

WIDE OPEN THROTTLE

Mercedes Dealers Ranked Highest, Secret Shopper Survey Finds

Karla Sanchez on July 13 2011 7:00 AM



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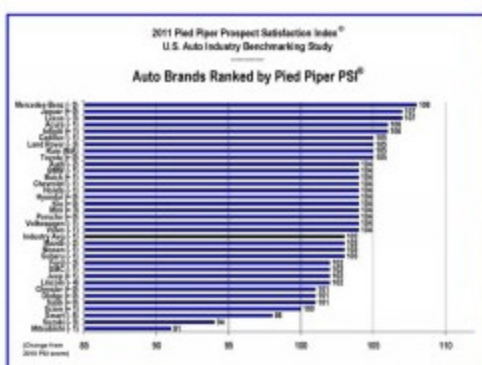
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When it comes to the [car](#) buying process, the car pretty much does all the work, pulling in buyers with its impressive MPGs, like the [Chevrolet Cruze](#) or [Ford Fiesta](#), or making them drool with offerings of the turbo inline 6 in the BMW 1M. Even completely new and fresh designs like the Kia Soul and completely redesigned models like the Hyundai Elantra are enough to entice buyers— all that's left is to seal the deal. But which dealerships leave customers the most satisfied?



Pied Piper PSI, a California-based dealership sales & marketing agency, sent 3,524 'mystery shoppers' to [dealerships](#) across the country between July 2012 and June 2011 to evaluate how different dealerships treat car shoppers. [Mercedes-Benz](#) dealerships ranked at the top of the satisfaction spectrum for the third year in a row. Jaguar and Lexus came in right at Mercedes' heels, and although BMW is topping the [luxury sales charts](#), it came in after German arch-rival Audi. The Lincoln brand—[flat in sales numbers](#)—also flatlined when it came to customer satisfaction, coming in last among the luxury brands.

Treatment in luxury brand dealerships most often constitutes better customer treatment; Salespeople devote more time to each customer because higher commission is at stake. But mainstream brands are following this 'luxurious' treatment and taking the time with each prospective buyer by explaining maintenance programs and pointing out unique [features](#) that make the brand stand apart from the competition. [Ram](#) and Toyota are utilizing these techniques and topped the chart among the mainstream brands, while low-volume brands Suzuki and [Mitsubishi](#) ranked the lowest in customer satisfaction. Dealerships selling Mini, Infiniti, Buick, Jeep and Scion all managed to improve their performance compared to last year's report.

Besides low-volume sales, reduced staff at dealerships may be at fault for low customer satisfaction scores. Fewer salespeople on the lots and showroom floors take on more car sales, which overall leads to deterioration in customer treatment. And with more car shoppers in the market, each salesperson may not be providing the best service possible.

How was your last dealership experience? Where was it the best? The worst?

Source: [Reuters](#), Pied Piper

