

# Business-to-Business Word-of-Mouth Promotion: A Thorough Examination and Additional Research

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## Abstract

*This study's main goal is to evaluate and assess the state of WOM research in the context of business-to-business transactions. It also seeks to pinpoint fresh, potential avenues for this field of study in the future. The researchers gathered 36 publications about B2B WOM in order to do a systematic review. These papers were examined to assess the state of the literature and pinpoint original discoveries related to business-to-business research. This study provides a systematic review of word-of-mouth (WOM) research within business-to-business (B2B) transactions, aiming to evaluate the current literature and uncover future research opportunities. WOM plays a critical role in B2B settings, where peer recommendations and reputational insights significantly influence purchasing decisions, relationship building, and trust. Analyzing 36 relevant publications, this review synthesizes key themes, theories, and findings in the field, including factors driving B2B WOM and its impact on business relationships. Additionally, the study highlights gaps and underexplored areas, proposing potential research avenues to enhance the understanding of B2B WOM. By illuminating these insights, this study contributes both to academic knowledge and practical applications, guiding companies in utilizing WOM to strengthen B2B marketing and competitive positioning.*

**Keyword:** Recommendation, citation, referral, Word-of-Mouth, systematic review

## INTRODUCTION

### Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) marketing is a potent phenomenon that involves people telling others about their positive experiences and recommendations regarding a product or service. WOM marketing consists of customer discussions in which people discuss a certain company, good, or service. It is a type of marketing that often happens organically, driven by positive customer experiences. Word-of-Mouth (WOM) is a powerful phenomenon in marketing. It refers to the informal conversation between individuals about products, services, or brands. Unlike traditional advertising, WOM relies on individual experiences and recommendations. Positive WOM can significantly impact consumer behavior, influence purchase decisions, and build brand loyalty. Whether it is a friend recommending a restaurant or an online review praising a new gadget, WOM plays a crucial role in shaping our choices. What is seen nowadays, WOM communication plays and influential rather than communication through other sources. Other sources may be advertisements in mass and social media and recommendations from editorial section of newspapers and magazines (Bambauer-Sachse et.al., 2011). WOM is the verbal exchange of information, even if it is as basic as sharing a quote with someone (Basri et al., 2016). WOM can be used normally like discussing between two people. Vividness and usefulness are the two characteristics of WOM. Body language, eye contact, and the sender's empathy are more important indicators of word-of-mouth (WOM)

propagation than the content or the degree of recommendation-conveying intent. Positive word-of-mouth (WOM) communication is seven (7) times more effective than newspaper and magazine ads, four (4) times more effective than personal selling, and two (2) times more effective than radio ads when it comes to influencing people, according to earlier research by other researchers. A consumer who changes brands. Additionally, word-of-mouth (WOM) allows customers to assess the predicted performance outcome of goods and services by using information from other products or services. They then create their own expectations for the products and services based on this knowledge (Basri et al., 2016).

### Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

EWOM, often referred to as online word-of-mouth, plays a pivotal role in today's interconnected digital landscape. EWOM refers to consumer's information sharing and exchange about a product or company via the Internet, Internet media, and mobile communication. It encompasses various formats, including product review sites, emails, discussion boards, user-generated content and online communities. eWOM encompasses consumers' information sharing and exchange about a product or company via the Internet, social media, and mobile communication. It involves both positive and negative statements made by potential, actual, or former customers, which are disseminated widely online<sup>1</sup>. Online reviews, often shared through platforms like social media, websites, and forums, serve as a form of eWOM. Consumers actively seek out these reviews before making purchase decisions. For restaurants and hotels, online reviews are particularly influential. Consumers mostly refer to online reviews as one of the primary sources of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communications before making a purchase. According to the Bright Local poll, 93% of consumers look up online reviews before making a purchase (Hou, T, et, al, 2019). Furthermore, 85% of buyers place an equal amount of trust in reviews and personal recommendations from relatives or friends. The study also made clear how vital it is for customers to read internet reviews before booking a hotel or restaurant. Online evaluations are becoming a crucial source of strategic information for businesses looking to understand their present position and competitive advantages, in addition to serving as a reference for customers making purchasing decisions. The study also revealed that customers place a great deal of importance on internet reviews for hotels and restaurants. A significant body of research examines how various features of internet reviews—like their usefulness,

