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**ONLINE BUSINESS STRATEGY:  
MAZDA MOTOR EUROPE GMBH**

**Thesis**

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**ABSTRACT**

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<p>Mazda Motors is a Japanese car manufacturer, founded in 1920. The headquarter is located in Hiroshima, Japan and the European headquarter is located in Leverkusen, Germany.</p> <p>The aim of this thesis is to investigate how Mazda Motor Europe GmbH could improve its accessory sales in the future and reach more young customers. Based on the research results Mazda Motor Europe GmbH can see how the main competitors are positioned in the market and consider its own strategy.</p> <p>In the theory part of this thesis I first introduce different online business models, which is the base of the theory part. Next I will describe basic information about Mazda Motor Europe GmbH and Mazda Motors. In the end I enter into benchmarking and describe the findings.</p> <p>In the final part of the thesis I analyze the benchmark findings and give recommendations on how Mazda Motor Europe GmbH could improve its online business in the future.</p> <p>All in all Mazda Motor Europe GmbH is pleased with the results and is going to focus on improving online services in the future.</p>		
<b>Key words</b> benchmarking, online business, three 3 c's		

## TIIVISTELMÄ OPINNÄYTETYÖSTÄ

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<p>Mazda Motors on japanilainen autovalmistaja, joka on perustettu vuonna 1920. Yhtiön pääkonttori sijaitsee Hiroshimassa, Japanissa ja Euroopan pääkonttori sijaitsee Leverkusenessä, Saksassa.</p> <p>Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus oli tutkia miten Mazda Motor Europe GmbH voisi tulevaisuudessa parantaa autojen lisävarusteiden myyntiä, sekä tavoittaa enemmän nuoria asiakkaita. Tutkimuksen tuloksen perusteella Mazda Motor Europe GmbH näkee miten kilpailijat ovat järjestäytyneet markkiniolla ja voi tämän perusteella harkita omaa strategiaansa.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön teoriaosuudessa käsittelen ensimmäisenä erilaisia online kaupan malleja, joka luo pohjan työn teoriaosuudelle. Seuraavaksi kerron perustietoja Mazda Motor Europesta, sekä Mazda Motorsista. Tämän jälkeen perehdyn benchmarkkaukseen ja esittelen tutkimuksen tulokset.</p> <p>Työn viimeisessä osiossa olen koontanut benchmarkkauksen tuloksia ja tein suosituksia miten Mazda Motor Europe GmbH voisi edetä tulevaisuudessa.</p> <p>Kaiken kaikkiaan Mazda Motor Europe GmbH oli tyytyväinen tutkimuksen tuloksiin ja aikoo tulevaisuudessa keskittyä kehittämään online palvelujaan.</p>		
<b>Asiasanat</b> benchmarkkaus, kolme c:tä, online kauppa		

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Mazda is known from its Zoom Zoom spirit “With passion, pride and speed, we actively communicate with our customers to deliver insightful automotive products and services that exceed their expectations”. Aim of this thesis was to analyze how customers can be reached in the business field “accessory marketing” and how online marketing and sales can be integrated into achieving Mazda’s vision and business objectives. The goal was also to find out through a benchmark study how Mazda’s main competitors and other car manufacturers who are not considered as main competitors have organized their online business. Therefore a benchmark study is conducted between twenty two car manufacturers.

Chapter two provides a theoretical framework about the basic characteristics of the Internet and the various types of online business models. First, the main characteristics of the Internet media will be introduced as they are important in order to understand the various business models and also because they have an impact on the choice of the ideal online business model for a company. Following that, the types of business models will be introduced and investigated to lay the groundwork for an in-depth analysis and to develop an online sales strategy for Mazda.

Chapter three provides detailed information for the car manufacturer Mazda. First, a general brief overview of the company will be given. Following that, the organizational structure of Mazda Motor Europe will be introduced in order to be able to identify key issues regarding the development of an online sales strategy. In the last part of chapter three, an introduction of the accessory business at Mazda Motor Europe will be presented.

Chapter four is divided into a theoretical and a practical part. First, the term “benchmarking” will be explained. It will be outlined what kind of benchmarking studies can be performed and how the benchmarking process is defined. In the practical part, it will be outlined how the benchmark of competitive automotive websites had been set-up (benchmarking plan).

Chapter five focuses on the evaluation of the benchmark findings. Here, it will be explored how the various features in the areas of content, community and commerce chapter are implemented by the analyzed car manufacturers.

Chapter six outlines the conclusion and recommendations drawn from the benchmark findings. First, general recommendations are made on how Mazda could improve their basic website feature. Following that, an integrated online marketing approach will be introduced. This approach should support Mazda to strengthen its bonds with customers and increase sales.

## 2 ONLINE BUSINESS MODELS – A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides a theoretical framework presenting the basic characteristics of the Internet and the various types of online business models.

First, the main characteristics of the Internet media will be introduced which:

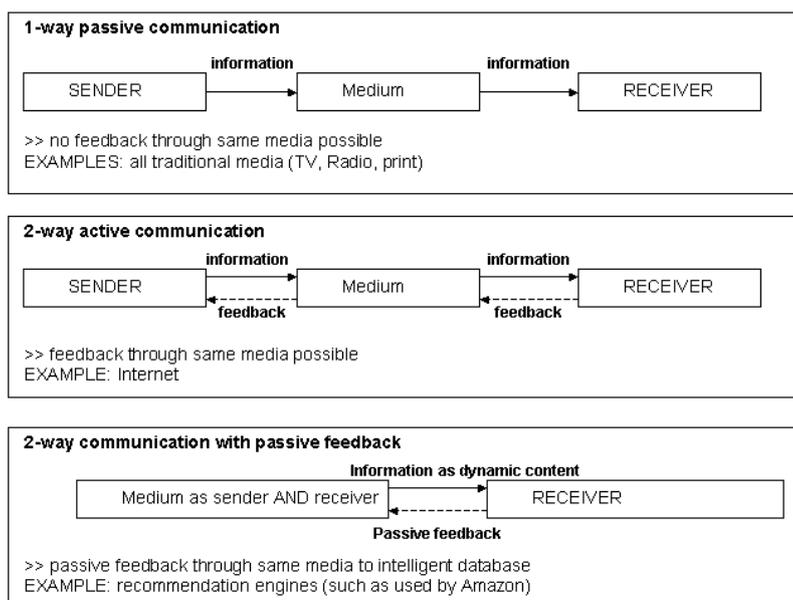
- are important in order to understand the various business models and
- have an impact on the choice of the ideal online business model for a company.

Following that, the types of business models will be introduced and investigated to lay the groundwork for an in-depth analysis and to develop an online sales strategy for Mazda.

### 2.1 Characteristics of the internet media

#### Interactivity

Interactivity describes how the information flow in a communication process is designed. As can be seen from the following graph 1 there are three different types of information flows.



GRAPH 1. Information flow in communication processes (Stähler 2001, 111.)

The first type of information flow is 1-way passive communication with no direct feedback through the same medium being possible. This way of communication can be found in all traditional media such as TV, radio and print.

In a second type, 2-way active communication, the receiver of information is able to send a feedback directly to the sender through the same medium. Contrary to other media, marketers can now communicate and interact directly with consumers, which provide great opportunity to strengthen and build brand loyalty.

The third type is a 2-way communication with passive feedback which refers to intelligent databases on the web such as the recommendation engine used by Amazon. Here, the sender analyzes the surfing / shopping habits of the user, compares it with the habits of similar users and generates dynamic content that is supposed to be relevant to the user (Stähler 2001, 110.).

### **Ubiquity**

Information on the web is placeless and timeless. For the user it is irrelevant on which server the information is stored. People can access the information anytime and anywhere in the world from any pc that is connected to the web. This is partly also true for radio and TV. However, here the information is only available at the moment of transmission unless the user saves the transmitted information actively and immediately (Stähler 2001, 114f.).

### **Multimediality**

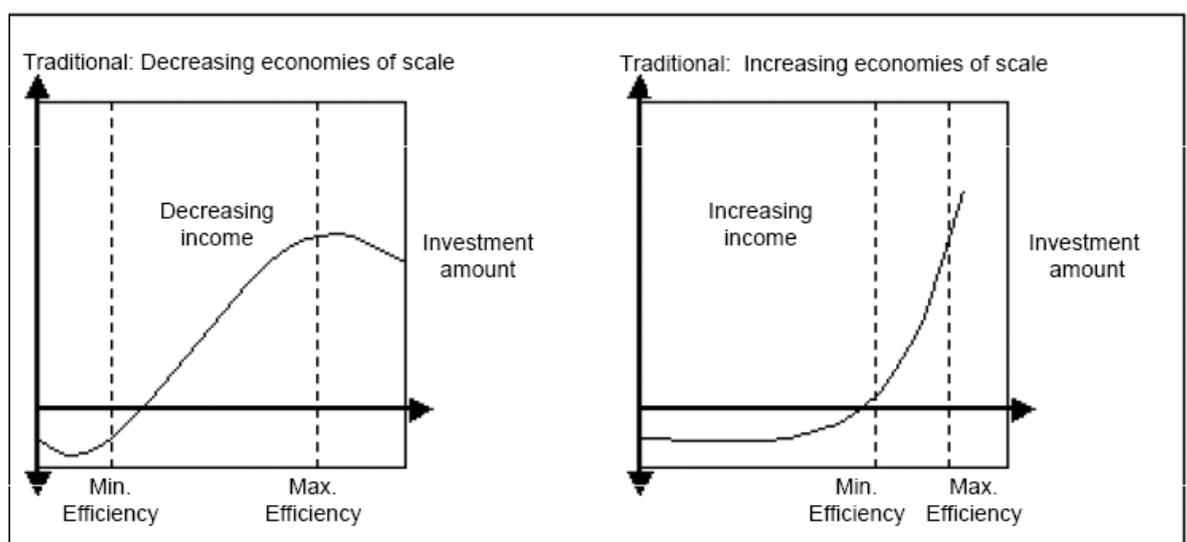
Multimediality means that, depending on the kind of programming, any kind of information can be re-produced as long as it can be digitalized. Due to its flexibility all kinds of media types (text, images, audio and video) can be produced and combined. Contrary to any other media channel, such as television companies can create a whole different user/customer experience due to the unique characteristics of the Internet as described in this chapter (Stähler 2001, 117f.).

## Customer empowerment / pull-principle

While in the so-called old economy communication was initiated by the sender of an information only for example (e.g.) through commercials on TV (market push principle). The Internet changed that picture radically. Here, the receiver decides what information from whom and when he wants to receive (market-pull principle). The switch from market-push to market-pull increases the market position of the consumer (consumer empowerment). This means that on the web the user / consumer actively decides what kind of information he wants. (Fritz 2001, 85f.)

## Domination of fix costs of first copy

When looking at the ratio of fixed versus variable costs at the production and distribution of digital products / content the domination of fixed costs is obvious. The production costs are the costs of producing the so-called “first copy”. With increasing output of digital content average costs decrease while profits increase disproportionate once break-even is passed (law of increasing return). Contrary to traditional markets, where profits start decreasing once the maximum efficiency is reached, profits keep increasing for digital content products. (Fritz 2001, 70.)



GRAPH 2. Comparison of scale effects of digital vs. physical goods. (Fritz 2001, 70.)

## 2.2 The 3 C's – Content, Community, Commerce

The typology of this online business models was developed by Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwig, Mayer & Johnston in 2001. They argue that the most successful Internet-Marketing strategies are comprised of the three elements content, community, and commerce. While content creates awareness among users for a website, community and interactivity increases customer engagement / loyalty and commerce capitalizes on the customer value by offering products that fulfil unmet consumers needs. (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwig, Mayer & Johnston 2001, 41f)

### 2.2.1 Content

Core activities of so-called content provider or publishers is the collection, selection and categorization of content while content can be of educational, informational or entertaining nature. While the majority of content providers refinance their business through advertising some generate their revenues through user fees (see chapter 2.4.2). (Wirtz 2000, 89)

In a survey (table 1) that was conducted in 2002, consumers / online users were asked what is important for them when they surf to a specific website in order to continuously come back to that website:

TABLE 1. Requirements towards appealing websites (Förster & Kreuz 2002, 112.)

Criteria	High importance
high quality content	97 %
up-to-date content	93 %
ease-of-use	86 %
high amount of content	82 %
appealing web design	41 %
brand image and awareness of company	24 %

The results show how important content is for the success of a website. The user only comes back to the website when the content is relevant, attractive, rich and

well-presented. Even more interesting is that content is more important than the brand awareness or image of that website. (Förster & Kreuz 2002, 112f.)

The logic behind the result is quite simple. The online user surfs on the web with a specific interest or purpose. If he does not find the information he is looking for on a website or does not feel entertained the next website is just one click away. Therefore, the job of the marketer is clear. Content needs to be provided that attract visitors to keep coming back to the website. The content must be kept up-to-date and presented in an easy-to-use way with an attractive design. Besides the actual website content there is another content tool that can increase loyalty among website visitors – the newsletter. (Förster & Kreuz 2002, 112f.)

### **Newsletters**

A newsletter is a one-way communication tool that doesn't allow interaction. It is a good way to stay in touch with customers and keep the company in their minds. The website visitor must actively subscribe to a newsletter. Newsletters are as well an excellent opportunity to improve reputation through well-written articles concerning the brand, products or services. Consumers can be informed about new website features, new products, or the latest offers. Links within the text can be announced so that can be used to drive customers straight to the website or the online shop. (Baumann & Kistner 2002, 221f)

### **2.2.2 Community**

“The rise of virtual communities in online network has set in motion an unprecedented shift in power from vendors of goods and services to the customers that buy them. Vendors who understand this transfer of power and choose to capitalize on it by organizing virtual communities will be richly rewarded with both peerless customer loyalty and impressive economic returns. (Hagel 1997, 2.)”

The above statement was published by Hagel in 1997, a long time ago before web communities such as YouTube, Facebook, or Xing became a huge commercial success. According to Hagel virtual communities are comprised of five elements:

1. Specific interest area of community member
2. Integration of content
3. User-generated content and interaction between users
4. Access to competitive offers
5. Commercial orientation. (Förster & Kreuz 2002, 112.)

The bullet points one to three are the key to creating a community. The host of the community (e.g. Mazda) does not create the key content but the community members do - the host focuses on providing the technical platform. Referring to bullet point five companies have various goals when creating communities. One of the top goals is to motivate users to join the company operated community section and establish or increase brand loyalty. Those brand loyal community members not just eventually purchase products or services from the host but also function as brand ambassadors. Brand ambassadors create positive word-of-mouth for the company's brands and products and can be an exciting leverages for a company brand management strategies. Other community members who are not customers are a big potential target group for the company when it comes to acquiring new customers. (Förster & Kreuz 2002, 185f.)

A successful example of how BMW has created and capitalized an online community is given in chapter 2.3.1. Other examples of how companies have established functioning communities are the tool manufacturer Bosch that has created a forum where amateurs can exchange on "do-it-yourself" issues including the recommendation of the best Bosch tool that solves the posted problem. (Bosch 2008)

In the following pages the various community tools are introduced and explained.

## **Forums / discussion boards**

Everyone has an opinion, and most people want to know that their opinions are taken seriously. Some enjoy helping other people, others have a desire to learn more about a subject, issue, or product. These desires cause people to gravitate to online communities. As word gets out, that serious discussions are going on at a website users will come back on a regular basis to see what has been discussed.

Discussion boards and forums provide a bulletin board of threaded discussions. They start with a series of subjects or questions that readers can post their comments or answers to. Later readers read the posts and add their comment to the thread of postings - either to the original subject or in response to a reader's posting - until the discussion dies out after available feedback is exhausted. Visitors of the website are allowed to read all posts. But if they want to participate in the discussion, they usually need to register and get a username and password. When they register, this gives marketers the opportunity to collect user information such as sociographic, demographic, and psychographic user information (depending on the amount of information requested in the registration process) which then can be used for marketing purposes. A good possibility to keep forums alive is to provide users the possibility to get new mail to their specific topic of interest emailed. By doing so the marketer transforms the forum from a pull-forum where users actively need to revisit the forum to see if something new has posted to a push forum where the user is informed as soon as a new text was posted. (Werner 2003, 178). Context-related forums can be good and cost-effective opportunity for marketers to promote the products so that users become customers.

## **Chat Rooms**

The most interactive community feature for a website is the live chat room. Visitors might stay on a website for hours while chatting with other users. During this time, it could be useful to place offers on the chat discussion page showing the products

or service the company is providing. An employee of the company could even join in the chat about the product or product category, identifying the company as the merchant and offering to answer any questions about the company and its products. (Werner 2003, 179.)

### **Challenges with forums and chat rooms**

Forums and chat rooms consist of user-generated content. This can cause to major problems for the hosting company. One major problem is the threat that users do not follow the behavioural guidelines (for example no offences). The other threat is that users start criticising the company which can develop into serious bad word of mouth. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to provide a behaviour guideline for the usage of such tools by the user which the user needs to accept in the registration process.

In addition to that, supervision for both tools by the company is recommended or even necessary. With regards to forums an administrator has the possibility to review each post and check if it violates any behavioural rules. With chat rooms supervision can be much more difficult. As communication happens real-time and possibly even 24 hours a day can be very costly due to the costs for staffing employees to monitor the chat 24 hours a day. A solution to that problem could be to open the chat room at certain times of the day, when monitoring is possible. (Werner 2003, 186.)

### **Voting modules**

Voting modules are a cost effective tool that can be added to other community features such as forums or chats. At voting modules the company can post a closed question while users can choose one of a few given alternatives to answer the question and post their opinion. After having given the answer the user can see how the rest of the participants have answered the question. This method can be an effective way to start and drive discussions in forums. (Werner 2003, 180.)

