

# The significance of GUNA personality and its implication for marketers - findings from empirical study of generation Z in India

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## Abstract

*India will become the youngest country by 2020 with nearly 64 per cent in the working age. Shaped by its 440 million millennial and 390 million Gen Z population, (Goldman Sachs Report, 2016). Indian youth, especially the urban middle class would rewrite the consumption story with sustained growth in purchasing power and changed consumption patterns. Generation Z in India are intense users of smart phones, and social media. The Goldman Sachs report, 2016 also revealed that India's Generation Z is likely to usher in the next era of consumerism in India.*

*The survival and growth and success of any organizations in globalized era, will be influenced by its customer centric approach. The successful Organization has the ability to recognize, the true personality of consumer and implementing their strategies so as to satisfy their present and latent demands.*

*The paper makes a case for an alternative perspective of study of Consumer Behaviour based on TriGuna Concept of Personality, or Vedic Personality which has its root in Ancient Indian Text. Triguna Personality considers physiological and psychological factors, inherent energies, temperament, food habits and gives a holistic view of personality. Study of this would give clues to the Marketer for organizing marketing communication, which would lead to success in the marketplace. The paper is based on empirical findings of Generation Next with respect to their Guna Personality, through an online survey, using questionnaire based on Mysore Triguna Scale. The paper decodes the various personalities of Generation Z in India, using the Guna theory using statistical technique of Karl Pearson Correlation, and relates popular advertisement campaign of 2017-18 with Guna Personality of Generation Z. The findings would be crucial for marketer specially to cater to the aspirational self of Generation Z.*

## 1. The Introduction

Consumer Behaviour is a Western Concept and has its roots in Psychology. Psychology as a discipline as a branch is learning developed by Western World. However, Mind as an abstract concept has been studied, in Ancient India. It was studied under the purview of Indian Medical Science, called Ayurveda, which dates to 5000 years back and has roots in Vedic times. The essence of Ayurveda or the Medical Science of Ancient India was the study of body, mind and soul holistically. This insight about the physiology and psychology of human being was derived from various Indian philosophies like Vedanta, Samkhya, Patanjali's Astang Yoga.

Personality is studied and understood with reference to two systems in Indian traditions, according to Shilpa S and Murthy (2011). They further state, that, Personality was studied in Ancient India, as a part of Indian Medical Science called Ayurveda was developed from Atharvaveda, which stressed on the five primordial life forces and its influence on the biology of the person. Ill Health was ascribed to the imbalance between the Tridoshas - Vata, Pitta and Kapha (VPK) and their psychological correlates, Trigunas Namely Sattva, Rajas and Tamas (SRT). Thus, Personality according to the Ayurveda has two aspects - one was biological and the other was psychological. (Shilpa and Murthy,2011).

According to Murthy et al;(2007), Human beings have all the six namely the Tri Doshas - Vaat, Pitta and Kapha (VPK) and Trigunas - Sattva, Rajas and Tamas (SRT). Their interplay and the combination and dominations create health or ill health. Depending on the circumstances, the dominance of the *gunas* keep changing, due to its dynamic nature, a person experiences bout of anger, happiness, fear and

sadness. The study of the *gunas*, their movement in people, and how they affect our daily life and behavior leads to classification of different personalities according to the Ancient Indian Text. This has led the authors (Shilpa and Murthy, 2011a) to develop the Mysore Triguna Scale which is validated and accepted for assessing Guna Personality.

For the purpose of primary data collection online questionnaire was made adapting the above-mentioned Mysore Triguna Scale, along with three popular advertisements and was answered by 53 Post Graduate Management Students of University of Mumbai, the convenience sampling technique was used for data collection. The study also examined the correlation between the Guna Personality and the Persona depicted in the three popular advertisements, of 2017-18. The findings suggest that respondents, belonging to Generation Z from Mumbai, India, exhibit either Satvik or Rajasvik Personality. This study also indicated about the marketing communication for different Guna Personalities and highlighted the significance of aspirational personality, self-concept and self-congruity which would result in purchases in the marketplace.

## 2. Literature Review

Consumer behaviour is not limited to the physical purchase of products or subscribing to a service. It covers a wide range of activities from the problem awareness stage through post-purchase behavior ideas, or experiences to satisfy their needs and desires. (Onu et al;2014). Consumer Behaviour is a careful examination of people's wants, their influencers, their demographics and personality as well as their thought processes which leads to buying one product instead of another and the study of their pattern of buying behavior. What a consumer purchases, when and how he or she purchases are influenced by their personality. The products consumer purchase or the services they subscribe, reflect their personality. Personality is a set of distinguishing human psychological traits that lead to relatively consistent and enduring responses to environmental stimuli (Mullin, 2010).

