



# A Study of Determinants Affecting The Role of Word of Mouth in Image Building of Politicians

## KEYWORDS

Word of Mouth, Politicians, Youth

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## ABSTRACT

*Sharing through storytelling is a very common and old practice and trusted too. WOM has its roots in storytelling in our culture. Politician's image is no-doubt affected by the phenomenon in society. People talk, opine, discuss and then elect their leader; young mind being more irrational can more easily get affected by the waves of thought. The present study explored the determinants affecting the role of word of mouth in image building of politicians. Population under study contains youth from age group 18-30. Youth 18+ was taken, as at the age of 18 a person gets a right to vote. A sample of 200 such respondents is interviewed. The first four determinants of WOM which affect the image of politicians are, that, WOM is an effective tool, image building tool, long lasting tool due to peer influence and it is a perception building tool.*

## Introduction

Word of mouth (WOM) remains the most powerful mode of communication in human life. WOM is a significant force in the marketplace too. Research across disciplines including marketing, sociology, and economics demonstrates that WOM affects consumer reach, competitive pricing, diffusion rates, and the formation of social movements. The Internet and social media has added important dimensions to this timeless concept: unprecedented scalability and speed of diffusion. A politician is a person who is involved in influencing public policy. This includes people who hold decision-making positions in government, and people who seek those positions, whether by means of election, appointment or inheritance. Politician's image is no-doubt affected by the phenomenon in society. People talk, opine, discuss and then elect their leader; young mind being more irrational can more easily get affected by the waves of thought. The change is evident in the way campaign being done by political parties. WOM has played role in general elections and influenced politician's image.

## Literature Review

Thorsten et. Al (2004) illustrated Web-based consumer opinion platforms, enables customers to share their opinions with other consumers. They suggested that consumers' desire for social interaction, their concern for other consumers, and the potential to enhance their own self-worth are the primary factors leading to eWOM behavior. eWOM providers can be grouped based on what motivates their behavior, suggesting that firms may need to develop different strategies for encouraging eWOM behavior among their users. Andrea and Nan (2007) investigated the role of balance and consistency in inter-consumer communication, i.e. WOM, through an analysis of consumers' cognitive networks or "signed digraphs" representing their WOM experiences. Results indicate that digraphs associated with recalled WOM experiences are more balanced than would be the case if they were generated by chance, and that this balance implicates not just disseminators' satisfaction with the experience, but also their future WOM propensities. Thorsten et.al. (2010) introduced a new "pin-ball" framework of new media's impact on relationships with customers and identified key new media phenomena which companies should take into account when managing their relationships with customers. They identify chal-

lenges, which relate to (a) the understanding of consumer behavior, (b) the use of new media to successfully manage customer interactions, and (c) the effective measurement of customers' activities and outcomes. Aharony (2012) studied how three political leaders – the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu; the Prime Minister of Britain, David Cameron; and the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama – communicate through Twitter. The work presents an analysis of tweets produced between August and October 2010 by three political leaders, concluding that US President tweets more than the other leaders, with the British Prime Minister tweeting the least, and that all three leaders use Twitter for both transparency and outreach. Hodeghatta and Sahney (2016) in the study indicated that the users in USA, Canada and UK, tweet more than the other countries, USA and UK being the highest in tweets followed by the Canada. On the other hand, the number of tweets in Australia, India and South Africa are low with New Zealand being the lowest of all the countries. This indicates that different countries' users have different social media behaviour. Some countries use social media to communicate about their experience more than in some other country. However, consumers from all over the world are using Twitter to express their views openly and freely. This study of literature suggests that WOM affect consumer behaviour differently and is used by marketer in significantly different manner.

## Methodology

It is Non-disguised exploratory study. Convenience sampling method with structured questionnaire is used for data collection. Data from respondents is collected on a 5 point Likert Scale. Population under study contains youth from age group 18-30. Youth 18+ was taken, as at the age of 18 a person gets a right to vote. A sample of 200 such respondents is interviewed and their responses are collected and analyzed.

## Objective

To study determinants affecting the role of WOM in image building of politicians among youth

## Results and Discussions

The findings of the study are as follows:

The sample distribution of two age groups 18-24 and 25-30 is 50% respectively. Factor Analysis was applied on data to determine the factors affecting the role of WOM in image building of politicians.

