

2018/19 Cars.co.za Consumer Awards winners announced

The 2018/19 Cars.co.za Consumer Awards - powered by WesBank, concluded with the announcement of 12 category winners and the awarding of the Brand of the Year title at a red-carpet event hosted at Kyalami in Midrand.



Conceived to be South Africa's definitive automotive awards programme, #CarsAwards has grown in stature, reach and influence since the inaugural event in 2016. Apart from being exclusively supported by WesBank, South Africa's largest vehicle finance provider, #CarsAwards is regarded as an energetic, impactful opening number on the automotive industry calendar. Highlights of this fourth iteration of the programme were:

- Toyota, the first recipient of the Brand of the Year title (in the inaugural 2015/16 iteration of the programme), narrowly defeated double winner Suzuki (2016/17 and 2017/18) to reclaim the most coveted #CarsAwards trophy this year.
- Volkswagen garnered the most trophies (four), elevating the Wolfsburg-based marque into a comfortable lead in terms of the most category wins (10) in the history of the #CarsAwards, ahead of Mercedes-Benz (six) and Suzuki (five).
- Nissan and Honda were first-time #CarsAwards trophy recipients by virtue of their wins in the Compact Family Car

and Hot Hatch categories respectively.

- The Range Rover Velar finally dethroned the Volvo XC90, which had dominated the Premium SUV category during the first three instalments of the #CarsAwards. Volvo's consolation was that its reigning World Car of the Year, claimed the Executive SUV trophy to ensure that the Swedish marque remains the only brand, apart from Volkswagen, to have won a category every year since 2015/16.
- The Volkswagen Amarok and Toyota Fortuner derivatives were the only finalists to defend their category victories from the 2017/18 #CarsAwards, although the Mercedes-Benz E-Class also won again, albeit with a different derivative. Suzuki won the Budget Car category for the third consecutive year, and impressively, with a different model on each occasion.

In no fewer than 5 out of the 13 categories, the judges' favourites did not win, due to the impact of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. Eighteen brands were represented in the list of finalists, with Volkswagen leading the nominations with 7 derivatives, followed by BMW and Ford (4 apiece), and Audi, Mercedes-Benz and Volvo (3 apiece). Significantly, Porsche and Isuzu made their first appearances in the final stage of the #CarsAwards programme, while Honda and Range Rover returned to the list of 39 after failing to make the last round in 2017/18.

Winners

Category winners of the 2018/19 Cars.co.za Consumer Awards – powered by WesBank are:

- **Budget Car:** Suzuki Swift 1.2 GL
 - **Compact Hatch:** Volkswagen Polo 1.0TSI Comfortline Auto
 - **Premium Compact:** Mercedes-Benz A200 AMG-Line
 - **Compact Family Car:** Nissan Qashqai 1.2 Acenta Auto
 - **Family Car:** Volkswagen Tiguan Allspace 1.4 TSI Trendline
 - **Business Class:** Volkswagen Arteon 2.0TSI 4Motion R-Line
 - **Executive Sedan:** Mercedes-Benz E220d Avantgarde
 - **Leisure Double-Cab:** Volkswagen Amarok 3.0 V6 TDI 4Motion Highline Plus
 - **Adventure SUV:** Toyota Fortuner 2.8 GD-6 4x4 Auto
 - **Executive SUV:** Volvo XC60 D5 AWD R-Design
 - **Premium SUV:** Range Rover Velar D300 R-Dynamic SE
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- **Hot Hatch:** Honda Civic Type R

The Performance Car category was cancelled because two of the three finalists became ineligible due to unforeseen circumstances. The rules of the competition require at least two cars in each category to have full scores (judges scores and survey scores) and in the case of this category, Cars.co.za could not meet the requirement.

Hannes Oosthuizen, Cars.co.za's consumer experience manager, explains: "In the case of the BMW M2 Competition, we could not secure the required 6-speed manual derivative for testing. It was always going to be difficult seeing as the market for a manual performance car has declined so much in recent years. We truly appreciate BMW's efforts to help, but in the end, we just couldn't get the right car for testing." "With the Porsche Boxster S, we could not secure sufficient owner surveys to calculate a representative owner satisfaction score for the brand's finalists. These issues were, in no way, the respective brands' faults."

