



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

A Comparative Analysis of IKEA's International Marketing Strategy in the United Kingdom and India

Student Name: **Imam Hossen**

Student ID: **2505843**

Module Name: **International Marketing: Principles and Practices**

Module Code: **LCMB7026**

Lecturer name: **Tushara Balendran & Dian Mayasari**

Word Count: **5471**

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Background: IKEA as a Global Brand.....	2
2.1 History and Development of the Company and Globalisation.	2
2.2 Essential Brand Values and Competitive Positioning.	2
2.3 UK and India- IKEA.....	3
3. Macro-Environmental Analysis: PESTLE Framework	3
3.1 Comparative PESTLE Overview	3
3.2 Critical Analysis of Key PESTLE Dimensions	6
4. Social and Cultural Analysis: Consumer Behaviour	7
4.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: UK versus India	7
4.1.1 Critical Evaluation of Hofstede's Model: Advantages and Disadvantages.....	8
4.2 Consumer behaviour in the UK and India	8
5. STP Analysis: Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning	9
5.1 Perceptual Map: IKEA's Positioning in India	10
6. International Marketing Mix: Comparative 7Ps Analysis	11
6.1 Product.....	11
6.2 Price	12
6.3 Place (Distribution).....	13
6.4 Promotion.....	13
6.5 People, Process, and Physical Evidence	13
7. Directional Development Strategy: IKEA in India.....	14
8. Ethical Issues in IKEA's International Marketing	15
9. Strategic Recommendations.....	16
10. Conclusion	16
Section 2: Reflective Account (Kolb's Reflective Cycle).....	18
Introduction.....	18
Stage 1: Concrete Experience	19
Stage 2: Reflective Observation.....	19
Stage 3: Abstract Conceptualisation	20
Stage 4: Active Experimentation	20
Reference List	21

1. Introduction

Retail brand globalisation in the twenty-first century has received a fair share of scholarly and managerial attention as organisations have to manoeuvre in complex trade environments, diversified and multicultural markets, and innovative regulatory contexts (Jonsson and Foss, 2011; Hollensen, 2020). The Swedish multinational home furnishings and retail chain IKEA is a well-known case study in global marketing literature because of its high levels of globalisation and the current issue of harmonizing its standardised brand image with the varying demands of national markets.

This report compares IKEA's marketing strategy in the UK (mature, high-income) and India (high-growth, aspirational). It is based on a six-fold framework of analytical frameworks: (1) a PESTLE macro-environmental analysis including transparent assessments of favourability; (2) Hofstede cultural dimensions model to explain consumer behaviour differences; (3) STP (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) analysis; (4) the extended 7Ps marketing mix (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, Physical Evidence). This report concludes with strategic recommendations to IKEA in both nations and a reflective commentary on Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle.

2. Background: IKEA as a Global Brand

2.1 History and Development of the Company and Globalisation.

IKEA started in 1943 in the Swedish city of Älmhult. It has gained popularity because of its shape in the 1950s flat-pack format that lowered the production and shipping costs significantly (Edvardsson and Enquist, 2011). By creating a Scandinavian hub, IKEA has continued to internationalize in Europe, North America, and Asia since the 1980s through a model of flexibility and replication IKEA uses to fit its core ideas to new locations (Jonsson and Foss, 2011). By 2023, IKEA has more than 460 stores in 60+ countries and earned a revenue amounting to €47 billion (Inter IKEA Group, 2023).

2.2 Essential Brand Values and Competitive Positioning.

IKEA has been anchored by Swedish principles of simplicity, low cost, and democratic design that involves the design of functional pieces at a low price (Edvardsson and Enquist, 2011). The official philosophy is reflected in the vision IKEA has: “To create a better everyday life for the many people” (Inter IKEA Group, 2023). Its business idea brings this vision to fruition: to provide a broad assortment of well-designed, useful home furnishing products at prices accessible to as many individuals as possible (Inter IKEA Group, 2023). The low-price advantage has been maintained through a supply chain that is globally integrated and flat-pack logistics and the company has aimed to achieve full circularity and environmental responsibility by

the year 2030 (Inter IKEA Group, 2023). This sustainability and price leadership is appealing to the younger and eco-conscious consumers (Hollensen, 2020).

2.3 UK and India- IKEA.

UK has been one of the major markets since IKEA has opened its first store in Warrington (1987). By 2023, IKEA has 22 stores in the UK in addition to an e-commerce channel that is expanding fast due to COVID-19 (Verhoef et al., 2021). The value proposition of the brand appeals to British households that experience inflationary pressures, as a result of Brexit (Johnson, Whittington, and Scholes, 2017). Conversely, FDI regulations seriously slowed down the entry of IKEA into India, and it was not until 2018 that the company opened its first store in Hyderabad (Inter IKEA Group, 2023). The stores have since been established in Mumbai and Bengaluru. India has a lot of potential growth due to the large and growing middle-class but there are issues such as cultural diversity, price sensitivity, and poor retail infrastructure (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

3. Macro-Environmental Analysis: PESTLE Framework

3.1 Comparative PESTLE Overview

The PESTLE model looks at macro-environmental factors (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental) that influence international strategy (Johnson, Whittington and Scholes, 2017). This framework compares IKEA's operating environment in the UK and India. More importantly, every factor is evaluated as either favourable or unfavourable to the strategic interests of IKEA in broad terms, accompanied by the justification behind them, causing an evaluative and not a descriptive interaction with the macro-environment than would otherwise be facilitated.

