

# Investigating Word of Mouth as Advertising Tool for Mobile devices in South Africa

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## **ABSTRACT**

Samsung Electronics entered the mobile device market on the back of their successes in other markets for electronic devices. The mobile device space in South Africa was dominated by Nokia and Blackberry and in a short space of time Samsung stormed into a tie for the top spot alongside Blackberry with a market share of 23%. In 2013 Samsung's market share dropped 5%, moving down to 18%, placing them second to Blackberry as they entered 2014. Samsung's IMC strategy for their mobile devices has been consistent and well-thought throughout the years. The influence of WOM suggests a greater need for Samsung to determine the effectiveness of WOM as part of their IMC strategy for mobile devices in South Africa. It is important for Samsung to understand how WOM shapes South African consumer purchasing decisions, what causes WOM, and what types of marketing are available to drive WOM for their mobile devices in South Africa. This study therefore attempts to investigate WOM as advertising tool in an IMC campaign, with a focus on Samsung and the South African market for mobile devices.

The research indicates that 94% of South African consumers trust WOM from family and friends more than any other form of advertising. This statistic clearly indicates that South African consumers trust WOM from family and friends more than any other form of advertising. It can be deduced that if 87% of consumers actively seek WOM when purchasing a mobile device, and 94% of consumers trust WOM, then WOM is indeed powerful. In conclusion, it is clear that for Samsung, WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy for its mobile devices in South Africa.

**KEY WORDS:** IMC strategy for mobile devices in South Africa, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), Word-of-mouth (WOM), Word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM), Consumer decision-making process.

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

South Africa has a competitive mobile market that has seen rapid growth since the 1990s (Africantelecomsnews.com, 2014). Market penetration is above 100%, driven by separate subscriptions of voice and mobile broadband, and resulting in a proliferation of consumers with

multiple devices (Lange, 2014). Mobile phone use in South Africa increased from 17% of adults in 2000 to 76% in 2010 (Hutton, 2011) and climbed to 79.5% in 2012 (Statistics South Africa, 2012, pp. 35-36). Lange (2014) states that the steady growth in smartphone and broadband adoption has been driven by technological developments such as network infrastructure outsourcing and LTE services in the South African mobile market. Nokia currently dominates the South African mobile phone market with a market share of 44%. Blackberry is second with 23%, and Samsung is in third place with 18% market share (Vermeulen, 2013). For Samsung Electronics, a company that has managed to establish itself as the ultimate in style and design and has a target to “dominate the entire South African consumer electronics industry” (Euromonitor.com, 2012), IMC and WOMM are critical to the success of its marketing strategy. In order to successfully market its products and services, a company such as Samsung Electronics must communicate with its customers or target market. Poor communication or lack thereof, is likely to result in the market not being aware of the company’s products and services. All activities undertaken by a company are deemed to be some form of communication with the market. This process of communication between companies and consumers is known as marketing communication.

Early marketing communication was based on the Shannon-Weaver Model of Communication, developed in 1948. This model provided an overview of how marketing communication flowed from the company to the customer. The communication message that flows from the company to the consumer plays an integral part of the overall IMC strategy – this is known as marketing communication. The communication message that flows from the consumer to the company, known as WOM, also plays an integral part of the IMC strategy. There is consensus among business managers and marketing professionals that consumer interactions driven by WOM have a major impact on consumer response to a product and the associated advertising (Hogan and Lemon et al., 2004, pp. 271-280). Companies use IMC in an attempt to gain the attention of consumers to raise brand and product awareness, drive WOM and ultimately influence consumers to purchase their products and services. It has been estimated that up to 80% of all consumer buying decisions are influenced by WOM (Richins and Root-Shaffer, 1988, pp. 32-36). Research indicates that whilst WOM is a more powerful selling tool than IMC (Hk.nielsen.com, 2007), IMC fulfills a significant role in stimulating WOM (Word of Mouth Around the World, 2010). It is therefore important to consider a model of IMC and to identify the IMC tools. At its most basic level, IMC is about the integration of the promotional tools and coordinating them so that they work together in harmony (Multimediamarketing.com, 2014). Figure 1 illustrates the IMC mix.

**Figure 1 – The IMC Mix**



Source: AGP & Associates, Inc. (2014)

The market shift from mass communication to interpersonal communication, as well as the increasing role of digital media in marketing communications has contributed to the resurgence of WOM and has emphasised the need for marketers to better understand WOM and its causes. WOM can be harnessed and driven just like any other marketing activity, making it important for marketers to know which marketing media and channels are available to drive it (Hughes, 2005). Previous research shows that WOM is the most powerful tool that marketers have to shorten the consumer decision making process (Silverman, 2011). Most consumers engage in WOM when making complex purchasing decisions (Levy, 2012). Companies must identify and understand how WOM influences their target market during the decision-making process. Marketers use IMC to communicate marketing messages to consumers. Consumers engage in WOM to communicate brand and product messages to one another. Marketers must strive to understand the relationship between WOM and IMC, and to effectively leverage WOM in their IMC strategies in order to drive sales. This study therefore investigates the relationship between WOM and IMC and attempts to identify the causes of WOM, the impact of WOM on consumer decision-making, and the types of marketing available to marketers to drive WOM. It examines and analyses these aspects of IMC and WOM in an attempt to clarify the importance and effectiveness of WOM as part of an IMC strategy.

Samsung Electronics entered the mobile device market on the back of their successes in other markets for electronic devices. The mobile device space in South Africa was dominated by Nokia and Blackberry and in a short space of time Samsung stormed into a tie for the top spot alongside Blackberry with a market share of 23%. In 2013 Samsung's market share dropped 5%, moving down to 18%, placing them second to Blackberry as they entered 2014. Samsung's IMC strategy for their mobile devices has been consistent and well-thought throughout the years. In recent years, Samsung sponsored the Africa Cup of Nations (2013), the MTN Qhubeka cycling

team, the first ever South African Enterprise Mobility Forum (2012), and South Africa's Premier Gaming Event, Rage (2011). They have an extensive advertising presence across multiple media types including internet advertising, social media, radio, print media such as newspapers and magazines, outdoor advertising on billboards. They frequently hold promotions in key locations around South Africa including Vodaworld as well as in-store displays at key retailers such as Hi-Fi Corp and many more.

