CHAPTER 8

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter lists the major findings and concludes it by discussing the implications of the results. The chapter acknowledges the unique findings of the study indicating the significant addition to knowledge base. Limitations of the study have also been described in the chapter. Future prospects of the study have also been briefed in the chapter. The chapter ends with giving valuable suggestions to the marketers.

8.1 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to describe the demographic profile of consumers using digital channels of communication, the most preferred digital channels of communication, consumers’ attitude towards digital marketing communication, impact of digital marketing communication on consumer buying decision making process and the factors which could be leveraged by the car marketers to effectively their brand in Indian car market. The section given below details the findings of the study.

8.1.1 Demographic Profile of Customers using Digital Channels of Communication

Variables like age, education, income, occupation, gender, place of living and car brands, were used in the study. The major findings are as follows:

1. A significant association was found between ‘age’ (Table 4.9, p. 80), ‘occupation’ (Table 4.14, p. 86) and ‘gender’ (Table 4.19, p. 92) of the respondents with both the channels of communication while buying a car.

2. The frequency of using digital channels was significantly higher than that of traditional channels of communication across all age groups (Fig. 4.1, pp. 78) and occupational categories (Fig. 4.3, p. 85) for both male and female respondents (Fig. 4.5, p. 91).

3. Respondents belonging to 18-25 years age group followed by 26-30 years made the maximum use of digital channels of communication while buying a car. 36-40 years age group made the least use of digital channels of communication (Table 4.8, p. 79).

4. Respondents belonging to service occupational category made the maximum use of digital channels of communication while buying a car, followed by the respondents belonging to student category (Table 4.13, p. 86).
5. Male respondents used digital channels of communication more than the female respondents (Table 4.18, p. 91).

6. Association of particular digital channel of communication was seen with age, and it was found that channels like websites, social networking sites, ‘YouTube’, and smartphones were used by respondents across all age groups bearing no specific association with particular age group. Mobile phone as a digital communication channel was used the most by the respondents above 40 years of age. Online communities and Digital TV were used the most by the respondents belonging to 18-25 years age group (Table 4.10, p. 81).

7. Association of occupation and gender was also seen with particular digital channel of communication and it was found that respondents belonging to service occupational category used mobile phone as a digital channel of communication while buying a car (Table 4.15, p. 88). However, gender of the respondents was not found significantly associated with any particular digital channel of communication (Table 4.20, p. 93).

8. Variables like annual household income (Table 4.17, p. 90), education (Table 4.12, p. 84), place of living (Table 4.22, p. 95) and car brand (Table 4.24, p. 97), were not found significantly associated with channels of communication (traditional as well as digital) while buying a car.

9. The study identified three distinct customers’ segments/clusters that used digital channels of communication while buying a car (Table 4.26, p. 99). First segment comprised of respondents belonging to 26-30 years age group mainly in business as an occupational category and was named as ‘Progressive Enterprisers’. Second segment comprised of students belonging to 18-25 years of age group and was named as ‘Young Digital Legions’. Third segment had the respondents belonging to service category in the 36-40 years age group and was named as ‘Occupied Wrights’. Age of the respondents contributed the maximum towards clustering with 97% contribution followed by occupation of the respondents with 55% contribution (p. 101).

The findings have important implications for the car marketers as they must understand that digital channels of communication are mainly used by the young customers. These customers also have their preferences for particular digital channels of communication. So, targeting these customers with their preferred channel of communication should produce good business results for the marketers. The results also infer that digital technologies have crossed the boundaries of urban metropolitan establishments and are registering its presence across semi-urban and rural areas as well.

8.1.2 Most Preferred Digital Channels of Communication

The study aimed to assess the most preferred digital channel of communication and major findings are as follows:

1. It was found from the study that digital channels were emerging as major source of communication while buying a car. Three fourth (75%) of the respondents were
using at least one digital channel of communication while buying a car (Table 5.1, p. 103). About two third (67%) of the respondents, used traditional channel of communication along with digital channel of communication. There were only quarter (25%) of the respondents who didn’t use digital channels of communication and only used traditional channels of communication. There were 23% of respondents who exclusively used digital channels of communication while buying a car (Table 5.2, p. 104).

2. Website was the most used digital channel of communication while buying a car used by an overwhelming majority (87%) of the respondents followed by social networking sites, used by less than majority (45%) of the respondents and smartphones used by 43% of them. ‘YouTube’ was used by 41% of respondents while buying a car. Email was used by an insignificant percentage (4%) of the respondents and emerged as the least used digital channel of communication while buying a car (Fig. 5.1, p. 105).

3. The study also explained the reason(s) for using digital channels of communication and found that websites and ‘YouTube’ were used while buying a car because of being compatible with other digital devices. Social networking sites, smartphones, digital outdoors and emails were used for being informative in nature. Online communities were used for getting other customers’ and experts’ reviews. Digital TV was used for being easy to use (Table 5.22, p.120).

The findings imply that car marketers in India must apprehend the fact that Indian car buyers are using both digital and traditional channels of communication while buying a car. However, use of digital channels of communication is increasing in car buying decision process. Consumers prefer digital channels of communication over traditional channels because of inherent characteristics of these channels like being compatible, informative, offering customers’ and experts’ reviews and easy to use to name the most prominent.

8.1.3 Consumers’ Attitude towards Digital Marketing Communication

The study aimed to assess the attitude of the respondents towards digital marketing communication and it was found that respondents had positive attitude towards digital marketing communication (Table 6.4, p. 125). However authenticity of the information and technicality of the digital media were cited as major concerns by the respondents. The major findings (as reported in Table 6.3, p. 124) are as follows:

1. A vast majority (72%) of the respondents agreed that digital marketing communication is informative in nature facilitating easy evaluation of car brands.
2. Digital marketing communication was considered being interactive by a vast majority (73%) of the respondents.
3. Relevant nature of digital marketing communication was acknowledged by a vast majority (69%) of respondents.
4. About three fourth (74%) of the respondents appreciated the quick nature of digital marketing communication by accepting that digital marketing communication saves time while buying a car.

5. About two third (66%) of the respondents considered digital channels of communication being ‘compatible’ facilitating easy availability of experts’ advice and an informed decision while buying a car. Another good majority (58%) of the respondents found digital marketing channels easy to use.

6. A simple majority of the respondents found digital marketing communication as low cost (54%) alternative to the traditional communication and offering best value deals (55%) to the respondents.

7. Digital marketing communication results in easy selection of car brand as a good majority (61%) of the respondents accepted this fact in the study.

8. A good majority (65%) of the respondents found digital marketing communication being technical in nature.

9. Half (50%) of respondents considered digital communication non-authentic and less trustworthy in nature.

10. Less than majority (46%) of the respondents considered using digital marketing communication while buying a car a good idea which also depicts the bright side of digital marketing communication in Indian car market.

The findings propose that car marketers must understand the fact that customers are appreciating the various characteristics of digital marketing communication despite being considered as ‘technical’ and ‘less trustworthy’. Customers are using digital marketing communication in their car buying decision process. Hence, it is a challenge for marketers to do away with the negative beliefs associated with digital marketing communication while promoting their brands using digital media.

8.1.4 Impact of Digital Marketing Communication on Consumer Buying Decision Process

It was found from the study that digital marketing communication significantly affects the entire consumer buying decision process while buying a car. The main findings of the study are as follows:

1. Digital marketing communication had an effect on the need recognition stage of consumer buying decision process by making them aware of their needs of buying a new car (Fig. 7.2, p. 133). Less than a majority (44%) of the respondents accepted that digital marketing communication made them ‘aware’ of their need of buying a car (Fig. 7.1, p. 132).

