

AUTOMOTIVE

## Mercedes ranks highest in customer satisfaction: J.D. Power

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*Mercedes-Benz at Gwinnett's Lawrenceville campus*

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

While consumers are now empowering themselves with more information from digital resources before entering a dealership, many believe the salesman is an integral part of purchasing a car.

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A new report from J.D. Power shows that vehicle shoppers, including luxury buyers, rely on salesmen and the dealership to teach them the new technologies that come along with their purchases. Luxury dealerships who follow up with customers with further explanation of the vehicle's features improve satisfaction rates by up to 100 points.

"While customers are preparing themselves online with the best information and negotiation tactics, they still prefer to interact with a salesperson or product specialist prior to buying a vehicle," said Chris Sutton, vice president of the automotive retail practice at **J.D. Power**. "Dealers can't control a customer's pre-purchase activities, but they should be prepared to positively influence areas that will affect a customer's likelihood to buy as well as their level of satisfaction."

J.D. Power surveyed 28,989 buyers who purchased or leased their new vehicle in April or May 2017 and their thoughts on sales and service.

Driving customer service

As technology grows, many would believe that customers are more empowered to take their vehicle purchases elsewhere to a digital platform. However, the growth of technological features within vehicles are pushing consumers towards dealerships to help empower them on how to best use these features.

About 33 percent of luxury vehicle purchasers want to be taught completely how to use the features within the car upon delivery. Eighty-seven percent of luxury buyers claimed their dealership contacted them, but only 51 percent said the dealership completed a second follow-up in regards to feature explanation.



BMW Connected interior

Another major impact on satisfaction is if there are any problems with the new vehicle upon delivery such as scratches or dents. Any problems such as this can see a drop in satisfaction by 198 points, according to the [J.D. Power 2017 U.S. Sales Satisfaction Index Study](#).

Lincoln and Mercedes are tied as the top ranking brands in sale satisfaction, each with a score of 830. Mercedes held this spot previously in 2014, but this is Lincoln's first time as the leader.



*Mercedes Benz e class dashboard*

Porsche also ranked within the top five with a score of 818.

#### Additional insight

Luxury automotive manufacturers have the ability to increase returning loyal customers by implementing a form of text message updates when servicing vehicles.

Another report from J.D. Power shows that 55 percent of consumers said they would definitely return when contacted through phone calls from personnel regarding service on their vehicles. However that percentage increases to 67 when customers are able to receive text updates on their vehicle service ([see more](#)).

J.D. Power also showed that there is still room for improvement despite automotive technology's substantial growth in recent years.

New vehicle quality is at an all-time high, according to research in the J.D. Power 2017 U.S. Initial Quality Study, but problems are still occurring for owners when it comes to technology. The most common issues seen in new vehicles are related to audio, communication, entertainment and navigation ([see more](#)).

"An example is to post photos of actual inventory to their Web site or engage with shoppers via text messaging or phone calls," Mr. Sutton said. "Be sure that online specials are up-to-date and easy to access from the dealer's site.

"These simple things go a long way toward earning a sale and satisfying a customer," he said.

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