Marketing *Strategy*

The system that turns spend into growth you can count.

Most companies in the Gulf run marketing activities. Very few run a marketing strategy. This report is about the difference, and what it costs you.

Redha Alayesh

START HERE

Three rings of evidence, one honest disclosure

Every number in this report is sourced on the page it appears. The evidence sits in three rings. The first is international: the large studies on what companies spend, waste, and can actually prove. The second is regional: the Gulf and Saudi market, its size and its gaps. The third is local: what a marketer, an agency, and a strategy actually cost in Saudi Riyals.

What this is not. It is not a template you fill in. It is not a list of channels to open. And it is not neutral about one thing: we think most marketing money in the region is spent without a strategy behind it, and we will show you the evidence.

THE DISCLOSURE

BMD helps companies build marketing departments. We sell that. So read the argument, then check it against your own numbers. That is the whole point.

THE VERDICT

Read it, then test it against your own spend.

SOURCES BMD, 2026

A marketing strategy is *four* choices, not a calendar of posts

Here is the verdict before the 27 pages that defend it. A marketing strategy is your answer to four questions, made on purpose and written down: Who exactly do we serve? Why would they choose us and not the other guy? How do we move a stranger to a paying customer, step by step? And which numbers tell us it is working before the quarter ends?

Everything else, the posts, the ads, the events, the brochures, is a tactic. Tactics are the "how." Strategy is the "who, why, and what counts." If your tactics are busy but your four answers are blank, you do not have a slow strategy. You have none.

4

The number of choices under every real strategy.

0

The number of them you can outsource to an agency.

THE VERDICT

Decide the four. The tactics draw themselves.

SOURCES Kotler STP · Porter 1996 · BMD framework

A plan is not a strategy, and a strategy is not a logo

People use three words as if they were one: plan, strategy, tactics. Change your logo tomorrow. Did your reputation with customers change? No. So the brand was never the logo. Change this quarter's campaign. Did your reason-to-exist change? No. So the strategy was never the campaign.

Michael Porter settled this in 1996: "The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do." A strategy is a set of choices that positions you to win, and every real choice closes a door. Roger Martin adds the trap most companies fall into: a plan is a list of activities and budgets, and a list of activities feels like progress. It is not strategy. Strategy is where to play and how to win. The plan comes after.

THREE WORDS PEOPLE CONFUSE

WORD	WHAT IT ANSWERS	EXAMPLE
Strategy	Who we serve, why us, how we win	We win mid-size clinics on trust, not price
Plan	What we will do, when, for how much	Q3: launch referral program, SAR 40,000
Tactic	The specific action	A WhatsApp broadcast to past patients

THE VERDICT

If it did not close a door, it was not strategy.

SOURCES Porter, HBR 1996 · Lafley and Martin, Playing to Win 2013

THE QUESTION · WHY THIS MATTERS IN SAUDI, NOW

The market got big and *measurable* at the same time

This is not a timeless think-piece. It is timed to a market that changed fast. Saudi Arabia now has 33.9 million internet users, 99 percent of the population, and social reach near saturation. The customers are online, all of them, all day.

The money followed. Card-based e-commerce through Mada hit 30.7 billion Riyals in October 2025 alone, up 68 percent in a year. Vision 2030 wants small and mid firms to carry 35 percent of GDP, up from about 22 percent today. The private sector is meant to reach 65 percent. Which means the government is betting the economy on companies like yours growing. You cannot grow on random acts of marketing.

99%

of Saudis are online (33.9 million users)

30.7 bn

Riyals of Mada e-commerce in one month, Oct 2025

35%

Vision 2030 GDP target for SMEs, from ~22% today

THE VERDICT

The customers are online. Your strategy is not optional.

