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ANALYSIS OF SELECTED MARKETING ELEMENTS IN SHAPING A COMPANY'S IMAGE

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Purpose: The aim of the article is to analyse and present a marketing strategy for product placement in the high-end segment, based on data from a furniture company. In addition, the article identifies the key role of trade show in building brand image and the company's market position.
Design/methodology/approach: The article is exploratory in nature and focuses on the process of shaping the image of a product intended for the luxury goods market. The data on turnover, profit, orders and promotional expenditure made it possible to analyse the strategy adopted by the company. The article also includes a review of the literature related to this issue.
Findings: The study demonstrated that the process of placing a product on the industrial goods market requires a carefully planned, long-term and costly strategy.
Originality/value: The article proposes viewing a luxury product as the result of a series of carefully considered actions.
Keywords: Marketing, promotion, product placement, high-end segment.
Category of the paper: Case study.

1. Introduction

The decade spanning 2015-2025 has gone down in the history of marketing as a time of fundamental transformation, with the technology, the ubiquity of data and the evolution of consumer attitudes completely changing the rules of the game. The traditional approach based on mass communication faded, giving way to a strategy focused on individual experiences and real needs of specific individuals. The main driving force behind these changes was advancing digitalisation, which opened the door to the collection and processing of vast data sets. It was precisely through the analysis of these data that marketing ceased to rely on intuition and

began to be based on hard facts, known as data-driven marketing. This allowed companies to attain unprecedented precision in defining their target groups and building fully personalized messages. At the same time, brands began to place enormous emphasis on accurate mapping of the entire customer journey, taking care over the quality of interaction at every touchpoint with the brand in order to build lasting relationships and ensure the highest standard of experience at every stage of the purchasing process (Boudet et al., 2019; Kotler et al., 2016).

The contemporary evolution of marketing has placed particular emphasis on customer experience management, where the product is no longer the only point of reference, and the emotions and impressions accompanying the entire relationship with the brand have become important. The cornerstone of this strategy is the omnichannel model, giving full synergy and consistency in messaging between the digital world and physical retail locations. Attention should be drawn to the important fact that social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have played a key role in building genuine brand engagement. At the same time, these processes have been bolstered by rapid automation and the implementation of AI, which — thanks to customer relationship management systems (HubSpot, Salesforce) — has enabled precise relationship management and personalized communication on a mass scale. This technological revolution has been completed by the widespread use of chatbots and advanced predictive algorithms, which not only streamlined service standards but also allowed brands to accurately anticipate consumers' future needs (Kotler et al., 2021; Lemon, Verhoef, 2016).

Alongside technological progress, this decade has seen the rise of influencer marketing and the popularisation of user-generated content, allowing brands to build a far more authentic image and reach niche audiences. Micro-influencers have become crucial in this process; by building deeper trust with their audiences, they have often proven more effective than major celebrities, forcing brands to be more honest and transparent in their communications. This shift towards authenticity coincided with the growing importance of value-based marketing and the idea of corporate social responsibility, as today's customers attach great importance to companies' ethical standards, their commitment to environmental sustainability, and their genuine engagement in addressing social issues. As a result, companies integrated sustainable development strategies into their core brand messaging, transforming marketing from a simple sales instrument into the foundation of long-term relationships with customers based on trust and shared values (Berger, 2014; Godin, 2018; Kotler et al., 2016).

Contemporary marketing techniques have focused on attracting audiences through valuable content such as blogs and webinars, which has allowed brands to build an expert image and use storytelling to engage customers. At the same time, performance marketing — which allows for precise measurement of specific results — and growth hacking, or rapid testing of innovative ideas to drive dynamic growth, have gained enormous importance. The entire landscape has been dominated by the digital world, with SEO and search engine marketing campaigns, email marketing, and the extremely popular video marketing in the form of short

videos on TikTok or Instagram becoming the standard. This modern marketing approach has been complemented by interactive tools, such as quizzes and the blending of the real and digital worlds, which, combined with widespread automation and personalization, enable brands to effectively build lasting loyalty and close relationships with consumers (Dave Chaffey, 2019; IAB Polska, 2025; Ryan, Jones, 2012).

