FROM TRAFFIC TO TEST DRIVES

Automotive Report 2025

PLATFORMANCE™

INTRODUCTION

This report contains rich insights for automotive advertisers, divided into distinct sections:

THE BIG TRENDS:

Automotive in the Middle East

An exploration of the major forces reshaping the region's automotive landscape and what they mean for both OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers) and dealers as they plan their next moves.

CONSUMER INSIGHTS

Car Buyers

A closer look at today's in-market shoppers: the size of the opportunity, what drives their decisions, and where their everyday behaviours create openings for effective automotive marketing.

DEEP DIVE:

Ramadan

Ramadan remains a pivotal moment for the auto industry. We unpack how consumer sentiment, expectations, and buying patterns shift during the holy month and translate those insights into practical guidance for advertisers.

DEEP DIVE:

Luxury & EV Car Buyers

An examination of the fast-growing luxury and electric vehicle (EV) segments. We highlight how these audiences differ from mainstream buyers and what brands can learn to refine their marketing approach.

AUTO META ANALYSIS:

Performance Campaigns in Practice

Drawing on Platformance's extensive experience across more than 80 campaigns, we break down recurring patterns in campaign performance and the insights that create a strong strategic foundation.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

Clear and practical steps for building high-performing automotive campaigns that are grounded in data, proven tactics, and industry expertise.

OUTLOOK:

Future Pillars of Automotive Conversion

A forward-looking perspective on the innovations shaping automotive marketing today. We identify the emerging tools and features that early adopters are already using to stay ahead.

THE BIG TRENDS: AUTOMOTIVE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The automotive industry in the Middle East is constantly shifting. As more people move to the region, especially to strong Gulf economies like the UAE and Saudi Arabia, the number of car brands entering the market also grows. In major markets such as the UAE, there are now around 120 distinct car makes for sale. It is a crowded landscape.

So what are the key trends shaping the market today, and in turn, the challenges facing OEMs and car dealers?

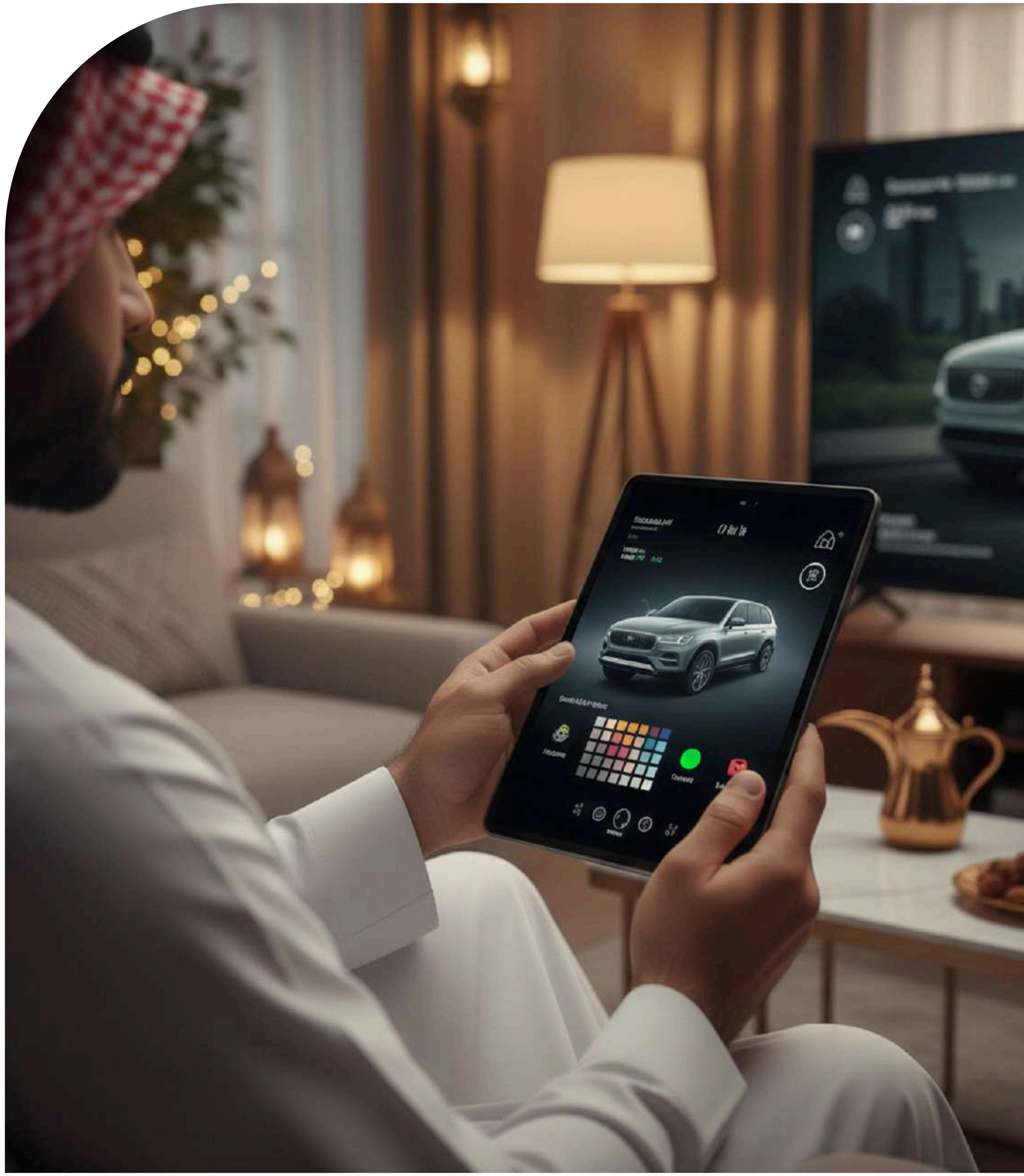
The first, and one many will have noticed on the road, is the rise of new entrants, particularly from China. AutoData reports that more than **70%** of buyers in the **UAE** and **KSA** now express confidence in purchasing Chinese brands. Consumers are not only more open to considering these brands, they are actively choosing them. DubiCars data (2024–2025) shows that demand for Chinese-brand cars in the UAE is growing faster than demand for non-Chinese brands. In the first half of 2025, brand registrations surged year on year, up **+163.9%** for Jetour and **+39.1%** for Geely.

+70%
Buyers Confidence
in Chinese Brands (UAE & KSA)

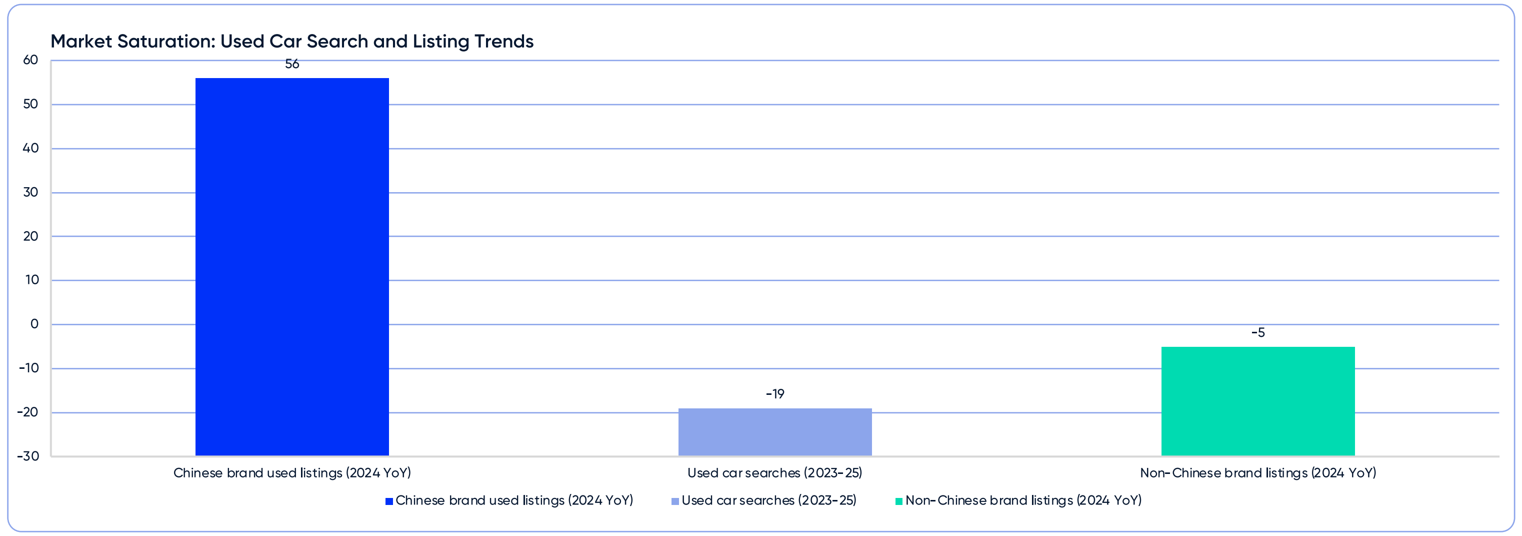
+163.9%
Jetour Registrations
Year on year

+39.1%
Geely Registrations
Year on year

Source: Dubicars



These brands lead by promoting features rather than heritage, and they attract buyers with competitive financing, strong post-purchase service packages and long warranties. Promotions also play a key role in converting hesitant shoppers. This influx has accelerated market saturation and has had a knock-on effect on the second-hand market. Searches for used cars are down 19% compared to 2023, as our search analysis of three major MENA markets shows. Used-car listings on DubiCars for Chinese-brand vehicles rose by 56% in 2024, while listings for non-Chinese brands fell by 5%. Chinese brands are clearly squeezing the space available to others. This is particularly pronounced in Egypt, one of the main MENA markets that makes up the majority of all used car searches, according to our recent analysis of 2023-2025 data. It's not surprising, given the lower average income here compared to the Gulf, that used cars are more popular in Egypt. What we anticipate is relatively more success for Chinese entrants selling at low price points.



Secondly, electric vehicles (EV) are becoming more visible. Their adoption in the Gulf is rising fast, even if total EV penetration remains modest. In 2024, the share of EVs across GCC vehicle fleets roughly **doubled from about 2% to 4%** (Roland Berger). While 4 % is still a small slice of the total, the speed of growth underlines a market in transition: rising consumer interest, expanding charging infrastructure and growing confidence in EV ownership.

For advertisers, this rapid growth from a low base means many buyers are still under-informed about EV ownership. Messaging should combine education on charging, range, and running costs with reassurance through test drives or in-person experiences. This dual approach reflects the hybrid buyer journey. More on this in the EV car buyer section later in this report.

The third major trend, which has gathered pace in the post-Covid media landscape, is the shift towards creator-led content, especially during new model launches. This has often come at the expense of traditional ATL channels such as OOH. The rationale is clear: TikTok platform data, based on an IPSOS survey, shows that creators are seen as "invaluable in driving credibility", with **40%** of users citing creators' credibility as the most useful part of their purchase journey. Creators are no longer appearing only at the point of recommendation. They now play a role earlier in the funnel. On creator-heavy platforms like TikTok, users are 1.64 times more likely to hear about tentpole events like car launches first compared with other media channels.

These shifts in brand competition, technology adoption, and media influence shape how consumers approach car buying. To understand the implications, we now look more closely at the target audience for OEMs and car dealers: car buyers.

CONSUMER INSIGHTS: CAR BUYERS

For consumers, a car purchase is a major financial decision. It is not something they do often. Across GCC markets, people typically replace their cars every 3 to 5 years (Yalla Motor). They also take time to decide, usually between 4 and 6 weeks (Yalla Motor), depending on the type of buyer and the type of car. There is growing evidence that this process is speeding up as more research and consideration move to digital channels.

