

## **DESIGN-DRIVER INFLUENCE AND CONSUMERS PURCHASE INTENTION OF DOMESTIC FURNITURE DEALERS IN PORT HARCOURT.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examined the relationship between design-driver influence and consumers purchase intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. Correlational survey design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprised 180 managers of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. The census sampling procedure was adopted. The instrument for data collection in this study was a questionnaire titled "Design-Driver Influence and Consumers Purchase Intention Questionnaire (DDICPIQ)". The reliability of 0.75 coefficient index was carried ascertained Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The data collected from the administration of the instrument on the respondents were analysed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Correlation at 0.05 significant level. The study finds out that is a significant relationship between user-centred design and planned intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. There is a significant relationship between functionality design and impulse purchase of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. The study concluded that design-driver influence significantly enhance consumers purchase intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. Based on the findings, the study recommended that furniture retailers should emphasize the functional design aspects of their products, such as space-saving, versatility, and easy assembly, to attract impulse buyers.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The contemporary marketplace is characterized by a dynamic interplay between design-driven influence and consumer behavior, particularly in the context of domestic furniture dealers and in today's competitive furniture industry, design-driven factors have become crucial in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in urban centers like Port Harcourt. Domestic furniture dealers are increasingly focusing on user-centered and functionality-driven designs to influence consumer purchase intentions. Furniture, beyond serving functional purposes, has become an integral part of interior aesthetics, which aligns with consumers' need for personalized, practical, and visually appealing products. As the demand for domestically crafted furniture grows, understanding the impact of design elements on consumer buying decisions, including impulsive purchases, becomes essential. User-centered design focuses on creating products that prioritize the needs, desires, and limitations of the end-users, enhancing overall customer satisfaction (Park, Kim, & Forney, 2016). Functionality design, on the other hand, ensures that furniture meets the functional requirements, contributing to its utility, comfort, and durability. These design drivers significantly affect consumers' purchase intentions and their likelihood to make impulse purchases. With consumers becoming more discerning and value-conscious, domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt are exploring ways to integrate these design elements to meet evolving consumer preferences.

Port Harcourt, as a commercial hub in Nigeria, hosts a vibrant domestic furniture industry, catering to a diverse range of consumers. With increasing urbanization and shifts in lifestyle, consumers are seeking furniture that not only fits their living spaces but also complements their style preferences. This has led to a rise in the importance of design elements such as ergonomics, usability, and aesthetics in influencing consumer decisions. The concept of user-centered design (UCD) has been widely adopted across various industries, including furniture manufacturing, as it allows designers to align products with the specific needs and preferences of users. UCD emphasizes interaction, comfort, and overall experience, which are critical in encouraging purchase intentions. Studies have shown that furniture designed with a strong focus on user needs can significantly increase customer satisfaction and loyalty (Norman, 2013).

Functionality design, on the other hand, addresses the practicality and operational aspects of furniture. It considers aspects such as the ease of use, flexibility, and durability of furniture, which are critical to long-term customer satisfaction. Research by McCormick et al. (2018) highlighted that furniture buyers prioritize functionality, particularly in multi-functional products that save space and provide multiple uses.

The interplay between these design drivers and consumer behavior, especially in terms of purchase intention and impulse purchasing, has been a subject of increasing interest in marketing studies. Purchase intention is typically driven by a planned, conscious decision-making process, where consumers evaluate the attributes of a product based on their needs. Impulse purchasing, however, occurs without prior planning and is often influenced by emotional and environmental factors, including attractive designs and displays (Verplanken & Herabadi, 2011).

Given the competitive nature of the domestic furniture market in Port Harcourt, understanding how design influences consumers' buying behaviors, including their tendency toward impulse buying, is critical for businesses. Research shows that well-designed products can trigger emotional responses, encouraging spontaneous purchases (Park, Kim, & Forney, 2016). Therefore, by integrating both user-centered and functionality designs, furniture dealers can not only cater to consumer needs but also drive higher sales through impulse purchases. It is on this platform that the study examined design-driver influence (user-centred design and functionality design) and consumers purchase intention (planned intention and impulse purchase) of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt face significant challenges in influencing consumer purchase intention, particularly in terms of planned purchasing and impulse buying. While design-driven factors such as user-centered design and functionality design are known to shape consumer behavior, many furniture businesses struggle to leverage these elements effectively. As a result, both purchase intention (the conscious, planned decision to buy a product) and impulse purchase behavior (unplanned, spontaneous purchases) remain suboptimal, leading to missed sales opportunities.

