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INDUSTRY INSIGHTS:

Small Cars = Big Business

- Jack R. Nerad, vice president, executive editorial director and executive market analyst, Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com

There was a time when the small cars from Ford, Chrysler and General Motors could have been charitably described as “also-rans.” When one looks back on the Pintos, Vegas, Chevettes and Omnis of several decades ago, one has to wonder how they ever sold at all. In fact, the bad taste they left in the mouths of American consumers was so strong that up until just a couple of years ago, many Americans wouldn't touch a domestic small car with anything shorter than a 10-foot pole. This makes the market transformation we've witnessed in the past 18 months or so all the more impressive. Make no mistake about it, Ford, General Motors and Chrysler each have small cars that Americans want to buy.

Ford deserves a great deal of credit for helping to lead the trend. Its one-two punch of b-segment Fiesta and c-segment Focus have been a success, and it continues to grow its small-car share even in the face of increased competition from, among others, Chrysler and GM. One might assert that the Fiesta is too close to the Focus in price to the detriment of the smaller car. However, there is no doubt that the Focus is not only a success, but also that in its new form it is gaining a new, more affluent buyer. Focus transaction prices are now much higher than in its previous iteration, and the mix is heavy with up-level SEL and Titanium trim versions.

Looking at Chrysler, some have maligned the Fiat 500, suggesting it is a failure. Perhaps a better way to look at the b-segment car is that expectations for it might have been too high. Now, after several months in the marketplace, it is getting its legs under it. No one can dispute that it has given Chrysler an “aspirational” small car, something it didn't have since the first heady days of the PT Cruiser.

Finally, if you go back just five years or so, one might have described General Motors' small-car offerings as dreary, and American consumers responded by largely ignoring cars like the Aveo and Cobalt. But now GM's small-car offerings are resonating with American buyers. The Chevrolet Cruze compact car has been an unexpected winner, and sales of the even newer Chevrolet Sonic are climbing the charts. Now GM is poised to launch the Chevrolet Spark this summer, another small car that could be described as “aspirational.” Chevrolet isn't the only GM division to find new success in small cars either. The Buick Verano premium compact, built on the same platform as the Cruze, seems to be off to a good start.

What's the difference between today's domestic-brand small cars and those of a decade ago? Well, high fuel prices have helped the small-car boom, but the domestic manufacturers also have started building small cars that are not only fuel efficient, but also good looking, full of must-have amenities, and fun to drive. Consumers are responding, and we expect the domestics to continue to flex their muscles in the small-car segment.

“...THE DOMESTIC MANUFACTURERS ALSO HAVE STARTED BUILDING SMALL CARS THAT ARE NOT ONLY FUEL EFFICIENT, BUT ALSO GOOD LOOKING, FULL OF MUST-HAVE AMENITIES, AND FUN TO DRIVE.”

- JACK R. NERAD

Check out the very latest news stories by visiting kbb.com and clicking the the *Kbb Top Picks* tab on the home page. The following latest news stories by kbb.com's editorial staff went live on the site or were updated during March 2012.

Videos Posted to kbb.com:

[Chrysler 300 Video Review](#)

[KBB Races a Mazda Miata - Part 1](#)

[Scion iQ Video Review](#)

[VW Beetle Video Review](#)

Written Stories Posted to kbb.com:

[10 Best Family Cars 2012](#)

[2012 BMW M6 Convertible - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2012 Chevrolet Sonic adds automatic option for turbocharged engine](#)

[2012 Chevy Camaro ZL1: Driving a new kind of muscle car](#)

[2012 Coda Sedan production begins](#)

[2012 Dodge Challenger Rallye Redline revealed](#)

[2012 Dodge Durango Special Service model rolls into action](#)

[2012 Fiat 500 Abarth First Drive Review: Little fun](#)

[2012 Ford Focus Electric earns record-setting 105 MPGe combined mark](#)

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[2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2012 Ram 2500 HD pickup adds CNG/gasoline bi-fuel option](#)

[2012 Subaru XV Crosstrek - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2012 Toyota Yaris Hybrid - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2012 Volvo C70 T5 Inscription first drive](#)

[2012 Volvo XC60 T6 R-Design - now fortified with a Polestar upgrade](#)

[2012 Volvo XC70 T6 AWD first drive - now with Polestar performance](#)

