



Press Release

J.D. Power Asia Pacific Reports: Helping Owners Understand the Importance of Winter Tire Performance Has A Positive Effect on Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Michelin Ranks Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Winter Tires in Japan for an Eighth Consecutive Year

TOKYO: 26 May 2011 — Owners who indicate that they do not place particular importance on the performance of their winter tires tend to be less satisfied with their tires and less loyal to the tire brand, according to the J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2011 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index StudySM released today.

The study, now in its eighth year, measures customer satisfaction with winter tires by examining six key factors. The factors are tire performance on icy road conditions (26%); performance on snow-covered road conditions (23%); durability/reliability (16%); ride/quietness on dry or wet roads (13%); appearance (12%); and handling/traction on dry or wet roads (10%).

The study finds that customers who indicate that tire performance is not particularly important tend to be less satisfied with their tires, compared with customers who do place importance on tire performance. For example, among customers who indicate that performance on icy roads is not an important consideration when purchasing winter tires, overall satisfaction averages 525 on a 1,000-point scale. In contrast, satisfaction averages 596 among customers who place importance on winter tire performance on icy roads. Similarly, satisfaction averages 549 among customers who don't place importance on handling and traction on dry or wet roads. However, satisfaction is 65 points higher, on average, among customers who indicate that handling and traction on dry and wet roads is an important consideration.

The study also finds that while 82 percent of customers place importance on performance on icy roads, only 53 percent say that handling and traction on dry or wet roads is important.

"It is imperative for tire manufacturers to educate customers at the time of purchase about the importance of tire performance, as well as how their tires perform in various conditions, in order to increase customer satisfaction," said Tetsushi Furuya, project manager at J.D. Power Asia Pacific, Tokyo. "There are sizable proportions of customers who are not concerned with the performance of their tires, so this represents an opportunity for manufacturers and retailers to reach out to these buyers."

Among the eight brands ranked in the study, Michelin ranks highest for an eighth consecutive year with a score of 653, and performs particularly well in all six factors. Following in the rankings is Bridgestone (609).

The study finds that customers who have higher expectations for tire performance are also more critical when they perceive a tire problem. Among customers who don't place importance on performance on icy roads, satisfaction declines by 27 points, on average, when they perceive a problem with a winter tire. Meanwhile, the score declines by 48 points among customers who do place importance on performance on icy roads.

"While educating customers about the importance of tire performance may yield notable improvements in overall customer satisfaction, this will likely also raise customer expectations for tire performance," said Furuya. "Tire manufacturers need to be prepared for this, and ensure their products are able to meet increasing customer expectations."

High levels of customer satisfaction have a strong positive effect on customer likelihood to repurchase the same brand of replacement of winter tires. Among customers who say they are “highly satisfied” with their previous winter tires (providing ratings of seven and above on a 10-point scale), 70 percent say they repurchased the same brand. Only 33 percent of the least-satisfied customers (providing ratings between one and four) indicate they repurchased the same brand.

The 2011 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index Study is based on responses from 5,595 vehicle owners who purchased new winter tires for their own private passenger vehicles (including mini-cars) between May 2008 and February 2011, and who are still using the tires. The study was fielded in February 2011.

About J.D. Power Asia Pacific

J.D. Power Asia Pacific has offices in Tokyo, Singapore, Beijing, Shanghai and Bangkok that conduct customer satisfaction research and provide performance analytics services in the automotive, information technology and finance industries. Together, the five offices bring the language of customer satisfaction to consumers and businesses in Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand. Information regarding J.D. Power Asia Pacific and its products can be accessed through the Internet at www.jdpower.com. Media e-mail contact: cc-group@jdpower.co.jp.

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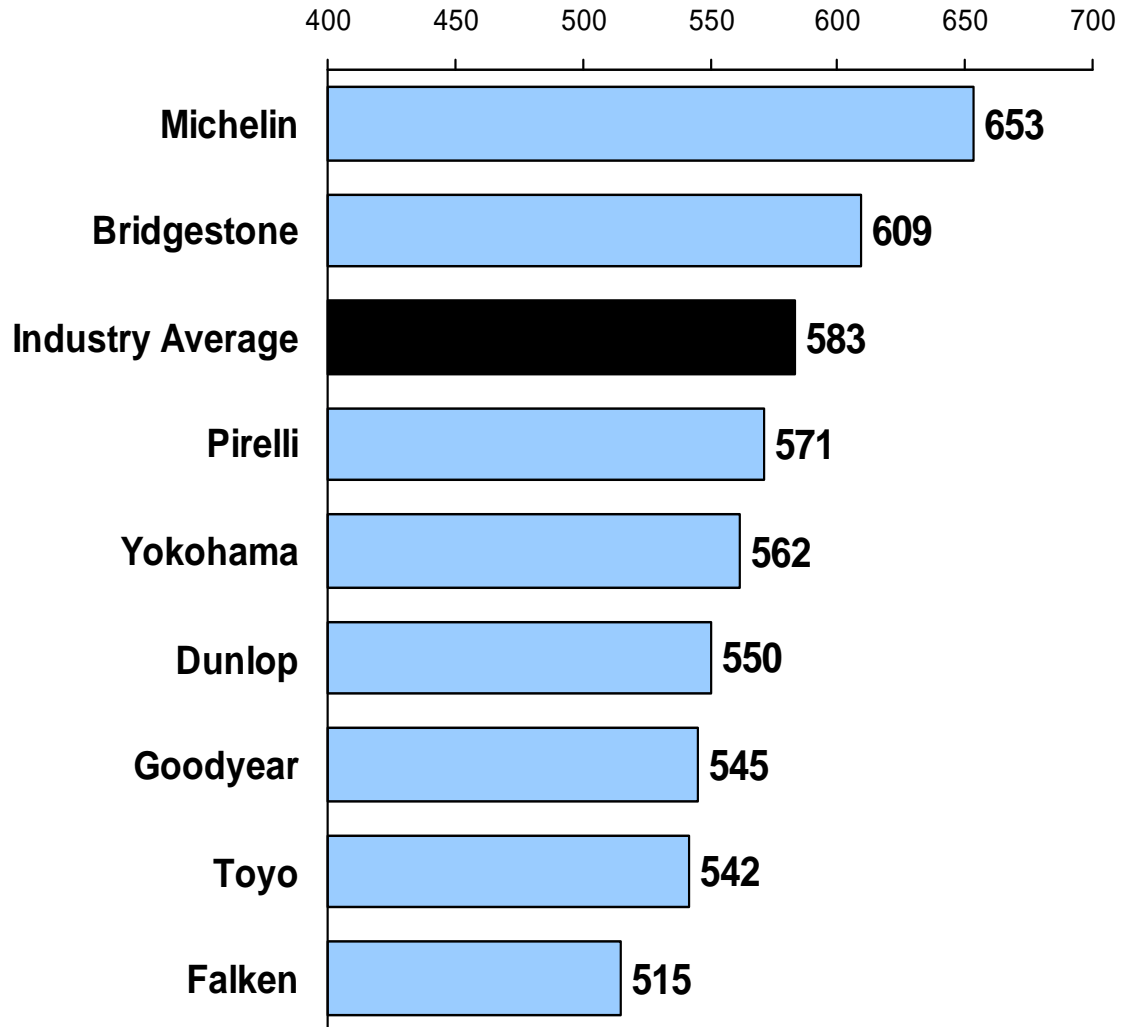
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NOTE: Two charts follow.

