



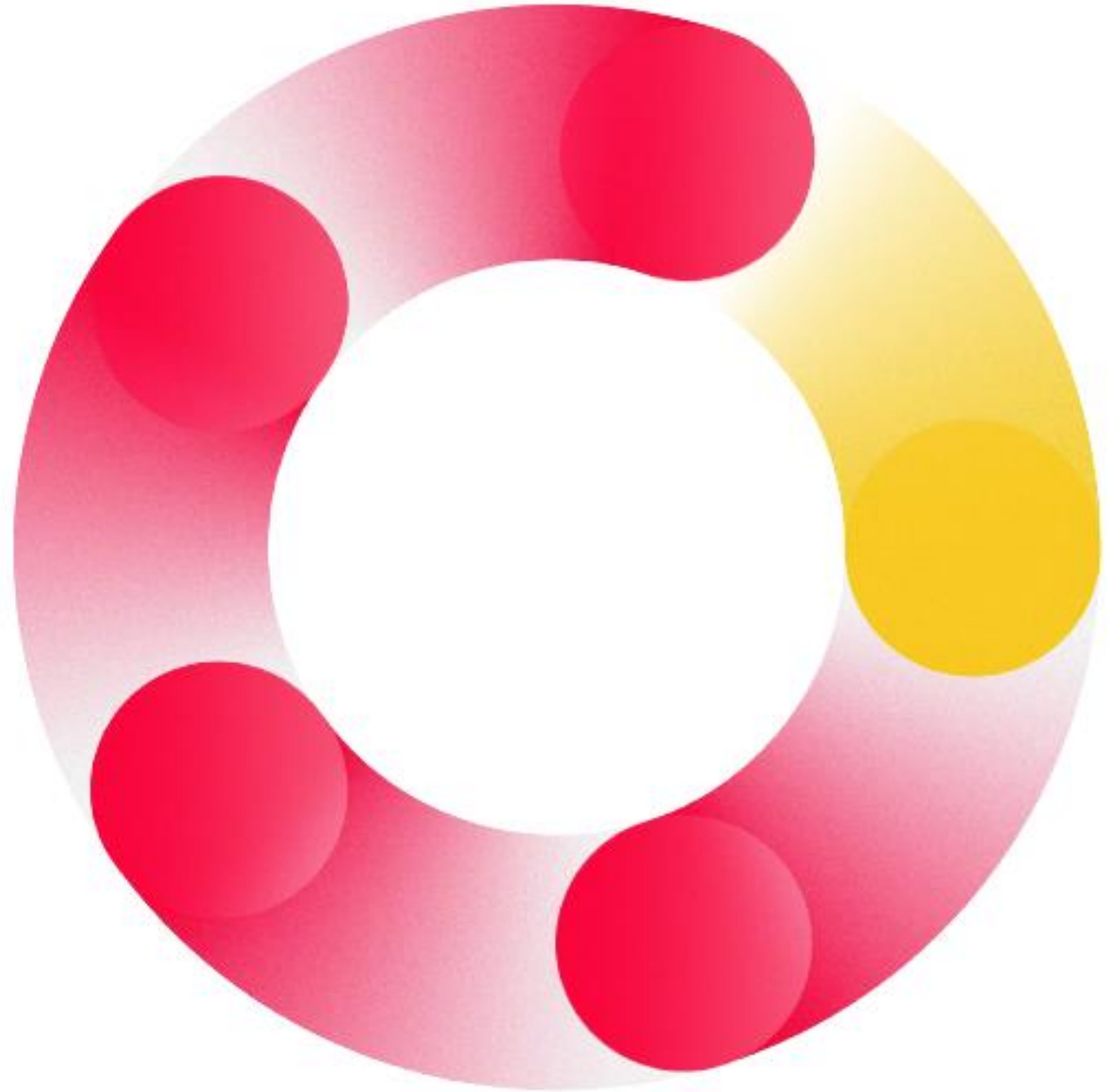
World Federation  
of Advertisers

# Marketer of the Future

Survey results: Middle East

In partnership with

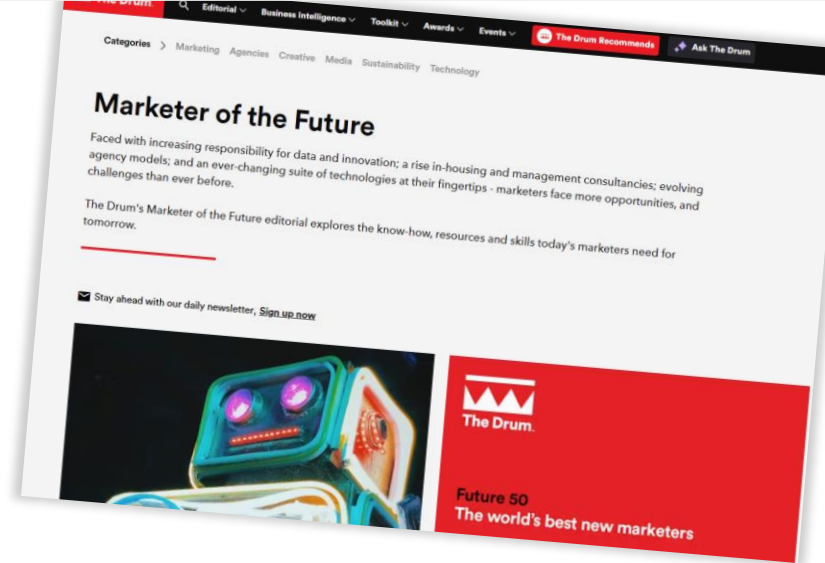
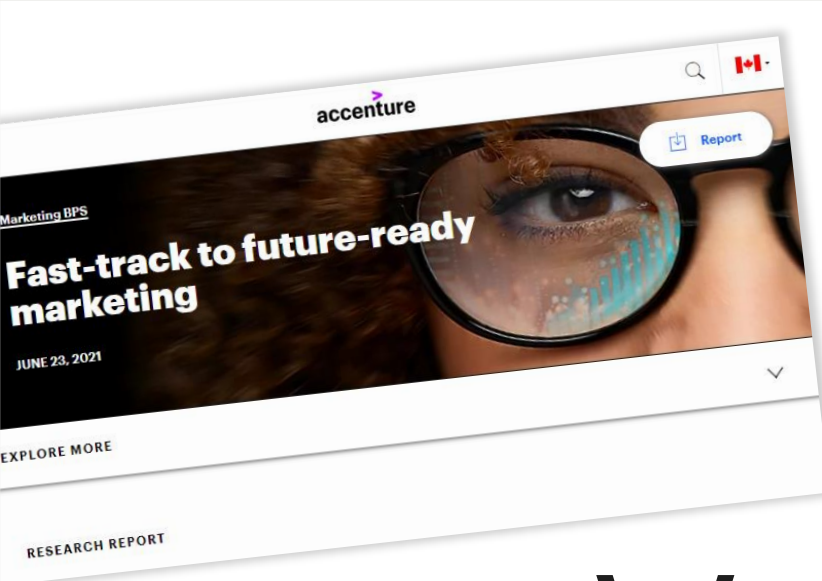
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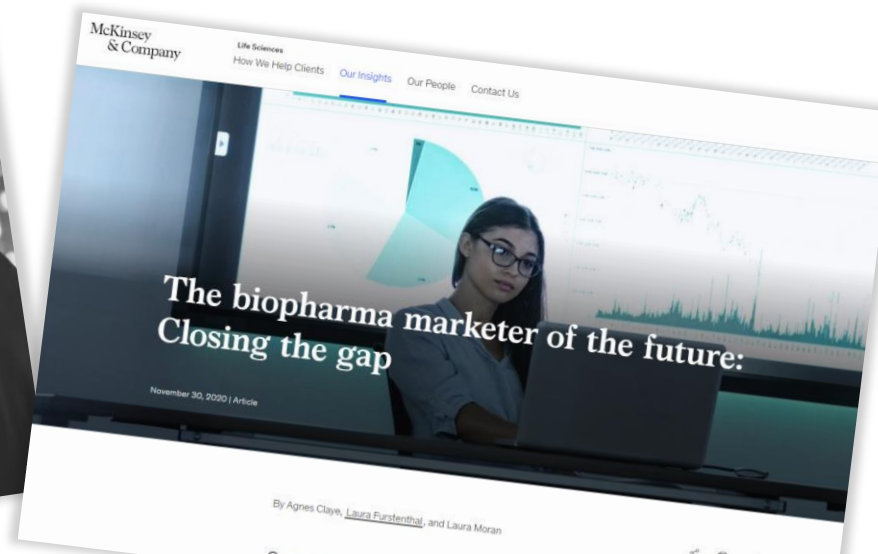
April 2025



