

# 2011 AUTOMOTIVE BUYER STUDY

SOURCES THAT INFLUENCE PURCHASE



# INTERNET IS THE MOST USED AND MOST INFLUENTIAL SHOPPING SOURCE AMONG NEW & USED VEHICLE BUYERS

The Internet is the preferred information source among vehicle buyers. In fact, **71% of both New & Used Vehicle Buyers** said they used the Internet during the car shopping process.

Furthermore, 50% of New Vehicle Buyers said that the **Internet was the predominant source that led them to the dealers** they bought from — more than twice that of any other source cited in the study.

As a result, effective online automotive advertising not only influences what makes and models consumers buy, but also influences which dealers they buy from.

## MOST USED SOURCE DURING SHOPPING PROCESS

NEW BUYERS ■  
USED BUYERS ■

71% 71%



INTERNET

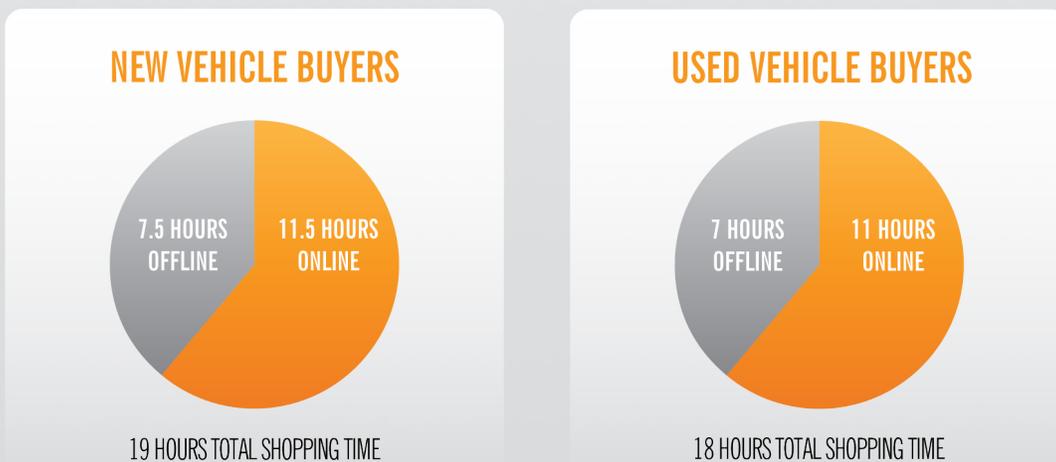
## MOST INFLUENTIAL SOURCES LEADING TO THE DEALER

NEW BUYERS ■  
USED BUYERS ■



# NEW & USED VEHICLE BUYERS SPEND 60% OF THE SHOPPING PROCESS ONLINE

For the first time ever, we now know the total amount of time that consumers spend on the car shopping process. According to the study, New Vehicle Buyers who use the Internet to shop for cars spend an average of 19 total hours shopping, while Used Vehicle Buyers spend an average of 18 total hours. Of that time, New and Used Vehicle Buyers spend the majority of their time online – 11.5 and 11 hours, respectively, **actively choosing to engage with the medium**. Throughout the process, they are seeking content and being exposed to multiple brand impressions – a big opportunity for automotive marketers to influence shoppers. Effectively engaging consumers at each point in their shopping process can dramatically improve the chances of turning a shopper into an actual buyer.



## HOW DO VEHICLE BUYERS INITIALLY CONTACT THE DEALERSHIP?



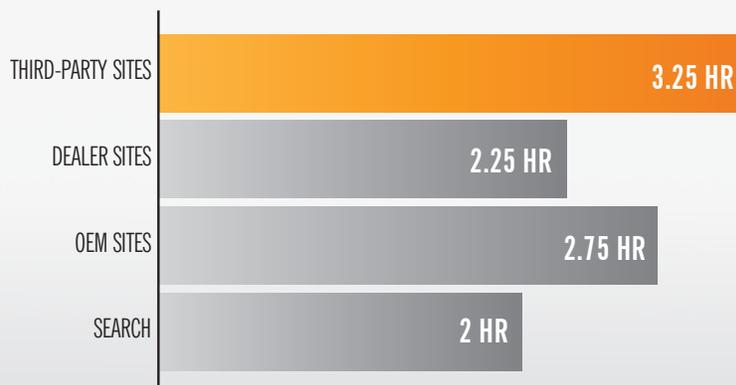
**7 out of 10 of all vehicle buyers walk into the dealership without establishing contact with the dealer prior to their initial visit.** Therefore, it has become increasingly important for automotive marketers to put methods into place to track advertising effectiveness (e.g., dealership walk-in traffic). Understanding the influence that online advertising has on car shoppers can help automotive marketers determine the true value of their advertising spend, as well as how and where they can more effectively invest their marketing dollars.

