

IKEA

ABOUT

Category:

Retail – homeware stores

Owner of the brand:

Inter IKEA Systems B.V.

Key competitors:

Home Depot, B&Q, Amazon, eBay, Target, Walmart

BRAND STRATEGY ANALYSIS

Brand essence

Creating a better everyday life for the many people.

Brand values

Design, accessibility, inspiration, sustainability.

Brand character

Warm, friendly, positive, creative, inspirational, for everybody, Swedish.

Dominating archetype



The Regular Guy

EVIDENCE

Comments

1

IKEA was founded by Ingvar Kamprad in 1943 in Älmhult, a small Swedish town. The brand name is an acronym formed from the founder's initials (I and K) and the farm and village where he grew up, Elmtaryd and Agunnaryd (E and A). In its early years, the company focused on selling smaller items such as pens, wallets, watches and picture frames, adding furniture to the range only a few years later. In 1951, IKEA published its first catalogue, which remained its main advertising channel for 70 years, with the 2021 edition being the last. All IKEA stores, except for one in the Netherlands, operate under franchise agreements, held by large organisations rather than individual owners.

2

Although IKEA's founder became one of the richest people in the world, he was famous for his frugality, driving second-hand cars and wearing clothes from flea markets¹. This mindset shaped IKEA's DNA, making cost-consciousness and accessibility central to the brand. IKEA prides itself on offering products that are affordable and therefore for everyone: "For us, good design is the right combination of form, function, quality, sustainability and a low price. We call it 'democratic design', because we believe good home furnishing is for everyone. It's why we're constantly exploring smarter, thriftier ways to do things."²

3

The core of IKEA's brand strategy lies in the notion of celebrating everyday life and recognising that your home, big or small, is the most important place on Earth, shaping your well-being and happiness. IKEA defines its brand vision as "creating a better everyday life for the many people"³, capturing both its focus on design and functionality ("better everyday life") and its commitment to affordability ("for the many people"). This vision is embedded across the organisation, from its business model to its product and marketing strategy.

4

Although IKEA's global brand strategy is consistent worldwide, there are some differences in how it is expressed in local markets. In the UK, the messaging is softer and more emotional, focusing on celebrating everyday life and making it more wonderful (e.g., "Enjoy the little things in life, maybe they are really the big things"⁴ or "It won't feel like home 'til it feels like you"⁵). In the US, communication has traditionally been more action-oriented and focused on improvement rather than celebration, although in recent years the tone has become noticeably more emotional.

In the UK, IKEA uses the "The Wonderful Everyday" tagline. In the US, the brand long described itself as a "Life Improvement Store", later introducing "Make the dreams yours" and more recently "Dream the Possibilities".

5

IKEA's employer value proposition (EVP) is closely aligned with its overall brand strategy. Rather than prioritising individual performance above all else, the company places a strong emphasis on teamwork ("togetherness"⁶) and on empowering employees. IKEA wants its people and suppliers to feel genuinely engaged in the mission of creating a better everyday life, while also striving to create a better everyday life for them in return. As the company puts it: "We are not like other businesses, and we don't want to be. We want to challenge conventions and drive positive changes in our industry and sometimes even in the world."⁷

6

IKEA has embraced the Regular Guy archetype like no other brand. Everything the brand does celebrates the beauty of everyday life and makes it accessible to as many people as possible.

Dominant colours: blue and yellow (the colours of the Swedish flag).

Tagline

“The wonderful everyday” (UK)

“Dream the possibilities” (US)

Official brand statement

“The IKEA vision

‘To create a better everyday life for the many people.’ This vision goes beyond home furnishing. We want to have a positive impact on the world – from the communities where we source our raw materials to the way our products help our customers live a more sustainable life at home.

By sharing what we do, and speaking up for what we believe in, we can be part of positive change in society.

The IKEA business idea

While our vision tells us why we exist, our business idea tells us what we want to achieve. And if you’ve ever visited IKEA, you’ll have probably worked out what our business idea is – ‘to offer a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them.’

Ingvar Kamprad, IKEA Founder”⁸

Interesting facts

In 1994, IKEA launched a US campaign believed to be the first to feature a same-sex couple, but it was withdrawn after several weeks following terrorist threats against its stores.