One core challenge is the limited incorporation of user-centered design in domestic furniture offerings. Consumers today prioritize products that align with their specific needs, such as comfort, usability, and aesthetic preferences. However, many domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt produce items that fail to resonate with these consumer demands. Furniture that does not adequately cater to ergonomic requirements or lifestyle

preferences results in decreased consumer interest, leading to weak purchase intentions. This gap in user-centered design prevents furniture from becoming a preferred choice, even when consumers are initially interested.

Functionality design is another critical area where furniture dealers struggle. Modern consumers, especially in urban areas like Port Harcourt, often seek furniture that is multi-functional, space-efficient, and durable. However, many furniture products in the market lack the necessary functionality to meet these expectations. Products that are aesthetically appealing but lack practical features are less likely to encourage consumers to finalize a purchase, resulting in a drop in both planned and impulsive buying behavior. The inability to offer functional solutions that address real consumer needs reduces both purchase intention and the likelihood of impulse purchases.

Moreover, the challenge of triggering impulse purchases through design-driven factors is underexplored by domestic furniture dealers. Impulse purchases are often driven by emotional and psychological triggers, such as visual appeal or the excitement of discovering a unique product. However, poor product presentation, lack of engaging store layouts, and ineffective marketing strategies make it difficult for dealers to leverage the emotional impact of their products. Consequently, the potential to stimulate spontaneous, unplanned purchases through effective design is missed, leading to lost sales opportunities. It is against this backdrop that the study examined Design-driver influence (user-centred design and functionality design) and consumers purchase intention (planned intention and impulse purchase) of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt

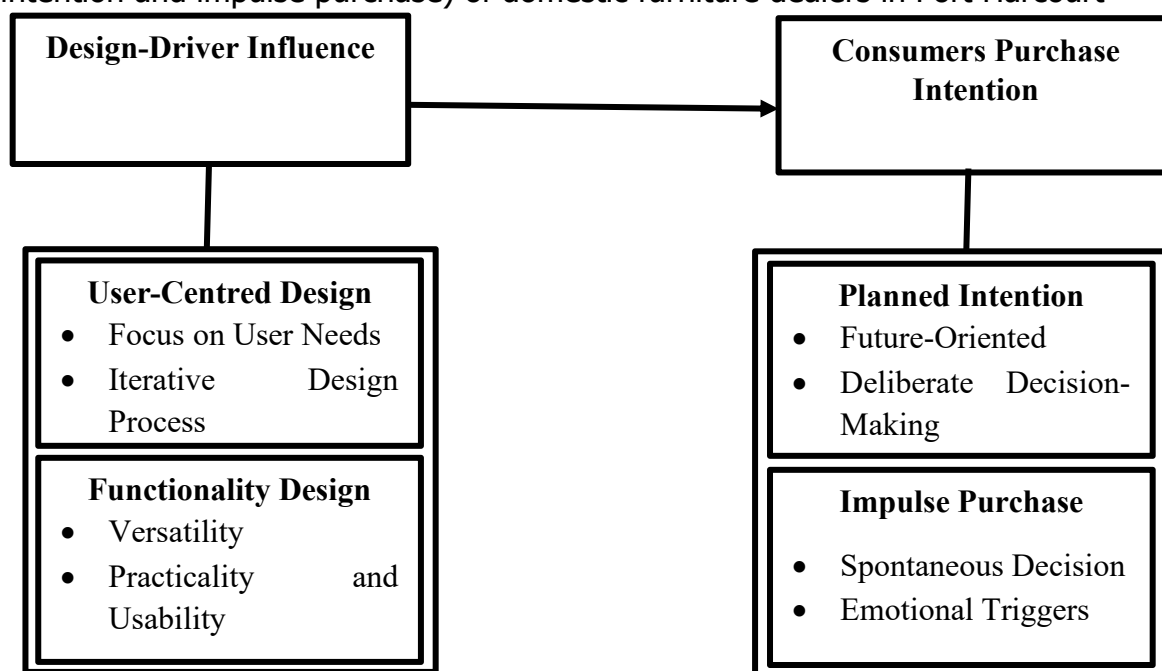


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between design-driver influence and consumers purchase intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt

**Source:** Kotler & Keller, Aaker & Jacobson (2001), Ajzen & Fishbein (2005)

### Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine relationship between design-driver influence and consumers purchase intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. The specific objectives of the study include;

1. Ascertain the relationship between user-centred design and planned intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt
2. Determine the relationship between functionality design and impulse purchase of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between user-centred design and planned intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt?
2. What is the relationship between functionality design and impulse purchase of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt?

