



And the winners are...

We celebrate the brands that are consistently getting it right for consumers

Companies that go the extra mile in providing excellent customer service, high quality, innovative products and value for money deserve to be recognised and celebrated. And the annual Which? Awards do just that.

Every year our teams of experts scrutinise the performance of companies in a variety of categories to decide which brands are most deserving of a prestigious Which? Award. Only businesses that excel throughout the year will be shortlisted for an award and only the very best can win. This year we've introduced two new categories – Best Computing Brand and Best Customer

Care – and we were impressed to discover six strong contenders for the service excellence title. The Which Awards 2013 feature a few old favourites, such as Bosch and John Lewis, but there are a few surprises in store, with brand new winners in both the Audio-Visual and Financial Services categories.

The Which? Awards are completely independent. Companies can't nominate themselves and have no influence over the results. The winners are announced at the illustrious awards ceremony in June and winning an award is a real honour as brands are judged on every aspect of the products and services that they offer to consumers.

TESTED BY US, RATED BY YOU

Shortlists of companies are chosen carefully by teams of Which? researchers who work day-in, day-out testing products, investigating services and analysing results. To be in with a chance, businesses need to impress both us and you. Their products must perform well in our lab tests, consistently winning Best Buy awards and achieving consistent reliability scores. Their services need to stand out from the crowd, stand up well under scrutiny in our investigations and achieve great customer feedback. Value for money is also a key factor when it comes to choosing our winners.

BEST CAR MANUFACTURER **SKODA**

Skoda has experienced a major turnaround under parent company Volkswagen, and is this year's deserved winner of our Best Car Manufacturer Award.

It produces a growing range of quality mainstream cars and we recommend most of its current models, either as Best Buys or as worth a look. Skoda has launched some impressive models over the past year, including the Citigo, Rapid, Octavia and Octavia Estate, and its cars offer exceptional value for money, particularly when compared to near-identical models from Volkswagen. Skoda owners seem to be very happy with

their choice, giving it one of the highest customer scores of 89%. Reliability is also good at four stars.

ALSO SHORTLISTED BMW, Ford, Volkswagen

BMW and Volkswagen both have a wide range of Best Buys, but Skoda beats them both when it comes to value. Ford has a number of popular cars that offer innovative technology and safety features. Last year's winner, Kia, only launched one significant car during the past year so doesn't make the shortlist.



BEST FINANCIAL SERVICES PROVIDER **NFU MUTUAL**



Our financial services category covers banking and insurance, and this year an insurer, NFU Mutual, knocks First Direct off the podium – a position it has occupied for the last three years.

NFU Mutual is a Which? Recommended Provider for both its car and home insurance products, but where it really stands out from the crowd is for its exceptional customer service. We've received glowing reports from Which? members about the way it deals with customers and handles claims. NFU Mutual obtained the highest marks in our customer score and claims-satisfaction

surveys for both car and home insurance, making it a worthy winner.

ALSO SHORTLISTED The Co-operative Bank/The Co-operative Insurance, First Direct, Nationwide

First Direct records excellent customer scores for its financial products, including savings, current accounts and travel insurance. Nationwide and The Co-operative (bank and insurance) have both achieved a number of best rates across a range of products, and have consistently high customer scores.

BEST RETAILER **JOHN LEWIS**

John Lewis has long been a firm favourite with Which? members. Its impressive range, both in-store and online, plus its excellent customer feedback, make it a true retail champion in 2013.

John Lewis offers products across eight different retail categories we look at, including electricals and clothes. It's a Which? Recommended Provider in seven of those categories – which takes pricing scores and overall customer satisfaction into account. Which? members are impressed with customer service, and John Lewis receives the highest customer score in five of its eight

categories. It's also a good performer online, with the second highest customer score.

ALSO SHORTLISTED Apple, Liz Earle, Lush, Richer Sounds

Apple achieved the highest customer score overall this year, but its pricing score prevents it from becoming a Which? Recommended Provider. Lush has the highest in-store customer score in its category, and second highest overall. Richer Sounds is a Which? Recommended Provider for electricals, with good customer scores online and in-store. Liz Earle got the highest online customer score.



BEST SUPERMARKET **ALDI**

Aldi wins our award for Best Supermarket for the second year running. The budget store gets a four-star rating for pricing and offers great value for money.

Its low prices don't seem to compromise on quality. Within Aldi's keenly priced range it has produced a number of Best Buys. We've seen everyday items, such as its Magnum Premium Eucalyptus Antibacterial washing-up liquid and its Almat with Stain-Lift Bio Powder, that do better than more costly rivals. And products such as the Aldi Specially Selected Luxury 12 Month Matured Christmas Pudding and its Bramwells Real

Mayonnaise have gained approval in our taste tests. Customers think highly of Aldi, and it gets the second best customer score overall.

ALSO SHORTLISTED Lidl, Marks & Spencer, Waitrose

Waitrose gets the best customer score and achieves a five-star rating for customer service. Marks & Spencer has a higher than average number of taste test Best Buys and great customer service. But neither can beat Aldi when it comes to value for money. Lidl shares a four-star price rating with Aldi but has a lower customer score overall.



