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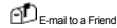
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The Ford Mustang is among four of the automaker's domestic vehicles -- the Mercury Milan, Lincoln MKZ and Lincoln Mark LT are the others -- that finished atop its segment in the annual Initial Quality Study.

Ford's Quality Challenge  
Automaker must turn gains in quality into sales

AutoWeek | Published 06/13/07, 1:27 pm et  
Ford Motor Co.'s stunning gains in quality could help the ailing automaker meet one of its toughest challenges: getting back on consumer shopping lists.

In previous years, automakers such as Hyundai that have scored well in the annual J.D. Power and Associates Initial Quality Study have moved quickly to weave their high quality rankings into their advertising. And Ford will do the same with at least two print ads that break today, June 11.

Four Ford domestic-brand vehicles - the Ford Mustang, Mercury Milan, Lincoln MKZ and Lincoln Mark LT - topped their segments in this year's Power study, which tracks problems experienced by owners during the first 90 days of ownership.

Mazda, in which Ford owns a controlling stake, took top honors in its segment for the MX-5 Miata.

Old message, new product

But Ford's challenge will be to convey the quality message to consumers in a way that doesn't make it appear the company was surprised by the results, says Michael Bernacchi, a marketing professor at the University of Detroit Mercy.

One way Ford might do that, he says, is by linking its quality gains to its 1980s and 1990s tag line "Quality is Job 1."

"Ford can integrate the old message into the new product," Bernacchi says. "I think they have to let the public know that while we all understand perception and image change slowly, this is now the reality."

In addition to the four Ford domestic vehicles that received top rankings in their segments, the automaker placed nine other vehicles in the top three in their segments. By brand, Lincoln came in third, up from 12th place last year. Mercury improved to eighth from 16th place last year, and Ford moved from 15th last year to 10th.

Hyundai, Toyota slip

All three of Ford's Premier Automotive Group brands - Jaguar, Land Rover and Volvo - also moved up.

"The news is certainly positive for Ford for all of our brands," says Bennie Fowler, vice president of global quality. "We're very pleased about the results, and hopefully what the buying public will certainly realize now is that Ford is serious about its quality, and the results are certainly showing that."

A few brands that posted gains in recent years slipped in the 2007 survey. Hyundai dropped from third place last year to 12th place. Toyota, which built its reputation on quality, slipped two spots to sixth. Toyota's spot was taken by Honda.

But it was Ford that dominated the quality rankings, giving the company some rare good news as it struggles to implement its Way Forward turnaround plan.

Says Bernacchi: "It really speaks well, not just for Ford's present products, but for products down the road. These opportunities don't often come to the domestics."

Leslie J. Allen contributed to this report.

AUTOWEEK ELDERLY DRIVING SPECIAL REPORT

Every day, we are all getting older. With better health care, life expectancy is rising. For a population that has enjoyed the personal freedom the automobile offers, a potential danger looms. >>DOWNLOAD FREE ISSUE>>



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3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Georgia Car Show						
>> <b>1st Goodguys Napa Southern Nationals</b> Fri 06/15						
Michigan						
>> <b>Walter P. Chrysler Museum Cruise Night - Radical Night</b> Fri 06/15						

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**SEGMENT WINNERS**

Segment winners

**Subcompact:** Kia Rio/Rio5  
**Compact:** Honda Civic  
**Compact sporty:** Mazda MX-5 Miata  
**Compact premium sporty:** Porsche Boxster  
**Entry premium:** Lincoln MKZ  
**Midsized premium:** Mercedes-Benz E class  
**Large premium:** (tie) Audi A8, Mercedes-Benz S class  
**Premium sporty:** Mercedes-Benz SL class  
**Midsized sporty:** Ford Mustang  
**Midsized:** Mercury Milan  
**Large:** Pontiac Grand Prix

**CARS**

**TRUCKS**

Top finishers in the truck and multiactivity vehicle segment  
**Compact MAV:** Honda CR-V  
**Midsized MAV:** Toyota 4Runner  
**Large MAV:** Toyota Sequoia  
**Midsized premium MAV:** Lexus RX 350/RX 400h  
**Large premium MAV:** Lincoln Mark LT  
**Large pickup:** Chevrolet Silverado Classic  
**Midsized pickup:** Toyota Tacoma  
**Van:** Chevrolet Express  
 Source: J.D. Power and Associates

**PORSCHE ON TOP**

**Porsche on top**

Brand rank in the Initial Quality Study. Listings are reported problems per 100 vehicles.

Porsche	91	<b>GMC</b>	131
Lexus	94	<b>Nissan</b>	132
Lincoln	100	<b>Saturn</b>	132
Honda	108	<b>BMW</b>	133
<b>Mercedes</b>	111	<b>Pontiac</b>	133
Jaguar	112	<b>Saab</b>	133
Toyota	112	<b>Subaru</b>	133
Mercury	113	<b>Cadillac</b>	135
Infiniti	117	<b>Audi</b>	136
Ford	120	<b>Chrysler</b>	151
Scion	123	<b>Suzuki</b>	153
Hyundai	125	<b>Mitsubishi</b>	155
Kia	125	<b>Dodge</b>	156
Industry avg.	125	<b>VW</b>	160
Buick	127	<b>Jeep</b>	161
Chevrolet	129	<b>Hummer</b>	162
Volvo	129	<b>Mazda</b>	163
Acura	130	<b>Land Rover</b>	170

Isuzu and Mini not included because of small sample size.  
 Source: J.D. Power and Associates

Lewis Hamilton is well on his way to taking the Formula One World Championship in his rookie season. Will he be able to sustain the momentum?

- Without a doubt
- Alonso will hold him off
- Massa has a chance

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**who cares about 90 days?????**

By **g35driver** from **Phila, PA** on **6/13/2007**

- Pros:** Easy To Understand
- Cons:** Lacks Information, not critical enough
- Best Uses:** Casual Reading
- Bottom Line:** Yes, I would recommend this to a friend

Who cares about quality in the first 90 days? If a consumer is going to shell out tens of thousands of dollars for an automobile, they want to know how it is going to hold up for the next few thousand days (ie, YEARS). The first 90 days reflects nothing but the quality of workmanship, but says nothing of design flaws. The American makes have been plagued with design flaws for years, making them a bad investment for the individual consumer. Ford needs to make a car/truck that is going to be out of

the repair shop for the first ten years of ownership or more. Emphasizing this attribute- long term reliability- is how Toyota has essentially trounced the big three.

*Was this review helpful to you? Yes/No - You may also flag this review.*

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