

# WE ARE THE WORLD

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Globalisation is a central tenet of modern business. For an organisation to be truly competitive, and meet customer demand, it is essential to be responsive to global trends and marketing techniques. Furthermore, in the digital age, even if a company currently only operates in one geographical territory, its message often travels far and wide. What opportunities and challenges does this brave new world present to marketing? >





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Globalisation has an impact on all marketers. Its effects are many and any exploration of them should begin with a definition of that unwieldy term itself: Globalisation is the process of international integration, arising from the interchange of world

views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture.

For some marketers – especially those working in multinational organisations with big budgets – a fully internationally integrated, globalised world might seem to present a golden age of opportunity. But globalisation also has its inherent tensions and offers marketers few certainties, other than that they must continue to challenge thinking, strategies, tactics and structures if they are to engage with a connected global audience and increase market share across different regions – or at home.

In the digital age, geographical boundaries are also less likely to be an imposition on the way the global consumers engage with brands. It dissolves divisions between the global and the local, and in a digitally connected world brands can have global reach despite only operating in a home market. In this multi-faceted environment, what does it mean to have a global outlook, and how can brands best engage with the new global consumer?

### Structure and approach

“There are two sides to marketing in a globalised world,” says Charlie Smith, the UK managing director at location data technology company Blis. “The first is about how you structure a business



**“Big global brands – such as Unilever – approach each product with a global view”**

CHARLIE SMITH, MANAGING DIRECTOR, UK, BLIS

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### The speed read

‘Global’ can describe a company’s structure, the location of its markets or the reach of its message

To build a global audience, marketers must first develop a truly scalable product

The ‘big rock’ idea can drive global engagement, but each market has its own nuances

Marketing operates in a global world, even if a product isn’t available everywhere

globally to deliver consistency across markets and allow customers to connect. The second is how you actually connect with consumers in those markets.

“When I joined Blis there were seven of us in a small London office. We were a small business, growing organically, but we were always dealing with global companies, which meant we had a global outlook. When we expanded, we moved into Singapore first, then Hong Kong and Australia.” The company’s expansion was fuelled by strong local market responses to its technology offering, and where there was an opportunity to develop existing partnerships.

“There was a big opportunity globally,” says Smith. “But structurally, we realised that to survive in a new region it helps for people from the head office to go over and develop that side of the business, alongside people who know about the local market. You also need to have the right personnel for that stage of the business – who can sell in the product. Five years later, who you might need will be different.

“When it comes to how you approach audiences, we see a pattern with a lot of the brands we work with. Big global brands – such as Unilever or Procter & Gamble – approach each product with a global view. They think about their audience from a centralised point, but different approaches are needed in different markets.

“Our approach to reaching global audiences is the same now as when we started – it’s about using data to match audiences by their location and trying to infer >

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*“I am extremely proud of my achievement, and that all my time and hard work really paid off. It has further enabled me to critically think more about business decisions, and I now always try to apply these strategic learnings to my day-to-day role. I cannot thank the Oxford College of Marketing enough for their dedication to my studies. Without them, I could not have possibly achieved the fantastic grades that I did with this level of success.”*





something about that person from where they are. It underlines one of the primary challenges for marketing globally, which is to build a scalable product.”

### Big-rock thinking

According to Jason Miller, global content marketing leader at LinkedIn Marketing Solutions, a global outlook is about having a big idea that can engage people across different regions.

“If you want to engage people globally you need a global mindset,” he says. “You might create something in North America, but how far can it travel? Can you extrapolate from it? At LinkedIn it means creating content that can go around the world. I’ve worked with some agencies who come to us with something that they say is ‘global’, but it has a picture of the Golden Gate bridge on it – it’s USA only. That’s not thinking with a global mindset.”

An enduring message is key to engaging worldwide audiences. “We look for the ‘big rock’ idea,” Miller says of the type of content, story or campaign that will connect with people globally. “Our ‘big rock’ content might be translated into eight or nine languages. You treat it like a bestselling book, updating it and translating it to keep it selling around the world.”

