



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2002

BEHAVIOURAL ASPECTS OF MARKETING

The general impression is that those who sat the August paper were entirely unprepared and relying on a most superficial and patchy grasp of the course content.

Question 1

The overwhelming majority of candidates who attempted this question attempted less than all five required parts. Part (c) (Ratio Measurement) was particularly notable for its absence from answers and when attempted was for some reason generally confused with 'Nominal Measurement' or else answered by explaining what a 'ratio' is without any seeming understanding of what the terms means in the context required. Part (e) (Norm Referenced Tests) attracted scarcely any informed answers either. Those who did demonstrate some knowledge of this part generally offered minimalist answers going no further than to state that it involves comparisons of an individual's performance to those of others. Students should be encouraged not to limit their explanations to a single sentence or two when answering questions such as this. A hint at the required knowledge can never attract very high marks. A similar minimalist approach to answers was evident in response to parts (b) and (d). Part (a) generally produced a rather more extended explanation consequently gaining better marks on average.

The material for this question was covered entirely in Chapter 2 of the prescribed text on pages 39-42 [part (a)], 48-49 [part (b)], 54-55[part (c)], 56-57 [part (d)] and page 62 [part (e)].

Question 2

A high proportion of students demonstrated some grasp of the process of classical conditioning. Their answers however were typical of a failure that besets the learning of a great many students at this level – a failure to grasp the broad implications of specific examples. Again and again respondents to this part of the question recited Pavlov's experiment and either made no attempt to explain its relevance or attempted to do so with reference to advertising and marketing but failed dismally to do so. It can hardly be said to be useful for marketing students to be able to describe an experiment carried out on dogs by a Russian physiologist when they are completely unable to explain its relevance to marketing, advertising or indeed any context in which human learning takes place. Illustrative of the same learning limitations, respondents rarely showed any grasp of what are unconditioned or conditioned stimuli and responses other than in the context of Pavlov's salivation experiment. The general picture is one where students can recite a single specific example of classical conditioning but cannot explain what is the process of classical conditioning. As for part (ii) of the question many respondents simply did not know what the three points were about. From answers given it seemed that their grasp of operant conditioning extended no further than to be aware that it involves reinforcement of responses.

All material necessary for this question was covered in Chapter 4 of the text at pages 123-127 [part (i)], 132-133 [part (ii a)], 130-132 [part (ii b)] and 133-134 [part (ii c)].

Question 3

Most students who answered this question received poor marks because they offered so little detail in their explanations of the Milgram experiment. The following are the individual points which might be expected in an answer to this question:

- ostensible division of volunteer subjects into ‘teachers’/‘learners’ (not explained by any respondent)
- supposed purpose of experiment as explained to subjects (not covered by any respondent)
- role of ‘teacher’ and circumstances of ‘learner’ during experiment (only very generally described by any respondent)
- description of equipment (only a few gave any hint at what it was like)
- degree of pressure applied by supervising scientist (only a few even indicated the mildness of the pressure)
- degree of compliance (most indicated that the majority complied, some gave precise percentage)
- Examples of compliance figures from replications and their implications (only a few gave any information at all about replications despite the wording of the question)
- Overall implications of the experiment (most showed a grasp that a tendency to comply with pressure was indicated but many seemed confused as to how this related to the attitude-behaviour relationship)

Students must be encouraged to offer more detail when answering questions and not to assume that very brief and superficial answers will suffice.

All the material necessary to answer this question is covered in Chapter 7 of the text at pages 257-259.

Question 4

This was a very poorly answered question. A high proportion of respondents gained no marks at all. It is difficult to understand why students answered a question for which they clearly knew none of the requisite knowledge. Students need to be strongly advised to read the question asked and only attempt it if they know something relevant to the answer. Writing about other issues under the general topic heading gains no marks at all, e.g. descriptions of the theories of Sigmund Freud, C.J. Jung or Carl Rogers offers nothing in response to the questions asked.

