

**J.D. Power and Associates Reports:
Boat Manufacturers Hone in on Improving Customer Satisfaction and Quality
While Facing Challenging Market Conditions**

Bass Cat, Bennington, Cobalt, Grady-White, Nautique, Regal and Sea Ray Each
Rank Highest in New-Boat Owner Satisfaction in Their Respective Segments

MIAMI: 12 February 2009—Despite challenging economic conditions, overall customer satisfaction and quality across the new-boat industry has increased considerably since 2008, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2009 Boat Competitive Information StudySM released today at the Miami International Boat Show.

Now in its eighth year, the study examines the sales, service and product experience of new-boat owners. [Owner satisfaction with new boats](#) is measured in seven segments: [fiberglass bass boats](#); [coastal fishing \(17 to 30 feet\)](#); [express cruisers \(24 to 33 feet\)](#); [small runabouts \(16 to 19 feet\)](#); [large runabouts \(20 to 29 feet\)](#); [pontoons](#); and [ski/wakeboards](#). Overall customer satisfaction index scores are based on performance in eight factors: cabin; engine; ride and handling; helm and instrument panel; design and styling; sound system; water sports; and fishing.^[1]

The study finds that customer satisfaction across the boating industry has increased considerably—up from an index score of 813 on a 1,000-point scale in 2008 to 830 in 2009. While all boating segments improve in 2009, the express cruiser segment (up 38 points) and large runabout segment (up 25 points) primarily drive the overall satisfaction increase. In addition, the average number of problems new-boat owners experience has declined by 33 problems per 100 (PP100) boats in 2009.

“The industry-wide drop in problems experienced is again driven by considerable improvements in both the express cruiser and large runabout segments, which, combined, drive a decline of more than 100 PP100 from the 2008 study,” said Todd Markusic, senior director of the powersports practice at J.D. Power and Associates. “In a time when sales are down nearly 30 percent and consumers are scrutinizing their discretionary spending, enhancing satisfaction and improving quality is vital. Ensuring the most satisfying experience possible during this down time will not only enhance customer loyalty, but also will likely secure even more sales through recommendations and referrals once the market improves.”

The marine industry has been impacted considerably by current economic conditions. The study reveals the following boating industry trends in 2009, which are heavily influenced by the current market situation:

- Many dealers and manufacturers in 2009 are scrutinizing the expense of participating in boat shows. The study reveals that 20 percent of new boats are purchased at a boat show, which demonstrates the value of these events to manufacturers and dealers.
- The median owner-reported price paid for a new boat increased by approximately \$1,500 from 2008 to \$31,495 in 2009. This marks the smallest price increase in the industry during the past three years.
- The amount of time boat owners are running their engines has decreased steadily, by five hours each year since 2003. In 2009, owners run their engines an average of 59 hours, which is down considerably from 83 hours in 2003.

[Bass Boat Segment](#)

Bass Cat ranks highest in the bass boat segment for a fifth consecutive year, performing particularly well in ride and handling, fishing, and design and styling. Ranger and Stratos, respectively, follow Bass Cat in the segment.

[Coastal Fishing Segment \(17 to 30 feet\)](#)

For an eighth consecutive year, Grady-White ranks highest in the coastal fishing segment, performing particularly well in fishing, ride and handling, and design and styling. Following Grady-White in the rankings are Boston Whaler and Century, respectively.

Express Cruiser Segment (24 to 33 feet)

Regal and Sea Ray tie to rank highest in the express cruiser segment. This marks the third consecutive year that Regal has ranked highest. Sea Ray performs particularly well in ride and handling while Regal performs particularly well in the cabin factor.

Small Runabout Segment (16 to 19 feet)

Sea Ray ranks highest among small runabout boats, performing particularly well in the engine, water sports, and design and styling factors. Regal and Monterey, respectively, follow Sea Ray in the segment.

Large Runabout Segment (20 to 29 feet)

For an eighth consecutive year, Cobalt ranks highest in the large runabout segment. Cobalt performs particularly well in water sports, design and styling, and ride and handling. Regal and Sea Ray, respectively, follow Cobalt in the segment.

Pontoon Segment

Bennington ranks highest in the pontoon segment, performing particularly well in design and styling. Manitou follows Bennington, while Premier ranks third in the segment.

Ski/Wakeboard Segment

For a seventh consecutive reporting year, Nautique (manufactured by Correct Craft) ranks highest in the ski/wakeboard segment, performing particularly well in instrument panel, water sports, and ride and handling. Mastercraft ranks second.

The 2009 Boat Competitive Information Study is based on responses from 9,790 owners who registered a new boat between June 2007 and May 2008. The study was fielded from September to November 2008.

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