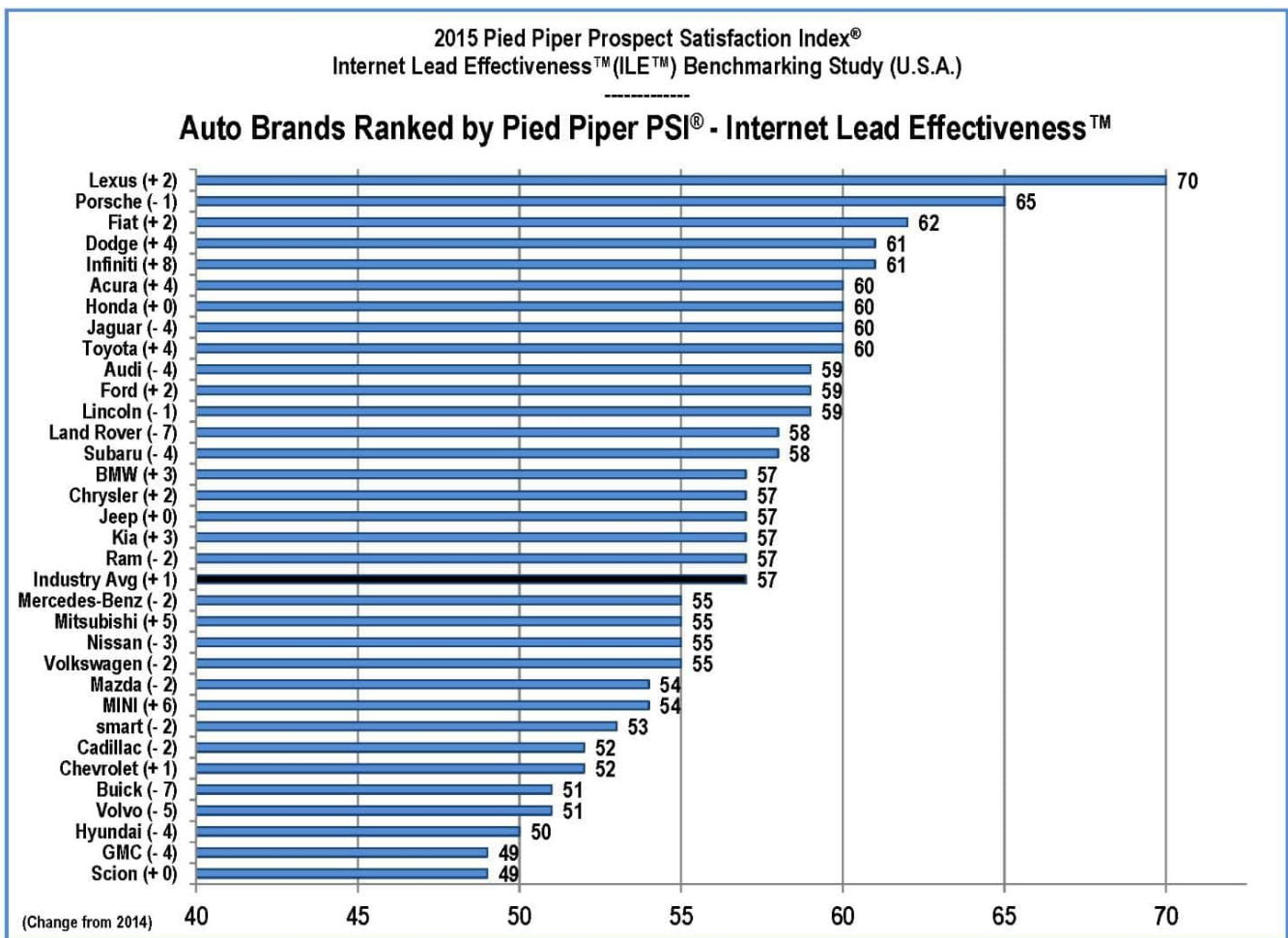


LEXUS IMPROVES TOP RANKING FOR RESPONSE TO CUSTOMER INTERNET INQUIRIES, REPORTS PIED PIPER PSI[®]

- Industrywide every 12th customer received no response of any type
- Less than half of customers received answer to question within 24 hours

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA – March 9, 2015 – Lexus dealerships improved their top ranking in the 2015 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index[®] (PSI[®]) Internet Lead Effectiveness[™] (ILE[™]) Benchmarking Study, which measured auto dealership responsiveness to customer inquiries received over the internet. Study rankings by brand were determined by the patent-pending Pied Piper PSI process, which ties “mystery shopping” measurement and scoring to dealership sales success.

