ACHIEVING INTENTION TO RECOMMEND WITH CONSUMER ARROGANCE AS AN ANTECEDENT

Shalini Nath Tripathi
Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow, India

Shalini Srivastava
Jaipuria Institute of Management, Noida, India

Nishtha Malik
Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow, India

Alok Kumar
FORE School of Management, New Delhi, India

ABSTRACT

This research explores whether arrogance (in the consumption context) can climax into intention to recommend by consumers through investigation of the mediating role of self-enhancement, self-affirmation, and consumer satisfaction. The study uses a quantitative approach where data was collected using standardized questionnaires and analyzed using PROCESS Macro. The findings corroborated that consumers tend to share consumption experiences to fulfill their self-enhancement and self-affirmation needs. This sharing of information enhances self-worth while gaining peers' likeability and trust. Also, consumers emphasized that recommendation intention was always the consequence of experiencing satisfaction with a product or brand. The study establishes that to attain recommendation intention from consumers, arrogance as a personality trait must be triggered or instigated. It also establishes that self- enhancement and satisfaction, and self-affirmation and satisfaction, serially mediate the relationship between consumer arrogance and recommendation intention.

INTRODUCTION

The marketing and advertising landscape is witnessing a phenomenal shift. What is the future? Will consumers believe in the authenticity of marketing communication touted by the organization, or will the marketing communication landscape undergo a sea change, shifting towards word of mouth (WOM) and consumer recommendations? There is an element of trust involved in recommendations from a peer or colleague. Hence, consumers tend to seek advice related to products and brands from others who are rather forthcoming about it (Berger, 2014; Peluso, Bonezzi, Deangelis & Rucker, 2017). According to Duhan, Jhonson, and Wilcox (1997), consumers generally pay heed to recommendations made by peers and close network members, which is labeled as WOM communication.

Customer recommendations are closely associated with consumption-related behaviors (Berger, 2014), which, in turn, are closely linked with consumer arrogance (CA). Communication emanating from consumers may include a display of superiority by nonverbal signals, such as the use of branded products to convey high social status. Ruvio and Shoham (2016) have explained CA as an individual personality trait that involves establishing an individual's social superiority and includes consumer bragging, image-based consumption, consumer superiority, and

exhibitionism-based purchases (for all products and services). Consumption-related behaviors are usually displayed by consumers to communicate self-worth and superiority, and to demonstrate their own achievements.

Arrogance in the domain of psychology has been viewed as a dimension of narcissism (Verbeke, Belschak & Bagozzi, 2004), reflecting an individual's feelings of superiority, desirous of associating only with individuals with an elevated status. Research views arrogance as a multi-dimensional trait, with people viewing an individual as arrogant when they espouse superiority to others (Johnson et al., 2010). Literary evidence suggests that individuals wield consumption behaviors for establishing achievements while communicating superiority and self-worth (Belk, 1988; 2011; Lee et al., 2015); however, there is a need for understanding consumers' arrogant inclinations driven by their consumption behavior. Thus, Ruvio and Shoham (2016) conceptualized consumer arrogance and defined it "as people's proclivity for demonstrating their social superiority through the acquisition, utilization or display of consumer goods".

There is an established relationship between CA and WOM (Alexandrov et al., 2013; De Angelis et al., 2012; Lovett et al. et al. 2013), which is significantly associated with intention to recommend. Consumers have been known to engage in WOM in order to satisfy self-enhancement (SE) and self-affirmation (SA) needs (Barasch & Berger, 2013; De Angelis et al., 2012; Packard et al.. 2016). Fulfillment of these needs results in consumer satisfaction (Burr, Santo & Pushkar, 2011; Liao et al., 2020; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000), which in turn, will culminate in the intention to recommend the product or service (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Hosany & Witham, 2009; Zabkar et al., 2010). Recognizing the significance of recommendation intention (RI), marketers need to devise more strategies for fueling such intention to recommend. Consumers possess a natural tendency to brag about their purchases. Marketers can achieve RI from consumers by instigating this inherent arrogance (Gibbs, 2009). Thus, an urgent need is to explore this as a strategic intervention in marketing, with the objective of achieving RI and exploring the consequences of instigating arrogance in consumers. Undoubtedly, discovering ways to prompt RI in consumers is critical to the marketing efforts of firms and strategically important for future success.

In this study, we focus on the increasingly important phenomenon of consumer arrogance and posit that by instigating CA, marketers can successfully achieve intention to recommend from consumers. Therefore, this study explores whether arrogance harbored by a consumer (in the consumption context) will culminate in an intention to recommend products or services, in contrast to previous research on CA leading to positive and negative WOM (Ruvio, Bagozzi, Hult 7 Spreng, 2020). It also explores the mediating roles of SA, SE and consumer satisfaction, unlike previous studies which have not taken cognizance of consumer satisfaction (Ruvio et al., 2020).

The paper is organized as follows: The introduction is followed by the Section on theoretical background and hypothesis building. Next, the methodology and analysis of the quantitative phase are elucidated, followed by the findings and discussion Section. Then come implications and, finally, limitations and directions for future research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This research focuses on the much talked about social phenomenon of CA and posits that CA results in RI by consumers. CA, as a concept, has been drawn from the theory of positive illusions (Taylor & Brown, 1988), with specific reference to the notion of illusory superiority. This theory purports that human thoughts harbor a tendency of positive bias, which is generally associated with mental health and psychological well-being. This has found widespread application in the domain of marketing, finance and psychology (Garbinsky, Mead & Gregg, 2021;

Thompson, 2022; Yang et al., 2020). Individuals usually hold an optimistic perception of the world and are more positively inclined towards future outcomes than is realistically possible. This tends to distort their sense of control, optimism, and self-worth, giving them an inflated self-view as compared to others (Taylor & Brown, 1988; 1994). This unrealistic superior self-view is called illusory superiority (Hoorens, 1993; 1995), which refers to an individual's favorable self-view compared to others. Most individuals harbor an illusion of superiority (Sedikides & Gregg, 2008), but do not express it for fear of social boycott (Anderson et al., 2006a). It is this illusion that instigates arrogant behavior, which, in turn, leads to SE behaviors accompanied by an inflated sense of superiority (Anderson al., 2006a).

