

Consumer Behaviour Model on the Furniture Market

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Abstract – This study introduces the furniture purchasing behaviour model. The study describes the behaviour model and characteristics of decision making and the environmental factors affecting the individuals besides emphasising the family character of furniture purchase. We introduce a chapter from the primary research verifying the model that analyses the validity of customer behaviour trends defined as elements of the impersonal environment on the furniture market. We touch on our lifestyle based segmentation model which is elaborated in our work in detail. The method of primary research is quantitative, personal interview. While working out our research model we applied a method that enables multi-level cross-section and cohort analyses. Our work has verified the need for trend researches on the furniture market so we suggest the construction and the near-future launch of a trend research system consisting of several modules that reveals the specific factors on the furniture market besides verifying the validity of general behaviour trends.

consumer behaviour model / trend research / lifestyle

Kivonat – Vásárlói magatartásmodell a bútortpiacon. A tanulmány bemutatja a szerzők által kidolgozott bútortvásárlói magatartásmodellt, amely a bútortvásárlás családi jellegének hangsúlyozása mellett fordít figyelmet a döntésben résztvevők személyes adottságaira, az individuumra ható környezeti tényezők vizsgálatára. Bemutatjuk a modellt igazoló primer kutatás egy fejezetét, amely a személytelen környezet elemeként értelmezett vásárlói magatartástrendek érvényességét vizsgálja a bútortpiacon. Ennek mentén érintjük a munka során részletesen is kidolgozott életstílus alapú szegmentációs modellünket. A primer kutatás módszere kvantitatív, személyes megkérdezés. A kutatási módszer kidolgozásánál olyan eljárást alkalmaztunk, amely többszörös keresztmetszeti vizsgálatok, kohorsz-elemzéseket tesz lehetővé. Munkánk igazolta a bútortpiaci trendkutatások szükségességét, ezért javaslatot teszünk egy olyan több modulból álló trendkutatási rendszer felállítására, és a közeljövőben történő bevezetésére, amely az általános magatartástrendek érvényességének igazolásán túl a bútortpiaci specifikumokat is feltárja.

vásárlói magatartásmodell / trendkutatás / életstílus

1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of customer behaviour researches is on the one hand the analysis of preceding reasons of mass phenomena, on the other hand, the prognosis of the future. One criterion of this is the analysis of psychic phenomena. Customers with individual personalities show

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various behaviours when affected by different environmental stimuli. The researchers of customer and consumer behaviour attempt to typify individual decisions and, as a result of this, several customer behaviour models have been created since the 1960s. In the majority of these models the process of decision making can be interpreted by the chain of problem recognition – information search – evaluation – purchase – use – follow-up evaluation, these are then determined by factors the different authors consider important.

Our innovative customer behaviour model, created in 2009, (Figure 1) can be applied on the market of durable goods, is based on the role of individuals in making family decisions and is verified by the analyses of the mechanisms of furniture acquisitions.

