

# **Branding Strategies for Home Furnishings Products: Consumer Perceptions**

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*This study investigated the effects of branding strategies (lifestyle, non-lifestyle), the impact of notable name brands, and shopping orientation on primary purchase criteria, perceived quality, and preferred brands of furniture. Data from a web-based survey indicated that products marketed with the non-lifestyle brand approach were considered to be higher quality, price was the most important purchase criteria, and store displays was the most used promotional source. Significant relationships were found between the two shopping orientations and all of the promotional sources. This study offers new information about purchase criteria, effective promotional channels, and quality perceptions from the brand promotion strategy.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The home furnishings market consists of furniture, floor coverings, home textiles, and decorative accessories. The subject of shelter and its accouterments are areas of interest to consumers as evidenced, in part, by a number of magazines and television programs devoted to these topics. The opportunity for home furnishings companies to build their brands to consumers through these media is tremendous. A survey of the shelter magazine segment revealed that by 2007, over 200 titles were available to consumers through which the home industry could use extensive visual images to communicate messages and advertise products. Of these, 110 titles were added from 2005 to 2006 alone (Kho, 2008). However, several well-known shelter magazines including *House and Garden*, *O At Home*, *Domino*, *Blue Print*, and *Home* ceased circulation during the economic downturn of 2008 and 2009 (Sapienza, 2009). By 2012, advertising revenues were up in the major shelter titles (Bazilian, 2012), indicating that interest in home improvement and décor is on the upswing.

Two different branding/marketing promotional strategies discussed in the home furnishings trade literature, both confusingly referred to by the industry as “lifestyle branding,” are (1) product licensing with notable names (usually celebrities) and (2) marketing campaigns featuring product in a “lifestyle” vignette, as opposed to a traditional features-and-benefits layout. This use of a single term to define two different branding strategies makes it quite difficult to define the concept of lifestyle branding.

Many companies use the term “lifestyle branding” when they are expanding their brand through licensing (“Lexington Offering,” 2009). Furniture companies often refer to new product lines as lifestyle collections based on their collaboration with fashion icons, celebrities, well-known interior designers/decorators, and other notable names. Furniture companies indicate that this strategy can help

them connect with consumers who are already aware of the lifestyle and aesthetics of these celebrities in other product categories (or other venues) in order to extend the brand to home furnishings and reach untapped markets by producing a sellable story to the consumer (Combs, 2010b; Combs & Russell, 2010). The celebrity name indicates endorsement of the aesthetic thereby providing source credibility for the brand (Clow, James, Sisk & Cole, 2011). The universal motive of desired love and admiration – and peer approval – can be expressed through socially visible products including home furnishings (Michman, Mazze & Greco, 2003). People do not want to be the only one holding a given taste, so there is a tendency to rely on others to determine whether or not we like something (Berger & Heath, 2007). Researchers have found that consumers who want to enhance their sense of self are attracted to brands with distinctive and appealing personalities (Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Park & John, 2010).

Academic marketing research suggests that branding has a stronger impact on product evaluation than product qualities and attributes (Na, Holland, Shackleton, Hwang & Melewar, 2008), perhaps because consumers use products to construct and express desired identities (Belk, 1988). Park and John (2010) found that brand personalities affect the self-perception of some people; the brand personality “rubbed off” on the user who used the brand personality cues to signal their positive qualities to the self and others. Merchandising and marketing efforts are critical in making a connection with the consumer, thus leading to the success of licensed collections as part of the furniture and accessory brand-building strategy (Combs, 2010a). Thus, the use of the notable-name-lifestyle concept makes sense, particularly with a product such as home furnishings where aesthetic value is a strong purchase criterion. In other words, does this sofa make me look like Cindy Crawford?

This lifestyle/licensing concept, although seen more in the last 15 to 20 years, has a long history. The first known licensed collection in the furniture industry was by Hickory Chair in 1931 and they still hold the longest running licensed collection. Their traditional line, James River Plantations, began in 1941 (Combs, 2010a; “New furniture,” 2010). But how prevalent is it in the consumer’s mind, the industry’s ultimate goal?

