

RESEARCH

Mobile encompasses automotive purchase funnel: L2

September 2, 2014



Jaguar XE's InControl technology

By JOE MCCARTHY

Mobile now plays an integral role in every stage of the purchasing process for cars, according to a report by L2.

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Luxury Daily

According to Nielsen, 63 percent of consumers also want in-car connectivity so that their mobile experience is never interrupted as they go about their day. Automakers that dismiss the power of mobile to guide purchases will no doubt suffer in the long term.

"Automakers have longstanding investments [in smartphone and search] that effectively subsidize the digital efforts of affiliated dealerships," said Colin Gilbert, research director of the report, New York.

"They need to address the middling site experience on tablet devices," he said. "Legacy desktop UI/UX for these brands is extremely text/link heavy—it doesn't translate well to touch input.

"Only a quarter of the 42 brands surveyed have a tablet-specific UI/UX template and only a handful have challenged conventional design in a meaningful way. Automakers still think of 'mobile' as a channel that only comes into play close to conversion—when in actuality,

it has extended to encompass the broader purchase funnel."

L2's "Auto Insight Report: Mobile & Tablet" is a subsidiary report of its "Digital IQ Index: Auto" that assesses the digital proficiency of 42 automotive brands.

From the outset

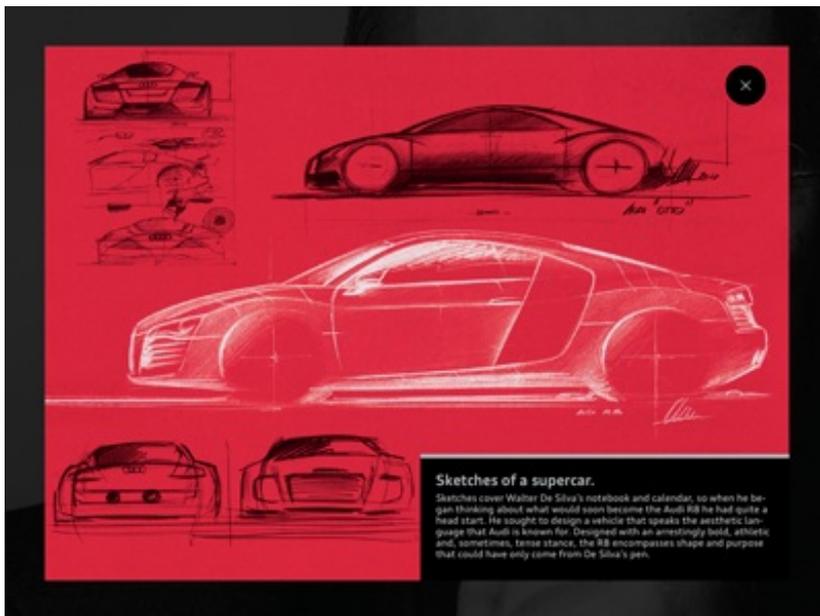
Consumers looking for a new car conduct substantial research online. In fact, Autotrader determined that 73 percent of the consumer journey now occurs online, where consumers are far more malleable.

Once a consumer shifts from the online researching phase to the offline phase, a purchase decision has essentially been achieved.

For this reason, auto brands have to be exceptionally nimble on mobile in order to appeal to consumers early and often.

Tablets have become preferred over smartphones for research, and many brands are responding accordingly, although huge deficits remain. Just 24 percent of the brands studied in the report support UI/UX elements on tablet, but when compared to the 2 percent of brands from the year-ago period, this figure does not look as shabby.

Also, 57 percent of brands enable swiping and 47 percent introduced touch-friendly interactive elements.



From Audi's library app

Automakers are also improving their mobile and tablet ads to capture the attention of consumers early.

However, the quality of desktop ads trumps mobile in the majority of cases.

For instance, Jaguar leveraged its ongoing British Villains campaign with mobile advertisements on The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and other publications.

While the ad had a takeover feature, displaying a helicopter chase on desktop Web sites, the mobile version was more mundane. The brand had been amassing content for the

British Villains campaign for several months and interested readers were able to access the archive with a click-through ([see story](#)).

Search engines, which come in as the sixth most influential source of in-market research, can shape the consumer journey.

Fifty-two percent of traffic to brand Web sites comes from search portals, according to SimilarWeb.

About 60,500,000 results (0.36 seconds)

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Google search results for Bentley in New York

Brands dominate organic first-page Google search with 44 percent of the results, while auto dealers generate 1 percent of results. However, only 38 percent of brand results offer the ability to track dealership locations, forcing consumers to rely on Google Maps or the paid search efforts of particular dealers ([see story](#)).

Forever after

Mobile is also taking over the driving experience.

Whenever an issue arises, consumers expect to be able to pull up relevant information with their smartphones, preferably through an app.

German automaker BMW is providing owners of its i-series vehicles with an application that houses useful vehicle information.

The app allows users to search for vehicle information on their phone rather than digging around for the owner's manual, flipping through pages for relevant sections and trying to make sense of technical jargon. Also, drivers will be able to access multimedia content to get a better sense of how to address problems as they arise ([see story](#)).

More fundamentally, consumers expect in-car connectivity and the ability to access apps for a seamlessly integrated life.

Most brands have turned to Apple and Google for in-car connectivity, but some may consider creating their own platforms in the future.

"Auto brand already tried this—and they failed," Mr. Gilbert said. "The fact that 76 percent of brands have already agreed to work with either Apple or Google signals that these tech

giants are quickly going to own the dashboard, paralleling investments in home automation anchored to competing smartphone platform.

"The question now becomes: (a) which of these players is going to win the race by proving the best partner for auto brands," he said. "And (b) are the remaining 24 percent of brands going to suffer by not offering these features or going it alone with proprietary integration solutions?"

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, staff writer on Luxury Daily, New York

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