



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports: Striking A Balance between Customizable Content and Intuitive Navigation Is Key To Improving Satisfaction with Automotive Manufacturer Websites

Toyota Ranks Highest among Automotive Manufacturer Websites in Canada

TORONTO: 16 June 2011 — Elevating satisfaction with auto manufacturer websites hinges on providing rich, customizable content along with a clear, intuitive navigation scheme—a combination that remains challenging for many automakers, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Canadian Manufacturer Website Evaluation StudySM released today.

In particular, vehicle shoppers who use website build tools—pages that allow them to virtually customize a vehicle model—are increasingly seeking more detailed configuration options, including a wider array of accessories and trim packages to choose from, and a greater variety and detail of vehicle images.

Many new vehicle shoppers who use automotive brand websites also cite that navigation schemes within these build tools are confusing. Proper placement of “next step” buttons, linear outlines of the steps and tiered menus with option details, are particularly useful for allowing users to filter out unwanted detail.

“A build tool can have tremendous detail and immaculate images, but without proper navigation to move shoppers through the process expediently, they will likely be confused and disappointed,” said Ryan Robinson, Canadian automotive practice leader at J.D. Power and Associates. “Providing the proper combination of these attributes is what truly satisfies new-vehicle shoppers.”

In striving to provide detailed content and images, many automakers find that graphics-heavy pages take much longer to load, which sacrifices website speed. However, the study finds that user perceptions of website speed are heavily influenced by aspects of website navigation and not solely by the length of time it takes for website pages to load and appear. When website navigation features lead shoppers quickly and easily to the information they are seeking, satisfaction with speed increases, even if page load times are relatively slow.

“Automotive manufacturers that use rich images and video on their websites can mitigate some of the slower page load times by ensuring that their navigation schemes are intuitive and clear,” said Robinson.

Historically, the study has found that high levels of satisfaction with an automotive manufacturer’s website translate into increased likelihood that a new-vehicle shopper will visit the manufacturer’s showroom. For example, highly satisfied shoppers (satisfaction scores averaging between 951 and 1,000 on a 1,000-point scale) are nearly three times more likely to visit a dealer showroom, compared with less-satisfied users (satisfaction averaging less than 600).

Effective websites have the ability to generate valuable online sales leads, but these alone do not lead to improved sales.

“While auto manufacturer websites can be designed and implemented to maximize usability, this can easily be forgotten if shoppers are mishandled or leads are ignored by the dealership,” said Robinson. “In today’s world of

digital and email marketing, if a shopper is willing to provide their contact information through the website, the lead should be handled with care and seriousness.”

Now in its sixth year, the study examines Canadian automotive manufacturer websites from the perspective of shoppers who intend to purchase a new vehicle within the next 12 months. Four factors contribute to overall customer satisfaction: information/content; speed of pages loading on the website; ease of navigating throughout the website; and appearance of the website.

Toyota ranks highest in customer satisfaction with a score of 828 and performs particularly well across all four factors. Hyundai and Kia follow in the rankings, in a tie, each with a score of 812.

The 2011 Canadian Manufacturer Website Evaluation Study is based on evaluations provided by 2,555 new-vehicle shoppers who indicated they would be in the market for a new vehicle within the next 12 months. The study was fielded between March and April 2011.

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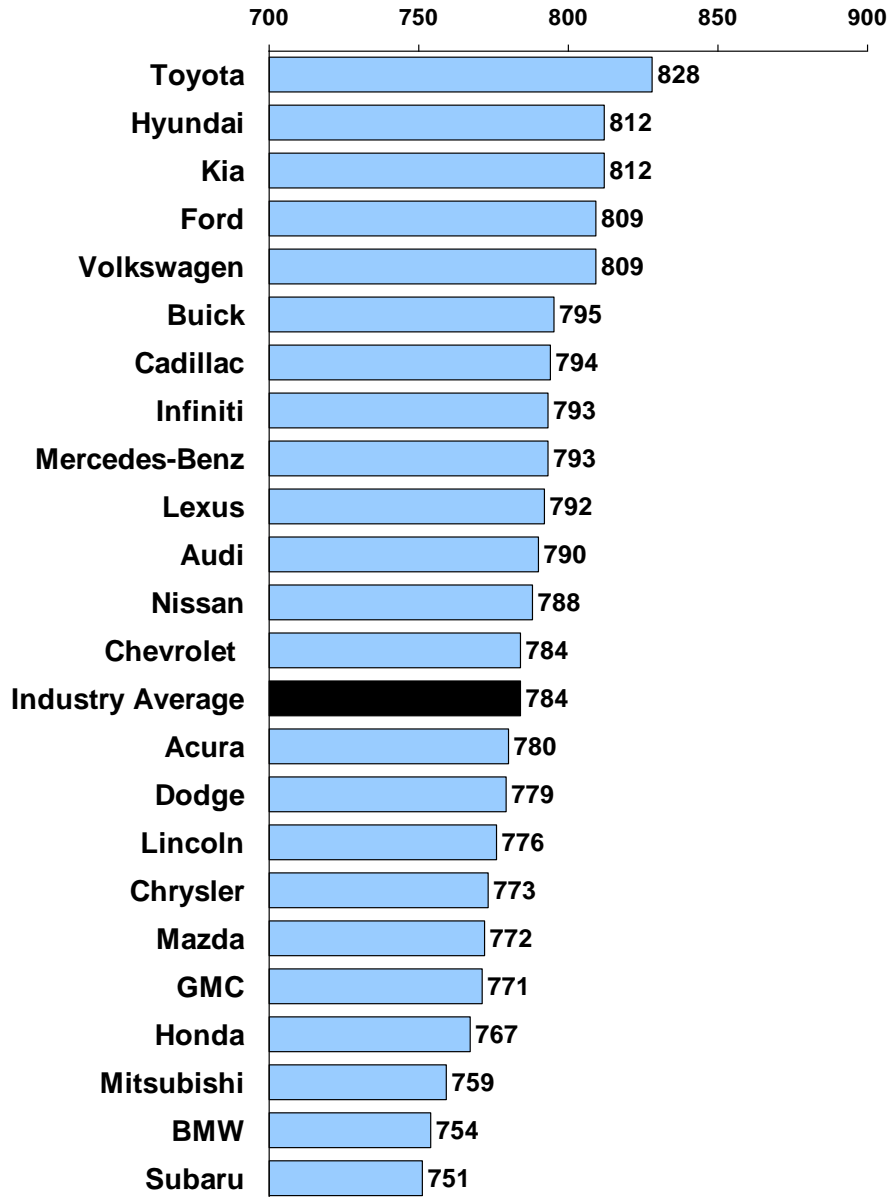
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NOTE: One chart follows.

J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Canadian Manufacturer Web Site Evaluation StudySM

Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)



Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Canadian Manufacturer Web Site Evaluation StudySM

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