SOURCES DataReportal Digital 2025 Saudi · SAMA, Oct 2025 · Vision 2030 Annual Report 2024

The quarter that felt busy and moved *nothing*

Watch how it goes without a strategy. You open the accounts. You post three times a week. You boost the post that did well. You run an ad. You sponsor an event because a friend asked. You print the brochures. You try the tool everyone mentioned. Everyone is busy. The calendar is full.

Then you sit in the quarterly meeting and ask the one question nobody can answer: which of these brought us money? The honest answer is "all of them, probably," which is the same as "none of them, provably." That is not a marketing department. It is a group of people generating activity so the silence does not feel expensive.

Busy is not a strategy. Busy is what you do *instead* of one.

THE VERDICT

A full calendar is the most convincing disguise for no strategy.

SOURCES BMD field observation · Porter 1996 (operational effectiveness is not strategy)

THE EVIDENCE · RING ONE

Budgets are shrinking and the pressure to prove it is rising

Start with what big companies spend, because it sets the ceiling everyone else lives under. Gartner's 2025 survey of senior marketers puts marketing at 7.7 percent of company revenue, flat against 2024 and down from 9.1 percent in 2023. Before the pandemic it ran near 11 percent. The trend is down.

At the same time, the CFO stopped nodding along. In the 2025 CMO Survey, 63 percent of marketing leaders reported more pressure from the CFO to prove impact, and 61 percent more pressure from the CEO. One caution before you borrow these numbers: Gartner samples billion-Riyal global firms, not Riyadh SMEs. Use the direction, not the ratio. The direction is clear. Less money, more scrutiny, everywhere.

MARKETING AS PERCENT OF COMPANY REVENUE · LARGE GLOBAL FIRMS

THE VERDICT

The money is tighter and the questions are harder.

SOURCES Gartner CMO Spend Survey 2023 to 2025 · The CMO Survey 2025 (Moorman)

THE EVIDENCE · RING ONE

Most marketers feel measured. Far fewer actually are

Here is the gap that should worry any owner writing the checks. Nielsen found 84 percent of marketers say they are confident in their return on investment. Then it found that only 38 percent actually measure return across their channels together. Confidence is not measurement. It is the feeling you get instead of it.

Independent data agrees. In the academic CMO Survey, 13.5 percent of marketers admit they cannot demonstrate the short-term impact of their spend at all, and 22 percent cannot show the long-term impact. And the money leaks in plain sight: the Association of National Advertisers found that of the open-web programmatic dollar, only 36 percent reaches the intended audience, and roughly 23 percent is simply wasted. Nielsen sells measurement, so weigh their number accordingly. The ANA is a trade body with no tool to sell. Their number is the one that should sting.

84%

feel confident in their ROI

38%

actually measure across channels together

36% of programmatic dollars reach the intended audience

~23% of open-web programmatic spend is simply wasted

THE VERDICT

You cannot manage what you only feel.

SOURCES Nielsen Annual Marketing Report 2024 · The CMO Survey Fall 2024 · ANA Programmatic Transparency 2023

Growth comes from being *remembered* by people not buying today

There is real science on how brands grow, and it contradicts the instinct to chase your existing customers harder. Byron Sharp and the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute showed across decades of data that brands grow mainly by reaching more buyers, not by squeezing more loyalty from the few you have. You grow by building mental availability: being the name that comes to mind when the need appears.

This reframes the whole spend. The LinkedIn B2B Institute and Ehrenberg-Bass estimate that at any moment, the large majority of business buyers, directionally around 95 percent, are not in the market this quarter. If you only talk to the 5 percent ready to buy now, you are fighting over the smallest room while ignoring the building. Treat the 95 percent as directional, not a law for every category. The lesson holds either way: marketing builds the memory that gets cashed later.

95%

of business buyers are not in the market this quarter (directional).

> The buyer you reach today usually pays you next year. Budget like it.

THE VERDICT

Be the first name they think of, not the loudest today.

