

# MULTI-DEVICE CAR SHOPPING STUDY

HOW CONSUMERS SHOP FOR CARS

# METHODOLOGY

In partnership with Ipsos, the **AutoTrader.com Multi-Device Car Shopping Study** is a three-phase research study among in-market car shoppers that was conducted from April 2013 to May 2013. In the first phase, 2,500 car shoppers logged all of their automotive researching or shopping activities — a total of 10,000 entries — in a mobile diary over a weeklong period. Diary participants answered a short set of questions for each diary log. In the second phase, 1,000 participants out of the original 2,500

completed an online survey to provide more details about their attitudes and behaviors around multi-device car shopping. In the third and final phase, 30 in-depth interviews were conducted with participants from phases I and II. These three phases combined provide a holistic look at how multi-device shoppers use and interact with their devices to meet their automotive research and shopping needs. The key findings from this study are featured here.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Google, “101-The Online Dealer Landscape;” <sup>2</sup> Source: AutoTrader.com Multi-Device Car Shopping Study, Ipsos;  
<sup>3</sup> Source: 2013 Polk Automotive Buyer Influence Study; <sup>4</sup> Source: \*Q: What compelled you to conduct these activities on your PC/laptop/smartphone/tablet? A: Boredom

## ABOUT THE STUDY

The mobile landscape is vast and hyper-competitive, yet dealers and manufacturers have very little control over how, when or where customers access their inventory and brands. For example, fully one-third of all car-shopping activity occurs after regular business hours.<sup>1</sup> So, it's more important than ever to focus on delivering the information and experience consumers expect when they want it, how they want it and where they want it, rather than focusing on the platform itself.

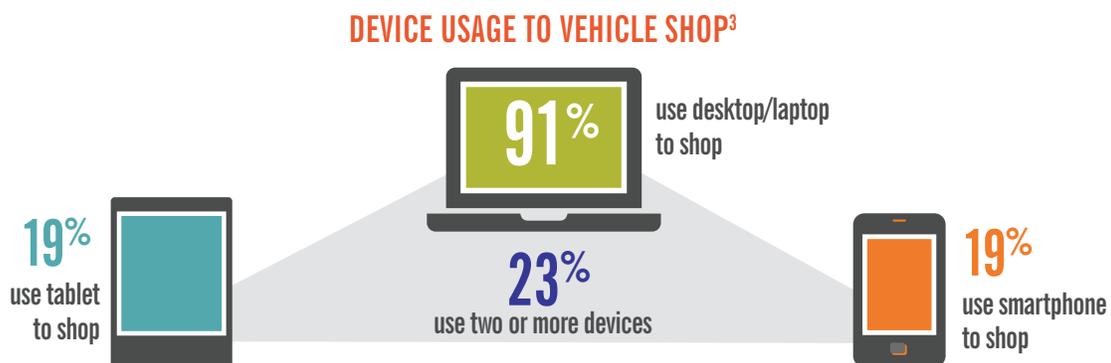
The findings represented here are the result of two AutoTrader.com proprietary studies: the **2013 Polk Automotive Buyer Influence Study** and the **2013 AutoTrader.com Multi-Device Car Shopping Study**<sup>2</sup> (see methodology on back cover). These studies provide key insights into how, when and where car shoppers use their devices in the shopping process, and the importance of prioritizing consumers' expectations to drive influence and preference for brands and dealerships.

# 23% OF ALL NEW & USED CAR BUYERS USE MULTIPLE DEVICES TO SHOP

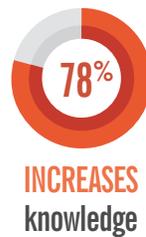
Car buyers are increasingly engaging with a variety of devices, including desktop and laptop computers, smartphones and tablets, leading to a multi-screen experience. According to the 2013 Polk Automotive Buyer Influence Study, nearly a quarter of all car buyers use multiple devices when shopping for a car. **Among Millennials, that number is even higher, with 36% using two or more devices.**<sup>3</sup> It's important to note that car buyers are adding **more** screens, not replacing them.<sup>3</sup> That means they aren't adding a tablet or smartphone and giving up a laptop. And while tablet

and smartphone usage is the same for car shopping at 19%, the more prevalent penetration of smartphones means that the number of tablet owners using their device to shop for cars is higher.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, there's a correlation between everyday device usage and shopping behavior, and it's a trend that will become a way of life with the ever-increasing capabilities of smartphones and tablets. In fact, AutoTrader.com expects that **52% of all car shopping will be done on multiple devices within the next 5 years.**<sup>2</sup>



### CAR SHOPPER ATTITUDES TOWARD DEVICES<sup>2</sup>



Consumers overwhelmingly agree that using multiple devices improves their car-shopping experience.