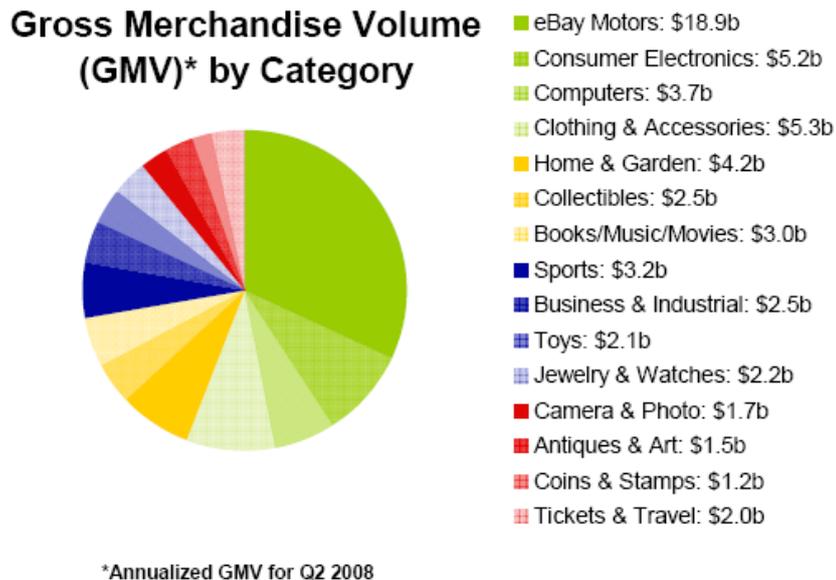
## **Owners club**

An owners club is not necessarily limited to the Internet. It is created by the company whereas access to the owners club is restricted. Companies create owners clubs so to be able to directly communicate with club members, promote products and services and enable club members to socialize with each others. By doing so customer loyalty shall be increased through creating an emotional bond between club member and the brand. A club with restricted access provides a range of services the company provides to its members. The characteristics of such club are that members get access to services which are no available for non-members. For example, Volkswagen owners club members have access to special travel offers, route planning, and receive free owners club magazines. (Förster & Kreuz 2002, 194f.)

### **2.2.3 Commerce**

Due to the unique advantages of the Internet as described in chapter 2.1 the Internet is very well suited for trading goods online. The products or services of the seller are basically available worldwide (ubiquity). They can be promoted with a wide range of multimedial tools such as pictures, videos, 3D-animations (multimediality) and the costs for offering products online are comparably low (domination of fixed costs of first copy) as there is also no need to open physical retail stores across the globe.

This is why e-commerce has rapidly grown over the last decades. Retailers such as Amazon.com, which was founded in 1995, became global players with 2007 turnover of Amazon being 14.8bill USD (Amazon 2008). The other global player eBay was also founded in 1995 and has achieved a turnover of 7.7bill USD. At eBay Motors, the biggest category of eBay, a car is sold every 56 seconds while the total trade volume of eBay Motors only in the second quarter 2008 was 18.9bill USD (graph 3). (eBay 2008)



GRAPH 3. Product categories at eBay and respective trade volume (eBay 2008)

### Level of e-commerce

The most basic form of e-commerce is a static website or dynamic product catalogue without a shopping cart function. The standard online shop is comprised of the following software components: a shop-database with product information, an administrative database, a media database (pictures, animations, and videos), a recommendation engine, the payment gateway, and after-sales tools. (Krause 1999, 494.)

### Advantages of e-commerce

For consumers, shopping online has a wide range of advantages. They save time as they can shop from home and do not need to drive to the retailer. The Internet is of high transparency in terms of pricing as consumers can easily compare prices – the next competitor is just one click away. Shopping online is convenient as the consumer decides when to shop – he is not limited to opening hours of a physical retailer.

For businesses, the advantages are obvious as well. Transaction costs are comparably low versus traditional retailing due to the domination of fixed costs of the first copy. By selling through the web products are made available to customers worldwide. Slow moving inventory can be particularly promoted in order to effectively reduce the stock. Through direct interaction with consumers over the web using features such as email, newsletters, chats customer loyalty can be build up and deepened.

### 2.3 Improvement based business models

Improvement based online business models can be divided into three groups (table 2) – enhancement strategies and strategies aimed at improving efficiency and/or effectiveness. (Hanson 2000, 126 - 131.)

TABLE 2. Improvement based business models (Hanson 200, 126.)

Improvement-Based Business Models	Examples
<b>Enhancement</b>	
- Brand building	- BMW
- Category building	- Toyota
- Quality enhancement	- Quelle.de
<b>Efficiency</b>	
- Cost Reduction	- KFZteile24
- Free trial	- Adobe.com
<b>Effectiveness</b>	
- Dealer support	- Mazda
- Supplier support	- ThyssenKrupp

Although all of these do not directly lead to a sale the indirect effects of these strategies can have a great impact on overall sales and profits for a company.

#### 2.3.1 Enhancement

Enhancement-based strategies are aimed at helping to build and strengthen brands and increase marketing effectiveness.

## **Brand building**

More and more companies have come to realize that one of their most valuable assets is their brand name associated with their products. In today's crowded marketplace, individuals have a huge choice regarding brands and products but have seemingly less and less time to make those choices. Therefore, the job of a brand is to simplify consumer decision, reduce risk and set expectations towards what the brand promises (Keller 2002, 2.)

When looking at the characteristics of the Internet (see chapter 2.1), the Internet is perfectly suited to build or strengthen a brand – alone or as part of an integrated marketing communication strategy. Through a company / brand website, consumers can actively get in touch with the brand (customer empowerment) anytime and anywhere they want (ubiquity). Due to the domination of fixed costs principle the Internet can be a cost-effective way for a company to build and strengthen its brand, increase brand loyalty and indirectly increase turnover.

An outstanding success with pioneering character in utilizing the Internet for brand building had been BMW's film series "The Hire" in the USA. This contains a series of eight short films, all produced by popular directors such as Guy Ritchie and have led to over 100million views and a sales increase of +12% after release of this pure online campaign. (BMWUSA.com, the hire.)

## **Category building**

Category building does not refer to a particular product but rather to a product category on a more generic level. With category building, marketers – in many cases either innovative companies or market leaders, try to accomplish one or more of the two general communication objectives:

Category awareness must be established, when a marketer has launched a completely new product, service or category that is totally new to consumers, for example when YouTube was first launched consumers needed to know that there is a new service on the market. To make this happen after activating the domain

name the creators offered the public a preview to the site for 6 months before making the its official launch.

Category image building aims at educating consumers about the purpose of the category. In the 90's, Toyota had to build a category image when hybrid cars were introduced to the market as a new environmental way of transportation. (Autointell 2000)

### **Online Quality Enhancement**

Online quality enhancement is a vital part for using the Internet for marketing purposes as digital marketing costs are comparably low. Here, marketers make use of the effect of the domination of fixed costs as described in chapter 2.1.4. For example, an image movie about a new car line needs to be produced and posted only once on the website. This one copy can then be seen by thousands of users at comparably low costs (web traffic on server). Brochures and product catalogues can be posted on the web. A re-production, which is necessary for example in print catalogue ordering (Otto, Quelle) is not necessary anymore. (Hanson 200, 126 ff.).

### **2.3.2 Efficiency**

Cost reduction has become one of the biggest reasons for companies to start online business. The main reason for that is the ubiquity of the Internet as described in chapter 2.1.3. Customers have access to the Internet anytime and anyplace in the world. Therefore, it is not necessary to shop in a physical store. Pure online retailers have emerged over the last two decades that got bigger than old established retailers. Pure online retailers such as Amazon have no costly physical stores, a highly cost-efficient supply and distribution structure and were able to attack companies with a traditional business model. The same can be found in the automotive industry where thousands of online shops with a more efficient cost structure than traditional resellers (i.e. [www.kfzteile24-shop.de](http://www.kfzteile24-shop.de)) have emerged. (Hanson 200, 126.)

Even more, cost savings can be generated by posting manuals and customer-support documents online – a strategy heavily employed by software companies. Companies who disregard such cost-saving benefits are threatened to become increasingly cost-uncompetitive over the years. Online sites can be a cost-efficient way of customer interaction and customer self-service.

### **Free trial**

Free trial on the Internet is largely focussed on digital products. Software companies such as Adobe frequently provide free trial downloads over the Internet – hoping that the consumer purchases the product after experiencing it personally (Adobe 2008). In the past, free trial was only possible through CD's or DVD's, which often came (costly for the company) as an insert in magazines.

### **2.3.3 Effectiveness**

Effectiveness is another category of indirect benefits of the web. These efforts normally involve the supply chain from vendors to distribution partners and dealers.

### **Dealer support**

The Internet is perfectly suited as a support tool for local dealers. Nearly all car makers provide configurators with which consumers can build their preferred car online. Once the consumer has build up his car he is referred to a dealer close to his/her own home. Although the goal of car makers is a car purchase, this procedure is an improvement based business model as it does not try to close the deal directly online. Only after the consumer actually visits the dealer and makes the purchase the car maker will benefit. (Mazda.de, configurator 2008)

## Supplier support

Supplier support is a fast growing use of the Internet to increase effectiveness. The goal is to improve procurement, speed up delivery and improve the speed of introducing new products. Many companies have created Intranet-based e-procurement solutions in which they manage supplier relationships or conduct e-auctions for standardized products. This is done for example by the German technology company Thyssen Krupp that operates its own e-procurement platform where suppliers are integrated for Thyssen Krupp via the Internet (ThyssenKrupp, procurement 2008).

## 2.4 Revenue based business models

Revenue-based business models (see table 3) have become one of the most successful types of online business model.

TABLE 3. Revenue based business models (Hanson 2000, 126.)

Revenue-Based Business Models	Examples
<b>Provider Pays</b>	
- Content Sponsorship - Online Advertising - Affiliate Marketing	- Yahoo & Eurosport - DoubleClick - Amazon
<b>User Pays</b>	
- Product sales - Retail Alliances - Subscriptions - Bundle Sales	- Dell Computers - Obi@Otto - New York Times - Nike & Apple

These business models can be distinguished between cases where providers pay for service and those where users pay. (Hanson 2000, 131 - 139.)

### 2.4.1 Provider-Based Revenue Models

Provider-based revenue models are those where the turnover is not generated by end consumers but by other companies. Such business models include content sponsorship, retail alliances, online advertising, and affiliate marketing.

## Content Sponsorship

Content Sponsorship is often used by websites that wish to put high quality content information on their website but do not have the resources to create the content themselves. A content sponsorship deal with a publisher of content solves that problem. The sponsored content is placed at a particular and distinct section on a website whereas the sponsored content should coincide with the subject matter as well as the target demographic of the website. Content sponsorship can work well for the publishing sites, as it is a guaranteed money flow, regardless of the exact level of readership. (Hanson 2000, 132.)

For example Yahoo benefits by attracting a readership with a strong interest in sports through a content sponsorship with Eurosport (image 1).

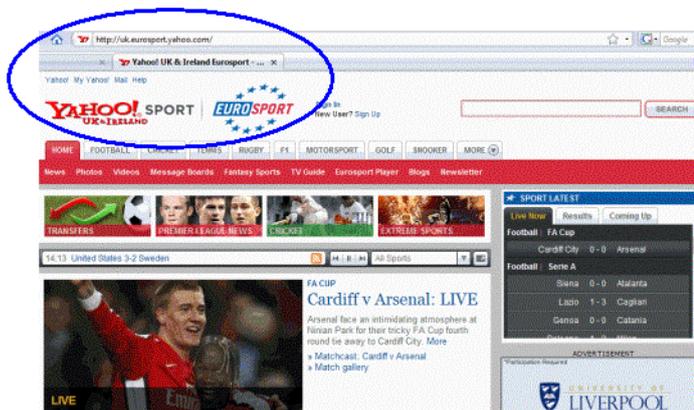


IMAGE 1. Content sponsorship Yahoo & Eurosport (YahooEurosport 2008)

## Online Advertisement

Online advertising is the most visible form of provider-based models. One of the exciting features of Web advertising is its inherent measurability. This is because the Internet is the only media where the success of a marketing campaign can be directly measured. Precise click-throughs of individual ads can be calculated. This makes marketers able to rapidly learn through experimentation and analysis. (Hanson 2000, 134f). DoubleClick is an example of a new company whose business model is based on online advertising ([www.doubleclick.com](http://www.doubleclick.com)).

## **Affiliate Marketing**

While in traditional advertising it is hardly possible to link a sale to a specific print ad or a TV commercial. The Internet changed this picture radically. Due to tracking functions advertisers can track how many people clicked on an ad and even made a purchase on the advertisers' website. One of the pioneers of affiliate marketing is Amazon.com. The idea was born in the early 1990's when a woman who operated a website about the topic "divorce" approached Amazon asking whether she could promote a related book on her website and get a sales commission in exchange. Since then, Amazon has partnered with hundreds of thousands of websites that promote books from Amazon in exchange for a sales commission by placing a link on their website. (Tamble 2001b, 1.)

Commission models include pay-per-click, pay-per-lead, and pay-per-sale. Major hosts of affiliate marketing solutions that bring together publishers and advertisers are e.g. [www.zanox.com](http://www.zanox.com) or [www.tradedoubler.com](http://www.tradedoubler.com).

### **2.4.2 User-Based Revenue Models**

#### **Product sales**

Online transactions are important especially for Business to Business (B2B) commerce. B2B sales are growing for several reasons. Businesses have better access to computers, faster connection speeds and a staff that makes sure the network and software are functioning. However, over the last decade consumer online sales have taken off rapidly due to the fact that faster connections are becoming more affordable for end customer and almost every household has at least one computer.

The importance of online sales goes past the profits made on the sales themselves. It completes the cycle of online commerce and makes the entire process accountable. As it is possible to track marketing efforts all the way from initial contact to actual sale, the process can be precisely evaluated for

effectiveness and profitability. A reliable return on investment can be calculated for sponsorships, banner ads and prospect fees. Effective approaches can be expanded and unprofitable efforts found out and eliminated.

This is one of the strongest advantages for online businesses. Whenever there is a gap between marketing efforts and marketing results, it becomes a challenge to track the effectiveness of the communication and sales efforts. One of the reasons that direct mail and telemarketing have grown so popular is that they are result oriented. The web is even stronger in this area as all the interactions are being captured. Companies are finding it possible to track their outreach efforts very closely. When this extends to actual, the full profitability can be established. (Hanson 2000, 138f)

One of the pioneering companies that have created a successful e-commerce business model for both B2B and B2C sales is Dell Computers. Founded in 1984, Dell started selling IT products to consumers and business through direct sales they started their online sales in 1996 (Dell History). In 2008, Dell generated a total turnover of 61Bill USD (Dell Facts).

### **Retail Alliances**

Retail alliances can be another opportunity to generate additional turnover on the web. By partnering with another retailer a company can explore new market segments while both partners can increase turnover (Hanson 2000, pg. 132f). With Obi@Otto, such a retail alliance has been successfully created by the German retailer "Otto" which sells all kinds of products to consumers and "Obi", a do-it-yourself retailer (Obi@Otto retail alliance).

### **Subscriptions**

Subscriptions are exclusive content that is only available to those users who pay a subscription fee. Subscription based business models can be a good revenue stream for content providers who produces large amounts of content. Such providers can then distinguish their website offers between free content and

premium content for which the user needs to pay a fixed amount of money. While this revenue model in theory is well suited for news website it still has not shown huge success as users are not ready to pay for information or content on a large scale. For example, in 2007 the newspaper “New York Times” has stopped charging money for access to its online news archive only two years after introducing that service (NewYorkTimes 2009).

### **Bundle Sales**

One successful example for product bundling is the co-operation between Nike and Apple iPod. Here, consumers can have a chip in to their shoes that is connected with an iPod. With that unique technological alliance between Nike and Apple they can check out running routes, calculate burned calories, choose music that matches with the running speed and join the online community. (Nikeplus 2008)

### **3 MAZDA MOTOR CORPORATION**

This chapter provides detailed information about the car manufacturer Mazda. First, a general overview about the company and Mazda's car lines will be given. The organizational structure of Mazda Motor Europe will be introduced in order to be able to identify key issues regarding the development of an online sales strategy. In the last part, an introduction about the accessory business at Mazda Motor Europe will be given.

#### **3.1 General company profile**

Mazda Motors is a Japanese automobile manufacturer, founded in 1920. The corporate headquarter is based in Hiroshima, Japan and the European headquarter is located in Leverkusen, Germany. The company started with producing machine tools and vehicle production started by the 3 wheel truck "Mazdago" in 1931. The first car, Mazda R360 Coupe was a two-door passenger vehicle and was launched in 1960. It was followed by the four-door Mazda Carol in 1962. The next year cumulative automobile production reached one million.

During 2007 Mazda produced 1, 3 million vehicles for global sales. The majority was produced in the company's Japanese plant and currently Mazda has production in several countries – such as in the USA, Thailand, Columbia and Canada. However, there is no production in Europe, which means that all the vehicles that are sold in Europe are produced in Japan and shipped to Europe.

In Europe Mazda began its sales in 1967 and the first local affiliate company was established in Germany in 1972. After the millennium Mazda started to re-establish its sales network in major European countries. Currently Mazda has National Sales Companies (NSC) in 23 European Countries and Independent Distributors (ID) in five countries. Altogether these NSC's and ID's cover 51 markets (see attachment 7.2). In 2007 Mazda sold 311,000 cars in Europe, which represents a sixth consecutive year-on-year increase. (Mazda sales, 2007)

### 3.2 Mazda carlines

To date, Mazda is offering a range of nine carlines in all classic product categories in Europe. This includes small-sized cars (Mazda2), Mazda3 for the so-called “Golf-class”, Mazda6 as the limousine, the family van Mazda5, the luxury vans Mazda CX-7 and CX-9, the open-top classic Mazda MX-5, the sports car Mazda RX-8, and the pick-up Mazda BT-50 (table 4).