Over the past decade, the rapid growth of marketing in the Polish furniture sector has been driven by international expansion (private labels, diversification of sales markets), large-scale digitalization, and the pursuit of a competitive advantage on the international stage. As one of the world's leading exporters in the industry, Poland has moved away from competing solely on price in favour of building the image of "Polish furniture" as a synonym for high quality, modern design and reliability. Strategic promotional activities, carried out in cooperation with institutions such as the Polish Investment and Trade Agency, are based on participation in prestigious trade shows and precise tailoring of the offering to the specific cultural needs of global audiences, which helps build a cohesive and recognizable national brand (Polska Agencja Inwestycji i Handlu, 2025a, 2025b).

Modern marketing in the furniture industry is based on a strong customer focus, manifested in the flexible adaptation of the product portfolio to rapidly evolving interior design trends and individual preferences of buyers. Product offering personalization has become a key pillar of a competitive advantage; thanks to thorough market research, it allows companies to precisely address the specific expectations of diverse customer groups. At the same time, manufacturers are placing a strong emphasis on omnichannel strategies that integrate digital channels with traditional brick-and-mortar retail to ensure a consistent customer experience and convenience at every stage of the complex purchasing journey. The use of advanced customer journey analysis (viewing the company through the eyes of the customer) and user behavior tracking tools enables companies to optimise the customer experience, creating a seamless transition from seeking inspiration online to finalizing a transaction in-store (IAB Polska, 2025; Polska Agencja Inwestycji i Handlu, 2025b).

Marketing in the furniture sector is based on the synergy between traditional methods and modern communication channels, with a key focus on participation in prestigious international trade shows, professional public relations activities, and strategic collaboration with architects and interior designers. The industry is increasingly focusing on content marketing, using inspiring videos, interior design guides and social media to build lasting relationships with customers and boost their engagement. On a global scale, the internationalisation is supported by reliable industry reports and market analyses which — often distributed with the support of institutions such as the Polish Investment and Trade Agency — build the credibility of domestic manufacturers among foreign business partners. Such an integrated range of promotional tools not only boosts the recognition of specific brands but also effectively positions the entire Polish furniture industry as a modern, professional sector ready for global challenges (Polska Agencja Inwestycji i Handlu).

To summarize the above, the past decade has been a period of radical transformation for the Polish furniture industry, in which the traditional sales approach has given way to advanced analytics and strategies focused on building deep relationships with customers. The foundation of modern marketing here is the close integration of digitalisation processes with dynamic foreign expansion, which has allowed to successfully establish Polish design as a global synonym for high quality and innovation. By adopting a philosophy based on precisely mapping the customer experience and responding flexibly to trends, the industry has not only cemented its position as one of the world's leading exporters but has also transformed one-way communication into an authentic dialogue with consumers. As a result, the market success of today's furniture manufacturers now depends on skillfully combining modern promotional tools with the creation of real value, making this sector one of the most progressive and strategic areas of the national economy (Dave Chaffey, 2019; Godin, 2018; Kotler et al., 2021; Polska Agencja Inwestycji i Handlu, 2025a).

2. Development of the Furniture Sector in Poland in 2015-2025

The furniture industry is one of the pillars of the Polish manufacturing sector and is of strategic macroeconomic importance, as evidenced by Poland's rise to become the world's second-largest furniture exporter in 2025. This heavily export-oriented industry sells as much as 60–80% of its production on foreign markets, which, on the one hand, reflects its global expansion and, on the other, its heavy dependence on international economic conditions. The foundation of this success, which was particularly evident between 2015 and 2019 — when the sector recorded robust average annual production growth of 7-8% — was based on relatively low labour costs, economies of scale and full integration into the European Union's single market. In addition, this rapid growth and building a sustainable competitive advantage during the period under analysis were driven by substantial capital expenditures, extensive modernisation of machinery, and the ongoing automation of manufacturing processes (Chrostowski, 2025; Eurostat, 2026; Jagodziński, 2025; Polska Branża Meblarska w 2024 Roku - Eksport, Wyzwania i Nowe Perspektywy, 2025). The years 2020-2023 were marked by considerable turbulence. The initial decline caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was offset relatively quickly by a sharp increase in demand, driven by the widespread adoption of remote work and a shift in consumer spending toward household refurbishments. Nevertheless, 2023 saw a drastic collapse, resulting in a year-on-year decline in production of around 6.8%. This decline was a direct result of the energy crisis, a sharp rise in raw material prices and wage pressures, all of which were linked to a Europe-wide economic slowdown (Chrostowski, 2025; Credit Agricole Bank Polska, 2025; Polska Branża Meblarska w 2024 Roku - Eksport, Wyzwania i Nowe Perspektywy, 2025).

