Word of Mouth Behavior and Online Activity: A Study of On/Off Line Communication Strategy and Online Business

Autoria: Danny Pimentel Claro, Sílvio Abrahão Laban Neto, Priscila Borin de Oliveira Claro

ABSTRACT

Research on word of mouth WOM is recently becoming more prominent in marketing literature. Word of mouth (WOM) is recognized for quite some time as a powerful source of products and services' information dissemination (Brooks 1957). For example, referral programs generate more profitable customers in the short and long term (Schmitt, Skiera and Van den Bulte 2011), high-uniqueness consumers (the consumer that prefers to differentiate from members of his or her reference group) were more likely to recommend privately consumed products (Cheema and Kaikati 2010), and a "word-of-mouth equity" is proposed as an index of a brand's power to generate messages that influence the consumer's decision to purchase (Court, Gordon and Perrey 2010). Online communities have increased in size, number, and character to make companies recognize the growing importance of WOM. This paper is a result of a preliminary and exploratory research about WOM. We aim to study the WOM behavior and analyze the impact of on/off line communication and online Activity on consumption. We tested four hypotheses with evidence of a survey with 248 online users. As our research model implies on antecedents, mediator variables and outcome variable, we estimated a three sets of ordinary least square regressions. Our results show an indirect impact of a company's communication, by WOM behavior and WOM activity, on online consumption. The direct impact of communication on consumption is interestingly negative. Consumers may look suspicious all kind of direct manipulation of press or customer evaluation. Consumers have become overloaded and skeptical about traditional company-driven communication. On the other hand, communication impact online consumption through WOM behavior and online activity. It appears that the right communication messages echo and expand within interested social networks, affecting product perceptions. The rise of online communities and communication has increased the potential for significant and far-reaching momentum effects. Our study attempts to help understand the WOM behavior and to identify those who influence online activity and consumption. The starting point for managing WOM is understanding WOM behavior and online activity. WOM analysis can detail the nature of the antecedents of consumption. The highest-impact messages, contexts, and social networks are essential components of a companies' communication strategy and sales.

1. Introduction

Word of mouth (WOM) is recognized for quite some time as a powerful source of products and services' information dissemination (Brooks 1957). For example, referral programs generate more profitable customers in the short and long term (Schmitt, Skiera and Van den Bulte 2011), high-uniqueness consumers (the consumer that prefers to differentiate from members of his or her reference group) were more likely to recommend privately consumed products (Cheema and Kaikati 2010), and a "word-of-mouth equity" is proposed as an index of a brand's power to generate messages that influence the consumer's decision to purchase (Court, Gordon and Perrey 2010). The importance of the WOM phenomenon is shown on studies that focus on the effects of WOM on the majority of all purchase decisions (e.g. Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006). However, the great majority of the seminal work and observations about informal, unsolicited WOM were constructed in a marketing world untouched by the Internet (Brown, Broderick, and Lee 2007; Dellarocas 2003; Godes et al. 2005; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004).

Online communities have increased in size, number, and character and companies start recognizing the growing importance of WOM. Business investment in online technology is increasing, and companies are putting a reasonable amount of resources on digital and online marketing venues. The widespread and misleading belief of managers is that Website must provide community content to build brand loyalty and achieve high sales. This is creating enormous challenges to companies. The opportunity for managers to influence and monitor WOM lies at the increasing internet's accessibility and reach. We believe that WOM can be deeply investigated to understand what makes it effective and that its impact can be measured.

This paper is a result of a preliminary and exploratory research about WOM. We aim to study the WOM behavior and analyze the impact of on/off line communication and online activity on consumption. Online WOM customer reviews are an important source of information about product quality to interested consumers, complementing and very often substituting other forms of company's communication strategy. By taking the consumers' perspective about company's communication strategy and analyzing it together with behavior and activity, we offer insights on how consumers react and influence the online environment. Four hypotheses were developed and tested on a survey data of 248 usable questionnaires. The sample was drawn from a population of online users.

