Identifying the Indian Car Buyer Segments Using Digital Channels of Communication : An Application of Cluster Analysis

** Rekha*
*** Aparna Mishra*

Abstract

Digital technologies have redefined the marketing communication parlance with its unique capabilities. Consumers both males and females belonging to various age groups, occupations, income categories having different educational backgrounds are making use of contemporary digital technologies for searching, comparing, evaluating, and buying goods and services across diverse product categories. Digital marketing has affected each and every industry irrespective of its nature, size, type, and category. Hence, the Indian car market is no exception in which the digital 'Midas' touch is affecting both the customers and marketers. The present study dealt with identifying the specific segments of car buyers who use digital channels of communication while buying a car. The study made use of primary data collected from 801 respondents using area wise proportionate cluster sampling technique. Data was analyzed with the help of SPSS 18.0 version and chi-square and cluster analysis were used as tests of significance to validate the results.

Keywords : **digital marketing communication, digital technology, Indian car market, cluster analysis, car buyers segment**

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Digital technologies, especially the Internet, has revolutionized every facet of business namely product development, profitability, brand management, customer relationship management, buying and selling, and communication, etc. Technology usage has not only reduced various business costs but also offers competitive advantages for numerous organizations (Edelman & Heller, 2015). Traditionally, marketers used a variety of communication channels having outbound focus like print, TV and radio advertisements, posters and banners, events, personal selling, word of mouth, etc. to reach their target customers (Kaufman & Horton, 2014). These traditional channels became less effective due to customers' frustration with similar promotional messages, lack of participation from consumers' end, and adoption & proliferation of new age innovative digital channels, especially the Internet having inbound focus (Dalziel, 2013 ; Koekemoer & Bird, 2004).

Digital technologies can be attributed for creation and satisfaction of customers' demand in innovative ways (Ryan, 2014). New age digital technologies are creating a win - win situation both for the marketers and customers (Dhar, 2008). Companies have been able to leverage the power of digital channels to obtain accurate customers' input that has led to improvement in overall product development capabilities of the firm. Digital mediums provide a broad platform to acquire new customers and engaging with them meaningfully helps spreading awareness about brands, building brand image, and positioning the brand in target customers' mind. The vital information about target customers leads to valued customer engagement and augmented customer experience.

* *Ph.D. Scholar,* Department of Management, Uttarakhand Technical University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand & **Assistant Professor,* Department of Management, Banarsidas Chandiwala Institute of Professional Studies, Dwarka, Delhi.
E-mail: rekkhadahiya@gmail.com
** *Associate Professor,* Department of Management, Banarsidas Chandiwala Institute of Professional Studies, Dwarka, Delhi. E-mail: aparna46@gmail.com

Digital channels have had the most significant impact on the business communication process. These technologies have redefined the marketing communication parlance with its unique capabilities, that is, interactivity, measurability, customer engagement, customization, accessibility, and managing large informative sources (Edelman & Heller, 2015). Marketers are resorting to digital communication channels as it allows marketers to deliver real-time, personalized services and content, and deal with one consumer at a time (Kierzkowski, Shyane, Waitman, & Zeisser, 1996). Over the last decade, marketers have exploited the potential of websites, emails, search engines, mobile phones, and other digital applications and products to their advantage for communicating effectively with its target audience. Marketers are directing their marketing efforts on increasingly expanding range of digital devices and platforms. Adoption of digital technology can be attributed to the ability to deliver value to both customers and marketers apart from access and connectivity.

The term 'digital' can be defined as a data transmission technology which is finite and non-variable in nature (Kaufman & Horton, 2014). Digital is expressed in contrast to analog, which is a continuous data transmission technology. A marketing action becomes digital if it relies over a digital medium to execute a marketing function (Yasmin, Tasneem, & Fatema, 2015). Stokes (2013) defined digital marketing as a process of marketing a brand over digital channels. Digital marketing communication refers to targeted, interactive, and measurable communication about goods and services with target audience made over digital mediums (Merisavo, Kajalo, Karjaluoto, Virtanen, Salmenkivi, Raulas, & Leppäniemi, 2007). Digital channels include the Internet, mobile phones, applications, digital TV, digital outdoors, e-mails, YouTube, social networking sites, etc. Digital channels also extend themselves to the channels that don't make use of the Internet like SMS, MMS, call back, and on-hold mobile ringtones, games, e-books, etc. Growing Internet user base, increased possession of digital devices, falling prices of digital devices and data plans, increased connectivity, improved Internet compatibility of various digital devices are leading the digital revolution in India, which has not only put the digital industry in the fastest growing business league, but is also impacting consumer behaviour.

