



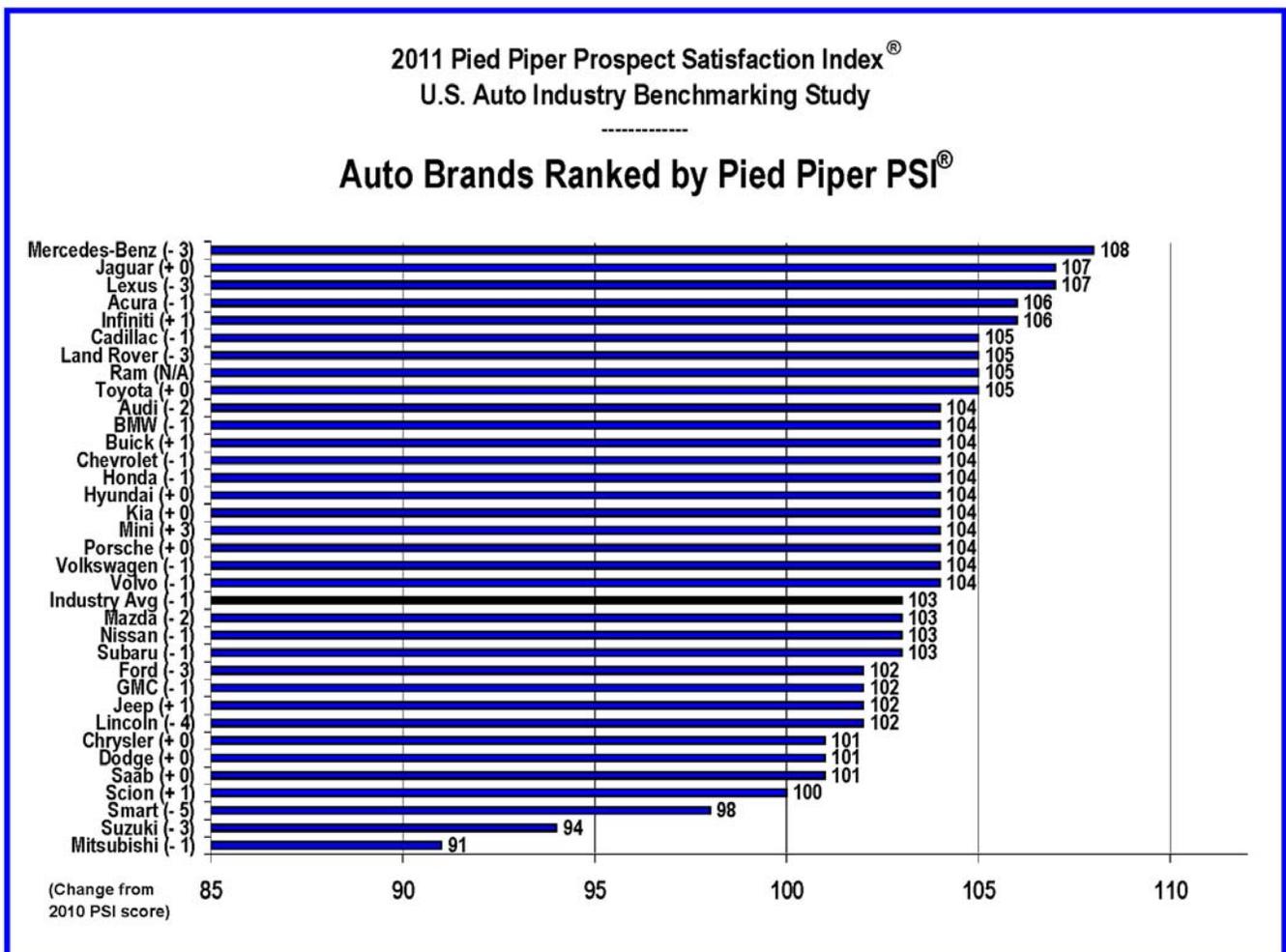
## MERCEDES-BENZ DEALERS ACHIEVE HIGHEST PIED PIPER PROSPECT SATISFACTION INDEX® RANKING FOR THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR

### Annual auto industry benchmarking study shows industrywide decline in dealership treatment of car shoppers

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA** – July 11, 2011 – Mercedes-Benz dealerships ranked highest in the newly released 2011 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index® (PSI®) U.S. Auto Industry Benchmarking Study, which marked three years in a row of top rankings for the U.S. Mercedes-Benz dealer network.

