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**Co-creating Sustained Impact for Diversity and Inclusion
Engaged Marketing**

**Cross, S., Galalae, C., Licsandru, T., Martin Ruiz, V., Cui, C., Mari,
C., Vorster, L., Yoruk, I. and Johnson, E.**

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Engaged Marketing**

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Co-creating Sustained Impact for Diversity and Inclusion Engaged Marketing

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to examine the complexities inherent in a collaborative academic-practitioner journey to co-create sustained impact that advances diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts in the marketing field.

Design/methodology/approach – Building on empirical insights from a series of academic-practitioner co-creation workshops and in-depth collaborations with two key stakeholders, this paper reflects on the co-creation efforts and use of brokerage and bridging practices, to engage effectively with different stakeholders under the Diversity and Inclusion Engaged Marketing (DIEM) Initiative.

Findings – To illuminate the collaborative practices that have facilitated enhanced knowledge sharing between the academic and practice fields, we present two case studies, showcasing the impact outcomes co-created with DIEM-related practitioners based in the UK and the US.

Research limitations/implications – This paper provides a roadmap for a co-created impact journey, starting from a cross-contextual approach to impact gap identification. Our approach involves bridging capital and brokerage of knowledge in the development of collaborative platforms and academic-stakeholder interactions, generating impact outcomes that are not without challenges.

Practical implications – The roadmap can be used to facilitate future academic-practitioner collaborative efforts.

Originality/value – The reflections on ongoing co-created impact journeys reinforce the value of a wider understanding of impact for practitioners and academics, stemming from sustained academic-practitioner collaborations.

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3 **Keywords** – Impact, diversity and inclusion engaged marketing, bridging capital, brokerage, co-
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5 created impact, sustained impact, impact journey
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8 **Paper type** – Research paper
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European Journal of Marketing

Introduction

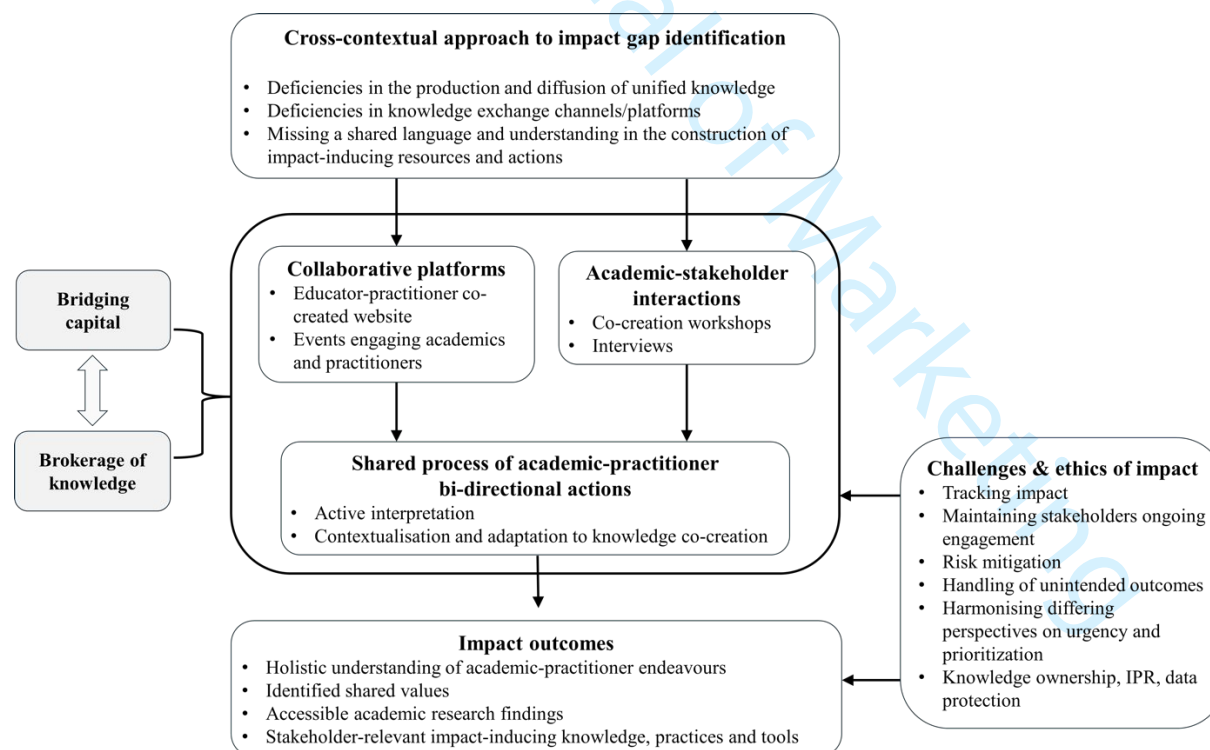
This paper reflects our journey as a network of academics co-creating impact with practitioners in marketing and diversity, equity, and inclusion, under the Diversity and Inclusion Engaged Marketing (DIEM) Initiative. Started in 2021, DIEM (<https://multicultural-marketplaces.net/diem-initiative/>) was set up as a continuous, collaborative, long-term research agenda aimed at advancing diversity and inclusion efforts in the field. This agenda entailed engaging multiple stakeholders, including non-academic experts, consumers, and educators to produce impact beyond academic circles. We define DIEM as “actions in marketing research, education, and practice that proactively and consistently promote the advancement of D&I [diversity and inclusion] for all marketplace participants” (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021, p. 144). From the early days of the DIEM Initiative, our understanding of impact had co-creation at its core, denoting a collaborative process that emphasises inclusivity, diverse perspectives, and the recognition of “holistic, alternative, and porous forms of impact” (Hutton *et al.*, 2023).

