

## **The Big Ideas. The Real Conversations. The Future of Marketing in Motion.**

Across five sessions, Navigate: Now & Next explored the tensions, opportunities, and transformations shaping modern marketing. From AI-powered operating models and organisational change to content ecosystems, creator-led discovery, and the growing importance of trust and human connection, the conversations reflected an industry in transition. The sessions did not position technology as the answer to everything, but as a force requiring better leadership, clearer strategy, and more intentional marketing. The recurring theme across the day was clear: the future belongs to organisations that can combine speed with clarity, automation with humanity, and performance with long-term brand value.

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### **SESSION 1: THE NOW - The CMO Tension: Cutting Through Complexity to Drive Growth in APAC**

- **Olivier Kuziner**, Managing Partner, APAC, Ekimetrics (Presenter + Moderator)
- **Alvin Neo**, Chief Customer and Marketing Officer, FairPrice Group
- **Lex Bradshaw-Zanger**, Chief Marketing & Digital Officer SAPMENA, L'Oréal Groupe

#### **Summary:**

This opening session explored the growing tensions shaping modern marketing leadership. While the fundamentals of marketing remain unchanged, the environment around marketers has become significantly more fragmented, data-heavy, and operationally complex. Through research conducted across CMOs and senior leaders in the region, the discussion unpacked the widening gap between business ambition and execution reality, and why the real challenge today is not technology itself, but decision-making. From overloaded KPIs and siloed organisations to AI adoption and short-term performance pressure, the session highlighted the need for clearer strategic frameworks, stronger organisational alignment, and more human-centred leadership in an increasingly automated world.

#### **7 Key Takeaways:**

##### **1. Marketing fundamentals have not changed. Execution has.**

The core principles of marketing still apply, but the environment around them has become dramatically more complex through fragmented media, rising consumer expectations, accelerating technology, and increased organisational pressure.

**2. The biggest challenge today is organisational complexity.**

Many of the tensions marketers face are internal rather than external. Siloed teams, disconnected KPIs, fragmented decision-making, and competing priorities are making effective execution increasingly difficult.

**3. More data does not automatically create better decisions.**

While marketers now have access to unprecedented amounts of data, the volume of information can often create confusion rather than clarity. The challenge is identifying which signals actually matter.

**4. AI is accelerating workflows, not replacing human judgment.**

The speakers acknowledged the growing role of AI in improving speed and efficiency, but reinforced that creativity, intuition, strategic thinking, and understanding human behaviour remain fundamentally human strengths.

**5. Brand and performance must work together.**

The discussion repeatedly returned to the tension between short-term sales delivery and long-term brand building. The consensus was clear: sustainable growth requires both. As discussed during the session, it is “sales overnight, brand over time.”

**6. Measurement frameworks need to evolve.**

Traditional measurement models often overvalue short-term attribution while underestimating broader business impact. Speakers highlighted the importance of aligning measurement with long-term business outcomes rather than isolated campaign metrics.

**7. Future-ready organisations require agility and trust.**

The strongest organisations are the ones building internal trust, aligning functions around shared outcomes, and creating operating models capable of adapting quickly to technological and market change.

**Bottom Line:**

The future of marketing will not be defined by who has the most technology, data, or AI tools. It will belong to organisations that can simplify complexity, align decision-making, and combine automation with deeply human understanding. In an increasingly fragmented landscape, clarity may become the greatest competitive advantage of all.

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## **SESSION 2: THE NOW - The CEO Conversation: The Future Leader**

- **Gita de Beer**, Global Director Strategic Initiatives, The HEINEKEN Company (Moderator)
- **Walter de Oude**, Founder and CEO, Chocolate Finance

### **Summary:**

This session explored how growth today is increasingly shaped by customer experience, organisational agility, and the intelligent use of technology rather than marketing communications alone. Drawing from the journey of building Singlife and Chocolate Finance, the conversation unpacked how modern businesses are redefining growth by solving real customer problems, simplifying experiences, and creating cultures built around experimentation and speed. The discussion also examined the rapid evolution of AI, not simply as a productivity tool, but as a fundamental shift in how organisations operate, hire, learn, and scale.

### **7 Key Takeaways:**

#### **1. Growth starts with solving a real customer problem.**

Successful brands are built around genuine customer needs rather than marketing narratives. The session highlighted that both Singlife and Chocolate Finance grew quickly because they addressed simple but meaningful frustrations around money management and accessibility.

#### **2. Customer experience is part of the brand.**

Brand building is no longer limited to advertising or communications. The ease of opening an account, the simplicity of a product experience, and the way customers interact with a platform are now just as important as campaigns or media visibility.