Stylised Buyer Journey for Auto Intenders

AWARENESS AND INTEREST → RESEARCH AND CONSIDERATION → EVALUATION AND SHORTLISTING → DECISION AND PURCHASE

Even so, the level of demand remains high. Recent GWI data shows that almost one in four consumers in MENA plan to buy a car in the next 3 to 6 months. A further 35% expect to buy within the following 18 months. This creates a sizeable, targetable audience: 2.3 million in the UAE, 6.3 million in KSA and 11.6 million in Egypt, respectively.

UAE ↗ 2.3M

KSA ↗ 6.3M

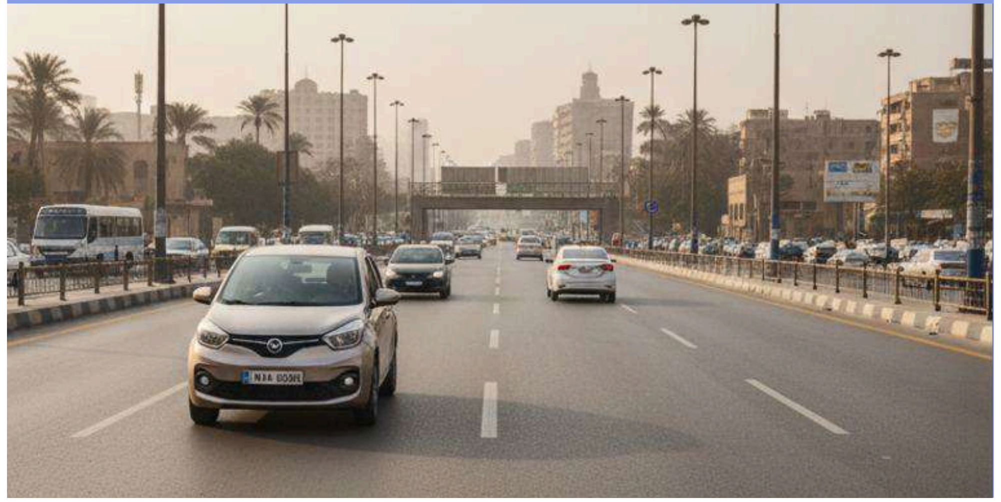
EGY ↗ 11.6M

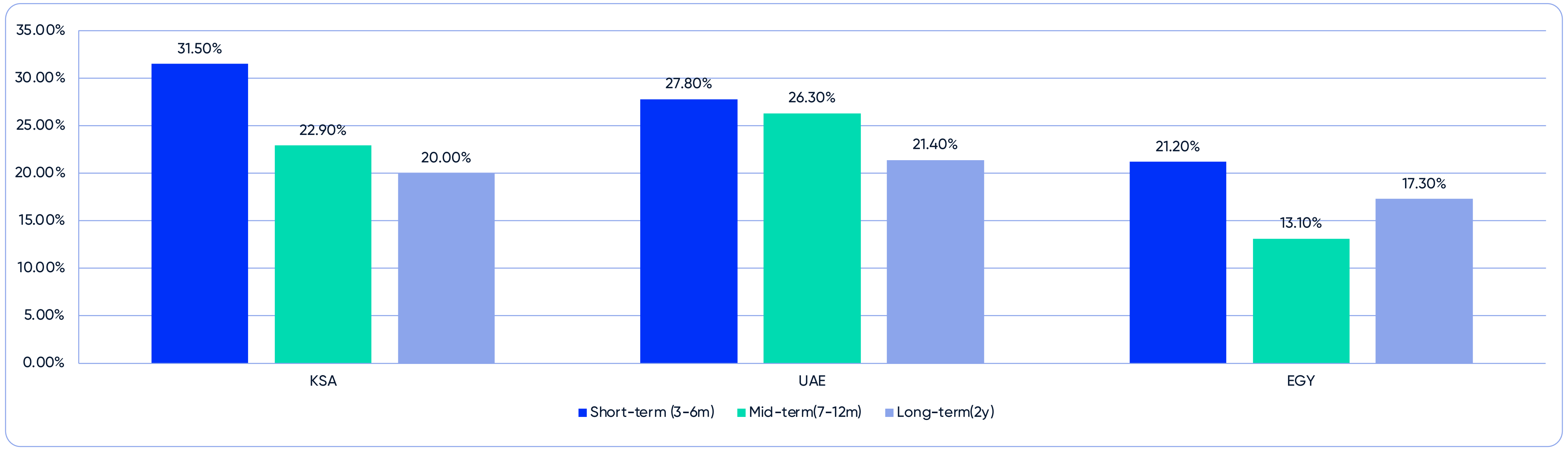
GWI DATA ALSO HIGHLIGHTS CLEAR REGIONAL DIFFERENCES

Short-term intent (3–6 months) is strongest in KSA at 31.5%, followed by UAE at 27.8%. Egypt sits much lower at 21.2%. The Gulf stands out as a particularly active market.

Mid-term intent (7–12 months) is highest in the UAE at 26.3%, ahead of KSA at 22.9% and Egypt at 13.1%.

Two-year intent is relatively stable across markets, with UAE at 21.4%, KSA at 20% and Egypt at 17.3%. Long-term interest is solid everywhere, but still strongest in the Gulf.





We examined imminent auto intenders (those looking to buy in the next 3-6 months) in more detail and compared them to the average consumer:

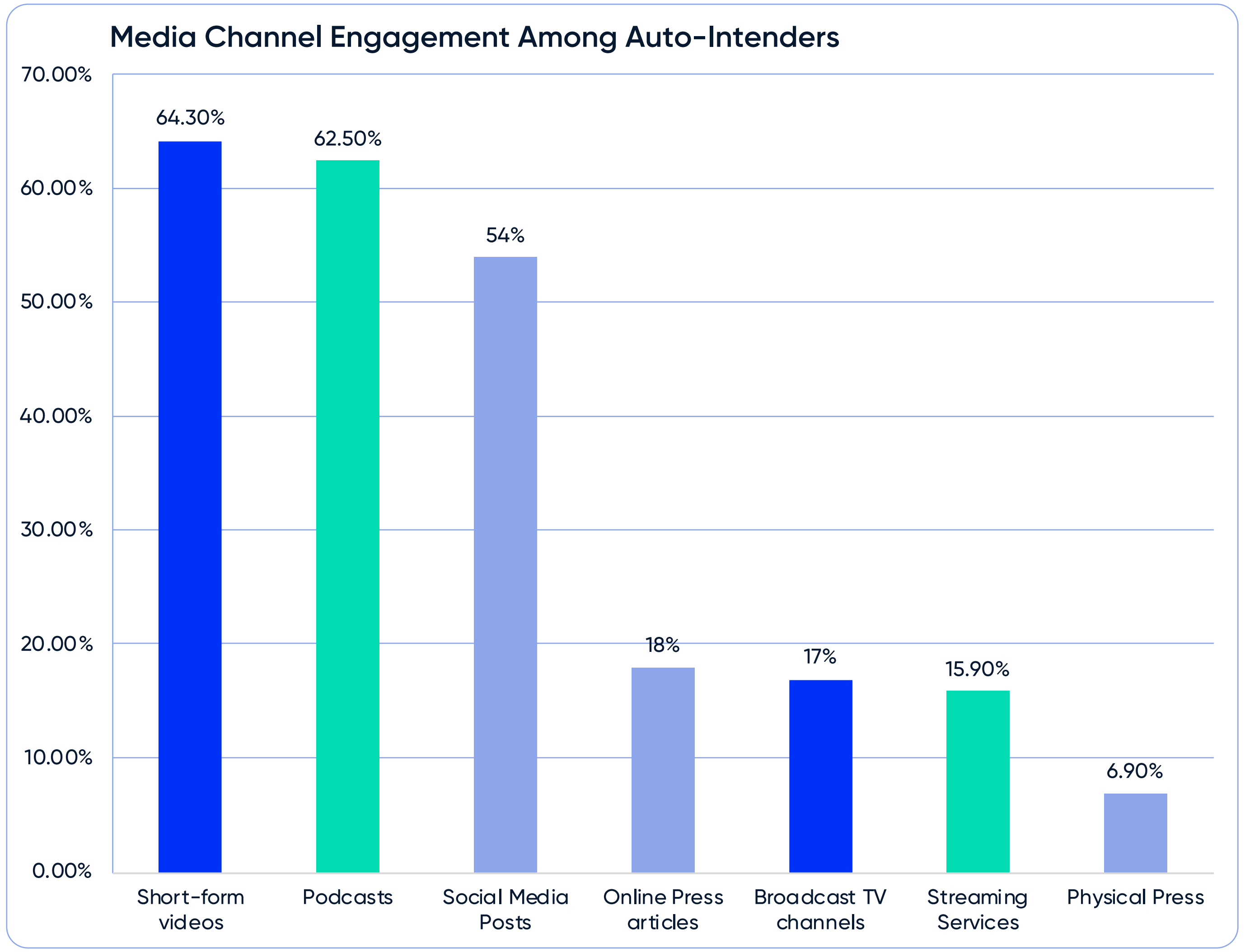
- They are 70% more likely to prefer luxury cars. This group makes up roughly 10% of all auto buyers and is growing quickly, which is why we dedicate a later section to them.
- Interest in EV and hybrid models is rising too. These groups now account for 16% and 18% of auto intenders. Current intenders are more than 20% more likely to prefer EVs or hybrids.
- Many are also looking for family-friendly models, such as hatchbacks, and are 32% more likely to consider these types of cars.

Beyond their product preferences, the question for brands is how to reach these buyers early.

The key is to prioritise the media channels with the highest cut-through among auto intenders. GWI data paints a clear picture:

Short-form video (e.g. Reels, TikTok): **64.3%**
Podcasts: **62.5%**
Social media posts (Stories and feed posts): **54%**
Online news articles: **18%**
Broadcast TV channels: **17%**
Streaming services: **15.9%**
Physical press articles: **6.9%**

(Responses to multi-choice question:
Approximately how many days have you done each of the following, in the last week?)



Digital touchpoints dominate. TikTok research suggests that the average car buyer encounters **more than 24** of them during the research phase. According to Cox Automotive, typically touchpoints will include **four to five** websites in the research phase alone, and many more across the full path to purchase. Digital is now clearly pervasive. Think with Google research shows that **95%** of car buyers turn to digital during their journey. They also spend a lot of time there: the average buyer spends **14 hours researching online**. All of these touchpoints represent channels that matter to car shoppers and opportunities for advertisers.
(Source : GWI)

Across each stage of their car purchasing journey, auto intenders turn to what we refer to as **trusted sources**. Being present across these is imperative for auto advertisers - why? Because brand survey research, for instance by Deloitte, shows that when thinking about what car to buy, the car model and brand are only the 5th and 6th most important user considerations, respectively - after price, car features, engine type and vehicle type. Data suggests this lack of brand loyalty is even more pronounced amongst luxury and EV car buyers. In order to ensure relevance for auto intenders early on and bind them to your brand over others, building up consistent, multi-channel yet digital first presence is key. The good news for advertisers is that many of the digital touchpoints are accessible through ads or sponsorships.

There is an additional benefit to ensuring consistent contact with auto intenders across digital channels. It opens up the opportunity to measurably drive users into your brand universe, whether your app (downloads & opens), website (visits and sessions) or your showroom (footfall). In turn, these very same users can be nurtured and converted, via conversion led outcomes like leads and qualified leads, that serve as valuable inputs for OEM and dealership sales teams to turn into a final sale.

