



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS
SCHOOL OF COMMERCE

**ANTECEDENTS OF WORD-OF-MOUTH COMMUNICATION: THE
CASE OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN ADDIS ABABA.**

BY:

HAILAY TADESSE

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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REQUIREMENT OF MASTERS OF ARTS DEGREE IN MARKETING
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ADVISOR: ANDINET WORKU (PhD)

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

MARCH , 2023

DECLARATION

I Hailay Tadesse, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, prepared under the guidance of Andinet Work (PhD). All sources of materials used for the thesis proposal have been duly acknowledged. I further confirm that the thesis has not been submitted either in part or in full to any other higher learning institution for the purpose of earning any degree.

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ENDORSEMENT

This thesis has been submitted to Addis Ababa University, college of Business and Economics, School of Commerce graduate Studies for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

WOMAV:	Word of mouth average
CUSATAV:	Customer satisfaction average
OPLEAV:	Opinion Leader average
REGUAV:	Reference Group average
MAMA AV:	Market maven ship average

Abstract

This study explored the antecedent's word-of-mouth communication practice at private schools in Addis Ababa. The research examined the effect of four variables, namely, being an opinion leader, reference group, customer satisfaction and being a market maven on antecedents of word-of-mouth communication. Based on purposive sampling, respondents were chosen and surveyed from three private schools in Addis Ababa. The researcher sent 384 questionnaires to the respondents, and has been collected 100% of the research questionnaires back. The results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that customer satisfaction has a significant effect on word-of-mouth communication. On the other hand, contrary to the researchers' expectation the other three variables, namely, being an opinion leader, reference group and being a market maven did not have a significant effect on word-of-mouth communication. Private Schools should note that customer satisfaction is significant antecedent of WOMC according to the participants of this study and should pay attention to enhance favorable WOM communication through reaching customer satisfaction. To the best of the researcher's knowledge this was the first study to examine antecedents WOM communication at private schools in Addis Ababa therefore, in an environment characterized by tough marketing competition as is the case with private schools, knowledge on what drives positive WOM communication is essential and affecting consumers' choice of service organizations.

Keywords: *Word of mouth Communication, Customer satisfaction, Opinion Leader, Reference Group, Market maven ship.*

UNIT ONE

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter provides the reader with a general introduction of the research area, word-of-mouth communication, and a review of previous literature. Based on the literature review, a problem discussion is presented, leading up to the aim of this research paper and how it can further our understanding in this field.

1.1 Background of the Study

“Word-of-mouth a simple definition of Word of mouth according to the Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association (2008a) is that it is “The act of consumers providing information to other consumers.” According to Kotler (2006, 408). WOM is considered as the most powerful, influential and persuasive force in the marketplace. WOM can originate from relatively small number of sources, while it can be timesaving and efficient, it is often negative according to Silverman (2001, 23-24)”.

“Word of mouth is the most important element that exists” according to Gordon Weaver, executive VP of marketing for Paramount Pictures, according to 1984 (Bayus, 1985, p.31). WOM is defined as verbal, person to person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial concerning a service according (Arndt, 1967 [2, p.3]. The WOM exists at the macro level of inquiry (flows of communication across groups) as well as the micro level (flows within dyads or small groups) Brown and Reingen, 1987 [13, p.350]

“People influence people. Nothing influences people more than recommendation from a trusted friend according to Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook CEO and Founder. “People trust people” According to Schuller (2015, pp. 48-50) it is not a new flash and probably as old as the human itself because it is human nature to communicate and exchange experiences.

Word of mouth is one of the ancient means of delivering information according to Dellarocas (2003) One of the earliest definitions was that put forward by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1966), who described it as the exchanging of marketing information between consumers in such a way that it plays a fundamental role in shaping their behavior and in changing attitudes toward products and

services. Other authors (e.g., Arndt, 1967) have suggested that WOM is a person-to-person communication tool, between a communicator and a receiver, who perceives the information about service as non-commercial. WOM is considered the most important information source in consumers' buying decisions according to (Litvin et al., 2008; Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012) and intended behavior. Some research indicates that consumers regard WOM as a much more reliable medium than traditional media (e.g., television, radio, print advertisements, etc.) (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). It is thus considered one of the most influential sources of information about products and services (Lee and Youn, 2009). Users generally trust other consumers more than sellers (Nieto et al., 2014). As a result, WOM can influence many receivers (Lau and Ng, 2001) and is viewed as a consumer-dominated marketing channel in which the senders are independent of the market, which lends them credibility (Brown et al., 2007). This independence makes WOM a more reliable and credible medium (Arndt, 1967; Lee and Youn, 2009).

consumers are always connected to each other and share experiences about services according to (Huete-Alcocer, 2017, pp.2-3; Barreto, 2014, p. 631; Carr and Hayes, 2014, pp.38-39; Daugherty and Hoffmann, 2014, pp. 82-83). However, it is still a natural phenomenon which occurs mostly offline through face-to-face conversations (Keller and Robinson, 2010, pp.1-12; Baker et al., 2016, p. 229; Fulgoni and Lipsman, 2015, p. 18).

According to (Steffes & Burgee, 2009; Sen & Lerman, 2007), WOM can be defined as; informal communication between consumers regarding the ownership, usage, experience or characteristics of service. According to (East et al., 2008), it is usually interactive, swift and lacking in commercial bias. According to some previous research, WOM is one of the most powerful forces in the consumer marketplace (Sen & Lerman, 2007; Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Compared to all other sources of information consumers are being exposed to, WOM is considered the most credible and it has a strong influence on consumers' attitudes (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Brown & Reingen, 1987). Furthermore, according to research conducted in the western has explored that wom has a significant impact on consumer purchase behavior (e.g., Richins & Root-Shaffer, 1988; Richins, 1983).

According to (Carl, 2006; Nyilasy, 2005, Arndt, 1967, p. 291) defining word of mouth (WOM) precisely, however, has proven difficult defines it as 'face-to-face communication about a brand,

product or service between people who are perceived as not having connections to a commercial entity'. Some forty years later, the American Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA), founded in 2005, defined word of mouth (WOM) very generally as 'the act of consumers providing information to other consumers' (WOMMA, 2008). Both definitions conceive of word of mouth (WOM) as natural (that is, noncommercial), inter-personal communication about brands, products or services that may be either positive or negative (WOMMA, 2008). In this sense, word of mouth marketing (WOMM) is seen as the type of marketing that specifically promotes natural interpersonal communication in the most diverse ways. WOMMA describes it as: 'Giving people a reason to talk about your products and services, and making it easier for that conversation to take place. It is the art and science of building active, mutually beneficial consumer-to-consumer and consumer-to-marketer communications' (WOMMA, 2008).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Word of mouth communication is becoming increasingly recognized as an important form of promotion, particularly within services environments, where credence qualities play a critical role in consumers' choices. In an environment in which there has been a reduction in consumer trust of both organizations and advertising, as well as a decrease in television advertising, word of mouth (WOM) offers a way to obtain a significant competitive advantage (International Word of Mouth Marketing Conference, 2005). Though, there is little evidence in Ethiopia's private schools to show the conditions in which WOM communication will be most effective in enhancing a receiver's perceptions or actions. And has been a matter of concern to many private schools and needs attention. It has also been observed that due to inadequate information and evidence of how word-of-mouth marketing will be effective in many private schools are likely not to achieve or meet their stated objectives and goals. The important role WOM communication plays has been long recognized by diffusion of innovation researchers (e.g., Ryan and Gross, 1943), and has been acknowledged as the most important communication source between consumers (Derbaix and Vanhamme, 2003). It is therefore clear from the foregoing that improper use of word-of-mouth marketing can ruin any business objective thereby affecting the overall target of school firms. There is a need for private schools to put in place

effectiveness of WOMM, that help to strive towards the achievement of schools' goals and objectives.

Pertaining to the study word-of-mouth communication at private schools in Addis Ababa, so far research has never been conducted towards the study area and unlike, not empirically justified how private schools practicing word-of-mouth communication. This shows that, the existing researches overlooked antecedents of word-of-mouth communication at private schools in Addis Ababa. Therefore, this paper seeks to fill these gaps and explore the antecedents that are likely to enhance the chances that receivers of positive word of mouth influenced by such information.

1.3. Research Questions

1.3.1. Main Research Question

Do antecedents of word of mouth have significant impact at private schools' goals and objectives?

1.3.2. Sub Research Questions

This study tried to address the research question of;

1. What is the effect of customer satisfaction on word-of-mouth communication?
2. What is the effect of opinion leaders on word-of-mouth communication?
3. What is the effect of reference group on word-of-mouth communication?
4. What is the effect of market maven on word-of-mouth communication?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. General objectives

The broad objective of this study is to examining the antecedents of word-of-mouth communication: the case of private schools in Addis Ababa.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The study has the following specific objectives which this thesis will work out:

1. To elaborate the effect of customer satisfaction on word-of-mouth communication.
2. To describe the effect of opinion leaders' word-of-mouth communication.

3. To elaborate the effect of reference group on word-of-mouth communication.
4. To elaborate the effect of maven on word-of-mouth communication.

1.5. Scope of the Study

This study laid emphasis on assessing the antecedents of word of mouth the case of private schools in Addis Ababa. This study laid emphasis on assessing the antecedents of word of mouth: the case of private schools in Addis Ababa. According to the perspective of Hovland (1998) WOM includes four dimensions, the communicator (sender), the stimuli (message), the receiver and the response(feedback) which all profit-making private schools demand it. Therefore, this study focused on investigating these dimensions of WOM positively relates to the firm's benefit. Time and financial constraints are also affected the concentration area of the research. Therefore, the study was limited to Addis Ababa as a majority of Antecedents of word-of-mouth philanthropic activities of the schools are being performed in the city by considered only the word-of-mouth activities which have done at three private schools in Addis Ababa. The study employed mixed research design with quantitative approach based on questionnaire survey and descriptive and inferential analysis, and for the measurement of WOMC the model modified and developed(adapted) by Kotler and Armstrong's consumer's buying model (2004: 198) was used. The four antecedents of WOMC surveyed in this paper, are customer satisfaction, Opinion leaders, reference group and market Maven.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study was intended to explore the antecedents of WOMC and examine if WOMC is worth appropriate practice by a profit-making firms like private schools. Now adays technology is advancing, Electronic WOM is enhancing, though still word of mouth is leading a creditable and trusted source of information for parents at private schools. Even if the issue of WOMC has been addressed during the last many years by many researchers from the glob, specific research has not been made which relates to business sectors like private Schools in Addis Ababa. Therefore, this study paid attention to private Schools in relation to the practice of WOMC at private schools and take measures in the context of antecedents of WOMC. The major significance of this study includes: Word of mouth marketing practice was found creditable and most trusted source of information to the business world. From practical perspective parents are becoming

more expectant of private schools spreading their service information through a means of WOMC to catch the attention of new customers as these largely rely on what existing customers say about the school and its services. For the other researchers it could also serve as reference and be useful to the academic community and who deal directly with the private schools with respect to the antecedents of word-of-mouth communication. Therefore, the study has importance to the private schools because at present the market competition is tough among themselves involves non-monetary factors as many private Schools offer similar services in the same market and the study of WOMC as tool of credible and trusted source of information is very essential. It will contribute to the development of goodwill and reputation of the private schools by creating positive image if it is properly implemented. In addition, marketing managers have identified that WOMC as strategic tool creates competition advantages for their market. Also, it will add to the knowledge and methodology of conducting research on the field: and it fills some part of the information gap of the issue to top management and external end users.

