

AutoPacific Announces 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Awards

Hyundai Azera Top Car, Lincoln Navigator Top Truck



Tustin, California, May 16, 2006 – A study released today by noted automotive consulting firm AutoPacific, Inc. summarizes the results of its 2006 model year owner satisfaction research. AutoPacific's VSA (Vehicle Satisfaction Award) study is an industry benchmark for objectively measuring how satisfied an owner is with their new car or light truck.

The vehicle registering highest overall satisfaction in 2006 is the Lincoln Navigator Luxury SUV. The highest rated car is the new-for-2006 Hyundai flagship – Hyundai Azera.

Unlike 2005, when Nissan North America had seven winners, the 2006 results are distributed across the industry. There are eighteen Vehicle Satisfaction Award categories. Honda won four categories, General Motors won three categories, Ford won three categories, Nissan won two categories, Hyundai won two categories, Mitsubishi won two categories.

Top 2006 model year performers are:

BRAND:

Lexus

PASSENGER CARS:

Premium Luxury Car

Entry Luxury Car

Luxury/Large Car

Premium Mid-Size Car

Mid-Size Car

Image Compact Car

Compact Car

Sports Car

Sporty Car

Lexus LS

Cadillac CTS

Hyundai Azera

Volkswagen Passat

Mercury Milan

MINI Cooper

Honda Civic

Chevrolet Corvette

Acura RSX

LIGHT TRUCKS:

Large Light-Duty Pickup

Large Heavy-Duty Pickup

Sport Utility Truck

Compact Pickup

Luxury Sport Utility

Large Sport Utility

Premium Mid-Size Sport Utility

Mid-Size Sport Utility

Compact Sport Utility

Minivan

Nissan Titan

Chevrolet Silverado HD

Honda Ridgeline

Mitsubishi Raider

Lincoln Navigator

Nissan Armada

Mitsubishi Endeavor

Hyundai Santa Fe

Suzuki Grand Vitara

Honda Odyssey



In addition to identifying segment winners, VSA also establishes numerical satisfaction ratings for virtually every passenger car and light truck in the North American market. This results from calculating owner satisfaction across 44 specific areas related to a vehicle's operation, comfort, safety and the overall purchase/lease experience. The 2006 ratings reflect input from buyers and lessees of new vehicles acquired September 2005 through January 2006.

AutoPacific releases VSA results yearly as a consumer and industry service. AutoPacific also offers a Satisfaction Benchmark Study (SBS) that analyzes, on a feature-by-feature basis, cars and trucks in the North American market. This study allows manufacturers and key suppliers to assess and compare their vehicles on a feature level with the best in the business. "We feel SBS is the best and most economical way for manufacturers and suppliers to rate their own performance, and find out who is setting the standard for satisfaction. It then takes the analysis to the discrete level, from cupholders to the dealership experience," says Peterson.

AutoPacific is a future-oriented automotive marketing and product-consulting firm. Every year it publishes a wide variety of syndicated studies on the automotive industry. The firm also conducts extensive proprietary research and consulting for auto manufacturers, distributors, marketers and suppliers worldwide. Company headquarters and its state-of-the-art automotive research facility are in Tustin, California, with an affiliate office in the Detroit area.

Additional information can be found on AutoPacific's websites: <http://www.autopacific.com> and <http://blog.vehiclevoice.com>. To weigh in with comments concerning these results, you can comment on the VehicleVoice blog site.

Note: Rankings for brands and segments will be released at a later date.

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Additional George Peterson comments regarding individual winners:

Lexus Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Top Brand: "Lexus' win comes from an especially strong showing by its LS430 Premium Luxury Car and solid results from the rest of its lineup. Strong vehicle scores combined with real luxury-level customer handling at Lexus dealerships edges Lexus ahead of other luxury brands like Cadillac, Infiniti, Land Rover, and Lincoln. European luxury brands other than Land Rover are down on the list this year."