### **Hypotheses**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between user-centred design and planned intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between functionality design and impulse purchase of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This section reviewed extant literatures under the headings of conceptual review, theoretical review and empirical review.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Design-Driver Influence**

In the competitive landscape of the furniture industry, where consumer preferences evolve rapidly, the role of design as a key driver of purchasing decisions cannot be overstated. Norman (2013) defines design-driver influence as the impact of design choices on how products are perceived and used by consumers. According to him, design must go beyond aesthetics to address functionality and usability, influencing not only the way people interact with products but also their decisions to purchase. Design-driver influence refers to the impact that design elements such as aesthetics, functionality, and user-centered features have on consumer behavior, particularly in shaping purchase intention and stimulating impulse buying.

Design-driver influence offers substantial benefits, such as enhancing consumer satisfaction, fostering brand loyalty, and boosting sales by aligning product offerings with consumer needs and preferences (Ulrich & Eppinger, 2015). When well-executed, user-centered and functionality designs improve product usability, ensure ergonomic comfort, and resonate emotionally with consumers, leading to higher purchase intentions and even spontaneous purchases.

### **Dimensions of Design-Driver Influence**

#### **User-Centred Design**

In an era where consumers demand more personalized and intuitive products, User-Centered Design (UCD) has emerged as a critical approach in product development across industries. Gould and Lewis (2015) define user-centered design as a set of principles that prioritize users' needs, tasks, and environments in the design process. They argue that successful UCD requires early focus on the users, empirical measurement of their interaction with the product, and iterative design improvements based on user feedback.

This approach ensures that the final product not only meets user requirements but also enhances their overall experience.

ISO 9241-210 (2010) explains user-centered design as a multidisciplinary approach that seeks to optimize a product's usability by focusing on the entire user experience. This standard emphasizes involving users at every stage of the design process to ensure the product aligns with their expectations and improves efficiency, satisfaction, and effectiveness. UCD involves understanding the user's context, specifying user requirements, designing solutions, and evaluating them in real-world scenarios.

UCD emphasizes the importance of designing with the end-user in mind, ensuring that products align with their specific needs, preferences, and limitations. By placing users at the center of the design process, businesses can create solutions that not only function well but also provide a seamless and satisfying experience. In the context of furniture design, this approach enables manufacturers to deliver products that offer comfort, usability, and aesthetic appeal—ultimately fostering stronger consumer engagement and loyalty.

### **Functionality Design**

In today's rapidly evolving marketplace, consumers seek products that not only look good but also serve practical purposes, making Functionality Design a cornerstone of successful product development. Baxter (2015) defines functionality design as the process of ensuring that products fulfill their intended purpose while maintaining ease of use and reliability. According to Baxter, functional design focuses on the practical aspects of a product, ensuring that it delivers measurable benefits to users through performance and usability. The goal is to meet specific user needs in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Papanek (2014) describes functionality design as the integration of practical utility with human-centered design, ensuring that products serve a real purpose in users' lives. Papanek emphasizes that functionality is the essence of good design, arguing that a product is only successful when it meets its intended use in the most efficient manner while minimizing unnecessary features that do not add value to the user experience.

Functionality design emphasizes the creation of products that provide clear, effective, and meaningful solutions to users' needs. For furniture dealers, functionality design can transform mundane items into essential components of a household, where aesthetics meet practicality. By ensuring that products work seamlessly and intuitively, functionality design enhances the overall user experience, driving consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

### **Customers' Purchase Intention**

In today's highly competitive marketplace, understanding customers' purchase intention is crucial for businesses aiming to convert interest into sales. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) describe purchase intention as a function of both personal attitudes toward a product and the influence of external social factors. According to them, purchase intention represents the likelihood that a consumer will follow through on their desire to buy, based on positive evaluations of the product and favorable social influences from peers or marketing communications.

Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that a consumer will buy a product or service based on their needs, preferences, and perceptions of value (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 2011). It is influenced by a range of factors, including product quality, brand trust, pricing,



and marketing strategies. For businesses, particularly in industries like domestic furniture, knowing what drives customers' intent to purchase can lead to better product positioning, enhanced customer satisfaction, and ultimately, increased sales. By tapping into these consumer motivations, companies can align their offerings to match the desires and expectations of their target market, ensuring stronger market performance and brand loyalty.

### **Measures of Customers' Purchase Intention**

#### **Planned Intention**

Ajzen (1991) in his Theory of Planned Behavior defines planned intention as a person's conscious determination to perform a specific behavior, based on their attitude toward the behavior, perceived social pressures (subjective norms), and their perceived control over the action. Planned intention is the key predictor of actual behavior in Ajzen's model, representing an individual's readiness to engage in a specific action if the right conditions are met.