Over the years, our evolving collaborative, co-creation work has challenged and reshaped our understanding of the various forms of impact. Initially, we viewed impact as concrete, pre-planned, and confined to the boundaries of the DIEM Initiative. Through our enduring co-creation endeavours, we have come to perceive impact as a complex, multi-faceted and non-linear process fostering outcomes that transcend measurable changes. In co-creating impact with non-academic stakeholders, we mobilised two practices known as brokerage of knowledge – transferring knowledge/ideas for co-creation purposes (Burt, 2004), and bridging capital - connecting communities of individuals to advance collective power (Putnam, 2000). As a result, we learnt that by nurturing long-term collaborations with key practitioner partners, we can also influence their broader networks, thereby amplifying the overall impact. Importantly, through

collaboration, our stakeholder partners have reassessed their approaches and become more open to working with academics, aiming to co-create impact and expand their DIEM work with academic expertise.

We spotlight the enhanced practices and outcomes achieved by two partner organisations as a result of our collaboration. The first case study highlights Women in Marketing, a UK-based social enterprise aiming to empower women in the marketing profession. The second involves the National Diversity Council, a former US-based non-profit organisation, which ceased operations in September 2024, advocating for diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in the corporate sector. In the following sections of this paper and in Figure 1, we document our journey and learnings.

Figure 1: DIEM Initiative Impact Journey



1. Problem generation and impact to be achieved

The DIEM Initiative was launched to better understand the barriers, opportunities, and policy developments needed to advance D&I efforts in marketing education, research, and practice. Aware that D&I issues extend beyond academia, we envisioned a collaborative programme of work within the framework of the 2019 Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) dialogical conference. We recognised that both academics and practitioners produce valuable knowledge to deepen the understanding of DIEM. However, we found that such knowledge is not always effectively shared between stakeholders and is not accessible to all. We asked the question: How do we move beyond siloed (mis)understandings of DIEM among marketing academics and practitioners to a shared understanding within the marketing field?

To address this question, we conducted an empirical study using a multi-method, cross-contextual approach to examine work by DIEM-related practitioners in the UK and the US. Our fieldwork uncovered (1) deficiencies in the production and diffusion of unified DIEM knowledge, and (2) a lack of shared language and mutual understanding for DIEM-specific resources and actions. Findings showed that these gaps stem from a deficit of accessible knowledge resources and exchange platforms (e.g., accessible best practice repositories, training materials, or specialised reading lists). Consequently, researchers often lag in addressing practice needs (fragmented understanding), while practitioners remain unaware of academic research insights that can help reduce costs and increase efficiency and accuracy (inefficiency) and advance DIEM-related policies and actions (delayed policy advancement). To address these academic-practitioner knowledge gaps, we identified several initiatives including maximising practitioner-researcher-educator interactions; jointly producing knowledge resources; doing translational work to create shared meanings, language, and understandings; and promoting

