

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, KUMASI**

**STRATEGIES USED BY LOCAL FURNITURE COMPANIES TO
OVERCOME FOREIGN COMPETITION (CASE STUDY IN NORTHERN
REGION OF GHANA)**

KONLAN MATHEW TAMIRKA

OCTOBER, 2018

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**A Dissertation in the Department of CONSTRUCTION AND WOOD
TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, Faculty of TECHNICAL EDUCATION,
submitted to the School of Research and Graduate Studies, University of
Education, Winneba in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of the
Master of Technology Education (Wood Technology) Degree.**

OCTOBER, 2018

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, **Konlan Mathew Tamirka**, declare that this Dissertation with the exception of quotation and references contained in previously published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole for any other degree elsewhere.

SIGNATURE.....

DATE.....

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this project work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of project work laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: **Prof. Stephen Jobson Mitchual**

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

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I wish to first of all thank Almighty God, the heavenly host, controller of lives for seeing me throughout this programme successfully. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Stephen Jobson Mitchual for the time he spent in guiding me throughout this study and the knowledge I acquired during this period. Thirdly, I wish to thank Dr. Bee for his assistance during this study and last but not the least I wish to thank Engineer Joseph Hayford for the support he gave me. I humbly pray that may Almighty God bless you, give you more strength, wisdom and good health.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear wife and her children and my siblings.

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ABSTRACT

Furniture is a use in making a room or other areas ready for occupancy in every house hold in the world. It provides comfort and harmony in the room for humanity. It also provides livelihood for furniture companies and employees in general. It's production is of great importance in that, it creates jobs, generate income, reduce poverty and generate export earnings. There are two types of furniture in the Ghanaian market, the foreign and the local furniture. The foreign product has captured the market to the detriment of the local product. Local furniture companies are collapsing, employees are not paid and families cannot get three square meals a day. This lead to this study which I intends to investigate the strategies that the local furniture companies will use to overcome foreign competition. The strategies to be investigated includes; marketing, machines, innovation, branding and employment of skilled labour. For instance, marketing strategy was used to advertise the products, through orgainsing of show cases, building and also renting of show room and other promotions. Secondly modern machines or technology was introduced to bring innovation, quality and quantity products. This was put to produce product that place them on the same level ground with their foreign compatriots. Both strategies mentioned above was achieved through employing skill labour, who brought their skills to bear. This brought about improvement in production, influencing purchase intentions thereby increase income generations, GDP growth, reduction of unemployment and so on. The targeted group for the study was the owners or managers of furniture companies in five towns or areas in Tamale in the northern region. The areas under the study were; Aboabu, Choggu, Kalpoheni, Lamashegu and Sakasaka. The findings indicated appropriate that the strategies could help the local furniture companies to overcome foreign competition.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Even though furniture manufacturing is a low-technology industry, it has the capacity to provide jobs and foreign earnings, however, over the past decade several weakness and problem areas have been identified in the Ghanaian local furniture manufacturing companies especially in Tamale in the northern region. Globally, many low-technologies, labour-intensive sectors such as the furniture industry, are achieving what would previously have been considered surprising levels of performance in job growth and foreign-earning capacity. As the furniture industry is growing rapidly in many different countries, it often provides lucrative employment opportunities, upgraded skills and increased revenue.

According to (Hammer, 1995; Kolter & Rath, 1984; Lorenz, 1986; Pilditch 1976; Veryzer, 1995). Product delivery is an opportunity for differential advantage in the market place, For that matter local furniture companies have to significantly improve and be strategic in their production to meet the standard of customer so that they can offer stiff competition to the foreign companies.

Purnomo et al, (2011) state that the industry is of great importance in terms of job creation, poverty alleviation and export earnings. Between 1995 and 2000 worldwide trade in furniture grew by 36 per cent; and by 2000 it was the largest low-technology sector. In 2006 the value of global furniture exports in the sector amounted to over US\$ 135 billion and analysts predicted that the trend would continue at the then current rate growth. Developed countries, led by Italy, Germany and United State of America (USA), have traditionally been the main manufactures,

exporters and importers of furniture, exporting US\$ 13.4 billion, US\$ 11.5 billion and US\$7.5 billion respectively in 2006.

Following the reports of association of Ghana Industries same cannot be said, their survey reported that Ghanaian furniture market is full of imported furniture of about seventy-eight per cent (78%) with twenty-two per cent coming from the local market. In addition, it stated that imported furniture were selling between seven hundred (700) and three thousand (3000) Ghana cedi's whilst the locally made furniture were going for between four hundred (400) and one thousand (1000) Ghana cedi's respectively (AGI, 2010).

Meanwhile, in 2008, the total value of China's furniture export was valued at USD27.6 billion compared to 5.8 billion and 5.2 billion for Germany and Italy respectively, (UNECE,2010), furniture industry in Malaysia contributed USD 1.7 billion export earnings in 2004,(Ratnasingam & Loras, 2009), this increased to USD 3.5 billion in 2008 in spite of the economic downturn in the year, (MPIC, 2009). Another available literature shows that a large growing percentage of small business in Tawian, Italy and the likes are engaged in exported in the furniture industries, (Olson Gough & Bokor,1997).

Again world trade in furniture shows that in the year 2000, the value of exports for all ITTO producer countries combine were about USD 5 billion, out of this, eighty three percentage (83%) originated from countries in Asia Pacific region, Latin America contribution was sixteen percentage (16%) and only one percent (1%) was what mother Africa contributed (Filho & Be'lishe, 2005; ITTO, 2007). This calls for radical approach in the content to solving this issue. Though World Bank sponsored regional programme on enterprise development reports revealed that a few of some African countries, notably Zimbabwe and South Africa were doing well with

fifty per cent (50%) or more export in the industry with hundred (100) employees while in Ghana less than ten percent (10%) of furniture firms can export (Bigten, 1999). However, in the last decade the world has seen fierce competition from developing countries, especially China. In 1990 China did not feature in the top ten exporters but by 2000 China was ranked world's ninth largest exporter and in 2006, China was rated first and has since been the leading of furniture, exporting almost US\$ 428 billion worth of furniture in 2006, which equalled 20 per cent of global exports. This is an indication that any country that is serious and strategic can compete with the large economies following China's footsteps.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Though consumer perceptions of price, quality and value are considered pivotal determinant shopping behaviour and product choice, (Bishop,1984; Doyle,1984; Jacoby and Olson,1985; Sayer and Dickson, 1984; Schlechter, 1984), protection list barriers crumble in emerging markets around the world, multinational companies are rushing in to find new opportunities for growth. Their arrival is boon to local consumers, who benefit from the broader varieties now available. For local companies, however, the influx often appears to be a death sentence. Considering habitual dominant positions in protected markets, they suddenly face foreign rivals having an unnerving range of advantages. For instance, they have significant financial resources, advanced technology, superior products, powerful brands, and seasoned marketing and management skills. Most often than not, the very survival of local companies in emerging markets is at stake.

Notwithstanding, instituting strategies can draw them on high competitive platform with their foreign counterparts provided the switch to modern approaches.

The managers of the local companies in the emerging markets can overcome foreign competition no matter their differences with co-competitors from advanced industrial countries depending on how they implement tactics at their disposal.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Fenko et al (2010) demonstrated that vision is the most important modality at the moment of buying. This explains why modelling, marketing, technology and employing skilled labour as strategies can impact positively on furniture products. The main purpose of this study is to assess the strategies that can assist local furniture companies to overcome foreign competition through reforms; such as innovation/modelling, branding, technology, marketing and employing skill labour as mentioned earlier will enable local furniture companies to become competitive with their foreign counterparts both locally and globally. The area of coverage for this study is Tamale metropolis in the northern region where the phenomenon may be peculiar. Other consideration will be how effective the firms are managed.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research is to determine strategies that will assist the local furniture companies in Tamale, Northern region to overcome foreign competition in the furniture industry

1.4.1 The Specific Objectives of the Study are to:

1. Identify the key strategies that the local furniture companies could be used to overcome foreign competition.

2. Investigate the extent to which the strategies could improve performance in the competition.
3. Investigate how the strategies of the local companies will bring transformation?

1.5 Research Questions

Here are the research questions for this study.

1. What are the strategies that will help local furniture companies to overcome foreign competition?
2. To what extent can these strategies influence the local furniture companies to be competitive?
3. Can the strategies adopted by the local furniture companies bring transformation?

1.6 Significance of the Study

To combined effort from private and public sectors would lead to the improvement in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) if both play their roles well. According to Hans et al, (1998) small and medium size furniture firms are expected to grow and expand so that they can create job opportunities for the youth and contribute significantly to the economy .Yamamoto and Lambert, (1994) revealed that industrial product appearance has influence on product preference considering the quality and value place on the product. There are a number of ways in which product design influences customer preference (Bloch 1995). The design of a product determines customers first impression about the product using their own evaluation depending on material, model and ergonomics.

The good book stated that, for lack of knowledge my people perish, to avoid this that is why this study is looking at the strategies that will assist local furniture companies to overcome foreign competition. Since this industry is overwhelming growing rapidly in many different countries and also the industry has become a panacea that provides lucrative employment opportunities, upgraded skill, and revenue. Despite the heated rhetoric surrounding globalization, industries actually vary a great deal in the pressures they put on companies to sell. At the other end of the spectrum are industries in which success turns on meeting the particular demands of local consumers. This explains why in the last ten years the world has been in fierce competition from furniture companies in the developing countries like Ghana.

The research finding from this study would be useful especially to Ghanaian economy. Such that, first and famous, the finding will enable the local furniture companies to overcome foreign competition that could strengthen their economy and also reduce unemployment as it is a potential sector to creating job.

Second, this study will provide insight to the new entrance of local furniture companies to become competitive with foreign companies besides those who already in the industry. They will all benefit it from provided they adhere to the strategies that will aid them compete both locally and internationally. Third, this study will provide policy direction policy makers to make policies that will assist the local furniture companies to overcome foreign competition and also to fulfil government dream of making the country an industrial hap.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study will covered the local furniture companies operating in tamale. This is because Ghana is geographically a big country and it will not be easy to cover the entire country, besides, this phenomenon may be peculiar in the area as compare to

other metropolitan area where many local furniture companies suffered in the hand of foreign counter part. The sectors to be investigated are: the strategies local furniture companies will need to become competitive with foreign companies, such strategies include; innovation (modeling) technology, marketing and employing skilled labour so that they can be able to compete effectively. It will also be looking at the extent to which the strategies will assist local furniture companies to become competitive with their foreign counter parts and how these strategies can provide transformation to local furniture companies. Additionally, recommendation will be made on the way forward. The study target is 50 respondents who are operating local furniture companies within Tamale metropolitan area. The owners/managers/shop assistance will be giving questionnaires to answer. The study will use tools like questionnaires, interviews and observation to gather all relevant data require to make the study successful.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

This study is presented in five chapter one is the generally introduction, which covers background of the study, statement of problem, purpose of study, research objective, research question, significance of study, limitations and organization. Chapter two reviews literature of past studies, chapter three look at the methodology. It explains the research design and also gives detail about the population, sampling procedures used in the study. It also explains the research instruments, method of data collection, chapter five presents deals with data analysis and results and last but not the list.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

With the fast-paced globalization and technological revolution, today's world has become a ground that is characterized by fast economic development and hypercompetitive business environment. In order to fully and effectively participate in the world economy, most countries have to make massive changes and being strategic. Besides, Ghana has also undergone incredible changes in terms of politics, economy, culture and social life within the West Africa sub-region. This makes it one of the fast-growing economies in West Africa, due its political stabilization and economic prosperity. Notwithstanding, government also focus on consumption of made in Ghana goods as it is regarded as the vital driving force for Sustainable economic growth.

