

2009 Synovate Quality Awards announced

Issued by [Ipsos](#)

29 May 2009

Synovate has announced the 2009 Synovate Quality Awards for Sales and Service Satisfaction in the automotive industry. These awards recognise service excellence and are acknowledged as the highest accolade for customer service in the South African motor industry.

Richard Rice, Global Motoresearch Sales and Marketing Director, comments on the awards saying that, "the number of Gold Awards for Sales in both the Passenger Vehicle and Light Commercial Vehicle segments is really incredible this year and the manufacturers have unquestionably done a fantastic job in keeping new customers happy." Synovate's focus going forward though is really to ensure that the results for satisfaction with service reach as high levels as those for sales do."

The 2008 Synovate Quality Awards are based on interviews with customers who purchased or serviced a vehicle between January and December of 2008 as part of the largest survey of South African vehicle owners. Recognition is given to the outstanding achievers in the following four categories:

- Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle
- Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Passenger Vehicle
- Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle
- Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle.

Rice continues: "Nissan, Mitsubishi and Toyota have really outdone themselves in this year's Quality Awards, getting Gold Awards for both Sales and Service in both categories. This is testament to the fact that these manufacturers are working hard at the relationship with their customer as a whole, from the first point of contact and all service encounters after that."

Awards at a glance:

Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle

Gold: BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Nissan, Toyota, Audi, Volvo, Volkswagen, MINI, Land Rover, Chevrolet, Mitsubishi

Silver: Opel, Renault, Mazda, Ford, Fiat

Bronze: Peugeot, Chrysler / Jeep / Dodge

Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Passenger Vehicle

Gold: Nissan, Mitsubishi, Toyota

Silver: Audi, Chevrolet, BMW, Mazda, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, Volkswagen, Opel

Bronze: Ford, Land Rover, Chrysler / Jeep / Dodge, Mini, Renault

Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle

Gold: Nissan, Toyota, Mitsubishi, Isuzu, Opel

Silver: Mazda, Ford, Fiat

Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle

Gold: Toyota, Mitsubishi, Nissan, Isuzu

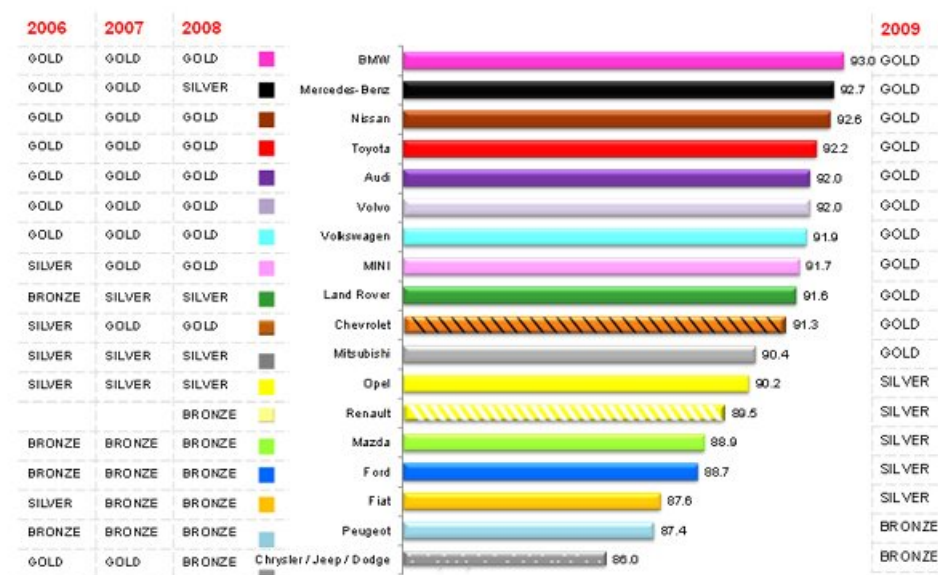
Silver: Mazda, Opel, Ford

Bronze: Fiat

The category of **Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle** consists of 11 Gold Award winners this year. BMW tops the ranking with a score of 93.0%, compared to last year's winning score of 93.9%. BMW is followed by Mercedes-Benz (92.7%), Nissan (92.6%) and Toyota (92.2%) Other Gold Award winners include Audi, Volvo, Volkswagen, MINI, Land Rover, Chevrolet and Mitsubishi. "To the benefit of the consumer most customers expect to enjoy a gold quality experience," says Roger Gibbs newly appointed Head of Motoresearch Clients Services in South Africa.

