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IKEA's complaint of "Slow product update": Bottlenecks and
breakthrough strategies for management practices

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Executive Summary

At a recent performance review meeting, the CEO received complaints about management practices in various functional areas. In the current business turbulent and competitive environment, these problems have a negative impact on management and organizational performance, as a large company IKEA, its product update speed seems to be behind the pace of The Times. This problem has not only affected IKEA's brand image in the minds of consumers, but also exposed its deep-seated problems at the management level. From the perspective of management, IKEA's hierarchy may be too complex, resulting in a slow decision-making process; In the aspect of employee care, employees may lack sufficient motivation and support from the management of the company, thus affecting their work enthusiasm and innovation ability; In terms of decision-making speed, IKEA may need to be more flexible and quickly respond to market changes. The cumulative effect of these problems makes IKEA unable to update its products, which affects the company's competitiveness and market position. Therefore, an in-depth analysis of the causes of these problems and the proposed effective solutions are essential for IKEA.

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Introduction

Due to the recent performance evaluation meeting, the CEO received a management complaint from IKEA enterprises about the slow product updates. This issue has adversely affected company management and organizational performance, especially in the current volatile and competitive market environment. According to Marcello (2020), studies say that due to the rapid changes in consumer demand, the technological progress of the company's products, and the continuous innovation of competitors in products and services, the current market environment becomes more and more complicated. IKEA lags in product update and innovation. As a result, its market response speed is slow and it is difficult to quickly meet the changing needs of consumers (Marcello,2020). According to Andhik(2024),studies sayIKEA's original management model compared with other companies at present, the traditional and cumbersome decision-making process makes Sayikea unable to make flexible, effective and rapid adjustments in the rapidly changing market environment (Andhik, 2024). 2024). Therefore, this report takes IKEA as an example, from the mainstream management theory, critical management theory, the key reasons for the slow product update, as well as the impact and other aspects of IKEA's slow product update.

1.0 Mainstream and critical management theory

1.1 Mainstream Theories

1. Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management

Taylor's scientific management theory argues that it is the job of workplace managers to develop the proper production system for achieving economic efficiency (Taneja,2011) .

According to Aurora (2021), studies say that Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management can be applied to IKEA to improve its product update process by analyzing and optimizing current workflows in product design, production and supply chain management. This approach helps the IKEA company save time and resources in the field, thus potentially speeding up product updates. However, this can also lead to a more rigid approach to innovation, as Frederick's focus on efficiency and standardization can limit creativity and slow adaptation to changing trends (Aurora, 2021).

2. Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory

Bureaucratic theory stresses that organizations are formal, rational systems with well-defined rules and procedures, defined by specialization, hierarchy, well-trained employees, managerial dedication, and the impartiality of management (Michael,1982).

According to Von (2024), studies say that Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory could explain IKEA's complaints about slow product updates. The reason for the complaint is that IKEA's internal decision-making process can involve multiple levels of approval, standardized procedures and compliance with established rules, which reduces innovation and responsiveness to market changes. To accelerate product innovation, IKEA could consider simplifying the decision-making process or introducing greater flexibility in the bureaucracy (Von,2024).

3. Henri Fayol's Administrative Theory

Administrative Management Theory, pioneered by Henri Fayol, focuses on organizing and managing the entire structure of an organization. It involves creating formal structures, defining roles and responsibilities, and dividing tasks for increased efficiency (Arthur,1961).

According to Von (2024), studies say that Henri Fayol's Administrative Theory can be applied to IKEA to explain the internal problems in the complaint of slow

product update. That is, different departments are responsible for each link in IKEA's product update process, which ensures the professionalism and efficiency of each department, but may also lead to a slow decision-making process and slow response to innovation and market changes. Therefore, to speed up product update, IKEA can enhance cross-department cooperation and reduce unnecessary level approval, thus improving the speed of product update (Von,2024).