The second lifestyle branding definition involves the design of the marketing and merchandising campaigns. The strategy may include print advertising of the product in a vignette setting that the consumer might reproduce or aspire to, or the product may be featured in a broader, holistic lifestyle setting. For example, Domain Home Fashions launched a campaign that included promotional offers for food and kitchen products, which they did not sell themselves, in conjunction with their own product lines in order to assert the brand as a lifestyle choice (“Domain Home,” 2004). Clow et al. (2011) found that the use of models and vignettes – a “slice-of-life” concept – gave consumers a positive feeling about the brand. In other words, the strategy is to sell the brand as a way of life. This promotional approach is very logical because individual lifestyle and cultural trends drive consumer decisions (Michman, et al., 2003).

While it may be argued that furniture and accessories promoted by lifestyle marketing or celebrity-branded affiliation do not inherently feed a desire for individuality or uniqueness, the furniture and accessories category is somewhat unique in that setting, placement, color, and presentation will make the same items seem innovative and imaginative. This is important because the home is not simply a physical place, but a space that serves as the nucleus of social relations for family members, friends and neighbors. The home reflects one’s identity to relevant social networks (Hassan, Maheeran, Muhammad & Bakar, 2010), and family purchases have become inherently emotional with an impact on the relationships between family members (Michman, et al., 2003).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of branding strategies (lifestyle, non-lifestyle), the impact of notable name brands, and shopping orientation on primary purchase criteria, perceived quality, and preferred brands of home furnishings products. For this study, lifestyle (LS) brands are defined as those that declare themselves to be lifestyle brands or that depict themselves as such by their print advertising by depicting the product in a lifestyle setting. Non-lifestyle (NLS) brands are those that employ print advertising campaigns that highlight features and benefits of products rather than the potential use of the products. To distinguish the celebrity brands from the campaign style, we employ the term, notable name brands to define those that are licensed by celebrities (for example, Kathy Ireland) or television shows (Antiques Roadshow) or locations (Biltmore Estate). Finally, shopping orientation

describes the general approach or pattern of external search; the shopping style that puts emphasis on certain activities or shopping motivations (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010).

### **The Importance of the Brand**

Brand equity, “driven by brand awareness, attitude toward the brand, and corporate citizenship and duties,” (Holehonnur, Raymond, Hopkins & Fine, 2009, p. 68), is important in any industry selling products to consumers. Obtaining brand awareness and brand preference by the consumer is only part of the branding result desired by companies; brand insistence is the ultimate outcome for companies. Branding of products also has advantages for the consumer, primarily that of streamlining their purchasing by allowing decisions to be made faster and increasing their confidence levels in the products they are purchasing when they buy familiar brands (Seitz, Razzouk, & Wells, 2010). Holehonnur et al. (2009) found both brand awareness and brand attitude to influence brand equity for both an easily accessible product (Red Bull energy drink) and a more expensive limited purchase item (North Face parka). However, with a durable good purchased infrequently (air conditioner) branding was unimportant to most consumers. “Where brand awareness does not exist, there cannot be brand loyalty” (p. 239).

Historically, consumers have not had as much brand recognition with furniture products as with other products such as apparel. Sloan (2007) reported research that found only 50% of consumers knew what brand of furniture they had purchased. It has been difficult for many home furnishings companies to successfully build brand equity because often one company typically produces the furniture and another company sells it. Because of this dynamic, consumers are less likely to know the brand of furniture they are purchasing. Another issue hampering the branding efforts in the industry is that both the manufacturer and the retailer have vied to become “the brand,” thus complicating the determination of individual brands by consumers. Recent strategies by some companies to increase consumer brand awareness have seen the development of single sources, which describes a single company that both produces and sells under the same brand name, for example, Ashley, Thomasville, and Bassett (“Branded Stores,” 2005). Since consumers expend search time to maximize the impact of their accumulated expertise (Ratchford, 2001), the single source strategy is an effective means of brand building in the home furnishings product category.

