



**WARC**

SAMPLE REPORT

## **Marketing through volatility**

Lessons from the most awarded work of 2020

# In this report

This report provides a sample of three whitepapers, brought to you by WARC Rankings, that look at the strategies and approaches of some of the world's most awarded campaigns for their use of creativity, media and effectiveness.

The reports contain commentary, expert opinion, case studies and interviews with the people behind the most awarded work of 2020.

The basis for this report series are the 2020 results of shows awarding creativity, media and effectiveness. These results form the 2021 WARC Rankings, which will launch in late 2021.

The brands and campaigns we focus on were all either highly awarded, or were notable in their response to the volatility of the past 12 months.

## Marketing through volatility

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# In this series

This report forms part of a series of reports that look at the most awarded work of 2020, ahead of our full rankings publication in November 2021.

## Available to WARC subscribers:

- [Creativity through volatility](#)
- [Media strategy through volatility](#)
- [Effectiveness through volatility](#)

## Also available to WARC Rankings subscribers:

- [The most awarded work for creativity](#)
- [The most awarded work for media](#)
- [The most awarded work for effectiveness](#)
- [The health of creativity](#)

If you'd like to know more about WARC Rankings or to get more information about a subscription, [get in touch here](#).

# Eight lessons from the most awarded work of 2020

1. Urgency can create a space for innovation
2. Successful brands retain their authenticity through crisis
3. Bravery and risk-taking is often rewarded
4. A strong brand purpose is sustained and consistent
5. There is opportunity in continued brand investment
6. Customer-centricity enables a rapid response to change
7. 2020 highlights the need for scenario planning and agility
8. Successful media strategies lie on a solid data bedrock

# Creativity through volatility

This report considers the importance of distinctiveness in a crisis, and how the best brands used this strategy in campaigns before and during the global pandemic.

Learn about the impact of e-commerce and shifting media investment on creativity, and how the creative industry is adapting to changed ways of working going into 2021.

Sample report  
This interview  
appears in: *"Creativity  
through volatility"*

# Moldy Whopper

## Burger King

Increasing sales  
by demonstrating  
its commitment  
to providing  
clean food



### Burger King's Moldy Whopper set the advertising world alight.

Love it or hate it, the campaign - which presented fine art photography of Burger King's signature offering in varying states of moldy decay - was not a stunt, but the realisation of many years spent improving the brand's food quality, according to Fernando Machado, Burger King's Chief Marketing Officer.

It was "love at first sight", Machado said, when agency partners David Miami and INGO Sweden both put forward different versions of the idea

several years ago. But Burger King was not yet ready for it. Machado wanted to wait until the Whopper's ingredients were 100% clean in the US, its biggest market.

Finally, the brand pushed forward with the Moldy Whopper idea, confident in the product's clean credentials.

"At Burger King, we had reached a really important milestone in our work which was to have a Whopper, which is our main hero product, 100% clean - meaning no artificial colours, flavours, or

### Credits

**Brand:**  
Burger King

**Location:**  
USA / Global

**Category:**  
Retail

**Advertiser:**  
Restaurant Brands International

**Agencies:**  
INGO Stockholm, DAVID Miami,  
Publicis Bucharest

preservatives - in the US," Machado said.

"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," Machado explained.

"Moldy Whopper was that idea." **Burger King wanted to subvert category advertising tropes**, while underlining its 'no artificial ingredients' message to differentiate from competitors.



"[Customers] expect real food to rot, but we know that's contradictory to how the restaurant and food industry advertises. We always try to show the perfect sandwich, smiles, etc. We really wanted to break all those rules with a message that's relevant around real food," Machado explained.

"We tried to do that in a very artistic way. Even though you know you shouldn't be liking it, it's both mesmerising and beautiful," he said.

Machado and his agency teams spent weeks becoming "experts in mold", running experiments with Whoppers to understand how the mold formed and photographing it at various stages of bloom. They photographed moldy Whoppers around the world, trying to get the perfect shot. **Machado even kept Whoppers in jars under his desk at the office as part of the experimentation process** - "really awkward", he admits - in an attempt to cultivate the most beautiful mold.

