



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports:

Although the Majority of Automotive Buyers Continue to Use Personal Computers to Shop for New Vehicles, Tablets and Smartphones Are Used by One in Five Digital Auto Buyers

Nearly 60 Percent of Buyers Narrow Their Decision to One Model during the Final Week before Buying

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 1 October 2012 —Influenced by the phenomenal growth of mobile devices to access the Internet, tablets and smartphones are being used by one in five new-vehicle buyers who use the Internet in the automotive shopping process, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2012 New Autosopper StudySM released today.

The study analyzes how new-vehicle buyers use digital devices (computers, smartphones and tablets) and which websites and apps are used to gather information prior to purchase. Overall, 79 percent of new-vehicle buyers use the Internet (also referred to as Automotive Internet Users, or AIUs) to research their vehicle purchase.

While nearly all (99%) AIUs use a desktop/laptop computer at some point in their shopping process, nearly 30 percent use multiple devices, including desktops, smartphones and/or tablets. The study finds that 20 percent of AIUs use a smartphone to gather information while shopping for a new vehicle, and 18 percent use a tablet.

“Access to new-vehicle information through the Internet and apps—obtained via personal computers, smartphones and tablets—is having a greater impact on many aspects of the purchase decision than ever before,” said Arianne Walker, senior director, automotive media and marketing solutions at J.D. Power and Associates. “It is important for brands and websites to provide consistency across their sites and apps, no matter what device is being used to access the information. The shopping experience should be equally usable and the shopping information equally complete, no matter the device.”

The majority of shopping among AIUs still occurs at home. However, tablets are not as mobile as they may seem. Most AIUs who use a tablet for shopping do so at home, while those who use a smartphone are more likely than tablet users to do so outside of the home, as smartphones are always within reach. Among AIUs who use a smartphone, 59 percent do so at the dealership, accessing vehicle pricing, model and inventory information, as well as comparing vehicles.

“This interplay between the dealership experience and digital information has become more intertwined with the availability of shopping content on mobile devices,” said Walker. “Now that buyers can easily access information right from their pockets, it is essential that the dealer body is as well versed as the shoppers in order to provide consistent information both online and in the dealership.”

The study finds that buyers go online nearly as soon as they decide to buy a new vehicle, and 59 percent of AIUs narrow their consideration list to one model during the final week before the actual purchase. With such a high volume of buyers deciding on the model of purchase so close to the actual time of the sale, the digital experience and dealer interaction are more important than ever.

The vast majority (98%) of AIUs visit manufacturer websites during their shopping process, followed by third-party websites (81%); dealer websites (73%); and social media sites (5%). AIUs rely heavily on manufacturer websites for researching specific models and utilizing build tools, while they more frequently rely on third-party sites for comparing vehicles; reading vehicle ratings and reviews; and learning about vehicle trade-in values. AIUs use dealer sites primarily for inventory and dealer-specific information, such as directions/location, hours and contact information.

“With such a wide range of information available digitally, it’s important for OEMs to partner with automotive sites, not only to drive traffic to the brand and dealer sites, but also to offer consistency in the information and tools shoppers rely on,” said Walker. “Manufacturers and automotive third-party sites need to think about synchronization across their properties in order to help provide consistency throughout the automotive shopping experience for their target audience.”

Digital automotive research continues to have the most impact on brand and model selection, followed by price, which is relatively unchanged from four years ago. As a result of having product information accessible through websites and apps, new-vehicle buyers have more tools to help define their consideration set. Although mobile apps are still used by a minority of AIUs, the same shopping tools are being used across the two types of digital properties, albeit at different rates.

The 2012 New Autoshopper Study is based on responses from 12,289 purchasers and lessees of 2010 to 2012 model-year new vehicles who used information gathered digitally in the shopping process.

About J.D. Power and Associates

Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., J.D. Power and Associates is a global marketing information services company providing performance improvement, social media and customer satisfaction insights and solutions. The company’s quality and satisfaction measurements are based on responses from millions of consumers annually. For more information on [car reviews and ratings](#), [car insurance](#), [health insurance](#), [cell phone ratings](#), and more, please visit JDPower.com. J.D. Power and Associates is a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

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