

# Personality does not matter to marketing practitioners: a debate essay sample

[Economics](#), [Consumer](#)



Are you a chicken soup lover or prefer the good old tomato soup any day? Was it a jelly bean sandwich or the one with peanut butter last time you craved for? Popcorn or Pretzels? A peek into small choices that you make can bring an immense delight to a marketer, as he would know what to sell you and when? No, he is not a spy but a pro on understanding personality types. One of the best tools for marketer is an insight of his/her target customers' overall personality. Personality is defined as the inner psychological characteristics that determine and reflect how a person responds to his or her environment. The marketers has closely come to examine these psychological characteristics and use it to rev-up the not just the sales revenues but promote brand image and identity among the consumers. They have been successful too. Thanks to the media communication messages that focus on various personality traits of the consumers, these products and brands have not just found a trait in consumers' shelves now but hearts too. The inner characteristics or those special qualities, attributes, traits, factors, and mannerisms of an individual reflects his or her response towards a product or the marketing messages. A personality portrays three major properties:

\* It reflects individual differences: Personality enables the marketers to categorise individuals on the basis of some specific traits. If each consumer portrayed different personality traits it would be impossible to segment the customers and develop similar products and media messages for them. \*

Personality is consistent and enduring: Although mostly the consumers' personalities remain consistent, their consumption behaviour may vary in case of shift in the psychological, environmental, behavioural, or socio-

cultural factors. \* Personality can change: The property may contradict the above point but personalities indeed change. In case of major life events such as marriage, birth of a child, death in the family the individual personality may register a shift psychologically and in terms of consumption patterns too. Theories Of Personality

Marketers have based their study of consumer personality on the basis of personality theories. Three of the most famous are: \* Freudian Theory

\* Non- Freudian Theory

\* Trait Theory

The famous Psychoanalytical Theory of Personality by Sigmund Freud forms the basis of marketers' consumer personality research. Freud came up with three interacting systems of a personality called: \* Id: The warehouse of primitive and impulsive drives such as thirst, hunger and sex for which an individual seek immediate gratification. \* Ego: It is an individual's conscious control. Ego is driven by rationality and reality. \* Superego: Superego develops as the individual develops. It encourages one to display ethical conduct and morality. Superego can be unreasonable demanding perfection and conscience. Consumer Personality and Freudian Theory

Research shows that consumers buy those products or service which are reflection and extension of their own personalities. A person channelise his or her personal desires by purchasing or using the products that corresponds to those desires. They want to buy the product but don't know the true reason behind the purchase. For example, according to a study called ' What flavour is your personality' by Alan Hirsch (Naperville, H. Sourcebooks 2001),

Potato Chips consumers tend to be ambitious, successful, high achiever, impatient with less than the best whereas, the ones' who like Pretzels are lively, easily bored with same old routine, flirtatious, intuitive, may over commit to projects. Neo-Freudian Personality Theories and Consumer Personality

Freud's colleagues (Alfred Adler, Harry Stack Sullivan, and Karen Horney) who did not agree with him believed that social relationships are fundamental to the formation and development of personality. Many marketers use it as a basis to position their products. The theory reflects an individual's desire to become part of the social setting or group who owns the coveted product. The desire to own an Apple product - an iPhone, iPad or a Macbook reflects an individual's desire to become part of the elite group who own these products. Trait Theory and Consumer Personality

A trait is distinguished relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another. The theory looks at differentiating one individual from another by pin pointing individual traits. The Single-trait Personality test devised to study the consumer personality is widely used by marketers. The test helps in measuring traits such as:

Consumer Innovativeness: how receptive a person is to new ideas. Consumer

Materialism: How attached a consumer is to worldly possessions Consumer

Ethnocentrism: How much is consumer likely to accept or reject foreign

products Consumer Innovators: These consumers' are a marketer's

favourite. Consumer innovators are open to new ideas and want to try out a

new products and services. For example, freelancers or bloggers these days visit various restaurants in the city and review them too. These innovators like to share their experiences with others. Companies are in fact now have turned to such bloggers who are respected in bloggers community to get their products and services by these bloggers. Many co-bloggers and consumers these days base their buying decision on such reviews these days. Consumer Dogmatism

It is a personality trait that measure the degree of rigidity that individual display towards unfamiliar information and towards the information that is contrary to his or her own beliefs. A highly dogmatic person is defensive and may show discomfort and uncertainty. They are seen to be more receptive to ads for new products and services and look for an appeal from an authoritative figure. E. g. While competing with Nerolac, Asian Paints used Amitabh Bachchan to re-enforce its numero uno position in the paint market. Bachchan's personality is synonymous with integrity, trust, and being number 1 in his field. The lesser dogmatic person on the other hand will readily consider the unfamiliar or opposing beliefs. These people are innovators who are venturesome and are very receptive towards new products and messages. An example of such personality may be music enthusiasts, who likes to listen to and buy different kinds of music without reading prior reviews. Social Character

The individual of this personality trait can show inner-directedness to other-directedness. The individuals with inner-directedness rely on their own inner values or standard while evaluating a product. For example, consumers who

buy clothes from local retailer and are not brand conscious, they are more focussed on clothes durability and its benefits. Such consumers like ads that feature product benefits. Other-directedness leads people to follow or belong to a particular class or group. A person wearing a Peter England shirt associates himself of being fair and truthful, as the shirt positions itself to be an ' honest shirt'.

