

Original article

**Effect of age factor on demand and preference for
teak furniture by general consumers**

Wataru Tanaka^{1*}

Wilawan Wichienopparat²

Woraphum Himmapan²

Suphakorn Klaewkla²

Ticha Laohaboo²

Iwao Noda^{3,4}

¹Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute, 1 Matsunosato, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, 305-8687 Japan

²Forest Research and Development Bureau, Royal Forest Department, Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900 Thailand

³Japan International Research Center for Agricultural Sciences, 1-1 Ohwashi, Tsukuba, Ibaraki 305-8686 Japan

⁴currently, Forestry and Forest Products Research Institute, 1 Matsunosato, Tsukuba, Ibaraki, 305-8687 Japan

*Corresponding Author, E-mail: watar@ffpri.affrc.go.jp

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to clarify general consumer's awareness and preference for teak furniture and to present a suitable marketing strategy. To accomplish the objectives, we conducted a questionnaire survey in Bangkok and Udon Thani city in 2013. There were no significant differences in the purchasing behavior between Bangkok general consumers and those in Udon Thani. Respondents who were highly interested in teak furniture tended to own teak furniture in their house already, and they were comparatively senior (older than 41 years old). Respondents who thought that teak was the most suitable material when purchasing furniture tended to pay attention to the origin of the wood and purchase ecofriendly products in daily life. On the other hand, compared to elderly consumers, young consumers, such as those under 40 years old, were not interested in teak furniture. Based on the findings of the questionnaire survey, we classified general consumers' preferences for teak furniture into three types ("first choice", "comparison/selection", and "exclusion").

Furthermore, we examined the characteristics of "comparison/selection" consumers who considered teak as one of their choices through a second questionnaire survey in Bangkok in 2014. They tended to select woods (other than teak) and wood-based materials as alternative materials for teak. They obtained information from shops, through the Internet, and by word-of-mouth. They needed information on the characteristics of materials, the production area of teak, and the legitimacy of wood materials.

We concluded that differences in consumers' preferences, which were caused by their age or experience of purchasing teak furniture, should be considered when developing sales strategies according to the type of each consumer.

Keywords: Consumers' preferences, Teak plantation, Teak furniture, Questionnaire survey

INTRODUCTION

In Thailand, where teakwood has long been used as a furniture material, teak has been significantly praised for its quality. However, logging of natural teak forests is banned at present due to resource depletion, and in Thailand, only teakwood grown in artificial forests can be cut for the purpose of raw material supply (Pandey and Brown, 2000). Since the 1990s, the development of privately-owned teak forests has also been promoted as part of the afforestation support project implemented by the government (Furuya *et al.*, 2011). Teak forests planted around the 1990s are in the mature stage, and teakwood in some areas is being logged and replaced by young trees.

In this context, a private plantation forest cooperative organized by the owners of teak forests in Nong Bua Lam Phu province in the northeast of Thailand is promoting the use of teakwood (Himmapan *et al.*, 2010). However, only recently was the distribution and processing of teak wood initiated in the northeast of Thailand, compared to Northern Thailand which has wide areas of natural teak forests (Komaki *et al.*, 2012; Tanaka *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, since people in that area have little experience in selling teakwood, it is extremely important for them to improve their skills by the acquisition of related information (Himmapan *et al.*, 2010). The objectives of this research are to clarify general consumer's awareness and preference for teak furniture and to present a suitable marketing strategy.

Consumers' motivation to purchase furniture and their behavior have been analyzed in previous surveys conducted in the USA (Roy

2002a, 2002b; Bumgardner *et al.*, 2007). In recent years, a number of studies have been conducted to examine the awareness of the purchase of furniture among consumers in Thailand and their behavior (Chaipornmetta, 2010; Boonsener *et al.*, 2011; Sutaros, 2009; Thanyamon, 2012).

When IKEA, a world-class furniture retailer, was planning to open a new store in Bangkok, Thailand, Boonsener *et al.*, (2011) conducted a survey on the awareness of furniture among consumers in Bangkok and their purchasing behavior to provide advice on the development of sales strategies. The results suggested that consumers in Bangkok tended to place more emphasis on the durability of furniture and hoped to receive after-sales services provided by stores more strongly than those in other countries (Boonsener *et al.*, 2011).

