Consumer Perception: the Rise of Market Research in the Automotive Industry

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Knowing your target market can be a company's key to success in modern business. Niche marketing, particularly with the availability of much more targeted advertisement using television commercials and online ads, is growing in popularity because of its high-yielding results.

With car companies putting out commercials and ads specifically targeting groups of consumers, like women, young people, parents with small children, and even successful CEOs, does anyone wonder where

they're getting their information? The answer: market research firms. The business of capturing information about segments of the consumer population has become a business in and of itself â€“ and a big one at that.

For example, let's start looking back at 2005 when Harris Interactive â€“ the 15th largest marked research firm in the world â€“ conducted a study to find out what automotive brands people felt were not only the most technologically savvy, but also which brands were perceived to be driven by socialites. Six brands made both lists: Volvo, Jaguar, BMW, Lexus, Mitsubishi, and Isuzu.

While the results are no surprise to the first four on the list, Mitsubishi and Isuzu have never actively tried to position themselves in either market. Currently, Isuzu offers four models to U.S.

consumers â€“ its high-performance SUV "Ascender" â€“ and three pickup trucks: the i-290 Extended Cab, the i-370 Crew Cab, and the i-370 Extended Cab. One wouldn't necessarily assume that when the majority of your line are pickups â€“ traditionally marketed to Middle America for their rugged hauling and towing capacities â€“ that you'd be perceived as a company known for progressive technology and appealing to socialites. But, in all honesty, that should be no surprise either.

Isuzu's recent upgrades, like the i-370's Crew Cab Comfort Package proves that Isuzu drivers appreciate luxury as much as anyone else.

It includes high-back 8-way power driver seats (and 6-way power seats for the front passenger) with lumbar support and integrated adjustable head restraints. The driver window controls are one-touch automatic and the steering wheel is leather-wrapped. In addition to the CFC-free refrigerant air conditioning and an AM/FM stereo with 6-disc in-dash CD changer, it offers a state-of-the-art 6-speaker audio system.

The i-370 also excels when it comes to desired safety features. The pickup boasts an automatic front-passenger airbag suppression system, power locks, remote keyless entry, and a content theft-deterrent alarm system. The interior is available in cloth or leather.

With ten exterior paint options to choose from like Deep Crimson Metallic and Pacific Blue, the pickup looks like it should sport a much higher price tag. It's truly and impressive looking vehicle.

Driving the i-370 is bound to prove that this ain't your grandfather's pickup. All that power handles as beautifully as many luxury cars handle thanks to a hydraulically assisted rack-and-pinion power steering system , triple door seals to block road noise, and Isuzu's own Electronic Traction Control.

So with all this, it's no real surprise that Isuzu ranked right up there with legacies of luxury like BMW

and Lexus. In an effort to design the best possible product for their buyers, they ultimately opened the door to markets they weren't specifically aiming for. But that just goes to show you that comfort, performance, and style appeal to everyone.

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