J.D. Power Reports:
The Internet Has the Greatest Impact among All Media Channels
Upon Shoppers’ New-Vehicle Purchase Decisions

Social Media Platforms Have the Highest Usage Among Young Buyers

Shanghai: 15 August 2014 — The Internet has the greatest impact among all media channels on the new-vehicle purchasing decision, especially among young vehicle buyers who were born in the 1980s and 1990s, according to the J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2014 China Auto Media Study (AMS) released today.

The study provides a comprehensive and strategic perspective regarding the role of media, including online, TV, outdoor, newspapers/magazines, radio and smartphone, in new-vehicle purchase decision-making process. Manufacturers and advertising agencies can use study findings in developing vehicle-buyer targets by examining the attitudinal, lifestyle, recreational and media consumption behaviors of their targeted audience.

With the fast development and penetration of Internet and digital media, consumers are spending more time on digital platforms during the new-vehicle shopping process. Among the various digital platforms, the Internet has the greatest impact on the vehicle-purchasing decision, as 60 percent of consumers say that the Internet is “somewhat impactful” or “very impactful” in helping them decide which vehicle they want to purchase; whereas 41 percent of consumers indicate that traditional media (TV, newspaper and magazine) is “somewhat impactful” or “very impactful” on the vehicle-purchasing decision.

Vehicle buyers are using the Internet during the shopping process to access a range of information related to the type of vehicle they are considering. Most buyers compare models, view pictures and check prices, as well as search for dealer information and vehicle ratings and reviews.

The Internet platforms new-vehicle shoppers visit vary greatly. General websites, search engines and WeChat are used by more than 80 percent of vehicle buyers. The most frequently visited platform among those top three categories is WeChat (seven times per week, on average). The WeChat usage rate is highest among younger buyers (born 1980-1999), with 60 percent of these buyers indicating they use the website at least once per day. Among buyers born 1950-1959, 34 percent use WeChat daily.

“Manufacturers need to pay close attention to their websites and social media platforms, and create compelling content for potential buyers,” said Dr. Mei Songlin, vice president and managing director at J.D. Power Asia Pacific. “Content-rich sites that engage consumers early in their vehicle-shopping process have the most impact and influence on their purchase decisions.”

Key Findings

- Tencent, Sina and Sohu are the three most frequently visited website portals among vehicle buyers. Buyers visit Tencent an average of 4.5 times per week, Sina an average of 3.7 times per week, and Sohu an average of 3.1 times per week. Among vertical websites, Autohome has the highest usage rate (87%), followed by BitAuto (68%) and Pacific Auto (54%).
One reason for the growing popularity of social media is that it allows users to easily post information and share their experiences. When asked which social network they most often use to share their purchasing experiences, most vehicle buyers across all age groups cite WeChat, followed by Weibo and auto forums.

The 2014 China Auto Media Study is based on responses from 15,388 vehicle owners who purchased their new vehicle between July 2013 and February 2014. The study was fielded from January 2014 to April 2014 in 51 major cities across China.

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