Luxury SUV Shoppers Want Comfort and Performance, While Non-Luxury SUV Considerers Look for Fuel Efficiency and Reliability

Brand Watch Study Reveals Brand Perceptions and Key Decision Factors Among Shoppers in SUV Segment

Kelley Blue Book (www.kbb.com) and Kelley Blue Book Marketing Research's latest report series, Brand Watch, which reveals key decision factors among consumers in the purchase consideration process, shows the two most important factors of luxury SUV shoppers are driving comfort and driving performance, whereas the non-luxury SUV shopper considers fuel efficiency and durability/reliability the two most important factors in considering an SUV. Falling in the middle of the top five consideration factors for both of these groups is safety. Among luxury SUV shoppers Lexus ranked No. 1 for driving comfort, their top consideration factor. Among non-luxury SUV considerers, Toyota ranked No. 1 for fuel efficiency, durability/reliability and safety, the segment's top three consideration factors.

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Brand Watch asked both luxury and non-luxury SUV intenders their opinions and perceptions regarding up to 17 different attributes associated specifically with SUVs. New-vehicle shoppers were asked to not only rank these attributes in importance, but to also rate each manufacturer on those important factors. The price-point difference between luxury and non-luxury SUV considerers leads the top five attributes among these two consideration groups to be nearly opposites.

"Shoppers who can afford a luxury vehicle can also afford gas at $3.50 a gallon and are much more concerned with driving performance and driving comfort than fuel efficiency and reliability," said Jack R. Nerad, executive editorial director and executive market analyst. "Those concerned with fuel efficiency and reliability are much more cost-conscious overall and less likely to consider a luxury vehicle."

In the luxury SUV shoppers group, GMC's luxury Denali line topped the rankings for seating-capacity, towing and being family-friendly, but tied for last place with Saab among considerers when it comes to prestige and brand status. In the prestige and brand status category, consumers ranked Mercedes-Benz at the top. For brand cachet and perception among consumers, HUMMER and Cadillac came in close behind Mercedes-Benz among luxury SUV shoppers. And while Hummer placed high for brand and prestige, the military-style vehicle ranked last for luxuriousness and sophistication, where again Mercedes-Benz garnered the top slot.

Perceptions of vehicle brands in the non-luxury shopping group placed Toyota and Honda high for the majority of attribute categories including comfort, reliability and safety, but when it comes to stylishness, layout/design and versatility/flexibility, non-luxury SUV intenders rate Ford highest for those attributes.

"In-market shoppers' make/model choices are clearly influenced by brand perceptions and brand-level campaigns," said Rick Wainschel, vice president of marketing research and brand communications for Kelley Blue Book. "It appears that the branding campaigns executed by some of the domestic luxury SUV brands are paying off."

Available to vehicle manufacturers and auto industry professionals, Brand Watch

taps into more than 12,000 active and in-market shoppers annually to determine their perception of vehicle makes within specific automotive segments. Brand Watch further delves into how each manufacturer's brand equity differs across vehicle segments, compares the relative standing of each make vs. competitive makes, and the decision factors of shoppers within each make and segment. Detailed demographic and psychographic information is also collected, reported and detailed throughout Brand Watch's comprehensive study available quarterly from Kelley Blue Book Marketing Research.

For sales inquiries on any vehicle segment or brand, please contact Kelly Gim, director of marketing research services at 949-268-2756 or via e-mail at kgim@kbb.com.

About Kelley Blue Book (kbb.com)

Since 1926, Kelley Blue Book, The Trusted Resource®, has provided vehicle buyers and sellers with the new and used vehicle information they need to accomplish their goals with confidence. The company's top-rated Web site, kbb.com, provides the most up-to-date pricing and values, including the New Car Blue Book® Value, which reveals what people actually are paying for new cars. The company also reports vehicle pricing and values via products and services, including software products and the famous Blue Book® Official Guide. Kbb.com is rated the No. 1 automotive information site by Nielsen//NetRatings and the most visited auto site by J.D. Power and Associates eight years in a row. No other medium reaches more in-market vehicle shoppers than kbb.com; nearly one in every three American car buyers performs their research on kbb.com.

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