The problem identified is that the persuasive power of WOM is firmly established and it is recognised as an important force in the marketplace. The impact of WOMM significantly exceeds the impact of traditional marketing (Bughin and Doogan et al., 2010). Customers acquired through WOM can have up to twice the lifetime value of customers acquired through traditional marketing activities (Villanueva, Yoo and Hanssens, 2008). The influence of WOM suggests a greater need for Samsung to determine the effectiveness of WOM as part of their IMC strategy for mobile devices in South Africa. It is important for Samsung to understand how WOM shapes South African consumer purchasing decisions, what causes WOM, and what types of marketing are available to drive WOM for their mobile devices in South Africa. This study therefore attempts to investigate WOM as advertising tool in an IMC campaign, with a focus on Samsung and the South African market for mobile devices

## **1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A quantitative approach was selected because quantitative research uses the deductive method and is used primarily for description, explanation, and prediction. The non-comparative scaling technique used was the Likert scale, classified as an itemised rating scale. A 5-point Likert scale was used. The measuring instrument used was a questionnaire. The questionnaire used structured questions with structured responses, as follows: dichotomous questions i.e. questions that have only two alternative answers, multiple-choice questions, and scaled questions. The methods selected for secondary data collection were online computer searches, past marketing research studies, academic literature, published books, and periodicals such as magazines and journals.

Primary data collected using a survey method with questionnaires. The sampling design focused on a mix of Generation X and Generation Y. There does not seem to be consensus on the exact dates as to where each generation starts and ends. This study placed each of the target generations within a birth time span that reflects start and end dates representative of the body of information available on the subject: Generation X: 1965-1984, and Generation Y: 1985-2004. The judgement sampling method was used to collect the primary data. The blind guess method was used to determine the sampling size. The sampling size used was 20 people.

## **1.3 EXISTING THEORETICAL PARADIGMS RELATING TO IMC AND WOM**

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), word-of-mouth (WOM), word-of-mouth marketing (WOMM), and the consumer decision-making process. These concepts are defined and described in this section. The IMC tools, causes of WOM, impact of WOM on the consumer decision-making process, and types of WOMM available to drive WOM are also investigated. It is important to discuss the two-step flow of communication because it serves as a well-accepted theoretical model that illustrates the interdependency of IMC and WOM. The two-step flow of communication hypothesis was introduced in 1944 by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard

Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet (Utwente.nl, n.d.). Their study addressed the process of decision-making during a presidential election campaign. They discovered that personal contacts, mostly informal, were mentioned more frequently than traditional advertising as sources that influenced voting behaviour. This stimulated Katz and Lazarsfeld to develop the two-step flow theory of mass communication.

Katz and Lazarsfeld's work, conducted in 1944, was based on the hypothesis that individuals known as opinion leaders tend to be exposed more often to mass media, and that this often results in opinion leaders receiving and processing information first (Utwente.nl, n.d.). Katz and Lazarsfeld's research found that movement of media occurs in two phases (Utwente.nl, n.d.):

1. Opinion leaders pay close attention to mass media and receive the information first.
2. Opinion leaders pass on these messages with their own interpretation.

It is clear that marketing communications serve as a catalyst for WOM through opinion leaders Utwente.nl (n.d.). It is thus important to investigate IMC, its role and the IMC tools available to marketers to form an IMC strategy. The purpose of including IMC in the literature review is to gain a deeper understanding of IMC in order to better understand if an IMC strategy should consider WOM at all, and then to use this information to determine if WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy.

### **DEFINING IMC**

The first definition of IMC was introduced by the American Association of Advertising Agencies in 1989 (BusinessDictionary.com, n.d.). IMC was defined as an approach to "achieving the objectives of a marketing campaign through a well-coordinated use of different promotional methods that are intended to reinforce each other" (BusinessDictionary.com, n.d.). Schultz (1993, p. 17) stated that IMC "evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines advertising, public relations, personal selling, and sales promotion and combines them to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact".

IMC is a consumer-oriented approach that companies use to coordinate their marketing efforts across the available communication channels. The primary focus of IMC is to create a seamless experience for customers across multiple promotion tools, thereby creating an awareness and affinity for the brand in the eyes of the customer. (Naeem and Bilal et al., 2013, pp. 122-133). Integrating marketing in this way ensures that the consumer does not receive mixed or unclear messages and that the marketing mix is geared towards driving WOM (The Growing Importance of Word of Mouth - Boundless Open Textbook, 2012). The importance of WOM should not be underestimated, it is an important IMC contact tool and forms the bulk of this report. It is important to have an introductory overview of IMC before the role and effectiveness of WOM as part of an IMC strategy can be thoroughly investigated.

### **THE ROLE OF IMC**

The role of IMC is to make sure that all forms of marketing communication are connected in a way that optimises marketing impact on consumers at a minimal cost. Marketers use the IMC tools to increase brand and product awareness by informing consumers about product, prices and places where the products can be purchased. Each IMC tool contributes to marketers achieving their promotional objectives, and all the chosen tools must work together to realise a successful IMC mix or strategy. The creation and development of an IMC strategy relies on



effective market analysis, market segmentation, target marketing and positioning, and coordination of the elements of the marketing mix (Nidiganti, 2012). Silverman (Silverman, 2011, p. 125) advocated that the traditional understanding of the relationship between IMC and sales-related action is a misconception. The traditional view holds that IMC leads to sales-related action over a period of time. However, Silverman(2013) also posits that although IMC creates awareness among the largest number of consumers, the reality is that WOM acts as the bridge and catalyst between IMC and sales-related action.

