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Subject: Action Research Paper on: Empirical Analysis of the Contribution of Digital Marketing in the Saudi Consumer Decision-Making Process Industry for Automotive Intended for Individual Use

Abstract:

Every firm relies on sales and marketing to survive, and without them, they would fail very rapidly. Despite their critical importance, questions remain about the finer points of how they differ. Because of this, a thorough examination of the factors that differentiate sales and marketing is provided here. Unique characteristics are highlighted in a three-step progression:

- 1) Reflecting on the past, recognizing that they complement one another well in a professional setting and that they conform to established definitions
- 2) Additional data indicates that parts need to be independent of one another in terms of day-to-day operations, but sales and marketing must be completely incorporated into operational planning and the formulation of strategies.
- 3) The ways in which the distinctions benefit the organization and the individuals who could cause harm are discussed.

Being one of the largest digital spenders, the automotive industry in Saudi Arabia has seen a dearth of academic studies. This contrasts with the effects of digital marketing communication on product categories such as books, banking, online shops, gaming, etc. The purpose of this research is to examine how consumers' exposure to marketing messages delivered via digital channels influences their final purchasing decisions in Saudi Arabia's growing passenger car market. The research used a combination of different approaches. Area-wise proportional sampling was used to choose a sample size of 784 residents of 'Saudi' to provide the study's primary data. Statistical significance was determined using the one-sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank test, the one-sample binomial test, and the chi-square test. According to the results, 75% of respondents used some form of internet communication when shopping for a car. When researching and purchasing a car, most consumers access information via the company's website, followed by social media platforms and mobile devices. Digital marketing communication had a "significant" impact on every stage of the car-buying decision-making process, from "need recognition" to "post-

purchase," although its greatest impact was seen during the "evaluation" phase. The study's findings validated the efficacy of digital marketing communication in eliciting needs for high-involvement products like automotive's. Positive attitudes about digital communication were also established, as were the effects of peer reviews and the use of digital platforms for sharing post-purchase emotions. Despite clients' positive attitudes toward digital channels, the study's findings showed that they rarely used them to reserve cars.

Introduction:

Any search engine will quickly return a plethora of articles from all around the web exploring the topic at hand with varied degrees of detail. All of these articles share a few commonalities, however: first, they rush to explain the possible roles of sales and marketing without first establishing formal definitions, especially of sales; second, they attempt to explain sales and marketing directly in the context and complexities of the modern era without first providing any background on the equally important historical perspective. Therefore, to fully understand the differences between sales and marketing, we must investigate the historical beginnings and steady development of both terms in business, as well as the many forms and trends of markets. Marketing has gone through six distinct periods since it was first identified by Keith (1960) (Marketing: Historical Perspective, 2007). Figure 1 shows a timeline of these epochs. This article will focus on three distinct time periods.

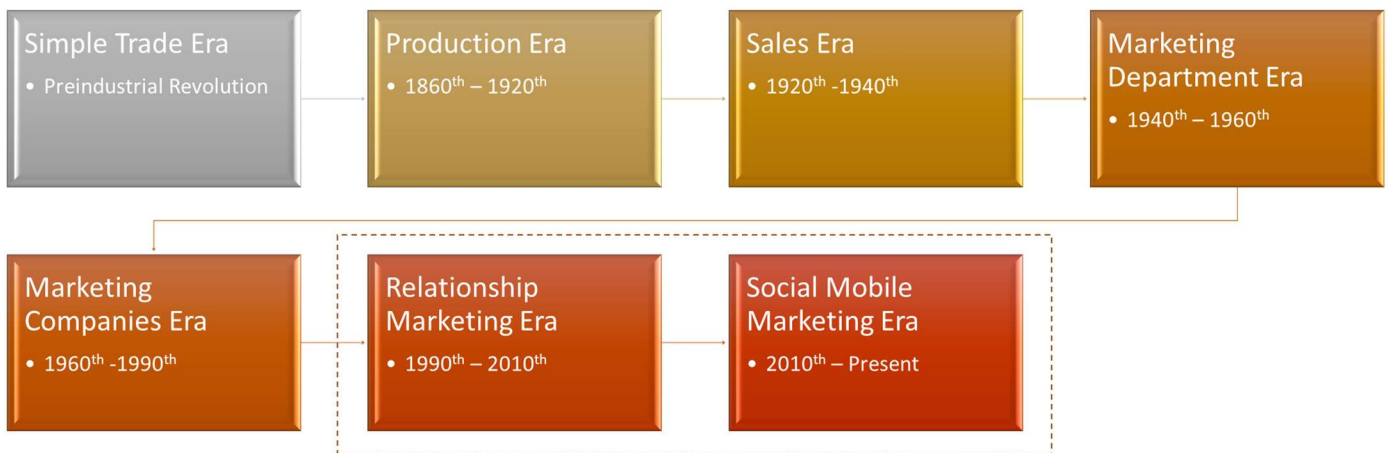


Figure 1. Marketing Development Throughout Years

The Internet and other digital technologies have dramatically altered the corporate landscape. Digital technologies have had a profound impact and application in key business decisions such as product creation, profitability, brand management, customer relationship management, purchasing, and communication (Hudson, Roth, & Madden, 2012). Notable advancements in devices, equipment, and marketing practices have all contributed to digital technology having the greatest impact on company communication operations (Sheoran, 2012). As defined by Yasmin, Tasneem, and Fatima (2015), "digital" marketing occurs when the strategy relies heavily on digital channels. Marketers can bypass intermediaries and connect with their target audience more directly using digital communication (Bird, 2007). There has been a shift in the scope of digital marketing away from solely those outlets that can be accessed online (Rowan, 2002). Marketers frequently use both online and offline channels to promote their products and services (Scharl, Dickinger, & Murphy, 2005; Pandey & Shukla, 2010). Offline channels include phones, digital TV, and other digital networks.

With their interactive, measurable, customer-engaging, customizability, accessibility, and data-managing abilities, digital technologies have rewritten the rules of communication (Deighton, 1996; Merisavo et al., 2007; Salehi, Mirzaei, Aghaei, and Abyari, 2012; Edelman and Heller, 2015). As a result of the ability to tailor offerings to each customer in real time, marketers are increasingly turning to digital marketing communication (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). In order to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction, digital marketing uses subtle yet compelling methods of reaching out to, informing, and swaying consumers (Gay, Charlesworth, & Esen, 2007). Digital marketing communication still centers on a two-way, personalized dialogue with each customer via digital mediums (Merisavo et al., 2007). However, the digital medium's ability to tailor each user's experience makes it a compelling substitute for more conventional methods (Hawks, 2015).

Globally, businesses are expanding their investments in digital channels (Maddox, 2015). According to a report by the Winterberry Group, digital advertising spending climbed by 6.4% in 2016, outpacing the growth of TV by 3.3% and outdoor advertising by 2.6%. The magazine industry saw a decline of 1.9%, while the newspaper industry saw a decline of 6%. There was no increase or change in expenditure on radio in this time period (Conlon, 2016).

Because of the inbound nature of digital channels, marketers can save money on client outreach and generate more leads than they might with outbound methods (Angelides, 1997). 45% of people

never open direct mail, 85% fast-forward through TV commercials, 84% don't stay on websites with excessive advertising, and 91% unsubscribe from emails, according to Hubspot's annual study on inbound marketing (2013). The research also found that, compared to traditional outbound marketing, the cost of inbound marketing via digital channels was 61% lower.

Saudi Arabia, with one of the world's fastest-growing economies, is not immune to the pervasive effects of digital marketing and other forms of electronic communication. Both businesses and individuals in Saudi Arabia have jumped into the digital sphere with both feet in the past decade. Marketers are gradually shifting their budgets from traditional media to digital channels, with the automotive, banking, financial services, and insurance (BFSI), and fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sectors being the most heavily invested. Saudi consumers are increasingly using digital channels throughout the buying process to share opinions via "liking," "recommending," and "feedback," to publicly display their allegiance to a brand, to gather and share information, and to have two-way conversations with brands (BCG Study, 2013). The digital uprising in Saudi Arabia is being fueled by ever-improving digital statistics (Deloitte, 2015; eMarketer, 2016), particularly the number of Internet and mobile users, the amount spent on data services, the narrowing of the digital divide between rural and urban areas, and the government's push towards a digital economy.

No sector has been immune to the pervasive influence of digital marketing (Kothari & Saxena, 2004; Ricciuti, 1995). Customers and sellers alike in the Saudi auto market, one of the world's largest, are feeling the effects of the digital "Midas touch" (Maklan, Knox, & Watson, 2001). Due to the country's population, rising standard of living, and export opportunities, the Saudi market is ripe for this type of product, and there is great potential for a high degree of penetration (Booz & Company, 2011). The potential for the automotive industry to generate substantial profits has piqued the attention of both marketers and academics.

Digital marketing in Saudi Arabia's passenger car market has a bright future to the rising interest in cars online, the preeminence of digital channels in consumers' car purchases, rising customer demand for seamless digital car purchasing experiences, and massive spending by the leading car market players on digital platforms (KPMG, 2013; Accenture Global Automotive Report, 2015). The empirical manifestation of digital marketing in the Saudi passenger automotive market has not been the subject of much academic research.

The significance of the digital medium in influencing consumer choice across a wide range of product categories is now generally accepted. Specifically in categories like apparel, fashion, books, etc., there is evidence to suggest that digital channels are facilitating consumers' purchasing decisions by allowing customers to search, evaluate, recommend, influence others, and give feedback on products and services (Kink & Hess, 2008; GE Capital, 2013; Google Saudi, 2013).

To date, there have been scant attempts at demonstrating the impact of digital marketing on the full cycle of customer decision-making in Saudi Arabia. In the Saudi context, researchers have emphasized the features and factors affecting car purchase decisions, especially in an offline environment, and concluded that price, fuel efficiency, design, family and friends' recommendations, and easy financing plans affect car buying decisions. These are just a few recent examples of research that either strongly supports the use of digital media by Saudi car marketers or highlights the awareness-creating capability of online media among Saudi car buyers. In the Saudi automobile market, research has not generally included the entire impact of digital communication on the entire buying decision process. Few European and American studies (Molesworth & Suortti, 2002; Naik & Peters, 2009) have examined the effect of internet communication on the purchase of automobiles. However, a study by Hutter, Hautz, Denhardt, and Füller (2013) found that the exact outcome of technological usage is disputed, and it is important for marketers to understand the effect on purchasing decisions because of the influence of digital communication on car purchases. There are a few research organizations, such as KPMG, GE, Accenture, etc., that periodically publish their reports focusing on the influence of digital media on car buying, but if you want to know how digital marketing communication affects the entire journey of a Saudi car buyer, you won't find much. Consequently, it is unclear how Saudi consumers' decision-making processes are influenced by digital marketing communication regarding a product like a car, which falls into the extended problem-solving category.

Most studies have used the phrase "digital media" to cover all content-based digital platforms and gadgets, but little is known about the preferred digital channels of communication while searching for information regarding cars.

While it is well established that most customers utilize digital channels while researching and comparing products and services, it is still completely unknown whether the same channels might also stimulate the desire to purchase a car. Therefore, there is room for a scholarly investigation of

the most important factors customers think about when shopping for cars online. These gaps in the existing body of knowledge were highlighted in the present study, and an empirical investigation was undertaken to fill them.

The rest of this research has been broken down into sections for ease of reading. This article is divided into two parts: the first discusses the theoretical foundations of important work explaining the effects of digital marketing on consumer behavior, while the second evaluates the impact of digital marketing communication in Saudi Arabia's passenger automobile market.

The next section details the study's methodology, with a focus on the development of the scale. The study's conclusions, applications, and caveats are discussed in the final section.

Consumer trends & Digital Marketing:

There have been significant shifts in consumer behavior due to the advent of the digital age (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). Rocolta-Paina and Luca (2010) argue that customers in today's digital marketplace are more likely to have high expectations for a satisfactory experience. Consumers generally and "Generation X" consumers specifically have grown more realistic, socially connected, nimble, skillful, and able to multitask in digital environments (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Hansen, 2008). As digital technologies continue to evolve and improve, more and more consumers are opting to use several different devices all at once when researching and making a final purchase decision (Havestein, 2008). Consumers today conduct research on, evaluate options for, and make purchases of anything from clothing and electronics to groceries, insurance, and even automobiles and houses (BCG Study, 2013) online. This is occurring because customers are being educated in an informative, fascinating, indulgent, and participatory manner across all product categories thanks to the Internet, mobile phones, and social media (Alexa, Shayne, Robert, & Michael, 1996; Wertime & Fenwick, 2011).

By facilitating customer participation in the form of digital content creation and sharing, conversation initiation, and feedback provision, digital communication is allowing customers to select and demand desired content and exert agency over marketing communications (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). Demand, information, networking, and crowd-based power in digital environments are the four sources of power that Labrecque Esche, Mathwick, Novak, and Hofacker (2013) identified as empowering consumers. Customers are no longer merely targets of

aggressive sales pitches in marketing materials (Lee, 2014). In order to convey marketing information and really engage consumers with the appropriate digital content, modern marketers first seek permission from them. Consumers are making more informed, enjoyable, and useful decisions as a result of increased agency on their part (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b). Better matching, time savings, increased awareness, price transparency, availability of niche offerings, people matching, problem solving, and entertainment were all listed as examples of customer value resulting from online searches by Bughin, Corb, Manyika, Nottebohm, Chui, de Muller Barbat, and Said (2011). Pearson (2013) said that contemporary media's success may be traced back to the social aspects of the medium itself.

The author argued that individuals all around the world are turning to digital platforms in order to satiate their most basic wants of seeking identity and connectedness because social media satisfies the very basic urge of communication at very low or no cost.

Digital channels are now being used more frequently than analog ones by consumers during the decision-making process (Kink & Hess, 2008). Customers favor these channels because of their low entry barriers, high customer satisfaction rates, and low costs (Bakos, 1997; Shapiro & Varian, 1999; Kink & Hess, 2008). More than 75% of consumers conduct internet research prior to making a purchase, according to a number of recent studies (GE Capital, 2013; Srivastava, Srivastava, & Pai, 2014; Mitra, 2015). Electronics for the home are the most sought-after commodity, followed by clothing.

Online searches for products related to accessories, books, cosmetics, personal care, home and furnishing, healthcare, and babies were very popular (Google Saudi, 2013).

Opinions have been split on whether or not digital media can successfully stimulate the need recognition stage of the buyer's journey. Researchers like Constantinides (2004), Hausman (2014), and Gross (2014) confirmed the capability of digital media to stimulate the need recognition stage in low-involvement product categories, while Jayawardhena, Wright, and Masterson (2003) and Jonathan (2012) argued that it might be difficult for digital channels to trigger the stage.

Because of technological advancements, Maklan, Knox, and Watson (2001) appeared uncertain regarding the beginning of the need for recognition. However, the rise of digital platforms, notably social media, has changed the method by which consumers seek out data (Jonathan, 2012).

Customers now look for answers wherever online: on the company's website, in search results, on message boards, on YouTube, in product comparison guides, etc. (Ioanas & Stoica, 2014). Consumers are increasingly turning to their mobile phones for pre-purchase research, making them the single most important digital device in this sector (xAd Research, 2015).

As Ludwig et al. (2013) point out, around 70% of shoppers look to online reviews before making a purchase.

According to Mir and Rehman (2013), people trust reviews written by other customers since they are unbiased. According to studies (Giamanco & Gregoire, 2012; Funde & Mehta, 2014), consumers who read and trust reviews written by other customers are more likely to make purchases based on those reviews. Dimensional Research found in 2013 that consumers are influenced by both positive and negative reviews. According to a survey by Dimensional Research, 90% of consumers are influenced by positive ratings, while 86% are influenced by negative reviews. Buyers were encouraged by positive evaluations and put off by unfavorable ones.

According to research by Negi and Saklani (2003), the most popular internet purchases are presents, clothing, electronics, and groceries. According to research by Hooda and Aggarwal (2012), most clients are using e-marketing channels to purchase e-tickets, e-bills, e-banking, and e-shopping. Customers are encouraged to write and discuss their experiences after making a purchase, according to research by Jayawardhena, Wright, and Masterson (2003). According to Hausman (2014), consumers use social media for post-purchase activities like discussing their purchases with others, recommending products based on their own positive experiences, and trashing brands after having a bad one themselves. Consumers' trust and happiness, according to Chiu, Chang, Cheng, and Fang (2009), are the primary drivers of repeat business via electronic marketplaces.

[A look at the relationship between digital marketing and automobile buyers' actions:](#)

According to recent studies (Kumar & Singh, 2013; Maruti Suzuki Saudi, 2015), a growing demographic of Saudi vehicle purchasers is interested in dealerships that offer a holistic shopping experience that combines human interaction, digital tools, and physical displays.

Digital platforms now account for the bulk of the car-buying process (Nielsen, 2012). Consumers in Saudi Arabia who are interested in purchasing a vehicle do so primarily online, where they

conduct research, compare brands, read feedback from experts and fellow consumers, participate in brand-specific online communities and social media groups, receive newsletters and promotional emails, and share their own experiences and opinions (Kusuma, 2015). The Saudi market for automobiles has shown a clear preference for some forms of online advertising. Buying a car has become increasingly mediated via websites (Capgemini, 2015), mobile phones (Mohile, 2016), e-mails, and smart phones (Harwani, 2015). But as Salmon (2015) points out, it's still difficult for marketers to pinpoint exactly which channels are influencing consumers' final purchases. Because of this, it's no surprise that many marketers use multivariate or A/B testing to zero in on the best digital channel. However, most marketers rely on online channels like websites and email to maximize consumer acquisition. The present research also seeks clarity by identifying the most popular digital channel utilized during the car-buying process.

In the last stages of the customer decision-making process, the Internet plays a key role in influencing the buyer to acquire an automobile (J.D. Power Report, 2015).

In 2011, 51% of Saudi car purchasers began their search for a vehicle online; by 2015, this number had risen to 75%, with 66% of all searches being performed on mobile devices (marketresearch.com, 2018). Since 2009 (Jaleel, 2015), the annualized growth rate of car-related online searches has been 54%. The websites of automakers, retailers, reviewers, journalists, magazines, dealers, independent researchers, YouTube comment sections, and online message boards are all excellent places to learn more about cars online (C+R Research, 2014).

According to Maklan, Knox, and Watson (2001), the Internet may have a larger influence on some parts of the consumer decision-making process than others. Consumers make exceptional use of digital channels when comparing different car brands, as suggested by reports from research organizations such as Nielsen (2012), J.D. Power Report (2015), Marketresearch.com (2018), Capgemini (2015), and Accenture (2015).

Before settling on a car to buy, consumers place a premium on research they can do on their own, including price comparisons, user reviews, and information about available financing (Mohile, 2016). When researching vehicles online, consumers are constantly adding and removing manufacturers from consideration (Wolstenholme, 2015). With the advent of the Internet, consumers no longer need to physically visit a dealer's showroom more than twice before making a purchase (Nair, 2015; Bruce, 2015). Rather than visiting a dealership in person, car shoppers are

gathering information on a vehicle through alternative channels such as e-mail, online chat, and mobile phones (C+R Research, 2014). Ioanas and Stoica's (2014) research highlighted the ROPO (Research Online and Buy Offline) phenomenon, whereby consumers conduct extensive online research and make a decision along key decision criteria, but the final purchase occurs in an offline environment.

Research Hypothesis:

A literature review shows that most studies (Bakos, 1997; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a; Corniani, 2006; Kink & Hess, 2008) didn't emphasize their preference for a particular digital channel, instead using the term "online" or "digital" channels to represent a variety of digital communication channels and platforms. According to several reports (Capgemini, 2015; Harwani, 2015; Mohile, 2016), online platforms, mobile devices, and social media are the most popular methods of client contact. In addition, it is difficult for marketers to determine which channel influences consumer behavior and leads to new client acquisition (Salmon, 2015). This leads us to our first working hypothesis for the research:

Customers have a preferred digital communication channel they employ when shopping for cars:

Researchers have paid little attention to how this impacts consumers' overall decision-making, especially when it comes to purchasing a vehicle. While customers may not always follow the steps that make up the consumer buying-decision process, marketers need to have a thorough understanding of it in order to influence customers' pre-purchase considerations, actual purchases, and post-purchase loyalty. There are only a handful of Western studies that examine the impact of digital marketing communication on the complete consumer buying decision process while purchasing an automobile (Molesworth & Suortti, 2002; Naik & Peters, 2009). Thus, a few more hypotheses were established to precisely comprehend the impact on the complete buying decision process, and these are presented below.

Even in low-involvement product categories, there is a lot of doubt regarding how well digital channels can initiate the need recognition stage (Maklan, Knox, & Watson, 2001). It was hypothesized that the need for stimulation for "Car," a product in the high-involvement product category, would be primarily intrinsic in character.

Digital advertising does not make people feel like they need to go out and buy a car:

Consumers in an extensive problem-solving category like "Car" hunt for knowledge on the items available in the category from both internal and external sources (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Kumar, 2010). The literature reviewed indicated that consumers preferred digital channels over more traditional ones when seeking information. This was mostly attributable to the interactive, relevant, rapid, and simple nature of digital media. As a result, the following theory was proposed:

Consumers are more likely to use digital channels than analog ones while looking for car-related information.

Additionally, it was speculated that:

Customers have a favorable impression of digital marketing communication, which explains why they turn to it while looking for answers to their questions.