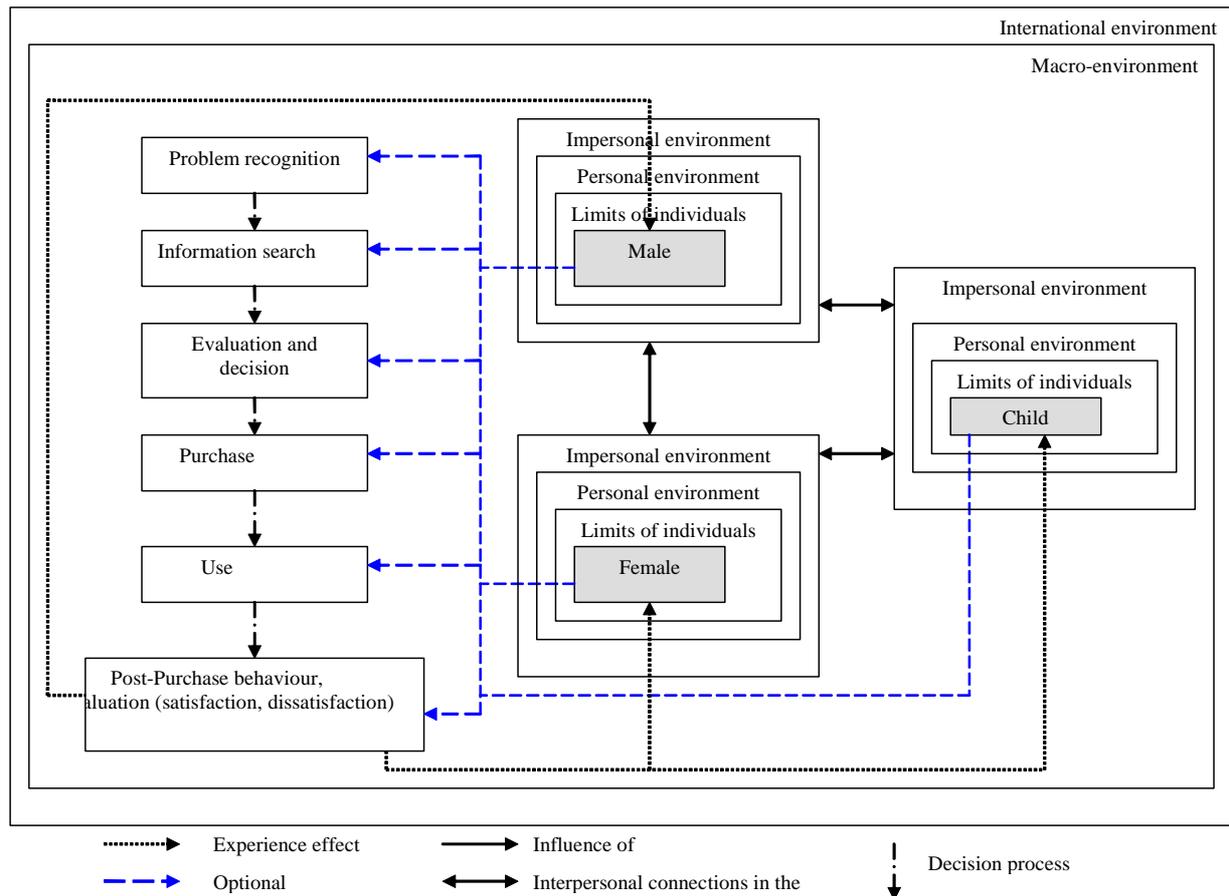


Figure 1. Customer behaviour model on the durable goods market

The behaviour models of Hoffmanné (1977), Pakainé (1997) and Töröcsik (2007) have been considered in our work.

This model designed for the durable goods market supposes that complex environmental stimuli affect members of families (men, women, and children) as *individual decision making elements*. In accordance with behaviour trends, *children* are also involved in purchase decisions in our model since they affect them. The male, female members and children in a family are directed into each period of purchase decisions by an optional type of relation, which signals that certain members take part in decision making to a different degree in line with the male-female-child roles characteristic to the given society. The relationship between the individuals determines the family character of decision making and the roles of individuals in decision making are unravelled. It is an important part of our model to analyse which periods of decision making do individual family members take part in and with what intensity. The *experience effect* impacts each family member, the results appear in the

consumer habit of the next decision making. We would like to emphasize that *international environment* also affects the process of decision making.

We verified this theoretical customer behaviour model on the *Hungarian furniture market* in accordance with an aspect-system determined by the primary research. We analysed the impacts of impersonal environment on furniture purchases by researching the validity of general customer behaviour trends on the furniture market. We found it necessary to analyse the family character of furniture purchase decisions, to survey family roles in each period of the decision process (problem recognition, information search, decision, purchase) based on the model. The primary research enabled us to group furniture uses and purchases *according to theoretical categories* and to *segment the market based on lifestyle*, which is of outstanding importance for small ventures and medium-sized business enterprises of the branch (Hetesi et al. 2007, Veres et al. 2006, Hradil 1995, Lazer 1971).

2 METHODS

The method of research is a descriptive, quantitative, personal interview based on a structured questionnaire. Our aim was to obtain statistically valid, quantifiable data on a sample representing Hungarian furniture purchasers, the population of the research. In keeping with the aims of the research, we considered those persons furniture purchasers who are planning to buy furniture in the next two years, who take part in the decision making process in the family and who do not work in the branches wood industry, furniture manufacturing, furniture trade, furniture design or inner architecture.

While elaborating the research method we aimed at assembling a questionnaire that is appropriate for conducting multi-level cross-section and *cohort analyses*. Multi-level cross-section researches enables to make comparisons on conspectus levels but they do not make it possible to measure changes in the opinions of individual respondents since our samples are made up of different persons each time. That is why it is advisory to use these multi-level cross-section researches as cohort analyses, which are multi-level cross-section researches consisting of research series conducted at appropriate time periods. We propose researches in a time period of two years in the case of the furniture industry so as to dissociate the affects of environmental trends and to acquire an impression of the tempo of development and changes. Thus cohort is a group of respondents who experience the same event at the same time period. With its help we can establish what attitudes groups of the population with identical characteristics maintain to aspects of the analysed decision making in proportion to time. In addition, it was our aim to elaborate a lifestyle based segmentation model while constructing the questionnaire that enables grouping according to value orientation and family life cycle.

