



By Mike Manges

Top 10 Brands (based on quality)

Rank	Brand	Overall Rating
1.	Michelin	4.6
2.	Bridgestone	4.4
3.	Goodyear	3.9
4.	Yokohama	3.8
5.	Toyo	3.7
5.	BFGoodrich	3.7
5.	Firestone	3.7
8.	Continental	3.6
9.	Dunlop	3.3
10.	Sumitomo	3.2
10.	Hankook	3.2
10.	General	3.2

What is the best medium truck tire brand in terms of quality?" This question has been the subject of intense debate for a long time. The tire industry now has an answer, straight from the mouth of the people who are on the front lines: independent commercial tire dealers.

Earlier this year, *Modern Tire Dealer*, through its *2010 Truck Tire Survey*, asked more than 7,000 independent tire dealers "How would you rate the following truck tire brands in terms of product quality, with 5 being 'excellent' and 1 being 'poor?'"

Dealers were given a choice of 37 medium truck tire brands, from well-known, first-tier names like Bridgestone, Michelin and Goodyear to lesser-known brands such as Freestar, Taurus and Warrior.

Among qualified recipients, the Michelin brand received the highest ranking with an overall rating of 4.6.

Tops in quality

In taking first place, Michelin edged out the Bridgestone brand, which received a total score of 4.4.

Goodyear came in at number three with an overall rating of 3.9. Yokohama followed closely in fourth place with a rating of 3.8.

What brand is the best?

Dealers rank truck tire brands on quality, retreadability.
Plus a look at what fleets really want!



Respondents to *MTD's 2010 Truck Tire Survey* weren't shy about naming the top truck tire brands based on quality.

There was a three-way tie for fifth place: Toyo, BFGoodrich and Firestone. Each of those brands scored 3.7.

Continental came in at number eight with a total rating of 3.6, edging out Dunlop, which came in at number nine with a rating of 3.3.

Rounding out the top 10 were Sumitomo, Hankook and General, which tied one another with a total score of 3.2. (For a condensed look at the top 10 brands, see the chart on page 42.)

According to *MTD's 2010 Truck Tire Survey*, product quality is the number one attribute that dealers want from their truck tire suppliers.

Recipients were asked to rank nine other attributes in order of their importance, again using a scale of 5 (for "excellent") to 1 (for "poor").

Here is how each attribute measured up:

Rank	Attribute	Total score
1.	Product quality	4.46
2.	Profitability	4.44
3.	Fill rate	4.14
4.	Warranty/adjustment policy	3.94
5.	Retreadability	3.76
6.	Technical support	3.45
6.	End user brand awareness	3.45
8.	End user marketing support	3.23
9.	Fuel efficiency	3.17
10.	Original equipment supplier	2.61

Product quality is a continual theme throughout the *2010 Truck Tire Survey*. Among survey respondents, 89% considered quality to be "very important, if not extremely important."

Approximately 57.5% said quality is "extremely important," while 31.2% said it is "very important." Another 11.3% ranked product quality as "important."

Rounding out the top five, 93% of the survey respondents said profitability is "very important, if not extremely important." Another 5.7% rated it "important."

Fill rates are the third most-wanted attribute a dealer wants from his supplier. Approximately 84% of survey respondents considered it to be "very important, if not extremely important." Another 13.9% described it as "important."

Survey results also show that warranty/adjustment policies remain a favored feature.

Seventy-two percent of respondents believed warranty/adjustment policies were "very important, if not extremely important." And 64% of respondents regarded retreadability in the same way.

A look at the rest

Which brands make up "the rest" when it comes to product quality? The short answer: a wide range of names from a wide range of places. (For a complete chart, see page 44.)

Both Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.'s Kelly brand and the Kumho brand barely missed cracking the top 10 with overall ratings of 3.1.

Bridgestone Americas

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Truck tire brands

Tire Operations LLC's Dayton and Falken Tire Corp.'s Ohtsu/Falken brands rounded out the brands that received a score of 3.0 or higher. Each has a rating of 3.0. (Falken is in the process of phasing out the Ohtsu truck tire name. It gained control of the Japan-made Ohtsu brand earlier this year.)

