

Influence of e-commerce on the furniture market in Poland: analysis of sales changes and consumer preferences.

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Abstract: The Influence of e-commerce on the Furniture Market in Poland: Analysis of Sales Changes and Consumer Preferences. The aim of this study was to analyze sales data from online and traditional furniture stores, as well as conduct interviews with customers who have purchased furniture online. Additionally, the article will discuss topics such as the advantages and disadvantages of buying furniture online, market trends in Poland, and marketing strategies used by both online and offline stores to attract consumers. In today's world, it is very important to understand the factors that influence a consumer's willingness to purchase furniture. The situation in the furniture industry in the Polish market is dynamic. To this end, a survey was conducted among 511 respondents in the Silesian Voivodeship. The research results can be useful for furniture industry entrepreneurs who want to develop their business online, as well as for customers planning to purchase furniture online.

Słowa kluczowe: E-commerce, rynek meblowy, trendy, preferencje konsumentów

INTRODUCTION

E-commerce, electronic commerce, e-trade, and e-business are synonymous terms used interchangeably in everyday language as well as in scientific publications. The term e-commerce has a very broad meaning, encompassing various types of issues.

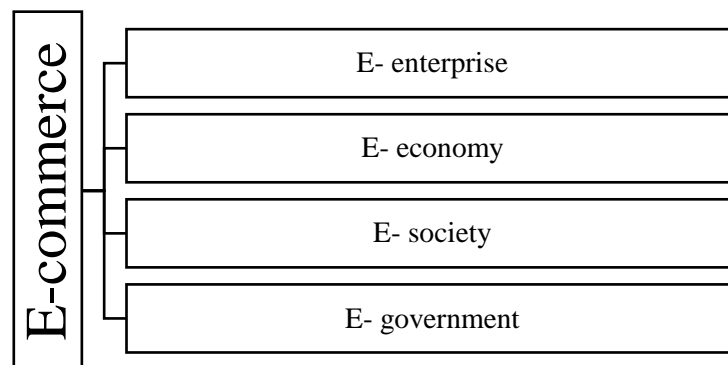


Figure 1. Topics related to the concept of e-commerce: own elaboration based on available articles (Kufel A., Zespół wFirma.pl, 2021)

It is worth mentioning that the definitions of e-commerce presented by various sources and institutions largely depend on the context of their application to a given situation, as demonstrated by Marcin Lewicki in his doctoral dissertation titled "Instruments for Creating Customer Value in Electronic Commerce" (Lewicki M., 2012). The author of the text presents his own formulation:

“Electronic commerce (e-commerce, e-retail) is a part of economic activity that involves conducting transactions of buying and selling products (both tangible and intangible) by specialized enterprises through the Internet.”

The discussed issue relates to nothing other than selling and buying goods via the Internet. The offered products are ordered online, and payment and delivery can be made either online or in person. We can call the Internet a global collection of products, services, many sellers, and an even larger number of consumers. The proper functioning of e-commerce will be significantly influenced by the entrepreneurial skills of the younger generation, who decide to pursue their professional dreams. Currently, preparing to run an e-business requires special skills and preparations, such as properly positioning a store in the virtual marketplace or adapting to changes in customer behavior. Customers increasingly use the Internet to check and compare company offers and make purchases online (Relich M., 2010).

By analyzing the relationships between seller and buyer, we can distinguish four most commonly used marketing models, which may be particularly significant for the furniture industry: B2B, B2C, C2C, C2B (Figure 2) (M.B.B. Logistics, 2022; WIXBlog Lankiewicz K., 2023; Lewicki M.).

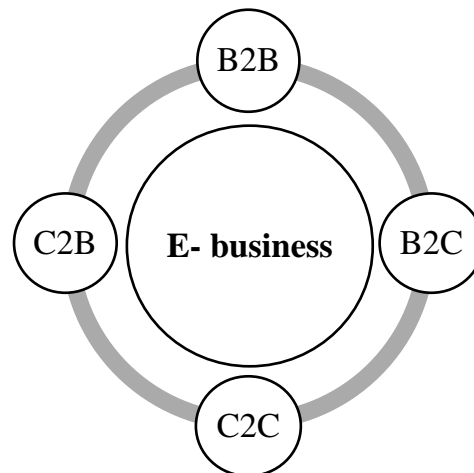


Figure 2. E-commerce- basic entities of e-buisness transactions: own elaboration based on available articles (WIXBlog Lankiewicz K., 2023; Osika P., 2024; Zespół wFirma.pl, 2020)

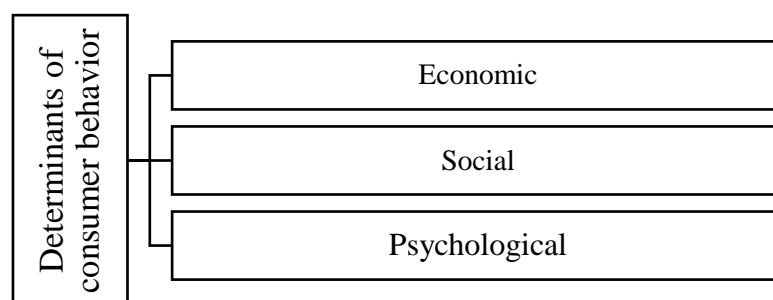
- B2B (Business-to-Business) refers to the electronic exchange of goods or services between two or more enterprises. An example of this form is a retail store placing e-orders for products from a wholesaler. This model includes small and large enterprises, such as wholesalers, raw material manufacturers, and service providers.
- B2C (Business-to-Consumer) encompasses online trade between a company that sells goods and services and a consumer. Operating with this business model usually requires having an online store as well as participating in an auction site. Currently, there are many online stores on the Internet offering this form of relationship. Examples of such websites in Poland are Allegro and Empik.
- C2C (Consumer-to-Consumer) refers to e-commerce where customers exchange products or services with each other rather than with a business. Examples of companies offering this business model are Allegro and OLX.

- C2B (Consumer-to-Business) involves electronic commerce where consumers offer their goods or services for businesses to bid on and purchase. This relationship is the opposite of the traditional B2C business model.
- MATERIALS AND METHOD

The research was conducted using the Ankieto.pl platform, focusing on the Silesian Voivodeship as the region in Poland most representative of the average demographic. The questionnaire was designed purposefully to gather detailed information regarding consumer purchasing preferences related to furniture in the context of e-commerce, changes in furniture sales through online channels compared to traditional sales methods, and factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions when choosing furniture online, such as price, quality, user reviews, and the availability of various delivery and return options. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions to allow respondents to express their opinions and experiences. The data obtained enabled a thorough analysis of the impact of e-commerce on the furniture market and identification of key trends and consumer preferences in the Silesian region. Statistical tools were used to analyze the results, drawing conclusions and formulating recommendations for entities operating in the furniture market in Poland. A critical review of the literature and empirical research allowed for an initial assessment of e-commerce and consumer behaviors in the specific furniture market. In summary, the survey was completed by 511 respondents.

DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND THEIR PREFERENCES

The issue of consumer behavior in the market has been, is, and will continue to be the subject of numerous studies. In conditions of intensified competition, factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions are meticulously analyzed to best tailor offerings to the needs and expectations of buyers, while simultaneously increasing satisfaction (Liczmańska K., 2015). In Polish literature, three main groups of determinants are most commonly distinguished: economic, social, and psychological (Kieźel E., 2000; Rudnicki L., 2009; Woźny D., 2012).



Picture 3. Determinants of consumer behavior: own elaboration based on available articles and literature (Kieźel E., 2000; Rudnicki L., 2009; Woźny D., 2012).

In economic behaviors, factors include:

- Demographic factors: age, gender, education, status, family life cycle stage,
- Macroeconomic factors (with indirect consumer impact): supply and availability of goods, price, quality, promotion of goods,
- Microeconomic factors: income, savings, asset ownership.

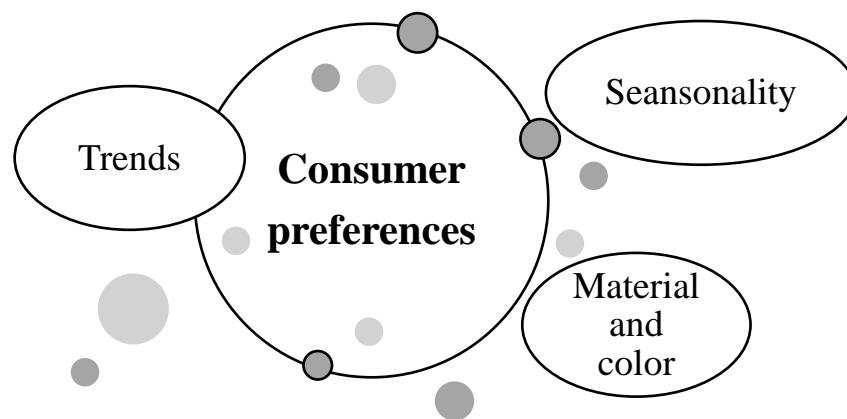
On the other hand, social determinants encompass factors such as: cykl

- Family life stage - we observe different attitudes and purchasing decisions in a young single person, whereas someone with a family and children will have different priorities.
- Level of education and occupation - they are linked to consumer behavior in two ways: they influence the perception of needs (often higher-order needs) and their fulfillment.
- Lifestyle - it is related to how leisure time is spent, such as interests.
- Group - belonging to a group where there are similar interests, value systems, and behaviors.

The most important psychological determinants include factors such as:

- Need - related to the subjective sense of lack or desire for a particular good (both consumable and non-consumable),
- Perception - the perception of goods influenced by stimuli such as color or shape,
- Motivations - direct drivers of purchasing decisions,
- Attitudes and preferences - related to the customer's stance towards a particular good. There is a close relationship between these factors, although attitudes are considered more stable and less variable, while preferences change, such as with trends,
- Personality traits - each consumer is different and has different desires and concerns. Depending on factors such as risk attitude or temperament, consumers make purchasing decisions differently.

Consumer preferences. The furniture industry plays a significant role in the Polish economy. In the face of dynamic changes including new technology, design trends, and increasing societal awareness of ecology, nothing impacts the development of this sector more than consumer preferences, which are constantly evolving.



Picture 4. Consumer preferences: own elaboration based on available articles (TO-TE MEBLE.PL Cieślík Tomasz, 2024; D'Interior, 2024).

Trends in furniture design and styles. Over the past few years, there has been an increasing interest among potential customers in furniture with minimalist design, functional solutions, and ecological materials. In 2023, as living spaces became more limited, there was a noticeable rise in demand for modular furniture, which allows for flexible arrangements in smaller rooms (TO-TE MEBLE.PL Cieślík Tomasz, 2024).

Seasonality of sales. Consumer preferences, which are constantly changing, are also influenced by seasons. For example, there is increased demand for outdoor furniture during the summer months, while interest in living room or bedroom furniture tends to rise during the winter season.

Preferences for materials and colors. Year by year, societal ecological awareness is growing, leading to expectations such as reducing negative environmental impact or sourcing materials or finished furniture from sustainable origins (Maślarczyk P., 2023). According to forecasts for 2024 in the furniture industry, the trend of "natural beauty of nature" will prevail, characterized by warm, harmonious colors, furniture and decorations with rounded shapes, and the dominant interior design trend known as Japandi style (D'Interior, 2024). In interior design, Pantone's color of the year for 2023 was Viva Magenta, while for 2024 it is Peach Fuzz (PANTONE, Eiseman L., 2023; PANTONE, Eiseman L., 2024).

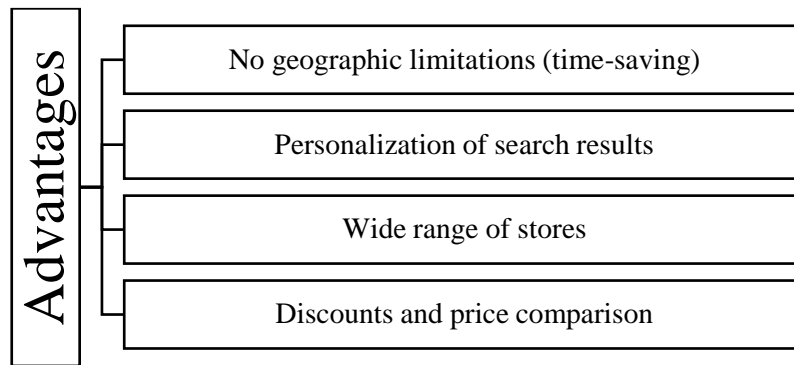
In summary, changes in consumer preferences result from various factors, including evolving interior design trends, seasonality, and the increasing ecological awareness of society. Faced with continually evolving consumer demands, manufacturers and retailers should adjust their offerings to meet the dynamic market needs.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF ONLINE SHOPPING

When opting for online shopping, there is no need to leave the house. Online platforms operate without specified trading hours or days, allowing us to purchase needed products at our convenience. Shopping online offers the ability to personalize searches for products and check their availability on the manufacturer's website or at a specific brick-and-mortar store. Online stores often have a richer variety of products because they are not limited by factors such as warehouse size or the costs associated with maintaining a traditional store. Utilizing the internet allows for more efficient comparison of prices for similar or identical products, facilitated by price comparison websites such as Ceneo, Nokaut, Skąpiec, or Okazje.info. According to a report titled "What are price comparison websites and how do they work? Can they increase sales?" by Robert Walkowski, Ceneo is the most popular price comparison website in Poland, operating continuously since 2005 (Walkowski R., 2023).

It is a fact that some online stores have separate promotional systems. This means that purchasing the same product in a brick-and-mortar store may result in a different sales price compared to the online store, due to factors such as lower maintenance costs, reduced pollution from vehicle emissions, seasonal sales, or weekend promotions. Increasingly common are Polish websites offering additional discounts, such as Groupon.pl, DużeRabaty.pl, and Zrabatowani.pl. These discounts are typically provided as electronic codes that can be added to the shopping cart during checkout. Such discounts are significantly easier and more convenient than their paper counterparts, as they eliminate the need to remember to bring physical coupons while shopping. According to the report "E-commerce trends: home and garden, marketplace platforms," orders using e-coupons or e-discounts increased by 20% compared to the previous year, specifically 2023 (Biznes.meble.pl, 2024).

