

Chapter 5

Personality and Consumer Behaviour

Learning Objectives:

- To understand what are the characteristics of personality
- To understand personality theories
- To understand what are personality and consumer behaviour
- To understand what is brand personality
- To understand the utility of personality theories and brand personality to marketers

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Marketers always want to create competitive differentiation. One such distinct approach popular among the marketers is segmentation based on PERSONALITY. Belief that supports this is that consumers' purchase decisions is a reflection of their unique personalities.

Personality can be defined as '*those inner psychological characteristics that both determine and reflect how a person responds to his or her environment*'. Inner characteristics mean specific qualities, attributes, traits, factors and mannerisms that distinguish one individual from others. A person choosing a specific product, location, sensitivity to price, promotional offer is all linked to one of these inner characteristics. Appeal to his personality trait triggers his buying a specific product, specific brand, from a specific store for a specific purpose. Personality also affects the way

the consumer responds to a firm's communication efforts; it has significant relevance to marketers. It can be thus concluded that the identification of specific personality characteristics associated with consumer behaviour may be highly useful in the development of a firm's market segmentation strategies.

An individual's personality has three distinct characteristics such as 1) personality reflects individual differences 2) personality is consistent and enduring and 3) personality can change.

5.2 PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

- 1) Personality reflects individual differences: Each individual has a set of unique inner characteristics. However, in every individual there is one dominant characteristic that describes him. Individuals with such dominant personality trait collectively become similar i.e. one homogenous group and thus it's a subject matter of interest for marketers.
- 2) Personality is consistent and enduring: An individual's personality is considered as consistent and enduring over a long period of time. As a result, marketers should evolve their product, appeal, communication in such a way that it touches the specific trait of their consumer to get the desired response, instead of changing the personality trait of their target group.
- 3) Personality can change: An individual's personality changes not only in response to abrupt events (heart break, death of beloved) or moment of truth (becoming a father), but also as a result of the gradual maturing process (mid-age, senior citizen).

5.3 PERSONALITY THEORIES

There are three theories related to personality a) Freudian Theory b) Jungian (non-Freudian theory and c) Trait theory.

a) Freudian Theory:

Psychoanalytic theory of personality is considered as catalyst of modern psychology. This theory was promoted by Sigmund Freud.

As per this theory, human personalities are construction of three interacting systems - *the Id, Superego and Ego*.

Id: This aspect covers primitive and impulsive drives; it consists of basic physiological needs like thirst, hunger and sex. For such physiological needs, an individual seeks immediate satisfaction without concern for the specific means of satisfaction.

Ego: Here an individual's behaviour is governed by his conscious control. It functions as an internal monitor that attempts to balance the impulsive demand of Id and the socio-cultural constraints of the super-ego.

Super-Ego: The super-ego is like a 'brake' that imposes restraints on impulsive forces of Id. The super-ego aspects convey that the individual satisfies his needs in a socially acceptable fashion.

Stages of Personality Development - In addition to specifying the personality structure, Freud emphasised that an individual's personality gets formed at distinct stages of growth from being an infant to childhood development. Freud titled these stages of development to conform to the area of the body where a child's sexual instincts are focussed at

the time - *oral, anal, phallic, latent and genital* stages.

Freud believed that an adult's behaviour is largely affected by how he coped with crises during the above stages. The first three stages particularly greatly impact the development of personality. This implies that a person whose oral needs are not adequately satisfied becomes fixated at this stage and develops tobacco chewing or smoking habits. An adult fixated at anal stage shows an excessive need for neatness. This is explained to basically help you know that marketers need to be aware of the basis of specific personality trait development to help them develop an appropriate trigger.

Application of Freudian Theory to Consumer Behaviour - Consumer research has established that human drives are largely *unconscious*. Thus consumers are not consciously aware of their true motives. To uncover consumers' unconscious motives and personality, various consumer research techniques are used such as *observation, projective techniques, focus group discussion and in-depth interviews*.

b) Jungian (Neo-Freudian) Personality Theory:

Neo-Freudian countered the instinctive and sexual part of Freud's personality theory. According to Neo-Freudians, *social relationship* impacts a great deal of personality development. Adler (person behind the Neo-Freudian theory) talks in terms of *style of life* to realise rational goals. Adler also emphasised how an individual tries to overcome a feeling of inferiority by striving to excel. Another researcher Sullivan writes about the individual's action to forge social relationships with others and reduce the anxiety which causes tension. Horney, a lady

researcher, puts an individual into three personality groups as Compliant, Aggressive and Detached.

Trait Theory:

The Trait Theory is quantitative in nature as against the earlier two theories. Empirical experimentation measurement techniques are used to measure personality characteristics or traits. Fundamentally, this theory believes that a personality consists of a set of traits or factors; however some dominant traits are common making it one group and some traits are individualistic. As a result, traits are measured against personality scales.

Marketing Focus on Specific Personality Traits:

Marketing people are keen to know and influence specific personality traits in individual groups. We can examine some specific personality traits and its relevance in marketing.

Consumers can be *dogmatic* or *innovator*. Dogmatic consumers are slow adopters.

Mr. David Reisman has classified the consumers on the basis of *social character*. Three major types of social characters are 1) *tradition-directed* 2) *inner-directed* and 3) *other directed*. Marketers need to understand whom to attract and how to attract.

Further in this social character theory, there is a concept called the optimum stimulation level (OSL). OSL indicates the desired lifestyle and the ability to risk. Consumers with a high OSL would be ready to take risks and try innovative products / services.

Personality traits also can influence the selection of outlets from where consumers purchase their products.

