

## **Module - 6**

# **CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

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## **LESSON – 23**

### **THEORIES OF PERSONALITY II, SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-IMAGE, IMPLICATIONS OF CONSUMER PERSONALITY FOR MARKETERS**

#### **Instructional Objectives:**

After completion of this lesson, the student shall know about:

#### **6.3.4 Theories of Personality II**

#### **6.3.5 Meaning of Self Concept and Self Image**

#### **6.3.6 Consumer Personality, Self-Concept and Self-Image and Implications for Marketers**

### **6.3.4 THEORIES OF PERSONALITY II:**

Theories on personality can be categorized as i) individual theories; ii) social learning theories. However, we would elaborate upon these without any such classification, as it is rightly believed that it is the combination of both individual characteristics/traits (genetics) as well as social learning (social environment) that impacts personality. The previous lesson deals with The Freudian theory, the Jungian theory and the Neo-Freudian Theory. The Trait theory is explained in this lesson.

#### **6.3.4.4 Trait theory:**

According to the Trait theorists, an individual's personality make-up stems out of the traits that he possesses, and the identification of traits is important. People possess specific psychological characteristics that are referred to as traits; and all those who possess a particular trait, are said to belong to a personality type. A trait is a predisposition to behave in a certain manner. In order to identify traits within individuals and differentiate amongst themselves, the trait theorists rely on personality tests, scales and inventories. Hence, they assume some kind of a quantitative orientation unlike the Freudian, and Neo-Freudian schools. Once they have identified the traits, they classify individuals into groups of people on the basis of the pattern of traits that they possess.

The trait theories can be of two broad categories, viz., simple trait theories and general trait theories. While

**i) Simple trait theories:** A limited number of traits are identified, and people are identified and classified on the basis of these traits.

**ii) General trait theories:** A large variety of traits are identified.

**An Assessment of the Theory:** Unlike the Freudian and the Neo-Freudian theories, the Trait Theories possess a degree of quantification while classifying individuals into personality types. Through the application of tests and scales, people are objectively assessed for presence/absence of personality traits and accordingly classified into personality types. Thus, unlike the previous theories, the Trait approach seems to be a more realistic and objective approach. However, the limitation lies in the fact that sometimes traits tend to be indefinable, vague and indescribable; nevertheless the personality tests are widely used.

## **The Trait Theory and Consumer Behavior:**

The Trait theory holds greater and wider relevance for a marketer than the Freudian and Neo-Freudian approaches. This is primarily due to the fact that the approach proves to be realistic, objective and quantitative. Single trait personality scales, inventories and tests have been designed, and tested for validity and reliability, and thereafter been applied for consumer research. Such single trait scales, as the name suggests, pertain to measurement of a single trait. Based on the traits, the consumers can be classified into groups, labeling the consumers as being of a certain personality type. Consumers can be finally segmented into personality types, on the basis of the configuration of traits that they possess.

Personality traits have been found to have an influence on consumer decision making and consumption patterns. The traits that consumers possess, influences their decision making processes and subsequent consumption patterns. Consumer behaviorists have identified General and Consumption specific traits; On the basis of these, they have been able to usefully formulate and implement marketing strategies, through first segmenting the market, target it, positioning their product/service offering, and designing the marketing mix accordingly. Some traits that have been subject to research are traits like consumer innovativeness, consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence and consumer ethnocentrism. The Five factor theory lists the traits as openness to experience, conscientiousness, experience, agreeableness and neuroticism (also referred to as OCEAN). Some of these traits and their relevance for a marketer are explained as follows:

### **i) Consumer Innovativeness:**

Innovativeness as a personality trait reflects how well a person reacts to something that is “new”; this “new” could be a new product or a brand or even a change in the marketing mix. A marketer needs to assess in its target segment, the degree of receptivity towards new products and services/brands or even towards changes made in the other Ps be it pricing, distribution and/or communication; the marketer also needs to have an understanding of consumer segments who would be most receptive to try out new products and services, so as to assess the target segments that would be most lucrative;

this has implications especially in terms of diffusion and adoption, two important topics in the study of consumer behavior that shall be discussed subsequently. Thus, a study of consumer innovativeness becomes important for a marketer.

Innovativeness gets related to other personality traits like dogmatism, social character, optimum stimulation levels and variety novelty seeking. The presence/absence of such traits help differentiate between consumer innovators and non-innovators. The various traits, and their implications for a marketer are explained subsequently through a table (See Table 2).