Chaipornmetta (2010) also conducted a questionnaire survey involving consumers in Bangkok, as Boonsener *et al.*, (2011) did, on sales strategies required by IKEA to open new stores in Bangkok. The results were similar to those of the survey conducted by Boonsener *et al.*, (2011); consumers in Thailand valued the durability of furniture, and expected the stores to assemble and/or deliver furniture. The results also suggested that consumers in Bangkok did not stick to specific furniture brands, and that IKEA would be able to enter the market to compete with other companies (Boonsener *et al.*, 2011).

Sutaros conducted a questionnaire survey in Chiang Mai, a production area of teakwood in Northern Thailand, to understand the characteristics of consumers and their

awareness of furniture. Regarding the attributes of consumers who purchased teak furniture, highly-educated customers including college graduates in their 30s were the most common, and the most common place for its installation was the living room. Suggestions related to marketing were also provided; it is necessary for furniture stores, or suppliers, to promptly improve the quality of their products and provide effective information (Sutaros, 2009)

Thanyamon (2012) conducted a questionnaire survey involving consumers in Bangkok, and identified determinants of the purchase of furniture. According to the results, the consumers prioritized delivery services, and placed more emphasis on the quality of furniture than its price. Thanyamon also suggested sales strategies to furniture stores.

The present study was conducted to promote the use of teakwood as a useful local specialty; it adopted teak furniture as its subject, and discussed what effective strategies could be developed for the sales of teak furniture. The subjects of the study also included consumers in Udon Thani city, a local city, in addition to those in Bangkok, the capital, whereas the subject of the above-mentioned study was different from this study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the present study, a questionnaire survey was conducted to examine the awareness of teak furniture among consumers in Thailand and their preferences. The first questionnaire survey was implemented in Bangkok and Udon Thani city in 2013 because Bangkok is the capital of Thailand and the largest city in the country with a population of eight million.

Therefore, there is presumably a strong demand for furniture, and the understanding of consumers' awareness in Bangkok is important in determining whether or not teak furniture produced in the northeast area can be sold in Bangkok. Udon Thani city is the central city in Udon Thani province adjacent to Nong Bua Lam Phu province. Udon Thani city is a central city in the area visited by consumers living in both Udon Thani province and other districts such as Nong Bua Lam Phu province. Understanding consumers' awareness of the above-mentioned local demand will help the Nong Bua Lam Phu Private Plantation Forest Cooperative design strategies for the development of new purchasers. Nong Bua Lam Phu province was not included in the subjects of the survey because demand for furniture in the province is lower than in the two above-mentioned areas.

The survey results obtained from the respondents in Bangkok and Udon Thani city were organized by age.

We asked not only the age of respondents but also their gender, education level, career, and income in the questionnaires. However, we could not find a clear statistical influence of gender, education level, and career. Consumers' income as a factor did not affect their behavior more than age. We also assumed that age was the most applicable category, in terms of the marketing for each type of consumer. Therefore, we focused on the age factor to analyze the respondents' characteristics.

Tests of statistical independence (Chao, 1969) were conducted to examine correlations between the attributes of consumers and their awareness. We used the significance level of 5

percent to judge significant difference. When the respondents had been allowed to provide multiple answers to each question, tests of all answers were conducted. Analyses were conducted to examine correlations between consumers' priorities in the selection of teak furniture and their purchasing behavior. We used the add-in software to "Microsoft Excel" for statistical analysis—Ekuseru-Toukei 2015 developed by Social Survey Research Information Co., Ltd.

Although the characteristics of the "first choice" group were examined in the 2013 survey of Bangkok and Udon Thani city, the preferences of the "comparison/selection" group were not discussed. Therefore, it was necessary to discuss and understand the awareness and preferences of consumers who compared teak furniture with that made of other materials. The second questionnaire survey, to examine the characteristics of the "comparison/selection" group, on consumers' preferences for furniture and its sales promotion was conducted in Bangkok based on the results of the first one; the number of the subjects and some of the questions were changed. Between August and October 2014, staff of the Thai Royal Forest Department interviewed the participants in the survey. Cross-tabulation analyses were conducted between consumers' experience of purchasing teak furniture and other factors as their preferences for alternative materials.

