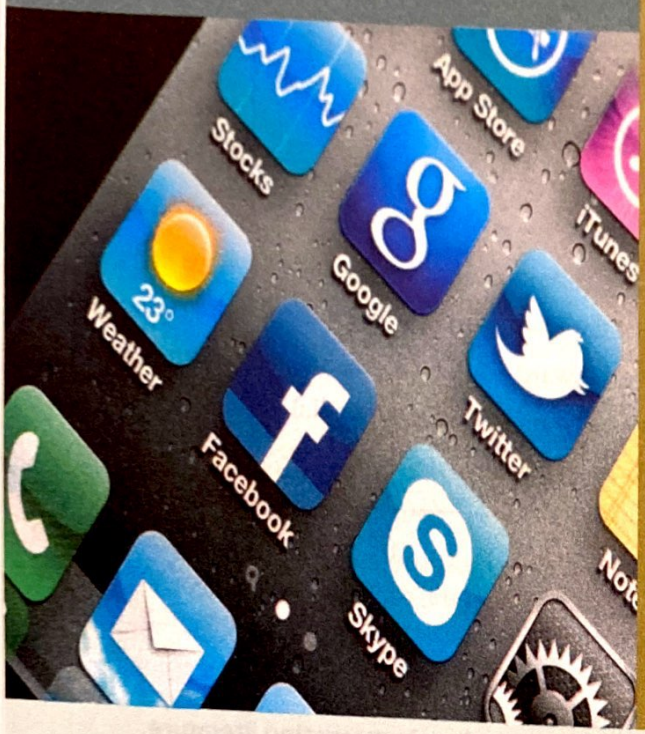
CHAPTER

12

SELF-CONCEPT AND PERSONALITY



OBJECTIVES *After studying this chapter, you should be able to ...*

1. Define self-concept, extended self, and love objects.
2. Explain how self-monitoring is related to consumer behavior.
3. Describe the three components of impression management.
4. Describe multiple trait theory and how it is linked to brand personality.
5. Discuss cognitive factors relating to single-trait theory of personality.

Kia Soul Has Personality

A favorable brand personality can be critical to the success of any product. Many of the world's top brands seem to possess human-like traits, providing a vehicle for consumers to express their own personalities. For example, Disney is cheerful; Coca-Cola is reliable; IBM is intelligent; McDonald's is friendly; Apple is creative and edgy; Volkswagen is down-to-earth; and Harley-Davidson exudes rugged individuality. Firms have even branded commodities, such as chicken (Purdue), potatoes (Idaho), and fruits (Sunkist). Automobile manufacturers rely heavily on brand personality to communicate a sustainable point of differentiation. Apparently, nobody does it better than Kia Soul—a youthful, irreverent, unpretentious, and reliable brand targeted at likeminded drivers.

The Kia Soul has become somewhat of a rock star on YouTube. In a recent television advertisement, the small, quirky Soul is driven by hip-hop hamsters through a sea of

AP Images/Anonymous

cardboard boxes, refrigerators, and toasters.

The Soul stands out as cool—both in shape and in personality. The car features an unusual, angular appearance whose offbeat, almost cartoonish character appeals to young consumers.[1] Thanks to the Soul, Kia has earned top honors for Nielsen's Automotive Ad of the Year for two consecutive years. The company's cast of dancing hamsters made a big impression on viewers in the "A New Way To Roll" ad in 2009 and duplicated consumer interest in 2010 with the automaker's "This or That" ad. Delivered through its marketing communication, Kia Soul's brand personality helped increase sales by 50.8% from March 2010 to March 2011.[2]

OBJECTIVE 1

Self-Concept Defined

Most people are preoccupied with discovering who they are. Indeed, "Who am I?" is a question that most of us consider throughout our lives. Our unique answers to this question provide insight into our **self-concept**, the beliefs and attitudes we hold about ourselves. Although no precise definition of self-concept exists in the consumer behavior literature, self-concept is often described as the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings regarding him or herself as an object.[3] Self-concept is complicated and multidimensional. Consumers have been characterized as describing themselves on three dimensions: role identities, personal qualities, and self-evaluations.[4]

Role identities represent the numerous *positions* that people occupy in society such as student, friend, son or daughter, and consumer. People construct these identities by observing how they behave and the reactions that others form about them in each of their roles.[5] Although society imparts role expectations on its members (e.g., friends should be loyal), individuals usually have plenty of room to improvise. It may be helpful to think of consumers as *shaping* their role identities within the broad boundaries set by society. For example, all people playing the role of customer do not respond the same way to sales promotions. Some people are passionate "bargain-hunters," while others play a more indifferent role toward sales. Because people create roles in unique ways, each person derives a different role identity even when they occupy the same position. Moreover, these differences vary widely across product category.

For example, a person who is a "bargain hunter" for shoes may demand an expensive brand when it comes to coffee, or vice versa.

When people identify their roles, they often start with occupational or educational groups (e.g., college student). Consumers have convenient acronyms that provide ready shortcuts, especially in the professions. "She's an MBA" labels someone as having obtained a master's degree in business and someone who is probably quite practical. "I'm an M.D." self-identifies a medical doctor, which is different than a D.O. (doctor of osteopathic medicine) or a D.D.S. (doctor of dental surgery). Consumers also identify social categories such as religion (e.g., Protestant), race (e.g., African American), and ethnicity (e.g., Lebanese). Consumers' role identities are played out in public, and hence, they are more transparent than their personal qualities and self-evaluations, which describe idiosyncratic parts of the self-concept and are not so clear-cut. People's notions about how friendly, athletic, and easy-going they are may not match the way others perceive them.

Personal qualities involve modes of interpersonal behavior that distinguish people from one another, such as sense of humor or friendliness. They also include internal psychological styles that influence role identities, such as optimism or cheerfulness.[4] Personal qualities can be thought of as **traits**, or tendencies to behave a certain way across similar situations. Psychologists believe that traits are developed at an early age, remain relatively consistent across similar situations, and endure. Personal qualities provide consumers with opportunities to play out their role identities. For example, people respond differently to product failures and malfunctions. Some people exhibit anger and aggression, while others are more "laid back" in response to these disappointments. Similarly, consumers who are technologically savvy may play the role of the expert whom friends and family members contact when it is time to shop for a personal computer or digital video recorder. Consumer psychologists also know that traits play out differently in different contexts. For example, a person who is classified as anxious is unlikely to express anxiety in the same way in all contexts, e.g., with a friend versus a policeman or professor. Thus, using personality traits to predict consumer behavior can be a tricky business.

People also perform **self-evaluations** by considering the adequacy of their performances in various role identities. Am I a good student or a thoughtful boyfriend/girlfriend? Am I a smart shopper? Usually, these evaluations focus on competence, perseverance, morality, and social unity. Self-evaluations also influence role identities. For example, people who perceive themselves as "athletic" are more likely to engage in organized sports than those with poorer self-evaluations. In a similar vein, consumers who see themselves as competent Internet shoppers often share their knowledge with less experienced friends. One consumer might say to another, "Just type in www.fedex.com, click 'track by number,' and type in your tracking number. You can follow your package all the way to its destination." If this advice is well received, then the e-shopper's self-evaluation is enhanced and he or she is more likely to perform this role identity in the future.

The sum of all self-evaluations determines **self-esteem**, the overall evaluative component of a person's self-concept. Self-esteem can be considered a person's general attitude toward him or herself. Research shows that high

self-esteem is associated with active and comfortable social interactions, and that low self-esteem can be depressing and debilitating. People with low self-esteem tend to view social situations as threatening, feel more negative toward others, and hence, are easily wounded by criticism. In addition, they yield more to other's requests.[3] It is probably best to think of self-esteem and behavior as a two-way street. People with high self-esteem tend to be more confident and consequently more influential. And yet, the behavior of influencing others may lead to increased self-esteem, a virtuous cycle.

The opposite may be true for those with low self-esteem. With little faith in their ability to succeed, people with low self-esteem may fulfill their low expectations, which leads to even lower self-esteem—a vicious cycle. Research provides evidence that marketing activities can affect a consumer's self-esteem. Exposure to idealistic standards can produce unpleasant consequences regarding how we view ourselves.[6] On the other hand, marketing stimuli can also cause our self-evaluations to converge toward these higher standards, subsequently increasing self-esteem.[7] Some marketers have attempted to enhance image-related self-esteem through the inclusion of more realistic and attainable role models. See this chapter's Ethics box feature regarding Unilever's "Real Beauty" and "Body Language" campaigns for Dove.