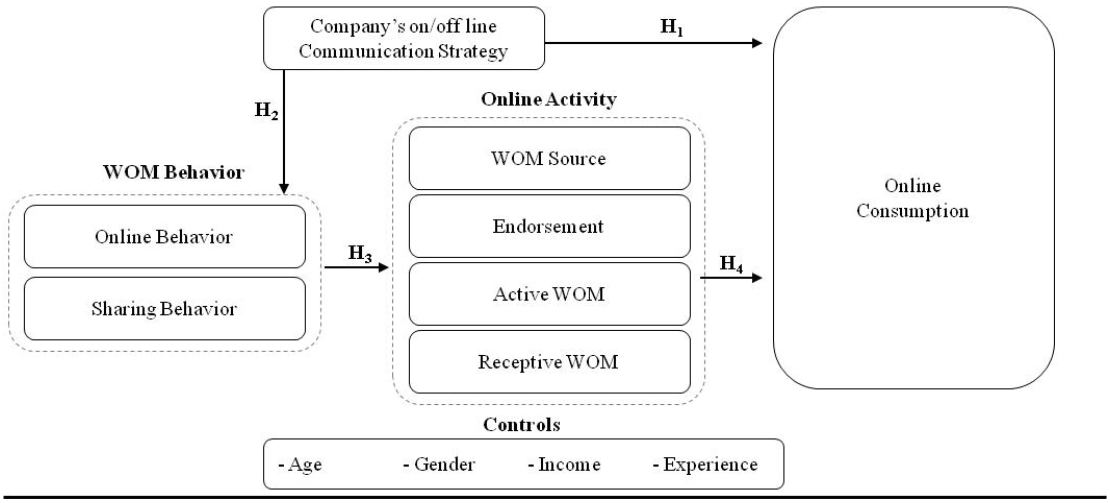
The next section of the paper provides an overview of the hypotheses on the basis of relevant literature in the fields. The research model is presented before the methodology. A descriptive of our measures and the results of the regression equations are presented. We then present discussions and conclusions as well as implications for managers and future research.

2. WOM behavior and online business

There is an increased importance of WOM among consumers because of the many choices and decisions regarding purchases. Individual's dependence on the social network to adopt a product

is recognized in consumer behavior for quite some time (Reingen, Foster, Brown, Seidman 1984). A product does not come suddenly to the consumer's preference, but generally involves some indication of someone else's experience. In this context, we present our research model in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Effect of WOM behavior and Online Activity



Companies' marketing programs are developed to persuade consumers about the product value proposition. There is a fairly strong sense that WOM is important and that some people may be more influential than others at creating it. The question than is how to addresses it from the company's perspective. A seminal study of WOM showed that when a consumer feels that the company communicates to him as a friend or an unbiased speaker, the consumer relax and tend better accept the product information (Dichter 1966). Communication forces trigger a psychological mechanism of involvement that truly motivates consumers to purchase a product.

Managers are aware of the effect of WOM, and attempt to manipulate it to effective implement a WOM campaigning. Yet managers have to reveal how to hone and deploy a message that consumers are likely to pass on and the impact of those messages, allowing estimation of the tangible effects of WOM on brand equity and sales. These insights are essential for companies that want to harness the potential of WOM and to realize higher returns on their marketing communication investments. One might suggest that this communication is executed to persuade behavior. Prior studies have indicated that marketing messages produce effects because consumers expect marketers to persuade them and consider this communication appropriate, especially in group messages and supporting activities (Pechmann & Wang 2010).

A company's performance may be measured by sales, profits, customer loyalty, market share and so on. Studies suggested that WOM may be generated by strong and stable customer relationships (Verhoef, Franses, & Hoekstra 2002). Perhaps, companies face difficulties to build strong customer loyalty because they are unable to create strong emotional bonds with their customers and by trust and commitment customer are willing to return on loyalty (Yim, Tse & Chan 2008). A well developed communication strategy may be a way to generate consumption and WOM. Following these ideas, we expect that:

H1: Company's on/off line communication strategy will impact positively online consumption.

H2: Company's WOM on/off line communication strategy will influence positively WOM behavior of online (a) and sharing (b) behavior.

