

COMMUNICATION AND COMPETITIVE STRATEGIES IN HOME & FURNITURE RETAIL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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***Abstract:** The home and furniture retail sector has become increasingly dynamic and competitive due to evolving consumer expectations, digital transformation, and market globalization. Communication strategies and competitive positioning now play a central role in shaping brand identity, influencing purchasing behavior, and building long-term customer loyalty. This comparative study examines how leading home and furniture retailers employ communication tools and competitive strategies to differentiate their brand, enhance customer experience, and strengthen market presence.*

***Key words:** communication, brand identity, digital engagement.*

INTRODUCTION

The home and furniture retail sector has undergone profound transformation over the past two decades, reflecting shifts in consumer preferences, technological advancement, and intensifying global competition. Once dominated by traditional brick-and-mortar stores, the industry has increasingly embraced digital communication, omnichannel retailing, and experience driven marketing strategies. As consumers have become more informed, more demanding, and more aware of sustainability, retailers have been compelled to reconfigure the ways in which they position their brands, communicate value, and differentiate themselves within an increasingly saturated market [9,15].

In this context, the study of communication and competitive strategies becomes essential for understanding how leading companies such as IKEA, JYSK, and other international retailers navigate a rapidly changing environment. Contemporary home and furniture brands no longer compete solely through product offerings or price structures; rather, they compete through storytelling, brand identity, supply chain transparency, customer experience, and technological integration. Digital platforms, social media engagement, and personalized communication campaigns have become core components of strategic positioning, shaping not only consumer expectations but also purchasing behaviour [19].

The home and furniture industry is uniquely influenced by emotional, aesthetic, and functional considerations [5,7]. For this reason, the communication strategies adopted by retailers must balance rational appeals such as price, durability, and functionality with emotional elements related to lifestyle, comfort, and personal expression [14,22]. At the same time, competitive strategies increasingly integrate sustainability commitments, circular economy initiatives, and ethical sourcing, reflecting the growing importance of environmental responsibility in the eyes of consumers.

This comparative study aims to explore how major retailers in the home and furniture sector design and implement communication strategies that support competitive advantage in domestic and international markets. By examining corporate branding, customer engagement, digital communication tools, and positioning practices, the research seeks to identify recurring patterns, strategic differentiators, and emerging trends within the industry [4,20]. Furthermore, the study investigates how companies respond to competitive pressures such as market saturation, changing consumer behaviours,

technological disruption. Through a comparative lens, this research evaluates the extent to which communication strategies contribute to market performance, consumer loyalty, and long-term brand sustainability.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative, comparative case study methodology to examine the communication strategies used in the marketing of agricultural dairy products across different European contexts. The methodological design integrates multiple sources of evidence and follows a structured, theoretically grounded approach that enables an in-depth exploration of how dairy brands communicate value, quality, authenticity, and sustainability to consumers [2,8]. The study relies on multiple qualitative data sources, ensuring methodological triangulation and increasing the validity of the findings. Data were collected from: official company websites and subpages dedicated to brand philosophy, product descriptions, sustainability initiatives, and corporate communication; social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, where dairy producers present promotional content, storytelling campaigns, consumer engagement strategies, and visual branding; packaging and labeling materials, analyzed for narrative elements, trust-building strategies, origin claims, certification logos, and visual identity components; academic literature and industry reports on dairy marketing, consumer behavior, and communication in the furniture sector.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This chapter synthesizes the evidence gathered through research and connects it with theoretical insights, offering a comprehensive interpretation of how the two companies operate, compete, and communicate in the current market environment. The aim is to provide a coherent narrative that not only explains the results, but also positions them within the broader landscape of marketing, retail strategy, and organizational communication. To fully understand the communication strategies and competitive approaches of the two brands under analysis, it is essential to examine their origins and evolution over time. IKEA and JYSK, two European companies with Scandinavian roots, have become major players in the home and furniture retail industry, yet their developmental trajectories reveal distinct characteristics that shape the way they position themselves in today's market [6]. The history of each company reflects not only their operational and strategic evolution, but also the guiding philosophy that has shaped their identity across decades. From the founders' early entrepreneurial initiatives to international expansion and the consolidation of strong brands, both IKEA and JYSK have built business models inspired by core Nordic values: simplicity, functionality, efficiency, and consumer orientation [17]. Understanding the historical path of these companies provides a solid foundation for interpreting their similarities and differences. Their evolution over time largely explains their current communication strategies, marketing approaches [13], product portfolio structures, and competitive positions in global markets. Therefore, this chapter aims to highlight the major milestones in the history of IKEA and JYSK, emphasizing the key transformations that have contributed to shaping their brand identity and the success they enjoy today [9].