Wooden furniture industry is traditionally known to be low-technology and labour demanding industry (Kaplinsky & Readman, 2000), which is extremely recommended for its widespread outsourcing. Besides, wooden furniture industry is highly export-oriented with a fast growing rate especially since 2008 (MARD, 2012). While the global economic crisis in 2008 had a vital influence on the national economies, it was reported that the foreign subsidiaries in furniture industry in Vietnam had outstripped their local competitors (VNS, 2013). Low-technology firms, such as those found within the furniture manufacturing industry, have no framework or methodology, lack of skilled labour and marketing strategies to guide them successfully to attain and integrate technology to allows them to operate more competitively. Strategies have become essential to support local furniture companies to overcoming foreign competition. To overcome foreign competition means to

change their old ways of doing things and embrace modernity I everything they do. Markets should be surveyed to find out the demand so that goods manufactured will meet the taste of customers.

2.2 Definitions

A strategy is defined as a high level plan to achieve one or more goals under conditions of uncertainty, Wikipedia. Strategy, it is also said to be a way of describing how you are going to get things done. The term strategy comes from the Greek word “strategia” that refers to “generalship” CAMBRIDGE Dictionary Online (2006) defines strategy as a long-term and detailed plan for achieving particular objectives in different situations.

Originally, strategy is a term that is derived from military use (Hart 1967; Chandler 1977; Schendel and Hoffer Schendel 1979; Bracker 1980; Fahey and Christensen 1986; Huff and Reger 1987; Miller and Cardinal 1994; Mintzberg 1994; Prahalad and Hamel 1994; McKiernan 1997; McCraw 1998). Military strategy plays an important role in wars, as it guides the army to conquer the enemy by dealing with the planning and conduct of campaigns, the movement and disposition of forces, and the deception of the enemy. Hart (1967) gave a short definition of military strategy as quote “the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy. Subsequently, business world have realized that Knowledge of strategy was massive and could be applicable for the business bases on the experience from military strategies.

Hence, a military strategy was use as a guide to develop business strategies. Some famous military strategies have been applied in business world directly, for instance, Sun Tzu’s “The Art of War” (about B.C. 500), Carl von Clausewitz’s “On

War” (1832), and Mao Tse Tung’s. “The Red Book” (1966). Later, due to the increasing variability and uncertainty of the business environment, strategy which originates from the military has been technologically advanced and widely applied in business world to adjust and balance the relationship, Nickols, (2006), Cambridge Dictionary Online (2006), Hart, (1967), between companies’ activities and environment changes. Nonetheless, the essence of strategy remains the same --- to compete (with the enemy) and to win (the war).

It is important to point out that although the terms of strategy and tactics both originate from military world and involve the relationships between ends and means, there exists a basic distinction between strategy and tactics. In principle, “strategy is concerned with deploying the resources at your disposal while tactics is concerned with employing them”.

Strategy has been a major focus of management concern in the last half of 20th century. Generally, strategy in the business world refers to a series of measures for achieving and sustaining an organization’s long-term success. Since strategy was introduced into business and management in the 1960s, its definition has greatly evolved according to various dimensions and contexts. There are several definitions of strategy but there is no universally accepted definition of strategy as summarized below in relations with business.

Chandler, (1962), strategy is the determination of the basic long-term goals and the objectives of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals. Andrews, (1965), corporate strategy is the pattern of major objectives, purposes, or goals and essential policies or plans for achieving these goals, stated in such a way as to define what business the company is in or is to be in and the kind of company it is or is to be.

Ansoff, (1965) strategy in terms of strategic decisions which “...are primarily concerned with external, rather than internal problems of the firm and specifically with selection of the product which the firm will produce and markets to which it will sell. He also defined strategy as the „common thread“ that gives “...a relationship between present and future product-markets which would enable outsiders to perceive where the firm is heading, and the inside management to give it guidance”.

Glueck, (1976) strategy is a unified, comprehensive, and integrative plan designed to assure that the basic objectives of the enterprise are achieved. Schendel and Hofer, (1979) define strategy as the centre piece of strategic management. Tregoe and Zimmerman, (1980) also saw strategy as the framework which guides those choices that determine the nature and direction of an organization. Porter, 1980, *Competitive Strategy: positioning a business to maximize the value of capabilities to distinguish it from its competitors.*

Quinn, (1980) stated that it is the pattern or plan that integrates an organization’s major goals, policies, and action remain sequences into a cohesive whole. A well-formulated strategy helps to organise and distribute an organization’s resources into a unique and sustainable posture based on its comparative internal competencies and shortcomings, estimated changes in the environment, and contingent moves by intelligent opponents.

Ohmae, (1983), what business strategy is all about is, in a word, competitive advantage. The sole purpose of strategic planning is to enable a company to gain, as efficiently as possible, a sustainable edge over its competitors. Corporate strategy thus implies an attempt to alter a company’s strength relative to that of its competitors in the most efficient way. Every organization’s long-term survival will be ensuring the organization’s achievement, maintenance and development of competitive gains.

Among these definitions, Quinn's (1980) contribution is in a dominant position as he indicated that strategy integrated an organization's major goals, policies and action sequences into a cohesive whole and provided a holistic framework from the viewpoints of market positioning, resource-oriented base and reactions of other competitors.

In today's dynamic and uncontrolled marketplaces, strategy plays an important role in achieving and sustaining a company's long-term success. The purposes of directing strategy for a company are not only to guarantee the success of competitive gain but also by defining the direction and scope of the company to fulfil stakeholders' expectations and objectives thereby matching the resources and competencies of the company within a fast changing environment.

Furthermore, it is impossible to predict which competences or strategies will be successful and for how long it will take the company to have a cutting edge over its competitors. All local furniture company must be flexible in choosing enterprise strategies that is consistent with its external and internal environment.

2.3 Types of Strategies

Starting to develop and adopt a strategic approach is by researching to locate techniques that are used by other people in other parts of the world which is tested and proved to be strategy. There are many strategies that already exist, such as;

Growth strategy is a key precondition for a long-term survival in the face of a rapidly changing business environment and the increasing competition. It is also an offensive corporate strategy, denoting the attainment of an organization's specific growth objectives beyond its past performances and maximising opportunities by deeply exploiting its internal competences. Its implementation will enable the, by so

doing, it will create employment opportunities, increase production, marketing, technological local furniture companies to identify its long-term survival plans and achieve an economic viability advancement to raise sales and increase revenues.

Technology strategy development process is similar to the strategic management process, but with technology being the driver of the business strategy to achieve competitive advantage. The aim is to identify components and activities that are either unique or common to the development of a technology strategy. The technology strategy must be based on the business strategy, as technology must bring the business strategy to fruition. Therefore the success of the technology strategy depends on a well-developed and defined business strategy, as all subsequent technology strategy tasks will be executed based on the business strategy.

Business strategy is the most critical starting point both in developing a technology strategy and in the process of identifying the technology required for a successful technology strategy. The process of developing a technology strategy must actively consider technology options in every step as a means to achieving the business strategy - and therefore attaining competitive advantage.

A differentiation and low-cost strategy is followed independently or simultaneously, and technology can be used as an instrument to achieve the desired critical success factors. Critical success factors for the furniture industry are identified as value, speed, innovation, and flexibility. Speed is defined as volume flexibility, delivery speed, and delivery dependability, while value includes low cost, providing value for money, product reliability, and quality in conformity with specifications.

Quality on the other hand, aims to gain advantage by stabilising the quality of the product at a level comparable to competitors. Flexibility is described as product- and process-flexibility to respond quickly to demand variation. Innovation focuses on

introducing new products, design quality, and improving production and management techniques, as well as providing products of premium value for the customer.

2.3.1 Differentiation Strategy

There are several criteria for a differentiation strategy. The business following a differentiation strategy will focus on marketing and advertising in addition to product design, rather than process design, for a more appealing product. The business will employ highly skilled and creative people, conduct research to improve product design that can add value to products so that it can ask higher prices.

2.3.2 Low Cost Strategy

Low cost strategy is design to produce products that are easy to manufacture, lower cost delivery, and supervised labour tightly, so that the manufactured products in a way benefits the company. Processing innovation and product development will be practised to lower cost. Besides use of technology to lower costs and produce standardised products, the production costs will be relatively lower to that of their competitor

2.4 Importance of Strategies

Strategy as define by CAMBRIDGE Dictionary Online (2006) it is a long-term and detailed plan for achieving particular objectives in different situations. This is why every local furniture company must seek to achieve in different conditions and time. Taking into consideration the fast-paced of globalization and technological revolution, it is imperative that the world has become an arena that is characterized by fast economic development and competitive business environment. Companies can

fully and effectively participate in the world economy when they make massive changes. This can be done through adopting strategies which according to Ohmae 1983, business strategy is all about competitive advantage. Strategic planning is required to enable a local furniture companies to overcome foreign competition if possible and become a sustainable competitor in a business environment through technological revolution.

Statistics below shows that furniture production is of great importance to every growing economy. For instance, in 2008, the total value of China's furniture export was valued at USD27.6 billion compared to 5.8 billion and 5.2 billion for Germany and Italy respectively, (UNECE, 2010), furniture industry in Malaysia contributed USD 1.7 billion in export earnings in 2004, (Ratnasingam & Loras, 2009), this increased to USD 3.5 billion in 2008 in spite of the economic downturn in the latter of the year, (MPIC, 2009). Another available literature shows that a large growing percentage of small businesses in Taiwan, Italy and the likes are engaged in export in the furniture industries, (Olson Gough & Bokor, 1997). As the other parts of the world are busy improving upon their product for foreign earnings, creating job opportunities for their by using raw materials from Africa, Africa on other hand is unable to use these materials to their advantage.

This assertion is confirmed by the world trade in furniture that in the year 2000, the value of exports for all ITTO producer countries combine were about USD 5 billion, out of this, eighty three percentage (83%) originated from countries in Asia Pacific region, Latin America contribution was sixteen percentage (16%) and only one per cent (1%) was what mother Africa contributed, (Filho & Be'lishe, 2005; ITTO, 2007). It is supported by World Bank sponsored regional programme on enterprise development report, which revealed that a few of some African countries,

notably Zimbabwe and South Africa were doing well with fifty per cent (50%) or more export in the industry with hundred (100) and over employees while in Ghana less than ten percent (10%) of furniture firms can export (Bigsten, 1999).

The furniture industry remains one of the forest sector economic activities that hold prospects for poverty alleviation in the developing countries, it has been described as a resource, labour-intensive and low-tech in nature which encompasses small and medium-scale enterprises and large volume producers (Kaplinsky, Memedovic, Morris, & Readman, 2003), it is also of great importance in terms of job creation and export earnings (Purnomo, Irawati, Fauzan, & Melati, 2011). In the state of Mississippi, the furniture industry directly accounts for nearly 30,000 jobs (Minnesota IMPLAN Group, 2006). In North Carolina, the industry employs over 75,000 people and is ranked second in the state's manufacturing sector. This constitutes about 9.7% of the total workforce in the state's manufacturing sector (Mirka, Smith, Shivers, & Taylor, 2002). In 2004, the Polish furniture industry accounted for over 100,000 jobs (Adamovicz & Wiktorski, 2006). Developed economies such as Italy, Germany, France, UK, Canada and USA have enjoyed their fair share in the manufacturing and export of furniture (UNECE/FAO, 2009).

