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INTRODUCTION

In today’s competitive marketplace, women buyers are crucial for auto dealer’s success. It takes more than having the ‘best price’ or a female spokesperson to market to today’s woman car buyer. The demographics of American families are changing rapidly and are impacting sales at your store. Dealerships need to pay close attention to engaging, marketing and optimizing sales to this powerful segment.

Here are some game-changing data points:

• 45% of women purchase cars by themselves¹
• 38% of women out earn their husbands²
• 53% of millennial car buyers are women³
• 56% of women do not purchase from the brand dealer closest to their home¹

Women-Drivers.com is proud to publish the 2017 U.S. Women’s Car Dealership Report which is drawn from 4,653 women’s car dealer reviews and opt-in surveys through December, 2016. The company generates its’ proprietary Women Satisfaction Index® (WSI) Optics, ranging from a high of 5.0 to a low of 1.0 for each dealership review score. Women rated their dealership for Purchasing, Servicing or Shopping.

The WSI® Optics report is available to Dealerships and OEM’s.

ABOUT

Women-Drivers.com is the premier car dealer review site focused on women+families. It connects women buyers to Certified Trusted Dealers. Over sixty percent of women report not being confident buying a car. The company provides reputation management, website content, and advanced Women’s Satisfaction Index® Optics for dealerships and OEMs to better service women customers when Purchasing, Shopping and in the Service Drive. @Women-Drivers #CompareTrustBuy

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1. Data derived from Women-Drivers.com
“According to our own research, Women-Drivers positive reviews are very effective at delivering more customers to our website and showrooms while converting sales and service leads for our Kelly Dealerships. The Women-Drivers Trusted Certified Dealer Program allow customers to write reviews for individual dealership team members as well as highlight the conveniences and amenities we offer. I continue to be amazed at how many customers walk into our stores and state ‘I am here because of your Women-Drivers reviews’.”

- Chris Saraceno, Partner, Kelly Automotive Group

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to share the research from thousands of women who rated their experience at participating dealers. Would it surprise you to learn that 9 out of 10 women who wrote reviews, voluntarily complete a 25-question opt-in survey about their Purchase, Service Drive or Shopping experience, without any incentive at all? This is where our rich journey in analytics originates. We help turn actionable data into turn-key solutions for dealerships.

Next to the reported findings are ideas and best practices called “What’s Working”. We provide actionable and repeatable plans to integrate, educate and assist dealerships in developing these disciplines.

We measure the Women’s Satisfaction Index® (WSI) of Certified Trusted Dealers and non-certified trusted dealers. Certified Trusted Dealers have a cumulative WSI® of 4.855, or the equivalent of 97.1% satisfaction score. Non-certified trusted dealers have a cumulative WSI® of 4.278, or the equivalent of 85.5% satisfaction score. This extraordinary 11.6% difference leaves two overarching conclusions:

1. **Certified Trusted Dealers** are putting forth an effort to elevate the customer experience and add value as part of their business practice. This is proven by their aggregate 97.1% satisfaction score, which is exceptional.
2. Non-certified trusted dealers have almost a twelve percent lower satisfaction score. While business remains strong, these dealers don’t know how this negative double digit differential impacts any of the following:
   - Lost gross margin dollars
   - Lost loyalty & retention
   - Lower CSI
   - Lost Service Visits
   - Friends and family
   - Reviews and reputation

Focus and attention is what distinguishes dealers who want to ignite an edge with this buying segment. Hyper competitiveness calls for leveraging value with every interaction. Today, every single interaction matters. As a business, we are a marketplace that empowers and amplifies cutting-edge experiences for dealers and customers, alike.
PURCHASING TRENDS
1. Mercedes-Benz
2. Lincoln
3. Dodge
4. Volkswagen
5. Jeep
6. Ford
7. Audi
8. Chrysler
9. Chevrolet
10. Hyundai
11. Toyota
12. Subaru
13. Lexus
14. Nissan
15. Honda

Note. Results based on 4,653 women’s car dealer reviews from participating dealers.

95.4% of women report the sales advisor was respectful and friendly.

**WHAT’S WORKING** Approach and engage women in a trustworthy and respectful manner. If she is buying with another person, for example, a male companion, always make eye contact with both individuals. Don’t assume who will be buying the vehicle. “Be” with both of them and find out who the buyer(s) will be; they may be buying it together. The simple rule is it’s always best to ask.

91% of women received follow-up communication from the dealer.

