

## **Social factors affecting consumer decisions during purchasing furniture in Poland.**

ADRIANNA BALICKA<sup>1</sup>, MATEUSZ NIEDBAŁA<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Wood Technology, Warsaw University of Life Science–SGGW

<sup>2</sup> Department of Technology and Entrepreneurship in Wood Industry, Institute of Wood Sciences and Furniture, Warsaw University of Life Sciences WULS-SGGW,

**Abstract:** *Social factors affecting consumer decisions during purchasing furniture in Poland.* The aim of this study was to analyse social factors affecting consumer decisions during purchasing furniture in Poland. Currently, it is very important to understand purchasing behaviour for the purpose of developing marketing strategy for better understanding of customer needs. The situation on Polish furniture market is dynamically changing and there is a need to determine how customers make decisions. In order to find those factors a survey of 1272 respondents was carried out. Survey was conducted during March to May 2022 in Śląskie Voivodeship. The questions asked were focused to areas such as: product quality, comfort of furniture use, design and costs. Obtained results were compared and significant correlation was observed between demographic and economic factors and purchasing decisions among respondents.

*Keywords:* social factors, customer behavior, Polish furniture market

### **INTRODUCTION**

Currently, the key to the success for any business is to understand the needs and expectations of customers. There is no doubt – no company can survive without their clients. To meet the demands of the market, it is necessary to answer several questions, which helps to get closer to the prospective customer. Rahman and Safeena (2016) suggest to start by gathering information: who they are, why they buy, when they buy, how much money they have, what they expect of the company or what they think about the company. Obtained data is relevant not only for building an intelligent and successful marketing campaign, but also for creating and launching a new product on the market.

Customer preferences were analyzed around the world. In Slovenia the most common place where consumers decide to purchase furniture is a store (Jošt et al., 2020). This same purchase method is the most frequent in Croatia in 2020 and 2021 (Pirc Barčić et al., 2021). When it comes to online shopping, according to Fachim et al. (2019) brand trust is the most dominant factor to encourage people to choose a particular shop. Promotions and e-service quality were listed as less important factors.

Statistical analyses clearly show an awareness of the importance of the furniture market for the European industry. Data collected in 2020 indicate that 15% of customers bought furniture and home accessories via the Internet (Analizy Pekao, 2021). A higher percentage of customers was reported only for the purchase of clothes and shoes. Under no circumstances can it be stated that a technological evolution in furniture market is finished. It is important to be aware that it is only gaining momentum.

Further exploration of the furniture market reveals its high potential. Figure 1 and 2 present the percentage of people that can afford to replace worn-out furniture. The difference between these charts concerns the income presented by social group. The first one refers to people whose income is below 60% of the median equivalent, and the second one refers to people whose income is above 60% of the median equivalent. (Eurostat, 2021). Those correlations provided unquestionably that not only Poles but also Europeans have sufficient financial resources to be spent on house equipment.

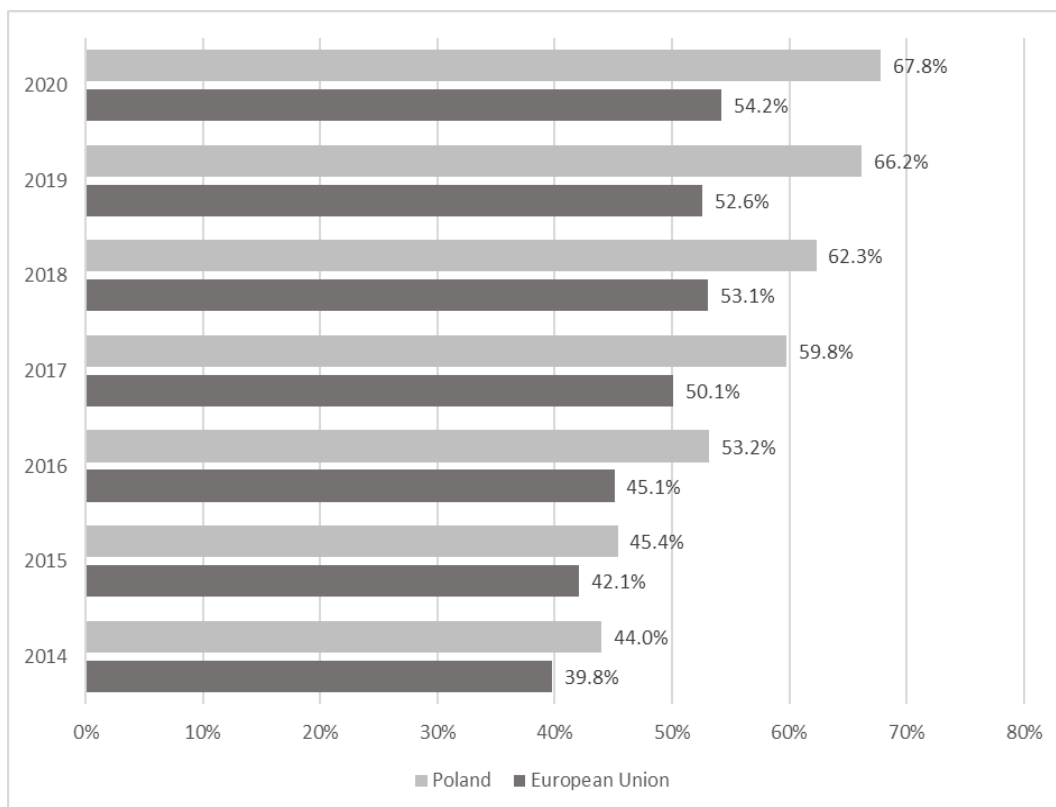


Fig.1. Persons with income below 60% of the median equivalent who can afford to replace worn-out furniture.

