

ARRIVES

IS THE FURNITURE PRODUCTION SECTOR FOR YOU?

Business and job
opportunities in Nigeria

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ABOUT THE PAPER

This furniture sector profile has been developed within the framework of the ARRIVES project. It provides detailed insights to guide returnees and other stakeholders interested in entering the furniture sector in Nigeria. It covers essential aspects of the broader industry, from market dynamics and emerging opportunities to key challenges and financial planning.

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A wooden bowl with intricate carvings resting on a wooden stand with a carved base. The bowl is dark brown with a wide rim and a deep, rounded body. It features a series of raised, curved ridges around its circumference. The stand is made of light-colored wood and has a wide, flat top surface. The base of the stand is decorated with a complex, symmetrical carving pattern. The background is softly blurred, showing more wooden objects and a warm, natural light.

ARRIVES provides holistic, **individualized assistance** throughout the entire reintegration journey—from the decision to return and the development of a business idea to establishing a business or entering employment in Nigeria.



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ACRONYMS

Unless otherwise specified, all references to dollars (\$) are to United States dollars and all references to tons are to metric tons. As of 5 May 2025, \$1 was equal to ₦1,605.

CNC	Computer numerical control
HDF	High-density fibreboard
ITC	International Trade Centre
Kgm³	Kilogram per cubic metre
MAN	Manufacturers Association of Nigeria
MDF	Medium-density fibreboard
MFC	Melamine-faced chipboard
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Furniture production is a major subsector in Nigeria's manufacturing industry, offering both employment opportunities and avenues for entrepreneurship. Nigeria's status as a net importer of furniture highlights the sector's substantial untapped potential and growing market demand. With its alignment with urbanization trends and the increasing demand from the middle class, the furniture sector represents an attractive investment opportunity. It also offers many prospects for returnees looking to start a business.

This profile provides detailed insights to guide returnees and other stakeholders interested in entering the furniture production sector. It covers essential aspects of the industry, including market dynamics, emerging opportunities, key challenges and financial planning.

- 1. Overview of Nigeria's furniture production sector:** This section examines market trends and growth drivers in Nigeria. It highlights key players, regulatory frameworks and value-chain stages, offering returnees a clear understanding of market dynamics and entry points.
- 2. Opportunities for entrepreneurs:** The furniture production sector offers many investment opportunities. Producing custom furniture and offering affordable options for schools, offices and hotels remains a profitable and value-added service. This section evaluates these opportunities, detailing their pros and cons.

- 3. Key stakeholders in the sector:** This section identifies the major stakeholders, including government bodies, trade associations and international organizations. It outlines relevant policies, programmes and benefits to help returnees navigate the sector's regulatory environment.

- 4. Challenges and barriers:** Although promising, the furniture sector faces several challenges, including raw material shortages, high production costs and competition from imported products. This section examines these barriers and proposes strategies to mitigate them, including leveraging local partnerships and adopting innovative technologies.

- 5. Labour market insights:** This chapter assesses job opportunities in carpentry, design, upholstery and related fields, identifying essential skills and training resources. It also highlights job growth potential and expected income levels to help returnees build their expertise and employability.

- 6. Financial aspects:** This section outlines the capital requirements for starting a furniture business. It also explores funding options and potential returns to help returnees make informed investment decisions.

Nigeria's status as a net importer of furniture highlights the sector's substantial untapped potential and growing market demand.



▶ CHAPTER 1 ▶

Sector overview

Nigeria's furniture sector is a \$5 billion industry with significant growth potential, driven by urbanization, a growing middle class and increasing consumer preference for modern, durable and customized furniture designs. The market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 2.93% from 2025 to 2029 (Statista, 2025a), indicating expanding opportunities for local manufacturers and entrepreneurs.

Nigeria is a net importer of furniture, with imports topping \$343 million in 2023 (Nigerian Finder, 2018). This highlights the wide gap between local production and demand, as well as the challenges that local manufacturers face in scaling their production and competing with international brands.

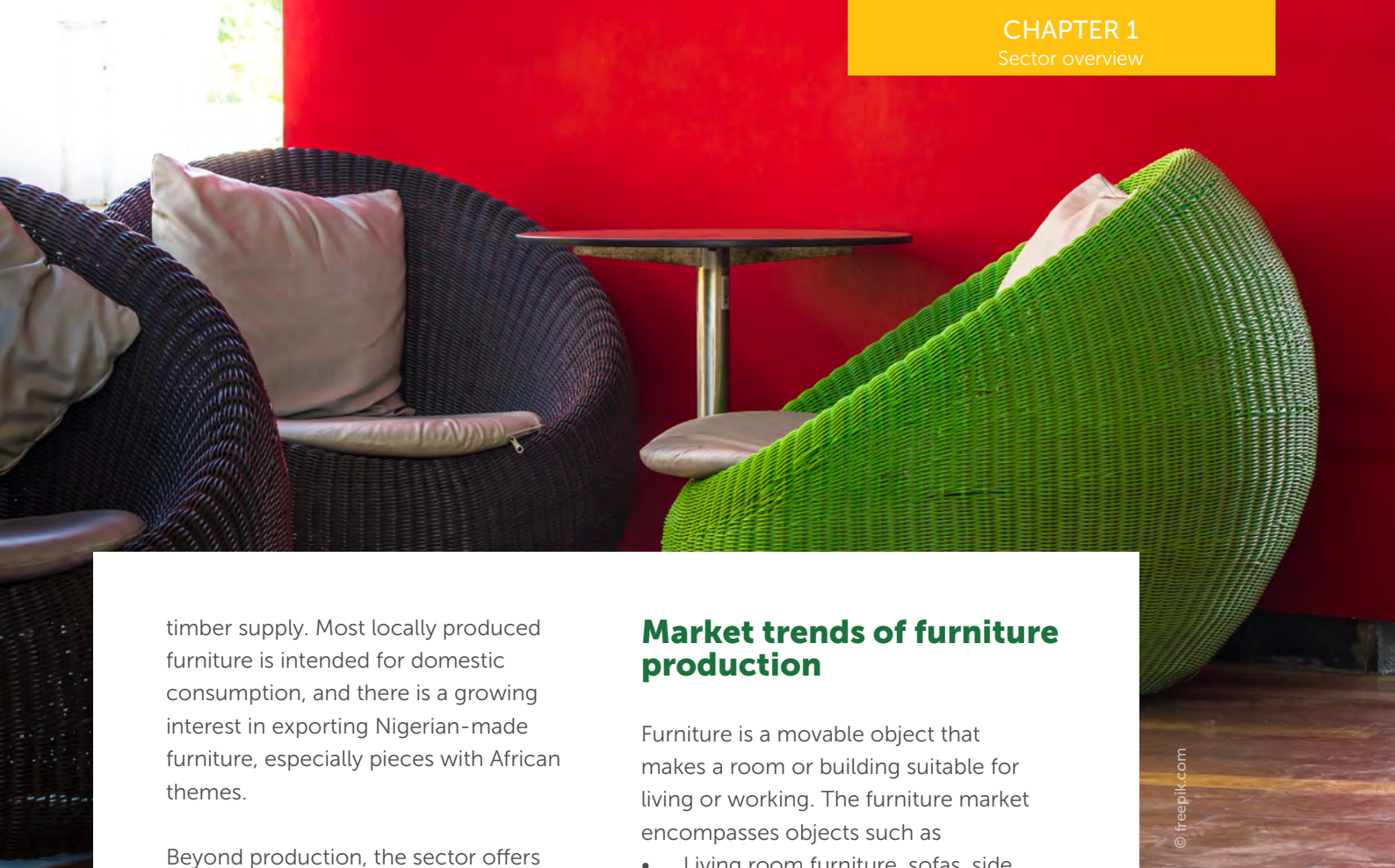
With the population projected to reach about 400 million by 2050, furniture consumption will continue to rise (United Nations Population Fund, 2023). The country's annual urbanization rate of 4.2% fuels the demand for residential and commercial furniture, particularly in densely populated cities. Urban areas, such as Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt, account for some 70% of the market,

primarily due to higher disposable incomes and rapid development.

There has been a shift towards modern and stylish furniture designs, with consumers increasingly seeking pieces with both functional and aesthetic purposes, adding value to their homes. This trend is characterized by demand for contemporary furniture that features sleek designs, innovative materials and a balance of durability and affordability.

The growing popularity of e-commerce also influences the Nigerian furniture markets. E-commerce platforms enable entrepreneurs to reach broader audiences, providing access to domestic and international markets. This trend is likely to continue as more Nigerians gain access to the internet and become accustomed to online shopping.

The industry spans artisanal workshops, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and large-scale manufacturers. This scalability allows entrepreneurs to operate at varying levels of investment and expertise. Nigeria's vast forest resources – covering more than 10 million hectares – provide a substantial



timber supply. Most locally produced furniture is intended for domestic consumption, and there is a growing interest in exporting Nigerian-made furniture, especially pieces with African themes.

Beyond production, the sector offers opportunities in value-added services, including repair, refurbishment, interior design consulting and the production of accessories such as cushions and upholstery. Additionally, producing furniture components such as screws, hinges and decorative fittings locally can reduce dependence on imports and stimulate growth along the value chain.

Despite its promising outlook, the sector faces challenges, including raw material shortages linked to its dependence on imports such as metal fittings and machinery, which drive up costs. Perceived quality and cost advantages, high production costs and the unreliability of electricity – as well as poor logistics, which affects efficiency – often gives an edge to competitors from international markets, notably China (Ozigbo, 2016). Deforestation and inadequate sustainable management practices hinder the optimal use of Nigeria's timber resources.

Market trends of furniture production

Furniture is a movable object that makes a room or building suitable for living or working. The furniture market encompasses objects such as

- Living room furniture, sofas, side tables and media cabinets;
- Bedroom furniture: beds, mattresses, closets, nightstands, dressers and bedding;
- Kitchen and dining furniture: dining tables, kitchen islands and kitchenware.
- Outdoor furniture: chairs, tables, sofas and loungers, at best, made from weather-resistant materials such as polyester;
- Home office furniture: desks, chairs, bookcases and filing cabinets;
- Home décor: accessories for aesthetic appeal, including decorations.

Demand is growing for handcrafted furniture made in Nigeria, reflecting a preference for traditional artisanship and support for local artisans. The largest segment is living room furniture, valued at \$1.71 billion (Statista, 2025a). Prices vary based on product type, size and material. The costs of imported raw materials and fluctuations in foreign exchange rates affect the market.

Beyond production, the furniture sector in Nigeria offers opportunities in value-added services, including repair, refurbishment, interior design consulting and the production of accessories such as cushions and upholstery.



