

# Consumer Behavior

## 5. Personality



**José Manuel Fernández Polanco**  
**Patricia Martínez García de Leaniz**

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

AREA OF MARKETING AND MARKET RESEARCH

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**5.1. The concept of personality**

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## 5.1. The concept of personality

**Personality** is a part of the way in which we perceive and describe other people.

There is significant debate about whether it is a **part of intelligence or a separate concept**. There is also a lot of controversy over its definition and use.

Usually **people are described using a single characteristic** and their complete personality is built around a single facet or a limited number of facets. **Depending on which facet we choose** to describe a given person, this would portray a different personality.

**Stereotypes** frequently **rely on false assumptions**.

**Allport, G. W.** (1927). "Concepts of trait and personality". *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol 24(5), 284-293

We can describe an individual's personality through its links with behavior

**External aspect.** Typical behaviors and the way they affect others.

**Internal aspect.** The psychological core, only possible to infer from behaviors.

**Dynamic aspect.** Adaptation to a changing environment.

**Consistent aspect.** Behaviors we may recognize as a characteristic of the individual.

**Role aspect.** Behaviors that are related with specific roles.

## 5.2. Theories of personality

### Psychoanalytic theories

Personality results from the synthetic confrontation of three parts of the human mind called **Id, Ego and Super Ego**.

**Id** is **fully subconscious**, working on the **pleasure principle**, dominated by sexual drives, **subjective**, and gratification seeking.

**Ego** is **fully conscious**, deals with reality, and helps the development of **interactive skills**. Includes our **self-image**.

**Super Ego** shares **conscious and subconscious** dimensions, deals with morality, and acts as a **moderator between** pleasure seeking **Id** and reality based **Ego**.

**Freud, S.** (1920). A general introduction to psychoanalysis. Boni and Liveright. New York.

## Psychoanalytic theories (Central ideas)

The ultimate goal of all human behavior is pleasure, and the **Id** is the **essential source of energy and motivation**. This source is subconscious.

**Early experiences causes later behavior**. People develop through a number of stages. When facing a threatening environment, an individual may **regress to behaviors from previous stages** where satisfaction was achieved.

## The theory of traits

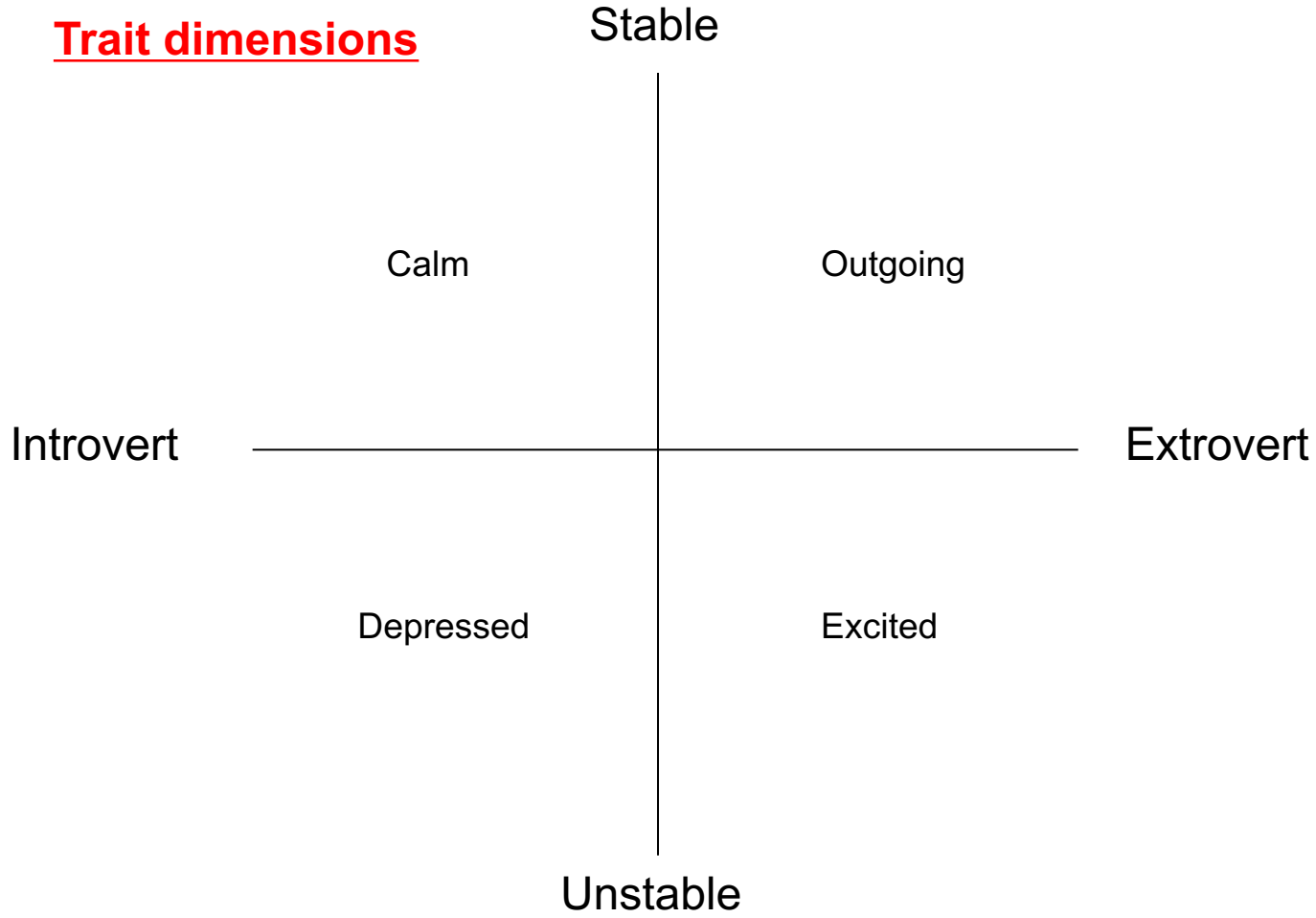
Traits are characteristics common to many people, but variable in strength across individuals.

