1. Your presentation at the Automotive Lightweight Interiors summit will be focusing on the Deep Orange 5 Concept and its role in redefining vehicle interiors. Could you give the readers a quick taste of the concept and what the audience will be able to learn from your work on the Deep Orange 5?

Deep Orange 5 is the concept designed for generations y and z living in mega cities in 2020. It was a grand challenge by General Motors to the young engineers at Clemson University – International Center for Automotive Research to create a better value proposition for the young adults, who have less interest in vehicle ownership and consider operating a vehicle as a disruption to their connected lifestyle. With the reconfigurable interior and digital cockpit, Deep Orange 5 provides high level of personalization enabling various modes such as Work, Game, Relax and storage apart from Driving representing the future of urban mobility.

As an Interior Team Lead my role was from concept to building the functional prototype. In the process to identify the user experience which creates an emotional connection for the target customer with the vehicle and the passion to define the future of automobile resulted in a innovative and radical seating concept. The circular profile seat with symmetric seat back and seat pan, faces forward or rearward as needed and minimizes the interaction mechanisms when compared to traditional seats. The fully functional seat mechanisms are packaged to provide a clean and spacious interior with a flat floor. The holistic approach and the creative engineering in building this radical interior also resulted in weight savings, making it a perfect concept for the future.

2. What do you see as being the major stumbling blocks behind leveraging the full weight reduction potential within the automotive interiors?

Two reasons stand out to me - the transition to the next generation of automobiles and customer expectations for convenient features. The journey towards autonomous mobility will involve implementation of new active technology. In parallel, more weight is added the automate the existing features and increase the level of personalization/ convenience.

3. What materials/technologies applicable to interiors have the highest potential with optimising weight while meeting customer expectations within the context of overall vehicle lightweighting?

Even though technologies or materials are very crucial, more benefits can be achieved through holistic approach. Automobile interior remained stagnant forever. Automating various features balanced out the advancements in lightweighting. The advent of Autonomous vehicles will open up new horizons in the automotive interior redefining the automobile. The quest for seamlessly integrating lifestyles of the customers might result in ‘plug and play’ concepts eliminating lot of conventional content.

4. Which presentation/panel discussion are you especially excited about during the Lightweight Vehicle Interiors summit 2016?

I am looking forward to the opening keynote by Daniela Bohlinger, Head of Sustainable Design, BMW Group. My interest is systems integration and I think the awareness of sustainability with respect to mobility helps me understand the bigger picture of creating a better ecosystem.