Nigeria's furniture sector is a

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growth potential



Market projected annual
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Nigeria is a net importer of furniture,
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With the population expected to hit

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Lagos, Abuja and
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Nigeria's annual
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Nigeria's vast forest resources
covering more than

10 million

hectares – provide a substantial
timber supply

The largest segment in Nigeria's
furniture sector is living room
furniture, valued at
\$1.71 billion





Table 1: Average prices of standard furniture pieces

Furniture type	Furniture	Price
Bed	Single - queen/king-size bed	₦170,000–₦370,000
Sofa set	Traditional sofa set / L-shaped sectional sofa set (7-seater)	₦450,000
Bedroom cabinet	Medium to large size cupboard	₦200,000–₦350,000
Dining set	Small-medium to large dining set (2–4- 6-seater)	₦350,000–₦700,000
Kitchen cabinet	Single - medium (L-shaped kitchen) to large kitchen (L-shaped with an island)	₦400,000–₦700,000– ₦2,500,000

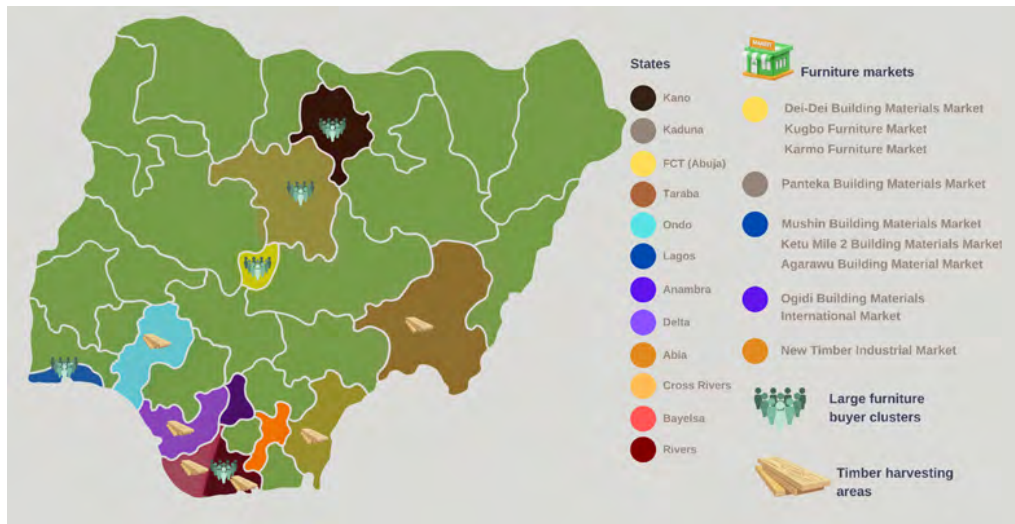
Source: International Trade Centre (ITC)

Nigeria's furniture sector is organized in clusters where stakeholders collaborate. These clusters, which are important for furniture production, sales and distribution, include the following:

- Mushin, Lagos: A major hub for wood processing and the manufacture of home and office furniture
- Oshodi-Isolo, Lagos: Known for a mix of locally made and imported furniture, with many showrooms
- Orile-Coker, Lagos: We produce high-volume products, including custom woodwork
- Aba, Abia State: Focused on handcrafted and custom-made furniture
- Onitsha, Anambra State: A key market for wholesale and retail furniture
- Pantaker Market in Kaduna: An emerging hub for furniture artisanship in the north
- Dei-Dei Building Materials Market in Abuja: A prominent location for construction materials and furniture

These clusters bring together carpenters, suppliers and traders to enhance the furniture industry. Figure 1 shows the timber harvest areas, which are mainly located in the southwest of the country, behind the large furniture production and buyer clusters.

Figure 1: Mapping of furniture markets cluster and timber harvesting areas



Source: ITC based on field interviews

As shown in Figure 2, imports have increased steadily over the years, reflecting growing demand for furniture. Imports of furniture and parts (HS 9403) followed a similar upward trend, peaking in 2022 before declining slightly in 2023. This decline may be due to increased local production or economic constraints. The consistent rise in imports signals strong domestic demand, enabling local producers to substitute imports and meet the local market's needs.

While export values remain modest compared to imports, the upward trajectory suggests opportunities for entrepreneurs focusing on export markets. This gradual export growth highlights the potential for Nigerian manufacturers, particularly in African-themed designs and competitive pricing.

Figure 2: Trend in furniture imports

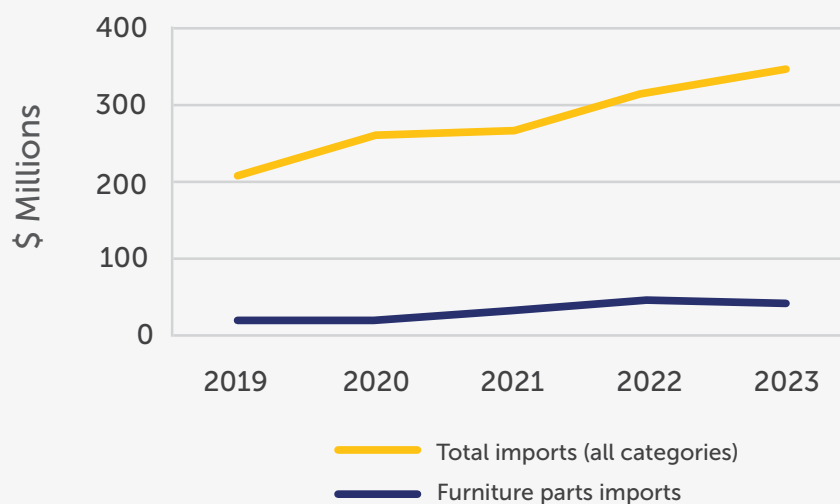
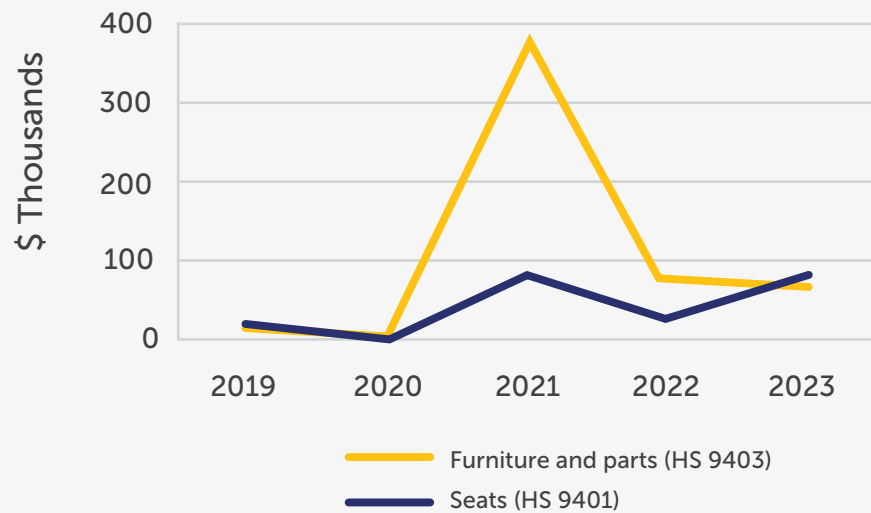


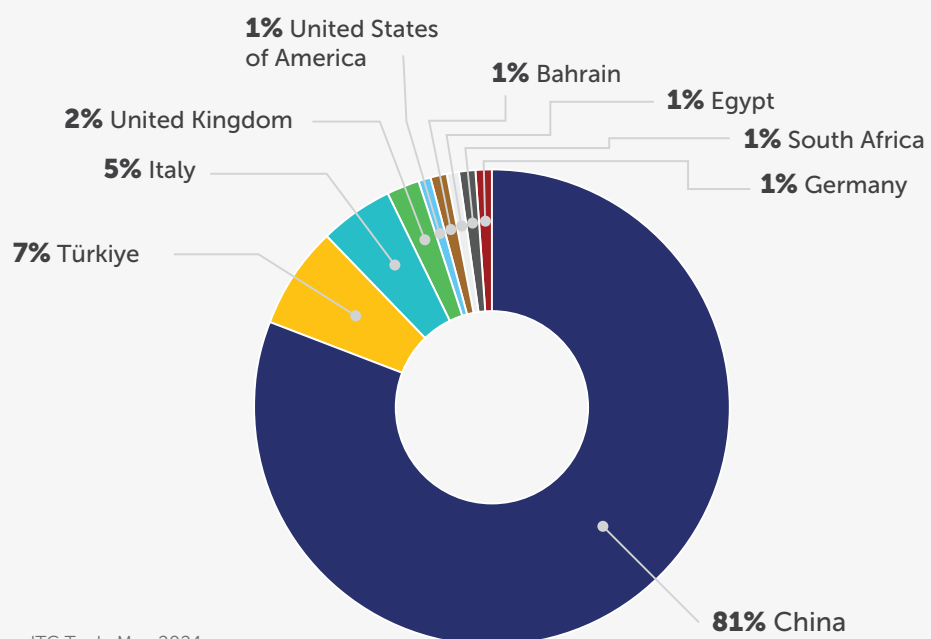
Figure 3: Trend in furniture exports



Source: ITC Trade Map 2024

China is the dominant supplier, accounting for 81% of Nigeria's furniture imports. Other contributors include Türkiye, Italy and the United Kingdom, which provide specialized or high-quality furniture products, representing 7%, 5% and 2%, respectively. Nigeria's dependence on imported furniture and materials underscores the need to enhance local production capabilities and improve access to affordable raw materials.

Figure 4: Top exporters of furniture to Nigeria in 2023

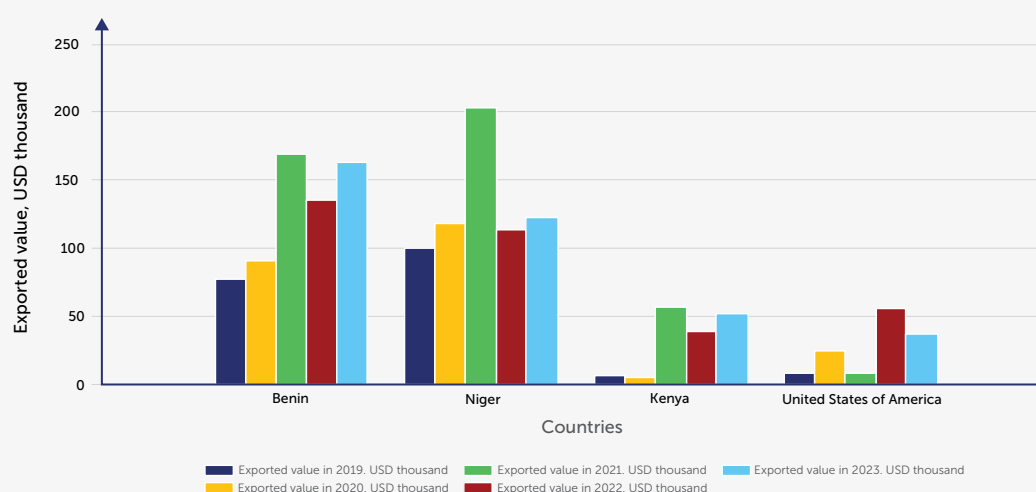


Source: ITC Trade Map 2024

In 2023, the leading export markets for Nigerian furniture were Benin, with sales amounting to \$162,000, and Niger, at \$122,000, highlighting strong demand from neighbouring countries. The United States, with a contribution of \$36,000, also present promising opportunities for Nigerian furniture producers seeking to expand into international markets. Many exports go to other African countries, underscoring the region's strength. Kenya, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda collectively account for many these exports.