In terms of the characteristic gap of respondents between the first survey and second, we assumed that it would be quite unlikely that the awareness and behavior of both respondents would be extremely different. After we learned from the first questionnaire

that there were no significant differences in the preferences between consumers in Bangkok and Udon Thani and others, we set the second questionnaire. We could clarify the "first choice group" through the first questionnaire. That is, in the second questionnaire, we focused on the general "comparison/selection" group on consumers' preferences for furniture in Bangkok to make clear the general "comparison/selection" group in detail. So we set different questions from the first survey to present marketing strategies more effectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First questionnaire survey

The subjects of the survey were consumers living in Bangkok and Udon Thani city. The survey was conducted between February and May 2013, and the number of valid responses obtained from consumers living in Bangkok and Udon Thani city was 800 (400 from each of the two cities). The subjects consisted of participants in events held by universities and public corporations in Bangkok and visitors to do-it-yourself, furniture and other stores in Udon Thani city. The subjects were asked to complete survey forms in front of researchers deployed at the above-mentioned places for their collection. The subjects first answered questions about their attributes, and those regarding their awareness of the purchase of furniture and their consumption behavior.

The numbers of male and female subjects accounted for 44.9 and 55.1 percent, respectively, of the total, whereas 42.7 and 57.3 percent of the subjects in Bangkok were males and females, respectively, the percentages of

those in Udon Thani city were 47.5 and 52.5 percent, respectively. The numbers of the subjects aged 20 years old or younger, 21 to 30, 31 to 40, 41 to 50, and 51 years or older accounted for 3.9, 31.5, 32.5, 18.0, and 14.1 percent of the total.

The majority of the respondents preferred wood (Table 1), with approximately 90 percent in both Bangkok and Udon Thani city. Plywood was preferred by the second largest number of the subjects (lower than 20

and 30% in Bangkok and Udon Thani city, respectively). This suggests that wood was extremely popular as wood was favored by a large percentage of subjects in all age groups. A large number of young subjects preferred plywood, metals, and fiberglass as well, in Bangkok. However, only fiberglass was favored by young subjects in Udon Thani city, which suggests that differences in preferences among age groups were smaller compared to Bangkok.

Table 1 Desirable material for furniture (Multiple answers allowed).

	Up to 20 years old	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	Total	<i>p</i> -value
Respondents in Bangkok							
N	4	127	123	79	67	400	
Wood	100.0%	89.8%	89.4%	97.5%	97.0%	92.5%	ns
Plywood	50.0%	26.8%	19.5%	10.1%	4.5%	17.8%	**
Metal	50.0%	14.2%	20.3%	11.4%	10.4%	15.3%	ns
Plastics	50.0%	7.9%	9.8%	3.8%	6.0%	7.8%	*
Fiberglass	50.0%	15.0%	17.1%	5.1%	7.5%	12.8%	**
Others	25.0%	0.8%	4.1%	1.3%	3.0%	2.5%	*
Respondents in Udon Thani							
N	27	125	137	65	46	400	
Wood	92.6%	85.6%	86.1%	93.8%	87.0%	87.5%	ns
Plywood	29.6%	26.4%	29.9%	26.2%	19.6%	27.0%	ns
Metal	11.1%	16.0%	19.7%	16.9%	15.2%	16.8%	ns
Plastics	14.8%	14.4%	22.6%	9.2%	10.9%	16.0%	ns
Fiberglass	14.8%	12.8%	24.1%	7.7%	17.4%	16.5%	*
Others	0.0%	3.2%	5.8%	4.6%	6.5%	4.5%	ns

Remarks: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, ns = $p \geq 0.05$, N= number of respondents

The largest numbers of respondents in both Bangkok and Udon Thani city valued the durability of furniture when choosing it (Table 2). They also stated that checking if the design was beautiful and the price reasonable

were as important as the durability. There were significant differences in the number of subjects who valued the public reputation and modern style among age groups in Bangkok; furniture with a high reputation and modern style being

avored by young subjects in Bangkok. On the other hand, differences among age groups in Udon Thani were smaller than those in Bangkok. As suggested in Tables 1 and 2,

materials preferred by subjects in Bangkok and Udon Thani and their values in selecting furniture were similar.

