



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports: Maintaining Consistency between Home Pages and Model Pages Is Critical to Usability and Satisfaction With Automotive Brand Websites

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

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 26 January 2011 — In addition to providing new-vehicle shoppers with adequate information that is easy to access, the most useful automotive brand websites must also provide a consistently satisfying experience across all points of entry, including the home page and model-level pages, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Manufacturer Website Evaluation StudySM (MWES)—Wave 1 released today.

For the first time since its inception in 2000, the study examines differences in satisfaction between auto manufacturer website users who entered the website through its home page and those whose point of entry was a model-level page. The study finds that, overall, website users who accessed a website through a model page are significantly more satisfied with their experience than are those who entered the website through the home page. Websites that achieve the highest levels of overall satisfaction and usability perform consistently well among both sets of shoppers.

“Certain brands that perform consistently well among users who enter at the home page and through model pages—such as MINI and Porsche—have navigation schemes that remain the same throughout the website,” said Arianne Walker, director of marketing and media research at J.D. Power and Associates. “This makes it possible for website users to access relevant information from anywhere on the site. This certainly reinforces the fact that automotive brand websites need to be intuitive and should reduce the number of clicks it takes for the user to get to their desired destination.”

In contrast, for some of the lowest-performing websites, there are significant gaps in satisfaction between users who entered the site through the home page and those who gained entry through a model page.

“Websites that are ranked as being the least useful or satisfying tend to have home pages that offer very little model-level information, if any, as well as cumbersome or inconsistent navigation,” said Walker. “Closing the gap between users who enter via the home page and those who use the model page is essential to creating a useful and satisfying experience for the consumer. From whichever point they enter a site, users should have an equally satisfying experience.

The semiannual study, now in its 12th year, measures the usefulness of automotive manufacturer websites during the new-vehicle shopping process by examining four key measures: speed, appearance, navigation and information/content.

Honda ranks highest with a score of 836 on a 1,000-point scale, and performs particularly well in the information/content, navigation and speed measures. Rounding out the top five automotive websites are Mazda

(818), MINI (815), Porsche (814) and Acura (813). The most improved brands in 2011 include Cadillac (which improves by 15 rank positions) and Porsche (which improves by 14 rank positions).

According to Walker, much of Cadillac's improvement in 2011 comes from improved navigation, which was added on top of image and branding updates that were initiated early in 2010. Porsche's improvement from 2010 is primarily due to changes in navigation and design that provide users with clearer, more readable page layouts.

"Whenever a website incorporates image and brand changes, it involves a certain amount of risk; however, taking these risks allows manufacturers and marketers to take advantage of the dynamic, changeable nature of the Internet," said Walker. "Compared with changing the design of a vehicle model, changing a website provides a relatively low-cost opportunity to experiment, and even allows for reversal of the changes if the experiment doesn't work. However, it's important to keep in mind that changes should include some reasonable payoff for the website user. In fact, users will be more accepting of experimentation if the payoff is clear to them."

The 2011 Manufacturer Website Evaluation Study—Wave 1 is based on evaluations from more than 10,200 new-vehicle shoppers who indicate they will be in the market for a new vehicle within the next 24 months. The study was fielded in November 2010.

About J.D. Power and Associates

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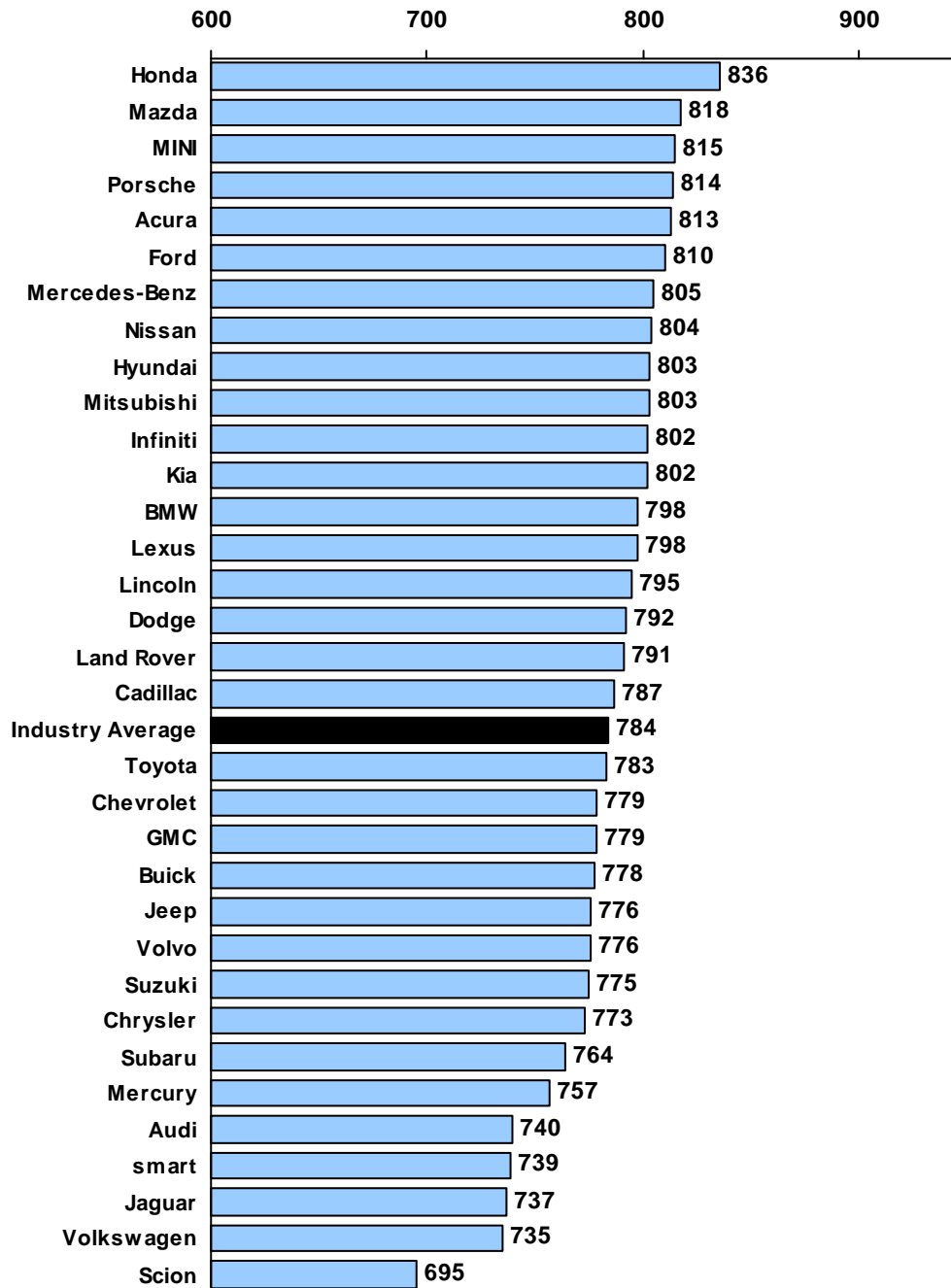
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NOTE: One chart follows.

J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Manufacturer Website Evaluation StudySM—Wave 1

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



Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Manufacturer Website Evaluation StudySM—Wave 1

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