



Nissan, GM Biggest Quality Winners Says Strategic Vision

San Diego – Drawing a blueprint for domestics on company turnaround, Nissan North America led five segments (one a tie) on Strategic Vision’s 2005 Total Quality Index™ (TQI). General Motors products also led five segments (one a tie) according to new owners, the San Diego-based research firm announced today.

“The common thread in Nissan and Infiniti models is superior delivery of power, style and innovation, “ says Strategic Vision vice president Daniel Gorrell, “that create a strong emotional response in new owners. The company’s strongly focused product effort suggests a route struggling domestic companies might follow.”

Several new GM products took top honors in their segments. Pontiac’s G6 medium sedan won out over Toyota and Honda entries, as did the Buick Rainier medium sport utility vehicle (SUV).

No one corporation dominated, with Toyota leading four segments (2 ties), BMW three (1 tie) Ford three (2 ties), Hyundai two (1 tie), and Honda, Chrysler and Land Rover one each. After a year out of the winner’s circle, BMW reemerged as the top-scoring brand. Nissan North America led as best full-line corporation.

Total Quality, the premier measure of new vehicle owner satisfaction, assesses the complete ownership experience, from buying and owning to driving new vehicles. This is how buyers gauge quality, including attributes and the emotional response to vehicle.

Buyers rated the following vehicles tops in their segments: (closely ranked scores, if the differences are not statistically significant, are considered ties)

Small Car	Ford Focus/Hyundai Accent/Mazda3 (<i>tie</i>)	860 / 859 / 859
Small Multi-Function (MFV) †	Chrysler PT Cruiser / Scion xB (<i>tie</i>)	843 / 842
Medium Car	Pontiac G6	875
Large Car	Ford 500 / Nissan Maxima (<i>tie</i>)	886 / 886
Small Specialty <\$25,000	Ford Mustang	915
Small Specialty >\$25,000	Chevrolet Corvette*	905
Near-Luxury Car	BMW 3-Series	934

†New segment in 2005 * 2004 Total Quality Award™ winner

Luxury Car	BMW 5-Series / Lexus LS 430* (<i>tie</i>)	911 / 910
Convertible (<\$30,000)	Mini Cooper Convertible	891
Convertible (>\$30,000)	Lexus SC 430	920
Minivan	Honda Odyssey*	861
Small SUV	Hyundai Tucson	879
Medium Crossover [†]	Nissan Murano*	880
Medium SUV	Buick Rainier	879
Large SUV	Nissan Armada	906
Near-Luxury SUV	Infiniti FX*	906
Luxury SUV	Range Rover/Hummer H2/Escalade* (<i>tie</i>)	908 / 907 / 906
Compact Pickup	Toyota Tacoma	852
Large Pickup	Nissan Titan	893
Heavy Duty Pickup	GMC Sierra 2500/3500	883
[†] New segment in 2005	* 2004 Total Quality Award™ winner	

New this year are multi-function vehicle (MFV) categories. Not all garnered awards as these segments are still developing. A medium crossover class makes its debut this year as well.

“Trying to peg the growing number of these ‘capable cars’ into traditional categories just didn’t make sense,” says Gorrell.

“Buyers’ rational and emotional needs differ from vehicle segment to segment,” says Strategic Vision president Dr. Darrel Edwards. “Psychologically, MFV buyers’ emotional needs and responses to the vehicles are so different from those associated with purchases of traditional SUVs that it only made sense to create separate classes that capture those differences.”

More than 40,793 buyers who bought 2005 models in October and November of 2004 supplied data. “We gather comprehensive data that reflects the breadth and depth of the ownership experience, including emotions. The information is used to calculate ‘Total Quality’ indices. These integrated relationships between attributes and emotions mirror how people respond to their new vehicle. Those product and performance characteristics that deliver more desired emotions more strongly impact the perception of Total Quality,” opines Dr. Edwards.

“As the number of new vehicles and segments continues to grow, understanding the emotional needs of buyers in each segment will be critical,” continues Dr. Edwards. “Successful companies will be able to deliver products generating such positive emotional experiences that they delight their customer. That builds loyalty with significant monetary implications.”

Strategic Vision has calculated the Total Quality Index™ annually since 1995. In addition, the firm releases a Total Value Index™ and a Total Delight Index™ that focus on different aspects of new vehicle owners’ experiences.

Since its incorporation in 1986, the research-based consultancy that was founded in 1972 has studied consumer and constituent decision-making for a wide variety of clients, including most auto manufacturers, Coca-Cola, American Airlines, and Procter and Gamble, among many. Its unique expertise is identifying consumers’ motivational hierarchies, including the values and emotions that drive perceptions and behavior.