

**AUSTRALIAN
AUTOMOTIVE WEBSITE
RANKINGS:
REPORT No. 5**

A RESEARCH REPORT

by

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Topic	Title	Year
Dealers	<i>The Quest for Dealership Best Practice</i>	1999
	<i>Emerging Dealer Formats</i>	2000
	<i>Poor Retailer Grosses Require a Rethink</i>	2004
	<i>Dealer Groups in Australia: Business Motives, Structure and Performance</i>	2005
	<i>Shifting Gears for Value: A Review of ICDP a research 1999-2005</i>	2006
	<i>Dealer Exit and Entry</i>	2006
Dealer HR	<i>Dealer Succession Planning</i>	2002
	<i>Dealership Staff Development and Training</i>	2002
	<i>Analysis of critical Automotive Dealership HR Practices</i>	2006
Distribution channels	<i>The Future Channel</i>	2001
	<i>Profitability in the Supply Chain: Investigating value and waste in vehicle distribution</i>	2003
	<i>Measuring and Improving the Performance of Car Distribution – Living with Push and Pull</i>	2004
	<i>USA & Europe: What lessons for Australia</i>	2006
	<i>Similarities & Differences</i>	2006
	<i>Outlook for the Franchise Model – A View from Europe</i>	2006
	<i>Creating Value Through Closed Loop Supply Chains</i>	2006
Fleet	<i>The Fleet Channel</i>	2002
	<i>Technology: The impact on vehicle distribution</i>	2000
IT & the internet	<i>E-Marketing: Driving vehicles from the e-showroom</i>	2003
Lean distribution	<i>Application of Lean Thinking to an Australian Dealership After Sales Department</i>	2003
	<i>Customer Fulfilment in Australia</i>	2005
	<i>Lean Dealer Workshop</i>	2006
Legal	<i>The European Block Exemption – Implications for Australia</i>	2001
	<i>Update On The New European Motor Vehicle Block Exemption and The Dawson Committee Review of the Trade Practices Act</i>	2003
	<i>The Legislative Landscape</i>	2005
New Vehicles	<i>New Vehicle Supply & Stocking</i>	1999
	<i>Nearly New Cars: A Solution to a Sales Shortfall</i>	2004
	<i>New Vehicle Supply and Stocking in Australia 2004</i>	2004
Parts	<i>The Aftersales Parts Supply Chain: An Opportunity for Inventory Savings</i>	2004
	<i>The Grey Automotive Parts Aftermarket</i>	2005

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Retailing	<i>Leading Edge Developments in Retailing</i>	2000
	<i>New Vehicle Buyers – Their Behaviour and Needs: Concepts and Framework</i>	2000
	<i>New Vehicle Buyers – Their Behaviour and Needs: The Consumer Perspective</i>	2001
	<i>Customer Relations</i>	2003
	<i>Capturing Customer Value</i>	2004
	<i>Global Retail Insights</i>	2005
	<i>Private to Private Selling</i>	2005
	<i>Emerging Retail Models: Part 1</i>	2006
	Used vehicles	<i>Used Vehicle Activities in Australia</i>
<i>The Used Vehicle Wholesale Channel</i>		2003
<i>Used Vehicle Supply and Stocking in Australia 2004</i>		2004
<i>Manufacturer Certified Used Vehicle Programmes</i>		2005
<i>Certified Used Vehicle Programmes: An Australian perspective</i>		2006
Vehicle policy	<i>Vehicle End of Life: Do vehicles have near death experiences?</i>	2003
		2004
	<i>Inner-city traffic congestion: A market opportunity?</i>	2005
	<i>Vehicle End of Life: Are We There Yet?</i>	
Website rankings	<i>Web Rankings I</i>	2005
	<i>Web Rankings II</i>	2005
	<i>Web Rankings III</i>	2006
	<i>Web Rankings IV</i>	2006

1 INTRODUCTION

This report is the fifth in the series reviewing the performance of the Australian retail automotive sectors' Internet presence on an ongoing, (six monthly) longitudinal basis.

The key objective of the study is two fold:

- to utilise a coordinated set of website measurements, in order to aggregate data on the technical and quantitative nature of Australian automotive websites, and
- to assess how websites interlink with existing and potential customer relations issues such as fulfilment, product and service research, customer information needs, service and support, and customer value.

A detailed explanation of the methodology used to generate the results of this report is contained in the 'Methodology' section.

