth information if they wanted to elaborate on their responses, such as describing their favorite piece of furniture or their favorite furniture store. In addition to the topics listed in

Table 2, demographic questions such as gender, age, ethnicity, income, region of country, home ownership, and household composition were also included.

TABLE 2
Topics Included in Survey

Furniture involvement	Store loyalty
Furniture and the self-concept	Furniture brand loyalty
Confidence in buying furniture	Favorite furniture brands
Favorite room in the home	Attitudes toward shopping online
Favorite furniture in the home	Sources of information, including the internet
Furniture and the environment	Use of social media
Furniture made in the U.S.A.	Buyer's remorse
Opinion seeking before purchase	Personality variables

Due to the length of the survey, respondent fatigue is a concern. After answering so many questions, it is possible that a respondent becomes complacent and does not read a question carefully, or he may click on one response category repeatedly without reading any questions in order to complete the survey and get awarded the incentive (see below for a description of incentives for survey completion). To help reduce this problem, two items were included relatively late in the survey that instructed respondents to select a specific scale point ("Please select answer choice Slightly Disagree" for example). If a respondent did not follow these instructions, he was automatically eliminated from the final sample.

Data Collection and Sampling Procedure

Data collection for this study was conducted with assistance from Qualtrics, a data collection company specializing in online consumer-related marketing research. An online survey was selected as the method of administration due to its low cost (resulting from the elimination of paper, postage, mailing, reminder cards, and data entry), ease, speed of data collection, and efficiency (Duffy, Smith, Terhanian, and Bremer 2005; Dillman 2000). The biggest potential disadvantage to online surveys lies in the representativeness of the sample. Are the attitudes and opinions of internet users (and specifically those registered with an online research company) different from the greater population? As close to 80% of U.S. households have a computer with internet access in their homes (Nielsen 2008), the advantages of online surveys are viewed to outweigh any potential disadvantages.

The sampling goal was to obtain a representative sample of at least 2,000 American respondents that matched the U.S. population on key demographic variables of gender, ethnicity, and region of country in which the respondent lives. The sample was drawn from a list of online panelists registered with Qualtrics, which maintains a database of tens of thousands consumers throughout the U.S. This list was sorted based on the characteristics specified by the researcher. In this case, the goal was to collect data from individuals at least 18 years of age, with key demographic variables matching those of the U.S. population as closely as possible.

Regarding incentives, online panelists registered with Qualtrics earn points each time they complete a survey. Because of the length of this survey (123 questions in total), respondents were awarded 50 points for completing it. Each respondent has an account where their points can be deposited and redeemed for various types of merchandise including cash prizes, gift certificates, and sweepstakes entries.

Email invitations containing a link to the online survey were sent to a total of 10,000 Americans registered with Qualtrics. The survey was closed after the desired number of responses was achieved, which took approximately one week. Data were collected in late September and early October of 2012, and the final sample consisted of 2,007 respondents.

Some respondents did not answer every survey question; thus, when frequency tables are presented throughout this report, the sample size may not always total 2,007.

Table 3 contains demographic characteristics of the survey respondents; it also contains similar demographic information for the U.S. population for comparison purposes. Population data come from the 2010 Census (www.census.gov). As can be seen in the table, the survey sample is relatively close to the population on key demographic variables. Some exceptions – females are overrepresented in this survey, Caucasians are underrepresented, and Hispanics are slightly underrepresented. Thus, while the sample is not truly random, as respondents are from an online panel, they do match well against the entire U.S. population.

TABLE 3
Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Characteristic	**Sample[1] (n)**	**Sample[2] (%)**	**U.S. Population[3] (%)**
Gender:			
Male	736	36.7%	49.2%
Female	1,268	63.2%	50.8%
Age:		Median=47 years	Median=37.2 years
18-24 years	130	6.5%	9.9%
25-34 years	371	18.5%	13.3%
35-44 years	393	19.6%	13.3%
45-54 years	496	24.7%	14.6%
55-64 years	441	22.0%	11.8%
65-74 years	150	7.5%	7.0%
75-84 years	23	1.1%	4.2%
85 years & older	2	0.1%	1.8%
Generation			
Generation Y	501	25%	
Generation X	539	26.9%	
Baby Boomers	850	42.4%	
Depression + Pre-Depression	116	5.8%	
Ethnic Origin:			
White/Caucasian	1,252	62.4%	72.4%
Hispanic/Latino	298	14.8%	16.3%
Black/African American	270	13.5%	12.6%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	18	0.9%	1.0%
Asian	98	4.9%	4.8%

Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	3	0.1%	0.2%
Multi-Cultural	38	1.9%	2.9%
Other	21	1.0%	6.2%
Region of Country:			
Northeast	388	19.3%	17.9%
Midwest	434	21.6%	21.7%
South	701	34.9%	37.1%
West	478	23.8%	23.3%
Primary Home Status:			
Own home	1,355	67.5%	64.7%
Rent home	587	29.2%	35.4%
Other (main response: live with parent(s)	61	3.0%	n/a
Annual Household Income:		Median=$40,000-59,999	Median=$49,445
Below $20,000	327	16.3%	
$20,000-$39,999	497	24.8%	
$40,000-$59,999	410	20.4%	
$60,000-$79,999	299	14.9%	
$80,000-$99,999	159	7.9%	
$100,000-$119,999	78	3.9%	
$120,000-$139,999	52	2.6%	
$140,000-$159,999	42	2.1%	
$160,000-$179,999	20	1.0%	
$180,000-$199,999	18	0.9%	
$200,000 or more	25	1.2%	
Marital Status:			
Single, never married	431	21.5%	n/a
Married without children	214	10.7%	n/a
Married with children living at home	581	28.9%	
Married with children not living at home	291	14.5%	
Divorced	234	11.7%	n/a
Separated	43	2.1%	
Widowed	72	3.6%	n/a
Live with partner	131	6.5%	n/a
Prefer not to answer	10	0.5%	n/a

[1]n=2,007
[2]Percentages may not equal 100 due to rounding or missing values.
[3]Percentages from the 2010 U.S. Census

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with SPSS version 20, a statistical software package primarily used for social sciences research. Due to the descriptive nature of this report, data analysis consists mainly of frequency distributions (which tell us how many people choose a particular response within a given question), and cross-tabulations (which compare responses across categories of people, such as male versus female, younger versus older people, people with lower versus higher incomes, or Southerners versus Westerners, for example). Throughout this report, when it is stated that a certain percentage of respondents agreed with a particular statement, the response categories of “strongly agree,” “agree,” and “slightly agree” were summed to arrive at this figure. The same is true for the three “disagree” categories. This was done to present the results in a straightforward manner. Further, when it is stated that one group is more likely than another to have certain attitudes or engage in certain behaviors, these differences are uncovered using a chi-square difference test, and the difference is statistically significant at the 0.01 level.

