
PAST-PRESENT-FUTURE

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Not only in Design but daily, we refer to these three words, whether we are talking about our past experiences or present states or even future accomplishments we want to make. However, in relation to design these three words can show how a design can change by the influence of time. In this essay I will be using a Designer to show how time using Past, Present and Future to distinguish why designs have changed and what has occurred in time, to influence a change in products. I have chosen to use IKEA as a case study to clearly display this passing of time and the evolution that has occurred to their products, ranging from the drastic, the bulky and bold designs, to the convenient and simplistic goods. To highlight this, I will be choosing a range of products from Past, Present and Future ranges to demonstrate how these three words can have an impact on how the appearance of products change through time. Moreover, I will conclude on how these three words may display contrasting designs, but also how they are interlinked to make designs similar and regenerative.

On commencement, it is well known that Ikea have a broad range of Past products. Past is a term used to describe what has already happened or taken place (Languages, 2022). In this instance the word Past allows the relation of IKEAS older products to be analysed. The IKEA business has been growing for over 70 years and still has a major influence on furniture design today (IKEA, 2022). (Crow, 2015)



Figure 1(IKEA 1950s)

As displayed in Figure 1 IKEA started as a very retro and vintage styled furniture company. With its unique style and range of colours. During the 1950s the Mid-Century Modern Design Movement was pinnacle at this time, which indicates why IKEA have chosen such obscure shapes, colours, and textures. The Mid-Century Modern Movement started Post War, products produced during this time were described as elegant, simple and functional (Grey, 2017). Within the United Kingdom, the Mid-Century Modern was later in influencing product design on account of resource shortages which witnessed the introduction of the Furniture Utility Scheme in 1942, which specified the appearance of furniture production and the target market for purchasers. However, it is argued that the demise of the Mid-Century Modern Movement resulted from the evolving new furniture, such as G-Plan and the designs of the manufacturer, E. Gomme (Crow, 2015)

Shown in the IKEA catalogue in the 1950s are various ranges of chairs and tables which suggests that this is how IKEA started their business and its continued growth, starting with simple but effective products to begin its production line. On account of

their small sized organisation, their production witnessed majority of their products being sold within the area in which they were produced (IKEA, 2022).



Figure 2(IKEA Colour Swatch)

Figure 2 above shows the ranges of colours available within IKEAs past products. They can be described as dark, low-toned and similar. This perhaps suggesting that coloured products were only just coming into fashion in past IKEA this was just the beginning of IKEAs colour palette which extended as IKEA became more privilant and popular by cnsumers. (IKEA, Design Through The Ages, 2022).

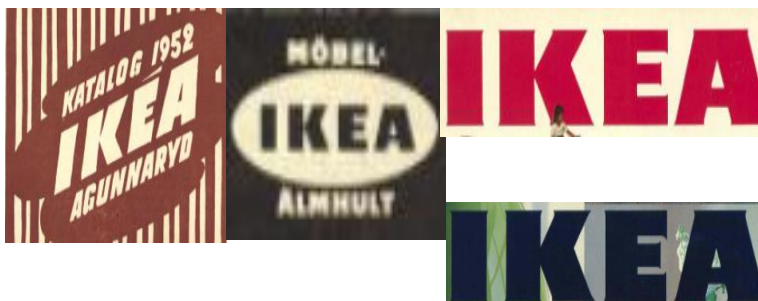


Figure 3 (Past IKEA logos)

When IKEA first launched their logo, it was still a work in progress, testing out new fonts and colours to see what best suited their brand. Commencing with a very dated look in the 1950s to a neat and modern style in the 2000s. As shown in Figure 3 above, they become more consumer orientated branded as does their logo designs to ensure that all products branded by IKEA have a trademark that enables consumers to know where the product has come from. As indicated on their website they chose the colour red for their initial logo due to the designer relating the colour red to low priced products, which is the reason why IKEA, as a brand was set up in the first place.



Figure 4 (IKEA 2000s)

Furthermore, as the 21st century approached, IKEA expanded internationally, having stores located all over the world (IKEA, About Us , 2022) which indicated the growth in their market to sell their products. The Present IKEA products during this time are very different to those shown In Figure 1, they have branched away from the retro looking products and focused on the simpler side of design, suggesting the movement towards convenience and neat products to match the decade they are designing for. It can be suggested that due to rivalry companies, IKEA began to rise

to the challenge and design for the age they were competing in to allow for their products to have an advantage over other companies, such as WayFair, Target, who are all competing internationally in the same market (Abott, 2022). Already, a noticeable distance is travelled across the time frame of 70 years since the start-up of IKEA, witnessing an extreme change of design from materials to colours and overall aesthetics of products.

Next, after analysing the Past products of IKEA, the next word analysis will be Present. The word Present In the terms of this essay means something that is



Figure 6 (IKEA 2021)



Figure 5 (IKEA 2021)

currently happening, in design it is a product either being produced or designed (Languages, Present, 2022).

Now in the Present 21st Century, IKEA is one of the leading furniture companies known for its flatpack, convenient and simple furniture designs the reasons for them using flatpack furniture is to make consumers feel involved in the start of their products lifecycle alongside the convenience, it enables them to see how a product fits together and makes them have a hands on experience with their products. As shown in Figures 5 and 6 above, IKEA are incorporating the present wants and needs of buyers to widen their products. Since COVID 19 consumers want to get the most out of life, rather than being stuck indoors we are now making the most of the

simpler things in life, with what we have around us. Hence, why they are selling products such as Surf boards to allow people to afford what they want to get out of life (IKEA, 2021 Catalogue, 2021). Not only in this present time are IKEA producing products for consumers livelihood but to make sure they are getting the most out of their everyday lives. Although, their Present products are still modern and elegant, the option for flatpack furniture allows products to become convenient for those who do not have space in small environments, whether that is through their furniture, utensils, or even outdoor products. The present flatpack products allow for consumers to feel as though they have been apart of the assembly of the product and encourages them to buy into partnered products.