The decision to transmit information to others lies within the individual consumer. According to exchange theory, perceived costs and benefits drive a person's decision to engage in WOM (Frenzen and Nakamoto 1993). Some individuals may proactively take a place of WOM agents who are often known to be market experts. These individuals are motivated by a greater sense of obligation to talk, a desire to help others, and a feeling of pleasure from telling others about products (Cheema and Kaikati 2010). Other individuals also provide WOM to justify their decisions, generating approval, and achieve social status (Gatignon and Robertson 1986). As a facet of social influence, positive WOM may be more persuasive for public products and create a greater likelihood of adoption by others

Individuals' behavior influence online activity by means of a reputation system of peer recognition. This virtual community helps self regulation encouraging honest reviews (Forman, Ghose, and Wiesenfeld, 2008). WOM needs to have a persuasive content to convince others to consume a product. The content may be spread through different online sources that includes product reviews and purchase recommendations. Endorsement is also a form of support or statement of approval of a product. It is also a way to persuade someone else to consume a given product. WOM behavior may also foster publically endorsement of a product. In the prominent WOM research, some call endorsers the "market mavens" (Feick and Price 1987) or opinion leaders (King and Summers 1970) whose influence extends across categories and sources. Following these ideas, we expect that:

H3: Positive WOM behavior leads to Online activity through intense use of WOM sources (a), endorsement (b), active WOM activity (c) and receptive WOM activity (d).

Previous studies have shown that the online activity leads to higher online consumption. The sales of a book of Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com are related to differences across the sites in the number of reviews for books and in differences across the sites in the average star ranking of the reviews (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006). This evidence suggests that active WOM activity affects consumer purchasing behavior.

Companies have to be careful in setting up open online community for a product. There are risks involved in setting up a forum for exchange of community content (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006). First, it is not clear the motives to provide reviews for which consumers are not in a way compensated. Second, competing firms can take a rather easy ride on investments in recommender systems. There is no system to block a consumer from using the information provided by one Web site to inform purchases made elsewhere. Third, by providing user reviews, a site cedes control over the information displayed; unfavorable reviews may impact negatively sales.

Endorsement is also a way to disseminate information. Endorser may be specialized by type of products and the social network may not take them in general. Research has shown that a

reviewer's descriptive information is important for peer recognition and consequently results in increasing sales. The research of Godes and Mayzlin (2004) showed a positive impact of online activity and ratings for TV shows. The authors suggested that ratings are important indicators for audience size and resulted in an increasing number of advertisers. Following these ideas, we expect that:

H4: Online activity through intense use of WOM sources (a), endorsement (b), active WOM activity (c) and receptive WOM activity (d) leads to online consumption.

3. Methodology

Our survey data collection processes followed Dillman's (2000) procedures. We initially developed a questionnaire by identifying construct items used in previous studies. We also obtained the help of other academics and expert in online business to develop items where the literature was silent, to refine survey wording, and to check the overall validity of questions vis-à-vis the online industry environment. After processing the suggestions and adjustments, the questionnaire was pre-tested by 10 potential respondents. We decided to use a population of a Business School students, following previous studies that reported the importance of online consumption for undergraduate and graduate ones (Lester, Forman, and Loyd 2005; Wang, Baker, Wagner and Wakefield 2007). An electronic questionnaire was then emailed to 3,423 undergraduate and graduate students who received three emails with a follow-up on a three-week window in November 2010. Our response rate reached 9.2% (313) with 248 usable questionnaires after deleting uncompleted ones.

The data collection effort employed a questionnaire with different measurement instruments. The variable for *online consumption* captures the online monthly expenditure. Respondents were asked to provide a dollar estimation of a product purchase on the internet.

The online activity construct was measured by four dimensions with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "never" to "frequently". First, *WOM source* refers to usage intensity of nine different online media (e.g. blogs, forum). Second, *endorsement* refers to the willingness of a respondent to rely on the endorsement of four other individuals (i.e. customer, paid agent, blogger, sales employee). Third, *active WOM* refers to the intensity of posting opinions and comments about a product through different online media (e.g. blogs, forum). Fourth, receptive WOM refers to the impact of other customers opinions on the decision to purchase a product. Every four dimensions of online activity were computed by the average of items.

The multi-item variables used in the questionnaire are described in Table 1. The construct of company's communication strategy was captured by three dimensions. *Off-line communication* refers to part of the communication plan that impacts off-line media and generates awareness in off-line environment. *On & off-line communication* encompasses the execution that can impact either environments. *On-line communication* is executed mainly in on-line environment and is expected to impact mostly on-line media. The three dimensions of communication strategy were measured with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "irrelevant" to "very important" and were computed by the average of the formative items.

