

Demographics and attitudes play a significant role in customer satisfaction

Issued by [Ipsos](#)

10 Jun 2015

Demographics play a significant role in customer satisfaction in terms of the purchasing and servicing experience of vehicle owners in South Africa. This is clear in the detailed breakdown of the latest Ipsos Competitive Customer Experience which is the result of telephonic interviews with more than 25,000 owners of passenger cars and light commercial vehicles over a 12-month period.

The sample does not include all the brands on the market, but covers 85% of the new vehicles sold through the retail dealer channel.

Women, for instance, are slightly easier to please in terms of both buying and servicing a car. The difference is only about half a percent, but it is measurable.

Older people - over 35 years of age - generally give higher ratings than the younger groups, with the 25-34 year group being the most demanding in terms of the buying experience and the 18-24 group giving the lowest ratings when it comes to servicing.

The demands of the various population groups in SA also vary as does the province where the sale or servicing takes place. For instance those people buying a car in the Free State are the most satisfied, but this is not the case with buyers of LCVs, where Mpumalanga gets the highest rating. Servicing is totally different, with those car owners in the Northern Cape the most satisfied and LCV owners in the Western Cape giving the highest rating.

"This information, which has been collected and processed by Ipsos and its predecessors since 1991, has proved a vital tool for the local motor industry - manufacturers, importers and the retail trade - in its efforts to improve customer experience when buying or servicing a vehicle. Our standards are now world class," explained Patrick Busschau, the Ipsos Automotive Business Unit Director.

One area of evolution in the customer service space has been the desire to receive individualised attention. Busschau explains, "Customers are increasingly expecting retailers to understand their individual needs and to appreciate their customers as unique and important to their business. This is a major challenge as we all have different needs and expectations. So how does a business achieve this? Through engagement and asking the right questions, before acting appropriately to meet those needs. Being able to deliver a unique and meaningful experience to a customer is what is starting to set some brands apart.

"It is not just a question of understanding the demographic differences in customers that you are likely to encounter as a business. Depending on the product category, customers may have distinctly different and varied perspectives of brand involvement, importance and performance. This is driven by their individual needs and motivations and is often even more powerful than understanding some of the subtle differences we see between age, race and gender."

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