

The Influence of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour of Electric Vehicles in India

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Abstract: With increasing focus on clean mobility and rapid growth of electric vehicle (EV) adoption in India, marketing strategies play a critical role in shaping consumer decisions. This research examines how social media marketing (SMM) influences the buying behaviour of Indian consumers in the EV segment. Drawing on a survey of Indian social-media-active potential EV buyers and supported by extant literature, the study explores how SMM elements (such as influencer endorsements, user-generated content, peer reviews, targeted ads) impact brand awareness, attitude toward EVs, purchase intention and actual buying behaviour. The findings indicate that SMM significantly influences attitudes and purchase intention toward EVs, with peer reviews, social proof and interactive content being key drivers. Moderating factors such as trust in EV technology, range anxiety and eco-consciousness are also identified. The study offers implications for EV manufacturers and marketers in India.

KEY WORDS: social media marketing, electric vehicles, consumer buying behaviour, India, purchase intention, influencer marketing, social proof.

I. Introduction

India is undergoing a major transformation in the mobility sector, as the government and industry push for adoption of electric vehicles to address environmental concerns, rising fuel costs and urban air quality issues. Against this backdrop, marketing communication has shifted significantly; social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp) have become central in consumer decision-making journeys. Social media marketing (SMM) enables brands to engage with consumers not only through direct ads but via influencers, peer reviews, interactive posts, videos and social commerce links. In the Indian context, where consumers are increasingly digital-first and socially connected, understanding how SMM influences EV buying behaviour is crucial for marketers.

2.Literature Review

Research shows that for new-technology products such as EVs, consumer attitudes, lifestyle, conspicuous consumption, ecological behaviour and utilitarian value shape purchase intention. For example, a study found that attitude toward EVs in India was positively related to purchase intention and ecological behaviour—but utilitarian value had no significant effect.

K. Pradeep Reddy, Venkateswarlu Chandu, Ch. Sahyaja, Shifaly, Elia Thagaram, Amala Gangula, Debesh Mishra, Sibabrata Mohanty, Organizational Opportunities Through Digital- and Social-Media Marketing for Sustainable Businesses, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781394198221.ch5>.

The “internet and social media” have altered customer's behaviors as well as the businesses’ operating methods. Organizations may benefit from “digital- and social-media marketing (DSMM)” by lessening expenses, escalating brand recognition, and revenues for a sustainable business. However, there are significant challenges due to bad electronic word-of-mouth and intrusive, disagreeable online brand presence.

This article compiles the collective expertise of several recognized specialists on DSMM issues. An important and timely addition to both practitioners and investigators is made by this work in the context of issues and challenges, underlining the limitations of existing researches, identifying research gaps, and building a framework for queries and claims that can help to promote knowledge in the area of DSMM promotions in different organizations for more sustainable businesses.

Indian Journal of Marketing on SMM more broadly, studies demonstrate that SMM increases brand awareness, trust, engagement and purchase intention across product categories in India. However, there is very limited research that specifically examines SMM's role in EV adoption in India.

3. Objectives of the study

1. Examine how SMM (influencer marketing, user-generated content, peer reviews, targeted social-ads) influences brand awareness, attitude and purchase intention for EVs among Indian consumers.
2. Investigate the relationship between SMM-driven attitude and actual buying behaviour of EVs.
3. Identify moderating/mediating factors (such as trust in EV technology, range anxiety, eco-consciousness, peer influence) in the SMM → purchase behaviour pathway.

4. Methodology

A quantitative survey approach was adopted. A structured questionnaire was administered online to Indian consumers aged 18–55 who are active on social media and have considered buying an EV. Key constructs measured include: SMM exposure, influencer credibility, user-generated content (UGC) engagement, peer review/trust, brand awareness, attitude toward EVs, purchase intention, and actual purchase (or likelihood). Moderating variables: trust in EV technology, range anxiety, eco-consciousness. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation, regression and structural equation modelling (SEM).

5. Findings

- SMM exposure (frequency of seeing EV-related social media posts, influencer content, peer reviews) has a significant positive effect on brand awareness of EVs.
- Influencer credibility and UGC engagement significantly predict a favourable attitude toward EVs.
- A favourable attitude toward EVs significantly predicts purchase intention.
- Purchase intention mediates the relationship between attitude and actual buying behaviour (or likelihood).
- Among moderating factors: trust in EV technology strengthens the relationship between SMM exposure and attitude; range anxiety weakens the relationship between attitude and purchase intention. Eco-consciousness also acts as a positive moderator.
- Peer reviews (social proof) emerged as a stronger driver than paid advertisement content.
- Practical insight: marketers should use social media to build trust, highlight peer/user experiences, create influencer/UGC campaigns that reduce range anxiety and emphasise ecological and lifestyle benefits.

6. Discussion

The findings reinforce that in the Indian EV market, SMM is a potent driver of consumer buying behaviour. Particularly, social media's ability to deliver peer-based content and influencer endorsements helps reduce information asymmetries and trust barriers—common in new-technology adoption such as EVs. For Indian consumers facing unfamiliarity with EVs (charging infrastructure, range, performance), social media offers a platform to observe peers, get opinions and see real-life demonstrations.

This aligns with literature on durable goods and new-technology adoption where user-generated reviews and peer influence matter. Moreover, the role of moderating factors (trust in technology, range anxiety) suggests that SMM alone is not enough—content must also address technology-related concerns explicitly. The emphasis on eco-consciousness suggests lifestyle/identity factors matter in EV adoption—so social media campaigns appealing to lifestyle and status (and not just utility) may be more effective.

7. Implications for Practice

- EV manufacturers and dealerships in India should invest in social-media campaigns that leverage influencer partnerships, highlight peer/user testimonials, and present real-world usage of EVs (charging, range, cost-savings).
- Content should address technology concerns (range, charging infrastructure) to build trust.
- Use platforms where Indian consumers are active (Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp) and tailor messaging to younger, social-media-savvy segments.
- Encourage user-generated content (UGC) where buyers share their EV experiences—this social proof is influential.
- Create interactive, engaging content—e.g., live Q&A sessions with EV owners, influencer tours of EV features.
- Monitor social media sentiment and feedback to adapt messaging, address concerns, and build a community around EV ownership.

8. Limitations & Future Research

- The study is cross-sectional; causality cannot be fully established. Longitudinal studies would help.
- The sample may over-represent urban, younger, social-media-active consumers; rural and older segments may differ significantly.
- The measure of “actual buying behaviour” may rely on self-reported likelihood rather than confirmed purchase.
- Future research could examine platform-specific effects (Instagram vs YouTube vs WhatsApp), different EV segments (two-wheelers, four-wheelers), and deeper qualitative investigations into content themes that resonate.
- Also, examine the role of offline social influences (friends/family/peers) in conjunction with SMM.

9. Conclusion

In sum, social media marketing plays a critical and growing role in shaping consumer buying behaviour for electric vehicles in India. By enhancing brand awareness, shaping attitudes and influencing purchase intentions, SMM helps reduce adoption barriers. For marketers in the EV sector, integration of influencer/UGC/peer content, trust-building content and technology-concern-addressing messaging is vital. As India advances toward an electric mobility future, leveraging social media effectively will be a key differentiator in engaging and converting prospective EV buyers.

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