



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2001

BUYER BEHAVIOUR

General Comments

The performance in this examination was poor, with just under half of the candidates achieving a pass grade. Just one in every eight of those who passed achieved a higher grade; only one candidate attained a B grade.

Many candidates cannot have bothered to prepare seriously for the examination, nor did they bother to present their material in a careful or clear manner. Lest there be any confusion, in terms of progressing from one stage to another of the Institute's graduateship programme, the Autumn examinations carry the exact same weight as those held in Summer; therefore the same high standard is required and the examination scripts are assessed in the same rigorous manner.

Nearly one in every five failed to attempt five questions. Many candidates only wrote a few lines as an attempt on individual questions and these are not included in these figures. How can candidates expect to achieve pass grades when they produce so little evidence of their work?

It is a waste of time to reproduce the question at the start of the "answer". Time is limited enough and it is best used focusing on the task at hand.

As regards legibility, it must be stressed again that it is the candidate's responsibility to provide material that is capable of being marked with reasonable facility. The clear and appropriate use of headings and sub-headings improves the presentational appearance of answers, and attracts higher marks.

Questions should be answered in a full and comprehensive manner that attempts to examine the complexity of the subject matter and to elucidate its applications to marketing decision making.

Many candidates wrote as if the briefest mention of the shortest summary of the barest details of the topic in question would suffice. It does not. Candidates are required to deal with questions in a professional manner which exhibits a full and detailed grasp of the subject.

The subject is inherently concerned with marketing decision making; all answers should therefore be imbued with a marketing orientation. Those candidates who show the ability to apply what they learn in other marketing classes to the subject matter of this paper, are developing the correct approach to the subject.

While cross-fertilisation with other subjects is encouraged, there is no point in hoping that what is (poorly) learned in another subject will suffice to answer questions in this subject. The buyer behaviour syllabus and buyer behaviour text must be studied, in depth.

In some cases, topics that were not directly asked on the paper were still produced, frequently without any "tailoring", as answers to totally different questions. Where prepared material is completely at variance with a question's main thrust, it is a waste of time to write it all down; more marks could be gained by making a genuine attempt at the question as posed, or by attempting a different question.

Where the prepared answers were apposite they were frequently not adequately directed to the precise point at issue. This approach can fortuitously lead to a pass result but it cannot generate better grades. To generate better grades, a more evaluative approach is required that does not solely rely on lists and categories.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

Just over half of those who attempted Question One attained a pass mark. It is sad that so few had a good grasp of what is a central element of the text-book. Some tried vague variations on the theme, but relatively few had clear and detailed knowledge, which is required at this stage. Among those who knew a little about the topic, too much attention was given to section (a) – the descriptive element of the question - to the detriment of sections (b) and (c). These latter sections test a candidate's ability to apply and evaluate concepts and are among the factors that differentiate the level of attainment required at diploma level from that required at certificate level. The question must be read carefully and treated seriously. The key lies in careful preparation.

Question 2

The pass rate for Question Two was just one-in every ten of those who attempted it, the worst such performance in this examination. The few who passed were able to give the basic approaches to explaining satisfaction and dis-satisfaction as outlined in the text-book. Vague generalities about satisfaction and its "importance" are not at all what is required in this question. Many who failed the question did not apparently appreciate that this is a technical subject which requires accurate and detailed work. The quotation referred to Marketing News which should be read carefully by those who wish to make their way in the marketing profession. However, it was possible to answer this question without remembering the detail of the article referred to. A careful reading of the quotation would indicate enough to a knowledgeable candidate to allow a reasonable answer, if enough were known about satisfaction and dis-satisfaction from the text-book

Question 3

Just over half the candidates attempted Question Three. Nearly four in every five passed, the best such performance in this examination. Semiotics is a serious topic and has considerable interest and relevance for marketers. Where the text is a little limited (and it is limited on this topic) a serious candidate for this qualification should read outside the text to deepen his or her knowledge. Candidates had a good grasp of the topic and some interesting examples of Irish campaigns were provided. Few enough, however, focussed directly on brand positioning which was explicitly mentioned in the question. It is almost unimaginable that candidates for this examination would not be able to comment on two current or recent Irish marketing campaigns but there were such.

Question 4

Just under two-thirds of candidates attempted Question Four. Over half of those passed it. Section (a) of this question was absolutely straight-forward and should be very easy at this

level. But it wasn't for many, among them the candidate who wrote about "Sigmund fried". Please. Very few attempted any definition of personality, which is a basic requirement in a question like this. On Section (b), some showed a clear understanding of the topic and how to answer the question based on a solid knowledge of the text. Most could not use whatever knowledge they had in the required applied manner.

Question 5

Fifty-seven per-cent of the candidates attempted Question Five and nearly three in every four of those attained a pass grade. Most of those who knew how to tackle this question were able to do so at a reasonably high level. Many candidates who were able to give an explanation, however brief, of what is meant by the decision-making path to attitude change, failed to make any mention of other available approaches as requested. This failure may arise from lack of knowledge or from lack of attention to the question as it is posed. There were also quite good approaches to the application element of the question in section (b), but nobody attained an A grade.

Question 6

Seventy-two per-cent of candidates attempted Question 6. Hopes were badly mis-placed. Less than one-in five passed. It was distressing to find that the vast majority were not able to mention any Irish social class categories or measures even in the most general fashion. So they had no idea whether or not social class was useful for segmentation purposes.

Question 7

Seventy-two per-cent of candidates attempted Question 7. Just over four out of every ten of them passed. There were some As. The topic of group influences is straight out of the text-book and there is no excuse for not having a passable knowledge of it. The question was well dealt with by those who bothered to acquaint themselves with the text. Those who didn't so bother floundered about to no avail.

Question 8

Seventy-two per-cent of candidates attempted Question 8. Less than two in every five of them attained a pass mark. The topic of involvement is quite well covered in the text book. Unfortunately, too many of the answers which were written demonstrate quite clearly that "not many people know this".