It can thus be concluded that IMC contributes to the creation of brand and product awareness through the IMC tools, and that this awareness sparks WOM, which in turn ignites sales.

### IMC TOOLS

It is interesting to note that WOM forms part of the IMC contact tools. The IMC audience contact tools are illustrated below (Belch and Belch, 2014):

**Figure 1 – The IMC Tools**



Source: Belch and Belch (2014, p. 41)

Kotler (Kotler and Armstrong, 2014, p. 88) state: “The promotions mix (the marketing communications mix) is the specific blend of promotion tools that the company uses to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationships.” Building on Kotler’s statement that the promotions mix and the marketing communications mix can be used interchangeably, it can be seen in figure 2 that the tools of the communications mix

identified by Smith and Pulford et al. (2009) are the same as the IMC tools identified by Belch and Belch.

**Figure 2 – The Communications Mix**



Source: Adapted from (Smith and Pulford et al., 2009, p. 166)

Smith and Pulford et al. (2009) included WOM as a tool in the communications mix. This is of importance to this study because it is evident that WOM makes a valuable contribution to the communications mix and the IMC strategy. The study will now take a closer look at WOM and attempt to define and investigate its causes for the receiver, impact on the consumer decision-making process, and types of WOMM that marketers can use to drive more WOM.

**DEFINING WOM**

WOM is one of the most common forms of communication and occurs naturally among consumers. It is commercially-oriented talk among consumers, of which none are perceived to be associated with marketers (Kirby and Marsden, 2006). According to Bansal and Voyer (2000) WOM is powerful and effective. Consumers frequently rely on informal or personal communication sources, as opposed to formal or traditional communication sources such as advertising during the decision-making process to purchase a product or service. Levy (2012) defined WOM as “informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization or a service.” Arndt, (1967) an early pioneer in the field of WOM research, offered the following definition which forms the foundation of WOM as discussed in this study:

“Oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, concerning a brand, a product or a service.”

This definition is still valid today. Kirby and Marsden (2006, p. 164) listed three essential parts to this definition of WOM, all of which are important in the context of expanding our understanding of WOM:

1. WOM is interpersonal communication – this is important because it sets WOM apart from other forms of mass communication and marketing, such as advertising. It also identifies language as the code of communication, separating it from other non-verbal communication.
2. The content of WOM communication, from a marketing perspective, is commercial. It involves brands, products and/or service. This implies that WOM may be considered a technical term applicable to marketing.
3. Even though the content is commercial, the communicators do not have, or are perceived to not have, commercial motivations or intentions when engaging in WOM. The communicators talk at their own will. This is an important aspect in our understanding of the definition of WOM as it will be addressed in detail when answering the secondary objective of identifying the antecedents of WOM.

### **PWOM AND NWOM**

There are two types of WOM communication: PWOM and NWOM. Levy (2012) described PWOM and NWOM as follows: “PWOM includes recommendations to others, conspicuous display and interpersonal discussions relating to pleasant, vivid or novel experiences. NWOM deals with product denigration, unpleasant experiences, and private complaining.” Kirby and Marsden (2006, p. 166) describe PWOM as “product-related information transmitted by satisfied customers”, and NWOM as “interpersonal communication among consumers concerning a marketing organisation or product which denigrates the object of communication”.

### **WOM AND THE CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

Consumers are constantly faced with purchase decisions. They select one product or service over another from numerous available choices. Consumer behaviour is a complex process. It encompasses the various activities that consumers engage in when seeking, choosing, selecting, buying, using and disposing products and services to satisfy their needs and desires (Solomon, 2002, p. 3). The consumer’s decision to purchase, or not to purchase, a product is of importance for marketers and serves as an indicator of whether or not a marketing campaign has achieved its objectives. Consumers go through a five stage decision-making process when purchasing products or services. WOM has an influence at each stage of the consumer decision-making process. Marketers must also know what type of WOM is effective at each stage of the decision-making process:

1. **Need recognition** – A need or problem can be triggered by IMC or WOM. Silverman (2011, p. 83) refers to this stage as “deciding to decide” because consumers are deciding if the need or want warrants a search for more information. WOM that centres on the brand or product claim is effective at this stage.
2. **Information search** – According to Buttle (2008), consumer expectations and perceptions are influenced by WOM in this phase of the process. When making complex decisions, consumers do not usually have enough information to make an informed decision and often turn to friends, neighbours and other acquaintances for product information i.e. they engage in WOM when searching for information (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007). This can be attributed to the perceived reliability of the source of the



information “largely because personal communication is viewed as a more reliable source than non-personal information. WOM communication is a powerful force in influencing future buying decisions.” (Levy, 2012, p. 4). At this stage, WOM that focuses on product detail is effective.

3. **Evaluation of alternatives** – WOM influences consumers’ attitudes during the evaluation phase of the decision-making process (Buttle, 2008). This is because WOM has the power to cut through the burden of information overload (Silverman, 2011). Consumers perform three key actions when evaluating alternatives: firstly, they identify possible options; then they study information about these options; and finally, they prioritise the options in terms of expected benefits applied to their situation. WOM must focus on simplification of information at this phase because consumers prefer less information in smaller doses i.e. simplification (Silverman, 2011, p. 84).
4. **Purchase** – Back in 1967, Arndt stated that consumers tend to rely on WOM when making purchase decisions. According to Bughin and Doogan et al. (2010), WOM has a greater impact at moment of purchase than IMC or previous experience
5. **Post purchase evaluation** – According to Buttle (2008, p. 248), “consumers who experience discomfort from cognitive dissonance” are likely to seek WOM. Consumers are more likely to turn to friends, neighbours and acquaintances when engaging in WOM (Schiffman and Kanuk, 1997). It is clear that WOM plays an important role in allaying possible negativity toward the brand or product induced by post purchase dissonance.