Another significant factor influencing consumer purchasing decisions is societal opinion about the purchased product or the company in general. Currently, potential consumers can easily check the reviews left by previous buyers who have purchased and used the product, allowing them to make informed decisions about whether to proceed with the purchase or opt out of the p



Picture 5. Advantages of online shopping: own elaboration based on available articles, literature and research reports.

It is worth mentioning that an increasing number of online stores are opting for various customer-oriented simplifications, such as the choice of preferred payment methods, expedited and convenient delivery options, or free returns of purchased items. Nowadays, it has become standard practice for e-furniture stores to offer not only traditional payment methods but also card payments, bank transfers, cash on delivery, as well as installment options or deferred payment methods like "buy now, pay later" (Salony Agata, IKEA). According to the study "Cashless Payments from the Perspective of Poles 2021," conducted as part of the educational and informational campaign "Warto Bezgotówkowo" (It's Worth Going Cashless), we learn that an increasing number of our compatriots are using card payments. As many as 55% of respondents use debit or credit cards, 35% prefer mobile payments like BLIK, 32% utilize online payments such as PayPal or Przelewy 24, 29% opt for electronic bank transfers, and only 3% do not use cashless payments.

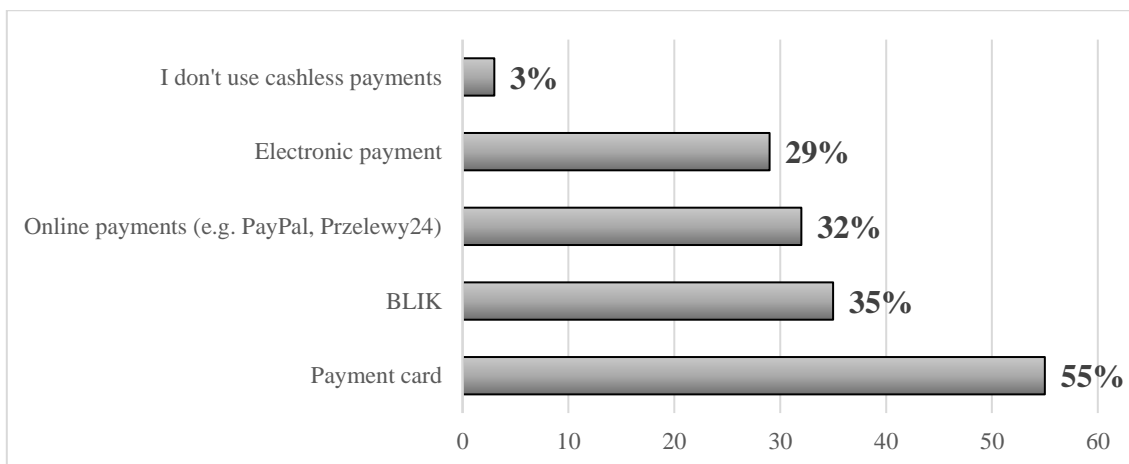
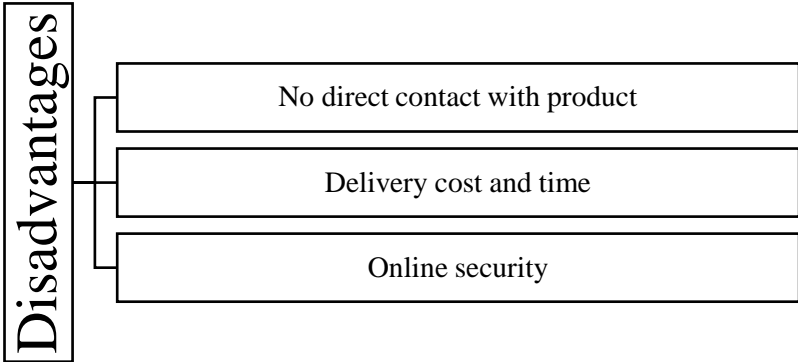


Figure 9. The most popular payment methods in Poland.: own visualization based on research report (Badanie pt. "Płatności bezgotówkowe oczami Polaków 2021" zrealizowanego w ramach kampanii edukacyjno-informacyjnej „Warto Bezgotówkowo”, s.7.)

A factor that can negatively influence a customer's decision to purchase a product online is the lack of direct contact with the item. For many consumers, the inability to touch or test the product is discouraging because they are unsure about the quality of the item they intend to buy. It is worth mentioning that companies continually strive to meet customer requirements by providing detailed product specifications. Another aspect that works against online shopping is the cost of delivery and the wait time for the product. According to the article "Perspectives and Trends in the Online Furniture Sales Market" by Marcin Szczur, we learn that as many as 62%

of internet users are discouraged when purchasing furniture due to additional delivery costs, while 38% of respondents find the extended waiting time for their order problematic (Szczur M., 2022).



Picture 6. Disdvantages of online shopping: own elaboration based on avaiable articles, literature and research reports.

In today's times, delivery is not just about bringing a product to a specified address but also encompasses comprehensive services such as furniture assembly and installation. It cannot be denied that ordering a product online eliminates geographical limitations since we can have it delivered to any designated address. However, it's important to consider that the package may not arrive on the same day the order is placed. Most courier companies offer delivery on the next working day, but it's worth noting that such waiting times can be shortened, for example, by visiting a physical store personally. An undeniable factor that also significantly influences consumer reluctance towards online shopping is internet security (PAP MediaRoom, 2023).

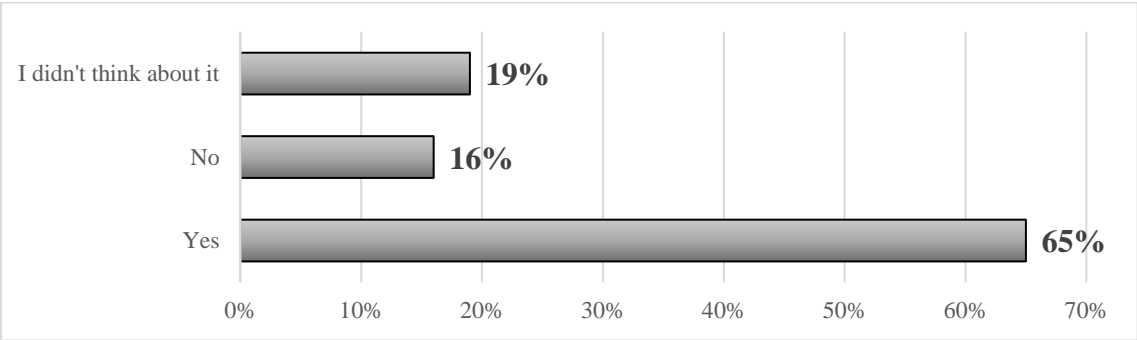
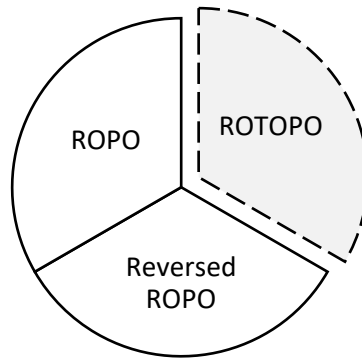


