

SCOPE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURNITURE MARKETING IN CONTEMPORARY DIGITAL WORLD: A CONSUMER SURVEY OF MOLDED FURNITURE

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ABSTRACT

The acceptance of a product is good for the industry but to succeed in the market brands need get accepted by consumers. Factors like brand image, quality, pricing, distribution and other factors have important role in success of a brand. The molded furniture's are no exception. Present research is an effort to understand the scope of digital marketing in the success of moulded furniture. The study is very unique as it covers a vast sample size for analysis. The researchers have conducted survey in Kolkata, Guwahati, Bhubaneshwar, Patna, Mumbai, Bhopal, Ahmedabad, Pune, Delhi, Lucknow, Dehradun, Chandigarh, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Mysore. Conducting such a vast survey was the key of the study. Researcher also tried to know the impact on commercial buyers for the impact of digital marketing. Researcher proposed to include purchase managers, inventory managers, owners of start-ups. Coaching centres and schools are most prominent buyers of modelled plastic furniture. Researcher will try to examine that does their buying decisions are also impacted by digital marketing efforts of companies.

Key Words: Digital Marketing, Molded Furniture, Marketing Management.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, India's plastic furniture industry is booming. South Asians currently favor plastic furniture as a preferred material. But it wasn't always like that. Indian furniture has historically been associated with artistic metalwork or woodwork that leans more towards aesthetics than functionality. Our tables were known for their creative imagination on a global scale. The furniture industry focused on making furniture accessible to a smaller percentage of the population and primarily catered to consumers with high purchasing power. However, the furniture industry has undergone significant changes over time.

India's furniture market has recently improved its customer service. Furniture made of wood and metal eventually gave way to items made of more widely available and long-lasting materials, like plastic. These materials gradually reduced the cost of production, enabling more people to afford furniture, and businesses to start selling cheaper, ready-made furniture that was both durable and low maintenance.

In India, the market for plastic-molded furniture has practically exploded. From a very small base, it has grown to almost 70 million in volume and used almost 170 kt of polypropylene. Since it offers features not found in traditional wooden and metal furniture, such as ease of maintenance, light weight, durability, and economy, the popularity of plastic furniture has increased. Plastic furniture is primarily made of polypropylene (PP), which also contains copolymers and homopolymers for impact and rigidity, respectively.

For economy and to increase rigidity, filler is added at a level that averages 15%. Antistatic additives are also added to reduce dust accumulation, and a UV stabilizer system is included to ensure good outdoor life. There are about 30 PP chair manufacturers in India, but the top manufacturer controls almost 75% of the market. The market leaders in this industry are Neelkamal Plastics and Supreme Industries. Since it makes a significant contribution to preserving forests, furniture made of plastic could be considered environmentally friendly.

It has been calculated that in the year 2000, about 200 million cubic feet of forests would be preserved. A truly outstanding accomplishment. The cost of plastic furniture has decreased over time; today, a basic plastic chair cost between Rs. 170-180, as opposed to a high-end, opulent chair that would cost between Rs. 1500 and 2000. Weight reductions, which have been reduced by almost 30%, have enabled this type of improved economy. The drawback of this phenomenon, however, may be that greater weight reductions may result in furniture of lower quality, which could ultimately prove to be a deterrent and put a stop to the growth of plastic-molded furniture.

1.1 A Shift in The Furniture Industry

The industry has changed as a result of India's rapid growth in material furniture, particularly in the past ten years. This shift was primarily brought on by the arrival of plastic furniture in India, which grew the country's domestic furniture market. From 2020 to 2024, the industry is expected to expand at a staggering CAGR of 12.91%. There are several reasons why the switch from wooden to plastic furniture has taken place. Several other trends have been noticed in addition to this change in the furniture industry. After a downturn, the industry experienced exponential growth. Read a thorough blog about the furniture industry in 2021 to learn more about these trends.

