

argues convincingly that the enormous demand for slaves jump-started British Caribbean free trade. In short, merchants did not want to be fettered by what they saw as excessive restrictions and pushed for open trade. The Free Port Act was, at least to some degree, the result of pressure to get African slaves into foreign markets.

O'Malley is also sensitive to the plight of the Africans who were caught in the middle of this trade. Sources from their perspective are extremely limited, but the author is effective in describing the conditions of the trade and speculating how Africans would have been affected. The intercolonial trade made travel for the captives more painful and complicated. Travel on smaller ships—usually with other types of cargo—made voyages at least as cramped as the Middle Passage. Many Africans were smuggled, which also made for problematic complications. Since a number of the ports were at the end of a long distribution network, slaves bound up in the intercolonial trade probably had longer land journeys than those who were part of the transatlantic trade. O'Malley also presents evidence to show that slaves in the intercolonial trade were less likely to revolt than those in the Middle Passage. The author is careful to show how ethnicity interacted with the intercolonial trade; for example, traders in Barbados and Jamaica tended to transship more captives from the Bights of Benin and Biafra.

*Final Passages* is a useful book for any scholar who studies colonial British North America. The sheer amount of information makes for a slow read, and the book has limited utility in the classroom. The author might have better served readers by making his narrative suppler. But for those individuals who persevere, the book is rewarding.

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Design by IKEA: A Cultural History. *By Sara Kristoffersson.* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014. viii + 148 pp. Illustrations, figures, references, notes, index. Cloth, \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0-8578-5814-6.

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Reviewed by Hans Sjögren

Registered in the Netherlands, with headquarters in Denmark, manufacturing in Poland, and the family foundation in Liechtenstein, the furniture company IKEA is more Swedish than the nation itself. This is

underlined by the Swedish Institute, which says that IKEA is doing more to disseminate the image of Sweden than all governmental efforts put together. The firm has systematically made use of national symbols to build a strong brand, during a period when we thought national identities would be wiped out by increasing globalization. This makes IKEA a remarkable story of general interest, from its foundation in the mid-1950s to its success as a firm with 298 stores in thirty-eight countries and an annual turnover of nearly £30 billion.

Sara Kristoffersson focuses on the corporate culture and the content of the narratives chosen by IKEA to promote the brand. In the tradition of a discourse analysis, the author deals with the content of the narratives surrounding Scandinavian design and products, rather than the artifacts themselves. The topic relates to the theory and empirics in *Cultural Strategy* by Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron, that is, how cultural expressions of ideology, myths, and codes have built breakthrough brands in so-called blue oceans. With access to archival and public sources, Kristoffersson uses notions, histories, and fictions to analyze how the identity of the firm has been “fabricated” throughout its history. The presentation is complemented by contrasting narratives and direct criticism, which makes the study a balanced evaluation of storytelling within branding. A range of illustrations from advertising campaigns gives us further insights into the signaling of messages and the process of marketing.

Kristoffersson contextualizes the concept of Scandinavian design historically and contemporarily. During its first decades, IKEA was not connected to any national symbols; the founder, Ingvar Kamprad, did not make any effort to link the products with particular Swedish values. The entrepreneurship was concentrated in flat packages and ready-to-assemble furniture, which continue to be the innovative hallmark of IKEA. In fact, the label “Scandinavian design” was something only used by foreigners to single out the simplicity and purity that characterized glassworks and furniture from Scandinavia. “In the 1950s and 1960s no one at IKEA talked about social consciousness and the Swedish dimension hardly existed. At the time, product names held no associations to anything Swedish and the company name was spelt Ikea, while the logotype remained yellow and white for many years” (p. 120). However, from the 1970s, IKEA introduced symbols of Swedishness in its rhetoric and started to appear as a Robin Hood in the consumption of furniture. Thus, the brand was associated with egalitarian spirit, social consciousness, and other elements embedded in the Swedish model of a welfare state. The firm enabled everyone—not least students and members of the working class—to change household effects more often. The core values of the political agenda, captured in

the concept of “the People’s Home” from the 1930s, had been taken over and materialized in the business sector, thanks to IKEA.

