

## **Tapescript DL 2.5**

### Listening - Tapescript: Buyers and Products

#### INTERVIEW 1

Interviewer: Ms Cheung, you are a buyer for a well-known UK store that has been very successful in Hong Kong, selling clothes mainly, and more recently biscuits, tea, bread, cakes, etc. What can you tell us about the Hong Kong consumer?

Cheung: Hong Kong people are professional shoppers, they shop every lunchtime, after work, at weekends. They know a new style or fabric as it comes in. We have to be on the ball.

Interviewer: What about the image of your store—in the UK it's rather down-to-earth and safe and is also the leader in selling one out of every dresses bought plus nine out of every ten pieces of underwear bought in Britain. Is this the case in Hong Kong?

Cheung: No, when we opened in 1988 we were not so successful. We had to bring in more sophisticated items—at the better end of the market. There are so many glossy designer shops in Hong Kong and most people dress smartly and Hong Kong women of 40-45 still like to look trendy and fashionable.

Interviewer: What about sizes? People are smaller in this part of the world, aren't they?

Cheung: Yes, we stock size 6 here as a matter of course. It's only available on request in Britain. Another difference is skirt lengths - short skirts are our best sellers.

Interviewer: How often do you choose stock?

Cheung: I buy twice a year. The best seller this summer was a short-sleeved button through T-shirt in three different colours. We sold 4,000 a week. Our worst selling items are glamorous nightwear. There's no privacy or space in Hong Kong homes with all the family sitting around watching TV.

Interviewer: No, I'm sure people are more comfortable in shorts or jeans!

## **Tapescript DL 2.5 (cont...)**

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#### INTERVIEW 2

Interviewer: Mr Lee, your job is to buy make-up, shampoo, bath and shower care products for a shop with a young green image. What is popular here in Hong Kong compared with elsewhere?

Ms Lee: Well, the big surprise has been aromatherapy—where people use perfumes and oils to help them rest and relax. I think because Hong Kong is so stressful, people are using them a lot.

Interviewer: Yes, that's surprising. Is there anything you can't sell easily?

Ms Lee: Anything to help people get a tan artificially—a fake tan. The fashion for skin colour is very different here, everyone wants to look as pale as possible. They try to stay out of the sun, not to sunbathe.

Interviewer: What has been your best seller?

Ms Lee: A tea-tree blemish stick—to deal with spots and pimples. I think the heat in the summer makes everyone spotty so we'll sell about 2,000 a month during the summer. Shower gel sells well too because everyone showers a lot. Bath products don't sell so well for obvious reasons.

Interviewer: Not many people have a bath in their home, do they?

Ms Lee: No! Another product that sells well is an eye gel because women often feel they don't get enough sleep and this leads to puffy eyes—so they use the eye gel all the year round to prevent sore, red or swollen eyes. We sell about 1,400 a month.

Interviewer: What about colours—any surprises there?

Ms Lee: Dark shades like blackberry and plum are selling well, all the dark colours, last season we sold lots of white and pastel colours, all the pale colours. People are very fashion-conscious and always buy the latest thing, even if it's a complete change.

## **Tapescript DL 2.5 (cont...)**

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#### INTERVIEW 3

Interviewer: Ms Mak, you select ranges of furniture for a popular Swedish furniture chain in Hong Kong. What is the most important factor?

Ms Mak: Space! The best selling items are the ones with the smallest dimensions, two seater sofas compared with three seater sofas which sell well elsewhere. Another example, is bed size, 120cm is seen as a large single in Europe but as a double bed in Hong Kong.

Interviewer: How about arranging the furniture in the home?

Ms Mak: Adaptability is the key. Hong Kong people are really flexible and don't mind using furniture for all kinds of other uses or functions—there are fewer boundaries between rooms. People keep fridges and microwaves in their living rooms, shoe cupboards in the doorway, multipurpose items sell well.

Interviewer: What about local taste? Is it very different to European taste?

Ms Mak: Yes! The least popular sofa in Hong Kong is the most popular in the UK. Hong Kong people don't like things that look old or are too traditional. They like pale wood like pine not dark varnished or stained wood. "Modern Popular" makes up 60% of our sales because you can coordinate these items with furniture from local shops.

Interviewer: Do people spend a lot on their homes?

Ms Mak: Not really, they're quite careful. Our best sellers are our cheapest. White melanvire bookcases and matching wardrobes—we sell 1,250 of those a month. The weather is a factor too. We don't sell feather duvets or quilts any more. They're too hot in the summer and the humidity makes them smell. Leather sofas sell well because they're easy to clean and the damp doesn't affect them.

Interviewer: And your customers—are they young married couples setting up home?

Ms Mak: Well, they range between 24-44 years old. They still cling to old superstitions too - they won't buy bright blue furniture or white paper lanterns because these are associated with death. I understand that, but we are market leaders so we can create trends not just follow fashion. We can show different ways to use things and persuade everyone to buy our styles!

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