



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports: For Automotive Manufacturer Websites, Striking the Right Balance Between Branding and Usability Is Key to Satisfying Vehicle Shoppers

Honda Ranks Highest among Manufacturer Websites in Satisfying New-Vehicle Shoppers

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 27 July 2010 — Auto manufacturer websites that focus primarily on brand image promotion and interesting design features rather than usability may be hindering vehicle shoppers in their search for information, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2010 Manufacturer Website Evaluation StudySM (MWES)—Wave 2 released today.

The semi-annual study, now in its 11th year, finds that websites that maintain focus on usability, along with branding and design features, are the most successful in satisfying vehicle shoppers. For example, two high-performing sites, Honda and Kia, each focus on usability and allow shoppers to access information quickly and easily. As a result, both Honda and Kia perform well in each of the four measures examined in the study: speed, appearance, navigation and information/content.

“The Honda and Kia websites are prime examples of particularly straightforward sites that focus on providing appropriate information to shoppers easily and quickly, which has been a crucial element in their strong MWES performances during the past 12 months,” said Arianne Walker, director of marketing and media research at J.D. Power and Associates.

In contrast, some of the lowest-ranking websites use an edgy, brand-centric design that put marketing goals ahead of meeting shopper needs. As a result, they perform particularly poorly in the appearance measure. Certain design elements on these sites hinder speed, ease of navigation and user access to information and content. For example, some websites feature links to streaming music and options for selecting the website background scheme, which distract users from vehicle shopping. Other websites deviate from traditional pull-down menus in an effort to incorporate brand logos into the site design, which forces shoppers to learn an entirely new navigation scheme.

“Sites can miss the mark when traditional navigation is ignored for the sake of including interesting design features,” said Walker. “Shoppers expect sites to function a certain way based on their experiences with other websites. Failing to follow navigation conventions often makes it difficult for website shoppers to find the information they seek.”

Other sites manage to achieve a more equitable balance between incorporating unique design elements and usability. For example, the MINI website uses a branding-oriented design scheme and non-traditional visual elements and images. However, this is balanced by the use of traditional navigation menus throughout the website.

“The desire to provide a sense of the brand and personalities for the vehicle models depicted on the website can and should be considered when establishing a web presence,” said Walker. “However, achieving success in this area is highly dependent upon balancing strong visual branding with intuitive usability.”

Honda ranks highest among automotive manufacturer websites for usefulness in new-vehicle shopping with an index score of 871 on a 1,000-point scale. Following Honda in the rankings are Kia (868), Mazda (866), Acura (860), and Infiniti (860).

The 2010 Manufacturer Website Evaluation Study—Wave 2 is based on evaluations from more than 10,621 new-vehicle shoppers who indicated they will be in the market for a new vehicle within the next 24 months. The study was fielded in May 2010.

About J.D. Power and Associates

Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., 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. 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.

About The McGraw-Hill Companies:

Founded in 1888, The McGraw-Hill Companies (NYSE: MHP) is a global information and education company providing knowledge, insights and analysis in the financial, education and business information sectors through leading brands including Standard & Poor's, McGraw-Hill Education, Platts, and J.D. Power and Associates. The Corporation has more than 280 offices in 40 countries. Sales in 2009 were \$5.95 billion. Additional information is available at <http://www.mcgraw-hill.com/>.

J.D. Power and Associates Media Relations Contacts:

John Tews; Troy, Mich.; (248) 312-4119; media.relations@jdpa.com

Syvetril Perryman; Westlake Village, Calif.; (805) 418-8103; media.relations@jdpa.com

No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release without the express prior written consent of J.D. Power and Associates. www.jdpower.com/corporate

