the BOOKMARKS 2026

CATEGORIES & CRITERIA

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south africa

BUILD

Where brands design and develop digital infrastructure, tools, and platforms that create seamless user experiences.
This category recognises the design, build, and optimisation of digital products and services - from responsive websites, mobile apps, and e-commerce platforms to internal systems, microsites, bots, and connected interfaces.

It celebrates digital utility, technical execution, and experience design that enable people to access, navigate, and benefit from digital environments.

Category Criteria:	Requirements:	Optional:
● Creative excellence (30%) ● Innovation & technical accomplishment (40%) ● Meeting or exceeding business goals and results (30%)	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary ● Results document	● URL ● Video / Images ● Include a creation timeline of build (if relevant)

ID	Sub-category	Description	Panel
WEBSITES & APPS			
PLT01	**Brand, Commercial & Retail Websites**	This is defined as a creative idea-led web browser-based experience. Successful entries will show how their website surpasses industry standards by seamlessly blending world-class user experiences, compelling content, and exceptional design, ultimately meeting business objectives and user needs. *This category is not for short-term or campaign microsites which should be entered under CHN15.	**Builders Panel**
PLT02	**E-commerce sites**	E-commerce websites should set the bar for seamless and engaging online shopping experiences. How does the online buying journey and supporting content enhance the user experience and drive sales?	**Builders Panel**

PLT03	Public Service and NPO Platforms	Any website or app for a government, civil society or "not-for-profit" organisation. This category focuses on the website or app as a marketing and communication tool: How does the design, experience and content deliver on marketing or communication objectives and drive business results?	Builders Panel
PLT04	Software, Services & Platforms	A rich web-based application designed to run in a browser - will be judged by its utility (UI and UX), functionality, quality and technical strength. This award is for software and user experience, not content. *Publishing apps have their own category (See Publishing).	Innovative Engineers Panel
PLT05	Mobile Apps	Any application installed on a mobile device, tablet or watch. The application should show world-class user experience, performance, design, content and accessibility. Successful entries will demonstrate a commitment to meeting both user goals and business needs in one seamless experience. *Publishing apps have their own category (See Publishing).	Builders Panel
PLT06	Mobile Sites	Interactive experiences that have been designed for mobile-first or mobile-only, for smart and/or feature phones. This category recognises interactive experiences that are not only responsive mobile views but designs that show optimised experiences, tailored specifically for the unique screen sizes and functionalities inherent in mobile devices. Indication of business results will be beneficial.	Builders Panel
CHN15	Campaign / Microsites	Any microsite built to market a particular product or service in the commercial space, relating directly to a specific campaign objective. Typically has a limited lifespan, and should not be an extension of the primary website for a brand which would then be entered into the Brand, Commercial & Retail Websites category. If the Microsite is no longer live at the time of entry submission, an offline rendition of the site should be presented, ideally in a video format, to enable judges to assess the UX and quality of the creative.	Marketers Panel

GAMES			
PLT07	**Games**	Digital games and gamification created either specifically for a brand (e.g. apps, Roblox, Minecraft) or the creative integration of a brand into a digital game (e.g. Fortnite).	**Innovative Engineers Panel**
PLATFORM INNOVATION			
*	**Platform Innovation**	The winner of this category must demonstrate a truly original, new-to-the-world, use or manipulation of the platform (app, web, mobile, games etc) and serve as a strategic tool to meet the marketing or communication objectives of their client. These platforms include brand, commercial and retail websites, microsites, E-commerce sites, public service and NPO platforms, web apps, mobile apps, mobile sites and games. *This category must be entered under INNOVATE. Entry code can be found there.	**Builders Panel**
INTERNAL PLATFORMS			
PLT09	**Employee Experience Programme**	Any platform, digital employee experience or company intranet that can demonstrate uplift and effectiveness in employee marketing and communications or upliftment in human resources, improving employee welfare and overall business performance.	**Builders Panel**
PLT10	**Internal Business Platforms**	Any internal-facing digital platforms that increase internal efficiencies, communication, customer relationships or employee experiences. This could be anything from HR tools, employee wellness and rewards programs to digital asset management.	**Builders Panel**
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DESIGN			
PLT11	**Customer Experience Design**	Any digital touchpoint that enhances a customer's experience of a brand, product or service. Includes: active desktop screens, branded technology, corporate presentations, downloadable desktop widgets created specifically for a brand, installations, intelligent applications connected to the Internet, kiosks, and touch tables.	**Builders Panel**