2. The usage of digital channel of communication was higher in comparison to traditional communication channel while buying a car. A good majority (66%) of the respondents in the study agreed that they had started using digital channels more in comparison to traditional communication channel while buying a car (Table 7.3, p. 134).
3. Respondents preferred digital channels for information search because they believed digital channels were easy to use and interactive in nature. Respondents used digital channels in search for information stage because of offering relevant and huge quantity of information and reducing the time taken in searching for information (Table 7.4, p. 136). A vast majority (72%) of the respondents agreed that digital marketing communication helped reducing the visits to showroom (Table 7.3, p. 134).

4. Digital marketing communication helped respondents in evaluation stage by offering them easy access to experts’ advice. A vast majority (72%) of the respondents accepted that other customers’ reviews available over digital media helped them in easy evaluation of car brands. Three fourth (75%) of the respondents accepted that car brands can be easily compared over digital media (Table 7.5, p. 137).

5. It was also found that respondents felt positive towards the brands with maximum positive reviews. A good majority (67%) of the respondents in the study accepted that they felt ‘positive’ towards the car brands with maximum positive reviews over digital media. Consumers also gave more importance to ‘consensus recommendations’ rather than manufacturer’s claim about various car brands as a good majority (59%) of the respondents believed more in ‘consensus recommendations’ while evaluating the car brands (Table 7.5, p. 137).

6. Digital marketing communication affected the selection and purchase stage of car buying decision process by assisting in easy selection of car brands. A simple majority (51%) of respondents believed that digital marketing communication results in easy selection of car dealers (Table 7.7, p. 139).

7. A good majority (61%) of the respondents accepted that they might change the considered brand after searching online. An overwhelming majority (80%) of respondents intended to join the online forums, blogs and SNS of car brands, subscribe the newsletter (79%) and participate in online discussions (78%) about cars (Table 7.7, p. 139).

8. A simple majority (56%) of the respondents accepted that ‘finance’ facility is easily available over digital media. A less than majority (45%) of the respondents agreed that they could ‘pre-pone’ their buying decision because of digital marketing communication (Table 7.7, p. 139).

9. A good majority (63%) of the respondents said they could buy the car on the basis of online information. Most of the respondents remained cynical about buying the car online as little more than one third (36%) of the respondents in the study accepted that they would ‘book a car online’ (Table 7.7, p. 139).

10. Digital marketing communication affected the post purchase stage of consumer decision making process whereby less than majority (46%) of the respondents felt that using digital communication throughout the decision making process is a good idea. A good majority (69%) of the respondents said they would share the feedback about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction over digital media after the ‘purchase’ of the vehicle (Table 7.9, p. 142).
11. About three fourth (76%) of the respondents accepted that they would like to recommend the exciting digital content about cars they come across to their friends (Table 7.9, p. 142).

12. Evaluation stage was the most affected stage of consumer decision making process due to digital marketing communication while buying a car followed by search for information stage. Need recognition was the least affected stage due to digital marketing communication (Table 7.11, p. 143).

13. The association of various digital channels with stages of consumer buying decision process was seen and it was observed that social networking sites were used the most by the respondents in need recognition stage (Table 7.14, p. 145).

14. Digital channels like websites (Table 7.13, p. 145), digital outdoors (Table 7.19, p. 148) and digital TV (Table 7.20, p. 148), were used the most in search for information stage.

15. Social networking sites (Table 7.14, p. 145), mobile phones (Table 7.16, p. 146), smartphones (Table 7.17, p. 147) and online communities (Table 7.18, p. 147) were the most used digital channels in evaluation stage.

16. YouTube was used the most in selection and purchase stage of buying decision process (Table 7.15, p. 146).

17. Respondents used Emails the most in the post-purchase stage (Table 7.21, p. 149).

The findings have important implications for the car marketers whereby they must comprehend that digital marketing communication is affecting this high involvement product category i.e. car. It is interesting to see that digital marketing communication is capable of affecting the need recognition stage also, which is normally considered intrinsic in nature for products lying in extended problem solving category. Marketers must also appreciate the fact that although customers are using digital channels more in comparison to traditional channels of communication, they are relying more on consensus recommendations rather than manufacturers’ claims. So, it becomes a challenge for marketers to know what has been written /said about them over digital media. Customers are getting affected from other customers’ and experts’ reviews which are also affecting the timing of the purchase and selection of brands and dealers. Marketers can find such situations difficult to handle where in claims made by them through advertisements are not subsequently endorsed by the other customers over digital media. Customers also have their preferences towards digital channels of communication for specific stage of buying decision process. Marketers must apprehend the preferred channels’ choice beforehand for a particular stage of buying decision process. Marketers must understand that although, consumers search for information over digital channels and research about the brands and dealers, but are hesitant in buying a car online. Consumers are more likely to actually see the product before buying. So, there could be a scope of leveraging the traditional channels of communication and strong persuasion techniques which might take the advantage of aroused interest stage kindled by digital channels of communication.
8.1.5 Identifying the Factors that can be leveraged by Marketers

The study aimed to determine the factors which could be leveraged by the marketer to effectively market the given product in the market by using Decomposed Theory of Planned Behaviour model given by Taylor and Todd (1995a). The main findings are as follows:

1. Decomposed theory of planned behaviour was successful in predicting the usage intentions of digital marketing communication while buying a car (Table 7.28, p. 157).

2. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and compatibility were significant predictors of attitude. Compatibility explained the maximum variation (28%) followed by perceived usefulness (26%) in the attitude towards digital marketing communication (Eq. 7.1, p. 159). All three variables collectively explained 20% of the variation in the attitude of the respondents towards using digital marketing communication while buying a car (Fig. 7.3, p. 158).

3. Covariance was observed among the perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and compatibility. Compatibility and perceived ease of use were 53% co-varying with one another. Perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness observed a covariance of 13%. 6% covariance was observed between compatibility and perceived usefulness (Fig. 7.3, p. 158).

4. Family, friends and online friends affected the use of digital marketing communication while buying a car as all three variables were found significant predictors of subjective norms. Family (97%) and friends (92%) explained the maximum variation in the subjective norms. Online friends explained 91% variation in the subjective norms. Family, friends and online friends were significant predictors of subjective norms and explained 31% of the variation in the latter (Eq. 7.2, p. 159).

5. Self-efficacy, resource facilitating conditions and technology facilitating conditions significantly affected perceived behavioural control and explained 13% of the variation. Self-efficacy explained the maximum variation (25%) in perceived behavioural control followed by resource facilitating conditions and technology facilitating conditions each explaining 15% of the variation (Eq. 7.3, p. 159).

6. The model also suggested the covariance among self-efficacy, resource facilitating conditions and technology facilitating conditions. 15% covariance was observed between resource facilitating conditions and technology facilitating conditions and 11% covariance was observed between resource facilitating conditions and self-efficacy and self-efficacy and technology facilitating conditions (Fig. 7.3, p. 160).

7. Attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control taken together as per decomposed TPB significantly affected the usage intentions and explained 63% of the variation. Perceived behavioural control explained a maximum of 57% of the variation in the usage intentions of the respondents, followed by attitude which explained 50% of the variation in usage intentions. Subjective norms explained 15% of the variation in usage intentions (Eq. 7.4, p. 160).
8. Usage intentions which were considered proxy to actual usage; were found significantly affecting actual usage and explained 39% of the variation. Perceived behavioural control also significantly affected actual usage and explained 33% of the variation. Perceived behavioural control and usage intentions together explained 41% variation in actual usage of digital marketing communication while buying a car (Eq. 7.5, p. 160).

9. Some inter-constructs covariance was also observed in the model (Fig. 7.3, p. 158). Technology facilitating conditions were found co-varying (43%) with perceived usefulness. Self-efficacy was also found co-varying (34%) with perceived ease of use and compatibility (39%).

10. Perceived behavioural control had the maximum potential to affect the digital marketing usage intentions while buying a car. This variable, if leveraged by the marketers can help the marketers to market the given product more effectively (Fig. 7.3, p. 158).

