



The Shopper Insights Report, brought to you by the AutoTrader.com Trend Engine, delivers insights on a new topic related to car shoppers each month.

Leveraging AutoTrader.com’s strengths in automotive expertise, consumer research and site traffic analysis, the Shopper Insights Report offers a unique perspective on timely and important issues facing today’s car shoppers.

For this edition of the Shopper Insights Report, AutoTrader.com experts looked at the topic of “Want to Buy Cars in a Need to Buy World” – or cars that consumers can feel good about purchasing if they find themselves in a position where a new (or new to them) vehicle is a necessity.

Want to Buy Cars in a Need to Buy World

The majority of consumers have been living in a “need to buy world”—that’s the word according to the 2011 AutoTrader.com Shopper Frame of Mind research study conducted with over 1500 recent vehicle purchasers. According to that study, an overwhelming majority—71% of respondents—purchased a car based on need (compared with only 29% who bought a car based on want), which is not surprising considering the economic conditions that consumers are facing. In addition to the purchasers’ previous vehicles being involved in accidents or breaking down, changes in lifestyle such as a new baby, new commute to work, new driver in the family and a new job were among the primary events driving the “need to buy” purchases.

For this edition of the Shopper Insights Report, the experts at AutoTrader.com developed a list of “want to buy cars” that consumers can feel good about purchasing in a “need to buy” world. Then AutoTrader.com fielded a new survey of over 300 site visitors in November to find out what cars on the list they were attracted to—and why.

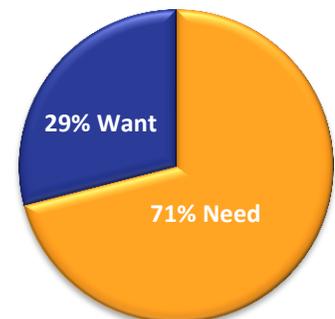
71%

That’s the percentage of shoppers who purchased a car based on need—rather than want, according to research conducted earlier this year by AutoTrader.com.

With this in mind, AutoTrader.com experts developed a list of “Want to Buy Cars in a Need To Buy World”: 12 Affordable New and Near-New Choices That Fulfill Consumer Needs and Wants.

Read on to see the list and consumer reactions to these cars with insights gathered from a survey of shoppers in November.

Figure 1: Need vs. Want





Expert Recommendations: Want to Buy Cars In a Need to Buy World - Categorized by Need

While we may be living in a “need to buy” world, there are a number of vehicles that can meet consumers’ needs while still providing many of the features, luxuries and conveniences that consumers will *want* to have in their next vehicle. AutoTrader.com’s expert editorial staff developed a list of new and near-new (late-model used) vehicles that would meet consumer’s various needs while fulfilling their wants as well. All recommended vehicles are affordably priced under \$30,000. Read on for more in-depth information regarding why AutoTrader.com experts recommended these vehicles.

Figure 2: AutoTrader.com Expert Recommendations for Want to Buy Cars in a Need to Buy World

Need (Event)	New Vehicle Recommendation	Near-New Vehicle Recommendation
Reliability (Previous Vehicle Broke Down)	2012 Hyundai Elantra	2010-2011 Ford Fusion
Safety (Previous Vehicle in Accident)	2012 Kia Soul	2007-2009 Volvo S80
Space and Value (New Baby in Family)	2012 Dodge Journey	2007-2009 GMC Acadia
Space to Haul or Style to Impress (New Job)	2012 Toyota Tacoma Double-Cab PreRunner	2007-2008 Infiniti G35 Sedan
Safety and Driving Dynamics (New Driver in the Family)	2012 Ford Focus	2010-2011 Suzuki Kizashi
Fuel Efficiency (Longer Commute)	2012 Jetta SportWagen TDI	2009 Acura TSX

Shopper Reactions: Used Luxury Vehicles Selected Most in Top Three Picks

To get insight into shoppers’ reaction to these “need to buy” cars that would fit some popular “want to buy” criteria, analysts at AutoTrader.com polled consumers who visited AutoTrader.com in November. Respondents picked their top three vehicles from the list provided by the experts and then chose descriptors that fit their view of each vehicle in their top three.

