



The power of car dealer reviews: helping car buyers make the right choice.

A JudgeService Automotive Industry Paper

JudgeService®

The power of car dealer reviews: helping car buyers make the right choice

Introduction

- Car dealers are a common sight in most towns and cities; there are so many to choose from. And choosing the right one can be a tricky task.
- Buying a car is often a major purchase, and yet only 7% of UK consumers claim to trust used car dealerships*.

These are the facts that emphasise the importance of car dealership reviews.

Following the trend of online research, where 84% of consumers say that they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations**, car buyers are increasingly looking online to find out more about the dealers they are considering. User reviews are proven sales drivers, and something the majority of customers will want to see before deciding to make a purchase. Most consumers will read between 4-6 online reviews before they fully trust a business.

*Autotrader

**BrightLocal

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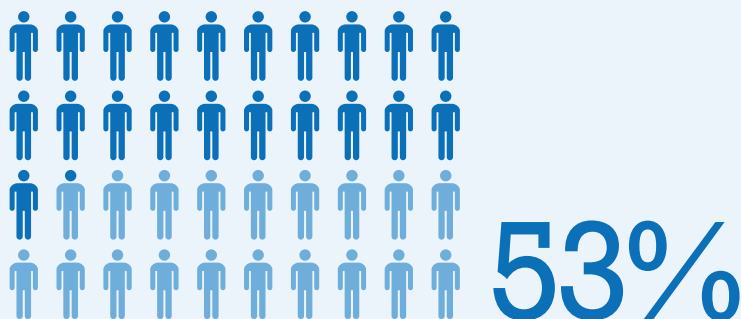


The power of reviews:

As car shoppers do more online research and engage with other customers before making a decision to head into a dealership, online reviews can be gold. Many dealerships use digital channels such as email marketing, digital advertising and social marketing, but when it comes to the final decision of which dealership to actually visit, positive online reviews can be the deciding factor in tipping the balance.

Dealership reviews give consumers insight into the experiences of other car buyers, so if they're not sure who to buy from they can easily see what others have said about a particular dealer. Consumers now know how important it is to find out what kind of reputation a dealer has before a visit and, in this digital age, the reviews that a dealer's customers create can help consumers make great choices.

Let's not forget, whether a small or a large dealer, reviews are free and give them the opportunity to build their reputation regardless of budget. Reviews that are accessible and displayed across reputable websites help establish and grow a reputation at no cost, while also increasing confidence in a business. Reviews give consumers insight into the experiences of other car buyers, so if they're not sure who to buy from they can easily see what other consumers have said.



of recent new car buyers claimed that dealership testimonials and reviews were an important factor in the car buying process - with just over half (51%) for recent used car buyers.*

*Source: AT Market Report 2016

The power of online reviews

- 84% of consumers say that they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.
- 72% of buyers will take action only after reading a positive review.
- 40% of buyers form an opinion of a business after reading just 1-3 reviews.
- More people are reading reviews on a regular basis (50% vs. 33% in 2015).
- 91% of consumers regularly, or occasionally, read online reviews.
- Only 9% of consumers don't read online reviews.

