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A STUDY OF THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PURCHASE OF
UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE AND THE RESULTING SATISFACTIONS
AS EXPRESSED BY FIFTY HOMEMAKERS

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The purchase of furniture represents a major investment of the family's income, second in importance only to the purchase of the house. Because of the relative permanence of furniture, qualities of durability, comfort, suitability, and aesthetic appeal must be considered if a wise choice is to be made, and these in terms of the budget limitations.

Due to the present commercial market, the layman cannot become an expert on the multitude of commodities he has to buy, and he must therefore purchase many articles more or less blindly. The very nature of upholstered furniture requires that the principle construction features be hidden, and conditions have not been such as to give even the most cautious consumer all the information he needs for really intelligent buying.¹

There are hundreds of interesting and vital facts available to consumers which make for greater discrimination and economy in buying, and aid in the selection of more charming, suitable, and comfortable furnishings in the home.² This information is increasingly available to consumers as the demand for it increases.

1. Clark B. Kelsey, Furniture, Its Selection and Use. Report of the Subcommittee on Furniture of the National Committee on Wood Utilization. Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1931. p. 1.

2. Ibid.

Many mistakes are made in buying furniture, the cost of which is difficult to estimate since the results of expenditures are measured in terms of satisfactions. There is no accurate way to measure satisfaction.³

The Problem

Statement of the Problem

It was the purpose of this study to investigate the factors considered by fifty consumers in the choice of upholstered living room furniture as they reflect the effect of outside influences, personal preferences, and the background of information, and to secure the home-makers' estimate of their satisfaction with the purchase.

Upholstered chairs, love seats, and sofas were chosen for study because (1) the purchase of upholstered furniture is practically universal among people who furnish a home regardless of income level, (2) the factors that influence the purchase of these pieces would be an index to considerations generally made in buying furniture, (3) the results of the study of considerations and satisfactions resulting would give an index to the general level of consumer education among the group, and (4) a knowledge of the construction and an awareness of the labeling would be an index to the buyers' interest in the kind and type of information available.

Importance of the Study

Although much buying information has been made available to consumers, and many evidences recorded of a movement toward bettering the

3. Jessie V. Coles, The Consumer-Buyer and the Market. New York: Wiley, 1938. p. 8.

status of the consumer as buyer, little has been done to investigate the effectiveness of these efforts as evidenced by the actual level of buying information, personal preferences, and satisfactions among a particular group of consumers. It is believed that this study will be of interest to educators, inasmuch as it indicates strong points and discrepancies of interest and information among the group studied, and to the extent that it shows effective influences and sources of information. It is believed that the study will interest retailers and manufacturers for the same reasons, and also as it indicates the effectiveness of their selling devices and their efforts to satisfy consumer preferences.

Methods Used

Fifty homemakers were interviewed in a door-to-door survey. Each was asked to fill out the questionnaire (see appendix), keeping in mind one particular piece of upholstered furniture, preferably the last purchase. After this, she was asked to identify certain of the materials and construction points. If she had a positive opinion about a point, she was given credit for knowing, since it was not possible to determine, in each instance, the accuracy of her statement. No credit was given for knowing if she said she did not know, or else gave an opinion which the interviewer knew from authoritative sources to be incorrect.

This information has been compiled into tables, graphs, and lists, and conclusions made from the data presented.

Related Studies

No research on this subject was found by a survey of the literature listed in the following guides:

Association of Research Libraries. Doctoral Dissertations Accepted by American Universities, 1933-34. Compiled for the National Research Council of Learned Societies by the Association of Research Libraries, edited by Donald B. Gilchrest. New York, The H. W. Wilson Co. 1934-47. 14 vols.

U. S. Bureau of Home Economics. Notes on Graduate Studies in Home Economics Education, 1936-1942. Washington: the Bureau, 1936-1942. Multigraphed.

U. S. Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics. Completed Theses in Home Economics in Related Fields in Colleges and Universities of the United States, 1942-1947. Washington: the Bureau, 1942-1947. Multigraphed.

United States Office of Education Library. Bibliography of Research Studies in Education, 1926-1940. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1929-1941.

United States Library of Congress. Catalogue Division. List of American Doctoral Dissertations, 1912-1938. Washington: Government Printing Office. 1913-1939.

The following organizations were contacted, but no information on similar studies was revealed:

American Retail Federation, 1626 K Street, Northwest,
Washington, D. C.

Consumers' Research, Inc., Washington, New Jersey.

Consumers' Union of U. S. Inc., 17 Union Square West, New
York 3, N. Y.

Institute of Distribution, Inc., 25 West 43rd Street,
New York City.

National Consumer-Retailer Council, Inc., 8 West Fortieth
Street, New York 18, New York.

National Retail Furniture Association, 666 Lake Shore Drive,
Chicago, Ill.

Public Affairs Committee, Inc., 22 East 38th Street, New
York 16, N. Y.

A survey on furniture buying habits was conducted by the Kroehler Manufacturing Company of Naperville, Illinois, in order that the company might eliminate guess work in designing a 1940 line. In forty-nine cities 1,817 families of all classes and age groups were interviewed in their homes. "By virtue of statistical sampling and complete coast-to-coast geographic coverage, the survey should correctly represent the typical viewpoint of no fewer than twenty-six million people and more than six and one half million families." It may therefore be assumed that one half of these were home owners, that three-fourths lived in one-family dwellings, and one-fourth in apartments.

The survey indicated that:

Fewer than one-third had bought their last furniture at the same store from which their last previous purchase had been made. Two-thirds elsewhere.

Thirty-three months elapse between major furniture purchases of the average family.

Over one-half of all furniture buyers shopped more than one store or department.

Fewer than ten per cent of actual buyers simply bought to replace out-of-style furniture.

Six out of ten customers wait until they are in the store before they choose a style.⁴

The Consumer Speaks Project of the American Home Economics Association was set up to give consumers a means of saying what they want in certain staple household articles. Straight chairs were discussed in

4. Roscoe R. Rau and Walter F. Shaw, Selling Home Furnishings. Federal Security Agency. United States Office of Education Bulletin, 1941, No. 216. Washington, D. C.: the Office of Education, 1941. pp. 39-40.

1946-47. The reasons for this choice were stated:

Straight chairs are used in every home.

Since straight chairs are used in the home to a great enough extent to affect the posture, health, comfort, and work efficiency of family members, properly designed and constructed chairs are important.

The objectives of the discussion were listed:

To secure information on consumer preferences about the design, construction, and function of straight chairs.

To make available consumers' preferences and needs regarding straight chairs to interested manufacturers, retailers, home economists, and consumers.⁵

The consumers who spoke were from nine states, representing the important regional areas of the United States, except New England. Sixty-five groups were included. The total number of women taking part in the discussions and voting was 1,212. Of the sixty-five groups, 40 per cent were members of home economics extension organizations; 21.5 per cent belonged to federated clubs; the remaining voters were divided among 12 other organizations, including students and business women. Members of 50 groups voting were homemakers.The percentage voting on items under this heading (informative labels) indicated a timidity in making definite statements about what they wanted on the label. The majority of votes were for the kind of wood and the type of joinery. Those items were mentioned as frequently as the desire for comfort. Seventy-eight per cent of the voters were homemakers; 522 were from families of 2 to 3 persons; 482 from families of 4 to 6 persons. Fifty-two represented families of seven or more. Their concern about the need for a comfortable and sturdy chair is well warranted.

.....
The comment, "Cost would be fair both to manufacturers and consumers" indicated that consumers are always willing to pay reasonable prices for chairs that meet these requirements. With these exceptions of preference, and in spite of the confusion in the use of terms, the consumer has made a good case for a functionally designed straight chair that conforms to body shape and will help the worker maintain good posture when she is seated; comments from various states indicate that chairs in local markets do not meet the needs of present day

5. The Consumer Speaks Project. Specific Suggestions for Discussion Leaders. Home Furnishings Section CSP-7, Straight Chairs. Washington, D. C.: The American Home Economics Association. 1947. P. 1.

usage. The consumers who took part in these discussions believe they will be more alert now to facts about buying straight chairs.⁶

6. Florence H. Mason, "The Consumer Speaks on Straight Chairs," Journal of Home Economics, 40:571-572, December, 1948.

CHAPTER II

CURRENT STATUS OF CONSUMER EDUCATION IN REGARD TO FURNITURE BUYING

The consumer movement began about one hundred years ago, but it is only during the past two decades that consumer interests and problems have risen to the position of eminence that they now hold.¹

The consumer movement, in the widest sense of the word, consists of all the efforts, organized or unorganized, to make the consumer a wiser buyer and user of those products which she acquires in her capacity as a consumer. The purpose of these efforts is to raise the standard of living of the consumer by making her recognize more clearly her needs and by equipping her with knowledge and factual information to help her satisfy them.

The efforts of the consumer movement are in two directions, toward the consumer and toward business. The leaders want to teach the consumer what she should look for when she is buying a certain article or a certain service, and how to use it after it has been acquired. Simultaneously, they want business to provide complete and accurate information about the merchandise and service which it sells.²

Several evidences of the growing strength of the consumer movement may be noted in the following ways: Courses dealing with these problems are being developed in secondary schools and colleges and in universities with continually increasing enrollment. Organizations specifically concerned with consumers' problems are functioning for purposes of testing, education, and as pressure groups. Many already existing organizations have incorporated these consumer activities into

1. Walter K. Gabler, Labeling the Consumer Movement. An analysis from the Retailers' Point of View of Organizations and Agencies Engaged in Consumer Activities. Washington, D. C.: American Retail Federation, 1939. P. 14.

2. Ibid.

their programs. Magazines are devoting more attention to the subject, and an increasing number of books on the subject is being published, with certain of the "debunking" books best sellers. Consumer magazines such as Consumers' Research Bulletin and Consumers' Union have appeared and shown an unprecedented increase in circulation.³

Where business has been slow to respond to pressure from consumer influences, the government, and especially the Federal government, has been induced to act, setting up agencies to educate the consumer and improve her spending ability.⁴

Both state and federal agencies publish bulletins which give advice on buying and use of products. Notable among these are the Bureau of Home Economics and the Consumers' Council of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Excellent publications are also available from a number of the state colleges.⁵

Government research has been aimed at the establishment of standards and grades of qualities.

The National Bureau of Standards furthers standardization by research and by cooperation with industry to set up standards. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics (now the Agricultural Marketing Service) has set up standards for many types of agricultural products. . . . Testing, too, is done by several government agencies--by the National Bureau of Standards, by various other governmental departments, and by educational institutions such as schools of home economics and engineering.⁶

There are regulations which require businesses to adhere to the standards and to give the consumer more complete and accurate information in labels and advertising. The Federal Trade Commission, although not

3. Ibid., p. 13.

4. Ibid.

5. Maxine Enlow, Buyer Guidance, Please! Columbia, Missouri, Stephens College Institute for Consumer Education, 1939. Pp. 20-21.

