

Women Call the Shots on Buying and Maintaining the Family Car

Article Courtesy of ASE

Women are not only becoming more influential in deciding what car to buy, they are also taking over the traditionally male-dominated responsibility of maintenance and repair, according to the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE).

Currently more than 65 percent of customers who take their vehicles to a repair shop for service and repair are women. Some repair industry experts estimate that the average may actually be closer to 80 percent.

"More and more women are deciding where to take their car, minivan, light truck or sport utility for service and repair," says Ronald H. Weiner, ASE president. "As this trend continues, females will represent the majority of customers with whom technicians and service managers must communicate."

ASE offers several factors that account for the increasing presence of women in the showroom and in the customer waiting area. They include:

The overall percentage of female drivers is rising, while the overall percentage of male drivers is decreasing. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, the percentage of female drivers grew from 44% in 1972 to 49% in 1996, compared to the percentage of male drivers which fell from 56% in 1972 to 51% in 1996.

Women have influential buying power. Ford Motor Marketing reports that women influence 80% of all purchases and have 95% veto power regarding automotive purchases.

Women are purchasing more cars than ever before. According to Art Spinella of CNW
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Research, an automotive marketing research firm based in Bandon, Oregon, nearly half of new car purchases are made by women, and 53% of used car sales can be attributed to women. In certain age and vehicle categories, females represent more than 50% of current buyers.

And here's what leading female automotive experts have to say about this trend:

"Female customers don't need or want to be treated differently. We just want respect," comments Lyn St. James, famed Indy car driver and a Car Care Council Board Member. "Repair businesses that respond to women's needs and expectations by providing clean waiting rooms, timely delivery, and repair orders that are easy to understand are making smart business decisions."

"There is a growing appreciation of female customers. Technicians report that females ask more questions, inquire about details, and are more willing to look under the hood, or check out parts," says Diane Hohman, an automotive aftermarket consultant in Herndon, Virginia. "Efforts to address the needs of female customers are evident in the marketplace. From conducting women's car care clinics to hiring female service writers and technicians, repair businesses are taking steps to welcome female customers."

Donna Wagner, Director of Operations for the Car Care Council, Port Clinton, Ohio, believes that the presence of female professionals in repair shops may help create a more user-friendly environment for female customers. "Many women feel less intimidated when interacting with female service advisors and technicians. A greater comfort level can turn the whole repair experience into a more positive one."

While the total number of women in the repair profession is small, the rate of increase over the last few years is

noteworthy. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the number of female technicians grew from 9,000 in 1994 to 11,000 in 1996 -- a 22 percent increase, while the number of male technicians increased by only 3 percent during the same period.

ASE, the national non-profit organization that tests and certifies repair professionals, has also seen an increase in the number of females participating in its testing and certification program. While the number of ASE-certified male technicians has increased by 14 percent in the last two years, the number of certified female technicians has almost doubled from 1,329 in 1994 to 2,041 in 1996.

"It's inevitable; just as we see more women in the showroom and at the service desk, we will see more women behind the service and parts counter talking to customers, and under the hood diagnosing and repairing automobiles," predicts ASE president, Ron Weiner. "Challenging careers as automotive service professionals are not gender-specific. Servicing and repairing today's vehicle requires more brainpower than brawn."

ASE was founded in 1972 to help improve the quality of automotive service and repair through the voluntary testing and certification of automotive technicians. More than 424,000 ASE-certified automobile, truck and collision repair technicians, engine machinists and parts specialists work in dealerships, independent shops, service stations, auto parts stores, fleets, schools and colleges.

For more information about ASE and ASE-certified technicians, write to National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence, 101 Blue Seal Drive, S.E, Suite 101, Leesburg, VA 20175 (703) 669-6600 Toll-Free Information Line: 1-877-ASE-TECH; or visit [ASE](#) on the World Wide Web.

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