## **ii) Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence:**

Susceptibility to interpersonal influence measures a person's receptiveness to social influence. A marketer needs to understand the how a consumer segment responds to social influence and social approval in the purchase and consumption of goods and services.

The famous SUSCEP scale, has been designed to assess consumers' susceptibility to social influence. The scale has been successfully used to identify differences amongst people with respect to social influence, and their attitude towards acceptance/rejection of new products and services based on social approval. People who score high on the scale are high on self-confidence as opposed to those who score low on the scale. Interpersonal influence can assume three forms, viz., information influence, value expressive influence and utilitarian influence.

**a) Information influence:** Inclination of a consumer to rely on others for information, and readily accept this information without thought and deliberation, is referred to as an information influence. The information could pertain to the product and service offering or the 4 Ps, competitors etc.

**b) Value expressive influence:** The person desires social acceptance by members of the social class; in order to gain such acceptance and hold on to it, he decides to behave in a manner that is similar to them. He respects the values, beliefs and notions of other members of his social class. As a consumer, this value expressive influence would imply

that the consumer behaves like others in his social group, be it family, friends, peers, reference group, members of the social class, etc. He would patronize product and service offerings that have social approval, and behave similar to others in his social group in terms of purchase decisions and consumption patterns. He would seek to gain and maintain social approval and so get influenced by values expressed by members of his social group.

**c) Utilitarian influence:** Under this kind of influence, a person tries to be conventional; he agrees to what have to say in order to win a reward or avoid a punishment. In other words, he yields to social pressure, in order to be benefited like others or escape a punishment like others. As a consumer, he would patronize usage of product and service offerings or brands that are rewarding in terms of usage experience provide value for money and bring satisfaction; he would avoid brands that others do not buy because they are not rewarding.

**Table 2: Personality traits and their Implications**

<b>Personality Trait and Meaning</b>	<b>Types</b>	<b>Relevance/Implications for a Marketer</b>
<b>Consumer Innovativeness</b> - measures how open and receptive a consumer is towards a new product or service/ brand OR even to changes made to any or all of the 4 Ps.	<b>-High on Innovativeness:</b> willing to try out new product/service offerings and /or brands.  <b>-Low on Innovativeness:</b> reluctant and unwilling to try out new product/service offerings and /or brands.	Innovativeness helps a marketer to: - assess a consumers' willingness to innovate. - analyze the degree of receptivity of segment(s). - identify the most lucrative segment(s) for a new product/service. - predict and forecast the rate of diffusion and adoption of new products and services.  An innovator would be willing to try out new product/services and would be receptive to new offerings, as opposed to a non-innovator.
<b>Dogmatism</b> - measures the extent of rigidity within a consumer towards something that is new, or unfamiliar or contrary to established preconceptions, ideas and beliefs.	<b>- High dogmatism:</b> when one approaches the new/ unfamiliar/alien/strange object defensively and with great resistance and discomfort in thought and action. They are "closed-minded."  <b>- Low dogmatism:</b> when one approaches and considers the new/unfamiliar/alien/strange object without any resistance and without any discomfort in thought and action. They are "open-minded".	<b>High dogmatism:</b> - Consumers who are high on dogmatism decide to purchase traditional, established and time tested product/brands; - They tend to become brand loyal. - In order to encourage such consumers to try out new products/brands, the marketer needs to use authoritative appeals; Credible sources like experts/celebrities should be used.  <b>Low dogmatism:</b> - Consumers who are low on dogmatism prefer to test out new products/brands. - Such consumers tend to be innovators. - For such consumers, the marketer should design advertisements that stress upon product features, benefits, factual differences and greater value over previous product offerings and /models.

**Social**

**Character:**

- reflects the degree to which a consumer relies on self or on others in making purchase decisions and forming consumption patterns

**-Inner directness:** when a person relies on his “inner, deep core” values, beliefs and standards in evaluating products and making purchase decisions

**-Other-directness:** when a consumer relies on others, particularly social influences in judging the right or wrong. They look towards others to take a decision.

**Inner directness:**

- Such consumers tend to be consumer innovators; They believe in themselves and make their own decisions.  
- Marketer should use appeals that are rational and fact providing; they should focus on product benefits, features and the value addition, leaving it finally to the consumer to use his value judgment in assessing the worth of the product/service offering.

