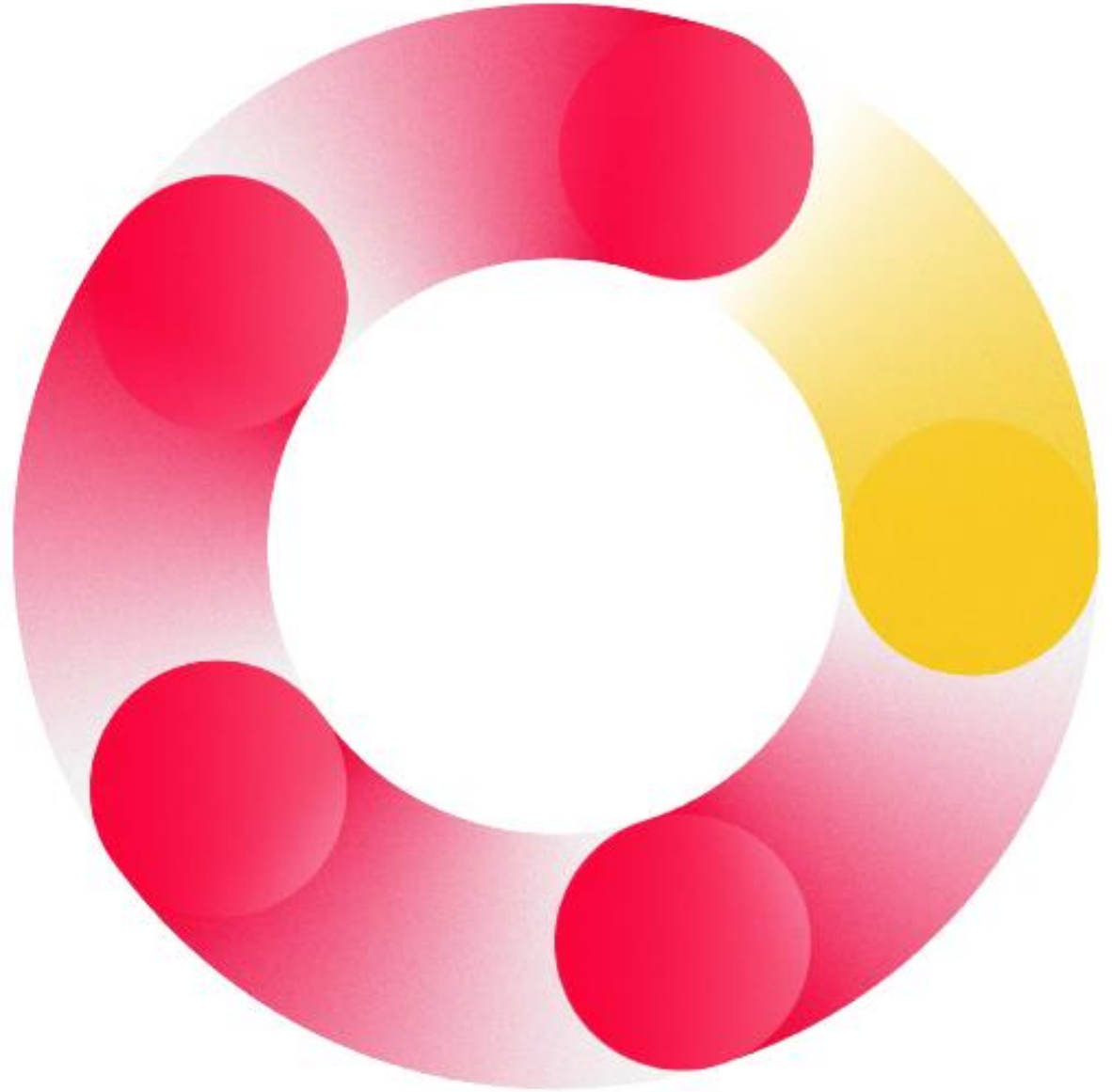


Marketer of the Future

Survey results: Middle East

In partnership with

O X F O R D



May
2025

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



Marketer of the Future

What challenges marketing leaders face

What sets top-performing companies apart

How to future-proof your teams and strategies