The book discusses the relationships between national brand and corporate brand in the chapter “Sweden Designed by IKEA.” A parallel is made to the mid-1970s nation-branding of Spain, a poor and politically outdated country promoting itself by using national symbols, such as beaches, Rioja wines, and a cheerful red sun painted by Joan Miró. Likewise, in the late-1990s project “Cool Britannia,” the new Labour Party tried to reshape British identity by stuffing it with youthfully hip design and fashion, in contrast with royalty, buttered scones, and gardening (p. 81). In the case of IKEA, it seems that the national symbols remain the same as in the 1950s, whereas the reality of Swedish society has been transformed substantially. Even if rural areas with red cottages and slender birch trees where people drive Volvos still exist, most people live in highly populated urban areas far from Pippi Longstocking and social homogeneity. And Volvo Car Corporation is owned by the Chinese. Besides, the wish of the Swedish state to foster individuals from the cradle has been abandoned. Consequently, the brand today is built on an anachronism, where the firm is selling a wooden exotic idyll in flat packages. Nevertheless, IKEA holds on to some political and social radicalism, underlined by this manifesto by Kamprad: “We have an important mission: The many people! They need us” (p. 112). This might be convincing, but it does not necessarily mean that IKEA fulfills its goal of sustainability. Lower quality means a higher turnover of the home interior, which increases pressure on the environment.

The narrative of Ingvar Kamprad is based on cost consciousness, which goes hand in hand with the products offered. That notion has surely helped to feed the gospel of praiseworthy, authentic, and functional design to all people around the globe. However, the image is less solid after revelation of Kamprad’s Nazi sympathy long after World War II and his escape to Switzerland, away from the high taxes in his social-democratic home country. Another crack in the façade emanates from the notion expressed by Kamprad himself that he should have donated the fortune of his empire, while in truth every coin is counted and controlled by a secret family foundation in Liechtenstein. According to Kristoffersson, IKEA uses a veil for triggering our culture of consumerism, by producing (false) connotations of a selection of positive values. “IKEA is easy to like. . . . The problems lie in the fact that IKEA pretends that the operation has very different motives. The company does not present itself as part of the consumer culture but justifies itself with its senses of social responsibility and its good will” (p. 117).

To conclude, Sara Kristoffersson has presented a problematized, nicely written, and most interesting study of one of today’s leading

megastores. She addresses questions beyond the history of design, targeting the criteria for branding and consumerism. The book makes a valuable empirical and theoretical contribution to the fields of business history, cultural history, and management studies.

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A Business History of the Swatch Group: The Rebirth of Swiss Watchmaking and the Globalization of the Luxury Industry. *By Pierre-Yves Donzé.* Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave, 2014. xiii + 152 pp. Figures, tables, notes, index. Cloth, \$91.89. ISBN: 978-1-137-38906-0.

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Reviewed by Teresa da Silva Lopes

*The Business History of the Swatch Group* tells the history of the world's leading watch producer and its business systems from the 1980s until the present day. The Swatch Group was created in 1983 from a merger of two Swiss firms, Allgemeine Schweizerische Uhrenindustrie A.G. (a leading producer of parts and movement blanks), and Société Suisse pour l'Industrie Horlogère S.A. (a leading watchmaker, owner of brands such as Omega, Biel, and Tissot). The newly merged group came into being in a period of crisis in the Swiss watchmaking industry, caused by the fast growth of competition from Japan.

Chapter 2 discusses and analyses the watchmaking crisis of 1975–1985 in the Swiss watchmaking industry. This crisis was, to a great extent, caused by the success of Japanese watchmaking companies such as Seiko, which from the mid-1960s adopted mass-production systems for mechanical watches and rationalized marketing strategies. The quartz revolution and the propitious monetary environment in Japan in the 1970s heightened the impact of this crisis. Chapter 3 describes the creation of the Swatch Group and the past evolution of its two predecessors. The Swatch watch, a radical innovation in the watch industry in terms of product concept, is highlighted as having contributed greatly to the comeback of the Group as well as to the Swiss watch industry's return to the world market. Chapter 4 focuses on structural changes carried out by the Group in the 1990s to deal with the threats associated with globalization, which led to high profitability and a leadership position in the industry by the end of the twentieth century. Rationalizing production operations in Switzerland, and offshoring and outsourcing parts of the production