



## EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2007

### MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

#### General Comments

In general, students demonstrated an understanding of the marketing communications syllabus, and provided examples of marketing communications practice. However, as recommended in previous reports, the examiner would emphasise that at Diploma level, students would be expected to offer at least three pages of discussion per answer. Answers of one, and one and a half pages, are insufficient at this level.

#### Question 1

This broad question required students to demonstrate their understanding of brand equity and the role of marketing communications in building and developing same. Marketers employ marketing communications elements such as advertising to actively promote features or benefits of a given brand. An underlying premise is the need to build positive, strong and sometimes, unique associations with the brand. Students could have further addressed the dimensions of brand awareness and brand image. In many cases, customers are aspiring to a certain image or lifestyle in purchasing a certain brand, and marketing communications can be used to promote such imagery.

#### Question 2

This question required students to demonstrate their understanding of the Consumer Processing Model (CPM) which outlines how consumers process marketing communications messages. Its emphasis is on rational, systematic and reasoned behaviour, and the model can be associated with high involvement purchasing behaviour, for example, the purchase of property and cars. However, the model describes an extreme of consumer behaviour whereas in reality, consumer behaviour will tend to fall between the CPM perspective and the other extreme of the continuum, the Hedonic Experiential Model. Answers should also have referred to the constituent stages of the CPM such as exposure, attention and so on.

#### Question 3

This broad question required students to demonstrate their understanding of the importance of measuring advertising message effectiveness, and also the difficulties in doing so. Answers should have recognised the growing demand for accountability with regard to advertising-spend, and also, the pressing requirement to assess the extent to which advertising messages are effectively and efficiently transmitted to, and received by, target audiences. The difficulties in advertising message measurement include expense, and the reality that whilst there are many techniques for measurement, no single technique is appropriate on all occasions.

**Question 4**

This question required students to critically examine the use of comparative advertising whereby advertisers may directly or indirectly compare their product offering(s) against those of the competition. Such advertising may lend itself to enhanced recall of a brand name and message arguments. It can lend itself to brands that offer a distinct advantage over the competition. On the other hand, it may be regarded as less credible than non-comparative advertising. It may also be received negatively by customers who prefer the comparison brand. Examples of comparison advertising prevail in the Irish grocery and airline markets.

**Question 5**

This applied question required students to consider the decisions involved when setting the media objectives for a campaign targeting 18-25 year old women. Answers should have focused on considerations such as the proportion of the target audience to be reached with the advertising message during a given period, the number of times that the target audience is exposed to the media vehicles carrying this message, and cost considerations.

**Question 6**

This question required students to examine the role and use of the database in a supermarket context. Supermarkets may seek to gather information such as customer demographics, value and frequency of custom, price sensitivity, products purchased and responsiveness to special offers. Such information can be recorded on a database which can be used to better equip the company to recognise best prospects for its product offerings, to tailor different messages and offers to different customers, and to create long-term relationships with customers.

**Question 7**

This question required students to identify the nature of reactive marketing public relations (MPR), referring to the employment of public relations in response to outside influences such as competitor activities and changes in consumer attitudes. Reactive MPR tends to be most associated with influences and actions that have negative consequences for the company such as product defects and failures. Principles to be followed include the need for a swift organisational response and the requirement for senior management involvement. Another consideration is the dissemination of information and the requirement to recognise the power of the Internet, in terms of the proliferation of consumer concerns and the difficulties that this poses for the organisation in managing negative publicity.

**Question 8**

This question required students to consider the limitations of consumer and trade promotions. Therefore, answers could have focused on considerations such as sales promotions' inability to compensate for an ineffective sales force or for a lack of advertising. Similarly, sales promotions cannot remedy a situation where there is an inherent problem with the product/brand image or where a superior alternative is available. A further limitation is that sales promotions may serve to encourage the trade to stockpile a product on promotion, thus diverting future business to the present.