



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports: Online Ratings/Review Sites and Social Networking Sites Impact New-Vehicle Buyers' Selection of Dealership

Lexus Ranks Highest among Luxury Brands for a Second Consecutive Year;
MINI Ranks Highest among Mass Market Brands for a Third Consecutive Year

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 28 November 2012 — Nearly 80 percent of new-vehicle buyers use the Internet during their shopping process, among whom nearly one-third consult online ratings/review sites when selecting a dealer, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2012 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) StudySM released today.

“For years, new-vehicle buyers have accessed the Internet to research model information, vehicle features, configurations and pricing,” said Chris Sutton, senior director of the Automotive Retail Practice at J.D. Power and Associates. “Now, neutral online ratings/review sites are playing a key role in dealer selection. Whether the online reviews are positive or negative, they impact buyers’ willingness to visit a dealer.”

The study finds that new-vehicle buyers are much more inclined to use a ratings/review site than a social networking site when selecting a dealer. However, satisfaction with the dealership experience is significantly higher among new-vehicle buyers who use social networking sites than among those who consult ratings/review sites.

“That’s the power of the network,” said Sutton. “New-vehicle buyers are using the Internet to read the reviews and recommendations of other buyers who have experience with a particular dealer, so it would be prudent for dealers to ensure their customers have had a satisfying experience, given their influence on prospective customers.”

Among new-vehicle buyers, males are significantly more likely than females to consult ratings/review sites, whereas females are significantly more likely to consult social networking sites. Both genders are equally likely to visit blogs, forums, or social networking sites (7% each); however, females post considerably more positive online statements regarding their dealer experience, compared with males (86% indicate comments “mostly positive” vs. 77%, respectively).

The study is a comprehensive analysis of the new-vehicle purchase experience and measures customer satisfaction with the selling dealer (satisfaction among buyers). The study also measures satisfaction with brands and dealerships that were shopped but ultimately rejected in favor of the selling brand and dealership (satisfaction among rejecters). Among buyers, satisfaction is examined across four measures (listed in order of importance): working out the deal (17%); salesperson (13%); delivery process (11%); and facility (10%). Among rejecters, satisfaction is examined across five measures (listed in order of importance): salesperson (20%); fairness of price (12%); facility (6%); inventory (6%); and experience negotiating (5%).

Overall sales satisfaction among both buyers and rejecters averages 664 on a 1,000-point scale in 2012, improving from 648 in 2011.

Satisfaction with the selling dealer averages 776 in 2012, a five-point increase from 2011. Satisfaction improves in three of the four measures that examine satisfaction among buyers, with salesperson achieving the highest score.

Among buyers whose salesperson asked them questions to determine their vehicle needs, only 21 percent perceive some or too much pressure from dealer sales staff, compared with 32 percent among those whose salesperson did not ask questions about their needs who perceive some or too much pressure. These results indicate that customers prefer salespeople who invest the time up front to listen to them and ensure they select the right vehicle. Perceived pressure decreases when sales consultants establish a business relationship and understand customer needs.

Given the increasing complexity of technology in today's new models, there is a growing need for dealers to spend time explaining complicated audio, entertainment and navigation systems so buyers can fully utilize all the benefits these technologies offer. A majority (86%) of new-vehicle buyers indicate that the dealer staff spent "just the right amount of time" with them during the delivery process. Among the 8 percent of new-vehicle buyers who say that the dealer staff did not spend enough time at delivery, nearly three-fourths indicate they would have preferred staff to spend more time reviewing their vehicle's features and technologies, such as pairing their phone to Bluetooth or demonstrating the navigation system.

Satisfaction with the dealership where rejecters shopped but did not buy their vehicle improves to 553 in 2012, a 28-point increase from 2011, with significant improvements in each of the five measures.

Lexus ranks highest among [luxury brands](#) in satisfaction with the new-vehicle buying experience for a second consecutive year, with an index score of 737. Rankings are based on the experiences of both buyers and rejecters. Infiniti (728) and Cadillac (725) follow in the luxury segment rankings to round out the three highest-performing brands. Year-over-year sales satisfaction improves the most for Infiniti (+52 index points), moving from ranking eighth in 2011 to rank second in 2012.

MINI ranks highest among [mass market brands](#) for a third consecutive year, with a score of 712. Buick (706) and GMC (683) follow in the mass market segment rankings. Honda improves the most among mass market brands (+30 index points) and moves from ranking 12th in 2011 to rank eighth in 2012.

