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## To Study the Influence of Digital Platforms on Consumer Buying Behavior in Automobiles

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### ABSTRACT

In the evolving landscape of digital transformation, the Indian automobile market is experiencing a fundamental shift in the way consumers approach the car buying process. The widespread availability of the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms is changing the traditional factors that consumers use to gather information about cars. Factors such as dealership visits, newspaper ads, and suggestions by word of mouth, are rapidly being replaced or supplemented by digital sources of information for car purchases. This study investigates the growing influence of digital platforms particularly YouTube, influencer content, social media, online reviews, and aggregator websites on consumer buying behavior in the Indian automobile industry.

This research aims to identify how these digital platforms influence different stages of the consumer buying journey from awareness and consideration to final decision-making. A structured online questionnaire was used to collect primary data from individuals over the age of 20 who had either recently purchased a car or were planning to do so. The study received over 80 valid responses, which were analyzed using descriptive statistics and visual representations to derive insights into usage patterns, trust levels, and platform preferences.

The findings reveal that YouTube is the most used and trustworthy platform for car-related research, followed by social media and automobile review websites. Consumers appear to trust digital content to a high degree, especially expert reviews and influencer videos, and that the content influenced their shortlists and final purchase decision. The study also reveals a strong preference for SUVs, growing interest in automatic transmissions, and an increasing reliance on online content to evaluate safety features, after-sales service, and pricing.

Demographic trends indicate that younger, urban respondents are more digitally engaged and more likely to rely on online platforms than traditional sources. This suggests that digital media forms not only enhance the offline buying process but influence consumers' perceptions and outcomes in their buying behavior in the first place.

The research ends with recommendations for automobile brands and marketers to implement platform-based digital strategies, engage with influencers that the company trusts, and create honest, informative content suitable for a changing marketplace with digitally connected consumers.

### 1 – INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, consumer behavior has changed dramatically - especially in high-value, high-involvement categories like the automobile industry. The traditional decision-making process for what cars to consider included dealership visits, printed brochures, peer recommendations, and finally test drives. Today, car buyers rely less on the ability to visit a dealership, when they get there, they are informed by the vast digital sources of information available to them. Car buyers are enormously influenced by many online touchpoints including dealership YouTube video reviews, influencers, social media ads, blogs, and most importantly, aggregated user reviews from automobile sites or dedicated automobile portals.

The arrival of digital mediums as a core aspect of the customer journey has changed not only how consumers actively seek information, but also how they form trust with brands, compare other options, and ultimately make final purchase decisions. Digital platforms provide real-time access to product knowledge, video demonstrations, experts' opinions, and peer reviews, truly placing information in the hands of the consumer. Consequently, automotive manufacturers and marketers are investing more in online branding, influencer marketing, and social listening to remain fresh and competitive in the market.

With expanding internet access, smartphone adoption and a young, tech-savvy population, India is a particularly dynamic market to study digital influences on automotive purchases. Consumers are more connected, more informed and more driven by social media; hence, understanding the impact this may have on consumers' preferences, priorities and expectations when buying a car is essential.

This research aims to understand the influence of digital platforms on consumer behavior in the Indian automotive industry. The specific research questions investigating will be to identify which digital channels matter most, how much trust do consumers have in them, and do consumers ultimately make important decisions based on digital platforms?

The following chapter will provide the background of the research, industry profile, problem statement, objectives, scope, and limitations setting the stage for understanding the proposed research direction and practical significance.

### ***1.1 Background of the Study***

The buying behavior of consumers in the automobile industry has changed dramatically in recent years due to the growth of digital platforms. Most car buyers used to use printed brochures, advertisements, and dealership visits to gather information about automobiles. Now, thanks to the Internet and smartphones, the decision-making process is largely dependent on digital touchpoints including YouTube reviews, influencer videos, blogs, social media posts, and online comparison websites.

Consumers today are better informed, more tech-savvy, and better at researching new purchases. Prior to stepping into a dealership, consumers view massive amounts of digital content. This shift made it crucial for automobile brands to have a strong presence on digital platforms and produce content that connects with their potential customers.

In India, where consumption of online content has increased drastically, the impact of digital influence is particularly strong among young and mid-age car buyers. These buyers rely on digital platforms not only for information but also for validation, peer opinions, and predictions of other trends.

This study aims to explore how these digital platforms influence the buying behavior of automobile consumers in India.

### ***1.2 Industry Profile***

The Indian automobile industry represents one of the largest and fastest growing industries across the globe. The automobile industry has significant economic impact on the nation through, gross domestic product (GDP) contribution, job creation and advancement of technology. The automobile sector consists of various categories of vehicles such as passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, two wheelers, and electric vehicles. The passenger car segment which consists of hatch backs, sedans, sports utility vehicles (SUVs), and multi-purpose vehicles (MPVs) has experienced significant growth due to rising income levels, urbanization and an expanding middle class.

India's automotive industry has evolved rapidly over the years. The industry changed from being one with only a few domestic manufacturers to a vibrant and competitive space with many international s in the market. To name a few brands include Maruti Suzuki, Hyundai, Honda, Kia, Toyota, BYD, Tata Motors, Mahindra and more. The constant innovation and development creates intense competition to stay ahead in design, safety, technology, and performance.

Over the last few years, digital disruption has greatly changed how the automotive industry engages with customers. Print advertising, billboards, and television commercials are becoming more companion media as digital channels take precedence, and in many situations, replace them. Almost 800 million internet users in India means that digital platforms are the main pathway for car brands to connect with potential customers.

Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook are now critical avenues to enhance brand awareness, consumer engagement, and brand storytelling. Nowadays automobile companies are collaborating with influencers and auto-reviewers in order to promote new launches, highlight features of vehicles, and relay ownership experiences. Online booking, virtual test-drives, and AI chat support are quickly becoming standard practice in the industry.

The industry has also witnessed a growing demand for electric vehicles (EVs) driven by environmental concerns, fuel cost savings, and government incentives. While EVs are still in their early adoption stage, digital platforms are playing a crucial role in educating consumers about their benefits and usage.

Overall, the Indian automobile industry is in a phase of dynamic transformation, not only in terms of product innovation and environmental goals but also in the way it communicates and builds trust with consumers. In this digital-first environment, understanding how online content shapes buying behaviour is essential for every brand aiming to succeed in this highly competitive and evolving market.

### ***1.3 Statement of the Problem***

The digital age is moving at the speed of light. The vehicle buying process has transformed dramatically, as consumers are now relying on more than just traditional methods, (e.g. visiting a local dealership, driving a vehicle, asking a friend), and are starting to base their decision on digital means. As a buyer, it is extremely easy to research, consider, evaluate, and ultimately select the vehicle you want to purchase through YouTube, Instagram, online auto forums, influencer reviews, and aggregator sites such as Car Dekho and CarWale.

The rise of digital media has really changed how people look for information and view brands. Nowadays, when someone wants to check out a car, they're more likely to watch a video review or scroll through social media rather than visit a dealership. Yet, despite this clear behavioral shift, there

exists a significant gap in understanding how these online platforms influence buying decisions, particularly in the Indian auto market, which has such a variety of preferences, income levels, and digital literacy.