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

Leaders

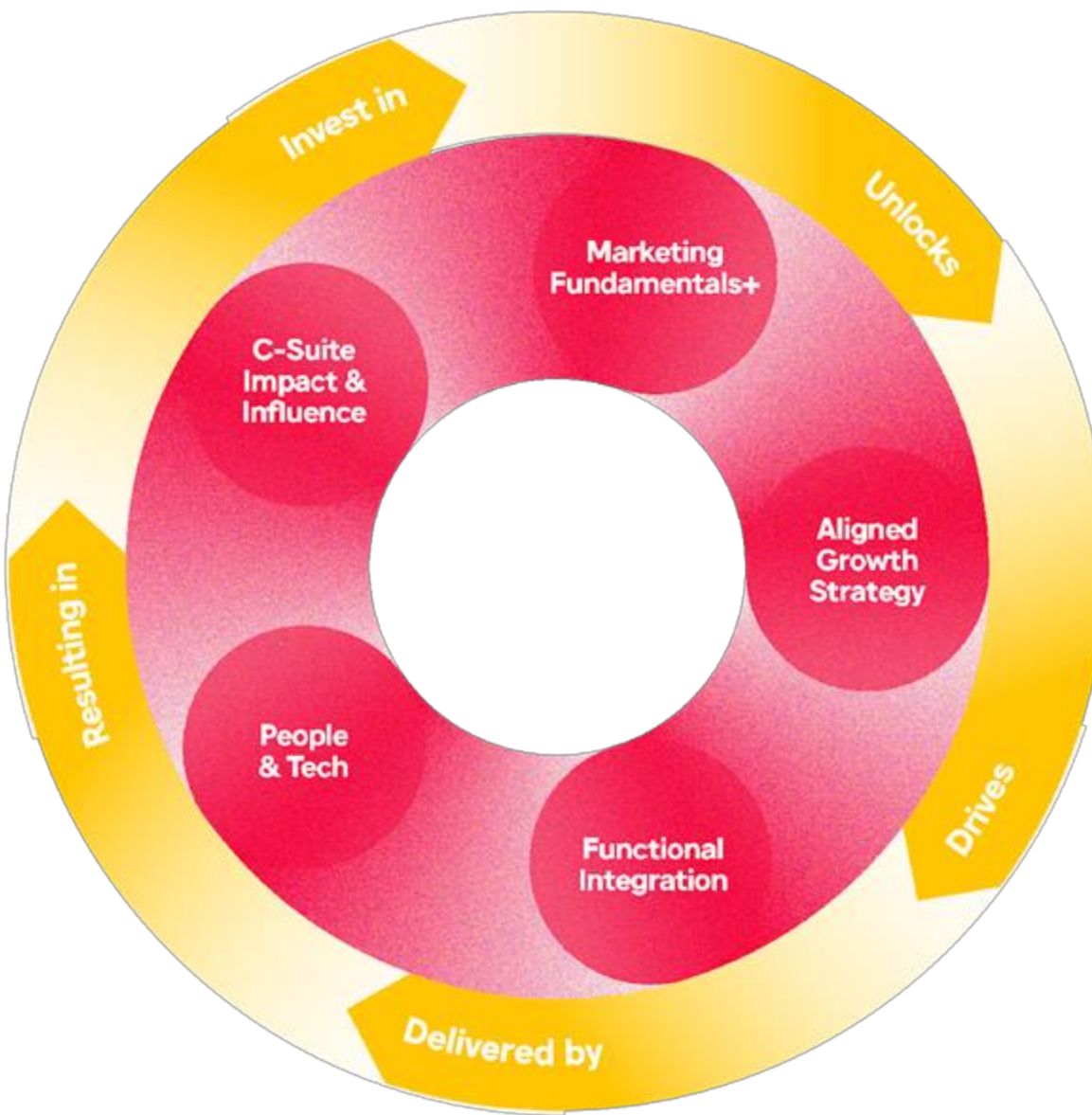
- ← More pessimistic, seeking resilience
- ← Trying to balance priorities
- ← Having to re-focus on the marketing foundations
- ← Struggling for growth vs. peers

Lagging

A large, dark red number '5' is centered on the page, serving as a background for the text.