Digital Marketing in the Indian Car Market

Digital marketing by car companies includes the utilization of digital channels that includes leveraging the power of social media, behaviourally targeted advertising, search engines, lead generation, including micro sites, landing pages, and other tactics that involve other digital channels. Indian passenger car market leader 'Maruti Suzuki' is very active across all the digital platforms. The company is engaged in activities like building a website, organizing campaigns, online reputation management, search engine optimization, search engine marketing, building and nurturing customers' trust online, etc. The company started experimenting with digital platforms as early as 2009 when it launched SX4 through a virtual test drive. Later on, in 2011, the new Swift was also launched over a digital platform (Sen, 2013). Ford India keeps 15-20% of its total ads spend for the digital front (Singh, 2015). Ford normally creates a digital contest for its customers who not only review the car but also upload their videos online. Another market player, Mahindra and Mahindra took advantage of digital media in designing its pricing strategy whereby it ran innovative 'Guess the Price' contest 10 days before the launch of its XUV 500 (Anand & Chaudhari, 2012). Volkswagen harnessed the power of the digital medium in generating awareness for the brand with the help of display ads, creative digital initiative 'Planet Volkswagen,' and various social media campaigns (Gupta, 2015).

Consumers nowadays are also getting accustomed to digital channels during their car purchase journey. They trust the manufacturers' websites for getting information about vital information about cars. They also visit specific car comparison sites like Carwale.com, cardekho.com, etc. Customers nowadays give due weightage to expert's opinions and other customer recommendations and reviews. Consensus recommendations are overpowering marketers' well planned strategies. Customers also subscribe to their favorite car brand's newsletters and blogs. They also share among each other any exciting car content they come across. They also follow their companies online and join their communities and forums too. Customers also don't mind venting off their satisfaction and dissatisfaction through digital channels.

Demographics and Digital Marketing Communication

Many studies aimed to establish a link between demographics and digital communication channel usage. Kierzkowski et al. (1996) discussed about a new breed of digital consumers. These users are the people who tend to be young, well-educated, and richer than average. Cotte, Chowdhury, Ratneshwar, and Ricci (2006) identified four groups of online consumers, with different intentions and motivations namely exploration, entertaining, shopping, and information.

Jayawardhena, Wright, and Dennis (2007) also organized online consumers in four groups namely the price sensitive, rational consumers, brand loyal buyers, and comfort-oriented buyers. A study conducted by Google India stated that 75% of the females, who bought online in India, were in the 15 - 35 years age group. The study also revealed that females who researched online belonged to the high income group category ("60 million women in India online: Google study," 2013).

The Next Big What (2013) study in India revealed that 50% of the Indian online buyers were in the age group of 18-24 years ("Not just discounts, but Indians are buying online for convenience as well [report]," 2013). Joshi and Upadhyay (2014) in their study involving 1327 online shoppers demonstrated that male customers dominated the online buying in India and young customers belonging to the 25 - 30 years age group were the most likely to purchase online. The study further stated that 42% of the consumers belonging to the middle and high income group working in the private sector shopped online.

Another study conducted by Ioanăs and Stoica (2014) proclaimed that most of the online buyers were young. People belonging to the low income groups were more likely to search for information over online platforms before making a buying decision. Women made more online searches than men and were leading in online purchases. A study conducted by Singh, Panackal, Bommireddipalli, and Sharma (2016) in the Indian e-retail context also highlighted the association of young customers with digital media.

A recent study conducted by Koundinya (2017) in the online travel industry identified the positive relationship between demographic variables and online buying wherein the author stressed that gender, income, and educational qualifications positively affected the online buying of tickets. However, the author was not able to establish the association of two important variables namely age and profession of the respondents with online buying.

The study conducted by Negi, Saklani, Badoni, and Jasola (2002) did not find any significant association between usage of online media and age, education, and income. Another study conducted by Hooda and Aggarwal (2012) also failed to detect any relationship between gender and e-marketing usage. The study also revealed that people in the high-income group were more aligned towards e-marketing because of lack of time. The study was successful in establishing a significant relationship between income, age, occupation, and e-marketing usage.