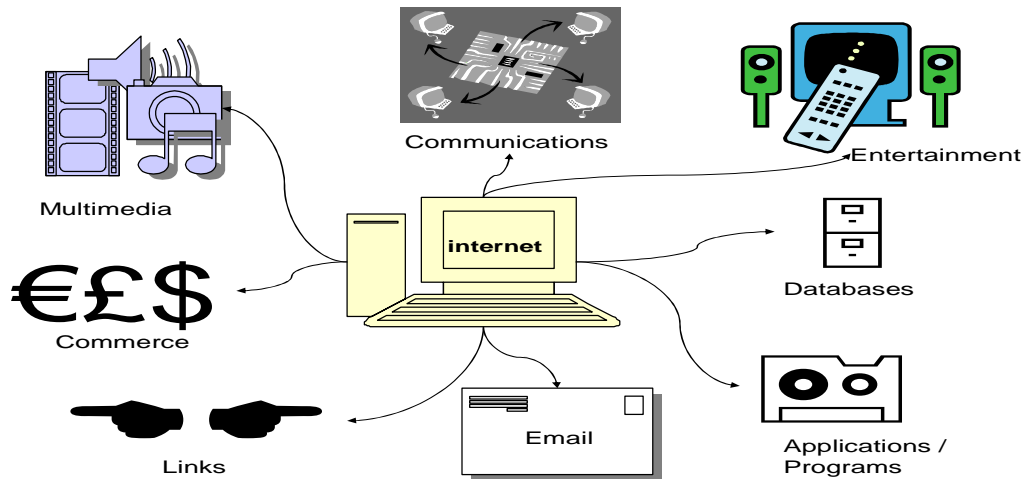
The report is an adjunct to other ICDPA reports and studies. ICDPA has regularly addressed the issue of e-marketing throughout its research programme. Most notably, ICDPA has produced two reports specifically reviewing the topic: *Technology: The impact on vehicle distribution* (August 2000) and *E-Marketing: Driving vehicles from the e-showroom* (May 2003). Further, in March, ICDPA together with the Australian Centre for Retail Studies will release a report titled *Emerging Retail Models Research Report (Part 2)*, which in part investigates developments in multiple retail channels which includes innovations concerning electronic commerce at the consumer level.

Across the retail automotive sector the application of the Internet as a viable channel in the overall distribution system typically continues to be managed as per the sectors' traditional retail channels – i.e that the consumer is a *by-product* rather than a *reason for* the vehicle distribution system. In recent years, that concept has undergone significant reassessment with new retail models created and implemented that fundamentally challenge that orthodoxy.

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Into this environment, a number of new and emerging formats have arisen, and the Internet possibly offers the most 'customer-driven' model currently advanced, as indicated by Figure 1.

Figure 1: Internet = CRM opportunities



The significant advantage of the Internet as both a communication and e-commerce platform is that it places the customer as the focus of the supply chain. Through strategic application of customer tracking techniques, tactical customer value innovations can be introduced leading to an improved longer-term relationship between customer and supplier. Through improved Internet traffic management techniques the automotive industry can improve its marketing, targeting prospective and current customers by their demographics and interests. Yet for the Internet to be successful as a long term information source, leading to sales, the automotive industry needs to continually rethink and reapply the core elements of a quality offer that can only be applied through a web presence - that is an offer that is unique or surprising, satisfying functional needs and also the 'emotional buy'.

With these observations in mind, ICDPA has prepared this report.

NB: *ICDPA was commissioned by ICDP Europe in 2005 to undertake a pilot study of the websites of Spain's ten largest automotive manufacturers and importers by retail market share. The same methodology utilised in the ICDPA report was used for the Spanish study.*

2 METHODOLOGY

All websites studied for this project were accessed, viewed and analysed on 26 & 27 February 2007.

2.1 Rankings' methodology

The websites assessed were all Australian domain name registered, ".com.au". Thirty websites were reviewed as listed in Table 1. There were no revisions to the sample group for this report.



Table 1: Websites studied

Alfa Romeo	alfaromeo.com.au	Mazda	mazda.com.au
Audi	audi.com.au	Mini	mini.com.au
BMW	bmw.com.au	Mitsubishi	mitsubishi-motors.com.au
DaimlerChrysler	daimlerchrysler.com.au	Nissan	nissan.com.au
Dodge	dodge.com.au	Peugeot	peugeot.com.au
Citroen	citroen.com.au	Porsche	porsche.com.au
Fiat	fiat.com.au	Proton	proton.com.au
Ford	ford.com.au	Renault	renault.com.au
GM Holden	holden.com.au	Saab	saab.com.au
Honda	honda.com.au	Ssangyong	ssangyong.com.au
Hyundai	hyundai.com.au	Subaru	subaru.com.au
Jaguar	jaguar.com.au	Suzuki	suzuki.com.au
Jeep	Jeep.com.au	Toyota	toyota.com.au
Kia	kia.com.au	Volkswagen	volkswagen.com.au
Land Rover	landrover.com.au		
Lexus	lexus.com.au		

ICDPA Members are invited to submit websites that they believe should be considered for review as part of this project. Please contact the authors for submission of website addresses.

The review of the websites featured in this report was based on three quantitative, generically applicable criteria and assessment categories:

1. the website's overall design and layout, including navigation features and aesthetic consistency;

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2. the website's functionality, in particular search functions, levels of user personalisation, and security features;
3. the level of customer value offerings, particularly product and service information, support and customer interactivity.

Across the three assessment categories, approximately 70 assessment sub-categories are reviewed. The following table lists the assessment sub-categories utilised for this study.

From time to time, modifications and amendments are made to the assessment criteria to take into account new developments in website architecture and performance. No additions or deletions to the assessment criteria were made for this report.

