



## ***CYPRIOT FURNITURE REFLECTION OF HERITAGE, CRAFTSMANSHIP, AND CULTURAL DESIGN: THE CASE STUDY OF ARKIN VISION FURNITURE***

*KIBRIS MOBİLYALARINDA MİRAS, ZANAATKARLIK VE KÜLTÜREL TASARIMIN YANSIMASI: ARKIN VISION MOBİLYA VAKA ÇALIŞMASI*

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Received / Geliş tarihi: 06.10.2025

Benzerlik Oranı / Similarity Ratio: %3

Revision Requested / Revizyon talebi:  
05.12.2025

Last revision received / Son revizyon teslimi:  
06.12.2025

Accepted / Kabul tarihi: 27.12.2025

Citation / Atıf : Saltık, B. (2026). Cypriot Furniture Reflection of Heritage, Craftsmanship, and Cultural Design: The Case Study of Arkin Vision Furniture. The Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication, 16 (1), 422-433  
<https://doi.org/10.7456/tojdac.1798189>

### **Abstract**

Cyprus, an island rich in history and cultural variety, has a magnificent legacy of furniture manufacture that has been passed down from generation to generation. Drawing on the richness of all peoples throughout history, Cypriot furniture is recognized for its distinctive blend of craftsmanship, natural materials and profound cultural origins. This unusual combination is a distinctive element of the island's heritage. This study investigates the cultural relevance and evolution of Cypriot furniture in general terms as a reflection of the island's heritage, identity and artisan tradition. Drawing on historical inspirations and local workmanship, Cypriot furniture mixes functional design with symbolic meaning. The study also contains a specific SWOT analysis of Arkin Vision Furniture, a leading Cypriot furniture manufacturer that shows how classic design may adapt to contemporary markets. Through this case study, the paper illustrates the relevance of furniture production that adapts to the culturally evolving era in a globalized consumer economy and stresses design factors in all its aspects. It is hoped that this study would shed light on furniture manufacture in Cyprus from various viewpoints.

**Keywords:** Cypriot furniture, Cultural heritage, Furniture design, Sustainability

### **Öz**

Tarih ve kültürel çeşitlilik açısından zengin bir ada olan Kıbrıs, nesilden nesile aktarılan muhteşem bir mobilya üretim mirasına sahiptir. Tarih boyunca tüm halkların zenginliğinden beslenen Kıbrıs mobilyaları, zanaatkarlık, doğal malzemeler ve derin kültürel kökenlerin kendine özgü karışımıyla tanınır. Bu sıra dışı kombinasyon, adanın mirasının ayırt edici bir unsurudur. Bu çalışma, adanın mirasının, kimliğinin ve zanaatkar geleneğinin bir yansıması olarak Kıbrıs mobilyalarının kültürel önemini ve evrimini genel hatlarıyla incelemektedir. Tarihi ilhamlardan ve yerel işçilikten yararlanan Kıbrıs mobilyaları, işlevsel tasarımı sembolik anlamla harmanlamaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca, klasik tasarımın çağdaş pazarlara nasıl uyum sağlayabileceğini gösteren, önde gelen bir Kıbrıs mobilya üreticisi olan Arkin Vision Mobilya firmasının özel bir SWOT analizini de içermektedir. Bu vaka çalışması aracılığıyla makale, küreselleşmiş bir tüketici ekonomisinde kültürel olarak gelişen döneme uyum sağlayan mobilya üretiminin önemini ortaya koymakta ve tasarım faktörlerini her yönüyle vurgulamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın Kıbrıs'taki mobilya üretimine çeşitli bakış açılarından ışık tutması hedeflenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kıbrıs Mobilyası, Kültürel Miras, Mobilya Tasarımı, Sürdürülebilirlik



## INTRODUCTION

The furniture of Cyprus is not only functional but deeply evocative of the island's social structure, aesthetic sensibility, and historical growth. As an island located at the junction of Europe, Asia, and Africa, Cyprus has absorbed a diverse array of cultural influences throughout ages — Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman, and British — each leaving its impression on local art and design. Furniture, as a daily object, serves as both a mirror and a conduit of these cultural manifestations (UNESCO, 2023).

