Green Furniture:

Sustainability, Consumer Choice, and Market Analysis in an Evolving Landscape
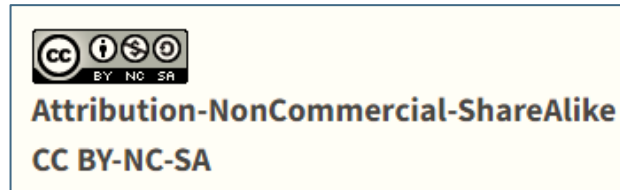
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Abstract

As sustainability increasingly gains in global prominence, the significance of sustainable furniture as a crucial element becomes evident. This MRP underscores the need for comprehensive efforts and the engagement of all stakeholders in shaping and influencing sustainable practices in the furniture industry. It delves into the multifaceted factors that influence consumer behaviour in the selection of furniture, with a specific focus on consumer motivation in the context of sustainable furniture adoption. It also examines the shifting patterns of consumption in the furniture industry and the role of governments and corporations in shaping consumer choice and building emotional connections.

Using the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a case study, this MRP critically evaluates both the positive and negative aspects of sustainability in the furniture industry and proposes steps to shift consumer choice and behaviour towards ecologically sustainable outcomes.

Keywords: Green Furniture, Sustainable Furniture, Sustainability, UAE, Green Consumer, Consumer Choice

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Sustainability in Furniture: A Brief History

Before the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, almost all furniture was essentially 'sustainable' in the way we commonly use this term today: constructed out of wood, by small-scale local hand production, made to last. Even the furniture of the wealthy classes could be considered sustainable in some sense, owing to its artisanal production that supported communities of skilled labour. Prior to the emergence of mass-produced furniture methods in the mid-19th century, then, we see two threads: a common furniture for ordinary people, constructed (often by the users themselves) out of local and readily-available wood, and an elite furniture for the wealthy, with an emphasis on decorative refinement, ornate details, and status objects. These consumers used furniture for comfort and practical use, as did others, but also used it to express prestige, prosperity, and current aesthetic tendencies.

With the advent of machine or mass-production during the Victorian era in Britain (1837-1901), a reaction arose against the ease with which furniture could be produced, and particularly against cheaply-applied ornament or frills. For the critic John Ruskin, these furnishings laid out "useless expense in unnoticed fineries or formalities":

> *. . . I speak from experience. I know what it is to live in a cottage*
> *with a deal floor and roof, and a hearth of mica slate; and I know it*
> *to be in many respects healthier and happier than living between a*
> *Turkey carpet and gilded ceiling, beside a steel grate and polished*
> *fender"* (Ruskin, 1849).

The 'honesty' of simple furnishings, which Ruskin and others saw in pre-Industrial Europe, was contrasted with the dishonest, garish, and even immoral overtones of Victorian eclecticism.

Following Ruskin, the resulting Arts and Crafts movement, emphasized an honesty of materials, simple furnishings, solid woods, rush seating, plant-based dyes, and above all a focus on the conditions of work under which a piece of furniture was made.

This was an early model of sustainable furniture, although Morris's work, which also became fashionable among subsets of the monied classes, remained restricted to

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relatively well-off consumers.

From the 1920s and '30s onward, new forms and new materials (injection-molded plastics, aluminium, tubular steel) were used to mass-produce furniture that could be functional, simple, and affordable. Sustainability was no longer a criteria for consideration: indeed, an ever-changing cycle of styles and 'good taste' supported planned obsolescence and a drive for novelty.

Toward the end of the 1960s, a new wave of environmental consciousness and critiques within the design field once more highlighted the industry's role in environmental degradation and 'junk' culture.[1] The 'hippie' subculture embraced DIY furniture, while 'natural' materials in interior furnishings became a trend exemplified by Terence Conran's Habitat stores, first opened in London in 1964.

In the 1980s, the furniture industry experienced significant changes that would set the stage for the emergence of sustainability in the decades to come. During this time, there was a growing awareness of the environmental impacts of furniture production, as well as a desire from consumers for more eco-friendly products. The use of plastic, metal, and glass continued to allow for new design possibilities and reduced the use of traditional materials like wood. However, they also had significant environmental impacts, as they were often made from non-renewable resources and were difficult to recycle. In response to these concerns, many furniture designers and manufacturers began to focus on sustainability in the 1990s. This involved a range of practices, such as using renewable materials like bamboo and cork, designing furniture for disassembly and recycling, and minimizing waste and energy use in manufacturing processes.

1- Among others, see: Ken Garland et al., *First Things First Manifesto* (1963); Ralph Nader, *Unsafe at Any Speed* (1965); Stewart Brand, *The Whole Earth Catalog* (1968); Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World* (1971).

Influencing Consumer Taste

Furniture design has been influenced by multiple social, economic, and cultural factors — including new materials and technologies, the rise of an affluent middle class, changes in living space, media, marketing and communications, and stylistic trends. But it is also linked to consumer preferences: modernist designers and institutions not only sought new materials and formal solutions, but also sought to construct and instruct new consumers for this furniture. Penny Sparke has outlined how a range of media and institutional forces shaped consumer tastes in furnishings from the late 19th through the mid-20th centuries in Europe and North America, through advertising, advice-books, home- and fashion-magazines, newspaper articles, design exhibitions, department stores, and popular film and television (Sparke, 2010). Today we would add social media and the internet to these sources of identifying and instructing audiences for new furnishings.

Other scholars have examined how markets outside of Europe and North America likewise sought to influence public taste toward modern furnishings in this period. In Japan, as Sarah Teasley has shown, the adoption of Western-style furniture was promoted by government to Japanese consumers and producers in the 1920s and '30s as part of a larger push to Westernize and modernize Japanese society (Teasley, 2003), Meltem O. Gürel's study of post-WWII Turkey shows how popular media, associating modern furniture with a new, glamorous lifestyle, prompted consumers to become modern by replacing their heavier wardrobes and antique pieces with new furniture made of chrome and formica (Gürel, 2013). In both cases, success was tempered with tension, compromise, and regret: Teasley's study demonstrates how compromises and tensions emerged between new furniture styles and the traditional attributes of the Japanese home that were more resistant to change, while Gürel notes the regret later expressed by homeowners over having replaced their traditional furniture with modern pieces that quickly lost their appeal (Gürel, 2013).

These examples demonstrate that on the one hand, external forces like governments, industry, marketing, and popular media and cultural institutions *can* shift consumer taste in furniture; but also that the emotional and psychological appeal of new styles and

modes of interior living will be balanced against the continued appeal of existing patterns of consumption and use. Considering the emotional attachments of consumers is key, and shifts will not take hold overnight.

In light of this historical context, my MRP examines the motivations for both producers and consumers to embrace sustainability in furniture, analyses the factors influencing consumer choice in furniture purchasing, and looks into how both industry and consumers might be brought toward a greater emphasis on sustainability in future.

To begin, I will look at factors influencing consumer behaviour more generally, and then move on to motivating factors in adopting sustainability as a decisive element (both on the side of industry and of consumers).

Factors Influencing Consumer Choice

To understand consumer behaviour in furniture purchases today, we can look to researches into factors influencing consumer behaviour more generally. According to Philip Kotler and Gary Armstrong (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012), factors influencing consumer behaviour can be broadly grouped in four categories: cultural, social, personal, and psychological.
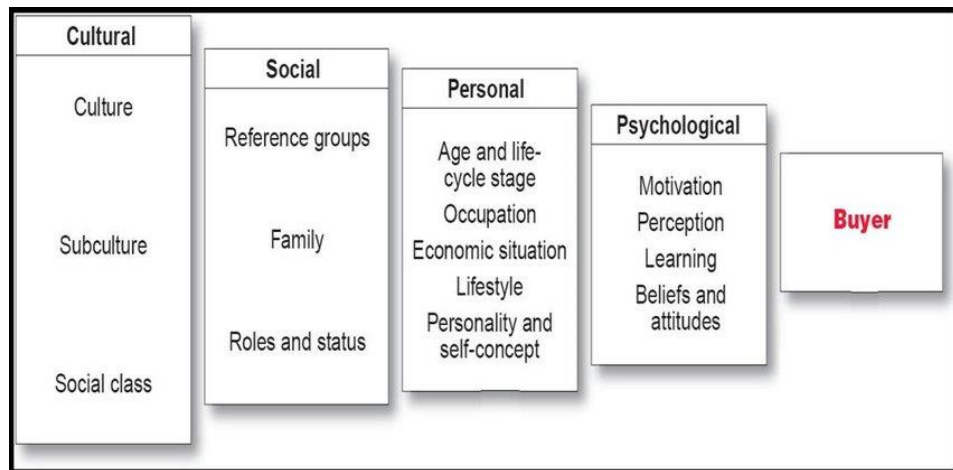
Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour. (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012)

Cultural factors: Culture is often perceived as the base value shaping consumer behaviour. This includes the sets of established habits, beliefs, and principles that individuals develop from their surroundings. However, culture is not static and can change over time. As per Victoria Wells and Gordon Foxal (2013), culture itself is always changing depending on exposure and interaction with other values (Wells & Foxall, 2013). As individuals interact with other cultures and are exposed to new ideas and experiences, their cultural values and beliefs may shift. This can influence their consumer behaviour and decision-making processes. Furthermore, consumers typically purchase products and services to satisfy their needs and wants. These needs and wants can vary based on cultural factors such as social norms, religious beliefs, and traditions.

Factors Influencing Consumer Choice

Social factors: Class, family, community, and social status play an essential role in influencing the buying decisions of consumers. Family is one of the most important factors in the development of individual preferences as people often learn their values, beliefs, and preferences from their family members, while communities play an important part in the development of social values because individuals may be influenced by the behaviours of their peers, and they may be more likely to adopt similar behaviours and attitudes (Rani, 2014). In his book "Consumer Behaviour: Buying, Having, and Being," Solomon (2015) notes that reference groups an individual uses as a standard for evaluating their own attitudes, behaviours, and values (including family members, friends, co-workers, and other social groups) can influence consumer behaviour and aspirations, because people seek validation and acceptance from their group members and community (Solomon, 2015).

Personal Factors: Age, lifestyle, personality, occupation, and financial circumstances have a direct impact on people's purchasing decisions. Consumer preference for brands, styles, and colours may all be related to said consumer's income, personality, social relations, and immediate surroundings. However, environmental, and social factors can influence personal factors. For instance, an individual's attitudes, personality, and lifestyle choices can be affected by their culture and subculture, while buying habits and perception can be affected by the motivation to conform to the norms of reference groups (Solomon 2015).

Psychological Factors: Motivation, perception, beliefs, attitude, and education play an essential role in influencing the buying decision of consumers, on a sub-conscious level (Rani, 2014) and motivate individuals to purchase products. Philip Kotler and Kevin Keller (2015) note that consumers purchase products based on their existing opinions and the image they build for any available product. These opinions can come from a variety of sources, including friends and family, online reviews, and expert recommendations (Kotler & Keller, 2015).

