

Public Abstract

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Title:READER PERCEPTION OF THE USEFULNESS AND CREDIBILITY OF JOURNALISTIC AUTOMOTIVE REVIEWS

The aim of this research is to examine the usefulness of journalistic automotive reviews from the perspective of readers making purchase decisions. Additionally, this study also looked at the perceived credibility of the sources of those reviews. Intercept interviews were conducted at a new-car dealership in a Midwestern city to determine what sources of information buyers consulted in their decision-making processes. When it was found that journalistic automotive reviews played a role, additional questions were asked about the usefulness of the reviews and how credible users felt they were. Data was then transcribed, coded and grouped into themes.

The results showed the majority of car buyers do not use journalistic automotive reviews or automotive journalism of any kind. This was in large part because outside factors such as money concerns, relationships with brands and people, enticements and personal circumstances limited purchase and information consideration sets. Those who did use automotive reviews believed them to be mostly credible, but they expressed skepticism depending on the presence or absence of the reviewer's stated professional background and of detailed information sensitive to the needs of the audience.