#### **3. Growth is an organisational responsibility, not a marketing silo.**

The discussion challenged the idea that marketing alone owns growth. Product, technology, operations, customer experience, and leadership all contribute to how customers experience a brand and whether that brand grows.

#### **4. AI is changing the nature of work itself.**

The role of employees is shifting from executing tasks manually to training, guiding, and collaborating with AI systems. Rather than simply improving efficiency, AI is fundamentally reshaping workflows, decision-making, and organisational structures.

#### **5. The real competitive advantage is adaptability.**

The companies best positioned for the future will be the ones that encourage experimentation, rapid learning, and continuous exploration rather than rigid processes or fixed operating models.

## **6. Talent matters more than credentials.**

The conversation reinforced that curiosity, hunger, adaptability, and willingness to learn are becoming more valuable than traditional resumes or formal qualifications. Future-ready organisations will increasingly prioritise mindset over pedigree.

## **7. AI lowers barriers to creativity and innovation.**

One of the strongest themes from the session was that technology is democratising creation. Individuals and small teams now have access to tools that previously required significant resources, opening up entirely new possibilities for innovation and entrepreneurship.

### **Bottom Line:**

The future of growth will belong to organisations that move quickly, stay deeply connected to customer needs, and build cultures designed for constant adaptation. In a world increasingly shaped by AI, the advantage will not come from having access to technology alone, but from how effectively people learn, experiment, and evolve alongside it.

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## **SESSION 3: THE SHIFT - Social Discovery: From Scroll to Decision**

- **Melissa Laurie**, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Oysterly Media

### **Summary:**

This session explored how discovery behaviour is rapidly shifting away from traditional search and toward social-first, video-led platforms. Using examples across Google, TikTok, Instagram, and emerging content ecosystems, the discussion highlighted how consumers increasingly expect discovery to feel immediate, visual, emotional, and community-driven rather than text-heavy and transactional. The session also examined why short-form video is no longer simply a content format, but a new discovery infrastructure, reshaping how brands attract attention, build relevance, and remain visible in an increasingly crowded digital environment.

### **7 Key Takeaways:**

#### **1. Discovery behaviour is fundamentally changing.**

Consumers are no longer relying solely on traditional search engines to discover products, brands, or experiences. Increasingly, discovery is happening through social feeds, creators, and short-form video platforms.

## **2. Social platforms are becoming search engines.**

Platforms like TikTok and Instagram are evolving beyond entertainment and social interaction into active discovery ecosystems where users search, evaluate, and make decisions directly within the platform experience.

## **3. Short-form video is shaping the future of attention.**

The rise of reels and short-form video reflects how audiences now prefer to consume information visually, quickly, and emotionally. Content must capture attention almost instantly in increasingly competitive feeds.

## **4. Brands are no longer competing only with competitors.**

In feed-based environments, brands compete against every other piece of content for attention. The challenge is not simply visibility, but creating content compelling enough to stop the scroll.

## **5. Authenticity outperforms perfection.**

The discussion highlighted the growing importance of creator-style content, user-generated storytelling, and lived-in experiences over polished, highly staged advertising formats. Audiences increasingly respond to content that feels real and relatable.

## **6. The content model is shifting from “one big campaign” to continuous creation.**

Brands need scalable content systems rather than isolated hero campaigns. Agile production models built around ongoing experimentation, iteration, and multiple formats are becoming essential.

## **7. Employee and community-driven content represent major untapped opportunities.**

The session highlighted how organisations can increasingly empower employees, creators, and communities to become active contributors to brand storytelling, helping brands create more relevant and discoverable content at scale.

### **Bottom Line:**

The future of discovery will not be driven by who shouts the loudest, but by who creates the most relevant, useful, and engaging experiences within the platforms where audiences already spend their time. As search becomes more social and feeds become the new storefronts, brands will need to rethink not only what content they create, but how quickly, consistently, and authentically they show up.

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## **SESSION 4: THE SHIFT - Orchestrate Everything: AI, Data, Content & Media in Real Time**

- **Scott Spirit**, Chief Growth Officer, Executive Director, S4 Capital | Monks

### **Summary:**

This session explored how AI is reshaping marketing operating models beyond simple automation or cost reduction. The discussion focused on the importance of connected data systems, modular content creation, and real-time decision-making, arguing that the future competitive advantage for brands will come from how effectively they connect intelligence to execution at scale. Rather than replacing creativity, AI was positioned as a force multiplier that allows teams to work faster, personalise content more effectively, and optimise campaigns continuously, while still relying on human judgement, strategy, and emotional understanding.