**WHAT’S WORKING** There remains a huge opportunity to get referrals from close to 10% of your buyers to build a relationship and maximize customer value. To help ensure your communications are getting through and opened, test them throughout the year for content and value.

Preferred follow-up method requested after purchase:
- **54.7%** - Email
- **27.3%** - Phone
- **18.0%** - Text
44.9% of women went to the dealership alone.

Of the 55.1% accompanied by someone else, 20.3% brought a woman and 79.7% brought a man.

WHAT’S WORKING Almost half of women are empowered to purchase a vehicle on their own. We strongly suggest your management team go through the exercise to add up the ‘women-only’ buyers from 2016. Same for your service drive. This will provide you with cumulative start to understanding the female buying power at your dealership. Now you can calculate the loyalty from your female clients for 2017. What is your strategic plan to not only maintain these customers, but to grow this segment?

54% of women went to one (1) dealership to purchase their vehicle.

46% went to an average of 3.2 dealerships.

WHAT’S WORKING An amazing 54% of dealers are in the right place at the right time. These dealerships are present, available and price competitive when it matters. They have some form of media and/or reputation appealing to women. Women report in most cases they had highly satisfactory experiences.

WHAT’S NOT WORKING Why does a buyer go to multiple dealerships when buying a vehicle? The top reason women report is “they didn’t like the way they were approached and treated” — the sales person was off putting or her questions weren’t answered to her satisfaction.

Hire more ambassadors from the hospitality industry where delivering an amazing customer experiences is strongly upheld. Look to local telecom retail stores with highly trained staff working demanding hours and selling technical product. These two industries have deep talent pools with polished customer engagement — and an equal degree of men and women to tap into.

3 Hours & 40 Minutes is the average time women reported spent purchasing a vehicle at a dealership.
**TOP 9 EMOTIONS WHEN PURCHASING**

1. Excited  
2. Relaxed  
3. Confident  
4. Apprehensive  
5. Nervous  
6. Overwhelmed  
7. Intimidated  
8. Confused  
9. Frustrated

**WHAT’S WORKING** Emotions are the heart of buying a car. While confidence is rising and now is the #3 emotion women report, (up from #4 last year), what works for dealers is taking the time to incorporate programs to actively boost confidence in prospective buyers. This means making your dealership a trusted destination. The benefits don’t stop when a woman finalizes her car sale. She will own her car for another 5 - 8 years, and will choose to service her car at the store she trusts. A confident, happy buyer who has written a great review of her experience can influence countless other women to follow her lead. And, when she decides to purchase a new car, the loyalty created will bring her back into the showroom to start the process all over again.

**TOP 6 REASONS FOR PURCHASING FROM THIS DEALERSHIP**

1. Sales Advisor  
2. Best Price/Deal  
3. Dealership Reputation  
4. Best Model/Color  
5. Hours of Service/Location  
6. Best Financing

**WHAT’S WORKING** Coach sales advisors to have their highest possible EQ and help educate them to read your client’s emotions. When hiring sales advisors, look for people who have a high EQ. This means they are trustworthy, respectful, good listeners and adept problem solvers. Those who easily adapt to new situations and can read non-verbal cues like body language, and tone of voice are top candidates.

We live in a world of customization for each person’s own needs and expectations. Successful dealers take the time to understand these differences, implement and adjust their mindset, attitude and behavior towards women to understand how they differ in their buying experiences. We have come across some dealers who are quick to say they ‘treat everyone the same’ as evidence they don’t discriminate against women, or for that matter, anyone. Would a physician treat all her patients the same, or a teacher, their students? Personalization is key.

Continuously find ways to highlight interactions with women customers. In the process, brag by letting others hear the voice of your customer champion. For example:

- Be sure reviews are front and center on your website and social media efforts.
- Don’t limit reviews to only glowing comments or they will look pre-screened. Show how you readily solve problems.
- Encourage customers to write reviews about their visit. Let them know you are using their ideas to improve your ability to deliver outstanding service.
TOP 6 REASONS FOR PURCHASING FROM THIS SALES ADVISOR

1. Respectful
2. Trustworthy
3. Likeable
4. Knowledgeable
5. Understanding
6. Price and/or Value of Vehicle

WHAT’S WORKING Emotions affect the buying experience. Recognize body language as a way to assess how a deal is progressing. Learn to read your customer’s verbal and non-verbal cues that indicate hesitation. Ask questions to find out what is causing doubts about the purchase and work to increase confidence. Steer the sales process toward a better result. Offer a 3-day money back guarantee, for example, to alleviate concerns and make buyers feel more confident.