These are the 5 things that
the Leaders do better

Marketer of the Future FLYWHEEL EFFECT



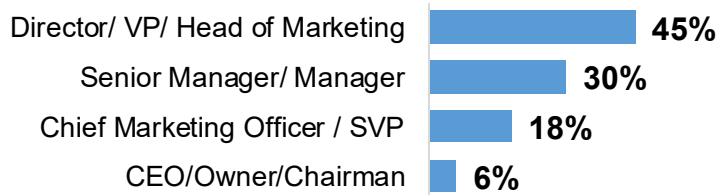
·Zoom in: Middle East



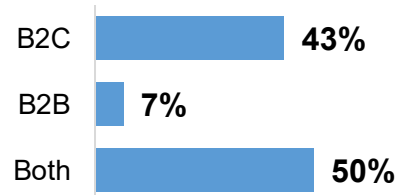
•Who did we interview



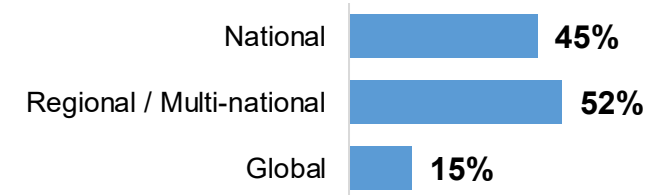
By role



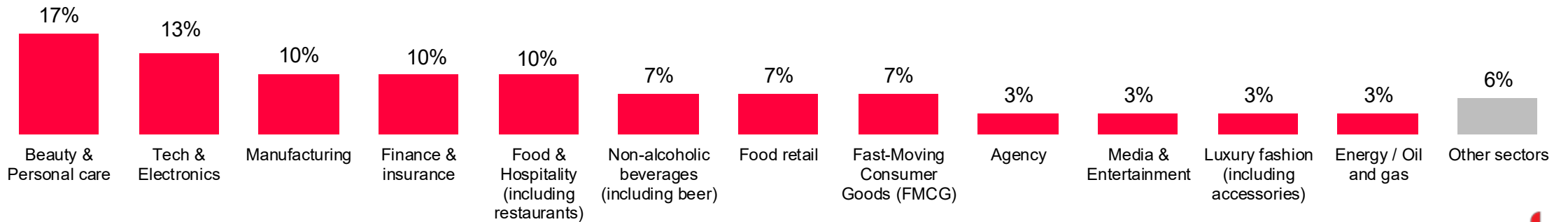
By business focus



By remit



By sector



• Sample size: 33 senior marketers in Middle East



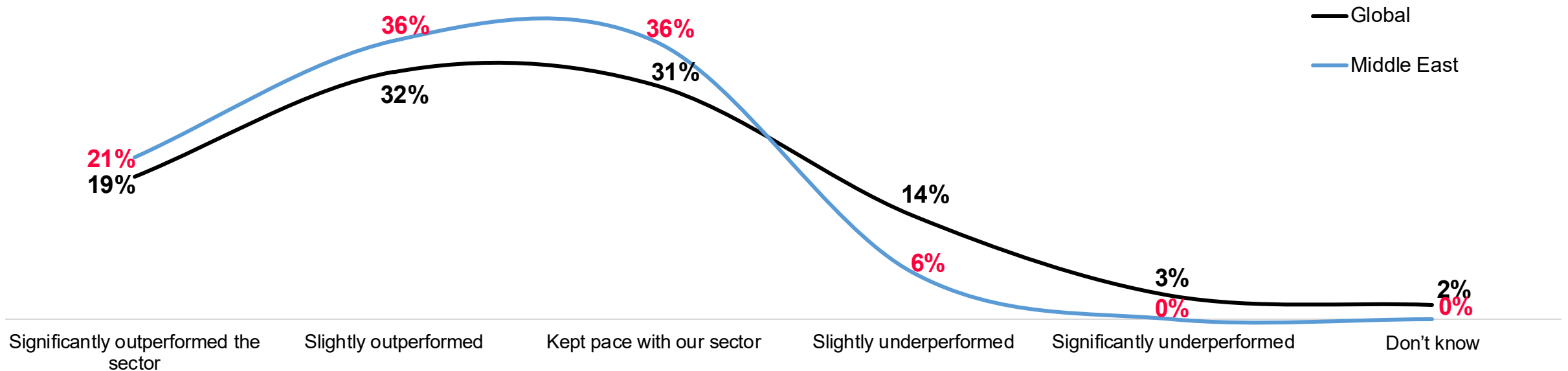
1 The current Marketing landscape

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)

