

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Travel and Tourism (6996)
Unit 10: Promotion and Sales in
Travel and Tourism

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General Introduction

The paper followed the format of a question and answer booklet. Candidates were required to respond in the spaces provided. There were 6 questions and 90 marks were available.

The questions only related to the travel and tourism industry. All questions linked to the information under 'what you need to learn' in the qualification specification.

The questions were linked to the assessment objectives. Candidates therefore needed to demonstrate knowledge and understanding and skills in vocationally-related contexts. Candidates need to apply knowledge and understanding of the specified content and of related skills in vocationally-related contexts. Candidates need to use appropriate research techniques to obtain information to assess vocationally related issues and problems. Finally candidates were required to evaluate information to make reasoned judgements, draw conclusions and make recommendations about vocationally related issues and problems.

Most candidates attempted all questions and consequently they picked up marks across the paper.

Question 1

Q1(a)

There were six marks available for this question and on average candidates scored four out of the six marks. It is an Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) question and candidates who had studied the stages involved in the sales process as outlined in the specifications scored well on this question. A response that scored full marks can be seen below:

“Establishing rapport

This is the first stage where you get to know the customer, engaging them in conversation, setting the scene; for example, asking how they are and have they had a nice day.

Determining customer needs and expectations

This is where the member of staff will obtain all necessary information about what product or service they require and what they expect from this. For example in a travel agents, the agent will ask questions about location for the customer's holiday, accommodation and number of passengers to establish needs.

Overcoming Objectives

Some customers might have problems with the product/service on offer, therefore, staff should reassure the customers, provide additional information about the product and explain how it meets the customer's needs.”

Often where lower marks were given, the answer was vague or the stem to the question was repeated. For example:

Determining customer needs and expectations

In this stage the customer needs, wants and expectations are discussed.

Q1(b)

This is an AO2 question so application as well as knowledge is what is being tested. All too often candidates could provide a relevant skill but then gave a generic explanation rather than referring specifically and consistently to the customer type provided. Or in other instances they state 'be friendly' which, in this circumstance, is a weak skill to then explain.

One response that did score 6 marks:

"School Group

Skill/quality

Questioning and listening skills

Explanation

Jenny will need to listen carefully to the teacher who is trying to gain access into the farm for the school because Jenny will need to identify when the booking was made, what name the booking is under and the ticket type, over the loud noise of excited young children.

Pig enthusiast

Skill/quality

Good Product Knowledge

Explanation

It is important for Jenny to have good product knowledge with the pig enthusiast as his main interest is to learn more about the breed of pig. If she did not have good knowledge then the visit would not be successful for the customer."

Question 2

Q2(a)(i)

This question was asked in a slightly different format than previous papers. Candidates were required to apply their knowledge on market research methods to a specific scenario. This was a differentiator question. Candidates who fully understand research methods and what their strengths and weaknesses are, scored well on this question. The better candidates realised that if customer numbers had jumped significantly this would have impacted on staff and the pressure they were under, hence leading to problems with customer satisfaction. Weaker candidates sometimes could not understand why bed occupancy rates and sales figures would help the investigation into customer dissatisfaction rates rising.

One answer that scored maximum marks:

“It will allow her to see if these figures have changed and therefore question why this has happened. If sales and occupancy rates have risen the hotel would have been harder to maintain and she can make improvements based on this.”

Q2(a)(ii)

Following on from Q2(a)(i) this was a better answered question with the majority of candidates scoring at least two marks. One good three mark answer chosen out of a number:

“The market research may not be useful to her if she is using data from the previous six months, as she may be using figures from peak times and off-peak times meaning the hotel may have been busy due to the time of year. Also the information doesn’t show what customers thought of their stay as it just shows the number of people staying in the hotel.”

Q2(b)

Again a well answered question with most candidates suggesting questionnaires.

One good answer:

Description

The manager could give questionnaires to customers when they depart the hotel which can ask specific questions about what areas the manager wants to look at.

Justification

This may be useful to the manager because the customers will be able to go into more specific detail into what they think needs improving at the hotel and the manager can use these questionnaires to improve the areas which need improvement.”

One area that could improve is candidates’ understanding of what is required in this type of question. Often they provide a short description worth one mark and then move into justification rather than extending the description to gain maximum marks. Other candidates provide another description in the justification so lose the marks available for the justification of their original description. Practice with exam technique may overcome this issue.

Question 3

Q3(a)

This question tended to divide candidates. Often candidates slipped into a description of the Red Sea and ‘Rendezvous Hotel’ against the four Ps listed.

If they did not explain and merely described, this limited the number of marks that could be awarded. Other candidates talked about what the resort and hotel could do rather than what they do or have and again this restricted the number of marks that could be awarded.

However, compared to previous series, candidate performance on this question is improving.

Candidates could present the case either for or against as there is no right or wrong decision. However, the amount of explanation and reference to the information provided and to the objectives was key.

For maximum marks, candidates needed to refer to the Rendezvous Hotel objectives outlined.

