









From a buyer's viewpoint, the internet provides a number of advantages, including increased efficiency and ease of use, more comprehensive product information, and a greater selection of products, prices, and product customization. The information revolution has meant that vast amounts of data have become available to consumers and can be accessed at any time. The accessibility of information has empowered consumers to directly influence the decision-making process in huge organizations (Oliveira, Gonçalves, Martins & Branco, 2018). Furthermore, customers' experiences of using social media platforms in turn might influence their buying behaviors (Chianga, Weib, Parker & Daveyd, 2017). Over time, social networks have become integrated into consumers' "day-to-day" lives; users engage in social activities, share their opinions of the products they use, and observe the products used by others. The facilities provided by social media platforms have posed dilemmas for consumers, forcing them to choose between their needs, desires, and temptations when shopping online. Researchers also argue that such platforms encourage consumers to buy impulsively at an unconscious level (Zafar, Qiu, Li, Wang & Shahzad, 2019). At the same time, social media is considered a transformational tool for consumers, removing their limitations, and allowing them to transform their lives (Nelson, 2017).

### **1.1.3. Celebrity Endorsement**

Using celebrities to market products is a longstanding and central strategy used by many global companies. In a marketplace where effective advertising campaigns play a vital role, companies have initiated all possible actions to influence and motivate customers to make a purchase. People view celebrities as representatives for the products and brands they advertise, enforcing a better image of the product in the consumer mindset (Katyal 2007). Some companies have spent billions of dollars for superstar endorsement, and famous figures such as Liz Hurley, Britney Spears, and Tiger Woods, have played an important role in the advertising industry (Shvary & Schwer, 2000; Kambtsis et al., 2002). Celebrity endorsement has been employed across an increasing range of industries and product types, and with the emergence of online marketing, this strategy has been adapted to incorporate celebrity social media accounts.

### **1.1.4. Recommendations from Friends**

Recommendations are a major new trend in social media marketing whereby customers purchase a product and then recommend the product to their friends. Current purchases can be linked with past purchases through status updates and news feeds. In addition, the use of social media presents a valuable tool for firms, whereby the satisfied user of a product could recommend that product to other potential users by clicking a “like” button or mentioning the product to another customer. In this way, social media platforms are replacing traditional product reviews with a new, digital format. Today’s customers may often rely on the endorsement or opinion of a friend or colleague within their social media network when making purchasing decisions (Forbes, L. and Forbes, L, 2019).

### **1.2. Research Objectives**

Having examined the relevant literature in this area, we have identified three key research objectives:

- To investigate the impact of social media on the buying behavior of consumers in Oman
- To identify whether recommendations from friends have an impact on the buying behavior of consumers in Oman
- To explore whether celebrity endorsements have an impact on the buying behavior of consumers in Oman

### **1.3. Hypothesis**

The study concentrates on various attributes and behaviors that will be used to ascertain whether social media use has an impact on consumer buying behavior. Taking into consideration the study’s scope and depth and the evidence presented in the literature review, the following hypothesis statements were formulated:

**H1:** Social media marketing has an impact on consumer buying behavior.

**H2:** Recommendations from friends have an impact on consumer buying behavior.

**H3:** Celebrity endorsements have an impact on consumer buying behavior.

## 2. Methodology

To collect data, an initial baseline survey was conducted. Hard copies of the survey were distributed from the College of Banking and Financial Studies, located in Bawshar, Muscat, in the Sultanate of Oman, to a sample of 250 consumers from different regions in Oman. We received valid responses from 190 consumers.

The questionnaire was composed of 20 questions divided between two categories. The questionnaire was submitted to all participants and examined different aspects of social media use and its impact on consumers' daily lives. The first category included general information about the participant (gender, age, academic qualifications, income, and region); the second category included survey questions exploring whether customers used online and mobile shopping applications such as Amazon, eBay, etc., and if so, the frequency of their use. Participants were also asked:

- To identify the delivery services, they used
- To rate their satisfaction with the speed and efficiency of those delivery services
- To identify the social media platforms, they used regularly
- To give the frequency of their use of these social media platforms
- Whether they were affected by online social media influencers
- The likelihood that they would buy a product because of recommendations from friends
- How much they participated in cross-selling

The questionnaire also included more detailed questions regarding the categories outlined above.

## 3. Data Collection and Analysis

The study's primary data was collected using structured questionnaires which were distributed to individuals across the region. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various statements regarding using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree).