SOURCES Byron Sharp, How Brands Grow 2010 · Ehrenberg-Bass and LinkedIn B2B Institute, 95-5 (Dawes)

THE EVIDENCE · RING ONE

All performance and no brand is a slow way to get expensive

Les Binet and Peter Field studied roughly 1,000 case studies in the IPA databank and found a split that keeps showing up: around 60 percent of budget to long-term brand building, 40 percent to short-term activation, produces the strongest combined result. Activation spikes then decays. Brand compounds. Pour everything into "buy now" ads and you train the market to only move on discounts.

One honest caution: 60/40 is a business-to-consumer average, and it shifts toward activation for business-to-business and for small brands that first need sales to survive. So do not treat it as law. Treat it as a warning against the common Gulf default, which is 100 percent performance, zero brand, and a rising cost per sale nobody can explain.

THE SPLIT WITH THE STRONGEST COMBINED RESULT · IPA

60 · BRAND BUILDING	40 · ACTIVATION
Grows future demand, cuts price sensitivity.	Converts the demand that exists now.
Compounds over years	Spikes, then decays

THE VERDICT

Protect a brand share. Do not go all-activation.

SOURCES Binet and Field, The Long and the Short of It, IPA 2013 · Field, Crisis in Creative Effectiveness, IPA 2019

THE EVIDENCE · A CASE, ONE DIRECTION

Domino's grew by *admitting* the product was the problem

In 2009 Domino's did the opposite of a marketing campaign. It admitted, in public, that its pizza was not good, and it reformulated the recipe. That is a strategic choice: fix the product truth first, then tell everyone. It closed a door. It risked the brand on honesty.

The result was not a nicer logo. Domestic same-store sales rose 14.3 percent in the first quarter of 2010, one of the largest quarterly jumps the category had seen, and 9.9 percent for the full year. Over the decade that followed, the stock went from under 3 dollars to more than 250. The lesson is not "be honest." The lesson is that a marketing strategy is a business choice about what is true, not a coat of paint on what is not.

14.3%	~89×
Same-store sales jump, Q1 2010, one of the category's largest.	The stock's rise across the decade that followed.

THE VERDICT

Fix what is true first. Then market it.

SOURCES Domino's Pizza 2010 financial results (company filing)

Two ways a "strategy" destroys value on purpose

Honesty means showing the reversals too. In 2009 Tropicana replaced its famous orange-and-straw packaging with a clean, modern design. Customers stopped recognizing the product on the shelf. Sales of the flagship line fell about 20 percent in under two months, and the company went back to the old design within weeks. A change that felt like progress in the design studio read as "unfamiliar" at the point of sale.

The second case is bigger. In 2023, after a single influencer partnership triggered a boycott, Bud Light lost its roughly 20-year position as the top-selling beer in the United States, and its parent reported around 1.4 billion dollars in lost North American revenue for the year. Neither company lacked money or talent. Both had a change of direction with no strategy underneath it that connected the move to the customer they actually had.

TROPICANA · 2009

-20%

Flagship-line sales, in under two months, before the reversal.

BUD LIGHT · 2023

1.4bn

Dollars in lost North American revenue for the year.

THE VERDICT

A bold move without a strategy is just an expensive guess.

SOURCES Ad Age 2009 (Tropicana, -20%) · CNN Business 2024 citing AB InBev earnings (Bud Light)

The opportunity is real. The measurement gap is *yours* to close

The Gulf numbers are not the problem. Saudi is the largest advertising market in the region, and MENA digital ad spend reached 8.185 billion dollars in 2025, up nearly 18 percent. The customers are online and spending. What is missing is not demand. It is discipline.

Here is the honest gap, and it is the whole reason this report exists. We searched for a Saudi or Gulf study measuring how many companies actually run a documented marketing strategy. There isn't one. The region tracks ad spend and follower counts in detail, and tracks strategic marketing practice almost not at all. That absence is itself the finding. The market is rich in spend data and poor in strategy data, which is exactly how you get a lot of motion and little proof.

