

Digital Marketing Communication in Indian Car Market: Understanding the Attitudinal Beliefs

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Abstract:

Digital technologies have created remarkable effects on communication, promotion, branding and importantly consumer behaviour. Consumers in the marketplace are getting accustomed to myriad digital tools, technologies and channels. Marketers irrespective of size, type and industry are increasing their digital spend as this medium offers more return on investment compared to traditional marketing. In India, digital stats are increasing over the years in terms of internet access, possession of digital devices, subscription of social networking sites and increased time devoted to various digital usages. Marketers are adapting fast to digital format because it is interactive, personalized, relevant, informative and cost effective. FMCG, BFSI and Automobiles have been consistently ranked as the top digital spenders of the country for last five years. Consumers are attracted towards the digital medium because it is attractive, easy to use, engaging and offers customers the relevant content by recognizing them as an individual having unique needs rather than being a faceless member of the masses. The present study is an attempt to understand the attitudinal beliefs of digital marketing communication in Indian car market. The study is based on primary and secondary data. Secondary data were reviewed extensively to understand the characteristics of digital marketing. Primary data are collected from 801 respondents using area wise proportionate sampling from Delhi. Reliability of the scale was checked with the help of Cronbach's Alpha. One sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was applied as test of significance.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Technology, Indian Car Market, Value Proposition

Introduction

The technology has been changing. Consumers have become smarter, informed, connected, updated, prosumers and empowered. Technology has become pervasive, inexpensive, compatible, easy and

advanced. The greatest example of change is the internet that has significantly altered the ways of communication, sharing, finding information and doing business. The tremendous growth of the Internet and particularly the World Wide Web, made consumers and firms participating in a global online marketplace which eventually caused firms to experiment with innovative ways of marketing in computer-mediated environments (Ricciuti, 1995). This interactive medium today has crossed the boundaries of a traditional computer and extended itself to many digital devices namely phone, smart phones, tablets, digital outdoors and digital TV.

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This revolution in digital technology has urged companies to redesign the marketing practices to engage effectively with past, present and potential customers (Gay et. al, 2007).

Digital technologies especially the internet has revolutionized the every facet of business namely the product development, profitability, brand management, customer relationship management, buying and selling and communication etc. Technology usage has not only reduced various business costs but has also offered competitive advantage for numerous organizations. Digital technologies have the most significant impact on business communication process. These technologies have redefined the marketing communication parlance with its unique capabilities viz. interactivity, measurability, customer engagement, customization, accessibility and managing large information sources (Edelman and Heller, 2015). Marketers are resorting to digital marketing communication as it allows marketers to deliver real-time, personalized services and content, and deal with one consumer at a time (Alexa, Shayne, Robert and Michael, 1996). Over the last decade marketers have exploited the potential of websites, e-mail, search engines, mobile phones and other digital applications and products to their advantage for communicating effectively with its target audience.

Digital landscape is changing in a developing country like India also. India has all the potential to be a world leader in digital communication. More and more people by every passing year are joining the internet from both urban and rural sectors.

There is almost consensus among academicians and marketers that digital technology has been shaping consumer decision making process. It influences the search, evaluation, purchase and post-purchase stages of consumer decision making process. One can see the magnificent effect of digital technologies in the product categories like fashion, apparel, lifestyle, electronics, grocery etc. where consumers are seamlessly relying upon digital communication channels for fetching information about product's salient features and benefits, comparing particular product and services with competitors, making recommendations to friends and colleagues, buying and selling products and giving feedback to the marketer etc. The effects of digital marketing communication can also be seen in a product category that comes under extended problem solving

category i.e. car. Indian car segment players are actively embracing digital marketing communication practices.

Digital Marketing in Indian Car Market: A Snapshot

Car compnies have been making use of digital marketing leveraging the power of social media, behaviourally targeted advertising, search engines, lead generation including micro sites, landing pages and other tactics that involve other digital channels. Indian car segment players are actively embracing digital marketing communication practices.

