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Acura, Land Rover top ranking of U.S. dealerships

Jul 16, 2007

DETROIT (Reuters) - Honda Motor Co.'s <7267.T> luxury Acura division topped a consumer satisfaction survey intended to measure how well U.S. car shoppers felt they were treated in dealer showrooms whether or not they bought a vehicle on the spot.

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The study, released on Monday by Pacific Grove, California-based sales consultancy Pied Piper, showed Acura in first place, followed by Ford Motor Co unit Land Rover and General Motors Corp's Saturn.

Automakers such as Toyota Motor Corp <7203.T> have made an effort to improve the quality of dealer service intended to address long-standing complaints that dealers can be pushy, neglectful or less than transparent when explaining vehicle features and financing options.

"The dealerships that scored well all give customers a reason to be interested other than the deal," said Fran O'Hagan, study author and president of Pied Piper. "Acura dealers were very consistent in all categories."

European import and luxury brands dominated the study, which was based on a combination of results from a survey of random shoppers leaving 1,592 auto dealerships and results from paid researchers posing as car shoppers.

The brands rounding out the top 10 were VW , Nissan <7201.T>, GM's Saab, Audi and BMW , according to Pied Piper.

Hagan said research showed up to 30 percent of U.S. vehicle shoppers do not buy on the same

day they visit a showroom, making satisfaction with the shopping experience key for automakers struggling to find sales in a declining U.S. market.

The study ranked 12 brands below the industry average, including all three mass-market offerings from the Detroit-based automakers: Chevrolet, Ford and Chrysler.

Toyota, Hyundai Motor Co. Ltd. <005380.KS> and Honda Motor Co. were ranked at the industry average in the first-of-its kind study.

(Reporting by Kevin Krolicki)

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