#1	8.185 bn	0
Saudi is the region's largest ad market	Dollars of MENA digital ad spend in 2025, up ~18%	Rigorous regional surveys of marketing-strategy maturity

THE VERDICT

The region measures spend, not strategy. Be the exception.

SOURCES IAB MENA 2025 · Communicate/Cannes 2025 · BMD search finding (absence)

Seven failures, and you can usually spot yours in *three*

Strategies do not fail in a hundred ways. They fail in about seven, and most companies are living inside two or three of them right now. Read the list and mark the ones that describe your last quarter.

01 **No target.** You serve "everyone," so your message fits no one.

02 **Vanity metrics.** You report reach and likes, not money.

03 **No position.** You sound like every competitor with a different logo.

04 **Copying.** Your plan is a screenshot of what a rival did last month.

05 **All activation.** 100 percent "buy now," nothing that builds memory.

06 **Sales and marketing at war.** Two teams, two numbers, one blame game.

07 **No owner.** Everyone touches marketing, nobody is accountable for it.

THE VERDICT

Name the two you are in. That is the work.

SOURCES Porter 1996 · Ries and Trout 1993 · Binet and Field 2013 · Kotler and Rackham, HBR 2006

If a number cannot change a decision, it is *decoration*

Eric Ries drew the line years ago: a vanity metric makes you feel good but tells you nothing about what to do next. Impressions. Likes. Followers. They go up and to the right no matter what, which is exactly why they are comfortable and useless.

We call the other kind clarity metrics: numbers tied to a decision and a Riyal. Cost to acquire a customer. Lifetime value. Conversion rate between two steps. Pipeline created. The test is one question: if this number doubled, would I do anything differently? If the answer is no, stop reporting it. A dashboard full of vanity metrics is not measurement. It is a comfort blanket with a chart on it.

VANITY METRIC	CLARITY METRIC
Impressions, reach	Cost per acquired customer (CAC)
Likes, followers	Lifetime value (LTV)
Website visits	Conversion rate, step to step
"Engagement"	Pipeline and revenue created

THE VERDICT

Report the numbers that change a decision. Cut the rest.

SOURCES Eric Ries, The Lean Startup 2011 · BMD (vanity vs clarity metrics)

Focus your message. Do not narrow your audience

Here the experts genuinely disagree, so we will not pretend they don't. One camp, Porter, Ries and Trout, says small companies must focus: own one word, serve one segment, because you cannot afford to be everywhere. The other camp, the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, says the opposite about reach: brands grow by reaching all category buyers, and narrow targeting is counter-productive to growth.

Both are right about different things, and the resolution matters for your budget. Focus your positioning: be known for one clear thing, say it the same way every time. But do not artificially shrink who can hear it. A dental clinic should be known for one promise, painless first visits, say, and still want every adult in the district to know that. Narrow the message. Widen the room.

Own one idea in the market. Then tell the *whole* market about it.

THE VERDICT

Sharp message, wide reach. Not the reverse.

SOURCES Porter 1980 · Ries and Trout 1993 · Ehrenberg-Bass (Romaniuk), LinkedIn B2B Institute

The company that spent more every quarter and grew less

COMPOSITE · ILLUSTRATIVE · DETAILS CHANGED

A mid-size services company in Riyadh, 40 staff, strong on direct sales, decided to "do marketing properly." They hired one energetic junior, opened five channels, and signed a 12,000 Riyal per month agency for social media. Six months in, the founder asked the only question that matters: how many customers did this bring? Nobody could separate the marketing customers from the referrals sales already had. So they doubled the budget, on the theory that more of an unmeasured thing is better. It was not.

What went wrong was not effort or talent. It was sequence. They bought tactics before they made the four choices. No defined customer, so the content spoke to no one. No position, so the ads sounded generic. No clarity metric, so spend could only go up. The fix was not a better agency. It was stopping for two weeks to decide who, why, how, and what counts.

