



## EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2005

### SERVICES MARKETING MANAGEMENT

#### General Comment

The numbers taking the Autumn examination were even lower than usual and therefore it is very difficult to make any generalizations. I would emphasise the need to study the assigned text book. There is still an over reliance on the course manual and anecdotes rather than expressing the theory relating to the topics.

#### Section A

##### Question 1

The compulsory question reverted to a discussion on the differences between product and services marketing. This should be 'bread and butter' to well prepared candidates. A good answer described the characteristics of services and discussed the services marketing mix. Exceptional answers also discussed areas specific to services e.g. service quality, services marketing triangle, etc. Weak answers had an over reliance on examples and failed to adequately place their answer in a theoretical context. Overall candidates scored well on this question.

#### Section B

##### Question 2

This question was taken from the chapter objectives in chapter 3 of the text. In 2003 a similar question was asked. This question required students to differentiate between those sources of customer expectations that are controllable and uncontrollable by marketers. These are explicitly dealt with in table 3.1 of the text. Controllable factors include explicit and implicit service promises while the less controllable factors include enduring service intensifiers, personal needs, word of mouth communication, past experience, etc. This question was not answered by many students but those who had prepared for this section scored very highly.

##### Question 3

I was surprised that more students did not attempt this question. Since physical evidence is part of the services marketing mix students should be aware of its use. Gap 2 is the gap between company perceptions of consumer expectations and customer-driven service designs and standards. Candidates could have discussed a multitude of servicescape strategies incorporating many elements of physical evidence.

**Question 4**

This was a very popular question. Students were presented with a reasonably broad statement allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge across a number of areas. Some candidates spent too much of their answer on anecdotes from their own experience as customers. Again I would emphasise that this is a final year examination in an honours degree. This requires students to have a knowledge of the relevant theories and the ability to use that knowledge in context. The subject matter is dealt with in chapter 12 of the text. This examined issues such as the level of customer participation across different services, the role of the customer, etc. Overall candidates scored well on this question.

**Question 5**

Questions on services marketing communications are the most popular each examination session. Every examination report I write contains the same overall comment. Students have a very limited understanding of the communication methods used by service organizations. Each year I ask a question taken from the chapter on integrated services marketing communications and each year I complain that candidates are not studying the chapter. The typical answer to this question is a review of TV advertising for services companies. Candidates are not considering the differences between product and services marketing and the impact of the characteristics of services on the communications strategies employed by service organizations. I would ask that for future examinations candidates become familiar with the relevant parts of the text and be able to apply the theory in the context of the characteristics of services. Examples are used to support an answer and not instead of an answer.

**Question 6**

Service blueprinting is a very useful tool that allows marketers to produce a graphical illustration of the service process. It is an area that students shy away from but is an area where students who prepare score very highly. This was a very general question that allowed students to broadly discuss the use of service blueprinting. It is a topic that is dealt with adequately in the text. Indeed there are some good examples contained in the chapter. Students should have defined a service blueprint, its use, the components, discussed how to read a blueprint, and given a brief example of how to build a blueprint.