

Soft Furnishings: Extent of Factors Considered Before Purchasing and Satisfaction Experienced by the Homemakers of Vadodara City

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Abstract

Soft Furnishings are essential element used to design various interior spaces. Soft furnishings are used in interior spaces in several ways by diverse users. It gives identity to interior spaces. The consumers prefer the use of furnishings because they help them in carrying out activities in a more comfortable way. Soft furnishings such as upholstery cover for sofas and chairs, bed and table linens, cushion, draperies, carpets, rugs, curtains etc. are used. They are flexible and can be easily change interior spaces. Furnishings are selected or purchased depending on the user's choices and preferences as every users have different character, lifestyle, habits, ideas and culture. The type of soft furnishings acts as most important element for users comfort and satisfaction. Therefore it became essential to find out the extent of selection factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings and extent of satisfaction derived. The present research was descriptive in nature. The data were gathered through questionnaire on a sample of 250 homemakers from Vadodara city selected through random sampling. The questionnaire contained four sections viz. background information, types and frequency of furnishings purchased, selection factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings and extent of satisfaction with the furnishings purchased. It was duly validated by the experts. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents. It was found that majority of the respondents purchased Cushion cover, Blankets, Cushion, Sofa covers, and Bed linens from showrooms. The results revealed that majority of the respondents considered several features of furnishings and services being offered before purchasing soft furnishings to a high extent. Majority of the respondents weresatisfied to high extent with the soft furnishing purchased. The findings had implications on the manufacturer, designers and retailers who can identify the factors of considerations and satisfaction by the consumers.

Keywords: Soft Furnishings, Selection Factors, Satisfaction, Purchase of Soft Furnishings.

Introduction

Major portion of people time is spent inside of the spaces. People live in houses or apartments, work in offices, shops or factories, study in schools, eat in restaurants, stay in hotels, travel inside of automobiles, buses, trains, ships and airplanes. Being at outside is most often a temporary situation (Pile, 2009). So, people carry out most of their activities in interiors. Interior living environment are more than the physical spaces that people inhabit.

Review of Literature

Peoples' routines and habits are embedded in all aspects of life and are the main activities that carry out at interior environments. Interior environments are the places where people organize their lives (Wahl, Scheidt and Windley, 2004). A tidy, well planned and tastefully decorated home makes life joyful and pleasant. A home has to be decorated beautiful both from outside as well as from inside. It deals with every nook and corner of the house which can be decorated to enhance the beauty of place (Sagar, 1983). Interior spaces are defined by the use of architectural elements; walls, floors and ceilings. These elements also give a shape to

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interior spaces. These major elements modified and enhanced depending on the type of an activity and user of interior spaces are developed, wishes. Said elements make interior spaces habitable (Nielson and Taylor, 1994).

Interior spaces are firstly formed by the building's structural system, further defined by the wall, floor and ceiling surfaces. Mentioned elements are related to other spaces by windows and doors. These are the main elements shaping interior spaces. They are gathered together to define the space enclosure as they are functionally related to each other (Ching and Binggeli, 2005). The architectural surfaces of a space, walls, floors, ceilings, are taken for granted as they constitute background stages for furnishings (Clark, 1996).

Home decor is not only about adding furniture pieces. The use of soft furnishings plays a vital role in defining the overall appeal of a place. Carefully choice of soft furnishings such as upholstery fabrics, curtains, carpets and rugs help to do home. Soft furnishings are the fabrics used in the interiors of a space including upholstery fabric, cushions, curtains and carpets. In addition to the interior decor features, use of soft furnishings can help bring together one's dream home. Every person wants their house to reflect themselves. Soft furnishings are a great option to portray this and make a home bright, lively and vibrant (Kumar, 2017). Soft furnishings give life to home, they allow to craft that wow factor in our home while not burning a whole pocket. People prefer to use furnishings as they help sustaining peoples' activities in a more comfortable way. In other words, sitting on a stool or chair is more comfortable than sitting on a ground (Nielson and Taylor, 1994).

