

Online Video In The Automotive Shopping Experience

by Eric Franchi, Monday, June 1, 2009



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In the wake of Chrysler's and General Motors' bankruptcy announcements, I have found myself thinking about the automotive industry more than usual lately. These restructurings will have massive reverberations across not only the automakers themselves, but dealers, suppliers and many other significant pockets of the global economy, including our own industry. Here's hoping that all of those affected come out of this stronger than ever.

The automotive makers were early adopters of online video, from adding functionality to their Web sites to leveraging in-stream advertising. In fact, some of the best video executions out there are from the auto makers. Examples include the Hyundai Genesis Coupe and Audi A5 microsites -- truly excellent work.

Recent research confirms that the automakers' investments in online video are the right decision. As reported last week by fellow MediaPost writer Laurie Sullivan, a Google-sponsored study "reveals that 83% of new vehicle buyers visit video focused Web sites prior to purchasing a car. This means 31% viewed videos on brand, product or company sites; 24% on auto-specific Web sites, 11% on YouTube; 7%, Yahoo Video; 7%, news sites; 6%, MSN Video; 4%, MySpace; 3%, Facebook; 3%, AOL Video; and 3%, other."

These numbers reveal several important things that automakers -- and those online media buyers and sellers that support them -- should keep in mind regarding online video:

Don't skimp on production. A full one-third of auto shoppers watch the video content on the product site. This is a massive opportunity to provide them with not only original and exciting content -- as in the Genesis example -- but other videos that highlight key benefits such as safety and technology, in a far more effective format than text or static images.

Follow the audience. While auto-specific sites have video content that is aimed at the enthusiast, a full quarter of the audience is in the market for a vehicle. While highly targeted in-stream placements on these sites command a premium, the audience quality is certainly there. An innovative way to extend the efficiency of these placements is to leverage retargeting. Assuming there are companion banners in place to drop cookies, retargeting those users across the auto site's extended network or across the broader Web is a highly effective strategy.

Investigate the broader video opportunity. Brand and auto-specific sites only make up slightly more than half of the automotive shopper's online experience. Creating a presence on YouTube and other video destinations will help round out the plan.

In an era of marketing budget scrutiny, the best part about the above is that only one requires paid media. Investing in creative video ideas will pay dividends when the well-researched shopper enters the dealer floor.