Below is an answer where the candidate scored full marks:

Product

The product may work for the Rendezvous in achieving their objective of attracting more wedding and honeymoon couples as the option for all-inclusive will appeal to this group, as it will ensure they have nothing to worry about organising whilst they are away, and features products such as the sunset cruise which is typical of a romantic getaway. The product may also work to increase year around occupancy, as flights fly twice a week all year around meaning the destination can be easily accessed at all times of the year.

Price

The price may work for the hotel when trying to increase year around occupancy as prices are lower in low season when hotel profits would typically be lower. However, during the school holidays when prices increase this may work against the Rendezvous. £800-£950 is a fairly reasonable price for a weeks' inclusive in a four star resort and this may particularly appeal to wedding and honeymoon couples following a recently high expenditure on a wedding.

Place

The place may work for the organisation when trying to attract year around visitors as the temperature remains reasonably warm (around 13 degrees centigrade) even in the winter months of December and January. Sunshine hours do not fall below eight which is considerably higher than in the UK, so this may appeal to winter holidaymakers. The place may also work for the company in attracting more wedding and honeymoon couples as the Red Sea is a fairly unspoiled holiday destination that offers many features expected on a honeymoon (white beaches, etc).

Promotion

The promotion of the hotel may not help it to meet its objective of increasing year around visits. Promotional adverts within the UK specifically target visits during school holidays when prices are highest which often falls into peak season. Little is done in the way of promoting the resort as a winter holiday destination. The promotion may also work against increasing

visits from wedding and honeymoon couples as they are unlikely to want to visit a resort that is marketed as a family holiday during school breaks.”

Q3(b)

This was a poorly answered question. Candidates struggled in the main, to understand why all-inclusive holidays would increase in popularity during a recession. This was a question designed to test the more able candidates and it did achieve this function.

One answer that scored higher level marks in level 2:

“During the recent recession and credit crunch customers have opted for all-inclusive holidays as it is just one lump sum and for that you receive everything. So people know exactly how much their spending is as soon as they book their holiday. This is beneficial for customers as they may not know how much disposable income they have once their holiday arrives. So if they book it all-inclusive they wouldn’t need to take lots of money with them.”

Question 4

Q4(a)

This is a question that has appeared on several past papers but it was disappointing to see how few candidates took the opportunity to gain an easy 5/6 marks here. Candidates are still confusing direct marketing with either target marketing or personal selling.

One answer that did score maximum marks can be seen below:

Direct Marketing

Direct Marketing is any form of marketing which allows a company to communicate directly with its customers. For example, sending emails or leaflets in the post.

Public Relations

This is where the organisation provides information to the media which they in turn print for free. This could be a press release.

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is a short term activity aimed at generating sales or improving public perception, an example is special offers such as buy-one-get-one-free.”

Q4(b)

This question was designed to test the more able candidates. However, in the event the majority of candidates scored relatively well in this question. One response that gained maximum marks:

This statement means that all publicity or media attention that a product receives is good regardless of whether the attention is positive or negative. This may be on account of the fact that awareness is being raised of the product and may attract interest whether the actual publicity is good or bad. One example of this may be a theme park receiving reviews of its new ride being too scary yet this seemingly negative publicity may still generate public interest and attract thrill seekers.

Q4(c)

This was a differentiator question. Those candidates who understood the terms 'lifestyle' and 'socio-economic' generally scored well. However, many candidates ignored these terms which severely restricted the marks that could be awarded.

One answer that scored the maximum marks available:

"Lifestyle – Some people may have busy lifestyles, for example business men are busy year round and can't get too much time off work, therefore it would be more appealing for a business man to have an 8-13 night holiday instead of two weeks because they may not have enough time to get off work.

Socio-economic – the working class may not earn enough to support a two week long family trip abroad. Therefore, something like a 10 day trip may be more appealing and beneficial to them and less expensive."

Q4(d)

This was a question candidates scored well in. The vast majority could provide recommendations and then justify these. Any marks lost tended to be due to justifications being weak.

A typical answer scoring four marks:

"Viral advertising via emails to customers currently on the agencies database. This can be done quickly and cheaply in the agency which means they aren't wasting time or money. It may also generate a lot of responses from people who have received the email from friends making them aware of these 8-13 night holidays that are available."

Q5(a)

This was a question that was well answered by a large number of candidates. It did tend to be a differentiator as weaker candidates tend to provide very descriptive answers as seen below. This response received three marks:

This website is very good at attracting new customers to the loyalty scheme as there is a section on joining up as well as opportunity for existing card holders to redeem points. There is also space for entering an email address. All candidates can save up to 20% if they book their stay early. This website

allows both new customers to join and allows existing cardholders to redeem points by booking stays. It is very effective.