1.7. Definition of terms

In this study terms were defined conceptually (operationally) and specified the nature of definition in convenient way for the community and other researchers. As follows:

1.7.1. Customer Satisfaction:

According to Phillip Kotler customer satisfaction is: as individuals feeling of pleasure or disappointment, which resulted from comparing a service's perceived outcome against their expectation. Customer satisfaction is among the most essential marketing performance and most measured by companies. Indeed, as per Ambler (2003)

1.7.2. Opinion Leaders:

According to (Berelson et al., 1954), Opinion leaders are trusted and informed people who exist in virtually all primary groups, who are the 'models' for opinion within their group, who listen and read in the media, and who then pass on information and influence to their circle of relatives, friends and acquaintances. According to (Weimann, 1991) perspective opinion leaders point out, is that these influential are usually elitists, not spread throughout the community as the old theory suggested that the influential are a subsection of the opinion leaders.

1.7.3. Reference groups

According to (Engel et al., 1993, and Hawkins et al., 2004), “not only provide standards and values that can become determining perspective of how a person thinks and behaves and but also influence a wide range of consumption behaviors”

1.7.4. Market Maven

Individuals who have information about many kinds of products, place to shop, and other facts of market, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information.

The definition of the market maven includes both general marketplace knowledge or expertise and influence. Thus, the definition is comparable with the definition of the opinion leader in that influence derives from knowledge and expertise, but differs in that the expertise is not product specific. The market maven’s influence is based on more general market expertise the definition of the market maven does not require that these individuals be early purchasers of products or necessarily even users of products about which they have information.

1.8. Organization of the study

This study report was ordered into five chapters, the first chapter is the introduction, which consists of background information about antecedents of word-of-mouth communication, the statement of the problem, research question, objectives, significance of the study and scope of study. The second chapter consisted of review of related literature on antecedents of word-of-mouth specifically in the context of private Schools. The third chapter presented research methodology, and the fourth chapter explained discussion of the finding and finally the fifth chapter contained conclusion and recommendation based on the findings and discussion.

UNIT TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter critically reviews the works of other peoples in the area WOMC towards private schools. The main purpose of the chapter is to introduce definition and theoretical framework guiding the study and empirical evidence about WOMC are reviewed in light of the objectives of the study. It provides rationale for WOMC as unit of analysis. The chapter also tries to identify gaps in the literature and draw contextual framework on which this paper was based.

2.1. Definitions and Concepts of Word of Mouth

‘Word of mouth is the most powerful human communication way transferring companies or organizations’ positive advertising message from one individual to another with no cost. This is performed using face-to-face conversation’. Word of mouth is a powerful, strong means, which should be included in effective strategies of marketing and advertising. In some cases, this approach is a neutral tool, as the message transferred both positively and negatively regarding that the proponents of a commercial brand always create positive loading for word of mouth; while, in contrast, the opponents and subversives create a negative advertisement through transferring negative meaning. However, in general, word of mouth is known for over 50 years as one the most critical issues in marketing literature. Recent theories show that word of mouth communication significantly influenced consumers in terms of services’ acceptance and service prevalence process according to Arndt, 1976; (Brooks, 1957; Coleman, Katz, Menzel, 1966; Zipel, 1974; Engel, Kegerreis, Blackwell, 1969; Holmes and Lett, 1977; Lu, 2006; Martilla, 1971; Sheth, 1971). Indeed, nowadays, while many scholars assumed that positive word of mouth led to persuading the consumer in some areas such as goods purchase, the conducted studies demonstrate that consumers do not apply the whole word of mouth communication; the consumers encountering this communication initially investigate the value of communication by studying some factors; then, make decision on whether applying the information obtained by word of mouth (Dichter, 1966). Overlooking the studies on this issue clearly reveals marketing literature gap, which is always influenced by the point that what will occur to the audience following word of mouth and how these events influence the audience consuming behavior (Sweeney, Soutar, and Mazzarol, 2008). Generally, studying this area may usefully help

marketers to understand when word of mouth largely influences and how the best communication may cause increased customer lifetime. Thus, the objective of this research is to develop a framework of processes making the consumer apply positive word of mouth to the product and change under the influence of some attitude factors. In this regard, the present research studied effective properties of word-of-mouth source and audience influencing this process. The question raised here is that how the audience (listener) applies the word of mouth created by the speaker.

Cox (1967) simply referred to word of mouth as nothing but conversation (dialogue) about service. Arndt (1967) stated that face-to-face word of mouth is between the messenger and the receiver in which the receiver receives information about a service name and brand through noncommercial channels. Of course, this definition has two considerable points. First, it requires oral and face-to-face interaction between the receiver and messenger, which seems that it needs adjustment and updating in cases including electronic communication (chat rooms); and second, the receiver must infer that the message sender is not related to the considered goods or service. West Brooks (1987), in another definition, defines word of mouth as any informal communication by a consumer with another consumer on possession, usage, the product or service specific characteristics (Jalka and Salmin, 2009). One traditional view of word of mouth assumes two individuals talking about a brand, product or service (Libai et al, 2010). This type of advertising classified as a post-purchase behavior. This phenomenon embraces oral interaction of products' buyers in transferring their experience of using the product; reinforcing and or weakening perceptions of buyers in such advertising are determining parameter encouraging or discouraging others to buy the desired products (Mazzarol et al, 2007).

2.1.1 Significance of Word-of-Mouth Communication

There is authentic and considerable literature about the significance of word of mouth on marketing and consumer behavior. The value of oral advertising clears once the consequences and effects on buyers are potentially and really observed. Positive interpretations and explanations of pleased and satisfied customers cause increased purchasing; while, negative comments and interpretations of dissatisfied customers may lead to reduced purchases (Ghafariashtiyani, 2005). Strowing (1996) and Davis (2008), on the significance of this advertising approach, figured out that profitable financial flows created by this approach through

attracting new customers and revisiting of the previous customers. Word of mouth also critically influences decision making process; though, the consumers often receive both positive and negative word of mouth from a certain individual at the same time. Word of mouth, in general, is known as a powerful factor of influencing consumer choice. Institutes increasingly use pleased, satisfied customers as their products' speaker and benefit through using word of mouth such as improving market position. Marketers considering two areas of word of mouth (positive and negative word of mouth) as marketing tool can recognize the message containing consumer's positive and negative attitudes (Lee and Yeeng Chung, 2007).

2.1.2 Word Of Mouth Communication Acceptance by Audience

Applying and accepting word of mouth typically refers to this issue that to what extent the listener uses word of mouth, the information presented by the speaker in word of mouth, in its purchase decision-making. Earlier studies on word of mouth mainly considered this as final and consequence variable; few studies mentioned the mediatory and situational factors surrounding word of mouth; it is regretful as understanding and recognizing these critical factors is considerably important regarding that word of mouth is not effective in any situation (Martin and Lueg, 2011). Therefore, this research particularly considered the aforementioned problem. However, many variables influence this issue; this research tried to study the effect of prominent and repeated variables of marketing and interpersonal relation literature, restated in many studies, which are probably effective in accepting word of mouth by the listener. According to the aforementioned, some key variables are defined as follows; then, research conceptual model is presented. They state that the "existence of a publicly accessible reservoir of observable person-to-person communications is unprecedented."

Word-of-mouth communication is often considered one of the oldest and most powerful forms of marketing. It is said that word-of-mouth communication has always existed since a human first pointed to a cave painting to share the location of a good hunting ground with his family according to O'Leary and Sheehan (2008), yet it's meaning still remains unclear. It has often been used as a synonym to other unconventional types of marketing such as buzz and viral marketing. However, there are essential differences which derive word-of-mouth from the rest. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a well-respected authority on the evolution of the English language etymology, the first written occurrence of 'word of mouth' dates back to 1533.

In the dictionary, 'word of mouth' is defined as 'oral communication,' 'oral publicity' and 'speaking' according to Oxford English Dictionary (1998 quoted by Nyilasy, 2007). Following the first occurrence of word-of-mouth, later on, in marketing and communication literature the term has obtained a more limited meaning and refers to the act of consumers giving information to other consumers about products or services. Despite the fact that personal communication about products was known in the early twentieth century, word-of-mouth only became a scientific term after the rise of positivist communication research in the US following World War II (Nyilasy, 2007). This research suggested the following definition for word-of-mouth: "Oral, person-to person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver concerning a brand, product or a service" (Arndt, 1967). Subsequent investigations on word-of-mouth have defined word-of-mouth as "conversation about a product" (Cox, 1967), "hearing about a service from friends" (Traylor and Mathias, 1983), "interpersonal information exchange about a product, service or retailer" (Higie et al., 1987), "interpersonal communications in which none of participants are marketing sources" (Bone, 1995) and "the act of telling at least one friend, acquaintance or family member about a satisfactory or unsatisfactory product experience" (Halstead, 2002). These early definitions are consistent with recent definitions in marketing and communication literature. The term word-of-mouth is most commonly recognized for its interpersonal communication occurring in a situational environment (Storey, 2008) and it describes verbal communications between groups such as the product provider, 7 independent experts, family and friends and the actual or potential consumer (Helm and Schlei, 1998). Emanuel Rosen (2000), the author of *Anatomy of Buzz*, believes that word-of-mouth can be considered oral communication about products and services with friends, family and colleagues. O'Leary and Sheehan (2008) define it as the process of information exchange, especially recommendations about products or services, between two people in an informal way. To make it clear, The Word-of-Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA) has defined word-of-mouth as "the act of a consumer creating and/or distributing marketing-relevant information to another consumer." Furthermore, word-of-mouth has been used as a synonym to advertising, which is incorrect, since advertising by definition is any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor (Kotler, 1994). Word-of-mouth, on the other hand, is not. It occurs naturally and consumers are not paid under any circumstances. Stern (1994) believed that word-of-mouth communication differs from

advertising distinctively in its lack of boundaries. She further defends that word-of-mouth communication involves the exchange of oral messages spontaneously occurring in real life and in word-of-mouth conversation consumers are not assumed to create and revise pre-written conversational exchanges about a product or service. Although there have been various definitions of word-of-mouth and it has been often confused with other types of marketing and advertising, based on the above-mentioned definitions it can be concluded that word-of-mouth is C-to-C marketing that results from individuals sharing information with other individuals about a product or a service in an offline environment spontaneously.

2.1.3. Wom Communication: A Coceptual Frame Work

Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMC) is a form of promotional campaign which operates through an individual's personal recommendations of specific brands, products or services. Like its literal meaning, word-of-mouth marketing spreads from one person to another outside of a formalized setting, without heavy intervention by advertisers. A recommendation from someone familiar and trust-worthy is the easiest path to a product sale, link or new subscriber. Why because recommendations are generally perceived as incentive-free, unlike the obvious motivation of advertisers, who may over-promise in a bid to increase sales. Word of Mouth (WOMC) is a concept of strong interest to both marketing academics and practitioners. From an academic perspective, WOMC has attracted research attention during the past six decades. Thus, WOMC is an area of sustained research enquiry and the intensity appears to be increasing. Practitioners also have a growing interest in WOMC; whether it is cooking oil, cars, music, books, Internet telephony, or handheld video games, marketing practitioners are increasingly shying away from traditional mass communication tools in favor of WOMC campaigns.

To promote and manage word-of-mouth communications, marketers use publicity techniques as well as viral marketing methods to achieve desired behavioral response. Influencer marketing is increasingly used to seed WOMC by targeting key individuals that have authority and a high number of personal connections.

It appears that both marketing academics as well as practitioners would benefit from a better understanding of WOMC and the reasons why it is so significant. A 'deconstruction' of the factors that make WOMC so important may allow marketing practitioners to develop more

diagnostic ways of measuring the effects of (potential) WOMC campaigns. This would echo researchers' calls for greater use of WOMC in market research.

Thus, the overall goal of this article is to develop a parsimonious conceptual framework of the factors that contribute towards WOMC's significance.

Word of mouth (WOMC) can be described as informal communication between consumers about goods and services without either party being formally rewarded for this communication. While early definitions focused on oral WOMC, more recent research includes non-personal

2.1.4. The Philosophy behind Word-of-Mouth Communication

Word of Mouth Communication is a prismatic discipline. Conversations online or offline are often multiple, non-hierarchical, horizontal and mutational. The message is not controllable by the advertiser, although they can attempt to manipulate buzz flow by devising campaigns to structure dialog and conversation.

