WARC releases a series of reports uncovering key creative, media and effective insights to discover the truth behind the extraordinary

Marketing Through Volatility - Lessons from the most awarded work of 2020 by WARC Rankings

6 April 2021 – WARC, the global marketing insights company, has today released Marketing Through Volatility, a series of reports compiled using the WARC Rankings proprietary methodology. The studies uncover the insights behind some of the world’s most awarded campaigns of 2020 for creativity, media and effectiveness, as well as the strategies of brands that were notable in their response to the volatility of the past 12 months.

Amy Rodgers, Managing Editor, Research & Rankings, WARC, says: “With many award shows paused in 2020 and resuming in 2021, and following consultation with our Rankings Advisory Board, we have postponed the release of the full WARC Rankings - Creative 100, Media 100, Effective 100 - until later this year.

“However, we’ve continued to track the results of the most important awards that were able to go ahead, as well as monitoring how brands have responded to the pandemic. This has allowed us to take a closer look at some award-winning work and successful strategies to provide insights to the industry at a time of recovery and renewal, as well as highlighting some great campaigns that will inspire and invigorate.”

“Marketing through volatility - Lessons from the most awarded work of 2020” is a sample report bringing together a selection of extracts from three whitepapers that focus on creativity, media strategy and effectiveness.

Included are eight key takeaways based on a cross-analysis of the whitepapers, which can be applied to campaigns for future success:

1. **Urgency can create a space for innovation**
   The urgency to respond to the events of 2020 created a space for innovation for some brands, which pivoted their creative ideas while remaining highly recognisable.

2. **Successful brands retain their authenticity through crisis**
   The most awarded brands have a strong sense of their brand, and they stay true to this in their messaging.
3. **Bravery and risk-taking is often rewarded**
   The most awarded brands are commonly brave brands: brands that take risks and challenge category norms.

4. **A strong brand purpose is sustained and consistent**
   2020 put a lens on the authenticity of brands and their overarching purpose. Many marketers are convinced that their consumers now prefer brands with a sustained, consistent purpose, applied across media.

5. **There is opportunity in continued brand investment**
   Whilst there’s been a shift towards performance marketing over the past 12 months, evidence abounds that brands that continue to invest in brand-building through recessions see success.

6. **Customer-centricity enables a rapid response to change**
   A focus on the customer has made it easier for brands to detect and respond to changes in consumer behaviour during and post-pandemic.

7. **2020 highlights the need for scenario planning and agility**
   The most awarded work of 2020 highlighted the benefits of scenario planning and being agile enough to pivot in the face of challenge.

8. **Successful media strategies lie on a solid data bedrock**
   The need for solid first-party data strategies was accelerated by the pandemic, when the ability to target customers using connected and digital channels was paramount.

The full report also includes trends analysis, case studies of award-winning work, opinion pieces including one by Karen Crum, Global Brand Strategy Director of McCann Worldgroup on pandemic positives and 'The Overview Effect', who says: "We have a responsibility as a collective to show the power and impact of creative thinking"; and interviews with marketing leaders including Fernando Machado, CMO of Burger King on the impact of Moldy Whopper and the brand’s commitment to providing clean food.

Machado comments: "For us to create the impact that we needed, we knew we needed to come up with an idea that would move people out of their comfort zone, off auto-pilot, and demand their attention."

This complimentary sample report, available to download [here](#), is part of a series of reports available to WARC and WARC Rankings subscribers, which includes three whitepapers that deep-dive into key takeaways, with interviews, opinions, a selection of case studies and listings of the most awarded work so far:

- **Creativity though volatility**: considers the importance of distinctiveness in a crisis, and how the best brands used this strategy in campaigns before and during the global pandemic. Read [opinion](#) "How to successfully sit in a dumpster fire" by Ari Weiss, CCO, DDB Worldwide
  Read [opinion](#) "The pivot to purpose: aligning Good and Growth" by Jean Lin, Global CEO, Creative, dentsu

- **Media strategy through volatility**: looks at how 2020 changed the way the industry works together in the context of changed media consumption habits, consumer behaviours and the rise of e-commerce and at-home media. Read [opinion](#) by Chrissie Hanson, Chief Strategy Officer OMD.
• **Effectiveness through volatility:** discusses the lessons from the most awarded work of 2020 for effectiveness, highlighting the need to be prepared for change, for balance, and to be customer-focused.

Additionally, WARC Rankings subscribers can view all the case study summaries and creative of the most awarded campaigns for creativity, media and effectiveness featured in the three whitepapers, and access “The health of creativity report”, which looks at how often is creative work also effective, to be released on 8th of April.

The full 2021 WARC Rankings - Creative 100, Media 100, Effective 100 - will be released in November to allow the inclusion of a full set of show results, including those that were postponed or cancelled in 2020.

**Ends**

---

**For further information, please contact:**
Amanda Benfell  
Head of PR & Press, WARC  
amanda.benfell@WARC.com  
+44 (0) 20 7467 8125  
www.warc.com

**About WARC – The global authority on marketing effectiveness**
WARC is an Ascential company, the path-to-purchase business that combines intelligence, data and insights to drive growth in the digital economy. We do this by delivering an integrated set of business-critical products in the key areas of product design, marketing and sales.

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.

**About WARC Rankings**
The WARC Rankings provide the ultimate, independent benchmark for excellence in creativity, media and effectiveness. Our methodology is rigorous and transparent using five key stages to produce unbiased results.

The WARC Rankings are created with the industry, for the industry. We collaborate with marketers at all levels across agencies and brands, to ensure The Rankings remain relevant.

The benchmarks are at the core of our promise: to bring confidence to marketing decisions through evidence-based insight and inspiration.

The WARC Rankings consist of:
WARC Creative 100: The world’s most awarded companies and campaigns for creativity  
WARC Media 100: The world’s most awarded companies and campaigns for media  
WARC Effective 100: The world’s most awarded companies and campaigns for effectiveness