3 KEY FINDINGS & RESULTS

3.1 The retail automotive sector

The top 10 performing websites are presented in Table 3.* Chart 1 (page 14) assembles the entire list of websites reviewed, comparing their performance in October 2006 and February 2007 (this reporting period). Chart 1 identifies the top ten performing websites, according to these rankings, and identifies websites outside the top ten by code reference.

Ford, for the first time, attained the number one position on the rankings, dislodging GM Holden. Apart from the exchange of positions between Ford and

GMH, there were no other changes to the top ten in either composition or ranking order of websites. Ford has made steady ongoing improvements to the architecture and presentation of its website throughout the course of this ICDPA study. For this reporting period, Ford's position was due to continual updating of its website design, on the back of improvement to its customer value offerings and website functionality. (For more information see chart 4).

The group average score for all websites reviewed in the February 2007 reporting period was 51.2, a small increase from 50.2 recorded in the last survey period, and maintaining the positive trend since the October 2005 reporting period.

Overall, the trend continues to remain positive. The majority of websites continue to perform satisfactorily. There were no outstanding innovations noted

Table 2: Top Ten Websites: February 2007

<i>Top Ten *</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Score – Feb '07</i>
1 (2)	Ford	70.3
2 (1)	GM Holden	68.7
3 (3)	Peugeot	68.4
4 (4)	Toyota	64.2
5 (5)	Alfa Romeo	60.0
6 (6)	Lexus	57.5
7 (7)	Mazda	56.9
8 (8)	Volkswagen	56.2
9 (9)	Renault	55.9
10 (10)	Porsche	55.6

** Figures in brackets refer to ranking in October 2006.*

* Note: in the previous edition of the report, as a result of a printing error, the wrong numerical results were listed in Table 3. The results as displayed in supporting chart no. 1 were correct.

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since the last ICDPA report. However, steady improvements were recorded by 13 websites, with 8 remaining unchanged, with 9 recording falls in total ranking points. As reported in the previous report (October 06), areas where websites performed well included:

- standard levels of product configuration enabled applications;
- consistent branding and presentation across multiple web pages;
- high levels of product descriptions;
- improved links to Dealer contact information and websites; and
- limited use of pop-up web pages, and launching of additional browsers.

The number of broken links or web pages not working for this reporting period was substantially reduced.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

GRAEME ADDISON

Graeme is the Chairman and founder of International Car Distribution Programme Australia Pty. Ltd. ICDPA was established in 1998.

From 1970-1985, he was involved in the motor industry in Australia and South East Asia, with both Ford and Nissan at both the manufacturing and retail levels in sales, finance and marketing roles. During this time he managed one of the largest motor vehicle leasing operations in Australia, developed a successful dealer-financing programme and managed a metropolitan Ford dealership.

He has worked in Asia, UK, Europe, South Africa and the USA. He lectures on entrepreneurship, business development and capital raising at Monash University, Deakin University, Mt Eliza Business School, and Melbourne University on MBA programmes. He has lectured at the University of Applied Sciences in Wolfsburg and China Europe International Business School in Shanghai.

His finance work is based on EVA (™ Stern Stewart) and shareholder value added principles. This approach has assisted many organizations to build an effective value creating, analysis and company wide conversation tool.

Prior to forming ICDPA he was Executive Director of Venture Management Associates Ltd., the manager of two major venture capital funds - CP Ventures Ltd. and Austech Ventures Ltd.

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ROBERTO COLANZI

Roberto has extensive experience in industry analysis, research and policy setting. Before joining ICDPA, Roberto was employed as a senior industry analyst with a major industry association in Melbourne, Victoria. The major focus of the association was representation of businesses within the retail automotive industry. The main functions Roberto undertook included: economic analysis - particularly federal and state government fiscal and monetary policies, government industry policy analysis automotive and small business industry analysis, trade practices analysis, representation on various national economics committees, government lobbying, and taxation analysis.

Roberto has also worked as a policy adviser for a major Australian accounting association. Roberto is also a Board Member of the Small Business Telecommunications Centre Ltd, a national association advancing and representing the interests of Australian small businesses as consumers of telecommunications and electronic commerce providers (www.setel.com.au). In 2000-2001 Roberto sat on the Australian Domain Name Authority (AUDA) Competition Panel, which was created by the federal government to establish the framework for the regulation of Internet domain name registrations. From 1991 to 1992, Roberto worked as a contractor to IBM UK, in its education centre.

He completed his Masters in Industrial and Employee Relations through the National Key Centre in Industrial Relations at Monash University, in 2000, concentrating on industry and economic issues. On completion, he received the award as the Top Graduating Student in Monash University's Department of Management Masters programme. In December 1998, he completed a Graduate Diploma Corporate Directors through University of New England. He completed his B.A (Hons), through the University of Tasmania in 1990.

His previous research for ICDPA included papers on electronic marketing, end of life vehicles, and capturing retail customer value. He is also a member of the British Institute of the Motor Industry.

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Disclaimer

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