In addition to above three personality theories, there is one theory sometimes considered by marketers, known as the Jungian Personality Theory.

c) Jungian Personality Theory:

Freud and Carl Jung were considered as the pioneers of personality theory in which consumers are classified as per their personality types. Another unconventional pair of researchers namely Myers-Briggs have developed another dimension to this theory, thus making it more relevant to markets. In this new approach, pairing is done on the basis of Jung-inspired psychological dimensions as follows:

1. Sensing - intuiting
2. Thinking - feeling
3. Extroversion - introversion
4. Judging - perceiving

Each of the above pairing is like the two different poles, distinct in their meaning. It shows consumer response to the world they live in. We take the first two pairs and cross tabulate four personality types. We get following table:

	Thinking (T)	
	Feeling (F)	
Sensing (S)	ST	SF
Intuiting (N)	NT	NF

Fig. 5.5 - Pairs of Personality Types under Jungian Personality Theory

Four different natures of characters emerge in front of us. We first try to summarise them for understanding:

Sensing-Thinking, Sensing-Feeling, Intuiting-Thinking, and Intuiting-Feeling.

Knowing the above nature of personalities, it is imperative for marketers to know the personality that accounts for the largest portion of their target segments.

5.4 PERSONALITY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

In an intense automobile market, Mahindra continued to make a difference when it identified the personality of its vehicle as rugged and masculine which was in sync with its prospects as well when they researched owners and their buyer behaviour.

Personality has two tangents - 1) Consumer as a self
2) Brand as a personality. It is essential to strike a right balance between the two.

1) Consumer as a self:

In consumer behaviour, it is recognised that there are two aspects linked to one individual namely SELF & SELF-IMAGE.

- a) Actual self image - It indicates what the consumers actually are
- b) Ideal self-image - Ideally what they like to be
- c) Social self-image - It's the perception others have about you
- d) Ideal social self-image - is your desired perception by others.

Self-image understanding helps marketers to either segment the market appropriately or to position the product in a way that it satisfies a specific kind of

self-image to not only get an entry but to differentiate from the competition.

2) Extended Self:

Once we understand self-image, it will be interesting to know that our possessions have a direct relationship with our self-image.

3) Self-alteration:

We like to improve it for better. Within the realm of actual-self, we are open to alteration to better it for ourselves.

5.5 BRAND PERSONALITY

A brand does have its own personality like human beings do. Brand personality consists of a set of characteristics for which it is recognised and recalled. This gives it a feasibility to enter the human mind in the form of a specific brand position. Specific brand personality attracts a specific mass of the market and thus marketers are very careful about developing and maintaining a specific brand personality.

Brand's personality creates two divides among the target audience, namely adopters or non-adopters. Also, users build a perception in the minds of brand users while non-users will have a different perception about this same personality of the brand.

Based on personality traits liked by the consumers, prospects, he / she build a brand personality and relate it either in human terms, or animal terms, or in terms of shapes and more. It's here that marketers can identify those traits liked by the consumers and how they build a picture of personality in their mind.

It is essential to understand the prime difference between the terms brand personality and brand image. Brand image is the general impression of the product being held by actual or potential consumers. Brand image deals at a broader level; brand personality enters the personality realm and deals with the feelings and emotions.

In short, from marketers' perspective, a well established brand must have a clear brand personality regardless of it being stated or not stated. Exposure should happen in such a way that it makes your brand closer to the envisaged ideal self-image of future customers.

Measuring Brand Personality:

It is essential for the marketers to determine their brand's personality and monitor the shift in the same. Over the decades, researchers have identified five personality factors popularly known as BIG FIVE – sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. Each of these factors can be further extended by set of additional traits.

We can further elaborate additional traits under sincerity as truthful, transparent and more. The traits under excitement could be colourful, stylish, and more. The traits under competence could be technology, process compliance, and more. The traits under sophistication could be design, presentation, and more. The traits under ruggedness could be sturdiness, masculinity, and more. It is essential to consider the traits diligently as it should not only be applicable to a brand but also the brand's product category e.g. Ruggedness could be essential for Bolero as well as utility vehicle category in general but it can't be covered if you are measuring a

fashion brand's personality. While measuring personality traits, it will measure both positive connotations and negative connotations. Derivative of this will be one emerging brand personality.

Brand Personality – How it gets created?

Brand personality can get created due to numerous factors and some of them are described below:

Non-product related factors – societal factors, environmental factors, monetary factors, personal upbringing, user's image event sponsorship. Also, iconic symbols like the RK Studios, the Swoosh for Nike also help in developing and retaining the personality of a brand.

Product related factors – product look, packaging, colour, and product attributes.

Advantages of Brand Personality:

Advantages of brand personality understanding are many such as capitalising positive attitude towards the brand, differentiate your brand, enhance your positioning, segment the market, enable individuals to showcase their social self-image, and more.

Brand Personality and User Imagery:

Human beings consciously or sub-consciously depict certain characteristics while they use multiple brands covering their different needs. A person using a Nike product demonstrates his freedom which is aligned with the brand's core message 'Just Do It'. A marketer's job is to synchronise a brand's personality with user imagery. Marketers can play smart to expand the market retaining the same personality – e.g. Jeans earlier considered for young individuals, later became suitable for their parents

as well. In brief, based on choices we make to satisfy our needs, our user imagery gets formed. Marketers can utilise individuals' continuous drive to define and retain his imagery to get their brand associated with the prospective customers and grow the market.

Next, Chapter Six 'Consumer Psychographics & Perception'