Kelley Blue Book's 2010 Brand Image Awards: Shoppers Identify Attributes Associated With New-Car Brands

Award Winners Named Based on a Year's Worth of Consumer Perception Data from Brand Watch™ Study

IRVINE, Calif., March 25 /PRNewswire/ -- Kelley Blue Bookwww.kbb.com, the leading provider of new- and used-car information, today announces the winners of the 2010 Brand Image Awards. These awards, based on consumer perception data, show which brands best communicated certain features of their vehicles over the past year and highlight factors that influence purchase decisions.

KELLEY BLUE BOOK'S 2010 BRAND IMAGE AWARD WINNERS

Best Comfort Brand: Lexus

Best Performance Brand: Porsche

Most Rugged Truck Brand: Ford

Most Family-Friendly Brand: Ford

Coolest Brand: Porsche

Best Exterior Design Brand – Luxury: Porsche

Best Exterior Design Brand – Non-Luxury: Chevrolet

Best Interior Design Brand: Lexus

Best Prestige Brand: Mercedes-Benz

This marks the third year Kelley Blue Book has awarded manufacturers the Brand Image Awards, and there are multiple repeat winners. The 2010 awards mark the third year that Mercedes-Benz has captured Best Prestige Brand, demonstrating that it has prevailed in terms of being perceived as the most prestigious brand among new-car shoppers. Additionally, one of the most important factors among new truck buyers is "ruggedness," and Ford has claimed the Most Rugged Truck Brand title among consumers for two years running.

The 2010 Brand Image Awards, presented to the top brands in nine categories, are based on consumer automotive perception data from Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence's Brand Watch™ study. Brand Watch is an online brand perception tracking study tapping into 12,000+ in-market new-vehicle shoppers annually on Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com. The highly comprehensive Brand Watch report provides a detailed look at in-market new-vehicle shoppers' perceptions of brands, and important factors driving their purchase decisions while they are in the midst of the shopping process. The Kelley Blue Book Brand Image Awards recognize automakers' outstanding achievements in creating and maintaining brand attributes that capture the attention and enthusiasm of the new-vehicle buying public.

"Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence data, and the Brand Watch study in particular, can provide manufacturers with a unique perspective into the minds of how in-market new-car shoppers view their brand," said James Bell, executive market analyst for Kelley Blue Book and kbb.com. "Much too often, brands take a 'shotgun' approach and offer several different marketing messages over time rather than focusing on the one or two that best resonate with the audience. The Brand Image Awards, chosen by in-market car buyers, honor the brands that were

successful in communicating a cohesive message across their vehicles and raising the profile of their overall brand image."

Kbb.com Editorial Comments About 2010 Brand Image Award Winners

"If you believe the marketing credo 'perception is reality,' then you cannot help but be encouraged about the prospects of the winners of Kelley Blue Book's 2010 Brand Image Awards," said Jack R. Nerad, executive editorial director and executive market analyst for Kelley Blue Book and kbb.com. "The brands included on this elite list have convinced the car-buying public at large of the considerable virtues of their vehicles, and that correlates well with success in the crowded automotive marketplace."

Best Comfort Brand: Lexus

Known from the very beginning for their quiet, comfortable highway rides, Lexus vehicles continue to offer more and more occupant-coddling amenities. Combined with renowned reliability and consistently high dealership ratings, the Lexus brand delivers a relaxing ownership experience.

Best Performance Brand: Porsche

Porsche is an automaker so uniquely focused on performance that when it announced it had an SUV in the works, it sparked disbelief, confusion and even anger in some circles. The dust from that disturbance settled years ago, and Porsche continues to design and build cars (and SUVs) that deliver a unique driving experience built not just on numbers, but on feel. The new four-door Panamera only adds to the mystique.

Most Rugged Truck Brand: Ford

When the Ford F-150 was named Most Rugged Truck Brand in 2009, we noted that it had been the best-selling vehicle in the country for 27 years in a row. Make it 28 years in a row and another Brand Image Award. And while the newest F-150 is surely the toughest yet, it's also the smoothest-riding and most feature-packed Ford pickup in history.

Most Family-Friendly Brand: Ford

In 2009, Ford attracted a lot of attention and accolades with a slew of family-style vehicles like the redesigned Fusion, three-row Flex crossover and a new, more relevant version of one of the all-time great family sedans – the Taurus. Combined with world-class reliability ratings, the Ford product renaissance is proving especially popular with families.

Coolest Brand: Porsche

In 2009, the Brand Image Awards for Coolest Brand, Best Performance Brand and Best Exterior Design Brand (Luxury) went to one automaker: BMW. This year, all three again go to one automaker: Porsche. Performance and cool have forever gone hand in hand, and Porsche's uncompromising, laser-like focus on driver enjoyment makes its cars distinctively desirable.

Best Exterior Design Brand - Luxury: Porsche

When your lineup includes the most iconic design in the history of the automobile, you get an automatic bid into any design conversation. The same evolutionary approach that's helped turn the 911 into a legend carries through the lineup, as Porsche continues to eschew design fads or gimmicks in favor of confident consistency.

Best Exterior Design Brand - Non-Luxury: Chevrolet

Chevy's designers are on a roll. The styling renaissance that started with the latest Tahoe SUV and continued with the current Malibu sedan continues to evolve in the form of new cars like the Chevy Equinox crossover, Chevy Traverse three-row crossover and, of course, the new Chevy Camaro. Even the Corvette

looks better than it has in decades. Backed up by a newfound, pervasive feeling of quality, we wouldn't be surprised to see Chevy win more Brand Image Awards in the coming years.

Best Interior Design Brand: Lexus

Lexus interiors aren't extravagant, plush or boundary-pushing, but the fit, finish and attention to detail deliver long-term allure. Clean, comfortable and simple define the typical Lexus interior, which remains user-friendly even as it continues to host more and more technology.

Best Prestige Brand: Mercedes-Benz

Kelley Blue Book visitors have named Mercedes-Benz the Best Prestige Brand three years in a row, and we suspect the streak will continue for the foreseeable future. While its competitors push varying combinations of performance, precision and style, Mercedes-Benz remains the luxury brand of luxury brands.

For more information about the 2010 Kelley Blue Book Brand Image Awards, please visit http://www.kbb.com/BrandImage2010.

For Brand Watch inquiries on any vehicle segment or brand, please contact Hwei-Lin Oetken, vice president of market intelligence for Kelley Blue Book, at 949-267-4460 or hoetken@kbb.com.

About Kelley Blue Book (www.kbb.com)

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, www.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. According to the C.A. Walker Research Solutions, Inc. - 2009 Spring Automotive Web Site Usefulness Study, kbb.com is the most useful automotive information Web site among new and used vehicle shoppers, and half of online vehicle shoppers visit kbb.com. Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com also is a W3 Gold Award winner, sanctioned by the International Academy of Visual Arts. Kbb.com is a leading provider of new car prices, used car Blue Book Values, car reviews, new cars for sale, used cars for sale, and car dealer locations.

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