A consumer's self-concept is comprised of two key dimensions: (1) *focus* (actual versus the ideal) and (2) *domain* (private versus public). Each dimension has two parts. Regarding private domain, the **actual self-concept** represents how consumers in fact perceive themselves, while the **ideal self-concept** describes how consumers would like to be. The gap between the two is referred to as self-discrepancy. In the public domain, the **actual public-concept** embodies others' perceptions of a consumer, while the **ideal public-concept** represents how consumers would like others to see them. The gap between actual public- and ideal public-concepts is known as a public-discrepancy. This four-part self-concept is shown in Figure 12.1.

FIGURE 12.1 | A Two-Dimensional Self-Concept

		Focus	
		Actual	**Ideal**
Domain	**Private**	Actual self-concept "Who I think I am"	Ideal self-concept "Who I want to be"
	Public	Actual public-concept "Who they think I am"	Ideal public-concept "Who I want them to think I am"

SOURCE: Cline, T. W. (2012). Working paper, Saint Vincent College, Latrobe, PA.

Brands offer a variety of opportunities for consumers to express who they are and who they would like to be.[8] Depending on the purchase situation, consumers are likely to emphasize a different self-concept. For privately consumed products, consumers may simply rely on their private-concepts. In contrast, when purchasing products that will be consumed in public, consumers may draw on their actual public-self concept to appear consistent with others' expectations, or they may employ their ideal public-concept to change how others view them. Let's take a closer look at the joint interplay of marketing activities and self-concept, with particular emphasis on the actual versus ideal self-concepts.

The Role of Self-Concept

Self-concept is important to marketers because consumers' self-perceptions influence their attitudes toward product categories and specific brands and subsequent purchase behavior.[8] Consequently, brands deliberately convey images that extend beyond their purely functional characteristics. For example, Harley-Davidson evokes mental imagery quite distinct from that of Honda or Suzuki, and Nordstrom conveys a different image than Kmart or Sears. Research suggests that some consumers like to express themselves in their brand choices. Thus, promotional efforts to image-conscious consumers are more effective if they portray product images that are consistent with consumers' self-concepts.[9] But which self-concept should marketers embrace—the actual or ideal? The answer is, "it depends."

Because self-concept is relatively important to everyone, consumers tend to maintain or protect their self-concepts on the one hand and enhance them on the other. The former is referred to as the self-consistency motive; the latter is called the self-esteem motive. Consumers motivated by self-consistency act in accordance with their self-concepts—even in the face of challenging evidence. In contrast, consumers motivated by self-esteem engage in activities that lead to more positive self-evaluations.[10] Both motives coexist within an individual, but they can tug us in different directions, depending on the task at hand.

Advertisers want us to remember their brands and evaluate them favorably, but recall and evaluation are two different tasks. If a consumer's task is to recall the brand name or its attributes, then she is more likely to remember information consistent with her *actual* self-concept, rather than information consistent with her *ideal* self-concept. Why? Consumers generally possess well-developed, actual self-schema with rich associative networks in their memories. **Self-schemas** are cognitive structures that help us make sense of who we are. Schemas can be thought of as basic sketches of what people know about something. People are generally knowledgeable (if not altogether happy) about who they are. Consequently, people are likely to attend to and retrieve information congruent with their actual self-schema.[11] Recalling congruent information also enables consumers to maintain a state of cognitive consonance. In general, consumers are motivated to maintain harmony in their belief systems and between their attitudes and behavior. Thus, if marketing communication fits

with consumers' understanding of who they are, the communication facilitates this desired balance.

The situation is quite different if a consumer is focused on evaluating or judging a product. Because consumers are aware of not only who they are, but also who they would like to be, a gap between the actual and ideal self-concepts represents a state of inconsistency. As such, the ideal self-concept can serve as an important moving target, a goal that consumers seek to attain. Thus, when consumers evaluate a brand, they are more likely to be influenced by whether the brand fills the gap, i.e., advances them toward their ideal self-concepts. It follows that brands congruent with a consumer's ideal self-concept are evaluated more favorably than those congruent with a consumer's actual self-concept. For example, a consumer who wants to feel "intelligent" and "in-the-know" may meet that goal by purchasing a smartphone. On the other hand, if a consumer's ideal self-concept is more "artsy," he may buy an iPad. In sum, if marketers want consumers to remember their brand names, attributes, and benefits, they should create communications that are consistent with consumers' actual self-concepts. In contrast, if changing attitudes is important, marketers should communicate information that is congruent with consumers' ideal self-concepts.

In a public context, a consumer who wants to be seen as "preppy" may meet that goal by endorsing J. Crew or Polo Ralph Lauren. If a consumer's ideal public-concept is more "edgy," he may wear clothing from Karl Kani or Timberline. Connecting with consumers' ideal public-concepts is *particularly* important for individuals who have a relatively negative view of self. Recent research shows that consumers who are anxious about relationships are likely to use brands as a means for signaling their ideal public-concepts to potential relationship partners. In addition, high anxiety consumers tend to avoid brands that don't match their ideal public-concepts to avoid the risk of being viewed as unattractive by others.[12]

The notion of positioning brand images to be congruent with consumers' self-concepts reflects the general practice of market segmentation (see Chapter 2). Marketers identify patterns of self-concepts residing in specific demographic groups and find media that communicate directly to these groups. This practice is not new. For decades, Virginia Slims cigarettes attempted to match their slogan, "You've come a long way, baby," with women's ideal self-concepts regarding social independence. Similarly, Harley-Davidson motorcycles convey raw excitement to consumers seeking to improve their ideal self-concepts regarding freedom and adventure. Non-profits and government organizations have also used this approach. The U.S. Army's recent ad campaign, "Symbol of Strength," targets prospects with messages of self-empowerment and self-determination. Other military services also rely on slogans to appeal to consumers' ideal self-concepts. The U.S. Air Force recently abandoned its "Cross Into the Blue" for

ACE STOCK LIMITED/Alamy

Harley-Davidson ads target consumers who seek excitement in their lives.

Marketing in Action

The U.S. Army's "Symbol of Strength" Targets Recruits' Self-Esteem

Early in 2001, the U.S. Army abandoned its 20-year ad campaign, "Be All You Can Be." Instead, the Army committed its $150 million advertising budget and its recruiting goals to "An Army of One." The campaign emphasized that young people could maintain their sense of identity and attain self-fulfillment while serving in the Army. One promotion featured a solitary soldier running outdoors while a voiceover says, "I am an army of one, even though there are 1,045,690 soldiers like me."

The change in campaign was not without controversy. Advertising expert Jerry Della Famina thought it was a mistake. He argued that the Army benefited from one of the greatest campaigns in history. *Advertising Age*, an industry publication and information leader, ranked the "Be All You Can Be" campaign as the second best of the 20th century.

Although "Be All You Can Be" was embedded in the culture of the nation, apparently it had lost its connection with the Army's target audience of over 20 million young adults between the ages of 18 and 24. During the fall of 2006, however, "Army of One" was retired. Army officials said the "Army of One" campaign had not been highly effective. The Army missed its recruiting target in 2005 by the widest margin in more than 20 years.

In 2006, the Army, hoping to better connect with potential recruits, introduced a new pitch, "Army Strong," accompanied by a $200 million annual advertising contract with McCann Worldgroup. This campaign, developed after numerous focus groups and interviews with soldiers, was designed to communicate the idea that if you join the Army, you will gain physical and emotional strength as well as strength of character and purpose.[13]

In May 2011, the U.S. Army extended "Army Strong" through its newest advertising campaign, "Symbol of Strength." This campaign highlights the ultimate benefit of becoming a soldier—participating in new opportunities and serving missions available only to members of the Army.[14] The U.S. Army is connecting with potential recruits through Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, and armystrongstories.com, where soldiers blog about their day-to-day life in the Army. These marketing communications are aimed directly at recruits' ideal self-concepts.

Dates	Campaign Slogan[15]
1971–1973	*Today's Army Wants to Join You*
1973–1979	*Join the People Who've Joined the Army*
1979–1981	*This is the Army*
1981–2001	*Be All You Can Be*
2001–2006	*Army of One*
2006–2011	*Army Strong*
2011–present	*Symbol of Strength*

Slogans of historical U.S. Army advertising campaigns

"Do Something Amazing." Since 2001, the U.S. Navy has promoted itself with "Accelerate Your Life," and the Marines have relied on "The Few...The Proud," targeting prospects who are motivated to enhance their self-esteem. Similarly, luxury brands such as BMW and Rolex play on consumers' desires to bridge the gap between actual public- and ideal public-self concepts.