According to the Western Psychologist, there are various types of Personalities:

- The Psychodynamic Theory
- The Psychoanalytic Theory
- Neo Freudian Theory
- Trait Theory
- Behavioural Theory
- Humanistic Theory
- Socio- Learning Theory

**The psychodynamic theory** is a theory in psychology founded on the idea that human personality is based on the interaction of instinctual drives and unconscious forces within the individual. Sigmund Freud developed theory which had named childhood experiences and instincts with concepts like Id, Ego and SuperEgo. (Udo-Imeh, et al 2015). The id operates on the pleasure principles; it contains the libido which demands immediate gratification of instinctual and biological desires such as sex and aggression regardless of the consequences (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). The superego is the moral and ethical dimension of the human psychic. The superego influences the individual with the moral principles and restricts the free play of id. The Conscious Ego is the balancing factor between the Id, and Superego, and weighs both the cost and benefits of an action, before deciding to act upon. (Udo-Imeh, et al; 2015.)

**The Neo-Freudian** consented to Freud, tripartite structure of personality; Alfred Adler developed the school of individual psychology. Adler's believed that individual's strives to put in efforts and overcome feeling of inferiority by striving for superiority (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010) He theorized that when people are encouraged and appreciated, they respond positively and if they are discouraged, individual acts in a negative way, by challenging, withdrawing, or giving up. Harry Sullivan researched on Freudian theory and believed that, personality can only be understood by observing people's behavior in interpersonal situation. (Udo-Imeh, et al; 2015.)

**Trait Theory** suggests that personality is made up of a set of quantitative measurable characteristics, called traits. Traits are inclinations, individual preferences and are relatively stable. The main distinction between psychodynamic and Neo-Freudian Theories and Trait theory is that, the former was qualitative in nature while the latter is quantitative in nature. Allport created a cluster of 200 related words, which he believed were the "building block" of personality. Cattell (1945) used factor analysis to

reduce Allport's list to 16 personality traits. Cattell (1945) was more concerned with using traits as a conceptual tool for predicting human behavior rather than just understanding it. Others who worked in this area were Eysenck (1947) with three traits like introversion/extroversion etc. This further led to the development of the 'Big Five' personality framework which consists of agreeableness, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience and neuroticism (Udo-Imeh, et al; 2015).

**Behavioural theory** contends that an individual's personality is the outcome of the interaction between individual factors and environment influences and is linked to learning. This theory believes that, Personality is learned through either classical or operant conditioning and shaped by reinforcement in the form of rewards and punishment. Notable behaviourists include John Watson and Frederick Skinner. Watson believed that personality evolves through learning and believed in classical conditioning. Whereas Skinner believed in Operant Conditioning. They both believed that personality was the human behaviour that can be observed, recorded and measured. (Udo-Imeh, et al; 2015).

**Humanistic theories:** This theory is based on a holistic perspective of personality and life and stresses on creativity, freewill, and human potentials. This theory was put forth by two eminent psychologists, Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Rogers' theory of self-concept suggests that every individual is made up of a tripartite of self - real self, perceived self and ideal self - and these are related. Individuals inherently drive for growth of self-concept which can lead to self-actualization. Maslow's paradigm consisted of a pyramid of need arranged hierarchically from the lower needs to the higher needs (Udo-Imeh, et al; 2015).

**Social learning theory** is an extension and a modification of the behavioural theory. Two major contributors to this school were Albert Bandura and Julian Rotter. Bandura's "social learning theory", suggests that, people learn social behavior primarily through observation rather than through direct experience and as such personality is influenced by social learning. Rotter introduced the concept of 'locus of control' which were basically internal which depended on our action's v/s the actions of uncontrollable variables of the external environment called external locus of control. (Udo-Imeh, et al; 2015).