Charan and Dahiya (2015), in their study related to digital marketing, tried to establish a connection between important demographic variables namely age, income, occupation, gender, and education with the usage of digital channels of communication. The study concluded that age, gender, and occupation had no association with digital channels of communication usage. However, the study successfully established that post graduate consumers belonging to the high income group used 'YouTube' and smartphones as information sources.

Although, many studies have tried to examine the demographic details of the consumers using digital media, yet there remains a need for a study that could precisely analyze the demographic variables so that the marketers might use them for effective segmentation. The current study tries to overcome the limitation by comprehensively understanding the demographic profile of the consumers along with making an attempt to discover the important customer segments for marketers to target. The present study deals with identifying the specific car buyers' segments using digital channels of communication while buying a car based on important demographic variables. The study would also reveal the association between key demographic variables and usage of digital channels of communication.

Research Objectives

The following objectives were set for the study :

- To assess the relationship between important demographic variables and usage of digital marketing communication while buying a car.
- To identify the car buyer segments using digital marketing communication while buying a car.

Research Methodology

As the study deals with clearly defined variables, the nature of research is descriptive. The study made use of primary data, which was collected through a survey from Delhi. Area wise proportionate cluster sampling was used to collect the data from the respondents. Census (2011) was considered as a frame of reference, which divided Delhi into nine districts. Purposely, seven districts were chosen for further inclusion in the study. We conveniently chose areas in each district, and proportionately and conveniently picked samples from the chosen area.

Primary data was collected from the respondents with the help of a questionnaire. The survey method was used for collecting primary data. Both online and physical modes were used to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. A respondent in the study was any person in the family who either had a car or planned to buy a car in the near future, that is, a potential customer. The finalized questionnaire was sent to 2000 respondents. A total of 830 questionnaires were received from the respondents between January 2015 - August 2016, generating a response rate of 41.5%. After data cleaning, 801 responses were deemed fit for the study. The proportion of the respondents in the sample was kept same as it was in the population in each district. Out of the total 801 respondents, 603 respondents had used at least one digital channel of communication while buying a car. Data was analyzed with the help of SPSS 18.0 version. Cluster analysis and chi-square were used as tests of significance to test the hypotheses. The Table 1 gives the details of the sampling plan followed for the study.

Table 1. Details of the Sampling Plan

Sr. No.	District	Population	% of Total Population	Proportion in Sample
I.	North West Delhi	3,656,539	22.76	183
II.	South Delhi	2,731,929	17.01	136
III.	West Delhi	2,543,243	15.83	126
IV.	South West Delhi	2,292,958	14.27	114
V.	North East Delhi	2,241,624	13.95	112
VI.	East Delhi	1,709,346	10.65	85
VII.	North Delhi	887,978	5.53	45

Sample Size = 801

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were envisaged to study the relationship that would reveal the statistical significance, if any, between demographic variables and use of digital channels of communication while buying a car.

- **Ha_1:** There is an association between the demographic profile of the respondents and usage of channels of communication while buying a car.

↳ **H_{a2}:** There are no distinct customer segments of car buyers using digital communication channels while buying a car.

Data Analysis

(1) Profile of the Respondents : The main demographic variables used in the study include age, education, income, gender, and occupation. The Table 2 depicts the details of the demographic variables used in the study. It can be seen from the Table 2 that the sample distribution indicates a large proportion of respondents falling into the age group of 18 - 25 years, where 36% of the sample was represented by the said age group. Respondents belonging to the 26-30 years age group comprised of 18% of the sample, whereas the 31 - 35 years age group was represented by 15% of the respondents. It can be observed from the Table 2 that 69% of the sample was represented by people below the age of 35 years ; 31% of the sample was represented by respondents above the age of 35 years.

Forty six percent (46%) of the respondents possessed a graduate degree ; 35% of the respondents possessed a postgraduate degree ; 16% of the respondents were educated upto intermediate (senior secondary) ; whereas, 3% of the respondents were found possessing other educational qualifications like doctoral degree, diploma, etc.

Nineteen percent (19%) of the respondents belonged to the income group of below INR 4 lakhs income category. Income category of INR 4 lakhs and above but below INR 8 lakhs was represented by about 42% of the respondents. Income category of INR 8 lakhs and above but below INR 20 lakhs was represented by 31% of the respondents ; whereas INR 20 lakhs and above annual income category was represented by 8% of the respondents.

