

Vol. 7, Issues 1 and 2, 2001

**NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF  
CLINICAL AND  
COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY**

ISSN - 1118 - 4035



# Typology of Human Behavioural Traits for Strategic Customer Relations

By

**Balogun, S. K. and Shenge, N. A.**

*Department of Psychology  
University of Ibadan,  
Ibadan, Nigeria.*

## **Abstract**

*This paper examined trait, personality, attitude and behaviour as they relate to strategic customer relations practice. Defined as a generalized and focalized neuropsychic system (peculiar to the individual) with the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide consistent forms of adaptive and expressive behaviour, trait was observed to have more than nominal existence. Attitude, on the other hand was defined as the constellation of those relatively enduring traits that characterize one individual from the other just as personality was seen as the overall effect the individual has on other people. While also bringing to bear the relevance of type A and B behaviour and self-concept on strategic customer relations, the paper stressed the need for public relations practitioners to, as a matter of regularity, employ psychological principles in the practice of their profession. This was based on the paper's assertion that such employment of psychological principles will maximize public relations results.*

## **Introduction**

Psychology, the scientific study of behaviour, aims at analysing, predicting and controlling human and animal behaviour. This behaviour, we know, is likely to be influenced by biological and or environmental factors, i.e. genetic inheritance and experience within and outside of the surroundings to which one is exposed. There exist individual differences,

which point to the fact that no two individuals can have exactly the same experience. The recognition of psychology as a relevant discipline to the solution of a wide range of human problems has just begun in Nigeria. This is supposedly in realization of the fact that whatever it is that one does, a psychologist will make one to do it better. This is because psychologists are trained in understanding human behaviour and wherever human beings are found, psychology is taking place.

### **Trait, Personality, Attitudes and Behaviour**

Before delving into the topic at hand, it is imperative to clarify certain concepts that are analogous to the proper understanding of the issues being discussed here. These concepts are traits, personality, attitudes and behaviour. In our day-to-day usage of the concepts and with regards to their relevance to the field of public relations and advertising, they are often used interchangeably.

Gordon Allport (1937) defined a trait as a generalized and focalized neuropsychic system (peculiar to the individual) with the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide consistent (equivalent) forms of adaptive and expressive behaviour. He added that a trait has more than nominal existence; it is independent of the observer, i.e. whoever is looking at the individual can manipulate it; it is really there because of certain bonafide mental structures in each personality that account for the consistency of behaviour. In other words, trait is innate. It initiates and guides individual behaviour, and because it is mentally structured, it asserts unequivocally the person's behaviour. Cattell (1965) summarized it as stable behaviour-determining tendencies in human beings. Trait approaches have tried to identify the most basic and relatively enduring dimensions along which people differ from one another.

On the other hand, personality can be defined as the constellation of those relatively enduring traits that characterize one individual from the other. While some see personality as the overall effect the individual has on the other people, a kind of mask that is only discernible by the observer; others see it as an aggregate of innate and learned characteristics, processes, systems, or traits which are often organized

into a whole. In other words, certain behavioural tendencies can be taken together as defining a particular type of personality. Current research is seeking to identify whether specific genes are related to personality and significant progress is being made along this lines. Wagner (1969) defined attitude as composing of affective, cognitive and behavioural components that correspond, respectively, to one's evaluations of, knowledge of, and predisposition to act toward the object of the attitude. The affective component, according to Zimbardo (1970), consists of person's evaluation of, liking of, or emotional response to some object or person. The cognitive component has been conceptualised as a person's beliefs about or factual knowledge of. The object or person. The behavioural component involves the person's overt behaviour directed to act toward the object or person.

A quick look at the above three concepts, trait, personality and attitude will reveal that a person behaves the way he does because of the knowledge he has acquired (learned) over a period of time, about the object, a person or an issue. Given the cognitive and evaluative capabilities of human beings, an individual establishes a response repertoire, which is referred to as behaviour. The change in behaviour, which is relatively permanent, is only possible if the cognitive and affective components of the person's attitude are understood.

### **Behavioural Traits – A Typology**

In an attempt to identify those traits and attitudes in the behavioural patterns of people that predispose them to coronary disease, Friedman and Rosenman (1974) found that emotional complex which include such attributes as ambitiousness, competitiveness, impatience, haste, aggressiveness, restlessness, explosiveness in speech and alertness, all characterize a particular group of people. They designate this behavioural pattern as TYPE A. Other characteristics of type A behavioural pattern include an intense, sustained drive to achieve self selected but usually poorly defined goals, persistence desire for recognition, continuous involvement in multiple and diverse functions consistently subject to time restrictions (deadlines) and *habitual* propensity to accelerate the rate of executions of many physical and

mental functions. When talking, behaviour signs such as fist clenching, sighing and anger are common.

