

Impact of Word of Mouth on Consumer Buying Decision

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Abstract

An objective of this research is to determine the word of mouth effects on consumers buying decision negative or positive. The collected data is primary and it is collected from different areas of Karachi city of Pakistan from students of colleges, universities and households. Sample size is one hundred. The collected information/and data is evaluated with the help Frequency Distribution and ranking (Statics Technique). In conclusion it is revealed that for purchasing mostly consumer trust on word of mouth. The respondents seem like to have an impact on consumers' decision and close family, close friend, and other associates. More result shows two things can be the reason to create difficulties for the company such as a bitter experience of any product/service and any comments (word of mouth especially negative) because negative word of mouth or any negative comments about anything influence strongly than positive. Viral Marketing is getting very common in e-business especially for consumers and buyers.

Keywords: Consumer buying decision, products/services, Pakistan, Viral Marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In 1960's many books were written however; its intellectual forefathers are much older. Consumer Behavior is a discipline. Understanding of consumers provides a number of benefits it is the consumption process. Benefits are included follow the manager for decision making and giving the marketing research with base of theoretical by which to analyses consumers to make better decision. Psychological, economics and sociological are the factors that influence human behavior or decision and could be understood by studying of consumer behavior. Consumer behavior general knowledge had personal value. It could help people to become better consumer after informing. Additionally it could help consumer for buying process after informing them regarding some of the strategies, which are used by companies for their products market. (Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994).

Word of mouth is one of the fundamental means of distribution. Word of mouth can influence others' views, thoughts and their decision. If word of mouth power utilized correctly, it could market any product/services for the long time. It has the power to create strong image in the individual mind. Word of mouth could be beneficial as well as harsh. Local market influencers, Trendsetters and Tastemakers are supported by word of mouth marketing process also by which advertising messaging campaign releases. The word of mouth marketing campaigns are connected with influencers and trendsetters who help to begin consumer trends such as consumer products trends, automobile purchase trends, entertainment trend, Fashion trends, and beverage consumption trends. Word of mouth values twice like advertisings values for consumer. By advertising we all are captured in the world all day and night.

To find the impact of word of mouth on consumer buying decision in Pakistan, analysis are carried out by using primary data of one hundred households and students of universities of Karachi including all consumer buying decision factors but limited to the following key terms:

1.1.1 Consumer Buying Decision

The decision process and psychosocial activity involve while evaluating, acquiring, consuming or ordering of goods and services. The increasing numbers of consumers facing the issue of 'confusion by over-choice' and disbelieving the claims of the product, cutting through advertising "clutter" with the message has never been more important. (Loudon & Della Bitta, 1994)

1.1.2 Word of Mouth

Word of mouth is not Shill marketing, where actors are hired in companies for creating a conversation process with consumers, without informing them that they're staged (recognized as "reaching marketing"). Word of mouth could not considered as forged online marketing, where individuals forward e-mails to persons who don't want them, or where any companies post fake ideas on social media, or review sites like Amazon. Word of mouth has strong perception in human mind, which is done by all every time – By which a powerful communication can be done. It is also a part of social communication. Word of mouth is the way of sharing ideas, believes and experiences among each other. Always share truthful idea, and also create word of mouth (Balter, 2004).

1.1.3 Viral Marketing

Viral Marketing is very powerful way of promoting any complex, premium, unusual, and breezy products. It is the most effective when promoting experiential, complex, premium, unusual and breezy products. These criteria does not met with the given most packaged goods on products, benefit will be given by marketers. Marketing by word of mouth could have effect consumers and their buying decisions. The study examines the impact. Further, examine to know that how word of mouth can manipulate with consumers decision.