Figure 5: Importing markets for furniture products (2019–2022)

List of importing markets for a product exported by Nigeria (Mirror)Product: 9403 Furniture and parts thereof. N.E.S. (excl. seats and medical, surgical, dental or veterinary furniture)



Source: ITC Trade Map 2024

Value chain mapping

The furniture production value chain in Nigeria comprises several key stages: raw material sourcing, pre-production, production, distribution and marketing, and market penetration.

Raw material sourcing

Nigeria's furniture industry relies heavily on wood – primarily mahogany, iroko and teak from forests in Bayelsa, Benin, Delta and Cross River, with softwood sourced from Taraba. Engineered wooden boards, such as medium-density fibreboard (MDF), high-density fibreboard (HDF), melamine-faced chipboard (MFC) and plywood, are primarily imported from China, Republic of Korea and Türkiye. The industry also uses metal for frames and plastics for various applications, while upholstery materials include microfibre fabrics, leather and foam.

The equipment ranges from essential tools to advanced machinery, including computer numerical control (CNC) routers. Most accessories, such as chair legs and drawer slides, are imported. Foreign brands including Bosch are expanding their equipment business in Nigeria, and there is a growing second-hand tool market. Key players include Evan CEO Wood Ltd, Rongtai Wood (Nigeria) Co. and the Dei-Dei Regional Timber Market.

Pre-processing

The pre-processing stage focuses on preparing raw materials for furniture production, involving harvesting timber, sawing and drying. Forests in regions such as Cross River, Delta and Bayelsa, as well as softwoods from Taraba, are harvested for timber. The logs are converted into manageable lumber on-site before being transported to timber markets nationwide. They may undergo a proper drying process, typically using kilns or air-drying methods, which ensures the stability and durability of the wood.

Production

The production landscape for furniture includes artisanal workshops and industrial manufacturing units. Artisanal workshops specialize in custom furniture in large markets and collaborate with specialized vendors for tasks like cutting and finishing. In contrast, industrial units integrate production processes – from design to finishing – at a single location, focusing on high-volume output with lean techniques and automation.

Furniture production involves several key stages. Initial discussions between clients and designers about styles, materials and finishes result in customized plans tailored to each client's preferences and budget. Once the design is finalized, raw materials are procured and processed, including cutting, shaping and treatment for quality and durability. The assembly stage connects components using different techniques, followed by finishing to enhance aesthetics and provide protection.

While traditional artisanship is valued, there is a trend towards mechanization to enhance efficiency and quality. Sofas, dining sets and beds require specialized processes, such as upholstery and surface treatments. More prominent manufacturers often use durable, branded packaging, while smaller producers prioritize cost-effectiveness.

Distribution and sales channels

After furniture is manufactured, it is stored in warehouses and then transported to consumers via road or logistics partners. Distribution occurs through physical stores or online platforms, with traditional markets and showrooms remaining important even as urban consumers increasingly seek the convenience of online shopping.

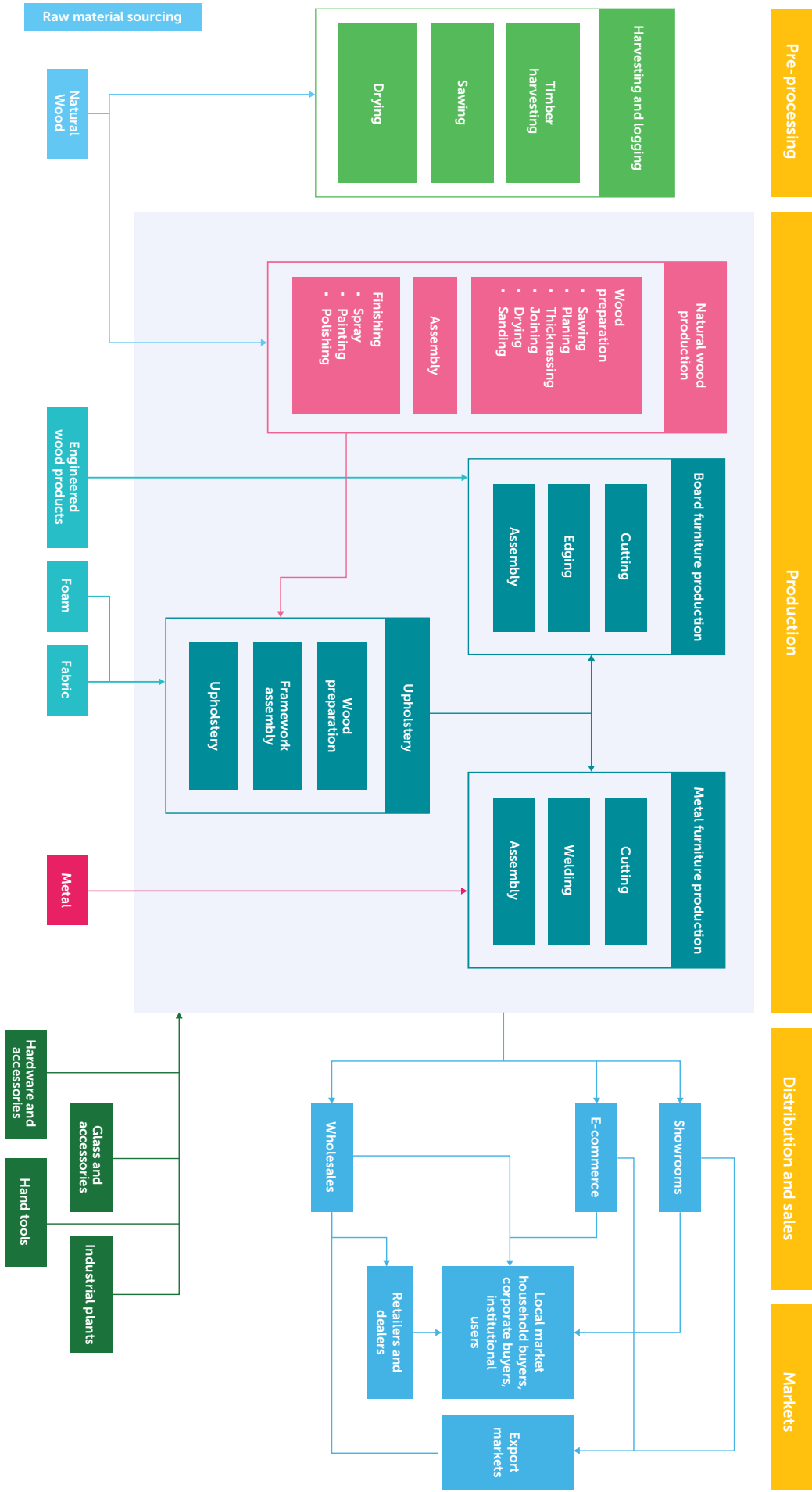
Many producers adopt a direct-to-consumer model, especially for custom orders, and rely on referrals for new clients. Social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp are popular for e-commerce, particularly among women, who are the primary purchasers. Consequently, businesses are investing in content creation on these platforms, with outlets such as Jumia and Konga growing in importance among urban consumers. Adequate transportation and logistics are essential for timely deliveries and to minimize damage during transit.

Markets

Consumers in Nigeria traditionally prefer customization but are leaning more towards modern, stylish furniture designs, often complemented by locally handcrafted items. In contrast, export markets in regions such as Europe, the Middle East and the United States favour ornate pieces with cultural significance.



Figure 6: Nigeria's furniture production sector value chain



Source: TTC

▶ CHAPTER 2 |

Exploring business opportunities

Nigeria's furniture market offers a range of opportunities thanks to growing consumer demand. These opportunities span sectors including manufacturing, retail, e-commerce and repair, offering distinct pathways for growth and innovation. Entrepreneurs can capitalize

on accessible business opportunities by focusing on custom designs, affordable mass production for schools and low-income households, sustainable products made from reclaimed materials and manufacturing furniture components to reduce reliance on imports.

Table 2: Entrepreneurship opportunities

Entrepreneurship opportunity	Knowledge required
Raw material sourcing	
Timber harvesting	Local geography, local government regulations, forestry management, supply-chain logistics
Engineering wood board distribution	Material sourcing, wholesale operations, supply-chain logistics, import regulations
Foam and fabric distribution	Material sourcing, wholesale operations, supply-chain logistics, import regulations
Furniture hardware supply	Material sourcing, wholesale operations, supply-chain logistics, import regulations
Metal supply	Material sourcing, wholesale operations, supply-chain logistics, import regulations
Power tools supply	Material sourcing, wholesale operations, supply-chain logistics, import regulations
Pre-processing	
Wood processing	Sawmill operation, lumber preparation

Kiln-drying facility	Kiln operation, timber drying techniques, quality control
Production	
Machining workshop	Carpentry basics, operations management, machinery operation, cutting and edging techniques
Artisanal furniture maker	Woodworking, custom design skills
Industrial furniture producer	Woodworking, mass production techniques, machinery usage, operations management
Eco-friendly furniture maker	Woodworking, material science, sustainability principles, material sourcing
Upholstery business	Carpentry basics, Upholstery techniques, sewing skills
Spray painting and polishing.	Carpentry basics, spray painting techniques
Metalwork furniture business	Welding techniques, custom design skills
Distribution and sales	
E-commerce furniture store	Digital marketing, e-commerce tools, lead generation techniques
Furniture showroom owner	Interior design, retail management, customer engagement
Furniture exporter	Export regulations, international logistics
Thrift furniture seller	Material sourcing, woodworking, retail management, customer engagement
Support services	
Furniture repair and refurbishment	Repair techniques, customer service
Furniture-making training provider	Furniture-making curriculum development, technical expertise
Logistics and delivery	Logistics operations, inventory management

The sector offers many opportunities for entrepreneurs

There are straightforward opportunities in Nigeria's furniture sector that are easy to start, require minimal investment and have consistent demand. Foam distribution, furniture repair and e-commerce are excellent starting points for new entrepreneurs.

Artisanal furniture maker

Nigerian consumers favour bespoke designs, making artisanal workshops a profitable alternative to mass-produced imports. The value proposition is mainly high-quality artisanship and direct client engagement. Most sales are made in in-person showrooms or through social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp and Jiji. There are corporate partnership opportunities to leverage; these involve supplying custom furniture to hotels, offices and residential developments.

Business model: The focus is on custom-built, handcrafted furniture for middle-class and high-end clients. Collaborating with machining shops to reduce start-up costs is advised. Depending on their operational capacity and lead generation, monthly earnings for these workshops can range from ₦200,000 to ₦5 million.¹

Getting started

- Initial investment ranges from ₦500,000 to ₦5 million
- Basic hand tools and power drills are necessary
- Hire or partner with skilled artisans to ensure quality
- Rent a small workshop in furniture markets, such as Kugbo (Abuja) or Ajah (Lagos)
- Develop and execute a targeted marketing strategy on social media, leveraging customer referrals to drive business growth

Table 3: Pros and cons of artisanal furniture maker

Pros	Cons
Lower initial capital requirements than industrial factories. Scalable and has access to a wider customer base. Due to a strong link between lower levels of education and the informal sector, many furniture sector participants lack business management and project management skills. This leaves an opening for a well-run company to outcompete its competition in service delivery.	Limited access to machinery necessitates reliance on third-party specialists for tasks such as cutting and finishing – this results in delays, inconsistent quality and higher production costs.
High demand for unique, custom-made furniture.	A lack of well-trained artisans leads to inconsistent artisanship and limits the ability to scale operations or maintain high-quality standards.
Local workshops benefit from proximity to customers, enabling faster delivery times and the ability to respond quickly to custom orders.	Artisanal workshops often struggle to access credit or affordable financing options for upgrading equipment.

