

J.D. Power Asia Pacific Reports: Variances in Satisfaction among Winter Tire Brands in Japan Shrinks

Michelin Ranks Highest in Satisfying Customers with Winter Tires in Japan for a 12th Consecutive Year

Tokyo: 14 May 2015 – While overall satisfaction remains stable, the gap in satisfaction scores between the highest- and lowest-performing winter tires shrinks considerably, according to the J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2015 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index StudySM released today.

The study, now in its 12th year, measures customer satisfaction with winter tires by examining six factors (in order of importance): traction/ handling on icy roads (22%); appearance (18%); ride/ quietness (17%); wearability (16%); traction/ handling on snow-covered roads (14%); and traction/ handling on dry/ wet roads (13%). Overall satisfaction scores (based on a 1,000-point scale) are calculated based on customer evaluations of 17 attributes.

Overall customer satisfaction with winter tires averages 550 index points in 2015, down from 551 in 2014. While overall satisfaction drops just 1 point, the gap between the highest- and lowest-ranked brands declines to 159 points in 2015 from 174 points in 2014.

“With the variance in satisfaction among winter tire brands shrinking, competition is becoming increasingly intense,” said **Taku Kimoto, executive director of the automotive division at J.D. Power Asia Pacific, Tokyo**. “It’s essential, therefore, that tire brands find ways to differentiate themselves from their competitors.”

KEY FINDINGS

- Satisfaction with the performance of winter tires decreases as the number of winter seasons used increases. On average, overall customer satisfaction declines by 20 points between the first season (563) and second season (543) and by an additional 7 points in the third season (536).
- The most significant declines in satisfaction between the first and second winter season are in the traction and handling factors: a decline of 23 points in traction/ handling on snow-covered roads; a decline of 21 points in traction/ handling on icy roads; and a decline of 20 points in traction/ handling on dry/ wet roads.
- The salesperson plays an important role when customers purchase winter tires. Customers cite “salesperson’s recommendation” most frequently as the reason they chose their tires (44%), followed by “low price/ special discount” (34%) and “recommended by salesperson at tire shop” (30%).
- The study finds a correlation between overall customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Among highly satisfied customers (overall satisfaction scores of 800 and above), 94 percent say they “definitely would” or “probably would” purchase the same brand the next time they are shopping for winter tires, and 88 percent say they “definitely would” or “probably would” recommend their brand to others. In contrast, among customers with low satisfaction (scores below 400), those percentages drop to 58 percent and 41 percent, respectively.

2015 Ranking Highlights

Michelin ranks highest among the 10 brands included in the study for a 12th consecutive year, with a score of 614 points. Michelin performs particularly well across all factors. Bridgestone ranks second with a score of 575 points.

The 2015 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index Study is based on responses from 7,856 vehicle owners who purchased new winter tires for their personal passenger vehicle (including mini-cars) between May 2012 and February 2015 and continue to use those tires. The online survey was fielded in late February and early March 2015.

About J.D. Power Asia Pacific

J.D. Power Asia Pacific has offices in Tokyo, Singapore, Beijing, Shanghai and Bangkok that conduct customer satisfaction research and provide consulting services in the automotive, information technology and finance industries. Together, the five offices bring the language of customer satisfaction to consumers and businesses in China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand. Information regarding J.D. Power Asia Pacific and its products can be accessed through the Internet at japan.jdpower.com.

About McGraw Hill Financial www.mhfi.com

Media Relations Contacts

Shizue Hidaka; J.D. Power Asia Pacific; Toranomon 45 MT Bldg. 8F; 5-1-5 Toranomon; Minato-ku, Tokyo; Japan 105-0001; Phone +81-3-4550-8060; shizue.hidaka@jdpower.co.jp

John Tews; Director, Media Relations; J.D. Power; 320 E. Big Beaver; 5th Floor, Suite 500, Troy, MI, 48083 USA; 001 248-680-6218; john.tews@jdpa.com

No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release without the express prior written consent of J.D. Power. www.jdpower.com