Figure 10. Are u concerned about your safety online?: own visualization based on article (PAP MediaRoom, 2023)

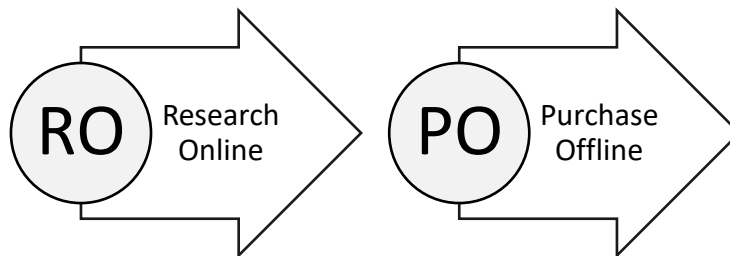
MARKET TRENDS

The Polish furniture industry is among the fastest-growing sectors in global e-commerce. At the same time, furniture is categorized as one of the most challenging products to sell online because it is least susceptible to "impulse buying" (Szczur M., 2022). The decision to purchase is heavily influenced by direct contact with the product, checking its functionality, and comfort. This is the main reason why the furniture industry faces two fundamental phenomena: the ROPO effect (Research Online- Purchase Offline), the opposite of ROPO (Research Offline- Purchase Online), and the shopping path undertaken by discerning customers: ROTOPO (Research Online- Test Offline- Purchase Online).



Picture 7. Phenomena affecting the consumer's purchasing decision and occurring in the furniture industry.: own elaboration based on available articles and literature (Sopiak S., 2022; Manahr, 2014; Szczur M., 2022).

The ROPO effect, also known as "showrooming," is a manifestation of increased societal awareness. It involves searching for information about a product using online websites and then purchasing it at a physical retail store.



Picture 8. ROPO effect: own elaboration based on available articles and literature (Sopiak S., 2022; Manahr, 2014; Szczur M., 2022).

Taking into account the diversity of online stores, such consumer behavior is completely natural. As Miguel Nicolás explains:

"Although e-commerce has become multidimensional, there are still customers who need physical contact with the product to make a purchasing decision."

He also adds:

"You must assume that the customer is not solely a digital or physical buyer. Both channels complement each other. Ultimately, the same person makes the purchase." (Nicolás M., 2021; Sopiak S., 2022).

It's worth mentioning that the ROPO effect will be a much lesser concern for businesses operating both online and offline, where digital marketing supports the offline sales channel. According to a report by Gemius titled "E-commerce in Poland 2023," as many as 34% of respondents search for furniture and interior furnishings online before making a purchase in a physical store (Gemius Polska, 2023).

The reverse ROPO effect occurs when consumers decide to search for a product in a physical store, assess its quality, but ultimately choose to purchase the item through an online website.

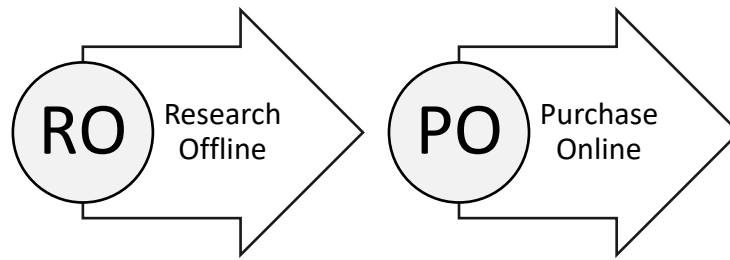


Figure 9. Reverse ROPO effect: own elaboration based on available articles and literature (Sopiak S., 2022; Manahr, 2014; Szczur M., 2022).

From the report conducted by Gemius titled "E-commerce in Poland 2023," it appears that 28% of respondents seek detailed information about furniture and interior furnishings in traditional stores but make their final purchase online (Gemius Poland, 2023).

The latest phenomenon challenging the furniture industry is the ROTOPO effect. This involves researching product information online, testing or evaluating it in a physical store, and then purchasing it online (Figure 6).

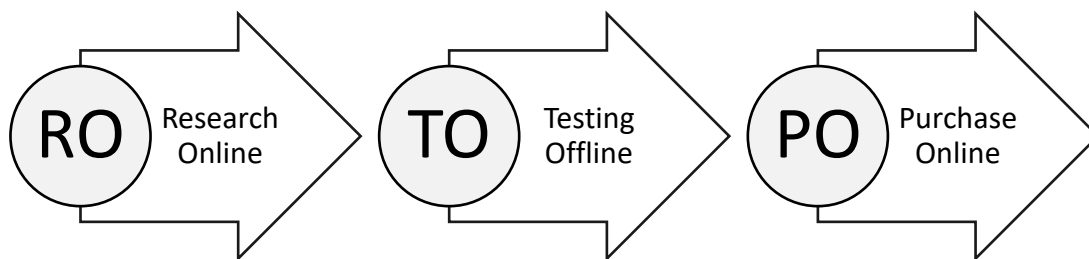


Figure 10. Reverse ROPO effect: own elaboration based on available articles and literature (Sopiak S., 2022; Manahr, 2014; Szczur M., 2022).

The popularity of this purchasing path is conditioned by the increasing use of price comparison websites, which, after internet search engines, are the second most commonly used source for finding information about purchased goods or services online (Manahr, 2014).

Analyzing trends in the furniture industry, we can observe that such products are still predominantly purchased in traditional stores. Referring to the article "Furniture Market in Poland according to KPMG report" published in 2017, at that time, 70% of respondents made purchases in online furniture stores, 30% bought from offline furniture stores, while only 30% opted for online purchases (Monthly magazine "BIZNES meble.pl", 2017, pp. 26-27). For the vast majority of Poles, the online purchase format primarily serves as a source of information about furniture products they intend to buy.

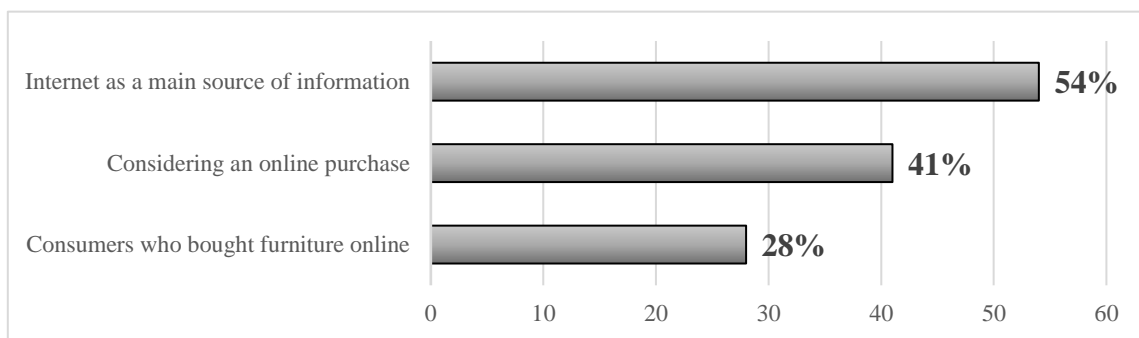


Figure 11. Preferences regarding purchasing furniture and home appliances: own visualization based on article (Szczur M., 2022)

STRATEGIE MARKETINGOWE

Marketing strategies employed by entrepreneurs require a precise analysis of consumer behavior and adaptation to changing market trends. Crucial for an online furniture store is the implementation of an effective advertising tactic to increase brand visibility, attract new customers, and build loyalty among acquired consumers.