Table 2. Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Options	% of Respondents
Age	18-25 years	36
	26-30 years	18
	31-35 years	15
	36-40 years	10
	Above 40 years	21
Education	Senior Secondary	16
	Graduate	46
	Post Graduate	35
	Others	3
Income (in INR)	Below 4 Lakhs	19
	4 Lakhs and above but below 8 Lakhs	42
	8 Lakhs and above but below 20 Lakhs	31
	20 Lakhs and above	8
Occupation	Student	29
	Service	40
	Business	22
	Home-maker	9
Gender	Male	64
	Female	36
Channel of Communication	Digital Channels	75
	Traditional Channels	25

Table 3. Demographic Variables and Channels of Communication

Variables	Options	Use of Digital Channels (%)	Use of Traditional Channels (%)	Chi-Square Statistic with Sig.
Age	18-25 years	28.96	6.74	40.753
	26-30 years	14.73	3.62	(.000 sig.)
	31-35 years	12.11	2.62	
	36-40 years	7.62	2.75	
	Above 40 years	11.86	8.99	
Education	Senior Secondary	11.99	4.12	2.585
	Graduate	34.33	11.36	(.460 sig.)
	Post Graduate	27.09	8.11	
	Others	1.87	1.12	
Income (in INR)	Below 4 Lakhs	13.36	5.37	4.610
	4 Lakhs and above but below 8 Lakhs	31.59	10.86	(.203 sig.)
	8 Lakhs and above but below 20 Lakhs	23.47	7.24	
	20 Lakhs and above	6.87	1.25	
Occupation	Student	23.60	5.99	12.299
	Service	30.46	9.24	(.006 sig.)
	Business	15.98	5.99	
	Home-maker	5.24	3.50	
Gender	Male	49.31	14.23	4.046
	Female	25.97	10.49	(.044 sig.)

Forty percent (40 %) of the sample was represented by respondents in the service sector ; 30% of the sample was represented by students ; whereas, respondents running their own business and home makers represented 22% and 9% of the sample, respectively. Male respondents constituted 64% of the sample, whereas female respondents formed 34% of the sample.

Out of the total 801 respondents, 603 respondents used at least one of the digital channels namely websites, SNS, YouTube, digital TV, digital outdoors, e-mails, smartphones, etc. during their purchase decision journey while buying a car ; whereas, 198 people did not use any digital channel and used only the traditional channels namely TV, radio, newspapers, visiting dealers' showrooms, etc. The results of the study show that 75% of the people used at least one of the digital channels, whereas 25% used only the traditional channels while buying a car.

The Table 3 details the usage of digital and traditional channels of communication while buying a car along with the results of chi-square test statistic, used as a test of significance. It can be seen from the Table 3 that for all demographic variables, the usage of digital channels of communication was found to be more than the traditional channels of communication while buying a car. Young male graduate respondents in the service sector belonging to the income category of INR 4 lakhs and above but below INR 8 lakhs income category made the maximum use of digital channels of communication while buying a car. Statistical significance of the descriptive results was checked with the help of a non-parametric test. Chi-square was applied as a test of significance at the 5% level of significance in order to see the significance of the results. The statistic is found to be significant (with a significance value of less than .05) for variables like age, occupation, and gender, thereby indicating an association between channel of communication and these variables. However, the statistic value is found insignificant (with a significance value of more than .05) for variables like income and education. So, hereby, the hypothesis H_{a1} is partially accepted as a significant association is found with channels of communication whereby digital was the preferred communication channel across demographic variables namely age, occupation, and gender. Other

demographic variables namely education and income, however, did not have a significant association with the channels of communication.

The findings reveal important and interesting insights for marketers. The results of the study reveal that young respondents (especially between 18 - 25 years of age) made the maximum use of digital communication channels while buying a car. The findings can be understood with the fact that young customers are comfortable in using new age technologies in comparison to the old age customers. Young customers feel themselves at ease while using new age communication channels and appreciate their obvious advantage over traditional channels of communication. The results also reveal that male respondents in service occupational category made the maximum use of digital channels while buying a car. Again, the findings can be understood as it is very obvious to get influenced from peers and colleagues for working customers regarding the use of new-age communication channels like websites, social networking sites, and online communities to name a few. Fellow colleagues might also recommend a particular communication channel in order to take an informed decision. Moreover, working customers might not have enough time to search, compare, and evaluate various car brands physically. So, they rely more on digital channels of communication, which provide instant and cost effective access to the information required for making a buying decision. Education and income of the respondents did not yield any specific association with the usage of channels of communication. The findings can be apprehended by appreciating the user friendly and less complex nature of digital devices. Nowadays, customers having basic education like high school or intermediate can easily use digital technologies due to easy availability, customer friendly interface, and low cost of digital devices.

