

# Gold awards to top manufacturers

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The Synovate Quality Awards have once again resulted in a close battle between South Africa's vehicle manufacturers to reach the top of the ranking in Synovate's annual survey of Sales and Service satisfaction in the local motor industry.

In the largest survey of South African vehicle owners, Synovate Gold achievers are recognised in four categories:

- Customer Satisfaction when Purchasing a Passenger Vehicle;
- Customer Satisfaction when Servicing a Passenger Vehicle;
- Customer Satisfaction when Purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle; and
- Customer Satisfaction when Servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle.

The rankings are based on the results of Synovate's Competitive Customer Satisfaction Index (CCSI) which is a survey that has been conducted in South Africa for the last 16 years.

Richard Rice, Synovate's Automotive Client Services Director says, "The Synovate Quality Awards are the premier rewards for the delivery of customer satisfaction in the South African automotive market and the battle for top positions is extremely hard fought."

MINI has fought its way to first place in Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle – displaying a remarkable improvement from last years ratings in this category.

Mitsubishi took the top Gold award for satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle.

Rice comments that "the industry has achieved remarkable results in the Sales environment. It is particularly commendable that the manufacturers have continued to strive for excellence in the delivery of customer service given the fact that vehicle sales have reached record highs in the last year. Typically, in this type of scenario, customer service takes second place but the number of manufacturers who have achieved Gold status demonstrates that this is not the case in the automotive sector."

Toyota topped the rankings for service satisfaction, in both the Passenger Car and Light Commercial Vehicle categories. Says Rice, "A great achievement for a brand that has such a large dealer network where consistently high levels of service are required on an ongoing basis to achieve a top ranking."

The category recognising satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle yielded ten Gold Awards. Hot on the heels of MINI (93.5%) in this category come Volvo (93.3%), Chevrolet (93.2%), Mercedes Benz (92.9%) and BMW (92.4%). The rest of the Gold winners in this category all scored above 91.5% and include Toyota, Jaguar, Audi, Nissan and Chrysler / Jeep.

"On the sales side, we have seen constant improvements over the last ten years and although there was a slight drop when we changed the measurement criteria, the manufacturers and their dealer networks have successfully adapted to new customer expectations and industry satisfaction improved again in 2006," says Rice.

Service satisfaction in the Passenger Car category was highest in the dealerships belonging to Toyota (84.0%), Jaguar (82.8%), Mitsubishi (82.7%), Chevrolet (82.5%), Audi (82.2%) and Nissan (82.0%).

"In the Service environment, the dealer networks are starting to see dramatically increasing volumes of customers which

places a major strain on both their physical and human resources. This wave of new customers is due to the increased sales over the last couple of years. It is, however, encouraging to see that in the tough after-sales environment, the industry has managed to absorb this increase without a drop in satisfaction,” says Rice.

The percentage scores for Synovate Gold in the Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle are also very high and very close: Mitsubishi (91.9%), Toyota (91.7%), Nissan (91.4%) and Isuzu (90.9%).

In Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle, two Gold awards were achieved with Toyota (83.4%) just squeezing past Nissan (83.3%).

“It is great to see that light commercial vehicle owners are receiving service that is on par with their passenger car counterparts’, says Rice, “and this is all due to consistent effort on all fronts in the dealer networks.”

“It is important to note that whilst Synovate does produce a ranking of the brands, the medal categories account for statistical variances in the scores.” Rice explains.

The survey was conducted over a 12 month period between January and December 2006 and is part of a study that measures the perceptions of more than 55 000 passenger car and light commercial vehicle owners.

The results are endorsed by the Department of Trade and Industry (the dti) and reflect their intention to encourage competitive performance in the South African automotive market. The endorsement also demonstrates the dti’s confidence in the research methodology and the robustness of the results.

“We can look forward to even higher levels of satisfaction into the future as the traditional players as well as the newer entrants consolidate their infrastructure and capacity to deliver ever-improving levels of satisfaction”, concludes Rice.

Other results are:

### **Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Passenger Vehicle:**

**Silver:** Land Rover, Volkswagen, Opel, Mitsubishi;

**Bronze:** Mazda, Ford, Peugeot, Fiat.

### **Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Passenger Vehicle:**

**Silver:** BMW, Volkswagen, Mazda, Volvo, Mercedes-Benz

**Bronze:** Opel, Ford, Land Rover, Fiat.

### **Customer Satisfaction when purchasing a Light Commercial Vehicle:**

**Silver:** Opel, Mazda,

**Bronze:** Ford.

### **Customer Satisfaction when servicing a Light Commercial Vehicle:**

**Silver:** Isuzu, Mitsubishi, Opel, Mazda;

**Bronze:** Ford.

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