

Autotrader Study Shows Car Technology Rules

Purchase Decision

New data reveals shoppers define luxury by car technology features

ATLANTA, Nov. 17, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- Technology trumps color when it comes to shopping for a new vehicle, according to findings of Autotrader's 2015 In-Vehicle Technology Shopper Influence Study, which provides insight into how vehicle technology impacts consumer vehicle purchase behavior. Conducted in September 2015, Autotrader had KS&R, Inc. survey online 1,012 U.S. vehicle owners who are in the market to purchase a new vehicle. This is the second year of the study.

In this year's study, nine of 10 consumers likely to purchase a vehicle in the next year said they already have or plan to research the latest technologies as they shop for a new vehicle. More than three-quarters (77 percent) said a vehicle with all of the technology features they desired was more important than car color. Of those surveyed, 65 percent said they would switch vehicle brands to have all of the technology features they desired in their next vehicle. Increasingly, consumers surveyed said they want features like Wi-Fi and streaming music services in their vehicles along with must-haves including cruise control, diagnostic alerts and USB charging ports.

When it comes to luxury, more than half (53 percent) of consumers surveyed said they defined a vehicle as luxury or non-luxury by the technology and infotainment features available. And 44 percent said they would pay up to \$1,499 for an in-vehicle concierge service such as Apple CarPlay or Android Auto.

"In-vehicle technology ranks increasingly higher for consumers as they consider must-have and desired features in their car shopping," said Michelle Krebs, Autotrader senior analyst. "That puts automakers under intense pressure to anticipate and offer the technologies consumers desire, or they risk losing them to a brand that delivers."

In addition to exploring what tech features to offer, automakers are contemplating the best avenues to deliver certain technologies either through the vehicle or via smartphones. In that regard, nearly 6 in 10 (57 percent) surveyed said they wanted automakers to focus on better integrating smartphones into all vehicles, similar to what some automakers now do with Apple Car Play or Android Auto. That was up from 48 percent in 2014. Similarly, 39 percent said they preferred to use the navigation system in their smartphones than a navigation system built into their vehicles, up from 20 percent a year ago.

The second year of this study also revealed that ease-of-use of vehicle features is not a key-deciding factor for car shoppers, with nearly three fourths (70 percent) saying they would still consider a vehicle they liked if the technology was perceived to be too difficult to use. In the 2014 study, 48 percent said they would walk away from a vehicle that was too hard to use. Nearly a quarter (22 percent) of consumers think it should take 15 minutes or less to figure out how to use the entire suite of tech features in their next vehicle (down from 48 percent in 2014).

"Consumers increasingly desire cool technologies as they are exposed to them, educated on their use, and as automakers improve the ease of use of them," Krebs said. "Still, education is key to consumer acceptance of new technologies, which is a huge opportunity for automakers and their dealers."

Other notable findings from the study include:

- Must have car features are cruise control (59%), diagnostic alerts (52%) and USB charging ports (49%)
- 39% of consumers would prefer the navigation system on a smartphone rather than the one built into their vehicles (up 19% from 2014)
- 67% of consumers think being able to use streaming music services such as Pandora or Spotify makes driving more enjoyable (up 12% from 2014)
- 61% of consumers surveyed wish their current vehicle had Wi-Fi (up 16% from 2014)

Autotrader experts will be available during the media days of the Los Angeles Auto Show and Connected Car Expo Nov. 16-19 to discuss the results of this study. Those not attending the show can contact the AutoTrader.com PR team for more information and to arrange for interviews.

About the Research

This study was conducted by KS&R, Inc. in partnership with Research Now on behalf of Autotrader.com and included 1,012 American vehicle owners aged 18 or older who participated in an online survey during September, 2015. Results were weighted as needed for age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Sampling error is an estimated +/-3%; a full methodology is available.

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