Kelley Blue Book Names Most-Researched New Vehicles, Brands of 2011; Hyundai Debuts in Top Five Researched Brands on Kbb.com

Hyundai Elantra Jumps 29 Positions on Most-Researched List; Luxury Models Unable to Hold Ground

IRVINE, Calif., Dec. 13, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Kelley Blue Book, the leading provider of new car and used car information, today announces the most-researched new vehicles of 2011 on the company's top-rated website, www.kbb.com. In addition, Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com reveals the top five brands with the greatest share of market interest for 2011.

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Kbb.com's Top 20 Most-Researched New Vehicles of 2011

1. Honda Civic	6. Hyundai Sonata	11. Nissan Altima	16. Ford Focus
2. Honda Accord	7. Hyundai Elantra	12. Toyota Highlander	17. Ford Explorer
3. Toyota Camry	8. Chevrolet Equinox	13. Honda Odyssey	18. Toyota RAV4
4. Honda CR-V	9. Toyota Prius	14. Toyota Corolla	19. Chevrolet Silverado 1500
5. Ford F-150	10. Volkswagen Jetta	15. Ford Fusion	20. Ford Escape

This year's success story is the Hyundai Elantra, entering the top 20 most-researched new vehicles list at No. 7, jumping 29 positions from 2010. Elantra's victory can be attributed to the vehicle's top-rated fuel efficiency, affordability, superior redesign and Hyundai's increased popularity among consumers.

"Hyundai's Elantra resonated with kbb.com visitors earlier this year with its redesign releasing as gas prices were soaring, and due to its styling it remains top-of-mind among new-car shoppers," said Arthur Henry, manager of market intelligence for Kelley Blue Book. "Hyundai was able to knock it out of the park two years in rows with the Sonata and now the Elantra, which is maintaining brand loyalty and changing public perception."

Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com 2011 Top Five Brands with Greatest Share of Market Interest among New-Car Shoppers

1. Toyota with 14.2 percent
2. Ford with 13.5 percent
3. Honda with 12.8 percent
4. Chevrolet with 11.5 percent
5. Hyundai with 7.5 percent

Toyota, Ford, Honda, Chevrolet, Hyundai (respectively) are the top five brands with the highest share of market interest -- defined as the percent of new-car shopper activity for a particular brand -- on Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com for 2011.

Making its big appearance this year as a top brand is Hyundai, closing in the fifth position on the 2011 top five most-researched brand list, replacing Nissan from last year. Hyundai's increased popularity among car shoppers can be accounted for in part due to Honda and Toyota delivering their vehicles at a low production rate because of the Japanese tsunami and recent Thai floods. Many consumers turned to Hyundai for their new-car purchase during this time with the lack of vehicles in the marketplace. Hyundai's roll out of the Equus and Veloster, in addition with the redesign of the Accent and Azera, were also considerable factors that translated into Hyundai's increased market share on kbb.com. The Hyundai Elantra and Sonata had a high level of prosperity this year, which generated brand interest among car shoppers.

Toyota retained its number one spot and the brand's market share increased 1 percent on www.kbb.com. This year, Ford moved up one position to the second brand researched most from 10.2 percent in 2010 to 13.5 percent this year. Honda moved down to number three on the list, while Chevrolet remained the fourth brand researched when compared to 2010.

Significant to this year's list is the absence of luxury brands among the top 20 most-researched new vehicles on kbb.com. The BMW 3 Series held position 18 last year; however, with uneasy economic conditions and rising gas prices during Q1 and Q2 2011, many luxury owners and intenders moved toward non-luxury brands on the site. Rising fuel prices also allowed the hybrid segment to thrive earlier in the year with the Toyota Prius benefitting most, moving eight spots this year to number nine.

"Luxury brands were hit the hardest this year; not one luxury vehicle made it on Kelley Blue Book's 2011 most-researched list," said Henry. "They simply didn't fit into many consumers' budgets, especially with the gas price hike earlier this year."

Since 2004, the Honda Accord, Honda Civic and Toyota Camry remain the top three most-researched new vehicles on kbb.com. While these models remained among the top three again in 2011, several other vehicles entered the list for the first time or shifted position.

A number of popular new or redesigned models also increased their standing for 2011 versus 2010, including the Volkswagen Jetta, up 10 positions to number 10, and the Chevrolet Equinox, up five positions to number eight. The Ford F-150, Chevrolet Silverado 1500 and Ford Explorer are new to this year's list compared to 2010.

Many vehicles that are standard candidates on the annual most-researched vehicle list dropped in ranking during 2011. The Toyota RAV4 fell eight positions to number 18, while Nissan Altima decreased five positions to number 11 and the Ford Escape fell four spots to number 20. Toyota Highlander dropped three spots to number 12 and the Honda Odyssey fell one position to number 13. The vehicles that claimed a top 20 spot on the 2010 list, but unfortunately did not make the cut this year were the Honda Pilot, Ford Mustang, Toyota Sienna, BMW 3 Series and Chevrolet Camaro.

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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 Retail Values and Fair Purchase Price, which reports what others are paying for new cars this week. The company also provides vehicle

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