Consumers rely heavily on online reviews since they provide a quick and easy assessment of a product's quality before making a purchase (Ludwig et al., 2013; Mir & Rehman, 2013; Mohile, 2016). In addition, a literature analysis revealed that different phases of the purchasing decision process are affected by digital channels to varying degrees (Maklan, Knox, & Watson, 2001). The literature (Capgemini, 2015; Accenture, 2015) also suggests that consumers are more likely to use digital channels during the research phase of the car-buying process. This prompted the following working hypothesis:

While considering a vehicle purchase,,

An-online review from previous customers have an impact:

As a result, the following was postulated:

Digital marketing communication has the greatest impact on the evaluation phase of the buyer's journey when it comes to automobile purchases.

A literature search indicated that automobile dealerships and brand choice might be simplified by using digital marketing (Nair, 2015). Consumers typically do their homework online before making a big-ticket purchase in person, such as a car or house (Ioanas & Stoica, 2014). It is also typical practice for those shopping for cars to personally inspect the vehicle. Researchers deduced the following from these findings:

The use of digital media for advertising makes it simple to choose a car and a dealership:

Furthermore, it was speculated:

Consumers do not want to reserve cars online. From providing feedback and suggestions to, in the worst instance, trashing brands, post-purchase activities were found to be common among consumers (Hausman, 2014). The social validation that a car receives increases the buyer's confidence in the purchase and mitigates any regret felt after the fact (Aaker, 2009). Buyers of automobiles are likely to engage in digital behavior sharing following their purchases. Because of this, scientists wondered and made an assumption: After making a purchase, the vast majority of customers will share their thoughts online.

Methodology for Research:

Howard and Sheth (1969), Nicosia (1976), Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (1970), and Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1995) are just a few of the most influential models accessible in the marketing literature for understanding customer behavior. The study chose to use the Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (Edison, 1993; Jisana, 2014; Schiffman, Kanuk, and Kumar, 2010) EKB model because of its clarity, adaptability, thoroughness, and capacity to explain the factors that affect consumers' purchasing decisions.

The model also identifies and emphasizes the decision-making process, from recognizing a need to conducting an online search, weighing the pros and cons of many options, making a final decision, and preparing for life after the purchase. The model is widely used because it is flexible enough to include new information about customer behavior and has survived the test of time since its inception. The present research utilized the EKB model to examine the effect on buyer choice.

Digital communication channels (such as websites, social networking sites, mobile phones, YouTube, digital TV, digital outdoors, and online communities) used by Saudi's passenger car marketers were analyzed in this study and collectively referred to as digital marketing communication. For the purposes of this research, "website" is synonymous with "search engine" and "third-party comparison website."

The current study used a mixed research methodology because of the few existing studies, which were cited as the main research need. Researchers that are interested in both theory development

and the testing of their hypotheses about a phenomenon often choose a mixed methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches (Greene, 2006).

Mixed methods produce more well-rounded and insightful findings (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Six coworkers, two superiors, one research supervisor, two car enthusiasts, one car dealer, one IT company employee, and ten management students participated in an elicitation study to determine the likely impact of digital marketing communication practices on the consumer buying-decision process when purchasing a car. Researchers can better replicate their theory in different settings with the help of elicitation studies because they better understand the target population's actual beliefs and experience less prejudice themselves (Downs & Hausenblas, 2005).

According to Fishbein (2000), theories can be used across cultural contexts because of the elicitation procedure. An analysis of the existing literature highlighted the crucial features of digital marketing communication, suggesting that this method of contact is preferred by both consumers and businesses. As scale items for the specified product category, these features of digital marketing communication were discovered to influence consumer behavior in the researched literature.

The elicitation study and existing literature served as important resources for the development of the 5-point Likert scale. After testing the scale with 80 participants in Riyadh, we eliminated six items. The final scale used in the study is listed in Table 1, along with the papers utilized as references.

The sample size was calculated based on the proportion of the target population. Researchers choose this tactic when they care more about a representative sample size than an overall average (Malhotra & Dash, 2012). The population proportion approach is recommended by Lwanga and Lemeshow (1991), particularly when the goals of the study are well-defined. Due to the diverse nature of the study's population (rural, urban, and semi-urban areas, different income groups, different educational backgrounds, and different occupations), the study's findings are predicated on the percentage of respondents who reported using digital channels of communication.

$$n = p \times q \times \frac{z^2}{D^2}$$

Confidence (z), error (d), and predicted proportions (p, q) are calculated using this method (Equation 1).

Stage of CDM	Statement(s)	Reference Studies Used
Need Recognition (NR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DM* leads to awareness of buying a car (NR) 	Maklan, Knox, and Watson (2001); Geissler (2002); Jayawardhena Wright, and Masterson (2003); Constantinides (2004); KPMG (2013); Hausman (2014); Gross (2014).
Search for Information (SFI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have started using DC** more (SF1) DM offers huge quantity of information (SF2) DM reduces the time taken in searching (SF3) DM helps reducing the visits to showroom (SF4) DM is interactive in nature (SF5) More relevant information over digital media (SF6) DM is easy to use (SF7) 	Reza Kiani (1998); Wind and Mahajan (2002); McDonald and Wilson (1999); Koiso-Kanttila (2004); Kink and Hess (2008); Reitzin (2007); Kirkpatrick (2012); Webchutney (2010); Smith (2011); Nielsen (2012); Verbaas (2013); Nielsen (2014); Nguyen (2014); C+R Research (2014); Jaleel (2015); J.D. Power Report (2015); CarDekho.com (2015); Bruce (2015); Nair (2015).
Evaluation of Alternatives (EA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy to have expert advice over digital channels (EA1) Customer reviews over DM help in evaluation (EA2) Feel positive towards the car brand with maximum positive reviews (EA3) More weight to consensus recommendations (EA4) Car brands can be easily compared (EA5) 	Shih and Fang (2004); Cheong and Park (2005); Samudra and Phadtare (2012); Lin (2007); Cappemini (2009); Nataraj and Nagaraja (2012); Thakur (2013); Bagchi (2013); C+R Research (2014); Cappemini (2015).
Selection and Purchase (SP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easy selection of car dealer (SP1) Easy selection of car brand (SP2) Intend to join online forums, blogs, SNS of car brands (SP3) Subscription to newsletters of car brands (SP4) Participation in online discussions about cars (SP5) Buying the car on the basis of online information (SP6) Booking car online (SP7) Easy availability of Finance (SP8) Buying decision can be pre-poned (SP9) Brand considered may be changed after searching online (SP10) 	Fishbein and Ajzen (1975); Ajzen (1991); Mathieson (1991); Taylor and Todd (1995); Davis (1989); Moon and Kim (2001); Troung (2009); Accenture (2012); Cappemini (2013); Wolstenholme (2015); xAd Research (2015).
Post-Purchase (PP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback about satisfaction/ dissatisfaction (PP1) Using DC throughout the decision-making process is a good idea (PP2) Recommendations to friends (PP3) 	Novak and Hoffman (1997); Corniani (2006); Bayo-Moriones and Lera-López (2007); Tiago and Veríssimo (2014); Charan (2014); Charan and Dahiya (2015); Cappemini (2015); Harwani (2015); Basu and Didyala (2015).

*DM stands for digital marketing;
**DC Stands for digital channel;
***Measured with one statement only.
Source: Authors' analysis.

Table 1. Scale used for the study.