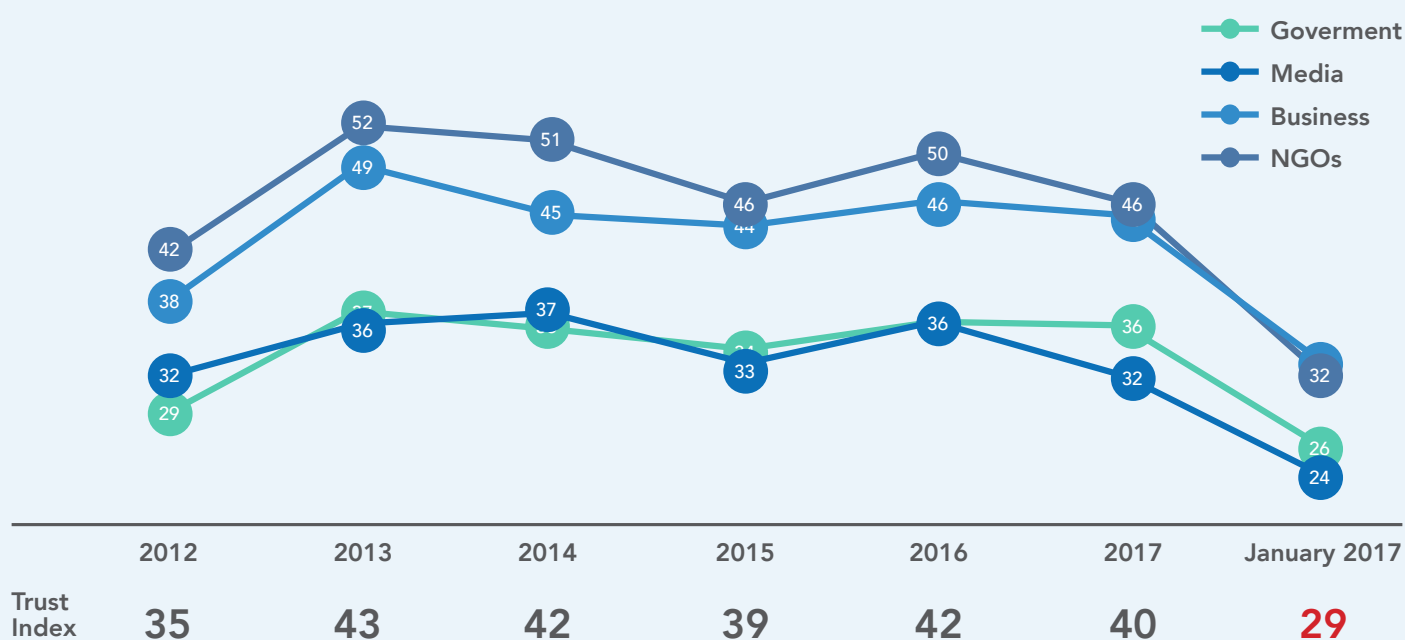
**figures sourced from BrightLocal*

The importance of trust

We are in an era where trust is at a premium

Evaporation of Trust in the Past Year in the UK

Trust in institutions, 2012-2017, shown in percent



When buying a car, this is no different. The reduced trust in businesses means that transparency and accuracy are imperative. And this is where online reviews can help.

The availability of unbiased reviews about local car dealers, to help customers make the right choice, has never been more important. Verified ratings and reviews can drive conversion and quicken the purchase journey. Customer interactions can actually convince prospects at that critical point of purchase.

Because they can share something a brand can't — real experience. That's why shoppers trust a personal recommendation above anything else. Nielsen, 2015

One fifth of recent car buyers found vague, hard to find or misleading information in their recent research to buy a car, with over a third claiming they delayed or actually put off buying all together*. Car dealership reviews should be independent and genuine to help customers make more informed purchasing decisions. Authenticated and validated reviews help ensure that customers know to trust the feedback available.

*Autotrader

Trust in car dealer reviews

- a best practise checklist

Consumers rely on online reviews to make purchasing decisions. They also expect reviews to be independent and genuine to help them make more informed purchasing decisions.