**Table 1. Participant Demographics**

| <b>Gender</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Male          | 67               | 35.3              |
| Female        | 123              | 64.7              |
| Total         | 190              | 100.0             |

**Table 2. Participant Age**

| <b>Age</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 20-29      | 158              | 83.2              |
| 30-40      | 31               | 16.3              |
| 41-49      | 1                | 0.5               |
| Total      | 190              | 100.0             |

**Table 3. Participant Qualifications**

| <b>Qualification Level</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| High School                | 57               | 30.0              |
| Diploma                    | 47               | 24.7              |
| Bachelor's Degree          | 83               | 43.7              |
| Master's Degree or Higher  | 3                | 1.6               |
| Total                      | 190              | 100.0             |

**Table 4. Participant Income**

| <b>Income</b>     | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Less than 500 OMR | 119              | 62.6              |
| More than 500 OMR | 71               | 37.4              |
| Total             | 190              | 100.0             |



**Table4. Participant Region**

| <b>Region</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|---------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Muscat        | 155              | 81.6              |
| Dhofar        | 3                | 1.6               |
| Al Batinah    | 22               | 11.6              |
| Other         | 10               | 5.3               |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>190</b>       | <b>100.0</b>      |

We used Excel to compile descriptive statistics and develop a multivariate regression model from the study data. The questionnaire was designed and structured well and met all aspects of the purpose of the study. The consistency of the survey instrument was tested using Cronbach's alpha. The test checked whether respondents' scores for each attribute tended to be related to their scores for other attributes. An alpha coefficient equal to or greater than 0.75 is considered an acceptable indication of construct reliability. The Cronbach's alpha for the survey questions in this study was 0.83, indicating a good level of internal consistency.

#### **4. Demographic Profile of Sample Data**

Primary data: Structured questionnaire

Secondary data: Obtained from online journals and magazines.

Sampling method: Snowball.

#### **5. Data Collection Procedure**

We distributed by hand hard copies of the questionnaire to a sample of 250 consumers from different regions in Oman and received 190 responses back. The results were entered into SPP and an Excel spreadsheet.

### 3.3. Regression Analysis

**Table 5. Regression Analysis**

| <i>Regression Statistics</i> |           |             |           |            |                       |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|------------|-----------------------|
| Multiple R                   | 0.32      |             |           |            |                       |
| R <sup>2</sup>               | 0.10      |             |           |            |                       |
| Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>      | 0.09      |             |           |            |                       |
| Standard Error               | 0.84      |             |           |            |                       |
| Observations                 | 190       |             |           |            |                       |
| <i>ANOVA</i>                 |           |             |           |            |                       |
|                              | <i>Df</i> | <i>SS</i>   | <i>MS</i> | <i>F</i>   | <i>Significance F</i> |
| Regression                   | 3         | 15.87240483 | 5.290802  | 7.43942707 | 9.87601E-05           |
| Residual                     | 186       | 132.2802267 | 0.711184  |            |                       |
| Total                        | 189       | 148.1526316 |           |            |                       |

| <i>Coefficients</i> | <i>Standard</i> | <i>t Stat</i> | <i>P-value</i> | <i>Lower 95%</i> | <i>Upper</i> | <i>Lower</i> | <i>Upper</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|

|   | <i>Error</i> |             |          |            |             | <i>95%</i> | <i>95.0%</i> | <i>95.0%</i> |
|---|--------------|-------------|----------|------------|-------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Intercept                                   | 1.301089626  | 0.253205903 | 5.138465 | 6.9658E-07 | 0.801564991 | 1.8006143  | 0.80156499   | 1.800614261  |
| X Variable 1 (Social media marketing)       | 0.019026893  | 0.082393372 | 0.230927 | 0.81762496 | -0.14351876 | 0.1815725  | -0.1435188   | 0.181572547  |
| X Variable 2 (Recommendation from a friend) | 0.119684022  | 0.078161903 | 1.531232 | 0.12741103 | -0.03451379 | 0.2738818  | -0.0345138   | 0.273881834  |
| X Variable 3 (Celebrity endorsement)        | 0.290849738  | 0.079734724 | 3.647717 | 0.00034346 | 0.133549066 | 0.4481504  | 0.13354907   | 0.44815041   |



### 3.4. Interpretation

Table 5 provides a summary of the regression model which indicates projected consumer buying behaviors based on various attributes of social media. The R value (0.32) presented in the model summary table indicates a positive correlation among all five attributes under study. The  $R^2$  (0.10) value indicates how much of the total variation in the dependent variable (consumer buying behavior) can be explained by the independent variables. In this study,  $R^2$  is 0.10, indicating that the model explained 10% of the variations in overall impact on customer buying behaviors. The results of the ANOVA also show that the regression model predicts the dependent variable significantly well. The F-statistics show that the overall model is highly significant and a good fit at the 5% level ( $0.00 \leq 0.05$ ) of significance, indicating that the model has a significant positive impact on customer buying behavior.

The multivariate regression model can be written as:

$$\text{Overall Impact on Buying Behavior} = 1.30 + (0.01)(X1) + (0.11)(X2) + 0.29(X3) + \text{Error}$$

As observed in the model outlined above, all attributes of social media were found to have a significant positive impact on consumer buying behavior.

## 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper attempted to investigate the impact of social media on consumer buying behavior. The results of the regression analysis indicate that attributes of social media have a significant positive effect on overall consumer buying behavior. The results of the study have significant implications for understanding patterns of customer buying behavior pertaining to social media.

### 4.1. Study Limitations

The time frame were only 6 months and sample size of the study were limited to less than 250. Additionally, while the study considered three attributes of social media, observation of the collected data suggested that the inclusion of more attributes in the study may have improved the accuracy of the model. Out of 250 questionnaires, sent

through various modes, the turn-up rate was 76% as we have expected higher rate of participation.

## 4.2. Statement of Disclosure

No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

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