It is exactly twenty years since the publication of Professor Ted Levitt’s, Harvard Business Review paper on the globalisation of markets. Levitt’s main thesis was that cultural differences were eroding so fast, especially in the developed world, that global brands were likely to dominate more and more markets in the near future. To some extent his predictions have proved to be accurate as the ubiquity of global brands is a frequently observed phenomenon. But there is now increasing evidence that although the logic of global brands remains as powerful as ever for multi-national companies it is increasingly rejected by consumers, especially in smaller countries.

This paper describes a number of case histories from the Irish market in an attempt to draw some conclusions about the most effective marketing communications strategies for indigenous brands faced with multi-national competition.
INTRODUCTION

Globalisation – An Overview

The issue of globalisation has been the subject of intense debate in the recent past, a debate that has generated more heat than light. Even the word ‘globalization’ itself has many different meanings for different people in different contexts and is too often used indiscriminately. It is usually considered to be a business and economic phenomenon; a development of global and financial markets, the growth of the transnational companies and the resulting decline in power and influence of national economies. From this perspective, globalisation is seen as a relatively recent phenomenon – a development that differentiates the present day from fifty or even twenty-five years ago. In this context globalisation is usually attributed to two key developments – the collapse of the socialist-run economies of Eastern Europe around the late 1980s and the advances in information technology during the same period. Both paved the way for the dominance of free market economics and the growth of global companies selling global brands.

The main proponents of this view of globalisation argue that it is not only good for you – allowing individuals greater freedom – it is economically the only way forward:

“It is important to understand why economic integration is a force for good and why globalisation, far from being the greatest cause of poverty, is the only feasible cure.”

However, alternative definitions of globalisation suggest that it may be a more complex phenomenon than it would appear on the economic surface:

“The intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.”

This definition is interesting for a number of reasons. It doesn’t specifically mention business or economics, thereby suggesting that globalisation may have much wider, particularly cultural, implications. Even more significant, however, it suggests that the process is not all one way traffic, that the opening up of small local communities might mean that they too could have an influence on the wider world.

Another useful insight is the repudiation of the assumption that globalisation is a recent phenomenon. In fact the exact opposite would appear to be the case – the world may well have been globalizing since the beginning of time – “humans have been weaving commercial and cultural connections since the first camel caravan ventured afield.” It is also true that there have always
been sceptics who feared for the loss of existing order. A historian writing in the 2nd century BC complained that “Formerly the things which happened in the world had no connection among themselves – but since then all events are united in a common bundle”. But regardless of how long the process has been happening there is little doubt that it moved up a gear in the last two decades. Thomas Friedman’s *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* captured the mood of this period with his powerful exposition of the view that any country which is prepared to adopt liberal economic policies could expect to enjoy the fruits of economic prosperity. Unlike some of the more starry-eyed and sometimes triumphalist free market evangelists, Friedman’s liberal (in the American sense) New York background ensured an element of caution. The terms he used to summarise the process are very revealing – global capital movements are referred to as “the economic herd” and the policies that are recommended to countries that wish to attract global capital are referred to as “the golden straightjacket”. “Herds” imply being trampled on and “straightjackets” are very restrictive, so in spite of his apparent endorsement and enthusiasm for the globalisation project Freedman is aware of possible problems. He has no doubts about the validity of the overall philosophy but is concerned about local sensitivities and the fact that there may be unfortunate side effects; “globalization in a very short time could wipe out the ecological and cultural diversity that took millions of years of human and biological effort to produce.”

But the most thorough examination of globalisation is probably Manuel Castell’s monumental three-volume study *The Information Age*. He accepts that the process of globalisation has been around for a long time but claims it has been speeded up exponentially by the new information technology:

“A world economy, that is an economy in which capital accumulation proceeds through the world, has existed since at least since the 16th century. A global economy is an economy with a capacity to work as a unit in real time or chosen time on a planetary scale … it was only in the late 20th century that the world economy was to become truly global on the basis of the new infrastructure provided by information and communication technologies and with the decisive help of deregulation and liberalizing policies by governments.”

