

Exploring the Impact of Cultural Differences on IKEA's Marketing  
Strategies in Denmark and Romania: A Comparative Study.

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the importance of being aware of cultural differences when entering a different market, and moreover when it comes to the creation of the marketing mix. This is done through an investigation of Danish and Romanian culture, with the purpose of uncovering and understanding how these cultures are different. An investigation of IKEA's marketing mix, in both Denmark and Romania, is then carried out with the purpose of uncovering how they are different. The findings of both the cultural analysis and the marketing mix analysis are then compared with the purpose of understanding whether the differences in marketing mix can be explained by the differences in culture. This allowed for a clearer understanding of how influential cultural differences have been on the marketing strategy chosen by IKEA, which in turn helped solidify how important it is to be aware of cultural differences when entering a new market and when constructing the marketing mix.

An interpretive research design was adopted to accomplish the objectives of this thesis, which also included the ontological perspective of post-positivism. The method known as thematic analysis was utilized throughout the project in a deductive manner, which allowed for the uncovering of data that fit directly within preexisting ideas based on theory. Differentiating comparative analysis was also used as a method throughout the thesis, which made it possible to compare findings with the purpose of uncovering differences. The two concepts, standardization and adaptation, were included as well, making it possible to categorize which elements of IKEA's marketing mix were similar, and thus standardized, and which were different, meaning adapted.

The cultural analysis showed that Danish and Romanian cultures are very different across almost all of the dimensions that were considered. The investigation of IKEA's marketing mix in Denmark and Romania also showed a lot of differences, as well as a few similarities. The products sold in the two countries, and the price they are given, seemed to be quite standardized as the same products could be found in both countries with a price that was as low as possible. However, the investigation of the food sold by IKEA in the two countries, showed that the menus are very adapted and only a select few food items could be found in both countries. Moreover, the way in which IKEA packages their products and distributes them to the two countries was found to be standardized as well, while the distribution of products from the physical stores to the customers was adapted. Our analysis also showed that IKEA has different approaches to the way in which they promote themselves and their products on Instagram.

In conclusion, the differences in marketing mix that were uncovered in the thesis, can all be explained by the cultural differences that were also uncovered. We can therefore conclude that cultural differences matter when it comes to creating a marketing mix, as even a giant furniture store such as IKEA has been influenced by said differences, which ultimately led to them having a mixed approach where certain elements were standardized while the majority of the elements were adapted to fit each specific culture.

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## 1. Introduction

With the on-going globalisation of markets that happens in our world, creating proper marketing strategies that bring success could potentially be a challenge for a company that wants to expand internationally. Throughout time, many companies have used marketing strategies in order to experience growth and become successful. Along with this growth come new and exciting opportunities. These opportunities can also appear in different countries around the globe, as companies choose to focus and invest in their own internationalization<sup>1</sup>.

Global marketing requires a few steps: planning, producing, placing, and promoting products or services that a company has to offer, worldwide. An example of a company that achieved success in the global market is Red Bull, an Australian drinks company. Red Bull has managed to build such an efficient marketing strategy, that many people around the world (for example: Germans, Americans, and British people) think that Red Bull is a local brand.<sup>2</sup>

Another company that has achieved success globally is KFC (an American fast-food restaurant), through creating and implementing smart strategies. For example, in Japan, KFC has managed to associate their food with Christmas.<sup>3</sup> These companies prove that in order to have an efficient and successful marketing strategy, it is crucial that a company reflects and takes into serious consideration the importance of cultural values and traditions when targeting a new market. It is safe to say that it is important for companies that want to expand globally to have a clear understanding of the culture of the people that they are going to be selling their products/services to, in order to achieve financial success in new geographical areas.

This thesis has its focus on the furniture and home-goods giant corporation “IKEA”, more specifically the marketing strategy that they have created in Denmark and Romania. The curiosity and determination to investigate how exactly cultural differences play a role in the process of creating effective marketing strategies that companies such as IKEA have to go through, has led to creating the following problem statement: *"How have cultural differences influenced IKEA's marketing strategy, if at all, when comparing IKEA Denmark and IKEA Romania?"*

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<sup>1</sup>Henrik Roth, “Globalization – its meaning in marketing & branding”, *Neuroflash* (blog), January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://neuroflash.com/blog/globalization-meaning-in-marketing-branding/>

<sup>2</sup> Market Business News, *what is global marketing? Definition, meaning and examples*, Financial Glossary, last accessed April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://marketbusinessnews.com/financial-glossary/global-marketing/>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate if and how the cultural differences, that are present between Denmark and Romania, influence IKEA's marketing strategy. It is interesting to explore how multinational companies build their marketing strategies around different cultural contexts with the purpose of achieving success in selling their products to their target consumers. The findings of this thesis can be helpful for other companies that want to expand globally, as this thesis can highlight the challenges that companies should be aware of when entering a new market, as well as the extremely intricate relationship between culture and marketing strategy.

When assessing the existing body of knowledge, it is clear that there is a complex connection between culture and marketing strategy, and the literature clearly shows the importance of cultural differences in connection to marketing. However, most of the literature that has a similar topic/research purpose to this thesis, focuses on comparing marketing strategies in a European country (such as Finland) and China.<sup>4</sup> Here is where this thesis will fill a gap in the field, as the focus here is on two European countries (Denmark and Romania). It is interesting to see if differences still exist when comparing two countries that are not as drastically apart as two countries from two different continents. The distance from Romania to Denmark is 1,571 kilometres, or about two hours by plane (air travel distance).<sup>5</sup> This is fairly less than the distance between Finland and China, which is almost 6000 km.<sup>6</sup>

No literature regarding marketing strategy in connection to culture and its potential differences in Romania and Denmark has been found. In addition, these two countries have been specifically chosen because of our nationalities, one of us being Danish and the other Romanian. Having a national and personal background for each country is important, as it allows us to avoid a language barrier when dealing with the data, and it also means that we would each have some knowledge about our respective cultures.

It is important to be aware that culture is a "fuzzy" concept that is known for creating definitional, conceptual and operational challenges for researchers. However, we can argue that Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework, which is one of the theoretical frameworks used in this thesis, is an efficient and simple way of integrating culture into marketing studies. After all, Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been more and more supported

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<sup>4</sup> Roy Debroto, "Impact of Consumer Market Preferences on Expansion Strategies – Strategies used by IKEA in the International Market", Centria University of Applied Challenges, International Business Management, April 2020, 2.

<sup>5</sup>DistanceFromTo, "Distance from Denmark to Romania", accessed May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.distancefromto.net/distance-from-denmark-to-romania>

<sup>6</sup>DistanceFromTo, "Distance from China to Finland", accessed May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.distancefromto.net/distance-from-china-to-finland>

throughout the years, because they capture cross-country differences.<sup>7</sup> Hofstede's definition of culture is what guides our understanding of culture throughout this thesis: *"The programming of the human mind by which one group of people distinguishes itself from another group."*<sup>8</sup> Hofstede's six cultural dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity, long-term orientation, and indulgence) will be used in this thesis to conduct a cultural analysis of Denmark and Romania based on the cultural dimension scores that Hofstede offers for each country. This is useful in uncovering any cultural differences that might exist between the two countries based on Hofstede's study.<sup>9</sup>

The second theoretical framework that is used in this thesis is the 4P's marketing mix offered by McCarthy, which comprises "Product", "Price", "Place" and "Promotion".<sup>10</sup> This framework is extremely useful, as it allows us to understand and analyse the elements that make up IKEA's marketing strategy. Namely, the analysis of "Product" will show whether or not IKEA sells the same products in Denmark as well as Romania, or if they are different; "Price" will show the differences in prices for the products in both countries, if there are any; "Place" will show the available ways of distributing the products in both countries, as well as other place-related instruments and if they are different or the same in both countries; and lastly, analysing "Promotion" will show if IKEA promotes their products differently, according to each culture, or in the same ways.

In order to successfully answer the problem statement mentioned above, the methods that are used in this thesis are: thematic analysis and comparative analysis. Thematic analysis will be used in connection to the 4P's marketing mix, to identify key themes for each of the four P's. When it comes to analysing the "Product" element, the data will come solely from IKEA's main web sites that they have for each country. Same goes for the "Price" and "Place" elements. However, the "Promotion" element will be analysed through focusing on IKEA's Instagram pages for each country, which is a social media platform.

More specifically, thematic analysis will be conducted with a deductive approach. This means that the analysis is conducted through creating preconceived themes based on

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<sup>7</sup>Ana Maria Soares, MinoFarhangmehr, Aviv Shoham, "Hofstede's dimensions of culture in international marketing studies", *Journal of Business research* 60 (2007), Science Direct, 283

<sup>8</sup>Hofstede Insights, "What do we mean by "culture"?" November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://news.hofstede-insights.com/news/what-do-we-mean-by-culture>

<sup>9</sup>Isabel Gallego-Álvarez and María Consuelo Pucheta-Martínez, "Hofstede's cultural dimensions and R&D intensity as an innovation strategy: a view from different institutional contexts", *Eurasian Business Review* (2021) 11:191–220, 195. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40821-020-00168-4>

<sup>10</sup>Chai Lee Goi, A review of Marketing Mix: 4P's or more?, *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2. [www.ccsenet.org/journal.html](http://www.ccsenet.org/journal.html)

theory or existing knowledge. This will allow for a clear and systematic analysis of the data, where we can ensure that the chosen data is relevant for our theories and ultimately for answering the problem statement.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, differentiating comparative analysis will allow for comparing in detail the potential differences uncovered through the thematic analysis, as well as the potential differences found in the cultural analysis conducted with Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework, and create a connection through the thematic and cultural analyses which will allow to explain why differences might exist in IKEA's marketing strategy in each country.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, two central concepts are used throughout this thesis: standardisation and adaptation. It is useful to include these concepts because they can be helpful in creating a better understanding of whether or not IKEA has changed any elements of their marketing strategy, which would mean that IKEA uses the adaptation strategy, or whether IKEA has decided to use the same marketing strategy in both countries, which would be considered standardization.<sup>13</sup>

Towards the ending of the thesis, the discussion section will present and compare all of the findings. This is where the comparative analysis comes into play, as in this section, all of the connections between the findings from the cultural analysis and the marketing strategies will be made to explain and show the potential differences between IKEA's marketing strategy in each country. The thesis will end with a conclusion that will clearly explain the findings of this study, and the answer to the problem statement.

## 2. Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to investigate the existing body of knowledge on the importance of cultural differences and their influence on the marketing strategies that a company uses depending on where in the world they are located, and inevitably, the culture of the people that they are trying to sell their product to. Key themes and debates in the literature regarding business, marketing and management will be identified and discussed. In-

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<sup>11</sup> Gareth Terry, Nikki Hayfield, Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, "Thematic Analysis" in *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, edited by Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton Rogers, 2nd Edition, (SAGE: California, 2017), 22

<sup>12</sup>Christopher G. Pickvance, "Four varieties of comparative analysis." *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 16, (2001): 11. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011533211521>

<sup>13</sup>Lukasz Sramkowski, "Marketing Mix: the Standardization vs Adaptation Dilemma", *ExportPlanning*, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021. <https://www.exportplanning.com/en/magazine/article/2021/03/17/marketing-mix-the-standardization-vs-adaptation-dilemma/>

depth research was carried out with the use of academic databases such as AAU library and Google scholar, using key phrases such as “marketing strategy and culture”, “cultural differences in marketing”, and “cultural influences on marketing strategies”, to give some examples.

The existing research on the topic of culture in connection to marketing strategy clearly shows the importance of cultural differences (differences in values, traditions, etc) and the influence that this has on companies when they decide to enter a new market. Researchers such as Bill Merrilees et al. (2007) discuss the crucial role that culture holds when it comes to shaping consumer behavior and how it determines the effectiveness of marketing in retail. Their study shows that companies that pay more attention to cultural differences when marketing their product have a better chance at succeeding and growing in different markets globally, while those who do not pay mind to the importance of cultural differences will fail.<sup>14</sup>

Other researchers also support these findings. Mishra et al. found that cultural differences play an extremely important role when it comes to the preferences and consumer behavior of Indian customers, as their work examines the cultural challenges that IKEA faces in the Indian market. Their study showed that because of their culture, Indian customers place their focus on the price of a product<sup>15</sup> more than the quality of it, they do not prioritize home furnishing, even less the “do it yourself” brand of IKEA and that they do not appreciate the simplicity of IKEA furniture, as their culture is all about traditional patterns and handcrafted furniture.<sup>16</sup> All of this shows how crucial it is for a company to invest in understanding cultural values, differences in traditions, lifestyles and any other special customs a culture might have when entering a new market.

This key theme in the literature is also found in the work of Risko and Wiwczarowski. In their work, the authors discuss the importance of changing the marketing strategy for companies when they decide to enter new markets. The authors stress how important it is for companies to take into consideration cultural differences among other factors if they wish to succeed in international markets.<sup>17</sup> The authors suggest that marketing strategies need to

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<sup>14</sup> Bill Merrilees, Brent McKenzie and Dale Miller, “Culture and marketing strategy in discount retailing”, *Journal of Business Research* 60 (2007), 220

<sup>15</sup> R. K. Mishra, A. Sridhar Raj and MeherKaruna, “IKEA, Furnishing the Indian Homes: The Challenges of Culture, Competition and Channel”, *IPE Journal of Management*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 98.

<sup>16</sup> R. K. Mishra, A. Sridhar Raj and MeherKaruna, “IKEA, Furnishing the Indian Homes: The Challenges of Culture, Competition and Channel”, *IPE Journal of Management*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 99.

<sup>17</sup> TundeCsaponeRisko and Troy Wiwczarowski, “From Domestic Marketing through International Marketing to Intercultural Marketing”, *Economic Affairs*, 2014, 59(3), 442 DOI 10.5958/0976-4666.2014.00011.4

evolve from domestic to international, to intercultural to ensure a company's success on a global level. The solution offered is creating intercultural marketing strategies which allow for companies to break down the cultural barriers between them and the customers and achieve success globally.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the importance of culture in marketing is also discussed in the work of Lukáš Copuš and Karol Čarnogursky. Their work on intercultural marketing suggests that cultural differences can highly impact how effective a marketing communication strategy is. The authors discuss the important role that culture plays in connection to marketing strategies, discussing how different cultures can be, from values to attitudes to different styles of communication. All of these differences influence and determine the effectiveness of a marketing strategy.<sup>19</sup> The authors suggest that understanding and adapting to these cultural differences is essential in order to create an effective communication strategy that will guarantee success for a company in the global market.<sup>20</sup>

Petersen, Kushwaha and Kumar add to the literature through their work surrounding the role of national culture on marketing communication strategies and consumer financial decision making. The authors place marketing communication strategies into two categories: rational and emotional. They explain how rational strategies are better suited for cultures that value individualism, and emotional strategies are better suited for cultures that value collectivism. This explains why it is important that a company is knowledgeable about the culture that they are trying to target.<sup>21</sup> The authors discuss the importance of national culture for marketing communication strategies, as national culture directly influences consumers' values, attitudes and beliefs, all of which directly influence customers' financial decision making. This is why it is so important that companies understand the cultural background of the customers that they are trying to target, in order to develop effective marketing strategies that bring success to the company.<sup>22</sup>

Reo Song et al. also stress the importance of culture in relation to marketing strategies in their work regarding the role of culture in product evaluations. The authors of this article come to the conclusion that cultural differences can have an enormous impact on how

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 444

<sup>19</sup> Lukáš Copuš and Karol Čarnogursky, "Intercultural Marketing: Culture and its Influence on the efficiency of Facebook Marketing Communication", *Management & Marketing. Challenges for the Knowledge Society*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 191. DOI: 10.1515/mmcks-2017-0012

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 205

<sup>21</sup> J. Andrew Petersen, Tarun Kushwaha and V. Kumar, "Marketing Communication Strategies and Consumer Financial Decision Making: The role of National Culture", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 79, January 2015, 60.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 59-60

customers evaluate a certain product. The authors discuss the role of cultural values (collectivism, individualism, etc) in the process involving consumers' evaluation of a product. They find that in cultures deemed collectivistic, products that encourage group cohesion and social harmony can be valued to a greater extent by said culture, while the same products might not have the same effect on individualistic cultures, as they tend to value products that encourage independence and personal success.<sup>23</sup>

It is safe to say that Reo Song et al. also support the key theme in the literature surrounding the fact that cultural differences when it comes to identity, values, and so on, can highly impact consumers' perceptions and behaviour towards a product, and that understanding and taking these differences into consideration is of great importance when a company develops a marketing strategy.

Other authors that support the argument about the importance of cultural differences in connection to marketing strategies are Michael R. Czinkota and Ilkka A. Ronkainen. In their book titled "Global business: Positioning ventures ahead", they stress how important it is for companies to understand the local culture of the consumers that they are trying to target, saying that: "This is just as important in the negotiation process as it is with the advertising theme, product variations, or anything else. Failure to understand the local culture and to adjust a negotiation style accordingly can lead to negotiation failures."<sup>24</sup> The authors urge companies that want to expand globally, to carefully tailor their marketing approach taking into consideration the cultural contexts. They stress how essential it is for companies to learn about the culture of the people that they want to target, as well as acknowledge the existing differences in language and societal structures.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, an article titled "Comparative International Management: Comparing cultures in IKEA (IKEA Sweden vs. IKEA China) by Karim Ashmawy et al. offers an insight into the importance of cultural differences and how these cultural differences can have an impact on the way IKEA operates in these different countries.<sup>26</sup> Ashmawy discusses the

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<sup>23</sup>Reo Song, Sangkil Moon, Haipeng (Allan) Chen and Mark B. Houston, "When marketing strategy meets culture: the role of culture in product evaluations", Academy of marketing science, 2017, 390. DOI 10.1007/s11747-017-0525-x

<sup>24</sup>Michael R. Czinkota and Ilkka A. Ronkainen, "Global business: Positioning ventures ahead", London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, Accessed March 13, 2023, page 147, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>25</sup>Michael R. Czinkota and Ilkka A. Ronkainen, "Global business: Positioning ventures ahead", London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2010, Accessed March 13, 2023, page 36, ProQuest Ebook Central.

<sup>26</sup> Karim Ashmawy, "Comparative International Management: Comparing cultures in IKEA (IKEA Sweden vs. IKEA China), The British University in Egypt, accessed March 14<sup>th</sup> 2023, ResearchGate

importance of understanding cultural differences when it comes to managing employees<sup>27</sup>, communicating effectively cross-culturally<sup>28</sup>, as well as the impact of these cultural differences on the leadership style of a company such as IKEA.<sup>29</sup>

In this article, Ashmawy presents how cultural differences can highly impact the management and strategies of an international company such as IKEA, as well as offers proof that companies can in fact change and adapt their values and strategies while taking into consideration the culture that they want to target, which leads to effective strategies that bring success, as it happened in IKEA's case.<sup>30</sup> Ashmawy comes to the conclusion that IKEA put in great efforts to understand and adapt to the Chinese culture, as IKEA clearly adapted its marketing strategies and its products to appeal to the Chinese market.<sup>31</sup>

Lastly, Roy Debobroto also investigated IKEA's global marketing strategies and how they are changed based on the market and consumers that are being targeted. In this case, Debobroto writes about IKEA's marketing strategy in China and Finland.<sup>32</sup> He sustains the fact that it is crucial that multinational companies make efforts to analyze the cultural differences and preferences of the market that they are entering, since each market has different values.<sup>33</sup> Debobroto writes about IKEA's challenges when entering the Chinese market, and how they were forced to change their marketing strategy in order to succeed in China. One of these challenges was the fact that Chinese people believed that IKEA's concept was not aligning with their social and traditional norms.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, to Ashmawy, Debobroto's findings also show that IKEA, despite the challenges, has made great efforts to adapt their products and marketing strategy to suit the Chinese culture and their values.<sup>35</sup>

In conclusion, all of these nine different papers that were presented and discussed in this literature review support and affirm the undeniable importance of considering cultural differences as a company when entering a new market. When we talk about cultural differences, we mean: language, traditions, social etiquette, practices and so on. These are

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<sup>27</sup> Karim Ashmawy, "Comparative International Management: Comparing cultures in IKEA (IKEA Sweden vs. IKEA China), The British University in Egypt, accessed March 14<sup>th</sup> 2023, ResearchGate, 15.

<sup>28</sup> Karim Ashmawy, "Comparative International Management: Comparing cultures in IKEA (IKEA Sweden vs. IKEA China), The British University in Egypt, accessed March 14<sup>th</sup> 2023, ResearchGate, 24.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 26

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 33

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 21-22

<sup>32</sup> Roy Debobroto, "Impact of Consumer Market Preferences on Expansion Strategies – Strategies used by IKEA in the International Market", Centria University of Applied Challenges, International Business Management, April 2020, 2.

[https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/334652/Roy\\_Debobroto.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y#page9](https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/334652/Roy_Debobroto.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y#page9)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 13

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 18

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 36

some of the visible cultural differences. However, when we talk about cultural differences, we also talk about the hidden parts, such as: values, assumptions and beliefs.<sup>36</sup> All of these authors have proved through their works that cultural challenges can be overcome if a company puts in the efforts to understand and adapt to the cultures that they are trying to target. Making culturally intelligent decisions as a company when implementing marketing strategies can undoubtedly lead to achieving success on a global scale.

After assessing all of these different papers that we discussed above, we uncovered that there is a clear lack of literature regarding IKEA's marketing strategy in Romania, and how the different cultural values, traditions and other differences that culture brings along could potentially cause IKEA to adapt/change their marketing strategy in order to become successful in this new market. This gap is the reason why we have decided to focus on comparing a Nordic country such as Denmark, and a totally different country (culturally speaking), Romania. In addition, we have not found any literature about this on a smaller geographical scale. For example, we have come across papers focusing on comparing IKEA's marketing strategy in Sweden and China, but no comparison between two countries that are not so geographically distant from each other has been found. Hence, this is the gap that we will fill in the field, through this thesis.

### 3. Theory

The following sections will deal with the theories chosen for this thesis, namely the 4P's marketing mix and Hofstede's cultural dimensions. These sections will serve as clarification and presentation of the two theories and what they consist of, while also discussing the criticisms that each theory has faced – in an attempt to provide more transparency. This means that each of the 4P's will be explained and clarified to establish one shared understanding of them for this thesis. The same goes for Hofstede's cultural dimensions, as all six of them will also be presented and clarified with the same purpose of creating one shared understanding of them. A clarification of the concept of culture will precede the presentation of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, as that will help establish what we, the researchers, understand by culture.

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<sup>36</sup> Felicity Menzies, "Nine Cultural Value Differences You Need to Know", include-empower.com, last accessed april 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://cultureplusconsulting.com/2015/06/23/nine-cultural-value-differences-you-need-to-know/>

### 3.1 The 4P's marketing mix

Marketing mix, or the “4P’s”, is a conceptual framework offered by McCarthy (1964) as a way to identify the decisions made by managers in the process of designing their marketing strategy for their products and services to appeal to the needs of the consumers that they want to target. The tools that the marketing mix offers can be of great use in developing both long-term and short-term strategies.<sup>37</sup> The term “marketing mix” was first used by Neil H. Borden (1965) after being inspired by Culliton’s way of describing a business executive as a “mixer of ingredients”.<sup>38</sup> It is believed that the Marketing Mix is the most indispensable concept of marketing, and it is defined as: “a set of controllable marketing tools used by a company for creating a desired response in the targeted market.”<sup>39</sup>

Originally, the marketing mix developed by Borden included twelve elements: product planning; pricing; branding; channels of distribution; personal selling; advertising; promotions; packaging; display; servicing; physical handling; and fact finding and analysis.<sup>40</sup> However, McCarthy took the twelve elements given by Borden and grouped them into only four elements (the 4P’s): Product, Price, Promotion, and Place.<sup>41</sup>

Under each of these elements, there are several marketing decisions. When it comes to “Product”, some of the marketing decisions that fit here would be: packaging, value, design, quality and branding. When it comes to “Price”, some marketing decisions would be in regards to: retail, peer to peer, direct sales, internet and so on. Under “Promotion”, some marketing decisions would be: strategies, skimming and psychological. Lastly, when it comes to the element named “Place”, some marketing decisions would be: special offers, advertising, joint ventures, competition and so on.<sup>42</sup>

Following McCarthy’s regrouping of the 12 elements into the original 4P’s, numerous researchers have offered new P’s to be added to the marketing mix. Judd (1987) offers a fifth

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<sup>37</sup> Chai Lee Goi, “A review of Marketing Mix: 4P’s or more?”, *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2. [www.ccsenet.org/journal.html](http://www.ccsenet.org/journal.html)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>39</sup> Muhammad Tariq Khan, “The Concept of ‘Marketing Mix’ and its Elements (A Conceptual Review Paper)”, *International Journal of Information, Business and Management* 6, no. 2 (2014): 95. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/concept-marketing-mix-elements-conceptualreview/docview/1511120790/se-2?accountid=8144>

<sup>40</sup> Chai Lee Goi, “A review of Marketing Mix: 4P’s or more?”, *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 3. [www.ccsenet.org/journal.html](http://www.ccsenet.org/journal.html)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Meera Singh, “Marketing Mix of 4P’s for Competitive Advantage”, *Journal of Business and Management*, vol. 3, Issue 6, 40 [www.iosrjournals.org](http://www.iosrjournals.org)

P, namely “People” as an addition to the marketing mix. Booms and Bitner (1980) also add three extra P’s to McCarthy’s original 4P’s: Participants, Physical evidence, and Process. Baumgartner (1991) offers the idea of 15P’s, and many other researchers proposed their own variant over the years.<sup>43</sup> However, McCarthy’s original 4P’s will be used throughout this thesis.

### 3.1.1 Product

The P named “Product” can be understood as a physical good or service that a company has to offer to customers in the market that they choose. In order to gain a better understanding, a definition will be provided. Hence, “Product” can be defined as: “something or anything that can be offered to the customers for attention, acquisition, or consumption and satisfies some want or need”.<sup>44</sup> This means that the product offered can take several forms: physical (objects), services, places, ideas, organizations, and others. To ensure success and efficiency when trying to sell a product, marketers need to take a few steps. First, a marketer needs to focus on building an “actual product” around what is called the “core product”, and lastly, build an “augmented product” around both the “actual product” and the “core product”.<sup>45</sup>

The “actual product” can be understood as the features that a product has; the packaging of the product, the quality level of the product, as well as its design and brand name. All of these attributes are carefully chosen and combined to ensure that the core benefits of the product are delivered to the customers. Furthermore, “core product” can be understood as the core benefits and problem-solving attributes that a product has, and that customers can benefit from once they purchase a certain product.<sup>46</sup>

Last but not least, “augmented product” refers to the extra benefits and services that come with the actual product and the core product, for example: installation services, guarantees and so on.<sup>47</sup> If we take a look at IKEA’s products, an example of an “actual product” can be a closet. The “core product” of the closet is the benefit that it brings for a customer. In this case, once a customer buys the IKEA closet, they now have a storage space

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<sup>43</sup> Chai Lee Goi, A review of Marketing Mix: 4P’s or more?, International Journal of Marketing Studies, vol. 1, no. 1, 3. [www.ccsenet.org/journal.html](http://www.ccsenet.org/journal.html)

<sup>44</sup> Muhammad Tariq Khan, “The Concept of ‘Marketing Mix’ and its Elements (A Conceptual Review Paper)”, International Journal of Information, Business and Management 6, no. 2 (2014): 98. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/concept-marketing-mix-elements-conceptualreview/docview/1511120790/se-2?accountid=8144>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 98

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 99

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 99

for their clothes. The “augmented product” in this case would be the installation services that IKEA offers for the customers, as well as potential guarantees if the closet has any defects.