Results

This section presents key survey findings regarding attitudes and buying behavior for home furniture. For organizational purposes, these results are categorized according to the five stages of the consumer decision process: (1) problem or need recognition, (2) information search, (3) alternative evaluation, (4) outlet selection and purchase, and (5) post-purchase evaluation.

Problem or Need Recognition

In the first stage of the consumer decision process, the need to make a particular purchase is activated. In the case of furniture, problem recognition is likely to occur when a consumer experiences a significant life change, such as getting married, purchasing a first home, having children, or downsizing due to retirement and/or children leaving home. Therefore, it is not surprising that buying furniture is a high involvement decision that garners input from the entire family. In our survey, of those who have a spouse, 71.6%

consult with their significant other before making a purchase decision, and 67.8% say that their spouse takes an active role in furniture shopping. When considering only the responses of females, 57.6% stated that their spouses take an active role in furniture shopping. So while females are more likely to have an interest in home furniture (68%, compared to 32% of males), males are still likely to be included in the decision process. For those who have children, 37.1% of respondents say that their children influence their furniture buying decisions. In addition, 75% of respondents indicated that they consider the needs of their entire family when beginning the furniture buying process. These percentages are all consistent with results from the same questions five years ago.

Furniture and the Self-Concept

Consumers do treat the decision as important, as furniture can serve as an expression of one's own identity and personality. A large 72.7% of respondents agreed that, "the design of my furniture reflects my personality," 67.0% of respondents agreed with the statement, "A lot can be said about a person from the furniture s/he owns," and 60.7% agreed that they express themselves with the furniture they buy. Regarding furniture as an expression of one's personality, there were no differences across generational groups, but, not surprisingly, females were more likely than males to agree with this statement.

Table 4 provides open-ended comments made by respondents that give an indication of what their furniture represents to them. The emotional nature of purchasing furniture is evident when consumers refer to their homes as a place to share and make memories with friends and family (Perry 2007). Keep in mind that these comments come from the very end of the survey as an unprompted, open-ended question that simply asked, "And finally, is there anything you would like to tell us about your feelings towards home furniture?"

TABLE 4
Comments Concerning the Significance of Home Furniture

Comment	Who Said It?
Home furniture makes the house feel like a home. It represents a person's style and personality. It makes the rooms more comfortable and relaxing and inviting to family and guests.	40 year old Caucasian male in Wisconsin
Furniture is a reflection of me and I work hard to ensure that the spaces in my home do so, and are comfortable and usable, both casually and for entertaining, of which I do a lot.	38 year old African-American female in Texas
Home furniture makes you feel good about spending time in the room and it can put you in a good mood when you are having a rough day.	37 year old Hispanic male in New York
Furniture is a reflection on my style, taste in decorating, and my success in life.	66 year old Caucasian male in Pennsylvania
I am very proud of my furniture and also my art work. It reflects who I am and what I believe in. I like who I am!	69 year old Caucasian female in Ohio
Furniture is an extension of me. It has to be functional but classically designed and high quality. Color is an important way to express my personality in my furnishings.	51 year old Filipino female in New York
Furniture is one of the things that make you feel at home. It reflects your personality.	55 year old Caucasian female in Michigan
Home furniture is simply magical. It pays to invest a lot in home furniture as it has a way of livening up one's mood. If it's good, it could make a good day great, and if it's bad, it could make a bad day worse.	31 year old African-American male in Maryland
Furniture makes a home a home and it tells your story. When you select it for your home, your family should be in on the selection as a whole. With their thoughts, it will make a difference.	52 year old African-American male in Louisiana
I like furniture – it makes a home a home and reflects a sense of comfort.	21 year old Caucasian female in Arkansas

As 75.6% of our sample agreed that they are interested in home furniture, and 80.3% stated that the furniture they own matters to them, these results provide evidence that furniture is significant in consumers' lives and that the furniture buying process is highly involving. Similar to results concerning furniture and self-identity across generation and gender, females were about twice as likely as males to agree that furniture matters to them, and no differences were found across the different generations.

Favorite Furniture in the Home

The emotional nature of owning furniture that reflects one's personality is evident when respondents provide information about the favorite room and favorite furniture in their homes. Many people are proud of their furniture and took the time to describe favorite pieces in great detail. Over half of the sample named the living room/den/family room their favorite room. When asked why this room was their favorite, respondents overwhelmingly mentioned the entire family and the living room as a place to share the happenings in each other's lives. For example, a 70 year old female states the living room is her favorite because, "it is where my friends and family gather to relax and enjoy one another." Furniture in this room facilitates this sharing. As one 41 year old female puts it, "the family room [is my favorite] because we spend a lot of time in there together. We have a sectional couch that is one of my favorite pieces because we can all be on it together."

A similar sentiment is expressed for the dining room or eat-in kitchen, with 6.5% of the sample stating that this was their favorite room. A 61 year old female states that it is her favorite because, "it is where everyone congregates and shares good times and good memories." This sentiment is echoed by a 26 year old female, whose favorite piece of furniture is the dining room table because, "it is where we eat together as a family and it is also where we do family activities like carving pumpkins and school projects."

While living rooms and dining areas facilitate togetherness with family and friends, the master bedroom is a favorite of 28% of our sample because it represents relaxation and privacy. A 69 year old male states that the master bedroom is his favorite:

> "Because it has beautiful oak furniture. It was our first purchase when we got married. It cost a lot and is very beautiful and sturdy. Very beautiful and is a very nice room to sleep in. The furniture definitely makes it my favorite."

This quote is particularly telling in that a 69 year old man refers to his bedroom furniture as "beautiful" three times within a handful of sentences. In addition, there is a sentimental attachment present due to the fact that the bedroom set was their first purchase as husband and wife.

Frequency of Purchase Decisions

While a majority of our sample is interested in home furniture and agrees that their furniture reflects their personality, it is not a decision that is made with great frequency. For example, when asked their level of agreement with the statement, "I like to replace some of my furniture every few years," only 35.1% of respondents agreed. Likewise, only 18.4% agreed that, "I change my furniture often to keep up with design trends." Alternately, when asked, "I expect my furniture to last for many years," a sizeable 95.1% of respondents agreed (which is up from 87.4% in 2008), with 53.2% strongly agreeing with this statement. When asked about level of agreement about keeping wood and upholstered furniture for a long time, 92.4% agreed that they plan to keep their wood furniture for a long time, while 86.9% agreed that they plan to keep their upholstered furniture for a long time. What constitutes a long time? The most frequently reported category for wood furniture was "over 15 years," while the most frequently reported category for upholstered furniture was "7-10 years." As one 61 year old female puts it, "You are the one who is going to live with it, like a husband you want it to last a long time!"