Impact of the Cars.co.za Ownership Satisfaction Survey

The importance of after-sales service excellence was highlighted by the impact of the Cars.co.za Ownership Satisfaction Survey on the final scores. "The public interest and industry support for #CarsAwards shows that there is a need for an awards programme that takes a more practical and usable approach to deciding the winners," Oosthuizen says.

“From the start in 2015 it was our goal to build an Awards programme that could be used as a buying guide, and which would reach the entire population, not only those that follow motoring publications.” “With 50% of a vehicle’s final score determined by a brand’s performance in the survey, a car only really 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 adds.

This year, the survey determined the results in 5 categories. The Volkswagen Polo (Compact Hatch), Toyota Fortuner (Adventure SUV), Nissan Qashqai (Compact Family Car), Mercedes-Benz A-Class (Premium Compact) and Mercedes-Benz E-Class (Executive Sedan) did not score the highest marks from the judges, yet emerged victorious because South African consumers rated their brands higher than those of their competitors.

Multifaceted judging process

There are several reasons why the #CarsAwards is of greater significance than most other automotive awards programmes. For one, the winners aren’t chosen exclusively by motoring journalists, who report on (and review) the latest new vehicles in the market.

Although the seven members of Cars.co.za’s editorial team chose the finalists, the combined judging panel (including 13 respected guest judges from various backgrounds and fields of expertise) only compiled the finalists’ individual scores once they’d evaluated the cars back-to-back during a thorough two-day test at the Gerotek facility at the end of 2018.

Combined judging panel (in alphabetical order): Aluta Maqoko (The Kolloquium), Ashley Oldfield (Cars.co.za), Brenwin Naidu (Sowetan & Sunday Times), Ciro de Siena (Cars.co.za), Claire Mawisa (Carte Blanche), David Taylor (Cars.co.za), Eddie Kalili (Freelance), Ernest Page (SA Car Fan), Gero Lilleike (Cars.co.za), Jacob Moshokoa (947/EWN), Juliet McGuire (Freelance), Khulekani Dumisa (Khulekani on Wheels), Khutso Theledi (YFM), Kojo Baffoe (Afropolitan), Lerato Matebese (Driven), Mike Fourie (Cars.co.za), Nafisa Akabor (Tech Journalist), Thami Masemola (Driven), Wendy Knowler (Consumer Specialist) and Wezile Bonani (Bay FM).

All derivatives listed on the new vehicles price list on 1 September 2018 were eligible for selection and the public had just as much say in the outcome of 2018/19 #CarsAwards as the 20 judges did. Fifty per cent of the final standings was based on rankings that the respective vehicle brands achieved in the Cars.co.za Ownership Satisfaction Survey, conducted in partnership with data specialists Lightstone Consumer. The data incorporated feedback from thousands of vehicle owners, based on their experiences of their vehicles (less than five years old and serviced through franchised outlets).

In fact, the most prestigious title awarded by #CarsAwards – Brand of the Year – was based solely on the findings of the Cars.co.za Ownership Satisfaction Survey.

Brand of the Year

Toyota scooped the coveted Brand of the Year award for the second time since the inception of the #CarsAwards. Toyota superseded Suzuki as the winner of the #CarsAwards Brand of the Year title, which is determined entirely by market and customer data, the latter from the aforementioned survey (brands’ respective sales and after-sales service ratings are particularly impactful). The Japanese firm had previously won the title in 2015/16, which means #CarsAwards Brand of the Year has been dominated by two firms in four years.

The Cars.co.za Ownership Satisfaction Survey data showed that Toyota defeated Suzuki by a very narrow margin, while Land Rover scored the final podium position. “We think the Brand of the Year trophy is the ultimate accolade in the South African automotive industry,” says Oosthuizen. “It represents validation from the people that matter most – actual car owners”.

The red-carpet ceremony was hosted by award-winning TV host and Metro FM presenter Pearl Modiadie with guest appearances by Minnie Dlamini, Maps Maponyane, Victor Matfield and DJ Fresh, the latter of which provided live entertainment. The event was preceded by a business presentation by WesBank and attended by 350 guests, including

industry leaders, representatives of the finance sector, media agencies and celebrities.

The event was digitally broadcast on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and, significantly, streamed live on the Cars.co.za YouTube channel, the biggest branded South African channel on the video site. The multi-platform broadcast allowed consumers, who are at the core of Cars.co.za's awards programme, to actively participate in the event.

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