However, on account of the labour-intensive nature of the furniture industry (Purnomo et al., 2011, UNECE/FAO 2009, Kaplinsky et al., 2003), furniture producers are increasingly re-locating their firms in developing countries where labour cost is presumably relatively low (UNECE/FAO 2009). This is proven by a decline of US domestic wood household furniture production with the corresponding surge in imported wood household furniture (Lihara, Buehlmann, & Graf, 2012). It is therefore no surprise that developing economies such as China, Poland, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico and Brazil have leapfrogged into both manufacturing and exports

of furniture past their Western European and North American counterparts. In 2008, the total value of China's furniture exports was USD27.6 billion compared to USD5.8 billion and USD 5.2 billion for Germany and Italy, respectively (UNECE, 2010). Malaysia's furniture industry contributed USD1.7 billion in exports earnings in 2004 (Ratnasingam & Ioras, 2009) and this increased to USD3.5 billion in 2008 in spite of the economic downturn in the latter part of the year (MPIC 2009). In the Japara District of Central Java Malaysia, alone, furniture exports valued at USD 120 million in 2009 (Purnomo et al., 2011). The Polish furniture industry also experienced a dramatic growth in exports, increasing its export earnings from USD147 million in 1989 to USD4.57 billion in 2004. The success stories of these developing economies in their effort to increase furniture exports have been encouraging, suggesting that there are huge prospects for other developing countries like Ghana to take a cue of some strategies adopted by this developed countries. This can be made possible if the local furniture sector is nurtured and developed. In Ghana, it is the fourth foreign exchange earner (11%) after minerals (36%), cocoa (35%) and tourism (12%) and accounts for about 6% of the Gross Domestic Product. About 2.5 million people depend on the industry for their livelihoods. The contribution of the industry to export earnings in 2009 and 2010 stood at USD192 million and USD190 million, respectively (GFC, 2010). Despite this modest achievement, Ghana still lags behind in terms of export growth. For example, Ghana's export growth in the past decades has been very marginal (28.6%) compared to 1300% and 131% export growths for Korea and Malaysia, respectively (Korea Development Institute, 2008).

In order to give some motivation to the wood industry, the government has since 1994, introduced a number of forest sector policy reforms aimed at enhancing the production and export of added value wood products (Awuah-Seiwaah, 2010). For

instance the imposition of levies ranging from 15-30% and 10-15% of the F.O.B. on export of logs and air-dried lumber, respectively is one; secondary, the establishment of the Wood Industries Training Centre (WITC) in 1994 to provide technical and managerial training, consultancy, extension and appropriate technology transfer services to the wood processing centre; thirdly, the ban of log export in 1995 to allow the timber firms focus on the manufacture and export of added value products; fourthly, exporters of value added wood products using lesser-used timber species enjoyed a higher refund of 2% of the Free On Board (F.O.B) than those produced from the traditional primary species (1%); and last but not the least, the establishment of Kumasi Wood Village in 1998 to transform the wood processing sector from manufacturers of simple wood products to high quality wood products through communal use of available facilities and resources (Awuah-Seiwaah, 2010).

2.5 Prospects of Strategy

The furniture industry remains one of the forest sector economic activities that hold prospects for poverty alleviation in the developing countries, it has been described as a resource, labour-intensive and low-tech in nature which encompasses small and medium-scale enterprises and large volume producers (Kaplinsky, Memedovic, Morris, & Readman, 2003), it is also of great importance in terms of job creation and export earnings (Purnomo, Irawati, Fauzan, & Melati, 2011). It is therefore important for local furniture companies to adopt certain strategies that can be implemented to alleviate their companies to them enable them compete effectively. By so doing, it will create employment opportunities, increase production, increase market share and improve their technological development. The local furniture companies upon identifying this will boost its long-term survival plans and achieve an

economic viability advancement to raise sales and increase revenues. Fenko et al (2010) demonstrated that vision is the most important modality at the moment of buying, suggesting that the product appearance is a significant cue for the apparent usability of product. Therefore it is important for local furniture companies to design products that are similar or even more beautiful and stronger than their competitors that can drive customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, they must adopt a strategic approach by researching to identify materials that have propensity to gains in the market and also look at the technology related strategies. Technology strategy development, productivity advancement and strategic management process, are key sectors that drives businesses to achieve competitive advantage. According to (Hammer, 1995; Kotler & Rath, 1984; Labach, 1976; Lorenz, 1986; Pilditch, 1976; Veryzer, 1995) Product delivery is an opportunity for differential advantage in the market place. The aim is to identify components and activities that are either unique or common to the development of company. Combining technology strategy which is based on the business strategy, marketing strategy and employing experts will bring the business to a competitive cutting edge. Success of the strategies will depend on how well-developed and defined business are. According to Purnomo et al, (2011) the industry is of great importance in terms of job creation, poverty alleviation and export earnings.

The global forest products industry is experiencing difficult and challenging times (Hansen & Juslin, 2006), and innovation have been identified as strategies that can be applied to bolster a firm's competitive advantage (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1995; Danneels & Kleinschmidt, 2001; Olson & Bakke, 2001), increase a firm's corporate performance (de Brentani, 2001; Han, Kim, & Srivastava, 1998), and increase a firm's opportunity to grow and expand into new areas (Danneels & Kleinschmidt,

2001). The ability of local furniture companies to create and develop new products can boost their economic fortunes as researchers has identified that innovation is inextricably linked to economic growth, competitiveness and employment (Rametsteiner & Weiss, 2006). In order that local furniture companies survive global competition, it is indispensable for the forest products industry step up its innovation activities (Stendahl, 2009).

As a natural resource-based sector that has the potential for generating employment for both rural and urban populace, local furniture companies have becomes an obvious sector where the contribution of innovative strategies and sustainable development be explored (Kubeczko, Rametsteiner, & Weiss, 2006). On account of the labour intensive nature of SMEs, they have greater potential for creating more job opportunities (Abor & Quartey, 2010; Chingunta, 2002) than the large firms. They also play a key role in social stability and general economic health of a nation (Islam, Khan, Obaidullah, & Syed Alam, 2011). As local furniture companies are more or less small and medium enterprises, it is described as a key player in modern economy (Utsch, Rauch, Roffuss, & Frese, 1999), capable of providing economic empowerment and dynamism in a rapidly globalised world (Chigunta, 2002). They are considered fertile sources of new ideas and products, efficient and prolific job creators, seeds of big business and leading sources of innovation (West & Sinclair, 1992). The growth of local furniture companies is consistent with the new paradigm shift in development strategies in most countries. According to Han et al. (1998) SMEs are expected to grow and expand so that they can create job opportunities for the youth and contribute meaningfully to the rural economy. For that matter managers or owners of local furniture companies must

monitor activities of other competitors and identify the strategy that is available for use and upgrading for future applications.

It is suggested that the industry should seek to compete at a level of quality, reliability, and differentiated designs, rather than at a low price/quality level. In addition, the export market, rather than the domestic market, will provide higher prices and volumes that will lead to superior growth of the industry. Investments in people and machinery should be made, along with an emphasis on a renewed focus on automation, product design, and quality not forgetting the skilled labour required.

Consequently, it is important that all local furniture companies recognised their capabilities and consider what is needed to change to better the fortunes of their business. Besides strategies like technology, marketing, skilled labour, local furniture companies also need to build good customer relations that will lure customers to them. They should also ensure standardisation of their products to the confident level.

2.6 Key Strategies to Be Considered

In as much as strategies are considered pivotal for the growth of local furniture companies (LFC). It is not possible to adopt all kinds of strategies, some of them are deemed fit for this study. Those that will be considered are technology strategy, marketing or promotion strategy, and also using employing of skilled labour as a strategy. Another important area to be looked at is modelling or innovation of products to foster growth of Local Furniture Companies (LFC) in the country and specifically in the Tamale northern region.

2.6.1 Technology Strategy

Technology has many effects. It has helped develop more advanced economies (including today's global economy) and has allowed the rise of a leisure class. Innovations have always influenced the values of a society and raised new questions of the ethics of technology. Technology ("science of craft", from Greek word, technic, which means "art, skill, cunning of hand"; and -logical. It was first robustly defined by Jacob Bigelow in 1829 as: "...principles, processes, and nomenclatures of the more conspicuous arts, particularly those which involve applications of science, and which may be considered useful, by promoting the benefit of society, together with the emolument [compensation] of those who pursue them.

Principle is a term defined current-day by Merriam-Webster as: "a comprehensive and fundamental law, doctrine, or assumption", "a primary source", "the laws or facts of nature underlying the working of an artificial device", "an ingredient (such as a chemical) that exhibits or imparts a characteristic quality".

Process is a term defined current-day by the United States Patent Laws (United States Code Title 34 - Patents) published by the United States Patent and Trade Office (USPTO) [as follows: "The term 'process' means process, art, or method, and includes a new use of a known process, machine, manufacture, composition of matter, or material.

Nomenclature is term defined by Merriam-Webster as: "name, designation", "the act or process or an instance of naming", "a system or set of terms or symbols especially in a particular science, discipline, or art". Application of Science is a term defined current-day by the United States' National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine as: "...any use of scientific knowledge for a specific

purpose, whether to do more science; to design a product, process, or medical treatment; to develop a new technology; or to predict the impacts of human actions.

According to Advanced Dictionary, (2018) it is a discipline that deals with the arts or science of applying scientific knowledge to practical problems. It is also a practical application of science to commerce industry.

Technology can be most broadly defined as the entities, both material and immaterial, created by the application of mental and physical effort in order to achieve some value. In this usage, technology refers to tools and machines that may be used to solve real-world problems, Wikipedia (2018). Technology is again described as the application of scientific knowledge to the practical aims of human life or, the change and manipulation of the human environment. In other wise it is the total knowledge and skills available to any human society for industry, art, science, etc.

It's worth noting that, currently technology is the back bone of every economy in the world and as such the back bone of every business in the world. The role of technology in this context will be looking at machinery for production and innovations that will shape the Local Furniture Companies (LFC) so that they can effectively compete in everything that technology offers them. Besides it will also assist them modernize the products that is locally and globally accepted. The purposeful application of technology in the design, production, and utilization of goods can improve performance. In order to survive global competition, it is therefore indispensable that the forest products industry step up its innovation activities (Stendahl, 2009). Use of technology will provide quality products, services and lower costs of production by ensuring standardising of produces, relatively to that of their foreign competitor. Quality is the totality of features and characteristics of a brand

based on its ability to satisfy stated and applied needs. This is the fact that customers evaluate a brand according to its uniqueness, prestigious and reliability. According to McCharty & William, (1991) quality is the ability of product to satisfy a customer needs and requirement. It is the best indicator of the products durability, reliability, precision and other valued attributes. All this attest to the fact that, importance of technology cannot be overlooked as far as growth of humanity is concern.

2.6.3 Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy is a long-term fore ward looking approach to planning with the fundamental goal of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage, (Wikipedia 2018). Marketing is the exchange of goods for money on agreed sum of money. Wikipedia, (2018) defined it as the commercial processes involved in promoting and selling and distributing a product or service.

The focus of the Local Furniture Companies (LFC) in marketing strategy should be making sure that their products and services meet customer needs and developing long-term and profitable relationships with those customers. To achieve this, they need to create a flexible strategy that can respond to changes in customer perceptions and demand by quality production. Perceived quality has received a considerable attention in the marketing literature, (Chowdhury & Islam, 2003; Holbrook & Corfman, 1985; Jacobson & Aaker, 11987; Olshavskt). It may also help them identify whole new markets that you can successfully target. The purpose of Local Furniture Companies (LFC) marketing strategy should be to identify and then communicate the benefits of their business offering to their target market. Once they have created and implemented their strategy, it is important to monitor its effectiveness and makes any adjustments required to maintain its success. As

customer perception of price, quality, and value are considered pivotal determinants of shopping behaviour and product choice, (Bishop 1984; Doyle 1984; Jacoby and Olsen 1985; Sawyer and Dickson 1984; Schlechter 1984).

Local Furniture Companies (LFC) can create a marketing strategy that strengthens and matches them to the needs of the customers they want to target. For instance, if a particular group of customers is looking for quality, first and foremost, aimed at them draw their attention to the high quality service you can provide. Once this has been completed, decide on the best marketing activity that will ensure your target market know about the products or services you offer, and why they meet their needs. The Local Furniture Companies (LFC) could achieved this through advertising, exhibitions, public relations initiatives, Internet activity and by creating an effective "point of sale" (ware house), or openly display the products.

Furthermore, they must monitor and evaluate how effective this strategy has been performing in practice. This can also help inform them of future marketing strategy. To achieve this research should be conducted to ask each customer, new or old how they heard about the business and how they feel using the product. Other area to investigate includes; the emergence of a new competitor, production of more sophisticated but attractive and cheaper versions of your product or service. It is an undisputable fact that marketing is essential in the growth of every industry.

