

Study: Gen Y New Car Buyers Up for Grabs

Among new-vehicle buyers who use the Internet in the automotive shopping process, one-half are open to any brand when they initially begin to shop, and more than one-half of Gen Y buyers are open to consider any brand that meets their needs, according to the J.D. Power 2013 New Autosampler StudySM released last week.

The study analyzed how new-vehicle buyers use digital devices (computers, smartphones and tablets) to gather information before a purchase, as well as which websites and apps are used. Overall, 79 percent of new-vehicle buyers use the Internet to research their new vehicle purchase during the shopping process.

Among all automotive internet users (AIUs), 50 percent are open to any brand at the outset of their shopping process, which increases to 54 percent among Gen Y. Nearly one-half (47 percent) of Gen Y AIUs use smartphones in their shopping process, which is more than any other demographic.

"It is important for brands and websites to pay special attention to Gen Y buyers," said Arianne Walker, senior director, automotive media & marketing at J.D. Power, "as they are increasing in market share at the greatest rate among all new-vehicle buyers and now comprise more than 20 percent of all retail sales."

"Automotive manufacturers have a great opportunity to influence these buyers during their shopping process, particularly since so many of them begin the process fairly open-minded."

"Additionally, the digital presence of the brand through mobile advertising and content across mobile-accessible sites and apps may be a great way to reach Gen Y buyers, since we see almost half use a smartphone during the shopping process."

According to the J.D. Power study, although AIUs continue to use a desktop/laptop computer most often to gather information while shopping, tablet and smartphone usage has dramatically increased year over year (39 percent and 15 percent, respectively).

For the first time, the percentage of AIUs using tablets has surpassed those using smartphones (25 percent and 23 percent, respectively). More than one-third (34 percent) of AIUs perform research using multiple devices, including desktop/laptops, smartphones, tablets and gaming consoles.

The study finds that almost all AIUs (98 percent) visit manufacturer web sites during their shopping process, followed by dealer sites (83 percent), third-party sites (80 percent), and social media sites (7 percent). The study also said AIUs more frequently indicate that third-party (54 percent) and manufacturer (52 percent) web sites are very helpful during the new-vehicle shopping process, compared

with dealer and social media sites/apps.

"As automotive Internet users continue to rely heavily on automotive manufacturer and third-party websites, an opportunity is created for sites to differentiate themselves further by providing engaging content and useful shopping tools that target consumers at each stage of the shopping process," Walker said.

The study finds that *Consumer Reports*, *Edmunds.com* and *Kelley Blue Book* (kbb.com) are among the most frequently visited third-party websites, with AIUs visiting these sites more often than the other 33 third-party websites measured in the study.

Additionally, AIUs indicate that the model pricing information, vehicle ratings and reviews and vehicle comparison information are among the most useful third-

party website content when making a purchase decision.

J.D. Power research finds the following Internet shopping behaviors among AIUs:

- On average, the entire vehicle-shopping process takes about four months for AIUs;
- On average, AIUs access 10 automotive websites before purchasing a vehicle (including third-party, dealer and manufacturer sites);
- About 90 percent or more of AIUs use model information and vehicle pricing. However, only 19 percent of AIUs access dealer ratings/reviews prior to purchase.

The 2013 New Autosampler Study is based on responses from 17,012 purchasers and lessees of 2011 to 2013 model-year new vehicles who used information gathered digitally during the shopping process.

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The consumption of hot dogs, bratwurst and barbecued ribs has begun, along with the downing of free-flowing liquid beverages.

It's tailgating time.

To celebrate the arrival of the fall season of football, Cars.com has released its annual list of "Top Tailgating Cars," and the 2013 Ram 1500 tops the list.

Cars.com editors applauded the vehicle for its owners' ability to lower the truck for easier access to the bed and its contents, and its RamBox package that can store up to 280 cans - plus ice.

Also on the list: Chevrolet Suburban, Chrysler Town & Country, Ford Flex and GMC Acadia.