Since 95% is the typical alpha for studies in education and the social sciences (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996), this value was chosen for the current study ($z = 1.96$). Since the accepted margin of error for educational research is between 3% and 5% (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970), the resulting d value was 3.5%. Given that the true proportion of the population is unknown, the p value (estimated proportion) was set at .5, representing the population's highest degree of variation (Chawla & Sondhi, 2011). Using this method, we were able to generate a sample size of 784 (Equation 2). Respondents were selected using a multistage, area-weighted cluster sampling method. Using this method,

$$n = .5 \times .5 \times \frac{1.96^2}{.035^2} = .9604 / .001225 = 784 \quad (2) \quad \text{the population of}$$

interest is partitioned into distinct and comprehensive clusters. Typically, these groups correspond to specific locations. After that, we take a sample from each cluster.

S/N	District	% of Population	Proportion in Sample
1	North West of Saudi	22.76%	178
2	South of Saudi	17.01%	133
3	West of Saudi	15.83%	124
4	South West of Saudi	14.27%	112
5	North East of Saudi	13.95%	109
6	East of Saudi	10.65%	84
7	North Saudi	5.53%	44
Sample Size: 748			

Table 2: Cluster sampling using proportional covering, tabulated.

To the overall population as a percentage, Using the results of the 2011 Census Saudi Arabia was divided into different districts. All other districts were diverse in terms of composition, including urban, semi-urban, and rural people. The study's sample locations were picked at random from each district. The study's sampling frame included all adult residents of the study area whose families either now had or intended to acquire a motor vehicle in the near future. It was easy to collect samples from those locations of interest. From August 2015 through July 2016, information was gathered from 784 car buyers and would-be buyers in Riyadh. When the researcher reached the predetermined number of replies for a given district, data collection ceased to ensure a representative sample. Table 2 displays the percentage of the sample that came from each district. Rather than relying on theoretical assumptions, the present investigation makes use of knowledge gained through practical experience.

In order to draw a conclusion, empirical investigations rely primarily on primary data, which typically involves measuring the observable phenomenon. Theorizing relied on information gathered from secondary resources like published works and the World Wide Web. Respondents (current and future car buyers) were surveyed using a questionnaire to acquire primary data. The basic data came from a survey method of collection. Primary data was gathered in both physical

and digital formats. The study was cross-sectional since it only contacted participants once to obtain all of the data it needed.

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	AVE	Reliability
Search for Information	SF1	.742	.549	.743
	SF2	.714		
	SF3	.782		
	SF4	.716		
	SF5	.771		
	SF6	.709		
	SF7	.752		
Evaluation of Alternatives	EOA1	.815	.681	.797
	EOA2	.829		
	EOA3	.798		
	EOA4	.859		
	EOA5	.824		
Selection and purchase	SP1	.714	.568	.791
	SP2	.729		
	SP3	.814		
	SP4	.817		
	SP5	.708		
	SP6	.754		
	SP7	.701		
	SP8	.810		
	SP9	.762		
	SP10	.716		
Post Purchase	PP1	.742	.572	.733
	PP2	.752		
	PP3	.774		

Source: Authors' analysis.

Table 3: scale's validity and reliability are demonstrable.

Assessment of the scale's validity and reliability

Cronbach's alpha, which should be greater than .7, was used to determine the scale's reliability. Each number was greater than .7, indicating that the reliability of the scale utilized in the study was high. Factor loadings and extracted variance were used to look at how closely different ways of measuring a concept were linked, which is called convergent validity. All of the items had factor loadings in excess of the 0.68 threshold (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). As measured by average variance, the latent variable explained more than the minimum acceptable amount of variation in the indicators (.5; Farrell, 2010). The scale's results for reliability and convergent validity are shown in Table 3.

Fornell-Larcker (1981) compared the correlations between the measures of each construct to the square roots of the AVEs for each construct to test for discriminant validity. Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011) found that the square root of AVE for each concept was greater than the correlations between the constructs. This showed that the discriminant validity was true. Discriminant validity statistics for the scale are shown in Table 4.

	Search for Information (SFI)	Evaluation of Alternatives (EA)	Selection and Purchase (SP)	Post-Purchase (PP)
Search for Information (SFI)	.741			
Evaluation of Alternatives (EA)	.605	.825		
Selection and Purchase (SP)	.527	.547	.754	
Post-Purchase (PP)	.389	.621	.594	.756

Note: The diagonal elements in bold are the square roots of AVEs whereas non-diagonal elements are the latent correlations.
Source: Authors' analysis.

Table 4: The scale's discriminant validity

Digital Channel	Test	Significance	Decision
Websites	One-sample Binomial Test	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
SNS		.023	Reject the Null Hypothesis
YouTube		.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
Phone		.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
Smartphone		.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
Online Communities		.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
Digital Outdoors		.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
Digital TV		.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
E-mails		.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
Others		.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis

Source: Authors' analysis.

Table 5: Statistics for evaluating data from electronic sources

Respondents' Characteristics:

Respondents between the ages of 18 and 25 made up 36 percent of the total sample. In total, 46% of people who filled out the survey had completed some level of higher education. The findings seemed to corroborate the widespread opinion and the findings of multiple studies (Rogers, 2010; Cotte, Chowdury, & Ricci, 2006; Jayawardhena, Wright, & Dennis, 2007; Joshi & Upadhyay, 2014) that young and educated people are at the forefront of digital technology adoption. 42% of respondents reported having an income between SAR 7,000 and SAR 45,000. Only 29% of the respondents were students, but 40% were active-duty military or government employees. Sixty-four percent of the respondents were male, whereas just thirty-four percent were female. Forty-five percent of those who participated in the survey were city dwellers, while 28% were from the suburbs and 27% were from rural areas.

Popular digital channel:

Across markets, customers are increasingly favoring digital channels as a more convenient means of communication than their more traditional options (Rao & Manzar, 2013; Ioanas & Stoica, 2014). Our data corroborated this notion, showing that three-quarters of respondents utilized some form of digital communication alongside more conventional methods of reaching out to make car purchases. However, one quarter of those polled said they would never abandon tried-and-true methods of communication. Websites are now the preferred digital medium for

communicating with a business during the car-buying process, used by approximately 87% of customers. 67% of clients also used non-digital channels in addition to digital ones. Twenty-three percent of customers did not engage with any of the company's standard communication channels at all. Statistical evaluation of online resources.

Decision on the Significance of Digital Channel Testing:

Websites, just one instance while picking out an automobile. Nearly half of those polled (45%) reported using social networking sites, while almost half (42%) used smartphones. YouTube, the video-sharing social network, was used by 41% of respondents as a source of information while researching and purchasing a vehicle. It was intriguing to note that people in Saudi Arabia were using newfangled digital channels like digital TV (31% of respondents) and digital outdoors (30%) to learn more about automobiles. As smartphones are becoming more popular in Saudi Arabia, it is not surprising that just 18% of respondents reported using the phone as a feature. About 11% of respondents said they used e-mail as their primary method of communication during the car-buying process. Only 4% of people in the poll said they learned about vehicles via "other" sources such as passing strangers, friends, or search engines like Google chrome. It should be noted that the "other" information sources identified by respondents can be accommodated within the larger group of communication channels already described, namely, traditional channels and the internet.