**Guna Theory of Personality.** This is also called as Vedic Personality, which is an ancient Indian perspective of Personality. According to Ayurveda or Indian medical science, the human body is composed of Doshas, Dhatus and Malas. Further, the *Doshas* are further classified as Vata, Pitta and Kapha. Doshas are natural energies originating in the human body and mind. They govern all physical and mental processes. These doshas were the physical manifestation of the five primordial elements or Panch Mahabhuta according to Ayurveda. Doshas namely Vata is composed of space and air, while pitta is related to the fire and water element and lastly kapha is related to earth and water. Like these biological and physiological body types, there is a corresponding psychological element which is called Triguna. (Shilpa and Murthy,2011a). Triguna is comprised of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Vedic Psychology had given an Individual's personality profile which was a combination of Tridoshas as well as Triguna. The Authours of the Mysore Triguna Scale (Shilpa S and Murthy,2011) have developed 16 different types of classical personalities, which are validated, based on the characteristics defined in the ancient Indian texts. They have developed a rigorously validated, personality tool for assessing personality, which can be majorly classified as Satvik, Rajasvikand, Tamasik. (Shilpa and Murthy,2011a). The authours state further that, each dosha gives certain characteristic qualities to the person, while guna would give us insights into his /her dominant traits, beliefs and disposition. Thus, combining both the Tridoshas and Triguna we get a holistic view of personality. The concept of triguna originated in Bhagavad Gita. According to this, Satva trait is dominated by quest for knowledge, compassion and justice. While Rajas is characterized by quest for power, passion, and self-centeredness. Tamas trait is differentiated by dullness, laziness, cruelty. If deliberated from this perspective, Guna Personality has many implications for the Marketers which are discussed in the Discussion Section.

### 3. Research Methodology

For the research under the study, research design adopted, focused on quantitative research study by means of using statistical analysis tool of Karl Pearson Correlation Coefficient, as well as Mode to determine the following:

1. Guna Personality of the respondents - namely students of Post Graduate Management Studies of University of Mumbai, belonging to Generation Z. An online questionnaire survey was

administered, which was based on Mysore Triguna Scale (Shilpa & Murthy, 2012). This scale was modified to form an online questionnaire where the students had to answer questions relating to their Guna and view three popular advertisements and write whether they are relevant or otherwise.

2. Self-Congruity between real Guna Personality (studied above) and Persona described in advertisement and its perception. As part of the survey, the respondents viewed three popular advertisements of 2017-18 in India classified and concurring to three GUNA personality namely Satvik, Rajasvik and Tamasik. Further from the questions posed, the study explored the Guna Personality of the respondent and further examined if there was any correlation between Guna Personality and Persona in the Advertisement.

**Hypotheses of the Study:** The following hypothetical assumptions have been postulated for validations in the course of this study: These set of Hypothesis are for the three Advertisement which were viewed by the respondents, while answering the online questionnaire.

I)  $P1H_0$  = There is a Relationship between the Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the product and persona are Satvik.

$P1H_a$  = There is No Relationship between the Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the product and persona are Satvik.

II)  $P2H_0$  = There is a Relationship between the Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the product and persona are Rajasvik

$P2H_a$  = There is No Relationship between the Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the product and persona are Rajasvik

III)  $P3H_0$  = There is a Relationship between the Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the product and persona are Tamasik

$P3H_a$  = There is No Relationship between the Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the product and persona are Tamasik

#### 4. Data Analysis and Findings:

1. Guna Personality of the Respondents based on the Online Survey and Questionnaire adapted from Mysore Triguna Scale.

Based on the Mode Calculation, 33 of the respondents were Satvic Personality, (63% approximately) and 2 (4% approximately) are Tamasic Personality and 18 (34%) are Rasjasvik Personality. Thus, there is a prominence of Satvik Personality among the Post-Graduation Students of Management of University of Mumbai. This also highlights the fact that they all are driven by their quest for knowledge and learning which an important attribute of Satvik Person is.

2. Relationship between Guna Personality and Advertisement Persona

$P1H_0$  = There is a Relationship between the Guna Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the product/ persona is Satvik.

$P1H_a$  = There is No Relationship between the Guna Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the product/ persona is Satvik.

|     |                     | PER  | P1   |
|-----|---------------------|------|------|
| PER | Pearson Correlation | 1    | .191 |
|     | Sig. (2-tailed)     |      | .172 |
|     | N                   | 53   | 53   |
| P1  | Pearson Correlation | .191 | 1    |
|     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .172 |      |
|     | N                   | 53   | 53   |

Table 1. Correlation Table Output from SPSS Version 19.

The significance level (or p-value) is the probability of obtaining results as extreme as the one observed. In this case, the calculated  $P= 0.172$ , in the above-mentioned table, is greater than 0.05 and hence there is no correlation between the two variables – namely Personality of the Respondents and the Persona in the Advertisement Campaign. From the above-mentioned statistical table, the study rejects, the null hypothesis, and conclude that there is no relationship between the Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the persona is Satvik

$P2H_0$ = There is a Relationship between the Guna Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the persona depicted is Rajasvik

$P2H_a$  = There is No Relationship between the Guna Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the persona depicted is Rajasvik.