One of Castell’s main conclusions is that revolutions will inevitably create their own backlash and that as a result there will be an increase of interest in and enthusiasm for local identity all over the world … “We have experienced the widespread upsurge of powerful expressions of cultural identity that challenged globalisation and cosmopolitanism on behalf of cultural singularity and people’s control over their lives and environment.”
Partly this is a natural human reaction because as the world becomes more of a
global unit people will feel disenfranchised, remote from the real centres of
power and frustrated by their increasing inability to affect any decisions. In
these circumstances the natural reaction is to cling to as many local comfort
blankets as possible. Michael Ignatieff, the critic and commentator, described
the process well when he said, “The more evident our common needs become
the more brutal becomes the human insistence on the claims of difference. The
centripetal forces of need, labour and science, which are pulling us together
as a species are counter-balanced by centrifugal forces – the claims of tribe,
race, section, region and nation pulling us apart”. 9) All the evidence we have
therefore suggests that the globalisation process will continue but will be met
with equally determined resistance from people all over the world, but
especially in smaller countries, who will become more fiercely attached to
their own identity and seek tangible methods of demonstrating this attitude:

“Indeed one of the results of the convergence of large institutions since the
end of the cold war is that people around the world are now even more
conscious of the cultural differences that separate them”. 10)

The basic premise of this paper is that local brands represent a method of
proclaiming local identity.

GLOBALISATION OF MARKETS

It is now exactly twenty years since Professor Ted Levitts’ famous assertion
that cultural differences across the world were likely to erode so fast that in no
time at all global brands would dominate most consumer markets. 11) Levitt’s
thesis has been enthusiastically adopted by the leading multinational branded
goods companies who viewed it as an ideal intellectual underpinning of their
quest for world domination and to some extent this thesis has proved correct –
the ubiquity of global brands has become one of the defining features of
modern life. American companies have been the most zealous proselytizers of
the global brand thesis – after all they own more of the worlds leading brands
than anyone else and they have greater financial resources. It’s also in their
character – Americans more than most people believe that their institutions
and values (democracy, individual rights, the rule of law and prosperity based
on economic freedom), represent universal aspirations that will ultimately be
embraced by people all over the world. They believe that American society –
and therefore American brands – appeal to people of all countries. Britain,
with its ‘special relationship’ with the United States tends to support this
argument. The continental Europeans, who as we have seen earlier this year
are not always prepared to follow the Anglo-American view, have been
spearheading the intellectual backlash against global marketing, in particular
standarised marketing communications in every country. The leading proponent of cultural differences is Geert Hofstede, a Dutch professor of organizational anthropology and industrial management, who believes that different countries can and often do have very different cultures and that culture is a dominant influence on consumer behaviour. Consequently instead of standarising marketing communications around the world multinational companies should be trying to analyse the culture of different countries so that they can tailor specific marketing communication messages and maximize efficiency by taking account of cultural differences.

Hofstede designated five dimensions of national culture:

- **Power Distance** – the extent to which less powerful members of a society expect that power is distributed unequally:
  - * France – high level of acceptance
  - * Britain and Germany – low level
- **Individualism / Collectivism** – the extent to which people believe that they should look after themselves and their immediate family over the community at large:
  - * Northern Europeans more individual
  - * Southern Europeans more collectivist.
- **Masculine/Feminine** – masculine societies put more emphasis on achievement and success. Feminine societies are more concerned with the quality of life:
  - * US – highly masculine
  - * Sweden, Norway – more feminine.
- **Uncertainty Avoidance** – the extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguity and try to avoid these situations:
  - * Italy, France – high
  - * Britain, Holland – low.
- **Long-Term Orientation** – the extent to which society is dominated by short-term issues or whether people take a more long-term view:
  - * US – short-term
  - * China – long-term.