### **Lifestyle Brands and Notable Names**

One major technique that has seen an explosion in its use by home furnishings companies in building their brands is lifestyle merchandising to promote brand extension. Several methods have been used to communicate the brand to consumers including creating product lines with designers who typically create fashion-apparel products, thus creating crossover designs appealing to consumers already familiar with the fashion-apparel product or brand (Forney, Park, & Brandon, 2005). Other companies have actually changed their corporate names to reflect this effort such as Lexington Furniture Industries becoming Lexington Home Brands. Lexington began representing themselves as a pioneer in the concept of lifestyle merchandising by their introduction of the Bob Timberlake collection in 1990 which was the first of several lifestyle product lines. (Bob Timberlake and Lexington ended their long running agreement in 2010.) Lexington continues the lifestyle strategy with the very successful Tommy Bahama line. Lexington has also recently returned to its roots through the development of a new brand, Henry Link Trading Co., which offers more eclectic products (Russell, 2011). Henry Link was one of the original founders of the company that became Lexington, so a traditional “link” to the past may help consumers related more to the brand.

While the concept of celebrity licensing and notable names for furniture lines is not necessarily a textbook-definition brand alliance, there are a number of similarities with the brand alliance definitions summarized by Gammoh and Voss (2011):

- There is synergistic power of both names that will ultimately enhance both brands (both the furniture/accessory and the celebrity).

- Current brand associations for both brands can be strengthened to secure competitive advantage.
- Alliances are formed to meet a variety of goals including enhanced market position, new market entry, added value and reduced cost of brand awareness building.

In the context of the present study, indeed the furniture industry, the legal brand relationship is of little importance to the consumer. Whether the brand is simply a name for a style line or the celebrity for whom the line is named is actually involved in the design of the product or some arrangement in between, the present authors hypothesize that the customer is simply looking at the aesthetic of the product and how well it will fit into their lifestyle and meet their personal product criteria. A celebrity brand should give clues about the aesthetic.

### **Shopping Orientation**

Shopping orientation is defined as a general attitude about shopping (Solomon & Rabolt, 2004) which encompasses shopping activities, interests and opinions, and reflects a view of shopping as a social, recreational, and economic phenomenon (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). This motivation-based taxonomy makes the concept a valid psychographic variable (Morschett, Swoboda, & Schramm-Klein, 2006). For example, Park, Yu, and Zhou (2010) found consumers with a sensory orientation were inclined to be more brand conscious and brand loyal, more fashion conscious, and more impulsive and recreation oriented when it came to shopping. On the other hand, the cognitive oriented consumer was more likely to focus on utilitarian benefits and was more quality and price conscious.

Moschis (1976) found shopping orientations to be good predictors of shopping behaviors and useful in determining choice of information use by shoppers. Further, Lumpkin (1985) stated that for the study of shopping orientation to be beneficial to marketers, it must be linked to marketplace behavior. Indeed, shopping orientation has been studied quite extensively with regard to clothing purchase and shopping channel preference, but we were able to locate only one empirical study on shopping orientation in the context of shopping for home furnishings, which was conducted with consumers in Malaysia. Hassan et al. (2010) found the consumer with an apathetic shopping orientation was only interested in store location and not generally influenced by the other marketing factors. Since Dawson, Block, and Ridgway (1990) found that shopping orientation influenced store choice and preference, could shopping orientation influence brand choice and preference of home furnishings?

### **Purchase Criteria**

Most current industry and consumer literature indicates the economy of the last few years has affected spending on home furnishings (Allegrezza, 2010). However, *Home Accents Today* reported research indicating that the recession of 2009 made consumers desire new home furnishings. In this industry-focused article, many survey respondents indicated they are spending more time at home, and therefore wish to make their homes more comfortable and inviting (French, 2010). Allegrezza (2010) reported that primary motivators for home furnishings consumers were style, price, and service. Home furnishings shoppers were looking for the “best (not lowest) price, durability, quality, value and style in a brand they trust” (p. 52). For durable goods, Brucks, Ziethaml, and Naylor (2000) found brand name to be an indicator of quality and that a high price did not suggest quality without the validation of a brand name. However, Na et al. (2008) found that presentation of design attributes can reduce the influence of brand name on quality evaluation.

Therefore, the following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. Does the brand strategy (lifestyle or non-lifestyle) affect perceived quality, preferred brand, or primary purchase criteria (price, brand, quality, value)?
2. Do the consumer’s primary purchase criteria or the promotion sources used most often affect their insistence on a notable name brand?