The product is an extremely important part of the marketing mix strategy a company has, because the product can determine whether or not the company will have success in the marketplace. When it comes to creating a product that a company wants to sell, the company has the opportunity to create said product in a unique way, giving it for example a unique design, which would allow the product to attract customers’ attention in a market full of competitors.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.1.2 Price

The price of a product or a service is considered an essential factor in the marketing mix strategy of a company. According to Virvilaite et al., the price that a company sets for a certain product or service is what determines customer’s satisfaction. The needs of each individual customer are different, and these differences in needs determine the price that a customer is willing to pay for obtaining a certain product. The P named “Price” can be defined as: “the amount of money charged for a product or service, or the total values that consumers exchange for the benefits of having or using the product or service.”<sup>49</sup> This element of the marketing mix involves everything that is price related about a product or service, for example: methods of payment, discounts for products/services, credit terms and so on.<sup>50</sup>

Price can be considered the most essential factor of the marketing mix when we are talking about consumer’s choice. It is also important to note that “Price” is the only element of the marketing mix that needs to be set in connection to the other three P’s of McCarthy’s 4P framework. Price is the only element of the marketing mix that generates income for a company, given that the “product”, “place” and “promotion” elements require financial investments from a company.<sup>51</sup> A company is forced to invest in the designing process of their product, the distribution process of their product, and the promotional process of the product. The “Price” element is in charge of supporting all of these elements of the marketing

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 99

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 99

<sup>50</sup> Walter van Waterschoot & Thomas Foscht, “Marketing theory: A student text”, (London: SAGE, 2010), Chapter: “The Marketing Mix – a Helicopter View”, 10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446280096.n9>

<sup>51</sup> Muhammad Tariq Khan, “The Concept of ‘Marketing Mix’ and its Elements (A Conceptual Review Paper)”, *International Journal of Information, Business and Management* 6, no. 2 (2014): 99. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/concept-marketing-mix-elements-conceptualreview/docview/1511120790/se-2?accountid=8144>

mix that do not bring any income to a company. It is extremely important that a company chooses the price of their product or service carefully, as having a price that is considered too low or too high by the customers can be detrimental to the success of selling that product or service and generating income.<sup>52</sup>

Studies have shown that customers tend to buy products based on price before taking into consideration any other attribute that a product may have. According to Chung and Shin, negative price perception resulted in more than half of the customers changing their minds about buying a product. This is why it is essential that companies carefully manage their customers' price perceptions when they try to sell a product.<sup>53</sup>

### 3.1.3 Place

The element named "Place", as defined by Armstrong and Kotler, is: "a set of interdependent organizations that caters to the process of making a product available to the consumers."<sup>54</sup> "Place" can be understood as a company's means of distributing their product or service to the customers. It is important that a company effectively uses marketing channels to distribute their products, such as retailers or wholesalers. It is essential that a company has an effective distribution system in order to achieve financial gain.<sup>55</sup>

The "Place" element of the marketing mix comprises all place-related instruments, for example: the distribution channels that a company chooses, the coverage of existing outlets, or the location of outlets.<sup>56</sup> As the name suggests, this is all about where customers can go and buy a product. They can either go in a physical store, or they can have the option to purchase products through an app or a website, or both. For example, when it comes to IKEA, it is possible for customers to purchase products through physical stores, but also on their website.

There are certain companies that have the possibility to own the necessary space for selling their products physically, or that have the necessary presence on the internet to make it easier for their products to reach the customer. However, some companies have to work

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 99

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 100

<sup>54</sup> Muhammad Tariq Khan, "The Concept of 'Marketing Mix' and its Elements (A Conceptual Review Paper)", *International Journal of Information, Business and Management* 6, no. 2 (2014): 102.

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/concept-marketing-mix-elements-conceptualreview/docview/1511120790/se-2?accountid=8144>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Walter van Waterschoot & Thomas Foscht, "Marketing theory: A student text", (London: SAGE, 2010), Chapter: "The Marketing Mix – a Helicopter View", 10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446280096.n9>

with “middlemen” in order to distribute their products, as they need help with storage, sales and location. When it comes to the “Place” element, here is where companies need to make decisions regarding their distribution chain, and if intermediaries are needed. The decision-making process would also include the logistics behind delivering a product to the buyer, and this includes the storage and delivery of the product.<sup>57</sup>

### 3.1.4 Promotion

The “Promotion” element of the marketing mix can be defined as: “sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing that helps to make potential customers aware of the many choices available regarding products and services.”<sup>58</sup> It is essential that a company effectively communicates the benefits that their product or service has to offer to customers, as this will determine whether or not the selling of a product or service in the marketplace will be successful or if it will fail.

There are three essential roles that a communication program plays, namely: “providing needed information and advice, persuading target customers of the merits of a specific product, and encouraging them to take action at specific times.”<sup>59</sup> The promotion of a product or service can be done in numerous ways. For example, a company can choose to promote their product or service through: advertising, sales promotion, or personal selling and publicity. These different ways of promoting a product or service play an essential role when it comes to influencing the customers’ experience, as well as their decisions regarding purchasing said product/service. It is important that companies manage their promotional strategy in a manner that focuses on offering clear and concise messages about the product that they want to sell, while also making sure that they have a presence in media channels that consumers are going to use.<sup>60</sup>

There are many ways to advertise a product or a service. For example, sales people can be involved in advertising the product. It can also be done through television or the internet, as well as through radio, magazines, and so on. Promotion strategies include:

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<sup>57</sup> Alicia Allen, “The Marketing Mix”, *Oxford College of Marketing* (blog), <https://blog.oxfordcollegeofmarketing.com/2020/10/08/understanding-the-7ps-of-the-marketing-mix/>

<sup>58</sup> Muhammad Tariq Khan, “The Concept of ‘Marketing Mix’ and its Elements (A Conceptual Review Paper)”, *International Journal of Information, Business and Management* 6, no. 2 (2014): 101.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Muhammad Tariq Khan, “The Concept of ‘Marketing Mix’ and its Elements (A Conceptual Review Paper)”, *International Journal of Information, Business and Management* 6, no. 2 (2014): 101. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/concept-marketing-mix-elements-conceptualreview/docview/1511120790/se-2?accountid=8144>

advertisements, personal selling and sales promotions.<sup>61</sup> A company can choose how to most effectively promote their product/service based on their target market.

### 3.1.5 Criticisms of the 4P's Marketing Mix

Although the marketing mix has been highly appreciated in the marketing field, it has also faced some criticism. McCarthy's 4P's concept has been criticised for being a definition of marketing that is too production-oriented instead of being more customer-oriented.

Lauterborn criticized the 4P's, saying that he believed that each of the elements that constitute the 4P's should also be seen from consumers' perspective. If this were the case, "Product" would become "Customer solution", "Price" would be "Cost to the consumer", "Place" would be "Convenience", and "Promotion" would be "Communication".<sup>62</sup>

Möller also criticised the marketing mix framework, claiming that the 4P's do not take into consideration customer behaviour, as it is an internally oriented concept. Another criticism mentioned by Möller was that the marketing mix treats customers as passive, as it does not offer interaction nor can it capture relationships. The fact that the marketing mix is not helpful when it comes to personifying marketing activities is yet another criticism from Möller.<sup>63</sup>

Numerous other scholars have criticised the marketing mix. Grönroos, similarly to Möller and Lauterborn, has also claimed that the marketing mix is not interactive, is too production oriented and that it is not integrative. Goldsmith also shares the same beliefs as the scholars mentioned above, while Patterson and Ward go as far as to say that the 4P's are offensive, as the strategies associated to the 4P's are mostly function-oriented and output oriented.<sup>64</sup>

Despite all of these criticisms, many studies show that the 4P's framework is actually extremely trusted and used by individuals who deal with operational or tactical marketing issues. A specific study by Alsem et al. (1996) involving 550 Dutch companies and their executives showed that around 70% of the companies involved in the study, actively apply formal marketing planning as the basis of their operational marketing plans, but different departments hold the responsibility for the decisions regarding the Marketing Mix. This study

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Chai Lee Goi, "A review of Marketing Mix: 4P's or more?", *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 4. [www.ccsenet.org/journal.html](http://www.ccsenet.org/journal.html)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> E. Constantinides, "The Marketing Mix Revisited: Towards the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Marketing", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 22:3-4, 417. DOI: 10.1362/026725706776861190

showed that market leaders clearly trust the formal operational marketing planning based on the 4P's, significantly more than the market followers.<sup>65</sup> David Jobber described the 4P's as follows: "The strength of the 4Ps approach is that it represents a memorable and practical framework for marketing decision-making and has proved useful for case study analysis in business schools for many years".<sup>66</sup> This statement is a powerful description of the acceptance of this approach in the field.

### 3.2 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions theory

Before explaining what Hofstede's cultural dimensions are, it is important that we clarify what exactly we mean when we say "culture" throughout this thesis. Culture is an extremely fluid concept, as it can have different meanings. Throughout this thesis, culture is understood as: *"The programming of the human mind by which one group of people distinguishes itself from another group."*<sup>67</sup> This is the definition provided by professor Hofstede, and all of his cultural dimensions are what we understand as culture and cultural values.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions can be considered a great and important theoretical framework, as it is useful in analyzing national cultures and at the same time it can show the effects that cultural differences have on companies and their marketing strategies. Initially, Hofstede's model included four cultural dimensions, namely: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism and masculinity/femininity. However, two extra dimensions were added later on: long-term orientation, and indulgence. Hence, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory is made up of six different dimensions.<sup>68</sup>

In order to develop this framework, Hofstede used a sample of IBM (a multinational technology company) employees who answered a set of questions regarding their values and opinions on their conditions of employment. More specifically, the questions were regarding the personal time of the employees, their freedom, job security, physical conditions and so on. These questions provided 32 answers regarding values from 117.000 IBM employees from 40 different countries. Later on, Hofstede extended this study to include 50 countries,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 408

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Hofstede Insights, "What do we mean by "culture"?" November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://news.hofstede-insights.com/news/what-do-we-mean-by-culture>

<sup>68</sup> Isabel Gallego-Álvarez and María Consuelo Pucheta-Martínez, "Hofstede's cultural dimensions and R&D intensity as an innovation strategy: a view from different institutional contexts", Eurasian Business Review (2021) 11:191–220, 195. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40821-020-00168-4>

and other investigations from other scholars ended up providing scores for these dimensions in a total of 76 countries.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.2.1 Power Distance

Hofstede's dimension called "Power distance" refers to a society's hierarchy. It can be understood as: "the extent to which the members of institutions and organizations within a given culture expect and accept power to be unevenly distributed."<sup>70</sup> This type of inequality could be seen if one looks at each individual's contribution to society as well as what exactly they receive for this contribution in terms of power distribution and the rights and obligations that each individual has. Scholars such as Waldman et al. claim that cultures with a higher power distance show a greater acceptance of hierarchy and unequal power distribution than cultures with low power distance, who want more equality in power distribution.<sup>71</sup>

### 3.2.2 Individualism/Collectivism

Hofstede's dimension called "individualism" refers to the extent to which the members of a culture consider themselves as part of a social network, as well as how high is their level of commitment to this social network. Individuals from collective cultures consider themselves members of a relationship-oriented in-group. For this exact reason, they try to situate themselves within this group and reach their personal goals in conformity with the group that they are members of.<sup>72</sup>

In contrast, members of individualistic cultures consider themselves autonomous individuals, and they make efforts towards setting and achieving their personal goals isolated from the interests of the group that they associate themselves with.<sup>73</sup> Independence and individual freedom are highly appreciated and desired by individualistic cultures. Hofstede claims that the employees of organizations in countries that have an individualistic culture have much more freedom when it comes to developing or trying out new products than employees in an organization with a collectivist culture.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 196

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 197

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Alexander Thomas, Eva-Ulrike Kinast and Sylvia Schroll-Machl, "Handbook of Intercultural Communication and Cooperation", Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 54

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Isabel Gallego-Álvarez and María Consuelo Pucheta-Martínez, "Hofstede's cultural dimensions and R&D intensity as an innovation strategy: a view from different institutional contexts", *Eurasian Business Review* (2021) 11:191–220, 197. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40821-020-00168-4>

### 3.2.3 Masculinity and Femininity

This dimension shows the extent to which gender roles are portrayed and predefined in a society. When it comes to masculine cultures, the roles of men and women are designated in a clear manner. The masculine cultures describe men as: “assertive, aggressive, ambitious, competitive and materialistic.”<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, the feminine role is described through words such as: “solicitousness, modesty, subordination and warm-heartedness.” In cultures considered feminine, nearly all roles in society can be taken by either men or women, and gender roles are not limited to a certain list of characteristics.<sup>76</sup> While feminine cultures tend to place more focus on quality of life and modesty, masculine cultures focus much more on material success.<sup>77</sup>

### 3.2.4 Uncertainty avoidance

Hofstede’s dimension called “uncertainty avoidance” can be defined as: “the extent to which ambiguous situations are threatening to individuals, to which rules and order are preferred, and to which uncertainty is tolerated in a society”.<sup>78</sup> According to Hofstede, cultures with a high level of uncertainty avoidance tend to be more anxious than cultures with a low uncertainty avoidance, which leads to them taking quick action toward reducing the level of doubt and uncertainty that they are experiencing.

A characteristic of societies with a high uncertainty level is that they are more eager to establish more rules and regulations in people’s public and private lives and they have a more difficult time accepting change and embracing innovation.<sup>79</sup> In contrast, societies with low uncertainty avoidance do not impose as many rules and regulations. This changes the way that people react in unclear circumstances, as they are more relaxed than the people from societies with a high uncertainty level, who, as mentioned above, tend to be more anxious when they face unclear situations.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 198

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Thomas, Eva-Ulrike Kinast and Sylvia Schroll-Machl, “Handbook of Intercultural Communication and Cooperation”, Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 55

<sup>77</sup> Isabel Gallego-Álvarez and María Consuelo Pucheta-Martínez, “Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and R&D intensity as an innovation strategy: a view from different institutional contexts”, *Eurasian Business Review* (2021) 11:191–220, 198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40821-020-00168-4>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid

<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Alexander Thomas, Eva-Ulrike Kinast and Sylvia Schroll-Machl, “Handbook of Intercultural Communication and Cooperation”, Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 55

### 3.2.5 Long-term orientation

Hofstede's dimension called "long-term orientation" deals with the extent to which a society deems future events important and to what extent long-term thinking is valued. Hofstede claims that individuals from societies that believe that future events are of great importance are more eager to save and invest, and they are characterized by traits such as persistency and adaptability.<sup>81</sup> People from societies with a high long-term orientation are better at adjusting traditions to new circumstances than people from societies with a lower level of long-term orientation, who tend to hold tightly onto their traditions and keep them unaltered.<sup>82</sup> Cultures with a lower level of long-term orientation will not focus as much on saving and investing, as they have a "here today, gone tomorrow" mentality.<sup>83</sup>

### 3.2.6 Indulgence

Last but not least, Hofstede's dimension called "indulgence" deals with: "the gratification of basic human desires related to the enjoyment of life."<sup>84</sup> People from societies with a high level of indulgence place great importance on enjoying life, having fun and greatly value their leisure time. They also consider freedom of speech to be extremely important, and the majority of people from these kinds of societies claim high levels of happiness.<sup>85</sup> According to Ismail and Lu, people from high indulgence societies place more focus on happiness, and they tend to create a certain perception when it comes to their freedom, health and life control. In contrast, people from societies with a low level of indulgence are more controlled in this regard.<sup>86</sup>

### 3.2.7 Criticism

Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework has also faced some criticism along the years. A limitation that the model has is that it offers patterns based on whole nations, not based on

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<sup>81</sup> Isabel Gallego-Álvarez and María Consuelo Pucheta-Martínez, "Hofstede's cultural dimensions and R&D intensity as an innovation strategy: a view from different institutional contexts", *Eurasian Business Review* (2021) 11:191–220, 199. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40821-020-00168-4>

<sup>82</sup> Alexander Thomas, Eva-Ulrike Kinast and Sylvia Schroll-Machl, "Handbook of Intercultural Communication and Cooperation", Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 55

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>84</sup> Isabel Gallego-Álvarez and María Consuelo Pucheta-Martínez, "Hofstede's cultural dimensions and R&D intensity as an innovation strategy: a view from different institutional contexts", *Eurasian Business Review* (2021) 11:191–220, 199. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40821-020-00168-4>

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 200

individuals. In addition, Smith et al. raise the issue that some cultural aspects may not be the same in all countries, while Baskerville believes that some of the dimensions place a larger focus on socio-economic issues rather than cultural. Jones is another scholar who criticizes Hofstede's model as he argues that 'four or five dimensions do not give sufficient information about cultural differences.'<sup>87</sup> Clearly, Hofstede was aware of this, and welcomed new dimensions to the model, which is why he added the dimensions "long-term orientation" and "indulgence" to his model.<sup>88</sup>

Despite these criticisms, Hofstede's cultural dimensions model has been widely accepted and used in studies of organizational culture<sup>89</sup>, and it is an important and useful framework, as it offers a great amount of information regarding cultural differences between countries and how these differences can be managed.

## 4. Methodology

The following sections are going to present the methodological choices made by the two researchers of this thesis. As such, the research design will be presented first, before a discussion of the choice of material takes place. Lastly, the two methods, thematic analysis and comparative analysis, will be presented and their use throughout this thesis will be clarified. Moreover, the two concepts standardization and adaptation will be presented and how exactly these two concepts will be drawn upon within this thesis will be explained. The last section is an explanation of how the cultural analysis and 4P's analysis relates to each other and how they are intended to be used.

### 4.1 Research Design

To establish the best possible basis for investigating the problem statement: *"How have cultural differences influenced IKEA's marketing strategy, if at all, when comparing IKEA Denmark and IKEA Romania?"*, we decided to adopt an interpretive research design, proposed by Christopher Lamont.<sup>90</sup> This research design will be based on two qualitative methods: thematic analysis and comparative analysis.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 195

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 196

<sup>90</sup> Christopher Lamont, "Research Methods in International Relations", (London: Sage, 2015), 43.

The decision to adopt this specific research design for this thesis was made because we intend to investigate the differences between Danish and Romanian culture, with the goal of being able to understand how exactly they are different. Moreover, we then wish to investigate and understand how exactly these differences might have influenced IKEA's marketing strategy when we compare their strategy in the two countries.

Another reason for choosing this specific research design lies in the way in which it views theory, compared to other approaches, such as an empirical research design. When drawing on an empirical research design, the researcher would most likely view theory as “general statements that explain cause and effect”.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, from this perspective, a theory also needs to lend itself to empirical testing and they have to be falsifiable, through the use of one of the two strategies known as observation and experimentation.<sup>92</sup> We, the researchers of this thesis, do not agree with that view of theory, and no theory used in this thesis will lend itself to empirical testing and will not be tested with the purpose of checking its falsifiability.

On the contrary, from the perspective of interpretive researchers, theory can be understood as “statements concerned with understanding the properties of those objects that we study.”<sup>93</sup> This is exactly the perspective that we share, as the theory used, for example Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, function as statements that tell something about Danish and Romanian culture – which can be seen as the two objects that are being studied. At the same time, the 4P's can also be understood as statements that tell something about different elements of the marketing strategy, which is also an object that is studied in this thesis.

The ontological perspective adopted in this thesis is that known as post-positivism. The reasoning behind these choices lies in the belief that both researchers hold, which is that the reality exists and is out there, but it is difficult to access and can as such only be understood imperfectly.<sup>94</sup> This is for example reflected in the cultural analysis, where we manage to uncover one perspective of reality, but without speaking to almost every person from each culture, the perceived reality will ultimately be imperfect.

Lastly, ethics were also considered throughout the process of creating this thesis. According to Guillemin and Gilliam, the “ethical important moments” can be defined as “the difficult, often subtle, and usually unpredictable situations that arise in the practice of doing

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid, 44

<sup>92</sup>Ibid, 41

<sup>93</sup>Ibid, 44

<sup>94</sup>Ryan S. Bisel, Elissa A. Adame, “Post-Positivist/Functionalist Approaches”, The International Encyclopedia of Organizational Communication, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017. DOI:10.1002/9781118955567.

research”.<sup>95</sup> One of the best ways of dealing with such moments is to employ the concept of reflexivity, which will also help make sure that the researchers remember their role throughout the research process.<sup>96</sup> According to Bordieu, reflexivity can also be understood and used by “taking two steps back”. Understood here is that the researchers would observe the research subject in an objective manner, while also reflecting on said observations.<sup>97</sup> The process of reflexivity will also help ensure that the research becomes more rigorous, and the potential issues of generalization and subjectivism in choice of data will be avoided which in turn will help improve the validity and quality of research throughout the thesis.<sup>98</sup>

Within this thesis, the specific ethical moments that the researchers encountered were in connection to the cultural analysis and also throughout the analysis of the marketing mix. First and foremost, given that one researcher identifies themselves as belonging to Danish culture and the other to Romanian culture, it was important that any preexisting ideas and beliefs about the cultures didn’t influence the cultural analysis, so that it could remain unbiased. To avoid this, the researchers made sure to write about the other culture throughout the cultural analysis, as that would remove the chance of letting any personal beliefs and ideas influence the analysis. The second ethical important moment was in regard to the marketing mix of IKEA in Denmark and Romania, where it was equally important that the researchers did not draw on their own personal experience and ideas about IKEA in the respective countries. Thorough proofreading and source validity checks were conducted throughout the analysis to ensure that any claims made have proper academic proof and were not a simple subjective opinion or belief.

## 4.2 Choice of material

Throughout the majority of the analysis of the two cultures, and the following comparison, the data came from the webpage: Hofstede-Insights.com, which is where the specific theoretical framework, known as Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions, can be found. This is the framework that the entire cultural analysis was based around, which is why this one page is solely responsible for providing the data. Moreover, the country comparison tool that this

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<sup>95</sup>Marilyn Guillemín & Lynn Gilliam, “Ethics, Reflexivity, and “Ethically Important Moments” in Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10 (2), (University of Melbourne: 2004), 262

<sup>96</sup>Ibid, 274

<sup>97</sup>Ibid, 274

<sup>98</sup>Ibid, 275

page offers cannot be found elsewhere, which also explains the reasoning behind relying on this webpage.

When it comes to the analysis of the marketing mix in IKEA Denmark and IKEA Romania, IKEA's own webpages were chosen as the main source of data throughout the entire analysis. The reasoning behind this choice is due to the fact that the information needed to carry out the analysis was readily available on their webpages. Moreover, since the focus of this thesis is surrounding the marketing strategies of IKEA, it made a lot of sense to simply consider what they actively do on their webpage, as that gave quite a good idea of what their focus is and how they go about selling and promoting products and services in the two different countries.

Before explaining how the specific data was gathered, it is important to note that whenever the IKEA page was used, both the Danish and Romanian one, the researchers made sure to be in incognito mode on their browsers. This helped ensure that no preexisting cookies or searches would influence what showed up on the respective webpages. In other words, it helped further the unbiased analysis that the researchers strive to conduct.

To find the appropriate data needed to investigate the P known as "product", we decided to settle on three different core products and then look for a total of ten different products within each core product. For example, one core product is "comfort" and within this core product it was decided to look for five different couches and five different beds. The second core product was "physical needs" which covered the food sold in the two stores, meaning that the restaurant food was considered as the actual products within this core product. The third and last core product that was chosen was "organization", which meant that five wardrobes and five wall shelves would be considered. The purpose here is to uncover whether or not IKEA sell the same products in Denmark and Romania, and by applying this strategy the researchers can conduct an investigation that would answer this question in an unbiased manner. When choosing the products, the researchers simply went into each product category and noted down the first ten products with different names.

Moreover, we also went through the front page of IKEA's webpage, both the one dedicated to Denmark and the one dedicated to Romania, with the purpose of uncovering which core products they actively push more directly towards their customers. To elaborate, for each webpage we simply scrolled through the front page without clicking anything, to avoid triggering any user-based advertisements, and made sure to note down any examples of core products being actively promoted, as well as which products were being sold as part of the core product, and lastly noted if any augmented products were also present.

It should be noted that throughout the entire data collection of data concerned with products, we focused on text and what IKEA was writing, not as much the pictures they had chosen or what was happening in said pictures. This means that, when examples are presented later, they are examples chosen based on the text, not the pictures.

The data needed to consider the P known as “Price” in the respective stores was also gathered on the webpage. As with the products, where core products were searched for on the front page of each IKEA webpage, similarly, we looked for instances where price was the focus on the front page. This means that as soon as we got onto the page we scrolled through the front page and took screenshots of examples where price was mentioned, without clicking on anything as to avoid ruining the unbiased approach. We also decided to consider the price of the products that was considered for the P known as “product”. Since those products had already been gathered in an unbiased way, and since they represented quite a few different product categories, we decided that it made the most sense to simply consider the price of those products and then compare the findings as well. Given the fact that Denmark and Romania have different currencies, we decided to convert the Romanian currency, called Leu, into the Danish Kroner. This was done through the app called “Currency Converter” which has a 4.7 rating on the app store after 21.000 people have rated it, which, in the eyes of the researchers, support its claim of being valid and trustworthy.

The data needed to consider the P known as “Place” was gathered mainly on IKEA’s webpage as well, while also gathering some information from other sources, such as [www.ingka.com](http://www.ingka.com). The reasoning behind relying on IKEA’s webpage for data needed to consider this specific “P” is due to the fact that they quite openly show and explain their distribution chain. Since IKEA is the point of interest, it also made sense to rely on the information they provide. The strategy behind finding the relevant information on the webpage was to search for specific words, such as “store location”, “Suppliers” and “App”.

Lastly, for the P known as “Promotion”, we decided to focus on just one of their promotion channels, namely their instagram page for each country. The reason for just choosing this one promotion channel, is due to the fact that considering more channels at once would have resulted in us having too much material to consider. IKEA’s Instagram posts were deemed as offering enough data to explain the promotion element to a satisfactory degree, which is why it wasn’t seen as an issue that only one promotion channel was considered.

Regarding the instagram posts, it was decided to consider posts from the past half year (from April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, back to October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022), with the purpose of selecting the

posts that matched the chosen pre-conceived themes based on the categories chosen. The specific categories that were chosen were: “sales promotion”, “current events”, “functional brand posts”, and lastly “emotional brand posts”. The reasoning behind choosing these specific categories is due to the fact that the six-month time period that posts will be gathered from contains holidays and other specific current events in each country. The researchers will as such be able to see what the focus is during those events, and also if IKEA has an equal amount of focus on those holidays and events in each country. Moreover, by looking for posts that are emotional and functional brand posts, the researchers will also get an idea of whether or not IKEA prefers one way of promoting in one country and a different in another country. For example, should IKEA have more functional brand posts in Denmark and more emotional brand posts in Romania, then that would paint a picture of an adaptive strategy.

Lastly, by including the “sales promotion” category, the researchers can get information about how frequent price is a focus in IKEA’s promotion in the two countries as well as how often free samples and coupons are given out, if at all. It will also be possible to see how often contests and product competitions take place.<sup>99</sup> Comparing the findings on the Danish and Romanian instagram pages, regarding sales promotion, will also help broadening the general understanding of which strategy IKEA has adopted, namely, is it standardized or is it adapted to the different markets.

It should of course be noted that the data that will be gathered through these specific strategies are in and of themselves limited, meaning that there is a chance of some potentially useful data being outside of the established scope. This is always a risk when choosing a specific strategy, but it was however judged that the chosen strategies throughout the data selection process would allow the researchers to obtain the appropriate and relevant data needed to answer the problem statement. However, it should be mentioned that a researcher with a different data gathering strategy and with different categories for the instagram posts, will most likely uncover some different findings. For example, should a different researcher decide to use the categories “Brand Community” and “Cause-related brand posts” when investigating the instagram posts, then that researcher would find more information concerning how IKEA might try to build more of a community around their stores while also highlighting, through social causes, why people should shop at IKEA instead of a different furniture store.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>Wondwesen Tafesse and Anders Wien, “A framework for categorizing social media posts”, *Cogent Business and Management*, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2017.1284390. P. 10

<sup>100</sup>Ibid, 10

### 4.3 Thematic Analysis

The qualitative method known as thematic analysis will be drawn on as the main method throughout this thesis. It is a well renowned method that has been used in many different fields, and it has been described as a method used to identify themes in qualitative data. Moreover, some scholars have claimed that thematic analysis and content analysis is the same thing while others have claimed that thematic analysis developed from content analysis.<sup>101</sup> As a method, thematic analysis gained most of its traction as an analytical method following the publication of Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's paper from 2006 in where thematic analysis was described as "a poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method".<sup>102</sup>

Thematic analysis is a method that allows the user to analyze many different types of data that ranges from interviews and surveys to diaries, online discussion forums, as well as other media sources.<sup>103</sup> It is as such considered a method with great flexibility, which can furthermore be seen when considering the analytical choices that the researcher can take when using this method, when it comes to analyzing the data itself. What is understood here is that the researcher can either choose to adopt an inductive or deductive approach (bottom up or top-down approach). Moreover, the researcher also needs to decide whether to focus semantically or latently when it comes to coding the data (semantic/surface or deeper level analysis).<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Gareth Terry, Nikki Hayfield, Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, "Thematic Analysis" in *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, edited by Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton Rogers, 2nd Edition, (SAGE: California, 2017), 17.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid*, 18

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid*, 22

<sup>104</sup>*Ibid*, 22-23

Within this thesis, the approach chosen is a deductive one. The reasoning for this is due to the interest and scope of the thesis, which is concerned with the 4P's. This means that the 4P's were used as the main topics that data was then coded within, which helped ensure that the proper data was found and included. Moreover, the coding of the data was done semantically, since it is general information about products and prices that will be considered, which doesn't require the need for any deeper level analysis. The same is true for the P's known as promotion and place, as the researchers will not be interested in any deeper level analysis of any information regarding those two aspects. Instead, the interest is in what IKEA is saying and actively doing outwardly.

When conducting thematic analysis, the researchers started by becoming familiar with the data, meaning that the chosen data was read with the purpose of becoming aware of its usefulness, as well as in what ways it might be useful. Moreover, the data that was read was read in such a manner where certain attention was paid to different patterns that might appear throughout the texts, while also immersing oneself into the information that the text provides.

Following the familiarization of data, the researchers then started coding the data. This was done by re-reading the texts and during that process identifying the relevant data, which was then given a "tag" in the shape of a word or a phrase. It was ensured that the chosen word/phrase would accurately represent the meaning of the tagged data segment. During this process, certain data segments also ended up fitting within multiple tags and they were as such given multiple tags to begin with. The researchers also found certain data segments that didn't contain any useful information and they were as such not provided with a tag.

