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INDIVIDUAL REPORT

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



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Executive Summary

This report presents a comparative analysis of IKEA's international marketing strategy in two structurally distinct markets: India and the United Kingdom (UK). IKEA is the largest furniture retailer in the world, having over 480 stores in over 60 markets, and retail sales in the year 2024 of about 47.6 billion Euros (Inter IKEA Group, 2024). Although IKEA expanded into the UK in 1987 as the initial step in its early European growth, its first store in India was only opened in Hyderabad in 2018, as a sign of a risk-averse and highly localized market-entry strategy (Burt et al., 2017).

Based on the PESTEL framework, the report compares the macro-environmental factors that influence the operations of IKEA in both countries and concludes that the UK is a mature, individualistic, and digitally developed retail market, and India is a high-growth, strong collectivist and family-centric, complex-regulated, and highly price-sensitive market. Using the cultural dimensions and the 7Ps of the extended services marketing mix, it can be stated that the approach of IKEA in the UK is more of a standardisation approach but in India the brand has been trying to deep adapt its products, pricing, place and promotions (Svensson, 2001). The directional growth strategy of IKEA India is assessed with the help of the Ansoff matrix and can be best described as the market development and intensive store and digital rollout.

The report also critically analyzes ethical issues that surround the IKEA marketing mix such as the allegation of wage differences in Indian stores, sustainability issues, and the risk of child labour in global supply chain. It ends with recommendations to go further local in India with digital channels, more sustainability communication in the UK, and more integrated omnichannel in both countries. The report ends with a reflective report that is based on Gibbs (1988) reflective cycle.

1 Introduction

A conflict between global brand uniformity and local cultural responsiveness is increasingly affecting international marketing (Kotler et al., 2022). Multinational retailers like IKEA need to constantly determine to what degree their marketing mix will be standardised across markets to take advantage of scale economies or customised to suit local consumer preference, regulatory conditions and social-cultural values (Vrontis et al., 2009; Schmid and Kotulla, 2021). The same argument is especially applicable to the emerging markets, where the cultural distance and institutional voids may greatly interfere with the Western retail formats (Khanna and Palepu, 2010; Bianchi, 2009).

This report is a critical analysis of the international marketing strategy of IKEA in two different markets, one being a mature Western retail market (the United Kingdom), and the other being a rapid emerging economy (India) in the world. IKEA has been in the UK since 1987 and has 22 stores and several order-and-collection points, with a well-developed e-commerce platform (IKEA UK, 2024). IKEA now has one large-format store in Hyderabad and one in Navi Mumbai, Bengaluru and a city-centre format in Worli, Mumbai, having established its supply-chain in India and opened its first large-format store there over a decade (Burt et al., 2017; Mint, 2024).

The structure of this report is as follows. Section 2 gives a comparative PESTEL and cultural analysis of the two markets. Section 3 compares the segmentation, targeting and positioning (STP) of IKEA decisions in each country and the 7P extended marketing mix. Section 4 analyses the IKEA India directional development strategy through the Ansoff matrix. Section 5 is about the ethical concerns in the marketing mix of IKEA and Section 6 is the recommendations. Section 7 of the report gives a reflective account.

Figure 1 demonstrates the trend of the retail sales realized by IKEA across the world in the last five years, which forms the business context within which the India and UK strategy of IKEA must be interpreted.

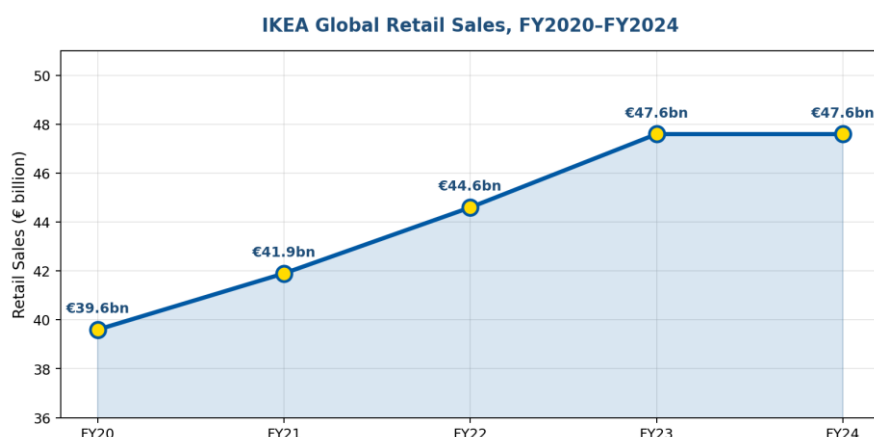


Figure 1: IKEA Global Retail Sales, FY2020–FY2024

Source: Inter IKEA Group (2024)

