



MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

General Comments

The overall comment in relation to this years examination is that there is no consistency from candidates in answering questions. Questions three, seven and eight were answered very well with 70%, 83% and 94% of candidates respectively receiving a pass grade or higher on each of these questions. However only 38% and 39% achieved a pass or higher on questions four and six respectively. Candidates had the ability to score well on question three which was very theoretical and yet also failed to answer one of the more straightforward questions on the internet as an advertising medium. It is advised that candidates ground their experience in a theoretical framework for all areas of the course.

Question 1

Some excellent answers were given to this question; candidates had clearly read the core text and incorporated their own examples. Various models were given to support a decision framework to enhance brand equity. The better answers examined both conceptual and strategic decisions including positioning, targeting, setting objectives and budgeting and also tactical decisions which focused on implementation. Tactical decisions broadly looked at the mix of marketing communication elements and aspects of media and creative decisions. Weak answers concentrated on life cycle model or a general communications model; neither was appropriate.

Question 2

The general approach taken to answering this question was to examine the current marketing communications campaign for Levi's and to propose improvements. Some candidates focused their attention on market segmentation and media audience selection and also on creative positioning of the product. It was a reasonably well answered question with 45% passing or achieving higher grades. This question provides candidates with the opportunity to display their ability to integrate various aspects of not just marketing communications but also of knowledge gained through marketing and consumer behaviour. Some candidates approached this question by elaborating on the creative brief with particular emphasis on implementing the creative message strategy, including a discussion of a positioning statement and also defining the target market.

Question 3

There were some very good answers to this question dealing with the nature of persuasion in relation to the ELM model. Some candidates outlined the factors underlying persuasion, for example, message arguments, peripheral cues, receiver involvement and then fully explained how these variables are integrated in the ELM model through both the central and peripheral route of persuasion. Other answers involved brief definitions of elements of both routes and used appropriate examples of campaigns using both persuasion routes. A few candidates chose to concentrate on the tools of persuasion such as reciprocation, social proof etc. without any reference to the ELM. These tools tell us about styles of strategies for campaigns. This was an incorrect approach to the question asked and they should have been applied to the ELM.

Question 4

Few answered this well. Most gave a definitional approach and resorted to discussing methods of setting budgets with no application to share of market or share of voice. In a lot of cases examples were given but the discussion of brands with highest market share and their resultant advertising share spend was often incorrect. There was weak knowledge of proposed strategies of expenditure in relation to objective setting, competitive activity and budget availability. A few excellent examples were given in relation to the share of voice effect on advertising spending.

Question 5

Generally speaking candidates took the correct approach to answering this question on when and how to use creative strategies. For the majority the question was well answered with 48% receiving a grade D or higher. Some candidates answered the question from a media perspective which was totally incorrect. Good answers included descriptions of the specific strategy and when and how to use each. It was expected that creative strategies discussed would include: unique selling proposition, brand image, resonance, emotional, generic and pre-emptive. Candidates gave good examples of how advertisers use these strategies and the factors influencing the choice of creative strategy. There could have been further discussion on the overlap of these strategies in many campaigns and how advertisers combine functional and emotional benefits in their choice of strategy.

Question 6

This was the most popular and the most poorly answered question on the paper. Many candidates failed to show any understanding of the internet as an advertising medium. These candidates either gave the advantages and disadvantages of TV, Press, Magazines and Radio with brief mention of the internet. The majority of the information presented in this type of answer was totally irrelevant. Other weaker answers talked about a website with no reference to the question asked. There were some good answers which focused on comparison of the internet, with traditional media. These answers focused on individuality and interactivity, strengths of the internet and also discussed a variety of internet advertisements and in addition compared the medium for measurability.

Question 7

Answers to this question showed good knowledge of the major problems of trade allowances with particular reference to the grocery sector in Ireland. Candidates gave excellent analysis of problems that arose in relation to retail practice. There were some very good answers which outlined how to rectify these problems. The main methods described were efficient consumer response, category management and everyday low pricing. Weaker answers to this question concentrated on describing forms of trade allowances and generally did not adequately address the problems that arose from the method or how to rectify the problem.

Question 8

Generally answers to this question were good on factors to consider in selecting of sponsorship events. Answers tended to be given in a series of questions e.g. Is the event consistent with brand image? Will it benefit the image? This approach could have been enhanced by elaboration and evaluation of the questions given. There was huge improvement in the answer to this question in comparison to previous years where there was a tendency to talk only about a particular sponsorship event. This year there was a much better mix of theory with practice particularly in relation to Bank of Ireland's sponsorship of the Special Olympics and Guinness of the Hurling Championship. There could have been more discussion on ambush marketing and customised sponsorship events.