Homes include a variety of rooms to living in it. They are mainly consisted the entry hall, living space, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. Every room has different needs and requirements in terms of their functions (Nielson, 2007). Different functions are provided by the usage of different materials and the used furnishings at home environments. Furnishings have a role to humanize with the needs and requirements of different functions. Generally, the functional needs are provided by the use of furnishings and also together with the soft furnishings. The usages of soft furnishings help to confront people requirements that what they want to see at their interior spaces of home environment (Erguden, 2012).

The main aim which one strive in home furnishing, just as in every other art pursuit is beauty might usually be considered to be "that combination of qualities that is pleasing approach the subject of selecting , decorating and furnishing a house is to seek to express some definite idea in it (Rutt,1935). A home that expresses formality usually also expresses dignity, strength, reserve and impressiveness. Furniture pieces are like sculptures at home and upholstery fabric helps enhance their beauty and purpose. Selecting the colour might seem to be the single biggest factor in fabric selection. However, one must choose the fabric based on who will be using the furniture. Woven patterns hold up longer than printed ones, as do higher thread counts. The fabric should be rust proof. One must wisely choose easy to clean

fabrics, and weather resistant, if used outdoors (Kumar, 2017).

As walls, floors, ceilings, windows and doors establish the architectural design of a building; furnishings are the selection and arrangement of movable interior design elements. They are used in interior spaces and counted as a movable type of furnishings. The placement of furnishings can change easily in interior spaces, because their places are not exact and prerequisite. Furnishings are generally selected depending on user choices and wishes. There is not any certain rule that should be obeyed. They differ from design to design, person to person and offer a transition between interior space and the people (Ching, 2005). When furnishings are placed by professional people related to space design, they provide comfortable movement within a space (Mitton and Nystuen 2011).

The consumers prefer the use of furnishings because they help them in carrying out activities in a more comfortable way. Furnishings are selected or purchased depending on the user's choices and preferences as every users have different character, lifestyle, habits, ideas and culture.

People prefer to use furnishings as they help sustaining peoples' activities in a more comfortable way. In other words, sitting on a stool or chair is more comfortable than sitting on a ground (Nielson and Taylor, 1994). Furnishings are needed by people as an essential element both in exterior and interior spaces. They provide people comfort, increase their life standards and help to sustain activities in a more comfortable way (Nielson and Taylor, 1994). Furnishings are essential element in people's lives. Without furnishings, people cannot maintain their lives, nor they can perform tasks. They cannot pass comfortably time in their living environments. In general, furnishings help to make spaces suitable for living. They create an opportunity to sleep, sit, relax and entertain. Furnishings, especially for the interior spaces, load a message to make spaces personal and reflect user's personality (Kalinkara, 2006).

Furnishings have an important role especially for the home environments. They are selected and used by users wants and reflected in a various way in interior spaces. However, because of home environments are the private spaces for people, also the soft furnishings have an important usage for interior spaces. Because, they have an ability to personalize the interior spaces and homes are the most suitable interior spaces for using the soft furnishings. Home environments are organized directly with the user's wants; not for other people wants, reveals and controls (Nielson, 2007). Thus, soft furnishings are shaped and reflected to a home environment by the user identity.

The main area of operation of the study is to find out the purchase behaviour of homemakers and satisfactions after purchasing soft furnishing. The researcher conducted in India has concentrated on importance and usage of furnishings. Less attention is paid on purchase behaviour of soft furnishings and

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satisfaction from its use. Therefore, the researcher thought to know the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings and satisfaction experienced by the homemakers of Vadodara City. Therefore, the present research was conducted with the following objectives:-

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the types of furnishings purchased by homemakers.
2. To identify the factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings.
3. To ascertain the extent of satisfaction with soft furnishings purchased.