Table 1: PESTLE Comparative Analysis with Favourability Assessment — IKEA in the UK and India

Factor	United Kingdom	India	UK	India
Political	Stable parliamentary democracy. Post-Brexit trade complexity affects EU supply chain costs. Strong Competition and Markets Authority oversight. Robust rule	World's largest FDI liberalised to 100% in single-brand retail from 2018. 'Make in India' policy promotes local manufacturing.	✓ Favourable Stable government encourages investment. Brexit puts some pressure	⚠ Mixed FDI Liberalisation is quite good, but bureaucratic delays at the state level are bad and

	of law supports long-term retail investment.	State-level bureaucratic complexity can delay store approvals.	on the supply chain costs, but it doesn't really endanger operations.	may really slow down growth.
Economic	High-income economy (GDP per capita ~£38,000). Mature retail sector. Post-Brexit inflationary pressures reduce household discretionary spend. Strong e-commerce infrastructure.	Fastest-growing major economy (6–7% GDP growth, (World Bank, 2023). Expanding middle class. Import duties of 20–25% on furniture inflate retail prices. High consumer price sensitivity.	⚠ Mixed High Income base helps with spending, but inflation that limits discretionary expenditures is bad for a bargain shop that relies on volume.	⚠ Mixed A strong development path is really good for long-term growth, but import tariffs are bad since they hurt IKEA's fundamental value offer.
Social	Individualistic, home-improvement culture. High DIY familiarity aligns with flat-pack model. Growing sustainability consciousness among consumers. Multicultural demographics driving inclusive product demands.	Collectivist, family-centric society. Strong preference for pre-assembled furniture. Cultural resistance to self-assembly. Aspirational consumption among urban middle class. Deep regional and linguistic diversity.	✓ Favourable The DIY culture and focus on home remodelling closely coincide with IKEA's flat-pack value proposition, while sustainability	✗ Unfavourable Cultural aversion to self-assembly clearly conflicts with IKEA's fundamental product concept, requiring expensive service adjustments and alterations to the product selection.

			trends bolster brand positioning.	
Technological	High smartphone/internet penetration (94%). Advanced logistics infrastructure. IKEA Place AR app well-adopted. AI-driven inventory management standard. Strong omnichannel capabilities.	750M+ internet users. UPI digital payment infrastructure enabling mobile commerce. E-commerce growing ~25% annually. Logistics infrastructure underdeveloped outside metropolitan areas.	✓ Favourable IKEA's omnichannel retail strategy and augmented reality-driven customer experience innovation are robustly supported by advanced digital and logistical infrastructure.	✓ Favourable The swift adoption of digital technology and the UPI infrastructure provide significant e-commerce opportunities for worldwide expansion; logistical deficiencies in non-metro regions are a controllable limitation.
Legal	Consumer Rights Act 2015. UK GDPR obligations. Product Safety Regulations. Anticipated sustainability legislation for retail sector. Robust intellectual property protection.	Consumer Protection Act 1986. BIS mandatory product certification requirements. Complex multi-tier GST framework. Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 introduces new	⚠ Mixed A transparent and consistent legal framework is generally advantageous; increasing sustainability compliance	✗ Unfavourable The complexity of BIS certification and the multi-tier GST system impose a considerable compliance burden and operating costs,

		compliance obligations.	requirements impose more costs and reputational strain.	especially for imported product categories.
Environmental	High consumer and regulatory pressure for sustainable retail. Net-zero targets by 2050. Strong NGO and media scrutiny of supply chain conduct. UK plastic packaging tax in force.	Growing environmental awareness among urban educated consumers. National Action Plan on Climate Change. Sustainability remains secondary to price for most consumers. Resource scarcity in manufacturing regions.	✓ Favourable IKEA's circular economy credentials and Climate Positive goals perfectly correspond with UK legislative requirements and customer values, enhancing distinctiveness.	✓ Favourable The less immediate sustainability pressure enables IKEA to emphasise value marketing; the increasing environmental consciousness among younger Indian consumers presents a long-term business potential.

Source: Compiled by author from Johnson, Whittington and Scholes (2017); Hollensen (2020); World Bank (2023); Inter IKEA Group (2023); Government of India (2018). ✓ = Favourable Δ = Mixed ✗ = Unfavourable.

3.2 Critical Analysis of Key PESTLE Dimensions

There are two dimensions that are strategically crucial. First, the economic difference: the established and inflation-prone market of the UK is a dramatically different contrast of the high growth environment of India, yet Indian import taxes of 20-25 percent are directly affecting the core tenet of IKEA value (World Bank, 2023). Second, the social dimension presents a fundamental challenge in India: cultural preference for pre-assembled furniture conflicts with IKEA's flat-pack model- expensive service modifications

unnecessary in the methods of DIY-friendly UK markets. India FDI liberalisation (2018) allowed entry, politically, which still slows rollout of stores due to state-level bureaucratic delays. In the UK, the pressure on the environment is also high and fits IKEA sustainability standards, but Indian consumers are price-conscious and require other priorities in communication (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

Similarities and differences: There are close similarities in both markets with robust technological infrastructure underpinning e-commerce (Verhoef et al., 2021; World Bank, 2023). But DIY culture of the UK is inherently consistent with the IKEA model, whereas India needs localisation of products, assembly options, and premium repositioning that undermines the promise of affordability of the brand (Hollensen, 2020; Inter IKEA Group, 2023).