(2) Demographic Profiling of the Customers - Cluster Analysis : Although age, occupation, and gender were identified as significant demographic factors which had an association with channel of communication, a more comprehensive grouping of respondents would help the marketers greatly. To obtain homogeneous subgroups of respondents based upon the similarity towards variables of interest, cluster analysis was used in the study. The significant variables namely age, occupation, and gender along with channels of communication were used in the 'k-way cluster analysis' to better understand the customer profile that might use the digital channels of communication while buying a car.

Cluster analysis is used to group individual cases into homogeneous subgroups based upon a similar response towards variables of interest. For large datasets, K-means clustering facilitates selection of a pre-defined number of clusters. For the study, three was the pre-defined number of clusters. K-means clustering algorithm assigns individual cases to clusters on the basis of smallest amount of distance between the cluster mean and individual case. Clustering is iterative in nature and the process stops when significant change is not observed in cluster means after adding or deleting a single case. A total of 10 iterations were performed which dealt with repetitive sequence of operations until the clusters did not change substantially. After 10 iterations, convergence was achieved due to very minor changes in 'clusters' and henceforth, the iteration stopped.

Final cluster centers (Table 4) explain the different clusters formed after the analysis. It can be seen from the table that Cluster 1 has the male respondents belonging to the 26-30 years age group, mainly in business as an

Table 4. Final Cluster Centers

	Clusters		
	1	2	3
Age	26-30 Years	18-25 years	36-40 Years
Occupation	Business	Student	Service
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Channel of Communication	Digital	Digital	Digital
No. of Cases in Each Cluster	201	268	332

occupational category. This segment can be named as '*Young Business Turks'* as the segment included the young respondents who were running their own businesses. Cluster 2 had male students belonging to the 18-25 years age group. This segment can be named as '*Generation Next,'* with it being comprised of young students. Cluster 3 has the male respondents belonging to the service category in the 36 - 40 years age group. This segment can be named as '*Employed Maestro'* as it comprises of employed mid-aged respondents. All three clusters have the respondents who were using digital channels of communication while deciding to buy a car.

The Table 5 gives the differences between final cluster centers which depicts the 'Euclidean distances' between the final cluster centers. 'Euclidean distance' between the two clusters is computed by taking the square root of the sum of the squares of the differences between cluster means. Greater 'Euclidean distance' between clusters infers the greater dissimilarity between clusters. It can be seen from the Table 5 that Clusters 2 and 3 have the maximum distance (3.480) ensuring the maximum dissimilarity. However, Cluster 1 is not very different from Clusters 2 (1.934) and 3 (2.248).

The ANOVA Table 6 describes which variables contribute the most towards clustering. It can be seen from the table that gender of the respondents contributed the least towards clustering and was found associated with a very small *F* value 1.510 with a significance value of .222. As the significance value is more than the cut off value, that is, .05, it can be interpreted that gender of the respondent was not significant in making its contribution towards clustering.

Cluster analysis (k-way) classifies the individual cases to manageable pre-defined clusters (three for the current study) but does not test for the significant difference among the cluster means. However, silhouette measure of cohesion and separation was applied as a measure of the clustering solution's overall goodness-of-fit. The value of the statistic is normally based upon the average distances between the objects and can vary between '-1 and +1'. Specifically, a silhouette measure of less than 0.20 indicates a poor solution quality, a measure between 0.20 and 0.50 indicates a fair solution ; whereas, values of more than 0.50 indicate a good solution. The Figure 1 indicates the quality measure of the clusters formed in the study.