BUILD CRAFT			
CRF03	**Excellence in Craft: Interface Design**	The design of exceptional, engaging interactive digital experiences. Winners in this category should show exceptional design craft, content design and interaction design. The design should elevate and support the overall user experience and user interface to deliver a world-class experience.	**Builders Panel**
CRF06	**Excellence in Craft: UX**	This category celebrates digital experiences that seamlessly merge strategic thinking with functional design, setting the stage for interactions that leave a lasting and positive impression on users. This category distinguishes itself from User Interface as the focus is on functional, effective and seamless experience.	**Builders Panel**
CRF11	**Excellence in Craft: Interactive Design**	For excellence in experiential, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality and game design, resulting in entertaining experiences for users. Including but not limited to immersive systems, video mapping, window-on-world systems (WoW) and telepresence. Creativity will be a key factor in this category, please provide details of your creative approach, explain how your creativity contributed to success and the results achieved as a result of your approach.	**Innovative Engineers Panel**

COMMUNICATE

Where ideas and storytelling bring brands to life across digital environments.
This category honours digital storytelling across video, audio, written and visual mediums - spanning online films, branded content, podcasts, sonic branding, copywriting, interface design and visual identity.

It rewards creativity in digital expression that brings narratives to life across screens, formats, and channels.

Category Criteria:	Requirements:	Optional
• Creative excellence (40%) • Innovation & technical accomplishment (30%) • Meeting or exceeding business goals and results (30%)	**Compulsory** • One-pager Summary • Results document	• URL • Video • Images

ID	Sub-category	Description	Panel
CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS			
CAM05	**Integrated Digital Campaign**	Excellence in a digital marketing campaign that utilises multiple digital channels. This can include web, app and social channels, VR, AR, installations, motion chairs, multi-screen and multi-dimensional experiences etc.	**Marketers Panel**
CAM08	**Second Screen Campaign**	Excellence in a digital marketing campaign or digital media buying campaign, that uses two or more screens (as channels) within the campaign to achieve marketing results. Planned and realised consumer journey (from awareness to conversion) needs to be shared, alongside anticipated, and actual commercial and media results.	**Marketers Panel**

CHN05	Online Video Series	Any online or digital video content created as part of a short-term campaign or series, where storytelling or narrative is presented. Entrants must show how the content helps achieve marketing objectives and business goals (e.g. PR impact, views, view-through rate, duration). Include production costs as media investment.	**Marketers Panel**
CHN17	**Podcasts, Live Streaming and Audio Streaming**	The use of a podcast, podcast series or audio streaming to achieve a marketing or campaign goal. Content may be published on any platform. This includes advertising campaigns on audio channels. Planned/anticipated media, channel and business results should be declared, together with actual results to measure impact. Share production/development and paid media costs.	**Marketers Panel**
CAM07	**Branded Content**	A marketing campaign including brand placement within a digital content context to promote a product or service, where the content remains the hero. Planned/anticipated media, channel and business results should be declared, together with actual results to measure impact.	**Marketers Panel**
COMMUNICATION CRAFT			
CRF01	**Excellence in Craft: Marketing Copywriting**	For an excellent piece or body of copywriting work, written specifically for Digital media.	**Marketing Craft Panel**
CRF02	**Excellence in Craft: Research**	For excellent research that delivered a new insight that enhanced a campaign or publication. This category cannot receive entries from multiple years. Entry needs to clearly define what insight(s) were sought, and the business rationale/opportunity behind it. Research results need to be presented in a	**Marketing Craft Panel**

		quantitative as well as qualitative manner e.g. size of the research pool, and which method was used to gain insights.	
*	**Excellence in Craft: Interface Design**	The design of exceptional, engaging interactive digital experiences. Winners in this category should show exceptional design craft, content design and interaction design. The design should elevate and support the overall user experience and user interface to deliver a world-class experience. *This category must be entered under BUILD. Entry code can be found there.	**Builders Panel**
CRF07	**Excellence in Craft: Online Video / Moving Image**	Creative use of online video and digital footage with technical skill involved, including 360 and interactive video. This category cannot receive entries from multiple years. The rationale for using the chosen technical and production methods should be shared, together with the planned outcome, be it media performance, PR, innovation capability enhancement, etc.	**Marketing Craft Panel**
CRF10	**Excellence in Craft: Use of Sound**	For the most accomplished and successful use of music and/or sound in a digital application, site, video or installation including sonic branding, music/brand partnership, and music-initiated campaigns etc.	**Marketing Craft Panel**
CRF12	**Excellence in Craft: Voice Experience Design**	For creative design practice centred around the use of voice assistants or conversational design using voice user interfaces. A demonstration of a clear understanding of how people naturally communicate with their voices and evidence of sophisticated design for voice interaction, experience and services supporting the marketing process.	**Innovative Engineers Panel**

CONNECT

Where digital fosters participation, co-creation, and community.
This category celebrates work that builds meaningful interaction between people and brands - from social communities and UGC campaigns to live digital activations, creator collaborations, interactive experiences, commerce moments, and community-led initiatives.

