

A Study on Characteristics of Swedish Furniture Company, Källemo's chair Design

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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to identify the characteristics of chair design from furniture company, Källemo, the furniture manufacturer in Sweden manufacturing mostly the limited edition of art furniture on the basis of the unique management philosophy.

There are 12 artists manufactured chairs for Källemo. Of them, this study selected 4 artists -Sigurdur Gustafsson, John Kandell, Komplot Design, Mats Theselius-who designed at least more than three chairs.

Total 25 chairs were analyzed; 6 from Sigurdur Gustafsson, 8 from John Kandell, 3 from Komplot Design and 8 from Mats Theselius. The chair structure was divided into three parts, seat, back and structure and analyzed by material, color, type of legs and finishing.

The following results were derived from the study.

First, Källemo secured the regular customers who want to possess the chairs as the artistic works by continuing the small quantity mass-production system insisting that the maximum quantity of production is 360 pieces and the minimum quantity is 33 pieces.

Second, the sufficient time and cost were invested in the initial phase of design. This approach seems to be deviated from the traditional business system that has to create the revenue at a glance, but ultimately induces the commercial success by exponentially increasing the revenue through the creation of various product lines.

Third, Källemo provides the space that the artists who work for Källemo can sufficiently enjoy the mental composure and luxury required for the designers by strictly selecting the artists and providing the best environment for enabling the creative activities that look like the pure art area.

This study enables the further analysis and research on other collections of Källemo that mass-produces the chairs on the basis of the unique philosophy in the world as well as in Sweden using more various kinds of analysis frameworks.

Key words : Källemo, Chair Design, Characteristics

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1. Introduction

1-1 Objectives and Background

This study attempted to identify the characteristics of chair design of Källemo¹⁾, the furniture manufacturer in Sweden manufacturing mostly the limited edition of art furniture on the basis of the unique management philosophy.

The furniture manufacturers of Sweden are classified in three types by their management philosophy. The first type is the mass wholesalers emphasizing the roles as the interior coordinator rather than the roles as the furniture designer, such as IKEA A²⁾. The second type is the furniture designers mass producing the furniture through the cooperation between the freelance furniture designer and the furniture manufacturer such as Swedese³⁾. The third type manufactures only a small quantity of furniture of which the roles and functions of designers or writers are absolutely emphasized as the artistry is maximized, like Källemo.

The Swedish Modern trend that we fully understood is the furniture design company like Swedese⁴⁾. Källemo has the unique philosophy aiming the distribution of furniture as the works of art beyond the generality of Northern Europe design as well as Sweden.

Our living space requires more diversified functions to the furniture in the 21st century. While Källemo that has secured the

enthusiastic customers all over the world who have tried to satisfy their life by appreciating or using the valuable furniture was known in near the Northern Europe and even in Japan, it is rarely known in Korea. The change and development of communication technology enable the rapid communication all throughout the world and the importance of design originality is highlighted. In such a period, this study aimed to suggest the future directions that the furniture manufacturers and designers of Korea have to take through the research on the characteristics observed in the works of Källemo as well as the designs and artists of Källemo⁵⁾.

1-2 Scope and Methodology

Källemo manufactures 4 kinds of chairs in large quantities: chair (chair, arm chair, easy chair), sofa, stool and bench. This study adopted only the chair for the research. 12 artists manufactured the chairs in Källemo in large quantities. Of them, this study selected the designs from 4 artists who designed at least three chairs.

The basic examination on 4 artists⁶⁾ and the chairs that each of them designed were done. On the basis of the basic examination, the design was divided into the seat, the back and the structure and each part was analyzed using the analysis system including materials, colors, structure types and finishing. With the results from the processes explained above, this study identified three characteristics of chair design

1) www.kallemo.se

2) www.ikea.com

3) www.swedess.se

4) www.swedess.se

5) Källemo calls the designers the artists.

6) Sigurdur Gustafsson, John Kandell, Komplot Design, Mats Theselius

by Källemo, the furniture manufacturer of Sweden, and suggested the cases corresponding to each characteristic.

2. Background of Källemo

2-1 History

Källemo was established in a small town called Värnamo in Sweden, the present location of head office, by the Sven Lundh(1925-) and his wife in 1965. Sven had a professional eye for the arts and design and his wife had the material management mind required for establishing and managing the company. The combination of such two persons was the foundation for the establishment of Källemo.

