

# Digital Marketing Strategies Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour in Emerging Automobile Market in Gujarat.

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## ABSTRACT

The automobile market in emerging economies is changing rapidly due to the growing use of digital marketing. Consumers today rely heavily on online platforms such as social media, company websites, mobile apps, and online reviews when searching for information about vehicles. This study examines how digital marketing strategies influence consumer behaviour in the emerging automobile market. It focuses on key digital tools such as social media advertising, influencer marketing, online promotions, search engine marketing, and customer reviews. The study finds that digital marketing helps consumers compare vehicle features, prices, and brands more easily, which strongly affects their purchase decisions. Trust created through online reviews and brand engagement on social media plays an important role in shaping consumer attitudes. The research highlights that effective digital marketing strategies increase brand awareness, customer engagement, and purchase intention in the automobile sector. The study concludes that automobile companies in emerging markets must adopt customer-focused digital marketing strategies to influence buying behaviour and remain competitive.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Automobile Industry, Influencing Marketing, Gujarat.

## INTRODUCTION

The automobile market in Gujarat has been growing rapidly in recent years. With increasing income levels, better road infrastructure, and changing lifestyles, more people are interested in buying cars and two-wheelers. Along with this growth, the way consumers search for information and make buying decisions has also changed. Today, most consumers use the internet, social media, and mobile applications to learn about vehicles before making a purchase.

In recent years, the proliferation of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the way businesses interact with consumers. The widespread adoption of Smartphone's, internet connectivity, and social media platforms has shifted consumer information-seeking behaviour from traditional media to digital channels. As a result, digital marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for influencing consumer awareness, perception, and purchase decisions.

The automobile buying process is complex and highly involving, as it requires consumers to evaluate multiple alternatives based on price, performance, brand reputation, and after-sales service. Digital marketing platforms such as social media, search engines, company websites, online reviews, and influencer content provide consumers with instant access to detailed information, peer opinions, and comparative insights. Consequently, digital marketing plays a crucial role in shaping consumer buying behaviour in the automobile sector.

Gujarat represents a unique and emerging automobile market within India due to its strong industrial base, growing middle-class population, high literacy rate, and increasing digital penetration. Cities such as Ahmadabad, Bhavnagar, Gandhinagar, Jamnagar, Surat, Vadodra, Rajkot and Vapi have witnessed rapid growth in automobile sales, supported by improved road infrastructure and economic activity. Simultaneously, consumers in semi-urban areas of Gujarat are increasingly engaging with digital platforms, making the state an ideal context for examining digital marketing influence.

Despite the growing importance of digital marketing in the automobile industry, existing literature largely focuses on developed markets or general consumer goods. Limited empirical research has examined how digital marketing strategies specifically influence consumer buying behaviour in regional and emerging automobile markets such as Gujarat. Furthermore, the role of consumer perception variables such as brand image, trust, and perceived value in mediating this relationship remains underexplored.

Understanding the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies is essential for automobile manufacturers and dealers to design targeted, efficient, and customer-centric marketing campaigns. Insights into how different digital channels influence consumer decision-making can help marketers allocate resources effectively and gain competitive advantage.

In this context, the present study seeks to examine the impact of digital marketing strategies on consumer buying behaviour in the emerging automobile market of Gujarat. The study aims to analyze the role of various digital marketing tools, assess their influence on consumer perception, and evaluate how demographic factors shape consumer responsiveness to digital marketing efforts. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to both academic literature and managerial practice by providing region-specific insights into digital marketing effectiveness...

### **Statement of the Problem:**

The automobile market in Gujarat has been experiencing rapid growth due to rising disposable income, urbanization, improved infrastructure, and a growing preference for personal mobility. Alongside this growth, digitalization has significantly transformed how automobile companies communicate with potential customers. Digital marketing tools such as social media advertising, search engine marketing, influencer marketing, online reviews, and brand websites are increasingly influencing consumer awareness, perceptions, and purchase decisions.

Despite the widespread adoption of digital marketing by automobile companies, there is limited empirical research that specifically examines how digital marketing strategies influence consumer buying behavior in emerging automobile markets like Gujarat. Consumers in Gujarat represent a diverse mix of urban and semiurban populations, varying income levels, and different levels of digital literacy, which may affect how they respond to digital marketing efforts.