Contrast the descriptive response with the one below that scored the full six marks available:

This website is extremely effective in terms of attracting new customers to join the loyalty scheme. For example there is a left hand box that is clear and attracts the customer with the heading 'Priority Club Rewards' in capital letters. There is a clear 'Join Now' box that has used an exclamation mark again to attract the reader. Above the box it also says 'earn free nights at our 4400 hotels worldwide.' Again this cleverly attracts the customer enticing them to join. Finally there are special offers which will attract customers looking for 'a deal.' Also it is very effective as it is clear to existing club cardholders how to redeem points as again the layout is clear and it is also clear who the target audience is. The special offers will also increase the chances of them booking. Finally there are many different hotel brands on show again to attract them and show their choice.

Q5(b)

This was a differentiator question. Many better candidates scored well. They recognised that they needed to describe two different types of promotional technique/material. Weaker candidates often gave answers relating to changing the product/service provided rather than a promotional technique/material. For example, for business men 'provide wi-fi in bedrooms.'

Often they also provided examples of special offers for both types of customer which meant they could only be credited once as the promotional technique/material provided for each had to be different. They didn't recognise these were both sales promotions.

In addition many candidates confused leisure customers with gym members.

However, those candidates who did provide relevant answers generally scored well. For example:

"Business Customers

Description

An email offering free upgrades or discount.

Justification

Most business people use computers and have email addresses for business purposes, therefore are likely to receive the promotion. Email is direct marketing so allows it to target the right market specifically. Also if it is offering discounts or free upgrades then this will attract the business men as they may go away a lot with business and the free upgrade may be appealing as it will provide more comfort for working.

Leisure customers

Description

TV adverts at peak times so during football matches or in an evening between soaps or popular TV programmes.

Justification

Advertising on TV can target a wide market as it can be national. Also the advert can be repeated many times to reinforce the content so more people can see it. They are also visual so when advertising hotel breaks a nice visual of the surroundings can attract customers."

Question 6

Q6(a)

This is a question that has appeared regularly. First of all the candidates were asked to name the promotional campaign. No marks were awarded for this but it allowed candidates to outline fully their campaign. If candidates referred to just one piece of promotional material or to all of the marketing undertaken by an organisation, then this restricted the number of marks that could be awarded to two.

The question then asked the candidate to name two of the promotional techniques that the organisation used. The candidates who did this scored two marks. However, some did not name any promotional techniques whatsoever and therefore lost marks.

Candidates were then asked to name two promotional materials used in the campaign. This really divided candidates. Those who had researched their campaigns were able to do this well. However some just named two materials not connected to the promotional techniques they had given earlier. For example, a candidate said sponsorship and direct marketing, then under materials said TV advert and newspaper advert.

Describing when and where the promotional materials were used was usually better answered and candidates usually gained the available marks here.

Generally this question was much better answered than in previous series. One answer that scored maximum marks:

"Virgin's latest campaign starring a group of rock stars: 'At Virgin everyone is treated like a Rockstar.

Promotional Techniques

The latest Virgin campaign was released on 7th May. The main promotional techniques used were advertising, as it reached out to a wide range of customers and target markets. They also used sales promotion to increase awareness.

Promotional Materials

A six minute Rockumentary on 'You Tube', TV advert, a 'Facebook' fan page, radio presence, posters and also a number of incentives including 'Rockstar Rewards' whereby customers received a discount if they booked before 8th June.

Where and when the promotional materials were used.

The TV advert was displayed for a whole month during the popular TV programme 'Britain's Got Talent' 60 second, 40 second and 30 second slots in between the programme. Posters displayed in larger travel agents, e.g. 'Thomas Cook'."

This response demonstrated excellent research skills.

Q6(b)

This part of the question asks candidates to assess the success of the campaign described in Q6(a). Assessment was better than in previous series.

One response that scored maximum marks as assessment was made against measurable targets:

"Campaign for Tourism Ireland

The campaign of Tourism Ireland was very effective as it increased the number of people visiting the country. There were 8.9 million visitors which is an increase of 9% from 2010 and they were as a result able to generate £3.4 billion in revenue. In addition, of the materials used, the internet was the most effective as they received a record 13 million visits which is a 34% increase from 2009 and they received 80,000 fans on Facebook and 13,000 followers on Twitter. So this shows social media websites, which are the new word of mouth, were effective. Also whilst the TV adverts were successful they were not cost effective and so increasing direct marketing which was proven to be effective and cheap would be a better alternative. Furthermore the least effective promotional material was the radio and this is believed to be due to the fact that people did not get a visual image of the country. So all in all the campaign was very successful and helped to increase tourism for Ireland."

This question should give candidates time to study and research on their own with just some guidance from you. It would be best to pick a short-lived campaign that uses a variety of promotional techniques and or materials so candidates can look at how each of these fitted in with the campaign to produce maximum awareness to the maximum number of the target market.

For the description of the campaign, candidates get two marks for referring to the techniques used, two marks for materials and two marks for where or when the materials were used.

For the assessment candidates should think how they are going to assess. What are they going to judge? Is it how many people came? How much money was made? How the relevant target markets were or were not reached?

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