

## NEW THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION PROCESSES

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**Abstract.** All over the world the market of marketing communications (MC), especially advertising, is saturated, cluttered with different types and contents of messages. Consequently, integrated marketing communications (IMC) are becoming more indispensable and useful. Besides, there are fierce discussions about the tools and approaches to be applied in achieving marketing goals. Under the globalization of economy the concept of “integration” in general and in marketing context, and also new aspects of IMC gaining more significance for achieving marketing goals and promoting efficiency. The authors have accomplished a survey and concluded that standardization is acceptable just in the case when specific elements are used, taking in account that the positioning and marketing elements have to be localized; localization determines efficiency in specific markets and its factors are very important under globalization; the new term ‘glocalization’ offers great opportunities in the standardization/adaptation issue; One of the success keys in global marketing issues is a comprehensive, synergic MC provided by an IMC program.

**Keywords:** marketing communications, integration, communication technologies, innovation, IMC.

**Jel classification:** M30, M31, M39

### 1. Introduction

Globalization raises a lot of discussions about the tools and approaches to be applied in achieving marketing efficiency. The planning and deployment of MC (marketing communications) strategies is perhaps one of the most perplexing challenges facing international/global marketers. The new realities of the global marketplace require a balance between the sensitivity to local needs and deployment of technologies and concepts across borders. The main question is about standardization (globalization)/adaptation (localization) issue, and also IMC (integrated marketing communications) significance in the global market under economic globalization.

**Research hypothesis:** The set of tools and technologies of IMC contributes to the solution of the MC problems raised by globalization.

**Research aim:** To evaluate the trends of MC development under globalization for overcoming communication problems (standardization/adaptation).

**Research object:** IMC under globalization.

**Research subject:** IMC set of tools as a solution opportunity of communication problems.

**Research tasks:** To define trends and influencing factors of globalization; To define the main problems of MC/IMC under globalization; To offer solutions for the problems that have arisen in the globalization circumstances (within the IMC

pattern); To accomplish an expert survey in order to define IMC opportunities under globalization (trends, standardization/adaptation issue, IMC development in Latvian market).

**Research methods:** analysis of literature, expert survey.

**Review of literature:** The abstractive analysis of the research is based on scientific publications, articles from books, conference proceedings, etc. In order to determine and correctly argue the topicality of the current market situation the examined literature covers a large time span.

**Expert survey within the research:** In September-December 2011 an interrogation of the representatives of Latvian marketing agencies, biggest companies and academic environment was carried out under the guidance of the authors in order to determine the main globalization trends both in general and also in the Latvian market; the main tasks of MC; priorities in standardization/adaptation strategies; opportunities of domestic (small market, e.g. Latvia) brands in global environment and global brands strategies accessing Latvian market. The experts addressed were the following marketing agency representatives – Euro RSCG Riga (*G. Ozoliņš*), PR agency Mediju Tilts (*G. Klēgers*), Johnson & Johnson AB Latvia (*D. Rūītis*), Internet Marketing Group (*M. Skuja*), Baltic Communications Centre (*A. Jēkabsons*); Marketing Department of the University of Latvia.

The authors have analyzed the survey results by question/chapter in order to conjoin theoretical findings and experts' viewpoints on the current marketplace situation in general, and also in the Latvian market. As a result, the majority of the surveyed experts tend to express viewpoints that coincide with the general globalization trends, confirm the effectiveness of localization and IMC programme usage and their ability to solve problems in the globalization context as well as confirm the research hypothesis.

## **2. Globalization of marketing environment: trends, factors**

The term "globalization" has acquired considerable emotive force and has become a cliché in daily usage. This concept is not new, economic globalization is a historical process, the result of human innovation, development, and technological progress. It refers to the increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows.

Global trends have always existed, and what is occurring today is nothing different from what took place during ancient times (Adekola, Sergi 2007). Both external and internal factors will create the favorable conditions for development of strategy and resources allocation on a global basis. These factors can be divided into market, cost, environment, and competitive factors (Douglas, Craig 1989; Yip 1989; Yip 2003; Sheth, Parvatiyar 2001; Czinkota, Ronkainen 2007). Also, the increasingly smaller world linked by instant communications, global supply networks, and international finance markets mandates evaluating global opportunities and threats (Cravens, Piercy 2003). Fundamental trends in the global marketing environment are: rapid changes in technology; emergence of the global service economy; evolution of the "knowledge" economy as a source of competitive advantage; increasing importance of managing relationships; the need for increasing transparency of corporate practices worldwide and the pressure that this puts organizations under to be more socially responsible in their business activities (Lee, Carter 2005).

