



MASTER IN MANAGEMENT 2010

ENGLISH TEST

TIME: 60 Minutes

MARKS: 60 Points

A: SUMMARY

20 Points

Instructions:

Using your own words, **summarize** the text in approximately 150 words.

B: ESSAY

40 Points

Instructions:

Give your opinion and present your arguments on the subject

FAMILY NAME: _____

FIRST NAME : _____

DATE : _____

A: SUMMARY

Short and Tweet Prospect Magazine: 18th November 2009

In the popular imagination, ours is a generation unable to focus, encircled by diversions and fuelled by an ever-quickenning media culture. While there is a lot of truth to this, the wilder assertions about our fast-moving world may be exaggerated: after all, the majority of British people don't use Twitter. Yet it is undeniable that catching our attention is becoming less and less easy in a world with ever more channels and websites.

The problem, as neuroscience reveals, is that humans are rotten multitaskers. An often cited 2001 study by psychology professor David Meyer at the University of Michigan examined the brains of young adults performing multiple tasks, like solving maths problems or classifying geometric objects. He found that our brains don't spread attention across tasks, but flip back and forth between them. This demands extra cognitive effort, draining mental focus away from the tasks themselves. The more distraction, the less attentive we become.

This is stressful for individuals, but potentially ruinous for those trying to sell us things. Marc Stewart, guitarist with American rockers Forever the Sickest Kids, says his band will now release three mini-albums, each a few songs long, every six months. The aim is to connect with the group's 13-24 year-old fans who, Stewart says, have "short attention spans."

Meanwhile the board game maker Hasbro has begun marketing accelerated versions of its bestselling games, Monopoly and Scrabble, with the slogan "take a 20-minute game break." The new Scrabble Express only has two words on the board at any one time, while the "Q" tile has been replaced with "Qu." Monopoly Express is missing the hotels, chance cards, and even cash (which is replaced by a cash-machine card). Who has time to count notes? Phil Jackson, head of Hasbro's games unit, says market research showed that players were bored by Monopoly's protracted endgame, as players slog it out to avoid bankruptcy.

Advertisers are learning from the research, too. Brands like Nestlé are already experimenting in the US with shrinking their television adverts from 30 to ten seconds. Studies by American media-buyer KSL Media show that these shorter messages still generate two-thirds of the "recall" of longer slots. MTV is even introducing five-second ads on the web, citing studies into "user tolerance" that show their viewers wouldn't watch anything longer.

Today's flick-flack of marketing stimuli is designed to catch our waning attention, but it may shorten spans further, warns Richard Silberstein, director of the Brain Sciences Institute in Melbourne. The human brain is designed to respond to the unexpected. Anything from an attacking animal to a new camera angle in a film perks up our attentiveness. But, Silberstein says, "if you expose individuals to environments where they don't have to sustain their attention... their ability to sustain it for any length of time may become compromised."

What follows is a sort of attention arms race to the bottom. Companies find it difficult to break through the noise of modern media, so they must dream up ever cleverer, quicker ways to catch our eye. But the more they do this, the thinner our attention spans will wear—and the harder, faster and sharper the ads, shows and propaganda will need to be.