"It was super challenging to produce because mold grows in a very weird, unpredictable way. Every time we didn't get the right shot, we needed to start again, which means that you've just trashed something like three weeks of film," he said.

"We did one in Sweden, we did one in Argentina... we are trying at the same time in different places to see which one would look more visually stunning. We tried different ways to photograph it, from being more microscopic to the macro shot that we ended up with. There was a lot of experimentation in the craft of the idea."

**With such a campaign, the quality of the craft is absolutely imperative to its success, he believes.**

"The craft of that campaign is important as the idea itself," Machado said, adding that he loves the Moldy Whopper image so much that a print of it now hangs in his own home.

"That's why it was the huge success that it was. People actually got what we were trying to do. It helped move the needle in terms of the attributes of the brand around food quality, and perception around use of real ingredients. It helped sales," he said.

**In recent years, Burger King has gained a global reputation for pushing the boundaries of creativity.** While the Moldy Whopper divided industry opinion at the time, Machado believes that a certain level of criticism is simply a side effect of doing something relevant.

"Many people may look from the outside and feel that we are just doing crazy stuff or cool stuff. But the reality is there is a method and a strategy behind the madness," Machado said.

"Moldy Whopper was the cherry on the cake. It crowned a strategy around improving the quality of our food - that was just how we communicated it. We had been working for years to get to that point."

*“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.”*

FERNANDO MACHADO, CMO, BURGER KING



*“We’ve found that our best work is [based on] really true creative ideas. Those ideas that feel great have a connection to lived experience.”*

IAN MACKENZIE, CCO, FCB/SIX



Sample report  
This case study  
appears in: *'The most  
awarded work for  
creativity'*

# Stadium's food delivery

Brahma

Supporting the  
livelihood of  
stadium food  
vendors by  
delivering to the  
homes of sports  
spectators



## Objectives & insight

Due to Covid-19, stadiums were shut down all over the world. In Brazil, after 128 days of suspended games, play resumed behind closed doors which meant that stadium vendors still could not generate an income.

## Strategy

Collaborating with these vendors, Brahma created a personalised stadium food delivery service so that consumers could support these businesses from the comfort of their own home, accompanied with tailored visual identities, posters and social films.

## Credits

**Brand:**  
Brahma

**Location:**  
Brazil

**Category:**  
Alcoholic drinks

**Advertiser:**  
Anheuser-Busch InBev

**Agencies:**  
Africa São Paulo

# What does 2020 mean for purpose?

The most awarded work in 2020 was dominated by brand purpose campaigns – many of which were conceived and executed in a pre-COVID world.

One reaction to the crisis has been the re-evaluation of purpose by many brands during a time of heightened consumer sensitivity. In our [Future of Strategy research](#), conducted in the summer of 2020, respondents reflected on the acceleration of brands having to ‘properly do good in the world’, and of the hope that 2020 would reset purpose away from a vehicle for differentiation and back towards a brand’s ‘reasons to be’.

The pandemic, the BLM movement, periods of political unrest: these events have given brands the opportunity to respond positively, and those that have done it authentically have seen improved customer sentiment and retention.

But a believable purpose requires sustained commitment and **sustainable change** – something which the pandemic (hopefully) cannot drive. What it can, and has done is to elevate the social impact of businesses and provided an impetus to consider and reset their purpose.

## The most awarded work of 2020

*Approaches to purpose*

*Sample report  
This commentary  
appears in: [“Marketing  
through volatility”](#)*

### Volvo

One of the most-awarded creative campaigns of 2019/20 is Volvo’s E.V.A. Initiative, which is based around the automotive company’s brand purpose to make cars safe for all.

### Samsung

Samsung’s ‘BACK2LIFE’, taught lifesaving CPR to gamers through a partnership with an online gaming platform in China.

### AB InBev

To raise awareness of drink driving, AB InBev repainted the driver cabins of its vans with non-alcoholic brands to show that where there is a driver, there cannot be alcohol.

### IKEA

IKEA created functional add-ons for its furniture that solved different accessibility issues for disabled people, and made the designs available to 3D print.

# Media strategy through volatility

This report looks at how 2020 changed the way the industry works together in the context of changed media consumption habit, consumer behaviours and the rise of e-commerce and at-home media.

