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Cambridge Career Awards in Travel and Tourism - Standard

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TRAVEL AND TOURISM CORE MODULE

Paper 5251

General comments

There were signs of an improving standard of overall performance in the October 2002 Core Module examination. It was pleasing to see yet another large entry and many Centres are now clearly getting to grips with the focus of the more important topics. Candidates handle the stimulus material quite well and there were many good answers to particular sub-questions. This trend to clear interpretation of the supplied stimulus materials is not always matched by a clear understanding of supporting case studies. It is important that candidates have a good knowledge and understanding of their own local area if they are to readily supply detailed exemplification of topics and concepts that require a clear application to a particular example. Thus, many promising scripts failed to carry through with their accounts when individual sub-questions asked for the wider exemplification of a particular topic.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The first pieces of stimulus were set in the context of East Coast USA and it was particularly pleasing to see the information on the Charleston area so well-handled. There were no difficulties identifying the two Visitor Centers in **(a)** and the products and services offered for **(b)** were usually well known and clearly stated. It was very much a similar story in **(c)**'s account of historical attractions. Most candidates scored quite highly in these first three sub-sections. However, there were frequent problems with **(d)** and most candidates ignored, or clearly failed to understand, the idea of location. Too many individuals concentrated on describing the features of the hotel and paid little attention to the idea of the hotel having an accessible location in terms of both the Leisure and the Business traveller's likely interest and needs. Obvious points to do with nearness to the airport and CBD were frequently ignored. It was pleasing to see so many candidates clearly explaining the use of computer technology in **(e)** and both front desk and restaurant environments were well understood. It was thus a shame that only the minority of candidates could address their comments in **(f)** to a named city example and far too many individuals paid little attention to the idea of a named city destination. Answers tended to be generalised and ideas of pollution and congestion would have been far more convincing had they been set in the context of a particular known case study example.

Question 2

Again, there was usually a good start and most candidates were able to clearly identify three Dutch heritage features of Curacao in **(a)(i)** and then correctly identify three appropriate festivals in **(a)(ii)**. There were less convincing answers to **(b)**'s language appeal and only a very small minority of scripts could argue their way to all three marks. However, most got either the idea of potentially easier communication or cultural interest. It was surprising that not one candidate commented about 'Papiamento' being unique. **(c)** invited comment about cruise ship staff skills and personal qualities. Many answers were along the right lines but only a minority of answers provided appropriate illustration of the points being made. Far too many candidates tended to produce a list of generalised points and this tended to limit the amount of credit actually scored. It was a similar story with **(d)** and price variation in the Caribbean. Too many candidates failed to realise that winter in the Caribbean is high season and most ignored peak seasons for Christmas, New Year and Easter. Furthermore, it was only the odd one or two individuals who made reference to a rainy season let alone the threat of hurricanes. However, most could clearly illustrate **(e)**'s importance of tourism and this topic was clearly understood by the vast majority.

Question 3

The first two sections were well attempted and there were frequent full mark answers to **(a)(i)** and **(a)(ii)**. There were, however, very many poor answers to part **(b)** and few candidates knew the precise meaning of "a la carte", "short break" and "all-inclusive". The latter was very surprising as this has been a popular concept in past examinations and is usually clearly understood and appreciated. Essentially the question was after a description of the three types of package arrangement whereas candidates tended to repeat the components of a package holiday. **(d)** was not always well illustrated and few candidates were aware of the differences in service available on these two contrasting types of flight. However, the real problems came with answers to **(d)** and the concept of products and services in an adventure activity context. There was far too much irrelevant description of the activity at the expense of analysis of the location hosting the provision. Better candidates clearly explained health and safety issues and credit was given to sensible comment about guides/instructors and first aid. There were far too many vague generalisations and most candidates were not at all comfortable with this topic. This should not have been the case because in other questions clear reference was being made to watersport activities, or to locations like Victoria Falls.