###

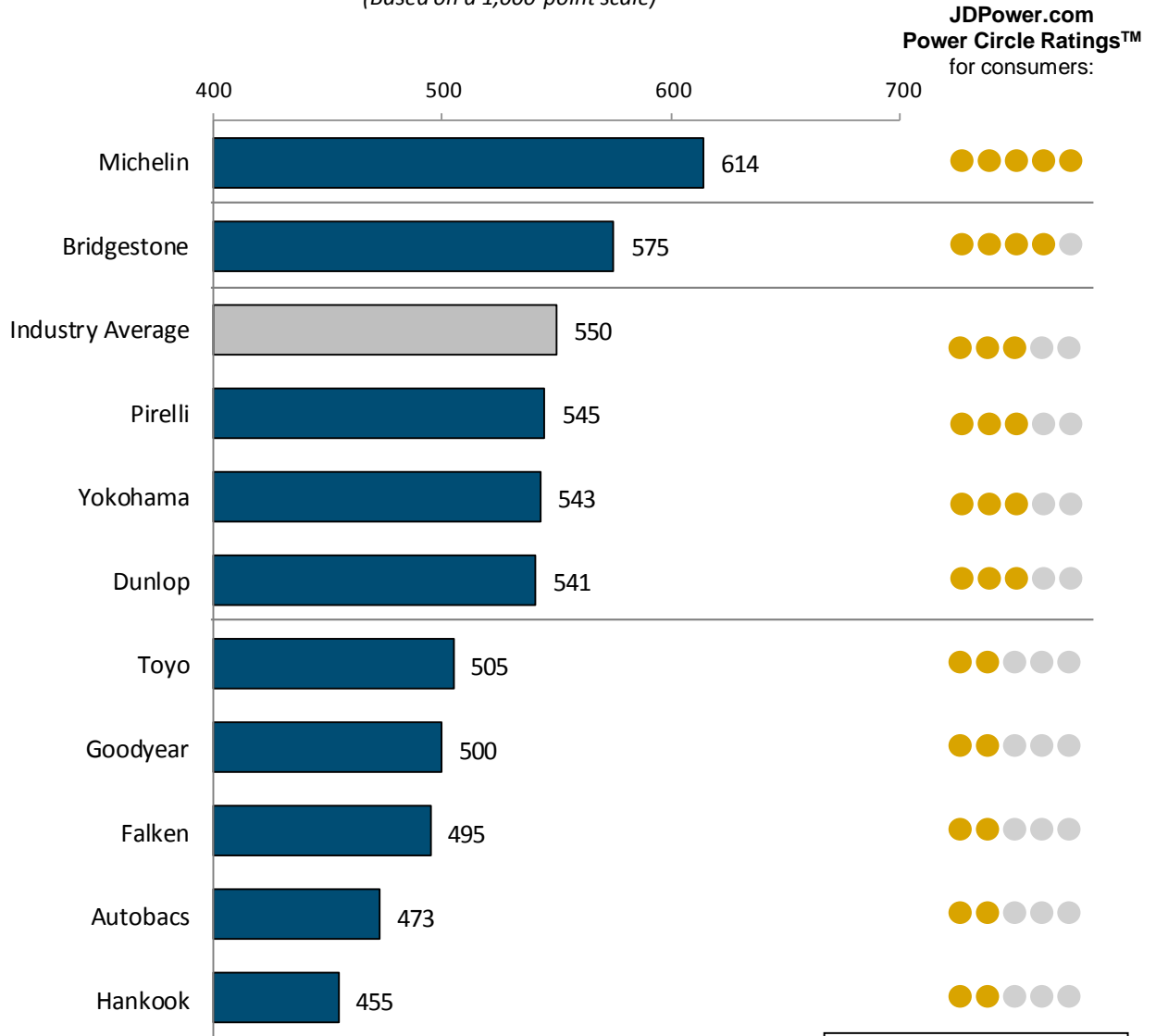
(Page 2 of 2)

Note: Two charts follow.

