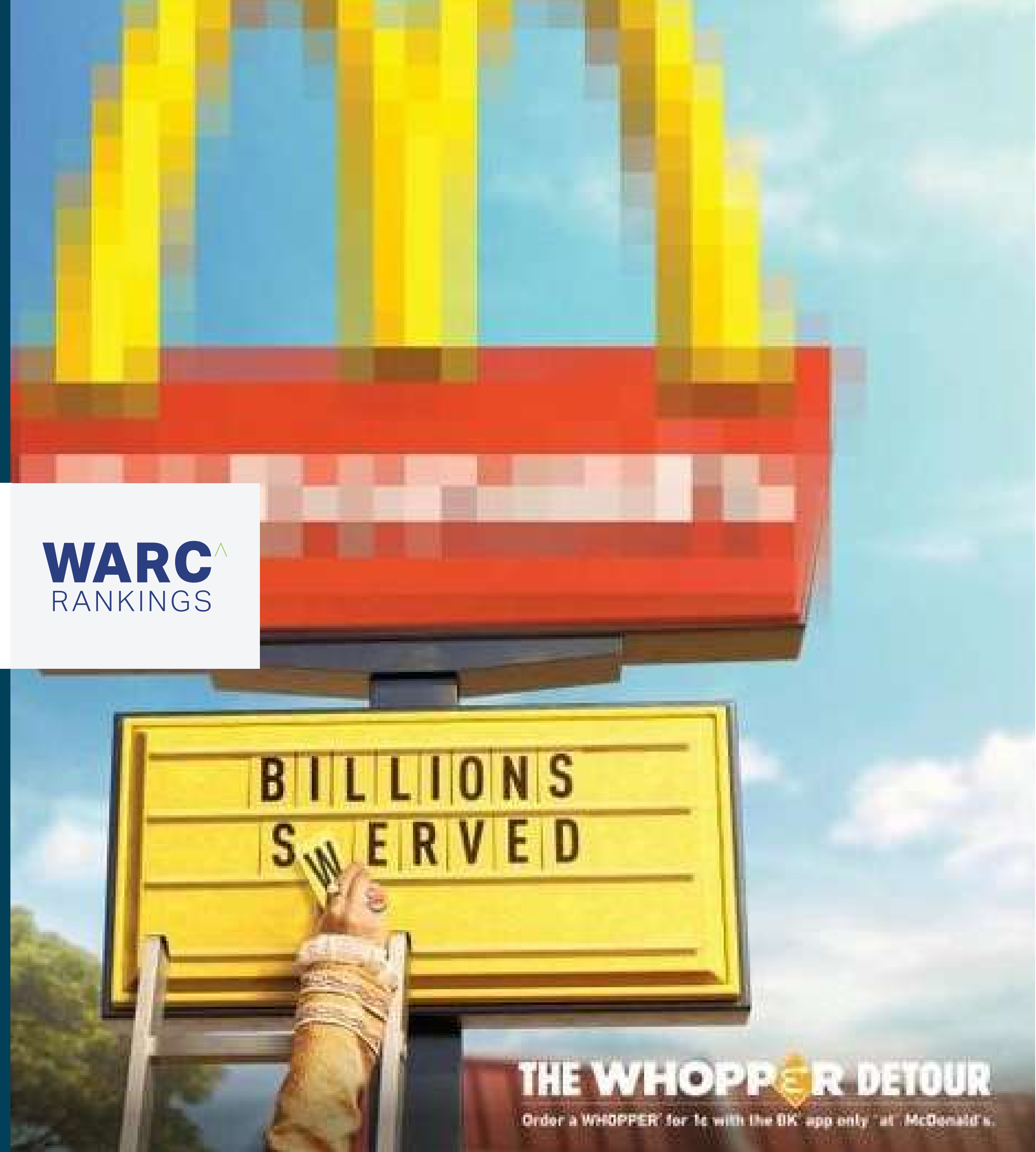


Learn from the best

WARC[^]
RANKINGS

Lessons from the world's
most awarded brands

Summary report



Contents of full report

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Lessons from the world's top marketers



David Tiltman
Head of Content,
WARC

This report looks at the strategies and the approaches of some of the world's best brands.

The brands we focus on all place highly in the 2020 WARC Rankings – so have been highly awarded for creativity, media or effectiveness (and in most cases more than one). We've interviewed the teams behind some of this work to see how it came about, and what they learned from it.

So what can marketers learn from these high achievers? Looking across the report, there are a number of common themes worth calling out – let's call

them the nine habits of highly successful marketers. And at a time when marketing budgets are coming under pressure as the threat of recession looms, these are some of the ways marketers can make sure their brands stay relevant.

1. They are marketers, not just communicators

While a lot of the work featured in the rankings is communications, the stories behind that work reveal marketers working across the classic 4Ps spectrum.

This is an important point – marketers have been criticised

by some for focusing too much on communications and not understanding the other levers at their disposal. The marketers in this report do not fall into this trap.

For example, IKEA identified a product opportunity to appeal to a new audience, and ensured distribution through 3D printing. NRMA Insurance took marketing communications budget and effectively reinvested it in cashback to its customers via its Safety Hub app. Xbox created a new business model with its 'Fanchise' peer-to-peer controller sales.

There is also a growing interest in the breadth of the customer

experience, and how to align all interactions with a brand – McDonald’s talks about “feel-good moments” that span ads to packaging to design.

2. They know how they’re contributing

A consistent theme through the interviews in the report is that marketers know how their work contributes at a business level.

That means brand metrics are joined up to commercial objectives. For retailers that link might be very direct – as Colin Mitchell of McDonald’s points out, they receive sales data very quickly and can see what is working.

For others it requires more work. Samsung and its agency Starcom, for example, use search data as an indicator of business impact – this is a growing trend as marketers look for better proxies for success.

3. They have one eye on the long term

Long term versus short term is a very live debate at present – the marketing literature of the past few years has created a new way of looking at marketing investment. This might involve splitting budgets between distinct ‘brand’ and ‘activation’ work. It also involves the nurturing of ‘distinctive brand assets’ over time – this demands consistency as well as creativity.

Several brands in the report use this sort of language. McDonald’s Mitchell talks about investment in long-term platforms, the need to avoid ‘disposable’ marketing, and the need to balance the familiar with the surprising. Volkswagen, another model of consistency, also balances brand investment like the Road Tales project with very sales-focused work.

Meanwhile, Fernando Machado of Burger King is criticised by some

for a ‘stunt’ approach. But as he points out here, that is only one element of his marketing plan – he balances high-impact brand activity with everyday executions designed to drive footfall.

4. They know creativity is key – but only when applied in a business context

Creativity is clearly a key element in this report, as brands seek distinctive and innovative products and communications. But the brands we interview are at pains to frame those creative leaps within a business strategy. Creativity drives distinctiveness, and in some cases delivers a cultural impact – but all that means nothing if it isn’t achieving broader commercial objectives.

