

# Understanding the Car Buyer's Path to Purchase: How Dealerships Can Win at Every Stage

On average, car shoppers are influenced by six to seven different online sources when considering what and where to buy. A customer's path to purchase can be complicated but understanding what motivates them along the way is critical to the success of a dealership's business.

Let's explore the five stages of a car buyer's journey and how modern marketing automation and strategies can help drive leads to purchase.

## STAGE 1 | AWARENESS

*The new vehicle shopper has identified a need and is starting their research*

**FACT:** 50% of car shoppers will use independent research sites and 49% will use search engines to research a new vehicle purchase.<sup>[1]</sup>

**MARKETING TIP:** Dealerships need to bring their brand to the shoppers' attention as they research. This includes having a multi-channel strategy to get helpful information like customer reviews and promotions in front of prospects via their website and social media.



## STAGE 2 | INTEREST

*The car buyer is beginning to evaluate vehicles to purchase and where to buy them*



**FACT:** 80% of customers are more likely to purchase from a brand that provides personalized experiences.<sup>[2]</sup>

**MARKETING TIP:** During this stage, dealerships want to analyze any insights they have into a prospect's actions, then send them relevant sales messages. Marketing automation tools can hyper-target shoppers with specific vehicle information or finance specials to guide their decisions. Personalized dealership emails see on average **14% open rates** compared to the industry benchmark of 10%.

## STAGE 3 | CONSIDERATION

*Now the buyer is looking deeper, checking out review sites, comparison shopping and even inquiring about financing*

**FACT:** 64% of auto shoppers will perform some level of cross-shopping while researching a vehicle.<sup>[3]</sup>

**MARKETING TIP:** Help the buyer through the process by providing a highly-personalized experience with your dealership to be considered. Do this by tailoring marketing messages to a shopper's exact needs and interests. Even send them to personalized landing pages -- a high-conversion strategy proven to deliver more "hand-raisers" (leads) for sales.



## STAGE 4 | PURCHASE

*The new car shopper has made the decision to purchase at your dealership*



**FACT:** 33% of top dealership sales are influenced by hyper-targeted marketing, according to Activator customers.

**MARKETING TIP:** Whether a customer completes a form to schedule a test drive or pays a visit to the showroom, this is a winning moment for a dealership. Once the contract is signed, ensure your marketing automation efforts include sending a follow-up message within days of purchase to welcome the customer to your dealership, complete a satisfaction survey and enter them into a cycle to receive timely service reminders.

## STAGE 5 | POST-PURCHASE

*The customer has purchased but needs ongoing communication to stay loyal*

**FACT:** Even just a 5% boost in customer retention can net a **25% to 95% increase in profit**.<sup>[4]</sup>

**MARKETING TIP:** The customer relationship doesn't end at a sale, in fact, it begins that day. Ensure your dealership's marketing automation tool allows you to send continuous relevant messages to the new vehicle owner from service reminders and offers to referral promotions and all the way to a new vehicle upgrade offer when the time is right.



## Win at every stage of the buyer journey

With Activator, dealers can market seamlessly across critical customer touchpoints in the path to purchase and positively impact their entire business using a single solution.