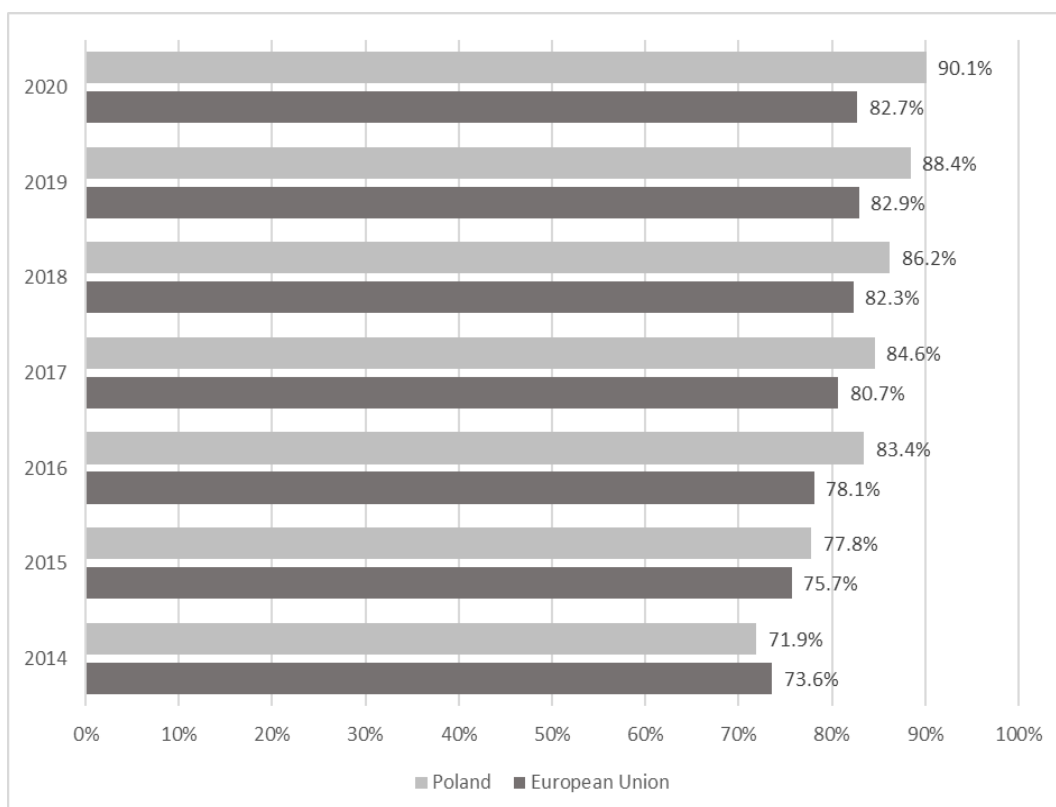


Fig.2. Persons with income above 60% of the median equivalent who can afford to replace worn-out furniture.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

The presented analysis of social factors affecting consumer decisions during purchasing furniture consist of two parts. The first one is based on available literature in the area of economics and psychology. Based on it, an attempt was made to determine the main factors impacted consumer behavior and kind of purchase decision. The stages of family life were also taken into consideration as a factor influencing the purchase decision.

The second part is based on conducted survey. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used in the research procedure. Most of the calculations were made in the Statistica 13.1 PL program. The research hypothesis was verified through a critical analysis of the theoretical achievements of consumer behavior to date, as well as secondary and primary empirical data.

The secondary research included a comparative analysis of domestic and international consumer statistics as well as industry data on the furniture market in Poland. Much emphasis was placed in particular on the consumption of these goods in order to create a research background for further empirical analysis, while it should be emphasized that these analyzes related to the group of products (and the industry producing them) relatively well separated in the official statistical reporting (essentially the Polish Classification of Products) and Services - PKWiU: 36.1, Polish Classification of Activities - PKD: 31.0).

The research used direct questionnaire surveys with the use of an internet platform (ankieteo.pl) addressed to 1,200 respondents. The questionnaire research was preceded by preliminary research aimed at adjusting the questionnaire. The selection of the area was deliberate and included the Śląskie Voivodeship as being the closest to the demographic average of Poland. Fully and correctly completed questionnaires were returned to 1272 which constitute the research group.

A critical analysis of the literature on the subject and the conducted empirical research allowed for an attempt to construct a model of consumer behavior on the furniture market. This is the main effect of the research and, at the same time, a contribution to the development of the theory of consumer behavior in a specific industry market, i.e. the furniture market.

It should be emphasized that this paper presents only a small fragment of these studies, and the presented results cannot constitute a scientific proof of this hypothesis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

To understand better consumer behavior it is necessary to look at factors affecting people. Figure 3 presents all determinant that are taking into consideration when choosing product to buy. According to Lichev (2017) the impact of psychological factors is strong but due to the individuality of each person, difficult to study. The dependences between them are comprehensively conditioned, dynamic and complex. Demographic factors are closely related characteristics of the purchaser not only as a person (age, sex), but also as a member of the household (household size, composition). In the furniture market, age is a more important factor than customer sex. It is related to needs that correspond to the different life stages (Zwierzyński P., 2017). Economic factors depend strictly on customer's wealth. Their define person's financial position and as a consequence affect financing options during purchase. Options like credits or loans are very common and frequently used by those with sufficient financial resources as well as those with low incomes. This trend is noticeable in various sales sectors. Sales are driven by marketing and customer satisfaction. By analyzing marketing factors, four groups can be highlighted – the first directly dependent on user's feelings and needs, the second related to the price of the product, the third linked to the infrastructure of stationary stores and the last related to the promotion and customer service.