Methodology

The research design for the present investigation was descriptive. The data were collected from 250 Homemakers of Vadodara City through convenience sampling. Five famous shops selling soft furnishing were contacted. Nearly fifty customers who have purchased soft furnishing from the shops and were willing to be a part of the study were selected randomly and were interviewed. The tool to collect data was an interview schedule which contained three Likert type scales (1) A scale to find out the factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings. The factors were classified as 'Features of Furnishing', 'Pricing and Offers', 'Services', 'Sales Promotion' and

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'Other factors'. The responses were 'Always', 'Sometimes' and 'Never' where the scores ascribed were from 3 to 1 respectively. (2). Extent of Satisfaction with the Soft Furnishing Purchased. It had 3 point continuum for the responses 'To High Extent', 'To Some Extent', and 'To least Extent'. The responses were given scores of 3 through 1 respectively. The possible maximum and minimum scores were divided in three categories having equal intervals. Higher scores indicated high extent of factors considered and high extent of satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased. The scale was subjected to establishment of content validity. The reliability coefficient derived were 0.647 and 0.746 respectively through test – retest method of establishing reliability.

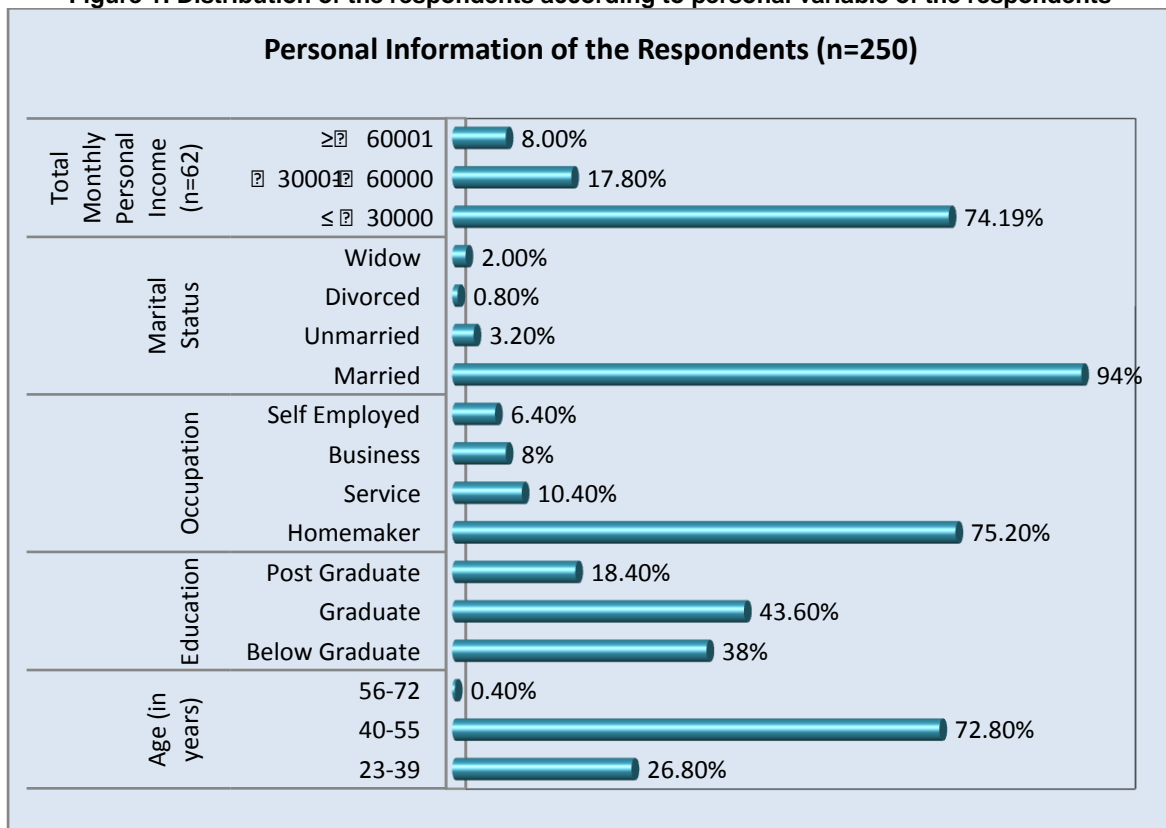
Findings

The major findings relating to personal variables of the respondents are given below

Background Information

The section dealt with the background information of the respondents. The background information included personal variable viz. age, education, total income, marital status, occupation of the respondents and family variables viz. total family income and type of family.