Factors Influencing Consumer Choice

A 2019 study by Deloitte suggests that "the consumer is changing in reaction to the proliferation of competitive options in the market," as well as growing economic pressure and financial constraints (Deloitte Insight, 2019). Consumer behaviours and attitudes are changing in response to technological advancements and societal shifts. Consumers are placing increasing value on experiences over products, indicating a shift away from materialistic values towards experiential ones. Trust is becoming increasingly important in consumer decision-making with social networks and interpersonal relationships playing a larger role. Consumers are also seeking personalized experiences, which may be influenced by social networks and peer recommendations. They are becoming more discerning, seeking authentic experiences that align with their values and preferences (Deloitte Insight, 2019).

Lifestyle changes due to financial pressure and marketplace dynamics, especially for younger generations, are driving consumers to focus on products with more practical, economical, and accommodating features (Erinckan 2009). To take one example, a 2019 report from the Joint Centre for Housing Studies of Harvard University found that the demand for smaller, more affordable housing options is on the rise, particularly among younger generations who prioritize location and access to amenities over square footage (Joint Centre for Housing Studies, 2019). This growing demand for smaller living environments, which by default require less furniture and smaller, practical pieces, is driving the need for innovative solutions to address the changing preferences of consumers.

Congruent with this, cultural factors such as the current appeal of minimal furnishings (IKEA's and Muji's minimalist streamlined designs), or comfortable, rustic ensembles such as those highlighted in recent books on cultures of domestic slowness and cosiness (Natalie Walton, The Slow Home; Hygge, the Danish concept of finding contentment in cosiness) have combined to make a 'clean' or 'simple' aesthetic, alongside appropriateness, practicality, affordability, and multifunctionality, important factors for current consumers when selecting furniture. A case study on consumer perception of design in the furniture sector performed by Doria Troian, reveals that aesthetics is first

Factors Influencing Consumer Choice

among the top three factors considered by consumers, followed by functionality and price. Consumers were found to value furniture that is visually appealing and fits with their personal taste, and they also appreciate furniture that is versatile and can be used in a variety of settings (Troian, n.d.).

Price and affordability are consistently among the topmost factors affecting purchasing decisions in furniture (Hansen, 2013), but they are not the only factors. As we have seen, aesthetics play a significant role, but a sense of being fashionable in one's choices, keeping up with shifts in style or technology, are also associated with personal identity and feelings of personal success (Cox et al., 2013).

Thus, consumer behaviour in furniture purchases is influenced by a wide range of factors that include cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors, as well as technological advancements, societal shifts, lifestyle changes, marketplace dynamics, aesthetics, functionality, and price. These factors interact with one another in complex ways to shape consumer preferences and decision-making.

Emotion and Consumer Choice in Furniture Selection

Consumers today largely seek to understand a product, its place in a social landscape (fashion, aesthetics, demographic appeal), and environmental 'footprint' before purchasing it. As with earlier currents in fashionable furnishings, they expect their furniture to both fill their functional needs, enhance their lives, and express their cultural sensibilities at the same time. However, behind these rationalized criteria, recent research has identified another, factor at the level of *emotion*: in this picture, consumers tend to choose furniture that aligns with their personal preferences, aesthetic taste, and functional needs, which together evoke a range of emotions that ultimately influence their decision-making.

The role that emotions play across all factors that influence consumer behaviour can be significant. They can be associated with cultural factors, such as pride and cultural identity; social factors like social approval, acceptance, and belonging; personal factors such as comfort, relaxation, and self-expression; and psychological factors as excitement, happiness, and satisfaction.

Emotions are now recognized as being potentially more potent than previously mentioned factors such as price, aesthetics, and functionality, in consumer choice, and as being a driver of each of these. A 1999 study published in the Journal of Marketing Research analysed over 100 research papers on emotions and consumer behaviour and found that emotions are more powerful than other factors such as price, brand, and product features in driving consumer behaviour (Luce et al., 1999). Another study on the relation between emotion and rationality, published in the Journal of Marketing Research found that emotions can influence consumers' perceptions of product aesthetics (Pham, 2007). Emotions can be especially significant in influencing decisions around sustainability in furniture purchases, as sustainability is less often a rational calculus than an emotional concept, going beyond the elements of price and aesthetics and involving ethical, environmental, and social considerations. Emotions such as guilt, empathy, and concern for the environment can motivate consumers to adopt sustainable practices, including furniture purchases. For instance, guilt feeling about the negative impact of consumption habits on the environment may drive a consumer to choose furniture that is sustainably

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produced and has a minimal carbon footprint. Similarly, feeling of compassion and empathy towards the plight of vulnerable communities affected by the unsustainable production of furniture may lead consumers to prioritize fair trade and ethical practices in their purchase decisions. At the same time, positive emotions that can arise from the idea of making a positive impact on the world can motivate consumers to adopt sustainable practises. Such consumers may feel a sense of satisfaction and pride when they consider the long-term impact of their choices on the environment, society, and future generations and see their purchases as aligning with these values.

It is important to note that the influence of emotions can operate on an unconscious level. Consumers are likely to select furniture that give them pleasure and fulfils their emotional needs, before turning to more rational justifications for their decision. Harvard Business School professor Gerald Zaltman argues, for instance, that "up to 95% of the purchase decision-making process occurs in the subconscious mind" (Zaltman, 2007). His research indicates that even if people compare brands and prices when selecting a product, their purchase decisions are actually driven by their emotions. Similarly, Douglas Van Praet argues in his book *Unconscious Branding: How Neuroscience Can Empower (and Inspire) Marketing*:

> "*We don't even think our way to logical solutions. We feel our
> way to reason. Our emotions are the substrate, the base layer of
> neural circuitry underpinning even rational deliberation. Emotions
> don't hinder decisions. They constitute the foundations on which
> they're made!"* (Van Praet, 2012)

Donald Norman has argued that the emotional side of design may be more critical to a product's success than its practical elements. Norman analyses the three levels of human cognitive items: *visceral*, *behavioural*, and *reflective*, from the perspective of cognitive psychology. On the visceral or instinct level, well-designed products tend to evoke positive emotions in the consumers; on the behavioural level, functionality establishes emotion between people and products which results in positive psychological feelings; and on the reflective level, a sense of dependence and pleasure is achieved between the

subject and the object (Norman, 2004). He argues that attractively designed products work better and make people feel good in a competitive marketplace where opportunities for differentiation on a functional level are limited. Accordingly, Norman writes, "the emotional side of design may be more critical to a product's success than its practical elements." (Norman, 2004)

> *"Beyond the design of an object, there is a personal component as well, one that no designer or manufacturer can provide. The objects in our lives are more than mere material possessions. We take pride in them, not necessarily because we are showing of our wealth or status, but because of the meanings they bring to our lives.*" (Norman, 2004)

While some of Norman's analysis relates to our feelings about products we already own, his schema is applicable as well to consumer choice in purchasing new items. We can note that appearance, for instance, can promote emotional interaction between individuals and their furniture, stimulating consumers' desire to buy.

In all these accounts, emotions are considered the real driver to decision making and purchasing behaviour. According to Nicole Ponder, furniture is *already* an emotional purchase, because of the sense of sharing and togetherness it generates — and because it is usually expensive, expected to last for several years, and not purchased with great frequency. In her 2013 study, Ponder suggests that furniture purchases can be influenced by emotional factors such as nostalgia, aesthetics, and the desire for comfort and security (Ponder et al., 2013).

Consumers now expect more than usability and functionality when buying furniture. They look for products that provoke pleasurable feelings and emotions; among these might be positive emotions associated with usability and functionality, but as Norman has shown, our products are also more useable and functional if they are associated with positive emotions. Accordingly, design based on emotions, or emotional design, accommodates users' needs and responses and can positively affect the overall user experience; in the following sections, we will consider how this connects more fully with sustainability as an emergent value in consumer decisions around furniture.

Current Market Trends in Furniture: The Importance of Sustainability

Over the past few years, the global pandemic, the impact of Covid on mental health, and an increasing environmental awareness, have all contributed to shifts in the way we consider the furnishing of our home environments. People today are spending more time indoors, and becoming aware of the multiple functions their homes play as the main setting for living, working, and socializing. Many organizations shifted to remote work model for more flexibility, better health, and positive environmental impact. The pandemic heightened environmental awareness as well, as per a recent BCG survey that shows consumers expressing increased concern about environmental protection (Kachaner et al., 2020). Today, top design trends are focused on products that provoke positive emotions and enhance consumers' experience. For instance, Ilse Crawford argues in her essay "The Domestic New Deal" that the home is more than just a physical space, but also a site of emotional and social significance. She emphasises that "aesthetic considerations are important, but they should be balanced by other concerns: comfort, safety, sustainability, and social relevance" (Crawford, 1996).

Consumers are focusing on items that give warmth, comfort, and airiness, along with some key industry trends toward multifunctional, sustainable, and easy-to-clean designs.

Multifunctional furniture is in high demand and is becoming the core of the home office as people are spending more time in their homes to live and work. It serves well for dual-purpose rooms. The use of folding and easy-to-clean furniture are useful for today's small living spaces. Prefabricated and compact furniture designed for double duty can be easily adapted to different room sizes, saving space and money while being easy to move and rearrange. Multifunctional furniture can reduce waste, save space, and is durable, versatile, and energy efficient making them a good sustainable option. One way in which multifunctionality relates to sustainability, is in reducing the need for additional purchases; if a piece of furniture can do double or triple-duty in a living space, this means avoiding additional environmental strains of production and consumption, as well as keeping those unpurchased pieces out of an eventual landfill. In addition, most multifunctional furniture is made from high-quality materials that are designed to last, which also reduces the amount of waste.

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Current Market Trends in Furniture: The Importance of Sustainability

"Green furniture," that is, furniture designed and produced with a focus on sustainability, has been a growing trend in recent years. An increased awareness of environmental issues has influenced the furniture market, both at the level of production and consumption, while sustainable materials and eco-friendly designs are trending.

Further, the return of vintage furniture as an important category can be understood both from an environmental standpoint (saving items from landfill while avoiding overproduction) and an economic one, additionally justified by the aesthetic 'character' that vintage furniture brings to a space. Choosing vintage furniture can be a way to express individual style and values, while also contributing to sustainability. While these pieces might themselves include non-sustainable elements of chrome, aluminium, foam, and so on, their repurposing and being given new life in a different period is seen as outweighing initial environmental impact. Additionally, one cannot discount the positive emotional value associated with finding and re-using a vintage piece which often has a unique character and history, giving it a personal touch that cannot be replicated by mass-produced furniture.

Finally, and partly in response to a lack of outdoor space and time spent in nature, biophilic designs that emphasize nature and introduce feelings of calm through patterns, forms, colours, and materials are also on the rise. The use of biophilic furniture has been shown to have numerous benefits, such as reducing stress and increasing productivity, as well as improving overall health and wellbeing. In a recent article published in "Psychology Today", Dr. Richard Ryan explains that biophilic environments can help to satisfy basic psychological needs, such as the need for autonomy and competence, which can lead to greater feelings of wellbeing and happiness (Ryan, 2010). Biophilic furniture can contribute to a more sustainable and environmentally friendly home as it often includes pieces made from natural materials such as wood or stone. Furniture designs may also incorporate living plants or mosses, which can help to improve air quality and provide a calming effect.

In the following section, I explore some of the larger dimensions of sustainability, and consider more specifically what it might mean in the furniture industry, both at the level of production and consumer awareness.

B Sustainability

Defining Sustainability

No consensus exists on a single definition of sustainability. As used in this MRP, I define it (based on different perspectives and definitions of sustainability provided by The Brundtland Report, 1987; Dernbach, 2015; United Nations Environment Programme, 2021) as the ability of an activity or system to be maintained over the long term without depleting or damaging the resources on which it depends. It further involves balancing the needs of the present with the needs of the future by ensuring that natural resources are conserved and used efficiently, and that social and economic systems are designed to promote long-term well-being. "Sustainable", "green", "environmentally safe", and "eco-friendly" are terms used to describe products, services, or activities that ensure stability for future generations and protect the planet.

According to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations, there are three main pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic; balancing all three provides long-term benefits for all stakeholders, including individuals, businesses, communities, and the environment. Environmental sustainability involves minimizing the impact of human activities on the natural environment, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving biodiversity, and minimizing waste (United Nations Environment Programme, European Environment Agency). Social sustainability involves promoting social well-being and equity, such as ensuring access to basic needs like food, water, and healthcare, and promoting social justice and human rights (United Nations Environment Programme, European Commission). Economic sustainability involves ensuring that economic systems are designed to be resilient, such as through responsible resource management (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs).

Sustainability recognizes that human activities are interdependent with the natural environment, and that maintaining a healthy and stable environment is necessary for human well-being. It also acknowledges the importance of striking a balance between present-day needs and the needs of future generations, and that strategic long-term planning and decision-making are essential for ensuring that resources are conserved and safeguarded against depletion or damage. In its broadest sense, sustainability aims to promote a harmonious relationship between humans and the natural world and to create a more equitable and resilient society.

Defining Sustainability in Furniture

Sustainability in furniture, as in the definition above, aims to balance the needs of the environment, society, and the economy. It refers to the production and use of furniture that has minimal negative impact on the environment, while also promoting social and economic well-being by supporting ethical practices, local production, and innovation, and by creating more opportunities for communities to thrive. It involves considering the entire lifespan of a piece of furniture, from the sourcing of materials to the end of its useful life. The three aspects of sustainability — economic, social, and environmental — are interconnected and should all be considered in the production of sustainable, or 'green,' or 'eco' furniture.

Environmental sustainability in furniture comprises the use of materials, manufacturing processes, and design strategies that minimize the environmental impact of furniture production by reducing the use of non-renewable resources, minimizing waste, and reducing the emission of harmful pollutants. Using sustainable materials is crucial in sustainable furniture design. It involves selecting materials that have a minimal environmental impact throughout their lifecycle, from harvesting to production to disposal. Furthermore, producing furniture locally and utilizing locally sourced materials and suppliers can reduce the carbon footprint of the product while also supporting the local economy.

Manufacturers can also use energy-efficient manufacturing processes to reduce the amount of energy used in production, such as using renewable energy sources like wind or solar power. Another way to contribute to environmental sustainability is by reducing waste throughout the furniture production process, such as using materials that would otherwise be discarded, and designing products that are easy to repair or disassemble.

Social sustainability in green furniture pertains to the ethical practices and social responsibility employed in the production, use, and disposal of furniture. It aims to ensure that furniture manufacturing and consumption are fair, just, and equitable for all stakeholders involved, including workers, communities, and consumers. Social sustainability in the furniture industry involves fair labour practices, ensuring that workers involved in the production of furniture are paid fair wages, have safe working conditions,

and are not exploited in any way.

It also involves responsible sourcing with materials being properly sourced and suppliers following ethical practices. It supports local production to create jobs and support local economies. In addition, it provides transparency by sharing information about the manufacturing process, materials used, and the social and environmental impact of furniture production. Social sustainability requires designing products that are inclusive and accessible to people of different abilities, ages, and cultural backgrounds. This can involve incorporating universal design principles into product design and considering the needs of diverse users in the design world.

Economic sustainability involves creating a balance between environmental and social sustainability while ensuring the industry remains profitable and financially stable. It includes cost-effective production ensuring that the manufacturing process does not incur additional costs that would render it unaffordable to consumers. Additionally, it emphasizes incorporating long-term planning and life-cycle assessment into the design and development of the furniture to promote durability and an extended lifespan, thus reducing the need for frequent replacement. Moreover, it entails utilizing renewable resources and adopting resource-efficient practices such as recycling and upcycling to minimize waste and reduce costs.

There is a wide range of key concepts and approaches that are employed that help to attain sustainability in furniture manufacturing offering various benefits and meeting the needs of the consumer at the same time. These may include adopting a circular economy, encouraging vintage furniture, designing for durability, and accommodating for smaller living spaces.

Circular economy: The circular economy approach in sustainable furniture promotes the reuse, recycling, and regeneration of products and materials, aiming to eliminate waste and reduce environmental impact. It is an example of how economic and environmental sustainability can be mutually reinforcing.

Defining Sustainability in Furniture

From an economic sustainability perspective, the circular economy approach aims to create a closed-loop system where furniture is designed to be reused, repaired, and repurposed, thereby extending its life cycle and reducing waste (Ellen MacArthur Foundation). This can lead to cost savings for both furniture manufacturers and consumers, as resources are conserved and waste is minimized. It also encourages the development of new business models, such as furniture rental and leasing, which can provide new revenue streams for companies and increase access to affordable furniture for consumers by avoiding the cost of frequent replacements and the need for constant disposal.

From an environmental sustainability perspective, the circular economy approach aims to reduce the environmental impact of furniture production and disposal. By promoting the reuse, repair, and repurposing of furniture, the circular economy approach reduces the need for virgin materials, minimizes energy consumption, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions associated with furniture production. It also reduces the amount of furniture waste that ends up in landfills, which can lead to environmental damage. Sustainable furniture produced under circular economy principles uses fewer harmful chemicals and materials. This means that consumers can enjoy furniture that is free of toxins, which can improve their health and safety.

Vintage Furniture: Vintage furniture refers to a sustainable approach that entails buying second-hand or pre-owned furniture as an alternative to purchasing new pieces. It offers various benefits to the environment, society, and economy.

This approach is highly beneficial for the environment as it reduces the demand for new furniture production, consequently mitigating the adverse effects of manufacturing processes on the planet. By choosing to purchase vintage furniture, individuals can extend the lifespan of existing pieces while simultaneously reducing waste. Vintage pieces may not offer the same benefits as present-day compact, multipurpose furniture, however, opting for vintage furniture can help to reduce the depletion of natural resources since it eliminates the need for new raw materials. Moreover, the purchase of local second-hand furniture cuts on transporting or shipping, further reducing the impact

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on the environment. Furthermore, choosing vintage furniture also has social and economic benefits. It helps to support local businesses, thrift stores, and online marketplaces that sell second-hand furniture. It also promotes a culture of reusing and recycling, encouraging individuals to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives.

By choosing vintage pieces, consumers can add character and personality to their home while reducing the demand for mass-produced furniture. Vintage furniture is often made with high-quality materials and craftsmanship, which means it can be more durable and long-lasting than new furniture. This durability can save consumers money in the long run while bringing character, uniqueness, and style to their homes.

Design for durability: Designing furniture for durability is an important approach to sustainability. It emphasizes creating furniture that lasts longer and requires fewer resources for maintenance and replacement, contributing to sustainable consumption and production.

It may come at an increasing cost to manufacturers, as the materials used are durable and of a higher quality. Durable furniture is designed to be fixable, easy to dismantle, and often with possible extensions and modifications. It is also an alternative to "fast furniture" that is made of inferior quality material like chipboard, cheap finishes, and adhesives that emit hazardous fumes and pollutants. Fast furniture tends to be affordable but has a very limited lifespan, ending up in landfills soon after purchase.

Designing for durability can also have positive environmental impacts by considering the end-of-life options and reducing the amount of waste generated from furniture production and disposal. By creating furniture that lasts longer and can be repaired and reused, manufacturers can reduce the need for new furniture production, which requires additional resources and energy. It also involves considering the construction and assembly methods used.

In addition, designing for durability can also benefit consumers. Furniture that is designed to last longer and can be repaired and reused, provides cost savings in the long term.

Defining Sustainability in Furniture

Design for smaller living spaces: Smaller living spaces are becoming increasingly prominent, due both to the rising cost of housing and the desire for sustainable living practices. A social and generational trend towards downsizing has also supported a reduction in personal possessions and smaller living spaces (Tiny Homes Trend: The Rise of Small Space Homes, 2015).

Smaller spaces have positive environmental impacts as they require less energy to heat and cool, and they use fewer resources during construction. These spaces often require furniture to be multifunctional, more compact, and space-efficient, promoting a more minimalist and sustainable lifestyle. Furniture designed for smaller living spaces help reduce resource consumption and minimize environmental impact. When space is limited, people are often forced to be more intentional with their buying decisions and focus on acquiring items that are both functional and durable. This encourages consumers to prioritize quality over quantity and avoid unnecessary purchases, leading to cost savings and sustainability.

In addition, investing in furniture that is versatile and adaptable like extendable furniture, customised systems, and modular designs, can help in maximizing space and providing more flexibility in room layouts. Choosing small space furniture is an efficient choice for a more sustainable living.

Defining the "Green Consumer"

The term "green consumer" has become increasingly used in recent years as environmental concerns continue to grow in importance around the world. It refers to an individual who prioritizes sustainability, is conscious of the environmental impact of their consumption choices, and makes purchasing decisions based on this consideration.

Green consumers are typically motivated by a range of factors, including a genuine concern for the environment, a desire for improved health and well-being, personal values and beliefs, and economic considerations (Groening et al., 2018; Sharma et al., 2022). For many green consumers, the desire to reduce their personal impact on the environment is a key driver of their consumption choices in various fields — and furniture is no exception.

One of the ways in which green consumers seek to reduce their environmental impact is by choosing products and services that are produced using environmentally-friendly methods. This may include products made from sustainable materials, or products that are energy-efficient or packaged in minimal or eco-friendly materials.

Another motivation for green consumption is the desire for improved health and well-being. Green consumers are increasingly concerned about the impact of everyday products on their health and the environment. As a result, they seek out products that are free from harmful chemicals and toxins to create a healthier and safer living environment (Eco-Friendly Furniture Market, Market Analysis 2016 - 2027, 2019).

The personal values, experiences, and beliefs of green consumers significantly influence their emotional motivation to engage in environmentally friendly or green consumption. These motivations are diverse and vary greatly among individuals, reflecting their unique perspectives and priorities when it comes to sustainability and environmental impact. For example, some individuals may feel a sense of responsibility towards the environment and engage in green consumption behaviours to fulfil that responsibility. Others may prioritize environmental protection and sustainability based on their personal values. For some, engaging in green consumption can signal their status and identity as environmentally conscious and socially responsible individuals. Additionally, individuals

Defining the "Green Consumer"

may be motivated by a sense of hope for a better future and believe that taking part in green consumption can help create that future.