J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2011 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index (W-TSI) StudySM

Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking (Based on a 1,000-point scale)



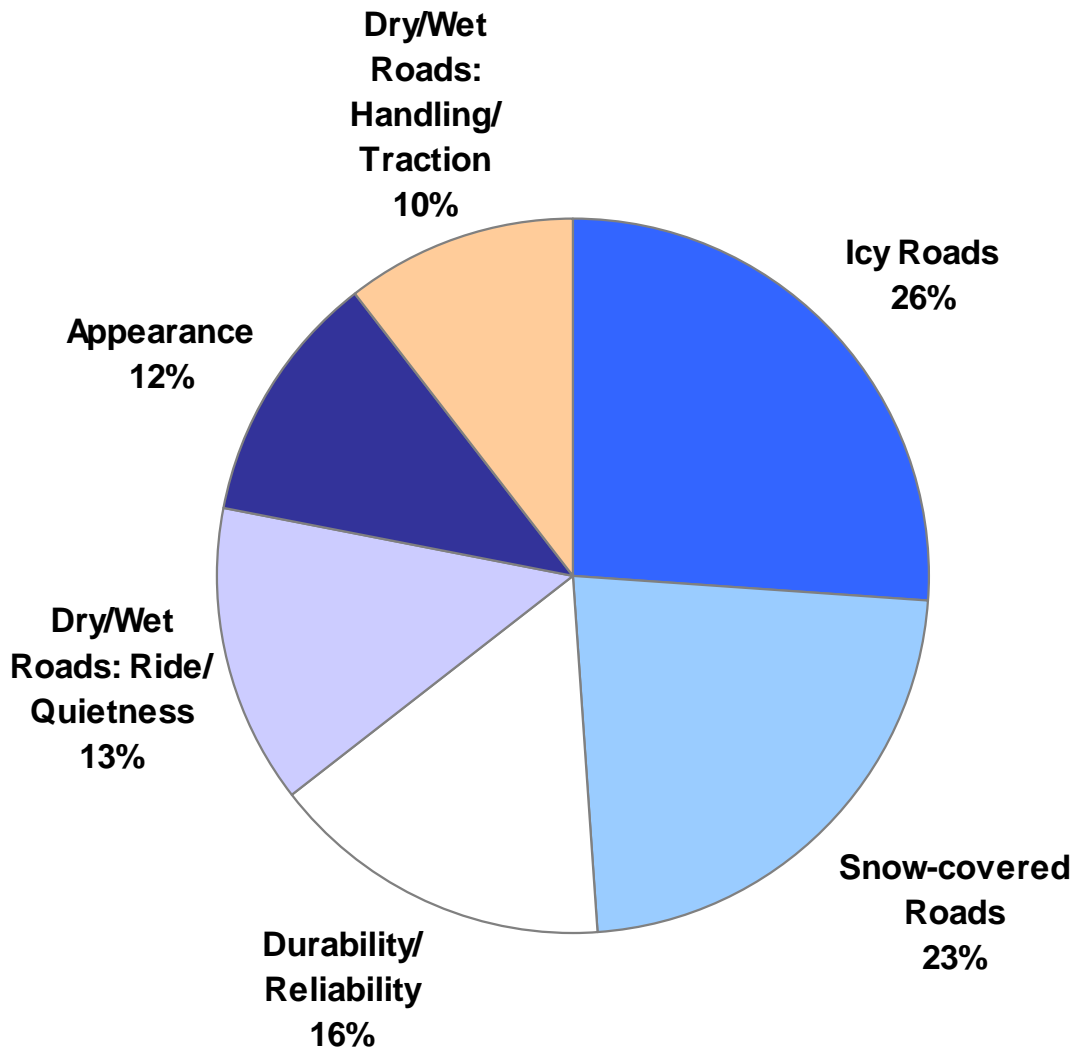
NOTE: Included in the study, but not ranked due to small sample size are: Autobacks.

Source: J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2011 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index (W-TSI) StudySM

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Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking (Based on a 1,000-point scale)



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