

The Ikea Rocking Chair Reset

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the redesign project of the IKEA rocking chair, systematically exploring its pain points and potential opportunities in design management through the framework of design thinking. The literature review section provides an in-depth analysis of IKEA's design strategy, the concept of design thinking, and its core value to business, supplemented by empirical case studies of the company's products. During the exploration phase, deficiencies in the existing rocking chair were identified, including aspects of user experience, material sustainability, and functional design. The problem definition stage further clarified key issues, such as the need for ergonomic optimization, as well as market opportunities, such as the potential for smart integration. Subsequently, during the development and prototyping phases, innovative design strategies were proposed, including modular structures and user-customizable solutions, with detailed design specifications outlining the prototype realization process. Ultimately, the study concludes that the IKEA rocking chair redesign not only enhances product competitiveness but also reinforces the business value driven by design, providing a replicable practice model for similar projects.

KEYWORDS

IKEA rocking chair; Design redesign; Design thinking; User experience; Modular design; Sustainable Design; Smart integration

1 Introduction

IKEA has become a globally recognized home furnishing brand after 80 years from the 1980s to the present. It has always endeavoured to provide the most affordable products to people worldwide. However, IKEA has adhered to the concept of sustainable design from the beginning to the end. Although it is very successful, plenty of problems can arise. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate IKEA's products, select the more popular product types, identify the issues, and then enhance the design from the design management perspective. Firstly, by exploring design management and thinking to develop an explanation of IKEA's core design strategy to bring business value to it. Secondly, the case of IKEA is analyzed from different dimensions, and the more popular product types, such as chairs, are selected for specific evaluation. Then, by extracting the relevant elements needed from design management's analytical tools and analyzing the competitive advantages of the chairs in comparison with similar chairs, we explore whether these are the necessary conditions for success.

2 Literature review

2.1 Design management at IKEA

Nowadays, most designs have gradually shifted from the traditional model of designing only for products to the model of designing for the public. This series of changes has deepened the complexity of the design process. It has also systematically impacted people's lifestyles. As a result, design is no longer a single discipline but

a cross-cutting paradigm between design and business; technology and marketing have evolved in response to the changing trends in design-related fields. The aim is to integrate design and innovation thinking into an organization's decision-making process to organize, coordinate, and direct design activities in a structured way to create competitive products. In this way, the organization's strategic goals are achieved - moving forward in the iteration and creation of design thinking.

2.2 Design thinking

Design thinking is a way of presenting understanding and reality to the world. It is not just limited to the design industry but also works in areas such as business and engineering. However, with the advancement of society, design thinking has begun to emphasize human-centredness, the core key of which is to put the user at the centre of the process by fully understanding the user's needs and applying a variety of creative ideas and techniques to come up with targeted solutions. For example, mind mapping, sketching, and so on. Then, prototype concepts are produced quickly and tested iteratively to create a finished solution that can be promoted and sold^[17].

2.3 The value IKEA's design strategy adds to the business

IKEA was an early adopter of public-centred design management. It has gained popularity by providing services and experiences with a sense of family atmosphere. IKEA's design management practices cover many areas, including product, brand, user experience, and service design. Therefore, value can be added to the organization from different perspectives from its domains.

2.4 Company product case studies

Ikea has been focusing on home products, and data from 2022 shows that the Poang chair occupies first place among the most popular products in Ikea. Therefore, the main focus is on evaluating the IKEA chair's merits and demerits. Among the many chair styles available at IKEA, the most popular is the Poang chair, which is used as an example for the analysis.

Regarding product performance, IKEA chairs have always been known for their assembled construction. However, the materials used are manufactured with suitable materials such as solid wood and metal that have stamina. The upholstery cushion fabric of the Ikea chair is easy to clean and replace, and Ikea also offers a wide range of chair upholstery for customers to choose from. The Poang chair uses the resilient characteristics of glued wood, and its curved wood-style frame and supportive backrest also make it comfortable. However, according to the study, some people still criticise the quality of IKEA's products. For example, Jonado Rocking Chair.

Regarding the product design process, the chairs that IKEA can enter the workshop to design need to fulfil four criteria: economy, sustainability, and sound design appearance and functionality. Therefore, the designers' choice of design elements is based on controlling the cost of raw materials and production techniques to design the product.

Regarding design sustainability, the Poang chair comes in a range of product styles, the variation of which is the removable cushion cover. They all use the same base frame design and are flat in shape, saving space by being easily placed in a flat box^[2]. Therefore, this bulk design can effectively reduce the cost and waste of resources (see Figure 1).