Source: ITC field interviews

¹Estimate based on a profit margin of 20%–50% on multiple sales of high-demand living furniture, e.g. sectional sofa sets (₦450,000–₦6,500,000).

Furniture-making training provider

While Nigeria's furniture sector is growing, it faces a significant shortage of skilled workers. Many carpenters, upholsterers and CNC operators work in the informal sector, lacking proper education or certification.

Demand is strong for a training centre that offers hands-on courses tailored to industry needs. Establishing such a centre could diversify revenue streams.

Business model: A furniture-making training provider can generate revenue through tuition-based training by charging fees for intensive courses in woodworking, upholstery, CNC operation and business skills. Online training can include courses in soft skills, including accounting and design. It is also possible to provide tailored programmes for manufacturers and developers or collaborate with the Government to secure grants for training low-income youth. Another opportunity is to establish job placement services that partner with companies to help trainees find employment. Refugees need to identify the best segment to position their business, leveraging the fact that they come from countries with well-developed vocational training systems. They may start with online training to reduce the initial capital required and mitigate risks.

Getting started:

- Initial investment can range from ₦500,000 to ₦20 million, depending on needs.
- Set up training facilities with necessary tools or deliver online courses through platforms like Zoom.
- Recruit skilled instructors and, if necessary, consider working with the National Board for Technical Education for certification.

Table 4: Pros and cons of furniture-making training provider

Pros	Cons
Meets growing industry skill demand, as only 20% of Nigerians can access traditional apprenticeships (Adams, de Silva & Razmara, 2013).	High set-up costs – the cost of machines is high and the short-term return on investment on training versus production is lower.
Progress in learning delivery techniques and technology (online options can make more theoretical courses cheaper).	Experienced instructors are scarce. Potential instructors are unavailable because most of their time is spent in the field, on projects or running their own businesses.
Practical, short-term courses cater to working-class Nigerians and young entrepreneurs who prefer immediate returns on training investments.	Many Nigerians perceive vocational training as inferior to academic education, which can hinder recruitment for such programmes.

Source: ITC field interviews

E-commerce furniture store

With more than 12.7 million Nigerians on Instagram (Statista, 2025b) – a number that exceeds the combined populations of Abuja and Port Harcourt – the furniture market is increasingly transitioning to online platforms. Social media platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp Business enable entrepreneurs to sell furniture without the need for physical showrooms, greatly reducing start-up costs.

However, many local producers face challenges with digital marketing and many consumers still prefer shopping in person (Yusuf et al., 2024). This presents opportunities for well-branded online furniture stores that effectively integrate digital marketing strategies with reliable delivery services to establish trust and drive sales.

Business model: E-commerce furniture stores operate in several ways. Customers can place orders online and artisans fulfil them. Stores can partner with carpenters and manufacturers on a commission basis or accept on-demand orders to reduce inventory risks. A small showroom can enhance online visibility.

Getting started:

- Start-up costs range from ₦500,000 to ₦5 million, depending on inventory and marketing.
- Set up Instagram, WhatsApp Business, Jiji and an e-commerce landing page for orders.
- Collaborate with skilled carpenters and upholsterers.
- Use third-party logistics delivery services.
- Implement return policies and showcase testimonials to alleviate buyer scepticism.

Table 5: Pros and cons of e-commerce furniture store

Pros	Cons
Nigerian women are leading the growth of the digital market on social media platforms.	Nigerian consumers may be hesitant to make online purchases due to concerns about scams or poor-quality products, making it crucial to establish credibility through strong branding and transparent business practices.
Low barrier to entry and overhead costs: a phone and internet connection.	Partnerships with artisans for production and logistics providers for delivery mean a seamless customer experience, building trust and repeat business, which is not within the entrepreneur’s control.
Businesses are not limited to their immediate location, allowing them to serve customers nationwide, from Lagos to Abuja to Port Harcourt, and internationally.	Platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp are saturated with sellers, making it difficult for new entrants to stand out without substantial branding and marketing efforts.

Source: ITC field interviews

Foam/fabric distribution

A foam and fabric distributor serves as a link in the supply chain, providing high-quality upholstery materials. Urban markets in Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt often lack diverse fabric options due to high retail costs, which push wholesalers to areas such as Suleja and Aba. A foam and fabric distribution business can address this gap by bringing wholesale materials closer to furniture makers and offering online sales.

Business model: Artisans typically buy upholstery in bulk from factories and wholesalers in Suleja and Aba, then resell it to workshops in major cities. They display fabric options online through platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp Business and Jiji for convenient remote ordering. To reduce storage costs, some purchase and deliver based on client orders. Additionally, they often bid for corporate contracts with workshops, hotels and real estate developers to secure a consistent supply.

Getting started:

- Initial investment ranges from ₦1 million to ₦10 million, depending on whether one holds stock or operates on-demand. Foam sheets of varying thicknesses and densities can cost between ₦4,000 and ₦250,000.
- Secure direct connections with factories for sourcing foam and fabric at wholesale rates.
- Set up small warehouses in Lagos, Abuja or Port Harcourt and establish a transport network for fast delivery.
- Maintain a strong online presence on WhatsApp, Jiji and Instagram to showcase inventory and consider having a showroom in furniture markets.
- Build a customer list that includes upholsterers, furniture makers and interior designers.

Table 6: Pros and cons of foam/fabric distribution

Pros	Cons
Nigeria's established network of wholesalers and peripheral markets such as Suleja and Aba provides a strong foundation for distribution.	Coordinating reliable transportation and warehousing for materials across cities and towns can be complex.
This model primarily requires partnerships and logistics coordination rather than significant investment in inventory or storage, making it accessible to smaller entrepreneurs.	Businesses relying on wholesalers for consistent stock may face shortages if suppliers fail to meet demand or experience supply chain disruptions.
Leveraging e-commerce to showcase a broader range of fabric options, urban customers in Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt can access the variety they seek without the limitations of physical retail space.	Subject to significant price fluctuations. For example, foam prices increased by 40% in 2023 due to foreign exchange volatility.

Source: ITC field interviews

Upholstery business

Upholstery is a highly lucrative segment of Nigeria's furniture market, particularly in cities such as Abuja, Lagos and Port Harcourt, where sectional sofas are in high demand. Cultural traditions in Northern Nigeria also drive consistent demand for furnishings for newlywed homes. The rise of start-ups and government institutions has increased the need for office furniture. This segment is competitive and has many players so making a difference by providing high-quality services and products is essential.

Business model: The business specializes in creating and refurbishing fabric-based furniture, such as sofas and office chairs. Revenue can be generated from made-to-order items for mid- to high-end clients or through contract sales with real estate developers and government agencies. Reupholstery services can also attract individuals and businesses seeking to refresh their old furniture.

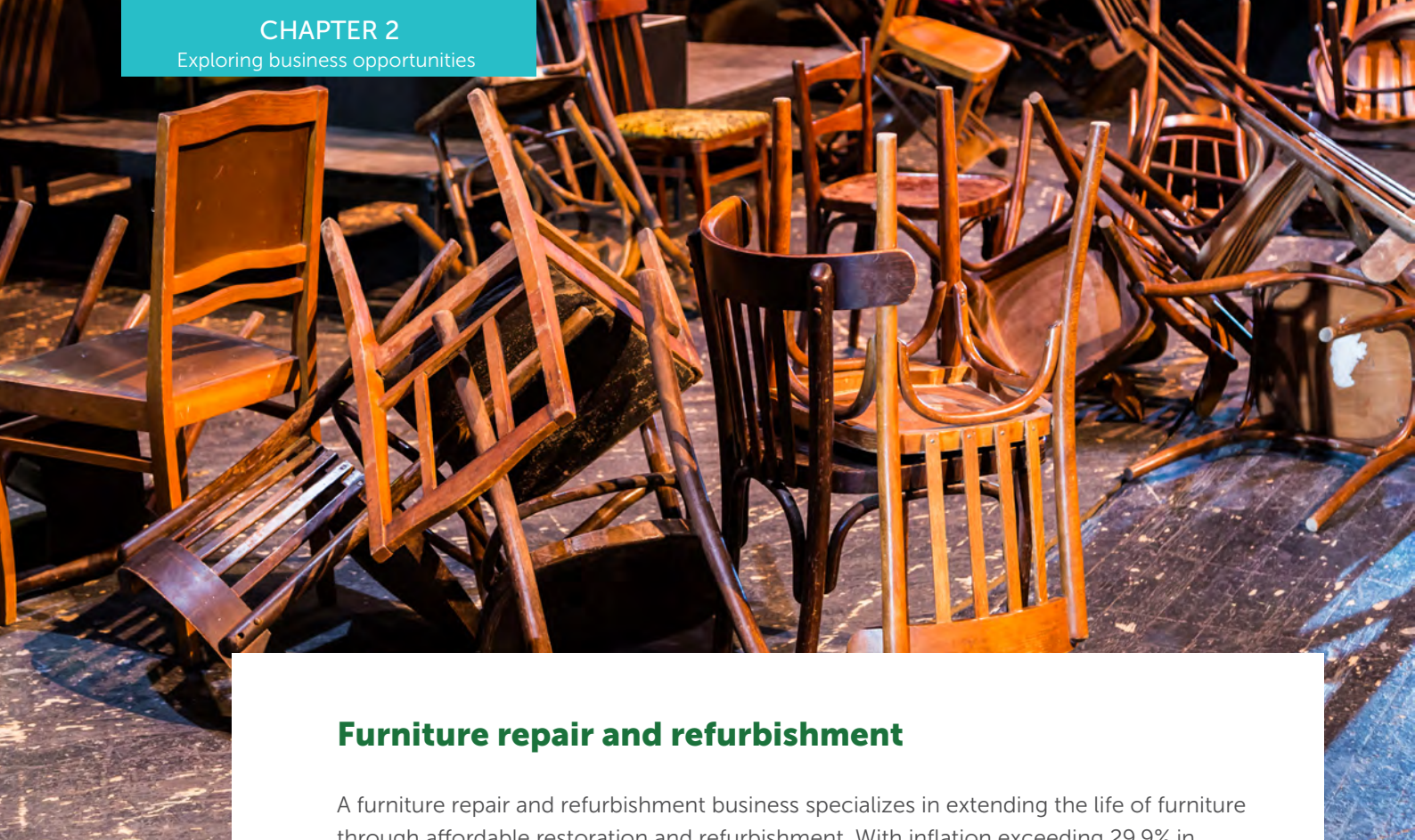
Getting started:

- Capital investment between ₦400,000 and ₦20 million, based on the scale of operations.
- Invest in industrial-grade sewing machines for quality.
- Build partnerships with suppliers to ensure material consistency.
- Hire and train experienced upholsterers.
- Position as a premium service provider using social media and showrooms.