Researchers have instigated interest in using RI as a predictor of a firm's financial performance (Morgan & Rego, 2006; Keiningham, Cooil, Andreassen & Lerzan, 2007b; Reichheld 2003). Some studies have posited that RI is a sounder predictor of a firm's performance as compared to customer satisfaction (Keiningham et al., 2007a; Pingitore et al., 2007). Thus, the RI must be reflective of deeper customer insights than those captured by customer satisfaction. Consumers harbor intentions to recommend a product or service for multiple reasons. Most of the researchers have viewed RI because of experiencing a product or service brand. Since RI has a significant impact on the bottom line and the firm's top line, the need arises to investigate it as an outcome variable of CA. Consumers harbor intentions to recommend a product or service for multiple reasons. Most researchers have viewed RI because of experiencing a product or service brand.

The brand-related factors having an impact on RI could be quality, satisfaction, loyalty, trust, commitment, and perceived value. This view, besides being logical, has a managerial rationale. Literature substantiates that customer satisfaction tends to positively impact the firm. This satisfaction not only leads to customer loyalty (Blattberg, Malthouse & Neslin, 2009; Fassnacht & Köse 2007; Szymanski & Henard, 2001) but also ensures positive behavioral intentions (e.g., Mittal and Kamakura 2001), customer retention (Bolton, 1998; Jamal & Bucklin, 2006) repeat purchase (Szymanski & Henard, 2001) and so on.

From the perspective of the firm, customer satisfaction tends to impact firm profitability, financial performance, shareholder value, and increased growth (Anderson et al., 2006a; Zhu et al. 2023). It also leads to positive word of mouth or recommendations (Berger, 2014), which have been viewed as powerful tools in the marketplace. Recommendation from a customer constitutes the upper threshold of customer relationship and can create a viral effect (Reichheld, 2003). Thus, satisfaction constitutes an important antecedent of RI and warrants attention in the current research.

This study draws upon the social exchange theory. Social behavior is perceived as the outcome of an exchange process, the objective of which is to maximize benefits and minimize costs. Hence, people tend to weigh potential benefits vis-a-vis risks while deciding about continuing a social relationship. Specifically, this study aims to unravel how CA can drive customers to harbor RI.

The conceptual model for the study also takes cognizance of the self-enhancement theory and the self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988). The premise of the self-enhancement theory is that people tend to seek positive evaluations for themselves to feel good. This helps them maintain self-worth and effectiveness. The self-affirmation theory, on the other hand, states that people need to maintain a steady self-image because they tend to use that self-image as a self-defense mechanism. Hence, the study proposes that it is needed for the feel-good factor and maintenance of self-image that drives consumers to recommend products and services.

This study posits that CA culminates in RI by consumers, and SE and satisfaction, as well as SA and satisfaction, serially mediate the impact of CA on RI (Figure 1). This is unlike previous work by Ruvio et al. (2020), wherein they studied the impact of CA on positive and negative WOM through the mediation of SE and SA and the moderating effect of social context, controlling for narcissism, hubris, and overconfidence. We have reviewed the main studies on CA and highlighted the key findings (Exhibit 1).

Figure 1
Conceptual Model
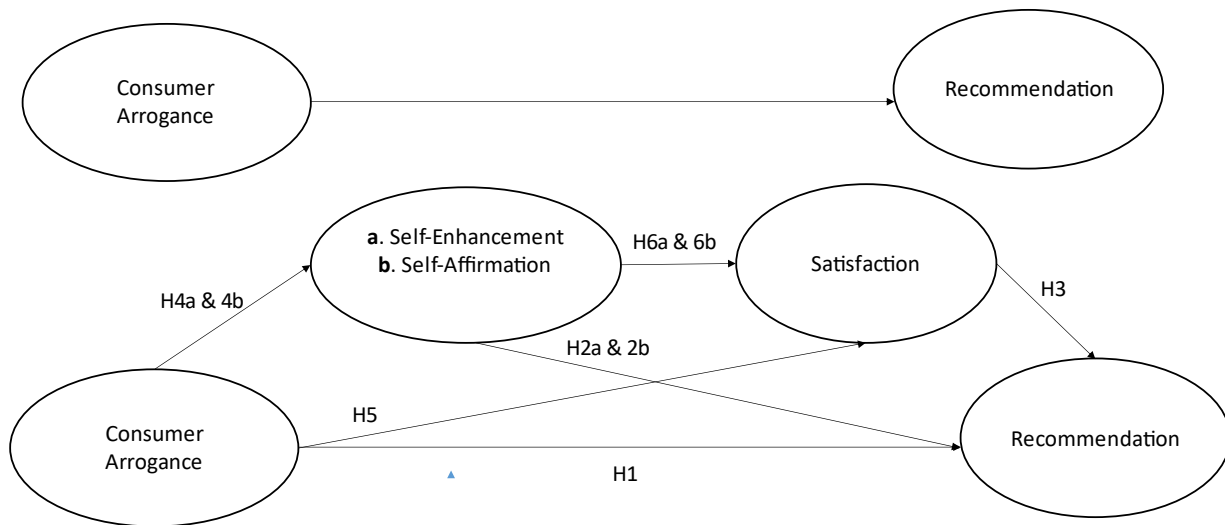
*Serial Mediation

