

Consumer Behaviour and Vedic Personality – A New Perspective

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Abstract:

In recent years, consumer's pattern of spending has changed. Western Psychology has given us many models of Attitude and Personality, however we are unable to grasp the essence of Consumer Behaviour and it remains a complex, dynamic and multi-dimensional process (Goswami R, 2015). The purpose of this paper is to document some aspects of Indian psychology including the significance of Guna Theory of Personality and concept of Sat Chit Ananda which if applied to Consumer Behaviour would help serve the consumer better. Indian Psychology deals with the inner states of a person, with consciousness as the primary subject matter. As per the Indian view, the objective is to seek long term congruence of body, mind and atman for happiness and transformation of the person to higher levels of spiritual oneness is called the concept of sat-chit-ananda. The paper explores the possibility of looking at Consumer Behaviour through the Indian Psychology concepts of Sat Chit Ananda and compare the same with the Tri Component Model of Attitude.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Attitude and Personality, Vedic Personality, Indian Psychology, Guna Theory, Sat- Chit- Ananda, Buying Habits

I. Introduction

Consumer Buying Behaviour as a discipline is relatively young and very few research has been carried out which would examine the concept of influence of National Culture on consumer Behaviour. There is a case for societal influence on business systems, commerce and industry. As Trade, commerce and Management are influenced by National Culture. Grainger and Chatterjee (2008), believe that, all economic activities are rooted and entrenched in a given society, its social institutions and culture. Grainger and Chatterjee (2008) have given below a comparative business system model which encompasses Institutional Framework, Culture, Key Historical Influences and Role of the State.

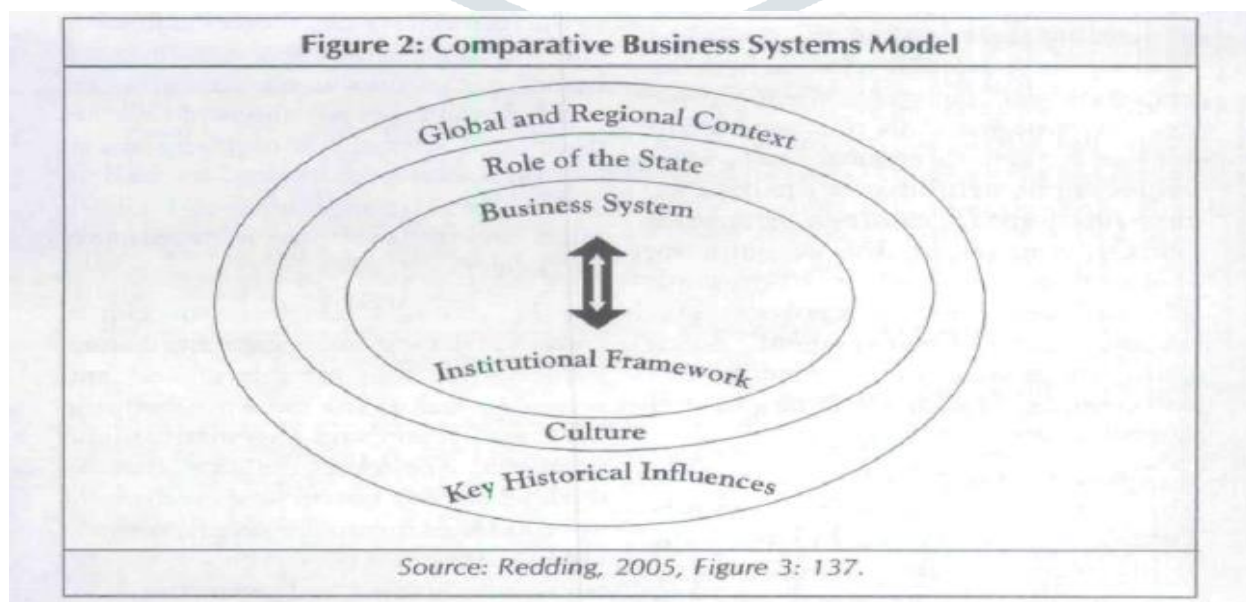


Figure 1 : Source: Grainger and Chatterjee (2008)

The circular core of the model represents the dynamic interrelationship between the relevant business system and the institutional framework. It would examine the business system, with respect to the owners of the enterprise, how control is exercised and also the nature of governance structures); Further, networks (shows how firms are interconnected across the economy), and management (the role of managers in the coordination of financial, technical and human resources). The institutional framework is made up of the societal institutions which are relevant to an understanding of the business system, and is made up of capital, human capital and social capital. Further, the second circle from the center, consists of the role of the state, and culture, implying that they are interrelated, and separately and jointly influence both the business system and the institutional framework.

