



# Role of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour in the Passenger Vehicle Segment

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## ABSTRACT

The increasing use of digital platforms has transformed consumer decision-making in the passenger vehicle segment. This study investigates the influence of digital marketing channels, online reviews, and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on consumer purchasing behaviour. Data were collected from 150 respondents in Ayodhya through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using means, standard deviations, correlations, and t-tests in MS Excel. The results indicate that digital tools such as YouTube videos, comparison websites, official brand sites, and customer reviews exert a significant impact on car buying decisions, with average Likert scores ranging from 3.03 to 3.68. Online reviews and eWOM contribute to trust-building, facilitate option narrowing, and reduce perceived purchase risk. The study establishes a clear association between digital marketing and consumer purchase decisions, highlighting the central role of internet marketing in the contemporary car-buying process.

**Key Words:** Consumer buying behaviour, Digital marketing, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), Passenger vehicles, Online reviews

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the passenger vehicle market has undergone substantial transformation due to the pervasive influence of digital technology on information search and decision-making processes. Contemporary car buyers increasingly rely on digital platforms rather than traditional advertising, facilitated by widespread internet access and mobile device usage. In this high-involvement market, digital marketing tools such as social media, search engines, brand websites, and online advertisements have become integral to consumer purchase decisions.

Prior to purchasing a vehicle, most consumers engage in extensive online research. Digital channels enable customers to access product specifications, compare prices and models, and review after-sales services at their convenience. These platforms not only disseminate information but also shape brand perceptions and influence decision-making. For automotive companies, understanding which digital marketing platforms consumers utilize and trust is essential for maintaining competitiveness. Online reviews and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) have emerged as critical determinants in the car-buying process, supplementing other digital marketing initiatives. Consumers frequently consult review sites, social media, and forums to benefit from the experiences of other vehicle owners. User-generated content is generally perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than traditional advertising. Online reviews and eWOM help buyers evaluate vehicle performance, reliability, and satisfaction, thereby mitigating perceived risks associated with high-value purchases.

Currently, customer feedback is readily accessible and disseminates rapidly, amplifying the influence of online reviews and eWOM. Negative reviews can swiftly alter consumer perceptions, whereas positive feedback fosters brand trust.

## Objectives of the Study

- To identify the most preferred digital marketing channels used by consumers while purchasing passenger vehicles.
- To study the role of online reviews and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in guiding consumers' vehicle choice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Ahmad and Pal (2025)** used secondary data and industry case studies to investigate the growing influence of digital and online marketing methods in the automotive industry. According to the data, digital marketing has emerged as the primary driver of consumer awareness, engagement, and purchase decisions in the automotive industry. Social media, search engines, and influencer marketing are all powerful online channels that influence how buyers study, compare, and shortlist vehicles. The study shows that digital marketing boosts customer connection, brand visibility, and lead conversion while decreasing reliance on traditional advertising. Overall, the study concludes that data-driven, personalized digital tactics are critical for remaining competitive in the current vehicle market.

**Amirudin et al. (2025)** investigated how social media marketing features affect consumer purchasing decisions in the electric vehicle sector, with brand trust acting as a mediating variable. The findings reveal that interactivity and informativeness of social media content significantly influence purchase decisions both directly and indirectly through brand trust. Entertainment-based content affected decisions only when trust was established, while perceived relevance showed no significant impact. The study concludes that trust-oriented social media communication is essential for encouraging electric vehicle adoption. Overall, the research highlights the strategic importance of informative and interactive digital content in building consumer confidence in emerging automotive markets.

**Chockalingam (2023)** investigated how internet reviews and digital ratings affect consumer decision-making in the automotive industry. According to the report, potential automobile purchasers rely extensively on online evaluations to assess vehicle performance, reliability, and overall value before making a purchase. Positive reviews considerably increase buyer trust, whilst negative or fraudulent reviews decrease confidence and delay purchase decisions. The data also show that verified reviews and aggregated ratings are more reliable than individual opinions. According to the study, internet reviews have a significant impact on vehicle purchase intentions, underscoring the importance of digital feedback management in modern automobile marketing strategy.