TABLE 4. Mazda Motors carlines

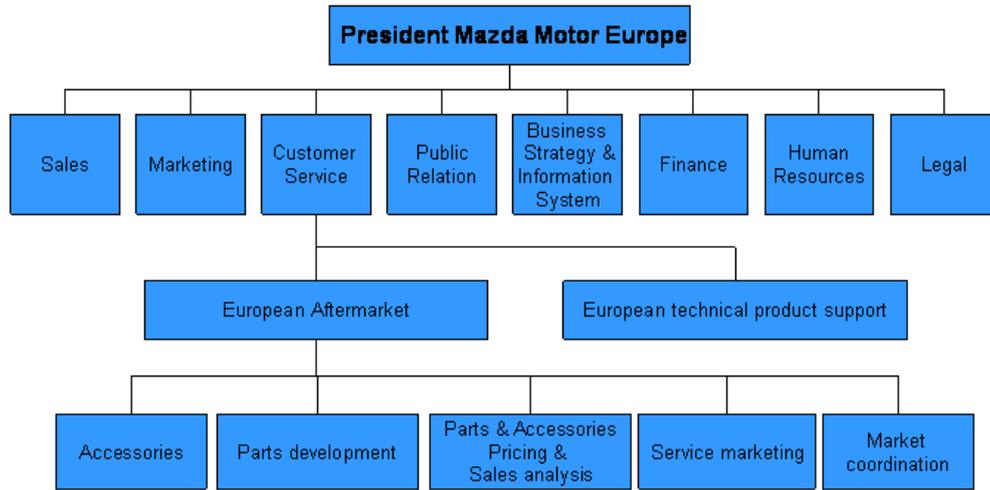
Car line	Image	Car line details
Mazda2		World Car of the Year 2008, sporty body shape, low consumption, low CO2
Mazda3		sporty styling, dynamic performance and quality craftsmanship
Mazda5		combines utility of a 6-passenger van with sports compact-like handling
Mazda6		High fuel efficiency and low emissions
Mazda MX-5		world's most popular open-top sports car
Mazda RX-8		smooth drive due to RENESIS rotary engine - even at the highest revs
Mazda CX-7		sporty crossover between SUV and sports car
Mazda CX-9		luxury crossover for Russian market
Mazda BT-50		versatile pick-up

With such an extensive range of carlines that covers all the basic car segments there is also a wide range of accessories available for each of the carlines. Managing such a wide range of carlines as well as accessories requires the right organizational structure in order to be able to compete successfully in the market place.

### **3.3 Organizational structure**

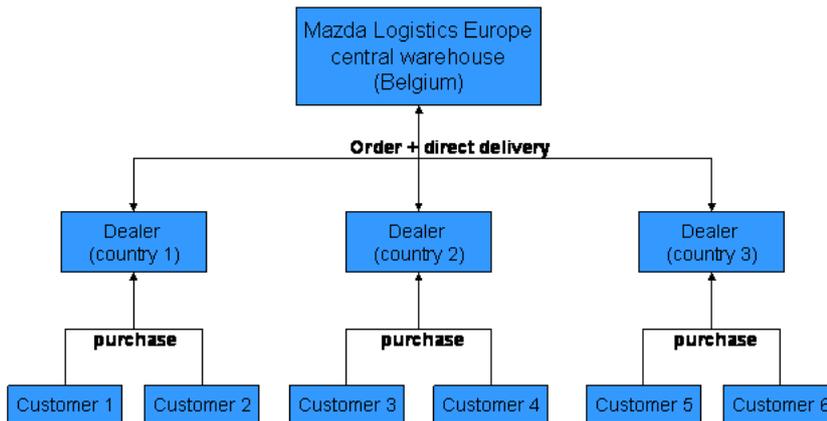
Graph 5 visualizes the organizational structure of Mazda Motor's European headquarter, which is based in the town Hitdorf located in the state of Northrhine Westphalia in Germany. The figure focuses on visualizing how the accessory business is integrated in the organizational structure. There are eight corporate departments (Sales, Marketing, Human Resources, Customer Service and so on). The customer service department is split into two groups with one being the European Aftermarket and the other being the European technical product support teams. The European Aftermarket team is split into five departments.

In here, the accessory team is responsible for developing the right accessory product range for each of Mazda's car lines from a product management perspective. The correspondent parts development team is responsible for the actual technical product development while service marketing is responsible for all accessory-relevant communication materials such as brochures. Finally, the market coordination team is responsible for all communication between the headquarter and the local markets while parts & accessories pricing & sales analysis teams are responsible for providing data analysis findings to the other team as well as setting-up the basic pricing strategy. (Mazda internal information / organizational strategy)



GRAPH 5: Mazda Motor Europe organizational structure.

In preparation of developing the online sales strategy for the accessory business it is also important to understand Mazda Motor Europe’s current logistics strategy, which is visualized in graph 6. All accessories that are marketed and sold within Europe are distributed via the central warehouse, which is located near Brussels, Belgium to the dealers – no matter in which country they are based. This means that there are no local warehouses in the European countries.



GRAPH 6. Mazda Motor Europe logistics structure.

### **3.4 Accessory business at Mazda Motor Europe**

Automobile Accessories include the whole range of car parts required to maintain the interior and exterior decoration of a vehicle. Accessories help to bring out the part of the vehicle that the vehicle owners want to highlight. Generally accessories are supplementary items, which do not affect the internal functioning of a vehicle. Accessories are mainly something non-essential but more desirable that aim to bring out the ultimate effect or results in a vehicle.

Accessories provide additional decoration to a vehicle and are actually additional features used to enhance the overall appearance or performance of an automobile. Accessories act as supplementary components that are used with and help to enhance the function of a car part or enable multiple parts to function together. For example, alloy wheels, mud guards, floor mats and other items with which the vehicle is supplied, all comprises as automobile accessories. The accessories come in all shapes and sizes. Depending on customer's demand accessories are designed with latest techniques. (Automobile News 2008)

Accessories offered at Mazda are either genuine accessories sourced from Japan or Europe. Many accessories for example alloy wheels, mud flaps and audio equipments are mainly Japan sourced and roof carriers, floor mats are mainly from Europe. For every vehicle model Mazda has carline specific accessories, but accessories that can be fitted to all the main models are called cross carline Accessories. These accessories are child seats, portable navigation systems, roof boxes, bicycle carriers and bluetooth hands free kits.

Lately Mazda Motor Europe GmbH has also started working with Supplier Branded Accessories, which means that the accessories are designed and produced by the supplier and Mazda is only offering them to its customers. This way the financial risk is at the suppliers' side as well as the warranty.

## **4 BENCHMARKING**

This chapter is divided into a theoretical and a practical part. In the first two chapters the term benchmarking will be explained in detail. It will be outlined what kind of benchmarking studies can be performed and how the benchmarking process is defined. The theoretical part is followed by the practical parts, which starts with an outline of how the benchmark of competitive automotive websites had been set-up (benchmarking plan). After that, the outcome of the actual benchmark will be presented.

### **4.1 Benchmarking – theoretical background**

When speaking about benchmarking a difference must be made between the term benchmark and the term benchmarking. While benchmark is a measure against a specific reference point, benchmarking refers to the actual process of measurement. More specifically, benchmarking is a measurement and analysis process that compares internal practises, processes, or methodologies with those of other organizations. The purpose of benchmarking is to identify best practises that may be adapted to a wide range of organizations and provide them with quantum process improvements, which result in increased business performance.

There are two distinct approaches to benchmarking:

1. Competitive benchmarking, which measures organizational performance against that of competing organizations.
2. Process benchmarking on the other hand measures discrete process performance and functionality against organizations that lead in those processes.

The objective of benchmarking is to provide goals for realistic process improvement and an understanding of the changes necessary to facilitate that improvement. The results of benchmarking should be increased customer satisfaction and improved competitive position. (APQC 1993, 4f)

There are four different types of benchmarking that can be conducted:

1. Internal studies compare similar operations within different units of a company.
2. Competitive studies target specific groups, processes or methods that are used by a company's direct competitors.
3. Functional or industry studies compare similar functions within the same industry field or company performance with that of industry leaders.
4. Generic benchmarking compares work practises or processes that are independent of industry. (APQC 1993, 4f)

## **4.2 The theoretical process of benchmarking**

A typical benchmarking study can be divided into the following five phases (APQC 1993, 30f):

### **1. Problem recognition**

Before a benchmarking process can be set-up the actual management problem must be explored and defined. Then, as a second step it can be analyzed to what degree a benchmarking study can support finding a solution to the management problem. (Malhotra 1999, 45 - 46)

### **2. Set-up of benchmark project**

The objective of this phase is to outline how a benchmarking study will be conducted. A so-called benchmarking plan should provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the target / objective of the benchmarking study?
2. Who is being benchmarked?
3. Who performs the benchmarking study?
4. Which data are how being collected? (data collection plan)
5. How will the data be analyzed? (Data analysis plan)
6. What are the milestones?
7. What is the budget needed?

Once the above mentioned questions are answered and when necessary approval by management is given to conduct the study the actual benchmarking process can be started. (APQC 1993, 32 - 33.)

### **3. Data collection**

The data collection plan that was established in phase two, answers the questions about which data will be collected. Data that can be collected are either of primary or secondary nature. Secondary data were collected for some purpose other than the problem at hand and were made available e.g. by business and government sources, commercial market research firms, and computerized databases. Contrary, primary data are collected by the researcher for the specific purpose of addressing the research problem. (Malhotra 1999, 112.)

A further important differentiation with regards to data collection for benchmarking purposes must be made between qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data are of non-statistical nature and suitable to develop an initial understanding of a problem. Quantitative data are of statistical nature and enable the researcher to find actionable, reliable answers to research questions. (Malhotra 1999, 148.)

### **4. Data analysis, discussion of results and recommendations**

Once all information has been collected then data analysis can be started. The objective is to translate the data into actionable information. Here, the current performance of the company is being compared against the benchmark(s), which were set-up in phase two. The discussion of findings as well as the drawing of recommendations is aimed at answering the management problem which was defined in the first phase of the benchmarking process. (APQC 1993, 35 - 36)

### **5. Practical Implementation of findings and monitoring**

In this phase, the findings of the benchmarking study that were translated into an action plan are implemented into the organization. In some cases, it is necessary

or beneficial to continue monitoring how the organization has improved its processes, business practices versus the benchmarks defined by the benchmarking study. (APQC 1993, 37)

### 4.3 Benchmarking plan - online strategy of car brands

The target of the benchmarking study is to develop a strategy aimed at increasing online sales of car accessories of Mazda. Therefore all major car brands that play a relevant role in the European car market will be analyzed. This includes more direct competitors of Mazda such as Alfa Romeo, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Citroen, Fiat, Ford, Honda, Kia, Nissan, Opel, Peugeot, Renault, Suzuki, Toyota, and Volkswagen. Although not being direct competitors of Mazda, premium brands such as BMW, Mercedes, Audi, Saab, Volvo, and Mini will be analyzed as well. This is because it can be assumed that those brands have a sophisticated online strategy from which conclusion can be drawn for the development of Mazda's corresponding strategy. The benchmarking study will be conducted by the author of this thesis and it will be split into three sections following Chaffey's typology of online business as introduced in chapter 2.2. Each of the three elements (content, community, and commerce) contains features that will be benchmarked (table 5).

TABLE 5. Benchmark data to be collected

CONTENT	COMMUNITY	COMMERCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dealer search</li> <li>- Newsletter</li> <li>- Video</li> <li>- Podcast</li> <li>- Web TV</li> <li>- RSS Feeds</li> <li>- Personal area</li> <li>- Owner's manual</li> <li>- E-service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Forum</li> <li>- Chat room</li> <li>- Owners club</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- way of promoting accessories               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. online shop</li> <li>2. online catalogue including prices</li> <li>3. online catalogue without prices</li> <li>4. PDF accessory list</li> <li>5. no accessory information</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

The features that are to be benchmarked were all selected by performing a qualitative analysis of the car brand websites.

The analysis will be made in three steps. The first step will be to analyze on a quantitative basis, whether a certain website feature in the categories content and

community is offered by the analyzed car brand websites. This analysis will be limited to the German websites with the URL-ending “.de”. For the commerce part it will be evaluated how accessories are marketed on each car brands website. Here, the benchmark will be widened by comparing the corresponding German (“.de”), UK (“.co.uk”), Irish (“.ie”), French (“.fr”), and Finnish (“.fi”) car brand websites. This will be done in order to analyze if there are differences in the presentation and promotion of accessories of a certain car brand in different countries.

The benchmark study will be split into three phases: data collection, evaluation of raw data and conclusion. For the purpose of this benchmark study there is no budget needed as all data are collected from the Internet and are available at hand as secondary data.

## **5 EVALUATION OF BENCHMARK FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Content**

Chapter 2.2.1 concluded how important content is in order to attract users to visit a website and keep coming back. A survey conducted by Foerster et.al. in 2002 showed that for 97% of the survey participants high quality content was of high importance.

In that regard, website features such as WebTV, videos, podcasts represent high quality content whereas a newsletter can be seen as a standard basic feature of a commercial website. These features are of rather informative or entertaining nature. Other features included in the benchmark such as personal area, e-service, dealer search and owners manual can be described as rather commercial-related features as they are either aimed at creating business with new customers or provide services to existing customers through e-services.

#### **5.1.1 Quantitative analysis – content features**

Table 6 shows the outcome of the quantitative analysis of the content section of the examined car brands.

TABLE 6. Quantitative analysis – content section.

	Dealer search	Newsletter	Video	PodCast	personal area	RSS Feed	Web TV	Owner's manual	e-service
BMW	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Mercedes	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Audi	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
Opel	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
Mini	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
Peugeot	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
Mazda	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
Volkswagen	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
Alfa Romeo	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Volvo	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Saab	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Toyota	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
Fiat	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Skoda	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Suzuki	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Chevrolet	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Renault	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
Citroën	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Ford	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Nissan	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Chrysler	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Kia	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Honda	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

The features in the table have been sorted by moving the feature that is used most by the car brand websites to the left, and the feature that is used least by the car brand websites to the right. The same has been done with the car brands: the car brand website that uses the most features is moved to the top and the car brand website that uses the least features is moved to the bottom of the table. Separated from this approach are A.T.U. and Ebay as their online marketing concept and business model can not be compared with an actual car brand.

From the table it can be seen that the only feature that is offered by all car brands is the feature “dealer search”. The logic behind this is quite simple: this feature aims at generating turnover and sales – either by selling a new car or booking a service appointment at the dealer. The feature “newsletter” is provided by almost all car brands – except Honda. The fact that there is a multinational car brand that does not offer newsletters comes by surprise considering the advantages a newsletter can bring to a company for the promotion of its brand, products, and services.

The feature “video” is still used by almost 75% of the car brands (17 out of 23), which underlines the importance of multimedial content on car brand websites in the automotive industry. Far less car brands make use of the features “podcast”, “personal area”, and “RSS feed”. Each of those features is used by 6 out 23 car brands or around 25%. Even less used are the features “WebTV”, and “owners

manual” – only 4 out of 23 car brands or less than 20% use them. The feature “e-service” is only offered by BMW and Mercedes.

When looking at the research objects and on how many content features which are used by the car brands it should not come by surprise that the three premium brands BMW, Mercedes, and Audi use the most content features on their websites. On the lower end of the table more exotic brands such as Chrysler, Kia, and Honda use the least content features on their websites. From a pure quantitative standpoint Mazda is ranked in 7<sup>th</sup> position with regards to the amount of features used on its website – having implemented four out of nine content features. Features that are not used by Mazda are the service-oriented features “personal area”, “owners manual”, and “e-service” as well as the rather entertainment oriented features “WebTv” and “PodCasts”.

### **5.1.2 Dealer search**

From table 6 it can be seen that from among all content features that are included in the benchmark the feature dealer search is the only one offered by all car brand websites. This is not too surprising as this feature is used by consumers in order to contact dealers with specific intentions – whether it is a car purchase or booking a service appointment. However, there are big differences regarding the way the feature dealer search is implemented on the various websites. Those differences will be discussed in the next question whereas the first part analyses the search criteria’s a consumer can choose in order to find a specific dealer while the second part focuses on the search result pages.

TABLE 7. Quantitative analysis – content section.

Brand	place	Zip	New vehicles	service	dealer name	distance search	used cars	street	parts&accessories	others
Volvo	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
Ford	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Nissan	x	x	x	x	x	x				test drive dealers
Suzuki	x	x	x	x	x			x		car recycling
Citroën	x	x	x	x	x		x			Autogas installation
Peugeot	x	x	x	x	x		x			
Opel	x	x	x	x	x					service request to selected dealer
Saab	x	x	x	x	x					
Volkswagen	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		accident specialists
Chevrolet	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		test drive dealers
Mini	x	x	x	x	x					
Mazda	x	x	x	x	x					
BMW	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	
Skoda	x	x	x	x				x		
Renault	x	x	x	x		x	x			
Kia	x	x	x	x						
Honda	x	x	x	x				x		car recycling
Toyota	x	x			x	x		x		
Mercedes	x	x			x	x				
Audi	x	x			x	x				
Chrysler	x	x			x	x				
Alfa Romeo	x	x								
Fiat	x	x								

Table 7 shows, that the search criteria “place” and “Zip code” are the only search criterias that are provided by all websites. From all competitors Volvo has the widest range of search criteria’s – offering the consumer the possibility to narrow down the search to his actual need. Therefore, Volvo’s “dealer search” set-up can be marked as “best in class”.

In the second group, which is marked in pink colour, websites are included that offer the search criteria “new vehicle” and “service”. The business of car dealers consists mainly from new vehicle sales and services. However, some dealers do not offer services (car fixing). Therefore, those two search criteria’s help consumers to search specifically for dealers based on their needs.

Contrary to that, the lilac and dark-lilac marked group of websites does not offer those two search criteria. This is the point of difference compared with the pink coloured group. The point of difference between the lilac and the dark-lilac group is that Alfa Romeo and Fiat from the dark-lilac group only provide the search by place and zip code while the lilac group provides further search criterias beyond just place and zip code search.

The following table 8 provides a comparison of the search result pages of the car brand websites.

TABLE 8. Quantitative analysis.