Table 1
Construct and Items

Company's Communication Strategy *(5-point scale, "irrelevant" - "very important")*
When picking a product I take into account the company's:
- Off-line Communication
support to cultural activities
support to sport activities
- On & Off-line Communication
positive press evaluation
positive customer evaluation
- Online Communication
positive evaluation of specialized sites
use of social media to communicate with customers
development of iPhone or iPad apps
development of apps for Facebook
WOM Behavior *(5-point scale, "not at all important" - "very important")*
Online Behavior
I follow *tweets* to become aware of promotion, events ...
I use social media to share my opinion regarding products
I use online forums to have information about users of products that interests me
I post questions on facebook, Orkut and Twitter to know my friends' opinions
The internet is the best mean to gather information about products
I have companies as "friends" on the social networks e follow the news
Online forums are important to know about new products
I am member of social communities of products
Sharing Behavior
The experience shared on the internet by customers are important to identify product problems
I search information about product consumption of relatives and friends
I become confident about products based on positive reviewers' reply
My opinion is influenced by customers' opinions
I become aquainted with products by sharing opinion and experience

The construct of WOM behavior was measured by two dimensions. First, *online behavior* captures the willingness to employ social networks and media to share opinion and experience about a product. The instrument comprised of eight reflective items ranging from "not at all important" to "very important" and a Crombach's alpha of 0.78. The second dimension, *sharing behavior*, captures the willingness to tell and receive someone else opinions and experience with other customers. This dimension included five reflective items ranging from "not at all important" to "very important" and Crombach's alpha of 0.71 . The two dimensions of WOM behavior were computed by the unweighted average of the reflective items.

We also considered four control variables in the estimation. First, the variable *age* represents the number of a respondent's years. We also controlled for *gender*, 1 female and 2 male. A control variable for *income* was included as a categorical variable of 5 points. Finally, *experience* refers to education level and computed as categorical variable of 4 points.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix of our variables. The correlations between the measures do not suggest problems of pairwise collinearity that would preclude the use of all constructs in the estimation.

4. Results

As our research model implies on antecedents, mediator variables and outcome variable, we estimated a three sets of ordinary least square regressions. The first set of equations estimated the two dimensions of WOM behavior as dependent variables and the communication strategy as the explanatory variables. Second, the four dimensions of online activity are the dependent variable and the dimensions of WOM behavior are de explanatory variables. Finally, the WOM outcome is the dependent variable and the communication strategy and WOM activity are the explanatory variables. A total of seven equations were estimated with control variables. Table 3 summarizes the results of the estimation.

Table 3 presents the standardized coefficients of the estimated regression models and the t-test in parentheses. The standardized coefficient allows for a comparison of "coefficient size" because all measures are in the same metric, namely, standardized normal deviates. The equation was statistically significant below the 0.01 level in the F-test. The lowest R^2 for the equations is 0.167 and the highest is 0.481, which indicates that the results of the estimated models present an acceptable explanatory power (Hair et al. 1998). The explanatory power of the equation and the relative pattern of the significant coefficients support the examination of individual coefficients testing the effects of each individual variable.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Online Consumpt	Off-line Com.	On & Off-line Com.	Online Com.	Sharing Behavior	Online Behavior	WOM Source	Endorse-ment	Active WOM	Receptive WOM	Age	Prof. Experience	Gender
Online Consumpt.	131,88	149,58													
Off-line Communic	3,19	0,61	-0,03	1											
On & Off-line	2,93	0,58	-0,07	***0,50***	1										
Online Communic	3,02	0,54	-0,03	***0,90***	***0,66***	1									
Sharing Behavior	3,25	0,69	-0,03	***0,31***	***0,40***	***0,31***	1								
Online Behavior	2,38	0,70	0,02	***0,22***	***0,30***	***0,19***	***0,63***	1							
WOM Source	2,23	0,68	0,12	***0,20***	***0,32***	***0,19***	***0,54***	***0,68***	1						
Endorse-ment	2,25	0,66	***0,35***	***0,20***	***0,21***	***0,19***	***0,27***	***0,23***	***0,36***	1					
Active WOM	1,55	0,64	0,03	***0,17***	***0,20***	0,13	***0,36***	***0,59***	***0,65***	***0,30***	1				
Receptive WOM	2,39	0,85	0,06	***0,36***	***0,36***	***0,33***	***0,46***	***0,42***	***0,41***	***0,54***	***0,28***	1			
Age	27,23	7,04	***0,23***	0,13	0,04	***0,17***	-0,14	***-0,18***	***-0,21***	***0,33***	-0,10	0,03	1		
Professional Experience	2,07	0,96	***0,29***	0,06	0,03	0,11	***-0,19***	***-0,17***	***-0,21***	***0,27***	-0,10	0,02	***0,80***	1	
Gender	1,35	0,48	-0,12	***0,15***	-0,05	0,11	-0,07	-0,10	-0,02	0,07	0,07	0,07	-0,08	-0,11	1
Income	13,58	5,64	***0,15***	-0,12	-0,10	***-0,16***	-0,02	0,00	0,05	-0,09	0,01	-0,12	-0,05	-0,05	-0,10