Traditional wooden furniture would be extremely expensive and susceptible to environmental factors. Due to the following benefits, numerous companies chose to invest in furniture made of plastic rather than timber furniture:

Low Maintenance

- Wooden furniture often gets weathered by water and moisture. It is also prone to get damaged by mites. On the other hand, Metal furniture is known to rust. This kind of furniture needs extra maintenance and care. However, Plastic furniture does not get damaged easily due to any such external factors.

Durable

- Plastic is more durable due to its inherent qualities. Unlike traditional furniture, plastic furniture does not deteriorate or become damaged.
- In response to the amount of moisture in the air, wooden furniture frequently stretches and shrinks. They may quickly become exhausted by such changes. Such destructive characteristics are not present in plastic. Plastic is virtually unbreakable, extremely durable, and chemically resistant. The durability has been further improved with the development of high-performance plastics.

Portable

- Furniture made of plastic is much lighter than heavy metal and wood furniture. The majority of plastic furniture can also be taken apart and put back together, which further increases its portability.

Economical

- Plastic furniture is significantly more cost-effective than wooden and metal furniture due to lower production costs, increased utility, and general functionality.

Innovative Designs

- Plastic can be molded and is flexible. As a result, in the last few years, the plastic furniture industry has produced some incredibly innovative and ergonomic designs.

Modern finish

- The design of plastic furniture features a variety of textures. Glossy finishes, matte finishes, enamel, woven, and other options are available on modern furniture that are not available on traditional wooden and metal furniture.

1.2 Changing Consumer Demographics

With a staggering 47% of the population in working age, millennials make up the majority of wage earners in India. They represent both India's and the world's largest generational cohort. Additionally, this generation is distinguished by high levels of disposable income. They are spending more on

lifestyle and consumer goods as a result of having more disposable income. Their behavioral patterns differ significantly from those of the preceding generations. These people place a strong emphasis on features like appearance, utility, cost, environmental friendliness, and uniqueness. In addition, family structures have changed. The plastic furniture market has benefited from nuclear families and an increase in dual-income households.

1.3 The Boom in Real Estate and Housing Industry

India's GDP for 2013 was 6.3% derived from real estate. 13% of the GDP, or approximately INR 12,000 crore, was contributed by the real estate industry in India in 2019. By 2040, it should be worth INR 65,000 crore. The market is seeing an increase in demand for wooden furniture, but plastic furniture has a high sales potential due to changing consumer demographics and rising discretionary spending. The construction of both homes and businesses has been advantageous to the plastics sector. As demand increases over the next few years, the industry will continue to expand.

1.4 Tourism and Hospitality Growth

One of India's largest industries, tourism is predicted to generate over 500 billion US dollars by 2029, according to the most recent reports from 2018. The expanding travel and tourism sector has increased demand for furniture for hotel rooms, restaurants, and other travel-related needs. Given its durability, adaptability, and affordability, plastic furniture is becoming more popular in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Nazarov A.D. (2020), the number of people using voice assistants started to rise in 2020, and businesses will soon spend a sizeable sum of money not only on contractual advertising but also on having their products listed during voice searches. In the twenty-first century, digital technology is a crucial tool for product promotion. Digital advertising is more efficient for businesses than traditional advertising. Online advertising performs significantly better than traditional methods of advertising in terms of cost and comprehension of performance.

According to Mamtaj Akter (2020), Bangladeshi consumers use the internet marketing channel to buy and sell goods at all stages of the decision-making process. In order to effectively sell branded cosmetics products across traditional and digital channels, brand managers can boost their confidence in digital communication strategies and marketers can recognise the synergistic effects of traditional and digital communication channels.

According to Al Azzam & et. al's research from 2021, the four independent characteristics have a favourable influence on students' purchasing decisions. Targeting is the most crucial element among the four studied digital marketing strategies in influencing students' independent purchase decisions. Additionally, it is clear that the assessment phase has the biggest influence on students' choices, which is related to the resorted channel's emphasis on users who have already searched for the item.

This user is already familiar with the product and is looking for more details to help them assess all of its available options and goods before making a purchase. Additionally, among all digital marketing channels, email marketing has the least impact on students' purchasing decisions.

