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A More Important In-Market Target



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Jumpstart Automotive Media's VP of business development explains how the auto enthusiast can be a valuable ally on the road to increased OEM reach and influence.

I was having lunch with a friend of mine recently and we invariably started talking about cars. Right off the bat he started going on and on about a car not yet on the market: the 2008 BMW M3. He was raving about its new styling, sleeker profile, lower riding height and something about a beefier engine with Formula1 technology, which I had to admit sounded pretty cool. I asked him where he got all of this information and he told me that he was a big fan of [RoadandTrack.com](#).

As I was thinking about our conversation, it struck me as odd that he showed so much enthusiasm and knew so much about a car that wasn't going to be for sale for over a year. It certainly made me think about that particular car in a deeper way. If I were fortunate enough to actually be able to afford a car in this class, I would have most definitely considered the M3 the next time I purchased a car.

Enthusiasts such as my friend are important to the auto industry and are an audience that OEMs should not ignore while developing their media plans. Plenty of focus is placed on the in-market shopper, but the car buff should never be forgotten.

Why is this audience valuable?

Enthusiasts are influencers. They are very passionate about their opinions and express them with a lot of heart. They not only talk to friends and family about the autos they like, but with the internet, they are expressing them online and influencing others within their specific communities and forums. On average, they provide their opinions on car purchases to 18 people per year (according to a Q1 2006 Internal User Study by Car & Driver/Road & Track).

- This influencer status also makes them the perfect audience to test pre-launch messaging.
- Enthusiasts are in-market for autos much more often than the average automotive consumer and will purchase four vehicles every five years.*
- The average household income for enthusiasts is over \$100k per year and they spend their discretionary income on parts and accessories for their automobiles.
- Icon cars like the Chevy Corvette, Ford Mustang and Dodge Charger maintain cult followings that warrant their own ad messaging and targeting initiatives.

There are many different types of web publishers that focus on enthusiasts or influencer audiences. Some enthusiasts are interested in a community environment about a specific type of vehicle (i.e., '57 Chevys), while others want to read in detail about a new type of turbo engine, or view postings from other enthusiasts. Sites like [Car and Driver](#) -- which offer in-depth, exclusive content like road tests, vehicle comparisons, first glances at upcoming models, and rich videos -- attract enthusiasts. Other publishers like [NADAguides](#), [Classic Cars](#), [HowStuffWorks Auto](#) and [mustang.org](#) offer unique content for specific interests or specific makes. Then there are enthusiast sites with user-generated content, like [AutoForums](#), [CarDomain](#) and [Motortopia](#), that offer users the opportunity to express themselves in the form of blogs,

communities and car clubs. Additionally, there are publishers like [TheCarConnection](#) and [LeftLaneNews](#) that offer content, auto industry news, car show recaps, and photos.

It's clear that OEMs are successfully targeting in-market auto shoppers on third-party research sites. However, it is critical that they also include strategies to target enthusiasts as well. Not only do these important influencers spend on autos at a higher rate than average households, they have a disproportionate influence on the types of cars others around them may consider.

It is equally critical that OEMs work with the right media partner that offers both in-market and enthusiast audiences and recognizes the need for a more comprehensive approach to media planning. This is a key element to ensure you are able to target a quality audience, establish reach and meet performance objectives.

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