The Extended Self

Some products are so important to consumers that they are used to confirm their self-concepts. The direct link between a consumer's self-concepts and her possessions is called the **extended self**.[16] The idea that our belongings

represent an extension of ourselves dates back to 1890, when psychologist and philosopher William James claimed that we are the sum of our possessions.[17] In a more recent and highly regarded essay, the academic Russell Belk maintains that the extended self is not limited to personal possessions, but also includes people, places, and group possessions. This view is consistent with the notion that external objects become a part of us when we are able to exercise significant control over them. In this sense, even body parts are viewed as part of the extended self.[18] Research confirms that people consider the following categories as possessions:

- Their bodies
- Personal space
- Consumable goods
- Durable goods
- Home and property
- Significant others
- Children
- Friends
- Mementos
- Pets[19]

Thus, marketers need to understand the variety of ways consumers express themselves through their possessions. And they do. For example, Unilever appeals to consumers' view of their bodies with Lever 2000, "for your 2000 body parts." An enormously successful campaign, Unilever extended the Lever 2000 brand to include body washes with ginseng and vitamins (Energize), cucumber extracts (Fresh Aloe), and a rain scent (Refresh). The computer security company Malwarebytes understands consumers' need for privacy. They developed a series of products designed to protect computers by completely removing all forms of malware, including viruses, Trojans, spyware, adware, and rootkits. For consumers who view their pets as an extension of themselves, PetSmart, Inc., the world's largest specialty pet retailer of products and services, offers in-store PetsHotels, Doggie Day Camps, pet training, pet grooming, and adoption programs.

While acquiring and investing in possessions can extend who consumers think they are, the loss of important belongings can reduce their extended selves. Burglary victims report a diminished sense of self when their possessions are lost to theft. Research suggests that grief and mourning follow theft, just as it does when someone loses a loved one.[20] Similarly, natural disaster victims report going through a grieving process, including denial, anger, depression, and finally acceptance.[21] The security system company ADT knows that homeowners fear the loss of possessions resulting from burglary. In fact, ADT advertises that its customer monitoring centers "help protect the people and things you value most," i.e., the extended self. Insurance companies like Allstate understand that natural disasters can damage more than homeowners' property. They can also destroy a consumer's extended self. Accordingly, these firms offer catastrophe and disaster insurance for those willing to pay the premiums.

Research also suggests that for many Americans, the automobile is an important part of their extended selves and ideal self-concepts.[22] The process of creating one's extended self through an automobile occurs when people

customize their cars or painstakingly wash and maintain them. Some consumers build special sound systems for their cars; others spend hours washing and waxing their vehicles. To these consumers, their automobiles represent a significant part of their extended selves. Marketers of Turtle Wax and 3M Car Care run advertisements that encourage people-car relationships. They feature beautifully conditioned automobiles, lavishly maintained by their owners, who caress and talk to their cars as though they are lovers. When car aficionados damage their vehicles, they often behave as though their own bodies have been wrecked, and they work anxiously to restore the automobiles to their original condition. Not surprisingly, for car aficionados, collision centers act as surrogate "emergency rooms."

Ethics

Launched nearly a decade ago, Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign purported to celebrate women of all shapes, sizes, and colors. It was conceived based on the results of a multinational study of 3,500 women. The study revealed that two-thirds of women believed that the media endorsed an image of beauty unattainable by most women. Moreover, just 2% of respondents reported that they considered themselves beautiful. Consequently, Unilever overhauled Dove's global advertising message to challenge the imagery traditionally associated with beauty and personal care products. "Real Beauty" arrived in the United States in 2005 with ads for hair, skin, and body products featuring images of mature skin for skin care; curvier bodies for moisturizers; and short, curly coifs for hair care products. TV ads in the series featured women old and young and of different complexions promoting Dove's Body Nourishers lotion line, as well as curvy women dressed in underwear endorsing a new Dove Intensive Firming Lotion.[23] In 2006, Dove ran its first Super Bowl ad with an inspirational message designed to raise girls' self esteem. Helping girls accept themselves is a mission of Dove's five-year marketing strategy.[24]

But is the "Real Beauty" campaign for real? Some consumers see it as just another marketing stunt aimed at selling soap. In June 2010, *Jezebel* uncovered a Craigslist ad for a New York casting call for Dove's Real Beauty campaign. Ironically, Dove's definition of "real women" narrowly adheres to typical beauty standards. It called for women who are "naturally fit," with "flawless skin," free of tattoos or scars, and who have "nice bodies," and "beautiful hair."[25]

Perhaps the heart of the issue is whether the campaign makes women feel good about themselves.[26] On one hand, there are certain classic looks that women would all secretly love to possess. When they see a beautiful model promoting a brand, women respond imaginatively and, for a moment or two, feel beautiful, too. Although they know the product will not change them, the power of association is so great that, deep down, women feel as though a little of the model's magic has rubbed off—this is the ideal self-concept speaking. On the other hand, contemporary, self-confident women want to see figures and faces like their own featured and celebrated in advertising—this is the actual self-concept speaking. Which self-concept wins? Research suggests that when evaluating brands, it's usually the ideal—not the real—that matters, which was an ominous sign for *Dove's* "Real Beauty" campaign. Early 2011, Dove decided to dump the "Real Beauty" campaign in favor of a less preachy "Body Language" campaign aimed at convincing women that Dove products will make them feel attractive and confident.[27]

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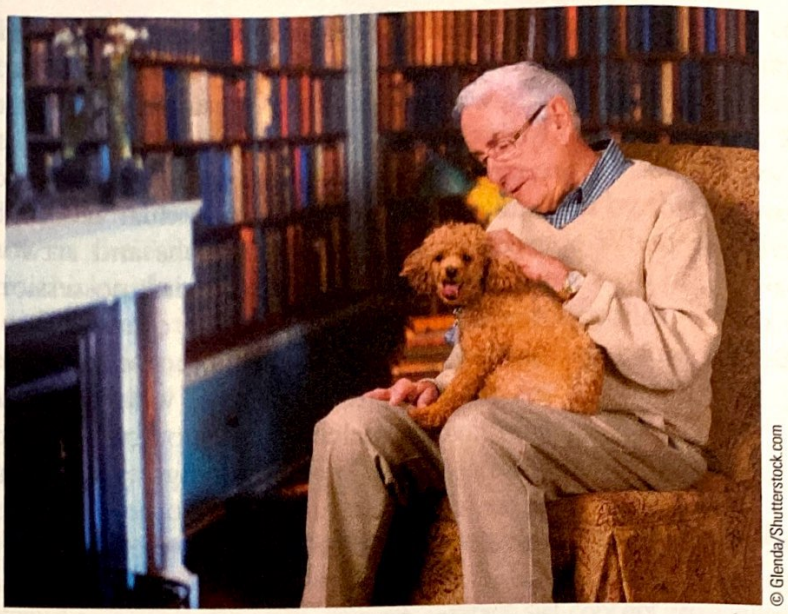
How do possessions become extensions of consumers? First, they facilitate *action* by allowing consumers to do things they otherwise couldn't do. For example, without an iPod, consumers would not be able to share their favorite songs with their friends, songs that also represent part of the extended self. Second, consumers' belongings *symbolically* extend who they are. For instance, trophies and awards highlight individual accomplishments; diplomas exhibit academic credentials; and photographs and artwork present vivid illustrations of what people deem important. Third, possessions bring consumers *power* and *prestige.* Accumulating antiques and other scarce items, for example, conveys a certain status, because rare items can be expensive. Fourth, possessions allow consumers to associate themselves with desirable *people*, *places*, or *times.* Autographs of a favorite celebrity, memorabilia acquired on a trip to Paris, and family heirlooms—these types of things extend who consumers are by linking them to these desirable entities.[13] Some possessions are so important that consumers develop a deep affection for them. These items are known as "loved objects."