HYPOTHESIS BUILDING

This research focuses on the highly relevant phenomenon (in the marketing domain) of CA and posits that CA results in consumers' recommendation intention (RI). This tendency can be appropriately deployed by marketers in unique strategic ways. Usually, an individual is perceived as arrogant when they incessantly communicate superior attributes possessed by themselves in comparison with others (Hareli & Weiner, 2000; Hareli, Weiner & Yee, 2006; Johnson et al., 2010; Lewis, 2000; Verbeke et al., 2004). Gibbs (2009) pointed out that we live in an age of CA wherein people enthusiastically share their views and opinions on products and services purchased and consumed by them. Thus, CA can be defined as an individual's tendency to broadcast his/her superiority (to others) in the domain of purchase and consumption of materialistic acquisitions. In essence, it encompasses both aspects of the self's sense of superiority as well as the need to socially communicate such superiority through public display and verbal communication of consumption episodes (Ruvio et al., 2020).

Consumers tend to engage in recommendations as evidence of their knowledge and expertise about online and offline product brands (Lovett et al., 2013; Packard & Wooten, 2013;

Berger, 2014). It is this public broadcast of consumption events that provides the consumer with a feeling of self-enhancement (Packard, Gerdhoff & Wooten, 2016; Barasch & Berger, 2013; Alexandrov et al., 2013; De Angelis et al., 2012; Sundaram, Mitra & Webster, 1998) as well as an opportunity to establish a superior image. Consumers may be looking for several psychological benefits through discussing their purchases such as establishing a superior self-view and strong persuasion (Packard et al., 2016), while also improving self-image (De Angelis et al., 2012).

The primary driving force for recommendations (by consumers) is an individual's need to project a positive self-image in public, which is referred to as SE (Baumeister 1998; Barasch & Berger, 2013; Alexandrov et al., 2013; De Angelis et al., 2012; Sundaram et al., 1998; Packard et al., 2016). Research has posited that consumers regularly need to fuel their SE needs and have a greater tendency to share positive recommendations rather than negative communication (Baker et al., 2007; Hong et al., 2018).

Contrarily, SA has been posited as driving negative marketing communication or word of mouth (Alexandrov et al., 2013; Arora et al., 2021; Wilson et al. 2017). SA has been described as the effort to restore an individual's self-worth (Steele, 1988). Research has established that negative word of mouth helps restore self-worth and a sense of superiority (Dunn & Dahl, 2012). A common perception of negative information is that it is being shared as an altruistic gesture of helping others (Richins, 1984). This conveys the impression that consumers are sharing social information to help others, while at the same time they are restoring their superior self-view and ego (Alexandrov et al., 2013). Hence, drawing from theoretical as well as empirical research, we posit the following:

> **H1:** *There is a significant association between consumer arrogance and recommendation intention.*

> **H2a:** *There is a significant association between self-enhancement and recommendation intention.*

> **H2b:** *There is a significant association between self-affirmation and recommendation intention.*

Evidence from the literature suggests that the importance attributed to word of mouth has resulted in the consideration of RI as a predictor of a firm's performance (Keiningham et al., 2007b; Morgan & Rego, 2006; Reichheld, 2003). Research also supports that RI is a better and more holistic predictor of a firm's performance than customer satisfaction (Hong et al. 2018; Keiningham et al. 2007a; Pingitore et al. 2007;). Current evidence also supports customer satisfaction's influence on loyalty and re-patronage (Wei, 2023; Zhu et al., 2023).

Finn, Wang, and Frank (2009) have also posited that in the online context, systemic disconfirmation and service offering disconfirmation both have an impact on the satisfaction of customers, which mediates their effects on RI. Several instances in literature support satisfactory tourism experiences leading to RI (Chen and Tsai 2007; Grappi and Fabrizio 2011; Zabkar et al. 2010;). Thus, based on this evidence, we propose:

> **H3:** *There is a significant association between satisfaction and recommendation intention.*

A review of the literature reveals some previous work done on SE and SA. SE has mostly been associated with consumers engaging in positive word of mouth (Alexandrov et al., 2013; De Angelis et al., 2012; Lovett et al., 2013; Packard & Wooten, 2013). However, De Angelis et al. (2012) established a relationship between SE benefits and consumers engaging in negative word of mouth. This was further reiterated by Ruvio et al. (2020) with reference to consumers sharing negative experiences. They further posited that SE is the driver for the impact of CA on word of mouth. Also, an individual's need for SA (Alexandrov et al., 2013) and SE mediates the impact of CA on negative WOM. Thus, consumers use word of mouth to fulfill their psychological needs (Berger2014). Ruvio et al. (2020) also established that consumers like to demonstrate relative superiority by owning specific products or brands and indulging in word of mouth (Bapat & Williams, 2023; Dubois et al., 2011; Han et al., 2010). This probably leads them to experience enhanced utility from the purchased product (Lovett et al., 2013), which, in turn, may lead them to recommend products or brands.