Sven developed his sense of discrimination for the arts and design through the close relationship with the designer Bruno Mathsson, Hans J. Wegner, Poul Kjaerholm and Mogen Koch who showed the most vigorous activities in Europe in late 1960s; However, it was the American artist Robert Rausenberg(1925-) and Jasper Jones(1930-) who had more effect on Sven. The French artist Marcel Duchamp(1887-1968) can't be neglected. Sven was substantially fascinated with their works especially Duchamp's and those who listed above also enjoyed the discussion on the works of Duchamp. The influence of Duchamp was the appreciate eye required for Sven to understand and select the furniture and finally, it was developed to the business for mass production of valuable furniture as the works of art.

While the furniture from Källemo caused a

serious controversy on the press and drew the public attention in the early period after establishment, it was not commercially successful.

However, in 1981, Källemo had the turning point with the 「Concrete Chair」 of Jonas Bohlin (Fig. 1).



(Fig. 1) Concrete Chair Jonas Bohlin, 1981

Källemo manufactured only 100 Concrete Chair. The first chair was sold for 2,000SKr(Swedish kroner, about 250,000 KRW). However, the last chair sold in 1986 was 225,000SKr(about 28,125,000 KRW), about 1,000 times as high as the price for the first chair.⁷⁾ Sven predicted the end of functional design with this chair and established the concept that the value of furniture might not be related to the value of materials.⁸⁾

Since then, Källemo achieved the commercial success as geometrically as it could be estimated with the sales of concrete chairs.

The second turning point of Källemo was the death of Sven's wife. She faced the sudden death about 15 years ago. Her death was the serious mental impact to Sven. Sven lost the energy to lead the company and determined to leave the company. Then, his son(Erik), his daughter(Karin) and his son-in-law(Agu) who had already built up the significant power in the fields totally different from Sven's business gave up all their professional background that they had built up until

7) interview with Karin and Erik Lundh at the head office of Källemo in Värnamo, Sweden, 2001

8) www.kallemo.se

then and determined to continue the operation of Källemo in a country where the company was located. It was the unique event in Sweden because there was almost no tradition that the children took over the companies from their parents. Fortunately, Källemo was survived and Sven's children succeeded to their father's management philosophy.

2-2 Design Philosophy of Källemo

For Källemo, the meaning of success was far from the commercial success. It was because those who mass-produced the works of art followed the money and so failed in their business.

People says Källemo mass-produces the aura.⁹⁾

The creative mind and commercial mind exist together in the design field including the furniture design. Those two minds have the obscure distinction between the outside and the inside like Mobius strip, have no starting nor ending, but are connected each other as one. The design philosophy of Källemo inclined more to the creative mind than to commercial mind.

Källemo put more emphasis on the aesthetic quality felt through the human eyes rather than the fundamental quality of materials. The quality of materials that people recognize can't be described only by the property of matter that the materials are verified in terms of safety through the test that the materials endured the weight of 80kg more than 1,000 times. The furniture

that Källemo want to express should contain a number of philosophies and controversies discussed between the artists and the manufacturers from selecting materials and forms to finishing the furniture.

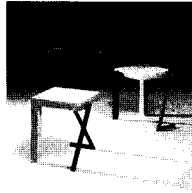
The design philosophy that Källemo seeks after for the furniture design as the works mass-producing the aura is the pursuit of unprecedented and progressive concept. Källemo never overlook the fact that the works with such a concept can be criticized, misunderstood or ignored by the public. However, since Källemo believes that even mistakes, trials and errors can be the important foundation for the creative works for designers, it also provide the opportunity for the artists to make mistakes. Källemo is addicted to the sense of achievement from the success of design that anyone doesn't attempt instead of assuming the risk on the uncertain results.

Such management philosophies make Källemo the most attractive company that the furniture designers in the world want to work with. The enthusiasm for working together can be estimated from the fact that over 30 portfolios from designers per day come to Källemo.

A story illustrated that Källemo selects the furniture designers through the unique process. The portfolio of a designer came to Källemo. There was no thick portfolio with splendid graphics that we can frequently see in the envelope. Instead, a variety of poses for Tango was described using the tiny drawings as a grain of sesame with the title "How to dance tango?" on a few papers of A4 size. As a conclusion, the designer was selected by

9) interview with Karin and Erik Lundh at the head office of Källemo in Värnamo, Sweden, 2001

Källemo for the next works (fig. 2). According to Erik and Karin, the drawings of that artist systematically analyzed and described the body structure and action using how to dance



(Fig. 2) Tango, Sigurdur Gustafsson, 1998

Tango so that Erik and Karin determined that he had the competency enough to design the furniture.

