



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2004

BEHAVIOURAL ASPECTS OF MARKETING

General Comments

As in past years the majority of those taking the August paper in this subject were very poorly prepared. Of the candidates who failed only one did so marginally, obtaining an E grade. A high proportion of candidates were unable to meaningfully attempt the requisite 5 questions. Of all those who sat the paper, 14 (37%) attempted less than five answers. A further 10 (26%) obtained no mark whatsoever for at least one of their attempts. Candidates need to appreciate that to pass, a highly selective approach to the course material is insufficient. On a more positive note the 9 candidates who did pass, were by no means all marginal cases. Of the 9, 2 obtained B grades, 2 obtained C grades and the remaining 5 D grades.

Question 1

This question was attempted by 18 candidates and passed by 8. In the answers a lot of confusion was evident between the concepts of validity and reliability and confusion also between test validity and research design validity. A high proportion of candidates also showed that they did not understand the differences between the various levels of measurement, confusing one with another in a variety of ways or simply having no idea at all what they mean. The material for this question is covered entirely in Chapter 2 of the required text, pages 52-55 for part (a) and pages 56/57, 58, 59 for part (b).

Question 2

This question produced the best performance of the 8 questions. It was attempted by 22 candidates with a pass rate of 73%. This may well, however, be due in part at least to the fact that, unlike other questions on the paper, the subject matter here has been a topic of general media discussion. Much of the relevant information lies within the domain of popular knowledge, at least at a superficial level. Many of the answers, though often sufficient to pass, did display a kind of superficial treatment of the subject indicating that a media 'sound-bite' insight informed the answer more than any close study of the relevant chapter in the textbook or any other scholarly text. The material for this question is covered in chapter 11 of the textbook, particularly pages 413 to 427.

Question 3

Of the 24 candidates who attempted this question, exactly half passed. While some responses displayed confusion between Belbin's team roles and Tuckman and Jensen's stages of group development, most candidates had some idea as to what Belbin's team roles are about. Descriptions of the team roles tended, however, to be minimalist in the extreme with confusion commonly evident between the various roles, notably between Monitor-Evaluator and Shaper and between Team Worker and Company Worker. The material for this question is to be found in Chapter 9 of the text on pages 338-343.

Question 4

Only five (27%) of the 24 candidates who answered this question obtained a pass.

The main problem evident throughout was answering the question as if it read – “Write down anything you know about perception.” Material of relevance (e.g. dichotic listening experiments, principles of perceptual organisation) when included tended to be without context or explanation as to how it related to the question. Other material of peripheral relevance, such as errors of social perception, tended also to be included without any attempt to explain how it might fit into the answer. Key material about perceptual selection such as its importance for everyday survival, its unconscious nature and the subjective and objective influences on selection were all too often omitted entirely. The same applied to perceptual organisation, where the concept of ‘categorisation’ integral to an understanding of the process was not in the main covered. Candidates need to learn to briefly summarise material relevant to an answer and avoid going into detail about issues that are either peripheral or if relevant are just one component of many. The material for this question is to be found in Chapter 3 of the text on pages 79-97.

Question 5

This question produced the poorest overall performance of all the eight. Of the 18 who attempted it, only 2 (11%) passed. Answers included descriptions of virtually every other motivation theory, sometimes a mixture of two or more. In short many candidates who answered the question displayed no idea of what Equity theory involves. Those who did have some grasp of the theory mainly failed to explain how an individual arrives at a perception of equity or inequity – the core point in the theory. The material for this question is to be found in Chapter 8 of the text on pages 299-303.

Question 6

Of the 18 candidates who attempted the question, 7 (39%) obtained a pass mark. As in question 5, a general pattern was evident of candidates writing down material without any attempt to relate it to the question asked. This involves an immediate rush to the particular without any addressing of the general to which particular pieces of information are relevant. In addressing the Behaviourist approach to learning, no candidate explained its general proposition: that learning is understood as the formation of associations between environmental stimuli and learner responses. The processes of Classical and Operant conditioning – relevant, of course, to the question – are mechanisms through which such associations are built up. Simply describing Pavlov’s dog salivation or Skinner’s rat lever pressing experiment, does not explain adequately what the behaviourist approach involves. Explanations of the Social Learning perspective would have benefited from a little more than simply stating that it involves learning through observing others. The characteristics of others that render them more likely to be imitated would, for example, have been useful. As for the cognitive approach there was a common tendency to describe the experiments of Tolman and Kohlberg as if thereby the approach was somehow explained. Clearly it is not. Those experiments simply illustrate that the behaviourist approach is insufficient to explain instances of learning even in animals and that a cognitive approach is required if we are to fully understand learning. What would have been expected here is how insights into the learning process have been achieved through the study of perception and memory. Scarcely any candidate made reference to this material. The material for this question is to be found in chapter 4, principally on pages 123-128 (behaviourist approach), pages 142-144 (social learning) and pages 144-149 (cognitive approach).

Question 7

Overall 19 candidates attempted this question, of whom 8 (42%) passed. A striking omission in all attempts with respect to the ‘Communicator’ was the conditions under which the communicator takes on more importance than the message itself in any attitude change attempt. Discussion on the two main characteristics of the communicator – attractiveness and credibility – tended to be addressed in a very limited and superficial way. As regards the ‘Medium,’ the relative advantages/disadvantages of transient versus permanent media - a key issue – was rarely

dealt with in answers. The distinction between personal and impersonal media was often omitted as well. Material necessary to answer this question is covered in chapter 7 of the text on pages 260-263 and 267-268.

Question 8

This was the least popular question with 15 attempts. It was the second poorest in terms of answer quality with only 2 (13%) passing. Most of those who attempted the question were unable to make a meaningful stab at explaining what the trait-factor approach to understanding personality involves. The terms trait and factor were used as if interchangeable and few showed any grasp of how factors are identified. Marks, such as were gained, were largely achieved through addressing the 'big five' factors. Candidates, however, showed a generally very weak ability to explain what each of the factors involved, often describing them in terms of one or, at most, two traits. A great deal of confusion was also evident as to which traits are manifest in which factors. The material for this question is to be found in Chapter 8 of the text on pages 201-209.