IKEA was established in 1943 in the small Swedish locality of Älmhult, Småland, by Ingvar Kamprad, who was only 17 years old when he launched the business. The name IKEA is derived from the initials of the founder, Ingvar Kamprad, the family farm where he was raised, Elmtaryd, and the nearby village that marked his childhood, Agunnaryd [16, 26]. During its early years, IKEA operated as a general goods retailer, offering items such

as wallets, pens, and picture frames. The company entered the furniture market in 1948, collaborating with local craftsmen to produce its first pieces. A turning point came in 1951, when IKEA published its first furniture only catalogue, followed two years later by the opening of its first showroom, allowing customers to physically interact with the products before purchasing [12]. In 1953, IKEA introduced what would become one of its most influential innovations: flat-pack, ready-to-assemble furniture. This concept drastically reduced transport and storage costs and later shaped IKEA's global business model. The company's first full-scale store opened in Älmhult in 1958. The company's international expansion began in 1963 with stores in Norway and Denmark, continuing throughout the 1970s in countries such as Switzerland, Germany, Japan, and Australia [26, 25].

From its inception, Ingvar Kamprad promoted a core philosophy providing well-designed, functional products at affordable prices without compromising quality. This principle remains central to IKEA's identity. The company's vision is anchored in the idea of democratic design, a concept that integrates five essential components: affordability, quality, functionality, aesthetic form, and sustainability. This combination forms the foundation of IKEA's enduring global success [26].

JYSK was created in 1979 by Lars Larsen in Aarhus, Denmark. At the beginning, the business operated under the name Jysk Sengetøjslager, a title chosen to clearly reflect the company's original focus primarily the sale of bed linens, as Larsen himself noted in his autobiography. For marketing and branding purposes, the name was later shortened to JYSK upon the recommendation of advertising specialists, who argued that a shorter name would be more memorable and easier to promote [28]. As the company began to expand beyond Denmark, the brand name was adapted to better align with the linguistic and cultural expectations of each new market. For example, when JYSK entered Germany, the stores were rebranded as Dänisches Bettenlager ("Danish Bed Warehouse"), a strategic decision based on the understanding that German consumers associated Danish products with high quality, while the word "Jysk" was not widely understood. Similarly, in 1991, during its expansion into Sweden, the brand adjusted its name to Jysk Bäddlager, maintaining a link to its original identity while ensuring local relevance. However, by the year 2000, Carl Erik Stubkier, one of the central figures responsible for international marketing, concluded that modifying the brand name in every country created inconsistencies and weakened global recognition [27]. Consequently, the company adopted JYSK as its universal name across all markets, consolidating its international brand identity [23].

IKEA's business model represents a sophisticated strategic architecture built around a distinctive form of cost leadership that integrates design, logistics, and retail operations. Its operational format large-format stores combining extensive showroom areas with self-service warehouses and in-house restaurants plays a central role in stimulating sales and enhancing the overall customer journey [21].



Figure 1. Ikea's logo

Source: [23].