1.2 Critical Theories

1. Critical theory of the Frankfurt School

“Critical theory” refers to a family of theories that aim at a critique and transformation of society by integrating normative perspectives with empirically informed analysis of society's conflicts, contradictions, and tendencies (Martin,2005).

According to Kulling (2020), studies say that According to the Critical theory of the Frankfurt School, IKEA may pay too much attention to cost control and standardized production. Ignoring the changing needs of consumers and market trends can lead to lagging innovation. Therefore, IKEA needs to

re-examine the strategy of profit maximization and promote more creative and flexible product development to better adapt to market changes. (Kulling, 2020)

2. Post-modern management theory

Postmodern management theory is a kind of management thought based on postmodern philosophy, which advocates challenging the traditional management concept and emphasizes the diversity, nonlinearity and uncertainty of the organization (Per,1989).

According to Karolina (2022), studies say that according to Post-modern management theory, IKEA may limit creativity and flexibility in a framework that relies too much on standardization and efficiency. Resulting in product update lag. Therefore, IKEA can pay more attention to the diversified needs and personalized trends of the market through a more flexible management structure, cross-department collaboration and a mechanism to respond quickly to market changes (Karolina,2022).

3. Feminist management theory

Feminist management theory is an approach to management that seeks to challenge traditional gender roles, promote gender equality, and emphasize

the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences in decision-making processes (Brian,1996).

According to Karolina (2022), studies say that according to Feminist management theory, IKEA may ignore the needs of female consumers or the consideration of gender diversity in the decision-making process. As a result, product design and update fail to reflect the diversified needs of the market in a timely manner. IKEA can therefore re-examine its product development process to ensure that more diverse perspectives and interest groups are involved in decision-making, thereby driving more inclusive and innovative product design (Karolina,2022).

2.0 The key reason for the slow update of IKEA products

1. Lengthy decision-making process and insufficient information flow

According to Ga-eul (2022), studies say that in IKEA's global management system, product update and design decisions usually need to go through multiple levels of approval. Although this structure ensures control and consistency, it also leads to the delay of decision making and update speed. In UK stores such as IKEA (Wembley, London), store staff are exposed to a large amount of customer feedback, but this feedback often needs to go through a

cumbersome reporting process before it can be passed on to head office and translated into product updates (Ga-eul, 2022).

2. Over-reliance on standardization and process management

According to Brown (2021), studies say that IKEA tends to reduce costs and maintain global brand consistency through standardized processes, but this highly standardized approach may inhibit the speed of innovation. In places such as IKEA (Greenwich, London), while standardization ensures consistency in product quality, it also limits the speed with which products can be introduced to the specific needs of consumers in the local market. As a result, product updates in the UK market tend to lag and are not flexible enough to adapt to customers' rapidly changing tastes and needs (Brown, 2021).

3. Insufficient participation of employees in innovation

According to Siqi (2024), studies say that although IKEA pays attention to the training and development of employees, the opinions and creativity of store employees are usually not fully valued in the process of product innovation. Especially in IKEA (Notting Hill Store in London), employees have frequent contact with customers and can directly perceive customers' demands and trends for new products. However, since decisions are mostly dominated by the headquarters, employees' feedback often fails to affect product updates in time (Siqu, 2024).

3.0 Influence of Mainstream Theories and Critical Theories

3.1 Mainstream Theories are having an impact on IKEA

1. Scientific management theory

According to Banerjee (2022), studies say scientific management theory emphasizes improving efficiency by refining tasks and controlling workers' working styles. This highly structured and controlled work environment can inhibit employee innovation and initiative. For IKEA, product updates may rely more on high-level decisions and fixed processes, while employees' creativity and inspiration may be limited by overly disciplined working styles, thus slowing down the development of new products (Banerjee, 2022). Employees may have many valuable ideas, but because scientific management emphasizes the standardization and execution of tasks, these ideas are not quickly translated into new products.

