

# Auto Parts Consumers Influenced by Recommendations, Price

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Auto parts buyers can be a fickle group. They have divergent interests in many different types of cars – luxury, family, sport, economy – and can choose from a multitude of foreign and domestic brands.

Trying to determine their auto parts buying preferences can be like attempting to catch a feather in a windstorm. But that's exactly what the *Aftermarket Business World* Consumer Attitude Study did at the end of last year.

The study, conducted by email, found some interesting things about the relationship between auto parts prices and consumer purchasing habits. For example, 75 percent of consumers said that they compare prices when shopping for auto parts, and in 10 out of 12 product categories lowest price was not the most important reason for their purchase. Only purchasers of batteries and wiper blades said that price was the most important consideration in their purchase. That means that in the other 10 product categories – auxiliary lighting, battery chargers, brakes, chassis, gaskets, shock & struts, spark plugs, starters and alternators, water pumps and wheel bearings – factors other than price motivated the purchase. Other criteria that rated a higher response rate from consumers in some of these product categories were auto parts recommendations, performance claim/warranty, brand name and in-store display/packaging.

The power of persuasion wields the heaviest influence with auto parts consumers, according to the study. In fact, in 10 out of 12 categories, recommendation was most often picked as the most important reason for their auto part purchase.

Companies that manufacture starters and alternators are least likely to have their products price shopped, according to the study. Only 43 percent of consumers buying those products in the study said they compared prices before buying. That's not surprising, because 30 percent of consumers surveyed said they bought that product when their car wouldn't start. So emergency situations appear to short-circuit price-shopping tendencies. Auto parts consumers agreed that they would be influenced to repurchase a product based on their experience. More than 80 percent said they would be "likely" or "highly likely" to repurchase a product based on its performance. As distributors, retailers and shops, this is important information to have. Arm yourself with the following to help make a sale:

- Overall information on price
- An outline of what a consumer will get for that price as compared to what they will get for other options, such as good, better and best models.

Distributors should take this information into account when preparing their sales teams for meetings. Make sure your staff understands the reasoning behind spending a few dollars more on a part so the driver can save hundreds – or even thousands – of dollars down the line on additional repairs (repair shops should share this information with drivers to boost customer loyalty). Articulating this information to a repair shop is crucial in being able to supply them with the right parts.

Additionally, both service advisors and technicians deal with the driving public daily. Having compassion for your customer's wallet is a great way to make sure they understand you are focused on their needs and making sure they get the most for their hard-earned dollar. Taking the time to train your staff and work with suppliers to make sure you have all of the right information on price differences can mean the difference between making the sale and missing the opportunity.