# Introducing this report



# We're conscious this is a crowded space



# Global & local

600 CMOs & leaders

All regions & sectors

# Brand owners

Leader characteristics

Marketing capabilities & skills

Change enablers

# Leaders

Focus on the over-performers

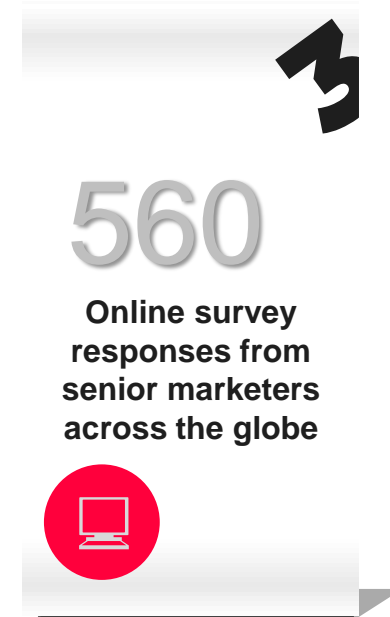
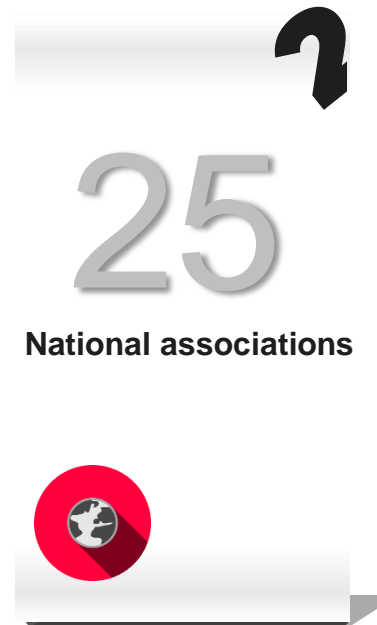
Thank you to the 25 National Advertiser associations who made this project possible



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## Our approach

In partnership with 25 of our National Association members and [Oxford](#), WFA conducted a new research to help explore these challenges and how to best meet them:



*The findings in this report highlight what CMOs and their teams need to be mindful of, and how the WFA plans to help the industry going forward*



# Contributors



**Alberto Hernandez**  
Global Chief Growth Officer



**Allyson Witherspoon**  
Chief Marketing Officer



**Tamara Rogers**  
Chief Marketing Officer



**Lex Bradshaw-Zanger**  
Chief Digital & Marketing Officer,  
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**Martin Renaud**  
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General Manager Brand, Insights  
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Global Chief Marketing Officer



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Officer



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**Becky Verano**  
(Former) VP Global Marketing  
Operations and Capabilities



**Sir John Hegarty**  
Co-founder & Creative Director



**David Jones**  
Founder



**Jon Williams**  
Founder and CEO



**Jenny Rooney**  
Chief Brand &  
Community Officer



**Sophia Angelis**  
(Former) SVP Marketing Excellence



**Irina Rodina**  
SVP Marketing Strategy  
and Operations



**Alyssa Fenoglio**  
VP, Global Head of Digital  
Commercial

# The context

*Extracts from the Global report\**



**\* Download the full report and learn more at:**  
[www.marketerofthefuture.org/](http://www.marketerofthefuture.org/)

# Marketer of the Future

A diagram with three curved lines branching downwards from the title 'Marketer of the Future' to three separate text blocks. The first block on the left is connected by a line curving to the left, the middle block by a straight vertical line, and the right block by a line curving to the right.

What **challenges**  
marketing leaders  
face

What sets  
**top-performing**  
companies apart

How to **future-proof**  
your teams and  
strategies





**Leaders**

**Lagging**

- Optimistic about the future
- Cross-functional and c-suite influence
- Marketing fundamentals and building new
- Over-performing on growth

**Leaders**

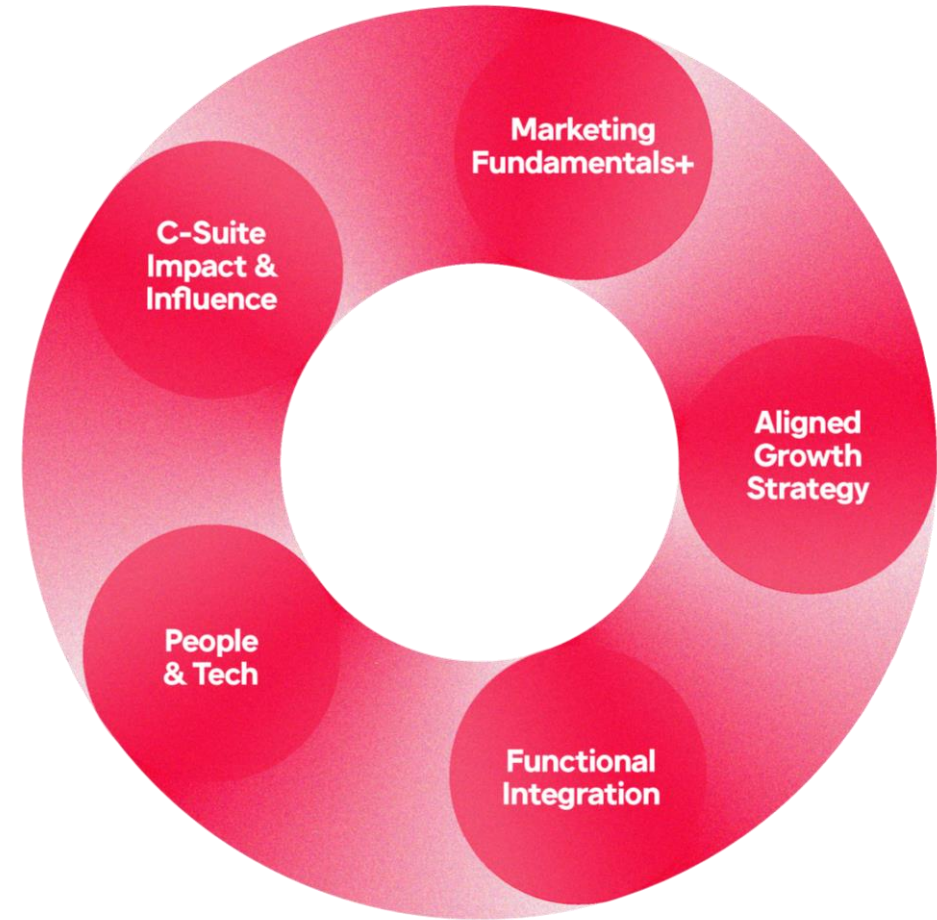
- ⬅ More pessimistic, seeking resilience
- ⬅ Trying to balance priorities
- ⬅ Having to re-focus on the marketing foundations
- ⬅ Struggling for growth vs. peers

**Lagging**

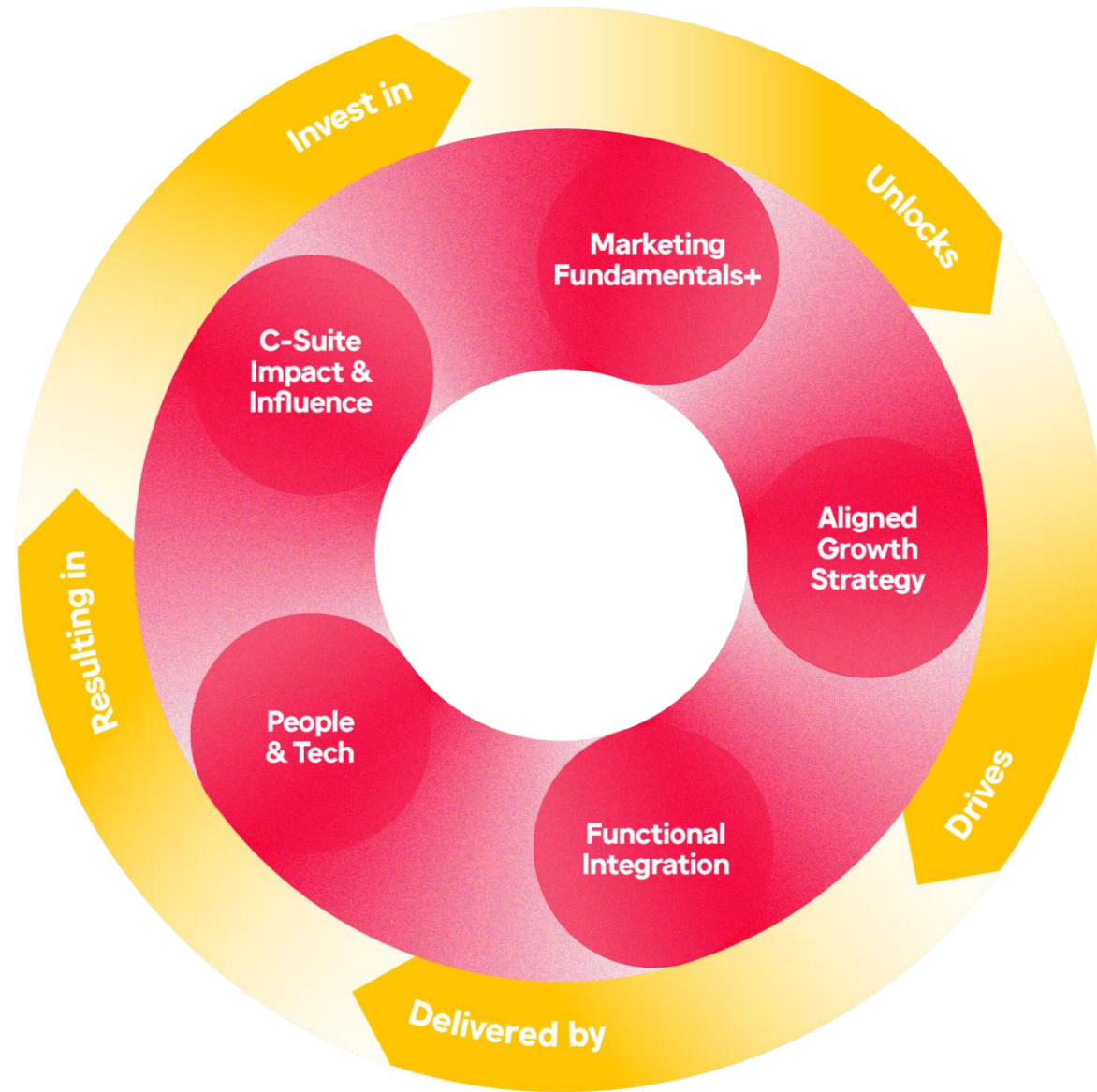
A large, dark red number '5' is centered in the background of the slide.