Hofstede analyzed over fifty countries on these five dimensions and found significant differences between them. If this is the case and these differences show no signs of eroding over time it would appear to contradict Levitt’s thesis. Dr Marike de Mooij, who runs a brand consultancy in Holland, has been the most consistent advocate of the existence and growing importance of cultural differences across different markets and has been the most determined
opponent of standarised marketing communications. Using Hofstede’s five dimensions she has studied a range of consumer markets in different European countries and has demonstrated significant differences in consumer behaviour as a result. For example, the individual/collective dimension is claimed to account for the significant differences which occur in European countries in the personal stereo market. Ownership is very high in Holland, an individualist society, and very low in Spain, a more collectivist society. Differences in the markets for men’s clothing and home furniture can also be explained with reference to different scores on the ‘power distance’ and ‘uncertainty avoidance’ dimensions.

If major variations in consumer behaviour in different markets can be explained by Hofstede’s five dimensions, it is obvious that this must have huge implications for the content and delivery of all forms of marketing communications. It is easy to see why communications which feature certain situations and actions could perform well in one society and be completely unsuitable for another.

Another academic brand commentator – Jean-Noel Kapferer, also European, has argued that local brands can forge deep-rooted, social and cultural bonds with local communities:

“In developing countries consumers certainly want quality but as individuals they also want to retain a sense of national pride and identity. They are not necessarily waiting for international brands like the ‘second coming’. This little published phenomenon is in stark contrast to the general and undisputed theory of brand globalisation”

However, in spite of this evidence I can’t see it cutting much ice with senior management in the leading multinational brand companies, most of whom are locked in unceasing wars of attrition with the increasingly powerful multiple retail trade on the one hand and the increasingly voracious demands of financial analysts and shareholders on the other. One of the key strategies they are forced to adopt is to drive all unnecessary costs out of their businesses and the last thing they want to hear is an argument for different marketing communication campaigns in different countries. Professor Levitt’s thesis suits them down to the ground and it is unlikely that they would be prepared to listen to anyone else. But it does leave a window of opportunity through which local brands can compete. The central theme of this paper is that if local brand managers can understand the real nature of the cultural drivers within their own society they will be able to create marketing communication campaigns which can withstand the superior financial resources of multinational brands. I want to demonstrate this process by examining the Irish beer market and in particular the performance of one of the local brands in the market – Smithwicks ale.
How local brands can survive in a global world?

THE IRISH BEER MARKET – THE GLOBAL VERSUS THE LOCAL

Until the 1970s the beer market in Ireland was dominated by three local brands – Guinness stout, Smithwick's ale and Harp lager – all owned and brewed in Ireland by Guinness. The rest of the market was taken up by smaller regional brands. During the 1970s continental lager brands started to appear and were followed in the 1980s by American brands. By the late 1990s multinational brands like Budweiser, Carlsberg and Heineken had a 40% share of the total beer market and Smithwick's, which accounted for over 30% of the market in the 1960s had fallen to just under 10%. All the obvious communication strategies were employed, in particular attempting to make the brand more contemporary and in tune with the tastes, interests and aspirations of the 18-25 year olds who are so critical to the beer market. For a time the brand had the most popular TV commercial among that age group but it had little or no effect on sales. In fact the more frantically we tried to compete with cool contemporary imagery the more we increased the gap between brand communication and brand reality. By the early 1990s Ireland was changing rapidly and in a last attempt to save the brand from complete extinction we set out to examine the changes in Irish society and see whether there was any insight that could be derived from this analysis which could be used to reposition the brand.

We carried out a series of qualitative research projects which provided valuable insights into the changing nature of Irish society, particularly among younger people who were becoming more individual, more cosmopolitan and above all more self-confident. This self-confidence was accompanied by a growing entrepreneurial culture. It had been widely assumed until then that the Irish were not really suited for the entrepreneurial world of business and commerce. A variety of weird and wonderful reasons were advanced for this state of affairs:

- **Weather** – people living under such extreme and unpredictable weather conditions would hardly have the temperament for the careful planning that a successful business requires.
- **Religion** – the Catholic religion tended to place less emphasis on material success in this life in favour of rewards in the next.
- **Language** – the semantic structure of the Irish language reflected and reinforced an Irish world-view which emphasized dependence and passivity.
- **Cultural/Historical** – it was an article of faith in Ireland that business was a somewhat grubby occupation and that we were more suitable for higher more cultural pursuits.15)

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Somehow or another in spite of these impediments, which had been fondly assumed to have been an integral part of Irish society, a sea-change occurred in the late 1980s and 1990s – a change which did not seem to provide much encouragement for a brand like Smithwicks.