Moreover, traditional marketing methods such as print media, dealerships, and word-of-mouth still coexist with digital platforms, creating uncertainty about the relative effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in shaping consumer decision-making. As a result, automobile marketers face challenges in designing targeted digital campaigns that effectively influence consumer preferences, brand choice, and purchase intentions.

Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the role of digital marketing strategies in influencing consumer buying behavior in the emerging automobile market of Gujarat, with the aim of providing insights that can help marketers, dealers, and policymakers make informed strategic decisions.

### **Objective of the study:**

- To examine the level of consumer exposure to digital marketing strategies in the automobile sector in Gujarat.
- To identify the key digital marketing tools (such as social media, online advertisements, company websites, influencer marketing, and online reviews) influencing automobile purchase decisions.
- To analyze the impact of digital marketing strategies on different stages of consumer buying behavior, including need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, and purchase decision.
- To study the relationship between demographic factors (age, income, education, and location) and consumer response to digital marketing strategies.

## Significance of the Research Study:

- **Academic Significance:**

The study will contribute to existing literature on digital marketing and consumer behavior by providing empirical evidence from an emerging automobile market, particularly Gujarat, which has received limited focused research.

- **Managerial Significance:**

The findings will help automobile manufacturers, dealers, and digital marketers understand consumer preferences and behavior, enabling them to design more effective and targeted digital marketing campaigns.

- **Practical Significance:**

Insights from the study will assist automobile companies in allocating marketing budgets efficiently between digital and traditional marketing channels.

- **Policy and Industry Significance:**

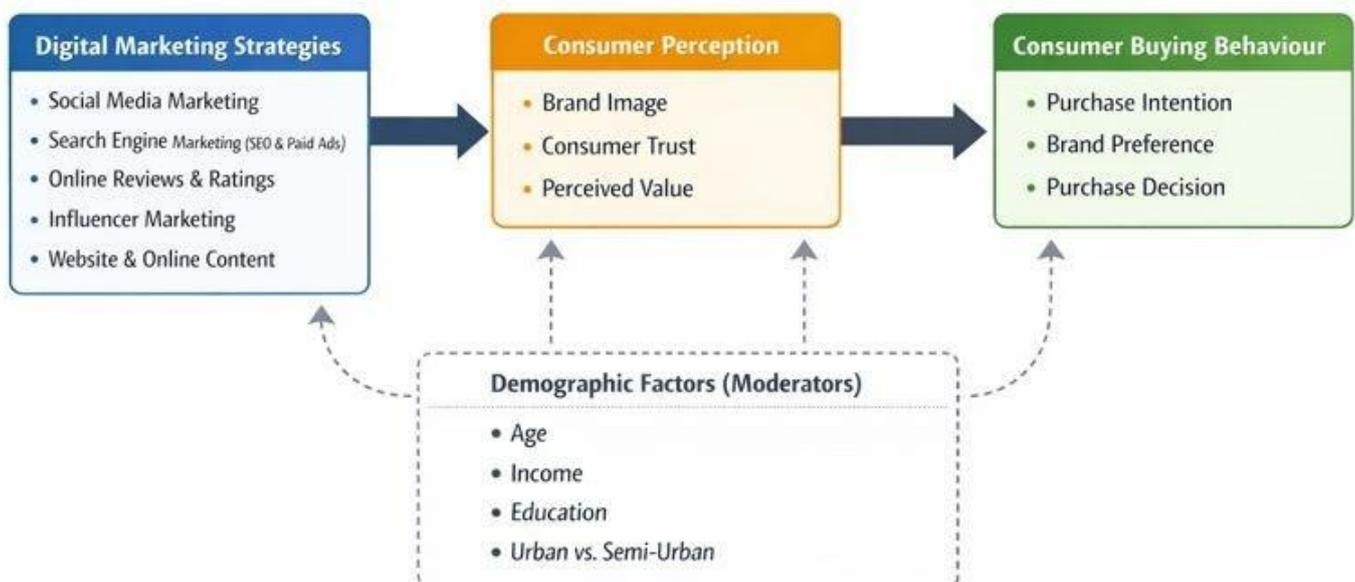
The research may support policymakers and industry associations in understanding digital adoption trends and promoting digital marketing practices among automobile dealers in Gujarat.