Digital's importance will only increase. McKinsey research from Europe shows that while fewer than **3%** of customers buy a vehicle fully online today, **29%** want their next purchase to be entirely online, and another **23%** prefer a hybrid approach. This hybrid group closely mirrors a large portion of MENA car buyers.

Where trusted sources sit along the buyer journey

AWARENESS AND INTEREST → **RESEARCH AND CONSIDERATION** → **EVALUATION AND SHORTLISTING** → **DECISION AND PURCHASE**

Video Reviews

Peer Advocacy / Word-of-Mouth

News Website

Social Media and Influencers

Car Review Website and Industry Magazines

Car Comparison Website

Manufacturer Website

Consumer Forums

Peer Recommendation

Dealer Website

DEEP DIVE: RAMADAN

Beyond always-on consumer behaviour, seasonality also plays a defining role in automotive demand. One period stands out for its ability to reshape intent and accelerate decision-making: Ramadan.

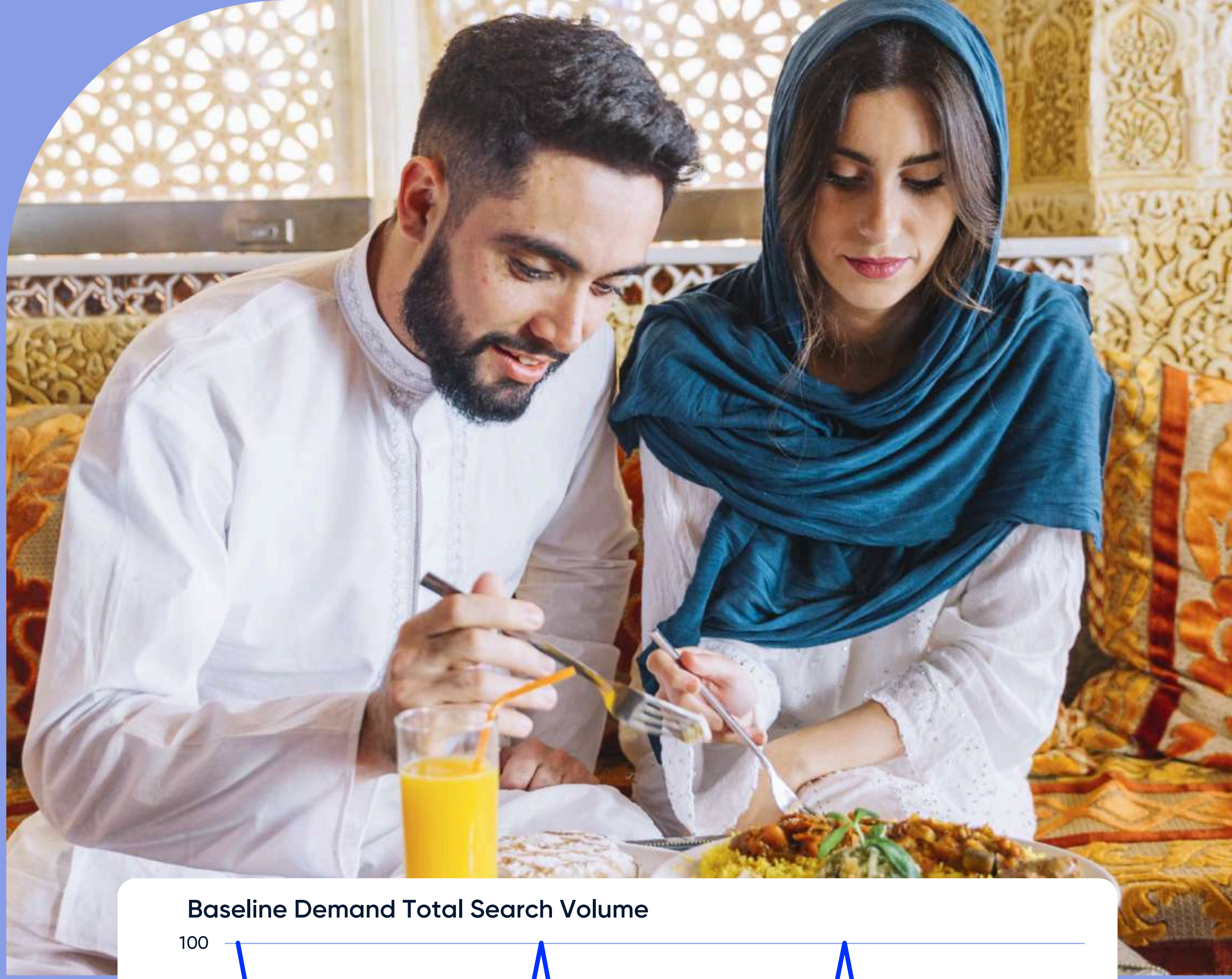
Ramadan is a culturally significant period that shapes how consumers in the Middle East research, compare, and purchase cars. Search data provides a unique lens into this behaviour, capturing changes in interest, intent, and readiness to act. We analysed automotive-related search behaviour over the past three years across the UAE, KSA, and Egypt to understand how Ramadan fits into the broader automotive demand cycle.

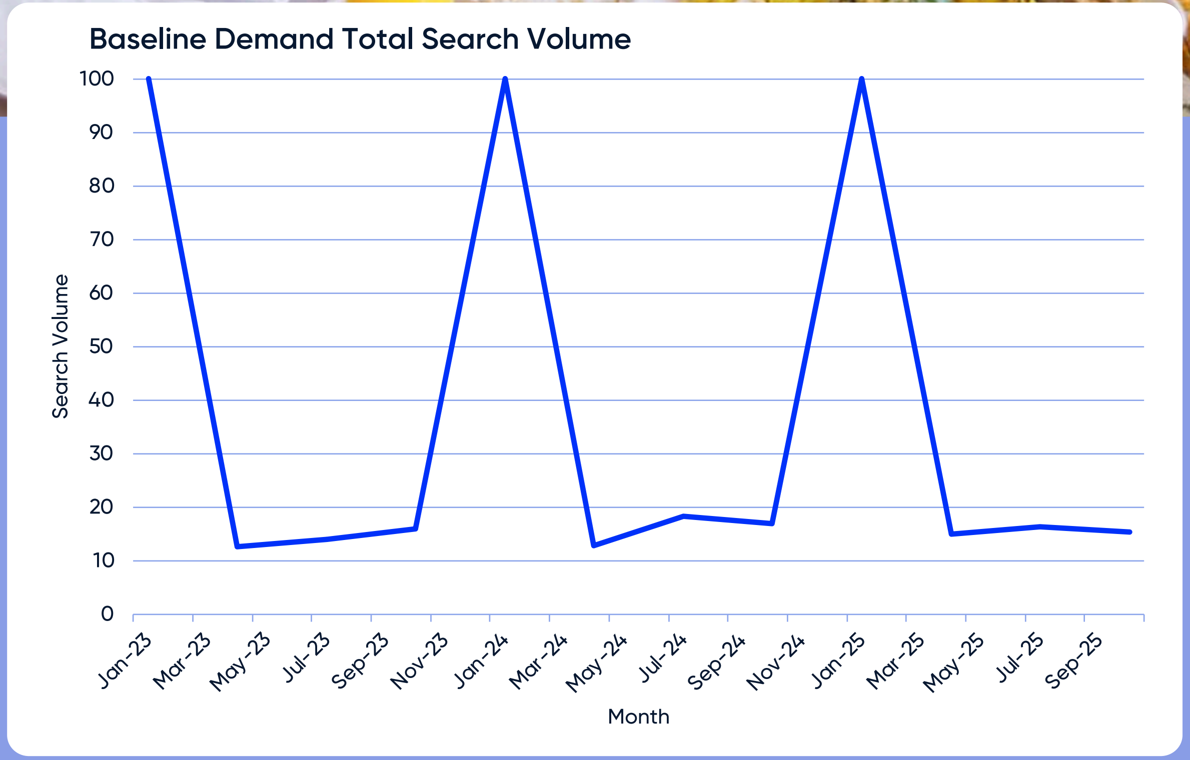
When Automotive Interest Really Peaks

We began by analysing a core set of keywords in both English and Arabic that capture baseline automotive demand, such as cars, cars for sale, top selling cars, and used cars for sale. These queries indicate how salient car buying is in consumers' minds at different points in the year.

One finding stands out clearly: the strongest and most consistent peak in automotive search interest occurs at the start of the year. Across all three markets and over three consecutive years (2023–2025), January emerges as the single highest point of baseline automotive interest. Search volumes during this period are materially higher than at any other time of the year, including Ramadan.

This pattern suggests that consumers enter the year with renewed purchase intent, likely linked to annual planning, financial resets, and lifestyle changes. For automotive advertisers, this reinforces the importance of early-year presence. Brands that are visible during this period are better positioned to capture high-intent demand before it disperses across the rest of the year.





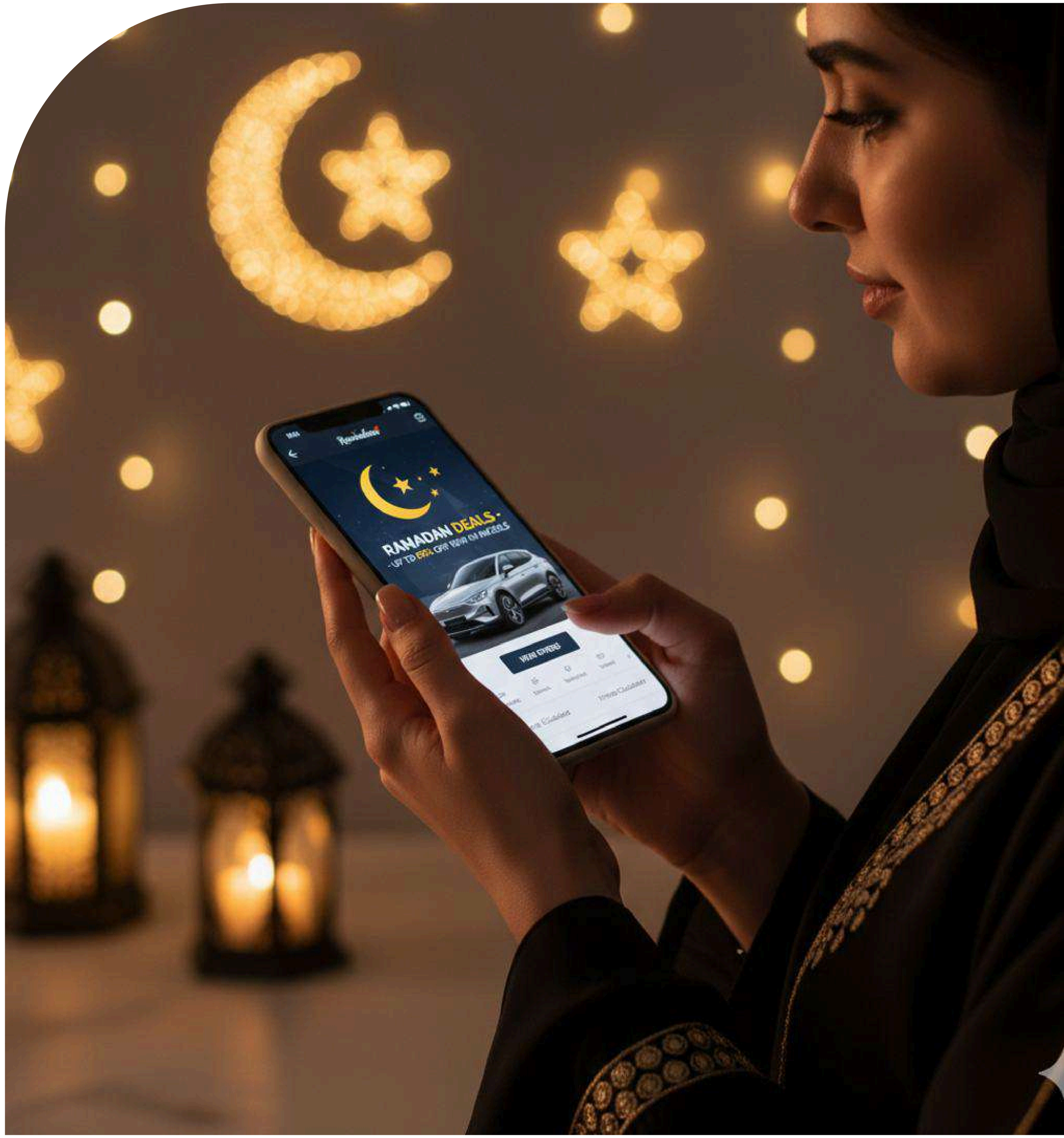
Promotions, Offers, and the Role of Ramadan

Search behaviour also shows that the start of the year is closely associated with promotional expectations. Keywords related to offers, discounts, financing, and deals rise alongside baseline automotive interest in January, indicating that consumers not only think about buying cars at this time, but actively expect value-driven propositions.