The 2024-2025 period brought the long-awaited stabilization and signs of recovery to the furniture market, as evidenced by a 3.4% year-over-year increase in production in 2025, which followed a previous 4-5% decline in 2024, when the value of sold production stood at approximately PLN 64 billion (Jagodziński, 2025; Polska Branża Meblarska w 2024 Roku - Eksport, Wyzwania i Nowe Perspektywy, 2025). Although this positive momentum signals the industry's gradual adaptation to new market realities, the earlier crisis strongly affected companies' financial condition. In 2023-2024, the operating margin shrank to around 5.2%, while constantly rising labour costs remain a permanent barrier to development and a factor limiting profitability compared with the period before 2020 (Credit Agricole Bank Polska, 2025; Jagodziński, 2025; Polska Branża Meblarska w 2024 Roku - Eksport, Wyzwania i Nowe Perspektywy, 2025). Despite these internal cost pressures, the sector's key pillar, i.e. exports, shows considerable structural resilience; after a temporary collapse in 2023-2024, 2025 brought a renewed revival in external demand, driven mainly by European Union markets (generating around 80% of shipments, of which 30-35% to Germany), as well as the United Kingdom, France, the Czech Republic and the USA (Eurostat, 2026; Forbes Polska, 2025; Jagodziński, 2025; Polska Branża Meblarska w 2024 Roku - Eksport, Wyzwania i Nowe Perspektywy, 2025). Importantly, dynamic international expansion — representing a major leap compared with the baseline export value of EUR 8.8 billion in 2015 — allows Poland to maintain a deeply positive trade balance on a permanent basis, despite the fact that furniture imports from Asia and the EU are also rising rapidly (from EUR 1.5 billion in 2015 to EUR 3.63 billion in 2024), which drastically intensifies price competition on the domestic market (Eurostat, 2026; Ministerstwo Rozwoju i Technologii, 2024; Polska Branża Meblarska w 2024 Roku - Eksport, Wyzwania i Nowe Perspektywy, 2025).

3. An Analysis of Selected Marketing Elements of a Furniture Company

The furniture company under review is part of a diversified family-owned business. According to EU and Polish law, it is a small business (< 50 employees: < EUR 10 million) that has been in operation since 2000. Taking into account its technological facilities (e.g. paint shop), full production capacity was achieved in 2014. Since then, the company owner has sought to position its products in the high-end segment. Figure 1 presents the product life cycle for the case under discussion.