IKEA's brand identity understood as the collective perception consumers hold about the company is deeply rooted in its overarching mission to enhance everyday life for as many people as possible. This identity is built around five core attributes, often encapsulated through the acronym ASUES, which together define the brand's distinctive character [24]. Affordability stands at the heart of IKEA's strategy, supported by continuous cost-optimization initiatives such as flat-pack design and value-driven pricing. The objective is to deliver well-designed, functional products at accessible prices without creating the impression of low quality. IKEA's Scandinavian heritage is one of its key differentiators. It is communicated through minimalist aesthetics, the signature blue-and-yellow color palette, and product names inspired by Swedish language and culture all contributing to an aura of authenticity, trust, and warmth (Figure 1.). IKEA offers a retail experience unlike that of traditional furniture stores. The customer journey is guided through a curated path resembling a creative maze of fully decorated rooms, transforming the act of shopping into an immersive and inspirational experience. By encouraging customers to assemble products themselves, IKEA fosters a sense of participation and personal achievement. The self-service format and the freedom to explore the store independently further strengthen this feeling of autonomy and involvement. Simplicity is a defining element of the IKEA aesthetic, a clean, functional design, straightforward advertising, and intuitive visual instructions reflect the principle of simplicity while maintaining elegance and broad accessibility [21, 24].

Together, these defining attributes aligned with the expectations and lifestyle values of IKEA's target audiences are consistently reflected across all brand touchpoints. This coherence reinforces IKEA's strong and unified brand image, contributing to its global recognition as a leader in affordable and thoughtful design.

JYSK's business model exemplifies a cost-oriented leadership strategy tailored to the home furnishing retail environment. The company differentiates itself through strategic specialization in essential product categories and through the creation of a dense network of smaller retail outlets that provide convenient, rapid access to everyday household items. Its compact, traditional store format is intentionally designed to streamline the shopping experience, enabling customers to quickly locate and purchase their desired products [24].



Figure 2. Jysk's logo

The JYSK logo (Figure 2.) brings together two central ideas comfort and reliability, through a simple yet highly recognizable visual composition. At the heart of the logo is a stylized white goose, a minimalist graphic element that immediately evokes the softness and coziness associated with down-filled bedding, one of the brand's core product categories [23]. This symbol communicates warmth, friendliness, and a sense of home, aligning perfectly with JYSK's focus on everyday comfort. The brand name appears in bold, geometric, and clearly defined lettering, conveying a sense of solidity,

professionalism, and trustworthiness. Beyond its visual weight, the name “JYSK” also signals the company’s Danish origins, reinforcing the brand’s Scandinavian heritage and its association with quality and practicality [28]. The background color, known as “JYSK Blue,” plays a significant role in shaping brand perception. The deep blue shade evokes feelings of calm, rest, and nighttime serenity, while the contrast with the bright white goose enhances legibility and immediate recognition. This consistent chromatic combination gives the logo an elegant, reassuring, and easily identifiable appearance. Through the interplay of these graphic, typographic, and chromatic elements, the JYSK logo succeeds in capturing the essence of the brand, a harmonious blend of familiar comfort and professional reliability.

In both companies, sustainability is not only a corporate responsibility imperative, but also a powerful element of brand positioning and communication. By embedding environmental protection, ethical practices, and long-term social commitment [1,11] into their business models, IKEA and JYSK reinforce consumer trust and differentiate themselves in an increasingly competitive home and furniture market. In this sense, sustainability becomes a key promotional asset strengthening brand reputation while responding to the growing expectations of modern, environmentally conscious consumers.

In today’s global landscape, the effects of environmental degradation are increasingly visible, prompting companies across industries to adopt responsible and sustainable business practices [10]. Within this context, IKEA has developed a comprehensive sustainability framework organized around four strategic pillars designed to minimize its environmental footprint and support long-term ecological balance. The company places strong emphasis on renewable energy, progressively shifting away from conventional energy sources. This transition aims to reduce carbon emissions significantly and contribute to a global shift toward clean, renewable power. Through reforestation programs, food-waste reduction initiatives, and the promotion of sustainable agriculture, the company actively invests in protecting and regenerating vital natural resources. These actions support biodiversity while fostering responsible land and resource management. IKEA encourages the adoption of electric mobility solutions and invests in environmentally friendly infrastructure [26]. The company also engages in humanitarian support during crises, aligning environmental considerations with social responsiveness in its logistical and construction activities. Sustainability at IKEA extends beyond environmental impact and includes a strong social commitment. Initiatives are designed to strengthen community well-being, improve working conditions, and ensure that sustainability principles are integrated across all levels of corporate operations.