THE VERDICT

They bought tactics before they made the choices.

SOURCES BMD composite · sequence principle from Porter 1996 and STP

You do not have a marketing strategy. You have a calendar

Put every page so far in one sentence. Most companies in the Gulf are not running a weak marketing strategy. They are running a marketing calendar, a schedule of activity, and calling it strategy because it is full and it is busy. The calendar tells you what happens on Tuesday. It cannot tell you who you serve, why they choose you, or whether Tuesday made any money.

A calendar is downstream of a strategy. It is the "how" that only makes sense once the "who, why, and what counts" are decided. Fill in the four choices and the calendar writes itself, and every item on it can finally be judged. Skip them, and the fullest calendar in the world is just expensive motion.

A strategy fills a calendar. A calendar *cannot fake* a strategy.

THE VERDICT

Stop scheduling activity. Start deciding direction.

SOURCES Porter 1996 · Lafley and Martin 2013 · BMD framework

Who, why, how you connect, and what counts

Here is the system the rest of this part builds out. A marketing strategy is four choices, made deliberately and written on one page. Miss one and the other three leak. This is the difference between a department that compounds and a calendar that drains.

01 WHO. The specific customer you serve, and the ones you do not.

02 WHERE YOU WIN. The one reason they choose you, said the same way every time.

03 HOW YOU CONNECT. The journey from stranger to paying customer, step by step.

04 WHAT COUNTS. The two or three clarity metrics that tell you it is working.

One page. Four choices. Everything else is *downstream*.

THE VERDICT

Four choices on one page beat forty slides.

SOURCES Kotler STP · Porter 1996 · Lafley and Martin 2013 · BMD

Pick the buyer, then own one reason to be chosen

The first two choices are the oldest discipline in marketing, and the most skipped. Segmentation, targeting, positioning, formalized by Philip Kotler and rooted in Wendell Smith's 1956 work, is just this: divide the market, pick the group you can actually win, and stake one clear position in their mind. Al Ries and Jack Trout added the hard part in 1981: positioning is a battle for one word in the customer's memory, and you only get one.

For a Gulf SME this is concrete. Once the buyer is that specific, the position gets easy, and the whole calendar snaps into focus because you finally know who you are talking to.

NOT A CUSTOMER

"We serve everyone who needs marketing."

A CUSTOMER

"We serve dental clinics in Riyadh with 2 to 5 branches that want more first-visit bookings."

THE VERDICT

A customer this specific makes every later choice easier.

SOURCES Smith 1956 · Kotler, Marketing Management · Ries and Trout, Positioning 1981

THE SYSTEM · CHOICE THREE

Marketing, defined twice, so the whole company agrees

Choice three needs a definition most companies never write down. So here it is on two levels. For the owner: marketing is anything that directly gets you a new potential customer, or makes an existing one pay more. For the practitioner: marketing is anything that brings people into the customer journey, or improves the conversion between its steps.

That second definition is the useful one, because it turns a vague budget into a map. Draw the journey. Now every tactic has a job and an address. When you can name the step a tactic serves, you can measure it. When you cannot, that tactic is the first thing to cut.

THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY · EVERY TACTIC GETS AN ADDRESS

STRANGER → AWARE → INTERESTED → FIRST BUY → REPEAT → ADVOCATE

A reel builds awareness. · A WhatsApp broadcast lifts repeat purchase.

THE VERDICT

If a tactic has no step, it has no job.

SOURCES AIDA (Lewis 1898) · McClure, Pirate Metrics 2007 · BMD two-tier definition

THE SYSTEM · CHOICE FOUR

The dashboard that fits on one screen and drives decisions

The fourth choice is where strategy becomes measurable and the calendar finally gets judged. You do not need 40 metrics. You need the two or three that connect spend to money, watched over time. For most Gulf SMEs that is cost to acquire a customer, lifetime value, and the conversion rate at the one step that is currently leaking.