2. Humanistic management theory

According to Montiel (2022), studies say that the theory of people-oriented management emphasizes the sense of participation and enthusiasm of employees. If the feedback and suggestions of employees, especially those of store employees, are not fully listened to in the process of product update, the

speed and quality of the company's product update will be affected. In the case of Ikea (Wembley Store in London), employees may find that consumers have new needs for certain home design or functionality, but if their feedback is not heeded or fails to directly influence product updates, product development may continue to follow the traditional process, resulting in delayed updates. (Montiel, 2020).

3. System management theory

According to Lara (2022), studies say system management theory emphasizes the importance of feedback mechanism in system adjustment. If the company's internal feedback mechanism is not perfect or there are communication barriers, resulting in departments not timely access to effective information about product design, market response or production progress, it may lead to delayed decision-making and slow product updates. Take IKEA (Acton Mall in London) as an example, if the feedback of store employees or customers is not effectively transmitted to the product development department, or if the feedback is delayed in the transmission process, the product development team may not adjust the product design or update strategy in time, thus affecting the speed of product update. (Lara,2022).

3.2 Critical Theories on the impact on IKEA

1. The problem of concentration of power

According to Avelino (2021), studies say that when decision-making power is excessively concentrated within the company, the top management may ignore the small signals of market changes due to too much attention to the overall situation and overall strategy, resulting in the delayed product update in the rapidly changing market environment. If the company's head office is too focused on global uniform product design, and fails to respond to the changing demand for personalized and environmentally friendly design in the UK market, it may lead to delayed product updates and missed market opportunities. (Avelino, 2021).

2. Lack of employee participation and innovation

According to Christopher (2021), studies say that critical management theory emphasizes the balance of employees' participation and power in organizational decision-making. Basically, the product innovation of any company depends on the collaboration and information flow between internal employees and external market information, and excessive hierarchical structure may lead to information lag and slow decision-making, which will slow down the company's product creation speed until there is no product creation. If the company headquarters focuses too much on the strict internal organizational structure, employees are likely to lose their participation and

innovation in product design, and then lose their enthusiasm for product creation, which is undoubtedly the biggest loss for the company's product update and creation (Christopher, 2021).

Conclusion

This paper discusses the difficulties IKEA faces in product renewal, and analyzes the deep causes of this problem through mainstream management theory and critical management theory. It mainly analyzes the role of mainstream management theories and critical management theories in IKEA's "slow product update" dilemma by comparing them. It can be mainly mentioned that the mainstream management theory has promoted the standardization and scale of IKEA, but also restricted its flexibility and innovation ability; The critical management theory suggests that IKEA should pay more attention to sustainable development and social responsibility when dealing with the challenges of product renewal. Finally, the paper puts forward suggestions for standardized response to complaints to improve IKEA's flexibility and adaptability in responding to consumer feedback and changes in market demand.

Suggestions for responding to complaints

1. Lengthy decision-making process and insufficient information flow

According to Ga-eul (2022), studies say that employees can connect with senior management through more direct communication channels (such as regular meetings, feedback systems, etc.) to promote more efficient execution of product decisions. Store managers can regularly report front-line feedback to ensure that customer needs receive timely attention. Simplifying the decision-making hierarchy and accelerating the flow of information can significantly improve the responsiveness of product updates (Ga-eul,2022).

2. Over-reliance on standardization and process management

According to Brown (2021), studies say that IKEA can encourage store employees to provide local innovative suggestions, especially in diversified markets such as IKEA (Acton shopping Mall in London), where employees can respond to local consumer needs. Propose specific product improvements or innovations. These suggestions can be reported to head office through store managers or market feedback mechanisms, driving greater flexibility and rapid roll-out of localized designs (Brown,2021).

3. Insufficient participation of employees in innovation

According to Siqi (2024), studies say that IKEA can encourage store employees to put forward innovative ideas and suggestions for product improvement by establishing a more effective employee participation mechanism. For example, awards for innovative proposals or regular cross-departmental workshops could be set up in UK stores to encourage employees to actively share market and customer feedback to quickly influence product design and updates (Siqi, 2024).

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