Rising to the top were primarily near-new luxury cars, with those models garnering the most top three picks. The 2008 Infiniti G35 was selected in the top three by 37% of those surveyed, the 2009 Acura TSX was selected by 34% and the Volvo S80 was chosen by 33%. Overall, respondents in the November survey viewed the G35 and TSX as being more sexy, stylish, sporty, fun and fast than the Volvo, but the Volvo was seen as more functional, safe and versatile than the other two.

The rise of the near-new luxury vehicles was not surprising, as shoppers have shown a significant increase in interest in luxury vehicles recently, as shown in the latest editions of AutoTrader.com’s [New Car Insights Report](#) and [Used/CPO Insights Report](#).

According to AutoTrader.com’s vice president of automotive insights, Rick Wainschel, it’s not atypical to see consumers shopping for new, non-luxury sedans in tandem with near-new luxury sedans, as these vehicles fulfill similar consumer desires at similar price points.

Figure 3: Luxury Vehicles Rise to the Top



Popular Choices vs. “Hidden Gems”

While there are a number of popular choices that get a lot of attention from consumers, there are quite a few hidden gems among the experts’ recommendations. In looking at overall shopper activity on AutoTrader.com, many of the recommended vehicles ranked highly based on shopper interest. For new cars, the Toyota Tacoma was the 11th most-viewed vehicle in October, followed by the Volkswagen Jetta (all models) at No. 18 and the Ford Focus at No. 32. These vehicles were also quite popular among the consumers that were polled, with 34% of consumers polled placing the Tacoma in their top three, 23% placing the Jetta TDI in their top three and 25% placing the Focus in their top three.

But vehicles such as the near-new Suzuki Kizashi and the new Kia Soul didn’t fare as well with shoppers surveyed in November, with only 10% of respondents choosing the Kia Soul and eight percent choosing the Kizashi among their top three choices, leading AutoTrader.com analysts to characterize these vehicles as hidden gems that shoppers should consider.

Below is a complete list of the cars recommended by AutoTrader.com experts, the reasons behind the recommendations and the insights gained from shoppers polled in November and recent activity on AutoTrader.com.



Vehicles with Rank According to Site Activity and % in Top 3

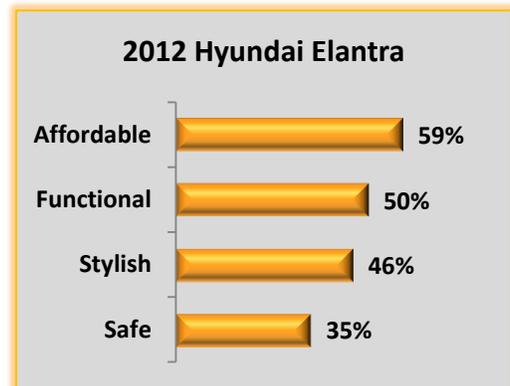
Vehicle	New Rank Oct 2011	Near New Rank Oct 2011	% in top 3
Previous Vehicle Broke Down			
2010-2011 Ford Fusion	--	65	33%
2012 Hyundai Elantra	53	--	15%
Previous Vehicle in Accident			
2012 Kia Soul	84	--	10%
2007-2009 Volvo S80	--	211	33%
New Baby in Family			
2012 Dodge Journey	105	--	15%
2007-2009 GMC Acadia	--	137	33%
New Job			
2012 Toyota Tacoma Double-Cab PreRunner	11	--	34%
2007-2008 Infiniti G35 Sedan	--	10	37%
New Driver in the Family			
2012 Ford Focus	32	--	25%
2010-2011 Suzuki Kizashi	--	444	8%
Longer Commute			
2012 Jetta SportWagen TDI	18	--	23%
2009 Acura TSX	--	126	34%

Event: Previous Vehicle Broke Down

For consumers whose previous vehicles broke down, quality, reliability and peace of mind are some of the major factors AutoTrader.com experts considered. Their recommendations are:

New: 2012 Hyundai Elantra

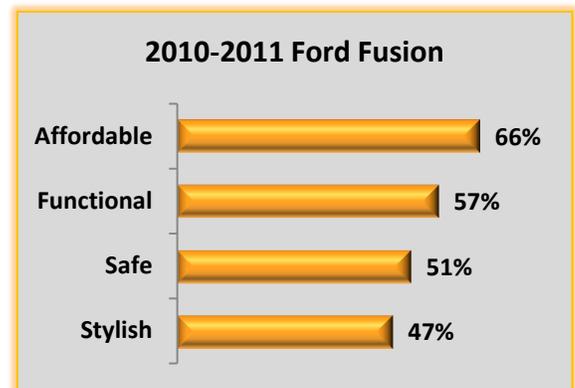
- AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The 2012 Elantra offers a lot of bang for the buck. It has an enticing design, plenty of premium features, including heated rear seats, a 10-year, 100,000-mile powertrain warranty—all at an affordable price.
- Shopper Insights:** While the 2012 Hyundai Elantra was not among the majority of surveyed shoppers’ top picks (it was selected by only 15%), those that did select it described the car as being functional (50%), stylish (46%) and safe (35%). The affordability of the Elantra was also noted by 59% of consumers, and coming in with a median asking price on AutoTrader.com at just under \$20,000, the Elantra certainly fits that bill. We do see signs that consumers on AutoTrader.com are beginning to take notice of this car, as the Elantra is now the No. 53 most-viewed new vehicle this year, up 20 spots from last year (No. 73).



- Conclusion:** The Hyundai Elantra is certainly a hidden gem. Though not as popular as other vehicles, the compact Elantra has a lot to offer, according to AutoTrader.com experts, delivering many features typically found on luxury cars, for a decidedly non-luxury price tag. Consumers needing to purchase a new compact car should certainly add this vehicle to their consideration sets.

Near New: 2010-2011 Ford Fusion

- AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The Fusion offers good driving dynamics and lots of features (including Ford's voice-activated SYNC) at a great price. It was also named Consumer Reports most reliable family sedan, making it a great choice for shoppers who have experienced a major vehicle break down in the past.
- Shopper Insights:** The Fusion was quite popular among surveyed shoppers, with 33% selecting this car in their top three picks. Sixty-six percent of respondents agreed that the Fusion is affordable, and on AutoTrader.com, shoppers can find a used Fusion for around \$18,000. The reliability of the Fusion didn't go unnoticed by consumers, with 45% agreeing that it would be a good car to buy if their old one broke down. And with its stylishness (noted by 47%), functionality (noted by 57%) and safety (noted by 51%), the Fusion gained an all-around great response in the November survey. However, the midsize car still has a ways to go overall on AutoTrader.com, as the pre-owned Fusion was only the 65th most-viewed used car in October 2011.
- Conclusion:** The Fusion is definitely a great choice for consumers who need to buy a car, with its attractive price point and slew of features and technology. During the aided survey in November, the Fusion fared quite well and garnered a great response, but the overall performance of the car on AutoTrader.com shows that it will need to rise above the noise to stand out in consumers' minds.



Event: Previous Vehicle in an Accident

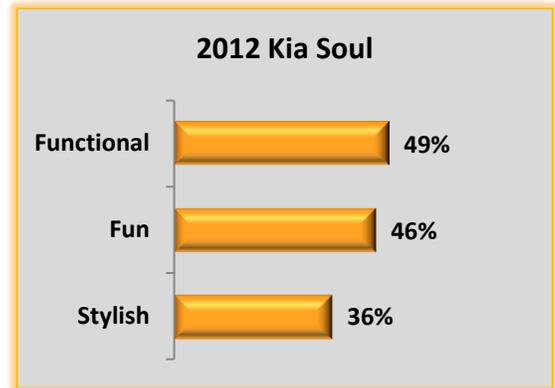
Safety will likely be top of mind for consumers searching for another car after an accident, and there are a few great vehicles that offer style and substance in addition to best-in-class safety features.