For a comprehensive perspective of automotive retail trends, which was presented by John Humphrey, senior vice president of global automotive operations at J.D. Power and Associates, on Nov. 27 at the NADA/J.D. Power 2012 Western Automotive Conference, click [here](#).

The 2012 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) Study is based on responses from 31,386 buyers who purchased or leased their new vehicle in May 2012. The study was fielded between August and October 2012.

About J.D. Power and Associates

Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., J.D. Power and Associates is a global marketing information services company providing forecasting, performance improvement, social media and customer satisfaction insights and solutions. The company's quality and satisfaction measurements are based on responses from millions of consumers annually. For more information on car reviews and ratings, car insurance, health insurance, cell phone ratings, and more, please visit JDPower.com. J.D. Power and Associates is a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

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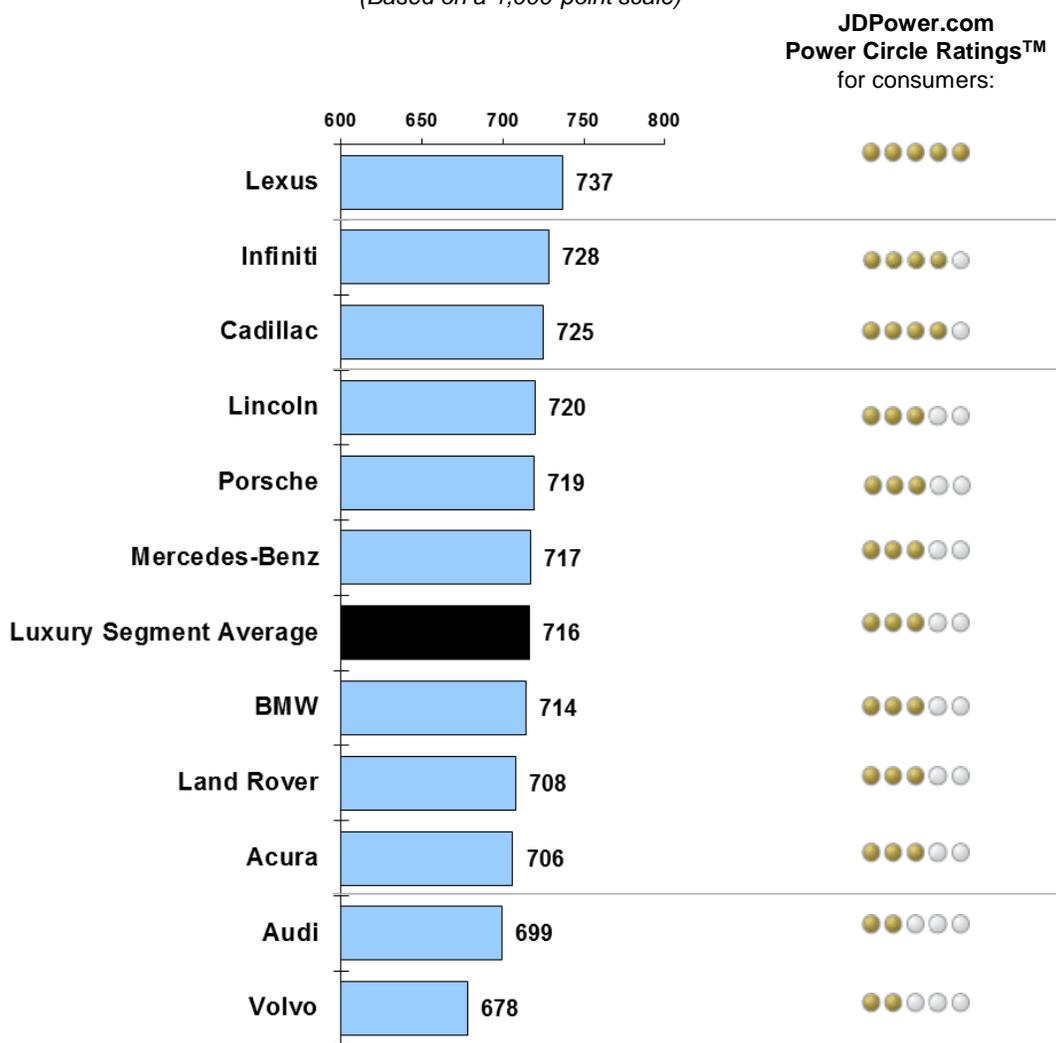
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NOTE: Two charts follow.