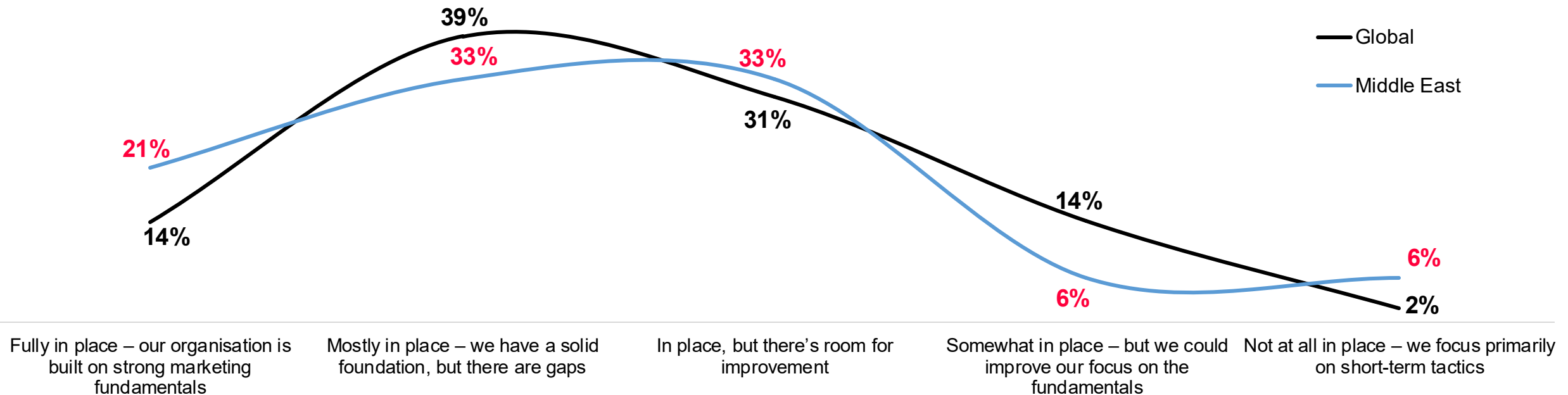
• Source: WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); Global sample = 560, Middle East = 33 marketers



•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.