Culture has very strong influence on founding many brands. Product Brands and Services which have been able to adapt to national culture are always successful. The best example is that of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), the world's largest chicken-based fast-food chain, had to be closed down after a few months of opening in Bengaluru in June, 1995 as they could not understand the Indian Culture. McDonald's opened its doors in India, the 95th country, in India, with its first restaurant opened on Oct. 13, 1996 at Basant Lok, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi. It was also the first McDonald's restaurant in the world not serving beef on its menu but had Alu Tikki, one of the favourites of Delhi people. This demonstrates how national culture plays an important role in understanding consumer buying behavior. Culture is the one of the biggest influencer in consumer buying behavior. Human behavior is largely learned. As the children are exposed to the basic values, perceptions, wants, and behaviors from the family and community, norms and the do's and don'ts all comprise of the culture. Every group or society has a culture, and cultural influences on buying behavior may vary greatly from country to country. Failure to adjust to these differences can result in ineffective marketing or awkward mistakes.

II. Objectives

1. To recognize the uniqueness of Indian consumer and their cultural orientation.
2. To know the different types of Vedic personality and its influence on consumer behavior
3. To consider advertisement campaigns which were targeted to Vedic Personalities.

III. Methodology

The present work explores the facets of Vedic personality and its significance to consumer buying behavior. Sources of the secondary data are used and the research design is exploratory in nature.

IV. Literature Review

Emerging-market consumers are becoming more discerning, shrewd and selective. Their consumption pattern has changed and they are becoming more demanding. Trends in consumer behavior are driven in India by the demographic dividend as India (Goswami R, 2015). These demographic changes are likely to contribute to a substantially increased labour force in the country. According to Accenture Report (2013), 40% of the consumers in India are between 20 and 49 years of age. 40% are less than 19 years and remaining 20% in the age group over 49. As per the latest census projection, the proportion of working age population between 15 and 59 years is likely to increase from approximately 58% in 2001 to more than 64% by 2021. Similarly the Indian consumer has a growing population of youngsters both in Millennials and generation Z.

When we study Consumer Behaviour, as per the western model of consumer buying behavior, Attitudes are an expression of inner feelings that reflect whether a person is favorably or unfavorably predisposed to some object. They are result of mental and emotional process, and hence are not visible, but must be deduced from what people say are what they do. Attitude and Personality are vital, as they are related to psychology of the consumer which influences his buying behavior. One of the important aspect of marketing research focuses on attitude, so as to develop new products repositioning the existing products, creating advertising campaigns, and predicting brand preferences as well as general purchase behavior. Study of attitude towards a product or service and personality are important for success of any marketer. According to consumer behavior an attitude is a learned predisposition to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable way with respect to a given object. It can be seen that the attitude is multi-dimensional concept, as it is directly connected and dependent on other concepts.

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), the concept of attitude was related to specific predisposition or the mental preference. It is one of the important aspects of consumer behavior. It was first theorized in social psychology as a tool to understand human behavior. According to Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), Attitude, communicates, aspects of the person's social identity and world view. Since attitude associate with a group of people, it reveals, one's personality, one's orientation, and also can be used to gain approval or avoid disapproval. (Schlenker, 1978). Further according to Schlenker (1978), an attitude is defined as "an enduring organization of motivational, emotional, perceptual, and cognitive processes with respect to some aspect of an individual's world."