J.D. Power and Associates 2012 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) StudySM

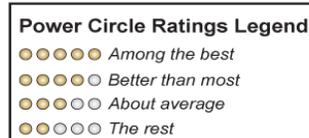
Sales Satisfaction Index Ranking Luxury Brands

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)



NOTE: Jaguar is included in the study but not ranked due to small sample size.

Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2012 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) StudySM

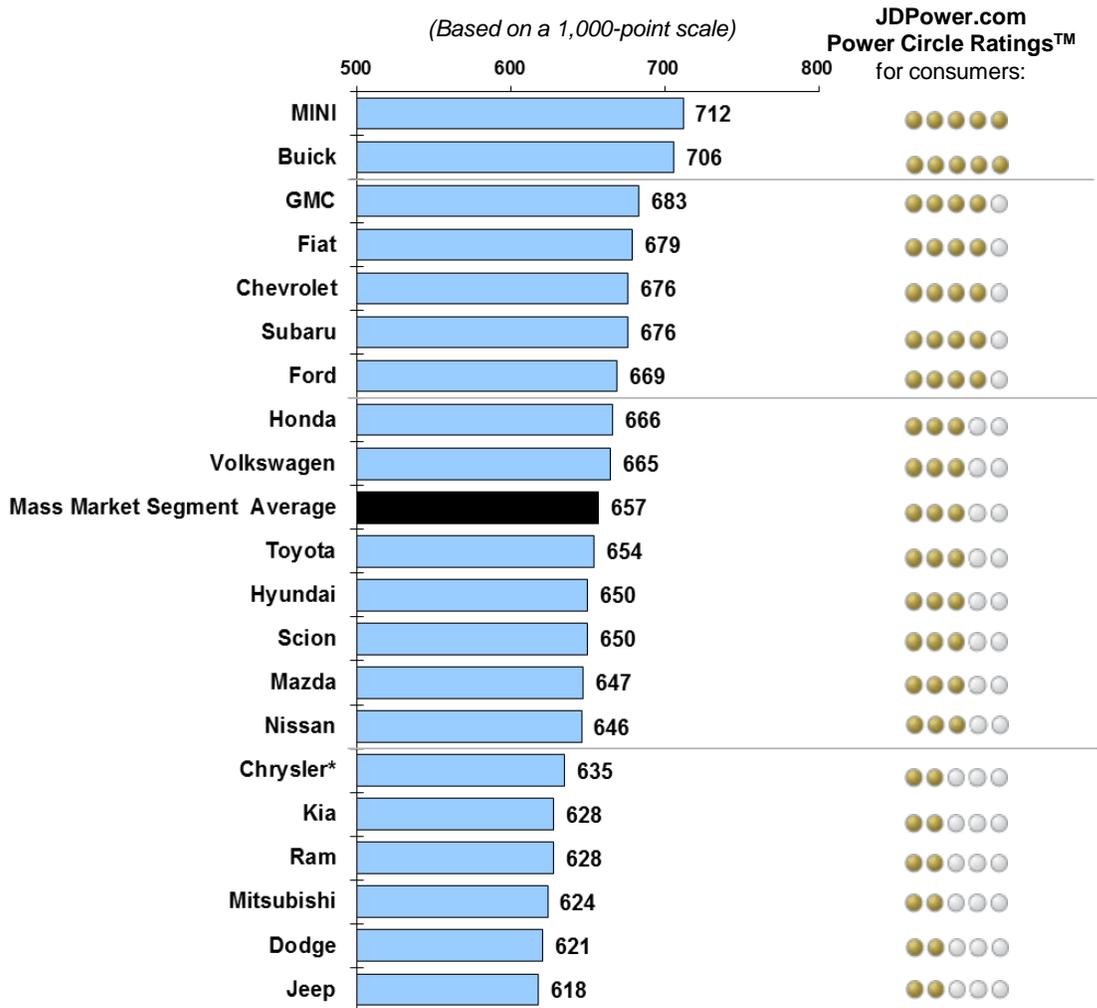


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Sales Satisfaction Index Ranking Mass Market Brands

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)



NOTE: Suzuki is included in the study but not ranked due to small sample size.

*Chrysler brand, not Chrysler Group LLC.

Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2012 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) StudySM

Power Circle Ratings Legend

- Among the best
- Better than most
- About average
- The rest

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