



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2000

PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING

General Comments

At each exam sitting there is a significant percentage of candidates who let valuable marks – those marks that lie between a pass and a fail grade – slip through their fingers because they do not apply the information that they have learned sufficiently well to the exam question they are addressing. In both the summer and autumn papers, there was a good deal of sloppiness in terms of setting out answers, such as failing to start answers to new questions on a new page, or failing to clearly mark questions so that the Examiner had to thumb through scripts trying to decipher which answers belonged to which questions.

Even if you think you have prepared less than well for an exam, it is important to make sure that on the day you do as well as you possibly can with the information you do have. Check all diagrams to ensure that they are properly labelled. Spend plenty of time marshalling your thoughts before you begin to answer the question. Don't just produce lists, develop your points fully and support your answer with examples. Leave space at the end of each question so that if you want to add another point, you have the room to do so. But most important of all, before you start, make sure you are preparing the answer to the question in the exam paper. Even while you are writing your answer, check the question once more to ensure that you are tailoring your answer to the context of the question. Some questions have a more practical orientation than others. The answers should refer to the specific example given in the question.

Question 1

A question on "What is marketing?" appears regularly on exam papers and should allow a student the opportunity to show how he or she has learned that marketing is about much more than the high visibility activities of selling and advertising. Marketing is a business philosophy which has the customer at the centre of all its activities. Marketing is also a set of activities which range from market research and environmental scanning through to creating a marketing mix which responds to identified needs, wants and demands. Advertising and selling are very important parts of this activity, but they are only a part of the whole marketing function.

Question 2

A question on the environmental forces affecting a shoe manufacturer doing business in Ireland and the UK required the student to look at the forces in both countries and to apply them to the industry set out in the question. Many students failed to mention the special challenges of working in two economies, particularly the currency difficulties. Some ignored the practical aspect of the question completely and gave a theoretical answer.

Question 3

The answers to this question showed clearly that the topic had not been sufficiently studied. There were few students who could name the main bases for segmenting consumer markets. A number of students confused segmentation with environmental forces! It was a straightforward question requiring students to discuss the value of the geographic, demographic, psychographic and behavioural variables. Those who could provide examples of each gained extra marks.

Question 4

A young couple buying an apartment will undergo extensive decision-making. They will apply a range of criteria to evaluate their options and will be subject to personal, psychological and social influences at different stages of the decision-making process. The exam candidate was expected to develop the principal stages of the consumer buying decision process for these types of buyers. There were many answers which simply trotted out the specific stages without due reference to the particular situation set out in the exam question.

Question 5

The product life cycle is a model. In your answer it is extremely important to describe the model fully. A diagram is not curves across a page, it is a properly labeled model, that clearly identifies the axes (sales/profits and time), PLC stages and profit and sales curves. You can then more clearly show how a marketing manager should plan to have products at different stages of the PLC so that the cash flows from products at the growth and maturity stage can fund new product development.

Question 6

To effectively answer a question on how the marketing of services differs from the marketing of products, it is important to first highlight how they differ. It then follows that marketers must use a wider marketing mix to overcome the challenges which services present. Candidates who discussed the extended services marketing mix, without due reference to why a different marketing approach was required, failed to answer the question fully.

Question 7

A practical question on developing a promotion mix for a café/bookshop in a medium-sized town proved the most popular. It is heartening to see how many students are able to apply their learning to a case study where resources and goals are both modest. However, additional marks could have been gained if more had been written on the strengths and weaknesses of each promotional tool with reference to this company.

Question 8

The functions of an intermediary are dealt with comprehensively in your textbook and include promotion, negotiation, risk taking, information gathering, matching of product offerings to buyer needs and physical distribution.