Dave Balter, in his Manifesto on Word-of-Mouth communication suggested that Word of Mouth is the desired end result, one that is achieved through viral or buzz marketing. It's a medium made up of the conversations and communications between people. Word of mouth can go viral...But in order for that to happen, you must have actual brand advocacy, and people must be willing to go out of their way to share an opinion, an experience, or their passion about a product. The reason that word of mouth is so powerful is that it is a mutual conversation.

Word of Mouth marketing doesn't exist in a vacuum and it can certainly develop without any efforts on your part if your product or website is seen as extremely helpful, interesting unique or valuable by a specific niche market.

More often than not, you will need to kick start some promotional method to initialize word of mouth buzz. While there are many strategies available, it's important to focus on producing an excellent product or bait as this will greatly facilitate the word-of-mouth process.

2.1.5. Word of Mouth communication's Importance

Researchers have recognized that WOMC is probably the most powerful force shaping consumer behavior, which lead researchers to describe WOMC as "almost irresistible" and a response that "may be among the most important". How persuasive WOMC is, particularly in comparison with

more traditional marketing communication channels such as advertising, has long been a topic of inquiry. Research has found that informal information, such as WOMC, was a more important source of information compared to mass media such as print or television Advertising. WOMC has even been found to be more important in influencing consumers compared to independent third-party reviews such as "Consumer" reports. Lastly, WOMC can also be more powerful than the consumer's own attitude toward a product. While it has become clear that WOM can dominate other information channels, no research has summarized why WOMC has such a significant impact on consumers. This is what this paper wish to investigate. Thus, this paper will now turn to a synthesis of previous research to fill this gap. At the most fundamental level, one could think of two fundamental factors that fuel WOMC's significance. The pervasiveness of WOMC, that is its 'reach' or the number of consumers exposed to it, and the persuasiveness, that is its 'impact' on consumers' attitudes and behaviors. The following two sections synthesize findings from the literature regarding the pervasiveness and persuasiveness of WOMC and build a conceptual framework consisting of eleven drivers that contribute towards the significance of WOMC.

2.1.6. The Persuasiveness of WOMC

Based on the extant literature, four factors have been identified that contribute towards the persuasiveness of WOMC. Firstly, it is generally agreed that the persuasiveness of WOM is mainly due to WOM being seen as credible, trustworthy and reliable. Secondly, WOMC has been found to be highly persuasive due to the receiver's ability to give feedback. Thirdly the sender's ability to deliver tailored or personalized information in which information may be added or filtered or one's own interpretation is added makes it more relevant to the receiver, thus making WOM highly persuasive. Lastly, more accessible and diagnostic information has a greater impact on consumers. Diagnostic in this instance refers to how useful information is for making a purchase decision, for example, how much brands differ and whether certain brands are judged 'better' than others. Importantly, WOMC fares well in both accessibility and Diagnostic compared to non-personal sources of information such as advertising, thus making it a highly persuasive communication channel.

2.1.7 WOMC in the business Industry

‘No matter what service you offer, finding customers is a challenge that all entrepreneurs have in common. It’s a never-ending process, requiring continuous effort to find approaches that work consistently for your business. If you’ve tried different advertising strategies but can’t seem to find the right solution, word-of-mouth communication marketing is you. Word-of-mouth communication marketing is an advertising strategy where customers promote your service based on their favorable experiences with your business. It is a great way to build a community of loyal followers who will support your brand.

2.2 Empirical Review on WOM

Indeed, that there are various approaches to influence people to the contrary of traditional channels (such as radio, television, newspapers, magazines). It is also seen that sometimes advice from satisfied customer, opinion leader, reference group and market maven ship may be much more effective than various advertisements and presentations. Nowadays, due to the promotion of numerous services by mass media, many of which cater to the same needs, consumers are required to make objective opinions and refer to independent sources in their decision-making according to Cop and Gümüş (2009, pp.179-202). Thus, word-of-mouth communication or ‘buzz marketing’ has become one of the most important tools of communication in the modern world. Previous studies have revealed that word-of-mouth communication has a significant effect on consumer satisfaction, opinion leader, reference group and market maven regarding services related to buying decisions as per Bush et al., (2005, pp. 257-264) as well as their attitudes toward buying in general according to Bone (1995, pp. 213-223). Bansal et al. (2000, pp.166-177) also underscored that word-of-mouth communication influences buying decisions, while Murray (1991, pp. 10-25) emphasized that it decreases the risks of such decisions. In this era of globalization and the use of widespread communication technology, the need for university-educated individuals has been rapidly increasing and consequently, this has intensified the level of competitiveness between existing universities. Despite the increase in promotional activities and advertisements, word-of-mouth communication is still more effective for presenting various aspects that can influence consumers (i.e., students) decision-making processes according to (Silverman, 1997, pp. 32-37). Therefore, this study examines the effect of word-of-mouth

communication on parents' private school preferences and to what extent such communication influences their decision-making behaviors.

2.2.1. Word-of-Mouth Communication

As a form of mass media, word-of-mouth communication is one of the widest and the most important tool for consumers and it can influence where they shop, what they buy and how they evaluate certain products. In addition, such communication can affect the expectations, awareness, perceptions and attitudes of consumers according to Iglesias et al., (2001, pp. 410-425); Reichheld and Schefter, 2000, pp. 105-114; Ward and Lee, 2000, pp. 6-20; Ha, 2004, pp. 329- 342). As a result, the importance of word-of-mouth communication as a channel of information has been the subject of focus in the aforementioned studies. This mechanism wields immense influence on the consumer's preference, dependence and changing behavior according to Marangoz, (2007: pp. 395-412) and it facilitates the consumer's knowledge of the necessary information for decision-making according to Stewart and Kamins, (2003, pp. 282-309).

Word-of-mouth communication was primarily emphasized by Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz in 1995, although its definition did not refer to formal communication among consumers regarding certain services (Kau & Loh, 2006, pp. 101-111). According to Stokes and Lomax (2002, 349-357), word-of-mouth communication serves as a so-called messenger and receiver about services, rather than verbal face-to face communication. According Ranaweera and Prabhu (2003, pp. 374-395) described such communication as an emotional dimension that influences consumers' decisions regarding various services, while the American Communication Institute (AMA) defined "word-of-mouth communication as the sharing of information between consumers (via various resources) concerning certain service and promotions according to (www.marketingpower.com/layouts/Dictionary 14/12/2013).

In general, people share advice regarding service on a daily basis according to Rosen (2000, p. 7) and they acquire additional information through their physical surroundings and mass media (East, Hamond and Wright, 2007, pp. 175-184). In the service industry, word-of-mouth communication is extremely essential since expectations regarding services are not as clear as those of concrete products. Moreover, factors such as cultural situations and past experiences can specially influence consumers' opinions, regardless of their current similar cultural environments according to Ateşoğlu and Bayraktar (2012, pp. 95-108). On the top of this, in their leading

research regarding word-of-mouth communication, according to Arndt (1967) and Dichter (1966) indicated that such communication can increase the expertise of individuals and strengthen their communicative relationships (Cheung, Anitsal and Anitsal, 2007, pp. 235-249). Therefore, it can be understood that word-of-mouth communication is an effective and powerful method of communication, particularly when important information is imparted by reliable and credible sources according to (Ennew, Banerjee and Li, 2000, 75-83).

2.2.2. Positive/Negative Word-of-Mouth Communication

Word-of-mouth communication can have both positive and negative effects. Positive word-of-mouth communication is one of the instruments for marketing experts since positive opinions can influence consumers to purchase the brand in question as per Arndt (1967, pp. 291-295). Conversely, negative word-of-mouth communication can have the opposite effect. In this regard, the majority of previous studies have indicated that consumers are more affected by negative word-of-mouth opinions than positive ones (Mangold, Miller and Brockway, 1999, pp. 73-89; Lam and Mizerski, 2005, pp. 215-228; Tybout, Calder and Sternthal, 1981, 73-79). In addition, negative word-of-mouth communication not only damages a brand's reputation but also influences consumers' buying behaviors regarding the service according to Hoyer and MacInnis (1997, p.37). With regard to the latter, it has been observed that a displeased consumer conveys his/her opinions to at least five people (Mangold et. al, 1999, pp. 73-89) and to as high as nine people on average (Buttle, 1998, pp. 241-254). Furthermore, in the process of purchasing service, word-of-mouth communication from existing consumers has a significant effect on consumers' buying behaviors (Engel, Blackwell and Miniard, 1993, p. 621).

2.2.3. Active/Passive Word-of-Mouth Communication

Word-of-mouth communication includes two dimensions: active and passive communication. Active word-of-mouth communication refers to conveying ideas about certain goods and services, shops, management, etc., whereas passive word-of-mouth communication denotes the gathering of information by satisfied consumers opinion leaders, reference group and market maven before buying certain service according to Lampert and Rosenberg (1975, pp. 337-354). With regard to the latter, passive word-of-mouth communication also functions as a form of active communication since these individuals, upon retrieving the information, convey their ideas to additional parties according to Christiansen and Tax (2000, pp. 185-199). Through either

of these communication methods, consumers directly or indirectly formulate their opinions regarding certain services and trust the opinions of those close to them. Moreover, based on these seemingly trustworthy comments, potential consumers also save time in their decision-making processes (Silverman et al., 2006: 601-634).

2.2.4. Word-of-Mouth Communication Model

In Figure 1, Kotler and Armstrong’s consumer’s buying model (2004: 198) is set off by Karaca’s (2010: 138) word-of-mouth communication model to analyze the decision-making process of potential parents of private school students. In this case, the word-of-mouth communication model consists of five steps. First, the consumer (i.e., parent) becomes aware of his/her needs. Second, he/she collects information regarding how to satisfy such needs. In this step, the approach can differ based on various resources such as previous experiences, certain beliefs and the opinions of satisfied customer, opinion leader, reference group and market maven. Third, the consumer evaluates the gathered information. Fourth, the consumer decides to buy the most appropriate service based on the evaluation. Finally, after the buying process is complete, the consumer evaluates and develops either a positive or negative opinion regarding the service in question according to Severn, Belch and Belch (1990, pp. 14-22).

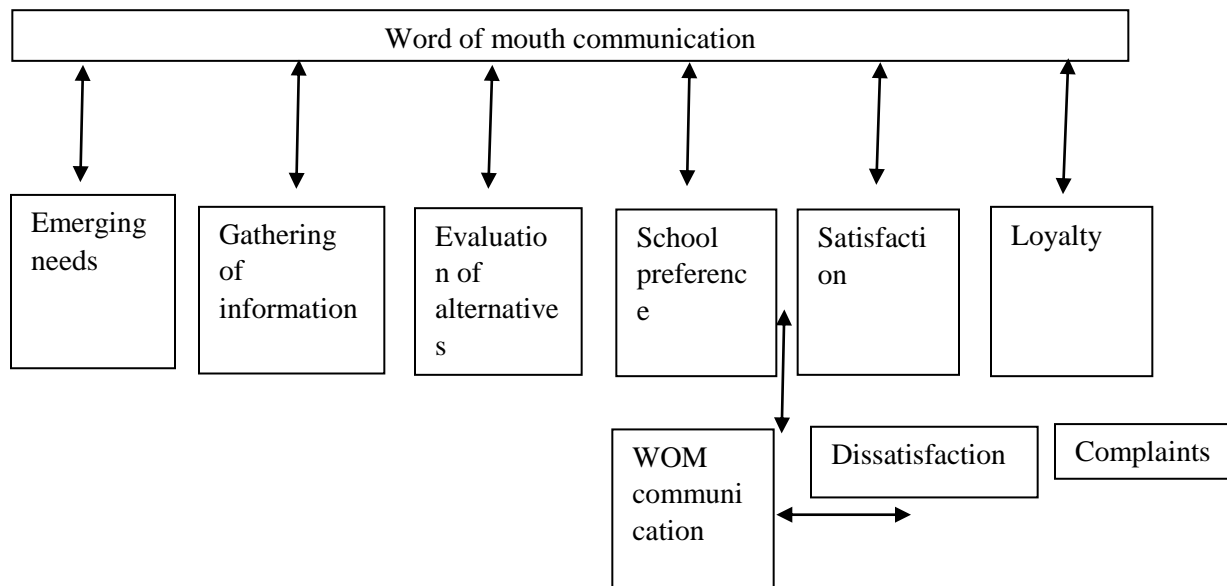


Figure 1: Word-of-Mouth Communication Model regarding parents’ private school Preferences

2.2.5. Perceived service quality and satisfaction

Perceived service quality and satisfaction have generally been conceptualized to be distinct constructs, but there isn't a good understanding of their relationship. While the two constructs are very similar, little research has empirically examined the distinction. This study discusses the conceptual arguments for the distinction, and examines the empirical distinction by testing a recently proposed model of Service quality and satisfaction. Results indicate that the two constructs are. In the present case, distinct, and there is some support for the model, with several modifications.

