

conspicuous consumption describes a tendency of the wealthy to flaunt their material possessions as a way of displaying their social class. Numerous product categories, ranging from automobiles to jewelry, help to signal a consumer's status and can be used to convey images of consumer "superiority." By buying and displaying the correct products, consumers often feel that they can send the "I'm better than you are!" message.

Other Traits Found in Consumer Research

It should be emphasized that the preceding traits represent only a small fraction of the many traits that have been investigated in consumer research. Exhibit 6.1

EXHIBIT 6.1

Examples of Other Traits in Consumer Research

Frugality The tendency of a consumer to exhibit restraint when facing purchases and using resources.

Impulsiveness The tendency for consumers to make impulsive, unintended purchases.

Trait Anxiety A tendency to respond with anxiety when facing threatening events.

Bargaining Proneness The tendency for a consumer to engage in bargaining behaviors when making purchases.

Trait Vanity The tendency for consumers to take excessive pride in themselves, including their appearance and accomplishments.

highlights other traits that are often studied. Again, we emphasize that there are many more!

The Five-Factor Model Approach

One of the most popular multiple-trait approaches found in both personality psychology and consumer research is the **five-factor model** (FFM) approach.³⁰ Numerous studies have examined the influence of the traits in the FFM on a wide range of behaviors, both inside and outside of the field of consumer research. The FFM proposes that five dominant traits are found in the human personality, including:

1. Extroversion
2. Agreeableness

3. Openness to Experience (also referred to as "creativity")
4. Stability (or Instability; sometimes referred to clinically as "neuroticism")
5. Conscientiousness

five-factor model

multiple-trait perspective that proposes that the human personality consists of five traits: agreeableness, extroversion, openness to experience (or creativity), conscientiousness, and neuroticism (or stability)

Extroverted consumers are outgoing and talkative with others. Agreeable consumers are kind-hearted to others and sympathetic. Creative consumers are imaginative and enjoy new ideas. Stable consumers tend to be able to control their emotions and avoid mood swings. Conscientious consumers are careful, orderly, and precise. These traits are presented in Exhibit 6.2.

As we have stated, the FFM approach is a multiple-trait approach, meaning that a consumer's personality is conceptualized as a *combination* of these traits and that each consumer will vary on the respective traits. For example, Corbin might possess relatively strong degrees of extroversion, agreeableness, and openness, but he may not be very stable or conscientious. By examining consumers across the five dimensions of the FFM, we gain an expanded view of how multiple traits influence specific consumer behaviors.

The FFM approach is indeed popular with consumer researchers, and the traits found in the FFM have been shown to impact consumer behaviors such as complaining,

EXHIBIT 6.2

Five-Factor Model

Personality Trait	Description
Extroversion	Talkative, outgoing
Agreeableness	Kindhearted, sympathetic
Openness to Experience	Creative, open to new ideas, imaginative
Stability	Even-keeled, avoids mood swings
Conscientiousness	Precise, efficient, organized

Source: Based on McCrae, R. R., and P. T. Costa (2005), *Personality in Adulthood: A Five-Factor Theory Perspective*, 2nd ed., New York, Guilford.