There are many literatures discussing word of mouth and respondent interest in products is the most important influencing factor. Main three concerns of researchers who investigate the phenomenon are exposed by word of mouth communication: i) The kind and frequency of word of mouth behavior, ii) Impact of word of mouth on product evaluation and iii) The effect of word of mouth on social relationship. All articles have been studied. The thought of understanding consumers buying behavior is mutual in marketing (Solomon., 1993; Wilkie, 1994; Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 1995; Assael, 1992; Loudon & Della Bitta, 1993; Kotler, 1997). Telephone interviews were conducted with one hundred fifty people of Metropolitan County in the northeast area of the United States. Result showed that retailers had some qualities that were more likely to be circulated by consumers. More they also found that the customers' class describes Market Mavens (person who have information about much products and location retailers than do other customers). They created methods for retailers to propagate information to "market mavens" (like sending free samples of products). Spangenberg & Giese (1997) were less involved in the frequency and types of word of mouth communication and, instead, concentrated on the effects of word of mouth behavior on product evaluation. At a large Midwestern University an experiment was conducted using undergraduate students attending and introductory marketing course.

1.2 Word of Mouth Model

A method was created by them for retailers to propagate information to "market mavens" (like product free sample). Spangenberg & Giese (1997) were less involves in the frequency and types of word of mouth communication and, instead, distillate on the effects of the word of mouth behavior on product analysis. Many attempts have been there to create models of consumer decision-making like those proposed by Howard & Sheath (1969), Nicosia (1966) and Engel et al. (1968). The review of this model would be beyond the scope of this study however a basic approach is adopted to guide the decision. The approach is here in below figure 1.

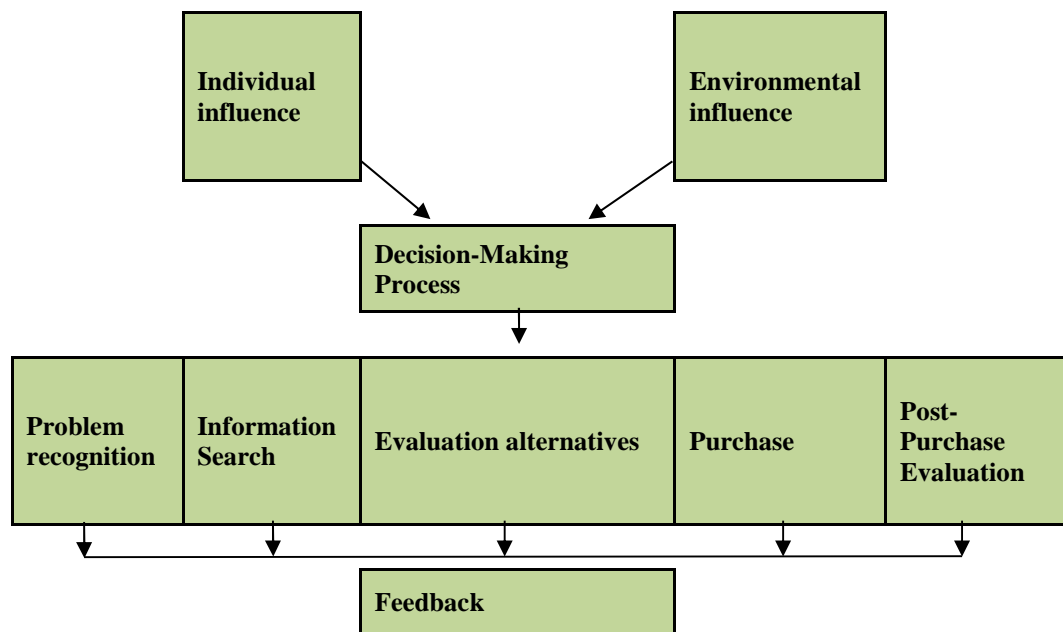


Figure. 1: Framework of consumer decision-making [from: (Pride et al., 1997)]