New: 2012 Kia Soul

- AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The 2012 Soul was an IIHS Top Safety Pick, making it a great vehicle for those concerned with safety. It also offers a funky design, roomy interior, and lots of features for a reasonable price. Plus, who can resist the hamsters?



- **Shopper Insights:** Out of the two vehicles recommended by AutoTrader.com experts as being great choices for consumers who have been involved in accidents—the new Kia Soul and the used Volvo S80—the new Kia Soul didn’t resonate as well with shoppers surveyed in November, with only 10% choosing the Soul as one of their top three picks. Of those who did select it, the Soul was described as functional by 49%, fun by 46% and stylish by 36%. That said, we do see positive shifts in year-over-year



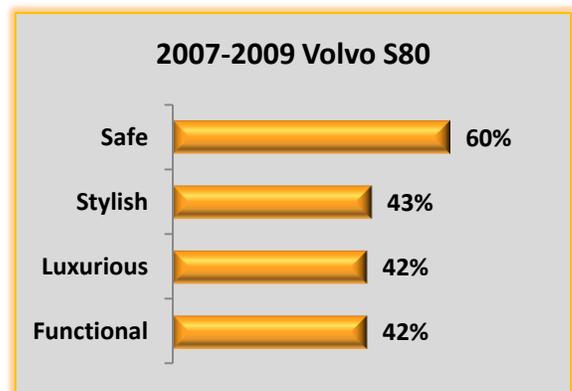
consumer consideration of the new Kia Soul on AutoTrader.com. The Soul was the 84th most-viewed new vehicle on AutoTrader.com in October 2011, up from its No. 104 position in October 2010, but down 36 spots from its No. 48 position in September 2011.

- **Conclusion:** Perhaps the most surprising insight discovered in the November survey is the lack of understanding of the Soul’s safety. Despite the new Kia Soul being selected as a Top Safety Pick by the IIHS, only 23% of respondents surveyed in November selected “Safe” as word to describe the Soul, and only 20% believed the funky compact SUV would be a car they’d consider after being in an accident in their previous vehicle. For comparison, 60% of shoppers surveyed in November viewed the Volvo S80 as a safe vehicle, showing that Volvo’s reputation for safety is strong while Kia has an opportunity to promote the Soul’s safety. Additionally, the roller coaster of interest from shoppers on AutoTrader.com shows that the Soul still has a ways to go before it is on a steady positive trajectory with the wider shopping population.

Near New: 2007-2009 Volvo S80

- **AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** Volvo is known for its safety, and the S80 lives up to the brand’s promises. In addition, it offers style, luxury and extreme comfort, making it a definite “want to buy.”

- **Shopper Insights:** The Volvo S80 was one of the top selected cars in the aided survey in November, with 33% choosing it as one of their top three picks. And while those consumers had many positive descriptors, the S80 hasn’t resonated as well among the wider AutoTrader.com shopper population. Shoppers surveyed in November agreed with the experts’ assessment of the car being a great vehicle for those looking for safety, with 60% noting the vehicle’s safety as a top descriptor. Forty-two percent of those respondents also noted the S80’s luxury, 43% noted its stylishness and 42% saw the car as functional. However, it only ranked at No. 211 on the list of most-viewed used vehicles in October.



- Conclusion:** Volvo's reputation for safety hasn't brought the S80 to the forefront of shoppers' minds just yet. While its luxury nature attracted numerous consumers when they were polled with the experts' list of 12 cars, the S80 has a harder time competing with other luxury vehicles in terms of shopping behavior on the AutoTrader.com site.

Event: New Baby in the Family

Growing families need more room, leading experts to recommend the following two vehicles.