Table 2 Important factors in choosing furniture (Multiple answers allowed).

	Up to 20 years old	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	Total	<i>p</i> -value
Respondents in Bangkok							
N	4	127	123	79	67	400	
Durability	100.0%	81.1%	78.0%	84.8%	79.1%	80.8%	ns
Beautiful design	100.0%	66.1%	57.7%	63.3%	53.7%	61.3%	ns
Public reputation	50.0%	13.4%	7.3%	7.6%	9.0%	10.0%	*
Reasonable price	75.0%	65.4%	57.7%	54.4%	52.2%	58.8%	ns
Naturalness	75.0%	37.8%	39.0%	43.0%	47.8%	41.3%	ns
Modern style	50.0%	37.0%	26.0%	20.3%	13.4%	26.5%	**
Match with other furniture	50.0%	26.0%	27.6%	13.9%	19.4%	23.3%	ns
Others	0.0%	2.4%	2.4%	1.3%	0.0%	1.8%	ns
Respondents in Udon Thani							
N	27	125	137	65	46	400	
Durability	81.5%	76.0%	82.5%	75.4%	82.6%	79.3%	ns
Beautiful design	66.7%	66.4%	57.7%	58.5%	52.2%	60.5%	ns
Public reputation	33.3%	24.8%	17.5%	26.2%	17.4%	22.3%	ns
Reasonable price	59.3%	56.0%	62.8%	53.8%	54.3%	58.0%	ns
Naturalness	33.3%	37.6%	47.4%	50.8%	39.1%	43.0%	ns
Modern style	25.9%	28.8%	32.1%	27.7%	28.3%	29.5%	ns
Match with other furniture	22.2%	16.0%	20.4%	6.2%	15.2%	16.3%	ns
Others	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	0.3%	ns

Remarks: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, ns = $p \geq 0.05$

Table 3 Interest in production area of wood-Being interested in whether wood produced in Thailand or other countries is used for furniture”.

		Up to 20 years old	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	Total	<i>p</i> -value
Bangkok	Yes	4	56	52	42	42	196	*
		100.0%	44.1%	42.3%	53.2%	62.7%	49.0%	
	No	0	71	71	37	25	204	
		0.0%	55.9%	57.7%	46.8%	37.3%	51.0%	
Udon Thani	Yes	23	81	82	50	34	270	*
		85.2%	64.8%	59.9%	76.9%	73.9%	67.5%	
	No	4	44	55	15	12	130	
		14.8%	35.2%	40.1%	23.1%	26.1%	32.5%	

Remark: * = $p < 0.05$

Table 3 presents the respondents' interests in wood production areas. Approximately 50 percent of respondents in Bangkok and two thirds of those in Udon Thani were interested in whether the wood used in the furniture construction was produced in Thailand or imported from other countries. The rates of respondents aged 20 years old or younger and 41 years or older who were interested in the area of production were particularly high.

The respondents were asked if they were interested in whether the wood used for the production of furniture had been grown in natural or artificial forests, and Table 4 shows

the results. The rates of respondents who had been interested in the cultivation method in Bangkok and Udon Thani were 56.0 and 73.0 percent, respectively. The rates of respondents aged 20 years old or younger and 41 years or older who were interested in the cultivation method were particularly high. Respondents living in Udon Thani city were more interested in both the area of production and the cultivation method than those in Bangkok, and respondents aged 20 years old or younger and 41 years or older were particularly interested in these two points.

Table 4 Interest in cultivation method-“Being interested in whether natural or artificial wood is used for furniture”.