**Other-directness:**

- They tend to be low on innovativeness.  
- They are socially directed.  
- For such consumers, the marketer needs to use a social appeal, and focus on advertisements that reflect a social environment and social approval.



**Table 2 Contd: Personality traits and their Implications**

<b>Personality Trait and Meaning</b>	<b>Types</b>	<b>Relevance/Implications for a Marketer</b>
<b>Optimum Stimulation Levels (OSL)</b> - measures the degree of calm or excitement that a person desires. - each one of us has an OSL limit. - some of us desire a calm, simple and uncomplicated or uncluttered life; others seek a life that is busy, complex, novel and full of excitement.	<b>-High OSL:</b> when a person is high on OSL, he seeks a life that is novel and full of excitement.  <b>-Low OSL:</b> when a person is low on OSL, he desires a life that is simple, calm and routine.	<b>High OSL:</b> -As a consumer, such people are attracted towards the novel and unique; they are innovative by nature, willing to take risks, and try out new products/brands. - The marketer can offer new variants and models or even come up with new products or changes in the marketing mix. - The advertisement should aim at creating awareness of the product, the factual details, features and benefits, and portray uniqueness of the product and excitement in usage.  <b>Low OSL:</b> - Such people are non-innovators, and go by existing patterns of decision making and consumption behavior; generally brand loyal.  Optimum Stimulation Levels also tend to reflect lifestyle stimulation; - People whose lifestyles are understimulated, tend to feel bored, and would desire anything that offers excitement; On the other hand, people who are overstimulated, desire rest, calm and quiet.
<b>Variety Novelty Seeking</b> - measure the level of variety that a person seeks while purchase of products and services/brands.	<b>- Exploratory purchase behavior:</b> this refers to a switching pattern within a consumer primarily with the purpose of trying out new and/or better brand alternatives.  <b>- Vicarious exploration:</b> when a consumer gets to know about a new product/brand, and then consciously attempts to gain more information, and contemplate purchase, it is referred to as a vicarious exploration.  <b>- Use innovativeness:</b> when a person discovers a unique or a novel way of using an existing product, it is referred to as use innovativeness.	<b>Exploratory purchase behavior:</b> - Such consumers are highly innovative. - They are risk takers. - They are very poor on brand loyalty, and are often switchers. - The marketer needs to create awareness about the new product and/or brand.  <b>Vicarious exploration:</b> - Such consumers are innovative, but act on logic and rationality. - The marketer needs to use a rational appeal, and explain the product/brand uniqueness in terms of features, benefits, value and facts.  <b>Use innovativeness:</b> - the consumer prefers to buy the product and/or brand, that is novel, or possesses multiple features or is even more attractive in the sense that it has multiple uses and applications. -the marketer needs to provide multiple features and functions (like for example, a LPG gas stove with an Oven), to attract such consumers.

**iii) Cognitive factors:**

Cognitive personality traits have also been studied by consumer researchers and have been found to have an impact on consumption behavior. While many traits have been studied and examined, two traits in particular, viz., visualizers and verbalizers, and need for cognition have been found to have a profound influence on how consumers behave in the marketplace. The traits hold relevance in that they could help the marketer in designing their communication strategy, both in terms of media and message strategy. The various traits, and their implications for a marketer are explained subsequently through a table (See Table 3).

**iv) Consumer Ethnocentrism:**

Ethnocentrism is illustrative of a persons' feeling of patriotism, and a resultant desire to accept or reject foreign made products and/or brands. As consumers, they feel that it is undesirable and inappropriate to prefer foreign products over indigenous ones; this could be one, because of patriotism, and two, because of the impact that it would have on the socio-cultural fabric and the economy.

A scale referred to as “CETSCALE” has been developed to measure the receptivity within consumers towards foreign made product and service offerings and/or foreign brands. This could help a marketer, especially a multi-national, help assess the consumer segment, in terms of receptivity towards foreign made products.

## Implications for a marketer:

On the basis of the trait theories, marketers can formulate and implement marketing strategies, through first segmenting the market, targeting it, positioning their product/service offering, and designing the marketing mix accordingly. This would help him classify segments, provide the product/service offering accordingly, and design the mix in terms of price, place and promotion. Apart from the above traits that are more useful for a marketer, there also exist other general and consumption specific traits, a few of which are mentioned below (See Table 4):

**a) General personality traits:** General personality traits are those traits that affect an individual across all kinds of situations, whether related or unrelated to shopping and /or consumption behavior.

