



Connie Motz

make your dealership female friendly

In recognizing that women make up 60 per cent of new car buyers and 53 per cent of pre-owned vehicle customers, female clientele are the most powerful purchasing force in today's automotive marketplace. Does your dealership offer a positive buying experience for women? By consulting a marketing guru, industry experts and fellow UCDA dealers, we've come up with best practices your dealership can implement to make the female used-car buying experience a positive one.

If that wasn't enough to sway you, think about this. "Women are the fastest growing segment of buyers. Female millennials, age 22 – 30, are outpacing their male counterparts by 20 per cent in vehicle purchases. Women influence a whopping 85 per cent of all car purchases – that's worth more than \$80 billion annually. Add in expenditures on maintenance, repairs, and other services, and women control about \$300 billion worth of vehicle spending. With figures like those, it's no wonder that 86 per cent of women list reliability as a very significant factor in purchasing their next vehicle," says Patricia A. Muir, Dealer Principal Coach and Canadian Regional Manager for AskPatty.com.

Keeping those bottom line numbers in mind, AskPatty.com offers female-friendly training, certification and

marketing for automotive retailers and related businesses to create an attractive culture for their female customers. With 2,200 Certified Female Friendly® locations across Canada and the US, Muir explains, "Women's main focus in automotive purchases and service are trust, respect, and developing relationships with the dealership. Women focus on the vehicle being dependable and safe for themselves and their family."

While it's true women are more inclined to shop around, it's only because they want to make informed choices and smart decisions. "They consider more makes and models than their male counterparts. For this reason, we see more females conducting research activities on our site and women tend to be more informed than male shoppers," says

Glenn Pereira, Manager of Industry Education for AutoTrader.com, noting that price, fuel efficiency and safety are the top three priorities for a female used-car buyer.

“The biggest opportunity for the automotive dealer to have the most influence is actually before a customer ever steps on the showroom floor. Dealers need to ensure that their inventory is online and well-merchandised (using several photos, custom comments, and pricing, to name a few) and that they have consistent pricing wherever the vehicle is advertised (including on the lot). It’s important dealers recognize they likely have a very well-informed consumer walking on to the lot,” Pereira said.

“Female consumers are very savvy today so it’s important for a culture to promote a friendly and open attitude towards them. Transparency is especially important when it comes to pricing and understanding that women are willing to wait until they feel the price is right. Female buyers are also likely looking for clear information regarding the financial aspect of purchasing a vehicle. The relationship with the salesperson is critical to having a positive dealership experience.”

With seven years experience in the automotive dealership industry, this is a sentiment that Avi Zur, Business Manager at Toronto Auto Brokers agrees with. “Our female buyers tend to be much less focussed on price negotiations, but rather focus on quality of service received from our sales staff. They prefer to be made comfortable and get assurance that they are purchasing a quality vehicle and to get as educated as possible about the vehicle they are purchasing.

They know the prices in the market and when they sit at the office, I believe they already made their decision to buy, as long as they feel comfortable and satisfied by the dealership.”

According to Women-Drivers.com, today’s female used-car buyer wants to feel empowered as she makes her precise and simple purchase decision. It needs to be quick, easy and maybe with a little fun thrown in. But most of all, she wants to know about the salesperson in order to create a trustworthy experience where she’ll be treated in a fair and respectful manner.

“Women go to two dealerships before buying a car,” says Anne Fleming, President & Car Buying Advocate for Women-Drivers.com.

The number one reason women buy from a sales advisor is trust – the second reason is price. So, if the sales advisor doesn’t establish trust right away, 72 per cent of women will leave and NOT return to that dealership. It is critical that the sales advisor approach and establish rapport with the shopper even if she says she is “just looking”.

“No one is in your store to just look – at some point they will be buying a car. Just looking can mean “I am not sure” or “I haven’t bought a car in 10 years and am nervous” or “I am testing you to see if I can trust you,” says Fleming.

As a whole, used car shoppers spend about 15 hours researching (75 per cent of which is done online) before they make their vehicle purchase.

