



# MAXWELL HOUSE

## Background to 'Houses' Campaign

### ■ BACKGROUND

The Irish coffee market is dominated by instant coffees which account for over 90% of total coffee purchases from retailers. Within this highly competitive mature market are two key players, Maxwell House, owned by the international Kraft Jacobs Suchard food company, and Nescafe, part of the multi-national Nestle company.

As part of large international enterprises, both Maxwell House and Nescafe have access to advertising from other markets and historically both brands have utilised UK television advertising in support of their marketing programmes on the Irish market.

In 1984 Wilson Hartnell Advertising was appointed to handle the advertising for Maxwell House in the Republic of Ireland. The brand held market leadership and, as part of the agency indoctrination into the brand, a major marketing audit was conducted across all the elements in the marketing mix - the product, its packaging, pricing, distribution, sales force, merchandising, branding, advertising, promotions, public relations, and research - to ascertain differences between Maxwell House and its main competitors.

Available qualitative and quantitative research on the market was reviewed and fresh qualitative research was undertaken to define the brand identity of Maxwell House and, in particular, to answer the key question:

*What is the nature of the inherent strength of Maxwell House that has enabled it to maintain dominance in the face of strong competition, and how can this best be harnessed for future development?*

The findings from this consumer research yielded the key data from which the copy strategy and advertising for Maxwell House has emanated over the past 10 years.

It clearly showed that at a conscious and spontaneous level, respondents perceived Maxwell House and Nescafe to be similar brands, BUT below decks the brands had very different personalities and imagery.

And brands do have personalities. They have relationships with purchasers and consumers and in many instances it is their personality and image differences which are the key determining factors in specific brand selection.

Co-incidental with the appointment of Wilson Hartnell to handle the advertising of Maxwell House in the Republic of Ireland, a new UK advertising campaign had been developed which, when researched proved to be unsuitable for the brand in this market.

And so, for the first time in the brand's history, advertising was created specifically for use in Ireland to capitalise on the image strengths and personality of Maxwell House.

A number of concepts were developed for research and one of these, the "Houses" campaign, emerged as the overwhelming favourite.

### ■ EVIDENCE OF CAMPAIGN EFFECTIVENESS

And what evidence exists to prove the effectiveness of the "Houses" campaign?

#### Sales Volumes:

In a retail coffee market which has grown by 10% over the past 10 years, total sales of Maxwell House have risen by 65%.

Over this period, pricing of Maxwell House consistently remained at parity with key competitors.

#### Market Share:

The total share of Maxwell House has expanded consistently over the 10 years of the advertising campaign from 39% in 1986 to 51% presently, a growth of 12 share points in a highly-competitive market.

Category 3  
Silver Award

Wilson Hartnell  
Advertising

Murrough  
MacDevitt  
Michael Curley

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**Advertising Research - Quantitative:**

Within three months of the launch of the "Houses" campaign 61% of national housewives correctly associated the "Houses" theme line, "Make yours a ..... House", with the Maxwell House brand when questioned on advertising slogans - an amazingly high reading.

In addition the brand advertising has recorded very high scores in advertising tracking and awareness studies carried out at various points during the campaign by Millward Brown International.

It has also performed exceptionally well in Link Test Advertising research, also undertaken by Millward Brown International, in both Ireland and in the US where the campaign was researched for possible use.

The link test scores in Ireland on the "Houses" advertisements exceeded advertising results on all the key rating scales which Millward Brown have for the vast bank of advertisements which they have tested in comparable product fields.

In addition, significantly improved ratings have been recorded in Maxwell House brand usage and image scores recorded in Usage and Attitude Studies

carried out on the Irish coffee market during the period of the advertising campaign. (These studies have been commissioned by Kraft Jacobs Suchard from both Behaviour & Attitude Research and Irish Marketing Surveys).

**Advertising Research - Qualitative:**

Every year since the commencement of the "Houses" advertising campaign, qualitative research has been undertaken on Maxwell House advertising.

These studies have very positively endorsed the campaign and its effectiveness in enhancing the image and standing of Maxwell House as the leading coffee brand on the market.

**Client Comment:**

The Irish "Houses" advertising for Maxwell House has won international awards from Kraft Jacobs Suchard for "The Most Successful Advertising" worldwide on three occasions in recent years against competition from all the major advertising agencies for KJS brands.

But the real proof of the effectiveness of the advertising lies in the sales volume and share increases which have been recorded over the past decade in a fiercely competitive market.

**Indexed Volume / Share Trends**

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
MARKET VOLUME	100	98	98	96	96	96	105	113	113	110
MAXWELL HOUSE VOLUME	100	105	109	115	129	141	158	170	172	165
MAXWELL HOUSE SHARE	39.5	41.1	43.7	44.4	45.3	48.1	49.7	51.6	50.1	51.2

Sources: Nielsen/Ex.Factory



## ■ SUMMARY

- The Maxwell House “Houses” TV campaign was conceived in 1985 following in-depth consumer research into the image and personality of the brand and its main competitor, Nescafe. At that point in time Maxwell House was the clear brand leader in the mature coffee market.
- Consumers at a conscious and spontaneous level, perceived the two main brands as very similar. However, at a deeper sub-conscious level, the images and personalities of Maxwell House and Nescafe were very different and it was these differences which contributed significantly to consumer preferences and the selection of one brand versus the other.
- The “Houses” TV campaign for Maxwell House set out to enhance the image of the brand and to further differentiate it, in image terms, from Nescafe.

- Four interpretations of the theme have been executed over the past decade and during that period:

Market share for Maxwell House has risen from 39% to 51%.

Maxwell House sales volumes have lifted by 65%.

The market volume, in comparison, has lifted by 10% over the same period.

- Consumer research studies, both quantitative and qualitative, have thoroughly endorsed that campaign and it's success in enhancing the brand's image and personality.
- The “Houses” campaign for Maxwell House has won the Kraft Jacobs Suchard International Award for “The Most Successful Advertising” worldwide on three occasions in recent years in competition with advertising from the major advertising agencies for Kraft Jacobs Suchard brands.



From Maxwell House ‘Houses’ Phase 1: 1986-1988



From Maxwell House ‘Houses’ Phase 2: 1989-1991



From Maxwell House ‘Houses’ Phase 3: 1992-1994



From Maxwell House ‘Houses’ Phase 4: 1994-1996