It is clear that consumers increasingly “prefer to make purchasing decisions largely independent of what companies tell them about products.” (Bughin and Doogan et al., 2010). The results of their study indicate that not only does WOM have a major influence on consumers at each stage of the decision-making journey, but that it is the only factor that “ranks among the three biggest consumer influencers at every step.” Bansal and Voyer (2000, p. 166) also found that WOM is influential throughout the consumer decision-making process.

A secondary objective of this study was to determine how WOM impacts the consumer decision-making process. The evidence presented in this section confirms that WOM impacts consumers at all phases of the decision-making process, and has the greatest impact at the moment of purchase

### **CAUSES OF WOM**

Cause and effect are an important part of WOM research. Cause is referred to as the antecedent, and effect as the consequence. There is an important distinction that must be drawn when approaching the subject matter of antecedents and consequences of WOM, namely that of input and output WOM. A review of available academic literature reveals that the antecedents and consequences of WOM cannot be studied in isolation, input WOM refers to the receiver of the communication, and output WOM refers to the communicator. Both are critical constituents of WOM because the antecedents and consequences of WOM are different for the receiver and the communicator (Kirby and Marsden, 2006, p. 168).

This section reviews and answers another of the secondary objectives of this study: To identify the antecedents of WOM. It considers the antecedents of WOM for the receiver of the WOM communication.

**Table 1 – Antecedents and Consequences of WOM**

Unit of Analysis	Antecedents of WOM (causes)	Consequences of WOM (effects)
<b>Receiver of communication (input WOM)</b>	Why do people listen? Information search, perceived risk, tie strength	The power of WOM Awareness, attitude change, behavioural intention, purchase behaviour
<b>Communicator/sender (output WOM)</b>	What makes people talk? Opinion leadership, satisfaction / dissatisfaction, promotional activities / direct influence of advertiser	What happens to the communicator after the WOM event? Cognitive dissonance, ego-enhancement

Source: Kirby and Marsden (2006, p. 168)

A review of the antecedents of WOM for the receiver must consider the causes for the receiver to seek or search for WOM, as well as the causes for the receiver to listen when exposed to WOM. The causes of WOM for the receiver that consider both these perspectives are (Kirby and Marsden, 2006, p. 168). Each of these causes of WOM for the receiver will be discussed in more detail:

- 1. Information search** – Information search can be categorized as internal or external. Internal search is often personal in nature and refers to the consumer’s memory or recollection of a product or service. This type of information search is characterized by past experiences with the product or service. The more frequent the consumer’s purchase history is with the product or service, the more likely internal search is to trigger a purchase (Information Search - Boundless Open Textbook, 2014). External search is characterized by the consumer having no prior knowledge about a brand, product or service. In this instance the consumer is left little option other than to seek information from personal sources i.e. WOM, public sources such as blogs and online forums, or marketer-dominated sources such as sales executives and advertising (Information Search - Boundless Open Textbook, 2014). WOM is clearly an important part of external information search.
- 2. Perceived risk** – The concept of risk was first brought to the attention of the marketing community by Bauer in 1960 (Mitchell, 2008, p. 1). Bauer’s concept has stood the test of time and continues to attract interest from marketing and academic researchers around the world. Perceived risk is the risk a consumer perceives to exist when purchasing a product or service. The risk may not be factually correct, it may only exist in the mind of the consumer. The level of perceived risk increases depending on certain variables such as the importance that the purchase holds for the consumer, familiarity with the brand or retailer, and as the cost of the item increases. WOM

information can reduce a consumer's perceived risk when purchasing a product. The greater the perceived risk, the more likely the consumer is to seek WOM information. Consumers tend to seek information from trusted sources such as family or friends rather than from commercial sources (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2007).

- 3. Tie strength** – A social network is comprised of various nodes connected by ties. Nodes can be people or organisations. Ties are the types of connections between these nodes. Ties are evaluated in terms of strength, for example: an acquaintance is regarded as weak tie, whereas a family bond is regarded as a strong tie (Social Networks - Boundless Open Textbook, 2014). The strength of a tie is a combination of time, emotional intensity, intimacy and reciprocal service which characterise the tie. Social relationships are a significant predictor of whether WOM will occur. The occurrence of WOM communication tends to take place between nodes with strong tie strength. The stronger the tie connecting two individuals, the more similar they are in various ways (Granovetter, 2003). Following on from Granovetter's statement, Schiffman and Kanuk, (2007) found that consumers tend to turn to friends, neighbours and other acquaintances when engaging in WOM.

In conclusion, the antecedents of WOM have been clearly identified through a large volume of research over many decades, as follows: information search, perceived risk, and tie strength.

#### **TYPES OF WOMM – MARKETING THAT DRIVES WOM**

In order to review and analyse the types of marketing that marketers have available to drive WOM and the role that WOM fulfils in an IMC strategy, a clear definition and understanding of WOMM is necessary. This section will also address another secondary objective of this study: to identify the types of WOMM available to marketers to drive WOM.

According to Welcome to WOMMAPEDIA (2014): "WOMM is about harnessing the power of people to build brand awareness, it is any business action that earns a customer recommendation." Welcome to WOMMAPEDIA asserts that WOMM is all around us, it is inescapable. Sernovitz (2012, p. 1) states that WOMM is about giving people a reason to talk about your brand, product or service, and making it easier for that conversation to occur in as natural a state as possible. Simply put, "it's everything you can do to get people talking". Sernovitz (2012, p. 4) also suggests that WOMM is about working with WOM "toward a marketing objective", and that it is "actionable, trackable, and planable as any other form of marketing". Marketers need to work within the conversations and ensure that consumers are talking about their brands, products or services. "WOMM is about joining that WOM conversation and participating in it – but never manipulating, faking, or degrading its fundamental honesty in any way" (Sernovitz, 2012, p. 4).