## What you need to know

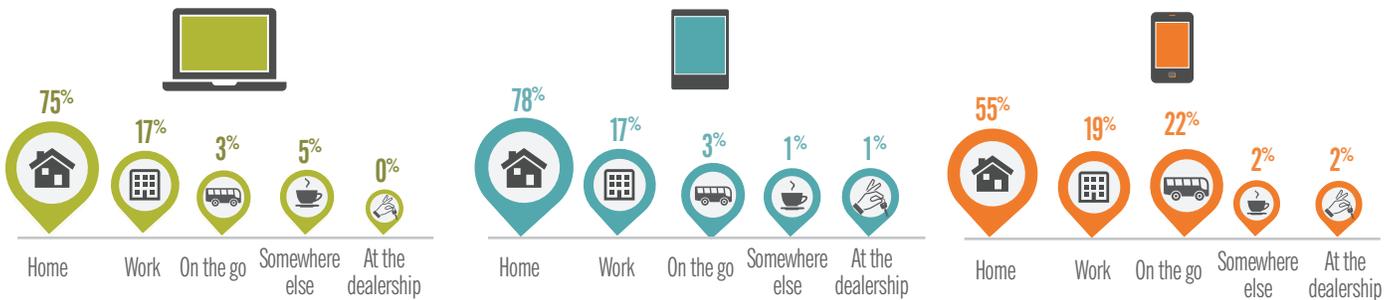
- Desktops and laptops are still the primary device for car shopping, but **shoppers are rapidly adopting multiple devices.** Currently, nearly 1 in 4 vehicle shoppers uses at least two devices.<sup>3</sup>
- The use of **multiple devices enhances** the car shopping process by empowering consumers to make more informed decisions more quickly.
- **Car shoppers access many sources to validate information** and aren't taking things at face value.<sup>3</sup>
- It's important to **focus on the overall shopper experience.** Any and all digital mediums should factor into a larger marketing strategy.
- Dealers should take advantage of **third-party site advancements in the mobile marketplace,** which include optimized mobile sites and apps that facilitate consumers' multi-screen experience by allowing **shoppers** to engage cross-platform.

# ON-DEMAND IS THE FUTURE

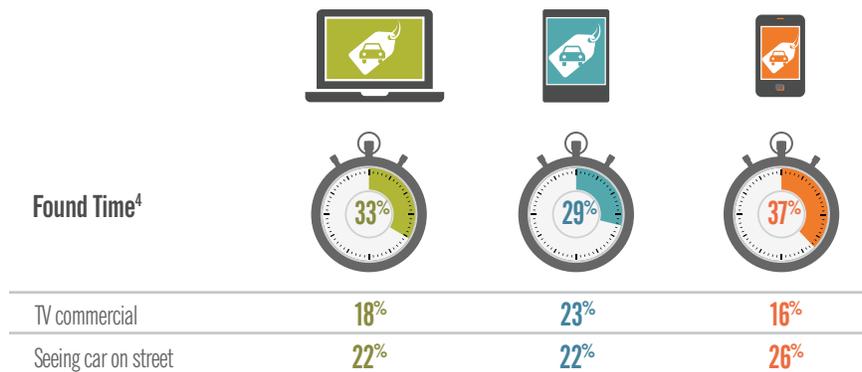
Consumers use a variety of devices to shop for cars, which allows them to shop whenever and wherever they have the time. In fact, “found time” is the top motivator for car shopping, regardless of the device. “Found time” includes spontaneous moments when consumers are bored and have an opportunity to access a device.<sup>4</sup> Whether it’s from a desktop or laptop, tablet or smartphone, **three out of four car shopping activities are spontaneous and not planned.**<sup>2</sup> Planned activities tend to increase the closer the shopper gets to the purchase decision.

While there is a perception that car shoppers often use their smartphones at the dealership, especially to compare competitive models and prices, the reality is that the majority of car shopping occurs at home or at work. Only a very small percentage – 2% – of the total online interactions occurs from a dealership location in a typical week.<sup>2</sup> That means almost all car shopping occurs **outside** the dealership rather than on the dealer’s lot.