The findings have interesting implications for the marketers as customers’ intentions of using digital marketing communication are affected from attitude towards technology, opinion other important people in customers’ circle, beliefs about capability and availability of resources and technology related factors. Marketers might find it challenging to leverage all the factors affecting usage intentions positively ensuring the use of digital marketing communication while buying a car.

Consumers would use the digital marketing communication when they consider it offering benefits like being informative and offering customers’ reviews and experts’ advice which facilitate easy selection of car brands and an informed decision. Consumers should also feel themselves at ease while using digital channels of communication. Digital channels should ‘fit’ in the consumer’s existing pattern of searching information without demanding significant changes in behaviour. Given the complex nature of digital technology demanding changes in existing behavioural patterns, marketers may find it difficult to motivate customers for using digital communication channels.

Consumers are getting affected from the opinion of their family and friends regarding use of digital channels of communication. Marketer here also might not be able to influence all important people in customers’ circle regarding the use of digital marketing communication while buying a car. It is extremely important for customers to feel comfortable using digital marketing communication while buying a car. Customers prefer technology to be cost effective, compatible with other devices and trustworthy. Putting customers extremely at ease for new innovative marketing practices might not be feasible always for the marketers.

8.1.6 Digital Marketing Trends in Indian Car Market

Indian passenger car market has been one of the top digital spenders since the year 2009. In year 2010, 10% of total advertising budget of the industry was spent on digital platforms by Indian passenger car market players which rose to 14% by the year 2014. Automobile sector contributed the most towards digital ad spending in India in
the year 2015 just after ‘FMCG’. Automobile sector spent 16% of its total advertising budget amounting to Rs. 724 crores towards digital platforms in the year 2016. Indian automobile industry used social media as a prominent digital channel which experienced a growth of 114% from the year 2009-13. The growth in social media spend was highest for ‘India’ among the markets like ‘Italy’, ‘Russia’, ‘Brazil’ and ‘France’. Also, it is further expected to increase by 41% by the year 2018 (Section 1.8, p. 24).

All major players namely ‘Maruti’, ‘Hyundai’, ‘Tata’, ‘Honda’, ‘Mahindra’, ‘Ford’, ‘Renault’, ‘Toyota’, ‘Volkswagen’ and others, used various available digital communication channels like websites, social networking sites, blogs, online communities, mobile phones and smartphones communicate with their target customers. Car marketers also made use of ‘YouTube’, the largest video sharing site to promote their vehicle. Hyundai, the second largest car market player did a live screen of vehicle’s launch on ‘YouTube’ (Section 1.8, p. 25). Companies like Maruti, Tata Mahindra and Renault designed dedicated websites for their new vehicles and asked customers to book the newly launched vehicle using digital channels (Section 1.8, pp. 24-27). Companies like Renault, Maruti and Tata created special forums for its loyal customer base. Renault India used blogger programs to launch the vehicle including top forty bloggers of India. Company also partnered with ‘Paytm’ wallet for booking its compact car ‘Kwid’ in ‘Delhi’ and National Capital Region (Section 1.8, p. 26).

The digital marketing trend in Indian car market presents an optimistic side whereby Indian car marketers are making generous use of digital media to communicate with their target customers. This trend is expected to increase in future with the augmentation of digital technologies in India.

### 8.1.7 Reasons for Not Using Digital Channels of Communication

25% respondents in the study didn’t use digital channels of communication (Table 5.1, p. 104). The study aimed to assess the reasons which accounted for non-use of digital communication while buying a car. Technicality of the medium, lack of knowledge and time and no trust for digital information, were the major reasons leading towards non-use of digital communication while buying a car (Table 6.5, p. 126). The major findings (as reported in Fig. 6.1, p. 127) were as follows:

1. 36% of the respondents didn’t use digital channel of communication because of its technical nature.
2. About one third (32%) of the respondents accepted that they didn’t have enough knowledge about the digital channels. 31% of the respondents expressed that they didn’t have enough time to explore the digital marketing communication.
3. Little less than quarter (23%) of respondents didn’t trust the information available over digital channels.
4. 19% respondents in the study acknowledged that they were not aware of all the digital channels.
5. 11% of the respondents stated that they didn’t find digital communication interesting enough to entice them.

6. 8% respondents cited cost as a reason for not using digital channels of communication.

7. Two customer segments were identified in the study that made use of only traditional channels of communication while buying a car (Table 6.8, p. 128). First segment comprised of respondents above 40 years of age belonging to business category and was named as ‘Traditional Laggards’. Second segment was composed of respondents in service occupational category belonging to 26 to 30 years age group and was named as ‘Struggling Learners’.

The findings reveal important insights for marketers which include that customers don’t using digital channels of communication because of being technical in nature. Given the technical nature of digital marketing communication, marketers might find it challenging to eliminate this particular belief impeding the use of digital marketing communication. Many customers are not using digital channels of communication because of lack of knowledge about the former. Marketers must understand that their target customers should have adequate knowledge about all the digital channels used by the marketers in order to use them while buying a car. Marketer might find it difficult to target customers who don’t have sufficient time to explore the digital marketing communication channel while buying a car. Such customers’ buyer readiness stage can be known with traditional channels of communication and can be targeted at the time of purchase with succinct yet effective piece of digital communication. Marketers must develop consumers’ trust in digital technologies which would promote the use of digital channels of communication.

8.2 CONCLUSION

Digital marketing communication has number of characteristics that make it the preferred communication alternative of modern era. The impact of digital marketing communication has been significant in categories like electronics, fashion, online music and games and many others. India, with the increasing number of internet users, rural population joining the digital revolution, decreasing data prices, internet enabled cheap priced devices and overall enthusiasm around digital platforms, technology and devices; has put itself one of the leading countries on global platform in terms of digital statistics. Indian passenger car market has been one of the largest digital spenders for last decade and consumers are resorting to digital platforms for completing important activities before buying a car. It is concluded from the study that digital marketing communication is affecting the consumer buying decision process while buying a car.

According to the study, website emerged as the most used digital channel of communication while buying a car followed by social networking sites, smartphones and ‘YouTube’. Digital marketing communication has eased the evaluation process by facilitating easy comparison which also helped respondents making an informed decision. Respondents also altered their selection in terms of dealers, brands and models after researching online about the vehicle. Respondents paid greater attention to other
customers’ reviews rather than marketers’ claims while making a car buying decision. Respondents also appreciated the use of digital communication while buying a car. Respondents however, were hesitant in making online payment for booking of the car. The study also detailed the reasons for use of various digital channels in car buying decision process. The study revealed the important customer segments that are most likely to use digital channels of communication while buying a car.

Respondents had positive attitude towards digital marketing characteristics due to inherent features of the latter. Respondents expressed their trust for digital marketing communication. However, study also analyzed the respondents who didn’t make use of digital communication due to its technical nature and lack of knowledge about digital technologies. Theory of Planned Behaviour (Decomposed) model was used to predict the intentions to use digital marketing communication while buying a car. The model was successful in explaining the usage intentions and explained 63% variation in the intentions to use digital marketing communication while buying a car. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and compatibility affected the attitude while buying a car. Compatibility explained the maximum variation in consumers’ attitude. It was identified in the study that friends, family and online friends affected the subjective norms and eventually the usage intentions. Self-efficacy, which dealt with being comfortable with the technology and ability of an individual to use digital technologies without anybody’s help, affected the perceived behavioural control which ultimately affected the usage intentions. Usage intentions were also found affecting the actual usage of digital marketing communication while buying a car.

