

## Determinants of Consumer Car Purchase Decisions in India: The Role of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Sweta Dhand, <sup>2</sup>Dr Amrita Bhattacharya, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Neha Agrawal, <sup>4</sup>Dr. Jyoti Kumar Chandel

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor,

Centre for Distance and Online Education, IIIT, Jaypee University, Noida

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, NSHM Business School,

NSHM Knowledge Campus, Durgapur

<sup>3</sup>Associate Professor,

Birgunj Public College affiliated to Tribhuvan University, Nepal

<sup>4</sup>Department of Management Studies,

Birla Institute of Technology, Off-Campus Jaipur

### Abstract

The Indian automobile sector has gone through major changes because of technological development, digitalization and altering customer lifestyle. Buyer car purchase decisions are highly affected by societal factors, social media platforms, digital feedback, product features and technological advances instead of just the cost and its performance. This research focuses on the key factors that affect buyer car purchase decisions in India, depending on societal impact, information seeking conduct, and product features. The research focuses on a literature review of buyer's behaviour, automobile marketing and digital communication. Former research show that factors like peer pressure, family's outlook, brand value, safety aspects, comfort, reselling profit, funding opportunities and web marketing notably impact buyers' choices and the intent to buy. The rise in the usage of virtual sites has also revolutionized the purchasing journey of automobiles by allowing in-depth investigation prior to the final decision of buying. The research determines that automobile organizations should implement client- focused and digitally oriented approach that focuses mainly on individualization, online interaction, modernization and enriched customer journey to be part of the Indian automobile sector competition. A sample of 341 was collected to find the result of the study. The factors studying the Role of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes determining the consumer Car Purchase decisions in India are Social Influence, Information Search Behavior, Product Attributes and Environmental and Technological Concerns. The study concludes that there is significant impact of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes on consumer Car Purchase decisions

**Keywords:** Consumer Trust, Car Purchase Decision, Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes

### Introduction

The automobile sector serves a pivotal role within the financial and industrial advancement of India by putting up extensively towards workforce expansion, industrial production and buyer expenditure. Recently, the Indian domestic car market has undergone swift growth because of development, growing discretionary income, technical advancement and boosted availability towards social media sites. Customer choices in the automobile industry have progressed substantially as users are now more literate, innovation-driven and standards-driven than earlier. Contemporary users estimate automobiles not just as a mode of transportation but also as means of ease, prestige, lifestyle and comfort.

The development of digitalisation and digital connectivity had vitally revolutionized user purchasing experience in the automobile sector. Users extremely depend on digital platforms, web marketing, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), social media feedback and automotive websites to collection info prior buying car. According to recent research, it emphasized that online channels notably impact the discovery of buying purpose and mould the decision-making approach within the Indian automobile market (Prabaharan et al., 2024). Likewise, electronic marketing has surfaced as a key determinant affecting user perspective, buying purpose and product consciousness amongst Indian car purchasers (Dahiya & Gayatri, 2017).

Transforming market trends has also changed consumer choices towards technically advanced, ecologically balanced and personalized automobiles. With respect to Deloitte (2024) Global Automotive Consumer Study, Indian customers are extremely dependable on dual-power vehicles and e-vehicles, with cost-effectiveness, enhanced functionalities, and environmental concerns firmly impact buying behavior. Additionally, developing transport systems, smart car technology, and customer-driven innovation are convincing automobile manufacturers to reform their advertising and management approach to be part of the competitive market.

Consumer car purchasing decisions are substantially extremely complicated as they incorporate considerable monetary investment and potential threat. Henceforth, customers engross in in-depth investigation and assess several aspects like cost, safety, comfort, low fuel consumption, customer support, trade-in value, instalment plans and brand value prior taking the final decision. Social pressure from family, peers, coworkers, social media groups additionally impact customer insights and buying pattern. Additionally, recent studies denote that social media platforms and online channels serve a pivotal role in structuring the client's buying experience within the automobile industry (Mukherjee et al., 2026).

Within this setting, comprehending the factors of client's car buying choices has become important for marketers, manufacturers and lawmakers. This research emphasizes to evaluate the key determinants affecting user buying decisions in India, concentrating especially social pressure, in-depth investigation and product features. The research also analyses the rising significance of digital communication and technical development in structuring the contemporary clients' preferences in the Indian automobile sector.