The picture on the right is an example of one of the instagram posts being coded. The coded information has been circled in red. In this instance, the

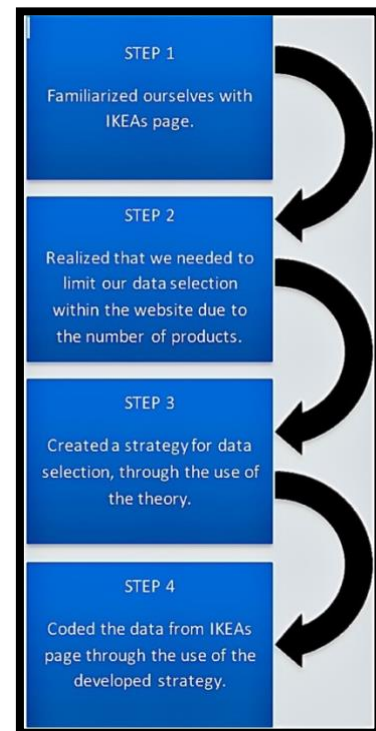


Figure 1. Visualization of our approach.



Picture 1. Example of how coding was done.

instagram posts fit within the “sales promotion” theme, as the post both mentions a 20% discount as well as a competition. Moreover, this is also a great example of data that can be attributed more than one code, as the theme “functional brand posts” also fits with this post. To elaborate, the mentioning of how 45% of Danes wish they slept better at night, followed by IKEA saying they can help with that, is a prime example of IKEA highlighting the function of their products.

At this stage, it is important to note that there are no “right” or “wrong” codes, as the codes chosen by the researchers depends on their respective interpretation of the data, as well as whatever meaning they choose to attribute to the data.<sup>105</sup> To ensure that both of the researchers participating in this thesis were coding in a similar fashion, frequent meetings and talks were held to compare and discuss the codes each researcher had created and used. At the end of the coding phase, the researchers were left with a list of codes that identified the relevant meaning from the data. The last step of this phase consisted of the researchers collecting and combining the associated tagged data, as that would make the following steps easier.

After the codes have been created, the researchers moved on to fitting the codes and the coded data within the preconceived themes that were developed initially. The preconceived themes were developed on the basis of theory, and with the problem statement in mind, to ensure that themes were truly relevant and could help answer said problem statement. The generated codes were all examined with the purpose of combining those that were similar or could fit well together within one of the larger, and more meaningful, preconceived themes. In order to place codes within a larger theme, the researchers first made sure to create a proper clear core idea or concept for each of the themes, which made it a lot easier to figure out which codes were similar or equal relevant for said theme.

The next step that the researchers took was to review the preconceived themes to make sure that they made sense and were still relevant. This is quite an important step during the process of conducting a thematic analysis, as it allows the researchers to clarify and better themes, or even delete themes that don’t make sense after being reviewed.<sup>106</sup> By conducting this type of “quality control” the researchers made sure that the remaining themes made sense in connection to the codes it consisted of as well as the data set and problem statement. The

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<sup>105</sup>Gareth Terry, Nikki Hayfield, Victoria Clarke and Virginia Braun, “Thematic Analysis” in *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, edited by Carla Willig and Wendy Stainton Rogers, 2nd Edition, (SAGE: California, 2017), 26.

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid*, 29

goal of the researchers was to be left with themes that could tell a clear story, which could successfully answer the problem statement.

The last step of thematic analysis involves writing the actual report, which is exactly what the researchers did. The researchers moved a bit away from having an analytical perspective on the research process to having more of a focus on the overall thesis. During this stage, the researchers were left with the choice of either writing in an illustrative manner or an analytical manner. Writing in an illustrative manner, would mean that data extracts would be used as examples within the analytical narrative while also being used as examples that would support certain claims made while telling the “story”. Writing in an analytical manner would however mean that the researchers would be discussing particular extracts as well as specific aspects/features of said extracts, which would then form the basis of the analytical claims that the researchers would make. It is however not unheard of that a combination of the two could be used, which was another thing the researchers had to consider.<sup>107</sup>

Within this thesis, writing will be done in an illustrative manner, as information about a product or price will be used as examples to support a claim that the researchers make. In the same way, different examples of promotion, for example on Instagram, will be used to support claims about the choice of marketing strategy and the choice of focus that IKEA has adopted in the respective countries.

For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that thematic analysis, just like any other research method, faces some criticism, specifically around the fact that thematic analysis is not a method but is instead a process of identifying patterns. However, other scholars and researchers have disagreed with this claim and instead claimed that thematic analysis can help researchers ensure that they deeply and thoroughly engage with their data, which in turn helps create a clear and in-depth analysis that does not, necessarily, depend on any predetermined theoretical framework.<sup>108</sup> The researchers of this thesis share that understanding of thematic analysis and have as such deemed it useful for this thesis while also refuting the claim that it is only a simple process of identifying patterns.

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid, 32

<sup>108</sup>Ibid, 34

## 4.4 Comparative Analysis

The qualitative method known as comparative analysis is going to be used throughout the thesis and will play a major role in comparing the two cultures as well as the two different marketing strategies used by IKEA in Denmark and Romania. Comparative analysis is a method that can be drawn on and utilized in many different ways, depending on what the aim is. However, it does have two conditions that need to be met no matter what type of comparative analysis the researchers set out to conduct. Firstly, “data must be gathered on two or more cases. The cases may be countries, cities, firms or families – the nature of the unit is irrelevant.”<sup>109</sup> Secondly, “there must be an attempt to explain rather than only to describe.”<sup>110</sup> With these two conditions in mind, it becomes possible to arrive at a proper definition for the method and its purpose for this thesis, which is: *comparative analysis is a comparison between two or more cases with the purpose of uncovering and explaining similarities and/or differences.*

It is important to reiterate the importance of fulfilling both conditions, as it would otherwise be difficult for the researchers to argue that the analysis that is taking place can actually be considered a comparative analysis. For example, would only one condition have been met in this thesis, such as the researchers only gathering and presenting two or more cases, then that would only have put the cases in juxtaposition, which cannot be considered the same as analysis.<sup>111</sup> The researchers of this thesis have therefore had a large focus on fulfilling both conditions by also explaining and clarifying differences and similarities, as well as gathering and presenting data for the chosen cases.

Within this thesis, two cases were chosen, and they were: IKEA’s Danish market and IKEA’s Romanian market, as well as Danish culture and Romanian culture. When comparative analysis is being drawn on as a method, it is important to note that it “requires the things being compared to be commensurable but not necessarily identical.”<sup>112</sup> Understood here, is that the cases that are being compared, should be able to be placed at the same or at different points on a dimension of theoretical interest.<sup>113</sup> This is the case in this thesis, as both of the cases regarding IKEA’s markets and both of the cases regarding culture can be placed

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<sup>109</sup>Christopher G. Pickvance, “Four varieties of comparative analysis.” *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 16, (2001): 11. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011533211521>

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid*, 11

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid*, 11

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid*, 16

<sup>113</sup>Christopher G. Pickvance, “Four varieties of comparative analysis.” *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 16, (2001): 17. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011533211521>

on the same dimension of theoretical interest due to their relevancy in connection to the problem statement and overall goal of this thesis.

As mentioned earlier, comparative analysis can be used in many different ways, depending on the goal of the researchers. To elaborate on this, there are four different varieties, and the two major varieties are known as differentiating comparative analysis and universalizing comparative analysis, while the other two are known as differentiating comparative analysis plural causation and universalizing comparative analysis with plural causation.<sup>114</sup>

For this thesis, the researchers decided to choose the specific variation known as differentiating comparative analysis. This specific type of comparative analysis can be considered self-explanatory, to a degree, as the focus here is on finding differences, which are also known as variations.<sup>115</sup> When using this specific focus, the aim of the researchers is to uncover what differences there might be between two or more cases and furthermore learn how one or more cases will have variations, when compared to other cases.

This means that, for this thesis, the aim is first of all to uncover any differences between Danish and Romanian cultures, which will be done following the cultural analysis, using Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Following the later analysis of the 4P's marketing mix in Denmark and Romania, comparative analysis will be used again, and differences will be uncovered between the two marketing strategies. By uncovering and explaining the differences in culture, it should be possible to explain any differences in marketing strategy that are uncovered, unless they of course seem to be differences caused by other aspects.

However, as a method, comparative analysis cannot be considered perfect or without flaws. This is due to certain issues and challenges that can come with doing comparative analysis, and the purpose of presenting those now is for the sake of full transparency and to acknowledge that there will always be some limitations as no method will ever be perfect. First of all, when using comparative analysis, one might leave out some complexity of reality and information. This is due to the fact that comparative analysis is mainly focused on the general and not so much on the specific or the unique. This simply means that comparative analysis should never be a substitute for a description of analysis of a single case.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid, 17-18

<sup>115</sup>Ibid, 76

<sup>116</sup>Christopher G. Pickvance, "Four varieties of comparative analysis." *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 16, (2001): 25. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011533211521>

Moreover, there is a potential issue to be aware of in connection to the construction of the research design. By choosing the specific cases that are the most appropriate for the thesis, said cases will have certain variables and variations. These variables and variations might also be visible from different angles and completely different variables and variations might be visible as well. What is understood here, is that from the start, the researchers need to understand and accept that not all variations and variables will be visible and within control.<sup>117</sup>

Lastly, it should also be noted that scholars of different theoretical schools have debated, and continue to debate, what constitutes satisfactory explanation when using comparative analysis. However, it is not a debate that can be easily solved empirically, and it is simply a matter of scholars from different theoretical schools arguing different things and taking opposing views.<sup>118</sup> It is however important to be aware that there are debates at all about the explanation that comes from using comparative analysis, as the researchers can use that information to attempt to avoid those issues and offer a proper and satisfactory explanation.

Ultimately, being aware of all of these limitations is important, as it will help the researchers understand where the method can become lackluster, so it can be avoided or at least minimized. As it was mentioned, it is, of course, also to remain transparent and open about the process of conducting this thesis.

## 4.5 Standardization vs Adaptation

The two concepts known as standardization and adaptation have also been drawn on throughout this thesis, in an attempt to better determine the strategy chosen by IKEA in each dimension of the 4P's. The reasoning behind including these concepts, is due to the fact that they can help create a better understanding of whether or not IKEA has changed any elements of their marketing strategy, which would be them using the adaptation strategy, or whether they have decided to use the same marketing strategy, which would be considered standardization. The following paragraphs will serve as a guide to the two concepts, with the purpose of explaining the understanding that we, the researchers of the thesis, have of them, as well as how they are intended to be used.

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<sup>117</sup>Ibid, 25

<sup>118</sup>Ibid, 25

What is understood by standardization is that it is a strategy that can be said to be employed when a company is using an undifferentiated marketing mix in all the countries it sells a product or service within.<sup>119</sup> This means that a company would simply replicate the same strategy, without making any changes, in the different markets where it operates. Usually, companies who would rely on this strategy, would be those who are exporting for the first time, or those that focus on cost savings, through economies of scale, as well as those who might be faced with a very costly operation should they choose an adaptive strategy instead.<sup>120</sup> There are, however, some factors that make standardization a favorable strategy to rely on. For example, if a company sells the same product in all their markets, then there is a good chance that they could start mass producing said products, meaning that they can potentially lower their unit production costs through this increase in volume. This also means that a company, who managed to decrease their unit production costs, could introduce more competitive prices, and they would furthermore be able to offer a quick response time to their markets, since they are producing the same products for every market.<sup>121</sup>

On the other hand, adaptation refers to when a company has constructed a specific marketing mix for each country/market it operates within. This is a strategy that is usually more geared towards meeting the needs of every market by planning all business activities in such a manner where they efficiently can meet the specific needs of said market while also respecting the values of local customers.<sup>122</sup> As such, an adaptive strategy had its strengths in markets where the following factors are present: there is a difference between customer/consumers when comparing markets, there is a difference in local competitive conditions, there is a difference in local legal conditions, and lastly, there is a high degree of service in the company's offering.<sup>123</sup>

## 4.6 Explaining the Analysis Hierarchy

The two types of analysis that will be done in this project, the cultural analysis and the 4P's marketing mix analysis will be done with a specific relationship between them in mind. The purpose of the cultural analysis will be to create a basis understanding of how exactly the two

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<sup>119</sup>LukaszSramkowski, "Marketing Mix: the Standardization vs Adaptation Dilemma", ExportPlanning, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021. <https://www.exportplanning.com/en/magazine/article/2021/03/17/marketing-mix-the-standardization-vs-adaptation-dilemma/>

<sup>120</sup>Ibid

<sup>121</sup>Ibid

<sup>122</sup>Ibid

<sup>123</sup>Ibid

cultures are different, and furthermore how exactly that should, theoretically, be visible in IKEA's marketing mix.

With those differences in mind, the next step will be to conduct the analysis of the marketing mix in both Denmark and Romania in order to uncover and understand how exactly the marketing mixes are different – if at all. The purpose will then be to understand whether any differences in marketing mix align with the differences in culture that were discovered during the cultural analysis. Regardless of whether any differences in marketing mix can be explained by the cultural differences, the result will help further the understanding of how important culture is when it comes to doing business in different countries.

It should be mentioned that the goal is not to prove that the differences found in the cultural analysis, through the use of Hofstede's dimensions, are correct or not. If the differences in marketing mixes do not align with the differences in culture, then that is seen as an acceptable outcome as well. In that instance, we will instead give our recommendations concerning changes in the marketing mix that should theoretically improve the chance of success in the two markets.

## 5. IKEA's Background

IKEA is a Swedish home furnishings retailer founded by Ingvar Kamprad in 1943. In the beginning, IKEA was a small rural company that focused on selling products such as picture frames, wallets, pens and other small objects. However, from 1947, the company started selling furniture made by local manufacturers. The company used to sell products through the use of a mail order catalogue. This was a particularly useful strategy, as Kamprad lived in a rural area in Sweden, and these catalogues were useful because they could also get to customers from bigger cities, which would help the company's income.<sup>124</sup>

A few years later, IKEA expanded to Norway (in 1963) and Denmark (in 1969). Following this, IKEA managed to expand globally over the next decade, reaching many other countries such as Japan, Australia and Canada.<sup>125</sup> Presently, there are 460 IKEA stores in 62 different markets around the world.<sup>126</sup> The largest IKEA store is located in the city of Pasayin

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<sup>124</sup> Amy Lamare, "A brief history of IKEA: From cheap bookcases to Swedish meatballs", The Business of Business, last updated august 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. <https://www.businessofbusiness.com/articles/ikea-history-founder-data-hiring/>

<sup>125</sup> Ibid

<sup>126</sup> ikea.com, "About us", last accessed April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://about.ikea.com/en/about-us>

the Philippines and is 730.000 square feet, while Germany has the most IKEA stores in the world (53 stores).<sup>127</sup>

IKEA offers low-priced furniture and other products for the home, and they sell these products in a “flat-pack” form, ready for the customers to assemble their product at home.<sup>128</sup> Kamprad came up with this strategy in the very beginnings of the company for IKEA’s products, in order to avoid the expense of shipping large furniture, strategy which helped both the company and customers save money.<sup>129</sup>

Today, IKEA is an extremely successful company all around the world. The fact that they offer high quality products at a low cost is definitely one of the main reasons for their success. Another plus for the company is the fact that their self-assembling furniture strategy makes customers feel more attached to the product that they bought, as they participate in the creation of that piece of furniture. This has been called the “IKEA effect”.<sup>130</sup>

Their store lay-out and the fact that they offer a restaurant/cafe also contribute to their success. Because of the store’s vast lay-out that is divided into different sections that one would have in their house (bathroom, bedroom, etc.), customers can easily spend a lot of time in the store. This means that they will most likely get hungry. This is why they offer food and drink options inside the store, as this means that they will keep customers in the store for a longer time, which would lead to them spending more money in the store.<sup>131</sup>

Since 1943, IKEA has slowly grown into a major global company, reaching more than 60 markets, as mentioned earlier. IKEA has made sure that each store is customized to meet the needs of every different country while keeping their signature IKEA style intact. This can be challenging in certain countries such as India, which is extremely different from IKEA’s country of origin, Sweden. However, the company seems to be managing these challenges, as they grow more and more successful.<sup>132</sup>

“One brand, many companies, and many, many people – that’s us in a nutshell. Spread all over the world, we have a passion for home furnishing and an inspiring shared vision: to create a better everyday life for the many people. This, together with our

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid

<sup>128</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. “IKEA”, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/IKEA>

<sup>129</sup> Amy Lamare, “A brief history of IKEA: From cheap bookcases to Swedish meatballs”, The Business of Business, last updated august 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. <https://www.businessofbusiness.com/articles/ikea-history-founder-data-hiring/>

<sup>130</sup> BhumikaNegandhi, “What makes IKEA so successful?”, The Financial Pandora, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. <https://thefinancialpandora.com/what-makes-ikea-so-successful/>

<sup>131</sup> Ibid

<sup>132</sup> Ibid

straightforward business idea, shared values, and a culture based on the spirit of togetherness, guides us in everything we do.”<sup>133</sup> This is the description IKEA offers for their brand.

## 6. Cultural Analysis

The following part of the thesis is the cultural analysis of the two countries, Denmark and Romania, and it has been conducted through the use of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. This means that the analysis will be structured in such a manner where one dimension is discussed at a time followed by a sub-conclusion to each dimension, where we mention how IKEA should preferably conduct themselves, in relation to their marketing mix, if they wish to maximize their chances of success, in each country. Towards the end, an overall conclusion to the cultural analysis will be given. Throughout the analysis, and within each dimension, a score will be mentioned, and said score should be seen as an indicator of where each country is placed within the given dimension that is being discussed. The score is a number between 1 and 100 where 1 is low and 100 is high, and a low score would suggest a low affinity for the given dimension while a high score would suggest the opposite.

### 6.1 Power Distance

Power distance is a cultural dimension offered by Hofstede that deals with the extent to which people from a society expect and accept that distribution of power is not equal.<sup>134</sup> This dimension shows the attitude of a culture towards these inequalities that we have in our world. Power distance can be defined as: “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.”<sup>135</sup>

Under this dimension, Denmark scored 18 points, which means that it has a relatively low power distance. A low power distance culture is characterized by an egalitarian attitude, as people value equality, independence, communication and mutual respect between people, regardless of their level of authority. Employee autonomy is also required and valued.<sup>136</sup> Workplaces in Denmark tend to have a very informal atmosphere, as employees and higher

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<sup>133</sup> ikea.com, “About us”, last accessed April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://about.ikea.com/en/about-us>

<sup>134</sup> Hofstede Insights, Country Comparison, Denmark Romania, last accessed April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/denmark,romania/>

<sup>135</sup> Ibid

<sup>136</sup> Ibid

power entities address each other by their first name. This creates an atmosphere where no one feels inferior compared to someone else and it is definitely not the case that individuals with a higher power in the workplace need to be respected more.<sup>137</sup>

In contrast, Romania has a score of 90 for this dimension, which means that Romanians are the complete opposite of Danes when it comes to power distance. Having a score of 90, which is an extremely high score, makes Romania a high power distance culture. A high power distance culture is characterized by a much greater acceptance of social hierarchy and inequality, as people with a higher authority in an organization are respected more than the subordinates.<sup>138</sup> At the same time, it is normal for hierarchy in an organization to be seen as reflecting deeply-rooted and expected inequalities, and subordinates actively expect to receive orders in the workplace before they take action, meaning that they are not independent.<sup>139</sup>

For a high power distance culture such as Romania's case, centralized decision-making is what works in organizations.<sup>140</sup> This means that the individuals with the most power in an organization deal with decision-making and get to have the final word without needing approval from other employees.

The differences between Denmark and Romania when it comes to power distance should be taken into consideration in the promotional process of IKEA. Given the fact that Danes are not used to or accepting of hierarchy as much as Romanians are, it could be argued that any promotion of products needs to be done in a way where it does not come across as being told what to buy for Danes. Instead, the promotion of products should be done in a way where IKEA focuses more on suggesting or simply showing the offered products, which would make Danes feel like they make the decision themselves.

Danes want to be addressed as equals to the company, not as subordinates. On the other hand, Romanians are probably more acceptable of promotions that give them the feeling that they are urged a bit more to buy a product, since they prefer and are used to hierarchy. Subordinates expect to be told what to do, meaning that people would most likely not be angry or hurt by promotional material where they are told and urged more directly to buy something.

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid

<sup>138</sup> Ibid

<sup>139</sup> Ibid

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

It can be argued that it is important for Danes to have more freedom of choice when it comes to acquiring products from IKEA, since they don't like to be told what to do or necessarily where to go. This means that IKEA should provide different ways for Danes to buy and collect their products. This is less important in Romania, since Romanians are not against being told what to do or where to go. It could even be argued that Romanians might prefer to have fewer options, as well as be guided and directed more by the company.

## 6.2 Individualism/Collectivism

The dimension called "individualism" deals with "the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members".<sup>141</sup> This means that this dimension has to do with the extent to which individuals in society value independence, personal goals and achievements, as well as freedom of expression, without worrying about other individuals or willing to focus on collective goals. In an individualist society, a person focuses only on themselves and their family, not on anyone else.<sup>142</sup>

Under this cultural dimension, Denmark has a score of 74. Having such a high score means that Denmark is a highly individualist society with people that value personal goals and autonomy. In Denmark, people are expected to prioritize their own well-being as well as their immediate families' well-being. It is not considered difficult to do business with Danes, as they are very direct communicators, and they do not feel a need to create relationships before doing business.<sup>143</sup>

In contrast, Romania has a score of 30 under this dimension, which is significantly lower than Denmark's score. This means that Romania is a collectivistic society. A collectivistic society is characterized by a high level of loyalty and commitment to the group, as individuals in a collectivistic society focus on prioritizing the needs of the group more than their personal needs and goals.<sup>144</sup> The group can consist of family, extended family and even extended relationships.

Loyalty is extremely valued in collectivistic societies. In a collectivistic society, building strong relationships is valued and is considered a priority, and everyone is expected to take care of other members of the group. In collectivist societies it is considered extremely shameful to commit offenses, and the relationship between the employer and the employee is

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid

<sup>142</sup> Ibid

<sup>143</sup> Ibid

<sup>144</sup> Ibid

perceived in moral terms, as hiring and promotion decisions take into account the employee's in-group situation.<sup>145</sup> It is safe to say that in a collectivist society, obeying rules from authority figures is a must, and independent decisions and self-expression are not usually accepted and encouraged.

Taking into consideration the obvious differences between an individualistic society such as Denmark, and a collectivistic society such as Romania, IKEA should tailor their marketing strategy accordingly. For example, marketing for an individualistic society would perhaps focus on communicating the benefits of a product to the individual, and not to the group. Building a brand image that resonates with individualistic values would also be expected. In contrast, marketing for a collectivistic society such as Romania should be the total opposite. The benefits of products should be communicated to the group, not the individual, and the brand image should resonate with collectivist values such as tradition, respect for authority and so on.

### 6.3 Masculinity/Femininity

Hofstede's dimension called "Masculinity" deals with the extent to which a society values and is driven by masculine traits over feminine traits. Some masculine traits can be: competitiveness, ambition, and success (meaning that the need to be the best in any field that someone is a part of is extremely desired and valued).<sup>146</sup> These values usually start in school and continue all throughout life, being the same in the organizational life of a person.<sup>147</sup>

On the other hand, some feminine traits would be: being caring, cooperating and valuing quality of life. Here, quality of life is what determines success.<sup>148</sup> Under this dimension, Denmark has a score of 16, which is a low score, making Denmark a feminine society. In a Feminine country such as Denmark, having a life/work balance is extremely important for people. In the workplace, decisions are made through involving everyone and accepting their ideas and contributions, instead of the authority figure making the decision without regard for others.

In a feminine society managers focus on unanimity, as people appreciate feeling like everyone is equals in the workplace. Free time and flexible working hours are extremely

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid

<sup>146</sup> Hofstede Insights, Country Comparison, Denmark Romania, last accessed April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/denmark,romania/>

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

valued in a feminine society.<sup>149</sup> This means that in a feminine society, there might be more focus placed on cooperation, supporting one another and building strong relationships in the workplace but also outside of the workplace, and less focus on being competitive and striving to be the best in the field.

In contrast, Romania has a score of 42 under this dimension, which is fairly higher than Denmark's score. This makes Romania a relatively feminine society. What this means is that Romania would share some of the same values as Denmark. Namely, focusing on “working in order to live”, placing value on solidarity, equality and quality in the workplace, and Conflicts would be resolved through negotiation, cooperation and compromise. Free time and flexibility in the workplace are also valued in Romania.<sup>150</sup> However, given that Romania scored 26 points over Denmark, we could argue that some traits such as competitiveness, valuing traditional gender roles and striving to be the best, are traits that are more likely to be seen in Romania.

Based on the degree of femininity or masculinity that a society has, it would make sense for a company such as IKEA to market their products accordingly. This means that communicating a product's benefits to the target customers would need to involve focus on the customer's well-being, quality of life and relationships, as these are the main traits of a feminine society, as mentioned earlier. Given that Romania also fits into the feminine society characteristics (although it is placed more towards masculinity on the scale), the marketing strategy should not need to change significantly.

## 6.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

As it was mentioned earlier, this dimension is concerned with “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these.”<sup>151</sup>

Within this dimension, Denmark has a score of 23, which can be considered to be fairly low. What this means is that Danes do not necessarily need a lot of structure and predictability in their life, moreover, plans could change overnight for a Dane and they would be fine with it. It is said that one of the reasons behind Danes being like this, is curiosity, which is something that is encouraged to Danes from a very young age. As such, curiosity, in

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid

<sup>150</sup> Ibid

<sup>151</sup> Hofstede Insights, Country Comparison, Denmark Romania, last accessed April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/denmark,romania/>

combination with a highly individualistic mindset, is said to be the main driving force behind the reputation Denmark has gotten for being innovative and at the same time for producing very specific designs. It can as such be worded in a different way, what is different is attractive to a Dane. Furthermore, this is something that can be seen throughout Danish society, and more specifically within the Danish humor and heavy consumerism for new and innovative products, as well as the specific industries that Danes thrive in, which are advertising, marketing, finances, and engineering.<sup>152</sup>

In the other end of this dimension, one can find Romania with a score of 90, which can be considered as very high. As such, Romanians have a high preference for avoiding uncertainty, and they have very specific beliefs and forms of accepted behavior as a result of this. Romanians also have a very low tolerance for unorthodox beliefs, behavior, and ideas. In Romanian culture, there is a very high emotional need for rules, and time is money, meaning that Romanians have an inner urge to work hard, be precise, and being punctual is considered the norm. Moreover, innovation is very likely to be rejected, as security is a very important element of the individual Romanians motivation.<sup>153</sup>

The way in which Danes and Romanians would react to specific products and ways of marketing can as such be said to be quite different on the basis of this dimension. It would seem that Danes would be a lot more acceptable of new products and ways of advertising, where Romanians would prefer and be more acceptable of the “usual” approaches to products and promotion. The same can be said for the different ways in which IKEA might sell their products. In Denmark, they have more leniencies to try new ways of selling products as Danes are more acceptable, and almost invites change. However, in Romania, it would most likely be for the best if IKEA sticks to the specific, usual, ways of selling their products, and limit the innovation within that field.

## 6.5 Long Term Orientation

The dimension concerning long term orientation can be said to deal with “how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future.” What is understood here, is that depending on the score a country's society is either more likely to honor tradition and norms, which is considered a normative approach, or

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid

<sup>153</sup>Ibid

encourage thrift and efforts in modern education, as that will allow the society to better prepare for the future, which would be described as a pragmatic approach.<sup>154</sup>

Denmark, and Danish culture, can be considered as having been very normative with a score of just 35. This means that Danes have a strong concern with establishing the absolute truth, and they can be considered quite normative in their way of thinking. Moreover, Danes have a great respect for traditions, and they have a relatively small inclination to save money for the future, and they can also be said to have a large focus on achieving quick results.<sup>155</sup>

On the other hand, Romania has a score of 52, which means they are placed directly in the middle. As such, they have the flexibility to lean to either side of the dimension, and they can as such be both normative and pragmatic in their behavior and way of thinking.<sup>156</sup>

What this means for IKEA and their marketing strategy, is that they need to be very aware of traditions in Denmark and it could benefit them to introduce specific products that fit within those traditions, or even create specific ways of promoting that includes and relies on those traditions. However, in Romania, it might be more difficult for IKEA to immediately create a successful strategy, as it can be hard to predict how Romanians might react to certain products and types of promotion, since they can be both normative and pragmatic. This could however also mean that IKEA can target both approaches and still be successful, since Romanians can be flexible.

## 6.6 Indulgence

This dimension is concerned with indulgence which has been defined as “the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses.”<sup>157</sup> In countries where it is uncommon to indulge, a culture will be categorized as being restrained, which in conclusion means that a culture can be considered either indulgent or restrained depending on their level of control.