Globalization is a complex phenomenon that affects many aspects of our lives. Some regard globalization as the outcome of development in new technologies especially in the areas of communication and transportation. For other, the term "globalization" is treated with distrust and fear (Lee, Carter 2005). Undoubtedly, globalization offers a wide range of opportunities – market access, financial integration, reduction of costs, global sourcing, purchasing and production. But, at the same time,

globalization raises a lot of discussions about what tools and approaches to be applied in achieving marketing efficiency.

**Global marketing** has become a popular, also complex, issue reflected in a large number of publications. Marketing across political and cultural boundaries raises many questions, problems and juxtapositions, rendering precise definitions difficult. Typical issues centre on the standardization/adaptation argument and focuses in one of two areas: (1) understanding consumer differences from the perspective of cultural, social, economic, and other marketing environment elements; (2) search for common groups of consumers across countries, for international market segmentation purposes. The latter focus suggests the possibility of the existence of global consumers (Cleveland, Laroche 2006).

The impact of globalization on consumer behavior around the world (Ger 1999): (1) capitalism, global transport, communications, marketing, transnational cosmopolitanism are interacting to dissolve the boundaries across national cultures and economies, and accelerating the emergence of a homogeneous global consumer culture; (2) differentiating impact of globalization strengthens or reactivates national identities; pattern of interrelationships fuels a hybridization of social life.

There development of specific marketing mixes has been tailored to meet the needs/wants of the desired target markets. In international markets, the MC may need to be adjusted to accommodate local markets.

*From the expert survey it is clear that* the process of globalization directly and increasingly affects corporate marketing. Globalization trends influence companies' marketing and communications development including the following aspects: There is a negligible force/value of distance in the process of information exchange, while dominant is speed and uniqueness; Internet access spread, while information distribution is not restricted and each data tends to develop beyond the country's boundary; The social web is of great influence in data spread, while management of crises communication is becoming very important; European Union as an economic and political confederation allows accessing new markets, while it is important to localize a unitary MC message to a specific audience. The survey results confirm the investigators' guidelines and show the corresponding practitioners' activities, also adjustments, taking in account the current marketplace position. That is why in the next stage of research it is necessary to define the main problems of corporate marketing communication under globalization.

### **3. Corporate marketing and communication problems in terms of globalization**

The truly global marketing seeks to lever its assets across political and cultural boundaries to maximize opportunities and exploit market similarities and differences in search of competitive advantage. It will move its asset base from country to country to achieve its goals and maximize stakeholders' value. Globalization must be understood not just as a set of economic, political and technological processes but rather as an exchange of cultures, which involves interaction among people. Lee and Carter (2005) propose that essentially, it is the "real" people and the ways they live, work and act that bear the effects of globalization on a daily basis. Globalization leads to the homogenizing of culture due to convergence of global media. Globalization increases social diversity as foreign cultures enter a society and co-exist with the local culture, producing a significant impact on the global cultural environment. The convergence of cultures and consumer tastes, the unparalleled growth in international trade of merchandise and services, and the proliferation of institutions concerned with or involved in global governance have meant that nation states, organizations and individuals are becoming 'increasingly enmeshed in world wide systems and networks of interactions, and relations and networks of power, so that distant occurrences and developments can come to have serious domestic impacts while local happenings can engender significant global repercussions' (Held, McGrew 2000).

Most global products and markets exist because marketing phenomena create them (Adekola, Sergi 2007). Global marketing is about widening business horizons to encompass the world in the pursuit of new market opportunities by putting available resources to the best possible use in order to create values for customer and other stakeholders. Lee and Carter (2005) propose that in order exploit these opportunities, organizations realized that they not only need to face the hidden risks and new challenges but also adapt a new approach to ensure survival, compete successfully.