4. Social and Cultural Analysis: Consumer Behaviour

4.1 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions: UK versus India

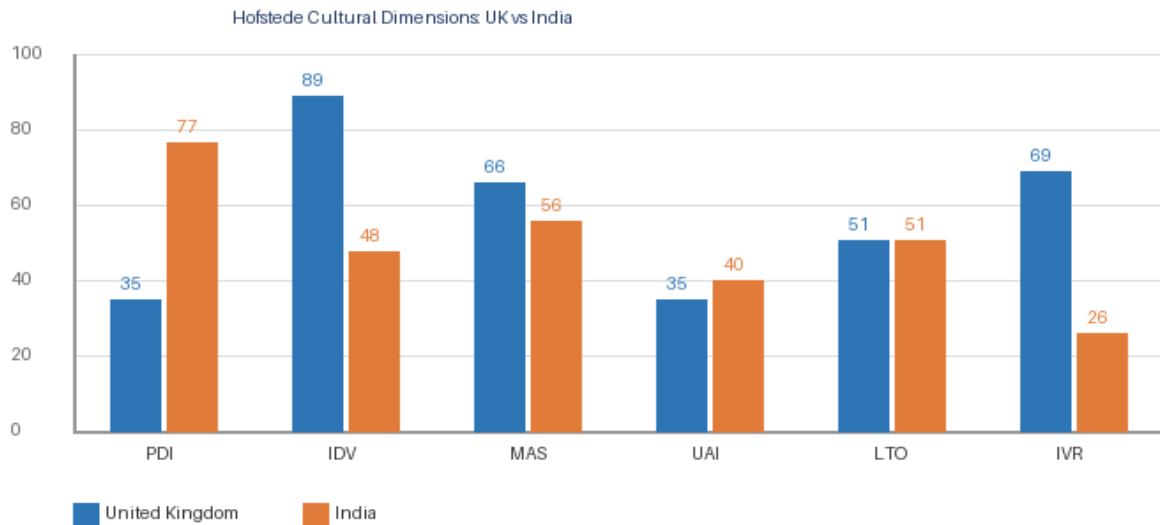
One such theoretical approach is the cultural dimension theory presented by Hofstede (1980), which is later extended into a theory of six dimensions (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010). As mentioned by De Mooij and Hofstede (2011), cultural dimensions have a quantifiable effect on consumer attitudes and purchase decisions and are therefore essential tools for international marketing strategy formulation.

The high individualism score (IDV=89) means that the major reasons for purchases made in such cultures are personal identity, individuality, and personal achievements (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). The mentioned culture is consistent with the IKEA business model of offering products that can be assembled at home by customers themselves. India has a very low score in terms of individualism (IDV=48) and extremely high in terms of power distance (PDI=77). In such cultural contexts, the structure of society becomes quite hierarchal, and group identity along with the consent of family and status become the major factors driving consumption decisions. The described cultural environment has direct implications for IKEA's marketing strategy since the company offers customers to do assembly work on their own, which does not comply with expectations of the Indian consumer who expects the product to be either fully assembled or to have professional assembly services offered.

India's elevated score on uncertainty avoidance (UAI = 40) compared to the UK (UAI = 35) and its markedly lower indulgence score (IVR = 26 versus UK's 69) suggest that Indian consumers are comparatively more restrained, risk-averse in purchasing decisions, and place greater emphasis on product durability and value retention (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2011). These cultural characteristics have led IKEA to offer professional assembly services in India and to emphasise product longevity and robustness in its Indian communications, adaptations that would be largely unnecessary in the UK market where DIY

capability and individual problem-solving are culturally normalised. Figure 1 provides a visual comparison of both countries across all six dimensions.

Figure 1: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Scores — United Kingdom versus India



Source: Adapted from Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010). PDI = Power Distance Index; IDV = Individualism; MAS = Masculinity; UAI = Uncertainty Avoidance; LTO = Long-Term Orientation; IVR = Indulgence.

4.1.1 Critical Evaluation of Hofstede's Model: Advantages and Disadvantages

There are two strengths of the Hofstede cultural dimensions framework that make it very useful in international marketing. To begin with, it has an empirical nature based on survey data of over 50 countries that allows it to make comparisons across nations systematically (Hofstede, 1980). Second, meta-analyses attest its predictive capability of marketing mix adaptations (Taras, Kirkman, and Steel, 2010). The model, however, is plagued by one basic weakness: the ecological fallacy. McSweeney (2002) asserts that Hofstede implicitly assumes that national populations are unified in terms of their cultures and does not recognise intra-national diversities in geographical, ethnic, religious and generational terms. This is especially worrisome to India comprising more than 2,000 ethnic groups and 22 official languages. Using one cultural score to represent such diversity bears the risk of drawing erroneous strategic inferences. In spite of this drawback, the framework can be discussed as a helpful point of departure in the analysis of the cross-cultural environment, when it will be supplemented by research based on the market-specific aspects.

4.2 Consumer behaviour in the UK and India

The UK target market of IKEA is young professionals, students, and families who require affordable yet functional furniture. The brand is also enjoying the strong do-it-yourself (DIY) culture that goes well with

the flat-pack concept (Edvardsson and Enquist, 2011). The in-store experience, such as Swedish restaurants, children playgrounds, has become part and parcel of the British consumer culture. An increase in sustainability awareness among the customers in the UK has also boosted the significance of the activities carried out by IKEA, including Buy Back and Resell programme (Verhoef et al., 2021).

