

RESEARCH

## Brand experiences biggest driver of auto purchases: report

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*BMW display area at NY Auto Show*

By JOE MCCARTHY

Prior brand experience influences 62 percent of consumer purchases, followed by dealership experiences at 59 percent, according to a new report by Foresight Research.

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The report also found that word of mouth and brochures are waning in their capacity to influence. However, luxury consumers, who are perhaps more discerning, are influenced by more possible channels, including auto shows.

"Luxury auto buyers are car connected, and auto shows are a perfect place to make that connection," said Nancy Walter, vice president of business development at Foresight Research, New York.

"Thirteen percent of buyers, overall, attended an auto show last year but 19 percent of luxury buyers attended a show," she said.

"Overall, auto shows influenced 9 percent of buyers, up from 7 percent the prior year. However 13 percent of the car-connected luxury buyers were influenced by auto shows."

Foresight Research's "The 2014 Auto Show Immersion Report" report gathered responses from 7,500 non-fleet new vehicle buyers through a national internet panel surveys in

March-April 2014.

### The right channels

The report found that luxury auto buyers skew toward older consumers that have distinct buying patterns. These consumers display greater brand loyalty and are more likely to be influenced by buyer-driven channels such as dealership experiences, seeing cars on the road and prior brand experience.

Luxury consumers, in particular, look to many different channels for influence. Audi owners are influenced by an average of 4.5 channels, Mercedes-Benz by 4.2 channels and BMW by 3.5 channels, according to the report.

Auto show influence is also on the rise. In 2009, 39 percent of auto show attendees said that they were influenced by the show. That number rose to 51 percent in 2013.



*Lexus display area at the New York Auto Show 2014*

Luxury buyers were also more likely than non-luxury buyers to be highly influenced by an auto show.

Foresight Research found that 67 percent of attendees respond to messages expressing style and appearance. Fifty-two percent of auto show attendees respond to brand reputation and 25 percent respond to available consumer reviews.



*Lamborghini Huracan at NYAuto Show*

Although luxury automakers receive immense traffic at auto shows, there are certain tactics that can meaningfully increase engagement.

The proximity of so many competitors can diminish the impact of a single brand. Consequently, automakers should incorporate unexpected activities or technologies into their display areas to generate new conversations ([see story](#)).



*McLaren 650s Spider at Espace in New York*

Luxury automakers kept the momentum going from previous auto shows with mid-level announcements and plenty of brand interaction at the New York Auto Show 2014.

Land Rover unveiled the details of its Discovery Sport concept, Bentley solidified plans to return to North American racing and Audi announced the return of the A3 TDI Sportback to the United States. As the official debut of the New York Auto Show unfolded, brands worked to buoy interest with a series of social media initiatives ([see story](#)).

Every corner

Luxury automakers have been devising all-encompassing, highly experiential campaigns to ensure that consumers are influenced wherever they turn.

For instance, Audi of America gathered fan tales of adversity and resilience for a live-stream event in Santa Monica, CA, directed by creative figures such as artists, designers and musicians.

The massive community-driven initiative was an extension of the “Paid my Dues” campaign that heralded the debut of the A3. As Audi repositions its entry-level vehicles to appeal to a broader audience, tapping the universal theme of overcoming obstacles will likely resonate ([see story](#)).

Auto shows in the future will act an effective way to sum up brand campaigns and renew engagement. Many automakers at the New York Auto Show had multiple touchpoints to shed light on broader initiatives.

"If producers/car manufacturers can generate the attendance, they will influence auto purchases," Ms. Walter said.

#### Final Take

*Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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