CA also tends to instigate consumers to engage in negative verbal communication. The perceived benefits of engaging in negative verbal communication are greater than the cost, and satisfy their SA and SE needs, especially in a social setting (Arora et al., 2021; Yong Seo & Scammon, 2014). Thus, based on evidence existing in the literature, we propose the following:

> **H4a:** *There is a significant association between consumer arrogance and self-enhancement.*

> **H4b:** *There is a significant association between consumer arrogance and self-affirmation.*

Arrogance has been identified as a basic personality trait linked to a self-belief of superiority and self-importance, which is demonstrated through presumptuous verbal expression (Brown, 2012). However, when people tend to demonstrate their social superiority by boasting about products or brands purchased by them, it is referred to as 'consumer arrogance' (Ruvio & Shoham, 2016). Some earlier studies have investigated arrogance as a part of narcissism and have posited a positive relationship between arrogance and life satisfaction (Aghababaei & Błachni, 2015; Egan, Chan, & Shorter, 2014; Rose, 2002; Roszkowski, 2003). Balıkçıoğlu and Arslan (2018) have extended this further to show that greed and materialism have a positive impact on arrogance and CA has a positive impact on life satisfaction. Although negative personality traits such as arrogance and selfishness tend to decrease life satisfaction, narcissism is positively related to well-being (Ha et al., 2018). Therefore, we posit that:

> **H5:** *There is a significant association between consumer arrogance and satisfaction.*

Values are known to be the driving force for leading one's life (Schwartz, 1992). Hence, there is some empirical evidence indicating that SE may be directly (Burr et al., 2011; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000) or indirectly (Karabati & Cemalcilar, 2010) related to life satisfaction. Lafrenière et al. (2013) posited that obsessive passion for an activity moderated the relationship between SE (within the activity) and life satisfaction. Then Thyroff and Kilbourne (2018) explored the mediating effect of SE in the materialism and consumer satisfaction relationship. Their findings

revealed that SE and individual competitiveness serially mediate this relationship. These studies provide evidence for a relationship between SE and satisfaction.

There is some evidence from extant literature about the relationship between SA and satisfaction. Chiang et al. (2008) applied the life review group program intervention to inmates of an old age home. This therapy helped improve the life satisfaction and self-esteem of the old inmates (Haight & Davis, 1992), which in turn improved the SA. Their findings established a relationship between SA and life satisfaction.

Self-affirmation theory explains how an individual's real-world self-evaluation guides his/her behavior as a consumer. This theory states that humans tend to maintain their self-worth (Sherman & Cohen, 2006), and that needs can be categorized as autonomy, relatedness and competence needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000), and their satisfaction. Liao et al. (2020) have explored the relationship between self-worth, need satisfaction, and loyalty. Taking cognizance of all categories of need satisfaction, competence need satisfaction indicates that the individual has made a notable accomplishment leading to positive self-evaluation, which is at the core of self-worth (Knowles et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2015). Autonomy needs satisfaction can be derived from the freedom of making choices (Chen et al., 2015). The theory of SA states that individuals feel happy about making free choices which in turn, boosts their self-worth (Steele, 1988). Social relationships are vital for an individual's SA, and satisfaction of relatedness needs reaffirms a person's belief in his/her ability to establish social connections (Herodotou et al., 2014). This, in turn, creates a positive self-image (Sherman & Cohen, 2006). An individual's need for social acceptance instigates a positive self-image and increases self-worth (DeWall et al., 2009). Hence, based on this empirical evidence we posit that:

H6a: *There is a significant association between self-enhancement and satisfaction.*

H6b: *There is a significant association between self-affirmation and satisfaction.*

CA is closely and significantly associated with SE and SA, with substantial evidence in extant literature about SE and SA needs being the primary driving force for consumers engaging in positive as well as negative word of mouth. Also, SE and SA have been known to mediate the relationship between CA and word of mouth. There also exists a significant relationship between satisfaction and RI, with satisfaction being an important precursor for a firm's performance as well as customer loyalty. We, therefore, propose the following:

H7a: *Self-enhancement and satisfaction to use sequentially mediate the impact of consumer arrogance on recommendation intention.*

H7b: *Self-affirmation and satisfaction to use sequentially mediate the impact of consumer arrogance on recommendation intention.*

METHOD

The survey data was collected with the help of a standardized questionnaire for all five constructs, and the results were analyzed. The quantitative study helped to test the proposed conceptual model empirically. The study used the convenience sampling method in consonance with prior studies for the collection of data (Söderlund & Öhman, 2003). Data was collected from respondents across India having varied demographic characteristics. The authors contacted their

networks of people and shared the purpose of the survey. A list of prospective respondents was then prepared. They were assured of their responses' confidentiality and the data collection's academic purpose. Due to prevailing conditions, a Google form was created to measure the constructs involved in the study. It was sent through the mail and other channels of social media. The questions were mixed-up to reduce social desirability within the respondents. To limit concerns related to sampling, the selection of the sample was based on a larger variation. We warranted that the sample included all demographic classifications of the population (age, marital status, occupation, and gender—see Exhibit 1). However, before floating the mail for the survey, a pilot study was conducted on 30 respondents to check the appropriateness of the scales. The reliability and validity of the scales were checked, and the values established that the scales were appropriate for the study. All ethical procedures of sustaining confidentiality and informed consent were firmly adhered to. Of 720 emails, the authors were able to receive 532 responses (response rate of 73.88%). Due to incomplete information, 8 surveys out of 532 were discarded, thereby leaving 524 for final analysis.

For data analysis, SPSS, AMOS, and PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013) were deployed to test validity, reliability, and serial mediation analysis. Serial mediation is a chain of mediators for whom causality is high in a particular direction of the causal flow (Choudhary et al., 2020). It is an analytical technique that allows for the testing of indirect effects by two mediators that have a causal relationship, allowing for more rigorous testing of the causal relations.

Measures

A questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5), which was used to measure all the five constructs on validated scales (Table 1).