credibility, professionalism, and information quality—affect consumers' intentions to make purchases. Nowadays social influencers are also a new source of eWOM. influencers, especially micro-influencers, play a crucial role in disseminating eWOM. They are the individuals with a smaller but highly engaged following on social media. Among micro-influencers, influencer market mavens have the highest impact on consumer engagement. Their eWOM messages influence purchase decisions and increase consumer participation. When consumers perceive online reviews as helpful, they are more likely to trust the information provided. Positive reviews that offer practical insights and address specific concerns can significantly influence purchase intentions. Credible eWOM sources (such as verified buyers or experts) carry more weight. Consumers tend to rely on reviews from trustworthy individuals or platforms. High credibility enhances the impact of eWOM on purchase decisions. The quality of information in reviews matters. Accurate, detailed, and relevant content helps consumers make informed choices. Well-written reviews that highlight product features, benefits, and drawbacks can sway purchase intentions. Professionalism refers to the tone, language, and overall presentation of eWOM. Reviews written in a respectful, objective manner are more likely to influence consumers positively. Unprofessional or biased content may have the opposite effect.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, **Hanaysha (2021)** and her colleagues attempted to examine the effects of social media marketing, corporate social responsibility, and price promotion on word-of-mouth within the fast-food industry in Malaysia's east coast region. Partial least squares research indicates that social media marketing and corporate social responsibility have a significant positive impact on customers' word-of-mouth. Additionally, the results demonstrated that price promotions boost word-of-mouth. Consumer-brand identification has drawn a lot of attention recently from academics and industry professionals.

**Woratschek (2017)** claims that this study is the first to explicitly explore the implications of the identification concept for price management as well as to integrate factors from the branding, relationship marketing, and behavioral pricing domains—all of which have been separately identified as particularly significant determinants of marketing outcomes. To get broad findings, the model was empirically tested using 1443 respondents from a representative customer panel and 10

service/product brands. Word-of-mouth and loyalty are significantly impacted by pricing perception, identification, and satisfaction, according to the research in this study by Woratschek (2017). It was also found that there are substantial relationships between the constructs: pricing image is positively impacted by identification, which also increases pleasure. This study shows the relative importance of three different client acquisition and retention techniques, which helps managers choose the best combination of branding, price, and relationship marketing.

The authors (Liao, 2022) create a paradigm to comprehend how customer value and B2B word-of-mouth affect supplier sales success. A selection of 220 Alibaba.com suppliers was used to evaluate this model using structural equation modeling. According to Liao (2022), the number of transactions and quotations are positively impacted by the volume and valence of B2B WOM, respectively. Additionally, the relationship between transaction volume and operational performance is mediated by B2B WOM volume. The correlations between reaction time and the volume of quotes and transactions are mediated by response rate.

**Makkonen (2014)** This article's goal is to clarify how experience-based data, which can aid in the purchase process, can be obtained from a variety of business network sources, including word-of-mouth, reputation, and customer references. The findings demonstrate the distinct roles that references, word-of-mouth, collegial advising networks, and reputation all play in complex buying. Additionally, they suggest that experience-based data might offer perception into vendors, offerings, and the environment of complex purchasing as a means of problem-solving. This study provides new insight into how customers acquire and use experience-based knowledge to tackle difficult purchasing problems. As sources of experience-based information, it combines word-of-mouth, reputation, collegial social networks, and references. It also identifies information embedded in those means and investigates how the means and information are used throughout the complex purchasing process.

**(Kikumori, 2023)** Reviewing and evaluating the state of word-of-mouth (WOM) research in connection to business-to-business (B2B) contacts is the aim of this study. Business-to-business (B2B) marketing relies heavily on word-of-mouth (WOM), according to academics and industry experts. According to findings from the B2C WOM literature, WOM significantly affects a company's success; nevertheless, managers should not attempt to extrapolate B2C research to the B2B sector.

The author (Kim, 2014) aims to verify the factors that influence the quality of industrial buyer-based relationships: dynamic capability and word-of-mouth (WOM) information. She also aims to determine how these factors affect the continuity of relationships in business-to-business (B2B) transactions. Word-of-mouth (WOM) information influences consumer behavior in business-to-business and business-to-customer contacts. However, because word-of-mouth (WOM) happens informally, it is not given as much weight in business-to-business transactions. According to a study that examined the impact of relationship quality on follow-up activities and relationship continuity, industrial consumers' perceptions of relationship quality and continuity are influenced by WOM expertise and dynamic capability.

The purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of the role that Customer Perceived Value (CPV) plays in the growth of word-of-mouth (WOM) and loyalty in business-to-business (B2B) contexts. It investigated whether clients valued service providers with different causes and effects. The participants used software services for accounting, quality control, and customer relationship management (CRM) applications, among other organizational applications. The results show that business-to-business marketing requires CPV as a key element. According to the current study, CPV influences WOM and customer loyalty and fosters an environment in which clients are inclined to think about keeping their connections with the company and serving as its ambassadors among their peers and other companies. (Norouzi, 2012).

The authors of this study (Mishra, 2021) examined electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) studies using bibliometric analysis and systematic review. Bad word-of-mouth, customer behavior and trust, social media word-of-mouth, online reviews and ratings, brand loyalty, social media, service failure and recovery, corporate social responsibility, viral marketing and user-generated content, service quality, and services marketing are some of the most popular topics in the industry. This study examines the field of electronic word-of-mouth using bibliometric analysis. The results of the performance analysis show a steady increase in publications. The majority of journals originated in North America and Europe. These two trends appear to have coincided with the expansion of social media and the Internet, which has increased the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM).

