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Winner

Brand Waitrose Agency MCB

The Grand Prix is awarded to the brand that has pushed the boundaries of what marketing can achieve, demonstrating a level of innovation, insight and effectiveness that puts it head and shoulders above the competition.

This year, the Marketing Society Awards for Excellence judges picked out Waitrose as its winner, recognising the insight and intelligent execution that went into the launch of its Essential range of products.

Despite the fact that rival supermarkets had well-established low-cost and value ranges, Waitrose – a brand associated with quality food and highly ethical business practices – had always resisted this move.

However, as the recession created a generation of value-conscious consumers, this decision had to be reviewed. The fear was that people would view Waitrose products as ‘nice to have’, but not necessities, and reject the store in favour of cheaper rivals.

The launch of the range of 1400 Essential products, in March last year, came with considerable risk. Some felt that a perceived ‘value’ range would undermine the retailer’s premium credentials.

The accompanying marketing campaign had to work hard to reassure people that Waitrose was not compromising on quality or ethics. It was crucial that customers understood that, while the range was competitively priced, it was not designed to compete on price with rivals’ economy ranges.

Instead, the brand positioning for Essential Waitrose was accessible, affordable quality, or ‘quality you would expect at prices you wouldn’t’.

The brand was given a simple yet highly visible identity, with transparent packaging wherever feasible. This aimed to communicate the fact that the products were simple but sophisticated.

The media strategy for the launch featured high-profile outdoor activity, showcasing the range of Essential products and their prices.

The brand used posters to target consumers at times when they were thinking about ‘everyday’ food-purchasing decisions, such as during their commute to work. This was complemented by TV ads aimed at ABC1 housewives, scheduled to influence the ‘end of week’ shop, alongside press and online work.

The launch has proved a huge success for Waitrose. According to TNS data for the week ending 19 November 2009, total sales at Waitrose were up by 14.6%, at a time when growth in the wider grocery market was showing signs of a slowdown.

The award makes it back-to-back Grand Prix accolades for supermarkets, following Sainsbury’s triumph in 2009.

The essential fish and chips.



4 breaded cod portions from sustainable sources £3.55



Straight cut oven chips from British potatoes £1.25



British garden peas, frozen within 2 hours of picking £1.48



Zesty lemons £1.59

essential Waitrose

Quality you'd expect at prices you wouldn't.

Prices correct at time of going to print.

waitrose.com/essential