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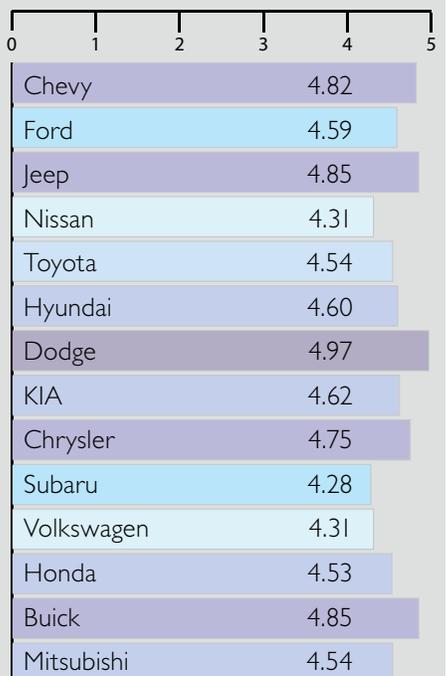
By the numbers, according to askpatty.com

- 60% of all new vehicles are purchased by women
- 53% of all used cars are purchased by women
- 85% of vehicle purchases are influenced by women
- \$300 billion spent by women on vehicles annually
- 105.7 million women have driver’s licenses – 1.4 million more than men
- 62% of women rank safety as very significant

Women-Drivers.com

2014 Top Used Auto Brands as Rated by Women (Women Satisfaction Index™ out of 5)

Top WSI Purchasing Used Car Brand as Rated by Women WSI Score



female friendly

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“Women are 50 per cent more likely to use car dealer review sites than men, and when a dealership/brand delivers more than expected, women will write about it and share their positive experience,” Fleming adds.

How can a dealership establish trust with their female clientele? With more than 20 years experience in the automotive industry, Ori Haik, Manager of Malibu Motors in Toronto says, “We do not treat women any different than our male customers when selling them a vehicle. We offer all our clients a copy of the history of the vehicle. I feel that people in general are more educated today with all the information that is available to them. We want our clients to know what we know about the vehicle that we are selling them. We also allow them to have an independent mechanical inspection on the vehicle.”

With the same thoughts in mind, Weston Motors of Toronto attributes their 40 years of family-run success to repeat clientele. “Our in-house service bay processes all our used vehicles being certified and reconditioned to proper standards and regulations,” says owner Paul Sanginesi. “We provide on-site auto detailing which we believe is crucial – any customer purchasing a used vehicle craves for that innovative appearance.”

Muir of AskPatty.com agrees with these same objectives saying that while females “source out businesses that demonstrate that they care about women, families, and their community,

they also enjoy adding “bling” and accessories to individualize their vehicles.”

While women may like to shop around, they appreciate one-stop shopping even more. Avi Zur knows the value of keeping customers satisfied. Besides offering female clientele “assurances that the vehicle is a quality and headache free one with an extended warranty, we also offer many accessories such as navigation, backup cameras, parking sensors, Bluetooth®, remote start, push button start, DVD players, etc.”

Besides the beloved one-stop shopping experience, it's really all about the details. Like any other shopper out there, female customers want to know what dealerships can offer them after they make their initial used-car purchase. In addition to offering oil changes, brake checks and tires, is your dealership able to fix her cracked windshield? That small dent she got when she backed up? Or how about detailing her car? Be sure to keep in mind that the number one requested item in the service department by women is a concierge vehicle. All of these services help build loyalty and trust while potentially inspiring referrals to friends and family.

Ryan Holtz, owner of Ryan Holtz Automotive Marketing, read a recent statistic saying “66 per cent of all service-related work to a vehicle is requested by females. That is huge! However most service promotions or ads are aimed at men. Imagine a

service ad that said ‘15 per cent off your next oil change’ and had a picture of a stiletto heel. That might get a female's attention.”

Holt enthusiastically promotes the benefits of using social media and digital marketing to his automotive dealership clients saying, “they are using these new mediums to really cater to females. For example, we create a nice blog post that talks about women and cars, making it fun but informative. Just treat females like people and remember they have most of the purchasing power.”

Holt also recommends paying attention to the details by providing unexpected services and amenities including “a complimentary floor mat wash or latte machines. Good waiting room music is popular and literature that is tailored more to females rather than just “car guy” magazines. All of these extras are designed to make female customers feel more at home and relaxed.

Women-Drivers.com takes it one step further by suggesting used-car dealerships consider hiring more women sales people, and service people, especially as service advisors. The more popular dealerships offer truly comfortable seating, connectivity to WI-FI, a designated children's play area and extended service department hours to help meet a busy mother's needs more efficiently.

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