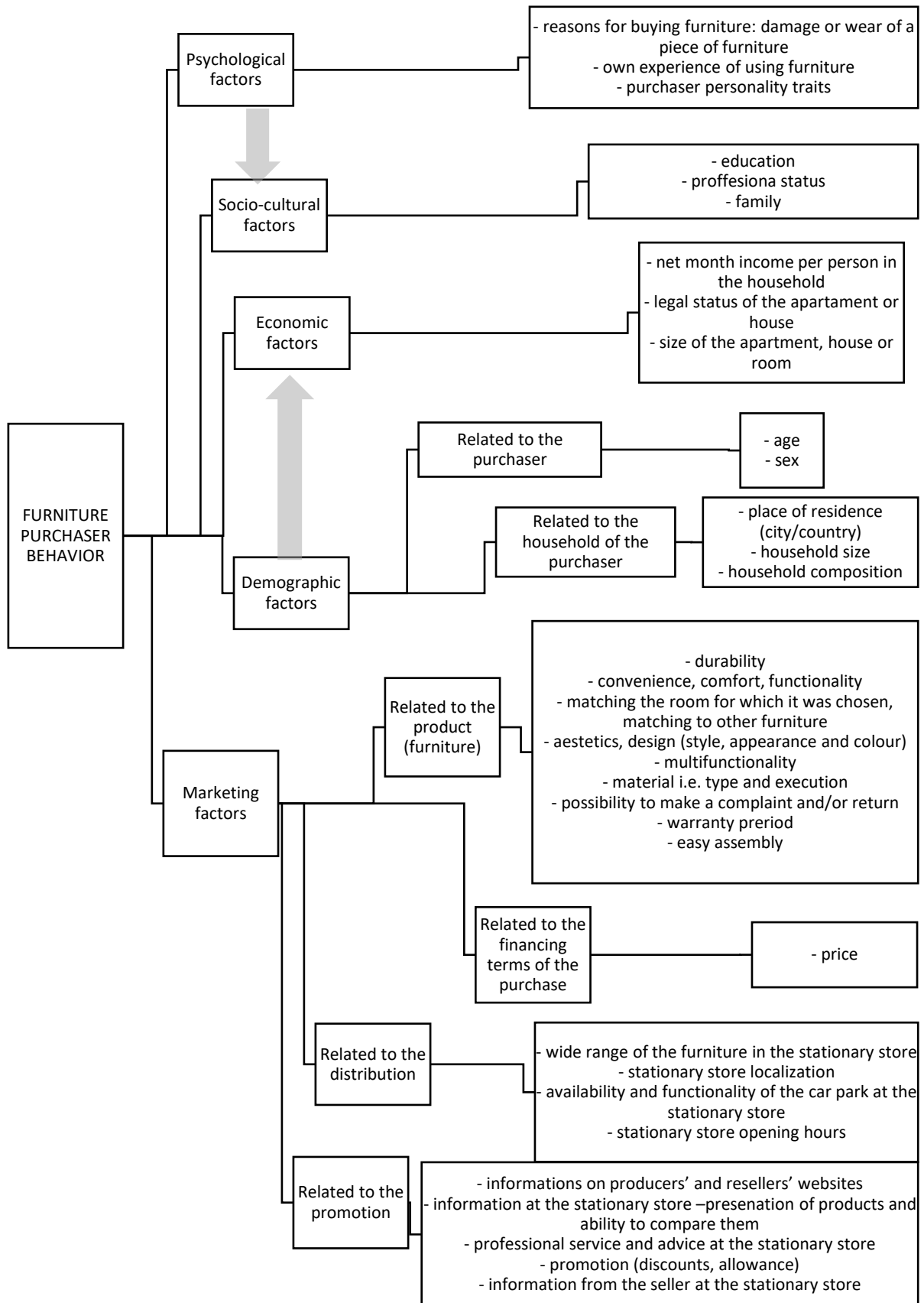


Fig.3. Main factors impacted consumer behavior in the furniture market identified through own research

**SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS**

A person's personality is also shaped by socio-cultural factors. Beliefs, thoughts and even expectations are the result of individual experiences and environment in which the person was raised or lives. Personality, as a sum of mental characteristic, makes every person unique and special. (UKEssays, 2018) Understanding how the world affects individuals helps to understand the basis of the customer shopping decisions.

Figure 4 is an expansion of the section of socio-cultural factors impacting furniture purchaser behavior from figure 3. Culture, as a one of the factors, may be consider as a values and accepted behaviors of a given society. Differences arising even from customs and social norms of some countries must be taken into account especially by international furniture company. Their staff members not only managers but also customer assistants with a view to achieving success must prepare special offers, promotions and advertising materials separately to each of host country. Furthermore, communication rules and cooperating with sales partners my require a completely different approach (Masovic, 2018).

Nowadays, types of people considered to be leaders or role models differ significantly from their predecessors. In the era of widespread access to social media not only young people but also middle-age adults are taking into consideration opinions of for instance influencers or celebrities. Moreover, we ourselves become opinion setters for others by adding comments or product ratings on sales portals. A study by Xiao-lie (2020) found that all participants supported their purchase decision with social media reviews. Additionally, the relationship between the truth of information and intention to buy may be disproportionate as a consequence of increasing amount of fake and negative information.

It can be stated that the education level affects customers' expectations of furniture producents and sellers. These are buyers who demand highest quality of goods and service are more aware of their consumer rights. Their requirements also have an impact on companies' decisions about marketing strategies, materials used to make packaging and advertising. On the other hand well-educated staff involve better working condition and higher wages (Masovic, 2018). As consumer and environmental awareness increases, ensuring decent working conditions for employees as well as responsible use of natural resources can yield tangible results in the form of increased sales.

