

No alternative - Many people won't do without cars

The original German version of this article was first published in Planung & Analyse, issue no. 03/2016.

Mobility – this term stands for motion, independence, velocity. For the majority of Germans, cars are still their favorite means of transportation. Under the supervision of Julia David, Produkt + Markt has launched a project on the typologisation of individual types of motorists. The goal is to gain a comprehensive and differentiated understanding of the significance of our beloved cars, their degree of utilisation, and also of possible alternatives.

According to current statistics of the German Federal Environment Agency, more than 80% of German households have at least one car at their disposal. This makes Germany a country with a very high level of motorisation; our daily life without a car seems nearly impossible to imagine. These statistic statements may be valid for the general public of Germany; however, when taking a closer look at the different types of motorists, they turn out to be a lot more nuanced. A car does not necessarily have the same meaning for everyone, neither does the term *mobility*. It is understood in many different ways, equally different are mobility predictions for the future.

By combining existing segmentation studies, ethnographic research, and online surveys, we were able to paint a comprehensive picture of six of the most interesting types of motorists identified by the best-4-planning car use typology (PKW Typologie). It became clear that these six types differ in terms of their attitudes toward cars, their willingness to make use of alternative mobility concepts, and therefore also in the specifications they want for their car.

For two of the six considered types of motorists – the *image-oriented automotive enthusiast* and the *demanding frequent driver* – the car takes on a very important role. The degree of utilisation and symbolic character are very distinct. The *demanding frequent driver* – a middle-aged man who enjoys luxuries – drives a lot for his job, is willing to spend his money, has high demands in the specifications of his vehicle, and is highly interested in cars in general. The *image-oriented automotive enthusiast* is prototypically represented by a younger, brand-aware, distinct auto-aficionado, whose car mirrors his attitude towards life. Both types of motorists enjoy driving and usually do so a lot.

Compared to the other types of motorists, if asked for an alternative means of transportation in case their car is damaged, the *image-oriented automotive enthusiast* and the *demanding frequent driver* are the ones most likely to choose another car – i.e. a rental, a taxi, or a private car from a friend or neighbour. Other possibilities like local and national public transport are out of the question for them. They claim that the only direct and most comfortable way for them to reach their desired destination is by car.

The *demanding frequent driver* as well as the *image-oriented automotive enthusiast* like to spec their vehicles with premium features. While the *image-oriented automotive enthusiast* mainly focuses on sportiness, velocity, tuning, leather, rims, and sound, the *demanding frequent driver* is mostly interested in the available safety packages in and around his car to make traveling and working in his *office on wheels* a little easier.

Similar to both types of motorists mentioned above, the type “*modern idealist*” also requires mobility to be smooth and efficient. However, in contrast, the car is not the one and only possible means of transportation for him anymore. As a member of a rather young target group, he considers driving a car a luxury, mainly because he neither has emotional ties to his car, nor is he dependent on a car in general. In times of almost endless traffic jams and congested inner cities, the *modern idealist* is one of the first who reacts to urban traffic issues by choosing and combining different means of transportation depending on the situation, and therefore participates in multi-modal mobility: the increasing utilisation of different means of transportation like cars, trains, trams, or bikes. If privately owned or rented is not that important.

For someone who always wants to be on the go using different means of transportation and who is also always online, it is essential to find web-based solutions that do not depend on a singular display medium.

More specifically, these solutions include applications that can be used to check the latest state of affairs anywhere, anytime and on any device – be it via mobile phone, iPad, or on the display of a car. Therefore connectivity is especially important for one’s own car, since a permanent WiFi connection guarantees access to all tools and applications at all times.

The combination of different methods has painted a comprehensive picture of existing mobility types. This gives the customer a better understanding of the situation and helps him to properly approach individual consumer groups while respecting their specific needs and desires for their vehicle’s specifications, and keeping in mind their future mobility needs.

About the author



Julia David is a Senior Research Consultant for Consumer & Retail Research at Produkt + Markt. Here she supervises mainly qualitative studies. Prior to this, she worked in automotive market research for many years.