

Social Media Usage During New-Vehicle Shopping Process Increases, J.D. Power Study Finds

22% of New-Vehicle Shoppers Use Social Media Websites as a Shopping Source, But Few Find Them As Helpful As Automotive Shopping Sites

COSTA MESA, Calif.: 15 Sept. 2016 — Consumers who use the internet during their new-vehicle shopping process are increasingly turning to social media websites as a source of information, according to the J.D. Power 2016 New Autos shopper Study,SM released today.

The study analyzes how new-vehicle buyers use digital devices—tablets, smartphones and computers—to gather information prior to purchase, as well as which websites and apps they use during the shopping process. The study also examines which types of content new-vehicle buyers access during their shopping process and which content they find most useful.

Among automotive internet shoppers, 22% use a social media site as a source while shopping for their new vehicle, up from 16% in 2015. The most popular social media sites used by auto internet shoppers during the shopping process are YouTube (13%), DealerRater (7%) and Facebook (5%).

“Social media plays a large role in many consumers’ lives, so it’s not surprising that it’s one of the tools they’re using during the vehicle-shopping process,” said **Mike Battaglia, vice president, automotive retail at J.D. Power**. “While we would not expect social media sites to compete head-on with designated auto shopping sites like Toyota.com and Kelley Blue Book, it’s easy to understand the role and relevance social plays in the automotive shopping process.”

Among automotive internet shoppers who use social media, only 13% indicate that the information posted on social media sites influenced their purchase decision, and only 2% say a social site was the “most useful site” they visited.

“Social media platforms aren’t as useful as automotive shopping websites for automotive information, but they do serve the needs of consumers for unbiased dealer reviews, affirmations from other vehicle owners, accessing automotive-related videos and exchanging ideas and opinions with friends and family members,” said Battaglia.

Slightly more than one-third (34%) of new-vehicle buyers using social media for automotive information post a picture of their new vehicle on a social site. Facebook is by far the most posted site at 88%, followed by Instagram at 21%.

While the use of social media in the automotive research process is increasing, it still does not rival the traffic to auto shopping websites. The study finds that more than nine out of 10 automotive internet shoppers visit at least one automaker’s site during the shopping process, while 84% visit a dealer site and 79% visit a third-party site. On average, internet shoppers visit 10 automotive websites in their shopping process: four automotive manufacturer websites, three third-party websites and three dealership websites.

The most frequently accessed content on automotive shopping websites are model information (89%), vehicle pricing (88%) and photo galleries (81%). Yet, automotive internet shoppers find different types of sites more useful for different reasons. For example, automotive internet shoppers find that automotive

brand sites are most useful for their model information, vehicle configurators and photo galleries, whereas dealer websites are found to be most useful for inventory searches, and vehicle pricing and third-party sites are most useful for vehicle ratings/reviews and vehicle comparisons.

Other key findings of the study include:

- **Smartphones Surpass Tablets for Automotive Research:** More than half (53%) of automotive internet shoppers use a mobile device in their quest for automotive information. For 2016, smartphone usage surpasses tablet usage (37% vs. 33%, respectively). The use of desktop or laptop computers remains most common at 92%, but has been steadily decreasing from 99% in 2012. Consequently, the proportion of time spent shopping on mobile devices continues to increase, with 33% of the total shopping time now conducted on a mobile device.
- **Third-Party Website Leaders Continue Reign:** The three most frequently visited third-party sites have remained consistent since 2012 (listed in alphabetical order): Consumer Reports, Edmunds.com and Kelley Blue Book. Among the 37 third-party websites measured in the study, TrueCar experiences the largest increase in site visitation for a second consecutive year.

The 2016 New Autosopper Study is based on responses from 17,349 purchasers and lessees of new 2014 to 2016 model-year vehicles who used information gathered digitally during the shopping process. The study was fielded from February through June 2016.

See the online press release at <http://www.jdpower.com/pr-id/2016272>.

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