#### **3.1. Globalization and marketing communications/integrated marketing communications**

Marketing communications market in Latvia, and also all over the world, is developing very fast, including the new correctives in marketing theory and practice according to trends, development of technology, consumers' changing values and perceptions, content aspects of products, services, and ideas. Market is becoming more and more saturat-

ed, cluttered with different types and contents of reports. Traditional approaches and solutions declare topicality loss. As a result, there are a lot of new concepts and also new forms of communications - the so-called non-traditional marketing has recently appeared in the world market, denying urgency of traditional marketing. The question is - has a new type of marketing appeared? No, it is just necessary to make marketing perception, that entertainment with concept "non-traditional" does not justify assumption about probable success - product communication must correlate with value development based on defined regularities. Non-traditional approaches (e.g. *Guerrilla*) is not an extremely new type of marketing, but the existent traditional fundamental approaches used according to the market situation and other circumstances, including all the criteria of the traditional/classical MC interpretation (Dmitrijeva, Batraga 2011).

One of the significant marketing trends of recent years is a move toward fully integrating all business practices that communicate something about a company's brands to customer (IMC). The five key features of IMC (Hoffman 2005) are - start with the consumer, use any form of relevant contact, achieve synergy (speak a single voice), build relationships, affect behavior. While the feature "*speak a single voice*" requires necessity of the message accordance to the target audience - adaptation of message or/and marketing strategy.

Marketing communications can be defined as 'the process whereby organizations seek to create commonness of thought and meaning between themselves and/or individuals and/or intermediaries in the distribution chain, or more likely with publics or audiences who could impact on organizational success' (Kitchen 1997). While the process of MC may be relatively similar to that in the domestic context, the contextual application of global communications is likely to vary due to prevailing environmental circumstances.

The planning and deployment of MC strategies that effectively 'communicate a range of messages about value, quality, reliability and brand image to a whole variety of global audiences' (Money 2000) is perhaps one of the most perplexing challenges facing global marketers. Accelerating pace of change in technologies, deepening integration of regional trading blocs, changing consumer demographics, fragmentation of media, intensive competition, and the proclaimed emergence of "global consumers", are just some of the market developments which exacerbate the complexity of managing domestic and multinational marketing communications. Organizations increasingly 'need to break through smudge and clutter

and deliver pertinent timely messages to clearly targeted markets' (Kitchen 1997). Consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages; they have become more sophisticated, knowledgeable and resistant to direct approaches.

IMC includes creation of one-voice (single "theme" and "image"), integration of both product image and relevant aspects of consumer behavior in promotion management (Gould *et al.* 1999). The potential benefits of Globally IMC include: coordination of MC across disciplines and countries; standardization of communications to reduce costs; taking advantage of cross-border spill-over of communications; developing a consistent brand name/image; exploitation of knowledge from different country operations.

Some of the most forceful supporters for the integration of communications have argued that the question "integration or not" is, in fact, futile as the drive towards IMC is inevitable due to the revolution of Internet and Communications Technologies and an enlightened understanding of the nature of communications (Lee, Carter 2005).

### 3.2. Globalization/standardization versus localization/adaptation

The new realities of the global marketplace require a balance between sensitivity to local needs and deployment of technologies and concepts across borders. In today's global business environment, the development and execution of MC campaigns can be an especially challenging task for those organizations that market their products or services globally. To guide the process of targeting and positioning, Cavusgil *et al.* (2008) proposes that global marketing strategy articulates the degree to which the company's marketing program should vary across foreign markets. The company's key challenge is to resolve the trade-offs between standardizing the marketing program elements and adapting them for individual international markets.

Such complication arises because these organizations are confronted with the decision of whether to standardize their advertising campaigns across countries or to localize their programmes in every country (Cutler, Javalgi 1992). This debate continues to attract diametrically opposing views and remains a fiercely divisive issue among academics and practitioners alike. The faithful in the localization camp hold that marketing campaigns tailored to individual cultures are more effective and will more than pay for the additional creative and production costs (Rutigliano 1986).

*Standardization* exemplifies global integration and is more appropriate in global industries and pursue when similar market segments exist across

countries, customers seek similar features, products have universal specifications; the advantages are cost reduction, improved planning and control, ability to portray a consistent image and build global brands (Cavusgil *et al.* 2008). Advocates of the standardization approach (Elinder 1965; Fatt 1967; Levitt 1983) argue that consumers everywhere have the same basic needs and desires and can therefore be persuaded by universal appeals. Four major benefits of standardization are –greater efficiency in planning and control; building of international brand; simplification of coordination; exploitation of good ideas (Rutigliano 1986).

