

AUTOMOTIVE

White-glove valet services can have major impact on auto customer loyalty

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Lexus was one of the top performing brands along with Porsche and Audi. Image credit: Lexus

By DANNY PARISI

When customers are happy with the service done on their cars from brands or dealers, they are more likely to remain loyal and recommend those brands to their friends, according to a new report from J.D. Power.

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The report, called the J.D. Power 2018 U.S. Customer Service Index Study, found that white-glove valet service, such as an automaker or dealer picking up and dropping off a customer's car for repair, is a huge plus for luxury clients. Brands such as Porsche, Audi and Lexus are all listed as brands making strong use of this trend.

"There's a strong link between a brand's CSI score and its Net Promoter Score," said Chris Sutton, vice president of U.S. automotive retail practice at J.D. Power, Costa Mesa, CA. "When a customer is happy with the service a dealer provides them, they're more likely to tell their friends and family members about it."

Customer service

For luxury customers, owning a car is about more than just driving it every day.

Customers want to feel as though they are valued and that they have a special relationship with the brand beyond just being a walking wallet.

J.D. Power's new report finds that brands and dealers that invest heavily in giving luxury customers a premium experience when it comes to servicing their vehicle will reap the rewards.

One feature that is common among high-performing luxury car dealerships and brands is the ability for customers to get their cars picked up by a valet and dropped off once the service has been finished. Customers who are offered such options report that 68 percent of them will definitely use it again.

Additionally, brands and dealerships that offer these valet options routinely score 29 percent higher than other auto brands on J.D. Power's index.

Audi RS 5 Coupe

Per J.D. Power, Japanese luxury brand Infiniti is the highest ranked auto brand for customer satisfaction with

Porsche in second and Audi, Cadillac and Lexus tied for third place.

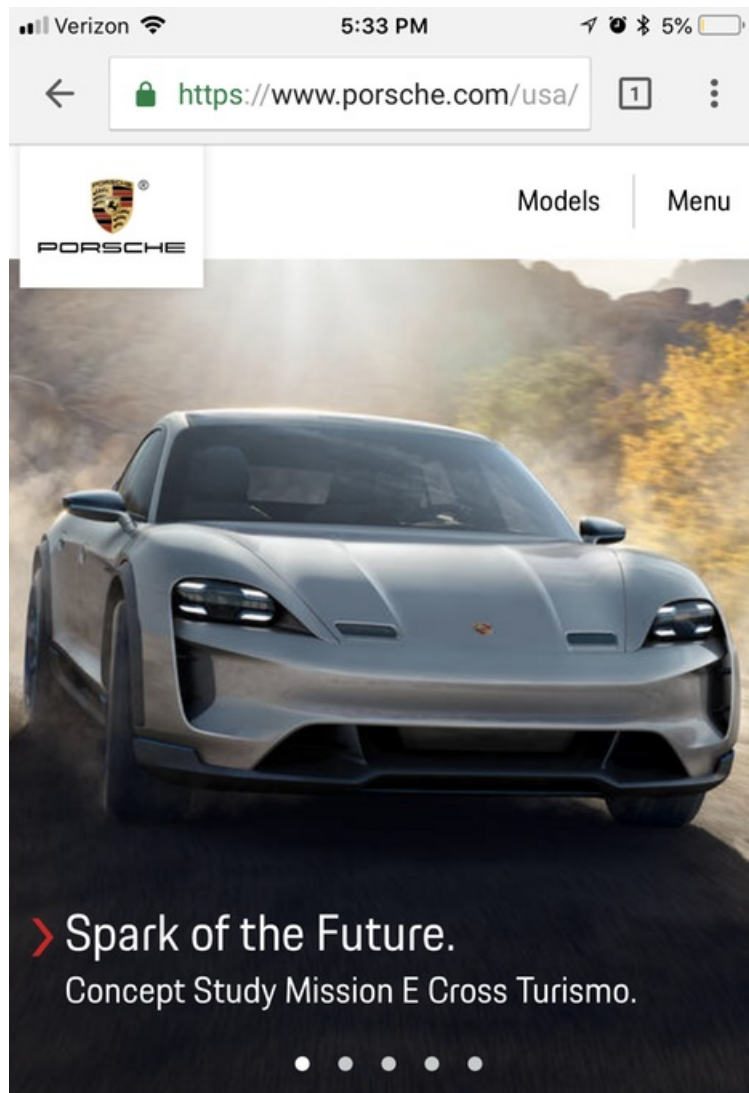
Prioritizing digital

Additionally, online options are increasingly popular, especially among young consumers.

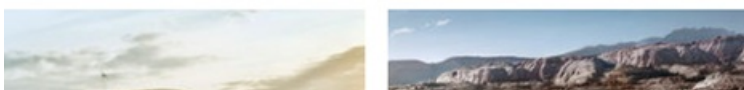
Approximately a quarter of all Generation Y customers schedule and order their auto services online. This is much higher than boomers who only go online for auto servicing about 10 percent of the time.

As Gen Y increasingly becomes the larger section of customers buying luxury vehicles, it is imperative that luxury brands do whatever they can to innovate and bring unique digital tools to their customers.

Luxury automakers should be leading the way in innovation, especially with digital, but a new L2 report shows that mass-market auto brands are driving laps around high-end manufacturers.



Models



Porsche's mobile site. Image credit: Porsche

L2's Digital IQ Index for the auto industry revealed that Rolls-Royce, Land Rover and Aston Martin are among the few automakers whose mobile sites lack any investment, with load times more than five seconds long. Mercedes was the only luxury brand listed within the top five rankings for digital offerings ([see story](#)).

For example, Lexus is making the point that its cars can only be appreciated in-person by leveraging a trendy technology.

In the automaker's "Virtual to Reality" ads, models are shown using various virtual reality devices to take a simulated

test drive. While most VR efforts have centered on providing the viewer with an immersive experience, Lexus' ads instead take a third-person view, highlighting the limitations of the innovation in an effort to drive traffic to its dealers ([see story](#)).

"This experience creates promoters for the vehicle brand who are more likely to return to a dealer for repairs and common services like oil changes and replacement of batteries, brakes and tires," Mr. Sutton said. "Increasing the number of brand advocates is the pathway to growth for dealers looking to generate repeat business and bring in new business based on positive word of mouth."

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