

Mums trust mums on the net, according to study

20 August 2014, by Sandra Hutchinson



Australian study finds mums trust other mums on the internet.

Facebook groups for mothers are overtaking the traditional mums-and-bubs and playgroup environments as a source of trusted advice, and offers a largely untapped marketing tool for businesses wanting to sell their products, an Australian study has found.

QUT educationalist Dr Rebecca English and marketing expert Dr Raechel Johns from the University of Canberra said word-of-mouth in [mothers'](#) groups and communities had fast become a major influence in mothers' buying habits.

The study, Mothers' influencing mothers: the use of virtual discussion boards and their influence on

consumption, was published in the International Journal of Web Based Communities.

Dr English said where mums' primary source of sharing information used to be face-to-face at mums' groups or playgroups, the growing popularity of [virtual communities](#) specifically for mums, was opening the door to a new trusted source of information.

"Our study found that mothers trust mothers and that mothers tend to trust the opinions of other mothers when they recommend a product," she said

"It is not surprising that social media makes a contribution towards the buying behaviour of its users, but what is surprising is the strength of these non-face-to-face opinions in online mothers' groups and communities.

"Repeated interactions with the community and the accumulation of trust make the effect stronger still, as the community matures.

"The study found the effect is strongest among mothers with the same number of children who are the similar ages."

Dr English said in terms of implications for advertisers and marketers hoping to increase sales, fostering word-of-mouth was essential in these online environments.

"Recommendations from other mothers are more powerful than any other structured promotion," she said.

"Organic promotion, for example using free product trials by well-connected or influential [mums](#), is one way to tap into this market."

But Dr English warned there were dangers for businesses.

She said although there were benefits of positive word-of-mouth, bad reviews could hold as much weight against a product as a positive review.

More information: "Mothers influencing mothers: the use of virtual discussion boards and their influence on consumption." Raechel Johns; Rebecca English, *Int. J. of Web Based Communities*, 2014 Vol.10, No.3, pp.319 - 338, www.inderscience.com/info/inarticle.php?artid=62945

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