Denmark has a score of 70 within this dimension, which can be considered quite a high score. This means that Denmark can be said to be an indulgent country, meaning that Danes can be said to show more willingness to realize their impulses and desires when it comes to enjoying life and having fun. Furthermore, Danes will have a tendency to possess a positive attitude and can often be seen being more optimistic than others. Ultimately, Danes

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<sup>154</sup>Hofstede Insights, Country Comparison, Denmark Romania, last accessed April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/denmark,romania/>

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup>Hofstede Insights, Country Comparison, Denmark Romania, last accessed April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/denmark,romania/>

place a high degree of importance on leisure time, on acting as they see fit, and on spending money as they wish.<sup>158</sup>

On the other side of the dimension, Romania can be found with a score of 20 making Romania a country of restraint. This means that Romanians more often than not will have a tendency to cynicism and pessimism. Moreover, Romanians do not place a large focus on leisure time, while also having a high degree of control of the gratification of their desires. Romanians are also more likely to believe that their actions are restrained by specific social norms, and as such, indulging feels somewhat wrong.<sup>159</sup>

This is a dimension that should heavily influence the marketing strategies used in Denmark and Romania. Specifically, when it comes to price, it is going to be important to be aware of this dimension and how different Denmark and Romania are. It would seem that Danes are more open and likely to spend money on new furniture and other items sold by IKEA, whereas Romanians are more speculative and likely to not purchase anything unless it is needed and socially acceptable. This difference should be easily seen in IKEA's marketing strategy, and specifically when it comes to price and moreover choice of product promotion. For example, there is going to be a bigger chance that Danes purchase a new couch, even if their current one still works, if it will improve their quality of life. This means that IKEA can freely advertise said couch without worry. However, in Romania it is more likely that a new couch would only be bought when the currently owned couch is completely broken, or in other words, when it has become socially acceptable to spend the money on new furniture. This means that IKEA need to place a larger focus on functionality in their promotion of products, and perhaps in the products they offer within the Romanian market.

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<sup>158</sup>Ibid.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid.

## 6.7 Sub - Conclusion

At this point, it has become quite evident how different Danish and Romanian cultures are, and also how differently IKEA should treat each market in order to maximize their chances of success. The following graph will paint a better picture of how different the two cultures are based on the score they were given within each dimension.

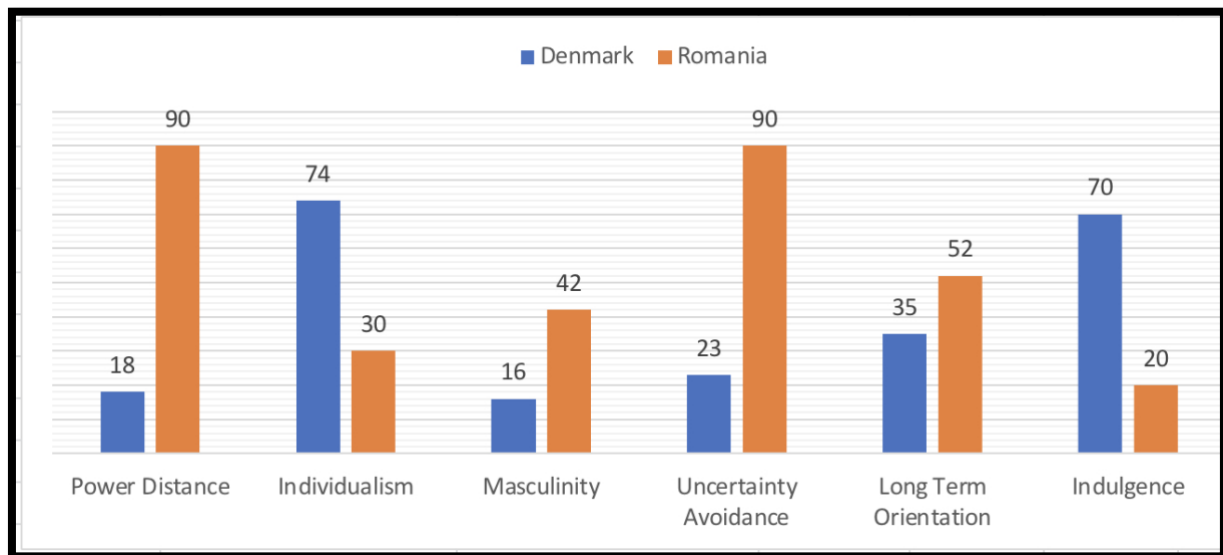


Figure 2. Comparison of the scores given in each dimension.

To summarize, the differences in power distance, and the following perception of the power distance in the two countries, should influence the way in which IKEA communicate with their customers in the two countries. In Denmark, IKEA should be careful with telling Danes what to do and buy, and they should instead be more suggestive in their promotion of their products. What is important is that Danes feel like they have the freedom to choose what they want, when they want. However, in Romania, IKEA can be, and probably should be, more direct with their promotion of their products, as Romanians prefer being told what to do since they respect and prefer having an authoritarian figure.

Moreover, since Denmark can be considered a lot more individualistic, while Romania is more collectivistic, IKEA needs to have different approaches to their promotion of their products and services, and perhaps even the construction of their brand image in the two countries. More specifically, the marketing strategy should be focussed more on promoting the benefits to the individual in Denmark and to the collective in Romania.

The difference in the masculinity/femininity dimension is not as big and IKEA could as such avoid being forced to change their marketing strategy too much between the two markets.

However, when it comes to uncertainty avoidance, there is a big difference between Denmark and Romania, meaning that there is a need for definitively different strategy. In Denmark, IKEA could have more success with introducing plenty of new products, or even ways of promoting their products as Danes have very low uncertainty avoidance and as such are more likely to welcome new things. Romanians will however prefer the “usual” and more known products and ways of promoting as they have very high uncertainty avoidance. This is a very important dimension for IKEA to be aware of, given the big difference.

When it comes to the long-term orientation, there is a very small difference between Denmark and Romania. It could definitely benefit IKEA if they focus on the traditions in Denmark and perhaps design products around those traditions as well as promotional material. Romania seems like more of a gamble where they can lean to either side or at the same time neither side. This means that IKEA might have more difficulty figuring out the market, but at the same time it also means they have more leniency in their marketing choices, and it is as such not a given that they would need to change much between the two markets.

The last dimension should theoretically have a big influence on the marketing strategy as well as it is possible to observe a big difference. Based on this dimension, it can be argued that Danes are a lot more likely to indulge in the purchasing of new furniture and products from IKEA, meaning that IKEA wouldn't necessarily have to focus too much on the price of, for example a couch, when advertising in Denmark, but instead on how said couch can improve a Danes quality of life. However, in Romania IKEA needs to focus more on price and how affordable a product is, since Romanians prefer not to indulge often and only seem to purchase new furniture when it is absolutely necessary.

In conclusion, we are now aware of not just the fact that the two cultures are different but also how exactly they are different. It will as such be interesting to see if the following analysis of the marketing mix in Denmark and Romania reflect an understanding of these differences from IKEA. Overall, it can be argued that there is a need for a predominantly adapted strategy between the two markets, with a few exceptions in where a standardized strategy also benefits IKEA.

## 7. 4P's Marketing Mix Analysis

The following pages will be concerned with the analysis of the 4P's marketing mix in both countries. It will be structured in such a way where one P is considered at a time for both countries. The findings will then be considered and compared properly in the following discussion sections.

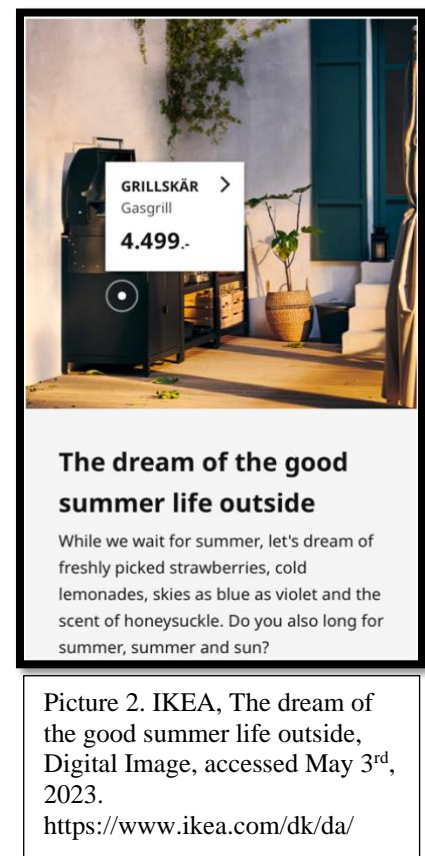
### 7.1 Product – Denmark

As it was mentioned earlier, in the theory section, the P known as product focuses on products and services that a company offers. Moreover, it explains how companies will often attempt to sell a core product to its customers, which then has actual products connected to it as well as augmented products to help persuade the customer to purchase said products.<sup>160</sup>

The preconceived themes that data was coded within, for the entire product section, are “core products”, “actual products”, and lastly “augmented products”.

Since we have adopted a deductive approach to coding in this thesis, and those three elements are what makes up the P known as “product”, it makes sense to draw on those as the main themes for this P.

First of all, let's start by assessing the core products that were actively being pushed by IKEA on their webpage in Denmark. The first example that was found was a core product that focused on summer and the feelings one might get during summer. This was highlighted by the fact that IKEA targets almost every sense in the body, by saying “let's dream of fresh picked strawberries, cold lemonades, skies as blue as violet and the scent of honeysuckle.”<sup>161</sup> Here, the feeling, smell, taste and visual senses were all targeted by the choice of wording. Within this core product, IKEA has numerous different products that they sell. The products range from patio furniture, such as table and chairs, to outdoor storage units, to outdoor lighting, and



Picture 2. IKEA, The dream of the good summer life outside, Digital Image, accessed May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/>

<sup>160</sup> Muhammad Tariq Khan, “The Concept of ‘Marketing Mix’ and its Elements (A Conceptual Review Paper)”, International Journal of Information, Business and Management 6, no. 2 (2014): 98.

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/>

<sup>161</sup> IKEA, “The dream of the good summer life outside”, accessed May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/>

even outdoor kitchens and grills.<sup>162</sup> When it comes to the augmented products that accompany the actual products being sold, they can be said to be the professional assembly service that IKEA offers. Understood here, is that IKEA will have a professional come assemble the products you buy should you not be able to, or want to, do it yourself. This service is of course not free, but it is not the less still an augmented product offered by IKEA.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, IKEA also offers the option of being able to simply purchase the products from home so you can easily come pick them up at the chosen IKEA store without having to go through the entire store looking for each product. By paying extra, IKEA can also deliver the products to your door or even have them carried inside and placed where you want them placed. However, if you pick the products up from one of their stores, they will collect and prepare them for pick up without requiring any extra payment.<sup>164</sup>

Another example of a core product that IKEA actively pushes towards their customers is that of being more sustainable in your everyday life. To be more precise, IKEA writes “Tips and ideas for a more sustainable everyday life at home”. Followed by this sentence are six different categories titled: Energy, trash, water, furniture, alternatives to disposable products, and food

products. Within each category, IKEA offers a selection of different products that, one way or another, relate to the category, and that can help the customer



Picture 3. IKEA, Tips and ideas for a more sustainable everyday life at home, Digital Image, accessed May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/>

become more sustainable in their everyday life.<sup>165</sup> For example, within the energy category, IKEA sells wool carpets and blankets, as well as thick duvets, which they suggest people use to “keep the night chill out” and to “turn cold floors into warm foot huggers”.<sup>166</sup>

Furthermore, within the food products category, IKEA promotes their own food and drink, which they sell in their stores. This is food such as plant-based buns, and veggie hot

<sup>162</sup> IKEA, “Outdoor”, accessed May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/cat/udendors-od001/>

<sup>163</sup> IKEA, “Assembly Service”, accessed May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/customer-service/services/assembly/>

<sup>164</sup> IKEA, “Click and Collect”, accessed May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/customer-service/services/click-collect/>

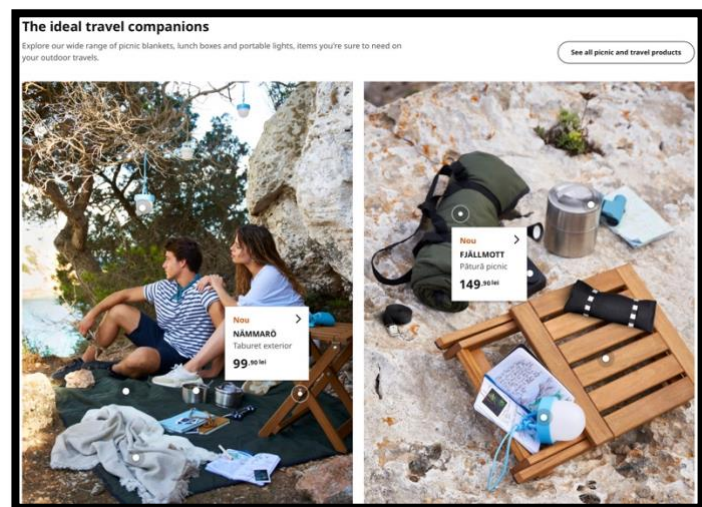
<sup>165</sup> IKEA, “Welcome to Cirkulär”, accessed May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/stores/cirkulaer/>

<sup>166</sup> IKEA, “How to save energy at home”, accessed May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/product-guides/sustainable-products/saving-energy/>

dogs, as well as ready-mixed smoothie mixes. They also suggest that people buy herbs from the supermarket to create their own farm at home, which IKEA uses as a good opportunity to promote their plant pots and other products used for gardening.<sup>167</sup>

## 7.2 Product – Romania

When it comes to the Romanian IKEA webpage, a few examples of core products can also be found by simply scrolling through the initial front page that you arrive at. One such example is when IKEA promotes “The ideal travel companions”, followed by two pictures, one with two people sitting together and the other with the actual products that are attached to this core product. The core product is of course the travel companions that IKEA first highlights and the actual product is the picnic blanket as well as the small table that can easily be brought along on a walk, as well as many other products.<sup>168</sup> Right below the initial sentence that highlights the core product – the travel companions –



Picture 4. IKEA, The Ideal travel companion, Digital Image, accessed May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

IKEA goes on to actively push the mentioned products by saying “Explore our wide range of picnic blankets, lunch boxes and portable lights, items you’re sure to need on your outdoor travels.”<sup>169</sup> An augmented product that comes with this core product, is one that all products sold at IKEA come with, namely their return policy. The return policy allows the customer to get the full amount they spent on the product in return when they return a product they weren’t satisfied with – given they bring a proof of purchase.<sup>170</sup>

A second example of a core product being promoted by IKEA on their front page is that they can help improve your daily life by offering product that can help create rituals in your day-to-day life. Within this core product, IKEA have set up multiple categories

<sup>167</sup> IKEA, “How to eat more sustainably”, accessed May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/product-guides/sustainable-products/sustainable-food/>

<sup>168</sup> IKEA, “The ideal travel companions”, accessed May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> IKEA, “IKEA return policy”, accessed May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/customer-service/returns-claims/return-policy/>

regarding rituals at different points of the day. For example, one such category is “rituals for sunny mornings”, where they suggest singing in the shower, or taking a walk through the forest, or even going for a swim. Within each of these suggestions IKEA offers a selection of actual products that can help the customer do the suggested activities.<sup>171</sup> As with the core product, and accompanying actual products, that were mentioned at first in this section, the actual products belonging to this core product of improving daily life, also come with the return policy.

### 7.2.1 Sub-Conclusion

On the basis of the core products that were found on the front page on either country's webpage, it can be concluded that IKEA, for now, aims to satisfy the same needs for their customers in both Denmark and Romania. The best example of this can be seen in the core product that focuses on the outdoors, meaning they try to promote products that can help the customers satisfy their needs for being outdoors. This is seen through IKEA promoting products in Denmark, that will help you feel like it is summer already and help you enjoy the outdoors. At the same time, IKEA is promoting a bunch of products in Romania that they describe as the ideal travel companions for outdoor activities. Moreover, IKEA also attempts to offer products to those who have a need for improving their daily life in one way or another. In Denmark, this is done by offering the customer tips and ideas on how to be more sustainable in their everyday lives, while IKEA in Romania offers their customers ideas on how to implement more rituals throughout their daily lives. It can as such be argued that the overall goal is the same, as both examples aim at improving your daily life, but in two different ways. Therefore, the overall goal seems to be standardized by IKEA, but the way in which it is accomplished in the two countries is very adapted – which paints a picture of a mixed strategy approach by IKEA.

## 7.3 Products (Comfort) – Denmark & Romania

After having assessed the core products that were obviously visible on IKEA's front page, the following core products were created with the purpose of being able to consider more products, which in turn will help us understand whether or not IKEA sell the same products

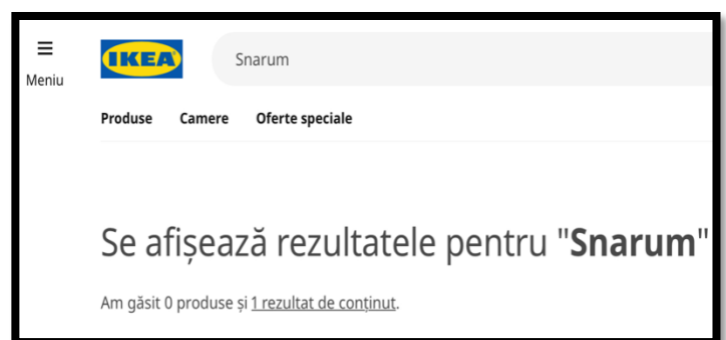
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<sup>171</sup> IKEA, “Daily rituals for a better life”, accessed May 4th, 2023, <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/ideas/everyday-rituals/>

in their Danish and Romanian stores. Should they sell the same products, then that would suggest they have implemented a standardized strategy to a wide range of their products, and should the opposite be true, then that would suggest an adaptive strategy has been employed.

The first core product that was created was given the title “comfort”, and within this core product, the actual products that were considered were five different couches and five different beds. The first five couches that were found, by simply going to the specific section on IKEA’s webpage, were named: Soderhamn, Ektorp, Vimle, Långaryd, and Linanas.<sup>172</sup> These were all couches with different sizes and colors, and they all served the same purpose of giving the customer comfort when sitting down. Following the selection of the five couches on the Danish webpage, the same couches were searched for on the Romanian webpage, and they were all found as well – down to the same size and color option. The only difference between the couches was the price, but that will be mentioned and discussed more during the next P, known as Price. All of the actual products had the same augmented products which were a 10-year guarantee and the option of having them delivered home, or even carried all the way inside to the specific room the customer should want it placed in. Moreover, the option of having someone build it for you is another augmented product attached to all the products.<sup>173</sup>

The five different beds that were found were named: Vevelstad, Snarum, Slattum, Brimnes, and Neiden.<sup>174</sup> These products were a mix of bed frames with, and without, mattresses and mattresses that came with a top mattress and legs as well. One bed frame, the Brimnes, even came with storage underneath. As such, they can be argued to be quite different products while still serving the same purpose, and thus fitting within the same core product of offering comfort for the customer when they sleep in them. Four out of the five beds could also be found on the Romanian webpage. It was only the Snarum which could not be found in Romania, and it seemed as if the entire product series wasn’t sold there.



Picture 5. IKEA, Search for “Snarum”, Digital Image, accessed May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

<sup>172</sup> IKEA, “Sofas”, accessed May 6th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/cat/sofaer-fu003/>

<sup>173</sup> IKEA, “Delivery”, accessed May 6th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/customer-service/services/delivery/>

<sup>174</sup> IKEA, “Beds and bed frames”, accessed May 6th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/cat/senge-og-sengestel-bm003/>

Understood here is that Snarum is the name for more than just the one bed, as it, at least in Denmark, was the name for a variety of different sized and looking beds. None of these beds are sold in Romania, and picture 5 shows that. The screenshots were taken of the two webpages untranslated, with the purpose of



full transparency, and to show the validity of the claim. Each picture says, “Showing results for “Snarum”” followed by “We found x products”. It is quite clear that the Danish page showed 63 products found while the Romanian found 0 products. All of these products share the same augmented products as well, which are a 10-year guarantee as well as the option of having them delivered to your home, just like the couches. In general, the augmented products are the same as the ones mentioned for the couches above, other than the increased guarantee of course.<sup>175</sup>

## 7.4 Products (Organization) – Denmark & Romania

The next core product where actual products that fit within the core product were intentionally looked for is that titled “organization”. Within this core product, we chose five wardrobes and five wall shelves as that would give us the chance to consider some very different product categories to those above – which in turn will help paint a clearer picture of the chosen strategy by IKEA.

First of all, the five wardrobes that were chosen are named: Kleppstad, Brimnes, Godishus, Gursken, and Vilhatten, and they were the five differently named products within the wardrobe category.<sup>176</sup> These are all different wardrobes, meaning that they have different number of doors, colors and sizes, while still serving the same purpose and thus belonging to the core product of organization, which is exactly what they offer the customers. When it comes to the Romanian IKEA store, it was possible to find the exact same products, meaning that they are all sold in both stores – with the only difference being price. The augmented products belonging to these products are the same as the ones for the previous category, namely the guarantee that comes with the products and the option of having them delivered,

<sup>175</sup>IKEA, “Delivery”, accessed May 6th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/customer-service/services/delivery/>

<sup>176</sup>IKEA, “Wardrobes”, accessed May 8th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/cat/garderobeskabe-19053/>

either to the doorstep or brought all the way inside, as well as the option of having a professional build the products for you.<sup>177</sup>

The next five actual products that were looked for were five wall shelves, and the first five that were found are named: Mossland, Bergshult, Svenshult, Boaxel, and Lindåsen. Once more, all five products are different in terms of size, color, and features, meaning that they offer the same core product but with different approaches depending on what the customer wants.<sup>178</sup> All of these products could also be found on the Romanian IKEA page, with the only difference once again being the price. The augmented products that come with the actual products here are the same as the previous five wardrobes, meaning that they can all be delivered, assembled, and have a guarantee should they break unusually or should the customer wish to return them for other reasons.

## 7.5 Products (Physical Needs) – Denmark & Romania

The last core product that was chosen is named physical needs, which will cover the food and drinks sold at IKEA in the two stores. The reason behind the name “physical needs” for this core product is because needing food and drink is part of being human and part of the physical needs that we as humans have, meaning that we will be considering what products IKEA offer to meet those physical needs of their customers. We believed that food and drinks sold would be a good indicator of whether they have adapted to the culture, meaning that all the food sold in both the restaurants and bistros in the two stores have been considered and compared to uncover what food is only sold in the two stores and what food is sold in both. This means that a total of forty-four food items were considered for this core product.

Let’s start with the products that are sold in both stores, see table 1. Seven different products were found to be sold in both Denmark and Romania during the comparison and they are their traditional Swedish meatballs – which also comes in a vegetarian option – fried

Food sold in both countries:
Traditional Swedish Meatballs (Also in a vegetarian option)
Fried fish with fries (Sold with different fries in Romania and with a side of peas)
Oven baked salmon with vegetables.
Vegetarian warap
Daim cake
Apple Cake
Cheesecake with strawberries

Table 1. Food sold in both Denmark and Romania.

<sup>177</sup>IKEA, “Assembly Service”, accessed May 8th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/customer-service/services/assembly/>

<sup>178</sup>IKEA, “Wall Shelves”, accessed May 8th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/cat/vaeghylder-10398/>

fish with fries, with the difference being the type of fries used in Romania as well as the extra side of peas that comes with the dish in Romania. Oven baked salmon with vegetables can also be purchased in both stores as well as a vegetarian wrap. Lastly, three different types of cakes are sold in both countries, namely, daim, apple cake, and cheesecake with strawberries.<sup>179</sup>

When it comes to the food sold only in Denmark, a total of twenty products were found, see table 2. It is food such a bbq and vegan burgers as well as a more traditional Danish dish “herregårdsbøf”, which is a type of steak with fries and peas. Plenty of breakfast options are also sold solely in Denmark, such as a brunch plate, which comes with a croissant, bread, fruit, pancakes, and other toppings. Customers can also purchase some Greek yoghurt with muesli, almonds and blueberries. IKEA also sells two types of Caesar salad, one being the traditional version and the other being with vegan Swedish meatballs. Another traditional Danish food item that IKEA sells is “Råkostsalat”. The list above, table 2, is a full list of all the food that is only sold in Denmark.<sup>180</sup>

Food sold only in Denmark
BBQ Burger
Vegan burger
"Herregårdsbøf" - steak with fries and peas.
Oven baked chicken breast with fries.
Garlic bread with cheese.
Soup of the day.
Steak fries.
Fried chicken with fries - Sold as a dish for children.
Pasta with meat sauce - Sold as a dish for children.
Cardamom Buns
Chocolate crunch cake
Brunch plate with croissants, bread, fruit, pancakes and other toppings.
Breakfast plate with a bun and toppings.
Greek yoghurt with musli, almonds and blueberries.
Traditional Caesar salad.
Casesar salad with vegan Swedish meatballs.
Rocket salad with tomatoes and a dressing.
"Råkostsalat" with raisins and pineapple.
Bread with shrimp, egg, and othet traditional toppings for this meal.
Salmon plate - marinated salmon with lemon and a dill/mustard sauce.

Table 2. Food sold only in Denmark.

<sup>179</sup>IKEA, Swedish Restaurant Menu, accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/> and <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

<sup>180</sup>Ibid.

Lastly, seventeen different types of food are sold solely in the Romanian store, see table 3. The food sold solely in the Romanian store ranges from vegan lasagna to duck leg with mashed potatoes and vegetables and fried chicken with mashed potatoes and vegetables as well. Soup is another thing that IKEA specifically sells in Romania, as they offer both salmon soup and cream soup with mushrooms. One thing that is quite special about the menu in Romania is

Food sold only in Romania
Vegan lasagna.
Duck leg with mashed potatoes and vegetables.
Salmon soup.
Cream soup with mushrooms.
Fried chicken with mashed potatoes and vegetables.
Omelet with bacon.
Toast with ham and cheese.
Sandwich with egg, ham and hollandaise sauce.
Omelet with nothing extra.
One fried egg.
One sausage - also as a chicken version.
One hash-brown.
Granola with yoghurt and fruit.
Yoghurt with cranberry jam and ginger biscuits.
Carrot cake
Almond cake
Salad with cabbage and carrots.

Table 3. Food sold only in Romania.

the option to buy a single fried egg, sausage or hash-brown, which is a piece of fried potato. This can be considered quite special as there is no option to buy a single egg or sausage in Denmark. Lastly, IKEA also sells two different yogurt options, one with granola and berries and the other with cranberry jam and ginger biscuits. The list above is a full list of all the food items that can only be found in the Romanian IKEA.<sup>181</sup>

As it was initially expected, the food sold in the two stores is quite different, and IKEA has truly taken an adaptive strategy approach when it comes to these products.

## 7.6 Price

Like we mentioned in the theory section, the P known as price is concerned with “the amount of money charged for a product or service, or the total value that customers exchange for the benefits of having or using the product or service”.<sup>182</sup> The preconceived theme that was used for this P, is simply “price”. The reason for using this simple theme, is because this P simply just deals with the price of a product or service, and our interest is also concerned with the price of IKEA’s products and services, meaning it makes sense to have “price” as the preconceived theme to code within.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid

<sup>182</sup> Muhammad Tariq Khan, “The Concept of ‘Marketing Mix’ and its Elements (A Conceptual Review Paper)”, International Journal of Information, Business and Management 6, no. 2 (2014): 99. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/concept-marketing-mix-elements-conceptual-review/docview/1511120790/se-2?accountid=8144>

The following sections will first deal with how IKEA themselves approach price and how they can offer the price that they can. Thereafter, examples of price being mentioned on their front page, on both the Danish and Romanian IKEA webpage will be discussed in an attempt to uncover how important price is as a tool when it comes to the promotion of their products. The last sections will then deal with the actual prices of their products, to get a better understanding of whether or not they have the same prices for the same products in Denmark and Romania.

Our initial researched showed that IKEA can be considered a low cost-oriented furnishing company, as their initial business idea was to create “a wide range of well designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them.”<sup>183</sup> To add to this, the IKEA Group Company from Denmark has stated on their official website: “we must create products with a beautiful design, good features that are more sustainable, of good quality and available at low prices”.<sup>184</sup> It is these two statements from IKEA themselves that paints the initial picture of them being a low-cost oriented company, but the later analysis of their prices of the same products in Denmark and Romania will help us understand if that is truly the case in both countries.