In sum, while the decision to purchase new furniture is not made with great frequency, it is an important decision that involves the whole family. People care about their furniture because, as one 41 year old female stated, "Your furniture has to be where your family feels comfortable and able to relax. With the world so stressful, having a place just to relax is very important." This high level of importance means that consumers will move through the stages of the consumer decision process with careful consideration. How and where they gather information is discussed below in greater detail.

Information Search

After the need for furniture is recognized, consumers engage in a search for information about the products/services that can satisfy those needs. While information is usually gathered to satisfy a pending need or solve a current problem at hand, consumers may also gather information simply because they enjoy furniture but do not have a specific need for it. Half of the respondents in our sample (50.1%) agreed that they like to shop for furniture, even if they do not have a specific need. This figure is up from the 35.4% of respondents five years ago who agreed with the same statement. These respondents are mainly women, not surprisingly. Considering generational groups, just over half of Gen X and Gen Y respondents we surveyed like to shop for furniture regardless of need, while only a third of the Depression/Pre-Depression generation does.

When gathering information to make a purchase decision, two key pieces of information are necessary: the evaluative criteria, or features of the furniture that are sought by the consumer; and the consideration set, or brands of furniture being considered for purchase. Detailed information about evaluative criteria and consideration sets are provided below.

Evaluative Criteria

The evaluative criteria of “made in the U.S.A.” and “environmentally-friendly furniture” were examined in the survey in greater detail, as the potential marketability of these features is of particular interest to U.S. furniture manufacturers. Table 5 provides results from a series of questions related to U.S. manufactured furniture. When presented with the statement, “I try to buy furniture only if it is made in the United States,” 57.8% of our sample agreed. Level of agreement did vary by generational group and region of the country where the respondent lived. Specifically, agreement increased with age, with the Depression/Pre-Depression generations most likely to strongly agree with this statement. Further, Southerners and Midwesterners were more likely to agree with this statement than those from the West and Northeast. Similar results were found for the statement, “I am willing to pay more money if the furniture is made in the U.S.A.” (see Table 11). 58.2% of respondents agreed with this statement, with agreement increasing with age, as well as for Southerners and Midwesterners.

The questions appearing in Table 5 asked about furniture manufactured in the U.S.A. versus other countries in general. To ascertain attitudes about American made furniture versus furniture made in China specifically, the survey also contained the following scenario: “Suppose a sofa that you really like costs $800 and is made in China. How much more are you willing to pay for the sofa if it is made in the U.S.A.?” 43.2% of respondents would not be willing to pay any more than $800 for the sofa, 19.8% would be willing to pay $850 for the sofa, 16.9% would be willing to pay $900 for the sofa, 6.1% would be willing to pay $950 for the sofa, 8.7% would be willing to pay $1,000 for the sofa, and 5.2% would be willing to pay more than $1,000 for the sofa. No differences were found across gender or generational group, but Midwesterners were more likely to pay up to $200 more for the sofa and Southerners were more likely to pay $1,000 or more for the sofa if it is made in the U.S.A.

TABLE 5
Support for Furniture Made in the U.S.A.

Item **Thinking about where your furniture is made…**	**STA[*] (7)**	**A (6)**	**SLA (5)**	**N (4)**	**SLD (3)**	**D (2)**	**STD (1)**
I try to buy furniture only if it is made in the United States.	14.4%	24.3%	19.1%	25.4%	5.0%	7.2%	4.7%
It may cost more in the long-run, but I prefer to support American-made furniture.	17.4%	25.9%	22.4%	23.6%	3.4%	3.6%	3.7%
It is always best to support American furniture manufacturers.	25.0%	28.3%	19.5%	20.1%	2.2%	2.2%	2.6%
We should purchase furniture made in the U.S.A. instead of furniture made in other countries.	24.6%	26.6%	18.5%	22.0%	2.8%	2.7%	2.7%

[*] STA=strongly agree, A=agree, SLA=slightly agree, N=neither agree nor disagree, SLD=slightly disagree, D=disagree, STD=strongly disagree
n=2,007

Attitudes towards environmentally-friendly furniture were also assessed. On the survey, the term "environmentally-friendly" was intentionally not specifically defined, so respondents were left to interpret its meaning on their own. Table 6 provides results from a series of questions related to environmentally-friendly furniture. In general, respondents agreed more with supporting furniture made in the U.S.A. over environmentally-friendly furniture. Note, however, that the "Neither Agree nor Disagree" category was the one most chosen for the statements in Table 6. This is likely due to the vagueness of the term.

TABLE 6
Support for Environmentally-Friendly Furniture

Item **How do you feel about furniture and the environment? Please answer the following.**	**STA[*] (7)**	**A (6)**	**SLA (5)**	**N (4)**	**SLD (3)**	**D (2)**	**STD (1)**
I want my furniture to be environmentally-friendly.	9.2%	22.0%	21.7%	37.5%	2.4%	4.2%	2.9%
I feel a moral obligation to buy environmentally-friendly furniture for my home.	6.6%	13.3%	17.3%	31.3%	10.7%	11.4%	9.4%
I will not buy furniture from a company that is ecologically irresponsible.	7.0%	13.3%	15.6%	38.9%	10.2%	7.6%	7.4%
I would be willing to stop buying furniture from companies who pollute the environment even though it might be inconvenient for me.	11.0%	18.9%	19.2%	30.3%	7.3%	6.3%	7.1%

[*] STA=strongly agree, A=agree, SLA=slightly agree, N=neither agree nor disagree, SLD=slightly disagree, D=disagree, STD=strongly disagree
n=2,007

Further, the survey contained a scenario similar to the question about American made furniture versus furniture made in China: "Suppose a sofa that you really like cost $800 and is made with materials that have a negative impact on the environment. How much more are you willing to pay for the sofa if it is made with environmentally-friendly materials?" 47.2% of respondents would not be willing to pay any more than $800 for the sofa, 19.6% would be willing to pay $850 for the sofa, 16.5% would be willing to pay $900 for the sofa, 4.9% would be willing to pay $950 for the sofa, 7.7% would be willing to pay $1,000 for the sofa, and 4.1% would be willing to pay more than $1,000 for the sofa. Interestingly, generational differences were uncovered for this question. The majority of Baby Boomers (50.9%) and the Depression/Pre-Depression generations (58.6%) would not be willing to pay any more than $800 for an environmentally-friendly sofa, but the majority of Gen Y (58.7%) and Gen X (55.7%) were willing to pay at least some amount greater than $800 for the sofa. More discussion on marketing furniture made in the U.S.A. and environmentally-friendly furniture to different generational groups may be found in the Recommendations section.