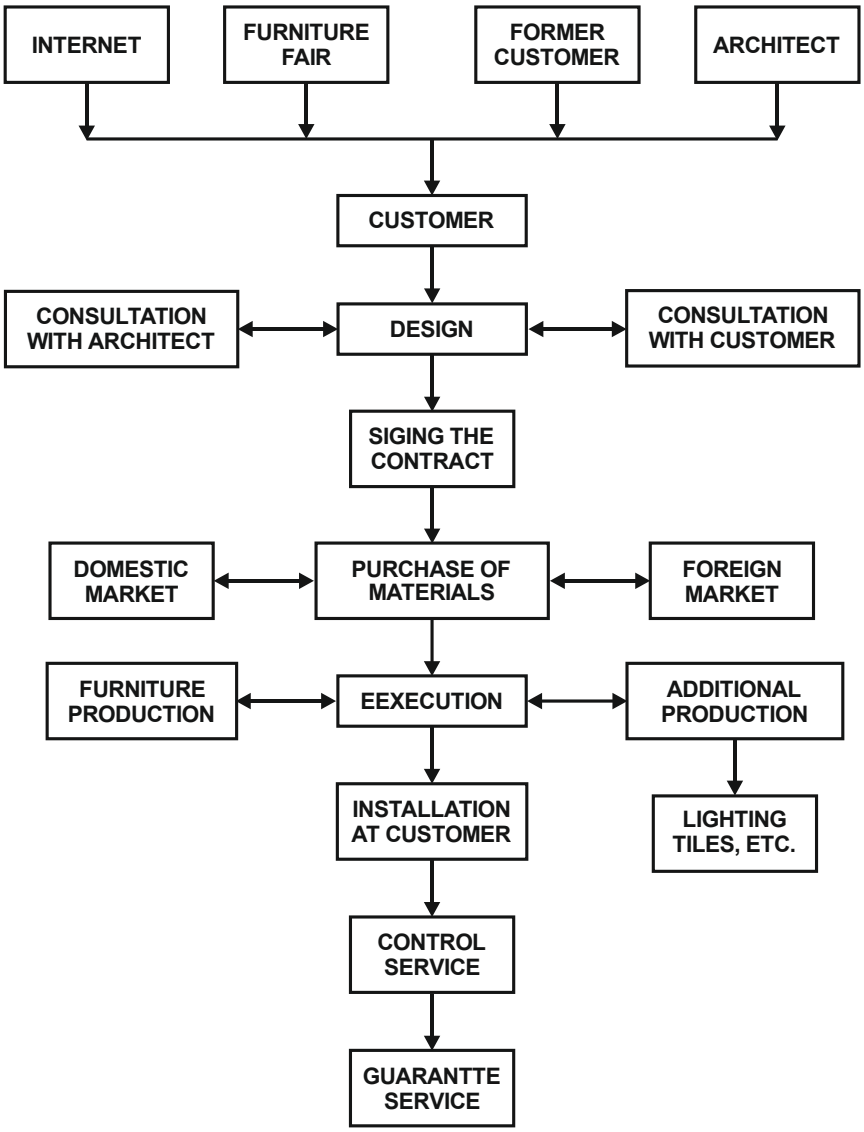

Figure 1. Execution of the work process – furniture manufacturing.

Source: own elaboration.

In the early stages of the company's development, marketing activities were primarily based on the Internet — search engine optimization, Instagram, and Facebook. Later on, the word-of-mouth marketing took effect, and satisfied customers gradually built the company's brand. The continuous expansion of the offering, up to the point of furnishing entire homes, forced the company to establish contacts with architects. Currently, collaboration on joint projects involves both foreign and domestic locations, such as: Zurich, Como, Oslo, Munich, as well as Gdańsk, Gdynia, Łódź, Częstochowa, Wrocław, Warsaw (six designers), Płock, Łowicz and Sochaczew. Participation in specialist furniture trade shows, in turn, contributed to the idea of opening eight showrooms (franchises), including in Warsaw, Gdańsk, Poznań and Częstochowa.

Depending on the type of order, the company prepares a detailed action plan either on its own or in collaboration with an architect. In each case, it is consulted in detail with the client. At this stage, stakeholders determine not only the type of furniture and materials, but also the layout, taking into account the individual needs and characteristics of the potential user (e.g. height, intended use of shelves, accessories, etc.). Consultations end up with the signing of a contract and setting of a price that remains fixed until the order is completed.

The unique nature of each design requires the purchase of specific materials and accessories. Purchases are made both on the domestic and foreign markets (e.g. timber from China, India, Brazil, etc.). In order to meet clients' various wishes, the company also works with 17 suppliers of kitchen and bathroom fittings.

The completion process of a given order itself takes from 1.5 to 6 months and depends on the specification (entire house, kitchen, bathroom, dressing room, etc.) and the scope of the work (installation, tiles, floors, ceilings, lighting, etc.). According to manufacturers' declarations, the warranty for fittings such as Blum is 17 years, for accessories 5 years, and for furniture from 2.5 to 8 years. Additionally, servicing is carried out after 0.5 years and after 2 years in order to remove any minor defects.

Figures 2-4 present company data showing its revenue, profit, and number of orders for the years 2024-2025. Individual figures were expressed as percentages relative to the values from January 2024.