		Up to 20 years old	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	Total	<i>p</i> -value
Bangkok	Yes	4	64	63	52	41	224	*
		100.0%	50.4%	51.2%	65.8%	61.2%	56.0%	
	No	0	63	60	27	26	176	
		0.0%	49.6%	48.8%	34.2%	38.8%	44.0%	
Udon Thani	Yes	24	87	95	48	38	292	ns
		88.9%	69.6%	69.3%	73.8%	82.6%	73.0%	
	No	3	38	42	17	8	108	
		11.1%	30.4%	30.7%	26.2%	17.4%	27.0%	

Remarks: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, ns = $p \geq 0.05$

A question was asked about the preference for furniture materials, and teak was the first choice for almost 30 percent of the respondents as presented in Table 5. Approximately 60 percent of the respondents stated that they might choose teak depending on the results of comparisons of its price and quality with those of other materials (the comparison/selection group), and more than

10 percent did not want to choose it regardless of the conditions. In Bangkok, the higher the age of the respondents, the greater the rate of those who would select teak as their first choice, and the lower the rate of respondents who would exclude it. In Udon Thani city, there were no significant differences or tendencies among different age groups.

Table 5 Priority for teak as furniture material.

Respondents in Bangkok**						
	Up to 20 years old	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	Total
First choice	0 0.0%	27 21.3%	23 18.7%	33 41.8%	32 47.8%	115 28.8%
Compare with others	4 100.0%	82 64.6%	82 66.7%	40 50.6%	32 47.8%	240 60.0%
Out of choice	0 0.0%	18 14.2%	18 14.6%	6 7.6%	3 4.5%	45 11.3%
Respondents in Udon Thani ^{ns}						
	Up to 20 years old	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	Total
First choice	7 25.9%	34 27.2%	34 24.8%	26 40.0%	12 26.1%	113 28.3%
Compare with others	19 70.4%	78 62.4%	78 56.9%	32 49.2%	26 56.5%	233 58.3%
Out of choice	1 3.7%	13 10.4%	25 18.2%	7 10.8%	8 17.4%	54 13.5%

Remarks: * = $p < 0.001$, ^{ns} = $p = 0.1548$

To examine whether or not the respondents purchased environmentally friendly products in daily life, a question on their purchasing behaviors was asked. As presented in Table 6, approximately two thirds of respondents in Bangkok and 60 percent of those in Udon Thani stated that “they sometimes purchase them”-the most common answer-followed by “they always purchase them”, whereas approximately 40 percent of the respondents

aged 41 years or older (those in the “41 to 50” and “51 or older” groups) always purchased environmentally friendly products and only 20 percent of the respondents aged 30 years or younger (those in the “20 or younger” and “21 to 30” groups) did so. This suggests that people in the middle-aged and elderly groups purchase environmentally friendly products more frequently.

Table 6 Purchasing behavior-“Purchase of environmentally friendly products”.

Respondents in Bangkok*						
	Up to 20 years old	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	Total
Yes, always	0 0.0%	25 19.7%	25 20.3%	23 29.1%	27 40.3%	100 25.0%
Yes, sometimes	3 75.0%	91 71.7%	85 69.1%	53 67.1%	36 53.7%	268 67.0%
Rarely	1 25.0%	8 6.3%	6 4.9%	3 3.8%	4 6.0%	22 5.5%
No	0 0.0%	3 2.4%	7 5.7%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	10 2.5%
Respondents in Udon Thani**						
	Up to 20 years old	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	Total
Yes, always	6 22.2%	32 25.6%	46 33.6%	33 50.8%	15 32.6%	132 33.0%
Yes, sometimes	14 51.9%	80 64.0%	81 59.1%	25 38.5%	27 58.7%	227 56.8%
Rarely	3 11.1%	10 8.0%	7 5.1%	5 7.7%	1 2.2%	26 6.5%
No	4 14.8%	3 2.4%	3 2.2%	2 3.1%	3 6.5%	15 3.8%

