



## Press Release

### **J.D. Power and Associates and *L'Automobile Magazine* Report: Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction in France Declines Notably from 2010**

#### Honda Ranks Highest in Satisfying New-Vehicle Owners in France for A Third Consecutive Year

**PARIS: 9 June 2011** – Satisfaction among owners of two-year-old vehicles in France has declined notably from 2010, with decreases occurring in all aspects of the ownership experience, according to the J.D. Power and Associates/*L'Automobile Magazine* 2011 France Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup> (VOSS) released today.

The study is based on owners' evaluations of their vehicles and dealers across 67 attributes grouped in four measurements of satisfaction. In order of importance, they are: vehicle appeal (32%), which includes performance, design, comfort and features; ownership costs (26%), including fuel consumption, insurance and costs of service/repair; vehicle quality and reliability (22%); and dealer service satisfaction (20%).

The study finds that overall satisfaction among vehicle owners in France has declined to an average of 753 on a 1,000-point scale in 2011, compared with 767 in 2010. The most notable decreases have occurred in the areas of quality and reliability as well as vehicle appeal, which is the most important aspect contributing to overall satisfaction.

“The uncertain economic environment in France has led many consumers to view their vehicle ownership experiences and the value they receive with heightened scrutiny, particularly when it comes to ownership costs,” said Brian Walters, senior director of European automotive operations at J.D. Power and Associates. “Even some traditionally high-performing brands have experienced decreases during the past two years, indicating that most automakers are finding it far more difficult to deliver the level of customer satisfaction that has come to be expected.”

“While new-vehicle sales in France are expected to contract by about 3 percent over the next two years, the number of models in the market is expected to increase to 342 models by 2015, compared with just 274 in 2008,” said Walters. “As customer choice expands, so does switching behaviour in the market. To keep their current customers and to get on the consideration lists of new potential customers, automakers need to deliver exceptionally strong levels of customer satisfaction—higher than many brands are currently delivering in France. These brands face considerable risk of customer defection and diminished recommendation rates based on their current satisfaction performance.”

Among manufacturers, Honda ranks highest in satisfying new-vehicle owners for a third consecutive year with a score of 796. Honda performs particularly well in two of the four key measures: vehicle appeal and service satisfaction. Rounding out the five highest-ranked nameplates are Audi (788); Volvo (784); BMW and Mercedes-Benz (in a tie with 782 each). Volvo ranks highest in the vehicle quality and reliability factor.

“Honda has demonstrated consistently strong performance during the past three years, even though its market share in France remains low,” said Stéphane Meunier, editor in chief of *L'Automobile Magazine*. “Volvo's position in the study is a surprise, as it competes well with German brands as far as customer satisfaction is concerned. Volvo's performance makes it one of the rare non-German alternatives for premium car customers. Among French brands, Peugeot and Citroën, which tie for 13th rank position, have distanced themselves from Renault. This confirms that the love story between Renault and French customers is fading, as *L'Automobile Magazine* has pointed out on several occasions.”

At the model level, Toyota ranks highest in two vehicle segments with the Prius (upper medium car) and Verso (MPV). Both Toyota models receive awards for a second consecutive year. Also receiving segment-level awards are the Dacia Logan (small car, in a tie), Honda Civic (lower medium car), Mazda 2 (small car, in a tie), Mercedes-Benz C-Class (compact executive car) and Opel Agila (city car).

The study also finds that customer expectations for vehicle ownership satisfaction have been steadily rising during the past decade. Owners have become more critical of design elements within their vehicles, are increasingly willing to shop around for service, are less tolerant of quality issues and are placing more importance on the overall appeal of their vehicles. During the past several years, vehicle owners in France have benefited from deep discounts, due to the economic difficulties experienced by automakers. While this may have allowed some owners to purchase vehicles they may otherwise not have been able to afford, it has also raised owners' expectations of receiving heightened vehicle performance for lower cost. According to Walters, this makes it critically important for brands to differentiate their products and service experiences in ways that meet and exceed customer expectations time after time.

The 2011 France Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction Study is based on the evaluations of more than 15,000 online interviews with French car owners after an average of two years of ownership. The study was fielded from January to March 2011.

The annual J.D. Power and Associates/*L'Automobile Magazine* study provides consumers with reliable and accurate information about many vehicle models, and helps manufacturers provide high levels of satisfaction to their customers. More comprehensive study results are published exclusively in the July issue of *L'Automobile Magazine* on sale Thursday, June 9, 2011.