We then began to dig a little deeper and selected a town where Smithwicks’ sales were still relatively healthy. Athy is a small town around forty miles from Dublin. It had been affected by the economic boom of the time but it was a place that had never suffered from real depression and had always retained a quiet sense of its own worth. A team of agency and client personnel descended on the town and in addition to the more formal qualitative research techniques of group discussions and depth interviews we stayed for a while observing the local drinking culture, chatting informally to Smithwicks’ drinkers in pubs and sharing our experiences the next day. The findings surprised us. The Smithwicks’ ‘man’ – it was a predominantly male drink – was quietly self-confident and amused at what he felt was the somewhat frantic self-absorption of ‘designer’ lager drinkers. Smithwicks’ drinkers regarded a pint of beer as a social lubricant rather than a deeply meaningful statement about themselves.

In an attempt to make sense of all this we also looked at how contemporary artists were treating the changes in Irish society. We were particularly struck by Carl Jung’s belief that

“Like any true prophet the artist is the unwitting mouthpiece of the psychic secrets of his time and is often as unconscious as a sleepwalker”. 16

The leading Irish poet of the 1950s and 1960s, Patrick Kavanagh, had made a famous distinction between Parochialism and Provincialism, observing that they were direct opposites – “the provincial has no mind of his own, he does not trust what his eyes see until he has heard what the metropolis – towards which his eyes are turned – has to say on any subject. This runs through all activities. The parochial mentality on the other hand is never in any doubt about the social and artistic validity of his parish”. 16 The mistake we had made when we first started to investigate the Smithwicks’ brand was to regard the Smithwicks’ drinker as provincial – whereas in fact he was parochial.

Taking our cue from Stephen Brown, “great art, poetry in particular, also announces, unveils and enshrines the essential ‘truths’ of an epoch by in effect calling them into being, bringing them forth into consciousness, by founding, opening up and realizing a world, of people, a way of life” 17, we examined the work of contemporary Irish artists and poets. Irish artists seemed to be reminding people of their roots and appeared obsessed with the West of Ireland – an area that had benefited least from the Irish economic expansion but which had, like the American West for the Americans, an almost mystical hold on the Irish imagination. Poets too were obsessed with the minute details
of the local. A word which recurred regularly in discussions about contemporary Irish poetry was *Dinnseanchais* – a Gaelic word which signified an intense love of the lore of the local – where local could mean a small town land or part of a small village. It was as if they were reminding us that in taking advantage of what the world has to offer us, we should not forget what we had to offer ourselves.

In order to break all this analysis down to manageable, actionable proportions we devised the following model – which we labeled the Dinnseanachas Model.\(^\text{18}\)

![DINNSEANACHAS MODEL](image)

**Figure 1**

**DINNSEANACHAS MODEL**

The words on the right are old Irish (Gaelic) words which have deep resonance in the Irish psyche:

- *Meitheal* – the tradition whereby everyone in rural communities used to help everyone else during harvest time. It implied a communal feeling that no one should be allowed to be left too far behind. However there was also an implication that no one should be allowed get too far ahead either.

- *Dinnseanachas* – as explained above this represents the idea of an intense attachment to a small locality, town and/or village.

The values on the left are obviously in conflict with those on the right. Our view was that although on the surface it appears that the values on the left were in the ascendant, those on the right had been ingrained in society for such a long time that they could still cast a powerful spell on the Irish imagination. We assigned ‘individualism’ to Budweiser and ‘cosmopolitanism’ to Heineken and Carlsberg. Any attempt to make Smithwicks compete here was doomed to failure but it did seem to us that it could occupy the ‘Dinnseanachas’ position.
In fact it was ideally suited to it. As a result of this we created a campaign appropriately entitled “Locals” and within four years it had succeeded in one of the most difficult marketing communication tasks, reversing the decline of a beer brand.