With the reference of figure 1 it is shown that this has been made of three main sections: (i) The process of customers' decision making, (ii) Individual behavior determinants, and (iii) Environmental influencing behavior. Herr et al (1991) search the same result allied to word of mouth information and product analysis. They found that familiarity with the product is decreased because of negative word of mouth information. They disclose three hypotheses that spread over two experiments. 84 college students determined in the first experiment, whether word of mouth approach is stronger than pallid printed information. Information of specific items was presented to the undergraduates by word of mouth and print. The conclusion shows that in consumer products finding word of mouth plays very effective part than bright printed information. CBC (2010) model is depended on four word of mouth basic layers that take individual from being unaware about brand engagement and transfers:

- **Buzz Campaign**-To create knowledge among individual who were unknown about the products/services.
- **Customer WOM**- Turn active customers/members into referral sources.
- **WOM Programs**-Transition knowledge into interest and consideration.
- **WOM Initiatives**- By creating sincere brand engagement convert interested individual into customers/members.

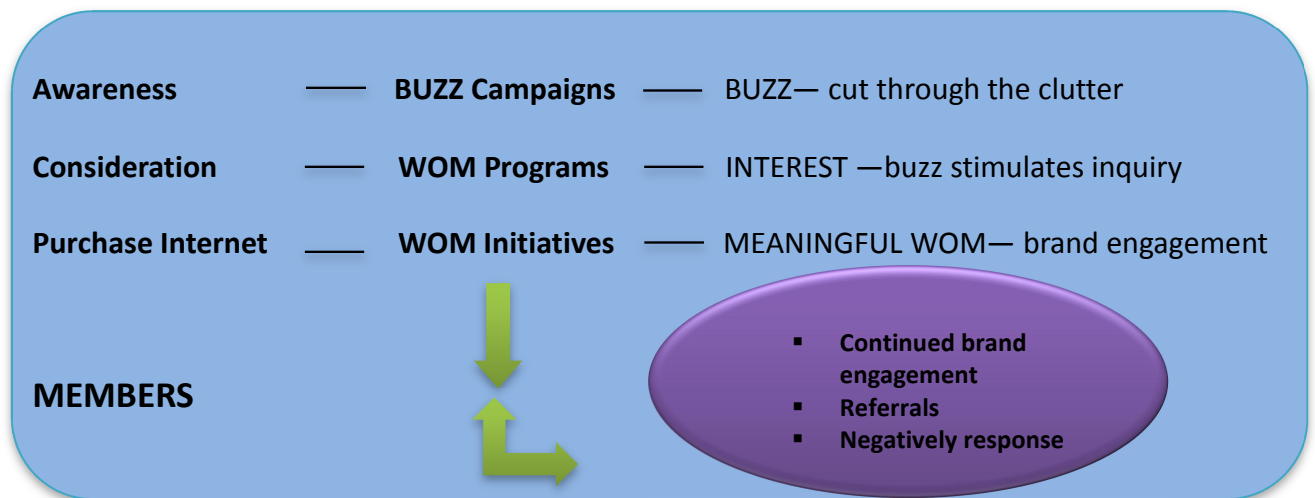


Figure. 2: *Word-of-Mouth Marketing Strategy (CBC-2010)*

Brown & Reingen (1987) consider that old research on word of mouth communication had not efficiently look at the impact on groups. Old research was failed to conclude how word of mouth begin with the individual and ends up aggregating to large group. The role of word of mouth communication in interpersonal process and determine how this is being interviewed in the macro and micro word of mouth process. Viral Marketing Strategy (2009) discusses on internet-based automatic marketing campaigns, including the use of blogs, seemingly unprofessional sites, and designed to create huge word of mouth for a new items or services. The purpose of viral marketing campaigns is to create media coverage via “offbeat” stories values more than the advertising budget of campaigning company.



Figure. 3: *Viral Marketing Strategy (Viral Marketing Strategy, 2009)*

Glenn & Fudenber (1995) Studied for individual how word of mouth communication summarizes information. Two researches were emphasized on how word of mouth creates “conformity and diversity”. For that Consumers were divided into two groups-“conformity” and “diversity”. They identified that whether word of mouth communication support their positioning. As the conclusion consumers acquire more detailed word of mouth information they shows more diversity than when that was received limited and/or general information. The researchers used the textual analysis to support their hypotheses. As the result, word of mouth plays a vital role in the evaluation of products.