A sense of shared personal values and beliefs can also play a role in driving green consumption. Green consumers often seek out businesses that engage in sustainable practices, such as using renewable energy sources or supporting fair labour and trade practices. They tend to support local businesses that prioritize sustainability and share their values.

Finally, economic considerations can also motivate green consumption. For example, individuals may choose to save money on energy bills by purchasing energy-efficient products or by reducing their overall consumption of energy. They may also look for ways to reduce waste and save money on disposables by choosing reusable or recyclable items.

Before returning to the role of emotion and other motivators in green consumption of furniture, I want to consider a case-study in government-led sustainability that highlights both possibilities and limits in shaping a green furniture market, and the challenges to properly consider motivations of the green consumer.

C **United Arab Emirates and Sustainability**

UAE: Smart Sustainable Cities

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has emerged as a leader in sustainable development in recent years. Despite being a major oil-producing country, the UAE has recognized the importance of transitioning to a more sustainable economy and has taken significant steps in this direction.

In this section, I will explore the UAE's firm commitment to achieving ambitious sustainability goals, examine the various initiatives implemented, and assess how these initiatives impact sustainable furniture.

The UAE, claiming to have one of the most progressive sustainable development strategies within its region (Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week - History), has committed to the United Nations SDGs; its pledge to work towards these goals has meant establishing a series of funds and initiatives at national and international levels, including a number that impact the furniture industry and market in the UAE.

Mapping of SDGs to UAE's National Agenda

(*UAE and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Executive Summary*, 2018)
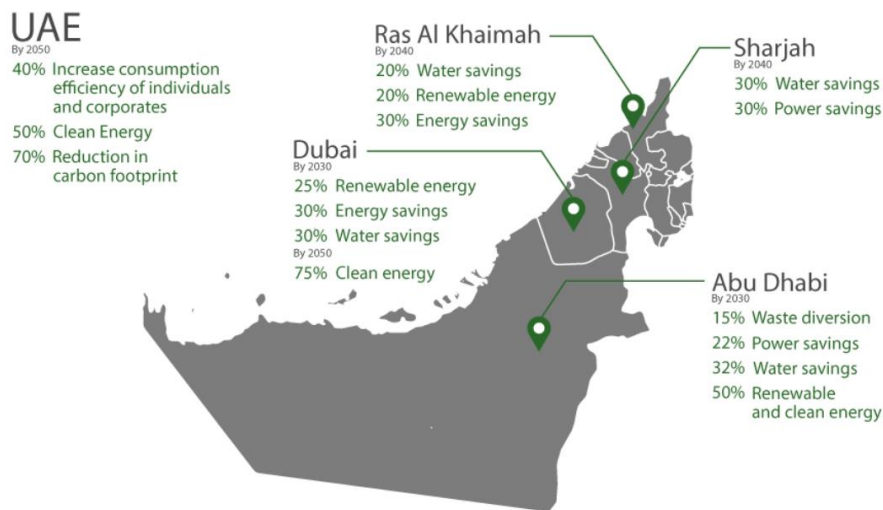
UAE: Smart Sustainable Cities

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 'universal' interlinked goals set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They are designed to tackle some of the most pressing issues around the world "to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all" (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), n.d.).

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

(*United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, n.d.)

The UAE has launched several initiatives and policies to promote sustainable development and become a global leader in the green economy. The "Vision 2021" was launched by the government as a national development agenda that sets out a number of strategic goals and targets across various sectors of the economy with an aim to transform the country into a knowledge-based, competitive, and diversified economy. The "Green Economy for Sustainable Development" national initiative aims to position the UAE as a model for the new green economy and a world leader in the export of green products and technologies. The "UAE Energy Strategy 2050" aims to increase the contribution of clean energy to 50% of the total energy mix and ensure a conducive economic environment for growth.

UAE: Smart Sustainable Cities

UAE
By 2050
40% Increase consumption efficiency of individuals and corporates
50% Clean Energy
70% Reduction in carbon footprint

Ras Al Khaimah
By 2040
20% Water savings
20% Renewable energy
30% Energy savings

Sharjah
By 2040
30% Water savings
30% Power savings

Dubai
By 2030
25% Renewable energy
30% Energy savings
30% Water savings
By 2050
75% Clean energy

Abu Dhabi
By 2030
15% Waste diversion
22% Power savings
32% Water savings
50% Renewable and clean energy

(*UAE Sustainability Initiatives*, 2020)

The two main cities in the UAE, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, have also launched several initiatives to adopt the goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and protect the environment. Abu Dhabi's "Vision 2030", "Estidama Pearl Rating System", and "Environment Vision 2030" initiatives focus on sustainable urban planning, environment protection and economic diversification. Dubai's "Dubai Plan 2021", "Smart City" project, and "Dubai Integrated Energy Strategy 2030" aim to provide comprehensive services, diversify energy sources and create a smart and sustainable city.

In addition, both cities have implemented several regulations and rating systems to promote sustainable construction, reduce the impact of conventional construction, improve the built environment, and enhance the operational performance of new and existing buildings. Various stakeholders from government bodies, academia, finance, business, industry, and private foundations are engaged in the implementation process. This growing investment and demand for environmentally-friendly buildings is also having an impact on the furniture industry and driving the demand for sustainable furniture.

One of the initiatives that impact the furniture industry is the Emirates Green Building

UAE: Smart Sustainable Cities

Council (EmiratesGBC), which promotes the adoption of sustainable building practices and green building standards in the UAE. This includes encouraging the use of sustainable materials in building construction and design, which can impact the furniture industry as manufacturers may need to shift towards using more sustainable materials in their products.

Another initiative is the Dubai Carbon Abatement Strategy, which aims to reduce carbon emissions in Dubai through various measures, including encouraging the use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. This shift towards renewable energy may also impact the furniture industry as manufacturers may need to adapt to using more sustainable materials and manufacturing processes that align with a low-carbon economy.

Furthermore, the UAE has launched various sustainability-focused events and exhibitions, such as the Dubai Sustainable Tourism Summit and the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, which provide a platform for companies and organizations to showcase their sustainability efforts and products. These events can also influence the furniture industry as companies may need to demonstrate their sustainability efforts in order to be competitive in the market.

The UAE is committed to advancing sustainability and clean energy by leveraging technology, R&D and established policies. The country is focusing on renewable energy, circular economy, hydrogen roadmap, sustainable agriculture, wind and solar projects, sustainability in the space sector, and sustainable construction practices. The "UAE Centennial 2071" roadmap aims to transform the country into a knowledge-based economy over the next 50+ years.

UAE's Local Furniture Market

The furniture industry in the UAE is driven today by various factors, including the rapidly increasing population, the growth of the real estate sector, increasing technological advancements, urbanization, and growth of disposable incomes. These major factors are playing an important role in the growth of the region's highly competitive furniture market. The country is witnessing a rise in the construction and real estate sector with the residential construction accounting for the largest share (UAE Furniture Market - Growth, Trends, and Forecasts (2020 - 2025)) due to the increasing population and the increasing number of foreign expats (more than 170 nationalities) residing in the cities. The growing demand for residential units is driving the growth of the domestic furniture industry in the region.

The pandemic, restrictions, and lockdown affected the UAE market heavily as the country imports the majority of its furniture. The interruptions of the supply chain had a major impact on the home furniture market (UAE Home Furniture Market | Growth, Trends, and Forecast (2019 - 2024)). The industry witnessed a bounce back at the end of 2020 with the rise of "work from home" model and the need for more comfortable spaces at home to live and work at the same time. In 2021, the furniture market continued to experience significant growth with a remarkable increase in furniture sales (Furniture - United Arab Emirates | Statista Market Forecast). The rising inflation and increasing energy prices along with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions helped the furniture industry to gain traction in 2022.

The UAE furniture industry is experiencing rapid expansion due to the increasing support from the government through massive investments and mounting number of construction projects across the real estate sector. The government is increasingly focusing on diversifying the economy away from the oil & gas industry, thus promoting infrastructural developments and construction projects to serve the growing population and the rapidly improving living standards of residents.

UAE's Local Furniture Market
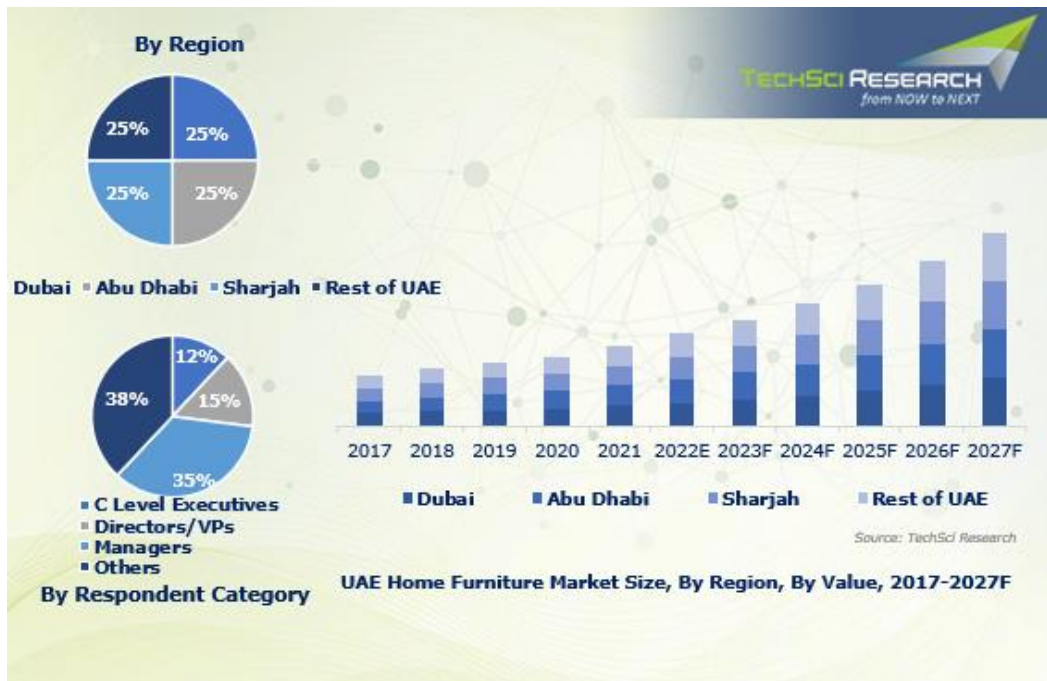
The growing number of replacements of aging infrastructure is projected to accelerate the growth of UAE home furniture market in the forecast period, 2023-2027
(*UAE Home Furniture Market Size, Growth, Trends, Forecast 2027*)

In addition, foreign stakeholders consider the UAE as a hub of profitable growth opportunities (Business in Dubai, n.d.). Foreign investments are expanding their furniture businesses in the country and providing a wide range of new and innovative products. This is helping the industry flourish, resulting in an augmentation of overall market growth.

An evolving lifestyle, rising number of expatriates, rapid urbanization, and the rising real estate prices have developed a variety of furnishing needs. On one hand, we notice a considerable reduction in house sizes which is resulting in an escalating demand for multifunctional furniture. Customers are increasingly looking for compact and convertible furniture to enable efficient use of the available space. Accordingly, multiple suppliers have introduced multifunctional furniture with storage facilities to accommodate for the market requirements, and this is projected to stimulate the market growth.