For the present study, by looking at the horizontal bar (Figure 1), the measure value is found more than .50, which means that the clusters formed are of good quality. This leads to the acceptance of the hypothesis H_{a2} of the study whereby three distinct customer segments were identified using digital channels of communication while buying a car. The first segment comprised of respondents belonging to the 26 - 30 years age group, mainly engaged in business as an occupational category, and was named as 'Young Business Turks'. The second segment comprised of students belonging to the 18 - 25 years age group and was named as 'Generation Next'. The third segment had

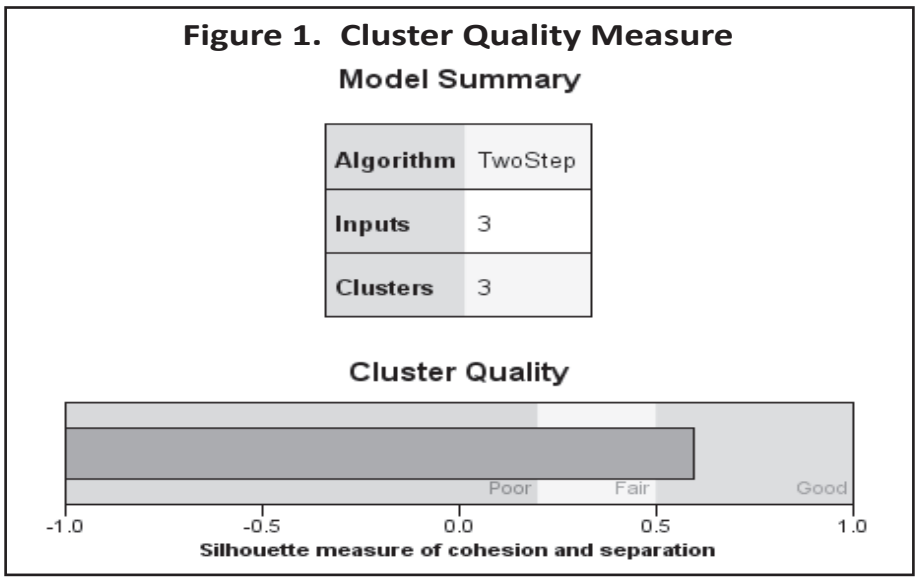
Table 5. Distances Between the Final Cluster Centers

Cluster		1	2	3
Dimension 0	1		1.934	2.248
	2	1.934		3.480
	3	2.248	3.480	

Table 6. ANOVA Table for Cluster Analysis

Clustering Variables	Cluster		Error		*F*	Sig.
	Mean Square	*df*	Mean Square	*df*		
Age	812.797	2	.379	798	2143.870	.000
Occupation	194.205	2	.372	798	522.160	.000
Gender	.350	2	.232	798	1.510	.222
Communication Channels	1.396	2	.183	798	7.615	.001

Figure 1. Cluster Quality Measure



respondents belonging to the service category in the 36 - 40 years age group and was named as 'Employed Maestro'.

Cluster analysis is followed by discriminant analysis to ascertain the significance of the results obtained. Age, occupation, and gender - all three demographic variables successfully discriminate towards the usage of channel of communication. The Wilk's Lambda is found to be significant with a value of .958 (.000 sig. value). The centroid value representing the mean score for usage of channels of communication is found as .363 and -.119, and the cut off score for the discriminant function is found as 0. The age of the respondents is found contributing the most towards the discrimination of channel of usage with 97% contribution (.000 sig.) which is followed by occupation of the respondents contributing 55% towards discrimination (.001 sig.). Gender of the respondents contributes the least towards the discrimination, with 34% contribution (.044 sig.). Overall, the discriminant function correctly classifies about 65% of the cases in the study. The discriminating function for usage of channel of communication can be written as Eq. (1):

$$Y = -2.556 + .607*Age + .666*Gender + .032*Occupation \quad (1)$$

Discussion

The results of the study reveal that three fourths of the respondents used at least one channel of communication while buying a car. Similar findings were reported by the studies conducted by KPMG (2013) and C+R Research (2014). Age, occupation, and gender of the respondents are found significantly associated with the channels of communication while buying a car.

Google ("60 million women in India online: Google study," 2013), Next Big What's report (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. The study identified three distinct customer segments/clusters that used digital channels of communication while buying a car. Age contributed the maximum towards clustering with 97% contribution followed by occupation of the respondents with 55% contribution. Kierzkowski et al. (1996), Cotte et al. (2006), and Jayawardhena et al. (2007) in their respective studies also grouped online customers on the basis of almost similar demographic variables in different product categories.

Managerial Implications

The findings have important implications for marketers whereby 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, nowadays, use of digital channels of communication is increasing in the car-buying decision making process. Car marketers must understand that the 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 a plethora of information about various car brands. Keeping the state of affairs in mind, marketers are required to regularly update all contemporary digital channels of communication, that is, websites, social networking sites, online communities, e-mails, mobile phones, digital TV, and digital outdoors with relevant and exciting content. The compatibility of digital content with different digital devices held by the customers should also be ensured by the marketers to give a consistent and seamless experience to the car buyers.

