

A NEW PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE TO MEASURE A PERSONALITY
CHARACTERISTIC: APPLICATIONS IN MARKETING

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Abstract

This paper describes a theoretical model of human behavior which helps to isolate a factor which has been shown to predict a quality of human behavior associated with the cooperativeness, friendliness and positiveness of interpersonal behavior. It's called the Others Concept and can be applied to various marketing functions.

Introduction

One of the fundamental problems in human relations is determining what factors influence behavior. Many attempts have been made to provide a framework from which to view these factors, but equally many have fallen short of the ultimate goal of any science of behavior: to explain, predict and ultimately be able to influence behavior in a positive manner.

In marketing, as in any business function in which people must work cooperatively together, the practical goal of providing an atmosphere in which people can work cooperatively and positively together is paramount. Thus, the importance of identifying the factors which contribute to cooperative and positive behavior are a concern to marketers and managers alike.

A new theoretical model of human behavior, which helps to isolate a factor which can and has been shown to predict a quality of human behavior that is intimately associated with the cooperativeness, friendliness and positiveness of interpersonal behavior, has recently been discussed in psychological literature.

The understanding of this factor or theoretical construct which is called the others-concept, can be used to explain, predict and ultimately influence behavior in positive directions. The others concept is defined as a person's general expectations and perceptions about other people. It is measured along a friendliness - to - hostility continuum.

A person's others-concept can be measured by means of briefly administered psychological test, known as the Paired Hands Test, which is available in published form. This test is a projective technique which relies on the belief that people will often reveal things about themselves, in this case, their perception of other people, even when asked to do a task which does not specifically ask them to tell how they might feel about other people.

The purpose of the present study, was therefore, to examine the others-concept of people who are employed in a particular occupation in which their others-concepts would be thought to influence their performance on the job. The Paired Hands Test, Adult Form, was administered to 323 people in the greater Ann Arbor, Michigan trading area.

Method

The Paired Hands Test was administered to a convenience sample of retail salespeople in various types of retail stores including independent specialty stores, chain stores and department stores.

The test consisted of 20 photographs, in color, depicting a black hand and a white hand in various positions.

These pictures were shown to all respondents who were asked to identify a statement that best describes each photograph.

An attempt was made to utilize demographic features to ascertain whether respondents could be clustered into groupings based on these features: among these were the classifications according to sex, age, urban-rural setting, dwelling type and whether they rented or owned their dwelling. The mean PHT scores for each group were compared and differences were tested for statistical significance.

Analysis

The analysis in terms of demographic data failed to yield any findings which were highly significant statistically, but some trends occurred which may be worth noting. Females tended to score higher than males (P . 10). The mean score for females (N=145) was 93.67. Another trend was that salespeople under age 25 tended to score higher than those above that age. Also, the analysis revealed a tendency for sales people who live in a more suburban setting (i.e., county or township) to score higher than those who live within the city. The factor of whether the salesperson lived in an apartment or house, and whether it was rented or owned, was not related at all to test scores.

The sex difference which was found, though it was only of questionable statistical significance, takes on meaning by virtue of the fact that in almost all prior research with the Paired Hands Test, females have scored significantly higher than males. It thus appears that among retail sales personnel there is more homogeneity between the sexes with respect to their attitude toward other people than among the general population, though females tend to be a little more positive, as has been true in the case of most groups tested to date.

The information yielded by this research would take on more significance, of course, if the sample tested could have been evaluated in terms of their capability as salespeople. It would be desirable to know if the best (most successful) salespeople obtained the higher scores, or if there is some optimal score which best describes them. Perhaps there is such a thing as too high an others-concept for successful saleswork. Such people may be overly trusting, perhaps in naive idealistic sense, and therefore they may not be best suited for work involving a realistic and competitive approach to people. This question can only be answered by future research. Other areas for research utilizing the adult form of the Paired Hands Test which would enable the researchers to generate more data to test validity are as follows: Industrial and Commercial Salesmen; Bank Tellers; Fund Raising; Marketing Research Interviewers; Employment Counselors or Interviewers; Service Repair people; Teachers; Lawyers; Newscasters; Internal Revenue employees; TV actors and actresses; Attorneys; Physicians and others who interact on a daily business or professional basis.

The unabridged paper can be obtained by writing to Professor Spitz.