

AUTOMOTIVE

More than 50pc of vehicle research done via mobile: report

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Prospective car buyers are most engaged on desktop devices. Image credit: BMW

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Mobile is becoming a more important channel for automakers to engage with audiences, according to research from IgnitionOne.

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In the second quarter of 2019, mobile sessions accounted for 55 percent of all automotive site visits in Europe and North America. Desktops saw the highest growth in engagement, highlighting the importance of automakers having a consistent experience across channels.

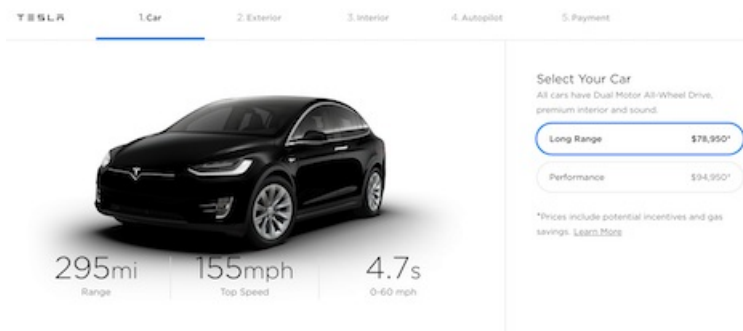
"While auto industry sales have shown signs of a decline for a few quarters now, understanding consumers' shopping behaviors will give marketers an edge during this downturn," said Rachel Pierson, global director of strategic accounts at **IgnitionOne**, New York.

Ignition One's report is based on first-party data gathered from more than 350 manufacturers and dealer Web sites across more than 50 countries.

Auto engagement

Although European car sales were not strong in the second quarter, site visits grew 8 percent year-over-year. This may indicate that the market will rebound in the third quarter.

In light of the postponement of Brexit, traffic for United Kingdom-based automotive sites declined from the first quarter. Year-over-year, France, Italy and Germany all experienced gains in traffic.



Customers can customize their vehicles on the Tesla Web site

Despite the increase in traffic, engagement in Europe fell by 4 percent in the second quarter. This includes declines in engagement from France, Italy and Germany.

IgnitionOne finds higher engagement is consistent with users who are deeper into the car buying process.

In Europe, visits from mobile devices grew nearly 20 percent while desktop visits declined by the same percentage. Users on both mobile and desktop devices increased their engagement level as well.

In North America, engagement grew 12 percent while site traffic fell by 25 percent.

Although visits declined across all devices in North America, mobile traffic dropped 15 percent compared to 30 percent for tablets and 36 percent for desktops.

Smartphones saw more modest growth in engagement, at 4 percent, while desktop engagement jumped 41 percent.

Ecommerce potential

Strong engagement on desktop computers indicates that car shoppers have a wealth of information available compared to mobile devices. Affluents are growing more accustomed to online research and ecommerce, and automakers continue to experiment with ways to add more digital communications into the shopping journey.

For instance, U.S. automaker Cadillac is looking to change the car-buying experience with a live digital showroom that facilitates one-on-one interactions between drivers and agents.

Through a one-way video conversation, users can speak to an agent directly and ask any questions about Cadillac and the car-buying process. Agents will use iPhone X smartphones and Bluetooth headsets, as well as a mobile application that allows them to share different vehicle configurations with customers ([see story](#)).

According to data, social network Pinterest holds an audience of early adopter automotive buyers, making it a strong fit for new model debuts.

Pinterest users are more apt than non-users to buy a car within the first 90 days of its release, and they show significant follow-through on purchases.

Seven million Pinterest users engage with automotive content, and the platform reaches half of all adults who are planning to buy a car in the next seven months, based on ComScore data. Fifty-seven percent of Pinnerers who engage with automotive content on Pinterest weekly also say that they are seeking out the cars and auto products they want to buy, and 62 percent have made a purchase after seeing auto pins ([see story](#)).

"Consumers are spending more time researching vehicles across devices and visiting comparison pages to find the best deal," Ms. Pierson said.

"Engagement on these sites remains consistent, which presents a great opportunity for marketers to dig deep into first-party data, with tools like CDPs, and get a 360-degree view of the consumer to further enhance the path to purchase and inform future marketing decisions," she said.