UAE's Local Furniture Market

On the other hand, with more than 90% of the population residing in urban areas and due to the rising disposable income per capita and better lifestyle requirements, growing consumer expenditure on furniture products is propelling the furniture market growth (UAE Luxury Furniture Market, (2022 - 2027)). As per a report by Mordor Intelligence, people in the UAE are increasing their spending on renovating homes and investing in higher-quality products resulting in a higher demand for high-end luxury furniture items (UAE Home Furniture Market | Growth, Trends, and Forecast (2019 - 2024)). The number of consumers shifting their preference towards high quality products is on the rise, resulting in the emergence of multiple players catering to the requirements of the same target consumer for luxury furniture items. This is leading various furniture companies to launch premium luxury furniture stores, further stimulating the growth of the furniture industry. The governments' initiatives to develop the tourism and hospitality industry is estimated to contribute approximately 12% of the country's GDP (UAE Luxury Furniture Market,(2022 - 2027)). This is expected to have a major impact in the UAE luxury furniture market with an estimated growth of a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 2.5% during the forecast period 2022-2027 (UAE Home Furniture Market | Growth, Trends, and Forecast (2019 - 2024)).
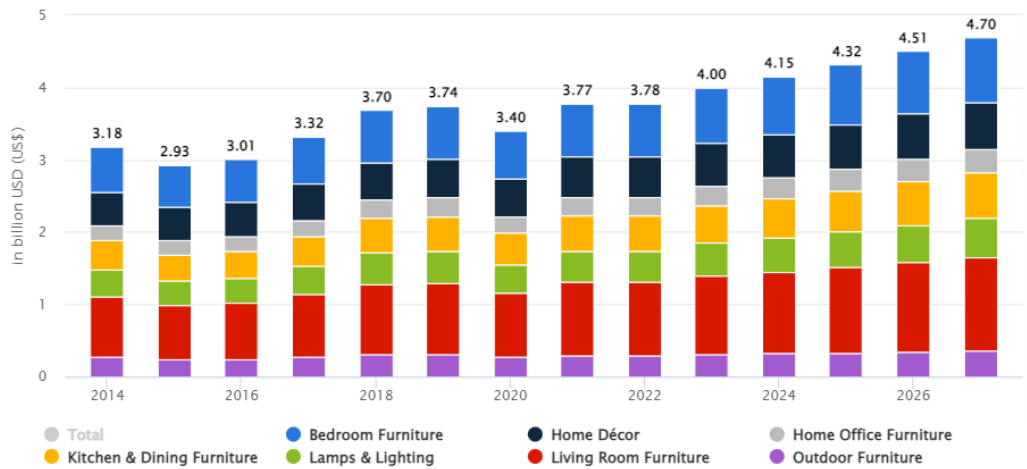
The technological advancements and the increase of e-commerce platforms offering various designs of furniture products is also accelerating the growth of the market in the UAE. The shift towards online stores and the online distribution channels are helping companies to reach wider customer range across the region and enhancing the sales of furniture.

The UAE furniture market is anticipated to witness potential growth in the forecast period 2023-2027 with an annual expectation of a CAGR 4.16% amounting to US$4.00bn in 2023 (Furniture - United Arab Emirates | Statista Market Forecast) and the residential sector is expected to emerge as an area of remunerative opportunities for the leading players in the UAE. The market's largest segment is the Living Room Furniture segment with a market volume of US$1.08bn projected in 2023 (Furniture - United Arab Emirates | Statista Market Forecast).

UAE's Local Furniture Market

REVENUE BY SEGMENT   REVENUE CHANGE BY SEGMENT

In billion USD (US$)

Year	Total
2014	3.18
2015	2.93
2016	3.01
2017	3.32
2018	3.70
2019	3.74
2020	3.40
2021	3.77
2022	3.78
2023	4.00
2024	4.15
2025	4.32
2026	4.51
2027	4.70

Legend:
- Total
- Bedroom Furniture
- Home Décor
- Home Office Furniture
- Kitchen & Dining Furniture
- Lamps & Lighting
- Living Room Furniture
- Outdoor Furniture

Notes: Data shown is using current exchange rates and reflects market impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Most recent update: Nov 2022

(Furniture - United Arab Emirates | Statista Market Forecast)

Limitations and Opportunities

The UAE depends largely on importation for the majority of the raw material needed for furniture production. With regards to materials used in the furniture-making in the UAE, imported wood — mostly teak, mahogany, oak, and maple— dominates the market. The availability, durability, and low maintenance of furniture made out of wood makes it appealing to the consumer, in addition to its natural beauty that provides a warm and inviting atmosphere adding a sense of highly demanded elegance and sophistication. However, this increase in consumer preference toward wooden furniture is not environmentally sustainable.

In addition to wood, various materials are used in the furniture industry like bamboo, metal, plastic, and stone.

Metal, aluminium, and stainless steel are mostly sourced from local producers, while wood is mainly globally imported from a diverse array of countries like China, India, and Brazil (UAE Home Furniture Market | Growth, Trends, and Forecast (2019 - 2024)). With the shortage of local raw material and to meet the increasing market demand, the industry depends largely on imported (largely wooden) furniture from China, Italy, Germany, Poland, Turkey, Malaysia, and Vietnam. The difficulties the local manufacturers in the UAE face in producing raw materials along with the dependency on importation and strict government regulations on wood production, is leading to growing costs and may restrict the growth of home furniture market across the UAE in the forecasted period 2022-2027 as per a market research report by MarkNtel Advisors (MarkNtel). This demonstrates an obstacle to attaining sustainability in UAE furniture production, owing to the cost and the need to import raw materials over long distances.

To promote sustainable furniture production in the UAE, there is a need to explore alternative materials and production methods, such as using recycled materials and promoting the use of sustainable wood species, like the widely available palm tree wood. By exploring local sourcing options and finding sustainable solutions for importing raw materials, the UAE can reduce its dependence on imported wood and promote a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly furniture industry.

Limitations and Opportunities

As for individual producers and corporations, we can see some tentative initiatives when it comes to producing sustainable furniture and accessories in the UAE. Very few furniture brands and designers are focusing their efforts on sustainability, while the vast majority are not. While some companies claim to be "green," my research did not uncover any furniture companies that could claim to be fully sustainable when considering all practices, from material procurement to manufacturing to logistics.

To support their claims to sustainability, some companies only import or produce few pieces using sustainable materials. Most of the raw material used in local furniture production is imported and furniture factories do not fully comply with sustainability guidelines. The sustainable furniture that is available in the market comes from big players like IKEA who import all their products; not producing locally, not using local raw materials, and not eliminating the carbon footprint caused by shipping and other associated environmental cost, which can have a negative impact on sustainability.

In addition, the idea of reusing or recycling furniture is not yet a common practice in the UAE and is not being widely promoted. The government initiatives regarding recycling are mainly focused on partners in relevant sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and retail industries. However, the introduction of these practices to individuals could have significant benefits in terms of creating awareness and reducing pressure on landfills. By promoting the idea of a vintage or secondhand furniture market, businesses and government entities can encourage individuals to reuse and recycle old furniture rather than throwing it away. This can be done through initiatives such as offering incentives for donating or selling used furniture or partnering with local charities to provide secondhand furniture to those in need. Promoting these practices not only helps to reduce the amount of furniture waste going to landfills but also provides economic benefits to individuals who are looking for affordable furniture options. Additionally, it helps to reduce the carbon footprint associated with the production and disposal of new furniture. By promoting the reuse and recycling of furniture, the UAE can take a step towards a more sustainable future while also providing economic opportunities for the community.

Limitations and Opportunities

While many companies in the UAE are partnering with the government to implement its vision for sustainable furniture, there is a significant gap in consumer awareness. This lack of knowledge on the benefits of sustainable furniture is a barrier to the adoption of eco-friendly furniture practices by individual consumers. Even the sustainable cities projects that are being built with sustainable building materials and promoting green environment are not advocating for sustainable furniture. To address this challenge, it is important for businesses and government entities to engage in public outreach and education campaigns that raise awareness of the benefits of sustainable furniture. Local NGOs such as the Emirates Green Building Council and other business forums should continue to promote the advantages of adopting sustainable furniture practices, provide educational resources, and influence policies to encourage the growth of the green furniture sector. People need to understand the initiatives to know how to take action and be part of realizing them. Capacity building should also be prioritized to ensure that manufacturers, retailers, and consumers have the necessary knowledge and skills to make sustainable furniture choices.

The UAE's government has played a key role in encouraging the adoption of sustainable practices in the furniture industry by providing guidelines and regulations. However, there are also some negative lessons that can be drawn from the UAE's experience. For example, the UAE's focus on sustainability in the furniture industry is partly driven by the desire to maintain its image as a global leader in sustainable development. This has led some furniture manufacturers to prioritize the *appearance* of sustainability over actual sustainable practices. In some cases, furniture manufacturers have simply rebranded their products as "eco-friendly" without actually making any significant changes to their production processes.