It needs to be recognised that type A behaviour does not describe a static personality trait, nor is it a stress reaction; rather it is a style of behaviour with which some persons habitually respond to circumstances around them and typically, it appears to be quite difficult to change such deeply ingrained attitudinal and life style patterns. When compared with TYPE B personality, type A people react negatively to what is considered as personal failure in any task or controllable situations (Schatatz & Peta, 1986; Furnham, et.al., 1985). Type A behavioural pattern reveals that the pattern consists of many traits (which are determinants of personality). In other words, the traits are also descriptive of types of behaviour and or personality. Behaviour can, therefore, be described in terms of traits. There are also other categories for classifying personality such as the internality and externality. This classification is based on the attribution of responsibility, consequences or reward on the act of an individual as being caused by forces within or outside of the individual. Internals are those who believe that whatever they do or whatever happens to them is as a result of their effort or ability, i.e. under their control; while externals are those who believe that their action is attributable to other forces beyond them e.g. fate, luck, superior others, and as such may be dogmatic in their behaviours.

Self-concept (self-esteem) is the self-evaluation of being good or bad, the degree of self-worth an individual ascribes to him/herself. This evaluation at times directs behaviour and attitudinal tendencies of the individual in a particular direction. One's self concept can be negative or positive. If negative, the person is unsure of him/herself and may be crowd-shy, anxious of what others think of him/her and therefore inactive and lacking self-assertion. The reverse is obviously the case for the person with positive self-concept.

Other categories of personality can be identified through the motivational levels within the individual, i.e., the need for aggression, need for affiliation, need for autonomy, need for achievement, need for dominance, etc. Need for aggression is the tendency to want to overcome pain or avoid displeasure or frustrating situation. The need to overcome frustration/pain leaves no consideration for the feelings of others or who

is likely to be hurt by such behaviour. On the other hand, need for affiliation is the tendency or desire to attach to or be in the company of significant others. The cause of this is not yet clear, but can be traced to withdrawal of love or affection in the early life or because of low self-concept. A person high on this will always seek out others and want to be identified with them.

Need for autonomy, appearing to be the opposite of need for affiliation, is the tendency to want to "stand out" or exercise self-will, not to be teleguided by others. An individual can be low or high on this. Whereas the need for dominance is that tendency in individuals to dominate or "lord it over others" in any given situation. The need for achievement is the tendency to strive to achieve a standard of excellence as dictated by a particular society or group. The person is constantly propelled to attain a goal within the dictates of the society, because high correlation has been reported between need for achievement and the level of society development. People high in this will always do things that will lead to attainment of higher goals.

### **Behavioural Patterns and Public Relations: The Implication**

According to Kotler (2000), it is more important to do what is strategically right than what is immediately profitable. Perhaps arguably, public relations involve image packaging, be it on a human being, an organization or a product. It is an attempt at boosting the qualities (traits) of the person, object or organization with the hope of changing someone's attitude (affect, cognition and behaviour) towards the attitude object. Analysing and studying of behavioural patterns is a sine qua non towards proper conceptualisation and effective dissemination of intended messages. Of course, one needs to equally understand the psyche, the needs and characteristics of the target audience in order to be able to design one's concept around the client's behavioural traits. The consequence of what is being driven at is that a research and development department may have to be created in the PR firm, or one may have to regularly consult an expert in the area of analysing behavioural traits. Such a venture, it is envisaged, would never be regretted. It makes sense for public relations practitioner to always

appreciate the complexity of human beings and research into ways of understanding much about human behaviour. When and where this human complexity is appreciated efforts will be made at packaging PR programmes to suit the needs of target. But when and where this is not the case, there is likelihood that PR practitioners will keep making wrong diagnoses or even administer wrong "professional medication".

## References

Abell, D. (1980). *Defining the Business: The Starting Point of Strategic Planning*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Allport, G.W. (1937). *Pattern and Growth in Personality*. New York: Holt Rhinehart and Wiston.

Baron, R.A., Byrene, D and Griffitt, W. (1974). *Social Psychology: Understanding Human Interaction*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Cattell, R.B. (1965). *The Scientific Analysis of Personality*. Baltimore: Penguin Press.

Day, G.S. (1994). The Capabilities of Market-Driven Organization. *Journal of Marketing*, October, P3.

Friedman, M. and Rosenman, R.H. (1974). *Type A Behaviour and Your Heart*. New York: Knopf.

Furnham, H.A., Brewin, A. and Chris, R (1985). Type A Behaviour Pattern of Attributions of Responsibility. *Motivation and Emotion*, 9, 39-51.

Kotler, P. (2000). *Marketing Management* (the Millennium edition). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Lanning, M.J. (1998). *Delivering Profitable Value*. Oxford: Capstone.

Magnet, M. (1994). The Golden Rule of Business. *Fortune*, November 60-64.

Schwartz, D.P. (1986). Influence of Personal and Universal Failure on the Subsequent Performance of

Person With Type A and Type B Behaviour Patterns. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 459- 462.

Wagner, R.V. (1969). *The Study of Attitude Change*. Belmont: Brooks

Zimbardo, P.G. and Ebbessen, E.B. (1970). *Influencing Attitudes and Changing Behaviour*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY