



Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice

EXAMINATION PAPER

29th June 2016
10.00am – 12.30pm

Instructions to Candidates

- Time allowed 2 hours 30 minutes
- Candidates must answer questions A, B, & C in Section 1
- Candidates must answer TWO questions from the six in Section 2
- All answers must be written in your Examination Answer booklet

Important Note: The requirement is for candidates to complete questions A, B & C in Section 1 and two questions from six in Section 2, failure to do this by either selecting more or less questions than the requirement may result in the paper being marked as non-compliant. Recommended times are detailed in each section to assist candidates in completing all the questions in the time available.

Section 1: Compulsory question (Recommended time: 50 minutes)

This section tests problem identification and problem solving using a number of skills. The section accounts for one-third of the total marks.

Read the following case study and answer ALL 3 questions below.

The Glow Place is a small chain of beauty & wellbeing salons. The first *Glow Place* salon was opened 10 years ago by husband and wife team Bill and Barbara Young. They now own 5 salons, one of which is also a training academy for beauty therapists. All of the salons offer a wide range of services, from standard beauty treatments to alternative therapies such as massage and aromatherapy. Business is good, and Bill and Barbara are keen to expand further.

As Managing Director, Barbara Young would like to diversify the way the business offers its services. She has noted an increase in 'deliver to your door' services, where businesses take services to clients, and she feels that this greater flexibility is the key to expansion. Her idea is to establish a number of *Glow Mobiles*. These are mobile salons which can take beauty & wellbeing treatments directly to clients. She is keen to offer this service to local businesses for their employees, and to exhibition organisers for events. She also feels that *Glow Mobiles* could be sited at railway stations during busy periods to offer services for commuters. Bill, however, thinks that *Glow Mobiles* are a high risk business option. He is not sure that there would be enough demand from businesses and event organisers for mobile services and believes that commuters would be unlikely to drop in to mobile salons. He also worries that their existing clients would not react positively to *Glow Mobiles* and that this would harm the brand's reputation for quality. His preference would be to go with their tried and tested approach of opening new salons.

Until this point, Bill and Barbara have found it easy to agree on business decisions and have never felt the need to commission market research to test their business ideas. Now, however, they cannot agree on a way forward. You are an independent market research consultant. Bill and Barbara have contacted you for advice.

Question A

As the research expert, you have been given the task of advising Bill and Barbara Young on how market research could help their company. Discuss the possible benefits and limitations of using market research to help identify if the *Glow Mobiles* approach or the new shop approach is the best option for expanding the business. Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one-quarter of total)

Question B

Bill and Barbara have decided that they would like to commission research into the *Glow Mobiles* option. They have asked you to devise a brief for this research which they will send out to three research agencies. Outline the information which should be included in the brief to ensure that the research agencies understand what is required in the project. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one-quarter of total)

Question C

Three agencies have submitted proposals for this research project. All have suggested a short phase of qualitative research to test possible reactions to *Glow Mobiles*, followed by a phase of quantitative research to gather data on the potential take up of these services. However, none of the proposals contains enough information about how the research agency will draw the sample for the quantitative phase.

Devise a sampling plan for the quantitative research into the likely take up of Glow Mobile services among **either** the business-to-business market **or** the consumer market identified by Barbara. You should include information about the population of interest, the sampling approach(es) you recommend and how you plan to get the target population to take part in the research. Give reasons for your choices. Ensure that your sampling plan takes account of any relevant ethical issues.

(Weighting: one half of total)

Section 2: Optional Questions (Recommended time: 100 minutes)

This section accounts for two-thirds of the total marks.

Answer any TWO questions from the SIX in this section. Give a full answer to each of the questions you choose.

Question 1

Three chemistry students have developed a new fabric. It has the potential to make thinner and more absorbent clothes for runners. They would like to go into business with a sportswear clothes manufacturer but they know very little about the market. You work as a researcher in the university's business development unit. They have asked you for help. They would like you to undertake **secondary (desk)** research that will help them understand the market for this type of fabric.

- a) Outline the sorts of information that you will include in your report to the students including the source of that information.

(Weighting: one half of total)

- b) You have sent your research report to the students. They have come back to you with questions about the quality of the information in the report. Outline the steps you took to ensure that the information you presented in your report is valid and reliable. Give reasons for the steps you outline.

