100 YEARS OF SUZUKI MILESTONES + HIGH UK CUSTOMER SERVICING RANKING

Published: July 14, 2021

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Online version: https://www.wheels-alive.co.uk/100-years-of-suzuki-milestones-high-uk-customer-servicing-ranking/



Suzulight – first Suzuki car on test, 1954.

Robin Roberts (and Motoring Milestones) reports on the history of the company and the high regard in which it is held today…

They may be one of the smaller engineering companies, but Suzuki has consistently shown over a century that it's the size of an idea which matters.

Some 11 years before the Suzuki Loom Manufacturing Co was officially formed in 1920, founder Michio Suzuki pioneered a new type of textile loom design in 1909 after watching his mother using her labour intensive and primitive device to weave cloth.

Very early looms used a manual cotton thread loading device known as a shuttle so Suzuki decided to design his own and, in summary, managed to patent a much more advanced machine that enabled weavers to work up to 10 times faster and with a lot less fatigue too by utilising his auto thread loading shuttle system. He sold his solution to other weavers and shortly afterwards came up with a method to produce vertical and horizontal striped cloth.

As the motoring age spread around the world in the 1920s and 1930s he considered car making but plans were interrupted by WW2 and in 1951 his son, Shunzo, joined him. That was a turning point for the business.

Riding his pedal cycle in strong head winds one day, Shunzo Suzuki realised he could make his daily journey much easier by designing his own simple motor assisted cycle and with his R&D team demonstrated the ‘Power Free’ 36cc motorcycle in 1952 which went into production that same year.



1952 ‘Power Free’ bicycle.

More powerful engines followed and after comparing cars of the day, the father and son created the Suzuki Motor Co and its first car emerged in 1955 with lightweight and innovative design and a two-stroke 360cc engine.

The Suzulight, shown in our heading photograph, was developed by just six people and was the first to have fully independent suspension with rack and pinion steering, and it appeared as Japan’s first car to have front wheel drive with a front engine. They realised how the business could develop and wisely trademarked the now well known ‘S’ symbol in 1958.

Motorcycle development continued and their machines were loved by riders and hit international recognition winning their class in the 1962 Isle of Man TT.

Ever interested in the widest application of automotive power, Suzuki looked at boats and produced its first outboard motor, a 5.5 hp unit in 1965. Six years later it showed its Snowmobile and in 1974 a Suzuki designed and powered wheelchair.

Probably the most significant model however was the Suzuki Jimny LJ10 which debuted in 1970. This really set the scene for the compact, lightweight, immensely capable small off-road generation of models.



Suzuki's original Jimny LJ10.

Out of this knowledge pool the company developed the world's first ATV ('All Terrain

Vehicle') in 1982 which replaced the traditional and less stable trikes used by farmers and country people.

Looking and learning from their own experiences and those of other engineers and products, Suzuki were early adopters of hybrid power and are producing some of the most powerful quad bikes which are now a major transport for country businesses as well as recreational vehicles, and used by emergency responders.



Suzuki Quadrunner ATV.

In three years time it hopes to be selling 2 million motorcycles and 3.7 million cars.

Today they have hybrid versions of every car model, six models available with 4×4 practicality, 19 types of motorcycle and two motocross models, 30 outboard engines and

three different quad machines.



Suzuki Across Hybrid and quad machine.



Suzuki Hayabusa motorcycle.

Off land, Suzuki makes 30 types of outboard motors which are not only renowned for their reliability and fuel economy as well as easy servicing, but more recently could be the models for future greening of the seas.

Suzuki has been developing and testing the world's first Micro-plastic collection system fitted to an outboard motor, which uses sea-water to cool them, and it incorporates a filter to screen out micro-plastics as it moves through the water and the pollutants are collected ready for disposal when back on land.



Suzuki Marine microplastic collection system.

Suzuki innovation stretches back over a century and it’s looking towards a cleaner and greener future on road, off-road, and on the water.



A century of other notable milestones around the world:

The world was slowly recovering from WW1 and a ‘flu pandemic which killed an estimated 50 million people.

Alcohol was banned in America until it was realised taxing it brought in much needed income after WW1.

Insulin was discovered in 1921 and diabetics usually died young before then.

You could buy heroin over the counter.

Coco Chanel introduces “Chanel No. 5”.

The farthing was Britain’s smallest coin, four of them made up a penny and 960 were in a pound.

The world’s first traffic lights were installed at a busy road junction in Detroit, after being invented by a serving police officer.

The 1921 Federal Highway Act designated east-west routes had even numbers and north-south they were given odd numbers.

The Roads Act 1920 created the Road Fund in Britain, with money from motorists and vehicle keepers and the first definitive numbering system followed shortly afterwards.

In car heating systems patented in the 1920s involved an extra manifold from the engine to the cabin, which replaced the option of a floor mounted heater-box containing a pre-warmed brick.

LATE SUZUKI GB NEWS – TOP AUTOMOTIVE BRAND FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Announced last Friday, 9th July 2021, Suzuki GB PLC has once again ranked high in the latest Institute of Customer Service’s UK Customer Satisfaction Index (UKCSI) and in joint third position from over 260 organisations measured, and the first position automotive brand. The index is a barometer of customer satisfaction measuring sentiment across the country, and asks over 10,000 consumers to rate their experiences of dealing with over 260 different companies across 13 sectors, including those in the motor industry. 45,000 responses were received in the latest UKCSI across all industries with 3,000 of those from the Automotive sector.

First Direct, John Lewis, Amazon.co.uk and Suzuki GB topped the table for customer satisfaction in the latest UKCSI. The Automotive industry sector average UKCSI score was 79.1 points measured across 26 brands and with a score of 84.0, Suzuki ranked first and

was 25 places ahead of its closest Automotive competitor from the full list of companies measured.