



## EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2007

### MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

#### General Comments

Overall, students demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the marketing communications syllabus, and provided relevant and current examples of marketing communications practice. As recommended in previous reports, the examiner would emphasise the importance of time management during the exam. It is crucial that students allocate an equal amount of time to each of the five questions which they are required to attempt. Furthermore, 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. Finally, students must be alert to the question asked as opposed to responding to certain words in the question. For example, in Question 8, some students offered a significant discussion with respect to reactive Marketing Public Relations (MPR), as opposed to proactive MPR.

#### Question 1

Students were required to demonstrate their understanding of the concept of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and the extent to which it might be a short-lived management fashion. Good answers tended to define the concept and to identify the distinguishing characteristics of IMC, e.g. its single-voice nature, and its employment of all forms of relevant contact. In addressing Shimp's perspective, students could have referred to the barriers to IMC, such as the perceived lack of agencies that can offer an integrated service, the existing provision of specialist services and the required changes in organisational culture. Many students chose to discuss the marketing communication tools separately, as opposed to this question's focus on how such tools could be integrated.

#### Question 2

This applied question required the student to select a car brand. The car's target market should have been considered in terms of variables such as demographics, lifestyles and product usage behaviours. The brand's positioning should have been identified in terms of the key attribute, benefit or image with which it is identified in the mind of the target market. The student may have chosen to discuss a current or previous advertising campaign for the car brand, and in doing so, should have considered elements such as the creative style and appeal that was used, as well as the choice of media placement and its appropriateness to the target market.

#### Question 3

This question required the student to focus on methods of agency remuneration such as the commission-based system, labour-based system and the performance-based measure. The student should have addressed key considerations relating to each, such as the controversy over the traditional 15% commission-based system. A small number of students chose to focus on issues related to the types of agency and the agency-client relationship. As stated in the opening comments above, it is important that students adhere to the question being asked.

#### **Question 4**

This question required the student to consider the emergence of online advertising which is exemplified by the use of websites, banner ads, podcasts and search engine advertising. Students identified issues such as individualisation, interactivity and relatively lower costs as being areas where online advertising might be preferred. They considered the Internet as a 'pull' medium targeting an active, goal-driven user, as opposed to the 'push' nature of traditional media, such as television and radio. However, strong answers also argued that the levels of Internet access in Ireland and access to broadband, means that the Internet is still seen as an emergent medium. Other issues related to the measurement of online advertising. It was also recognised that an IMC approach can be used whereby traditional advertising media such as television and radio can be used to drive traffic to a website.

#### **Question 5**

This question required the student to examine creative appeals that may generate negative emotions such as fear and guilt. Ads which use a fear appeal seek to identify the negative outcomes of behaving in a certain way (e.g. drinking and driving) or of not using the brand in question (e.g. personal hygiene). A key consideration to critically examine is the intensity of the fear appeal. Ads which use a guilt appeal seek to move the recipients to change their behaviour in some manner. A typical example would be the television licence advertisements. Here, a key consideration would be the extent to which the appeal holds credibility and/or whether the message is perceived to be manipulative. A large number of students concentrated their answers solely on examples of advertisements, such as road safety ads. It is important that examples be used to supplement the theoretical discussion in an answer as opposed to constituting the answer.

#### **Question 6**

This question required the student to address methods that can be used to measure the effectiveness of advertising messages. Strong answers commenced by recognising the importance of measuring advertising effectiveness and by also acknowledging that there is no one universally appropriate measure of same. The student should then have addressed measures relating to recognition, recall, persuasion, physiological arousal and sales responses. In considering these measures, the student should also have addressed key considerations relating to each, for example, the extent to which advertising recall may address whether the ad was received, as opposed to whether its message was accepted.

#### **Question 7**

This question required the student to critically evaluate the role of trade-oriented sales promotions. Some students chose to offer a substantial discussion about consumer promotions whereas this question required students to focus on the trade promotions offered by manufacturers to wholesalers and retailers. Factors driving the use of such promotions include the need to gain, maintain or increase one's share of shelf-space, and the need to counter competitor brand activity. This question required students to consider the shift in power from the manufacturer to the retailer in the context of the competitive grocery market in Ireland, the growing competitive threat from the retailer's own brand offerings, and the divergence between the manufacturer's need to build brand presence and the retailer's need to boost his/her own profit margins.

#### **Question 8**

This question required the student to indicate their understanding of proactive marketing public relations (MPR). Strong answers considered how MPR can be integrated with other IMC tools such as advertising, and also addressed MPR's requirement to generate exposure and credibility. The underlying importance of publicity should also have been noted in terms of building brand awareness and/or enhancing brand image for a new product through forms such as product releases, executive-statement releases and feature articles.