Burger King’s Whopper Detour is a great example of a campaign that ticks all the boxes: fantastically creative, but with a real business purpose – driving downloads and orders through an

“Creativity drives distinctiveness, and in some cases delivers a cultural impact – but all that means nothing if it isn’t achieving broader commercial objectives.”

app – underlying it.

5. They tolerate risk

The decision to do something different – for example, to run a campaign that does not play by category rules, or to divert budget into an untested proposition – can seem risky. But the rewards are potentially much higher. The marketers in this report understand that trade-off.

Indeed, some of the brands in the report – even big ones like Samsung and Burger King – take a ‘challenger’ approach. They deliberately flout category rules and use attention-grabbing tactics that court controversy to position themselves against a bigger competitor.

An interesting theme within some of the interviews is the limits of traditional testing. Burger King’s recent controversial Moldy Whopper execution came after a more run-of-the-mill execution that tested well but flopped in the real world. One

of the team behind the award-winning Xbox work insists that work designed to have a cultural impact is hard to test, meaning ‘gut instinct’ still plays a role.

6. They execute flawlessly – even if it takes time

The scale of some of the work in the WARC Rankings is breathtaking. Whopper Detour took a year to come to market due to the technical and legal complexities. Carrefour’s Black Supermarket also took a year as the marketing team convinced colleagues, lawyers and lobbyists it should deliberately flout the law to gain an advantage. IKEA’s ThisAbles project took even longer.

A genuinely great idea is worth the wait if that’s what it takes to land it seamlessly.

7. Their purpose is focused on their customers

Purpose has become a dirty word in some quarters, synonymous with ‘save the world’ communications that have little alignment with a brand’s actual objectives or its impact in the world.

A lot of the marketers here use the word ‘purpose’ – but what’s striking is that purpose is usually focused on their customers. It’s a less ambitious use of the word ‘purpose’ – but arguably a more realistic and ultimately more useful one.

In other words, they know why their brand exists and how it ought to behave.

In the case of Xbox, that confidence in the brand’s role in the world led them to new thinking, such as the Adaptive Controller.

“A genuinely great idea is worth the wait if that’s what it takes to land it seamlessly.”

That knowledge also allows brands to focus on their customers' pain points. IKEA's approach to developing add-ons for the disabled community is a textbook example of spotting a new way to serve a specific group, testing and releasing it. Volkswagen's Road Tales was built on the simple need to entertain children during a car journey.

8. They look for the human stories in data

A lot of modern marketing revolves around data and tech. And there's plenty of examples of data-driven ideas and tech innovation in the WARC Rankings. But data savvy is only part of the story; another is the ability to spot human stories or 'small data' that can turn information into a source of creativity and competitive advantage.

There's a lovely example in the section on KFC's work in China. Much of its success is built on work around Chinese gaming and e-sports. This in turn was built on

the observation that KFC's meals can be eaten with one hand, leaving the other hand free to hold a controller.

There are plenty of other great examples in the report. Volvo's E.V.A. Initiative was all about data; but what made it powerful was the message that crash test data had become a gender issue. And Samsung applies behavioural insight to its data to understand why people make the decisions they are making.

9. They build an ecosystem of trusted partners

Clearly most marketers work with external partners. But much of the work in this report springs from relationships that go beyond supplier and contractor.

There is no one way of working. Burger King insists on an "intense" partnership with its agencies; it works with multiple suppliers, and will bring in new

agencies if they have good enough ideas. Xbox has worked with McCann since 2003 and has developed a close relationship. Other projects in this report involve broader ecosystems, as clients and agencies bring in specialist support.

A common thread: it's not just about hiring the right people – it's about sharing data, giving them access across the organisation, and setting them briefs that will bring out the best from them. As NRMA Insurance's Brent Smart comments: "When you have an agency that knows they're going to get to make great work, you get this unbelievable discretionary effort where they will do anything to make that work great," he said. "That's the best commercial decision I can make as a marketer because I get all this additional effort and value without paying more for it."

“It’s not just about hiring the right people – it’s about sharing data, giving them access across the organisation, and setting them briefs that will bring out the best from them.”

Learn from the best

The top brands in the 2020 WARC Rankings

WARC[^]
RANKINGS

The top brands

The top brands across the 2020 rankings came from 11 different sectors, and from 20 different advertisers, with fast food retailers earning the top place across each of the three rankings for creativity, media and effectiveness. On page 14, we discuss the competitive fast food space, including interviews with the CMOs for Burger King and McDonald’s, and KFC’s media agency.

Though many of the brands at the top are household names, there are also some emerging brands in the top 10s that have ridden the digital wave. Uber and Uber Eats are both app-based brands that have capitalised on the constant connectivity enabled by smartphones, and other brands are using digital technologies to bring new customers in, like Canadian brand Sport Chek and tech brand Samsung Galaxy.

Included in these brands are some of the world’s biggest global brands by brand value according to Interbrand’s Best Global Brands 2019 Rankings. A guest article from Interbrand’s Vice President of Global Brands, Joe Stubbs is on page 7. Joe discusses the difficulty in maintaining a successful brand, and the habits of some brands that continue to achieve just that.

Top brands in the WARC Rankings for creativity, media and effectiveness

RANK	CREATIVITY	MEDIA	EFFECTIVENESS
1	Burger King	KFC	McDonald’s
2	Nike	Foxtel	Coca-Cola
3	Xbox	Lifebuoy	IKEA
4	IKEA	Nike	KFC
5	Bodyform/Libresse	Samsung Galaxy	Vodafone
6	The New York Times	Burger King	Burger King
7	Apple	Sport Chek / Canadian Tire	Tide
8	Volkswagen	McDonald’s	Xbox
9	Diesel	Uber Eats	Hiroshima Tourism
10	KFC	Uber	National Safety Council

The top advertisers

Burger King’s dominance in the Creative 100 Rankings meant its owner brand, Restaurant Brands International, topped the advertiser ranking for creativity, but FMCG giant, Unilever, topped the other two rankings. With over 400 brands used by consumers globally, Unilever has consistently been at or near the top of our media and effectiveness rankings.

In the 2020 rankings, Unilever had three brands ranked in the Media 100 but was represented by 28 brands responsible for 53 campaigns across the full database. In the Effective 100, only one Unilever brand made the top 100, but 33 appeared in the full database across 54 campaigns.

Only two top 10 advertisers appeared across all three rankings: drinks giant Anheuser-Busch InBev, and Unilever’s big rival,

Procter & Gamble. The two are accompanied by a further 10 advertisers that are ranked in all three rankings in 2020.

Top advertisers in the WARC Rankings for creativity, media and effectiveness

RANK	CREATIVITY	MEDIA	EFFECTIVENESS
1	Restaurant Brands International	Unilever	Unilever
2	Nike	Yum! Brands	The Coca-Cola Company
3	Anheuser-Busch InBev	Procter & Gamble	Nestlé
4	Microsoft	PepsiCo	Anheuser-Busch InBev
5	Mars	News Corp	Procter & Gamble
6	The New York Times Company	Nike	McDonald’s
7	Volkswagen Group	Anheuser-Busch InBev	Yum! Brands
8	IKEA	Uber	Vodafone
9	Procter & Gamble	Samsung	IKEA
10	Essity	The Walt Disney Company	PepsiCo

Top brands by sector

The retail sector is the clear winner of the 2020 rankings, with the top brand in each of the three rankings belonging to the sector, specifically fast food retailing. We look at the dynamics between the three leading retailers on page 14, including interviews with the CMOs of both Burger King and McDonald’s.