Indian consumer behaviour differs. The customers of IKEA are mainly upper-middle-income consumers in Tier 1 cities. Traditionally, all the furniture market in India was dominated by local carpenters who have provided customised and assembled products. Indian customers perceive that furniture is an investment, which should be well-thought, professionally assembled, and even tailor-made furniture (Hollensen, 2020). This local inclination towards assembled and customised furniture directly confronts IKEA with its model of flat-pack furniture. As a result, IKEA has tailored its product by making its products highly localised, a concept that is discussed in Section 6.1.

5. STP Analysis: Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning

The STP model offers a basis on which to study the segmentation strategies used by IKEA in the two countries under discussion – United Kingdom and India. The STP models of the two markets are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Comparative STP Analysis — IKEA in the United Kingdom and India

STP Element	United Kingdom	India
Segmentation	Demographic: broad (students, young families, homeowners, 18–55); psychographic: value-conscious, design-aware, DIY-capable; behavioural: regular home improvement purchasers, omnichannel shoppers.	Demographic: urban upper-middle class, 25–45, dual-income households; geographic: Tier 1 cities (Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru); psychographic: aspirational, internationally brand-aware, family-oriented.
Targeting	Undifferentiated to differentiated targeting; broad appeal across income segments; specific sub-targeting for sustainability-motivated consumers and urban young professionals.	Concentrated targeting; primary focus on affluent urban dual-income households; secondary B2B hospitality segment; Tier 2 cities emerging as future target via e-commerce.
Positioning	Scandinavian design that is affordable to all" – affordable pricing, sustainable innovation, retail experience; positioning	International quality home furnishings with local resonance" – positioned between high-end international brands and small unorganized Indian retailers.

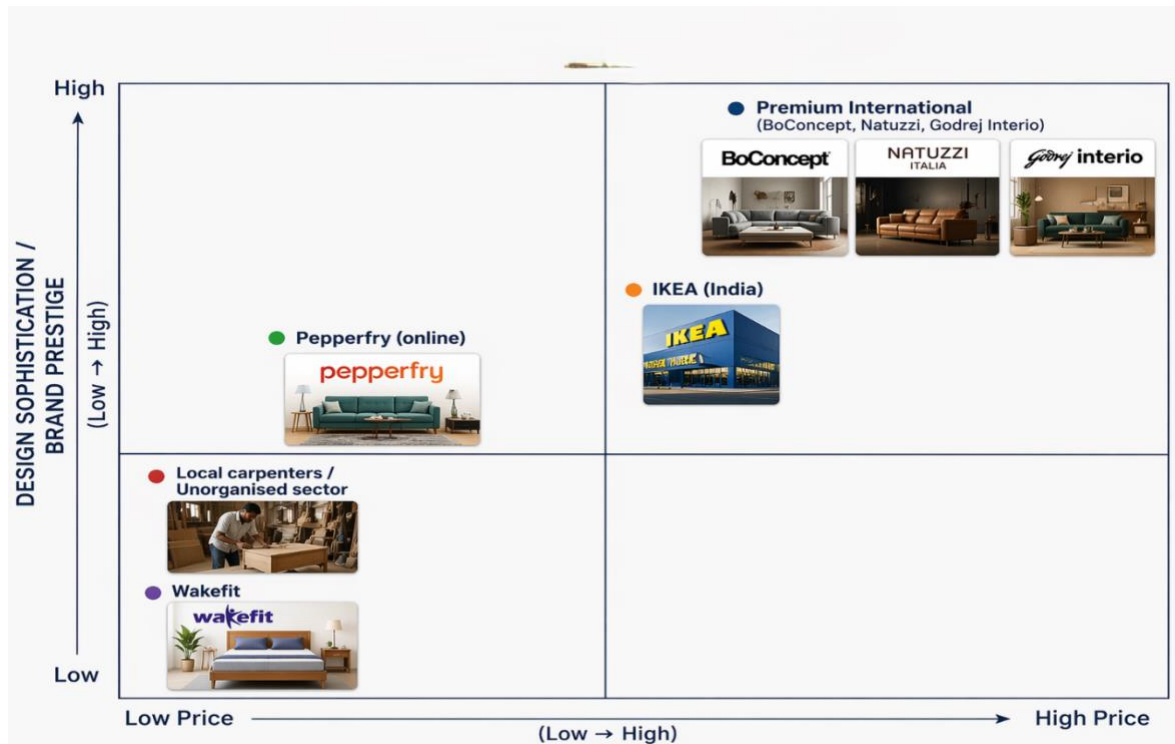
	as a value brand that offers both good prices and a reputation for good design.	
--	---	--

Source: Compiled by author from Kotler and Keller (2016); Hollensen (2020); Burt, Johansson and Thelander (2011); Inter IKEA Group (2023).

Comparative STP analysis proves that the composition of IKEA's market position varies significantly between the two countries under consideration. The firm holds a wide, democratized market position in the UK since the target market consists of people belonging to all socio-economic strata and spheres of activity. Such a composition enables the company to benefit from economies of scale and maximize the potential of the store network. The import tariff structure and limited number of IKEA stores in India determine that the brand appeals to affluent urban customers. These consumers consider the brand to represent foreign design that is desired yet cannot be bought daily. This positioning inversion, which implies that a product or service positioned in the mass segment in one country competes with premium products in another country, is a well-known but strategic problem faced by international retailers in emerging markets (Hollensen, 2020; Burt et al., 2011).