Table 7: Pros and cons of the upholstery business

Pros	Cons
Acquiring modern equipment, securing reliable suppliers and recruiting skilled labour are feasible and cost-effective for small-scale entrepreneurs.	The supply chains for foam and fabric remain unreliable, making it difficult to meet tight deadlines or maintain quality standards.
Entrepreneurs can target distinct markets, such as middle-class families seeking affordable quality and other furniture makers looking to deliver their orders.	Nigeria faces a persistent shortage of skilled upholsterers, and retaining trained workers can be particularly challenging.
Few business management skills are present in most local competition.	Middle-class customers may prioritize affordability over premium quality, necessitating a careful balance of production costs and pricing.

Source: ITC field interviews



Furniture repair and refurbishment

A furniture repair and refurbishment business specializes in extending the life of furniture through affordable restoration and refurbishment. With inflation exceeding 29.9% in 2024, year-on-year (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024), many people and businesses are opting to repair or upgrade furniture instead of purchasing new pieces.

Repair services can be up to 70% cheaper than buying new furniture, making them highly appealing in a cost-sensitive market. This shift has created a consistent demand for skilled repair services, including repairing upholstery and structural damage as well as refinishing surfaces. For new entrants, this represents a low-barrier entry point for a venture that offers steady income with minimal start-up costs. Additionally, it can serve as an extra revenue stream for artisanal workshops without incurring additional expenses.

Business model: Repairing broken furniture, reupholstering sofas and refinishing wood surfaces through on-demand repair services. There is also the option to operate with mobile toolkits, allowing repairs at customer locations and saving on transport costs. In some instances, regular maintenance services can be offered for offices, hotels and real estate companies, as well as collaboration with agents to refurbish properties before sale or lease through facility management contracts.

Getting started:

- Start-up costs range from ₦200,000 to ₦1 million, primarily for tools, transportation and initial marketing.
- Basic carpentry tools, upholstery needles, fabric and wood finishing supplies are needed. It is also essential to consider hiring or training artisans skilled in carpentry, upholstery and finishing techniques.
- Implementing a simple booking and tracking system to manage appointments is essential, as on-time service is important to customers. Promoting services via WhatsApp Business, Instagram and partnerships with real estate firms is advisable for visibility.

Table 8: Pros and cons of furniture repair and refurbishment

Pros	Cons
Addresses a significant service gap between the thrift and new furniture markets.	Logistics of moving large furniture are a drag on profit margins.
A low barrier to entry, which allows new entrants to establish a foothold and build their reputation in local markets.	Repair work typically generates lower margins than manufacturing or selling new furniture, as it requires high volumes to sustain profitability.
Builds long-term customer relationships that can be converted into other revenue streams.	It lacks many growth prospects and will require diversification of its services.

Source: ITC field interviews

Logistics and delivery service

Furniture delivery in Nigeria faces several challenges, including high logistics costs, inadequate infrastructure and inconsistent service, which often result in damaged goods and dissatisfied customers. Lagos alone loses ₦3.8 trillion annually due to traffic delays, highlighting the need for efficient logistics for bulky and fragile items, such as sofas and glass tables (Danne Institute for Research, 2021).

Business model: A last-mile delivery service specializing in furniture logistics, generating revenue by charging businesses and individuals per delivery, partnering with manufacturers for regular services and carefully handling delicate items. Expanding to cross-state logistics could also tap into underserved markets, particularly in northern Nigeria.

Getting started:

- A small operation with one vehicle can earn between ₦500,000 and ₦2 million monthly, with initial investments ranging from ₦2 million to ₦10 million, depending on the vehicle type and scale.
- Essential components include a reliable truck, GPS tracking for efficiency and trained staff for careful handling.
- Ideal bases for operations include Abuja, due to its infrastructure, and key furniture hubs in Lagos and Port Harcourt.

Table 9: Pros and cons of logistics and delivery service

Pros	Cons
Furniture customers often face delays and damage due to poor delivery services, creating a major market for dependable, specialized logistics solutions.	Fuel, vehicle maintenance and logistics software can become expensive, particularly in Nigeria, given rising fuel prices and unpredictable road conditions.
Using data and technology to ensure reliable delivery, facilitate real-time communication and minimize damage fosters trust, leading to repeat customers and referrals.	Poor road infrastructure and traffic congestion can lead to delays and increased vehicle wear and tear in cities such as Lagos and Port Harcourt.
Cities including Abuja have better road infrastructure than Lagos and Port Harcourt, allowing for smoother operations and quicker deliveries within the state.	Overregulation and multiple taxation continue to be issues for transport services.

Source: ITC field interviews

Thrift furniture seller

Demand for affordable furniture in urban centres such as Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt is growing, particularly among renters, students and expatriates. Government institutions frequently refurnish offices with every new administration, creating a steady supply of high-quality used furniture for resale. The 2007 Remuneration Package for Political Office Holders includes a furniture allowance, further fuelling this market.

Business model: A thrift furniture seller sources, refurbishes and resells second-hand furniture. Returnees can purchase bulk from government offices and hotels and then sell at a mark-up. They can also enhance furniture through cleaning and repairs to increase its appeal. Using platforms such as Jiji and Instagram to minimize costs is essential, and providing affordable furniture to start-ups and SMEs is key. Small-scale sellers operating out of the Jabi Motor Park Market estimate that one can earn ₦200,000–~~₦1~~ million monthly by maintaining a physical presence.

Getting started:

- The initial investment ranges from ₦100,000–~~₦5~~ million, depending on sourcing and refurbishment. Build partnerships with government offices and hotels for consistent inventory.
- Secure a warehouse for bulk purchases.
- Use a small truck or partner with a transportation service for delivery.
- Leverage online platforms and offer free inspections to build trust.

A thrift furniture seller sources, refurbishes and resells second-hand furniture.

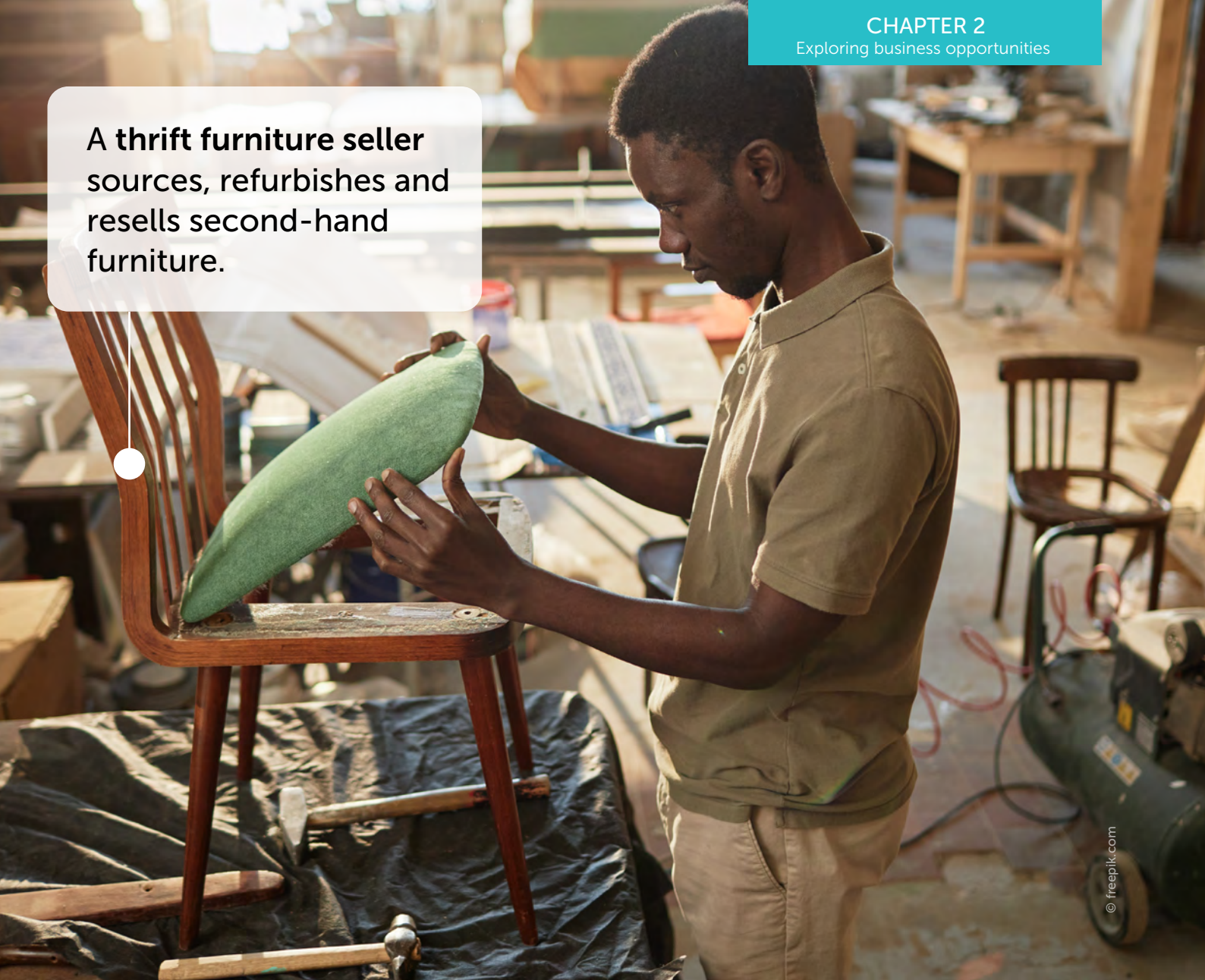


Table 10: Pros and cons of thrift furniture sellers

Pros	Cons
More Nigerians are open to buying used furniture due to rising inflation.	Finding reliable sources of used furniture can be unpredictable.
There is no need for machinery or large capital investments; basic refurbishment tools are enough.	Moving large furniture items is expensive and requires reliable delivery solutions.
Platforms such as Jiji and Instagram enable sellers to reach buyers without the need for a physical showroom.	Without a warehouse or affordable storage, managing inventory becomes challenging.
Potential for high margins. Simple cleaning, repainting or reupholstering can greatly increase resale value.	Some Nigerians associate used furniture with low status or poor quality, requiring marketing to shift mindsets.

Source: ITC field interviews

Box 1: Recommendations for new businesses entering the sector

Market entry and consumer insights

Nigeria's demand for furniture varies considerably by region and income level. For instance, in Kano, families may spend between ₦500,000 and ₦20 million to furnish homes for newlyweds. In contrast, Lagos sees start-ups driving the demand for compact, modern office furniture, while in Abuja, government contracts and political cycles can influence furniture projects. To capitalize on these trends:

- Build networks in the wedding planning and event sectors in the northern regions to generate leads for newlyweds seeking furniture makers.
- Leverage the start-up ecosystems in Lagos and Abuja, which are poised to establish new office spaces.
- Explore opportunities to bid for government furniture contracts in various government institutions.
- Conduct informal surveys or social media assessments in your target areas using social media tools to validate market demand. For example, consider how Taeillo successfully targets young professionals on social media by balancing affordability with modern aesthetics.

Reliable and cost-effective operations

- Familiarize yourself with the basics of operations, project management and supply-chain management.
- Gain firsthand experience by observing how furniture inputs come together and reach the end user. Visiting furniture markets such as Kugbo Furniture Market in Abuja or Ketu Mile 12 Market in Lagos can provide valuable insights into supply-chain processes.
- Identify the repeated problems that slow your service delivery and develop effective solutions.
- Identify trustworthy vendors and suppliers and incentivize the best ones with increased work and referrals.
- Consider establishing your business in a furniture market and joining the local association to benefit from collaborative solutions.

