

PRODUCTS

The Oscar for consumer products: "... And the Winner is..."

In a market where innovation speed reigns supreme, consumers, too, can have their say by choosing those products that best satisfy their needs, while at the same time supplying a scenario of consumption trends and habits and illustrating the degree of innovation of a given product.

Maura Leonardi

I don't know if you've ever happened to buy or just simply to notice products on supermarket shelves bearing a red & white label stating: Voted Product of The Year, Eletto Prodotto dell'Anno if you are in Italy, Elegido Producto del Año in Spain, Elu Produit de l'Année if you happen to be in France, Gewalt Zum Produkt des Jahres in Germany, Eleito Producto Do Ano Pelos Consumidores in Brazil, Gekozen Product Van Het Jaar if you're travelling to Holland, Wybor Produkt Roku Konsument in Poland, Eleito Producto do Ano pelos consumidores in Portugal... and so on in another 21 countries of the world. This label is a clear and visible mark on the product's packaging that identifies on supermarket shelves those products that have received this recognition by consumers. The award, born in France in 1987 and today present in another 32 countries (among which the USA, Australia, Canada, Turkey, Ireland, Israel) is the only International recognition conferred by consumers who, through direct voting, choose the most innovative consumer products of the year, rewarding the marketing and innovation work behind these brands.

WE CAN DEFINE IT AS SORT OF AN ANNUAL OSCAR OF CONSUMER PRODUCTS WHERE INNOVATION IS SURELY ONE OF THE DRIVERS DETERMINING THE SELECTION. In a market where innovation speed reigns supreme, consumers, too, can have their say by choosing those products that best meet their needs and, while doing this, they are also giving a clear scenario of the trends in consumption habits by photographing their current status. The award performs a twofold function by constituting an instrument both for companies and for end users. For companies, in that they can collect useful information that helps them to better understand the features that spur consumers to buy one product over another and hence to improve their offer. For the end users, because they express their own opinion regarding product innovation. And, as mentioned before, the selection hinges on the concept of new/innovative, a criterion that singles out those products that answer the needs of consumers through, for example: the creation of a completely new product, a new formula or recipe, product range completion, diversification, a new packaging, a new technology, a product that gives rise to a new category or market.

BUT HOW IS THE SELECTION MADE? IT IS A FIVE-STEP PROCESS.

Step 1: product submission. Submission is free of charge and open to all innovative consumer products available in large and/or specialist retail chains.

Step 2: a committee selects the finalists. This committee of experts from the academic community, marketing and the trade press, checks to make sure that the products possess the necessary requisites for participation (innovation and date on which it became available in retail chains). The finalists are divided into trade categories (based on Nielsen/IRI/GfK).

Step 3: consumers elect the Products of the Year. Conducted by TNS Italia (for the Italian market, but the same happens also in other countries through the respective agencies entrusted with this type of activity), this research represents the biggest consumer survey of this type in Italy for the number of people involved. The research consists in: survey on consumer behavior, sensitivity, expectations concerning innovation in general and for every specific trade category from which the Product of the Year is to be selected; the TRI*M Index, a clear-cut indicator that measures the quality of the Consumer Experience. And finally, the 4th and 5th steps that consist in the award itself and in applying the red and white logo certifying election as Product of the Year directly on its packaging.

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THE CENTRAL CORE OF THE PRODUCT OF THE YEAR CONTEST IS THE GPMI® MARKET RESEARCH CARRIED OUT BY TNS INFRATEST. This research is the most important one in Italy for the number of people involved – over 30,000. A representative sample of the Italian population of individuals over 15 years of age. TNS Infratest group ranks first in the world in market research on consumers, and performs this type of survey through a proprietary Elected-Product-of-the-Year method used also for the other countries where the award is bestowed. The research highlights consumer trends, i.e. what lies behind each purchase choice and the criteria dictating the selection of one product over another. The 2010 Italian edition featured 100 products divided into 38 categories, and the winners were chosen by a panel of over 8,000 consumers. The guidelines supporting product choices were attention to price, respect for the environment and naturalness.

THE ITALIAN CONSUMER IS TODAY A MORE RESPONSIBLE AND ATTENTIVE BUYER, INTERESTED IN PRODUCTS THAT RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND IN A GOOD PRICE/QUALITY RATIO. The most alert and rational consumers nowadays select and consequently reward through their purchases, those companies that are capable of conjugating price, rapport with the customer and quality of the product and of the company. Common denominator of the products that have attained the podium are quality and functionality, two characteristics that synthesize the desires and demands of shoppers to place timesaving items in their trolleys, but also items that take environmental respect into account. In Italy, purchasers are willing to experiment new products (79%) and are oriented towards spending more for a really new product.

RED CARPET ALSO IN THE HYGIENIC-SANITARY CATEGORY WHERE “...THE WINNER IS: TEMPO COMPLETE CARE”. A determining winning factor was the innovative technology by which the lotion applied on the tissue is not absorbed by the ply, but is transferred on the skin upon use, protecting it and preventing reddening of the nose. Eucalyptus oil helps free the respiratory tracts, giving a feeling of relief for stuffy noses. The recognition aims at rewarding the research and development of the innovation itself applied in this case to a tissue paper product. An award has also been given to facial tissues in Great Britain in the hygienic-sanitary category. In Poland, the “Oscar” for Product of the Year 2009 in the hygienic-sanitary category goes to the Zewa brand super-soft Softis Aromathera produced by SCA Hygiene Products. Winning the Product of the Year award means an entire year of prestige and visibility, and it is a great parameter to understand the direction of the market and the drivers that motivate consumer choices. •

For greater information you can visit:

Italy: www.prodottodellanno.it

France: www.produitsdelannee.com

Spain: www.granpremioalainnovacion.com

Germany: www.produktjahres.de

Great Britain: www.productoftheyear.co.uk