Lexus LS430 Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Premium Luxury Cars: "Owners of the Lexus LS return the Lexus flagship to its accustomed place at the top of the Premium Luxury Car rankings. With a combination of extremely luxurious ride and driving dynamics, top notch materials, bulletproof quality and overachieving dealers, the Lexus LS provides its owners with an extremely satisfying experience."

Cadillac CTS Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Entry Luxury Cars: "Cadillac CTS moves to the top of the Entry Luxury Car category in 2006. The European ambience of the CTS makes it a clear alternative to the Japanese and European brand entries in this segment. The fact CTS comes from an American brand is a testament to Cadillac understanding what buyers in this product category really want."

Hyundai Azera Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Large Cars – Also Top-Ranked Car: "The satisfaction results for the all-new Hyundai Azera prove that Hyundai is serious about selling top class products. In its first year on the market, Azera achieves not only a class win, but is the highest scoring passenger car ahead of vaunted Premium Luxury Cars like the Lexus LS, Jaguar XJ and Mercedes S-Class. The fact that these cars are twice the price of an Azera is just icing on the cake."

Volkswagen Passat Wins AutoPacific 2006 Premium Mid-Size Car Vehicle Satisfaction Award: "In its first year out, the all-new Volkswagen Passat has established itself as an extremely satisfying Premium Mid-Size sedan. Passat handily beat segment volume leaders Honda Accord, Toyota Camry and Hyundai Sonata. Passat wins by virtue of its outstanding interior design, use of high touch materials and European driving dynamics."

Mercury Milan Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Mid-Size Cars: "The all-new Mercury Milan is a clear winner among Mid-Size competition. Combining excellent style, good size and roominess, sporty ride and handling, the Milan provides its owners with a very satisfying experience."

MINI Cooper Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Image Compact Cars:

"Car makers continuously strive to produce a small car that people actually want to buy – an Image Compact Car – a car people aspire to. MINI has certainly achieved that goal. A car coveted by young and old drivers alike, the MINI has an attitude unmatched in today's car market. Distinctive, cute, fun to drive, MINI is a delight that clearly satisfies its owners."

Chevrolet Corvette Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Sports Cars:

"Owners of the new C6 Chevrolet Corvette return the car to the top of the Sports Car category with a decisive class-winning performance for 2006. The new Corvette is perhaps the best value in the entire Sports Car arena. The C6 Corvette is a more satisfying car than any previous Corvette – great styling, more finesse, super performance, great handling and a more supple ride. Still immediately identifiable as a Corvette, the C6 is clearly new across the board."

Acura RSX Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Sporty Cars:

"Acura RSX is a small sporty coupe priced substantially below other Acura entries. This value, combined with a great powertrain and sporty handling provide RSX owners with class-topping satisfaction."

Nissan Titan Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Large Light-Duty

Pickups: "Owners of the 2006 Nissan Titan rate the pickup at the top of the Large Light-Duty Pickup category. The 2006 model year is the third year in a row Titan has topped its segment. This is an outstanding accomplishment and testament to the satisfaction Titan is giving its owners."

"Titan's achievement is truly remarkable and demonstrates the inherent differences in AutoPacific's way of measuring satisfaction compared with others. Titan is immensely satisfying, but owner surveys conducted by others show Titan has a fair share of niggling problems. But, if you are not counting things gone wrong and looking at what really matters – how well buyers are satisfied – Titan shines. Its big, powerful V8 engine combined with outstanding styling and features provide the top-satisfying product package for 2006."

"We cannot ignore that two large trucks produced at Nissan's Canton Mississippi assembly plant won top place in their categories for both the 2004, 2005 and 2006 – Nissan Titan and Nissan Armada. This is a sweep any company can be envious of."



Chevrolet Silverado Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Large Heavy-Duty Pickup Trucks: “The Chevrolet Silverado Heavy Duty wins among Heavy Duty Large Pickups. A workhorse near the end of its run, the Silverado HD nosed out Dodge Ram Heavy Duty and Ford F-Series Super Duty entries. Much of its win has to be credited to its up-graded Duramax diesel for the 2006 model year.”