So where does Ramadan fit into this picture?

While Ramadan does not consistently outperform January in terms of overall automotive search volume, it plays a different and complementary role. Ramadan is a period where purchase intent sharpens. Search queries become more transactional, with greater emphasis on financing, offers, availability, and practical considerations tied to ownership. Rather than creating the largest spike in demand, Ramadan appears to help convert existing interest into action, with searches related to financing and loans often rising to levels that match or even exceed those seen during the early-year peak in general automotive interest.

There is also a structural shift underway. Ramadan moves around ten days earlier each year and is expected to begin in mid-February in 2026. As a result, it is gradually moving closer to the early-year peak in automotive interest. Over time, this creates the conditions for overlap between two high-intent periods: the annual New Year reset and Ramadan-driven consideration. While this full overlap still lies a few years ahead, advertisers can already plan for strategies that bridge January demand into Ramadan rather than treating them as separate moments.



What This Means for Advertisers

The search data points to a clear takeaway: Ramadan should not be viewed in isolation or as the sole peak moment for automotive demand. Instead, it sits within a broader seasonal arc where interest builds strongly at the start of the year and becomes more conversion-oriented as Ramadan approaches.

For advertisers, this shifts the strategic focus. Rather than relying on short, intense Ramadan-only campaigns, there is value in sustained presence that captures early-year interest and nurtures it through Ramadan with relevant messaging around offers, financing, and readiness to purchase. Search behaviour suggests that Ramadan is particularly effective at moving consumers down the funnel, turning browsers into intenders and intenders into active leads.

This also highlights the importance of flexibility and risk management during high-intent periods. As intent intensifies and competition increases, performance-based approaches that align media spend with measurable outcomes, such as qualified leads, can help advertisers remain responsive to demand without overcommitting budgets.

DEEP DIVE:
LUXURY & EV CAR BUYERS

While Ramadan sharpens intent across the broader market, some buyer groups respond more strongly than others. Luxury and EV buyers are two fast-growing and high-value segments in the region, and they behave very differently from mainstream car buyers.

DIVERGENT BEHAVIOR

Their expectations, motivations and preferred touchpoints diverge sharply, which has direct implications for how OEMs & dealers should market to them

CRITICAL DIGITAL JOURNEY

For luxury and EV buyers, the digital journey is even more critical.

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS

Their paths are more emotional, more research-intensive, & their expectations for content, interaction, and innovation are higher than the mainstream.

This section explores these two segments, the challenges they present, and the marketing tactics that can convert and retain them in a highly competitive landscape.

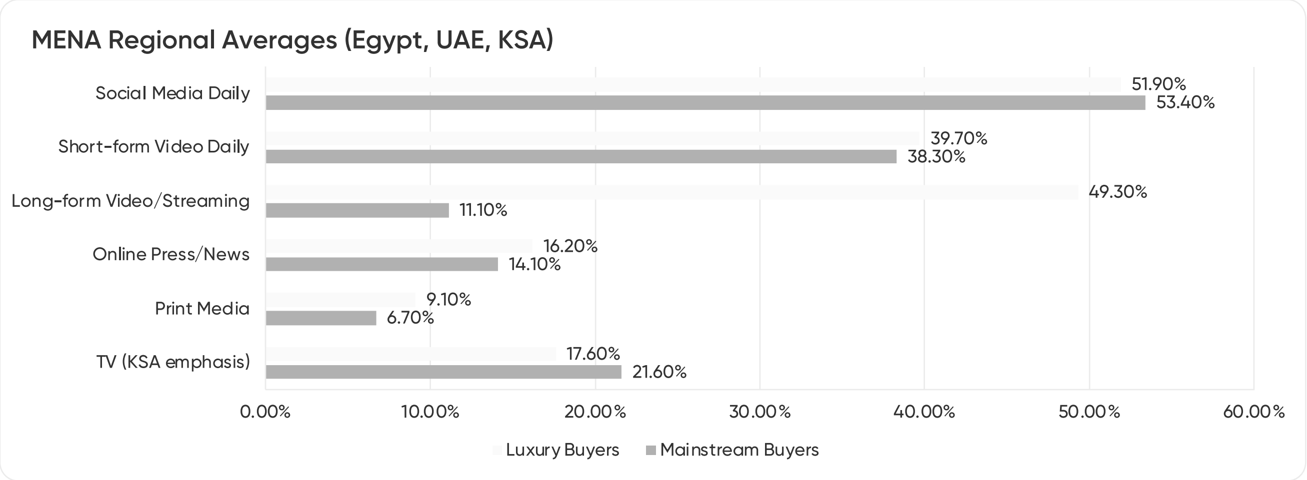
LUXURY CAR BUYERS

Who They Are and How They Behave

Luxury car buyers in the Middle East behave very differently from mainstream auto-intenders. McKinsey's global luxury research highlights that **perfection** and **heritage** are the two most important brand attributes, enjoyment of driving motivates **86 per cent**, and only 37 per cent stay loyal to a single marque. Purchase decisions are fast and emotional, and buyers often switch brands despite previous positive experiences.

Across Egypt, the UAE and KSA, GWI data reinforces this distinctiveness. Luxury buyers typically skew more premium, more digitally engaged and more research-driven. In Egypt, **62.5 per cent** use social media daily compared with **57.4 per cent** of general auto-intenders. Their engagement with short-form video is even stronger: nearly **two-thirds** consume Reels or TikTok daily, yet they also over-index for long-form video and online press. Even print has a stronger role among Egyptian luxury buyers than among the broader auto audience, reflecting their affinity for premium editorial environments.

In the UAE and KSA, the same pattern scales upward. Luxury intenders exhibit extremely high daily use of social platforms, streaming and online press, with UAE buyers showing particularly strong consumption of digital news and reviews. KSA retains a hybrid media profile where TV remains influential, yet luxury buyers still demonstrate heavy daily engagement with video-led platforms and premium digital content.



(Source: GWI charts, MENA Audience planning to purchase a car in 3-6 months)

Mindset, Motivations and Expectations

The psychology of luxury purchase is markedly emotional. Buyers seek exclusivity, identity expression, craftsmanship, and aesthetically perfect design. Younger luxury buyers expect advanced in-car technology and seamless customer experiences, even if they are not heavy users of every feature. Yet satisfaction gaps persist: 45 per cent say they are not fully satisfied with maintenance quality and 49 per cent want turnkey garage management services.

Although luxury buyers conduct extensive online research, their decision cycle is compressed. One in three completes the journey in under a month – significantly shorter than mainstream buyers who take several months and remain more price-driven. Trust matters: authoritative reviewers, specialist automotive press, and credible creators carry more weight than generic ads. GWI data across all three markets confirms luxury buyers' above-average consumption of online press, long-form explainers and creator-led automotive content.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVERTISERS

Luxury requires an emotionally led creative strategy supported by premium media and high-quality storytelling:

Cinematic, lifestyle-driven creative should sit at the heart of the campaign. GenAI now makes premium-grade cinematic content and localised adaptations far more scalable, enabling brands to refresh creative rapidly whilst maintaining elevated visual standards.

Creators and authoritative automotive reviewers are essential to building trust. Their credibility aligns with luxury buyers' desire for informed, expert-backed perspectives.

Fast-cycle retargeting is crucial due to short purchase timelines. Sequential storytelling should move buyers quickly from emotional consideration to detailed features and then to lead generation.

Premium digital environments social, online press partnerships, high-quality video, and prestige programmatic placements matter disproportionately. Luxury buyers already over-index in these channels, and they support brand cues that reinforce craftsmanship, exclusivity and heritage.

EV CAR BUYERS

Who They Are and How They Behave

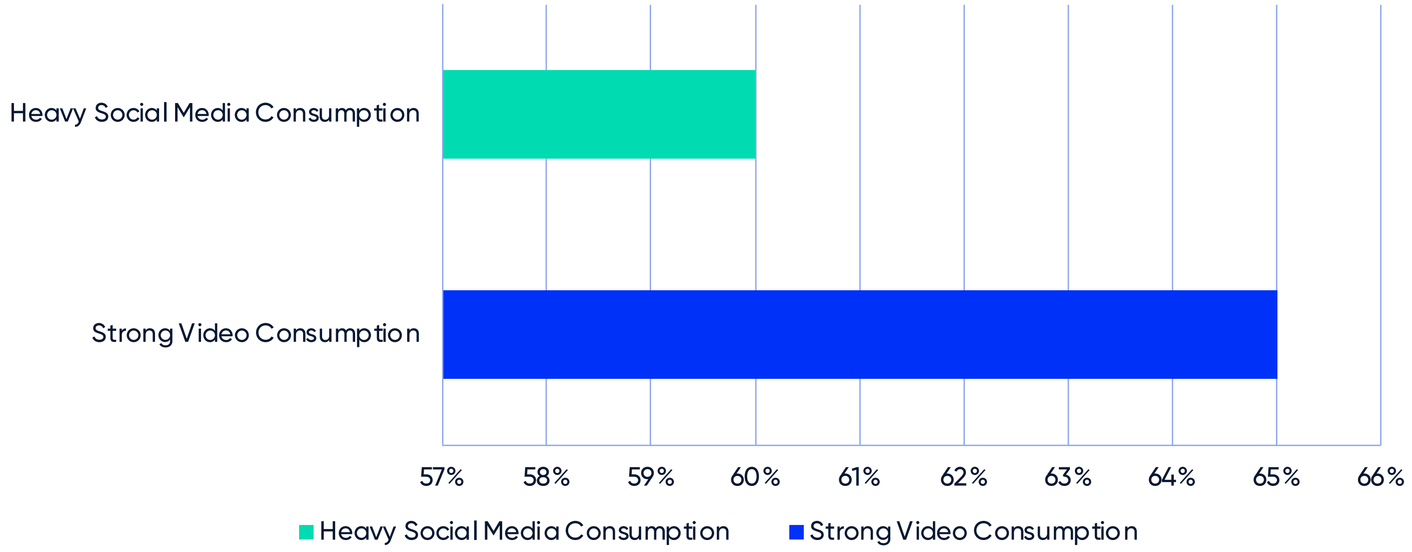
EV buyers in the region represent a different kind of premium-oriented audience. Their motivations centre on innovation, sustainability, performance and curiosity rather than heritage or status. Global EV consideration is rising: BEVs (Battery Electric Vehicles) are up **five percentage** points year on year, and PHEVs up **four**. Skepticism is declining, and buyers are increasingly open to switching brands. More than half of EV buyers are willing to consider a new brand, rising to **70 per cent** for BEV buyers specifically. (Source: GWI)

70% BEV Buyers

Willing to Switch Bands

Their digital behaviour overlaps with luxury buyers but for different reasons. GWI data across Egypt, the UAE and KSA shows EV-leaning audiences are heavy users of social, video platforms and online press. They consume large amounts of both short-form and long-form video, especially content that breaks down charging, range, battery performance and real-world driving scenarios. They research extensively and rely heavily on expert reviews and user-generated walkthroughs.