It recognises the power of participation, conversation, and collective creativity in shaping culture and driving engagement.

Category Criteria:	Requirements:	Optional
• Creative excellence (40%) • Innovation & technical accomplishment (30%) • Meeting or exceeding business goals and results (30%)	**Compulsory** • One-pager Summary • Results document	• URL • Video • Images

ID	Sub-category	Description	Panel
SOCIAL			
COMO3	**Social Media Campaigns**	Brand communication campaigns where social media was the primary or sole medium used. Entries can be on one platform (e.g. TikTok) or can be a Social Media programme that extends across several platforms, e.g. TikTok, Instagram and Facebook, as well as custom platforms. Paid-for influencers engaged in the success of the campaign should be disclosed with budgets, where possible.	**Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel**
COMO4	**Online Video Channels**	Online video channels with dedicated fans or followers. Entrants need to show how this channel helped achieve marketing objectives, not paid media performance results. This category does not exclude YouTube, Meta, Google, or TikTok channels however entries should not be focused on executing paid strategies on	**Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel**

		these channels but rather the advocacy and amplification of the communities they have. Publishing channels have their own category (See Publishing).	
*	**Social Media Innovation**	Creative utilisation of existing social platforms and/or online communities to impact business objectives. This may also include the utilisation of new functionality of existing social platforms. Please provide planned KPI's with evidence of actual results. *This category must be entered under INNOVATE. Entry code can be found there.	**Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel**
COMMUNITY			
COMO1	**Social Communities**	This category recognises exceptional efforts in creating, nurturing, and sustaining vibrant social communities for brands or publishers. Eligible entries include new or ongoing communities where social activity is strategically designed to engage users, foster meaningful connections, and strengthen loyalty. Please provide planned KPI's with evidence of actual results.	**Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel**
COMO2	**Co-Creation & User-Generated Content (UGC)**	Social campaigns and activities created to encourage users or communities to contribute or collaborate with the brand. Best use of user-generated content (not influencer, celebrity or brand-led created or developed content) to achieve a marketing goal. Entrants must show innovation in encouraging and leveraging UGC.	**Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel**

| COMO5 | Influencer Marketing | Excellence in the use of influencer marketing. Work entered must be Influencer-generated content only and the primary channel should be the influencer's own social channels.

Entries must include:

1. Objectives vs results: Detailed campaign objectives and outcomes, including KPIs such as revenue impact, ROAS, brand lift (brand health), conversion rates, website traffic, or other relevant client/campaign metrics.
2. Audience alignment: A statement explaining how the influencer's audience aligns with the brand's target market, demonstrating strategic relevance.
3. Budget transparency:
   ○ Influencer costs (if an NDA prevents disclosure, include as part of production costs).
     Paid media budget, if applicable (including spark ads or any format that would boost performance unnaturally).
4. Media performance: Clearly distinguish between organic performance and any paid media or amplification, with breakdowns for reach, impressions, engagements, clicks, and other relevant metrics.

Compliance and authenticity:

● All content must comply with local and platform-specific disclosure requirements. Failure to properly disclose paid or sponsored content will result in disqualification.
● Content must be original to the influencer and not repurposed from existing brand campaigns, with the exception of a brand logo appearing on the content. | **Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel** |

		Additional considerations: • For collaborations involving multiple creators, results should be aggregated and clearly attributed to each participant. • All performance claims should be verifiable through analytics dashboards, screenshots, or platform reports.	

COMO7	**Creator Marketing**	Entries must demonstrate excellence in the use of creator marketing and clearly distinguish between influencers and creators.
		
		Work submitted should be agency or creator-devised, but always creator-led content for a brand partner. The primary channels should be the creator's own social platforms or brand channels.
		
