



How much longer is there for diesel?

The end of the combustion engine may not be too far away but just how quickly manufacturers and consumers can switch to newer technologies isn't clear





Diesel suffers from a problem of misinformation and confusion

Sales of diesel cars continue to fall, with their share of the market now at just 35%, down from 45% a year ago (Society of Motor manufacturers and Traders, SMMT). The SMMT describes the slump in diesel demand as “disappointing”, given that the “latest cars are the cleanest in history and can help address air quality issues” But, this message isn’t getting through to consumers as our research amongst 500 UK car owners shows:

The desertion from diesel looks set to accelerate

We see very low levels of intention to buy for diesel amongst new car owners, just 11% are likely to choose a diesel car next time. This desertion is even higher amongst current new diesel drivers, with 29% looking at non-diesel alternatives next time they come to choose a car.

Hybrid and electric vehicles are starting to leapfrog fossil fuelled cars

Recent car buyers already have their sights set on their next car being a new generation hybrid /electric (21%) which is double the current interest in diesel.

New generation engines are benefitting from the Government’s congestion and emissions charging approach. These interventions have significantly influenced drivers’ attitudes and intended behaviours: around half of all diesel / petrol rejecters do so because of environmental and health concerns around the fuel (45%) and congestion / fuel emission charges (46%)



Yet, the route to alternative power isn't always that clear

Will this high level of intention to buy convert into actual sales of hybrid / electric cars? With low levels of incidence and a lack of knowledge about who makes them, it's bound to take time and give the mainstream diesel/ petrol manufacturers some window of opportunity to catch up.

Who the leading alternative fuel manufacturers are hasn't yet hit home: perhaps unsurprisingly given the 'Elon Musk' effect, recent car buyers put Tesla at the top of the list (21%). Toyota isn't far behind at 15%, but mainstream manufacturers are not even considered to be at the races. Just 4% think Ford is at the leading edge of new engine technology

In the short term, at least, diesel isn't dead yet

The fate of diesel cars isn't quite sealed with 27% of current car owners yet to make up their mind about the next type of engine they'll choose. Added to this is consumer uncertainty about who the really trustworthy manufacturers are in this technology.

We believe there's room for the mainstream manufacturers to speak into this vacuum educating consumers about newer diesel technologies and their cleaner environmental credentials, making it a path of least resistance for current car owners to stick with what's familiar in the short term. But, it's obvious that mainstream manufacturers have a lot to do to keep pace with the move towards alternative fuel technologies.



Insights from Intrinsic, a research consultancy with a unique eye for trends and consumer behaviour in the automotive sector

Our experience in the automotive sector comes from working with major manufacturers and OEMs globally within Europe, Asia and across North America for over 20 years. Our survey here reflects the views of over 500 UK car drivers interviewed via our in-house online panel who own cars less than five years old. Fieldwork was conducted in April 2018

Intrinsic works with some of the world's leading businesses to help them understand the consumers' relationship with their brands. We employ a multi-lens approach of online, qualitative, mobile and quantitative insight to get closer to what consumers are really thinking when it really matters to them. In doing so, we help clients identify new opportunities and ways of engaging with customers through better product, brand communication and experiences

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