Financial Express
Celebrating Innovation


At a time when questions have been raised about the credibility of the research sector in India, PoY has compiled its third successful listing in the country. The event has seen continuous participation from leading consumer products companies such as Hindustan Unilever, Procter & Gamble, L’Oreal, Garnier, Coca Cola, GlaxoSmithKline, Godrej and many others. In India, research agency Nielsen does the survey on behalf of PoY. The organizers say that the reason why these companies keep coming back to PoY is its sample size (30,000 consumers) of its survey and the final voting process in which consumers vote directly. The tag of PoY, however, comes at a price. Each brand pays Rs 4 lakh per participation. However, the money is refunded if it gets eliminated in the first round. Companies that reach the final stage pay Rs 15 lakh per product. In a conversation with TVF, Pritha Mitra Dasgupta, the three forests behind PoY, Christian LeBret, Founder, PoY; Mike Nolan, Global CEO, PoY Management UK and Charulata Ravi Kumar, CEO, PoY India, share their views on the journey so far and future plans.

What led to the launch of Product of the Year?
Christian LeBret: I started PoY in France about 25 years ago. And in the beginning the idea was just to organise a party and celebrate some success. However, soon after that I started my professional activity to manage the concept of PoY. The primary reason was to give voice to the consumers. The existing awards were judged by experts. But if we feel for FMCG products it is the consumers who can give the right insight and opinion. Initially we gave awards to FMCG products and soon we elevated to innovative FMCG products. Innovation is the right way for entrepreneurs to grow. If the manufacturer doesn’t innovate then I think it is a mistake by the company.

What were the challenges when you started PoY?
Mike Nolan: It’s extremely serious. One of reasons we know that is certain manufacturers Thems win, more importantly companies that lose get very

OTHERS WINNERS

- Product: Tela Photon TV
- Category: Wire broadband Supplies Solutions
- Product: Vivid Active Fair
- Category: Women’s Fairness Cream
- Product: Spice View D (M-47 3D)
- Category: Value Additions
- Product: Women Desi Spirit Soap
- Category: Soaps

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With a huge number of product launches happening in India, one is forced to ask: how many of them are really innovative and relevant and what's the way to make them successful? Product of the Year (POY) evaluates just that. It is an internationally recognised standard for product innovation that evaluates a new product's innovation quotient. The independent survey is done by Nielsen across 30,000 respondents in 36 markets in India. Here's presenting a snapshot of 2011 winners.
upset. And we say it is the consumers who voted. That is the biggest strength. It is voted by the people. There are lots of awards around but we are the only award genuinely of the people. So manufacturers like Hindustan Unilever, or GlaxoSmithKline or others always say we listen to our shoppers. In one occasion, Reckitt Benckiser mentioned the number of awards it has won in PVY in it's annual report because they were highlighting how successful were their innovations.

Tell us about the quality of innovation you saw this year?

Amita Nalon: Innovation comes in so many different sizes. So that's one of the great things about PVY. Globally, we have seen, though not surprisingly, a lot of fine extensions because I think players are nervous and so they have done less big things. But what is interesting is that while they may be doing less new things but they are doing them more consistently.

Charulata Ravi Kumar: The level of innovation that we saw in India this year has probably not changed much. But this is not a bad news. Because I think brands have constantly been innovating but the effort in promoting the innovation was a bit muted. That could be because of the crunch in the market. It is, however, changing now and innovations are becoming a promotional plank.

What are the future plans both in India and globally?

Mike Nolan: We are planning to go further outside of FMCG into wider things and we are discussing all different kinds of services. In which case we might need to change the methodology. We could be looking at banking, insurance, and similar sector. We are also looking to enter newer markets but I can't reveal the names right now.

- Product: Spice S-1200
  Category: Premium Phones
  Innovation: Spice S-1200 is India's first phone with a 12 megapixel camera and 3X optical zoom. It also has advanced features of a digital camera like CCD sensor and xenon flash. It supports advanced professional camera modes like smile shutter, multiple face detection, auto focus and anti-shake. One can also view the picture being by connecting the phone to the television or even take prints of great quality. It has a capability to support a 1 Gbyte memory card.

- Product: Minute Maid Nimbu Fresh
  Category: Refreshers
  Innovation: Minute Maid Nimbu Fresh is made from no preservatives and no added colour. It tastes just like homemade 'Nimbu Paani'. The juice is imported from Israel, the concentrate is made at the company's Pune plant, and then sent to Coca-Cola plants at Ganganekond in Tamil Nadu and Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh.

- Product: Cera Sanitaryware
  Category: Sanitaryware
  Innovation: Cera Sanitaryware has launched a new white colour for their sanitaryware, named Snow White. This has been developed by Cera's R&D department, after long market research and laboratory trials. The extra whiteness has been achieved through usage of special raw materials. Fired in computer controlled, natural gas kilns, snow white is comparable to any white sanitaryware produced internationally with advanced technologies.

- Product: Flamina DiWills Aqua Pulse
  Category: Shower Gel
  Innovation: New Flamina Di Wills Aqua Pulse Shower Gel is a blue transparent shower gel with suspended sparkling beads, targeted exclusively at men. It has a unique active defense complex which protects the skin.

- Product: Hirtm by Student Stationary
  Category: Students Stationery
  Innovation: The company offers a range of innovative quality products to students include learning notebooks, student note books, drawing books, lead pencils, colour pencils, crayons, oil pastels and copier paper. High on functionality, the products not only cater to the specific needs of students but make them look good too. The company also exhibits popular cartoon characters like Dance, Mogli, Lion King, Winnie the Pooh on these products.

- Product: Mirage Compact
  Category: Water Purifiers
  Innovation: The purifier claims to be the only storage water purifier that meets USEPA norms (Environmental Protection Agency USA for removal of bacteria and virus) for microbially ready-to-consume safe drinking water at a revolutionary price point of Rs. 1000/-, enabling millions to have access to complete protection from water borne diseases.