These are the 5 things that  
the Leaders do better

# Marketer of the Future **DRIVERS**



# Marketer of the Future **FLYWHEEL EFFECT**





**“The fundamentals of marketing have remained true for decades. That said, evolving the skills, tools, and the way in which businesses adapt the operations behind the fundamentals is critical. Only then can the full potential of brands be unleashed and opportunities for growth unlocked.”**

**Cristina Diezhandino,**  
Chief Marketing Officer, Diageo



# The Marketer of the Future

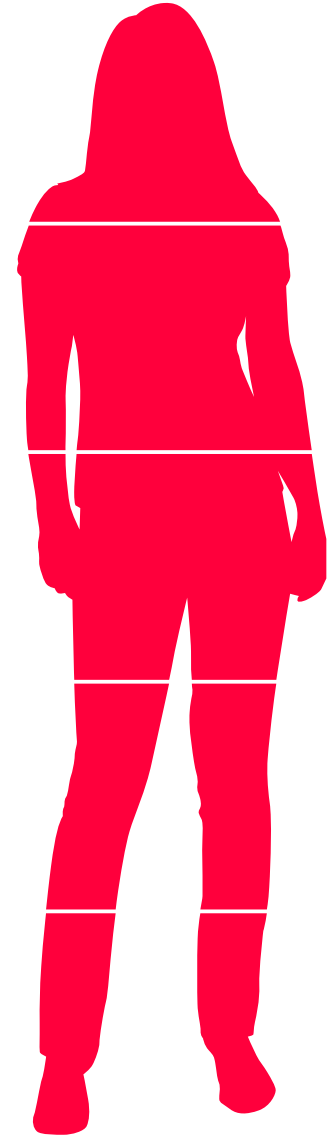
**Masters the marketing fundamentals**

**Leads on growth**  
76% have a commercial mindset

**Breaks down silos**  
Leaders over-index in terms of soft skills

**Skills and decisions enhanced by AI**  
76% of our marketing leaders strong in digital literacy

**Leverages impact for influence**  
Leaders over-index on performance management (assessing, taking action)



# Watch the key highlights from the global report in **this short video**

**The Marketer of the Future  
is coming...**



*(Click the image to play the video)*



# **Zoom in: Middle East**



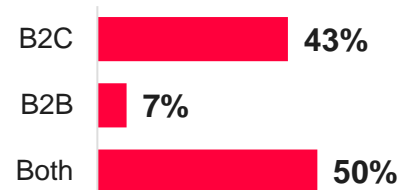
# Who did we interview



## By role



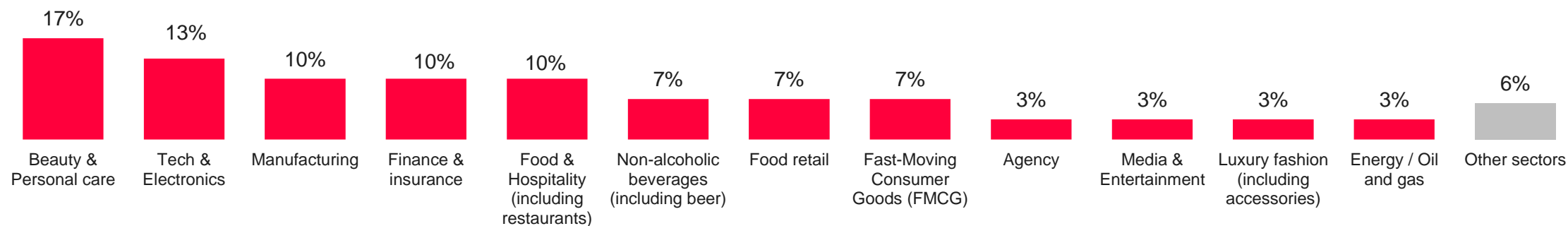
## By business focus



## By remit



## By sector





# How to read the norms



This report illustrates the results at 2 levels:

- Region deep-dive (🇸🇦🇹🇷): *includes senior marketers in GCC and Turkey*
- Global norms\* (🌍)

## How are the differences highlighted?

Where the results in Middle East are statistically significant higher/ lower than Global norms, the % is highlighted by arrows, as following:  Arrows indicate a significantly higher / lower value than norms (at Confidence interval 95%)

Specifically...



Light blue arrows indicate a value higher / lower value than **Global** norm



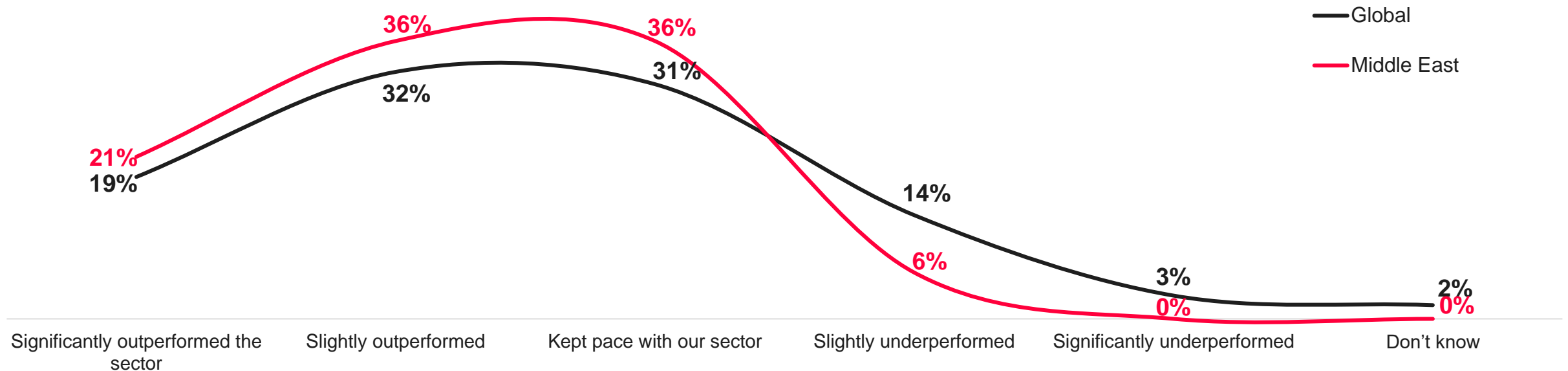
# 1 The current Marketing landscape

*What is happening now? Where does Marketing stand today?*

# Benchmarking Marketing performance

A greater proportion of marketers in Middle East report **outperforming the sector** compared to the global average (58% vs 51%), indicating a stronger self-assessment as compared to the other regions.

While most regions have kept pace with or slightly outperformed their sector, in Middle East, **very few report underperforming**, reflecting an overall positive outlook on the companies' performance.



D3: Thinking about the competition in your organisation's primary sector over the last year, how would you rate your company's performance? (single answer on a 5-point scale)

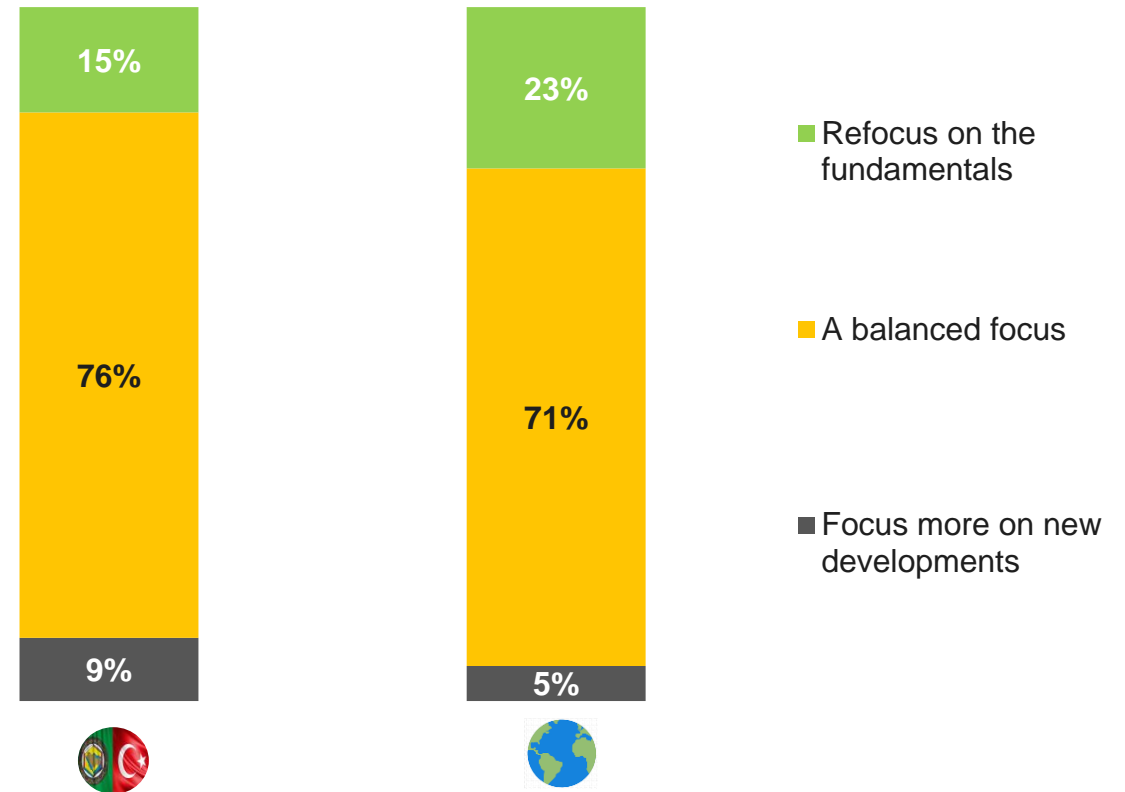
**Source:** WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); **Global sample** = 560, **Middle East** = 33 marketers

# Striking the right balance: Marketing's future focus

Most respondents in the Middle East (76%) **prefer a balanced focus**, with only a small percentage (15%) suggesting a **strong inclination toward maintaining current practices** while still recognizing the need for fundamental strengthening.