There are a few reasons why IKEA can function as a low-cost oriented company, and one of those reasons is the self-service model they employ in their stores by having clear in-store displays of a multitude of their products, which in turn means that they don’t need salespeople to attend customers. Moreover, IKEA does not rely on any third-party manufactures and the way in which IKEA designs their products in a low-cost and ready-to-assemble way also helps them achieve as low as possible prices, as the customers are the ones building the furniture.<sup>185</sup> Lastly, by flat packing their products, IKEA can also reduce the cost of shipping, construction and assembly, as each product takes up less space and doesn’t require any assembling before shipping. This also means that IKEA can save space in their warehouses which in turn means they can store more products without having to purchase more space.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Mengling Chen and Xin Huang, “Why do IKEA’s products have different prices in different countries?”, 23. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:542036/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

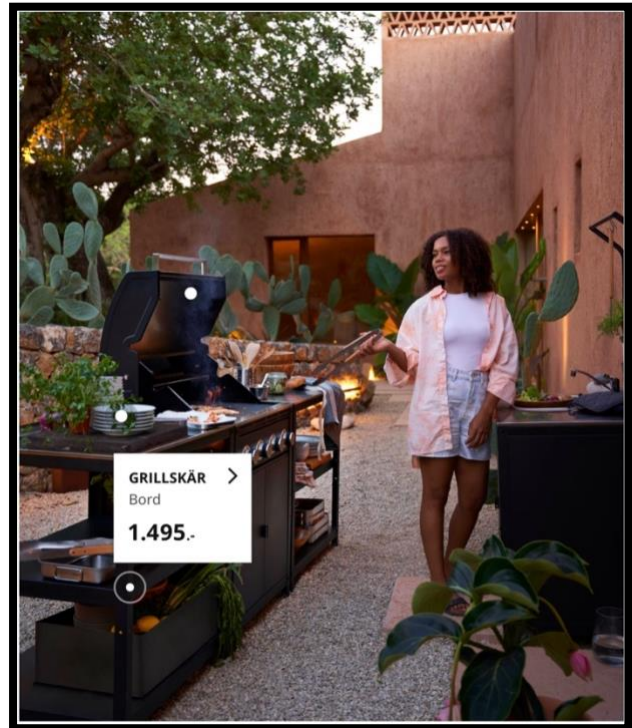
<sup>184</sup> IKEA Denmark, “Vision and Business Idea”, last accessed May 9th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/this-is-ikea/about-us/vision-og-forretningside-pub9cd02291>

<sup>185</sup> Ikea’s low price strategy, *Supply chain management* (blog), February 5th, 2013, <http://cmuscm.blogspot.com/2013/02/ikeas-low-price-strategy.html>

<sup>186</sup> IKEA Denmark, “Vision and Business Idea”, last accessed May 9th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/this-is-ikea/about-us/vision-og-forretningside-pub9cd02291>

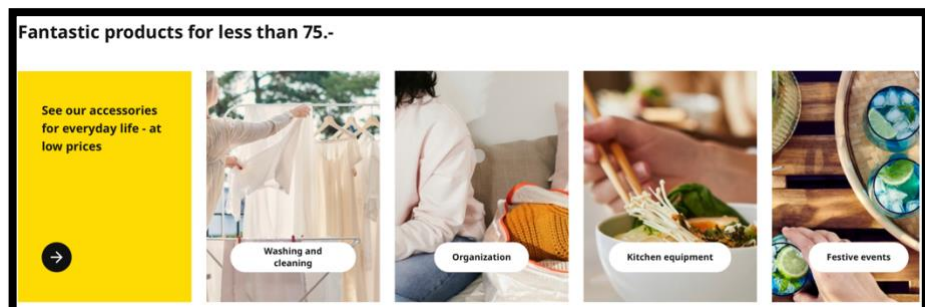
## 7.7 Price – Denmark

When considering the front page of IKEA's Danish webpage, it is possible to notice just a few examples where price is directly mentioned and highlighted. More often than not, if the customer wants to see the price, then they have to actively click on the products. However, one example of the price being obviously shown is the following instance, where an outdoor table is being advertised.<sup>187</sup> Other than this example, only three more examples were found on the entire front page, where the price of a product was actively shown without any need for extra clicks and searches. This paints a clear picture of price not being a big focus when it comes to



Picture 7. IKEA, Grill table, Digital Image, accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da>

promoting products on their webpage. However, one example shows how exactly IKEA is trying to focus on being a low-cost oriented furnishing company, as they actively promote products that are under a certain price. They not only promote one product they promote five different categories that each have multiple different products



Picture 8. IKEA, Fantastic products for less than 75,-, Digital Image, accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da>

within them. IKEA titles that section “Fantastic products for less than 75,-“, meaning that they quite obviously have a big focus on promoting how low of a price they can offer for these products, which is what furthers the narrative of them being a low-cost oriented company.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>187</sup>IKEA, Grill table, accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da>

<sup>188</sup>IKEA, Fantastic products for less than 75,- accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da>

## 7.8 Price – Romania

The front page of the Romanian IKEA webpage has noticeably more products where the price is actively mentioned and shown. However, there are still a lot of instances where the customer has to do extra clicks and searches to see the price of certain products. One example of price being shown and pushed is the picture to the right, where a carriage is being promoted with the price of it being actively shown. There are four more examples on the front page where a product is being promoted with the price shown next to it.<sup>189</sup>



Picture 9. IKEA, Carriage, Digital Image, accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

Another thing that is quite similar to Denmark is the fact that IKEA has also created a section where they write “Excellent products for less than 25 lei”, which comes to about 37 DKK. Within this section they promote seven different categories that all have multiple products that cost less than 37DKK. Up until this point it would seem that price is equally important in both countries, at



Picture 10. IKEA, Excellent products for less than 25 lei, Digital Image, accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

least when the front page of the two IKEA stores are considered.<sup>190</sup>

However, there are two examples from the Romanian front page that shows how exactly price is slightly more important in Romania than Denmark. One of those examples is when IKEA has a section titled “Prices as low as possible”, where a product is also being advertised with the price shown. IKEA furthermore goes on to explain how they have

<sup>189</sup>IKEA, Carriage, accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

<sup>190</sup>IKEA, Excellent products for less than 25 lei, accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

decreased the price of some of their most loved products, which truly furthers the argument of IKEA being low-cost oriented. It also shows how price is being actively used as a marketing tool in Romania compared to how little price is used in Denmark.<sup>191</sup>



Picture 11. IKEA, Prices as low as possible, Digital Image, accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

### 7.8.1 Sub-Conclusion

The initial findings on the two webpages clearly shows how price is less used as a promotional tool in Denmark compared to how it is used in Romania, where almost double the examples of price being shown could be found. At this stage, it is also clear that IKEA does indeed seem like a low-cost oriented furnishing company, especially based on the fact that they created several categories on both webpages where they advertise a multitude of products sold under a specific price. Moreover, the last example used in the section about Romania, IKEA is advertising having prices as low as possible, which also shows how price and cost focused they actually are.

## 7.9 Price – Denmark & Romania

As it has been mentioned a few times, the prices of the products chosen for the core products that we constructed, is going to be considered with the purpose of understanding whether IKEA has different prices, and if they do, how much do the prices fluctuate. It should be noted that the products found on the Romanian webpage showed the price in their own currency, Lei, but it has been converted into Danish kroner for the sake of an easier comparison and understanding.

Let's start with the core product named "comfort" and more precisely the couches that were considered as the actual products within this core product. The following table shows the price of each couch in Denmark and then in Romania, as well as the

Couches	Danish Price	Romanian Price	Difference	Cheapest
<i>Soderhamn</i>	4.549 DKK	4.989 DKK	440 DKK	Denmark
<i>Ektorp</i>	2.999 DKK	2.418 DKK	581 DKK	Romania
<i>Vimle</i>	4.999 DKK	5.291 DKK	292 DKK	Denmark
<i>Långaryd</i>	7.799 DKK	9.677 DKK	1.878 DKK	Denmark
<i>Linanas</i>	2.499 DKK	2.569 DKK	70 DKK	Denmark

Table 4. Couches and their price.

<sup>191</sup>IKEA, Prices as low as possible, accessed May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

difference in how much it costs as well as which country it is cheapest within. The difference in price between the couches fluctuates quite a lot from 70 DKK all the way to 1.878 DKK, and four out of the five couches are cheaper when purchased in Denmark, as only the Ektorp couch is cheaper in Romania. It would as such seem like IKEA have an adapted strategy when it comes to the pricing of their couches in the two countries.<sup>192</sup>

Next are the other products that were considered in this core product, namely the five beds. As

Beds	Danish Price	Romanian Price	Difference	Cheapest
<i>Vevelstad</i>	899 DKK	754 DKK	145 DKK	Romania
<i>Snarum</i>	3.049 DKK	Not Sold.	Not Valid.	Not Valid.
<i>Slattum</i>	1.499 DKK	1.057 DKK	442 DKK	Romania
<i>Brimnes</i>	2.449 DKK	1.964 DKK	485 DKK	Romania
<i>Neiden</i>	599 DKK	527 DKK	72 DKK	Romania

Table 5. Beds and their price.

it was discussed during the product section, the bed named “Snarum” is not sold in Romania, meaning that only four price comparisons were possible in this instance. Compared to the couches, the difference in price didn’t fluctuate nearly as much which is evident in the fact that the lowest difference was 72 DKK and the largest was only 485 DKK. One interesting thing about the beds is the fact that they were all cheaper in Romania, other than the one bed that couldn’t be bought in Romania at all of course. This would suggest that IKEA might have different pricing strategies for each category of products they sell. The reasoning for arguing this, at this stage, is due to the fact that four out of five couches were sold cheaper in Denmark while four out of five beds are cheaper in Romania. Even if the difference in price isn’t large, it could still suggest the use of an adaptive strategy by IKEA when it comes to price.<sup>193</sup>

The second core product that was created and considered was that

Wardrobes	Danish Price	Romanian Price	Difference	Cheapest
<i>Kleppstad</i>	799 DKK	679 DKK	120 DKK	Romania
<i>Brimnes</i>	1.199 DKK	1.208 DKK	9 DKK	Denmark
<i>Godishus</i>	699 DKK	724 DKK	25 DKK	Denmark
<i>Gursken</i>	549 DKK	453 DKK	96 DKK	Romania
<i>Vilhatten</i>	1.199 DKK	1.359 DKK	160 DKK	Denmark

Table 6. Wardrobes and their prices.

named “organization”, which contains the wardrobes and

<sup>192</sup>IKEA, Sofas, accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/> and <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

<sup>193</sup>IKEA, Beds, accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/> and <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

wall shelves. First of all, the wardrobes are very closely linked in price when comparing the two countries. The difference becomes as small as 9 DKK when comparing the Brimnes wardrobe in Denmark and Romania, and the Vilhatten has the biggest difference between the two countries with 160 DKK. A 9 DKK difference might as well mean that they cost the same, as a simple fluctuation in the value of the Danish Kroner and Romanian Lei could mean that the difference drops to about 0 DKK. When it comes to where the wardrobes are the cheapest, it is basically a split between the two countries. If the 9 DKK difference is excluded, as it is minuscule, then the situation is that two wardrobes are cheaper in Denmark and two are cheaper in Romania. By multiplying the difference of the products that are cheaper in Romania and the difference of the products that are cheaper in Denmark, it becomes clear that the total difference is slightly higher in Romania with 216 DKK compared to 185 DKK in Denmark, meaning that there are slightly more money to be saved on wardrobes in Romania in total. Since the difference is so small, it can be debated whether this is the result of an adaptive strategy by IKEA, or whether it is simply the result of transportation costs being different or even the value of the two currencies fluctuating at the time of converting.<sup>194</sup>

Lastly,  
the wall shelves  
category is  
where the  
smallest  
difference can

Wall Shelves	Danish Price	Romanian Price	Difference	Cheapest
<i>Mosslanda</i>	85 DKK	75 DKK	10 DKK	Romania
<i>Bergshult</i>	129 DKK	129 DKK	0 DKK	Equal
<i>Svenshult</i>	139 DKK	120 DKK	19 DKK	Romania
<i>Boaxel</i>	50 DKK	30 DKK	20 DKK	Romania
<i>Lindåsen</i>	129 DKK	80 DKK	49 DKK	Romania

be found of all the products and their prices that have

Table 7. Wall Shelves and their price.

been considered thus far. The Bergshult wall shelves had a difference of 0 DKK, meaning that it is the first product to be sold at exactly the same price in both Denmark and Romania. The wall shelf named Lindåsen has the biggest difference in this product category with 49 DKK, which truly shows how close the prices are of all of these products. All of the products, except the Bergshult wall shelf, are cheaper in Romania compared to Denmark. Even if the differences are small, it is still noteworthy that all of the products are cheaper in Romania as

<sup>194</sup>IKEA, Wardrobes, accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/> and <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

that paints a picture of IKEA employing an adaptive strategy that focuses on selling products cheaper in Romania.<sup>195</sup>

The last core product that was considered was that titled “physical needs” which investigated the food sold in the two IKEA restaurants. Since it wouldn’t make sense to

Food	Danish Price	Romanian Price	Difference	Cheapest
<i>Traditional Swedish meatballs</i>	29 DKK	27 DKK	2 DKK	Romania
<i>Fried fish with fries</i>	59 DKK	39 DKK	20 DKK	Romania
<i>Oven baked salmon + Veg</i>	69 DKK	52 DKK	17 DKK	Romania
<i>Vegetarian wrap</i>	22 DKK	13 DKK	9 DKK	Romania
<i>Daim Cake</i>	29 DKK	12 DKK	17 DKK	Romania
<i>Apple Cake</i>	22 DKK	8 DKK	14 DKK	Romania
<i>Cheese Cake with strawberries</i>	29 DKK	15 DKK	14 DKK	Romania

Table 8. Food sold in both countries, and their price.

consider every food item that was gathered, only those that were found in both countries have been included here. As it has been mentioned, a total of seven food items were found to be sold both in Denmark and Romania. Across all of the food items, the price doesn’t fluctuate too much, as it ranges from a mere 2 DKK when it comes to the traditional Swedish meatballs and up to 20 DKK when purchasing the fried fish with fries. The majority of the food items have a difference somewhere between 10-20 DKK, and noticeably, all of the food is cheaper in Romania. This could be seen as another argument to IKEA using an adaptive strategy between the two markets as the price of every food item has been adapted in Romania.<sup>196</sup>

### 7.9.1 Sub-Conclusion

One noteworthy and interesting thing to take away from this is the fact that the difference in price became smaller and smaller as the products also decreased in size. This is evident in the fact that the biggest difference can be found within the couch product category of 1.878 DKK and the smallest within the wall shelves product category of just 49 DKK. The specific reason behind why this is happening can be hard to pinpoint. However, one reason could be the fact that IKEA manufacture all of their products in bulk, so that they can get a discount on the entire production.<sup>197</sup> Knowing this, we can speculate about the production costs, and it is not difficult to imagine that the smaller products are cheaper to manufacture, and it is potentially

<sup>195</sup>IKEA, Wall shelves, accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/> and <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

<sup>196</sup>IKEA, Swedish Restaurant Menu, accessed May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/> and <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/>

<sup>197</sup>Jessica Tyler, Here are IKEA’s secrets to keeping its prices so low, *Business Insider*, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018. <https://www.businessinsider.com/why-ikea-is-so-cheap-2018-10?r=US&IR=T>

easier to manufacturer a larger amount of them compared to a big couch. This means that the reason the price decreases as the products decrease in size, is because IKEA can manufacturer a larger quantity of the smaller products at the same time, compared to the larger ones, which in turn gives them a greater discount on the large quantity of smaller products. Moreover, in eleven of the twenty products that were considered, said products were cheaper in Romania. Of the remaining nine products, one was the same in both countries, one didn't exist in Romania and the remaining seven can be found cheaper in Denmark. If this result is to be extended to the rest of IKEA and the products they offer, then that would mean that they have adopted an adaptive strategy where the focus is on selling most of their products cheaper in Romania, which is evident by the fact that over half of the considered products were cheaper there. The fact that all of the food items are cheaper in Romania also supports this claim of an adaptive strategy being present when comparing the two markets.

## 7.10 Place

The third P known as "Place" is the first P that deals less with the actual products themselves and more with the processes and systems around the products and services that makes them available to the customers. This was also explained earlier by the definition given in theory, which stated that place can be understood as: "a set of interdependent organizations that caters to the process of making a product available to the customers."<sup>198</sup> For this P, the preconceived themes that the data was coded within were "distribution" as well as "product availability". These two themes basically encompass what "place" deals with, which is why it makes sense to rely on specifically these two themes and to code data within them. The first section is concerned with how IKEA's products are distributed around the world from where they manufacture them. The section thereafter, then deals with how IKEA makes their products available to their customers in the two countries.

Before a product can be made available to the customer it of course needs to be produced first. IKEA have said that they manufacture their products all around the world, namely in five locations, and they are: China, Poland, Italy, Germany, and Sweden.<sup>199</sup> IKEA has also said that they use more than 1200 local furniture suppliers located around the world,

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<sup>198</sup> Muhammad Tariq Khan, "The Concept of 'Marketing Mix' and its Elements (A Conceptual Review Paper)", *International Journal of Information, Business and Management* 6, no. 2 (2014): 102.  
<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/concept-marketing-mix-elements-conceptual-review/docview/1511120790/se-2?accountid=8144>

<sup>199</sup> IKEA, "Where are your products manufactured", accessed May 11th, 2023.  
<https://www.ikea.com/gb/en/customer-service/knowledge/articles/>

as well as 100 food suppliers and 275 transportation suppliers.<sup>200</sup> With this level of logistics, IKEA can easily get their products transported around the world to all of their different stores. Another thing that makes the transportation easy is the way in which IKEA packages their products. It is well known that customers who buy products from IKEA, have to build said products themselves, which is what allows IKEA to package their products in the famous flat-packed way. The flat-packed products will not only fit into the customers mode of transportation easier, but it also means that even more units can fit into a truck or container as they are transported to the designated store. Lastly, by flat-packing the products, IKEA can also make better use of their warehouse space as they can easily stack products.<sup>201</sup>

Following the manufacturing of a product, IKEA conducts quality checks before they are shipped off to the stores. However, IKEA employs independent firms, who are located closer to the manufacturer, to conduct these quality checks. An example of this can be seen in China where IKEA has employed a company named Intertek to take care of these quality checks, which means that IKEA does not have to struggle with the complexities of long-distance collaboration with the manufacturer and even remanufacture of the products that aren't up to standard. Instead, the local company, in this instance Intertek, can take care of these issues on behalf of IKEA.<sup>202</sup>

Now knowing where and how the products are manufactured, the remaining question is, how do they get transported to the rest of the world? The answer to this question is container ships. To elaborate, the products manufactured, in for example China, will be loaded onto a container ship and then shipped to where ever in the world they need to go. Upon reaching its destination, the products will then be loaded onto either a truck or a train which will transport the products by railway. At this stage, the products are then transported to one of the many distribution centers that IKEA has built all over the world.<sup>203</sup> From the distribution centers, the products can then be individually sent to whichever store needs said products, which can also be done through the use of independent truckers.<sup>204</sup>

In 2018, IKEA had nearly 1.000 suppliers in 50 countries, and the way they transport products to its stores is through the regional distribution centers, as was just mentioned.<sup>205</sup> In

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid

<sup>201</sup> Steven Ehrlich, "Logistics By Ikea", *Forbes*, September 29th, 2005. [https://www.forbes.com/2005/09/28/logistics-ikea-retail-cx\\_rm\\_0929ikea.html](https://www.forbes.com/2005/09/28/logistics-ikea-retail-cx_rm_0929ikea.html)

<sup>202</sup> Ibid

<sup>203</sup> Ibid

<sup>204</sup> Ibid

<sup>205</sup> IKEA, "IKEA Expands Distribution Network With New Customer Fulfillment Center in Lakeland FL", September, 29th, 2021. <https://www.ikea.com/us/en/newsroom/corporate-news/ikea-expands-distribution-network-with-new-customer-fulfillment-center-in-lakeland-fl-pub598f5877>

connection to the chosen countries, Denmark and Romania, one remaining question, where is the nearest distribution center, as that could potentially be said to influence price and product availability should IKEA have to transport their products from further. The nearest distribution center to the stores located in Romania is in Strebersdorf Vienna in Austria, which, according to google maps is about 11 hours and 18 minutes away by car.<sup>206</sup> Comparatively, the closest distribution center to Denmark is located in Almhult in Sweden, which is, according to google maps, 6 hours and 19 minutes away from the IKEA store in Aalborg, which is the furthest store from the distribution center.<sup>207</sup> This means that it takes almost twice as long for IKEA to get products transported to their Romanian stores compared to their Danish stores. However, in both instances, transportation can be done within a day, meaning that day to day delivery of products is still an option, and neither the price or product availability should be affected much by the distance.

### 7.11 Place – Denmark

When it comes to IKEA in Denmark, a total of five stores can be found spread across the country in the cities, Aalborg, Aarhus, Odense, Taastrup, and Gentofte, which means that unless you're in the southern park of Denmark, access to an IKEA store is quite easy. Moreover, IKEA also have three planning studios located in Esbjerg, Vesterbro, and Vejle. At these locations customer can get help with their next house upgrades, and they get a chance to feel and see the different products and materials that can be used in said upgrade.<sup>208</sup> Moreover, IKEA is planning on opening a sixth store in Copenhagen sometime during 2023, which further testifies to IKEA focusing on the major cities when planning their store locations.<sup>209</sup>

Other than the physical store locations, IKEA also has an app where customers can browse through all the products and even purchase them from the app and have it all delivered without having to go to the physical store. Furthermore, IKEA has also made it so that customers can scan the products they wish to buy, while walking around in the physical store, and then pay through the app meaning that they don't have to stand in line at check

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<sup>206</sup> IKEA, "IKEA pickup station Vienna Strebersdorf", accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/at/de/stores/abholstation-strebersdorf/>

<sup>207</sup> Google, "IKEA Distribution Service", accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.google.com/>

<sup>208</sup> IKEA, "Addresses and opening hours", accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/stores/>

<sup>209</sup> IKEA, "IKEA-Copenhagen Opens in 2023", accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/stores/kobenhavn/>

out.<sup>210</sup> Customers can also simply choose the option called Click & Collect when shopping on the app or on the webpage, which means that the products can be ordered and purchased from home, and then simply picked up at the chosen store, or at one of the 45 local pick-up locations that IKEA have established across Denmark.<sup>211</sup>

Another service that IKEA offers is something called “furniture express”, which is a service for those who can’t transport the purchased products home with them. Instead, the customer can simply hand over the products to a driver waiting outside in the parking-lot, who will then transport the products to the destination of choice. This is of course not a free service and requires payment, and at this time, it is only available at two of five stores in Denmark.<sup>212</sup> A different option to the furniture express service is to rent one of the trailers IKEA have standing outside their physical stores. In the instances where the purchased products won’t fit in the car, the customer can easily rent one of those trailers for free through an app named Freetrailer.<sup>213</sup>

It is quite clear that IKEA offers numerous different ways, and services, for the customers to purchase, pick up, and even transport the many different products they sell. The products sold by IKEA can therefore be said to have been made readily available for the Danish customers wherever they are in the country, and shopping at IKEA in Denmark has been made as convenient as possible.

## 7.12 Place – Romania

Compared to Denmark, IKEA has constructed significantly less stores in Romania with only two stores existing today. Both of these stores are located in and around Bucharest, making it quite difficult for every Romanian to shop at IKEA.<sup>214</sup>

IKEA does however offer online shopping through either their Romanian webpage or the app, which was also talked about above. With the app, Romanians can find tips and inspiration and they can browse through all the products offered by IKEA, and even check the availability of the products before going to the physical stores. Customers can also create

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<sup>210</sup> IKEA, “Use the IKEA app in the department store and skip the queue with Scan & Pay”, accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/customer-service/mobile-apps/ikea-app-pub59385840>

<sup>211</sup> INGKA, “Convenience for the many in Denmark”, last modified March 5, 2020. <https://www.ingka.com/news/convenience-for-the-many-in-denmark/>

<sup>212</sup> IKEA, “Furniture Express”, accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/customer-service/services/delivery/mobelekspres-pub00212b10>

<sup>213</sup> IKEA, “Rent a trailer”, accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/dk/da/customer-service/services/lan-en-trailer-pubc4c99538>

<sup>214</sup> IKEA, “IKEA Stores”, accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/stores/>

a shopping list within the app, making shopping in the physical store a bit more convenient and potentially faster. However, it is not possible to scan and pay through the use of the app, like customers in Denmark can.<sup>215</sup>

Another service that IKEA offers in Romania is click and collect, but only when buying stuff on their online webpage, as the app doesn't allow for purchasing. This means that, just like in Denmark, customers can purchase the products from home and then simply show up at a designated time and location and pickup the ordered products.<sup>216</sup> As something new, IKEA also offers a service called click and collect box, where the purchased products will be placed into a box that the customer can open with a specific pin code they get when the order is ready. This is a free service and instead of having to collect the products on the same day, and at a specific time, the customer has two days to pick the order up and can do it whenever they have time as the boxes are placed outside the store.<sup>217</sup>

To combat the lack of stores in Romania, IKEA has introduced an option for delivery that can reach every corner of Romania, as long as the customer is willing to pay for the delivery. If the products are less than 30 kg, then a courier will deliver the products, and anything above that will be delivered by truck, which might prolong the transportation and thus alter the delivery date. Depending on how far away the customer is from the physical stores, the prices will increase as well.<sup>218</sup>

Lastly, IKEA also has pickup points in Romania. However, compared to the 45 pickup options in Denmark, customers in Romania only have five different ones to choose between. These pickup points are all located in some of the bigger cities in Romania, such as Cluj, Brasov, and Iasi. This service allows the customers to pick their products up from somewhere closer and at a lower price than having them delivered home. IKEA are currently expanding this service, as they have opened up a new pickup point on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2023 in Sibiu.<sup>219</sup>

Even though IKEA don't have a lot of stores in Romania, they are offering many different services that help make the products readily available to all corners of the country. Through the delivery system and pickup options, those who live far away from the physical

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<sup>215</sup> IKEA, "Discover the IKEA apps", accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/customer-service/mobile-apps/>

<sup>216</sup> IKEA, "Click & Collect", accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/customer-service/services/click-and-collect-pub7acc7060>

<sup>217</sup> IKEA, "Click & Collect Box", accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/customer-service/services/click-and-collect-box-pub39fb3450>

<sup>218</sup> IKEA, "Delivery service", accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/customer-service/services/delivery/#18fc4069-0a57-11ec-912c-d5190c7baa2c>

<sup>219</sup> IKEA, "IKEA ordercollection points", accessed May 11th, 2023. <https://www.ikea.com/ro/ro/stores/punctele-de-ridicare-comenzi-pub724fcc91>

stores can still be customers of IKEA and will still have, to some degree, their products readily available. However, the level of convenience involved with shopping at IKEA, is not nearly as high as it is in Denmark, given the lack of pickup points and lack of app services. For those living closer to the physical stores, IKEA still offers plenty of convenience, especially through their “click and collect” service and the “click and collect” box service, which is a good option for those who might have busier days and need more time to pick up their products.

### 7.13 Promotion

“Promotion”, as mentioned in the theory section, deals with how exactly a company such as IKEA communicates the benefits of their products to their customers. This can be done in numerous ways. However, for this thesis we have decided to focus on how IKEA promotes their products through a social media platform, namely, Instagram. In this section, the instagram pages that IKEA has for Romania and for Denmark will be analysed in order to uncover how they market their products in each country. Doing this will allow us to find differences in their marketing strategy, differences that could perhaps be linked to culture.

We have approached the analysis of IKEA’s instagram pages (both for Romania and Denmark) in a deductive way. Through a deductive approach to thematic analysis, the data is approached with some already preconceived themes that we expect to find, based on our theory or on existing knowledge. In this case, based on the categorization of posts mentioned in choice of material, we have the already preconceived themes that we expected to find when analysing IKEA’s instagram pages. The preconceived themes are: “sales promotion”, “current events”, “functional brand posts”, and “emotional brand posts”.

The posts that fit under “sales promotion” would be posts related to the prices of products, the availability points, competitions, discounts, coupons and promotional offers.<sup>220</sup> When it comes to the “current events” theme, the posts that would fit here would be the ones that involve an active talking point that exists among a population. This could be relating to holidays, cultural events (film, sports, TV shows, etc.), the weather or season, anniversaries and so on.<sup>221</sup> Under the theme “functional brand posts”, the posts that would fit here would be the ones that highlight the benefits of a product (quality, efficiency, style,

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<sup>220</sup>WondwesenTafesse and Anders Wien, “A framework for categorizing social media posts”, *Cogent Business and Management*, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 19. Doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2017.1284390

<sup>221</sup>Ibid, 15

features).<sup>222</sup> Last but not least, under the theme “emotional brand posts”, posts that include emotional language, inspiring stories, as well as humour and trivia would be found.<sup>223</sup>

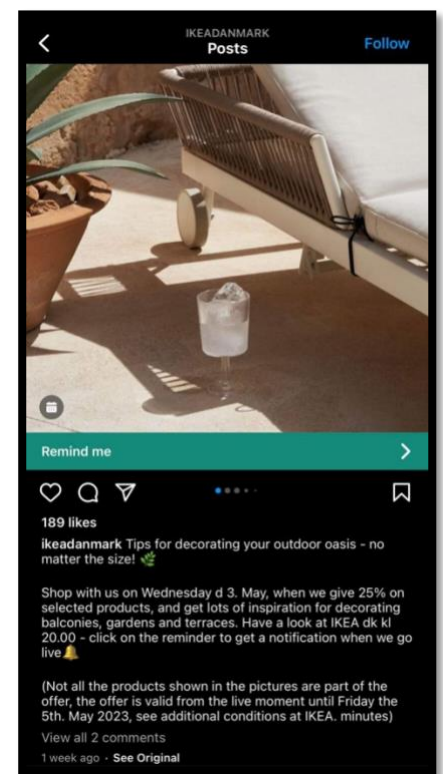
However, it is important to mention that some posts can include elements that make them fit under more than one theme. When that is the case, the post will be put under the theme that we find to be the major theme of the post.

## 7.14 IKEA Denmark instagram

### 7.14.1 Sales promotion

When looking at IKEA’s instagram page for Denmark while having the preconceived theme of “sales promotion”, a good amount of posts were found to fit under this theme. To be more precise, a total of nineteen posts have been found to fit under the theme “sales promotion”.