Industry average performance improved slightly from 2014 to 2015, but the performance of seventeen brands declined. Brands achieving the greatest improvement were Infiniti, Mini, Mitsubishi, Dodge, Acura and Toyota. Five non-luxury brands were included within the ranking of top ten brands: Fiat, Dodge, Toyota, Honda and Ford.



2015 marks the fifth consecutive year that Pied Piper has released the PSI-ILE “Internet” Study, and there are marked differences in how the performance of auto brands have changed over time. For example, Lexus is the only brand that has remained in the top one-third of all brands during all five years. Among mainstream brands, both Honda and Toyota have changed little in five years, remaining in the top half of all brands. In contrast, the performance of both Ford and FCA (Chrysler) brands have improved substantially, from well-below the industry average to above the industry average. For the most part, GM brands have remained consistently below the industry average.

The success of Lexus is based upon consistent sales processes and a greater quantity of top-performing dealerships as a percentage of all dealerships. PSI-ILE reports dealership scores, and also assigns letter grades: A – B – C – D – F for each evaluation. In the 2015 study the percentage of industrywide evaluations that scored an A grade was 5%, compared to the Lexus percentage of 22%. Similarly, 30% of industrywide evaluations scored an F, compared to the Lexus percentage of 16%. Measurements where Lexus dealerships led the industry include responding in any way to customer internet inquiries (99% of the time), giving reasons to act quickly (29% of the time), and giving reasons to buy from their specific dealership (66% of the time.)

Industrywide, much room remains for improvement. In the 2015 study, every 12th customer (8%) received no response of any type—not even an automated email response; a level that has not improved over the past five years. During the 2015 study, only Lexus dealerships managed to respond to 98% or more of customer internet inquiries. In contrast, during the 2015 study the following brands failed to respond in any way to one-in-ten or more of their customer internet inquiries: BMW, Cadillac, Honda, Hyundai, Lincoln, Mazda, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Scion, Subaru, and Volvo.

“Few areas within the auto industry reward effort so immediately with incremental sales,” said Fran O’Hagan, President and CEO of Pied Piper Management Company LLC, talking about how dealerships handle customer internet inquiries. “Yet at too many dealerships, internet follow-up performance remains largely invisible.”

On average, customer internet inquiries from the 2015 study received a qualified response within 30 minutes about 50% of the time. However, much variation exists brand-by-brand. For example, Dodge, Fiat, Ford, Lexus and Lincoln dealerships responded within 30 minutes on average more than 60% of the time, while Chevrolet, GMC, MINI, Mitsubishi, smart and Volkswagen dealerships responded within 30 minutes on average less than 33% of the time.

As part of the PSI-ILE process, a specific question is asked that cannot be answered with an auto-response or a non-customized salesperson email template. In the 2015 study, dealerships on average answered the customer question 39% of the time. Three brands performed much better, answering customer questions more than 60% of the time: Hyundai, Jaguar and Mini, with BMW and Mitsubishi dealerships just behind at 59%. In contrast, Chevrolet, Ford, GMC, Lincoln and Ram dealerships answered internet customers’ specific questions 33% or less of the time.

Most dealerships with a successful internet sales process reply immediately by email, but also quickly attempt to contact the customer by telephone if a number has been provided. The 2015 study showed that on average dealerships attempted internet customer contact by telephone 63% of the time. Two brands topped 70% for telephone contact: Fiat and Nissan, while GMC, Jaguar, Land Rover, Lexus, Porsche and Volvo attempted telephone contact on average less than 50% of the time.

The 2015 Pied Piper PSI[®] Internet Lead Effectiveness™(ILE™) Benchmarking Study (U.S.A.) was conducted between September 2014 and March 2015 by submitting internet inquiries to a sample of 13,637 dealerships nationwide representing all major brands. Examples of other recent Pied Piper PSI studies are the 2014 Pied Piper PSI U.S. Auto Industry Study and 2014 Pied Piper PSI U.S. Motorcycle Industry Study, both of which measured in-dealership, in-person sales effectiveness. Complete Pied Piper PSI industry study results are provided to vehicle manufacturers and national dealer groups. Manufacturers, national dealer groups and individual dealerships also order PSI “mystery shop” evaluations—in-person, internet or telephone—as tools to improve the sales effectiveness of their dealerships. For more information about the Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index, and the patent-pending PSI process, go to www.piedpiperpsi.com.

About Pied Piper Management Company, LLC

Founded in 2003, Pied Piper Management Company, LLC is a Monterey, California, company that develops and runs sales and service programs to maximize the performance of dealer networks. Go to www.piedpipermc.com.

This press release is provided for editorial use only, and information contained in this release may not be used for advertising or otherwise promoting brands mentioned in this release without specific, written permission from Pied Piper Management Co., LLC.

###