Figure 1: Distribution of the respondents according to personal variable of the respondents



Personal variable

The age of the respondents ranged between 23 years to 72 years. The mean age of the respondents was 41.92 years. It was found that less than three fourth (72.80 per cent) of the respondents were from the age group of 40 to 55 years. Less than

one half (43.6 per cent) of the respondents were graduate while more than one third (38 per cent) of the respondents were below graduate. Nearly three fourth (75.2 per cent) of the respondents were homemakers while rest were doing service (10.40 per cent), business (8 per cent) and were self employed

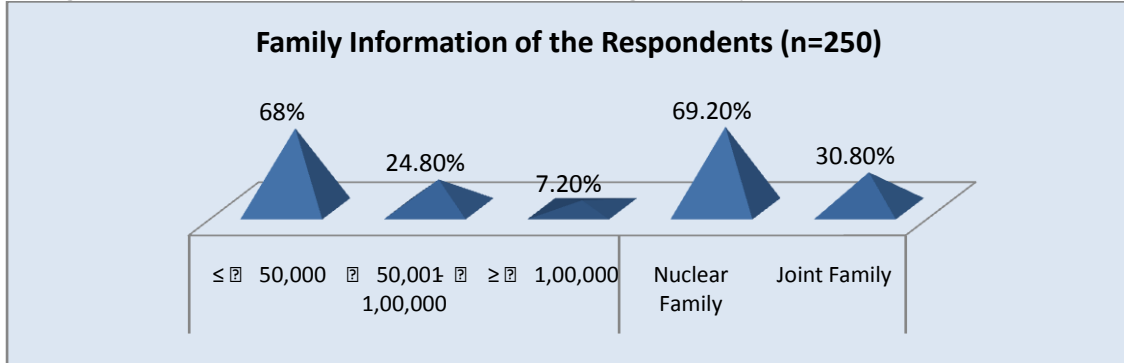
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(6.40 per cent). Majority (94 per cent) of the respondents were married (Fig.1). It was found that at the time of data collection only 62 respondents were found working and rest were homemakers, therefore

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the personal income was considered of those who were working. The mean personal income was Rs. 42648.44. Less than three fourth (74.19 per cent) of the respondents had personal income \leq Rs.30,000/- .

Figure 2: Distribution of the Respondents According to Family Variables of the Respondents



Family Variable

It was found that more than two third of the respondents (69.2per cent) had nuclear family while 30.8 per cent of the respondents were from joint family (Fig. 2). More than two third (68 per cent) of the respondents had total monthly income of \leq H 50,000 per month. Income ranged between H 50,001 to H 1,00,000 per month was found among less than one fourth (24.80 per cent) of the respondents.

Purchase Behaviour of Homemakers

In this section question related to types of furnishings purchased by the respondents, frequency of purchase, and sources preferred for purchasing soft furnishings were asked. It was found that majority of the respondents purchased Cushion cover (93.6 per cent), Blankets (91.2 per cent), Cushion (88.4 per cent), Sofa covers (83.2 per cent), and Bed linens (79.2 per cent). Less than one half of the respondents

preferred yearly purchase of soft furnishing. Majority (84 per cent) of the respondents preferred showroom for purchasing soft furnishing.

Extent of Factors Considered before Purchasing Soft Furnishings

A scale was developed to find out the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings. The factors considered were 'Features of Furnishing', 'Pricing and Offers', 'Services', 'Sales Promotion' and 'Other factors' where the responses were 'Always', 'Sometimes' and 'Never' and the scores ascribed were from 3 to 1 respectively. In order to obtain the extent of factors considered, the possible maximum and minimum scores were divided in three categories having equal intervals. Higher scores indicated high extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings.