According to tri-component attitude model, attitudes consist of three major components, a cognitive component, an affective component, and a behavioral component. According to Schiffman and Kanuk(2004), there are three components of attitude, namely Cognition, Affective and Conation. Cognitive component comprises of information and perceptions that are found through a combination of experiences with the attitude objects and related information from different sources. The cognitive component relates to a consumer's beliefs about an

object. It includes the knowledge and perceptions that are acquired by a combination of direct experience, logical reasoning and something that appeals to once left brain. This knowledge and resulting perceptions commonly take the form of beliefs. While as regards Affective component, it comprises of consumers emotions and feelings about a particular product or brand or service. These emotions and feelings are evaluative in nature, because of this nature, an individual rate an object either “favorable” or “unfavorable. As regards the last component, Conative, represents one’s tendency to respond in a certain manner toward an object or activity. It is action related and represents the consumer’s intention to buy as also a series of purchase decisions.

There are many theories which explain why the consumer buy what they buy or why consumer don’t buy. One of the important personality theories in western psychology is Trait Theory. One of the popular theories of personality is Trait theory and believes that, an individual’s personality is composed of definite predisposition attributes called traits. A trait is more specifically defined as any distinguishable, relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another. In trait theory personality typically is described as having one or more such characteristics like ambitiousness, social, authoritarian, extroversion, assertiveness, competitiveness .

V. Discussion

According to Indian Psychology, the concept of Sat Chit Anand and Satwa, Rajas and Tamas Guna Theory of Personality is also closely related to the concept of Personality. Personality is one of the most influential aspect of consumer behavior. Personality is the result of social and environmental influences on the person concentrated. We can say that personality of an individual is the sum total of his hereditary. One individual is different from others not only in the physical aspects, but also in personality types. It is one of the factors that influence one’s behavior in the marketplace. What a consumer purchases, when and how he or she purchases are influenced by his personality types.

We have within us what could be viewed as a Sacred Concept of SAT-CHIT-ANANDA. It can also be designated as, Truth, Goodness and Beauty. When we observe the Cognition Component of Attitude formation and Influencer, we concentrate on the Intellect or Rational Expression also termed as SAT . While when we examine the different activities that we indulge in “Conation” we are satisfying our “ Chitta” and seeking Goodness. Finally we are pursuing “Beauty” we are pursuing “Affect” or feelings, sentiments; everything which compels us to pursue “Ananda” or Supreme Bliss.

Sat-Chit-Ananda (Sanskrit) is a path to spiritual advancement. Its literal translation is the following: Purity-Subtlety-Bliss. According to this concept, one is able to transcend one’s being first by imbibing truth (Sat), followed by Enhanced Consciousness (Chit), which finally leads to Ananda(Eternal Bliss). According to Adi Shanakaracharya, every human being can attain this once the sheath of Avidya (Ignorance) is uncovered. If this concept is applied to Consumer Behaviour and Attitude according to Indian Psychology, it is the job of the Marketer through Advertisement and Promotion to displace Avidya (Ignorance) and educate the buyer/ consumer about the Truth, Goodness and Beauty – The Tricomponent Model of Indian **Psychology (Sat Chit Ananda)**. Thus whenever the consumer buys a product or brand or subscribes to a service he has to know the Sat – Truth which will appeal to his rational mind. Chit or Goodness which will appeal to his emotions and feelings and finally Ananda or Beauty which will make him perceive the value and benefit of the product.

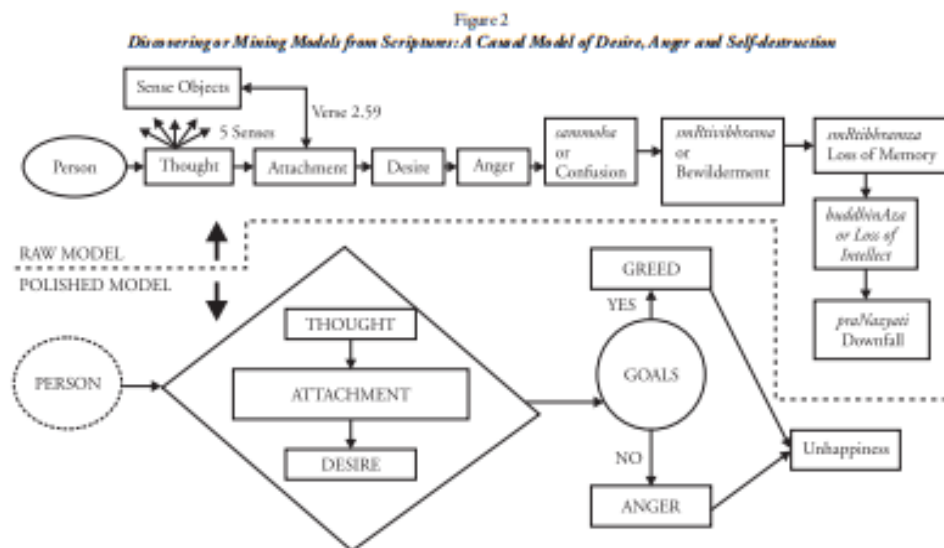


Figure 2 Source : Methodology for Building Psychology Models from Scriptures. Bhawuk D. (2010)

