

# Insight & Strategy: Tomorrow Starts Tonight /

IKEA

How a home furnishing retailer repositioned itself as a sleep expert to differentiate against the bed-in-a-box start-ups that have oversaturated the category

15 FEB 2021



Last year, home furnishing retailer **Ikea** launched two UK campaigns in quick succession using the creative wrapper **Tomorrow Starts Tonight**. The campaigns were designed to help Ikea stand out in the sleep wellness market, which has become increasingly competitive over the last few years.

With new start-ups emerging regularly, Ikea and its London-based agency **Mother** focused communications on the quality and importance of sleep rather than the low cost or size benefits that are commonly advertised by its competitors.

► <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8cKgngc2Ro>

The first piece of creative for Tomorrow Starts Tonight was a reimagining of the Tortoise and the Hare fable, which was set to the backdrop of the morning and night before of the London Marathon. While the Tortoise gets his 40 winks in a bedroom designed to induce the best night's sleep possible, the Hare parties the night away and sleeps on his sofa, emphasising the importance of a good night's sleep in facing the challenges of tomorrow.

The second was an OOH and print campaign that juxtaposed images of quick fixes commonly used to substitute for a good night's sleep, including energy drinks, anti-aging make-up and sleeping pills. Ikea replaced elements of the images with its sleep products, including pillows to look like pills and a duvet to mirror rejuvenating creams.



To discover why Ikea separated this campaign into two different creative executions and find out how the brand is promoting itself as a sleep expert, we spoke with UK marketing communications manager at Ikea **Kemi Anthony**, and Mother London's strategy director **Scarlett Spence** and creative director **Thom Whitaker**. They told us:

- The recent influx of bed-in-a-box competitors into the sleep category has made it hard to stand out, a sizable problem for Ikea given how important the bedroom department is to the business.
- To differentiate itself, Ikea has spent the last few years positioning itself as an expert in sleep.
- From research conducted by the brand, Ikea discovered that sleep is frequently sacrificed in favour of the waking day and supplemented with quick-fix miracle cures.
- To speak to this issue, Ikea is using Tomorrow Starts Tonight to focus on how powerful sleep can be at improving one's wellbeing.

#### How has the Ikea brand evolved over the last five years in the sleep category?

**Scarlett Spence:** About four years ago, Ikea created a long-term marketing brief to establish itself as a sleep expert. This shift from selling beds, to selling a behaviour, has since manifested in every touchpoint across the brand, from online to in-store and of course down to our marketing campaigns. Every campaign that we've created since then including The Nightclub, The Hare and Tomorrow Starts Tonight has all tried to position Ikea as sleep experts in the category.

**'When it comes to being a specialist, Ikea's area of expertise is understanding what people's needs, wants and dreams are at home. And that really doesn't matter if it's the bedroom, the kitchen or the living room.'**

Kemi Anthony, Ikea

#### Who is Ikea's target audience in the sleep category?

**Kemi Anthony:** Our vision is always about creating a better everyday life for the many people. Therefore the audience is always broad no matter what area of the business we're talking about. But the big gap between the haves and the have nots is becoming more obvious now, especially against the backdrop of Covid-19. As a result, our aim then is to look at what we can do to close that gap and give everybody the same opportunities.



#### What informs the sleep category buyer's decision to purchase? How is this changing?

**Anthony:** Mattress replacement is recommended around every eight years, but right now, purchases are being driven by people wanting a new look for the bedroom. The new-look is historically not something that customers have taken a lot of notice of, but I

think that's changing because we're spending so much more time at home, and that need is now greater and more apparent than usual.

### What are the key challenges Ikea is facing right now in the sleep category?

**Spence:** The sleep market has grown exponentially in terms of specialist mattresses, sleep tracking tech and I even read an article this morning about pyjamas that are designed to reset your circadian rhythm. The category has truly taken on a life of its own. But because of all these new innovations in sleep, it's been a greater challenge for Ikea to stand out amongst all this noise.

**People don't wake up in the morning thinking about flatpack, but they do wake up wanting to have a better night's sleep. That being so, The Wonderful Everyday is a really emotive platform that enables us to have meaningful conversations about areas that truly matter to people.**

Scarlett Spence, Mother, London

### How does Ikea attempt to stand out in the overly cluttered sleep category?

**Thom Whitaker:** A lot of Ikea's competitors in this space are of the bed-in-a-box variety, which all emphasize the size and price of the mattress in a race to the bottom. But Ikea is more focused holistically on the whole bedroom and how that can improve people's sleep.