Al-Azzam (2014) explains that furniture as home goods are personal products and correspond with consumer emotions. His findings identify factors such as reference group, family, quality and color as the most important predictors of behavioral intention.

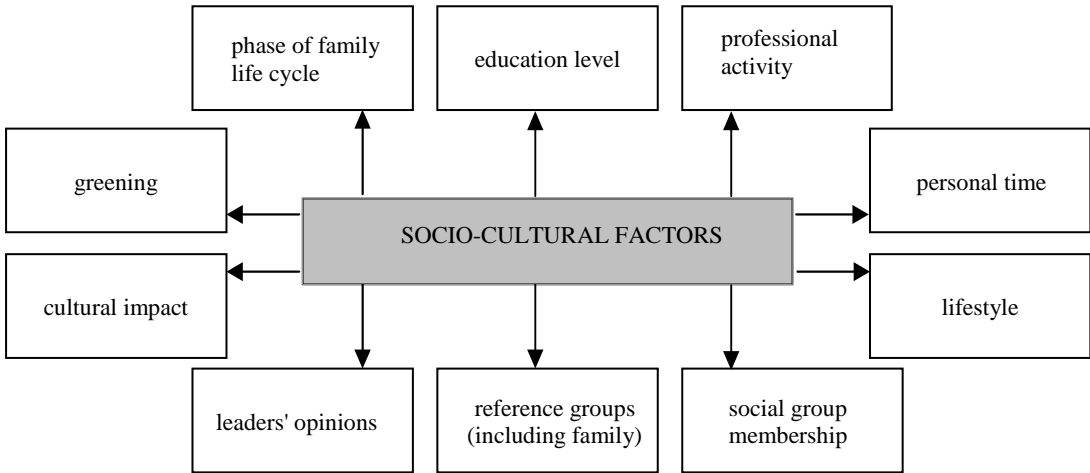


Fig.4. Socio-cultural factors of consumer behaviour source: own elaboration based on available literature

## FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGES

Further analysis requires identifying consumer consumption patterns. The first well-known family life cycle analysis were described in 1977 (Duvall 1977, Hill 1977). Nowadays these and the following studies are frequently discussed in terms of the influence of the family life phase on the most frequently purchased products.

According to Medalie (1977) the Key Points of Family Life Cycle Concept are:

1. Changes over time
2. A beginning and an end
3. Family development with sequential stages/phases
4. Phase-specific developmental tasks
5. Normal transitions and unexpected crises
6. Transmission of biologic, behavioral, and social processes

The figure below (fig.5) presents a sociological point of view of family life stages (with stages and correlations between them).

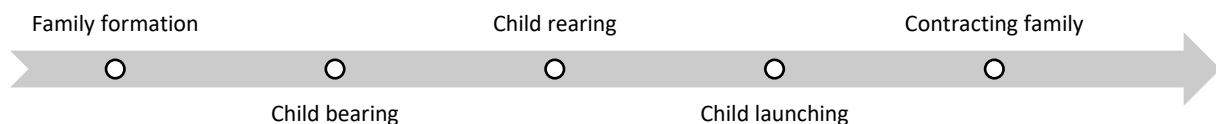


Fig.5. The family life cycle stages (own elaboration, based on Medaline J., 1979).

From the economic point of view, 7 stages of family life have been identifying and classified by the development stages (tab.1). Considering the table presented, it can be stated that home and furnishing items are the most frequently chosen by purchaser aged 18 to 30. It is correlated with changes occurring their personal life i.e. expecting first child ore having one or more children. Fraiser (1963) explains:

*“The typical young couple starting marriage today can predict about two-year interval before the birth of first child. The last baby will probably be born about six years after marriage”.*

With the growth of the family, young couple must invest financial outlay in further equipment like crib, dresser, baby textiles etc. Further purchase will involve the child / children growing up and will be driven by factors such as furniture damages, inadequate size of the furniture or the young person's emerging style and taste.

Table 1. Types of products purchased at different stages of family life development (Żelazna et al. 2002, Bywalec C., 2007)

Development stage	Age (in years)	Phase of family life cycle	Purchased groups of products
Expansion	18-30	Household of a single young person	Clothing, cosmetics, travel, recreation, hobbies
		Household of a young married couple without a child	Housing and its equipment, saving, entertainment
		Household of a young married couple with a preschool-age child/children	Food, clothing, toys and other children's items, home furnishing items
Stabilization	31-45	Household of a married couple aged 31-45 with a school-age child/children (7-19 y/o)	Food, clothing, education, public transport
	46-60	Household of a middle-age married couple (46-60 y/o) with growing and independent children	Education, clothing, home furnishings, recreation
Regression	over 60	Household of an elderly married after their children became independent and their departure from the family home	Hobbies, savings, travel, pharmaceuticals
		Household of a single elderly person, usually after death of spouse	Food, medicine, medical services

## CONSUMER DECISIONS

How does the process of making purchasing decision look? The traditional model (fig.5) considers the need to purchase a new product as the beginning of the purchasing process. This need can occur immediately or be thoroughly considered. The next step is to find satisfying product by searching the available shopping channels and consider all alternatives. The penultimate stage is to make a purchasing decision. At this time, the customer must not only decide on a specific product, but must also decide how to finance the purchase, how to buy it (online, in the stationary store), choose the delivery method. The last stage is to find an answer to the most important question – Is the customer satisfied with the purchased product? It should be remembered that when the customer is satisfied with the product an chance of choosing the same producer / store again increases.

