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2005 Synovate Quality Awards

LOCALLY PRODUCED CARS HOLD THEIR OWN AGAINST IMPORTED COMPETITORS

The quality of imported vehicles is slightly better than locally manufactured passenger car models. This is according to the latest results released by the 2005 Synovate Quality Awards.

The product quality survey is based on interviews conducted with approximately 55 000 vehicle owners on an annual basis, and measures the number of problems (PP100: problems per 100 vehicles) new car owners experience with their vehicles in the first few months of ownership.

According to Albert McLean, Synovate's Chief Operating Officer for the Middle East and Africa, this was more notable in certain areas, such as those classified as Squeaks and Rattles, Brakes and Handbrakes, and Steering and Handling, where local production's performance lagged.

"Interestingly, the comparison between local and imports mirrors that between volume and luxury in many respects," said McLean. "This is true not only of the overall score, but a similar pattern emerged as luxury outperformed volume in the same categories as where imported models outperformed locally manufactured models.

This is not altogether surprising, since the lower-volume luxury models make up the bulk of the imports, while local production is focused more on the volume sellers."

But the fact that this correlation exists does not in itself highlight whether it is the fact that they are volume models or whether they are locally manufactured that causes the higher overall problem count. In truth, it is very likely to be a bit of both.

"It is not always feasible for the same amount of time to be spent on the production of the hundreds of vehicles coming off the line for a lower-end model," said McLean. "This could account for the slightly higher (although still low at under one problem per ten vehicles) count in paint problems, interior problems, bodywork and moulding dents and dings.

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Wind Noise is also more common in the locally manufactured models, as well as in the volume models. But this is unlikely to be a build quality issue as much as a design aspect. "Recording a slightly higher count in these categories is not unusual, and is not necessarily a reflection of any local condition."

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About Synovate

Synovate, the market research arm of Aegis Group plc, generates consumer insights that drive competitive marketing solutions. The network provides clients with cohesive global support and a comprehensive suite of research solutions. Synovate employs almost 5,000 staff in 46 countries. Synovate in South Africa was formerly known as Proactive Insight.

More information on Synovate can be found at www.synovate.com and www.synovate.co.za

About Aegis Group plc

Aegis Group plc is the holding company for Carat, its media strategy, planning and buying business, and Synovate, its market research business. These two operating groups provide clients with a range of services across media communications, marketing consultancy and market research. Listed on the London Stock Exchange, Aegis is capitalised at around £1.1 billion and operates in 64 countries. More information is available at www.aegisplc.com