

**Product Specialists Help New-Vehicle Owners Understand Technology, Enhance Ownership Experience, Increase Future Demand, J.D. Power Finds**Buick Ranks Highest among Mass Market Brands; Porsche Ranks Highest among Luxury Brands

**COSTA MESA, Calif.:** **EMBARGOED until 1 p.m. EST Thursday, Nov. 10, 2016** — With vehicles becoming increasingly complex, buyers are getting assistance from product specialists to help them learn how to use the technology in their new car, according to the J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) Study,<sup>SM</sup> released today.

The study finds that 24% of owners of luxury vehicles and 16% of owners of mass market vehicles in 2016 worked with both a salesperson and a product specialist when buying or leasing their new car, up from 19% and 15%, respectively, just two years ago.

The product specialist's primary role is to make the owner aware of the array of technology in their new vehicle and help them understand how to use it. For example, the product specialist helps the owner pair their smartphone to the vehicle's Bluetooth system; shows how to operate the navigation system; and explains the vehicle's audio and communication systems. Owners who work with both a salesperson and product specialist are overall more satisfied with the sales experience than those who work only with a salesperson (836 vs. 829, respectively, on a 1,000-point scale).

"Owners can be challenged with the complexity of today's vehicles," said **Chris Sutton, vice president of the automotive retail practice at J.D. Power**. "More dealerships are employing product specialists—and more brands, especially the luxury brands, are requiring that the dealers have them—to help the customer have a more thorough ownership experience with their new car or truck. Having a product specialist show the technology to the owner can really ensure the customer gets the most benefit out of their vehicle."

Sutton noted that explaining the technology or providing a demonstration at the time of the purchase not only makes the owner aware of all of the technologies within their vehicle, but also helps them understand how to use the technology, which means they are more likely to use them, continue to use them, and, because they see the value, want them in their next vehicle.

Two other J.D. Power studies—the J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Tech Experience Index (TXI) Study<sup>SM</sup> and the J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Initial Quality Study<sup>SM</sup> (IQS)—share similar findings that point to the critical nature of assisting owners with the technology in their new vehicle.

According to the TXI Study, owners who learn how to operate the technologies from their dealer have higher overall satisfaction than those who learn how to operate the technologies from another source or from prior experience. The TXI Study finds that across all technologies, there is, on average, a 98-point drop in satisfaction when owners have technologies they say are difficult to use (DTU).

The product specialist can help minimize DTU issues with technology, which can improve satisfaction and positively affect the vehicle's quality. Even though it may operate as intended, when a technology is difficult for an owner to use or understand, it is likely to be considered a quality issue. For example, navigation system difficult to use/poor location ties for the sixth most common problem in IQS. Owners who learn how to use their navigation system from the dealer report 2.0 problems per 100 vehicles (PP100) fewer navigation DTU problems than those who do not get a dealer explanation.

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“Whether it’s taking a few minutes with repeat buyers to refresh their knowledge of the technology or a few hours with first-time buyers, it’s a small investment with long-term benefits,” said Sutton.

### **Brand Sales Satisfaction Rankings**

**Buick** ranks highest in sales satisfaction among mass market brands, with a score of 809. It is the first time Buick has topped the rankings since 2008. **MINI**, which had ranked highest from 2010 through 2015, ranks second (797) and **Chevrolet** ranks third (789). **GMC** ranks fourth (786), giving General Motors three of the four top spots among mass market brands.

**Porsche** ranks highest in sales satisfaction among luxury brands for a second consecutive year, with a score of 824. **Infiniti** ranks second (815); **Mercedes-Benz** third (809); and **BMW** and **Cadillac** tie for fourth (807).

