

CAR SHOPPING AS PLEASURABLE AS SHOE SHOPPING?

World-first technology promises to revolutionise showroom experience

Honda's car dealers can now take the car showroom to the customer using cutting-edge technology, removing the need to visit a dealership in person and revolutionising the car buying experience in the process.

Sixty-one per cent of women make or have a significant input into the car buying decision in their household, yet research by Simpson Carpenter has found that women would feel more comfortable seeing a car 'privately', before taking the process further and meeting a salesperson face-to-face.

C It Now (CIN) affords customers the ability to do this. By using a camcorder coupled with a broadband internet connection, CIN creates a live video broadcast allowing consumers to give a car the once over without even needing to leave home. Dealer salespeople can present cars in extraordinary detail and customers have the opportunity to see any part of the car and ask any questions just as they would face-to-face. It also enables dealers to continue offering Honda's renowned customer service via video.

Buying trends

CIN provides a simple-to-use tool that helps the customer with the decision making process. In some cases the car is purchased and delivered without ever visiting the dealership. (See case study)

The internet has revolutionised the way in which consumers research and purchase cars. Women in particular have benefited from these changes; as they tend not to enjoy the typical car purchasing experience, being able to view a live video of a car from home on the PC is much more appealing.

Janice Kennedy, Head of Sales, Cars, Honda (UK) said: "We know people are researching and buying cars in different ways and we're trying to meet this demand. CIN allows people to shop for cars at their leisure, from the comfort of the home, which is a real bonus for those who don't want to make the trip to a showroom or feel more relaxed and able to ask questions openly when they are not face-to-face with the salesperson.

"We can all appreciate the added peace of mind that a live video offers compared to a 2D or 3D virtual image, especially with an important purchase, such as a car," she added. "Women in particular have taken to CIN as they tend to dislike the current dealership experience most and are extremely efficient online shoppers."

Used car sales

CIN is especially beneficial for used car sales, which are growing in popularity with the current economic conditions, as it eliminates geographical barriers to buying from a dealer further afield. For instance, if a couple in London find a CR-V offered for sale in Stoke, they can see it in detail online before making the decision to travel to view the car in the metal.

Customer benefits summary:

- Customers can be confident they're dealing with a reputable authorised Honda dealer. CIN allows the salesperson to give a tour of the premises.
- CIN removes the pressure of buying cars face-to-face, and any nervousness customers may feel about entering dealerships.
- Customers can spend more time with the dealer, on their terms, in an environment they feel comfortable in.
- CIN enables Honda dealers to offer a better level of customer service than their competitors.
- Gives consumers greater confidence in online shopping.
- CIN overcomes geographical restrictions of buying cars from dealers further afield. Customers are willing to travel to find the right car at the right price and CIN allows them to do thorough research before travelling to view it in person.
- CIN customers will be sent a link of the video they've created, enabling them to show their partner, husband, wife etc. at a later date*.

Case study

Customer: Mr Brooks, Shepperton, Middlesex

Dealer: Holdcroft Honda, Stoke

"I purchased a Honda Civic just before Christmas. I found C It Now on the Holdcroft Honda website and suggested to my wife that we try it. I had no intention of ever travelling to Stoke to view the car, so the sale would not have happened without being able to view the car live over the internet.

C It Now gave me the confidence to buy online. I liked the fact that Steve Holleran, the Holdcroft salesperson, could show me every aspect of the car that I wanted to see. Steve was able to zoom in and show me lots of close-up detail, enough to give me a clear idea about the condition of the car. It was also really useful to see how the panoramic roof operated.

There were also occasions when I wanted Steve to hold on one particular shot for longer, so I just kept telling him to go back until I was satisfied.

I would recommend this service to any of my friends; in fact I did, but unfortunately Holdcroft didn't have the car that my friend was looking for this time.

It's interesting as I don't typically use the internet to make purchases. But the live video demo coupled with Steve's help made it really easy and convenient. At the end of the day, I bought off a person who had been really helpful, not an anonymous website."

The CIN technology has been on trial use at Holdcroft Honda, Stoke for a year. Holdcroft was the first retail outlet in the world to use this technology and it is now being made available to Honda dealers across the UK.

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Editor's notes:

For a live demo of CIN, media should contact Emma Knight on 01753 590193 or Andrew Howells on 07767 377125.

A demonstration video featuring Charlie Butler-Henderson is available from the Honda (UK) media website: <http://www.hondauk-media.co.uk/cars/multimedia/individual/?media=5718>

Customers who are looking to purchase a used car using Holdcroft Honda's C It Now technology should visit: www.holdcroft.com/used-honda, select an appropriate model, click 'C It Now' and follow the customer instructions.

Main website: www.holdcrofthonda.co.uk/showroom

Used car website: www.holdcroft.com/used-honda

*In some cases the Honda salesperson may advise that a repeat CIN viewing is completed by another related customer – to ensure the highest level of customer service is provided.

Second case study available on request