Brand	route planning	dealer link	interactive map	static map
<a href="#">Volvo</a>	x	x	x	
<a href="#">Ford</a>	x	x	x	
<a href="#">Nissan</a>	x	x	x	
<a href="#">Honda</a>	x	x	x	
<a href="#">Alfa Romeo</a>	x	x	x	
<a href="#">Toyota</a>	x	x	x	
<a href="#">Suzuki</a>	x	x		x
<a href="#">Mercedes</a>	x	x		x
<a href="#">Opel</a>	x	x		x
<a href="#">Peugeot</a>	x	x		x
<a href="#">Saab</a>	x	x		x
<a href="#">Skoda</a>	x	x		x
<a href="#">Volkswagen</a>	x	x		x
<a href="#">Mazda</a>	x	x		x
<a href="#">Chevrolet</a>	x		x	
<a href="#">Citroën</a>	x		x	
<a href="#">Chrysler</a>	x			x
<a href="#">Mini</a>		x	x	
<a href="#">Renault</a>		x		x
<a href="#">Fiat</a>		x		
<a href="#">Kia</a>			x	
<a href="#">Audi</a>				x
<a href="#">BMW</a>				x

The blue marked area refers to websites which all display the found dealers on an interactive map, offers links to the dealer websites (if the dealer operates one), and a route planning service from a specifiable address to a particular dealer is possible. The pink marked area refers to websites which offer the same functions whereas contrary to the blue marked websites the dealers that were found in the search are displayed on a static map.

The lilac marked area refers to websites which offer route planning service as well but do not provide a link to dealer websites, which is the point of difference to the prior groups. The last group (marked dark-lilac) separates from the other group as a route planning is not possible. Surprisingly, premium brands such as Audi, BMW, and Mini are in that group.

### 5.1.3 Newsletter

As could be seen from table 5 newsletter is used by all car brands except Honda. In the following, the newsletter of each car brand will be analyzed from an online marketing perspective – specifically it will be analyzed which personal information a user must reveal when subscribing to a newsletter (see table 9):

TABLE 9. Quantitative analysis.

Brand	full name	email adress	postal address	Phone No.	model interested in	desired purchase time	currently owned car	Other data
Peugeot	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Bdate
Alfa Romeo	x	x	x	x		x	x	Bdate + leisure activities
Opel	x	x	x	x	x			
Chrysler	x	x	x	x	x			
Ford	x	x			x	x		
Nissan	x	x	x		x			
Saab	x	x	x	x		x	x	
Mazda	x	x	x	x	x			
BMW	x	x	x					
Chevrolet	x	x	x					
Kia	x	x	x					
Renault	x	x	x					
Toyota	x	x	x					
Volvo	x	x	x					
Volkswagen	x	x	x					bday
Audi	x	x						
Citroën	x	x						
Fiat	x	x						
Mercedes	x	x						
Mini	x	x						
Skoda	x	x						
Suzuki	x	x						
Honda								

In the above table, the newsletter subscriptions of the car brands have been sorted and grouped according to the amount of personal information that must be provided by the subscriber. From the marketing perspective each newsletter strategy has advantages and disadvantages. Clearly, Honda's strategy not to offer a newsletter provides no possibility to communicate to the consumer or promote new products and services.

In the lilac marked section only the full name and the email address is required when subscribing to a newsletter. While the hurdle rate to subscribe to a newsletter is low as not many personal information must be revealed this strategy does not provide the opportunity for targeted marketing. The car brands who use this strategy cannot determine why a user subscribed to a newsletter – whether he just wants general company information, whether he intends to purchase a new car or whether he already owns a car from the brand where he subscribes to the newsletter and maybe is interested in information about new accessories.

The same pro's and con's apply to the pink section of table 9 whereas here, the user can also provide his postal address when subscribing to the newsletter. This enlarges the range of marketing communication tools for the car brand, which can now promote its brand, products and services also e.g. through direct mailing campaigns. However, the main disadvantage remains: a targeted communication

is not possible as the motivation of the user to subscribe to a newsletter is not known.

The car brands in the dark-blue section goes a step further: besides the phone number as additional information this newsletter group is clearly targeted at consumers who intend to purchase a new car. Here, the car model the consumer is interested in, the time frame for a desired purchase and the currently owned car model shall be provided by the subscriber. This strategy has two advantages. First, it provides the possibility for targeted communication to consumers towards selling new cars. Second, if the consumer does not intend to buy a new car but subscribes to the newsletter because he already owns a car from the particular brand it provides the possibility to promote accessories for the car the consumer owns. Therefore, it may result in additional sales and can be aimed in building and increasing brand loyalty.

All those information with its pro's and con's are also requested in the light-blue section by Alfa Romeo and Peugeot. However, these two brands additionally ask for the birth date and in the case of Alfa Romeo for particular leisure activity interests. This later provides the option to communicate with consumers on an even more emotional level as the consumer reveals more details about his personality. The amount of information requested by Alfa Romeo and Peugeot embodies one major chance and a major risk. The risk is that the more information a user has to reveal the higher the risk is that the user is not willing to subscribe and therefore quits the subscription. This is then a lost chance to sell a car or accessories or promote the brand. The chance on the other side is to communicate to the consumer based on its actual interest in the company – whether it is a general interest in the brand or an intended purchase.

#### **5.1.4 Videos**

Many of the vehicle manufacturers are offering videos on their websites to promote their products. In most cases the videos are about new vehicles that are going to be launched or have recently been launched. By offering videos from

various topics the car manufacturer can increase the time consumers spend on their website. The hope is that the more time consumers spent on the website in combination with viewing emotional multimedia content, the better chances to establish an emotional bond between consumer and brand.

Honda, Skoda, Fiat and Toyota have posted the latest TV spots on their website. The TV spots are the same ones that are currently shown on TV and the purpose is purely to promote vehicle sales. Saab and Peugeot are offering a wider range of videos. For example, Saab has videos of the latest events and trade fairs they have participated in as well as videos of concept vehicles, which gives an interesting preview of the ideas that the manufacturer has for the future. Peugeot posts videos of different topics, such as design, environment, sports and actual news from the company. Vehicle promotion is of course an important point when planning a website and thinking how to attract customers.

A very good implementation to promote vehicle sales using videos is done by Volkswagen. When the user clicks on the link "Modelle" he is forwarded to the overview of car lines available from Volkswagen. Each car line is promoted with well-produced, informative and entertaining videos. Depending on the car model there is either a long promotional video available or, as can be seen from image 2, a topic-related video.

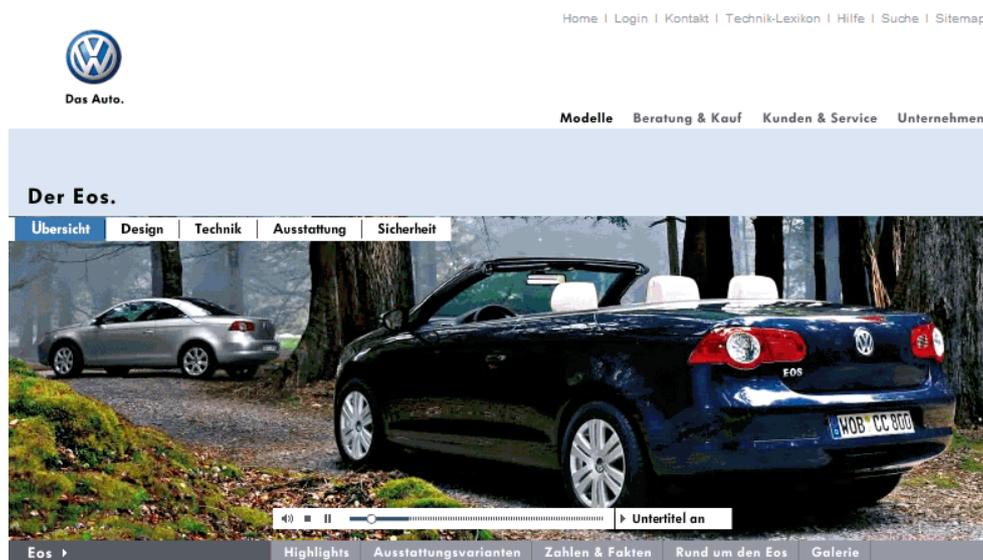


IMAGE 2. Vehicle promotion for Volkswagen Eos (Volkswagen video 2009)

Mercedes is following the same approach to push vehicle sales but goes a step further. Besides promoting each car model with emotional videos Mercedes promotes particularly accessories that are in need of more detailed explanation with video content (see image 3).

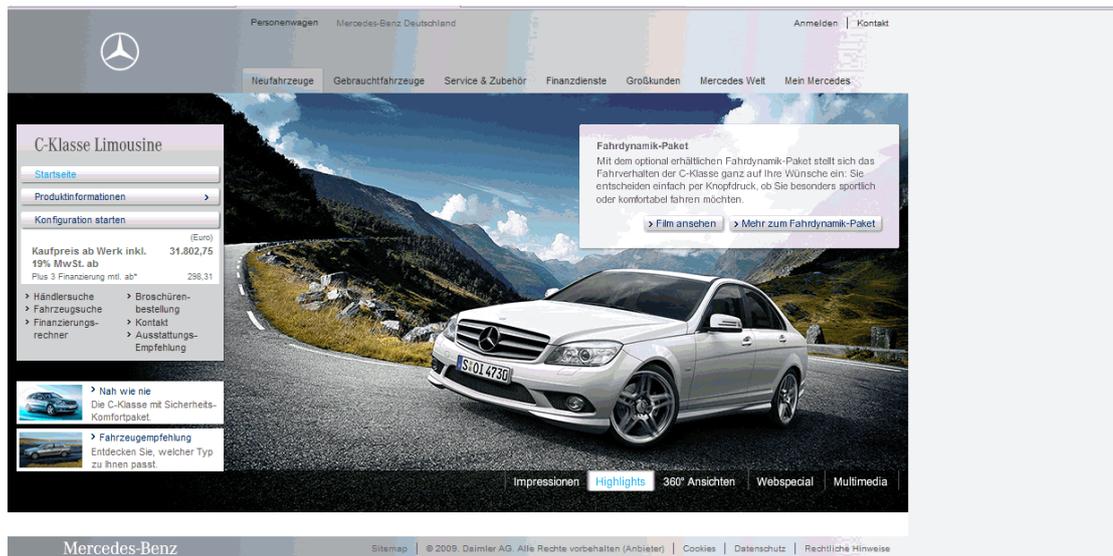


IMAGE 3. Mercedes accessory promotion with videos (Mercedes video accessory promotion)

### 5.1.5 PodCast

Podcasts are used for spreading out the new information from the car manufacturer to its customers. As table 6 shows Mercedes Benz, Opel, BMW, Alfa Romeo, Volvo and Saab are offering Podcast on their website. The podcast offered is either in audio or video format with the most common one being audio. Mercedes Benz offers podcast in three categories: The first category is IAA 2007 in video format. The second category is music where consumers get free music every two weeks in audio format while the third category provides video podcast for every carline of Mercedes. If the user wants to see or hear those podcast he has to subscribe them through iTunes. (Mercedes podcast, 2009)

Opel offers both a video and audio podcast while new podcasts are added at least every second week. The topics of the Opel podcasts are to promote the brand

emotionally, introduce new technologies, new cars or interesting travelling routes to consumers. Opel posts those podcasts in two areas of its website: first under the navigation menu “Entdecke Opel” / “discover Opel” and second in the MyOpel personal area while in each the same podcasts are posted. (Opel podcast, 2009)

Alfa Romeo provides video podcasts in three categories: technology, Alfa car lines, style, and exhibitions / road shows. All podcasts can be downloaded to the PC. However, every podcast is in Italian language. The German website forwards the user to the Italian website. This is either because Alfa wants to use the sound of Italian language for brand building purposes or they just have not been willing to customize the podcasts for different countries. (Alfa Romeo podcast, 2009)

Volvo offers only audio podcasts while the main topics are reports on vehicle safety (which is targeted at strengthening Volvo’s positioning for safe cars), motor shows, and introduction of new cars. Additionally, Volvo offers the possibilities to subscribe its Podcasts through iTunes or another software application called podcatcher, which must be installed on the PC of the user. (Volvo podcast, 2009)

BMW offers both audio and video podcasts. The audio podcast are of rather informative nature. Topics are interviews with executives, career opportunities, or new technologies. The video podcast area is the most advanced compared with the competitors that offer video podcasts. Users can chose a podcast from one of the following categories: cars, motorbikes, design, tradition, sport, event, technique, and BMW efficient dynamics. (BMW podcast 2009)

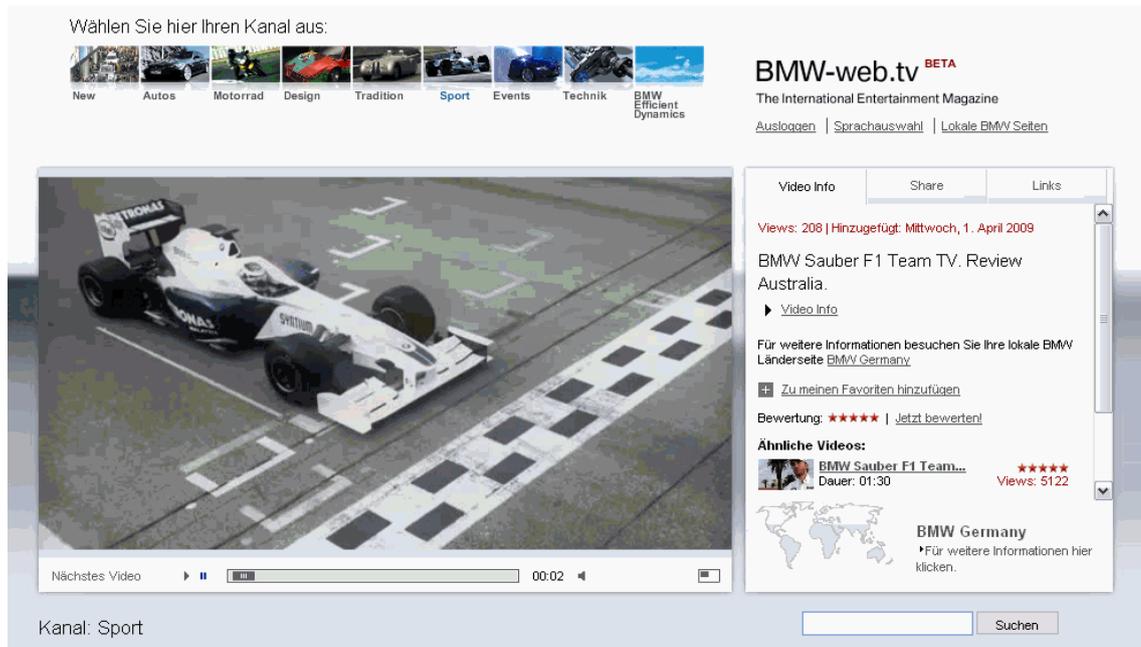


IMAGE 4. BMW Web TV (BMW podcast 2009)

To be able to view the videos from Saab website the customer must download a Saab widget. This program requires Adobe Air application to be installed to the computer before it can be used. After installing the needed software the customer needs to register to the widget and then finally the videos can be watched. It takes a bit of an effort to get started with the program and in the end it is nothing special, basically the same information could have been posted straight to the website without requiring any extra installations. From the video archive the customer can view videos that are related to the new vehicles and Saab winter camp testing in Jukkasjärvi, Sweden. Through the widget also the latest articles regarding Saab developments can be read. (Saab podcast 2009)

### 5.1.6 Personal area

From table 5 it could be seen that six car brands offer a personal area on their website. In the following these personal areas will be analyzed in detail.

## Personal area at BMW

The personal area at BMW is called “Mein BMW” while BMW offers distinct areas for actual customers and consumers who do not own a BMW. For customers BMW provides three different tools – “my BMW for BMW drivers”, “BMW connected drive”, and the “M Power World” platform. As the “M Power World” is rather a community platform it will be introduced in chapter 5.2.2.

The personal area “my BMW for BMW drivers” is exclusively for BMW owners. A vehicle identification number (VIN) must be provided when registering for this platform. Unfortunately, BMW does not provide any information on what are the benefits for consumers to register here. Besides the fact that at this point the analysis of this feature cannot go deeper it must be questioned why BMW does not provide any information about the advantages of registering. The only reasonable explanation at hand is that BMW might promote this area at their dealerships to customers.

The third option for consumers is to register for the program “BMW ConnectedDrive”. Direct information is also not available when consumers click on the “Mein BMW” button but can be found by clicking on the button “service & accessory”. This is not very user-friendly and might prevent consumers from registering at all. BMW promotes this feature as a personal assistant to the customer while this personal area consists of the three services “BMW Assist”, “BMW Online”, and “BMW TeleServices”.

“BMW Assist” connects the car via the navigation system or cellular phones with the BMW service headquarter. In an accident the car location is automatically sent to the service headquarter which then takes action to help the customer. It also functions as a traffic management system warning about traffic jams. Additionally the customer can request all kinds of information such as addresses, tips for sightseeing onto his board monitor. “BMW Online” is a mobile Internet portal installed in the car, which sends the actual car location via GPS to the online portal. The advantage is that the customer can receive information around the location where he is located currently – no matter where.

With “BMW TeleServices” the board computer of the car analyses the car data and as soon as a regular car inspection interval gets close a message to the service centre is sent. The advantage for the customer is that he or she does not need to worry that he misses an inspection interval. The cost of the total service “BMW ConnectedDrive” depend on the navigation system the customer has purchase along with a new BMW. Depending on the system the service itself is for free between 6 and 36 months (BMW “ConnectedDrive”, 2009).

The last personal area BMW provides is targeted at consumers who are generally interested in BMW but do not own one. This personal area is branded as “BMW Impulse”. When registering the consumer can specify in which car line he is interested in. Additionally, consumers can specify if they want to receive further information about the BMW brand by selecting one or more of the following categories:

1. Company, culture and events
2. BMW bank / wealth management
3. BMW lifestyle products
4. BMW sports (Golfing, Sailing, Tennis)
5. Innovation and technique
6. BMW world
7. BMW motorbike and BMW Sauber F1 (formula1)

This approach is a good strategy by BMW to increase brand involvement and excitement for the BMW brand and eventually motivate the consumer to a car purchase. It provides the opportunity for targeted communication and interaction with the consumer based on its actual interest. (BMW Impulse 2009)

### **Personal area at Mercedes**

The registration data that are required are the full name, email, postal address, phone number, and the birth date. An opt-out is possible in the registration process where the consumer can specify if he wants to receive phone calls from Mercedes.