- 1 Review sites should operate rigid testimonial publishing criteria to ensure that consumer reviews are totally unbiased and provide an accurate picture of the consumer experience.
- 2 All endorsements should reflect the endorser's actual experience and opinion. Companies should not use testimonials that make claims about a product or service that can't be backed up with clear evidence.
- 3 Appropriate procedures should be in place to detect and remove fake reviews, and act promptly in response to reports of suspected fake reviews.
- 4 Every testimonial should be checked, prior to publishing, as there is no safer check than a pair of eyes reading content!
- 5 Review sites should not 'pretend' to be a consumer and write reviews about customers – or pay others to do so.
- 6 Money or gifts should never be offered to customers to write positive reviews as inducements. This would dilute the accuracy and honesty of any review.
- 7 Every used car sales review should be published, including negative ones, provided they are genuine and lawful. Customers are becoming increasingly wary and suspicious of only positive reviews.
- 8 Reviews should never be published if they include swearing, abusive language or defamatory remarks.
- 9 Reviews that contain personal details such as a mobile phone number should also never be published.
- 10 Sometimes a customer may request that a review is not made public. These requests must be honoured.
- 11 There should be no unreasonable delay before reviews are published, so consumers get the current picture straight away.
- 12 Businesses should have the opportunity to respond online through a 'right to reply' facility which should also show responses to the online review. This provides a dealership with the opportunity to resolve the complaint in an open forum and for potential consumers to see how they handle issues generally.

For more information about how Car Reviews should be managed, read the JudgeService rules for publishing online reviews - <https://business.judgeservice.com/about/house-rules>

The power of negating a negative

Negating a negative is a genuine thing and, of course, two negatives make a positive! At JudgeService, if you choose to publish your testimonials, we publish all of them (unlike some other review providers that cherry pick and only show the good ones to fudge the results).

But these negative reviews actually help aid conversions too. At least, they do if they are handled correctly. **30% of consumers assume online reviews are fake if there are no negative reviews!**

60% of consumers questioned the quality of a business when they saw negative reviews. By replying to negative comments to address the issue and take the conversation offline, you can manage your reputation.

Professional, trustworthy review sites should have a Right to Reply function, where you can respond to anything negative that someone has said. JudgeService solutions include this and, in addition, our system sends an alert to a nominated person, immediately notifying your business so you can address it in a timely manner.



Customer relationships in the digital age

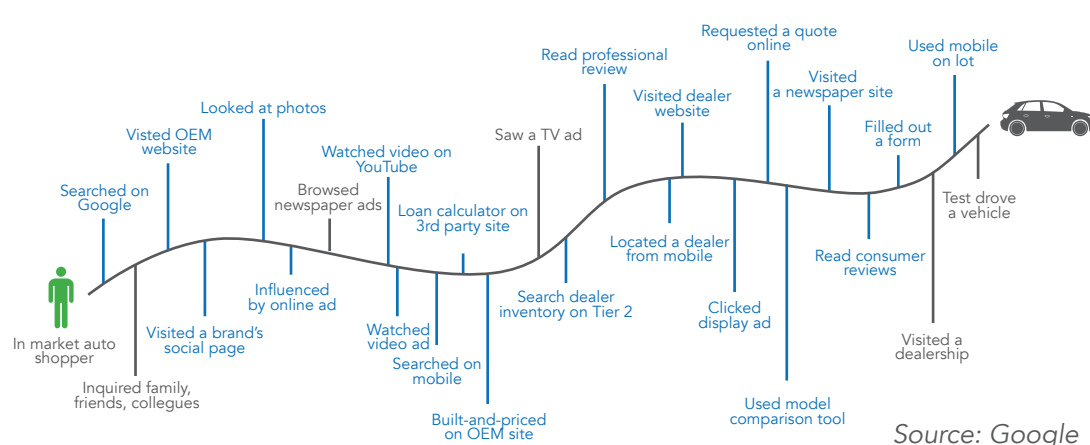
The digital age has changed the way consumers and providers can share what used to be known as word-of-mouth information. At the end of 2016, the rate of communication by consumers across digital channels surpassed everyone's expectations, and it is predicted by to be an even greater influence throughout 2017.

We are moving towards – if not already in – 'Experience Marketing', where consumers want to be actively involved with your brand. As a result, consumers will become your advocates. People are readily sharing their experiences of a brand, product or service through digital channels.

If we look at the automotive industry to highlight this consumer trend, we can see that during the purchasing process there are 24 key touchpoints. 19 of these are now digital!

As a result of digital platforms where every consumer has a voice, consumers are becoming key influencers in the purchasing process, with research showing that 88% of consumers trust online reviews as much as family and friends!