Common Method Bias. To handle the issue of common method bias (CMB) (Podsakoff et al., 2003), which occurs when the cross-sectional method is followed, a random arrangement of items and Harman's single factor test were used (Kaur et al., 2021). The first factor accounted for 33.84% of the total variance, and this value was less than the threshold value (50%) (Podsakoff et al., 2003); therefore, CMB was not an issue. Second, the researchers also carried out Bagozzi's method (Bagozzi et al., 1991) to check CMB. According to it, none of the correlations was found to be more than 0.9.

Data analysis and results

Measurement model: Reliability and Validity. The measurement model was evaluated via confirmatory factor analysis, which depicted a good model fit (χ/df = 2.95, GFI=0.92, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.06) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As shown in Table 2, composite reliability (CR) values for the study constructs were above 0.70. This confirmed both internal reliability and convergent validity. Moreover, convergent validity was confirmed since the average variance explained (AVE) for the study measures was greater than 0.50.

Table 2 of the present study reflects the correlation and discriminant validity of the study variables. Results show that the correlation between the variables was positive and significant. The discriminant validity of the study variables was assessed by calculating the square root of the AVE estimates. Discriminant validity is significant when its value exceeds the correlation value between the constructs. As is evident from the results, all the correlation values were less than the discriminant values of the constructs.

Table 1
Construct Measures

Construct	Source
Consumer Arrogance *Bragging* 1. I often buy products that emphasize my social status. 2. I tend to choose showy products. 3. It is important to me that others realize that I have the best things. 4. I like to show others what I buy. 5. I often make sure that others know what I buy. 6. I often tell others how my purchases are the best. *Sense of Superiority* 7. Compared to others, I usually know what the best buy is. 8. Not many people know the best buy as well as I do. 9. I tend to buy better products than most people I know. 10. I usually know where to get the best deals better than others.	Ruvio & Shoham 2016
Self-enhancement 1. It will create the impression that I am a "good" person. 2. I will receive positive feedback from others about my gestures. 3. I will create a positive impression on others.	Alexandrov et al. 2013
Self-affirmation 1. It will reveal who I am. 2. It will reveal what I stand for. 3. It will make the other person aware of what I value about myself. 4. It will make the other person understand what is important to me. 5. It will make me think about positive aspects of myself.	Alexandrov et al. 2013
Satisfaction 1.I would feel satisfied with the product/ service 2. I would feel contented with the features of the product/ service 3. I would feel comfortable with the product/ service usage 4. I would feel pleased because it potentially fulfills my needs.	Madan & Yadav 2016
Intention to Recommend 1. I would recommend the product/ service to my friends and family to use it, if it is available. 2. If I have a worthy experience with the product/ service, I recommend friends to purchase it for use. 3. I would recommend the product/ service, if it is worth using.	Oliveira et al. 2016

Structural model. Like the measurement model, the structural model was also found to possess satisfactory model fit indices (χ/df = 3.48, GFI=0.91, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.06). The results supported the first six hypotheses of the study. A significant association was found between CA with RI, (H1: ß = 0.393, S.E.=0.065, p <0.01), a significant association between SE and RI (H2a: ß = 0.338, S.E.= 0.057, p <0.01), a significant association between SA and RI (H2b: ß = 0.264, S.E. = 0.054, p <0.01), a significant association between satisfaction and RI (H3: ß = 0.157, S.E.=0 .064, p <0.01), a significant association between CA and SE (H4a: ß = 0.605,

S.E.= 0.065, p <0.01), a significant association between CA and SA (H4b: ß = 0.377, S.E.= 0.050, p <0.01), a significant association between CA and satisfaction (H5: ß = 0.282, S.E.= 0.050, p <0.01), a significant association between SE and satisfaction (H6a: ß = 0.201, S.E.= 0.043, p <0.01) and a significant association between SA and satisfaction (H6b: ß = 0.232, S.E.= 0.063, p <0.01)

Table 2
Validity and Reliability Analysis

VARIABLES	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	ENHANC	ARROG	SATIS	RECOM	AFFIRM
ENHANC	0.861	0.674	0.359	0.276	0.821				
ARROG	0.848	0.530	0.327	0.207	0.495	0.728			
SATIS	0.842	0.572	0.146	0.118	0.382	0.259	0.756		
RECOM	0.767	0.523	0.354	0.237	0.595	0.572	0.351	0.723	
AFFIRM	0.803	0.507	0.359	0.206	0.599	0.434	0.366	0.377	0.712

N=524

Serial Mediation Analysis. The study utilized an analytical approach by Hayes (2013) for testing the hypothetical model. Path coefficients were calculated using Model 6 (PROCESS). As Van Jaarsveld, Walker, and Skarlicki (2010) mentioned, besides testing the mediating effects of SA/SE and satisfaction in isolation, the PROCESS Macro also helps assess the "indirect effect passing through both these mediators." Figures 2 and 3 of the study illustrate estimates of the path coefficients. The mediation approach suggested by Hayes (2013) "directly tests the mediating effects between the predictor and criterion variables via bootstrapping procedure". The study using bootstrapping at 10, 0000 subsamples reflected that at 95% confidence intervals, the indirect effects did not contain zero for any of the study variables viz., CA, SA, SE and RI.