1.3 Problem Statement

This research purpose is to study that comments about anything or word of mouth influence decision of the consumers mostly in buying process especially in Pakistan with some more objectives:

1.4 Research Objectives

The specific objectives are:

- To examine word of mouth marketing impact on individuals buying decision.
- To get the first-hand knowledge about other's ideas and opinions have power to change anyone perception about using products.
- To check whether consumers are supposed to give more importance to negative word of mouth rather than positive.

1.5 Scope of the Study

For this study the respondents had been randomly chosen within the area of Karachi. Questionnaires had been circulated at many households and universities to comprehend the youth and the old point of views. In this study sample of the students had been interrogated with regard to its external validity

1.6 Significance of the Research

The major consumer trends to rely on word of mouth for buying daily and long term consumption goods. The most family, close friend and acquaintances more influence on the decision of the consumers. It is revealed by the result that bad experience of any product, place and environment could be the reason of many problems for the organization in this all the main factor is word of mouth. One thing is getting quick acceptance among consumers as it is proved from the result this is Viral Marketing. At last negative word of mouth is moved faster than positive.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

For this study the respondents were randomly selected within the area of Karachi. To collect the data and to know about the views of young and old questionnaires were divided at household and universities both. Students are attractive and market innovators for many products.

As the sample size 100 respondents were selected. The final survey was administered to household and within the area of Karachi students were chosen randomly from universities and others institutions during learning hours. As being secondary and primary data sources are classified. By giving out first hand questionnaires primary data was collected and the secondary data collection resource were Internet, past trends, past researches and journals, etc. For this study information or data was collected from both primary and secondary resources. Primary based information is gathered solve the problem by taking first-hand information while Information secondary based is collected to find the answers of the raising questions to solve the problems.

2.1 Measurement and Instruments

In this study personally administered questionnaires have been used as the research instruments. The core advantage of this is that within a short period of time the all completed response have been collected. A questionnaire to which respondents recode their answers is a pre-formulated set of question. For this research data is collected by using mechanism tool called questionnaires to find accurately what the requirement is and on interest how to quantify the variables. Questionnaire is an appropriate way to collect the data specifically. Finally the questionnaire was the combination of close-ended and open-ended questions for this purpose individuals were requested to answer the selected questions related with word of mouth marketing and its influence on buyers' decisions. Name, age, gender and marital status were inquired to the respondent fin data collection process.

2.2. The Procedure of Sampling

Random sampling technique is used in this study. In random sampling process every element from population has equal chance to be selected as a subject. Even the sampling process could sometime become huge and costly. The questionnaires' formation was structured. For collecting reliable data for reliable analysis, every individual was requested to respond to the opened-ended and closed-ended questions.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaires were distributed among sample of 100 respondents. The results of collected data with discussion are following:

3.1 Results

The results of the frequency distributions are given as follows:

Table 1.Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to Gender (N=100)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Female	45	45%	2
Male	55	55%	1
Total	100	100%	

With respect to gender (N=100) as per frequency distribution result, female respondents percentage is 45% whereas, male respondents number were 55%. Both genders were selected to know their views regarding subject.

Table 2.Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to Age (N=100)

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
15—25	60	60%	1
26—35	21	21%	2
36—50	7	7%	4
Above	12	12%	3
Total	100	100%	

About 65% of the respondents were belonged to 15-25. Aged between “16-35”, 21% were aged of “26-35”. “Above 50” 12% were selected and about 7% of respondents are “36-50”. This result is collected to get the view from multiple ages of respondents.

Table 3.Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to Marital Status (N=100)

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Unmarried	65	65%	1
Married	35	35%	2
Total	100	100%	

For certain household stuff word of mouth is a key resource of information and many people believe that family and friend or sometime associate plays a vital role while taking important decisions about some specific brands, so the respondents were preferred belong to all walk of life and multiple age groups. Many of students were relatively more even though they were both married and unmarried. Therefore the Percentage of “unmarried” was 65% and 35% was “married”.