2 Brand and Country Overview:

2.1 Comparison of Sociocultural Context of the UK and India

The PESTEL framework offers a systematic perspective of comparing the macro-environment in which IKEA operates (Whittington et al., 2023). Table 1 highlights the major political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal forces that influence the strategic decisions of IKEA in the UK and India.

Table 1: Comparative PESTEL Analysis, UK vs India

Factor	United Kingdom	India
Political	Stable liberal democracy; post-Brexit trade friction with the EU has raised import costs and affected IKEA's supply chain (Deloitte, 2023).	Stable democracy but complex federal regulation; FDI in single-brand retail liberalised to 100% in 2018, enabling IKEA's entry (Ministry of Commerce, 2020).
Economic	Mature economy; GDP per capita $\approx$ US\$49,000 (World Bank, 2024); cost-of-living pressures have increased price sensitivity.	Fast-growing emerging economy; GDP per capita $\approx$ US\$2,700 (World Bank, 2024); rising middle class but high price sensitivity.
Social	Individualistic culture (Hofstede IDV = 89); smaller households; strong DIY culture; ageing population (ONS, 2023).	Collectivist, family-centric culture (IDV = 48); joint households common; furniture often viewed as long-term investment (Gupta, 2019).

Factor	United Kingdom	India
Technological	High e-commerce penetration (>30% of retail); advanced logistics; mature AR/VR home-planning tools (Statista, 2024a).	Rapid digital adoption driven by UPI and smartphones; however, last-mile logistics remain challenging outside metros (KPMG, 2023).
Environmental	Strong regulatory pressure; Net Zero 2050 commitment; growing consumer demand for sustainable products (DEFRA, 2023).	Environmental awareness rising but secondary to affordability; air-quality concerns drive indoor product interest (ODIASE et al., 2024).
Legal	Robust consumer protection (Consumer Rights Act 2015); GDPR; advertising governed by ASA (UK Government, 2015).	Consumer Protection Act 2019; 30% local sourcing rule for single-brand retail created early challenges for IKEA (Government of India, 2019).

Source: Self-made

Politically, the UK has a stable and transparent regulatory environment, but Brexit has also brought about the issues of the complexity of customs and the pressure on costs in the supply chain, directly impacting the imports of IKEA (Deloitte, 2023). Conversely, the political climate in India is stable yet operationally complicated, as multi-level GST, different state regulations, and the 30% local sourcing requirement of foreign single-brand retailers initially made IKEA entry impossible (Burt et al., 2017; Government of India, 2019).

The two markets are sharply different in terms of economy. UK is a developed economy with furniture being a replacement-based product, and India is a high-growth market with a fast-growing middle-income population of about 600 million people by 2030 (PwC, 2023). Nevertheless, Indian consumers are much more price-sensitive and thus the already notorious low prices of IKEA still had to be re-engineered to the market (Svensson, 2001). The sharp discrepancies of the two markets can be visualised in Figure 2.