Target audience definition. The effectiveness of a marketing strategy for an online furniture store depends on defining the right group of buyers and their preferences. Armed with detailed consumer data including age, gender, location, and interests, stores tailor their tactics to the appropriate audience (Kapelczak K., 2022).

Website. A clear and user-friendly online platform is essential for a furniture store. The website showcasing products should be visually appealing to capture the customer's attention, build trust, and credibility. According to consumer trends in the furniture industry, the online service should also be responsive to ensure a positive user experience on both computers and mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO). SEO is a crucial aspect of reaching potential customers. Key to this internet strategy is the selection of keywords. The strategy is defined as effective and secure (Strehlau K., 2023).

Content marketing in the furniture industry. Many customers distrust online ads. Content marketing comes to the rescue. This involves high-quality publications such as blog posts or instructional videos that address customer uncertainties and subtly encourage furniture purchases (Strehlau K., 2023).

Visual product presentations. Websites increasingly utilize technological capabilities allowing customers to view products through 360-degree photography and zoom functions. Such marketing should feature contextual imagery, as emotionally rich images are more likely to persuade potential buyers than simple isolated product shots against a white background. Consumer trends indicate that potential buyers expect more details. Therefore, online furniture stores often employ 3D visualizations and interactive tools such as VR (Virtual Reality) for virtual placement of furniture in their surroundings or AR (Augmented Reality) for enhanced reality experiences (UnityGroup, 2022; Strehlau K., 2023).

Social media. Platforms serve as excellent mediums for presenting furniture and communicating with consumers. Instagram, Pinterest, or Facebook enable product presentations within real-life contexts of interiors and also serve to build communities interested in design and interior decoration.

Online furniture advertising. Various forms of promotion include textual, product-based, graphic, and retargeting ads (ads that follow customers and remind them of previously viewed products). Given the nature of the industry, the best forms of promotion are social media platforms.

Omnichannel in the furniture industry. This refers to multichannel sales, significantly impacting product sales (Biznes.meble.pl, 2022, UnityGroup, 2022).

As we can see, marketing strategies for online furniture stores encompass a wide range of activities aimed at reaching as many consumers as possible while increasing sales. Modern promotional tactics focus on creating unique shopping experiences for customers, utilizing virtual store tours, product recommendations, and interactive interior design tools.

Marketing strategies for traditional furniture stores involve organizing events such as promotional events, open days, interior design weeks, or design workshops. Additionally, the furniture industry can leverage local media such as newspapers, flyers, billboards, or radio and TV advertisements. Five primary strategies used in furniture retail stores can be distinguished:

1. **Storefront displays**, aimed at attracting customer attention by showcasing products and creating creative interior arrangements using details such as decorations and lighting.
2. **Local promotional campaigns**, which draw customers into the store and allow them to test products.
3. **Customer support**, providing professional customer service and advice on selection to build customer trust and loyalty.
4. **Partnership with interior designers**, involving collaboration with local designers to reach customers seeking professional furniture-related advice.

ANALYSIS OF ONLINE AND OFFLINE SALES IN THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY

The analysis of online sales encompasses three reports conducted by Gemius Polska: "E-commerce in Poland 2021," "E-commerce in Poland 2022," and "E-commerce in Poland 2023." Below are selected questions related to the furniture industry and information regarding average consumer expenditures. During the survey, when asked about purchasing or intending to purchase furniture and interior furnishings, respondents showed the greatest interest in 2023, reaching 34%. This marks an increase of 2 percentage points compared to 2022, which achieved a result of 32%.

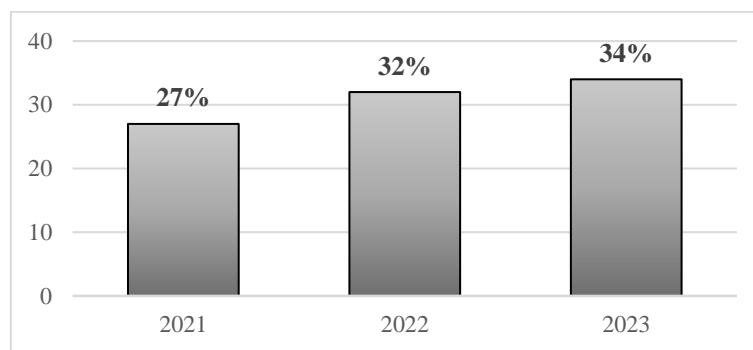


Figure 12. For each furniture and home furnishings product category, indicate whether you have ever purchased it online and whether you intend to purchase it in the future: own elaboration based on research reports (Gemius Polska, 2021 p. 156; Gemius Polska, 2022 p. 153; Gemius Polska, 2023 p.170)

It is worth mentioning the ROPO effect. According to the research, consumers are less likely to search for products online and make payments at physical retail outlets. Comparing 2021 to 2023, the ROPO effect has decreased by 10 percentage points.

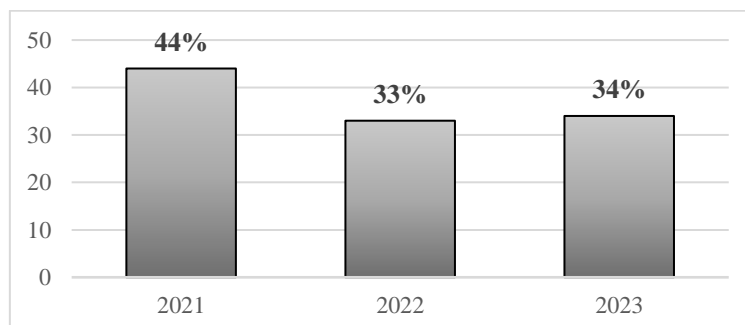


Figure 13. How often does it happen that you look for detailed information about the following products on websites, but you buy them in traditional stores?: own elaboration based on research reports (Gemius Polska, 2021 p. 168; Gemius Polska, 2022 p. 163; Gemius Polska, 2023 p.182)

We can also observe a declining trend in the case of the reverse ROPO effect. Comparing both 2021 and 2022 to 2023, we notice that the effect has decreased by 5 percentage points.