Note: significant coeficient at $p < .05$ in bold and italic.

Table 3

Results: Effect of Company's WOM on/off line Communication Strategy and WOM behavior

Variable		WOM Outcome (3)	Online Activity (2)				WOM Behavior (1)	
		Online Consumption	WOM Source	Endorsement	Active WOM	Receptive WOM	Online Behaivor	Sharing Behavior
Company's Strategy								
Off-line Communication	H_{1a}	- .05 (.34)					H_{2a} **.43 (2.61)****	**.32 (1.98)***
On & Off-line Communication	H_{1b}	**- .19 (2.03)***					H_{2b} **.34 (3.54)****	**.38 (4.04)****
Online Communication	H_{1c}	- .13 (.69)					H_{2c} - .38 (1,94)	- .20 (1.04)
WOM Behavior								
Online Behavior	H_{3a}		**.16 (2.36)***	**.23 (2.66)****	- .04 (.54)	**.33 (3.92)****		
Sharing Behavior	H_{3b}		**.58 (8.69)****	**.18 (2.08)***	**.63 (8.55)****	**.24 (2.88)****		
Online Activity								
WOM Source	H_{4a}	**.19 (2.09)***						
Endorsement	H_{4b}	**.38 (4.56)****						
Active WOM	H_{4c}	- .11 (1.38)						
Receptive WOM	H_{4d}	- .11 (1.41)						
Control Variables								
Age		- .12 (1.07)	- .05 (.55)	**.32 (2.93)****	- .01 (.06)	- .06 (.59)	- .13 (1.16)	.03 (.23)
Professional Experience		**.34 (3.16)****	- .04 (.41)	.11 (.97)	.03 (.28)	.08 (.77)	- .12 (1.09)	**- .25 (2.31)***
Gender		**- .17 (2.56)****	.07 (1.29)	.12 (1.84)	**.16 (2.74)****	.10 (1.59)	**- .15 (2.15)***	- .07 (1.04)
Income		**.21 (3.29)****	.07 (1.40)	- .04 (.57)	.05 (.82)	- .07 (1.15)	- .02 (.24)	- .00 (.02)
R^2		.324	.495	.247	.367	.270	,198	,243
Adjusted R^2		.282	.481	.223	.348	.247	,167	,213
F-statistic		**7.59****	**33.39****	**10.12****	**19.71****	**11.42****	**6,28****	**8,17****

Notes: **p < .05; **p < .01.* The table reports standardized coefficients with t-values in parentheses.

Online consumption is negatively influenced by on & off line communication (β=-.19, p<.05). This result is opposed to the hypothesized sign ($H1_b$). The other communication strategies do not impact significantly the online consumption. As companies invest in communication it appears that either consumers purchase less or no significant impact is registered. Online consumption is influenced by two dimensions of online activity. WOM source (β=.19, p<.05) and endorsement (β=.38, p<.01) influence positively online consumption, according to $H4_a$ and $H4_b$.

Our results show overall support for the impact of WOM behavior on online activity, except online behavior on active WOM. Online behavior impacts WOM source (β=.16, p<.05), Endorsement (β=.23, p<.01), and Receptive WOM (β=.33, p<.01) as hypothesized ($H3_a$). Sharing behavior impacts WOM source (β=.58, p<.01), Endorsement (β=.18, p<.05), and active WOM (β=.63, p<.01), Receptive WOM (β=.24, p<.01) as hypothesized ($H3_b$).