6. Ibid.

established for the purpose of protecting consumers, has been their most effective ally, since it has the power to take action against sellers who misrepresent articles or mislabel them.⁷

Besides the number of independent testing laboratories at work for the benefit of producers and businesses who buy in large quantities, there are some independent agencies which carry out tests or collect information on consumers' goods. Consumers' research is a non-profit organization, which publishes bulletins and an annual publication on the testing and rating of many kinds of products, identifying them by brand names. Although the organization is staffed by qualified technicians, free from any commercial interest or influences, the lack of uniformity of goods marketed under particular brands and what is sometimes judged as inadequate sampling of the goods tested often leaves the validity of the ratings open to question.

Consumers' Union of the United States, Inc., is a non-profit organization similar to Consumers' Research, differing largely in that it is pro-labor, wherever possible providing information concerning labor conditions. It publishes a monthly bulletin, and an annual Buying Guide, of which there is an abridged edition concerning only lower priced products.⁸

Although the consumer movement is an increasingly potent force, according to Coles in The Consumer-Buyer and the Market:

7. Jessie V. Coles, The Consumer-Buyer and the Market. New York: Wiley, 1938. P. 476.

8. Ibid., pp. 564-566.

The first and most vital problem to be attacked at the present time in this field of education is the necessity of arousing customers to their need for action. Customers must be aroused from their apathy, their complacency.⁹

Continues Coles in a discussion of the problems of educating the consumer:

Another phase in the education of the consumer as buyer is concerned with an understanding of the character of the market, the methods employed, the devices used. An understanding of the services performed by the market and an appreciation of the necessity of the services for our very existence is essential to the intelligent consumer-buyer. The consumer-buyer must have sufficient information to appraise existing arrangements and proposed changes. . . Consumers need to understand the fundamental position of producers as profitseekers. They must understand that their profit motives place them in a position not always inimical with interests of consumers. Consumer-buyers must also understand how the practices they follow in buying influence the market and its arrangements.

And finally, the education of the consumer as buyer must deal with specific commodities and services as means of satisfying wants. This involves knowing what goods are available, the purpose of the goods, . . . qualities that make goods suitable or unsuitable, . . . and the ability to identify and compare qualities. . . . This involves developing ability to inspect goods, to judge from experience their value, . . . and a knowledge of and the use of such devices as are available for detecting qualities which are not self-evident.

Education of the consumer as buyer also includes a body of factual information concerning terminology and symbols used in describing goods according to grades, standards, and brands. Much of that pertaining to brands is impermanent and the buyer must be constantly alert to changes in this information.¹⁰

The ultimate consumer has never been able to judge qualities of some goods offered for his purchase and use, and is probably less able to do so now than ever before, since technological advances in industry make specialized information necessary. This is especially true with

9. Ibid., p. 573.

10. Ibid., pp. 573-574.

upholstered furniture, where hidden values are built into the construction. The consumer is not in a position to compare items for quality, neither can he be sure of getting the best value for the money when buying by brand.¹¹

According to Coles,

. . . it seems rather doubtful if the consumer-buyer of today can accept brands as an entirely adequate guide in buying. They may pay more for branded goods than for those not branded, especially for those widely advertised, without getting better quality. The convenience of using them in buying depends upon the uniformity of qualities. There are real reasons for believing that qualities of goods marketed under particular brands may vary considerably at present. If consumer-buyers are to continue to rely upon brands in buying, producers will need to take measures to provide more information concerning qualities of branded goods than they provide at present.¹²

By informing consumer-buyers of the availability of goods, advertising performs a valuable and indispensable service. It also provides an excellent means by which producers could, if they desired, give the public adequate and reliable information concerning qualities which would make possible intelligent buying. Unfortunately, however, little or no information is given, but most advertising contains trade puffing, much of which may be misleading or false.¹³

According to Rau and Shaw, "analysis of magazine advertising will reveal the fact that construction is rarely used as an advertising appeal; a count of several current issues indicated about one in twenty."¹⁴

11. Clark B. Kelsey, Furniture, Its Selection and Use, Report of the Subcommittee on Furniture of the National Committee on Wood Utilization. 1931, Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1931. P. 1.

12. Coles, op. cit., p. 421.

13. Ibid., p. 432.

14. Roscoe R. Rau and Walter F. Shaw, Selling Home Furnishings. United States Office of Education Bulletin, 1941, No. 216. Washington, D. C.: The Office of Education, 1941. P. 84.

Newspapers and magazines, in their capacity as advertising media, exert varying degrees of censorship over the advertising they accept.

Newspapers also generally cooperate with the Better Business Bureaus in their efforts to improve the quality of advertising. At the request of the local bureau a paper will often refuse misleading advertising of a firm that is not reputable, and advertising which is not in accordance with Federal Trade Commission rules.

Most magazines, too, refuse advertising which does not come up to their standards. Several have set up testing laboratories . . . of their own to obtain first-hand information about commodities in which they are interested. Some guarantee that the products advertised in the magazine come up to the statements made in the advertisement or guarantee that the products will prove satisfactory. . . . Some magazines have established seals of approval which they award to products that are accepted by the bureaus or institutes they have set up to judge them.¹⁵

Checking up on all the claims made by advertisers is an expensive and troublesome job which is not really the business of publishers, and the effectiveness of their efforts is sometimes questioned.

Even some of the most reputable magazines have accepted advertisements which were subsequently shown by the Federal Trade Commission to have been misleading or fraudulent. Similarly, with regard to seals of approval, there has long been a question in the minds of consumer leaders as to whether the minimum standards were high enough to give them much significance.¹⁶

Both newspapers and magazines give general information in articles on the purchase and use of various products. Although they both "present themselves persuasively as spokesmen and allies of consumers," a publication owes its first responsibility to its advertisers,

15. Enlow, op. cit., p. 11.

16. Ibid., pp. 12-13.

since commonly twice as much of their income is derived from advertising as from subscriptions. It is to their interests to eliminate advertising that the consumer can easily detect as false and can bring discredit on advertisement in general and impair the value of the publication as a medium for sales promotion.¹⁷

The retailer is constantly in touch with the manufacturer, and has access to more information about the product than is usually provided for the consumer. However, even retailers are sometimes unable to get all the facts necessary for intelligent buying.¹⁸

It is the salesperson who comes in personal contact with the consumer, and it is to him that the buyer will turn for information. The reliance that consumers place in salespersons may or may not be well founded. Much of the information given by salespersons is accurate, yet some statements may be misleading or false. Sometimes information is deliberately withheld if it might interfere with the sale. Often providing the consumers with information is subordinated to the art of persuading them to buy.¹⁹

Only when consumers are informed about the goods they wish to buy and the tactics employed by the salespersons in promoting sales are they less gullible in accepting what salespersons tell them, and they have more resistance to high pressure salesmanship. Says Coles, in regard to their responsibility in this respect:

17. Ibid., p. 13.

18. Ibid., p. 6.

19. Coles, op. cit., p. 381.

Present-day consumer-buyers are responsible for letting salespersons and their employers know that they recognize and disapprove untruthful and misleading information. They are also responsible for letting salespersons know the kind of information they would like. They must insist upon such information until they have convinced both salespersons and retailers that they really want facts. Sellers will then not be able to say that no one is interested in such information.²⁰

Better trained consumer-buyers will look to informative labeling as an aid to buying.

For many years consumer leaders have been hammering away on the need for labels as a consumer protective device, and as an aid in buying. Other efforts have countered which have demonstrated that consumers do not pay any attention to labels, and that it was much easier to sell a consumer on the need for labels than it was to sell her on the use of them. . . . However, some consumer surveys have indicated a distinct preference for labeled products expressing satisfaction of the consumer in the very fact that a label is affixed to the product.²¹

The labeling of furniture has lagged behind the labeling of certain products which affect the health and safety of users, but there are certain laws in effect

. . . regulating the manufacture and sale, including the labeling of bedding, upholstered furniture, and similar articles. . . in seventeen states, the District of Columbia, and two large cities. Generally these laws require that manufacturers attach a label to the article, naming the kinds of materials used for filling and stating whether or not they are new or second hand. Percentages or weights of materials used are often required in such statements. These laws are enforced by trained inspectors who visit factories, warehouses, and retail stores. Lack of uniformity in regulations from state to state and lack of active enforcement in some states mean that consumer-buyers do not always have adequate protection.

20. Ibid., pp. 387-388.

21. The Committee on Consumer Relations in Advertising, The Problem of Labeling: A Report. New York: The Committee. Section I, pp. 1-2.

For example, in Missouri where the law is supposedly actively enforced, the Better Business Bureau of St. Louis found that twelve out of fifteen mattresses, purchased in St. Louis stores ranging in price from \$4.54 to \$11.95 and practically all of local manufacture, contained previously used materials in spite of the fact that the labels showed that all new materials had been used.²²

In regard to upholstered furniture manufactured and sold in North Carolina, a search through The North Carolina Code of 1935 failed to reveal any law requiring the labeling of upholstered furniture used for seating purposes only.²³

The Federal Trade Commission with the furniture industry has set up certain rules concerning woods which apply to all forms of advertising, labeling, and descriptions of all kinds. These rules, which are enforceable by law in interstate commerce, state that:

Furniture in which exposed surfaces are of one wood, shall be designated by the name of that wood.

Furniture in which the exposed surfaces are of more than one kind of wood, shall be designated as to the woods used.

Note: "exposed surfaces" mean those parts of a piece of furniture which are exposed to view when the piece is placed in the generally accepted position for use.²⁴

Furniture trade associations and Better Business Bureaus have prevailed upon retailers to adopt and to apply these rules so that now many ethical furniture dealers observe them in their advertising. Unfortunately for the consumer, however, the observance of these rules is not generally applied to tags which appear on merchandise and in salesmen's representations.

Most stores have tags with a space for "finish" but no space for "kind of wood." The unwary buyer will see "mah" or "wal" and assume that the piece is genuine mahogany or walnut and the salesman may let his assumption go without correction.

22. Coles, op. cit., pp. 397-398.

23. A. Newman Michie, editor. The North Carolina Code of 1935. Charlottesville, Va.: The Michie Co. 1935.

24. Household Finance Corporation, Furniture, Better Buyman-ship Bulletin No. 26. Chicago: Department of Research of the Household Finance Corporation, 1939. p. 7.

If, after the furniture is delivered, a complaint is registered, the store's excuse is that the tag referred only to the color of the finish and not to the kind of wood.²⁵

The American Walnut Manufacturers' Association and the Mahogany Association, Inc. are two organizations which promote the use of identifying tags and labels. In labeling furniture, manufacturers may use the "solid" tag if all exposed surfaces are the designated wood such as solid walnut or solid mahogany. If frame parts such as legs, posts, and stretchers are made of solid walnut or mahogany and larger surfaces such as panels and table tops are of plywood, the furniture is labeled as "genuine" walnut or mahogany. The Associations issue these labels to furniture manufacturers under contract, with mahogany labels under penalty contract, thereby guaranteeing to the shopper that the furniture is made of the wood specified and not substitute wood.²⁶

Three obstacles to the widespread use of informative labels such as would be of real value to consumers are listed by Coles. These are: "(1) lack of adequate facts concerning and adequate methods of measuring quantitatively important qualities of goods; (2) lack of co-operation on the part of producers; and (3) lack of adequate demand on the part of consumers."²⁷

In regard to the first point, it is true that qualities of materials and construction of upholstered furniture are difficult to evaluate and describe, especially on a grade labeling basis, but many qualities can be described in terms sufficiently accurate to be used on labels.