Tables 3 and 4 depict the serial mediating effects to assess Hypotheses 7a and 7b. It is found that there exists a significant indirect effect (indirect effect=0.167, Boot SE=0.0273, 95% Boot CI [lower]=0.1153, Boot CI [upper]= 0.2224) for SE as a mediating variable. Similarly, there exists a significant indirect effect (indirect effect=.077, Boot SE=0.0209, 95% Boot CI [lower]= 0.0309, Boot CI [upper]= 0.1205) for SA as a mediating variable. These results support that both SE and SA had significant serial mediating effects. CA leads to (a) SE (b) SA leads to satisfaction which in turn leads to RI, hence supporting Hypotheses 7a and 7b. As both the direct and indirect effects are significant and are pointing in the same direction for Hypotheses 7a and 7b, it depicts the case of complementary mediation. Figure 2 and Figure 3 of the study depict the serial mediation results.

Table 3
Indirect effects: Self-enhancement as a mediator

Indirect effects	Effect	Boot SE	95% confidence interval[a]	Figure path
CA →SE →REC	.142	.0273	(0.091, 0.199)	(a1b1)
CA →SAT →REC	.012	.0071	(0.013, 0.101)	(a2b2)
CA →SE→SAT →REC	.013	.0062	(0.002, 0.026)	(a1d1b2)
Total indirect effects	.167	.0273	(.1153, .2224)	(a1b1+ a2b2+a1d1b2)

Note: [a]10,000 bootstrap samples for bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals.

Table 4
Indirect effects: Self-enhancement as a mediator

| Indirect effects	Effect	Boot SE	95% confidence interval[a]	Figure path
CA →SA → REC	.041	.0193	(0.060, 0.082)	(a1b1)
CA →SAT →REC	.021	.0102	(0.004, 0.043)	(a2b2)
CA →SA→ SAT →REC	.015	.0056	(0.005, 0.027)	(a1d1b2)
Total indirect effects	.077	.0209	(0.039, .1205)	(a1b1+ a2b2+a1d1b2)

Note: [a]10,000 bootstrap samples for bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals.

DISCUSSION

Several researchers have substantiated a relationship between CA and WOM (Alexandrov et al., 2013; Ruvio et al., 2020), which consequentially results in intention to recommend. Consumers tend to engage in product-related verbal communication in order to satisfy SE and SA needs (De Angelis et al., 2012; Packard et al., 2016). When fulfilled, SE and SA needs will consequentially lead to consumer satisfaction (Liao et al., 2019), ultimately leading to RI for the product or service by consumers (Chen & Tsai 2007; Zabkar et al., 2010). Hence, this study

proposed that SE and satisfaction, and SA and satisfaction, serially mediate the relationship between CA and RI.

Figure 2
Serial Mediation with Self-Enhancement as a Mediator
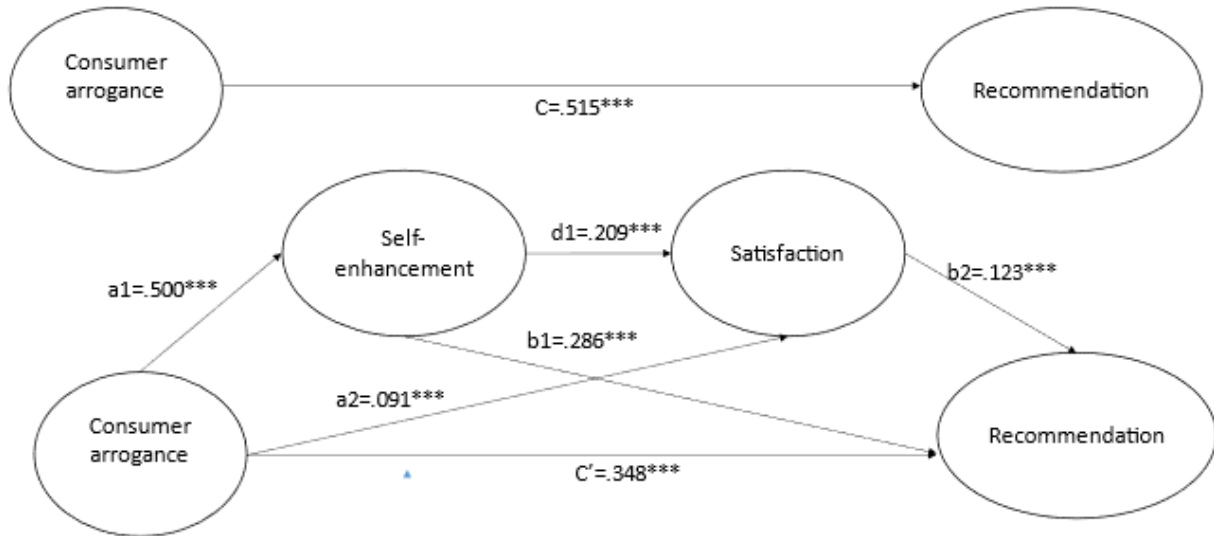
Figure 3
Serial Mediation with Self-Affirmation as a Predictor Variable
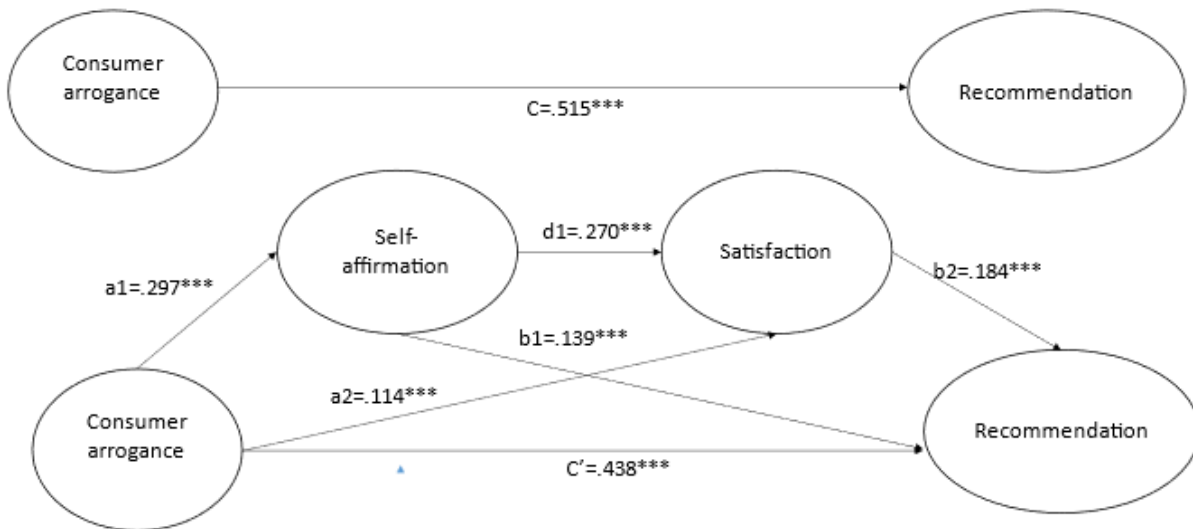
Results supported the first six hypotheses of the study. There exists a significant relationship between CA and RI, SE and RI, SA and RI, satisfaction and RI, CA and SE, CA and SA, CA and satisfaction, SE and satisfaction and SA and satisfaction. The results also revealed a significant indirect effect for SE as a mediating variable. Similarly, a significant indirect effect

