

# Audi comes out tops in Ipsos quality survey

Audi was once again the shining star in the annual Ipsos Passenger Car Product Survey with seven Gold awards.



The quality of the cars and light commercials sold in the country has improved to such a degree in recent years that Ipsos SA, which has been tracking the automotive industry in this country since the early 1990s, says it has revamped the scoring system for its annual Vehicle Quality Survey.

Facts and figures obtained from telephonic interviews conducted in 2015 with more than 8,000 owners of 17 participating brands were used to compile the survey. The brands involved equated to 77% of the total number of passenger cars and light commercial vehicles (LCV) sold through retail dealer channels. It was made up of 71% of car sales and 90% of the LCVs retailed.

"We changed our approach and the methodology used in this annual survey in 2015 because we, as a syndicate, were finding that a high proportion of inherent vehicle design issues and shortcomings were not being reported and that the frequency of these complaints had increased over the past few years," explained Patrick Busschau, the Ipsos automotive business unit director.

"This is actually a credit to the industry because the issues that bother customers nowadays are more likely related to their individual expectations around the product experience as opposed to straight and simple defects, which are rated on a scale of the number of problems per 100 vehicles.

"The quality of vehicles being produced today is very high, with few significant problems.

"Admittedly, there are many more product recalls by the manufacturers these days, but most of these are precautionary and provide the dealer and manufacturer with the opportunity to show their commitment to customer satisfaction by handling the recall well.

"So the goalposts have changed and we have changed our measurement accordingly to allow for the design issues to be incorporated into the measurement index figure.

"However, there is a weighting applied where actual quality defects have a slightly higher impact on the customer experience and so a proportionately greater impact on the scoring."

## **Winning models**

While Audi was the biggest winner, the next best was Toyota with five Golds followed by Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz and Nissan (two Golds each) and Volvo (one Gold).

Audi won Gold as the Best Luxury Car Brand overall, as well as Best Top Hatch (A1 and A3 Sportback), Best Medium Sedan (A4 and A5 Sportback), Best Top Sedan (A3) and Best Sports Coupe (A5 coupe).

Toyota won its five Passenger Car Gold awards for the Best Small Hatch (Yaris), Best Top Hatch (Auris), Best Small Sedan (Corolla Quest), Best New Volume Passenger Car (Corolla Quest) and Best Volume Passenger Car Brand.

Volkswagen won two Golds for Best Small Sedan (Polo) and Best New Volume Passenger Car model (Up). Nissan's two Golds came from the Best Entry-Level Car (Micra) and Best Volume Passenger Car Brand overall. In addition, the Nissan Micra, with an index of 49, was the highest-rated passenger car overall.

Mercedes collected Gold for the Best Top Executive (E-Class) and Best Multipurpose Vehicle (B-Class). Volvo earned Gold for the Best New Luxury Passenger Car (V40).

Volvo also won two Gold awards in the Recreational Vehicle Category, for Best Small Recreational Vehicle (XC60) and Best New Recreational Vehicle (XC60), while Audi won Gold in the Small RV category (Q5). Volkswagen took Gold for the Best Large Recreational Vehicle (Touareg). The Touareg, with an index score of 22, was also the vehicle with the highest product quality rating overall.

Toyota made a virtual clean sweep of Gold awards in the LCV category with seven. The Hilux collected Golds for the Best Petrol Single Cab, Best Diesel Single Cab and Best Diesel Double Cab. The Hilux was also the best One-Tonne Single Cab Commercial Vehicle Brand and the Best Double Cab Commercial Vehicle Brand, while Toyota was the Best Light Commercial Vehicle Brand overall.

## **Hilux Single Cab**

The best quality rating for LCVs overall was achieved by the Hilux single cab petrol with an index figure of 37.

Nissan won Gold for the Best Three-quarter Tonne Pick-up (NP200) and the Best New Light Commercial Vehicle (Hardbody petrol single cab). General Motors SA (GMSA) took Gold for the Best Diesel Single Cab with its Isuzu KB.

There are also awards for the best manufacturing plants, although these are about as unscientific as they come.

The GMSA plant in Port Elizabeth won Gold for the Best Passenger Car Plant, although it only makes the Chevrolet Spark, which won nothing outright but was the best scoring locally made vehicle with 58 problems per 100 vehicles. That is how Ipsos decides on the award.

Bizarrely, GMSA took Gold ahead of Mercedes and Toyota, despite Mercedes' East London plant having recently received an award for the best Mercedes manufacturing facility in the world. Toyota won the Gold award for the Best Light Commercial Vehicle Plant for its facility in Prospecton.

*Source: Business Day*

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