2.7 Labour Force

A Labour Force Survey (LFS) is a standard house hold –based survey of work-related statistics. In Ghana, it the Ghana Statistical Service which has the framework of Ghana Statistics Development Plan that developed a calendar of household activities including Labour Force Survey (LFS). This survey is to be conducted

every two years with funding from Statistics for Result Facility/International Development Association (SRF/IDA). This is a biannual surveys that collects, analyse and disseminate the require statistical information to government, so that it will enable it to assess the impact of labour force in the country and to develop policies and programmes on labour. Government recognises the important role labour plays in the development agenda of the country, especially for economic growth and improvement of the lives of the people. In view of this, governments have made a stalling efforts through the following initiatives; Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS); Livelihood Empowerment Agenda Programme (LEAP) and recently Ghana Share Development Agenda (GSDA). All this bore down to how important labour is in the country and one key area that can create job opportunities is the furniture industry. According to Han et al. (1998) SMEs are expected to grow and expand so that they can create job opportunities for the youth and contribute meaningfully to the rural economy. Wooden furniture industry is traditionally known to be low-technology and labour demanding industry (Kaplinsky & Readman, 2000), which is extremely recommended for its widespread outsourcing.

The labour force is the sum of persons in employment plus persons in unemployment. Together these two groups of the population represent the current supply of labour for the production of goods and services taking place in a country through market transactions in exchange for remuneration.

Based on the latest international statistical standards, the population of working age in a country may be classified according to their labour force status in a short reference period. Countries produce their official labour market statistics, thus promoting the international comparability of the statistics. This is done by using the following, three mutually exclusive and exhaustive groups: Persons in employment,

persons in unemployment and persons outside the labour force. A refined definition of employment, states that it is a work for pay or profit.

2.8 Skilled Labour

A skill is the ability to carry out a task with determined results often within a given amount of time, energy, or both. It is also an ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustainable effort to smoothly and adaptively carryout complex activities or job function involving ideas (cognitive skill), things (technical skills), and /or people (interpersonal skills).

Skilled labour is a segment of the workforce with specialized know-how, training and experience to carry out more-complex physical or mental tasks than routine job functions. Skilled labour is generally characterized by higher education, expertise levels attained through training and experience, and higher wages Skill (labor) From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia. Skill is a measure of the amount of worker's expertise, specialization, wages, and supervisory capacity. On 27 Jun 2018, Skilled labour was refers to as labour that requires workers who have specialized training or a learned skill-set to perform the work, (<https://smallbusiness.chron.com> › skilled).

Skilled labor often refers to a line of work that requires technical skills or specialized training. Skilled workers are generally more trained, higher paid, and have more responsibilities than unskilled workers. Although it can be seem that skilled labour is synonymous with white-collar work, this is not actually always the case. What matters is the level of training and expertise a person has. LFC indeed needs skilled labour to develop the companies to a standard that can position them such that their products will be accepted. The labour has the ability to produce quality and

standard furniture for both local and international markets. The industry really needs the services of skilled labour for new ideas and for modelling or innovative works to improve their fortunes. New product development and innovation have been identified as strategies that can be applied to bolster a firm's competitive advantage (Brown & Eisenhardt, 1995; Danneels & Kleinschmidt, 2001; Olson & Bakke, 2001), increase a firm's corporate performance (de Brentani, 2001; Han, Kim, & Srivastava, 1998), and increase a firm's opportunity to grow and expand into new areas (Danneels & Kleinschmidt, 2001).

Employing skilled personnel is the way to aimed at cost saving and improved quality, such that the firm will have a competitive advantage at the marketplace. The ability to create and develop new products or model an old product to standard is key to every LFC. Therefore it is important for LFC to ensure that skilled labour is employed to increase their economic fortunes. Innovation should be in cooperated in the firm's activities as it is indistinguishably linked to increasing competitiveness and growth. In order to survive global competition, the LFC needs to step up its innovation activities (Stendahl, 2009), because it has the potential for generating employment for both rural and urban populace. LFCs have become an obvious sector where the contribution in innovation and modeling cannot be over looked, considering their potential for creating more job opportunities. They also play a key role in social stability and general economic health of a nation (Islam, Khan, Obaidullah, & Syed Alam, 2011) and also capable of providing economic empowerment.

According to Han et al. (1998) SMEs (LFC) are expected to grow and expand so that they can create job opportunities for the youth and contribute meaningfully to the rural economy. It is of great importance in terms of job creation and export earnings (Purnomo, Irawati, Fauzan, & Melati, 2011). It is important to note that

strategy is vital to doing business in today's world, and using technology, marketing, skilled labour will promote the LFC to be more competitive. Lay emphasis on modelling or innovation LFC to overcome foreign competition.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

It is an established fact that the success of every research work depends on the method employed to gather the information from the population. For that matter the researcher deemed it fit and employed appropriate methods and collated the results.

In this chapter the following headings will be considered.

- a) Research design
- b) Study population
- c) Sample techniques and sample size
- d) Instruments used for the study
- e) Scoring of instruments
- f) Data collection and analysis
- g) Validity and reliability

3.2 Research Design

The research design selected for this study was survey. This design was chosen because it helped to assess strategies used by local furniture companies to overcome foreign competition in the northern region of Ghana, Tamale to be precise. Cross-sectional survey was used as it is based on quantitative approach. The data was collected using this quantitative approach for the study. According to Neuman (2000) cross-sectional survey is appropriate for situations where data to be collected are about self reported belief or behaviours.

3.3 Study Population

Generally, population refers to the people from which samples are taken for the study. The study population was comprised of owners or managers of local furniture companies that are thriving to meet competitive standard with their foreign counter parts. According to the association of furniture production firms in Tamale metropolis, the firms that were registered were two hundred and forty eight (248). Out of this number, the samples size of the population targeted for this study was fifty (50) local furniture company's managers/owners within Tamale metropolis.

3.4 Selection sample Population

A sample of fifty (50) local furniture company managers/owners was selected for the study. The firm managers or owners were sampled using stratified sampling technique. The respondents were drawn from five (5) areas of the metropolis that were identified by the researcher as having the elements of interest to the study. These fifty managers or owners was drawn from five towns in the metropolis where ten respondents was sampled from each town. The towns were Aboabu, Choggu, Kalpoheni, Lamashegu and Sakasaka. The respondents were require to answer a questionnaire on marketing, machines, innovation, branding and employment of skilled labour as strategies that are used to overcome foreign competition in the metropolitan area.

Table 3.1: Number of respondents in areas of study

No.	Name of area	Number of companies selected	Number of respondent
1	Abuoabu	10	10
2	Choggu	10	10
3	Kalpoheni	10	10
4	Lamashegu	10	10
5	Sakasaka	10	10
Total		50	50

3.5 Instruments Used for the Study

The study was carried out using a number of instruments for gathering of the information purposeful to aid the research results. These instrument includes; questionnaire, observation, unstructured interview and opinions from the scripts.

3.5.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was set for owners/managers of local furniture companies who were selected for the study. They were asked to tick [] the appropriate response that best fit their opinion. The questionnaire contained four section, I, II, III, IV. The I was on socio demographics, II response was high, moderate, low and no idea while the response for III & IV was strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree.

3.5.2 Observation

As a practising carpenter and a resident in the metropolis, the researcher made a lot of observations during his rounds in distributing questionnaire and collecting them back from the respondents and also visits to other shops that were not even sampled. This he did was to help him get more information for the study.

3.5.3 Unstructured Interview

Even though structured interview questions was not prepared, the researcher interviewed some workers in the firms which helped him got more information for the study.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher personally used a survey and collected the data within the months of September and October in the metropolitan area of Tamale. The data was collected through administering of questionnaires, observation and unstructured interview. The researcher's distribution of the questionnaires to the respondents and retrieval took about two month as mentioned earlier. During the administering of the questionnaires, he took the opportunity and made observations and also used unstructured interview and interviewed some workers which provided additional information as well as from the literature review. The data analyzed was presented using descriptive type of statistics. The presentation took the form of frequencies and percentage where conclusions were drawn from. Research finding tables were also drawn for easy assimilation. As a practising carpenter and a resident, it was not difficult to identifying necessary elements for the information.

3.7 Time Frame

The researcher used about two months for both distribution and retrieval of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were explained and given out to respondents and was later on collected. This took place in September and October, 2018. Meanwhile observations were going on for a little over a year. During the data collecting process, unstructured interviews were simultaneously conducted with the questionnaires. The questionnaires really drew the attention of the respondents since the strategies adopted by researcher were poised to solve their problems.

3.8 Scoring of the Instrument

Once the respondents were already willing to adopt some form of innovation to bring change into their performance, they positively responded to the questionnaires by ticking the response that fits their opinion. The responses were converted into percentages to represent the opinions of the respondents. In all fifty (50) questionnaires were administered and forty-eight (48) were retrieved representing ninety- six (96%) per cent. This is illustrated in the table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Return rate of questionnaires

Serial Number	Population	Questionnaire	Number Administered	Number Responded	Percentage of Response
1	Aboabu	Questionnaire	10	10	20
2	choggu	Questionnaire	10	10	20
3	Kalipohei	Questionnaire	10	9	18
4	Lamashegu	Questionnaire	10	9	18
5	sakasaka	Questionnaire	10	10	20
Total			50	48	96

3.9 Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

Questionnaires were drafted and submitted for scrutiny, comments and suggestions were made for quality output. This was approved by the supervisor and then a pilot study was made. Fifteen questionnaires were distributed to the five towns identified and three person from each town was made to answer. All though the piloted number was less than the targeted population, and the necessary adjustment were made before the final printing was carried out.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results and analysed the data that was collected from the field. The data was collected from the local furniture producers in five towns in Tamale. The five towns were Abuabu, Choggu, Kalpoheni, Lamashegu and Sakasaka. Fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed and forty eight (48) were retrieved. Therefore the discussion was based on the forty eight (48) retrieved questionnaires. This will depict the opinion of the forty eight respondents who responded to the questionnaires.

4.2 Socio Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

These are personal information's that are collected to assist the researcher know the characteristics of his population. There are many demographic that could have been collected, but the researcher was interested in five key areas and that was included in the questionnaire. They include; gender, age group, educational level, type of management and the number of employees. It is important to know the numbers with regards to male and female, age groups of the respondents, their educational status, types of managements and finally the number of employees each firm employed. The table below presents the results and the discussions followed.

Table 4.1: Socio demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Sub-scale	Freq.	%
Gender distribution	Male	39	81.2
	Female	9	18.8
Age distribution	15 – 20	2	4.2
	21 – 30	4	8.3
	31 – 40	13	27.1
	41 – 50	22	45.8
	51 – 60	6	12.5
	61 and above	1	2.1
Education status	No formal education	1	2.1
	Basic education	5	10.4
	Secondary education	17	35.4
	Tertiary	25	52.1
Type of Management	Manager	22	45.8
	Owner	26	54.2
Number of Employees	1 – 4	23	47.9
	5 – 8	12	25.0
	9 – 12	12	25.0
	13 – 15	1	2.1

Table 4.1 above represents the gender of forty eight (48) respondents who were sample for the study, out of the forty eight (48) respondents, nine (9) of them were females representing eighteen point eight percent (18.8 %) whilst the remaining thirty nine (39) respondents representing eighty one point two percent (81.2 %) were males. This means that majority of the sampled population were men. Therefore i can conclude that there are more men operating furniture manufacturing companies within Tamale than women. Other research conducted by Amoah et al (2009) on new product development and Kufour 2008 on Small and Medium Enterprise development equally had fewer women than men.