Economic Context: UK vs India

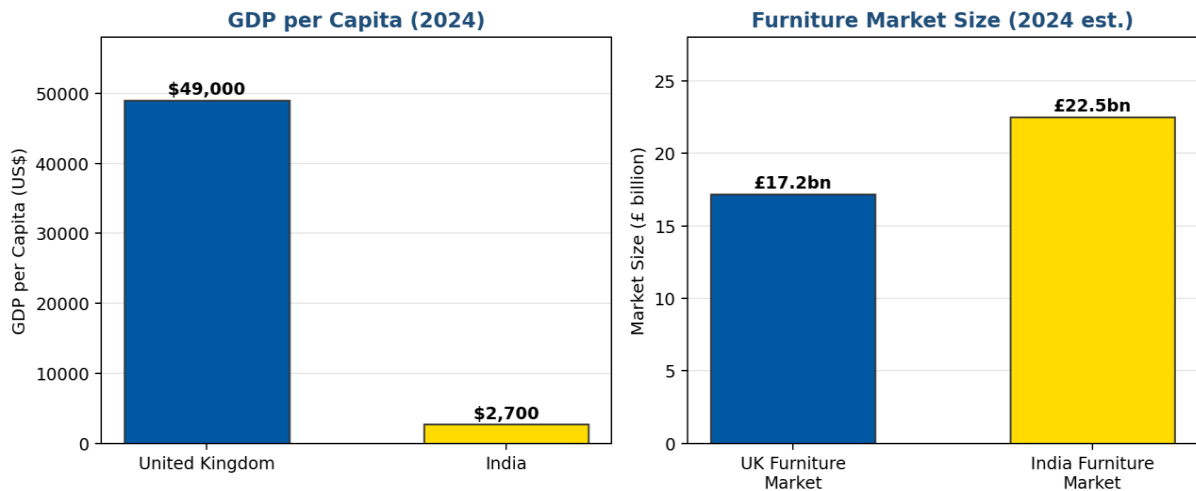


Figure 2: Economic Context, GDP per Capita and Furniture Market Size

Source: World Bank (2024) and Statista (2024b)

The most impactful in terms of IKEA is arguably social and cultural differences. The joint-family orientation characteristic of India is opposed to the individualistic, small-household orientation of the UK, a direct consequence of which is the size of products, range, and in-store experience (Gupta, 2019). The two countries are also digitally developed, and the logistics infrastructure of the UK allows it to complete an order faster than India, whose last-mile infrastructure has been a continuous issue, especially when it comes to delivering large furniture (KPMG, 2023).

3 Consumer Behaviour and Cultural Dimensions: UK Vs India

The framework of cultural dimensions by Hofstede (2011) can explain the key differences in behaviour of the UK and Indian consumers. The two countries are compared to the six dimensions in Table 2.

Table 2: Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, UK vs India

Cultural Dimension	United Kingdom	India
Power Distance (PDI)	35 — low hierarchy; egalitarian consumer relationships	77 — high hierarchy; status-oriented purchases
Individualism (IDV)	89 — highly individualistic	48 — collectivist, family-oriented

Cultural Dimension	United Kingdom	India
Masculinity (MAS)	66 — achievement-oriented	56 — moderately masculine
Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)	35 — tolerant of ambiguity; accepts self-assembly	40 — moderate; prefers assisted purchase
Long-Term Orientation (LTO)	51 — balanced	51 — pragmatic, durability-focused
Indulgence (IVR)	69 — indulgent; lifestyle shopping	26 — restrained; value-oriented

Source: Adapted from Hofstede Insights (2023)

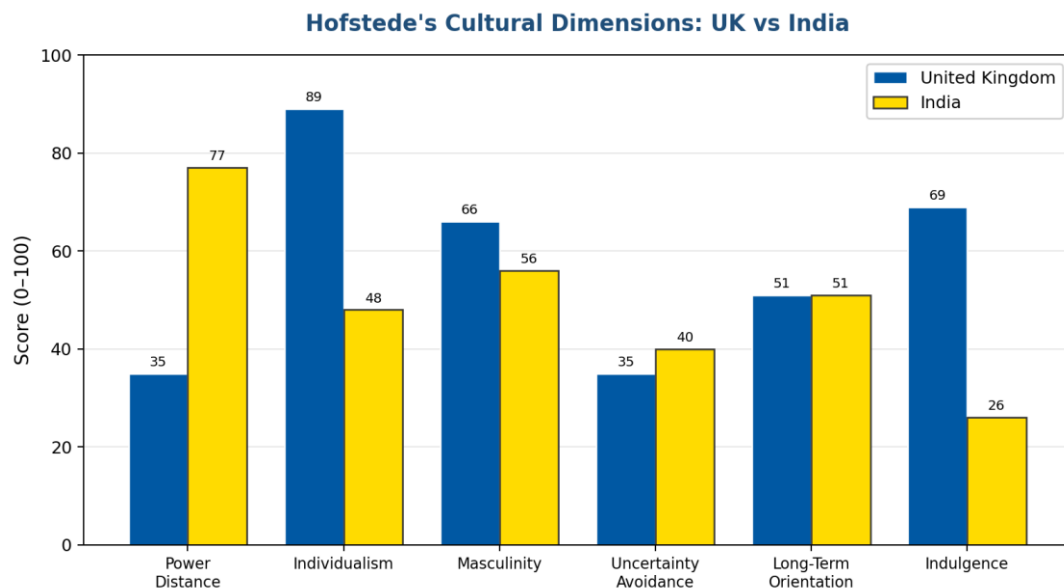


Figure 3: Visual Comparison of Hofstede Scores — UK vs India

Source: Hofstede Insights (2023)