The lack of comprehensive regulation in the furniture industry is also leading to inconsistencies in sustainability practices among different companies which may hinder the progress towards a more sustainable industry.
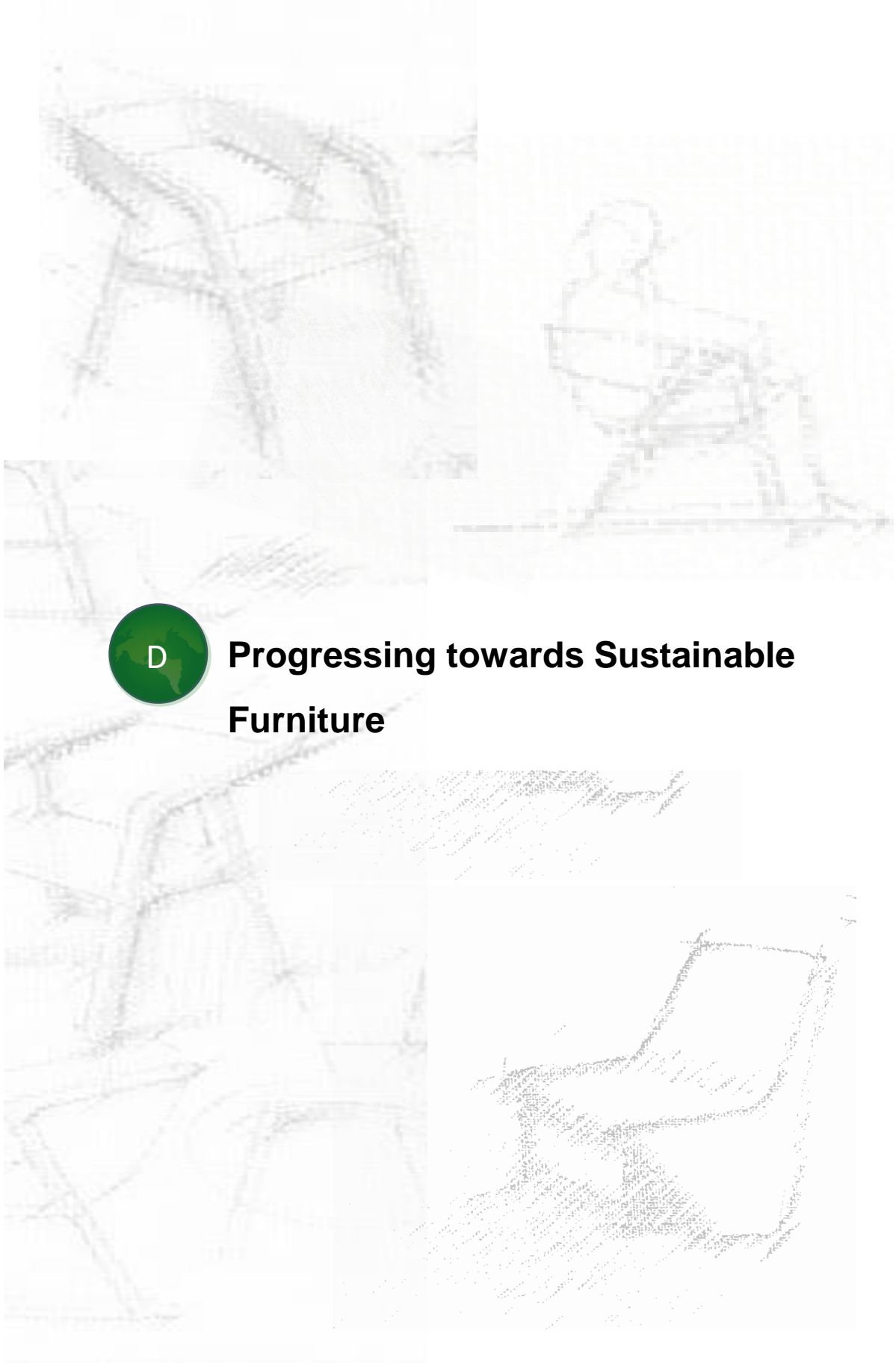
D **Progressing towards Sustainable Furniture**

Shaping Consumer Choice: Building (Emotional) Connection

Sustainability in the UAE furniture industry is scarce, and the market lacks a major supply of green furniture. Although the government is working towards building and strengthening partnerships for an increase in industrial productivity and growth opportunities, sustainable furniture manufacturing still requires more efforts. The industry needs to shift its practices to drive demand and support with environmental issues. This shift can be driven in part, I argue, by creating an *emotional* connection with consumers and by leveraging the *emotional* factors that influence purchasing decisions around sustainability in furniture. This can involve highlighting the materials used in the furniture, the environmental benefits of using those materials, and the impact that the production of the furniture has on the environment. The industry can also highlight the social and economic benefits of sustainable furniture, such as supporting local communities and promoting ethical manufacturing practices.

A 2015 study published in Harvard Business Review argues that customers find emotional connection with brands when these aligns with their motivations and helps them fulfil deep, often unconscious, desires (Magids et al., 2015). The study identifies high-Impact "emotional motivators" that can drive consumer behaviour and affect customer value; these include standing out from the crowd to project a unique social identity, feeling a sense of belonging by being part of a group, and the positive feelings derived from protecting the environment while taking action to improve one's surroundings (Magids et al., 2015). In addition, other factors like social responsibility, positive habit formation, self-image, values, needs, and ethics, are likewise affected by emotions, and play an essential role in influencing the buying decision of consumers. Positive emotions can, I suggest, thus lead to environmentally and socially responsible interest and to more sustainable decisions and behaviours around furniture purchases and ownership.

Companies need to work with the government on finding solutions to economic and environmental challenges and finding ways to provide affordable and accessible sustainable furniture to the consumer at the same time. It is important to create a culture of sustainability in the UAE, where green furniture practices are seen as a desirable and

Shaping Consumer Choice: Building (Emotional) Connection

beneficial choice for both individuals and the community as a whole. Incentives can also encourage businesses and consumers to adopt sustainable practices by making it financially and socially advantageous to do so. By building consciousness and emotional attitudes towards sustainable furniture practices, the UAE can help to drive demand for sustainable furniture while supporting environmental and social issues.

Government intervention and policy changes are crucial in achieving sustainability. Governments can regulate the industry by launching initiatives and imposing environmental standards. Their policies and regulations can create an enabling environment that incentivizes sustainable practices, sets standards for environmental protection, and creates a level playing field for sustainable businesses as well as promote innovation and the development of new sustainable technologies. Government intervention can also address systemic issues that require more significant structural changes and that can only be addressed through policies and industry-wide reforms.

Learning from the UAE's practices towards sustainability, particularly within the furniture industry, highlights the importance of providing incentives to businesses and consumers to adopt sustainable practices.

One approach to incentivize the furniture industry to adopt sustainable practices is to bring the costs of eco-friendly furniture in line with other products. This can be achieved through government subsidies and financial support for businesses that adopt sustainable practices. The promotion of sustainable furniture as durable is also crucial as it reduces the need for frequent replacements, thus reducing waste and conserving resources.

Education and awareness-raising campaigns can be another effective approach to incentivize businesses and consumers to adopt sustainable practices. Governments can organize workshops, seminars, and training programs to educate furniture industry professionals on sustainable design, material sourcing, and production practices. Similarly, public awareness campaigns can promote sustainable furniture practices, such as reducing waste, choosing eco-friendly materials, and supporting businesses that prioritize sustainability.

Shaping Consumer Choice: Building (Emotional) Connection

The UAE's practices towards sustainable furniture also underscore the importance of collective action and innovation in promoting sustainability in the furniture industry. There needs to be a collective effort that involves not only governments and businesses but also individuals to achieve real progress towards sustainability. Without the active participation of individual consumers who can drive demand for sustainable products and practices, it will be challenging to reach sustainability in furniture.

Consumer behaviour has a profound impact on the natural environment and influencing consumers to adopt environmentally sustainable behaviour is vital for conserving natural resources and meeting the green needs of societies. Additionally, consumer behaviour can influence government policies and regulations related to sustainability in furniture. As more consumers demand sustainable products, governments may be more likely to implement policies that incentivize companies to adopt environmentally friendly practices. As Pollex (2017) notes, focusing on individual-level changes is necessary to achieve larger-scale societal changes (Pollex, 2017).

In order to achieve environmental sustainability, it is essential to change individuals' consumption behaviours (Halder et al., 2020). Eliminating perceived obstacles to positive emotional outlook for sustainable furniture, such as concerns about aesthetics and cost, can be a powerful way to encourage responsible consumption behaviour. By designing sustainable furniture that is aesthetically pleasing and competitively priced compared to non-sustainable options, companies can attract more consumers and encourage them to make sustainable choices.

Moreover, promoting vintage furniture and supporting the circular economy can also contribute to sustainability in the furniture industry. This can be achieved by encouraging consumers to buy used furniture, refurbishing old furniture, and recycling materials. It is also essential to allow consumers to 'feel good' about their purchases while being sustainable—by providing information about the environmental benefits of products and communicating the commitment to sustainability. This can help to create a sense of pride and satisfaction among consumers who make sustainable choices, thereby encouraging more people to adopt sustainable behaviour.

Shaping Consumer Choice: Building (Emotional) Connection

Most importantly, the change to responsible consumption behaviour can be reached by stimulating positive emotional experiences, achieving a balance between emotional, social, economic, and environmental aspects. Fostering an emotional connection between consumers and sustainable products can help to shift consumer values towards more sustainable and socially responsible lifestyles, creating a positive ripple effect across society as a whole.

Social factors, as we have seen, play an important role in purchasing decisions. Social influence based on social norms, social learning, and social comparison processes is a highly influential factor that can affect sustainable consumer behaviour change (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013) which indicates that consumers are often impacted by their surrounding and make choices based on the presence, behaviours, and expectations of people around them. They tend to select sustainable options to make a positive impression on others, seeking social desirability from their actions (Green & Peloza, 2014).

Consumers also tend to endorse high involvement in sustainable choices to convey social status to others and these status motives, that can influence product choices, can be used to promote pro-environmental behaviour (Griskevicius et al., 2010). Thus, we can link social influence to behaviour change using the effect that people's activities and actions can have on others as a catalyst for positive transformation. Consumers can be subject to these pressures, but may also act as agents of environmental change, by adopting social practices that contribute to sustainable development (Barr et al., 2011) and further influence others in their social and reputational networks.

Another factor that plays a role in determining sustainable consumer behaviour is self-image: where people desire to maintain positive self-views which in turn triggers positive emotions. The positivity of the self-image can be reaffirmed through sustainable consumption and can be critical for behaviour change. If possessions with positive emotional values attached, can become extensions of people's identity (Belk, 1988), individuals usually take better care of and are less likely to trash identity-linked products (Trudel et al., 2016). This may promote sustainable consumption, if the positive values

Shaping Consumer Choice: Building (Emotional) Connection

associated with purchasing and owning sustainable pieces can extend to become an aspect of identity consciousness.

With the rising awareness of the environmental impacts of consumption and production, we notice that consumers are becoming more sensitive towards green products when making their purchasing decisions. However, as the history of consumer choice and shifts in furniture consumption show, there need to be strong and multiple motivators for people to adapt their consumption habits, particularly when purchasing products that are not widely known or familiar in their community. This can also apply to sustainable furniture, as many consumers may not be familiar with the materials, manufacturing processes, and benefits of eco-friendly furniture.

Accordingly, as sustainable furniture can be positively associated with desired and socially-valued elements, aspirational lifestyles, and personal values, tapping into these associations, the furniture could be promoted as a desirable and meaningful choice for consumers who care about quality, durability, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship. The design and aesthetic appeal of sustainable furniture should demonstrate that eco-consciousness need not come at the expense of style or comfort. It may be necessary to acknowledge that sustainable furniture can be more expensive than conventional options due to the use of eco-friendly materials and manufacturing processes. However, it's important to also emphasize the long-term savings that can be realized through reduced replacement. Providing information on the expected lifespan of sustainable furniture and how this compares to conventional furniture can help consumers understand the long-term value of their investment and make informed purchasing decisions.

Nevertheless, sustainable innovations can face strong negative emotions and public resistance if not developed and implemented correctly, as per recent research on emotions and sustainable innovations (Contzen et al., 2021). The research suggests that emotions play a critical role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours towards sustainable innovations, and that the success of sustainable innovations may depend on the extent to which they are perceived as being congruent with individuals' personal

Shaping Consumer Choice: Building (Emotional) Connection

values and goals. It appears crucial to understand the factors and processes that provoke positive emotions for a sustainable innovation to be successful.

Values that are important to individuals and that are seen as relevant to the innovation itself, such as environmental concern, social responsibility, health and safety, and ethical considerations, need to be addressed, as these can be the basis of people's emotions toward sustainable innovations and crucial for ensuring responsible decision-making. This research also highlights the need for effective communication strategies that can address negative emotions and concerns and help to foster positive emotions such as enthusiasm and hope for sustainable innovations (Contzen et al., 2021). Addressing products to consumers at the level of personally-held values can promote positive emotions, and increase the meaningfulness and satisfaction derived from responsible sustainable behaviour.