2-3 Future of Källemo

One of design philosophies of Källemo is to give the opportunity to make mistakes. However, this philosophy was not observed only in the process to make the furniture with designers. Källemo has been supporting the creative works of designers by occasionally planning the interesting exhibitions. In 1998, Källemo planned the body support exhibition using the stone with the support from a stone company in Sweden. For the exhibition, Källemo strictly selected 6 competent artistes around Europe and provided the financial support for all processes required to display the works on the outdoor exhibition pavilion along the secluded lake in Sweden after 6 months. In other words, Källemo provided all requirements including materials for the works, cost for materials and workspace as well as the money enough for 6 designers to totally stop their bread-and-butter jobs for 6 months. The designers who received such supports could devote to the creative works with the mental composure, extravagance and stability inevitable for the creative works. It is the fantastic opportunity for the

designers and the investment to get more differentiated output from them for Källemo.



(Fig. 3) A view from 「Body Support」 exhibition, Värnamo, Sweden, 1998

3. Källemo's artistes

3-1 Sigurdur Gustafsson (1962-)

His ideas about form and materials are very closely related to his upbringing and background. He was born in a small village in Iceland.

His father is a carpenter with his own little carpentry. It was in these surroundings that he got his first, and maybe most important experience with forms and materials.

This is reflected in his aesthetics which he thinks of as naive. Not far from his childhood home there is a wrecker's yard with remains of ships and all kinds of materials, corroded by rust and etched by time. The decay reveals the essence of things. You see how parts are put together and how different materials relate to one another.

He emphasizes that, as a designer you must know your own background, but also know the history, so that you can see the perspective and reflect your own time by use of the history. There is nothing new under the sun but there can always be a new understanding in well known objects. The chair for instance is a good example of

this.

The process of designing furniture that can be made without using screws or glue is a very good exercise in exploring the essence of the construction. You must have full control as the harmony in between the form and structure must be total. As a consequence he has payed interest in the De Stijl movement and the Russian constructive movement. Both exploring the essence of the structure.

In his work he tend to work in two ways that is with expressive forms and geometrical forms. It is not the purpose of this work to come up with a new style or movement, he simply try to express his own time and place.

He focuses on the idea; design is more than just working with forms. You must learn to see and explore. All around us there are hidden ideas and treasures waiting for revelation.

He seeks the essential how material and form unites.

3-2 John Kandell (1925–1991)

There are not many designers have tested their powers on the chair. But only a few, including John Kandell, have succeeded in making a chair both unique and universally applicable. In the 50's he designed both furniture and interiors, and made excursions into architecture, glass and textiles among other areas.

He worked with the greatest Swedish architects of the day, Peter Celsing, Nils Tesch and, above all, Sven Ivar Lind. Classics were created. With HI-gruppen, the

short-lived association of architects and cabinet-makers, he pushed against the limits. The distinctive features were refined proportions, vigorous line and exquisite handling of materials. Some were before their time but have now been revived. John Kandell has always worked discriminatingly and sometimes minimally. In the 80's his exuberant come-back was a surprise. His work became increasingly a synthesis of sculpture, painting, architecture and furniture. Playful and humorous, but at the same time with a display of feeling for space, volume, balance, colour and expression accumulated over an entire professional lifetime. Picasso's graphic world and imagination inspired John Kandell. He liked to quote a statement by Picasso that he had read - "a picture should be so simple that I could be sent to New York by telephone". The Pilster shelf unit (1989) can be seen as an application of this quote. The design was phoned through to Källemo, and with its surprising, unerring simplicity became one of the great successes.

3-3 Komplot Design (1987–)

Komplot Design is a partnership of Boris Berlin(1953-) and Poul Christiansen(1947-) since 1987. The company works within the fields of industrial, furniture and graphic design.

Boris Berlin is an industrial and Graphic Designer who was born in Leningrad, graduate of the Institute of Applied Arts and Design, Leningrad 1975.

Poul Christiansen was born in

Copenhagen, Denmark. He was graduated from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Copenhagen 1973. He was Freelance designer since 1979 until the Komplot Design.