Human resources and skill development

- To communicate effectively in the furniture industry, develop a clear local technical language. The everyday terms used differ greatly from those in formal education or literature.
- Begin by understanding the entire value chain, then narrow your focus. For example,

carpenters should learn basic upholstery skills.

- When hiring, look for candidates with a high school education or higher. This ensures they have essential reading and math skills.
- A skilled workforce is key to a well-structured business. Use management systems to streamline processes and boost efficiency.
- Manage labour costs wisely. During busy wedding seasons in the north, consider using contract workers to keep expenses down.
- Financial management
- Effective financial management is essential to control hidden costs and inflation and optimize pricing and payment methods. For example, you can use cost-plus pricing with a 30%–50% buffer to account for fluctuations in material prices.
- Provide quotes with a limited validity period to ensure accurate pricing and request a 70%–80% deposit upfront to prevent cash flow issues.

Marketing and customer management

- Focus on getting new customers by learning how to attract and keep them.
- Keep your customers happy to encourage referrals and repeat business.
- Share your work on social media to showcase project updates and attract potential inquiries.
- Quickly address and resolve complaints to keep a good reputation.

Regulatory, legal compliance and associations

- Corporate Affairs Commission registration and Federal Inland Revenue Service tax compliance are essential for securing larger contracts, especially with corporations.
- Industry associations, such as the Interior Designers Association of Nigeria, help businesses influence policy and network with key stakeholders.
- Market associations, such as the Dei-Dei Regional Market Carpenters Association, are valuable for resource aggregation, enabling access to shared infrastructure like electricity and security.

CHAPTER 3

Key players and regulatory environment

The furniture ecosystem in Nigeria includes different stakeholders, including government bodies, industry associations, private enterprises and international organizations. These stakeholders work together to regulate, advocate for and support the sector. Relevant institutions supporting returnee entrepreneurs include public and private-sector institutions.

Policy network (regulatory and policy institutions)

Table 11: Public and government agencies in the sector

Organization	Role and engagement strategy	Relevance to new entrants
Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment	Develops policies to promote industrialization and trade, including initiatives supporting the furniture industry.	Provides policy frameworks and support programmes for furniture start-ups.
Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria	Provides capacity building, access to finance and market linkages for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Provides access to modern furniture production facilities.	Supports start-ups with resources, training and production facilities.
Bank of Industry	Provides financial assistance, including low-interest loans, to industries including furniture manufacturing.	Facilitates financing for starting and scaling furniture businesses.
Raw Materials Research and Development Council	Promotes the use of local raw materials and offers technological support.	Helps new entrants source materials and adopt advanced technologies.

Nigerian Export Promotion Council	Provides training and incentives to help furniture manufacturers enter international markets.	Helps new manufacturers access export markets and meet global standards.
Development Bank of Nigeria	Offers wholesale loans through intermediary financial institutions to improve credit access for SMEs.	Supports new entrants indirectly by improving loan accessibility.

Source: ITC based on field interviews

Private-sector and industry players

The Nigerian furniture production market is experiencing substantial growth, driven by key players such as Lifemate Nigeria Limited and UniWood/Starwood. Lifemate is expanding through a franchise programme that promotes affordability, high-quality furniture and local employment, supported by more than 500 dealers (Omisakin, 2024). UniWood targets the luxury segment at accessible prices and plans to build a local factory to meet domestic demand (Diamond, 2024). Events such as Design Week Lagos and the Design and Build Expo 2024 highlight the industry's transformation, garnering positive feedback from figures including former President Olusegun Obasanjo, which suggests a promising future for Nigerian-made furniture (Oghifo, 2024).

Table 12: Private-sector and industry stakeholders by market segment

Organization	Short description	Relevance to new entrants
Alibert	A leading furniture manufacturer offering a wide range of products for homes and offices.	Demonstrates scalability and shows how a fully integrated manufacturing business works.
Lifemate	The company offers high-quality and affordable furniture to various segments of Nigerian society, providing a diverse range of product lines that include home furniture, office furniture, kitchen cabinets, sanitary ware and outdoor furniture. It has an extensive reach in major Nigerian cities, such as Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Ibadan Kano and Mowe, as well as its online platform.	One of the foremost furniture companies in Nigeria, it is an example of a business that is almost 100% integrated across the entire value chain and does it successfully.
UniWood /Starwood	UniWood, a prominent wood supplier with a 14-year market presence, unveiled new products and collaborated with Starwood to enhance furniture manufacturing and innovation in Nigeria.	An engineered wood board retail and wholesale supplier showing the potential growth of business-to-business firms in the furniture sector.

Taeillo	A furniture company specializing in African-inspired designs, using technology to modernize production.	Inspires innovation and technological adoption in the furniture sector.
WOOD-ET AL	A specialized furniture manufacturer that produces bespoke furniture items and construction services.	Demonstrates how to use space efficiently while aligning functionality with aesthetic appeal.

Source: ITC based on field interviews

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and industry associations

Many organizations provide resources, training and funding, helping to improve productivity, access markets and meet regulatory standards. Several associations play pivotal roles in representing and supporting stakeholders in Nigeria's furniture industry:

Table 13: NGOs and industry associations supporting the sector

Organization	Description	Relevance to new entrants
Professional Carpenters and Furniture-Makers Association of Nigeria	Established in Lagos State in the 1930s, this association comprises 50,000 members across various local governments. The association focuses on training, advocacy and enhancing the skills of carpenters and furniture makers.	Important to new entrants looking for a community of furniture makers in Lagos state and other south-western states in Nigeria.
National Union of Civil Engineering, Construction, Furniture and Wood Workers	Formed in 1996 through the merger of two unions, this organization represents workers across related industries, including furniture manufacturing. Affiliated with the Nigeria Labour Congress, it had about 62,000 members as of 2005.	It is particularly relevant to employees in the furniture sector who seek labour union protections within their respective organizations.
Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN)	Founded in 1971, MAN is a platform for manufacturers to influence economic, industrial, labour and social policies. It promotes made-in-Nigeria products and advises the Government on infrastructural needs for the manufacturing sector (MAN House, 2025).	Larger furniture businesses should collaborate with other sectors to advocate for better policies and laws that benefit local manufacturers.

Furniture Manufacturers Association of Nigeria	Advocates for favourable policies, quality standards and collaboration among manufacturers.	Provides networking and advocacy for start-ups in the furniture sector.
Lagos Furniture Manufacturers Association	Regional association supporting Lagos-based furniture manufacturers.	Offers localized support and resources, particularly for start-ups in Lagos.
Create Skills Foundation	Focuses on vocational training and skills competitions to promote artisanship in furniture making.	Helps entrants access training programmes to improve workforce skills, competitiveness and workplace opportunities.
Dei-Dei Regional Market Carpenter's Association	Represents carpenters and local furniture artisans, providing a platform for collaboration and advocacy.	Offers networking opportunities and cooperative support for small furniture makers.
Interior Designers' Association of Nigeria	Represents interior designers and promotes collaboration with local furniture manufacturers.	Connects new entrants with designers and potential clients who need custom furniture solutions.

Source: ITC based on field interviews

Regulatory environment

In Nigeria, formal business registration and tax compliance are essential to conduct legal operations and access banking services. Registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission and obtaining a tax identification number are mandatory to start a business, especially for corporate and government clients. Local government permits, such as signage fees, are also often required, particularly in industries such as timber and transportation.

Furniture makers rely on raw materials including wood and plywood, which can be sourced locally or imported. Strict regulations on timber sourcing exist to prevent deforestation, with import duties influencing costs. The Federal Capital Territory requires timber to be cut to size before being transported to markets.

Maintaining quality standards is essential for competitiveness, and certification from the Standards Organisation of Nigeria is needed for mass production and exports. While there are safety standards for materials such as foam, enforcement is often lacking.

Finally, access to finance and government incentives, such as loans from the Bank of Industry, are crucial for business growth, although the processes can be lengthy. Export regulations from the Nigerian Export Promotion Council are essential for businesses seeking to target international markets.



▶ CHAPTER 4 ▶

Challenges and barriers for entrepreneurs

Challenges affecting the sector

The Nigerian furniture industry faces several important challenges that hinder its growth and development. It suffers from a lack of coordinated oversight and the absence of a strong regulatory body, resulting in many SMEs operating informally without mandatory certifications or adherence to standard regulatory practices.

Industry participants ignore many regulations, such as tax compliance laws including Pay-As-You-Earn. As a result, most furniture business owners navigate the sector with minimal government oversight, fostering a general sentiment that regulatory intervention is more of a hindrance than a help. This results in inconsistent product quality and limited accountability in the industry.

Some businesses choose to avoid formal registration to escape bureaucratic

burdens. In this context, market associations often take on responsibilities – such as funding local infrastructure and providing security – that, ideally, the Government should manage. This lack of coordination complicates material sourcing and undermines regional and international competitiveness.

Heavy reliance on imported wood products and specialized machinery boosts raw materials costs.

Quality wood boards and engineered materials, such as MDF and HDF, are primarily sourced from countries including China and Türkiye, driving up production costs. Manufacturers have reported that steep import prices, combined with rising domestic transportation costs – particularly after fuel subsidies were removed – force some firms to compromise on the quality of materials. For instance, a local manufacturer in Edo State has suffered severe foreign exchange losses,

highlighting the industry's vulnerability. Additionally, the high cost of essential machinery, such as CNC routers and panel saws, further raises the financial barriers for new businesses entering the market.

High power costs and unreliable electricity supply add to furniture manufacturers' difficulties.

The power supply in Nigeria is unstable. Frequent power outages mean many people rely on generators, substantially increasing operational expenses. There are no direct regulations, and the high cost of diesel affects overall operations.

Electricity rates have surged – sometimes by as much as 200% (Okonkwo, 2023) – compelling firms to allocate a large portion of their revenue to fuel and maintenance. The unreliable power supply disrupts production schedules and negatively influences the quality of wood machining processes such as CNC routers, panel saws and edge banders, reducing competitiveness. Furniture clusters, such as those in Dei-Dei and Mushin, have informal zoning regulations managed by local governments and trade associations.

Influx of imported furniture and evolving retail demands mean increased market competition.

The influx of imported furniture – primarily from China – after import restrictions were lifted in 2018 has intensified competition in the Nigerian market. Local manufacturers must invest in physical showrooms and aggressive marketing to establish consumer trust, a challenge similar to those faced in the beauty and fashion sectors (Yusuf et al.,

2024). This further increases operating costs. Consumers' preference for in-person purchases compounds this trend, making showroom investments almost mandatory for credibility and market acceptance (Okamgba, 2023).

Reliance on informal apprenticeships and lack of formal training lead to a shortage of skilled labour.

The furniture production sector is labour-intensive, requiring skilled artisans and safe workshop conditions. Many artisans in the sector acquire skills through informal apprenticeships rather than structured vocational training. This results in notable skill gaps in modern woodworking techniques and effective business management.