On a global scale, the balance remains the most popular approach, with 71% of respondents opting for a balanced focus. However, there is a higher tendency (23%) to refocus on the fundamentals compared to Middle East, reflecting perhaps a more cautious or corrective approach.

Interestingly, 9% in the Middle East chose to focus more on new developments, indicating a **stronger inclination towards innovation and growth**, whereas worldwide, only 5% feel the focus should be shifted to new developments.



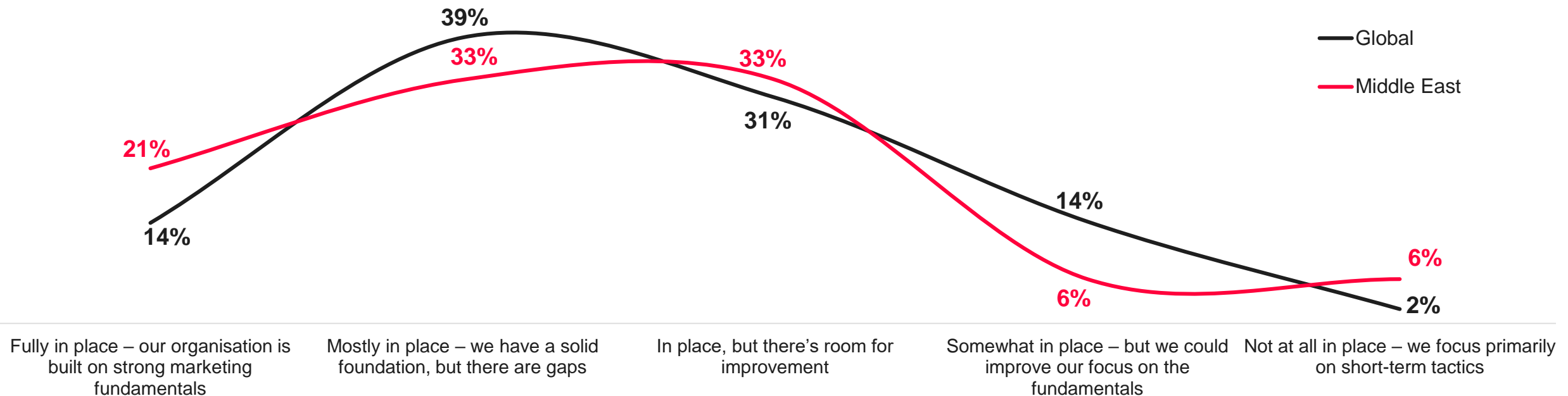
C2: How important is it for your organisation to have strong marketing fundamentals e.g., brand building, strategy, creative? (single answer)

**Source:** WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); **Global sample** = 560, **Middle East** = 33 marketers

# The state of Marketing fundamentals

The Middle East demonstrates a similar alignment with global trends in marketing fundamentals, with one-third acknowledging room for improvement, particularly in establishing a strong foundation (33% in the Middle East). Another 33% believe they have a solid foundation but still identify some gaps.

21% of the interviewed marketers in Middle East report having a **fully solid foundation**, surpassing the global level.



C3: To what extent does your organisation currently have marketing fundamentals (e.g., brand building, strategy, creative) in place? (single answer on a 5-point scale)

Source: WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); Global sample = 560, Middle East = 33 marketers





# 2 Shaping the future of Marketing

*How will the role of Marketing evolve? What forces will drive change?*

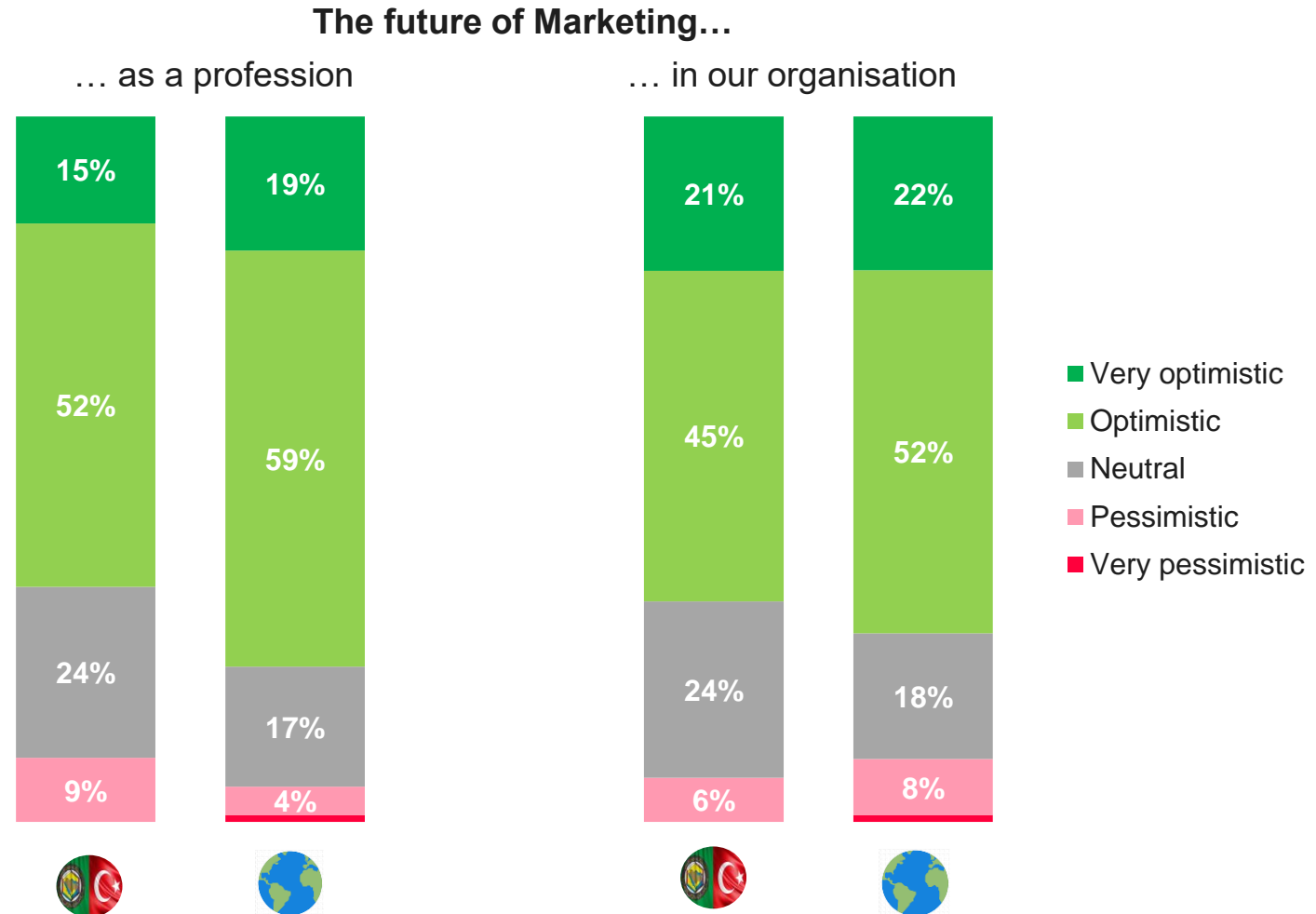
# How optimistic are the Middle Eastern marketers about the future of Marketing?

Overall, a strong, positive outlook towards Marketing as a profession and as a function within organisations across Middle East and globally is noticed.

Around **2 out of 3 senior marketers in Middle East are optimistic**, suggesting confidence in industry growth and innovation.

Overall, the global perspective is more optimistic, while in Middle East, marketers are also hopeful, with some remaining neutral or even slightly pessimistic, indicating some uncertainty about how Marketing teams will navigate future challenges.

Pessimism is minimal across regions.



B1: How do you feel about the future of marketing as a profession? (single answer)

B2: And how do you feel about the future of marketing in your organisation over the next 5 years? (single answer)

**Source:** WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); **Global sample** = 560, **Middle East** = 33 marketers

# Challenges and opportunities expected to grow in the next 5 years

Middle East perceives **tech & data** and **sustainability** (90%) as the most significant shifts in marketing, surpassing global benchmark (67%), indicating a stronger regional emphasis on **integrating sustainable practices** into marketing strategies.

Constant complexity (87%) and economic uncertainty (84%) also rank high in Middle East, in line with their global peers.

There is a stronger focus on retail power (84%) in Middle East, reflecting the region's **strong focus on optimizing the retail experience** and leveraging local market dynamics to drive growth and consumer engagement.

