

HOWSAFEISYOURFIRSTCAR.COM.AU – A WEBSITE TO ASSIST YOUNG DRIVERS TO FIND A SAFE CAR, IN THEIR BUDGET.

Samantha Collins

Jessica Truong

Samantha Cockfield

Transport Accident Commission

Victoria, Australia

Paper Number 15-0306

ABSTRACT

Young drivers constitute approximately 13% of all license holders, yet they represent around 25% of drivers killed each year. Although gains have been made in reducing the number of young people being killed and seriously injured on our roads, they continue to be overrepresented in fatal and serious injury crashes each year.

Research has demonstrated that young drivers are at greater risk because they are inexperienced and more likely to take risks on the road.

Some of the factors that increase the risks of crashing among young drivers include:

- Driving with peer aged passengers
- Night time driving
- Use of mobile phones
- Drink/drug driving
- Speeding
- Driving older and less safe cars

Research shows that young drivers tend to drive the least safe and oldest cars on our roads. Research from the Monash University Accident Research Centre (2009) demonstrated that:

- Both female and male young crash-involved drivers are driving older vehicles than their older counterparts.
- Young males are driving older vehicles than females.
- Young female drivers are driving smaller vehicles than their older counterparts.
- Crashworthiness of cars driven by younger drivers is poorer than for older drivers.
- Young female's cars are less crashworthy than young male's cars.

An annual survey from the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) demonstrates that 24% of 18-25 year olds intend to buy a new car, 51% intend to purchase a used car and 25% are undecided. Safety features rank second in importance for 18-25 year olds after condition of vehicle (and price). 67% of 18-25 year olds say they will consider crash test results or safety ratings before purchasing a car, compared to 71% of 26-39 year olds, 64% of 40-60 year olds and 87% of 61+ year olds. 23% of 18-25 year olds say they will not consider safety ratings, and 11% don't know.

In addition to other initiatives to improve young driver safety, including a graduated licensing scheme and school based road safety education, the TAC has now developed a website to make it easier for young drivers to find a safe car within their budget. The website allows users to search through a database of cars that have a 4 or 5 star Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) rating or Used Car Safety Rating (UCSR) and are approved by the roads authority for probationary license holders to drive. Users can search by price ranges starting from as low as \$2,500 to find a safe car, within their budget.

This paper will detail the background research, development of the website, including data used, marketing strategies and an early evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

In Victoria, Australia, young drivers aged between 18 and 25 years old, constitute approximately 13% of all licence holders, yet they represent around 20-25% of drivers killed each year. This is a trend that is seen in many other jurisdictions globally. Although gains have been made in reducing the number of young people being killed and seriously injured on our roads, they continue to be overrepresented in fatal and serious injury crashes each year.

There are many factors that increase the risks of crashing among young drivers including:

- Driving with peer aged passengers
- Night time driving
- Fatigue
- Use of mobile phones and other distractions
- Drink and drug driving
- Speeding

Another important factor that plays a role in crash avoidance and injury severity is the car that a young person is driving. Research from the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) [1] demonstrates that:

- Both female and male young crash-involved drivers are driving older vehicles than their older counterparts.
- Young males are driving older vehicles than females.
- Young female drivers are driving smaller vehicles than their older counterparts.
- Crashworthiness of cars driven by younger drivers is poorer than for older drivers.
- Young female's cars are less crashworthy than young male's cars.

An annual survey by the Social Research Centre for the Transport Accident Commission (TAC) demonstrates that the majority of (51%) young people are looking to purchase a used car rather than new (24%) however 25% were undecided [2]. Safety features rank second in importance for 18-25 year olds after condition of vehicle (and price). 67% of 18-25 year olds say they will consider crash test results or safety ratings before purchasing a car, compared to 71% of 26-39 year olds, 64% of 40-60 year olds and 87% of 61+ year olds. 23% of 18-25 year olds say they will not consider safety ratings, and 11% don't know.

Based on research that indicated the low level of protection provided by the cars young people tend to drive, Victorian road safety organisations, the TAC, VicRoads and the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV), sought to promote awareness of the importance of vehicle safety for young drivers, and make it as easy as possible for young drivers and their parents to find a safe car. Safety ratings for used vehicles were already available as Used Car Safety Ratings (UCSR) which are calculated every year by MUARC [3]. However, a key consideration for young people who are purchasing a car is price. It was recognised that to make it as easy as possible for consumers to find a safe car, within their budget, pricing information would need to be provided along with safety ratings.

FIRST CAR LIST

The Victorian road safety organisations engaged a vehicle specifications and pricing information supplier, Redbook, to match UCSR with their database to provide a list of safe (4 or 5 star rated) cars under \$14,000. The list of cars was developed into a static document that was made available online. The document also included supporting information explaining the UCSR, prohibited vehicles for probationary drivers, crashworthiness ratings, harm to other road users ratings, pricing information. The list was promoted via schools, youth activations and events, and local community organisations.

While the list was very popular, it was difficult to keep up to date and it was recognised that it could be more interactive and useful for young drivers. The list also lacked Australasian New Car Assessment Program (ANCAP) rated vehicles and didn't clearly identify possible probationary prohibited vehicles. Taking these barriers into consideration it was decided that an online searchable tool would be more useful, easier to update and promote.