		Entries must include:
		
		5. Objectives vs results: Detailed campaign objectives and outcomes, including KPIs such as revenue impact, ROAS, brand lift (brand health), conversion rates, website traffic, or other relevant client/campaign metrics.
		6. Audience alignment: A statement explaining how the creator's audience aligns with the brand's target market, demonstrating strategic relevance.
		7. Budget transparency:
		    ○ Creator costs (if an NDA prevents disclosure, include as part of production costs).
		        Paid media budget, if applicable (including spark ads or any format that would boost performance unnaturally).
		8. Media performance: Clearly distinguish between organic performance and any paid media or amplification, with breakdowns
			Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel

for reach, impressions, engagements, clicks, and other relevant metrics.

Compliance and authenticity:

- All content must comply with local and platform-specific disclosure requirements. Failure to properly disclose paid or sponsored content will result in disqualification.
- Content must be original to the creator and not repurposed from existing brand campaigns, with the exception of a brand logo appearing on the content.

Additional considerations:

- For collaborations involving multiple creators, results should be aggregated and clearly attributed to each participant.
- All performance claims should be verifiable through analytics dashboards, screenshots, or platform reports.

		BOTS, MESSAGING AND DARK SOCIAL	
CHN16	**Bots, Messaging and Dark Social**	Use of chat, chatbots, conversational AI chatbots and messaging platforms (dark social) to achieve a marketing or communication result. If utilised, the use of conversational AI systems, those that use deep learning and natural language processing (NLP) techniques to generate human-like text responses in real-time to be detailed. Planned Consumer Journey (where applicable) should be shared with anticipated consumer behaviour and desired marketing objectives to demonstrate impact. Production/development costs, as well as media costs to drive user adoption, should also be shared.	**Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel**

EXPERIENTIAL			
CHN11	**Digital Installation and Activations**	Use of digital technology to engage audiences in a typically out-of-home or events setting. This category welcomes innovation and campaigns using digital-out-of-home (DOOH) media.	**Innovative Engineers Panel**
CHN18	**Interactive Mixed Media**	Use of digital and non-digital channels in an integrated manner to achieve marketing objectives. Entries in this category must show that multiple types of media were used in the campaign (e.g. Screens, Social, DOOH,). This could include syncing or real-time augmentation to create the effect of interactive print etc. Planned/anticipated media, channel and business results should be declared together with actual results.	**Marketers Panel**
ENGAGEMENT CRAFT			
CRF08	**Excellence in Craft: Social Media Community Management**	For excellent community management that builds, engages and maintains a highly engaged audience while cultivating an overwhelmingly positive sentiment for the brand. This can be either campaign-specific or as part of a long-term consumer engagement strategy. In both cases, business objectives and KPIs need to be shared.	**Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel**
CRF14	**Excellence in Craft: Creator Content**	Honours outstanding content and creativity made (independently) by creators and influencers. Not necessarily in partnership with a brand.	**Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel**

INNOVATE

Where technology and creativity combine to unlock new possibilities and shape the future of digital experiences.
This category recognises emerging and transformative work - including AI, AR/VR, mixed reality, automation, platform engineering, experimentation, and novel applications of data or creative technology.

It celebrates breakthrough ideas, prototypes, and digital inventions that push boundaries, challenge convention, and redefine what digital can do.

Category Criteria:	Requirements:	Optional
• Creative excellence (30%) • Innovation & technical accomplishment (40%) • Meeting or exceeding business goals and results (30%)	**Compulsory** • One-pager Summary • Results document	• URL • Video

ID	Sub-category	Description	Panel
EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES			
EME01	**Virtual Reality (VR) & Augmented Reality (AR)**	Use of Metaverse, AR and VR A creative use of AR, VR or the Metaverse to promote a brand and add to business results (Cannot be a test case)	**Innovative Engineers Panel**
EME02	**Internet of Things**	Use of atypical internet devices (i.e. not phone or computer) to achieve a marketing or communication goal. i.e.: Cross-device work that uses at least one atypical internet device - including, but not limited to, wearables, driveables, sports devices, smart watches, flyables, household smart objects and sensors - to achieve marketing objectives. This entry must prove value to the end-user and integration into their lives.	**Innovative Engineers Panel**