Only 1 in 5 informal sector participants acquires skills through a traditional apprenticeship (Adams, de Silva & Razmara, 2013). Many manufacturers struggle to expand their capacity or undertake large-scale projects, which limits their innovation and operational efficiency. While informal hiring is common, structured businesses should use employment contracts to mitigate potential disputes.

Access to capital is limited due to high financial entry barriers and stringent lending requirements.

Many small and medium-sized furniture businesses in Nigeria face severe financial difficulties. High interest rates, strict collateral requirements and lengthy, bureaucratic loan processes force entrepreneurs to operate with limited capital (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2024). As reported by artisans, starting

an artisanal workshop can cost between ₦500,000 to ₦1 million for basic setups. While advanced machinery investments can push costs into the tens of millions, this high financial entry point restricts business expansion and perpetuates underinvestment in the sector.

High machinery costs and reliance on external vendors cause fragmented production processes.

Limited capital means many businesses in Nigeria's informal sector hire non-wage workers – that is, self-employed and contributing family members (Adams, de Silva & Razmara, 2013). These firms invest only partially in necessary machinery and outsource critical production steps, such as cutting, planning and finishing, to third-party vendors. This fragmentation leads to longer production timelines, inconsistent quality and reduced scalability compared to integrated manufacturing operations (Okamgba, 2023).

Additionally, challenges include a shortage of skilled artisans and poor business management. Many factory owners underpay or delay payments, resulting in low employee retention and stagnant skill development due to inconsistent practices.



Box 2: Practical tips to overcome entry barriers, including cost

- Join furniture market cooperatives to pool resources, share infrastructure costs and access new business opportunities.
- Leverage family-owned land to minimize start-up costs, particularly for returnees.
- Lease underused spaces, such as vacant land or partially completed buildings, to secure affordable workshop locations.
- Strategically co-locate with key value chain businesses, such as a cutting and edging shop, an MDF retail shop and a glass and mirror shop, to form a furniture production hub. This will reduce logistics costs and improve efficiency and quality.
- Adopt a project-based carpentry model, paying artisans per job to reduce fixed labour costs while allowing them to use the workshop for personal projects, ensuring retention while prioritizing business work.
- Choose a location near a furniture market to minimize transportation costs for materials and ensure easy access to skilled labour and logistics.
- Secure 70%–100% customer deposits to cover procurement, production and delivery costs, reducing cash flow strain.
- Allocate a portion of each project's profit to equipment purchases to gradually enhance the workshop's operational capacity. This improves quality control, reduces defects, minimizes recalls and returns, and protects profit margins.
- Conduct cost–benefit analyses before buying tools or machinery to ensure financial sustainability.
- Offer machining services to other furniture businesses to offset the cost of expensive equipment.
- Consider purchasing equipment insurance to protect against financial losses resulting from theft, damage or unexpected breakdowns.
- Undergo basic accounting training to manage finances effectively, covering key concepts such as cash flow, depreciation and balance sheets.
- Prepare essential regulatory paperwork, including business registration, tax identification number and tax clearance, to ensure the business is eligible for contracts with the government, international organizations and corporations. This can open doors to financially beneficial partnerships with more operationally advanced workshops, increasing the chances of securing bulk contracts.

CHAPTER 5

Labour market insights

Data on the exact size of the workforce in Nigeria's furniture sector are scarce. However, with a projected compound annual growth rate of 2.93% (Statista, 2025a), demand for workers in the industry is rising.

Nigeria's furniture sector labour market is largely informal, relying heavily on informal apprenticeship training for new artisans. This has led to widespread skilled labour shortages, driven by an aging workforce, youth emigration and limited formal training opportunities. However, this scarcity presents an opportunity for young, skilled workers to capitalize on the high demand for their expertise. For instance, more than 80% of construction firms in Edo State reported shortages in carpentry and related trades (Oseghale, Abiola-Falemu & Oseghale, 2015).

Most workers in the sector have only received primary or secondary education. In Jos Metropolis, for example, 78% of furniture makers had no tertiary education (Sambe, Ancha & Goshit, 2022). Despite rising

material costs and infrastructural deficits, the industry remains profitable and continues to grow, contributing to the local economy through self-employment, small-scale enterprises and export markets.

Job opportunities and skills requirements

The Nigerian furniture sector provides many employment opportunities throughout its value chain, spanning from raw material sourcing to production, distribution and management. As the industry expands, demand for skilled labour, technical expertise and business professionals remains strong.

The table below outlines the key employment roles, the required knowledge for each position and the hiring demand in the sector. Whether in wood harvesting, machining, upholstery, sales or logistics, career paths are available for skilled artisans and professionals looking to start or advance their careers.

Table 14: Key job roles in the furniture industry

Job role	Responsibilities	Required skills
Logger	Identify and select mature trees for harvesting. Operate logging equipment to fell and cut trees into transportable logs.	Forest management, harvesting techniques
Wood processing technician	Grade lumber by quality, species, moisture level and intended use (e.g. hardwood vs. softwood).	Sawmill operation, lumber grading
Material supply-chain manager	Oversee end-to-end logistics for lumber transportation, including route optimization and effective transport selection. Ensure timely delivery of raw materials to manufacturers and finished goods to furniture markets or clients.	Supply-chain logistics, procurement
Sawing operator	Operate and maintain sawmill machinery to cut logs into planks or beams.	Timber cutting, safety protocols
Kiln operator	Manage kiln operations to dry lumber to specified moisture levels.	Wood drying processes, kiln operation
Woodworking technician	Prep lumber into workable forms (e.g. planning, sanding, jointing) for furniture components.	Wood shaping, sanding techniques
Furniture designer	Translate client requirements, ergonomic principles and aesthetic trends into functional furniture designs. Create detailed technical drawings, 3D models and cutting lists using CAD software.	CAD software, design principles
CNC machine operator	Program and operate CNC machines to cut, carve or engrave wood and metal components according to design files. Calibrate machines for precision, troubleshoot errors and perform routine maintenance.	CNC machine programming, precision cutting
Carpenter/joiner	Assemble furniture components, install hardware (e.g. hinges, handles) and perform on-site fitting for furniture pieces.	Wood assembly, joinery techniques
Upholsterer	Cut and sew fabric and attach foam to furniture frames. Repair or replace worn upholstery during refurbishment projects.	Sewing, foam shaping, fabric application
Glass fabricator/installer	Measure, cut, temper, polish and install glass for tabletops, cabinets, mirrors and other applications.	Glass cutting, installation
Welder	Weld and assemble metal frames, legs or decorative elements for furniture.	Metal cutting, fabrication, installation
Painter and finisher	Prepare surfaces (sanding, priming) and apply stains, paints or varnishes to furniture.	Spray painting, polishing methods
Warehouse staff	Load and unload raw materials and finished goods and help operate warehouse tools and machinery.	Inventory management, logistics

E-commerce manager	Manage online sales platforms (including websites, social media and marketplaces) to drive furniture sales.	Digital marketing, e-commerce platforms
Showroom sales representative	Communicate the features and benefits of furniture to clients. Close sales, process orders and coordinate delivery timelines with logistics teams.	Customer relations, sales tactics
Vocational trainer	Develop training curricula and deliver effective teaching content for carpentry, upholstery and other related fields.	Carpentry, teaching methods
Repair and refurbishment specialist	Assess and repair damaged furniture (e.g. broken doors, torn upholstery) on-site at client locations.	Furniture restoration, customer service
Logistics officer	Coordinate delivery or pickup of furniture and installation projects. Optimize routes and transportation.	Providing specialized transportation for the delivery of furniture and raw materials
Production manager	Oversee daily factory operations to ensure alignment with production schedules.	Carpentry basics, operations/project management, process optimization, team supervision
Finance and accounting officer	Manage finances for the organization. Track production costs (including materials and labour) and generate accurate reports.	Carpentry basics, budgeting, payroll management

Expected income

Nigeria's furniture industry is a dynamic field that offers many career opportunities for people with diverse skill levels and educational backgrounds. As the sector grows, it offers the potential of career advancement and professional development across several specialized areas. Understanding the various employment categories can help job seekers make informed decisions and plan their career paths strategically.

The table below outlines the primary categories of roles in the industry, along with their typical responsibilities and indicative salary ranges.

Table 15: Monthly salary ranges for different jobs

Category	Employment role	Monthly salary range
Entry level		
Manual labour and technical assistants	Logger	₦50,000-₦100,000
	Warehouse staff	₦50,000-₦100,000
	Wood processing technician	₦50,000-₦100,000
Sales and marketing	Showroom sales representative	₦70,000-₦150,000
Support and maintenance	Repair and refurbishment specialist	₦100,000-₦150,000
Technical role		
Upholstery and finishing	Upholsterer	₦150,000-₦250,000
	Glass fabricator/installer	₦120,000-₦200,000
	Welder	₦120,000-₦200,000
	Painter and finisher	₦150,000-₦250,000
Woodworking and carpentry	Woodworking technician	₦120,000-₦200,000
	Carpenter/joiner	₦120,000-₦200,000
Production and operations	Furniture designer	₦150,000-₦250,000
Machine operators	Sawing operator	₦100,000-₦150,000
	Kiln operator	₦100,000-₦200,000
	CNC machine operator	₦120,000-₦200,000
Supervisory/mid-level management		
Production and operations	Logistics officer	₦100,000-₦200,000
Production and operations	Production manager	₦150,000-₦200,000
Sales and marketing	E-commerce manager	₦150,000-₦250,000
Executive role		
Industry training and knowledge Development	Vocational trainer	₦200,000-₦350,000
Production and operations	Material supply-chain manager	₦150,000-₦250,000
Production and operations	Finance and accounting officer	₦150,000-₦250,000

Source: Data obtained from stakeholders.

Training and education providers

Access to training and industry certification is crucial for enhancing artisans' skills and product quality. Initiatives such as the Skill-Up Artisans programme, launched by the Industrial Training Fund in collaboration with the Government of Nigeria, aim to empower up to 10 million artisans through tech-enabled training, licensing and provision of essential toolkits. This enables Nigerian furniture artisans to enhance their skills and improve their market competitiveness.

The National Board for Technical Education oversees vocational training institutions, ensuring that programmes align with industry standards. However, most carpentry and furniture-making training occurs through informal apprenticeship systems, with only a small percentage coming from formal institutions including Yaba College of Technology.

Initiatives such as community skill development centres and collaborations, such as those with Bosch-Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, better known as GIZ, have increased training opportunities and incomes. The rising demand for quality furniture in the middle class presents many opportunities. With proper training and resources, furniture businesses could transition from the informal economy and meet growing market needs.



▶ CHAPTER 6 ▶

Financial aspects

Investment requirements

The furniture sector offers various investment opportunities, each with financial requirements, capital needs and potential profitability. Different segments of the industry come with distinct challenges that have a direct impact on business finances.

This section highlights investment prospects, outlining capital requirements, obstacles and major expenses. These details help people, especially returnees, choose business ventures that align with their interests, financial capability, expertise and market demand. Options range from lower-capital opportunities, such as furniture retailing and repair services, to higher-investment ventures, such as furniture manufacturing or setting up large-scale workshop facilities.