8.3 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study concluded that 75% of respondents used at least one digital channel of communication while buying a car. There were 23% of respondents who exclusively used digital channels of communication while buying a car. Website emerged as the most used digital channel of communication by the respondents followed by social networking sites. Smartphone emerged as the most used digital device used by the respondents while buying a car (Section 5.1, p. 103). Similar findings were reported by the studies conducted by Capgemini (2009), Nielsen (2012), KPMG (2013), C+R Research (2014) and J.D. Power Report (2015 & 2016). The recent study conducted by ‘Cardekho.com’ also validates the results of our study. Results of ‘cardekho.com’ study attributes digital thrust the most important change affecting car purchase decisions. The study revealed that vast majority (75%) of Indian car buyers conduct online research before buying a particular car brand. Mobile phone, is the most contemporary digital channel used in car buying decision process (Goyal, 2016). Another study conducted by Ernst and Young (2016) in India concerning ‘social media marketing trends’ revealed that websites was the most used digital channel used both by the marketers and consumers. Mobile phone emerged as the most used digital device of modern era. The report presented an optimistic picture of digital landscape in India and stressed that digital marketing in India will grow in years to come an account of young educated digital natives. The report also highlighted that digital spend by the marketers will also see an up rise surge as digital spend has already registered an increase of about 48% on year on year basis.
The findings result in important implications for the marketers. Based on the results of the study, car marketers must understand and appreciate the fact that car buying decision process has changed from being a linear process to a dynamic interconnected system in which customers make ample use of digital devices available with them to get plethora of information about various car brands. Findings of this study can further boost the confidence of marketing manager spending considerable amount of money on digital platforms. Usage of both the channels of communication by the car buyers however, can perplex the marketers; where on one hand they can’t undermine the importance of traditional communication channels; and on the other hand, usage of digital channels is increasing in car buying decisions. Marketers must appreciate the synergistic effect of traditional and digital channels of communication. So, integrating both the channels appropriately and strategically at each stage of consumer buying decision process might result into conversion of a prospect in to a customer. Companies should devise an integrated communication program to give a consistent experience to the car buyers.

Although, few earlier studies investigated about the preferred communication channels used by the customers, yet concrete conclusions could not be made about the most preferred channel used while buying a car. This study resolved this confusion and accredited website as the most used channel of communication while buying a car (Section 5.1, p. 103). The finding is an important managerial contribution as it would guide the marketing manager about the best digital marketing channel for advertising appropriation assuring the adequate return on investment. However, it must be understood that it is not essential that a car buyer directly reaches the website of the manufacturer. Car buyers might use search engines to reach the marketer’s website, so effective search engine optimization (SEO) strategies should be adopted. Important keywords used in the search engines should be used in the website as well as in the links. Effective SEO would result in placing manufacturer’s website a higher rank than others. Consumers can also access third party comparison websites like ‘carwale.com’, ‘cardekho.com’, ‘cartrade.com’ to name the most popular, so utmost care should be paid to what is being mentioned there about a manufacturer’s brand. It becomes extremely important to pay attention to other consumers’ reviews over such websites as ‘car’ being a self-expressive product is being subjected to social approval. The study theoretically classified the digital marketing channels into content based platforms (Section 1.5, Subsection 1.5.1, p. 9) and digital devices (Section 1.5, Subsection 1.5.2, p. 13), which simplifies and enhances the understanding about digital marketing communication. Such classification was not seen in previous studies. However, while judging the effect of digital marketing communication on consumer buying decision process, this classification was not taken into account and a collective term ‘digital channels’ was used to represent both the content based platforms and digital devices.

The present study revealed the reasons accounting for the usage of particular channel of communication (Section 5.2, p. 106). Earlier studies conducted by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004a); Smith (2011); Ryan (2014); Muller et al. (2011); Kirkpatrick (2012) and Kloosoky (2012) reported the reasons for acceptance of digital media by the consumers, but authors didn’t reveal the specific characteristic(s) leading towards the use and non-use of particular digital channel. The current study identified the specific reason(s) leading towards the use of particular channel of communication and adds
immensely to the available literature. Marketers can also capitalize upon the identified characteristics of different digital channels and effectively use these channels for better customer engagements.

This study identified the significant association between demographic variables like age (Section 4.2, Subsection 4.2.1, p. 78), occupation (Section 4.2, Subsection 4.2.3, p. 85), and gender (Section 4.2, Subsection 4.2.5, p. 91), with the channels of communication. Google India (2013a), BCG Study (2013), Joshi and Upadhyay (2014) and Ioanăs and Stoica (2014) in their respective studies also confirmed the significant association between demographic variables and use of digital channels of communication. Place of living was not found significantly associated with usage of particular communication channel, but respondents belonging to urban, rural and semi-urban areas used digital channels of communication more than the traditional channels of communication (Section 4.3, p. 94). The results could be better appreciated by understanding the reports of Statista (2016) and DeitY India (2015) which state that Indian people from all walks of life are participating in digital interactions and activities. The reports further claimed that ‘digital divide’ between urban and rural customers is decreasing in India and customers from rural India are contributing significantly to the Indian digital revolution. Low association was observed between demographic variables and digital channels of communication. This implies that apart from demographic variables, other factors also contribute towards use of digital channels of communication while buying a car. The present study identifies these factors as well and posits that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are the significant factors affecting usage of digital channels of communication.

The study identified distinct customer segments with digital medium as their preferred communication channel (Section 4.5, p. 98). The three different clusters were named as ‘Progressive Enterprisers’ (young customers in business), ‘Young Digital Legions’ (young students) and ‘Occupied Wrights’ (working professionals in late 30’s). Kierzkowski et al. (1996), Cotte et al. (2006) and Jayawardhena et al. (2007) in their respective studies also grouped the online customers on the basis of demographic variables in different product categories in foreign context. Such classification was not seen in case of car as a product category, so this study hereby makes a sound theoretical contribution by adding contextual breadth to the global theory of digital marketing. The findings have important implications for the car marketers as they must understand that digital channels of communication are mainly used by the young customers. These customers might have their preferences for particular digital channels of communication. So, targeting these customers with their preferred channel of communication should produce good business results for the marketers.

It was concluded from the study that respondents had positive attitude towards usage of digital marketing communication while buying a car. They found digital marketing communication as interactive, informative, relevant, easy to use, cost effective and facilitating easy evaluation (Section 6.1, p. 122). However, respondents were cautious about the technicality of the medium and authenticity of the information available over digital media (Section 6.2, p. 126). The findings of the study were found in consonance with the results of the study conducted by Negi and Saklani (2003) whereby the study concluded that customers had positive attitude towards online media.
Customers found online media buyer friendly offering unique benefits in terms of variety, customization and price. The study also attributed that technicality, unfamiliarity/unawareness, less authentic information, and cost as factors impeding the usage of online media. The results of the study also associated well the studies conducted by Bauer et al. (2005), Klososky (2012), Kaufman and Horton (2014), Nguyen (2014) and Syme (2015). The present study also cited technicality of the medium, lack of knowledge and time and no trust for digital information as major reasons impeding the usage of digital channels while buying a car. George (2002), Google India (2013a) and Maklan et al. (2001) also expressed similar factors causing non-use of digital channels of communication. The study also identified two distinct customer segments that believed only in traditional communication channels while buying a car which were named as ‘Traditional Laggards’ and ‘Struggling Learners’ (Section 6.2, Subsection 6.2.1, p. 128). Such findings were not observed with earlier studies and findings of the present study make a significant addition to the available literature. The findings imply that although Indian car buyers have positive attitude towards digital marketing owing to its specific advantages, yet there are concerns related to technicality of the medium and authenticity of the information. The findings represent the cautious approach of Indian car buyers towards digital media while buying a car. Such approach of Indian car buyers might pose significant challenges for marketers while promoting their brands over digital medium.

It was found from the study that digital marketing communication affected the entire buying decision process right from need recognition to post-purchase stage. Digital marketing communication was found affecting even the need recognition stage of consumer buying decision process for a product category like car (Section 7.1, Subsection 7.1.1, p. 131). However, the findings of the study were in consonance with studies conducted by Kocyigit (2015), Hausman (2014) and Jahan (2014) whereby it was revealed that digital channels like mobiles, social networking sites and websites have the capabilities to stimulate the need recognition stage of consumer buying decision process for high involvement product category also. The finding can be seen as an opportunity for the marketers whereby digital channels can be leveraged to initiate the buying decision process.

