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TRAVEL AND TOURISM STANDARD LEVEL

Paper 5251

Travel and Tourism Core Module

General comments

As in previous sessions, the vast majority of candidates were able to attempt all four questions within the time allocated. Furthermore, it was pleasing to see active reference being made to actual case studies with which the candidates were familiar and there were many instances of candidates using appropriate industry terminology fluently.

However, many longstanding difficulties still remain and far too many individuals rely on vague generalisation to support their various answers. A large minority of individuals still cannot quote precise illustrations of the topics/concepts that are under consideration and this tends to very much reduce the amount of credit that can be awarded to particular answers. It is strongly suggested that Centres emphasise to candidates the importance of clearly addressing the problem posed by individual questions. For example, when asked to discuss an issue for six marks, a simple listing of appropriate features/characteristics falls well short of what is required and expected at this level. Finally, Centres are once again reminded that *all* candidates should write their answers in the spaces provided within the question and answer booklet.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was set in the context of Singapore's Raffles Hotel. The simple identifications required in parts **(a)(i)** and **(ii)** were always well done and nearly every candidate got off to a very good start. Part **(a)(iii)** was a little more demanding and candidates were expected to use their powers of reasoning to identify the types of retail outlet that would be attracted to such a prestigious location. Many candidates offered very sensible suggestions, but others struggled to make valid suggestions and obtained only limited credit. Few candidates could identify what was 'unique' about Raffles and only a small minority could identify famous guests, Long Bar and the historic connections of the property.

Part **(c)** required candidates to consider the personal skills and qualities that a 'personal butler' should possess. Few could describe the chosen skills/qualities in any depth and far too many answers consisted of simple listing without any descriptive comment. It was surprising to read about the need for foreign languages and then not to see any attempt to link this with the Hotel's international reputation for hospitality service provision.

There tended to be better reasoning within answers to part **(d)** and many candidates appreciated the ideas of vertical integration, increasing profitability and the need to fill airline seats. It was quite worrying to see a minority of candidates who wrote about Emirates as the UAE and not as an airline, as was clearly stated in the question. The concept of 'amalgam destinations' is quite well understood and there were some very good answers to part **(e)**. Many answers could easily be improved if specific examples of the features talked about had been quoted. It was pleasing to see, however, that most candidates wrote in terms of servicing the needs of both business and leisure visitors.

Question 2

Candidates readily understood the stimulus material about the Maldives and there were many full mark answers to parts **(a)(i)** and **(ii)**. In part **(b)**, however, there was almost the total neglect of the various positive economic impacts that would follow the Maldives promoting leisure tourism visits. Far too many candidates ignored the wording of the question and could not offer valid reasoning why the destination would want to promote this type of tourism. All too often, candidates simply re-stated extracts of Fig. 2 text rather than thinking about why such visits were to be encouraged. Credit for this sub-question was thus very limited. It tended to be a similar story with answers to part **(c)** and too many individuals were not really familiar with the role of national tourist boards in terms of the promotional strategies that might be used. Many individuals spoke about activities that tour operators might engage in rather than the more significant hosting of familiarisation visits and the attending of trade fairs. The concept of the 'Demonstration Effect' was *very poorly understood* and few candidates were able to score full marks in part **(d)** as a result. A much better attempt was made with part **(e)**'s negative environmental impacts and there were some excellent answers that looked at conditions along Spain's Mediterranean coast.

Question 3

Many scripts began very well and there were many full mark answers to part **(a)**. However, few candidates could correctly itemise procedures followed by travel agents when taking a booking. This suggests that Centres are not really introducing candidates to operational procedures. Key steps need to receive emphasis and only a minority of candidates could mention preparing a reservation file, drawing up an itinerary and the issue of tickets following the recording of payment. There was far too much vague generalisation about making bookings using a computer and one gained the impression that candidates were quite unfamiliar about the operational procedures currently in use. Again, it was only a minority of candidates who could offer reasons for the three Cathay Pacific flights per day as asked for in part **(c)**. There were too many repetitive statements and little evidence of constructive thinking about demand, convenience, leisure/business/VFR trips, comparative advantage and tourism generating regions. Any valid reasoning was acceptable, but many candidates failed to contextualise their ideas. There were very few good answers to part **(d)** and this question typifies the careless approach adopted by many candidates. It is thus, appropriate to comment in some depth about this type of question.