Available financing models

Starting a furniture business in Nigeria has many challenges, such as finding a workspace, getting materials and hiring skilled workers. Different funding options are available for new entrepreneurs (Counseal, 2024). The following table lists these funding options by type, showing their advantages and disadvantages.

Table 16: Funding options for entrepreneurs

Self-funded options	
Personal savings	Using personal savings provides complete control over finances without debt, but it carries the risk of total loss if the business fails.
Debt financing	
Bank loans	Nigerian banks offer loans for small businesses, with substantial funding available. However, these loans come with high interest rates and strict repayment terms.
Trade credit	This allows for the purchase of materials with deferred payment, which helps improve cash flow. However, it may not be available from all suppliers, and late payments can harm credit ratings.
Equity financing	
Angel investors	Angel investors provide capital in exchange for equity and mentorship, requiring the entrepreneur to share profits and decision-making.
Venture capital	Venture capital firms invest funds in exchange for equity. They also provide mentorship and networking opportunities. However, this involves giving up some ownership and control.
Crowdfunding	Crowdfunding enables the raising of funds from a broad audience, including friends, family and supporters, thereby fostering engagement. However, it often requires a compelling idea to generate substantial capital.
Government grants and schemes	
Government grants and schemes	The Nigerian Government provides various grants and support schemes for small businesses. These funds do not require repayment, making them appealing options. However, the application process can be complex and time-consuming.

Box 3: Practical tips for returnees interested in entering the sector

- Define the ideal customer profile: For example, young, middle-class couples in Abuja are seeking affordable, space-saving furniture.
- Identify customer needs and pain points, such as concerns about high prices or low-quality issues, and craft an offer that addresses these issues.
- Validate demand by offering the product to family and friends, collect feedback and refine the offer based on responses.
- Demonstrate proof of traction to potential funders :
 - » Track key metrics such as monthly revenue
 - » Gather customer testimonials
 - » Build partnerships with reputable individuals to enhance credibility
- Increase visibility: Use media, social media and industry events.
- Ensure meticulous financial tracking :
- Maintain accurate sales and expense records for transparency.
 - » Legally register the business to access funding options
 - » Prepare effective marketing materials for pitching across various platforms
 - » Consistently outreach to funding bodies to improve chances of securing necessary funding

Box 4: Success story of Sejiro Oke-tojinu

Achievements

In the southwestern town of Ibadan, Joshua Mosebolatan was drawn to furniture because he loved to build things and solve people's problems. When he received his first payment for carpentry work, it was not a defining moment, but rather a validation of his skill and impact. Determined to refine his craft, Joshua pursued an informal apprenticeship in traditional woodworking methods. His ability to grasp and apply knowledge quickly set him apart, allowing him to excel in the trade. This positive feedback loop reinforced his belief that passion and dedication would pave his path to success.

Challenges

While pursuing a degree in medical biochemistry, Joshua continued to work part-time as a carpenter, setting up a small artisanal workshop to support himself financially throughout his four years at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. After graduating, he moved to Lagos, where the furniture market was larger and more competitive.

The industry was evolving, and acquiring advanced machinery became essential to remain competitive. In Lagos, Joshua transitioned from traditional carpentry methods to modern, machine-assisted techniques. However, financial constraints made it difficult to invest in the necessary tools. Rather than letting this setback deter him, he worked relentlessly, learning to improvise workarounds and gradually expanding his capabilities.

After a few years, he applied for a carpentry competition in Abuja. He was accepted, attended and won the competition, earning a cash prize and cutting-edge power tools. More importantly, it introduced him to a new furniture market. Following the competition, Joshua decided to stay in Abuja.

Lessons learned

Most aspiring furniture business owners struggle to obtain large start-up capital, but Joshua believes that skill is the most critical asset in carpentry. A carpenter's work speaks for itself, often eliminating the need for costly marketing. Initially, he navigated the lack of significant funding by using his artisanship to attract clients and generate income. His advice to aspiring carpenters is clear: master your skill first. A well-crafted product will create demand, paving the way for financial growth.

Opportunities and advice

Joshua's journey from a passionate young carpenter to a thriving business owner proves that skills change lives. From his small artisanal workshop in Abeokuta, he has built a successful furniture business in Abuja, serving one of the largest furniture-buying markets in northern Nigeria.

His workshop has increased its operational capacity, shifting from outsourcing more than 90% of its processes to now handling 70% in-house. His story inspires, showing that raw artisanship and a commitment to solving clients' problems will find a viable market.

Appendix:

Cost of setting up different businesses

This section breaks down the critical resources required for an optimal workshop setup. Most furniture-making equipment is expensive, so it is essential to start with tools that offer the greatest versatility and the highest return on investment in the furniture production process.

An important factor to consider is the cost of renting, leasing or buying the shop or land. This cost depends on several factors, including the state and city, proximity to the furniture market or client clusters, shop size, condition and shared infrastructure (e.g. security, paved roads, power and water supply). More favourable conditions lead to higher competition and prices. For example, rent in Abuja can be up to 130% higher than in Lagos (Numbeo, 2025).

Option A is designed to strike a balance between internalizing the most common production processes and maintaining a cost-effective budget. Option B, on the other hand, prioritizes cost-effectiveness while enabling a highly efficient, bootstrapped operation capable of delivering quality products and scaling with time. Both options are viable and provide a solid foundation for new entrants to build a highly effective operation that can compete in the furniture-making industry.

Option A: Large artisanal workshop

A medium-sized workshop (100–200 square metres) optimized for bulk cutting, edging, assembling and finishing (i.e. painting and polishing) internally for mainly cabinetmaking, but can carry out other furniture-making processes.

Spatial requirements will include:

- Material storage area: Store engineered wood boards (MDF, HDF, MFC, plywood, particleboard)
- Cutting and edging section: Space for panel saw and edge bander
- Assembly area: For fitting furniture components together
- Finishing section: Painting/polishing
- Packing area: For final storage before delivery

The rent is estimated at ₦350,000 to ₦1 million depending on proximity to the furniture market. These prices are based on shops available in Dei-Dei Regional Market, Abuja.

Table 17: Setup costs for a large artisanal workshop

Name	No. of units	Price
Rent for the workshop (dependent on location and quality of building)	1	₦350,000 – ₦1,000,000
Machinery		
Panel saw	1	₦9,000,000
Edge banding machine	1	₦2,500,000
CNC router (optional)	1	₦11,000,000
Dust collection system	1	₦1,400,000
60 kVa generator	1	₦40,000,000
Equipment		
Compressor (50L, electric)	1	₦175,000
Spray gun	1	₦20,000
Circular saw	1	₦170,000
Mitre saw	1	₦350,000
Jigsaw	1	₦65,000
Router	1	₦130,000
Cordless drill	4	₦600,000
Clamp	8	₦320,000
Measuring tape	4	₦20,000
Square	4	₦60,000
Hammer	4	₦40,000
Hand saw	4	₦36,000
Orbital sander	2	₦190,000
Furniture		
Assembly table	2	₦160,000
Protective gear		
Safety goggles	4	₦36,000
Gloves	4 pairs	₦12,000
Dust masks	4	₦6,000

Source: Visits to Karmo Furniture Market, Karu Furniture Market and Dei-Dei Regional Market.

Option B: Small artisanal workshop

A small workshop (50–100 square metres) optimized for low volumes of cutting and assembling mainly for cabinet making, but other furniture-making processes can also be carried out.

Spatial requirements will include:

- Material storage area: Store engineered wood boards (MDF, HDF, MFC, plywood, particleboard)
- Cutting section: Space for do-it-yourself cutting table (an assembly table fitted with a jig for a circular saw that can be removed)
- Assembly area: For fitting furniture components together
- Packing area: For final storage before delivery

The rent for a small artisanal workshop is estimated at ₦100,000 to ₦200,000 depending on proximity to the furniture market. These prices are based on shops available in Dei-Dei Regional Market, Abuja.

Table 18: Setup costs for a small artisanal workshop

Name	No. of units	Price
Rent for the workshop (dependent on location and quality of building)	1	₦100,000–₦200,000
Machinery		
10 kVa generator	1	₦1,000,000
Equipment		
Circular saw	1	₦170,000
Mitre saw	1	₦350,000
Jigsaw	1	₦65,000
Router	1	₦130,000
Cordless drill	4	₦600,000
Clamp	8	₦320,000
Measuring tape	4	₦20,000
Square	4	₦60,000
Hammer	4	₦40,000
Hand saw	4	₦36,000
Orbital sander	2	₦190,000
Furniture		
Assembly table	2	₦160,000
Protective gear		
Safety goggles	4	₦36,000
Gloves	4 pairs	₦12,000
Dust masks	4	₦6,000

Source: Visits to Karmo Furniture Market, Karu Furniture Market and Dei-Dei Regional Market.

This example of a price breakdown for an L-shaped sectional sofa illustrates to new entrants in the furniture sector how the various material costs contribute to the total cost of the product. This is important to understand how to structure pricing and factor in profit margins.

Table 19: Quotation example for an L-shaped sectional sofa (7-seater)

Material	Quantity	Unit price	Total
Microfibre fabric	30 yards	₦2,500	₦75,000
6" foam (26kg/m ³)	1.5 sheets	₦75,000	₦112,500
2" foam (26kg/m ³)	2 sheets	₦30,000	₦60,000
2" fibre sheet	6 sheets	₦6,000	₦36,000
Gum	1 gallon	₦14,000	₦14,000
Plywood + planks			₦70,000
Sewing thread	1 roll	₦2,000	₦2,000
Sofa legs	5 (sets of 4)	₦6,000	₦30,000
Baft	8 yards	₦1,000	₦8,000
Staple pins	2 packets	₦1,200	₦2,400
Cords	3 lengths	₦1,000	₦3,000
Webbing rubber	¼ roll	₦32,000	₦8,000
	TOTAL		₦420,900

Source: Based on visits to Karmo Furniture Market, Karu Furniture Market and Dei-Dei Regional Market.

Operational cost

This breakdown outlines the operational costs involved in delivering a sectional sofa, including transportation, labour and timeline considerations. These expenses highlight potential hidden costs that affect the overall pricing and execution of the project.

Transportation:

- » **Consultation visit** – ₦20,000 (negotiated separately and may vary based on location and number of visits). An in-person assessment with the client to discuss project details, take measurements, evaluate the space and provide professional or design recommendations. This ensures the final product fits the client's needs and space requirements. The ₦20,000 fee for this visit is negotiated separately and covers transportation, time and expertise. There may be follow-up meetings due to notes from the client on design or specifications.
- » **Delivery** – ₦40,000 (negotiated separately and may vary based on location). The transportation of the finished sectional sofa from the workshop to the client's location. This involves careful handling to prevent damage and coordination of logistics. The ₦40,000 delivery fee is also negotiated separately, depending on factors such as distance, accessibility and special handling requirements.

- » **Labour:** ₦30,000. This cost covers the work of two assistants, commonly referred to as 'helpers', who support the head carpenter and upholsterer throughout the project. Their tasks may include loading and offloading materials, setting up jigs and equipment, and cleaning the completed sectional sofa before delivery.
- » **Timeline:** 3–7 days. This timeline accounts for material procurement, framework construction, upholstery work, quality checks and final delivery. Factors such as project complexity, labour and material availability, the workshop's workload and client specifications can influence the duration.

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