Maruti Suzuki, the leader of the Indian passenger car market is very active across all the digital platforms. The company is engaged in activities like building the website, organizing campaigns, online reputation management, search engine optimization, market building and nurturing customers trust online etc. The company started experimenting with digital platforms as early as 2009 when it launched SX4 model through a virtual test drive. Later on in 2011, new swift was also lunched over digital platform rather than going through the traditional route (afaqs, 2013). Company has separate Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube profile for each of its brand. Ford India keeps 15-20% of their total ads spend for digital front (exchange4media, 2015). Ford normally creates a digital contest for its customers who not only review the car but also upload their videos online. Another market player, Mahindra and Mahindra (M&M) took the advantage of digital media in designing its pricing strategy whereby it ran innovative 'Guess the Price' contest ten days before the launch of its XUV 500. The innovative campaign saw an overwhelming response whereby it received 1.15 lakh entries (Anand and Chaudhari, 2012). Volkswagen India has been a really active player on digital front right from its launch in India in 2007. Volkswagen harnessed the power of digital medium in generating awareness for the brand with the help of display ads (Gupta, 2015). In 2011, the brand took another creative digital initiative "Planet Volkswagen" that informed target group not only about the products of the company but also ideas, philosophies and values that brand cherished (afaqs, 2011). The company also introduced its LinkedIn page where Volkswagen brand lovers could give their recommendations (Digital Vidya, 2014).

The proposed area of study deals with Indian Passenger Car Market. Indian automobile industry is the 6th largest automobile industry of the world. Factors like size of the population in India, increasing purchasing power and exporting opportunities abroad ensure that automobile industry became the 4th largest automobile industry of the world by the end of 2015 (Booz & Company, 2011). The proposed study would be useful for the marketers as it would help them knowing the impact of consumer attitude towards digital marketing fine tuning their marketing strategy.

Literature Review

Digital marketing has been recognized as the latest addition to the marketing communication mix world over mainly because of its association with internet and database technology (Egan, 2007). Invention and mass acceptance and adoption of TV, radio, cable TV and internet acted as a driving force for digital marketing (Yasmin, Tasneem and Fatema, 2015). Factors like convenience, variety, efficiency, competitive pricing, participation and cost reduction etc. were considered responsible for adoption of information and communication technology (Bayo-Moriones and Lera-López, 2007). Almost all the notable academicians and researchers have unanimously agreed over the salient features of digital marketing communication which include interactivity, measurability, customization, informative, relevant, quick, entertaining, convenient and cost effective.

While considered findings of the study by Kierzkowski et al. (1996) useful, Bechererand and Halstead (2004), commented on the usefulness of digital marketing for characteristics of twenty four hours availability, interactivity, customization, increased learning about product category, convenience, reduced search cost and increased variety. Smith (2010) explains that digital media is easy to use, personalized and accessible. Kink and Hess (2008) report that internet is primarily used for searching information which later on provided users means to buy, sell and network with like-minded people. People get entertained, socialized and built communities using social media over internet. Large numbers of people belonging to various demographics are using the internet indiscriminately. Ferrar (2010) attributes digital marketing communication as measurable, addressable and flexible. The study finds that in digital marketing, it is possible to provide individual customize

service whereas same is not possible in traditional marketing due to its expensive and less measurable nature.

Kaptyukhin et al. (2013) find that internet has been emerging as the most important channel of communication using information and communication technology. Availability of internet and mobile devices clubbed with increasing social networking and creation of content by the consumers are identified as the most important factors leading to digital revolution. The study also highlights important characteristics of digital communication i.e. interactable, measurable and precise targeting. Yasmin et al (2015) reports digital marketing communication to be reasonably cheap, easy to implement, 24*7 availability and enable to generate feedback.

Digital mediums are not completely devoid of some of the disadvantages like complexity, trust, lack of instant gratification etc. Customers remain cynical about the quality of the products being purchased online as they can't touch or smell the product before delivery of the product (Hooda and Aggarwal, 2012). This becomes especially important in case of high involvement product like car which also requires high investment. Trust and privacy are other important areas of concerns over digital platforms. Customers don't fully trust the digital information as they have reservations about the quality of the products, validation of guarantees, price differences, availability of unbiased information, security of the payment and timely delivery of the product. According to Nielsen (eMarketer, 2015), 79% Indian internet users in India consider TV ads more trustworthy than the digital ads.