We used quota sampling. Sample size was 1300 persons. Assembling the quota was done based on a preliminary omnibus survey of 1054 people in which we used the basic demographical data – significant for the topic – of people planning to buy furniture in the next two years as the basis of the quota. These were: type of settlement, gender, and age group. In keeping with the regional quota (Budapest, western Hungary, and eastern Hungary) the distribution of respondents followed national rates. According to the omnibus survey of 1054 people 18.8% of the Hungarian population was planning to buy furniture at the time of the interview. The interviews were conducted in June 2009 on neutral spots (streets).

As for the demographical characteristics of the respondents, according to the preliminarily given quota, there were slightly more men (55%) in the sample. The age distribution of the respondents was: 18–25 years: 21%, 26–30 years: 17%, 31–40 years: 23%, 41–50 years: 18% 51 years or older: 21%. Two thirds of the respondents came from towns, one third of them from villages.

3 RESULTS

During primary research we examined if general behaviour trends (Törőcsik 2007) – defined as elements of impersonal customer environment in the model – are valid on the Hungarian furniture market. All these, besides verifying the theoretical model, strongly support the marketing strategy planning of business enterprises. We analysed the validity of the following trends (we signal the marketing area of practical application in brackets):

1. Furniture purchasers need *personally tailored* products as a result of ego trends derived from modern values. (product policy, communication)
2. Price is still a very important factor in decision making. However, the trend of social responsibility, environmental protection and appraising human health may also be apprehended that is why the need for *cheap eco-products* can be expected to appear on the furniture market as well. (product policy, pricing policy, communication)
3. Besides price sensitivity characteristic for furniture purchase decisions, we can observe the *trend of cheap design and cheap chic* on the furniture market. (product policy, pricing policy, communication)
4. The impact of *personal information sources* are greater on furniture purchase decisions, which comes along with the entry of a trend indicating increase in *interest in origin of product*. (product policy, communication)
5. *Counselling, personal relations* are equally important for both sexes at the point of information obtaining when making furniture purchase decisions. The general behaviour trend that men rely more on written documents than the expertise of shop assistants does not work during furniture purchase. (communication)
6. Nowadays the 'middle-class – individualistic' value trend has spread among flat users, which puts the individual into the foreground beyond the basic functionality of the 'conventional-traditional' value trend. (product policy, communication)

According to the customer behaviour trend verified first, furniture purchasers need products **tailored to individual needs** as a result of ego trends derived from modern values. The trend found by the Trend Inspiration research group in 2008 suggests that the need for personally tailored products have become commonplace. The determinant factor of this trend is exhibitionism since everything can become a tool of self expression. This refers back to ego trend (Törőcsik 2006) which means putting the individual into the foreground and the need for personally tailored product (tailored to person). In the approaching social era, knowledge-economy, individualism will become the centre element (Horx 2000). Although the trend of 'the limit in infinity' (Trend Inspiration 2009) – suggesting that because of overflowing credits prior to the economic crisis people got used to the idea that there is no limit to their ambitions – has occurred in Hungarian trend research, in 2009 in connection with the economic crisis, people face limitations in purchasing due to credit confinements. Along with our hypothesis, all these do not affect the need for personally tailored products on the furniture market.

During lifestyle based segmentation we grouped customers according to modern and traditional values. We analysed the following statements characteristic for modern values and backing up the ego trend: flexibility is typical for my lifestyle, I like buying furniture, I look for pleasure in shopping, I often entertain guests, I often rearrange my furniture, and I would like to renew my home décor more often.

Table 1. The need for personally tailored products in the group indicating ego trend¹

How important is personally tailoredness, uniqueness for you when choosing furniture?							
	N	Very important/important valid frequency (%)	Not so important valid frequency (%)	Not important/ absolutely not important valid frequency (%)	Average	Deviation	Variance
Flexibility is typical for my lifestyle.	470	74.3	14.3	11.4	4.04	1.19	1.39
I like buying furniture, I look for pleasure in shopping.	623	73.7	15.9	10.4	4.05	1.14	1.31
I often entertain guests.	533	70	18.4	11.6	3.98	1.18	1.39
I often rearrange my furniture.	255	73.7	14.9	11.4	4.01	1.17	1.37
I would like to renew my home décor more often.	604	75	13.1	11.9	4.05	1.18	1.39