# NEW & USED VEHICLE BUYERS SPEND MORE TIME ON THIRD-PARTY SITES

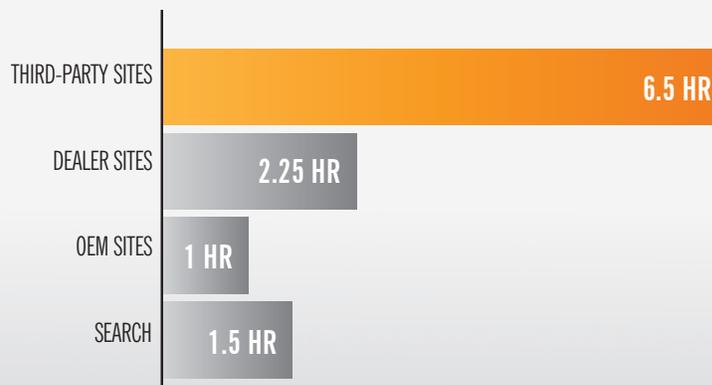
Of the time that New & Used Vehicle Buyers allocate to shopping online, **they spend the most time on third-party sites.** While both New & Used Buyers shop online in a variety of places, New Vehicle Buyers distribute their time more evenly across the different types of automotive sites. This information is important because it reveals that vehicle buyers find value shopping on manufacturer sites, dealer sites, and third-party sites alike. These sites serve as complements to each other during the shopping process.

Knowing where car shoppers spend their time online also demonstrates the need for automotive marketers to have a broad Internet strategy. To effectively reach and influence vehicle buyers online, a defined marketing message must be in front of as many in-market shoppers as possible, as often as possible.

## NEW VEHICLE BUYERS



## USED VEHICLE BUYERS

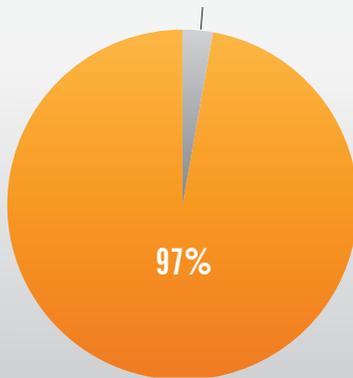


# DO SEARCH AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES INFLUENCE VEHICLE BUYERS?

According to the research, New & Used Vehicle Buyers are often using search engines like Google as a “Yellow Pages” type service — a convenient way of getting to sites and businesses they are already aware of. For example, of the New Vehicle Buyers who used search, the most common reasons they used it were to access a dealer’s website, find a dealer’s phone number and/or address, access a manufacturer’s website, and to access third-party sites.

## SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE INFLUENCE

Only **3%** of vehicle buyers said a social networking site influenced their purchase.



## VEHICLE BUYER SEARCH ENGINE USE

Access OEM site	62%
Access a dealer website	61%
Find dealer phone number and/or address	48%
Access 3rd party sites	35%
Other/None	16%

\*New Vehicle Buyers only

Regarding social media, an overwhelming **97%** of New & Used Vehicle Buyers stated that their most recent vehicle purchases were not influenced by social networking sites. Vehicle buyers typically do not go to Facebook to search inventory, for example. However, social networking can still be an important relationship and customer retention tool. It can provide an opportunity for automotive marketers to stay engaged with their customer base and even generate post-purchase revenue.

## WHAT INFORMATION INFLUENCES VEHICLE BUYERS MOST ONLINE?

New & Used Vehicle Buyers both use the Internet to research car prices, compare makes & models, look at photos, and locate a vehicle. While Special Offers, Dealer Rebates and Incentives are important to Used Vehicle Buyers, they are significantly more important to **New Vehicle Buyers, who rank it the third most important reason to shop online.**

In order to effectively target their marketing messages as well as ad spend, it is important that automotive marketers understand how and why consumers use the Internet during the vehicle shopping process. These insights can help ensure that dealers and manufacturers deliver the **right marketing message and content to the right shoppers at the right time.**

## ABOUT THE STUDY

The “Automotive Buyer Study: Sources That Influence Purchase” was commissioned by AutoTrader.com with R.L. Polk & Co. to understand what media sources influence New and Used Vehicle Buyers prior to purchase. A total of 2005 New Buyers and 2000 Used Vehicle Buyers who purchased during June 2010 and July 2010 were interviewed. Quotas were set to ensure a representative sample based on the vehicle make purchased and state of residence.