The independent Pied Piper PSI study sent 3,524 hired anonymous “mystery shoppers” into auto dealerships nationwide, then used the patent-pending PSI process to compile the results into an accurate measurement of how each brand’s dealerships treat car shoppers.

Overall auto industry performance declined from 2010 to 2011, following four years of consistent gains. Despite the overall industry decline, dealerships selling Mini, Infiniti, Buick, Jeep and Scion managed to improve their performance during the past year.



Two-thirds of the 58 sales process areas measured by Pied Piper PSI declined from 2010 to 2011. Compared to the previous year, salespeople were less likely to mention maintenance programs and costs, less likely to address specific features and benefits relevant to the shopper, less likely to focus on 3 to 5 memorable features and benefits, and less likely to discuss features unique from the competition. In contrast, salespeople were more likely to offer a brochure, more likely to provide compelling reasons to buy now, more likely to involve shoppers with visual aids and more likely to determine factors preventing purchase. “Not all auto brands have struggled during this recession,” said Fran O’Hagan, CEO of Pied Piper Management Company LLC, “but reduction in dealership staffing has been common. Over the past year the quantity of car buyers has rebounded, leading to higher sales spread among fewer salespeople, but also leading to deterioration in customer treatment.”

The car-shopping experience at luxury brands typically outperforms mainstream auto brands since higher profitability and higher salesperson commissions per transaction encourage luxury brand salespeople to devote more time and effort to each prospective customer. The 2011 PSI rankings were no exception, with luxury brands at the top. However, mainstream brands Toyota and Ram both achieved sixth place rankings in a tie along with Cadillac and Land Rover. Compared to the industry average performance, Toyota salespeople were 48% more likely to introduce customers to dealership management, 18% more likely to determine factors preventing purchase and 12% more likely to provide compelling reasons to buy from their dealership. The performance of the Ram brand, measured for the first time this year, is notable in that it demonstrates the potential impact of product on how salespeople sell, since many of the same salespeople sell both Ram and Dodge brands. Salespeople selling Ram were 21% more likely to mention the availability of financing options than salespeople selling Dodge. Similarly, the Ram salespeople were 21% more likely to mention compelling reasons to buy from their dealership and were 19% more likely to address specific features and benefits of interest to the shoppers.

For the past five years, the best performing auto brands for sales effectiveness as measured by PSI have also tended to be brands with more exclusive dealerships and higher sales throughput per dealership. Improvement in PSI by brand has on average also tracked improvement in market share by brand. In addition, the recent release of the 2011 Pied Piper PSI Internet Lead Effectiveness™ Benchmarking Study (U.S. Auto Industry) showed that dealership response to customer internet inquiries is also highly correlated to overall Pied Piper PSI performance. Explained O’Hagan, “Brands and dealerships who use sales improvement tools like Pied Piper PSI to ‘act like’ top performing sales dealerships often go on to become top performing sales dealerships.”

The 2011 Pied Piper PSI U.S. Auto Industry Study was conducted between July 2010 and June 2011 using 3,524 hired anonymous “mystery shoppers” at dealerships located throughout the U.S. Examples of other recent Pied Piper PSI studies are the 2011 Pied Piper PSI U.S. Motorcycle Industry Benchmarking Study, in which Polaris Industries, Inc’s Victory brand was ranked first, and the 2011 Pied Piper PSI Internet Lead Effectiveness™ Benchmarking Study (U.S. Auto Industry), in which Toyota’s Lexus brand was ranked first. 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 evaluations as a tool 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](http://www.piedpiperpsi.com).

### **About Pied Piper Management Company, LLC**

Pied Piper Management Company, LLC is an eight year old Monterey, California company that develops and runs sales and marketing programs to maximize the performance of dealer networks. Go to [www.piedpipermc.com](http://www.piedpipermc.com).

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