

Status of the Furniture Industry in Ilocos Sur

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Abstract

This study determined the status and economic aspects of the furniture-making industry of Ilocos Sur. It investigated the factors affecting the production and sale of Iloko furniture.

Respondents of the study, chosen through purposive sampling, were 44 furniture makers from the municipalities of San Vicente, Sta Catalina, Sto. Domingo and Narvacan. The survey was conducted from January to March 2003.

Results show that the major furniture products in Ilocos Sur include chairs, gallenera, pillow racks, planters, and decorative products. Other products produced are sala sets, doors, beds, dining tables, cabinets/closets, rocking chairs, dividers and office tables. Most of the respondents revealed that the sale of their products is lower than in the past and are spending less than P20,000.00 for materials. The average monthly expenses of each of the furniture makers is P33,304.31. The average monthly sale of furniture products is P47,8654.85. The average monthly income is P14,561.54. Most of the respondents' income is P14,561.54. Most of the respondents claimed that income derived from furniture making is sufficient to sustain their families' needs. The major factor affecting the production and sale of products is competition in terms of quality, design, color and price.

It is recommended that furniture-making as an industry should be preserved and developed with the assistance of government agencies. The quality of products priced reasonably should be a top consideration for those involved in the furniture industry.

Introduction

Background of the Study

One of the notable industries of Ilocos Sur is furniture making. The industry is said to have started in the municipality of San Vicente in 1946 after World War II. Carpenters who pioneered the venture produced small wooden chairs locally called *taborete* as their initial products. The wood they used as raw materials was *bittaog* or *palomaria* (*Callophylum inuophylum*) which was lumbered from nearby towns (Ruelos, 2002).

Over the past five decades, the furniture industry expanded and has become a major source of livelihood not only in San Vicente but also in the municipalities of Sta. Catalina, Sto. Domingo, and Narvacan. Various furniture, from small items like wall and table decors to the big items such as dining tables, cabinets and sala sets, are now being made using narra (*Sandericum koetjape*), sagat (*Vitex pariflora*) and lanite (*Wrightic lanite*).

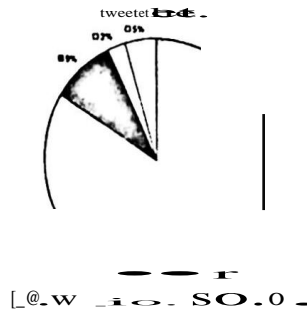
There used to be a high demand for these products as the pieces of furniture with antique designs are used to decorate museums, houses, churches, hotels, and restaurants. The local schools also need a big number of chairs and tables. However, the production of furniture in Ilocos Sur may have been affected by the diminishing market demand brought about by economic instability and other factors. An assessment of the status of furniture making is thus needed and timely. It is important to investigate how this local industry has survived the passing of time.

Objectives

This survey aimed primarily at determining the status and economic aspects of the furniture-making industry in Ilocos Sur. It also investigated the factors affecting the production and sale of Iloko furniture.

Methodology

Forty-four respondents (San Vicente – 37, Sta. Catalina – 4, Sto. Domingo – 1 and Narvacan -- 2) were chosen through purposive sampling. They were interviewed by the researchers and were asked to accomplish a questionnaire developed to gather the needed data.



Most of the respondents were males, married, belonged to the 41-60 age bracket, and had less than four dependents. The survey was conducted in four towns from January to March 2003.

Production and Sale of Furniture Products

The result of the study shows that a variety of furniture products are being produced and sold in Ilocos Sur. The major products of the furniture makers taken as respondents include chairs (with an average of 23 pieces produced and 21 pieces sold monthly), *gallenera* (18 pieces produced and sold monthly), pillow rack (15 pieces produced and 12 pieces sold monthly), planters (15 pieces produced and 10 sold monthly) and decorative products (13 pieces produced and 9 pieces sold monthly). Less than five pieces of each sala set, door, bed, dining table, cabinet/closet, rocking chair, divider, and office table are produced and sold monthly.

Most of the respondents reported that acacia and narra are still the leading raw materials for furniture. Other wood varieties being used are *bittaog*, *santol*, mahogany, *sagat* and *lanuti*.

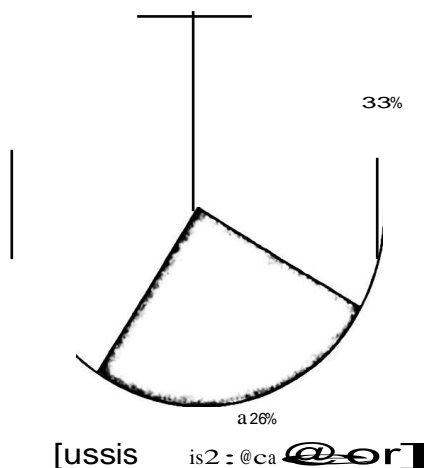
According to most of the respondents, their products are sold in their own houses and furniture making sites. One-fourth of the respondents sell their products in nearby towns. A small proportion of the respondents claimed to have been selling their products in antique houses/stalls of retailers, in the local market and in trade fairs and exhibits.