With the rise of tech-savvy, mobile-first consumers, and an increasing reliance on online platforms for major purchase decisions, it becomes essential to investigate the real impact of digital content on consumer behavior. This includes identifying which platforms are most influential, what type of content holds the most trust, and whether such influence genuinely converts into consideration or purchase. Furthermore, factors such as age group, budget range, preferred transmission type, and car body preferences may also affect how individuals interact with digital content.

Thus, this study aims to identify the evolving relationship between digital influence and car buying behavior from Indian consumers to provide data-driven understanding of the impact of specific platforms, developing levels of trust, and shifting purchase patterns which helps in deeper understanding of how digital platforms are redefining consumer behavior in one of the world's largest automobile markets.

#### ***1.4 Need for the Study***

The rising penetration of digital platforms into everyday life has greatly affected consumer behavior in many sectors, and the automotive sector is no different. Online car reviews, influencer content, targeted digital advertising, and aggregator sites with benchmark details and comparisons, consumers are now empowered with more information than ever before as information is now can be accessible and conveniently.

While many companies are investing heavily in digital marketing strategy, there is little research that provides a systematic understanding of how these platforms actually influence consumer behavior especially in the Indian context where the consumer base is diverse in terms of geography, income levels, and digital literacy. The decision-making process for car buying is no longer linear. There are many different touchpoints that consumers follow, each playing an important role in their perception building, developing trust and influencing their choice.

Understanding the degree to which digital platforms impact consumer preferences, trust levels, and final purchase decisions is essential for automobile brands, marketers, and dealerships aiming to stay relevant in a competitive market. It is also important to examine how factors like age group, budget, car body type, and transmission preferences interact with digital influence.

Therefore, this study is necessary to:

- Understand the extent to which digital platforms influence automobile purchase decisions.
- Identify the most effective platforms and content types from a consumer perspective.
- Examine the trust and perception gap between online and offline sources.
- Help automobile brands, digital marketers, and dealerships make data-driven decisions about how to engage with today's digitally active car buyers.

By bridging the existing research gap, this study aims to offer valuable insights into the evolving role of digital media in shaping consumer decisions in the Indian automobile market.

#### ***1.5 Objectives of the Study***

The primary objective of this study is to examine the role and impact of digital platforms on consumer buying behavior in the Indian automobile market. As digital media continues to reshape how consumers access information and make decisions, it is essential to understand which factors most strongly influence modern car buyers.

- To assess the impact of digital platforms including YouTube, blogs, online reviews, influencer content, and social media on the decision-making process of car buyers.
- To evaluate the level of trust consumers place in digital sources of information and the extent to which this trust translates into actual purchase decisions.
- To analyze the digital behavior of different consumer segments based on age, budget, car type preferences, and location (urban/semi-urban/rural).
- To analyze the relative impact of digital platforms compared to traditional sources such as dealerships, family and peer recommendations, and conventional advertisements.
- To understand consumer preferences regarding body type, and transmission type, and to determine how digital content contributes to the formation of these preferences.
- To provide insights and practical recommendations for automobile manufacturers, dealers, and digital marketers to enhance their engagement strategies based on consumer behavior trends observed through the study.

### ***1.6 Scope of the Study***

This research investigates the growing influence of digital platforms on consumer purchasing behavior in the Indian passenger car segment. It aims to discover how various digital touchpoints from online reviews to influencer content that shape buyer perceptions, preferences, and final purchase decisions.

- **Target Segment – Passenger Car Buyers Aged 21 and Above**

The research was limited to participants aged 21 years and older who are current or potential purchasers of passenger vehicles. Participants were limited to this age range because it represents people most likely to have the income and/or decision-making ability to participate in the actual purchase process. People younger than 21 years of age are not included as it is not likely they would participate in automobile purchases themselves, even if they contributed to the influence decision-making their families did with select purchases.

- **Focus on Digital Platforms as a Behavioral Influence**

The study highlights the role of digital platforms such as but not limited to YouTube car review videos; automotive blogs; ads on social media, influencer videos; and online reviews of products. These platforms were evaluated based on not only their visibility but also their degree of influence in terms of consumer trust, awareness, short-listing, and decision of a vehicle purchase.

- **Geographic and Demographic Diversity**

The study examines consumer responses from urban, semi-urban, and rural populations. It does not limit itself to a few cities or states. So the area of study could be relevant and flexible across areas in India, without being limited by regions behavioral prejudices. Demographic attributes like age group, budget segment and type of location are all reviewed in order to determine behavioral tendencies.

- **Assessment of Consumer Preferences in the Digital Context**

The research investigates the extent to which digital exposure influences consumer choices and whether digital media serves as only a secondary source of information or is actually a deciding factor in feature related choices.

- **Practical Implications for Industry Stakeholders**

The scope of study includes generating actionable insights for automobile manufacturers, advertisers, dealerships and digital content developers. By discovering which platforms and content types are most impactful, this study helps stakeholders to develop marketing strategies while aligning it with consumer behavior influenced by digital media in the real-world.

### ***1.7 Limitations of the Study***

Some limitations are unavoidable due to the manner in which the research was conceived and executed. To grasp the extent and bounds of how far the study's findings are supposed to be understood, these findings need to be recognized.

- The data is collected through an online survey, limiting participation to individuals with internet access and basic digital literacy.
- The study focuses exclusively on passenger car buyers, excluding consumers of two-wheelers, commercial vehicles, or fleet buyers.
- The findings may not fully represent offline consumers who rely more heavily on traditional sources like physical dealerships or word-of-mouth.
- Responses are self-reported, which may include biases or inaccuracies in perception versus actual behavior.
- The sample size is limited and may not reflect the entire demographic diversity of the Indian automobile market.
- Regional analysis is avoided to maintain general applicability; hence, geographic-specific conclusions cannot be drawn.

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## **2 – LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

A literature review serves as the theoretical foundation for any research study. It involves systematically exploring previous studies, scholarly articles, and academic insights related to the chosen topic. In the context of this research, which focuses on the influence of digital platforms on consumer buying behavior in the Indian automobile industry, the literature review helps in identifying existing patterns, key findings, and gaps that still need to be addressed.

With the rise of digital transformation in India driven by affordable internet, increasing smartphone penetration, and changing media consumption habits consumer decision-making processes have become increasingly digital. This shift has generated a growing body of research on online reviews, influencer marketing, social media impact, and digital advertising, especially in high-involvement sectors like automobiles.

This section summarizes major past studies relevant to the topic, highlighting their methodologies and key conclusions. It also sets the stage for identifying gaps in existing literature, which this study intends to address.

## 2.2 Review of Past Studies

A number of recent studies have explored how digitalization has impacted consumer buying behavior, particularly in the Indian automobile sector. These studies provide a rich foundation for understanding how digital platforms, marketing strategies, and consumer preferences interact in today's market.