The types of marketing that marketers can use to drive WOM differ from traditional marketing. The table below offers a clear and concise description of the difference between WOM and WOMM:

**Table 1 – Differences between WOM and WOMM**

<b>WOM</b>	<b>WOMM</b>
<b>WOM is output</b>	WOMM is input
<b>WOM is the conversation</b>	WOMM is the conversation starter

Source: Adapted from Welcome to WOMMAPEDIA (2014)

According to WOMMAPEDIA (2014), the types of marketing available to marketers to drive WOM are:

**Table 2 – Types of WOMM**

<b>Type of WOMM</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Conversation marketing</b>	Digital marketing in which design, content and technology are driven by the customer and in which the customer is a long-term participant (Lurie and More, 2011). Welcome to WOMMAPEDIA (2014) defines conversation marketing as stimulating advertising, entertainment, or promotions intended to initiate WOM conversations.
<b>Evangelist marketing</b>	Evangelist marketing focuses on loyal customers who believe so strongly in a brand that they “freely try to convince others to buy and use it” (Evangelism marketing, 2014). Welcome to WOMMAPEDIA (2014) defines evangelist marketing as cultivating and encouraging evangelists to “take a leadership role in actively spreading the word on your behalf.”
<b>Viral marketing</b>	Viral marketing describes “any strategy that encourages individuals to pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message’s exposure and influence” (Kirby and Marsden, 2006, p. 88).
<b>Grassroots marketing (also known as guerrilla marketing)</b>	Grassroots marketing targets small groups with the intention of motivating the group to spread WOM to a larger audience (Definition of Grassroots Marketing, 2014).
<b>Buzz marketing</b>	Buzz marketing uses “high-profile entertainment or news to get people to talk about your brand” (Welcome to WOMMAPEDIA, 2014). Kirby and Marsden (2006, p. 26) offer a similar definition “a marketing technique that makes use of an actual event or performance to create WOM.”
<b>Community marketing</b>	Community marketing is about engaging and supporting select communities with similar interests and opinions about

Type of WOMM	Definition
	a brand or product, and “providing tools, content, and information to support those communities” (Welcome to WOMMAPEDIA, 2014).
<b>Influencer marketing</b>	Influencer marketing is about identifying and targeting opinion leaders, instead of the whole target market. Opinion leaders are key individuals or groups of individuals who are “likely to talk about products and have the ability to influence the opinions of others” (Welcome to WOMMAPEDIA, 2014).
<b>Cause marketing</b>	Cause marketing is about supporting social causes in an attempt to “earn respect and support from people who feel strongly about the cause” (Welcome to WOMMAPEDIA, 2014).

In conclusion, there are various types of marketing available to marketers to drive WOM. This type of marketing is called WOMM. This section identified and described the following types of WOMM: Conversation marketing, evangelist marketing, viral marketing, grassroots marketing, buzz marketing, community marketing, influencer marketing, and cause marketing.

### **IMPACT OF WOM ON IMC**

According to IMC and WOM-related research conducted by the Kellerfay (2014), WOM makes traditional media more effective. A key finding was that although traditional media generates awareness, it does not create credibility. The study found that consumers made reference to other forms of marketing in 50% of WOM conversations. The findings stated that WOM “increased the effectiveness of traditional media and the marketing campaign as a whole” by “igniting brand or product conversations among friends and family” (trnd: WOM makes traditional media more effective, 2014). The research indicates that marketers will achieve the best results with a mix of marketing communication tools that promote WOM and traditional media to work together. This is because the IMC strategy will promote awareness through traditional marketing media and motivate consumers to take action based on credible recommendations resulting from WOM.

It is clear that IMC and WOM make an important contribution to raising brand and product awareness and influencing consumers to take action and make purchases. This chapter cited sufficient existing literature to show that WOM has an influence throughout the consumer decision-making process and that the causes of WOM for the receiver are related to the need or search for information, reduction of perceived risk and tie strength. It is also clear that marketers have many types of marketing available to them to drive WOM. The next chapter will investigate the effectiveness of WOM in an IMC strategy for the chosen audience.

## **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS**

The focus of this section is on the presentation, interpretation and analysis of the data and results obtained from the research. Data was collected from an age group representative of Samsung's target market, an age range of 20-49, as follows:

- Ages 20-29 – Generation Y
- Ages 30-49 – Generation X

The gender split of the participants surveyed was 54% male and 46% female. This is representative of the sex ratio population statistics for South Africa which are published as 0.99 males: 1 female (South Africa Demographics Profile 2013, 2013).

## **TRUST IN WOM – A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**

Markets around the world are different. Consumers from different parts of the world and from different cultures have different needs and wants. From a South African perspective, it is important to understand if the target population is actively engaging in WOM in their day-to-day lives. This question asked participants if they actively seek WOM when purchasing a mobile device product as opposed to a non-mobile device product. Figure 3.1 shows that 87% of South African consumers are likely to actively seek WOM when purchasing a mobile device, compared to 63% who are likely to actively seek WOM for non-mobile device purchases. This is valuable information for Samsung because these results confirm that the large majority of South African consumers actively seek WOM when purchasing a mobile device. This indicates that WOM should play an important role in an IMC strategy and that Samsung should attempt to drive and influence as much PWOM as possible.

WOM has different consequences for the receiver and communicator. For the receiver WOM can be the difference between purchasing and not purchasing the Samsung mobile device. For the communicator, actively engaging in WOM can reduce the effects of post-purchase dissonance and confirm that the purchase was indeed a good, safe purchase. Nielsen (Nielsen: Earned Advertising Remains Most Credible Among Consumers; Trust in Owned Advertising on the Rise, 2013) reports that 84% of consumers around the world trust WOM from family and friends above all other sources of advertising, it is important to determine if a similar level of trust exists amongst South African consumers when purchasing products and services, particularly for mobile devices.

The research indicates that 94% of South African consumers trust WOM from family and friends more than any other form of advertising. This statistic clearly indicates that South African consumers trust WOM from family and friends more than any other form of advertising. It can be deduced that if 87% of consumers actively seek WOM when purchasing a mobile device, and 94% of consumers trust WOM, then WOM is indeed powerful. It should be noted that this finding does not mean that the South African public does not trust advertising, in fact, considerable trust was shown in other forms of advertising when WOM was removed. 70% of participants indicated that they trust one or more other forms of advertising when purchasing a mobile device.