As represented above in a table 4.1 are the age group of forty eight (48) respondents sampled, two were between fifteen to twenty years, (15-20) representing four point two percent (4.2%), four were between twenty one to thirty years (21-30) representing eight point three percent (8.3%), thirteen were between thirty one to forty

years (31-40) representing twenty seven point one percent (27.1%), twenty two were between forty one to fifty years (41-50) representing forty five point eight percent (45.8%), six were between fifty one to sixty years (51-60) representing twelve point five percent (12.5%) and only one person was above sixty years (60) representing two point one percent (2.1%). Therefore, majority of the managers or owners were between forty and fifty years of age. This means that there can be challenges in future since the young are not into it. It is important to design a programme that can attract the young one into the industry. According to Hans et al (1998) the industries is expected of grow and expand so that they can create job opportunities of the youth and also contribute significantly to the economy.

Also in the same table 4.1 gives the analysis about educational status, as usual forty eight (48) respondents were sampled. One person (1) representing two point one percent (2.1%) had no formal education, five persons (5) representing ten point four percent (10.4%) had basic education, seventeen persons (17) representing thirty five point four percent (35.4%) had secondary education, majority of them were technically incline, twenty five persons (25) representing fifty two point one percent (52.1%) had pursued tertiary education. This indicates that, to a large extent most of the people that are into furniture production business have acquired higher certificate of learning. Therefore they can easily adopt to this strategies and improve the performance of the local industry. As was revealed by Bloch (1995) there is a number of ways product designs can influence customer preference. Bring to bear this strategies are way that can influence customers to their products.

Moreover the same table 4.1 gives us the summary of type of management with regards to local furniture producers within five location of Tamale. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, twenty two (22) of them representing forty five point

eight per cent (45.8%) were managers whereas the remaining twenty six (26) were firms owners representing fifty four point two per cent (54.2%). This is evident that majority of them were owners of the firms. Since the owners of the companies are the majority, they should be able to go the extra mile to make these strategies workable. Especially, now that they want to produce to meet international standard like their counter parts abroad. According to Glueck (1995) strategy is defined as a unify, comprehensive and to design an integrative plan to ensure that the basic objectives of the firm are achieved. So that they will be able to overcome foreign competition.

The table 4.1 above equally presents the summary of the number of employees that the local furniture producers within five location of Tamale were able to employ. As mentioned above, forty eight (48) respondents responded to the questionnaires, twenty three (23) of them representing forty seven point nine (47.9%) employed between one to four persons, twelve (12) of them representing twenty five point zero per cent (25.0%) employed between five to eight persons, another twelve (12) of them representing twenty five point zero per cent (25.0%) employed between nine to twelve persons, while only one person (1) representing two point one per cent (2.1%) employed between thirteen to fifteen (13-15) persons. This confirms the assertion by Purnomo et al, (2011) that the industry is of great importance in terms of job creation, poverty alleviation and export earnings. It is also important that majority of them employed between one to four persons. As asserted by Kaplinsky and Readman (2000) the industry has four technology and labour demanding. It therefore means that they can employ more if they work seriously.

4.3 Knowledge of Owners or Managers of Local Furniture Producers on the Strategies that will help Overcome Foreign Competition

This objective seeks to find out how marketing, machines, innovation, branding and employing skilled labour as strategies can help local furniture producers overcome foreign competition as they strive to break the chain of marginalization from their counter parts abroad. Due to Lack of these strategies cost them a lot, as they loose their customers to the foreign companies.

It is prudent for the local furniture companies“ to make gains in the market place, both local and international markets thereby creating employment opportunities and foreign earnings to the Ghana government since the sector have the potential for economic transformation. Adopting to these strategies can lead to serious growth of this sector and can increase GDP of the country like China, Malaysia, Germany, Italy etc, (UNECE, 2010). As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the discussions are centred on forty eight (48) respondents sampled from five towns in Tamale namely; Abuoabu, Choggu, Kalpoheni, Lamashegu and Sakasaka.

Table 4.2 below indicates the response on how knowledgeable respondents were with regards to marketing. Out of the forty eight respondents (48) twenty six (26) of them representing fifty four point two percent (54.2%) had high knowledge on how marketing strategy could improve their fortune at the market place, twenty one (21) of them representing forty three point eight percent (43.8%) had moderate knowledge on how marketing strategy could improve their fortune in the market place too whereas only one person representing two point one per cent (2.1%) had little knowledge on marketing. Considering the frequencies and the corresponding percentage, it can be concluded that marketing strategy was generally accepted by both the owners and managers as a good strategy that can assist them overcome foreign competition. Knowledgeable in marketing will help them overcome their long

over due marginalisation in the hands of their foreign counter parts as reported by AGI, 2010, where about seventy eight per cent (78%) of furniture in Ghanaian market was imported.

Table 4.2: Knowledge on the Strategies that will help local furniture producers overcome foreign competition

Strategies that can overcome competition	High		Moderate		Low	
	Frq.	%	Frq.	%	Frq.	%
Knowledgeable in marketing	26	54.2	21	43.8	1	2.1
Knowledgeable in technology	35	72.9	13	27.1	-	-
Knowledgeable in innovative process	28	58.3	20	41.7	-	-
Knowledgeable about experts	28	58.3	19	39.6	1	2.1
Knowledgeable in advertising	24	50.0	20	41.7	4	8.3
Knowledgeable in using machines	40	83.3	7	14.6	1	2.1
Knowledgeable in branding	19	39.6	25	52.1	4	8.3
Knowledgeable about skilled labour	38	79.2	10	20.8	-	-
Knowledgeable about skilled labour pay	22	45.8	26	54.2	-	-
Knowledgeable about cost of machines	36	75.0	11	22.9	1	2.1
Knowledgeable in innovation	23	47.9	21	43.8	4	8.3
Knowledgeable about foreign competition	21	43.8	20	41.7	7	14.6

As mentioned earlier, the table 4.2 above also had forty eight (48) respondents, all of them already knew technology as a strategy and its importance in the furniture industry since a chunk of them have had some experience in the schools. Thirty five (35) persons representing seventy two point nine per cent (72.9%) were highly aware of technology and how effective it could be to their business and the rest of the thirteen persons representing twenty seven point one percent (27.1%) equally moderately knew something about it. With technology, they will produce quality products that would equal the foreign product and place them on the same value thereby addressing the challenge identified by (A.T.O. 2004, AGI, 2010) as poor quality, poor design, poor construction method, and poor finishing.

The same able 4.2 covers the opinions of forty eight (48) responses on how innovation as a strategy can assist them become competitive in the global market. Every single respondent had fair knowledge on innovation with the majority of the

respondents of about twenty eight (28) persons representing fifty eight point three percent (58.3%) had high knowledge on innovation and the remaining twenty (20) persons representing forty one point seven percent (41.7%) moderately knew about innovation. This innovative strategy could bring transformation and sustainable development to the local furniture industry, (Kubeczko, Ramatsteiner, Weiss, 2006). So that they can sell at the same price and the same quantity, thereby overcoming the challenges identified by AGI 2010 where the local furniture were selling between 300 of one thousand cedis while foreign furniture were going for 700 and 3000 Ghana cedis.

Table 4.2 above discuss the responses on how knowledgeable respondents were with regards to experts. Out of the forty eight respondents (48) twenty eight (28) of them representing fifty eight point three percent (58.3%) had high knowledge on how employing experts as strategy could improve their product in the market place, nineteen (19) of them representing thirty nine point six percent (39.6%) had moderate knowledge on how employing experts could increase their productivity whereas only one person representing two point one (2.1%) had low knowledge on who experts are. Getting experts in to the firms will help in overcoming foreign competition since they have what it takes to produce standard products that could much foreign products boot for boot. This confirms the world bank report on Zimbabwe and South Africa as doing well in terms of number of persons employed and percentage of furniture exported Bigsten (1999).

The table 4.2 above as well discusses the responses on how knowledgeable respondents were in terms of running an advert. Out of the forty eight respondents (48) twenty four (24) of them representing fifty point zero per cent (50.0%) had high knowledge on how getting air time as strategy could improve their product value and

also change customer perception, twenty (20) of them representing forty one point seven percent (41.7%) had moderate knowledge on how market promotion could increase their productivity whereas four person representing eight point three (8.3%) had low knowledge on what advertising could do for their business. It is an undeniable fact that promotion of businesses are carried out through adverts. Therefore the indigenous furniture companies should learn to advertise their products like their foreign counter parts do. Since they are very much aware of it.

Table 4.2 above again discusses the responses on how knowledgeable respondents were in terms of branding their product to meet the demand in the market. Out of the forty eight respondents (48) nineteen (19) of them representing thirty nine point six percent (39.6%) had high knowledge on how getting products branded as strategy could improve their product aestheticism, boost customer satisfaction and influence purchase intention, twenty (25) of them representing fifty two point one percent (52.1%) had moderate knowledge on how branding could increase their productivity whereas four person representing eight point three per cent (8.3%) had low knowledge on branding of product. As was reveal by Yamamoto and Lambert in 1994 branding would improve appearance of the product and influence the value of the product in the market. Since both owners and managers are aware of importance of branding, they should be proactive in adopting the strategy so that they would improve their competitiveness in the global market.

Table 4.2 above too present the responses on how knowledgeable respondents were in terms using machines to produce standard furniture to meet the demand in the market. Out of the forty eight respondents (48) as many as forty (40) of them representing eighty three point three percent (83.3%) had high knowledge on how machines usage as a strategy could increase productivity, improve aestheticism, boost

customer satisfaction and influence purchase intention, seven (7) had moderate knowledge on how machines usage could increase their productivity whereas only one person representing two point one per cent (8.3%) had low knowledge on machines. As part of technology, it is significant in production, because innovation and branding cannot be effective without machines. Moreover, their counter parts in China, Malaysia, Italy and even in Zimbabwe in Africa produce their products using machines. So, to become competitive globally, indigenous furniture companies must use machines in production. According to Lui and Barrar (2010) manufacturing technology contribute to goal attachment.

Table 4.2 in addition present the responses on how knowledgeable respondents were concerning skilled labour in relations to productivity, enhancing standards of furniture to meet the demand in the market and overcome foreign competition. Out of the forty eight respondents (48) as many as thirty eight (38) of them representing seventy nine point two percent (79.2%) had high knowledge on how employing skilled labour as a strategy could increase productivity, improve aestheticism and also standardized products, while the remaining ten (10) representing twenty point eight per cent (20.8%) had moderate knowledge on how skilled labour could increase their productivity and beautify the product as well. It is important to note that all the strategies under this study would not function well if managers or owners of furniture firms would not employ skilled labour. It is the backborn of every enterprise as reported by World Bank about enterprise development on Zimbabwe and South Africa. They could export about fifty per cent of their products when they employ skilled labour. This is so because production of both quality quantity of products depends largely on skilled labour.

The same table 4.2 represent the responses on how knowledgeable respondents were in terms cost of machines and the difficult in its acquisition. Out of the forty eight responses (48) majority of the respondents of say thirty six (36) of them representing seventy five point zero percent (75.0%) had high knowledge on how costly machines were vis a vis its importance, eleven (11) of them representing twenty two point nine percent (22.9%) had moderate knowledge on machines cost whereas only one (1) person representing two point one per cent (2.1%) had low knowledge on cost of machines. This points to the fact that machines are costly in Ghana, the firms are not able to purchase them. Being fourth sector in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the country, government should support the sector such that they can contribute more to increase GDP growth and also generate employment to reduce the burden of unemployment as well (AGI, 2010). Government support could be in a form of loans through its agencies like MASLOC or even providing a legislative instrument that could them from paying taxes when importing machines.

Table 4.2 also denote the responses on how knowledgeable respondents were concerning wages of skilled labour in relations to productivity, enhancing standards of furniture and the product performance in the market. Out of the forty eight respondents (48) twenty two (22) of them representing forty five point eight percent (45.8%) had high knowledge on how cost it was to employing skilled labour and its significance, while the remaining twenty six (26) of them representing fifty four point two per cent (54.2%) had moderate knowledge on cost of employing skilled labour could increase their productivity and beautify the product as well (AGI, 2010). Since about 2.5 million people in the country depends on this industry for livelihood, there should be a collaboration between the industry players and the government to sustain

them so that they continue to provide for the people a decent living and also reduce unemployment.