J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2015 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index StudySM

Customer Service Index Ranking

(Based on a 1,000-point scale)



Power Circle Ratings Legend

- Among the best
- Better than most
- About average
- The rest

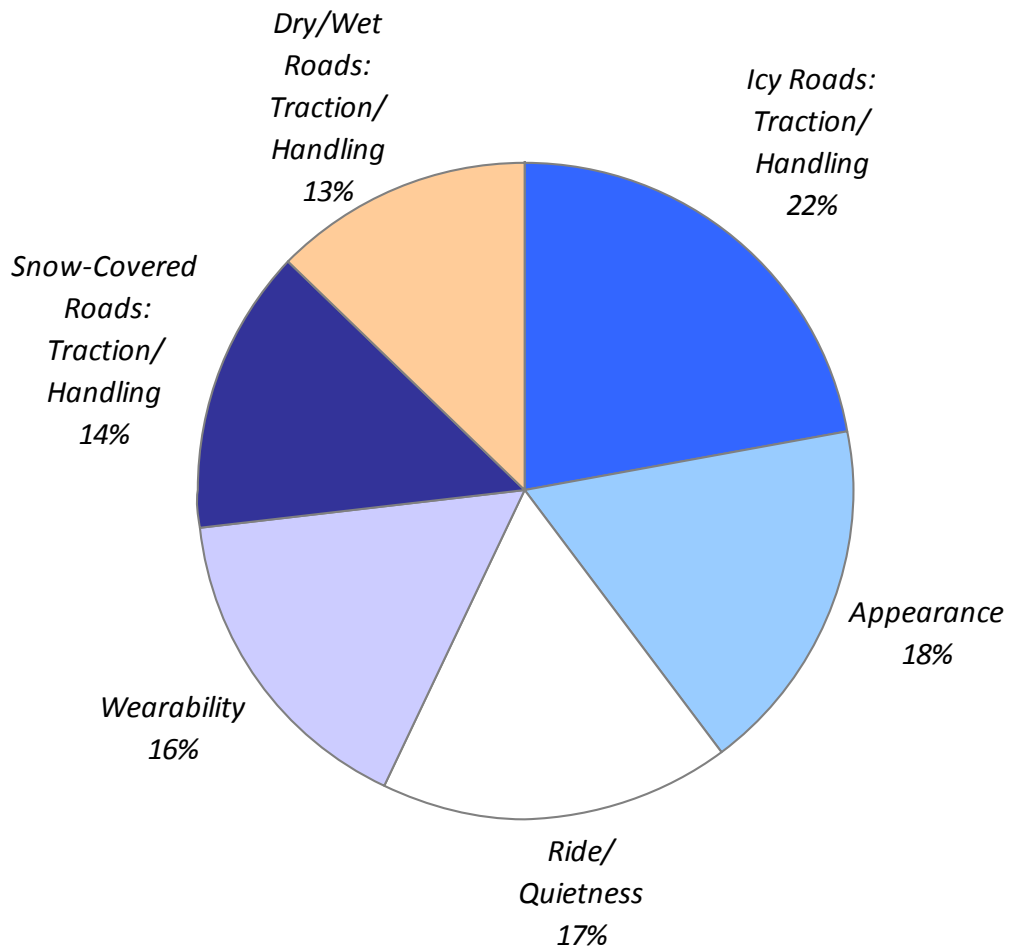
Included in the study but not ranked due to small sample size are Kumho.

Source: J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2015 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index StudySM

Charts and graphs extracted from this press release must be accompanied by a statement identifying J.D. Power Asia Pacific as the publisher and the J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2015 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index StudySM as the source. Rankings are based on numerical scores and not necessarily on statistical significance. No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release or J.D. Power Asia Pacific study results without the express prior written consent of J.D. Power Asia Pacific.

J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2015 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index StudySM

Factors Contributing to Overall Satisfaction



Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

Source: J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2015 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index StudySM

Charts and graphs extracted from this press release must be accompanied by a statement identifying J.D. Power Asia Pacific as the publisher and the J.D. Power Asia Pacific 2015 Japan Winter Tire Customer Satisfaction Index StudySM as the source. Rankings are based on numerical scores and not necessarily on statistical significance. No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release or J.D. Power Asia Pacific study results without the express prior written consent of J.D. Power Asia Pacific.