## LOCATION OF SHOPPING ACTIVITIES IN A TYPICAL WEEK<sup>2</sup>



## “FOUND TIME” IS THE TOP MOTIVATOR ACROSS DEVICES<sup>2</sup>



## What you need to know

- Shopper location does not dictate engagement. Automotive content needs to be easily viewable on all devices, **whenever and wherever** consumers want to shop.
- Advertising messages should be **consistent across all screens**, including television.
- Next to “found time,” **television commercials** are a top motivator in using all devices. So for brand advertising, be mindful that there’s online payoff to traditional media messages.

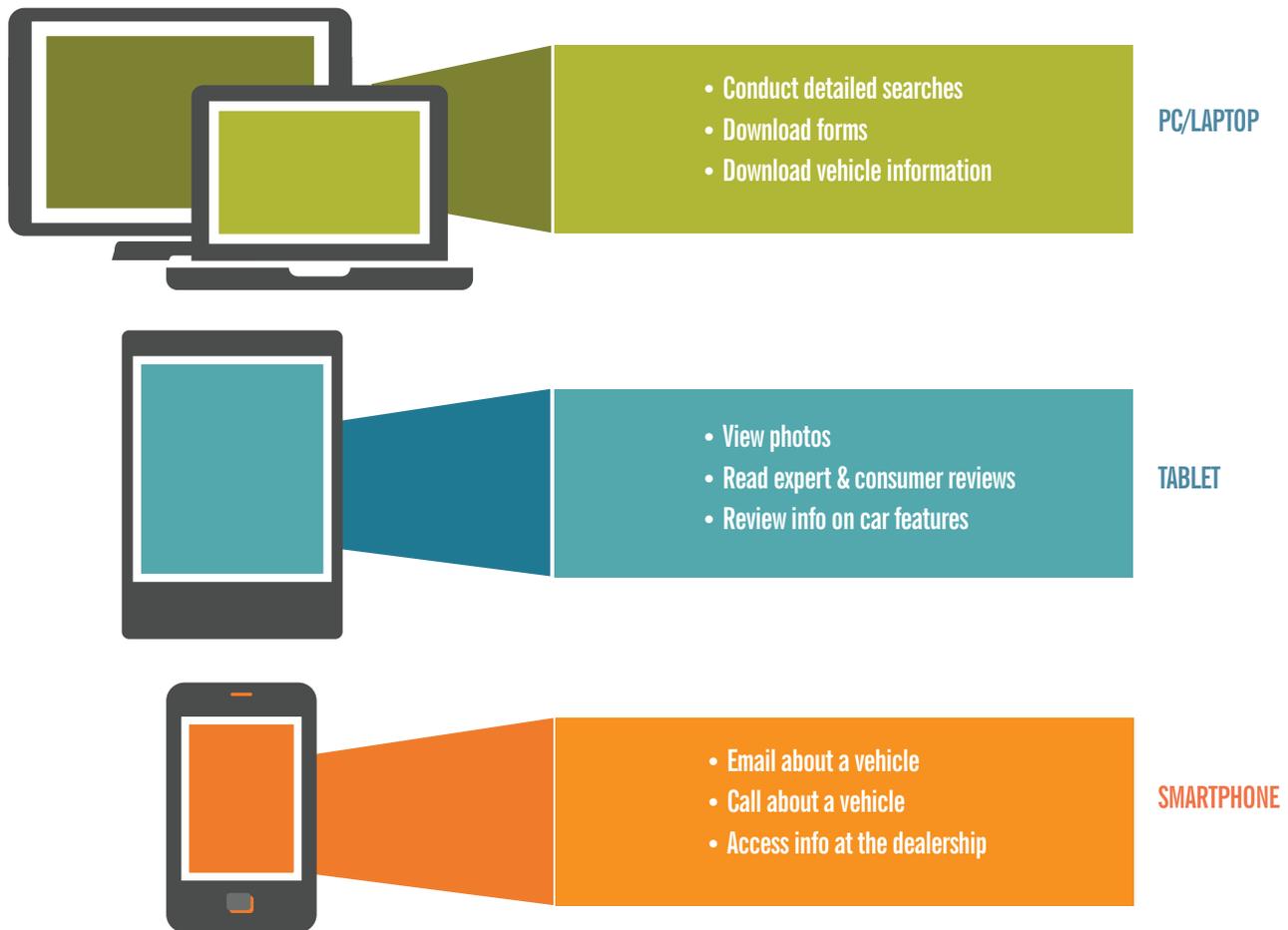
# CONSUMERS NEED STREAMLINED CONTENT ACROSS DIFFERENT DEVICES

While looking at photos, car reviews and pricing are the top activities across all devices, **car shoppers do different things on different devices, most of which is dictated by the device's capabilities and limitations (see diagram below)**. For example, oftentimes consumers start the car shopping process on a desktop or laptop to conduct detailed searches, and download