Table 4.Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to Consumers Buying Behavior

Answers	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Advertising	49	49%	1
Word of mouth	29	29%	2
Leaders Opinions	22	22%	3
Total	100	100%	

What affect the buying decision the most when the question was asked to the respondents 49% preferred “Advertising”, 29% chosen “word of mouth” and 22% selected “opinion leaders”. This is proved from the result that maximum people goes with advertising, which is the most high-ranking factors which affects their buying decision, so word of mouth has become more important tool for the firms as compare to advertising.

Table 5.Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to Previous Bad Experience-

Answers	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Yes	41	41%	2
No	59	59%	1
Total	100	100%	

When the question was asked to the people if they heard negative about any product would they try or not, then above analysis displays that 59% People “Disagreed” and 41% people “agreed”. Actually, word of mouth has more reliability, therefore has more impact than other communication channels. Although in the first question it was determined that advertising influences more than word of mouth, but in this condition not many people motivate to tryout any product/services after hearing any negative comments about it

Table 5.1.Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to Previous Bad Experience

Answers	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Always	26	26%	2
Most of the time	49	49%	1
Sometime	22	22%	3
Rarely	3	3%	3
Total	100	100%	

When respondents were asked, that would they inform others whenever they had any bad experience? 49% replied “Most of the times”, 26% answered “Always”, 22% said “Sometimes” and 3% replied “Rarely”. Simple word of mouth has extra credibility. Bad experience of any products/services/places usually becomes very common.

Table 6.Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to word of mouth by marketers

Answers	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Always	20	20%	3
Most of the times	42	42%	1
Sometimes	34	34%	2
Rarely	4	4%	4
Total	100	100%	

Marketers start planned word of mouth campaigns that promote any products or services, 42% respondents accepted this view. Most of the firms take advantage by creating “buzz”. Separately marketers create a strong hype, through which products/services promote in the market.

Table 7.Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to word of mouth by relatives

Answers	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Yes	86	86%	1
No	14	14%	2
Total	100	100%	

It is shown by the above result that people buying decision are strongly taken when they talk to their family, friends and associates regarding purchasing items. 86% respondents strongly said “Yes” and only 14% said “No”. When any closed associates remarks good about a particular products/services, it is served as a fact testimonial, which consider more reliable than any other source of information.

Table 8. Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to word of mouth by everyday items

Answers	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Always	15	15%	4
Most of the time	41	41%	2
Sometimes	25	25%	1
Rarely	19	19%	3
Total	100	100%	

While people were asked that for buying daily use items they would trust on word of mouth or not, 25% replied “sometime”, 41% replied “most of the time”, 19% answered “Rarely” and 15% respond “always”. Nowadays consumption of daily items is increased day by day so people depend on word of mouth during making purchasing decision.

Table 9. Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to Expensive items

Answers	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Yes	45	45%	2
No	55	55%	1
Total	100	100%	

The respondents were questioned that they depend on word of mouth during purchasing any expensive item or not. 45% of them said “Yes” whereas 55% replied “No”. Result shown that word of mouth has its impact but when they have to spend a huge amount of money they do not reply on it.

3.2 Discussion

Respondents provided many reasons of preferring word of mouth while buying any expensive items. The first reason that might affect most of the people was that, they would like to gain much information as possible about products/services before making any decision of purchasing. The respondents always believe that close relations like relatives, family, friends and associates always support to make the decision easier especially during purchasing something. Other reason that might affect most of the people was that, others’ experience can support while making decision because already it has relied on it that is why it can be reliable easily, other like second opinion because it support them, Word of mouth from reliable source provide satisfaction to make any decision. Second reason which was collected others’ experience could be so helpful because it has realism which could be easy to rely, some people consider second one opinion to make any decisions because word of mouth from trustworthy sources makes them satisfied. Last but not the least another cause to rely on word of mouth is that people want to be careful in order for better results. Respondents also shared the reason of choosing word of mouth while buying luxurious items, that time people invest a huge amount of money which going to be spent lamp sum from their pocket, in this situation they mostly rely on the information coming from authentic sources.

