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USING THE ENNEAGRAM FOR MARKET SEGMENTATION

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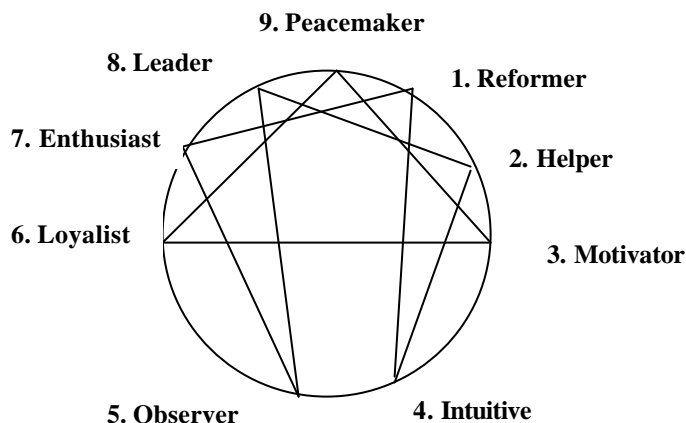
Abstract

Segmentation and positioning constitute the crux of marketing strategy. Over the past two decades, lifestyle and psychographics have been increasingly used as a basis for market segmentation. This paper illustrates how the ancient and mystical technique of the Enneagram can be effectively used as a base for psychographic segmentation. With the Enneagram finding ever-increasing applications in strategic management and human resource development, it is only fitting that scholars in marketing harness the diagnostic and predictive power of the Enneagram. However, adoption of the Enneagram for marketing purposes will require further conceptual development and empirical analysis.

Introduction

The Enneagram is an ancient technique of personality classification that dates back at least two thousand five hundred years. Practitioners of the Enneagram (pronounced any-a-gram) regard it as a vital link between the psyche and the spirit. Figuratively, the Enneagram is a circle enclosing nine equidistant points connected by nine intersecting lines (see Figure 1). The nine points represent the different ways in which the nine underlying personalities constituting the Enneagram perceive and defend their "mental models" or realities (Senge 1990). Understandably, scholars and practitioners of management and human relations are exploring ways in which the richness and the dynamic power of the Enneagram can be tapped to understand human behaviour. Oddly enough, the Enneagram has, thus far, received no attention in the marketing literature.

Figure 1



This paper makes a case for inclusion of the Enneagram in the repertoire of tools and techniques currently used to understand consumer behaviour. More specifically, the applications of Enneagram in psychographic segmentation have been discussed. Toward these ends, this paper has three objectives: (1) to briefly discuss the nine main personality types

inherent in the Enneagram theory; (2) to illustrate how the nine personality types can be used in psychographic segmentation; and (3) to highlight research needs that would facilitate adoption of the Enneagram in the marketing literature.

The Nine Types

The table below summarises the broad attributes of each personality type. The essential characteristics and marketing implications of the nine types are briefly discussed below. These descriptions are drawn from the work of Riso (1987), Palmer (1988, 1991), Goldberg and Fomalont (2000), and Goldberg (1996).

TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	MANAGERIAL ORIENTATION	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
One: Reformer, Perfectionist, Idealist	Wise Realist, Reasonable, A Principled Teacher	By the Book, Leads by Example, High Standards	Idealism, Reasonableness, Objectivity	Intolerance, Obsessiveness, Punitiveness
Two: Helper, Giver, Mentor	Disinterested Altruist, Caring, Nurturing Helper	Cheerleader, Appreciators, Management by Encouraging Others	Disinterestedness, Empathy, Generosity	Manipulation, Coercion, Feeling Victimised
Three: Motivator, Performer, Producer	Authentic, Self-assured Person, Outstanding Paragon	Task Oriented, Belief in Meritocracy, High Profile, Autocratic	Inner-directed, Adaptability, Ambitious	Opportunism, Duplicity, Vindictiveness
Four: Artist, Romantic, Innovator	Inspired Creator, Self-Aware, Intuitive, Self-revealing	Task Oriented, Belief in Meritocracy, High Profile, Autocratic	Creativity, Self-awareness, Individualist	Self-inhibition, Self-torment, Self-destructiveness
Five: Thinker, Observer, Sage	Pioneering Visionary, Perceptive, Knowledgeable	Philosophical, Well-informed, Detached	Understanding, Involvement, Expertise	Rejection, Distortion, Derangement
Six: Loyalist, Trooper, Partner	Self-affirming, Engaging Committed Loyalist	Reckless, Protective of Inner Circle, Ally	Self-Affirmation, Engagement, Cooperation	Inferiority, Over-reaction, Masochism
Seven: Generalist, Visionary, Futurist	Ecstatic Appreciator, Enthusiastic, Accomplished Generalist	Management by Juggling, Walking Around and Networking	Gratitude, Enthusiasm, Productiveness	Dissipation, Compulsiveness, Gluttony
Eight: Leader, Advocate, Boss	Magnanimous Hero, Self-confident, Constructive	Autocratic, Blunt, Confrontational	Self-Restraint, Self-Confidence, Influential	Ruthlessness, Recklessness, Destructiveness
Nine: Peacemaker, Mediator, Diplomat	Self-Possessed, Receptive Supportive Peacemaker	Participatory, Inclusive, Sharing-orientation	Autonomy, Non-aggressiveness, Supportive	Neglect, Dissociation, Self-abandonment

