



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2005

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

General Comments

In general, students demonstrated an adequate knowledge of the marketing communications syllabus. One area where the students must be complimented relates to the provision of relevant and current examples of marketing communications practice. There are two points in particular to which the examiner would like to draw attention. Firstly, students should ensure that they read each question carefully. It was noted in some cases that students appeared to focus on a word or term in a question and concentrate their answer accordingly. Secondly, where examples are given, they must be used to compliment the theoretical underpinnings of the answer, and not as a substitute for that theory.

Question 1

This applied question required students to demonstrate their understanding of integrated marketing communications (IMC) by way of its application in the marketplace. Good answers were structured around the basis of IMC. For example, one approach that was taken by students was to consider the nature of IMC, e.g. seeking to affect behaviour using all forms of contact, achieving synergy, and building relationships, and students then considered how their chosen organisation worked to achieve each of these elements.

Question 2

This question required students to address two aspects – the importance of marketing communications objectives and the characteristics of same. Therefore, strong answers referred to the importance of objectives in terms of issues such as giving a foundation to marketing communications decision-making, and guiding the setting of budgets. Additionally, objectives would be characterised in terms of but not limited to; being specific, measurable, achievable, and linked to corporate and marketing objectives. It was noted that some students concentrated their answers solely on examples of marketing communications objectives. Such examples were relevant if used to supplement the discussion on the importance/characteristics of objectives.

Question 3

This question required the student to discuss the nature of ambush marketing as a controversial practice within sponsorship. Students should have demonstrated their understanding of the practice whereby ambush marketers seek to deflect attention away from the official/main sponsor. The ethical implications of such a practice and the potential for consumer confusion were also relevant. Ambush strategies include sponsoring media coverage of an event, purchasing the sponsorship

rights to individual personalities within an event, and using advertising that coincides with the sponsored activity. Good answers also gave examples to illustrate ambushing strategies. Weak answers focused on the word ‘sponsorship’ in this question and a number of students based their answer around the nature and/or types of sponsorship.

Question 4

This question encouraged students to demonstrate their knowledge of advertising regulation in Ireland and answers could have focused on the nature of voluntary regulation or statutory regulation. Most of the students attempting this question focused on the former, and more specifically referred to the Code of Advertising Standards for Ireland. A small number of students referred to the Children’s Advertising Code which came into force in Ireland in 2005. The question also required students to address whether there is sufficient regulation of advertising in Ireland. Good answers used examples such as the case studies to be found on the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland’s (ASAI) website, to illustrate the arguments being made.

Question 5

This question required students to focus on the criteria which would influence the inter-media decision in an applied context. Strong answers addressed criteria such as the target audience, budget, the technical abilities of a given medium, creative preference, client preference and the nature of the product, whilst considering such factors in the given context. Weaker answers tended to focus entirely on the media that would be suited to targeting a student audience.

Question 6

This question required students to be familiar with the different types of customers in terms of their responses to sales promotions. These customer groupings include loyalists, switchers, stockpiling loyalists and exceptionist loyalists. Students then had to consider the profitability of using a sales promotion in the case of each group. For example, a sale promotion used to target stockpiling loyalists would be unprofitable. Again, some students focused on the term ‘sales promotion’ and addressed the different types of promotions, which was not sought by the question.

Question 7

There are broadly three stages in the advertising agency-client relationship – selection, maintenance of the relationship, and dissolution of the relationship. This question required students to address the selection stage and strong answers addressed criteria such as the type of agency suited to the client’s requirements, and the range of services offered by the agency. Other criteria include the agency’s existing clients and agency statistics such as expenditure, personnel and ownership.

Question 8

This question referred to the Consumer Processing Model (CPM) and the Hedonic, Experiential Model (HEM). Students were required to address the nature of each model which seeks to explain how consumers receive and use marketing communications stimuli to help them arrive at purchasing decisions. Strong answers also recognised that these two models represent two extremes. In reality, consumer behaviour is largely a mixture of both the rational and the irrational.