Consideration Set

A consideration set may be defined as those brands that a consumer will consider purchasing. These are the brands that get appraised along the evaluative criteria most important to consumers. Similar to results obtained five years ago, consumers are not particularly loyal to specific furniture brands. A majority of respondents (77.9%) either disagreed or were neutral about the statement, "I am very loyal to specific brands of furniture." Respondents also tended to disagree with the statement, "I stick with just a couple of brands of furniture that I know I like." 76.3% of respondents disagreed with this, and only 3.1% strongly agreed with this statement (down from 5% in 2008). Also similar to the prior survey, while older people are usually more brand loyal in general, brand loyalty did not vary by age here.

These findings are consistent with other research which found that online furniture buyers are undecided on brand, with only 8% of internet furniture buyers knowing specific brands to search for to make their purchase (Nickell 2013). While most of our respondents did not have a favorite furniture brand, some did comment on our open-ended question, “If you have a favorite furniture brand and/or favorite furniture store, please tell us about them.” IKEA was mentioned for its price, Ashley and Haverty’s were mentioned for their price/quality ratio as well as the variety of styles they offer, and La-Z-Boy, Ethan Allen, and Thomasville were mentioned for their quality. See Table 7 for more details about favorite brands and stores.

TABLE 7
Consumers’ Favorite Furniture Brands and Stores

Favorite Brand/Store Mentioned Most Often	# of Respondents Naming the Brand	Sample Reason Given
IKEA	94	They offer trendy styles at low prices.
Ashley	79	Good quality, fair prices, and helpful salespeople.
La-Z-Boy	51	They make very comfortable products.
Ethan Allen	50	Good quality, classic furniture.
Broyhill	20	Good quality and stylish.
Thomasville	17	It is a brand I know and trust.
Haverty’s	12	It has been around for many years and I like their quality.

Information Sources

During the information search stage, consumers may search a variety of external sources to gather information to help make a purchase decision. While it does take time and effort to conduct an external search, benefits that are both tangible (a lower price, a preferred style, or a higher-quality product) and intangible (reduced risk, greater confidence) can result (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2012). External information sources may include traditional media, the internet, social media, and interpersonal sources, such as consulting family members or friends. Traditional media sources include advertisements on television and in magazines, sales catalogs or brochures, as well as home decorating-themed magazines and television programming. Table 8 shows the percentage of respondents who engage in search via each of these traditional media sources. Also provided in this table are results from the 2008 furniture study. While the traditional media sources of television and magazine advertising did not fare very well five years ago, it seems that people are more likely to pay attention to these sources now. Watching home decorating themed shows and reading home magazines also rose compared to five years ago.

TABLE 8
The Role of Traditional Media in Information Search

Survey Item **When I gather information on furniture before making a purchase decision…**	**% of sample who agree (2013)[1]**	**% of sample who agree (2008)[2]**	**Mean (2013)[3]**	**Mean (2008)[3]**
I pay attention to television ads.	50.7%	34.9%	4.16	3.78
I watch home decorating themed programs on television (such as HGTV).	48.7%	41.8%	4.00	3.93
I pay attention to magazine ads.	42.7%	37.1%	3.87	3.81
I read lifestyle and home magazines.	41.2%	30.2%	3.71	3.50
I gather information from catalogs and/or sales brochures.	47.0%	45.2%	4.05	4.10

[1] n=2,007
[2] n=2,012
[3] seven point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

Not surprisingly, gender differences exist for watching home decorating themed television programming and reading home magazines, with women enjoying these activities more than men. Generational differences are also found for these two activities, along with paying attention to television and magazine ads. 53.5% of Gen Y members watch this type of television programming, compared to 49.4% of Gen X members, 47.8% of Baby Boomers, and 31.9% of Depression/Pre-Depression generation members. Similar results are found for television advertising, with 52.3% of Gen Y, 55.8% of Gen X, 42.4% of Baby Boomers, and 36.2% of the Depression/Pre-Depression agreeing that they pay attention to TV ads. Reading home magazines and paying attention to magazine ads are also more likely to be done by Gen X and Y members rather than older generations. Thus, while Gen Y is commonly thought of as the internet generation, it seems they also pay attention to traditional media of television and magazines as well.

In addition to the use of traditional media sources, many consumers consult the internet as it is an extremely useful and efficient source for gaining a vast amount of information (Peterson and Merino 2003). A recent study conducted by Cisco indicates that over 70% of consumers conduct research online before making an in-store purchase (Cisco 2012). For furniture shoppers specifically, the internet offers the convenience and efficiency of learning about brands, trends, and product quality information that would otherwise be difficult to obtain, especially since furniture is not a frequent purchase for most consumers.

Table 9 provides information regarding searching for information about furniture via the internet. For comparison purposes, results from the 2008 study are also included. According to our survey, the internet serves as a strong source of information for consumers before making a furniture purchase. Almost 70% of our sample, both men and women equally, agreed that they search for furniture-related information on the internet. This represents an increase of 17.7% since 2008.

TABLE 9
The Role of the Internet in Information Search

Survey Item **What are your thoughts about shopping for furniture online?**	**% of sample who agree (2013)[1]**	**% of sample who agree (2008)[2]**	**Mean (2013)[3]**	**Mean (2008)[3]**
I search for information on the internet.	69.1%	51.4%	4.94	4.39
I like to look at different brands of furniture online.	64.1%	43.0%	4.77	4.02
I do research online before I go to furniture stores to shop for furniture.	63.7%	46.1%	4.78	4.12

[1] n=2,007
[2] n=2,012
[3] seven point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

Conducting an internet search is really where generational differences become more pronounced, with 80.6% of Gen Y, 69.4% of Gen X, 65.5% of Baby Boomers, and 44.0% of the Depression/Pre-Depression generation agreeing that they search for furniture information online. For the statement, "I like to look at different brands of furniture online," 73.7% of Gen Y agreed, compared to 65.1% of Gen X, 60.6% of Baby Boomers, and 43.1% of the Depression/Pre-Depression generation. Similar results are found for the statement, "I do research online before I go to furniture stores to shop for furniture." These results are consistent with secondary data which show that consumers increasingly use the internet to search for furniture (French 2013b; French 2012).