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3 cross-field knowledge sharing (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021). We categorise these initiatives through the
4
5 concepts of bridging capital and brokerage.
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8 Bridging capital denotes connecting diverse individuals, agents, and communities
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10 through voluntary networks, fostering consensus and collective leverage (Putnam, 2000).
11
12 Brokerage refers to transferring knowledge and best practices to enable the selection and
13
14 synthesis of value-creating ideas for all parties (Burt, 2004). Given the two gaps identified during
15
16 our fieldwork, the concepts of bridging capital and brokerage proved suitable for directing our
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18 impact-creation journey through 1) connecting with diverse stakeholders and 2) enabling the
19
20 transfer of knowledge across all parties, respectively. In this process, bridging capital takes the
21
22 form of effective communication channels, such as workshops and collaborative platforms,
23
24 enabling the co-created knowledge to be widely shared and suited for relevant contexts.
25
26 Brokerage also plays a critical role in transferring and co-creating knowledge and best practices.
27
28 In this context, academics and practitioners are no longer isolated to “transfer” and “receive”
29
30 knowledge. Instead, they both act in parallel to facilitate the flow of information, ideas, and
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32 solutions. Hence, brokerage is not merely a passive transfer; it compels active interpretation,
33
34 contextualisation, and adaptation to knowledge co-creation as a shared process. These concepts
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36 not only illustrate how our impact developed, but our engagement with these practices drove our
37
38 impact production. Thus, under the DIEM Initiative, our continuous research agenda has focused
39
40 on “developing bridging capital through brokerage” (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021, p.153) to co-create
41
42 impact through the long-term process of collaboration with practitioners.
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49 In the following section, we draw from published DIEM-related work and ongoing
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51 collaborative efforts with stakeholders, as we explain how we use bridging capital and brokerage
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53 of knowledge to engage with different stakeholders and create impact at multiple levels. We
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3 elaborate on the knowledge exchange with practitioners that preceded and enabled our research
4 and share insights on how practitioners benefit from our continuous collaboration.
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7 8 **2. Working with stakeholders**

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10 Our initial attempt at bridging capital encompassed co-creation workshops and interviews with
11 DIEM-related practitioners, at different organisational levels, from a range of companies and
12 organisations, who became our stakeholders outside of academia. We define co-creation
13 workshops as events where academics and practitioners jointly develop impactful, actionable
14 solutions by blending theoretical insights with practical expertise and experiences. The co-
15 creation workshops, organised in an open discussion format exploring current marketing and
16 business practices in DIEM, focused on the skills university graduates require to competently
17 address the DIEM-related issues in their professional practice. Specifically, the workshops were
18 designed to facilitate collaborative input, allowing participants to share insights in a round-table
19 format and propose solutions that address DIEM-related challenges. This relational engagement
20 method is employed in TCR to co-create knowledge with audiences beyond academia (Ozanne *et*
21 *al.*, 2017). Practitioners who were unable to take part in the workshops were invited to share
22 their views via one-to-one interviews with members of our team. Our stakeholders included
23 representatives from Fast Thinking, Kantar, Canvas8, Media Diversity Institute, Campaign,
24 Utopia, Collider, Models of Diversity, The Unmistakables, Objective Creative, and
25 Uninvisibility in the UK, and Nationwide, Kum & Go, Vermeer, Latinos Can Coalition, Greater
26 Des Moines Partnership, Two Rivers Marketing, Bankers Trust, Principal Financial Group, and
27 LAI Communications in the US. Co-creation workshop participants in both countries also
28 included three university representatives, from one university in the UK and one university in the
29 USA, who formally spearhead D&I initiatives. We identified and recruited these participants
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3 through personal contacts of the author team and our respective university-industry connections,
4 as well as via LinkedIn and direct mailing to organisations engaged in DIEM-related work. Over
5
6 the last five years, we have leveraged those initial relationships and have continued to actively
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8 engage with many of these stakeholders via online meetings, events, seminars, and professional
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10 social media.
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15 To increase our reach to other potential stakeholders beyond the initial workshops, we
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17 used an organic snowball approach, with initial collaborators reaching out to others in their
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19 networks to gauge their interest in the DIEM Initiative. When identifying potential stakeholders
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21 outside of academia, our goal was to achieve representation from consultants, business owners,
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23 community advocates, marketers, and educators from a variety of sectors, seniority levels, and
24
25 organisational sizes, all dealing with DIEM-related concerns. With that goal in mind, based on
26
27 referrals and other contacts, we have established connections with over 40 business and
28
29 education DIEM-related practitioners in the UK and the US, with whom we have actively
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31 engaged through various channels, including in-person, online, and hybrid interactions.
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36 The co-creation workshop format remains our key mode of engagement. Despite
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38 logistical, scheduling, and time-difference-related coordination challenges, to date, we have
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40 conducted ten workshops (online, hybrid, and in-person), including workshops focusing on
41
42 curriculum development, in the UK and the US, and one pre-conference session. While the initial
43
44 co-creation workshops in 2019 were held in person in the UK and the US, the COVID-19
45
46 pandemic hampered in-person interactions. The workshops in 2020 and 2021 were held online,
47
48 followed by two hybrid workshops in 2023 and 2024. Our bridging capital efforts also include
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50 hosting the Marketplace Inclusion Pre-conference at the 2024 Winter AMA Academic
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3 Conference, where we brought together six DIEM-related practitioners and six DIEM-related
4 educators in a dialogue on the link between marketplace inclusion and innovation.
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8 Overall, the bridging capital approach helped us better understand academic-practitioner
9 endeavours from holistic and alternative perspectives. Simultaneously, this better understanding
10 allows us to brainstorm impact gaps and solutions, in the form of brokerage efforts feasible for
11 all parties, which we explain next.
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16 **3. The knowledge exchange, (co-)creation and learning process**

