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## Shoppers pleased at Acura

Survey: Experience best at its dealerships

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BY SARAH A. WEBSTER  
FREE PRESS BUSINESS WRITER

Acura dealerships ranked highest in a study to be released today that evaluates how consumers are treated when shopping for a new car or truck.

Land Rover and Saturn took second and third place, respectively, in the 2007 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index auto industry study. The report evaluates shopping experiences at 1,592 dealerships, representing all brands, nationwide.

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Fran O'Hagan, a former auto industry executive with Land Rover, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Jaguar, said this study is different than others that evaluate customer or sales satisfaction levels at stores. That is because those studies capture consumers who buy at the dealership and exclude those who don't make a deal.

The Pied Piper study was conducted between April and June using anonymous shoppers who looked at more than 50 aspects of the buying experience. That included whether salespeople gave a compelling reason to buy at a dealership, were informative about the vehicles they were selling or whether they asked the potential buyer for information.

While salespeople often are presumed to be hard-nosed in pressing for a sale, the study found the opposite is more often true.

"It's four times more likely for them to feel they were undersold than oversold," O'Hagan said of consumers.

The survey found Land Rover salespeople were most likely to walk around the vehicle with consumers and inform them of features.

Saturn salespeople were most likely to offer a test-drive.

Lexus salespeople nearly always asked potential consumers for contact information.

In all, the study found that salespeople offered consumers a test-drive 89% of the time, asked for contact information 83% of the time, asked for the sale 75% of the time and offered a brochure 66% of the time.

Because most car and truck buyers don't finalize a sale the same day they visit a showroom, O'Hagan said it is important for dealerships to maximize their time with prospective customers.

A total of 25 brands performed at or above average in the study.

Eleven of those 25, or 44%, are owned by Detroit automakers.

Seven out of the 12 below-average performers, or 58%, were Detroit-affiliated brands: Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Ford, Jeep, Lincoln and Mazda.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### Satisfied shoppers

The 2007 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index ranks auto brands by the experience of shoppers, not just those who buy a new car or truck. The average score is 100. Here are the brands that scored at or above average:

Acura...109
Land Rover...108
Saturn...107
Jaguar...106
Volkswagen...105
Nissan...105
Saab...104
Audi...104
BMW...103
Lexus...103
Subaru...103
Dodge...103
Pontiac...103
Hummer...103
Volvo...103
Mercedes-Benz...102
GMC...102
Mini...101
Porsche...101
Mercury...101
Buick...101
Toyota...100
Hyundai...100
Infiniti...100
Honda...100

Source: Pied Piper Management Co.

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