Honda Ridgeline Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Sport Utility Trucks: “Complementing the numerous awards the Honda Ridgeline has received since its introduction, Ridgeline customers weigh in by rating it as the most satisfying pickup on the market. Scoring higher than all Full Size, Heavy Duty and Compact pickups, Ridgeline proves that a softer pickup doing car and truck duty can provide great satisfaction for its owners. Heaped with innovations, including the first-ever trunk in a pickup, Ridgeline breaks the pickup mold.”

Mitsubishi Raider Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Compact Pickup Trucks: “Tough styling communicates the capability of the top ranking Compact Pickup Truck – the Mitsubishi Raider. The only Japanese-brand Compact Pickup available with a V8 engine, the Raider achieves class-leading satisfaction. Raider's win demonstrates the value of good power and performance even in the Compact Pickup class.”

Lincoln Navigator Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Luxury Sport Utility Vehicles – Also Top Ranked Truck and TOP RANKED VEHICLE Overall: “The Lincoln Navigator is the top ranked vehicle for satisfaction in AutoPacific's 2006 research. Not only did the Lincoln flagship beat its Luxury SUV competition, but it was ahead of all other trucks and cars as well. While Cadillac's Escalade may be the new King of Bling, Navigator achieves its class leading status with an industry benchmark interior, full fold flat rear seating, tasteful styling and a great performing V8.”

Nissan Armada Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award Large Sport Utility for Third Year in a Row: “Armada is a significant vehicle for a variety of reasons, the most notable of which is that it comes from a Japanese brand but is completely tuned for American tastes and sensibilities. Brand aside, there is absolutely nothing traditionally or typically Japanese about it. Armada is full size, and when we say full-size, we mean it! It has a powerful and sophisticated V8 engine bigger and mightier than the domestic competition! Armada is unapologetically made for North America and North America alone, with no compromises or shortcomings.”

“Armada was right for the market right out of the box for the 2004 model year when it won Large SUV honors. As a repeat winner, Armada's 2004 and 2005 performances surely were not flukes.”

Mitsubishi Endeavor Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Premium Mid-Size Sport Utility Vehicles: "Mitsubishi Endeavor won its first VSA when it was launched in 2004 and repeats in 2006. Endeavor's 5-passenger interior package gives good spaciousness to front and rear passengers without the compromises often made by SUVs trying to shoehorn 7-people into the space designed for five. Endeavor has good performance and driving dynamics. While Endeavor's somewhat controversial styling may limit its sales, clearly, once a person has made the commitment, the Endeavor provides what they want."

Hyundai Santa Fe Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Mid-Size Sport Utility Vehicles: "In its last year before being replaced, the Hyundai Santa Fe continues its string of category-leading performances. Santa Fe has won or tied in its category for five of the six years it has been on the market. This is a testament to Santa Fe's strong combination of product competence, value and warranty. Santa Fe satisfies its owners and continues to help Hyundai build its brand image in the United States."

Suzuki Grand Vitara Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Compact Sport Utility Vehicles: "In Suzuki's first win ever, owners of the all-new Grand Vitara rate it best in the Compact SUV class. New styling, larger, up-graded interior, up-graded powertrain, affordable pricing and a more-than-competitive warranty, make Grand Vitara a satisfying value proposition."

Honda Odyssey Wins AutoPacific 2006 Vehicle Satisfaction Award for Minivans: "The Honda Odyssey Minivan wins top satisfying Minivan honors for 2006. The Odyssey, in a three-way tie with other Japanese brand Minivans in 2005, moves into the lead for 2006. Odyssey's relatively sporty performance, ride and handling combined with traditional Minivan styling and innovative interior features nudge Odyssey ahead of the Nissan Quest for 2006. Honda's perceived product quality was the deciding factor."