kbb.com: Toyota Regains Top Spot for Most-Considered Brand; Ford, Honda Close Behind

Latest Market Intelligence Data Shows Subaru, Mitsubishi Climbing Among Certain Factors of Importance

IRVINE, Calif., Dec. 13, 2010 /PRNewswire/ -- According to the latest Kelley Blue Book www.kbb.com Market Intelligence Brand Watch™ study, embattled automaker Toyota has regained the top spot as the most-considered auto brand among new-car shoppers. Toyota consistently captured the most-considered auto brand title from Q1 2007 through Q3 2009, but then fell to the number-two spot for Q4 2009 through Q2 2010, during which time the company experienced its high-profile recall crisis and domestic auto manufacturer Ford surged ahead to capture the top spot. In addition to being the most-considered auto brand overall (regardless of segment), for Q3 2010 Toyota is the most-considered brand in the non-luxury sedan/coupe/hatchback and non-luxury SUV/CUV segments, and consideration of Toyota trucks also considerably rebounded this quarter.

Kbb.com Brand Watch Q3 2010 Study
Most-Considered Auto Brands Overall (Regardless of Segment)

Toyota	25%
Ford	24%
Honda	23%
Chevrolet	19%
Nissan	16%
Hyundai	13%

For Q3 2010, Ford and Honda (respectively) are hot on the heels of the once again number-one Toyota, with only one percentage point separating these top three brands in overall consideration (regardless of segment) in the latest Brand Watch study. Rounding out the top five most-considered among the 37 new-vehicle brands tracked in the Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence study include Chevrolet and Nissan, respectively. Consideration for Korean automaker Hyundai, which ousted Nissan for the number-five spot last quarter, slipped to sixth place for Q3 2010 as Nissan's consideration gained three percentage points since Q2 2010.

"The latest Brand Watch data from Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence indicates that Toyota is slowly recovering from its public-perception crisis and regaining a position of prominence in the minds of new-car shoppers," said James Bell, executive market analyst for Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com. "However, whether Toyota will ascend as high as it was before the recall crisis remains yet to be seen. Hot competition from the likes of Ford, Honda, Chevrolet, Nissan and Hyundai could make it very hard for Toyota to keep a strong lead moving forward."

Overall for Q3 2010, new-car shoppers rank durability/reliability, fuel efficiency, driving comfort, driving performance and safety (respectively) as the top five importance factors while shopping for their next new vehicle (regardless of segment).

Specific to the non-luxury sedan/coupe/hatchback segment, Hyundai consideration maintains a slight advantage at fourth place over fifth-place Nissan, following Toyota, Honda and Ford, respectively. Additionally, for the first time, Mitsubishi was the top-rated brand for the importance factor of 'cool factor/vehicle image' in this category.

In consideration of the non-luxury SUV/CUV segment, both Nissan and Jeep saw significant increases in consideration over the prior quarter. In addition, Subaru made its first appearance as the top-ranked brand among the importance factors of safety and versatility/flexibility in this category.

Specific to the luxury sedan/coupe/hatchback segment, BMW has regained the top spot for consideration in Q3 2010, followed by Lexus, Audi, Acura and Mercedes-Benz, respectively. While Mercedes-Benz places fifth for consideration in this segment, it continues to garner the top rank for most of the factors of importance (driving comfort, safety, interior design/layout, luxuriousness/sophistication, prestige/brand status, family friendliness).

In consideration of the luxury SUV/CUV segment, Lexus remains the most-considered brand for Q3 2010, even though the brand's consideration has been eroding for the last few quarters. Following Lexus for top consideration of luxury SUV/CUVs are Acura, Cadillac, Lincoln and BMW (respectively).

Ford continues to remain the most-considered truck brand, experiencing a dramatic increase in consideration since Q2 2010. In addition, the importance factor of safety has edged out driving performance to round out the top factors of importance for trucks (durability/reliability, fuel efficiency, towing/hauling capacity, driving comfort and safety, respectively).

Honda continues to remain the most-considered minivan brand, yet of all minivan brands, only domestic automakers Chrysler and Dodge experienced a slight increase in minivan consideration for Q3 2010 over the previous quarter.

The Q3 2010 Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence Brand Watch Study was fielded to more than 2,700 in-market new-car shoppers on Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com from July 8 – September 23, 2010. Kelley Blue Book's Brand Watch is an ongoing study tracking and trending consumer perceptions, detailing strengths and weaknesses of makes within each segment. Brand Watch primarily tracks brand consideration, segment consideration, important consideration factors for new-car shoppers, and how brands perform on those important factors. Kelley Blue Book Market Intelligence has been tracking Brand Watch since 2007. For Market Intelligence inquiries on any segment or brand, please contact Hwei-Lin Oetken, vice president of market intelligence services for Kelley Blue Book's kbb.com, at 949-267-4460 or hoetken@kbb.com.

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