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HOT CAR REPORT

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Note: For Top/Bottom 5 Models, only vehicles where the weekly page views fall above the 30th percentile are used for analysis.

Summary:

The 2011 Kia Optima has turned out to be a head-turner as the hottest intro/redesign this week, increasing its share of new-car shopper activity by 118 percent week-over-week. However, the Chevrolet Volt edges out the Kia Optima in terms of hottest car overall, as fuel economy continues to be a hot topic for the New Year.

Commentary:

When several Chinese auto companies made news that they would be coming to the U.S. market in the near future back in 2006, every car company felt a chill. However, this chill was felt strongest by Hyundai and Kia, as they were the current occupants of the lower rungs of the automotive ladder and could see a future where the Chinese would be able to undercut their value position. They wisely decided to fight back with unexpected design, fuel economy and refinement, and a perfect example of this new philosophy is the 2011 Kia Optima. Based on the already-successful Hyundai Sonata, the Optima is helping to push the previously conservative Kia brand onto new-car shoppers' consideration lists across the country. This new wave of Korean design leadership also is in the news this week as the more conventional Kia Borrego and Rondo have been deleted from Kia's lineup as of the 2011 model year. Also noteworthy this week is the continued presence of the Chevrolet Volt within kbb.com's Hot Car Report, as a new wave of interest likely was spurred by the Volt's win of the North American Car of the Year award during the Detroit auto show. For shoppers who are not sure if the Volt is a 'real car,' this award should help allay any fears.