It is becoming more prevalent than ever to create Raving Fans, and not just get customers!



JudgeService has conducted research to establish that 40% of enquiries are coming through websites, with 21% coming through the dealer's own website and 19% coming through other sites such as manufacturer websites.

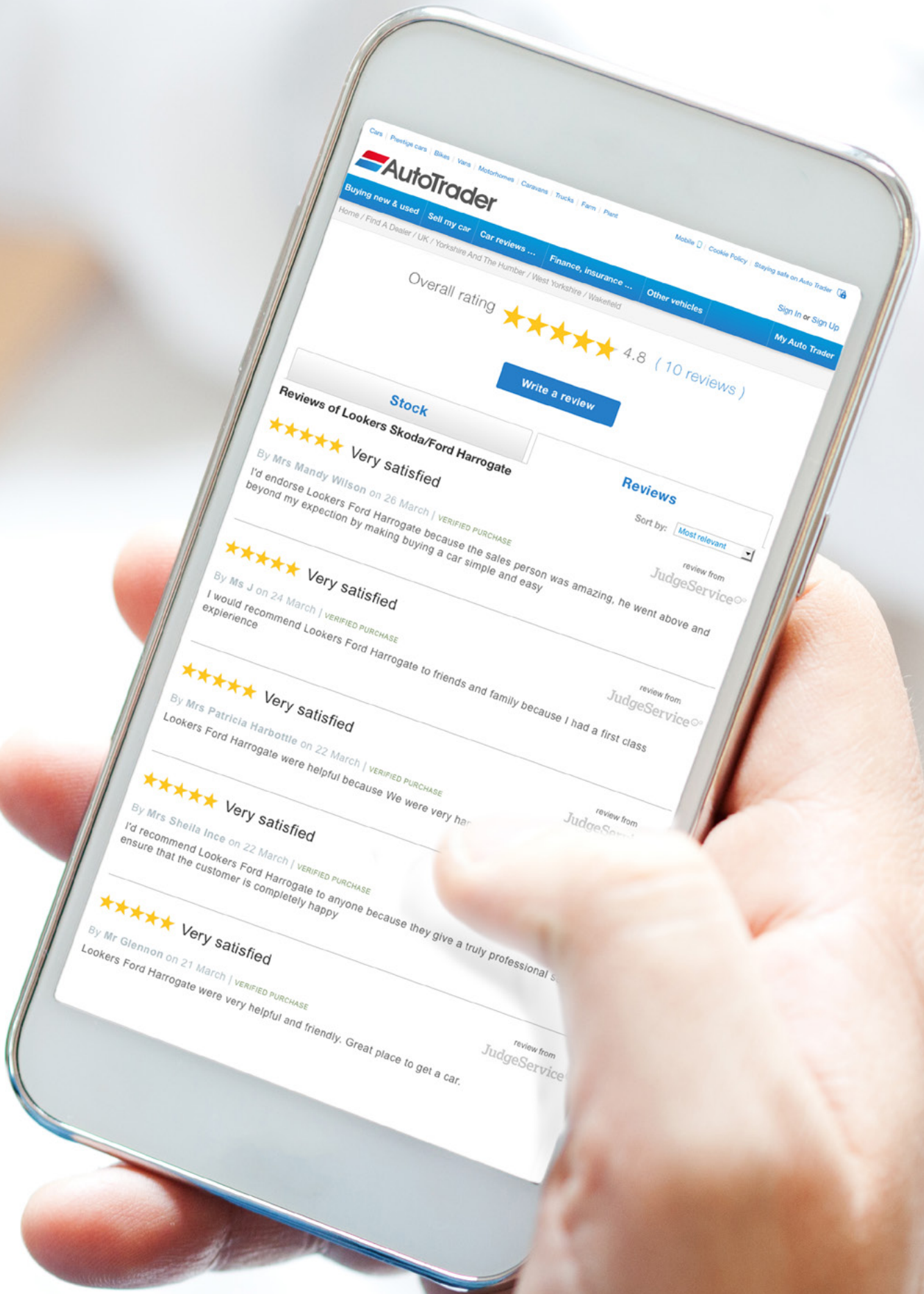
Source: Google

See organic growth in SEO through online reviews

With the advent of the digital age, search engine optimisation has never been more important. And search engines are placing more and more emphasis on user-generated content. They want to know what consumers are saying about a product or service and online reviews of your business are one way you can tap in to this, without having to lift a finger.