5.1 Perceptual Map: IKEA's Positioning in India

Figure: Perceptual Map – Price vs. Design Sophistication in the Furniture Retail Market in India.



Source: Author's own work. Positioning based on analysis of market data and literature (Hollensen, 2020; Inter IKEA Group, 2023; World Bank, 2023).

The perceptual map shows how IKEA restructurally repositioned itself in the Indian furniture market. IKEA India is in a near-premium square, unlike its value-for-money in the UK, which is a higher price and heightened perceived design sophistication compared with local mass-market competitors like Wakefit, Pepperfry, and the unorganised carpenter market (Hollensen, 2020). This increase is propelled by 20-25% import taxes that drive retail prices up, and the brand perception among aspirational urban buyers abroad (World Bank, 2023).

6. International Marketing Mix: Comparative 7Ps Analysis

6.1 Product

The basic assortment of Scandinavian-designed, flat-pack furniture is the same around the world, but local demands are met through market customizations. There are also differences in product depth (differences in a line) and width (difference in categories) which vary strategically in different markets (Kotler and Keller, 2016).

IKEA in the UK is a very deep product: the shelving unit, KALLAX, comes in 6 colours and 8 sizes. The scope of product width is 12+ (living, bedroom, kitchen, lighting, textiles, etc.), which total around 7,000 SKUs (Inter IKEA Group, 2023). This is in line with the British DIY culture and 30 years of brand equity (Edvardsson and Enquist, 2011).



Figure: Product depth example – IKEA KALLAX shelving unit in multiple sizes and colours (Source: IKEA, 2026.)

IKEA has implemented its biggest product localisation in India whereby 25 percent of the offering has been localised after ethnographic home visits (Inter IKEA Group, 2023). Low beds (25-30cm to sleep on the floor), saree storage (longer narrow rooms), prayer room furniture (mandir/cabinet), and tawa pans are among the adaptations (Hollensen, 2020). Store size limits the number of products (product width is narrower (5,000 SKUs), number of categories is 10).



Figure: PAX / GRIMO/ÅHEIM corner wardrobe – example of IKEA India's product depth (white/white mirror glass, 211/161x201 cm). Source: IKEA (2025).

This demonstrates IKEA's strategic trade-off: UK benefits from scale economies, while India prioritises cultural relevance over depth.

6.2 Price

In the UK, IKEA adopts the everyday low pricing (EDLP) approach where there are no regular promotions but the prices are kept low due to the flat-pack logistics and operational economies of scale (Jonsson and Foss, 2011). Value perception is strengthened in case of psychological pricing (e.g., £4.99) (Hollensen, 2020).

India poses a structural threat: 20-25% importation taxes inflate prices (World Bank, 2023). IKEA has taken a dual-pricing approach: the higher-end pricing of typical imported lines (which unintentionally positions the brand as aspirational) and the lower-end pricing of a locally sourced low-end range (products under 200 rupees/£1.90) to appeal to price-sensitive middle-income consumers (Inter IKEA Group, 2023; Hollensen, 2020). This two-tier strategy caters to the two segments but establishes brand conflict between cost-effectiveness and luxury.

6.3 Place (Distribution)

The UK's distribution channel has 22 out-of-town destination stores and a fast-growing online shopping platform, which is boosted by the COVID-19. Convenience-seeking, digitally-sensitive customers are served by the next-day delivery and click-and-collect services (Verhoef et al., 2021). As of 2023, IKEA has stores in Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Navi Mumbai in India. To address large-format retail logistical and regulatory issues IKEA has opened smaller planning studios in city centres and increased its online platform, with the support of the UPI digital payments system in India (World Bank, 2023).

6.4 Promotion

IKEA has a very digitalised promotional strategy in UK, which uses Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube to relay home design inspirations and sustainability messages. The IKEA Place AR application, which enables the use of virtual furniture, has been especially successful because of the large number of people with smartphones (Verhoef et al., 2021). India needs to be adapted to local media and culture. As a multi-generational family enterprise, IKEA enlists Bollywood-influenced lifestyle influencers and campaigns that include multi-generational family stories, which is reflective of collectivism ideals found within Hofstede framework. Indian food is offered in the stores as a way of minimising foreignness of the brand as is the case with the Swedish meatballs (Burt, Johansson and Thelander, 2011).

6.5 People, Process, and Physical Evidence

Both markets are operated under the egalitarian co-worker culture. Nonetheless, there are staffing differences: the UK has around 9,930 (Endole, 2025) employees, whereas India has around 2,500-3,000, and an additional 2,500 employees will be added (The Financial Express, 2026).

There are also differences in customer complaints processes. UK makes use of Resolver platform and standard returns. Even assembled products have 365-day returns (launched 2024) available in India - a feature unprecedented elsewhere (UNI India, 2024). Indian shoppers have self-service kiosks of Express Return, and Urban Company is in charge of assembly issues.

Physical evidence: both websites have a very minimalist Scandinavian design, but the site in India is focused on UPI payments, 365-day return banner of the site, and localised categories.