The personal area consists of four categories. The first category “my Mercedes world” provides informative and entertaining content around the Mercedes brand. Features are access to an online magazine, the history of the Mercedes brand, an online game that educates and entertains about Mercedes’ current and past cars, a photo album, and recommendations for road trips to interesting locations.

The second category “cars” is targeted at consumers who plan to purchase a new Mercedes. It links to the car configurator where the consumer can build his or her desired car. Unlike on the normal website configured cars can be saved and compared with each other. Additionally, the consumer can watch an image movie that shows how a new car is developed and produced.

The third category is named “service”. The services provided in that area are calculators for leasing and/or financing a new car, for warranty contracts, and insurance contracts. Another tool offered is an accessory configurator whereas this tool is not linked with the accessory online shop of Mercedes. Furthermore, a link to the merchandise online shop is provided as well as a toll-free phone number for Mercedes owners that can be called in emergencies or accidents. The fourth category consists purely of the integration of the “dealer search” feature in the personal area. (My Mercedes area 2009).

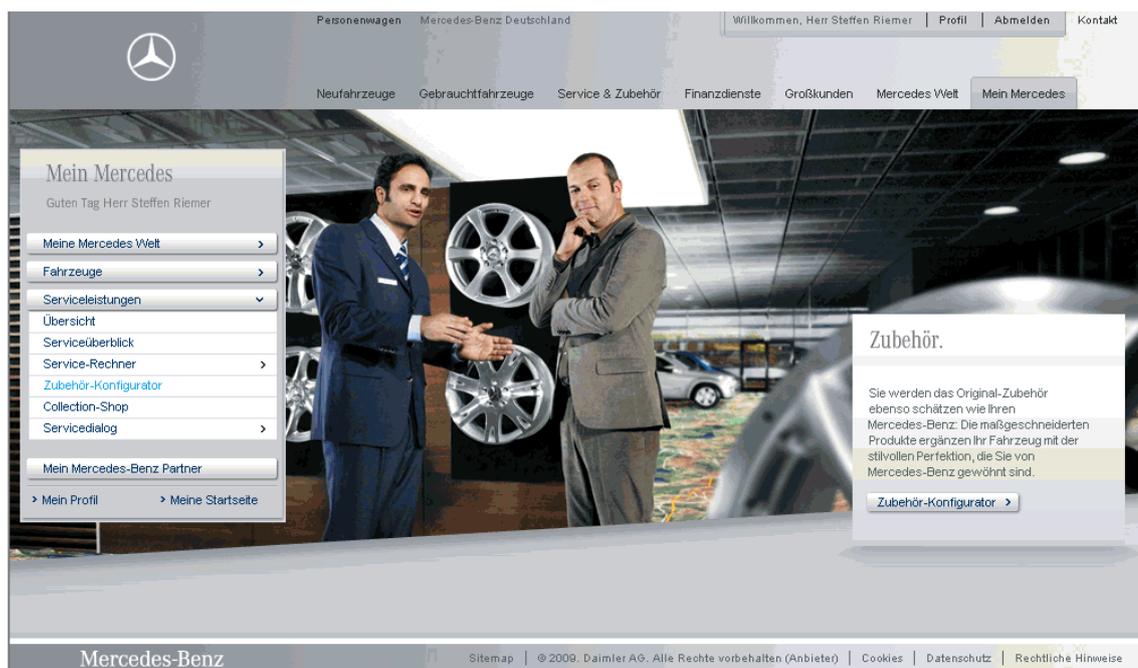


IMAGE 5: My Mercedes area 2009 (My Mercedes 2009)

## **Personal area at Audi**

The personal area at Audi is called “MyAudi”. The link on the homepage is placed on the bottom navigation menu and is not so easy to find. The landing page of the registration site is clearly designed. Positive is that Audi communicates to the consumer that the login for “MyAudi” can be used for all online content on the Audi website – contrary to BMW where users need separate accounts for different online sections of the website. Positive as well is that Audi communicates what users can expect inside the personal area – the listed advantages are:

- to save and compare configuration of different Audi's
- one user account for all content areas of Audi
- file search requests for used cars
- various organizers such as time planner, gasoline consumption management.

(MyAudi registration 2009)

The personal area consists of five sections. In the first one the user can see his personal profile. In the second a preferred dealer can be selected whereas it is not explained what benefits the consumer gets from this. The third section is provides the possibility to save and compare car configurations while in the forth section the consumer can search for used cars. Here, the user can save up to five search requests so that whenever a new used car matches the search request the consumer gets an email about this new used car. Additionally the user has the possibility to calculate financing and insurance rate for a particular used car. The last area is called “Mein Auto”. Here, the user can type the vehicle identification number of his Audi. Based on that number the actual car configuration is uploaded to the personal area. An argumentation why this is beneficial for the consumer is not provided. It can only be assumed that the consumer can use the features such as gasoline consumption then.

## **Personal area at Opel**

The personal area at Opel is named “MyOpel” and can be very easily found on the homepage. When the user clicks on the “MyOpel” link he is forwarded the landing page of “MyOpel”. Here, the user who wants to register has two options: option

one is registration without vehicle identification number (VIN) and option two is registration with VIN. On the same page the advantages that come with the registration for each option are listed (see table 10).

TABLE 10. Advantages of MyOpel personal area

Registration with VIN	Registration without VIN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 15% discount on all articles from online shop</li> <li>- receive latest offers</li> <li>- MyOpel newsletter</li> <li>- 1 year free subscription to Opel mail magazine</li> <li>- toll-free service hotline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 10% discount on all articles from online shop</li> <li>- Save car configurations</li> <li>- Opel brand newsletter</li> <li>- my Opel calendar</li> </ul>

Data that have to be provided in the registration are name and e-mail address. The entry page of the MyOpel personal area is well-designed. First, the user is welcomed with his name on two locations on the entry page. Second, Opel asks the user if he/she, since registration changed status and is now an Opel owner because if this is the case the consumer can upgrade his MyOpel status. By doing so, more benefits would be provided to the customer (see table 10). The navigation structure is also very easy to understand and well visible. Under the navigation point "Mein Opel Partner" Opel has integrated the standard dealer search. Under "Meine Konfigurationen" consumers with purchase intent for a new Opel can configure a car model, save these configurations and compare them with each other, which is not possible on the regular website. The navigation point "Betriebsanleitung" provides the possibility to download owners manual of all Opel cars that were build after the year 2006. At "Mein Kalender" the user gets information on special promotions of dealers while the categories are "new vehicles offers" and "service offers". While the web design and user-friendliness of this navigation point is rather poor compared with the rest of the MyOpel area the idea to offer special promotions, and promote services is good. The Opel shop is linked with the personal profile meaning that the database recognizes that the user is registered on MyOpel and the discount (table 10) is applied immediately. (MyOpel personal area 2009)

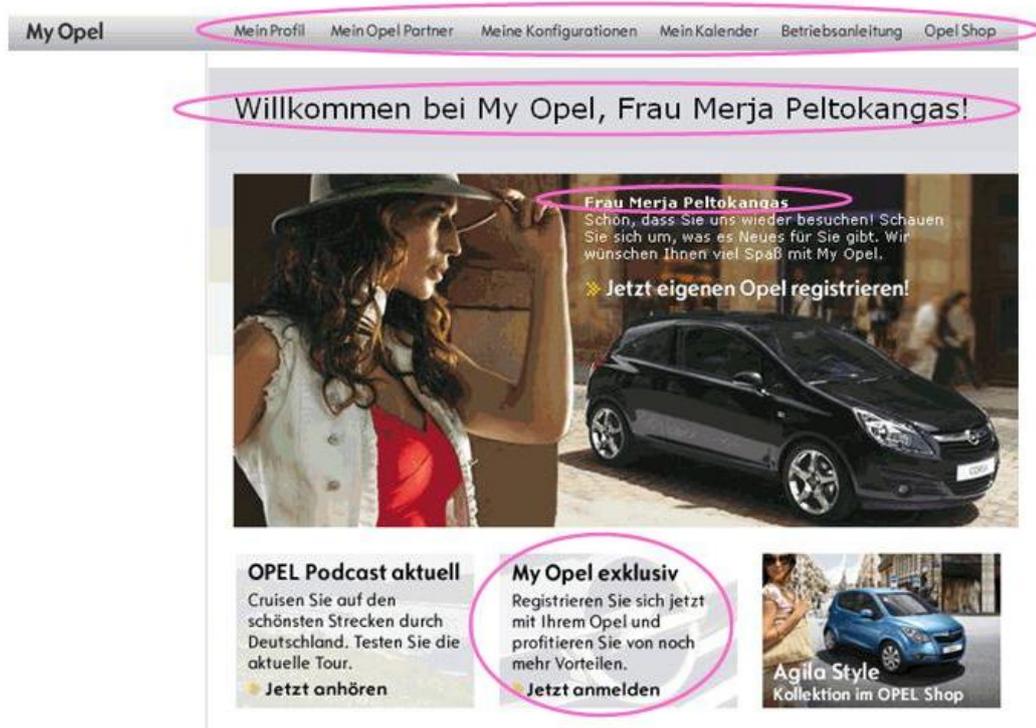


IMAGE 6. Entry page MyOpel personal area (MyOpel personal area 2009)

### Personal area at Mini

To register on Mini users either needs to own a Mini or they need to have the so called “Mini Excitement Card”, which is a credit card issued by Mini in cooperation with American Express. The benefits of this card are:

- no credit card fee at total purchases of at least 5.000 EUR per year
- reward bonus points for every purchase
- free membership on “Mein Mini”.

Although further advantages are claimed from owning this card those further advantages are not described specifically. This is not executed well as the consumers get no clear picture on the full list of advantages of a “Mein Mini” membership. (Mein Mini 2009)

## **Personal area at Volkswagen**

The personal area at Volkswagen is limited to Volkswagen owners only. The VIN code is required for the registration of a Volkswagen whereas the car must be build at least in the year 2000. Membership advantages of a registration are posted on the entry page of “My Volkswagen”. The advantages are:

- Customized accessory for the car that the user registered
- An Internet forum only for Volkswagen owners
- Services such as financing calculators, test reports of new cars, and the possibility to save car configurations. (My Volkswagen 2009)

### **5.1.7 RSS feed**

RSS feeds are a subscription service that delivers news from the publisher to the user whereas the user does not necessarily have to visit the website of the publisher. This feature is offered by six car brands – Audi, BMW, Peugeot, Mini, Opel, and Mazda.

Audi provides RSS feeds in three categories:

1. Audi news around new car models and services
2. Audi news around the company
3. Audi news – investor relations.

The RSS feeds can be subscribed through dynamic bookmarks. (Audi RSS feed 2009)

Dynamic bookmark is also the strategy of Mazda to send news to the user. Additionally, Mazda also provides the possibility for the user to forward news to friends by email, which is a nice marketing idea to accelerate word-of-mouth among users. (Mazda RSS feed 2009)

The RSS feed of Peugeot is limited to sending the user with new content of Peugeots WebTV and can be subscribed with dynamic bookmarks (Peugeot RSS feed 2009). The same is done by Mercedes where RSS feeds are only available for the WebTV section of the Mercedes website (Mercedes RSS feed 2009). Opel

follows the same approach whereas Opel provides feeds for new podcast content (Opel RSS feed 2009).

BMW provides two ways to subscribe RSS feeds for general BMW information and the BMW WebTV program. One option is subscribing news through dynamic bookmark and the other one is downloading a widget, which is installed to the symbol list of the users PC or laptop. (BMW RSS feed 2009)

The similar widget is used by Mini (see image 7) whereas contrary to BMW, Mini only provides feeds through that widget. (Mini RSS feed 2009)

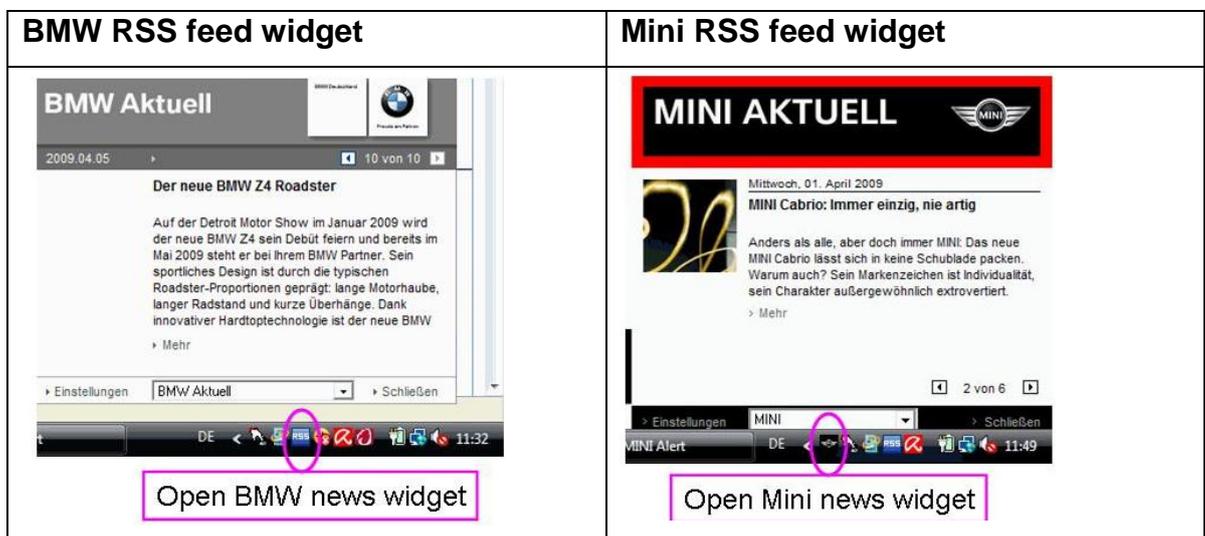


IMAGE 7. RSS news widgets of BMW and Mini (BMW RSS feed 2009 and Mini RSS feed 2009)

### 5.1.8 Web-TV

WebTV is only offered by four car brands. Among those are all three German premium car brands – Audi, BMW, and Mercedes. The fourth brand offering WebTV is the French car maker Peugeot.

## WebTV@Mercedes

The WebTV website at Mercedes is appealingly designed and the navigation is intuitive and user-friendly. The user welcomed by a female TV hosts (see graphic 06). When the user clicks on the “menu” button he is forwarded to the program detail website. Here, he can choose to see videos from the three main categories “Mercedes Benz car line”, “technology”, and “current topics”. The last category is further split into the following sub-categories “design”, “DTM”, “fashion”, “Formula1”, “Mixed Tape”, “Oldtimer”, and “TV-spots”. Furthermore, the Mercedes provides further features in its WebTV area. Users who operate their own website can integrate a certain video into their website. Here, BMW provides the programming code. Additionally, a link to a special video can be obtained in order to link from a user website to the chosen video. Videos can also be downloaded by the user. The last option is the possibility for the user to forward the link to a video via email to friends. Target of those offers is to accelerate word-of-mouth among users and consumers.

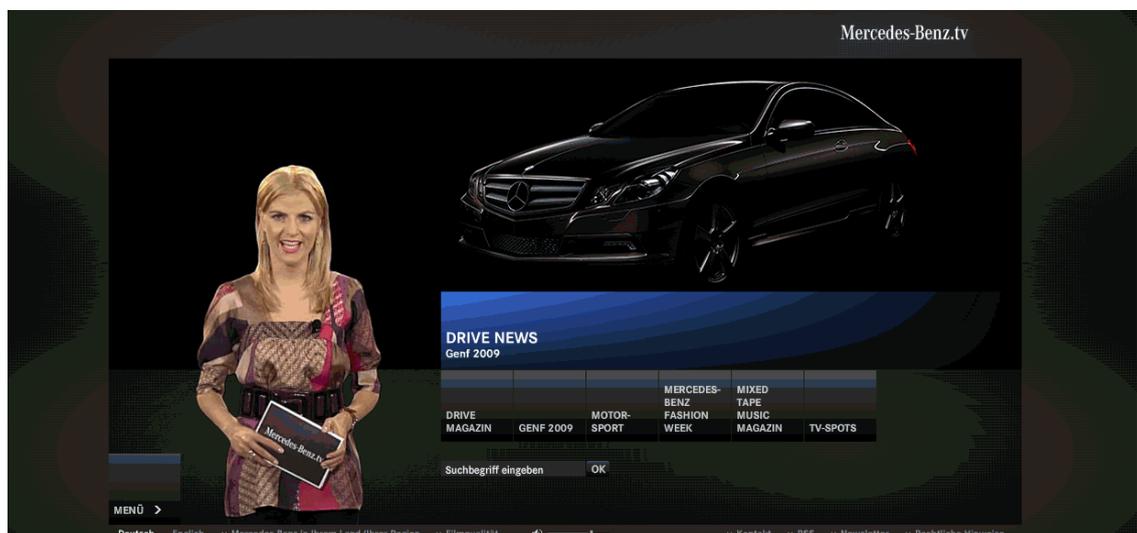


IMAGE 8. Mercedes WebTV (Mercedes WebTV 2009)

## WebTV@Peugeot

From all WebTV offers Peugeot offers the most intuitive and user-friendly designed WebTV program. When opening the WebTV website the user is

welcomed by the female WebTV host. The navigation menu / the TV categories are easy to find and clearly named (see image 9).



IMAGE 9. WebTV entry page of Peugeot (Peugeot WebTV 2009)

When clicking on a category the user can choose which video file he wants to see from that category (see image 10).

