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Guest satisfaction winners, losers by brand

[Posted by Patrick Mayock](#) at 12:00 AM

My father is perhaps the smartest man I know. A long-standing entry on Cleveland Magazine's "Best Doctors in America" series, his intellect is almost Einstein-ian—minus the propensity for goofy facial expressions.

Yet for all his wisdom, I'd never have the guy pick out a new car for me. His track record of automobile purchases reads like a timeline of the Federal Trade Commission's most memorable (deadly?) recalls. The guy's struck out more times than Major League Baseball strikeout leader Reggie Jackson (who whiffed on a record 2,597 trips to the plate). We're talking clunker after clunker after clunker.

The trend started early, when at the ripe old age of 17 his engine literally rusted out of his car while wheeling around Cleveland's infamous "Dead Man's Curve." Granted, that one was a used dinosaur, but subsequent new or nearly new purchases have: caught fire, stalled, caught fire, required countless trips to the mechanic, or caught fire.

So when it came time for me to enter the unenviable club of car owners, I was intent on bucking the trend. (If



I can't contribute to my family's brain trust, I might as well be able to cart us around safely and reliably.)

For assistance, I turned to my go-to resource for any substantial purchase: Consumer Reports. The company combines extensive in-house testing with decades of consumer surveying and reporting to generate detailed ratings on a wide range of consumer products including cars to candy bars. The ratings themselves are broken down in granular detail, outlining everything from (in the case of cars) transmissions systems to shoulder room.

The result was a 2006 Honda Accord, which, in the five years I've owned it has never required a service more extensive than an oil change.

How anyone could make a purchase decision in today's age of transparency is beyond me. Countless consumers have erred before me. Why not learn from their mistakes? And I'm not the only one who thinks this way. That's why customer reviews have become such an important part of the hotel industry.

But individual reviews often lack authority. That's why outlets such as Consumer Reports and J.D. Power and Associates cultivate such loyal followings. Am I more likely to trust the rantings of commenter "angryDude51" regarding Brand X or the time-tested, measured guest satisfaction scores of J.D. Power? The answer is obvious.

That's why it is so important for you, dear readers, to know exactly where you stand on the gut-wrenchingly honest stage of consumer opinion.

If you've lost your bearings, now is the perfect time to orient yourself. J.D. Power just released findings from its 2012 North American guest satisfaction survey, which my colleague Stephanie Wharton wrote about Wednesday. [Her coverage](#) gives a great overview, pointing at larger trends and shifts in consumer satisfaction.

Here I've delved deeper to highlight the winners and losers in each respective segment J.D. Power covers. For the full findings, see the company's [news release](#).

Luxury

Winners:

- **Ritz-Carlton:** The Marriott International brand bested competitors Four Seasons, JW Marriott and Fairmont to retain the top spot in this segment for the third consecutive year, posting a six-point bump in guest satisfaction to boot.
- **Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts:** Retains No. 2 spot on list with a six-point gain in satisfaction.

Losers:

- **W Hotels:** After ranking third in the previous survey, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide's category killer suffered a setback during 2011, falling 22 points in satisfaction to a below-average rating in the luxury segment.
- **Loews Hotels and Resorts:** Dropped 17 points in guest satisfaction.

Upper Upscale

Winners:

- **Omni Hotels & Resorts:** The brand kept a firm hand on the rudder, maintaining a steady score of 811 for the second consecutive year, and found itself in the No. 1 spot among upper-upscale hotels.

Losers:

- **Westin Hotels & Resorts:** Dropped 13 points in satisfaction to a below-average score within the segment.

Upscale

Winners:

- **Hilton Garden Inn and SpringHill Suites:** Yes, the brands reported decreases in guest satisfaction of six and three points, respectively, but they outlasted their competitors to tie for the top spot in this suffering segment.
- **Aloft and Crowne Plaza Hotels & Resorts:** With increases of eight points and six points, respectively, Aloft and Crowne Plaza were the only two brands to see increases in guest satisfaction.