3. Does shopping orientation affect the preferred brand type (lifestyle, non-lifestyle), insistence on a notable name brand, primary purchase criteria, or the promotion sources used most often?

## **METHOD**

### **Instrument**

In order to measure perception of quality two separate measures were used. In the first, participants were simply asked two questions: "*I feel that furniture items which are part of a "lifestyle" [or "brand"] concept indicate a higher quality of product*" both measured on a 5-point strongly disagree/agree scale. The second measurement of quality perception asked the participants to rate the level of quality they believed was present in a list of 17 brands on a 5-point poor/high quality scale. A sixth answer choice was provided if the participant was unfamiliar with the brand. The seventeen brands consisted of seven LS brands and ten NLS brands. In this study, a brand was considered LS if the company described the brand as "lifestyle" on their website or portrayed products or brands through visual print ads depicting the product being used in a lifestyle setting. The NLS brands had a focus on features and benefits rather than use in a realistic setting in their print campaigns, and no mention of "lifestyle" on their websites.

To determine preferred brand, participants were asked in an open-ended question, "*If money were no object, which one brand of furniture would you purchase?*" The primary purchase criteria were determined by asking participants to indicate the importance of each criteria (price, brand, quality, and value for the price) on a 6-point most/least important scale. Promotional sources used most often were measured by asking participants to indicate how often they use eleven different promotional sources on a 5-point very often/rarely scale. To collect data regarding the impact of a notable name brand, participants indicated their level of insistence for purchasing products from a list of 19 notable name licenses or brands on a 5-point very strong/ weak insistence scale. An answer choice of N/A was also included for each brand.

Shopping Orientation was measured with an adapted version of the scale used by Shim and Kotsiopoulos (1993). The original scale consisted of 32 questions designed to measure shopping orientation for clothing. The adapted scale was reduced to 16 questions and all references to clothing were changed to "home furnishings."

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected from an online consumer panel service, Zoomerang. The database from which the sample was drawn was comprised of individuals who agreed to participate in online corporate research and Web-based surveys. The participant pool consisted of homeowners who indicated an interest in purchasing items for their home. Prior to data collection, the survey was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Research Board at the researchers' university.

## **RESULTS**

A total of 986 usable surveys were completed. The sample was almost evenly split between males (46.5%) and females (53.5%) with an age range of 20 to 64 ( $M=41$ ). Almost half (45.3%) of the participants indicated a yearly income between \$40,001 and \$80,000, 86% of the sample was Caucasian, and 78.3% were married. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents indicated they visit a home furnishings retailer three to five times a year; 26% of the respondents indicated they had purchased one to two case goods, 22% indicated they had purchased one to two upholstered items, and almost 35% indicated they had purchased one to two decorative accessories during the past year.

### **Brand Strategy**

The first research question regarded whether a lifestyle (LS) or non-lifestyle (NLS) brand strategy affected perceived quality of home furnishings. When participants were asked directly to rate their

perception of quality for furniture items marketed as a “lifestyle” concept or marketed as a “brand” concept, they rated the brand concept approach as higher quality ( $M=3.06$ ) than the lifestyle concept approach ( $M=2.92$ ).

Brand strategy did affect the preferred brand. The open-ended question asking participants to name the brand they would purchase “if money were no object,” revealed 113 different brands. For analysis purposes, only those brands listed by 20 or more participants were used for analysis. This resulted in a pool of five brands: Ethan Allen (LS,  $n=120$ ), LaZBoy (NLS,  $n= 66$ ), Broyhill (NLS,  $n= 48$ ), Ashley (NLS,  $n= 40$ ), and Thomasville (LS,  $n= 31$ ). Of these brands, two are promoted with a LS brand strategy and the remaining three are promoted with a features-and-benefits strategy (NLS brands). Simple descriptive analysis indicated that this participant pool was almost equally divided with just over half of the consumers surveyed preferring to purchase brands marketed with a NLS strategy ( $n=154$ ; 50.5%) versus a LS strategy ( $n=151$ ; 49.5%).

