

Alternative Fuel Vehicle Supporters Desire Vehicles From BMW, Lexus, Toyota, and Ford

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Phoenix Marketing International's Alternative Fuel Vehicle Consideration Study: Opportunities Lie in Shaping Alternative Fuel Image and Appeal to Youth

Phoenix Marketing International (Phoenix), a Honomichl Top-30 market research firm, reported findings that reveal consumers' consideration of alternative fuel vehicles for their next automotive purchase. The study was fielded in July 2012 and covered 1,800+ consumers who were recently, or are currently, in the market for a new vehicle.

Phoenix reports that over half of those in the non-luxury and luxury vehicle markets are neutral when it comes to considering alternative fuel vehicles. "For automotive marketers that means there is immense opportunity for developing and delivering alternative fuel messaging around their brand. As alternative fuel vehicles continue gaining popularity, cultivating and communicating an alternative fuel image will be critical. Honing related messaging will be step one in persuading consumers who are unsure about the technology to consider their products," states Kevin Severance, Senior Research Analyst at Phoenix.

The study also found that consumers in the luxury vehicle market already tend to be more receptive of alternative fuel vehicles than those in the non-luxury vehicle market. Those inclined toward alternative fuel vehicles in the luxury market outnumber those averse by more than 3:1; however in the non-luxury market those inclined outnumber those averse by more than 2:1.

Further analysis of alternative fuel vehicle consideration within each market uncovers differences between the opinions of those from different age groups.

Non-Luxury Market

The study shows that only roughly 10% of those under age 40 would not consider an alternative fuel vehicle for their next purchase. This sharply contrasts the 77% who are willing to consider one, which indicates almost twice as many people under 40 are willing to consider alternative fuel vehicles than those age 40+. Severance continues, "Our research finds that consideration of alternative fuel vehicles from consumers under 40 is overwhelmingly positive. This has substantial implications for those who are building their brand image around alternative fuel technology: to market alternative fuel vehicles means to appeal to younger people."

Following are the non-luxury automotive brands with the highest purchase consideration among consumers inclined to consider alternative fuel vehicles:

1. Toyota (59%)
2. Ford (53%)
3. Honda (50%)
4. Chevrolet (42%).

Luxury Market

Phoenix identified similar findings in its analysis of the luxury vehicle market. Those under age 40 are much more likely to consider an alternative fuel vehicle for their next purchase. Mr. Severance notes, however, "When targeting communications to luxury vehicle purchase intenders, it is important to keep in mind that performance messaging resonates substantially within that consumer group.

Previous research conducted by Phoenix's automotive team has shown that a balanced message of fuel efficiency without sacrificing performance is highly effective in driving market actions in the luxury category."

Luxury automotive brands with the highest purchase consideration among consumers inclined to consider alternative fuel vehicles are:

1. BMW (62%)
2. Lexus (60%)
3. Mercedes (55%)
4. Audi (54%).

Phoenix measures advertising performance across five vehicle categories (non-luxury car, non-luxury cuv/suv, truck, luxury car, and luxury cuv/suv) and tracks the brand health of leading automotive companies in two segments (luxury and non-luxury). Data are collected monthly from 1800+ U.S. consumers who have recently purchased or are currently in the market for a new vehicle.

Brands tracked for advertising and brand data include Acura, Audi, BMW, Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Dodge, Fiat, Ford, GMC, Honda, Hyundai, Infiniti, Jaguar, Jeep, Kia, Land Rover, Lexus, Lincoln, Mazda, Mercedes, Mini, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Porsche, Ram, Range Rover, Saab, Scion, Subaru, Suzuki, Toyota, Volkswagen, and Volvo.

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