Car, being a high involvement product category relies mainly of external sources of information. The same was confirmed from the results of the study as digital channels also emerged as desired source of getting information about various car brands because of specific characteristics of digital marketing communication (Section 7.1, Subsection 7.1.2, p. 133). The results of the study also associated well the past studies conducted by Negi and Saklani (2003), Bauer, Barnes, Reichardt and Neumann (2005), Klososky (2012), Kaufman and Horton (2014), Nguyen (2014) and Syme (2015). Marketers must understand that absence of specific characteristics like being informative, interactive, easy, relevant and time saving in a digital communication might deter car buyers to use digital communication while buying a car.

Evaluation stage of car buying process was found affected from digital marketing communication (Section 7.1, Subsection 7.1.3, p. 136). Consumers referred to other customers and experts’ reviews while buying a car and gave more weightage to consensus recommendations while comparing the various car brands. The findings
can be easily apprehended as car buyers consider online customer reviews offering unbiased information without any vested interest (Nielsen, 2014). Study conducted by KPMG (2013) also approved the results of the study by stating that customers compare the price, models, technical specifications and brands over digital platforms. Customers also rely upon the videos available online to have the feel (virtual) of the vehicle (Bagchi, 2013). Evaluation also emerged as the most affected stage of car buying decision process due to digital marketing. The findings correlated highly with the results of studies conducted by Charan (2014), Sharma and Rehman, (2012), Dimensional Research (2013), Hinckley (2015) wherein evaluation was attributed as the most affected stage of consumer buying decision process due to the digital marketing communication. The results have important implications for the marketers whereby they must understand that, not only it is essential to give complete information over digital channels facilitating comparison, but also equally important is to get it endorsed by large number of customers. It is essential to nurture customer relationships over digital channels as customers have the potential to alter the other customers’ decisions in technological realms.

Digital marketing communication affected the selection and purchase stage except the online booking of the car (Section 7.1, Subsection 7.1.4, p. 138). All other important decisions namely selection of dealer and brand, timing of purchase, subscribing to a newsletter, joining a club, booking a car online, deciding about financing options, changing the considered brand for purchase and participating in online discussions were made over digital channels. Studies conducted by Gay et al. (2007), Accenture (2012), KPMG (2013), J.D. Power Report (2015) and Goyal (2016) reported the similar findings. Singh (2016) in his recent study revealed that ‘social media’ provides a kind of comfort in purchase process and has the ability to influence and affect the purchase decision of the customer. ‘Cardekho.com’ in its study asserts that cost effective nature of digital technologies promotes their use while buying a car. The study however added that car buyers are not buying the car online as car buying decision in India is highly emotional (Goyal, 2016). The findings of the study can be better understood by looking at the observations of study conducted by Saxena (2016) whereby it has been emphasized that for high priced items like cars, a customer conducts online research to evaluate and compare the car brands but final purchase happens in offline settings after physically examining the product. Customers would like to actually see the product before buying. It is interesting to see the value conscious customers in India completing their buying decision process online for an expensive product category except the online booking of the vehicle. The results infer that although consumers in India perceive digital communication offering distinctive benefits over its traditional counterpart irrespective of product category, still at the time of actual purchase of high involvement products, fears and doubts associated with technological medium overpower its unique advantages. The results further contribute to the global digital theory by clarifying that in case of high involvement products, product buying decisions are also subjected to technology specific characteristics especially in purchase stage of consumer buying decision process.

The findings have important implications for car dealers as well. Car dealers have to understand that if they don’t want to limit themselves as an entity demonstrating variants and providing test drives only; then they have to transform themselves into
brand experience centers by leveraging upon digital channels. They will have to change their customer outreach strategies as per the evolving mindset of the car buyers along with experimenting with the store formats by designing interactive physical virtual layouts (Afaqs, 2017).

It was revealed in the study that respondents engage in post-purchase activities over digital media share their experience with others (Section 7.1, Subsection 7.1.5, p. 141). The findings seemed to be in tandem with the results of the studies conducted by Jayawardhena et al. (2003), Mangold and Faulds (2009) and Charan (2014) and J.D. Power Report (2016). Scope of post-purchase activities will broaden in future with the more advanced digital technologies and connected vehicle whereby post-purchase activities would also include booking for the regular service of the vehicle online and purchase of accessories and spare parts. Marketers would also be able to offer gamut of post-purchase services like emergency support and infotainment services leading to valued individual relationships with the customers (Afaqs, 2017).

The findings imply that marketers should understand that car buyers are likely to express their post-purchase experiences over various digital platforms which have the immense potential to affect and alter the other car buyers’ evaluation and selection process. Handling post-purchase experience over digital channels thus becomes a double edged sword for the marketers as a single dissatisfactory experience with the customer can cause great harm to the marketer’s reputation if customer shares the experience with others over digital platform. No or late response to a customer query can label the company unfriendly or ignorant. Online reputation management in such situations both becomes a necessity and challenge.

The study detailed the association of various digital channels with different stages of consumer buying decision process and it was discovered that in search for information and evaluation of alternative stages respondents made the maximum use of digital channels. Mobile phones, digital outdoors and digital TV were the main digital channels used in search for information stage whereas social networking sites, smartphones and online communities emerged as the most used digital channels in evaluation stage. ‘YouTube’ was likely to be used in the selection and purchase stage. Emails were used in post-purchase stage (Section 7.2, p. 144). Such observations were not seen in past studies and findings were considered unique, which improve the understanding of digital marketing practitioners.

The study extends its theoretical contribution to the existing body of the knowledge by offering contextual support to the prevailing global phenomenon in a relatively younger digital economy in relatively less explored product category. Philosophies, intellectual traditions and practices of Indian consumers which ultimately shape their behaviour are quite different from the western world. India represents high context collectivist culture (Hofstede, 1981) wherein consumers have strong belief in nonverbal communication (Writer, 2017). Moreover, digital marketing in India is still in infancy stage wherein marketers allocate hardly ten percent of the marketing budget to the digital platforms. Although, gradually Indian digital landscape is improving with every passing year, still owing to its fairly indigenous characteristics like diverse culture and demographics, low literacy rate, infrastructural bottlenecks, issues of security and privacy; India offers itself a peculiar and evolving digital economy on the global map.
Available literature on digital marketing communication has established its success in low context individual western cultures having core beliefs in verbal communication. This study broadens the range of global digital theory by assuring its application in high context collectivist Indian culture with not so motivating digital stats. This study also illustrates the acceptability of highly individualistic and verbal communication strategy in a collectivist Indian culture emphasizing non-verbal communication, that too in high involvement product category. The results can be attributed to the ‘demographic dividend’ of the country wherein large English speaking working young population equipped with low cost internet enabled mobile devices are fuelling the digital uprising in the country. Easy and quick availability of relevant information over digital channels seem to be more attractive to the Indian consumers while buying a car rather than accessing the comparatively costlier and time consuming traditional communication channels. The results further modify the existing global digital theory that in developing economies like India, apart from the inherent characteristics of digital marketing communication, ‘possession’ and proliferation of low cost digital devices and individual skills ensure the successful application of digital marketing communication. The results can further motivate other researchers in the area to determine the other factors responsible for the success of digital marketing communication in countries sharing similar cultural contexts and digital stats to India.

Such contextual studies in emerging economies also result in significant implications for the firms having geocentric approach (Whetten, 1989; Tsui, 2004). The study enhances the understanding of competitive Indian passenger car market where several national and international players operate. Such knowledge is not only essential for academicians to take up further research in this field but also lays down guiding principles for those stakeholders who are battling to make effective sales to the huge consumer group comprising of potential buyers. The results of the study further benefits the managers, employees and consumers in India passenger car market by understanding the phenomenon and its effect on consumer buying decision process. Organizations will be able to survive cut throat competition if they are able to delight their customers and not just meet their needs and wants. In this process, ample understanding about target market’s decision making process is necessary to cater to the needs of consumers effectively, which this study fulfils.

