

Warc releases 2020 Media Strategy Report

Warc released its 2020 Media Strategy Report, highlighting key insights and trends for effective media strategies, with lessons drawn from the shortlisted and winning papers of the global Warc Media Awards.



Lucy Aitken, managing editor, Case Studies, Warc.

The insights are drawn from the winners of the Warc Media Awards 2019, a global case study competition rewarding comms planning that has made a positive impact on business results.

Following an analysis of the shortlisted and winning entries across the four categories - Effective Channel Integration, Effective Use of Tech, Effective Use of Partnerships and Sponsorships, and Best Use of Data - the key insights are:

1. Influencers are becoming a more trusted component in the media mix

Brands are turning to micro-influencers in particular, combining their followers to achieve further reach. The collective clout of credible influencers and what they can bring to the mix is increasing: brands are expected to spend \$10bn globally on influencer marketing in 2020, according to Mediakix. What's more, as many people across the globe are now based entirely at home, there's been the emergence of what the Financial Times has dubbed the 'lockdown celebrity', influencers in relevant areas such as fitness, education and food preparation.

2. AI is being deployed in different ways that show off its range and flexibility

Artificial Intelligence has progressed beyond being a bolt-on or a gimmick designed to generate PR, and instead is at the core of transformational ideas that are firmly rooted in commercial objectives. Data is key to encouraging behaviour change.

Among this year's winners were three stand-out uses of AI: a wicket predictor that enhanced the viewing experience of cricket fans in Australia, a hands-free smart speaker to help new parents in China and a video-insertion tool to embed ads

within a popular Hong Kong sitcom.

3. Brands are exploring innovative angles and approaches when leveraging passion points such as sport and music

Audiences are receptive to original ways that brands choose to engage with them. Connecting with people through their passion points can be a useful way to hit the right target audience at a time when they are already highly engaged.

Yet effectiveness remains a tricky area. Sport is a popular passion point, though many marketers admit to being uncertain about its effectiveness: \$666bn is invested annually in sports sponsorship, yet in a recent Kantar study, 44% of marketers admitted that it was one of their least understood channels in terms of ROI.

Other areas which were popular among the winning papers included gaming, cycling and running. This year, of course, sponsorship will also bear huge losses because of Covid-19.

4. A combination of innovative and creative touchpoints can cut through and engage with audiences at all points throughout the customer journey

Approaching touchpoints in a lateral way that considers the customer journey beyond traditional media can be a highly effective way to capture attention.

Among this year's winners were several brands that found highly original and engaging touchpoints to communicate their message more powerfully: for its World Without Walls campaign, Middle Eastern children clothes retailer Babyshop invested in a song, a children's book and immersive in-store experiences. Chocolate bar Oh Henry! targeted a new audience by using macro-influencers married with a pop-up store; and no-frills New Zealand telco Skinny, wrapped convenience stores in Skinny branding.

Lucy Aitken, managing editor, Case Studies, Warc, says:

“ Channel selection is one of the most demanding aspects of campaign building. At a time when many countries are locked down and brands all over the world are rethinking their marketing activity, unprecedented levels of agility are currently required to adapt to constant change, while achieving an appropriate balance between performance marketing and brand-building continues to challenge marketers. ”

"We hope that the insights outlined in our Media Strategy Report 2020 will provide some guidance to media planners and strategists during these unprecedented times."

The report, available to Warc subscribers on [the website](#), includes an exploration of the four themes, summaries of the winning case studies, data and infographics, as well as key takeaways and what these mean for brands, media owners and agencies.

The Warc Media Awards examine the insight, strategy and analytics that power effective media investment. They are free to enter and there is a \$40,000 prize fund for the top winning papers. Case studies are welcomed from any territory or discipline. The Warc Media Awards 2021 will launch in early May and close in late September.

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