This campaign featured a group of people, mostly men, of different age groups, quietly chatting in a local pub. There was a complete absence of the frantic posing and posturing normally associated with beer ads.

**Figure 2**  
**SMITHWICK’S VOLUME % CHANGE VERSUS PREVIOUS YEAR**

I suspect that the competition between the left and right-hand sides of the Dinnseanchais model is present in markets all over Europe, especially in smaller markets, which have been swamped by products and images from more powerful countries in the last few decades, facilitated by the increasing power of information technology. What the Smithwicks’ case history shows is that if deep rooted aspects of the smaller societies’ cultures can be identified they can be harnessed into the service of local brands and although they may never be strong enough to enable them to overcome a multinational brand all over the world they will enable the local brand to survive in its own patch, or as Jeremy Bullmore put it more elegantly, “as the global gospelers begin to sound ever less persuasive it is the coded tribal messages we should increasingly look at with respect”.  

It would be useful if we could draw some general conclusions from this case study but as yet marketing is a discipline without any general theory. Unlike physics with its quantum theory, chemistry with its atomic theory and the equilibrium theory of economics, marketing must rely on specifics rather than general theories. Therefore in an attempt to build on the lessons of the
Smithwicks’ case history I want to look at a number of other markets in Ireland where indigenous brands were faced with multinational competition.

MORE LOCAL STORIES

Nailing Your Colours to the Mast

An example of the change in Irish society in the late 1990s that has already been referred to was the huge rise in entrepreneurial activity. In fact a survey of school children in the mid-1990s showed an astonishing 50% of all boys were interested in starting their own businesses when they had completed full time education. A few years before that one young entrepreneur launched a brand of toothpaste in the Irish market. The brand was called Fiacla, which is itself the Gaelic word for teeth. It immediately established itself with a 10% market share. Fifteen years later the brand has maintained that share of an increasingly competitive market and for the last decade there has been virtually no above the line support. There have, however, been regular pack design changes and I believe that design is a powerful and cost-effective method of marketing communication for smaller brands.

We have carried out qualitative research on behalf of this brand and the results show that a proportion of the population are not particularly concerned or convinced about the type of product improvements made regularly by the multinational brands of toothpaste. These consumers believe, and many in the dental profession would agree, that it is really the brushing action of the toothbrush that counts and that what toothpaste you use matters very little. There are a proportion of consumers in the market who believe this and who – all other things (namely price) being equal – are prepared to buy an indigenous brand. However, there are very few markets where consumers are prepared to support a brand solely because it is indigenous.

Product Quality is Even More Important for Local Brands

The soft drinks market in Ireland, as in most small countries around the world, was dominated by small local manufactures until the arrival of the multinational cola brands of the 1950s. In the conservative, repressed Ireland of the 1950s Coke arrived at the same time as Elvis Presley and both were greeted with open arms by a young population bored out of their minds with the rigid pieties of Irish life and anxious to embrace any part of the heady freedom that America stood for. The local brands didn’t stand a chance, most dying a fairly quick death, but one brand with slender enough resources persevered with a consistent marketing communication strategy and still survives today with a healthy and profitable market share. Club Orange is a much-loved carbonated orange drink long associated with the orange bits in it,
so that you can taste ‘bits of orange’ when you drink it. Some are still visible on the sides of a finished glass. The brand could never aspire to the kind of marketing budgets of the major colas, nor could it hope to compete with the international imagery associated with these brands. But it stuck to the product quality story, always reminding its audience of how close it remained to real oranges and as a result has retained an 11% share of a highly competitive market.

A key conclusion from this case study is the importance of product quality for local brands. Research we have carried out shows that there is a tendency for consumers in smaller markets to assume that the product quality of multinational brands is superior. Therefore local brands must continually remind local audiences of their commitment to product quality and where the target audience is young and media and advertising literate, ensure a reasonable level of production values in marketing communication and, if possible, a level of style and wit.