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18 As the DIEM Initiative work evolved, we focused on escalating the process of bridging capital
19 through brokerage, with co-created knowledge based on shared values and context-relevant
20 impacts for all stakeholders. DIEM brokerage endeavours with business and education
21 practitioners involved co-producing transferable impact-inducing knowledge and best practices.
22
23 Through our engagements, both practitioners and educators called for actionable resources
24 beyond the traditional academic literature. For example, practitioners prioritised managerial
25 knowledge that is actionable and implementable, favouring resources like white papers and
26 reports over academic journal articles. Consequently, in response to our stakeholders' requests,
27 we develop tools, such as white papers (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021), podcasts (Demangeot, 2021), and
28 infographics, to a) disseminate the insights and recommendations from our research articles, b)
29 positively impact the work of wider business practitioners, and c) improve the experience of
30 consumers in the marketplace.
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47 Furthermore, to address one of the challenges highlighted earlier – the deficit of
48 accessible knowledge resources and exchange platforms – in 2022, we launched the
49 Multicultural Marketplaces Network knowledge-sharing and networking platform ([multicultural-](https://multicultural-marketplaces.net)
50 [marketplaces.net](https://multicultural-marketplaces.net)). This platform was co-created with, and for, our practitioner and educator
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3 partners, and funded by the Association for Consumer Research TCR Grant Program, the
4 University of Leicester, and the IESEG School of Management. It offers resources, case studies,
5 and best practices for promoting D&I in marketing, tailored specifically for researchers,
6 practitioners, and educators.
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12 Our co-creation journey has reshaped our understanding of impact from concrete, pre-
13 planned, and consequential for a single project, to a complex, multi-faceted, and non-linear
14 process. Fitting with academic expectations of impact, this co-creation work has resulted in
15 improved communication, trust-imbedded interactions, and increased knowledge co-developed
16 by researchers and practitioners, leading to anticipated additional avenues for further research
17 and partnerships. Most importantly, working with our stakeholders has also allowed them to
18 expand and re-conceptualise their definition of impact as a much more comprehensive and
19 holistic process or journey, as discussed next. To illustrate the impact achieved through ongoing
20 co-creation efforts, we focus on work with two stakeholders: Women in Marketing and the
21 National Diversity Council.
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35 **4. Impact outcomes**