Know that while half of women are excited about their car purchase, just one-third are confident during the process. Price matters, but emotions are a very large part of a woman buyer’s satisfaction levels.

When a woman shopper walks in your door, create a mental attitude to treat her as the most important person you’ve met. Listen carefully to what she is and isn’t saying. Don’t interrupt, and ask the right questions to understand her needs. When she asks a question, answer it in a succinct manner. Let her know why she can trust your dealership from start to finish and what sets it apart from others. Don’t be overconfident and derail the meeting. Stay present.

Respecting a buyer’s time. Everyone is busy. Women buyers may be on her lunch hour or ready to pick up her kids from school in an hour. She certainly isn’t window shopping; she is there to accomplish something. If she senses she is wasting her time or you aren’t paying full attention, she’ll go elsewhere.

TOP 5 REASONS FOR NOT PURCHASING AT DEALERSHIP

1. Poor Price/Deal Presented
2. Didn’t Like the Way They Were Treated
3. Didn’t Have Model/Color
4. Poor Trade-In Offer
5. Location and/or Service Hours

WHAT’S NOT WORKING 74% of women buyers feel misunderstood by car marketers. When a woman walks out of your dealership because she doesn’t like the way she was treated there is a downside domino effect to your dealership. A CAR-Research study shows that the average dealership only logs about 25% of its ups. How many women are overlooked as potential buyers in the other 75%?

Let’s dissect the impact when a woman walks out of your store:

- She is buying from your competitor.
- Your reputation suffers. Consider she is writing a review about her visit at your store.
- Cost of CSI.
- You have lost her referrals family and friends referrals.
- You have lost the residual value of her service business.
- You have lost her potential future business.

93% of women, when purchasing, were satisfied with the price and payment discussed.

95% of women were satisfied with the overall dealership visit.
**TOP 10 REASONS FOR PURCHASING A VEHICLE**

1. Price
2. Brand/Model/Reputation
3. Style/Design
4. Safety
5. Space/Functionality
6. Warranty
7. Color
8. Tech Gadgets
9. Mileage
10. Dealership’s Service

**WHAT’S WORKING** Dealers relationship with customers, their reputation, and standing in the community, demonstrates their trustworthiness. Client retention has everything to do with their experience from walking in the door, buying the vehicle, to how they are treated over the years. All of this hinges on their eagerness to do business there in the future.

**WHAT’S WORKING** Women voluntarily brag and share their positive experiences socially, with friends, and the community. This is another reason to ask, ask, ask, for reviews. Never miss an opportunity to have female clients review their sales and service visit because they are generous and leave high scores.

**WHAT’S WORKING** Women use dealer reviews 50% more than men. They are looking for authentic reviews written by other women to help them relate to a dealership as a trusted business. Using a strong ‘evidence-driven reputation’ strategy to distinguish your dealership with leads from your BDC is highly effective.

**WHAT’S WORKING** Successful dealers get involved early in the buying process with reputation management and marketing programs focused on women to some degree. Do you know women use dealer reviews 50% more than men? Take advantage and distinguish your store with these buyers.

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30.8% of women report they have purchased at the same dealership before.

26.5% of women report being referred by a friend or family member.

49.2% of women report visiting and buying from a dealership because of their reputation.

56.4% of women did not purchase at the brand dealership closest to their home.

14.4 Miles is the average distance between the dealership and buyer’s home.
**TOP 10 WEBSITES RESEARCHED WHEN PURCHASING**

1. Dealership  
2. Manufacturer  
3. Kelley Blue Book  
4. AutoTrader  
5. Consumer Reports  
6. Edmunds  
7. Cars.com  
8. CarFax  
9. TrueCar  
10. JD Power

**WHAT’S WORKING**

Women report that the #1 website they visit when buying a car is the dealership’s, followed closely by the OEM. This is tremendous good news for dealers. Are you prepared and ready for women to come to your website today? Remember, you only get one first impression.

- Do you have a true understanding of your women buyers and her digital behaviors and buying habits? This is a must-have start.
- Create “How-to” videos for women and post on your site. They don’t need to be about car buying, but rather the owner experience.
- Fill website with lifestyle photos and various demographics.
- Have engaging content addressing various stages of the ownership experience, like the *Women’s Car Guide*.
- Stop selling cars to women like they are power tools. Create women-centric ads that speak to what matters to women. Differentiate your dealership like you “get it”.
- Showcase Reviews to women for women and highlight on website.