Nike leads its category in clothing and accessories, with stand out, bold creative campaigns like Dream Crazy, and in soft drinks, Coca-Cola was the highest ranked brand across all three rankings, with a particularly strong performance in effectiveness. Its top performing campaign was Faces of the City, in 10th in the Effective 100.

Also profiled in this report are automotive brand Volkswagen, which is consistently present across the three rankings, performing

particularly well creatively, and NRMA Insurance: a newcomer to the rankings in financial services led by ex-ad agency exec, Brent Smart, who we talk to on page 55.

Top brands by sector

SECTOR	CREATIVITY	MEDIA	EFFECTIVENESS
Retail	Burger King	KFC	McDonald's
Food	Skittles	Oh Henry!	Snickers
Soft drinks	Coca-Cola	Coca-Cola	Coca-Cola
Alcoholic drinks	Budweiser	Cerveza Victoria	Absolut
Automotive	Volkswagen	Volkswagen	Chevrolet
Financial services	NRMA Insurance	ANZ Bank	NRMA Insurance
Household & domestic	Berger Paints	Güd	Tide
Toiletries & cosmetics	Bodyform / Libresse	Lifebuoy	Lifebuoy
Clothing & accessories	Nike	Nike	Adidas
Transport & tourism	Uber	Uber	Hiroshima Tourism

Learn from the best

A hat-trick in fast food

WARC[^]
RANKINGS





A hat-trick in fast food

Burger King, KFC, McDonald's: the best brands for creativity, media and effectiveness. Why are these brands the best at what they do and why is the fast food sector having such a strong period in advertising?

Disruption through delivery services and a focus on younger consumers that don't consume media in traditional ways are driving innovation, and we look at what these brands are doing to react.

Burger King's success appears to lie in unconventional advertising, and a willingness to be brave. Its campaigns break rules in and aim to kickstart conversations in popular culture, with negative feedback expected and embraced.

For McDonald's, consistency of approach has been key. Its "feel-good messaging" is built

into long-term communication strategies that have led to three consecutive years near the top of the Effective 100 brands ranking. In the last year McDonald's have hired Wieden+Kennedy New York – an agency known for its award-winning creativity – to drive creative excellence, and perhaps to compete with Burger King on creativity.

KFC has become known for its humour in the UK and US through campaigns like FCK and Chickendales, but it was the retailer's results in APAC that drove it to the top of the Media 100 ranking. On page 25, we interview KFC's media agency in China, Mindshare, to find out how the brand and agency work together, and some of the insights used to form the media strategy for KFC.

Burger King's performance in the 2020 rankings

Brand ranking

#1

Creative 100
(17 campaigns
in rankings database)

#6

Media 100
(10 campaigns
in rankings database)

#6

Effective 100
(13 campaigns
in rankings database)

Most successful campaigns



Creative 100
The Whopper Detour
#1

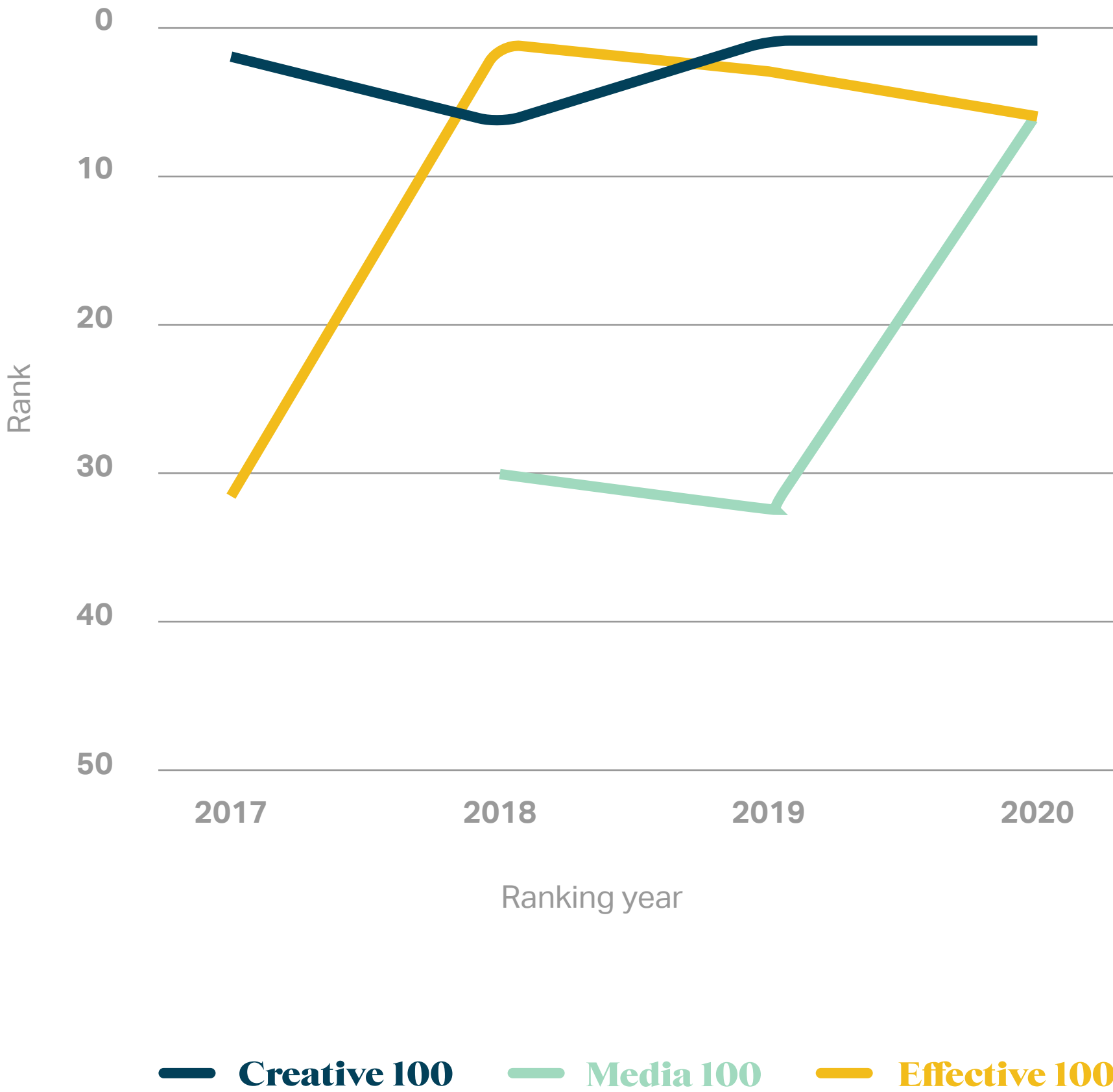


Media 100
The Whopper Detour
#17



Effective 100
Scary Clown Night
#63

Burger King's performance over time



How Burger King ties buzzworthy campaigns to strategic objectives

Takeaways

- *The conversations prompted by campaigns should be aligned with a brand's strategic priorities so that marketing initiatives guide the brand in the right direction over time.*
- *Layer day-to-day work that leads to short-term sales, with the industry-changing, brand-building work that gets people talking.*
- *A good relationship between brand and agency relies on brand side marketers being as immersed in the advertising as their agencies.*

Fernando Machado describes Burger King's brand using words like "daring", "democratic", "fun" and "self-deprecating".

