Irish Loyalty & CX Awards A SPECIAL 2-PAGE REPORT

Loyalty & CX awards gala celebrates brands connecting in new ways

The annual Irish Loyalty & CX Awards, sponsored by Visa, pay tribute to the brands building lasting and profitable customer relationships through innovation, writes **Lorraine Courtney**

The RDS in Dublin was the setting for this year's Irish Loyalty & CX Awards, with SuperValu scooping the overall prize for Customer Loyalty Programme of the Year 2023.

The Irish Loyalty Awards & CX Awards, sponsored by Visa, recognise and pay tribute to the brands building lasting and profitable customer relationships. This special competition brings together the leaders in loyalty, to celebrate innovation and creativity. This year's ceremony was hosted by comedian Barry Murphy.

For the past four years, the awards have provided a platform for loyalty initiatives to get recognised and set a new standard for customer experience. This year's gala event brought together a diverse range of leading Irish brands and professionals for a night of celebration, endorsement and networking.

Personalisation, the convergence of physical and digital loyalty programmes, the rise of digital loyalty initiatives, and a focus on sustainability and social responsibility are all trends seen across the 2023 entrants.

Commenting on this year's awards, programme co-founders Marian Kelly and Eileen McGuinness said that the entries demonstrated how the loyalty marketing landscape continued to evolve in 2023, with businesses adopting new technologies and approaches to engage and reward their customers.

"Over the last few years, we have witnessed the loyalty marketing profession truly elevate itself and rise to the multiple challenges that have come its way. In moments of hard times, we have seen loyalty programmes and initiatives that have engaged and inspired their customers here in Ireland.

"We are incredibly proud of what our loyalty industry in Ireland has achieved. As we move through 2023, shopping habits, customer preferences, and expectations of brands are changing rapidly.

Consumers are regularly reassessing their brand loyalties. It is crucial we not only deliver what people want, but look further into the future beyond the products and services.

Brands will need a holistic loyalty strategy that goes beyond transactional benefits."

Commenting on the future of loyalty programmes, Kelly and McGuinness said: "This year and beyond will continue to test Irish enterprises – and in today's highly saturated competitive market, loyalty can be a fickle thing.

We have to constantly adapt and determine the best possible loyalty initiatives to achieve success. With price no longer the only determining factor, exceeding customers' expectations is what helps companies stand out from the crowd."

SuperValu's Real Rewards keep shoppers coming back time and again

The Irish grocery firm's 'meaningful incentive' offering has won Irish Loyalty Programme of the Year at the Irish Loyalty and CX Awards, writes **Lorraine Courtney**

Irish Loyalty Progamme of the Year 2023 sponsored by Visa winners: SuperValu is confident it is offering 'real and relevant savings to shoppers' Pictures: Lensman

For SuperValu, loyalty is earned by constantly innovating and offering customers new ranges and better shopping experiences, said Margaret O'Donoghue, loyalty brand manager of SuperValu.

"Staying ahead of customers' needs is key to loyalty, providing exclusive offerings such as the SuperValu Freshly Prepared By range, The Happy Pear, Frank & Honest Coffee and Caramico Pizza. Constantly updating and evolving our stores to meet the changing needs of consumers and continuing our long tradition of being a community retailer keeps customers coming back," she said.

"Winning the 2023 Irish Loyalty Programme of the Year recognises and reinforces that the changes made to Real Rewards resonate with the judges and the hugely important public. At SuperValu, we are always listening to our shoppers and will continue to improve SuperValu Real Rewards to meet their needs.

"SuperValu Real Rewards was created many years ago and to this day its role or reason for existing hasn't changed. Even though the offer has changed over the years, at the core of the programme is a meaningful incentive to reward shoppers for being loyal to SuperValu, and to thank them for shopping with us."

O'Donoghue said loyalty schemes could range from being a nice-to-have differentiator to being an essential element to compete and meet shopper expectations. "For the grocery sector, it's the latter. Loyalty schemes are an essential element. In grocery, giving a reward or discount has never been more important. Real Rewards gives shoppers a money-off voucher and product coupons every week on the app.

"While shoppers may buy your brand for a myriad of reasons – location, range, quality, shopper service – a good loyalty scheme can help any brand grow their loyal shoppers, by being more meaningful to their needs."