In line with the next trend, we can expect the need for *cheap-eco* products to enter the furniture market as well. Eco means the commitment for the protection of both people and their environment. One of the values of the 'individualistic – middle-class' value trend is that the need for individual integrity and thus dehumanization seemed to be one of the key questions at the turn of the century (Kapitány – Kapitány 2000). Furthermore, our hypothesis is built on the previous research result that price is the first and most important aspect of choice in most furniture categories (Pakainé et al. 2007). Eco products will become characteristically cheaper along with future improvements, cheap-eco products will appear, resulting in the appearance of the cheaper versions of previous products and of eco products designed with the aim of cheapness. (Trend Inspiration 2010). Our hypothesis dealt with 'conscientious purchase' (Trend Inspiration 2010), which means that products will be expected to have an *eco- and charitable* character. *Eco chic* trend will mean not only an eco-conscious purchase but its communication towards customers. The booming 'CSR' activities of companies back up this trend as well. According to this trend affecting furniture manufacturers, customers would like to see transparent companies; this means that customers would like to be able to have an overview on the whole production process.

In accordance with the results of the whole sample analyses, environmental protection is not a characteristic aspect among the population planning to buy furniture in the next two years. However, being detrimental to health very much is. (Table 2)

¹ 1-5 scale of importance where 1 means 'absolutely not important' and 5 means 'very important'

Table 2. Environment- and health consciousness²

	N	Min	Max	Average	Deviation	Variance
People do not pay attention if the furniture purchased is recyclable or not.	1095	1	5	4	1.09	1.18
Most people cannot identify if a given piece of furniture is environmentally friendly.	1115	1	5	3.83	1.13	1.27
People do not take into account the effects of a product on the environment while making a purchase decision.	1113	1	5	3.96	1.04	1.09
It should be harmless to health.	1115	1	5	4.55	0.8	0.64

We examined the *raison d'être* of the need for *cheap-eco* products *first of all* among those who think that people take into consideration the effects of products on the environment. The average importance of low price was 3.69, its deviation was 1.14, and its variance was 1.29 in this group. The average agreement with the statement 'Excellent quality is more important than price when buying furniture' was 3.47 in this group. The deviation was 1.061 while the variance was 1.126. (N=355)

The estimation of price-quality ratio of furniture purchase among respondents keeping environmental aspects in mind was similar to the whole sample: on the valid frequency range (N=340) 58.8% of the respondents usually buys good quality but pays attention to the price as well and 31.2% of them generally buys average quality products for moderate prices. 2.6% of the people typically buy good quality even for higher prices and 0.9% of them look for the cheapest solutions even at the cost of quality.

The average agreement with the statement 'people do not pay attention if the furniture purchased is recyclable or not' was 4.00 in the whole sample, the deviation was 1.09 while the variance was 1.18. Price was also an important aspect (64.3%) for those respondents who keep recycling factors in mind when buying furniture (N=308). The result of the question analysing the costs of furniture purchase according to price-quality ratio in the group: on the valid frequency range 58.4% of the respondents usually buys good quality but pays attention to the price as well and 30.5% of them generally buys average quality products for moderate prices. 3.2% of the people typically buy good quality even for higher prices and 1.3% of them look for the cheapest solutions even at the cost of quality.

The number of respondents considering health protection at least moderately important was 1082 persons in the sample. 63.3% of them found low prices important or highly important. The result of the question analysing the costs of furniture purchase according to price-quality ratio in the group: on the valid frequency range 62.7% of the respondents usually buys good quality but pays attention to the price as well and 27.3% of them generally buys average quality products for moderate prices. 5.1% of the people typically buy good quality even for higher prices and 0.9% of them look for the cheapest solutions even at the cost of quality.

In summary we can say that the role of price is outstandingly important when making decisions about furniture purchase even among environment- and health-conscious groups.

² 1-5 scale of importance where 1 means 'absolutely not important' and 5 means 'very important'

The research has proved that, besides price, quality also occurs to modulate the situation to some extent.

According to the next analysed trend, besides price sensitivity – which is so typical for decisions about furniture purchase – the need for *cheap design and cheap chic* is also characteristic for furniture markets. Cheap design means the democratization of design (Trend Inspiration 2010). Along with this trend, customers would like more imaginative, more beautiful products for lower prices. Cheap chic (Trend Inspiration 2010) is about products that become cheaper through innovativeness. A need for aesthetics occurs besides convenience in the 'individualistic – middle-class' value trend that, on the one hand, serves the needs of a society that turns outwards and seeks the acknowledgement of others to prove their own successfulness but, on the other hand, it serves the needs of the individual as well. One of the values of aesthetics is conveyed by the society assigning the greatest value to joy, attractiveness (Kapitány – Kapitány 2000).