Two types of communication strategy influence WOM behavior ($H2_a$ and $H2_b$). Off line communication impacts positively online behavior (β=.43, p<.01) and sharing behavior (β=.32, p<.05). On & off line communication influences positively online behavior (β=.34, p<.01) and sharing behavior (β=.38, p<.01). This is an interesting result that shows an indirect impact of a company's communication, by WOM behavior and WOM activity, on online consumption. Our results show that it is better to influence behavior rather than consumption directly.

Several control variables present significant effect on online consumption. Professional experience (β=.34, p<.01) and income (β=.21, p<.01) affects positively online consumption. Women significantly purchase online (β=-.17, p<.01). Endorsement is remarkably executed by old people (β=.32, p<.01). Male individuals are significantly active on WOM (β=.16, p<.01). Women are significantly more online behavior (β=.15, p<.01). Less professional experienced individuals are prone to sharing behavior (β=-.25, p<.05).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

In this article, we address the calls for research by Brown and Reingen (1987) and Schmitt, Skiera and Van den Bulte (2011) to help understand the WOM behavior and to identify those who influence online activity and consumption. The study of communication strategy of firms might also provide indications to what strategy is better indicated for online consumption. Our study presented evidence that communication impacts consumption by a mediation of behavior and online activity.

The direct impact on consumption is interestingly negative. A communication program employing on&off line media impacts negatively the online consumption. The placement of communication strategy in on&off line media may cause a disapproval recall by consumers that can engage in immediate negative outcome, even if the communication program also conveys positive and attractive messages. Consumers may look suspicious all kind of direct manipulation of press or customer evaluation. We believe that the extremely high volume of information available today has altered the balance of power between companies and consumers. Consumers have become overloaded and skeptical about traditional company-driven communication. This might be a reason that consumers prefer to make purchasing decisions independent of what companies tell them about products.

However, communication may impact online consumption through WOM behavior and online activity. Companies can hardly control what consumers tell others. But marketers can use WOM insights to shift from consequential to intentional campaigning. WOM can prompt a consumer to consider a product in a way that any advertising spending simply cannot. The right communication messages echo and expand within interested social networks, affecting product perceptions. The rise of online communities and communication has increased the potential for significant and far-reaching momentum effects. The return on communication programs involves understanding the range of channels and messages employed and allocating marketing communication activities accordingly. Companies can weigh the spread marketing messages and drive their reach and impact by looking at the evidence presented in this paper.

We found a not significant impact of active WOM on online consumption. Some may argue that users would not bother to take the time to provide reviews for which they are not directly compensated. A company may also free ride on investments of recommender systems and on top of all the control over community content is pretty low. Unfavorable reviews may impact negatively sales. Finally, online user reviews may not be useful and may not stimulate sales because of the sample selection bias that is inherent in an amateur review process (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006).

The starting point for managing WOM is understanding WOM behavior and online activity. WOM analysis can detail the nature of the antecedents of consumption. The highest-impact messages, contexts, and social networks are essential components of a companies' communication strategy and sales. Equipped with the insights provided in this paper, companies can then work on generating positive WOM, stimulating WOM behavior and activity.

The evidence collected to test the hypothesis points to some opportunities for future research. Firms are relying more on WOM and are recruiting consumers as volunteer WOM agents (Court, Gordon, and Perrey 2005; Kaikati and Kaikati 2004).These agents are often unpaid, ostensibly engaging in WOM for the psychosocial benefits (Court, Gordon and Perrey 2010). Future research may address the psychological drivers of WOM behavior. Also studies in WOM may move forward an understanding of the structure of the WOM network of contacts. Previous studies (e.g. Reingen, Foster, Brown and Seidman 1984; Brown and Reingen 1987) have investigated the brand building networks. Future study may address the nature and impact of social networks of online connections.

6. References

Brooks, Robert C.Jr., (1957), 'Word-of-mouth" advertising in selling new products, *Journal of Marketing*, v. (Oct), p.154-161.

Brown, Jacqueline Johnson and Peter H. Reingen (1987), "Social Ties and Word-of-Mouth Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14 (3), 350–62.

Bughin, Jacques; Doogan, Jonathan, and Vetvik, Ole Jørgen (2010), A new way to measure word-of- mouth marketing, *McKinsey Quarterly*, (April) 9p.