### **Literature Review**

As per Beatty & Smith, (1987) found that purchase involvement, purchasing attitudes, and time availability all have a favourable impact on the total search effect, but product class knowledge has a negative impact. It was discovered that there was no significant correlation between ego involvement and the overall search effect. The impact of these factors is also examined and documented in relation to other subindices of external search, such as media search, retailer search, interpersonal search, and neutral sources search. Kotler & Keller (2016) concluded that car decision making is affected by social status, peer pressure from other family members owning a car' and 'social pressure from friends/ neighbours / family members.

Compact cars, re-sale value' and 'good after sales service' were the major factors explored while evaluating the variable 'personal preference on convenience factors. 'Interior design', 'exterior design' and 'comfort in driving' were the prime determinants which contributed towards evaluation of the construct variable 'personal preferential choices on comfort features. 'Dealer and show room experience', the car as a status symbol/prestige value' and 'dealer offers on your specific car model' were the decisive issues considered while assessing the variable 'influence factor based on car manufacturer/dealer' Factors affecting the car purchase decision include 'Interior design', 'advanced technology features of your model' and 'security features of the specific model' were the major aspects focused on during evaluating the variable 'influencing factor of specific car models'. Opinions of your colleagues, ease of car loan availability and 'processing' and 'advertisement of cars' were the deciding factors when the major variable 'external influence', 'after sales service', 'influence of dealers', showroom experience', price of the car' and 'advanced technology'. Thus, positioning of the store (customers' perception regarding function of the store) and customers' needs should play a decisive role in store designing and store atmosphere (Leong et al., 2024; Lima & Faustino-Dias, 2025).

According to Humphrey & Memedovic (2003), found that competitors have failed to give impetus to relocate to developing countries, opposite to what most literature concludes. Two conflicting strategies is prevalent in the highly competitive car industry; firstly, companies are inclined to invest in low-wage developing countries and are sourcing world-wide and secondly, the extent of relocation of the car industry to a developing nation or a developed country depends on technical upgradation.

The backdrop of such a thought process was the hypothesis that ongoing innovations and economic growth in the developed economies will result in reducing unemployment and would push the government to formulate favorable policies for trade and international investment. It is to be seen whether the political forces in the developed countries really want to or can actually prevent relocation of industries by the economic forces. Only theories that take into consideration the working of the political forces in the developed countries is capable of making such predictions.

As per Wells, P. (2015), automotive industry is facing an uncertain future due to contradictory trends. Inter-organizational integration and synchronized vehicle designing as an effort towards greater global integration through the usage of UN standards system is being pushed by the industry. Nevertheless, markets seem to have fragmented and alternatives that comply with current economic and environmental concerns continue to pose threats to petrol/diesel cars.

Oliver Wyman (2010) claims that presenting 'mobility solutions' is crucial for the established car manufacturers to reach the customers profitably. The fundamental thought behind the automotive industry is very simple in the sense that instead of selling cars to customers and leaving them to use as per their will, car manufacturers wish to become part of the network combining deliver mobility packages.

According to Deloitte (2014) the Indian markets categorize customer segments differently, as in India, a small segment of Indian customers can afford premium car, and their behavioural aspect is also different from that of developed countries (Khanna and Palepu, 2010). Secondly, there exists a different institutional system in the emerging markets where imported components and assembled cars are subject to tariffs.

Jha (2019) concluded that the only way to operate and survive for the MNCs in the Indian market is by providing various alternatives, in the same price band offered by various manufacturers, is to understand the local mindset and accordingly formulate, adopt and execute a local strategy conducive to it. The Indian customers' penchant for small and compact cars was grasped by Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai long before the other MNCs and that is why they are the frontrunners in the market share.