Gollwitzer (1999) describes planned intention through his implementation intentions theory, which distinguishes between goal intentions ("I want to achieve X") and implementation intentions ("I will do Y to achieve X"). According to Gollwitzer, planned intentions move beyond general desires and focus on specific actions that must be taken to accomplish goals. This form of intention includes when, where, and how the behavior will occur, making it a structured guide for future behavior.

In the realm of consumer behavior and decision-making, planned intention plays a pivotal role in understanding how individuals commit to future actions. In business and marketing contexts, understanding planned intention is crucial for predicting consumer behavior, as it sheds light on the factors that drive individuals to make calculated, purposeful decisions. For companies aiming to influence consumer actions, recognizing how planned intention forms can enhance strategies for product design, advertising, and overall market success.

#### **Impulse Purchase**

Rook (2017) defines impulse purchase as an unplanned buying behavior driven by a sudden, compelling urge to buy something immediately. According to Rook, impulse buying is often emotional rather than rational, where consumers experience a spontaneous desire to acquire a product without considering the long-term consequences of the purchase. This behavior is frequently triggered by environmental cues such as sales promotions or visually appealing product displays.

Stern (2012) characterizes impulse purchase as a quick decision-making process that occurs without extensive prior consideration or planning. Stern categorizes impulse buying into different types, such as pure impulse buying (completely unplanned) and planned impulse buying (where a consumer intends to purchase, but decides on specific items in the moment). Stern highlights the psychological and situational factors, like mood or store layout, that often encourage impulse purchases.

In the fast-paced world of consumerism, impulse purchases represent a significant aspect of shopping behavior, where decisions are made spontaneously without prior planning. From the tempting displays in retail stores to the targeted ads on e-commerce platforms, impulse buying occurs when consumers make unplanned purchases, driven by emotions, immediate gratification, or unexpected desires. For businesses, understanding and leveraging impulse buying can be a powerful tool to increase sales and create engaging

shopping experiences. In the furniture industry, for instance, strategically placed items or limited-time offers can trigger an impulse purchase, leading consumers to buy products they hadn't initially considered. As technology continues to shape the modern marketplace, impulse buying remains an important factor in consumer behavior that businesses cannot ignore.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, posits that an individual's intention to engage in a behavior is the primary predictor of whether they will actually perform that behavior. This theory suggests that behavioral intentions are influenced by three key components: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

1. **Attitudes Toward the Behavior:** This refers to the degree to which a person has a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of the behavior in question. In the context of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt, consumers' attitudes towards purchasing furniture may be shaped by their perceptions of quality, aesthetics, price, and brand reputation.
2. **Subjective Norms:** These are the perceived social pressures to perform or not perform a particular behavior. For instance, if friends and family members endorse certain furniture brands or styles, this can influence an individual's intention to purchase from those dealers.
3. **Perceived Behavioral Control:** This reflects an individual's perception of their ability to perform the behavior. Factors such as financial resources, availability of products, and ease of access to stores can affect consumers' perceived control over their purchasing decisions.

In relation to design-driven influence specifically user-centered design and functionality design the TPB can be applied to understand how these factors impact consumer purchase intentions for domestic furniture. User-centered design focuses on creating products that meet the needs and preferences of users, which can enhance positive attitudes towards purchasing decisions. Functionality design emphasizes usability and practicality; when consumers perceive that furniture is functional and meets their needs effectively, it can lead to stronger purchase intentions.

## **Empirical Review**

Adeola and Tella (2020) examined the influence of design aesthetics and functionality on consumers' purchase intention in the Nigerian furniture industry. Research design was descriptive survey design. Population of study was consumers of domestic furniture in Lagos State. A sample size of 250 respondents selected through simple random sampling. The sources of data were primary data collected via structured questionnaire with 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha of 0.78 indicating good reliability was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Method of data analysis was descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (regression analysis). Design aesthetics and functionality both had a significant positive influence on consumers' purchase intentions. Furniture retailers should focus on creating aesthetically pleasing and functional designs to enhance consumer purchase intentions. Manufacturers should invest more in user-centered designs that balance beauty with functionality.

Akinyemi (2018) investigated effect of user-centered design on consumer buying behavior in the Nigerian electronics market. The research design adopted for the study was explanatory research design. The population of study were buyers of electronics in Ibadan with a sample Size of 150 respondents using purposive sampling. Primary data collected via semi-structured Questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions. Reliability of instrument was tested with a pilot study yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. Data was analyze using correlation analysis and structural equation modeling. The study finds out that User-centered design positively affects consumer satisfaction, which in turn enhances purchase intention. The study concluded that focusing on consumer needs in product design leads to higher satisfaction and increased purchase behavior. The study recommended that designers should include features that meet the evolving needs of Nigerian consumers to drive higher purchase rates.