In recent years there has been a great deal of interest in the conceptualization and measurement of consumer satisfaction and perceived service quality, by both managers and academic researchers. Consumer satisfaction and service quality have each been the subject of extensive, but separate, research, although many studies of consumer satisfaction have been conducted in service settings (Cadotte, Woodruff and Jenkins, 1987; Fomell, 1992; Oliver. 1980; Oliver and desarbo, 1988; Oliver and Swan, 1989; Swan, 1988; Swan and Trawick, 1980). There seems to be a great deal of similarity between these two concepts, yet researchers are usually careful to state that these are different constructs (for exceptions see Dabholkar, 1993; Oliva, Oliver, and macmillan. 1992; Spreng and Singh, 1993). For example, Cronin and Taylor (1992, p. 56) state that "This distinction is important to managers and researchers alike because service providers need to know whether their objective should be to have consumers who are 'satisfied' with their performance or to deliver the maximum level of 'perceived service quality.'" Most researchers in the services domain have maintained that these two constructs are distinct (Bitner, 1990; Boulding, Kalra. Staelin and Zeithaml, 1993; Carman, 1990; Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988; Taylor and Baker, 1994), yet there have been repeated calls for research investigating the relationship between the two constructs (Anderson and Fomell, 1994; Rust and Oliver, 1994).

Greater understanding of the relationship between perceived service quality and satisfaction is needed. If they are distinct constructs as has generally been claimed, then we need to understand how they are different. If they are not distinct, then we don't have to waste time on surveys asking for both or confuse managers by telling them they have to be concerned with both. Further, researchers in the service quality area continue to state that satisfaction is the result of a comparison with predictive expectations (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Bitner, 1990; Parasuraman et

al., 1988. 1994; Oliver. 1993; Rust and Oliver, 1994; Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman, 1993), despite many criticisms of the disconfirmation of expectations according to Barbeau (1985; Cadotte et al. 1987; latourand Peat. 1979; Spreng and Olshavsky, 1993; Westbrook and Reilly, 1983). If satisfaction is no/simply a result of meeting expectations, then managers may not be focusing on the correct things.

2.2.6. Reference Group

In the present study, a reference group is defined to be an actual or imaginary individual or group conceived of having significant relevance upon an individual's evaluations, aspirations, or behavior. Within this definition, three motivational influences of reference groups will be examined—informational, value expressive, and utilitarian.

It is a known fact that a consumer is never alone when making a purchase decision. Almost all individuals who interact regularly in a group influence their purchase decisions either directly or indirectly. Within the context of word-of-mouth marketing, the group impact is of great importance, because these groups serve as frames of reference for individuals in their purchase or consumption ideas. By definition, reference group is any person or group that serves as a point of companion or reference for an individual in the formation of either general or specific values, attitudes, or behavior. Reference groups not only provide standards and values that can become determining perspective of how a person thinks and behaves according to Engel et al., (1993) and but also influence a wide range of consumption behaviors (Hawkins et al., 2004). Group influence is strongest when social aggregation is sufficiently small to permit and facilitate unrestricted face-to-face interaction as per Engel et al., (1993). This constitutes one of the reasons why word-of-mouth communication is more efficient than mass marketing as it provides a reason both to primary groups (satisfied customer opinion leader, reference group and market maven) and secondary groups to interact informally and naturally with each other. Reference group influence can also be a normative influence form. This results in the desire to be accepted by the group. Normative influence or conformity to groups means that consumers will imitate the group's behavior and buy brands and service of the group leader (Assael, 1987). Similarly, while an individual's opinion can be influenced by pressure for conformity, an individual may also accept others' opinion as a credible source of information.

Informational Reference Group Influence; This reference group influence is similar to the informational or comparative influence suggested by Deutsch and Gerard (1955), although their definition is not specific. It may be described by processes such as Asch's conviction (1952), Jahoda's consentience (1972), or Kelman's internalization process (1961). An influence is accepted (internalized) if it is perceived as enhancing the individual's knowledge of his environment and/or his ability to cope with some aspect of this environment, e.g., purchasing a service. The information source most readily internalized is the one perceived as being credible (Kelman 1961; Jones and Gerard 1967; Jahoda 1972). As the Yale group studies concluded (Hovland and Weiss 1951; Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953; Janis et al. 1959), sources of high credibility play a very significant role in determining conformity.

Utilitarian Reference Group Influence, this reference group influence is similar to the normative influence (Deutsch and Gerard 1955), the conformity concept of "it-is-dangerous-not-to-conform" (Asch 1952), and the compliance process (Kelman 1961; Jahoda 1972). A crucial difference between the utilitarian reference group influence examined in this paper and the normative social influences just cited is that most of these other social influences are derived from explicit rewards and punishments which accompany specific group memberships and specifically defined norms.

Value-Expressive Reference Group Influence. This reference group influence relates to an individual's motive to enhance or support his self-concept. Such an individual would be expected to associate himself with positive referents and/or dissociate himself from negative referents (Kelman 1961).

2.2.7. The market maven and opinion Leaders

Perhaps the best-established idea about the transmission of marketplace information is the importance of interpersonal communication. In 30 years of research, remarkably consistent results have documented the significance of interpersonal sources, particularly in influencing marketplace choices (Katz and Mueller 1955; Kiel and Layton 1981; Price and Feick 1984; Urdell 1966) and in diffusing information on new products (Arndt 1967; Engel, Keizer-Reis, and Blackwell 1969; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Sheth 1968, 1971). Research has demonstrated interpersonal information exchange is widespread (King and Summers 1967), interpersonal communication affects preferences and choices (Arndt 1967), interpersonal sources are often the

most important sources are often the most important sources of information (Katona and Muller 1955; Kiel and Layton 1981; price and Feick 1984; Robertson 1971, and Interpersonal sources are seen as more credible than no personal sources (Assael, Etagar, and Henry 1983). Traditional approaches to interpersonal influence have focused on two types of influencers-the opinions leader and early purchaser or adaptor. These approaches are characterized by two fundamental assumptions. One is that we can understand the important aspects of interpersonal information exchanges by studying opinion leaders and early adaptors the other is that we can understand interpersonal information usage by examining interpersonal exchanges within service classes-implicitly assuming also that by aggregating the results across product classes we can obtain a picture of interpersonal influence. As described earlier, word-of-mouth communication involves advice or information about a service through informal conversations. One of the parties in the word-of-mouth episode seeks for information while the other offers enhanced information and experience about a brand, a product or a service. The latter in this episode is called opinion leader in the marketing literature. Opinion leaders are trusted and informed people who exist in virtually all primary groups, who are the 'models' for opinion within their group, who listen and read in the media, and who then pass on information and influence to their circle of relatives, friends and acquaintances (Berelson et al., 1954). Opinion leaders, as Weimann points out, is that these influential are usually elitists, not spread throughout the community as the old theory suggested (Weimann, 1991). Weimann suggests that the influential are a subsection of the opinion leaders. The purpose of our research is to develop the concept of a marketplace influencer whose influence is based not on knowledge or expertise in particular product categories rather on more general knowledge and experience with markets. We develop a measure of this influencer, whom we call a "market maven," and relate this measure to marketplace be saviors and consumer characteristics. By so doing, we break free of the two assumptions that have guided previous research and obtain a better understanding of the extent and importance of interpersonal influence. Much of current thinking on the importance of interpersonal influence had its origins in the study of the 1940 presidential election by lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948). These researchers identified opinion leaders- individuals who acted as information brokers intervening between mass media sources and the opinions and choices of the population. A later study covering a number of different realms (food and

household products, movies, fashions, and public affairs) substantiated the existence and importance of the opinion leader (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955)

Opinion leaders are still probably the marketplace influencers most described in the literature. Current thinking on opinion leadership varies about the key features distinguishing these individuals. Some writers emphasize influence as the crucial determinant (e.g., Engel and Blackwell 1982; Rogers 1983), others emphasize knowledge (Assael 1984, p.413), and still others emphasize information transmission (Hawkins, Best, and Coney 1983, p.129). Most authors, however, see a combination of knowledge or expertise and influence as characterizing the opinion leader (e.g., Midgley 1976; Robertson, Zielinski, and Ward 1984). At least in some product categories, opinion leaders appear to be more knowledgeable about and involved with the product class (Jacoby and Hoyer 1981).

The implicit assumption in examining the personal influence of opinion leaders is that they are motivated to talk about the product because of their involvement with it. For example, Bloch and Richens (1983) view opinion leadership as a manifestation of enduring involvement in a product class. Though some writers have criticized this orientation as undervaluing the communications component and overvaluing the product interest component of opinion leadership (e.g., Midgley 1976), product involvement remains the predominant explanation for opinion leaders' conversations about product. Consequently, opinion leadership has been viewed as being product class specific.

There is evidence that interest in a number of Services can lead to opinion leadership in more than one service category) opinion leader (King and Summers 1970; Langeard, Crousillat, and Weisz 1978; Mayers and Robertson 1972; Silk 1966).

The second group of personal influencers that has received substantial research attention is early purchasers. Early purchasers can exert either a passive or active influence on later purchasers. For visible service such as automobiles, much information can be transmitted simply by product use. In contrast, the active diffusion of information by early adopters is generally thought of as occurring through product-related conversations (see, eg. Midgley and Dowling 1978). Empirical research has indicated that early adopters talk about products (e.g., Arndt 1967; Baumgarten 1975; Lambert 1972) and that there is a group of influential early adopters (Baumgarten 1975). As with opinion leaders, the implicit assumption about early adopters' assessment of the product

(Engel, Kegerries, and Blackwell 1969). Other reasons for talking about service might include the novelty of the product, the desire to look like a pioneer in having purchased the new product, or the involvement and expertise that come from the actual experience with the new product. As with opinion leaders, research suggests that early adaptors are product specific and there is no general early adapter (Robertson 1971; Robertson and Myers 1969). In summary, research suggests opinion leaders and early adaptors influence other consumers because of their product-specific knowledge or expertise. In the case of the opinion leaders, Knowledge or expertise has been viewed as arising from involvement with a product or product class. In the case of the early adapter, this expertise arises from product usage or purchase experience. Hence, in explaining the informational superiority of opinion leaders and early adopters, researchers have emphasized their involvement and experiences with specific products.

General Marketplace Influencers Kassarjian (1981) proposed that marketplace involvement need not be restricted to a particular product class or purchase situation. He argued that certain individuals may be consistently more involved in market-place activities. This proposition is supported by the literature that suggests many people enjoy browsing and window shopping (Hirschman 1980; Raju 1980) and certain people are more careful and concerned in making purchase decisions (Theorell 1977). Recently, lama and Taschen (1985) documented a characteristic they call “purchase involvement.” They report that individuals with greater purchasing involvement tend to know where to shop for certain items, where to get a good price on products, and what outlets are having sales. Though undocumented by research, individuals characterized by the type of involvement described by Kazanjian and by Slama and Tashhian could also be marketplace influencers. In this section we introduce the concept of an influencer characterized by general marketplace expertise. We have called such individuals “market mavens” and define them as individuals who have information about many kinds of products, place to shop, and other facts of market, and initiate discussions with consumers and respond to requests from consumers for market information. The definition of the market maven includes both general marketplace knowledge or expertise and influence. Thus, the definition is comparable with the definition of the opinion leader in that influence derives from knowledge and expertise, but differs in that the expertise is not product specific. The market maven’s influence is based on more general market expertise the definition

of the market maven does not require that these individuals be early purchasers of products or necessarily even users of products about which they have information.