The findings relating to trust in WOM for mobile devices in South Africa can be summarised as follows:



- 87% of South African consumers actively seek WOM when purchasing a mobile device. This is clear testament to the importance of WOM for marketers of mobile devices in South Africa, including Samsung.
- 94% of South African mobile device consumers trust WOM more than any other form of advertising – marketers should therefore look for ways to integrate WOM into their IMC strategies at all phases of the consumer decision-making process.
- 70% of South African mobile device consumers trust other forms of marketing communications – this finding indicates that marketers IMC efforts are effective and that they should continue to integrate their marketing communications.

The results shows that 95% of South African consumers are more likely to recall other forms of advertising if a brand or product has come up in casual conversation in the last six months. A further observation from the data collected is that the 82% of the target population indicated that other forms of advertising have a limited lifespan in terms of stickiness in their minds. This is an important finding for marketers because it can be deduced that if consumers remember other forms of advertising for longer periods of time after they have engaged in WOM, then they are more likely to recall a brand or product at any given moment of in the decision-making process. Considering that consumers spend up to 10 weeks in the decision-making process for mobile devices, this is a clear indication that WOM has a positive impact on IMC and it should be considered as an important component of an IMC strategy. This also applies to all marketers for mobile devices, including Samsung.

These findings relating to WOM and the decision-making process, and the impact of WOM on IMC memory retention can be summarised as follows:

- South African consumers spend on average 10 weeks in the consumer decision-making process. 40% of this time is spent in the post-purchase evaluation phase. Marketers have an opportunity to communicate with consumers and stimulate PWOM at each phase of this process, indicating that driving WOM should form an important part of the overall IMC strategy.
- 95% of South African consumers remember marketing communications for mobile devices for a longer period of time if it has come up in casual conversation – WOM therefore has a positive impact on IMC, indicating that it is in fact effective as part of an IMC strategy and marketers such as Samsung should seek to stimulate more of it.
- IMC efforts for mobile devices have a limited lifespan in the minds of 82% of South African consumers when WOM is not present in the communications mix. It is evident that WOM prolongs the effect of the marketing communications in the minds' of consumers, supporting the claim that WOM has a positive impact on IMC and is therefore effective as part of an IMC strategy.

### **IMPACT OF WOM ON PURCHASE DECISION**

A secondary objective of this study investigated the impact of WOM on the consumer decision-making process. The literature shows that WOM does influence the consumer throughout the decision-making process. The literature review also showed that WOM is the strongest influencer on the purchase decision. Marketers must therefore look for ways to drive WOM throughout the decision-making process in an attempt to increase brand and product awareness and drive sales.

Building on the research thus far, the results shows that 93% of consumers are more likely to purchase a product if it has come up in conversation in the last 6 months. This is useful information because it clearly shows the high level of influence that WOM has during the decision-making process and the purchase decision.

Another interesting observation is that 98% of consumers indicated that they actively seek WOM during their search for information and evaluation of alternatives during the decision-making process for a new mobile device. This provides empirical evidence that WOM is influential throughout the decision-making process.

Consumers are more likely to purchase a product or service when WOM is involved as opposed to only other forms of marketing communications. This finding indicates that WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy because consumers are more likely to purchase products when the product or brand has come up in recent conversation. It can be concluded that marketers should therefore seek ways to drive and increase WOM within their IMC strategies

The findings related to the impact of WOM on the consumer decision-making process can be summarised as follows:

- 94% of South African consumers of mobile devices trust WOM more than any other form of advertising. WOM influences the purchasing decision of 93% of consumers. WOM is therefore powerful and effective, and it is influential in the purchasing decisions of South African consumers. Marketers such as Samsung should seek ways to drive PWOM and ensure WOM forms part of their IMC strategies for mobile devices.
- WOM is influential throughout the consumer decision-making process, 87% of South African consumers of mobile devices actively engage in WOM as part of the decision-making process. Marketers such as Samsung should create marketing communication appropriate for each phase of the decision-making process, and understand what type of WOMM is appropriate at each phase. It is therefore important for WOM to form part of their IMC strategies for mobile devices in South Africa.
- 93% of South African consumers are more likely to purchase a product if it has come up in conversation. WOM has a positive impact on product sales and is clearly effective as part of an IMC strategy. South African marketers of mobile devices, such as Samsung, should attempt to drive WOM as part of the IMC strategies.

### **PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF WOM IN AN IMC STRATEGY**

In this section attention will shift to a specific company operating in the South African market for mobile devices. This company has gained significant market share and has continued to deliver well-executed IMC strategies with each new product release. They have successfully entered markets that have traditionally been dominated by market leaders such as Apple, Nokia and Blackberry. They have created a buzz in the market, generating WOM through well-planned IMC strategies. Their success is largely attributed to the awareness they have created for their brand through intensive IMC and WOM efforts in conjunction with reliable, high quality products and excellent customer service. Focus on an individual South African company will bring clarity to the primary objective of this study, namely to determine the effectiveness of WOM as part of an IMC strategy.