[2013 Audi A3 - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2013 BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2013 BMW M6 Coupe - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2013 BMW X1 preview - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2013 Chevrolet Corvette turns 60 with a unique birthday blowout](#)

[2013 Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra bi-fuel pickups unveiled](#)

[2013 Chevrolet Traverse teased - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2013 Dodge Avenger SE V6 impressive value, impressive performance](#)

[2013 Dodge Charger NASCAR Sprint Cup car unveiled](#)

[2013 Ferrari F12 Berlinetta - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2013 Ford F-Series Super Duty Platinum Series revealed](#)

[2013 Ford Flex First Drive Review: A box that's anything but boring](#)

[2013 Ford Mustang First Drive Review: Old pony, new tricks](#)

[2013 Ford Shelby GT500 Mustang Coupe opens at \\$54,995](#)

[2013 Ford Taurus First Drive Review](#)

[2013 GMC Terrain Denali - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2013 Hyundai Santa Fe teased - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

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[2013 Maserati GranTurismo Sport - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2013 Mazda CX-5: The cure for the common CUV](#)

[2013 Mercedes-Benz A-Class - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2013 Mercedes-Benz GLK-Class - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2013 Mercedes-Benz SL65 AMG - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2013 Mini John Cooper Works Countryman - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2013 Mitsubishi Outlander - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2013 Nissan Altima shows its face - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2013 Porsche Boxster - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[2013 Toyota Venza teased - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[2014 Chevrolet Impala first glimpse - 2012 New York Auto Show](#)

[BMW M135i Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Bentley EXP 9 F Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Bertone Nuccio Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Carrozzeria Touring Disco Volante Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Delphi/Sbarro F1FOR3 Concept teased - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Fisker NINA range-extended EV teased](#)

[Five steps to successfully financing your next vehicle](#)

[Hyundai i-oniq Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Infiniti Emerg-E Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Italidesign Giugiaro Brivido Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Jaguar XF Sportbrake - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Jeep Easter Safari Concepts teased - three for the off-road](#)

[Lamborghini Aventador J - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Lexus and Mini top latest J.D. Power Dealer Satisfaction Study](#)

[Lotus Exige S Roadster - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

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[Mercedes-Benz Wants You to Fall in Love with 4MATIC All-wheel Drive](#)

[Mini celebrates 10 years in the U.S.](#)

[Mitsubishi i-MiEV Prototype to challenge Pikes Peak](#)

[New Chevrolet nameplate coming for 2013](#)

[New Ford Tourneo Custom previews future U.S. E-Series van](#)

[Nissan Hi-Cross Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Nissan Hi-Cross Concept teaser - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Nissan Invitation Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Nissan plans to cut costs by using Common Module Family design](#)

[Nissan to power revolutionary DeltaWing racer at Le Mans](#)

[Pininfarina Cambiano Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Range Rover Evoque Convertible Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Rolls Royce Phantom Series II - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

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[Subaru introduces EyeSight driver assist system](#)

[Top 10 From the 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Toyota FT-Bh Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Volkswagen Cross Coupe TDI Plug-in Concept - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[Volkswagen GTI Cabriolet - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

[smart Brabus fortwo ED and eBike - 2012 Geneva Auto Show](#)

The following new-vehicle reviews written by kbb.com's editorial staff went live on the site or were updated during March 2012. To see any new-vehicle review from kbb.com's editorial staff, please visit kbb.com and click on the *Car Reviews* tab, then select the make and model.

[2012 Infiniti G](#)

For 2012, the Infiniti G series continues its tradition of captivating car buyers looking to get what they pay for in entry-level luxury, and then some. The 2012 G offers sedan, coupe, and convertible variants, plus rear-wheel drive (RWD) or all-wheel drive (AWD) and the choice of an efficient 2.5-liter or powerful 3.7-liter V6. The 2012 Infiniti G models have proven once again that they can not only run with the best in their class, they can do so at a lower cost to you... [MORE](#)

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

[2012 Mercedes-Benz GLK350](#)

The 2012 GLK350 has some big shoes to fill as the junior member of the Mercedes-Benz SUV family. To the delight of its larger siblings – the Mercedes M-Class and GL-Class – the compact GLK offers the modern styling, upscale amenities and advanced safety features one should expect from a luxury vehicle. Developed on Mercedes-Benz's best-selling C-Class platform, the 2012 GLK combines the comfortable ride quality and enticing technology of the C with the versatility of a small SUV... [MORE](#)