The extremely high individualism index (89) is mirrored in the consumer base that uses self-service and self-assembly and makes decisions independently. This is also inherently consistent with the flat-pack, DIY-focused offer of IKEA and why there is no need to adapt the in-store experience much (Burt et al., 2017). On the other hand, individualism scores only 48 in India, a strong indicator of a collectivist orientation in which extended families decide on purchases. Gupta (2019) notes that Indian furniture buying choices are frequently multi-generational, and durability, status, and long-term usefulness have a greater weight than Scandinavian minimalism.

The increased power distance score (77) of India is also a factor. The Indian customers are more likely to demand assisted service and product demonstration by the staff, unlike the IKEA philosophy of self-service. IKEA India, in turn, has many more in-store employees than its stores in Europe - allegedly over 950 co-workers in its store in Hyderabad alone - to offer guided customer service (Bianchi, 2009). Moreover, the low score in indulgence (26) indicates that the Indian consumers are more conservative and price-sensitive, which supports the necessity of high entry-price points.

One more culturally specific behaviour is related to eating habits. The IKEA restaurant, which is one of the key sources of the global store experience, was to be redesigned in India in a significant way. About half of Indians are vegetarian, whereas beef and pork are sensitive in terms of religion (Pew Research Centre, 2021). IKEA India thus introduced a veg biryani, samosas, dal makhani and chicken meatballs menu, with no traces of beef or pork - a change that has been extensively used as a textbook case of cultural responsiveness in international retail (Svensson, 2001).

4 Comparison of IKEA's STP Strategies in the UK and India

4.1 Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning

The global positioning statement of IKEA - to create a better everyday life for the many people - applies in both the UK and India, but the meaning of the many people differs meaningfully (Inter IKEA Group, 2024). Promoting modern, affordable, and design-driven furniture in the UK, IKEA utilises demographic and lifestyle segmentation to appeal to young professionals, first-time buyers, families, and student renters (Burt et al., 2017). The positioning is based on Scandinavian design democracy - good design at low cost - and is aimed at a wide middle-income market that already knows about self-assembly.

Entry segmentation in India has been significantly lower. IKEA appeals to the aspirational, middle-income, English-speaking, Tier-1 city residents of India, with a monthly income of between INR 50,000 and INR 200,000 (about £475 to £1,900) (Bianchi, 2009). The urban-based nuclear families with younger people compose the first segment since they are more open to modern design and self-building compared to older people living in joint families. IKEA India has strategically positioned itself as not just a furniture retailer but as an affordable aspirational lifestyle brand, and competes more with organised retailers like Pepperfry, Urban Ladder and Godrej Interio than the fragmented, price-based unorganised furniture market, which makes up about 85 per cent of Indian furniture sales (IBEF, 2023).



Figure 4: STP Analysis (Burt et al., 2017).

4.2 Comparison of Marketing Strategies in the UK and India

The 7Ps framework developed by Booms and Bitner (1981) and further expanded by the author to 7P is especially pertinent to IKEA since its value-creating proposition goes beyond furniture to its in-store environment. Table 3 gives a comparison of the marketing mix choices of IKEA in UK and India.

Table 3: IKEA's 7Ps Marketing Mix, UK vs India

Element	United Kingdom	India
Product	Full global range (~9,500 SKUs). Larger sofas and beds reflecting UK body sizes and room layouts. Standard Swedish meatballs and plant-balls in food court.	Curated range (~7,500 SKUs) adapted to smaller Indian apartments. Higher-density kitchen storage, pressure-cooker-compatible cookware, idli makers, masala boxes, and culturally appropriate bed sizes. Restaurant menu entirely reformulated with no beef or pork.
Price	Competitively priced against Argos, Dunelm and John Lewis. Price perception based on design-to-cost ratio.	Over 1,000 products priced below INR 200 (£1.90) at launch. Entry-level coffee mug at INR 15 deliberately chosen as a psychological anchor (Burt et al., 2017).
Place	22 large-format suburban stores plus order-and-collection points, click-and-	Large-format stores in Hyderabad, Navi Mumbai and Bengaluru, plus a