Question 4

The stimulus material was clearly and accurately interpreted by most candidates and there were few difficulties with **(a)**. Not all candidates were very convincing in describing environmental impacts within National Parks and there were too many weak generalisations. Candidates would have fared better if they had made reference to a precise location and it is suggested that at least one example is studied in some depth to allow clearer exemplification of particular impacts. Furthermore, far too many individuals tended to confuse environmental with economic and thus lost the opportunity for credit. Most scripts then picked up the mark scoring habit in parts **(c)(i)** and **(c)(ii)** and it was pleasing to see many full mark answers to these two sections. The correct points were found from the stimulus material and there were several very good answers to these two sub-questions. There were serious problems with answers to **(d)** and the emphasis to local attractions was never really provided. There were far too many descriptions of destinations and very little attempt was made to look at the ways in which an individual tourist attraction might increase visitor numbers. The few individuals who quoted marketing/advertising/promotional strategies received their just rewards for making a positive attempt to answer the question.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Paper 5252

General comments

Candidates were entered for this examination from a wider range of Centres than has previously been the case, and a broader span of ability was witnessed in the responses made to the questions as a result. Many candidates were able to demonstrate a good understanding of the principles of marketing within a Travel and Tourism context through their answers to the paper as a whole, although there appeared some Centres where candidates were inadequately prepared for the examination.

The Standard Level examination papers for this Award allow space for candidates' responses within the actual question paper. The amount of lines given for a response, reflect the anticipated length of answer from an average candidate. Whilst it is acceptable on occasions for candidates to require additional paper to extend their answers to one or two questions, it was very frustrating to note for this paper, that a large number of candidates from more than one Centre used additional paper for almost every question. This seemed to be irrespective of the marks allocation for questions – for example **Question 2 (a)(i)** required a one-word answer – Primary - yet many candidates wrote 3 or 4 line responses. Centres should therefore be encouraged to look at examination techniques used by their candidates and should make greater use of mark allocations and space provided on question papers to guide candidates in gauging how much to write.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question aimed to focus on the level of understanding candidates have on the general principles of Marketing and their specific application within a Travel and Tourism setting. A Case Study example of a national Tourist Authority's role in marketing and promoting a specific region was used to enable candidates to show their understanding of the tools associated with positional analysis – namely SWOT and PEST, as well as examining candidates' knowledge of aims and objectives.

- (a) Many candidates were able to conduct the SWOT Analysis competently. Weaker candidates were thrown by key words such as “strong” in statement A.
- (b) The majority of candidates were able to identify meaningful priorities from the SWOT analysis and could justify their choice of priority to a reasonable standard. Candidates from one Centre used the general principles of SWOT to state that priorities should come from overcoming weaknesses and threats but did not relate this specifically to the SWOT data for Tourism Victoria, so were unable to gain accreditation for their answers.
- (c)(i) Again the majority of candidates recognised the positive political aspects from the PEST Analysis to achieve the mark for this question.
 - (ii) Fewer candidates appeared to be familiar with negative social impacts of tourism in answering this question correctly.
 - (iii) This question caused some difficulty for many candidates. Information from the PEST results was not well used in assessing whether political influences would be of a positive or negative nature. Many merely copied out the statement rather than interpreted its longer term effect on the tourism industry.

- (d) Stronger candidates scored well within this level of response question, being able to clearly identify what the general aims and objectives of tourism promotion are for local and national government providers. They used the knowledge they had gained from the assessment objectives and were able to apply these to national tourism authorities. Weaker candidates merely listed straight from the assessment objectives the main aims and objectives and were not able to substantiate these in respect of this type of tourism provider.

Question 2

This question aimed to test candidates' awareness of market research methodologies adopted in the Travel and Tourism industry, market segmentation and matching specific client groups to specific product needs.