Figure 3: Distribution of the Respondents according to the Extent of Factors Considered before Purchasing Furnishings

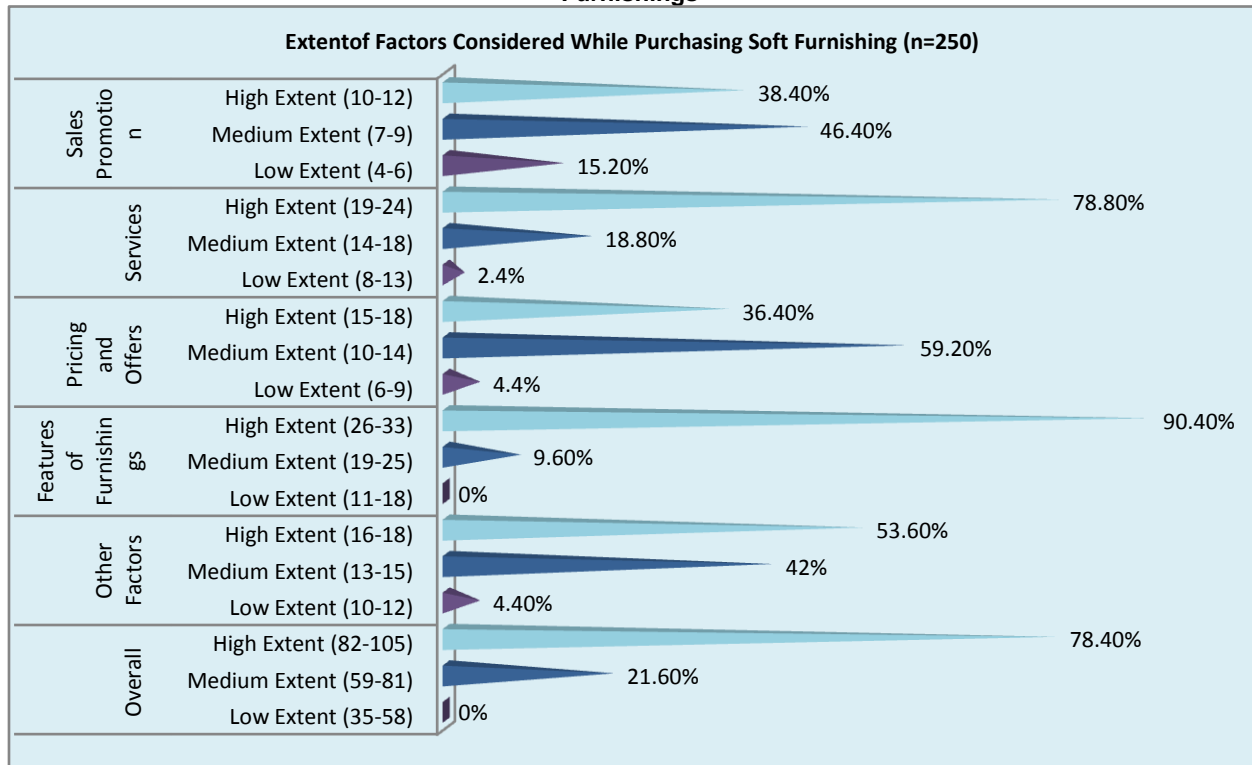


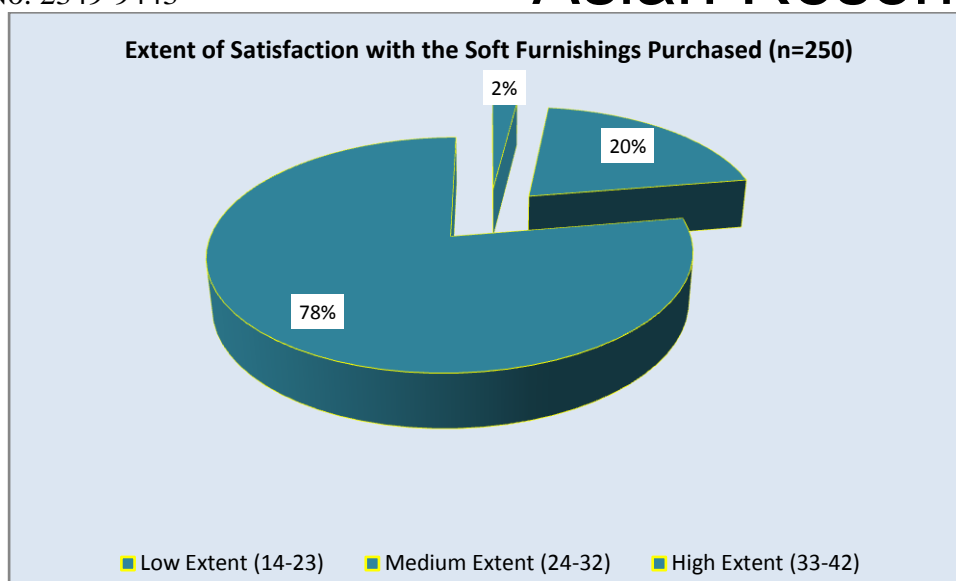
Figure 3 depicts that less than one half (46.40 per cent) of the respondents considered sales promotion techniques to medium extent for purchasing soft furnishings. A high extent of consideration was reflected by more than three fourth (78.80 per cent) of the respondents for services viz. free delivery, quick ordering, regular supply, availability variety etc offered at the showrooms. Pricing and offers like discount, mode of payment, cash back, voucher, pricing of furnishing etc was considered by less than two third (59.20 per cent) of the respondents to medium extent. Majority (90.40 per cent) of the respondents considered features of furnishings such as design, durability, colour, style, pattern, finishes, quality, brand etc. to a high extent. Other factors like latest trends, previous experience, need of furniture, use and popularity of furnishing