*Adaptation* exemplifies local responsiveness and is more appropriate in multidomestic industries and pursue when there are distinct national preferences, laws and regulations, living standards and economic conditions, national infrastructure. The major advantages are: meet customers' needs more precisely, enjoy unique appeal, comply with government regulations, and achieve greater success in combating customer resistance (Cavusgil *et al.* 2008). Proponents of the adaptation/localization (Ricks *et al.* 1974; Mueller 1987; Synodinos *et al.* 1989) assert that consumers are different and must be reached by communications tailored to their respective countries.

Most blunders in international/global communications occur because marketers fail to understand foreign cultures and adapt accordingly (Kanso 1992). Often MC are implemented across countries for the wrong reasons (short-term pressures on budgets, timing issue, etc.). The result can be wasted media-spend supporting ineffective copy, or worse still, directly damaging the brand (Lee, Carter 2005). Factors that force to look beyond globally harmonized MC are grouped into "market differences" (economic factors, media environment, advertising regulations/restriction, category and competitive development) and "consumer differences" (cultural differences, communication syntax, and experience with the brand) (Wilkins 2002). In order to create a global brand not all marketing elements can or have to be standardized. In general, strategy, objectives and image are more likely to be globalised, while pricing, distribution and MC are more easily localized (Philips, Doole 1996). Whether or not a global approach is successful depends to a great extent on how similar the foreign culture is to the domestic one on the one hand and on the nature of the product on the other. Furthermore, some product categories seem to lend themselves better to a global approach than others (De Pelsmacker *et al.* 2007); product suitability for global approach: globalize – luxury, image appeals, similar target groups, country-of-origin, high tech (Fannin 1984). Knowledge

of local market conditions seems to play an overriding role, leading to a more standardized approach by companies (Sohlberg 2002).

Achieving a balance between adaptation and standardization is part of a broader corporate strategy that has the company debating its position between *global integration* and *local responsiveness*. How the company resolves the balance between them affects how it makes standardization and adaptation decisions within the marketing programme elements.

Ideally, the marketing manager should “think globally and act locally”, not by focusing on the extremes of full standardization or full localization, but rather by exploiting good ideas, strategies, and products on a wider regional basis. Cross-cultural marketing must examine the ‘complex interplay between local context and global content, rather than arguing for the primacy of one over the other’ (Wilk 1995). The adaptation decision will also have to be assessed as a function of time and market involvement (Hoffman 2005). The more exporters learn about local market characteristics in individual markets, the more they are able to establish similarities and standardize marketing approach. This market insight gives legitimacy with local representatives in developing understanding of the extent of standardization vs. adaptation (Sohlberg 2002). In addition, Hoffman (2005) proposes that ‘Without local commitment, no global marketing effort can survive’.

### 3.3. Globally integrated marketing communications

Gould (1999) offers the concept of globally integrated marketing communications (GIMC) or a global IMC program, which extends IMC by adding the “international” aspect: ‘*system of active promotional management which strategically coordinates global communications in all of its component parts both horizontally in terms of countries and organizations and vertically in terms of promotional discipline. It contingently takes into account the full range of standardized versus adaptive market options, synergies, variations among target populations and other marketplace and business conditions*’. The goal is still the same – to coordinate marketing efforts. The challenges are greater due to larger national and cultural differences in target markets. The GIMC is easier to apply when a company relies on the standardization method, but can and should be used with either adaptation or standardization (Gould 1999).

Clow and Baack (2007) propose the ingredients of successful GIMC plans: understand the

international market; borderless marketing plan; thinking globally but acting locally; local partnerships; MC segmentation strategies; MC analysis; solid communication objectives. It is urgent to make strategic decisions through the integrated tracking, comparison, coordination of MC across all relevant global markets in order to maximize both organizational learning and the efficient allocation of resources (Lee, Carter 2005).