Element	United Kingdom	India
	collect, and rapid home delivery; mature omnichannel integration.	smaller city-centre format at Worli (Mumbai) to test compact retail; partnerships with third-party logistics for home delivery and assembly.
Promotion	Integrated campaigns across TV, digital, and print; iconic annual IKEA Catalogue ended in 2021, replaced by digital content; emphasis on sustainability storytelling.	Bollywood-style TVCs, vernacular digital campaigns across Hindi, Telugu, Kannada and Tamil; heavy use of Instagram and YouTube influencers; experiential in-store events.
People	Lean staffing; self-service model; staff trained to be minimally intrusive.	High-touch service model with significantly higher staff density; ~50% female workforce, explicitly signalling gender inclusion in a traditionally male retail sector (Bianchi et al., 2009).
Process	Streamlined self-navigation with AR planning apps; home delivery slots booked online.	Guided tours, free assembly at lower threshold, and home assembly services are included in many transactions to overcome reluctance around self-assembly.
Physical Evidence	Blue-and-yellow exterior, signature room sets, Swedish food market.	Same visual identity but with larger restaurants (up to 1,000 seats in Hyderabad), dedicated children's play areas and prayer rooms, and Indianised room sets.

Source: Burt et al. (2017), Svensson (2001)

4.2.1 Product

The most conspicuous aspect of the IKEA localisation strategy in India has been product adaptation. To understand that the apartments of Indian people are smaller and need more storage space, IKEA India developed more compact storage, and culturally relevant objects like masala boxes, idli makers, pressure-cooker-compatible cookware, or tawa-friendly induction surfaces (Svensson, 2001). In the UK, however, the product range is similar to the pan-European range with only slight variations in bed sizes and electrical requirements.

4.2.2 Price

The most contrasting one is the pricing strategy. The pricing of IKEA UK is set at a competitive level, not the lowest on the market, which is advantageous due to the reputation of the brand as a designer (Statista, 2024b). Price architecture had to be radically re-engineered by IKEA in India. According to Burt et al. (2017), IKEA India created over 1,000 SKUs with the opening price less than INR 200 in the initial days, and the notorious INR 15 coffee mug was made with a special purpose to establish a psychological access point to indicate availability. Bianchi (2009) believes that this can be viewed as price adaptation at the point of value perception, a higher-order response than mere price discounting.

4.2.3 Place

Interesting differences and similarities are found in the place strategy. IKEA has a well-established network of omnichannel stores in the UK with large suburban stores, smaller city-centre Planning Studios, and order-and-collect points and full e-commerce. IKEA started with big-box stores in suburban India but has since tried a small city-centre store in Worli, Mumbai, which was opened in 2022, specifically aimed at urban consumers who do not own cars (Mint, 2024). This indicates that IKEA is training to embrace the IKEA traditional destination-store model to the Indian reality of dense cities, whereby the number of individuals owning personal cars is considerably less than the number of individuals in the UK.

4.2.4 Promotion

Also, there is a significant variance in promotion strategies. UK ads focus on sustainability, Scandinavian design tradition, and the aspiration of lifestyle, provided via combined online and TV platforms. IKEA spent a lot of money on vernacular, Bollywood-infused television advertising when it launched in India, as well as influencer marketing in Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil (Bianchi, 2009). According to ODIASE et al. (2024), IKEA campaigns in India are crafted to create a sense of joint families, as opposed to nuclear-family advertising that is prevalent in Europe, which is a symptom of cultural analysis in Section 2.2.

4.2.5 Physical Evidence, Process and People.

The 3Ps are particularly crucial in a retail-experience business, especially the extended ones. In India, an IKEA store has about 50 per cent female workers, a conscious expression of gender diversity in a male-dominated retail industry (Bianchi, 2009). The processes are also better supported: free assembly services and low-cost assembly services are commonplace to overcome the fact that Indian customers are not familiar with flat-pack furniture. Physical

evidence that still has the signature blue-and-yellow identity consists of restaurants that are dramatically scaled-up, prayer rooms, and children play areas that are adjusted to joint-family visits. In the UK, IKEA stores, on the contrary, focus on the efficiency of self-navigation and reduced restaurant sizes.