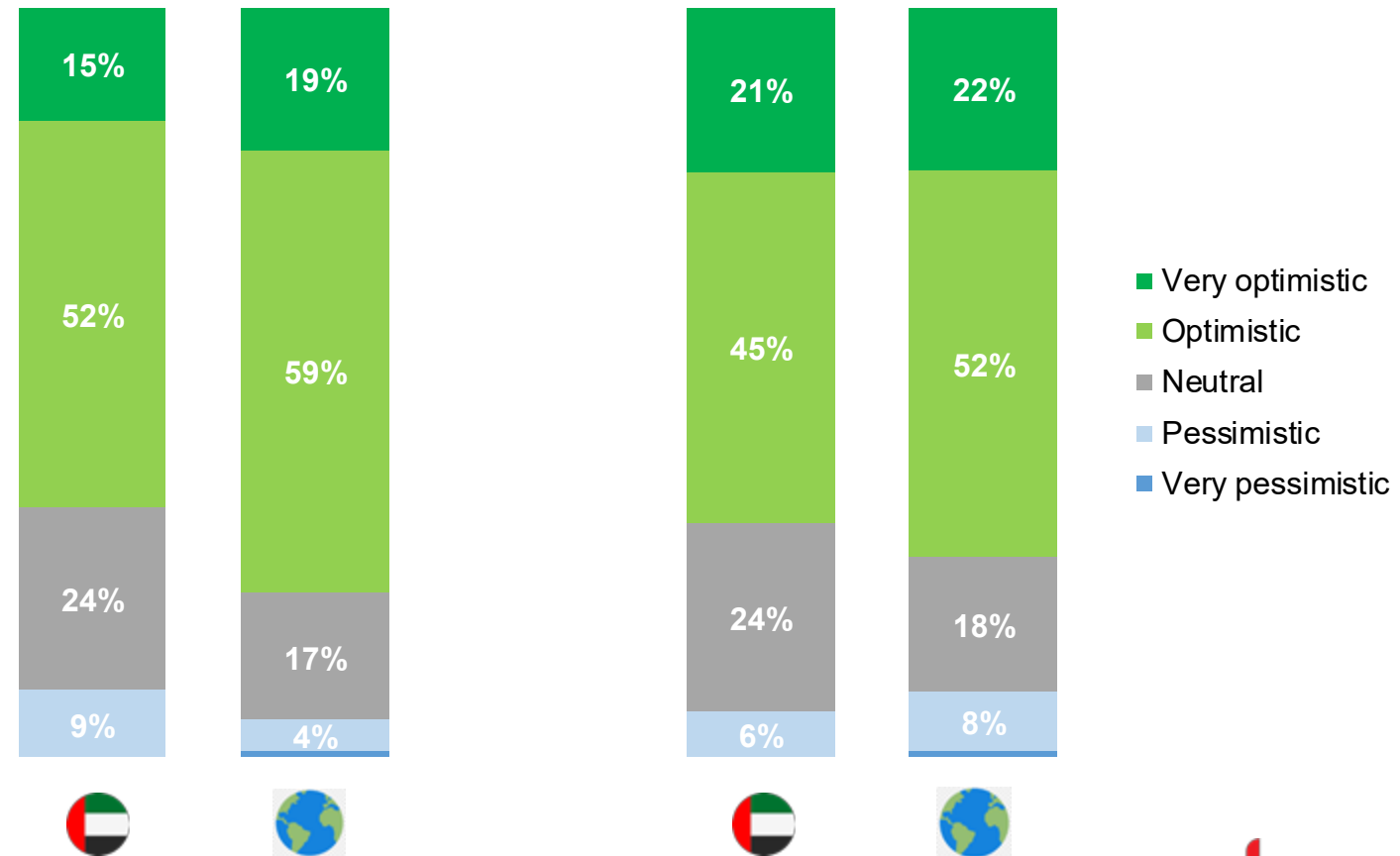
Overall, the global perspective is more optimistic, while in Middle East, marketers are also hopeful, with some remaining neutral or even slightly pessimistic, indicating some uncertainty about how Marketing teams will navigate future challenges.

Pessimism is minimal across regions.

The future of Marketing...

... as a profession

... in our organisation



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.