When asked to rank purchase criteria, study participants indicated, overall, that price (45.3%) was most important followed by quality (30.8%), value (16.4%), and brand (7.5%). To determine the importance of the purchase criteria between the preferred brand strategy groups, a one-way ANOVA was computed. Since a total of 113 individual brands were listed in the open-ended “If money were not object” question, only the participants choosing one of the top five brands listed above were included in this analysis. ANOVA did not indicate any significant differences between the preferred brand categories in terms of price, brand, quality, or value.

### Celebrity / Notable Name Brands

Study participants were asked about their level of insistence for 19 celebrity or notable name brands. Participants who indicated they were unfamiliar with a brand were eliminated from analysis for that brand. ANOVA results found significant differences between the primary purchase criteria for 12 of the 19 brands (Table 1). Scheffe’ post hoc analysis revealed that participants rated brand more important than value for the price for the following brands: Christopher Lowell, Cristina Saralegui, Ernest Hemmingway, Humphrey Bogart, Jessica McClintock, Kathy Ireland, Laura Ashley, and Martha Stewart. They also rated price as more important than quality for the Christopher Lowell brand.

**TABLE 1**  
**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE RESULTS FOR INSISTENCE OF BRAND AND**  
**PRIMARY PURCHASE CRITERIA**

<b>Purchase Criteria</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p&lt;</b>
<b>Insistence on Notable Names**</b>				
<b>Alexa Hampton</b>		2.830	325	.05
Price	2.46			
Brand	2.46			
Quality	2.11			
Value	2.10			
<b>Antiques Roadshow</b>		4.750	330	.01
Price	2.51			
Brand	2.57			
Quality	2.12			
Value	2.00			
<b>Biltmore Estate</b>		2.633	372	.05
Price	2.49			
Brand	2.63			
Quality	2.22			
Value	2.18			

<b>Christopher Lowell</b>		9.238	631	.0001
Price	2.58 <sup>b,c</sup>			
Brand	2.69 <sup>c</sup>			
Quality	2.18 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Value	2.04 <sup>a</sup>			
<b>Cindy Crawford</b>		3.034	341	.05
Price	2.43			
Brand	2.52			
Quality	2.06			
Value	2.24			
<b>Cristina Saralegui</b>		5.677	567	.001
Price	2.61 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Brand	2.74 <sup>b</sup>			
Quality	2.27 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Value	2.19 <sup>a</sup>			
<b>Ernest Hemmingway</b>		5.108	532	.01
Price	2.54 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Brand	2.66 <sup>b</sup>			
Quality	2.18 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Value	2.17 <sup>a</sup>			
<b>Humphrey Bogart</b>		8.172	623	.0001
Price	2.60 <sup>b,c</sup>			
Brand	2.80 <sup>c</sup>			
Quality	2.29 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Value	2.07 <sup>a</sup>			
<b>Jessica McClintock</b>		9.531	617	.0001
Price	2.60 <sup>b,c</sup>			
Brand	2.76 <sup>c</sup>			
Quality	2.26 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Value	2.03 <sup>a</sup>			
<b>Kathy Ireland</b>		3.774	635	.05
Price	2.69 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Brand	2.85 <sup>b</sup>			
Quality	2.66 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Value	2.30 <sup>a</sup>			
<b>Laura Ashley</b>		4.729	748	.01
Price	2.69 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Brand	2.88 <sup>b</sup>			
Quality	2.53 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Value	2.26 <sup>a</sup>			
<b>Martha Stewart</b>		3.603	611	.05
Price	2.61 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Brand	2.87 <sup>b</sup>			
Quality	2.58 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Value	2.26 <sup>a</sup>			

*Note:* Only brands with significant differences are reported in the table.

Study participants were asked how often they used 11 different promotional sources for ideas about which styles of home furnishings to purchase. The promotional source used most often was store displays ( $M=3.21$ ) followed by store advertisements ( $M=2.97$ ), friends ( $M=2.96$ ), and catalogs ( $M=2.94$ ). See Table 2.