Learn from Always, Budweiser and Lifebuoy on being consistent in brand purpose in this new environment, and the role data excellence has to play in successful media strategies.

## The rise of at-home media

Humans spend roughly 40 percent of our waking lives using connected devices. That's according to Hootsuite & We Are Social's 2021 Global Digital Overview. That's a fairly mind-blowing stat given that connected devices only really became mainstream in around 2014.

The global COVID-19 pandemic had a significant, accelerating impact on the trend towards time online, but it was a trend that was gaining momentum in the years leading up to 2020 as social media platforms proliferated and internet penetration and speeds increased.

## 3 trends in at-home media *The impact of a year of COVID-19*

*Sample report:  
This current technology and  
media strategy  
through volatility?*

WARC

1

### Connected TV

With the population stuck at home, time spent with TV increased but as the pandemic continued, choice became the competitive advantage and connected TV (CTV) and streaming platforms saw huge uplifts in viewers as a result. Netflix's streaming revenue was up by 22% year on year in the last quarter of 2020.

2

### Importance of data

Data remain key in this new world. The rise of CTV means advances in measurement, and opportunities in targeting and addressability. Combine this with the massive increases in social media usage driven by the pandemic, plus the increased working from home, and our time spent 'connected' is nearing 12 hours per day for many.

3

### Changing media habits

Media habits throughout the day have changed: the commute has disappeared for some, and home office environments mean people have access and freedom to consume media when and where they like. For brands and media owners, discovering these new patterns of consumption, and deciding how permanent they are likely to be, has become a core focus.

*“That behaviour of convenience and choice that e-commerce gives will stay with the consumer and we will be closely monitoring and learning our way up.”*

AMIT THAKUR, MANAGING PARTNER, MINDSHARE VIETNAM



*“We believe that in the future brands will increasingly nurture data-informed ecosystems, bringing together e-commerce, CRM and content into one integrated offering.”*

CHRISSIE HANSON, CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, OMD

Sample report  
This case study  
appears in: [The most  
acclaimed work for  
media](#)

# The Last Dance Deep Fake

ESPN / State Farm

Maximising  
existing  
sponsorships with  
a co-branded  
commercial



## Objectives & insight

Following the pandemic outbreak, sports in the USA came to a standstill. As a result, ESPN brought the release of Michael Jordan documentary, The Last Dance, forward and needed to find new ways to create hype.

State Farm, the insurer, needed to find new ways to increase brand affinity without outspending its rivals and saw an opportunity to amplify its ESPN sponsorship.

## Strategy

Using facial mapping and voice engineering, a re-concepted co-branded spot was cleverly integrated into the premiere episode of The Last Dance.

The Last Dance premier was the top trending topic on Twitter. The co-branded spot received over 52m impressions and tripled brand mentions, making it an overnight viral success.

## Credits

**Brand:**  
ESPN / State Farm

**Location:**  
USA

**Category:**  
Media & publishing

**Advertiser:**  
The Walt Disney Company

**Agencies:**  
OMD New York

# Effectiveness through volatility

This report 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.

Learn from KFC, DB Breweries and Tesco on how they approached effectiveness through distinctiveness, authenticity and balanced, meticulously planned strategies.

Sample report  
This opinion piece  
appears in:  
[‘Effectiveness through  
volatility’](#)

## Pandemic positives and ‘The Overview Effect’



**Karen Crum, Global Brand  
Strategy Director, McCann /  
McCann Worldgroup**

**I’ve always been fascinated by ‘The Overview Effect’. It was a term coined in the 1970s by author Frank White to try and explain the profound cognitive shift that happens when astronauts first see Earth from space.**

In the early Apollo missions, the focus was on the target ahead - reaching the stars; and landing on the moon. No one was thinking much about looking back at Earth, or the impact that might have on the astronauts. But the sentiment shared by Edgar Mitchell, an astronaut on the Apollo 14 Mission, is echoed by the majority of astronauts: “You develop an instant global consciousness, a people orientation, an intense dissatisfaction with the state of the world, and a compulsion to do something about it.”