5 Evaluation of the Performance of Marketing Strategies:

The product-market matrix of Ansoff (1957) has been one of the most popular schemes in the classification of directional growth strategies. The matrix differentiates between market penetration (existing product in existing markets), market development (existing products in new markets), product development (new products in existing markets), and diversification (new products in new markets) (Whittington et al., 2023).

IKEA's strategy in India is best characterised as market development. The firm is entering a new geographical market with a range of existing products (though modified) into it. Nevertheless, much of product development is also part of the strategy, since India-specific SKUs that were not previously part of its global product range have been launched by IKEA India, including masala boxes and idli makers (Svensson, 2001). This in-between positioning aligns with what Schmid and Kotulla (2021) refer to as a market development characterised by glocalisation-oriented product-market, where the product-market shift is supported by intentional local innovation.

Table 4: Ansoff Matrix Applied to IKEA India

	Existing Products	New Products
Existing Markets	Market Penetration — e.g. IKEA UK growing share via click-and-collect and price campaigns.	Product Development — e.g. new sustainable product lines in the UK.
New Markets	Market Development — IKEA's core strategy in India: taking adapted global range to new cities.	Diversification — limited; some India-specific SKUs (masala boxes, idli makers) represent hybrid market/product development.

Source: Ansoff (1957) and Whittington et al. (2023)



Figure 4: Ansoff Matrix Visualised, IKEA India's Strategic Position (Ansoff, 1957)

The directional development of IKEA India can be further explained as a careful gradual deployment. After entering Hyderabad in 2018, it took two years to open its second store in Navi Mumbai in 2020, followed by Bengaluru in 2022 and the smaller Worli store (Mint, 2024). This slow pace allows IKEA to gain market experience first, before investing additional capital again, and is in keeping with the Uppsala internationalisation model, which suggests that companies venturing into culturally very distant markets increase their activities at a slow pace as they gain experience (Johanson and Vahlne, 2015; Vahlne, 2020). IKEA has officially pledged to invest INR 10,500 crore (around £1 billion) into Indian activities, which indicates long-term risk despite a tentative short-term rate (Inter IKEA Group, 2024).

6 Evaluation of Marketing Ethics Practice

Marketing internationally leads to unique ethical issues since what is acceptable in one market could be challenged in a different one (Crane et al., 2019). The operations of IKEA in India and the UK have elicited a few ethical controversies, which are worthy of critical analysis.

6.1 Sustainability Claims and Greenwashing

IKEA is a global company that markets its People and Planet Positive strategy and has set its goal of becoming climate positive by 2030 (Inter IKEA Group, 2024). In the UK, where consumer scepticism and regulatory pressures towards environmental claims are high, IKEA sells products like the SYMFONISK range and circular economy take-back schemes (Buy Back & Resell) as demonstrations of its sustainability leadership. But critics have noted that IKEA's internal business model, which relies on high-volume and low-cost furniture, can be

directly incompatible with the principles of the circular economy, and may be subject to the accusation of greenwashing (Niinimäki et al., 2020; de Freitas Netto et al., 2020). The UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA, 2022) has published advice on Green Claims that IKEA UK has been forced to comply with, such as more prudent wording in its sustainability messages.

6.2 Labour Conditions and Supply-Chain Ethics

IKEA has been criticised concerning child labour in its South Asian supply chains before, a past which it has publicly recognised and responded to by implementing the IWAY Standard and collaborating with UNICEF and Save the Children (Inter IKEA Group, 2024). However, it is difficult to ensure compliance in a complex Indian supplier base. According to Gupta (2019), direct operations of IKEA in India show rather high standards of labour, but the indirect supply chain, especially in the cases of textiles and handicrafts, is one of the reputational risks areas that should be monitored regularly. IKEA has already been questioned about child labour in its South Asian supply chains, a record the company has publicly admitted and resolved using the IWAY Standard and collaborating with UNICEF and Save the Children (Inter IKEA Group, 2024). However, it is difficult to make sure that all suppliers in the Indian supplier base, which is usually complicated, comply. As Gupta (2019) observes, although direct activities of IKEA in India show quite good labour standards, the indirect supply chain, especially the textile and handicrafts, is a reputational risk area that needs to be monitored continuously.

