

BMW CLAIMS POLE POSITION IN CAR WEBSITE STUDY

It's not just test-drives and show rooms that sell cars. New research indicates that websites heavily influence the purchasing decision. However, customers' online experience varies widely between the leading luxury car companies, with many failing to provide the information and service customers are looking for online.

Independent research from customer experience benchmarking firm, Global Reviews, found that 85% of car buyers visit manufacturers' websites before purchasing. Eighty percent use the internet to compare cars from different manufacturers. Most significantly, 20% go online again just before making their final decision.

Global Reviews' 'Luxury Car Website Benchmark' measured customers' experience on ten of the top luxury car websites. The sites were assessed against more than 475 objective criteria including the information available to prospective buyers, customer support, service offered to vehicle owners, and general site usability. The study found that:

- BMW offers the best customer online experience with 76%, against an industry average of 62%, followed by Jaguar (72%), Porsche (71%), Ford (69%), Mercedes (68%), VW (62%)
- Audi, Aston Martin and Subaru (54%) and Ferrari (44%) offer their customers a below average online experience
- Mercedes offers the best online experience for prospective buyers (66%), followed by Porsche (63%) and Jaguar (62%)
- 81% of customers say it is important to be able to find full features list online. This is the area that most manufacturers focus on and the industry average is a very respectable 80%. Audi leads with 94% and BMW is second with 92%. The Ferrari website is benchmarked at only 39%
- 82% of customers would want to order a printed brochure online compared with just 6% by the telephone. While most companies enable online ordering, Ferrari, Aston Martin and Porsche do not.
- 34% would like to be able to book a test drive, or request a call back about one online. But only six of the ten companies offer this service.

Global Reviews director, Adam Goodvach said:

"It is clear from this research that the vast majority of car buyers depend on websites. With so many customers returning to the sites just before making their final decision, car companies are missing a trick if they fail to offer potential buyers the information they are looking for online. These companies are among the world's leading luxury brands, but when it comes to their websites, some are at the back of the grid."

The benchmark was conducted in April 2007.

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Global Reviews surveyed 1,100 people.

The Automotive Manufacturers Customer Experience Benchmark contains over 475 assessment criteria.

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Notes to Editors

Global Reviews measures and improves the customer experience of its clients with offices in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Banking clients include HSBC, Citibank, ING Direct, National Australia Bank, and Hertz. The company also benchmarks websites across 25 non-banking industries and provides actionable recommendations to improve customer acquisition and boost retention. More information about Global Reviews is available at www.globalreviews.co.uk.