

**BUYER'S DECISION: A FUNCTION OF PERSONA  
A LOOK AT CONSUMER PSYCHOLOGY**



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**Abstract:** The consumer /buyer behavior is governed by his buying motives and habits which are further governed by his buying psychology .the marketers design their marketing mix strategies on the assumptions as to how the consumers would behave and respond to their marketing programmes hence knowledge of consumer psychology plays an important role in developing the marketing mix Marketers have long tried to appeal to consumers in terms of their personality characteristics. They have intuitively felt that what consumers purchase and when and how they consume, are likely to be influenced by personality factors. For this reason marketing and advertising people have frequently depicted specific personality traits or characteristics in their marketing and advertising messages. This paper is designed to provide an understanding of how personality and self concept are related to various aspects of buyer's behavior. It examines what personality is, reviews several major personality theories and describes how these theories have stimulated marketing interest in the study of consumer personality.

## **Introduction**

The personality is a dynamic concept that describes the growth and development of an individual's whole psychological system, which includes motives, beliefs, attitudes, habits and overall outlook. Personality is generally believed to be consistent and enduring over time. In the context of application to marketing, three distinct properties of personality appear to be of central importance:

1. Personality is used to account for difference between individuals rather than the similarities. However all individuals may not differ in every respect. Many individuals tend to be similar in terms of single personality traits. This helps marketers to group people on the basis of a single or a few common traits. If each individual were to be different in every respect, then any find of grouping of consumers based on similarity would be impossible.
2. Personality is generally believed to be consistent and enduring overtime and tends to carry to a variety of situations. Knowing this marketers attempt to influence specific consumer responses by appealing to relevant personality traits.
3. Despite the fact that personality tends to be consistent and enduring it, may change due to major life events such as marriage, birth, death in family, changes in economic circumstances and process of ageing.

**Keywords** Specific motives, beliefs, attitudes, habits, personality traits, group pressure, individual's behavior, psychoanalytic theory, Freudian theory, neo Freudian theory.

**Purpose:** The basic purpose behind studying Consumer psychology is to provide the marketers an insight into the minds of his prospective customers. It aims at finding the needs and wants of the prospective consumers and thereby producing a market offering which fully satisfies their needs and wants. In this age of intense competition, knowledge of consumer psychology plays an important role it provides the marketer an edge over his competitors and further leading to an increase in the goodwill of the firm and hence leading to increase in the profits of the firm.

### **Significance of study**

Psychology is the study of individual which includes motivation, perception, attitude, personality and learning theory all these factors are critical to an understanding of consumer behavior and help us to comprehend consumption related needs of individuals, their actions and responses to different promotional messages and products and the way their experiences and personality characteristics influence product choices. When marketers talk of personality, they refer to a dynamic concept describing the growth and development of an individual's whole psychological system. However personality can be defined as those inner psychological characteristics that both determine and reflect how person responds to his or her environment. The inner characteristics that we call personality are likely to influence the individual's product choices: They affect the way consumer respond to marketer's promotional efforts and when, where and how they consume particular products or services. Therefore the identification of specific personality characteristics associated with consumer behavior has proven to be highly useful in the development of a firm's market segmentation strategies.



### **Determinants Of Consumer Buying Decision**

- i. Cultural factors
- ii. Social factor
- iii. Personal factor
- iv. Psychological factor

## **Psychological Factors**

### **Theories of personality**

This section briefly reviews three major theories of personalities:- and their impact on buying behavior of buyer.

#### **1. Freudian theory**

#### **2. Neo Freudian theory**

#### **3. Trait theory**

Each has played a prominent role in the study of relationship between consumer behavior and personality

#### **1. Freudian theory**

Freud's psychoanalytical theory proposes that every individual's personality is the result of childhood conflicts. These conflicts are derived from three fundamental components of: *id, ego and super ego*. According to the theory the id is entirely unconscious and not fully capable of dealing with objective reality. The ego is the individual's conscious control. The super ego constitutes the moral part of an individual's personality. It represents the ideal rather than the real, defines what is right and good and it influences the individual to strive for perfection.

#### *Freudian theory and product personality*

It believes that human drives are largely unconscious and that consumers are primarily unaware of their true reasons for buying what they buy. The consumers' purchases or consumption situations are a reflection and an extension of the consumers own personality. It is believed that consumer's appearance and possessions – grooming, clothing, jewellery and so forth are reflections of individual's personality.

There are several themes based on psychoanalytic theory which are sometimes used by marketers in attempting to influence consumers such as fantasy, wish fulfillment, aggression and escape from life – pressures examples Perfumes, hair dye, skin care products, dresses, farm houses and motorcycles etc.

## 2. Neo Freudian theory

This theory believed that social and cultural variable, rather than biological drives are more important in the development of and individual's personality. Karl Jung identified number of personality types such as –

- *Sensing, thinking personality*: individuals with this personality type make rational, objective decisions. They are logical and empirical in their approach are inclined to be highly involved, extensive problem solving orientation, weigh economic considerations, are price sensitive and avoid any risk
- *Sensing, feeling personality*: they are moved by personal values. They follow a subjective orientation in making decision. they are status conscious and have short term perspective in decision making
- *Intuiting, thinking personality*: such individuals take a broad view of their own situation and the world. Though they highly rely on imagination and consider a wide range of options , yet use logic in making decisions and their perspective is long term
- *Intuiting- feeling personality*: they use imagination in considering a wide range of options in making a decision and show least sensitivity towards prices. They are also inclined to seek novelty and take risk.