P. Ganpathi et al., 2021 The behaviour of consumers has been positively affected by digitalization. In large cities and among working couples, who find it more convenient to buy and pay at any time and from any location due to a lack of time, the most noticeable change may be observed. Additionally, consumers are encouraged to use digital transactions because they are rewarded for doing so through coupons, gift cards, discounts, cash back, and cash discounts. It is essential in today's world to integrate all operations through a digital platform.

Mukund V. Kaushik (2021) indicated that digital communication strategies like video advertisements, flash ads, and blogs, as well as social media sites like YouTube and Facebook, have been very effective in influencing consumers. Social media marketing, which has developed as a digital marketing strategy, has had a significant impact on consumers' purchasing behaviours. Additionally, we can observe that consumers are becoming more aware of digital marketing and, as a result, research products and services before making a decision. We can also contend that the overall shopping experience is enhanced by digital marketing. With this knowledge, we can draw the conclusion that digital marketing is an excellent tool for businesses to draw in, keep, and produce contented and happy customers.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is very crucial for any research. Researcher has used 02 samples in the present study. First sample was used to establish the validity and reliability of research questionnaire. The researcher has used 33 questions to examine the impact of digital marketing efforts on consumer buying behaviour. As sample size of 330 respondents that were customers of plastic furniture. These respondents were a mix of individual buyers and managers of small schools or offices. The researcher has conducted survey for all the 04 selected zones. A total of 500 responses were collected. These included individual buyer as well as industrial buyers. So, the present study has 03 samples size; 330 for questionnaire development, 500 individual customers, and 500 institutional buyers like managers, owners of schools and offices.

The researcher has developed a questionnaire that could find the impact of digital marketing on the consumer buying behaviour for the find that how an individual can be influenced to buy plastic furniture. The questionnaire was tested for reliability and validity to collect the data. The step wise development of the questionnaire has been detailed further. Scaling is very important aspect while deciding the research tool. A questionnaire may carry 03,05- or 07-point scale. Here it has to be understood that the points on the scale measure the weight of the opinion of the respondents about the statement in the questionnaire. The three-point scale usually narrow down the scope of expression for respondents and a seven-point scale may provide significant variation that a respondent may not be able to surely express their response. Literature review suggested that a 05-



point scale can help to get the responses of the people in a better way. Face validity concept was firstly considered by Mosier C.I. (1947). The concept of the face validity is related with the acceptance of the respondents about the research questionnaire. The present questionnaire is supposed to measure the impact of digital marketing efforts on consumer buying behaviour. The respondents have perceived the objectives of the questionnaire as same. In the pilot testing, most of the respondents have agreed with the same. Few other opinions were like the questionnaire is of the marketing, market activation, and other aspects of the furniture industry.

Sampling Adequacy for Factor Analysis

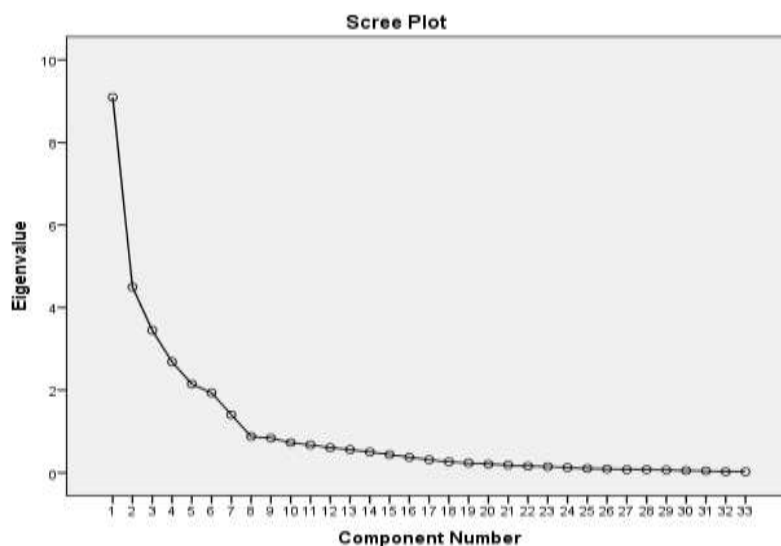
The researcher has conducted KMO and Bartlett's Test for the suitability of factor analysis. The basic rule suggested that a researcher should consider 10 times the number of questions in the questionnaire. In SPSS the test has been performed to find the adequate sample. The researcher has used a sample of 330 respondents. These respondents were a mix of individual buyers and managers of small schools or offices.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.722
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	11393.827
	df	528
	Sig.	.000

