

Associating your car with your identity can lead to aggressive driving

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A new study by a Temple University Fox School of Business professor finds those who view their car as an extension of themselves have stronger aggressive driving tendencies.

The study, "Aggressive Driving: A Consumption Experience," is thought to be the first to comprehensively examine how personality, [attitude](#) and values contribute to aggressive driving behaviors. Driving is one of the most common consumptive behaviors, and aggressive driving causes a third of all accidents that involve personal injuries and two thirds of all [fatal accidents](#) in the [United States](#).

"It explains much of the [phenomenon](#) we knew existed," said Ayalla Ruvio, lead author and an assistant professor of marketing. For instance, "we know men tend to be more aggressive drivers and we know men tend to see their cars as an extension of themselves more than women."

Ruvio's article, published online in the *Journal of Psychology & Marketing*, takes a consumer behavior perspective of this phenomenon and features two studies conducted in Israel. One took a holistic look at the influence of [personality](#), attitudes and values gathered from 134 surveys of men and women with an average age of 23.5. The second study, of 298 people, built from the first and added the factors of risk attraction, impulsivity, driving as a hedonistic activity and perceptions about time pressures.

The studies found:

- People who perceive their car as a reflection of their self-identity are more likely to behave aggressively on the road and break the law.
- People with compulsive tendencies are more likely to drive aggressively with disregard for potential consequences.
- Increased materialism, or the importance of one's possessions, is linked to increased aggressive driving tendencies.
- Young people who are in the early stages of forming their self-identity might feel the need to show off their car and driving skills more than others. They may also be overconfident and underestimate the risks involved in reckless driving.
- Those who admit to aggressive driving also admit to engaging in more incidents of breaking the law.
- A sense of being under time and pressure leads to more aggressive driving.

The study findings "suggest that the perception of the car as an extension of the self leads to more aggressive behavior on the road rather than increased driving cautiousness," the authors wrote, adding that "individuals may view cars and the road space they occupy as their territory and will seek to maintain control over it and defend it as necessary."

Ruvio said the implications of this study can be seen in numerous cultural contexts because of the strong link between cars and identity. She points to the "soccer-mom" stigma of minivans, the Thelma and Louise personas, and songs such as Shania Twain's "You Don't Impress Me Much," with its line, "I can't believe you kiss your [car](#) goodnight."

More information: The full article is available at onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/mar.20429/full

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