



EXAMINER'S REPORT

AUGUST 2008

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

General Comments

In general, students demonstrated an adequate knowledge of the marketing communications syllabus. As indicated in previous Examiner's Reports, students should ensure that they read each question carefully, as opposed to focusing on a word or term in a question and concentrating their answer accordingly. Also, students should allocate sufficient time per question.

Question 1

This question required students to demonstrate their understanding of the concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC) by focusing on its distinguishing characteristics. These include IMC's quest to affect consumer behaviour using all forms of contact, to achieve synergy in terms of the forms of contact employed, and to build brand-consumer relationships. Finally, students were required to illustrate their understanding of this concept by giving examples of organisations that are deemed to successfully practise IMC.

Question 2

This question required students to explore prevailing concerns with regard to the practice of advertising to children. Students could therefore have discussed issues such as 'pester power', the marketing of food products to children and the accompanying childhood obesity debate. It is important that students address the remaining part of the question, namely whether each concern is justified. Answers could have been further enhanced by referring to the regulation of children's advertising, for example, the role of the Children's Advertising Code.

Question 3

This question required students to demonstrate their understanding of the role of a media planner by focusing on the decisions to be taken in an inter-media context. Criteria such as the target audience, budget, technical abilities of a given medium, the creative message, seasonal requirements and competitive activity, should therefore have been addressed.

Question 4

This question required students to focus their answers on methods of setting the advertising budget. Therefore, students should have examined methods such as percentage of sales, objective and task, and competitive parity. Answers should also have referred to the relative merits of each method

where appropriate. For example, the percentage of sales method can be criticised on the basis that it views advertising as being a function of sales, as opposed to the reverse scenario.

Question 5

This question required students to critically examine the role of means-end chaining in creative strategy development. Discussion should have drawn upon concepts such as brand attributes, consequences of brand use and personal values. An example of an application of means-end chaining is the MECCAS model. As part of their evaluation, students should also have addressed criticisms of the means-end approach, for example, consumers may identify clear links between attributes and consequences, but not necessarily between consequences and values.

Question 6

This question required students to address the cornerstones of an effective advertising agency-client relationship. Students could therefore have examined the importance of agency-client communication as well as the role of the briefing process which serves to guide the activities of the agency whilst also reducing the potential for misunderstanding between the parties. Other relevant issues include the importance of clearly specified and realistic budgets, as well as the agency's ability to generate creative and effective advertising.

Question 7

This question required students to address the reasons for the growth of direct marketing in Ireland. Answers could therefore have addressed factors such as the relative costs of traditional broadcast advertising and other marketing communications options, the onward rise of new channels of distribution such as the internet, and direct marketing's facility for targeting, interaction and measurement in the context of an ever-increasing quest for accountability and cost-effectiveness as regards marketing communications spend.

Question 8

This question required students to select a sponsorship event and to evaluate whether the event offered a suitable association for the brand in question. Therefore, students should have considered factors such as the association between brand image and the event, the facility for targeting the desired target audience, and the sponsorship's potential to enhance an integrated marketing communications message.