On-line activities of the customers generate digital footprint and critical information that drives brand perception and influence purchase decisions in the digital age. Automobile sector is the largest producer of the on-line conversations (Google Study, 2011). This study finds that digital channels dominate the purchasing "journey". The purchasing journey for cars involves a number of different phases from awareness to consideration, to short listing, to purchase, to service and ultimately, repurchase. While through this journey, customers increasingly rely on digital channels, e.g., checking brands' Web sites, reading reviews and visiting social networks and community forums in the consideration phase. Today a consumer shops for a car

in the way as he/she shops for any other electronic appliance with certain amount of consideration required. This is happening because internet, mobile and social media educate the customers in the informative, interesting, indulging and participative manner irrespective of product category. Consumers have been researching online before buying a car through variety of digital channels (Gaur, 2015). Power Report (2015) concerning Indian car buyers stated that internet is increasing its penetration among Indian car buyers as the new source of information. The report further highlighted that in future, word of mouth recommendations would also be made through online channels. 75% car buyers in India begin their buying decision process with online research and 66% does so using their smartphones (CarDekho.com, 2015). Visits to showrooms have decreased as essential activities involved in car buying for comparing various brands, short listing of the brand and dealer are now conducted online. These have benefit the customer in terms of reduced time, efforts and cost (Nair, 2015). A study conducted by Auto Trader found customer's visits for dealers' showrooms have reduced from traditional 5 times ten years ago to an average of 1.6 times. The study further revealed that customers checked an average 10 dealers' website before deciding the final one to visit for purchase (Bruce, 2015).

Review of existing literature validates that digital marketing communication is interactive, relevant, easy to use, quick and compatible. The literature also revealed that digital communication is very informative and thus facilitates informed decision making, easy evaluation and selection. However, consumers are concerned about the cost, trust and technicality or complexity of digital channels of communication.

Research Methodology

The study aims to understand the value proposition about digital marketing communication while buying a car in Indian passenger car market. While the study deals with clearly defined variables, the nature of research was descriptive. The study is based on primary data collected through the sample survey in Delhi. Area wise proportionate Cluster Sampling is used to collect data from the respondents. Census 2011 is considered in the paper as a frame of reference which divides Delhi into 9 districts. Purposely seven districts were

chosen for inclusion in the study. The researcher conveniently chose areas in each district and conveniently picked samples from the chosen area proportionately to population of the area. A total of 801 responses were collected from the study's sampling area Delhi. A respondent is chosen from the family members who has a car or has a plan to buy a car in near future i.e. potential customer. Both online and physical modes are used to administer the questionnaire to the respondents. Data are analyzed with the help of SPSS 18.0 version and non-parametric test is used as test of significance to accept/reject the hypothesis. Table 1 gives the details of sampling plan followed for the study.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to assess the attitudinal beliefs regarding digital marketing communication in Indian Passenger Car Market and investigates consumers' perspective regarding specific benefits that motivates the consumers to use digital communication channels while buying car.

Following objectives are set in the study:

- To identify the most preferred digital channels used by the consumers while buying a car.
- To study the attitudinal beliefs regarding digital marketing communication in Indian Passenger Car Market.

Most Preferred Digital Channel : Website

Responses were collected from 801 respondents from Delhi. Out of which 603, people used at least one of digital channel namely Website, SNS, YouTube, Digital TV, digital Outdoors, E-mails, Smartphones etc. during their purchase decision journey while buying a car; whereas 198 people didn't use any digital channel and used only the traditional channels namely TV, Radio, Newspaper, visiting Dealers' Showroom etc. Table 2 gives the details of the respondents' usage of digital marketing communication while buying a car.

Digital channels are emerging as an important contemporary communication channel. The same has been validated from results as more than 75%

Table 1. Sampling Plan for the Study

Sr. No.	District	Population	% of total	Proportion in Sample
1	North West Delhi	3,656,539	22.76	183
2	South Delhi	2,731,929	17.01	136
3	West Delhi	2,543,243	15.83	126
4	South West Delhi	2,292,958	14.27	114
5	North East Delhi	2,241,624	13.95	112
6	East Delhi	1,709,346	10.65	85
7	North Delhi	887,978	5.53	45

Source : Author's Survey

Sample Size = 801

of the people use at least one digital channel. However, there were 25% of the people who believed in only the traditional channels of communication.