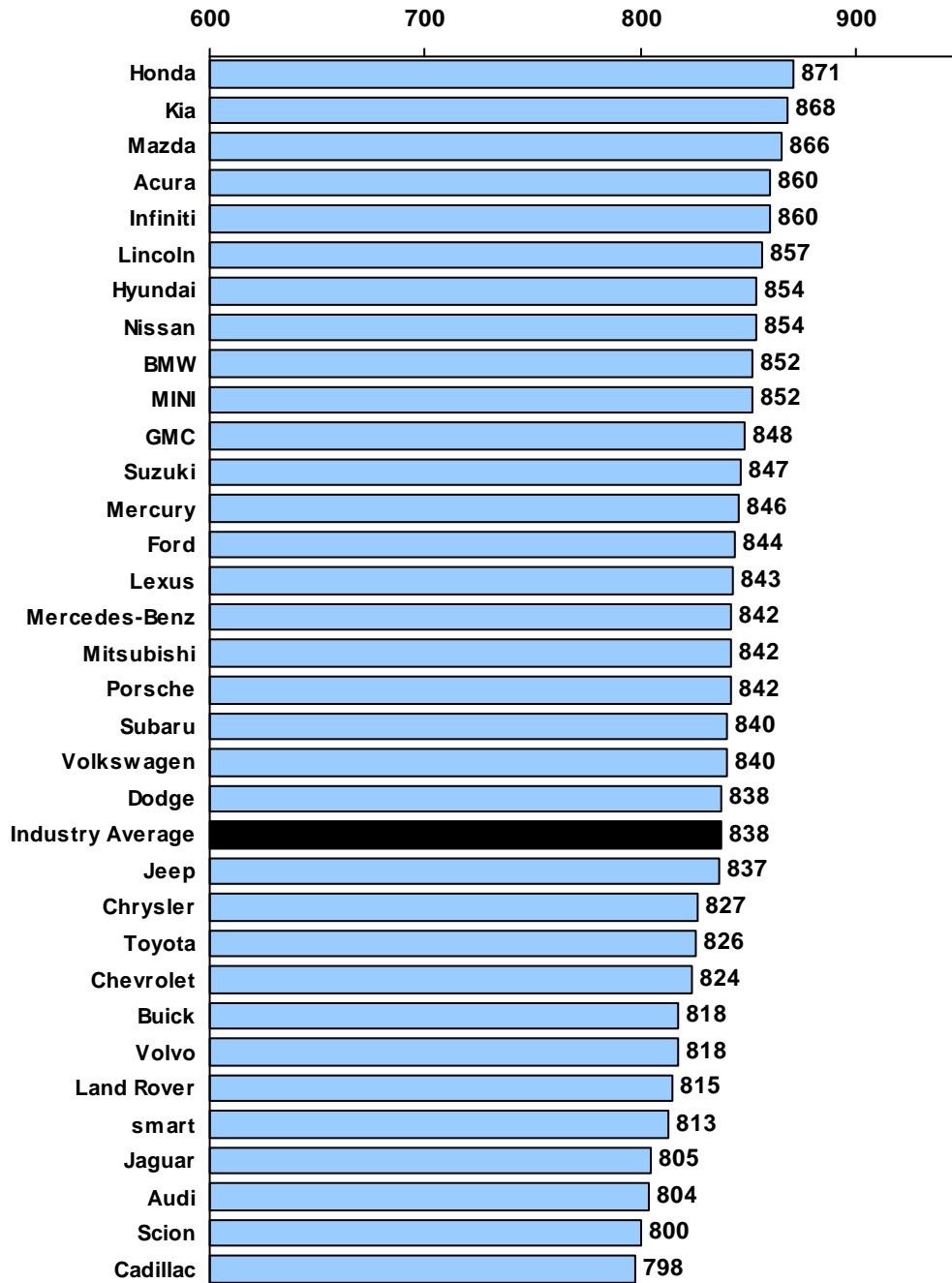
#

(Page 2 of 2)

NOTE: One chart follows.

J.D. Power and Associates 2010 Manufacturer Web Site Evaluation StudySM—Wave 2

Manufacturer Web Site Ranking (Based on a 1,000-point scale)



Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2010 Manufacturer Web Site Evaluation StudySM—Wave 2

Charts and graphs extracted from this press release must be accompanied by a statement identifying J.D. Power and Associates as the publisher and the J.D. Power and Associates 2010 Manufacturer Web Site Evaluation StudySM—Wave 2 as the source. Rankings are based on numerical scores, and not necessarily on statistical significance. No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release or J.D. Power and Associates survey results without the express prior written consent of J.D. Power and Associates.