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Toyota led quality “Evolution” inspires Volkswagen, Ford “Revolution” says Strategic Vision’s Total Value Index™ report

San Diego – Strategic Vision announces its 2009 Total Value Index™ (TVI) to help customers and automotive manufacturers understand what parts of the value equation are key motivators in the consumers’ new car shopping process. Results show a revolution in buyer perceptions as, for the first time ever, Toyota Motor Sales does not have a vehicle leader in any segment. “Toyota has evolved to be defined by customers as a paradigm of reliable and durable vehicles,” reports Darrel Edwards, Ph.D. Strategic Vision’s Founder and Chairman. “Toyota meets an essential part of the purchase contract. Toyota provides buyers the Security needed to make the purchase. However, with so many manufacturers, inspired by Toyota, improving in perceived quality, customers have a wider range of options to choose from in our current economic climate. This allows them to find both value and love in their new vehicle.”

Fueled in part by a recovering economy, this revolution has an impact across all vehicle segments, including luxury buyers. For example, the Hyundai Genesis is the Near Luxury Car Segment leader. The Genesis has brought luxury buyers to Hyundai as Genesis buyers have household incomes very close to BMW 3-Series and Mercedes C-Class buyers. We see many Lexus, Infiniti, Cadillac and BMW owners trading in their vehicles for the Genesis. Hyundai competes by meeting a customer’s security needs with perceived quality and successful programs such as “Hyundai Assurance” combining price, warranty and value a customer can love.

“Durability alone and simply satisfying customers is not enough for buyers who demand both immediate and long term Value,” says Alexander Edwards, President Strategic Vision. “Customers no longer feel constrained to consider only the ‘usual suspects.’ Because of increased quality, competitive prices and manufacturers fighting for their lives to provide LoveworthySM vehicles, this is truly an exciting time for car buyers, today and in the near future,” says Edwards. “Manufacturers are listening and reacting quickly to stay competitive.”

Ford Motor Company, the most improved brand and corporation, led many segments with Focus Coupe, Mustang Convertible, Flex, Expedition and F-250. Volkswagen of America delivered the following leaders: CC Sedan, rating the highest TVI score of any model, Tiguan, Jetta and Audi Q7. American Honda continues its’ strength with Value leaders like Odyssey and Ridgeline, and provided revolutionary leadership with an affordable hybrid, the Insight (Small Car Segment winner). “Insight opens the door, leading to a larger number of hybrid “wanna be’s” (a good thing by the way) who will ‘do the math,’” says Christopher Chaney, Strategic Vision’s Vice President. “People will not buy hybrids in larger numbers until they have all their demands/needs met and “the math” (MPG + ‘Eco’ + ‘I Love This Car’ + ‘Right Price’= Purchase) makes sense,” says Chaney. “Not an easy task, but look at MINI Cooper as having a correct solution to the equation. They have the ratings and sales to back it up,” continues Chaney.

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TVI – add one

General Motors also provides some Value through innovation. Similar to perennial winner Honda Ridgeline, Chevrolet Avalanche is an example of the importance of “True Innovation” influencing Total Value. True Innovation is rich, makes an impact, is intuitive, motivational, in-depth and specific. “Truly Innovated” products are what will motivate fence sitters and initial consideration shoppers to become buyers. The Chevrolet Corvette Coupe continues to lead among Premium Coupe class and although some question Saab’s future, the Saab 9-3 Convertible was the leader of Convertibles over \$30k which is symbolic of buyers enjoying a sense of Value with unique character as an aspect of luxury.

Buyers rated the following vehicles top in Total Value (TVI) in their segments:

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| Small Car | Honda Insight | 795 |
| Small Multi-Function | Ford Focus Coupe | 801 |
| Medium Car | Volkswagen Jetta / Volkswagen Passat (tie) | 808/807 |
| Medium Multi-Function | Volkswagen Jetta Wagon | 769 |
| Larger Car | Volkswagen CC | 846 |
| Near-Luxury Car | Hyundai Genesis | 838 |
| Luxury Car | Mercedes S-Class | 828 |
| Luxury Multi-Function | Mercedes R-Class Wagon | 792 |
| Small Specialty (<\$28,000) | MINI Cooper Hatchback | 827 |
| Premium Coupe (>\$28,000) | Chevrolet Corvette Coupe | 840 |
| Mid-Specialty Car | Honda Accord Coupe | 802 |
| Convertible (<\$30,000) | Ford Mustang Convertible | 799 |
| Convertible (>\$30,000) | Saab 9-3 Convertible | 807 |
| Minivan | Honda Odyssey | 745 |
| Small SUV | Volkswagen Tiguan | 801 |
| Medium SUV | Chrysler Aspen | 766 |
| Medium Crossover | Ford Flex | 784 |
| Large SUV | Ford Expedition | 803 |
| Near Luxury SUV | BMW X3 | 806 |
| Luxury SUV | Audi Q7 | 792 |
| Standard Pickup | Honda Ridgeline | 748 |
| Full-Size Pickup | Chevrolet Avalanche | 787 |
| Heavy Duty Pickup | Ford F-250/350 | 709 |

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TVI – add two

The Total Value Index™ was calculated from 48,228 buyers who bought 2009 models during September 2008 to March 2009. Strategic Vision has presented Total Value Awards™ annually since 1995. The calculation of Total Value begins with clear statements that owners make about value (e.g. expected reliability, expected fuel economy, price paid, expected resale value, innovation, etc.). Total Value then incorporates the importance of the variables that make up the ownership experience, and it is here that Strategic Vision finds “True Value” – the worth of the attribute weighed against the costs.

Strategic Vision is a research-based consultancy with thirty-five years of experience in understanding the consumers’ and constituents’ decision-making systems for a variety of clients, including most automotive manufacturers, American Airlines and Procter & Gamble. Its unique expertise is in identifying consumers’ comprehensive motivational hierarchies, including the product attributes, personal benefits, value/emotions and images that drive perceptions and behaviors. J. Susan Johnson, CEO of Strategic Vision, coined the phrase “True Innovators” and we measure this construct in the detailed Total Value Index report. The ValueCentered® psychology and research methods were defined by Dr. Darrel Edwards in 1968, and enhanced by co-founders J. Susan Johnson (1972) and Sharon Shedroff (1975).

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