

2011 Synovate Quality Awards: Winners announced

Issued by [Ipsos](#)

31 May 2011

Synovate has announced the 2011 Synovate Quality Awards for Sales and Service experience 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. Gold Award winners include Audi, Toyota, Isuzu, Mitsubishi, Chevrolet and Lexus.

The 2011 Synovate Quality Awards are based on interviews with customers who purchased or serviced a vehicle between January and December 2010. This study makes up part of the largest survey of South African vehicle owners.

Recognition is given to the outstanding achievers in the following four categories:

- Passenger Vehicle (PC) Purchasing Experience
- PC Servicing Experience
- Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) Purchasing Experience
- LCV Servicing Experience

"The awards this year demonstrate how manufacturers have committed themselves to distinguishing themselves and breaking away from the frontrunners," states Richard Rice, Sales and Marketing Director at Synovate South Africa. "Our previous Quality Awards for Sales and Service yielded a higher number of gold awards but the scores across the categories have improved, indicating a higher level of satisfaction with the sales and service experience than previously. Simply put, the standard of quality has improved and the competition has steepened."

Awards: Passenger Vehicles

PC Purchasing Experience

Gold: Audi

Silver: Volkswagen, Chevrolet, Toyota

Bronze: Opel, Renault, Mercedes-Benz, Lexus, Ford, Mazda, Peugeot

PC Servicing Experience

Gold: Mitsubishi, Lexus, Chevrolet

Silver: Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz

Bronze: Audi, Toyota, Mazda, Opel

Audi takes top spot for quality for **PC Purchasing Experience**. "Although Audi has won Gold Awards for this category before, this year it has pulled away from other leaders in this category to establish itself as the frontrunner," states Rice. "This move is really a beneficial one to the automotive consumer because it sets a higher standard for customer experience."

This category enjoys the highest average score for the quality of customer experience at 90%. Audi's score is far above average at 95%. Previously the highest score for this category has been 93%.

The category of **PC Servicing Experience** was topped by Mitsubishi, Lexus and Chevrolet - all three with a score of 87%. The previous gold award winner in this category topped the ranking with 85%. "The service experience is typically a more difficult area for manufacturers as it is not as exciting for the consumer as the initial sales process. They are therefore

harder to please and scores are usually lower for service than they are for sales," comments Rice. The average satisfaction for this category is 78%. "However, the scores have improved since the last awards for Sales and service, which indicates an increased effort to make this interaction as pleasant as possible."

Awards: Light commercial vehicles

LCV Purchasing Experience

Gold: Isuzu, Toyota, Chevrolet

Silver: Mitsubishi, Mazda, Ford

Bronze: Nissan

LCV Servicing Experience

Gold: Mitsubishi, Toyota, Chevrolet, Isuzu, Nissan

Silver: Ford, Mazda

Bronze: Fiat

The category of **LCV Purchasing Experience** yields three Gold Awards - for Isuzu, Toyota and Chevrolet respectively. Isuzu scored a high 93% with Toyota and Chevrolet at 92%. This category boasts a high average score of 88%.

The top achievers for the category of **LCV Servicing Experience** consisted of five gold award winners - namely Mitsubishi, Toyota, Chevrolet, Isuzu and Nissan who's scores were neck and neck between 84% and 86%. The average score for this category is 80%.

"Isuzu, Toyota and Chevrolet were awarded Golds in both purchasing and service for LCV which is a great testament to how seriously these manufacturers take the branded experience they offer their customers and loyalty into the future," states Rice. Synovate questions respondents on the quality of the interaction and focuses not only on the hard measurements but also on the softer, more emotional attributes. This directly relates to the degree of customer loyalty a brand will enjoy. Getting the softer issues right can be a far greater challenge than just making sure that the customer was given all the right information, as an example. What we focus on is the overall customer experience."

More about the survey:

These rankings are based on Synovate's Competitive Customer Experience (CCE) which has been conducted in South Africa for the past 20 years. The survey was conducted over a 12 month period between January and December 2010 and is part of a study that measures the perceptions of more than 33 000 passenger and light commercial vehicles.

The questionnaire covers all elements of both the sales and service process, from the appearance and staff at the dealership itself to the financing or pricing aspects of the sale or service and then to the post-sale or post-service follow up. Complaint resolution is also a key part of the questionnaire for customers who do report problems.

The results are endorsed by the Department of Trade and Industry (the dti) and reflect their intention to encourage competitive performance in the automotive industry. The endorsement also demonstrates the dti's confidence in the research methodology and the reliability and validity of the results.

Not all the brands are included in the survey for various reasons. This could be because the manufacturer chooses not to participate or because the sample that has been achieved is too small. Another reason some manufacturers do not get published is due to the length of participation in the study - a full year of participation is required before a brand can be included in the rankings.

The results are based on more than 33 000 interviews. Synovate interviews about 83% of the PC market and 98% of the

LCV market.

About Synovate

Synovate, the market research arm of Aegis Group plc, generates consumer insights that drive competitive marketing solutions. The network provides clients with cohesive global support and a comprehensive suite of research solutions. Synovate employs over 6, 000 staff in 121 cities across 63 countries.

More information on Synovate can be found at www.synovate.com and www.synovate.com/southafrica.

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