New: 2012 Dodge Journey

- AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The recent redesign makes the Journey a vehicle that shoppers will actually want to own; it offers seating for either five or seven, depending on equipment, and great kid-friendly features such as backseat entertainment.
- Shopper Insights:** The new Dodge Journey didn't fare as well with shoppers as the GMC Acadia, which was the other midsize SUV recommended by experts. Only 15% of consumers surveyed selected the Journey as one of their top three picks. Additionally, the Journey was only the 105th most-viewed new vehicle during October 2011. Those open to the Journey are enticed by its functionality (70%), being family friendly (68%), versatility (61%) and safety (50%) which were all higher than the percentages for these categories for the Acadia.
- Conclusion:** AutoTrader.com experts recommended both the 2012 Dodge Journey and the 2007-2009 GMC Acadia for consumers who have a new baby in the family. Both of these midsize SUVs offer lots of family friendly features, but more consumers polled in November chose the Acadia (33%) in their top three than the Journey (15%). However, AutoTrader.com experts believe that consumers should take note of the Journey, especially with its reasonable new-car asking price of around \$27,200.

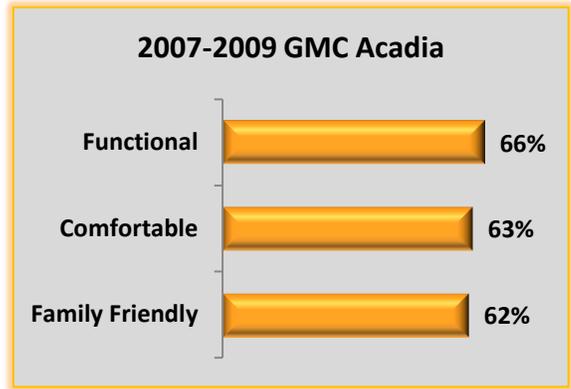


Near New: 2007-2009 GMC Acadia

- AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The midsize Acadia offers the functionality of a full-size SUV (plenty of room for people and storage) with the better fuel economy, ride and handling of a crossover. Its chunkier styling also helps it stand out from similar vehicles such as the Buick Enclave and Chevrolet Traverse.



- **Shopper Insights:** The GMC Acadia was quite popular among shoppers surveyed in November, with 33% of them selecting the Acadia as one of their top three picks. Described by 66% of those as functional, 63% as comfortable and 62% as family friendly, this midsize SUV got high marks on all the things that make it good for a growing family. However, while the Acadia was popular among those surveyed, it still has a little ways to go among all shoppers on AutoTrader.com, as it ranked at No. 137 on the list of most-viewed used vehicles in October.



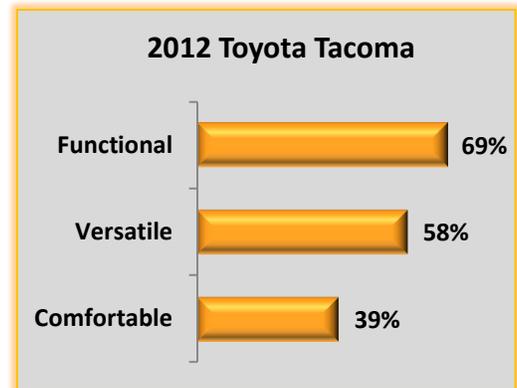
- **Conclusion:** Of the two midsize SUVs recommended by AutoTrader.com experts, the Acadia was the more popular vehicle. Either would be ideal for growing families, according to AutoTrader.com experts, and with similar asking prices for a new Journey at around \$27,200 or a near-new Acadia at \$25,000, shoppers searching for a family-friendly ride in this price point will have some great options.

Event: New Job

Whether a shopper is looking for a work truck or simply wanting to arrive in style, there are a few great options recommended by AutoTrader.com experts.