The study also provides a peep role into the decision making process of Indian car buyers in technology mediated environments along with providing the empirical support for the application of digital marketing in Indian passenger car market. It also offers a scale developed after the extensive literature review and elicitation study that would further guide the other scholars in assessing the impact of digital marketing communication on entire car buying process.

The study also tested the applicability of DTPB model to reveal the factor(s) to be leveraged by the marketers to effectively market the given product effectively in the market (Section 7.3, p. 141). The results of the study revealed that DTPB model fits the study and explained 63% variation in the usage intentions and 41% variation in actual usage. The study identified that perceived behavioural control, attitude and subjective norms respectively affect the intentions to use digital communication while buying a car. The findings were similar with another study conducted by Rekha and Gayatri
(2015) whereby they assessed the impact of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and compatibility on attitude towards digital marketing. Family, friends and online friends were significant predictors of subjective norms. Self-efficacy, resources facilitating conditions and technology facilitating conditions were the significant predictors of perceived behavioural control. Ndubisi (2004); Lin (2007); Shih and Fang (2004); Sahli and Legohérel (2014); Dahiya (2015b) and Gangwal and Bansal (2016) in their respective studies also confirmed that decomposed TPB successfully explained the variation in usage intentions in technology related behaviour. Perceived behavioural control was found as the factor that can be leveraged by the marketers (on the basis of maximum variation explanation) to effectively market their car brands over digital platforms.

Intentions in Indian context are different from the mature western context, warranting special attention in order to understand the technology adoption. This study provides ample understanding about the determinants of intentions to use digital communication in Indian context. The results demonstrate that intentions in Indian context also, are determined by attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. The study extends its sound contextual support to the extant western models and theories dealing with technological adoption by assuring its successful application in relatively unexplored product category in a young and evolving digital economy. The successful results in Indian market establish the robustness of prevailing technology adoption theory (DTPB) thereby adding depth and breadth to the global theory of digital marketing. However, inter-construct covariance among the determinants of attitude and perceived behavioural control revealed important insights for the marketers. The results imply that capability beliefs of the individual along with the availability of the resources play the key role in shaping intentions to use digital marketing communication while buying a car. Results also imply that it is essential for car buyers to feel comfortable while using the new age technology which will also help augmenting the perceived ease of the medium and eventually improve the car buyers’ attitude towards digital marketing communication. These important insights can be effectively used by the marketers to formulate marketing strategies and policies which might yield successful business results.

Not many studies have applied DTPB model especially in Indian context. Even fewer studies have applied the intention based models in Indian passenger car market. So, this study fills an important gap especially in academic studies wherein one can see the dearth of studies in predicting intentions to use digital communication in extended problem solving product categories. The adoption of digital technologies both by marketers and consumers is the interest area for marketers, consumers, researchers, academicians and policy makers. So, the findings of the study affect the multiple stakeholders in digital environment. Marketers can greatly benefit from the findings of the study whereby they can leverage the desired construct to get the estimated impact on usage intentions and later on actual purchase behavior. Consumers can also get benefitted from the findings of the study and can take a more informed decision.
### 8.4 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study made an effort to study the impact of digital marketing communication on entire buying decision process whereby respondents answered the questions related to each and every stage of consumer buying decision process. The study didn’t correlate the results obtained through this descriptive research with the actual sale of vehicle. The study couldn’t identify whether the respondents who agreed that digital marketing communication had an impact on consumer buying decision process, actually purchased the vehicle based on digital information or not. Although intentions to use digital marketing communication were studied; but actual purchase behaviour was not studied. Such a study involving the pre-post causal research design would disclose even more precise and relevant insights for marketers.

The study was conducted in ‘Delhi’ and results of the study can be applied to metropolitan cities like ‘Mumbai’, ‘Kolkata’, ‘Bengaluru’, ‘Chennai’ and ‘Pune’. However, the results of the study should be applied with great caution in non-metro cities. There was no representation of the pure illiterate respondents in the study. The car buyers consisted of both actual and potential buyers and study didn’t differentiate between the two. A study with a clear distinction between the ‘actual’ and ‘potential’ buyers might offer different insights. The study collectively used the term digital channels of communication for diverse digital technology enabled platforms and devices like websites, phones, digital TV, emails and social networking sites. So, the results obtained can’t be specifically and precisely applied for a particular channel of communication. Moreover, usage of channels has been used as proxy for preference while indentifying the most preferred channel of communication.

The study has explored the intentions to use digital marketing communication while buying a car for Indian car buyers using decomposed TPB. The study demonstrated the ability of the model in predicting the intentions to use digital marketing communication. However the results should not be interpreted that out of all contemporary models, DTPB best fits the data because DTPB was selected for the study based upon the review of literature. It remains yet to be seen whether chosen model for the study excels over other contemporary models in predicting user intentions in an empirical study. A study employing all contemporary models can be conducted to know the best suited model for predicting the intentions to use digital marketing communication while buying a car. Although intentions to use digital communication of car buyers were studied, but association of usage intentions with various demographic factors like age, income, education, occupation and gender, was not seen which might have revealed the specific consumer segments for marketers to cater.

### 8.5 SUGGESTIONS

The study concluded that digital marketing communication affects the car buying decision process. It was found in the study that respondents used many digital platforms and digital channels to get information in each and every stage of car buying decision process. Respondents leveraged the potential digital media to gain information about various car brands and dealers, evaluating the car brands, making the selection
and purchase decision and expressing their post-purchase feelings. The section given below presents the main suggestions of the study:

(a) Making the Digital Channels of Communication More Effective

It was found from the study that a vast majority of the respondents used digital channels of communication while buying a car, implying that future belongs to digital marketing communication. The most used digital channels of communication were websites, social networking sites, smartphones and YouTube. The major suggestions related to digital channels of communication have been given below:

- Websites emerged as the main digital communication channel while buying a car. Websites were used in search for information stage by the respondents. Literature also reported that websites were interactive, informative and relevant in nature, so it is proposed that websites of car manufacturer should be interactive carrying all the relevant information. It was also found from the literature review that websites can be viewed over multiple screens i.e. desktops, laptops, mobile phones, digital outdoors and TV. So, it makes more sense to improve the compatibility of the corporate websites across multiple channels to give a consistent experience to the customers. Content of the websites should be given utmost importance and it should help customers through their entire consumer buying decision process thereby facilitating them in making an informed decision. Description of technical details about cars should also be there on the websites, which would help in relevant evaluation of the vehicle.

- Websites should be regularly updated and should have an adequate amount of audio-visual display through rich data formats like flashy graphics, animations, videos and audios. Video formats carrying the effective demonstrations or 360 degree virtual demos of the vehicles should be used to stimulate the interest of the customers. Every link and component of the website should work properly thereby ensuring the functionality of the websites. Also, it should facilitate easy navigation across pages. Websites should expedite the comparison among various car brands which would help customers making an informed decision. Chat widget over website can further help customers clearing their personal doubts and queries.

- Customers might reach the website through search engines, so effective search engine optimization (SEO) strategies should be adopted. Important keywords used in the search engines should be used in the website as well as in the links. Effective SEO would result in ranking manufacture’s website a higher rank than others. The landing page of the website should also be attractive and informative enough to help the customers in fulfilling all the informational needs. Landing page of the website should also have the information that can further kindle the interest of the customers. Consumers consider the digital channels of communication quick alternative to traditional communication, so it should be ensured that website doesn’t take too long to load. Regular appraisal and updation of the content and resolving technical issues would help in bringing the new traffic to the website and retaining the old customers. At least one tracking tool should be used to identify the performance of the website.
Social networking sites were the most used digital channels of communication after websites. Social networking sites were used in the need recognition stage of car buying decision process. It is proposed that car marketers should upload the updated content regularly over social networking sites. Curiosity can be built up around new launches by carefully planning a launch strategy over social networks. Available literature about social media asserted that customers’ participation and control over social media are facilitating the growth of social networking sites. So, marketers are suggested to establish a dialogue rather than monologue over social media. Marketers should encourage the customers to share and post the affiliations and opinions about their experiences with other users on social media. The conversations over social media would result in meaningful insights about consumer behaviour. Social networking sites of manufacturers should also have ‘live-chat’ functions which would facilitate the real-time chatting between customers and marketers. Social networking contests, quizzes and games should be used by the marketers which would not only involve the customers but also create buzz around the brand. Marketers can also choose to send email alerts to the interested or potential customers over social media.