According to Piplani & Fu (2005), the challenges faced by the automobile sector in India is highlighted by the auto component manufacturers. According to them, growth potential and huge market size in India have lured many MNCs to either already establish their business in India or planning to do so in near future. It has created a major pressure scenario for the Indian car makers wherein they have to not only fight domestic competition but also have to survive the onslaught from the global firms. This situation has made the companies feel pressure of producing high quality products at lower prices; product line expansion within a very short period of time; and customization of products. The condition has worsened due to the fact that the Indian automobile sector has to deal with the above-mentioned issues with inadequate technologies, lack of in-house expertise, and lack of financial resources.

Rutz & Bucklin (2011) concluded that people involved in online searching is prone to take up multiple searches before making the final purchase. The analysis pointed out that nearly one-third of the visitors who finally ordered had clicked on more than keyword ad. The number of visitors impacts the methodology of how search advertising is measured.

Conversion attribution is referred to as the acknowledgement of the role a keyword ad click plays on an online purchase i.e. a visitor becomes a purchaser after clicking on a search ad. Usually, a click to-order conversion is credited to the last click before purchase. However, if there is multiple keyword ads clicked before the purchase, then it should be assumed that every single keyword ad has influenced the sale and all of them should be

considered while computing performance metrics. An analysis associated with management of online advertising campaigns normally uses two metrics, “time-to convert and cost-per-order” (CPO) to study the impact of attributing conversions to the “first click before purchase” against the “last click before purchase”. This study, for the purposes of this analysis, has decided to emphasize the later aspect and share credit equally although it is of the opinion that further studies on this aspect should continue.

It was found that conversion was driven by frequently appearing high volume keyword ads among all ad clicks, whether first, middle or last. It was observed that same ads were clicked multiple times before conversion by the searchers. The analysis of repeat search behaviour by the searchers revealed that 82 % of searchers who had clicked on multiple keyword ad before ordering had actually clicked on the same ad many times. Data revealed that visitors at least clicked twice on the same keyword ad even if he/she had clicked a new ad during the visit. Apart from the quantitative implication with respect to search ad performance there are qualitative implications too as it addresses the issue of nature of search behaviour also. From the searching pattern that includes conducting same searches multiple times for the same information, it has become clear that there is a behavioural shift in the searchers from curiosity to navigation.

Hugstad, Taylor & Bruce (1987) opine that situations having different level of perceived risk drive consumers to use different information search behaviors. Number of sources of information used is more in case of high-risk purchasing situations than what is used in the case of mid-level or low-level situations. Some sources of information are being used by women over and over again irrespective of the level of perceived risk.

It is observed that educational levels have a direct relation with all indices of search activity except retailer search and income level to which it is inversely related. In case of income, results support the conclusion that search activity decreases with age. Men and women search activity finds no sex-related differences. There is direct relation between price and search behaviour, as results show that greater the net price is, longer the search time.

As per Kim & Lee’s (2008) for the retailing industry, maturity of internet as a retail channel is very significant, as that paves way for multichannel retailing becoming a major retailing strategy. College students are a prominent market segment for multi-channel retailers. College-aged consumers, a majority of which have multi-channel shopping experiences. Five different channels are studied in the current study, and the conclusions suggest that various retail channels are being used by consumers to search for product information, which culminates into product purchase from their selected channel. It is crucial for the apparel retail sector to recognize the market characteristics of the younger segment and their channel selection to develop their multi-channel retail strategies.

Nieuwenhuis (2008) recommended the adoption of a modular approach to car construction that allows a higher degree of personalization and regular cosmetic changes. This would result in the car getting updated with latest technology, fashion and new environmental and safety standards, which would allow the car to grow and evolve with the user. These models can be marketed in their own right as well as new cars or as replacements. While exchange of models ensure better control and easy maintenance, reliability will make sure there are very less repair and maintenance issues.

Mittal et al., (2024) examined the impact of Digital Marketing Communication (DMC) on customers’ adoption of mobile-based taxi applications using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The research integrated DMC as an antecedent of perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, social influence, and attitude, while behavioural intention was considered the outcome variable. Data collected from 368 respondents in Delhi-NCR were analysed using SEM and serial mediation analysis. The findings revealed that DMC significantly influences users’ perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural intentions toward app-based taxi services. Further, perceived usefulness and attitude partially mediated the relationship between DMC and behavioural intention, highlighting the importance of digital communication in shaping technology adoption behaviour.