Moreover, consumers need to feel motivated to purchase green products; as Baudrillard and other media theorists have noted, individuals are not only motivated by desire for physical products themselves, but even more so by the simulation: the promised values associated with ownership, or visions of a projected self. They argue that people are often motivated by the desire to own a product because of the lifestyle or image it represents, rather than the actual physical product itself. This is often referred to as the "sign value" or "symbolic value" of a product (Baudrillard, 1968). A person may be motivated to purchase a sustainable piece of furniture not only because of its physical properties but also because of the lifestyle or image it represents, such as being eco-conscious or socially responsible. The product becomes a symbol of their values and identity, rather than just a functional object.

Conventional motivation strategies attempt to make sustainable actions more attractive by adding financial incentives and rewards to encourage people to adopt sustainable behaviours, however, leveraging on emotional incentives has a higher potential to influence sustainable behaviour and consumption. By tapping into people's emotional drivers, such as their values, beliefs, aspirations, and identity, it is possible to create a deeper and more meaningful connection between them and sustainable actions or

products. For example, promoting sustainable furniture as a way to express one's personal values and identity, or as a way to contribute to a better world and future, can be more effective in motivating sustainable consumption than simply offering a discount or financial incentive. In addition, emotional incentives have the potential to create lasting change in behaviour and consumption patterns. By creating an emotional attachment to sustainable actions or products, individuals are more likely to maintain their sustainable behaviours over time, even when the financial incentives or rewards are no longer present.

The industry needs to understand the consumer, and the significance of emotions in the design process in order to inspire shifts in behaviour. Green products should be designed to meet people's needs using the emotional connections as a strategy for real competitive advantage and growth. This requires understanding the emotional and practical considerations that consumers have when choosing furniture including factors such as the desire for comfort, functionality, and aesthetics, as well as the emotional connection that people have with their homes and living spaces. Another consideration is the emotional connection that many people have with nature and the desire to incorporate elements of nature into their homes. By using sustainable materials such as reclaimed wood or bamboo, or by incorporating natural colours and textures, companies can create an emotional connection with their customers that goes beyond just the eco-friendliness of the product. In addition, sharing the story behind the creation of the green furniture and highlighting the efforts made and the impact the product has on the environment should evoke positive emotions in the consumer, help them feel a connection with the product, and leave them feeling inspired to act.

By capitalizing on the importance of emotions in the purchasing decision and understanding that consumers possess the capability to impact the environment, we can determine the appropriate actions that generate positive emotions for consumers and encourages purchases of sustainable products. This can be achieved by highlighting the environmental and social benefits of the product, providing engaging and interactive experiences to help consumers feel more emotionally invested in the product and its

Shaping Consumer Choice: Building (Emotional) Connection

sustainability story, or by empowering consumers to make a difference through their sustainable consumption.

Positive emotions have an influence on our thoughts and actions at many different levels. They can motivate long-term sustainable behaviour change, help improve sustainability interventions, and increase well-being at the same time. From the perspective of sustainably-minded consumers, the physical properties, aesthetic qualities, and ideological-emotional values of status, taste, and personal commitment associated with certain furniture pieces, all play a role in purchasing decisions. Additionally, and returning here to some of the earliest frameworks for sustainability in furniture in the 19th-century critiques of Ruskin and Morris, are the values associated with corporations themselves, and varied phenomena associated with reputational value, labour practices, shipping, and marketing.

Corporate Role

Organizational reputation & ethics: Organizations play a vital role towards achieving sustainability and influencing consumer behaviour. Sustainable consumption starts with organizational action to drive change through operations and practices. By prioritizing sustainability as a core value and integrating sustainable practices throughout their operations, organizations can influence consumer behaviour towards more responsible consumption patterns while reducing their environmental footprint. Consumers' perceptions of companies' practices, reputation, and behaviour are essential in influencing (consumers') attitudes and purchase behaviour. With increasing awareness of social and environmental issues, people expect companies to be more responsible and meet their expectations in terms of sustainable practices. Therefore, it is essential for companies to not only prioritize sustainability in their operations but also communicate their efforts transparently to consumers, building trust and reinforcing their reputation as socially and environmentally responsible brands.

As noted in a study by Forte and Lamont in 1998, consumers are increasingly making purchasing decisions based on a company's reputation and behaviour towards social and environmental issues (Forte & Lamont, 1998); research has shown that consumers in general often make conscious choices for or against brands by considering a company's level of ethical behaviour / reputation for ethical practices, and are accordingly willing to reward this behaviour by paying a premium for products that align with their values (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000) — including those related to environmental sustainability: the use of environmentally friendly materials, sustainable production processes, and fair labour practices. This highlights the importance for companies to prioritize sustainability and corporate social responsibility initiatives, not only for ethical reasons but also to attract and retain customers in a highly competitive market. To understand consumers' willingness to support ethical firms and punish unethical firms, it is necessary to establish consumers' levels of ethical awareness, by providing consumers with information about the ethical and environmental practices of companies. This requires a collaborative efforts from multiple stakeholders including the companies themselves, government agencies, and consumer advocacy groups for instance.

Socially and environmentally responsible practices can lead to more positive consumer

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perceptions of the organization and create loyalty, since being perceived as adopting ethical stances have positive effects on organizational images and reputations (World Economic Forum report, 2002). Business leaders realize that consumers today are interested in corporate reputation, which is perceived as the sum of every activity a company undertakes that have an impact upon the community, intentionally or unintentionally.

Thus, organizations consider corporate reputation to be a crucial element of their success (Boulstridge & Carrigan, 2000). They also realize that brands that have a strong reputation are often perceived as providing more value. Accordingly, striving for competitive advantage, organizations are integrating sustainability and implementing pro-environmental initiatives into their business to create value and improve corporate reputation. They intend to develop a positive image by embracing pro-environmental values since pro-environmentalism is perceived as a form of altruism and corporate citizenship (Maignan & Ferrell, 2001). They also aim to meet the consumers desire for greener products in order to retain customers and remain competitive (Green et al., 2000). Responsible social and environmental behaviour is thriving and changing companies' behaviour and practises as it offers long-term benefits on an individual, organizational, and societal levels.

Sustainable production: The path toward preventing environmental degradation starts with sustainable production. This requires a holistic approach that involves companies' operations and strategies with an emphasis on creating sustainable products, processes, and practices. It also involves design, green procurement, and manufacturing. It focuses on cutting down on energy, waste, and greenhouse gas emissions, improving resource efficiency, and reducing consumption. Organizations are recognizing the advantages of adopting sustainable production practices which result in cost savings and improved brand reputation, increasingly central as these are to consumer habits and preferences.

Adopting sustainable production practices in the furniture industry can significantly reduce environmental impact and resource depletion as manufacturing consumes large amounts of natural resources and contribute to environmental pollution. Adopting ethical

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production processes can reduce negative environmental consequences, however, changes are necessary at every organizational level including product design, procurement of raw material, manufacturing, product assembly, packaging, shipping, and distribution. Making consumers aware of these components is also a way for producers to differentiate themselves in the marketplace, and to garner the desired reputation for sustainable practices. It is thus not only desirable to engage in these practices, but to embed awareness of sustainable approaches at every level of the marketing of one's product. It must also be noted that producers who *claim* sustainability are incredibly vulnerable to critique, with sustainable consumers being a highly critical and aware group who will not take claims (especially exaggerated or false claims) of sustainability for granted.

Designers play an important role in promoting sustainable practices in the furniture industry. They have the responsibility of understanding consumers' expectations and translating them into products that are both aesthetically pleasing and environmentally friendly. Designers can achieve this by using their creativity and knowledge of sustainable materials to create furniture that meets consumers' needs while minimizing the impact on the environment.

Green procurement in the furniture industry is a rapidly-growing trend that can have significant positive impacts on the environment, local economies, and human health. By prioritizing the use of environmentally friendly materials that is free from harmful chemicals, furniture manufacturers can reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to a more sustainable future. This can also have positive social and economic impacts; by supporting local suppliers, furniture manufacturers can help to create jobs and stimulate economic growth in their communities. Sourcing materials locally can also reduce transportation emissions and support the growth of local economies.

Once sustainable materials have been sourced and procured, the focus shifts to manufacturing. The furniture manufacturing processes can create a range of environmental hazards with a negative impact on multiple resources like air quality, biodiversity, and water. In addition to the consumption of large amounts of natural

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resources, furniture production poses health risks to humans and a heavy burden on the environment by being a source of pollutants and wastes. Sustainable production can reduce the environmental impact of furniture manufacturing. It involves a range of practices, including responsible material sourcing, green manufacturing, and the use of renewable energy to power factories and production plants.

Furniture manufacturers can also implement closed-loop manufacturing processes, where waste materials from one part of the production process are used as inputs for another part of the process. This reduces the amount of waste generated and can lower production costs. Sustainable product assembly, packaging, shipping, and distribution are important aspects of furniture production that can help reduce the environmental impact of the industry. Furniture manufacturers can implement sustainable practices by reducing transportation distance and carbon emissions, minimizing waste and overproduction, and implementing recycling programs for packaging and shipping materials.

By adopting these sustainable practices, furniture manufacturers can not only reduce their environmental impact but also demonstrate their commitment to ethical and sustainable practices. These practices are likely to be rewarded with increased consumer support and loyalty, so long as they are consistently and verifiably connected to producer and communicated to the consumer.

Awareness & green marketing: When presenting sustainable furniture to consumers, green marketing strategies should be used in a way that creates emotional impact and connection, while also increasing awareness and encouraging more sustainable habits.

For instance, eco-labels and certifications should be used to provide reliable information about the green characteristics of the product and motivate consumers to purchase green furniture. Eco-labels should be located on the packaging in a way that captures consumers' attention, and the information should be simple and user-friendly.

Lack of awareness is the most significant barrier to the adoption of eco-friendly furniture. As learned from the UAE practices, many consumers still prioritize factors such as cost and design over sustainability because of their limited awareness about sustainable

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furniture. Companies should start by educating consumers about the benefits of sustainable furniture and making ethical and sustainable issues more evident. They should emphasize that their products are made from eco-friendly materials, which means they are non-toxic, recyclable, and biodegradable. They should also highlight the impact of buying sustainable furniture on future generations.

Providing more information to customers about how to maintain and repair furniture, in order to prolong and extend the product lifespan, alongside marketing campaigns emphasizing this quality (and perhaps developed in parallel with public service campaigns to re-use furniture and keep it out of landfills) can encourage circular consumer patterns. Providing customers with more information can help increase awareness and encourage more sustainable practices.

One strategy to encourage sustainable habit formation is to make the action (whatever it is) easier to do (Gardner & Rebar, 2019). Making it easy for consumers to access and purchase green furniture can encourage them to adopt more sustainable habits. For example, purchasing furniture has become easier due to the availability of online platforms and social media has proved to be a powerful tool for creating awareness. Companies can take advantage of the availability of these platforms to reach a wider audience. Governments can play a key role in supporting organizations as well. By developing green e-commerce policies and encouraging the development of online sustainable marketplaces for instance, governments can help to increase awareness of sustainable options and make it easier for consumers to find and purchase sustainable products. This can lead to a shift in consumer behaviour towards more sustainable choices and create a market for sustainable products, which in turn can drive innovation and investment in sustainable technologies and practices.