The quick-service restaurant chain's marketing has embodied these qualities with a broad range of campaigns that have driven conversations and, on occasion, controversy. Examples include Moldy Whopper, Burning Stores, Whopper Detour and Google Home of the Whopper.

Many marketers envy the chaotic spirit that seemingly underpins

these campaigns, while other industry-watchers criticize Burger King for relying on gimmicks – or what marketing consultant Mark Ritson dubbed "stunts" and "flashy, ineffective fare".

But Machado, Burger King's chief marketing officer, repudiated this argument – and, in the process, offered guidance to CMOs wanting to embrace more courageous marketing. "Some people say, 'Oh, what you do is a bit stunky', or, 'It's a stunt.' I honestly don't see it that way," he said.

"I see an idea that's so powerful that it makes people talk about it. If people talk about something today, they move on to talking about something else tomorrow. That's how pop culture works. It's not just in advertising; with any news, people just move on.

"And, then, I think the onus is on us ... to continue to bring and create those moments, so that

the brand is continuously part of the conversation."

Propelling Burger King into the zeitgeist is not an end in itself. Instead, the conversations prompted by its campaigns must be "aligned with our strategic priorities". Its marketing initiatives – however unconventional – will guide "the brand in the right direction" over time.

As a demonstration, Machado cited Whopper Detour – a campaign that took a year to produce because it was so complex. It was unusual in that it was pitched by an agency outside the brand's usual roster, but ended up being "the most-awarded campaign that we had in the past year", yielding billions of impressions, as well as 1.5 million app downloads.

"It was completely aligned with one of our strategic objectives, which is to strengthen the brand when it comes to tech and when it comes to digital," Machado said.



"As long as what you're doing is aligned to one of your strategic priorities, it should work."

Balancing the day-to-day short-term activations with exceptional, higher-level strategic initiatives

Burger King's splashy campaigns generate significant chatter, but traditional activities – like TV spots centered around promotions – also play an integral role.

"We have the day-to-day work, which has deadlines, which has a ton of market research, which correlates to short-term sales. And we layer on top of that work that is brand building, that's industry-changing, that gets talked about," Machado said.

Looking at the short-term piece, "Sometimes, it's very promotional, because that's how the category is: If I don't have a

promotion, my competitors will have, and I will suffer," he said. Campaigns like Google Home of the Whopper and Whopper Detour then go "above and beyond" as higher-level strategic initiatives. The aim may be to increase brand preference, boost affinity with target demographics, or enhance perceptions of food quality – each of which is a long-term aim, but does not inevitably translate into an instant spike in demand.

Moldy Whopper is one example: "The objective of the campaign was not to sell more tomorrow," Machado said. "It was to start taking people on a journey, showing them that the food that we serve is actually better than people think, because it doesn't have any artificial preservatives."

The culture at Burger King requires its marketers and agency partners to be "all-in"

Burger King's marketers – and

agency partners like DAVID, FCB and MullenLowe – have a deep "love" of advertising, Machado asserted.

"My team knows more about advertising than many agencies. Probably not more than our agencies, because our agencies are equally as obsessed as we are," he said. "People say, 'We'd love to have you as a client.' You don't know what you're talking about. Because we are all in, all the time. So, it's very intense. But our creative partners are like that. The ones that do the best work: they are all in all the time."

Being "all in" requires a full immersion in the industry, from engaging in debates to gaining familiarity with the strongest work – such as that honoured at the big award shows – to "develop your palate" and their own "criteria" for campaigns.

"What I mean by 'criteria' is you know what's new and what's not so new; you know what's cliché and what's not cliché; you know what is award-



“My team knows more about advertising than many agencies. Probably not more than our agencies, because our agencies are equally as obsessed as we are.”

Fernando Machado, Burger King

winning and what is not award-winning; you have an instinct for what people are going to be talking about and what they are not,” Machado said.

Machado also ensures the shops on Burger King’s roster operate under conditions that enable sustained creativity.

“We never pitch briefs. We go to very specific agencies for certain briefs and we have some briefs that are open briefs that our key creative partners can come and present to us. And they know it’s not a competition,” he said.

“Because if we are presented with two great ideas, we will do both. And if we are presented ten great ideas, I will do ten of them ... We nurture those relationships. And that’s why we don’t pitch stuff.”

One vital member of that list is 3G Capital, the private-equity group that owns Restaurant Brands International, the parent

company of Burger King. Strong sales undoubtedly help, as hard revenues evidence the tangible return on investment in marketing – and build a degree of expectation regarding the cut-through of communications.

The franchise-holders who run Burger King’s restaurants are another necessary cohort to engage. “If I’m talking to franchisees, I need to be very rational, show the data, and even when you do that, they will not always agree,” Machado said.

Disagreements, he added, don’t “happen that often to be honest with you, because I think that they also understand the brand, and the level of collaboration that we have with our franchisee partners is very high.”

As a case in point, Moldy Whopper was primarily developed by a Swedish agency called Ingo, and it was “a franchisee partner from Sweden that brought the

idea to the table,” Machado said. “So, they are also fairly ambitious creatively.”

The Moldy Whopper campaign delivered an outcome that a prior ad had not achieved, despite testing well. Whichever audience Machado addresses, he reiterates that impactful work only results if aims and creativity are matched.

“I think it’s very important that you align what the strategic objectives are. You align on what the brand is about. And, whatever you do needs to connect to these two things,” he said.

The overall result: year-on-year system-wide sales growth hit 9.3% in 2019, following on from lifts of 8.9% in 2018 and 10.1% in 2017.