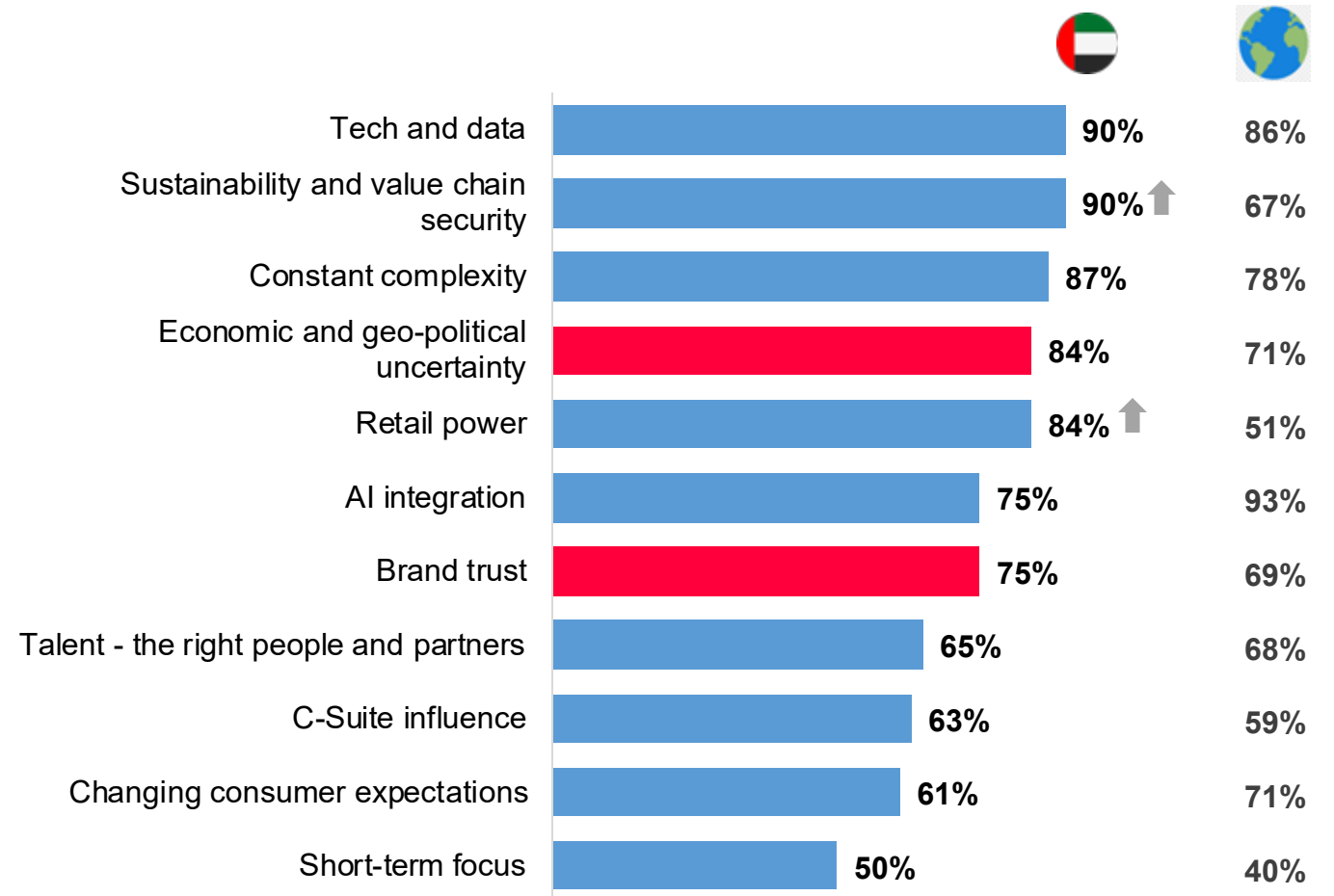


Chart shows Top 2 Boxes % ("More Important" + "Considerably more important")

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")

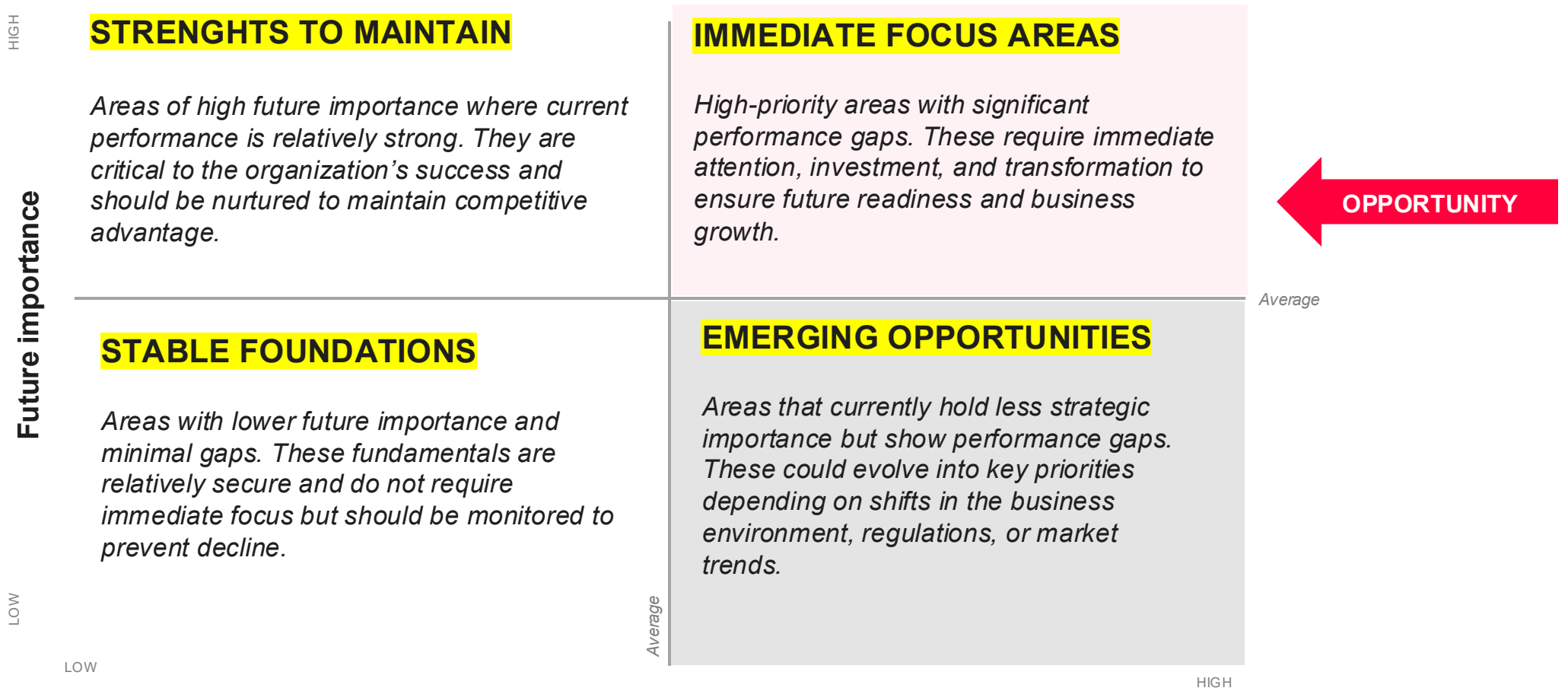
D1: How important are the following factors in driving future change in your organisation? (single answer on a 4 points scale)