Furniture is more than a functional aspect of interior spaces—it serves as a tangible expression of a culture's identity, values, and history. In the context of Cyprus, furniture reflects a deep-rooted tradition of craftsmanship that has evolved over centuries through a fusion of indigenous skills and external influences. The island's strategic position at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa has shaped a distinctive cultural heritage, including its decorative arts and domestic architecture, within which furniture plays an integral role (Hadjikyriakos, 2014). Traditional Cypriot furniture is characterized by intricate woodwork, practical design, and a reliance on locally sourced materials, such as olivewood, pine, and carob trees. These pieces are often handmade by skilled artisans using methods passed down through generations, making each item a vessel of cultural memory and heritage (Philokyprou and Michael, 2017).

Historically, furniture in Cyprus was deeply connected to family life and religious practices, with pieces such as wedding chests (*prikonomata*) and icon stands (*iconostasias*) carrying symbolic and ceremonial significance. The craftsmanship reflected in these objects not only fulfilled practical needs but also embodied social values, including hospitality, honor, and devotion. Over time, modernization, urbanization, and global trade have transformed the way furniture is produced and consumed on the island, threatening the survival of traditional knowledge systems and artisanal practices. Yet, amidst these changes, there remains a strong cultural desire to preserve Cypriot identity through material forms, especially in the face of increasing cultural homogenization (UNESCO, 2003; Avdela, 2012).

In recent years, a number of local furniture designers and manufacturers have begun to reinterpret traditional aesthetics for contemporary audiences. These efforts reflect a broader trend in which heritage-based design is used not only to preserve cultural memory but also to foster economic and creative innovation (Dormer, 1997). One such company is Arkin Vision Furniture, a contemporary Cypriot furniture studio known for its sophisticated blending of historical design elements with modern sensibilities. Arkin Vision's work draws from a wide range of traditional motifs—geometric carvings, local timber textures, and Byzantine-inspired forms—while integrating sleek lines and sustainable practices that appeal to modern consumers. Through this synthesis of past and present, the company has positioned itself at the intersection of tradition and modernity, offering a unique model of cultural sustainability through design.

This case study explores how Arkin Vision Furniture contributes to the preservation and evolution of Cypriot furniture design. By examining its design ethos, production methods, and material choices, this paper aims to demonstrate how furniture can serve as a meaningful conduit of cultural expression and continuity. Additionally, this study considers how Arkin Vision's work engages with broader questions of identity, place-making, and the role of craft in the 21st century. As such, the case of Arkin Vision offers valuable insights into the ways in which furniture can act as a living archive—preserving intangible cultural heritage while simultaneously adapting to the demands of contemporary aesthetics and lifestyles (Kalaycıoğlu and Aykac, 2016).

Through this analysis, the paper contributes to the growing discourse on cultural design practices and the importance of supporting local craftsmanship in an era of mass production and cultural standardization. It also invites reflection on the role of creative industries in sustaining heritage and the responsibilities of designers in navigating the delicate balance between innovation and tradition.

There are previous studies in the literature on Cyprus furniture. These studies generally include the history of the island of Cyprus, furniture produced specific to the island and their contents. These studies

do not include a general comparison of furniture produced in the past and today and a company-based study (Papadakis, 2005).

The aim of this study is to combine all other studies, provide information about the current furniture industry in Cyprus and apply the study conducted on a company basis to the general public. With the case study, the strengths and weaknesses of the company, threats and opportunities were examined and a general conclusion was reached based on this.

## METHODOLOGY

### Historical and Cultural Context

Cyprus has a long history of furniture making, influenced by diverse civilizations such as the Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman, and British. Every period added to the development of regional furniture designs by fusing functional architecture with decorative accents. The island's agricultural lifestyle, religious convictions, and social mores are frequently reflected in traditional Cypriot furniture (Alessandra, Giovanni, Primo and Davide, 2008).

The Mediterranean climate has increased the importance of outdoor furniture and encouraged the use of airy, spacious, and natural materials in interior design. The traditional Cypriot home lifestyle, a culture of hospitality and conversation, has influenced furniture choices for large seating groups and comfortable spaces.

Cyprus's natural resources have directly influenced the materials used in furniture production. The abundance of tree species such as citrus, olive, carob, almond, and walnut has led to the widespread use of these local woods in furniture.

Sturdy construction, useful design, and ornamentation that incorporates both religious and folkloric themes are characteristics of traditional Cypriot furniture. Instead of being mass-produced, items like boukles (ornamental wooden chests), krevatia (hand-carved beds), and trapezaria (dining sets) were created by local artisans, frequently utilizing locally available materials like cypress, walnut, and olive wood (Ioannides, 2017).



