

AutoTrader Study Shows that Car Buyers are More Decided on Vehicle When They First Visit a Dealership

Used car buyers showing the biggest increase year-over-year on how decided they are on make/model prior to their dealership visit.

ATLANTA, Jan. 22, 2015 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- According to AutoTrader.com's 2015 Automotive Buyer Influence Study, more car buyers have already decided on the vehicle they want to purchase when they first visit a dealership. In 2015, 72 percent of recent car buyers reported that they purchased the vehicle they had in mind when they first visited a dealership. This is a statistically significant increase from the 66 percent who reported doing so in 2014. This increase is being driven by used car buyers, who exhibited the largest change year-over-year.

In 2015, 71 percent of used car buyers said they purchased the vehicle they intended, versus 63 percent in 2014. New car buyers who reported this behavior stayed relatively flat year-over-year, with 77 percent in 2015, compared to 76 percent in 2014. This finding is particularly significant, as it shows that the Internet, and the access to information it provides, is leading more shoppers to firm decisions in the car buying process.

"Over the past several years of conducting this study, we've seen significant changes in car buyers' behaviors, particularly in how they are arriving at their purchase decisions," said Jared Rowe, president of AutoTrader.com. "The Internet is providing an unprecedented level of transparency for car shoppers, enabling them to make informed car buying decisions that they can be confident about."

Used car buyers are less likely to know what vehicle they are interested in purchasing when they begin the car shopping process, with just 29 percent reporting that they knew the exact model. This is significantly lower than 38 percent of new car buyers who have a vehicle in mind when they begin shopping. But by the time used car buyers first visit the dealership, 71 percent purchase the make/model they have in mind.

To arrive at their purchase decisions, used car buyers spent 16.6 hours shopping for a vehicle, up from 15.2 hours during the prior year. They are spending 77 percent of their shopping time online—at 12.7 hours. Of the used car buyers who go online to shop for cars, 81 percent use third-party sites like AutoTrader.com and KBB.com. The top three reasons used car buyers use the Internet to shop are: research pricing, find cars for sale and compare vehicles.

"Buyers, and in particular, used car buyers, rely on the Internet to inform their car buying processes," Rowe continued. "The more information and transparency we, as an industry, can provide online, the easier it will be to help car shoppers turn into car buyers."

About the Study

The 2015 Automotive Buyer Influence Study was commissioned by AutoTrader.com through IHS Automotive. Now in its fourth year, the Automotive Buyer Influence Study is the only large-scale research study that looks at new and used car buyers. The 2015 study was conducted among nearly 2300 car buyers (~1300 new car buyers and ~1000 used car buyers) and ran from August through September 2014. To qualify for the study, participants must have purchased a light vehicle within the past 12 months and have been the primary decision maker in the vehicle purchase. The study used a combination of online and offline survey methods, resulting in a large, representative sample of online and offline car buyers who purchased new and used vehicles.

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audience of in-market shoppers. As the foremost authority on automotive consumer insights and expert in online and mobile marketing, Autotrader makes the car shopping experience easy and fun for today's empowered consumer looking to find or sell the perfect new, used or Certified Pre-Owned car. Using technology, shopper insights and local market guidance, Autotrader's comprehensive marketing solutions guide dealers to personalized digital marketing strategies that grow brand, drive traffic and connect the online and in-store shopping experience.

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