7P Dimension	Similarities	Differences
People	Egalitarian culture	UK: 9,930 staff; India: ~2,500–3,000
Process	365-day returns	India: Express kiosks, assembly partnerships
Physical Evidence	Minimalist design	India: local food, Indian room settings

This demonstrates IKEA's balance between global consistency and local responsiveness (Hollensen, 2020).

7. Directional Development Strategy: IKEA in India

Ansoff's (1957) Product-Market Growth Matrix provides a well-established framework for evaluating the strategic growth orientations available to organisations in existing or new markets. Applied to IKEA's Indian operations, the matrix indicates that the brand is simultaneously and complementarily pursuing market penetration, market development, and product development strategies, as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Ansoff's Growth Matrix Applied to IKEA's India Strategy

	Existing Products	New Products
Existing Markets	Market Penetration ★ Deepening share in Tier 1 cities (Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Navi Mumbai); growing e-commerce sales; professional assembly services broadening accessibility to non-DIY consumer segments.	Product Development ★ Indian-sized kitchenware; lower-height beds; saree storage solutions; prayer room furniture; low-price entry-level range below 200 rupees.
New Markets	Market Development ★ Expansion into Tier 2 cities (Pune, Chennai, Kolkata, Jaipur) via planning studio format and digital-first e-commerce reach to non-metro aspirational consumers.	Diversification Not currently pursued; high risk given brand's established home furnishings focus.

Source: Adapted from Ansoff (1957) applied to IKEA India by author, drawing on Inter IKEA Group (2023) and Hollensen (2020). ★ = primary strategies currently being pursued.

The three strategies complement each other. Market penetration is further achieved by investing in Tier 1 cities with the help of professional assembly services to break the self-assembly resistance of Indian consumers, thus increasing the number of cities to address (Hollensen, 2020). Product development has been IKEA's largest localisation project worldwide, which develops India-specific variations of products- like lower beds and saree storage- which are the products that mirror functional needs that are not reflected in standard products (Jonsson and Foss, 2011). Lastly, the highest potential of growth in the medium term is in market development in Tier 2 cities (e.g., Pune, Chennai, Jaipur). The IKEA can serve the aspirational middle-class consumers without the capital and regulatory expenses of a full-format store due to a digital-first entry mode facilitated by the UPI system of payments in India and the widening 4G/5G networks (World Bank, 2023).

8. Ethical Issues in IKEA's International Marketing

Even though IKEA is a self-proclaimed sustainable retailer, researchers question the disjuncture between the proclaimed aspirational communications and what actually happens in the operations (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

To start with, in the UK IKEA has 2030 circular economy and climate-positive commitments (Inter IKEA Group, 2023) that do not sit well with a high-volume, fashion-following business model that promotes replacement instead of repair. The program Buy Back and Resell is innovative but reflects only a small part of the product flows and works not consistently across stores. Such is an example of selective greenwashing: pointing to side sustainability initiatives to draw the eye away from greater environmental evils (Delmas and Burbano, 2011).

Second, the IKEA focus on wealthy urban areas in India, coupled with the high costs due to the import-duty crisis, implies that its offer of a democratic design will be experienced by only a small group of affluent individuals. This situation poses equity challenges in a nation where income limits are enormous (World Bank, 2023). Although IKEA has launched a low-cost product line, critics express doubts as to whether this is simply a strategy to foster economic inclusion or just a strategy to attract aspirational consumers.

Third, in both markets, supply chain ethics is an issue. IKEA integrates economically disadvantaged countries like Bangladesh and India, where third-party studies have found that most workers have to work excessively and their representation is low (Niinimäki et al., 2020). IKEA implements its IWAY supplier code of conduct using third-party audits, but scholars are not convinced of the efficacy of audit-based compliance, as its global supply chain is large and complex, leading to concerns that many violations may go undetected and unaddressed.

9. Strategic Recommendations

Based on the foregoing analysis, five prioritised recommendations are offered to IKEA in UK and India with each of them having measurable KPIs.

Priority 1: Indian localisation manufacturing.

Form joint ventures with the Indian furniture makers to avoid 20-25% import duty. This is in line with policy of Make in India (Government of India, 2018). **KPI:** Within 24 months of local production, average product prices will be decreased by 15-20 percent.

Priority 2: Tier 2 city expansion, digital-first. Expand into Pune, Chennai, Jaipur and Kolkata with planning studios and vernacular language e-commerce (Hindi, Tamil, Telugu). UPI infrastructure addresses logistics risks (World Bank, 2023). **KPI:** 30% of Indian e-commerce revenue in Tier 2 cities by FY2026.

Priority 3: Circular economy in the UK.

Introduce a product take-back and recycling that is independently tested in all stores within the UK, no longer Buy Back and Resell (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). **KPI:** Recycle or refurbish one-fifth of the volume of furniture sold by 2027.

Priority 4: Culturally adjusted sustainability communication in India. Repair and frugality are Indian traditions of frame sustainability instead of translating Western stories (Niinimäki et al., 2020). **KPI:** Within 18 months, brand trust of urban Indian consumers will increase to 75% compared to the current level of 62%.

Priority 5: Supply chain ethics monitoring improvements.

Digitalise worker-feedback in both markets with continuous feedback systems instead of periodic audits.

KPI: No high-risk supplier violations that remained unresolved after two consecutive quarterly reviews.

These are the KPI-based recommendations that are prioritised, which help IKEA to devote resources effectively and monitor the progress without any secret (Jonsson and Foss, 2011).