● 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

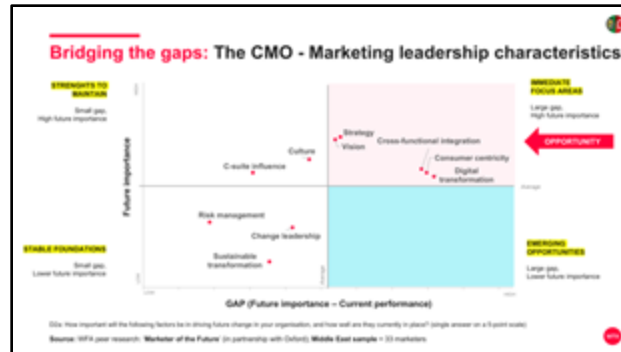
How to read



● Source: WFA peer research: 'Marketer of the Future' (in partnership with Oxford); Global sample = 560, Middle East = 33, Middle East = 29 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?

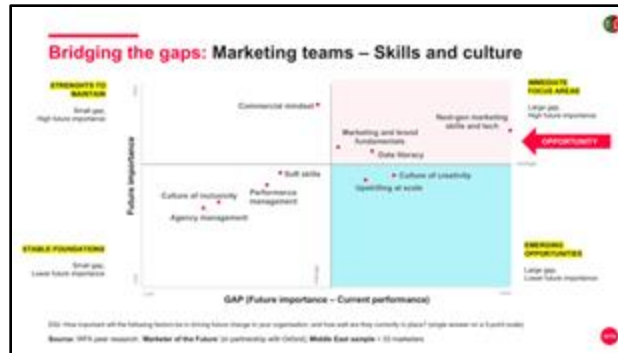
Senior marketers from Middle East agree that, currently, **the key areas that require immediate attention & investment** are on:

- **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.

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.