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

[2012 Cadillac CTS](#)

Building upon Cadillac's commitment to reestablish its place as the world's standard of luxury, the 2012 CTS lineup aims to bring the fight directly to its European and Japanese competitors with a brand-new powerplant, additional standard equipment and a host of high-tech features. For 2012, variety is the name of the game. With sedan, coupe, and wagon models, high-performance CTS-V variants for each body style, and available all-wheel drive (AWD), the Cadillac CTS series is perhaps the most diverse nameplate in the luxury segment... [MORE](#)

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

[2012 Chevrolet Express](#)

Many vehicles claim to be versatile do-it-alls, but when it comes to backing claims with fact, the 2012 Chevrolet Express Van puts its money where its grille is. As a passenger van, the Express Van trumps the largest SUVs in the field, with accommodations for up to 15 people. In cargo-haul mode, the Express Van's massive 285 cubic feet of storage volume makes it ideal as a parcel or parts delivery vehicle, or just one really big conversion van (time to relive the 70s, man)... [MORE](#)

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

[2012 Cadillac SRX](#)

Once overlooked by the majority of luxury crossover shoppers, the Cadillac SRX is now a force to be reckoned with and asserts its rightful place as one of Cadillac's top sellers. The 2012 Cadillac SRX addresses prior grievances concerning its uninspiring powerplants with a brand-new 3.6-liter V6 engine mated to a revised 6-speed transmission with a fuel-saving "Eco" feature... [MORE](#)

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

[2012 Acura TSX](#)

In a class defined by prestige, opulence and sticker prices exceeding the \$60,000 mark, the 2012 Acura TSX will appeal to anyone looking for a luxury midsize sedan or wagon at a non-luxury price. Often overlooked, the TSX offers classy styling and appointments that reflect the high levels of comfort, refinement and convenience that have become hallmarks of the Acura brand... [MORE](#)

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

[2012 Lexus ES 350](#)

2012 marks the final model year of the Lexus ES 350 before a planned revamp in 2013. While it is getting a little long in the tooth, the ES 350 is still a worthy competitor to luxury sedans such as the Acura TL, Audi A6, Infiniti G37 and Lincoln MKZ. Built on a platform shared with the Toyota Camry, the Lexus ES 350 is a front-wheel-drive sedan that is more focused on cruising comfort than burning up back roads... [MORE](#)

To read the latest Consumer Reviews & Ratings on this vehicle, click [here](#).

Kelley Blue Book Names 2012 Brand Image Award Winners Based on Annual Car-buyer Perception Ratings

Ford Garners Four Top Honors; Mercedes-Benz, Cadillac, Honda Repeat Wins

IRVINE, Calif., April 4, 2012 -- Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the leading provider of new car and used car information, today announces the winners of the [2012 Brand Image Awards](#). These awards, based on consumer perception data from the company's Brand Watch™ study, honor the automotive brands that have most successfully captured positive consumer attention.

The 2012 Brand Image Awards, presented to the top brands in 12 categories, are based on consumer automotive perception data from Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence's Brand Watch study. Brand Watch is an online brand perception tracking study tapping into 12,000+ in-market new-vehicle shoppers annually on Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com. The highly comprehensive Brand Watch study offers insight into in-market new-vehicle shoppers' perceptions of brands and important factors driving their purchase decisions while they are in the midst of the shopping process. The Kelley Blue Book Brand Image Awards recognize automakers' outstanding achievements in creating and maintaining brand attributes that capture the attention and enthusiasm of the new-vehicle buying public... [MORE](#)

Kelley Blue Book: March New-Car Sales To Reach Highest Levels Since 2007; 1,425,000 Units, 14.6 Million Seasonally Adjusted Sales Rate

High Gas Prices Keep Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Demand Strong; Toyota, Honda Continue to Increase Market Share on Economical Lineups

IRVINE, Calif., March 22, 2012 -- Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the leading provider of [new car](#) and [used car](#) information, projects new-vehicle sales to reach 1,425,000 units, or 14.6 million seasonally adjusted sales rate (SAAR), in March 2012. This is a 24 percent gain from last month and a 14 percent gain from March 2011.

