



## EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2007

### SERVICES MARKETING MANAGEMENT

#### General Comment

The examination scripts corrected this year scored the lowest overall results since this examiner was appointed. NO candidate achieved an A grade and 40% scored less than a D grade. This was most disappointing given that the examination paper followed the same lay out as previous years and the areas examined were similar to past papers.

I wish to emphasise the point made in earlier reports on the essential text. The number of students who had NO knowledge of the fundamentals of the text continues to be disappointing. Services Marketing by Zeithaml et al is the essential text. This is what is examined. External reading is welcome as a supplement but is not sufficient on its own. Students depending on the study manual or other notes will not do well in this subject. The text is assigned for a reason and so as examiner I expect that students have a good knowledge of the central issues in the text and also that they can demonstrate an understanding of these issues through examples. I am not satisfied that all candidates have even read the text. The report mentions the chapters or sections of the text from which the questions were taken.

While examples are welcomed and are necessary to support an answer a candidate cannot achieve a pass grade by giving only examples. For instance the Section A question asked candidates to compare and contrast the theoretical and practical differences in the marketing of given pairs of companies. A substantial proportion of candidates ignored the word 'theoretical' and gave only anecdotes. This is unacceptable in a final year examination. Candidates are being examined on their ability to discuss theoretical concepts supported by practical examples.

#### Question 1

This was a very straightforward question requiring only that students discuss the differences between product and services marketing. This is the most basic question that can possibly be asked and so a good standard answer was expected. Students at the final stage of the graduateship should be well capable of constructing an essay style answer on such an elementary subject. As previously mentioned too many candidates ignored the instructions to compare and contrast the theoretical and practical differences between the marketing of the named companies.

#### Question 2

As stated in the previous two examiners reports consumer behaviour is regularly examined and candidates should be well prepared for any question on the topic. This was a very straightforward question allowing the candidate to use any number of topics from the section of the text titled 'Focus on the Customer'. A substantial portion of the text examines

customer experiences and the need to manage these experiences. This was not a popular question and even those who selected this question did not answer it particularly well.

### **Question 3**

This question was based on the Chapter 7 of the text 'Building Customer Relationships' and in particular the section of the chapter dealing with relationship challenges. This would have required a discussion of topics such as 'the customer is not always right', 'the wrong segment', 'not profitable in the long term', etc. The biggest problem with answers to this question was that many candidates did not read the question. Candidates read the first sentence mentioning the benefits of long-term customer relationships and ignored the actual question. These candidates scored zero.

### **Question 4**

This question was a very straightforward question on physical evidence. Mary Jo Bitner is one of the leading researchers and writers on the area of the servicescape. As physical evidence is one of the additional three 'P's of the services marketing mix students should expect such a question as that asked as to how the servicescape affects customer perceptions and experiences. The question was sufficiently general to allow students discuss the theory raised in Chapter 11 – Physical Evidence and the Servicescape. Inevitably any question on the servicescape is attempted by a small number of candidates.

### **Question 5**

This question is well covered in the chapter dealing with customers' roles in service delivery. This is dealt with in Chapter 13 – Customers' Roles in Service Delivery'. An excellent answer would have discussed the following roles; customers as productive resources, customers as contributors to service quality and satisfaction, or customers as competitors. This was a very popular question with many candidates scoring in excess of 70%.

### **Question 6**

The final question asked candidates to discuss the need for integrated services marketing communications to minimise the discrepancies between service delivery and external communications. This is taken from Chapter 16 'Integrated Services Marketing Communication. The chapter lists four approaches for integrating services marketing communication. These are manage service promises, manage customer expectations, improve customer education, and manage internal marketing communication. The required answer needed to discuss these four points, no more and no less. I have consistently highlighted that there will be a question from this chapter and that I expect students to be able to relate the question to the text.

I will repeat a quote from earlier years reports "Every year there is a question taken from the chapter on integrated marketing communications and every year I comment in the report on the inadequacy of the answers. This year was no different. Too many students use the shotgun approach when attempting this question and hope that something will gain them marks, but not knowing exactly what that 'something' is. Since candidates should realise that this is a regular examination topic I expect the chapter to be well studied and also that students will be able to support their answer with relevant examples." There will be a question from this chapter again next year and so I expect students to prepare thoroughly for this question.