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Ford vs. Toyota: The Battle for Total Quality Intensifies, Reports Strategic Vision

San Diego – Toyota and Ford tied for leading in the most segments on Strategic Vision's Total Quality Index™ (TQI), leading with three vehicles each. Toyota lead with its Yaris, 4Runner and Sequoia while Ford lead with the Edge, Mustang Convertible and F-250/350. The San Diego based research firm today announced the 2008 results that are based on the ratings by new vehicle owners in 19 product segments.

Toyota Motor Sales had two additional leaders with the Scion xB and the Lexus RX 350 (which tied with Land Rover's LR2); while Ford Motor Company added two additional wins with the Mercury Sable and Volvo C30. "Ford is back, establishing its vehicle quality in the hearts and minds of its customers," says Alexander Edwards, president of Strategic Vision's automotive division. "The Ford Edge is one of the vehicles Ford can be proud of. By careful attention to key areas such as exterior styling, workmanship and performance, (which are the cues that signal quality for crossover customers), Ford is building vehicles that also build brand equity and perceived customer quality."

The Total Quality Index™ is the premier measure of new vehicle owner satisfaction. It asks buyers to rate all aspects of the ownership experience, from buying and owning to performance and driving. It is much more than simply counting problems. "Innovation and thoughtfulness in functionality and design, keeping in mind how the customer will interact and use the vehicle, is essential," reports Dr. Darrel Edwards, Founder and CEO of Strategic Vision. "Vehicles like the Volvo C30 and Toyota Sequoia are both terrific examples of providing customers with this 'functional luxury' in a very stylish design suggesting quality both on the inside and out."

Mercedes, Honda and Chevrolet brands each had two leaders: Mercedes leading with the S-Class and SL, Honda with the Odyssey and Ridgeline, and Chevrolet with the Corvette Convertible and a tie with itself in full size trucks between the Avalanche and Silverado. From three leads last year, Hyundai took the lead in only one segment this year with its Santa Fe in one of the most competitive automotive segments, the Smaller SUVs. The Volkswagen Jetta, Chrysler 300C and BMW X5 were each TQI leaders. Also worthy of mention is the redesigned Chevrolet Malibu, now second in the highly competitive Medium Car segment.

"Over the past quarter century in the US, customer perceptions of quality of domestic and Asian manufacturers underwent large swings. Today, it doesn't matter if you are a Toyota or a Ford, BMW or Hyundai, each manufacturer has the opportunity and mandate to produce a product with the right Cues of Quality — those product attributes that signal quality and create customer Trust — and present vehicles that have a greater impact on the purchase decision," says Alexander Edwards.

TQI – add one

Buyers rated the following vehicles tops in their segments:

Small Car	Toyota Yaris	860
Small Multi-Function (MFV)	Scion xB	876
Medium Car	Volkswagen Jetta	911
Large Car	Mercury Sable	877
Near-Luxury Car	Chrysler 300C	927
Luxury Car	Mercedes S-Class*	950
Small Specialty <\$25,000	Volvo C30	908
Convertible <\$30,000	Ford Mustang	896
Convertible >\$30,000	Chevrolet Corvette*, Mercedes SL	940 / 939
Minivan	Honda Odyssey	864
Small SUV	Hyundai Santa Fe*	866
Medium Crossover	Ford Edge	877
Medium SUV	Toyota 4Runner	891
Large SUV	Toyota Sequoia	897
Near-Luxury SUV	Lexus RX 350* / Land Rover LR2	913 / 912
Luxury SUV	BMW X5	907
Standard Pickup	Honda Ridgeline*	878
Large Pickup	Chevrolet Avalanche 1500 / Silverado 1500	880 / 880
Heavy Duty Pickup	Ford F-250/F-350*	863

** 2007 Total Quality Award™ winner*

The Total Quality Index™ was calculated from the responses of 20,655 buyers who bought 2008 models in September, October and November of 2007. Strategic Vision has presented Total Quality annually since 1995.

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.