Through these strategic directions, IKEA reinforces its global commitment to environmental protection, responsible resource management, and social sustainability creating long-term value for customers, employees, and future generations.

For JYSK, sustainability represents a core component of its corporate philosophy and long-term strategic development. The company views responsible business practices as essential not only for safeguarding the environment, but also for supporting communities and enhancing quality of life. This vision is articulated in its long-term sustainability strategy, “A Great Offer for Generations”, which outlines the company’s commitment to making sustainable choices accessible to consumers worldwide. As part of this strategic approach, JYSK joined the Science Based Targets initiative, using 2022 as the baseline year for aligning its climate objectives with the Paris Agreement [23]. Through this initiative, JYSK seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across its operations and supply chain while promoting positive transformation in its workforce, stakeholder relationships, and product portfolio. The company’s strategy focuses on high-impact areas such as

climate action, ethical supply chain practices, and social responsibility. Transparency plays a central role: JYSK is committed to publicly reporting its progress and maintaining open communication about the results achieved. The concept “A Great Offer for Generations” is structured around two interconnected pillars [23]:

1. A Great Offer integrating sustainability criteria into all elements of the business model, from sourcing raw materials to production, logistics, and final product delivery.
2. For Generations embracing intergenerational responsibility by implementing actions that reduce environmental and social impact, thereby contributing to a healthier planet and stronger communities.

The social media strategies of IKEA and JYSK reflect two distinct approaches shaped by their brand identities, market positioning and communication philosophies. IKEA adopts a highly consolidated global strategy rooted in inspirational storytelling, visual design culture and consumer participation [3,15]. JYSK, by contrast, embraces a more localized and operationally agile social media strategy. Rather than relying on global storytelling, the company focuses heavily on community driven content, local influencer collaborations and direct promotional activities [18]. When comparing the two companies, it becomes clear that IKEA leverages its strong global brand equity to build aspirational and design centered narratives, while JYSK prioritizes proximity, practicality and price-driven communication. IKEA’s social media presence functions as a lifestyle ecosystem, where followers are invited to explore aesthetic ideas, sustainable solutions and creative home transformations. JYSK, on the other hand, focuses on immediate value communication, localized promotions and practical demonstrations of its products, often relying on influencers and live formats to strengthen consumer trust. These differences illustrate how social media has become a strategic arena where brand philosophy, customer expectations and competitive positioning converge [18]. IKEA’s worldwide recognition allows it to invest in long-term brand building, while JYSK’s dynamic approach gives it the agility to respond quickly to local trends and consumer needs.