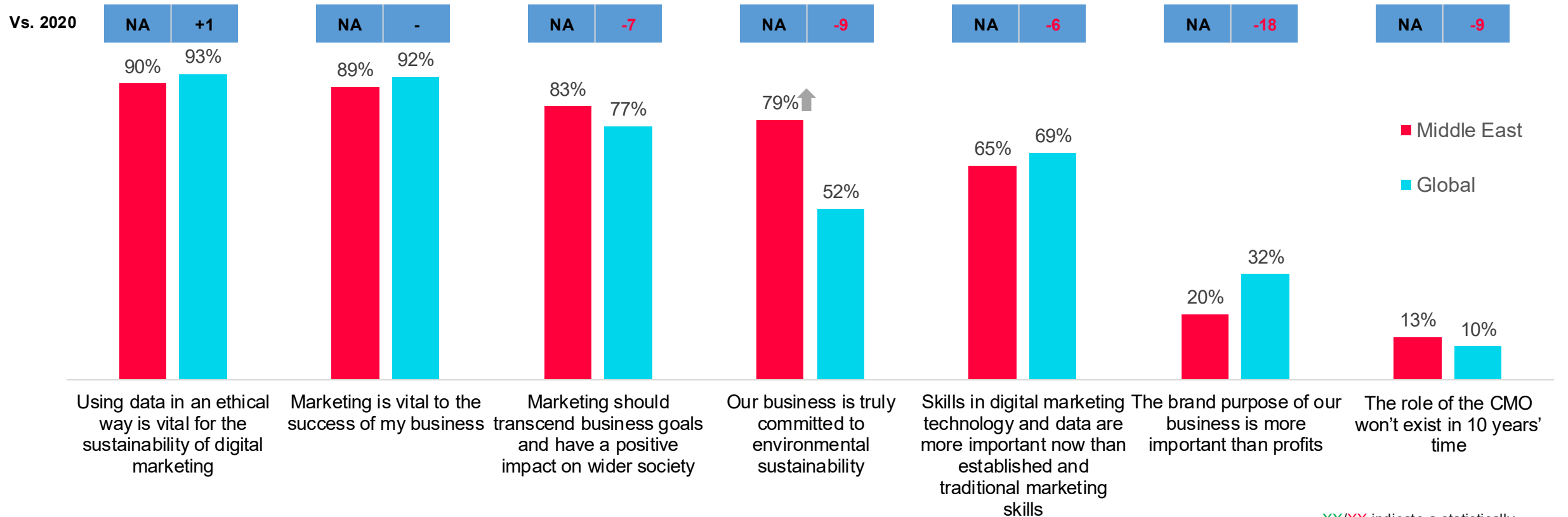
Middle East reports higher confidence in its **commercial mindset** and **performance management**, while globally, these areas are considered critical and in need of immediate attention.

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**.



XX/XX indicate a statistically higher/ lower value versus 2020
 NA= Not applicable, low sample

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

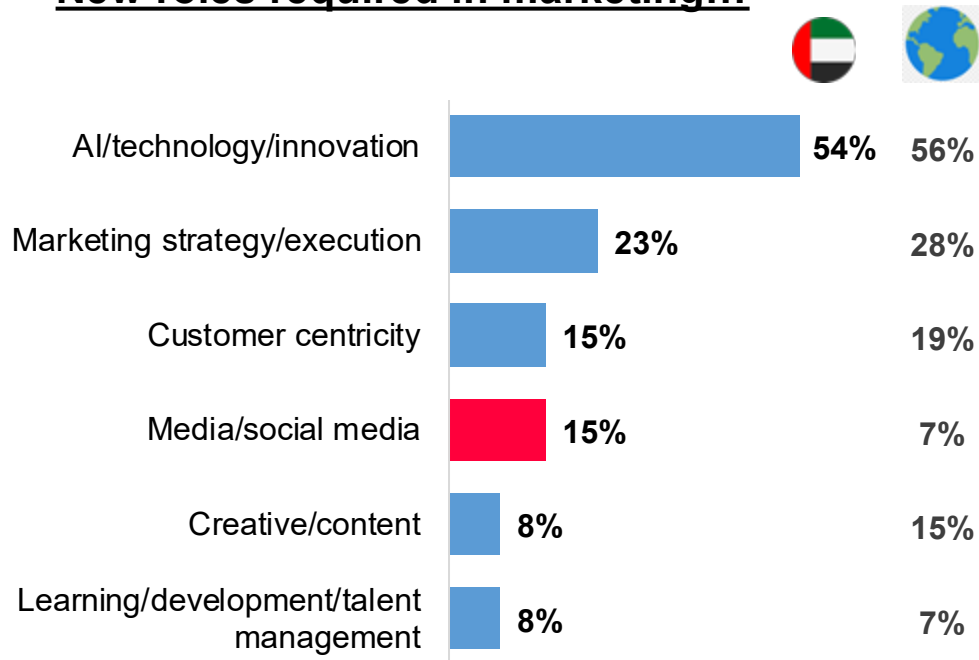


New Marketing roles

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.

New roles required in marketing...



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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