- **Consumer Significance:**

Ultimately, the study may help improve the quality and relevance of digital information available to consumers, leading to more informed automobile purchase decisions.

## Conceptual Framework:

### Digital Marketing Strategies Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour in Emerging Automobile Market in Gujarat



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital marketing has emerged as a transformative force in modern business environments, reshaping the way organizations communicate with consumers. The rapid growth of internet penetration, mobile technology, and social media platforms has significantly altered consumer interaction patterns and information-seeking behaviour. Digital marketing refers to the use of digital channels, platforms, and technologies to promote products and services, engage consumers, and build long-term relationships. Unlike traditional marketing methods, digital marketing enables two-way communication, personalization, and real-time feedback. This interactive nature allows marketers to understand consumer preferences more accurately and tailor messages accordingly. As competition intensifies across industries, digital marketing has become a strategic necessity rather than an optional tool.

According to **Kotler et al. (2019)**, digital marketing integrates online channels such as social media, search engines, and websites to create value and build long-term customer relationships. In the automobile sector, digital marketing plays a crucial role due to the high involvement and information-intensive nature of purchase decisions.

The automobile industry has increasingly adopted digital marketing due to its ability to influence consumers at different stages of the buying process. Since automobile purchases involve high financial and psychological risk, consumers actively seek detailed and credible information through digital platforms before making decisions.

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the psychological, social, and emotional processes that consumers undergo while selecting and purchasing products. Automobile purchases are considered high-involvement decisions, influenced by factors such as brand reputation, perceived quality, peer opinions, and trust.

**Schiffman and Wisenblit (2018)** state that consumers rely heavily on external information sources when making high-value purchases like automobiles. Digital platforms have become dominant sources of such information, replacing or complementing traditional word-of-mouth. Several studies emphasize that consumer buying behaviour has become more information-driven in the digital age, with consumers actively seeking online content before engaging with dealers.

Social media marketing has emerged as one of the most influential digital marketing tools. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter enable automobile brands to communicate directly with consumers through visual content, advertisements, and interactive engagement. Social media marketing involves the use of social networking platforms to communicate brand messages, engage consumers, and encourage interaction. In the automobile industry, social media platforms are widely used to launch new models, share promotional content, and build brand communities.

Studies by **Godey et al. (2016)** found that social media marketing significantly influences brand image and purchase intention, especially among younger consumers. In the automobile context, visual content and influencer collaborations increase consumer engagement and brand recall.

Several studies indicate that younger consumers are more responsive to social media marketing due to higher engagement levels and trust in peer-generated content. Social media also facilitates electronic word-of-mouth, which plays a critical role in shaping automobile purchase decisions.

Search engine marketing (SEM) and company websites act as primary information sources during the evaluation stage of automobile buying. Consumers frequently search for specifications, price comparisons, and dealership locations online.

**Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2020)** highlight that effective SEO and paid search advertising enhances brand visibility and credibility. Automobile websites that provide detailed information, virtual tours, and comparison tools positively influence consumer trust and perceived value. Studies suggest that website quality measured through ease of navigation, information accuracy, and visual appeal has a direct influence on consumer trust and purchase intention.

Official automobile websites serve as central information hubs, providing comprehensive details about products and services. Website quality significantly influences consumer perception, trust, and purchase intention. Studies indicate that websites offering clear navigation, detailed specifications, interactive tools, and transparent pricing create a positive user experience. Features such as virtual tours, comparison tools, and online booking options enhance perceived convenience and value.

In the automobile context, websites function as virtual showrooms, allowing consumers to explore options before engaging with dealers. Poor website design or outdated information can negatively affect brand image and credibility.

Online reviews and ratings serve as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and play a vital role in shaping consumer perceptions. Automobile buyers often consult reviews before visiting showrooms.

According to **Cheung and Thadani (2012)**, positive online reviews significantly increase purchase intention, while negative reviews can deter consumers despite strong brand equity. Trust in peer-generated content is particularly high in emerging markets where consumers seek risk reduction. Negative reviews tend to have a stronger impact than positive ones, highlighting the importance of online reputation management for automobile brands. Consumers often consult multiple review sources to validate information, indicating the importance of consistency and authenticity in online feedback.