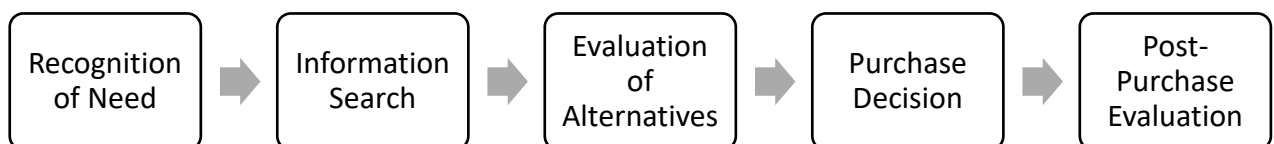


Fig.5. Consumer buying process (based on Stankevich 2017)

## PURCHASE DECISION

By observing customers when making purchase decisions, four different types of behaviors can be identified (tab.2). Impulsive decisions can be seen when the customer feel sudden and strong emotional desire of possessing. It can be caused by factors as: the emotional state of the consumer at that time, the store environment, self-esteem. The researchers suggest that the impulsive need of buying can be also stimulated by a visual stimulus or a promotional campaign (Rodrigues et al., 2021). What is more, such factors as product price or possibility of price negotiation are very little or not considered at all. A study by Dąbrowska and Janoś-Kresło (2014) found that more half of survey Poles (53%) are aware that they sometimes make purchases on impulse, without a prior plan.

Habitual buying behavior is being characterised by low consumer involvement. Those decisions are usually made routinely, the products chosen are standard and the effort put into them is none or very little. As a consequence, time spent on selecting a single product is minimalized (Lautiainen 2015). It should be noted that loyalty to a particular brand can turn into habitual buying overt time.

Nearly always, non-routine decisions involve products that have been purchased before. In this case, the time spent searching for information is longer compared to previously discussed types. Factors that may influence such a decision are recommendations, time pressure, own experience and opinion expressed by friends. Non-routine decision are made most often when purchasing furniture, gifts, clothing, cars, computers and trips (Adamowicz and Krasuska 2016).

Prudent decision are characterized by the greatest amount of information gathered not only about the chosen product but also about its potential substitutes. Those decisions are making usually when purchasing luxury goods or goods previously unknown to the customer (Maciejewski 2016). Additionally, prudent decisions involve products of relatively high value.

Table 2. Types of consumer decisions with regard to the decision to purchase durable goods, including furniture

	<b>Impulsive decisions</b>	<b>Habitual decisions</b>	<b>Non-routine decisions</b>	<b>Prudent decision</b>
Product information search time	very short	short	medium	long
Product price	low	low	average to high	very high
Product features	standard product	standard product	the possibility of selecting some features	customized products
Negotiation possibilities	no	no	in a small range	in a significant range
	<b>Frequent purchase products</b> <b>Periodic purchase products</b> <b>Episodic purchase products</b>			
	Intensity of product information search			
	minimal			maximal

Source: own elaboration, based on Grabarski 2001 and Żelazna et al. 2002.



### CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING FACTORS

As can be seen in Figure 6, quality of furniture (69.9%) is very important or factor for customers before making a final decision. On the contrary, the same level of significance in the case of accessories used to produce furniture indicated only 20% respondents.

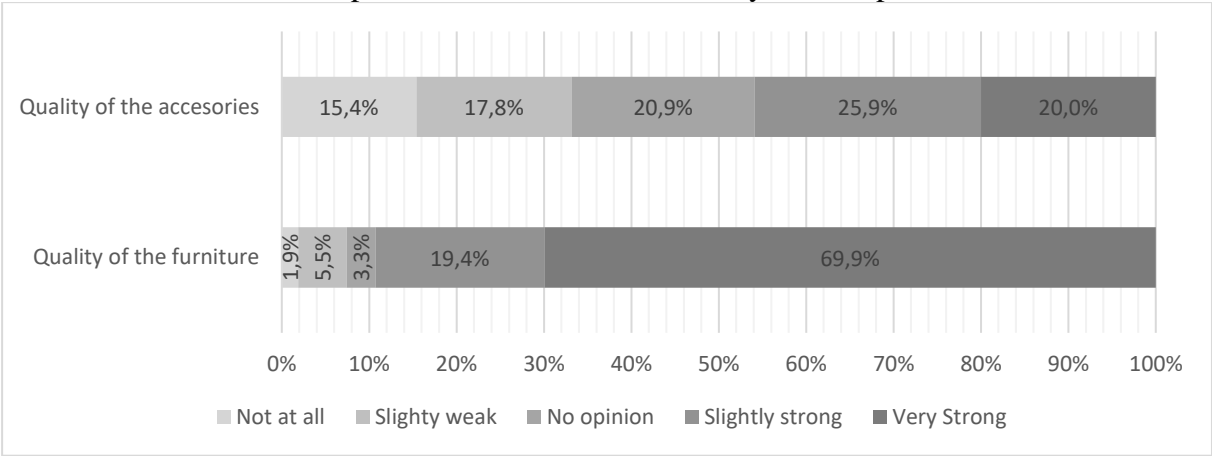


Fig.6. The impact of quality of the furniture on the purchase decision of customers in Poland

Obtained results presented in the Figure 7 allow to conclude that both functionality and convenience are factors with similar level with similar levels of influence on the purchase decision. Around 40% of respondents indicated these factors as very important for them when choosing furniture to buy. In contrast, only 9.4% of respondents indicated functionality and 10.6% of respondents indicated convenience as factors with slightly weak or no impact on their decisions.