### 3.4. Globalization and glocalization

Another concept of globalization proposes the compromise between globalization and localization – “glocalization” (Shalkovska 2005). In the global arena, it is important to view differences in lifestyle and traditions, as well as consumer behavior, objectively rather than making judgments about customs or cultures in other parts of the world (Lane *et al.* 2008). In some cases, isolationism can be resolved in part by greater sensitivity to other cultures and willingness to learn local customs. In an attempt to deal with local culture and at the same time enjoy the advantages and efficiencies of global marketing, many companies have adopted the concept of *glocalization*. The term was popularized in the 1990s and seeks to combine the twin aims of globalization and localization. The term usually denotes one or both of the following: (1) The creation of distribution of products or services intended for a global or trans-regional market but customized to suit local laws or customs; (2) Using electronic communication technologies (Internet), to provide local messages on a global or transregional basis.

Lane (2008) proposes that glocalization seeks to emphasize the belief that international sales of a product are more likely to succeed when companies adapt the product and/or promotion specifically to a particular locale (e.g., *McDonald*). Global marketing is a balancing act between keeping costs low through advertising efficiency and communicating effectively with local buyers. Ideally, companies would be able to adapt a single advertising and marketing strategy throughout the world. The big issue for multinationals today is how to tailor the global marketing concept to fit each business (Adekola, Sergi 2007). Localizing in the global village helps to offer the point of differentiation that many consumers seek. Competitive success in the global environment is based on three key components (Dann, Dann 2004) – unique perceived value, cultural resources and targeting, and positioning on the basis of “localness”.

*According to expert survey* global brands adaptation in domestic markets has always been top-

ical and must be taken in account. When accessing each new market it is necessary to evaluate the product and marketing strategy accordance to culture and mentality of the new market as well as all possible risks. Therefore, it is urgent to examine separately (more or less) the economic and market individualities in order to adapt/localize MC to either smaller or larger market. Wherewith, the best challenge is to appraise the market situation correctly and to tailor MC, also the product, to the specific market. Simplified global brand promotion, also standardization strategy, is unbiased as long as it brings predictable profits. Also, experts assert that there are quite a lot of global brands adaptation cases in the Latvian market; as a result, the adapted brands are more successful, also providing for higher efficiency of MC. Foreign brands accessing Latvian market often use marketing campaigns with adapted advertising slogans, texts, designs, while the message content is global/standardized. Sometimes this situation is effective, but, on the other hand, there is another/reverse occasion when producers (e.g. *L'Oreal*, *Garnier*, *beer producers etc.*) work out a specific marketing campaign for the local market according to the general regional marketing strategy. According to examples in the Latvian market, such approach often is much more effective than standardized product and MC strategy.

In many ways, the future of international trade will be two-tiered. In conclusion: the interpretation of the non-traditional approaches indicates existent traditional fundamental approaches; Standardization is acceptable just in the case when specific elements are used, taking in account that the positioning and marketing elements are to be localized; Localization determines efficiency in specific markets and its factors are very important under globalization - without local commitment, no global marketing effort can survive; glocal approach is very important nowadays – to think global, but act local. That is why, in the authors' opinion, there are additional solutions for the current issue in order to achieve MC goals in global marketplace – comprehensive IMC program covering market access needs.

#### **4. Integrated marketing communications as solution of marketing problems under globalization**

Needs and desires of consumer are becoming more and more homogenous around the world, justifying the use of a global communication programme. The goal is to design the MC package that effectively reaches every market segment. Language,

culture, laws must be taken in account in the development of GIMC program (Clow, Baack 2007).

The decision about the degree of standardization and adaptation is not an either/or decision, but rather, a balancing act. There are good arguments and outcomes in favor of both standardization and adaptation. Perhaps Cavusgil *et al.* (2008) argues that the most important distinction between standardization and adaptation is that standardization helps the firm reduce its costs, while adaptation helps the firm more precisely cater to local needs and requirements, thereby increasing its revenues. It is necessary to engage in standardization and adaptation simultaneously, at varying degrees. As a compromise, some companies pursue standardization as part of a regional strategy, where international marketing programme elements are formulated to exploit commonalities across a geographic region instead of across the world (*GM cars for China-Buick, Europe-Opel, etc.*). Convergence of regional preferences, regional economic integration, harmonization of product standards, growth of regional media and distribution channels all make regional marketing more feasible than pursuing global marketing approaches (Yip 2003).