Interestingly, Middle Eastern marketers seem to **place less priority on integrating AI**, compared to their global counterparts. This suggests a more measured pace in embracing AI-driven innovations within the region.

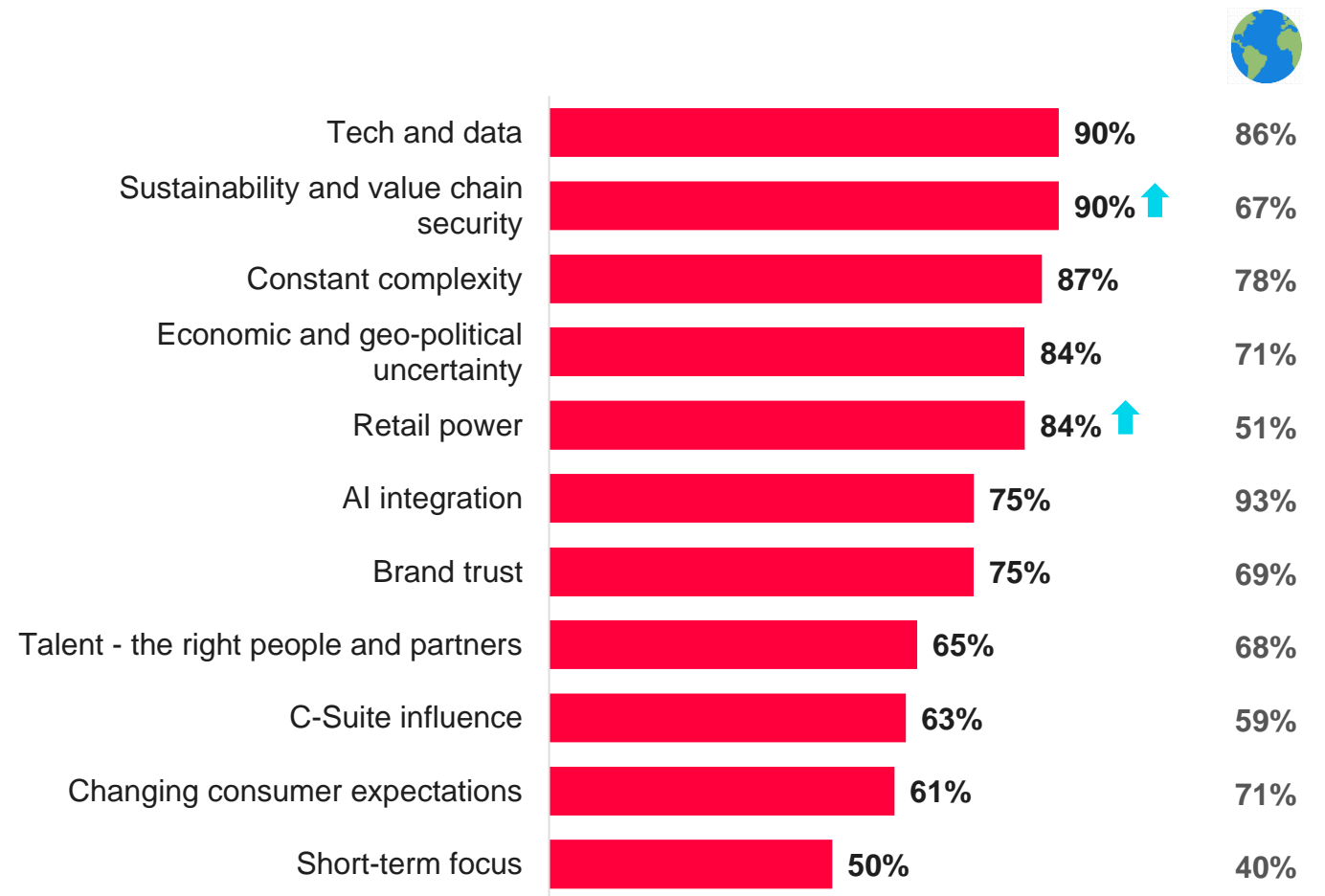


Chart shows Top 2 Boxes % ("More Important" + "Considerably more important")

C1: How do you think the importance of the following challenges and opportunities will change over the next 5 years? (single answer on a 4 points scale)

Source: WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); Global sample = 560, Middle East = 33 marketers

# If everything's important, nothing is: The challenge of prioritising

All Middle Eastern respondents rate **alignment, skills building, balancing priorities and data-driven decision making** as critical, in line with the global average (96-99%), indicating a strong regional commitment to strategic coherence and continuous improvement in marketing capabilities.

Generally, there is broad agreement across Middle East and other regions on the importance of resilience, automation, adaptability and experimentation.

With **all factors rated highly**, there is a **challenge in distinguishing what truly drives competitive advantage**, suggesting the **need for clearer strategic focus**.



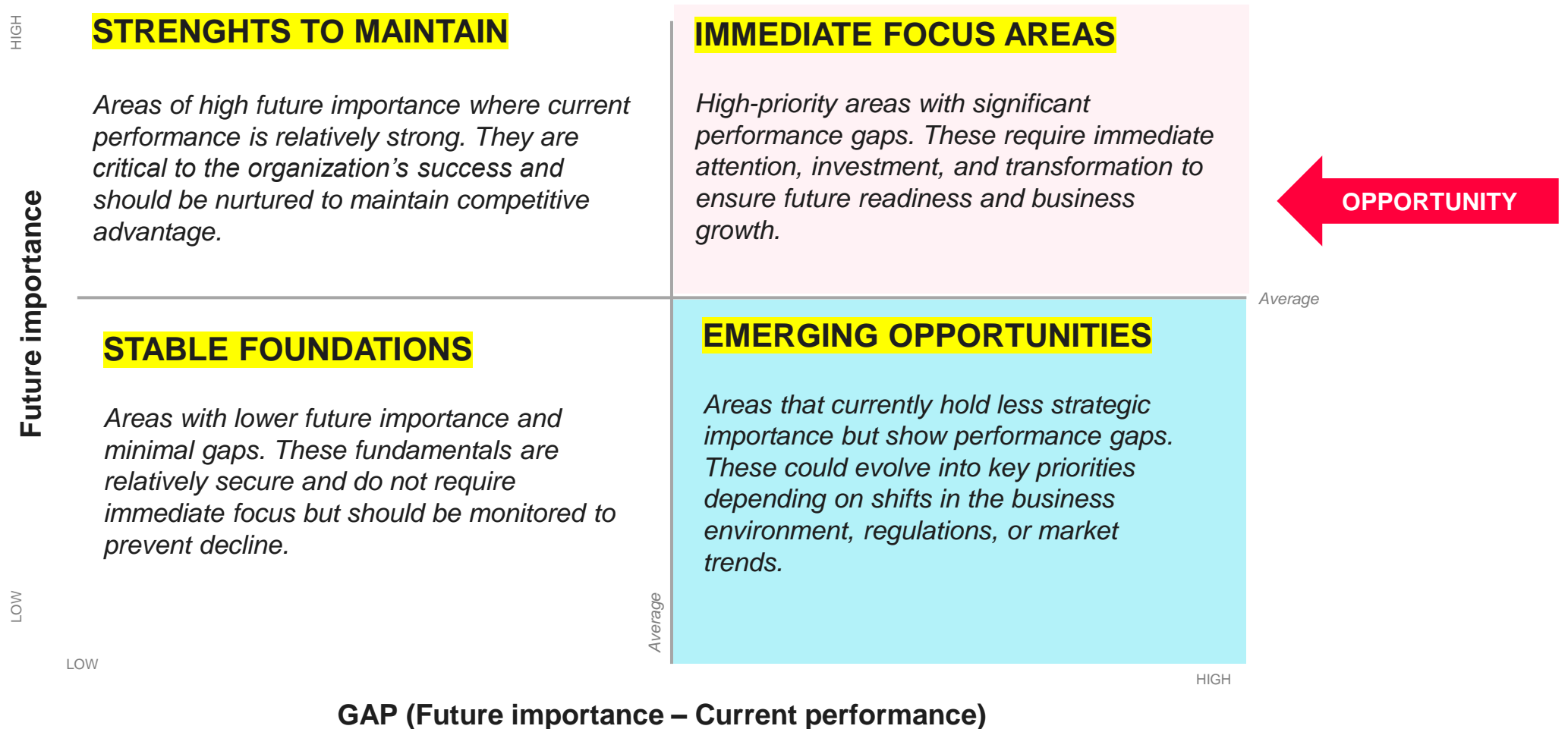
Chart shows Top 2 Boxes % ("Important" + "Extremely important")

D1: How important are the following factors in driving future change in your organisation? (single answer on a 4 points scale)

**Source:** WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); **Global sample** = 560, **Middle East** = 33 marketers