Digital Engagement Among EV Buyers

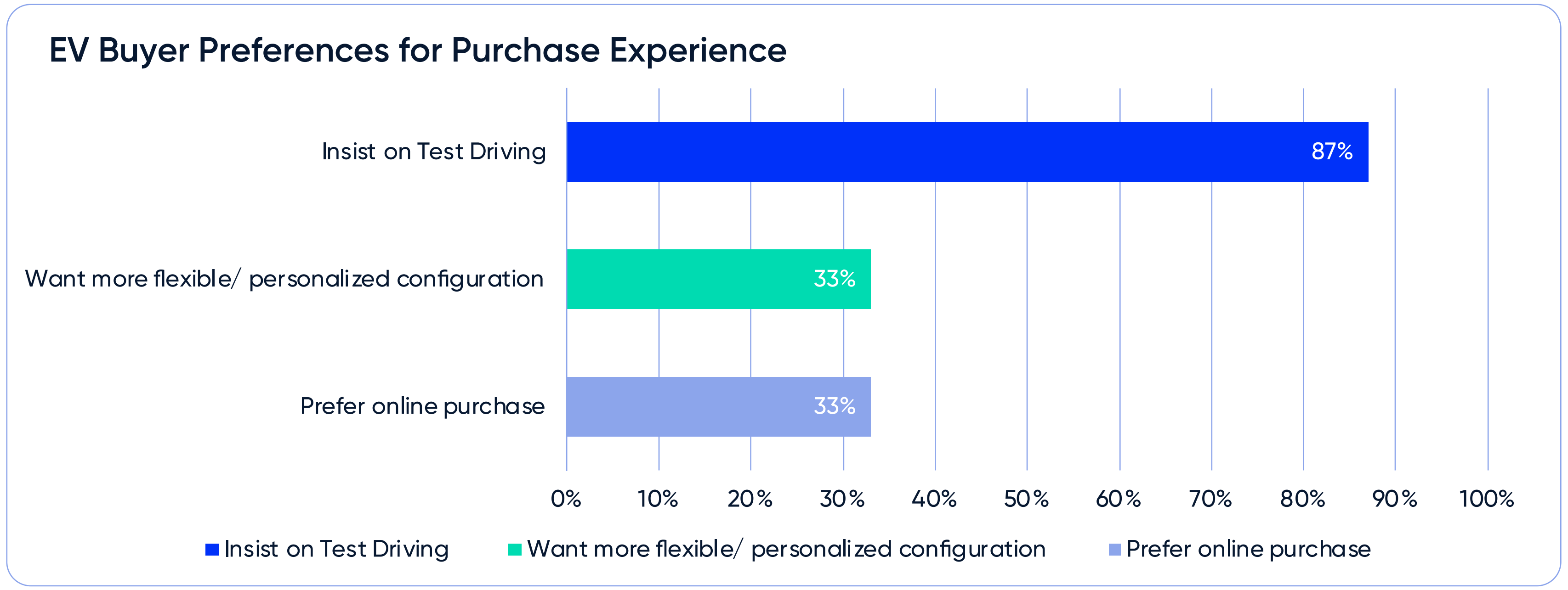


Mindset, Motivations and Expectations

EV buyers expect the buying experience to reflect the innovation of the product. They prefer a **hybrid retail journey** – online configuration and research combined with the option to speak to a human adviser. Their frustrations relate to complexity: opaque pricing, confusing trim structures, long delivery times and inconsistent dealership communication. No surprise that only **53 per cent** of recent EV buyers said they were fully satisfied with their journey.

Test drives are even more essential for EVs than for non-EVs. Around **87 per cent** of all auto buyers insist on test-driving, and this number rises for EVs due to concerns about acceleration feel, handling, range and charging. Buyers are increasingly open to alternatives such as virtual test drives, immersive demos or at-home test-drive experiences.

Personalization matters strongly. One in three EV buyers wants more flexible configuration options, modular trim bundles and the ability to update their configuration after placing the order. They are far more likely than ICE buyers to consider purchasing online, though they still want negotiation options and real human interaction when needed. (Source: GWI)



IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVERTISERS

EV advertising must balance education, reassurance and innovation across the full funnel. Three solutions stand out:

01

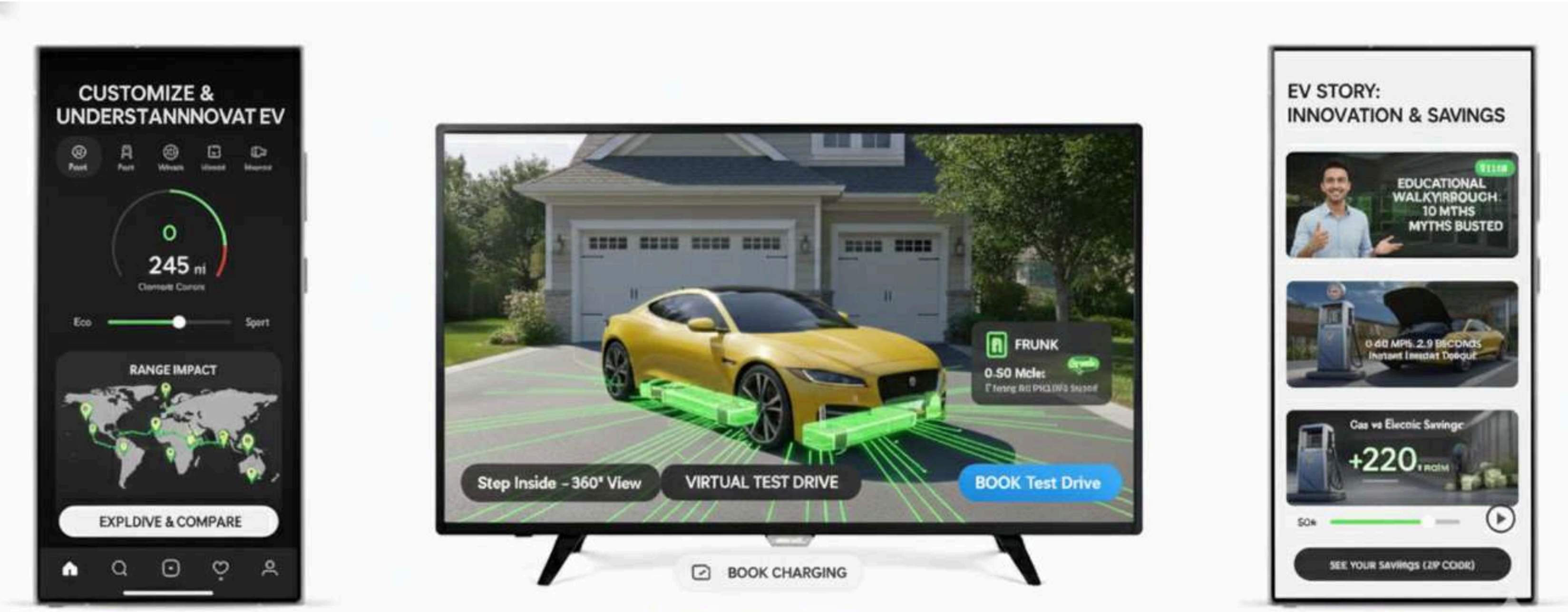
Rich, interactive formats such as 3D car models, AR previews, charging explainers or range simulators help reduce the complexity that often slows EV consideration. This is where rich media formats are particularly powerful, as they directly address the questions EV buyers spend the most time researching.

02

Educational storytelling layered through the mid-funnel ensures buyers have access to credible explanations. Long-form reviews, charging tutorials, creator-led range tests and detailed feature walk-throughs match the informational depth this audience seeks.

03

Full-funnel retargeting built on early intent signals moves buyers from broad research toward action. Lower-funnel placements that push test-drive bookings, charging-network reassurance or financing options help convert curiosity into trial. Virtual or immersive test-drive ad experiences pair naturally with how EV buyers already explore new technology.



3D car model   Immersive AR / Virtual EV Experience   Mobile Test Drive

KEY OBSERVATIONS

Beyond always-on consumer behaviour, seasonality also plays a defining role in automotive demand. One period stands out for its ability to reshape intent and accelerate decision-making: Ramadan.

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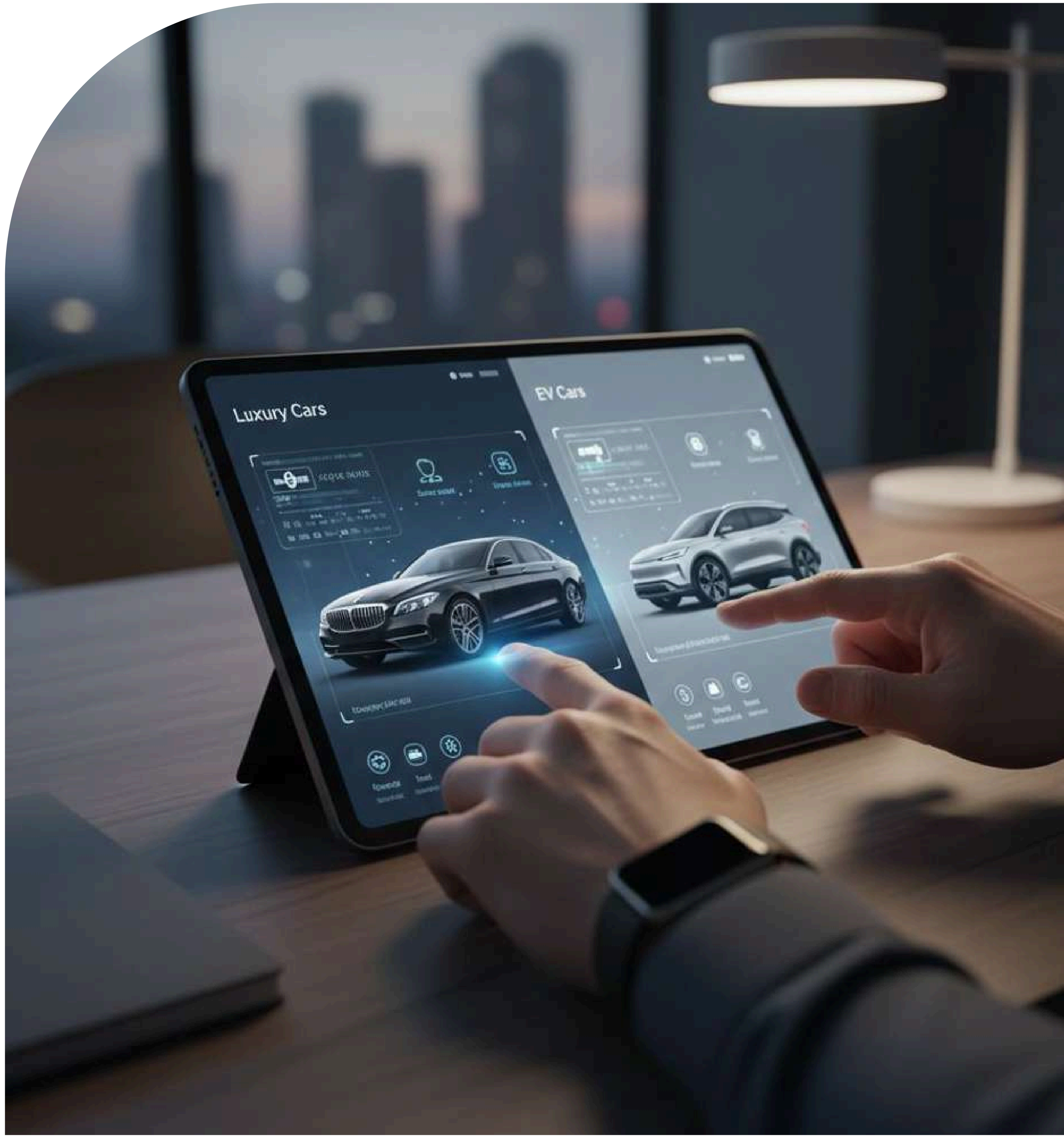
Luxury buyers value emotion, aspiration, and status. Campaigns should focus on premium content at scale, creator credibility, and fast, high-impact retargeting. Generative AI enables cinematic storytelling across multiple channels at reduced costs.