25. Ibid., p. 11.

26. Ibid.

27. Coles, op. cit., p. 398.

The lack of co-operation of producers is one of the greatest obstacles for procuring informative labels; however, it would seem that only producers of inferior goods would be reluctant to give complete and accurate information regarding their goods.²⁸ In The Problem of Labeling it is brought out that

. . . many manufacturers should find informative labeling of aid to them in selling their products. It tends to increase the desirability of the commodity that is of good quality and honestly labeled. Because the purchaser of such a product knows more about it, he has greater confidence in it. Because he gets more nearly exactly the thing he wants, he derives greater satisfaction from it and is more likely to make repeat purchases.

The unreliable manufacturer is apt to be handicapped by an informative labeling program. If he presents on his labels true information about his merchandise, their deficiencies become readily apparent. If his labels are untruthful, he is liable to find himself in trouble with the law. If he makes no pretense of labeling his merchandise informatively when other producers are doing so, he labors under a serious handicap in his selling efforts. The manufacturer of poor quality goods has everything to lose and little, if anything, to gain from informative labeling. The producer of good merchandise, on the other hand, can gain much from the practice.²⁹

As to the lack of demand on the part of consumers, producers claim that informative labels would be cumbersome, and that consumers would not read the extensive information, making unwarranted the necessary expense. It is true that the great mass of consumers do not as yet demand such information, and until large groups of consumers become articulate about their desire for adequate facts on labels, producers will not consider it necessary to provide informative labels.³⁰

28. Ibid.

29. The Committee on Consumer Relations in Advertising, op. cit., p. 12.

30. Coles, op. cit., p. 399.

As individuals and as organizations it is possible to exert pressure on individual retailers and organizations of retailers. When retailers are convinced of the need for and the value of labels, pressure may be exerted by both retailers and consumers upon manufacturers.³¹

Since descriptive labels are in the language of the seller and provide a conducive media to sales promotional "puffing" of the product, they may be subject to abuse. Unless they are standardized by competing manufacturers³² and policed by government agencies,³³ information given might have little relation to facts and become misleading or deceptive.

To do really intelligent buying, consumers need (1) to inform themselves about quality before buying, and (2) to demand reliable information about points which they are unable to judge for themselves. Until furniture is labeled adequately, the consumers' best assurance of quality merchandise is the reliability of the manufacturer or retailer.

Summary

Increased consumer desire for adequate buying information and standard products has stimulated and been stimulated by corresponding efforts on the part of business and other organizations concerned with consumer problems.

31. Ibid.

32. The Committee on Consumer Relations in Advertising, op. cit.,
p. 8.

33. Ibid., p. 9.

Generally speaking, there is less information regarding furniture available to the consumer and less assurance of quality merchandise than is found regarding many products that affect the health and safety of the buying public. The information and protection which the buyer receives are usually in proportion to the demand of the buyer.

There are forces operating to improve the labeling and quality of furniture construction, and to enforce legislation prohibiting the use of unhealthful materials in its manufacture. At the present time, however, the consumers' best assurance of quality in furniture lies in the integrity of the manufacturer and the retailer.

CHAPTER III

THE SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

The Kirkwood Section of Greensboro

The information for this study was collected during March and April of 1948 in the Kirkwood section of Greensboro, North Carolina. This section was chosen for study because it was considered homogeneous for the following reasons:

All the families represented are owners of small homes.
The majority are families of veterans of World War II.
Many of the families represented are young married couples with small children.
The family incomes were sufficient to maintain an adequate standard of living.

The Kirkwood section is an emergency housing development, built between the spring of 1946 and spring of 1947, the houses of which were made available to veterans of World War II under the priority system. Approximately one hundred thirty houses were built by two construction companies, selling for \$7800 to \$9400. This variation in price was due to (1) the differences in the size of the houses, ranging from nine hundred to eleven hundred square feet; some having two bedrooms, others, three; (2) differences in the size of the lot, some sixty-two feet, others, seventy-five feet; and (3) the desirability of the location. Four of the houses were not built by either of the construction companies. The materials used in the houses were the same with the exception of

thirty pre-cut houses which were manufactured by American Homes, Inc. These houses were somewhat more expensive and better constructed than those using local materials.

There were approximately fifteen complete stock plans furnished by the builders, each with four or five variations in exterior and interior design, resulting in two to four duplications in the entire development.

These houses were built during a period of increase in the cost of building. During the period of construction there was a rise of fifteen per cent, all of which was not reflected in the final sales price. The value of the homes has increased since they were built due to improvements made in yards and houses, and the growing desirability of the neighborhood.

Ninety-five per cent of the homes were financed with G. I. loans which required no down payment. Only a few were combination G. I. and F. H. A. loans.¹

The Size of the Families

It has been stated that the large majority of families were those of veterans of World War II. With slight exception the children of these families were young children; however, there may have been dependents other than children in the family group.

In Table I it is indicated that a fifth of the families were composed of two members, that over a third were families of three, and that

1. Interview with R. B. Cauthen, Chief Construction Examiner, Federal Housing Administration.

over a third were families of four, making a total of 94 per cent having two to four persons in the family. Only 6 per cent of the families were composed of five or six persons.

TABLE I
THE SIZE OF THE FAMILIES

Number in family	Number of families	Per cent of families
2	10	20
3	18	36
4	19	38
5	2	4
6	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	50	100

The average number in the families of the group was 3.33, and the median number was three. According to the National Conference on Family Life "Working Papers," which was based on a nation-wide sample survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census in April 1947, the average number in a family in the United States was 3.6, there being more families of two than of any other number.²

The Economic Status of the Group

Income Levels

Of the number of families reporting the information, slightly less than a fifth had incomes of less than \$3500. About a fifth had

2. National Conference on Family Life. "Working Papers." American Families: The Factual Background. Washington, D. C.: The Conference, May 8, 1948. p. 1. Mimeographed.

incomes of less than \$3500 to \$4500, and three-fifths, of more than \$4500. More than half of the families in the study earned incomes which compare approximately to the fourth highest fifth and the highest fifth of the national income averages as they are shown in the "Economic Report of the President," January, 1948.³

TABLE II
FAMILY INCOMES*

Yearly income	Number of families	Per cent of total families	Per cent of families reporting
Up to \$1500	1	2	2
\$1500-2500	3	6	7
2500-3500	4	8	9
3500-4500	8	16	19
4500-6500	24	48	56
Over \$6500	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>
Total	43	86	100

*Incomes unknown by three homemakers, withheld by four.

The incomes of the following wage earners were not given by the homemakers:

Agent for Mohawk Carpet Mills
Consulting engineer
Manufacturer of ladies' underwear, co-owner and manager
Newspaper reporter
Railway mail clerk
Restauranteur
Wholesale druggist

According to the Department of Agriculture publication, "How Families Spend Their Incomes,"

3. "Economic Report of the President," Business Week, April 24, 1948. p. 24.

In 1945 nearly half (49 per cent) of the city families of two or more persons reported incomes between \$1500 and \$3500. Thirteen per cent were below \$1500; the remaining 38 per cent had incomes above \$3500. The median 1945 income for city families of two or more persons was about \$3000.

Many in the low income group were small families, less pressed by rising prices than the average city family. For example, six out of ten city families with incomes below \$1500 had only two members; above the \$1500 level, only three out of ten were two person families.⁴

According to the National Conference on Family Life "Working Papers,"

Family cash income has risen sharply since prewar. In 1939, the median civilian wage and salary income of primary families was \$1,389. In 1944, it was \$2,607; two years later in the first full postwar year, it was \$3,010.⁵

The "Working Papers" also discusses the size of the income which is necessary to maintain an adequate standard of living at current prices.

In December 1947, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released a new "city workers' family budget" which was based on scientific standards (where available) and on the kinds of choices of goods and services which families actually made when purchasing. The living pattern arrived at is described as "modest but currently adequate to provide family health, worker efficiency, nurture of children, and social participation by all members of the family." It is in general the point where the struggle for "more and more" things gives way to the desire for "better and better" things.

The total cost of the budget (including goods and services, taxes, social security and other outlays) at March 1946 prices, ranged from \$2985 in Washington, D. C., the most expensive of the 34 cities selected, down to \$2532 in Houston, Texas. At June 1947 prices, the cost of the family budget ranged from

4. United States Department of Agriculture. How Families Spend Their Incomes. Miscellaneous Publication No. 653. Washington, D. C.: The Department, 1948. p. 2.

5. National Conference on Family Life, op. cit., p. 6.

\$3485 in Washington, D. C. to \$3007 in Houston and \$3004 in New Orleans. At current prices the cost of this budget would be higher than in June 1947. The bureau's consumer price index shows an increase of 7 per cent from June 1947 to February 1948 in retail prices of all goods and services.⁶

It would, therefore, seem that the incomes of the majority of the group would provide an adequate standard of living in spite of current high prices.

Occupations of Wage Earners

Many of the homemakers' husbands held executive business positions, while others were highly trained or skilled, accounting for and substantiating the relatively high incomes reported by the homemakers. Only two wives and one daughter were listed as wage earners. The occupations are listed in the appendix.

The Educational Background

The maximum schooling of the homemakers is indicated in Table III. It is shown that although all of the group attended high school, six per cent did not graduate, and twenty per cent went no further. Of the 14 per cent who went on to junior colleges, over half of these graduated, and of the 30 per cent who went on to a four-year college, three-fourths graduated. Six per cent of the group completed graduate school. A fourth of the group completed some vocational or business training.

6. Ibid., p. 7.

TABLE III
THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE HOMEMAKERS

Last schooling	Attended		Attended but did not graduate			Graduated		
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent of total	Per cent of those attending	Number	Per cent of total	Per cent of those attending
High school	13	26	3	6	23	10	20	77
Junior college	7	14	3	6	43	4	8	57
Four-year college	15	30	4	8	27	11	22	73
Graduate school	3	6	0	0	0	3	6	100
Business school	6	12	0	0	0	6	12	100
School of Nursing	3	6	0	0	0	3	6	100
Art school	2	4	0	0	0	2	4	100
School of Interior Decorating	1	2	0	0	0	1	2	100
Total	50	100	10	20		40	80	

The "Working Papers" of the National Conference on Family Life states that

. . . according to the 1947 census more than half the population twenty years old and over had completed the first year of high school; in 1940 half the population twenty-five years of age and over had 8.4 or more years of schooling. The median number of school years completed by persons twenty to twenty-nine years old in 1947 was about twelve years.⁷

The homemakers in the study, by comparison with the above figures, are shown to have more education than is average for the general population of the United States.

7. Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

DATA AND ANALYSES

Introduction

In this chapter will be discussed the data obtained from the check sheets filled out by the fifty homemakers selected for the study, and from the questions asked them in interviews. The data will include a discussion of the description, dates and places of purchase, and cost of the furniture; the factors concerning the selection and purchase of the furniture; the homemakers' background of information; and the resulting estimated satisfactions.

The Furniture

Type of Furniture and Amount of Upholstery

In answering the questions included in the check sheet, each of fifty homemakers was asked to consider one piece of upholstered furniture which she had bought, preferably the last purchase. Of the furniture in the study, 66 per cent were sofas, 24 per cent were chairs, and 10 per cent were love seats. Almost three-fourths of the furniture was upholstered, and slightly more than one-fourth was partially upholstered.

Definitions of Terms Used

Upholstered.--No exposed wood except the feet.

Partially upholstered.--Some exposed wood on arms or back of the furniture.

TABLE IV
TYPE OF FURNITURE AND AMOUNT OF UPHOLSTERY

Type of furniture	Upholstered		Partially Upholstered		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Sofas	27	54	6	12	33	66
Chairs	6	12	6	12	12	24
Love seats	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>10</u>
Total	36	72	14	28	50	100

Dates of Purchase of the Furniture

The following observations may be made regarding the dates of purchase of the furniture in the study:

(1) Before 1940 only 4 per cent of the furniture was purchased in any one year.

(2) The years immediately preceeding the war show an increase in the number of purchases; from 4 per cent in 1939 to 8 per cent in 1940, and 12 per cent in 1941.

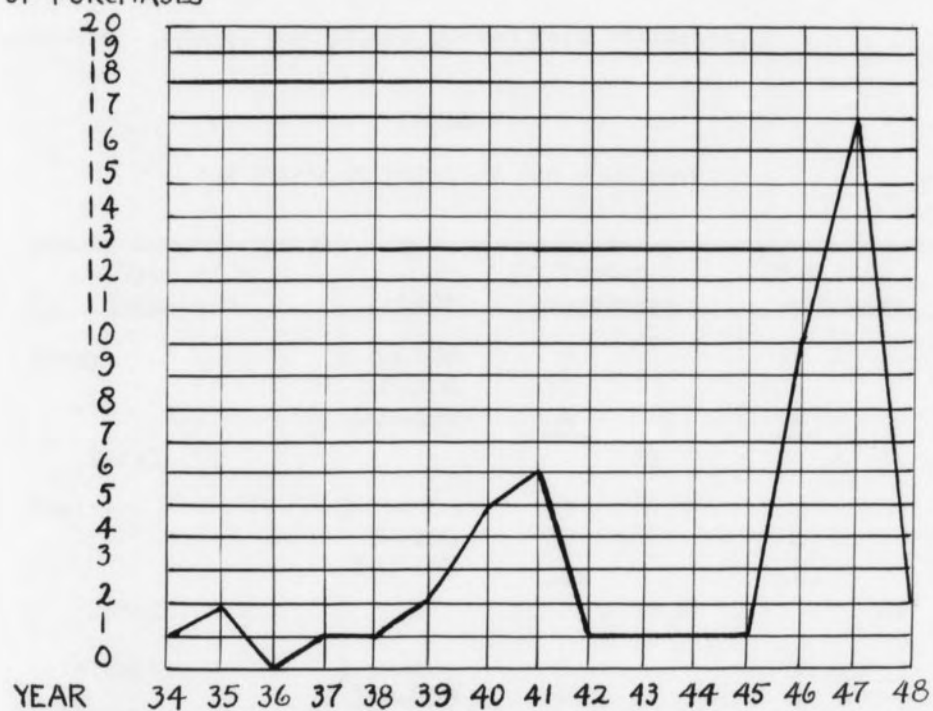
(3) During the war years, 1942 through 1945, only 2 per cent of the furniture was purchased in any one year.

(4) Immediately after the war the number of purchases increased sharply to 20 per cent in 1946 and 34 per cent in 1947, accounting for 54 per cent of the total number of purchases.

(5) In the first three months of 1948, only 4 per cent of the furniture was purchased by the time the survey was made.

FIGURE 1
DATES OF PURCHASE OF THE FURNITURE

NUMBER
OF PURCHASES



The Purchase Price of the Furniture

The furniture ranged in price from very high to very low, with the largest per cent of each group within a medium price range. The distribution of these prices is shown in Table V. The figures are based on an actual 66 per cent of the total number of pieces of furniture, since 24 per cent of the homemakers did not give the price of the furniture. Some of the prices quoted were estimates.

TABLE V
THE PURCHASE PRICE OF THE FURNITURE

Type of furniture	Price*	Number purchases	Per cent purchases
Sofas	\$ 20-100	7	18
	100-200	10	26
	200-450	<u>4</u>	<u>10</u>
Total		21	54
Chairs	\$ 15- 50	3	8
	50-100	3	8
	100-169	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>
Total		9	24
Love seats	\$ 59-100	1	3
	100-200	2	5
	200-225	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
Total		4	11
Chair and sofa combinations	\$165-200	1	3
	200-250	2	5
	250-285	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>
Total		<u>4</u>	<u>11</u>
Total		38**	100

*Price of eight sofas, three chairs, one love seat unknown.

**Price of one sofa withheld.

Factors Regarding the Choice of the
Place of Purchase

Residence of the Purchasers when Furniture
Was Bought

Residence of purchasers who bought furniture in Greensboro.--Fifty-eight per cent of the furniture was purchased in Greensboro. Ninety-five per cent of this furniture was purchased by Greensboro residents, while the remaining 5 per cent was purchased by families living outside of Greensboro at the time the purchases were made.

Residence of purchasers who bought furniture at towns other than Greensboro.--Forty-two per cent of the furniture was purchased at towns other than Greensboro. Slightly more than a third of these out-of-town purchases were made by Greensboro residents. Almost two-thirds of the families who made out-of-town purchases moved to Greensboro after their furniture had been bought.

TABLE VI

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF PURCHASES MADE IN GREENSBORO
AND IN TOWNS OTHER THAN GREENSBORO

Place of purchase	Number of purchases	Per cent of purchases
Greensboro	29	58
Towns other than Greensboro	<u>21</u>	<u>42</u>
Total	50	100

TABLE VII

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF GREENSBORO
RESIDENTS AND NON-RESIDENTS WHO BOUGHT
FURNITURE IN GREENSBORO

Residence of purchasers	Number of purchases made in Greensboro	Per cent of purchases made in Greensboro	Per cent of total purchases
Greensboro	27	95	54
Outside Greensboro	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	29	100	58

TABLE VIII

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF GREENSBORO
RESIDENTS AND NON-RESIDENTS WHO BOUGHT
FURNITURE OUTSIDE GREENSBORO

Residence of purchasers	Number of purchases made outside Greensboro	Per cent of purchases made outside Greensboro	Per cent of total purchases
Greensboro	8	38	16
Outside Greensboro	<u>13</u>	<u>62</u>	<u>26</u>
Total	21	100	42

Places Where the Furniture was Purchased

Stores in Greensboro.--Morrison-Neese Furniture Company sold furniture to almost one-fourth of the families in the study, and to almost one-half of those who made their purchases in Greensboro. No more than 6 per cent of the total purchases were made at any other one store in Greensboro.

Towns other than Greensboro.--Twelve per cent of the furniture was purchased in High Point, a furniture manufacturing town, and 15 per cent in the other North Carolina towns of Winston-Salem, Charlotte, Raleigh, and Wilson. Single purchases were made at a number of out-of-state towns.

Preference for a Specific Store
When Buying Furniture

As is shown in Table IX, over half of the total number of homemakers in the study stated a preference for a particular store. Of this number, three-fifths made their purchases at the store preferred.

TABLE IX

NUMBER AND PER CENT OF HOMEMAKERS WHO PREFERRED
A SPECIFIC STORE WHEN PURCHASING FURNITURE

Preference for a specific store	Number of homemakers stating preference	Per cent of total homemakers
Specific store preferred	27	54
Specific store not preferred	<u>23</u>	<u>46</u>
Total	50	100

As shown in Table X, over half of the homemakers made their purchases at the stores which they preferred.

TABLE X
NUMBER AND PER CENT OF HOMEMAKERS WHO PURCHASED
FURNITURE AT THE STORE PREFERRED

Purchased at preferred store	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Homemakers who purchased at preferred store	15	59
Homemakers who did not purchase at preferred store	<u>12</u>	<u>41</u>
Total	27	100

The stores preferred are listed in Table XI. Morrison-Neese Furniture Company, which sold over one-fifth of the furniture in the study, was preferred by a third of the homemakers. No more than 8 per cent of the homemakers stated a preference for any other one store.

TABLE XI
PLACES OF PURCHASE OF THE FURNITURE
AND STORES PREFERRED

Place of purchase	Number of purchases	Per cent of purchases
Stores in Greensboro		
Morrison-Neese Furniture Co.	11	22
Bridges-Taylor Furniture Co.	3	6
Colonial Furniture House	3	6
Friendly Furniture Co.	2	4
Higgins Furniture Co.	2	4
Huntley-Stockton-Hill Co., Inc.	2	4
Rhodes-Perdue Furniture Co., Inc.	2	4
Bessemer Furniture Co.	1	2
Jones-Lewis Furniture Co.	1	2
Martin Furniture and Carpet Co.	1	2
Auction of surplus army equipment	1	2
Total	29	58
Towns other than Greensboro		
High Point, N. C.	6	12
Winston-Salem, N. C.	3	6
Charlotte, N. C.	2	4
Raleigh, N. C.	2	4
Boston, Massachusetts	1	2
Charleston, S. C.	1	2
Dalton, Ga.	1	2
Daytona Beach, Fla.	1	2
Greenville, S. C.	1	2
Ithica, N. Y.	1	2
Miami, Fla.	1	2
Wilson, N. C.	1	2
Total	21	42
Stores preferred		
	Number of preferences	Per cent of preferences
Morrison-Neese Furniture Co.	16	32
Bridges-Taylor Furniture Co.	4	8
Friendly Furniture Co.	2	4
Bessemer Furniture Co.	1	2
Colonial Furniture House	1	2
Higgins Furniture Co.	1	2
Rich's Furniture Co., Raleigh, N. C.	1	2
Total	26	52

Factors Considered in the Choice of the Store

Reliable reputation of the retailer and a wide selection of stock.--These factors influenced more of the homemakers in the choice of a store than did any of the other reasons listed on the check sheet. In merchandise where quality is likely to be concealed and with the lack of adequate labeling, the reliability of the dealer has been recognized by authorities to be the best assurance of quality.

Prices within budget.--The price levels of a store were the concern of almost half of the group in choosing a place to buy furniture.

Comparison with other stores.--Forty per cent of the homemakers made their purchases after they had compared several stores.

Advertising and displays.--Sixteen per cent of the homemakers said that advertising influenced them to buy at a particular store; however, attractive displays were credited by 38 per cent as an influence. This would indicate that the group as a whole was not aware of the persuasive power of advertising.