Correlation Output

|     |                     | PER   | P2    |
|-----|---------------------|-------|-------|
| PER | Pearson Correlation | 1     | -.006 |
|     | Sig. (2-tailed)     |       | .965  |
|     | N                   | 53    | 53    |
| P2  | Pearson Correlation | -.006 | 1     |
|     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .965  |       |
|     | N                   | 53    | 53    |

Table 2. Correlation Table Output from SPSS Version 19.

The significance level (or p-value) is the probability of obtaining results as extreme as the one observed. In this case, the calculated  $P= 0.965$ , in the above-mentioned table is greater than 0.05 and hence there is no correlation between the two variables – namely Personality of the Respondents and the Persona in the Advertisement Campaign are linearly related. From the above-mentioned statistical table, the study rejects, the null hypothesis, and concludes that there is a no relationship between the Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the persona is Rajasvik.

$P3H_0$ = There is a Relationship between the Guna Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the persona depicted is Tamasik

$P3H_a$  = There is No Relationship between the Guna Personality of the Respondent and the Advertisement where the persona depicted is Tamasik

Correlation Output

|     |                     | PER    | P3     |
|-----|---------------------|--------|--------|
| PER | Pearson Correlation | 1      | -.330* |
|     | Sig. (2-tailed)     |        | .016   |
|     | N                   | 53     | 53     |
| P3  | Pearson Correlation | -.330* | 1      |
|     | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .016   |        |
|     | N                   | 53     | 53     |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Correlation Table Output from SPSS Version19.

The significance level (or p-value) is the probability of obtaining results as extreme as the one observed. In this case, the calculated  $P= 0.016$ , in the above-mentioned table, is less than 0.05 and hence the correlation is significant and the two variables – namely Personality of the Respondents and the Persona in the Advertisement Campaign are related. From the above-mentioned statistical table, the study accepts, the null hypothesis, that there is a Relationship between the Personality of the Respondent and

the Advertisement where the product and persona is Tamasik. As the p value is negative value, the implication is that, even though the respondents are either satvik or rajasvik, they concur to the tamasic personality depicted in the advertisement campaign. This can be their aspirational personality.

### 5. Discussions and Conclusion

Studies have proved that consumers buy those products which are compatible with their self-concept and self-congruity (Sirgy, 1982). Further, when the product/service are in sync with the self-image then there is satisfaction about the purchase intention. (Sirgy,1982). The research paper identified the TriGuna Personality of Respondents which was predominately Satvik and Rajasvik. According to the Guna Theory of Personality, when the Satva Guna is dominant, there is an intrinsic aspiration for knowledge, for higher meaning of life and spirituality. Such Consumers can be targeted for new learning, higher education, meditation and holistic living workshops. Since their major characteristic is rationality, the marketing communication must make an appeal to their rationality and higher being. They prefer all kinds of organic and pure foods, clean environment. As regards the Rajasvik Personality, their main characteristic is their love for power and position. Such Consumers can be targeted for lifestyle products and services, including all branded goods and services. Since they are led by passion and activity, the marketing communication addressed to them must stress on doing or action. Tamasic Personality's distinctive feature is their laziness; they are the best target for ready to eat foods, convenience services. They love non vegetarian and spicy foods. are very hard working. The typical profile of a Tamasic Person is someone who works beyond the wee hours. The Tamasic Person is led by their moods/ temperament and thus an emotional appeal works as regards the marketing communication.

Further when the study probed into the correlation between Guna personality and the relationship between Guna Personality and Persona depicted in the three Popular Advertisement of the year 2017-18. According to the study there is no correlation between, Guna Personality and the Persona of the Advertisement Campaign, for the first two advertisements. However, there was a correlation between the Guna Personality and Persona portrayed in the third Advertisement which resonated with the Tamasic Personality. This leads us to the conclusion that, this may be the aspirational persona of the respondent and thus must be examined further.

### 6. Limitation and Direction for Future Research

The current study is limited as generalization of the result is difficult as data is collected from only Post Graduate Students. The sample size could have been stratifying and the questionnaire could have been the original Mysore Triguna Scale and time was also a limitation. An in-depth study, applying Robson (1989) Self- Concept Questionnaire along with Mysore Triguna Scale, with a larger stratified sample.

### 7.Scope of the Research

This research paper explored the concept of Guna Personality and examined its significance for study of buying behavior of Generation Z of India and the correlation between their Guna Personality and their aspirational self. It has given an alternative view of Personality as an influencer for buying behavior and also mentioned about the importance of aspirational self for buying behavior. Millennials in India are digitally connected, brand conscious, with a westernized lifestyle and consumption patterns and are exhibit buying behavior which concur to their aspirational self.

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