- (a)(i) The majority of candidates scored the mark for correctly identifying that this was a form of primary research. Several weaker candidates could not differentiate between primary and secondary research methods.
- (ii) This question caused a surprising amount of confusion – better candidates were able to provide relevant sources of domestic and international visitor numbers but many repeated research methods rather than sources.
- (iii) Very few candidates recognised open questioning to be reflective of qualitative data – the majority of candidates repeated their answer from question (a) primary - showing a lack of understanding in data type.
- (b) Many candidates were reasonably aware of appropriate tourism activities for different market segments so made a fair attempt at matching activities to the four target client groups.
- (c) The term “characteristics” caused difficulties for many candidates – some did not even attempt the question, whilst others tried to define what segmentation is, without actually categorising how segmentation occurs.
- (d) The responses to this question reflected the wide ability span of the cohort of candidates undertaking this examination. Better candidates were able to analyse to a high level how accommodation and transport providers cater for the wide range of needs of different client groups, and gave excellent exemplification within their answers. Mid range candidates clearly identified and described the different forms of accommodation appealing to each segment, but were not always able to amplify their answer with specific examples. Weaker candidates provided simple lists that were not always directed towards specific client groups nor amplified in any way.

Question 3

The third question of this paper was designed to ascertain candidates' understanding of the first two components of the Marketing Mix – Product and Price. Candidates were expected to be able to give a full account of specific features of a holiday package product and use the product life cycle model to make decisions about the impact of a given product's position within the model. There was also an expectation that candidates would be able to justify the most appropriate pricing strategy being used for the given product, as well as provide an analysis of the factors affecting pricing decisions in more general terms.

- (a) Surprisingly, several candidates were unable to identify the main products of an all inclusive holiday package, although the majority found this a straightforward task.
- (b) Only the better candidates were then able to identify specific additional services from an all-inclusive package – many of the examples given would apply to any type of holiday package – e.g. car parking or room service.
- (c) Most candidates clearly identified the main benefit to the tour operator as being profit based – but weaker candidates answered this from the perspective of the client rather than the provider.
- (d) Pricing strategies chosen varied enormously but accreditation was generally given if full justification of the choice was made. Few candidates were able to recognise the “all-inclusive” label as an association with luxury or prestige – thus selecting the most appropriate strategy correctly.

- (e) Many candidates drew the product life cycle chart – for which they gained no additional accreditation. The question was designed to ensure candidates fully understand how the life cycle can be applied rather than to test the memory of the sequence in which each stage occurs.
- (f) This level of response question about the general theory of price was met by a variety of responses. As expected the best candidates were those whose were able to discuss the range of factors that affect price of holidays and assess those which cause the greatest impact. The lower scoring candidates merely listed one or two factors but could not relate these specifically to the concept of price determination. Candidates from one Centre seemed to have learnt a set answer about pricing policies but could not apply the information they had learnt to this particular question, thus not gaining high marks in this section.

Question 4

This question used a Case Study approach to test candidates' understanding of the remaining two components of the Marketing Mix – namely Place and Promotion.

- (a) This question caused many difficulties – very few candidates recognised forms of direct marketing from the assessment objectives and merely chose one of the listed marketing activities from the Case Study.
- (b) This question was answered in varying ways as anticipated. The better candidates were able to provide a detailed comparison of Above the Line and Below the Line marketing – whilst those candidates working at the borderline Pass level again repeated information from the Case Study and were unable to differentiate between the two types.
- (c) This question was generally answered well – paper based resources were not deemed appropriate examples of technological advance – but both TV and the Internet were accepted. Many candidates were able to give some account of the benefits but not always specifically targeted to national tourism providers as stipulated in the question, hence some marks not being awarded.
- (d) This question was perhaps the most poorly answered across the whole paper. Very few candidates seemed to recognise the word “Constraint” and few picked up on the fact that they should have examined the factors affecting promotion – too many picked up on the final phrase products and services and gave an account of their differences – thus not answering the question at all. Mid range candidates tended to list time and money but could not gain fuller marks in this level of response question for the lack of depth in their answers.
- (e) Most candidates were able to give appropriate examples of distribution channels used by the organisation. Fewer were able to explain fully how these could be used.
- (f) A detailed discussion of Factors of location was expected within responses to this question. Several candidates were able to provide the model answer, but the majority listed some of the factors without any justification or a brief mention of how location might impact, thus resulting in mid range marks often being scored here.