Ones: Idealistic perfectionists. They are very particular that rules, standards and procedures are strictly adhered to. As customers Ones want to know that an organisation or marketer has guidelines and directives and that they are being followed. They don't want the firm to take shortcuts, if found cutting corners they will sharply criticise the firm. They want to know that the seller cares about getting things right as much as they do. Neatness, ie, a clean shop and a clean waiting room counts in this case. Marketeers have to act and present themselves to be ethical and honourable. Ones are impressed if the organisation's mission statement is displayed and frequently referred to. Added to all the above, it is crucial that the organisation ensures that a very orderly and polite face is presented.

Twos: Open hearted helpers. Personal relationships are of paramount importance to Twos. They are eager to have a friendly customer relationship with the seller. A rough, impolite and cold seller will put off Twos and they will start scouting for other places to give their business. It is important that the seller recognises Twos and personalises the interaction. Additional steps like knowing the customer's name and providing a warm and personal service will be well received by Twos. Twos will be most impressed if they know that certain rules have been altered to specially favour them.

Threes: Hard-driving Performers. Threes want to finish the job quickly and efficiently, irrespective of who or what is in the way. "Just Do It," the slogan of Nike, targets the Threes and exemplifies the Three orientation. Getting a good deal and a quick turnaround as customers is very important to Threes. They want to do business with a company that's successful and with a good reputation, a winner. It will be advantageous to show these customers newspaper clippings of the company's success and accomplishments. The marketer should be efficient, very responsive and make an effort to give special time slots to the Threes. They should be convinced that the price/value they are receiving is the best in the market. With Threes, it is vital that the firm put its best foot forward.

Fours: Aesthetic Connoisseurs. They have a passion for aesthetic appeals as evidenced in design and beautiful presentation. As customers, Fours are concerned that the organisation listens carefully to their particular problems. Their concerns have to be tackled and honoured with special care, uniqueness and style. Marketeers should lay special emphasis and acknowledge the Fours' distinctive personal needs and problems. Special concessions like out of the way delivery or late night delivery will go a long way in impressing Fours. Packaging and handling the goods has special importance in the case of Fours. The packaging should be done in such a manner as to impress their aesthetic sense.

Fives: Thoughtful Sages. Fives are smart experts, up-to-date on the latest and best technical developments in their field. They usually prefer working alone and not in groups. As customers they are very keen to know whether the firm selling to them has the most up-to-date equipment and information. They are very impressed when the vendors they deal with are certified by a professional or a trade group. In the case of Fives the marketers should forget the small talk and get straight to the heart of the problem. Personal information and complex relationships are irrelevant here. Extra information about the product and service is always appreciated. Pamphlets, manuals and do-it-yourself kits will impress the Fives, especially when given out as free gifts.

Sixes: Prudent Trouble-Shooters. They are always on the lookout for something to go wrong. Complaints and protests can surely be expected if something goes wrong. They are great to analyse some tough technical problems. As customers, Sixes will want to know if the marketer is competent or if he/she is trying to cheat them like everybody else. It is crucial that the firm keeps everything above board and sticks to the commitments made. It is imperative that the selling organisation builds up trust and sticks to its promised word and does exactly what was supposed to be done. A very patient hearing should be given to the complaints and they have to be treated in all seriousness. Transparency is highly appreciated by the Sixes and this transparency should reveal the work and the costs. Detailed explanations are necessary and all the problems, real and potential, ought to be clearly presented to the customer.

Sevens: Up Beat Visionaries. They are “big picture” planners who focus on all the great events and changes that are going to happen. They’re smart, and they get excited, but they may struggle with staying focussed on one thing until the end. As customers, they want the buying experience to be fun, up beat and hassle-free. The firm has to keep in mind that instant gratification has to be given to these customers whenever possible. They have to be presented with new and interesting and latest add ons. It is important that the marketer looks convenient and is able to handle all the details at the same time keeping pace with the customer requirements.