**Even the Smallest Brands Can Afford Good Design**

*Goodalls* is another long-established Irish brand of seasonings and spices, which has seen off regular attempts by multinational brands to gain a foothold in the market. For many years it was owned by the multinational company CPC. But in a trend which is likely to become increasingly common, CPC sold the brand to a local Irish entrepreneur. This phenomenon appears to be on the increase as multinational businesses follow the strategy being adopted by Unilever and reduce the number of brands they manage around the world to concentrate on their core ‘power’ brands. The market for seasonings and spices is not large enough in Ireland to provide funds to merit above the line advertising but there is always a continuous need to communicate with consumers, to reassure them about product quality and to give them the confidence that the brand is being kept up to date.

The solution in this case was a radical new pack design which manages to communicate all these objectives for a very modest outlay. There is a very clear conclusion for local brands in this case study. Good design – which often does not cost that much more than poor design – can be a powerful and extremely cost-efficient method of marketing communication.

**Export Success Guarantees Domestic Success**

*Kerrygold* is one of the few Irish food brands to have achieved a sustained degree of export success. This makes the marketing communication strategy in the domestic market very obvious – simply communicate details of that export success, because smaller countries crave international recognition of any kind (political, sporting and commercial). A long running domestic campaign was
developed featuring the fact that Kerrygold is used in cooking by French people – whom the Irish would regard as expert in these matters. Export success is the most obvious of all marketing communications strategies for indigenous brands, but of course it must be based on reality.

The ‘Meitheal’ Factor Can be Found in the Most Unlikely Places – Even Among Retailers

Another entrepreneurial success from the 1990s was the launch of a new vodka by two executives who had previously worked for a multinational drinks company. This is an interesting case history because it was a completely new product and used a deliberately Irish brand name – Boru – the name of one of the most famous warriors in Irish history who lived in the 12th century. All of the other brands in the market from Smirnoff, the brand leader, to a myriad of pouring brands had Russian or at least some Eastern European sounding names. Boru’s advertising budget was understandably modest and mainly served to create awareness by featuring the bottle. But the brand did achieve an 8% share of this lucrative market and there are a number of conclusions that could be drawn from the experience.

The first is the importance of the local trade for certain product categories. Drink sales in Ireland are predominantly through pubs and Off-Licences where, unlike the grocery trade, there is little concentration of power. Instead sales are dispersed through hundreds of different owner-occupied outlets. Because they themselves are small businesses they often resent the power of the multinational companies and sometimes are prepared to favour indigenous operations.

For very similar reasons the trade press are also prepared to grant a disproportionate amount of space to indigenous product launches and the new vodka was given massive coverage, not only during the launch but for a long time after.

In a Celebrity Obsessed World, PR Can Work Wonders

Another local entrepreneur who emerged in the late 1980s was Geoff Read, who launched the first brand of bottled water, Ballygowan, in the Irish market. At the time the market was very small and relatively underdeveloped with Perrier the clear brand leader. Within two years Ballygowan had taken over brand leadership and more than doubled the size of the market. Today the market has grown tenfold since the 1980s, Ballygowan is still the brand leader, and Perrier is virtually extinct.

A number of factors were involved in the success of the brand including a cleverly deployed advertising campaign which made no allusions to the
Irishness of the brand but instead consisted of outrageously over the top copy in the manner of the most pretentious restaurant or wine critic to position the brand so far into the stratosphere of chic that the ads developed a cult following among the public.

But one of the most important kick-starts for the brand was the appearance of the owner on the most widely viewed TV programme on Irish television. Geoff Read had the advantage of being articulate, handsome (he had been a male model), and he expressed the entrepreneurial zeitgeist of the Ireland of the time. This TV appearance made a huge impact and spawned a myriad of subsequent press, radio and TV stories about the brand.