- **"Evolution of Car Purchasing Behaviour and the Reasons Behind it among Indian Consumers: A Comprehensive Analysis from 2010 to Present"**

*Author: Pragyan Borthakur / Published: July 2023 / Journal: International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*

This study provides a long-term view of changing trends in Indian car buying behavior, focusing on the post-COVID-19 landscape. It highlights how consumer decision-making has shifted due to greater health concerns, financial uncertainty, and a stronger reliance on online research. The study reveals that digital awareness among Indian car buyers has significantly increased, pushing brands to revamp their online engagement strategies.

- **"The Role of Digital Touchpoints in Car Purchasing – An Empirical Research Concerning the Indian Market"**

*Authors: M. Prabaharan, M. Selvalakshmi, R. Christina Jeya Nithilia / Published: July 2024 / Journal: Indian Journal of Science and Technology*

This empirical study focuses on how various digital touchpoints such as online reviews, influencer content, and social media advertisements affect the car purchasing process in India. It finds that digital content serves not only as an information source but also as a trust-building mechanism that strongly influences brand perception and final purchase decisions.

- **"Factors Influencing Consumer Decision to Purchase a Car"**

*Authors: V. Nerurkar, P. Barge, V. Bhatt, S. Rastogi, B. Agarwal / Published: 2023 / Journal: Marketing and Management of Innovations*

This research investigates the major psychological and economic factors that impact car buying decisions in India. While traditional factors like price, performance, and brand reputation remain important, the study points out that digital engagement especially peer reviews and expert videos which now plays a growing role in shaping consumer choices.

These studies collectively demonstrate the increasing relevance of digital platforms in the automotive purchase journey, while also highlighting the evolving priorities of Indian consumers in a digitally connected environment.

## 2.3 Research Gap Identification

While there is an increasing literature analyzing consumer behavior and the role of digital platforms in the automobile space, substantial gaps remain in knowledge - particularly in the Indian context. Most studies discussed in this paper examine either digital marketing strategies or consumer preferences in general, but do not explore how individual digital platforms (like YouTube, Instagram, blogs and online reviews) shape consumer decision making across segments.

To begin, although a number of studies have found that digital media can influence perceptions of and intentions towards a brand or product, there is relatively little empirical research examining the level of trust consumers have in various digital content sources and whether this trust translates into action -: for example, test drives, showroom trips, or purchases. The actual conversion from influence to behavior is not typically highlighted.

Second, many previous studies have combined all types of digital media as one, and have not distinguished between platforms or types of contents (i.e., expert reviews vs. influencer promotions vs. peer opinions). There is no fine-grained analysis of which particular platforms are most effective for Indian consumers or preferred based on demographics, budget, or types of cars.

Lastly, the majority of the literature available still emphasizes metro or urban consumers and leaves little or no literature on digital engagement for semi-urban or tier-2 and tier-3 regions, where consumers are adopting digital tools more frequently, and possibly viewing its content differently, influenced by regional themes and access to technology.

The study seeks to address these gaps by presenting a thorough and detailed segmented insight into how different digital platforms affect the Indian consumer's buying behavior in relation to automobiles. Moreover, it will examine platform-specific levels of trust, demographic trends, and the final decisions of car type, budget, and features with regard to the digital influence of the identified digital platforms.

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## 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction to Research Methodology

Research methodology is the guiding framework that describes how to structure and implement the study in an orderly, consistent, and objective manner. For this research, which examines the impact of digital platforms on consumer buying behavior in the Indian automobile market, a structured methodology will guide the study to ensure stakeholders can rely on the findings as valid and relevant.

The methodology selected for the study was structured to study consumer preferences, behaviors, and consumer consideration in a digital environment, with consideration to the digital tools used for consumer research when making purchases; such as social media, online reviews, influencers, and digital

ads. This research will collect and analyze structured data to learn how each of the digital touch points affects the relationship consumers have with key aspects of brand/desired fuel type, body type, and ultimately a purchasing decision.

The following sections provide an overview of the research design, data collection, sampling plan, and analysis tools. The approach adopted is aligned with the research objectives and ensures that the data collected is both accurate and actionable.

### 3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a **Descriptive Research Design**, which is appropriate for understanding and explaining current consumer behavior patterns and preferences related to digital influences in the automobile buying process. Descriptive research is particularly useful for gathering quantifiable information that can be statistically analyzed to draw meaningful conclusions.

The focus of this research is not to manipulate any variables but to observe and record how digital platforms such as YouTube, blogs, online reviews, influencer content, and social media impact various aspects of consumer decision-making. The goal is to describe the influence of these digital sources on buyers' perceptions, trust levels, vehicle preferences (e.g., fuel type, transmission, body type), and ultimately their purchase intent.

Given the exploratory nature of how digital influence is still evolving in the Indian market, this design provides a flexible yet structured way to analyze relationships between digital media exposure and consumer behavior across various demographic segments. The findings are expected to offer actionable insights into the growing significance of digital engagement in the automobile industry.

### 3.3 Data Collection Method

The data collection process is a cornerstone of research methodology because it provides an indication of the quality, relevance, and credibility of the findings of the study. This project used a combination of primary and secondary data collection methods to provide a complete view of consumer behavior and preferences in the Indian automobile market.

In this study, I used a quantitative manner of gathering **primary data** with a structured, self-administered online questionnaire using Google Forms. I used digital distributions of questionnaires across WhatsApp, Instagram and email and targeted a tech-savvy population who were experienced in digital environments, which matched my focus of digital influences on consumer behavior.

The questionnaire was divided into five logically ordered sections:

1. **Demographic Details** – Included age, gender, income group, residential category, and city/state, to help identify patterns based on background characteristics.
2. **Digital Platform Usage** – Assessed the frequency of usage and preferred digital platforms (YouTube, blogs, social media, reviews, etc.).
3. **Car Buying Preferences** – Focused on variables such as budget, fuel type, body type, and transmission preferences, as well as open-ended reasoning.
4. **Digital Influence on Decision-Making** – Evaluated the extent to which digital platforms impact brand selection, trust-building, and final purchasing decisions.
5. **Future Preferences and Expectations** – Captured evolving consumer expectations from the digital landscape in upcoming car purchases.

To maintain data quality and relevance:

- Responses from participants **below 20 years of age** were **excluded** from analysis, as they do not represent immediate car buyers.
- The form was intentionally concise, taking approximately **5–7 minutes** to complete to ensure higher engagement and response rates.

Several **types of measurement scales** were integrated:

- **Nominal scales:** For variables like gender, fuel type, and transmission preference.
- **Ordinal scales:** Used in questions that required prioritizing or ranking (e.g., reasons for body type preference).
- **Likert scales:** Applied to assess levels of influence, trust, and satisfaction with digital platforms.

This data collection method was chosen for its efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and alignment with the study's objective—to understand the digital behavior of Indian automobile consumers.

Besides primary data, secondary data was also used from credible sources which included credible literature, published research articles, academic journals, and industry reports. Secondary data was mainly used in the literature review in order to provide background context, distinguish gaps, and verify the relevance of the study; however, it was not utilized for statistical analysis or interpretation in the findings.

### 3.4 Sampling Method

The sampling method we used in this study is non-probability convenience sampling because of the ease of accessing and finding respondents within the limits of the researcher's network and social circles. The focus of the study was to assess the effects of digital platforms influence on automobile buying behaviors, therefore, the target population was individuals 20 years of age and older who were potential or recent car buyers.