Probably the best way to approach international markets is not to adhere to one of the extreme strategies of globalisation or localisation, but to opt for a “global commitment to a local vision” (Keegan 2002). If the brand positioning is a good one, it should be rolled out in most countries. Also, an excellent creative idea can work nearly everywhere. However, advertisers should always look at the creative idea through the eyes of the locals. Even the best ideas might need some adaptation in execution to get into the mind-set of local people or to respect their cultural value (White 2000). An example would be to work out a global creative idea, but to adapt the advertising so that local presenters, experts or celebrities are employed, or that reference is made to local history or national symbols (e.g. *Big Ben etc.*). If these two seemingly opposite demands (global & local) could be coupled and the goal of being “global locally” met, one of the greatest challenges facing marketers could be solved (De Pelsmacker *et al.* 2007). Global brands may have more success in high-involvement categories, while consumers may still give local brands preference in purchasing everyday products (Johansson, Ronkainen 2004, 2005). IMC are about coordinating multiple and diverse tools targeted at multiple and diverse audiences (Stewart 1996).

According to the marketing communication goals IMC can be one of the globalization problem solutions. First of all, the difference between the classic MC and IMC (Van Raaij 1998) represents the advantages of IMC, and at the same time, solu-

tions of the problem in choice between standardization and adaptation approaches: IMC is the “selective communication” while MC is “mass communications” sustaining by IMC general MC goals and necessity of localization approach, even in the global market; IMC achieves effect through the “relevance” while MC by the “repetition” indicating the localization aspects; Also “confidence of brand” indicates orientation on customers and dialog formation, while MC shows just “salience of brand”; IMC is “postmodern – cyclical, fragmented” while MC is “modern – linear and massive”. It is very important to be cyclical and take in account media and audience fragmentation for achieving goals in the global marketing arena. The fragmentation and cyclical approach indicates the aspect of localization, and at the same time, fulfils marketing goals in general – to reach the customer.

Secondly, in terms of the main IMC drivers (De Pelsmacker *et al.* 2007), it is necessary to note, that drivers conform to the main standardization/adaptation problems; also indicating a solution of modern MC problems, especially in the global arena. Exactly IMC is proposed as the key solution for such aspects as a need for more impact, media fragmentation, low levels of brand differentiation, technological evolution, overlapping audiences, finally, globalisation of marketing strategies. Examining these aspects, it is clear that they propose the possibility to solve the problems of marketing globalization: (1) Audiences and markets tend to become more and more fragmented, making mass media less effective and increasing the need for more specialized and fragmented media. Communications tend to become customized for narrower markets, and customer contact is established by means of multimedia methods; (2) Markets are becoming increasingly global. Phenomena such as internet, also globalization of mass media and increasing exposure of consumer to international communication stimuli, increase the need for consistency in everything the company communicates in all countries (Schultz 2000).

**Experts claim** that when accessing each new market it is necessary to evaluate the accordance of the product and marketing strategy to the culture and mentality. Wherewith, the best challenge is to appraise the market situation correctly and to tailor MC, also product, to the specific market. The best MC approach is an integrated, coordinated set of communication (IMC). That is why, the authors conclude that one of the success keys in global marketing issues is comprehensive, synergic MC provided by an IMC programme.

## 5. Conclusions

Undoubtedly, the process of globalization directly and increasingly affects corporate marketing, including the new correctives according to trends. The expert survey results confirm investigators’ guidelines and show the corresponding practitioners’ activities, and also adjustments, taking in account the current marketplace position. As a result of theoretical research and the accomplished expert survey, the authors conclude that:

- Interpretation of non-traditional approaches indicates existent traditional fundamental approaches;
- Standardization is acceptable just in the case when specific elements are used, taking in account that the positioning and marketing elements have to be localized;
- There is undeniable importance/efficiency of specific elements standardization in specific cases, also in order to reduce costs, but without local commitment, no global marketing effort can survive;
- Localization determines efficiency in specific markets and its factors are very important under globalization;
- The new term ‘glocalization’ offers great opportunities in the standardization/adaptation issue –thinking globally while acting locally;
- The best MC approach is an integrated, coordinated set of communication;
- One of the success keys in global marketing issues is a comprehensive, coordinated, synergic, adapted MC provided by an IMC programme.

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