Personal contacts.--Approximately one-fifth of the homemakers were influenced in their choice of a store through personal contacts within the store and the advice of another person.

The convenience of the location.--This factor influenced only 6 per cent of the group, indicating that more of the homemakers preferred a store for reasons of quality, service, and price than for reasons of convenience. Accordingly, only one purchase was made because there was no other store in town from which to choose, and one purchase was made because "they happened to be riding by and saw what they wanted."

TABLE XII
FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED THE HOMEMAKERS
IN THE CHOICE OF THE STORE

Influencing factor	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Reliable reputation	28	56
Good selection of stock	28	56
Prices within budget	24	48
Comparison with other stores	20	40
Attractive displays	19	38
Advice of another person	11	22
Contact within store	9	18
Advertising	8	16
Convenient location	3	6
Only store in town	1	2

Factors Concerning the Selection
and Purchase of the Furniture

The factors which influenced the purchasing, the factors considered when the purchase was made, and the points which the homemaker said that she liked about the furniture are summarized in the table in the appendix. Due to the way in which the questions were stated on the check sheet, there is some overlapping of answers, which serves as a check on the accuracy and consistency of the way in which the questions were answered by the homemakers.

Factors Relating to the Sale

Price.--Less than half of the homemakers considered that the price of the furniture had influenced their decision to make the purchase.

Reliable reputation of manufacturer and retailer.--Two-fifths of the homemakers considered that the reliable reputation of the manufacturer and of the retailer had influenced them to make the purchase.

Advertised brand.--Approximately one-fourth of the group were influenced by the advertised brand.

Guarantee.--Approximately one-seventh of the group considered that a guarantee had influenced their purchase. As will be shown in the study, a still smaller portion of the group had a definite idea of what information was provided.

Salesperson.--Ten per cent considered that the salesperson had influenced them to purchase, implying that the remaining 90 per cent gave credit to their own ability to choose, rather than admitting susceptibility to influence by the salesperson.

Store advertising.--Four per cent claimed to have been influenced by store advertising, and 24 per cent, by brand advertising, further indicating that the larger number of the homemakers in the study were not aware of the subtle influence of advertising.

Picture.--Only 2 per cent of the choices were from a picture of the furniture.

Only choice.--Only 2 per cent of the homemakers said that they had to take what was available at the time, even though 58 per cent of the furniture was purchased during and immediately after the war when furniture was scarce and likely to be of questionable quality.

TABLE XIII

FACTORS CONCERNING THE SELECTION
AND PURCHASE OF THE FURNITURE
-FACTORS RELATING TO THE SALE-

Factors which influenced the homemakers to purchase	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Price	22	44
Reliable reputation of Manufacturer	20	40
Retailer	18	36
Advertised brand	12	24
Guarantee	7	14
Salesperson	5	10
Store advertising	2	4
Picture	1	2
Only choice	1	2

The Appearance of the Furniture

Appearance of the furniture was a factor reported by more than half of the homemakers to have influenced their selection and purchase. However, more than three-fourths of the group listed individual factors relating to the appearance of the furniture as points which they liked about their purchase:

Style.--More than three-fourths liked the style of their furniture.

Size.--Three-fifths of the homemakers liked the size of the furniture. The size of the furniture would be a necessary consideration if it were bought for the Kirkwood homes, since all the homes were small.

Fabric color.--Three-fifths of the homemakers listed fabric color as a factor which they liked about the furniture.

Shape.--The shape of the furniture was liked by half of the group, but due to the way in which the question was asked, this point might have been confused with style.

Wood.--Approximately a fifth of the homemakers listed the furniture wood as a point which they liked about their furniture.

Fabric design and decoration.--The design of the fabric was liked by a fourth, and the decoration or ornament by a tenth of the participants. However, since no record was kept of the frequency with which these factors occurred, this information cannot be interpreted to mean that the furniture was bought for these reasons.

TABLE XIV
FACTORS CONCERNING SELECTION
AND PURCHASE OF FURNITURE
-THE APPEARANCE OF THE FURNITURE-

Appearance factors liked by the homemakers	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Style	39	78
Size	30	60
Fabric color	29	58
Shape	26	52
Fabric design	13	26
Wood	9	18
Decoration or ornament	5	10

The Suitability of the Furniture to the Setting

As large a per cent of the homemakers considered the suitability of the furniture to the setting when they were purchasing as listed any of the other factors concerning the selection and purchase of the furniture.

Approximately three-fourths of the homemakers stated that the size of the room and the color scheme were considered when they selected the furniture. Almost two-thirds listed the style of the other furniture as a consideration when purchasing.

TABLE XV
FACTORS CONCERNING THE SELECTION
AND PURCHASE OF THE FURNITURE
-THE SUITABILITY OF THE FURNITURE TO THE SETTING-

Suitability factors considered by homemakers	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Size of the room	39	78
Color scheme	36	72
Style of the other furniture	31	62

The Comfort of the Furniture

Seventy-six per cent of the homemakers were influenced by the comfort of the furniture when buying, and 66 per cent listed comfort as a point which they liked about the furniture. Comfort was listed almost as frequently as any of the factors concerning the selection and purchase of the furniture.

The Suitability of the Furniture to the Purpose

Over half of the homemakers listed suitability to the purpose for which the furniture would be used as a factor influencing the purchase. Two-thirds liked their furniture for this reason.

Suitability to slipcovering.--This factor was listed by 66 per cent of the homemakers as a point which they liked about their furniture; however, no record was kept of the number of slipcoverable pieces.

Amount of wear.---Fifty-six per cent of the homemakers reported that they considered the amount of wear which the furniture would receive when they were making the purchase.

The Quality of Construction and Materials

That the quality of construction and materials was considered important by the homemakers in the study is shown by the fact that almost three-fourths said that construction qualities influenced them to purchase the furniture.

When asked which construction points were considered when the purchase was made, there was a wide variety in the number of times individual points were considered, ranging from 50 per cent who considered the resistance of the fabric covering to wear to 6 per cent who did not consider any of the construction points listed on the check sheet.

The quality of workmanship of the fabric covering in relation to its appearance was considered by almost half of the homemakers; however, due to the way in which "quality of workmanship" was stated on the check sheet, it may have been interpreted to mean the quality of the workmanship of the entire piece of furniture rather than of the fabric covering.

TABLE XVI
FACTORS CONCERNING THE SELECTION
AND PURCHASE OF THE FURNITURE
-QUALITY OF CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIALS-

Factors which the homemakers considered when purchasing	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Resistance of fabric covering to wear	25	50
Pulling at seams	19	38
Showing soil	19	38
Picking	14	28
***Fading when laundered (slipcover)	12	24
Fading in the light	12	24
***Shrinking	11	22
Holding dirt	4	8
Appearance of the fabric covering		
Quality of workmanship	24	48
*Design matched and centered	11	22
Fit of the covering	9	18
The woods used		
Exposed wood	11	22
Unexposed wood	7	14
The finish of the exposed wood		
Kind of finish	19	38
Quality of the finish	14	28
The quality of the frame construction		
Sturdiness of the legs	19	38
Reinforcements	10	20
Kind of joints	9	18
**Quality of the carving	3	6
Quality of the glue	1	2
Filling		
Kind of filling	18	36
Amount of padding over springs	18	36
Amount of padding over frame	15	30
Condition new or re-used	10	20
Springs		
How spring unit assembled	10	20
Location of the springs	5	10
Material used for spring base	5	10
Type of support in seat edge	5	10
Quality of the springs	3	6
No construction points listed	3	6

***No record kept of the number of slipcovered pieces.

**No record kept of the number of carved pieces.

* No record kept of the number of patterned fabrics.

The Homemakers' Knowledge of Construction Compared
With Factors Considered When Purchasing

As has been previously stated, each homemaker was asked to identify certain of the construction points and materials used in the furniture. If she could give a positive opinion, she was given credit for knowing, since it was not possible, in every instance, to test the answer for accuracy. She was not given credit for knowing if she said that she did not know, or else gave an opinion which the interviewer knew from authoritative sources to be incorrect. One piece consisted of a wood frame and separate cushions so the question regarding the amount of padding at the frame was not answered. Five pieces of furniture had no exposed wood so the questions regarding the identification of the wood and the finish were not answered. A comparison of the construction factors which the homemaker could recognize and those which they considered when purchasing are shown in Table XVII.

Padding sufficient over springs and frame.—A larger percentage of the group could identify those materials and construction points which could be ascertained by examining the furniture. Practically all of the homemakers had a positive opinion as to whether or not the padding was sufficient over the springs and frame, and in only one case did the interviewer disagree with the homemaker who considered the padding sufficient. These points were considered by about a third of those who could identify them.

Finish of the exposed wood.—About two-thirds of the homemakers could identify the finish of the exposed wood. Approximately three-fifths of this number considered it when purchasing.

Location of the springs.—Slightly more than three-fifths of the homemakers could locate the springs in their furniture, but only 16 per cent claimed to have considered this point when making the purchase.

Upholstery and filling.—About half of the group recognized those points which required somewhat more specialized information, such as the weave and fiber of the upholstery fabric, and whether or not the filling was new or re-used. The opinions regarding the filling are questionable, most of the homemakers being "sure" that the filling was new, although few remembered having been informed to that effect by either the salesperson or a label. Less than half of the homemakers who could identify the weave and fiber of the upholstery and could tell whether or not the filling was new or re-used considered these points when making the purchase.

Spring base and seat edge.—About a fourth knew the kind of spring base which their furniture had and the type of support in the seat edge. Less than half of this number considered these factors when purchasing the furniture.

Exposed wood.—About a fourth of the homemakers had an opinion regarding the exposed wood of their furniture. The same number reported that they considered this factor when making the purchase.

Reinforcement of frame and unexposed wood.—Only 8 per cent of the homemakers had an opinion regarding the hidden inner construction of the furniture, such as the way in which the frame was reinforced or what the unexposed wood might have been. A larger number of homemakers claimed to have considered these factors when purchasing than could recognize them.

TABLE XVII

THE HOMEMAKERS' KNOWLEDGE OF CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIALS
COMPARED WITH POINTS CONSIDERED WHEN PURCHASING

Construction and materials	Recognized	Did not recognize	Considered when purchasing
(Number of homemakers)			
Padding sufficient over:			
Springs	49	1	18
*Frame	48	1	15
**Finish of exposed wood	32	13	19
Location of springs	31	19	5
Weave of upholstery	27	23	
Filling new or re-used	22	28	10
Fiber of upholstery	21	29	
Materials of spring base	12	38	5
Springs in seat edge	11	39	5
**Exposed wood	11	34	11
Reinforcement of frame	6	44	10
Unexposed wood	4	46	7
(Per cent of homemakers)			
Padding sufficient over:			
Springs	98	2	36
*Frame	96	2	30
**Finish of exposed wood	64	26	38
Location of springs	62	38	10
Weave of upholstery	54	46	
Filling new or re-used	44	56	20
Fiber of upholstery	42	58	
Materials of spring base	24	76	10
Springs in seat edge	22	78	10
**Exposed wood	22	68	22
Reinforcement of frame	12	88	20
Unexposed wood	8	92	14

*Factor not present on 2 per cent of furniture.

