

## **The Effect of Self-Enhancement and Regulatory Focus On Word of Mouth**

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### **Abstract**

Word of mouth is one of the main drivers that shapes consumers' decisions. With the advent of social media, consumer reviews, opinions about brands propagate at a higher spread and reach masses. Thus, giving the rising interest in word of mouth, many brands are interested in understanding what makes consumers talk favorably about their products. Existing research suggests that one of the psychological motivations to engage in positive word of mouth is self-enhancement. Consumers like to provide positive information, which makes them look good to others. Yet, it is not so much known how self-enhancement affects sharing. Do consumers also provide positive recommendations when they already feel good about themselves? Our research shows that self enhancement boosts the likelihood of giving positive recommendations. Yet, this pattern does not always hold and can be moderated with regulatory focus. We show that when consumers are under high prevention focus, higher self-enhancement, in fact, decreases the likelihood of giving positive recommendations. This framework shed lights on how companies can encourage positive word of mouth, by understanding self-enhancement and regulatory focus mechanisms.

**Keywords:** word of mouth, regulatory focus, self-enhancement