

# Word of Mouth Marketing has changed its game plan, but not its clout

 By Pieter Groenewald

16 May 2022

With the public influence of online as an atomic conduit of marketing, Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM) is no longer reserved for the offline arena. Digital integration has made online an adrenalised distribution channel that bullet-trains references, commodities, recommendations and reviews through communities and economies.



Source: [www.pexels.com](http://www.pexels.com)

Enter the rise of momfluencers, product reviewers, micro and macro influencers - all of which are now helping to fuel the world's 21st Century economy – through their personal and trusted experiences.

Let's look at the facts. Data reported on [Review42.com](http://Review42.com) lists that 92% of consumers trust recommendations from friends; and that word-of-mouth marketing brings in five times more sales than paid media; with 74% of consumers identifying word-of-mouth as a critical influencing factor in their purchasing decision.

If we consider a case in point - according to [Forbes.com](http://Forbes.com): 83% of new moms are millennials, of which 46% trust the recommendation of other parents above any other channels, of which, on average, these moms are spending over eight hours online primarily searching or browsing for parenting advice – we can't help but tip our hats to the explosive possibility of word-of-mouth marketing via online channels.

And guess what Captains, you need to be there!

We're not saying get rid of the classic parking lot moms nor the old school golf game, where many a business lead has been caught in the name of 'I know a guy that' or 'you should try' recommendations – we're saying pay attention to where these recommendations are now being explored, discovered and 'shared' – at an alarmingly rapid rate.



## Reality reimagined, enter the virtual influencer

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It's not that WOMM requires a comeback, it's that its already here – it always has been – only that now, it shares its voice with an online buzz and has reshaped itself to be stronger, bolder, quicker and more impactful in the online amphitheatre. The difference between then and now? Is the **how**.

In a world that increasingly leans towards the digital, automation, tools, views, and clicks, we're seeing growing emphasis placed on the importance of word-of-mouth marketing online as a primary component of e-commerce success.

Here are three key factors around why word-of-mouth marketing – online and offline - is an avenue well worth investing in:

- **The Age of Influence**

Traditionally, the power of word-of-mouth marketing has been believed to belong firmly in the realm of celebrity. The mistaken perception is that millions of followers mean best bang for your buck when partnering with people to spread the word about your product. But there's increasing evidence to demonstrate that this is not the case.



## Influencer marketing dynamics are shifting

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Currently, we're seeing a larger band of potential word-of-mouth 'advertisees', which means more people are putting their degree of influence – both big and small – to work, sharing recommendations and tips to the benefit of the brands they work with.

It's also worth noting that brands now tend to utilise micro-influencers and nano-influencers more regularly, than celebrities and mega-influencers – and for good reason, since their content receives higher engagement, which arguably delivers a more meaningful ROI at the end of the day.

- **Power to the People**

Long gone are the days when creative careers were limited to those who were fortunate – and funded – enough to make a name for themselves on the big screens or sports fields. Now, we're seeing ordinary people amass millions of followers through the combination of natural talent, creative flair, and dynamic tech platforms engineered to facilitate the widespread consumption of entertaining content.

Accessible platforms that empower users to craft unique content are producing an entirely new generation of entrepreneurs (with big and small audiences) who put their time online to work earning money in ways we've never seen before.

- **The Power of Trust**

There's no denying that the Internet of Things has rapidly become a space in which an array of mixed-quality (and often terribly poor quality) information is available with just a few clicks. To this end, people with smaller, more engaged online communities tend to have a higher degree of trustworthiness in the eyes of their friends, family and followers.

In the world of word-of-mouth marketing, that trust is gold, and that's why brands are moving towards building relationships with real people, who lend their own authenticity and credibility to the brand as well.

With the exponential trend towards online WOMM as a hot contender in the eCommerce space, it would be a brand's foolery to overlook it as a key business investment strategy, within the next five years.

## ABOUT PIETER GROENEWALD

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