Losers:

- **Hotel Indigo:** After ranking first in last year's survey, InterContinental Hotels Group's lifestyle brand plummeted 45 points in satisfaction to the No. 6 spot on the list.
- **Delta Hotels and Resorts:** Dropped a whopping 29 points.
- **Four Points by Sheraton:** Fell 15 points.

Mid-scale, full service

Winners:

- **Holiday Inn:** Despite a nine-point decrease in guest satisfaction, the [IHG](#) brand outlasted its competitors to retain the No. 1 spot in the segment for the second consecutive year.
- **Red Lion Hotels:** The brand debuted on the list at No. 3 with an above-average ranking of 745. (The segment average was 739.)

Losers:

- **Best Western:** Yes, the brand held onto its No. 2 ranking, but it also decreased 16 points in satisfaction.
- **Ramada Inn/Plaza:** The Wyndham brand also fell 16 points.

Mid-scale, limited service

Winners:

- **Drury Hotels:** Drury maintained its dynastic performance with a five-point gain to claim its seventh consecutive spot at No. 1 in the segment.

Losers:

- **Wingate by Wyndham:** Although it still ranks among the top four, Wingate's guest satisfaction score plummeted 27 points.
- **Sleep Inn:** Experienced a sharp 22-point decrease.
- **Comfort Inn:** The brand dropped 17 points.

Economy/budget

Winners:

- **Jameson Inn:** Newcomer Jameson, which this year had enough rooms to be featured in the survey, debuted at No. 1 with a 751-point score. It ousted former champion Microtel Inns & Suites from a 10-year winning streak.
- **Red Roof Inn:** The brand posted the highest gain in the segment (+9 points) to take the No. 3 spot in the rankings.

Losers:

- **Travelodge:** The Wyndham brand fell below the segment average of 676 with a 28-point free fall.

Extended stay

Winners:

- **Homewood Suites:** Hilton Worldwide's extended-stay brand outgained the generally strong segment with 17 points to take the No. 1 ranking for the third year in a row.
- **Hyatt House:** Hyatt Hotels Corporation's entrant into the space debuted better than most at No. 4 with a score of 815.
- **Candlewood Suites:** The IHG brand gained nine points.

Losers:

- **N/A:** The segment did not see any brand decrease more than 10 points.

Now on to the usual goodies ...

Stat of the week I

\$1.1 billion: The total transaction volume of single-asset sale transactions valued at more than \$10 million in the U.S., according to LW Hospitality Advisors' "[Q2 2012 Major U.S. Hotel Sales Survey](#)." That total includes approximately 5,100 hotel rooms with an average sale price per room of approximately \$207,000. By comparison, the LWHA "Q2 2011 Major U.S. Hotel Sales Survey" identified 42 transactions totaling more than \$3.6 billion, including 12,800 hotel rooms with an average sale price per room of \$285,000.

Stat of the week II

19: Percentage point decrease in the total percentage of hotel deals conducted by real-estate investment trusts during the first half of 2012 (16%) compared to the first half of 2011 (35%), according to [an analysis from STR Analytics' Steve Hennis](#). Fortunately, private equity has swooped in to fill the void. After only accounting for 7% of the deals in 2011, private equity was involved in 16% of the purchases during the first half of 2012.

Quote of the week

"From the very beginning we are trying to find out as much about you as we can."

—Dennis Morris, director of revenue development at Meyer Jabara, discussing the group's efforts to collect as much data about guests as possible, as reported in "[Access to guest data is 'priceless.'](#)"

Comment of the week

"It is true that employee is very important for the success of the hotel. Employee is the ambassador of the hotel. We need to treat very well so that they spread the hotel name to community and the world."

—Commenter "Anonymous" reiterating the importance of employee engagement in response to "[Investing in employees can boost hotel value](#)."

Email [Patrick Mayock](#) or find him on [Twitter](#).

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