To verify our hypothesis we analysed the importance of form/design, aesthetics, fashion, functionality and durability among price-sensitive respondents. 504 respondents were price-sensitive in the sample from the aspect of the hypothesis. They did not agree with or were not certain about the attitude statement that 'the excellent quality of the product is more important than its price when buying furniture' (agree and disagree as well). According to the results summarised in *Tables 3 and 4*, durability and functionality are outstandingly important even in the case of price-sensitive customers. In proportion to importance averages, they are closely followed by aesthetics and design. Fashionableness is a moderately important factor.

Table 3. Design and functionality among price-sensitive customers 1

	N	Min	Max	Average	Deviation	Variance
Durability	491	1	5	4.71	0.523	0.274
Functionality	490	1	5	4.64	0.616	0.379
Aesthetics	488	1	5	4.48	0.696	0.484
Design	481	1	5	4.20	0.899	0.808
Fashion	481	1	5	3.31	1.202	1.446

Table 4. Design and functionality among price-sensitive customers 2³

	N	Important valid frequency (%)	Not so important valid frequency (%)	Not important valid frequency (%)
Durability	491	96.5	3.5	0
Functionality	491	94.5	4.9	0.6
Aesthetics	488	92.0	6.8	1.2
Design	481	81.9	13.5	4.6
Fashion	481	45.6	33.7	20.7

³ 1-5 scale of importance where 1 means 'absolutely not important' and 5 means 'very important', in the table: important: categories 4-5, not important: categories 1-2

According to the next analysed trend, *personal information sources* have greater influence on decisions about furniture purchase and this comes along with the occurrence of the trend indicating the *increase in the interest of product origin*. The question dealt with *authenticity* as well and it examined the role of information coming from given sources in the decision making process. The search for *authenticity* occurs as the counter-trend of pleasure search in connection with customer expectations (Töröcsik 2006) where credibility is in the foreground and finding a trustworthy manufacturer and its store requires great awareness and commitment from the customer. The need for transparent companies originates from the fact that customers are more likely to believe their mates than companies. According to our verified hypothesis, personal information sources are observably higher rated on the Hungarian furniture market.

In case of personal information sources, friends and acquaintances turned out to be the most creditable sources from the aspect of purchase decisions, followed by furniture retailers, joiners, interior designers and building contractors (evaluation on a scale of importance where 1 means 'absolutely not important', 5 means 'very important'/How important are the given information sources for you when making decisions about furniture purchase?). The situation was modulated when we analysed the role of informants in further detail by correlating the opinions of people working in furniture trade (Table 5). When contradictory opinions occur, manufacturers and designers become more creditable. Respondents take into account the opinion of retailers less than that of others.

Table 5. The role of advisers⁴

Adviser	Valid frequency	N
Interior designer	73.25	1174
Retailer	26.75	
Manufacturer	77.23	1186
Retailer	22.77	
Interior designer	45.63	1166
Manufacturer	54.37	
Interior designer	37.72	1169
Joiner	62.28	
Joiner	83.84	1176
Retailer	16.16	

When we took **impersonal information sources** into consideration during our analysis, we found that friends and acquaintances were still on the top of the list. According to the importance average, besides personal acquaintances, retailers and joiners preceded any impersonal information source. The role of interior designers and building contractors were moderate, many impersonal information sources preceded them (catalogue, Internet magazine, exhibition).

In case of impersonal information sources *catalogues are the most important sources followed by the Internet, magazines, exhibition and then by flyers*. Television, local daily newspapers, women's magazines, weekly or monthly newspapers, radio stations and national daily newspapers did not turn out to be creditable information sources.

⁴ Whose opinion is determinant in case of contradicting notions?

While analysing the **interest in origin of product**, we found that the place of origin is less important when we are choosing furniture. The importance average of the place of origin (a 1–5 scale where 5 means 'very important') was 2.9, deviation was 1.28 and variance was 1.62. If we take a closer look we find that: 31.1% of the respondents found this aspect important or very important, 31.6% of them found it moderately important and 37.3% of them thought it was not important (or absolutely not important). The difference between 'important' and 'not important' categories is only 6.2% in favour of the 'not important' category.

The situation was modulated when we asked a concrete question: do you prefer buying Hungarian furniture? 59% of customers prefer Hungarian furniture. This rate of preference was independent of age, region and gender (Chi square test, 0.05 significance level).

Among people preferring Hungarian furniture we asked an open question about the type of criteria they require Hungarian furniture to meet. Quality was mentioned most often (69%) followed by price (51%), guarantee (31%), repair services (21%), complementary services (5%) and reliability in 2% of spontaneous remarks.

