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The “Dream Car” of the Germans 2007 – Top Scoring Mercedes, Audi and Volkswagen all equally desired

The seventh annual poll by TNS Infratest Automotive on the popularity of passenger-car brands and models

Bielefeld, 22 January 2008 – Mercedes, Audi and Volkswagen automobiles are the dream car brands for German motorists. At the end of 2007, automotive market researchers at TNS Infratest found that, for the first time ever, the contest to ascertain the most coveted automobile in Germany was a neck-and-neck affair. In the seventh year of this poll, Mercedes (13.9 per cent of all votes) loses its solitary lead as the most desired car brand and now shares the number-one position with Audi (13.2 per cent) and Volkswagen (13.0 per cent). Whereas BMW (9.9 per cent) and Porsche (4.1 per cent) lost a lot of ground against the previous year, the Ford brand (4.1 per cent) enjoys a significant increase in popularity.

Each year, in a representative survey the automotive market researchers at TNS Infratest in Bielefeld ascertain the dream cars of German motorists. 1,549 owners of passenger cars were questioned in telephone interviews in the second week of December. As in previous years, motorists were asked to name the brand and model they would choose if they had unlimited resources at their disposal for the purchase of a new car.

“The results for the three top-ranking brands are so close, i.e. within the margin of the so-called sampling error, that we are actually forced to declare all three of them the winner in 2007,” says Stoyan Kamburow, General Manager of TNS Infratest Automotive in Bielefeld, by way of explaining the result. “This is essentially attributable to three particular developments,” Kamburow adds. “While the popularity of Mercedes has diminished compared to the previous year and Audi remains at the same level it enjoyed the previous year, Volkswagen has taken a significant leap upwards.”

“What is most striking about the latest results is the general decline in the prevalence of German premium brands in motorists’ dreams. Audi, BMW, Mercedes and Porsche had a total stake of 47.4 per cent of German automotive dreams in 2006. This figure has now dwindled to 41.1 per cent, with more and more of the mass-volume brands taking hold of German automotive dreams. Not only Volkswagen (up 2.6 percentage points against the previous year) and Ford (plus 1.2 percentage points), but Peugeot (plus 1.4 percentage points to 2.5 per cent) and Skoda (plus 1.1 percentage points to 1.8 per cent) have seen

considerable increases in popularity, illustrating in this survey as in others the trend towards a “new modesty” among German motorists,” says Kamburow.

Where the individual models are concerned, the findings indicate new dominance on the part of the products offered by the Wolfsburg-based Volkswagen automotive group. The Audi A4 (3,9 per cent of the vote, including the cabriolet and S4/RS4) takes the place of the previous top dream model, the Audi A6, which this time around landed at third place with 3.5 per cent of the vote – marginally outdone by the Volkswagen Golf, which once more came in strong at 3.7 per cent. “In strictly statistical terms,” says Kamburow, “we have three winners of equal standing in this category as well, especially considering that the next-ranked models, the Mercedes C Class and E Class, only scored in the region of two per cent.”

Kamburow considers another important finding of the survey to be that it indicates a “split” in buyer segments where environmental aspects and fuel consumption are concerned. “While this is a constant topic of deliberate political and media discussion, there would appear to be a buyer group in the market whose automotive dreams continue to be centred on the segment of luxury SUVs.” The five models on offer from German carmakers stood in close competition to one another, securing a collective share of 6.2 per cent of respondents’ automotive dreams. By contrast, the passenger-car brand which boasts the highest profile in the discourse surrounding environment-friendly motoring, Toyota, scored 2.4 per cent of the vote.

“Germans are becoming increasingly more defensive about their car dreams. And they have plenty of reason to be so,” concludes Kamburow.

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