Remarks: * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$

The preceding paragraphs discussed trends in the preferences of consumers in different age groups. The following are the results of a cross-tabulation analysis of consumers' preferences and their purchasing behavior conducted to examine the trends from other perspectives. The relationship between the status of the possession of teak furniture and the preference for teakwood was also examined. A large number of teak furniture owners selected teak as their first-choice material for furniture and the rate of those who did not have teak furniture and excluded teak was high (Table 7). The causal relationship can be explained as follows: the owners of teak furniture preferred teakwood because they understood its high

quality, and consumers who did not have teak furniture and could not recognize the quality of teakwood were not interested in it. The relationship between consumers' interests in the production area of wood and their preferences for teak suggest that consumers who preferred teak were more interested in the production area for domestically produced or imported wood. Whereas approximately 70 percent of the consumers whose first choice was teak placed importance on the production area, only one third of those who did not choose teak were interested in the production area. Approximately 40 percent of the respondents who had selected teak as their first choice stated that they “always” purchased environmentally

friendly products, which suggests that they were environmentally oriented-the percentage

was higher compared to the “comparison/selection” and “exclusion” groups.

Table 7 Cross tabulation on preference for teak and purchasing behavior.

Purchasing behavior		Priority types of teakwood as a primary material for furniture							Total	<i>p</i> -value
		First priority		Compared with other materials		Out of consi-deration				
Do you have teak furniture ?	Yes	171	75.0%	331	70.0%	27	27.3%	529	66.1%	***
	No	57	25.0%	142	30.0%	72	72.7%	271	33.9%	
Do you mind origin of timber (domestic / imported) ?	Yes	161	70.6%	272	57.5%	33	33.3%	466	58.3%	***
	No	67	29.4%	201	42.5%	66	66.7%	334	41.8%	
Do you choose safe goods for environ-ment ?	Always	87	38.2%	128	27.1%	17	17.2%	232	29.0%	***
	Sometimes	119	52.2%	307	64.9%	69	69.7%	495	61.9%	
	Rarely	15	6.6%	21	4.4%	12	12.1%	48	6.0%	
	No	7	3.1%	17	3.6%	1	1.0%	25	3.1%	

Remark: *** = $p < 0.001$

Second questionnaire survey

The second survey was conducted in Bangkok to examine the characteristics of the “comparison/selection” group on consumers’ preferences for furniture and its sales promotion between August and October 2014. The number of valid responses was 315.

The respondents aged “30 years or younger”, “31 to 40”, “41 to 50”, “51 years or older”, and “unknown” accounted for 23.1, 19.0, 23.5, 33.5, and 0.9 percent of the total, respectively. Since the number of the respondents aged 20 years old or younger was only four, they were included in the 30-years-or-younger group.

Approximately 20 percent of the respondents selected teak as their first choice of material for furniture (the first choice group), and about 10 percent excluded it (the exclusion group) (Table 8). The present study aimed to determine consumers’ preferences for teakwood, and the following are the results of analyses involving 221 people in the “comparison/selection” group, which accounted for approximately 70 percent of the total. In the first survey, the “comparison/selection” group accounted for approximately 60 percent of the total, 10 percent lower compared to the present survey, and the proportion of the “first choice” group was higher by approximately 10 percent.

Table 8 Priority of teakwood as a material for furniture.

	First survey	Second survey
First priority	228 28.5%	62 19.7%
Compared with other materials in price and quality	473 59.1%	221 70.2%
Out of consideration	99 12.4%	32 10.2%
Total	800	315

Over 60 percent of the respondents had purchased teak furniture before by themselves; the families of over 20 percent of the respondents had purchased it; and 15 percent had not purchased it (Table 9). The rates of respondents aged 30 years old or younger and their families who purchased teak furniture, and those who had not purchased it were similar. There was a correlation between the age of the respondents and the rate of those who had

purchased teak furniture by themselves, with more than 80 percent of respondents aged 51 years or older having purchased it by themselves. The rate of respondents aged 51 years or older who purchased teak furniture themselves or whose families purchased it was 95 percent. This suggests that most households including family members of relatively advanced age have purchased teak furniture before.

Table 9 Experience of purchasing teak furniture and age.