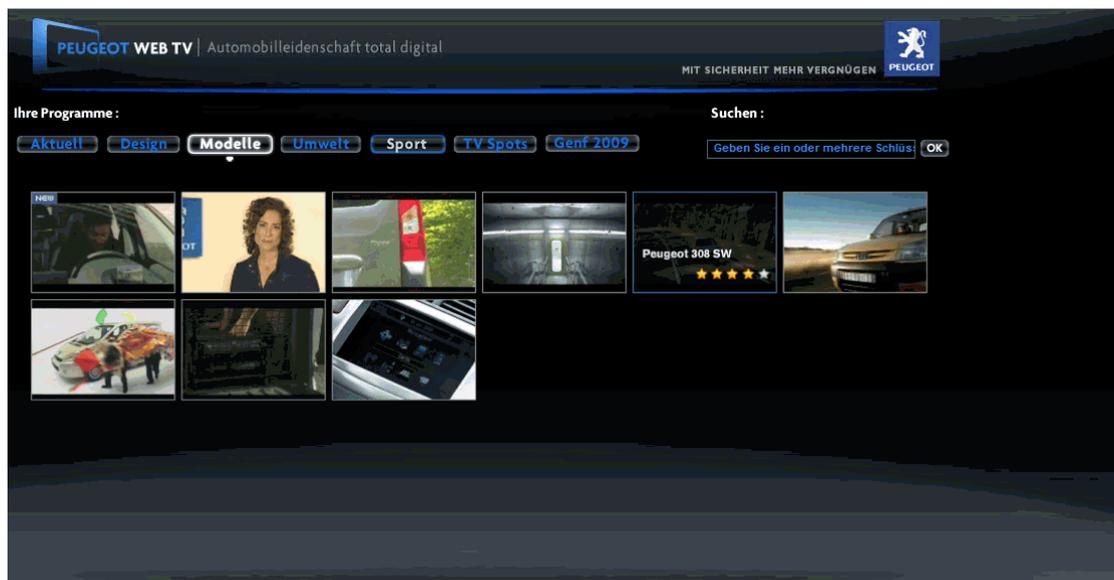


IMAGE 10: Peugeot WebTV category videos (Peugeot WebTV category videos 2009)

The WebTV programs of Audi and BMW will not be introduced further at this point because the user-friendliness is not executed as good as it is by Mercedes and Peugeot. Besides the fact that well-made multimedia content is very likely to build

brand image and increase brand loyalty all four car brands use a variety of tools to increase reach of their WebTV efforts by enabling word-of-mouth effects. Table 11 shows which tools are used by the car brands in order to spread the word about the multimedia content and increase usage of the WebTV offers. Should Mazda decide to introduce WebTV on its website it should include all of the features shown in table 11 as they are state-of-the-art and used by all of the competitors offering WebTV.

TABLE 11. WebTV features.

WebTV feature	BMW	Audi	Mercedes	Peugeot
Download video	YES	YES	YES	YES
Forward video by email	YES	YES	YES	YES
Implement code to own website	YES	YES	YES	YES
Copy video link to website	YES	YES	YES	YES
Rate video	YES	YES	YES	YES
RSS feed for new videos	YES	YES	YES	YES

### 5.1.9 Owners manual

In total four car manufactures are publishing owners' manuals on their websites. While Audi and Toyota provide simple PDF downloads Renault and Mercedes go a step further by providing interactive, animated owners manuals (see image 11).

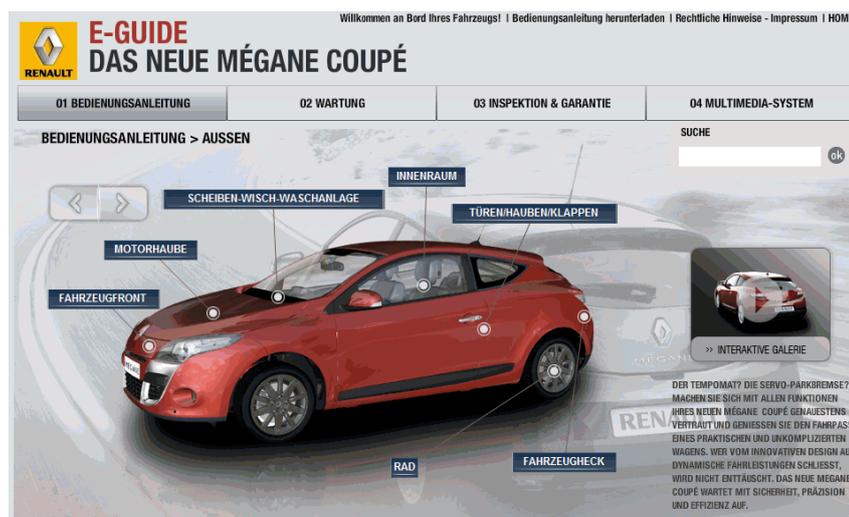


IMAGE 11. Renault interactive owners manual 2009 (Renault interactive owners manual 2009)

This approach fulfils two targets. First and obvious, it helps customers understanding their purchased car. Second, it also promotes the vehicle to potential buyers by promoting the car and its features and benefits in an emotional way.

### 5.1.10 E-service

E-service gives the customer the possibility to schedule service bookings directly to the preferred dealer through the car manufacturers' website. This service is only offered by BMW, Mercedes, and Opel. The information that the customer needs to provide includes the model name, year of manufacture, when the car can be dropped to the dealer and picked up and what kind of service is required. After sending the information the customer receives an email confirmation that the service booking was successful.

The most advanced e-service feature is offered by Mercedes. Here, the customer navigates to the e-service section of the Mercedes website (image 12). To book a service the customer first needs to select the dealer where he wants to get the car fixed. The second step is to type the VIN code which then loads the car settings and possible services that can be booked online. A further analysis of this service feature is not possible as a VIN code is not at hand to complete the ordering process.

e-service

Betriebsanleitungen

Rettungslitfad

Digitale Servicebericht

Telefonie & Multimedia

> Händlersuche > e-service

> Service & Zubehör > Kontakt

Shop

ExpressService

ohne Voranmeldung. Zum günstigen Festpreis.

Unser neuer Serwwwice.  
Mercedes-Benz e-service.



Der e-service von Mercedes-Benz für Pkw und Transporter ist einfach ideal für alle, die sich online über Service-Leistungen und deren Preise informieren wollen. Und wenn sie via Internet auch gleich Termine mit uns vereinbaren möchten: Unabhängig von Öffnungszeiten. Unabhängig von Ort und Zeit. Einfach dann, wenn es am besten in den persönlichen Zeitplan passt.

Ob Inspektion, Reifenwechsel, Öl-Service, oder, oder, oder: Der Mercedes-Benz e-service bietet eine umfangreiche Palette von Leistungen, die Sie einfach und problemlos bei uns buchen können. Zu Konditionen, die für den betreffenden

IMAGE 12: Mercedes e-service 2009 (Mercedes e-service 2009)

A more simple approach is made by Opel. Here, the customer fills out a simple online form to book or request a service appointment. Data that need to be filled out are the type of car, desired car drop and pick up date, and the kind of service desired by the customer. The services that can be booked online are limited to standard services such as oil or wheel change, air conditioning checks, inspections and a few other standardized service options. (Opel e-service 2009)

## 5.2 Community

Chapter 2.2.2 discussed what impact a functioning community can have on building a brand, strengthening brand loyalty or create additional sales. Additionally, the tools used to create an online community were introduced and their advantages and disadvantages were discussed. The following chapter analyses if and how car brands use those techniques in order to create online community on their website.

### 5.2.1 Quantitative analysis – community features

Table 12 shows the outcome of the quantitative analysis of the community section of the examined car brand.

TABLE 12. Quantitative analysis.

	Owners club	Forum	Chat room
<b>BMW</b>	YES	YES	NO
<b>Mazda</b>	YES	YES	NO
<b>Volkswagen</b>	YES	YES	NO
<b>Honda</b>	NO	YES	NO
<b>Mini</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Mercedes</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Audi</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Alfa Romeo</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Chevrolet</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Chrysler</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Citroën</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Fiat</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Ford</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Kia</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Nissan</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Opel</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Peugeot</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Renault</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Saab</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Skoda</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Suzuki</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Toyota</b>	NO	NO	NO
<b>Volvo</b>	NO	NO	NO

As done in the content part the features in the table have been sorted by moving the feature that is used the most by the car brand websites to the left and the car brand website that uses the most features is moved to the top.

Considering the fact that the German market size of new purchased cars amounted to 3.15 million in 2007 and 40 million cars owned by consumers at a total population of 82 million inhabitants it may look surprising that just a few car brands make use of community features as an element of their marketing mix. For example, owners clubs are only implemented in the online marketing mix of three car brands – BMW, Mazda, and Volkswagen. A forum is provided by only four car brands – BMW, Mazda, Volkswagen, and Honda while no car brand provides a chat room on their websites.

### **5.2.2 Qualitative analysis - owners club and forum**

Five of the car brands that have been investigated more closely in this thesis are also offering Owners Clubs for car owners. Some of them require owning a car before being able to register to the club. Some of them on the other side allow people to register to the club even if not owning a car.

#### **Mazda MX-5 owners club and forum**

An owners club and a forum is offered by Mazda to all consumers who are interested in this vehicle. In Mazda's case registration is not needed to be able to visit the club. The club area contains a MX-5 forum, where people can post their questions, answers or just discuss various topics regarding MX-5. In the club area a separate menu point is devoted to the history of MX-5. Further features offered on the website are Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), fun features such as monthly polls, wall paper, a calendar, brochures and videos, a directory of Mazda MX-5 fan clubs as well as latest news about new developments around Mazda MX-5. As of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 more than 7.800 users have registered on the Mazda MX-5 community website (image 13).

Home **Features** The MX-5 Story Me & my MX-5 Forum Clubs Gallery & Downloads  
 Current Archive

**Current features**



**2009 Mazda MX-5 facelift photo gallery**

The latest preview pictures of the 2009 Mazda MX-5 facelift.



**2009 Mazda MX-5 facelift**

What's changed with the Mazda MX-5 facelift? Judging by the new front fascia and streamlined silhouette, your favourite roadster has been brought bang up-to-date.



**Buying a used sports car**

Classic looks and heart-racing performance have made the Mazda MX-5 the world's best-selling roadster. And its excellent maintenance record means it's also a fantastic second-hand option.

**The Buzz on the forum**

**Latest topic: 0 Replies:**

 **Where exactly is the drain hole?**

I've had a good look on the forum about the hood well drain ....

**Have your say**

**Hottest topic: 272 Replies:**

 **iPods/MP3 Players and the MKIII: The Definitive Guide**

I've seen a lot of posts on here talking about installing an....

**Have your say**

**Who is Online**

There are **16** of **7,832** member(s) online - [Babyface](#), [Bigdave](#), [Biochemical\\_Keith](#), [Cazcat](#), [collincn](#), [dgs](#), [dnamurphy](#), [GlasgowDave](#), [hat](#), [jamie86](#), [jimandrich](#), [joey](#), [mpzross](#), [sonystu](#), [The\\_Wolfmeister](#), [yiannisc](#)  
**43** guest(s) online.

[Go to the forum](#) >

IMAGE 13. Mazda MX-5 community website (Mazda MX-5 community 2009)

## Volkswagen owners club

To join the Volkswagen club area the consumer must own a Volkswagen. To become a club member the user can fill a membership request on the club website where he needs to provide the VIN code of his car as well as the name of his preferred dealer. There is a wide range of membership advantages / benefits. The main benefits are:

- club service center that books event tickets for any event for the members,
- print club magazine which is issued four times per year,
- club holiday bookings at [www.club-reisen24.de](http://www.club-reisen24.de) with a lowest price guarantee whereas money will be refunded if the user finds the same offer cheaper anywhere else,
- a membership card that gives loyalty points for every transaction the user has made with the card while loyalty points can be redeemed for example at the dealer when purchasing a new car, accessories or booking a service appointment,
- loyalty points can also be redeemed at well-known German online shops that cooperate with the Volkswagen owners club,
- toll-free club service centre phone number and many more benefits.

Volkswagen has invested a lot of energy into creating an owners club with a wide range of attractive benefits to its customers. (Volkswagen owners club 2009). Even though user numbers are not available it can be assumed that Volkswagen is successful establishing strong bonds with existing customers through that club.

### **BMW M-power owners club**

BMW offers a Club for BMW M Power vehicle owners. To join this club the VIN code must be provided to register. BMW on one side aims at strengthening the bond to its M-power customer base. Features provided inside the membership area are:

- the possibility to ask questions directly to M-power engineers, designers and other specialists inside BMW
- a club magazine
- an online forum
- access to exclusive events such as meet and greets with Nick Heidfeld, the Formula One driver of BMW, or with M-power designers and engineers at race tracks where new models can be test driven. (BMW M-Power owners club 2009)

Especially from the exclusive events BMW is offering to its club members it can be seen how important strengthening and building brand loyalty is to BMW – particularly with regards to its top-premium M-power car range.

### **Honda forum**

The Honda forum has more than 3.300 registered users. The forum is a classic Internet forum which can be found on many other Internet websites as well. It is split into two main categories – one forum is for Honda motorbike fans and the other forum is targeted at Honda car fans. In each category three general topics are provided. Offering and selling cars or motorbikes in the forum as two topics and general discussions around Honda cars or motorbike as the third topic. The forum is moderated which means that an administrator watches that the forum guidelines are kept by all forum users. (Image 14)



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**Diskussion Auto**

Moderatoren: Keine  
 Benutzer in diesem Forum: Keine  
**Alle Themen als gelesen markieren**

Gehe zu Seite [1](#), [2](#) [Weiter](#)

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 themas

Honda Forum Foren-Übersicht » Diskussion Auto

Themen	Antworten	Autor	Aufrufe	Letzter Beitrag
<a href="#">Aus Honda wird „Brawn racing“</a>	2	TIGA	55	Sa März 07, 2009 10:22 Rai
<a href="#">Fukui muss gehen.</a> [ <a href="#">D</a> Gehe zu Seite: <a href="#">1</a> , <a href="#">2</a> ]	20	TIGA	388	Mo März 02, 2009 22:16 Bachatero
<a href="#">Integra 1200</a> [ <a href="#">D</a> Gehe zu Seite: <a href="#">1</a> , <a href="#">2</a> ]	26	Rai	1222	Mo März 02, 2009 16:38 Legend35
<a href="#">Aus für den S2000!</a>	18	TIGA	792	Sa Feb 28, 2009 11:59 Legend35
<a href="#">Honda Car Classics 2009</a>	5	peppi	288	Fr Feb 20, 2009 21:43 peppi
<a href="#">Honda Formel 1 News!</a> [ <a href="#">D</a> Gehe zu Seite: <a href="#">1</a> , <a href="#">2</a> , <a href="#">3</a> , <a href="#">4</a> ]	66	TIGA	5432	Mo Feb 16, 2009 19:25 Civicus1
<a href="#">180 PS Diesel Accord kommt!</a>	11	TIGA	409	Sa Feb 14, 2009 10:35 Rai
<a href="#">Feiertagslektüre</a>	7	schreibberling	512	Do Feb 12, 2009 01:49 Schmudi
<a href="#">Die Lachnummer unter den Auto News/ Tests!</a>	2	TIGA	354	Do Feb 12, 2009 01:37 Schmudi
<a href="#">Honda Accord Diesel Automatik 2,2 I-DTEC</a>	8	Schmudi	386	Do Feb 12, 2009 01:32 Schmudi

IMAGE 14. Honda forum 2009 (Honda2009 – forum)

As can be seen owners clubs are focusing to offer a bit more to the car owners than just the basic service. They also focus more on the leisure part and support people who own similar vehicles to bond and share their information about the vehicle. Owners clubs are also a good way to keep the vehicle owners loyal to the brand. When they bond with other vehicle owners and share thought within each others they are less likely to change the car brand when buying a new vehicle. For example in the Mazda forum there is a part where fellow drivers and Mazda experts can share their tips and tricks for MX-5. From that part owners get useful information how to keep their vehicle in top condition. So could be stated that it doesn't necessarily take much effort to keep the vehicle owners satisfied and once they are satisfied it is much more likely that their next vehicle will be from the same brand.

### 5.3 Commerce

The analysis of the electronic commerce activities of the examined car manufacturers is limited to the presentation / marketing of car accessories. Other electronic commerce activities such as online merchandising sales will not be explored as this would explode the scope of this thesis.

### 5.3.1 General quantitative analysis

Table 13 shows the outcome of the quantitative analysis of the content section of the examined car brands.

TABLE 13. Quantitative analysis.

Question: How are accessories promoted on the websites of the car brands?

Option 1:	Online shop	OS
Option 2:	Online catalogue including prices	CiP
Option 3:	Online catalogue without prices	CwoP
Option 4:	PDF lists	PDF
Option 5:	no accessory information	NO

	Germany	UK	France	Ireland	Finland
Volkswagen	OS	CiP	CiP	CiP	PDF
Mercedes	OS	CiP	CiP	NO	CwoP
Citroën	CiP	CiP	NO	PDF	NO
Opel	CiP	OS	NO	OS	NO
Audi	CiP	CiP	PDF	CwoP	NO
Mini	CiP	CiP	CwoP	NO	CwoP
Nissan	CiP	CiP	CiP	CiP	CiP
Peugeot	CiP	CiP	CiP	CiP	NO
Renault	CiP	CiP	CiP	CwoP	PDF
Saab	CiP	CwoP	CiP	PDF	CwoP
Fiat	CiP	CiP	CwoP	CiP	NO
Suzuki	CiP	CiP	NO	CwoP	NO
Mazda	CiP	CiP	CiP	CiP	PDF
Ford	CiP	PDF	PDF	PDF	PDF
Honda	CiP	NO	NO	NO	NO
Toyota	CiP	CwoP	NO	CwoP	NO
Alfa Romeo	CwoP	NO	PDF	NO	NO
BMW	CwoP	CwoP	NO	CwoP	NO
Volvo	CwoP	CwoP	NO	NO	CwoP
Skoda	PDF	CiP	CiP	PDF	PDF
Kia	NO	CiP	NO	NO	NO
Chevrolet	NO	CiP	CiP	NO	PDF
Chrysler	NO	NO	CwoP	NO	NO

As can be seen from a first look differences between countries and car manufacturers are big. To get a further broader picture all possible ways accessories are presented by the car manufacturers, are aggregated per country in table 14. This provides a more comprehensive look on the usage of the various possibilities.

TABLE 14. Usage of online accessory presentation.