Research has demonstrated an overlap of early adoption and opinion leadership (Baumgarten 1975; Feldman and Armstrong 1975; Summers 1970, 1971). Similarly, market mavens also can be opinion leaders or early purchasers of particular products. Market mavens' general market place expertise should lead them to earlier awareness of new products (hence, an increased likelihood of early adoption) and may also lead them to acquire not only general market information, but also in-depth information on selected products (hence, an increased likelihood of opinion leadership). The concept of the market maven, however, is distinct from the concepts of opinion leadership and early adoption, as it is predicated on a more general knowledge of markets. The marketing, consumer behavior, communications, and political science literatures provide a basis for hypothesizing the existence of market mavens. In addition, these literatures suggest several reasons for market mavens' acquisition and transmission of market information. Some individuals may acquire and transmit market information despite having no specific product involvement or experience. One reason for the maven's acquisition of market information may be marketplace involvement. Kazanjian (1981) has suggested some individuals may feel it is their obligation to become knowledgeable consumers. Kazanjian's high involvement consumer appears to be similar to the information seeker described by Theorell and colleagues (Theorell, Becker, and Engle-Dow 1975; Theorell and Theorell 1977) and the individual who is purchasing involved described by slama and Tashchian (1985). These writers have suggested that certain individuals may feel obligated to be informed about the marketplace and that purchasing is particularly relevant for these individuals. This involvement or interest is not tied to a particular product class for these individuals, but represents a more general marketplace or purchasing interest. Other literature suggests individuals may attend to information because they anticipate using it in social exchanges. For example, in examining information seeking on news events, Atkin (1972) found that the expected usefulness of information for future interactions with co-workers, family, friends and acquaintances was an important predictor of information seeking. In addition, Chaffee and McLeod (1973) found that the anticipation of a future social role affected processing of political information and that the social utility of communication was a more important predictor of political information seeking than was intention to vote. Levy (1978) identified surveillance-reassurance as a reason for

watching TV news. This factor accounted for over half the variance in his set of measures included items such as "I watch television news because I like to get the news first so I can pass it on to other people" (p 406). In examining word-of mouth communication, Dichter (1966) noted that some individuals attend to market information they think will be useful to others. He found such individuals to be important in about one-fourth of the buying situations he examined. Finally, Richmond (1977) found that rather than attending to personally relevant information, opinion leaders seem to attend to information that others might request from them at a later time. These findings suggest the possibility that market mavens obtain marketplace information because they think it will be useful to others or because it will provide a basis for conversations. If we view the market maven as a role individuals can adopt, research on role accumulators suggests reasons for information transmission by mavens. Siebert (1974) notes that individuals who adopt multiple roles enhance their power in society by becoming more valuable to those with whom they interact. One implication from Siebert's work is that individuals may transmit information as part of an implicit contract in which the information receiver pays for the information by providing information or other rewards to the giver. That is, a market maven may provide general information to individuals who, in turn, give information to the maven, perhaps on specific topics about which they are particularly knowledgeable.

2.3 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This chapter provides an overview of past research in marketing and related fields that has examined WOM. Most studies dealing with WOM focus either on the communicator or the receiver side of the interaction (Berger, 2014; King et al., 2014). The traditional WOM literature can also be systematized based on studies that investigate antecedents or consequences of a concept. Based on these two dichotomies, Nyilasy (2005) developed a framework that organizes the WOM literature into four key issues (figure 1). The research that focuses on the antecedents of the receiver investigates "why do people listen?" While research focusing on the consequences of the receiver investigates "the power of WOM." Studies that focus on the antecedents of the communicator investigate the issue of "what makes people talk?" While studies focusing on consequences of the communicator investigate "what happens to the communicator after the WOMC event?"

Table 1: Areas of WOMC Literature

Unit of analysis	Main focus of study	
	Antecedents of WOMC	Consequence of the Study
Receiver of communication	Q1: “Why do people Listen?”	Q2: “The power of WOMC
Communicator	Q3: What makes people talk?”	Q4: “What happens to the communicator after the WOMC event?”

This study is related to the issue of “what makes people talk?” Hence, a major part of the following literature review is concerned with the antecedents of WOMC from the parents’ perspective. The theoretical foundation for this paper is drawn mainly from the literature on satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Lam et al., 2004; Olsen, 2002), which has studied WOM extensively as a behavioral intention among consumers.

This paper attempts to answer research question concerning the relationship between consumer evaluations and positive WOMC. The theoretical foundation for this paper is drawn mainly from the literature on satisfaction and loyalty (e.g., Lam et al., 2004; Olsen, 2002), which has studied WOMC extensively as a behavioral intention among consumers. And related to research question on how individual difference factors affect WOMC transmission. This paper is based on theories about personality predictors of WOMC (e.g., Clark and Goldsmith, 2005; Mowen et al., 2007) and consumers’ WOMC motives (e.g., Dichter, 1966; Sundaram et al., 1998). The fourth paper in this dissertation investigates WOMC discussions in which the receiver of WOMC later becomes the communicator, and the primary focus is on the content of WOMC, rather than its drivers or consequences. Thus, that study does not fit accurately into either of the issues highlighted in the traditional WOMC literature. For instance, whereas the previous perspectives of WOMC conceptualize WOM as unidirectional transmission of information from one individual to another, the new perspective views WOMC as something consumers co-produce in many-to many discussions (see figure 1)

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

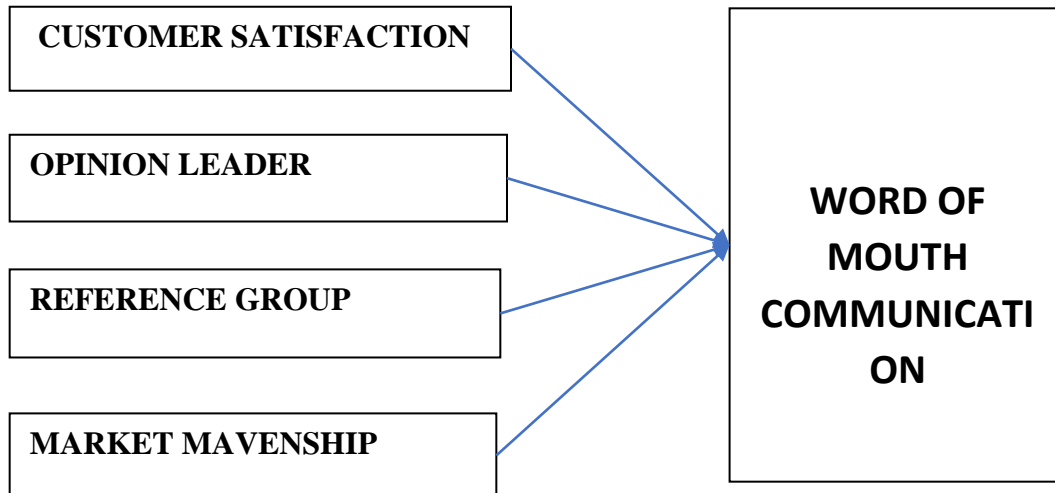


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The framework of the study (see Fig. 1) depicts the antecedents of word-of-mouth communication at private schools in the context of School of Tomorrow, Dimond academy and Cambridge academy via a four-layer model. The model includes customer satisfaction, Opinion leader, Reference group and Market maven ship will be considered in subsequent finding and discussion.

2.4. Hypotheses of the study

The following hypothesis are formulated to be tested based on empirical review of the literature:

- H-1: Customer satisfaction would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools.

- H-2: Opinion Leaders would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools.
- H-3: Reference group would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools.
- H-4: Market maven ship would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools.

UNIT THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As it is indicated in the title, this unit encompassed the research methodology of the thesis. In more detail, in this part the author outlines the research strategy, the research method, the research approach, the methods of data collection, the selection of the sample, the research process, the type of data analysis, the ethical considerations and the research limitations of the project.

3.2. Description of the study Area

The study was conducted in three private schools in Addis Ababa, School of Tomorrow, Dimond academy and Cambridge academy.

3.2.1. School of Tomorrow

School of Tomorrow is a private school, which was established in September 1993. It is one of the most prominent schools in Ethiopia, providing quality education at Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Pre-college levels. The school is known for providing high quality education including strong English background, accelerated curriculum, small class size, and individual attention as well as a healthy and nurturing environment. Students are educated well so that they will be wholesome citizens of the world.

School of Tomorrow is an ever-expanding educational establishment highly sought for by both parents and students. It stands as one of the most popular schools with its well-trained teaching staff and overall conducive teaching-learning atmosphere.

The school is located in ten different parts of Addis Ababa City, the capital of Ethiopia. It has three branches in Bole sub-city (Hayahulet, Rwanda & Bole Eyerusalem) three branches in Yeka Sub city (Misrak, CMC & Lem), One branch in Arada Sub city (Ras Desta), three branches in Nifassilk Lafto Sub City (Bisrat, Gofa and Mekanisa). This makes the school easily accessible to students/ parents from different parts of the city.

It stands as one of the most popular schools with its well-trained teaching staff and overall conducive teaching-learning atmosphere. The school provides an atmosphere conducive for focused learning. Spacious athletic compound and fields well equipped laboratories, libraries, other activities rooms and creatively designed buildings that complement the natural beauty of the different branches of the school all help to make School of Tomorrow not only educationally excellent but also aesthetically beautiful. However, each one of the school branches is unique in the way that it adapts to its particular circumstances.

3.2.2. Dimond Academy Ethiopia

3.2.3. Cambridge Academy Ethiopia

Cambridge Academy Ethiopia (CAE) is committed to developing accreditation relationships that support the school in being a world-class learning institution. Cambridge Academy Ethiopia is licensed by the Ministry of Education here in Ethiopia to operate as a British curriculum international school. Like the majority of international schools across the world, CAE offers the National Curriculum for England. This is well renowned across the world as a highly effective, broad and balanced curriculum. The school provides learning that is aligned to this curriculum from the age of 5. The National Curriculum for England provides a range of learning outcomes and expectations that are developmental and age related. The teachers plan lessons that are aligned to these outcomes, seeking to ensure all children are working at, or above, their expected level. Students are assessed against the standards aligned to their age.

3.3. Research strategy

The thesis held along to this paper was applied one, but not new. Rather, numerous pieces of previous academic research exist regarding the antecedents of word-of-mouth communication in promoting and managing customers choice at private schools in ADDIS ABABA and other places of the country. As such, the proposed research took form of a new research but on an entrant research subject.

3.4. Research Method

So as to meet the objectives of the thesis, qualitative quantitative research was held. The main feature of qualitative research is it is mostly appropriate for small samples, while its outcomes are not measurable and quantifiable. It's basic advantage, which also constitutes its basic

difference with quantitative research, is that it offers a complete description and analysis of a research subject, without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of participant's responses (Collis & Hussey, 2003). However, the effectiveness of qualitative research is heavily based on the skills and abilities of researchers, while the outcomes may not be perceived as reliable, because they mostly come from researcher's personal judgments and interpretations. Because it is more appropriate for small samples, it is also risky for the results of qualitative research to be perceived as reflecting the opinions of a wider population (Bell, 2005).

Quantitative approach involves studies that make use of statistical analyses to obtain their findings. Key features include formal and systematic measurement and the use of statistics (Geoffrey, et. Al., 2005). To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the study adopted a quantitative research approach.