	Up to 30 years old	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	Total
Purchased by himself/herself	16 31.4%	22 52.4%	39 75.0%	61 82.4%	138 63.0%
Purchased by family	19 37.3%	13 31.0%	8 15.4%	9 12.2%	49 22.4%
No experience	16 31.4%	7 16.7%	5 9.6%	4 5.4%	32 14.6%
Total	51	42	52	74	219

Remark: $p < 0.001$

Consumers were also asked about two alternative materials for teak, and the largest number of the respondents preferred wood-based materials (including particle boards and MDF), followed by wood (other than teak) (Table 10). A cross-tabulation analysis of consumers' experience of purchasing teak furniture and their preferences for alternative

materials was conducted. Although there were no significant differences in the preference for wood-based materials among consumers due to the experience of purchasing teak furniture, there were significant differences in the preference for wood (other than teak). Whereas the respondents who had purchased teak furniture by themselves tended to view

furniture made of wood other than teak as alternatives for teak furniture, those without the experience of purchasing it did not. This suggests that the respondents without experience only had a little knowledge and

unclear images of wood furniture. Furthermore, the rate of respondents without experience of purchasing teak furniture who had viewed metals and plastics as alternative materials for teak was higher.

Table 10 Alternative materials for teak furniture (Two answers allowed).

	Purchased by himself/ herself	Purchased by family	No experiences	Total	<i>p</i> -value
Wood(other species)	61.2%	36.0%	18.8%	49.3%	**
Plywood	17.3%	30.0%	18.8%	20.4%	ns
Woody materials	65.5%	56.0%	53.1%	61.5%	ns
Metal	18.0%	28.0%	34.4%	22.6%	ns
Plastic	4.3%	12.0%	31.3%	10.0%	**
Others	2.2%	2.0%	15.6%	4.1%	**

Remarks: * = $p < 0.05$, ns = $p \geq 0.05$

The respondents were asked to state two sources of information on the characteristics of the materials for furniture, and the most common answer was “store clerks” followed by the “Internet”, “word-of-mouth”, and “experience”, as presented in Table 11. Although there were no differences due to age in the rate of the respondents whose source of information had been “store clerks”, there were significant differences in the rates of those who stated the “Internet”, “word-of-mouth”, and

“experience”. Where many respondents aged 30 years old or younger obtained information through the Internet, the number of those who obtained it by experience was small. The rate of respondents aged 51 years or older who had obtained information by experience was high, and the rates of those who had obtained it through the Internet and by word-of-mouth were relatively low. Books, newspapers, TV, and radio were not useful sources of information.

Table 11 Methods for acquisition of information on materials for furniture (Two answers allowed).

	Up to 30 years old	31 - 40	41 - 50	>51	<i>p</i> -value
Shops	58.8%	47.6%	55.8%	62.2%	ns
Books or newspaper	25.5%	9.5%	11.5%	13.5%	ns
Television or radio	15.7%	11.9%	7.7%	5.4%	ns
Internet	47.1%	35.7%	40.4%	23.0%	*
Personal communication	33.3%	47.6%	32.7%	25.7%	ns
Utilization experience	15.7%	26.2%	32.7%	40.5%	*
Others	0.0%	7.1%	5.8%	9.5%	ns

Remarks: * = $p < 0.05$, ns = $p \geq 0.05$

Customers were asked what are the most and second most important pieces of information on teak furniture except for the price, and common answers included the characteristics of materials, production area of teakwood, and the legitimacy of wood used for furniture, as presented in Table 12.

The rates of consumers aged “between 41 and 50 years old” and “51 years or older” who required information on the production area of teak were high. There were no significant differences in tendencies for answers among consumers in different age groups.

Table 12 Necessary information on teak furniture (Two answers allowed).

Necessary information						
	Up to 30 years old	31 - 40	41 - 50	> 51	Total	<i>p</i> -value
Producing area of teak	29.4%	28.6%	50.0%	45.9%	39.4%	*
Profile of teak producer	3.9%	7.1%	7.7%	9.5%	7.2%	ns
Character of material	51.0%	57.1%	46.2%	39.2%	46.6%	ns
Legality assurance for material wood	43.1%	33.3%	25.0%	36.5%	34.4%	ns
Profile of furniture factory	9.8%	14.3%	15.4%	12.2%	12.7%	ns
Profile of furniture designer	11.8%	16.7%	13.5%	29.7%	19.0%	*
After-sales service	29.4%	26.2%	21.2%	16.2%	22.2%	ns
Nothing	7.8%	7.1%	7.7%	1.4%	5.4%	ns