The research posited a predilection for specific forms of digital communication. Since the data only had two possible outcomes—use or nonuse—a one-sample binomial test was performed to determine whether respondents were equally likely to use each digital communication platform. With a .000 mean (Table 5) across the board, it's clear that respondents used every available digital medium for automobile shopping; however, websites fared best. Because of this, the study's null hypothesis was deemed acceptable.

Stage	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	Test	Sig.	Decision
Need Recognition	NR	3.18	1.117	One Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
Search for Information	SF1	3.68	.949		.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis
	SF2	3.90	.972	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SF3	3.94	.991	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SF4	3.90	1.016	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SF5	3.83	.919	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SF6	3.81	.939	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SF7	3.53	1.101	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
Evaluation of Alternatives	EOA1	3.73	.945	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	EOA2	3.85	.925	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	EOA3	3.80	.955	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	EOA4	3.66	1.007	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	EOA5	4.01	.938	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
Selection and purchase	SP1	3.46	1.153	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SP2	3.66	1.006	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SP3	4.16	.858	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SP4	4.08	.872	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SP5	4.07	.901	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SP6	3.71	.878	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SP7	3.08	1.112	.059	Retain the Null Hypothesis	
	SP8	3.51	.944	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SP9	3.23	1.132	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	SP10	3.65	.958	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
Post-Purchase	PP1	3.84	.936	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	PP2	3.28	1.113	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	
	PP3	3.96	.858	.000	Reject the Null Hypothesis	

Source: Authors' analysis.

[Table 6: Consumer purchasing behavior hypothesis testing statistic.](#)

Influence on the Consumer Purchasing Decision:

One of the most significant influencers on the buying decision process for consumers has been digital marketing communication (Gay, Charlesworth, & Esen, 2007). This investigation tested the hypothesis that key activities and decision variables characterizing the complete buying decision process were influenced by digital marketing communication. When a value significantly higher than average was found to be related to each stage, it was considered that progress had been made. According to the descriptive results (Table 6), all of the statements describing the consumer buying-decision process (with the exception of item SP7, dealing with online booking of the vehicle) were given a higher value by respondents than the average value (3).

Respondents in the survey agreed that exposure to marketing messages on digital platforms increased their awareness of the need to purchase an automobile. In the poll, respondents admitted that they now prefer using digital channels over more conventional ones while shopping for a car. A significant Chi-Square test statistic value of 204.775 at the .000 significance level indicates that digital routes of communication were preferred over traditional channels of communication during the car-buying process.

As a result, the third hypothesis was approved, which claimed that people prefer using digital channels to find information on automobiles. The survey also determined why people turned to online methods of discussion during the car-buying process. Respondents attributed their increased use of digital channels to the enhanced convenience, interactivity, and accessibility of these methods of information delivery. Most respondents also agreed that researching and purchasing a car online cut down on their time spent at dealerships.

Seventy-five percent of those surveyed in the study said that researching different makes and models of cars online is helpful. According to the respondents, the availability of reviews from other customers and professionals makes it simple to evaluate cars using digital media.

Participants in the survey reported having favorable feelings for the vehicle makes that received the most positive feedback. When comparing brands of cars, they put more stock in expert advice than they did in the claims of the manufacturers. Many research participants agreed that digital marketing channels simplified the process of choosing a car dealer and brand. Eighty percent of those surveyed planned to participate in brand-specific online communities like message boards and social networks. Many respondents also said they'd like to join automotive-related web forums and sign up for brand newsletters. Respondents to the study suggested that the availability of finance through digital channels could help automobile buyers make more informed financing selections. It was also acknowledged by respondents that online research could lead them to choose a different brand. Most respondents admitted that they would buy the car based on internet information, so the survey acknowledged a hopeful situation regarding the acceptance of digital communication by car buyers. Some respondents said they were considering putting off making a purchase altogether as a result of interactions with digital marketers. However, respondents were still skeptical about making the purchase online; only 36% said they would consider reserving a car using an online service. After making the purchase, respondents wanted to share their thoughts on their overall experience through digital platforms, whether positive or negative. They agreed that they wanted to tell their peers about the cool new digital stuff they found. In general, respondents agreed that it was a good idea to use digital communication at every stage of the decision-making procedure.

Normality tests were performed to get the statistics needed for inferential analysis.

The data under consideration were not normally distributed, since both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests for normality were significant. Therefore, the level of significance set at 5% allowed for the use of the one-sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test.

Digital marketing communication had a substantial impact on the entirety of the consumer buying-decision process, as evidenced by a higher-than-average value for all phases and a significant test linked with a value of .000 (excluding statement SP7). Because of these findings, we cannot accept the null hypothesis, which indicated that exposure to digital marketing content does not make people feel compelled to go out and buy a car. The results of this research are consistent with those of Kocyigit (2015), Hausman (2014), and Jahan (2014), who found that the use of digital channels such as smartphones, social media, and websites can influence consumers during the need recognition phase of the purchasing decision process for high-involvement products. Results show that digital marketing communication can successfully convince people they need a new car. The success may be attributable to the nature of digital marketing communication, as consumers become more aware of their need to purchase a new car after being exposed to the product through digital means. According to Nielsen's (2012) car-focused research, the Internet in particular helps spread the word about cars and has a significant impact on consumers' final purchasing decisions. KPMG (2013) also discovered that using display advertising, content, and mobile marketing effectively can stimulate customer needs. Many hypotheses developed for the research were confirmed as a result of the findings. The hypotheses studied were all recognized as true because of the findings.

Online automobile reservations failed to pass the significance test since their related significance value, .059, was higher than the required value, .05. Therefore, it can be argued that online booking for automobiles is not a result of digital marketing communication. Because of this, the hypothesis H8 was accepted, which predicts that customers won't use the website to reserve a car. If you consider that digital marketing is still in its infancy in Saudi Arabia and that many people there are wary of using the internet to conduct financial transactions, you can see how these findings make sense (Kstart, 2016). In addition, customers prefer to view the thing they're investing a lot of money in—like a car—in person before making a final purchase choice (Nielsen, 2014). The study's findings were consistent with those of Saxena (2016), who found that when buying a costly item like a car, consumers do research online to learn about different makes and models but ultimately

make their purchase in a store after trying them on for size. Only 15% of people booked a car online, and only 6% paid online for a new car in developed nations like Germany (eMarketer, 2015). Many young Saudi automobile buyers, however, prefer to do everything online (Harwani, 2015; Accenture Global Automotive Report, 2015); therefore, this may alter in the future.

Evaluation is the most vulnerable phase:

We averaged the results to determine how much the rise of digital communication methods affected each phase. The evaluation phase (3.80 average score) and information gathering phase (3.79 average score) both saw the greatest impact. The stage with the lowest average score needed recognition. One Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to determine if the results were statistically significant at the 5% level of significance. At every point in the consumer decision-making process, the value of the statistic was found to be connected with a significance value of .000. Results showed that digital marketing communication had a significant impact on all phases of the buying decision process but had the greatest impact on the evaluation and purchase phases, followed by the research and learning phases. As a result, the evaluation phase of the car-buying decision process was found to be the most influenced by digital marketing communication. According to Mogensen's (2015) research, digital marketing communication has the greatest impact during the evaluation phase.

Conclusions from this study's findings:

The research has important theoretical and practical implications for managers. This is elaborated about below.