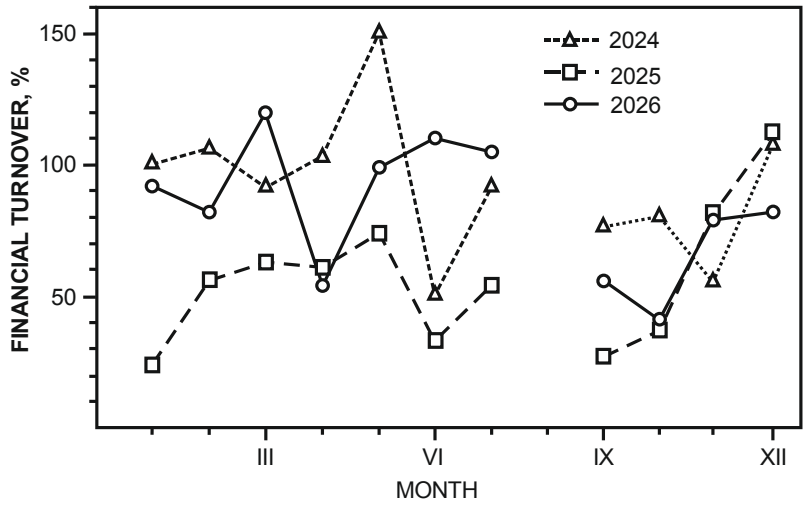

Figure 2. Percentage ratio of the company's turnover in 2024-2026 compared to January 2024.
Source: own elaboration.

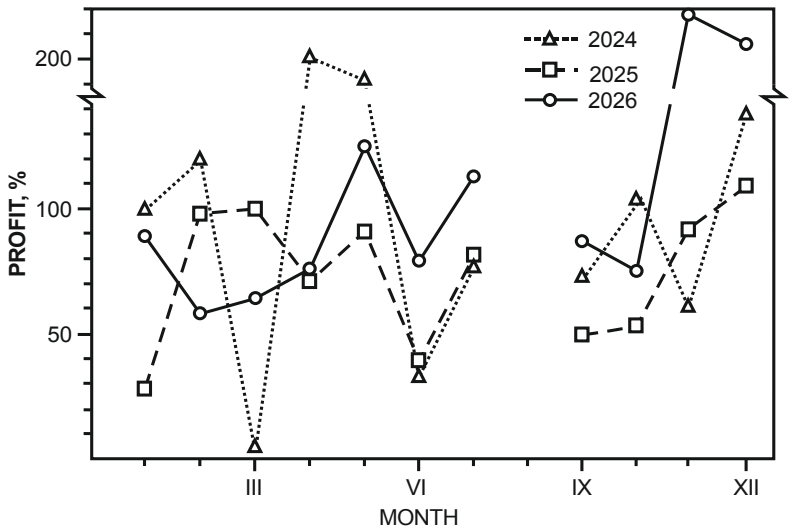

Figure 3. Percentage ratio of the company's profits in 2024-2026 compared to January 2024. Source: own elaboration.