HOWSAFEISYOURFIRSTCAR.COM.AU

Following the popularity of the First Car List, the partners investigated the possibility of turning it into a searchable online tool. The TAC managed the project and engaged Redbook to match the latest UCSR data to their database (which already includes VicRoads data on probationary approved vehicles) and develop a search tool to enable safe, probationary approved vehicles to be displayed easily. A website was developed which allowed the TAC to manage the homepage content and additional pages while Redbook managed the search tool and search results.

Essentially, the website and search tool allows users to search through a database of 4 and 5 star UCSR and ANCAP rated cars that are P plate approved, up to \$35,000. The user is able to filter by different price ranges, and undertake make/model searches. Further information about the ratings and safety features is also available on the site.

HOWSAFEISYOURCAR.COM.AU

Howsafeisyourfirstcar.com.au is a complementary website to howsafeisyourcar.com.au. howsafeisyourcar.com.au is a broader website which the TAC uses to support its vehicle safety campaigns. Howsafeisyourcar.com.au includes all vehicles sold from 1990 until the present day and their safety feature specifications. Where available it also includes UCSR and ANCAP ratings. Further information is also provided about individual safety features, fleet policies, child restraints and other related vehicle safety information. This website has become quite successful and obtains an average of around 60,000 unique visitors per month when not supported by mass media but reaches around 120,000 unique visitors per month when supported by mass media. howsafeisyourcar.com.au does not currently include pricing information or probationary approved vehicle information.

PROMOTION

Howsafeisyourfirstcar.com.au was launched on October 19 2014. Initially the website was promoted via stakeholders, local community groups and social media. The website is also promoted via the TAC's young driver activation activities and events. The TAC manages a program aimed at young drivers which is based around a large bus, which has been converted into a chill out space for young people. The bus is named Vanessa and attends major festivals and events in Victoria, Australia that have a predominantly young patronage. Vanessa is manned by young people who have received road safety training and information, and have been trained to use police issue breathalyzer machines. The main function of Vanessa is to provide free breath tests to festival patrons to help them to get home safely. Vanessa also provides road safety information, free merchandise, competitions and games to engage with young people. Some competitions, merchandise and information include vehicle safety messages and the howsafeisyourfirstcar.com.au URL.

The TAC has also developed a postcard to be sent to all Learner drivers letting them know about the website. The first mailout will go out in early 2015. Further mailouts will be sent every quarter. Search engine optimization will also be used to promote the website.

EVALUATION

Despite the small amount of promotion the website has had a good amount of unique visitors and page views. Refer to Table 1 for exact numbers.

Table1.
Number of Unique visits and page views by month for howsafeisyourfirstcar.com.au.

Month	Unique Visits	Page Views
October	624	4149
November	527	2890

December	251	1715
January	221	1597
February	342	1675

The TAC will continue to monitor the usage of the howsafeisyournfirstcar.com.au and make improvements.

CONCLUSION

Young drivers are some of the most at risk drivers on Victorian roads, yet they often drive the least safe cars. The aim of howsafeisyournfirstcar.com.au is to provide young drivers and their parents an easy to use tool to easily identify safe cars within their budget. The website was launched in late 2014 and has attracted a good amount of unique visitors and page views. Work will continue to be undertaken by the road safety organisations to promote this website, in a bid to get more young drivers into safer cars.

REFERENCES

1. Whelan, M., J. Scully, and S. Newstead, *Vehicle safety and young drivers: Stages 2 & 3 - Analysis of young driver crash types and vehicle choice optimisation*. 2009, Monash University Accident Research Centre: Melbourne, Australia.
2. Social Research Centre, *The Transport Accident Commission Road Safety Monitor*. 2014: Geelong, Australia.
3. Newstead, S., L. Watson, and M. Cameron, *Vehicle safety ratings estimated from police reported crash data: 2014 update. Australian and New Zealand crashes during 1987-2012*. 2014, Monash University Accident Research Centre: Melbourne, Australia.

APPENDIX 1

Definition of probationary prohibited vehicle

If the vehicle is manufactured before 1 January 2010:

- has an engine with eight cylinders or more, or
- has an engine that is turbocharged or supercharged.
- has an engine that has been modified to increase the vehicle's performance (other than a modification made by the manufacturer in the course of the manufacture of the vehicle, or
- is a nominated high performance six cylinder engine.

If the vehicle is manufactured after 1 January 2010

- has a power to mass ratio of greater than 130 kilowatts per tonne, or
- has an engine that has been modified to increase performance (other than a modification made by the manufacturer in the course of the manufacture of the vehicle)

Manufacture date

The date of manufacture is determined by the date on the vehicle's compliance plate or, in the case of a used import, the "Built" or "Built Date" recorded on a metal plate or component of the vehicle.

The vehicle compliance plate confirms that the vehicle complies with Australian design standards and emissions. The date shown on the compliance plate is the date that the compliance plate was fitted to the vehicle by the manufacturer. With some vehicles, there may be a significant difference between the build date and the date of compliance due to shipping and storage time. The compliance plate may even be fitted in a different year.

The compliance plate can be a silver metal plate or sticker that is attached to the vehicle, usually fitted to the firewall (between the passenger compartment and engine) or in the driver's door jam or boot area.

Exemptions

An exemption from VicRoads allows a probationary licence holder to drive a probationary prohibited vehicle.