#### Target Population:

The target population of this study are Indian individuals aged 20 and above who recently purchased a car, are going to purchase a car, or are currently researching cars online. Participants under the age of 20 were excluded from the study since they are less likely to be financially independent or directly involved in making or suggesting a car purchase.

#### Sampling Frame:

Since this study is digital, the sampling frame consisted of internet users active on platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and other online channels in which the survey link was shared with them. Also, the research is also aligned with this study frame as they are likely to be affected more by the digital characteristics of the content.

#### Sampling Unit:

The researchers considered each respondent that completed the online questionnaire as a sampling unit. These respondents provided relevant information about their digital media usage, vehicle preferences, and the influence digital media/online had on their decision-making process.

#### Sample Size:

A total of 80+ valid responses were collected and considered for the final analysis. This size was deemed sufficient to provide preliminary insights into consumer behavior trends within the scope and limitations of this academic study.

#### Sampling Technique:

As previously discussed, convenience sampling was employed. Although using convenience sampling does not guarantee full representativeness of all Indian automobile consumers, it was warranted based on time, resources available, and exploratory nature of the study. Likewise, care was taken to ensure respondents were from various ages, income levels, and geographic locations, no diversity was missed from the sample.

### 3.5 Tools for Data Analysis

Data analysis is fundamental to deriving valuable knowledge from the data gathered from primary research.

Microsoft Excel was used to help organize, process, and analyze the data collected. All survey responses collected from Google Forms automatically acquired and exported a copy into an Excel spreadsheet to make it easier to work with. With Excel's sorting, filtering, and built-in functions, Excel was an excellent choice for data cleaning, verification, and data preparation before analysis.

The analysis process involved:

- Data Cleaning and Preparation: The raw data was first cleaned to ensure accuracy and consistency by:
- Removing duplicate or incomplete responses,
- Excluding participants under 20 years of age,
- Standardizing open-ended answers where applicable.

**Descriptive Statistics:** Basic measures such as frequency counts and percentages were computed to summarize demographic information, digital platform usage, car buying preferences (budget, body type, transmission), and digital influence indicators.

**Data Visualization:** To enhance understanding and presentation, various charts were created, including:

- For visualizing the survey data, pie charts were primarily used to represent proportions and percentages of categorical responses, providing a clear snapshot of the distribution across various factors.
- Horizontal bar charts were applied in cases where comparisons between multiple categories or factors were needed, as they effectively display differences in magnitude and make it easier to interpret relative preferences.

### 3.6 Limitations of the Methodology

Some limitations need to be recognized in order to offer a fair and honest reflection of the process.

- **Sampling** - The survey has been distributed via an online platform and the data collected was through convenience sampling, so it may not be representative of all types of car buyers in India. People who are typically more online-oriented may have been overrepresented.
- **Sample Size** - The sample is fairly small (about 80) with respect to the vast and diverse automobile market in India. The relatively small sample size limits the potential extent of generalization of the results.
- **Self-Reported Data** - The responses are self-reported, so, to some extent, they can be affected by the participants' personal bias or inability to accurately recall information, particularly with respect to how much digital influence they perceive.
- **Qualitative Data** - The study is based primarily on quantitative survey data. While not definitive, the reported survey data does not offer deeper insights into the reasons why or the emotions consumers associated with their decisions; the qualitative aspect that in-depth interviews or observation would have captured for a richer analysis.
- **Snapshot in Time** - The data collected encapsulates opinions and behaviors at that time period. Particularly with the speed with which digital platforms and consumer trends shift, this brief snapshot of experience and data may be irrelevant in the near future.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides useful insights into how digital platforms influence car buyers, helping pave the way for more comprehensive studies in the future.

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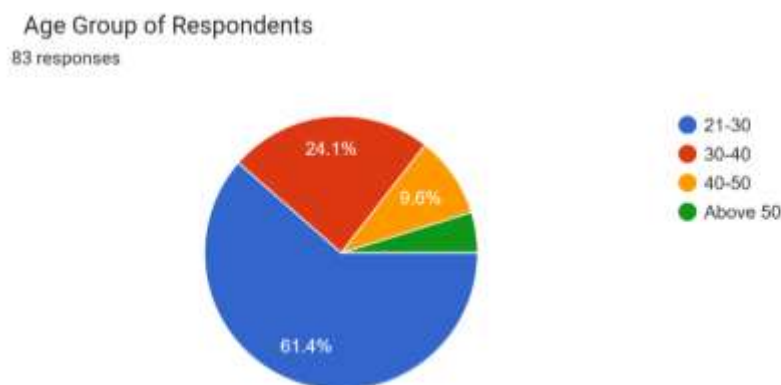
## 4 – DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the primary data collected through the structured questionnaire. The aim is to interpret how digital platforms influence consumer behavior in the Indian automobile market. Responses are analyzed to identify patterns, trends, and insights based on demographic profiles, digital usage habits, buying preferences, and the level of digital influence.

### 4.1 Section 1: Demographic Information

The demographic profile of the respondents provides a foundational understanding of the target audience for this study. It helps contextualize how different groups interact with digital platforms during the car-buying journey.

#### Age Distribution

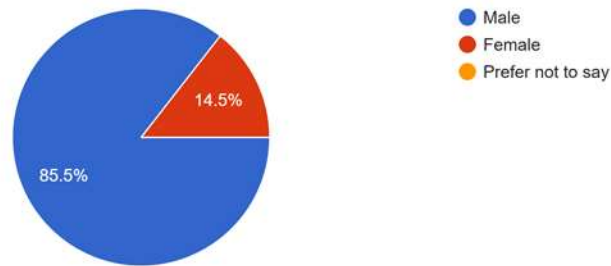


A significant 61.4% of respondents belongs to the 21-30 age groups, indicating that young adults represent the most significant segment in this study. Young adults tend to be more tech-savvy and seek to research and learn as much as possible before making a purchasing decision. The next largest segment (30-40 age group) accounts for 24.1% of respondents, indicating that mid-career professionals also make use of digital resources. The 40-50 age range is only represented by 9.6% and only 4.8% of the sample indicate they are over 50, revealing that older age groups are less represented and perhaps less influenced by digital media for car-related decisions.

#### Gender Distribution



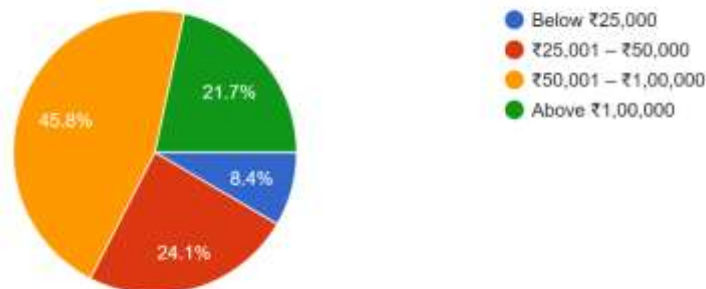
**Gender of Respondents**  
83 responses



In terms of gender, 85.5% of the survey respondents are male and 14.5% are female. The data shows a significant number of respondents are male. This is consistent with the market factors as males have always been more involved in the automobile research and decision-making process, especially in an Indian context. However, the data do show that women are conducting automobile research and are involved in decision making for automobiles as well, just less than men.