Loved Objects

The people and things that consumers love impart a strong influence on their self-concepts. The word "love" is commonly used to describe activities, places, and possessions: "I love to golf," "I love Paris," "I love your hair style," "I love that movie." Research shows that consumers not only "love to shop," but they also "fall in love" with the products they buy.[28] In fact, love is the second most common word consumers use to describe their feelings about possessions (happiness ranks first). Of all the possessions that consumers acquire and divest throughout their lives, only a few attain loved status. Loved objects, a special subset of all possessions that comprise the extended self, play a central role in our knowledge of who we are as people. Recent research provides evidence that loved objects can be part of a synthesizing solution to a specific identity conflict. In fact, **loved objects** are shown to derive much of their emotional status by helping to resolve these internal conflicts.[29] For children, a favorite stuffed animal provides comfort during times of psychological conflict. For adults, beloved sports cars can compensate for lack of physical stature, and chocolates can be used as rewards. Loved objects can also resolve role conflicts. For example, if a man experiences a psychological conflict between his role as a businessperson and his role as an art connoisseur, he might come to love his paintings and sculptures as a way of preserving his artistic persona and compartmentalize his business as simply a pragmatic choice. "It's just a job," he says. He might also identify his unloved objects, such as furniture, as practical and mundane—like his job. Similarly, if a woman has a conflict between her feminist and traditional ideals, she may identify loved objects to help resolve this conflict. Perhaps her collection of antique and delicate porcelain figurines raises good feelings about a time (the 1950s) in which women were relatively repressed.[29]

Even a favorite pair of blue jeans can resolve internal role conflict. Perhaps a young manager has misgivings about working on Saturday. By dressing in her favorite, well-worn blue jeans, she can exercise some autonomy. "If I have to work on the weekends, at least I'll be comfortable," she says. In a positive sense then, loved objects can provide a mechanism for psychological conflict resolution. Now that we've discussed the importance of the extended self and loved objects, let's examine how individuals manage their social behavior.



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In times of emotional conflicts, people oftentimes focus on loved objects to ease their struggles.

OBJECTIVE 2

Self-Monitoring

The extent to which consumers use situational cues to guide their social behavior is known as **self-monitoring**. People who routinely modify their behavior to meet the expectations of others are known as *high self-monitors*. Conversely, people who act primarily on the basis of their internal beliefs and attitudes are known as *low self-monitors*.[30] Put simply, high self-monitors tend to behave like social chameleons, constantly changing and adapting their behaviors to different situations and different people. Low self-monitors march to the beat of their own drums. Research shows that *low* self-monitors exhibit greater attitude-behavior consistency than high self-monitors.[31] Research also demonstrates that *high* self-monitors show more concern for the self-image they project in social situations.[32] As a result, high self-monitors are more likely to respond to image-based appeals that promise to make them look good, while low self-monitors are more likely to evaluate the functional benefits of a product.[33] Self-monitoring typically involves three somewhat distinct individual differences:

- Willingness to be the center of attention
- Concern about the opinions of others
- Ability and desire to adjust one's behavior to induce positive reactions in others

Like many individual difference variables, self-monitoring can be measured by a survey instrument. Low self-monitors tend to endorse statements like, "My behavior is usually an expression of my true inner feelings, attitudes, and beliefs." High self-monitors agree with statements such as, "When I am uncertain how to act in a social situation, I look to the behavior of others for cues."

Self-monitoring can be helpful in resolving the personality-versus-situation debate in consumer behavior, which focuses on the relative influence of personality traits versus situational factors on consumers' attitudes and behaviors. Advocates of the personality approach argue that an individual's personality traits determine his or her behavior. Conversely, advocates of the situation approach

believe that the nature of circumstances drives behavior.[34] Research suggests that both approaches can be correct, depending on an individual's self-monitoring. The importance of personality traits is discussed later in this chapter.

The term **malleable self** refers to a multifaceted self-concept that includes a *good self*, *bad self*, *not-me self*, *desired self*, *ideal self*, and *ought-to-be self*. Any of these **self-conceptions** are accessible at any given moment.[35] In this sense, self-concept is regarded as both stable and malleable. On one hand, the self-concept contains an enduring set of self-conceptions. On the other hand, consumers access and use different self-conceptions, depending on the task at hand—like tools in a toolbox. Classic research indicates that people prefer brands that match their self-conceptions. But which self-conceptions do consumers use to compare themselves to brands? Recent research shows that high self-monitors use social cues to select self-conceptions, and low self-monitors draw on their internal traits.[36]

Let's take a real-world example. Suppose a first-year college student goes dancing three nights during the first week of school. Does this mean that she is extroverted (a stable personality trait) or did she go dancing to reduce the stress associated with her new school environment (a temporary situation)? Self-monitoring provides a possible explanation. Perhaps this individual is neither unusually extroverted nor extraordinarily stressed. She is, however, interested in joining a social sorority (a brand), whose members have been frequenting the night clubs this week. As a high self-monitor, she evaluated the situation and drew on her "desired self," i.e., her desire to be a member of this sorority. Next, she adapted her behavior to appear extroverted and outgoing because she believes this would increase her chances of being invited to join the sorority. Alternatively, if she were a low self-monitor, she would probably stay at home. Her choice of a sorority would be guided predominately by her internal beliefs and attitudes, and she would not attempt to construct a desired image. Perhaps charity is an important part of her self-schema, or actual self. If this is the case, she might evaluate sororities on the basis of their community service record and search for a sorority accordingly.

Consider also a high self-monitoring consumer who wants to project an image of intellect and culture to his dinner party guests. In addition to choosing appropriate words and mannerisms, he selects and displays the brands of food, wine, and music that support an intellectual and cultured image. Conversely, the low self-monitor would not be influenced by these social cues. Instead, he would select a decorum that fits his actual self-concept, i.e., who he really is.[37] Some level of self-monitoring is inherent in all social situations. People must adapt to their environments in order to interact. Nevertheless, some individuals present themselves in such a way as to create exaggerated or misleading images. Motivation for this behavior is explored next in a discussion of impression management theory.

OBJECTIVE 3

Impression Management Theory

The process of creating desirable images of ourselves for others is known as **impression management**. In general, people practice impression management to increase control over valued outcomes, such as praise, approval, sympathy, and special treatment. Individuals engage in impression management to make people like them (ingratiation); to generate fear (intimidation); respect (self-promotion); to lift up their morals (exemplification); and to engender pity

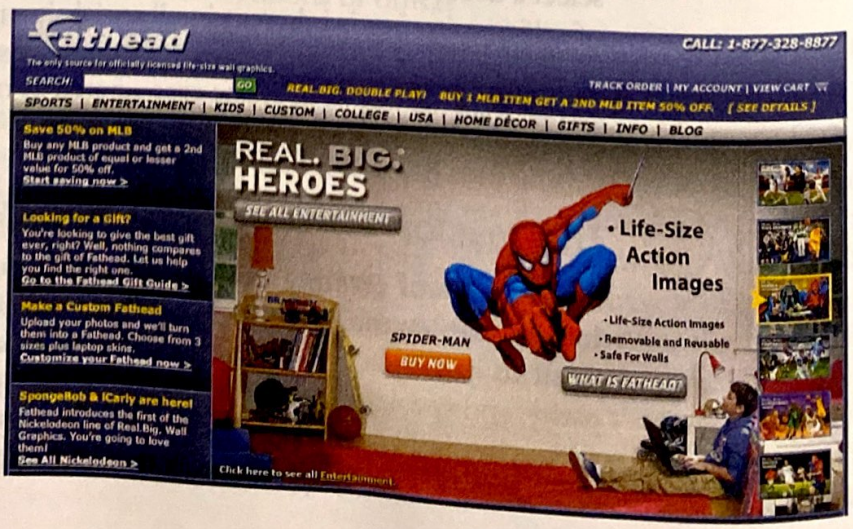
(supplication).[38] Consumers employ at least three tactics to manage the images that others form about them:

1. Appearance management
2. Ingratiation
3. Aligning activities

Appearance Management By controlling the selection of clothes, grooming, habits (e.g., smoking), verbal communication (e.g., jargon, accents), and the display of possessions, consumers convey desired images to others.[39] The decisions regarding how consumers control their physical appearances and surroundings comprise their **appearance management**. Research supports the notion that consumers pay close attention to their physical appearance in order to claim certain identities. Job applicants have been shown to manage their physical appearance to match the interviewer's stereotyped expectations. If the interviewer is thought to be conservative, the applicants dress more traditionally than if the interviewer is thought to be progressive.[40] Likewise, salespeople spend considerable time and money on clothing and grooming. People also pay close attention to their props (items in their physical environments). Do you arrange your dormitory or apartment differently depending on whether your parents or friends will be visiting? You are not alone; most consumers use props. Executives arrange their offices to convey prestige; children prop their bedrooms with colorful posters; and professors always seem to have piles of books on their desks and tables (they must be busy). Have you noticed that U.S. politicians always have the American flag propped in the background and an American flag pin in their lapels for photo ops and speeches? The retail website *Fathead* targets consumers who want to prop their surroundings with sports and entertainment figures.

Ingratiation It is inherently pleasing to be liked by others. One of the tactics people use to get others to like them is **ingratiation**, a set of strategic behaviors designed to increase the probability of gaining benefits or favors from another person. One can ingratiate with self-presentation, opinion conformity, and flattery.