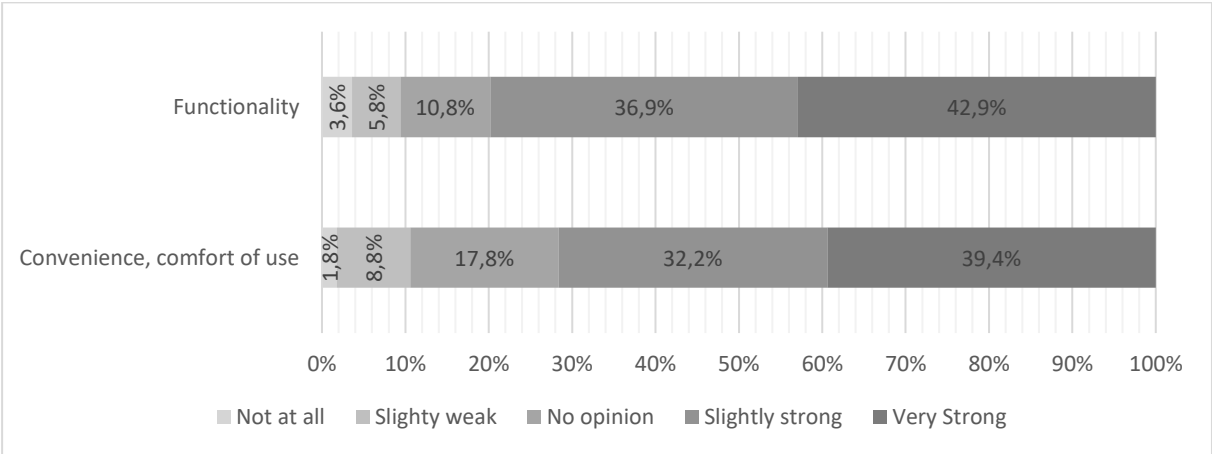


Fig.7. The impact of comfort and usability of the furniture on the purchase decision of customers in Poland

It is interesting to note, that as shown in Figure 8, nearly 40% of respondents have no opinion about the importance of extended warranty for their decision. What is more, this is the most frequently indicated answer. Thus, analyzing the results presented, it can be concluded that extended warranty period is not a factor that convinces customers in Poland to purchase a particular product. The results also indicate the importance of service quality provided in stores (stationary and online) as an important factor for customers when choosing furniture to purchase.

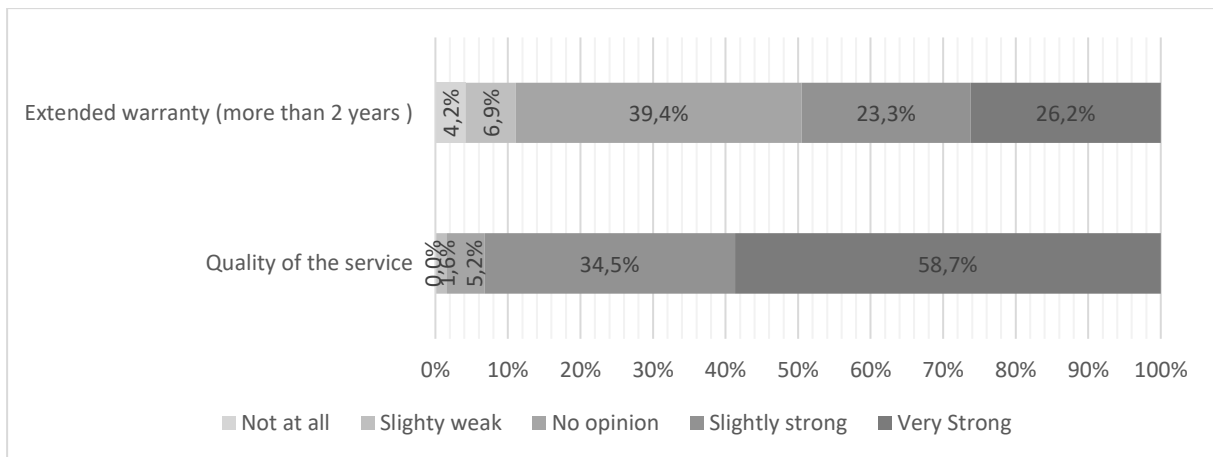


Fig.8. The impact of additional services on the purchase decision of customers in Poland

The impact of individual charges on the final purchase price is presented in Figure 9. Respondents ranked the impact of product price on their decision as very strong (68.2%) as well as the impact of mandatory delivery charge (39.2%). When asked about additional charge for assembly the most frequent answer was no opinion (26.3%). The impact of the discount given for the purchase of furniture was indicated by the majority of the respondents as slightly strong (42.2%).

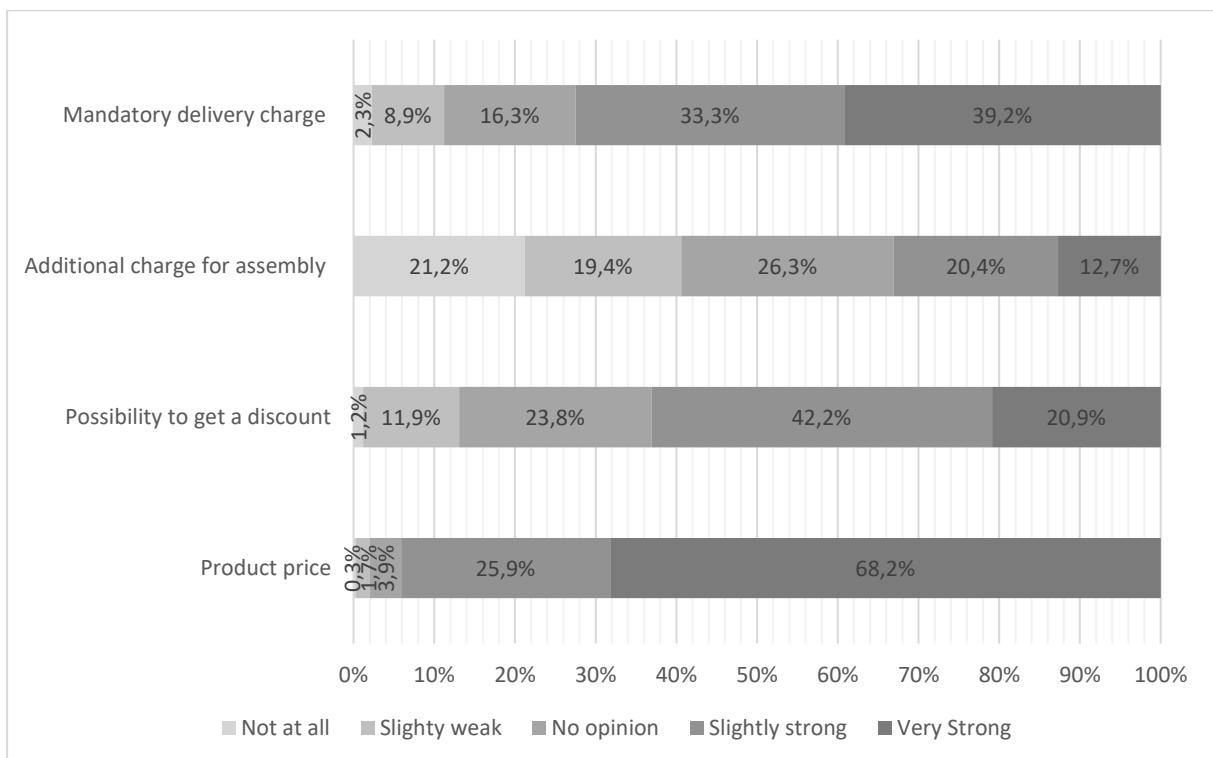


Fig.9. The impact of furniture purchase costs on the purchase decision of customers in Poland

Figure 10 presents reasons for furniture purchase in Poland. Respondents indicated damages (including wears) as the most common factor pushing them to purchase a replacement (28.3%). In contrast, impulse purchases for which we can consider both purchases influenced by advertising and incidental/unplanned purchase were indicated in total by 8.1% of respondents.

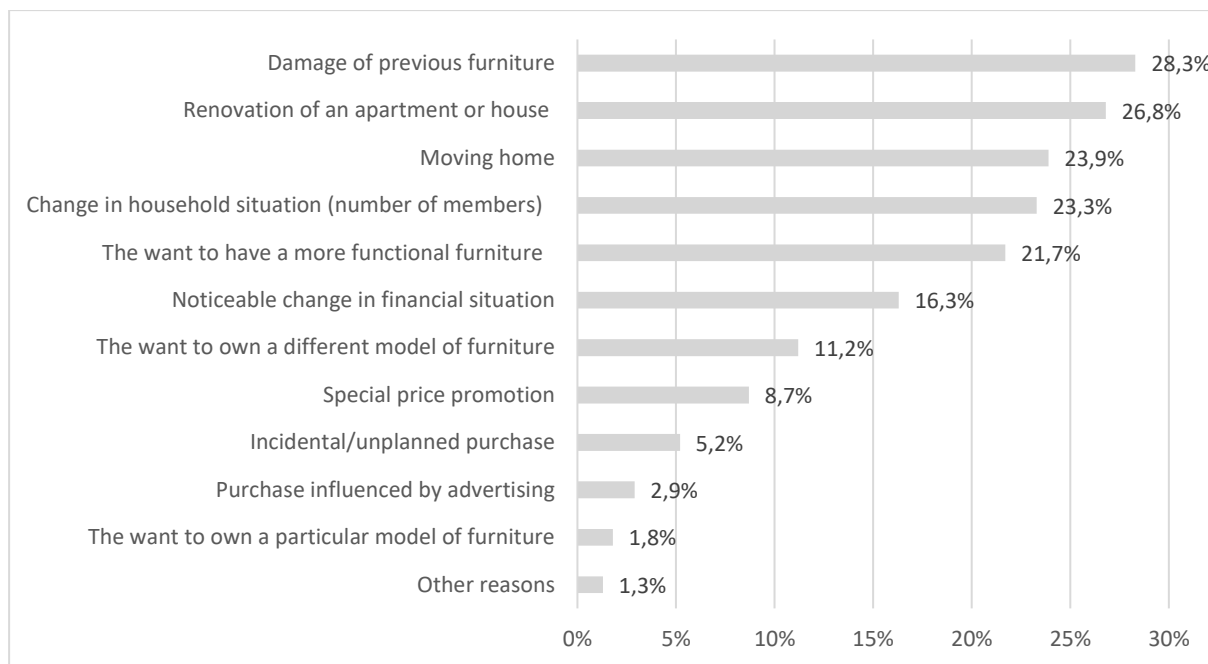


Fig. 10. Reasons for furniture purchases in Poland.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is an undeniable fact that customers are influenced by many factors that affect their decision-making process. Some of them are related to the purchaser, the product or the store's sales offer. There is a strong correlation between stage of family life cycle and the most frequently chosen category of products to buy. It is a result of human development, cultural aspects, the environment in which the person grew up, beliefs and life experiences. Conducted survey indicates that the most common factors influencing the decision during purchase that characterize the furniture are those related to design and aesthetics (avg 91.7% of respondents' answers). Price-related factors are fairly important to customers (86.8% of responses), and quality-related factors are the least important (avg. 80.0% of respondents' answers).

## REFERENCES

1. Adamowicz M., Krasuska A., (2016) Komunikacja marketingowa a zachowania nabywców na rynku towarów konsumpcyjnych, *Nierówności Społeczne a Wzrost Gospodarczy*, nr 45 (1/2016)
2. Al-Azzam A., (2014) Evaluating Effect Of Social Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior In Purchasing Home Furnishing Products In Jordan. *British Journal of Marketing Studies*, Vol.2, No.7, pp. 80-94, November 2014.
3. Dąbrowska A., Janoś-Kresło M., (2014) Zachowania zakupowe Polaków w świetle badań własnych. *Zeszyty naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego Nr 825*
4. Duvall EM. (1977) *Marriage and Family Development*, ed 5, Philadelphia, JB Lippincott
5. Hill R., Mattessich P. (1977) Reconstruction of family development theories: A progress report. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council on Family Relations, Theory Development and Methodology Workshop, San Diego

6. Rahman, M Ramees and Safeena, P K (2016) Customer Needs and Customer Satisfaction. In: Training Manual on Theeranaipunya - Equipping Fisherwomen Youth for Future. ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi, pp. 259-262.
7. Jošt, M., Kaputa, V., Nosál'ová, M., Pirc Barčič, A., Perić, I. i Oblak, L. (2020). Changes in Customer Preferences for Furniture in Slovenia. *Drvena industrija*, 71 (2), 149-156.
8. Fachmi1 M., Putra Setiawan I., Hidayat A., (2019) Analysis of Factors Affecting Consumer Purchase. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, Volume 4, Issue 3, March – 2019
9. Lichev G., (2017) psychological Factors In Determining Consumer Behavior. *Eastern Academic Journal*, Issue 1, pp.8-16, March – 2017
10. Zwierzyński P., (2017) The Determinants Of Consumer Behaviors In The Furniture Market, *AMME*, Vol.3, No 1, 2017, 131-143
11. Maciejewski G., (2010) *Ryzyko w decyzjach nabywczych konsumentów*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach 2010
12. Masovic A., (2018) Socio-cultural Factors And Their Impact On The Performance Of Multinational Companies. *Ecoforum*, Volume 7, Issue 1(14), 2018.
13. Xiao-lie Q., (2020) The Influence of Social Media on Buy Decision-making of Young Chinese Consumers, *E3S Web Conf.*, 218 (2020) 01037
14. Żelazna K., Kowalczyk I., Mikuta B. (2002) *Ekonomika konsumpcji elementy teorii*, Wydawnictwo Szkoły Głównej Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego, s. 18-19, 98
15. Bywalec C., (2007) *Konsumpcja w teorii i praktyce gospodarowania*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, s.56.
16. Grabarski L., (2001) *Zachowania nabywców*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne S.A., s. 85.
17. Medaline J. H., (1979) The Family Life Cycle and Its Implications for Family Practice, *The Journal of Family Practice*, Vol.9, No.1. 47-56, 1979.
18. Frasier R. C., (1963) *You and the Family Life Cycle*, Reprinted January 1963
19. Stankevich A., (2017) Explaining the Consumer Decision-Making Process: Critical Literature Review, *Journal of International Business Research and Marketing*, Volume 2, Issue 6, 2017
20. Rodrigues RI, Lopes P and Varela M (2021) Factors Affecting Impulse Buying Behavior of Consumers. *Front. Psychol.* 12:697080
21. Lautiainen T., (2015) Factors affecting consumers' buying decision in the selection of a coffee brand, *Saimaa University of Applied Sciences*
22. Pirc Barčič A., Kitek Kuzman M., Vergot, T., Grošelj, P., (2021) Monitoring Consumer Purchasing Behavior for Wood Furniture before and during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Forests* 2021, 12, 873
23. Analizy Peako, (2021) *Polskie meblarstwo 4.0. Jak przebiega ewolucja krajowego sektora w stronę nowych motorów wzrostu?*
24. Eurostat, (2022) *Persons who cannot afford to replace worn-out furniture by income group and type of household.*
25. UKEssays. (November 2018). *Factors that Shape Our Personality*. Retrieved from <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/psychology/the-factors-that-shape-our-personality-psychology-essay.php?vref=1>

**Streszczenie:** *Wpływ czynników społecznych na decyzje konsumenckie przy wyborze mebli w Polsce.* Celem niniejszych badań było określenie czynników społecznych wpływających na decyzje konsumenckie przy wyborze mebli w Polsce. W dzisiejszych czasach istotnym jest zrozumienie zachowań nabywców w celu opracowania przynoszących zyski strategii marketingowych. Sytuacja na polskim rynku meblarskim zmienia się dynamicznie i istnieje potrzeba podjęcia próby wskazania w jaki sposób klienci podejmują decyzję o wyborze a następnie zakupie danego produktu. W celu wyznaczenia najistotniejszych czynników w marcu 2022 przeprowadzono badania na grupie 1272 respondentów na terenie województwa śląskiego. Zadawane pytania dotyczyły takich obszarów jak: jakość produktu, komfort użytkowania mebli, wzornictwo oraz koszty zakupu. Uzyskane wyniki porównano i zaobserwowano istotną korelację pomiędzy czynnikami demograficznymi i ekonomicznymi a decyzjami zakupowymi respondentów.

Corresponding author:

Mateusz Niedbała, PhD., Eng.  
mateusz\_niedbala@sggw.edu.pl  
Institute of Wood Sciences and Furniture  
159 Nowoursynowska St  
PL 02787 Warsaw