3.5. Research Approach

The research approach that was followed for the purposes of this research was the inductive one. According to this approach, researchers begin with specific observation, which are used to produce generalized theories and conclusions drawn from the research. The reasons for occupying the inductive approach were that it takes into account the context where research effort is active, while it is also most appropriate for small samples that produce qualitative data. However, the main weakness of the inductive approach is that it produces generalized theories and conclusions based only on a small number of observations, thereby the reliability of research results being under question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

According to Beiske (2007) suggests that the deductive research approach studies a certain theory and tests to see if that theory applies under intended circumstances or not. Deductive approach follows the course of logic precisely. Argumentation begins with a theory and leads to a new assumption. This assumption is tested via comparison with the observations and finally it would be accepted or rejected (Sneider&Larner, 2009). In addition, deductive argument can be described as a general to specific (top-down) reasoning process (Pelissier, 2008). While the inductive approach is quite opposite. In other words, the deductive approach includes formulating assumptions and testing them via research process, while inductive studies have nothing to do with assumptions. The aim of the study was to investigate the antecedent of WOMC at private schools, explanatory research design was followed. This type of research aims

at for example, explaining social relations or events, advancing knowledge about the structure, process and nature of social events, linking factors and elements of issues into general statements and building, Testing or revising a theory (Jhon, et., 2007).

3.6. Data Collection method and tools:

For the purpose of this thesis, in depth interviews were used. In depth interviews are personal and structured interviews, whose aim is to identify participant's emotions, feelings, and opinions in relation to a particular research subject. The main advantage of personal interviews is that they involve personal and direct contact between interviewers and interviewees, as well as eliminate non-response rates, but interviewers need to have developed the necessary skills to successfully carry an interview (Fisher, 2005, Wilson, 2003). What is more, unstructured interviews offer flexibility in terms of the flow of the interview, thereby leaving room for the generation of conclusions that were not initially meant to be derived regarding a research subject. However, there is the risk that the interview may deviate from the prespecified research aims and objectives (Gill & Johnson, 2002). As far as data collection tools were concerned, the conduction of the research involved the use of semi-structured questionnaire, which was used as an interview guide for the researcher. Some certain questions were prepared, so as for the researcher to guide the interview towards the satisfaction of research objectives, but additional questions were made encountered during the interviews. Some sample questions that were included in the semi-structured questionnaire were the following:

Question 1: Is your school implementing word of mouth communication?

Question 2: How can you enhance your word-of-mouth communication efforts? Any strategy?

Question 3: Can you significantly increase your sales volume through implementing WOMC?

Question 4: How are you encouraging and motivating your parents to talk about your school in the communication?

Question 5: Do you encourage all parents to spread positive information about the school?

Question 6: Do you select certain type of parents to spread positive word of mouth? what type are they?

Question 7: Negative word of mouth happens to every organization at any time. Do you have any effective ways to stop and turn it into your opportunity to catch attentions of new parents?

Question 8: Do you have any tactics(ways) to measure effectiveness of word of mouth?

Based the explanatory study and the literature we identified four constructs as follows: Customer satisfaction, opinion Leaders, Reference group and market maven). On the top this, Subsequently, we selected and adapted existing measurement items to capture these constructs according Spreng et al. (1996). After content adequacy and validity of the items were established, a draft questionnaire was pretested for readability, clarity, and face validity by four private school administrators and six parents. The feedback acquired was used to make several changes to the wording of some items.

The questionnaires were distributed physically in person to the participants. Questionnaires are a device consisting of a series of question dealing, with someone psychological, social education etc. And the Firms website were to get secondary data published and unpublished document those procedures, monthly and annual reports of the private schools.

3.7. Population and Sample selection

3.7.1. Population

The population for this study was all consumers' who have direct contact to the private schools. According to the schools, parents are not only one who knows the service but also all individuals who knows about the schools. But, for this research the target population was parents who enrolled their children at private schools during the data collection period.

3.7.2. Sample selection

1. School of Tomorrow plc.
2. Dimond Academy and
3. Cambridge Academy

3.7.3. Sample Size Determination

Because of the large number of the sample unit, unspecified geographical place of the targeted population and cost constraint, Cochran sampling formula was employed to draw the sample from the population.

The sample size was determined by using estimation method given by Cochran sampling formula (1963) cited in Israel (2003) as: $n = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot p \cdot (1-p)}{(1-z)^2 \cdot n}$ where n = the sample size which will be drawn = level of precision or sometimes called sampling error (is ranges in which the true value of the population would be estimated. P = population proportion, z = level of confidence thus, rely on the above equation, a sample size of at least 384 .16 \approx 384 people will be necessary. The sample is drawn from maximum variability of the population ($P=0.5$) with 95% level of confidence with 5% precision level.

3.8. Research process

Discussions were held during October 2022 with the owners of the private schools mentioned above, so as to gain acceptance of their participation in the research. More specifically, the researcher came in touch with and asked them to participate in the research after explaining the nature and the scope of the study. In general terms the respondents were willing to participate in the research and the interviews were conducted between November and December 2022. The discussions took place at the offices of the executives and lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. During the interviews were mainly kept notes, in order to help the researcher to analyze the gathered data. During the conduction of the interview, respondents were free to express their views even in topics which were not included in the discussed areas. Finally, it should be noted that the conversations flowed smoothly and pleasantly. “Questionnaires save time, money and efforts of researcher and give freedom to respondents, feel free, and confidentiality, note this fact the researcher will get reliable information and the questioner will be standard to all respondents” according to Pro. Yalew Endawoke (2017). For proper achievement of the objectives of the study; the researcher used both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data for the study included the data gathered through close-ended questionnaires and unpublished internal firm’s report. The secondary data were collected from journal documents and the website of the firm. The primary data for the study were collected from customers through questionnaires. And the questionnaires included questions measured on a seven-point Likert scale, where 7 was labeled as Strongly agree (SA)=7, 6 was labeled as Agree, somewhat agree was labeled as 5, Either agree or disagree was labeled as 4, Somewhat disagree was coded as 3, disagrees was coded as 2 and finally Strongly disagrees was labeled as 1, The questionnaire also included items which measured the demographic variables of the participants.

3.9. Data Analysis Method

Content analysis was used to analyze the data which was gathered from personal interviews. According to Moore & McCabe (2005), this is the type of research whereby data gathered is categorized in themes and sub-themes, so as to be able to be comparable. A main advantage of content analysis is that it helps in data collected being reduced and simplified, while at the same time producing results that may then measure using quantitative techniques. Moreover, content analysis gives the ability to researchers to structure the qualitative data collected in a way that satisfies the accomplishment of research objectives according to (Krippendorff & Bock, 2008). In the stage of collecting data, each participant was provided an information sheet at the beginning of the research questions explaining the purpose of the research prior to each questionnaire. After the data was cleaned, it was tested to meet the assumptions of multivariate analysis. The data analysis method began with the profiling of respondents which includes demographics, response rate and missing data. Secondly, the explanatory data analyses were conducted, which include descriptive statistics and checking for the assumption of linear regression. The reliability and validity of the variables were also checked using a couple of different methods. To examine the influence the four variables on WOMC, multiple regression was performed by using **SPSS.V.22** software which is very fit for my thesis paper by providing range of analysis to create variables and subs setting data in a simple & straight forward.

3.9.1. Validity of the research instrument

In order to establish the valid of the study instrument the researcher adopted questionnaires which were used and tested by the extant literature. Besides this, pilot study was also conducted, and data collected from 10 participants was used to develop the final version of questionnaires. The questionnaire was also evaluated by an expert in academia. Based on their comments some modification was made. The construct validity is explored by investigating its relationship with other constructs, both related (convergent validity) and unrelated (discriminant validity). An easy-to-follow summary of the various types of validity is provided according to Streiner and Norman (2015).

3.9.2. Reliability of research instrument

Reliability refers to the degree to which data collection method or methods yield consistent information and data verification were also made during analysis of the data of this study and

checked through Cronbach Alpha reliability test. The data tested for its reliability using Cronbach's alpha the most common measure of scale reliability test. The value for Cronbach's Alpha (α) started from 0.70 is the accepted value (Nunnally, 1978). The test conducted again for the final analysis on the data collected from the sampled respondents. The overall internal consistency of 18 items was tested and the result showed the high range Alpha value ($\alpha=.822$ to $.890$ see table 3.1 below). Thus, it concluded that the questionnaire was reliable and consistent, because the Alpha value again greater than 0.70. (See table 2 below)

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

VARIABLE	OBSERVATION	NO. OF ITEM	SIGN	ALPHA
CUSATAV	384	3	+	.890
OPLEAV	384	3	+	.868
REGUAV	384	3	+	.822
MAMAAV	384	3	+	.874
TOTAL SCALE		12		

Source: own survey results (2022/23)

3.10. Ethical Consideration

The research topic has been approved by the Institute. A support letter was written to question their participation in the study. The researcher was approached the participants and explained that, in this study all participants and data collected remain confidential and identities of respondents remain anonymous. Moreover, the privacy of all respondents was respected in the reporting of this research. No details of individuals were involved in this research. so that they were volunteer to give responses to the study questionnaires. The objectives of the study were explained to all participants as well as the management of the schools. Permission and informed consent obtained without pressure from each participant and they were also told that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition, participants were further informed that their names will not be used at any point and the fill questionnaires will be taken anonymously. Moreover, they were informed that refusal to participate in the study shall not affect their ability to access the usual services they currently receive or expect to get from the

school then and in the future. Participants were given an opportunity to ask questions about the study before they commit themselves to participate. Finally, they were informed that they are entitled to get the final version of this study to be submitted to their respective Firms.

UNIT FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and discussion of the research findings. The data analysis done with the help of Statistical Package for social Science (SPSS.V.22). The demographic profile study sample, their attitudes towards the antecedents of WOM at private Schools, word of mouth practice and analysis of its effect on catching attention of new parents through its factors have been described using descriptive and inferential statistics. Pearson's correlation was employed to see the strength of association between the dependent and independent variables. Linear regression model was also employed to test the hypothesis and the study objective that focuses on examining the impact of antecedents of word of mouth at private schools. A total of 384 questions were distributed to respondents were selected from School of Tomorrow, Dimond academy and Cambridge academy (128 respondents from each) and all questionnaires were fully completed and returned. This represents a response rate of 100%.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

4.2.1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

The table 3 shown below describes the general findings regarding the respondent's sex, age and marital status. From the respondents 134 (34.9%) were females and 250 (65.1%) were males. Here the shares of males are higher than females. The majority of the respondents fall in the age group of above 50 (239, 62.2. From the respondents 360 (93.8%) were Married and 24(6.2%) were found divorced.

(See table 3 below)

Table 3: Demographic Profile of the respondents

Measures	Items	Frequency/Sample	Percent
Sex of respondents	Female	134	34.9
	Male	250	65.1
	Total	384	100.0
Age of respondent	30-40	22	5.7
	41-50	123	32.0
	Above 50	239	62.2
	Total	384	100.0
Marital status of respondents	Married	360	93.8
	Divorced	24	6.3
	Total	384	100.0

4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Among the statistical approach for examining equivalence between groups is using simple analyses of means and standard deviations for the variables of interest for each group in the study (Marczyk, Dematteo and Festinger, 2005). The mean indicates to what extent the sample group averagely agrees or does not agree with the different statement. The lower the mean, the more the respondents disagree with the statement. The higher the mean, the more the respondents agree with the statement. On the other hand, standard deviation shows the variability of an observed response from a single sample. On the questionnaire, the respondents were asked to measure their level of perception about antecedents of word of mouth at private schools. The mean scores of each WOMC activities and customer's perception were calculated as well as the mean scores of each item under these questions. On a 7-point scale for 18 different items

measuring the four constructs of WOMC were developed to measure their attitude about factors affecting WOMC at private schools in Addis Ababa. The mean score values of antecedents of WOMC at private Schools ranges between 4.8533(mean score values of customer satisfaction) with St. Deviation 1.18183 and 5.3655(mean score values of market maven) with St. Deviation .86706. The overall mean of the items measuring the constructs of factors affecting WOM at the private schools, as measured by customers, is well above average as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: descriptive statistics of factors affecting WOMC

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer satisfaction	384	1.33	7.00	4.8733	1.18183
Opinion leader	384	2.00	7.00	4.9401	.89686
Reference group	384	1.33	7.00	5.2118	.95549
Market maven	384	1.00	7.00	5.3655	.86706
Valid N (listwise)	384				

Source: own survey results (2023)

Likewise, the dependent variable (WOMC= word of mouth communication), the total questions regarding WOMC through its antecedents scores a mean of 4.7960 and standard deviation 1.18583. This shows that the mean of WOM construct is close to above the middle value of 4 (see table 5).