(Weighting: one half of total)

Question 2

Get Going is a website offering support services for young people aged 14 to 19 in a major city. In order to access *Get Going* services, individuals must register their email address and create an account on the website.

Over the past six months, visits to all areas of the website have been falling. The organisation has commissioned research to identify how they might reverse this trend. The researchers have identified two main groups within the population of interest: *current users*, which includes all account holders; and *non-users*, who are young people who have never used *Get Going* services.

- a) The researchers plan to conduct the first stage of the research online with current users. They will be using a quota sample. Describe the steps the researchers should take to select and recruit the required sample, giving reasons for the steps you suggest. You should highlight any ethical issues involved in drawing this sample, and how the researchers can ensure that the sample achieved is ethically robust.

(Weighting: one half of total)

- b) To explore reasons why non-users haven't used *Get Going* the researchers plan to conduct qualitative research. Describe the steps the researchers should take to recruit the required sample of *non-users* for face-to-face group discussions, giving reasons for the steps you suggest. You should highlight any ethical issues involved in drawing this sample, and how the researchers can ensure that the resulting groups are ethically robust.

(Weighting: one half of total)

Question 3

For the past 25 years, a local government has operated a chain of 'one-stop shops' in the city's shopping centres. The shops allow local people to access a wide range of public services directly, from the renewal of parking permits to advice on how to deal with a range of community issues. The local government has now decided to close the one-stop shops and move all of its services online. This process is likely to take up to two years. To track how the changes affect local people over this period and to track their satisfaction with the local government services, research has been commissioned. The research agency which won the contract to carry out this work has suggested creating an online panel to collect the type of information needed.

- a)** Discuss the strengths and limitations of the online panel for gathering the type of evidence the local government wants to collect.

(Weighting: one half of total)

- b)** Taking into account the limitations you have identified, describe the steps that can be taken to ensure that the panel delivers valid and reliable evidence over a two-year period. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one half of total)

Question 4

A national daily newspaper has experienced a major decline in sales over the past two years. The company feels that a daily publication is no longer sustainable but does not want to move all of its news products online. They are keen to retain their current readership, to regain former readers and to encourage new readers. One suggestion is to reformat the newspaper into a weekly magazine highlighting the most important news stories of the week, and showcasing the best in journalist writing. To explore if the proposed magazine will be a popular replacement for the daily newspaper the company has commissioned a qualitative study. You are leading the team of moderators who will be conducting a series of face-to-face group discussions with the target audience across the country.

- a)** Describe the steps you will take to ensure that valuable, consistent and ethically-robust insight is gathered from the study. Give reasons for the steps you suggest.

(Weighting: one half of total)

- b)** Devise an outline discussion guide for this series of qualitative group discussions, listing the topic areas you would cover and describe any stimulus material you might use. Give reasons for all of the elements you include.

(Weighting: one half of total)