In order to explore and discover new potential future opportunities, Mai's (2023) study attempts to assess and analyze the current state of word-of-mouth (WOM)

research in the business-to-business (B2B) context. Three topics emerged from this thematic analysis of the articles: reference marketing, WOM generation, and WOM consumption. The authors give the research findings under each area that are specific to business-to-business (B2B) research and distinct from business-to-consumer (B2C) WOM research. A number of research questions are brought up by this work that demand more study in the future.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- Examine the state of B2B WOM research at the moment.
- Determine the main conclusions and patterns.
- Assess the gaps in the research.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study investigates B2B WOM research using a descriptive research design. Perform a thorough literature search using terms such as "B2B WOM," "word-of-mouth in business-to-business," "B2B marketing," etc. throughout pertinent academic databases (such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar). Set inclusion and exclusion criteria to filter publications that specifically focus on B2B WOM. Criteria could include publication year, type (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles), language, and relevance to B2B WOM. Collect a representative sample of publications, ultimately narrowing down to 36 relevant studies. Record key information, such as study objectives, research methods, sample sizes, main findings, theoretical frameworks, and any limitations noted by the authors. Perform a content analysis on the selected publications, focusing on identifying common themes, theories, methodologies, and findings relevant to B2B WOM. Categorize these findings into different themes or categories, such as factors influencing WOM in B2B, measurement approaches, or implications for B2B relationships.

### FINDINGS

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication, defined as the exchange of information and recommendations between individuals, has long been recognized as a powerful influence on consumer behavior. However, while much attention has been given to WOM in business-to-consumer (B2C) contexts, comparatively less research has focused on its role in business-to-business (B2B) settings. WOM in B2B transactions involves unique dynamics, as it typically occurs between businesses rather than individual consumers, impacting decision-makers within companies.

This form of WOM can be instrumental in building trust, shaping reputation, and driving purchasing decisions, particularly in high-stakes environments where products and services are complex, and relationships are built on credibility and long-term partnerships.

In recent years, the importance of WOM in B2B markets has grown due to the increasing complexity of business transactions and the heightened value placed on peer recommendations and expert insights. As a result, a deeper understanding of B2B WOM could offer substantial benefits for companies looking to improve customer acquisition, enhance relationship management, and create competitive advantages. Despite these potential benefits, existing research on B2B WOM remains fragmented, with limited exploration of its specific drivers, impacts, and measurement approaches.

The primary objective of this study is to systematically review and evaluate the current state of B2B WOM research, examining 36 key publications that contribute to this field. Through this review, the study aims to assess the breadth and depth of current B2B WOM research, identify common themes and patterns, and highlight unique insights specific to B2B transactions. Additionally, this review seeks to uncover gaps within the literature, offering a foundation for future research by proposing potential avenues to expand and deepen the understanding of B2B WOM. Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication refers to how people share information and recommendations with each other. It's a powerful factor in influencing how consumers make decisions. While a lot of research has focused on WOM in situations where businesses sell to consumers (B2C), there hasn't been as much attention given to its role in business-to-business (B2B) contexts. In B2B, WOM occurs between businesses and affects decision-makers within those companies. This type of communication is crucial for building trust, establishing a good reputation, and influencing purchasing decisions, especially in complex situations where products and services require credibility and long-term relationships.

Recently, WOM has become even more important in B2B markets because business transactions are becoming more complicated and the value of recommendations from peers and experts has increased. Understanding WOM in this context can help companies improve how they attract customers, manage relationships, and gain a competitive edge. However, research on B2B WOM is still not very comprehensive, with little exploration of what drives it, how it impacts businesses, and how to measure it.



The main goal of this study is to review and analyze the existing research on B2B WOM by looking at 36 important publications in this area. The study aims to provide a clearer picture of what is currently known about B2B WOM, identify common themes, and reveal unique insights specific to B2B interactions. It also seeks to identify gaps in the research, paving the way for future studies that can further enhance the understanding of B2B WOM.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Ultimately, this study aspires to contribute to the academic and practical understanding of WOM in B2B contexts, enabling businesses to make more informed decisions and adopt strategies that leverage WOM as a powerful tool in their marketing efforts. By shedding light on the current landscape and identifying future research directions, this study seeks to bridge the gap in B2B WOM knowledge, paving the way for further exploration in this impactful field of study. Word-of-mouth, whether face-to-face or electronic, plays a key part in B2B marketing. It has a greater effect on sales than both personal selling and advertising. This study clarifies the distinctive features of B2B WOM by combining previous studies, and it stimulates more investigation in this area.

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