Karen Horney proposed that individuals be classified into three personality groups –

- a. *Comp lined individuals*: are those who move towards others. they prefer name – brand products
- b. *Aggressive individuals*: are those who move against others. They desire to excel and win admiration.
- c. *Detached individuals*: are those who move away from others. They desire independence, self reliance, self sufficiency and freedom from obligations. They are less likely to be brand loyal and were more likely to try different brands.

## 3. Trait theory

Trait is defined as any distinguishing, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from others. Trait researchers have found that it is generally more realistic to

expect personality to be linked to how consumers make their choices and to purchase or consume of a broad product category rather than a specific brand examples: There is more likely to be a relationship between a personality trait and whether or not an individual owns an SUV than between a personality trait and the brand of SUV purchased. On the basis of traits there are different personalities as consumer innovativeness, consumer materialism and consumer ethnocentrism.

### **Personality and understanding consumer diversity**

Marketers are interested in understanding how personality influences consumption behavior because such knowledge enables them to better understand consumers and to segment and target those consumers who are likely to respond positively to their product or service communication. Several specific personality traits that provide insights about consumer behavior:

□ **Dogmatism** is a personality trait that indicates the degree of an individual's rigidity towards anything that is contrary to her or his own established belief. Apparently the person is resistant to change and new ideas.

One would expect highly dogmatic consumers to be relatively resistant to new products, promotions or advertising. On the other hand, consumers low in dogmatism are more likely to accept new and innovative products to establish alternatives and be more receptive to add messages that focus on product attributes and benefits.

□ **Optimal stimulation level**

Consumers with high and low levels of needs for stimulation differ in their purchase behavior .if an individual lifestyle is such that it offers the desired level of stimulation ,she or he is quite satisfied .if the level of stimulation falls short of the desired level ,such a person is bored. Consumers with high stimulation needs tend to be the first to buy a new product, actively seek information about and engage in variety seeking buying behavior. They tend to be curious about the ads they see but are also likely to be bored by them. Interestingly, they are also likely to buy products with greater risk.

□ **Need for cognition**

A promising cognitive personality characteristic is need for cognition. It measures a person's craving for or enjoyment of thinking. Available research indicates that consumers who are high in need for cognition are more likely to be responsive to the part of an ad that is rich in product related information or description, consumers who are relatively low in need for cognition are more likely to be attracted to the background or peripheral aspects of an ad, such as an attractive model or well known celebrity. In this realm, research among adolescents compared the effectiveness of a cartoon message and a written message. As expected, for those low in NC, the cartoon message was more effective in changing attitudes and subjective norms, whereas the written message was more effective for those high in NC.

#### □ **Consumer ethnocentrism: responses to foreign made products**

It is for indentifying consumers with a predisposition to accept or reject foreign made products. Consumers who are highly ethnocentric are likely to feel that it is inappropriate or wrong to purchase foreign made products because of the resulting economic impact on the domestic economy, whereas non ethnocentric consumers tend to evaluate foreign made products-ostensibly more objectively-for their extrinsic characteristics example: how good are they?.A portion of the consumers who would score low on an ethnocentric scale are actually likely to be quite receptive to products made in foreign countries.

#### □ **Brand personality**

Consumers also subscribe to the notion of brand personality; that is, they attribute various descriptive personality-like traits or characteristics to different brands in a wide variety of product categories. For instance, with some help from frequent advertising, consumers tend to see Nike as the athlete in all of us and BMW as performance driven. In a similar fashion, the brand personality for Levi's501 jeans is dependable and rugged, real and authentic, and American and Western. Such personality-like images of brands reflect consumers' vision of the inner core of many strong brands of consumer products.

#### □ **Personality and color**

Consumers not only ascribe personality traits to products and services, but they also tend to associate personality factors with specific color. For instance, Coca-Cola is associated with red, which connotes excitement. Blue bottles are often used to sell wine because the color blue appeals particularly to female consumers. And they buy the majority of wine. Yellow is associated with novelty, and black frequently connotes sophistication. A combination of black and white communicates that a product is carefully



engineered, high tech, and sophisticated in design. The IBM ThinkPad has consistently used an all-black, white case with a red button to house its very successful line of laptops. Nike has used black, white and a touch of red for selected models of its sport shoes. This color combination seems to imply advanced-performance sports shoes.

Many fast food restaurants use combinations of bright colors, like red, yellow, and blue, for their roadside signs and interior designs. Those colors have come to be associated with fast service and inexpensive food. In contrast, fine dining restaurants tend to use sophisticated colors like gray, white, shades of tan, or other soft, pale, or muted colors to reflect the feeling of fine, leisurely service.

### **Conclusion**

Although marketers cannot change consumers' personalities to conform to their products, if they know which personality characteristics influence specific consumer responses, they can attempt to appeal to the relevant traits inherent in their target group of consumers.

Even though consumers' personalities may be consistent, their consumption behavior often varies considerably because of the various psychological, sociocultural, environmental, and situational factors that affect behavior. For instance, although an individual's personality may be relatively stable, specific needs or motives, attitudes, reactions to group pressures, and even responses to newly available brands may cause a change in the person's behavior. Personality is only one of a combination of factors that influence how a consumer behaves.

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