New: 2012 Toyota Tacoma Double-Cab PreRunner

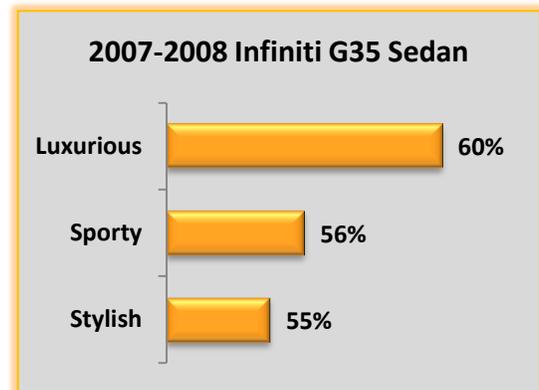
- **AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The "compact" Tacoma has grown to be as big as older full-size trucks. Our experts say that it's all the truck most people will ever need for a job that necessitates the capabilities of a truck. For a decent price, shoppers can get the powerful V6 engine, four-door double-cab with room for five adults and great features.
- **Shopper Insights:** Trucks are generally popular among shoppers on AutoTrader.com, and the Tacoma is certainly no exception. It was selected as a top three pick by 34% of shoppers surveyed in November, and it ranks in the top 20 most-viewed new vehicles on the site among all car shoppers, currently sitting at No. 11. Among the descriptors chosen by surveyed visitors in November, the Tacoma got the highest marks out of all cars for being functional, with 69% selecting this term. Additionally, 58% described the truck as versatile and 39% as comfortable.



- Conclusion:** As the only foreign-made truck in the top 20 most-viewed used cars in October (according to the [Used/CPO Car Insights Report](#)), the Tacoma has been quite popular among shoppers that tend toward American-made trucks. The overall positive response from respondents and high interest among all site visitors indicates that the Tacoma rates high in many shoppers' consideration sets when searching for this type of vehicle.

Near New: 2007-2008 Infiniti G35 Sedan

- AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The stylish G sedan can help consumers make a good impression at work, and its mix of power, comfort and luxury will make commutes more enjoyable. The near-new G35 sedan edges out the BMW 3 Series in expert's minds, as consumers can get more for their money overall and enjoy a lower cost of ownership.
- Shopper Insights:** Respondents in the November survey selected the G35 more often as a top three pick than any other vehicles on the list, with 37% choosing the luxury car. It was also the No. 10 most-searched used vehicle in October on AutoTrader.com, showing that interest in quality, near-new luxury cars is strong among shoppers. The Infiniti G35 was noted by respondents as being luxurious (by 60%), sporty (by 56%) and stylish (by 55%)—all things that will make a great first impression at a new job.
- Conclusion:** Consumers often cross shop near-new luxury vehicles with new, non-luxury vehicles during their search for a new car, as these vehicles can fall within the same general price range. In the [Used/CPO Car Insights Report](#), near-new luxury vehicles, particularly CPO models gained significant consumer interest month-over-month.



Event: New Driver in the Family

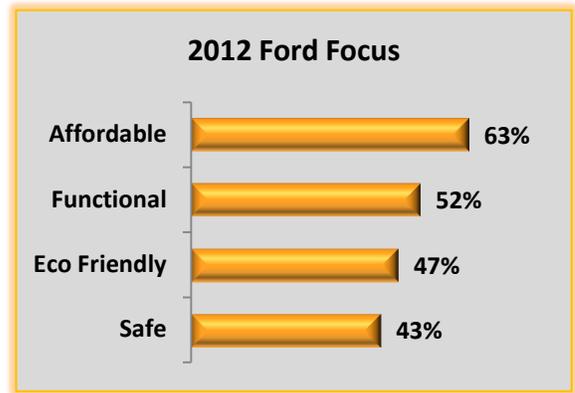
Safety is generally a top concern for parents looking for a first car for their new drivers, but today's new drivers want more than safety—they want style and great features.

New: 2012 Ford Focus

- AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The Focus was recently awarded an IIHS Top Safety Pick. Additionally, the Focus offers stylish European design, high-quality materials and excellent fuel economy. High-tech features such as Ford's voice-activated SYNC can prevent distractions while driving, making it a great choice for new drivers.



- **Shopper Insights:** During the November survey, 25% of respondents included the Focus in their top three picks. Of those, 63% noted the car's affordability, 47% noted its eco-friendliness, and 43% noted its safety. The car was also more likely to be described as functional (52%) than fun (41%). Nevertheless, the Focus has been performing quite well on AutoTrader.com, coming in as the No. 32 most-viewed new car on the site in October 2011.

