

Kia, Hyundai, Jeep Show Increased Share of Market Interest as Honda, Saturn, BMW Decline

'Core' Domestic Brands Continue to Show Consumer Interest Strength

IRVINE, Calif., Aug. 13 /PRNewswire/ -- Kelley Blue Book, www.kbb.com, the leading provider of [new car](#) and [used car](#) information, today announces the results of the latest analysis by Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence of recent kbb.com Web traffic patterns, including the top five upward-climbing and downward-declining brands in share of market interest for July 2009 when compared to July 2008.

Top Five Upward Climbers	Top Five Downward Decliners
1. Ford	1. Honda
2. Chevrolet	2. Saturn
3. Kia	3. BMW
4. Hyundai	4. Pontiac
5. Jeep	5. Nissan

While Ford and Chevrolet have led share of market interest year-over-year for the past three months, newcomers to the list Kia and Hyundai saw a significant increase in share of market interest in July 2009 when compared to July 2008. Kia saw a jump due to the popularity of its all-new Soul and the introduction of its all-new Forte, and Hyundai due to its heavy promotion of the Genesis coupe and sedan. Jeep also entered into the top five 'upward climbers' list for July 2009 with traffic primarily reaching the fuel-efficient Patriot small SUV, which is garnering more attention now due to recent heavy incentives and its eligibility for new-car purchase under the federal Cash for Clunkers program.

In July 2009, as other domestic manufacturers were coming out of bankruptcy and dealer closings, Ford traffic saw the largest year-over-year share of market interest increase compared to July 2008. A leading contributor to Ford's climb was the Fusion, which saw a 180 percent increase in year-over-year interest from July 2008 to July 2009, likely due to the introduction and heavy promotion of Ford's 2010 Fusion and Fusion Hybrid models.

Brands affected by the negative economic news actually saw increases in share of market interest in July 2009 compared with the prior year. The second-highest upward climber of year-over-year share of market interest on kbb.com was Chevrolet. Despite GM's bankruptcy and dealer closings, the Chevrolet brand's share of market interest surged ahead in July 2009, based largely on strong consumer interest in the new 2010 Camaro as well as the heavily-marketed Equinox and Traverse crossovers.

Two exceptions to the domestic surge are Saturn and Pontiac, whose decline is largely attributable to General Motors' decision to sell Saturn and terminate the Pontiac brand as part of its massive government-assisted reorganization. GM's original communications sent a signal to consumers that the Saturn brand might cease to exist, which has eroded its market share since that announcement was made. While GM subsequently has announced that Saturn Corporation will be acquired by the Penske Automotive Group, this has not, as of yet, reestablished interest levels in that brand.

BMW is a newcomer to the top five 'downward decliners' list for July 2009, due to the fact that the luxury-car market has not fared as well with the current economic

problems in 2009 when compared to one year ago. Even with more affordable entry-level models like the 1-Series and 3-Series, consumers still perceive BMW as a luxury brand and are simply not shopping for luxury vehicles as much this year. Luxury brands also have suffered as shoppers are drawn to more affordable vehicles that qualify for the Cash for Clunkers program.

Likely reasoning behind July share declines in Honda and Nissan was their uncommonly high interest in July 2008. At that time with a rapid run-up in fuel prices, consumers took a decided turn toward more fuel-efficient vehicles, boosting the share of audience for both small-car and primarily sedan-oriented brands, including those with heavy hybrid representation. Now, with fuel prices down from their peaks of nearly \$5-a-gallon last year, the shares of both brands are at more 'typical' levels.

"Ford, Chevrolet and Jeep increasing their year-over-year share of market interest certainly brings good news to the domestic manufacturers, and the Korean manufacturers have a lot to be proud of with the increased interest in Kia and Hyundai," said Jack R. Neraid, executive editorial director and executive market analyst for Kelley Blue Book and kbb.com. "However, domestic brands in flux such as Saturn and Pontiac, luxury brands like BMW and fuel-efficiency-focused Japanese brands like Honda and Nissan are simply victims of the changing times. A lot has happened to the U.S. economy in the past year, and the mindset of the American car shopper has changed along with it."

The information contained in this press release is from Kelley Blue Book Market Watch Web site traffic data from kbb.com from July 2008 - July 2009.

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