while purchased etc were considered to a high extent by more than one half (53.60 per cent) of the respondents. On the entire scale high extent of selected factors were considered by more than three fourth (78.40 per cent) of the respondents.

Extent of Satisfaction with the Soft Furnishing Purchased

Nearly fourteen factors were identified in relation to soft furnishings. Respondents were asked to the extent to which they were satisfied with the soft furnishings purchased by them. The responses were 'To High Extent', 'To Some Extent', and 'To least Extent' where the scores ascribed was 3 through 1 respectively. The possible maximum and minimum scores were divided in three categories having equal intervals where high scores revealed high extent of satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased.

Figure 4: Extent of Satisfaction with the Soft Furnishing Purchased by the Respondents



The data in figure 4 revealed that more than three fourth (78 per cent) of the respondents were satisfied to high extent with the soft furnishing purchased by them. Whereas, less than one fourth (20 per cent) of the respondents were satisfied to medium extent with the furnishing purchased.

Testing of Hypotheses

In order to test the hypotheses formulated for the present investigation, as per the nature of

Table 1: t-test showing the difference in the type of family and extent of factors considered and extent of satisfaction with the furnishings purchased

Sr. No.	Variables	Mean Scores	t value	df	Level of Significance
A.	Extent of Factors considered before Purchasing Soft Furnishings				
	Type of Family				
	Nuclear	87.29	-0.870	248	N.S.*
Joint	88.19				
B.	Extent of Satisfaction with the Soft Furnishings Purchased				
	Type of Family				
	Nuclear	35.23	-0.838	248	N.S.*
Joint	35.77				

Note: *N.S. =Not Significant, df=Degree of Freedom

The computation of t value did not show any significant difference in the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings and type of family (Table-1). No significant difference was found between extent of satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased and type of family. Thus the null hypothesis was accepted. Thus, it was inferred that the type of the family did not cause any difference

Table 2: Analysis of Variance showing variation in the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings with age, education, occupation, marital status and total monthly family income of the respondents

Sr. No.	Extent of Factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings	df	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F value	Level of significance	
1.	Age					1.570	N.S.*
	Between Groups	2	180.445	90.223			
	Within Group	248	14194.899	576.469			
2.	Education						

variables t-test, coefficient of correlation, and Analysis of Variance were computed. For the purpose of statistical analysis, the hypotheses were formulated in null form. The results are presented in this section.

HO₁

There is no difference in the type of family and extent of factors considered and extent of satisfaction with the furnishings purchased

in the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings.

HO₂

There exists no variation in the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings with age, education, occupation, marital status and total monthly family income of the respondents

	Between Groups	3	476.360	158.787	2.810	0.05*
	Within Groups	247	13898.984	56.500		
3.	Occupation				0.389	N.S.*
	Between Groups	3	67.861	22.620		
	Within Groups	247	14307.483	58.161		
4.	Marital Status				1.674	N.S.*
	Between Groups	3	287.523	95.841		
	Within Groups	247	14087.821	57.268		
5.	Total Monthly Family Income				2.569	N.S.*
	Between Groups	3	292.903	146.451		
	Within Groups	247	14082	57.014		

Analysis of Variance was computed to test the hypothesis. The F values were not found to be significant for the variation in the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings with the age, occupation, marital status and total monthly family income (Table-2). A significant variance was found between extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings with education of the

respondents. Hence, the null hypothesis was partially accepted.

