

The Media Audit

NEWS RELEASE

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Automotive Web Sites Draw Significant Numbers; Media Companies Dominate

Houston – (10/21/03) – More than 20 percent of all those who go online regularly or occasionally during an average weekday visit automotive web sites, according to a report on 49 metro markets by The Media Audit.

AutoTrader.com and Cars.com had the strongest web sites in most markets. However, Carmax.com, the web site of the national car dealership chain, made a solid showing in the markets in which it has dealerships.

“The audience numbers are surprisingly strong,” says Bob Jordan, President of International Demographics, Inc., the 32-year-old research firm, which produces The Media Audit. In 49 metro markets the automotive sites attract between 21 and 39 percent of those who go online regularly or occasionally on an average weekday.

Automotive/Employment Comparisons

“Employment sites,” says Jordan, “have received the most attention but their numbers aren’t a lot higher than those of the automotive sites.” Employment sites in the same 49 markets attract between 30 and 48 percent of those who go online regularly or occasionally during an average weekday.

The Media Audit is a syndicated media ratings service currently covering more than 80 metro markets across the US. Automotive sites and real estate sites were included in the survey for the first time this year. The data revealed here is based on the first 49 markets surveyed in 2003. Only those auto web sites that attract at least one percent of the adult population in a market are included in the survey data.

AutoTrader.com, owned by Cox Enterprises and Landmark Communications, ranked first among automotive sites in 26 of the 49 markets and second in another 15. AutoTrader.com failed to attract at least one percent of adults in just one market, Boise. Cars.com, operated by six prominent newspaper organizations, attracted more than one percent of adults in 27 of the 49 markets. It was first in six markets and second in 11 of the markets.

E-bay attracted more than one percent of adults in 30 markets but was first in just one market and second in four markets. Yahoo.com attracted at least one percent of adults in eight markets and was first in just one. In the other seven it was either third or fourth. Vehix.com qualified for the survey in just four markets and was first in one. In the other three it was either fourth or fifth.

Unique Visitor Totals

AutoTrader.com attracted to its sites a total of 2.4 million unique visitors who live in the 49 markets covered in these local market surveys. Cars.com attracted 1.3 million; Carmax.com, 747,900; E-bay.com, 730,800; local newspaper web sites; 639,000; Yahoo, 253,400; and, Vehix, 131,800.

Local dailies attracted at least one percent of adults in 20 of the 49 markets. They were the leading sites in seven markets and the second site in 12 others.

Some independent sites not affiliated with the media did well in a few markets. CarSoup.com showed up in three of the 49 markets and was easily the most popular automotive site in Minneapolis. Recycler.com led the field in Los Angeles.

In all, 35 auto web sites succeeded in attracting at least one percent of the adults in a market and, as a result, were included in The Media Audit.

Differences Between Markets

“There are significant differences between markets,” says Jordan, “and as a result the data must be examined on a market by market basis. The markets are being created and shaped by competition. The more competition, the more unique visitors generated in the market. Atlanta, among our markets, appears to be the most competitive. AutoTrader.com, Carmax.com and AJCcars.com are collectively generating more than 400,000 unique visitors a month. The unique visitors break down this way: AutoTrader.com, 176,900; AJCjobs.com, 139,000; and, Carmax.com, 108,200. The fact that AutoTrader and ACJ (Atlanta Journal & Constitution) are owned by the same company does not diminish the competition. It may, in fact, intensify it. An equally competitive market exists in Chicago between AutoTrader.com, Cars.com, and Carmax.com. The numbers in Chicago are: Carmax.com, 156,700. Cars.com, 131,800; AutoTrader.com, 108,900. The data seems to indicate that Carmax is going to be a fierce competitor in any market in which it has multiple dealerships.”

The Data Source

The Media Audit, a syndicated media ratings service currently covering more than 80 markets, provides both quantitative and qualitative data for media web sites as well as for traditional media.

Traditional media – print, broadcast and outdoor – have used The Media Audit data in sales, marketing and management for more than 30 years. In 1998, the survey started providing data on local media web sites. The surveys now contain more than 400 fields of qualitative information in addition to quantitative measurements of local web audiences.

The Media Audit is a product of International Demographics, Inc., a 32-year-old Houston firm that is engaged exclusively in syndicated, multimedia surveys conducted at the local market level.

Note: If you would like to periodically receive market survey data from The Media Audit, please contact Bob Jordan by email (bjordan@TheMediaAudit.com) and leave your name, title, company affiliation and email address.