**Figure 1.** Tradional Cyprus chair example – Dio Dio collective series



**Figure 2.** Tradional Cyprus chair example – Dio Dio collective series

### Techniques

Traditional craftsmanship still holds a significant place in the Cyprus furniture industry. Crafts such as the famous Lefkara lacework and wood carving are used as decorative elements in furniture, reflecting the island's artisanal spirit (Demetriou, 2014).

Locally accessible materials including cedar, pine, olive wood, and occasionally Mediterranean hardwoods are used to make most Cypriot furniture. Each piece's rustic beauty is enhanced and endurance is guaranteed by the use of natural, long-lasting woods. Expert woodworking methods, such as carving, inlay, and painting, are used by artisans, who frequently incorporate elaborate patterns and symbolic themes.

Decorative features like geometric patterns, floral motifs, and religious symbols are frequently seen in handcrafted furniture pieces including coffee tables, chests, high-backed armchairs, and carved wooden sofas. These components have cultural and spiritual importance in addition to being aesthetically pleasing (Herzfeld, 2004).



**Figure 3.** Cypriot handcrafted traditional sofa - Antiques Mall Cyprus, circa 1950



**Figure 4.** Example of techniques - F. Motwary series

### **Design Features and Styles**

Furniture in Cyprus typically features a blend of traditional Mediterranean style and popular modern aesthetics, emphasizing natural materials, light colors, and functionality. The current trends also incorporate minimalist, Scandinavian, and eco-friendly designs.

Traditional Cypriot furniture is characterized by solid craftsmanship, simple yet elegant design, and a focus on usefulness. The furniture tends to be hefty and substantial, reflecting its agricultural origins. It often has hand-carved embellishments, painted surfaces with brilliant hues, and the use of indigenous textiles and needlework (Tselentis, 2018).

In contemporary times, traditional designs are being altered to fit modern tastes, merging old-world charm with contemporary aesthetics. This fusion has led to greater popularity both within Cyprus and beyond.



**Figure 5.** Pedoulas Village Cyprus – Adobe Stock photo



**Figure 6.** Antique Cypriot exquisite wood carved daisy detail, circa 1920

### **Cultural Significance**

Cyprus furniture holds significant cultural importance, primarily rooted in centuries-old woodcarving traditions, the use of local materials, and as an expression of the island's diverse historical influences (Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman, and British colonial eras). Each piece often embodies communal memory, identity, and practical craftsmanship passed down through generations.

Furniture plays a vital role in Cypriot social and religious practices. Many sculptures are produced expressly for religious events, marriages, and family gatherings, expressing the community's ideals and customs.

The workmanship transmitted from generation to generation serves as a cultural legacy, preserving the island's individuality amid globalization.



**Figure 7.** *Troodos Village* – Adobe Stock photo

### **Modern-Day Revival and Export**

Modern-day Cypriot furniture involves a revival of traditional craftsmanship through contemporary design, utilizing local natural materials and traditional motifs in innovative ways. The industry has adapted to global trends, blending old and new aesthetics to create a unique, export-oriented design language.

Today, there is a rising respect for traditional Cypriot furniture, both as utilitarian things and as collectible art pieces. Local craftspeople and furniture producers are increasingly integrating ancient techniques with new design trends to appeal to a wider market.

Cypriot furniture has achieved reputation on the world scale, with exports reaching Europe, the Middle East, and beyond. This global interest helps maintain local artists and preserves the island's rich artisanal legacy.

### **Contemporary Landscape**

A contemporary landscape in Cyprus for modern furniture focuses on durable materials, clean lines, and a harmonious blend with native flora to create stylish, climate-resilient outdoor living spaces.

In recent decades, the effect of globalization, urbanization, and consumerism has led to a reduction in traditional furniture-making processes. Nonetheless, a revived interest in historical preservation and ecological design has created prospects for a cultural rebirth.

### **Methods**

#### **Case Study: Arkin Vision Furniture**

Founded in Cyprus, Arkin Vision Furniture has emerged as a notable example of a company that embraces both tradition and innovation. The company offers a wide range of home and office furniture, project business that emphasizes quality, aesthetics, and cultural relevance.

#### **SWOT Analysis**

In the research, a qualitative approach was used to evaluate the sustainability-oriented design framework in the furniture industry. Arkin Vision Furniture company was considered as a case study in evaluating design for sustainability in the Cyprus furniture sector. A focus group was formed consisting of 5 designers with at least 2 years of experience working full-time or part-time in the company. The analysis of the focus group discussions was carried out using a thematic and inductive approach derived from the discussions and themes emerging from the focus groups (Vlados, 2019).