Regarding material sustainability, IKEA had more negative impacts in the early days due to using raw materials. For example, IKEA's use of wood has impacted the environment as it accounts for 1% of the world's annual consumables and occupies third place worldwide. To preserve the balance of the ecosystem, from 2022 onwards, IKEA products will be made from FSC-certified wood or recycled wood. Even the upholstery of the cushions that replace the chairs is made from sustainable cotton. It is easy to see that the Poang armchair is produced to achieve sustainability in its design, materials, and production processes. The Poang armchair is one of the most iconic, if not the most popular, of IKEA's chair categories.

However, compared to peer brands, like Herman Miller and Steelcase, although these brands have unique features, IKEA's products remain the strongest combination in quality and price concessions.



Figure 1 PELLO chairs in a variety of styles

3 Explore

To better present the business chain within IKEA. This research will explore its internal strengths and weaknesses and develop several aspects related to the society to analyze the current situation of IKEA. For this purpose, the following four tables have been created, and the target project is briefly described.

In terms of IKEA's customer segments, the earliest customers were in middle-income households (see Figure 3). It will make localisation adjustments when IKEA stores are extended to the world. For example, since the consumption level in China is somewhat different from the original direction of Ikea's positioning, the Chinese market was specifically segmented for Ikea's Chinese market: relatively affluent people in big cities. These office workers want to buy good quality goods but can't afford to pay high prices.

In terms of IKEA's marketing strategy, cost control is at the top of IKEA's strategy, and its in-house flat packaging design is one of IKEA's biggest core strengths in reducing costs. At the same time, IKEA has been committed to supply chain sustainability in its production process since 2018, that is, in using only recycled materials or second-hand parts warranty, etc. (see Figure 2). As seen from the Poang chair in Figure 1, it has a flat appearance for easy removal and installation. In

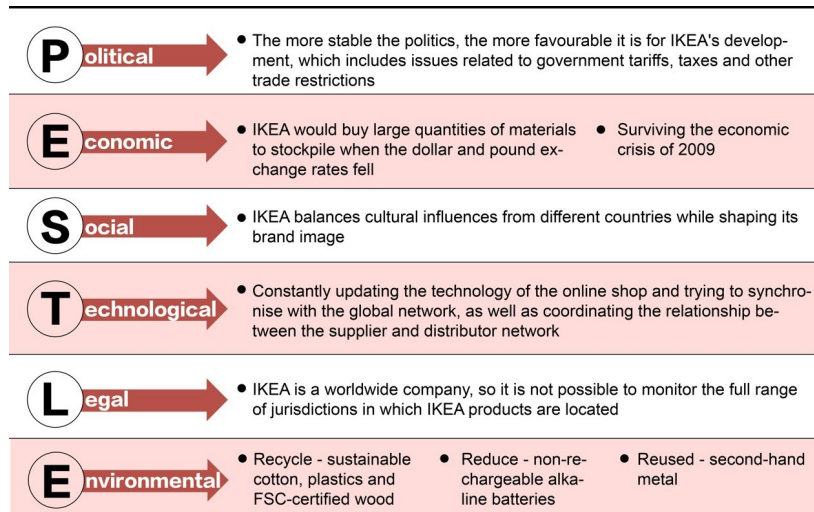


Figure 2 PESTEL analysis of ikea

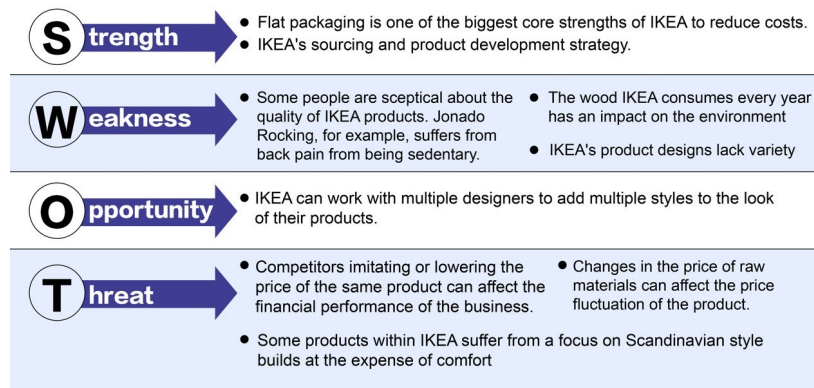


Figure 3 SWOT analysis of ikea

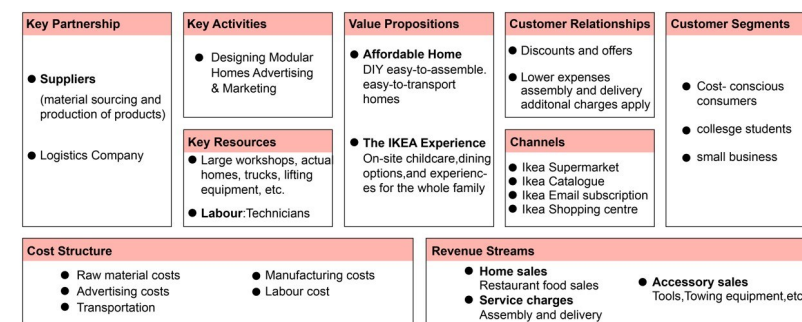


Figure 4 The business model canvas of ikea.