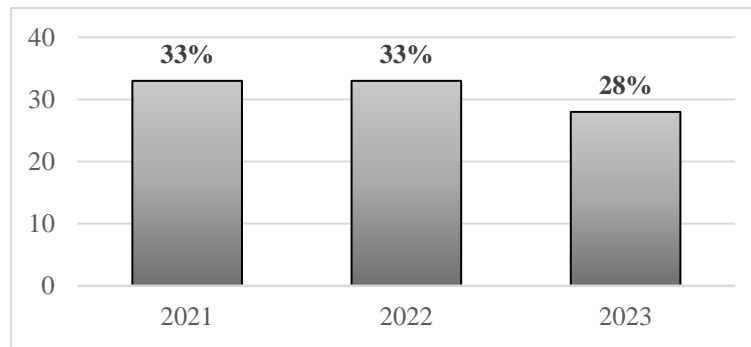


Figure 14. How often does it happen that you look for detailed information about products from a given category in traditional stores, but you buy them on websites?: own elaboration based on research reports (Gemius Polska, 2021 p. 170; Gemius Polska, 2022 p. 165; Gemius Polska, 2023 p.183)

Further, a large number of consumers browsing furniture websites are not convinced to make a purchase. This is due to the lack of ability to verbally assess a particular product. Customers who visit a store have the opportunity to physically assess the item they intend to purchase, which may lead them to make a buying decision more quickly.

As we can see, average expenditures in the furniture industry are increasing year by year. This is largely driven by a systematic increase in wages both in the public and private sectors.

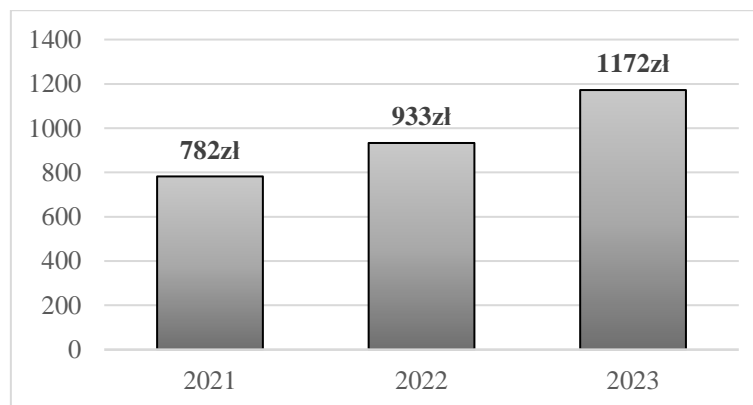


Figure 15. Presentation of average expenditure on furniture and interior design: own elaboration based on research reports (Gemius Polska, 2021; Gemius Polska, 2022; Gemius Polska, 2023)

Despite the possibilities offered by the internet, there is still a large audience that prefers physical contact with the product. The current situation in the furniture market is uncertain, with a downward trend noted in the furniture industry. However, there is still a chance for consumer interest to increase. According to the article "Where is the furniture industry heading in 2023 - forecasts, trends, challenges... And what to do about it?" by Piotr Maślarczyk, it is estimated that there will be a growth of approximately 5.6% in the furniture industry from 2023 to 2026 (Maślarczyk P., 2023).

To assess the current situation of the traditional furniture market, we can simply look at the data presented by GUS (Główny Urząd Statystyczny). As we can see from the chart below, there is a downward trend. Comparing 2021 to 2023, we can observe a decline of up to 19 percentage points.

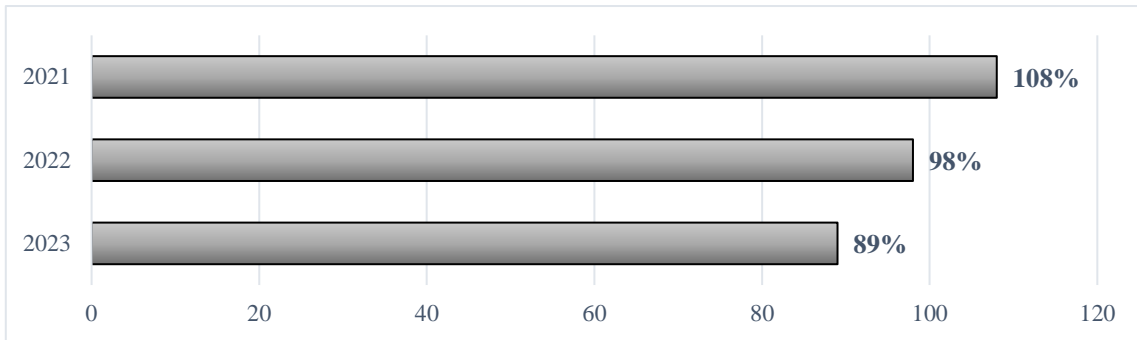


Figure 16. Dynamics of furniture retail sales over the years 2021-2023: own elaboration based on research reports by GUS.

The analysis of furniture sales online and offline in Poland reveals that there is demand for both sales channels. Technological development and constantly changing consumer preferences require furniture companies to be flexible and adept at adapting to these changes. Therefore, understanding and analyzing both sales channels that impact the development of the furniture industry in Poland is crucial. We can observe that a significantly larger number of people purchase furniture through online websites very rarely (46.1%) or never (28.1%). This type of product can be considered a luxury item, as when purchasing such products, consumers intend to use them for a longer period of time (Figure 17).

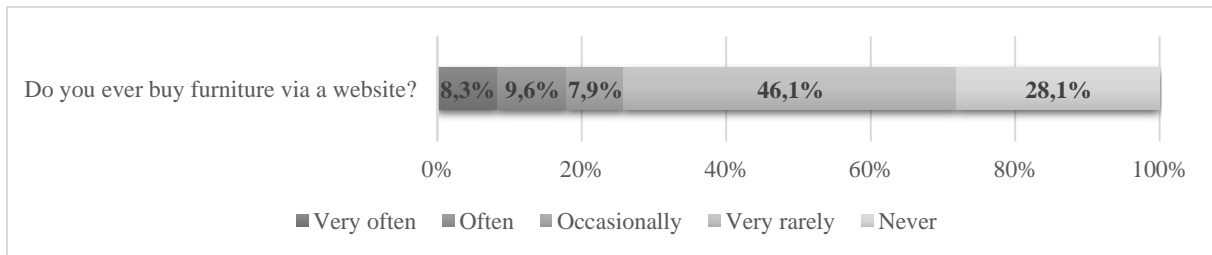


Figure 17. Do you ever buy furniture via a website?

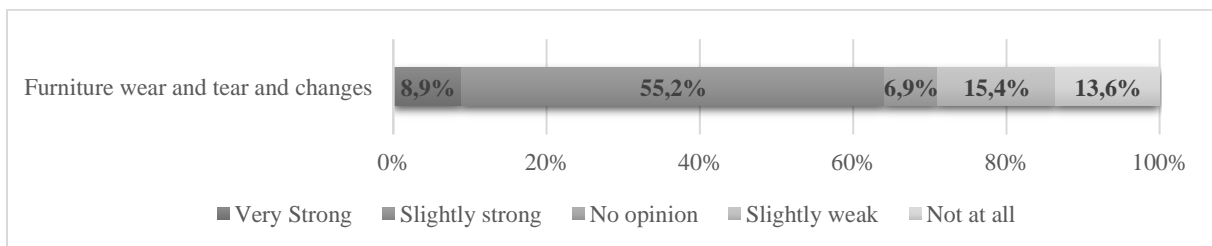


Figure 18. The impact of furniture wear on the decision to change

We can observe that for over half of the respondents (61.4%), the condition of furniture is a factor influencing their willingness to replace a given product with a new one. This is related to consumer needs, such as improving quality of life comfort (Figure 18).