### **INTERPRETATION OF DATA COLLECTED ON SAMSUNG'S IMC STRATEGY**

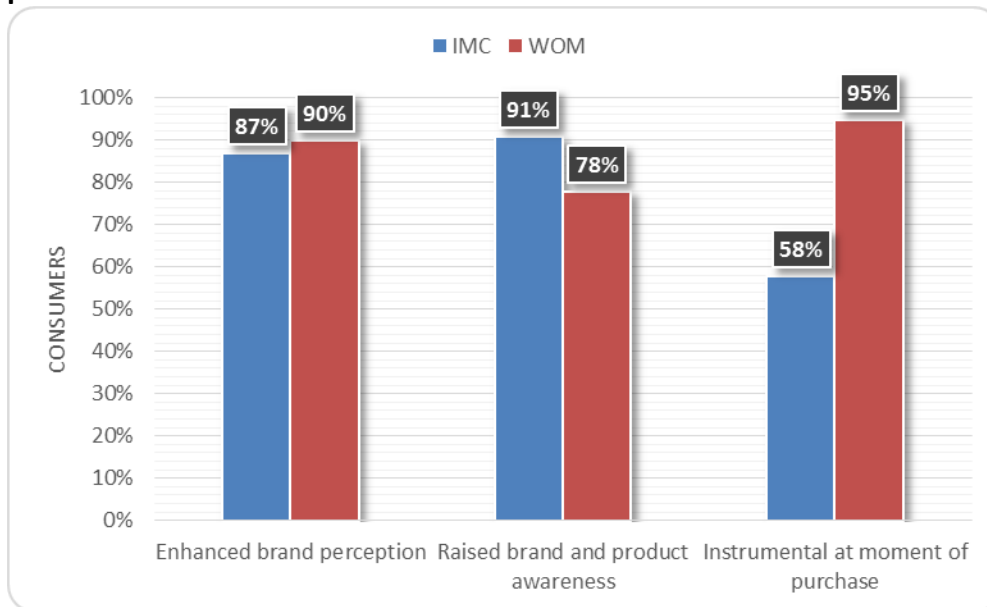
The primary objective of this study was to determine the effectiveness of WOM as part of an IMC strategy for Samsung mobile devices in South Africa. It is thus important to determine if Samsung's marketing efforts influence WOM, and if Samsung mobile device-related WOM influences South African consumers to purchase a Samsung mobile device. The target population was thus asked if Samsung's marketing communications have or had influenced them to actively seek WOM, and if WOM influenced their purchase decision.

The research shows that 65% of respondents were influenced to actively seek WOM as a result of Samsung's marketing communications (IMC). This shows that Samsung's IMC is driving WOM. It has already been shown that WOM is powerful and effective. Samsung should therefore attempt to drive as much WOM as possible in South Africa through an effective IMC strategy.

The research also shows that WOM influences the purchasing decisions of 90% of the target population, and that marketing communications ignites WOM for 65% of the target population. This is important information for Samsung because whilst 90% of the respondents stated that WOM influenced their purchase decision, 60% purchased Samsung mobile devices. This means that 30% purchased another brand of mobile device. There are too many unknown variables to understand why 30% purchased another brand, this may warrant further study. Some of the variables to consider in future studies are: PWOM and NWOM, brand preference, purchase intention, price, and stock availability.

The research also shows that 87% of the target population had an enhanced perception of the Samsung brand as a result of Samsung's marketing communication efforts, and that 90% had an enhanced perception as a result of WOM. A positive statistic for Samsung Mobile is that 91% of participants indicated that Samsung intensive IMC efforts increase brand awareness. An interesting observation is that whilst IMC enhances brand perception, sparks discussions, and increases awareness, 58% of consumers said it was instrumental at moment of purchase as opposed to WOM being instrumental at moment of purchase for 95% of consumers.

**Figure 3 – Impact of IMC and WOM on brand perception, product awareness and moment of purchase**



Important conclusions that address the primary objective of this study can be drawn from these findings:

- Samsung’s IMC efforts and WOM enhance their brand perception to a similar degree, with IMC enhancing brand perception for 87% of consumers, and WOM for 90% of consumers. It was surprising to note that WOM enhanced brand perception more than IMC. This was an unexpected result and suggests that WOM’s influence is pervasive throughout the decision-making process. Samsung should determine which type of WOMM is appropriate for each phase of the decision-making process.
- Samsung’s marketing communications spark discussions for 65% of South African consumers, indicating that IMC is effective and acts as a catalyst for WOM. WOM in turn influenced the purchasing decision of 90% of consumers. It can thus be concluded that WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy for Samsung mobile devices in South Africa because of its influence on the purchase decision.
- Samsung’s marketing communications for their mobile devices in South Africa raises brand awareness in a higher percentage of consumers than does WOM. IMC raised brand or product awareness for 91% of consumers, whilst WOM raised awareness for 78% of consumers. This indicates that Samsung’s IMC strategy is useful in bringing brand and product awareness to consumers, and that it is more effective than WOM in this area. However, it should be noted that whilst IMC was more effective at raising awareness, WOM was still effective and played an important role.
- The influence of Samsung’s IMC efforts on the consumer decision-making process dwindles towards the moment of purchase. Samsung-related WOM influences 95% of consumers at moment of purchase, suggesting to Samsung that WOM is a force to be reckoned with in an IMC strategy. Samsung should attempt to drive as much PWOM as

possible through their marketing efforts and high quality products because WOM drives sales. It can be concluded that WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy and it is important for Samsung to include WOM in their IMC strategy.

It is clear that for Samsung, WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy for its mobile devices in South Africa. This was shown from a number of perspectives – the details of which were described in this section:

- IMC and WOM raise brand or product awareness and enhance brand perception.
- Samsung's IMC stimulates WOM.
- WOM influences purchasing decisions for Samsung mobile devices.
- WOM is a deciding factor in the purchasing decisions of the majority of consumers.

WOM is most effective at influencing consumers' purchase decisions, and it was shown that other areas where WOM was effective included increased brand awareness and enhanced brand perception. WOM is powerful and effective. It is important for Samsung to integrate WOM into their IMC strategy. Whilst it is clear that Samsung should continue to drive WOM within their IMC strategy for mobile devices, they should not lose focus on customer satisfaction by providing superior service and consistently good product quality.

