



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2007

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT & STRATEGY

General Comments

The examination presentations for May were the best for many years and the pass rate was notably higher than in recent years. This may have something to do with the new textbook which is well written and easy to read even though it occasionally presents an overly American point of view. Candidates are coming to grips more successfully with the global aspects of international marketing but there are still some shortfalls. Candidates who relied on standard domestic and international approaches to some of the topics – those who failed to appreciate that global marketing management is a much more sophisticated and complex discipline than international or multindomestic marketing – did not do so well in the May examinations. For the future, therefore, students should be aware that this subject has stepped up quite substantially both in the complexity of management practice and the expectations of the Examiner with respect to the standard of knowledge.

Question 1

Almost everyone who attempted this question achieved very good marks. There were a few failures among candidates who had obviously not studied the essential reading or the relevant parts of the essential text or who were simply relying on general knowledge. One or two candidates failed because they did not read the question properly and wrote only about using general e-business to best advantage.

Where there were weaknesses in answering they arose from two issues.

- (i) Candidates were not really clear on the functions that make up a business and how intranets can be used to maximize communications, minimize time delays and misunderstandings and bring about tighter co-ordination between functional operations in the interest of enhanced customer service.
- (ii) Candidates were also often unable to describe how extranets could be used to enhance the operations of supply chain, logistics and channel systems. Students seem to be generally weak in their understanding of traditional distribution channels or seem to be neglecting traditional channels in favour of technology based systems.

Question 2

This question was reasonably well answered by the majority of candidates. The topic was chosen because of its relevance to the current international trading environment in which legal issues are becoming more equitable as the result of continued progress towards liberalization and harmonization of international trade but emerging political agendas have begun to disrupt this process in a manner which has not been seen before.

Students should watch out for trends such as this in the international environment as they are likely to influence the Examiner's choice of examination topic. Students should also note that it

is unwise to allow personal feeling regarding the political actions and policies of certain countries – no matter how strongly held – to outweigh clinical presentation of the facts as set out in the textbook – even when the textbook may infringe somewhat on what we Irish might consider acceptable attitudinal norms. In the event, the question was quite well answered even though Chapter 5 in the essential text is not the easiest of chapters to study.

Question 3

This question was also well answered and most candidates achieved reasonably good marks. Candidates who reproduced some of the very good exhibits from the two relevant chapters in the essential text received extra marks as did candidates who gave relevant case examples. Students are advised to consider diagrams and good, clear setting out of materials on a point by point basis when tackling this kind of technical question. This approach helps the Examiner enormously and means that it is not necessary to dig into reams of text in order to find reasons to award the extra marks that may be necessary to bring a weak candidate over the pass mark line.

Question 4

The answering of this question showed up some major weaknesses in candidates understanding of the communications process simply because there was a general failure to differentiate between consumer and industrial/institutional markets. Almost without exception candidates described the need to integrate communications in consumer markets and in support of the brand. Few candidates described the problems of integrating the sales and promotions effort in industrial markets. Fewer still tackled the problems international negotiations even though the recommended text quite rightly devotes much time to this topic. Students should note that the need to distinguish between market types is very much a requirement of questions such as this and that the marking system will always reflect the candidate's willingness to do so.

Question 5

Very few papers tackled this question and this was probably just as well because most of them completely misunderstood the term. In most cases global linkages were seen as being in some way related to channels of distribution. Only one or two papers tackled global linkages from the point of view of the fact that “world trade has forged a network of global linkages that bind us all – countries, institutions and individuals – much more closely than ever before”. (Page 6 in both editions of the recommended text). Students are urged to ‘step up a gear’ in their thinking. While most of the old issues that related to traditional international marketing are still valid, it is essential that Irish students come to grips with the new and more complex world of global marketing. Irish investment overseas has now well exceeded overseas investment in Ireland and Irish marketers are having to operate in a much more comprehensive fashion in a much wider range of global environments. This fact will be reflected to a much greater degree in future International Marketing Management & Strategy papers.

Question 6

This question was well answered by most candidates despite the complex nature of the topic. Candidates were able to draw nicely on much of the information contained in Chapter 13 of Edition 8 and Chapter 7 of Edition 7 of the essential text. The lack of diagrams in the answers was a bit surprising given that there are many to choose from in the text and the fact that – in the case of physical, transactional and information flows – diagrams would have gotten a lot of information across very simply.

Question 7

Surprisingly, this question was not particularly well handled by most candidates. The topic of product development was well presented but the part played by product development in the context of the global organization was not so well handled despite the fact that Chapter 14 in both editions of the essential text covers the topic in a very interesting fashion. It is noteworthy that the essential text goes to some trouble to distinguish between international product policy and global product policy. Students should note that there have been very few examination papers in the past that have not asked about the topic of product or service development in some form or other.

Question 8

This question brought quite a number of weak papers over the pass mark. For the first time ever, one candidate got a perfect 100% score in this question with three brilliant presentations. Most of the questions worked well with the exception of the one on supply chain management. Once again, many candidates insisted that the supply chain worked downstream from the marketing organization and ignored up stream issues. It would appear fortunate that the topic was just one of three parts to the question. Had the question been a main stream one, many candidates would have done quite badly. As a matter of note for the future, the attention of students is drawn to the importance of supply chain management and logistics in international and global marketing.