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE			
EME03	**Artificial Intelligence: Product, Platform and Experience**	Recognises the best AI experiences across industries and disciplines, with a focus on products and platforms that transform the experience of services, organisations, businesses, customers, or everyday life.	**Innovative Engineers Panel**
EME04	**Artificial Intelligence: Creative Communication**	Recognises the creative use of AI in advertising campaigns and / or marketing communications. Creativity will be a key factor in this category, explain how your creativity contributed to success and the results achieved.	**Innovative Engineers Panel**
INNOVATION			
PLT08	**Platform Innovation**	The winner of this category must demonstrate a truly original, new-to-the-world, use or manipulation of the platform (app, web, mobile, games etc) and serve as a strategic tool to meet the marketing or communication objectives of their client. These platforms include brand, commercial and retail websites, microsites, E-commerce sites, public service and NPO platforms, web apps, mobile apps, mobile sites and games.	**Builders Panel**
CHN14	**Channel Innovation**	The winner of this category must demonstrate a truly original, new-to-the-world, use or manipulation of the channel or media. Your innovation proves what's possible when creativity and technology come together for an organisation, product or service to achieve or exceed its goals. May include media innovation in paid or organic search marketing, social advertising, display advertising, native advertising, video content, media buying, email, direct and inbound marketing, programmatic media or use of CRM, loyalty programs and gamification.	**Performance Marketing Panel**

COM06	Social Media Innovation	Creative utilisation of existing social platforms and/or online communities to impact business objectives. This may also include the utilisation of new functionality of existing social platforms. Please provide planned KPI's with evidence of actual results.	Social, Community and Influencer Marketing Panel
*	Publisher Innovation	A unique new digital news product or content presentation method – anything not yet done in the South African media – or an innovative upgrade to an existing news product such as a website or an app. *This category must be entered under PUBLISH. Entry code can be found there.	Publishers Panel
EME05	Artificial Intelligence Innovation	The winner of this category must demonstrate a truly original, new-to-the-world, use of AI in either product, platform, experience or creative communication to meet the marketing or business objectives of their client.	Innovative Engineers Panel
INNOVATION CRAFT			
CRF04	Excellence in Craft: Software, Coding & Tech Innovation	Awarded for demonstrable excellence and innovation in coding or use of technology in an online campaign or platform. Special attention is weighted to the inventive use of an existing or new technology or group of technologies to enhance the user experience and/or brand communication. This can include but is not limited to, smart automation, apps, on-demand services, content crowdsourcing, cloud services and marketplaces.	Innovative Engineers Panel
CRF15	Excellence in Craft: Innovative use of Technology	Innovation in the use of technology for all digital platforms. The technology must add value to the overall experience and brand offering. *Original content can be a video navigating the digital experience.	Innovative Engineers Panel

IMPACT

Where digital creativity demonstrates tangible value through performance, purpose, and results.
This category rewards work that proves the impact of digital - from effectiveness and ROI to purposeful change, data-driven insights, commerce innovation, and measurable behavioural influence.

It celebrates ideas that deliver clear outcomes, whether commercial, social, or cultural, demonstrating the power of digital to drive results.

Category Criteria:	Requirements:	Optional
● Creative excellence (40%) ● Innovation & technical accomplishment (20%) ● Meeting or exceeding business goals and results (40%)	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary ● Results document	● URL ● Video ● Images

ID	Sub-category	Description	Panel
CAMPAIGN STRATEGY AND EFFECTIVENESS			
CAM01	Digital Campaign Strategy	Excellence in digital strategic thinking and planning. The winner will demonstrate the ingenuity of the strategy (not the work) and how it led to success, showing objectives being met and impact on business results.	Marketers Panel
CAM03	Mobile Campaign Strategy	Campaigns run primarily through mobile channels. Consider innovation for Activation by Location. Make sure that the entry focuses on mobile as a critical part of the campaign with demonstrated business impact / ROI. If a mobile social media app/channel is a primary element of the campaign, elaborate on how this gets integrated into the broader mobile campaign strategy.	Marketers Panel
CHN06	Content Marketing Strategy	Excellence in Digital Content Marketing strategic thinking and planning. The entry must demonstrate, and prove through results, the ingenuity of the strategy through its holistic approach and how it led to attracting, retaining,	Marketers Panel

