



Environmental aspects do not play a key role in car purchase decisions

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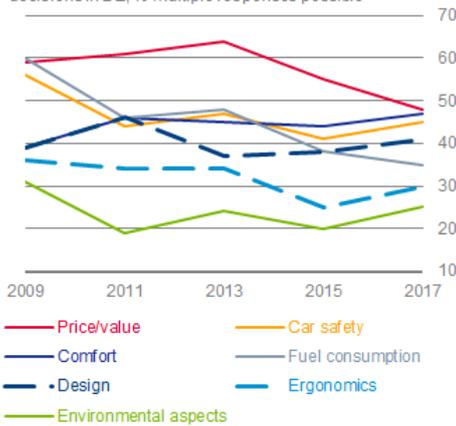
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Germans who want to buy a new car tend to focus on three issues: the price, the degree of comfort and security aspects. That is the conclusion of authors of the latest Aral car buying trends study. While environmental considerations now play a larger role – their importance rose by 5 pp, to 25%, in comparison to the 2015 survey – they still rank only 11th in the list of influencing factors and come behind aspects such as ergonomics or brand image. This appears somewhat surprising, particularly against the background of the heated discussions about excessive diesel car emissions (nitrogen oxides) in the last few months.

New cars: Environmental criteria unimportant

Importance of selec. criteria for new car purchase decisions in DE, % multiple responses possible



Source: Aral car buying trends study 2017

Surveys by Deutsche Automobil Treuhand (DAT) about the criteria which customers use to select a new car show similar results. In fact, environmental aspects have not once been among the top 10 buying criteria in the last few years.

Obviously, the public discussion about emissions exaggerates the importance of the issue for the average German car buyer. And this hypothesis is supported not only by the survey results quoted above, but also by the actual purchasing decisions of the last few years. According to the Federal Motor Transport Authority, people continue to prefer stronger engines for their new cars. In 2016, the average engine power of a new car was 26.5% above that of 2007. Moreover, the share of SUVs and off-road vehicles is rising steadily. Remarkably, however, the official records say that carbon dioxide emissions and, in turn, fuel consumption per newly registered car declined by 25% between 2007 and 2016, despite the trend towards bigger engines and cars.

So far, only a handful of German car buyers have switched to alternative fuels. And that is not only due to the fact that environmental aspects play only a minor role in their buying decisions. Electrical or hybrid vehicles obviously do not yet meet customer's demands in terms of price, reach, charging times or charging infrastructure.



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Still, the Aral study clearly shows the effect of the diesel debate. The share of customers who intend to buy a diesel car has dropped by 13 pp in comparison to 2015, to 18%. This reflects (private) buyers' uncertainties about future regulations for diesel cars. Of course, customers may still change their minds and decide differently at the time of purchase. After all, in the first seven months of 2017 more than 41% of newly registered cars in Germany still had a diesel engine, even though their share trended downwards. To some extent, this is due to the fact that a large number of new registrations are for company cars, whereas the Aral survey focuses on private customers.

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