#### **About J.D. Power and Associates**

The European headquarters of J.D. Power and Associates is located in Munich, Germany. With world headquarters in Westlake Village, California, U.S.A., J.D. Power and Associates is a global marketing information services company operating in key business sectors including market research, forecasting, performance improvement, Web intelligence and customer satisfaction. The company's quality and satisfaction measurements are based on responses from millions of consumers annually. J.D. Power and Associates is a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

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#### **About *L'Automobile Magazine***

With a monthly circulation of 180,000, *L'Automobile Magazine*, established in 1946, is the first monthly car magazine in France. With its ISO 9001-registered test drives; sneak previews on new cars; annual and official "Guide to Quality and Reliability;" and its retro, design and sport stories, *L'Automobile Magazine* attracts both the most passionate car enthusiasts and car buyers alike who are looking for advice.

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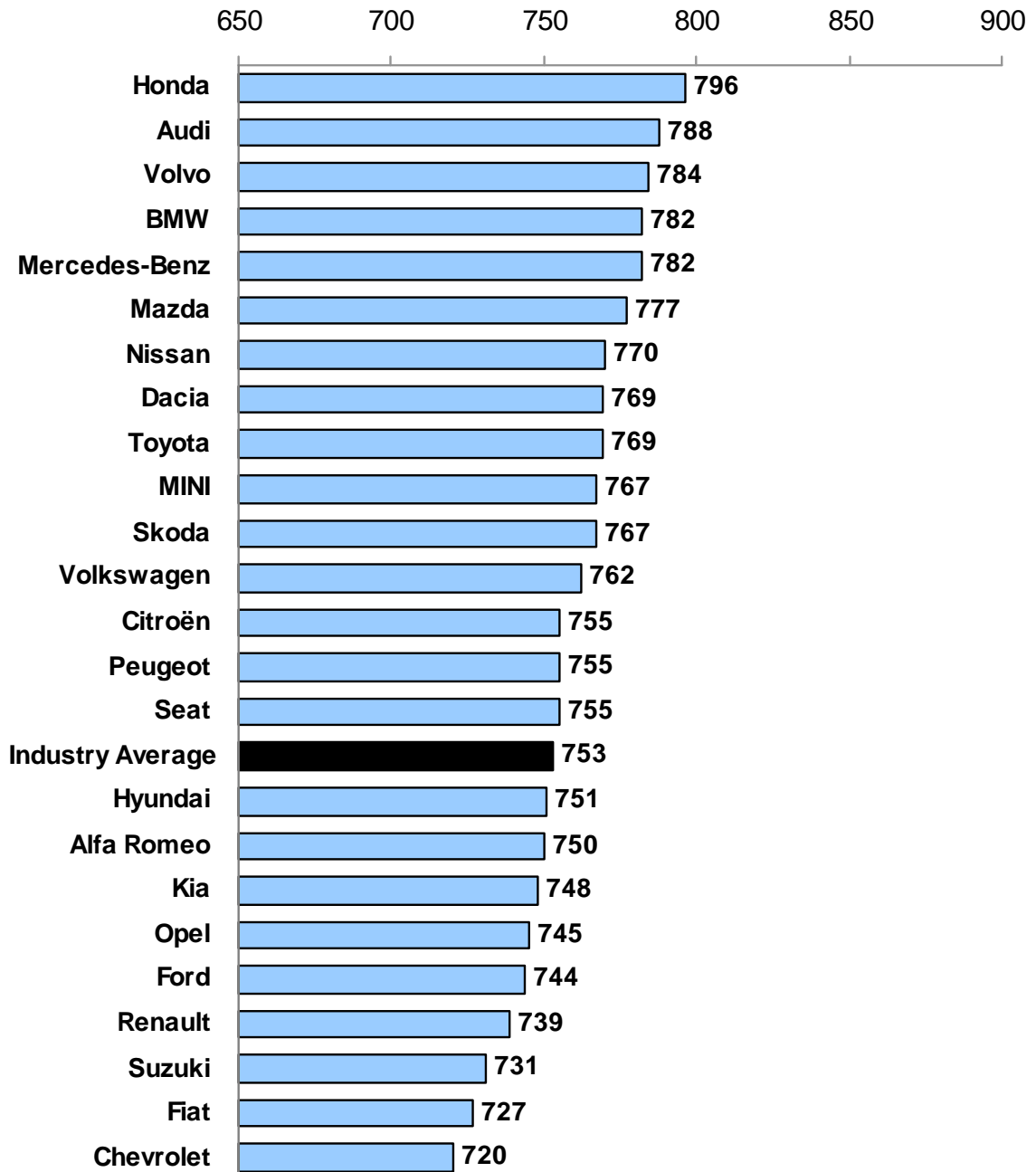
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NOTE: Three charts follow.