		or growing a clearly defined audience. Planned/anticipated media, channel and business results should be declared, together with actual results e.g. sales and or consumer acquisition lift, retention challenges/opportunities, incremental gains from remarketing, including 1st-time buyer acquisition and LTV gains of existing buyers, etc.	
CAMO4	Best Use of Data in a Campaign	A marketing campaign which has used data in an interesting and/or groundbreaking way to achieve its success. Entrants must show how data formed the backbone of the campaign. Entrants should include a clear, detailed data strategy as well as demonstrable ROI. Please also include what type of data sources were used and show how data was used to interact or communicate with customers to provide value.	Marketers Panel
CAMO6	Break Through on a Budget	A campaign with creative use of modest budgets and/or resources to create maximum impact. Need to focus on effectiveness and ROI. Actual costs of the campaign (or % of total marketing budget utilised) to be fully disclosed, including Production and Media to demonstrate why you consider this campaign as developed within a shoestring budget.	Marketers Panel
PERFORMANCE MARKETING			
CHNO1	Paid Search Marketing	The use of Paid Search Engine Marketing (PPC) to achieve marketing and business goals. It is important to show key objectives and performance metrics against the objectives. Entrants must show the critical role that paid search played in the campaign and results. Media investment, your technical approach and ROI should be clearly stated.	Performance Marketing Panel
CHNO2	Search Engine Optimisation	SEO and other search marketing techniques to achieve marketing goals and business goals. It is important to show key objectives and performance metrics against the objectives. Your technical and creative approach; and	Performance Marketing Panel

		ROI should be clearly stated.	
CHN03	**Display Advertising**	Banners, page take-overs and any other premium (direct-from-publisher) bought-media advertising. It is important to show key objectives and performance metrics against the objectives. Media investment and ROI should be clearly stated.	**Performance Marketing Panel**
CHN04	**Native Advertising**	Advertiser-sponsored, publisher-carried content designed to market a product or service through content development. Please include what type of native advertising was used and why. Please also show the alignment of the desired audience to content and show website/app performance data.	**Performance Marketing Panel**
CHN07	**Social Paid Advertising**	Paid media campaigns run on social media platforms specifically, leveraging these social platforms to deliver exceptional results. Media investment and ROI should be clearly stated.	**Performance Marketing Panel**
CHN08	**Innovative Use of Media Planning**	Demonstrable innovation in digital media placement or buying. Winners must show real creativity in how unusual channels were used or conventional channels were used in new ways to achieve digital marketing objectives.	**Performance Marketing Panel**
CHN09	**Email, Direct & Inbound Marketing**	Use of email, SMS, direct digital marketing and other inbound techniques to achieve digital marketing objectives. Entrants must show the critical role that inbound marketing played in the campaign and its results. Planned/anticipated media, channel and business results should be declared, together with actual results to measure impact.	**Performance Marketing Panel**
CHN10	**Use of Programmatic Media**	Use of programmatic media buying techniques to deliver exceptional marketing results for brands. Entries should show new, clever and effective ways of programmatic buying that make use of data sources and re-targeting. Programmatic buying extends beyond banner display and can include social	**Performance Marketing Panel**

		channels, digital-out-of-home (DOOH) and other channels where innovative use of programmatic media has been displayed.	
CHN13	Use of CRM, Loyalty Programs & Gamification	Excellence in the use of customer data and targeting to achieve digital marketing results, including online loyalty programs and gamification. It is important to show key objectives and performance metrics against the objectives. Media investment and ROI should be clearly stated.	Innovative Engineers Panel
*	Channel Innovation	The winner of this category must demonstrate a truly original, new-to-the-world, use or manipulation of the channel or media. Your innovation proves what's possible when creativity and technology come together for an organisation, product or service to achieve or exceed its goals. May include media innovation in paid or organic search marketing, social advertising, display advertising, native advertising, video content, media buying, email, direct and inbound marketing, programmatic media or use of CRM, loyalty programs and gamification. *This category must be entered under INNOVATE. Entry code can be found there.	Performance Marketing Panel
IMPACT CRAFT			
CRF05	Excellence in Craft: Strategy	For demonstrable excellence in strategic thinking. Entries in this category will be judged on how the strategy unlocked insights and understanding of consumer behaviours/needs in order to develop a customised strategy to meet a client's specific business objectives, marketing goals and overall brand positioning. This category cannot receive entries from multiple years.	Marketing Craft Panel

CRF13	Excellence in Craft: Digital Content Marketing	A demonstration of the innovative use of content marketing to engage an audience and grow its long-term value. Pure content marketing has a content-first approach (I.E the content is the product, and the brand is secondary).	Marketing Craft Panel
CRF09	Excellence in Craft: Digital Media	For the best and most innovative use of paid digital media (including organic search). Entrants are required to demonstrate creativity and technical expertise that takes the work beyond a standard digital strategy.	Performance Marketing Panel

PUBLISH

Where digital publishers innovate in storytelling, content delivery, and monetisation models.