TRAVEL ORGANISATION

Paper 5253

General comments

The performance of candidates was generally improved on previous examination series. This could be due to candidates and Centres being more aware of the types of questions which may appear on this paper and the responses required from candidates. However, there were still too many instances of candidates not using the stimulus material provided in order to respond appropriately to the questions and responses being too general in nature. Many of the marks for this paper rely on candidates being able to complete documentation used within the travel and tourism industry and more practice would benefit candidates in these areas. Generally scripts were more legible and candidates had attempted to respond to questions more fully. Centres are strongly recommended to study this report in order to develop their candidates further in order to achieve improved performance.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question was aimed to test the candidates' understanding of the terminology within the travel and tourism industry and demonstrate their awareness of how itineraries are laid out and presented as well as why different providers combine to produce a special interest package with the relevant benefits. This was generally not well attempted by candidates, particularly in sections **(d)**, **(e)** and **(f)**.

- (a)(b)(c)** Most candidates were able to identify the appropriate providers.
- (d)** Though calculators are allowed for this part of the question, the correct answer relies on candidates' ability to identify the components which make up the cost of the holiday. Most had doubled the basic cost of 1947, but only some realised that insurance was payable by both passengers, so final totals were often incorrect. The advertisement also states that German government departure tax was included in the basic cost, so candidates should not have also included 60 DM per person in their totals. Candidates would benefit from further practice in calculating holiday costs, as this is a vital function in travel organisation.
- (e)** The question specifically asked for a travel itinerary with check in and transfer arrangements, so candidates should have given full details of the check in at Frankfurt airport, flight details and airline, and calculated the appropriate arrival time in Borneo. Many candidates attempted a detailed tour itinerary for the 10 night holiday and included the excursions at appropriate intervals throughout the holiday for which credit was given. However, there were too many examples of candidates not understanding that an itinerary/travel arrangements should include all the relevant information for passengers concerning check in, departure and arrival times. This is an area where Centres need to develop candidate expertise further.
- (f)** This type of question requires candidates to 'discuss' the issues, rather than just list travel service providers and specifically to explain the benefits received by them when producing a package holiday. This was a level of response question where increasing depth of knowledge and explanation was required in order to achieve higher marks. Generally this was not well attempted by candidates and again is an area which needs further development by Centres. Candidates may have commented on increased sales/improved image/higher profits, but failed to explain how these are achieved through development of a package and working with other providers to meet these targets.

Question 2

- (a) Candidates made reasonable attempts at this part of the question though only a few made reference to the improved convenience of using own transport with a disabled passenger.
- (b) Candidates needed to extract relevant information from the stimulus material in order to respond appropriately to both parts of this question in terms of benefits to the particular scenario given at the top of the question – responses should have related to facilities on board each ferry and the length of journey. Candidates tended to achieve more marks for (ii) than for (i).
- (c) This question was aimed to test the candidates' knowledge of appropriate sources of information, such as guide books, brochures, leaflets, word of mouth, etc as in Section C of the syllabus, and should not have included such things as e-mail or computerised reservation systems, as these rely on internet usage. There were also too many references to tour operators and travel agents as sources of information, which was not the aim of the question and was marked accordingly.
- (d) Few candidates achieved full marks on this question as they had not read the stem and related their responses to 'legal requirements relevant to driving', and included such things as passports and visas. Centres should ensure that Section D of the syllabus is covered adequately in order to improve candidate performance in this type of question.
- (e) This question was a level of response type question – as 'discuss' should indicate to candidates – and few candidates related the 'special needs' of the family (with a disabled son) to the three components in the question. Candidates were expected to be able to identify the special needs requirements of this family and how the different providers could meet those needs. Very few candidates achieved above Level 1 for this question, so Centres would be advised to relate candidates' understanding of customer services in relation to special needs to meet the requirements of B4 of the syllabus.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates stated that a 'stopover' was a break in the journey but the majority failed to identify the minimum time of 12 hour break in the journey, so few obtained full marks.
- (b) Generally this was satisfactorily responded but few obtained full marks for this question.
- (c) Candidates would benefit from further practice in this type of question in order to be able to extract the relevant information from the stimulus material and achieve full marks. They also needed to bear in mind that mobility issues needed to be considered also.
- (d) Candidates need to develop the necessary skills in completion of booking and reservation forms, and ensure all the relevant details are completed such as name, address, other passenger details, resort and hotel specified, number of nights and type of room required. Most booking forms only require deposits to be paid and insurance, and this section of the form was generally very poorly attempted. The date on the booking form should be the date of the examination, not the date of the holiday. This was not well achieved by the majority of candidates, though many were awarded marks for the relevant sections completed.
- (e) All types of currency used by travellers were expected in the response, with justification for the use of different types. This was not well attempted by the majority of candidates and is an area where Centres could improve candidate performance by raising awareness of the benefits of different currency forms and relevant security.

