



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2007

STAGE 2 PROJECT

General Comments

The project brief required the student to examine the changing face of the Irish drinks industry. Particular emphasis was put on the effects of environmental factors on consumption patterns and the long-term implications, particularly for the pub trade. The student was then requested to profile a specific Irish drinks company, its objectives, products and competitors. The latter part of the project required the utilisation of appropriate primary research techniques to further investigate consumer behaviour in order to gauge the effectiveness of the company's marketing efforts in the face of a rapidly changing marketing environment.

The overall standard of submissions was very good and a number of projects were exceptional. The primary purpose of the Examiner's Report is to provide feedback to students. A critical focus is therefore intended to highlight areas that may be improved by students in later projects.

On this and on previous occasions, the examiner has emphasised that the Stage 2 Project is primarily a marketing report - irrespective of the subject being investigated. The project is an opportunity for students to display their ability to utilise and adapt the marketing concepts and strategies acquired through their studies. Students are expected to be familiar with such concepts as PEST, SWOT, segmentation, product lifecycles and portfolios that should be the staple diet of aspiring marketing graduates. It may seem obvious but where concepts and terminology are applicable- use them. These concepts provide professional credence as well as a solid framework to any marketing report. Better students used every opportunity to incorporate and apply models such as Porters five forces and adopter categories to elucidate their arguments. Interspersing graphs and models throughout the main text not only underpinned the written point being made but also added to the presentation

Business reports require an impartial objective style and should therefore be written in the third person. As in previous years, some students fell into the trap of not extricating their personal feelings and opinions-thus losing objectivity, which is the hallmark of analysis. Sermons on the evils of alcohol or bitter tirades on the price of the pint for poor students cut no sway with the examiner- save they specifically addressed the marketing issue at hand.

There was a distinct lack of marketing terminology or concepts in many of the reports with a level of bland analysis that suggested that much of the information had been weaned from a

coffee table publication. A number of submissions were little more than an amalgam of tracts taken from the internet.

The level of understanding of market research methodologies was higher than last year. Greater marks were allocated to those students who attempted to justify their choice research methodology. Stronger candidates emphasised the linkage between secondary information, the use of primary research to fill the information gaps and the conclusions and recommendations. In many cases however, the information weaned in market research was often not followed through into recommendations. Few candidates cross-tabulated the data gathered and in many instances graphs were used infrequently and inappropriately. Where graphs and diagrams were inserted, marks were added accordingly. Generally, candidates based their recommendations on marketing communications, ignoring the opportunities of manipulating the other parts of the marketing mix.

The examiner wishes to see evidence of applied marketing principles. At minimum, projects should include a profile of a company from a marketing perspective, its product portfolio, an applied environmental analysis from which opportunities and threats can be drawn and an analysis of the marketing concepts available to the company. Students should present their reasons for using a specific primary research methodology and research findings should be backed up with appropriate use of graphs and tables.

The examiner is your customer- treat him as one and gives him what he wants!