We examined in our research the need for furniture purchase at *joiners*. 61% of the respondents would not have his/her furniture made by a joiner but 10% of them were sure to order furniture from a joiner, and this is reassuring. While analysing significant differences in opinions (Chi square test, 0.05 significance level) we found that younger people were more open to order from joiners and people living in eastern and western Hungary also prefer ordering from joiners while those living in Budapest do not. The spontaneously mentioned and most important reasons for ordering from joiners: meeting unique requirements (53%), personal acquaintanceship (14%), credibility, reliability (13%), quality (8%), low price (8-8%), precision of joiners (4%) and the statement 'Hungarian joiners are good' (4%). Spontaneously mentioned reasons of those not planning to order from joiners: higher price of joiners (25%), longer time (8%), the simplicity of shopping in a department store (8%), 'preferring to see what they buy' (7%), wider choice in department stores (6%), not reliable, not creditable (5%), longer acquisition time (5%), joiner cannot make it (3%) and 'do not know any joiners' (3%).

Reliability/credibility occurred among spontaneously mentioned reasons for buying from close, local members. It was also confirmed that the role of personal connections, informants is significant in connection with furniture purchases.

The trend that **counselling**, personal relations are more important for women since men rely more on written documents during purchases was not confirmed on the furniture market. The need for *counselling* is a general behaviour trend characteristic for our time (Töröcsik 2006), which signals that customers entrust certain decisions they have little knowledge about to experts. The role of shop assistant is dominant in making furniture purchase decisions (Pakainé 1997), appropriately trained people can determine the decision making process since consumers need tangible help and counselling when making decisions about furniture purchase.

We examined the differences in opinions between personal and impersonal information sources – analysed in connection with the previous hypothesis – in proportion to gender to examine this hypothesis. We did not find any significant difference in the opinions in personal aspects (One Way ANOVA, 0.05 significance level).

Table 6. Opinions about personal information sources among men⁵

	N	Categories 4–5 valid frequency (%)	Moderate	Categories 1–2 valid frequency (%)
Friend, acquaintance, relative	530	68.3	21.5	10.2
Joiner	512	62.1	27.7	10.2
Retailer	526	59.5	29.3	11.2
Interior decorator	506	40.1	20.6	39.3
Building contractor	500	28.4	27.6	44.0

We verified the assumption that the '*individualistic – middle-class*' value trend has spread among flat users which puts the individual into the foreground beyond the basic functionality of the 'conventional-traditional' value trend. The motto of this new value trend is to feel oneself comfortable; self-expression has become typical in furnishing. This, on the one hand, serves the needs of a society that turns outwards and seeks the acknowledgement of others to prove their own successfulness but, on the other hand, it serves the needs of the individual as well. The shift between the two value trends became multitudinous in the 1960s in Hungary and in a certain way that resulted in mixed forms. The two value trends mixed and gradually shifted towards the individualistic value trend (Kapitány – Kapitány 2000).

The lifestyle based segmentation carried out during the research confirmed that there are two groups among Hungarian furniture purchasers that own the modern values of the 'individualistic – middle-class' value trend characterised by Kapitány – Kapitány (2000). These two groups are the 'modern, innovative' (21%) and the 'demanding, modern' (19%) amounting to 40% of furniture purchasers. Evidences of modern values can be detected in the additional three groups (escapist 10%, style-less 29%, frustrated 21%) but they more or less stick to traditions. The practice of segmentation according to values is widespread in lifestyle based models. The Gallup model identifies groups in a space determined by traditional-modern or individualistic-social values. The Lifestyle Inspirational model segments groups according to pace of life and value orientation. The SINUS milieu model creates groups according to basic value orientation, everyday activities, general attitudes and everyday aesthetics. The analysis of the role of values was confirmed by Lazer (1971) who stated that lifestyle is the result of factors such as resources, culture, values, rules, punishments and symbols.

In our work we aimed at developing a model – in connection with the customer behaviour model dealt with in the introduction – that enables us to segment furniture purchasers based on lifestyle. That is why segmentation was done according to the following variables:

1. Socio-demographic: taking into consideration age, region, qualification, subjective living standard, character of flat/house, and especially life cycle: the age of oldest child, marital status (single, couple), age and economic activity.
2. According to questions of attitude: they served the analysis of attitudes towards traditional-modern values, furniture purchase and home décor and that of factors of furniture choice. According to value orientation we determined modern and traditional furniture purchasing and using values in accordance with Table 6.

