



# Consumer arrogance: Scale development and validation



Ayalla A. Ruvio<sup>a,\*</sup>, Aviv Shoham<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Broad College of Business, Michigan State University, 632 Bogue St., East Lansing, MI 48824-1121, United States

<sup>b</sup> Graduate School of Management, University of Haifa, Haifa 31905, Israel

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 29 September 2015

Received in revised form 7 June 2016

Accepted 8 June 2016

Available online 24 June 2016

### Keywords:

Arrogance

Superiority

Measurement

Cross-cultural

Validation

## ABSTRACT

This article provides a conceptualization of the new construct of consumer arrogance and develops and validates a measurement scale for it. It views consumer arrogance as a multi-dimensional trait reflecting the proclivity to use possessions in order to establish one's social superiority over others. The final version of the scale has four dimensions: image-based consumption, consumer bragging, exhibitionism-based purchases, and consumer feeling superior. In six studies, which include 1529 participants, both students and adults, the consumer arrogance scale demonstrates internal consistency and validity within one country (Israel), across two sub-cultures (Israeli Arabs and Jews), and across cultures (Israel and the US). The findings also support the role of consumer arrogance in explaining and predicting consumption behaviors above and beyond existing constructs.

© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Arrogance, the inclination to publicize one's qualities and worth over others, is a basic human trait (Lewis, 2000). While the marketing literature has long recognized that individuals use consumption-related behaviors to demonstrate their achievements and communicate their self-worth and superiority (Belk, 1988, 2011; Hirschman & LaBarbera, 1990; Kleine, Kleine, & Allen, 1995; Lee, Ko, & Megehee, 2015), an examination of how consumers use consumption behavior to project their arrogant inclinations has largely been neglected.

This research addresses this gap by introducing the concept of consumer arrogance (CA), defined as people's proclivity for demonstrating their social superiority through the acquisition, utilization, or display of consumer goods. This definition focuses on how consumption-related activities help individuals communicate their superiority. It relies on the premise that behaviors such as the acquisition, use, and explicit communication of the value of consumer goods are tools in the service of arrogant consumers' efforts to enhance their social status. This study develops a parsimonious, multi-dimensional scale to measure consumer arrogance and demonstrate its value in explaining, predicting, and understanding various consumption behaviors in different cultural settings.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Conceptual origins

Early discussions of arrogance in psychology view it as a dimension of or related to narcissism (Lewis, 2000; Raskin & Terry, 1988; Verbeke, Belschak, & Bagozzi, 2004), reflecting one's feelings of superiority and beliefs about being a special person, who can be understood only by, or should be associated only with, other special or high-status individuals. Recent research views arrogance as a multi-dimensional trait, rather than as a pathology (Johnson et al., 2010; Silverman, Johnson, McConnell, & Carr, 2012). These studies show that perceivers tend to regard others as arrogant when they communicate their qualities as being superior to those of others (Hareli & Weiner, 2000; Hareli, Weiner, & Yee, 2006; Johnson et al., 2010). In other words, if individuals emphasize some unique quality and project from it the superiority of their global self, others see them as arrogant (Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Lewis, 2000; Verbeke et al., 2004). Like pride (Chakrabarti, 1992), the sources of arrogance include things to which arrogant people feel closely related, regard as exceptional, or use to signal their superiority. However, arrogance is distinct from pride. Pride often results from a specific achievement, attribute, or pro-social behavior, whereas arrogance arises from the perception of the global self as superior to others (Tracy & Robins, 2007; Verbeke et al., 2004).

Continuous and exaggerated pronouncements about one's accomplishments accentuate perceptions that one is arrogant (Hayward & Hambrick, 1997, Lewis, 2000). Note that the validity of the communicated message is relatively unimportant to perceptions of arrogance. Once people convey such messages to others, they are

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [aruvio@msu.edu](mailto:aruvio@msu.edu) (A.A. Ruvio), [ashoham@research.haifa.ac.il](mailto:ashoham@research.haifa.ac.il) (A. Shoham).

seen as arrogant regardless of the truthfulness of the message (Hareli et al., 2006). Similarly, if people send such signals in the context of a given achievement, the importance of that achievement does not affect the extent to which others regard the achiever as arrogant (Johnson et al., 2010; Silverman et al., 2012).

## 2.2. Consumer arrogance – conceptual definition

The symbolic power of possessions to signal one's accomplishments and achievements provides consumers with an easy way to convey superiority and boost their self- and public images (Belk, 2011; Hirschman & LaBarbera, 1990). One might expect that the broader the range and the more frequent the use of possessions, the higher the level of perceived consumer arrogance (CA). However, the manifestation of CA depends on individuals' genuine belief that they are superior to others in terms of the acquisition and use of possessions (*consumer superiority*), regardless of its objective accuracy (Johnson et al., 2010). Individuals who score high in CA make pointed connections between the superior nature of their purchases and their global self, and direct inferences from the quality of the products to their own superior qualities (Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Lewis, 2000; Verbeke et al., 2004). In addition, they view the products that others choose as inferior to theirs, inferring from these purchases the inferior characteristics of these other people (Lewis, 2000). This is the starting point for other CA behaviors.