Furthermore, the table 4.2 above covers the opinions of forty eight (48) responses on how innovation and innovative processes can assist them become competitive in the global market. Every single respondent had fair knowledge on innovation and innovative processes with twenty three (23) of the respondents representing forty seven point nine percent (47.9%) had high knowledge on innovation processes and its significance, twenty one (21) persons representing forty three point eight percent (43.8) had moderate knowledge on innovation processes and the remaining four (4) persons representing eight point three percent (8.3%) had low knowledge on innovation processes. It is a fact that innovation and innovative activities can help local furniture companies survive global competition (Stendahl, 2009). According to Porter & Kramer (2011) innovation also makes employees and customers integral part of the organisation, because through their participation, decent innovation of products are achieved.

Table 4.2 covers the opinions of forty eight (48) responses on how knowledgeable they were about foreign competition and its effects on their fortunes and also how it cut down their sales making them become uncompetitive in the global market. Every single respondent had fair knowledge on foreign competition, twenty one (21) of them representing forty three point eight percent (43.8%) had high knowledge of it, twenty of the respondents representing forty one point seven percent (41.7%) had moderate knowledge on it whereas seven (7) persons representing fourteen point six per cent (14.6) had low knowledge on foreign competition. These point to the fact that foreign competition impact negatively on the indigenous furniture companies and deepening their woes. It also cause unemployment in the

country. Because, as much as seventy eight per cent of furniture in the Ghanaian market are imported, (AGI, 2010).

It is valuable to state that the extent to which foreign competition affect local furniture companies cannot be overlooked considering the rate at which it impoverishes the indigenous businesses. It is therefore necessary for government to put policies in place to curb this cancer, as it is poised to make this country an industrial hub in the West African sub region. None the less, the local furniture companies equally have a herculean task to undertake, such as adopting to the strategies identified.

Considering the responses in the frequencies and the percentages above, it can be concluded that, all the strategies are very key to overcoming foreign competition. Therefore it is important for the indigenous furniture companies to adhere to and adopt the strategies so that it will go a long way to help them overcome foreign competition, since everybody have knowledge on them, it will be easy to adopt it. It is also evidence that machines are very important in furniture production for both the manager or owners but are costly for individuals to purchase it from their savings, for that matter government through its agencies like MASLOC can help provide the local furniture producers with some financial assistance to be able to buy the machines to boost their competitiveness in the global market and help brake the backbone of foreign furniture.

4.4 Knowledge on the Extent to which the Strategies can help Improving Performance of Local Furniture Producers in Tamale Metropolis in the Northern Region.

This objective seeks to find out the extent to which marketing, machines, innovation, branding and employing skilled labour can help improving performance and change the agony of local furniture companies into gains and to create

employment to Ghanaians in general. These strategies can be a panacea to the many problems local furniture companies face, such as lack of patronage of their product by the customers, lack of funds to purchase required machines, innovate and brand their products to standard and last but not the least lack of funds to employ experts or skilled labour to produce quality products to meet the required standards that their counterparts abroad produce. The following are the opinions expressed by the respondents sampled from the five locations in Tamale on how the strategies can help improve performance of their companies.

Table 4.3: Knowledge on the extent to which the strategies can help improving performance of local furniture producers

Extent to which the strategies can improve performance	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Frq.	%	Frq.	%	Frq.	%	Frq.	%
Marketing will influence purchase	25	52.1	23	47.9	-	-	-	-
Marketing will change customer perception	22	45.8	26	54.3	-	-	-	-
Marketing will bring promotion	24	50.0	24	50.0	-	-	-	-
Machines will increase production	33	68.6	15	31.2	-	-	-	-
Machines will increase efficiency	29	60.4	19	39.6	-	-	-	-
Machines will reduce labour cost	31	64.6	16	33.3	1	2.1	-	-
Machines will increase help meet demand	32	66.7	16	33.3	-	-	-	-
Innovation will improve quality	22	45.8	25	52.1	1	2.1	-	-
Innovation will boost competition	18	39.6	29	60.4	-	-	-	-
Branding will increase satisfaction	17	35.4	31	64.6	-	-	-	-
Branding will give equal opportunity	14	29.2	32	66.7	2	4.2	-	-
Skilled labour can change products	31	64.6	17	35.4	-	-	-	-
Skilled labour can promote competition	25	52.1	23	47.9	-	-	-	-
Skilled labour can bring innovation	23	47.9	25	52.1	-	-	-	-
Skilled labour can provide value for money	29	60.4	19	39.6	-	-	-	-

Table 4.3 above covers the opinions of forty eight (48) respondents on whether marketing can influence purchase intentions of customers or otherwise. Every respondent agreed that marketing will influence purchase intentions. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, twenty five (25) of them representing fifty two point one percent (52.1%) strongly agreed that marketing will influence purchase intentions of their customers and the rest of the twenty three (23) persons representing forty seven

point nine per cent (47.9%) also agreed on the same verdict. As long as the respondents agreed that marketing could influence purchase intentions of customers, it is important for them to adopt the strategy since there will be wider coverage of the information. The variation in prices according Association of Ghana Industry (AGI, 2010) report could be bridge in their favour making them gain popularity in the market both locally and internationally.

Equally the table 4.3 above presents the opinions of forty eight (48) respondents on whether marketing will change the perceptions of customers or otherwise. Every respondent agreed that marketing will change customer perception on the product. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, twenty two (22) of them representing forty five point eight (45.8%) percent strongly agreed that marketing will change customers perception and the remaining twenty six (26) persons representing fifty four point two per cent (54.2%) equally agreed on the similar verdict. The importance of marketing cannot be over looked because International Tropical Timber Organization and International Trade Centre (ITTO-ITC) report in 2002 recommended more research on markets in timber industry.

The same table 4.3 above discusses the opinions of forty eight (48) responses on whether marketing will bring promotion to the furniture products or otherwise. The entire respondent agreed that marketing will bring promotion to their products on the market place. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, twenty four (24) representing fifty percent (50%) each strongly agreed and agreed that marketing will bring promotion to their products thereby increase their product value and make them competitive in the market place. Going by the definition, it is clear that marketing will bring promotion as it is a long term forward looking approach, planning with a fundamental goal of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. Literature has it

that perceived quality received a considerable attention in marketing. This therefore suggest that marketing can truly bring promotion to the indigenous furniture companies.

Again table 4.3above shows the opinions of forty eight (48) respondents on whether machines will increase productions of their products or otherwise. All respondent agreed that machines will increase productions of their products and assist them meet the demand in the market place. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, majority of them say thirty three (33) representing sixty eight point eight (68.8%) percent strongly agreed that machines will increase productions of their products while the remaining fifteen (15) persons representing thirty one point two per cent (31.2%) likewise agreed on the same outcome. As we all know, one of the key uses of machines are to increase production (Da Costa, 2009). For that matter managers and owners should do all it takes and get machines so that they can always be able to produce to the require quantity to meet the demand in the market.

Table 4.3in addition shows the opinions of forty eight (48) respondents on whether machines will increase efficiency of their products or otherwise. Every respondent agreed that machines will increase efficiency of their products and assist them meet the customer satisfaction in the market place. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, majority of them say thirty three (33) representing sixty eight point eight per cent (68.8%) strongly agreed that machines will increase efficiency of their products while the remaining fifteen (15) persons representing thirty one point two per cent (31.2%) likewise agreed on the same verdict. It is also a fact that one of the importance of machines is its efficiency in furniture production. Because furniture importance is obvious, such that every home in this country posses one, especially the beautiful furniture irrespective of the price (Sohal et al, 2013).

Table 4.3 above presents the opinions of forty eight (48) respondents on whether machines will reduce cost of labour or otherwise. Almost Every respondent agreed that machines will reduce cost of labour. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, majority of them say thirty one (31) representing sixty four point six per cent (64.6%) strongly agreed that machines will reduce cost of labour then sixteen (16) persons representing thirty three point three per cent (33.3%) likewise agreed on the same verdict whereas only one person (1) representing two point one per cent (2.1%) disagreed with that decision. This question is address as it is one of the functions of a machine. Machine as explained by Wikipebia (2018) may used to solve real world problem. What a machine can do in a day five people cannot do it, therefore machine can definitely reduce labour cost.

The table 4.3 above illustrates opinions of forty eight (48) respondents on whether machines will help meet demand or otherwise. The respondent all agreed that machines will help meet demand and assist the companies to produce on large scales. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, majority of them say thirty two (32) representing sixty six point seven per cent (66.7%) percent strongly agreed that machines will help meet demand whereas the remaining sixteen (16) persons representing thirty three point three percent (33.3%) also agreed on the same verdict. Machines can really produce to meet demand of customers, it is just the matter of the managers or owners to be being proactive. Since they are made to produce both quality and quantity of product at the same time (Sohal et al, 2013).

Table 4.3 also interpret the opinions of forty eight (48) respondents on whether innovation will improve the quality of the products of local furniture companies or otherwise. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, twenty two (22) of the respondents representing forty five point eight (45.8%) percent strongly agreed

that innovation will improve the quality of the products of local furniture companies, twenty five (25) persons representing fifty two point one (52.1%) as well agreed on the same verdict. Except one person (1) representing two point one (2.1%) disagree with this assertion. The acceptance this question confirms what Olson & Bakke, (2001) identified, that innovation as a strategy can be applied to bolster a firms competitive advantages.

Table 4.3 above moreover explains the opinions of forty eight (48) respondents on whether innovation will boost competition as the quality of the products of local furniture companies are improved. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, nineteen (19) of the respondents representing thirty nine point six per cent (39.6%) strongly agreed that innovation will boost competition once the quality of the products of the local furniture companies have improved, and the remaining twenty nine (29) persons representing sixty point four per cent (60.4%) as well agreed on the similar decision. This assertion is confirmed by Han, Kim & Srivastava (1998) that innovation can increase firm's corporate performance.

Table 4.3 above presents another opinions of forty eight (48) respondents on whether branding will increase satisfaction of customers on the product of the indigenous furniture companies or otherwise. Every respondent agreed that branding will increase satisfaction and assist the companies to produce standard furniture. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, seventeen (17) persons representing thirty five point four percent (35.4%) person strongly agreed that branding will increase satisfaction while the remaining majority of them say thirty one (31) representing sixty four point six per cent (64.6%) agreed the on the equal verdict. Importance of branding is obvious since vision is the most important modality at the moment of buying, Fenko et al, (2010). Branding is carried out on a more serious note to improve

the aesthetic value of product. So the firms managers or owners should be encourage to adopt this strategy. Promotion can be runned on both radio and television, if the companies cannot brand well it will bore down to nothing.

Furthermore, in the table 4.3 above depicts the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether branding will give equal opportunity to the local furniture companies or otherwise. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, fourteen of the respondents (14) representing twenty nine point two percent (29.2%) strongly agreed that branding will give equal opportunity to the local furniture producers, thirty two (32) respondents representing sixty six point seven percent (66.7%) also agree that branding will give equal opportunity to the local furniture manufacturers whereas the remaining two persons (2) persons representing four point two percent (4.2%) disagreed on the verdict. Literature has it that product appearance is a significant cue for apparent usability of products. This explains the value of branding in terms of giving equal opportunity.

Again table 4.3 above portrays views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether skilled labour can change the product of the local furniture companies or otherwise. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, thirty one (31) of the respondents representing sixty four point six percent (64.6%) strongly agreed that skilled labour can change the product of the local furniture producers, whereas the remaining seventeen (17) respondents representing thirty five point four percent (35.4%) also agree that skilled labour can change the product of the local furniture manufacturers as they are poise to uplift standards. It is important to note that skilled labour is considered fertile source of new ideas and products. Therefore the operators of this firms should employ skilled labour to be able to produce standard product that could meet the expectation of customers.

