



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2000

STAGE 2 PROJECT

This project required students to investigate the marketing developments affecting a particular retail sector. A wide variety of fields were analysed including hardware, electrical appliance, cosmetics, leisurewear, banking, mobile phone, clothing and footwear retailing, as well as pharmacies and petrol stations. However the most popular retail sector proved to be grocery retailing which represented some fifty percent of all the projects submitted. This may have been due to the wealth of readily available information or to candidates' personal interest or because of the students' employment situation. In a small number of cases the student decided to study a very specific type of retailing such as 'Internet Retailing' or retailing in a particular geographical location. A few students failed to meet the requirements of the project brief by focusing on a consumer product rather than the retailing of the product.

The first part of the project required an analysis of the current environmental trends affecting one retail sector. A number of projects did not provide an introduction to this section to lead the reader into the analysis. Most submissions provided a comprehensive overview of the various dimensions of the marketing environment of their respective retail sectors, with many referencing hard evidence to support their analyses. Common areas highlighted were economic trends, regulatory issues, lifestyle and demographic changes, recycling, technological developments, in addition to more specific environmental concerns such as animal testing and genetically modified foods. Weaker projects failed to provide supporting information to strengthen their assessments, or only gave a very general overview of environmental issues without investigating the detail of the retail sector.

The second part of the project required students to undertake some primary research to investigate consumers' responses to the retail developments identified. In many of the poorer submissions little emphasis was placed on this part of the report with a few failing to provide evidence of any primary research. Some students failed to integrate this part of the report with their earlier investigations. A wide variety of field marketing research techniques were employed. Most students enlisted some type of questionnaire which they applied through personal interview, telephone, mail and even email. Others used focus groups, and a number used observation techniques to gather information. A few

students used a selection of information gathering tools, for example, using focus groups to get a feel for the area and to provide a basis for questionnaire development. Many candidates failed to outline the objectives of any survey that was undertaken and so it was difficult to assess the quality of the study. Some students decided to focus their study on particular marketing developments rather than attempting to deal with a wide variety of quite diverse areas. In a number of quality projects the researcher clearly indicated their objectives, provided a clear specification of the population under study, and attempted to select a representative sample. For many students the analysis of the survey results was a very superficial headcount of responses with little reference back to the study's objectives. In a number of instances, reports included unnecessary material explaining marketing research techniques and terminology. However, this is not to suggest that the rationale behind various research decisions in the planning of the study should not be explained.

The third part of the project required students to speculate on future developments in the retail sector based on their analysis. Many reports gave considerable attention to this part of the exercise, taking each of the trends identified and surmising on their consequences for the future. In a few cases the conclusions drawn were not related to the earlier investigation.

Finally, with regard to the presentation and structure of the reports, in the better submissions, spelling and grammar were correct. A detailed bibliography was provided which identified the sources employed in the study. Where material was directly taken from a source, this was clearly referenced in the report and content of the report was presented in a logical and well-structured manner.