While some answers did remain confined to the question in one sense, a key point seemed to have been frequently missed. This concerns the word ‘evidence.’ The question required a description of evidence that genes and environment play an interactive role in personality. It is no exaggeration to say that the following sentence, which I quote from a script, summarises the kind of evidence most frequently offered: “Genetic inheritance proves that we do in fact inherit genes from our families.” A few students did indicate that twin studies offer evidence of a genetic influence on personality. However, by and large little detail about this evidence was offered. As for evidence of environmental influence, only one respondent offered the most compelling piece of evidence, that if genes were the only influence, correlations on personality test scores between identical twins would be much higher (approaching 1.0) than they actually are . Most discussions on environmental influences went no further than bald assertion without any supporting evidence that this or that type of environment leads to certain personality traits. No respondent discussed the evidence underpinning the complex interaction between genes and environment in determining personality.

All the material necessary to answer this question is covered in Chapter 6 the text, pages 210-215

Question 5

As for those who failed in this question, the reasons encompass the whole gamut of possibilities. The poorest answers revealed an inability to identify accurately Maslow's need categories. Those who might be interpreted as identifying the correct categories were frequently confused as to what they involved. What Maslow meant by Social, Esteem and Self Actualisation needs seem particularly poorly grasped. A minor point perhaps, but still worthy of note: scarcely a single respondent could spell the word 'Physiological' when referring to the lowest category of needs in the hierarchy, many referring to them as 'psychological needs' or misspelled variants thereof.

As for applying the theory in the context of the question asked, those who displayed a reasonable grasp of the theory frequently adopted a very minimalist and unimaginative approach, showing for example little appreciation of the wide variety of ways in which people seek to purchase esteem through material possessions or how money may be used to gain opportunities for the satisfaction of social needs. The concept of Self Actualisation seemed poorly understood by the majority and few could offer any suggestions as to how one might spend money in pursuit of its realisation.

Material relevant to this question is covered in Chapter 8 of the text at pages 283-285. It was expected that students should be able to apply this knowledge to simple everyday contexts.

Question 6

The most striking issue about answers to this question was the extremely minimalist approach adopted by even those students who seemed to have a fairly clear idea about Tuckman and Jensen's stages of group development. Most answers consisted of no more than a page of writing, describing the stages of group development in vague general terms and showing a singular lack of imagination in identifying the kind of issues that might exemplify each of the stages in the suggested context. Poorer answers confused the four stages in various ways and failed to indicate a command of even their bare essentials. It strikes me that a great many students need extensive practise in expressing themselves in writing so as to make best use in an examination context of whatever their level of actual knowledge is. That said, I suspect that the level of practice necessary to make much difference is well beyond the scope of this or any other similar course and even further beyond the typical motivation level of students to complete in their own time.

The theoretical material for this question is covered in the text at pages 327-331. Again there was an expectation that students should be able to apply this material to a simple commonplace example.

Question 7

The majority of responses to this question demonstrated little or no grasp of anything to do with organisational culture. It was presumably chosen as a last resort. Those who did have some relevant knowledge, as with most other questions, did themselves no favours by failing to elaborate in any detail. When, for example, a student writes that 'organisational culture consists of the values and norms of an organisation,' it is necessary to go further so as to demonstrate clearly a grasp of what 'values' and 'norms' are about. Students should be encouraged to explain such terms and offer appropriate examples. Once again it is rarely possible to write a good answer to a question such as this inside a single page.

All material necessary to answer this question is covered in Chapter 10 of the text at pages 378-382.

Question 8

With a few notable exceptions answers to this question indicated no knowledge whatsoever of the relevant material in Chapter 11 of the textbook or from any other informed source. In the main such little as was written consisted of personal opinion and commonly held views and assumptions about the term 'individualism.' Writing about the advantages of individualism many listed the kind of superficial advantages that they assume accrue to one who acts in an individual way within an individualist society where such is the accepted culture, e.g. able to express one's individuality through fashion and dress sense and be respected for that. What, of course, was required was a consideration of how this kind of culture may itself produce benefits.

Not one answer made any reference to the work of Tonnies, Wirth or Hofstede or to that of Smith and Bond (Chapter 11, pages 398-401) when explaining 'Individualism.' Explanations of the term generally extended no further than that which one would expect from the average person in the street confronted suddenly with such a question.

Information sufficient to answer this question is covered in Chapter 11 of the text on pages 398-401 and 428-434.