**Factor not present on 10 per cent of furniture.

The Homemakers' Background of Information
Regarding the Purchase of Furniture

The General Background

Formal education.--It is impossible to evaluate the educational background of the group, but it has been indicated that the participants as a group have had more educational advantages than the average homemaker.

The homemakers' estimate of their ability to buy furniture.--When asked at the beginning of the questionnaire to rate themselves on their ability to buy furniture, 66 per cent of the homemakers regarded themselves as average, 32 per cent as knowing sufficient to buy intelligently, and 2 per cent as knowing nothing.

Upon completion of the questionnaire opinions were expressed by some of the homemakers that they felt that they knew less about how to buy furniture than they had thought previously. The interviewer also noticed that uncertainty was evidenced as to what constitutes sufficient information to buy furniture intelligently.

The homemakers' desire for more information.--Of the 42 per cent who answered the question "Would you like to know more?" 40 per cent answered yes, and 2 per cent answered no.

Sources of Information on Buying Furniture
Considered Helpful by Homemakers

Magazines.--More than nine-tenths of the group considered popular household magazines a source of information on buying furniture. Three

of the fifty homemakers did not consider magazines informative: one, because she considered the information inadequate, and two, because they did not admit reading magazines. Pictures, articles, and advertisements were considered by approximately two-thirds of the group to be helpful. This would indicate that popular magazines constitute an effective means of educating and influencing homemakers.

Newspapers.—Approximately three-fourths of the homemakers considered newspapers a source of furniture buying information. A larger per cent of the group considered newspaper advertisements informative than considered newspaper articles a source of buying information. All of the group subscribed to The Greensboro Daily News, The Greensboro Record, or both. Two homemakers read The New York Times, and one each listed The New York Post, The Washington Post, and P. M. Due to the fact that newspapers are so widely subscribed, they can be an effective medium for influencing and educating consumers.

Books.—Approximately one-half of the homemakers had read books which they considered helpful sources of information on furniture buying. Only 15 per cent of this number could remember any of the titles. The interviewer did not consider important which books had been listed or how many, since the small per cent who could list them could name several, especially one homemaker who was an interior decorator. A third of the homemakers did not consider that they had received any information on furniture buying from books.

Bulletins.—Although 14 per cent of the group had made use of some commercial bulletins, and 8 per cent had read consumer bulletins, only 2 per cent of the homemakers had read Better Buymanship bulletins.

Only 2 per cent of the homemakers had read either government or professional bulletins on the subject. Three-fourths of the group had received no information at all from bulletins of any description. Since some of the most readable and valuable information available is in bulletin form, many effective sources of information are shown to be neglected by the group.

School subjects.—Two-thirds of the group considered that they had received information on how to buy furniture from school subjects. A larger number considered home economics a source of information than any other subject, with art second in importance, and vocation occupations, third. It is possible, in answering the question on the check sheet, that "vocational occupations" might have been considered as gainful employment where information was received, rather than as a course in school. Due to opinions expressed by some of the homemakers when filling out the check sheets, some courses may have been checked as sources of information, when they were merely taken, and not necessarily considered sources of information on furniture buying.

Movies.—While movies were considered by more than half of the homemakers to have influenced their ideas on furniture buying, only 5 per cent of this number could list titles of such movies. "Claudia" and "Leave Her to Heaven" were remembered for the furniture shown. Could it be that movies possibly exert a strong but subtle influence on ideas for home furnishings?

Study groups.—From 6 to 12 per cent of the homemakers stated that they considered various club activities helpful sources of furniture

buying information. Here, also, there may have been a tendency to check clubs if the homemaker had ever belonged, regardless of whether or not actual buying information had been received.

Experiences with furniture.--All of the participants in the study considered that they had learned about how to buy from some previous experiences with furniture. Four-fifths of the homemakers had learned about furniture through buying it; three-fourths, through observing it; and almost two-thirds, through using it. Some had seen furniture constructed, some had refinished it themselves, and some had had experience selling it. Experience is shown to be the teacher, and while trial and error may be an effective method of learning, it can also be an expensive method.

TABLE XVIII

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON BUYING FURNITURE AND THE
HOMEMAKERS' ESTIMATE OF THEIR HELPFULNESS

Source of information	Considered source helpful	Did not consider source helpful	Total
(Number of homemakers)			
Magazines	47	3	50
Newspapers	36	14	50
Books	27	23	50
Bulletins	12	38	50
School subjects	34	16	50
Movies	28	12	50
Study groups	6	44	50
Experiences with furniture	50	0	50
(Per cent of homemakers)			
Magazines	94	6	100
Newspapers	72	28	100
Books	54	46	100
Bulletins	24	76	100
School subjects	68	32	100
Movies	70	30	100
Study groups	12	88	100
Experiences with furniture	100	0	100

TABLE XIX

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON BUYING FURNITURE
CONSIDERED HELPFUL BY HOMEMAKERS

Source of information	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Magazines:		
Woman's Home Companion	30	60
Good Housekeeping	29	58
House Beautiful	29	58
Ladies' Home Journal	28	56
Better Homes and Gardens	24	48
American Home	20	40
House and Garden	18	32
McCall's	15	30
Woman's Day	7	14
Mademoiselle's Living	1	2
Sun-Up	1	2
Magazine		
Pictures	35	70
Articles	33	66
Advertisements	31	62
Newspaper		
Advertisements	27	54
Articles	11	22
Books		
which could be listed	4	15*
which were not remembered	23	85*
Bulletins		
Advertising	7	14
Consumer	4	8
Government	1	2
College	1	2
Better Buymanship	1	2
School subjects		
Home economics	20	40
Art	10	20
Vocational occupations	5	10
Shop work	1	2
Consumer education	1	2
Business course	1	2

*Only 54 per cent of homemakers answered question about books on check sheet.

TABLE XIX (continued)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON BUYING FURNITURE
CONSIDERED HELPFUL BY HOMEMAKERS

Source of information	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Movies		
which could be listed	26	95
which were not remembered	2	5
Study groups		
Women's Clubs	6	12
Home Demonstration Clubs	4	8
4-H Clubs	3	6
Experiences with furniture		
Buying	40	80
Observing	38	76
Using	31	62
Seeing construction	15	30
Refinishing	14	28
Selling	6	12

The Homemakers' Sources of Information
In Regard to the Furniture Purchased

Salesperson.—Three-fourths of the homemakers considered that they had received information from the salesperson about the furniture which they purchased. This figure may be compared with the 10 per cent who considered that the salesperson had influenced them to make the purchase, further confirming the indication that the homemakers gave credit to their own ability to choose rather than admitting susceptibility to influence by the salesperson.

Label.—Approximately a third of the homemakers said that they received information about the purchase from the label. As will be

shown in the study, only 10 per cent of the homemakers had a definite idea of the information provided on the label.

Publications from the manufacturer.—Fourteen per cent had received information about the purchase from a manufacturer's leaflet. Six per cent had received information from a catalog.

Other information provided by the manufacturer. Four per cent had seen samples of upholstery from the manufacturer. Four per cent reported information received direct from the manufacturer through an interview, and 2 per cent received information through a letter from the manufacturer. One homemaker (2 per cent of the group) had at one time been employed by a furniture manufacturer.

TABLE XX

THE HOMEMAKERS' SOURCES OF INFORMATION
ABOUT THE FURNITURE PURCHASED

Source of information	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Salesperson	38	76
Label	16	32
Manufacturer's leaflet	7	14
Catalog	3	6
Samples	2	4
Interview with manufacturer	2	4
Letter from manufacturer	1	2
Working for manufacturer	1	2

The Homemakers' Evaluation of Information
Received Regarding the Purchase

Adequacy of the information.—Approximately two-thirds of the homemakers considered the information which they had received regarding the furniture which they had purchased to be adequate. Approximately one-third of the homemakers considered the information received inadequate.

Reliability of the information.—The answers on the check sheet were incomplete regarding the reliability of the information which the homemakers received about the purchase. Eighty-two per cent answered the question, and all considered the information reliable.

TABLE XXI

THE HOMEMAKERS' EVALUATION OF INFORMATION
RECEIVED REGARDING THE PURCHASE

Evaluation of information	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Adequate	34	68
Inadequate	16	32
Reliable	41	82
Not reliable	0	0

The Homemakers' Knowledge of the Labeling
Of Their Furniture

Knowledge regarding the attachment of a label to the furniture.—Approximately three-fourths of the homemakers were aware of the presence or absence of a label on the furniture which they had bought. Of this number, 64 per cent said that a label was attached, and 10 per cent said

that a label was not attached when the furniture was purchased. One-fourth of the homemakers had no idea whether or not a label was attached to their furniture.

Knowledge regarding the information on construction and materials provided on the furniture label.--Of the 64 per cent of homemakers who stated that their furniture had a label, approximately one-fourth said that information on construction and materials was provided on the label. A fourth said that no construction information was provided, and approximately one-half checked that they did not know whether or not it was provided.

Of the number who stated that information on materials and construction was provided on the labels on their furniture, approximately half could make a definite statement telling what the information was. These statements were as follows:

1. About quality and factory source
2. Filling, spring construction
3. Springs, padding
4. Filling content
5. Guaranteed wood

Approximately half of the homemakers who stated that construction information was provided could make no definite statement as to what it might have been.

A total of 36 per cent of the homemakers could make a definite statement regarding the attachment of a label and the information provided. This number included 10 per cent who said that no label was provided, 16 per cent who said that no construction information was provided on the label attached, and 10 per cent who could make a definite statement regarding the information provided on the label attached.

TABLE XXII

THE HOMEMAKERS' KNOWLEDGE REGARDING THE
ATTACHMENT OF A LABEL ON THEIR FURNITURE
AND THE CONSTRUCTION INFORMATION PROVIDED

Answers to questions regarding the attachment of a label to the furniture and the information provided	Number of homemakers answering	Per cent of homemakers answering	Per cent of total homemakers
Was a label provided?			
Yes	32	64	64
No	5	10	10
Did not know	<u>13</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>26</u>
Total	50	100	100
Was construction information provided?			
Yes	9	28	18
No	8	25	16
Did not know	<u>15</u>	<u>47</u>	<u>30</u>
Total	32	100	64
What construction information was provided?			
Could make definite statement	5	55	10
Could not make definite statement	<u>4</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>8</u>
Total	9	100	18

The Estimated Satisfaction Received
From the Furniture

Although satisfaction cannot be measured objectively, indications of the homemakers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction were noted, as shown in the following paragraphs.

The Homemakers' Estimate of the Quality and Worth of Their Furniture

Seventy-six per cent of the homemakers considered the quality of their furniture to be good, 20 per cent considered the quality medium, and 4 per cent considered it low.

Eighty-eight per cent of the homemakers considered the furniture worth the cost, while 12 per cent did not consider it worth the cost.

