

Marks & Spencer TIV Framework Assessment Report

Section	Score %	Category
Business & Strategy	53.3%	Technology Follower
Applications & Data	63.3%	Technology Adopter
Infrastructure	43.3%	Technology Follower
Total	53.3%	Technology Follower

Executive Summary

Marks & Spencer (M&S) demonstrates a mixed profile in its technology, infrastructure, and data strategy. The company has clear commitments to digital transformation, evidenced by investments in analytics platforms, AI-powered personalization, and governance. However, leadership structure remains fragmented with no visible Chief Data Officer or AI Officer, while reliance on external vendors persists. The 2025 cyberattack further highlighted structural weaknesses in infrastructure and security readiness. Overall, M&S is best categorized as a Technology Follower, with strengths in Applications & Data but notable execution risks and infrastructure gaps.

Strengths

- Clear strategic commitment: “digital & technology” is baked into their “reshaping for growth” agenda.
- Strong investment in data & analytics (Azure / modern stack) and governance (catalog, stewardship).
- Good public engineering culture signals (open blog, component library, platform evolution).
- Use of AI / personalization in fashion, computer vision in stores, planning modernization via o9, etc.
- Transparency on the cyberattack — shows willingness to be visible on risks

Weaknesses

- C-Suite / leadership structure is blurry, with role turnover (digital chief exit) and lack of distinct AI or data execs.

- Infrastructure maturity is low (CI/CD, ML ops, compute, observability) in visible evidence.
- Hiring velocity, seniority mix, internal hiring vs vendor mix: public evidence is weak.
- Governance / ethics / AI policy maturity: partial but not robust visible signals.
- Dependence on external vendors / partner platforms (o9, First Insight, SymphonyAI) rather than fully building in house.

Business & Strategy

The company lacks a Chief Data Officer and a dedicated Chief Information Officer role, but has a Chief Technology Officer (historically Rob Barnes, later transitioned into a Chief Digital & Technology Officer role). Technology is a declared strategic pillar, supported by investments such as a £340m automated National Distribution Centre, the adoption of o9 AI planning systems, SymphonyAI computer vision deployments, and Alation data governance. Hiring evidence is mixed: role diversity is apparent, but hiring velocity and seniority mix are weakly supported in public sources. Consultant reliance remains significant, with a history of outsourcing to TCS. Employee sentiment appears mixed, with some evidence of training initiatives such as a Data & AI Academy. Developer culture is strong, as shown by the Engineering blog and open-source contributions.

Applications & Data

The company has invested in modern web platforms and modular identity management systems, with personalization and AI increasingly integrated into the customer experience. AI-driven personalization is visible in clothing and wine, supported by partnerships with First Insight and Preferabli. Analytics capabilities are strong with Azure Synapse, Databricks, and Alation for governance. Omnichannel integration and customer journey improvements are evident, although experimentation platforms and CMP transparency are less visible. The company demonstrates maturity in governance and customer analytics, but infrastructure gaps limit full leverage of its applications stack.

Infrastructure

The firm relies primarily on Microsoft Azure, with Synapse, Databricks, and Data Lake integrations forming the backbone of its analytics stack. However, there is no evidence of multi-cloud strategy, AI cloud partnerships, or ML Ops maturity (registries, feature stores, pipelines). Compute orchestration and AI compute infrastructure remain under-documented, with reliance on vendor AI solutions over in-house capabilities. While governance tools and IAM modernization exist, the 2025 cyberattack exposed weaknesses in incident response speed and security resilience. Compliance with GDPR and transparency in reporting breaches are positives, but CI/CD maturity and observability practices are lacking.

Conclusion

The company shows credible progress in its digital transformation journey, particularly in Applications & Data where it is closest to a Technology Adopter. Its Business & Strategy profile is middling, with leadership and talent gaps undermining execution. Infrastructure is the weakest domain, leaving the company exposed to operational and cybersecurity risks. To move beyond Technology Follower status, stronger C-Suite data leadership, faster capability building, and institutionalized infrastructure and security practices are required.

Sources

- M&S Corporate Site – Press Releases, Investor Relations, Engineering Blog
- Alation Blog: 'How Marks & Spencer Aligns Data Initiatives to Business Outcomes'
- o9 Solutions Press Release (Clothing & Home Planning Systems)
- SymphonyAI Press Release (AI-based Store Intelligence)
- Preferabli Partnership Announcement (Wine Personalization)
- First Insight Partnership (Product Development, Merchandising)
- ComputerWeekly (CTO departure after cyberattack)
- Guardian / Cybersecurity Dive coverage (2025 cyberattack)
- GlobeNewswire: M&S Digital Transformation Strategy Analysis