For me, this has been the main pandemic positive – we all collectively experienced our own version of The Overview Effect. Only we didn’t have to go into space. But we were forced to see

the bigger picture. Of how so many of the systems that humans rely on are not-fit-for-purpose. The stark realities of how life for too many people means being set-up to fail, instead of set-up to succeed. The inequalities and discrimination that are baked into everyday life – 26% of people globally believe that social divides are a worse threat than Covid, and 1/3 people say that Covid has only emphasised existing inequalities.

It’s been a huge reminder of how much we want to protect people’s lives, livelihoods, and the beautiful planet we all share. Fundamentally, we saw the need for renewal, not for a ‘new normal’. Because the future must hold something new and better, rather than a return to a pre-crisis stasis.

The task now is to hold each other to account. For agencies and brands to remember the shared ambition and renewed focus that 2020 gave us. We can and must do better. In fact, we have a responsibility to *make* it



“We have a responsibility as a collective to show the power and impact of creative thinking”

better, to fuel renewal for all. We know how powerful brands are, and we know how much people look to them as beacons of change, of how they are increasingly stepping in and becoming the systems we rely upon.

**The Effectiveness community (and therefore the awards industry) can be a huge catalyst in spearheading the renewal.**

We can help set the benchmarks for the change we want to see. Encouraging and shining a light on work that is proven to make societal change, that delivers on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whilst moving the business forward. Demanding ideas from each other that impact and change culture; that help brands earn a meaningful role in people's lives by proving how they actively, and measurably, make people's lives healthier, happier, safer, more rewarding and full of joy.

Looking back at 2020, I can't think of any other time in marketing (or in living memory)

when everyone had the same brief. But there was a four to five months period of 2020 where we were all working to the same brief. And the focus was about immediate short-term solutions to get us through the next few days, weeks, months etc. Rightfully so, the idea of 'awards' wasn't at the front of everyone's mind. Neither was perfection or excellence. It was about getting solutions out that were 'good enough to go'. If they worked, great; if they didn't, we went again and tried to learn as quickly as possible from failure.

Our [Truth Central study](#) showed that 1/5 people were inspired by the creative responses to the pandemic that they had seen by brands, governments and institutions in the first months, but this dropped to 1/8 as the months rolled on. Brands that seemed to navigate it well knew who they were – they were clear on their brand's purpose and knew how to earn a meaningful role in their customers' lives. They had a big head-start on knowing where and how they

needed to help.

Looking forward, I do think awards and award shows are always going to be really important for the creative industry. They give airtime and focus to the best examples of what creative minds can do when faced with a really hard problem to solve.

**We have a responsibility as a collective to show the power and impact of creative thinking.**

Arguably, maybe we'll need them to play an even bigger role if we want to show the world the impact that great creative ideas can have at changing the status quo?

I'm excited to see what comes next from getting businesses and brands to focus on renewal. And I'm optimistic that because of this, we'll see an emergence of ground-breaking ideas and brand strategies, designed to solve the 'head on fire' problems that the world and people are facing.

*Sample report  
This case study  
appears in 'The most  
awarded work for  
effectiveness'*

# Vorsprung durch Technik over four decades

Audi

Creating long-term value and increasing sales with the power of Vorsprung durch Technik



## Campaign summary

As early as 1982, Audi knew it needed to increase sales efficiently by giving the brand a fresh vision to justify the higher price and entice the exclusive prestige audience.

Audi re-ignited its communications by elevating its Vorsprung durch Technik belief externally, seducing new drivers with its more modern, witty approach to success and behaved like a progressive luxury brand, focusing on its shiniest models.

Building on this, it strengthened its distinct tone of voice by creating advertisements with a new set of 'progressive premium' behaviours for automotive storytelling, tailoring it to each model to send the right message.

As a result, there has been an estimated incremental revenue of £23.9-31.8bn from 1982-2019 and Audi increased its market share by a factor of 5, growing 7.6x faster than the UK car market.

## Credits

**Brand:**  
Audi

**Location:**  
UK

**Category:**  
Automotive

**Advertiser:**  
Volkswagen Group

**Agencies:**  
BBH London

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# About the WARC Rankings

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

## 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

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