Remarks: * = $p < 0.05$, ns = $p \geq 0.05$

According to the results of the first survey, there were no significant differences in the preferences between consumers in Bangkok and Udon Thani; they both chose wood as the material for furniture and valued the durability and design of furniture when selecting it. The “comparison/selection” group in both Bangkok and Udon Thani “preferred teak as the material for furniture”, although there were slight differences due to age. Consumers in all age groups were interested in the production area of wood, although there were differences in the level of interest depending on the area.

The results of questionnaire surveys by Chaipornmetta (2010), Boonsener (2011) and Thanyamon (2012) showed that durability and design of furniture were critical for consumers.

Our study showed similar results to these pre-studies as described above. Chaipornmetta (2010) and Boonsener (2011) did not find a definite relationship between the age of respondents and their awareness or behavior. On the other hand, Thanyamon (2012) showed that the younger generation has a tendency to focus on the price of furniture and the older generation has a tendency to focus on after-sales service. However, Thanyamon did not report whether there were significant differences statistically.

Approximately 30 percent of the respondents selected teak as their first choice of material for furniture. These consumers who preferred teak were 41 years or older (of a relatively advanced age), already had teak furniture, were interested in the production area

of wood, and often purchased environmentally friendly products. On the other hand, the rate of respondents aged 40 years old or younger in Bangkok who were interested in teak furniture was relatively low.

The first survey showed the awareness and attitudes of consumers whose first choice was teak, and the results suggested that the development of products and sales strategies according to the consumers' preferences is effective from a short-term perspective.

However, the majority of the consumers stated that "they would consider purchasing teak furniture after comparing its price and quality with those of other materials", as suggested by the results of the questionnaire. Therefore, it is also necessary for the providers of furniture to attract the interest of consumers who did not select teak furniture as their first choice, from the long-term perspective of increasing the demand for it.

The results of the second survey suggested that consumers who compared furniture made of teak and other materials: (1) considered that other types of wood and wood material could replace teak as materials for furniture, (2) had already obtained information on materials for furniture from store clerks, on the Internet, and by word-of-mouth, and (3) required information on the production area of teakwood and its legitimacy. Furthermore, the experience of purchasing teak furniture influenced consumers' preferences for materials competing with teak, and their priority on the quality or price. The age of the respondents influenced the sources of information on materials for furniture.

CONCLUSION

In this study, demand and preference for teak furniture were investigated to develop sales strategies in Thailand. Since consumers' choices and their purchasing behavior were influenced by their preferences for teak furniture, it is effective to develop sales strategies and set targets according to these preferences. There was a large number of consumers who were relatively old and already had teak furniture in the "first choice group", as suggested by the results of the first survey. Therefore, products with an emphasis on the tradition of teak furniture should be produced, and consumers' demands for new furniture products should be reflected in their development. As the consumers in the first choice group were markedly interested in the production area of materials, it is also important to provide them with appropriate information on the production area of teakwood and production methods. In other words, it is necessary to inform consumers that furniture produced in the northeast of Thailand is made of domestic teakwood grown in properly-managed artificial forests, although they are relatively new.

As a strategy for selling teak furniture to the "comparison/selection" group, it is extremely important to effectively demonstrate that the characteristics of teak furniture are far superior to those of furniture made of other materials. To convey that teak is superior to other materials, it is necessary not only to emphasize the characteristics of teak furniture: "durability", "beauty", and "naturalness", which the respondents to the first survey assessed positively, but also to provide information on

the production area of teak and its legitimacy. To effectively provide information for young consumers in particular, the Internet can be used, in addition to explanations provided in stores, word-of-mouth, and other conventional methods.

In the two surveys, the characteristics of the “first choice” and “comparison/selection” groups were examined, and sales strategies were discussed. However, no effective strategies have been developed for consumers “who do not want to choose teak furniture”. It will also be necessary to develop and implement activities to encourage those consumers to become interested in teakwood from the long-term perspective of increasing the teak demand.

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