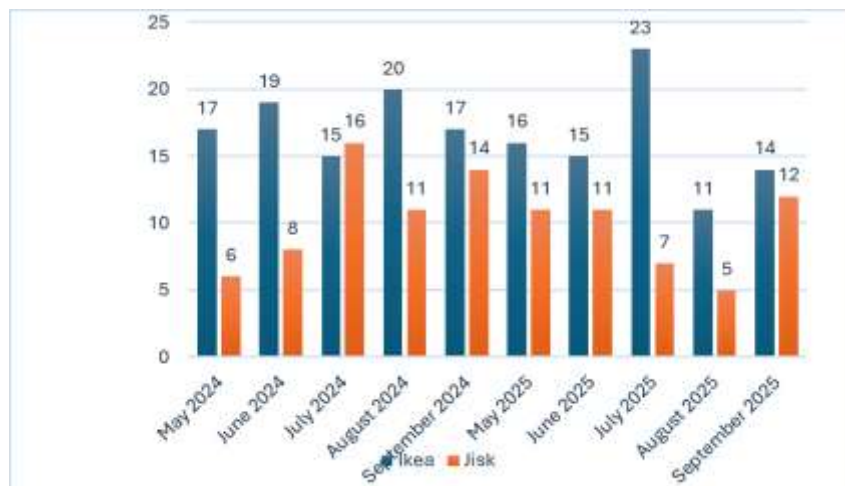


Figure 3. Instagram posts

The data presented in the Figure 3. highlights substantial differences between the Instagram posting activity of IKEA and JYSK over the analysed period (May 2024 – September 2025). Overall, IKEA consistently maintains a significantly higher volume of content, with monthly posts ranging from 14 to 23, while JYSK’s activity remains considerably lower, fluctuating between 5 and 16 posts per month.

Throughout the analysed interval, IKEA demonstrates a stable and sustained communication rhythm, with visible peaks in August 2024 (20 posts) and July 2025 (23 posts). These peaks suggest periods of intensified marketing campaigns, seasonal promotions, or launches of new product collections strategies characteristic of IKEA's visually driven and inspiration-oriented communication on social media.

In contrast, JYSK's posting activity is notably more modest and irregular. The company registers its highest level of activity in August 2024 (16 posts), but in most other months the volume remains under 12 posts, reaching a low of 5 posts in August 2025. This fluctuation suggests that JYSK relies more on targeted or campaign based communication rather than on a continuous flow of content. The reduced frequency also reflects the brand's preference for a more localised, promotion-focused digital strategy, as opposed to IKEA's global narrative approach.

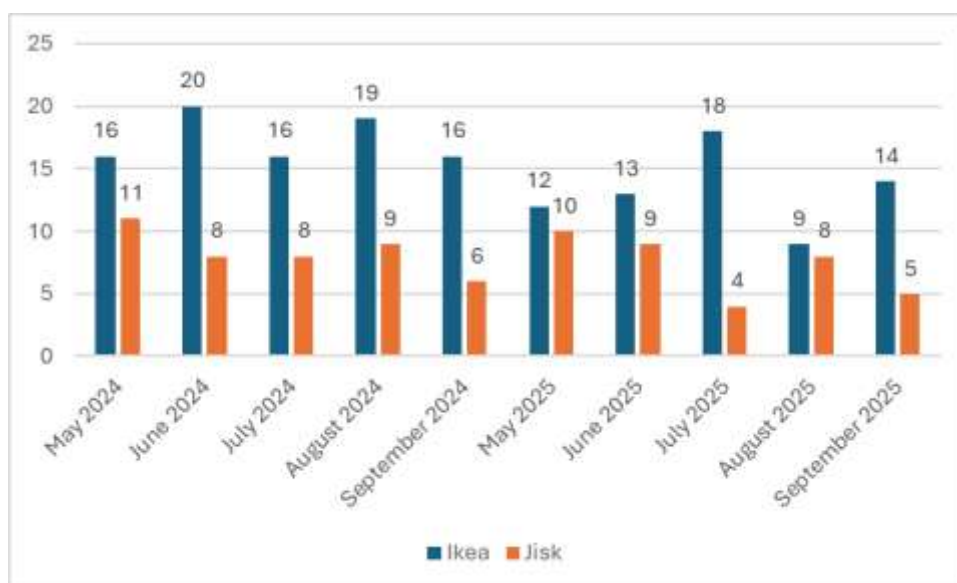


Figure 4. Facebook posts

The Figure 4. illustrates the monthly posting activity of IKEA and JYSK on their official Facebook pages over the period May 2024 – September 2025. Compared with Instagram, both companies display a more moderate but still strategic level of activity on this platform. Throughout the entire interval, IKEA consistently maintains a higher volume of posts than JYSK, reinforcing its orientation toward intensive and continuous social media communication.