From the above figure, we infer that when there is a desire in a person, it leads to - Sat or Cognition (thinking logically, which further leads to goal setting, which can be both material and spiritual and this leads to emotions (Chit - Affect) and one is motivated to work (conation). (Wolf, D, 1999) This Chit is a living reality and desire is translated into behaviour, which is directed towards goal. This goal can be termed as "Ananda". Also when desires are met, there is a range of emotions (affect) whether happiness, anger or greed. This propels a chain reaction for fulfilment of goal (Ananda).

Vedic theory asserts that while the classification scheme of the three *gunas* comprises all aspects of material, social and psychological reality. According to the Sankhya philosophy, Guna Theory (SRT Guna) is explained, which also portrays different types of personalities. There are basically three Gunas or qualities and a person may possess one or more qualities and hence predominance of one Guna over other.

- (a) **Satwa Guna:** The chief drive is welfare for all. This GUNA has love for wisdom and knowledge. By nature, they are 'Satvik' or pure hearted people. They are free from jealousy, envy, greed and all such malice. They are led by 'PRAGNYA' or power of discrimination. They have a balanced approach towards life. Sattwa is active in the early part of the morning.
- (b) **Rajas Guna:** The chief drive is passion and GOOD LIVING. This GUNA has love for power. By nature, they are 'rajasvik' or people who pursue good life and sensual enjoyment. Their dominant emotions are valour, pride, ambitious, jealousy etc. They are led by Rewards and hence rational thinking or 'BUDDHI' is dominant. Rajas is active in the later part of the morning, especially afternoon.
- (c) **Tamas Guna:** The chief drive is extremely self-centeredness and manipulation. This GUNA has no direction and totally groping in the dark. Hence the word 'Tamas' which signifies ignorance or darkness. By nature Tamasi persons are lethargic, crooked, arrogant, heartless and rash. They are more led by impulses and moods - hence Bhavna is predominant. They have a negative mind set. Tamas is active in the late night and hours before sunrise.

Some of the recent Advertisement Campaigns in India, where we see the manifestation of the Guna Theory of Personality :

Dead Hour- Nescafe**Name of the Advertiser: Nestle Ltd****Name of the Advertising Agency: McCann Erickson Private Ltd*****The campaign***

This advertisement campaign told a story as a part of Nescafe's #StayStarted campaign, McCann told a story of Rishi, a radio jock of an early morning show—so early that no one is actually up to listen and give him a call. This programme was targeted to the youngsters who sleep late or rise early and in the dark wee hours, people voice out their feelings, complaints and desires, knowing that no one would be listening to them. But as he drinks his cup of Nescafé, he comes up with a brilliant idea that turned things around. That's how he finally got people to listen and call him. The creative idea stemmed from the insight that the youth was bubbling with bottled-up emotions. Youngsters need a place to vent out their feelings without the fear of being judged. The agency gave it to them in the form of Nescafe Mornings - India's first ever dial-in show at 5.30 a.m.

The team tied up with Red FM to launch Nescafe Mornings. Through a TVC based on the RJ's life that was aired on TV and digital, a series of radio spots, and on Facebook and Twitter. The show reached millions of people across 4 cities. On average, the show received even more calls compared to shows in the early morning slot. Such has been the impact of the show that the sales of Nescafe large packs (habit packs) also increased.

Tamas Guna Personality is highlighted. Tamas means darkness and it also means people who are awake at night, the present day youth. They fantasize, are disillusioned with the present system and want a change. It gave them a platform to voice their feelings and opinions. The advertising campaign captures Tamas, darkness, this part of the late night, early morning when there is lethargy, one is dull and once when the youngsters voice their feelings and opinions they are ready for action in the day.

