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**Evolution in customer buying priorities is “Smart” and “Green.”
Strategic Vision announces new automotive metric:
SmartGreenSM**

San Diego – Strategic Vision unveils the new SmartGreen IndexSM (SGISM) which reflects the relationships between perceived quality plus overall value (Smart) and “green” issues such as fuel economy and environmental friendliness (Green). SGISM is based on actual customer experiences and is weighted according to those aspects which best predict customer advocacy, overall satisfaction, future brand choices and loyalty, which ultimately result in increased model and brand sales.

“While all customers are looking for vehicles they can trust and depend on, a majority of customers also have vehicle priorities such as styling, capacity, comfort, capability, performance and price. Ideally, most customers are looking for a vehicle they can love and express a meaningful emotional connection to,” says Dr. Darrel Edwards, CEO of Strategic Vision. Vehicles such as the Land Rover LR2, Corvette Convertible, Kia Amanti and Chrysler 300C are not always thought of as Green but still score higher than others in their respective segments when it comes to SmartGreenSM. These vehicles are vehicles customers love and are emotionally connected to, providing exactly what customers desire in performance and capability while also providing the “best” Green-related issues in class.

“When customers do not have to compromise their desired vehicle styling, roominess, power and price to obtain the best fuel economy and environmentally friendliness in class, they have made the SmartGreenSM choice,” reports Alexander Edwards, President of Strategic Vision’s Automotive division. As SGISM scores are based on those product attributes which best predict strong sales in segment, it is no surprise that the brands with the highest number of segment leaders are Toyota and Honda (with five and four leaders, respectively). Toyota’s best-in-class leaders are the Yaris Hatchback, Prius, Highlander Hybrid (tie), 4Runner and Tundra (tie). Honda’s leaders are the Accord Coupe, Odyssey, CR-V and Ridgeline. Lexus also had two segment leaders with the IS 250/350 and the RX400 Hybrid.

Being a hybrid vehicle alone is not enough to guarantee top SmartGreenSM marks. Industry-wide, some hybrids place at or below segment average in SGISM when factors such as interior quality cues or overall perceived value are rated below their competition. While the Toyota Prius may be the obvious SmartGreenSM leader because of its fuel economy, it is easy to forget that the Prius also offers innovative interior styling which adds to making the Prius the SmartGreenSM choice and among hybrid models, highest in sales. “Even when fuel prices are highest, people will want more than a little box with good fuel economy,” says Chris Chaney, V.P. of Special Projects at Strategic Vision. “For example, the Mazda3 leads in its segment ahead of the hybrids, offering superior styling, innovation, performance and affordability coupled with good fuel economy, offering more than competitive hybrids.”

SGI – add one

Chevrolet had the most segment leaders among the domestic corporations with the Tahoe, Avalanche (tie) and Corvette Convertible leading their respective segments. The Tahoe scored high in perceived quality, as did its competition; however, the Tahoe was rated exceptionally higher than the competition in environmentally friendliness and fuel efficiency. “Even SUV buyers are sensitive to Green issues. Flex-fuel and hybrid options provide Green choices to Tahoe owners which increase customer advocacy, retention and bring new buyers into the brand, even if the vehicle they finally purchase is not always the greenest option,” states Alexander Edwards.

The MINI Cooper Clubman and Convertible were leaders in their segments due to terrific performance, overall value and Green-related issues. The MINI Cooper Hatchback scored just below the MINI Cooper Clubman, with both vehicles taking the top places in Specialty Coupes. The BMW 3-Series Coupe was also a leader in its segment.

Other best in class SGISM leaders were the Kia Amanti, Nissan Murano (tie), Audi Q7 and Mercedes S-Class for their excellence in quality, styling, performance and greenness. Buyers rated the following vehicles tops in their segments:

Small Car	Mazda3 Sedan	697
Small Multi-Function (MFV)	Toyota Yaris Hatchback	725
Mid-Size Car	Toyota Prius	749
Large Car	Kia Amanti	707
Near-Luxury Car	Lexus IS 250/350	765
Luxury Car	Mercedes S-Class	771
Specialty Coupe	MINI Cooper Clubman	751
Premium Coupe	BMW 3-Series Coupe	729
Mid-Specialty Coupe	Honda Accord Coupe	686
Convertible	MINI Cooper Convertible	719
Premium Convertible	Chevrolet Corvette Convertible	782
Minivan	Honda Odyssey	688
Small SUV	Honda CR-V	644
Medium Crossover	Nissan Murano / Toyota Highlander Hybrid	649 / 649
Medium SUV	Toyota 4Runner	664
Large SUV	Chevrolet Tahoe	641
Near-Luxury SUV	Lexus RX 400 Hybrid	742
Luxury SUV	Audi Q7	711
Standard Pickup	Honda Ridgeline	602
Large Pickup	Chevrolet Avalanche/Toyota Tundra	630 / 628

SGI – add two

According to Dr. Edwards, in addition to the SGISM segment leaders, many manufacturers are “getting it right” with their model lineup. Included in Strategic Vision’s SmartGreenSM Report are vehicle Five and Four Star SmartGreenSM ratings, that are provided to manufacturers to better understand which of today’s vehicles are paving the way to help make their brand and their lineup the leaders of tomorrow.

For example, Five and Four Star vehicles are those like the Suzuki SX4 Sedan which offer fun and excitement through strong vehicle performance and styling in a fuel efficient package. These attributes and vehicle imagery are what can lead to increased awareness and potential consideration of the SX4 and other Suzuki models.

In addition to its segment-leading Amanti, Kia also has five other vehicles that scored highly in their respective segments: Spectra4, Rondo, Sedona, Sorrento and Sportage. Hyundai also placed well with four of their models — Azera, Entourage, Elantra and Santa Fe — demonstrating that thoughtfulness, value and overall economics all work together toward Hyundai’s future success.

Domestic corporations too have created some of the higher rated SmartGreenSM vehicles through perceived quality, innovative styling and capability. Chrysler had highly-rated vehicles with their 300C, Aspen, Dodge Caliber and Jeep Liberty while Ford’s Edge, Escape Hybrid, Focus, Mercury Mariner and Lincoln MKX were all strong competitors in their segments with Four Star ratings.

With shrinking automotive sales in the US, knowing which product perceptions direct customer interest, consideration and purchase is more critical than ever. Providing vehicles that delight customers with vehicle styling, innovative features, thoughtfulness and performance combined with increased fuel economy and environmental friendliness is the key to unlocking the hearts and minds of today’s automotive customer. Manufacturers who heed this message will gain an edge in today’s difficult market and sell more vehicles.

SGISM is calculated from responses of 44,320 buyers who bought 2008/9 models from September 2007 to March 2008.

Since its incorporation in 1989, Strategic Vision has studied consumer and constituent decision-making for the widest variety of clients, including most auto manufacturers, Coca-Cola, American Airlines, Procter and Gamble, as well as for most advertising agencies. Its unique expertise is identifying consumers’ motivational hierarchies, including the values that shape perceptions and capture the customers’ emotional responses and drive behavior. The firm’s in-depth Discovery Interviews and ValueCentered Surveys provide comprehensive, integrated and actionable outcomes. Please visit www.strategicvision.com to learn more.