Table 4.3 interprets the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether skilled labour can promote competition of the products of the indigenous companies or otherwise. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, twenty five (25) of the respondents representing fifty two point one percent (52.1%) strongly agreed that skilled labour can promote competition of the product of the local furniture producers, as well as the remaining twenty three (23) respondents representing forty seven point nine percent (47.9%) respectfully affirmed that skilled labour can promote competition of the product of the local furniture manufacturers and place them on the same platform. Skilled labour holds the button to machines operation, innovation and branding, and all of these are employed to help managers and owners become competitive. This confirms the decision of the respondents to unanimously agreed to the said question.

Table 4.3 above also presents the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether skilled labour can bring innovation of the products of the indigenous companies or otherwise. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, twenty three (23) of the respondents representing forty seven point nine percent (47.9%) strongly agreed that skilled labour can bring innovation of the product of the local furniture manufacturers, as well as the remaining twenty five (25) respondents representing fifty two point one percent (52.1%) also agreed that skilled labour can bring innovation of the product. As stated above skilled labour can bring innovation in the local furniture companies line of production since they are expert.

Table 4.3 in addition presents the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether skilled labour can provide value for money on the products of the indigenous furniture companies or otherwise. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, twenty nine (29) of the respondents representing sixty point four percent (60.4%) strongly agreed

that skilled labour can provide value for money on their product, as well as the remaining nineteen (19) respondents representing thirty nine point six percent (39.6%) also agreed that skilled labour can provide value for money for the product. It is indeed true that skilled labour can provide value for money as long as they hold the key to machines operation which innovation and branding also depends on. This is what makes products sell in the market, once products are sold, there is value for money.

From the frequencies and the corresponding percentages presented in the table 4.3 above, one can conclude that the strategies can assist local furniture producers improve their performance in the market place and make them overcome foreign competition, provided they adapt the strategies that have been studied. Their quest to become competitive in both local and international market are in their hands. These also call for assistance from the government. Be it financial through its agencies or provision laws that will strengthen them.

4.5 Knowledge on how the Strategies can Bring Transformation to Local Furniture Companies

This objective seeks to find out how marketing, innovation, branding and employment of skilled labour can bring transformation to local furniture producers as they strive to break the chain of marginalization from their counterparts abroad. Lack of these strategies deepened their woes, as they lost their customers to foreign companies. This also led to their employees leaving them as they were not able to pay them their wages.

It is prudent for the local furniture companies to gain momentum in the market both local and international thereby creating employment and foreign earnings to Ghana government since the sector has the potential to economic transformation.

The growth of this sector can increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country like China, Malaysia, Germany, etc.

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the discussions will be centred on forty eight (48) respondents whose opinions were expressed from five locations in Tamale namely; Abuoabu, Choggu, Kalpoheni, Lamashegu and Sakasaka. The table below presents the frequencies and percentages of the respondents sample for the study.

Table 4.4: How these strategies can bring transformation to furniture companies

How the strategies can bring transformation	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Frq.	%	Frq.	%	Frq.	%	Frq.	%
Marketing will give wide coverage	26	54.2	22	45.8	-	-	-	-
Marketing coverage will bring customers	22	45.8	26	54.2	-	-	-	-
Marketing will provide high returns	27	56.2	21	43.8	-	-	-	-
Machine usage will provide good finish	37	77.1	11	22.9	-	-	-	-
Machine usage will provide uniformity	33	68.8	15	31.2	-	-	-	-
Machine usage will maximise profit	24	50.0	24	50.0	-	-	-	-
Machine usage will save time	38	79.2	10	20.8	-	-	-	-
Innovativeness can provide equal standard	15	31.2	32	66.7	1	2.1	-	-
Innovation can overcome competition	18	37.5	29	60.4	1	2.1	-	-
Innovation can change purchase intention	17	35.4	31	64.6	-	-	-	-
Branding can improve cost effectiveness	16	33.3	32	66.7	-	-	-	-
Branding can overcome market competition	17	35.4	30	62.5	1	2.1	-	-
Skilled labour can provide require aesthetics"	29	60.4	19	39.6	-	-	-	-
Skilled labour can change product quality	38	79.2	10	20.8	-	-	-	-
Skilled labour can make equal products	32	66.7	16	33.3	-	-	-	-

Table 4.4 above portrays the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether marketing will give wide coverage to local furniture companies or else. All the forty eight respondents agreed that marketing will give wide coverage to local furniture companies. Out of the number, twenty six (26) of them representing fifty four point two percent (54.2%) strongly agreed that marketing will give wide coverage to local furniture companies as well as the remaining twenty two (22) person representing forty five point eight per cent (45.8%) also agreed to that same decision. This is

confirmed by a number of writers that marketing provides perceived quality to customers and had received a considerable attention in the market. Since the main goal of marketing is to get customers to the product it would really provide a wider coverage.

The table 4.4 above also depicts the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether marketing coverage will bring customers to locally produced furniture or otherwise. All the forty eight respondents agreed that marketing coverage will bring customers to local furniture companies. Out of the number, twenty two (22) person representing forty five point eight per cent (45.8%) strongly agreed that marketing will give wide coverage to local furniture companies as well as the remaining twenty six (26) of them representing fifty four point two per cent (54.2%) agreed to the same verdict that marketing coverage will bring customers to locally produced furniture and boost their sales in the market place. Jacoby & Olson (1985) considered customer perception of price, quality, and value as pivotal determinants of shopping behaviour and product choice. Per the assertion above marketing is aims at influences shopping behaviour of customers.

Again the table 4.4 above give a picture of views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether marketing will provide high returns to local furniture companies or otherwise. All the forty eight respondents agreed that marketing will provide high returns to local furniture companies. Out of the number, twenty seven (27) of them representing fifty six point two percent (54.2%) strongly agreed that marketing will provide high returns to indigenous furniture companies besides the remaining twenty one (21) persons representing forty six point eight per cent (43.8%) equally agreed to that same decision that marketing will provide high returns to the indigenous furniture companies and place them on the same pedestal. It is obvious

that marketing would change the perception of customers and lure them to the products.

Table 4.4 above equally portrays the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether machines will provide good finish to the products of local furniture companies or otherwise. They all agreed that machines will provide good finish to the products of local furniture companies. Out of the number, thirty seven (37) of them representing seventy seven point one percent (77.1%) strongly agreed that machines will provide good finish to the products to home-grown furniture products likewise the remaining eleven (11) persons representing twenty two point nine percent (22.9%) equally agreed to that same decision that machines will provide good finish to the products of the indigenous furniture companies. One of the functions of a machine is to produce quality and aesthetic products, this means that machines could produce products with good finish which will attract customers to it and increase returns of the company.

The same table 4.4 above depicts the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether machines usage will provide uniformity to the products of local furniture companies or otherwise. All of them agreed that machines usage will provide uniformity between the products of the local furniture companies and their counterparts abroad. Out of that number, thirty three (33) of them representing sixty eight point eight percent (68.8%) strongly agreed that machines usage will provide uniformity between the products of the local furniture companies and their counterparts abroad likewise the remaining fifteen (15) persons representing thirty one point two percent (31.2%) equally agreed to that same decision. This decision to agree to the assertion is that machines are also used for mass production which means that

making uniform products or repetitive work, variety, flexibility are assured as long as machines are concern (Da Costa et al, 2009).

Table 4.4 also presents the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether machines usage will maximize profit to the local furniture companies or otherwise. All of them agreed that machines usage will maximize profit to the local furniture companies and improve their fortunes. In fact both strongly agreed and agreed were equal, twenty four (24) each representing fifty percent (50%). Once machines could reduce labour cost and produce both quality and quantity product, then maximizing profit is guaranteed.

Also in the table 4.4 above depicts the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether machines usage will save time and increase products of local furniture companies or otherwise. All of the forty eight respondents agreed that machines usage will save time and increase products of local furniture companies thereby helping them meet demands. Out of that number, thirty eight (38) of them representing seventy nine point two percent (79.2%) strongly agreed that machines usage will save time and increase products of local furniture companies as well as the remaining ten (10) person representing twenty point eight percent (20.8%) equally agreed to that same conclusion. Reflecting on this agreement of respondent brings to explains why both quality and quantity are secured when using machines.

In the same table is also are the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether innovation can provide equal standard products to the local furniture companies or otherwise. Out of that number, fifteen (15) person representing thirty one point two percent (31.2%) strongly agreed that innovation can provide equal standard furniture products of the local furniture companies and provide them with equal opportunity just as their counter parts abroad, thirty two (32) of them

representing sixty six point seven percent (68.8%) also agreed to that same decision. While only one person representing two point one per cent (2.1%) disagreed with the verdict. Assertion by Organization for Economic Cooperation and development (OECD, 2009) attests that innovation is the ability to develop new products. This points out that innovation can produce equally standard products as their counter parts abroad.

Table 4.4 denotes the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether innovation can overcome competition of the local furniture companies and remove ambiguity or otherwise. Out of that number, eighteen (18) respondents representing thirty seven point five percent (37.5%) strongly agreed that innovation can overcome competition and provide a level ground to the local furniture companies just as their counter parts abroad, twenty nine (29) of them representing sixty point four percent (60.4%) also agreed to that same decision. While only one person representing two point one per cent (2.1%) disagreed with the verdict. From the immediate point above, innovation can produce equal standard products. It therefore implies that innovation can overcome foreign competition.

Table 4.4 above present the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether branding can change purchase intension of the customers or otherwise. Out of this forty eight (48) respondents, seventeen (17) respondents representing thirty five point four percent (35.4%) strongly agreed that branding can change purchase intension of the customers and assist the local furniture companies overcome competition, likewise the remaining thirty one (31) of the respondents representing sixty four point six percent (64.6%) agreed to that same pronouncement. Indeed branding changed the purchased intentions of customers, since it had the propensity to changed the outlook

of the products. This is demonstrated by Fenko et al (2010) that is an important modality at the moment of buying.

Table 4.4 above portrays the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether branding can improve cost effectiveness of the local furniture companies or otherwise. Out of these forty eight (48) respondents, sixteen (16) respondents representing thirty three point three percent (33.3%) strongly agreed that branding can improve cost effectiveness and assist the local furniture companies' brake their long marginalization, likewise the remaining thirty two (32) of the respondents representing sixty six point seven percent (66.7%) agreed also to that same assertion. The response could not had been better, because surface changes provides a new opportunity to customers to exploit the market and patronise the local products which lead to cost effective.

The table 4.4 above shows the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether branding can overcome market competition of the local furniture companies or otherwise. Out of these forty eight (48) respondents, seventeen (17) respondents representing thirty five point four percent (35.4%) strongly agreed that branding can overcome market competition and assist the local furniture companies brake even as the enjoy same platform in the market, since customers are satisfied with their products, thirty (30) of the respondents representing sixty two point five percent (62.5%) agreed to that same assertion whilst only one person representing two point one percent (2.1%) disagreed with that opinion. The effects of branding in the previous discussions proved that it can overcome competition both locally and internationally.

Table 4.4 above presents the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether skilled labour can provide require aesthetics on the products of the indigenous

furniture companies or otherwise. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, twenty nine (29) of the respondents representing sixty point four percent (60.4%) strongly agreed that skilled labour can provide require aesthetics on the products of the indigenous furniture companies, once they can produce standard product that can satisfy customers just as their counter abroad as well as the remaining nineteen (19) respondents representing thirty nine point six percent (39.6%) also agreed on same verdict. This response means that skilled labour have what it takes to provide furniture with the needed aesthetics that would luir customer to the benefits of their bosses. As they are described as people with know-how and experience to carryout more complex physical and mental task given them, Wikipedia.

Also in the table 4.4 above denotes the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether skilled labour can change product quality of the indigenous furniture or otherwise. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, thirty eight (38) of the respondents representing seventy nine point two percent (79.2%) strongly agreed that skilled labour can change product quality of the indigenous furniture companies, once they have the skill that can produce standard product that can stand the test of time just as their counter abroad as well as the remaining ten (10) respondents representing twenty point eight percent (20.8%) also agreed on same outcome. Chron.com on small businesses described skilled labour on June 27, 2018 as workers who have specialised training to perform work. To this effects, they can produce any product that would be required by customers.

