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Straight talk on how to maximize your automotive investment, and more.

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Car Brands With The Most Satisfied Shoppers

This is a good news/bad news, glass is half empty/half full type of situation. On the one hand, dealing with unscrupulous car dealers remains among the top consumer complaints, on the other hand a recent study reports that dealers are treating today's car shoppers better than ever on the showroom floor.

Especially if they're interested in buying a luxury-branded model.

Mercedes-Benz dealers can boast having the most satisfied shoppers in the auto industry according to the 2012 Prospect Satisfaction Index (PSI) U.S. Auto Industry Benchmarking Study conducted by Pied Piper Management



(Photo credit: Wikipedia)

Company in Monterey, Calif. Meanwhile, Acura, Infiniti and Lexus followed closely in a three-way tie for second place. Overall, twenty-four of thirty-four auto brands improved their prospect satisfaction scores from 2011 to 2012. Those at the bottom of the pack include Audi, Jeep, Kia, Porsche, Suzuki and Mitsubishi.

Mercedes placed first by virtue of leading in 10 of the 60 separate sales activity categories measured by Pied Piper. These included such areas as whether or not the salesperson introduced him or herself to the customer, allowed the prospect to take a thorough test drive, mentioned the availability of different financing options and took the time to sufficiently explain three to five memorable features or benefits.

Twenty-two different brands led at least one sales process category in the survey, which was conducted using 4,419 hired “mystery shoppers” that interacted with dealerships throughout the U.S. in person, by phone and on the Internet. Results in some categories varied widely among some brands. The index points out that, for example, salespeople at Subaru, Buick and Volkswagen dealerships were 50 percent more likely to offer a brochure to browsers than were employees at Hyundai, Jeep or BMW dealerships. Jaguar, Volvo and Infiniti salespeople were almost twice as likely to point out features unique from competitive vehicles when compared to Chrysler, Mitsubishi and Jeep salespeople.

“This year’s record high PSI results show that today’s dealership employees work harder than ever to be helpful to car shoppers,” says Fran O’Hagan, Pied Piper’s president and CEO.

Unfortunately, since it’s apparent the assembled team of mystery shoppers never actually took a transaction through to its conclusion (or this would have been one heck of an expensive study), it doesn’t consider such bugaboos as the negotiation process, satisfaction with the purchase price/trade-in allowance and whether or not a prospect became the store’s most profitable

customer of the day in the so-called “back end” of the deal. Still, we’d like to think that dealerships that respectfully regard customers as they’re walking in the door treat them just as well throughout the course of the buying process.

Here’s the complete list of 2012 Pied Piper PSI rankings:

- 1. Mercedes-Benz
- 2. Acura
- 2. Infiniti
- 2. Lexus
- 3. Jaguar
- 4. Cadillac
- 4. Fiat
- 4. Honda
- 4. Ram
- 4. Toyota
- 4. Volvo
- 5. BMW
- 5. Buick
- 5. GMC
- 5. Lincoln
- 5. Mazda
- 5. Nissan
- 5. Subaru
- 5. Volkswagen
- (Industry Average)
- 6. Chevrolet
- 6. Chrysler

- 6. Ford
- 6. Land Rover
- 6. Mini
- 6. Smart
- 7. Dodge
- 7. Hyundai
- 7. Scion
- 8. Audi
- 8. Jeep
- 8. Kia
- 8. Porsche
- 9. Suzuki
- 10. Mitsubishi

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