⁵ 1-5 scale of importance where 1 means 'absolutely not important' and 5 means 'very important', in the table: important: categories 4-5, not important: categories 1-2

Table 7. Modern and traditional values in lifestyle based segmentation

Modernity	Tradition
Self-expression, the individual is in the centre (colour, form, design, fashion, brand products, tailored to person). Flat as the source of joy.	Functionality in furniture use (long endurance, manufacturing precision, cleanness and order as basic value).
Furnishing principle: 'feel comfortable', sacrifices time, and goes into details.	Functionality in home décor.
Provoking positive reaction from the social environment by self-expression. This means fear/risk at decision making. Mutual presence of confidence and fear.	Provoking positive reaction from the social environment by correspondence, adjustment to others.
Chosen relationships are higher valued, more frequent guests; accessible spaces are created in accordance with this.	Less guests.
Changes, rearrangements are typical.	Continuity, rearrangements are not typical.
Eclectic home décor (memorabilia from the past together with modern objects in one space).	Respect tradition in home décor, influenced by average standards, mediocre principle, follows uniform style determined by tradition.
The role of the Internet, virtual objects, pictures.	Written text, personal communication.
Flexible pace of life (workplaces mixed into each other).	Considerate, slow pace of life.
Self-expression penetrates working areas.	Strict functionality (kitchen, pantry, workshop).
Search for experiences is characteristic for lifestyle.	Aspiring safety in lifestyle.
Critical approach, need for authenticity.	
<i>Basic value:</i> <i>joy, self-centred, measures own success through acknowledgement of others.</i>	<i>Basic value:</i> <i>belonging somewhere, rules, norms, authority</i>

We used the k-mean cluster statistic method for determining groups. *Figure 2* shows the segments according to family life cycle and value orientation.

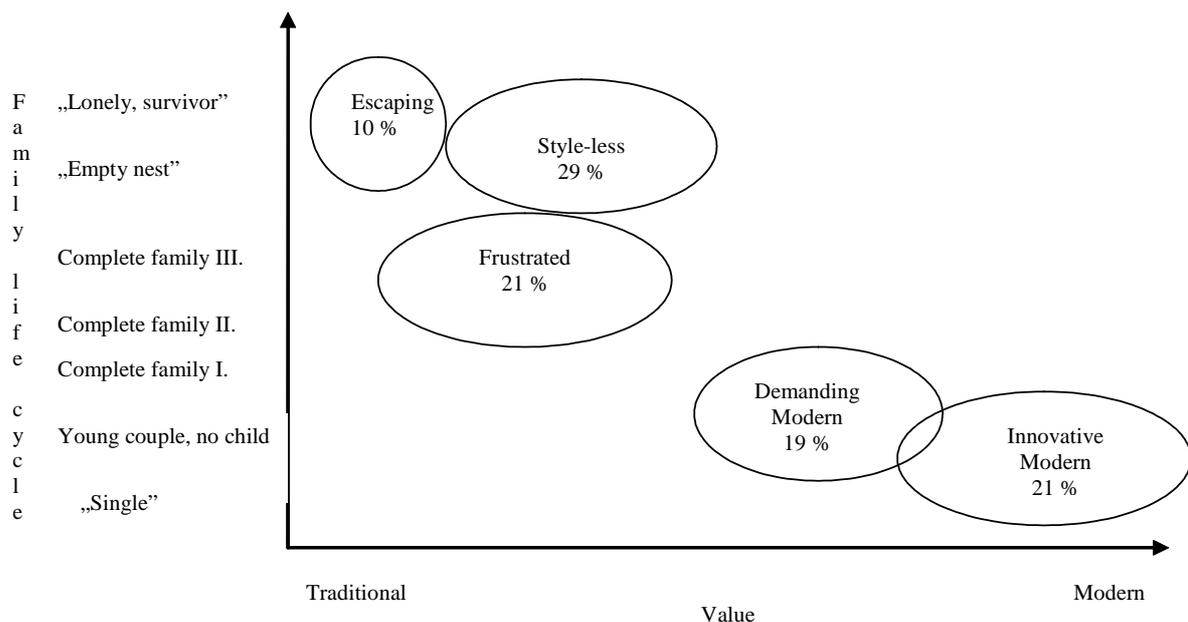
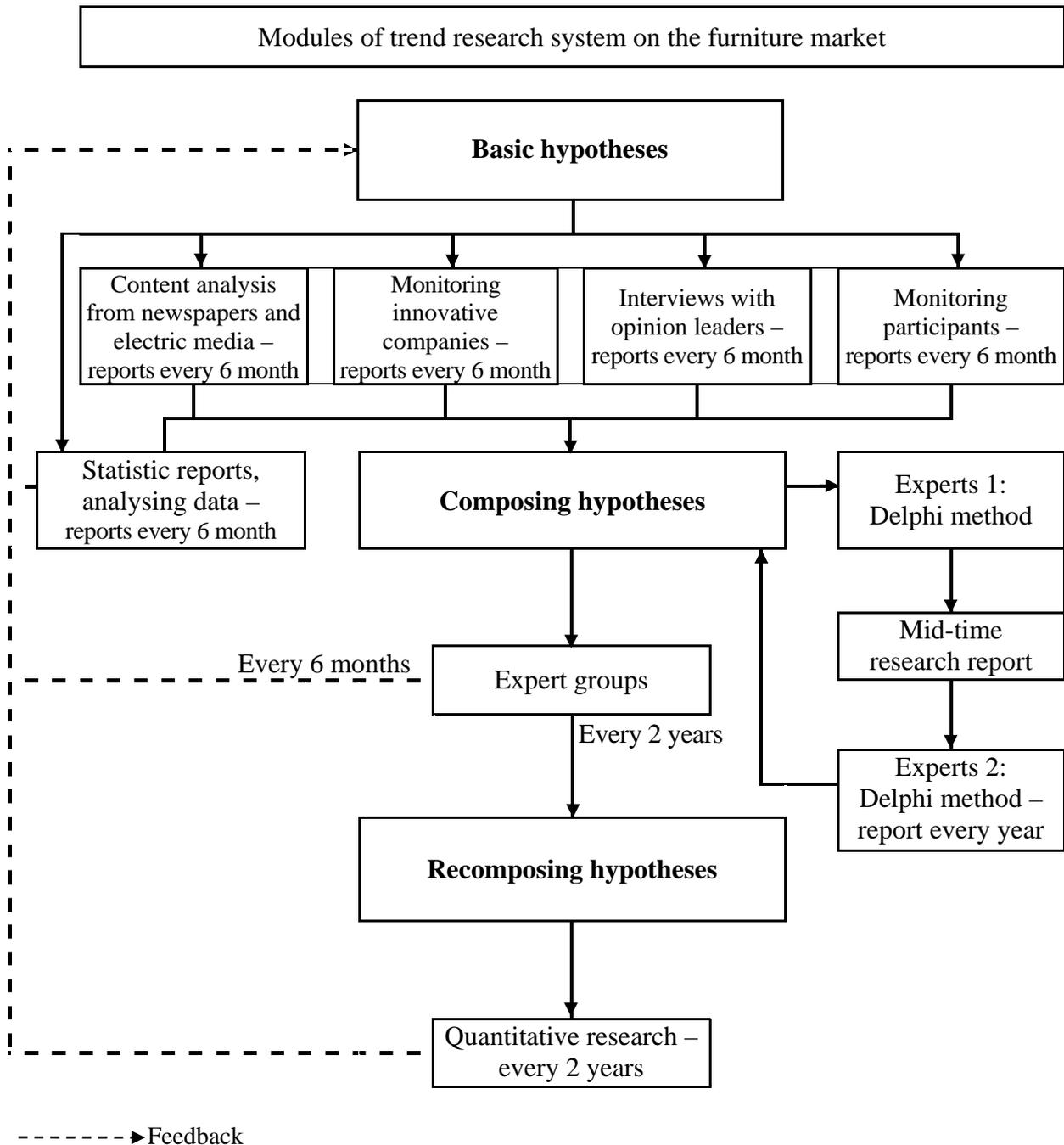