**TABLE 2**  
**MEAN VALUES OF PROMOTIONAL SOURCES USED FOR IDEAS ABOUT WHICH HOME FURNISHINGS ITEMS OR STYLES TO PURCHASE**

Promotional Source	Mean	Standard Deviation
Displays	3.21	1.125
Store Advertisements	2.97	1.107
Friends/Family	2.96	1.087
Catalogs	2.84	1.170
Home/Garden TV	2.82	1.239
Internet	2.79	1.221
Home Magazines	2.66	1.243
Newspaper Advertisements	2.64	1.194
Television Advertisements	2.62	1.102
Model Homes	2.22	1.183
Designer Advice	2.01	1.114

*Note.* Use was measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 5= “Very Often” and 1= “Rarely”

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis found significant correlations for 199 of the possible 209 relationships between preferred promotional channels and notable name brands in the study. The relatively stronger correlations ( $r>.25$ ) were for the following notable name brands and the use of television advertisements: Alexa Hampton ( $r=.312$ ), Christopher Lowell ( $r=.303$ ), Ernest Hemingway ( $r=.303$ ), Alexander Julian ( $p=.293$ ), Antiques Roadshow ( $r=.293$ ), Cindy Crawford ( $r=.293$ ), Cristina Saralegui ( $r=.284$ ), Humphrey Bogart ( $r=.272$ ), Martha Stewart ( $r=.269$ ), Jessica McClintock ( $r=.259$ ), Ralph Lauren ( $r=.257$ ), Todd Oldham ( $r=.257$ ), and Jacklyn Smith ( $r=.251$ ). In addition, positive correlations were found for home/garden television and insistence on the following notable name brands: Antiques Roadshow ( $r=.277$ ), Alexander Julian ( $p=.274$ ), Cindy Crawford ( $r=.268$ ), Jaclyn Smith ( $r=.263$ ), Biltmore Estate ( $r=.257$ ), Alexa Hampton ( $r=.256$ ), Ernest Hemingway ( $r=.253$ ), and Barbara Barry ( $r=.252$ ). The notable name brand with the greatest number of significant correlations above .25 was Jaclyn Smith with four (designer advice ( $r=.263$ ), home/garden television ( $r=.263$ ), home magazines ( $r=.251$ ), and television ads ( $r=.251$ )). All correlations reported were significant at ( $p<.0001$ ).

### Shopping Orientation

Principal Components Factor Analysis with varimax rotation was computed on the sixteen shopping orientation statements to reduce them into a manageable number of dimensions. A minimum eigenvalue of one was used as the criterion to control the number of factors extracted. Statements loading greater than .50 on a single factor were included resulting in four factors. Cronbach’s alphas for two of the factors were less than .70 and were eliminated from further analysis. Both of the remaining two factors had a computed alpha greater than .70, and were retained for analysis (Table 3). After satisfactory results were obtained on the scale statements, composite scores were created by computing the mean of the respective statements that loaded onto the scales. These composite shopping behavior scores were used to represent the dependent variables for the tests of hypotheses. After examining the individual statements in each shopping behavior factor, the two factors were labeled Brand Conscious and Confident.

**TABLE 3**  
**FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SHOPPING ORIENTATION**

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	$\alpha$
<b>Brand Conscious</b>		4.940	30.875	.785
It is important to buy well-known home furnishings brands.	.799			
A well-known brand means good quality.	.723			
I try to stick with certain brands and stores.	.698			
Once I find a brand I like, I stick with it.	.677			
A person's reputation is affected by how his/her home looks.	.568			
<b>Confident</b>		2.222	13.889	.828
I have the ability to choose the right HF for my home.	.833			
I feel very confident in my ability to shop for HF	.828			
I think I am a good home furnishings shopper	.767			
When I find what I like I usually buy it without hesitation	.637			
Having a well-decorated home is an important part of my life.	.537			