However, not all of them will be mentioned if they are similar, in order to avoid repetition. A post that promotes an IKEA sun bed has the following caption: “Tips for decorating your outdoor oasis – no matter the size! Shop with us on Wednesday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, when we give 25% off on selected products, and get lots of inspiration for decorating balconies, gardens and terraces.”<sup>224</sup> Here, they clearly present an offer of 25% off for their customers. This makes this post fit perfectly under this theme.



Picture 12. @ikeadanmark, ”Tips for decorating your outdoor oasis”, Instagram, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark>

<sup>222</sup>Ibid, 11

<sup>223</sup>Ibid, 10

<sup>224</sup> @ikeadanmark, ”Tips for decorating your outdoor oasis”, Instagram, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

This is not the only post where they offer a discount of 25% on their products in Denmark. Another post promoting cutlery and glass says: “Can you also feel the wedding season approaching? Right now, IKEA Family Members get a 25% discount on the STORSINT glass range. Valid from the 6<sup>th</sup> of April to the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2023, as long as supplies last.”<sup>225</sup> In addition, IKEA also offers a 25% discount on a train set for kids, through a post that says: “All aboard. Calling all little engineers. With LILLABO you can walk around, load Christmas goods and build tracks. IKEA Family Members get 25% off on the LILLABO series from today. Click on the pictures. Offer valid from 12/1 to 12/14/2022, while stocks last.”<sup>226</sup>

A different post that promotes bedding has the following text on the picture: “45% af danskerne drømmer om at sove bedre”<sup>227</sup>, while the caption says: “We would like to help with that! We are going live on IKEA.dk, where you get 20% discount on your night’s sleep. But wait, there’s more! You can also participate in the competition to win an online interior design consultation for your bedroom. So settle down in your softest pyjamas and we’ll see you live on Thursday March 2<sup>nd</sup>?”<sup>228</sup>. Another competition that IKEA offers involves three Halloween themed products. The caption says the following: “HALLOWEEN COMPETITION. For today’s occasion, three of our little favourites look spooky good. Place your guess on what we could name one of the three products and enter the draw for a 500.- gift card to IKEA”<sup>229</sup>, followed by more information about the competition. The codes found here through thematic analysis are the offers and the competitions, which all fit into the bigger preconceived theme “sales promotion”.



Picture 13. @ikeadanmark, “We would like to help with that!”, Instagram, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark>

<sup>225</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Can you also feel the wedding season approaching?”, Instagram, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>226</sup> @ikeadanmark, “All aboard. Calling all little engineers”, Instagram, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>227</sup> @ikeadanmark, “We would like to help with that!”, Instagram, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> @ikeadanmark, “HALLOWEEN COMPETITION”, Instagram, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

When analysing their posts further, it was discovered that IKEA is extremely focused on promoting new collections in Denmark. A total of five posts were found, where they promoted the arrival of the “OMSESIDIG” collection, through captions such as: “NEW. Get ready for spontaneous gatherings with the new special collection OMSESIDIG, created in collaboration with 9 Latin American designers. The collection will be available from April 5<sup>th</sup> in your local IKEA department store”<sup>230</sup> or “The OMSESIDIG collection will soon dance into our lives. Find the special collection from April 5<sup>th</sup> in your local IKEA department store”<sup>231</sup>.

It is clear that IKEA focuses on promoting the collection before its arrival, but also after its arrival, with posts that say: “Find the special collection OMSESIDIG in your local IKEA department store now”<sup>232</sup>, urging people to come and buy this collection. Through posts like these, they clearly show when and where customers can find their products, which makes these posts fit under this theme.

Another collection that they promote is the “BASTUA” collection. IKEA uses a competition to promote this collection, through a post that says: “Win a goodie bag from the BASTUA collection and a place for you and a friend to a sauna. Who do you want with you?”, followed by more information about the competition<sup>233</sup>. However, similarly to the OMSESIDIG collection, IKEA also makes posts regarding when the collection will arrive: “The BASTUA collection arrives in the beginning of March”<sup>234</sup>. The competitions and the availability time are codes that fit within this theme. VARMBLIXT is another collection that IKEA promotes on their Instagram page in Denmark, through a caption that says: “Are you guys ready? Welcome VARMBLIXT. Designed in collaboration with @sabine\_marcelis. Do

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<sup>230</sup> @ikeadanmark, “NEW. Get ready for spontaneous gatherings with the new special collection OMSESIDIG”, Instagram, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>231</sup> @ikeadanmark, “The OMSESIDIG collection will soon dance into our lives”, Instagram, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

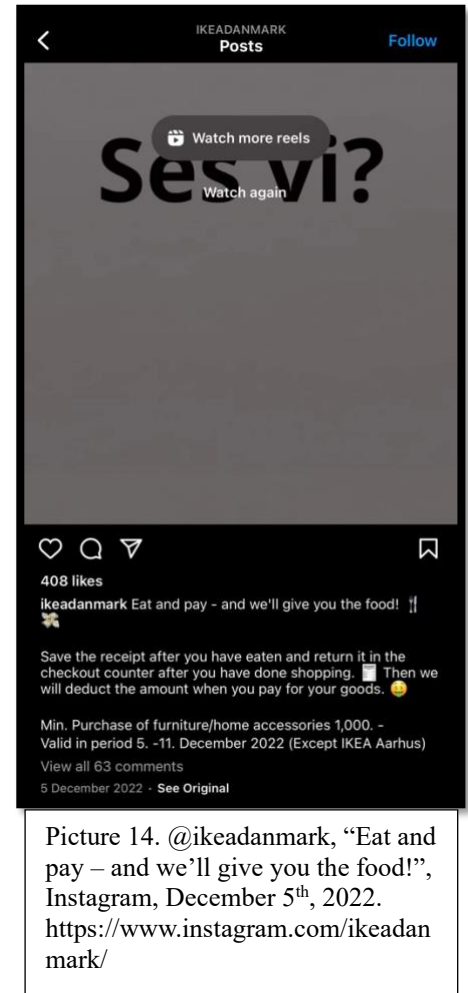
<sup>232</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Find the special collection OMSESIDIG in your local IKEA department store now”, Instagram, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>233</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Win a goodie bag from the @marimekko BASTUA collection”, Instagram, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>234</sup> @ikeadanmark, “The BASTUA collection arrives in the beginning of March”, Instagram, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

you want to see more? The collection will be arriving on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and it will be sold for a limited time.”<sup>235</sup> It is the same situation for this post, as the availability of the collection fits into the theme.

Furthermore, IKEA focuses on giving their customers plenty of special offers. For example, one of their posts says: “Eat and pay – and we’ll give you the food! Save the receipt after you have eaten and return it to the checkout counter after you have done your shopping. Then we will deduct the amount when you pay for your goods. Min. purchase of furniture/home accessories 1.000.- Valid in period 5-11 December 2022 (Except IKEA Aarhus)”.<sup>236</sup> A special offer such as this one is extremely useful to get customers to come and spend money in the IKEA stores, as they feel like they get something in return. Another special offer involves customer’s old furniture. Because IKEA wants to create new furniture from old pieces of furniture to waste less, they make a post saying: “Do you want to sell your used IKEA back to us and together let us waste less? You can get a review of your used IKEA at the link in bio. If you are an IKEA Family member, we offer you an extra 50% when you sell your used IKEA to us. The offer is valid until November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022.”<sup>237</sup> Through this special offer, IKEA gives an incentive for customers to be more willing to sell their used/old furniture. The special offers are codes that fit under this theme.



Picture 14. @ikeadanmark, “Eat and pay – and we’ll give you the food!”, Instagram, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/>

<sup>235</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Are you guys ready? Welcome VARMBLIXT”, Instagram, January 17<sup>th</sup>. 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>236</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Eat and pay – and we’ll give you the food!”, Instagram, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>237</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Do you want to sell your used IKEA back to us and together let us waste less?”, Instagram, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

Following this special offer, IKEA posts about their new collection called FORNYA, which is a collection made from the old furniture that customers sold to them because of the special offer, proving that it worked. IKEA's post says: "Do you want to get your hands on our FORNYA special collection? On the occasion of Green Friday, we have turned used IKEA into a limited special collection, and you can win one of the products. Visit your local IKEA department store from 19/11-27/11, where you can experience the collection and participate in the competition to win one of the renewed NEW products. We think it's crazy how much a creative and personal touch can bring new life to our iconic furniture. Will we see you?"<sup>238</sup> This post includes both elements of competition and availability, which fit under this theme.

IKEA also uses their instagram platform in Denmark to promote their products through live interaction with customers. During these "lives" that they hold on IKEA.dk, they promote products, and they give offers, as well as interact with customers to give them inspiration for their homes. One of their posts about a live shopping says: "Will we see you tonight? At 20:00 we are broadcasting live from a home with IKEA Home smart products. There is a really good offer to pick up and a lot of inspiration on how to control light, sounds and curtains with a single click. It's at 20:00 o'clock on IKEA.dk – link in bio. See you around?"<sup>239</sup>, while another post says: "We are going LIVE tonight. Get inspired to save money in the kitchen. Sandra and Henriette will among other things, give you tips on how to lower your energy consumption and reduce food waste with small means. In addition, we have a really good offer for you who's watching. Hope to see you at IKEA.dk at 20:00 o'clock."<sup>240</sup> These are also considered special offers, which is why these posts are under this theme.



Picture 15. @ikeadanmark, "We are going live tonight. Get inspired to save money in the kitchen", Instagram, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/>

<sup>238</sup> @ikeadanmark, "Do you want to get your hands on our FORNYA special collection?" Instagram, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>239</sup> @ikeadanmark, "Will we see you tonight? At 20:00 we are broadcasting live from a home with IKEA Home smart products", Instagram, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

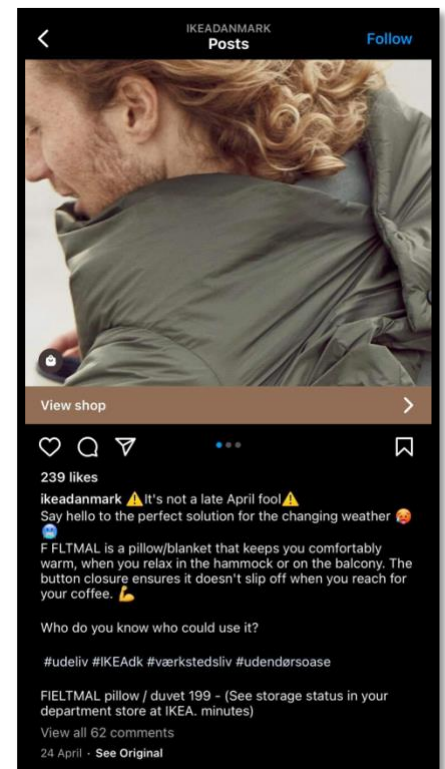
<sup>240</sup> @ikeadanmark, "We are going live tonight. Get inspired to save money in the kitchen", Instagram, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

It is important to note that many of the Instagram posts that promote all of these different IKEA products show the prices of these products clearly and transparently, as they are mentioned in the captions of those posts. This means that IKEA is willing to paint the real picture about their products in Denmark, and they do not feel the need to hide their prices. On the contrary, they make prices a part of their promotional posts.

### 7.14.2 Current events

Under this theme, a total of twenty six posts were found to fit. A post promoting a product that is a mix between a pillow and a blanket has the following caption: “It’s not a late April fools. Say hello to the perfect solution for the changing weather. FALTMAL is a pillow/blanket that keeps you comfortably warm, when you relax in the hammock or on the balcony. The button closure ensures it doesn’t slip off when you reach for your coffee. Who do you know, who could use it?”<sup>241</sup> This caption talks about the weather (“the changing weather”), while also mentioning “late April fools”, which makes this post fit into the “current events” theme.

The season change is an extremely used event in IKEA’s Instagram posts for Denmark. For the spring season, IKEA shared posts such as the following: “Have you dreamt of a spring-ready home all winter? Get the ideas and a special discount if you look on IKEA.dk tomorrow evening” or “Ready to let spring in? Thank you for the evening’s inspiration @helenehoue”<sup>242</sup>. Another post promoting several products for spring (picnic blanket, lamp, pillowcase, etc.), also focuses on the change of season in its caption: “It’s not quite there yet. But we’re still allowed to dream. We couldn’t wait to show you these amazing spring news. Perhaps time to create a ‘spring 23’ folder?”<sup>243</sup>



Picture 16. @ikeadanmark, “It’s not a late April Fools, say hello to the perfect solution for the changing weather”, Instagram, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/>

<sup>241</sup> @ikeadanmark, “It’s not a late April Fools, say hello to the perfect solution for the changing weather”, Instagram, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

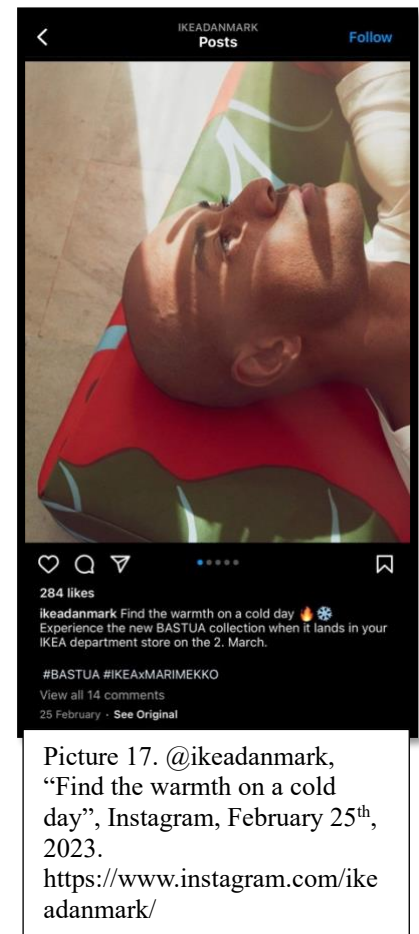
<sup>242</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Have you dreamt of a spring ready home all winter?”, Instagram, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>243</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Ready to let spring in?”, Instagram, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

The weather is an on-going subject in IKEA's Instagram posts, as they place a large focus on including mentions about weather. Some examples of such posts are: "find the warmth on a cold day. Experience the new BASTUA collection when it lands in your IKEA department store on March 2<sup>nd</sup>."<sup>244</sup>, or "Colourful Friday – gray weather, or not. Let it bring a little extra joy and light into your life."<sup>245</sup> It is clear that these posts fit under this theme, as they are focused on season and weather.

It definitely makes sense why IKEA would focus on talking about the weather in their posts, as Denmark is known for having "bad weather". However, there is a Danish saying: "There is no bad weather, only wrong clothing." Studies show that Denmark has an average of 170 rainy days throughout the year, which makes weather an extremely talked about subject among the Danes.<sup>246</sup> IKEA takes this into consideration when writing their posts for their Danish customers.

Mentions of holidays also fit under this theme. IKEA definitely knows how to use holidays to its advantage when it comes to promoting products. They promote chocolate eggs through a caption that says: "Ready for Easter? Find everything for the Easter basket in the Swedish food market, at the checkout boxes of your local IKEA department store."<sup>247</sup> In another post, IKEA promotes Easter



<sup>244</sup> @ikeadanmark, "Find the warmth on a cold day", Instagram, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>245</sup> @ikeadanmark, "Colourful Friday, gray weather or not", Instagram, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>246</sup> Pricilla Cheung, "The Danish Culture and Way of Life", *swaplanguge* (blog), May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020,  
<https://swaplanguge.com/blog/moving-to-denmark-the-danish-culture-and-way-of-life/>

<sup>247</sup> @ikeadanmark, "Ready for Easter?", Instagram, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

products (watercolours and paint for Easter eggs, vases) through saying: “For the creative Easter corner”<sup>248</sup>. IKEA also uses the Easter holiday to promote their “Frobullar”, which translates to “seed buns”, and they are meant to feed insects to create more biodiversity in Denmark. Their post says: “Do you need a DIY-guide for the Easter holidays? Denmark’s insects are hungry. When you plant your Frobullar, you give a big meal to the smallest ones. Good for nature, and for you too.”<sup>249</sup>

Easter eggs are always present during the Easter holidays as a tradition in many countries around the world. Denmark is also one of those countries, as having painted eggs and chocolate eggs on the table during Easter is a tradition that is definitely present in Danish households. Chocolate eggs are an important part of Easter, as Danes have a tradition that dates back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where they hide chocolate eggs in their gardens for kids to find on Easter Sunday.<sup>250</sup> Knowing this, it is clear why IKEA focuses on Easter in their posts for Denmark.



Picture 18. @ikeadanmark, “For the creative Easter corner”, Instagram, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/>

<sup>248</sup> @ikeadanmark, “For the creative Easter corner”, Instagram, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>249</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Do you need a DIY guide for the Easter holidays?”, Instagram, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>250</sup> Alikiseferou, “Here’s what you need to know about Danish Easter traditions”, The Culture Trip, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018. <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/denmark/articles/heres-what-you-need-to-know-about-danish-easter-traditions/>

Another holiday that IKEA does not fail to use in the promotional process of their products is Christmas. IKEA sells numerous products for Christmas, such as Christmas balls to decorate the Christmas tree. Their caption says: “When do you decorate your Christmas tree? Are you waiting for Christmas Eve or is the tree ready and decorated at your home? Tell us about your Christmas tree decorating traditions in the comments. Find direct link to colourful Christmas balls in bio.”<sup>251</sup> Another product that they promote through using Christmas is a chain of lights, with a picture that shows that chain placed on a wall, in the shape of a Christmas tree. The caption says: “Idea for those of you who don’t have room for a Christmas tree, but still want to get in the Christmas spirit. Who do you know who should see this DIY? Find all light chains at the link in bio.”<sup>252</sup>

A product that they also promote through Christmas, although it has nothing to do with Christmas, is a wooden hand decoration. For this post, the caption says: “Everyone can need a helping hand during Christmas time”, while the photo says: “not just for Wednesday”.<sup>253</sup> This post references both Christmas and “Wednesday” the series about the Addams family, which was extremely popular and talked about at the time. All of these posts fit under this theme, as Easter and Christmas are holidays, while the series is also considered a current event.



Picture 19. @ikeadanmark, “Idea for you who don’t have room for a Christmas tree”, Instagram, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/>

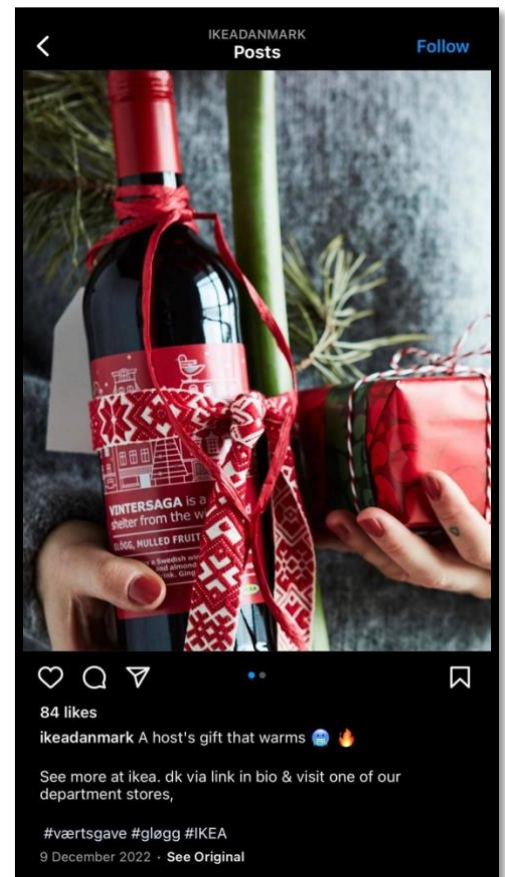
<sup>251</sup> @ikeadanmark, “When do you decorate your Christmas tree?”, Instagram, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>252</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Idea for you who don’t have room for a Christmas tree”, Instagram, December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>253</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Everyone can need a helping hand during Christmas time”, Instagram, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

IKEA also promotes multiple products (candles, bedsheets, mirror, etc.) under the idea of Christmas gifts. The caption for this post is: “Who do you think should see this gift guide? Make it possible to find gifts for the entire December celebrations. Remember you can share and save this post for later. Find the link to our entire gift guide in bio”<sup>254</sup>. In addition, IKEA sells and promotes “gløgg” in Denmark during the month of December, with a post that says: “A host’s gift that warms (freezing emoji, fire emoji). See more at ikea.dk via link in bio and visit one of our department stores.”<sup>255</sup> Gløgg is a sweet, mulled wine that is served hot, and it is a staple during the Christmas season in Denmark.<sup>256</sup> This post can also be considered fitting under this theme, as it is a reference to the cold weather.

Furthermore, the New Year’s event is also extremely present under this theme. IKEA promotes products for New Year’s such as wine glasses and champagne glasses, with a caption that says: “2023 is just around the corner. How will you choose to celebrate the New Year? Do you toast alone or in a festive gathering with friends and family? No matter what, we toast to you.”<sup>257</sup> Another post says: “New Year’s Eve is just around the corner. Are you going to be a guest or have guests? We can count down together and welcome the New Year. Click on the picture to see what you can find at the #2023 table.”<sup>258</sup>, promoting several products for New Year’s Eve. The New Year’s celebration fits under this theme, as it is a current event.



Picture 20. @ikeadanmark, “A host’s gift that warms”, Instagram, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/>

<sup>254</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Who do you think should see this gift guide?”, Instagram, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>255</sup> @ikeadanmark, “A host’s gift that warms”, Instagram, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>256</sup> “Gløgg- Danish mulled wine”, Denmark.dk, last accessed April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023. <https://denmark.dk/people-and-culture/christmas-recipes/gloegg>

<sup>257</sup> @ikeadanmark, “2023 is just around the corner. How will you choose to celebrate the New Year?”, Instagram, December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>258</sup> @ikeadanmark, “New Year’s Eve is just around the corner”, Instagram, December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

Other products that IKEA promotes on Instagram through the use of a holiday are LED lights and rechargeable batteries, through a post that says: “Now the light is being brought forth (musical notes emojis). On Tuesday we are ready, and of course we have an idea on how you can celebrate the “light” again and again”<sup>259</sup>. This is a reference to Santa Lucia day, which is a Danish religious holiday. It is a tradition that celebrates the life of Santa Lucia, every year on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December. Danes consider Santa Lucia day as a warming and beautiful day, full of light and songs.<sup>260</sup> As this post involves a holiday, it fits within this theme.

As some last examples for this theme, it is worth to mention that IKEA also focuses a fair bit on the weekend in their posts. For example, a post promoting a kitchen and table top says: “Finally Friday! Now that we are in the kitchen, could it be appropriate to hear what your recipe is for a lovely weekend?”<sup>261</sup>, or another post promoting a closet, says “Weekend inspiration provided by @livingroomdanishly”<sup>262</sup>. A different post promoting products such as: baskets; net bags, gummies and waffles, has the following caption: “Ideas for weekend snacks to bring under your arm. Have a really nice Friday. Remember that you can save this post for later.”<sup>263</sup> The weekend is extremely important in the lives of Danes, as they value having a good work-life balance.<sup>264</sup> Hence why IKEA uses this narrative in their posts directed toward Danes.



Picture 21. @ikeadanmark, “Now the light is coming on”, Instagram, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/>

<sup>259</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Now the light is coming on”, Instagram, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>260</sup> Spousecare, “Santa Lucia”, *all about Denmark* (blog), December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <https://allaboutdenmark.dk/2019/12/12/santa-lucia/>

<sup>261</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Finally Friday. Now that we are in the kitchen, could it be appropriate to hear what your recipe is for a lovely weekend?”, Instagram, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>262</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Weekend inspiration provided by @livingroomdanishly”, Instagram, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>263</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Ideas for weekend snacks to bring under your arm”, Instagram, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

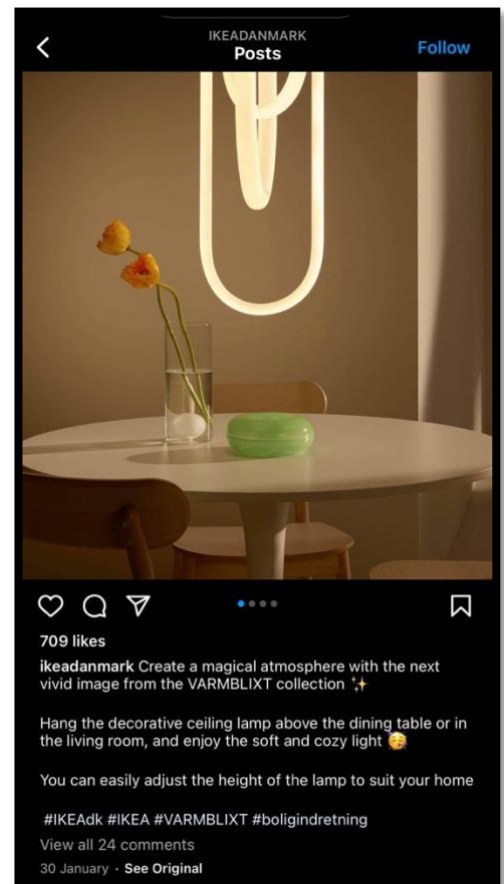
<sup>264</sup> “Work-life balance”, Denmark.dk, last accessed April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. <https://denmark.dk/society-and-business/work-life-balance>

### 7.14.3 Functional brand posts

This theme is made up of twenty-five different posts. Many posts that make up this theme include codes related to the features of the products. A post promoting an LED lamp says: “Did someone mention a love for the color beige? NEW: SOMMARLANKE”<sup>265</sup>. This is not the only post that presents a product’s feature in regards to colour. A post that promotes a display cabinet with glass doors has the following caption: “Are you dreaming of more color in your home? @mettenorrild has created a lively atmosphere with colourful elements.”<sup>266</sup>

Other posts that promote several different products (mirror, vase and lamp), say the following: “Do you also love light colors and soft shapes? Take a look at @interiordesign\_byc\_ @inlovewithseptember and @christinahoeist home here”<sup>267</sup> or “Valentine’s Day is over, but we are still in love with FADO. The table lamp is available in both white and transparent gray. Which color do you prefer?”<sup>268</sup>. Another example is this promotional post for a mirror lamp: “A closer look at the VARMBLIXT collection. The bronzed mirror lamp can be dimmed while the tinted mirror reflects natural light. What would you like to take a closer look at from the collection?”<sup>269</sup> All of these posts represent a part of the design of the products (colour) which makes them fit under this theme.

Furthermore, other features that the products have also fit under this theme. For example, a post promoting the same lamp mentioned above, says the following: “Create a magical atmosphere with the next vivid image from the VARMBLIXT collection. Hang the



Picture 22. @ikeadanmark, “Create a magical atmosphere with the next vivid image from the VARMBLIXT collection”, Instagram, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark>

<sup>265</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Did someone mention a love for the color beige?”, Instagram, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>266</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Are you dreaming of more color in your home?”, Instagram, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>267</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Do you also love light colors and soft shapes?”, Instagram, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>268</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Valentine’s Day is over, but we are still in love with FADO”, Instagram, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>269</sup> @ikeadanmark, “A closer look at the VARMBLIXT collection”, Instagram, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

decorative ceiling lamp above the dining table or in the living room, and enjoy the soft and cozy light. You can easily adjust the height of the lamp to suit your home”<sup>270</sup>. All of these feature mentions belong under this theme. Another example is a post promoting a side table/coffee table, saying: “NEW: Get the best of both worlds with OLSEROD, the smart table that acts as both a side table and a coffee table.”<sup>271</sup>

There are also some posts that fit under this theme because of their “green” claims. One example is a post that presents an indoor/outdoor greenhouse, with the caption: “Your very own starter kit for green fingers”<sup>272</sup>. The following post that promotes a solar powered LED lamp has to be mentioned here as well: “A tribute to the sun by Olafur Eliasson. New: SAMMANLANKAD. Solar powered LED lamp, where the light is enhanced by mirror reflection. IKEA and @littlesunorg have collaborated to raise interest in how the sun can power everyday objects and get more people to explore solar energy.”<sup>273</sup>

Other posts that present “green” products say: “Unboxing of the new TRADGRANSEN. Structured, organic decorations that can be used on a wall or a table” and “BEFORE/AFTER guests. Some say you become what you eat. We don’t know that. But we eat what we see – so if we want to minimize food waste, organized and transparent storage can be a solution”<sup>274</sup>. All of these green mentions fit under this theme, as they are features of the products.

