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# Furniture makers told to stress on design and quality

**KUALA LUMPUR:** There is a growing trend among Malaysian consumers to be more design and quality centric when it comes to buying furniture, although it is still low compared with the developed countries like Europe, Japan and the United States.

MIFF Sdn Bhd managing director Datuk Dr Tan Chin Huat said Malaysian manufacturers should invest more in design and quality as well as research and development in order to be more competitive and capture the market potential.

"The design of the local furniture has been improving over the years but there is still a lot of room to grow. Local manufacturers should also collaborate more with overseas designers to improve the value proposition of their products," he told *StarBiz* at the Malaysian International Furniture Fair 2011 (MIFF 2011).

Local manufacturers, especially mid-sized companies, should produce more middle to high-end products going forward to enjoy higher margin and find their own niche in the market, he said, adding that middle-class and high-end products only constituted about 15% and 5% of the world furniture production respectively.

"Malaysian consumers were getting more and more concerned on the design and quality when buying furniture instead of just looking at prices," he said.

Although consumers from developed countries spent more on furniture compared with developing countries, the latter did provide good business opportunities which should not be neglected, he said, adding: "Furniture trade had been on an uptrend as the world recovered from its economic crisis, thus the

demand for furniture is improving."

To be creative in product design, Daniel Korb – a well-known architect and furniture designer from Baden, Switzerland – said: "Creativity is not something that comes out of the blue. Creativity is based on knowledge and understanding, so it is something that you have to nurture and make it grow. The best place is to make it grow in your heart and not in your brain only."

Korb was one of the speakers in the MIFF 2011 industry seminars.

This seminar has been specially arranged for architects, interior designers, furniture designers and related industry players who would like to gain insights in the field of architecture, product design and communication.

MIFF 2011, held simultaneously at the Putra World Trade Centre and Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, started on Tuesday and ends tomorrow.

The event showcases furniture made by top exhibitors from Malaysia, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, India, South Korea, the United States, Britain, Turkey, Egypt and Japan.

The event is endorsed by the International Trade and Industry Ministry, Plantation Industries and Commodities Ministry, Malaysian Furniture Promotion Council, Malaysian Timber Industry Board, Malaysian Timber Council, Malaysia External Trade Development Corp, Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board and Forest Research Institute Malaysia.

It was approved by The Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, with The Star as the media partner.