As per Peterson & Merino (2003) consumers search behaviour will definitely be affected by internet for those who use it for information search. However, it is important to reflect on the broader aspects of internet while considering the numerous ways by which the internet is expected to manipulate consumer information search behavior in the future. Internet should be looked upon as a reservoir of information search that equates currently

available information from physical sources with newly explored unthinkable information. Consumer information search behavior is essentially complex. It has been reflected in many proposals that research on consumer information search behavior with reference to internet should lay emphasis and focus on the moderators and interactions rather than main effects. Consumer characteristics, the type of information looked for, the nature of the product or service for which information is being sought are the various moderators of consumer information search behavior, all of which are worth of serious study. Implications of consumer information search behavior that is reconciled by expertise will essentially become very important in the context of the Internet.

Brucks (1985) suggested that knowledge discrimination is not only enhanced alone by information but also by consumers' confidence in knowledge. Consumers' confidence in their knowledge can be increased by making them aware of what they know and what they are lacking. Possibly, possibly, is the best possible way through which this can be accomplished. Moreover, to increase the consumers' awareness regarding the knowledge they possess, salespersons are associated with intensive information products.

Shende (2014) concluded that consumers prefer indigenous brands while purchasing small cars, while it is the opposite in the case of high-end cars. It is noticeable that consumers take ethnocentric purchasing decisions in the small car segment. There is a possibility though that consumers' trust with respect to higher car segments is more on foreign brands. It is highly imperative that car and transportation planners consider the considerable impact of demographic variables even if it is believed that demand for cars is majorly related to its cost and performance. Households opting for multiple cars have increased the demand for small cars, especially the used ones. With respect to large cars, low preference for them can be attributed to not only the expensiveness as compared to small cars, but also the changes in consumers' travel practices where they are opting to travel on their own and more restricted to urban areas. Since the preference for brands differ according to their size, the pinch of reduction in market share of high segment will be experienced by only few brands. Increased accessibility to third party financing transforms the car segment market share considerably.

### **Objectives**

- To identify the Role of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes determining the consumer Car Purchase decisions in India.
- To measure the impact of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes on consumer Car Purchase decisions.

### **Methodology**

The study used a quantitative research design to look into the factors that affect consumer car purchase decisions in India. It focused on social influence, information search, and product attributes. We gathered primary data from 341 respondents across different income groups to capture a variety of consumer perspectives and buying behaviors. We used a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale to measure responses related to the identified factors. The respondents were chosen using purpose to ensure their appropriateness for this study. Data collection took place through online survey among potential and existing car buyers. After collecting the data, the responses were checked for completeness and reliability. Explanatory Factor Analysis (EFA) helped identify the key dimensions of social influence, information search behavior, and product-related attributes that impact purchase decisions. We assessed the data's suitability for factor analysis using KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Then, conducted multiple regression analysis to explore the effects of the identified factors on consumer car purchase decisions.

**Findings**

Table 1 demonstrates demographic details, it shows that 54.84% are Male, 45.16% are female. Looking at the age, 34.31% are between 30 to 35 years of age, 30.21% are between 35 to 40 years of age, and 35.48% are above 40 years of age. With regards to the income level, 5 to 10 lacs are 34.90%, 10 to 15 lacs are 27.86% and more than 15 lacs are 37.24%.

**Table. 1 Respondent’s Details**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	187	54.84%
Female	154	45.16%
<b>Total</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Ages in years</b>		
30 to 35	117	34.31%
35 to 40	103	30.21%
Above 40	121	35.48%
<b>Total</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Income Level</b>		
5 to 10 lacs	119	34.90%
10 to 15 lacs	95	27.86%
More than 15 lacs	127	37.24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>100</b>