EV buyers are highly digital and research-driven, with low brand loyalty and strong preference for innovative, hybrid purchase journeys. Campaigns should integrate immersive test drives, interactive configurators, and funnel-based retargeting to guide buyers from discovery to conversion.

Both segments differ from mainstream buyers in loyalty, decision speed, and the type of content that drives conversion. For advertisers, these differences create opportunities to deploy more sophisticated digital strategies, richer creative formats, and highly personalised campaigns.



AUTOMOTIVE META ANALYSIS: PERFORMANCE CAMPAIGNS IN PRACTICE

To complement the market and consumer insights in this report, we analysed the real-world performance of automotive campaigns run by Platformance over the past 12 months, covering the period from December 2024 to November 2025. This meta analysis brings together results from more than **80 performance campaigns across 16 automotive brands**, spanning multiple markets and car types.

The primary aim of this analysis is to identify the factors that most strongly influence the KPIs that matter to performance-driven automotive advertisers: **Cost per Lead (CPL) and Qualification Rate (QR)**. By examining how these metrics vary by market, vehicle price, car type, brand profile, and seasonality, we can begin to understand what drives efficiency, and where optimisation opportunities lie.

Automotive Meta-Analysis Scope

TIMEFRAME
Dec 2024–Nov 2025

PERFORMANCE CAMPAIGNS
80+ campaigns analysed

KEY KPIS
CPL & Qualification Rate

AUTOMOTIVE BRANDS
16 brands included

VEHICLE TYPES
Various car segments

MARKET COVERAGE
Multiple global markets

OVERALL PERFORMANCE: BENCHMARKS AND VARIABILITY

Across all campaigns analysed, the average CPL we observed is $36. The average CPQL stands at $246, calculated only for campaigns where qualified leads were actively tracked by Platformance. The average qualification rate across these campaigns is 27%. In most cases qualification criteria includes i) leads being reachable and ii) leads genuinely showing interest.

$36
Average CPL

$246
Average CPQL

27%
Average Qualification Rate

These averages provide a useful benchmark, but they also mask wide variation. Some campaigns deliver leads at a fraction of the average cost, while others incur significantly higher CPLs but generate stronger lead quality. This reinforces a central theme of this analysis: efficiency in automotive performance marketing cannot be judged on a single metric alone.

MARKET-LEVEL PERFORMANCE: COST FIRST, QUALITY SECOND

When comparing markets, clear differences emerge in both cost efficiency and lead quality.

From a pure cost perspective, Kuwait records the highest average CPL at $51 with Qatar following at $40. This suggests that smaller markets with a smaller target audience and more fierce competition have higher CPL costs. Larger markets like the UAE and KSA perform better, at $33 and $32, respectively, whilst Iraq is the most cost-efficient market analysed, with an average CPL of $30.

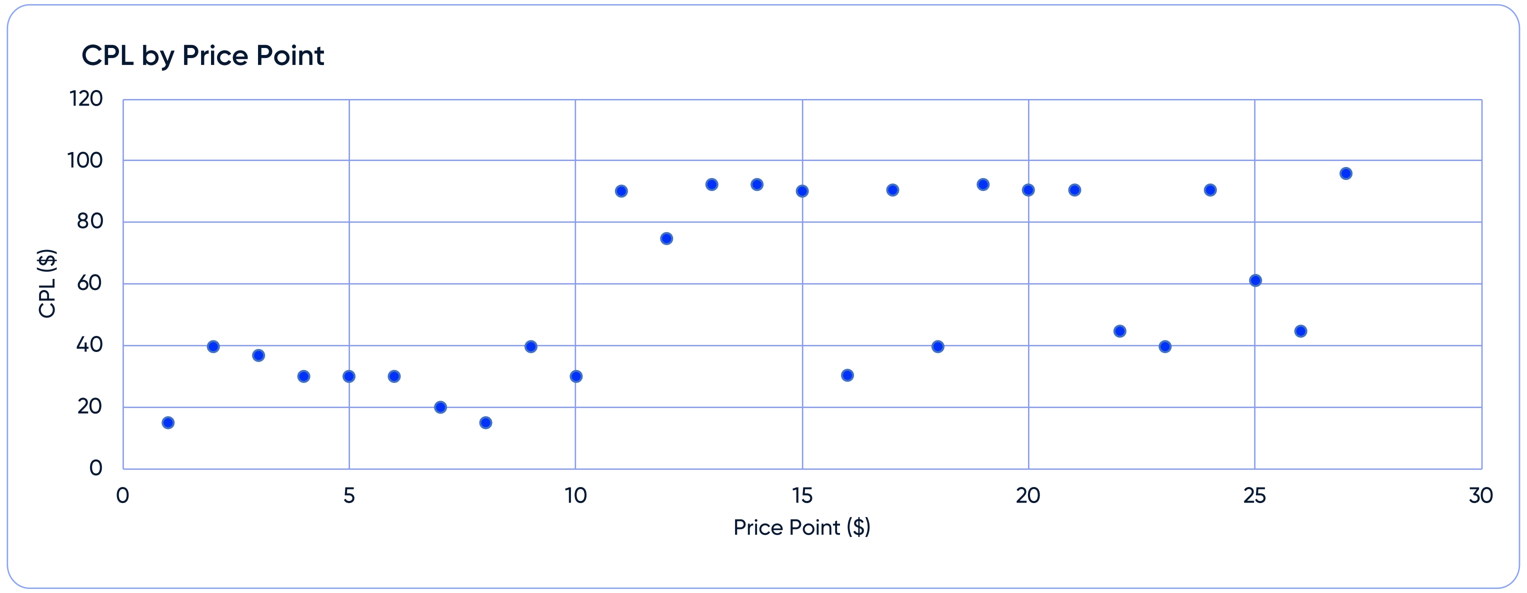
However, looking at qualification rates tells a different story. The UAE delivers the highest **QR at 30%,** in contrast to both KSA and Kuwait, where we observe an average QR of just 18%. This divergence highlights differences in consumer behaviour with regards to actual consumer intent and the likelihood to fill out a lead form even if true interest is not there. Evaluating both CPL and QR together thus becomes essential for understanding true campaign efficiency

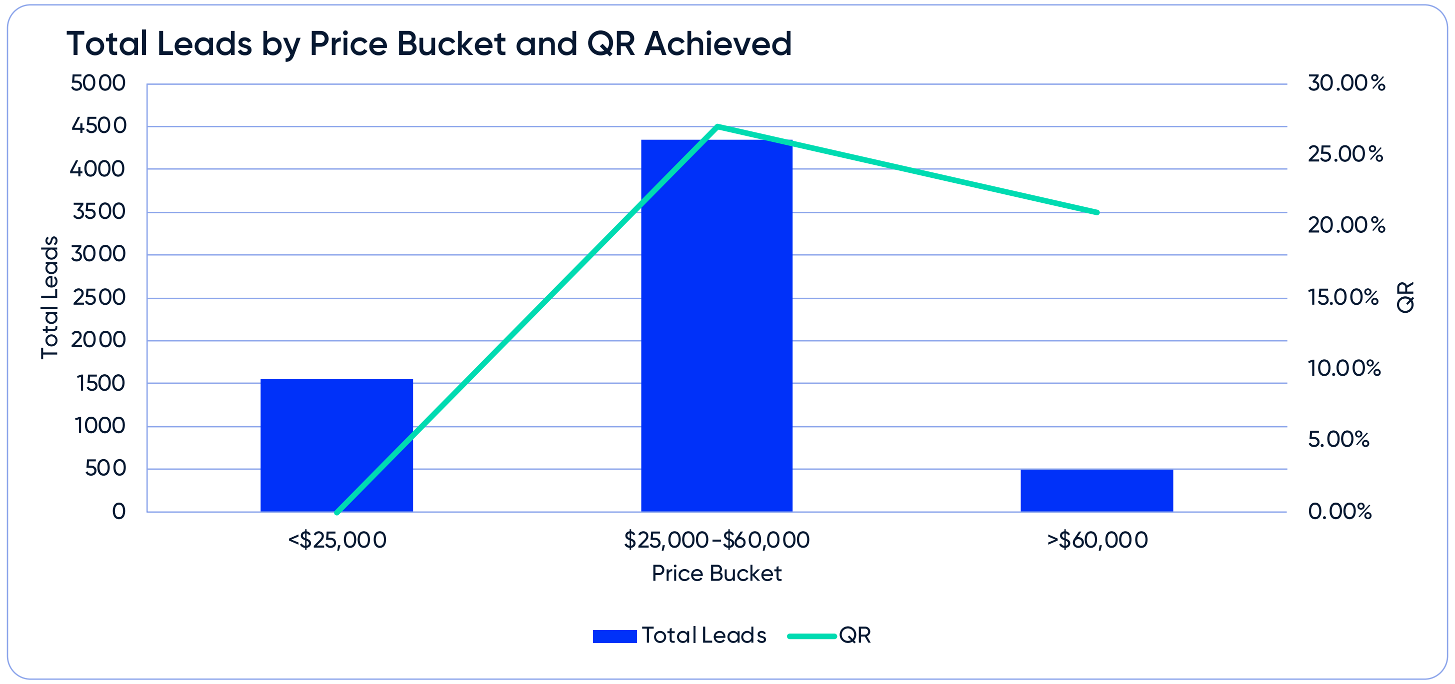
The key insight is that lower CPL does not automatically translate into better performance. Markets differ not only in how cheaply leads can be acquired, but in how likely those leads are to convert into meaningful sales opportunities. For advertisers, this makes a strong case for evaluating markets on both CPL and QR together, rather than optimizing toward cost alone.

VEHICLE PRICE: A STRONG PREDICTOR OF CPL

Vehicle price has a noticeable impact on CPL across the campaigns analysed. When vehicles are grouped into three price bands, a clear pattern emerges.

Low-priced cars (under $25k) deliver an average CPL of $36. Surprisingly, mid-priced vehicles ($25k–$60k) are slightly more cost-efficient, at $33. This suggests high consumer demand for mid-priced vehicles. In the high-priced vehicles category ($60k+), CPL is highest, averaging $65 - this is as expected.