At more than 1.4 million units, sales will be the highest for any March since 2007, when industry sales topped 1.5 million units overall. March traditionally is a strong month as consumers cash-in their tax returns and head to dealerships for the latest model-year vehicles. Kelley Blue Book expects this March will be especially strong due to high consumer demand for fuel-efficient models and interest in popular redesigns such as the [Toyota Camry](#), along with improving supply conditions and attractive finance opportunities... [MORE](#)

Kbb.com Android App Hits One-Million Download Milestone

Free Kelley Blue Book Mobile Offerings Provide Essential Car-Buying Information, Help Shoppers Negotiate On-the-Spot

IRVINE, Calif., March 20, 2012 -- Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the leading provider of [new car](#) and [used car](#) information, today reports a one-million download milestone for its [kbb.com](#) Android mobile application. Launched in November 2010, the free, interactive [kbb.com](#) Android app provides users with crucial car-buying information to help make confident purchase decisions.

The [kbb.com](#) Android app provides shoppers with access to new and used Kelley Blue Book® Values, including MSRP, Invoice, Fair Purchase Price, Certified Pre-Owned, Suggested Retail, Private Party and Trade-In Values. Car buyers and sellers can use this information in vehicle transaction negotiations to ensure they get the best deal possible, wherever they may be... [MORE](#)

Kelley Blue Book: Used Compact, Hybrid Car Values on the Rise, Could Repeat 20 Percent Gains of 2011

March Blue Book Market Report Advises Dealers to Stock Used Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Inventory Sooner Rather Than Later

IRVINE, Calif., March 19, 2012 -- Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the leading provider of [new car](#) and [used car](#) information, today reports that used compact-car values are on the rise and could reach the same 20 percent gains seen in 2011. According to Kelley Blue Book's [Book Market Report for March 2012](#), values of used fuel-efficient compacts increased a modest 0.4 percent in February; however, values picked up significant momentum during the last weeks of the month. In the last week of February, [used compacts](#) increased 1.3 percent, while [hybrid cars](#) increased a more substantial 3.6 percent... [MORE](#)

Kbb.com Editors Name 10 Best Sedans Under \$25,000

Kelley Blue Book's Kbb.com Editors Rank Favorite Affordable New Models in Popular Sedan Segment

IRVINE, Calif., March 15, 2012 -- Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com, the leading provider of [new car](#) and [used car](#) information, today announces the [10 Best Sedans Under \\$25,000](#).

The popular sedan segment for new cars is becoming more crowded with each passing year. While auto manufacturers continue to one-up each other with more feature-laden [new sedans](#) than ever before, ultimately it is the American consumer who wins with a plethora of new models from which to choose. However, with an influx of all-new or redesigned sedans in the marketplace, it can be difficult for consumers to discern the best model for their needs... [MORE](#)

Kbb.com Reports Most Fuel-Efficient Vehicles Available With Five-Year Total Cost of Ownership Less Than \$30,000

Analysts Recommend Car Shoppers Consider Long-Term Expenses in Choosing Next New Car

IRVINE, Calif., March 13, 2012 -- Kelley Blue Book, www.kbb.com, the leading provider of [new](#) and [used vehicle](#) information, today reports the most fuel-efficient vehicles available with a five-year [Total Cost of Ownership](#) less than \$30,000. Available on kbb.com, Kelley Blue Book's Total Cost of Ownership information reveals depreciation, expected fuel costs, finance and insurance fees, maintenance and repair costs, and state fees for new models for the initial five-year ownership period.

In today's economy, most families are looking to save money wherever possible. Going out to eat less often, cutting back on premium cable channels and nixing expensive coffee shop habits are a few ways consumers can reduce their weekly expenses in the short term. However, with gas prices on the rise, many consumers are looking beyond short-term savings by considering more fuel-efficient vehicles to help offset the rising price of fuel... [MORE](#)

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Founded in 1926, Kelley Blue Book, The Trusted Resource®, is the only vehicle valuation and information source trusted and relied upon by both consumers and the industry. Each week the company provides the most market-reflective values in the industry on its top-rated website www.kbb.com, including its famous Blue Book® Trade-In and Suggested Retail Values and Fair Purchase Price, which reports what others are paying for new cars this week. The company also provides vehicle pricing and values through various products and services available to car dealers, auto manufacturers, finance and insurance companies as well as governmental agencies. Kbb.com provides consumer pricing and information on [minivans](#), [pickup trucks](#), [sedan](#), [hybrids](#), [electric cars](#), and [SUVs](#). Kelley Blue Book Co. Inc. is a wholly owned subsidiary of AutoTrader.com.