

confidence which not only obliterated the impulse shopper, but shattered long established shopping patterns.”

Christmas trade “came to a standstill,” and “For the nation’s shopkeepers, 1992 will be remembered as the worst year in the history of Irish retail trade since the 1920s.”

Analysts report consumer spending and confidence has suffered during the 90’s, the direct result of rising unemployment, punitive levels of income and value-added tax, and fluctuating interest rates.

Dunnes Stores, a major retail discount chain, is known for slashing prices and subsisting on low margins, a practise which has seriously hurt other stores, forcing them to cut margins regardless of their market position.

Brown Thomas (owned by the Weston family) is the most upmarket store in Ireland, followed by Switzers (also Weston owned) and Arnotts.

Channels of distribution vary in that companies may act as either agents or distributors. In light of the cut price policies of Dunnes, the trade is less structured, with pressure on margins. Currently “sales” have lasted up to two months in certain outlets.

The Common External Tariff of the EEC applies, and under code 6302 60 000, duty of 13 per cent would apply to towels manufactured outside of the EEC. This obviously distorts competition to some degree.

In 1992, the following were top importers of toilet linen and kitchen linen made of terry towelling or similar terry fabrics of cotton into Ireland: Great Britain - 294 tonnes; Portugal - 231 tonnes; India - 211 tonnes; Colombia - 109 tonnes; Thailand - 89 tonnes; Brazil - 76 tonnes; USA - 56 tonnes; Northern Ireland - 38 tonnes; Israel - 23 tonnes; Pakistan - 18 tonnes; China - 16 tonnes; France - 11 tonnes; Netherlands - 10 tonnes; Czechoslovakia - 10 tonnes; (Others - 22 tonnes, approx.)

During the same time period, Ireland exported 1,781 tonnes of towels, of which 1,412 tonnes went to Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

C. PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

1. Irish Autumn Fair - Hardware, Housewares & Gifts
3 Woodbine Pk., Stillorgan Rd., Blackrock, Dublin, Ireland
Tel: 1 2694022
Fax: 1 2692295

Alternates between housewares and hardware to gifts and fancy food each year. Last year (1993), 3,500 retail store buyers, wholesale distributors and product agents attended last year.