Using creative messaging will help consumers feel a connection with the product and understand why it's important to choose sustainable furniture. Highlighting the benefits of sustainable furniture, such as its durability, quality, and environmental impact, educating consumers, and encouraging them to take action can lead to increased demand for sustainable furniture and a shift towards more sustainable practices in the furniture industry.

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Appearance and function: Sustainable furniture must balance environmental sustainability, functional sustainability, and trendy sustainability. By prioritizing the use of sustainable materials, designing for long-term use, and meeting the functional needs of users while also promoting aesthetic appeal, sustainable furniture manufacturers can offer products that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Designing furniture with functional sustainability in mind involves products that meet both the immediate and long-term needs of users, as well as the potential for the furniture pieces to be adapted to different uses while minimizing the environmental impact. The design of furniture should be based on the needs of users, such as comfort, ease of use, modularity, multifunctionality, and accessibility. This can be achieved by considering factors such as materials, construction techniques, design, and end-of-life options.

Designing furniture that is multifunctional and versatile is an effective way to ensure that it meets the requirements of users in different settings and for a range of purposes. This can help accommodate smaller living spaces and reduce the use of multiple pieces of furniture. Multifunctional furniture, as noted above, can save space, reduce waste, and provide greater value to users, while keeping pieces out of landfill and avoiding the initial embedded energy expenditure involved in extraction of materials and production processes. Modular designs can also help accommodate changing needs and allow for different shapes and subdivisions to be built from the same elements leading to reduced waste and increased longevity.

In addition, focusing on developing furniture that is resilient, tensile, and long-lasting can help ensure that it remains relevant and valuable over time. There is a common perception that sustainable consumers are less concerned with fashion and more interested in practicality and durability. This is because many sustainable products are designed with an emphasis on functionality and longevity, rather than following short-lived fashion trends. However, this is not necessarily true for all consumers, and there is a growing trend towards sustainable and eco-friendly designs that are also aesthetically pleasing and fashionable, responding to these factors of emotional connection and

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satisfaction. Green furniture does not have to be boring or unattractive. Trendy sustainable furniture is a growing niche in the furniture industry and customers are willing to pay more for furniture that is both aesthetically pleasing and environmentally responsible (Biswas, 2016).

To ensure that sustainable furniture remains relevant over time, a focus should be on durability and adaptability to changing trends: classic design principles and versatile materials can be updated or adapted more easily than those based on sheer novelty or single-use. Additionally, multi-functionality can help to extend the lifespan of the product and reduce the need for consumers to replace their furniture as their needs change over time.

Designing furniture with a focus on the principles of disassembly/reassembly, repair, reuse, and recycling can lead to longer product lifecycles and help maximize the potential for a successful second life reducing the load on landfills.

Designers should understand the values and preferences of consumers to offer furniture that reflects their lifestyle and needs, while not remaining inattentive to trends and fashions. Offering customizable options for instance, allows customers to personalize their furniture choices, enhancing their positive emotional investment in these pieces while reducing waste and promoting sustainability by reducing overproduction and producing only what is needed. Tailored furniture is more likely to be used and valued over time, reducing the likelihood of disposal or replacement.

Materials: Furniture manufacturers have the opportunity to make a positive impact on the environment by using sustainable materials in their production process. It's important for manufacturers to determine which materials are the most sustainable and ensure that their products are of high-quality, appealing, and comfortable.

Wood is a popular choice for furniture because it is durable and versatile, but it's important to use responsibly sourced wood that does not contribute to deforestation. The use of wood in sustainable furniture requires a comprehensive approach that considers all aspects of the product's lifecycle, from sourcing to disposal, using responsible forestry practices, innovative design, manufacturing processes, and end-of-life considerations.

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Using wood that has been harvested employing responsible forestry practices, such as selective harvesting or agroforestry, and certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), can help ensure that the wood used in furniture production comes from responsibly managed forests. These practices can help maintain healthy forests, protect wildlife habitats, and promote biodiversity, while also providing a sustainable source of wood for furniture production.

Another way to manufacture sustainable furniture is by using reclaimed wood. This involves taking wood from old buildings, furniture, or other sources and repurposing it for use in new furniture. Reclaimed wood can have a unique character and patina that gives furniture a distinctive look, and it also reduces waste by keeping materials out of landfills. Other materials that furniture manufacturers can use to create eco-friendly pieces, include renewable, biodegradable, and low carbon-footprint bamboo, cork, and recycled materials like plastic, metal, and glass.

Growing public awareness of the negative impacts of toxic carcinogens and chemicals on human health and the environment, have led governments and consumers alike to limit or avoid these. Some examples of toxic chemicals that are commonly found in furniture include formaldehyde, flame retardants, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Formaldehyde is a known carcinogen and can be found in some types of wood furniture, as well as in adhesives and finishes used in furniture manufacturing. VOCs are released from materials like paint, adhesives, and finishes, and can contribute to indoor air pollution. Flame retardants are often used in upholstered furniture and have been linked to health problems like cancer, hormone disruption, and neurological damage. They are released from products into soil, rivers, and oceans where they are persistent pollutants and can bioaccumulate up food chains (Allysona, 2017). They provide limited fire safety benefit and can delay ignition only a few seconds and make a fire more toxic.

Non-toxic alternatives are available and are a great alternative to conventional finishes that may contain harmful chemicals. Coating furniture with natural vegetable oils and waxes is a sustainable and eco-friendly option. These natural coatings are derived from renewable resources, such as plants, and are non-toxic, biodegradable, and can provide

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excellent protection and durability for furniture. Vegetable oils, such as linseed oil, walnut oil, or tung oil, are commonly used to finish wood furniture. These oils penetrate the wood and provide protective barrier against moisture and wear, while also enhancing the natural beauty of the wood. They are also non-toxic and can be easily reapplied if needed. Waxes, such as beeswax, carnauba wax, or soy wax, can also be used to finish furniture. These waxes provide a smooth, protective layer over the wood surface and can help to enhance the natural colour and texture of the wood. They are also renewable and biodegradable, making them an environmentally friendly choice.

With the use of sustainable fabrics such as wool, leather, nettles, hemp, recycled polyester, and jute, furniture manufacturers can further reduce the environmental impact of furniture. These materials are renewable, biodegradable, and have a lower impact on the environment than synthetic alternatives.

Using sustainable materials such as PET-fill and CertiPUR-US® certified foam in furniture manufacturing is a great way to create eco-friendly and high-quality furniture. PET-fill is a vegan down alternative made from recycled post-consumer plastic, such as plastic water bottles, which reduces the demand for new raw materials and keeps plastic waste out of landfills or oceans. PET-fill is lightweight and breathable, can provide good insulation and warmth, and can be hypoallergenic and resistant to mould and mildew, while CertiPUR-US® certified foam, made without harmful flame retardant chemicals, without formaldehyde, and with low VOC emissions, emits fewer volatile organic compounds into the air.

Additionally, some companies aim for zero-waste manufacturing, which involves using every scrap and off-cut of materials to create new products or recycle back into the manufacturing process. This can be achieved through various methods, such as using digital technology to optimize cutting patterns and minimize waste or implementing closed-loop production systems that allow for the reuse of materials in the manufacturing process to reduce waste.

Given the amount of unverified environmental claims on the market, certifications become an important tool for consumers to identify sustainable products and to ensure that they

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meet specific environmental and social standards. Green certifications are credible as most are based on industry best practices and require a proven application process.

Some of the most common certifications in the furniture industry include the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification, which ensures that the wood used in the furniture comes from responsibly managed forests; the GreenCircle certification, which evaluates the sustainability of the entire product life cycle, from raw material extraction to disposal; the Cradle to Cradle certification, which assesses the environmental impact of the manufacturing process, as well as the recyclability and safety of the product; and the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) which applies to textiles and ensures that products are made with organic fibers, are free of harmful chemicals, and meet social criteria such as fair labour practices.

Conscious material selection is an essential aspect of sustainable furniture design. Rather than catering to the demand for disposable "fast furniture" that is often made from low-quality materials and has a short lifespan, products should be built to last. By carefully selecting materials, furniture can be made to withstand the test of time reducing the need for frequent replacement and minimizing waste.

Progressing towards Sustainable Furniture

The Future of the Furniture Market is Green

Sustainability and environmental protection are no longer niche concerns, but have become mainstream, and this will shape trends in the furniture industry for a long time to come. The future of the furniture market is undoubtedly green and sustainable, and this shift towards sustainability is already shaping the industry in various ways. The furniture industry can embrace sustainability by combining science, art, technology, and humanity to create innovative, sustainable designs that are both aesthetically pleasing and functional.

Sustainable furniture design should prioritize finding ways to save the earth while also incorporating beauty and inspiration from organic materials and forms. The move towards green furniture is subsequently expected to drive product demand from consumers who are willing to pay more for environmentally friendly products that are of high-quality and can save resources in the long run.

The sustainable furniture industry can enhance brand loyalty and awareness among consumers, by addressing consumer concerns and appealing directly to the emotional values which have proven to be such strong motivators in shifting consumer preferences and decision-making. As more and more consumers prioritize sustainability in their purchasing decisions, companies that focus on producing sustainable furniture can attract and retain customers who value environmentally friendly products — and, importantly, shift the industry and marketplace as a whole toward a greater share for sustainable production and consumption in future.

The sustainable furniture industry is affected by regulatory laws, which in turn affect consumers' purchasing decisions. In order to promote sustainable consumption, well-defined and targeted policy measures need to be designed. However, weak overarching policy drivers often result in furniture not being managed according to a waste hierarchy that would prioritize reuse over recycling, incineration, and landfill. Underinvestment in reuse, repair, and remanufacturing infrastructure further limits the potential for furniture to be managed in accordance with the principles of the circular economy.

Therefore, it is important for policymakers to develop and implement effective policies that promote sustainable production and remanufacturing of furniture, as well as

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encourage consumers to make sustainable purchasing decisions. This could include measures such as tax incentives or subsidies for businesses that invest in sustainable practices, regulations that mandate the use of sustainable materials and production processes, and public education campaigns that raise awareness of the environmental and social impacts of furniture production and consumption. By taking a comprehensive and targeted approach, policymakers can help to create a more sustainable and resilient furniture industry that benefits both people and the planet.

There is a growing expectation for increased collaboration and innovative solutions to be brought into the marketplace, as well as the establishment of circular business models that prioritize sustainability. This trend is likely to continue as companies recognize the long-term benefits of environmentally responsible behaviour, both for themselves and for society as a whole. The adoption of sustainable practices in furniture production, along with a targeted and consistent program of education, exhibition, marketing, and social valuation that seeks to bring sustainability as an emotional and personal value to an increased percentage of the population, is necessary to encourage innovation and contribute to the overall sustainability of the environment, ultimately supporting the long-term health of the planet.

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