

Principal Examiner Feedback

January 2013

GCE Applied Business (6921)
Paper 01

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General Comments

The feedback given below is based on comments from all examiners involved in marking this unit.

This paper considered two main businesses for the first two thirds of the marks. The first scenario related to promotions used by *France Télécom* under the Orange brand name. This was a familiar brand for candidates which created both positive and negative outcomes - positive where knowledge was applied to the situation given in the question – negative where the knowledge lead to the question becoming secondary. The second scenario related to *Tags* a retail clothes store. Again this was generally well received by candidates and for most of the questions answers were well applied.

Questions 8 to 10 required an understanding of how specific real businesses actually carry out their promotions. Question 8 was about the use of leaflets to reach a specific target market. This was generally well answered by most candidates. Question 9 was about changing promotion to meet customers' ethical concerns. Students have a poor understanding of the term 'ethical' and this was generally poorly answered. Question 10 was about the use of moving image in an advertisement to create a particular impression. This was well answered by candidates who could describe the actual movement involved.

There was evidence that some candidates did not manage their time well and a significant number of candidates did not attempt the last two questions.

In addition there are the usual perennial weaknesses which are flagged up after every series. They are:

- Not considering the context of the question in sufficient depth.
- Not understanding some very basic terminologies.
- Not considering the number of marks being awarded for a question.
- Writing to the space provided, especially for candidates with large handwriting.
- Not developing answers, especially where the command word and the number of marks awarded indicate that this should be done.

Comments on specific questions

1 (a)

Branding is 'the marketing practice of creating a name, symbol or design that identifies and differentiates a product from other products'. For many candidates this did not seem to be the meaning that they were taking. There were many answers where the main feature of branding was taken to be that the business had high sales or high market share, and candidates possibly confused 'developed brand' with 'developed business'. Some candidates gave the benefits of branding, rather than the features of branding.

Where candidates identified a feature of branding they gave good examples, although most of these were taken from Orange.

1 (b)

Most candidates gave benefits, usually in terms of increasing awareness or recognition, and explained why they came from the process of branding. Generally candidates did not develop their answers and limited their marks to 2 or 3 marks. The better candidates gave well developed answers some of which included an understanding of branding across product ranges and the benefit of branding when introducing new products.

2 (a)

This question was well answered by most candidates, although development of their answers was limited for nearly half of the candidates who scored 2 or less marks. The term was well understood, except for the bottom 10% who took this to mean doing something doing for the customer rather than showing the business in a good light because, in this case, it was doing something to benefit the community. Candidates who made good use of the details in the stem and clearly understood the term gave well reasoned answers gaining 3 or 4 marks.

2 (b)

Over half of the candidates approached this question from a general point of view, looking at the benefits and drawbacks of using newspapers for advertising. The word 'this' in the question was ignored. Where candidates did apply their answers, as instructed, to 'this promotion' they gave well reasoned answers backed up by reference to the likely target market and to the nature of the promotion itself. However, only the best candidates gave well developed answers to gain high marks.

3 (a)

85% of candidates scored 2 to 4 marks for this question reflecting a reasonable understanding of the promotion and how it would lead to a benefit for Orange. It also reflected a lack of development by a significant proportion of candidates who gave fairly basic reasons as to why Orange would benefit. Some candidates also outlined the benefits to *Pizza Express* and the cinemas, without then going on to show that this would also benefit Orange. There were also some candidates who assumed that Orange would be paid by the cinemas and *Pizza Express* for the promotion.

30% of candidates give well argued and developed answers to gain 4 or 5 marks.

3 (b)

Most candidates had little difficulty in getting to at least Level 2 for this question but many limited their answers for the following reasons. Some candidates seemed to think that they should only consider the higher figure on the table. Other candidates took the table to mean a breakdown of Orange's customer base. Some candidates gave general answers with no clear reference back to what the 'Orange Wednesdays' promotion was about, which had been outlined in the stem to Q3.

The question did ask candidates to 'evaluate' but a significant minority of candidates only considered the positive points of the promotion, again usually limited themselves to Level 2. Where the nature of the promotion was well understood and candidates considered a specific age range, or more than one age range, they tended to tie both positive and negative aspects of the promotion to the nature of the likely target. There were some very well argued answers with the very best candidates scoring at Level 4.

4

The majority of candidates had no difficulty in suggesting methods of ambient advertising which would be possible in schools or the university, but these tended to be very general and it was therefore very difficult for them to justify why these particular methods should be used for these institutions. Just over 40% of candidates could give reasons why the method they had chosen would be particularly suitable in schools and the university rather than in a local mall or coffee shop. This generally came from thinking about the nature of the institution and then selecting the method, for example:- schools will have students using the library, placing leaflets where students will sign out books as the method. There was generally poor application for this question.

5

This question was well answered with a mean mark close to 3. The situation of a retail shop or a business selling clothes was well understood and the appropriateness of a window display well applied to these features by nearly all candidates. There was a lack of development for some candidates which limited their overall mark.

6

Again this question was well answered, with a mean 3.3. Both terms were well understood and candidates explained the benefits to *Tags* clearly and appropriately. This was not a challenging question and candidates' performance reflected this.

7

This question required candidates to bring together various factors that they were given in Figures 2 and 3, namely, the target population and the promotional campaign (the budget, the time span of two weeks and what would be in the advertisement). This then needed to be used when determining the best slots shown on Table 2. This was a challenging juggling act and the marks achieved by candidates reflected just how well they could do this.

40% of candidates scored at Level 2, which was typically because they identified the target market and gave good explanations of why certain slots would be appropriate for teenagers and students, but either ignored, or made very limited use of the details of the promotional campaign. The figures on the table were often not referred to at all so that the only consideration was the time of the slots.