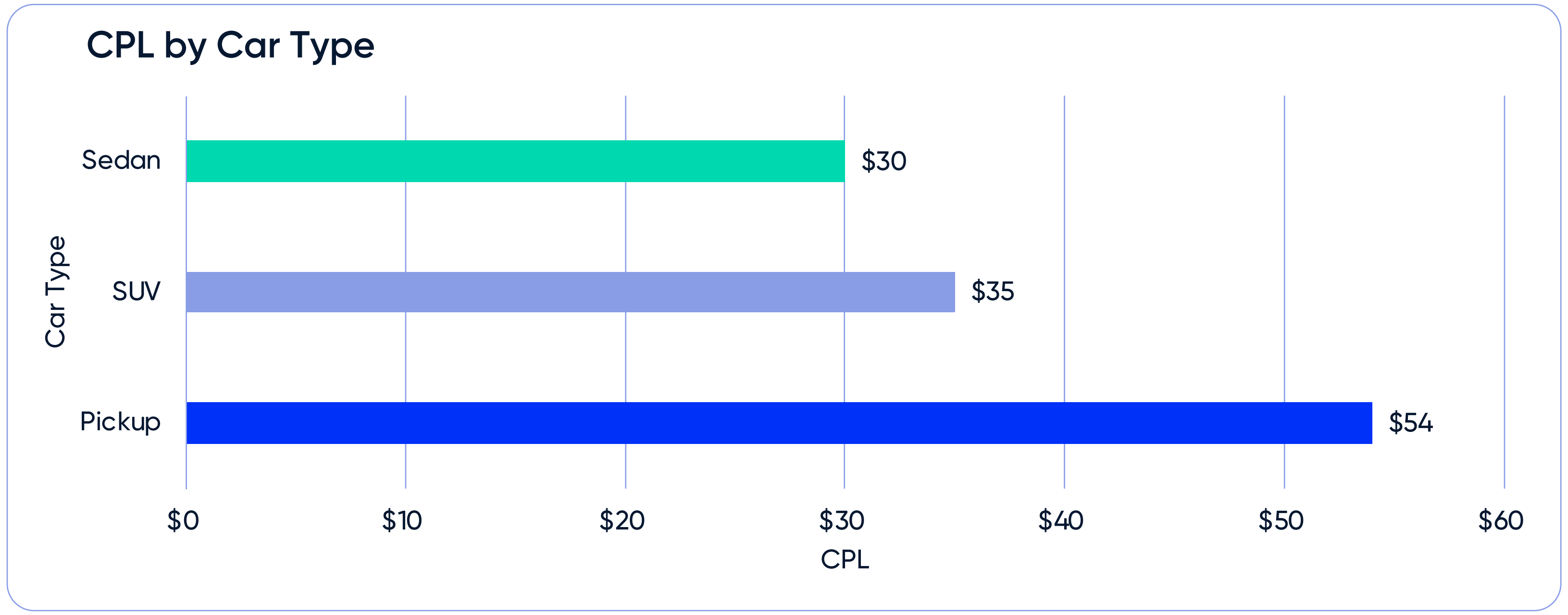
The relationship between price point and CPL is not incidental. Across campaigns, **the correlation between average vehicle price and CPL is positive, at 0.56.** As vehicle price increases, so does the cost of acquiring demand.

The relative differences are stark. Leads for high-priced vehicles cost more than two times as much as those for low-priced or mid-priced cars. This reflects the higher levels of consideration, narrower audiences, and longer decision cycles associated with premium purchases. For advertisers, it underlines the importance of setting realistic efficiency benchmarks that align with vehicle price and buyer behaviour, rather than applying uniform CPL targets across the portfolio.

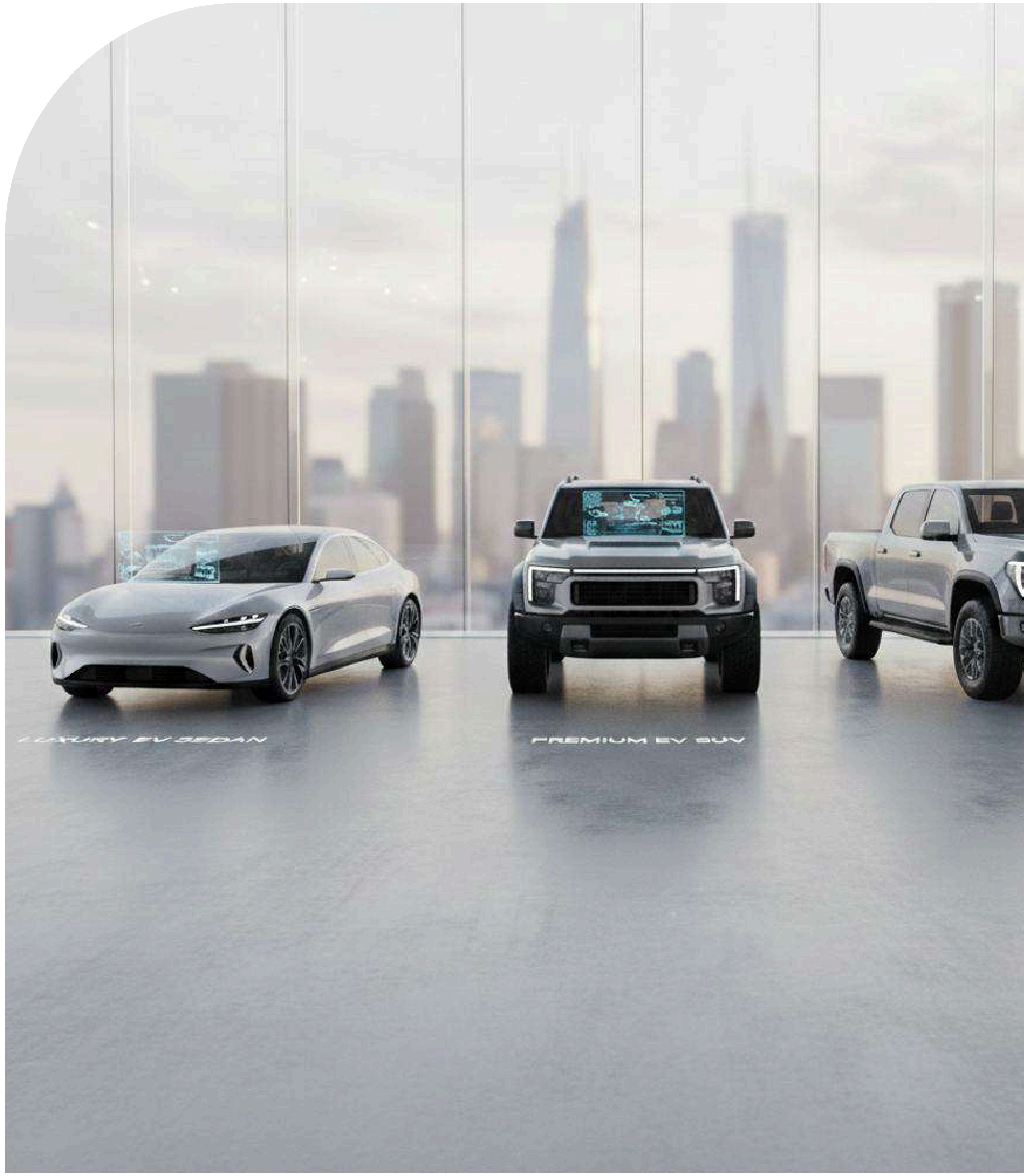
Car type reinforces price effects

Car type further amplifies the impact of price on performance.

Pickups attract the highest CPLs, averaging $54, followed by SUVs at $35. Sedans are the most cost-efficient segment, with an average CPL of $30.



These differences broadly mirror price distribution across car types, but they also reflect demand dynamics. SUVs and pickups generate strong interest and high competition, driving up acquisition costs. Sedans, by contrast, face less competitive pressure and attract more utility-driven buyers, resulting in lower CPLs.



SEASONALITY AND RAMADAN: EFFICIENCY AND INTENT ALIGN

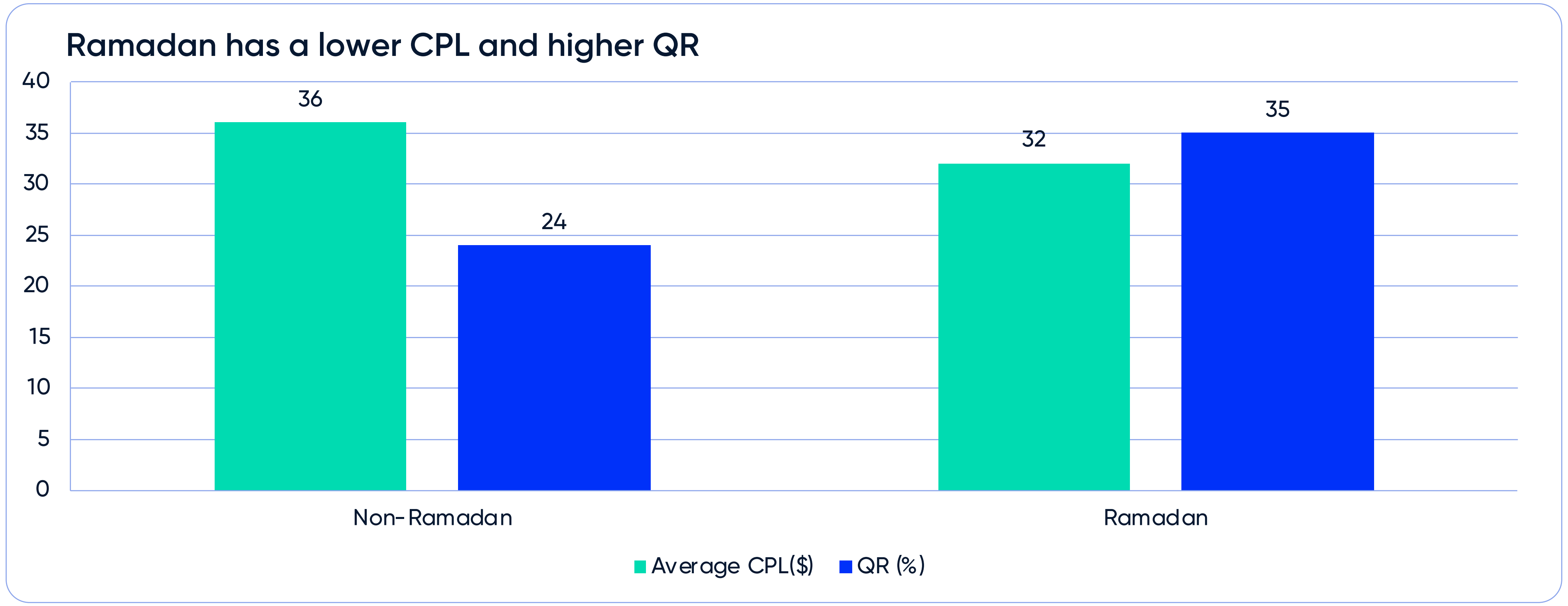
Timing plays a critical role in automotive performance, and Ramadan stands out as a particularly efficient period.

During Ramadan, the average CPL drops to **$32**, around **10-15% lower than the annual average**. At the same time, **qualification rates increase to 35%**, compared with **24%** outside the Ramadan period. Ramadan alone accounts for **43%** of all leads generated across our 12-month analysis window, underlining its importance not just as a high-volume period, but a high-intent one.

This combination of lower CPL and higher QR suggests that Ramadan aligns efficiency and intent in a way few other periods do. It reinforces earlier insights from search behaviour, where Ramadan appears to sharpen purchase intent rather than simply increase top-of-funnel interest.

