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Top manufacturers in tight tussle for awards

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Nissan has worked its way to the top of the Synovate Quality Awards in a closely-contested and high-scoring annual survey of sales and service satisfaction in South Africa's motor industry.

The brand heads the list of Synovate Gold achievers in three of the four survey categories -Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Passenger Vehicle, Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle and Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle.

It ties for third place in Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle. The rankings are based on the results of Synovate's Competitive Customer Satisfaction Index (CCSI).

"Nissan gets the special Synovate Platinum for its determined and focused effort," said Jon Salters, the global research company's Managing Director for Sub-Saharan Africa.

"This award is presented, at Synovate's discretion, to a brand whose performance is outstanding and exceptional. Nissan hardly featured in the survey last year, so it's a remarkable move up the rankings."

Salters says the authoritative survey, in its 15th year, has become the "excellence benchmark for the South African motor industry".

"Nine motor manufacturers have earned their Synovate Gold in Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle."

Mercedes Benz is at the top of Synovate Gold in Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle, with 92.8 percent, followed by Toyota (92.6%), Chrysler /Jeep (92.2%), Nissan (92.2%), Jaguar (92.0%), Volvo (91.7%), BMW (91.3%), Audi (91.2%) and Volkswagen (91.0%).

"These figures show that manufacturers are taking their customers seriously. There is little separating the top nine," Salters comments.

The percentage scores for Synovate Gold in the Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Passenger Vehicle are also very close: Nissan (83.1%), BMW (82.6%), Toyota (82.0%), Jaguar (81.2%), Chevrolet (80.7%).

"Clearly, manufacturers are intent on delivering customer satisfaction in both the sales and service transactions," Salters says.

In Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle, Nissan (92.7%) and Mitsubishi (92.6%) take the Synovate Gold, while in Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle, Nissan (81.3%), Toyota (81.2%), Mitsubishi (80.1%) and Isuzu (79.7%) get their Synovate Gold too.

"Synovate calculates the various gold, silver and bronze categories by looking at the margins of error in the final statistics. The closeness of the scores, and not the percentages, determines their category," Salters explains.

He says the survey, undertaken over 12 months up until December 2005, measures the perceptions of more than 55 000 passenger car and light commercial vehicle owners.

It is endorsed by the Department of Trade and Industry (dti) and, because it is done telephonically, results are accurate and immediate when compared with mail-based surveys.

"We are measuring what is crucial to the customer, so the industry can act accordingly," Salters concludes.

Other results are:

Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle:
Silver: Chevrolet, Mitsubishi, Mini, Opel, Fiat; **Bronze:** Land Rover, Peugeot, Ford, Mazda.
Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Passenger Vehicle:
Silver: Mitsubishi, Audi, VW, Ford, Opel, Fiat, Mazda, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, Mini; **Bronze:** Chrysler/Jeep, Peugeot.
Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle:
Silver: Isuzu, Toyota, Ford, Mazda.
Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle:
Silver: Ford, Mazda.

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