6.3 Wage Equity and Pricing Ethics

A more recent ethical issue relates to pricing and wage equity. IKEA has been publicly boasting of its high female employee engagement and wages in India; however, some reports have highlighted that in-store wages do not necessarily follow the local cost of living in metropolitan regions (Bianchi, 2009). On the other hand, entry price points as low as the INR 15 mug, although successful as marketing anchors, pose a more insidious ethical question: do such low prices cause unrealistic expectations among suppliers that force them to squeeze margins in other segments of the value chain? It is a familiar conflict of the value retail model and a conflict that Carrigan, Moraes and Leek (2011) claim must be resolved by transparent supplier auditing.

6.4 Cultural Sensitivity and Representation

Finally, IKEA has generally been praised for culturally sensitive advertising in India, particularly its use of joint-family imagery and vernacular languages. Nevertheless, the

company has been criticised in the past on previous global catalogues that portrayed gender-traditional images, which some Indian commentators initially viewed as patronising (ODIASE et al., 2024). IKEA has since amended its creatively centred rules in order to be more egalitarian and diversely represented, which is a good practice of ethical responsiveness.

7 Recommendation and Conclusion

Considering the above analysis, this study offers five recommendations to enhance the IKEA international marketing strategy in India and the UK.

1. Firstly, IKEA India should increase the pace of the implementation of its smaller city-centre, store format, after the pilot in Worli. The classic suburban destination-store model leaves out a large portion of its target market since more than 40 percent of Indian urban households do not yet own a car (KPMG, 2023). Small formats, combined with click-and-collect and last-mile delivery partnerships, would increase accessibility faster than large-format expansion by itself.
2. Second, IKEA India ought to further invest in its digital-first marketing, especially in vernacular social content and regional influencer collaborations. As illustrated by Bianchi (2009), non-English digital content has a much greater engagement in Tier-1 and Tier-2 Indian cities. A regional influencer programme, structured by Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Marathi, would create brand salience far in advance of a physical store opening.
3. Third, IKEA should enhance sustainability reporting in the UK by switching the generic statements for concrete, quantifiable impact indicators according to CMA Green Claims recommendations (CMA, 2022). It might involve product-level carbon-footprint labelling, after the initial steps of rivals like Allbirds and Oatly (Niinimäki et al., 2020).
4. Fourth, IKEA ought to consider its restaurants as a more strategic marketing asset in the two markets. The restaurant is already utilized as a footfall driver in India, and further expansion of casual-dining and delivery relationships might create new incremental visits. The restaurant can be used in the UK to reinforce the position of sustainability with plant-based menus and locally sourced products.
5. Fifth, IKEA needs to enhance its omnichannel integration in India, by investing in assisted digital sales, AR-based room planning applications tailored to the size of Indian apartments, and WhatsApp commerce, which is a major channel of Indian retail

communication (KPMG, 2023). This would reduce the disparity in digital maturity of IKEA UK and IKEA India without involving overseas spending of capital.

No.	Recommendation
1	Accelerate small city-centre store formats in India, supported by click-and-collect and last-mile delivery, to improve accessibility (KPMG, 2023).
2	Strengthen digital-first marketing in India through vernacular content and regional influencer collaborations to boost engagement (Bianchi, 2009).
3	Improve UK sustainability reporting with clear, measurable indicators such as product-level carbon labelling (CMA, 2022).
4	Leverage restaurants as strategic assets—expand in India for footfall and use in the UK to promote sustainability (e.g., plant-based menus).
5	Enhance omnichannel integration in India via assisted digital sales, AR tools, and WhatsApp commerce to close the digital gap (KPMG, 2023).

8 Reflective Account

This reflection report is based on Gibbs (1988) reflective cycle, which consists of six steps, namely description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. It is specifically the cycle that is well-adapted to a structured academic reflection since it is balanced between analytical and experiential aspects (Husebø et al., 2015). The six stages of the cycle which form the rest of this section are shown in figure 5.

