Survey Reveals Relationships with Cars Mimic Relationships with People

A new AutoTrader.com survey explores the emotional reasons why people's relationships with their cars are longer than ever before

ATLANTA, June 4, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- If there's one thing Americans can commit to, it's their cars. AutoTrader.com recently conducted the "Automotive Relationship Survey" to determine the emotional reasons why it now takes longer than ever before for consumers to break up with their cars.*

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According to the survey, consumers tend to personify their cars to the point that the relationship with them mirrors relationships with living beings in their lives. More than 70 percent of respondents feel "very attached" or "somewhat attached" to their cars, with 36 percent describing their vehicle as an "old friend" and more than a quarter saying they feel sad when they think about parting ways with it. Dependability (65 percent) and comfort (52 percent) were the primary drivers of attachment.

The survey also revealed gender and generational differences in the relationships people have with their cars. More women than men said they were attached to their cars because of the way it looks (48 percent of women vs. 29 percent of men), while more men than women bond with their cars because of fond memories of the adventures they shared together (57 percent of men vs. 20 percent of women). Survey respondents aged 18-24 were most likely to be attached to their car for its looks (50 percent), while respondents aged 55-64 were most likely to be attached to their car because of the way it drives (60 percent).

"The emotional attachment people feel for their cars is interesting, but not completely surprising," said life coach and relationship expert, Dr. Michelle Callahan. "In addition to the large financial investment, a car can become a significant emotional investment – it's there with them for major milestones in their lives like weddings, new babies and graduations and it's literally the 'vehicle' that makes being physically present in these moments possible."

Given this attachment, when it comes time to let go of a car it can be an emotional moment. More than a third (36 percent) of people wanted to see their car "go to a good home" and over two thirds of those surveyed (65 percent) would want to "say goodbye" to their car by spending quality time together on a road trip or by driving a favorite road.

"Summer is known as the season when people find new love. So while breaking up is never easy, this is a perfect time to let go of relationships that are holding you back," says Dr. Callahan. "There are things you can do to minimize the emotional fallout from a breakup—and that applies even to your vehicle. The good news is you can make a clean break and when it comes to cars, there can be a significant financial upside to doing it right."

AutoTrader.com offers several exclusive online tools to help make it easier for consumers to let go. Trade-In-Marketplace is an ideal option for people who need a quick, clean breakup. Consumers fill out an online form and within minutes receive an instant offer for their car from a local dealer. Once they take the car to the dealer to verify its condition, they can sell the car to the dealer for the amount of the final offer and leave with a check, or use the offer toward the purchase of a new car.

AutoTrader.com's Private Seller services offer a way to break up with a car and still remain friends; consumers enjoy the financial benefit of selling a car themselves and the security of being able to select their car's new home. With Private Seller VIP service, AutoTrader.com's expert consultants act as personal car selling concierges,

handling all of the details like screening calls from potential buyers, writing an effective ad, setting the appropriate price, conducting a vehicle inspection and taking attractive pictures.

"Because consumers may not have been car shopping in many years, they might not be aware of all the online services available to help simplify the process," said Melanie Kovach, vice president of Consumer and Specialty Sales, AutoTrader.com. "Breaking up with a car can be a very emotional moment, so letting AutoTrader.com handle the practical details can make letting go that much easier."

About the AutoTrader.com Automotive Relationships Survey
The online survey was conducted with Toluna among a sample of 1250 American adults in May 2013.

About AutoTrader.com
Created in 1997, Atlanta-based AutoTrader.com is the Internet's ultimate automotive marketplace. As a leading resource for car shoppers and sellers, AutoTrader.com aggregates millions of new, used and certified pre-owned cars from thousands of dealers and private sellers and provides expert articles and reviews. AutoTrader.com, which also operates the AutoTraderClassics.com auto marketing brand, is wholly owned by AutoTrader Group. Additionally, AutoTrader Group owns Kelley Blue Book (kbb.com) as well as three other companies that provide a full suite of software tools that help dealers and manufacturers manage their inventory and advertising online: vAuto, HomeNet Automotive and VinSolutions. AutoTrader Group is a majority-owned subsidiary of Cox Enterprises. Providence Equity Partners is a 25 percent owner of the company and Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers is also an investor. For more information, please visit press.autotrader.com.

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