The KMO value 0.722 and Sig value 0.00 in Bartlett's Test of Sphericity suggested that the sample is suitable for the factor analysis.

Scree Plot





The term “scree” is taken from the word for the rubble at the bottom of a mountain (Cattell, 1966). The 07 points in the graph above form the place where the graph gets into a straight line is actually representing the 07 factors extracted from the 33 questions in the questionnaire. All the items have eigen value below 01 lie in straight line.

Harman’s One-Factor Test for Common Method Bias

If the total variance extracted by one factor exceeds 50%, common method bias is present in your study. There is no problem with common method bias in this data since the total variance extracted by one factor is 27.543% and it is less than the recommended threshold of 50%.

Reliability Testing

The researcher has assumed that all the questions are examining the impact of digital marketing on the buying of modded furniture. No variable in the study was pre assumed. So, the reliability test has been considered for complete tool only. Few researchers pre assume a variable and assign specific questions to measure them. It such case they examine the Cronbach Alpha Value for each variable separately for each variable.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.888	33

The Cronbach’s Alpha value 0.888 shows the tool is reliable and suitable for research. Further the Cronbach’s Alpha Value if item deleted table shows that there is no significant change in the Cronbach’s Alpha Value if item deleted.

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The researcher has found that there are several aspects of digital marketing that have impact on individual as well as institutional buyers. It was expected that digital marketing may impact differently in individual buying and industrial buying. The findings of the research are as follows:

1. It has been observed in the research that individual and industrial buyers both prefer plastic furniture over other materials.
2. Respondents in the both categories believe that plastic furniture is reliable and long lasting.
3. Respondents believe that plastic furniture offers customization and design. Earlier it was believed that the plastic furniture is useful for the commercial use and at home they not suit or look good. But over a period, companies like Neelkamal have developed a variety of product range that suits the customer expectations.

4. Companies like Neelkamal have fulfilled BIFA and green guard norms to establish the ecofriendly nature of the business. The impact can be seen as respondents were of firm believe that switching to plastic furniture is eco-friendly than other options.
5. Buyer have found information from social media posts related with new molded furniture.
6. Digital marketing contents of internet helps buyers to find new design of furniture according to my need.
7. Online product information, reviews, rating and feedbacks helps in buying.
8. Digital presence of furniture companies works as potential source of product information.
9. Buyers whether usually search for my need on first 4-5 website appearing on goggle page.
10. Top recommendations, ratings and websites often lead buyer to the product of my choice.
11. Buying online furniture often results cost effective purchase.
12. Top appearing websites during online search are usually authentic.
13. Popular brands websites are top searched.
14. Brands highly visible online, attract more purchase.
15. Those products that are visible often during net surfing, got purchased.
16. Those products that are usually have more presence online, got purchased.
17. Buyers often click the desired product ad on web pages while surfing as they are informative for new deals and discount.
18. Buyers were influenced by the advertisements that appeared of Facebook/YouTube or other social media.
19. Buyers found online advertisement very informative while buying plastic furniture
20. Digital adds not only helped buyers to choose right product but also reduced the time of visiting shops.
21. Buyers feel common looking website are less attractive and less informative.
22. Uniqueness of content of the brand promotion attract more attention.
23. Often companies imitate the promotional message of the competitors, thus marketing it difficult for us to differentiate.
24. Buyers have (at least once) misunderstood one advertisement/ website ad/social media post for any other company from the actual one. Here we can understand the clarity needs in message delivery. Companies like Neelkamal keep content differentiation that provide a unique message.
25. Differentiation Content helps in making purchase decision.
26. Respondents suggested that comprehensive website is more informative than a fancy one with multiple graphics.
27. Buyers could easily search my needs of the plastic furniture brand on their website.
28. The content and message must be clearly visible then only it helps the buying decision.
29. Buyers don't spare much time to read long messages rather I prefer small and clear messages.
30. Content Credibility in digital marketing messages attract buying.
31. The furniture brand you purchased last have same digital and actual appearance.
32. The difference in prices in the furniture brand reduces the interest of buying.
33. If I find the online features and actual features same, I like the brand.