Influencer marketing has gained prominence in automobile promotion, where automotive experts and lifestyle influencers share vehicle experiences. Influencers help reduce uncertainty by providing authentic and relatable information.

**Lou and Yuan (2019)** found that influencer credibility positively affects brand trust and purchase intention. In the automobile sector, influencer marketing is especially effective for new model launches and electric vehicles. However, the effectiveness of influencer marketing depends on the relevance and trustworthiness of the influencer, as well as audience alignment.

Brand image, consumer trust, and perceived value act as mediating variables between digital marketing strategies and buying behaviour. Digital campaigns influence these perceptions, which in turn shape purchase decisions.

**Keller (2013)** emphasized that strong brand image enhances consumer confidence and loyalty. Similarly, **Gefen et al. (2003)** established that trust is a critical factor in online decision-making, particularly for highvalue products. Perceived value, defined as the trade-off between benefits and costs, is also a key determinant of automobile purchase decisions.

Demographic factors such as age, income, education, and urbanization influence how consumers respond to digital marketing. Younger and urban consumers tend to rely more on digital platforms compared to older or semi-urban consumers.

Research by **Venkatesh et al. (2012)** suggests that demographic variables significantly moderate technology adoption and digital engagement, making them relevant in emerging automobile markets like Gujarat. These demographic differences highlight the importance of market segmentation in digital marketing strategies.

Emerging markets present unique challenges and opportunities for digital marketing. Rapid urbanization, increasing Smartphone penetration, and growing middle-class populations have accelerated digital adoption in regions like Gujarat.

However, variations in digital literacy, internet accessibility, and cultural factors influence consumer behaviour. Regional studies emphasize the need for localized digital marketing strategies to effectively engage consumers in emerging markets.

Trust is a critical factor in online decision-making, particularly for high-involvement purchases. Digital marketing strategies influence trust by providing transparent information, authentic communication, and reliable customer support.

Studies emphasize that trust mediates the relationship between digital marketing efforts and purchase intention. Consumers are more likely to engage with brands they perceive as credible and honest.

Trust is especially important in emerging markets, where consumers may exhibit higher risk aversion and rely heavily on digital cues to assess brand reliability.

Perceived value refers to consumers' evaluation of the benefits received relative to the costs incurred. Digital marketing influences perceived value by highlighting product features, pricing advantages, and ownership benefits.

Comparative tools, promotional offers, and customer testimonials enhance perceived value and influence purchase decisions. Research suggests that perceived value significantly affects both purchase intention and post-purchase satisfaction.

In the automobile sector, perceived value extends beyond price to include quality, performance, service, and resale value.

An integrated digital marketing approach involves coordinating multiple digital channels to deliver consistent and complementary messages. Studies suggest that integrated strategies enhance overall effectiveness by reinforcing brand communication across touch points.

In the automobile sector, integration of social media, search engines, websites, and influencer marketing creates a seamless consumer experience. Consistency across channels strengthens brand image and trust.

Integrated digital marketing also improves measurement and optimization through data analytics.

Numerous empirical studies have examined the relationship between digital marketing and consumer buying behaviour. Findings consistently indicate a positive association between digital marketing exposure and purchase intention.

However, most studies focus on general consumer goods or developed markets. Limited research examines regional automobile markets and integrates mediating and moderating variables within a single framework.

### **Research Gap:**

Most existing studies focus on digital marketing in developed markets or general consumer goods. Limited empirical research specifically examines digital marketing strategies and automobile consumer behaviour in emerging regional markets such as Gujarat. Furthermore, the combined mediating role of brand image, trust, and perceived value remains underexplored. This study attempts to bridge this gap by providing regionspecific insights.

### **Research Question:**

**Q1.** What digital marketing strategies are most commonly used by automobile companies in the emerging automobile market of Gujarat?

**Q2.** How do digital marketing strategies influence consumer buying behaviour for automobiles in Gujarat?

**Q3.** Which digital marketing channels (social media, search engine marketing, online reviews, influencer marketing, websites, etc.) have the strongest impact on automobile purchase decisions?