### **7 Key Takeaways:**

#### **1. The future advantage lies in connected systems, not isolated AI tools.**

Many organisations are experimenting with AI through disconnected pilots and point solutions. The real opportunity comes when data, media, content, and performance systems operate together in a unified ecosystem.

#### **2. Data is becoming the foundation of modern marketing operations.**

Without connected, real-time data flows across platforms, teams, and channels, brands cannot optimise effectively or activate campaigns dynamically. Data was positioned as the “connective tissue” that enables everything else.

#### **3. The traditional campaign model is no longer scalable.**

The old model of one campaign idea producing a limited set of assets is being replaced by modular systems that generate thousands of adaptive content variations tailored to different audiences, moments, and channels.

#### **4. AI changes workflows more than it changes creativity.**

Creative strategy, brand thinking, and emotional storytelling remain deeply human responsibilities. AI’s role is accelerating production, adaptation, optimisation, and execution rather than replacing strategic creative thinking.

#### **5. Speed and effectiveness now work together.**

The session challenged the idea that AI is primarily about reducing cost. Instead, the real value comes from increasing effectiveness through faster learning cycles, real-time optimisation, and continuous iteration.

## **6. Marketing teams will need to evolve structurally and culturally.**

The biggest barrier to transformation is not technology, but organisational change. Companies must rethink workflows, approval systems, team structures, and attitudes toward experimentation and automation.

## **7. Human connection becomes more valuable in an AI-heavy world.**

As automated content becomes more widespread, authentic human storytelling, emotional relevance, and cultural understanding become even more important differentiators for brands.

### **Bottom Line:**

The next era of marketing will not be defined by who adopts the most AI tools, but by who builds the most connected, adaptive, and intelligent operating systems around them. Success will depend on combining automation with human creativity, using real-time data to drive decisions, and creating organisations capable of learning and responding continuously at speed.

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## **SESSION 5: THE NEXT - Startup Showcase (In collaboration with Singapore Management University)**

- **Aditya Singh**, Co-Founder, ShiftRight
- **Alan Ho**, CEO, GoodBards
- **Anand Roy**, CEO, Wubble
- **Joe Lu**, CEO, HeyMax

### **Summary:**

The final session spotlighted a group of emerging startups showcasing how AI and technology are reshaping marketing operations, B2B growth, content creation, customer engagement, and loyalty ecosystems. From automated marketing orchestration and AI-driven lead generation to ethical music creation and travel-based rewards systems, the session highlighted how startups are solving longstanding industry inefficiencies with faster, more integrated, and more consumer-centric models. Across all presentations, the common theme was clear: technology is no longer just supporting marketing, it is redesigning how businesses operate, connect with audiences, and create value.

### **7 Key Takeaways:**

#### **1. AI is moving from experimentation to operational integration.**

The startups showcased practical applications of AI embedded directly into workflows, from marketing planning and campaign execution to sales prospecting and customer engagement, demonstrating that AI is increasingly becoming part of day-to-day operations rather than isolated innovation projects.

## **2. Marketing teams are being overwhelmed by fragmented tools and systems.**

Several founders highlighted the growing complexity marketers face with disconnected platforms, siloed data, and slow execution cycles. The opportunity lies in simplifying workflows through unified systems and integrated orchestration.

## **3. AI can dramatically accelerate marketing execution.**

Tasks that traditionally took weeks or months, such as building marketing plans, generating campaigns, producing content, or prospecting leads, are now being compressed into minutes or seconds through AI-assisted workflows.

## **4. Hyper-personalisation is becoming scalable.**

Whether through AI-generated content variations, region-specific lead generation, or adaptive music experiences, startups demonstrated how technology can personalise engagement at scale while responding dynamically to customer context and behaviour.

## **5. Ethical AI and responsible innovation are becoming competitive differentiators.**

The discussion around AI-generated music highlighted growing concerns around intellectual property, creative ownership, and ethical AI usage. Companies building transparent and responsible AI systems may gain stronger trust and long-term adoption.

## **6. Consumer expectations around loyalty are shifting toward emotional value.**

Traditional loyalty programmes based on discounts and transactional rewards are losing relevance. Travel-linked rewards and aspirational experiences are becoming more effective drivers of engagement and emotional connection.

## **7. Startups are increasingly shaping the future of marketing innovation.**

Rather than waiting for large organisations to evolve, startups are rapidly building solutions around emerging consumer behaviours, AI capabilities, and operational pain points, often moving faster than established enterprise systems.

### **Bottom Line:**

The startup showcase demonstrated that the future of marketing will be driven by businesses capable of combining AI, automation, personalisation, and consumer-centric thinking into integrated systems that move at speed. The winners will not simply adopt new technologies, but rethink how marketing, growth, loyalty, and customer engagement work together as connected experiences.

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