5. CONCLUSION

As the largest producer of plastic furniture worldwide, Nilkamal has an advantage over competitors. Nilkamal was successfully established by first-generation businessmen Mr. Sharad Parekh (Managing Director of Nilkamal Ltd.) and Mr. Vamanrai Parekh (CHAIRMAN of Nilkamal Ltd.). Since then, Nilkamal has gradually expanded into a number of industries, including Material Handling Solutions, Ready Furniture, @Home, the brand's retail network for lifestyle home solutions, Nilkamal Mattrezzz, and Bubbleguard, a service that provides product protection.

Nilkamal has also been a listed company on the National Stock Exchange and the Bombay Stock Exchange since 1991. The Company's fundamental guiding principle is to maintain leadership in its market categories while placing a strong emphasis on its core values, hard work, and meeting evolving customer demands. Due to the numerous safety restrictions during the COVID-19 period, Nilkamal has implemented quality control to boost customer confidence and sustain sales. It works to create as many touchpoints as possible so that customers have the opportunity to benefit fully from its product and service proposition. Today, customers can buy Nilkamal products almost anywhere in the nation thanks to a reliable digital infrastructure. All Nilkamal products have BIFMA Level 3 and Greenguard certifications.

Nilkamal's segmentation can be broken down into a number of categories, including region, city, family size, gender, etc. For instance, furniture made entirely of wood is popular in south and central India. This type of segmentation allows for the consideration of plastics marketing as well as the preferences of people in various locations. Similar to how women would look for designs and patterns, men could research how plastic furniture is more flexible and long-lasting than traditional furniture.

City: The same is true for cities, where this type of segmentation is possible due to the diverse populations and income levels that each city has. People with higher incomes—or, for that matter, residents of higher-income cities—prefer wood furniture over plastic furniture.

Personality: Since most furniture is made of wood, personality-based segmentation would be best because a person's capacity to adapt to using plastic furniture would be more closely related to their personality.

Thus, Nilkamal established itself as a well-known brand in India and gained a significant competitive advantage over the other plastic furniture producers on the market. It became popular, especially in south India, where people prefer simple living. Furniture made of plastic was therefore required there as well. The first-mover advantage has undoubtedly benefited Nilkamal.

The campaign, which was conceptualised, produced, and executed by Makani Creatives, consists of a number of videos that celebrate everyday events in novel ways and instantly appeal to millennials. These films depict how viewers interact with their loved ones, highlighting the crucial role that

furniture plays in transforming everyday experiences into priceless memories. 'Nilkamal has been a staple in Indian homes for more than three decades,' said Pinaki Gupta, general manager of marketing for Nilkamal. Nilkamal has innovated and changed to reflect the evolving patterns in consumer preferences over time. Our most recent marketing campaign draws inspiration from this journey and uses relatable and charming stories to highlight our collection of furniture.

It is accurate to say that one of the key advantages of switching to digital marketing is that it is more straightforward than traditional marketing. That does not imply, however, that you can simply put a plan into action and then completely ignore it. Digital marketing, like traditional marketing, necessitates the establishment of precise goals and deadlines for achieving goals. Recalibrate your digital marketing objectives and strategies based on an understanding of your target market. Because the digital world moves quickly and market trends shift frequently, doing this is crucial. As a result, you must be aware of what is current and how your audience will react to a given tactic.

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