

NQF unit: Introduction to Marketing (IMkt)

Examination Session: June 2015

Introduction/General comments: There was a high level of passes noted in this examination. Candidates appeared to have a good understanding of marketing and generally addressed the questions on the paper effectively.

Question 1: The question was split into two-parts:

- (a) **'Using an organisation of your choice, identify five stakeholders and explain their role within an organisation'** presented no real issues for the learners. All seemed to have a good understanding of what stakeholders are and could relate these to a given organisation. The majority of candidates gained good marks for this section, a number achieving the full 10 marks available for this answer.
- (b) **'Using examples, explain why it is important that an organisation understands and anticipates customer requirements'** was handled less effectively. The approach regarding customer requirements was generally unstructured and few provided examples of an organisation that both 'understood and anticipated customer requirements' well.

Question 2: Again the question comprised of two-parts:

- (a) **'As the marketing manager of a sports brand, identify and explain three factors that you will need to take into account when selecting advertising media'**. This part of the question posed a number of problems with candidates not appearing to fully understand factors for choosing media. Although in one case relevant headings were provided, reasons for why factors were relevant/appropriate were not explained.
- (b) **'Outline an advertising campaign for the sports brand above by describing the product, identifying the target market and suggesting how the success of the campaign can be measured'** was only really attempted by one candidate and while they dealt with the outline campaign well, the evaluation requirements (media measures) of the question was not really addressed.

Question 3: A two-part question focusing on sales and marketing.

- (a) **'Explain five ways in which personal selling can contribute to effective marketing'** and
- (b) **'Define five attributes and/or skills you would expect an effective sales person to possess'** was not addressed by any of the candidates.

Question 4: This two-part question proved to be a popular question with candidates.

- (a) **'Outline the stages in the consumer buying process'** saw most candidates opting to use the five step 'Decision Making Model' rather than AIDA (suggested in the answer sheet). The candidates were marked on the basis of the chosen model rather than the one in the mark sheet, as the answers provided were relevant and in line with responses given on the QCF unit of the same title.
- (b) **'Identify and explain three potential signals that a customer might display to suggested they are interested in a product'** enabled the learners to demonstrate good knowledge in terms of verbal and non-verbal methods of communication and a broader understanding of body language. Understanding of verbal communications, such as questions customers might ask, was also dealt with extremely effectively.

Question 5: Once again a two-part question, the first part of which provided some areas of confusion for the candidates, leading to lower marks being awarded for this compared to some of the other questions.

- (a) **'You are due to attend a job interview for a position of a marketing assistant in a bank. Identify and explain three reasons why it is important that you are well-groomed for your interview.'** While the candidates had no problem grasping the nature of the concept of interview and the context of a bank, they were clearly thrown by the term 'well-groomed'. This is clearly a colloquialism that was not understood by the candidates. Certainly the responses given were not seen in terms of personal appearance, and its effect in terms of creating a good first impression, showing an interviewee's attention to detail and impact on personal self-esteem, which was necessary for an effective response to this question.
- (b) **'Identify and explain three important techniques you should use when being interviewed for a position above in order to help you secure the role'**, was dealt with more effectively than part (a). A good range of responses including demonstrating enthusiasm for the role, ability to communicate effectively and being attentive in the interview were developed.

Question 6: This two-part question focused specifically on the marketing mix:

- (a) **'Describe the four elements of the marketing mix'**. As was the case with question 1(a), the first part of the question was dealt with effectively, with the majority of the candidates being able to clearly cite the four traditional elements of the marketing mix (product, price, place and promotion) and provide a brief description of each. Maximum marks were gained by the majority of the candidates in this case.
- (b) **'Using an organisation of your choice, demonstrate how the marketing mix should be applied'** was dealt with less effectively than the first part of the question. There was a repetition of points made in part (a) and some confusion as to how the mix was or could be applied in many instances. Marks on this basis were generally less than those awarded for part (a). This suggested that while the basics of the marketing mix were understood, that when it came to applying this to specific goods or services, learners had less knowledge of how to do this and therefore struggled to develop an appropriate response.

Question 7: The focus of this two-part question was on the macro-environment. This did not prove to be particularly popular with candidates.

- (a) **'Using examples, identify and explain four of the six factors that influence an organisation's macro-environment'**. Although those choosing this could cite elements of the macro-environment, i.e. using PESTLE factors, explaining these for some candidates proved to be too demanding and in some cases didn't provide a particularly good response.
- (b) **'Using an organisation of your choice, demonstrate how its market has been influenced by the four factors you have identified above.'** This question was either dealt with well or dealt with very poorly. Although candidates chose suitable organisations to relate the macro factors too, not all did this well or got beyond a basic paragraph explaining the influence of these.

Question 8: This two part question proved popular but unfortunately was not dealt with well by candidates generally.

- (a) **'Identify and explain two pricing strategies that an organisation may use in order to sell a new product'** saw most candidates identifying penetration and skimming as the obvious strategies for a new product. Having done so they failed to correctly explain these/ differentiate these effectively from one another. Penetration pricing was seen in the context of sales promotion or low cost pricing rather than introductory strategy i.e. low introductory price for a mass market product. There was great confusion as to how long the price would stay low for, if indeed it gets increased at any stage at all. Skimming was generally better understood but perhaps not the reasons why. This was seen as a pricing strategy, which immediately delivers profit, which isn't the case. Skimming endeavours to enable R&D/launch/ promotional costs to be recovered effectively but doesn't necessarily result in profits immediately or indeed, in the short to medium term.
- (b) **Identify and explain two advantages and two disadvantages of each pricing strategy you have identified in (a).** This produced very muddled responses from a number of the candidates. The advantages cited were often disadvantages in reality or vice versa!! Very few passed this question, suggesting that this is a subject that isn't particularly well understood by candidates.

Conclusions:

In the case of most questions attempted by the candidates, it was clear that all had some or a good understanding of the requirements. The main limitations related to the individual's ability to provide more than a basic understanding of each concept to their answers. Simply providing an outline of a model or theory (e.g. PESTLE) is not going to achieve a pass but application of that model/concept to the context given (or an example provided by the candidate), together with some relevant detail, will. There was no indication that most candidates were time pressed, suggesting there is time to answer questions properly, particularly where candidates have equipped themselves with a full understanding of the subject matter prior to entering the exam room. Having said that, there was a pass rate of 75% for this paper, suggesting that the majority of the candidates had been well prepared for this examination.

Recommendations to students and tutors for future examinations:

- (1) Learn the syllabus! Those that have full knowledge of the subject matter and relevant models/concepts/theories relating to this can and did do well in this exam.
- (2) Tutors are encouraged to concentrate on the areas of weakness highlighted in this exam i.e. learners' understanding of subjects such as understanding of customer requirements, factors for selecting advertising media, role of selling in relation to marketing, application of the marketing mix (and how to apply individual elements e.g. pricing strategy) and understanding of and how to apply macro environmental factors i.e. PESTLE to businesses.
- (3) Remember, the more you practice the luckier you will get! In other words, learn appropriate areas of the syllabus and then practice questions taken from past papers. The more students are set past questions by tutors or practice these for themselves, the more likely they will pass the exam. This doesn't mean rote learn answers from past papers (as each paper has different requirements) but learn models/concepts and how to apply these in different contexts.
- (4) Plan and organise answers effectively. If time pressed, leave space to come back to the answer later in the exam, should time permit.