Some more examples are posts that promote the product through mentioning its functionality and design: “Do you also use the blue IKEA FRAKTA shopping bag for Christmas presents? Have you seen that we have the tote bag in many different new designs? We have put the link in the bio.”<sup>275</sup> Another great example is a post that promotes multiple products that can be used to go swimming in the lake (waterproof bag, chocolate bar, sports bag and thermos bottle), which says “Do you know someone who wants to jump in with you? Do as @paulinasysterp and take a trip into the blue. We have collected the recipe for a

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<sup>270</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Create a magical atmosphere with the next vivid image from the VARMBLIXT collection”, Instagram, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>271</sup> @ikeadanmark, “NEW: Get the best of both worlds with OLSEROD”, Instagram, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>272</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Your very own starter kit for green fingers”, Instagram, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>273</sup> @ikeadanmark, “A tribute to the sun by Olafur Eliasson”, Instagram, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>274</sup> @ikeadanmark, “BEFORE/AFTER guests”, Instagram, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

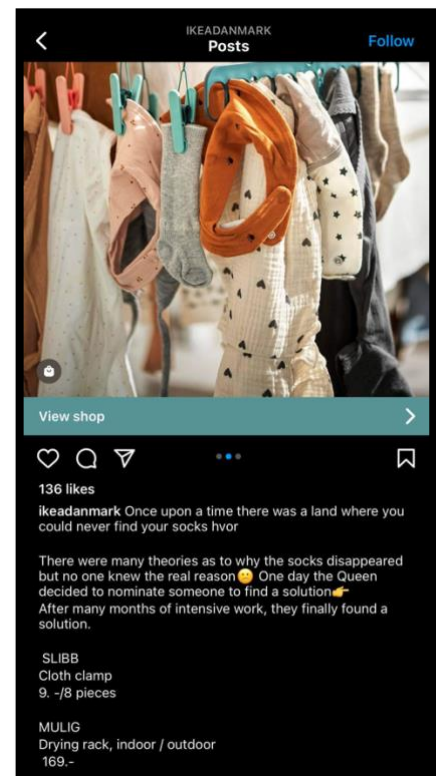
<sup>275</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Do you also use the blue IKEA FRAKTA shopping bag for Christmas presents?”, Instagram, December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

refreshing dip here.”<sup>276</sup> This post shows how all of these products could help the customer have a good experience when they go lake swimming. All of the mentions of design, features, as well as functionality and green credentials fit under this theme. It is clear that IKEA puts a decent amount of focus on promoting their products through showing their qualities and functions to their Danish customers.

#### 7.14.4 Emotional brand posts

This theme is made up of only ten posts that include story-telling, emotion-laden language or humour. A great example worth mentioning here is a post that promotes multiple products such as: drying rack for clothes, clamps for clothes and hanger with clamps. The post says: “Once upon a time, there was a land where you could never find your socks. There were many theories as to why the socks disappeared, but no one knew the real reason. One day, the Queen decided to nominate someone to find a solution. After many months of intensive work, they finally found a solution.”<sup>277</sup> In this case, the solutions that they are talking about are the products themselves. Because this post includes a story, it belongs under this theme.

Another post that IKEA made approaching the New Year, says: “2022 is about to go down... so let’s pour a glass and let’s think of all the times we’ve laughed danced and enjoyed ourselves with family and friends. Remembering all the exciting things we experienced and new places we visited. And we can toast to all the challenges we’ve overcome and the victories we’ve celebrated. Cheers and thank you from us.”<sup>278</sup> This is a post that uses emotion-laden language to evoke consumers’ emotions, which makes it fit perfectly under this theme. A post with similar emotion-laden language is a post IKEA made for Christmas,



Picture 23. @ikeadanmark, “Once upon a time there was a land where you could never find your socks”, Instagram, January 9th, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/>

<sup>276</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Do you know someone who wants to jump in with you?”, Instagram, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

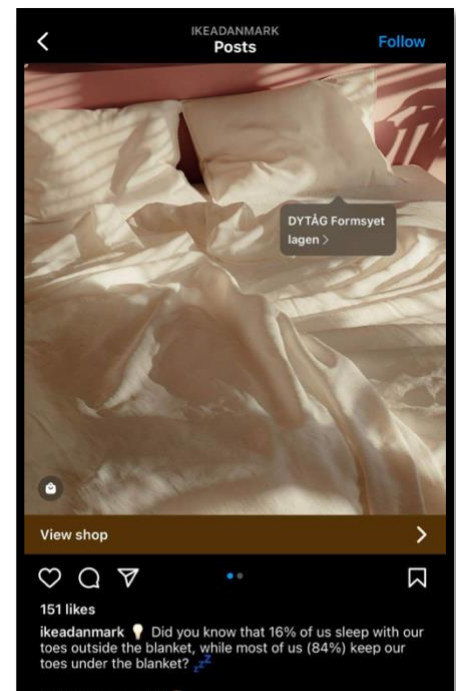
<sup>277</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Once upon a time there was a land where you could never find your socks”, Instagram, January 9th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>278</sup> @ikeadanmark, “2022 is about to go down...”, Instagram, December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

which has the following caption “We know you’ve been waiting for it. Now it’s here: the Christmas 2022 collection guide. 1: be prepared a battery in your back pocket is always a good idea. 2: Give yourself a break. Christmas can be hectic, so remember to take a moment for yourself and relax before the celebrations begin. 3: Cozy. The most important thing about a good Christmas Eve is having fun and enjoying time with family and friends. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas.”<sup>279</sup>

Other posts that fit under this theme are the “fun fact” story-telling type of posts. For example: “Did you know that the idea of summertime was meant as a joke? Benjamin Franklin wrote an essay in 1784 about getting up an hour earlier to save on the candles. But saving energy at home? This is what we mean. LED bulbs use up to 85% less energy and light up to 20 times longer than light bulbs.”<sup>280</sup> Another post would be one promoting a duvet and fitted sheet, which says: “Did you know that 16% of us sleep with our toes outside the blanket, while most of us (84%) keep our toes under the blanket? How do you sleep?”<sup>281</sup>

Another example of a post that uses emotion-laden language is a post that promotes Lego’s and a toy kitchen for kids. The caption says: “Psst... when you’re a little one, you never know what the day after Christmas Eve will bring. 2 tablespoons creativity, 1 tablespoon nostalgia and several hours of play. It’s the secret recipe for nostalgic gifts that keep on giving”<sup>282</sup>. One last example is a post promoting a table mirror and bowls, which says: “Take a Tuesday chiller and extend the quiet moments. No scrolling, no pressure to be productive, no to-do list”.<sup>283</sup>



Picture 24. @ikeadanmark, “Did you know that 16% of us sleep with our toes outside the blanket, while most of us (84%) keep our toes under the blanket?”, Instagram, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/>

<sup>279</sup> @ikeadanmark, “We know you’ve been waiting for it. Now it’s here: the Christmas 2022 collection guide”, Instagram, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>280</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Did you know that the idea of summertime was meant as a joke?”, Instagram, October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>281</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Did you know that 16% of us sleep with our toes outside the blanket, while most of us (84%) keep our toes under the blanket?”, Instagram, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>282</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Psst... when you’re a little one you never know what the day after Christmas Eve will bring”, Instagram, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

<sup>283</sup> @ikeadanmark, “Take a Tuesday chiller and extend the quiet moments”, Instagram, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikeadanmark/?hl=da>

Story-telling and emotional words such as “nostalgia”, “having fun”, “enjoying time”, “quiet moments”, and so on, are what makes up this theme called “emotional brand posts”. It is clear that IKEA uses words that evoke consumers’ emotions, although these kinds of posts are not the ones that are seen the most often on IKEA’s Instagram page for Denmark.

## 7.15 IKEA Romania Instagram

### 7.15.1 Sales promotion

Under the preconceived theme “sales promotion” in Romania’s case, there were significantly less posts to be placed under this theme. More precisely, only three posts from IKEA Romania’s Instagram page had codes that fit under this theme. A post promoting multiple products (chair pillow, organization panel, organization box, food containers) has the following caption “When everything comes together easily, you made the right choice. For a better life at home, we reduce the prices of many IKEA products.”<sup>284</sup> Here, the mention of reduced prices is what fits under this theme.

Another post promoting pillowcases says the following:

“Small changes can have big effects. Sofa cushions, new wall decorations or a gorgeous plant can really change the atmosphere in your home. Come to the site and discover the seasonal discounts, valid until April 2<sup>nd</sup>.”<sup>285</sup> In this case, the seasonal discounts are what makes this post fit under this theme. The third post that fits under this theme is a post regarding selling old furniture back to IKEA. The post says: “Even if you don’t use it anymore, old IKEA furniture deserves a new chance to shine. If you’re an IKEA Family Member, bring it in store by April 30<sup>th</sup> and you could get up to 100% more back on a return card for the price you would usually get at BuyBack”.<sup>286</sup> Here, the offer of getting 100% more back on a return card



Picture 25. @ikearomania, “When everything comes together easily, you made the right choice”, Instagram, February 23rd, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/>

<sup>284</sup> @ikearomania, “When everything comes together easily, you made the right choice”, Instagram, February 23rd, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>285</sup> @ikearomania, “Small changes can have big effects”, Instagram, February 22nd, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

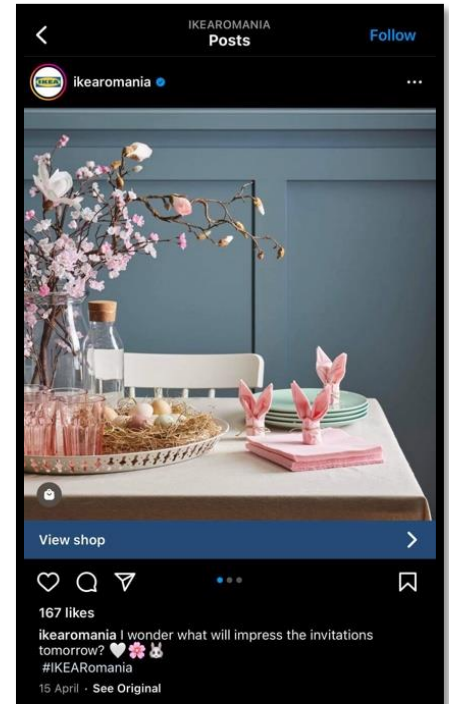
<sup>286</sup> @ikearomania, “Even if you don’t use it anymore, IKEA furniture deserves a new chance to shine”, Instagram, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

from IKEA if customers sell their old furniture back to them, is what makes this post fit under this theme.

### 7.15.2 Current events

A total of twenty nine Instagram posts contain codes that make up this theme. Similarly to Denmark's case, IKEA knows how to create a narrative surrounding holidays in order to promote their products to the Romanian customers. Nearing and during the Easter holidays, IKEA made several posts related to Easter. A post that promotes sweets, says: "Before the bunny comes, you're in charge of the treats when you visit"<sup>287</sup>. Another post that promotes a tray with Easter decor and napkins says the following "I wonder what will impress the guests tomorrow? (heart, flower and bunny emoji)"<sup>288</sup>. As more than 80% of Romanians are of Orthodox confession, Easter is one of the most important and valued religious holidays in Romania. Dyed eggs are a tradition and a must on the Easter table in any household, while the Easter bunny is a symbol of Easter in many countries, including Romania.<sup>289</sup>

IKEA also made a post during Valentine's Day, which says "Share. Happy Valentine's Day! (heart emoji)" The pictures of the post say: "out of all the cakes, you're the sweetest", followed by other cheesy Valentine's day lines relating to IKEA.<sup>290</sup> Other important current events that IKEA mentions in their posts are: related to Women's Day: "Swipe left, choose the most suitable instance and send it to your life partner as a proposal to share the work equally, every day. #WomensDay". The main picture says: "Equality starts at home" while the next slides are multiple pictures that mention tasks that can be shared (fx. I wash whites,



Picture 26. @ikearomania, "I wonder what will impress the guests tomorrow?", Instagram, April 15th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/>

<sup>287</sup> @ikearomania, "Before the bunny comes, you're in charge of the treats when you visit", Instagram, April 14th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

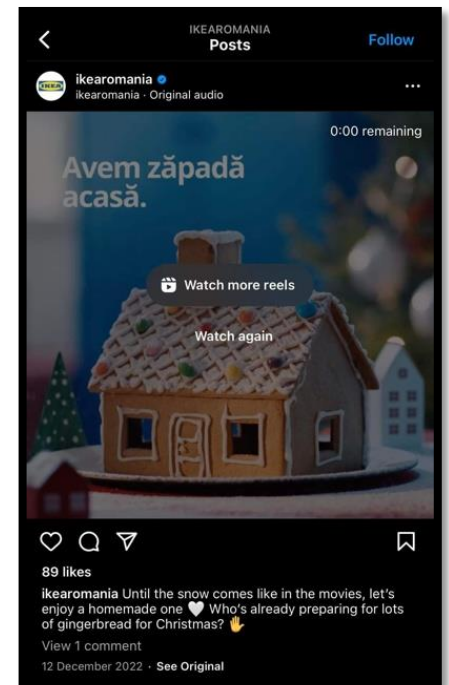
<sup>288</sup> @ikearomania, "I wonder what will impress the guests tomorrow?", Instagram, April 15th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>289</sup> "Easter in Romania: Traditions, Food, Fun facts and More", travel market tours, last accessed April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. <https://travelmakertours.com/easter-in-romania-traditions-food-fun-facts-and-more/>

<sup>290</sup> @ikearomania, "Share. Happy Valentine's Day!", Instagram, February 14th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

you wash colors).<sup>291</sup> IKEA also promotes a bin during Global Recycling Day: “We trust that the little ones will change tomorrow by using what they learn today. (green heart and globe emojis), #GlobalRecyclingDay”<sup>292</sup>. All of these are events that were currently happening when IKEA made the posts, hence why they fit under this theme.

IKEA also uses the Christmas holidays as a way to promote products in Romania. A post promoting a gingerbread house has a caption that says: “Until the snow comes like in the movies, let’s enjoy a homemade one. Who’s already preparing for lots of gingerbread for Christmas?” while the picture of the post says: “We have snow at home.”<sup>293</sup> Another example is a post that promotes a Christmas decoration, with the caption: “Here’s an answer to your question: “How can I decorate this year’s holiday table better than last year?””<sup>294</sup> A post promoting wrapping paper says “Is it a gift and the best decoration or is the best decoration actually a gift? You answer”<sup>295</sup>. These are just a few examples of how IKEA uses the Christmas narrative to promote their products. Codes such as gift, best decoration, Christmas, snow, and so on, are what makes these posts fit under this theme.



Picture 27. @ikearomania, “Until the snow comes like in the movies, let’s enjoy a homemade one”, Instagram, December 12th, 2022.  
<https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/>

<sup>291</sup> @ikearomania, “Swipe left. Choose the most suitable instance and send it to your life partner”, Instagram, March 8th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>292</sup> @ikearomania, “We trust the little ones will change tomorrow by using what they learn today”, Instagram, March 18th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>293</sup> @ikearomania, “Until the snow comes like in the movies, let’s enjoy a homemade one”, Instagram, December 12th, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

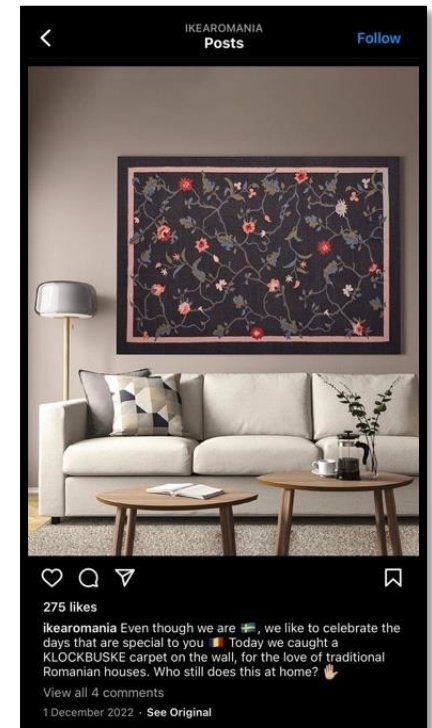
<sup>294</sup> @ikearomania, “Here’s an answer to your question”, Instagram, December 9th, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>295</sup> @ikearomania, “Is it a gift and best decoration or is the best decoration really a gift?”, Instagram, December 13th, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

Christmas is an important holiday in Romania, as it is in many countries. Romanians have plenty of traditions during the month of December. One special tradition is Saint Nicholas' Day, which is celebrated on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December. During the night of the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, it is a tradition that kids clean their boots/shoes and leave them out in order to get small presents put into them from Saint Nicholas.<sup>296</sup> IKEA makes a post about this tradition, saying: "No matter how old you are, at 6 AM you check your (boot emoji). Which IKEA product would you like to find in them? It also has to fit, don't cheat!" The picture of the post says: "Who has been good this year?"<sup>297</sup>

Another special day for Romanians that IKEA uses in a promotional post is Romania's national day, or Great Union Day, to mark the independence of Romania, during December 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>298</sup> IKEA promotes a carpet put on a wall through a post that says: "Even though we are (Swedish flag), we like to celebrate the days that are special to you (Romanian flag). Today we put a KLOCKBUSKE carpet on the wall, out of love for traditional Romanian houses. Who still does this at home?"<sup>299</sup> Traditional wall-carpets made by Romanian communities were used for decoration, funerals, as part of a bride's dowry and exhibitions. Today, the traditional wall-carpets are considered a work of art.<sup>300</sup> These posts fit under this theme, as Saint Nicholas Day and Romania's National Day are both current events.

New Year's is also mentioned in IKEA's promotional posts on Instagram. A post promoting multiple decoration products for New Year's says "A new year, a new festive atmosphere in your home – with a few simple details! Here's how you can



Picture 28. @ikearomania, "Even though we are (Swedish flag), we like to celebrate the days that are special to you (Romanian flag)", Instagram, December 1st, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/>

<sup>296</sup>"Christmas in Romania", whychristmas, last accessed April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.

<https://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/romania>

<sup>297</sup>@ikearomania, "No matter how old you are, 6AM you check your boots", Instagram, December 6th, 2022.

<https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>298</sup>"National Day in Romania", timeanddate, last accessed April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023.

<https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/romania/ziua-nationala>

<sup>299</sup>@ikearomania, "Even though we are (Swedish flag), we like to celebrate the days that are special to you (Romanian flag)", Instagram, December 1st, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>300</sup>Romania Insider, "Romania's traditional wall-carpet craftsmanship, on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list", Romania-Insider, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016, <https://www.romania-insider.com/romantias-traditional-wall-carpet-craftsmanship-unescos-intangible-cultural-heritage-list>

do it!”<sup>301</sup> Another post that mentions New Year’s says: “House rules: We discuss resolutions starting Monday. IKEA wishes you a happy new year!”<sup>302</sup>. Because New Year’s is a holiday, it fits under the theme current events.

IKEA also mentions the spring and winter seasons in their promotional posts, which are also considered current events. A few examples are: a post that promotes outdoor furniture that has the following caption: “How many texture combinations can you make starting from a chic metal surface? Let the little spring projects begin”<sup>303</sup>, a post that promotes a closet and boxes for minimizing closet space that says: “spring cleaning and reorganizing when you don’t follow our advice: (sad and tired emojis) vs when you do: (happy and sparkling emojis)”<sup>304</sup>, and another post promoting scented candles says: “What says winter better than the combination of hot chocolate and the scent of vanilla?”<sup>305</sup>.

Last but not least, IKEA also makes a reference to the “Wednesday” series, similarly to the one made for Denmark, for the same wooden hand product. The post caption says: “It can move too, but only if you help it”, while the picture of the post says: “Good to have even when it’s not Wednesday”<sup>306</sup>. Mentioning of a series such as “Wednesday” which was so talked about at the time of the post, makes this post fit under the current events theme.

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<sup>301</sup>@ikearomania, “A new year, a new festive atmosphere in your home”, Instagram, December 12th, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>302</sup>@ikearomania, “House rules: We discuss resolutions starting Monday”, Instagram, January 1st, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>303</sup>@ikearomania, “How many texture combinations can you make starting from a chic metal surface”, Instagram, April 13th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>304</sup>@ikearomania, “Spring cleaning and reorganizing when you dont follow our advice vs. When you do it”, Instagram, March 27th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>305</sup>@ikearomania, “What says winter better than the combination of hot chocolate and the scent of vanilla?”, Instagram, November 28th, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>306</sup>@ikearomania, “It can move, but only if you help it”, Instagram, December 16th, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

### 7.15.3 Functional brand posts

Under this theme, an extremely large amount of posts were found to fit. More exactly, forty four posts had codes that belonged under this theme. Starting with a few examples of promotional posts for products such as coffee mugs, balcony furniture, balcony chairs and table, and balcony lamps, IKEA promotes these products through the idea that these products can give customers their own personal balcony cafe. The post that promotes coffee mugs has the caption: “When you have a balcony cafe, you never have to wait in line for them to shout “next customer”, while the picture of the post says: “Always the first client in your balcony cafe”.<sup>307</sup> The post promoting balcony lamps has the caption: “Finally a coffee shop that doesn’t close at sunset, but when you want it to. What type of lights do you prefer?”, while the picture of the post says: “It’s always sunny in your balcony cafe”<sup>308</sup>

One more example is the post that promotes balcony chairs and table, which says: “When you have a cafe on your balcony, you get the best table, and without reservation.” The picture of the post says: “You can always catch a spot at your balcony cafe”.<sup>309</sup> All of these narratives that show what the products can make customers achieve (their own balcony cafe) is what makes these post fit under this theme, as it shows what the products can do for the customer.



Picture 29. @ikearomania, “Finally a coffee shop that doesn’t close at sunset”, Instagram, April 25th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/>

<sup>307</sup>@ikearomania, “When you have a balcony cafe, you never have to wait in line”, Instagram, April 25th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

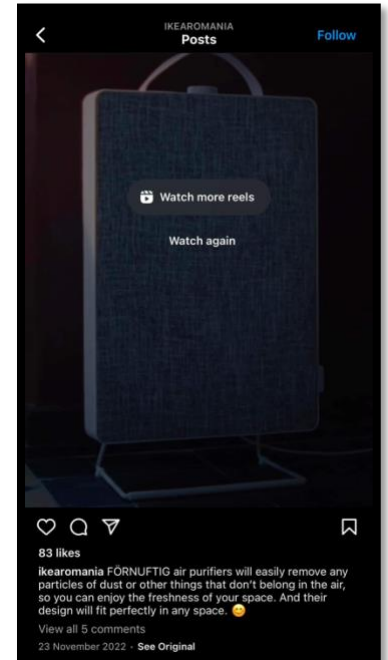
<sup>308</sup>@ikearomania, “Finally a coffee shop that doesn’t close at sunset”, Instagram, April 25th, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>309</sup>@ikearomania, “When you have a cafe on your balcony, you get the best table and without reservation”, Instagram, April 21st, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

Furthermore, other posts that show the functions that IKEA's products have are: a post promoting a sofa/bench with the following caption: "It's called JOLPEN, but we also call it the sofa "you don't have to deal with stains"<sup>310</sup>, another post that promotes balcony chairs that says: "when you thought you couldn't fit three chairs into your balcony"<sup>311</sup> and another one that promotes a storage solution for under the bed, saying: "You shove it under the bed... then you pull it back out, under the bed again, then again out. A simple storage solution that when needed becomes a nightstand"<sup>312</sup>.

A different post that shows the product's function is a post that promotes measuring utensils and other kitchen objects "If eye measuring isn't your thing, the VARDAGEN measuring cup and measuring spoon are here to save the day"<sup>313</sup>. Another post promoting a panel for closet organization says: "Discover so many solutions for organizing accessories in your wardrobe".<sup>314</sup> A post about an air purifier has the following caption: "The FORNUFTIG air purifiers will easily remove any particles of dust or other things that don't belong in the air, so you can enjoy the freshness of your space. And their design will fit perfectly in any space."<sup>315</sup> All of these posts have messages that show the products' function, which makes them all fit under this theme.

Under this theme, there are also posts that have codes related to the design of the products. The colour of the products is mentioned in multiple posts. For example, this post that promotes a utility cart says "NISSAFORS, as you've never seen it before – in a playful shade of green that you've got to love"<sup>316</sup>. Another post that presents the product's colour is a post promoting bed sheets with the following



Picture 30. @ikearomania, "FORNUFTIG air purifiers will easily remove any particles of dust", Instagram, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/>

<sup>310</sup>@ikearomania, "It's called JOLPEN, but we also call it the sofa "you don't have to deal with stains"", Instagram, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>311</sup>@ikearomania, "When you thought you couldn't fit three chairs into your balcony", Instagram, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>312</sup>@ikearomania, "You shove it under the bed, then you pull it back out", Instagram, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>313</sup>@ikearomania, "If eye measuring isn't your thing, the VARDAGEN measuring cup and measuring spoon are here to save the day", Instagram, October 26<sup>h</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>314</sup>@ikearomania, "Discover so many solutions for organizing accessories in your wardrobe", Instagram, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>315</sup>@ikearomania, "FORNUFTIG air purifiers will easily remove any particles of dust", Instagram, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>316</sup>@ikearomania, "NISSAFORS, as you've never seen it before", Instagram, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

caption: “Textiles in bold colors or unique designs give a fresh air to any room. Wake your bedroom up from dullness with some new tropical beach-inspired bedding”.<sup>317</sup> Another post promoting multiple different products (bed sheets, transparent curtains, bed frame and furniture) says: “A bedroom as small as it is chic. The transparent curtains around the bed separate the functions of the room, the white furniture and mirrors make the space seem larger, and the natural details here and there make the place warmer and more comfortable.”<sup>318</sup> All of these posts show the colour of the products to the customers, which makes them fit under this theme.

In addition, there are also some posts focused on presenting the style of the products. For example, this post promoting furniture for the entryway says: “The entryway reflects both the style of our home, as well as ours. Modern, bohemian or minimalist. Swipe and find decor ideas that represent you.”<sup>319</sup> Another example is a post promoting chairs that says: “Timeless design with a modern touch – the new OSTANO chairs in your dining area”<sup>320</sup>. The words that represent the style of the products are what makes these posts fit under this theme.

Multiple posts about what exactly the products can do for customers have been found. An example is this post promoting champagne glasses: “Do you have enough glasses for tomorrow’s party? If not, SVALKKA can save the situation”<sup>321</sup>, while another post promoting personalized Christmas tree decorations says: “Make your Christmas tree stand out this year with some personalized decorations! Who will you be making these with?”<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>317</sup>@ikearomania, “Textiles in bold colors or unique designs give a fresh air to any room”, Instagram, February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>318</sup>@ikearomania, “A bedroom as small as chic”, Instagram, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>319</sup>@ikearomania, “The entryway reflects both the style of the home and ours”, Instagram, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>320</sup>@ikearomania, “Timeless design with a modern touch”, Instagram, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>321</sup>@ikearomania, “Do you have enough glasses for tomorrow’s party?”, Instagram, December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

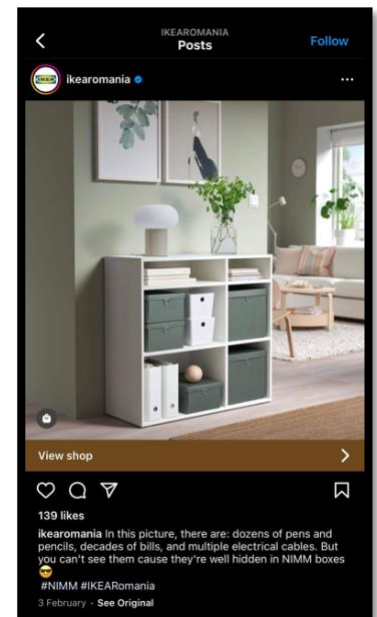
<sup>322</sup>@ikearomania, “Make your Christmas tree stand out this year with some personalized decorations!”, Instagram, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

IKEA also offers multiple storage solutions and explains their benefits in many of their posts. For example, this post promoting storage boxes says: “In this picture, there are: dozens of pens and pencils, decades of bills, and multiple electrical cables. But you can’t see them cause they’re well hidden in NIMM boxes”<sup>323</sup>. Another post promoting a drawer with wheels says: “That moment when you manage to hide a lot of things in one place. A place that now has wheels.”<sup>324</sup> These types of posts show the functions/benefits that the products have for customers, which makes them fit under this theme.

#### 7.15.4 Emotional brand posts

This theme is made up of fifteen posts in Romania’s case. Here, some posts had story-telling language, which makes the posts belong under this theme. For example, a post that promotes toothbrush holders says: “You know that moment when you look in the mirror and start reflecting on all the things in the bathroom that you need to upgrade, and then you end up not changing a thing? It’s time to have a serious talk with yourself and stop wasting time”.<sup>325</sup> Another post of the same kind says: “Friends are on the way, table is set, music is on. The OMSESIDIG Collection is here, ready to party. We teamed up with 9 Latin American creatives for this vibrant and colourful limited edition inspired by the joy of hanging out. Discover it for yourself, in stores and on the website.”<sup>326</sup>

Other posts that fit under this theme are posts that include jokes/humour. An example here is a post that promotes blanket baskets, tea pots and breakfast trays with the caption “you can do with just one blanket” – that’s something no mom has ever said (freezing emoji)”<sup>327</sup>. Another example is an April 1<sup>st</sup> post about pillows with a meatball design, which says: “are you a fan of IKEA meatballs? Look at a dream come true. Grab some



Picture 31. @ikearomania, “In this picture there are dozens of pens and pencils, decades of bills, and multiple electrical cables.”, Instagram, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/>

<sup>323</sup>@ikearomania, “In this picture there are dozens of pens and pencils, decades of bills, and multiple electrical cables.”, Instagram, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>324</sup>@ikearomania, “That moment when you manage to hide a lot of things in one place”, Instagram, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>325</sup>@ikearomania, “You know that moment when you look in the mirror and start reflecting”, Instagram, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

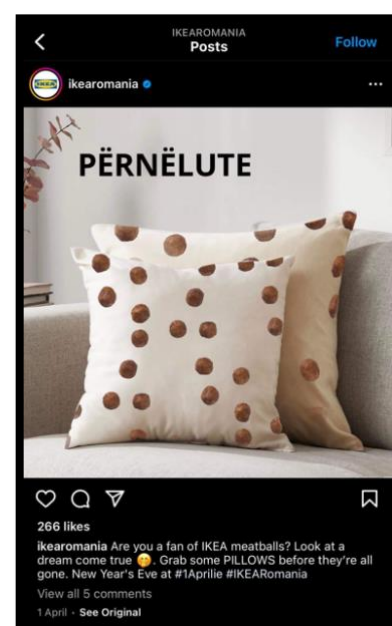
<sup>326</sup>@ikearomania, “Friends are on the way, table is set, music is on”, Instagram, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>327</sup>@ikearomania, “Can you handle a blanket – that’s something no mama ever said”, Instagram, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

“meatballpillows” before they’re all gone.”<sup>328</sup> Here, IKEA makes wordplay between pillows and meatballs which cannot be properly translated, but it is meant as a joke.

