

CONSUMER PREFERENCES FOR WOOD-FRAMED HOUSING IN KOREA

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The demand for wood-framed housing, especially constructed with a western light wood frame, has recently increased as a new single-family detached housing type in Korea. However, a knowledge base that addresses consumer preferences or opinions on wood-framed housing has not been defined.

The purpose of this paper is: 1) to measure Korean consumers' preferences for wood-framed housing; and 2) to identify differences in wood-framed housing related characteristics by demographic and current housing characteristics.

From the visitors to a model wood-framed house in Seoul, Korea, 296 persons willing to live in a wood-framed house were selected as the sample for this study. Data were collected using a self-administered survey in August and September 1997. Frequency distribution, factor analysis, chi-square test, t-test, and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the data.

Respondents' households were two-generational and in the child-education stage of the family life cycle with a mean of 3.38 family members. More than one-half of the respondents (56.0%) were male. Mean age was 37 years and mean monthly income was 3,970,000 won (\$ 2,836 US). The majority of the respondents (91.8%) had more than a 12th grade education, and less than one-half (46.3%) were employed as professionals or office workers. More than two-thirds of the respondents (67.0%) lived in apartments, and most (79.3%) were homeowners with more than 30 pyung in housing size.

The most frequent reason for choosing wood-framed housing was the preference for living in the country. In contrast, the most frequent reason for not choosing it was "unreliable" construction. For more than one-half of the respondents, the purpose of purchasing wood-framed housing was as a permanent residence. With regard to preferred type in construction techniques of wood-framed housing, almost one-half of the respondents (42.0%) had no knowledge of various types of wood-frame construction techniques, but 21 percent preferred light-weight wood frame construction. Almost two-

thirds (60.7%) of the respondents preferred to participate in planning their wood-framed house. In preferred heating systems, the respondents were almost evenly distributed between floor heating (29.5%) and warm air heating (25.0%).

Thirty-two variables were used to measure preferences for wood-framed housing characteristics using a five-point Likert-type scale and seven factors (Factor I - Aesthetics and Interior/Exterior Design, Factor II - Floor Plan and Interior Environments, Factor III - Housing Size and Space Use, Factor IV - Privacy and Convenience, Factor V - Economy, Factor VI - Noise and Moisture Condition, Factor VII - Community Conditions) were produced as a result of factor analysis. Among seven factors, Factor VI (mean: 4.51) was the highest ranked characteristic, followed by Factor I, "Aesthetics and Interior/Exterior Design" (mean: 4.46). Also, efficiency of heating and cooling included in Factor II was the highest ranked characteristic (mean: 4.97) as a single variable, followed by green field of near environment (mean: 4.74) included in Factor VII.

The differences between each of the seven factors in housing preferences and selected demographic, current housing, and wood-framed housing related characteristics were tested. The findings indicated that females, those age 50 or older, full-time housewives, were more likely to prefer better "floor plan and interior environments" (Factor I). Also, full-time housewives showed higher preference on "noise and moisture condition" (Factor VI). Sex was the most significant predictor of consumer preferences for overall housing characteristics of wood-framed housing. In other words, females were more likely to prefer most of the housing characteristics.

Those who were willing to purchase a wood-framed house as a permanent residence were more likely to prefer "Aesthetics and Interior/Exterior Design" (Factor I). And those who are currently living in larger housing (50 pyung or more) showed higher preference to "Housing Size and Space Use" (Factor III). In Economy (Factor V), current renters and those who hesitated to choose a wood-framed house because of unreliability of the construction company or high housing price were more likely to prefer better economic aspects of housing characteristics. Respondents who preferred to choose a wood-framed house based on the company's catalog or model houses were more likely to prefer better "Community Conditions" (Factor VII).

As a result of testing the significant relationships between each of the selected demographic and current housing characteristics and the six wood-framed housing

related characteristics, age and current housing type were the most significant variables that indicated group differences in the wood-framed housing characteristics.

This study provides important insight into factors that might affect consumer preferences for wood-framed housing. However, development of wood-framed houses in Korea is in the beginning stage, and the consumers' recognition or preferences for wood-framed housing have not been established. Therefore, further studies are needed to confirm whether or not the findings of this study are generalizable.