Figure 8 (IKEA)



Figure 7(IKEA)

Furthermore, the present colour swatch of IKEA products is clearly a contrast to those in Figure 2. Figures 7 and 8 are both showing very basic and beige colours which is the colour tones that are very currently available in today's society. A notable feature in a lot of IKEA design rooms, the present IKEA, is clear usage of past design features such as the colour tones to enhance their present colour swatch. Thus, making it a choice for consumers to decide what bold colours they want to use when building their own home designs. Small bursts of colour allow for

rooms to have character without overwhelming the space. The set-up of Present IKEA ensures a fulfilled consumer experience. Compared to past IKEA there was a lack of consumer and product interaction, however, within present IKEA, due to the increased number of stores, people globally now receive a physical experience with the potential products they wish to purchase. It also accounts for a reduction in the number of items returned, as consumers can view them for face value, they can test and choose designs for themselves. IKEA is also a corporation that encourages a long visit to the premises as they cater food that is affordable for all to allow consumers to relax and enjoy their experience. There is also an option for childcare whilst young families visit, a soft play area for children so that parents can concentrate on the bigger design future of their households. So, the Present IKEA is still evolving but their designs are still influenced by societies climate such as their taste in style, colour and functionality of products, which all has an impact on how IKEA products are designed today. (IKEA, About Us , 2022).



Figure 9 (Present IKEA logo)

Additionally, as shown in Figure 9 the Present IKEA is a well know for its Logo and the colours alone are significant which is how a lot of consumers recognise the brand. Stated on their website they use the two vibrant colours to enrich their

Swedish heritage as a company and they believe the colours provide customers with a positive outlook on their stores (IKEA, The IKEA Logo-History and Design, 2022).

Moving forward, the next word analysis is on future. The meaning of future is something which will happen further on in time as a result of what happens today (Languages, Future, 2022). To relate this word to this essay the next section will be concerned with what IKEA want to achieve for the future of their company.

In the near Future, IKEA aims to become 100% circular business which is allowing consumers to return used products to be recycled back into the business and regenerated into new furniture that can be then made to look as though it never had a past life so that it can be made into another product for another lifecycle. (IKEA, About Us , 2022) the decision was made when IKEA became aware that customers were conscious of their impact on the planet. As we are starting to witness the impact of our human footprint on the planet, resulting in a rise in sea levels and climate change, all occurring dramatically quick, IKEA are conscious that their business morals must change to better serve the planet. To become a circular business, it means that only recycled or renewable materials. They are hoping to collaborate with other corporations to make becoming circular more sustainable. They aim to reach this goal by 2030 and sustain it (IKEA, About Us , 2022). IKEAs future is not about stopping people from purchasing new products but emphasising the need to recycle and upcycle products so that products have a longer life cycle, thus reducing wastage and encouraging product renewal. The year 2030 is IKEAs target for a lot of their criteria for their products. Alongside becoming 100% circular, they want to guarantee that all plastic products will be 100% renewable or recyclable (IKEA, Sustainability Strategy, 2020). IKEAs sustainability strategy is outlining what they believe will make the world a better place. Their 3 key future challenges are to

tackle Inequality, Climate change and Unsustainable consumption (IKEA, Sustainability Strategy, 2020) these being major issues humanity is facing in the future. As well as the challenges IKEA is using the UNs Sustainable Development Goals to help combat the three main targeted areas which was launched by the UN in 2015 these goals are guiding IKEAs business, engagements with partners and future ambitions. UN goals are 15 areas that need to be considered especially when businesses like IKEA are dealing with mass produced and taking different materials and manufacturing processes into account. It allows corporations to set goals and standards that align according to the UNs goals, these boosting morals of businesses and making them more environmentally friendly which is a positive when moving forward for the business and pleases consumers and makes them repeat customers to businesses (IKEA, Sustainability Strategy, 2020).

To finalise, the three key words within this essay Past, Present and Future have clearly been used to show the evolution of IKEA and its products. Although these words can be used to define differences however, they are used. There can also be links, this is how we can move forward, being able to see how IKEA have potentially learnt from past movements and implemented them into their present-day products, for example flatpack furniture is still produced by them today as it is a cheaper and convenient for consumers as they save money on products that are of good quality. However, all though some manufacturing processes are continued in todays designs the aesthetics have completely changed to more neutral and simpler colours and techniques. Moreover, the future of IKEA has been shaped around the experiences it has had, which may indicate why it is so successful in its market with limited competitors, this ensuring a promising future.

To continue, using the case study allows us to thoroughly understand what terms these words are used for. For example, after studying the findings it has allowed me to draw the conclusion that these words can be linked. As they are tenses, they have an impact on each other. It is like a story, circumstances that happen in the past will affect what happens in the present resulting in a potential solution in the future. The word future gives people time to plan or change how they perceive things as they know it will lead to an outcome in future tense. Therefore, this essay has enabled me to justify that words are outlining contrast but there is always a way of linking them especially in design terms as there is always another way of picturing how words can be used.