Cheema, Amar and Kaikati, Andrew M. (2010), The Effect of Need for Uniqueness on Word of Mouth, *Journal of Marketing Research,* v.XLVII (June), p.553–563

Chevalier, Judith A. and Mayzlin, Dina (2006), The Effect of Word of Mouth on Sales: Online Book Reviews, *Journal of Marketing Research*, v.XLIII (August), p.345–354.

Court, David C., Jonathan W. Gordon, and Jesko Perrey (2005), "Boosting Returns on Marketing Investment," *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2 (May), p.1–7.

Dillman, D. A. (2000), *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method*. 2ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Dichter, Ernest (1966), How word-of-mouth advertising works, *Harvard Business Review*, v.nov-dec. p.147-166.

Feick, L. F. and L. L. Price (1987). The market maven: A diffuser of marketplace information,. *Journal of Marketing*, v.51, p.83-97.

Frenzen, Jonathan and Kent Nakamoto (1993), "Structure, Cooperation, and the Flow of Market Information," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (December), p.360–75.

Forman, Chris; Ghose, Anindya and Wiesenfeld, Batia (2008), Examining the Relationship Between Reviews and Sales, *Information Systems Research*, v.19(3), p. 291–313.

Hair, J. F., Anderson, R., Tatham, R. L., and Black, W. C. (1998), Multivariate data analysis, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River.

Kaikati, Andrew M. and Jack G. Kaikati (2004), "Stealth Marketing: How to Reach Consumers Surreptitiously," *California Management Review*, 46 (4), 6–22.

King, C. W. and J. O. Summers (1970). Overlap of opinion leadership across consumer product categories. *Journal of Marketing Research*. , v. (Feb), p.

Kumar, V., J. Andrew Petersen, and Robert P. Leone (2010), Driving Profitability by Encouraging Customer Referrals: Who,When, and How, *Journal of Marketing*, v.74(Sept), p.1–17.

Kozinets, Robert V.; Wilner, S.; Wojnicki, A.; de Valck, K. (2010), Networks Of Narrativity: Understanding Word-of-mouth Marketing In Online Communities, Journal of Marketing,

Lester, Deborah H., Andrew M. Forman, and Dolly Loyd (2005), Internet Shopping and Buying Behavior of College Students, *Services Marketing Quarterly*, 27 (2), p.123–38.

Yim, C. K., Tse, David K. and Chan, Kimmy Wa (2008), Customer Loyalty Through Intimacy and Passion, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol.XLV, 741–756.

Liu, Yong (2006), "Word of Mouth for Movies: Its Dynamics and Impact on Box Office Revenue" *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (July), 74-89.

Mathwick, C., Wiertz, C., de Ruyter, K. (2008). Social capital production in a virtual P3 community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34, 832-849.

Matos, C. A. D., Rossi, C. A. V., Word-of-mouth communications in marketing: A meta-analytic review of the antecedents and moderators. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36, 578-596, 2008.

Pechmann, Cornelia and Liangyan Wang (2010), Reference Group Messages and Persuasion Knowledge, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. XLVII, 134–145.

Reingen, P. H., Foster, B. L., Brown, J. J., Seidman, S.B. Brand Congruence in Interpersonal Relations: A Social Network Analysis, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11(3), p. 771-783, 1984.

Schmitt, Philipp, Bernd Skiera and Christophe Van den Bulte (2011), Referral Programs and Customer Value, *Journal of Marketing*, v.75(Jan), p. 46 –59.

Verhoef, Peter C., Philip H. Franses, and Jenny C. Hoekstra (2002), The Effects of Relationship Constructs on Customer Referrals and Number of Services Purchased from a Multiservice Provider: Does Age of Relationship Matter? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 30 (3), 202–226.

Wang, Liz C., Baker, Julie, Wagner, Judy A., and Wakefield, Kirk (2007), Can a Retail Web Site Be Social? *Journal of Marketing*, v.71 (July), p.143–157.

Wells, Melanie (2004), "Kid Nabbing," *Forbes*, (February 2), p.84–88.

Venkatesan, R. ;Kumar, V., "A Customer Lifetime Value Framework for Customer Selection and Resource Allocation Strategy," *Journal of Marketing* (October 2004);