Shop Category	Total usage	Germany	UK	France	Ireland	Finland
4 x OS	4	8,7 %	4,4 %	0,0 %	4,4 %	0,0 %
43 x CiP	43	60,9 %	60,9%	39,2 %	21,7 %	4,4 %
19 x CwoP	19	13,0 %	17,4 %	13,0 %	21,7 %	17,4 %
15 x PDF	15	4,4 %	4,4 %	13,0 %	17,4 %	26,1 %
34 x NO	34	13,0 %	13,0 %	34,8 %	34,8 %	52,2 %
115 = TOTAL	115	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

The first eye-catching issue from table 14 is that the bigger the population of the analyzed country, the more accessory information is presented on the car manufacturer websites. For Germany with a population of around 82 million inhabitants, around 70% of car manufacturers present their accessory assortment either in an online shop or a catalogue with prices. In Finland with a population of around 5 million inhabitants 75% of car manufacturers are either offering no accessory information or provide only PDF lists which could be due to the small market size and the relatively high costs of maintaining an online shop.

At the same time, both markets in Germany and in the UK are comparable with regards to the structure of the accessory presentation. The most used way to present accessories is a catalogue with prices, offered by 61% of car manufacturers (14 out of 23) in both the UK and in Germany. 13% of manufacturers (3 out of 23) do not provide any kind of accessory information. For Germany, these are Kia, Chevrolet, and Chrysler – all with a presumably low market share and low sales volume. Online shops are only offered by Volkswagen and Mercedes in Germany, while both manufacturers in the UK do not have online shops but catalogues with prices.

France, Ireland and Finland all have a different structure with regards to the presentation of accessories. In France none of the car manufacturers offers an online shop. Online catalogue with prices is the most common used way to present accessories (39%). Online catalogue without prices and PDF are used as often (13%) and surprisingly 35% of car manufacturers do not offer any kind of accessory information on their French websites. In Ireland the situation is undifferentiated. Here, Opel is the only car manufacturer who promotes its accessories with an online shop. Catalogues with and without prices are both equally presented (21.7%). PDF download can be found from 17.4% of the websites and 35% of the car manufacturer websites are without accessory information.

When taking a closer look at the situation in Finland it can be clearly seen that car manufacturers are not putting so much effort on smaller markets. The share in Finnish market is totally different than all the other markets investigated. None of

the car manufacturers promotes its accessories with an online shop and minority of them are even offering online catalogue with prices (4.5%) in Finland. Online catalogue without prices is not that well presented either with its 17.4% share while PDF download is the most used way to present accessories (26.1%). However, the majority of the car manufacturers (52.2%) do not offer any accessory information in Finland. This might be due to the fact that the market size of the Finish accessory market is just too small to justify the cost of setting up and managing an online shop or even online catalogues.

### **5.3.2 Degree of standardization in Europe per car manufacturer**

From table 13 it can be seen that Nissan is the only car manufacturer with a consistent standardized accessory presentation strategy (catalogue with prices) in the analyzed European countries. Mazda is the second placed car brand when it comes to a consistent approach to market accessories in the analyzed European markets. In the bigger markets – Germany, France, UK, and Ireland Mazda offers catalogues with prices while in Finland Mazda chose to present their accessories in PDF format. Ford also has a quite standardized but not sophisticated approach offering PDF downloads in France, UK, Ireland and Finland and a catalogue with prices in Germany. A similar approach is made by Honda whereas Honda chose not to offer any accessory information in those countries where Ford at least provides PDF lists. Volkswagen seems to have a prioritized accessory marketing and sales approach. In its home market Germany, Volkswagen markets its accessories with an online shop while in the other bigger markets UK, France and Ireland, Volkswagen chose catalogue with prices to present its accessories while in Finland only PDF lists are offered.

Surprisingly in the first place is also that BMW is either not promoting its accessories at all (in France and Finland) or chose to only present its accessories in an online catalogue without prices. It can be questioned why BMW does not publish its accessory prices online. One theory could be that they do not do it to avoid competitors being able to do price comparison. Another theory could be that dealers do not wish prices to be published because they want to decide on

themselves how to price accessories and see the publishing of prices online as a threat to their own business.

For all the remaining car manufacturers the hypothesis can be formed that their approach to promoting their accessories online depends on the importance of each market and the market share they have in each particular market.

### **5.3.3 Qualitative analysis of online shops**

When looking at the manufacturers online shops it can be seen that they are all done in a very professional way. Currently only Mercedes Benz, Opel and Volkswagen are offering online shops but it can be predicted that they are coming more popular in the future as the customers get used to using them and notice that it is a very convenient way of purchasing accessories.

When visiting the Mercedes Benz online shop it can be immediately seen that the site is very easy to navigate and all the information is available and possible to find with just a few mouse clicks away. They are presenting all the car models and model years clearly and from there a customer can choose his preferred carline and then browse through the accessories. As the accessories are presented per carline, it is very convenient to see which accessories would fit and are available for the chosen model. Product information is also clearly described and pricing information shows that the price includes VAT so the customer can immediately see the complete price. Top selling accessories are also shown, so it is easy to see which products are popular at the time being. Another good point is that the search box is visible all the time, so in case the customer can't find what he is searching for immediately he can just type in the name of the accessory and then it is easily founded.

If there is something negative to mention about Mercedes Benz online shop it is the fact that the online shop is only half of a page size and this makes it hard to read the text sometimes. Volkswagen online shop has many similar positive sides as the Mercedes Benz one (this can be seen from the table 15). Categories are clearly shown on the start page, and they have been categorized through the

carline and model year. All the accessories also have a clear image and more detailed information can be found by clicking the accessory. Accessories are also possible to be added on a wish list and then the customer can visit the online shop later and see the saved favourite accessories he was interested in. On the attachment 7,2 it is shown how the accessories are promoted on the Volkswagen online shop.

Opel also shows top selling accessories on its online shop and even top viewed accessories are visible. They also have added the information regarding latest products that have been added to the online shop. This makes it easy for the customer to see what is newly available. Product search is made possible with a drop down menu; this is also an advantage as the customer doesn't necessarily need to remember the name of the product and is still able to search for it. The online shop is very colourful and this makes it look a bit messy, but with all the other positive sides this is just a minor thing that caught the attention when visiting the online shop. The interesting point about the Opel online shop is that they are delivering accessories around Europe, but inside the United Kingdom the delivery is free of charge for orders worth more than £25.

When looking at the overall situation it is clear that car manufacturers who have added an online shop to their website have put a lot of effort on this. All the information is available in a customer friendly way. Accessories are shown per carline and category and customer can't make the mistake of ordering wrong kind of accessories that wouldn't fit to his car. Shopping basket is also visible all the time, so the customer can see the total value of his planned purchase. The negative point is that the delivery costs are not shown, so the end price is not clear to the customer until in the end when finalizing the order. In the United Kingdom Vauxhall has solved this problem easily while delivering orders worth more than £25 free of charge. In Germany this is not the case and this would be an improvement that could be taken into consideration when thinking how to improve the customer satisfaction in the future. Also in the case when accessories need to be fitted into the vehicle the customer should have the possibility to book a service appointment from the dealer via the website. The key to make an online shop attractive is to provide as much information of the products and ways of delivery as

possible, so that the customer can receive all the information immediately and is not forced to contact the car manufacturer many times with unclear points. When these things are solved it is a lot easier to attract customers and make them more familiar with online shopping, even with accessories which need in many cases to be installed to a vehicle by a dealer.

TABLE 15. Online Shop comparison

	Mercedes Benz	Volkswagen	Opel Ireland (Vauxhall UK)
+	Easy to navigate on the page	Categories clearly shown on the first page	Special Offers shown on the first page
	All vehicle models available	Accessories for each model and baureihe	Top Viewed Products
	Accessories per category for each model	High lights presented for each model	Top Sellers
	Also new offers for each model mentioned	Shopping basket visible all the time	Free Delivery for UK orders over £25
	Top Seller products shown	Images above each category name make those more visible	Shopping Cart visible all the time
	Service also mentioned	Prices incl. VAT	Products per category
	Information about the product and to which vehicles it fits	Search box visible	Latest products mentioned
	Search box visible all the time	Accessories possible to add to "wishlist"	Product search with drop down menu, makes it easier to search
	Prices include VAT	Under more info part, specise description about the accessory and to which model it fits	Also advanced search
	Phone Number for Accessory team available for questions		
Shopping basket shows also the amount of delivery costs			
-	Page is only "half", annoying...	First it was hard to find the accessory section for carlines	Too many colours on the page
	Categories hard to see from upper part of the page (Found under Accessories)	After opening one category, hard to see the others	

## **6 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

The conclusions drawn from the benchmarking analysis will be made in two steps. First, general conclusions and recommendations will be drawn for specific features – based on a comparison of the specific Mazda website feature in comparison with the best-in-class feature. In the second part, an integrated online marketing approach will be introduced and suggested.

### **6.1. General recommendations**

#### **Dealer search**

When looking at table 6 it can be seen that the dealer search feature is already well executed. Search criteria such as distance search and the possibility to search for dealers that offer used cars are not available yet from Mazda. As both search criteria would add convenience to users it is recommended to add these two features to the search criteria. The search result page (see table 7) is also well executed on Mazda's website. One feature that could be improved is to switch from providing a static map to an interactive map from which the user can directly click on a dealer in order to get more information such as a link to the dealer website, route planning, and contact information.

#### **Newsletter**

Table 9 shows what kind of information users must provide when registering for a newsletter whereas it must be said that most of the car manufacturers focus on acquiring information from consumers who are interested in purchasing a new car. When looking at the target of promoting vehicle sales through newsletter Mazda is doing a good job. However, when comparing the newsletter registration at Mazda with the best in class newsletter registration forms further information could be requested from the consumer. To date, the user must specify which Mazda car model he would like to buy. The minimum additional information that may be requested in the registration form could be to specify the time of a desired

purchase so that marketing efforts beyond sending a newsletter such as tele-marketing or direct mail (if approved by the consumer) can be improved time-wise.

### **Video**

With regards to videos there is no must-do recommendation what Mazda could improve. However, the approach of Volkswagen to promote vehicle sales of its Volkswagen Eos with online videos can be a powerful tool to increase chance for increased vehicle sales or increased interest in booking at least a test drive appointment at a dealer. Here, Volkswagen provides videos in the categories design, technique, safety, and equipment that are produced like an advertisement but run longer than the usual 30second spots. This provides the chance to promote the car in much greater depth than possible with pure TV spots or pure text and images. Besides these advantages of using online videos to promote a vehicle Mazda's approach of a 3D animated car model that can be viewed from various perspectives is also a good approach to use multimedia features for promoting vehicles.

### **Podcast and WebTV**

With regards to podcast and WebTV there is no recommendation whether to introduce WebTV on Mazda's websites. Regarding WebTV this is simply because it seems logic that the production of content is relatively complex both with regards to the amount of content and with regards to the quality of the content. What can be said is that it is rather counterproductive to have a poorly executed WebTV program with small amount of actual content. The same applies to podcast. The most important question which cannot be answered in this thesis is: to what extend would features such as WebTV or podcast help Mazda in achieving its company or brand goals?

## **RSS feed**

This feature is already offered by Mazda. Up to now the user has had the possibility to stay updated about Mazda news through a dynamic bookmark. The RSS feed feature offered by BMW and Mini is a nice idea as well as the widgets are installed to the tool bar on the users PC or laptop. By doing this the user has not just a very convenient way to stay updated about news of his preferred car brand but the brand is also constantly visible for the user through the little icon in the tool bar.

## **Owners manual**

This feature is currently not offered by Mazda. In chapter 5.1.9 Renault's approach to publishing owners manual was introduced. This approach could provide two possibilities to Mazda. First, customer satisfaction may be further increased by offering a playful approach to get to know the new purchased car with such an interactive tool. Second, new potential customers who use such a tool may be further convinced about buying a new Mazda by having seen the car in such an interactive tool.

## **Accessory online shop**

Accessory Online shop is not offered by Mazda yet. But in general it is recommended to offer this on Mazda website as well. First of all as it's another opportunity to increase turnover and generate additional sales. Additionally the accessory online shop will be an important part of owners club. It is also needed in order to create an owners club with wide range of benefits to customers (see chapter 6.2.2).

Besides Mercedes, Opel and Volkswagen already have well executed online shops. The only feature that was not found from any of those online shops is the possibility for the customer to type in his VIN code and then see the accessories that are available for a certain car model.

## **6.2 Integrated online marketing approach**

In the following an integrated online marketing approach for Mazda will be introduced that aims at strengthening and building brand loyalty as well as providing a strategic framework for a successful e-commerce strategy. The underlying foundation of the recommendation is the establishment of a personal area / an owners club serving two basic target audiences:

Target audience 1: consumers who do not own a Mazda car but are a fan and likely to buy a new Mazda

Target audience 2: actual customers who already own a Mazda. As it is quite obvious each of the segments has different needs and requires a different marketing approach.

Therefore the recommendation is as follows:

1. Create a personal area for consumers who do not own a Mazda but are willing or interested in buying one (target audience 1).
2. Create an owners club devoted to customers who own a Mazda already (target audience 2).

The primary goal of creating a personal area for target audience 1 is to motivate consumers to register for the personal area in order to build a database with potential new customers. Primary goals of creating an owners club are to build and strengthen brand loyalty as well as to generate sales in categories such as accessories, merchandise, or service / inspections.

Before both tools, with its target audience specific features, are introduced some general recommendations have to be made in advance. These recommendations are directed at topics that apply to both tools – the personal area and the owners club. First, both member areas can/should be available under the same link, which

could be named “MyMazda”. Second, the entry page should list all advantages of a membership for either of the clubs very clearly. This is important because this entry page is one of the key elements to attract significant numbers of registered users for both member areas. Even though this sounds logical the example of Mini’s owners club shows that not all competitors offering an owners club communicate the benefits of a membership in a clear way. In the following two chapters the characteristics and potential features of each membership area will be introduced.

### 6.2.1 Personal area for Mazda fans and potential customers

In the registration the consumer should reveal at least the following personal information:

TABLE16. Registration information at personal area

MUST information to be provided	CAN information to be provided
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- full name and gender</li> <li>- email</li> <li>- either full postal address or at least ZIP code</li> <li>- desired car model and desired time of purchase</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- car currently driven by consumer</li> <li>- phone number</li> </ul>

The full name and gender must be provided so that when the user logs in he can be welcomed with a personalized message like done in the personal area of Opel. The email address is of course required because Mazda must be able to communicate with the user. With regards to the place of living it can either be asked to provide the postal address or at least a ZIP code. While the full postal address could be voluntary information by the user the ZIP code should be requested as a must. By doing so, a dealer near the place of living of the consumer can be pre-selected by the database in the personal area. The postal address would of course be appreciated in order to be able to send direct mailings to the consumer. The desired car model and time of purchase should also be requested in order to further personalize the personal area for the user.

The following features could be integrated into the personal area whereas it should always be looked at that the content in the personal area is meaningful, informative and entertaining for the user so that he is motivated to register for it and use it.

#### **Feature 1: exclusive multimedia content**

Exclusively multimedia content could be the production of special videos that promote the car, the Mazda brand. Audio music podcast as offered by Mercedes could be another option.

#### **Feature 2: Car configuration - saveable and comparable**

This feature is offered by most of the other car brands that operate a personal area. Only in the personal area the consumer has the chance to save various car configurations and compare them with each other in order to find his preferred car model.

#### **Feature 3: services for potential car purchasers**

Features which are already available on the Mazda website such as the financing calculator could also be implemented to the personal area and be linked with the car configuration. An additional service could be an insurance rate calculator.

#### **Feature 4: MyMazda print magazine**

An exclusive printed magazine appearing a few times per year could another option to add value to the personal area.

#### **Feature 5: Discount for merchandise shop / exclusive merchandise**

A discount for Mazda's merchandise shop could be another option to motivate users to register for the personal area. However, it should be evaluated how much this brings Mazda as the primary target is to attract consumers with a purchase intend to register for the personal area and not users who are just searching for a discount. Another idea could be to offer certain merchandise articles that are exclusive to registered users. This may make offering a discount on merchandise not absolutely necessary.

**Feature 6: exclusive events**

Exclusive events could be another possibility to increase attractiveness of the personal area. Such events could be promotional activities organized by local dealers for potential customers. In this case, the actual value of the personal area becomes very clear. Consumers who registered to the personal area already demonstrated a keen interest in Mazda / buying a new Mazda. These addresses could prove very valuable for increasing vehicle sales.

As a conclusive comment it should be noticed that the suggested personal area features are not exclusive. This means that there is a lot of room for creativity how the personal area can be made more attractive for potential customers. The general target to create a database of potential customers should always be kept in mind when thinking about this tool. Additionally, once a potential customer who is registered to the personal area has purchased a new Mazda her or his membership status could or even should be upgraded to become a member of the owners club.

**6.2.2 Owners club for Mazda owners**

As was mentioned in chapter 6.2 the MyMazda owners club is restricted to customers who own a Mazda. Membership can be obtained in two ways. Either the customer already owns a Mazda for a long time and registers him- or herself to the owners club or the customer had been a member of the personal area and switched membership status through a recent car purchase. The registration information to be provided (see table 17) are very similar to the required information from the personal area except that the consumer has to provide the VIN code in the registration process.

TABLE 17. Registration information at owners club

MUST information to be provided	CAN information to be provided
- full name and gender - email - full postal address - car currently driven by customer (provided by VIN code)	- phone number

The actual content of the Mazda owners club can be very different to the content of the personal area, which focuses on preparing a vehicle sale. Features that can be implemented into the Mazda owners club are:

**Feature 1: upload vehicle data**

Based on the provided VIN the actual vehicle configuration should be uploaded to the profile of the new owners club member. A 3D animated car model which looks just like the purchased car (even the same colour, interior and exterior) could increase the entertainment value.

**Feature 2: personalized accessory shop**

The accessory shop that shall be introduced to the Mazda website could be loaded to the personal settings of the owners club member meaning that only items are displayed that actually would fit to the owned car. By doing this navigation in the accessory online shop becomes much more convenient as the customer only sees items that are relevant to him or her.

**Feature 3: link accessory shop items in 3D animation with owned car**

This means basically that contrary to standard online shops where consumers who are for example interested in buying alloy wheels can only see regular images the club member who wants to buy alloy wheels could click on a certain alloy wheel which would then be displayed in the 3D animation of the actual owned car (see feature 1). Doing this would differentiate Mazda from many aftermarket online shops and increase the likelihood that the club member purchases a Mazda accessory rather than one from the aftermarket.