Analyzing the responses from Figure 19, we can observe that tables and coffee tables show the highest popularity among types of furniture purchased online (27.1%), whereas outdoor furniture is less popular (5.2%). This is influenced, among other factors, by seasonality. Tables play a relatively significant role in our homes (as places for family and social gatherings) and can be used both indoors and outdoors. It's also worth mentioning that not everyone has space for outdoor furniture.

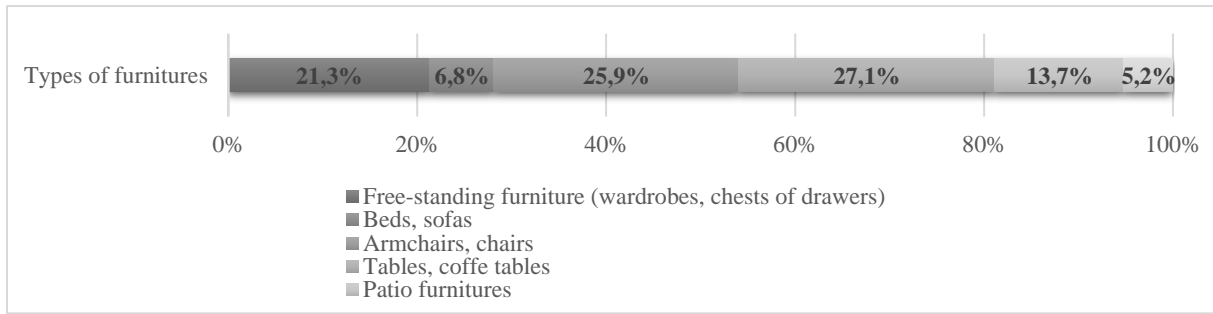


Figure 19. Types of furniture most often purchased online

It can be stated that despite solutions offered by online companies (e.g., 3D furniture visualization), there is a lack of verbal contact with the product being offered. The inability to physically test a product can significantly influence the purchasing decisions of respondents (61.9%). According to the majority of respondents, the possibility to test the product before purchase affects their purchase intention (69.8%).

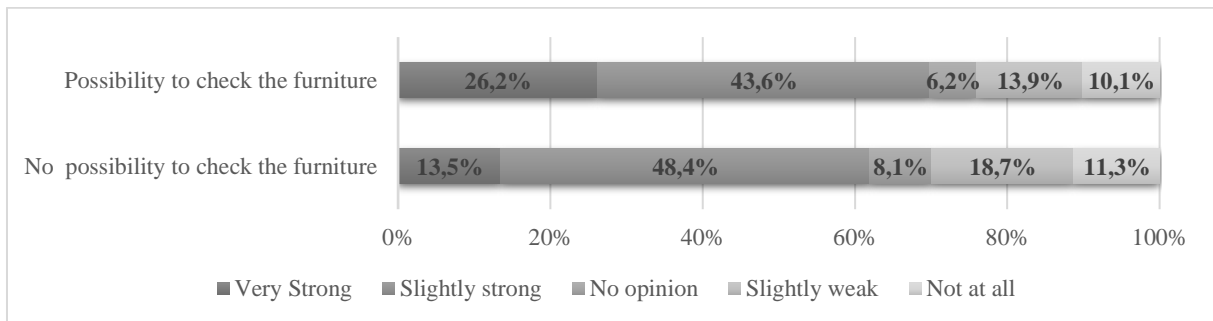


Figure 20. The impact of the purchase furniture online without the possibility of checking it and the impact of purchasing decisions with the possibility of checking the furniture in the store in advance

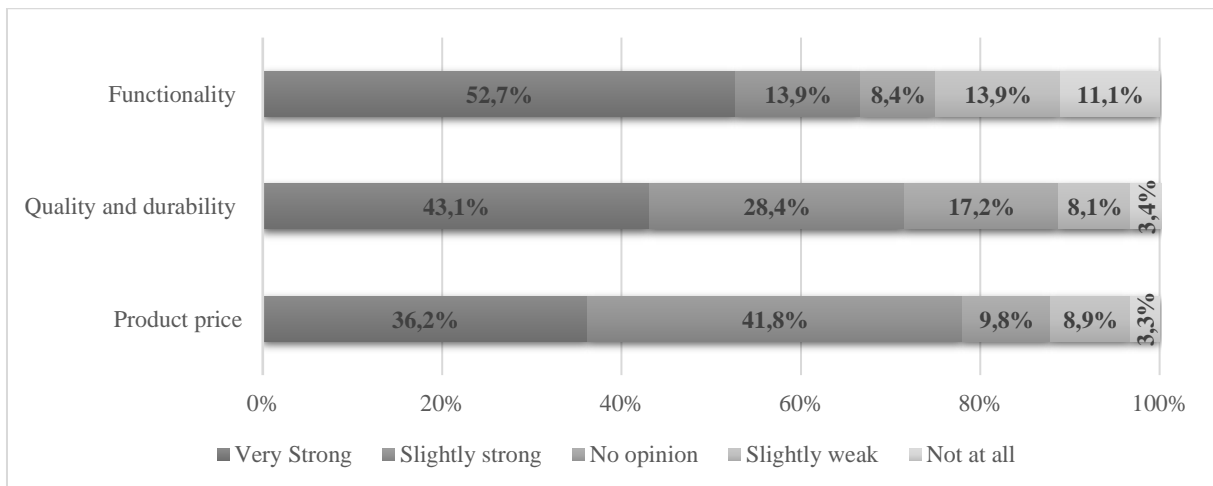


Figure 21. The impact of product price, furniture quality/durability and functionality on purchase decision

According to respondents, among the three product features presented in Figure 21, the most important one is functionality of the furniture (52.7%), followed by quality and durability (43.1%), and lastly its price (36.2%). Based on these results, it can be inferred that a significantly smaller proportion of consumers would be willing to pay a higher amount for a functional, high-quality product. It is more apparent that the majority of customers are likely to conduct thorough market analysis to find a substitute product that is relatively cheaper and possesses similar features to the initially chosen prototype.

It has been observed that in today's times, brand awareness is no longer the main determinant of successful business. According to survey responses, it can be deduced that public opinion about the manufacturer and store significantly influences the decision to make a purchase online (46.1%). Purchasing products online involves so-called "buying blind", so before a customer decides to purchase a particular product, they will ensure - based on previous consumer experiences - whether it is worthwhile (Figure 22).

