



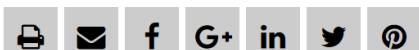
DEALERS

Luxury-Brand Car Dealers Best in Internet Effectiveness, Study Says

BMW dealerships score highest in the Pied Piper mystery-shopping study of internet effectiveness.

Pied Piper submitted customer inquiries through the individual websites of 9,264 dealerships.

Steven Finlay | Jul 08, 2019



Luxury-brand car dealerships take the top five top spots of the 2019 Pied Piper PSI Internet Lead Effectiveness Benchmarking Study.

The annual by-brand mystery shopping exercise uses various measurements to answer an essential question, “What happens when customers visit a dealer website and inquire about a vehicle?” says Pied Piper CEO Fran O’Hagan.



Dealerships that field those leads the best – from responding quickly to answering a specific question about a vehicle in stock, to using good grammar and correct spelling when replying – are ranked accordingly.

BMW dealers led the pack this year, followed by Acura, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo and Audi.

In ascending order from the bottom are Fiat, GMC, Alfa Romeo, Ram and Dodge. ***(See the complete list below.)***

O'Hagan says he's not surprised luxury brands occupy the top spots, although that hasn't always been the case in previous years.



Part of their success is because dealerships selling upscale vehicles focus more on customer treatment both in the showroom or online, he says. The other part is that those stores have fewer internet leads to handle compared with mainstream brands selling higher volumes. ***(Fran O'Hagan, left)***

Pied Piper submitted customer inquiries through the individual websites of 9,264 dealerships, asking that question about a vehicle in inventory, and providing a customer name, email address and local telephone number.

The Monterrey, CA-based consultancy that works primarily for automakers then evaluated how the dealerships responded by email, telephone and text message over the next 24 hours. Twenty different measurements generated a dealership's score.



The most basic measurement is whether a customer received an email response of any type – even an automated reply – within 24 hours. Industrywide, on average 8% of customers received no email reply of any type.

O'Hagan says a more meaningful measurement is whether the customer received an email answering their question within 24 hours.



BMW, Porsche, Mercedes-Benz, Acura and Mini dealerships were the most likely to email an answer to the customer's question within 24 hours, more than 55% of the time on average.

In contrast, dealerships selling Ford, Genesis, Buick, Hyundai, GMC and Lincoln answered the customer's question within 24 hours less than 30% of the time on average.

Response to customer web inquiries varies by brand and dealership, and Pied Piper cites the following examples of by-brand performance:

- Failed to respond less than 5% of the time on average: Mazda, Infiniti, Dodge, Audi, Volvo.
- Failed to respond more than 15% of the time on average: Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Mitsubishi. (O'Hagan says it's likely no coincidence those three are considered ailing brands because of weak vehicle sales.)

How often did the brand's dealerships send a personal email response within 30 minutes?

- More than 45% of the time on average: Acura, Genesis, Toyota, Lexus, BMW.
- Less than 25% of the time on average: Dodge, Chrysler, Alfa Romeo, Ram, GMC.

How often did the brand's dealerships phone the customer within 1 hour?

- More than 67% of the time on average: Dodge, Chrysler, Genesis, Ram, Jeep.
- Less than 45% of the time on average: Porsche, Lexus, Jaguar, Infiniti, GMC, Land Rover.

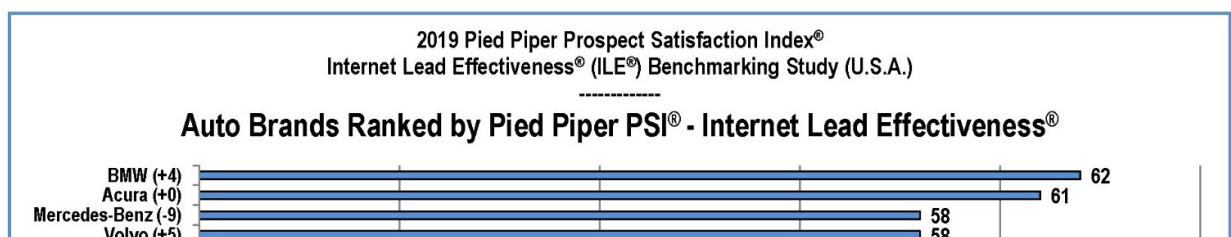
How often did the brand's dealerships email a request to schedule an appointment?