**Feature 4: set-up preferred dealer**

Customers who own a Mazda for a long time should be given the opportunity to select a preferred dealer. Customers who just purchased a new Mazda at a dealer should be given a welcome package by the dealer asking the customer to register to the owners club. The welcome package could be a well-prepared direct mail letter that could be handed over at the same time the new car keys are handed

over to the customer – making it more official and valuable for the eyes of the customer to become an owners club member.

#### **Feature 5: integration of the digital service prove**

The “digital services prove” is a feature offered by Mazda for all sold vehicles in Europe that were produced after the year 2006. The digital service prove stores all services and car repairs made in a database. Whenever a customer visits a dealer to get a service the dealer can access that database and get a quick overview of the services a car has received in the past. (Mazda digital service prove 2009)

This information could be integrated in basic form into the car profile of the member. One advantage of doing this is that for example the regular car inspections necessary in many countries would also be stored in that database. Whenever such a car inspection is due soon a reminder email could be send to the customer.

#### **Feature 6: e-service**

This feature is offered by Mercedes in a well-executed way and by Opel in a basic way. E-service provides the opportunity for the customer to book service time online. Another opportunity for Mazda could be to promote certain standardized services such as wheel changes, oil check, air conditioning checks, and winter check through the owners club. Dealer’s who wish to promote such services could do that through the owners club. The user however would only see those promotions that are offered by his preferred dealer whereas it could be thought of to also promote services from other dealers.

#### **Feature 7: special club promotions**

Volkswagen is doing an outstanding job organizing special deals for its club members. A few of these were described in chapter 5.2.2. A similar approach could be made by Mazda – offering vacation trips in cooperation with an online travel website or anything that could be seen as valuable to Mazda’s owners club client base. Developing such promotions may be time-consuming in the first place but such co-operations with third party vendors could increase both brand loyalty, brand involvement and last but not least they could also increase the turnover for

Mazda. The bigger the customer database the more attractive that database becomes for other vendors that look for co-operation deals to increase their sales.

### **Feature 8: club reward points and special club promotions**

Owners club members could be given the opportunity to collect reward points, which could be collected through many ways. These could be given when the customer brings the car to a Mazda dealer when services are needed. Here, Mazda could improve its chances to increase turnover in the aftermarket area by motivating customers to bring their car to Mazda dealers rather than to service companies such as ATU. Further reward points could be earned by customers from purchases from third party vendors that were promoted in the owners club area. A reward program with existing bonuses should be established to motivate customers to use club offers actively.

### **Feature 9: club magazine / newsletter**

A postal or digital club magazine could be produced and provided to club members. A club magazine can be used for multiple purposes – from promoting new car models, special promotions for low selling accessory or merchandising items that need to be gotten out of stock, news about the loyalty program up to general information about the Mazda brand or other brand building related articles.

### **Feature 10: club forum or/and chat room**

A forum is recommended only to be introduced once the database of registered users has achieved a certain member size. A forum that is not used frequently will rather have a counterproductive effect on building brand loyalty.

Installing a chat room could be a nice idea under one condition. Generally, it is not recommended to install a chat room where owners club member can chat with each other – simply because monitoring the chat room 24 hours per day is not possible. However, a temporary chat room available only to club members might be a fun and good idea, if for example club member have the chances to chat in a limited time (one to two hours) with any kind of celebrities that are sponsored by Mazda. Such feature might add a lot of additional value to customers so that they

register to the owners club and would also help to strengthen the emotional bond between customers and the Mazda brand.

As with the conclusion for the establishment of a personal area for non Mazda owners the same conclusion is drawn for the owners club. The suggested features of the owners club should not be seen as exclusive. It is assumed that there is even more room for creativity of how the owners club can be made more attractive for current customers. The general targets to strengthen brand loyalty and improve the chance of aftermarket sales should always be kept in mind when thinking about the owners club.

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**Mazda Motor Europe country organization**

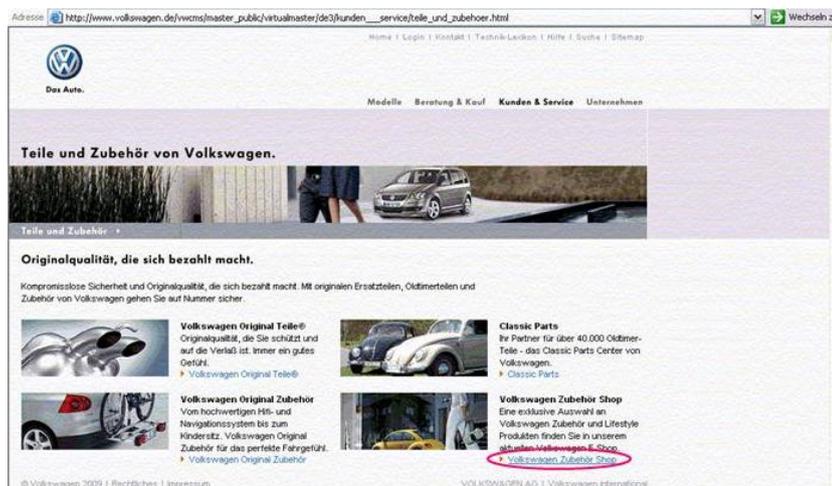
<b>National Sales Company (NSC)</b>		<b>Countries covered by the NSC</b>
Mazda Austria Gesellschaft m. b. H.	MAG	Austria, Albania, Austria, Bosnien & Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia
Mazda Motor Belux	MMB	Belgium, Luxembourg
Mazda Motor Croatia	MMCR	Croatia
Mazda Czech Republic	MMCZ	Czech Republic
Mazda Motor Denmark	MMDK	Denmark, Iceland
Mazda Automobiles France SAS	MAF	France, Monaco, Andorra
Mazda Motors (Deutschland) GmbH	MMD	Germany
Mazda Motor Hungary Kft.	MMH	Hungary
Mazda Motor Ireland	MMIRL	Ireland
Mazda Motor Italia S. p. a.	MMI	Italy, Vatican, San Marino
Mazda Motor Nederland	MMNL	Netherlands
Mazda Motor Norge	MMN	Norway
Mazda Motor Poland Co., Ltd.	MMPOL	Poland
Mazda Motor de Portugal Lda.	MMP	Portugal
Mazda Motor Russia OOO	MMR	Russia
Mazda Slovak Republic	MMSK	Slovakia
Mazda Motor Slovenija d. o. o.	MMSI	Slovenia
Mazda Automoviles Espana, S. A.	MAE	Spain
Mazda (Suisse) SA	MS	Switzerland, Liechtenstein
Mazda Motor Sverige	MMS	Sweden
Mazda Motor Logistics Europe N.V. Merkezi belika Turkiye Istanbul Subesi	MMT	Turkey
Mazda Motor UK Ltd.	MMUK	United Kingdom, Cyprus, Malta
<b>Independent Distributors (ID)</b>		<b>Countries covered by the ID</b>
Atlant-M Holpy Foreign LLC		Belarus
Inchcape Motors Finland OY		Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
Elma S. A.		Greece
Auto International		Ukraine
Others		Algeria, Egypt, Lybia, Morocco, Tunisia
<b>Total Sum of countries covered by MME</b>		<b>51</b>

## Navigation through Volkswagen accessory shop

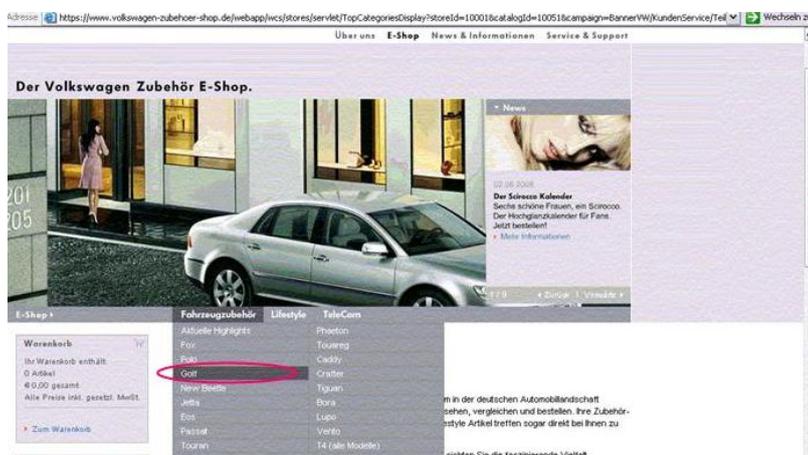
Step 1: click on “parts & accessories / Teile und Zubehör” on [www.volkswagen.de](http://www.volkswagen.de)



Step 2: selection of shop category (here: accessories)



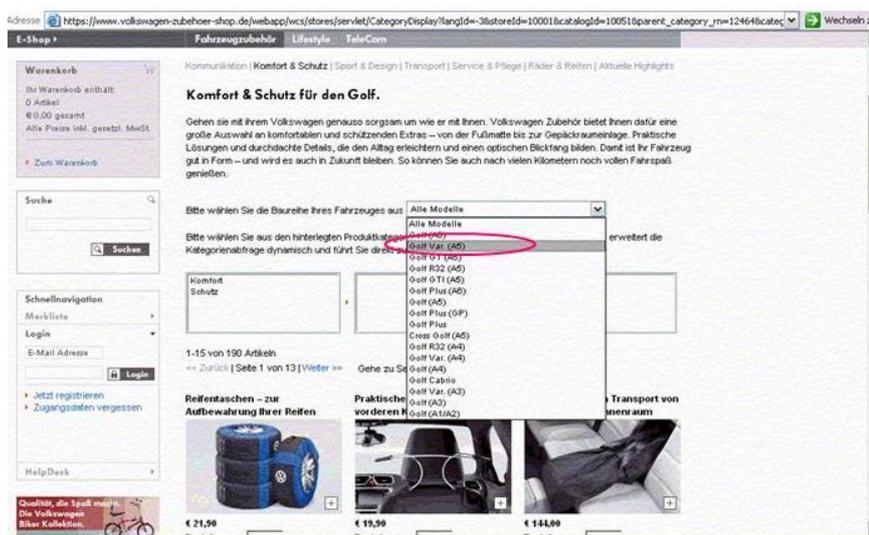
Step 3: selection of corresponding VW car brand



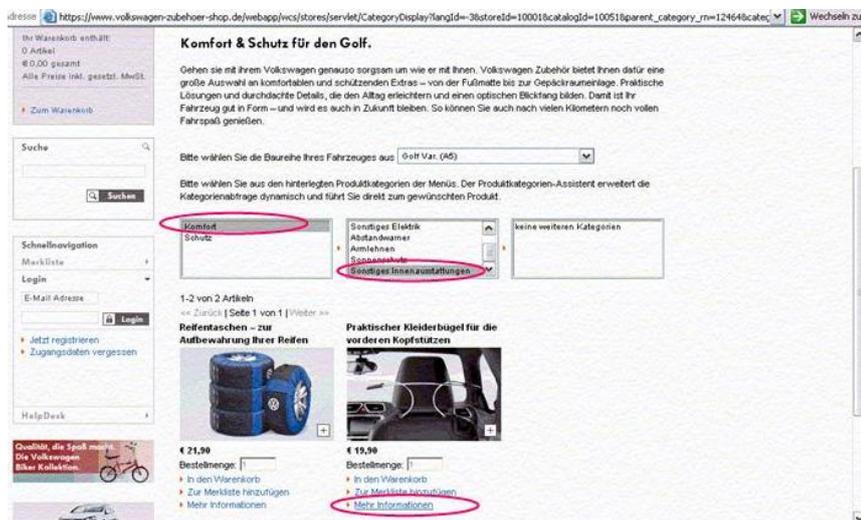
**Step 4: selection of product main category (here: comfort & protection)**



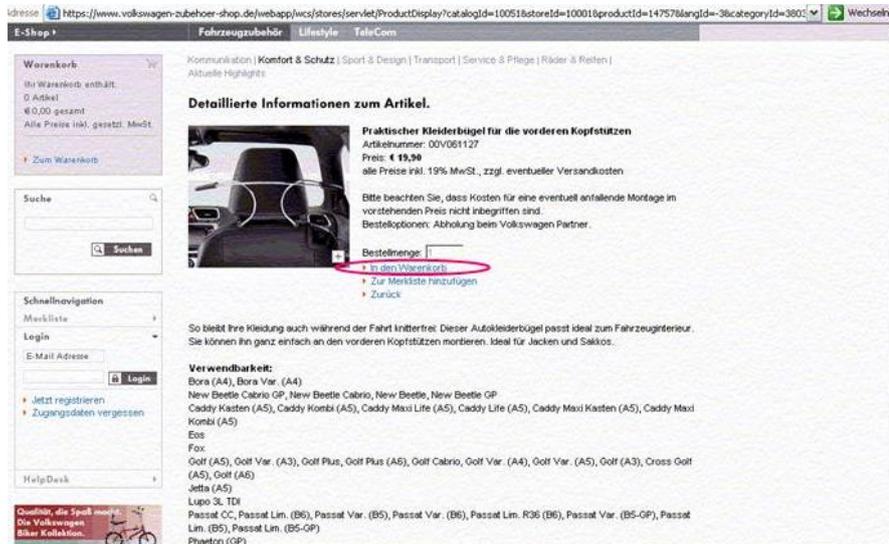
**Step 5: selection of specific car model (here: VW Golf A6)**



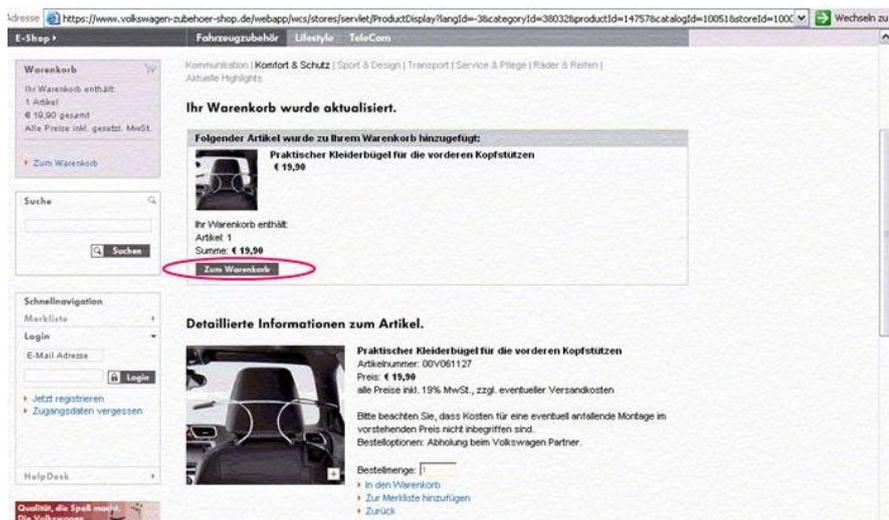
**Step 6: selection of product sub-categories (here: comfort click on product details)**



**Step 7: putting product into shopping cart (here: selected product “hanger”)**



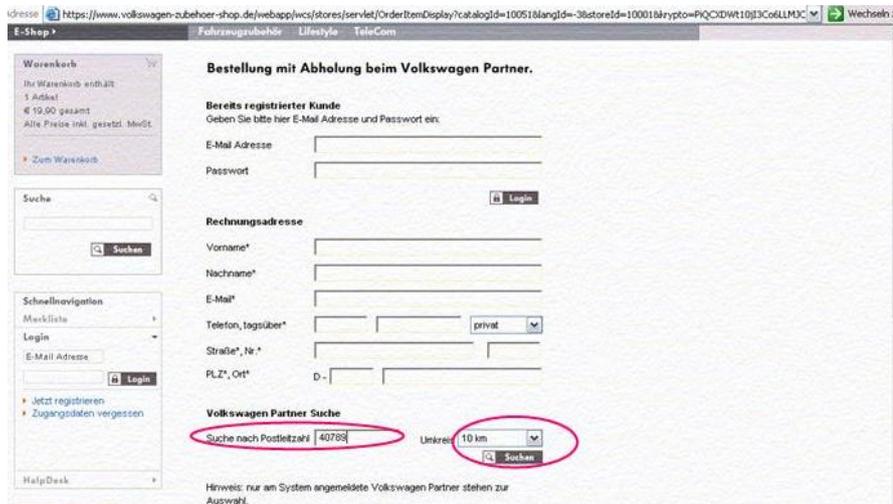
**Step 8: go to shopping cart**



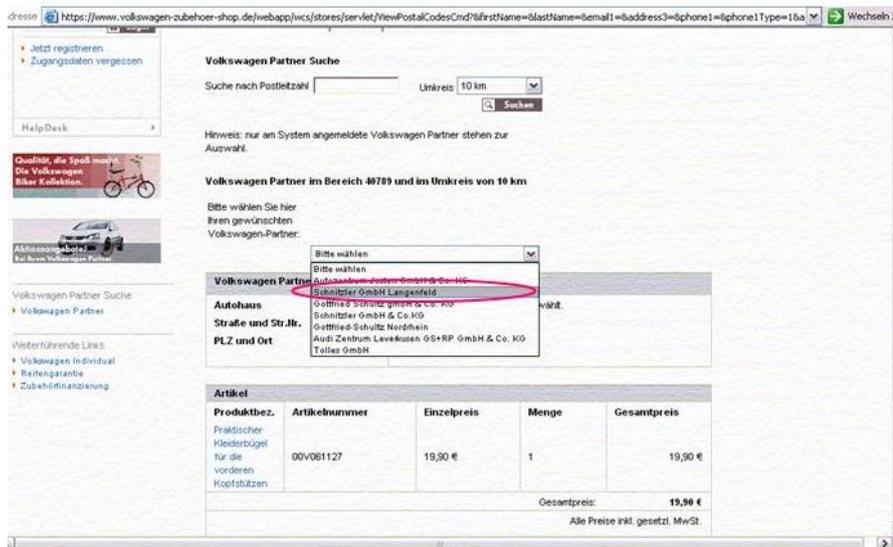
**Step 9: go to order placement page**



**Step 10: inserting personal data & start search for nearest dealer by ZIP code**



**Step 11: selection of nearest dealer**



**Step 12: submit order**