IKEA's posting frequency fluctuates between 12 and 20 posts per month, with the highest activity recorded in June 2024 (20 posts) and July 2025 (18 posts). Such peaks may correspond to major promotional campaigns, product launches, international marketing events, or seasonal sales periods. The consistency of IKEA's communication highlights the brand's intent to maintain an active presence across platforms, engaging consumers through diverse content formats such as home furnishing ideas, sustainability messages, and promotional materials.

In contrast, JYSK exhibits a significantly lower posting frequency, with values generally situated between 4 and 11 posts per month. The lowest activity is observed in August 2025 (4 posts), while modest increases appear sporadically in months such as May 2024 (11 posts) and June 2025 (10 posts). The brand's more restrained approach suggests a tactical, campaign-focused strategy rather than an emphasis on continuous daily

engagement. This aligns with JYSK's positioning as a value-oriented retailer whose communication often prioritizes direct sales messages, discounts, and short-term offers.

Overall, the comparison shows that both companies effectively use social media, but in ways that mirror their broader strategic identities: IKEA as a global design authority with a strong emotional appeal, and JYSK as an accessible value retailer committed to practical solutions and local consumer engagement. This duality highlights the diversity of competitive strategies in the home and furniture retail sector and provides a valuable foundation for understanding how digital communication influences brand perception, customer loyalty and market performance.

CONCLUSIONS

The comparative analysis of IKEA and JYSK highlights two distinct yet complementary strategic models within the home and furniture retail industry. Although both companies share Scandinavian origins and operate in the same global sector, their approaches to branding, communication, sustainability, and digital engagement reflect different priorities and competitive philosophies.

IKEA emerges as a complex, innovation driven retailer whose strategy is anchored in a holistic value proposition. The company successfully integrates democratic design, extensive product diversification, large format experiential stores, and an assertive digital presence. Its communication strategy is built on emotional narratives, sustainability commitments, and the consistent reinforcement of a global brand identity. The analysis of social media activity confirms this orientation: IKEA maintains high posting frequency, visually curated content, and continuous interaction with its community. This integrated communication style supports the company's long-term objective of improving everyday life for consumers while consolidating a strong global footprint.

JYSK, in contrast, adopts a more focused and efficiency-oriented model. Its strategy centers on affordability, a streamlined product assortment, and proximity-based retail expansion, reflected in smaller store formats and a straightforward commercial message. The brand's identity leverages functional Scandinavian design, trustworthiness, and accessibility. On social media, JYSK demonstrates a more conservative communication rhythm, with fewer posts and a stronger emphasis on promotions, practical information, and seasonal campaigns. While less immersive than IKEA's storytelling, this pragmatic style aligns with JYSK's positioning as a value driven retailer serving price-sensitive customers.

Regarding sustainability, both companies place growing emphasis on environmental responsibility, albeit with different intensities and directions. IKEA pursues a broad sustainability agenda integrated deeply into its operations, supply chains, and brand messaging, focusing on renewable energy, resource efficiency, and circularity. JYSK approaches sustainability strategically as well, centered on transparency, responsible sourcing, and the long-term "A Great Offer for Generations" framework, signaling commitment to ethical practices and intergenerational responsibility. These initiatives demonstrate that sustainability has become not only a corporate obligation but also a differentiating factor in competitive retail markets.

Overall, the study shows that IKEA and JYSK exemplify two successful strategic pathways: one based on emotional engagement, innovation, and brand immersion, and the other on simplicity, efficiency, and value optimization. Their differences illustrate the diversity of competitive strategies that can thrive within the same sector, while their similarities reveal the importance of Scandinavian design principles, consumer-centric

practices, and sustainability-oriented communication in shaping contemporary home & furniture retail.

The findings of this comparative study offer valuable insights into how global retail brands construct and communicate their identity, respond to evolving consumer expectations, and structure their competitive advantages. In an increasingly digital and sustainability-aware marketplace, the strategic choices made by IKEA and JYSK will continue to define their performance, market relevance, and ability to adapt to future transformations in the retail landscape.

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