The data collected from the focus group interviews were transcribed, and the variables were classified into four SWOT categories as strengths and weaknesses according to internal factors and opportunities and threats according to external factors (Gurel and Tat, 2017). The application of the SWOT analysis was aligned with a qualitative analytical framework, ensuring a comprehensive and holistic evaluation of the researched topic (Buyukozkan and Ilicak, 2019).

The study aimed to avoid bias by adopting a multi-perspective approach, which is in line with the suitability of SWOT analysis for qualitative analytical frameworks. Data collected from focus group discussions were transcribed and systematically analyzed to classify, and summarize variables into four categories (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences, in line with the qualitative nature of the study. The use of focus group discussions contributed to a holistic assessment of sustainability-oriented design in the furniture industry by providing a platform for diverse perspectives.

Within the scope of the focus group study, participants were asked to evaluate the "strengths", "weaknesses", "opportunities" and "threats" for the new situation that emerged when the design approach was taken into consideration by the furniture sector. As a result of the interviews, thematic coding was done and approaches under these headings were created (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Focus groups SWOT analysis conducted with Arkin Vision Furniture

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established reputation for quality and elegant design.</li> <li>Incorporation of Cypriot and Mediterranean motifs.</li> <li>Strong machinery.</li> <li>Local production allows for customization and responsiveness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited international brand recognition.</li> <li>High price points reduce accessibility.</li> <li>Finding some qualified workers.</li> <li>Reliance on a small domestic market.</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion into international markets through digital platforms.</li> <li>Increased demand for eco-conscious and artisanal furniture.</li> <li>Partnerships with the tourism and hospitality sectors.</li> <li>Incentives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competition from global low-cost brands.</li> <li>Economic instability affecting consumer spending.</li> <li>Rising costs of raw materials and skilled labor.</li> <li>To reach the raw materials easily.</li> </ul>

### Strengths of Design Applications in the Cyprus Furniture Industry

The strengths identified by the participants in design practices in the Cyprus furniture industry were divided into sub-themes as; “Established reputation for quality and elegant design”, “Incorporation of Cypriot and Mediterranean motifs”, “Strong machinery” and “Local production allows for customization and responsiveness”.

When we consider the strengths of the company, the first thing that comes to mind is the brand awareness in terms of quality and design. The fact that the company stands out in terms of quality and design in furniture in Cyprus, which is a relatively smaller market compared to other major countries, is seen as a sign that it stands out compared to other companies in terms of taking on and completing new work.

Another strength of the company is that it uses motifs and patterns specific to Cyprus in its designs. It can be considered that the company is advancing in a local and unique line in terms of design.

Another strength is the powerful machinery park. In island countries like Cyprus, a powerful machinery park is very important both in terms of the applicability of your design and its quality.

Finally, while the company works on a project basis, local production allows it to act more comfortably and diversely in terms of design. This is another strong aspect of the company. The company easily responds to designs that are specific to the Cypriot culture and desired.

### Weaknesses of Design Applications in the Cyprus Furniture Industry

The weaknesses identified by the participants in design practices in the Cyprus furniture industry were divided into sub-themes as; “Limited international brand recognition”, “High price points reduce accessibility”, “Finding some qualified workers” and “Reliance on a small domestic market”.

Cyprus is an island geographically located in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is not close to international markets. The company's international recognition is weak in the analysis. The reason for this can be seen as being an island and far from foreign markets. As of today, there is no international furniture fair in Cyprus.

Company has problems to reduce the prices and main reason behind that is raw material prices. Due to geographic situation, in Cyprus raw materials are expensive. For this reason, the accessibility of high price rating companies is decreasing.

Finding qualified workers, actually it is our main problem for every location. Company has its own production facility and they always need qualified workers. Since the company does this specifically for Cyprus, it has difficulty in working comprehensively on this issue and this is seen as one of the weak trends of the company.

Last weaknesses point for company is reliance on a small domestic market. As mentioned above in other weaknesses, the company remains in a limited market because it is on an island. In fact, as part of its goals, the company offers local designs specific to Cyprus to foreign markets. However, it remains weak in this position.

### **Opportunities of Design Applications in the Cyprus Furniture Industry**

The opportunities identified by the participants in design practices in the Cyprus furniture industry were divided into sub-themes as; “Expansion into international markets through digital platforms”, “Increased demand for eco-conscious and artisanal furniture”, “Partnerships with the tourism and hospitality sectors” and “Incentives”.

In our global word, selling products through digital markets is very popular so company also has an opportunity use these platforms. There are also sister companies to help its expansion.