Launched in May 2022, the new SuperValu Real Rewards programme delivers instant rewards, through a simple, digital-led programme, while still giving plenty of value to non-digital shoppers.

Shoppers to SuperValu, whether weekly trolley shoppers, online shoppers or just popping in daily for the essentials, are able to use the SuperValu Real Rewards app to access weekly money-off vouchers, product coupons based on shoppers' shopping needs and member-only deals, resulting in savings and better weekly planning.

Shoppers who scan their app or card in-store or online can enter a monthly Scan to Win prize draw to win national and local prizes. There are ten national prizes also up for grabs monthly across Ireland, including a year's free shopping with SuperValu and a €2,000 SuperValu e-gift card. There is also the chance to win a €100 SuperValu e-gift in every store, every month.

O'Donoghue said the response from shoppers was extremely positive. "The level of engagement by way of app downloads and voucher usage has shown no signs of levelling off. This is a really positive indicator that the new SuperValu Real Rewards is something that more and more shoppers are looking for.

"Entry to the monthly Scan to Win prize draw has surpassed all our expectations and continues to grow and appeal to all shopper demographics. To date, thousands of shoppers have won a prize."

Shoppers had reported that they love the simplicity and ease of use of the app, she said. "They love never having to worry about forgetting a paper voucher. They love the ability to plan ahead, with visibility of vouchers for the weeks ahead and their weekly product coupons, while getting great value with Member Flash Deals. Most of all, the savings are what's resonating with shoppers. That weekly voucher in particular, that helps shoppers manage costs in these times."

SuperValu was confident it was offering real and relevant savings in a format that shoppers had asked for, said O'Donoghue. "Our shoppers expressed the desire for more predictable rewards to allow them to plan their weekly shop. They also expressed the need for instant rewards when shopping and the SuperValu Real Rewards app does this: it makes the programme more tailored to the needs of our shoppers, giving shoppers who download the SuperValu Real Rewards app weekly money-off vouchers which they can see in advance of going shopping in store or online at supervalu.ie.

"The programme offers other unique elements such as weekly product coupons, Member Flash Deals, a monthly Scan to Win Prize Draw – and shoppers can save on their energy bills if they link their SuperValu and Electric Ireland accounts."

> **Shoppers have reported that they love the simplicity and ease of use of the app**

She said SuperValu was always aiming to improve. "We will have more exciting things coming for our shoppers based on their feedback, including being even more personalised in our offers to shoppers.

"The launch last year followed a significant period of investment in the app. That investment continues as the Real Rewards App adds new features such as e-receipts and more exciting additions to the Scan to Win prize draw. For the May Scan to Win draw, there is an exclusive prize of a trip for two to Australia for the Fifa Women's World Cup in partnership with Visa."

SuperValu serves over 2.7 million shoppers every week and has 222 stores nationwide. Together with its retail partners, it employs approximately 16,000 people, making it one of the state's largest private-sector employers. SuperValu continues to source locally wherever possible, which helps to sustain 30,000 jobs in the Irish economy.

Loyalty is now seen as a key factor in business growth, said O'Donoghue. "This is due to its ability to reward and retain loyal shoppers and provide direct communication channels, eg a loyalty app. Loyalty is now an important element not only of the business strategy but also of the marketing mix.

"The loyalty profession and those who work in it benefit from the networking and learning opportunities the Irish Loyalty & CX Awards & CX provide. It is also great for team reward and recognition," she said.

2023 Loyalty Launch of the Year:
Maxol – Maxol Loyalty App – Loyalty Rewarded

Established (5 years+) Loyalty Programme of the Year:
SuperValu – Real Rewards

Retail Loyalty Programme/Initiative of the Year: Tesco | dunnhumby – Building long-term loyalty using personalisation science to reward customers

Customer Experience of the Year Award:
Energia – Energia Rewards

Financial Services Loyalty Programme/Initiative of the Year:
permanent tsb– Explore Account

Best Customer Experience in Travel & Leisure:
WIN | WIN Group – Early Table

Technology Programme/Initiative of the Year:
KFC – KFC Rewards Arcade

Loyalty Industry Innovation of the Year:
Vodafone – Shake to Win