

Vehicle quality in SA shows improvement

The latest survey of the quality of South African passenger cars and light commercials, conducted by Ipsos in 2017, shows a slight improvement compared to the figures for 2016.



Source: pixabay.com

Quality levels in South Africa are generally impressive. This is the case for both locally made and imported models in a market where customers are very demanding, and vehicles have become far more complex in recent years. The 2017 figure of 69 defects per 100 vehicles compares favourably to 73 in 2016 and 81 in 2015.

One must remember that the Ipsos Vehicle Quality Satisfaction (VQS) survey underwent a major revamp in 2015 when it was extended from just measuring the number of defects to include vehicle design issues or irritations that owners have experienced. The survey is completed by vehicle owners at about 90 days of ownership and is based on the proportion of problems reported by owners for each 100 customers surveyed (PP100), so in other words the lower the score the better the quality of the vehicle.

Before the change in the scoring system the figure for defects reported by owners in 2014 was only 37 per 100 vehicles, which was an all-time low after 23 years of vehicle quality measurement by Ipsos and its predecessors in South Africa. There is a weighting applied where actual vehicle quality defects – genuine faults in the assembly process – have a slightly higher weighting compared to so-called “design defects” which are more minor issues related to the actual design of the vehicle. Both aspects do have an impact on the customer experience of the vehicle and so are important to measure.

Bar keeps being raised

“The South African motor industry continues to impress us each year with their ongoing motivation to improve,” commented Patrick Busschau, the automotive director for Ipsos. “They keep raising the bar despite the challenging operating and commercial environments. The retail industry and the market in general are becoming ever more complex in this information age, and customers are more demanding than ever in the consumer-driven environment in which we now live. It is a credit to all the brands who’ve been awarded Quality Awards that they have been able to continue to thrive and strive for excellence.”

It is not surprising that “fuel consumption” was the most common complaint from owners surveyed in the light of the sensitivity we all feel as consumers towards the fuel price. This was the case in all, but five of the 16 segments surveyed. The exceptions were: “inadequate performance” in the entry, compact car, and extra-cab pick-up segments, while “road-holding” was the most common problem area reported for multi-purpose vehicles. Sport and luxury car owners complained most about “information system malfunction”.

The research data used in the latest VQS survey was obtained from more than 7,000 customers from 16 participating brands in 2017, with these brands representing more than 73% of new vehicles sold through the dealership channel in South Africa during the course of the year.

Participation in the survey is open to any OEM willing to supply customer names for interviewing, agreeing to the rules of syndication and a willingness to participate in the project in a transparent and open manner.

There are extensive checks and balances in this VQS survey which is an important tool for the participating brands, informing the manufacturers, brands and dealers in South Africa on improvements required in vehicles sold locally as well as providing valuable input to advance their product offering.

“Measuring perceived vehicle quality needs to be done in an holistic manner in order to keep pace with the evolving requirements and desires of customers,” continued Patrick Busschau, “and so understanding as many aspects of the customers’ experiences with their chosen automotive brand has become a very important dimension of the strategy of all vehicle manufacturers. Using this information has allowed some of them to improve their offering to customers and thus grow their commercial position in the market. It’s a win-win situation,” Busschau concluded.

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