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Role of Cultural Values on the Consumption of Timber for Architectural Purposes

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Abstract

Cultural values play a unique role in consumption decision of goods and services in general. This study aimed to identify the impact of cultural values on consumption decision of timber for the architectural purposes, especially on house construction in Sri Lanka and dilemma between physical properties of timber and cultural values. The sample included a range of professional carpenters (12), contractors of housing projects (08), timber stores owners (05) and consumers (30) engage in house construction. Story telling exercise was performed with aged and experienced carpenters, timber stores owners and contractors to obtain the insights on cultural values associated with the selection of timber for architectural purposes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by telephone with individuals selected for relevant practical knowledge of cultural values associated with various types of timber. All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed into qualitative tool. Local knowledge, traditions and experience were key tools in interpretation of various cultural values attached to the types of timber. Cultural histories, stories, experiences and recommendations of adults and the trustworthy carpenter heavily influence the purchase intention of the consumers. Intangible benefits such as religious, social, and cultural values associated with different timber types were influential in consumer decision. Moral and spiritual wellbeing were influential compared to economic benefits. Little or poor consumer knowledge on identification of timber types and heavy dependency on carpenters and contractors on identification of timber pushes consumers towards irrational purchase decisions. Super luxury, luxury and special class timber were usually replaced by the substitutes.

Keywords: Architectural purposes, Cultural values, Timber consumption