The most common way people communicate their superiority and achievements is through verbal statements (Alexandrov, Lilly, & Babakus, 2013; Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker, & Costabile, 2012; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Examples include behaviors such as bragging about purchasing triumphs, as well as publicly comparing them to those that others have bought (*consumer bragging*). Such direct communications are central to the conceptualization of CA, because they reflect the effort individuals are willing to invest in promoting their achievements as consumers (Hayward & Hambrick, 1997; Verbeke et al., 2004).

Another verbal communication of superiority may be knowledge-based. Arrogant people might view themselves as experts in particular context (Hayward & Hambrick, 1997). In terms of consumption, arrogant individuals might perceive themselves as opinion leaders or market experts. However, while opinion leadership is domain specific rather than a global pattern of behavior (Flynn, Goldsmith, & Eastman, 1996), arrogant individuals will associate their knowledge with a broader perception of themselves as superior in all regards. Accordingly, verbal manifestations of CA may include a perceived and expressed "I know best" mentality compared to others in general and salespeople specifically.

Consumers can also communicate achievements and superiority non-verbally by using high status, brand-name products (*image-based consumption*) (Belk, 1988, 2011; Lee et al., 2015). Research shows that people value such goods due to their power to communicate, achieve, and restore social status (Han, Nunes, & Drèze, 2013; Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012; Shukla & Purani, 2012). Given that high status brands have conspicuous, unique, social, hedonic, and quality values (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999), they can provide a sense of superiority and signal achievements. Thus, buying and using luxuries or expensive brands may project superiority over others.

Finally, *exhibitionism-based purchasing* can also demonstrate arrogance non-verbally. Such purchases imply that individuals engage in extravagant and conspicuous consumption to attract attention to their superior appearance and inflate their ego (Veblen, 1934). These strategies fit Riesman's (1951) view of Americans as becoming less inner- and more other-directed, leading to a need for approval from others (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). This dimension highlights the importance of the social context of arrogance (Johnson et al., 2010).

## 2.3. Consumer arrogance and related constructs

Similar to arrogance, constructs such as self-promotion (Godfrey, Jones, & Lord, 1986), superiority (Raskin & Terry, 1988), vanity (Netemeyer, Burton, & Lichtenstein, 1995), and exhibitionism (Raskin & Terry, 1988) reflect the importance that people attach to their images in the eyes of others. However, they do not explicitly recognize the role of consumption in burnishing one's image as part of their definition.

Other constructs highlight the importance placed on material goods, such as materialism (Griffin, Babin, & Christensen, 2004; Richins & Dawson, 1990), consumer susceptibility to interpersonal influence (CSII) (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989), status consumption (Eastman, Goldsmith, & Flynn, 1999), price-prestige sensitivity (Lichtenstein, Ridgway, & Netemeyer, 1993), and hedonic shopping (Babin & Darden, 1995). However, they reflect consumption motivations that differ from superiority-based ones. For example, materialism reflects the importance individuals place on material goods as a means to achieve happiness (Richins & Dawson, 1990). CSII focuses on individuals' inclination to conform to the expectations of others with regard to purchase decisions (Bearden et al., 1989). Thus, the conceptualization of CA attempts to bridge these gaps by identifying how individuals use consumption to convey a superior social image.

Nevertheless, while CA is conceptually distinct from these constructs, it is related to most of them. Netemeyer et al.'s (1995) study provides initial support for such relationships, by establishing positive relationships between vanity and superiority, exhibitionism, price-prestige sensitivity, and status consumption. Given that superiority, exhibitionism, and vanity reflect attempts to present a favorable self-image, they should be associated positively with CA. Similarly, high-CA individuals should demonstrate strong price-prestige sensitivity, status consumption, and brand consciousness, because these behaviors provide them with methods for projecting superiority. Additionally, since high-CA individuals value other people's opinions as a means of establishing their superiority (Chakrabarti, 1992), CA should be positively related to the importance of social approval (ISA) (Fisher, 1993) and CSII (Bearden et al., 1989). The relationships between CA and these constructs will be tested as part of establishing CA's nomological validity. In sum, studies in consumer behavior investigate self-enhancement constructs but largely ignore the arrogant proclivities of consumers. This omission is unfortunate, because CA may impact consumption differently than these related constructs and may explain important individual differences in consumption-related behaviors.

## 3. Scale development

### 3.1. Study 1 - elicitation procedure, item generation, and construct formation

The first step is an open-ended elicitation procedure for generating items (Netemeyer et al., 1995) to ensure that the conceptualization of CA is consistent with the general public's view of it. A sample of 66 students from an Israeli university responded to the following question: "How do you think arrogance is expressed through buying, consuming, and using products?" The most common statements were "an arrogant person...": "purchases only brand name products" (26); "chooses only expensive products" (19); "purchase things s/he do not really need" (12); and "shows off his/her purchases" (10). Given that the statements closely fit the conceptualization provided earlier, they can be regarded as a general view of CA.

Following the elicitation procedure, two experienced marketing researchers reviewed the items, eliminated ambiguous statements, and combined statements with identical meanings (Bearden et al., 1989), resulting a revised pool of 76 statements. Next, common CA

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5109852>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5109852>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)