**Anthony:** In the sleep category, we often have people saying that Ikea is not seen as a specialist. But our strength is in having everything under one roof. Therefore, the approach we take is very much about understanding life at home. So when it comes to being a specialist, Ikea's area of expertise is understanding what people's needs, wants and dreams are at home. And that really doesn't matter if it's the bedroom, the kitchen or the living room. We do well in bedrooms as a business, we are the market leader in the total bedrooms offering. Saying we're not a specialist is always a perplexing notion for me. Because for us, our specialism is life at home. Which goes right across the board.

Also, our marketing is always driven by trying to offer the consumer an emotional benefit. Therefore it's not just about the look and size of the mattress, although those are equally important, it's understanding that people are different and varied in their needs or preferences, while these beds-in-a-box take the approach that one size fits all. But it's less about trying to compete with them and more about playing to our own strengths at Ikea.



### What does 'The Wonderful Everyday' mean to Ikea and how is it distinctive from 'The Wonderful Everynight'?

**Spence:** The Wonderful Everyday is Ikea's enduring brand platform that we've had since 2013, which continues to inspire great work and consistency across our comms. We often say as a brand team, 'people don't wake up in the morning thinking about flatpack, but they do wake up wanting to have a better night's sleep'. That being so, The Wonderful Everyday is a really emotive platform that enables us to have meaningful conversations about areas that truly matter to people, such as sleep, cooking or play.

**Whitaker:** We have been careful to use The Wonderful Everynight quite sparingly. This is because we don't want to create a parallel platform that would fight against The Wonderful Everyday, which is our all-encompassing singular idea that is at the heart of everything that we do for Ikea. But The Wonderful Everynight is a playful device we use sometimes when we're talking about sleep.

**The research set us up with an interesting challenge, which was how do we culturally reappraise sleep and stop it being consistently degraded in culture? How do we go about changing behaviour and routine, making people act on this intent to want more sleep?**

Scarlett Spence, Mother, London

## Did Ikea conduct any research to help form the creative brief for the Tomorrow Starts Tonight campaign?

**Spence:** Ikea commissioned ethnographic research for this brief, which involved video diaries of participants right before and immediately after sleeping. The interesting insight was that sleep is at the bottom of everyone's to-do list. One participant said it best with: 'I would sleep more, but it's just a waste of time'. This was our penny dropping moment of, sleep has no cultural currency, people would rather be filling their day with more activities than going to bed.

## What was the challenge of the brief for Tomorrow Starts Tonight?

**Spence:** The research set us up with an interesting challenge, which was how do we culturally reappraise sleep and stop it being consistently degraded in culture? There's a big intention and action gap when it comes to sleep. Asking someone if they'd like more sleep is one of the most agreeable questions in the world - everyone will say yes. But getting people to actually get more sleep by prioritising it over the waking day is a different matter. So the big challenge for the brief was to get under the skin of why people want more sleep - but rarely do anything about getting more sleep. It made sense for us to evolve that idea between The Hare and Tomorrow Starts Tonight rather than switching it up and starting again from scratch.

## How does Mother approach the creative executions of Ikea briefs? Are fantastical elements important to this process?

**Whitaker:** We often start by looking at a brief by trying to inspire people to think differently about life at home, which can often be relegated to the mundane bedrock of your everyday life, with people not generally thinking about the impact that can have on your wellbeing. We like taking a provocative or counterintuitive point of view and bringing it to life using fantastical elements. But these are never just flights of fancy, the creative executions are always grounded in real-world insights.



## Tell me about the creative process – how did a modern reimagining of the tortoise and the hare fable concept originate?

**Whitaker:** We got to the core insight of reframing sleep to be the start of the day, rather than the end. Which was a very rich creative territory for us to explore.

From that, we had a bunch of scripts on the table that would have all made great films, but the one that fit best with this narrative was a previously untold prequel to the tortoise and the hare fable. Taking this story that everybody already knows and adding a new chapter to it.