BEST CUSTOMER CARE **AMAZON**

Amazon is the deserved winner of this new award for its outstanding customer service. To achieve this prestigious title our champion had to demonstrate excellent customer service across the board. Companies shortlisted in this category were assessed on a range of criteria, including providing information to consumers in a clear and accessible manner, and showing evidence of good staff knowledge.

In our recent survey of online shops, Amazon performed well across a broad range of product categories. Overall it received the third highest customer

score and was the highest rated site in two out of seven categories. It achieved five-star ratings for product stock, delivery and website usability in the books, CDs and DVDs category. In addition to this, it also gained four stars for price and its relatively easy returns process.

ALSO SHORTLISTED First Direct, John Lewis, Lexus, Lush, Waitrose

All of our shortlisted companies stood out for their excellent customer service, and deserve praise for going the extra mile to meet their customers' needs.

BEST COMPUTING BRAND **SAMSUNG**

Samsung is an excellent all-rounder and a worthy winner of our first Which? Award in the computing category.

It offers a wide range of quality products across each of our five computing categories – laptops, all-in-one PCs, printers, tablets and smartphones – and during the past 12 months it has been awarded more Best Buys than any other computing brand.

Overall, Samsung products are affordable, with three Best Buys (two printers and one tablet) and several models that are worth a look coming with a below-average price tag. It also has decent reliability and customer

scores, with its mobiles and tablets being particularly good – Samsung's mobiles beat Apple's for reliability, and share top spot for tablet reliability.

ALSO SHORTLISTED Apple, Google

Apple products have excellent customer scores and the laptop, mobile and tablet products we've tested have achieved Best Buy recommendations. But its premium prices holds it back from the top spot. Google has produced some innovative Best Buy tablets, which prove that good products don't have to cost the earth.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAMY, CHARLES BEST

BEST AUDIO-VISUAL BRAND **LG**

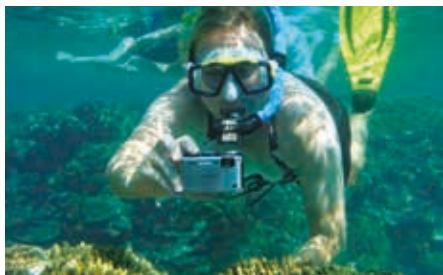
This year LG takes the audio-visual crown from Korean rival Samsung. It has made remarkable advances over the last few years with an impressive range of innovative Best Buy products across a range of categories, including TVs, Blu-ray players and sound bars. LG has the highest Best Buy strike rate – the percentage of products tested that make it as Best Buys – and it achieves good reliability and customer scores. Its quality

products offer good value for money, particularly compared with rivals Sony and Panasonic.

ALSO SHORTLISTED Samsung, Sony
Samsung has the highest number of Best Buys in this category and a high strike rate, but was just beaten by LG. Sony is near the top of the tables for customer score and reliability, but lags behind rivals in Best Buys.



BEST PHOTOGRAPHY BRAND **PANASONIC**



Panasonic is the clear winner of this category, replacing Canon as pick of the shots. It has achieved 13 Best Buys during the past 12 months and a strike rate of 57% – double that of its nearest rival.

Owners of Panasonic photographic equipment are clearly impressed, too. In our surveys, members give Panasonic cameras and camcorders the highest customer scores and tell us that reliability is excellent.

Panasonic cameras are generally simple to use and produce great quality images. Value for money is also good, and on a par with its competitors.

ALSO SHORTLISTED Canon, Sony
Canon and Sony also have good reliability and customer scores, but simply can't match Panasonic when it comes to the number of Best Buys.

BEST TELECOM SERVICES PROVIDER **TESCO MOBILE**



Tesco Mobile is a Which? Recommended Provider for pay-as-you-go and contract mobiles, and both services get a four-star rating for value for money.

It's the only major network to pledge not to increase monthly bills mid-contract – something that we've been calling for with our Fixed Means Fixed campaign. We applaud this step in the right direction, but it needs to back it up by amending its terms and conditions.

ALSO SHORTLISTED O2, Plusnet, Zen Internet

Zen Internet is a Which? Recommended Provider for broadband and broadband/phone and gets a five-star rating for customer service. O2 achieves good customer service ratings across the board. Plusnet rates highly for value for money and is a Which? Recommended Provider for broadband and broadband/phone.

BEST HOME APPLIANCE BRAND **BOSCH**

Bosch continues its impressive run at the top with its third consecutive Which? Award. Bosch is an excellent all-rounder with 19 Best Buys across a range of products, including dishwashers, freezers, fridge-freezers, irons, kettles, tumble dryers and washing machines. Bosch has more 'best on test' and energy-saver products than any other home appliance brand. Overall, its reliability score and customer scores are mostly higher than

other shortlisted companies and its innovative products – such as dishwashers that reuse water – offer good value for money.

ALSO SHORTLISTED AEG, Panasonic, Siemens
AEG has achieved 10 Best Buys in 10 different product areas. Siemens has a high number of Best Buys, and five energy savers. Panasonic's Best Buy appliances offer value for money.