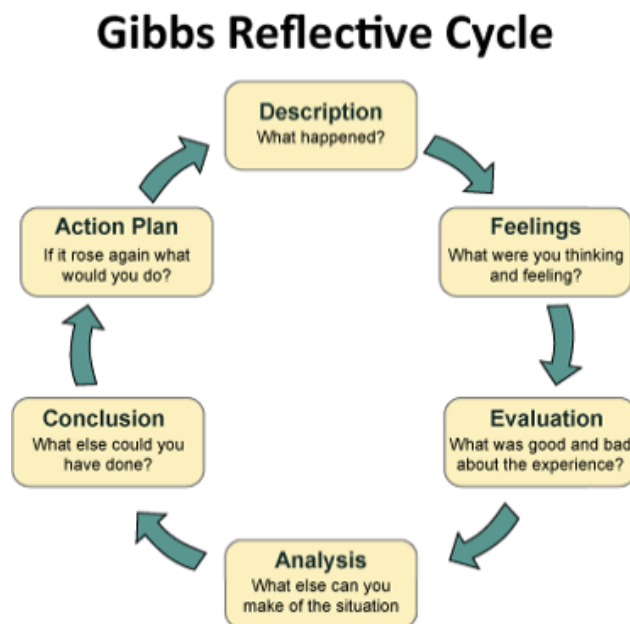


Figure 5: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Source: Gibbs (1988)

8.1 Description

The task required producing a comparative report on IKEA's international marketing strategy in India and the UK, followed by a reflective account. It included the search of valid academic and industrial sources and the organization of a comparative study based on models like PESTEL, cultural dimensions by Hofstede, marketing mix 7Ps and the Ansoff model, the assessment of ethics concerns, and making recommendations.

8.2 Feelings

Initially, I experienced a sense of curiosity and trepidation. The brand that I personally know as a consumer, which made the topic interesting, but the need to compare two structurally different markets at Level 7 depth in the first place seemed overwhelming. My confidence increased as I continued to read the literature review, both due to the richness of published studies on the Indian market entry of IKEA giving me a solid evidential foundation and because

of the analytical frameworks taught in the module giving me an analytical framework. During the drafting phase I was truly engaged in what I was reading, but towards the conclusion, I felt a slight panic remaining within the word count but still maintaining the depth in the analysis.

8.3 Evaluation

Looking back, I think the best choice I made was to organize the report in terms of frameworks at the beginning instead of addressing the narrative description. This provided the analysis with a disciplined backbone and allowed me to avert the usual trap of coming up with a descriptive brand profile as opposed to an incisive comparison. I also believe that the comparison presented visually was made using tables in the PESTEL, Hofstede and 7Ps analyses. Of lesser success was my early propensity to pile up sources without shifting them to see what was germane to me; I eventually had to eliminate a few sources that could not contribute the value of uniqueness.

8.4 Analysis

Reflecting on the reasons as to why the process went the way it did, I realise that my previous module learning on segmentation and internationalisation influenced my approach to the task. The idea of reflection-in-action by Schoen (2017) made me realize that I was actively changing my argument as I learned new information, such as how I have revamped the segment of my paper on IKEA India, where I had thought of it as market entry, to staged market development after reading the reassessment of the Uppsala model by Vahlne (2020). I also acknowledge that I did initially undervalue the ethical aspect of the assignment; I only realised the importance of marketing ethics in international settings when reading Crane et al. (2019) that it is only then that the explicit treatment of cultural relativism and stakeholder plurality is deemed valuable. It was also through the experiential learning cycle by Kolb (1984) that I came to realise my process: I was cycling between concrete experience (reading cases), reflective observation (evaluating what the cases said), abstract conceptualisation (applying frameworks) and active experimentation (testing arguments in drafts).

8.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, I learned three main lessons. To begin with, good comparative analysis requires discipline in applying frameworks; otherwise, comparative analysis rapidly degenerates into parallel description. Second, Level 7 academic writing involves one constantly doubting the sources - even an author as reputable as one may can make assertions without questioning them, and I needed to learn how to triangulate academic, industry, and organisational sources. Third, I now understand the importance of applying ethical analysis throughout the report, as

opposed to considering it a section to be added to the report; marketing decisions are ethical decisions and the most compelling analysis recognizes this fact.

8.6 Action Plan

Three of the practical changes that I will adopt in future assignments will include. First, I will create an annotated bibliography earlier on in the process to sift through sources prior to writing, rather than the waste that I had this time. Second, I will also reserve certain time to critically re-read and listen to the strength of the argument, rather than grammar and referencing. Third, I will ask fellow students to review my draft halfway, since I think that a prior external review would have helped me understand the gaps in my ethical analysis in a shorter time. On a significantly broader scale, this reflective practice has cemented my faith in lifelong learning as one of the most significant Level 7 requirements and I will continue to use Gibbs cycle as a self-directed learning tool to not only tap into academic and future work experience (Husebø et al., 2015).

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