Candidates were invited to explain three types of security check for six marks. Therefore, there are two marks available for each valid check. One mark will be awarded for the identification of an appropriate check and a second mark awarded for an explanatory comment of its use. The following table clearly illustrates one way to achieve a full mark answer.

Security Check	Explanation for use
Passport check	To confirm passport holder's identity – not a criminal or terrorist
Baggage x-ray	To identify any concealed dangerous materials e.g. bombs or explosives
Personal metal scan	To identify any concealed weapons – terror threat

Many candidates could identify the checks but could not clearly explain a valid security context. The above table offers an appropriate illustration of what is required at this level. This lack of explanatory comment was also a feature of answers to part **(e)**. Too many individuals simply listed airport ancillary services without offering any comment as to how or why they were appropriate to the needs of incoming passengers. Those candidates who attempted to comment on why provision was made for valid services were appropriately rewarded.

Question 4

Many candidates scored well on part **(a)** and most found it relatively easy to identify locations using the stimulus material provided. Very few could suggest Miami as a cruise port and only a minority of candidates were aware that the Caribbean Sea is an important cruise circuit. Part **(b)(iii)** was, however, much better understood, with climate and holiday season dominating explanations for the popularity of cruises at this time of year. There were also some very clear locational statements made about Nassau's TICs in part **(c)** and there were quite a few full mark answers. Some candidates really did well on promotional strategies for the city tour and there were some excellent answers to part **(d)**. The majority of answers tended to have the same shortcomings as did **Question 3 (d)** and many answers would have been improved if candidates had structured their individual responses a little more clearly. Of all the questions on the paper, **4 (e)** represented the worst level of performance. Far too many candidates simply had no real idea what 'economies of scale' actually were, let alone how they might apply in the cruise ship context. Only a small minority could talk about buying in bulk and no-one could mention the trend of increasing ship size (such as the Voyager of the Seas) in order to boost profitability. Far too many candidates simply left this section blank. Centres are advised that this is an important concept and it is bound to feature in future examinations for 5251.

Paper 5252
Marketing and Promotion

General comments

Entries of over 150 candidates for this paper came from a broad range of Centres around the world. The majority of candidates appeared to have prepared well for this examination and were able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the principles of marketing and promotion. The examination provided clear opportunities for differentiation, with better performing candidates being able to apply their knowledge of the syllabus through the scenario-based questions, whilst weaker candidates made limited contextualised responses to the majority of questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This question focused on the use of market research within the context of a tourism-promoting organisation such as the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism. Candidates were required to apply their understanding of the marketing tools, known as SWOT and PEST analyses, using a scenario-based approach as in many other sessions.

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to suggest appropriate reasons for market research being carried out to score both marks for this question.
- (b)(i) The mention of a focus group seemed to alarm weaker candidates although many correctly identified the data type as being qualitative, being based on personal preferences and opinions.
 - (ii) Responses to this question tended to be generalised, yet many candidates were able to identify two advantages of the use of a focus group. Those who did not score well here tried to look at this from the respondent's viewpoint rather than from the organisation's perspective.
- (c) The layout of this question differed slightly from that used previously. This format elicited a much more focused response from candidates than the customary use of a SWOT box – in the past, it was not unusual for at least one candidate to write a list of all statement letters/numbers in all of the boxes.
- (d) Many candidates did not follow the instructions for this question closely enough and instead of giving just two examples of positive influences and two examples of negative influences, as requested through the question, a large number of candidates completed all eight boxes within the table.
- (e) This question required candidates to provide specific examples of marketing activities with some elaboration. The majority of candidates made reference only to advertising and did not consider any other element of the marketing mix or the concept of product differentiation. Weaker candidates were not able to link their responses to the specific example of alternative tourism in Bulgaria.
- (f) Most candidates were able to attempt this question, despite it seemingly requiring an understanding of the role of the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism. Responses often appeared repetitive with some overlap made to the previous question focusing predominantly on the role of advertising in promoting Bulgaria as a holiday destination, rather than considering the wider function of the organisation in generating increased sales through competitive marketing strategies.