Since it is involved a lot of assets which require more consideration so people usually certain of what they are going to buy. Next the main cause which huge number of suspects discussed was that they have strong dislikes and likes that’s why they personally want to visit to the markets rather than relying on others while a limited respondent replied that not any single word of mouth effect on their mind decision because they do not rely on others information. They believe that luxurious products are durable and long term so they do not need more information from word from word of mouth. Further many people said that they prefer proper research and survey to be confident before purchasing any expensive items. Some people also claim that they like to try any purchase items themselves because they trust that experience teach a lot, people are satisfied by relying on their own.

Table 10. Results of Frequency Distribution with respect to Viral Marketing

Answers	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Yes	70	70%	1
No	30	30%	2
Total	100	100%	

As per above result 70% respondents said “Yes” and only 30% replied “No” while people were inquired whether Viral Marketing help marketers to create hype for promotion, buzz spread very fast. It is begun among different people having different interest, different views, through online conversations, which is the easiest and most cost effective way to measure word of mouth, called ‘Viral Marketing’ in the online form.

There are several ways, which facilitate communication to be ‘Viral’. The most common way of communication is e-mail. E-mail is fast and quick way especially when it involves transmitting “word of mouth”, positive or negative, about any organization, product or services. Internet or computer is growing up for getting information. Word of mouth has much importance in e-business world. It plays very important role both off-line and online.

Table 11.Resultsof Frequency Distribution with respect to Negative & Positive word of mouth

Answers	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Yes	95	95%	1
No	5	5%	2
Total	100	100%	

With the reference of above result 95% people agreed that a bad experience of any products/services and word of mouth (especially negative comments) can create the bad image in consumers’ mind because negative word of mouth about anything influence strongly than positive.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Conclusion

Main objective of this study is to found effects on consumer buying decision positive or negative. The final result shows that people of different ages, marital status and to buy any item genders rely on others’ comments, opinions and others’ word of mouth to take any decision. With the help of first question of the questionnaire it has been found that people prefer advertising rather than word of mouth but on the contrary when the detail question have been asked it has been noticed individual’s decision could be effected by word of mouth. This is real fact that bad impression of any product/service can be created by once bad experience, which proved that negative word of mouth could have undesirable effects, but positive word of mouth could create a magical impression or image of products/services.

In the situations where a small amount of money is involved people mostly don’t have to wish to carry out a survey before spending. On the other hand whenever the stakes are high it’s just about the opposite. However, the basic demand to have first-hand knowledge or experience must influence other respondent, who want to learn from others’ experience. More information that the results have shown is that word of mouth can be incredible helpful for marketers to create the required hype for their items/services, so that persons are very much aware of its existence. Viral Marketing is one of the topic from which some people are still unknown with. Internet and e-mail has taken a magical place in social media. Good Viral marketing makes every customer a salesperson. As it is found from the results that it can be more influential than many other marketing techniques because it is accurate, fast, and cheap which allows retailed information. It is not only valuable for individuals who can access the net, but also others because it generates online and off-line discussions. Another fact that has come up by the conclusion is that word of mouth has the power of wiping off any business especially negative. About effective use there is unanimity if word of mouth being a contributing factor in sale/promotion of products and services. It is accepted through the survey that ‘word of mouth’ is a persuasive means to promote a product/service also formulating favorable decision regarding purchase of personal items.

5.2 Recommendations

There are numbers of suggestions mention below:

1. Marketers should not trust word of mouth campaigns. Newspapers, magazines, television and Internet should be used for communication.
2. Before purchasing any expensive or luxury item consumers must carry out survey from word of mouth.
3. People have good or bad experiences by which others can get benefits from them.
4. Consumers should share their opinion about any products or services.

5. The use of Viral Marketing should not be negative.

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