The respondents revealed that housekeepers and retailers are their primary buyers, followed by storeowners, wholesale buyers, and tourists/visitors.

Status of the Furniture Industry

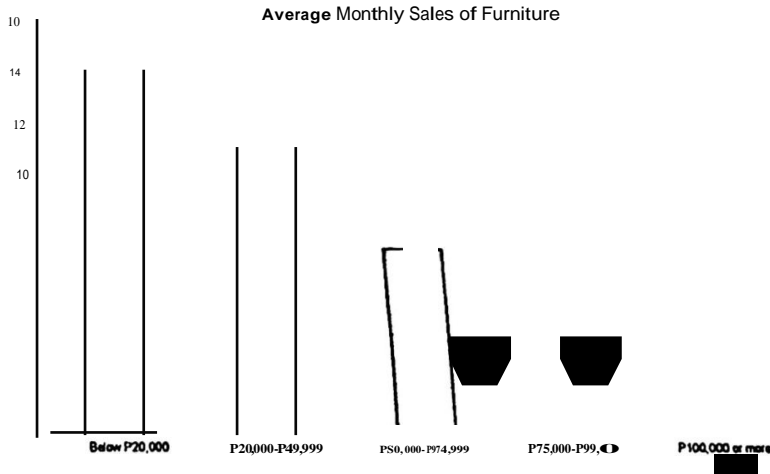
Seventeen respondents revealed that the sale of their products nowadays is lower than in the past. Fourteen reported that their sale is the same as in the past. Eleven respondents claimed that their sale is two to three times greater than in the past.

Number of Respondents Indicating Present Sale of Furniture Products as Compared with Past Sale



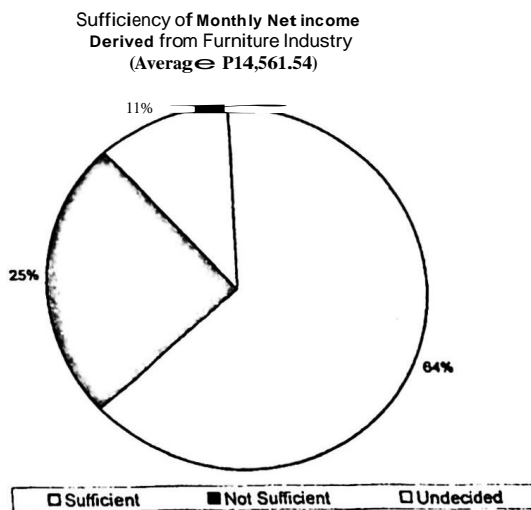
As to the monthly expenses for materials, 15 respondents are spending below P20,000, eight are allocating P20,000 to P49,999 and six are allocating at least P50,000. As to the total monthly wages of their workers, 13 respondents are spending less P20,000.00, three are allotting P20,000.00 to P49,999.00 and one is spending at least P50,000.00. The average monthly expenses for materials of the respondents is P23,379.31. The furniture-makers are also spending an average of P9,925.00 monthly for transportation of the products. Thus, the total monthly expenditures of each furniture maker is P33,304.31.

Some respondents prefer to pay their workers based on the number of sales they produce. Seven of them are giving their workers P500.00 to P999.00 for every furniture set completed. The wages, of course, depend on the type of furniture made.



Findings reveal that fourteen furniture makers had an average monthly sale of below P20,000.00, eleven were on the range P20,000.00-P49,999.99, seven were on the P50,000.00-P74,999.00 income bracket, three had sales falling within P75,000.00-P99,999.00, and six respondents admitted to have a monthly sale of P100,000 or more. The average monthly sale of furniture products of the respondents is P47,865.85.

Based on cost-benefit analysis of the furniture industry, the average monthly net income is P14,561.54. Twenty-eight respondents admitted that the income from furniture making is sufficient to sustain their families' needs. Eleven respondents reported that their income is not sufficient. This is the reason why some of them have to generate income from other sources: teaching (9), nursing (5), carpentry (1), fanning (1) and hog-raising (1).



Factors Affecting the Industry

The production and sale of furniture products depends on a set of factors. More than half of the respondents observed that competition in terms of quality, design and color, and competition in terms of price are the primary factors. Only few of the furniture makers surveyed regarded the following factors to be affecting the industry: manner of promoting the products, collection of debts, support from government agencies, tourist attraction, and presence of museums and exhibits.

Conclusions

The municipality of San Vicente remains the center of the furniture-making industry. Some furniture-makers are spending much to be able to maintain their business. The cost of the raw materials and the transportation expenses of the products are high. To some, the net income derived from the industry is just enough to sustain the needs of their families. Some others admit that they have to get income from other occupations.

Recommendations

Being one of the oldest industries and distinguishing features of Ilocos Sur, the furniture-making industry must be preserved and developed. Government agencies should give assistance to the furniture-makers by lending them money for their capital and by providing them opportunities for a better promotion of their products. Quality of products priced reasonably should always be a top consideration for those involved in the furniture industry.

References

- Ruelos, A. 2002. *"San Vicente Furniture Factory of the Ilocos."* Samtoy. Vigan City: Tawid ti Ilocos Foundation, Inc. Vol. IV. No. 1.