exists for SA as a mediating variable. Thus, both SE and SA have a significant serial mediating effect. CA leads to (a) SE (b) SA, which leads to satisfaction, which, in turn, leads to RI, hence supporting Hypotheses 7a and 7b.

The current study puts forth certain important theoretical and practical implications. First, the trait of arrogance in consumers leads to a need for fulfilling SE and SA needs, providing empirical support to our conceptualization that a significant association exists between CA and SE, and CA and SA (Lovett et al. 2013; Packard and Wooten 2013;). Second, fulfillment of SE and SA needs leads to satisfaction in consumers, which lends support to our next proposition that there is a significant association between SE and SA needs and satisfaction (Ghosh et al., 2014; Karabati & Cemalcilar, 2010; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000). Third, the satisfaction experienced by consumers inculcates RI in them, which supports our assertion that there is a significant association between satisfaction and RI (Finn et al., 2009; Hosany & Witham, 2009). Fourth, CA leads to SE and SA, which leads to satisfaction, finally resulting in RI, providing empirical support to our assertion that SE and satisfaction, and SA and satisfaction, serially mediate the relationship between CA and RI.

The findings indicate that consumers enjoy talking about their new product or brand purchases. They experience a sense of happiness by helping others by sharing their purchase and consumption information. This results in RI, with people believing that peers and friends benefit from their wise recommendations. The government-imposed restrictions and social isolation during the pandemic have further provided an impetus to consumption-based information sharing on social media.

The findings revealed that consumers liked sharing consumption experiences, fulfilling their SE and SA needs, and exhibiting pro-social behavior. This enhances their self-worth while gaining their peers' trust. Further, appreciation for their recommendations also made them feel good about themselves. This feel-good factor stems from a feeling of benevolence by helping others arrive at a purchase decision. Also, consumers emphasized that recommendation was always the consequence of experiencing satisfaction with a product or brand.

This is a noteworthy finding from the perspective of achieving consumer recommendations. It reveals that consumers will neither share product-related information nor make any recommendations unless they have something tangible to talk about; they will not risk any type of social stigma (Ruvio et al., 2020). The product must be unique, of good quality, and should result in customer satisfaction after usage; only then can marketers hope for recommendations.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study addresses the vital question: what are the driving forces for achieving consumer recommendations? Although there is a vast body of knowledge on antecedents of RI, to the best of our knowledge, there is no study that has explored CA as an antecedent (Ruvio et al., 2020; Ruvio & Shoham, 2016; Senyuz & Hasford 2022). The current research thus makes a noteworthy contribution to this body of knowledge. RI can be achieved by instigating CA. Consumers like to share information about products or brands purchased by them, thereby establishing a superior self-image (Johnson et al., 2010; Hareli et al., 2006). This sharing of information fulfills self-serving motives. Hence, just as sharing consumption experiences makes consumers feel superior (Lovett et al., 2013), similarly recommending products or brands also gives them a sense of happiness and benevolence, as established by this study. In the current scenario, organizations are increasingly deploying artificial intelligence and machine learning-based recommendation

systems in areas of tourism, entertainment, stock markets, e-commerce, etc. However, these systems usually fail to take cognizance of user preferences in different contexts. Further, contextually aware systems are being developed to capture user preferences (Kulkarni & Rodd, 2020).

The study also establishes that engaging in information sharing helps consumers in fulfilling SE and SA needs, increasing self-worth and enhancing self-image (De Angelis et al., 2012; Ruvio et al., 2020). It is the motivation to fulfill SE, and SA needs that cause consumers to not only share consumption experiences but also recommend products or brands used by them. Third, this study also establishes that fulfillment of SE and SA needs leads to a feeling of satisfaction in consumers (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Liao et al., 2020; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2000;). However, consumers would be satisfied only if the product exceeds their performance and quality criteria expectations.