Question 2

This question provided candidates with the opportunity to display their understanding of the segmentation process, using theme parks as a specific tourism product. Candidates were expected to be able to discuss the importance of product differentiation as well as a range of appropriate pricing strategies for theme parks to use. There was also a section in which candidates were to demonstrate their knowledge of the product life cycle model as an important market analysis tool.

- (a)(i) The majority of candidates were able to provide a good definition of the term 'target market' although one or two weaker candidates could only repeat the phrases 'target' and 'market' within their attempted definitions.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to correctly identify two methods of segmentation. Several weaker candidates confused this question with one about research methods.
- (b) Responses to this question were surprising. Candidates needed to choose one type of customer from the list of three. Most selected 'families with children' as their customer type, obviously believing this to be easy to understand. However, when it came to giving two examples of how the theme park could meet the specific needs of this client group, many candidates forgot to apply their knowledge and wrote in general terms.
- (c)(i) Few candidates identified rides and shows as the main product of a theme park. The mark scheme was adjusted to accept the more generalised identification of entertainment. More classroom coverage of the differences between a main product and linked services may be of benefit in improving scores for this type of question.
- (ii) Reference to 'ancillary' services did not seem to confuse candidates as responses to this question were generally well written.
- (d)(i) Most candidates were able to pick up on key points from the question's introduction to identify that theme parks are popular attractions, and were thus able to select an appropriate placing on the life cycle model.
- (ii) This question evoked a mixed response. There were those candidates who were able to describe the life cycle model in detail, but who did not appear to understand why it is used, and there were those candidates who understood the organisation's need to analyse market position. Many responses were descriptive rather than analytical.
- (e)(i) This caused some confusion. Many candidates had clearly not heard of the alternative term for variable pricing. They therefore attempted to explain what they understood variable pricing to be, but could not be accredited for this explanation.
- (ii) Many candidates scored well within this level of response question. A wide range of alternative pricing strategies were identified and explained. Better candidates were also able to apply each strategy to the example of a theme park to assess how effective it might be for the organisation in generating income and staving off competition.

Question 3

This question examined candidate's understanding of the place element of the marketing mix by focusing on specific channels of distribution used by travel and tourism providers, as well as the physical dimension to a destination's location. The second part of this question addressed the increased impact of advanced technology on the marketing efforts of tourism organisations.

- (a)(i) Most candidates were familiar with the term 'intermediary' and provided a satisfactory definition.
- (ii) Responses to this question varied. Better candidates were able to give three excellent examples of the duties performed by a travel intermediary. Weaker candidates tended only to provide confused explanations of the relationship of the intermediary with its customers.
- (b) There were many interesting interpretations of how this distribution channel diagram should look. The three marks were awarded for inclusion of the provider, intermediary and customer in the correct position. Many candidates produced very involved relationship diagrams, over and above the level required here.

- (c) This question was generally quite poorly answered, despite it being relatively straight forward by nature. Candidates generally listed factors of location as per the assessment objectives from the syllabus, rather than selecting those factors relevant to the tourist in selecting a destination. Thus any mention of available population to provide a labour market would limit candidates' marks to level 1 – the question clearly requires an examination of climate, physical relief, built attractions etc.
- (d)(i) Few candidates appeared to be familiar with the term 'virtual tour'. Many attempted to answer the question assuming that this was an example of an actual tour operated by a travel or tourism provider, rather than an effective use of advanced technology in marketing an intangible product.
- (ii) There were several outstanding responses to this question, attracting full marks. However a large number of candidates answered poorly, depending on their initial understanding of what a virtual tour actually is.

Question 4

This question used the internationally famous Disney brand as a focus and its newest acquisition in Hong Kong. It required candidates to explain factors that impact on price, to discuss the merits of Hong Kong's physical location for the business market and to examine the promotional methods used to draw in new customers.