**b) Consumption-specific personality traits:** Consumption-specific personality traits are traits that affect shopping and /or consumption behavior.

**Table 3: Consumer Cognitive Personality Traits and their Implications**

<b>Consumer Cognitive Personality Traits</b>	<b>Types</b>	<b>Relevance/Implications for a Marketer</b>
<b>i) Visualizers and Verbalizers:</b>	<p><b>-Visualizers:</b> consumers who prefer the visual media or visual information or even products that stress the visual.</p> <p><b>-Verbalizers:</b> such consumers prefer the written/verbal media or the written/verbal information or even products that stress the written/verbal.</p>	<p><b>Visualizers:</b> -As a consumer, they prefer the TV or would prefer the audio visual CD to provide them with information, rather than a book to read.</p> <p>-The marketer should present his communication via the visual media and stress on pictures, charts, figures and drawings in order to create awareness of the product, the factual details, features and benefits. The strategy would attract attention and seek retention of information from visualizers.</p> <p><b>Verbalizers:</b> - As a consumer they prefer the newspaper/ magazine as a media and would desire information via a brochure or a book rather than audio visual CD.</p> <p>- The marketer should use the print media or even supplement it with the verbal to educate verbalizers about their product and service offerings, as also other information about the 4Ps.</p>
<b>ii) Need for cognition (NC):</b>	<p><b>-High Need for Cognition:</b> those consumers, who are high on cognition, are desirous of information; they love to think, and thus, like to collect information, and deliberate upon it. It refers to their propensity to gather information and enjoying thinking.</p> <p><b>-Low need for Cognition:</b> such consumers are low in need for thought and deliberation.</p>	<p><b>- High Need for Cognition:</b> Consumers who are high on the NC, prefer a message that is information providing, gives product/service related information, arguments and counter-arguments; in other words, they like to process information through the central route to persuasion; they would prefer the message content, rather than the context.</p> <p><b>- Low need for Cognition:</b> Consumers who are low on the NC, prefer a message that contains fun, fantasy, via colours, music, jingle etc.; they like to process information through the peripheral route to persuasion, and would prefer the message context (the music, jingle, scenery, and celebrity/model) rather than the message content.</p>

**Table 4: Examples of general versus consumption specific traits:**

<b>General personality traits</b>	<b>Consumption-specific personality traits</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dogmatism</li> <li>- Compliance</li> <li>- Expertise and Involvement</li> <li>- Self confidence</li> <li>- Impulsiveness</li> <li>- Need for cognition</li> <li>- Extroversion</li> <li>-Openness to experience</li> <li>-Conscientiousness</li> <li>- Agreeable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Innovativeness</li> <li>- Social directedness or other directed</li> <li>- Opinion leadership</li> <li>- Early adopters (high confidence) versus late majority or Laggards (low confidence)</li> <li>- Deal prone</li> <li>- High versus Low</li> <li>-Prefer to shop with others than alone; Socially directed.</li> <li>- Variety novelty seeker; Innovative</li> <li>- Careful; Logical and rational</li> <li>- Socially directed; Looks towards others for help, advice and decision, Compliant.</li> </ul>

### **6.3.5 MEANING OF SELF CONCEPT AND SELF IMAGE:**

The two issues, self-concept and self-image, have been widely researched and dealt upon in studies on consumer behavior. Every individual makes a self-assessment of himself/herself, and forms opinions of himself/herself. He sees himself as an “actual”, and as an “ideal”. Based on such an image, he acts out his behavior, both general and specific to consumption behavior. The study on self-concept and self-image lay emphasis on such aspects of personality that are expressive of an individual's image of him or herself. They hold relevance for a marketer in the sense that consumers hold opinions of their own personalities, and such individual opinions have an impact on their decision making as well as usage and consumption patterns. Many a times this assessment of self-concept and self-image have a greater impact than even the personality traits; as such while we could make broader generic conclusions with personality traits, the self-concept and self-image help us make specific conclusions.

Theories related to self-concept indicate relationships between a person and his/her social system, and conclude how this relationship affects a person's personality

make up. In other words, an individual's interaction with others around him affect his personality development, through self-concept. While earlier theories like the Freudian theory and the Trait theory also recognize the role played by social forces in the development of an individual's personality, there is a difference. The former theories recognize the role social forces could play in grooming one's personality in the past, self-concept theories focus on the influence that such forces have on one's current personality pattern.

