

AutoPacific's 2009 Vehicle Satisfaction Award Highlights Consumer Opinion As Industry Struggles

By Dan Hall

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National Survey Measures Satisfaction with New Vehicles

TUSTIN, Calif. (May 19, 2009) - In the most challenging auto sales market in years, AutoPacific today announced its 13th Annual Vehicle Satisfaction Awards (VSA). For the second straight year, Cadillac ranks highest among new car owners, taking the Highest Satisfaction Brand honors even with the turmoil surrounding General Motors and the industry as a whole.

Overall brand satisfaction ratings among Hyundai purchasers jumped 11 positions earning Hyundai 2009 Rising Star honors. This positive move was more than any other manufacturer in the survey. Hyundai scored higher in 40 of 48 rating categories in 2009 compared with 2008. Two Hyundai products took VSAs this year: the Genesis in the Aspirational Luxury Car category and the Sonata in the Premium Mid-size car class.

"These are difficult times, with news of automaker bankruptcies, companies restructuring and dealer closures a daily occurrence," says George Peterson, president of AutoPacific. "Clearly, the dynamics surrounding the Vehicle Satisfaction Award in 2009 are far different from anything we've seen in many years. Winners needed to overachieve to earn their awards."

AutoPacific's Vehicle Satisfaction Award is an industry benchmark for measuring how satisfied an owner is with his/her new car or light truck. This study by the Southern California-based automotive research firm summarizes the results of its 2009 model year vehicle satisfaction data and analysis.

"Vehicles that score highest in the Vehicle Satisfaction Awards hit the mark with their buyers by delivering value and satisfaction across a wide range of attributes," says Peterson. "The winners perform well in 48 separate categories that objectively measure the ownership experience."

The vehicle - car or truck - registering highest overall satisfaction in 2009 is the Lexus LS. The LS scored 99 points above the industry average to place first among all 2009-model year vehicles in AutoPacific's survey of more than 25,000 new vehicle owners and lessees. The truck or SUV with the highest overall satisfaction score is the Cadillac Escalade, contributing to Cadillac's win as the top-ranked brand for vehicle satisfaction.

At the manufacturer level, multiple top-ranked award winners are: Toyota with six winners (Toyota 3, Lexus 2, Scion 1), Ford with four (Ford 3, Lincoln 1), Hyundai/Kia with three (Hyundai 2, Kia 1), Chrysler with 2 (Dodge 1, Jeep 1) and General Motors with 2 (Cadillac 1, Chevrolet 1). Honda, Land Rover, Mitsubishi, Porsche and Volkswagen each took top honors in one segment.

The buyers of vehicles included in the Vehicle Satisfaction research purchased or leased their new vehicles during the 4th Quarter of 2008, as the public was just realizing that a major economic downturn was occurring.

"In a year that promises to be the toughest in more than a decade, car buyers are being especially prudent, and the data we've analyzed for the Vehicle Satisfaction Award will help this year's customers make wise purchase decisions," says Peterson. "We've found that more than 25% of respondents are positively influenced by awards like the VSA when deciding on a car and this trend will certainly continue given the economy."

Top 2009 model year performers are:

HIGHEST SATISFACTION BRAND: Cadillac

2009 RISING STAR: Hyundai

PASSENGER CARS:

Premium Luxury Car	Lexus LS
Aspirational Luxury Car	Hyundai Genesis
Luxury Large Car	Lincoln Town Car
Luxury Mid-Size Car	Lexus ES
Premium Mid-Size Car	Hyundai Sonata
Mid-Size Car	Ford Fusion
Image Compact Car	Toyota Prius
Compact Car	Mitsubishi Lancer
Economy Car	Honda Fit
Sports Car	Porsche 911
Sporty Car	Scion tC

LIGHT TRUCKS:

Large Pickup	Dodge Ram 1500
Compact Pickup	Ford Explorer Sport Trac
Luxury Sport Utility	Cadillac Escalade
Large Sport Utility	Chevrolet Tahoe
Premium Mid-Size Sport Utility	Ford Explorer
Mid-Size Sport Utility	Jeep Liberty
Luxury Crossover SUV	Land Rover LR2
Large Crossover SUV	Mazda CX-9
Premium Mid-Size Crossover SUV	Toyota Venza
Mid-Size Crossover SUV	Volkswagen Tiguan
Compact Crossover SUV	Kia Sportage
Minivan	Toyota Sienna

AutoPacific is a future-oriented automotive marketing and product-consulting firm. Every year AutoPacific publishes a wide variety of syndicated studies on the automotive industry. The firm also conducts extensive proprietary research and consulting for auto manufacturers, distributors, marketers and suppliers worldwide. Company headquarters and its state-of-the-art automotive research facility are in Tustin, California, with an affiliate office in the Detroit area.

Additional information can be found on AutoPacific's websites: www.autopacific.com and www.vehiclevoice.com.

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