McDonald's performance in the 2020 rankings

Brand ranking

#11

Creative 100
(15 campaigns in rankings database)

#7

Media 100
(11 campaigns in rankings database)

#1

Effective 100
(31 campaigns in rankings database)

Most successful campaigns



Creative 100
McDelivery
#75

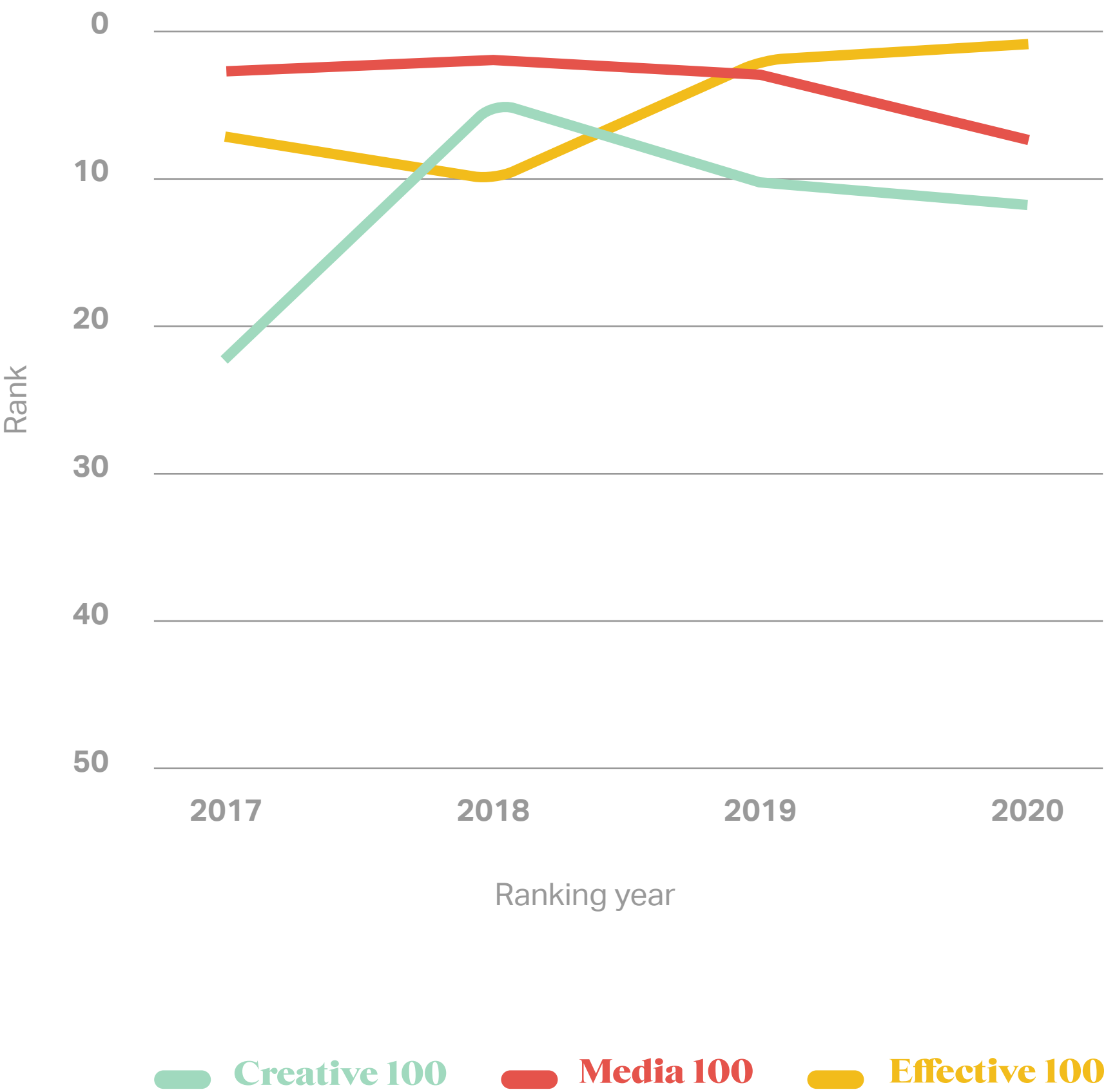


Media 100
FriesList
#29



Effective 100
The McDelivery Pin
#73

McDonald's performance over time



The secrets behind long-term McMarketing success

Takeaways

- *Build long-term communication platforms, balancing familiar and surprising to create a consistent but engaging customer experience.*
- *Establish global standards, converging around a common vision and use this to elevate the standard of local work.*
- *Be wary of the ABC of corporate vices: arrogance, bureaucracy and complacency.*

McDonald's has been a model of consistency in the WARC Rankings, having placed strongly across the creative, effectiveness and media categories in each of the past five years.

Colin Mitchell assumed the role of SVP/Global Marketing at the quick-service restaurant (QSR) chain in July 2019, after spending three years as the company's VP/Global Brand. And he can draw upon an embarrassment of riches – from the iconic Golden Arches

Bun
Tartar
Fish
Cheese
Bun

emblem to mouth-watering Big Macs and the earworm "I'm lovin' it" jingle – to build on its impressive, sustained advertising performance.

"We have a phrase which we call 'feel-good marketing,'" Mitchell explained to WARC. "So, each experience with the brand – it could be a piece of design, it could be a TV ad, or packaging – has to be a feel-good moment, almost like a little dopamine hit.

"It's an emotional free sample

of the brand itself. We think it gives people a sample, and a reminder, of what the brand does for them – just as the restaurant, hopefully, at its best does."

A recent case in point is the "Iconic Stacks" billboard campaign from early 2020, which featured a simple list of ingredients from its menu items, which acted as distinctive brand assets without directly naming a product or mentioning the brand.

Prioritising long-term "platforms" that can be built on year after

year, over short-term "disposable marketing"

The quick-service category is highly competitive – and features a diverse range of marketing strategies, from the deeply tactical and promotional to irreverent, unbridled creativity.

On its part, McDonald's emphasises long-term communication "platforms". This notion is premised on the development of "enduring ideas around particular products or services that acquire accrued fame and meaning amongst consumers over time."

One case in point is "#ReindeerReady", a series of festive campaigns from the UK that launched in 2017, and has put the creatures who pull Santa's sleigh at the centre of heartwarming stories during each subsequent yuletide period. A further illustration is "Loose Change", a long-standing initiative from Australia that is connected to the brand's low-cost menu.

"We've tried to encourage the [local] markets to build year after year on a particular communications platform."

Elaborating on this approach, Mitchell suggested that balancing the "familiar and the surprising" has been impactful. "We find that consumers know what to expect, but they like the variation and difference year after year," said Mitchell.

That does not mean shifting to a short-term focus, however, as Mitchell asserted his opposition to "disposable marketing" – which is short term in nature, and quickly "thrown away" once it has been released.

"That's a real peril, particularly in a retail business," he said. A focus on iteration marks a point of contrast between McDonald's and Burger King, its fellow QSR, which has proved highly adept at driving buzz with campaigns that rapidly enter the zeitgeist.

As a signal of its own intentions, McDonald's named independent shop Wieden+Kennedy as its lead US creative agency last year, with one stated aim being to deliver "creative excellence that will influence culture."

McDonald's won advertising awards in over 40 countries, reflecting a culture that prizes consistency

Alongside its "vision statement", Mitchell flagged up several ways that the company has established consistent standards in different geographies:

Setting a Creative Agenda: "Each year, we will take one big theme about where we think creativity generally is going, and we go in and talk that through with the markets," he said.

Review Days: In these sessions, members of McDonald's global marketing team visit specific markets to review the brand's

pre-eminent creative on a worldwide basis, as well as its best local output.

"That mechanism has worked really well for us in converging around a common vision and elevating the standard of the work."

Expert "Councils": McDonald's runs a "couple of councils" internally that play an essential role in disseminating best practices.