# Bridging the gaps: The role of leadership & skills in transformation

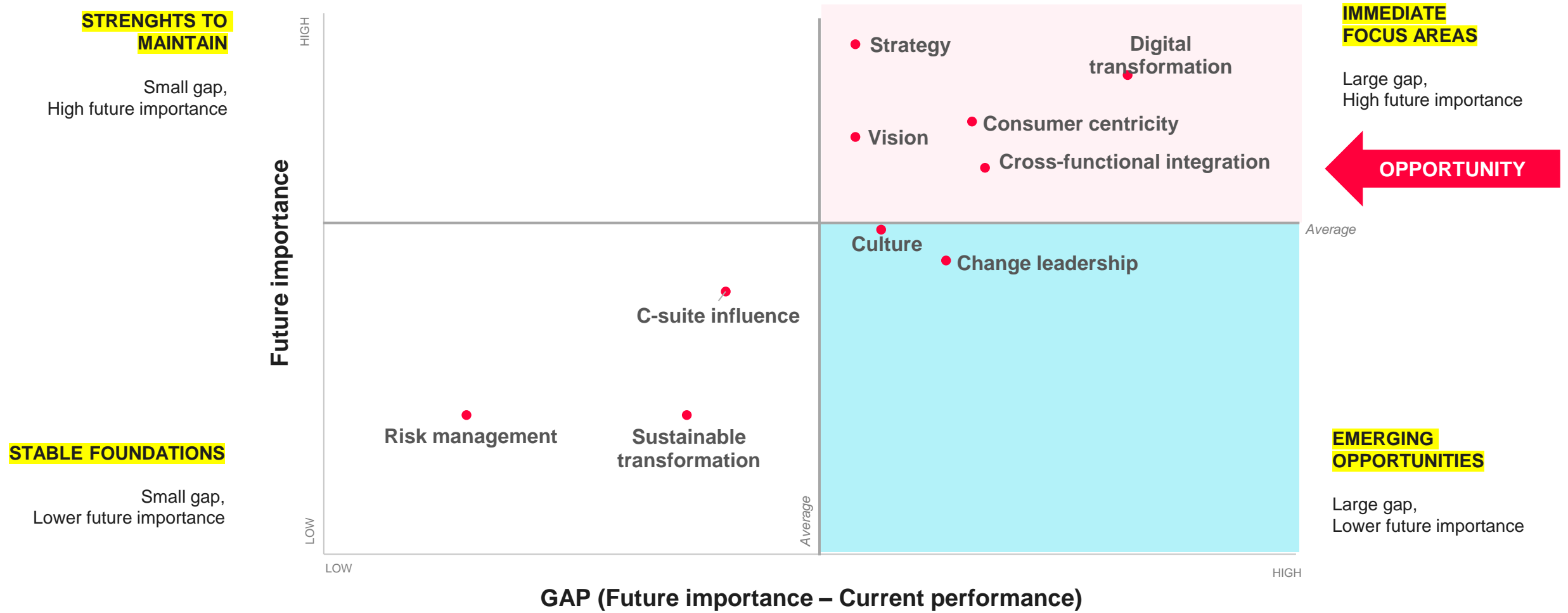
## How to read







# Bridging the gaps: The CMO - Marketing leadership characteristics

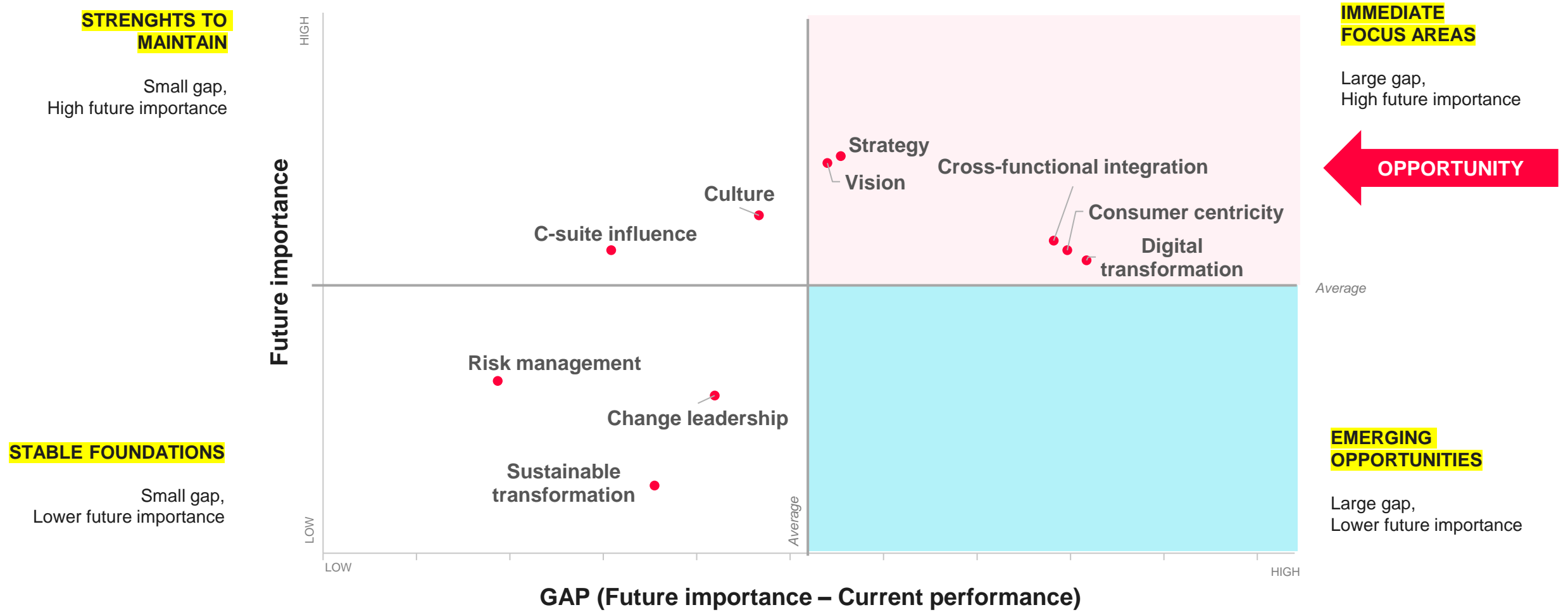


D2a: How important will the following factors be in driving future change in your organisation, and how well are they currently in place? (single answer on a 5-point scale)

**Source:** WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); **Global sample** = 560 marketers



# Bridging the gaps: The CMO - Marketing leadership characteristics

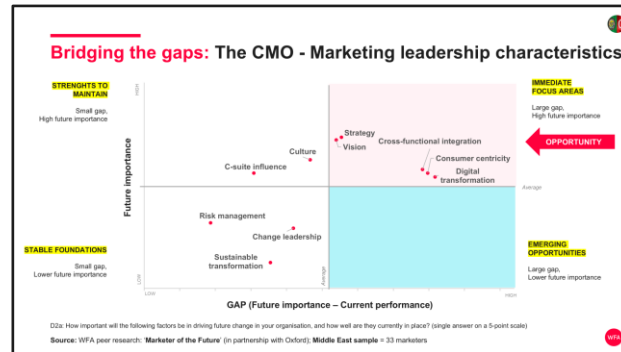


D2a: How important will the following factors be in driving future change in your organisation, and how well are they currently in place? (single answer on a 5-point scale)

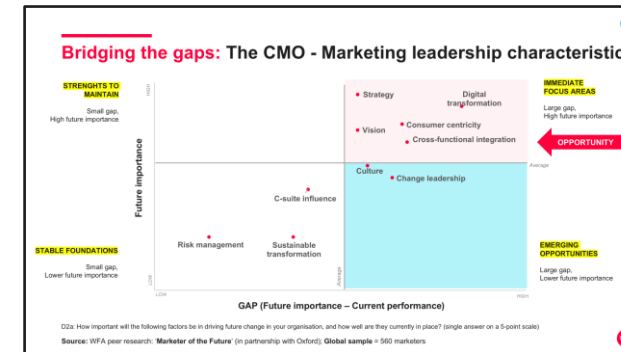
**Source:** WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); **Middle East sample** = 33 marketers

# Gap analysis – Marketing leadership - learnings for Middle East

The CMO – Middle East



The CMO – Global benchmark



## Where does Middle East stand versus Global norms?

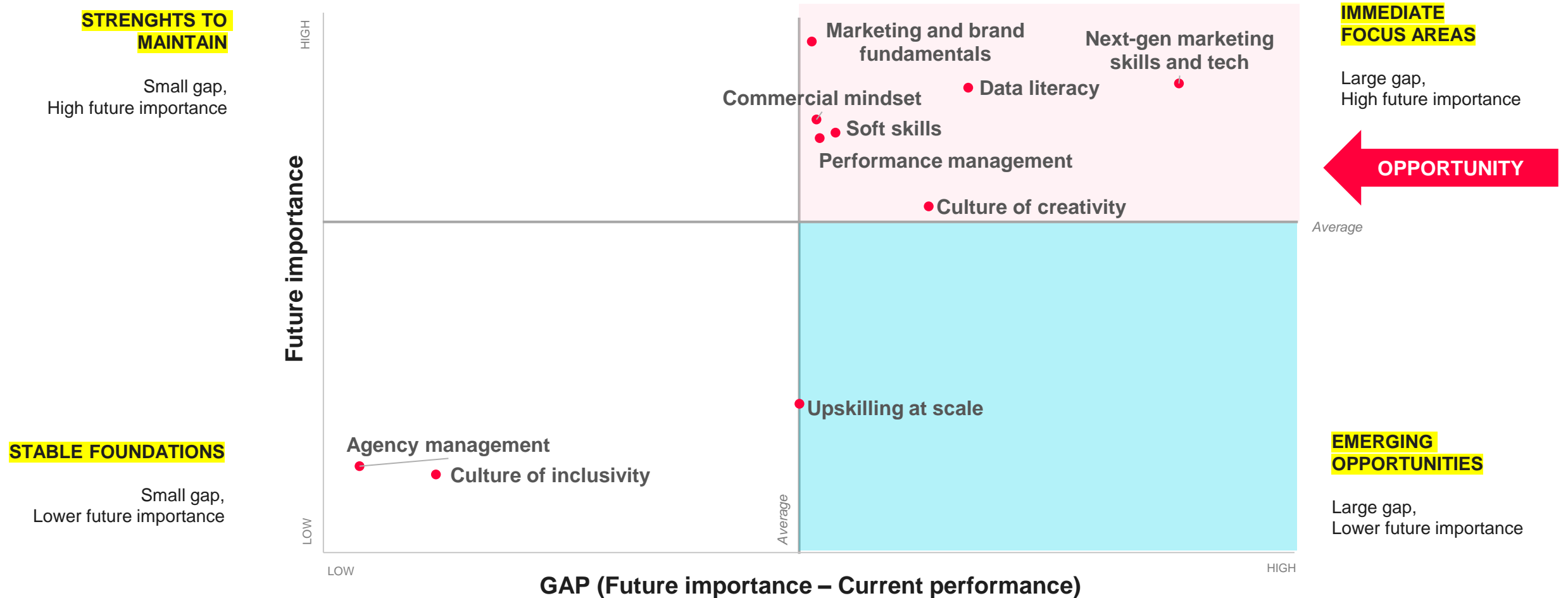
Senior marketers from Middle East agree that, currently, **the key areas that require immediate attention & investment** are on:

- **Digital transformation, cross-functional integration and consumer centricity** → *in line with the global trends*
- Additionally, **strategy and vision** are important for Middle East, **revealing significant gaps in current performance** → *similarly to other regions*

Whilst **culture** and **change leadership** are considered emerging opportunities globally, Middle East reports closer performance to their level of expectations on these aspects.



# Bridging the gaps: Marketing teams – Skills and culture

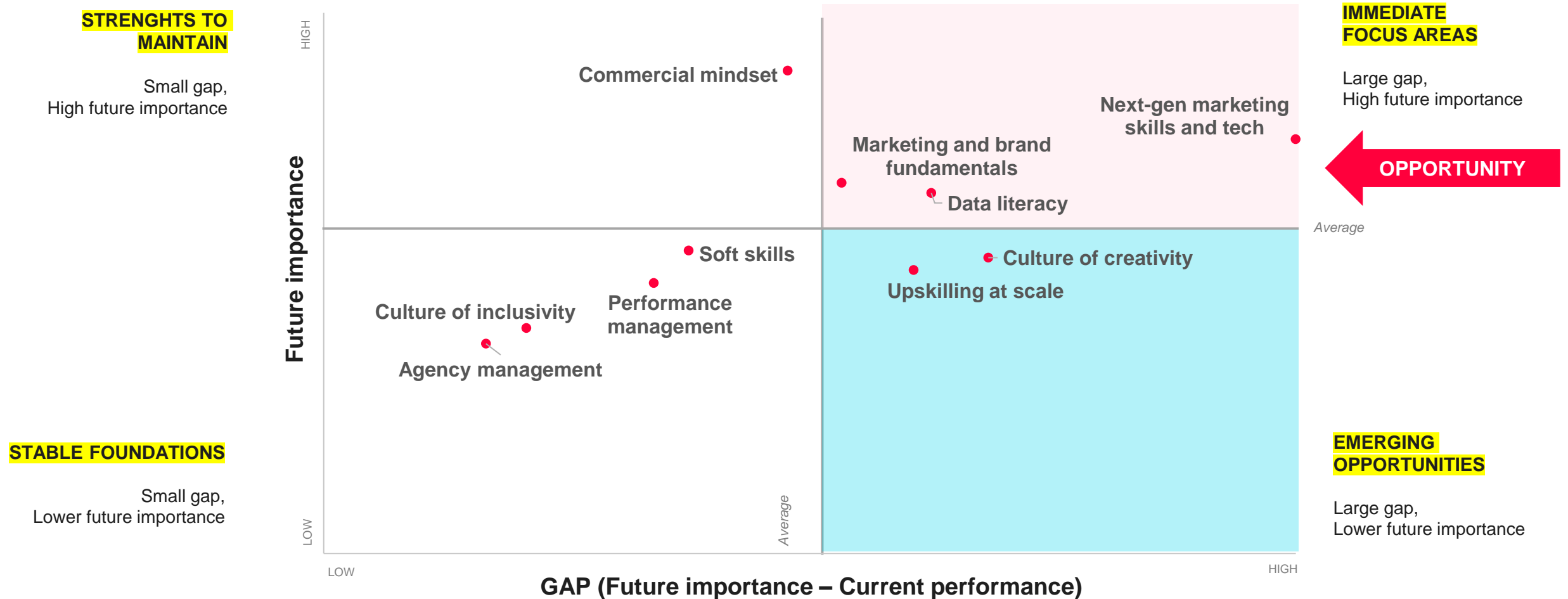


D2b: How important will the following factors be in driving future change in your organisation, and how well are they currently in place? (single answer on a 5-point scale)

**Source:** WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); **Global sample** = 560 marketers



# Bridging the gaps: Marketing teams – Skills and culture

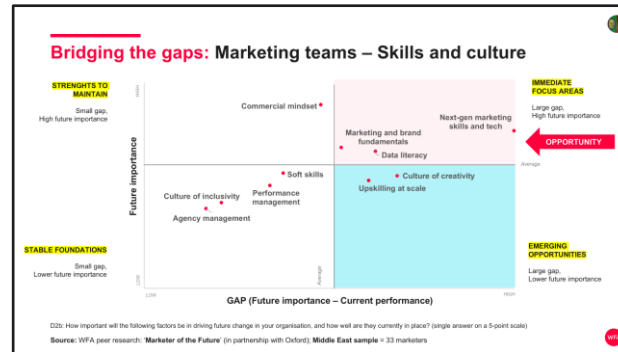


D2b: How important will the following factors be in driving future change in your organisation, and how well are they currently in place? (single answer on a 5-point scale)

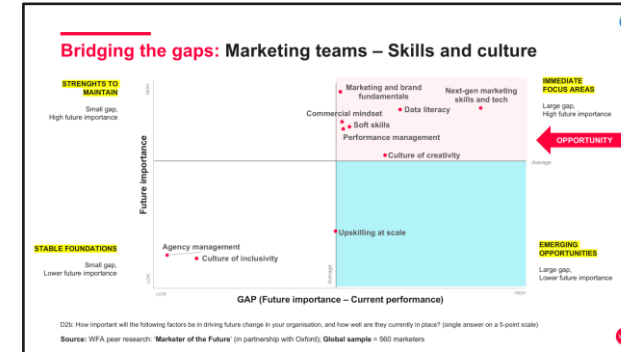
**Source:** WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); **Middle East sample** = 33 marketers

# Gap analysis – Skills and culture - learnings for Middle East

Skills and culture – Middle East



Skills and culture – Global benchmark



## Where does Middle East stand versus Global norms?

In terms of skills and culture, senior marketers from Middle East **emphasize the importance** of:

- **Next-gen marketing skills, technology, data literacy and marketing & brand fundamentals** → aligning with the global trends.
- Additionally, **creativity and upskilling** are also emerging opportunities in driving future change in organisations from Middle East.

Middle East reports higher confidence in its **commercial mindset** and **performance management**, while globally, these areas are considered critical and in need of immediate attention.

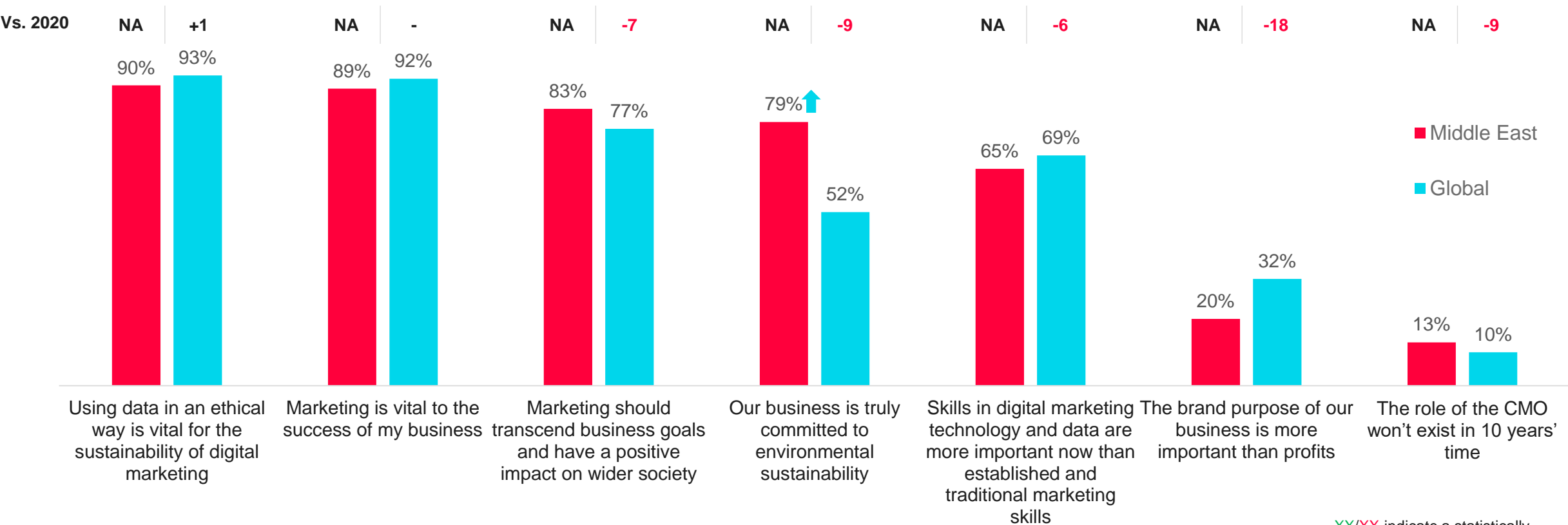
# **3 The future of Marketing: Opportunities & innovations**

*Where is Marketing headed? What will shape its future?*



# Shifting priorities in Marketing: less focus on social impact

Generally, Middle Eastern senior marketers are closely aligned with global trends regarding marketing and their role. Globally, there has been a noticeable decline in the perception of businesses' social impact since 2020, whereas marketers in the Middle East demonstrate a **stronger commitment to environmental sustainability**.