Self-presentation involves either *self-enhancement* or *self-deprecation*. The former occurs when people promote their good qualities, such as during interviews or on first dates. Self-enhancement can backfire, however, if the claims are viewed as conceited[41] or exaggerated and are later discredited.[42] When employing



Fathead appeals to consumers who like to prop their surroundings with sports and entertainment figures.

Courtesy of Fathead

self-deprecation, people make humble or modest claims about themselves, often downplaying their positive attributes or their role in a successful outcome. This tactic can also backfire if the self-deprecation is excessively negative and perceived as an attempt to elicit reassurance from others.[43] Taken together, self-presentation is a trade-off between favorability and plausibility—modest claims may signal incompetence, and yet, highly favorable claims may not be credible.

Think about your strategy on a first date. On one hand, if you describe all of your accomplishments and talents, you may be perceived as boastful and turn off your date. On the other hand, if you fail to mention your positive capabilities, your date may regard you as mediocre. Either way, you probably don't get a second date. Thus, self-presentation involves striking a balance between the opposing forces of self-enhancement and self-deprecation.[44] Research demonstrates that the optimal balance shifts, depending on whether people are interacting with friends or strangers.[45] Self-presentations are more likely to be self-enhancing to strangers and modest to friends. Why? Strangers usually have little information, so an individual's performance record may be difficult to verify. Consequently, by presenting highly favorable information to strangers, people willingly sacrifice likeability in exchange for perceptions of competence. The strategy is different with friends. Because they have more background information about you, friends can easily disconfirm an exaggerated claim. Moreover, people share common interests with friends and expect many future interactions. Thus, people maintain friendships by increasing likeability through a more modest self-presentation. Let's return to the strategy for a first date. Research suggests that if a new acquaintance is aware of something you've done well, he or she will like you more if you are modest about it. On the contrary, if the other person is completely unaware of a particular talent, modesty is simply interpreted as mediocrity.[46] In sum, if you've got it, flaunt it—but only if your date doesn't already know about it.

Opinion conformity entails expressing insincere agreement on important issues. Subordinates often use this tactic with supervisors, because people generally like those who share their opinions.[47] But it can backfire if the target of opinion conformity perceives the ingratiator as pandering. Thus, a clever mix of disagreement on unimportant issues and agreement on critical issues reduces suspicion.

Flattery involves excessive compliments or praise designed to make someone feel good about him or herself. Flattery does not have to be insincere. In fact, effective flattery should be targeted at important attributes where people feel uncertain about their abilities or performance. For example, if a friend expresses anxiety about his performance on an important and recently delivered speech, an earnest comment such as, "I appreciate that you spoke slowly and clearly," is likely to gain favor for the ingratiator. Similarly, when a salesperson flatters a potential customer regarding an important but uncertain attribute, the customer is likely to respond favorably. For example, a consumer may have reservations about his weight and expresses those concerns while trying on business suits. A clever salesperson may flatter the customer by remarking that he is "in better shape than most men his age." Recent research demonstrates that if customers perceive flattery to be sincere, it doesn't matter whether the remark is perceived to be accurate, as both genuine compliments (sincere and accurate) and opaque flattery (sincere and inaccurate) appear to generate positive intentions to continue working with a salesperson.[48] Figure 12.2 provides a multi-dimensional model of Consumer Ingratiation.

FIGURE 12.2 | **A Multi-Dimensional Model of Consumer Ingratiation**

POSITIVE INGRATIATION		Sincerity [Perception of the Ingratiator's Motive]	
		Insincere [self-enhancement] *manipulative*	**Sincere** [other-enhancement] *genuine*
Accuracy [Perception of the accuracy of the remark]	**Accurate** [true positive]	***Phony Compliment*** *[smooth talk]*	***Genuine Compliment*** *[positive feedback]*
	Inaccurate [false positive]	***Transparent Flattery*** *[brown-nosing]*	***Opaque Flattery*** *[friendly behavior]*

NEGATIVE (anti) INGRATIATION		Sincerity [Perception of the Ingratiator's Motive]	
		Insincere [self-enhancement] *manipulative*	**Sincere** [other-enhancement] *genuine*
Accuracy [Perception of the accuracy of the remark]	**Accurate** [true negative]	***Disparagement*** *[malicious Criticism]*	***Negative Feedback*** *[useful Criticism]*
	Inaccurate [false negative]	***Sarcasm*** *[harmful Criticism]*	***Hyper Critique*** *[ineffectual Criticism]*

Source: Thomas W. Cline, D.P. Mertens, N.S. Vowels, and A. Davies, "All Ingratiation Is Not Equal: A Two Dimensional Model of Consumer Ingratiation," Society for Consumer Psychology 2009 Winter Conference. Reprinted by permission of Thomas W. Cline.

Aligning Activities Sometimes consumers behave in ways that violate existing cultural norms. **Aligning activities** consist of comments that attempt to realign our behavior with norms.[49] **Disclaimers** are verbal assertions, made in advance, to offset the potential negative effects of a behavior.[50] A celebrity endorser may

use a disclaimer such as, "I'm no expert, but ..." to avoid responsibility for a product's performance. A salesperson may remark, "Please hear me out before you refuse this offer" to keep potential customers from prematurely rejecting an offer. **Accounts** entail *excuses* and *justifications.* The former reduce or deny one's responsibility for inappropriate actions; the latter acknowledge responsibility but rationalize the behavior as appropriate, given the circumstances.[51] Both excuses and justifications are designed to reduce perceptions of wrongdoing. For example, a customer service representative from Dell, who claims that your computer crashed because you installed incompatible software, is excusing Dell from any responsibility for the problem. In contrast, the service rep may justify the computer crash on grounds that the computer is seven years old and well beyond its useful life. In a similar vein, one salesperson may explain a late delivery as a shipping or supplier problem—an excuse; another may explain the late delivery as a function of building a custom order—a justification. Accounts work best when the individual delivering them is of superior status and when the violating behavior is not serious.[52] What about students, who are not in a superior position to account for serious violations such as late assignments and missed exams? Research suggests that students' excuses and justification are better received if they are truthful and apologetic. It also helps if the account is reasonable.

It should be clear that people employ various tactics to manipulate the impressions others form of them. Consumers and salespeople manage their appearances; they ingratiate themselves through selective presentation, opinion conformity, and flattery; and they try to repair their identities when their conduct is questionable. Next, let's take a look at what makes an individual unique and how that influences his or her behavior as a consumer.

Personality

Personality is a set of unique psychological characteristics that influences how a person responds to his or her environment, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral tendencies. Understanding a consumer's personality can help predict his or her responses to marketing activities—but it is a tricky business. People don't necessarily behave the same way in all situations, and an individual's personality can change over time. Consumers' personalities mature along with their physical growth. For example, advanced education may affect consumers' personalities by teaching them to be more open-minded and inquisitive. Similarly, the process of aging often ushers in self-reflection, increasing consumers' desire for reading and experiential travel. Some people become more cynical over time, while others become more trustful. Few consumers respond to products and services today as they did as children or teenagers.

Major life events can also produce "shocks" in a consumer's personality. A full-time job can increase a person's need to be conscientious, and marriage frequently brings a spirit of cooperation (at least initially!). Having children, changing occupations, chronic illness, and the death of loved ones can also engender significant shifts in one's personality. Nevertheless, it's difficult to ignore the enduring qualities of personality; in fact, personality has

uniformly been considered to be constitutional, i.e., an essential and stable characteristic of individuals. Some people just seem consistently grouchy, while others routinely act pleasingly. In the same vein, some of your friends probably assert themselves without fail, while others predictably withdraw from confrontations. Earlier in this chapter, we described these individual nuances as traits. Indeed, scholars have approached the study of personality from a variety of angles, producing many interesting theories, including Freudian Systems,[53] Neo-Freudian Theories,[54] and trait theories.[55] The most useful approach for consumer behavior is multiple trait theory.