Moving down the list, Chinese-manufactured brands dominate. The Double Coin brand scored 2.8, while the Hercules and Roadmaster brands tied at 2.6. (Roadmaster is Cooper Tire & Rubber Co.'s medium truck tire line. Cooper shifted its truck tire production to China several years ago.)

The Dynatrac and Power King brands tied with scores of 2.5 apiece. Respondents gave GT Radial a score of 2.4.

Moving down the list just one-tenth of a point, Aeolus, Akuret and Sailun tied with an overall rating of 2.3. (Akuret is offered by Del-Nat Tire Corp. Aeolus was formerly controlled by the defunct GPX International Tire Corp.; Alliance Tire U.S.A. now has exclusive rights to Aeolus in the U.S.)

As the list continues, more European brands enter the mix. Mitas, which is made in the Czech Republic, received a score of 2.2; China's Wanli scored the same.

CEAT, a brand that originates in India, scored 2.1. Gladiator, which is made in China and sold in North America by American Pacific Industries Inc., also received a score of 2.1. Two Chinese brands, Long March and Westlake, each scored 2.1, as well.

The rest of the "others" include three Chinese brands and two European brands. Geostar and Freestar, both originating from China, plus Taurus (Europe), each received a score of 2.0.

Warrior (China) and Barum (Europe) round out the list with scores of 1.9 each.

Brand un-familiarity

Respondents to the 2010 *Truck Tire Survey* list "brand awareness among end users" as the seventh most important attribute they want from their truck tire suppliers.

Approximately 45% of respondents say the attribute is "very important, if not extremely important." Another 43.9% say it is "important."

What brands, then, are dealers not familiar with?

Of all the brands listed in the survey, Mitas has the least amount of brand recognition: 70% of respondents say they are not familiar with Mitas.

Warrior is the second least-known brand with 69% of respondents reporting they are unfamiliar with it.

Barum is the third least-known brand with a lack of recogni-

tion rate of 65%. Akuret and CEAT tied for fourth place (62%). They were followed by Freestar and Geostar, which also share the same level of unfamiliarity (61%).

GT Radial and Taurus tied for the distinction of the eighth most unfamiliar brand; 58% of respondents said they are not familiar with either label. Aeolus came in at number nine with an "unfamiliarity rate" of 56%.

A chart on page 46 provides a quick look at the 10 least familiar brands and how they rate, according to survey respondents.

Most (and least) retreadable brands

Retreadability is another sought-after attribute, and with good reason: despite a decline in production numbers from 2008 to 2009, retreading remains big business in the U.S.

An estimated 13 million medium and heavy truck tires were retreaded in the U.S. during 2009, according to the 2010 *Modern Tire Dealer Facts Issue*. Sales of retreaded tires (without casings) totaled \$1.64 billion last year.

In the 2010 *Truck Tire Survey*, we asked "How would you rate the following truck tire brands in terms of retreadability, with 5 being 'excellent' and 1 being 'poor?'"

Dealers were given a choice of 37 brands, the same number and assortment of brands they were offered for the earlier survey question about quality. (Responses were accepted only from dealers who said they were familiar with the brands.)

What brands are the most retreadable, then? Michelin and Bridgestone, according to respondents. The two brands tied for first place with an overall rating of 4.4. (Michelin offers retreads through its Michelin Retread Technologies Inc. arm, while Bridgestone offers retreads through its Bridgestone Bandag Tire Solutions subsidiary.)

Goodyear is next with an overall score of 4.0. Next in line is Yokohama with a rating

of 3.8.

Respondents rated Firestone, Continental and Toyo the same at 3.7 each. (Continental, working through its Continental Tire the Americas LLC subsidiary, introduced a new retread product, ContiTread, to the U.S. market last year. ContiTread products are manufactured by Marangoni Tread North America franchisees.)

Michelin's BFGoodrich label was deemed the eighth most retreadable brand with a total score of 3.6. Rounding out the "most retreadable" list are Dunlop, General and Sumitomo, which scored total ratings of 3.3 each. (Sumitomo medium truck tires are distributed in the U.S. by Treadways Corp.)