"One's at the CMO level, so we work very closely with our CMOs. We meet often. And we also have what we call a 'Creative Council', which is a group made up of the people primarily responsible for actually making the work in the markets," Mitchell said.

Franchisee Involvement: The operators of McDonald's franchises have unique knowledge about the messages that drive foot traffic and sales. While these stakeholders may not be schooled in advertising theory like the experts on Madison Avenue, they have crucial insights to provide.



McDonald's has an extensive menu of key performance indicators to choose from as it seeks to prove return on marketing investment (ROMI)

Mitchell outlined some of the most important metrics:

Sales: The "preferred method" to assess marketing payback, he stated, is "real sales" from restaurants – and system-wide sales rising by 4% on an annual basis (or 7% in constant currencies that account for fluctuations in currency value) to \$100.2 billion in 2019.

"Because we're a retail business, we have very good data for sales daily, in real time," Mitchell asserted. "The good thing about a QSR is you can tell almost immediately whether something is working or not. It's a highly advertising-responsive category, and you are left with no doubt whether something works."

Same-Store Revenue: Within the overall sales figures, same-store performance – which strips out factors like the opening of new restaurants, allowing for direct year-over-year comparison – is

critical. This figure rose by 5.9% annually for McDonald's in 2019, including 5% growth in the US.

"That's a core metric, probably not just for us, but for everybody in our category. It's a very clean, simple number" that is "universally understood by everybody from a crew member to the CEO," Mitchell said.

ROMI: Over the last two years, McDonald's has been "standardizing" the regression methodologies that are employed to prove its marketing impact – an endeavour pursued in a tie-up with Analytic Partners, an analytics consultancy based in New York.

"We're now able to split apart the contribution of marketing."

Intermediate Measures: As with most marketing organisations, McDonald's conducts brand and ad tracking to determine its results with softer metrics.

Other proxies include how well its entries score at the Cannes Lions Festival and in the Effie Awards, which are focused on effectiveness. Brand valuation is another consideration, too.

These types of numbers are meaningful, but "being a retail business, we find the most effective way is ROMI analysis," Mitchell said.

As his team looks to continue McDonald's run of marketing success, they are seeking to be wary of an "ABC" of vices that the company has identified: namely, "arrogance", "bureaucracy" and "complacency".

"Obviously, those are perils in any big company," said Mitchell. "We've had success commercially for five years now, but you can't take that for granted. And we strive to achieve it."

KFC’s performance in the 2020 rankings

Brand ranking

#10

Creative 100
(12 campaigns in rankings database)

#1

Media 100
(19 campaigns in rankings database)

#4

Effective 100
(22 campaigns in rankings database)

Most successful campaigns



Creative 100
Christmas Pocket Store
#52

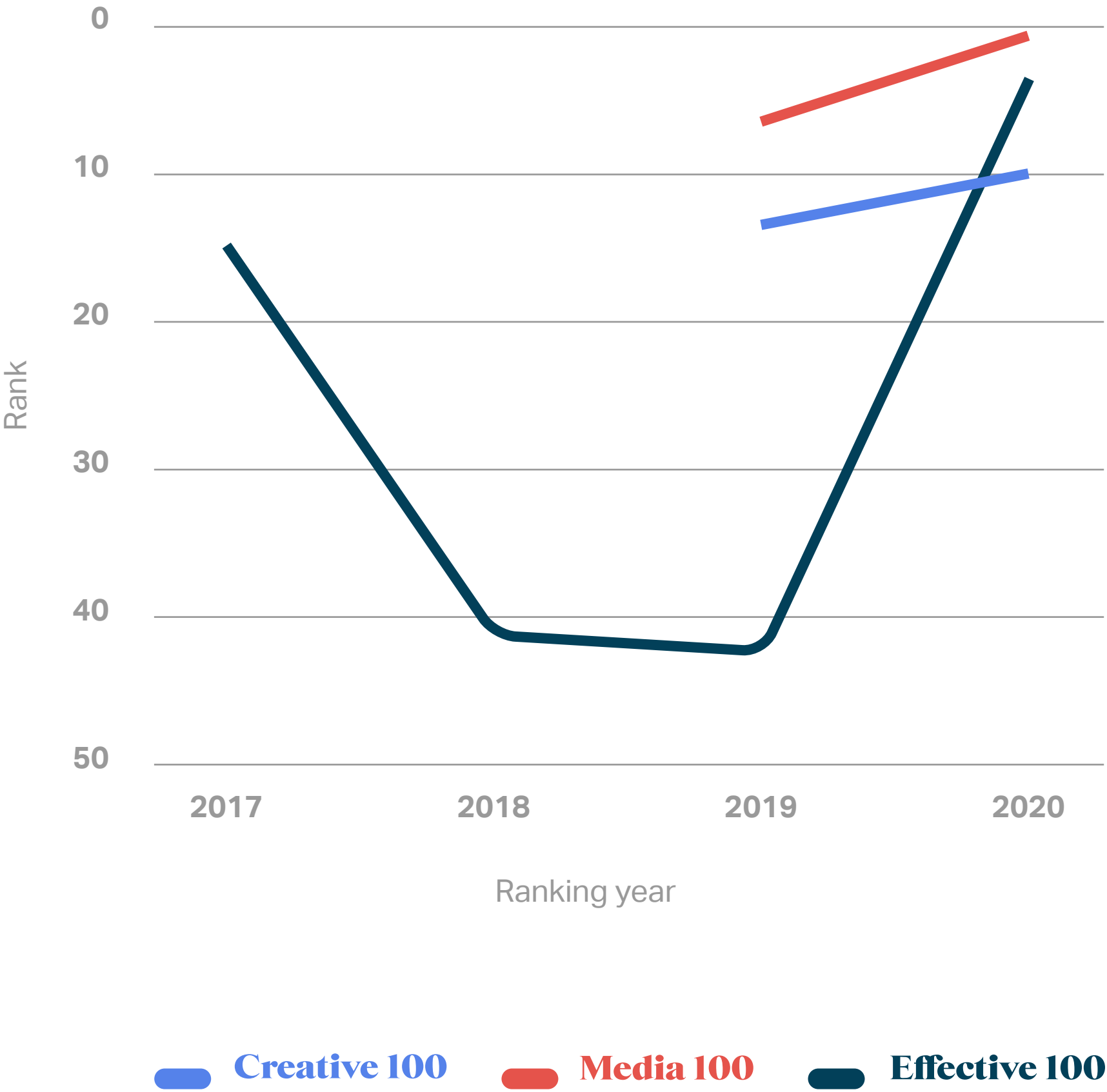


Media 100
The First Colonel to Conquer eSports
#2



Effective 100
Christmas Pocket Store
#60

KFC’s performance over time



Case study: The First Colonel to Conquer eSports

Agencies

Mindshare
Shanghai

Advertiser

KFC (Yum! Brands)

Market

China

Colonel KI strengthened KFC’s relationship to gamers in China and went beyond sponsorship by cleverly using data to elevate the experience of League of Legends.

During matches, gamers who were overwhelmed with gameplay and data played with their gut, often incorrectly. KFC created Colonel KI, an algorithm that appeared at the beginning of each game and during breaks to predict who would win.