The ratio to know is lifetime value against acquisition cost. A common working benchmark is roughly 3 to 1: a customer should be worth about three times what it costs to win them. If you cannot calculate those two numbers today, that is not a small gap. It is the signal that you have a calendar, not a strategy, because you are spending without a scoreboard.

3:1

A common healthy ratio of lifetime value to acquisition cost.

2–3

The number of metrics a real dashboard needs. Not 40.

THE VERDICT

Three honest numbers beat a wall of charts.

SOURCES Ries, Lean Startup 2011 · LTV:CAC benchmark (venture/SaaS, e.g. Skok) · BMD Marketing Truth Dashboard

The three ways to buy marketing capability, priced in Riyals

A strategy has to be executed by someone, and in Saudi you have three doors. Hire in-house, retain an agency, or bring in a fractional lead. Here are the real 2026 ranges so you can plan against numbers, not vibes. Remember the loaded-cost rule: an employee costs about 1.25 to 1.4 times base salary once you add benefits and GOSI.

OPTION	TYPICAL MONTHLY RANGE · SAR
Marketing specialist (in-house)	4,000 – 15,000
Marketing manager (in-house)	4,500 – 35,000
Digital marketing manager (in-house)	9,000 – 28,000
Agency retainer (SMB to mid)	5,000 – 40,000
Fractional marketing lead (Gulf)	5,000 – 51,000+

Two local facts change the math. From 2026, marketing and sales roles carry a **60 percent Saudization** requirement, and a Saudi hire must earn at least **5,500 Riyals** to count. But the government pays you to comply: HRDF Tawteen support covers up to **3,000 Riyals** per Saudi employee per month, for up to **24 months**.

THE VERDICT

Price the option, then subsidize the Saudi hire.

SOURCES GulfTalent 2026 · Entasher/Digital Gravity 2026 · MHRSD and HRDF 2026 · MIT Hadzima (loaded cost)

What 25,000 Riyals a month should buy at three stages

Take a single number, 25,000 Riyals a month, and watch how the right split changes with your stage. The point is not the exact figure. It is that allocation follows strategy, not habit. Own the strategy in-house always; rent the hands you have not earned yet.

STAGE	OWN · STRATEGY	RENT · EXECUTION	MEDIA
No marketing yet	One part-time lead	Agency for content	Small test budget
Selling, no system	In-house manager	Freelance specialists	40% brand, 60% activation
Ready to scale	Manager plus specialist	Agency for spikes	Toward 60% brand

Notice what never moves to the "rent" column: the four choices. You can rent a video editor, a media buyer, a designer. You cannot rent the decision about who you serve and why. Outsource that and you have paid someone else to not know your business.

THE VERDICT

Own the four choices. Rent the hands.

SOURCES Binet and Field 2013 (split) · BMD allocation model

Five questions. Three "no" answers means you have a calendar

Before the scenarios, test yourself. Answer these five out loud, today, without opening a file. If you cannot answer three of them in one clear sentence each, you do not have a marketing strategy yet, and that is useful to know.

01	Can you name your target customer in one specific sentence?
02	Can you say the one reason they choose you, not a competitor?
03	Can you draw your customer journey from stranger to advocate?
04	Do you know your cost to acquire a customer this month?
05	Is one person accountable for that number?

Three blanks is not a failing grade. It is your first *agenda*.

THE VERDICT

If three answers are blank, start there Monday.

SOURCES BMD Scale Readiness Assessment

Four companies, four honest first moves

SCENARIO 01

Situation. Pre-revenue or brand new, tiny budget.

Skip brand spend. Sell by hand first.

FIRST MOVES

Talk to 20 buyers. Find the one promise that lands. Do not hire an agency yet.

SCENARIO 02

Situation. Strong direct sales, no marketing function.

Build the system, do not just add posts.

