

Cars.co.za Consumer Awards 2020/21 winners announced

The sixth edition of the Cars.co.za Consumer Awards - powered by WesBank - has been announced. Since 2015/16, the winners of the annual Cars Awards have been announced at a gala event early in the year, but owing to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the planned 2021 event could not be staged live without putting attendees' health at risk.

The 13 category winners and the recipient of the Brand of the Year title of the 2020/21 programme were, therefore, announced during the Cars.co.za Consumer Awards TV presentation, which was broadcast on DStv's Motorsport HD channel on 15 February.



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The Car Awards automotive awards programme, and the list of vehicles it recognises is meant to guide car buyers to make the best-informed purchasing decisions. The judging panel evaluates vehicles directly against their peers in specific categories, each of which has particular requirements.

The theme for this year's #CarsAwards was *Be Part of the Journey – My Car, My Freedom* and the televised programme, which will be repeated on DStv's 1Magic (103), as well as Motorsport HD (215), was formatted to retain the excitement of a live show.

"In these unprecedented times, it's become more crucial than ever to ensure the car decisions we, as consumers make, are well informed and make our ownership journey as simple as possible," said Ghana Msibi, WesBank's CEO of Motor.

"With the sixth edition of the consumer awards, WesBank is proud to be associated with giving consumers the freedom of informed decision-making. Our OEMs continue to produce excellent products, and we are proud to be part of celebrating their hard work. I want to say, well done to all the nominees and congratulations to the winners," he added.

Category winners

- Budget Car – Toyota Starlet 1.4 XR

- Compact Hatch – Volkswagen Polo 1.0 TSI Comfortline Auto
- Compact Family Car – Volkswagen T-Cross 1.5 TSI 110kW R-Line
- Entry Level Car – Suzuki Swift 1.2 GL
- Family Car – Toyota RAV4 2.0 AWD GX-R
- Adventure SUV – Toyota Fortuner 2.8 GD-6 4x4 VX Auto
- Premium SUV – Land Rover Defender D240 HSE
- Executive SUV – Volvo XC60 D5 R-Design
- Crossover< – Toyota C-HR 1.2T Luxury
- Premium Crossover – Volvo XC40 T5 AWD R-Design
- Hot Hatch – Volkswagen Golf GTI TCR
- Leisure Double Cab – Toyota Hilux 2.8 GD-6 4x4 Legend Auto
- Sports Executive – BMW 330is Edition

Impact of the Ownership Satisfaction Survey

Fifty per cent of the final scores of the category finalists were determined by the rankings the vehicles' respective brands achieved in the Cars.co.za Ownership Satisfaction Survey – in partnership with data specialists Lightstone Consumer. The data was based on owners' experiences of their vehicles (less than for years old and serviced through franchised outlets) and the survey affected the results in four #CarsAwards categories.

The Toyota Starlet (Budget Car) and Hilux (Leisure Double Cab), plus the Volkswagen T-Cross (Compact Family Car) and Golf GTI TCR (Hot Hatch) did not score the highest marks from the panel of judges following the evaluation yet they emerged victorious because consumers rated their brands' experiences higher than those of their competitors.

"Right from the outset, the #CarsAwards was conceived to take a practical and usable approach to deciding the winners," said Hannes Oosthuizen, Cars.co.za consumer experience manager. "Our Awards programme is meant to be used as a buying guide that reaches the entire population, not only those who follow motoring publications."

"With 50% of a vehicle's final score determined by a brand's performance in the survey, a car really only stands a very good chance of winning if it is a good product in the eyes of the judges and if the brand delivers solid after-sales service," he added.

In the Family Car, Adventure SUV and Crossover categories, the winning cars received both the highest consumer category and judges' scores. In Entry Level Car, Compact Hatch, Premium Crossover, Executive SUV, Premium SUV and Sports Executive, the winners received the highest judges' scores, but not the highest consumer scores.

Judging process

The winners of the awards aren't chosen exclusively by motoring journalists who produce content about the latest new vehicles in the market. The finalists were selected from the entire passenger-vehicle market (all derivatives listed on the new-vehicles price list on 1 October 2020), as opposed to only models launched during the past 12 months.

Although Cars.co.za's editorial team chose the finalists, the combined judging panel (including 14 respected guest judges from various backgrounds and fields of expertise) only compiled the finalists' individual scores once they had evaluated the cars back-to-back during a two-day test at the Gerotek testing facility in late 2020.

Despite the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, the thoroughness of the evaluation programme, which was supervised by PricewaterhouseCoopers, was not affected.

Brand of the Year

As opposed to the 13 category winners, which were decided by a combination of judges' scores and consumer data, the recipient of the Cars Awards Brand of the Year title was determined entirely by market data and the findings of the survey (brands' respective sales and after-sales service ratings were particularly impactful, as were the percentages of purchase-price value the brands' finalists retained after three years of ownership).

Although Toyota failed to win a single category during the first two instalments of the awards, the Prospecton-based manufacturer famously won the programme's very first Brand of the Year title in 2015/16. After Suzuki claimed the Brand of the Year title for two consecutive years (2016/17 and 2017/18), Toyota secured the most prestigious trophy again in the 2018/19 programme but finished well behind Volkswagen in 2019/20.

However, having won five of the 13 awards categories in the 2020/21 awards and moving up no fewer than eight places in the Ownership Satisfaction Survey rankings since last year, Toyota won the Brand of the Year title for the third time. In doing so, it became the most prolific winner of the programme's most prestigious trophy.

Behind Toyota, Mini finished second, having moved up five positions from 2019/20 and Land Rover/Range Rover was in a sensational third place. Volkswagen was fourth and Isuzu fifth.

"The Brand of the Year trophy is the ultimate accolade in the local automotive industry. It represents validation from the people who matter most: car owners," said Oosthuizen.

"By providing consistently superior after-sales support through the most extensive dealer network in the country, Toyota has put South African consumers first and – based on the feedback by thousands of vehicle owners – they evidently appreciate that."

2021 show features

The Consumer Awards television programme took viewers on mini biographical journeys with car owners through a series of short videos that showed how their cars contribute to their freedom of movement and add value to their life stories. It incorporated performances by Ms Cosmo, Leah, Robot Boii and Micasa, with special appearances by Lalla Hirayama, Rob Forbes and Ciro De Siena.

"We really had to bring our A-game when conceptualising this year's event. Not being able to host a physical event meant using platforms such as television and smartphones in innovative ways to bring this highly anticipated event to the public,"

said Oosthuizen.

The programme will be repeated on DStv's 1Magic channel (103) at 9.30pm on 20 February, as well as at 3.30pm and 10.30pm on 23 and 25 February. There will be further repeats on the Motorsport HD channel (215), the times of which have not yet been confirmed.

[More on the Consumer Awards here.](#)

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