Implications for theory:

Extending its theoretical addition to the current body of knowledge, the study provides contextual support for the prevalent global phenomenon in a digital economy that is relatively young and in a product category that has been less studied. Saudi consumers' philosophies, intellectual traditions, and habits, all of which influence their actions, differ significantly from those of their Western counterparts. Consumers in Saudi Arabia have a deep faith in nonverbal communication (Writer, 2017), as the country is a "high context," "collectivist" society (Hofstede, 1981). And with only about 10% of marketing budgets going toward digital channels, it's clear that the field is still in its infancy in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is a unique and developing digital economy on the global map due to its indigenous characteristics, such as its diverse culture and

demographics, low literacy rate, infrastructural bottlenecks, issues of security and privacy, and so on, even though the digital landscape is improving with each passing year. According to the existing literature on digital marketing communication, it has been shown to be effective in "low context," "individual" Western societies with a central belief in verbal communication. This research extends the reach of global digital theory by guaranteeing its utility in the high-context, collectivist Saudi culture that has produced uninspiring digital statistics. This research shows that even in the highly involved product category, a highly individualized and vocal communication strategy is acceptable in the collectivist Saudi culture, which places a premium on nonverbal communication. The country's young, English-speaking workforce, equipped with smartphones that can access the Internet, is driving the country's digital rise, which has led to these positive results. The convenience and speed with which important information may be accessed using digital channels appear to be more appealing to Saudi Arabia's customers than the more time-consuming and expensive traditional communication channels, particularly when it comes to the purchase of a vehicle. The findings offer a nuanced revision to the widely held belief that the inherent characteristics of digital marketing communication—such as instantaneous global reach and the ability to target specific demographics—ensure the successful application of digital marketing communication in developing economies like Saudi Arabia. Findings like these can inspire scholars in the field to look further and identify what makes digital marketing communication effective in nations with similar cultural backgrounds and digital statistics to Saudi Arabia.

It's fascinating to observe Saudi Arabia's cost-conscious consumers making their final purchase decisions online, apart from making their automobile reservations. The findings imply that even though Saudi consumers believe digital communication has distinct advantages over its traditional counterpart across all product categories, they are more reluctant to make purchases of high-involvement products due to concerns about security and privacy. The findings add to the global digital theory by showing that technology-specific characteristics play a larger role in the purchasing selection process for high-involvement products. Companies that use a geocentric strategy miss out on opportunities in emerging markets where such research is conducted (Whetten, 1989; Tsui, 2004). This research sheds light on the complex and highly competitive passenger automobile market in Saudi Arabia, which is populated by both domestic and foreign manufacturers. Such information is crucial for academics to pursue additional research in this area,

and it also provides principles for those stakeholders who are fighting to make effective sales to a massive consumer group. By delving into this phenomenon and its impact on the customer buying decision process, the study's findings are of use to managers, employees, and consumers in Saudi Arabia's passenger automobile industry. Companies will thrive in today's highly competitive market if they can consistently exceed their consumers' expectations rather than merely satisfy their basic requirements. This study equips readers with a thorough understanding of the decision-making process of a target market, which is crucial for meeting the needs of consumers.

In addition to providing factual evidence for the implementation of digital marketing in Saudi Arabia's passenger car industry, the study offers insight into the decision-making process of Saudi Arabia's automobile buyers in technology-mediated environments. In addition to a thorough literature analysis and elicitation study, it provides a scale that can help other researchers gauge how digital marketing communication affects the car-buying process.

Conclusion & Executive results:

Marketers in Saudi Arabia need to realize that car purchases are a two-way street. In addition to more traditional forms of contact, today's vehicle purchasers are making extensive use of digital channels throughout the sales process. Seventy-five percent of Saudi Arabia's car buyers did online research before purchasing a specific car brand, which is consistent with the findings of a previous study by yourtarget.com (2022) that found digital thrust to be the most important change affecting car purchase decisions. KPMG (2013), C+R Research (2014), and the J.D. Power Report (2015, 2016) all came to the same conclusion.

The results of this research can give marketing managers more reason to put their money into digital channels. While marketers can't ignore the continued relevance of more traditional forms of communication in the car-buying process, the growing influence of digital channels can make it difficult to keep up. Those working in marketing need to recognize the complementary nature of digital and analog channels of dissemination. Thus, it is possible to turn a prospect into a customer by integrating both channels in a thoughtful and strategic manner at each level of the consumer buying decision process. Companies should create a unified communication strategy to provide repeatable service to customers.

Previous research into customer communication preferences has yielded mixed results, so it's unclear which method is most popular during the car-buying process. This research clarified the

situation, finding that websites are the preferred method of contact during the car-buying process. This discovery represents a significant managerial contribution since it aids marketing managers in selecting the most efficient marketing channel in which to allocate advertising funds in order to maximize return on investment. It is important to note, however, that a potential car buyer does not need to visit the manufacturer's website before making a purchase. Effective search engine optimization (SEO) tactics should be implemented, as potential car purchasers may utilize search engines to find the marketer's website. The website, including the links, should take advantage of the most popular search engine terms. If SEO efforts are successful, the manufacturer's website will rise to the top of search engine results. Paying close attention to what is being said about a manufacturer's brand on third-party comparison websites is crucial since consumers may visit sites like yallamotor.com, motory.com, and ksa.hatla2ee.com, to name the most popular.

Since automobiles are a social commodity, it's crucial to consider the opinions of peers while making a purchase online. Since it is likely that a website will be viewed on more than one screen, car marketers should check that their site works properly when viewed from a variety of devices, including PCs, laptops, mobile phones, digital outdoor displays, digital televisions, etc. Customers can make better-informed purchases when presented with engaging, enticing, and pertinent digital content. By using social media well, you may have a conversation with potential automobile customers rather than just talking at them. Marketers could utilize social media competitions, quizzes, and games to generate interest in and excitement about the vehicles they are selling. September 2017 by [Mrs. Rekha Dahiya]

The International Marketing Review By a margin of 15 to 1, respondents' preferred digital tool for researching and purchasing a vehicle was a smartphone. Therefore, marketers need to create a mobile communication strategy that makes content accessible across several mobile platforms. Likewise, marketers may create engaging mobile apps and mobile websites.

Personal and commercial channels of communication should be used to make automobile buyers aware of the utility of a certain car brand. The company's app needs to be distributed to major app shops. Potential automobile customers can become interested in the brands through mobile games.

Since many businesses use both online and offline communication channels, stimuli from either of these sources can cause the first stage of the consumer buying decision process, need recognition, to occur (Jayawardhena, Wright, & Masterson, 2003). In this light, it is fascinating to

find that digital marketing communication can influence the need recognition stage, which is typically thought of as inherent to products in the extended problem-solving category. This discovery presents a golden opportunity for salespeople to use digital channels to kick off the buying decision. By highlighting discrepancies between the ideal and actual states, marketers can pique consumers' interest in purchasing a car using digital platforms. Customers' wants can be piqued by keeping them apprised of recent developments in the relevant markets, including the introduction of new vehicles, the introduction of special offers, the introduction of new technological platforms used for the car, changes in exchange policy, etc. (Shim, Eastlick, Lotz, & Warrington, 2001) Consumers do extensive research on products before making a purchase.