It was found in the literature that customers paid attention to other customers’ reviews and results of the study also validated that respondents considered consensus recommendations more than the marketers’ claim. So, marketers are suggested to join the consumers’ community whereby they might identify the opinion leaders who would not only influence other customers but also help them in evaluation stage of car buying decision process. Marketers should utilize these communities to communicate their marketing offers through groups and sub-groups. Marketers should pay attention to the comments of customers about their brand over social media and act quickly to the complaints, suggestions and concerns if any, of the customers.

Smartphones were used by the respondents for being informative, quick and interactive. So, marketers are advised to design the mobile communication strategies carrying informative content ensuring the compatibility of the content with different mobile operating systems. Marketers should design interesting mobile applications and mobile websites to offer the relevant information to the customers. Consumers should be made aware about the application of particular car brand both by personal and commercial channels of communication. ‘App’ of the company should be made available at popular ‘apps stores’. Mobile website of the company should be designed facilitating easy navigation across pages and enhanced customer experience. Mobile games can also be used to engage customers with the brands.

Digital marketing communication by its very nature is measurable which allows tracking of each customer’s action and reaction. So, marketers should segment customers group effectively on the basis of parameters like history, frequency of visits, favourite items, list items and many others. Marketers should carefully target these distinct segments with customized messages containing relevant information and specific promotional offers. Marketers should analyze how people are responding to various mobile marketing tactics and try to engage them at each and every step of consumer buying decision process.
Consumers also used YouTube as one of the most used digital channels while buying a car so it is recommended to offer marketing content in appealing video formats available on video sharing sites. Literature disclosed that customers found YouTube as an interesting and important communication channel while buying a car. Marketers are suggested to use various formats like funny, spoof, testimonials and demonstrations to present the information about various car brands in an interesting manner. The videos should have the capability to get shared with other customers. Important keywords should be used in titles and tags of videos so that customers can easily find the channel when searched for. The results of the study ascertained that respondents were using YouTube for being compatible, informative and relevant. So, it was suggested to use experts’ reviews to help customers deciding the best car brand as per his/her requirements. ‘YouTube analytics’ should be used to reveal the important customers’ details with which future communication could be established for identifying the needs of the prospects and converting them into the customers.

Other digital communication channels like digital outdoors, digital TV and online communities were found informative, easy-to-use and offering experts and customers’ reviews while buying a car. Marketers are recommended to provide informative contents to these channels. It was found in the study that respondents used online communities especially in evaluation stage. So, due importance should be given to the online reputation management by paying sincere attention to the testimonials and reviews posted by the users about a marketer’s brand in online communities.

(b) Nurture Positive Attitude towards Digital Marketing Communication

It was found in the study that respondents had positive attitude towards digital marketing communication while buying a car. It was also found that attitude also affected digital marketing communication usage intentions while buying a car. Respondents used digital communication while buying a car because they found communication being informative, interactive, relevant and easily available. So, marketers should ensure that they adhere to the features important to the customers while devising a digital communication programme. Companies should ensure the availability of complete information over digital platforms. It is also suggested to devise an integrated communication program to give a consistent experience over digital platforms.

(c) Deal with the Barriers Limiting the Use of Digital Media

The study also highlighted that many respondents were apprehensive in using digital channels of communication while buying a car mainly due to the technicality of the media followed by lack of knowledge and uninteresting nature. The major suggestions related to the barriers limiting the use of digital media have been given as under:
• Marketers are recommended to design the websites which are easy to navigate, develop ‘Apps’ which produce user specific content in their preferred language, send SMS and MMS in their language and designing digital platforms supporting voice based commands to reduce the perceived technicality of the media.

• Marketers can also design a promotional campaign whereby they can showcase the happy and satisfied customers using digital channels of communication who initially used traditional channels of communication while buying a car by exhibiting the benefits like being interactive, easy to access and relevant.

• Marketers can also overcome the lack of knowledge barriers by providing help in the form of help pages and video tutorials to the customers while using digital channels of communication.

• Uninteresting nature of digital marketing can be dealt by presenting the content in an interesting manner. Marketers can initially target the customers using both traditional and digital channels of communication. Also, they could influence the target customers by approaching to their reference groups such as friends, family and peers and encourage them to advocate the use of digital communication channels to the target groups.

(d) Prioritize the Efforts toward Explicit Customers Segments

The study determined the positive association between use of digital channels of communication with age and occupation of the respondents. The major suggestions related to the specific customer segments have been given as follows:

• It is suggested for car marketers to use digital content like SMS and MMS which is mobile compatible as mobile phone emerged as the preferred channel of choice for the customers above 40 years of age.

• Online community was the preferred digital channel of communication of the respondents belonging to 18-25 years age group. So, marketers should motivate customers to join the communities owned by the marketer so that relevant details might be shared with the customers. Marketers should also become a member of popular free online consumers’ communities so that meaningful insights about consumer behaviour might be obtained. Marketers should engage young customers in online discussions through contests and quizzes.

• Digital TV emerged as the preferred channel of communication for the respondents belonging to 18-25 years of age group. So, marketers are suggested to engage young customers with their promotional message by enabling the customers’ participation over digital TV. Marketers might direct the customers to other channels of communication like websites and social networking sites for getting further details about their brands.

• Marketers can focus on three customers segments as: 1. Customers of business class between the age groups of 26-30 years 2. Students between the age group of 18-25 years. 3. Customers of service class between the age group of 26-40 years; as it was observed from the analysis that these customer segments are more likely to use digital channels of communication while buying a car.
(e) Need Recognition Stage: Create a gap between Desired and Actual State with Effective Digital Content

The study found that digital marketing communication affected the need recognition stage of consumer buying decision process. The major suggestions related to the need recognition stage have been given as follows:

- It is recommended to present the informative content on digital platforms in such especially on social networking sites an elaborative yet interesting manner that it can stimulate the needs of the customers by creating a disparity between the desired and actual state. The needs can be stimulated by communicating with the target customers about contemporary happenings and developments of the respective market phenomena such as new vehicle launches, special offers, new technology platforms used for the vehicle, exchange policy etc.
- Marketers should design the advertisement of the vehicle in a context representing the social approval and enhanced social status, which would act as external stimuli for triggering the need for a new car.
- Marketers should upload and share the interesting car content over social media having the ability to create buzz among the customers, thereby creating a kind of interest and enthusiasm about the product.

(f) Search for Information: Integrating the Digital Media with the Conventional Media

The study unveiled that respondents were using digital channels of communication as major source of information. It was also found that respondents also used traditional channels of communication along with digital channels while buying a car. The stage was the most affected by the use of digital marketing communication after evaluation stage. The major suggestions related to the search for information stage have been given as follows:

- It is suggested to the marketers that they must appreciate the synergistic effect of traditional and digital channels of communication. Both types of channels have their own set of advantages and disadvantages which were validated both by the literature review and results of the study. So, integrating both the channels appropriately and strategically at each stage of consumer buying decision process would result into the conversion of the prospects in to the customers.
- The results of the present study disclosed that digital channels like websites, digital outdoors and digital TV were most used by the respondents in search for information stage. So, marketers are suggested to make the required information available over these channels, so that customers might search for information through their preferred digital channels.
- Digital channels were used in the search for information stage as respondents believed that use of digital marketing communication reduced the visits to the
showroom and overall time taken in car buying. So marketers should make the marketing content readily available in the form of display advertisements, exciting videos and applications to the major websites most browsed by the customers.