The larger per cent of the group is shown to be generally satisfied with the quality of the furniture, considering it worth the price.

The Amount of Use Which the Furniture Received

All of the furniture was purchased for general use. Ninety per cent of the families used the furniture constantly, while 8 per cent used the furniture frequently, and 2 per cent used it occasionally. The interviewer noted an occasional opinion that the furniture had to be used regardless of its quality or suitability.

Points Which the Homemakers Liked About the Furniture

Points which the homemakers liked about the furniture have been presented in various ways in the section of this chapter, "Factors Concerning the Selection and Purchase of the Furniture." These points are summarized in Table XXIII.

TABLE XXIII
FACTORS WHICH THE HOMEMAKERS LIKED
ABOUT THE FURNITURE

Points liked	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Style	39	78
Comfort	33	66
Suitability to slipcovering	30	60
Suitability to purpose	30	60
Size	30	60
Fabric color	30	60
Shape	26	52
Durability of construction	24	48
Fabric design	13	26
Wood	9	18
Decoration or ornament	5	10

More than three-fourths of the homemakers liked their furniture for its style, and two-thirds liked it for its comfort.

Three-fifths of the homemakers liked the suitability of the furniture to slipcovering and suitability to the purpose for which it would be used. This number liked the furniture for its size and for the color of the fabric.

One-half of the homemakers checked the shape of the furniture, and the durability of construction as points which they liked about the furniture.

One-fourth liked the design of the fabric, although no record was kept of the number of patterned fabrics on furniture in the study.

Approximately one-fifth of the homemakers liked the furniture for the wood which was used.

One-tenth of the group liked the decoration or ornament, although no record was kept of the occurrence of decoration or ornament present on the furniture in the study.

Points Which the Homemakers Disliked
About the Furniture

Only 18 per cent of the homemakers answered the question, "With what are you dissatisfied?" The following statements were made:

No springs.

Does not match the other piece. Have to use it for a long time whether we like it or not.

Temporary purchase. Want sofa when child grows up.

Do not consider workmanship of today on a level with prewar and earlier.

Covering not what I would have chosen, still not altogether dissatisfied.

Arms too high, end table inconvenient. Sent back for refilling once as down worked through.

Hard to tell how upholstery would look just from seeing sample.

Depth of seat.

Fabric faded when tried to clean it.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was made to investigate the factors that influenced the purchase of upholstered furniture and the reactions as indicated by personal preferences, background information, and the resulting satisfactions as expressed by fifty homemakers.

The data for the study were obtained by a door-to-door survey made in the Kirkwood section of Greensboro, North Carolina, in the spring of 1948. The Kirkwood section is a post war housing development, consisting of small houses which were made available to veterans of World War II.

The majority of families represented were younger married couples with either one, two, or no children. Eighty-two per cent of the group, a surprisingly large number, had incomes ranging from \$3500 to over \$6500. A number of the husbands in these families held executive business positions, while others represented professional, highly trained, or skilled occupations. The educational level of the homemakers was higher than average. Eighty-two per cent of the furniture on which the study was based was purchased immediately preceeding, during, and immediately after World War II. Although 58 per cent of the furniture was purchased during and immediately after the war when qualities

were questionable and stocks were low, only 2 per cent of the homemakers recognized that they had to purchase in a restricted market.

In the choice of the store, 56 per cent of the homemakers were influenced by the reliability of the retailer and 56 per cent by a good selection of stock. Forty-eight per cent were influenced by price. Two-fifths of the homemakers shopped several stores before purchasing. Attractive displays were credited with influencing more homemakers than did advertising. Only 6 per cent chose a store because of its convenient location.

Outstanding factors relating to the purchase were: price, which influenced 44 per cent of the homemakers; the reliability of the manufacturer, which influenced 40 per cent; and the reliability of the retailer, which influenced 36 per cent. Brand advertising was considered a greater influence than store advertising, and only 2 per cent of the homemakers made their purchases at a store because there was no other place to purchase.

Outstanding qualities of the furniture, itself, which were indicated most frequently as reasons for the selection and purchase of the furniture were comfort and appearance. The furniture style was liked by 78 per cent; the appearance of the furniture in relation to the size of the room was considered, also, by 78 per cent. The style in relation to other furnishings was considered by 62 per cent. Comfort influenced 76 per cent when they were making the purchase. Other factors which pleased over half of the homemakers were the size of the furniture, the fabric color, and the shape of the furniture.

Sixty per cent of the homemakers liked their furniture for its suitability to the purpose for which it was bought and for its suit-

ability to slipcovering, while 56 per cent considered the amount of wear which it would receive in use.

The quality of construction and materials was stated as a factor considered by almost three-fourths when the purchase was made, and as a point which pleased almost half of the participants. The construction point most frequently considered when the purchase was made was the wearing qualities of the fabric covering. A large part of the group overlooked many important features of construction, indicated by the fact that only 36 per cent considered whether or not the filling was new or re-used. Only 2 per cent considered the reinforcement of the frame and only 10 per cent considered the type of support in the seat edge. Six per cent of the homemakers admitted not having considered any construction factors. More homemakers were familiar with construction features than considered them when purchasing, except for hidden inner construction features which they did not recognize.

Ninety-eight per cent of the homemakers considered themselves average or above average in ability to select furniture, and only 40 per cent expressed a desire for more information on the subject.

All claimed to have gained knowledge concerning the purchase of furniture through practical experience. Ninety-four per cent considered popular household magazines a source of information on furniture selection. Newspapers, subscribed to by all, were considered helpful by 72 per cent, mainly because of the advertising.

Fifty-four per cent had read books on the subject, although only a few could recall specific titles. Bulletins were largely overlooked

by the group as a source of information, with practically all of the group unfamiliar with some of the most informative ones. School subjects were acknowledged by 68 per cent to be helpful, with home economics stated as the subject that supplied information to the largest number, and art to the second largest number.

Seventy per cent of the group considered that movies had been a source of information on home furnishings, although few could list titles of any movies which they remembered. Only a few of the homemakers listed clubs or study groups as a source of information.

The salesperson was considered by 76 per cent of the homemakers as supplying information on the furniture selected; however, only 10 per cent admitted that their decision to purchase had been influenced by the salesperson. The label was considered a source of information by more homemakers than knew what information it carried. A small number, 8 per cent, had received information directly or indirectly from the manufacturer. The information received regarding the purchase was considered reliable by all of the 82 per cent who answered the question; however, only 68 per cent considered the information adequate.

The homemakers expressed general satisfaction with their purchases, and considered that their furniture was of good or medium quality and worth the price. All of the furniture was bought for general use, and most of it was used constantly.

The homemakers have been pleased with the furniture first, for its style; second, for its comfort; third, for its qualities of suitability; and fourth, for its durability of construction.

Conclusions

As a result of an analysis of the data, the following conclusions may be made regarding the selection and purchase of the furniture, the information regarding the purchase, and the satisfactions received:

The fact that more homemakers chose a retailer whom they considered reliable and who had a large selection of attractively displayed stock from reliable manufacturers indicates that personal confidence in the merchant and the merchandise is of great value in building good sales relationships.

Since price influenced less than half of the group in the selection of the store and the furniture purchased, it is suggested that money is not the major determining factor when purchasing furniture.

Appearance, comfort, and suitability were the most frequently checked factors controlling the purchase of the furniture and thus are shown to be the qualities considered most desirable by the participants. The appearance of the furniture in the decorative scheme of the room was considered more important than the quality of the construction. This may be due to overemphasis of the decorative as gained through general information or to a lack of knowledge of construction qualities, or due merely to the aesthetic appeal of style.

Since many of the homemakers have considered the quality of materials and construction as important, and since they considered themselves able to recognize characteristics which may be ascertained by examining the furniture, it is possible that many points of construction may have been considered without being specifically recognized. The

participants' failure to indicate the importance of considering inner construction in the selection of upholstered furniture suggest a lack of knowledge of this basic factor and a lack of realization of its significance. This cannot be considered a fault of the homemaker due to the necessary concealment of the inner construction of upholstered furniture. A knowledge of these factors can only be gained with the assistance of the manufacturer and the retailer through adequate labeling or the use of selling devices demonstrating construction.

The majority of the participants considered themselves capable of buying furniture intelligently, and less than half expressed a desire for more information which indicates that the average homemaker is not aware of the need for factual information on furniture selection.

The participants indicated that they had gained knowledge through the experience of buying and using furniture, thus suggesting that there may be a material loss when trial and error is the teacher. Effective labeling undoubtedly would be helpful in such circumstances.

Since popular household magazines were indicated as being the most frequent source of information, it seems that magazines would be an effective medium for educating and influencing homemakers on how to buy furniture. Newspapers, because of their large circulation, also have the facilities for providing information. Little or no use was made of commercial and professional bulletins by these participants which indicates they did not utilize one of the more authoritative and unbiased sources available. More widely read were bulletins distributed by manufacturers regarding their products, indicating another effective medium of providing information but one which is usually restricted to

to specific merchandise. While some participants read books on the subject, many did not. This may indicate a lack of availability or that the writing is not in a popular form. The influence of movies is difficult to evaluate due to the discrepancy between the actual power of the influence and the homemakers' acknowledgement of it.

Since home economics and art were the school subjects indicated as providing the most helpful information on furniture selection, the conclusion must be drawn that there is a lack of emphasis in teaching on construction factors.

The participants indicated that all of the information regarding the purchase was reliable, although sometimes inadequate, suggesting that the retailer has an opportunity to educate and a responsibility to inform the consumer. Since the salesperson was considered the chief source of information and since the quality of information furnished by the salesperson affects the reliability of the retailer, it can be concluded that the training and integrity of the salesperson may not only be of assistance to the consumer, but also to the retailer.

More homemakers regarded the salesperson as a source of information than considered that the salesperson influenced the sale; a small per cent of those who read magazines admitted being influenced by brand advertising; and more homemakers considered newspapers a source of information on furniture buying than considered that they had been influenced by newspaper advertising, showing that there is a discrepancy between the power of persuasion and the homemakers' acknowledgement of it.

Although the participants acknowledged the presence of a label on the furniture, there was little indication of their knowing what was printed on the label. This may suggest that there was little actual information, perhaps only the name of the manufacturer or a possible use in a decorative scheme.

While most of the furniture bought by the participants has been in constant use and is considered satisfactory, this cannot be regarded as a positive indication of durable construction since much of it has been in use a relatively short time. The fact that style and comfort are dependent upon lasting durability and continued satisfaction with this furniture is questionable.

Recommendations

In order to promote interest in construction qualities of furniture and to increase the consumers' knowledge of the importance of these qualities, it is recommended:

That instruction not only stress information regarding construction of furniture, but also that students be familiarized with source materials on the subject.

That instruction develop a critical appreciation of factors which influenced the purchase, such as advertising, salesmanship, and displays.

That popular household magazines, newspapers, and books present and popularize adequate information on furniture buying.

