



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2004

PRINCIPLES OF MARKETING

General Comments

1. The question design was modified this year to indicate the marks available for each part of the question. This had a positive effect on the structure of the answers, with students clearly distributing the efforts in line with the marking structure.
2. There was a significant number of students not attempting the full number of questions, which did adversely affect their overall mark.
3. There is still a significant number of students either misreading questions or providing stock answers no matter what the specific question asks.
4. There is a noticeable increase in the evidence of students using / referring to the course text.
5. There is still a tendency for students to provide superficial description of concepts, topics etc with little attempt to offer discussion or comment.

Question 1

Question one was attempted by 77% of the cohort; the top mark achieved was 75% and the average mark was 52%. Question one sought to test the student's knowledge and understanding of a basic marketing concept, which has been a mainstay of marketing theory for many years. The question required students to define the PLC, identify and describe the various stages and suggest how marketing managers may use the concept. Marks were also available for relevant examples used in the answer. In contrast to previous years the question identified the marks available to students for the different parts of the answer.

In general, the question was answered reasonably well, with most students aware of the concept and able to demonstrate an adequate degree of knowledge. There was good evidence of students having covered the concept as outlined in the course text as well as the use of examples at appropriate stages of the PLC. An area of weakness was students' relative inability to move beyond a descriptive answer and show the relevance of the PLC to marketing strategy. The majority of answers can still be classified as superficially descriptive.

Question 2

Question two was attempted by 26% of the cohort; the top mark achieved was 79% and the average mark was 50%. Question two was the least popular of the eight questions, even though it achieved relatively high marks for those students who attempted it. The question sought to

examine the student's knowledge of the communications elements of the marketing programme, and how these elements are used in an integrated way to achieve the overall marketing objectives. Marks were available for the definition of IMC, the description of Marketing Communication Components (Advertising, Sales Promotion, PR, Personal Selling, Direct Marketing, Billboards etc) and suggest how a political party might use IMC to communicate with the public.

Many students did not define IMC, but were able to identify and describe in good detail many of the IMC components. This may suggest the students are familiar with the various communications mix elements but are less familiar with the concept of integrating communication components into a coherent IMC programme. The application element of the question further reinforces this view, with only a few students providing a creditable attempt at an IMC programme for a political party.

Question 3

Question three was attempted by 51% of the cohort; the top mark achieved was 64% and the average mark was 34%. Pricing continues to be a topic that seems to present difficulties for students. The question was based directly on the introduction elements to pricing covered in the course text. A significant proportion of the answers showed no familiarity with the text and depended on a general knowledge of social, cultural and economic influences.

Marks were available for identifying and describing the external factors which affect pricing decisions. (The market and demand, consumer perceptions of price and value, competitors' costs, prices and offers, economic conditions, government policy, and social concerns). As well as examples to illustrate your answer. A small proportion of those attempting the question did demonstrate knowledge of the course text and achieved relatively high marks. As in other questions the use of appropriate examples was neglected in many answers.

Question 4

Question four was attempted by 78% of the cohort; the top mark achieved was 75% and the average mark was 47%. This was a very basic question that sought to evaluate students' knowledge and understanding of core marketing management philosophies. Marks were available for the definition of marketing and the identification and description of the five marketing management philosophies (the production concept, the product concept, the selling concept, the marketing concept, the societal marketing concept) as well as examples to illustrate the answer.

Most students had little difficulty in offering an adequate definition of marketing and identifying most of the accepted philosophies. The difficulty, however, still appears in providing anything more than a superficial description of each concept without comment on their connection, evolution or relevance in the modern business environment. A reasonable assumption from the evidence of the answers provided is that students do not adequately understand the various marketing management philosophies and are content to view them in a purely historical context with little relevance for current business activity.

Question 5

Question five was attempted by 78% of the cohort; the top mark achieved was 70% and the average mark was 40%. Question five was the most popular question among students. However a significant proportion of those who attempted the question failed to address the specific question asked. Many students contented themselves with a description of market segmentation, without addressing the requirements for effective segmentation. Market segmentation is another fundamental concept which is at the core of marketing theory and activity and the question sought to assess the student's knowledge and understanding of a specific element of this body of knowledge.

Marks were available for the definition of 'Market Segmentation', and the identification and description of the requirements for effective segmentation. (Measurable, Accessible, Substantial, Differentiable, Actionable) as well as a worked example of segmentation in the Car market. The majority of students have an adequate understanding of the concept of segmentation and scored well in the definition and description elements of the question. Students had more difficulty however in identifying and describing the requirements for effective segmentation and how these may relate to the choice of various target segments within the car market. Overall students had a good general knowledge of the market segmentation concept, with a smaller cohort of students demonstrating a deeper knowledge of the specific question asked.

Question 6

Question six was attempted by 73 students or 61% of the cohort; the top mark achieved was 80% and the average mark was 49%. This question sought to evaluate the students' knowledge and understanding of the impact of a relatively new technology on marketing practice. The question provided the student with the opportunity to bring in knowledge from outside the context of their course and/or text.

The marks in this question were available for identifying and evaluating of how the Internet can be used by a marketing organisation in areas such as: developing relationships with customers, developing relationships with suppliers, developing relationships with channel members, distributing digital services, providing customer support and market research. Marks were also available for a description of an Internet site with which the student was familiar, and for suggesting how the organisation uses the site to create a relationship with the customer.

In general the question was well answered, with many students showing a clear understanding of the current and potential use of the ICT technologies in business and marketing activity. Most students who attempted the question scored well in the application element, showing clear understanding of the integrated way in which various organisations are using the technology as an integral part of their operations.

Question 7

Question seven was attempted by 36% of the cohort; the top mark achieved was 65% and the average mark was 45%. This proved a difficult question for students with only 36% of students attempting it. There was evidence of confusion over the term MIS and the identification of three main components of a system. In the main the answers consisted of descriptions of various marketing research tools, techniques and sources, with only a small proportion of students attempting to show the degree of integration typified within an organised MIS system.

There was clear evidence of students having covered the topic, but in common with other questions there was a lack of depth in many of the answers provided. Marks were available for

the definition of the a 'Marketing Information System', and the identification and description of the components of a typical MIS (market research, market intelligence, internal records/databases, information analysis) and how the MIS is used by a marketing organization, as well as examples to illustrate the answer.

Question 8

Question eight was attempted by 68% of the cohort; the top mark achieved was 70% and the average mark was 43%. This was a disappointing question in terms of the quality of the answers provided. The theory of consumer behaviour is central to the principles of marketing module as well as being covered in a separate module. The question posed allowed students a wide variety of factors to discuss and describe. In general, answers were very brief, superficial and reflected a general knowledge rather than a specific knowledge of the topic. There was little evidence of students using information or knowledge from the behavioural module on the course. Marks were available for the identification and description of the factors which influence consumer behaviour (culture, social influences, personal influences, psychological influences, buyer influences) as well as the use of examples to illustrate the answer.