(g) Evaluation Stage: Customer Endorsements and the Pragmatic Comparison

It was found in the study that digital channels of communication significantly affected the evaluation process of consumer buying decision process. The stage was most affected due to digital marketing communication. The major suggestions related to the evaluation stage have been given as follows:

- It was found in the study that respondents gave importance to customers and experts’ reviews posted on digital platforms especially the online communities, social networking sites and YouTube. So, marketer should nurture the relationship with customers over digital channels and encourage them to share and post their feelings, opinions, comments and reviews.
- It is also recommended to address the complaints or concerns of the customers as early as possible.
- Marketers should also identify the opinion leaders in a group and influence them positively who in turn would be followed by others in the group. Marketers should also follow the effective online reputation management strategy and pay utmost attention to moderate the customers’ reviews written about them online. They must also address the customers’ issues as quickly as possible.
- Marketers should track their customers’ behaviour in order to successfully complete the evaluation stage by offering the required help promptly.
- It was discovered through literature review that digital channels facilitate easy comparison among brands, which was further validated in the study too. So marketers are suggested to offer customers the comparison along the key selection parameters like price, technical specifications, brands and models.
- Customers use the independent websites or third party comparisons sites in the evaluation stage as per reviewed literature. So, marketers should pay attention to the comparative stats available over such websites. Discrepancy, if any should be handled with utmost dedication and care.
- The results of the study revealed that social networking sites, phones smartphones and online communities were used in evaluation stage. So, marketer should communicate make the key comparison statistics available over the preferred channels of customers. Marketers can also design mobile optimized site in order to give seamless experience to the customers.

(h) Purchase: Furnish Relevant Details and Apply Effective Sales Management

The results of the study exhibited that respondents were likely to engage in activities like selecting the car brand and dealer, subscribing to newsletters, participation in online discussions and joining the forums, SNS, blogs over digital platforms which constituted the selection and purchase stage over digital channels of
communication. The major suggestions related to the purchase stage have been given as follows:

- Marketers are advised to keep the options of subscription to newsletters, joining car forums and ‘follows us’ tabs at a convenient place over digital platforms so that customers can proceed easily with the desired action.

- The results of the study also showed that respondents even changed the considered brand after searching online about the brand. So, marketers are recommended to instill loyalty among the customers by making them sure about their decision. This can be done by sharing satisfied customers’ testimonials over digital media. Customers can also be consulted individually using emails and mobile phones and personal queries and doubts about purchase can be solved. Traditional methods like personal selling and inviting customers to the showrooms can be used here to resolve the customers’ constraints, if any.

- The results of the study disclosed that digital marketing communication had the capability to pre-pone the buying decision of the customers. So, if marketers could identify buyer’s purchase readiness stage with a customer’s survey, then effective digital content would help customers making a buying decision at a time desired by the marketers.

- Marketer can share the vital details like availability of finance, on-road pricing, delivery time and documents required for purchase with the customers through their preferred digital channel of communication.

- It was divulged from the results of the study that ‘YouTube’ was the most used digital channels in purchase stage of consumer buying decision process while buying a car. So, marketer should track the activities of customers especially on YouTube as customers visiting YouTube channel might be in purchase readiness stage. Marketers must identify the keywords used by the customers for watching videos over YouTube. The most popular keywords should be used in the uploaded videos of the car brands. Videos featuring car’s interior and exterior details, experts’ opinion and testimonials of satisfied customers must be used by the customers, which would simplify the car buying decision process of the customers.

- Marketers must have provisions over digital channels to gather personal details of the customers so that interested customers might be contacted again by the marketers.

- Respondents didn’t make online booking while buying a car. Literature related to online purchase discovered that digital platforms lack instant gratification after purchase along with inability to touch and feel. Digital channels might also be subjected to fraud and there lies a possibility whereby customers might feel a difference between the actual product and product marketed over digital channels. Literature also detailed that big ticket items followed ‘Research Online Purchase Offline’ phenomenon. Marketers are suggested to fill the difficult void existing between online and offline purchase by assuring customers delivering the promised quality and product. Technological innovation like 360 degree view of the vehicle and augmented reality can also be used by the marketers to give customers the complete understanding of the product.
• Marketers should also use traditional channels whereby they can invite customers to their showrooms where effective sales management can possibly convert the desire of the customers kindled by digital channels of communication into a tangible action of purchase.

• It is suggested to the marketers to identify the factors affecting selection of brands and dealers over digital media and results of the study must be incorporated in digital communication to make the selection process easy for the customers.

(i) Post Purchase: Build Relationships after Post Purchase

It has been found from the study that respondents wished to engage in the post-purchase activities over digital channels after buying a car. The major suggestions related to post-purchase stage have been given as follows:

• Marketers are advised to motivate its customers via some quiz or contest to share their post-purchase feelings with others in online communities and over social networking sites.

• Car buyers expect to receive the communication from marketer’s end between purchase and delivery of the vehicle. So, marketers should update the car buyers about the important details like a letter mentioning the intended purchase, expected delivery date and time of the vehicle and formalities to be completed before handing over the vehicle.

• Marketers can also engage in post-purchase activities with its customers like writing a ‘thank you’ mail and invitation to join the loyal customers’ club, online communities and liking the social networking sites pages of marketer.

• Selected customers can also be asked to write reviews over social media as these reviews would help other customers evaluating the car brand. Marketers can also ask its customers to recommend its brands to their friends, relatives and colleagues.

• Emails emerged as the channel used by the respondents in post-purchase stage. So, marketers should send their customers an email after purchase assuring them about the purchase which would also reduce the post-purchase dissonance. Later on, marketers should engage their customers by sending emails related to new launches, upgrade and exchange offer, new quality certifications and testimonials of other satisfied customers.

j) Decomposed Theory of Planned Behaviour: Leverage the Perceived Behavioural Control Factor

The study made use of Decomposed Theory of Planned Behaviour which explained 63% of the variation in intentions to use digital marketing communication while buying a car. All three constructs used in the model namely attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control were found significantly affecting the usage intentions. Marketers are advised to pay attention to perceived behavioural control as this was the construct/factor to explain a maximum variation of 57% in usage intentions.
followed by attitude which explained 50% of the variation. The major suggestions related to the application of Theory of Planned Behaviour (Decomposed) have been given as follows:

- Self-efficacy was the factor that explained maximum variation in perceived behavioural control. So, marketers are suggested to put customers at ease by making them comfortable while using the technology i.e. use of digital channels of communication in particular.

- Marketers should also take care of cost of accessibility of digital media whereby only relevant content should be shared with the customers.

- Quick loading time and early response to the customers’ queries should also be ensured by marketer.

- All three factors namely perceived usefulness, ease of use and compatibility, were found significantly affecting the attitude towards digital communication. So, marketers should pay attention to major features of digital marketing which are considered important by the customers and also provide an edge to the marketer over alternative communication channels. Marketers should ensure the ease of using digital channel of communication as well as trustworthiness and compatibility of digital communication with other digital devices.

- It was also found that friends, family and online friends affected the usage intentions of digital marketing communication while buying a car. So it is suggested that marketers should identify and influence the important people in a customer’s reference group.

- Attitude and subjective norms should be considered along with perceived behaviour control while assessing the intentions to use digital marketing communication while buying a car. A car buyer having positive attitude towards digital marketing, possessing knowledge and resources, having core belief in own capabilities along with the consent of family and friends; is more likely to use digital marketing communication while buying a car.

So, it can be successfully concluded that digital marketing communication is writing the new rules in business and has the ability to impact the entire consumer buying decision process for a product category like car.