There are many digital channels today; to mention some important ones - websites, SNS, YouTube, Phone, Smartphones, Online Communities, Digital Outdoors, digital TV, e-mails etc. A consumer uses all these channels before making a purchase decision. This Researcher aims to understand the most preferred digital channels used by the individual for getting information about cars. Table 1 has detailed the frequency of usage of various sources of information by the consumers while buying a car.

The most commonly used information about cars were traditional sources as 75% people get information about cars from traditional sources. However, it is followed by websites used by 66% people, Social Networking Sites by 34% people, YouTube used by 31% people and smartphones used by 32% people. E-mail was the least used channel of communication along with other sources of communication.

Hypotheses for the test were set as follows:

H0: People use all digital channels of communication indifferently.

Ha: People use various digital channels of communication differently.

A significance value of .000 (Figure 1.1) for all the digital channels indicated that people used all digital channels indifferently; whereby website was the most used digital channel.

Hypotheses are tested with one sample binomial test to see if people use all digital sources of information

Attitudinal Beliefs regarding Digital Marketing Communication

Attitudinal beliefs regarding digital marketing communication are assessed by recording responses of actual and potential car buyers about salient beliefs/features of digital marketing communication as per review of literature. Reliability of data was checked with the help of Cronbach's Alpha whose value was found .897 (Table 5) which was more than .5 and indicated that scale used was reliable.

Table 2 : Use of Digital Marketing communication

Digital Marketing Communication	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Use	603	75.28
No Use	198	24.72

Sample size: 801

Table 3: Usage of Different Digital Channels

Information Source: Digital Channels	Frequency of Responses (Yes)	Frequency of Responses (No)	Percentage of responses using Internet
Websites	527	274	65.8
SNS	273	528	34.1
You Tube	246	555	30.7
Phone	110	691	13.7
Smartphone	256	545	32
Online Communities	148	653	18.5
Digital Outdoors	178	623	22.2
Digital TV	185	616	23.1
Traditional Sources	602	199	75.15
E-mails	64	737	2.9
Others	23	778	2.9

Source: Author's Survey

**Table 4 : Statistical Test for Various Digital Channels
Hypothesis Test Summary**

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.*	Decision
1 The category defined by Website Use and No use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial	000	Reject the Null
2 The categories defined by Social Networking Sites - Use and No use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis
3 The categories defined by YouTube - Use and No use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis
4 The categories defined by Phone - No Use and No Use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis
5 The categories defined by Smart Phone - No Use and No Use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis
6 The categories defined by Online Communities - Use and No use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis
7 The categories defined by Digital Outdoors - Use and No use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis
8 The category defined by Digital TV - Use and No use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis
9 The categories defined by Traditional Sources - Use and No use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis
10 The categories defined by Email - - Use and No use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis
11 The categories defined by Others - No Use and No Use occur with probabilities .05 level of significance	One-Sample Binomial Test	000	Reject the Null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed.

*The significance level is .05.

Table 5: Reliability of the Scale

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.897	12

All major attitudinal beliefs regarding digital marketing communication were rated more than mean value which was 3 as per the measurement tool. This implies that customers believe in digital marketing communication and useful for being informative, interactive, relevant, compatible with other devices, cost effective and easy to use. Customers also believed that while buying a car; digital marketing communication helps them taking an informed decision; offers them with unimaginable quantity of information and expert advice which facilitate an informed decision. Customers were also of the opinion that digital channels fetch them the best value proposition. One sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was applied as test of significance at .05 (5%) level of

significance; as data distribution of the sample violated the normality parameters. The hypothesis for the test stated.

H_0 : Customers were indifferent towards value proposition beliefs of digital marketing communication while buying a car.

H_a : Customers were NOT indifferent towards value proposition beliefs of digital marketing communication while buying a car.

The results of the test of significance are given below in Table 7. A p value of .000 indicates that test was found significant. So, we can conclude that customers considered digital marketing communication containing core characteristics like interactive, informative, relevant, cost effective etc. and providing various benefits while buying a car.