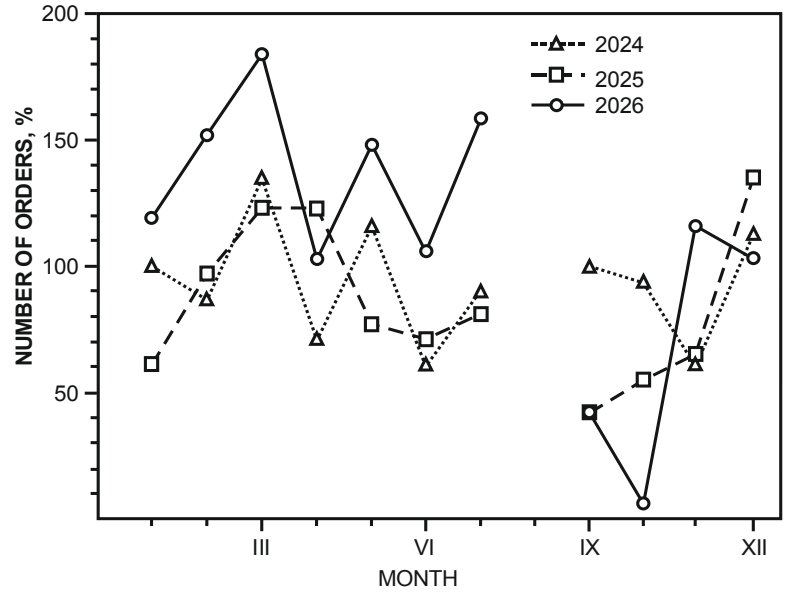

Figure 4. Percentage ratio of the company's number of orders in 2024-2026 compared to January 2024. Source: own elaboration.

As can be seen from the figures presented, both turnover and profit peaked in 2024 and, conversely, hit their lowest point in 2025. The figures for 2026 are based on actual data as of March 31. The following months (August — the holiday month) already include booked orders, the completion of which depends, for example, on the date a given investment is to be commissioned for use. With this in mind, it can be concluded that the current year will be the best in the entire period under consideration. New projects in the coming months may only reinforce this trend. Particular attention should be paid to the fact that these changes may have occurred as a result of the company's promotion at the Warsaw Home 2025 trade show (22-25 October). These are the largest international professional trade show in Central and Eastern Europe (stands, catalogues, events, etc.) presenting furniture, kitchen and bathroom equipment, and design.

Until now, the company has relied exclusively on online channels — its website, Facebook, and Instagram — as its primary form of active promotion. Presenting its offering at such a prestigious industry event required a significant organizational effort. Financial expenditures played a particularly important role here, including: exhibition space rental, designer, transportation, accommodation, setup, booth construction, lighting, kitchen (display), dressing room (display), accessories (BLUM, PECA, REJS), sofa, wallpaper, carpet, flowers, an advertising banner, a photographer, flyers, business cards, online promotion, catering, company uniforms, and a sponsored interview in a newspaper.

In total, all costs related to participation in the trade show and its accompanying events amounted to approximately PLN 800,000. These expenses — particularly when compared to past promotional costs (2024/2025: approx. PLN 60,000) — are more than a dozen times higher and significantly burden the company's overall balance sheet.

Positioning products in the high-end segment requires the adoption of an appropriate strategy. The company is aware of this and is gradually implementing a coherent 4P marketing mix concept:

- product – top quality, the finest materials, partly handcrafted workmanship, attention to detail, limited production,
- price – competitive (raised after the trade show), conveys the product's exclusivity,
- place – limited and based on direct contact with the customer; the creation of luxury showrooms is currently under way,
- promotion – maintaining good relations with former and current customers, building the brand image through the internet, catalogues and trade shows.

4. Summary

The furniture company under review, operating in the market, has prioritized quality of workmanship since its founding. The gradual development of a professional team, its integration (e.g., through joint, owner-financed family vacations to Tunisia), and the use of the finest materials allowed it to gradually build a luxury brand image and establish itself on the domestic market. Another crucial element of premium furniture manufacturers' promotion is collaboration with architects and interior designers, who are increasingly serving as opinion leaders and participating in customers' purchasing decisions. A specialist's recommendation increases the manufacturer's credibility and reduces perceived risk for buyers, especially in the case of high-value products (Kotler, Keller, 2016). Therefore, companies develop partnership programs, offer design support, and provide dedicated services to architectural firms.

Attention to customers, taking into account their needs and wishes, contributed to an increase in orders. In theory, word-of-mouth marketing and online promotion, as well as personalized offerings (Berginc, 2021), guaranteed orders that exhausted the company's limited production capacity. In the case of luxury and premium goods, positive user experiences are one of the most important sources of information used in the purchasing process. Informal recommendations are often perceived as more credible than traditional advertising, which fosters brand reputation and long-term customer loyalty (Rosen, 2009).

Participation in international trade fairs was another significant step in the company's development. Trade fairs serve not only a sales function but, above all, an image-building one, enabling the presentation of quality craftsmanship, design, and innovative technological solutions. At the same time, they serve as a platform for building business relationships and exchanging knowledge between manufacturers, designers, and end users, which is particularly important in the premium segment for building brand trust (Gębarowski, 2010).

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