As many consumers look to online options to find information, social networking sites offer a means by which consumers can gain product knowledge. Social networking has, in fact, become a very popular online activity; in 2011, it accounted for 15% of all internet usage in the United States, and 91% of all adults utilize social networking sites on a regular basis (Moscaritolo 2012). Popular sites include Tumblr, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Facebook (Notess 2012).

Social networks allow people to connect with others who share similar tastes and interests (Heinrichs, Lim, and Lim 2011; York 2011). Not only do people connect with strangers with whom they share commonalities, but also have access to information shared by friends, family members and acquaintances via social networking. For the purposes of this study, respondents were asked specifically about searching Pinterest for information. In the United States, Pinterest is now ranked third in popularity amongst social networking sites (following only Facebook and Twitter) (Moscaritolo 2012). The site is also noted as the social network that retailers should be most aware of and attentive to (Moscaritolo 2012). Pinterest allows users to share pictures, links and web-content via online pinboards. For a new account, default boards include “For the Home” and “Products I Love” (Notess 2012). Based on this format that allows for sharing and ‘pinning,’ consumers who are in the market for furniture can browse the site for ideas, get feedback from other users, and view boards like “For the Home” on others’ accounts in order increase their knowledge of furniture styles and brands.

Table 10 shows results related to the use of Pinterest as a source of information about furniture before making a purchase decision. Only a small portion of respondents, just under 15%, use Pinterest for this type of information. No gender differences were found, but, as expected, the use of Pinterest is by far an activity for younger generations. Pinterest is used for furniture ideas by about 27% of Gen Y, 16% of Gen X, 8% of Baby Boomers, and only 3% of the Depression/Pre-Depression generation.

TABLE 10
Social Media as an Information Source

Survey Item **When I gather information on furniture before making a purchase decision…**	**% of sample who agree**	**Mean***
I use Pinterest to pin furniture or decorating ideas to my page.	14.9%	2.38
I use Pinterest to look at furniture or decorating ideas on other people's pinboards.	14.8%	2.38
I use Pinterest to follow other users who pin furniture or decorating ideas to their pinboard.	13.4%	2.33

*Based on a seven point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

Finally, regarding interpersonal sources of information, consumers either have confidence in their ability to decorate a home, or they have confidence in their ability to find the appropriate sources without asking the opinions of others such as friends and family. Only 3.3% of our sample strongly agreed with the statement, "I ask others about the furniture in their homes," and only 2.5% strongly agreed that they mainly rely on family or friends to give them advice on what to buy. Gen Y members are the group most likely to get other peoples' opinions before they buy a piece of furniture. This is likely due to the fact that since they are younger, they do not have as much experience with selecting furniture as older generations (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2012).

Alternative Evaluation

Once consumers gather information about their evaluative criteria and brands in their consideration set, alternative evaluation occurs when the consumer makes comparisons and judges the abilities of each selected brand to perform according to the consumer's most important criteria (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh 2012). In this stage, consumers will narrow their options down to one – the one chosen for purchase.

Consumers typically know what features they want their furniture to possess, but they may have to sacrifice some of these desired features due to budget constraints. As with most big-ticket purchases, trade-offs are typically made between the price paid and features that may add to the cost of the item, such as quality, style, country of origin, and environmental friendliness. Table 11 illustrates some features of furniture that respondents are willing to pay more money to obtain. Quality of the furniture is a strong criterion, with 80.8% of the sample agreeing that they would be willing to pay more money for high quality furniture. This finding is consistent with results from the 2008 furniture study, and secondary research also shows that quality is frequently the strongest evaluative criterion sought by consumers when purchasing furniture (Anonymous 2006).

TABLE 11
Features for which Consumers Will Pay More

Item **When it comes to shopping for furniture, I am willing to pay more money if…..**	**STA* (7)**	**A (6)**	**SLA (5)**	**N (4)**	**SLD (3)**	**D (2)**	**STD (1)**
I can get exactly what I want.	12.9%	28.1%	28.6%	14.1%	6.5%	5.6%	4.2%
The furniture is made in the U.S.A.	13.5%	23.5%	21.2%	26.4%	5.7%	5.7%	4.1%
The furniture is customized to fit my style and preferences.	13.1%	26.8%	26.6%	18.5%	5.7%	5.4%	3.9%
The furniture is high in quality.	24.2%	33.5%	23.1%	12.2%	2.8%	2.3%	1.9%

The furniture is made with environmentally-friendly materials.	9.8%	19.8%	20.8%	31.4%	6.7%	6.2%	5.3%

[*] STA=strongly agree, A=agree, SLA=slightly agree, N=neither agree nor disagree, SLD=slightly disagree, D=disagree, STD=strongly disagree
n=2,007

As another illustration of the importance of furniture quality to respondents, when asked to rank four features in order of importance (quality, price, made in the U.S.A., and environmental friendliness), quality was selected as most important by 53.2% of the sample (up from 46.1% in 2008), while price was ranked as most important by 31.2% of respondents. The ranking of quality as the number one feature did not vary by gender or generational group.

Over half of the sample ranked "furniture made with environmentally-friendly materials" as last among the four features, but there were some differences in this across generations. Gen Y was more likely to rank "made in the U.S.A." as last and "environmentally-friendly" as third behind quality and then price. The fact that Gen Y seems to value environmentally-friendly furniture more than furniture made in the U.S.A. represents a shift in sentiment that manufacturers and retailers need to be aware of.

In a separate rank-order question, respondents were asked to consider the four features of furniture style, price, the brand name of the furniture, and made in the U.S.A. This time, more respondents chose style of the furniture over its price, with 45% ranking style as most important and 35.4% ranking price as most important. This does not hold true when comparing Gen Y to the other generations, however. For Gen Y members, price just edged out style, with 44.7% of Gen Y ranking price as number one and 43.3% ranking style as number one.

In this same question, “made in the U.S.A.” was ranked third overall and “brand name of the furniture” was ranked fourth. There are some gender and generational differences here, though. Males appear to rank brand name as higher than females, and Baby Boomers and the Depression/Pre-Depression generations ranked “made in the U.S.A.” as higher than Gen Y and Gen X.

Outlet Selection and Purchase

In-Store Shopping and Purchasing

Similar to waning loyalty for specific brands of furniture, respondents were not particularly loyal to specific furniture stores either. Regarding the statement, “I am very loyal to specific furniture stores,” only 26.3% of respondents agreed. Alternately, when presented with the statement, “I look at many furniture stores before I choose where to purchase,” 76.7% of respondents agreed. This response is consistent with the high-involvement nature of furniture, as consumers are willing to shop at multiple outlets to find a piece of furniture that best satisfies their needs.