**“Factor Analysis”**

**“KMO and Bartlett's Test”**

**Table. 2 “Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy”**

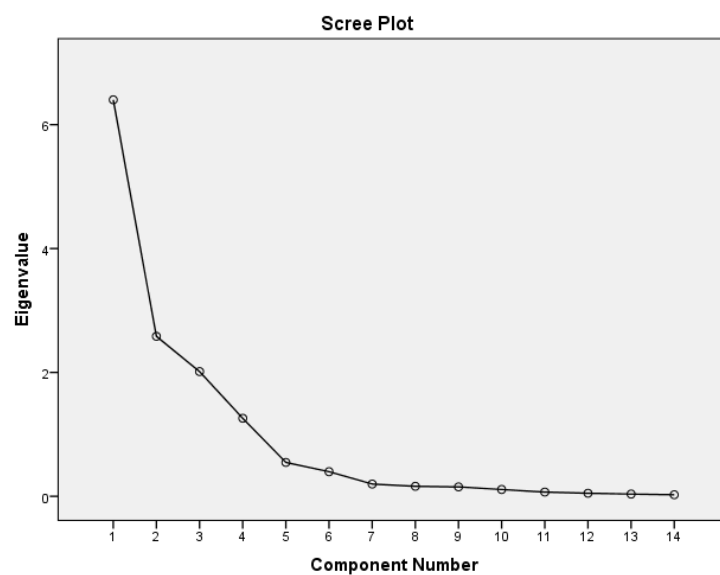
“Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy”		.757
“Bartlett's Test of Sphericity”	“Approx. Chi-Square”	6040.518
	df	91
	Significance	.000

“KMO and Bartlett's Test”, value of KMO is .757 (Table 2).

Table 3 “Total Variance Explained”

“Component”	“Initial Eigenvalues”			“Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings”		
	“Total”	“% Of Variance”	“Cumulative %”	“Total”	“% Of Variance”	“Cumulative %”
1.	6.401	45.724	45.724	3.880	27.716	27.716
2.	2.583	18.451	64.175	3.631	25.939	53.655
3.	2.014	14.383	78.557	2.393	17.090	70.745
4.	1.260	9.000	87.558	2.354	16.813	87.558
5.	.546	3.903	91.461			
6.	.397	2.836	94.297			
7.	.198	1.414	95.710			
8.	.161	1.153	96.863			
9.	.151	1.080	97.943			
10.	.110	.784	98.727			
11.	.068	.489	99.216			
12.	.050	.354	99.570			
13.	.036	.254	99.823			
14.	.025	.177	100.000			

The four factors contribute towards explaining total 87.558% of variance. Variance explained by Social Influence is 27.716%, Information Search Behavior is 25.939%, Product Attributes is 17.090%, and Environmental and Technological Concerns is 16.813%. (Table 3).



“Scree Plot”

Table. 4 “Rotated Component Matrix”

S. No.	Statements	Factor Loading	Factor Reliability
	<b>Social Influence</b>		<b>.949</b>
1.	Opinion and influence of friends affect the car purchase decisions	.952	
2.	Social status associated with a car influence purchase decision	.902	
3.	Online reviews and social media influence the car buying decision	.850	
4.	Word-of-mouth communication plays important role in car purchase decision	.840	
	<b>Information Search Behavior</b>		<b>.961</b>
1.	Consumer search online for detailed car specification and features	.961	
2.	Automobile website helps in making better purchase decision	.903	
3.	Customers rely on YouTube videos and automobile blogs for car information	.896	
4.	Customers spend considerable time to collect information before buying a car	.871	
	<b>Product Attributes</b>		<b>.864</b>
1.	Fuel efficiency is considered important factor in choosing a car	.913	
2.	Safety features strongly influence the car purchase decisions	.842	
3.	Price of the car affects the buying decision	.743	
	<b>Environmental and Technological Concerns</b>		<b>.841</b>
1.	Environmental-friendly vehicles influence purchase decision	.932	

2.	Electric and hybrid vehicle options attract customers	.930	
3.	Smart technology features increase the value of car	.649	

**Factors of the study and its related variables**

Social Influence is the first factor of the study, the variables it includes are Opinion and influence of friends affect the car purchase decisions, social status associated with a car influence purchase decision, Online reviews and social media influence the car buying decision and Word-of-mouth communication plays important role in car purchase decision. The second factor is Information Search Behavior, its variables are Consumer search online for detailed car specification and features, Automobile website helps in making better purchase decisions, Customers rely on YouTube videos and automobile blogs for car information and Customers spend considerable time collecting information before buying a car. Product Attributes is the third factor, its variables are Fuel efficiency is considered important factor in choosing a car, Safety features strongly influence the car purchase decisions and Price of the car affects the buying decision. Environmental and Technological Concerns is the last and fourth factor, the variables it includes are Environmental-friendly vehicles influence purchase decision, Electric and hybrid vehicle options attract customers, and Smart technology features increase the value of car.