Eights: Take-Charge Top Dogs. Eights want to be the ones in control, ordering others about. As customers, they can be blunt, confrontational and vengeful. Eights are a bit tough to handle for any marketer. The simple rule in this case is to ensure not to be bullied and a unwavering adherence to agreements is advocated. Limits have to be rigidly set and defined because Eights have a tendency to always press for more. It is futile to counter argue with them and it is always advisable to be direct and to the point. It is crucial that the marketer stands his/her ground and clearly defines what service or product will be provided.

Nines: Easygoing Mediators. Nines tend to be slow and steady. Their intentions are to keep proceedings calm and to have everybody functioning as a team. As customers it is most likely that they will not indulge in direct outbursts of anger but they will go about voicing their intent in a very circuitous manner. It will be advantageous if the firm listens to what is expressed in “between the lines.” Marketeers should give Nines plenty of time and space and should never make the mistake of underestimating them. It is advantageous if they are made to understand that by providing a good or service to them their life will be made easy and comfortable.

Discussion

The nine points on an Enneagram demarcate the segments and marketing strategy can be devised based on the size and potential yield of each type of segment. Ideally, market segments should be homogenous, heterogenous, substantial and operational (McCarthy, Perreault and Quester 1999). This means that the customers in a market segment should be as similar as possible in terms of their responses to certain marketing mix variables. At the same time customers in different segments should be as different as possible to the other customers in the other segments. The segment should be large enough, so that it yields substantial return on investments and also the segmenting dimensions should be useful for deciding the

marketing mix variables. In general, the Enneagram typology presented above definitely meets the basic criteria set forth for any effective segmentation.

The Enneagram has a unique style of personality classification as it does not follow a pattern of ascending or descending “levels” in the way other classifications do (c/f. Maslow 1954, VALS2). Enneagram descriptions seem to share a lot in common with the “list of values” (LOV) method of segmentation, which evolved from the work of Feather (1975), Maslow (1954) and Rokeach (1973). In fact, several of the values under the LOV typology constitute the “basic desire” of the Enneagram numbers. For example, the value of security could be equated with the Enneagram type Six, warm relationships with others with a Two, and fun, enjoyment, and excitement with a Seven. Research suggests that the Enneagram typology incorporates most personality classifications such as the MBTI (1975), Freud (1998) and Horney (1948). In this regard, the Enneagram emerges as a comprehensive and compelling method of classifying individuals based on their desires, values, and attitudes. What’s more, the Enneagram gives a better description of consumer profiles even without a thorough integration of demographics. Besides, unlike PRIZM and other similar typologies, the Enneagram is not country specific or culture specific and can be used in any country.

However, the general caveats about “personality as a basis of segmentation” would probably apply to the Enneagram as well. In this regard, it is vital that the admonitions of Kassarian and Sheffet (1981) be considered before embracing this typology.

Conclusion

The Enneagram of personality types is a tool that offers practical means of aiding people discover their inner selves and advance their understanding of others. Exploration of human evolution, including the evaluation of consciousness, can be aided by the Enneagram figure. Each character type is its own composite of qualities, defences and attitudes that belie a single unconscious motivation. The types described in the Enneagram are drastically different in core values, worldview, personal and work relationships and in their relationship to the environment.

The problem of successfully segmenting markets is one of the very complex tasks in marketing. This is because consumers operate on several levels and they are difficult to comprehend due to the multiplicity of responses or variations in the response patterns. The existing typologies for psychographic segmentation appear inadequate and to a certain extent uni-dimensional. Hence this new typology which is quite different from the ones in vogue is put forth. This typology, Enneagram, draws from evidence in several fields of management, psychology and spirituality. The complete adequacy and success of the Enneagram in marketing is not yet proven. Yet, even a cursory understanding of the Enneagram reveals its applications in several areas of consumer research. Besides segmentation, the Enneagram can be gainfully employed in studies on impulse buying, hedonic consumption, brand loyalty, and moods, just to name a few.

Space restrictions prevent us from discussing the intricate aspects of the Enneagram. Certain vital issues pertaining to Enneagram theory such as the concept of wings, the directions of integration and disintegration, and the levels of development could not be addressed in this paper. We strongly encourage both scholars and practitioners to gain a strong grounding in these and other aspects of Enneagram theory before jumping on to its

applications. We also recognise the need to address reliability and validity issues as they relate to the Enneagram. In this regard, we feel that marketing-specific scales for measuring Enneagram type be developed and validated. The present tools to assess a person's Enneagram type seem inadequate and controversial. The basic premise of the Enneagram, however, more than compensates for the present-day weak measurement instruments and it is well worth the effort to design instruments that meet stringent psychometric standards.

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