It is these big rocks that deliver consistency in experience across markets for a brand with global reach. For Miller, the big rocks of content marketing are a primary tool of communication, and they help to sell in the brand’s core appeal: “Marketers should ask themselves what conversation they want to own and say ‘this is what I’m going after’. This might be based on the No 1 question consumers are typing into a search engine. The big rock is the best answer to these questions; it attacks this challenge; it’s the big, substantial idea – the centrepiece, the mothership.”

Miller, however, also advises marketers remember that alongside the ‘big rock’ is global marketing’s ‘long tail’ – the narrowly targeted and niche products, services and messages that meet localised demand: “It is about finding the nuances in different markets. We have four different plans: LatAm, North America, EMEA, Apac. And while we need to make sure that everything we produce has a global element to it, there also needs to be regional relevance. We don’t want to end up in a situation where a central team pumps out content and then marketers in teams around the world simply localise it. That’s not marketing, that’s localisation.”

“You can call yourself a global marketer, but do you really understand the nuances of the markets in France, Germany and Spain? When I arrived in the UK from San Francisco, people told me that I’d find markets around 12 to 18 months behind where the US was, but it wasn’t true – they were right on par. I didn’t really understand what the challenges were going to be until I got here.”

“Marketers must drill down into the market and ask questions. Do you have a story to tell? Can you solve problems? Is there a conversation already happening, or a gap in the conversation that could be plugged? Can you show that you are an authority in that conversation? Marketers need to do their research, and collect data and insight. Do your homework, and do it well.”

### We are all global

The flipside, of course, is that not all marketers are tasked >

## CASE STUDY: PADDY POWER AND GLOBAL BRAND EXTENSION

A blog post on bookmaker Paddy Power’s website, from the day after the US election result, highlights how world events can inform marketing strategy:

*‘D’oh! A bleary-eyed Paddy Power is stumbling around the Dublin office this morning confused, concerned and, most importantly, skint! Donald Trump was elected the 45th President of the United States last night, costing Paddy a massive \$4.5m in the betting ... the gaffer was fairly confident of a Hillary win. So much so that we paid out \$1 million early to punters who backed Clinton ... But now we’ve been Trumped! ... Paddy Power has some very expensive political egg on his face.’*

Describing the company’s stunt to take bets on the US election result, Paul Mallon, Paddy Power’s

head of brand engagement, says that “the US election was a window where we could get a large amount of attention”. While the decision to make early payouts on the result cost Paddy Power dear, it was in line with the brand’s marketing strategy.

“It was a big risk but a lot of consideration went into it,” says Mallon. “The strategy behind the stunt was simple, however – it was about press releases and targeting US journalists, both directly and via agencies. It created a great amount of coverage for us. It’s classic news-jacking, really. Yes, it’s an investment, but it means you are part of a global conversation.”

What is perhaps surprising about Paddy Power running such a campaign in the US is that currently it doesn’t do any business there.

“At the moment we only take bets from UK and Ireland customers,” says Mallon. “But there are other goals – about building engagement and getting attention. America could be somewhere we would go. Pulling off a stunt in New York brings the Paddy Power name to an American audience, even if they can’t place bets with us. The intentions are to do with PR.”

There is some hard strategy behind Paddy Power’s stunts, however, which feed into core marketing activities of research and measurement.

“America has a culture of casinos,” says Mallon, “but not of high-street betting like we do here, and it has a different attitude towards online betting. You can’t just launch there; you need to test how palatable it might be with



audiences before you jump in. We can use social channels to judge how people are reacting to our activities out there and gauge the attention.”

The election campaign stunt reflects the brand of a company that has a ‘mischief department’, but also highlights how businesses can test product strategies and overseas markets through inventive – yet traditional – marketing, before committing to entering one.





## *“We’re not a global brand, but we exist in a globalised world”*

GILL WORBY, HEAD OF DIGITAL MARKETING, VIRGIN MEDIA

with building global brands. In theory, their big ideas don’t need to travel so far because their audiences and customers are near at hand. In the modern world, however, it’s often the consumer who decides whether a brand’s message does or doesn’t travel.