Reviews can provide your website with new, relevant content. Over a nine-month period businesses that started showing reviews generated over 7.5k organic page views per month – an increase of approximately 2.5k.

These reviews can then feed into social media optimisation, as user-generated content is more likely to come through social media channels.



Why JudgeService?

- Our surveys are developed from market demand and our expertise in the automotive sector. Over 25 years' motor trade experience has enabled us to ensure the questions we ask your customers provide answers that will drive your business.
- Our digital know-how ensures our dealer customers have a fully responsive online presence and marketing opportunity.
- We specialise in automotive surveys which provide business intelligence, critical to effective sales process and performance management. We are ALL about providing the tools to measure your customers' dealership experience.
- We have been chosen by over a thousand car dealerships, and have clients ranging from the largest dealer groups in the country to the single site car dealer, because of our specialist knowledge and experience.
- Our knowledge will support your business in enhancing customer satisfaction, gaining competitive advantage, increasing sales and retaining existing customers.
- Our surveys and online tools are constantly re-evaluated, and we strive to keep up-to-date with customer demand and market changes.
- We have established successful partnerships with leading web, CRM and media providers to allow us to integrate with existing systems. This provides a seamless approach for dealers who want to achieve all the benefits of their online presence and drive sales in today's competitive environment.
- JudgeService customers have access to unique levels of reporting. The reporting suite provides unparalleled granular detail, making it easier for dealers to identify buying trends and/or potential issues.