- (a) It was disappointing to note that the majority of candidates did not understand the term characteristic – many were therefore unable to identify specific brand associations such as the Mickey Mouse logo or the enchanted castle silhouette.
- (b)(i) This and its follow up question in part (ii) were very poorly answered. Many candidates took the term tariff to mean tax rather than price. Therefore, only a very small number of candidates actually answered this question effectively to describe the relationship of supply/demand and price.
- (ii) Having continued to misinterpret the term tariff, a predominance of answers here focused on taxes rather than external influences on price. This was the weakest scoring subset question for this paper. Candidates should, therefore, be careful when reading questions in case of double meanings as in this instance.
- (c) Responses to this question varied greatly. Many candidates were able to identify Hong Kong's location as an important factor, and many implied that effective infrastructure would be beneficial. However, weaker candidates overlooked the need to suggest reasons for Hong Kong hosting international trade fairs, focusing only on the country's internal commercial prowess.
- (d)(i) This question caused no major difficulties – most candidates were able to list an appropriate range of promotional methods, although some weaker candidates listed several forms of advertising, thus restricting their access to the full range of available marks.
- (ii) This question should have provided candidates with an opportunity to pick up some easy marks. However, responses were generally disappointing. Some candidates clearly misread the question and having seen the word 'factors' assumed the question related to factors of location. There were several examples of a basic list of these, which obviously scored no marks. Many candidates listed one or two factors affecting consumer's choice of product but were unable to apply this to the question which focuses on factors affecting the promotion rather than the product itself.

Paper 5253
Travel Organisation

General comments

Candidates appeared to cope well with most questions but a surprising number did not perform well on **Question 1 (a)**. There was sufficient time allocated which enabled candidates of all abilities to attempt the majority of questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were no dramatic problems although **(a)** proved difficult for some candidates.

- (a)(i)** Some candidates only supplied half the required answer and so only scored 1 mark.
- (ii)** There were no problems with this part.
- (b)** Where candidates scored well they had attempted to deal with all three elements of the questions. Too many candidates, however, concentrated on one or two which prevented access to the higher level marks.
- (c)(i)** Most candidates performed well.
- (ii)** The majority of candidates were able to give appropriate reasons.
- (d)** Candidates found this question difficult and limited their responses to a discussion of travel providers generally rather than producing an explanation of how travel and tourism service providers contribute (work together) towards a special interest holiday.

Question 2

- (a)** There were no problems with this part.
- (b)(i)** The required response related to cost, convenience and availability. Some candidates misinterpreted the requirement and discussed different countries.
- (ii)** There were no problems with this part.
- (c)(i)** Good responses from the majority of candidates.
- (ii)** Where candidates scored full marks they had explained fully the term 'stopover' but the majority of candidates managed to score at least 1 mark.
- (iii)** Sound examples were given in most cases.
- (d)** There were no problems with this part.
- (e)** Higher level candidates accessed upper level marks because they had discussed both elements of the questions. Lower level marks were the result of one element e.g. advantages. It was also often the case that candidates discussed limited types of accommodation e.g. hotel/youth hostel. They would have benefited from a discussion of a range of accommodation.

Question 3

- (a)(i) Generally, there was a good understanding of the terms demonstrated.
- (ii) A significant number of candidates could not give the correct definition of the term 'transfers'.
- (iii) Most candidates coped well.
- (b) No significant problems here.
- (c) Candidates showed limited awareness of the benefits of cruising to flying, they concentrated more on the aspect of 'lovely views' than the relaxation factors, mobility factors etc.
- (d) Most candidates scored well on this question.

Question 4

- (a) Some misinterpretation was evident as candidates often responded with things like 'sightseeing' but the required response related to the family not being overtired, particularly the children i.e. limiting interruption of their usual routine of sleep.
- (b)(i) Candidates often missed a mark for not ticking the 'enquiry' box.
- (ii) The required answer was related to 'Buena Vista' no marks were awarded to candidates who selected the 'Pueblo Laguna Beach Club'.
- (iii) A significant number of candidates lost marks as they did not meet the requirements of the question, i.e. they gave general advice often relating to currency and legal requirements rather than health and safety for a family travelling with young children.
- (c) Most candidates scored at least 2 out of 3 marks for this question.