**Darshan B. M. (2018)** analyzed the influence of social media and internet resources on vehicle purchasing decisions in Coimbatore and Mysore. The findings show that social media platforms significantly affect consumers' awareness, evaluation, and final selection of cars. Online information sources were found to be more influential than traditional media, particularly among younger and urban consumers. Socio-demographic factors such as age and income also played a role in shaping digital information usage. The study concludes that social media has become an indispensable decision-support tool in the automobile industry, encouraging manufacturers to strengthen their digital engagement strategies.

**Dahiya and Gayatri (2017)** surveyed Indian car buyers' intentions to use digital marketing communication during the car purchase process using the Decomposed Theory of Planned Behaviour. The findings specify that attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control significantly influence both intention and actual usage of digital marketing communication. Digital platforms were extensively used for information search, brand comparison, and peer reviews. The research concludes that Indian consumers are increasingly dependent on digital communication channels throughout the car-buying journey. The research highlights digital marketing as a powerful tool for influencing consumer behaviour in the Indian automobile market.

**Dahiya (2016)** explored the effectiveness of digital marketing in influencing car purchase behaviour in the Indian market using the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The study found that consumers' digital attitude



significantly affects their intention to use online platforms during the car-buying process. Among various digital channels, company websites emerged as the most preferred source of information. The findings suggest that consumers actively use digital media for information search, comparison, and evaluation before final purchase decisions. The study concludes that positive digital attitudes and accessible online information strongly support consumer decision-making, emphasizing digital marketing as a key driver in the Indian automobile sector.

### Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine consumer purchasing behaviour in the passenger vehicle segment and to identify preferred digital marketing channels. The investigation also explores the influence of online reviews and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Primary data were collected through questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data were sourced from journals, research papers, and articles. The sample comprised 150 participants from the Ayodhya district.

### Sample Collection

The study sample comprised respondents from the Ayodhya region of Uttar Pradesh.

### Limitations

- The sample size of 150 respondents from the Ayodhya district limits the generalizability of the study's findings.
- The reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias.

### Hypotheses

**H0:** There is no significant difference between consumers' preferences toward various digital marketing channels while purchasing passenger vehicles.

**H1:** There is a significant difference between consumers' preferences toward various digital marketing channels while purchasing passenger vehicles.

**H0:** There is no significant difference between Online reviews' effect on consumers' passenger vehicle choice.

**H1:** There is a significant difference between Online reviews' effect on consumers' passenger vehicle choice.

**H0:** There is no significant difference between the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) effect on consumers' passenger vehicle choice.

**H1:** There is a significant difference between the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) effect on consumers' passenger vehicle choice.

### Data Analysis And Interpretation

Digital Marketing Channel	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
YouTube videos for vehicle information	3.68	1.25	1
Online price & feature comparison tools	3.68	1.25	1
Digital marketing helps in the final	3.47	1.34	4



<b>decision</b>			
<b>Official vehicle websites</b>	3.36	1.34	9
<b>Social media advertisements</b>	3.25	1.35	13

Table 1: Mean Score Analysis of Digital Marketing Channels

Survey results demonstrate that digital marketing exerts a significant influence on consumer buying behaviour in the passenger vehicle segment, with respondents indicating moderate to high agreement across key variables (means ranging from 3.03 to 3.68 on a 5-point Likert scale). YouTube videos and digital tools for price and feature comparison emerged as the most preferred channels (mean=3.68, SD=1.25, Rank=1), highlighting their role in facilitating product understanding and purchase evaluation. Official vehicle websites were valued for their reliability (mean=3.36, SD=1.34, Rank=9), while social media was effective in generating awareness of new models (mean=3.25, SD=1.35, Rank=13) but had less impact on final purchase decisions.