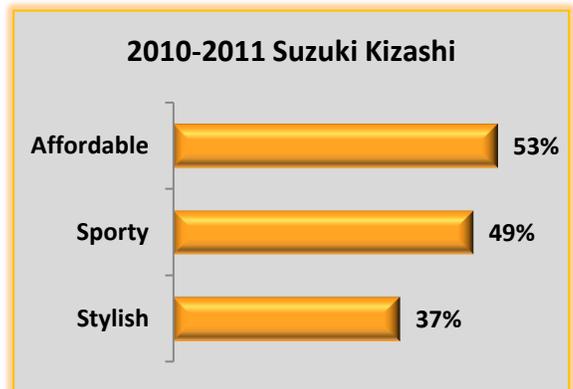


- **Conclusion:** The Ford Focus is definitely an all-around popular car with consumers and a great choice for new drivers. It offers the safety that young drivers need while giving them some of the high-tech features they'll want—at a great price. On AutoTrader.com, the median asking price for a brand new Focus was around \$21,000.

Near New: 2010-2011 Suzuki Kizashi

- **AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The Kizashi isn't a well-known vehicle among most shoppers, but it's a great car for new drivers, according to AutoTrader.com experts. It's stylish with plenty of room for friends and cargo and offers several premium features. It has sporty handling, but not enough power to get new drivers in trouble, all-wheel drive for bad weather, and a transferable 7-year, 100,000-mile powertrain warranty.

- **Shopper Insights:** The Kizashi ranked low with consumers polled in November and according to recent shopping activity on AutoTrader.com. Only eight percent of shoppers surveyed chose the Kizashi as one of their top three vehicles, and the vehicle was ranked low according to site activity as well, with the Kizashi coming in at No. 444. For consumers who selected the Kizashi among their top three picks, the car was noted for its sportiness by 49%, stylishness by 37% and affordability by 53%.



- **Conclusion:** The Kizashi is perhaps the biggest hidden gem on AutoTrader.com right now, as it has not had significant visibility among or interest from shoppers. At \$19,000, the Kizashi has a lot to prove, but experts at AutoTrader.com think it fits the bill—especially for new drivers. For now, it appears that other vehicles will continue garnering the most attention from shoppers, and the experts' other top pick for new drivers, the Ford Focus, will likely be one of those.

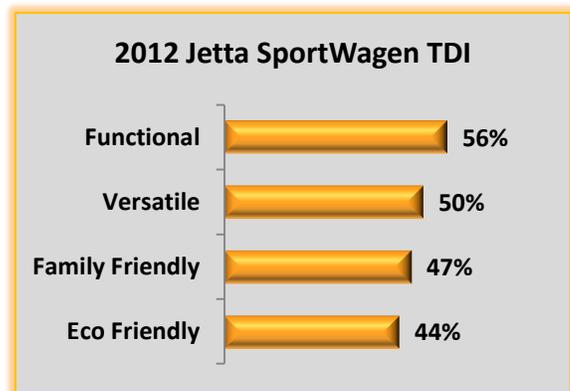
Event: Longer Commute

Taking on a new commute can be made much more enjoyable—and affordable—in a vehicle that combines great fuel efficiency with modern comforts.

New: 2012 Jetta SportWagen TDI

- AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** Long commutes require great fuel economy, and the Jetta TDI delivers on this front. With its clean diesel technology, it gets 42 mpg on the highway while still delivering good acceleration and driving dynamics, making it both fuel-efficient and fun to drive. The SportWagen also offers more space and functionality than the traditional sedan model.

- Shopper Insights:** The TDI SportWagen wasn't as popular as other vehicles with shoppers surveyed in November. Only 23% of respondents chose the TDI among their top three picks. However, of those, 60% agreed that the car would be great for a long commute, and 56% described the car as functional, 50% as versatile and 47% as family friendly. Additionally, 44% used "eco-friendly" as a word to describe the car, a nod to its clean diesel technology. Overall on AutoTrader.com, the new Volkswagen Jetta (all models) ranked at No. 18 on the list of most-searched new vehicles, a strong position for a compact car.