Komplot Design has received numerous Design Awards such as 2004 RED DOT Design Award 2004 for "Gubi" chair, 2003 Design 100, Metropolitan Home 2003 with Non Chair, and so on.

3-4 Mats Theselius (1956-)

Mats Theselius was born in Stockholm 1956, and lives in Tomelilla. He has educated at Konstfackskolan, industrial design school Stockholm from 1979 to 1984. He was a professor at HAD, industrial design school Gothenburg in 1995.

He has received numerous Design Awards such as IKEA scholarship, Swedish state art foundation and Swedish Form society in 1984, and travel scholarship in 1986 and 1988.

Mats Theselius's furniture projects various images and potential associations that are remote from clinical functionalism. Thus, the bear more resemblance to furniture predating the modern period. Various stylistic features and materials are juxtaposed, in a functional and logical world, they bear pictorial language that gives them in situation, the aspect of objects from a world we recognize, yet one that is unfamiliar.

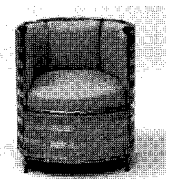
4. Examples and Analysis

Only the chair designs from 4 artists were

selected. The chair structure was divided into three parts, seat, back and structure and analyzed by material, color, type of legs and finishing. The analysis results are given in the (Table 1). Total 25 chairs were analyzed; 6 from Sigurdur Gustafsson, 8 from John Kandell, 3 from Komplot Design and 8 from Mats Theselius.

Two types for the chairs of Källemo were identified; that is, one was to develop the limited edition of which the maximum quantity was 360 pieces and the minimum quantity was 33 pieces and to sell them at higher price; the other was to invest sufficient time and budget for developing the basic type of chair and to create additional revenues by mass-production of various kinds of products. The representative chair as the first type was the

「Concrete Chair」 by Jonas Bolihn that was mentioned above while being excluded from this analysis. The other famous case was El Dorado by Mats Theselius (Fig. 4). El Dorado is one of chairs that we can easily find inside the houses of luxurious brand furniture lovers.

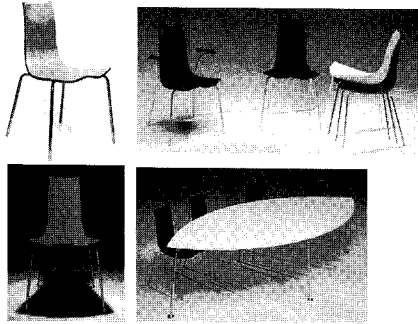


(Fig. 4) El dorado, Mats Theselius, 2002

The representative chairs of second type are Puma and NON Series by Komplot Design. Those chairs created more revenues by continuously generating the various design ranges through the investment of sufficient time and cost during the initial development phase.

While Puma was mass-produced by a Japanese furniture maker with the name "Gingko", Källemo created the new design

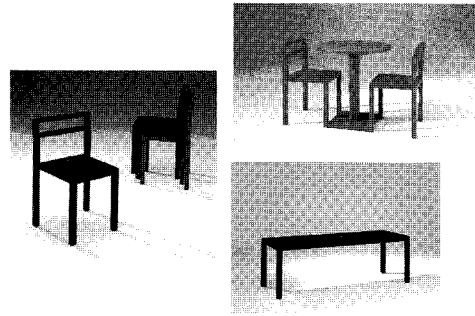
with it. As renaming the design as Puma, Källemo deployed the product line to the armchair type, bar stool type and outdoor type as well as the basic type (Fig. 5).



(Fig. 5)
Puma series, Komplot Design, 1996

The Puma case demonstrates how important the perfection of basic and first model is for developing the series of a chair. In other words, Källemo created the perfect design by investing more time, 2 years, on the chair designed by a Japanese furniture maker, and the development of perfect basic pattern became the driving force for producing a variety of transformed designs. It proves the principle of design that the design faithful to the basic requirement enables the various kinds of transformation.

Non series also required the precise works because it was the design with the simple pattern. Since the development of basic black pattern, the change of colors linked to green, red and grey as well as Non table formed the product line (Fig. 6). It was selected as the permanent collection in the Modern Art Museum in New York, the USA in 2003 and displayed www.kallemo.se



(Fig. 6)
NON series, Komplot Design, 2000

4-1 Seat and Back












The materials for seats and back are divided into 7 categories: plastic, metal (steel plate, aluminum, brass), metal frame with upholstery (rattan, fabric, leather, rubber), metal frame, foam with upholstery, solid wood, and wooden frame with upholstery (webbing, leather, fabric) with moulded plywood (Table 2).