Figure 2. Home décor style groups in Hungary

4 DISCUSSION

The result of our research confirms the necessity of trend analysis on the furniture market verifying the validity of several general behaviour trends on the furniture market. We recommend a *research system of multi-level modules* focusing on the furniture market that could reveal special characteristics of this market besides monitoring and testing general trends. It is our aim to explore greater correlations about the living standards of customers, consumers, about the changes in values, the features of lifestyle so as to help companies to adapt to the market. Qualitative research methods are primarily needed to reveal new phenomena but we cannot neglect quantifiable results either. An interdisciplinary approach will be further needed in future researches taking into account mainly the research results and methods of sociology and psychology. It is essential to give exact frames and systems of criteria before starting researches. The research methodology we suggest (*Figure 3*) refers to the furniture market and undertakes exclusively the revelation of the trends in furniture use and purchase. Besides these, it constantly monitors general behaviour trends, analyses their interpretability and validity from the aspect of the furniture market. We need to examine the results of trend researches from time to time; we have to monitor changes, the spreading process, time and pace of the phenomena.

We are planning to further research certain elements of the *customer behaviour model* outlined in the introduction: the effects of marketing activities as elements of the impersonal environment and the role of reference groups, opinion leaders given as elements of the closer social environment in decision making. Our aim was to create a customer behaviour model that is valid on the market of durable goods because of its cogency on the furniture market but which has to be further confirmed on additional markets. *Figure 3* demonstrates the trend research system suggested for the furniture market.



Research aim revealing trends on the furniture market, constant monitoring, analysing the validity of general behaviour trends

Figure 3. Trend research system on the furniture market

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