OBJECTIVE 4

Multiple Trait Theory

Multiple trait theory maintains that **personality traits** represent consumers' tendencies to respond in a certain way across similar situations. Traits vary from one person to another, and although an individual's traits can shift, they are generally stable over a reasonable time frame. Think of traits as those specific qualities and mannerisms that distinguish one person from another. Consider, for a moment, your best friend. How would you describe his or her personality? Is this person generally outgoing, smart, shy, or moody? How does he or she respond to new situations? Is he or she optimistic, dramatic, or indifferent? How does this individual react to marketing stimuli? Is he or she a bargain hunter or an impulsive shopper? Longstanding research interest in personality and consumer psychology has produced a host of measurable personality traits. Among the most popular multiple trait theory taxonomies is the **Five-Factor Model**.[56] This multi-factor structure identifies five basic traits that derive primarily from an individual's genetics and early childhood learning.[57] The five basic traits have traditionally been numbered and labeled as:

1. Surgency (outgoingness)
2. Agreeableness
3. Conscientiousness
4. Emotional stability
5. Intellect

Figure 12.3 provides specific characteristics of the five core traits.[56]

The Five-Factor Model enables marketers to categorize consumers into different groups based on several traits. Thus, trait theory is a special case of market segmentation. Research shows that important personality traits can be linked to specific consumption behavior, such as **compulsive buying**, i.e., the drive to consume uncontrollably and to buy in order to avoid problems. Specifically, consumers who score low on conscientiousness or high on agreeability demonstrate a propensity to shop compulsively.[58] This negative link between conscientiousness and compulsive buying suggests that individuals who have difficulty controlling their buying may also lack organization, precision, and efficiency. The positive relationship between agreeability and compulsive buying implies that uncontrolled shopping is associated with tendencies to be kindhearted, sympathetic, and not rude to others.[59] The Five-Factor Model has also been used to explain consumers' bargaining and complaining behavior,[60] voting behavior,[61] and alcohol abuse.[62] Research also shows that the Five-Factor Model can provide a framework to tap the dimensions of a brand's personality.

FIGURE 12.3 | **The Five-Factor Model of Personality**

	DIMENSION	
Those scoring low are...	**Surgency**	*Those scoring high are...*
Introverted		Extraverted
Shy		Talkative
Quiet		Assertive
Reserved		Verbal
Untalkative		Energetic
Inhibited		Bold
Withdrawn		Active
Timid		Daring
Bashful		Vigorous
Those scoring low are...	**Agreeableness**	*Those scoring high are...*
Cold		Kind
Unkind		Cooperative
Unsympathetic		Sympathetic
Distrustful		Warm
Harsh		Trustful
Demanding		Considerate
Rude		Pleasant
Selfish		Agreeable
Uncooperative		Helpful
Those scoring low are...	**Conscientiousness**	*Those scoring high are...*
Disorganized		Organized
Careless		Systematic
Unsystematic		Thorough
Inefficient		Practical
Undependable		Neat
Impractical		Efficient
Negligent		Careful
Inconsistent		Steady
Those scoring low are . . .	**Emotional Stability**	*Those scoring high are . . .*
Anxious		Unenvious
Moody		Unemotional
Temperamental		Relaxed
Envious		Imperturbable
Emotional		Unexcitable
Irritable		Undemanding
Those scoring low are...	**Intellect**	*Those scoring high are...*
Unintellectual		Intellectual
Unintelligent		Creative
Unimaginative		Complex
Uncreative		Imaginative
Simple		Bright
Unsophisticated		Philosophical
Unreflective		Artistic

Source: Adapted from Goldberg, L. R. (1992). The Development of Markers for the Big Five-Factor Structure. *Psychological Assessment*, *4*, 26–42.

Brand Personality

Earlier in this chapter, we learned that consumers prefer brands that enhance their self-concepts. In some cases, consumers prefer products that reflect who they are, i.e., their actual self-concepts. For example, "These blue jeans aren't for me. They're too risqué." In other cases, consumers buy products that help them express who they'd like to be, i.e., their ideal self-concepts. For example, "I'll take these preppy jeans; I need to upscale my image." Brands such as Nike and Nokia often conjure up specific **brand images**, which comprise all the thoughts and feelings consumers have about a particular brand. Consumers' thoughts and feelings are evoked through the stimuli they associate with a brand, such as logos, slogans, endorsers, price, distribution channel, typical users, and use situations. Though somewhat elusive, brand image can be estimated by asking consumers the first words that come to mind when the think about a brand. What comes to mind when consumers think of Mountain Dew, Google, Apple, Ford, McDonald's, and Louis Vuitton?

A considerable amount of research demonstrates that, like people, brands exhibit personality traits. **Brand personality** refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand. Brand personality comprises the human side of a brand's image. For example, Absolut vodka is typically described as a cool, contemporary, 25-year old, while Stolichnaya vodka is an intellectual, conservative, older man. Would consumers describe the personality of SKYYvodka any differently? Drawing on the Five-Factor Model of personality, Jennifer Aaker, General Atlantic Professor of Marketing at Stanford Graduate School of Business, developed a framework to measure a brand's personality. She identified five distinct personality traits:

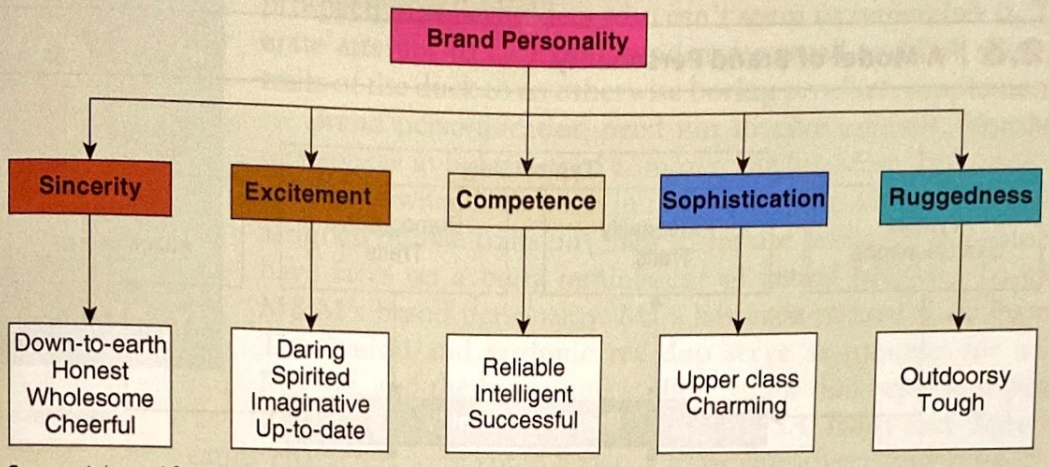
1. Sincerity
2. Excitement
3. Competence
4. Sophistication
5. Ruggedness[63]

Each of these factors includes various descriptors, as shown in Figure 12.4.

Three of the five dimensions of brand personality relate to the "Big Five" human personality dimensions. *Agreeableness* matches up with *sincerity* to capture warmth and acceptance; *conscientiousness* parallels *competence,* as both embody responsibility, security, and dependability; and *extroversion* and *excitement* mutually describe energy, activity, and sociability. However, two dimensions of brand personality (*sophistication* and *ruggedness*) stand apart from the Five-Factor Model. This suggests that consumers may not recognize these particular traits in themselves, but rather aspire to attain them. This notion is consistent with existing marketing activities surrounding archetypal sophisticated brands such as Gucci, Lexus, Hennessy, and Rolex that feature glamorous, high-class images. Similarly, rugged brands such as Marlboro, Timberline, Jeep, and L.L. Bean symbolize tough, outdoorsy ideals that appeal to consumers' ideal self-concepts.[63]

Brand personality traits maintain an important relationship with human personality traits. First, human traits are characterized based on a consumer's observable behavior, manifest beliefs and attitudes, and physical and

FIGURE 12.4 | The Dimensions of Brand Personality



Source: Adapted from Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research, 35,* 347–356.)

demographic characteristics.[64] For example, "He's a sophisticated manager, always up-to-date with technology." In contrast, brand traits are characterized based on a brand's *typical user,* i.e., the set of human characteristics associated with those who routinely endorse the brand. Thus, if technologically inclined, sophisticated managers are typical users of Bluetooth technology, then these particular personality traits are likely to be transferred to the Bluetooth brand.[65]

