



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2001

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

General Comments

Overall the lack of higher grades in this subject is very disappointing. However there are some excellent grades for individual questions: some candidates know two or three areas very well and then perform poorly on the remaining sections of the course. It is encouraging to see students' understanding of the entwined relationship between marketing and advertising and consumer behaviour. Effective integrated marketing communications focus on enhancing brand equity, therefore knowledge of managing the brand concept is critical to this subject. Students need to apply their knowledge of marketing to marketing communications.

Question 1

This question gave candidates the opportunity to overview the nature of marketing communications and discuss its importance in modern marketing. There were two essential requirements in examining this question. The first sought an integration approach to all marketing communication elements rather than treating them as separate and independent. The second looked for a focus on managing the brand concept as part of the discussion. Few candidates incorporated integrative and brand equity issues into their discussions. A variety of approaches used in answering this question, such as concentrating only on advertising and communication, showed complete lack of understanding of the role of marketing communications. Another weak approach was definitional in nature: attention was given to corporate strategy, marketing strategy and marketing communications with no discussion of linkage and role.

Question 2

Students had a choice in answering this question to either examine the Consumer Processing Model or Hedonic Experiential Model. It is well recognised that consumer behaviour is much too complex to be captured by either model, and that much information processing falls somewhere between the two. Where the question was answered well, focus was on the Consumer Processing Model. There were some very good answers demonstrating full knowledge of the Consumer Processing Model. Answers which only looked at the elements in the communication process model, and failed to apply it to process and responding to an internet marketing communications campaign, scored poorly. Very weak answers simply described how they used a site without any reference to theory. The most frequently quoted site was Pigsback.Com.

Question 3

This was the least and best answered question on the paper. Candidates fully discussed Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration likelihood model. They also showed, using practical examples, how it helps marketing managers in developing persuasive communication. Answers generally commenced with a discussion on the extent to which a person engages in elaboration and how this depends on the person's motivation, ability and opportunity to process persuasive communication.

Candidates in most cases went on to discuss both the central and peripheral route to persuasion giving appropriate examples in each case.

Question 4

Most answered this question outlining the broad frame of an advertising strategy including five areas, objectives, budget, media message and implementation to different depths of discussion. Some gave a brief definition of each of the elements of strategy while others showed how the element guides the advertising strategy. For some reason a number of candidates decided to use the creative brief as the base for discussion of advertising strategy. This approach worked when candidates focused on contribution of the strategy to the brief. There were some very weak answers which gave detailed descriptions of the Budweiser ad.

Question 5

While some answers showed understanding of elements of the brief, discussion of creativity as an aspect to the outcome of a brief was disappointing. It was hoped that answers would highlight creativity either by way of examples or theory. Generally this did not happen. Instead the creative brief was given and outlined. Weaker answers to this question examined creative categories such as generic strategy and generally failed to uncover the creative process underlying the formulation of the advertising strategy.

Question 6

One of the great difficulties in marketing communications is that it is hard to determine precisely how effective marketing communications has been or will be in the future. The dilemma that results is that if too little money is spent sales volume will not achieve its potential, and if too much is spent there is a reduction in profits. While it was expected that answers would include analysis of budget methods, it was hoped they would also include a discussion of budgeting in theory and budgeting and competitive interference. Generally this did not happen and responses concentrated on methods. Some candidates chose to answer this question by discussing frequency levels in the media. Where this approach was taken in the context of budgeting it worked very well. However, some answers only looked at frequency in terms of media. This was not appropriate.

Question 7

The majority of answers to this question focused on the functions of an advertising agency. It was expected that there would be a good discussion of the need for an integrated marketing communications campaign, and that the role and function of an agency/agencies was essential in ensuring integration. Very few answers dealt with this issue, and when they did they gave good examples of integrated campaigns. Some even knew if one or several agencies were used in the development of the campaign. Weaker answers only looked at advertising and the structure of the advertising agency instead of the role and function.

Question 8

There were some really good answers to the question with a few students scoring top marks. These answers concentrated on the role of sales promotion in influencing the trade and the consumer. They clearly outlined the objective and tactics of both sales promotion categories and individual techniques, and showed when and how they are used. Weaker answers only outlined methods without concentrating on how they influence the target market. Very weak answers simply looked at reasons for growth of sales promotion which was not relevant to the question asked.