#### Monthly Income Range

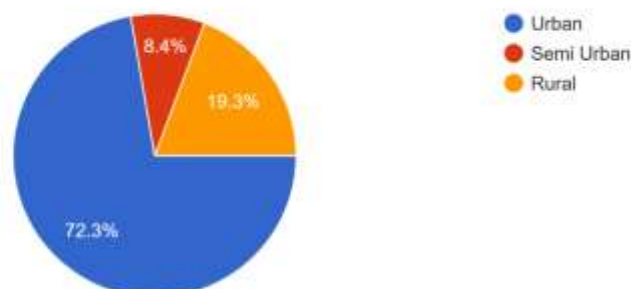
**What is your monthly income range?**  
83 responses



The monthly income distribution reveals that 45.8% of respondents earn between ₹50,001 and ₹1,00,000, followed by 24.1% earning ₹25,001–₹50,000. Interestingly, 21.7% earn above ₹1 lakh, indicating a notable presence of high-income individuals in the sample. Only 8.4% fall in the below ₹25,000 range. This pattern shows that the majority of digitally engaged consumers belong to the middle- and upper-middle-income groups, who typically have greater purchasing power and access to online tools for research and comparison and often targeted by automobile brands offering value-for-money products and budget-friendly financing options.

#### Geographical Background

**Which region do you belong to? ( Urban areas are cities with developed infrastructure, semi-urban are smaller towns or outskirts with moderate develop...al refers to villages or less developed regions. )**  
83 responses

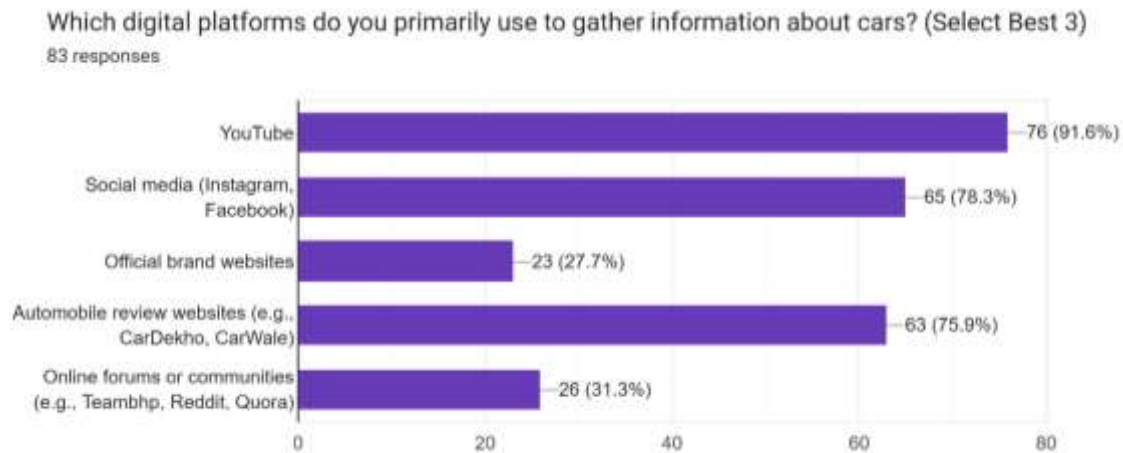


The geographical distribution indicates a greater number of responses in the Western and Northern regions of India. The majority of respondents (72.3%) are in urban areas, while 19.3% are rural and 8.4% are semi-urban. This confirms that as a whole, urban consumers are the primary drivers of digital interaction in the automobile sector, likely due to better internet infrastructure, digital literacy, and exposure to online marketing.

#### 4.2 Section 2: Digital Platform Usage

Understanding the usage of digital platforms is essential to gauge how they influence consumer behavior in the automobile sector.

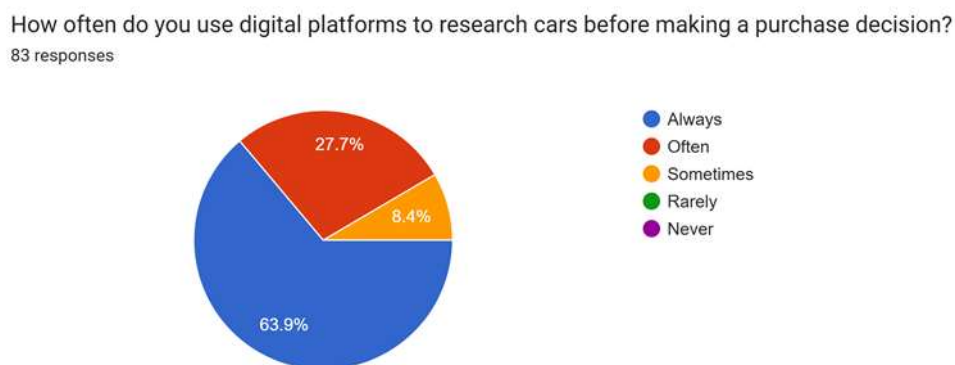
##### Preferred Digital Platforms for Car Research



When asked about the digital platforms they use to gather car-related information, a clear trend emerged in favor of video and social-driven content. A dominant 91.6% of respondents rely on YouTube, making it the most preferred platform, likely due to its visual and detailed car reviews, test drive videos, and influencer content. This is closely followed by social media platforms (78.3%) such as Instagram and Facebook, where users are influenced by sponsored posts, reels, and peer opinions.

Moreover, 75.9% of participants use automobile review websites like Car Dekho, ZigWheels, or Autocar, which provide detailed specifications, comparisons, and expert insights. Online forums or communities, such as Team-BHP or Reddit threads, were selected by 31.3%, showing moderate engagement from consumers looking for real-world user opinions. Interestingly, only 27.7% mentioned using official brand websites, indicating that while brand presence is essential, third-party platforms hold more credibility and influence during the consumer's research journey.

##### Frequency of Digital Platform Usage Before Car Purchase



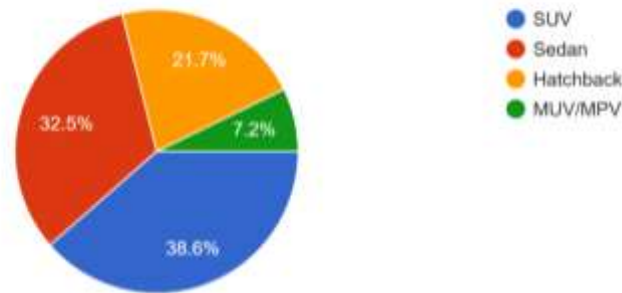
The results regarding the frequency of usage of digital platforms show that the vast majority of consumers often or always use digital platforms to research vehicles prior to making a purchase. An overwhelming 63.9% of respondents said they always used digital platforms, while 27.7% said they often used them. Other consumers responded that they only sometimes used them (8.4%), and no consumers reported that they rarely or never used digital platforms. The frequency of usage confirms digital platforms are important decision-making aids in the automobile sector, frequently replacing traditional sources of information, such as a visit to a dealership or personal recommendations.