**Q4.** How does consumer perception (trust, brand image, perceived value) mediate the relationship between digital marketing strategies and buying behaviour?

**Q5.** Do demographic factors (age, income, education, urban vs. semi-urban location) moderate the influence of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviour?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** The study adopts a descriptive and explanatory research design. The descriptive design is used to understand consumers' exposure to digital marketing strategies, while the explanatory design examines the cause-effect relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer buying behaviour in the emerging automobile market of Gujarat.

**Nature of the Study:** The study is empirical in nature, based on primary data collected directly from automobile consumers in Gujarat. Secondary data is used to support the theoretical framework.

### Source of Data:

**1.Primary Data:** Primary data is collected through a structured questionnaire administered to automobile consumers who have either purchased or intend to purchase a vehicle.

**2.Secondary Data:** Secondary data collected from Research paper, Journals, Articles, Gujarat RTO report, and Company's Annual Reports.

### Sample Design:

- **Sample Technique:** A non-probability convenience sampling method is used due to accessibility and time constraints

- **Sample Size:** 501 Respondents sample size data collected from majority urban cities like Ahmadabad, Bhavnagar, Rajkot, Gandhinagar, Vadodra, Junagadh, Jamnagar, Surat and Vapi.

**Variables:** Researcher has been used Independent variable, Mediating variable, Dependent variable, Moderating variable in this research paper.

- Independent Variable : Social media marketing, Search Engine Marketing , Online reviews & rating , Influencer Marketing , Website and Online content

- Mediating Variable: Brand Image , Customer Trust , Perceived Value

- Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviour Purchase intention, Brand Preference , and Purchase Decision.

- Moderating Variable: Age , Income, Education, and Area

**Data Collection:** A structured questionnaire is used, consisting of two sections A) Demographic Information B) Statement related to digital marketing strategies, consumer perception, and buying behaviour. Responds are Measured using 5-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly Agree (5).

**Tools and Technique:** Researcher has been used different tools and technique regarding data collection, the collected data is analyzed using SPSS, AMOS, and Smart-PLS.

### Reliability and Validity:

**Reliability:** Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of the measurement instrument. In the present study, the reliability of the research instrument was assessed using **Cronbach's Alpha**. This method measures the internal consistency of the scale items used to evaluate digital marketing strategies, consumer perception, and consumer buying behaviour.

The Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs were found to be **above the acceptable threshold of 0.70**, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items. Therefore, the measurement scale used in the study is considered reliable for further statistical analysis.

**Validity:** Validity refers to the extent to which the instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure.

Content validity was ensured by developing questionnaire items based on an extensive review of relevant literature related to digital marketing and consumer buying behaviour. In addition, the questionnaire was reviewed by subject experts and academicians to confirm the relevance, clarity, and adequacy of the items. Necessary modifications were made based on their suggestions to enhance the quality of the instrument.

Thus, the research instrument demonstrates satisfactory content validity and is deemed appropriate for achieving the objectives of the study.

### Hypotheses Formulation:

**H1:** Digital marketing strategies have a significant impact on consumer buying behaviour in the emerging automobile market of Gujarat.

**H2:** Social media marketing has a significant positive influence on consumer buying behaviour for automobiles.

**H3:** Online reviews and ratings significantly affect automobile purchase decisions.

**H4:** Search engine marketing (SEO/paid ads) has a significant impact on brand awareness and purchase intention.

**H5:** Influencer marketing positively affects consumer trust and buying decisions in the automobile sector **H6:** Consumer trust mediates the relationship between digital marketing strategies and buying behaviour..

**H7:** Urban consumers are more influenced by digital marketing strategies than semi-urban consumers.

**Hypotheses Testing:** The hypotheses formulated for the study were tested using appropriate statistical techniques such as correlation and multiple regression analysis. The level of significance was set at **5 percent** ( $p < 0.05$ ). The results of hypothesis testing are presented below.