<b>Online reviews</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Online ratings help shortlist vehicles	3.51	1.33	2
Reviews prevent from wrong purchase decisions	3.51	1.12	2
Trust customer reviews more than advertisements	3.42	1.07	6
Positive reviews increase confidence	3.41	1.30	7
Negative reviews reduce interest	3.08	1.21	17

Table 2: Online Reviews on Consumer Vehicle Choice

<b>eWOM</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Rank</b>
eWOM is more trustworthy	3.46	1.15	5
Digital discussions influence decisions	3.47	1.34	4
Peer opinions shape preferences	3.36	1.28	8

Table 3: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Online reviews and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) exerted a considerable influence on vehicle selection. Online ratings aided in the shortlisting of options (mean=3.51, SD=1.33, Rank=2), and reviews contributed to the avoidance of suboptimal purchase decisions (mean=3.51, SD=1.12, Rank=2). Respondents reported greater trust in customer reviews compared to advertisements (mean=3.42, SD=1.07, Rank=6), valued eWOM for its trustworthiness (mean=3.46, SD=1.15, Rank=5), and indicated increased confidence as a result of positive reviews (mean=3.41, SD=1.30, Rank=7). Conversely, negative reviews were particularly effective in discouraging interest (mean=3.08, SD=1.21, Rank=17).

Variables	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
Digital marketing factors & Buying behaviour	0.78	< 0.01

Table 4: Correlation between Digital Marketing & Buying Behaviour

Gender	Mean Score	t-value	p-value
Male	3.44	1.53	0.132
Female	2.98	1.53	0.132

Table 5: Gender-wise Comparison of Digital Marketing Influence (t-test)

Digital marketing was identified as essential in car-buying decisions (mean=3.47, SD=1.34, Rank=4), exhibiting a strong and statistically significant correlation with purchasing behaviour ( $r = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). No significant gender differences were detected ( $t=1.53$ ,  $p=0.132$ ; males mean=3.44, females mean=2.98). These findings, corroborated by low standard deviations (1.07–1.39), emphasize the consistent reliance of consumers on digital channels and eWOM for informed passenger vehicle purchases.

## FINDINGS

Hypothesis testing results indicate that consumer buying behaviour in the passenger vehicle segment is significantly influenced by digital marketing channels, online reviews, and electronic word of mouth, both statistically and practically. Consequently, all null hypotheses were rejected and the corresponding alternative hypotheses accepted, confirming the critical role of digital information sources in high-involvement automobile purchasing decisions.

The findings demonstrate that digital marketing channels, online reviews, and electronic word of mouth significantly influence consumer purchasing behaviour in the passenger vehicle segment, underscoring the growing importance of digital information sources in automobile purchase decisions.

## Suggestions

Based on the empirical findings, it is recommended that passenger vehicle manufacturers and marketers strategically enhance their digital marketing initiatives to align with contemporary consumer information-seeking behaviour. Given the prominence of video platforms and online comparison tools in shaping purchase decisions, firms should prioritize developing high-quality, informative, and credible digital content that supports product evaluation and comparison. The impact of online reviews and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) highlights the necessity for a structured approach to digital reputation management. Additionally, integrating data-driven and personalized digital marketing strategies can increase consumer engagement and facilitate more informed decision-making. Enhancing consumer digital literacy may further enable critical evaluation of online information, fostering more rational and confident passenger vehicle purchasing behaviour.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that digital marketing is a critical factor influencing consumer buying behaviour in the passenger vehicle segment. The results indicate that consumers rely extensively on digital platforms, particularly YouTube videos, online comparison tools, official websites, and online reviews, throughout the vehicle purchase process. Online reviews and electronic word of mouth (eWOM) play a significant role in vehicle shortlisting, trust development, and the avoidance of unfavourable purchase decisions. User-generated content is regarded as more credible and influential than traditional advertising. Statistical analysis confirms



that digital marketing channels, online reviews, and eWOM significantly affect consumer vehicle choice, thereby rejecting all null hypotheses.

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