Fourth, it establishes that it is satisfaction with the product or service that ultimately leads to consumers recommending it to others (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Grappi & Montanari, 2011; Zabkar et al., 2010;). Lastly, the study makes a unique contribution by exploring the mediation impact of SE and satisfaction, and SA and satisfaction, and establishing that SE and satisfaction, and SA and satisfaction, serially mediate the relationship between CA and RI. No prior studies have established this relationship.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Marketers are witnessing a sea change in the marketing communication arena. Traditional strategies have lost their grip on the consumer psyche. Consumers engaging with traditional media find the communication either too generic or unbelievably praise-heavy, while younger consumers (including millennials) are hardly present on such platforms. The metaverse, for instance, is a game changer for marketing communication. It has brought forth unprecedented opportunities for brands to engage and interact with consumers through innovative media and advertising to effectively connect with the target market (Tan et al. 2023). Hence, marketers need to rethink and redesign their communication strategies, taking cognizance of the changing business scenario. Authentic marketing communication perception is crucial in the current hyper-competitive environment. Also, this will become increasingly critical with the ever-expanding reach of social media. Recent research also offers insights into leveraging visual merchandising and product and package design for reinforcing brand claims and appealing to consumer preferences (Affonso & Janiszewski, 2023).

Consumers tend to consider recommendations from friends and peers as more authentic and believable. Hence, this gains critical importance for the marketing success of companies. Researchers have established that RI is a more reliable predictor of a firm's performance as compared to customer satisfaction (Keiningham et al., 2007a; Pingitore et al., 2007).

This view carries managerial rationale, as literature presents ample evidence of positive impacts (on the firm) from customer satisfaction. As noted earlier, this satisfaction leads to customer loyalty (Szymanski & Henard, 2001), ensures positive behavioral intentions (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001), customer retention (Bolton, 1998), repeat purchases (Szymanski & Henard, 2001), and so on.

A void still exists in the effective deployment of consumer recommendations to leverage their full influence. Thus, our findings have some important implications for marketers trying to leverage RI among existing as well as prospective consumers. First, as noted previously, to achieve recommendations from consumers, arrogance as a personality trait must be triggered or instigated,

which, in turn, will result in recommendations by them. CA is not targeted at any specific group of consumers since it appeals to an inherent human psychological trait of arrogance but with specific reference to consumption-related expression. This self-expression of consumption stories may pertain to any product or service that they either had a positive experience with or were dissatisfied with after use. Another factor to be kept in mind is that the consumers should feel satisfied after using the product or service, and the product should possess an element of uniqueness or innovation. Customer satisfaction tends to impact firm profitability, financial performance, shareholder value, and increased growth (Anderson et al., 2006b) and will also lead to positive verbal communication or recommendations (Berger, 2014; Leon & Choi, 2020). Thus, this satisfaction will prompt customers to share consumption experiences as well as make recommendations. Recommendations from a customer can be classified as the ultimate test of customer relationship and can create a viral effect (Reichheld, 2003).

Further, some actionable insights for marketers are as follows:

- Designing consumer engagement or consumer connect programs on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp, wherein consumers are offered rewards for sharing consumption stories. This, in turn, would instigate arrogance in the consumer psyche.
- Ongoing feedback mechanism for products as well as services, to keep an active track of consumer satisfaction.
- Concrete measures and checks to ensure that consumers who have a poor product experience do not talk negatively about it. The consumers can be incentivized with some extra offers or rewards. Thus, instances that are marketing disasters can be transformed into marketing triumphs.

The findings lay down a road map for deploying consumer recommendations as a strategic marketing tool and justify them as authentic and believable means of marketing communication that businesses can leverage.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Arrogance in the consumption context has become deeply embedded in our culture. Consumers enjoy sharing consumption experiences to establish a superior self-image. Arrogance is a personality trait that has lost its negative connotation; marketers can view it as a window of opportunity for meaningful communication and engagement with consumers. Like all studies, this research is constrained with its own set of limitations, which make way for future research avenues. Future scholars can explore other consequences of instigating arrogance in consumers, such as customer loyalty, customer re-patronage, and so on since this work only takes cognizance of re-patronage intention. Future studies can also deep dive into other antecedent variables and test their mediation and moderation effects besides SE, SA, and satisfaction. Further, antecedents of negative WOM can be explored in depth while trying to comprehend various consequences (customer dissatisfaction, loss of customer patronage, and so on) of this phenomenon. Another avenue for research could be deploying experiments instead of a cross-sectional quantitative or qualitative study. An experimental research design could help acquire a granular understanding of consumers' consumption-related arrogance and their SE and SA needs.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:
Shalini Nath Tripathi, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Jaipuria Institute of Management
Lucknow
Uttar Pradesh, India
E-mail: shalini.tripathi@jaipuria.ac.in
Phone: +91 9450195373

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Exhibit 1
A Review of Principal Studies on Consumer Arrogance

Author	Title	Journal	Main findings
Ruvio, Bagozzi, Hult & Spreng (2020)	Consumer Arrogance and Word-of-Mouth	*Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*	By triggering consumer arrogance, marketers will be able to promote consumers' inclinations to engage in WOM communication, both online and offline Triggering consumers' sense of arrogance is highly effective in generating WOM communication than further triggers their sense of superiority, desire to brag.
Ruvio & Shoham (2016)	Consumer arrogance: Scale development and validation.	*Journal of Business Research*	CA is composed of image-based consumption, consumer bragging, exhibitionism-based purchases, and consumer feeling superior.
Ruvio, Shoham & Hareli (2007)	Consumers' arrogance: Construct conceptualization and preliminary validation evidence	*Advances in Consumer Research*	CA is defined as a general multidimensional construct that reflects the tendency of individuals to communicate their achievements to others through products. A five-dimensional CA structure includes brand-name self-assertion, exhibition-based purchases, the "I know best" mentality, showing off through purchases, and purchase superiority.