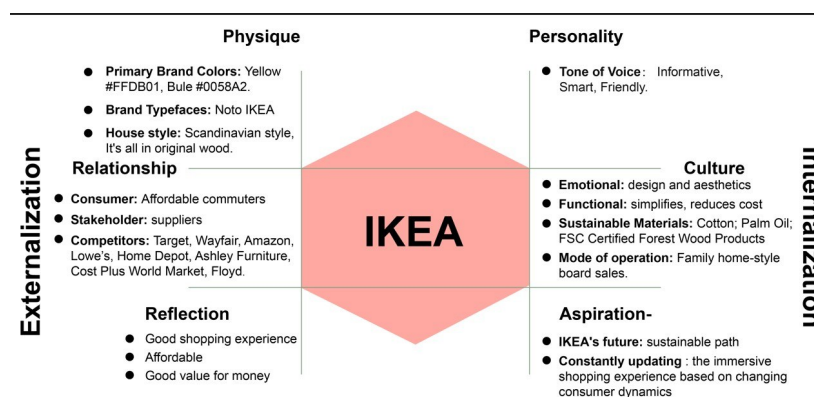


Figure 5 Brand identity prism of ikea

addition, customers can easily take the product home, which further improves warehouse management efficiency and reduces the company's logistics costs.

In terms of who IKEA works with, since IKEA does not have its manufacturing plants, IKEA's long-term relationships with key suppliers are a vital strength of IKEA's sourcing and product development strategy. For example, IKEA's earliest outsourcers were in Poland, saving IKEA money by eliminating the cost of maintaining the teams associated with the manufacturing process. Product design is the core of business success. So, IKEA is only involved in conceptualising its products, selling them and holding the core power of product design in its hands.

Based on the previous case study of the PELLO chair, another IKEA chair, the Jonado Rocking Chair, has a bad rating (see Figure 5). From the material point of view, woven rattan sits up very hard, even with a backrest, but the sense of comfort is not good; its sitting position and high backrest are simple, but there is no support for the lumbar position. From an ergonomic point of view, it does not fit the human body shape, and the sitting depth is too short, which can lead to people's lower back pain when used for a long time. Its only advantage is that it is also cool in summer.

To sum up, the SWOT in Figure 3, combined with the case of typical IKEA chairs, allows us to analyze the consistency of their styles. However, by analyzing different chairs from the same perspective, in addition to the similarity of styles, their comfort is not consistent. According to the survey, one of the reasons why IKEA is reluctant to expand its business to other countries is that the style is too homogeneous.



Figure 6 Problems with the jonado rocking chair

4 Defining the problem

4.1 Problematic point

(1) Although most of the IKEA chairs are more classic cases, there are still some products with some design problems, such as the Jonado Rocking Chair, but there are problems with the material and design comfort.

(2) Due to the special nature of the Nordic style, the shape of IKEA chairs is too single and lacks diversity.

(3) IKEA uses the most wood as its material. However, to protect the ecology, in the past two years, it has begun to use FSC-certified wood but still has some impact on the environment; the famous science writer Carson (1963) said that people have always hoped to have the power to master nature. However, it causes ecological destruction, not knowing that this has been the source of the problem for future generations.

4.2 Chances

Firstly, from the point of view of the style of the product, the designer should combine some different styles to design the product and enhance the design for the products that have problems in design. Secondly, from the point of view of the basic principles of design, based on the assessment of the issues of the Jonado Rocking Chair, the design should not only echo the Scandinavian style. Ergonomics in the design should be considered to ensure people's comfort. Customized designs can also be accepted, providing a diversity of appearance products so that the style is no longer homogenized, on the premise that the original design of IKEA cannot be violated. Finally, from the ecological point of view, the use of materials to reduce the dependence on natural resources, more recyclable materials.

5 Developing and prototyping

5.1 Design strategy

Through the literature review, it is understood that IKEA's design strategy is divided into two parts: marketing, which is expressed in user experience marketing, and product design, which is mainly to control the cost of its products to omit the design of the space. It is also good at applying sustainable materials to ensure that the environment is green development.

Therefore, the quality of IKEA chairs in the market leads to poor reviews of the type of quality improvement, and

without changing the core of IKEA's design strategy based on the design of various styles. At the same time, it does not violate the essence of IKEA's principle of being affordable to the public.

