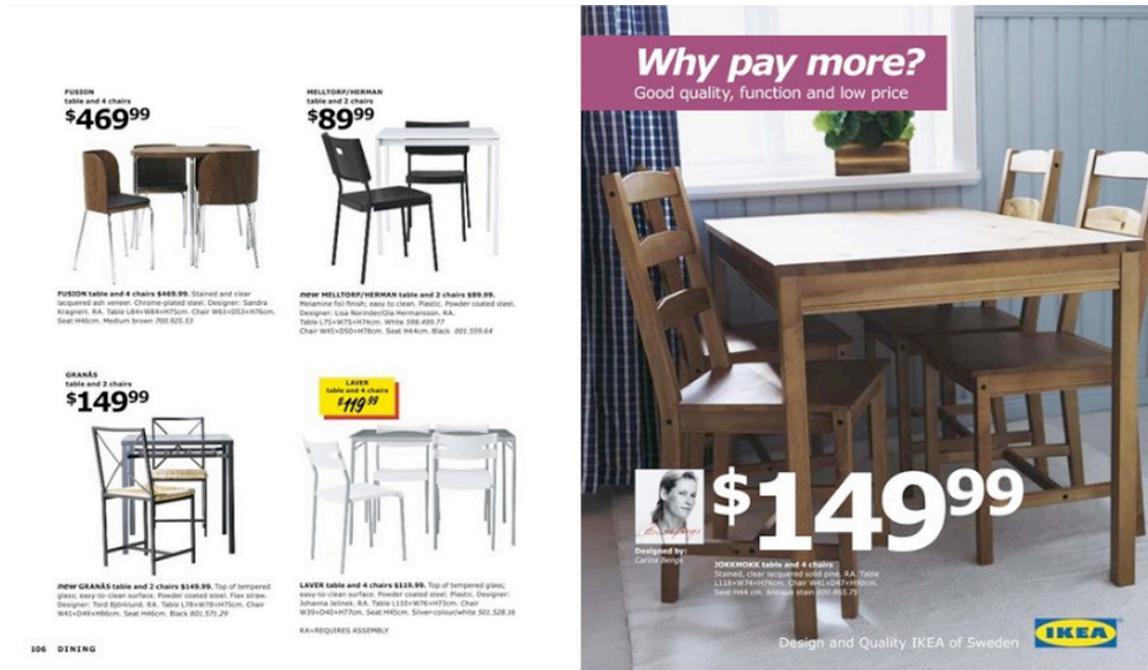


Latest Ikea Design Has Critics Fuming

by THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



A page from the 2010 IKEA catalog.
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Ikea, the Swedish furniture chain, said Sunday it never expected such a backlash after switching typeface in its latest catalog.

The company's decision to make its first such font change in 50 years — from the iconic Futura typeface to the Verdana one — has caused a worldwide reaction on the Internet. The catalog, which the company advertises as the world's most printed book, was distributed last month.

"We're surprised," said Ikea spokeswoman Camilla Meiby. "But I think it's mainly experts who have expressed their views, people who are interested in fonts. I don't think the broad public is that interested."

Verdana was invented by Microsoft for use on a computer screen, not on paper. Its wide, open letters with space between characters are designed to increase legibility on small computer screens.

Ikea said that in order to reach many people in many different ways, it needed a font that works in both digital and print media.

"Verdana is a simple, cost-effective font which works well in all media and languages," Meiby said.

But some Ikea fans were outraged, finding Verdana less elegant than Futura.

The online forum Typophile ended its first post with the words, "It's a sad day."

A week ago, Romanian design consultant Marius Ursache started an online petition called "Ikea, please get rid of Verdana." On Sunday, the campaign had more than 2,700 signatures.

The move to a simple, modern-looking font also fueled Twitter posts such as "Ikea, stop the Verdana madness" and "Words can't describe my disgust."

Swedish art director Christoph Comstedt disagreed.

"I don't think the average consumer will react, maybe people in the advertising business," Comstedt said.

Ikea has 246 stores selling inexpensive but stylish furnishings globally and around 140,000 staff members.