



Why Fly 10,732 Miles to Malaysia?

Furniture, say buyers in far corners of the world

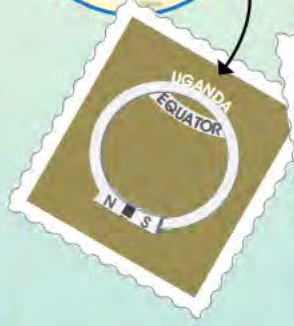
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"MIFF IS A GOOD SOURCE FOR WOOD FURNITURE....."



Mike Esparza



THEY COME FROM Uganda and Puerto Rico. With the distance to Kuala Lumpur at 4,774 miles and 10,732 miles, respectively, we're talking beyond far and wide. Those are the lengths discerning global buyers are willing to go to get to the Malaysian International Furniture Fair (MIFF).

Is the furniture really that good?

They think so.

"I come to MIFF in Malaysia to find different manufacturers to compare prices and designs," said Alice Karugaba, managing director of Nina Interiors Ltd, Uganda.

"I have found quite a lot here so much so that most of what I buy is now from Malaysia."

Nina Interiors is a premier retailer for office and domestic furniture, and furnishing accessories in Uganda. The company has two retail outlets in Kampala, Uganda and a third one in Kigali, Rwanda. Having been in business for the last 22 years, it has 2,000 square meters of showroom, workshop and warehouse all under one roof.

Meanwhile, MIFF has been part of Puerto Rico-based Furniture Warehouse Outlet's business calendar for the last 10 years, as General Manager Mike Esparza's needs are specific.

"MIFF is a good source for wood furniture—mainly bedroom sets for adults and juveniles, and also dining sets," he said. Furniture Warehouse Outlet has a 55,000-square foot showroom, and the business focuses on bringing quality furniture direct from the country of origin at the best prices possible. It has been in business for the last 20 years, and clearly knows how to source for good products.

"I COME TO MIFF IN MALAYSIA TO FIND DIFFERENT MANUFACTURERS TO COMPARE PRICES AND DESIGNS."



Alice Karugaba

"Another reason [we go to MIFF] is due to U.S. anti-dumping laws that tax bedroom furniture from China," said Mr. Esparza. "This has made Malaysia become even more important for bedroom furniture for our market."

According to the U.S. Center for Trade Policy Studies, the U.S. antidumping law, supporters say, ensures "fair trade" by offsetting market distortions caused by foreign governments. Specifically, it allegedly targets "unfair" pricing practices—price discrimination and below-cost sales—that reflect protectionism, cartelization, subsidies, and other structural defects in foreign markets. China is sometimes a target of enforcement of this law.

China also harbors language barriers, while Malaysia is a multi-lingual country and most visitors rarely have a problem talking with Malaysians. This obviously helps facilitate communication in an industry full of specific needs and requirements.

"Another reason I come to MIFF rather than other places like China, for instance, is because of communication," said Ms. Karugaba, of Nina Interiors. "Communication is much easier for me in Malaysia than anywhere else."

Serendipity also is known to strike in Malaysia.

Even though office furnishings are part of Nina Interiors' product portfolio, Ms. Karugaba didn't come looking for them at MIFF. She got them, nonetheless.

"I also deal in office furnishings and I have not been able to find fabrics," Ms. Karugaba said. "But I found it in Malaysia though I wasn't really looking for it."

Hassle-free, one-stop-furniture shopping seems to be Malaysia's market strength. At least that's what savvy global buyers are thinking.