[VIEW THE CASE STUDY](#)



Results

*35m
organic topic views on
Weibo*

*70 min
brand exposure per day*

*1.9m
on-screen, KFC-specific
comments*

Takeaways

Within the gaming industry, it is not enough to do what any brand would. New solutions show creativity which gamers appreciate.

Integrating a brand within a hobby is most effective when it adds to the experience rather than interrupting your audience.

Historic data has a wealth of potential if used accurately but clearly explaining the findings is just as powerful.

The insights guiding KFC to success in China

Takeaways

- *Risky ideas need to be big enough, and the rewards good enough, to persuade management for support.*
- *Collate insights from multiple sources and give them all consideration – seemingly small data points can often bring some unexpected results.*
- *Knowing a brand's business inside out is a key condition for success.*

Q&A with:

Carey Wang, General Manager, Yum! China (CW)

Yi Liu, General Manager, Content + (YL)

Bolin Wang, Managing Director, Content + (BW)

If you had to sum up KFC China's marketing philosophy in one sentence, what would it be?

CW: Continuous innovation and iteration based on an open ecosystem and embracing both success and failure.

How do you ensure a similar spirit and ethos runs through your campaigns in different markets?

YI/BW: Focusing on the user experience, deeply understanding the user's psychological and cultural needs, and using the latest technology available in the local markets to enhance effectiveness. This is the same across all markets.

What are the main marketing challenges that result from being in a franchise model?

CW: The fast food industry is full of challenges. Players in this industry have to face many competitors from FMCG to offline retail. In recent years it has also seen the impact of e-commerce.

The fast food industry is fundamental to the lives of almost every consumer, meaning that consumers are exposed to it on a daily basis. To succeed, fast food brands need a comprehensive understanding of consumers' lifestyles. At KFC, we study the link between online and offline consumer behaviour, thereby enhancing our consumer insights to provide more targeted services.

How do you sell risky / innovative marketing ideas to senior leadership?

YI/BW: Selling risky / innovative marketing ideas is not simple since it is aimed at the future.

The changes must be big enough, the rewards must be good enough, and it must be difficult for the competitors to imitate. Then, it is easier to persuade management for support. The most important thing is to identify your innovation capabilities, including any resistance from your own internal departments, competitors, or customers.

What sort of insights inform the media strategy for KFC's campaigns in China?

CW: We use insights from three aspects: consumer insight, brand category insight and media insight. As early as 2015, when online games became mainstream, we started to think about how to combine gaming with KFC in a meaningful way, rather than simply using the gaming crowd as a source of traffic.

When we communicated directly with some gamers, we found that KFC is particularly popular, because its burgers, chicken wings, burritos and other products can be eaten with only one hand. Compared with

Chinese-style meals, these can free the players' other hand to play the game.

We took this insight and selected the most popular game, "League of Legends" game, and created a "one-click order" function in the game to promote all the meals that can be enjoyed with one hand. At the same time, in offline KFC stores, when consumers buy meals, they can get in-game gifts.

The collaboration combined brand and product insights to address consumer pain points while also leveraging the most popular elements of the game.

What data sources have generally proved the most valuable when media planning and buying?

YI/BW: Firstly, first-party data can reveal the relationship between consumers and the brand, and is an important source of data for media planning. Marketing to existing consumers can be more efficient than marketing to new consumers.

Secondly, real and reliable third-party data can also help us look at a variety of consumer trends from an objective perspective. Its importance is not only reflected in media planning & buying, but also in other aspects of marketing.

Taking the Colonel KI as the core example, the power of data has given the KFC brand high status in the e-sports ecosystem, which provided unique value for players. The data available in e-sports is extremely rich, and it's up to us to use the data to reflect the value of the brand.

Finally, the "one-handed meal" insights in the above answer also revealed the charm of small data points, because these seemingly small data points can often bring some unexpected results. In an era of intelligent marketing, data is important, but more important is the planning process based on data.



If you look ahead over the next one / two years, how do you think marketing will change?

YL/BW: In the future, the impact from youth culture and new technology will become bigger, not only for marketing, but also for business models and corporate strategies. This will become more and more challenging and requires marketers to constantly understand these new developments. At the enterprise level, this also requires the company to establish a system to improve overall collaboration.

Are there any other aspects of the 'conditions for success' formula you 'd like to delve into?

CW: Knowing the client's business and always paying attention to innovation are both important when partnering with clients. The Chinese market is constantly changing, so we are constantly thinking about how these changes can empower the client's business, not just at the media planning and buying level.

Learn from the best

The best regional performances

WARC[^]
RANKINGS

Top APAC performances in the 2020 rankings

Most successful brands in APAC

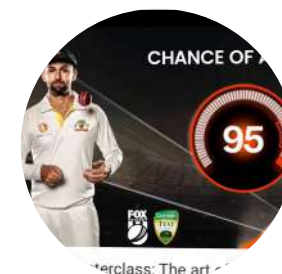
KFC
Creative 100


KFC
Media 100

KFC
Effective 100

Most successful campaigns in APAC

 **Creative 100**
Safety Hub
NRMA Insurance

 **Media 100**
Monty: The World's
First AI Predictive
Commentator
Foxtel

 **Effective 100**
Oyster Kanji
Dictation
Hiroshima Tourism

Most successful agencies in APAC

 **Creative 100**
CHE Proximity,
Melbourne
BBDO Worldwide

 **Media 100**
Mindshare,
Shanghai
Mindshare
Worldwide

 **Effective 100**
CREATIVE
CHE Proximity,
Melbourne
BBDO Worldwide

 **Effective 100**
MEDIA
Mindshare,
Mumbai
Mindshare
Worldwide

 **Effective 100**
**DIGITAL/
SPECIALIST**
MRM//McCann,
Shanghai
McCann
Worldgroup

The standout performer in the APAC region in 2019 shows was KFC, which took the top brand spot for the region in all three rankings. KFC's most awarded campaigns were executed in China, with The First Colonel to Conquer eSports ranking in 2nd overall in the Media 100.

Despite the strength of KFC across the three rankings, the top APAC campaign in each came from other brands. In the Creative 100, NRMA Insurance's Safety Hub, in 10th overall, was the top ranking campaign for APAC. For media, the top overall campaign from Foxtel took place in APAC, and for effectiveness, a campaign from Hiroshima Tourism took 2nd place overall.

The region was best represented in the Media 100, where 35 of the top 100 came out of APAC, and 12 of the top 50 agencies were based there including those in 2nd, 3rd and 4th place.

