Acknowledgement

Thanks to God and may His peace and blessings be bestowed upon all his prophets for granting me the chance and the ability to successfully complete this study. To the casual observer, a doctoral dissertation may appear to be solitary work. However, to complete a project of this magnitude requires a network of support, and I am indebted to many people.

I am most especially grateful to my parents, for their support and extraordinary courage. I wish to express my deepest gratitude to my Guide Dr. B.B. Ahuja for his moral support, valuable advice and guidance on this work. He has been a constant source of help and inspiration to me. He gave a lot of freedom in my research work, and has been extremely supportive and understanding at all the times. Special thanks and gratitude to Dr. S.K. Basu, Professor Emeritus for his genuine support, valuable advice and sincere comments which helped me a lot to finish this study. I would like to sincerely thank Dr. A. D. Sahasrabudhe, Director, College of Engineering, Pune, for providing support, encouragement and help in completing my thesis.

Many thanks to the Internal Progress Committee members, Dr. M. R. Nandgaonkar, Dr. N. K. Nath, Prof. K.G. Patil whose comments and criticism were helpful in refining the proposed methodologies. I am grateful to the faculty of Production Engineering Department of College of Engineering, Pune, especially Dr. Mrs. N. R. Rajhans, Prof. S. M. Patil, Prof. B.U. Sonawane for sharing their laboratory and other facilities and timely help.

I am grateful to the authority of the College of Engineering, Pune for supporting field, laboratory and office work. I am also grateful to the authority of the University of Pune for allowing me to undertake the present work.

I am indebted to the authorities of TATA MOTORS LIMITED, Mr. S.P. Joshi (Head, Customer Support), Mr. K. Chandrasekhar (G.M. QA Deptt.), Mr.
Avinash Dharmadhikari (G.M. Reliability ERP), Mr. A.V. Karmarkar (D.G.M. QA Deptt.), Mr. P.Y. Deo (A.G.M. QA Deptt.), Mr. A.V. Likhite (A.G.M. AD Deptt.) for their untiring efforts in practical assistance and cooperation in data collection and related field work, in spite of their frantic schedules.

Many thanks to the authorities of Tata Distribution Company Ltd., Mr. Amol Joshi (DGM Vehicles Distribution Cell) and others for their exclusive help in providing the required information and field data.

My heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Vijay Gokhale (Owner- Pandit Auto Ltd.) for his guidance and cooperation by allowing me to interact with the marketing and sales experts in his vehicle showrooms.

I wish to place on records my thanks to the authorities of HINDUSTAN UNILEVER LIMITED and Aparna Distributors Ltd., Pune, Mr. P.S. Karmarkar-(Head, Distribution Cell) and others for allowing me to analyze their Supply Chain, furnishing necessary details and extending wholehearted cooperation in field activities.

Many thanks to the authorities of D Y Patil College of Engineering, Akurdi, Pune, to mention- Director Col. S.K. Joshi and Principal Dr. Mrs. Prachi Warnekar whose encouragement really expedited my work. I am also thankful to the numerous individuals who have directly or indirectly contributed to the completion of this work. Finally, I am particularly grateful to my husband Mr. Sunil S. Bindu, for helping and assisting me in all the stages of this work. Without his help this study would never have been possible.

Mrs. Rupa Sunil Bindu