



The 3M Model of Motivation and Personality: Theory and Empirical Applications to Consumer Behavior

John Mowen

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Integrating control theory, evolutionary psychology, and a hierarchical approach to personality, this book presents a new approach to motivation, personality, and consumer behavior. Called the 3M, which stands for 'Meta-theoretic Model of Motivation', this theory seeks to account for how personality traits interact with the situation to influence consumer attitudes and actions. The book proposes that multiple personality traits combine to form a motivational network that acts to influence behavior. Mowen argues that in order to understand the causes of enduring behavioral tendencies, one must identify the more abstract traits underlying surface behaviors.

In constructing the 3M model, the author reports data from fifteen empirical studies employing over 3500 respondents. In this hierarchical model, four types of personality traits are identified: elemental, compound, situational, and surface traits. Eight elemental traits are proposed as forming the underlying dimensions of personality. Consistent with control theory, the research reveals that the elemental traits combine to form compound traits, such as self-efficacy, task orientation, playfulness, and competitiveness. These elemental and compound traits combine with situational influences to cause enduring behavioral tendencies within general situational contexts. Examples of situational traits investigated include impulsive buying, value consciousness, sports interest, and health motivation.

In the 3M model the elemental, compound, and situational traits combine to yield surface traits, which are enduring dispositions to act in specific behavioral contexts. Five surface traits are empirically investigated in the book: compulsive buying, sports participation, healthy diet lifestyles, proneness to bargaining, and a tendency to frugality. Across these five studies, the empirical results reveal that the 3M model accounts for over 44% of the variance in the surface trait measures. By presenting a new meta-theory of motivation and personality that is testable, Mowen's 3M model accounts for high levels of variance in consumer behavior. By integrating the work of selected past and current theorists into a comprehensible whole, the 3M model provides coherence in a field currently dominated by conflicting ideas, theories, and approaches. The book provides evidence that by understanding the individual dispositions that underlie consumer behavior, public policy officials and marketing specialists can develop better communication programs to influence and persuade their target audiences. The book shows how to employ the 3M model to segment the marketplace, provide psychographic inventories, position brands, create promotional themes, and develop brand personalities.

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