34% of candidates scored at Level 3 and usually gave good justifications for the slots they selected in terms of being covered by the budget and the number of days it would be shown, as well as relating the slots to the lifestyles of target population. Some also considered what needed to be included in advertisement and justified the duration of their chosen slots on that basis. However, only the very best candidates were able to bring all of these factors together, with good justification for the final decision, and gain Level 4.

Questions 8 to 10

As required for these questions it must be clear that candidates are dealing with real businesses, but there are some candidates who do not have sufficient knowledge of real promotional campaigns that match the questions. When they are being asked to describe, assess, explain, etc, what actually happened in the campaign they are giving generalised details of what could have happened rather than actual details of what did happen. These questions expect candidates to have studied real promotional campaigns and to use knowledge of these to answer the questions. Without this knowledge, the potential marks will be considerable reduced.

Q8

There was a tendency here to see the word 'leaflets' and then launch into the answer without carefully reading the question first. Part (a) had to be tied to the target market and the more specific that was made the easier it was to answer the question. Far too many candidates put down general targets, such as adults or all ages, and that generally prevented them from showing why the features of the leaflet would apply specifically to them.

(a) Noting the points made above, a significant minority of candidates failed to score any marks for their explanations because the features they had given, such as the use of bold colours, could apply to most targets. Where general targets had been given for the target market candidates were unable to explain why the features they had chosen would apply and sometimes when a specific target had been given, for example women between the ages of 16 and 20, the candidates still could not explain why the features they had chosen were particular appropriate for that target.

(b) Candidates had little problem in giving the method of distribution and how it reached the target market. Exceptions included those who ignored the word 'distribution' and wrote about the costs of producing the leaflets. Only the better candidates were comfortable with the phrase 'cost effective', but, when they were, they gave good explanations of why the particular method of distribution chosen by the business was one that would keep costs low. There were some candidates who argued well that the costs, even though they might be

significant, would be effective because of the success of the leaflet delivery in terms of generating sales.

Q9

This question was not well answered by many candidates and there were some who did not even attempt it. A quarter of candidates failed to score any marks at all. Generally students have a very poor understanding of the term 'ethical', even though it is clearly stated in the syllabus. As long as they can keep in mind that this is about perceptions of what is right or wrong, moral or immoral, they should find these kinds of question relatively easy to answer as they are so many examples from the real world of business and promotion.

(a) Candidates who understood the term had little difficulty in stating the ethical concern that customers had.

(b) Candidates tended to either state what ethical meant and gain a mark, or they simply repeated the concern without saying why this was ethical and gained no mark.

(c) Where candidates read the question carefully they gave details of the change in promotion and how that was showing customers that the business was taking its customer concerns into account. Some candidates only described changes to the product and did not deal with changes to promotion at all.

(d) Most candidates could come up with an aspect and give a basic explanation of why the negativity arose because of the way the business showed customers it was taking their concerns into account. This could be fairly wide, because of the way the question had been phrased, but, even then, few candidates went on to gain good marks. Some candidates ignored the instruction to examine only one negative aspect.

Overall very few candidates were able to build up good marks, with only just over 1% gaining more than 7 marks.

Q10

The answers to this question were disappointing with a fifth of candidates gaining no marks. In part this may be due to poor time management, and a significant number of candidates did not attempt this question. Low marks, in generally, were down to poor selection of the advertisement and not reading the questions carefully enough.

(a) This asked for the impression the business was trying to create. This was usually well answered, but many candidates selected an impression that was not going to be easily shown through moving image, such as the cheapness of the business's prices.

(b) Candidates had to have a clear moving image described in their answer. Some candidates assumed that the advertisement would be known, and therefore everyone would know how the image moved in it. What was required was sufficient detail in the description to show how it was moving. Some descriptions would have applied equally to a still image. Even when candidate did describe movement, only the better candidates went on to explain how that

movement created the impression given in part (a). Selecting the right advertisement, and impression, was vital, and few candidates thought about this before attempting their answers.

(c) This was only well done by the best candidates who saw the real significance of having an effective moving image which creates the wanted impression and then adding spoken words. That needed a good understanding of what additional benefit the spoken words would add to the advertisement. Most candidates could give one aspect of that, but not all aspects; what was said, what additional benefits this gave and why it should be spoken, rather than, say, written.

Issues for future series

The points listed below repeat comments made in previous reports, but they are ones that are still **not** being addressed by many candidates – hence marks are being lost unnecessarily.

1. **The applied approach** – All businesses used in these papers relate to real businesses, either named or with the names changed. Preparation for this paper should, therefore, include as much study of the promotional techniques used by real businesses as possible.
2. **Terminologies** – Candidates need to know all of the terms given in the syllabus **and** common terms that relate to the real world of promotion.
3. **Reading the question/following instructions** – Many marks are still being unnecessarily lost, simply because candidates have not read the question carefully enough or have not taken the context into consideration.
4. **Questions requiring extended answers** – There will continue to be two questions with 11 marks in the future series. Students should be shown how to develop their answers so that they can provide in-depth and detailed answers for these questions.
5. **Questions based on own study** – Students must be able to use knowledge and understanding of a wide range of real promotional situations in order to answer questions on any part of the syllabus. This must be in sufficient depth to show clear details of the promotional campaigns.

Please also note the comments made about online marking in previous reports and the comments made about writing only to the space provided on the paper itself. Centres need to ensure that their candidates are not being disadvantaged simply because of the layout of the paper. Additional work outside of the specified area on the paper, or on additional sheets, is totally acceptable, but, when this is done, it is vital that the candidates **indicate** somewhere on their answer to a specific question that they are using additional paper or completing the answer somewhere else in the actual booklet. Preferably, they also indicate where the rest of the answer is.

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