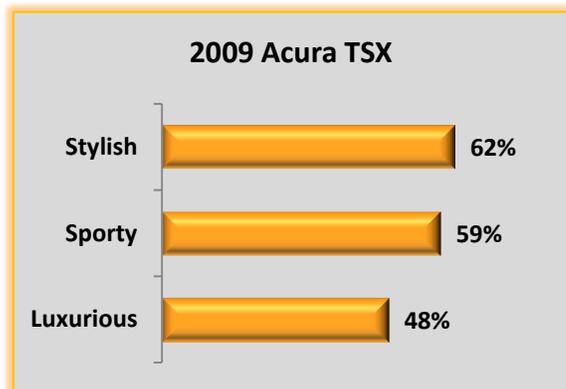
- Conclusion:** Though consumers generally shy away from diesel technology, AutoTrader.com has had a version of the TDI in its long-term test fleet for several months and has found it to be an affordable car that actually stirs feelings. In one article, they had this to say: "What VW has accomplished with the Jetta TDI is actually quite brilliant. They've built a car that's reasonably priced... that sips fuel to the tune of 42 mpg on the highway, and it's actually rewarding to drive."

Near New: 2009 Acura TSX

- AutoTrader.com Expert Opinion:** The latest generation Acura TSX is bigger and more sophisticated than the previous generation. It's fuel-efficient, has premium features and materials, and is also sporty and fun to drive. One unique option is a manual transmission, which is somewhat rare in its class.



- **Shopper Insights:** The Acura TSX was one of the top choices for consumers surveyed in November, as it was selected as a top three pick by 34% of respondents. Noted for its stylishness by 62%, luxuriousness by 48% and sportiness by 59%, the TSX garnered a lot of positive feedback from shoppers surveyed. Overall on the site, shoppers during the month of October showed greater interest in the CPO model than used (non-CPO). According to site analytics from October, the 2009



Acura TSX ranked at No. 126 on the list of most-viewed used vehicles, which is down five spots year-over-year. However, the rank among the most-viewed CPO models was much higher—at No. 35.

- **Conclusion:** For many luxury vehicles on AutoTrader.com, shoppers tend to search more often for CPO models than non-CPO, as the quality assurance and warranties that come with CPO models are particularly enticing for shoppers who want a luxury vehicle without the new-luxury price tag. Shoppers can find a great deal on a 2009 TSX on AutoTrader.com, with asking prices around \$23,400 for a used model and around \$24,000 for a CPO model.

About AutoTrader.com

Atlanta-based AutoTrader.com, created in 1997, is the Internet's ultimate automotive marketplace and consumer information website. AutoTrader.com aggregates in a single location millions of [new cars](#), [used cars](#) and [certified pre-owned cars](#) from thousands of auto dealers and private sellers and is a leading online resource for auto dealers, individuals and manufacturers to advertise and market their vehicles to in-market shoppers. The company also provides a robust suite of software tools for dealers and manufacturers to help them manage and market their vehicle inventory and display advertising on the Internet. AutoTrader.com continues to grow key business metrics, including revenue, profitability and site traffic. Today, AutoTrader.com attracts more than 15 million unique monthly visitors who utilize the site to review descriptions, photos and videos of vehicles for sale; research and compare vehicles; review pricing and specials; and read auto-related content like buying and selling tips and editorial coverage of major auto shows and automotive trends. AutoTrader.com operates one other auto marketing brand, AutoTraderClassics.com. AutoTrader.com also owns used vehicle management software company vAuto, Kelley Blue Book (Kbb.com), HomeNet Automotive, a leading provider of online inventory management and merchandising solutions for the automotive retail industry and VinSolutions, a leading provider of end-to-end solution platforms for dealers. AutoTrader.com is a majority-owned subsidiary of Cox Enterprises. Providence Equity Partners is a 25 percent owner of the company and Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers is also an investor. For more information, please visit www.autotrader.com.