Survey respondents also were not shy about listing the 10 "least retreadable" medium truck tire brands.

Other Brands (based on quality)

Rank	Brand	Overall Rating
13.	Kelly	3.1
13.	Kumho	3.1
15.	Dayton	3.0
15.	Falken/Ohtsu	3.0
17.	Double Coin	2.8
18.	Hercules	2.6
18.	Roadmaster	2.6
20.	Dynatrac	2.5
20.	Power King	2.5
22.	GT Radial	2.4
23.	Aeolus	2.3
23.	Sailun	2.3
23.	Akuret	2.3
26.	Mitas	2.2
26.	Wanli	2.2
28.	Gladiator	2.1
28.	CEAT	2.1
28.	Long March	2.1
28.	Westlake	2.1
28.	Ling Long	2.1
33.	Geostar	2.0
33.	Taurus	2.0
33.	Freestar	2.0
36.	Warrior	1.9
36.	Barum	1.9

Truck tire brands

They listed Taurus as the least retreadable brand with a total score of 1.7. Barum, Warrior and CEAT tied for number two with 1.8 each.

There was a five-way tie for fifth place. Westlake, Freestar, Wanli, Long March and Ling Long all scored 1.9.

Respondents also held Mitas, Sailun, Akuret and Geostar in equal "esteem." Each of those brands scored 2.0. (See chart on the right-hand side of this page.)



Michelin edged out the Bridgestone brand in terms of overall quality, according to survey respondents.

What do fleets want?

The MTD 2010 Truck Tire Dealer Survey also asked dealers what fleets want in a truck tire brand. Their answers were illuminating.

Dealers were asked "How important are the following product attributes to your commercial/fleet truck tire customers, with 5 being 'extremely important' and 1 being 'not important at all?'" They were given a choice of nine attributes.

Respondents said original cost was the most important attribute with an overall score of 4.3. The rest ranked/scored as follows:

Rank	Attribute	Total score
2.	Availability	4.30
3.	Original tread life	4.13
4.	Casing life	3.78
5.	Retreadability	3.78
6.	Fuel efficiency	3.24
7.	Brand name	3.17
8.	Country of origin	2.98
9.	Tire weight	2.65

Approximately 86% of respondents listed the original cost of

the tire as being "very important, if not extremely important" to customers. More than 12.5% said it was "important."

Close to 86% of the respondents also said that availability was "very important, if not extremely important." Another 12.7% said it was "important."

Tread life and casing life were considered "very important, if not extremely important" by 82% and 66% of the respondents, respectively.

Further down the list, 67% of respondents said retreadability was "very important, if not extremely important." Another 18.6% said it was "important."

Thirty-seven percent of respondents said fuel efficiency was "very important, if not extremely important." Another 40% considered it "important."

Brand name, country of origin and tire weight rounded out the list with "very important, if not extremely important" percentages of 33%, 26% and 19%, respectively. ■

10 Least Retreadable Brands

Rank	Brand	Overall Rating
1.	Taurus	1.7
2.	Barum	1.8
2.	Warrior	1.8
2.	CEAT	1.8
5.	Westlake	1.9
5.	Freestar	1.9
5.	Wanli	1.9
5.	Long March	1.9
5.	Ling Long	1.9
10.	Mitas	2.0
10.	Sailun	2.0
10.	Akuret	2.0
10.	Geostar	2.0

10 Most Retreadable Brands

Rank	Brand	Overall Rating
1.	Michelin	4.4
1.	Bridgestone	4.4
3.	Goodyear	4.0
4.	Yokohama	3.8
5.	Firestone	3.7
5.	Continental	3.7
5.	Toyo	3.7
8.	BFGoodrich	3.6
9.	Dunlop	3.3
9.	General	3.3
9.	Sumitomo	3.3

10 Least Familiar Brands

Rank/ Brand	% of dealers unfamiliar with brand
1. Mitas	70%
2. Warrior	69%
3. Barum	65%
4. Akuret	62%
5. CEAT	62%
6. Freestar	61%
6. Geostar	61%
8. GT Radial	58%
8. Taurus	58%
10. Aeolus	56%