

Another great year for vehicle quality – 2007 Synovate Quality Awards results

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Synovate has announced the winners of the Synovate Quality Awards 2007 for Product Quality. "This year has been an exceptional one for vehicle quality," states Richard Rice, Automotive Client Services Director at Synovate.

"Last year, the average problem count on passenger vehicles was 153 per 100 vehicles. This year the problem count has decreased to 117 per 100 vehicles, an improvement of 23.5% from last year. This is also the best score ever attained by the industry since the inception of the study in 1992," says Rice.

"This is really encouraging for vehicle consumers," he continues. "With expectations consistently increasing, a rise in customer satisfaction with vehicle quality is clearly the result of some very hard work on the manufacturers' side."

The research is part of Synovate's Competitive Customer Satisfaction (CCSI) research which is the largest survey of its kind in the South African market. Part of this survey includes a Product Quality measurement, which is commonly known as PP100 or Problems per 100 Vehicles. Quite literally this survey measures the number of problems new car owners experience with their vehicles in the first few months of ownership. This means that in this survey, a lower score means a better result.

More than 55 000 vehicle owners are interviewed each year and the survey has been extensively used by the manufacturers for more than thirteen years as the benchmark of vehicle quality. Not only is the study utilised by local manufacturers but the information is used by plants exporting vehicles in to South Africa.

There are quite a few shifts in the rankings this year, which is a natural result of new models entering the segments as well as some major improvements amongst others. Most of the traditional top performers have again shown their ability to produce consistently high quality vehicles and although some brands have slipped, there is no question that the industry as a whole has maintained a focus on top quality. This type of jockeying for position makes for a very competitive environment and is one that the consumer can only benefit from.

Passenger Car Category Awards

In the **Best Local Plant Manufacturing Passenger Cars** award, Mercedes-Benz takes top position for the second year in a row with only 57 problems per 100 vehicles. Second position goes to BMW. Opel shares the podium this year with a commendable third place.

In the highly competitive **Best Luxury Car Brand Overall**, Jaguar took first place in a tie with BMW. Last year's winner in this segment, Mercedes-Benz, retained a high ranking and came second this year.

Best Volume Passenger Car Brand Overall went to Honda for the third year in a row. Second and third place went to Chevrolet and Opel respectively.

Light Commercial Vehicle Category Awards

The **Best One Ton Petrol Light Commercial Vehicle Overall** award goes to Toyota and Isuzu in a tie. Nissan, who tied with Toyota in the previous awards, takes second position.

Best One Ton Diesel Light Commercial Vehicle is headed by Isuzu on its own, which scores a low 82 problems per 100

vehicles. The usual contenders in this segment stay in the top three and Nissan and Toyota tie in second spot.

Toyota shares top spot with Opel/Isuzu for the **Best Local Plant Manufacturing Light Commercial Vehicles**. As a change from last year however, Ford/Mazda enters the ranking in second position.

This year the **Best Overall Light Commercial Vehicle Brand** goes to Isuzu. Last year's winner, Toyota, moves to second position with Opel in third position.

Passenger Car Segment Awards

Entry Segment: The Ford Ka retains its spot in first place with 81 problems per 100. The Chevrolet Spark and Toyota Yaris T1 take second and third positions respectively.

The Chevrolet Aveo 5-door now occupies first place in the **Small Hatch** segment. The Honda Jazz, which took Gold for the past three years now shares second position with the much-improved Opel Corsa.

The **Small Sedan** segment is now topped by the Toyota Yaris which scores a very low 42 problems per 100. Chevrolet Aveo 4-door and the Toyota Corolla take the second and third positions respectively.

The **Top Hatch** segment is topped by last year's second placed Honda Civic hatch. The BMW 1 series enters the rankings in second place with a new entrant, the Dodge Caliber taking third place.

The **Top Sedan** segment boasts three winners this year. Gold awards go to the Honda Civic (the only model to retain a spot in the top three), the Volkswagen Jetta and the Mazda 3.

In the **Medium** segment, a three way tie for gold between Mercedes-Benz C-Class Petrol, Mercedes-Benz C-Class Diesel and the Toyota Avensis emerges – all scoring very low problem counts. “The Medium segment is highly competitive,” states Rice. “All three contenders have produced less than 60 problems per 100 vehicles and this section of the market undoubtedly enjoys a very high level of quality.”

The **Top Executive** segment is won by the Mercedes-Benz S-Class. The BMW 5 series is once again in second place and tied with last year's winner – the Mercedes-Benz E-Class.

The BMW 3 Series Coupe/Cabriolet has produced a very low problem count and tops the **Sports Coupé** segment. Last year's gold winner, the Mercedes-Benz C-Class Coupé retains a medal in second place with the BMW 6 series taking third spot.

The **MPV/Station Wagon** segment sees some change with two newcomers to the top three. The Toyota Avanza takes top spot with the Mercedes-Benz B-Class and the Toyota Corolla Verso tying in second position.

The **Small Recreational Vehicle** segment sees some reshuffling with the BMW X3 moving to second place and the Honda CRV occupying first place. The Nissan Xtrail makes an appearance in third place in this year's ranking.

The Toyota Prado retains its leading position in the **Large Recreational Vehicle** segment. The Volvo CX90 takes a silver award and this year the BMW X5 enters the rankings in third spot.

Light Commercial Vehicle Segment Awards

Last year's three gold winners have separated themselves out this year in the **Half Ton** segment. Top score goes to the Opel Corsa Utility. The Ford Bantam and Fiat Strada take second and third positions respectively.

The **Small Petrol Single Cab** segment scores an impressively low problem count. In this segment, the Toyota Hilux is

awarded the gold. The Isuzu KB ties with the Ford Ranger in second place.

The **Large Petrol Single Cab** sees little change this year. Nissan Hardbody joins Isuzu KB and Toyota Hilux in first position.

Diesel Single Cab sees a repositioning of the three medal winners from last year. Isuzu KB and Toyota Landcruiser Pickup tie in first position with the Nissan Hardbody coming in second.

Petrol Double Cab: Toyota Hilux takes the gold in this segment. Isuzu KB and Nissan Hardbody produced problem counts placing them in second and third place respectively.

The **Diesel Double Cab** is a very tight-scoring segment. The Nissan Navara and Isuzu KB are tied in first place with the Toyota Hilux hot on their heels with 103 problems per 100.

These awards have achieved a high status over the years, due to the extensive research history that has been accumulated. The product quality interview is normally conducted after 90 days of ownership and the age of the vehicle is carefully controlled to ensure that comparisons between brands and models are fair.

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