Marketers must also understand that digital channels of communication are mainly used by young customers. These customers might also have their preferences for particular digital channels of communication. Marketers should identify the most preferred digital channels of communication and leverage the same to better market the given product, that is, the car. Targeting these customers with their preferred channel of communication could produce good business results for the marketers. Relevant information about the given product category that might deal with new offers and variants of car, special discounts, new launches, contest and games, loan and financing options, due date of services, maintenance updates, etc. should be communicated to the target audience at a right time through their preferred digital channel as it would help them in taking an informed and valued decision.

The study identifies three distinct customer segments using digital channels of communication while buying a car, which implies that improved business results could be obtained if marketers prioritize their efforts toward explicit customer segments that are more likely to use digital channels of communication. Based on the results of the study, these segments could include :

(i) Customers of business class between the age group of 26-30 years,

(ii) Students between the age group of 18 - 25 years,

(iii) Customers of service class between the age group of 26 - 40 years.

Marketers can share exciting digital content via myriad digital channels available today which not only engages the potential customers, but would also result in valued relationships with them. The digital content should be made as interactive as possible so that greater details can be obtained about the target customers who later on can be targeted individually and more precisely. Marketers can also motivate their target customers to sharing the feedback and opinions with them ; studies can also be conducted to reveal the association between digital channels of communication and various stages of the car buying decision process. The results of the study can be used to formulate the strategies to target customers as per their buyer readiness stage.

The study reveals that one fourth of the respondents did not use digital channels of communication while buying a car. Although the study did not identify the reason(s) for not using digital channels of communication while buying a car, but available literature reports that consumers don't use digital channels as : they are not tech savvy, lack of trust, and time & knowledge constraints (Ryan & Jones, 2012 ; Thakur, 2013 ; Wind & Mahajan, 2002). Converting such customers (traditional channels users) into users of digital channels can be a challenge for marketers. Marketers should identify the barriers limiting the use of digital channels and deal with these barriers. Some of the recommended measures include designing easy to navigate websites, developing apps producing user specific content in their preferred language, sending SMS and MMS in users' preferred language, and designing digital platforms supporting voice based commands to reduce the perceived technicality of the

media. It is also advised that car marketers must identify the opinion leaders in the target segment's group which can be easily done over digital channels given their identification and targeting capabilities so that the target customers trust the digital communication channels.

Conclusion

Digital marketing is writing new rules in business communication across all businesses. The Indian car market is also experiencing a change, and marketers are actively applying various digital communication marketing practices across various digital channels. For the past 5 years, the Indian passenger car marketers have been one of the top digital spenders and are gradually increasing their digital spends. Consumers have also experienced a change in the traditional car buying process whereby they are making fewer visits to the showroom than before and now rely heavily on digital information for making a purchase decision. They are also comparing and reading reviews of experts and other consumers before deciding about the brand. The young generation, especially belonging to the age group of 18-30 years and in service, is quite proactive when it comes to using digital marketing communication while buying a car. So, it can be concluded that the digital platform is offering itself in an exciting proposition to both marketers and consumers.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

The present study made use of quantitative data whereby it sought the desired information from 801 respondents belonging to Delhi area. The study made use of cross sectional descriptive research design whereby respondents were contacted once. Future studies can produce different results with longitudinal research design and even larger sample size. The study was conducted in Delhi and the 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. The car buyers consisted of both actual and potential buyers, and the study did not 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 cannot be specifically and precisely applied for a particular channel of communication. The study only saw the association between demographic variables and channels of communication. As results indicated an association between the two, a formal study might be conducted revealing the most preferred channel of communication used by the customers belonging to a particular demography.

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About the Authors

Ms. Rekha is a PhD Scholar of Uttarakhand Technical University, Dehradun and is currently working as an Assistant Professor with Banarsidas Chandiwala Institute of Professional Studies, Dwarka, Delhi. Her areas of interests are Digital Marketing and Consumer Behaviour.

Aparna Mishra is presently working as an Associate Professor with Banarsidas Chandiwala Institute of Professional Studies, Dwarka, Delhi. Her areas of interest are Digital Economy and Behavioural Finance.