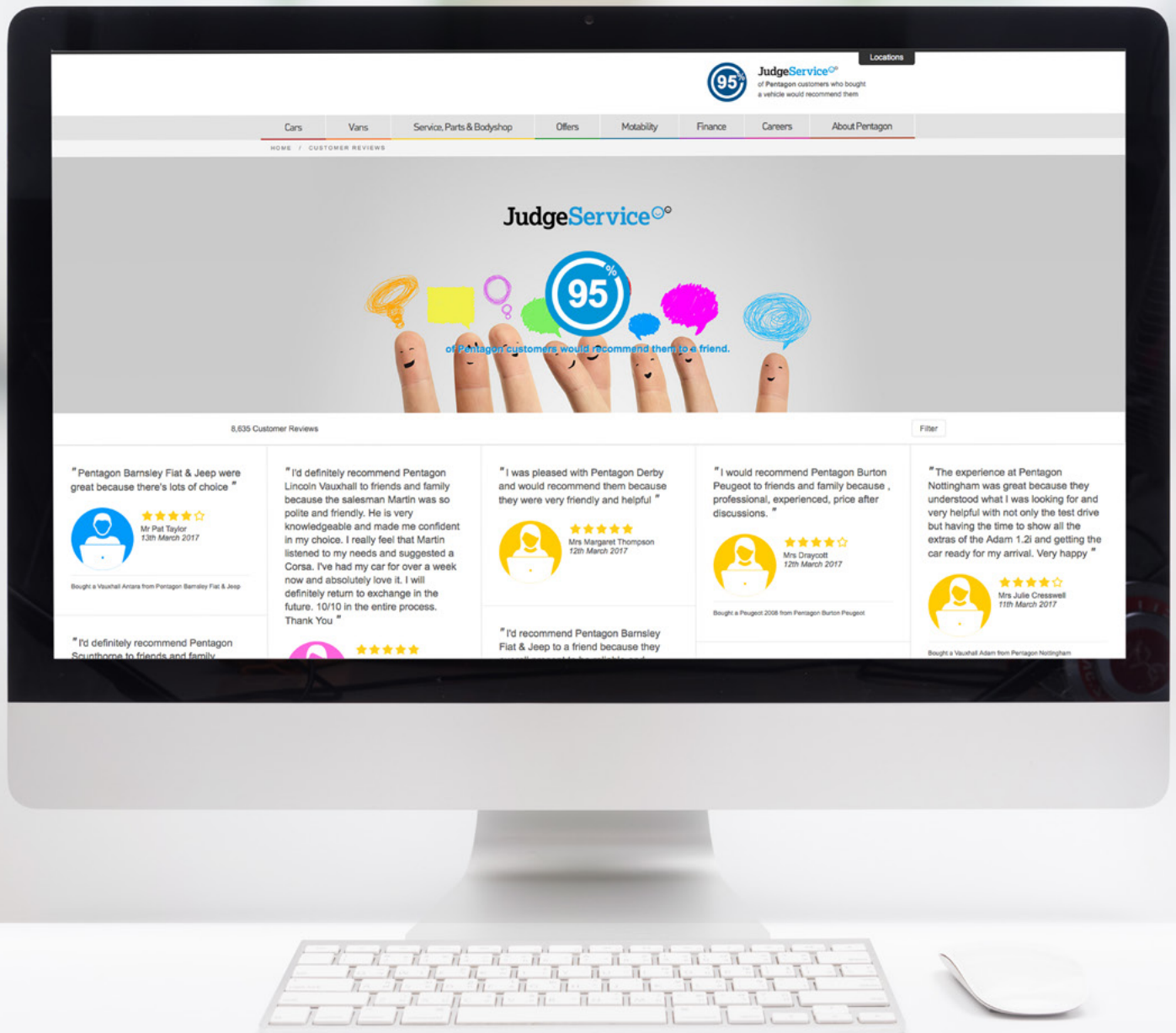


2.1
million

Car sales last year were helped by dealer reviews left by consumers or personal recommendations.*

*Source: AT Annual Buying Report 2016

A great example of how the JudgeService widget and API are being used to drive business forward.



About JudgeService

JudgeService is the UK's most effective automotive online review provider and understands how powerful reviews are in influencing buyer behaviour and aiding a conversion. We help car buyers find great car dealers.

Our business was launched in 2011 and has received more than 750,000 reviews and is currently used by more than 1,000 leading dealerships. It was the first customer satisfaction index service developed specifically for the used car sector by those working in the industry.

JudgeService provides dealers with an end-to-end customer contact and monitoring tool, which not only enables groups to assess used car sales and satisfaction across different dealerships, marques and sales teams, but also encourages and promotes positive customer testimonials online and via social media.

As an independent review provider we are dedicated to bringing you unbiased customer reviews you can trust.

Clients can choose to use our research for internal purposes only, but where we publish any reviews we publish them all – good or bad. Reviews are published on our client's websites, our website, AutoTrader, Motors, Facebook and Trusted Dealers.

And whilst they are compelling, these reviews are just the tip of the iceberg compared to the rich vein of customer data that JudgeService clients are able to use to manage and improve their businesses.

We continually invest in building our software application solutions to offer turnkey customer satisfaction tools to the automotive sector. As well as our flagship used car customer satisfaction programme, "ReAct", JudgeService offers a wide range of additional customer satisfaction tools for car servicing, body shops and new cars.

We offer data cleansing services and with our ProAct solution we actively call your lost prospects to help turn them from lost sales into happy customers. We can also work with selected clients in offering usability services, consultancy, bespoke customer research panels and training.

Our client base is nationwide with over 1,000 car dealerships across the United Kingdom. JudgeService is proud to work with dealers representing most of the UK's leading car manufacturers – volume, premium and prestige alike.

Discover More

To find out more about JudgeService, and why we are able to boast nearly 750,000 reviews, visit: business.judgeservice.com, email: sales-enquiry@judgeservice.com or call 01423 225166

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