One does not have to go all the way with Al Reis’s latest blockbuster predicting the demise of advertising and the rise of PR to acknowledge that PR can play an extremely important role in the launch of new brands.21)

One striking omission from all these case histories is an exhortation to buy a brand because it is a local brand. I believe this is the worst possible strategy that a local brand can adopt. Asking people to buy something because it’s produced locally runs the risk of sending out signals of inferior quality

**DO LOCAL BRANDS MATTER**

At this point it may be worth asking whether it matters if local brands survive. Would anyone, apart from someone whose job is directly affected by the health of local brands really care if, for example, everyone in Ireland drank Coke or Pepsi and not Club Orange or if everyone drank global brands of beer and allowed the local brands to die. On the surface it shouldn’t really make that much difference but a reading of the sociological U.S. best seller *Bowling Alone*22) suggested an interesting line of thought. This book, which has attracted widespread interest among academics, politicians and media opinion leaders in the United States, has at its core the concept of social capital. This is defined as the quantity and quality of the connections between individuals and the societies in which they live. The book is based on the premise that the more individuals come into contact with other people the more there will be an accumulation of social capital which will satisfy social needs and lead to a substantial improvement in living conditions in the whole community. I wonder if there is an equivalent concept of consumption capital or more accurately indigenous consumption capital?

This would be measured by the proportion of goods consumed by a society which are produced in that society and if the proportion becomes very low something more than the wealth created by the number of jobs involved is lost – that in some way that society is a poorer one. What I am suggesting is that a
society which only eats multinational foods, only drinks multinational drinks, wears multinational clothes and consumes only multinational products and services, is a much less healthy society than one with enough self-confidence and pride in its own worth to sustain a reasonable share of what it creates itself.

Equally the communication of local brands creates images and signs which form part of the character of these societies. Communication shapes culture because “we do not see reality as ‘it’ is but as our languages are. And our languages are our media, our media are our metaphors, our metaphors create the contents of our culture”.\(^{23}\) My contention is that local brands represent an important contribution to local culture and without them that culture is weakened.

This does not mean that I expect or want to see only local produce consumed by smaller communities and anyway that is not going to happen. But neither is it likely that smaller societies will succumb to multinational forms of communication. The more likely outcome is a more balanced approach which the concept of ‘needs. states’ may help to explain.

The ‘need. states’ idea was introduced around ten years ago by Wendy Gordon\(^ {24}\) and helped to explain how it is perfectly consistent for people to buy very different brands in the same market on a regular basis. She argued that each person is made up of a number of different personas which require different brand solutions in different circumstances. I believe this paper has shown enough evidence to suggest that identification with the local community is a valid ‘need. state’ – so that at any given time people’s behavior in different markets could vary, depending on their mood, between sophisticated cosmopolitan ‘me’, practical ‘me’, everyday ‘me’ and Dinnseanchas ‘me’ – the latter being a part of me that wants to let my immediate circle, and the whole world for that matter, know that although that I am familiar with and at ease with the world, I’m proud of my local roots.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The conquest of time and space in the latter part of the 20th century means that we are now living in an increasingly global world in the sense that we are all affected by events occurring many miles away, but Professor Levitt’s prediction that the world’s consumers would become “irrevocable homogeneous” is unlikely to happen. In fact it is now being widely recognized that globalisation is not necessarily in conflict with cultural diversity but might have the opposite effect by providing a kiss of life to cultures that were in danger of dying out.
Global capital aided by information technology may be able to overcome the limitations of time and space, but this is likely to strengthen rather than weaken the sense of local identity. Local brands are a form of local identity and if properly managed can be used by consumers as a balance against excessive homogenization. There is no blueprint for the marketing of local brands anymore than there is for global brands but a number of lessons from the Irish market may be of use to those who are charged with the task:

I. The most useful insights are likely to be gained from a deeper understanding of the dynamics of how people in smaller countries are reacting to the increasing cultural and commercial pressure from global media and marketing, and in particular the degree to which they will seek to use local goods and services to create a sense of identity and space for themselves.

II. Product quality must always be a matter of prime concern for local brands. Product quality must be maintained and communicated on a regular basis partly to offset the unfortunate tendency among the populations of smaller countries to assume global brands offer higher quality.

III. Advertising is still the most efficient and cost-effective method of communicating a quality product message in most markets but high standards of contemporary design can also be used to achieve the same result.

IV. Although the retail trade will always adopt a macho, no holds barred, take no prisoners approach to suppliers, they can, if only for public relations reasons, be inveigled into giving disproportionate support to local brands.

V. Smaller markets are increasingly conscious of the importance of local economic success stories. This means that PR can act as a very economic form of brand communications.

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