ANOVA was computed to determine whether shopping orientation affected the preference for LS and NLS brands. No significant effects for shopping orientation were computed. Similarly no significant effects were found between the two shopping orientations and preference for a particular brand, regardless of brand type.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation analyses were computed to examine the relationships between shopping orientation and the level of insistence for a notable name or celebrity brand. Each of the notable names had a significant relationship with the Brand Conscious orientation factor (all at  $p < .0001$ ). The strongest correlations, that is the strongest insistence, was for Alexa Hampton ( $r = .253$ ), Antiques Roadshow ( $r = .239$ ), Rachel Ashwell ( $r = .229$ ), Kathy Ireland ( $r = .226$ ), Cindy Crawford ( $r = .226$ ), and Biltmore Estate ( $r = .224$ ). For the participants with the Confidence shopping orientation, weak yet positive correlations ( $p < .05$ ) were computed for the insistence for Rachel Ashwell ( $r = .229$ ), Kathy Ireland ( $r = .105$ ), Barbara Barry ( $r = .100$ ), Cristina Saralegui ( $r = .099$ ), Martha Stewart ( $r = .089$ ), Ernest Hemingway ( $r = .089$ ), and Laura Ashley ( $r = .075$ ).

Shopping orientation was found to significantly affect the participant's primary purchase criteria: price, brand, quality, and value ( $p < .0001$ ), as indicated in Table 4. Scheffe' post hoc analysis indicated the consumer with the Brand Conscious orientation felt the product brand was more important ( $M = 3.17$ ;  $p < .0001$ ) than price ( $M = 2.85$ ) or value ( $M = 2.76$ ). On the other hand, the consumer with the Confident orientation indicated that quality ( $M = 3.58$ ) was more important than value ( $M = 3.19$ ) or price ( $M = 3.12$ ).

Finally, we looked at the relationship between shopping orientation and the promotion sources used most often for ideas about which home furnishings to purchase. Correlation analysis indicated significant relationships ( $p < .0001$ ) between both of the shopping orientations and all of the promotional sources. The strongest correlations for the Brand Conscious orientation were: television advertisements ( $r = .406$ ), designer advice ( $r = .367$ ), newspaper advertisements ( $r = .345$ ), store advertisements ( $r = .327$ ), and model homes ( $r = .323$ ). The strongest correlations for the Confident shopping orientation were: home magazines ( $r = .364$ ), Home/Garden Television ( $r = .353$ ), catalogs ( $r = .350$ ), television advertisements ( $r = .322$ ), and store displays ( $r = .322$ ).

**TABLE 4**  
**ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE RESULTS FOR SHOPPING ORIENTATION AND**  
**PRIMARY PURCHASE CRITERIA**

<b>Purchase Criteria</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p&lt;</b>
<b>Shopping Orientation</b>				
<b>Brand Conscious</b>		6.456	901	0.0001
Price	2.85 <sup>a</sup>			
Brand	3.17 <sup>b</sup>			
Quality	2.98 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Value	2.76 <sup>a</sup>			
<b>Confident</b>		20.880	914	0.0001
Price	3.12 <sup>a</sup>			
Brand	3.36 <sup>a,b</sup>			
Quality	3.58 <sup>b</sup>			
Value	3.19 <sup>a</sup>			

*Note.* Means sharing a common superscript are not significantly different by the Scheffe' test.

*\*Note.* Shopping Orientation was measured with a 5-point Likert scale where 1="Strongly Disagree" and 5="Strongly Agree."

*\*\*Note.* Only celebrity/notable names with significant findings are listed.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken to examine home furnishings brands and brand strategies as they affect consumer opinions, particularly with regard to their desire for purchase. Two brand strategies were examined – lifestyle branding and non-lifestyle branding. In recent years, several home furnishings companies have employed this strategy to reach their target customer; is the strategy working? The use of notable names was also explored – either licensed brands (Ralph Lauren), brands that are associated with television shows (Antiques Roadshow), places (Biltmore Estate), or historical figures (Ernest Hemmingway). In a study about brand strategy, it was also logical to examine the promotional venues that participants use for idea sources. Finally, to create a better profile of the consumer, these brand-related variables were studied in light of the psychographic, consumer shopping orientation.

