



EXAMINER'S REPORT

MAY 2001

STAGE 2 PROJECT

Marketing in the Information Age

This project required students to investigate the marketing activities of a particular sector. The student was invited to choose from a wide range of markets including media, telecommunications, information and Internet service provision, and terrestrial and satellite broadcasting. The vast majority of students selected the telecommunications sector and, in particular, mobile telephone operators which accounted for over fifty percent of the submissions. This may have been due to the wealth of readily available information. Some students mentioned the difficulties in evaluating and analysing such a vast volume of easily accessible information. In certain instances students chose to focus on a particular technology rather than deal with a whole range of industry technologies. A number of candidates made less obvious market choices which tended to be in the arena of on-line information provision such as airline, gambling, procurement, audience measurement and job recruitment.

The first part of the project required students to analyse the current competitive trends of the chosen sector. This was to include a profile of the competitors in the industry. Many submissions concentrated solely on the competitor profiles with no introduction to the sector to set the context of the analysis being provided. Sometimes there was little evaluation or analysis of the marketing activities employed by the companies involved. Some company profiles gave extensive detailed descriptions of the various product/service options with little or no competitive comparisons or assessment of competitive success or otherwise in the marketplace. Similarly, extensive timeline histories of the players were often provided without any real assessment of the companies' respective marketing activities. Many of the sectors selected involved products and services of a highly technical nature. Most submissions of this type showed a real understanding of the offerings concerned, but some placed too much emphasis on the technologies rather than the marketing involved. In some cases the student employed theoretical competitive frameworks to analyse the sector. Some projects quoted verbatim from secondary sources without referencing the source or adding any additional analysis to the data.

The second part of the project required the student to investigate one aspect of the chosen market using appropriate primary research. Details of how the research was designed and implemented were to be provided. This part of the assignment attracted forty-five percent of the available marks and so should have been a significant component of the submission. Again some submissions used theoretical frameworks to support any analysis. Students employed various research techniques including case studies, focus groups, in depth interviews and surveys. In

some cases reports included unnecessary material explaining the meaning of marketing research, explaining the role of primary research and spelling out marketing research techniques and terminology. In the better submissions students provided clear, unambiguous and specific objectives for the study. The objectives laid a sound foundation and rationale for any design decisions made. Various projects failed to provide details of how sampling was undertaken or controlled. In other instances the developed questionnaire failed to meet the purported objectives of the study or was ill devised and did not facilitate valid and reliable responses. Some students failed to provide any analysis of the results of the survey. In better submissions detailed analysis was provided, use was made of graphical presentation where appropriate and the key findings were highlighted and related to the initial objectives of the study. Many students identified the limitations of their study and appreciated the significance of these to any conclusions reached.

The third part of the project required students to identify possible marketing strategies that may be employed by players in the industry. By its nature this part of the exercise was very speculative. However, any suggestions should have been based on the preceding analyses.

Many submissions attempted to integrate marketing theory and practice by using consumer buyer behaviour models, SWOT analysis, competitive frameworks and growth matrices for example. Better projects were logically structured and clearly referenced with all sources of information correctly identified. Only essential material was included in the main body of the report with other information submitted as appendices.