CPL vs Qualification Rate: Ramadan Impact

Ramadan Advantage:
CPL is 11% lower during Ramadan ($32 vs $36)
QR is 46% higher during Ramadan (35% vs 24%)



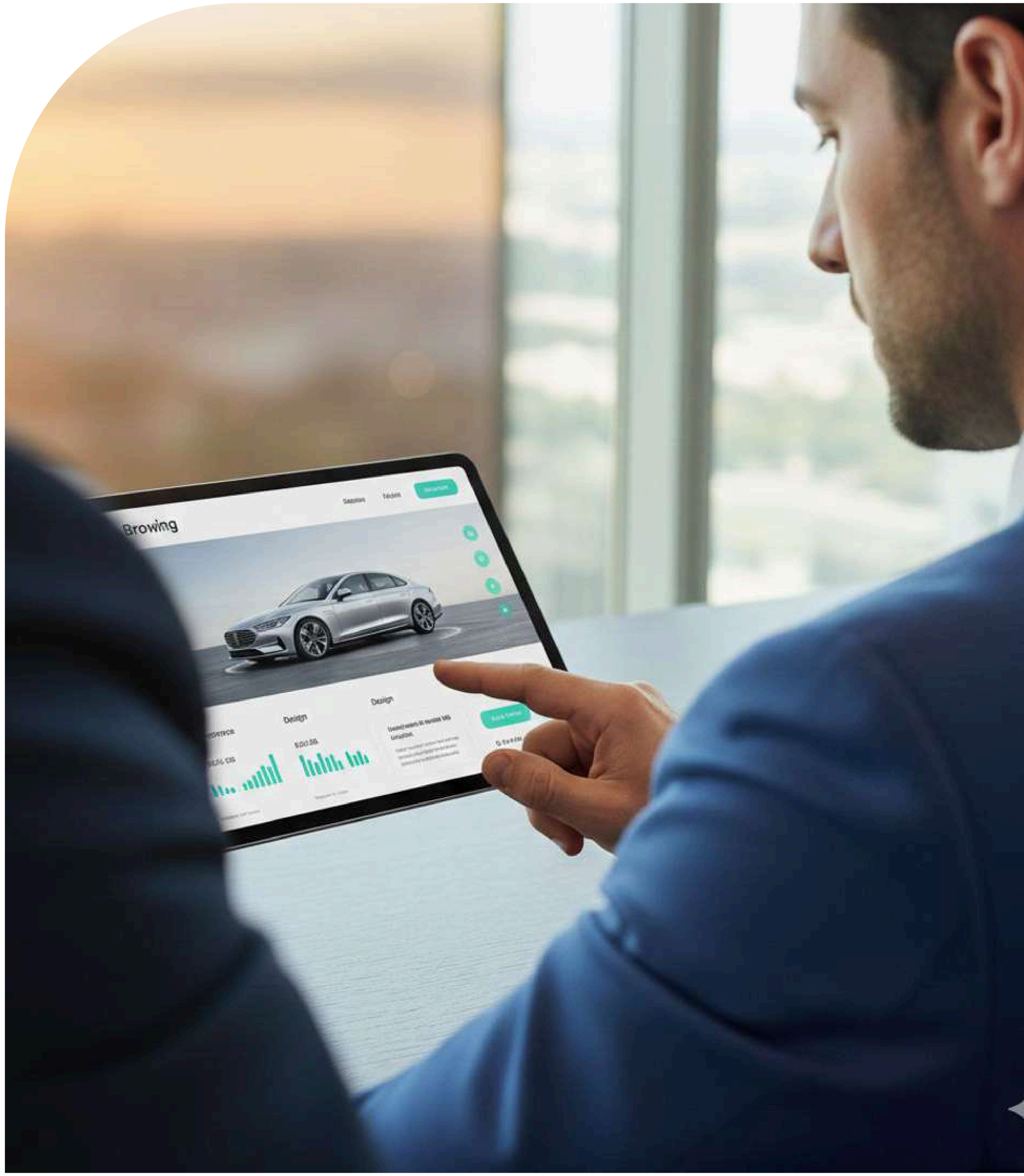
NEW ENTRANTS VERSUS LEGACY BRANDS

Brand profile also has a clear impact on CPL. New entrants, which in this analysis are primarily Chinese brands, achieve an average CPL of $31. Legacy brands, by comparison, average $39 per lead.

While the data clearly shows a clear efficiency gap, the reasons behind it can only be hypothesised. New entrants often compete aggressively on price and promotions, and may attract more price-sensitive or deal-driven buyers. Legacy brands may face higher competition, broader targeting, or longer consideration cycles. What is clear is that brand positioning materially influences acquisition costs and should be factored into performance expectations.

$31
CPL Chinese Brands

$39
CPL Legacy Brands



WHAT DRIVES CPL AND QR IN AUTOMOTIVE PERFORMANCE?

Taken together, the analysis highlights several factors that consistently influence CPL and qualification rates:

- Market dynamics shape both cost and lead quality. Part of this may be rooted in differences in consumer behaviour
- Vehicle price is a good predictor of CPL.
- Car type reinforces price-driven effects.
- Seasonality, particularly Ramadan, materially improves efficiency and intent.
- Brand profile plays a significant role in acquisition costs.

The following section builds on these findings to outline practical recommendations for OEMs and automotive brands, translating performance insights into strategic guidance for campaign planning and optimisation.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

Building on best practices gathered via our automotive industry experience and insights into different segments of car buyers, we recognise the need for a strategic distinction between Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and local Car Dealers. While demand generation activity is vital for the long-term success of OEMs, full-funnel strategies that connect demand generation to conversion are crucial for both advertiser types.

For OEMs

The primary recommendation is to use media to drive brand metrics like Recall and Affinity, and bundle these efforts with performance tactics to achieve superior conversion and qualification rates as well as drive purchase intent lift.

For Car Dealers

The focus is almost entirely on maximizing the efficiency of performance campaigns through continuous optimisation, generating high-quality leads, and leveraging local credibility to drive immediate sales and dealership visits.

The table below outlines their strategic differences across core advertising functions and recommended ad solutions.

Feature	Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs)	Car Dealers (Retail/Local Tier)
Primary Goal	• Full-Funnel Sales and Leads supported by strategic Demand Generation (brand positioning). • Focus is on creating a strong mental model and brand demand that ultimately drives the entire sales funnel.	• Demand Conversion (Immediate Sales, High-Quality Leads) and Driving Local Footfall/Traffic. • Focus is on converting existing demand efficiently and getting measurable results today.
Campaign Type & Targeting	• Tentpole Launches (New Models, Portfolio Awareness) focused on a major market spike of generated demand. • Longer Campaign Flights (6+ weeks minimum) for sustained demand creation. • Target Broad Audiences (Demand Generation) then filter using Interest and	• Always-On Inventory Promotion focused on converting demand immediately with specific models. • Time-Sensitive Local Offers and immediate promotional pushes focused on short-term conversion.
Ad Solution Spotlight	• Rich Media (large-format ads) for high impact and the ability to communicate as well as educate during launches. • Programmatic Targeting and SuperView (contextual targeting) to efficiently reach auto-intenders across premium content. • Advertising on a Network of Relevant Car Review Websites and Industry Magazines to align with trusted sources of research.	• Targeted Campaigns via Online Retailer Platforms (inventory ads) to immediately capture purchase intent. • Tapping into the role of Creators for building local trust and promoting specific deals.
Creative Focus	• Hero Key Visuals (KVs), Brand Storytelling, and Educational content to spark demand and inform. • Use trusted influencers and key opinion leaders (KOLs) to deliver authentic, high-impact messaging and reach the core auto intender audience.	• Local Angle by showing actual, available inventory and transparent offers (high creative rotation). • Leverage creator content to build local credibility and promote specific deals or local events, driving foot traffic.
Data and KPI Measurement	• A wide array of KPIs is important, including brand outcomes (Brand Recall, Favorability, Intent Lift) to validate demand generation investment. • Conversion outcomes (Leads, Qualification Rates) are used to assess full-funnel performance.	• Focus on tangible conversion outcomes (Leads, Qualification Rates) to measure immediate sales impact. • Requires robust offline sales matching capabilities to accurately attribute ad spend to real-world conversion.

OUTLOOK:
FUTURE PILLARS OF AUTOMOTIVE CONVERSION

The strategic success of both OEMs and local dealers hinges on continuously optimising the connection between mass-market campaigns (Demand Generation) and the moment a prospect decides to purchase (Demand Conversion). Our outlook highlights two emerging solutions crucial to mastering these phases and which will shape automotive conversion in years to come: the use of authentic creators to drive physical store traffic, and the adoption of AI voice agents to conquer the critical "speed-to-lead" challenge.

1. THE ROLE OF CREATORS IN DRIVING SHOWROOM FOOTFALL

In a landscape where the consumer journey is overwhelmingly digital, bridging the gap between online discovery and the physical showroom visit is a persistent challenge. Creators, influencers, and key opinion leaders (KOLs) offer a critical solution by injecting authenticity and trust into the purchase decision process.

DRIVING PHYSICAL TRAFFIC

The buying journey starts online, but consumers validate their decisions through in-person test drives and showroom visits. Globally, over 60% of car buyers visit a dealership or brand's website after watching a video about a vehicle they were considering. Influencer-driven campaigns can significantly boost dealership footfall by up to 20%, proving that authenticity is a measurable asset.

THE POWER OF TRUST

Unlike traditional adverts, influencers provide content that feels organic and relatable. This leads to high trust levels, with nearly half (46%) of consumers considering car influencers to be a trustworthy source of information. In fact, 40% of in-market users cite the credibility of creators as the most useful part of their purchase journey.

TARGETING AND CONVERSION IN MENA

In markets like the UAE and KSA, where digital influence is high, strategic influencer content is key. Micro-influencers (those with smaller, highly engaged audiences) often yield higher conversion rates and can drive significantly more engagement than mega-influencers, making them ideal for targeted local marketing and building real engagement. A well-executed campaign should create buzz while moving audiences towards measurable actions, such as test drive bookings and showroom footfall.

2. AI VOICE AGENTS AND CONQUERING THE SPEED-TO-LEAD

A critical vulnerability for both OEMs and local dealers is the failure to respond to digital enquiries immediately, a problem AI solutions are uniquely positioned to solve. The industry consensus is clear: **Speed converts the deal.**

The Speed-to-Lead Crisis: Why Automation Matters

Industry statistics reveal the immense pressure on response time:

- **Immediate Response Boosts Conversion:** Contacting a lead in the first minute can increase lead conversions by 391% (Spyne).
- **Speed Matters Passively:** Responding to a lead within five minutes makes a dealership 100x more likely to convert the lead than responding after 30 minutes (Spyne).
- **Delays are Costly:** After five minutes, the likelihood of qualifying a lead drops by 80% (Spyne), and waiting 30 minutes makes you 21x less effective (Spyne).
- **The Automation Gap:** While 75% of car dealerships use live chat and 81% use web forms (Giosg), only 13% of dealerships respond to web form leads in under five minutes (Giosg).

The AI Voice Agent Solution

AI Voice Agents and intelligent lead qualification systems automate the essential first-touchpoint, closing the gap between consumer expectation and operational reality.

24/7 QUALIFICATION

Automation tools, such as AI chatbots or lead routing systems, allow for continuous 24/7 engagement, helping capture and qualify leads that arrive outside of business hours (Spyne).

INTENT SCORING AND ROUTING

Advanced AI agents can assess a user's urgency and specific intent signals in real-time. They then automatically score, prioritise, and route the "hottest" leads directly to a human sales representative for a live transfer or scheduled follow-up.

CRM INTEGRATION

The system automatically logs conversation summaries and next steps into the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, ensuring human agents are empowered with full context before they take over.

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