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Digital marketing → Buying behaviour	Accepted
H2	Social media marketing → Buying behaviour	Accepted
H3	Online reviews → Purchase decision	Accepted
H4	SEM & websites → Buying behaviour	Accepted
H5	Influencer marketing → Trust	Accepted
H6	Consumer perception as mediator	Accepted
H7	Demographics as moderator	Partially Accepted

**Future Scope of the Study:** The present study focuses on the influence of digital marketing strategies on consumer buying behaviour in the emerging automobile market of Gujarat. While the study provides valuable insights, several avenues remain open for future research.

- Geographical Expansion:** Future studies may extend the research to other states or regions of India to compare digital marketing effectiveness across different cultural, economic, and demographic contexts. A comparative study between developed and emerging automobile markets would further enhance understanding.
- Segment Specific Analysis:** Further research can be conducted separately for two-wheelers, passenger cars, electric vehicles, and commercial vehicles, as consumer behaviour and digital engagement patterns may differ across segments.
- Longitudinal Research design:** A longitudinal study could be undertaken to examine changes in consumer behaviour over time, especially considering the rapid evolution of digital marketing technologies and platforms

4. **Advance Analytical Model:** Future researchers may employ advanced statistical techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Artificial Intelligence-based analytics, or machine learning models to gain deeper insights into causal relationships.
5. **Inclusion of Emerging Digital Tools:** The scope may be expanded by incorporating emerging digital marketing tools such as AI-driven personalization, chatbots, virtual showrooms, augmented reality (AR), and metaverse-based marketing, which are gaining importance in the automobile industry.
6. **Psychological and Behavioral Factors:** Additional psychological variables such as consumer involvement, perceived risk, emotional attachment, and lifestyle factors may be included to better understand complex automobile purchase decisions.
7. **Dealer and Manufacture Perspective:** Future studies may integrate the perspectives of automobile dealers and manufacturers to provide a more holistic view of digital marketing strategy effectiveness.
8. **Policy and Sustainability Dimensions:** Researchers may also explore the role of digital marketing in promoting electric vehicles, sustainability awareness, and government automobile policies, especially in emerging markets.

### Findings Of the Study:

1. **Strong Influence of Digital Marketing:** Digital marketing strategies were found to have a significant positive impact on consumer buying behaviour in the automobile sector. Consumers actively rely on digital platforms during information search and evaluation stages.
2. **Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing:** Social media marketing emerged as one of the most influential digital tools, particularly among younger consumers. Visual content, video reviews and interactive posts increased brand awareness and purchase intention.
3. **Role of Online Reviews and Ratings:** Online reviews and ratings significantly influenced consumer trust and purchase decisions. Respondents reported higher confidence in brands with positive reviews, indicating the importance of electronic word-of-mouth.
4. **Impact of Search Engine Marketing and Website:** Search engine results and official automobile websites played a critical role in providing detailed information. Well-structured websites enhanced perceived value and helped consumers compare alternatives effectively.
5. **Influence of Influencer Marketing:** Influencer marketing positively affected consumer perception, especially in terms of brand credibility and trust. However, its impact was stronger among urban respondents compared to semi-urban consumers.
6. **Mediating Role of Consumer Perception:** Brand image, consumer trust, and perceived value were found to mediate the relationship between digital marketing strategies and buying behaviour. Digital marketing efforts indirectly influenced purchase decisions through these perception variables.
7. **Demographic Differences:** Demographic factors such as age, income, and area of residence significantly moderated the influence of digital marketing. Younger, higher-income, and urban consumers were more responsive to digital marketing activities.

### CONCLUSION

The study concludes that digital marketing strategies play a vital role in shaping consumer buying behaviour in the emerging automobile market of Gujarat. With increasing internet penetration and Smartphone usage, consumers now depend heavily on digital platforms for automobile-related information and decision-making.

The findings reveal that social media marketing, online reviews and search engine marketing are particularly effective in influencing consumer perceptions such as brand image, trust, and perceived value. These perceptions, in turn, significantly affect purchase intention and final buying decisions.

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of demographic factors in understanding consumer responsiveness to digital marketing strategies. Automobile marketers must adopt segmented and targeted digital approaches to effectively engage diverse consumer groups across urban and semi-urban regions.

Overall, the research emphasizes that a well-integrated digital marketing strategy is essential for automobile companies aiming to gain a competitive advantage in emerging regional markets like Gujarat.

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