In keeping with the finding that our respondents seek quality over price when selecting furniture, only 27.7% agreed with the statement, “I prefer to shop for furniture at discount stores like Target or Walmart.”

Internet Shopping and Purchasing

Regarding shopping for and purchasing furniture via the internet, 21.6% of our respondents have made a furniture purchase online. This percentage is nearly double what it was in 2008, when only 11% of respondents had purchased furniture online. Further, 34.8% of respondents agree that they will shop for furniture online over the next few years, compared to 25% who agreed with that statement in 2008. Even more significant is the number of respondents who stated that they are willing to purchase furniture online – 1,044, or 52.0% of respondents. This represents a major shift in attitudes towards shopping for and purchasing furniture via the internet. Secondary research supports this finding, as consumers are becoming more comfortable with making a furniture purchase online (York 2010).

Regarding intentions to shop for furniture online over the next few years, generational differences are especially pronounced, with 46.9% of Gen Y, 36.7% of Gen X, 28.8% of Baby Boomers, and 17.2% of the Depression/Pre-Depression generation agreeing with this statement. Of those who have already made a furniture purchase online, 34% are Gen Y members, 29.6% are Gen X members, 32.4% are Baby Boomers, and 3.9% come from the Depression/Pre-Depression generation. These percentages are nearly the same of those who say they are willing to purchase furniture online.

Post-Purchase Evaluation

Post-purchase evaluation occurs when the consumer has had a chance to use the product and make some evaluations in comparison to initial expectations. Cognitive dissonance, defined as a feeling of self-doubt, remorse, and uneasiness after a purchase, may occur in this stage of the decision process, and it is more likely to occur for products that are considered important to the consumer, given their costs, and the fact that the decision is relatively irreversible (Oliver 1997). Oftentimes, this anxiety is induced as a result of having to choose one alternative over all others (Festinger 1957). While choosing furniture is an important and emotional decision, respondents do not really feel this “buyer’s remorse” after a furniture purchase; only 13% of our sample indicated that they get this feeling (down from 17.7% in the 2008 study). This low number may be attributed to the considerable time and effort consumers expend in the information search and alternative evaluation stages of the decision process – consumers "do their homework," so to speak, before they buy, so any feelings of buyer's remorse after the purchase is made are diminished. See Table 12 for specific results regarding cognitive dissonance.

Those who do experience buyer's remorse are more likely to come from Gen Y than any other generation. This is likely due to their lack of experience in buying such items. These findings are corroborated by Thompson, Pitts, and Schwankovsky (1993), who also found that younger people experience greater cognitive dissonance after making decisions in general. Similar results are found concerning the uneasiness of the buying process, worry over spending too much money, and the lack of confidence to make a purchase decision.

TABLE 12
Survey Items Related to Cognitive Dissonance

Item	**STA*** **(7)**	**A (6)**	**SLA (5)**	**N (4)**	**SLD (3)**	**D (2)**	**STD (1)**
I typically get buyer's remorse after I buy a piece of furniture.	0.7%	3.5%	8.8%	18.0%	13.5%	33.4%	22.0%
I feel uneasy about the furniture buying process.	1.8%	5.3%	16.9%	19.9%	12.3%	25.3%	18.3%
I sometimes worry that I have spent too much money on furniture after I have purchased it.	4.0%	11.9%	26.2%	17.0%	10.0%	17.2%	13.7%
I do not have a lot of confidence in my ability to make the right purchase decision.	2.1%	5.8%	11.3%	14.6%	15.5%	26.5%	24.1%

* STA=strongly agree, A=agree, SLA=slightly agree, N=neither agree nor disagree, SLD=slightly disagree, D=disagree, STD=strongly disagree
n=2,007

Recommendations

Based on these results, some recommendations may be made regarding the manner in which furniture manufacturers and retailers communicate with consumers along their way to making a furniture purchase. First, problem or need recognition is typically triggered due to a significant life change; thus, furniture purchases are considered important and are emotional in nature for many people. Manufacturers and retailers should keep this in mind – they are not making or selling a product, but instead are providing a way for consumers to spend time comfortably with family and friends. People are proud of the furniture in their homes and view it as an extension of who they are. This makes for a more engaged shopper, one who wants to understand as much as possible about his or her options before making a purchase. Furniture retailers should be prepared for customers to ask a lot of questions, having conducted research online prior to entering the store.

"Made in the U.S.A." is a strong sentiment and can be used as a selling point for American-made furniture. This is particularly true for older consumers. Unfortunately, Gen Y does not appreciate this sentiment as strongly as older generations do. While purchasing furniture that is made with environmentally-friendly materials is a weaker selling point than furniture made in the U.S.A. in general, this is not the case for members of Gen Y. In order for U.S. furniture manufacturers to win favor with Gen Y, more consumer education is needed. Perhaps showing that the U.S. furniture industry is heavily regulated compared to other countries will go a long way in convincing Gen Y consumers that U.S.-made furniture is more environmentally-friendly than furniture made in other countries.

While environmental friendliness can win favor with Gen Y, this information is not always easily accessible. The inability to determine how environmentally-friendly a piece of furniture is could lead to frustration among consumers. One 34 year old multicultural female made this comment at the end of her survey:

> “It is sometimes difficult to find environmentally friendly items – or know if they are. It would be nice if more companies clearly labeled how/what something is made out of and where it is made. It is not easy lifting a bookshelf or chair to read a tiny sticker underneath!”

The obvious recommendation here again comes back to education. Manufacturers should provide clear and detailed information regarding the materials used to create the furniture, and not require the consumer to work hard to obtain it.

Furniture quality continues to reign supreme as an important evaluative criterion. Educating consumers on how to specifically evaluate quality in furniture will help to ensure them that the piece of furniture they choose will last a long time. The fact that 43.2% of respondents indicated that they would not be willing to pay any more money for a sofa made in the U.S.A. versus a sofa made in China is evidence that consumers need to be more educated in evaluating quality, if that is indeed the most important criterion when making a furniture purchase.

Fortunately, furniture manufacturers and retailers have a variety of information sources at their disposal to communicate with and educate consumers. Television advertising as well as networks such as HGTV can target women of all ages. Home magazines and magazine ads will also do well to reach members of Gen Y and Gen X, as will social media.

Regarding content of promotional messages, furniture manufacturers and retailers should consider the integral role that furniture plays in the consumer’s self-concept. The open-ended comments provided in Table 4 as well as the descriptions given of favorite furniture demonstrate how furniture can create happy memories with family and friends in the home. These comments can be used to create television and magazine ads that will resonate with furniture shoppers.