#### 4.3 Section 3: Car Buying Preferences

##### Preferred Car Body Type

### What type of car body do you prefer?

83 responses

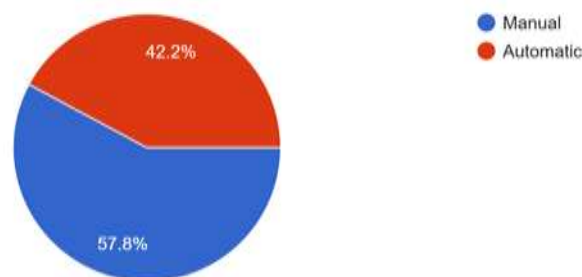


The preferred body type of vehicle was SUV, chosen by 38.6% of respondents, which reflects the shift toward large vehicles with presence, space, and versatility. Buyers chose them for their elevated driving position, ground clearance, and off-road potential. Sedans were chosen by 32.5%, Buyers chose them for their stylish appearance and comfort. Hatchbacks were chosen by 21.7%, which signify practicality and affordability, especially with younger-age and first-time buyers. MUVs/MPVs were chosen by 7.2%, likely by respondents in a search for family and multi-passenger utility vehicles.

### Preferred Type of Transmission

#### Which type of transmission do you prefer in a car?

83 responses

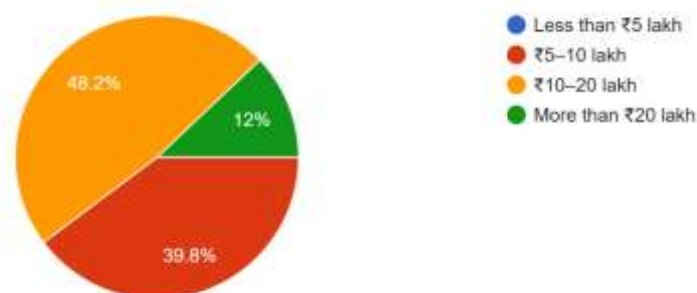


The transmission preference results identified that 57.8% of respondents expressed a preference for manual transmission, while 42.2% preferred automatic transmission. The reasons behind this preference varied: people who preferred manual transmissions frequently cited reasons such as better control, lower maintenance, affordability, and fuel efficiency; whereas people who preferred automatics valued reasons such as ease of driving in traffic, comfort, less fatigue, and smoothness. This indicates a shift to automatics, especially in urban driving conditions, however, manual still accounts for a larger share of the market in cost-sensitive categories.

### Approximate Car Purchase Budget

#### What is your approximate car purchase budget?

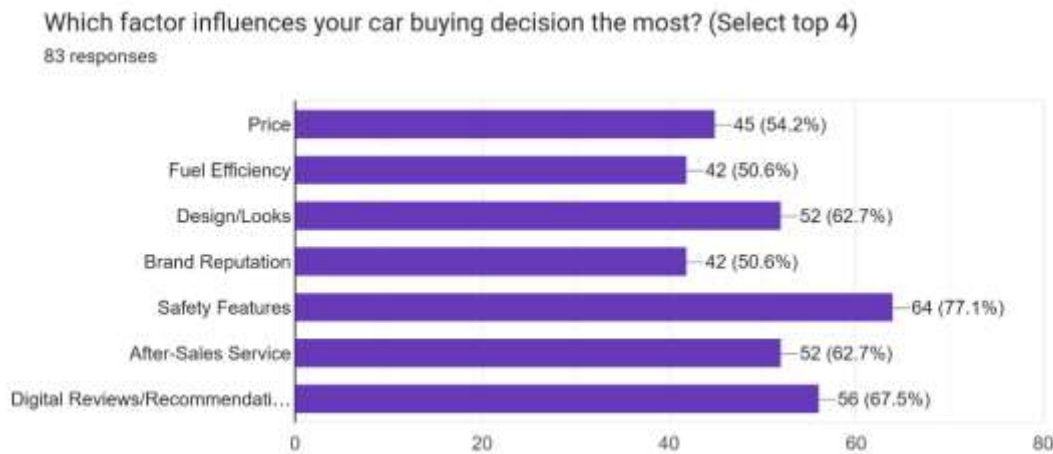
83 responses



The data on purchase budget revealed that nearly half of the respondents (48.2%) were planning to buy a car in the ₹10–20 lakh range. This was followed by 39.8% with a budget of ₹5–10 lakh, and only 12% looking at cars above ₹20 lakh. This indicates a growing middle-income buyer base looking for

feature-rich vehicles in the mid-range price segments. Manufacturers targeting this range with the right value proposition are more likely to capture a substantial portion of this market.

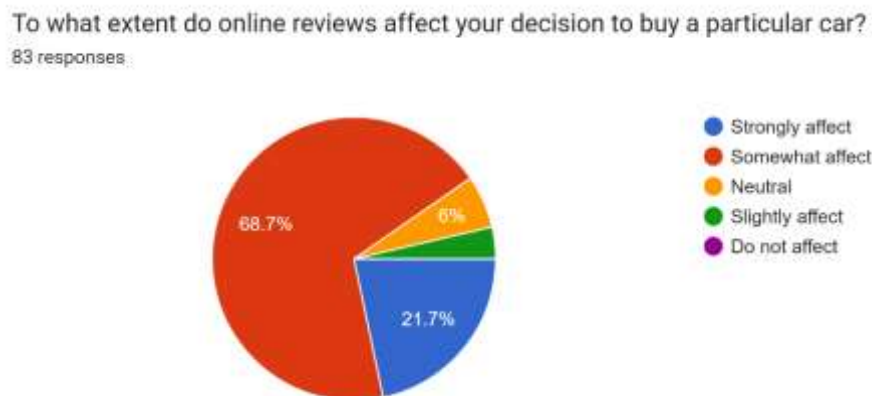
#### Key Factors Influencing Car Buying Decisions



When it comes to car buying decisions, safety features top the list (77.1%), as buyers increasingly prioritize safety for family and advanced safety tech. Digital reviews and recommendations (67.5%) also carry strong influence, showing that buyers trust online content like influencer videos and test drives. After-sales service (62.7%) is valued for the assurance of maintenance support and hassle-free ownership. Equally, design and looks (62.7%) attract buyers who connect emotionally with a car's style and road presence. Price (54.2%) remains a major factor, especially among budget-conscious buyers seeking maximum value. Fuel efficiency (50.6%) appeals to daily commuters aiming to minimize long-term costs, while brand reputation (50.6%) influences trust and confidence in product quality and service reliability.