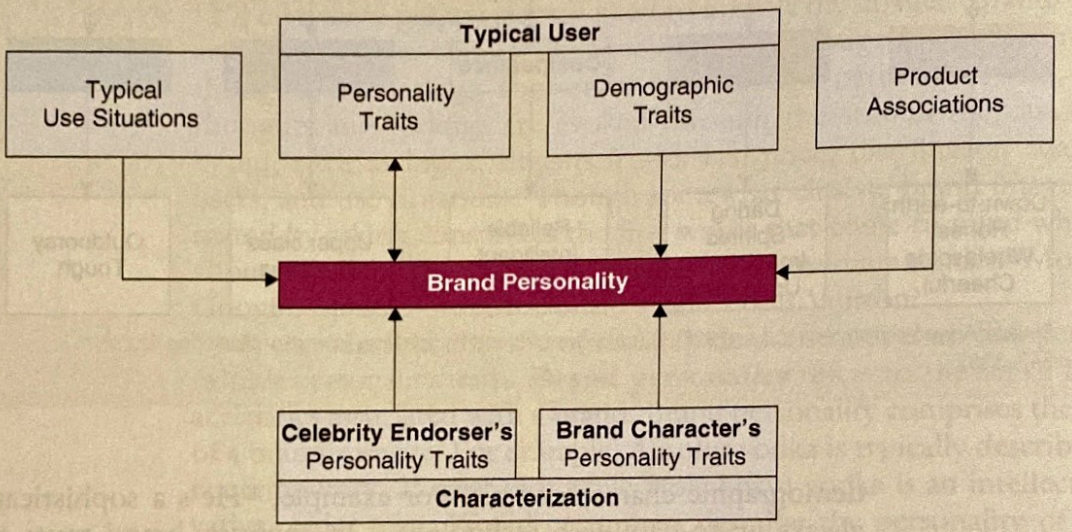
Consumers also extract cultural meaning from the brands they purchase. Thus, the process is a paradoxical two-way street. A brand's image is shaped by those who use it, and yet the users construct their identities through a brand's personality. Research also suggests that brand personality includes the demographic characteristics of the typical users, such as gender, class, and age. For example, Revlon is predominately female; Budweiser is male; and Starbucks is gender-neutral. Chevy is middle-class; but Cadillac is upper-class. Apple's Mac is young; and HP is older.

Brand traits can also be inferred through *typical use situations,* which represent the various ways a brand is consumed or used. For example, McDonald's is a popular destination for single parents to treat their children to a pre-made meal in a colorful, quick-serve environment. Big Boy also appeals to this demographic, offering a similar menu and remarkably comparable brand symbols (Ronald McDonald versus Big Boy). However, the use situation at Big Boy is sit-down and typically includes the entire family. For another example, consider the desktop computer. Apple computers are typically used for creative applications and hobbies. Quite the opposite, PCs tend to be all about business applications. The popular "I'm a Mac/I'm a PC" ads by Apple attest to this dichotomy.

Like human traits, brand traits can also be inferred indirectly through *product associations,* such as attributes (e.g., the iPhone's apps are imaginative), product-category (e.g., motorcycles are daring), names (e.g., Smucker's is down-to-earth), and logos (e.g., Nike's swoosh is spirited).[66] Finally, a brand's

personality can be formed by using characters and celebrities to endorse the brand. See Figure 12.5 for a model of brand personality.

FIGURE 12.5 | A Model of Brand Personality



SOURCE: Adapted from Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research, 35*, 347–356.

In contrast to a brand's tangible attributes (e.g., dress or pants size), brand personality tends to serve a symbolic or self-expressive function for consumers.[67] The symbolic use of brands occurs because consumers instill brands with human personality traits. Marketers understand the importance of symbolic meaning and often use characterization to communicate brand personality.

Characterization

Two strategies provide brands with characterization. **Brand personification** involves giving non-humans human-like traits, while **brand anthropomorphism** assigns both human traits and *form* to non-humans. Marketers use both strategies to build brand personality. For example, Geico's talking gecko represents brand personification. The gecko's English accent and delightful mannerism are unmistakably human, but he retains the form of a lizard. In fact, this laid-back ambassador of great customer service and quick insurance rate quotes was voted America's favorite advertising icon in 2005.[68] The idea for the gecko emerged from a creative session at the Martin Agency in Richmond, Virginia. For years, the company's name, "Geico," an acronym for Government Employees Insurance Company, had been incorrectly pronounced as "Gecko." Thus, the gecko was created to turn consumers' mispronunciations into an amusing memory aid. The famous gecko first aired on national television in

AP Images/PRNewsFoto/Carvel Corporation

The M&M characters represent brand personification.

1999. But the gecko had, and still has, competition—in the form of the Aflac Insurance duck. Also debuting in 1999, Aflac's duck—voiced by Gilbert Gottfried—"quacks" out the company's name in frustration to prospective policyholders who can't seem to remember it. This is a deliberate attempt to facilitate brand name recall and link the zany character traits of the duck to an otherwise boring product, supplemental insurance.

Brand personification need not involve animals. The M&M characters appear in lighthearted commercials for Mars, Inc., one of the largest privately owned businesses in the world. The M&M characters have been assigned human traits but their forms are primarily non-human, i.e., they have faces on a body reminiscent of actual M&Ms. To emphasize the M&M's brand personality, Mars has even named their "spokescandies." The cynical and sardonic *red* duo serve as mascots for milk chocolate M&Ms, and the happy and gullible *yellow* duo represent peanut M&Ms. In a recent online poll sponsored by *USA Today* and *Yahoo!*, the M&M candy characters were voted America's favorite advertising icons.[69] Their popularity even gave rise to Planet M&Ms, a website where customers could create their own look-alike M&M characters. There are many more brand personifications out there, including classics such as the Budweiser Clydesdales, the Energizer Bunny, Star-Kist's Charlie the Tuna, and the Michelin Man, along with the more contemporary Taco Bell Chihuahua, Cheetos Chester Cheetah, and Chic-fil-A cows.

In contrast to brand personification, brand anthropomorphization enlists fictitious characters with both human traits and human form. In one of the most fascinating cases of brand anthropomorphization, the California Raisin Advisory Board, working with its advertising agency, Foote Cone and Belding, employed claymation (stop-motion animation) to bring its dried and shriveled commodity to life. In 1987, the agency created The California Raisins, a fictitious rhythm and blues musical group, that debuted singing Marvin Gaye's 1968 classic, "Heard It through the Grapevine." The annual advertising budget was estimated at $40 million. The dancing raisins created such a popular brand image that the licensed dolls, toys, and mugs bearing their likenesses generated nearly $200 million in revenue. Although estimates vary, raisin sales increased dramatically during the first two years of the campaign, largely as a result of cereal marketers Post Cereal Co. and Kellogg Company bolstering the raisin content of their brands. Fewer than five years later, however, the characters lost their charm, and sales of raisins had decreased to below pre-campaign levels.[70] Perhaps the California Raisins overpowered the image of Sun-Maid, the very brand they were enlisted to help. Unlike the M&M characters, the California Raisins' faces were sculpted with distinctly human features.

Longstanding brand anthropomorphizations dot the marketing landscape, including the Jolly Green Giant, The Pillsbury Dough Boy, Mr. Clean, McGruff the Crime Dog (National Crime Prevention Council), Planter's Mr. Peanut, Froot Loops' Toucan Sam, Mrs. Butterworth, the Quaker Oats man, and the Kool-Aid man. Each is designed to "humanize" and distinguish the brand from its competitors. In a more recent example of brand anthropomorphization, the ABC network developed a comedy called "Cavemen," adapted from

Geico Insurance commercials as an offbeat commentary on ethnic prejudice from the perspective of three prehistoric guys trying to make their way in the modern world. The television show debuted in fall 2007, but didn't survive the entire season.

In sum, brand personality has long held the attention of marketing professionals, who are interested in "striking the right chord" with their target markets.[71] Humanizing a brand empowers it to play a more central role in the consumer's life, potentially allowing consumers to project a desirable aspect of him or herself.[12] Research has demonstrated that consumers purchase brands not only for their functional benefits, but also for their symbolic roles. Brand personality dimensions can affect consumer behavior as a result of self-expressive needs expressed when consumers choose brands representing an extension of their actual or ideal-self concepts. Furthermore, brands are also capable of affecting consumers' self-concepts. Recent research provides evidence that a brand's personality can be transferred to consumers. Specifically, when consumers think about "sincere" brands, they view themselves as more agreeable. When consumers consider "competent" brands, they see themselves as more sophisticated.[72] This is particularly true for consumers who believe that their personalities are fixed and cannot be improved by their own efforts; they use brands to signal their positive qualities to themselves and others.[73] These findings highlight the extraordinary power of brand personalities. Not only do consumers choose brands because they want to underscore some aspect of who they are or who they want to be, but—to some extent—brands also make consumers who they are.