# J.D. Power and Associates 2011 France Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup> (VOSS)

## VOSS Manufacturer Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)



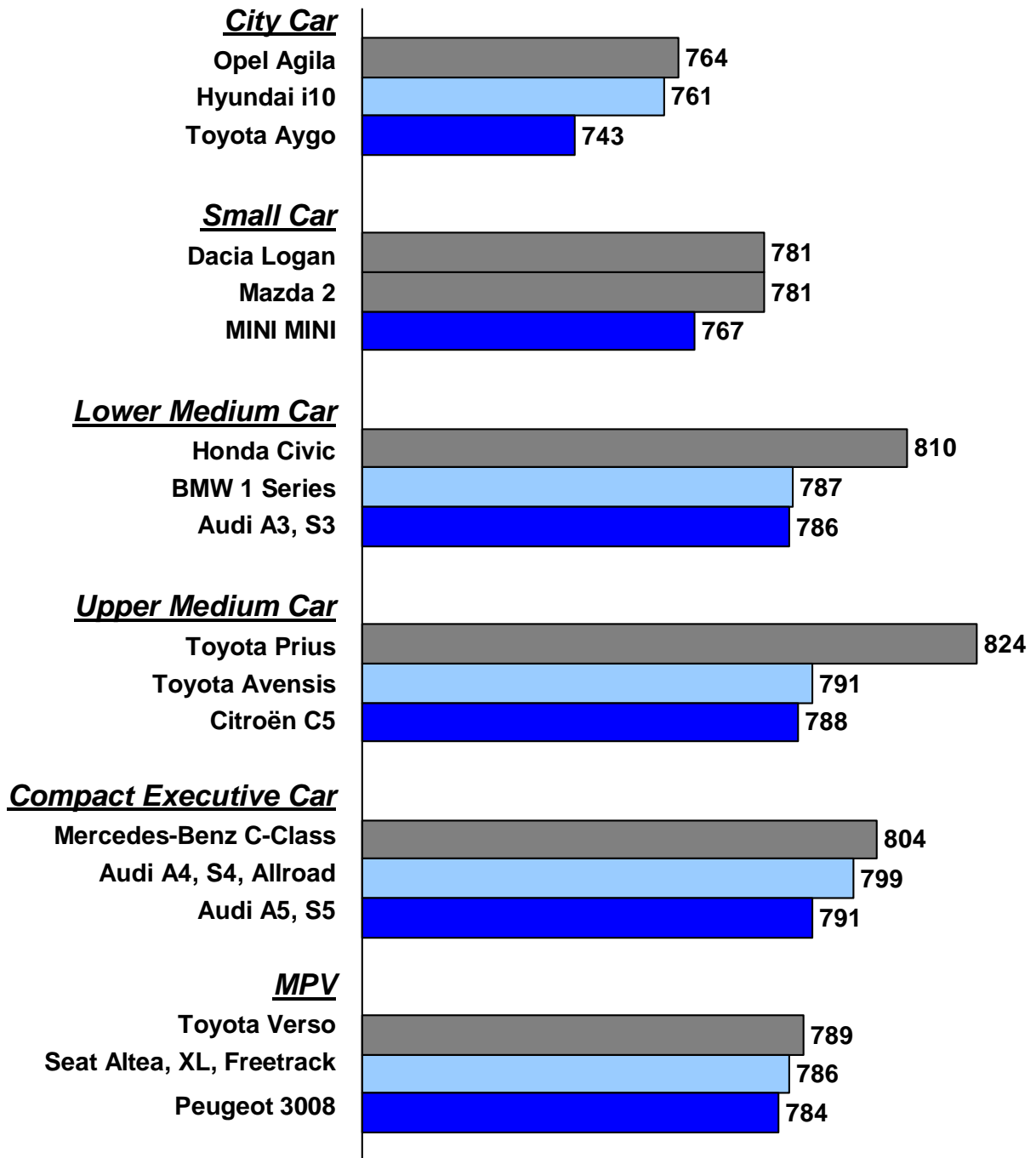
Included in the study, but not ranked due to small sample size are: Chrysler, Dodge, Lancia, Land Rover, Mitsubishi, smart and Subaru.

Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2011 France Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup> (VOSS)

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# J.D. Power and Associates 2011 France Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup> (VOSS)

## Top Three Models per Segment Overall VOSS

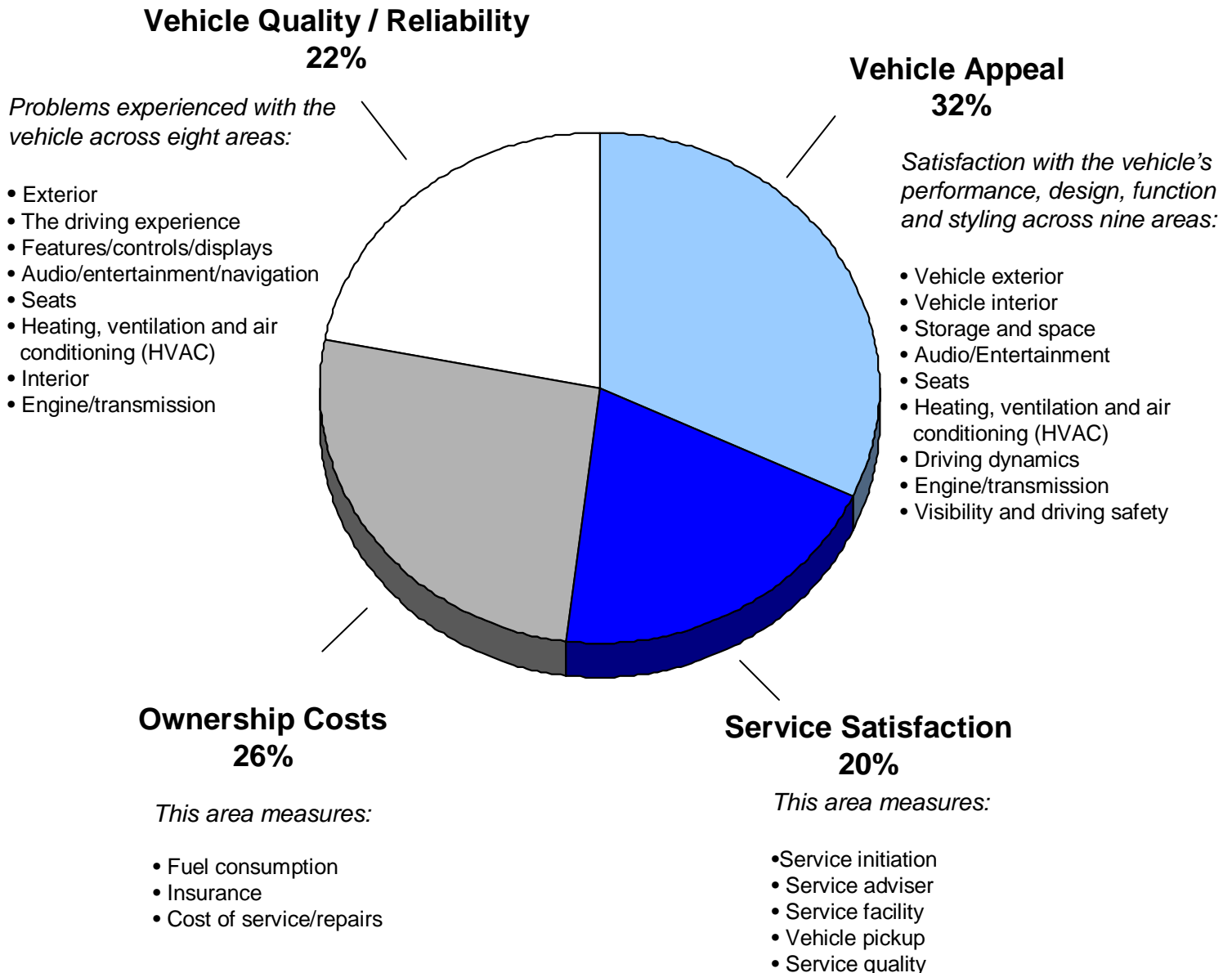


Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2011 France Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup> (VOSS)

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# J.D. Power and Associates 2011 France Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup> (VOSS)

## Factors Contributing to Overall Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction



Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2011 France Vehicle Ownership Satisfaction Study<sup>SM</sup> (VOSS)

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