Eze and Nwankwo (2021) studied influence of design functionality on consumers' purchasing decisions in the Nigerian home appliance sector. The research design was Cross-sectional survey design. The study population were customers from major home appliance stores in Abuja with a sample size of 300 respondents selected through cluster sampling. Primary data from questionnaires and interviews served as sources of data. Cronbach's alpha of 0.83.was ascertained as the reliability instrument index. Method of data analysis was descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. The findings/results of the study suggested that functionality was found to be a stronger determinant of purchase decision than aesthetics. The study concluded that consumers prioritize functional attributes like durability and ease of use in home appliances. The study recommended among others that marketers should highlight the functional benefits of products in advertisements and store displays

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design and the correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 180 managers of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. The census sampling procedure was adopted. This made use of all 180 managers of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. The instrument for data collection in this study was a questionnaire titled "Design-Driver Influence and Consumers Purchase Intention (DDICPIQ)". The respondents were requested to respond to research variable items based on a five-point modified Likert scale. To validate the instrument, the content and face validity was determined by the expert judgment of two other experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The reliability of 0.75 coefficient index was ascertained Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ ). The data collected from the administration of the instrument on the respondents were analysed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Correlation at 0.05 significant level.

## **Analysis of Data**

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between user-centred design and planned intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt.

## **Table 1: Correlation Between User-Centred Design and Planned Intention**



			User-Centred Design	Planned Intention
Spearman's rho	User-Centred Design	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.813**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	1180	1180
	Planned Intention	Correlation Coefficient	.813**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	1180	1180

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The probability value is .000, which is less than the crucial value of 0.05, according to the hypothesis testing findings. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis "**H<sub>A1</sub>**: There is a significant relationship between user-centred design and planned intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt is accepted. The correlation value of 0.813 indicates that the relationship between is strong.

## Hypothesis 2

**H<sub>02</sub>**: There is no significant relationship between functionality design and impulse purchase of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt.

**Table 2: Correlation Between Functionality Design and Impulse Purchase**

			Functionality Design	Impulse Purchase
Spearman's rho	Functionality Design	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.854**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	180	180
	Impulse Purchase	Correlation Coefficient	.854**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	180	180

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The probability value is .000, which is less than the crucial value of 0.05, according to the hypothesis testing findings. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis, "**H<sub>A2</sub>**: There is a significant relationship between functionality design and impulse purchase of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt is accepted. The correlation value of 0.854 indicates that the relationship is strong.

## Discussion of Findings

The findings related to the user-centred design and planned intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt ( $r = 0.813$ ), These results suggest that the user-centred design relate with planned intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. This

finding is in accordance with Adebayo and Olajide (2019) who found a positive relationship between user-centred design and planned purchase intentions, where furniture designed with user needs in mind (ergonomics, functionality, and aesthetics) was more likely to encourage consumers to plan future purchases. Consumers reported that when they found the furniture catered to their personal preferences and lifestyle, it was easier for them to commit to planned purchases.

The findings in hypotheses 2; functionality design and impulse purchase of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt ( $r = 0.854$ ). This indicates that functionality design can significantly enhance impulse purchase of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt. These findings are somewhat consistent with Bello and Johnson (2020), who found that that functional designs, such as modular and space-saving furniture, significantly encouraged impulse buying among consumers. The practicality of these designs led consumers to perceive the products as immediate solutions to home furnishing needs, often resulting in unplanned purchases. Functionality increases the perceived utility of furniture, making it easier for consumers to justify impulsive purchases. Furniture that combines practical solutions with aesthetic appeal is more likely to spur impulse purchases.

## CONCLUSION

The study examined design-driver influence and f consumers purchase intention had provided significant insights into the relationships between user-centred design, functionality design and key purchase intention metrics of planned intention and impulse purchase. The study concludes that there is a significant relationship between design-driver influence and f consumers purchase intention of domestic furniture dealers in Port Harcourt.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Domestic furniture dealers should prioritize user-centred designs by offering customizable furniture options. Allowing customers to select specific features, colors, and materials that suit their preferences can encourage both planned purchase intention and increase customer satisfaction.
2. Furniture retailers should emphasize the functional design aspects of their products, such as space-saving, versatility, and easy assembly, to attract impulse buyers.
3. Retailers should improve product displays both in physical stores and online platforms, showcasing how user-centred and functional designs can fit into various home settings.

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