WARC Releases China edition of The Marketer’s Toolkit 2021

March 03, Shanghai -- WARC, the global authority on effective marketing, has released a China edition of the Marketer’s Toolkit 2021, a guide in Chinese language specific to the Chinese market, to help brands tackle major challenges in the year ahead, navigate through uncertainty, seek new opportunities and develop effective strategies to drive business growth.

Based on the “STEPIC” methodology (Society, Technology, Economy, Policy, Industry and Creativity), The China Marketer’s Toolkit 2021 report, follows the release at the end of last year of WARC’s global Marketer’s Toolkit 2021, an annual study now in its tenth year.

Jenny Chan, China Editor, WARC, comments: “There are new challenges facing marketers in China this year - from how to adjust and make the most of new opportunities, to how to better control the ever-changing domestic market. With the release of our first China edition of the Marketer’s Toolkit 2021 we provide practical advice, guidance and inspiration to help marketer’s in China recover, renew and rebuild.”

71% of Chinese marketers surveyed for the report say that changes in consumer behaviour in the post-pandemic era are a key focus when developing their marketing strategies for 2021. This and other key challenges, as well as how to address them, outlined in this report are:

1. **New consumer trends are accelerating under pandemic**

According to research by WARC, Chinese consumers are not only paying attention to prices, but also increasingly care about the experience provided by a brand, beyond the products themselves.

Additionally, due to the pandemic, consumers are pursuing healthier diets and lifestyles. To cater for this change in consumer psychology, health is a factor that brands should consider when stepping up their efforts in product development and promotion.

Cindy Wang, Chief Growth Officer, WM Motor, said, “In the past, the term “cost performance” may be more inclined to discounts and promotions, but now it’s more about bringing consumers more value-added services, emotional experience, and even whole-life services.”
2. The technology dividend has not peaked

The rapid development of mobile payment, e-commerce, 5G, AI and other technologies has enabled China to take more initiatives in the pandemic-accelerated digital transformation. According to WARC's research, 51% of the marketers interviewed deemed AI the most important emerging technology, followed by live-streaming and 5G. With consumers spending more time at home, these technologies can power brands to more accurately reach their core target customers and maintain continuous interaction with them.

**Kuo-Hi Lee, Head of Brand Project House, Volkswagen Passenger Cars China**, said, "*We marketers should embrace new technologies, experiences and tools, and integrate them into our work programs so as to create exciting and distinctive marketing communications.*"

3. The rise of the lower tier markets and the rise of local brands

Although China was least affected by the economic turbulence in 2020, 96% of respondents said that the economic impact would be a major consideration for their 2021 strategies.

Following the development of the "dual circulation" vigorously promoted in China, local brands and domestic products are benefiting the most. Marketers should tap into this current economic environment and consumer attitude, to contribute to a thriving local market.

In addition, the effort to promote in the lower tier markets can drive mutual growth for both them and brands.

**Andrew Khan, Vice President & CMO at Carlsberg Group China**, said, "*Carlsberg Group has created a brand matrix of 'strong local brands and international premium brands'. In fact, the former is the backbone of its business development.*"

4. Standardization and systemization of the marketing industry is imperative

In 2020, Chinese governments introduced policies to regulate and standardize emerging business platforms within the advertising and marketing industry, such as e-commerce, live-streaming, consumer data protection, promotional advertising, etc., which are bound to expose many problems in the development process.

71% of Chinese marketers surveyed by WARC expect tighter advertising and marketing regulations in China in 2021. 40% said that they already have a comprehensive ethics-based data protection strategy in place; whilst 51% of respondents said they would further reinforce data protection rules within their organisation.

**Chen Ming, General Manager of Commercial Marketing and Brand Department, Internet Business Department, Xiaomi**, said, "*We prioritize consumer experience and privacy protection. In this regard, we have stricter requirements than Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent, which are application-based enterprises. Xiaomi, however, is a system-based and hardware-based enterprise. It performs stronger in data dimension and depth. This also motivates us to develop more stringent data-related solutions.*"
5. Volatility, uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity force marketers to be more capable of responding to change

2021 will also be a year full of "volatility, uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity". The rapid changes in the macro-environment are forcing brands to strengthen their organizational structure. 41% of respondents said that their marketing teams now had greater influence versus the previous year, while 16% said that it had not changed.

Edward Bell, General Manager of Brand, Insights and Marketing Communications, Cathay Pacific, said, "The CEO of a company may question whether he needs marketers, so he only thinks about the importance of marketers after there is no sales growth."

6. Creativity needs to break through same interest based communities and meet individual needs

Trend-setting culture, cross-industry cooperation, key opinion leader cooperation, and interaction with e-sports players are emerging creative marketing methods that achieved new heights last year.

According to WARC’s research, 60% of Chinese marketers say creativity is "very important" - the lowest rate among major markets in the world - and approximately 30% less than in Asia (excluding China), where 91% say creativity is very important. In more creative markets, brands put more effort into finding new and creative ways to boost sales and brand awareness, to break through same interest based communities and drive personalisation.

Gao Qiang, Vice President of Zhihu, said, “There has been a dramatic change in content consumption behaviour among younger audiences, with a shift from prestigious institutions and figures to their peers. This is because they can get more recognition and a sense of belonging from their peers.”

With a focus on effective marketing, The Marketer’s Toolkit 2021 presents a definitive, evidence-based and practical action guide for marketers to help companies and brands in China develop marketing strategies, reset business objectives and seek new opportunities for the year ahead.

For more information and to download a complimentary copy of The China Marketer’s Toolkit 2021, please visit here or follow WeChat official account "WARCChina".

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About WARC – The global authority on marketing effectiveness
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For over 30 years WARC has been powering the marketing segment by providing rigorous and unbiased evidence, expertise and guidance to make marketers more effective. WARC services include 18,000+ case studies, 90,000+ best practice guides, research papers, special reports and advertising trend data, webinars, awards, events and advisory services; has 1,200+ client companies, 21,500+ active users in 100+ countries; collaborates with 50+ industry partners; has offices in the UK, US, China and Singapore.