Further, an online presence is crucial. Five years ago, a recommendation was that furniture manufacturers should maintain websites that feature their products in a way that allows consumers to get a realistic picture of what the furniture would look like in their own homes (Ponder 2008). This is even more critical today, as the number of people who search for information about furniture online has increased significantly since 2008. With 46.9% of Gen Y stating that they intend to shop for furniture online over the next several years, the maintenance of a website is essential for manufacturers and retailers who want to establish a relationship with this important generational group. Even if furniture manufacturers do not plan to sell their offerings directly to consumers, they should still maintain a website with information about their products and where consumers may be able to find them.

Another significant change over the past five years is the willingness to actually purchase furniture online. In 2008, only 11% of respondents indicated that they had purchased furniture online, and this number jumped to 21.6% currently. Further, over half of respondents stated that they would be willing to make a furniture purchase online. Thus, retailers should strongly consider offering the option to purchase online if they have not already done so.

Most people are confident in their decision-making abilities. Instead of tactics to reinforce the wisdom of a purchase, furniture manufacturers and retailers could have online forums for customers to share "before and after" decorating projects. Posting and sharing pictures of furniture items via Pinterest is another way to reach Gen Y consumers and may encourage more home redecorating.

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Appendix
Survey Instrument

Welcome!

You have been invited to participate in an online research project about household furniture. The survey is going to ask you about your thoughts and feelings towards the furniture in your home and answer some questions about your experiences with shopping for and purchasing furniture.

Participation in this survey is voluntary, and you are free to answer or not answer any questions at no penalty. There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts that might occur as a result of your participation in the study. To participate in this survey you must be 18 years old or older.

The time needed to participate in the entire study is approximately 15-20 minutes. Thank you for your participation and if you have any questions please contact:

Dr. Nicole Ponder
Mississippi State University
E-mail: nponder@cobilan.msstate.edu

or

Institutional Review Board
Mississippi State University
Email: irb@research.msstate.edu

SECTION 1: ATTITUDES ABOUT FURNITURE AND FURNITURE SHOPPING

While thinking about the furniture in your home, please answer the following questions. The scale ranges from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Please select the category that best represents your feelings.

1. I am interested in home furniture.
2. I like to shop for furniture, even if I don't have a particular need.
3. I feel knowledgeable about furniture.
4. I think I am an experienced shopper when it comes to buying furniture.
5. I feel confident about my furniture buying abilities.

Still thinking about home furniture…

1. A lot can be said about a person from the furniture s/he owns.
2. I value furniture as an important part of my lifestyle.
3. The items I buy for my home are a reflection of who I am.
4. The design of my furniture reflects my personality.
5. I express myself with the furniture I buy.
6. A person's home should reflect who s/he is.
7. My furniture fits with the lifestyle that I lead.
8. I feel that it is important for me to update my style by replacing my furniture often.

The furniture I own…

1. Tells others about me.
2. Is part of my self-concept.
3. Matters to me.

When it comes to shopping for furniture, I am willing to pay more money if...

1. I can get exactly what I want.
2. The furniture is made in the U.S.A.
3. The furniture is customized to fit my style and preferences.
4. The furniture is high in quality.
5. The furniture is made with environmentally-friendly materials.

Still thinking about home furniture…

1. I will only buy a piece of furniture if it is on sale.
2. Saving money is one of my main priorities.
3. I expect my furniture to last for many years.
4. Whenever I purchase wood furniture, I plan on keeping it for a long time.
5. Whenever I purchase upholstered furniture, I plan on keeping it for a long time.
6. I like to replace some of my furniture every few years.
7. I change my furniture often to keep up with design trends.

8. I believe that wood furniture should be kept for:

- ❍ Less than 1 year
- ❍ 1-3 years
- ❍ 3-5 years
- ❍ 5-7 years
- ❍ 7-10 years
- ❍ 10-15 years
- ❍ More than 15 years

9. I believe that upholstered furniture should be kept for:

- ❍ Less than 1 year
- ❍ 1-3 years
- ❍ 3-5 years
- ❍ 5-7 years
- ❍ 7-10 years
- ❍ 10-15 years
- ❍ More than 15 years

10. Now think specifically about your home and the furniture in it. What is your most favorite room in your home, and why do you say that? Please share anything you'd like about your favorite room.

11. Please tell us about the furniture you have in your favorite room. Does your furniture help to make it your favorite?

How do you feel about furniture and the environment? Please answer the following.

1. I want my furniture to be environmentally-friendly.
2. I feel a moral obligation to buy environmentally-friendly furniture for my home.
3. I will not buy furniture from a company that is ecologically irresponsible.
4. I would be willing to stop buying furniture from companies who pollute the environment even though it might be inconvenient for me.

5. Suppose a sofa that you really like cost $800 and is made with materials that have a negative impact on the environment. How much more are you willing to pay for the sofa if it is made with environmentally-friendly materials?

- ❍ I am not willing to pay any more than $800 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay $850 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay $900 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay $950 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay $1,000 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay more than $1,000 for the sofa.

Thinking about where your furniture is made...

1. I try to buy furniture only if it is made in the United States.
2. It may cost more in the long-run, but I prefer to support American-made furniture.
3. It is always best to support American furniture manufacturers.
4. We should purchase furniture made in the U.S.A. instead of furniture made in other countries.

5. Suppose a sofa that you really like costs $800 and is made in China. How much more are you willing to pay for the sofa if it is made in the U.S.A.?

- ❍ I am not willing to pay any more than $800 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay $850 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay $900 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay $950 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay $1,000 for the sofa.
- ❍ I'd be willing to pay more than $1,000 for the sofa.

When selecting and purchasing furniture…

1. I often influence other people's opinions about furniture.
2. I feel more comfortable buying a piece of furniture when I have gotten other people's opinions on it.
3. I like to get other people's opinions before I buy a piece of furniture.
4. When choosing furniture, other people's opinions are important to me.
5. Other people usually come to me for advice about choosing furniture.
6. People that I know pick their furniture based on what I have told them.

The following are some characteristics of furniture, all of which may be important to you. Please RANK each characteristic from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most important feature you look for, and 4 being the least important. Click on and hold the attribute to move it up or down to finalize your rankings.

______ Quality of the furniture
______ Furniture is made with environmentally-friendly materials
______ Price of the furniture
______ Furniture is made in the U.S.A.

Again, the following are some characteristics of furniture. Please RANK each characteristic from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most important feature you look for, and 4 being the least important. Click on and hold the attribute to move it up or down to finalize your rankings.