10. Conclusion

The UK is a mature market with significant brand equity for IKEA, supported by a well-established retail infrastructure and customer alignment with its values and sustainability messages, despite increasing regulatory scrutiny related to the concept of a circular economy. India is a promising development market; nevertheless, elevated import charges, cultural aversion to self-assembly, and logistical challenges constrain IKEA's ability to fully capitalize on this market. The research critically validates the positions of Hollensen (2020) and Jonsson and Foss (2011), asserting that a successful foreign marketing strategy cannot be reduced to a binary choice between complete standardization and total modification. It entails a nuanced approach that accounts for the functional and cultural distinctiveness of each market while upholding the

core brand values. The Indian strategy of IKEA, characterized by the greatest product localization initiative, professional assembly services, and the utilization of digital as the principal distribution channel, exemplifies this notion.

Section 2: Reflective Account (Kolb's Reflective Cycle)

Introduction

This section involves a systematic reflective report of how the research, analysis and writing of Section 1 of this report were done, along with the process of revision which was brought about by the comments made by the professor. Experience: The organising framework is the Experiential Learning Cycle proposed by Kolb (1984), which consists of four stages: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualisation, and Active Experimentation.

Table 3: Timeline of Report Writing and Revision Process

Phase	Time Period	Key Activities
Phase 1: Research & Planning	Week 1	Topic selection; initial literature search (IKEA annual reports, Hollensen, Jonsson & Foss); outline drafted
Phase 2: First Draft (Sections 1–6)	Week 2	PESTLE analysis written; Hofstede dimensions applied; STP and 7Ps drafted; no critical evaluation yet
Phase 3: First Draft (Sections 7–10)	Week 3	Ansoff matrix, ethical issues, recommendations, and conclusion completed (first version)
Phase 4: Submission & Feedback Received	Week 4	Initial submission; professor feedback received pointing out: (a) missing favourability assessment in PESTLE, (b) uncritical Hofstede use, (c) missing Hofstede visual, (d) incomplete final sections
Phase 5: Revision & Resubmission	Week 5	PESTLE table rebuilt with ✓/△/✗ ratings; Hofstede bar chart (Figure 1) created; McSweeney critique added; Sections 7–10 completed; Sections 2–9 trimmed for conciseness
Phase 6: Final Polish & Reflection	Week 6	Proofreading; reference verification; Kolb reflection written; final submission

Stage 1: Concrete Experience

The firsthand experience that informed this reflection was the experiential process of researching, writing and rewriting a comparative international marketing report on the IKEA strategies in UK and India. This included how the available academic sources like peer-reviewed articles and institutional reports have been systematically accessed and analyzed; how existing theoretical models such as PESTLE, cultural dimensions defined by Hofstede, STP and 7Ps models, the Growth Matrix created by Ansoff and the theory of ethical marketing have been applied and utilized; and how elaborate feedback on the work provided by professors has been incorporated into the substantially detailed document. The feedback presented three particular areas of improvement: the necessity to evaluate each factor of PESTLE as either favourable or unfavourable and explain it; the provision of a visual chart of the Hofstede comparative with both countries; and the critical analysis of the limitations and advantages of the Hofstede model. The fact that these requirements required further investigation but also a reevaluation of the analytical depth and quality of analytical assessment that should be expected in Level 7.

Stage 2: Reflective Observation

Taking a retrospective look at the initial writing experience, and the revision one, some key points were made. First, the initial PESTLE analysis encapsulated all the macro-environmental factors in a correct manner but did not explicitly examine the strategies that they implied on IKEA, which is the main difference between descriptive and analytical scholarship. The feedback offered by the professor helped to see that Level 7 analysis must not only involve the identification of environmental factors, but an outright evaluative judgement of their relevance to the organisation in question. Second, original cultural analysis was competently addressing the scores produced by Hofstede but did so in an overwhelmingly uncritical way, as though the model is an ambivalent-free empirical instrument instead of a theoretically disputed framework with major methodological shortcomings. The necessity to incorporate a visual comparison and critical analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of the model led to an involvement with the seminal critique of McSweeney, (2002) and the meta-analysis study by Taras, Kirkman and Steel (2010), which further enriched the level of analysis of the cross-cultural theory significantly. Third, the missing final sections of the original report, Sections 7 to 10 and the reflection, demonstrated that time management and structural planning need to be more focused in the future assignments of such scale.

Stage 3: Abstract Conceptualisation

The thoughts about these observations inspired a number of more general theoretical and methodological conclusions. The experience helped me to uphold a fundamental principle of Level 7 scholarship as articulated by Johnson, Whittington and Scholes (2017), namely the idea that analytical frameworks are not empirical realities but rather analytical tools, and their application should always be inhibited by critical assessment of their assumptions, limitations, and contextual relevance. The analytical critique of Hofstede model, bringing in the criticism of the ecological fallacy by McSweeney and validation evidence by Taras, Kirkman and Steel respectively, demonstrated how strict academic studies neither wholesale believe nor wholesale disbelieve theoretical constructs, but deploy them with explicit awareness of their implications and limitations. In addition, the necessity to clearly evaluate PESTLE factors as either favourable or unfavourable served to reinforce the larger analytical ideology that description without evaluation is a fundamental lack of scholarship in graduate-level academic writing: the scholar is not to tell what is, but to judge what it means.