This section celebrates publisher-led digital excellence - from large-scale and niche sites to newsletters, social-first campaigns, and multimedia storytelling. It rewards innovation in data journalism, video, live coverage, and audience engagement, as well as pioneering monetisation strategies that sustain digital media businesses.

Category Criteria:	Requirements:	Optional
● Storytelling excellence (40%) ● Innovation & technical accomplishment (30%) ● Meeting or exceeding audience growth and advertiser and/or reader revenue goals (30%)	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary ● Results document	● URL ● Video ● Images

ID	Sub-category	Description	Panel
PUBLISHING			
PUB01	**Publisher Sites (Mass Appeal)**	Any publishing sites intended to distribute information to a mass audience for commercial or non-commercial purposes, with 1 million or above in page views monthly. Important to consider: How has this publisher shaped national conversation? Has this publisher implemented new, engaging storytelling techniques and mechanisms? Has this publisher on-boarded or created tech to add to its offering? How has this publisher countered disinformation and misinformation?	**Publishers Panel**
PUB02	**Custom or Community Publishing**	Any publisher, of any size, that produces content for commercial or non-commercial purposes to distribute information to a niche audience (up to 1 million page views monthly), meaning it is aimed at communities of	**Publishers Panel**

		interest or geographic niche audiences, or for specific events or themes. Please provide expected ROI / benchmark on measurement (Eg. Audience numbers) in your entry.	
PUB03	**Email Newsletters & Marketing**	Editorial content distributed via email, or other produced editorial marketing campaigns via email, displaying innovative, highly effective and creative use of the medium. The entry should show engagement results as well as the newsletter's effect on the larger publisher business. I.e. Did it build on the subscription base? Did it increase trust? Did it deliver impressions?	**Publishers Panel**
PUB04	**Social Media Content**	Innovative, highly effective and creative use of social media platforms for the publication of news content or for other publisher-produced editorial marketing campaigns. This category moves beyond publisher content distribution on social media and rewards publishers embracing social media to reach new audiences and tell different stories, in different formats. *Engaged social communities set up for publishers can be entered under COM01	**Publishers Panel**
PUB05	**Data Strategy & Data Journalism**	Innovative, highly effective and creative use of data visualisations, infographics and other forms of data journalism in news reporting; in publisher-produced editorial marketing campaigns; or in internal applications such as data dashboards and reports.	**Publishers Panel**
PUB06	**Video Content**	Innovative, highly effective and creative use of video in news reporting or in other publisher-produced editorial marketing campaigns.	**Publishers Panel**

PUB07	Live Event Content	Innovative, highly effective and creative use of the digital medium to cover a live news event (including sports events) in any combination of reporting, multimedia, social media and more.	Publishers Panel
PUB08	Audio Content & Podcasts	Innovative, highly effective and creative use of audio in news reporting, podcasting or in other editorial marketing campaigns.	Publishers Panel
PUB09	Publisher Innovation	A unique new digital news product or content presentation method – anything not yet done in the South African media – or an innovative upgrade to an existing news product such as a website or an app.	Publishers Panel
PUB10	Publisher Brand-Building Campaigns	Any digital campaign designed to develop or promote a publisher's digital brands (can include online PR, live online event content, online reader engagement initiatives).	Publishers Panel
PUB11	Publisher Monetisation	Innovative, highly effective and creative use of digital publisher initiatives, designed to support the publisher's revenue goals, including all forms of paywalls, memberships, sponsorships, native advertising, new advertising formats etc.	Publishers Panel

SPECIAL HONOURS

Where we celebrate the people and organisations driving digital transformation and impact.

This section recognises the visionaries, innovators, and change-makers shaping the digital marketing ecosystem - from students and rising stars to established marketers, agencies, publishers, and brands. It also honours work that drives purpose, inclusivity, and long-term industry growth.