The demand for furniture in our developing world is increasing. Wood, with its edible properties, plays a significant role in this. The company emerged in Cyprus as a tradition in its designs using natural wood. This growing demand for flexible, handcrafted furniture presents a significant opportunity for the company.

Cyprus, a large, temperate, and historical island in the eastern Mediterranean, is visited by tourists throughout the majority of the year. Consequently, the island's tourism sector is significantly developed. The company considers collaborating with hotels and other tourism-related businesses a significant opportunity. Furthermore, considering the frequent renovations and renovations within the tourism sector, the magnitude of this opportunity becomes even more evident.

Finally, Cyprus offers significant government incentives, particularly for the furniture sector. These incentives provide companies with a more manageable advantage in terms of both design and material costs. Therefore, receiving these incentives presents a significant opportunity for companies.

### **Threats of Design Applications in the Cyprus Furniture Industry**

The threats identified by the participants in design practices in the Cyprus furniture industry were divided into sub-themes as; “Competition from global low-cost brands”, “Economic instability affecting consumer spending”, “Rising costs of raw materials and skilled labor” and “To reach the raw materials easily”.

Although the product determines its own price, a strict cost-effectiveness policy is followed worldwide. Lower-priced products are more preferred. In this respect, because Cyprus has a high semi-material input and the company primarily uses wood, which is unique to Cypriot design, cheap products pose a serious threat to the company.

Cyprus's economic relations, as in every country, are experiencing significant economic instability following COVID-19. Increasing prices and the price-product balance pose a serious threat to the company. Consumers can act differently in such economies, and companies are sometimes struggling to find a way forward in this situation.

As mentioned above, rising commodity and labor costs, the effects of an unstable economy, also increase the price of finished goods. This, in turn, reduces the company's sales force and poses a threat. Finally, because Cyprus is an island, it's impossible to find every desired material at any given time. Because the company operates with a design focus and reflects Cypriot culture, it uses specialized materials. The constant lack of access to these materials poses a threat to the company.

## CONCLUSION

Cypriot furniture is more than material; it is memory made tangible. It reflects centuries of lived experience, artistic expression, and communal identity. In an era dominated by mass production and cultural standardization, preserving and innovating within such traditions is both a challenge and a necessity.

Cypriot furniture embodies the soul of the island's history, culture, and artistry. Its timeless appeal lies in the meticulous craftsmanship, meaningful symbolism, and natural materials that define each piece. As the world continues to seek authentic and handcrafted products, Cypriot furniture stands out as a testament to enduring tradition and creative innovation.

Consequently, evaluating the influence of Cypriot culture on Cypriot furniture design provided valuable learning opportunities for both designers and industry representatives. This analysis, conducted through a focus group and design center, informed designers about Cypriot culture and contributed to a more informed understanding of design processes and sectoral strategies. The study, particularly with designers, revealed that design is generally approached from a production- and sales-focused perspective. One of the primary reasons for this is that the designer group selected for the sample operates in a sales-focused industry and is positioned under marketing departments. Factors such as manufacturability, cost calculations, and a customer-focused approach emerged as limiting factors in the design process.

The use of SWOT analysis in the research not only facilitated the focus group discussion but also provided designers with the opportunity to participate from a sectoral perspective rather than a limited one. This approach helped designers gain a more comprehensive perspective across the industry, rather than being limited to their own disciplines.

### If we look at the results of your SWOT Analysis:

- The company's brand awareness in terms of quality in the market, its ability to incorporate Cypriot motifs and culture into its designs, its strong machinery and its ability to move more easily with its identity as a local manufacturer have emerged as its strengths.
- The weaknesses of the company were its lack of recognition in international markets, its high prices, difficulties in accessing qualified personnel and operating in a small market.
- The company's presence on digital platforms alongside other companies within the group, the increasing demand for environmental and handmade products and the company's ability to meet this demand, its ability to work with tourism as the other largest sector on the island, the availability of incentives easily granted by the government on the island and the company's ability to easily access these incentives are all opportunities.
- The company's inability or difficulty in competing with cheaper companies, an unstable economy and the unbalanced movements of consumers in this economy, the increase in labor and material prices, and the inability to easily access all the desired materials are also threats.

The results of this study are believed to provide insights into Cypriot furniture and pave the way for future research. Further research on this topic is also considered beneficial given its importance.

Overall, this study affirms that research into Cypriot furniture—whether focused on market trends, historical significance, or sustainable practices—is an important field that continues to evolve and presents numerous opportunities for future investigation.

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