Cox Automotive has been conducting the Car Buyer Journey Study for the past 12 years to determine key changes in consumer buying behavior. The extensive study is based on a survey of nearly 3,000 consumers who bought or leased a new or used vehicle from September 2020 to August 2021. Highlighted here are the main insights revealed in this year’s Car Buyer Journey Study.

**Satisfaction with the overall shopping experience softened after reaching peak levels in 2020.**

**% of buyers satisfied with shopping experience**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>New Buyer</th>
<th>Used Buyer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Let’s dive into some of the reasons why…**

**Buyers recognized the impact of the chip shortage**

**2021 Buyer Sentiment**

- **Limited vehicle selection:** 39%
  - 32% Sept ’20-Feb ’21
  - 47% Mar ’21-Aug ’21

- **Prices are higher than expected:** 31%
  - 26% Sept ’20-Feb ’21
  - 35% Mar ’21-Aug ’21

- **Paid more than initially intended:** 48%
  - 39% Sept ’20-Feb ’21
  - 53% Mar ’21-Aug ’21

- **A dealer/retailer contacted with incentive/financing deal, trade-in/early lease return:** 18%
  - 20% Sept ’20-Feb ’21
  - 16% Mar ’21-Aug ’21

† † INDICATES SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE TO PRIOR YEAR OR TIMEFRAME
**PRICE PAID AND TRUST IN DEAL SUFFERED**

- **Satisfied with Price Paid**
  - NEW: 70% (Sept '20-Feb '21)
  - USED: 67% (Mar '21-Aug '21)
  - NEW: 63% (Sept '20-Feb '21)
  - USED: 60% (Mar '21-Aug '21)

- **Trust the Dealership/Retailer Gave Me the Best Deal**
  - NEW: 70% (Sept '20-Feb '21)
  - USED: 67% (Mar '21-Aug '21)
  - NEW: 57% (Sept '20-Feb '21)
  - USED: 61% (Mar '21-Aug '21)

**THRIVING ECONOMY AND SHIFT TO VEHICLE OWNERSHIP SPURRED DEMAND**

1. Strong U.S. economy—highest annual GDP growth since 1984
   - 2021 estimated GDP growth: 6%

2. Consumers focused on vehicle ownership spurred by safety and cost
   - 35% Plan to increase # of vehicles owned/leased in 5 years

The benefits of a streamlined process induced by the pandemic helped minimize time at dealership.

**TIME SPENT WITH THE DEALERSHIP/RETAILER**

- **Total**
  - 2016: 2:55
  - 2017: 2:55
  - 2018: 2:58
  - 2019: 2:50
  - 2020: 2:37
  - 2021: 2:36

- **New Buyer**
  - 2016: 2:40
  - 2017: 2:42
  - 2018: 2:51
  - 2019: 2:48
  - 2020: 2:37
  - 2021: 2:35

- **Used Buyer**
  - 2016: 2:53
  - 2017: 2:53
  - 2018: 2:50
  - 2019: 2:50
  - 2020: 2:37
  - 2021: 2:37

**TOP FACTORS FOR VEHICLE OWNERSHIP VS. OTHER TRANSPORTATION**

- **↑ 93%** Safety
- **↑ 91%** Total cost of ownership
- **87%** Convenience

*(The process) was shorter this time and I didn’t feel like I was being haggled by the dealership.*
HIGH DEALER SATISFACTION PREVAILED

% OF BUYERS SATISFIED WITH DEALER EXPERIENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New Buyer</th>
<th>Used Buyer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
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<td>64%</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of mostly digital buyers **weathered the impact of limited inventory**.

SHOPPING EXPERIENCE COMPARED TO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES

- **This experience was better**
  - Total: 43% (2020), 34% (2021)
  - Light Digital: 51% (2020), 54% (2021)
  - Mostly Digital: 6% (2020), 6% (2021)

- **Experience was about the same**
  - Total: 56% (2020), 59% (2021)
  - Light Digital: 56% (2020), 59% (2021)
  - Mostly Digital: 6% (2020), 6% (2021)

- **This experience was worse**
  - Total: 6% (2020), 6% (2021)
  - Mostly Digital: 6% (2020), 6% (2021)

**TOTAL**

- **Light Digital**
  - Buyers completed 20% or less of the steps in their buying journey entirely online.

- **Mostly Digital**
  - Buyers completed more than 50% of the steps in their buying journey entirely online.

**INDICATES SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE TO PRIOR YEAR OR TIMEFRAME**
The majority of New buyers used a Cox Automotive site when shopping.

57% OF NEW BUYERS USED COX AUTOMOTIVE (61% IN 2020)

Nearly two-thirds of Used buyers used a Cox Automotive site when shopping.

64% OF USED BUYERS USED COX AUTOMOTIVE (68% IN 2020)
KEY TAKEAWAYS

1/
Consumers are still very motivated to purchase. Therefore OEMs and dealers must continue to engage customers with compelling messaging to sustain demand and protect loyalty, despite inventory shortages and the surge in prices, consumers were still motivated to purchase.

2/
Those “all-in” on digital were more confident in the price paid, more content with the shopping experience, and more likely to save time, so a commitment to digital tools pays off.

3/
Support and expedite the shopper’s purchase journey by leveraging Cox Auto sites and trade-in tools, as third-party sites continue to be the top destinations for researching and shopping.

4/
The top focus for OEMs and dealers should be on rebuilding brand loyalty, even though satisfaction with the dealership experience remained high.