ID	Sub-category	Description	Category Criteria	Requirements	Panel
SPECIAL HONOURS					
HONO1	**Best Digital Student**	Best student studying a digital marketing course at an institution, including digital marketing and related disciplines.	**Category Criteria** ● Quality of work submitted ● Demonstrate potential ● Demonstrate innovative, and creative digital thinking	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary: please include bio, LinkedIn Profile ● Up to 3 Testimonials to support above rationale with contact email addresses **Optional** ● Overview entry video	**Youth Action Panel**
HONO2	**Digital Rising Star**	Best person under 35 who has made a significant contribution to digital marketing this year through their work (can be agency, publisher or other). Group work is applicable,	**Category Criteria** ● Quality of work submitted ● Demonstrate potential ● Demonstrate innovative, and creative digital thinking	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary: please include bio, LinkedIn Profile ● Up to 3 Testimonials to support above rationale with contact email addresses **Optional**	**Youth Action Panel**

		but demonstrated individual work would be highly beneficial.		● Overview entry video	
HONO5	**Best Contribution to Transformation in the Digital Industry**	Organisation or the person who has made the most convincing contribution to growing diversity in the digital marketing industry in line with overall goals for an integrated South Africa. This could be through any meaningful mechanism ranging from ownership to participation.	**Category Criteria** ● Clear evidence of support for and success in transforming the digital industry to be more representative in terms of culture, race and gender.	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary: please include LinkedIn bio where applicable ● Please include resources and/or testimonials to support rationale with contactable email addresses **Optional** Overview entry video	**Special Honours**
HONO6	**Pixel for Purpose**	Awarded to a piece of work (site, app, publication or any other digital content piece) that made a significant positive impact which reflects long-term sustainable change. The winner will have conclusively proven that the idea worked.	**Category Criteria** ● Campaign strategy. ● Creative excellence. ● Evidence of purposefulness (making the world a better place). ● Evidence of meaningful change/new features (for previous entrants). ● Meeting of business goals & results (please provide clear evidence).	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary ● Results document **Optional** ● URL ● Video ● Images	**Special Honours**

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HONO7	Best Individual Contribution to Digital Marketing	This award recognises an individual who has made the greatest contribution to the digital marketing industry in South Africa, in the past 24 months, from either agency, publisher, brand or other. *IAB Chairperson and CEO not eligible.	**Category Criteria** ● Evidence of innovation and championing digital (marketing, publishing, brand or other) and furthered the success of the digital industry in South Africa within the time frame (24 months)	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary ● Please include bio, LinkedIn Profile ● Testimonials to support above rationale with contact email address **Optional:** ● Overview entry video	**Special Honours**
HONO8	Best Direct Brand or Online Business	A company born in digital and enabled by technology to build its business through direct customer relationships and non-traditional, non-linear supply chains, where revenue results from the direct relationships between the company and its customers.	**Category Criteria** ● Overall excellence in direct customer relationships through digital. ● Evidence of growth of customer acquisition through technology and online communities. ● Evidence of rapid & responsive product development through online feedback loops. ● Evidence of user-generated content and peer referrals (preferably demonstrating effect on increased sales).	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary ● Please include brand or business LinkedIn Page ● Testimonials to support above rationale with contact email address **Optional:** ● Overview entry video	**Special Honours**

HON12	Localisation & Cultural Relevance	This category celebrates work that resonates deeply with South African audiences through authentic cultural insight, inclusive storytelling, and meaningful local relevance. It recognises ideas rooted in African context.	**Category Criteria** ● Entries should demonstrate how localisation and cultural nuance enhanced the campaign effectiveness.	**Compulsory** ● One-pager Summary ● Please include brand or business LinkedIn Page ● Testimonials to support above rationale with contact email address **Optional:** ● Overview entry video	**Special Honours**
	Best Marketer	Based on performance in the Bookmark Awards, and does not require an individual to enter.	**Category Criteria** Points earned in the 2026 Bookmark Awards.		**N.A**
	Best Creative	Based on performance in the Bookmark Awards, and does not require an individual to enter.	**Category Criteria** Points earned in the 2026 Bookmark Awards.		**N.A**
	Digital Brand of the Year	Based on performance in the Bookmark Awards, and does not require a brand to enter.	**Category Criteria** Points earned in the 2026 Bookmark Awards.		**N.A**
	Best Publisher	Based on performance in the Bookmark Awards, and does not require a brand to enter.	**Category Criteria** Points earned in the 2026 Bookmark Awards.		**N.A**

	Best Digital Agency	Based on performance in the Bookmark Awards, and does not require a brand to enter.	**Category Criteria** Points earned in the 2026 Bookmark Awards.	N.A
	Outstanding Individual Impact in Digital	This award recognises an outstanding contribution by an individual to the digital industry, regardless of age, title, or tenure. It is not a lifetime achievement award, nor is it age-restricted. Instead, it celebrates a specific contribution that has had a tangible impact on the industry or audiences.	**Category Criteria** The award recipient will be selected from a shortlist compiled by the IAB Executive in conjunction with the Bookmark Awards Committee.	N.A