76.3% of women report a dealership’s websites is informative and helpful.

**WHAT’S WORKING**

Three out of 4 women report their dealer’s website is “helpful”. Take an honest and fresh look at your website and ask, what can be done to improve it? Add value by providing content to assist your customer:

- 76.3% of women report a dealership’s websites is informative and helpful.

78.2% said the posts were helpful and 61.2% said they “liked” the Facebook page.
Top 15 Brands for Vehicle Service

1. Volvo 4.95
2. Mercedes-Benz 4.93
3. Audi 4.91
4. BMW 4.90
5. Porsche 4.89
6. Lexus 4.88
7. Ford 4.84
8. Volkswagen 4.82
9. Jeep 4.71
10. Chevrolet 4.64
11. Honda 4.63
12. Nissan 4.63
13. Lincoln 4.62
14. Dodge 4.58
15. Subaru 4.54

Note: Results based on 4,653 women’s car dealer reviews from participating dealers.

90.7% of women report service personnel were friendly & respectful.

What’s Working: Today’s cars are complex, and buyers rely on their service advisors to be transparent and truthful. Women who are dealing with their jobs and families do not always have the time to research what service or repairs their cars need. It’s up to the service personnel to provide a trustworthy and comfortable environment so that women feel confident about their car’s safety and the dealership they are doing business with.

An important part of the service process is ensuring women understand what is happening to her car. Today’s technology provides excellent ways to impart knowledge about required services and repairs. ClearMechanic.com and Dealertrack have mobile applications that allow dealerships to provide visual inspections to show video & photo evidence of needed repairs. These records are stored for later use, making this tool effective for repair and for future customer loyalty and retention.
71.6% of women reported receiving follow-up communication from the dealership.

80.6% of women were satisfied with the car’s cleanliness after service.

WHAT’S WORKING

Your customer may not always have the understanding or confidence to be able to describe a car’s problem. Listen for what she is saying and not saying. Be the solution provider to your client’s satisfaction. If a woman feels misunderstood, placated or patronized, she will find another place to service her car.

59.3% of women serviced their vehicle at the closest dealership to their home.

87.4% of women reported that all of their questions were answered.

WHAT’S NOT WORKING

There are dealers still saying “call us first if you are not going to leave all 5’s” regarding reviews or CSI. This pressures women and for that matter, all your customers. It’s not an appropriate practice.
62% of women went to the dealership where they purchased.

19.8% of women went to another dealership.

18.2% of women went to a Retail Service Center, Mechanic or other place for service.

**WHAT’S WORKING** Typically, the first 2-3 years after buying her car, women come in for mandatory service visits or recalls. It’s what we call the Yo-Yo Effect. What can be done to create more ongoing interactions with women post-sale to build brand awareness? Have you considered offering free car washes or sending cards? What about a “happy anniversary this-is-the-day-you-bought-your-car-here-and-we-appreciate-you” detailing? These are opportunities to further build real relationships and to keep you top of mind.

**TOP 3 LOCATIONS WOMEN REPORT THEIR SERVICE WORK IS COMPLETED**

**TOP 7 REASONS FOR NOT GETTING SERVICE AT ORIGINAL DEALERSHIP**

1. Not satisfied with last visit
2. Didn’t like how they were treated
3. Inability to get issue resolved to satisfaction
4. Cost of service
5. Location is not convenient
6. Hours are not convenient
7. Lack of concierge services

67.5% of women requested a courtesy vehicle when leaving their vehicle overnight for service.

**WHAT’S WORKING** Dealerships who offer value-add services like a courtesy car increase the likelihood of additional service drive business, loyalty and referrals from women. And future business. These are the types of services that have your women clients love your dealership.

As a minimum, include:

- Comfortable seating lounge area
- Wi-fi connectivity with nearby power outlets
- A safe, entertaining play area for children
- Clean, comfortable restrooms
- A refreshment station with quality coffee, tea, healthy snacks and drinks
SHOPPING TRENDS
56.2% of women went to the dealership alone.

Of the 43.8% accompanied by someone else, 24.2% brought a woman and 75.8% brought a man.

80% of women received follow-up communication from the dealer. This is a 3% decrease from 2016.

85% of women would recommend their sales advisor.

87.8% of women, when shopping, were satisfied with the price and payment discussed.

55% of women who leave a dealership without purchasing will not return there.