Question 5

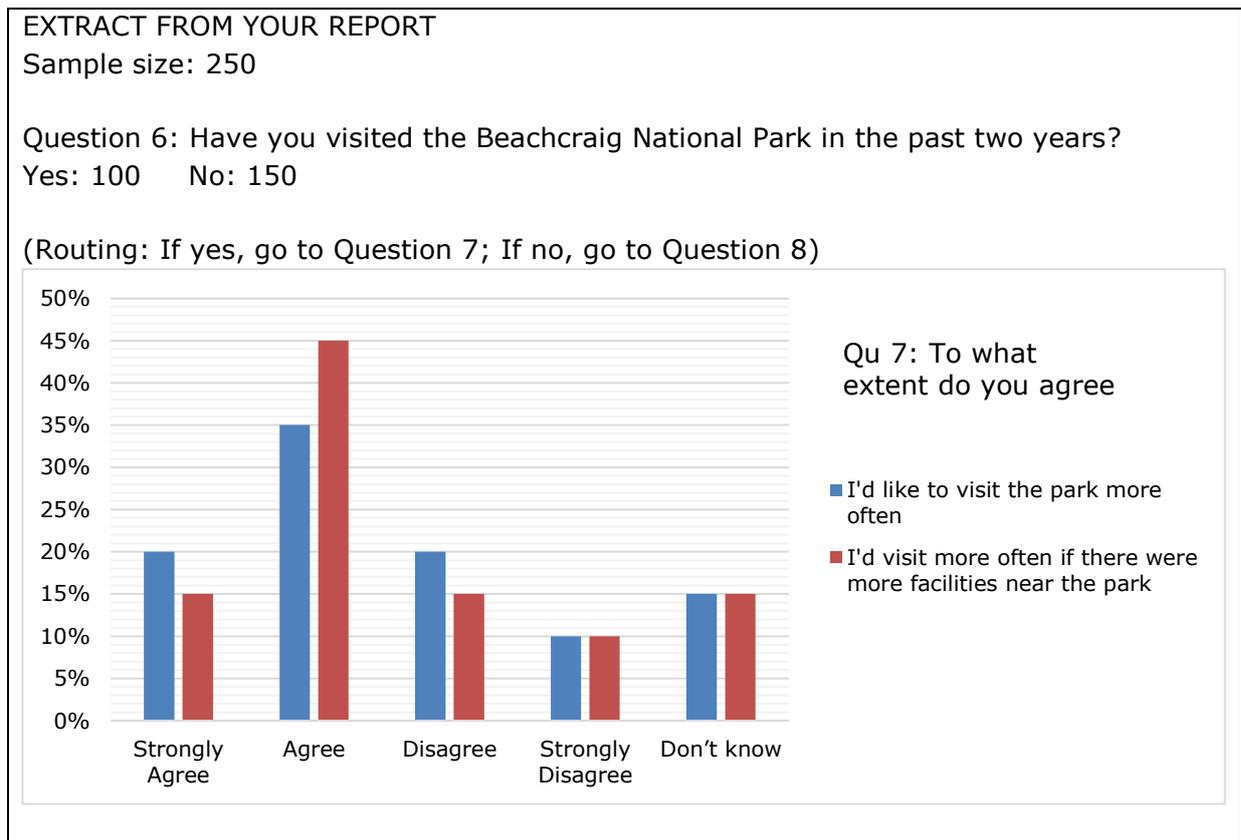
An international company plans to construct a major leisure facility on the edge of a national park. They have commissioned your research agency to conduct research into public perceptions of the proposed development. They intend to use the results as part of their campaign to gain planning permission for the development.

- a) What ethical and professional issues should you agree with the client when planning this project? Explain why the issues you identify are important, illustrating your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one half of total)

- b) Following your report on the research findings, you discover that the client has taken some information from it and included it in their own report intended for the committee responsible for deciding on planning permission.

Look at the information in the extract below from your original report and at the extract from the client’s report. What advice would you give to the client to ensure that the information is presented in an ethically robust way? Give reasons for the suggestions you make.



EXTRACT FROM THE CLIENT’S REPORT
 Our proposed development will attract more visitors to the Beachcraig National Park. In our recent survey, almost half of those interviewed (45%) indicated they don't intend to visit the park. However, with the new facilities in place, more than 60% have said they will visit. Dr Stuart Smith, who lives at Beachcraig, said: *'The park has long needed new facilities to attract more visitors....'*

(Weighting: one half of total)

Question 6

A major bookseller has relaunched its online shopping website. The marketing department has created a pop-up online questionnaire for website users to complete. The aim of the questionnaire is to gather feedback on the new website. The pop-up questionnaire will appear at the end of the website visit regardless of whether or not the visitor has made a purchase.

- a)** Identify at least three types of information which the questionnaire needs to gather to provide useful insight into the users' experience of the website. Give reasons for the suggestions you make.

(Weighting: one half of total)

- b)** Two weeks after the launch of the questionnaire, the Marketing Director discovers that only 20% of the customers who start the questionnaire complete it. Identify at least three reasons why there might be such a high drop-out rate. What could have been done when designing the questionnaire to avoid this? Illustrate your answer with examples.

(Weighting: one half of total)

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The Market Research Society
The Old Trading House
15 Northburgh Street
London EC1V 0JR

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7566 1805
Fax: +44 (0)20 7490 0608
Email: profdevelopment@mrs.org.uk
Website: www.mrs.org.uk

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