Gill Worby, Virgin Media’s head of digital marketing, says that even though a company might only offer its services in local markets, its brand can have global reach.

“Our focus is on the UK and Ireland,” says Worby, “but we are also part of the greater Virgin Group and we take our values from that.”

This plugs Virgin Media into a truly global operation, with interests in financial services, transport, healthcare, food and drink, as well as media and telecommunications. Virgin Media is also a subsidiary of Liberty Global, the American international telecoms and television giant. At Virgin Media, the differing merits of

global power and more localised brand values are clear.

“We are lucky that we are not a dry telco brand,” says Worby. “We are an innovative brand and our Virgin values give us a really great story to tell.” Liberty Global has the might, but the values remain Virgin’s own.

But even when finding meaning in localism, the interconnected world has a habit of muscling in. In 2016, a campaign for Virgin Media’s broadband services received an unexpected, but warmly welcomed amount of global coverage.

“We ran a campaign around the Rio 2016 Olympics, themed on Usain Bolt’s world record 100-metre time. We worked with Twitter, creating a custom emoji, and used the hashtag #bethefastest – and it trended in 11 countries within 20 minutes of it going live. We got retweeted by the Jamaican prime minister and then made the news over there. It’s an example of how campaigns can go global. We’re not targeting Jamaica but it’s a tremendous piece of advocacy for us. We’re not a global brand, but we exist in a globalised world.”

The combination of a global superstar, the world’s biggest sporting event, social media and the widely recognised Virgin brand, fused to make a campaign with global reach. But do consumers even think about whether a brand such as Virgin Media is global or local?

“I don’t think they ever stop to think about it for a minute,” says Worby. “At least, not until they reach a point where they need to find out if it’s available where they are located.”

### Back to basics

The interplay between global reach and local needs is likely to become more complex as audiences grow accustomed to discovering brands, products, services and experiences wherever and whenever they want. Where does this leave marketing?

“Go back to your brief,” says Worby. “Remind yourself what it is you’re trying to achieve. Gut instinct is one thing, but you need to know that your strategy can deliver bang-on what you’re trying to do.”

Marketing might operate in an age of the global consumer, but real people’s needs still come first, wherever they are in the world. ✓

## A NEW VIEW OF GLOBALISATION FOR MARKETING

Globalisation can be described as the integration of markets, nations, states and technology on greater scales. Its effect is to enable individuals, corporations and nations to reach new markets faster, deeper and cheaper. It can be recognised by an increased production of goods, services, ideas, culture and communications.

Perceptions of globalisation are changing, however. As a percentage of global GDP, world exports are now in decline. China’s rapid speed of industrialisation has been checked. Trade agreements

between European Union member states might be made less secure by Britain’s vote for Brexit. No one knows for sure what a Donald Trump presidency might involve. The word on some trend forecasters’ lips is perhaps not ‘globalisation’, it’s ‘isolationism’.

In a recent YouGov survey, less than half of respondents in America, Britain and France said they believed that globalisation was a ‘force for good’. In France, 52% believed that their economy should not rely on imports.

And yet the story was not

the same for all demographics. Perhaps spurred by engagement with the 21st-century’s new global pacesetter brands such as Snapchat, Uber, Airbnb and Instagram, up to 77% of 18–24-year-olds said that globalisation was a force for good. A swipe through an Instagram feed’s search suggestions builds a picture of a world where global reach is at every millennial’s fingertips.

There are also geographical differences in perception. According to YouGov, the countries that are the biggest enthusiasts of globalisation

are those in East and Southeast Asia. Here, belief that globalisation is a force for good reaches at least 70% in all countries, and as high as 91% in Vietnam.

The research reflects that there are fault-lines in attitudes to globalisation between young and old, and East and West. And while the West might be entering a period of political retrenchment, opportunities afforded by mobile communications and social media channels are still expanding consumers’ global view of the world.