Table 4.4 above presents the views of forty eight (48) respondents on whether skilled labour can make equal products or otherwise. Out of the forty eight (48) respondents, thirty two (32) of the respondents representing sixty six point seven percent (66.7%) strongly agreed that skilled labour can make equal products, since

they are expert in furniture production and can produce standard furniture that can meet customer expectation just as their counter parts overseas as well as the remaining sixteen (16) respondents representing thirty three point three percent (33.3%) also agreed on same conclusion. It is therefore prudent to conclude from the frequencies and the percentages that the strategies investigated could transform the local furniture and make them compete effectively with their foreign counter parts abroad. Since they are trained in the field, they will certainly produce equal standard product that will meet global standards.

4.6 Unstructured Interview

In the process of administering the questionnaires, the researcher made some unstructured interviews. He interviewed both the owners or managers and some of their employees. It was revealed that, the local furniture companies are going through a lot of challenges with regards to foreign competition. Some companies preferred to produce their furniture on request base instead of large scale production due to inflate of foreign products in the country. Some of their products made for sale could last for between six months to two years without been bought. This locked up their small capital they have and those who took loans from banks could not pay, others took machines on high purchase and faced the same difficulty since their products were not patronised.

Employees on their part were bitter because the wages were not forth coming making living unbearable as some couldn't afford three squares meal for the families. Not forgetting of school fees and other expenses. Some blamed the problems on their employers as some of them were not ready to spend to produce quality products that could contest foreign products as they were also blaming customers. The said

customers were not ready to pay certain amount for the local product no matter the standard.

Some few that adapted one more of these strategies confessed there were great changes in their products and sales as well. Some of them came together and hired a showroom and selling their products in it, this move gave them equal access customers as they wanted while other manages to merge with the big ware houses and were doing well.

Further engagements with some customers also discovered that some local made products were up to standard off late and can even last longer than foreign products. Some attest to the fact that the foreign furniture was beautiful but lacks durability, they were also not repairable. Therefore there was a wind of pyridine change coming where customers will have to relook what, where and why the need these products.

4.7 Observation

Since the researcher administered the questionnaires himself, it afford him the opportunity to observe what was going on, on the ground in the local furniture companies in Tamale. The observations were carried out in line with the strategies that was under investigation.

First of all, almost all of the local furniture firms' managers or owners knew something about marketing and its impact in the business meanwhile a hand full were practising it. In as much as some of them had the zeal, they were met with some challenges such as how to raise funds to fund this strategy. Others could afford it but was reluctant to do it because the felt it wasn't necessary and a waste of the scanty resources they got.

Secondly, most of them knew innovation and its influence on the quality of their product, but due to the cost involved in innovative process, it was a difficult task to undertake once it was not easy to change and people are always comfortable to doing what they know best. Some also feel offence to consult and learn from colleagues due to pride, other were cash trapped and couldn't employ the required skilled labour to bring innovation to their doorsteps. Thirdly, branding was not different from innovation in terms of challenges encountered. Raising funds was the key fundamentals task, since this strategy requires experts to carry out this activity.

Last but not the least was employing of skilled labour that will in turn produce quality products that could compete with the foreign products. Everyone knew what skilled labour could bring to their tables but where was the capital to embark on such projects. So the underlining problem that was observed was money.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the findings of the research, its conclusions and recommendations of the study. Findings of the study were based on the opinions express by the managers and owners of local furniture companies in the following towns in Tamale Metropolis. These areas were Aboabu, Choggu, Kalpoheni, Lamashegu and Sakasaka. The data was collected in three ways, which are questionnaires, unstructured interview and observation. It also included the theories read from the experts in the literature as well as conclusions and recommendation.

5.2 Summary of the Main Findings of the Study

This study was to investigate the strategies that the local furniture companies can use to overcome foreign competition in Tamale Metropolitan area. The targeted group was the owners or managers of the local furniture companies and the strategies that were considered were marketing, machines, innovation, branding and skilled labour.

There were more owners than managers and almost all of them had formal education except only one didn't have formal education. There were few women as against their male counter parts and each firm contributed in creating employment confirming the assertion by Purnomo et al (2010), their ages varied starting from 15 onwards.

Marketing was generally accepted as a strategy that could be relied upon if wanted to overcome foreign competition. They also agree that it could bring

customers, increase sales and make them competitive. Thereby aiding them generates income and boosting their fortunes.

Machines were overwhelmingly accepted by all as a crucial, since manufacturing or production could not be effective without it. According to them both quality and quantity of product was dependent on it. The machines were also key in terms of meeting demands and it could equally reduce labour cost. This strategy was at the centre of all the strategies that have been investigated.

Innovation was equally accepted by both managers and owners of the local furniture companies as a vital strategy that could help them overcome foreign competition and become competitive both locally and globally in as much as standard and quality product could be produce using this strategy. This could change their product to look different from what they were producing.

Branding likewise enjoyed the same endorsement like innovation, this strategy was accepted both managers and owners of local furniture companies that it was a game changer once products can be changed to suit the customer and inure to their benefit. They were willing to adapt it since it could help them break through foreign competition and produce both standard and quality products that can influence purchase intentions of the customer's both locally and internationally.

Last but not the least skilled labour, this was known to every manager or owner as the way forward if they will succeed, this was what could make the other strategies achievable. They agreed that skilled labour could use machines to produce the quantity and quality product require, innovation and branding were both equally dependent on it since the skill was needed in producing product that could contest foreign furniture and also stand the test of time. The strategy was exclusively accepted

because everyone had employed skilled labour and knew their importance in the industry.

This strategies was an eye opener to almost all the sampled population vis a vi's the overwhelming endorsement. Therefore it is important for every local furniture producer to try as much as possible to adapt these strategies since it is very key to becoming competitive both in the local market and the international markets. These strategies neutralised foreign competition and in a long term eliminate it.

5.3 Conclusions

It is prudent to state that if local furniture companies adapt these strategies it will go a long way to assist them become competitive in the global market since the products would be patronise by both foreigner and Ghanaians in general. With these, sales will increase leading to generating of more income, employing more people, increase GDP, increase foreign earnings and reduce poverty in Ghana.

Employing skilled labour is very important because they will be able to bring innovation to bear and change the face of the products to meet the expectations of the customers. Thereby increase sales of the product and generating income so that their bosses can pay them well and for them to be able to meet their obligation. Besides, it will help the owners or managers employ more, acquire more machines that would make them a force to reckon within the market place.

Skilled labour is also the engine of branding of product; they are able to see a product and produce same or modernised it to suit market demand. Good branding is a promotion by in self because it is able to attract customers to the product. The success of the strategies resulted in certain benefits, these benefits are enumerated below:

- certain manufacturing methods introduced to cut costs;
- more unique products were designed and manufactured;
- more consistent standard and quality products were made;
- production time was reduced;
- labour cost reduced;
- products and services were improved;
- deliveries to customers improved;
- number of customers increased ;
- market share increased;
- the overall working environment improved;
- improved overall competitiveness and productivity;

5.4 Recommendation

It is undisputable fact that if the following recommendations are taken seriously, it will improve performance of local furniture companies and also help the government to create job opportunities, increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and foreign earnings of the country.

Local furniture companies should adapt the strategies that have been investigated and proven to be worthy of making them competitive since marketing can draw customers closer to the product, machines can be used to make standard and quality products, increase production and help meet demand, innovation can bring a face lift to products and change perceptions of customers, branding can influence purchase intentions by introduction of new quality products whereas skilled labour have the ability to make all these happen through the use of special skills that can produce same products like the foreign companies products.

Owners or managers of local furniture companies should be ready to spend on various stages of production such as marketing, machines, innovating, branding and employing of skilled labour to accomplish their mission. These can make them compete with their foreign counter parts abroad both locally and globally.

Government should introduce policies that can help the local furniture companies get access to capital market and subsidise raw materials. It should also in act by laws that force it's agencies from the Ministries, Metropolitan, Municipal and District assemblies patronise locally made furniture or made in Ghana goods to promote industrialisation in the country as it is poised to make Ghana an industrial hap.

Local furniture companies in collaboration with government should organise exhibition to expose their products to the world since this forum have the propensity to bring customers globally. Local furniture companies should also create websites and post their products on net for global exposure.

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APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION WINNEBA

COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION, KUMASI

DEPARTMENT OF CONSTRUCTION AND WOOD TECHNOLOGY

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire seek to solicit views from the managers/owners of local furniture companies on a topic: *investigate the strategies that the local furniture companies will use to overcome foreign competition (case study in northern region, Tamale)*

The piece of work is purely for academic work in partial fulfilment of the award of the Master of Technology Education wood technology.

You are kindly requested to provide responses to the questions to enable the researcher contribute knowledge in his field of study.

All information given shall be treated as confidential and besides your anonymity is guaranteed.

Thank you for your co-operation

SECTION I

Please respond by ticking the appropriate responses below.

Gender: 1. male [] 2. Female []

Age group: 1. 15-20 [] 2. 21-30 [] 3. 31-40 [] 4. 41-50 [] 5. 51-60 []

6. 61 and above []

Level of Educational: 1. No formal education [] 2. Basic education: (i. Primary [] ii.

JHS []) 3. Secondary: (i. Senior High School [] ii. Technical/Vocational []

4. Tertiary: (i. Diploma [] ii. HND [] iii. Degree [] iv. Masters [] v. PHD []

Type of Management: 1. Manager [] 2. Owner []

Number of Employees: 1. 1-4 [] 2. 5-8 [] 3. 9-12 [] 4. 12-15 []

SECTION II

Please select an option by ticking (√) in the right column box.

Please choose from the following variable; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree the option that represents your opinion on strategies that will overcome foreign competition in the statements below.

S/no	Strategies that can overcome competition	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Knowledgeable in marketing				
2	Knowledgeable in technology				
3	Knowledgeable in innovation				
4	Knowledgeable about experts				
5	Knowledgeable in advertising				
6	Knowledgeable in using machines				
7	Knowledgeable in branding				
8	Knowledgeable about skilled labour				
9	Knowledgeable about skilled labour pay				
10	Knowledgeable about cost of machines				
11	Knowledgeable in branding				
12	Knowledgeable in innovation				
13	Knowledgeable in innovative process				
14	Knowledgeable about foreign competition				

SECTION III

Please choose from the following variable; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree the option that represents your opinion on how these strategies can help overcome foreign competition in the statements below

S/no	Extent to which the strategies can improving performance	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Marketing will influence purchase				
2	Marketing will bring promotion				
3	Marketing will change customer perception				
4	Machines will increase production				
5	Machines will increase efficiency				
6	Machines will reduce labour cost				
7	Machines will increase help meet demand				
8	Innovation will improve quality				
9	Innovation will boost competition				
10	Branding will increase satisfaction				
11	Branding will give equal opportunity				
12	Skilled labour can change products				
13	Skilled labour can promote competition				
14	Skilled labour can bring innovation				
15	Skilled labour can provide value for money				

SECTION IV

Please choose from the following variable; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree the option that represents your opinion on how these strategies can bring transformation to furniture companies in the statements below.

S/no	How the strategies can bring transformation	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Marketing will give wide coverage				
2	Marketing coverage will bring customers				
3	Marketing will provide high returns				
4	Machine usage will provide good finish				
5	Machine usage will provide uniformity				
6	Machine usage will maximise profit				
7	Machine usage will save time				
8	Innovativeness can provide equal standard				
9	Innovation can overcome competition				
10	Innovation can change purchase intention				
11	Branding can improve cost effectiveness				
12	Branding can overcome market competition				
13	Skilled labour can provide require aesthetics"				
14	Skilled labour can change product quality				
15	Skilled labour can make equal products				