Before making a purchase, consumers often utilize the internet to learn more about a product and read reviews (PWC Study, 2012). The automotive industry is highly dependent on third parties for data collection and analysis. The study's findings corroborated this observation, showing that people prefer using digital channels to learn about different makes and models of cars due to the unique qualities of this type of marketing communication. Previous research by Negi and Saklani (2003), Bauer, Barnes, Reichardt, and Neumann (2005), Klososky (2012), Kaufman and Horton (2014), Nguyen (2014), and Syme (2015) corroborated the present study's findings. Marketers need to realize that consumers are less likely to use digital communication when it is not informative, interactive, simple, relevant, and saves time. Participants in the survey reported that they spent less time researching and shopping for a car thanks to the prevalence of digital resources. Customers can research vehicles and make educated decisions regarding the brand and dealer before setting foot in a showroom, which is consistent with the findings (KPMG, 2013).

Customers today often make a total of two visits to the showroom before making a purchase (C+R Research, 2014). Marketers should therefore ensure that engaging display ads, videos, and apps are easily accessible on the most popular websites frequented by prospective automobile purchasers.

Consumers can keep track of their search history and easily make comparisons using digital tools (Charan, 2014), which greatly facilitates the evaluation process. Blogs, reviews, YouTube videos, message boards, and Twitter feeds all play a role in the car-buying process for consumers (Giamanco & Gregoire, 2012). The current study benefited from the accessibility to expert and user reviews and consensus recommendations made possible by digital communication. Car

buyers believe that internet customer reviews offer unbiased information without any vested interest (Nielsen, 2014), hence the results make sense. KPMG (2013) conducted a study that corroborated the findings, finding that consumers do, in fact, do price, model, feature, and brand comparisons while shopping online. Customers frequently rely on web videos to gain a virtual feel for the automobile before making a purchase (Bagchi, 2013).

Advertisers should foster customer relationships with those who have recently purchased automobiles through digital channels and ask for feedback in the form of reviews and comments. However, it becomes difficult for marketers to keep track of everything that has been stated about them online. Customer behavior, brand preference, and dealer choice are all influenced by reviews from both peers and professionals. On digital platforms, advertisers' claims that are unsupported by other users can be difficult for marketers to handle [Mrs. Rekha Dahiya].

As soon as possible, marketers should address customers' concerns and complaints. Marketers can observe their clients' actions and provide timely support to ensure a positive outcome for the evaluation phase. It is possible to identify and influence the group's opinion leaders, who other group members will then follow. Marketers can greatly benefit from implementing a plan for managing their internet reputation. Marketers looking to appeal to prospective car customers should take note of the comparative data that may be found on unbiased or third-party comparison websites.

Decisions about dealer, brand, and timing of purchase, as well as other actions like newsletter subscription, club membership, online booking, financing analysis, brand switch, and online discussion, are all part of the digital channel selection and purchase process (xAd Research, 2015; Capgemini, 2015; Singh, 2016). Apart from online car booking, this study corroborated all previous ones. Marketers should take note of the issue and realize that customers frequently reevaluate their choice over digital platforms and switch to a different brand after investigating online, especially if they find negative reviews. In such a scenario, marketers can win over new customers' trust by disseminating positive reviews from existing ones via digital channels. In this case, the clients' potential objections can be addressed through the employment of tried-and-true approaches like personal selling and inviting customers to the showrooms. Marketers can use online platforms to formally conduct in-depth research into the factors that influence brand and dealer preference. The research findings might be used in an online advertising push aimed at

simplifying the car-buying decision-making process. Study participants also agreed that persuasive advertising could make them put off buying a car for a while. Marketers could benefit from this trend if they can properly marry efficient digital communication with the readiness stage of their target audience.

Marketers need to be aware that consumers are wary about making a large purchase like a car purchase online, even though they do a lot of research on brands and dealers online. Customers are more inclined to make a purchase after seeing it in person. Assuring clients that they will receive the advertised quality and product can help marketers bridge the gap between online and offline shopping. Marketers may give potential customers a more in-depth look at their goods by employing cutting-edge technologies like 360-degree product tours and augmented reality. Marketers continue to use traditional channels to draw potential customers into physical stores so they can see the products that have caught their attention online and hopefully persuade them to make a purchase. Customers are encouraged to post and discuss their after-purchase experience on a variety of digital venues.

Customers use digital platforms to voice their approval or disapproval of digital material and to spread the word to others about it (Hausman, 2014). Respondents in the current study were found to participate in post-purchase activities and discuss their car-buying experiences via digital media. The conclusions were consistent with those of the J.D. Power Report (2016) and research by Jayawardhena, Wright, and Masterson (2003), Mangold and Faulds (2009), and Charan (2014). Marketers need to be aware that customers will share their thoughts and feelings about their new cars on a variety of digital channels and that these comments will have a major impact on how other customers rate and choose their vehicles. Managing the client's expectations after a purchase is made online is a double-edged sword for businesses because one unhappy customer can do significant damage to a brand's reputation if they choose to tell their story online. Customers may get negative impressions of a business if their questions aren't answered promptly or at all. In such circumstances, managing one's online reputation becomes both essential and difficult.

Advertisers of automobiles could encourage their current customers, via a quiz or contest, to talk about their experiences with the brand in online forums and on social media. After a customer makes a purchase, the marketer can follow up with a thank-you email, invite them to join a loyalty

program or online community, or simply encourage them to "like" the marketer's social media pages.

A subset of customers can be requested to provide feedback on the brand of car they purchased via social media reviews. Marketers can also try requesting word-of-mouth promotion from satisfied consumers in their circle of acquaintances. *Journal of Global Marketing*, Volume 17, Issue 9, September 2017 Downloaded by [Mrs. Rekha Dahiya]

The study indicated that digital marketing communication had a substantial impact on every stage of the car-buying decision-making process, from the initial recognition of a need through the post-purchase phase, suggesting that digital marketing communication is the way of the future. It follows that the entire car-buying process in Saudi Arabia is influenced by digital marketing communication. As the country's infrastructure for digital communication develops, this trend is likely to accelerate.

Research scope and limitations:

Respondents were asked questions about each stage of the customer buying decision process as part of an effort to assess the effect of digital marketing communication on the entire buying decision process. Because the study could not establish a link between the participant's reported behaviors and the actual sale of the automobile, the results may be unreliable. The study was limited in its ability to determine whether or not respondents who said digital marketing communication influenced their purchase of a vehicle actually made that purchase. While the adoption of digital marketing communication was investigated, consumer actions were not. Pre- and post-causal research designs, which would be used in such a study, would yield much more precise and applicable findings for marketers.

The results may be limited in their applicability because the study employed a mixed sampling technique in which the final sampling units were chosen at random. Both confirmed and prospective buyers of automobiles were included in the research. Research that clearly differentiates between real and potential buyers may yield different results. The research took place in Saudi Arabia, but the findings have broad applicability to other countries like USA, UK, China and India.

The study's findings should be applied with caution outside of major metropolitan areas.

Similarly, marketers can learn why people prefer to use different forms of contact when shopping for a car. As a result, this would aid in the development of more targeted and efficient advertising campaigns. Digital channels of interaction during the car-buying process can allow marketers to identify various customer categories. The relationship between a consumer's decision-making process and a digital medium is something that marketers should investigate better. These specifics were left out of the analysis, opening the door for more research.

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