



50 giving stories shared as part of The Marketors' Trust's 50th Anniversary celebrations in 2026

No 21: The prize that gave important research a wider stage



Dr Karen Middleton, Associate Professor of Responsible Advertising at the University of Portsmouth.

Not all of the Trust's giving goes to charities on the front line. Some of it goes to ideas, and to the people producing the research that will shape how marketing is done for years to come. In 2023, the Marketors' Outstanding Contribution to Marketing Thesis Prize went to Dr Karen Middleton.

Karen completed her PhD alongside a full academic role, a late-career researcher whose work asks a deceptively simple question: how can marketing and advertising contribute positively to society? Her research spans responsible advertising, online safety and social impact, from sustainability and online harms to women's leadership and safety in the night-time economy, and has been published in journals including *Marketing Theory* and the *International Journal of Advertising*.

For a researcher balancing a doctorate with a demanding day job, the recognition mattered. *"The award provided valuable external recognition of the quality and societal relevance of my research,"* Karen says. It raised the profile of her work beyond her own university and opened doors, including an invitation to present her research on business social impact at Cranfield School of Management, and helped build what has become an internationally recognised body of work.

The prize also played its part in Karen's own progression, from Senior Lecturer to Associate Professor of Responsible Advertising at the University of Portsmouth, where she chairs the faculty's Athena SWAN team and sits on the board of the Conscious Advertising Network. For her,

she says, the award *“demonstrated the value of research that seeks not only to advance academic knowledge but also to create meaningful impact beyond academia.”*

That is a belief The Marketers’ Trust shares. Alongside its grants to charities, the Trust champions the thinkers, asking how marketing can be a genuine force for good, because the ideas recognised today are the ones that make the whole profession better tomorrow.

Website: [Dr Karen Middleton, University of Portsmouth](#)

How to give

Every gift, at whatever level, helps secure the Trust’s grants, awards and care for the next fifty years.

To give, go to: <https://www.marketers.org/the-marketers-trust/support-ways-to-give>

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