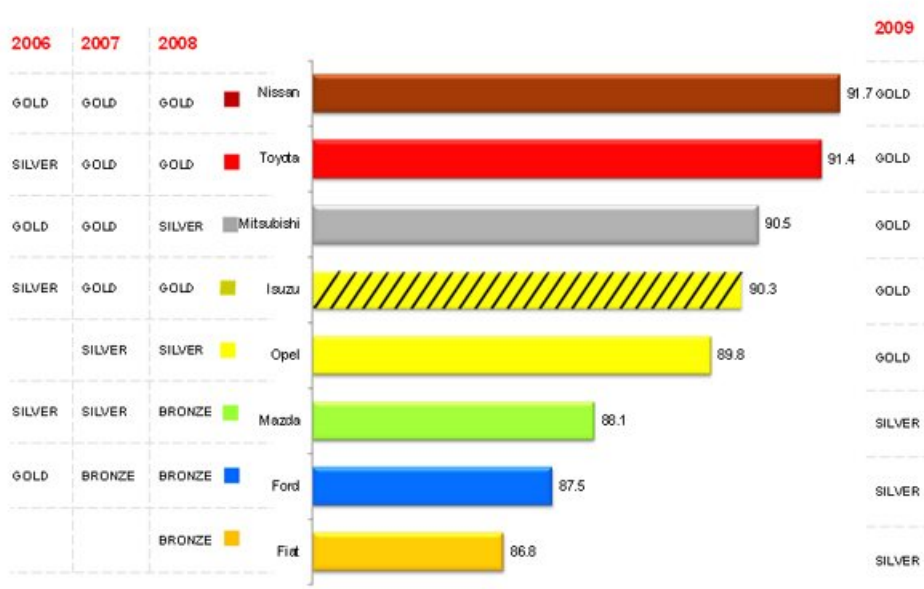
The average score for this category in 2008 is 91.4%. "Manufacturers are perfecting the sales process," says Gibbs. "Especially in times of decreased sales, manufacturers are doing everything they can to ensure customers are happy when buying a car from their dealerships and this is definitely one of the ways of securing repeat business and loyalty to their brand. Scores are very competitive and there are shifts in the rankings each year."

Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle



The industry average for **Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle** has stabilised at over 90% - this year at 90.2%. Top spot goes to Nissan for the second year running with a high average score of 91.7%. Toyota and Mitsubishi follow with 91.4% and 90.5% respectively. Isuzu gets the fourth Gold Award in this category with 90.3% followed by Opel with 89.8%. Gibbs commented on the high scores in this category, saying that "historically, satisfaction with sales in the Light Commercial Vehicle category maintained lower levels than in the Passenger Vehicle category. It is great to see that Light Commercial Vehicle owners are receiving service of the same high standard as Passenger Vehicle owners."

Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle

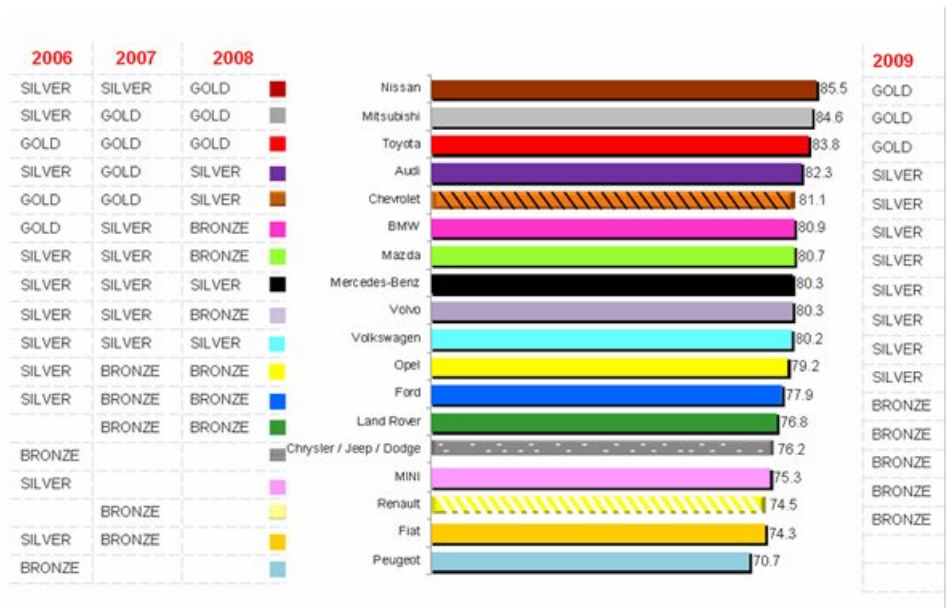


The top achiever in **Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Passenger Vehicle** is Nissan with 85.5%. Mitsubishi and Toyota also earn Gold Awards with 84.6% and 83.8% respectively.

“The service process is a relatively complex one and is generally a grudge purchase for consumers,” states Gibbs, “and this is why we find lower scores in these categories. Regarding satisfaction with the service, respondents are asked about their experience with arriving at the dealership, being booked in on time, being kept in the loop about progress on their vehicle and having their vehicle fixed right the first time, amongst a host of many other aspects. We have identified some softer issues that have surfaced as influencers in determining satisfaction with this process and starting to monitor these as way to ensure that the service process reaches the levels of satisfaction that the sales process has reached.”

Nevertheless, the industry average for servicing has increased over the years. This year, the industry score for servicing passenger vehicles stands at 80.3% - maintaining the record high average it reached last year.

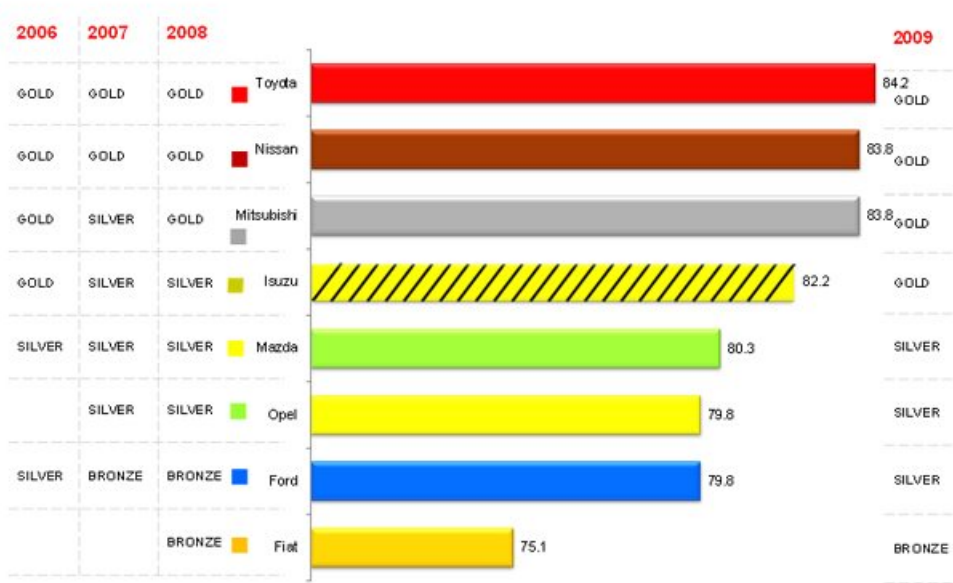
Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Passenger Vehicle



The average **satisfaction score for servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle** has reached a record high at 82.2% this year. Typically Light Commercial Vehicle servicing yields a higher satisfaction score than Passenger Vehicles due to the fact that with less electrically operated items, these are easier to service.

First place in this category goes to Toyota for a second consecutive year with a score of 84.2%. Hot on its heels is Mitsubishi with 83.8% followed by Nissan with 83.8% and Isuzu with 82.2%.

Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle



“There is no question that manufacturers are working extra hard to ensure the customers they have are happy and are building reputations for themselves as being customer-focussed and eager to please. Whilst this ranking is based on sales and services processes that happened last year, we can expect these scores to increase in the next reading due to the

competitive market that 2009 has brought,” concludes Gibbs.

NOTE: Some brands are not included in this study due to non-participation or small sample size. These include : Honda, Alfa, Smart, Jaguar, Hummer, Lexus

These results are based on research conducted from January 2008 – December 2008

Source: Synovate Quality Awards 2009

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