______ Style of the furniture
______ Brand name of the furniture
______ Furniture is made in the U.S.A.
______ Price of the furniture

<u>SECTION 2: FURNITURE SHOPPING AND PURCHASING</u>

Thinking about how you typically shop for furniture, please select the category that best describes your level of agreement with the following statements about the furniture stores where you consider shopping.

1. I am very loyal to specific furniture stores.
2. I look at many furniture stores before I choose where to purchase.
3. I am very loyal to specific brands of furniture.
4. I would like to be able to purchase an entire room of furniture as a package.
5. I prefer to shop for furniture at discount stores, like Target or Walmart.
6. I stick with just a couple of brands of furniture that I know I like.

7. If you have a favorite furniture brand and/or favorite furniture store, please tell us about them. What are they, and what makes them your favorite?

What are your thoughts about shopping for furniture online? Please select the category which corresponds to your feelings.

1. I search for information on the internet.
2. I like to look at different brands of furniture online.
3. I do research online before I go to furniture stores to look for furniture.
4. I wish it were easier to purchase furniture online.
5. I intend to shop for furniture online over the next few years.
6. I want to touch and feel a piece of furniture before I purchase it.
7. I would never buy upholstered furniture without sitting on it first.
8. I have purchased furniture online. (Yes or no)
9. I have purchased furniture from a catalog. (Yes or no)
10. I am willing to purchase furniture online. (Yes or no)

Who influences your decision to purchase furniture?

1. I consult with my spouse/partner before making a purchase decision.
2. My spouse/partner takes an active role in furniture shopping.
3. My children influence my furniture buying decisions.
4. When I buy furniture, I consider the needs of my entire family.

When I gather information on furniture before making a purchase decision …

1\. I pay attention to television advertisements.
2\. I ask others about the furniture in their homes.
3\. I watch home decorating themed programs on television (such as HGTV).
2\. I go to websites to look at furniture online.
5\. I read lifestyle and home magazines.
6\. I gather information from catalogs and/or sales brochures.
7\. I pay attention to magazine ads.

8. I watch infomercials or home shopping channels on TV (such as HSN).
9. I rely mainly on family or friends to give me advice on what to buy.
10. I use Pinterest to pin furniture or decorating ideas to my page.
11. I use Pinterest to look at furniture or decorating ideas on other people's pinboards.
12. I use Pinterest to follow other users who pin furniture or decorating ideas to their pinboard.
13. Please select answer choice "Slightly disagree"

When I go furniture shopping…

1. I typically get "buyer's remorse" after I buy a piece of furniture.
2. I feel uneasy about the furniture buying process.
3. I sometimes worry that I have spent too much money on furniture after I buy it.
4. I do not have a lot of confidence in my ability to make the right purchase decision.
5. I have wondered if I made the right choice after purchasing furniture.
6. I get anxious or uncertain about my ability to shop for furniture.
7. Please select answer choice "Agree"

<u>SECTION 3: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOURSELF</u>

Thinking about how you like to spend your time…

1. I get a good feeling from doing things with a group of people.
2. Being in a large group is fun.
3. Socializing with other people makes me feel good.
4. I like to entertain family and friends at my home.
5. Spending time with other people is more fun than spending time alone.

Please answer these questions about your personality.

1. I am full of ideas.
2. I have a vivid imagination.
3. I am curious.
4. I like novelty.
5. I pay attention to details.
6. I like order.
7. I follow a schedule.
8. I am spontaneous.
9. I am interested in people.
10. I often sympathize with others.
11. I get stressed out easily.
12. I worry about things.
13. I am easily frustrated.
14. I am even-keeled.
15. I am relaxed most of the time.

Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender?
- ❍ Male
- ❍ Female
- ❍ Prefer not to say

2. Please select your age from the pull-down menu below. (drop-down menu ranges from 18-100 or over)

3. What is your ethnicity?
- ❍ White/Caucasian
- ❍ Hispanic/Latino
- ❍ Black/African American
- ❍ American Indian
- ❍ Asian
- ❍ Alaskan Native
- ❍ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- ❍ Multi-Cultural
- ❍ Other (please write in) _____________________
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- ❍ Less than High School
- ❍ High School / GED
- ❍ Some College
- ❍ 2-year College Degree
- ❍ 4-year College Degree
- ❍ Masters Degree
- ❍ Doctoral Degree
- ❍ Professional Degree (JD, MD)

5. What is your work status?
- ❍ Work full time (40 or more hours per week)
- ❍ Work part time (21-39 hours per week)
- ❍ Work part time (up to 20 hours per week)
- ❍ Unemployed/Do not work
- ❍ Retired

<If unemployed or retired is selected, SKIP to income question.>

6. In which industry are you employed? (U.S. Census categories)

- Forestry, fishing, hunting or agriculture support
- Mining
- Utilities
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale trade
- Retail trade
- Transportation or warehousing
- Information
- Finance or insurance
- Real estate or rental and leasing
- Professional, scientific or technical services
- Management of companies or enterprises
- Admin, support, waste management or remediation services
- Educational services
- Health care or social assistance
- Arts, entertainment or recreation
- Accommodation or food services
- Other services (except public administration)
- Unclassified establishments

7. What is your annual income range?

- Below $20,000
- $20,000 - $39,999
- $40,000 - $59,999
- $60,000 - $79,999
- $80,000 - $99,999
- $100,000 - $119,999
- $120,000 - $139,999
- $140,000 - $159,999
- $160,000 - $179,999
- $180,000 - $199,999
- $200,000 or more
- Prefer not to answer

8. What is your marital status?
- ❍ Single, never married
- ❍ Married without children
- ❍ Married with children living at home
- ❍ Married with children not living at home
- ❍ Divorced
- ❍ Separated
- ❍ Widowed
- ❍ Living w/ partner
- ❍ Prefer not to answer

9. In which state do you currently reside? Please select from the drop-down menu.

10. In what city do you currently reside? Please type in your response. ____________________

11. Do you own or rent your primary home?
- ❍ Own
- ❍ Rent
- ❍ Other, please write in ____________________

12. What is the size of your primary residence?
- ❍ Less than 800 sq. ft.
- ❍ 800-1199 sq. ft.
- ❍ 1200-1499 sq. ft.
- ❍ 1500-1999 sq. ft.
- ❍ 2000-2999 sq. ft.
- ❍ 3000-3999 sq. ft.
- ❍ 4000-4999 sq. ft.
- ❍ 5000 sq. ft. or more

13. Do you own a second home, such as a vacation home?
- ❍ Yes
- ❍ No

14. And finally, is there anything you would like to tell us about your feelings towards home furniture? Please write in the space below.

Thank you very much for your time and effort in completing the survey!