FIRST MOVES

Define the customer and position. Hire one owner. Track cost per acquired customer from day one.

SCENARIO 03

Situation. Burning money on ads, cannot prove return.

Stop scaling. Fix the measurement first.

FIRST MOVES

Pick two clarity metrics. Kill vanity reporting. Re-decide the four choices before adding budget.

SCENARIO 04

Situation. Ready to scale, sales are strong.

Shift budget toward brand, keep the scoreboard.

FIRST MOVES

Move toward a 60/40 brand split. Add a specialist. Protect the metric no one games.

THE VERDICT

Match the card. Do the first move this week.

SOURCES BMD scenario model · Binet and Field 2013 · Ehrenberg-Bass

Decide, then measure, then scale, in that order

Strategy fails most often on sequence, so here is the order that works. Ninety days is enough to replace a calendar with a strategy, if you resist the urge to buy tactics in week one.

01 DAYS 1–30

Decide the four choices.

Write them on one page.

02 DAYS 31–60

Set up two clarity metrics.

Instrument the journey.

03 DAYS 61–90

Run one focused campaign.

Judge it against the metrics.

Notice what is not in week one: hiring an agency, opening channels, buying tools. Those come after the choices, because tactics bought before choices are the exact trap this whole report is about. Decide first. The spending gets smart only once the direction is set.

THE VERDICT

Decide first. Spend second. Scale third.

SOURCES BMD BUILD framework · Porter 1996 (sequence)

THE MOVE · THE NEXT STEP

Find out where your marketing actually stands

You read a report full of numbers. The next number that matters is your own. BMD's Scale Readiness Assessment is a short, honest self-check that shows where your marketing sits against the four choices, and what to fix first. It takes a few minutes and it does not require a sales call.

THE NEXT NUMBER THAT MATTERS IS YOURS

Take the Scale Readiness Assessment.

buildingyourmarketingdepartment.com →

Want the full BUILD framework? The book and the Marketing Truth Dashboard are there too.

THE VERDICT

Stop guessing where you stand. Measure it.

SOURCES BMD Scale Readiness Assessment

Every number, grouped by ring, with its limits stated

RING ONE INTERNATIONAL	Gartner CMO Spend Survey 2023 to 2025; The CMO Survey (Moorman, Duke Fuqua) 2024 to 2025; Nielsen Annual Marketing Report 2024; ANA Programmatic Transparency 2023; Byron Sharp, How Brands Grow 2010; Binet and Field, IPA 2013 and 2019; Porter, HBR 1996; Lafley and Martin 2013; Domino's 2010 filings; Ad Age 2009; CNN Business 2024.
RING TWO REGIONAL	DataReportal Digital 2025 Saudi Arabia; IAB MENA 2025; Communicate/Cannes 2025; Vision 2030 Annual Report 2024; Monsha'at 2023 to 2025.
RING THREE LOCAL	GulfTalent 2026; Entasher and Digital Gravity agency pricing 2026; MHRSD and HRDF 2026; MIT (Hadzima) loaded-cost method.

STATED LIMITS

Gartner and most global surveys sample large firms, not Gulf SMEs; use the direction, not the ratio. Nielsen sells measurement, so its figures are flagged as vendor data. The 95-5 and 60/40 rules are directional benchmarks, not laws. And the honest gap: no rigorous Saudi survey of marketing-strategy maturity exists, so the core claim leans on global data plus the region's own missing measurement.

Built by people who build marketing departments

Building Your Marketing Department (BMD) helps executives in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf turn marketing from a cost into a system that produces measurable return. The method is the BUILD framework, applied across more than 40 marketing departments in the region and internationally. The disclosure from page 2 still stands: we have a commercial interest in you building a real marketing function. We wrote this to be useful whether or not you ever work with us.

You do not need more marketing activity. You need a marketing *strategy*.

THE VERDICT

Decide the four choices. The growth gets countable.