**Anthony:** The living spaces between the two characters were designed quite differently, and although we used Ikea furniture for the Hare's room, that space was less considered than the tortoise's. Everything in his room was designed to create a good night's sleep, this was to show a clear point of difference between both of their surroundings and behaviours.

## Why did IKEA choose the areas of energy drinks, makeup and sleeping pills as the antagonists of sleep in the Tomorrow Start Tonight OOH campaign?

**Spence:** We found this extraordinary piece of research that said there is a cure for all these things you don't think are attainable in life. Whether that's having more energy, feeling better or looking younger. But it's not by throwing money at anti-aging creams or energy boosting products, actually, it is from something as innocuous as sleep. We thought that by taking these adjacent categories of quick-fix miracle cures and colliding them with something that is achievable, which is just getting more sleep, would really be impactful.



## Why split the Tomorrow Starts Tonight campaign into two different creative executions for different media channels?

**Spence:** We've found that lots of people tend to approach communications with matching luggage. So they'll shorten the main TVC film for social or use a still from the ad as OOH. But with Ikea, we have two really clear roles for communication. TV is about inspiring a point of view to a mass audience. But OOH is about enabling, which has more of a focus on the product. We believe that a breadth of creative ideas is what does those two roles greater justice.

## Can you share any results?

**Spence:** Although we don't have any hard business results to share, it's too early for that. But so far we have started to see elements of talkability and genuine attention from people. Whether that has been discussing the choice of music in the film online or sharing the OOH ads on social media, these ads are starting to imbed in culture. Which is really a shift from paid media to earned media. So if we create ideas like Tomorrow Starts Tonight that's paid for media in OOH and it shifts into earned media in online, that suddenly brings us efficiencies. Which is very important in our aim to have conversations with as many people as possible.

**'Tomorrow Starts Tonight was strategically sound from top to bottom, with customers able to see the ad and walk into a store and immediately have those conversations around improving their sleep quality.'**

Scarlett Spence, Mother, London

## Tell us more about the Ikea sleep hub initiative and whether customers have been receptive to that?

**Anthony:** Just like any other business, we're facing lots of challenges right now due to Covid-19. Considering our stores are closed right now in the UK, we're supporting the business in any way that we can. But what we've done in the background is redesign our bedroom departments from scratch and we're continuing to train our stores using a specialist sleep doctor [Dr. Guy Meadows], who is helping us build up our understanding around sleep and the importance of it. Then this is then being relayed to customers when our co-workers interact with them in-store. Anecdotally, we have heard from some Ikea stores that over the last few years more people have been coming in and requesting advice about sleep, rather than saying they just want to buy a bed or mattress. Which is a really big thing for us.

**Spence:** And as all this planning for the campaign was happening, the co-workers were being upskilled to have totally different conversations with customers about sleep. So this huge brief with a massive ambition could be backed up across all touchpoints. Tomorrow Starts Tonight was strategically sound from top to bottom, with customers able to see the ad and walk into a store and immediately have those conversations around improving their sleep quality.



**What piece of advice would you give to a marketer that is fighting for market share in a highly competitive industry such as the sleep wellness category?**

**Anthony:** Sometimes in the process of achieving everything you need to as a business, the creativity can get a little bit lost. As a client, I never want to feel like I'm dumbing down on creativity, which is something I fight for quite a lot in maintaining. I think it's tempting to get derailed when you see your competitors acting differently and feeling like you need to fall in line as they do. But what has worked for us at Ikea is having a clear understanding of our brand and continuing to stick to our strengths and be consistent with our messaging.

**What has been your greatest learning from this campaign?**

**Spence:** With sleep being such a cluttered space, you've just got to lean into that discomfort sometimes, which we've seen pay off with some really bold creative ideas. Anthony always says that she delights in never being too comfortable, and often gets uncomfortable from being too comfortable. Which is very much a testament to the risks and bravery that Anthony is willing to take. The reality is that when you say something that feels challenging, or when you're leaning into boldness, that's where you're more likely to have your campaign shared organically and earn a place in culture.

---

This article was downloaded from the Contagious intelligence platform. If you are not yet a member and would like access to 11,000+ campaigns, trends and interviews, email [sales@contagious.com](mailto:sales@contagious.com) or visit [contagious.com](https://contagious.com) to learn more.