HO₃

There exists no variation in the extent of satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased with age, education, occupation, marital status and total monthly family income of the respondents

Table 3: Analysis of Variance showing variation in the extent of satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased with age, education, occupation, marital status and total monthly family income of the respondents

Sr. No.	Extent of Satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased	df	Sum of squares	Mean squares	F value	Level of significance
1.	Age				3.614	0.05
	Between Groups	2	1.932	0.969		
	Within Group	248	66.238	57.469		
2.	Education				1.151	N.S.*
	Between Groups	3	9.944	0.315		
	Within Groups	247	67.232	0.273		
3.	Occupation				0.447	N.S.*
	Between Groups	3	0.370	0.123		
	Within Groups	247	67.806	0.276		
4.	Marital Status				3.589	0.05
	Between Groups	3	2.858	0.953		
	Within Groups	247	65.318	0.266		
5.	Total Family Monthly Income				1.066	N.S.*
	Between Groups	3	0.583	0.292		
	Within Groups	247	67.593	0.274		

Note: *N.S. =Not Significant, df=Degree of Freedom

Analysis of Variance was computed to test the hypothesis. The F values were not found to be significant for the variation in the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings with the education, occupation, and total monthly family income (Table-3). A significant variance was found between extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings with age and marital

status of the respondents. Hence, the null hypothesis was partially accepted.

Ho₄

There exists no relationship between the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings and extent of satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased

Table 4: Co-efficient of Correlation showing Relationship between Extent of Factors considered before Purchasing Soft Furnishings and Extent of Satisfaction with the Soft Furnishings Purchased

	Selected Variables	n	r-value	Level of significance
I.	Extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings	250	0.438	0.01
	Extent of satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased			

The results revealed the existence of significant relationship between the extent of factors considered before purchasing soft furnishings and extent of satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased (Table-4). Hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

It can be concluded from the findings that the mean age of the respondents was 41.92 years, majority were homemakers having graduate degree and having a married status. Majority of the respondents were living in a nuclear family with the mean total family income of H 69248.00. The

Conclusion and Implication

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respondents had purchased cushion covers and cushions during last one year. It was also reflected that the respondents usually purchase furnishing on yearly basis from showrooms. The respondents considered factors such as latest trends, experiences, reputation of retailers, need of & use of furnishing, popularity, features of furnishing and services before purchasing the soft furnishing. A significant relationship was found between education of the respondents and extent of factors considered while purchasing soft furnishing. Thus, it can be said that more the education more is the awareness which leads more consideration of factors. The analysis of the results showed that the satisfaction with the soft furnishings varied with the age and marital status of the respondents. On analysis of the data, it was found that there existed a significant relationship between the extent of factors considered while purchasing soft furnishings and the extent of satisfaction with the soft furnishings purchased. Hence, this reflects that the factors considered carefully before purchasing the soft furnishings directs towards more level of satisfaction. It can also be concluded that there will be more extent of satisfaction if the factors of consideration are kept in mind and followed before purchasing soft furnishing. Now a days, it has been observed that due to lack of time people do purchase soft furnishing without investing time and considerations. Also due to technological advancement they prefer option of online purchasing. Online shopping may be beneficial or can have several issues and consequences along with lack of feel of the texture of the cloth or any article and colour variation too. The present research has clear implications for the manufacturer, designers and retailers. The soft furnishing are purchased once in six months or yearly and requires lot of investment also, therefore the consumers must consider various factors critically before purchasing it. The quality, durability, colour fastness, maintenance, cost etc. other factors if considered usually leads to greater satisfaction. The manufacturer, designers and

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retailers should identify the factors of considerations by the consumers and their factors of satisfaction.

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