Traits are relatively stable, influence behavior, and can be consistently inferred from the observation of individuals' behaviors.

A person can be defined by the profile of his traits. Extroversion, anxiety, independence, neuroticism...

**Cattell, R. B.** (1957) *Personality and motivation structure and measurement*.  
World Book Co. Oxford UK

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Eysenck, H. J. (1953). *The structure of human personality*. Methuen. New York.



## The self-concept theory

Personality has **three faces**:

The “**I component**”. The personal, private and individual concept of oneself.

The “**ME component**”. The socially acceptable self.

The “**Ideal Self**”. How the person would like to be.

The three concepts don't need to be coincident. A non-consistent self-concept may result in individual conflicts.

**Newcomb, T. M.** (1950), “Role behaviors in the study of individual personality and of groups”. *Journal of Personality*, 18: 273–289.

### Ego defense mechanisms.

Or how we justify our inconsistencies.

**Repression.** Suppress or exclude disturbing thoughts from mind.

**Rationalization.** Application of logic to avoid facing the true motivations.

**Projection.** Ascribe our own emotions and motivations to others. Criticize our own vices in others.

**Sublimation.** Redirect energy from the socially unacceptable to the socially acceptable.

**Identification.** Attributing to ourselves the characteristics of another person or group.

**Fantasy.** A pleasant escape from reality.

## 5.3. Personality and consumer behavior

### Personality and predicting consumer behavior

Personality **measurement** has several **problems** concerning reliability and validity.

Personality is **not a significant factor** in many consumer decisions. It can result non-significant when acting in conjunction with other variables.

The creation of **large groups** tends to **dilute the clarity of market segments**.

### Brand personality

People may purchase products which are compatible with their self-concept. They may be particularly attracted by products which enhance their “ideal-self”.

Marketers may identify their products with personality characteristics which are considered to be desirable by certain consumers.

While consumers may be attracted to a product personality, there are several reservations as to whether this would significantly affect purchase behavior. Brand personality may complement, rather than match, that of the consumer.

## 5.4. Personal learning style

Human beings **learn through experience**. Each of us, as individuals, will have developed a **preferred learning style**. Learning style is the sum of our **learning habits acquired over the years**.

Four main learning styles will affect people's behavior when facing new concepts, ideas or products.

**Activists** prefer the real experience. **Reflectors** are happy observing and evaluating. **Theorists** enjoy the process of conceptualizing and classifying. **Pragmatists** like to try out ideas to see if they work.

A person's learning process will be a combination of the four learning styles. The **preeminence of one will affect the individual's experience** with the new concept.

**Honey, P. & Mumford, A.** (1986), *Using your learning styles*, Peter Honey. Maidenhead.