### **Self-Concept:**

The self-concept comprises two components, viz., the “actual self”, and the “ideal self”. The first, i.e., “actual-self”, refers to an individual's perception of what/who he or she is; the second, i.e., “ideal-self”, refers to an individual's perception of what/who he or she wants to be. Both of these concepts are related to each other. An individual can express his personality in two ways; depending upon the priority that is assigned, the resultant behavior would differ. For example, the person can either act out his “actual self” and behave as he is, consistent with his existing personal make-up. The other alternative would be to act out in a manner that is close to or similar to the “ideal-self”, something that he wants to be, thereby increasing his self-esteem. An individual faces a conflict when there is a big difference between the “actual” and “ideal” self, and the choice to behave as “actual” or “ideal” depends on the situational context. Thus, individual's are not a “single self”; they are “multiple-selves”, and would act differently in different situations.

As a consumer, also the two, “actual” and “ideal” selves come into play in the marketplace. While a consumer tries to relate his personality with the personality of the product/service offering, and the brand, the “actual-self”, comes into play; on the other hand, when he tries to match the product /service and the brand personality with his aspirational group, and aspires to buy the same, the “ideal-self” comes into play. This confirms the assumption that self-concept is closely related with personality, and individuals would buy such products/services, which match their concept and personalities.

Further, consumer's also exhibit "multiple-selves", and the same consumer could act differently at different times with different people; for example, he could buy prefer a blue colour today, and a black tomorrow. Again, whether the "actual-self" or the "ideal-self", comes into play would be determined by situational factors, which would include social visibility of purchase and usage, and the importance/relevance of the purchase for the person's self-image. This could have implications for a marketer in terms of market segmentation (use-benefit, and use-situation segmentation).

### **Self-Image:**

Traits, characteristics, qualities and mannerisms of behavior, all put together create the self-image of a person. This self-image arises out of the person's background, values, lifestyles, experiences, etc. as well as interactions with parents, family, friends, peers etc.

In terms of marketing also, we as consumers possess a self-image. Similar to relationship between self-concept and brand personality, there also exists a relationship between self-image and the brand personality. Consumers match the product and/or brand personalities, with their self-image, and buy those where they find a close or perfect match. In this manner they attempt to reaffirm and preserve their self-image.

Based on findings from research undertaken in consumer behavior, various kinds of self-images have been identified, viz., actual self-image (how a consumer perceive himself), ideal self-image (how he would like to perceive himself), social self-image (how a consumer feels others perceive him, or how they think of him), ideal social self-image (how the consumer would like others to perceive him), and expected self-image (how the consumer expects to see himself in future). The expected self-image refers to something that lies between the actual and the ideal self-image, in other words, it is something what the consumer would like to be. It needs to be mentioned here that very often consumers' seek to "alter their self", and try and go for a personality change, for example they could go in for fashion apparel, grooming and cosmetic surgery, etc., and try and reach an ideal self.

As a consumer, which of the self-images comes into play would depend upon the i) product/service offering and, ii) the situational factors, which would include social visibility of purchase and usage, and the importance/relevance of the purchase for the

person's self-image. For example for convenience goods or day-to-day household goods, the consumer would base his purchase on his actual self-image. On the other hand, for shopping goods or specialty goods, he would be guided by the social self-image or the ideal self-image. This could have implications for a marketer in terms of market segmentation and positioning. Self-image can be used as a basis to segment the market, and the marketer can then position his product/service offering as a symbol of such self-images.

**Brand Personality:** Just as individuals' have a personal make-up with characteristics/traits/qualities, similarly products/services also have personalities. Brand personality refers to a set of characteristics/qualities similar to human beings that become associated with a brand. Based on their understanding, consumers' begin to ascribe certain characteristics or traits to a brand. This association between the characteristic/trait and the brand gets generated out of the manner in which it is positioned by the marketer. Thereafter, consumers match the product and/or brand personalities, with their own personalities, self-image and self concept; and they buy those where they find a close or perfect match. Sometimes they buy such product/brands that help them bolster their weak or inferior self. Some personality traits with examples of brands are mentioned below:

- a) Sophistication: Dove, Titan Raga
- b) Ruggedness: Levi's Jeans, Bajaj Pulsar
- c) Power: Surf, Rin, Hero Honda
- d) Achievement: Boost, Glucon C
- e) Competence: Kingfisher Airlines, IBM
- f) Sincerity: Life Insurance Corporation, Western Union Money Transfer



### **6.3.6 CONSUMER PERSONALITY, SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-IMAGE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS:**

Consumer personality, self-concept and self image have implications for a marketer. Consumers' purchase and usage of product and service offerings is reflective of his personality, self-concept, and self-image. Consumers generally buy those products/brands, whose personality matches their own. For marketers this is important as they must know that consumers make purchase decisions to support their personality, self-concept and self-image. The concept of self helps a marketer to understand, predict, and direct the purchase decisions of consumers. Thus, marketers need to understand the congruity between personality, self-concept and self-image of the customers, vis a vis, the brand personality and image of the product/service offering. The study of consumer personality, self-concept and self-image can be useful for a marketer in the following ways:

1. Every person is unique in oneself, and thus personality reflects individual differences. Yet, while we are different, we may be similar to each other on a trait (s), and could constitute a personality type (s). A person's decision with regard to the brand as well as the timing and place of purchase, the amount purchased, its usage and disposal, are all based on his personality. This could have implications for a marketer who could treat each personality type as a separate segment, position his offering accordingly and design the 4Ps.

Drawing upon from various theories on personality, marketers can formulate and implement marketing strategies, through first segmenting the market, targeting it, positioning their product/service offering, and designing the marketing mix accordingly. This would help him classify segments, provide the product/service offering accordingly, and design the mix in terms of price, place and promotion.

2. Self-concept is closely related with personality, and individuals would buy such products/services, which match their concepts and personalities.

The study of consumer self-concept helps a marketer understand how the "actual" and "ideal" selves come into play in the marketplace. A consumer tries to relate his

personality with the personality of the product/service offering, and the brand, the “actual-self”, comes into play; on the other hand, when he tries to match the product /service and the brand personality with his aspirational group, and aspires to buy the same, the “ideal-self” comes into play. Further, consumer’s also exhibit “multiple-selves”, and the same consumer could act differently at different times with different people;

Again, whether the “actual-self” or the “ideal-self”, comes into play would be determined by situational factors, which would include social visibility of purchase and usage, and the importance/relevance of the purchase for the person’s self-image. This has implications for a marketer in terms of market segmentation.

3. Similarly, there also exists a relationship between self-image and brand personality. Consumers match the product and/or brand personalities, with their self-image, and buy those where they find a close or perfect match. In this manner they attempt to reaffirm and preserve their self-image.

Based on findings from research undertaken in consumer behavior, various kinds of self-images have been identified. As a consumer, which of the self-images comes into play would depend upon the i) product/service offering and, ii) the situational factors, which would include social visibility of purchase and usage, and the importance/relevance of the purchase for the person’s self-image. Self-image can be used as a basis to segment the market, and the marketer can then position his product/service offering as a symbol of such self-images.

Thus, the study of consumer personality (personality traits and types as well as general and consumption specific personality traits), self-concept, and self-image is important, and holds relevance for a marketer in the design, development and implementation of his marketing strategies. After gaining an insight into the various personality types, a marketer could design his marketing strategy so to be able to serve consumers with the varying personality types in a better manner, leaving them more satisfied.

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## FAQS (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS):

**Ques 1** Define self-image. How is it relevant for a marketer.

**Ans 1** Traits, characteristics, qualities and mannerisms of behavior, all put together create the self-image of a person. This self-image arises out of the person's background, values, lifestyles, experiences, etc. as well as interactions with parents, family, friends, peers etc.

In terms of marketing also, we as consumers possess a self-image. Similar to relationship between self-concept and brand personality, there also exists a relationship between self-image and the brand personality. Consumers match the product and/or brand personalities, with their self-image, and buy those where they find a close or perfect match. In this manner they attempt to reaffirm and preserve their self-image.

Based on findings from research undertaken in consumer behavior, various kinds of self-images have been identified, viz., actual self-image (how a consumer perceive himself), ideal self-image (how he would like to perceive himself), social self-image (how a consumer feels others perceive him, or how they think of him), ideal social self-image (how the consumer would like others to perceive him), and expected self-image (how the consumer expects to see himself in future). The expected self-image refers to

something that lies between the actual and the ideal self-image, in other words, it is something what the consumer would like to be. It needs to be mentioned here that very often consumers' seek to "alter their self", and try and go for a personality change, for example they could go in for fashion apparel, grooming and cosmetic surgery, etc., and try and reach an ideal self.