Question 4

- (a) This was generally not well attempted by the majority of candidates showing a lack of understanding of terms used within ticketing for scheduled flights and the benefits of upgrading tickets.
- (b) Too many candidates did not read the stem of this question, as it related to 'free transfers from home to a UK airport' meaning the home of the clients in question, not the candidates' own home. Few candidates achieved full marks for this question and it was generally not well attempted.

- (c) This question aimed to test the candidates' ability to identify advantages and disadvantages of different types of travel and generally was not well attempted. Little awareness of convenience of connecting flights as opposed to driving 628 km was shown by the candidates.
- (d) Again, completion of documentation is an important element of this module, and candidates need to develop skills in the accurate completion of forms from information given. They did gain marks for items included, but these were not always reflective of the candidates' competence if they were working within the industry. There were too many examples of inaccurate information or incomplete information being included which would not be acceptable in employment. More practice in completing industry documentation is advisable for future candidates.
- (e) To achieve full marks for this question, candidates needed to identify two services or specific advice (e.g. insurance, currency, vaccinations) and explain each, which few were able to do to achieve maximum marks. Many gave lists of services/advice with no explanation, which meant that maximum marks could not be given.

VISITOR SERVICES

Paper 5254

This assignment based optional module has generated a higher level of entry during the past year than on previous occasions. Those Centres, who have entered candidates for the module appear to have a good understanding of the requirements in generating assignment evidence, although it has been rare to gain sight of any assignment brief that candidates have been set.

Very few candidates have failed to achieve the Pass criteria within this module – this is largely down to the introduction of the Student Assessment Record (SAR) which enables Course Tutors to keep a track of the coverage of assessment objective evidence for individual candidates as well as monitoring progress towards assignment completion. Therefore, fewer candidates have submitted assignments, which do not address all aspects of the assessment criteria.

However, it would be equally true to assert that very few candidates have submitted assignment evidence to meet Distinction level criteria within this module. This is often due to the lack of depth of coverage of one or two aspects of the assessment objective criteria – most notably the role and function of national, regional and local tourist boards, which often causes difficulties for Centres where such concepts are difficult to investigate at first hand.

Scale of operation is rarely fully evidenced, together with difficulties explaining the channels of communication within any public sector tourism provision within the country or state being investigated. Candidates should be encouraged to use textbook examples to make reference to examples of how internal and external communication channels might work.

Many candidates have produced informative and detailed case study based assignments, which clearly demonstrate their knowledge of how tourism information services operate within their selected area. Some evidence of Quality Standards are mentioned but a more full investigation of accommodation classification schemes and how they are reviewed and implemented would again be beneficial in allowing candidates to work towards Distinction level within this assessment criteria.

The range of products and services offered by Visitor Service providers is generally well covered, with many inclusions of leaflets, pamphlets and guides. More should be made of destination management systems in order to gain higher grading in this area.

The marketing and promotion section of assignments is usually well evidenced, particularly by those candidates, who have already been entered for Module 5252. An area for improvement for future assignment work would be to encourage candidates to consider the skill of recommendation employed by visitor service staff.

Few candidates are able to provide detailed information about training and qualifications obtained by visitor service employees as part of the quality control section of the assignment.

Generally well evidenced are the sections on Business Travel Services and Leisure Travel Services, particularly calendar of events, festivals and exhibitions.

Professional presentation skills are employed by the majority of candidates submitting evidence for this module – spiral bound, word-processed accounts are commonly produced.

More candidates are using source-referencing techniques to help validate their research – bibliographies and contact details are often included as appendices to the assignment evidence, which is an example of excellent practice.