Other key findings of the study include:

- **Technology Trends in Sales Process:** The use of technology, such as tablets and computer displays, by dealers during the sales process is increasing. Among premium owners, 27% say their salesperson used a tablet during the sales process, up from 24% in 2015, while 22% of non-premium owners say their salesperson used a tablet, up from 15%. A tablet is used most frequently to capture information about the buyer, demonstrate vehicle features and display price or payment information.
- **Telephone Remains a Viable Shopping Tool:** Three-fourths of owners say they used the internet during the vehicle-shopping process, yet 42% of all owners say they also used the telephone to call dealers. The top two reasons for calling a dealership are to check vehicle inventory and pricing. Surprisingly, buyer satisfaction is lower among owners who use the internet to shop than among those who do not (823 vs. 843, respectively), while satisfaction is higher among those who call dealers than among those who do not (835 vs. 823).
- **Younger Buyers Are Toughest Customers:** Gen Y<sup>1</sup> buyers are the toughest to please, with sales satisfaction of 824. In contrast, Boomer and Pre-Boomer buyers are the most satisfied, each with sales satisfaction of 836. “Gen Y has high expectations and less experience than their older counterparts with the vehicle-buying process, which are likely contributing to their lower satisfaction,” said Sutton.
- **The Deal Affects Satisfaction:** The study identifies 10 dealership processes that have the greatest effect on sales satisfaction. Five of the processes are part of the working out the deal measure, including providing the customer with straight answers; not pressuring the customer; and not being too pushy to sell the customer additional products. When the dealer adheres to these processes, each can improve sales satisfaction by 35 points or more.

The study, now in its 30th year, measures satisfaction with the sales experience among new-vehicle buyers and rejecters—those who shop a dealership and purchase elsewhere. Buyer satisfaction is based on four measures: working out the deal (15%); salesperson (15%); delivery process (15%); and facility (15%). Rejecter satisfaction is based on five measures: salesperson (10%); fairness of price (4%); experience negotiating (4%); facility (3%); and variety of inventory (3%).

The 2016 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) Study is based on responses from 28,979 buyers who purchased or leased their new vehicle in April or May 2016. The study is a comprehensive analysis of the new-vehicle purchase experience and measures customer satisfaction with the selling dealer (satisfaction

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<sup>1</sup> J.D. Power defines generational groups as Pre-Boomers (born before 1946); Boomers (1946-1964); Gen X (1965-1976); Gen Y (1977-1994); and Gen Z (1995-2004).

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among buyers). The study also measures satisfaction with brands and dealerships that were shopped but ultimately rejected in favor of the selling brand and dealership (satisfaction among rejecters), and was fielded from July through September 2016.

Learn more about the 2016 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) Study at <http://www.jdpower.com/resource/us-sales-satisfaction-index-ssi-study>.

See the online press release at <http://www.jdpower.com/pr-id/2016224>.

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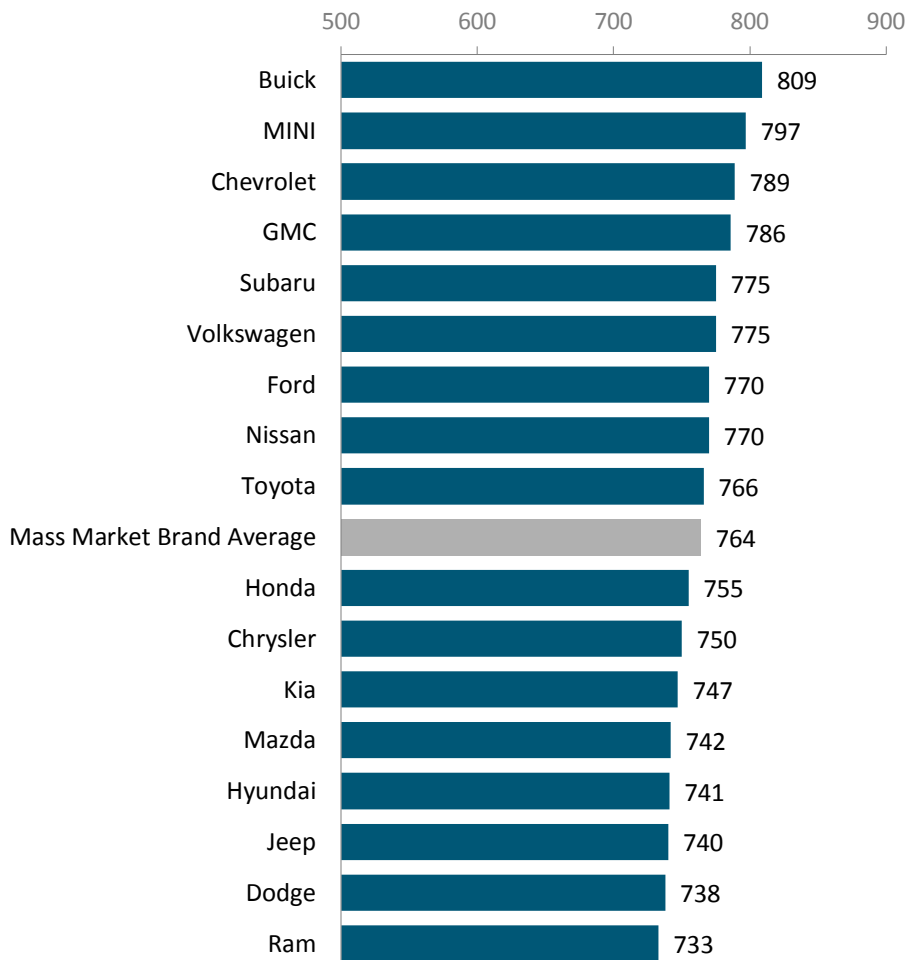
Note: Two charts follow.

