

A growth in digital maturity helps local brands prepare for the year ahead

 By [Johan Walters](#)

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In last year's predictions we spoke about how brands were moving past digital transformation, saying we saw digital maturity playing a bigger role when it came to building sustainable brands.



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And if we said digital transformation was dead in 2022, then digital maturity is surely alive and thriving as we enter 2023. Here are some insights we gained from the work we did with some leading SA brands during 2022.

Research done by Boston Consulting Group shows that organisations which lead the way in what Google's benchmark refers to as "multi-moment marketing" – their highest level in the maturity framework – are more equipped to respond to changing market dynamics, and were twice as likely to grow their market share over a 12-month period. What's more, these companies also continued to outperform less advanced competitors by an average of 29 percentage points in cost savings and 18 percentage points in revenue.

2022 shows SA brands are ready to do things differently

We have been doing maturity assessments throughout 2022, as brands began to grasp the value of having a more digitally mature organisation. There was a particularly strong interest from the financial services sector. In fact one of our largest banking brands not only benchmarked their local operations, but also had a number of their African operations complete the work as well.

We also saw good uptake from the retail and automotive sectors and it is interesting to see that brands are quickly catching on to the power of this new way of measuring and improving. The process, which includes all stakeholders, from staff to leadership and agencies, allows all players to articulate their focus areas for the short- and long-term, in a structured fashion. Using the maturity framework, our output is an agreed, practical roadmap that acts as a guide for future efforts. This massively reduces duplicated work, tangential efforts and poorly planned spending.



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We also found that brands which had created a centre of excellence to oversee this type of work not only saw more value from the work, but with the addition of mini-labs, they were able to further boost return. These labs help teams to build an approach to tackle the immediate challenges while ensuring every team member is accountable for follow-up actions. This plays into the goal of having everyone pulling in the right direction, which is critical in an environment where budgets and skills are under pressure.

Some of the outtakes from the work we did in 2022:

- That many companies on legacy technology quickly understood that they needed to enable data-driven attribution and this could include adopting a blended tech approach if they wanted to avoid a rip and replace approach.
- More than just a tech question, many brands were not 100% sure they fully understood what data-driven marketing entails and how they would need to shift teams (or upskill), in order to embark on a data-driven future. Fortunately there was an openness to learning and this laid the groundwork for success.

- Privacy was also seen as a big challenge by many brands. A big part of the work we did was helping brands build a toolkit to address the many privacy challenges that lie ahead, including the deprecation of the third party cookie. Tools like GA4, consent mode, and server-side tracking were all considered.
- We learned that many brands don't have a full customer journey framework yet, with many still sitting in the performance marketing stage despite aspiring towards a full funnel framework.
- Data creative, including automation and personalisation, came up as a future focus for almost all the brands we worked with during the last year and this is very likely to continue into 2023 and beyond.
- As with all bigger enterprises, many of the brands we worked with during the year had to overcome the challenge of helping their legal and compliance teams to understand what is required to harvest first party data and the use cases for it in future marketing efforts.
- Those brands that involved steercos to help manage the process performed better, and those that are taking the time to look back and reflect 12-months down the line are laying the foundation for healthy digital maturation over the coming years.

Overall, South African brands have really made progress in moving up the maturity levels during 2022, with some even sitting on the brink of the multi-moment phases (described as dynamic execution across multiple channels, optimised toward individual customer business outcomes and transactions,) giving them a real advantage.

We definitely see more verticals embracing this way of planning and building for a digital future. And, if 2022 was the year of taking the first real steps towards transitioning from digital transformation to digital maturity, then South African brands can confidently step into 2023.

ABOUT JOHAN WALTERS

Johan is a digital marketing transformation specialist helping brands on their transformation towards digital marketing maturity.

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