4-2 Structure




The chair structure was analyzed in types, colors and finishing. The types of structure were comprised of 4-leg, 3-leg, 2-leg and 1-leg. The materials for structure were the wood (beech, birch, mahogany, ash) and the metal (stainless steel, aluminium, steel frame, brass). The finishing colors were the coating with various kinds of colors, the finishing with natural color of wood and painting with the standard color (Table 2).

5. Conclusion; Characteristics of Källemo's chair design

<Table 1> Examples and analysis

		examples				analysis						
artistes' name	pictures' of chairs	project's name	year of production	size	seat		back		structure			
					material	color	material	color	type of legs	material	color	finish
1 Sigurdur Gustafsson		PLEX	2004	h:830, w:510, d:500	recycled PET plastic	white, black, transparent	recycled PET plastic	white, black, transparent	4-leg	steel frame	steel color	stained
		Origami	2005	h:780, w:420, d:440	steel frame +natural +birch +paint	black, white, walnut lazur	natural, birch +paint	black, white, walnut, lazur	4-leg	steel frame	chromed color	chrome
		Rock'n roll chair	1998	h:690, w:560, d:930	stainless steel plate	steel color	stainless steel plate	steel color	2-leg	stainless steel string	steel color	stained
		limited edition 99pcs										
		Kkyseat	2001	h:780, w:800, d:750	aluminium	black, red, green, blue	aluminium	black, red, green, blue	4-leg	aluminium	various	lacquer
		Tango	1998	h:680, w:460, d:460	solid ash	natural	steel frame	red	3-leg	steel frame	red	stained -
	Wind	2003	h:670, w:670, d:670	brass net	brass color	brass net	brass color	4-leg	steel frame	steel color	paint	
	limited edition 33pcs											
2 John Kandell		Barnbarnstolen	1985	h:450, w:350, d:270	mahogany frame +leather	natural	mahogany	natural	4-leg	mahogany	natural	-
		Block	1988	h:850, w:600, d:550	beech frame +leather	natural	beech	natural, red, white, black	4-leg	beech	natural, red, white, black	stain
		Bobbob	1985	h:700, w:500, d:550	steel frame -leather	black	steel frame	black	1-leg	steel frame	black	stained
		Camilla	1982	h:830, w:250, d:350	beech	natural or various colors	beech	natural or various colors	3-leg	beech	natural or various colors	-
		Pimpim		h:850, w:500, d:480	birch	red, green	birch	red, green	4-leg	birch	red, green	-

		examples				analysis							
artistes' name	pictures' of chairs	project's name	year of production	size	seat		back		structure				
					material	color	material	color	type of legs	material	color	finish	
2	John Kandell		Victory	1991	h:1090, w:650, d:660	natural seat webbing	natural	beech	natural, red, white, black	4-leg	beech	natural, red, white, black	-
			Schablon	1987	h:800, w:500, d:50	beech+webbing	natural	beech	natural, black, red, white	4-leg	beech	natural, black, red, white	-
			Solitar	1988	h:890, w:500, d:450	beech+leather	natural, standard color	beech	natural, standard color	4-leg	beech	natural, standard color	-
3	Komplot Design		Puma	1996	h:820, w:450, d:520	birch, birch+fabric or leather	natural, various color of fabric or leather finish	birch, birch+fabric or leather	natural, various color of fabric or leather finish	4-leg	steel frame	chrome	chromed
			NON	2000	h:770(450), w:440, d:390	steel frame + PUR-rubber	black, green, red, grey	steel frame + PUR-rubber	black, green, red, grey	4-leg	steel frame + PUR-rubber	black, green, red, grey	-
			Pampas	2004	h:820, w:590, d:530	prime leather	natural, black, green, brown	prime leather	natural, black, green, brown	4-leg	steel frame	chrome	chrome
4	Mats Theselius		El dorado limited edition 360pcs	2002	h:780, w:650, d:600	brass nubuck leather	natural	brass nubuck leather	natural	4-leg	brass	stain	stained
			Ambassador	1999	h:750, w:540, d:530	steel frame + cold foam + rivet prime leather	natural, green, black, brown	steel frame + rivet prime leather	natural, green, black, brown	4-leg	steel frame	match chrome or chopped	match chrome or chopped
			Bamboo king limited edition 360pcs	2000	h:740, w:540, d:610	steel frame +rattan +fabric	various	steel frame +rattan +fabric	various	4-leg	steel frame	gold enamel finish	enamel
			Bruno	1997	h:720, w:540, d:730	steel frame +cold foam +rivet prime leather	natural, green, black, brown	steel frame +cold foam +rivet prime leather	natural, green, black, brown	4-leg	steel frame	chrome	chromed
			Elektra	2001	h:870, w:650, d:750	anodized aluminium+leather	bordeaux amber, royale blue, silver, black	anodized aluminium+leather	bordeaux amber, royale blue, silver, black	4-leg	anodized aluminium	aluminium colot	-