#### KMO and Bartlett's Test

The Kaiser value is 0.598, which shows factor analysis is appropriate for this data. Bartlett's test with value 0.000 is also signifying that factor analysis is suitable for the data.

#### Principal Component Analysis

A Principal component analysis with varimax rotation was applied to the data collected. Nine factors were extracted by factor analysis with Eigen values more than one (1) explaining 61.424% variance. Factor 1 accounted for 10.714% of variance, factor 2 for 9.473, factor 3 for 8.994%, and factor 4 for 6.587%, factor 5 for 6.113% and factor 6 for 5.525% of the variance. The rest three factors accounted for 13.5% variance. When we studied all the nine factors and named them, it was realized that the factors are too dispersed to understand the role of WOM publicity in image building of politicians amongst youth. Thus the study was repeated with only six factors, which are expressing together 47.406% variance. Bhati, Pandey and Kalwani (2013) in their study extracted 4 factors expressing 50% variance and Frewer, Howard and Shepherd (1998) in their study considered only two factors.

The six determinants which emerged from factor analysis affecting the role of WOM in Image building of Politicians amongst Youth are presented here. The first determinant is interpreted as Effective Tool. Items which loaded positively here are essential medium of information (.501), information doesn't find in other medium (.622), effective because done by my friend (.694), unpaid (.654), detailed (.572), Analysed form of information (.565). The second determinant is interpreted as image building tool. Items which loaded positively on determinant two include belief of people (.466), interactive medium (.613), improves point of view (.509), important in attitude formation (.583), affects image (.437), helps in image building (.437). The third determinant of WOM which influenced politician's image is interpreted as Long Lasting Tool due to Peer Influence. Items loaded positively in third factor are Friends and peers influence more about politicians (.697), People have long lasting impact (.642), People pay greater attention (.707) and Become problem for entire political parties (.504). The fourth determinant is interpreted as Perception Building Tool. The positively loaded items are as follows – Changes Reputation (.727), Helps in making perceptions (.670). The fifth determinant is interpreted as Recommendation Tool i.e. WOM is effective as a recommendation tool. Items which loaded positively here are - Recommendation helps me to understand personality (.541), Rely more on personal communication (.662). The last determinant forming opinion about politicians is interpreted as Trust Worthy Tool. The positively loaded items are as follows – Trust more on others in decision making (.764), Believe in WOM (.479) and Leading form of communication (.517).

#### Discussions

The determinants emerge from the study are inherent to the nature of WOM. An attempt was made to understand that which determinant affect politician's image more amongst youth and naming was done. WOM is an effective tool, came out as the first determinant of WOM in image building of politicians, as there is no market power behind WOM. The basic nature of WOM, that's being un-

paid and source awareness has made it an effective tool. The youth now-a-days uses lot of internet and social media, so is the reason it is becoming very effective. WOM is an image building tool; it helps in improving point of view about any product, person or concept. Being an interactive medium it contributes significantly to attitude formation as compared to other IMC tools. Third determinant is WOM is long lasting tool due to peer influence. Peer influence plays a significant role in our life, in all kinds of decisions. We don't want to feel ashamed or cheated after buying something or taking a decision, and hence consult family or friends. This influence works maximum among youth, so this came out as important factor.

Perception building and recommendation are respectively fourth and fifth features of WOM in image building of politicians. The study reveals that WOM is better way of creation of understanding regarding something. A recommendation by an influential person can easily change the perception, so it happens with youth. A family member, a friend, or in today's era a blog writer influences. People are conversing about a product on social media and people are sharing information about a product on social media (Hodeghatta and Sahney 2016). Youth feel by WOM they can understand the person and personalities better by interactions. Viral communication strengthens the process. Source credibility makes WOM a trust worthy tool.

#### Conclusions

WOM is as old as society itself. Advent of internet has made WOM a stronger and faster mode of communication. In any society, youth speed up the process of communication, they accept any idea first. Youth is also a big consumer of social media and hence WOM has come out as an important tool for image building amongst youth. Youth interact a lot with peers and trust factor is very high in this age. Decision is taken in this age "as my friend say and what my friend do". Hence politician's image is also affected by WOM.

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