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of WOMC

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
WOMCAV	384	1.33	7.00	4.7960	1.18583
Valid N (listwise)	384				

Source: own survey results (2023)

4.3. Multiple Regression Diagnosis Test

Multiple regression techniques give researchers flexibility to address a wide variety of research questions (Hoyt et al., 2006). Since the analyses based upon certain definite conditions or assumptions, it is imperative that the assumptions be analyzed (Sevier, 1957). Below we will present the tests of the assumptions of Multiple Regression.

4.3.1. Assessment of Normality

In the table labelled below Tests of Normality, were given the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic which assesses the normality of the distribution of scores. A non-significant result (Sig. value of more than .05) indicated normality. In this case, the Sig. value is .000, suggesting violation of the assumption of normality. This is quite common in larger samples. (See the graph below)

Table 6: Tests of Normality, ^{a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h,i,j,k,m,n}

	Customer satisfaction	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^l			Shapiro-Wilk			
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.	
Word of mouth communication	5	0.505	41	.000	0.292	41	.000	
	6	0.513	35	.000	0.374	35	.000	
	6	0.516	40	.000	0.339	40	.000	
	6	0.291	12	0.006	0.778	12	0.005	
	Opinion Leader	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk			
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.	
		2	0.253	3	.	0.964	3	0.637

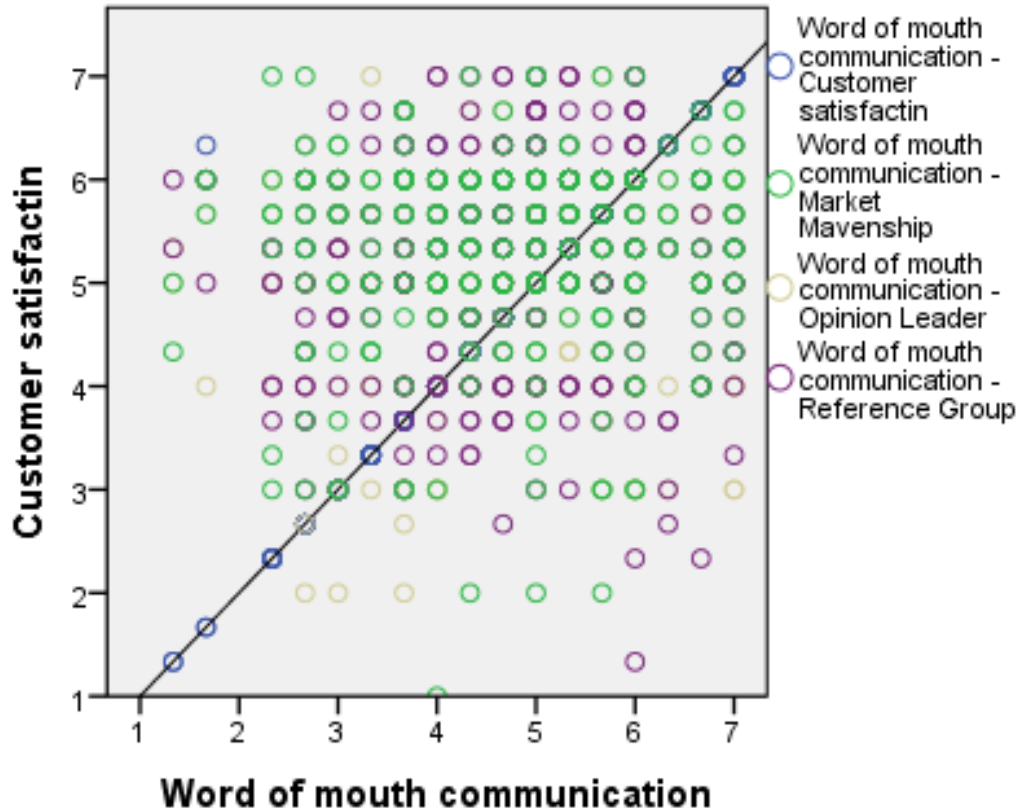
	5	0.144	17	.200*	0.95	17	0.452
	6	0.178	22	0.069	0.936	22	0.165
	7	0.253	3	.	0.964	3	0.637
	Reference Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^b			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
	5	0.093	67	.200*	0.976	67	0.225
	6	0.143	22	.200*	0.964	22	0.575
	7	0.254	17	0.005	0.887	17	0.041
	7	0.129	12	.200*	0.937	12	0.456
	Market Mavenship	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^b			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
	2	0.175	3	.	1	3	1
	3	0.187	12	.200*	0.891	12	0.121
	6	0.141	12	.200*	0.91	12	0.215
	7	0.227	7	.200*	0.889	7	0.27

Source: own survey results (2023)

4.3.2 Assessment of Homoscedasticity

The scatterplot shown us the variables are related in a linear (straight-line). Therefore, the linear relationships were suitable for correlation analyses and indicated the variables were positively related because the points formed a line which started low on the left-hand side and moved higher on the right. The scatterplot has also provided a strong strength of the relationship

between variables which the points formed a vague cigar shape, with a definite clumping of scores around an imaginary straight line. (See the graph bellow)



4.3.3. Assessment of Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity exists when there are strong correlations among the predictors and the existence of R-values. Variance Inflation factor (VIF) greater than 10 in the correlation matrix are the causes for the multicollinearity existence (Field, 2009). Tolerance is a statistic used to indicate the variability of the specified independent variable that is not explained by the other independent variables in the model. According to Hair et. (2013) if there are no two or more values above .90 in one line in the regression variance decomposition matrix, there is no collinearity problem. This can be seen at Table 7 where the VIF values are below 10. In addition, the tolerance values are all above 0.1. Therefore, the researcher concluded that collinearity is not a problem.

Table 6 provides the model summary, and shows that 87.5% of the variance of the dependent variables can be explained by the variable included in the model Table 6 shows that all the independent variables except customer satisfaction don't have significant effect on the word-of-mouth Communication. Customer satisfaction has a significant effect on word-of-mouth communication ($\beta = .942$; $p < .05$). When customer satisfaction increases by 1-unit WOMC also increase by 0.942.

Table 7: Coefficientsa

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.935 ^a	.875	.874	.42158

Table 8: Model Summaryb

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
	(Constant)	.070	.223		.312	.755		
	CUSATAV	.942	.018	.939	51.339	.000	.986	1.014
	OPLEAV	.046	.024	.035	1.908	.057	.989	1.011
	REGUAV	.031	.023	.025	1.358	.175	.999	1.001
	MAMAAV	-.047	.025	-.034	-1.874	.062	.979	1.021

Source: own survey results (2023)

The above table provided the model summary, and shows that 87.5% of the variance of the dependent variables can be explained by the variable included in the model.

Table 9: anova^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	471.217	4	117.804	662.838	.000 ^b
	Residual	67.359	379	.178		
	Total	538.576	383			

The above model 8 shown us statistical significance of the result (Sig=.000; which is $p < .0005$)

4.4. Model Estimation

The regression result that obtained by regressing, the WOM in identifying Customer satisfaction, Opinion leader, Reference group and Market maven. The regression result explores the necessary indicators of WOM by using the variables identified in the model. As indicated in the model summery (table 6) the appropriate indicators of the variable used to identify the WOM explored. That is, the value of R square used to identify how much of the variance in the dependent variable (WOM) identify by the model. The larger the value of R square, the better the model is. Best fit contribution the model to predict contribution customer satisfaction on managing WOM marketing in private schools. The coefficients or beta (β) sign also shows the positive sign or negative effect of the independent variables' coefficient over the dependent variable.

Based on the statistical significance of the independent variable over the dependent variable at $P= 0.000$ level of significance the variable (customer satisfaction) has significantly positively contributed for the dependent variable. The variable (Market maven) has negative relation with the dependent variable (WOMC) though the effect is not significant. Therefore, this implies customer satisfaction is the component is the most determinant of WOMC in which the private schools should give more emphasis to enhance and reach maximum customer satisfaction.

4.5 Discussion of the major findings

This study tried to explore the relationship among the antecedents of WOMC, customer satisfaction, Opinion Leader, Reference group and Market maven at the private schools in Addis Ababa.

This discussion is essential to provided more information on the above result. This study aimed at identifying significant antecedents of word of mouth at private Schools. Thus, the study assured to us that the Effect of customer satisfaction on WOMC could use to make significance and positive encouragement on getting the attention of new parents and increasing their profit. The researcher contracted certain factors that could affect WOMC practice at private Schools. This discussion in this section centered on findings from four effects of antecedents of WOMC to test the research questions. The following research questions conducted based on the regression results gained from model estimation from table 4.6. The first research question (What is the effect of customer satisfaction on the intention to engaged in word of mouth?) Implies that the is a relationship between WOM and its antecedent the WOMC (β :.942, $p < 0.05$) related the research question. This result is consistence with prior studies (Oliver, 1993.Szymanski and Henard, 2001). The second, third and fourth research questions were (What is the effect of opinion leaders on the word-of-mouth communication? What is the effect of reference group on the word-of-mouth communication? And What is the effect of maven on the word-of-mouth communication? The researcher projected certain factors that could affect word of mouth communication. This discussion focused on the findings from Hypothesis Test that answers the research question. The following hypotheses test conducted based on the regression results obtained from model estimation from table 10.

H-1: Customer satisfaction would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools. The first hypothesis implies that there is relationship between customer satisfaction and word of mouth communication. The positive beta sign and a statistically significant result of customer satisfaction related with the WOMC ($\beta = 0.942$, $P > 0.05$) support the proposed hypothesis. The result is consistence with prior studies (Lai et al. 2015), Lam (2016), Rosemary (2013) and Tadess (2017).

H-2: Opinion leaders would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools. The second hypothesis implies that there is relationship between opinion leaders and word of mouth communication. The positive beta sign and a statistically significant result of ethical responsibility related with the brand equity ($\beta = 0.046$, $P > 0.05$) not support the proposed hypothesis.

H-3: Reference Group would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools. The third hypothesis implies that there is relationship between Reference group and word of mouth communication. The positive beta sign and a statistically significant result of legal responsibility related with the brand equity ($\beta = .031, P>0.05$) not support the proposed hypotheses.

H-4: Reference Group would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools. The final hypothesis implies that there is relationship between customer satisfaction and word of mouth communication. The negative beta sign and a statistically significant result of legal responsibility related with the brand equity ($\beta = -.047, P>0.05$) not support the proposed hypotheses. Implied there is a relationship with the dependent variable WOMC, but no significant effect. ($\beta:0.046, p>0.05, \beta: 0.031, p>0.05$ and $\beta:-0.047, p>0.05$). Why these four variables did not have an effect on WOMC should be explored by future research using qualitative approaches. In general, the result of this regression analysis, the findings shown that 87.5% of WOMC practice is effective based on customer satisfaction. The findings of this thesis also confirmed there is positive and relationship between customer satisfaction and WOMC.