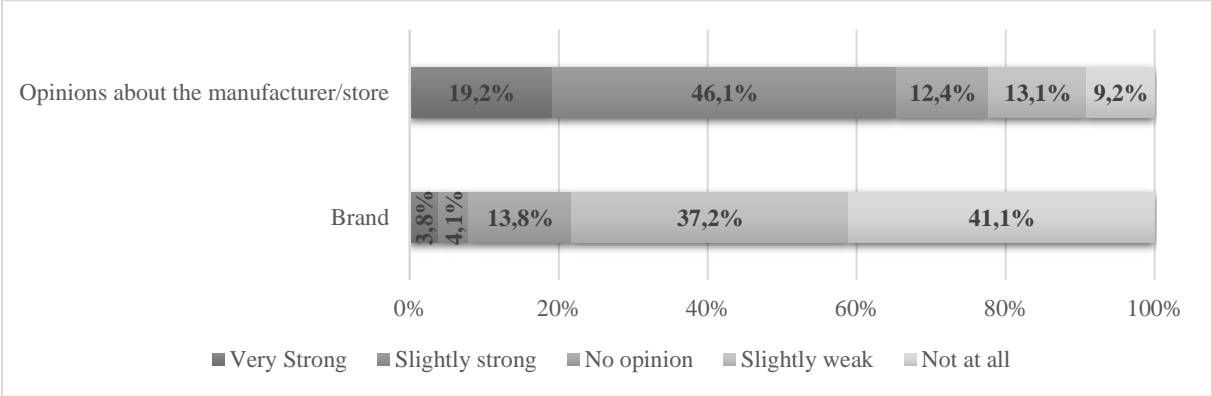


Figure 22. The impact of brand and opinions about the manufacture/store on purchase decision

It has also been noted that the impact of both payment methods through online websites and the possibility of financing online purchases is not particularly significant for the respondents (24.8%), or they have no opinion on this matter at all (28.3%).

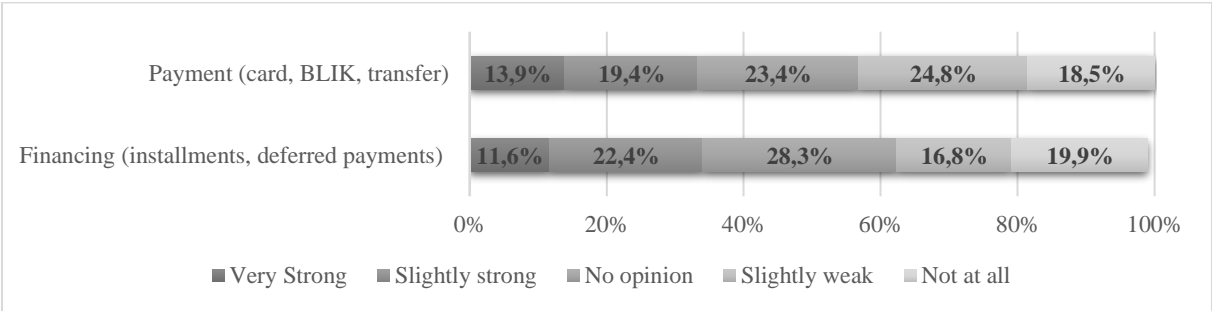


Figure 23. The impact of various forms of financing and payment on the purchase decision

According to the survey responses presented in Figure 24, the impact of after-sales service and direct contact with the seller in online furniture stores is significant for over 50% of the respondents. The percentage of respondents who have no opinion on this matter (22.9%) may stem from the fact that not every company, despite the rapidly growing e-commerce in the furniture industry, employs or has the capability to use such forms of customer communication as live chat with a consultant.

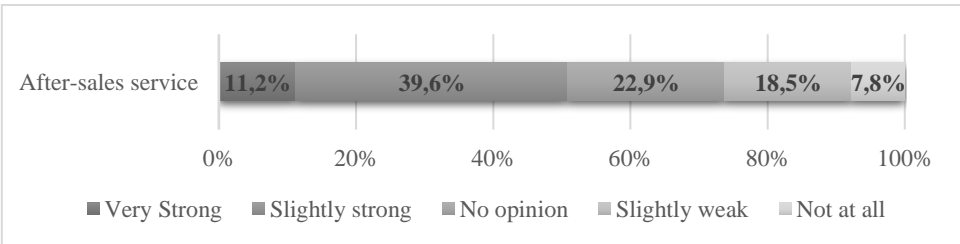


Figure 24. The impact of after-sales service (including contact with the seller) on the online purchase decision

PODSUMOWANIE I WNIOSKI

The research conducted on the Ankieteo.pl platform in the Silesian Voivodeship aimed to analyze consumer shopping preferences related to furniture in the context of changes in online sales compared to traditional sales methods. The survey was designed to obtain detailed information on factors influencing purchasing decisions, such as price, quality, user reviews, and the availability of various delivery and return options. The study included both closed and open questions, allowing respondents to express their opinions and experiences. Analysis of results from 511 respondents enabled a thorough examination of the impact of e-commerce on the furniture market and the identification of key trends and consumer preferences in the Silesian region. The results indicate that economic, social, and psychological factors play a crucial role in shaping consumer purchasing behaviors. There is a growing interest in minimalist design, functional solutions, and eco-friendly materials, as well as seasonal changes in shopping preferences. The research also showed that average spending on furniture increases year by year, which is driven by a systematic rise in salaries. Moreover, consumers are increasingly using online tools, such as price comparison websites and discount systems, which influence their purchasing decisions. However, the inability to physically assess the product online is one of the barriers to online shopping.

Proposed Solutions for Online Furniture Stores

1. Virtual Product Presentations:
 - Implementation of advanced 3D visualizations and VR/AR tools that allow customers to virtually place furniture in their living spaces. This enables customers to better assess the product before purchasing.
2. Mobile Optimization:
 - Ensuring full responsiveness of the website so that shopping is convenient both on computers and mobile devices. This is crucial as many customers use mobile phones for browsing and online shopping.
3. SEO and Content Marketing:
 - Optimizing the website for search engines (SEO) and creating valuable content, such as blog articles, guides, and instructional videos, which build trust and educate customers, subtly encouraging them to make a purchase.
4. Interactive Design Tools:
 - Providing customers with online interior design tools that allow them to experiment with different furniture and decoration arrangements in their home spaces.
5. Comprehensive Review and Rating System:
 - Encouraging customers to leave detailed reviews and product ratings, which helps new customers make purchasing decisions based on the experiences of other users.
6. Offer Personalization:
 - Using data on customer shopping behaviors to personalize product recommendations and promotional offers, increasing the chances of making a purchase.
7. Wide Range of Delivery and Return Options:
 - Ensuring a variety of delivery options and flexible return policies, which increases the comfort of shopping and builds customer trust in the store.

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Streszczenie: Wpływ e-commerce na rynek meblowy w Polsce: analiza zmian sprzedażowych oraz preferencji konsumentów. Celem tego badania było przeanalizowanie danych sprzedażowych mebli online i tradycyjnych sklepów meblowych oraz wywiady z klientami, którzy dokonali zakupów mebli przez Internet.

Ponadto w artykule zostały poruszone takie tematy, jak: zalety i wady zakupów mebli internetowych, trendy rynkowe w Polsce, strategie marketingowe stosowane przez sklepy online i offline, które mają na celu przyciągnięcie konsumentów. W obecnych czasach bardzo ważne jest by zrozumieć jakie czynniki wpływają na chęć nabycia mebli przez konsumenta. W tym celu przeprowadzono ankietę wśród 511 respondentów.

Praca posiada charakter badawczy i analityczny, a wyniki badań mogą być przydatne dla przedsiębiorców meblowych, którzy chcą rozwijać swoją działalność w Internecie, jak również dla klientów, którzy planują zakup mebli online.

Słowa kluczowe: E-commerce, rynek meblowy, trendy, preferencje konsumentów

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