**Table 5 “Reliability Statistics”**

“Cronbach's Alpha”	“Number of Items”
.898	14

Total reliability of 14 items that includes variables for the Role of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes determining the consumer Car Purchase decisions in India” is 0.898 (Table 5).

**“Table 6 Model Summary”**

“Model”	“R”	“R Square”	“Adjusted R Square”	“Std. Error of the Estimate”
1	.856 <sup>a</sup>	.732	.729	.39563
Predictors: (Constant), Social Influence, Information Search Behavior, Product Attributes, and Environmental and Technological Concerns				

The adjusted R-squared value is 0.729 with approximately 73% of the variation.

**“Table 7 ANOVA”**

“Model”	“Sum of Squares”	“df”	“Mean Square”	“F”	“Sig.”	
1	“Regression”	143.912	4	35.978	229.857	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	52.592	336	.157		
	Total	196.504	340			
a. Dependent Variable: Overall impact of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes on consumer Car Purchase decisions						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Influence, Information Search Behavior, Product Attributes, and Environmental and Technological Concerns						

Value under significant column indicates a significant relationship between “Social Influence, Information Search Behavior, Product Attributes, and Environmental and Technological Concerns” and consumer Car Purchase decisions.

“Table 8 Coefficients”

“Model”	“Un standardized Coefficients”		“Standardized Coefficients”	“t”	“Sig.”
	“B”	“Std. Error”	“Beta”		
(Constant)	3.962	.021		184.922	.000
Social Influence	.338	.021	.444	15.734	.000
Information Search Behavior	.063	.021	.083	2.955	.003
Product Attributes	.249	.021	.328	11.613	.000
Environmental and Technological Concerns	.493	.021	.649	22.984	.000
DV: Overall impact of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes on consumer Car Purchase decisions					

All the factors Social Influence, Information Search Behavior, Product Attributes, and Environmental and Technological Concerns are showing significant impact on consumer Car Purchase decisions. Highest impact is shown by Environmental and Technological Concerns with beta value .649 followed by Social Influence (.444), Product Attributes (.328), Information Search Behavior (.083).

**Conclusion**

The research determines that user purchase pattern of car in India is impacted by societal, cognitive, technological and financial aspects. Contemporary buyers assess several factors like brand value, comfort, safety aspects, technological progress, trade-in value, funding opportunities and customer support instead of just depending on cost and performance. The rise in web access and interactive media has additionally revolutionized user decision making allowing in-depth investigation virtually and comparative evaluation. Additionally, social media interaction helps people to find more attributes about the vehicles as social media enables a two-way communication (Kudeshia & Mittal, 2015). The paper emphasizes that societal impact from relatives, peers, coworkers and social networks extensively moulds customer choices and buying intent. In addition, online marketing, virtual feedback and virtual platforms have become critical aspects in the car buying journey. Users mostly are inclined towards an individual journey, cutting-edge technology, accessibility and low-carbon transport whilst buying vehicles. The outcomes indicate that automobile organizations in India should comprehend the transforming buyer requirements and implement client- focused and digitally oriented approach to be part of the competition, Aspects like product development, cost-effectiveness and online interaction, installment plans, user satisfaction are becoming extremely imperative in appealing customers within this growing competitive Indian automobile industry. The factors studying the role of social influence, information search, and product attributes determining the consumer car purchase decisions in India are social influence, information search behavior, product attributes and environmental and technological concerns. However, in case of luxury buying the comprehensive communication matters more than the traditional one (Das & Mittal, 2023), hence the motivating factors may also differ accordingly.

The study aims to know the Role of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes determining the consumer Car Purchase decisions in India. It is found that Social Influence, Information Search Behavior, Product Attributes and Environmental and Technological Concerns determine consumer car purchase decisions. The study

concludes that there is significant impact of Social Influence, Information Search, and Product Attributes on consumer Car Purchase decisions.

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