In terms of quality perception, on the surface, study participants rated furniture marketed with the lifestyle strategy lower than furniture marketed with a more generic features-and-benefits brand concept. Though participants may not have been able to define the difference in the marketing strategies, these questions were asked intentionally since many of the brands specifically mentioned on the questionnaire report using a lifestyle strategy and editorially report its success in the trade magazines. This finding supports the Na et al. (2008) finding that the focus on the dominant feature of a product – the design in a home furnishing – can shift the locus of equity from brand to attribute. In addition to this general quality perception question, participants were also asked what brand they would purchase "if money were no object" in an open-ended format. The purpose for asking this question was to determine the brands the participant were truly most interested in purchasing. Of the top brands listed (those listed by 20 participants or more), about half of the responses were for two brands marketed with the lifestyle strategy (n=151) and about half (154) were for brands marketed with a features-and-benefits strategy. Further, even though one of the shopping orientations identified in this study was labeled Brand Conscious indicating the importance of brand names to the consumer, no significant relationships were found with regard to either of these branding strategies. While the buzz in the furniture industry in recent years has

been the success of the lifestyle brand strategy, participants in this study did not seem to respond to it in a strong manner.

Brand managers have employed numerous strategies to reach the largest possible audience. The lifestyle concept may not have made a significant difference with this national sample of consumers, nevertheless the fact that companies vary their advertising strategy is one technique that keeps a brand interesting. While lifestyle branding has been an important buzz term in the furniture trade press, the reality in the marketplace is that consumers do not distinguish this strategy in a meaningful way. Participants in this study were asked to rank their purchase criteria (price, brand, quality, and value) for the different brand strategies in the study. While no significant differences were found for the lifestyle/non-lifestyle strategies, there were some significant effects for several of the specific notable name brands on the survey. The brand was more important than value for purchasing six licensed brands (Christopher Lowell, Cristina Saralegui, Jessica McClintock, Kathy Ireland, Laura Ashley, and Martha Stewart) and two notable names (Ernest Hemmingway and Humphrey Bogart). Interestingly, price was more important than brand for the Christopher Lowell license. Perhaps this is because of Lowell's past affiliation with discounter, Target and current affiliation with Office Depot. From a marketing perspective, familiarity appears to be powerful. Assigning a familiar name to a piece of furniture helps the consumer remember the brand and it gives them a positive association.

Consumers in this study with the Brand Conscious shopping orientation indicated a degree of insistence for each of the notable name brands listed. The strongest correlations were for Alexa Hampton, Antiques Roadshow, Rachel Ashwell, and Kathy Ireland. There were also positive correlations computed for the Confident shopping orientation and insistence for notable name brands, but the correlations were generally weak.

When promotional sources were examined, the consumers in this study indicated they relied most on store displays, store advertisements, friends, and catalogs. However, when insistence for notable name brands was examined, the stronger correlations were for television advertisements and home/garden television. The participant's shopping orientation might shed some light on these findings. Consumers with the stronger Brand Conscious orientation were more inclined to use television advertisements, designer advice, newspaper and store advertisements, and model homes for inspiration. The Confident shopping orientation had a stronger correlation with the use of home magazines, home/garden television, catalogs, television advertisements and store displays.

These findings indicate that overall, consumers shop, look at circulars and catalogs, and talk to their friends. But when it comes to wanting particular brands, the television venues are more important. It appears that, for licensed and notable name brands, television advertisements and featured product promotion on home/garden television shows are good venues for reaching the target market.

Finally, shopping orientation did prove to be an indicator of primary purchase criteria without regard to brand strategy. Participants with a stronger Brand Conscious orientation valued the brand more than price or value for the money. The participant with the stronger Confident shopping orientation indicated that quality was more important than value or price. This finding might be related to the relationship between shopping orientation and promotional source used. Participants with the Brand Conscious shopping orientation tended to rely more heavily on advertisements (TV, newspaper, store) for their idea sources. By design, the information provided in advertising sources is controlled. Another strong correlation was for designer advice, which can be another controlled resource since the designer will promote the brands with which they have a working relationship.

On the other hand, participants with the Confident shopping orientation indicated using home magazines and home/garden television shows. Both of these venues allow editorial comment and usage instruction and direction. Similarly, another strong correlation was found for the Confident shopper and catalogs. While a catalog will focus on a particular brand, there is opportunity to show various color choices and use settings – perhaps in greater detail than in advertisements, which are limited in size and page limit.

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