forms and vehicle information. On tablets, they do a lot of "browsing," i.e., looking at photos and reading reviews, and they use their smartphone to research prices, to email someone about a car, etc. The key for automotive marketers is to drive loyalty by connecting those experiences across devices.

## CAR SHOPPERS PREFER TO CONDUCT SELECT ACTIVITIES ON DIFFERENT DEVICES<sup>3</sup>

(based on current device capabilities)



## What you need to know

- **Ensure your brand and message are consistent** across devices to more effectively connect with consumers and create better car shopping experiences.
- **Car shoppers use different devices for different reasons**, so marketers must consider each device when developing differentiated experiences for them.

# CONTENT IS KING

With the proliferation of devices that consumers are using to research and shop for cars, automotive marketers can't control the device; but what they can control is the **content**. Strong, relevant content creates a better shopping experience across multiple screens, opening up more opportunities for dealers and manufacturers to

drive influence and preference for their dealership and brand. It's time to rethink the framework for your online presence from "How do we reach our customers?" to "What experience do we want consumers to have?"



## What you need to know

Advances in technology for the mobile web have created great opportunities for automotive marketers to stay connected to car shoppers during all stages of the shopping process. **But being excellent at the fundamentals is still the most**

**important aspect of online marketing.** Looking at photos is among the top activities conducted on all devices, so vehicle and dealership merchandising should be the highest priority across all tiers and platforms.

# DO IT RIGHT OR DON'T DO IT AT ALL

User experience drives the success of a multi-device strategy. Generally speaking, car shoppers expect optimized mobile and tablet sites, and more than half of users start their research on a mobile device. A good initial experience encourages broader interactions on other devices. At the same time, a bad experience will discourage a shopper to engage with a brand on another device.

In fact, **68% of shoppers say that a poor mobile experience has a negative impact on their impression of a brand.**<sup>2</sup>

Apps are not as important; only **19%** of car shoppers say that not offering a mobile app would negatively affect their opinion of a brand.<sup>2</sup> However, an app can greatly improve brand opinion, with **42%** of shoppers indicating that a mobile app would positively affect their brand opinion.<sup>2</sup>

## What you need to know

- **Dealers should be cautious of one-size-fits-all** vendors that offer mobile-optimized websites, apps and other products. "Try before you buy" to ensure the experience promised is the experience you want to deliver to car shoppers.
- For dealers considering a mobile or tablet app, a sales-focused app may not be the best investment as car shoppers are not in the market for a car often. A better option may be a **relationship-based app** that allows you to manage the customer relationship with features like appointment scheduling, and service and maintenance reminders.
- For manufacturers, a **poor mobile experience is a greater risk to a brand** than not having a mobile site or app at all. It's better not to have a mobile site or app if the experience isn't good for the shopper.
- Ease of use and quality images are the most important features, regardless of device.<sup>2</sup> While comprehensive vehicle information is important on a desktop or laptop, speed is important for smartphones and quality visual content is important for tablets.

## IMPLICATIONS

While desktops and laptops are still the primary choice for car shopping today, consumers are quickly adding smartphones and tablets to their device arsenal. And they're not replacing one device with another — they're using them to complement each other in the shopping process. For automotive marketers to effectively connect with shoppers **it's important to ensure consistent branding, messaging and the overall experience across the spectrum of devices and advertising media**, all of which should be part of a larger marketing strategy.

**Focus on creating meaningful, easily accessible content that's always available to the consumer when, where and how they want it.** It's the most

efficient and powerful way to influence busy and distracted consumers as well as drive preference for your dealership and brand. Automotive marketers, in general, should make it their mandate to focus on providing shoppers with streamlined experiences that give them the information they seek as quickly and easily as possible.

**User experience drives the success of a multi-device strategy.** Generally speaking, car shoppers expect optimized mobile and tablet sites. However, a poor mobile quality is a greater risk to a brand than not having a mobile site or app at all. It's better not to have it if the experience isn't good for the shopper.