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# J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) Study<sup>SM</sup>

## Sales Satisfaction Index Ranking Mass Market Brands

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)



*Note: Included in the study, but not ranked due to small sample size are Fiat and Mitsubishi. Included in the study, but not ranked due to insufficient sample size is smart.*

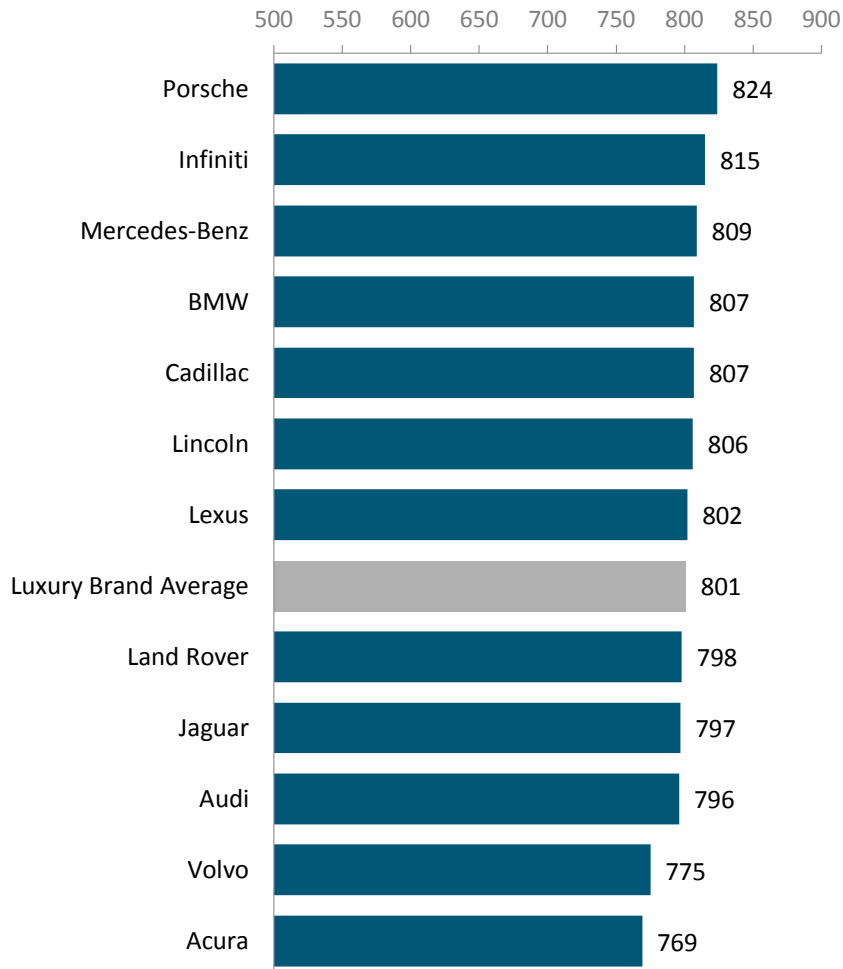
Source: J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) Study<sup>SM</sup>

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# J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) Study<sup>SM</sup>

## Sales Satisfaction Index Ranking Luxury Brands

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)



Source: J.D. Power 2016 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index (SSI) Study<sup>SM</sup>

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