Table 10 Summary of Hypothesis

<i>Hypothesis of the study</i>	<i>Beta and P-Value</i>	<i>Result /accept or reject</i>
<i>H-1: Customer satisfaction would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools.</i>	$\beta = 0.942, P<0.05$	<i>Accepted</i>
<i>H-2: Opinion leaders would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools.</i>	$\beta = 0.046, P<0.05$	<i>Rejected</i>
<i>H-3: Reference Group would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools.</i>	$\beta = .031, P<0.05$	<i>Rejected</i>
<i>H-4: Reference Group would have a positive and significant effect on word-of-mouth communication at private schools</i>	$\beta = -.047, P>0.05$	<i>Rejected</i>

UNIT FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter intended to review the problem of the research and conclude the findings with regard to the objectives of the study. Recommendations that encourage positive WOMC are also included. The study explored the relationship among Customer satisfaction, Opinion Leader, Reference Group, Market maven and WOMC. This study determined that customer satisfaction and positive WOMC must flow in same direction. The study findings indicated that customer satisfaction significantly and positively affected WOMC. This result is consistent with (HoushangTaghizadeh, Mohammad Javad Taghipourianand AmirKhazaei, Mar 2013, Oliver, 1993.Szymanski and Henard, 2001). Thus, to reach customers maximum satisfaction in the high market competitive private schools must increase confidence in their service. The results confirmed that the encouraged (positive) WOMC was the direct outcome of customer satisfaction. Private schools should not neglect high service quality because quality is the determinant factor behind customer satisfaction and positive WOMC. Therefore, my study addresses the theoretical gaps. To my knowledge, the current work is the first work to examine antecedents of WOMC at private schools in Addis Ababa. So, the study has several implications for School owners, marketing managers, Directors and so on and so far. Private schools' owners must understand that factors affecting of WOM is customer satisfaction. In addition, this thesis enriches knowledge in the education sector and provides empirical findings that may help future research in the Private school areas.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This study explored the relationship among Customer satisfaction, Opinion Leader, Reference group, Market maven and WOMC. WOMC is the best advertising because it is highly trusted. People are more likely to believe and take action on recommendations from people they know and trust, rather than from a business or divertissement. Additionally, WOMC is cost effective, as it does not require a lot of money for advertising and promotion. Finally, it is one of the most powerful forms of advertising, as it can reach a much larger audience than any other form of advertising.

5.2 Conclusion of the Study

This study is the first to highlight the varied direct and indirect antecedents of word-of-mouth communication at private schools. It has many essential contributions to the Literature. First, few studies have been examined the mediating effect of customer satisfaction among Opinion Leaders, Reference group and market Maven and WOMC. The results confirm that Customer satisfaction was direct outcomes of WOMC because private schools' services are intangible, if customers perceive private schools' service positively and perceive that the services provided high quality, they will speak of that customer in a positive manner. and WOMC was influenced by customer satisfaction. and the concept of WOMC provided the backbone for the entire study as it serves as independent variable by Parents' positive evaluation of private schools' service help drive encourages (positive) WOMC. Furthermore, for private school owners, customer satisfaction is the 2nd to non-determinant factor of continually tracking parents' positive attitude and making regular enhancement to boost WOMC. The results of this study help private school owners, marketers, directors and scholars develop a thorough understanding of the antecedents of WOMC.

5.3 Recommendations

Word of Mouth marketing has been around as long as people have been recommending the latest cave painting or gladiator fight. It works because people trust other people. which is the belief that the majority knows best. So, in order to make the best decisions, parents look toward the choices other people have made, before acting themselves. This mental shortcut can have consequences both good and bad WOMC for the private schools. These observed behaviors of others are supposed to act as a clue, rather than proof. So, often people will copy others word of mouth based on not much evidence. This can be useful for owners, managers and marketers. However, they must also be aware that if their consumers act, and are disappointed, negative word of mouth can be extremely damaging. The private schools need to set strategies to reach their customers' service satisfaction, as a result the interaction and communication between the owners and parents can be effective.

Researchers interested in factors affecting WOMC at private schools would contribute much if they undertake similar studies involving the point of view of parents about the WOM practice at private schools.

5.4 Limitation and areas of future Study

The study had several limitations that should be addressed in the future research. The focus of the study was on limited private schools in Addis Ababa, thus to enhance the generalization of the findings, future studies should test the model in different area of the country. It is clear that word of mouth is important for private schools, and the literature review showed that WOM, if done properly, could result in a good reputation in building goodwill. There are limitations with regard to the sampling techniques that were used. The research was limited by the fact that a small sample of participants that were selected through purposive sampling techniques and it won't fully represent the behavior of the entire population. Besides that, the researchers should consider other variables, such as brand equity, functional quality technical quality, customer handling and so on and so far which are related to Customer satisfaction. The other the thing in this context, the focus was limited on a few private schools. To enhance the findings of this study, future studies should test the model in different areas in of Ethiopia.

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- The most important element that exists" Gordon Weaver, executive VP of marketing for Paramount Pictures, 1984 (Bayus, 1985, p.31).
- WOMC 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. (Arndt, 1967 [2, p.3].
- Richins (1983) WOMC is the act of telling at least one friend or acquaintance about the dissatisfaction [59, p.17].
- Brown and Reingen, (1987) "WOM exists at the macro level of inquiry (flows of communication across groups) as well as the micro level (flows within dyads or small groups V. 13, p.350]

Conversations motivated by salient experiences are likely to be an important part of information diffusion” Higie et al., 1987 [35, p. 459].

Bone, (1992) WOMC is an exchange of comments, thoughts, and ideas among two or more individuals in which none of the individuals represent a marketing source. V.10, p. 579.

Schueller (2015), pp. 48-50 “People trust people”

Huete-Alcocer (2017) Carr and Hayes (2014) Daugherty and Hoffmann, (2014) Consumers are always connected to each other and share experiences about brands, products or services (, pp.2-3; Barreto, 2014, p. 631;, pp.38-39;, pp. 82-83).

Fulgoni and Lipsman, (2015) (Keller and Robinson (2010), pp.1-12; Baker et al., 2016, p. 229; p. 18. “WOMC is a natural phenomenon which occurs mostly offline through face-to-face conversations”

(Steffes& Burgee, (2009); Sen &Lerman, (2007) WOM is informal communication between consumers regarding the ownership, usage, experience or characteristics of a product or service.

(Sen &Lerman (2007); Bansal &Voyer, (2000) It is usually interactive, swift and lacking in commercial bias (East et al., 2008).

WOM is one of the most powerful forces in the consumer marketplace

(Godes and Mayzlin, (2004; Brown &Reingen, (1987). WOM is considered the most credible and it has a strong influence on consumers’ attitudes

(e.g., Richins& Root-Shaffer, (1988); Richins, (1983). “Womc has a significant impact on consumer purchase behavior”

Success of a service depends on the word-of-mouth that is generated (Godes and Mayzlin, 2004). Word of mouth (WOM) ‘face-to-face communication (Carl, 2006; Nyilasy, 2005, Arndt, 1967, p. 291)

‘WOM is the act of consumers providing information to other consumers’

“Spreng and Mackroy (1996) Customer satisfaction (adapted from Effect of customer satisfaction" (Oliver, 1989. P., 1).

Customer satisfaction is among the most important marketing outcomes and most measured by companies. Indeed, Ambler (2003)

(Engel et al., (1993) and Hawkins et al., (2004) Reference group influence a wide range of consumption behaviors

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Camarero, (2007) “WOM Motivating existing customers to provide referrals is the most effective means of acquiring new customers”

(Jalivand and Samiei, (2012); Le et al., 2019; Chang and Lee, (2020) WOM communication is a crucial factor influencing customer purchase decisions

Appendix

Research Questionnaires

Questionnaire to Respondents

List of questionnaires for the Survey Study

Addis Ababa University

College of Business and Economics

School of Commerce

Department of Marketing Management

Addis Ababa

My name is **HAILAY TADESSE** and prospective graduates of Addis Ababa University school of Commerce. I'm conducting research as partial requirement for Masters of Arts degree in marketing management. The purpose of my research is to examine the **antecedents of word-of-mouth Communication** at private schools. There is no right and wrong answer. All comments, positive and negative are welcome. Feel free to express your opinion honestly and openly. The estimated duration of time to complete the questionnaire is 25 minutes. The information that you provide will be kept anonymous, highly confidential and will not be utilized for any other purpose. I would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and time.

Direction: - Write the number of your choice in the box for close-ended questions (Code) and write responses for open-ended questions in the space provided.

Segment I: I would like to ask you about socio demographic profile.

S/N	Characteristic Features	Response	Code
1	Sex of respondents	1.male 2.female	
2	Age of Respondent (in year)	-----	
3	Current marital status?	1.Single 2.Married 3.Divorced 4.Widowed 5. Other specify	
4	Educational Level?	1.Illiterate 2. Read and Write 3.Primary first cycle (1-4) 4. Primary Second cycle (5-8) 5.High School (9 -12) 6. First Degree 7. 2 nd Degree and above	

Segment II: I would like to ask you about your level of service satisfactio

5	Overall, I am satisfied with this private school.	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree	
6	Overall, parents who can choose this private school are more satisfied with their children's result.	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Either agree or disagree 5. Somewhat agree 6. Agree 7. Strongly agree	
7	Overall, more satisfied parents talk about this private school in community.	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Either agree or disagree 5. Somewhat agree 6. Agree 7. Strongly agree	

S/N	Characteristic Features	Response	Code
8	Overall, I am knowledgeable about private schools?	1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Somewhat disagree, 4. Either agree or disagree 5. Somewhat agree 6. Agree 7. Strongly agree	

Segment III. I would like to ask you about opinion leaders

9	Do you think that ever influence other people in registering their children in private school.	1.Highly unlikely 2. Unlikely 3. Somewhat unlikely 4. Neutral 5. Somewhat likely 6. Likely 7. Highly likely	Code
10	The desire to satisfy the expectations which others have him has an impact on the individual's choice of private schools.	1.Highly unlikely 2. Unlikely 3. Somewhat unlikely 4. Neutral 5. Somewhat likely 6. Likely 7. Highly likely	

14	Characteristic Features	Response	Code
15	I like introducing new private School to my friends	1.strongly disagree 2.disagree 3.somewhat disagree, 4.either agree or disagree 5.somewhat agree 6.Agree 7.strongly agree	
16	I like helping people by providing them with information about many kinds of private school's initiatives.	1.strongly disagree 2.disagree 3.somewhat disagree, 4.either agree or disagree 5.somewhat agree 6.Agree 7.strongly agree	
17	People ask me for information about private schools	1.strongly disagree 2.disagree 3.somewhat disagree, 4.either agree or	

		disagree 5.somewhat agree 6.Agree 7.strongly agree	
18	If someone asked where to get the best information on private, I could tell him or her where to look for.	1.strongly disagree 2.disagree 3.somewhat disagree, 4.either agree or disagree 5.somewhat agree 6.Agree 7.strongly agree	
19	My friend thinks of me as a good source of information when it comes to new private schools.	1.strongly disagree 2.disagree 3.somewhat disagree, 4.either agree or disagree 5.somewhat agree 6.Agree 7.strongly agree	
Segment VI: I would like to ask you about WOM			
20	WOM is the key acquisition channels among the thoughtful	1.strongly disagree 2.disagree	

		marketing tactics to attract new parents.	<p>3.somewhat disagree,</p> <p>4.either agree or disagree</p> <p>5.somewhat agree</p> <p>6.Agree</p> <p>7.strongly agree</p>	
	21	Motivating the parents committee to provide referrals is the most effective means of acquiring new parents.	<p>1.strongly disagree</p> <p>2.disagree</p> <p>3.somewhat disagree,</p> <p>4.either agree or disagree</p> <p>5.somewhat agree</p> <p>6.Agree</p> <p>7.strongly agree</p>	
	22	WOM is the source of credible and genuine information at private schools.	<p>1.strongly disagree</p> <p>2.disagree</p> <p>3.somewhat disagree,</p> <p>4.either agree or disagree</p> <p>5.somewhat agree</p> <p>6.Agree</p> <p>7.strongly agree</p>	