#### 4.4 Section 4: Influence of Digital Content

##### Influence of Online Reviews on Buying Decisions

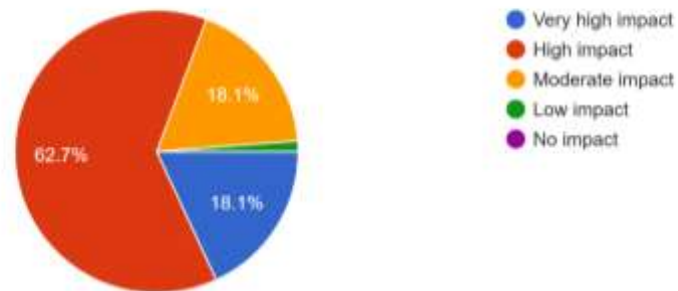


In the automotive industry, online reviews tend to have a significant impact on purchasing decisions. Approximately 68.7% of respondents indicated that reviews somewhat affect their decision, while 21.7% indicated they are strongly influenced, indicating that people do rely on these users feedback. Only 6% of respondents said they are neutral, and only 3.6% said they are slightly influenced by reviews. This emphasizes the credibility buyers place in real-world experiences and peer opinions while evaluating vehicles.

##### Impact of Influencer Reviews and Test Drive Videos

How much impact do influencer reviews/test drive videos have on your perception of a car or brand?

83 responses

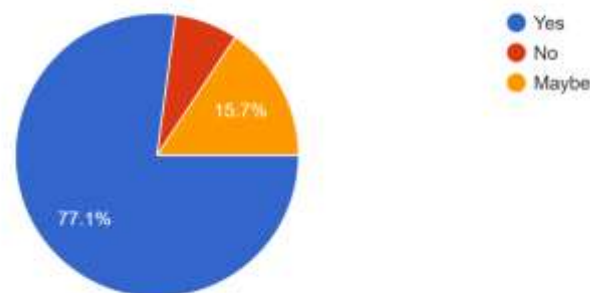


Influencer content strongly impacted car buyers. Of the respondents, 62.7% said influencer reviews, and test drive videos, had a high impact, while 18.1% said they had a very high impact, and another 18.1% indicated a moderate impact. Just 1.2% reported low impact. These findings illustrate how effectively influencers use visuals and experiences to shape public perception and build trust in the brand or model.

#### Influence of Digital Advertisements and Social Media Promotion

Have you ever made a car-related decision (like shortlisting or purchasing) influenced by digital advertisements or social media promotions?

83 responses

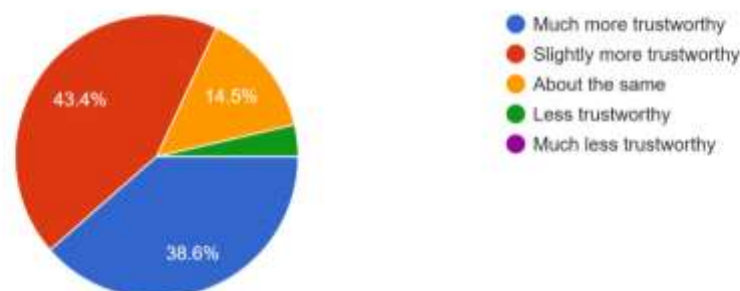


When asked whether digital ads or social promotions have ever influenced their car-related decision, whether that's shortlisting cars or actually purchasing them, a huge 77.1% said 'yes', indicating a strong relationship between online promotions, and actual decision-making behaviour. A further 15.7% said 'maybe', which implies digital content may have had an indirect influence or subconscious role. Only 7.2% said 'no', indicating very few consumers are unimpacted by online promotional content. These results demonstrate the increasing power of digital marketing being able to incite action in a consumer.

#### Trustworthiness of Digital Content vs. Traditional Sources

How trustworthy do you find digital content (reviews, influencer videos, ads) compared to traditional sources like dealerships or word of mouth?

83 responses



When comparing the trustworthiness of digital media (e.g., reviews, influencer videos, and digital ads) to traditional sources such as dealership ads or word of mouth, 43.4% of respondents found digital media to be slightly more trustworthy, while 38.6% found them to be much more trustworthy, indicating the growing shift in consumer trust toward digital platforms. On the other hand, 14.5% found both types of media to be about the same, while only 3.6% reported digital media to be less trustworthy, which indicates that while skepticism continues to surround digital content, little exists.

### **Specific Instances Where Digital Platforms Influenced Car-Related Decisions**

From open-ended responses, participants shared personal stories of how YouTube and automobile review websites significantly shaped their car-buying decisions. Many respondents highlighted that comparison videos and space tests on YouTube and Automobile Websites like Zig Wheels, CarWale, Autocar India, etc. helped them in evaluating the options without physically visiting showrooms. Platforms like Team-BHP and Reddit forums were commonly used for reading ownership reviews and gaining deeper insights into long-term user experiences. The convenience of virtual showrooms was also appreciated, allowing users to explore car features and interiors at any time. Popular influencer channels such as Gagan Choudhary, AutoYogi, and DDS were frequently cited as trusted voices. Additionally, some users mentioned beginning their research through Instagram reels or posts, which eventually led to detailed research and shortlisting via auto websites and official brand pages.

## **5 – RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Key Findings**

This chapter presents the key findings that emerged from the primary data collected through the structured questionnaire. The results highlight how digital platforms have transformed the automobile buying journey for Indian consumers, especially among younger, urban, and tech-savvy demographics.

#### **■ Digital Platforms as a Primary Source of Information**

The majority of respondents stated digital sources, such as YouTube, social media, and automotive review websites, as their major source of information regarding automobiles. YouTube was the most used source with 91.6%, followed by social media (78.3%) and automotive review websites (75.9%). This shows a dramatic shift in behavioral data away from traditional sources such as dealerships or printed ads and towards online, visual and community content.

#### **■ High Frequency of Usage Indicates Strong Reliance**

More than 90% of respondents said that they "always" or "often" use digital platforms before making a car-related decision. This largely illustrates the trend of individuals pursuing and employing digital media at various stages in their car buying journey, from the moments of awareness through their final decision.

#### **■ Digital Media Holds High Trust Value**

Most participants saw digital content as more credible and reliable than traditional sources. Specifically, approximately 82% of respondents indicated that digital media is "much more" or "slightly more" trustworthy than dealership advertising and peer recommendations. This illustrates that our trust and confidence in influencer reviews, video demonstrations and online peer feedback.

#### **■ Digital Influence Drives Actionable Outcomes**

Influencer content and online reviews were found to have a strong impact on consumer decisions. Approximately 81% of respondents said that influencer reviews and test drive videos had a high to very high impact on their purchase process. Similarly, 68.7% acknowledged that online reviews influenced their decision significantly. Furthermore, 77.1% reported being influenced by digital ads or social promotions when shortlisting or finalizing a vehicle.

#### **■ Consumer Preferences Reflect Practical and Emotional Priorities**

Respondents preferred SUVs over other body types due to commanding view, space, presence, and higher ground clearance, followed by sedans and hatchbacks. While manual transmission still holds a majority, automatic transmission is gaining popularity especially in urban driving scenarios. Budget-wise, nearly half of the participants were planning to spend between ₹10–20 lakh, showing a tilt toward mid-segment vehicles with better features.

#### **■ Demographics Influence Behaviour and Digital Engagement**

Most respondents were aged between 21 and 30 and resided in urban locations groups more likely to be digitally literate and research-oriented. These demographics were more engaged with influencer content, relied heavily on YouTube, and were open to forming decisions based on digital interaction.

