Domestics Still Hold Brand Perception Crown in New Truck Market

Brand Watch Study from Kelley Blue Book Marketing Research Shows Toyota Trucks Rising

Kelley Blue Book Marketing Research (http://www.kbb.com/) today announces the third-quarter truck segment results of its new-vehicle consumer automotive perceptions study, Brand Watch. According to the study, in-market truck shoppers still believe that domestic brands embody many of the qualities and perceptions they are looking for in their next new vehicle. The latest edition of Brand Watch also reveals that during 2007, Toyota has made some significant strides in the truck segment, but they still have a long way to go to overtake Detroit. The highly comprehensive report takes a detailed look at in-market new-vehicle shoppers' perceptions of brands, and important factors driving their purchase decisions while in the midst of the research and shopping process.

In the Brand Watch study, consumers are asked to rate their perceptions of various brands in different new vehicle segments, based on 17 different attributes. When it comes to purchasing a new truck, in-market shoppers state the following five attributes, in order of importance, as being top factors out of the 17 attributes rated: durability/reliability, fuel efficiency, driving comfort, towing/hauling capacity and driving performance.

Brand Watch Third-Quarter Truck Segment Results: Best Truck Brands by Top Attributes

Durability/Reliability: Toyota
Fuel Efficiency: Toyota
Driving Comfort: Chevrolet
Towing/Hauling Capacity: Ford
Driving Performance: GMC

While Toyota dominates consumer perceptions of two important truck attribute categories, durability/reliability and fuel efficiency, the domestic brands outperform the Asian automakers on the more long-standing traditional truck attributes, including towing/hauling capacity as well as ruggedness/toughness. While American-made trucks still hold the top perceptions among shoppers, Brand Watch shows that perceptions of Toyota have been climbing in the truck ratings since the beginning of 2007, especially when it comes to towing/hauling capacity.

"While Toyota is making strides, the Asian manufacturers still have some work to do," said Rick Wainschel, vice president of marketing research and brand communications at Kelley Blue Book. "Their equity of durability and reliability transfers seamlessly into the truck segment, but decades of consumer messaging from the domestic manufacturers regarding towing/hauling capacity, ruggedness and toughness are not quickly or easily overcome."

The Brand Watch results from the first, second and third quarters of 2007, compiled by Kelley Blue Book Marketing Research, reflect the brand perceptions of more than 12,000 active, in-market vehicle shoppers. Each quarter, Kelley Blue Book releases information found within Brand Watch's 17 main factors, including exterior styling and interior layout and comfort, among the seven major vehicle segments

Based on Brand Watch consumer perception data, Kelley Blue Book will host its inaugural 2008 Brand Image Awards dinner and ceremony in New York City on Wednesday, March 19, 2008, at the historical landmark and restaurant Providence (http://www.providencenyc.com/). More information will be released in the near future regarding the inaugural 2008 Kelley Blue Book Brand Image Awards.

For Brand Watch sales inquiries on any vehicle segment or brand, please contact Kelly Gim, director of marketing research services at 949-268-2756 or kgim@kbb.com, or Nicole Stark, marketing research account manager at 949-267-4781 or nstark@kbb.com.

About Kelley Blue Book (http://www.kbb.com/sitemap)

Since 1926, Kelley Blue Book, The Trusted Resource®, has provided vehicle buyers and sellers with the new and used vehicle information they need to accomplish their goals with confidence. The company's top-rated Web site, kbb.com, provides the most up-to-date pricing and values, including the New Car Blue Book® Value, which reveals what people actually are paying for new cars. The company also reports vehicle pricing and values via products and services, including software products and the famous Blue Book® Official Guide. Kbb.com is rated the No. 1 automotive information site by Nielsen//NetRatings and the most visited auto site by J.D. Power and Associates eight years in a row. No other medium reaches more in-market vehicle shoppers than kbb.com; nearly one in every three American car buyers performs their research on kbb.com.

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