examples					analysis							
artistes' name	pictures' of chairs	project's name	year of production	size	seat		back		structure			
					material	color	material	color	type of legs	material	color	finish
4 Mats Theselius		Sven	1998	h:710 w:540 d:670	steel frame+fabric, leather or birch	fabric, leather or birch	steel frame+fabric, leather or birch	fabric, leather or birch	4-leg	steel frame	steel color	stained
		Theselius	1990	h:700 w:600 d:620	aluminium frame+leather	various	aluminium frame+leather	various	4-leg	aluminium frame	aluminium color	stained
		Sheriff	2004	h:780 w:530 d:500	steel structure+rivier prime leather	various	steel structure+rivier prime leather	various	1-leg	steel	stain color	stained

This study identified the characteristics only for the chairs among the collections of Källemo that has been mass-producing the chair designs with the philosophy that it mass-produces the aura. The following results were derived from the study.

First, Källemo secured the regular customers who want to possess the chairs as the artistic works by continuing the small quantity mass-production system insisting that the maximum quantity of production is 360 pieces and the minimum quantity is 33 pieces. The works mass-produced in a small quantity can apply the different prices even on the same model and can be sold at higher price in an auction market. This case enhances the position of design by combining the distribution system that was applied to the pure art field with the design.

Second, the sufficient time and cost were invested in the initial phase of design. This approach seems to be deviated from the traditional business system that has to create the revenue at a glance, but ultimately

induces the commercial success by exponentially increasing the revenue through the creation of various product lines.

Third, Källemo provides the space that the artists who work for Källemo can sufficiently enjoy the mental composure and luxury required for the designers by strictly selecting the artists and providing the best environment for enabling the creative activities that look like the pure art area. Through such a process, the artists recharge themselves and it is again linked to the creative works for Källemo.

This study is considered as the basic survey related to the features of chair design of Källemo around the artists designed at least 3 chairs, a part of furniture mass-produced by Källemo. This study enables the further analysis and research on other collections of Källemo that mass-produces the chairs on the basis of the unique philosophy in the world as well as in Sweden using more various kinds of analysis frameworks.

<Table 2> Analysis of 25 chairs from 4 artists

Analysis		Result of analysis	Sigurdur Gustafsson	John Kandell	Komplot Design	Mats Theselius	
seat	material	plastic	1				
		metal (steel plate, aluminum, brass)	4				
		metal frame + upholstery (rattan, fabric, leather, rubber)		2	2	6	
		metal frame + foam + upholstery				2	
		solid wood	1	1			
		wooden frame - upholstery (webbing, leather, fabric)		5			
	color	moulded plywood			1		
		natural	3	6	2	4	
		paint	3	3	2		
		upholstery		1	1	6	
back	material	plastic	1				
		metal (steel plate, aluminum, brass)	5	1	1	7	
		metal frame + upholstery (rattan, fabric, leather, rubber)		1	2	1	
		metal frame - foam + upholstery					
		solid wood		7			
		wooden frame + upholstery (leather, fabric)					
	color	moulded plywood					
		natural	3	1	1	3	
		paint	3	1	1	1	
		upholstery		1		7	
structure	type of leg	4-leg	metal frame	3	1	3	7
			wooden frame		7		
		3-leg	metal frame	1			
			wooden frame	1			
		2-leg	metal frame				
			1-leg	steel frame		1	
	material	swivel					1
			solid wood(birch, mahogany, oak, beech)		6		
			metal(steel, chrome, aluminium, brass)	6	1	3	8
			plywood				
		color	rubber				
			plated finishing color(chrome, metal, aluminium)	6		2	8
			natural color of wooden finish		6		
			standard color	1	7	1	
finnish			natural	3	5	1	
			lacquered	2	3	2	8
	paint	1					

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