#### **■ Consumers Value Safety and Service — Reinforced by Digital Content**

Safety features (77.1%), digital reviews (67.5%), and after-sales service (62.7%) emerged as top influencing factors, demonstrating that consumers are concerned not just with price but also with product reliability and brand support elements often clarified through digital content.

## 6 – RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, several actionable recommendations can be made for automobile brands, marketers, and digital content creators to better engage with today's digitally influenced consumers:

### ▪ Invest Heavily in YouTube and Video-Based Content

Since YouTube was the most preferred and trusted channel for research among respondents, auto brands should focus on video content such as product walkarounds, expert reviews, comparison videos, and virtual test drives. These should be optimized for mobile viewing and tailored to address common buyer questions.

### ▪ Collaborate with Influencers and Auto Bloggers

As influencer reviews and test drive videos heavily influence purchase decisions, brands should collaborate with credible auto influencers who have trust built with their followers. The influencer should be transparent, authentic, and consistent with their content in these partnership opportunities.

### ▪ Maintain Active Presence on Multiple Digital Touchpoints

Although YouTube leads in popularity, it is always best to have a multi-platform approach. Social media platforms like Instagram & Facebook as well as auto review websites and aggregator platforms like CarDekho, OLX Autos should be utilized for both promotional and informational content to maximize consumer reach.

### ▪ Simplify Digital Access to Information and Offers

Brands should enhance user experience on their official websites and aggregator platforms by offering comparison tools, customer reviews, pricing breakdowns, and instant communication (e.g., chatbots). Making this process seamless encourages deeper engagement and faster conversion.

### ▪ Focus on Content that Builds Trust

Given consumers increasingly prefer online content to dealer pitches, brands must prioritize on producing informative, non-biased, and transparent content. Using explainer, authentic user testimonial, and service content can help to establish credibility and influence decision-making.

### ▪ Personalize Digital Engagement by Segment

Different consumers react to different types of content. Younger consumers may prefer influencer videos and interactive forms of content whereas older or budget-conscious consumers might rely more on review articles and specifications. Brands should analyze platform data and tailor content to consumers accordingly as per their preferences.

### ▪ Use Digital Platforms to Reinforce Practical Purchase Factors

The research shows that safety, service, and vehicle quality are highly important to buyers. Brands should promote those characteristics in their digital messaging and demonstrate them through features, awards, crash ratings, and service packages.

## 7 - CONCLUSION, BIBLIOGRAPHY & ANNEXURE

### 7.1 CONCLUSION

The Indian automobile sector is experiencing a considerable change in consumer behavior, primarily due to the increasing influence of digital platforms. This research was conducted to study how platforms such as YouTube, blogs, social networks, influencer content as well as online reviews are determining the preferences, perceptions and final decisions of car buyers.

Findings reveal that digital platforms are not just supplementary information sources but have become central to the buying journey especially among younger, urban, and digitally literate consumers. High engagement with YouTube and influencer content, increasing trust in digital reviews, and widespread use of social media have created a new ecosystem where brands must be present, credible, and informative to remain relevant.

The study also confirms that traditional factors like safety, design, after-sales service, and budget are still relevant to buyers. However, digital content plays a crucial role in how these factors are discovered, evaluated, and interpreted by potential buyers. Thus, digital influence is not replacing traditional factors but amplifying how they are communicated and understood.

In conclusion, digital strategy is no longer optional for brands in the automotive sector, it is essential now. The opportunity to influence purchase behavior now depends on visibility, trusted content, content quality, and the relevance of digital engagement across platforms.

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Nerurkar, V., Barge, P., Bhatt, V., Rastogi, S., & Agarwal, B. (2023). *Factors Influencing Consumer Decision to Purchase a Car*. **Marketing and Management of Innovations**, Vol. 3, pp. 45–57.

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### 7.3 Annexure / Appendix

#### Sample Survey Questionnaire (Google Form)

*The following is the structured questionnaire used for primary data collection in this study. The survey was self-administered via Google Forms and distributed online. It was divided into four sections to align with the study's objectives related to digital platform usage and automobile buying behavior. Both open-ended and close-ended questions were included to gather a mix of qualitative and quantitative insights.*

#### Section 1: Demographic Information

1. **Age Group of Respondents**

- ☐ 21–30
- ☐ 30–40
- ☐ 40–50
- ☐ Above 50

2. **Gender of Respondents**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say

3. **What is your monthly income range?**

- ☐ Below ₹25,000
- ☐ ₹25,001–₹50,000
- ☐ ₹50,001–₹1,00,000
- ☐ Above ₹1,00,000

4. **What region do you belong to? ( Urban areas are cities with developed infrastructure, semi-urban are smaller towns or outskirts with moderate development, and rural refers to villages or less developed regions. )**

- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Semi-Urban
- ☐ Rural

5. **Please enter your State and City (Open-ended)**

#### Section 2: Digital Platform Usage

6. **Which digital platforms do you primarily use to gather information about cars? (Select Best 3)**

- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ Social Media (Instagram, Facebook)
- ☐ Official Brand Websites
- ☐ Automobile Review Websites (e.g., CarDekho, CarWale)
- ☐ Online Forums or Communities (e.g., Team-BHP, Reddit, Quora)



7. **How often do you use digital platforms to research cars before making a purchase decision?**

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

**Section 3: Car Buying Preferences**

8. **What type of car body do you prefer?**

- ☐ SUV
- ☐ Sedan
- ☐ Hatchback
- ☐ MUV/MPV

9. **Please mention the reason for your preferred car body type** (*Open-ended*)

10. **Which type of transmission do you prefer in a car?**

- ☐ Manual
- ☐ Automatic

11. **Why do you prefer this transmission type?** (*Open-ended*)

12. **What is your approximate car purchase budget?**

- ☐ Less than ₹5 lakh
- ☐ ₹5–10 lakh
- ☐ ₹10–20 lakh
- ☐ More than ₹20 lakh

13. **Which factor influences your car buying decision the most?** (*Select top 4*)

- ☐ Price
- ☐ Fuel Efficiency
- ☐ Design/Looks
- ☐ Brand Reputation
- ☐ Safety Features
- ☐ After-Sales Service
- ☐ Digital Reviews/Recommendations

**Section 4: Influence of Digital Content**

14. **To what extent do online reviews affect your decision to buy a particular car?**

- ☐ Strongly affect
- ☐ Somewhat affect
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Slightly affect
- ☐ Do not affect

15. **How much impact do influencer reviews/test drive videos have on your perception of a car or brand?**

- ☐ Very high impact

- 
- ☐ High impact
  - ☐ Moderate impact
  - ☐ Low impact
  - ☐ No impact
16. **Have you ever made a car-related decision (like shortlisting or purchasing) influenced by digital advertisements or social media promotions?**
- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Maybe
17. **How trustworthy do you find digital content (reviews, influencer videos, ads) compared to traditional sources like dealerships or word of mouth?**
- ☐ Much more trustworthy
  - ☐ Slightly more trustworthy
  - ☐ About the same
  - ☐ Less trustworthy
  - ☐ Much less trustworthy
18. **Please share a specific instance (if any) where a digital platform significantly influenced your car-related decision (*Open-ended*)**