Change the Rhyme – Dove**Name of the Advertiser: Hindustan Unilever****Name of the Advertising Agency: Mindshare*****The Campaign :***

A movement to challenge stereotypes. Women in India are often discouraged from making a career in sports as it is believed to lessen their physical attractiveness — athletic frames lose out the desire for feminine curves, broken teeth to a perfectly aligned set, tanned skin to fair, and glowing skin. Around the Olympics, there is a huge increase in conversation around beauty. In recent sporting events in India, it's women who have been bringing home the glory. India left Rio de Janeiro with only two medals. These medals were awarded only to the female athletes for the first time in history. Dove tapped into the intuition that beauty stereotypes are inculcated from childhood, hence Dove established a strong presence with the #changetherhyme campaign. Dove fueled a conversation about the unrealistic standards of beauty that society hands down to impressionable young girls. The content fetched the brand millions of views on YouTube apart from reams of user engagement.

Rajas Guna Personality is highlighted. Rajas guna is the “active quality”. Rajas guna is considered to give rise to passion and desire, adventure, vigour and activity and desire. We don't easily forget the nursery rhymes we were taught in school. Dove's advertisement first begins to play the tune of ‘Chubby cheeks, dimpled chin’ which reminds us of the nursery rhyme and we too sing along. Dove focuses on personal achievements, dedication and passion in order to redefine beauty and represents the true “Stree Shakti” of India.

“Prakriti ka ashirwad”**Name of the Advertiser: Patanjali Ltd****Name of the Advertising Agency: DDB Mundra*****The Campaign***

Patanjali is one of the leading FMCG players in India that has established a huge market for itself in no time. Several reports suggest that the brand, founded by Baba Ramdev, a renowned Yoga Guru, has set up a revenue target of INR 20,000 Crores in the financial year 2018. From its shampoos, toothpaste, soaps, pulses, grains, sugar, or any other FMCG item, Patanjali offers it all via their single brand and multi-brand retail stores. The brand has expanded its presence across every nook and corner of the country and has a strong hold in North, East and West. In doing so, Patanjali has given a tough competition to the established multi-national brands and believes in word-of-

mouth publicity. Patanjali enjoys huge public support and has been promoting the brand with the idea of adulteration free products through its marketing campaigns.

Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev being the promoter of the herbal products produced by Patanjali is the vital advantage that Patanjali has over any other FMCG company in India. Having more than 400 products with differing SKU's made up of herbal and natural components are helping the company to offer bundled products to the customers. Patanjali's objective of the business is to provide cost-effective products, superior quality products which are the crucial factor in the success of any FMCG company.

Baba Ramdev himself being the face of the promotions of the Patanjali products is helping the brand in maintaining high TOMA (top of mind awareness). Further Yoga guru Baba Ramdev has become the most visible face in TV commercials with just one brand to endorse his own Patanjali Ayurved.

Over a period, it has emerged as a huge challenge to some of the traditionally strong players such as HUL, Colgate, Reckitt Colman, Nestle. Patanjali founders have been regularly making statements attacking these MNC's and creating a movement that will corner these players in the market.

Sattva Guna Personality is highlighted. Sattva guna personality person is simple living and high thinking. He is good and caring by nature. Such a person, is bound by duty, and believes in harmonious living. He is at peace with Nature and is calm and composed. He aspires for spiritual values. Patanjali Ltd is persuading Indians to start using Indian brands and are focusing on satvik products, which are made by pure ingredients which are free from the white sins like maida (all purpose flour), sugar etc. and have natural and organic ingredients.

VII. Conclusion

There is a growing importance on making the discipline of psychology culturally relevant and suitable to the business environment. Indian intelligentsia, believed in holistic thinking, which is distinct to analytical thinking that, is characteristic of the West. One needs to critically examine, the validity and usefulness of theories, models, and principles of modern psychology developed in the West, and its applicability and relevance for eastern cultures. Hence, the emerging importance of Indian Psychology. Further there is a urgent need to devise and articulate a coherent ideology of Bharatiya business and Bharatiya Vyasthapan Shastra (Indian Management Science) and this paper is an attempt to perceive Consumer Behaviour through the Vedic Personality.

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