

AUTO US: STREAMLINING PURCHASE

The Full Report is Available to Gartner Clients Only.

Key Findings

- Brands are developing more useful and transparent Build and Price tools: 77% offer detailed pricing breakdowns and 81% reflect add-on costs in real time. At the end of configuration, the majority offer “next steps” but prioritize guiding users to dealers over allowing users to save builds.
- Brands are embedding more touchpoints for dealership handoff across their sites, as 70% include a Find a Dealer function on vehicle information pages and the homepage. These touchpoints steer customers away from unsophisticated dealer sites but toward dealer lots.
- To measure up to click-to-buy standards, several brands have launched online shopping tools. However, these initiatives are still in their infancy and in their current states risk discouraging shoppers.

What Brands Should Be Thinking About

- **Facilitating the Next Step:** In addition to next steps like Find a Dealer, offer ways to save builds at the end of car configuration to meet different customer needs, as shoppers often return to the Build and Price tool throughout the purchase process.
- **Taking the Wheel:** Enable users to search inventory at specific dealerships on the brand site to prevent them from deferring to dealer sites. Create a cohesive footprint by establishing a site tool or aesthetic template for dealer networks.
- **Alternative Purchase Models:** Invest in and advertise digital tools and services that provide price transparency and streamline test-drive and purchase processes.

Cody Stack | Director, Research, Auto

Megan McVay | Specialist, Research, Auto

Mai-Hanh Nguyen | Specialist, Research, Auto

Sarah Cioffi | Designer

Gartner L2 research is based on data-driven analysis. Our findings, rankings and recommendations are objective, unbiased and independent of membership.

Introduction

The traditional car buying process is inherently long and fragmented, requiring shoppers to traverse multiple online and offline touchpoints — from OEMs to dealers and third-party sellers. Tesla’s first-of-its-kind direct online sales offered relief from this disjointed process and established a precedent for digital startups like Carvana.

Consumer sentiment is shifting in light of these offerings and the dominance of online retailing. Sixty percent of U.S. consumers report they are interested in buying their next vehicle from the manufacturer via an online process.¹ The advent of ride-hailing services has led consumers to question if they need a vehicle in the first place: 52% of U.S. consumers who use ride-sharing or ride-hailing services question whether they need to own a car going forward.² With the digital future closing in on the auto realm, the pressure is on for car brands to meet evolving consumer preferences. Brands have taken immediate action by eliminating friction on their sites to better replicate purchase processes in other industries. One way brands accomplish this is by providing as much information as possible under one URL. More OEMs are subsuming everything users could conceivably find on dealer sites onto their central brand sites: 61% of Index desktop sites outline new inventory at specific dealerships and over a fifth allow users to request quotes from dealers. Fifty-six percent of Index mobile sites enable shoppers to save their final builds, ensuring that when they make the leap from Google browsers to dealer lots, they have their research collateral at the ready.

1. “How Digital Technologies Can Elevate the Car-Buying Experience,” Deloitte.

2. “Great Expectations: Insights Exploring New Automotive Business Models and Consumer Preferences,” Deloitte.

Auto US: Adoption of Dealer Handoff Features on Desktop Site

January 2018 vs. January 2019



n = 43 Brands Across Studies
Source: Gartner L2 Digital IQ Index: Auto 2019.

Inform decisions with data-driven benchmarking, expert advice and peer-sourced insights.

Data-Driven Benchmarking

- Digital performance of 2,200+ brands across four dimensions
- Multimodal surveys and advanced data science

Expert Advice

- Industry experts and marketing practitioners
- Quantitative and qualitative research

Peer-Sourced Insights

- 750+ marketing organizations provide a rich perspective
- Documented, benchmarked and validated best practices

Gartner for Marketers provides the objective, expert advice and proven tools you need to seize the right opportunities with clarity and confidence.



Benchmark

your performance with data-driven insights



Prioritize

investments and areas of improvement



Execute

your mission-critical priorities with speed and confidence



Stay Ahead

of trends that matter



Connect

with peers