#### **KEY FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS**

- South African consumers engage in WOM every day, either by actively seeking WOM or by inadvertently receiving WOM in casual conversation. WOM can be positive or negative. Consumers tend to engage more in PWOM than NWOM. The greatest WOM influence is attributed to family and friends.
- South African consumers trust WOM more than any other form of advertising. However, South African consumers do also trust other forms of advertising. This finding indicates that both WOM and IMC are still important and relevant today.
- WOM is influential throughout the consumer decision-making process. IMC is also influential, but WOM is more influential – particularly at the moment of purchase.
- IMC is a catalyst for WOM, and WOM influences the purchasing decisions of the majority of consumers. Samsung should integrate WOM into future IMC strategies for their mobile devices in South Africa.
- WOM contributes to consumers' memory retention of marketing communications. By integrated WOM into their IMC strategies, Samsung will ensure that South African consumers remember their marketing messages for a longer period of time.
- WOMM is important to drive WOM. Samsung should focus their efforts on WOMM as well as traditional marketing communications in an attempt to drive more WOM.
- This study focused on Samsung because Samsung is a market leader in IMC. It was important to study the effectiveness of WOM within an IMC strategy in order to better understand the reciprocal relationship and enhance future marketing strategies. Samsung provided a practical, South African foundation for this study, thereby making the findings relevant to the South African market for mobile devices.
- This study collected data from consumers in the 20-29 and 30-49 age brackets. This means that age groups outside of this target population were not considered in this study. Other age groups, particularly the Boomers, should form the topic of future research, as Boomers are still economically active in the South African workforce.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OTHER COMPANIES**

WOM is one of the most important considerations for companies today. An IMC strategy must include WOM as a key communication tool. Companies need to start including WOMM in their IMC strategies. Recommendations include:

- IMC is effective in terms of raising brand and product awareness, enhancing brand perceptions, and driving sales – companies should not undermine the importance of an effective IMC strategy.
- An effective IMC strategy includes WOMM and WOM. IMC and WOM both impact the consumer decision-making process at each phase. Companies should understand this impact and design marketing communications and WOMM appropriate to each phase.
- IMC creates expectations. WOM creates expectations. This puts pressure on companies to deliver consistently good products or services, and also to deliver consistently good marketing communications – companies cannot afford to drop brand or product standards in the eyes of consumers. WOM should be backed by superior after sales service and product quality.
- IMC has a limited lifespan in the minds of consumers – WOM prolongs IMC efforts. It is thus important to drive WOM in order to gain maximum benefit from IMC efforts.
- WOMM and WOM cannot be ignored. It is critical to include them in an IMC strategy.

## **IMPORTANCE OF THIS STUDY**

This study is important to investigate WOM as advertising tool in an IMC campaign is relevant and effective as part of an IMC strategy for mobile devices in South Africa. The research and survey results clearly answered this objective using Samsung as the practical cast study. It was concluded that WOM is in fact effective as part of an IMC strategy for Samsung mobile phones in South Africa. The study did not only consider the effectiveness of WOM, but also the effectiveness of IMC on its own, as well as the effectiveness of IMC at driving WOM. It also considered the types of WOMM available to marketers to drive WOM as well as the causes of WOM. This study thus provides an in-depth analysis, review and findings related to IMC, WOM, WOMM, the influence of WOM during the consumer decision-making process, and the use of WOM within an IMC strategy.

## **FUTURE FIELDS OF RESEARCH**

This study focused primarily on how WOM influences consumers. WOM and IMC is a large and well-studied area of marketing, however, there are still many aspects that are open to future research, and these include:

- To analyse how WOM impacts consumers that were already planning to purchase a product, as opposed to consumers who have no intention of purchasing the product.
- To analyse the individual effects of PWOM and NWOM in an IMC strategy.

## **REFLECTION**

The primary objective of this study was to investigate WOM as advertising tool in an IMC campaign for Samsung mobile devices in South Africa.

This objective is achieved by showing that:



WOM is powerful and effective, and that consumers trust WOM more than any other form of marketing communication. This study also showed that IMC is effective. WOM and IMC are both relevant and effective today, and the target population continue to engage in WOM. The literature review indicated that IMC stimulates WOM, that WOM is influential throughout the consumer decision-making process, and that WOM contributes positively to consumers' memory retention of marketers IMC efforts. It was also shown that WOM is the most influential factor at the moment of purchase, thereby driving sales. This study therefore concluded that WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy for Samsung mobile devices in South Africa because it positively impacts IMC efforts, increases brand awareness, enhances brand perception, influences purchasing decisions, and drives sales.

The secondary objectives of this study were:

- To identify the antecedents of WOM for the receiver of WOM communication for Samsung mobile devices in South Africa.
- To determine how WOM influences the consumer decision-making process for Samsung mobile devices in South Africa.
- To identify the types of WOMM available to drive WOM for Samsung mobile devices in South Africa.

These objectives are achieved by finding and showing that:

- The causes of WOM for the receiver of the communication are: the search for information, mitigation of perceived risk, and the strength of ties. These causes are applicable to South African consumers and Samsung can learn from them.
- WOM has an influence at each phase of the consumer decision-making process. It raises awareness, it makes a valuable contribution in the information search and evaluation of alternatives phases because of its high level of implicit trust, and it is the most influential factor in the purchase decision. WOM was also shown to be highly influential in the post-purchase evaluation phase.
- There are at least 8 types of WOMM available to Samsung to drive WOM for their mobile devices in South Africa. The types of WOMM identified were: Conversation marketing, evangelist marketing, viral marketing, grassroots marketing (also known as guerrilla marketing), buzz marketing, community marketing, influencer marketing, and cause marketing.

At the start of this study it was not clear if WOM was effective as part of an IMC strategy. The role of WOM in an IMC strategy was also unclear. The question was asked whether WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy, using Samsung mobile devices in South Africa as the practical case study.

Through detailed research it can be concluded that WOM is powerful and effective, and that WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy for mobile devices. The majority of consumers indicated that they engage in WOM, trust WOM more than any other form of marketing communication, remember marketing communications for a longer period of time if they have engaged in WOM, that both IMC and WOM increase awareness, enhance brand perception and influence the consumer decision-making process, and that WOM is the most influential factor in the purchase decision, thereby driving sales.

It is clear that WOM is effective as part of an IMC strategy. Marketers should therefore include WOM as part of their IMC strategies and use the different types of WOMM to drive more WOM.

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