### Personality and Marketing

In order to use personality to form marketing strategies the direct marketers should keep in mind two aspects of consumer decision-making: \* Consumers make many decisions about different aspects of their purchasing behaviour: Consumers not only decides what to buy but also how much to buy, when to buy, and how often to buy etc. Therefore, direct marketers should focus on profiling the personality characteristics of consumers who buy recently or not, frequently or not, in large volume or not, a variety of different types of items or only similar items, and so forth. \* Decision-making often is not a rational process: People tend to get influenced by the social classes, reference groups, and ethnic identifications. They also get influenced by their own emotional reactions. The criteria they use to evaluate choices is not always heuristic but can be irrational. (Linda F. Alwitt, Consumer Personality Characteristics Can Help Guide Marketing and Creative Strategies, Journal of Direct marketing) Self Concept and Marketing

Self-concept is `the attitude a person holds toward him-or herself'.

Individuals have a concept of who they are (the actual self) and who they would like to become (the ideal self). The self concept is driven by achieving

self consistency and enhancing one's self esteem. Consumers tend to buy products that coincide with their actual self. However, if they suffer from low self esteem they may be more likely to buy based on their ideal self.

Researchers have linked compulsive buying behaviour to the consumers' effort to achieve his or her ideal self image. The consumer may portray compulsive buying behaviour in order to overcome the low self esteem. The Self-concept is also extended to products with a symbolic value and viewed as extension of one's own personality. For instance, consumers like to own a car which suits their overall self concept. An uptown girl who belongs to upper class society may like to own a Beetle by Volkswagen. She views the car as a symbol of status, quality and style. A middle aged successful executive on the other hand may own a BMW, as it is classy, demands attention and is full of power. These traits are very closer to his self-concept. The self-concept is complex and contains many attributes including facial attractiveness Vs mental aptitude, positivity Vs negativity, stability, and intensity. Optimum Stimulation Level

OSL is linked with a person's ability to take risks, try new products and innovate. Individuals who seek high level of stimulation want to experience novel, complex experiences while those who seek low stimulation levels look for a calm, humdrum experience. Such people are most often brand loyal. An example of fluctuating stimulation: When an individual starts from his home on a saturday evening, he is excited and his stimulation levels are very high. He goes to a nearby pub and party till late night. In the morning the same individual is found to be looking for some strong coffee to subdue his last

night's experience. According to a study by Gianluigi Guido, Optimum Level of Stimulation and arousability describe consumers in relation to their responses to the environmental stimulation. In turn, these constructs interact with the structural and contingent traits of consumers' personality - accounted as the Big Five Factors (Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, Extroversion/Introversion, Emotional Stability/Neuroticism, Conscientiousness) and motivational states (telic vs paratelic) - to determine their shopping goals (hedonic Vs utilitarian). There are various other factors related to personality that effect the consumer's buying behaviour. Some of these are: Compulsive consumption behaviour: This has been explained under self-concept also.

A darker side of consumption - consumers who are addicted and have no control over their shopping desires come under this personality type. Women possessing hundreds of stilettos and different kinds of shoes is one such example, as they are not rational while buying these shoes and cannot resist their desire to own a shoe if they like it. Fixated Consumption Behaviour: People with these traits do not keep their objects a secret and display them freely. e. g. small girls carrying their Barbie dolls wherever they go. Consumer Materialism: People with such behaviour take pleasure in acquiring and showing off possessions. A young man who is doing well in his career and likes to buy expensive and respected brands is one such example. He likes to wear a Tissot watch and takes pleasure in showing it off to others. He carries an iPhone and wears the best shoes. Other Factors: Other factors that have an effect on consumer's buying behaviour is



geography and colours. For example, men in corporate setting prefer blue colour as it commands respect and authority but when they go out they may prefer Green which reflects a natural, relaxed, and easy going approach.

### Conclusion

A study of consumer personality forms the basis of Marketing and any marketers cannot afford to neglect that. There have been instances when the products were not in sync with the consumers' personality to whom these products were targeted. The result was failure of these products, as consumers did not relate to them. One such example is of Heinz EZ Squirt. This bizarre neon green, purple, blue, or "mystery" coloured ketchup though appealed to kids but parents could not see their kids consuming such a product. The company launched it in 1998 but had to discontinue the product in 2006. Thus, it is important for marketers to not just keep in mind the personality of their consumers but customers too.