Table 6 : Attitudinal Beliefs on Digital Marketing Communication: One-Sample Statistics

Sr. No.	Statements related to Attitudinal Beliefs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
1.	Provides Huge Quantity of Information	603	3.90	.972	.040
2.	Informed Decision Can be taken	603	3.73	.968	.039
3.	Easy Availability of Expert Advice	603	3.73	.945	.038
4.	Easy Selection of Brand	603	3.66	1.006	.041
5.	Easy Evaluation of Brand	603	3.85	.925	.038
6.	Best Value Deal	603	3.52	1.035	.042
7.	Interactive	602	3.83	.919	.037
8.	Relevant Information	603	3.81	.939	.038

Table 6 Continued

Sr. No.	Statements related to Attitudinal Beliefs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
9.	Quick/Saves Time	603	3.94	.991	.040
10.	Easy to Use	603	3.53	1.101	.045
11.	Low Cost	603	3.51	1.105	.045
12.	Compatible with other devices	603	3.78	.928	.038

Table 7 : Statistical Test on Attitudinal Belief variables**Hypothesis Test Summary: One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test**

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
1.	The median of Provides Huge Quantity of Information equals 3	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	.000	Null hypothesis rejected
2.	The median of informed Decision Can be taken equals 3	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	.000	Null hypothesis rejected
3.	The medium of Easy Available of Expert Advice equals 3	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks	.000	Null hypothesis rejected
4.	The median of Easy Selection of Brand equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	.000	Null hypothesis rejected
5.	The medium of Easy Evaluation of Brand equals 3	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	.000	Null hypothesis rejected
6.	The medium of Best Value Deal equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	.000	Null hypothesis rejected

Table 7 Continued
Hypothesis Test Summary

	Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
7.	The medium of interactive equals 3	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	000	Reject the null hypothesis
8.	The medium of Relevant Information equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	000	Reject the null hypothesis
9.	The median of Quick/Saves Time Equals 3	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	000	Reject the null hypothesis
10.	The median of Easy to Use equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	000	Reject the null hypothesis
11.	The median of Low Cost equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks	000	Reject the null hypothesis
12.	The median of Compatible with other devices equals 3.	One-Sample Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	000	Reject the null hypothesis

Asymptotic significances are displayed at the significance level .05

Source: Author's own calculation

Findings and Recommendations

The major findings of the study are as below:

- It is found that although traditional channels are the most used sources of information about cars, digital channels has been emerging as important communication source. Website was the most used digital source for getting information about cars followed by YouTube and Smartphones.
- It is also found that customers considered digital marketing communication as informative, interactive, relevant, compatible with other devices, cost effective and easy to use.
- Customers in the study believe that digital marketing communication helps in easy selection of car brands and dealer by providing them huge quantity of information and expert advice.
- Customers in the study believe that best value deal about various car brands can also be obtained over digital channels of communication.
- Customers in the study find digital communication to be cost effective compared to traditional medium and easy to use.

Based on the results of the study it is proposed to the car marketers that they must understand and appreciate the fact that car buying decision process has changed from being a linear process to a dynamic interconnected system in which customers make ample use of digital devices available with them to get plethora of information about various car brands. They are leveraging the potential of this interactive and informative medium to know not only about the features but also about car brands, evaluative criteria and dealers. Since now a days customers use website the most, it is recommended to regularly update the website with the relevant content having interactive appeal. Car marketers should actively promote their brands over social networking sites by preparing dedicated pages for various brands. YouTube was the third most used digital channel after website; so it is advisable to have marketer's content in appealing video format available on video sharing site. Consumers make use of digital channels to evaluate car brands online so due importance should be given to the online reputation management by paying sincere attention to what is written about a marketer's brand especially in online communities.

Conclusion

Digital marketing communication is rewriting marketing rules in business arena. Digital marketing communication is craving a niche for itself in business communication's parlance owing to its value proposition that is built over salient characteristics like interactivity, compatibility, cost effectiveness along with being informative and quick. Consumers are making use of this novel and interactive medium across industries and car industry being no exception has seen the effects of its share too. Marketers need to leverage the specific and unique characteristics of digital marketing to better promotion of their products and indulge into a fruitful and valued relationship with its customers.

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