In order that more adequate information be made available to purchasers regarding upholstered furniture, it is recommended:

That consumers ask manufacturers and retailers to provide adequate informative labels.

That adequate labeling for upholstered furniture used for seating purposes only be required by law.

That the retailer use more demonstrative materials in selling his furniture so that the consumer may learn by visual concepts.

The following recommendations are made for further study:

A study of the adequacy and reliability of the information given by salespersons regarding upholstered furniture.

An analysis of the information on furniture presented in advertisements and articles of popular household magazines.

A study of the selling devices used by furniture retailers to attract customers and influence them to purchase.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

CHECK SHEET USED IN THE COLLECTION OF THE DATA

Name _____ Address _____

Number in family _____ Occupation of wage earners _____

Please check approximate family income (before income taxes).

- ☐ up to \$1500 a year ☐ \$2500-3500 ☐ \$4500-6500
☐ \$1500-2500 ☐ \$3500-4500 ☐ over \$6500

Please check your last schooling:

- ☐ Grammar school ☐ Junior college ☐ graduate work
☐ High school ☐ 4-year college ☐ business or vocational
☐ other:

Did you graduate? ☐ Yes ☐ No

In regard to buying furniture, do you consider that you know

- ☐ sufficient to buy intelligently? ☐ average? ☐ nothing?

Please check the following sources from which you have learned anything about buying furniture:

- | <u>Source</u> | <u>List of most helpful</u> |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Magazines: | <input type="checkbox"/> American Home <input type="checkbox"/> Woman's Home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> articles | <input type="checkbox"/> Better Homes and Gardens Companion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> advertisements | <input type="checkbox"/> House Beautiful <input type="checkbox"/> Good Housekeeping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pictures | <input type="checkbox"/> House and Garden <input type="checkbox"/> McCall's |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Mademoiselle's Living <input type="checkbox"/> Woman's Day |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Ladies' Home Journal <input type="checkbox"/> other: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bulletins: | <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Better Buymanship |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> College <input type="checkbox"/> Advertising |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Consumer <input type="checkbox"/> other: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers | <input type="checkbox"/> Greensboro Daily News |
| <input type="checkbox"/> articles | <input type="checkbox"/> Greensboro Record |
| <input type="checkbox"/> advertisements | <input type="checkbox"/> others: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Books (please list): | <input type="checkbox"/> don't remember |

☐ Movies (please list): ☐ don't remember

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School subjects: | <input type="checkbox"/> Home Economics <input type="checkbox"/> Shop work |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Art <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational occupations |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial arts <input type="checkbox"/> Others: |

- ☐ Study groups: ☐ Women's clubs
☐ Home Demonstration Clubs
☐ 4-H Clubs

☐ Experiences you have had with furniture:

- ☐ selling ☐ constructing
☐ using ☐ seeing construction
☐ buying ☐ refinishing
☐ observing ☐ other:

Did you buy this furniture in Greensboro? ☐ Yes ☐ No
 Were you living in Greensboro at the time? ☐ Yes ☐ No
 Do you usually prefer a specific store when
 you buy furniture? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name of store _____

Did you buy the furniture at this store? ☐ Yes ☐ No
 If not, where did you buy it? _____

In answering the following questions, check as many points as you wish:

Why did you choose the store where you bought your furniture?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> convenient location | <input type="checkbox"/> advice of another person |
| <input type="checkbox"/> reliable reputation | <input type="checkbox"/> advertising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good selection of stock | <input type="checkbox"/> knew someone in the store |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prices within budget | <input type="checkbox"/> compared several stores |
| <input type="checkbox"/> attractive displays | <input type="checkbox"/> other reasons: |

What influenced you to buy this particular furniture?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> appearance | <input type="checkbox"/> reliable reputation of store |
| <input type="checkbox"/> comfort | <input type="checkbox"/> store advertising |
| <input type="checkbox"/> quality of construction | <input type="checkbox"/> reliable reputation of manufacturer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> price | <input type="checkbox"/> advertised brand |
| <input type="checkbox"/> salesperson | <input type="checkbox"/> had to take what you could find |
| <input type="checkbox"/> guarantee | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> picture | |

What did you like about the furniture?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> size | <input type="checkbox"/> fabric color |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shape | <input type="checkbox"/> fabric design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> style | <input type="checkbox"/> it could be slipcovered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wood | <input type="checkbox"/> durability of construction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> comfort | <input type="checkbox"/> suitability to purpose |
| <input type="checkbox"/> decoration or ornament | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

Which of the following points did you consider when you bought?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> exposed wood | If the material would: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the kind of finish | <input type="checkbox"/> pull at the seams |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the quality of the finish | <input type="checkbox"/> pick easily |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the kind of joints | If the slipcover would: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the quality of the glue | <input type="checkbox"/> shrink when washed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the reinforcements | <input type="checkbox"/> fade when washed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the sturdiness of the legs | <input type="checkbox"/> the material used for seat base |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the quality of the carving | <input type="checkbox"/> the kind of filling |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> if the filling is new or re-used |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the way the chair cover fits | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> if the design is matched | <input type="checkbox"/> the amount of padding over frame |
| and centered | <input type="checkbox"/> the amount of padding over springs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the quality of workmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> the location of the springs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> the quality of the finishes | <input type="checkbox"/> the quality of the springs |
| If the material would: | <input type="checkbox"/> how the spring unit is assembled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> resist wear | <input type="checkbox"/> the seat edge |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hold dirt | <input type="checkbox"/> the spring base |
| <input type="checkbox"/> show soil | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fade in the light | <input type="checkbox"/> the unexposed wood |

Which of these points did you consider?

- ☐ the size of the room in which the furniture would be used
- ☐ the way it would fit into the general color scheme of the room
- ☐ the style of the other furniture in the room
- ☐ the purpose for which it would be used
- ☐ the amount of wear which it would receive

Do you consider it worth the price? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Furniture was bought for:

- ☐ general use
- ☐ special chair for one person
- ☐ occasional use
- ☐ decorative use only

Used:

- ☐ constantly
- ☐ frequently
- ☐ occasionally
- ☐ seldom

Did the furniture have a label? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Did it give any information about the construction?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ don't know

What information was given?

What was the source of your information about the furniture?

- ☐ salesperson
- ☐ label
- ☐ printed leaflet from manufacturer
- ☐ catalog
- ☐ other source:

Do you consider this information adequate ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you consider this information reliable? ☐ Yes ☐ No

With what, if anything, are you dissatisfied?

Would you like to know more about furniture buying? ☐ Yes ☐ No

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS WHICH THE HOMEMAKERS

WERE ASKED IN INTERVIEW

What is the exposed wood?

How is the exposed wood finished?

What is the unexposed wood?

How is the frame reinforced?

Of what fiber is the chair covering made?

What is the weave of the chair covering?

What is used for the filling of the upholstery?

What is used for the spring base?

Where are the springs located?

What is the type of support in the seat edge?

Is the padding sufficient over the frame?

Is the padding sufficient over the springs?

APPENDIX C

OCCUPATIONS OF THE WAGE EARNERS

Occupations of the Husbands

Accountants
Administrative assistant, Burlington Mills Corporation
Advertising agency, production manager
Advertising consultant
Agent for Mohawk Carpet Mills
Architect
Assistant head of retailing department, Burlington Mills Corporation
Assistant service manager, Trader's Chevrolet Company, Inc.
Banker
Beef salesman, Swift and Company
Buyer of women's clothes
Chief architect, Federal Housing Administration
Claim adjuster
Control buyer, Sears Roebuck and Company
Consulting engineer
Department manager, Sears Roebuck and Company
Designer and machinist
General sales manager, Carolina Willys Company, Inc.
Industrial engineer, Standard Oil Company of New Jersey
Insurance salesman
Laboratory technician
Lubricating engineer
Lumber salesman
Manager, Canada Dry Ginger Ale, Inc.
Manager, Young Men's Department, Younts-DeBoe
Manufacturers of cedar chests
Manufacturer of ladies' underwear, co-owner and manager
Mechanic
Newspaper editor
Newspaper reporter
Oldsmobile dealer, Adamson Cadillac Olds Company
Parts manager, automobile firm
Physician
Plant maintenance engineer, Western Electric Company
Purchasing agent, Wysong and Miles Company
Railway mail clerk
Restaurateur

Sales and advertising department, Wysong and Miles Company
Salesman, Carnation Milk Company
Salesman of industrial equipment
Salesman of wholesale produce
Shop foreman, automobile firm
State agent for insurance company
Traveling salesman, McLeod Leather and Belting Company
Vice-President, Southern Converting Company (Scrap iron
and metal)
Wholesale druggist

Occupations of the Wives

Interior decorator
Secretary
Stenographer

APPENDIX D

FACTORS CONCERNING THE SELECTION AND PURCHASE OF THE FURNITURE -FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCED THE PURCHASE, FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN PURCHASING, AND POINTS WHICH THE HOMEMAKERS LIKED-

Factors	Factors which influenced the purchase		Factors considered when purchasing		Points liked	
	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers	Number of homemakers	Per cent of homemakers
Factors relating to the sale						
Price	22	44				
Reliable reputation of						
Manufacturer	20	40				
Store	18	36				
Advertised brand	12	24				
Guarantee	7	14				
Salesperson	5	10				
Store advertising	2	4				
Picture	1	2				
Only choice	1	2				
Appearance of the furniture	29	58				
Style					39	78
Size					30	60
Fabric color					29	58
Shape					26	52
*Fabric design					13	26
Wood					9	18
Decoration or ornament					5	10
Suitability to the setting						
Size of the room			39	78		
Color scheme			36	72		
Style of the other furniture			31	62		
Comfort	38	76			33	66
Suitability to the purpose			27	54	30	60
**Suitability to slipcovering					30	60
Amount of wear it would receive			28	56		
Quality of construction	35	70			24	48
Resistance of fabric covering to						
Wear			25	50		
Pulling at seams			19	38		
Showing soil			19	38		
Picking			14	28		
**Fading when laundered (slipcover)			12	24		
Fading in the light			12	24		
**Shrinking (slipcover)			11	22		
Holding dirt			4	8		
Appearance of the fabric covering						
Quality of workmanship			24	48		
*Design matched and centered			11	22		
Fit of the covering			9	18		
The woods used						
Exposed wood			11	22		
Unexposed wood			7	14		
The finish of the exposed wood						
Kind of finish			19	38		
Quality of the finish			14	28		
The quality of the frame construction						
Sturdiness of the legs			19	38		
Reinforcements			10	20		
Kind of joints			9	18		
***Quality of the carving			3	6		
Quality of the glue			1	2		
Filling						
Kind of filling			18	36		
Amount of padding over springs			18	36		
Amount of padding over frame			15	30		
Condition new or re-used			10	20		
Springs						
How spring unit assembled			10	20		
Location of the springs			5	10		
Material used for spring base			5	10		
Springs in seat edge			3	6		
No construction points considered			3	6		

*No record kept of the number of patterned fabrics.
**No record kept of the number of slipcovered pieces.
***No record kept of the number of carved pieces.