Some more posts that involve humour are: a post promoting closet hangers, with a picture that says “Hanging the clothes is better than folding them. Do you think you can change our minds?” while the caption says: “Someone had to say it (raising shoulders emojis). Now you tell us your preference.”<sup>329</sup> Another similar humorous post about clothing hangers says: “You also used to fold your clothes before starting to hang them, admit it (funny emoji)”<sup>330</sup>. In addition, other captions that involve jokes are: “It is an unwritten rule: You do not come to IKEA dressed in yellow”<sup>331</sup>, or “We know why you actually come to our store”<sup>332</sup>, this caption being a reference to IKEA food. One more post that fits here because of its humorous nature is a post that has the caption: “And you wonder why the trip to IKEA takes hours” while the video itself says: “You know you’re in IKEA when you feel the need to try every armchair”<sup>333</sup>.

Additionally, posts that have emotional language can also be found under this theme. A few examples are: a post that promotes organization boxes for toiletries that says: “No, it’s not just a bathroom, it’s your spot to relax”<sup>334</sup>, or another post promoting plant scissors and watering can with the caption: “When the greens at the market inspire you to grow your own little garden”.<sup>335</sup> A different post promoting a drawer organiser says: “Priorities in life may change. But we’re here for you no matter what”<sup>336</sup>. This caption belongs to a video that first



Picture 32. @ikearomania, “Are you a fan of IKEA meatballs? Look at a dream come true”, Instagram, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/>

<sup>328</sup>@ikearomania, “Are you a fan of IKEA meatballs? Look at a dream come true”, Instagram, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>329</sup>@ikearomania, “Someone had to say it. Now you tell us your preference”, Instagram, March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>330</sup>@ikearomania, “You also used to fold your clothes before starting to hang them, admit it”, Instagram, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>331</sup>@ikearomania, “It is an unwritten rule: you do not come to IKEA dressed in yellow”, Instagram, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>332</sup>@ikearomania, “We know why you actually come to our store”, Instagram, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>333</sup>@ikearomania, “And you wonder why the trip to IKEA takes hours”, Instagram, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>334</sup>@ikearomania, “No, it’s not just a bath, it’s your spot to relax”, Instagram, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>335</sup>@ikearomania, “When the greens at the market inspire you to grow your own little garden”, Instagram, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

<sup>336</sup>@ikearomania, “Priorities in life may change, but we’re here for you no matter what”, Instagram, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. <https://www.instagram.com/ikearomania/?hl=da>

shows the drawer full of messy clothes, and then changes to an organised drawer that has baby clothes in it. Words such as “relax”, “inspire” and “we’re here for you no matter what” are words that can make customers feel emotions.

## 8. Discussion

The following sections will discuss the findings that were uncovered during the cultural analysis as well as the analysis of the 4P’s marketing mix. This will be done with the purpose of connecting the findings in the two analyses more, which in turn will help understand how influential the cultural differences have been on IKEA’s marketing mix.

### 8.1 Product Discussion

First and foremost, the analysis of the P known as product brought forth some interesting results. One interesting find was how the core products found on the front page of each IKEA’s webpage seemed to target the same needs. To elaborate, people who have the need for being outdoors and the need to spend time outdoors were specifically targeted by IKEA on both webpages. Moreover, people who have the need to improve their daily lives, in one way or another, were also targeted. The only difference was in terms of products offered within each core product, which was evident from the fact that IKEA promoted a grill for the Danish people who wish to be outside more and a picnic blanket as well as a small chair, among other products, for the Romanians who wish to be outside more. When it came to ways one can improve their daily life, IKEA focused on promoting products and tips that were sustainable in Denmark while focusing on rituals, that the customer could implement in their day-to-day life, in Romania.

This means that even though IKEA focuses on satisfying the same needs, they still seem to be aware of how that is best done in each country, which is evident in the different products they offer. These findings could also suggest that Danes are more aware of sustainability and care more for being sustainable, compared to Romanians. If these findings are an indication of how people are in the two countries, then that would suggest that Romanians care more about improving their everyday life, perhaps through rituals, than about being sustainable and helping the environment. The cultural analysis did show that Danes are more likely to spend money if it will improve their everyday life, while Romanians prefer to not spend any money unless it is absolutely necessary. This could perhaps help explain why different products are used to satisfy the same needs. Being sustainable might be a way for

Danes to improve their everyday life, meaning that they are more likely to purchase products that are advertised as being sustainable.

On the other hand, since Romanians prefer to not spend money unless it is absolutely needed, it makes sense for IKEA to advertise products in a way that suggests it can help them, which is exactly what these rituals do. This means that IKEA is attempting to sell more than just a product, they are trying to create needs that Romanians didn't have before, which in turn makes them come back to IKEA and purchase the products needed to continuously satisfy those needs. Understood here, is that the rituals are the new needs created by IKEA, which they are trying to make Romanians adopt. If IKEA is successful in this endeavor, then they could potentially avoid the issue of Romanians only purchasing products when it is absolutely necessary as implementing the rituals suggested by IKEA would have become a necessity in their everyday life, which makes Romanians more likely to purchase different products.

Our initial view of IKEA suggests that they have adopted a mixed strategy approach. Moreover, the cultural analysis, more specifically the masculinity/femininity dimension, showed that IKEA should focus on the customers' well-being, quality of life and relationships when promoting products. It would seem like IKEA is aware of this, given the core products they highlight on the front page. Since the two cultures do not change that much within this dimension, it makes sense for IKEA not to change the core products on the front-page too much. In other words, due to how close Denmark and Romania are within this dimension, IKEA can afford to simply use a standardized strategy when it comes to the core products themselves. Culture can as such be said to have had some influence here, even if it's not a lot, as IKEA might have been forced to develop different core products for each market, had the cultures been very different within this dimension.

When it comes to the product availability, and the products IKEA sells in the two countries, the analysis showed that they sell almost all of the same products to both markets. Only one product series could not be found in Romania, meaning that the remaining nineteen, out of twenty products that were considered are sold in both countries. It is quite evident that a standardized strategy has been employed for a large selection of their products. In connection to these products, augmented products were also considered, and showed that IKEA has the same augmented products in both countries, with the option of delivery and assembly service as well as the same warranty. This further supports the claim of a standardized strategy being used by IKEA when it comes to the products they sell.

However, one aspect where IKEA has clearly adapted is when it comes to the food sold in the two countries. The created core product, titled physical needs, highlighted the clear difference in food, and ultimately showed that only seven food items are sold in both the Danish and Romanian IKEA stores. Given the lack of an analysis of the food culture in each country, it can only be assumed that the differences in the food offered were done to satisfy the different food norms that each country has. Since we, the researchers of this thesis, come from Denmark and Romania, we can to some degree consider whether the food sold in the two stores are adapted to the cultures. From our point of view, it is quite evident that IKEA has tailored the food selection to the cultures, which is especially evident in the fact that they sell “herregårdsbøf” and “råkostsalat” in the Danish IKEA stores, while selling more soups in Romania, as well as duck leg with mashed potatoes and vegetables. This means that culture undoubtedly has had an influence on the food products that IKEA sells, which means that IKEA uses an adapted strategy within this section of products.

## 8.2 Price Discussion

Next, the pricing strategy used by IKEA in the two countries seems to be mostly identical, even though the actual prices themselves are slightly different. The initial analysis of IKEA and their pricing strategy showed that they are very low-cost oriented, which also became evident in the examples, of price, found on the two webpages. The number of times the price of a product was mentioned was slightly higher on the Romanian webpage compared to the Danish, but whenever price was mentioned, it was done in mostly the same way. To elaborate, the way in which price was mentioned was a way that highlighted how low it is, and thus how affordable the products are. This was done in both Denmark and Romania, which suggests that IKEA is indeed a low-cost oriented company, who highlights it in their promotion of their products. Furthermore, this would definitely suggest the use of a standardized pricing strategy, as their focus seems to be the exact same.

Even though the pricing strategy seems to be standardized, the analysis still showed that a majority of the products are cheaper in Romania compared to the prices in Denmark. The cultural analysis made it evident that Romanians are less likely to spend a lot of money unless it is much needed. This could potentially explain why a large majority of the products sold in Romania are cheaper than they are in Denmark, where Danes are much more likely to buy products as long as they improve their quality of life.

However, since the differences are as small as they are, many different factors could explain said difference. It could also be the case that IKEA is saving money on other aspects of their business in Romania, which allows them to lower the price of other products. The food they make could also be made with cheaper ingredients, which doesn't necessarily mean lower quality, but could instead explain why the food is so much cheaper in Romania. This would explain why the apple cake is almost three times the price in Denmark and the Daim cake, as well as cheesecake are double the price.

Overall, the strategy seems to be the same, which is to offer the customers the lowest possible price. This supports the claim of IKEA being a low-cost oriented company, and this focus suggests that they are using a standardized pricing strategy, even if the prices themselves are slightly different.

### 8.3 Place Discussion

In the analysis of the P known as place, it became evident that IKEA has a very standardized strategy when it comes to the way in which their products are manufactured, packaged, and transported to the numerous distribution centers they have around the world, before the products are transported to the physical stores. What this does for IKEA, is that it allows them to supply each and every store, all over the world, in the same way and almost at the same speed. This was also visible by the fact that both the Danish and Romanian stores were within half a day's travel from the nearest distribution center. The result of this is that IKEA can supply their customers with the same products and offer the same level of product availability regardless of whether the customer is in Denmark or Romania.

However, when it comes to the actual selling of the products in each country, it becomes clear that there are a lot more ways of obtaining said products in Denmark than in Romania. First of all, there are more physical stores in Denmark, and a lot more pick-up points compared to Romania. Moreover, IKEA also offers more services in Denmark, as they have the furniture express option as well as the option of renting a trailer. On top of this, customers in Denmark can also do all their shopping through the IKEA app, and they can even scan and pay for the products they find in the physical stores, meaning they don't have to stand in line at check out. The only service that Romania has, that Denmark doesn't, is the click & collect boxes that are located right outside the physical stores.

The cultural analysis showed that Danes don't like to necessarily be told what to do, and they want more freedom of choice. This could explain why they have so many more

pick-up points spread across the country. According to the cultural analysis, Romanians are much more welcoming of being told where to go and what to do, which in turn explains the lack of pick-up points, and the focus on giving them options where they can just go to a box and pick their products up when they are ready. It also explains why IKEA can still remain successful in Romania by creating a fraction of the pick-up points and offering a delivery service that reaches the furthest corners of the country – instead of building more physical stores.

This would suggest a more adapted strategy when it comes to the ways in which IKEA sells their products. There is a higher focus on giving the customer as many options as possible in Denmark, while the focus seems to be on narrowing the options in Romania and simply create one or two solid solutions. Ultimately, this means that the process, all the way up until the products have to be sold in the two countries, is very standardized. As soon as the products have to be sold, it then turns into an adapted strategy, evident by the different services available and different levels of choice the customers have when it comes to the purchasing and subsequent delivery of their products.

## 8.4 Promotion Discussion

When analyzing the P known as promotion, more specifically the promotion that IKEA does on the social media platform called Instagram in both countries, it became clear that IKEA adapts their promotional strategy to each culture. After analyzing half a year's worth of Instagram posts for each country, we discovered that the posts on IKEA Denmark and the posts on IKEA Romania were significantly different. During the analysis, the posts were placed under four different preconceived themes: sales promotion, current events, functional brand posts, and emotional brand posts.

Right from the start, the number of posts that could be placed under the “sales promotion” theme was extremely different for each country. For Denmark, there were a total of nineteen posts surrounding special offers, competitions, discounts and availability. In contrast, there were only three posts that fit under this theme for Romania. This could be explained through going back to the cultural analysis, where it was found that Denmark has a highly individualistic culture that values personal goals and achievements, in comparison to Romania, which is considered a collectivistic culture that values the group. Hence why it makes sense that IKEA would focus more on posts related to sales promotion for the individual (personal discounts, competitions and special offers) in Denmark, and less in

Romania, where out of the three posts found to fit under this theme, two of them are focused on a better life at home and the home's atmosphere (with family).

In addition, this finding could also be connected to the "power distance" dimension mentioned in the cultural analysis. For this dimension, we found that Denmark and Romania were polar opposites, with Denmark having an extremely low power distance compared to Romania, which had an extremely high-power distance. A low power distance culture such as Denmark values equality and participating in decisions. A high-power distance culture such as Romania accepts the differences in equality and accepts being told what to do by a higher power. This could explain why IKEA focuses so much on competitions that people can participate in, as well as offers where people can get involved, such as the LIVE shopping. In contrast, IKEA does not focus on getting the Romanian customers involved in these offers.

Moving on to the second theme named "current events", a total of twenty-six posts were found on IKEA Denmark's instagram page, while twenty-nine posts were found to fit under this theme for IKEA Romania's page. This theme showed that IKEA places an equal amount of focus in both countries when it comes to involving holidays, special occasions, seasons, weather, current film releases, and so on, in their posts. However, the findings showed that IKEA adapts their promotional strategies based on each country's culture. This could be seen through their posts, as they focused on Romanian traditions such as the Saint Nicholas tradition, the wall-carpet, Romania's national day, and so on. IKEA also mentions seasonal changes for Romania (spring, winter).

When it comes to Denmark, IKEA also focused on involving relatable things in their promotional posts. For instance, there were a good number of posts focused on the idea of weather and season change (gray weather, rain, the cold), but also on traditions such as the mulled wine called gløgg that is a popular drink for Danish people during the month of December. IKEA also includes specific Danish holidays in their posts, such as Saint Lucia Day. As a last mention, IKEA also focuses a fair bit on mentioning the weekend in their posts for Denmark. As mentioned in the analysis, weather is an extremely talked-about subject in Denmark, which is why IKEA focuses so much on mentioning weather in their posts for Denmark.

In addition, the fact that IKEA focuses on mentioning the weekend in Denmark and not in Romania, can be connected to the individualism/collectivism dimension. Denmark's individualistic culture means that Danes value leisure and personal time way more than Romania, as a collectivistic culture values community (including work) and family-time more

than anything else. Taking all of this into consideration, it is clear that IKEA adapts their promotional posts to fit each individual culture.

Furthermore, the third theme called “functional brand posts” included twenty-five posts from IKEA Denmark, and forty-four posts from IKEA Romania. This is quite a big difference, as Romania has almost double the posts about the functionality of products compared to Denmark. This can be explained by looking back at the difference between Denmark and Romania when it comes to the uncertainty avoidance dimension. Romania has a very high uncertainty avoidance compared to Denmark. This can explain why IKEA would focus more on accentuating the functionality of their products for Romania, as this would cater to their high uncertainty avoidance level. A culture with high uncertainty avoidance feels the need to be extremely sure about their decisions to purchase a product. Hence why having a large number of promotional posts that present clearly what a product looks like and what it can do for the customer is a great idea.

In addition, the power distance dimension can also be worth noting here. Because Denmark has a much lower power distance compared to Romania, Danes are more willing to make purchasing decisions without being influenced as much by IKEA. In contrast, it is a good idea for IKEA to focus more on promoting the functionality of their products in Romania, which has a higher power distance, as this can give the company more credibility, and it can reassure Romanian customers that they are making a good decision if they purchase a specific product.

Last but not least, under the theme called “emotional brand posts”, there were a total of ten posts found for Denmark, and fifteen for Romania. A fairly low number of posts compared to the other themes, although the number of posts found are almost the same for both countries. However, a difference that can be seen between the posts for the two countries are that for Denmark, IKEA focuses a fair bit on story-telling and words such as “enjoying time”, “having fun”, “quiet moments”, and so on. In contrast, the emotional posts for Romania are more focused on jokes/humour, only a little bit of storytelling, and words such as “relax”, “inspire” and “friends are on their way”.

The fact that there are so many posts involving jokes/humour for Romania, and none for Denmark, can be connected to Romania’s collectivistic nature. It is a good idea for IKEA to use jokes in their promotional posts for Romania, as this creates a connection with the customers, which they value due to their collectivistic nature. Additionally, it is a great idea to use words such as “having fun” and “enjoying time” for Denmark, for the same reason stated

above when it came to mentioning the weekend. Denmark's individualistic nature means that Danes value leisure and having time for themselves.

## 8.5 Reflection & Limitations

At this point, it can be argued that Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been a very helpful tool when it comes to analysing the two chosen cultures in a systematic manner. By analysing the cultures through predetermined dimensions, it also became easier to compare the findings from each country, which in turn helped make it clear how they are different. However, one limitation of Hofstede's cultural dimensions is the generalisation of culture. This was also mentioned earlier before the analysis was carried out. The reason that this limitation did not stop us from using the dimensions, is that it would have been very difficult to conduct a cultural analysis otherwise. Different regions of a country might have different cultural traditions and norms, meaning that we would have had to conduct an analysis of every region in both countries to get a less generalised picture of the two cultures. A cultural analysis that is not generalised to some degree seems like a very difficult thing to achieve, especially given the fact that culture is so fluid. This is why Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been deemed as a very helpful tool for analysing cultures in this thesis, even if it is generalising.

The different strategies that were developed during the methodological process have also turned out to be a very helpful tool, however for analysing the 4P's marketing mix. Through them, it was possible to narrow the data selection a bit, which made it clearer and easier to conduct the analysis and find the appropriate data needed to do the analysis at all. By setting up specific strategies, it was also ensured that the same relevant information was looked for in connection to the marketing mix in both countries, which in turn made it easier to conduct a comparison of the findings as well. However, as helpful as these strategies have been, they also limited the data that we would find since we did not go beyond the limitations of the strategies. This means that some information that could potentially be useful, might not have been found during the research process. It also means that we cannot deny that a different outcome of the analysis might be possible with different strategies that focus on different things. If we would not have created the strategies that we did, then we would have been in a position where there would have simply been too much data to look through, and it would have been more challenging to conduct a systematic analysis where it was also possible to compare the findings appropriately. It is for this exact reason that the strategies

were created and also why they can be labeled as being a very helpful tool throughout this thesis.

Now that the analysis is completed, we can also reflect on the choice of methods. Both of the methods chosen have been useful and have allowed us to conduct a very systematic analysis of the 4P's as well as a thorough comparison of the findings. Thematic analysis allowed for the implementation of an easy-to-follow step-by-step process, which was indeed needed in an investigation of this size, where it otherwise might have been easy to get confused about which stage you were at. Differentiating comparative analysis also turned out to be a good choice as it has a clear focus on differences, which was exactly the focus we sought after. However, it is possible that an investigation with different approaches could be equally fruitful, perhaps through the use of interviews. That would, however, mean that the focus would be slightly different, and it would require us to visit Romania, which was not an option for us. As such, our approach is not necessarily the perfect approach, but given the limitations of travel and communication that we had, as well as the specific focus that was chosen, it turned out to be quite appropriate and helpful.

## 9. Conclusion

The initial purpose of this thesis was to investigate and further the understanding of how influential culture is when it comes to the creation of a company's marketing mix. This led to the following problem statement: *"How have cultural differences influenced IKEA's marketing strategy, if at all, when comparing IKEA Denmark and IKEA Romania?"* To do this, we decided to take a closer look at both Danish and Romanian culture, with the purpose of understanding how exactly they might be different. IKEA, and their marketing mix, was then chosen due to the fact that they have stores in both countries, which would allow us to analyze whether their marketing mix had changed between the two countries, and if it did, how, and furthermore, if any changes were present, could they then be explained by any differences in culture that were discovered earlier.

To accomplish all of this, two theories were included, namely the 4P's marketing mix and Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The choice of the 4ps marketing mix is quite self-explanatory as IKEA's marketing mix was a main point of our analysis. Hofstede's cultural dimensions formed the basis for the cultural analysis as it is a renowned theory and tool for analyzing cultures – even if it does generalize an entire country's culture. To get the most out of these theories, and to operationalize them to the best of our abilities, we decided to use the

methods: thematic analysis and comparative analysis. Through the use of these methods, it was possible to conduct a systematic analysis while also comparing findings for each culture and each marketing mix – which in turn helped us answer the problem statement posed in the beginning. Moreover, through the inclusion of the concepts: standardization and adaptation, it also became possible to categorize the different approaches by IKEA into two categories, one that described their approach as being the same in both countries, standardization, and another that describes their approach as being different in the two countries, adaptation.

When it comes to the cultural analysis, it showed that Danish and Romanian cultures are quite different as they have been given almost polar opposite scores within the six different dimensions. Specifically, the differences could be found within the following dimensions: power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and indulgence, while the last two dimensions, masculinity and long-term orientation were slightly closer in terms of score. What this meant for the rest of the thesis was that we had certain expectations for what would be found within the marketing mix analysis, as the differences in culture meant that certain differences in marketing mix should be a given. This is also visible from the fact that a few recommendations were given within each dimension concerning how IKEA should conduct themselves, in the two countries, to maximize their chance of success. The findings from the cultural analysis thus suggested that an adapted strategy would be the best option for IKEA.

The analysis of the 4P's gave a plethora of findings concerning the different strategies that IKEA use. Initially, it seemed like IKEA has adopted a standardized strategy when it comes to their products, as they focus on satisfying the same needs, albeit through different products, while also offering the exact same products in both countries – with the only exception being one product line. The choice of food sold in the two stores, is the main indicator of an adapted strategy being included as the food was clearly adapted to each country. This is the first instance where culture can be said to have had an effect on the marketing mix. However, during the analysis of the P known as promotion, it was discovered that IKEA do indeed create specific products to match specific events in the two countries – which suggests an adapted product strategy. In conclusion to this P, IKEA have a mixed strategy where the main portion of the products they sell are standardized, with the exception of a few products they create specifically for certain events, as well as the food, which is also quite adapted.

IKEA's pricing strategy was found to be low-cost oriented and very standardized in the two countries. This was evident from the fact that IKEA utilizes price in the same way in

both countries – which is in a way that highlights how cheap, and affordable, a product is. The analysis did show that a majority of the products are cheaper in Romania, but it is almost impossible to uncover the specific reason why this is the case as there could be many factors involved. However, since the cultural analysis did suggest that Romanians are very unlikely to purchase products that are expensive, unless it is absolutely necessary, then that could potentially explain why the price is a bit lower in Romania. The price being higher in Denmark furthermore makes sense when the findings of the cultural analysis are brought forth, as they stated that Danes are a lot more likely to indulge and spend a lot of money if the product, they purchase will improve their quality of life. The focus is however the same for IKEA in both Denmark and Romania, which is to offer the most affordable products possible, which suggests that they have implemented a standardized strategy when it comes to their pricing.

During the analysis of the P “place”, it was uncovered that IKEA has a standardized strategy for a large part of the supply chain. The way in which their products are manufactured, quality checked, and transported to their distribution centers around the world, who will then transport the products to the physical stores, is all standardized. Through this, as well as the way the products are packaged – the famous flat packed way – are also reasons why IKEA can offer their products at such a low price as they are. However, when it comes to how the customer can get the products they buy delivered to their home, then that’s where it seems like IKEA has adopted an adapted strategy. The cultural analysis showed that Danes prefer to not be told where to go and what to do, meaning that they want more options for how they can buy their products and how they can be transported and delivered. On the contrary, Romanians prefer to be told where to go and don’t mind having less options. This is reflected in IKEA’s strategy, as there are a lot more options for Danes when it comes to how to buy products and also where they can either pick them up from or how they can have them delivered. Meanwhile, Romanians have a lot less options and have to rely on only a few pickup points located around the country. This means that IKEA use a mixed strategy, where the approach, up until the customer purchases a product, is standardized and the following transportation and delivery is adapted.

The analysis of IKEA’s promotion, which was done by analyzing their Instagram pages dedicated to both countries, is the best example of how culture, and cultural differences, have influenced IKEA. This can be argued on the basis that every category, which the posts were coded within, showed that culture had influenced the posts in one way or another. An example of this would be the different events in each country that IKEA is

aware of and has created specific products for, as well as constructed their promotional material to fit within those events. The promotion strategy can as such be classified as being adapted to each culture, and how each culture should preferably be treated in order to maximize the chance of success.

This leaves one last question concerning whether or not the differences in marketing mix that have been observed align with the differences in culture that were discovered earlier, during the cultural analysis. The short answer is yes, they do indeed align. The way in which these differences in culture have influenced IKEA's marketing strategy, are quite obvious at this stage. First of all, IKEA has had to introduce different selections of food in the two countries to better match with what is usually eaten in each country. IKEA has also been able to limit the need for creating a lot of pickup points and multiple delivery options in Romania, while having to do the opposite in Denmark, again due to the differences in culture. Lastly, the way IKEA promotes themselves and their products, at least on Instagram, has changed quite a lot when comparing the findings from the two Instagram pages. As it was discussed, all the changes in promotion could be explained by the cultural differences that were discovered initially.

However, certain aspects of IKEA's marketing mix have not changed, such as the majority of the products they offer, as the analysis showed that they sell all of the same products in each country. Even though the prices are not identical, it is still clear that IKEA utilizes the same strategy, which is to sell the products as cheap as they can in both countries, which is why it can be considered a standardized approach even if the prices aren't the exact same. Moreover, a large part of IKEA's supply chain is also standardized, and as such unchanged by the cultural differences.

As it has been mentioned earlier, we wanted to give our recommendations on how IKEA could potentially be more successful in the two countries, but only if their current strategy seemed to lack understanding of the cultural differences. It is now clear and evident that IKEA is very much aware of the cultural differences and have adapted quite a lot of their marketing mix to better suit these differences. This means that we don't have any recommendations for IKEA specifically. Our only recommendation would be for other companies to look at IKEA and their efforts and mimic them, as IKEA seems to be very good at adapting the elements of their marketing mix that matters the most, while standardizing everything else around them.

In conclusion, cultural differences have influenced IKEA's marketing strategy in many ways when comparing IKEA Denmark and IKEA Romania. This has resulted in IKEA having a mixed strategy with both standardized and adapted elements.

## 9.1 Our Contribution

Lastly, the question of what the implications of our research are, remains. The literature review showed us how culture has been highlighted as a very important factor in quite a lot of cases, but especially in cases with a large geographical distance between the two countries that were being considered, such as Finland and China.

The implications of the findings in this thesis, are that culture can be further highlighted as being quite important when doing business in different countries rather than in your own country of origin, even if the geographical distance is smaller in scale, which is the case when considering Denmark and Romania. Moreover, this thesis also furthers the understanding of IKEA and how they do business in different countries that are located closer to their country of origin – Sweden. The gap in the field that was uncovered during the literature review was concerned with these exact elements of whether culture mattered as much when the geographical distance is a lot smaller and furthermore, how IKEA does business in Romania and how their marketing mix looks.

This means that our findings align with those mentioned in the literature review, and we can therefore add our investigation to the other investigations that conclude that culture and cultural differences are very important for companies to be aware of. In other words, what we have contributed to the current literature on this topic, is a developed understanding of culture and cultural differences when the geographical distance between the two cases is decreased significantly. The new findings that can be added to the literature is that culture is still a very important factor to be aware of when attempting to do business in a country that is located closer to you.

Moreover, the way in which we conducted this investigation is also new within the literature. Specifically, our choice in methods and strategies was something that hasn't been done in the literature that was considered earlier during the literature review. Our inclusion of Hofstede's cultural dimensions is also a new thing that we have added to the field, as none of the examples we considered during the literature review included said dimensions. This means that our approach to analyzing the two cultures and the following analysis of the marketing mix, is different and new compared to the approaches used so far.

However, before any final conclusions can be made regarding whether culture matters more when the geographical distance is small or large, further research is needed on other countries that are located closer to Sweden, to get a better understanding of whether the findings in this thesis match with findings in those other countries. Furthermore, before it becomes possible to definitively say that cultural differences matter more, or less, as the geographical distance increases, and decreases, a comparison is needed between a marketing mix taken from a case where there is a smaller geographical distance, and a marketing mix taken from a case where there is a large geographical distance. This could perhaps be a comparison that draws on the findings in this thesis and then also conducts an investigation of perhaps Denmark and China. That would give an idea of whether culture has influenced IKEA equally in both countries, and the results could help determine whether the importance of culture changes.

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