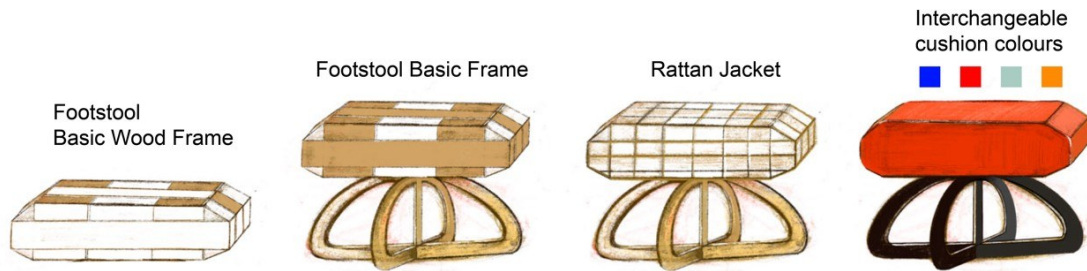


Figure 7 Sketch of footstool design from frame to final form

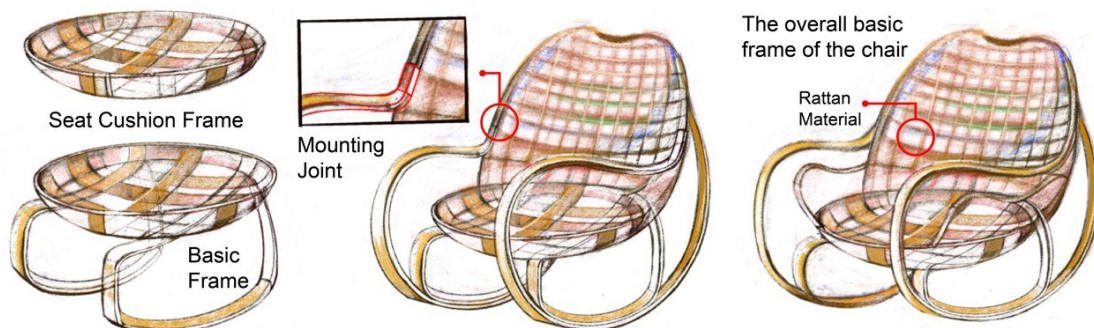


Figure 8 Sketch of cushion skeleton design

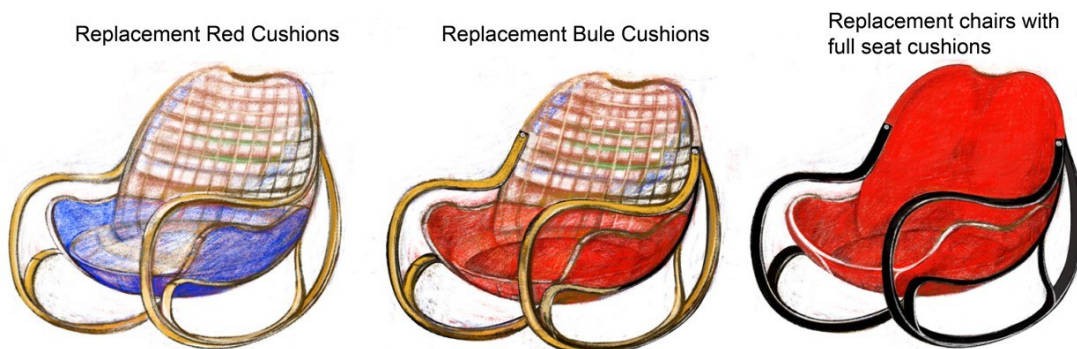


Figure 9 Sketch of the final design of the chair

5.2 Design statement

After a series of literature reviews on IKEA, this design takes a poorly evaluated chair and enhances the design. From a cost point of view, the dismantling and assembling of the chair follows sustainability without changing the original IKEA design principles, and the flat design of the wood is still easy to transport and pack (see Figure 3). What is different, however, is the use of curved elements in the cushions, which are shaped to fit the human body, and in the outer shell of the matching footrests, which add to the variety of shapes in the IKEA product. From an innovative design point of view, the basic frame is constructed from wood and steel (see Figure 4). Regarding stylistic diversity, the seat cushion is designed to be interchangeable in various colours.

Most importantly, the inner core is cotton in various curved shapes to increase comfort. Regarding material sustainability, the metal can be recycled and reused repeatedly, while the cotton is also sustainable. This aligns with the life cycle characteristics of such materials and provides physical and mental comfort (see Figure 5).

6 Conclusion

The main focus of this time was to enhance IKEA's product design strategy, identify problematic areas, and redesign them. However, IKEA was originally a very successful brand with a unique socio-linguistic mechanism that allowed the recognition of the Scandinavian style to dominate the mass media and become a widely recognized cultural status quo.

The most popular product, the Jonado Rocking Chair, is selected from the market feedback data and analyzed in comparison with the disadvantages of the Poang armchair in the same brand, removing the dregs and taking the essence. Starting from the design strategy of Ikea products, we extracted Ikea's original high-quality design strategy and improved the quality and innovation.

About the Author

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