D4: Thinking generally about marketing and your role, to what extent do you agree with the following? (single answer on a 5-point scale)  
**Source:** WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); **Global sample** = 560, **Middle East** = 33 marketers

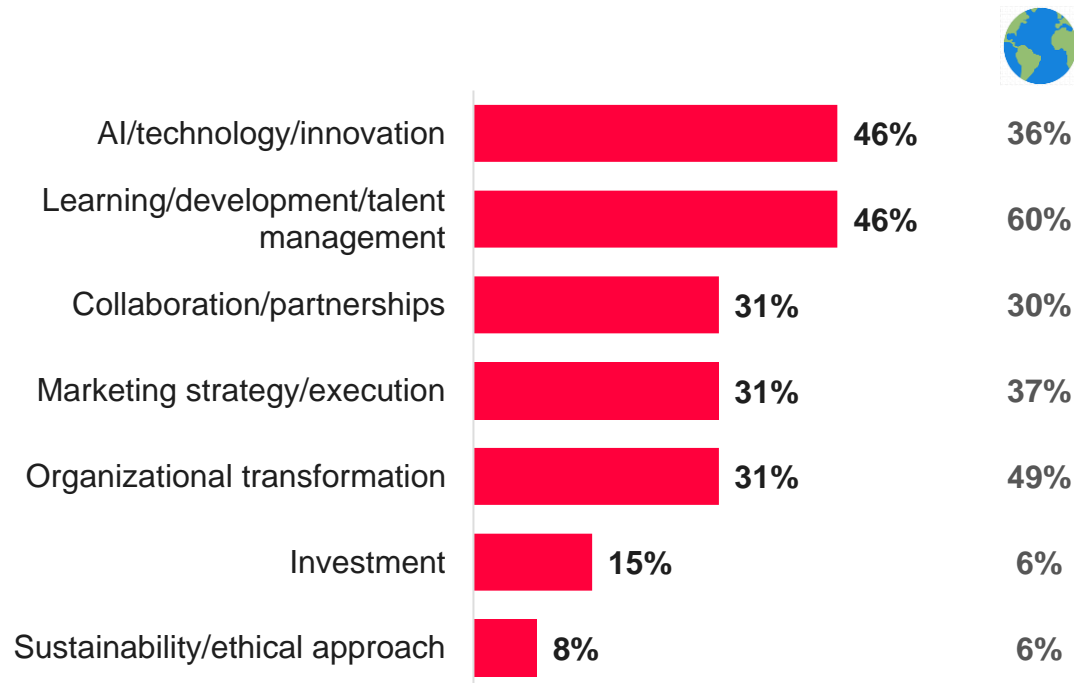


# Organisational priorities & areas for improvement

Middle Eastern marketers emphasize on **continuous capability building**, **empowering associates** through rotation programs, and fostering a **culture of learning and curiosity**.

Additionally, investments are being made in **training**, **cross-functional collaboration**, and the **development of AI use cases**, while leveraging partnerships with companies like Google, Meta, and Deloitte to stay ahead of future trends.

## The most effective steps for the future...



## In Middle Eastern marketers' voice...



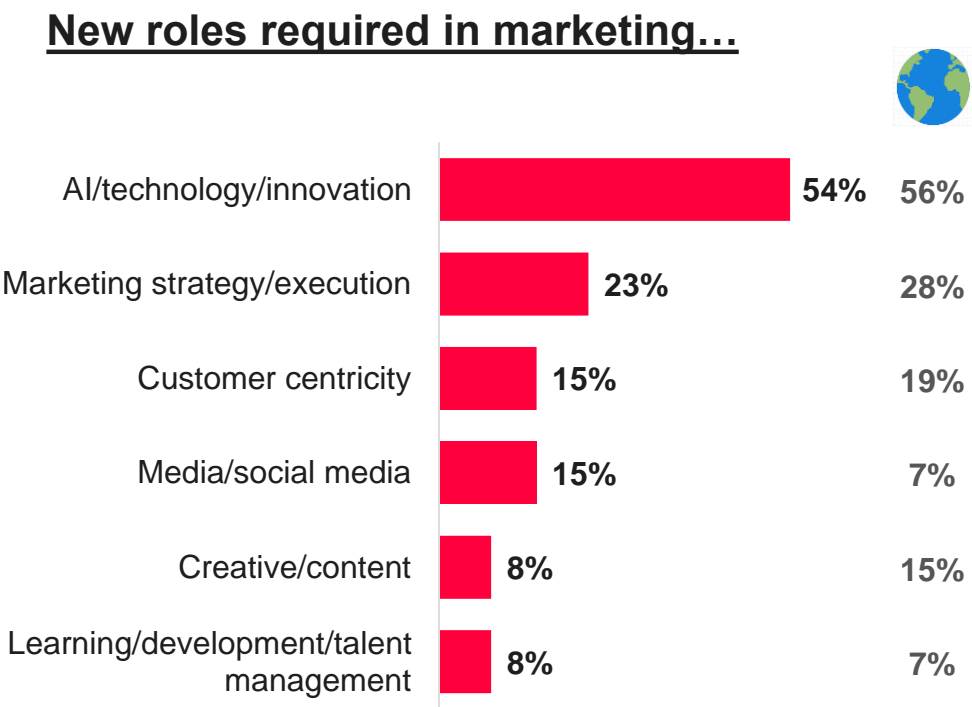
- Investing in capability building programs, empowering associates to take in roles via rotation programs
- Ongoing capability building; Test and Learn mindset; External focus
- Alignment on our purpose; Upskilling talent; Cross functional collaboration; AI - developing use cases
- Investing in training and development, collaborating with Google, Meta, Deloitte, etc. for best practice and future trends;
- Data dashboards where possible to dissect customer and performance data
- Education and upskilling
- Talent
- Culture of learning and curiosity
- Cross-functional strategy team
- Working heavily on automation of analysis for on the go
- Focus on brand equity

D5: What you consider are the most effective steps your organisation has taken, or may plan to take, to create a marketing team that is prepared for the future? (spontaneous answer)

Source: WFA peer research: **'Marketer of the Future'** (in partnership with Oxford); **Global sample** = 560, **Middle East** = 33 marketers

# New Marketing roles

According to Middle Eastern marketers, there should be a growing focus on **expanding capacity for digital marketing**, with dedicated roles for **experience design**, **trend creation**, and **marketing innovation**. New positions such as marketing scientists, AI marketing innovation leads, and marketing effectiveness leads are being introduced to support larger teams and drive digital transformation.



**In Middle East marketers' voice...**



- Roles dedicated to experience design & development
- Marketing effectiveness lead;
- AI marketing innovation lead
- More capacity focusing on digital marketing
- Experience roles, Trend M creation roles
- Marketing scientist or engineer. Marketers are software creators
- Roles dedicated to experience design & development
- Bigger teams to support

F3: Finally, an opportunity for creativity! Based on the responses you have kindly provided, if money were no object, what new role(s) would you create within the marketing function and why? (spontaneous answer)

Source: WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); Global sample = 560, Middle East = 33 marketers



# **4 Key takeaways & Strategic implications**

# Executive Summary

## 1. The current Marketing landscape

- ✓ A greater proportion of marketers in Middle East report **outperforming the sector** compared to the global average (58% vs 51%), indicating a stronger self-assessment as compared to the other regions.
- ✓ Most respondents in Middle East (76%) **prefer a balanced focus**, with only a small percentage (15%) suggesting a strong inclination toward maintaining current practices while still recognizing the need for fundamental strengthening.
- ✓ Majority admit that there is room for improvement on Marketing fundamentals – aligned with the global outcome.

## 2. Shaping the future of Marketing

- ✓ Overall, a strong, positive outlook towards marketing as a profession and as a function within organisations across Middle East and globally is noticed.
- ✓ They perceive **tech & data** and **sustainability** (90%) as the most significant shifts in Marketing, surpassing global benchmark (67%), indicating a stronger regional emphasis on addressing evolving challenges and **integrating sustainable practices into marketing strategies**.
- ✓ All Middle Eastern respondents rate **alignment, skills building, balancing priorities and data-driven decision** making as critical, in line with the global average (96-99%), indicating a strong regional commitment to strategic coherence and continuous improvement in marketing capabilities.

## 3. The future of Marketing: opportunities & innovations

- ✓ Middle Eastern marketers put emphasis on **continuous capability building, empowering associates** through rotation programs, and fostering a **culture of learning and curiosity**. They suggest a growing focus on **expanding capacity for digital marketing**, with dedicated roles for **experience design, trend creation, and marketing innovation**.



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