Stage 4: Active Experimentation

Based on these observations, various practical approaches will be embraced in the future academic and professional practice. Firstly, the application of all of the analytical frameworks will be on both a substantive analytical dimension (what does this factor/score mean to the organisation?), and a critical dimension (what are the limitations of this analytical framework in this context?), not an afterthought, but at the beginning of analysis. Second, the proactive implementation of visual representation of comparative data, like the Hofstede bar chart created in this revision, will be introduced in the future, as visual data transmission always increases the accessibility and analyzing effect of the multi-dimensional comparisons. Third, a detailed structural plan with all parts, word estimates and deadline will be drawn at the beginning of all subsequent assignments to avoid the incomplete part issue experienced in the original submission. The process of scholar receiving, decoding and substantively responding to the detailed academic feedback has been one of the most practically useful features of this assignment, building both the academic reflexivity and the revisioning field experience necessary to academic excellence and professional practice in a postgraduate level.

Reference List

1. Ansoff, H.I. (1957) 'Strategies for diversification', *Harvard Business Review*, 35(5), pp. 113–124.
2. Burt, S., Johansson, U. and Thelanders, Å. (2011) 'Standardised marketing strategies in retailing? IKEA's marketing strategies in Sweden, the UK and China', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 18(3), pp. 183–193. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2010.09.007>
3. De Mooij, M. and Hofstede, G. (2011) 'Cross-cultural consumer behaviour: A review of research findings', *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 23(3–4), pp. 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08961530.2011.578057>
4. Delmas, M.A. and Burbano, V.C. (2011) 'The drivers of greenwashing', *California Management Review*, 54(1), pp. 64–87. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2011.54.1.64>
5. Edvardsson, B. and Enquist, B. (2011) 'The service excellence and innovation model: Lessons from IKEA and other service frontiers', *Total Quality Management and Business Excellence*, 22(5), pp. 535–551. doi:10.1080/14783363.2011.568242
6. Endole (2025) *Ikea Limited Company Profile*. Available at: <https://open.endole.co.uk/insight/company/01986283-ikea-limited> (Accessed: 23 April 2026).
7. Government of India (2018) FDI policy further liberalized in key sectors (Press Release No. 1516115). Press Information Bureau. Available at: <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1516115®=3&lang=2> (Accessed: 22 April 2026).
8. Hofstede, G. (1980) *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
9. Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G.J. and Minkov, M. (2010) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. 3rd edn. New York: McGraw-Hill.
10. Hollensen, S. (2020) *Global Marketing*. 8th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education.
11. IKEA (2025) *PAX / GRIMO/ÅHEIM corner wardrobe, white/white mirror glass, 211/161×201 cm (82 7/8/63 1/4×79 1/4")*. Available at: <https://www.ikea.com/in/en/p/pax-grimo-aheim-corner-wardrobe-white-white-mirror-glass-s99336169/> (Accessed: 23 April 2026).
12. IKEA (2026) *KALLAX shelving unit with underframe, white/white, 57 7/8×37"*. Available at: <https://www.ikea.com/us/en/p/kallax-shelving-unit-with-underframe-white-white-s49442676/> (Accessed: 23 April 2026).
13. Inter IKEA Group (2023) *IKEA Annual Summary FY23*. Available at: <https://www.inter.ikea.com/en/performance/financial-performance> (Accessed: 1 March 2026).

14. Johnson, G., Whittington, R. and Scholes, K. (2017) *Exploring Strategy: Text and Cases*. 11th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education.
15. Jonsson, A. and Foss, N.J. (2011) 'International expansion through flexible replication: Learning from the internationalization of IKEA', *Journal of International Business Studies*, 42(9), pp. 1079–1102. <https://doi.org/10.1057/jibs.2011.32>
16. Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
17. Kotler, P. and Keller, K.L. (2016) *Marketing Management*. 15th edn. Harlow: Pearson Education.
18. McSweeney, B. (2002) 'Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith — a failure of analysis', *Human Relations*, 55(1), pp. 89–118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726702551004>
19. Niinimäki, K., Peters, G., Dahlbo, H., Perry, P., Rissanen, T. and Gwilt, A. (2020) 'The environmental price of fast fashion', *Nature Reviews Earth and Environment*, 1(4), pp. 189–200. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43017-020-0039-9>
20. Taras, V., Kirkman, B.L. and Steel, P. (2010) 'Examining the impact of Culture's Consequences: A three-decade, multilevel, meta-analytic review of Hofstede's cultural value dimensions', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(3), pp. 405–439. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018938>
21. The Financial Express (2026) 'IKEA India to turn profitable in FY28', *The Financial Express*, 5 March. Available at: <https://www.financialexpress.com/business/news/ikea-india-to-turn-profitable-in-fy28/4163604/> (Accessed: 23 April 2026).
22. UNI India (2024) 'IKEA introduces 365-day exchange & return policy', *UNI India*, 16 September. Available at: <https://www.uniindia.com/ikea-introduces-365-day-exchange-return-policy/business-economy/news/3284678.html> (Accessed: 23 April 2026).
23. Verhoef, P.C., Broekhuizen, T., Bart, Y., Bhattacharya, A., Dong, J.Q., Fabian, N. and Haenlein, M. (2021) 'Digital transformation: A multidisciplinary reflection and research agenda', *Journal of Business Research*, 122, pp. 889–901. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.09.022>
24. World Bank (2023) *World Development Indicators*. Washington, DC: The World Bank Group. Available at: <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators> (Accessed: 1 March 2026).