Global Perspectives

Brand Personalities Differ by Country

Brand personality may be critical to developing brand loyalty, but the specific dimensions that describe a brand's personality can differ from country to country. These differences reflect cultural dissimilarities in basic values. For example, Korean and U.S. cultures exhibit different values, which are reflected in the way the two countries view the same brands.[74]

In Western cultures, consumers emphasize emotional independence, privacy, autonomy, and individual needs. Westerners tend to focus on self-reliance, hedonism, and competition. Americans in particular value individualism.[75] In contrast, East Asian cultures tend to value emotional dependence, group harmony, cohesion, and the collective over the individual. Koreans in particular draw on their Confucian heritage, where harmony among humankind is the overarching goal.

Research shows that when Korean and U.S. consumers perceive powerful global brands, such as BMW, Samsung, Nike, Mercedes Benz, Sony, Levi's, and Adidas, they see culture-specific brand personalities. Koreans perceive these global brands to be more likeable, sophisticated, intelligent, and big than do Americans. U.S. consumers, on the other hand, perceive the same set of brands as more competent, trendy, rugged, and traditional than do Koreans.[74] The implications for global marketers are clear: do not assume that a global brand has a one-size-fits-all personality. Marketers need to make sure that a brand's personality is adapted or customized to the characteristics of each country's culture.

OBJECTIVE 5

Cognitive Factors

One critical difference between the social sciences (e.g., consumer behavior) and the natural sciences (e.g., biotechnology) is that the former recognizes the importance of **cognitive personality variables**, those personality traits that describe an individual's mental responses to objects. Individual differences in cognition can explain how consumers respond differentially to various marketing activities. Earlier in the chapter, we learned that high self-monitors, individuals who are sensitive and responsive to social cues, constantly change and adapt their behavior to match the particular social situation. Conversely, low self-monitors behave more consistently across various situations. Similarly, **locus of control** describes the extent to which an individual possesses internal or external reinforcement beliefs. Individuals with an external locus of control believe that their outcomes are controlled primarily by fate, luck, or more powerful factors.[76] Consequently, their behaviors seem to vary almost randomly across situations. Individuals with an internal locus of control, however, believe that they are masters of their own destinies and so, are more likely to behave in accordance with their internal states, i.e., opinions, beliefs, and attitudes.[77]

In contrast to multiple trait theory, cognitive approaches often identify one particular cognitive trait relevant to consumers' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding products and services. Traits labeled as "needs" generally reflect consumers' desires or tendencies to engage in specific mental activities. Three of these motivational traits—need for cognition, need for humor, and need for cognitive closure—are discussed next.

Need for Cognition

Just as there are situational differences that enhance consumers' motivations to carefully evaluate persuasive messages, personality differences can also affect consumers' processing motivation in persuasive situations. **Need for cognition** (NFC) measures an individual's natural tendency to engage in and enjoy effortful cognitive activities. Specifically, individuals high in NFC are more intrinsically motivated to engage in effortful cognitive analyses than are those individuals low in NFC.[78] Research shows that consumers who score high in NFC focus primarily on the product-relevant information in an advertisement. Motivated to evaluate the cogency of the message, these consumers are relatively unaffected by irrelevant background appeals, such as celebrity endorsements. On the other hand, consumers who score low in NFC pay attention to ancillary message cues, such as celebrities and attractive people in the ad. Related research reveals that when presented with unfamiliar brands, the attitudes of high NFC individuals are based on evaluation of product attributes, while those low in NFC develop attitudes based on simple peripheral cues.[79]

Need for cognition can also explain consumers' Internet preferences. Research evaluating individual differences in web usage shows that those high in NFC use the Web to search for product information, current events and news, and for general education purposes. In contrast, web users low in NFC

are more likely to use the Web for entertainment purposes.[80] In general, those high in NFC, who enjoy thinking and effortful intellectual pursuits (e.g., chess, bridge, crossword puzzles, Sudoku), tend to be more heavily influenced by rational appeals, while those low in NFC—who do not enjoy effortful cognitive exercises and who think carefully only when necessary—are influenced more by emotional appeals.[81]

Need for cognition can provide helpful guidelines for public policy makers, who have embraced the use of marketing activities to improve public health by preventing the spread of HIV infection. A recent study shows that high NFC individuals develop a better understanding of the risks of unsafe sexual conduct when the information is presented in a written (versus comic strip) format. The opposite is true for those low in NFC.[82] Results of another study demonstrated the usefulness of need for cognition in reducing addictive behaviors, such as smoking. As their perceived vulnerability to the negative health effects of smoking increased, smokers more correctly inferred that smoking-cessation gimmicks (e.g., Quest Cigarettes) were no healthier than regular cigarettes, especially when their NFC was high. This finding was consistent with previous studies demonstrating that increased levels of motivation to process a persuasive communication are associated with more critical appraisals of that communication.[83]

Need for Humor

Humor is such a key ingredient in social communication that it is unusual to witness a casual conversation in which jokes and other humorous stimuli are *not* attempted. Similar to the need for cognition, individual differences in an individual's need for humor play an important role in the processing of persuasive communications. **Need for humor** (NFH) represents an individual's tendency to crave, seek out, and enjoy humor, a construct more motivationally driven than sense of humor.[84] The domain of NFH includes amusement, wit, and nonsense. Research suggests that the influence of humorous ad appeals are shaped by the joint interplay of the level of humor present in an ad and an individual's NFH.[85] Specifically, those consumers low in NFH appear indifferent to the level of humor in the ad, while those high in NFH not only form more favorable attitudes towards humorous ads, but are also turned off by understated or weak humor.

More interesting, NFC may act as an "on-off switch" regarding consumers' NFH. People high in NFC are motivated to process issue-relevant ad claims rather than peripheral cues, so their NFH may be switched "off" during message evaluation. As a result, the level of humor in an ad has little effect on their attitudes. In contrast, those low in NFC are not motivated to critically evaluate the message; they are interested in peripheral cues, such as humor. Consequently, their NFH is switched "on." Taken together, consumers who are *low* in NFC and *high* in NFH tend to respond most favorably to humorous ad appeals. Finally, related research indicates that NFH can influence message recall. Individuals with low NFH recall more ad claims if they do not anticipate humor to be present in the communication, i.e., the humor is completely unexpected.[86]

In short, the need for cognitive closure promotes *epistemic seizing* and *freezing*. *Seizing* refers to the tendency to attain closure quickly, even if this means oversimplifying an issue or failing to carefully consider all sides of an issue. Alternatively, *freezing* refers to the tendency to maintain closure as long as possible, even if this means being closed-minded or unwilling to consider other options. People differ in their NFCC—some are strongly motivated to reach conclusions quickly at the risk of overlooking important qualifiers and limiting conditions; others are willing to deliberate carefully for long periods of time at the risk of appearing indecisive or to lack confidence. Situations also differ in the extent to which they increase or decrease NFCC. Time pressure increases the motivation to attain closure quickly. Concerns about accuracy and the long-term consequences of one's actions decrease motivation to attain closure quickly.

Recent research shows that the degree to which price is perceived to predict quality (the price-quality heuristic) is overestimated when consumers' NFCC is high. For people with a heightened NFCC, attaining closure quickly and perpetuating that closure are paramount. For these consumers, selectively focusing on belief-consistent information and ignoring potentially disconfirming evidence promotes closure because it allows one to reconfirm and maintain preexisting beliefs.[88] Research also reveals that when the attributes of a brand under consideration (target brand) cannot be readily compared to a previous brand (referent brand), evaluations for the target brand suffer, particularly if a consumer has a high NFCC.[89] Need for cognitive closure also provides insights into criminal investigations. Recent evidence suggests that criminal investigators with high NFCC are less likely than those low in NFCC to acknowledge observations that are inconsistent with their hypothesis about a given crime.[90]

Chapter Summary

Self-concept is the totality of an individual's thoughts and feelings about him or herself, including role identities, personal qualities, and self-evaluations. Role identities represent the various positions that consumers occupy in society. Personal qualities involve personality traits, or tendencies to behave in a certain way across similar situations. Self-evaluations are constructed when consumers consider the strength of their performances in various roles. The sum of all self-evaluations comprises self-esteem, which is the overall evaluative component of self-concept. The self-concept can be broken down into two dimensions—the actual versus ideal, each with two parts. The actual self-concept represents how consumers perceive themselves, while the actual public-concept embodies others' true perceptions of a consumer. The ideal self-concept describes how consumers would like to see themselves, and the ideal public-concept represents how consumers would like others to see them.

Self-concept is important to marketers because consumers' self-perceptions influence their attitudes toward products and subsequent purchase behavior. If marketers want consumers to recall something about their brands, they should create communications that are consistent with consumers' actual self-concepts. Alternatively, if marketers' goals involve creating positive attitudes or images about their brands, they should communicate information that is congruent with consumers' ideal self-concepts. The relationship