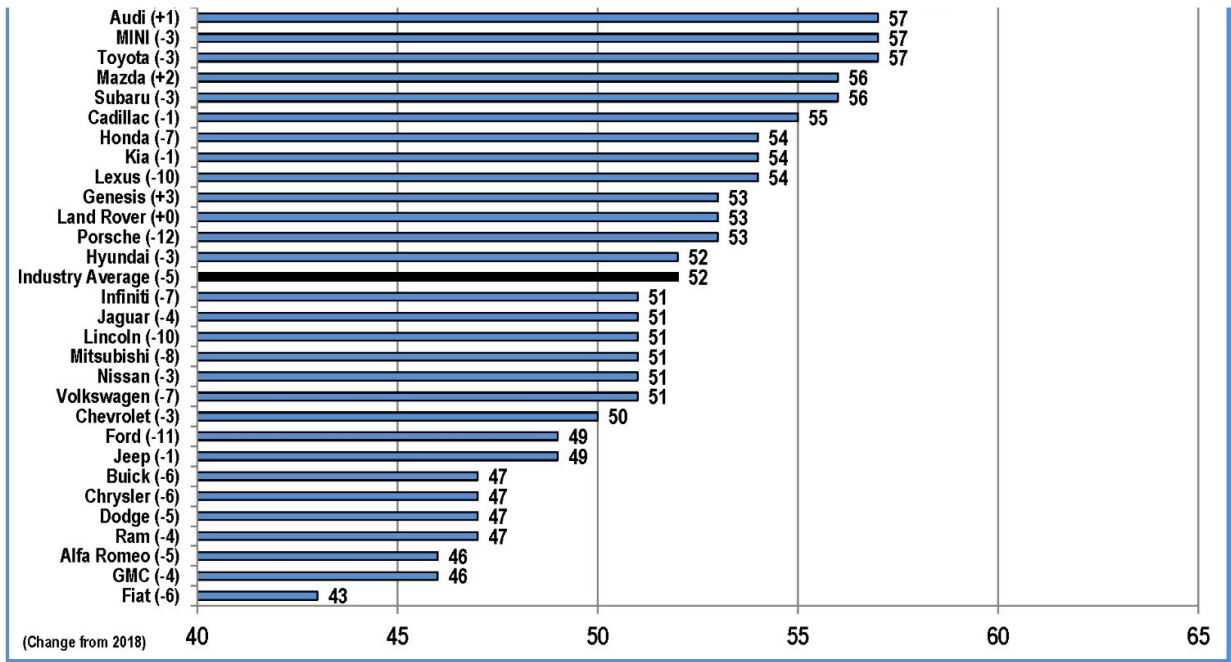
- More than 35% of the time on average: Audi, BMW, Alfa Romeo.
- Less than 15% of the time on average: Ford, Genesis, Porsche, Chrysler.

Use of website "chat" functions has become common, with 72% of dealer websites on average promising customers the ability to immediately chat online with a dealership representative.

However, 59% of the time on average those chat systems failed to provide a human response within 30 seconds," O'Hagan says. "Worse than not having chat capability on a website is promising chat but failing to quickly deliver."

He tells Wards outstanding internet lead effectiveness involves three main things: "Having a good auto-responder, personally answering the specific customer question within an hour and picking up the phone immediately after you press the 'send' button."





Source: 2019 Pied Piper PSI® ILE® Benchmarking Study (USA)

www.piedpiperpsi.com