As a consumer, which of the self-images comes into play would depend upon the i) product/service offering and, ii) the situational factors, which would include social visibility of purchase and usage, and the importance/relevance of the purchase for the person's self-image. For example for convenience goods or day-to-day household goods, the consumer would base his purchase on his actual self-image. On the other hand, for shopping goods or specialty goods, he would be guided by the social self-image or the ideal self-image. This could have implications for a marketer in terms of market segmentation and positioning. Self-image can be used as a basis to segment the market, and the marketer can then position his product/service offering as a symbol of such self-images.

## **FAQS (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS):**

### **Ques 1      What is the Trait theory of Personality?**

**Ans 1**      According to the Trait theorists, an individual's personality make-up stems out of the traits that he possesses, and the identification of traits is important. People possess specific psychological characteristics that are referred to as traits; and all those who possess a particular trait, are said to belong to a personality type. A trait is a predisposition to behave in a certain manner. In order to identify traits within individuals and differentiate amongst themselves, the trait theorists rely on personality tests, scales and inventories. Hence, they assume some kind of a quantitative orientation unlike the Freudian, and Neo-Freudian schools. Once they have identified the traits, they classify individuals into groups of people on the basis of the pattern of traits that they possess.

The trait theories can be of two broad categories, viz., simple trait theories and general trait theories. While

**i) Simple trait theories:** A limited number of traits are identified, and people are identified and classified on the basis of these traits.

**ii) General trait theories:** A large variety of traits are identified.

**An Assessment of the Theory:** Unlike the Freudian and the Neo-Freudian theories, the Trait Theories possess a degree of quantification while classifying individuals into personality types. Through the application of tests and scales, people are objectively assessed for presence/absence of personality traits and accordingly classified into personality types. Thus, unlike the previous theories, the Trait approach seems to be a more realistic and objective approach. However, the limitation lies in the fact that sometimes traits tend to be indefinable, vague and indescribable; nevertheless the personality tests are widely used.

## SELF EVALUATION TESTS/QUIZZES:

### Section A True/false:

1. Trait Theories possess a degree of quantification while classifying individuals into personality types.
2. The SUSCEP scale, has been designed to assess consumers' feeling for patriotism.
3. Social Character reflects the degree to which a consumer relies on self or on others in making purchase decisions and forming consumption patterns.
4. When a person is low on OSL, he seeks a life that is novel and full of excitement.

**Section B Fill up the blanks:**

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ scale measures susceptibility to interpersonal influence measures a person's receptiveness to social influence.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is illustrative of a person's feeling of patriotism, and a resultant desire to accept or reject foreign made products and/or brands.
3. The self-concept comprises two components, viz., the \_\_\_\_\_, and the "ideal self".
4. Consumer's also exhibit \_\_\_\_\_, and the same consumer could act differently at different times with different people.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to a set of characteristics/qualities similar to human beings that become associated with a brand.

**Section C Multiple choice questions:**

1. When a consumer gets to know about a new product/brand, and then consciously attempts to gain more information, and contemplate purchase, it is referred to as:
  - a) variety novelty seeking
  - b) a vicarious exploration
  - c) exploratory purchase behavior
  - d) none of the above.
2. Based on the traits, the consumers can be classified into groups, labeling the consumers as being of a certain personality \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) type
  - b) group
  - c) class
  - d) none of the above.

**Section D Short answers:**

1. Differentiate between general and consumption-specific personality traits.
2. Innovativeness gets related to other personality traits. Mention any three of them.

**KEY**

**Section A True/false:**

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False

**Section B Fill up the blanks:**

1. SUSCEP
2. Ethnocentrism
3. Actual self
4. Multiple selves
5. Brand personality

**Section C Multiple choice questions:**

1. b
2. a

**Section D Short Answers:**

1. General personality traits are those traits that affect an individual across all kinds of situations, whether related or unrelated to shopping and /or consumption behavior. For example: dogmatism, compliance

Consumption-specific personality traits are traits that affect shopping and /or consumption behavior. For example: innovativeness, social directedness.

2. Dogmatism, Social character, Optimum stimulation levels and Variety novelty seeking.

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