Top Europe performances in the 2020 rankings

Most successful brands in Europe

**Bodyform/
Libresse**
Creative 100

Missguided
Media 100

IKEA
Effective 100

Most successful campaigns in Europe

 **Creative 100**
Viva La Vulva
Bodyform/Libresse

 **Media 100**
Missguided Styles
Love Island
Missguided


 **Effective 100**
Project 84
CALM

Most successful agencies in Europe

 **Creative 100**
AMV BBDO,
London
BBDO Worldwide

 **Media 100**
PHD, London
PHD Worldwide

 **Effective 100**
CREATIVE
AMV BBDO,
London
BBDO Worldwide

 **Effective 100**
MEDIA
Starcom,
Warsaw
Starcom

 **Effective 100**
DIGITAL/
SPECIALIST
Fullsix, Lisbon
Havas Creative
Group

The standout performer in Europe in 2019 shows was Bodyform/ Libresse, with Viva La Vulva, ranked overall 2nd for creativity and the brand ranking 5th overall in the Creative 100. Viva La Vulva was the latest in the brand’s series of attention-grabbing campaigns that aim to empower women by tackling taboo subjects.

Missguided’s campaign with UK TV series Love Island topped the Media 100 ranking for Europe, placing 8th overall, and IKEA’s long-term The Wonderful Everyday drove the retailer to the top of the Effective 100 ranking for Europe.

Europe was best represented in the Creative 100, with more than a third of the top 100 campaigns originating in Europe, including 13 from the UK, and 18 of the top 50 agencies were based in the region.

Top North America performances in the 2020 rankings

Most successful brands in Europe

Burger King
Creative 100

Samsung Galaxy
Media 100

Tide
Effective 100

Most successful campaigns in Europe


 **Creative 100**
The Whopper Detour
Burger King


 **Media 100**
Digital Window Shopping
Sport Chek/
Canadian Tire

 **Effective 100**
It's a Tide Ad
Tide

Most successful agencies in Europe

 **Creative 100**
McCann, New York
McCann
Worldgroup

 **Media 100**
Starcom, Chicago
Starcom

 **Effective 100**
DIGITAL/
SPECIALIST
MKTG, New York
Dentsu Aegis
Network

 **Effective 100**
CREATIVE
Saatchi & Saatchi, New York
Saatchi & Saatchi

 **Effective 100**
MEDIA
Hearts & Science, New York
Hearts & Science

North America is the home for both the most creative brand and campaign overall, and the most effective campaign overall. Burger King's The Whopper Detour drove the fast food retailer to the top of the Creative 100, and Tide's Super Bowl campaign, It's a Tide Ad, saw Tide to the top of the Effective 100 brand ranking.

For media, Samsung Galaxy's advertising in North America made it the top performing brand, while Sport Chek/Canadian Tire's Digital Window Shopping campaign was the most awarded campaign for media in the region.

North America was best represented in the Creative 100, where 35 of the top 100 came out of the region, including six of the top 10 campaigns. The region's performance in the Media 100 was almost equal; 29 of the top 100 campaigns came from the US, and almost half (22) of the top 50 agencies were based in the region.

Top LATAM performances in the 2020 rankings

Most successful brands in LATAM

Volkswagen
Creative 100

Nike
Media 100

Coca-Cola
Effective 100

Most successful campaigns in LATAM

 **Creative 100**
The Endless Ad
Old Spice

 **Media 100**
Air Max Graffiti Stores
Nike

 **Effective 100**
I love you, Hater
Sprite

Most successful agencies in LATAM

 **Creative 100**
Africa, São Paulo
DDB Worldwide

 **Media 100**
MediaCom, Mexico City
MediaCom

 **Effective 100**
DIGITAL/
SPECIALIST
Zavalita Brand Building, Lima

 **Effective 100**
CREATIVE
DAVID,
Buenos Aires
Ogilvy

 **Effective 100**
MEDIA
OMD, Lima
OMD Worldwide

The top brands in LATAM belong to some of the biggest advertisers in the world. Automotive giant Volkswagen is the most creative brand in LATAM, Nike the most awarded for media, and Coca-Cola the most effective. Nike is the only brand that also took a top campaign spot for LATAM, with its Air Max Graffiti Stores the most awarded campaign in LATAM for media.

The region is represented to a similar degree across the three rankings; 10 of the top 100 campaigns in the Creative 100 originated in LATAM, and 12 campaigns in both the Media 100 and Effective 100 were executed in the region.

Only one LATAM agency ranked in the top 10 agencies in any of the three rankings. Africa São Paulo, a DDB Worldwide agency, accumulated points from 13 different brands including Budweiser and Brahma for an overall rank of 9th in the Creative 100.

Top Middle East performances in the 2020 rankings

Most successful brands in the Middle East

IKEA
Creative 100

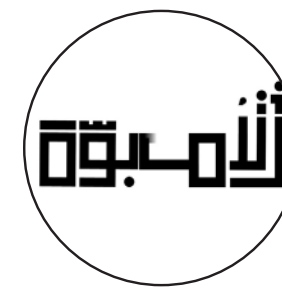
Pantene
Media 100

Babyshop
Effective 100

Most successful campaigns in the Middle East

 **Creative 100**
ThisAbles
IKEA

 **Media 100**
Blend-In
Pantene
Canadian Tire

 **Effective 100**
Al Umobuwah:
Putting
'Mum' into
'Parenthood'
Babyshop

Most successful agencies in the Middle East

 **Creative 100**
Impact BBDO,
Dubai
BBDO Worldwide

 **Media 100**
MediaCom
Connections, Tel
Aviv
MediaCom

 **Effective 100**
CREATIVE
FP7 McCann,
Dubai
McCann
Worldgroup

 **Effective 100**
MEDIA
Mindshare,
Istanbul
Mindshare
Worldwide

 **Effective 100**
DIGITAL/
SPECIALIST
Rafineri,
Istanbul

IKEA's most successful campaign in the 2020 rankings was ThisAbles, a campaign promoting accessibility for disabled people that ran in Israel. It ranked 9th overall and was the top campaign in the Middle East for creativity. Its success meant IKEA ranked the top brand or creativity in the region.

Top for media was Pantene, through its Blend-In campaign that ranked 14th in the Media 100. In the Effective 100, the most awarded campaign from the Middle East ranked in 13th: Babyshop's Al Umobuwah. Seven further campaigns from the Middle East ranked in the Effective 100 in the region's best performance in a ranking.

The agency behind the Al Umobuwah campaign, FP7 McCann Dubai, was the top creative agency in the Effective 100.

More from WARC

Who we are

At WARC, our purpose is to save the world from ineffective marketing by putting evidence at the heart of every marketing decision.

We believe that effective marketing is based on facts and not opinions.

Since 1985, we've brought confidence to marketing decisions through the most trusted research, case studies, best practice, data and inspiration.

Today, we help 75,000+ marketers across 100+ countries.

Our clients include the world's leading brands, advertising and media agencies, media owners, research companies and universities – including the top-five largest agency groups and top-five largest advertisers in the world.

About the WARC Rankings

WARC Rankings are the ultimate benchmark for marketing. They celebrate excellence in creativity, media and effectiveness.

In an industry that sometimes struggles to defend its place in the C-suite, the Rankings offer an opportunity for marketers to reflect on the best campaigns in the business and to review the impact their own work has on their brands.

The benchmarks and insights garnered from the WARC Rankings are at the core of our brand promise: to bring confidence to marketing decisions through evidence based insight and inspiration.

Find out more about WARC:
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