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37 We discuss the impact outcomes of our work under two case studies: 1) Women in Marketing
38 (WiM) and 2) National Diversity Council (NDC). While there are several differences between
39 the two organisations in the ways we collaborated and the continuity of our engagement with
40 each, they shared a common feature. Both had multiple stakeholders, whom we were also able to
41 impact through our efforts, thus collectively contributing to the advancement of D&I for multiple
42 participants. We acknowledge the challenges that come with this added complexity at the end of
43 the section.
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53 *Women in Marketing (WiM)*
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3 Women in Marketing (WiM; womeninmarketing.org.uk/) is a UK-based social enterprise
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5 “established to empower women to fulfil their potential within the marketing profession. WiM
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7 takes a holistic approach to the educational and well-being of women through collaborations and
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9 partnerships with relevant organisations” (WiM, 2024). Our ongoing collaboration with WiM
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11 began in 2019, when we reached out to them as a potential participant in our London co-creation
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13 workshop, attracted by their organisation’s DIEM ethos. While they did not directly participate
14
15 in the workshop, the Founder and CEO continued the communication with two of our network
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17 members. Each side was motivated by the potential for knowledge exchange surrounding the
18
19 emergent DIEM research area, resulting in an ongoing dialogue and collaboration. These bi-
20
21 directional exchanges between academic and WiM practitioners resulted in several brokerage
22
23 efforts, and it has been instrumental to the “trickle-down dissemination” (Ozanne *et al.*, 2022,
24
25 p.129) of our network’s work beyond academic audiences.
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31 WiM launched their WiM Awards in 2010 to “recognise the economic, social influence
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33 and impact of women to millions [and give] recognition to inspirational women and male
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35 equality advocates across the globe” (WiM, 2024). An important impact outcome of our
36
37 evolving partnership with WiM was the co-creation of two new category awards, namely the
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39 “Marketing Scientist Award” in 2020 and the “Next Generation Student Award” in 2022, as part
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41 of their annual Awards ceremony. The WiM Marketing Scientist Award marked the ten-year
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43 anniversary of the awards, and “celebrate educators in marketing” (WiM, 2024). This award was
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45 inspired by our network’s engagement with WiM’s founder, as a recognition that there was value
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47 in the collaborations and interactive dissemination of research and insights between academics
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49 and practitioners:
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3 *“Partnering with educators that were equipping the next generation of marketing*
4 *professionals with skills needed to include inclusive change (...) WiM wants to engage*
5 *and work closely with academic researchers and educators to contribute to the current*
6 *and future landscape of marketing practice. Your educators’ network being global is also*
7 *aligned with our global community.”* (Ade Onilude, WiM Founder)
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15 Through trusted collaborative interactions with our network, WiM was motivated to create an
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17 opportunity for academic recognition beyond the scholarly community. Since the introduction of
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19 this award category, and as of the writing of this paper, WiM has offered ten awards to
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21 marketing researchers and educators. The launch and visibility of the Marketing Scientist Award
22
23 underscores the value of academic-practitioner collaborations and the potential contribution to
24
25 industry development and growth. This award is an example of how collaboration can play the
26
27 ultimate role of bridging capital through brokerage. Together, WiM and our network not only
28
29 engaged in cross-field knowledge sharing, but also co-created a tangible long-term recognition of
30
31 female marketing researchers and educators’ contribution to advancing the marketing field.
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35 Importantly, the Marketing Scientist Award serves not only as an inspiration for further
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37 education and career opportunities for female marketers, but also to amplify the wider impact of
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39 the winners themselves: *“I hope that it also encourages [the] next generation of females to*
40
41 *become lecturers in marketing as well, and to really celebrate and acknowledge the importance*
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43 *of doing a university degree in marketing”*(...) *“I want to amplify the various facets of lecturers*
44
45 *and professors in marketing* (Ade Onilude, WiM Founder).
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50 While the effect the award has had on the winners is difficult to measure directly, we
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52 highlight the emotional and intangible impact articulated by two of the latest winners, Dr. Pilar
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3 Rojas Gaviria, winner of the 2023 WiM Marketing Scientist Award, and Dr Mina Tajvidi,
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5 commended for their research contributions to the field:
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8 *“This award was a mark of approval and celebration from the women's marketing*
9
10 *community... The impact of this award is the myriad of emotions of all women*
11 *celebrating and exchanging their contributions. The award allowed me to connect with*
12 *many of them and develop further collaborations for teaching or simply for friendships...*
13
14 *This award is a beginning rather than an end. I am not alone in sharing impactful ideas*
15 *for others to try; I see all these women doing the same with their projects. It is a privilege*
16 *to belong.”* (Dr. Pilar Rojas Gaviria, Associate Professor in Marketing, University of
17
18 Birmingham, UK)
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22 *“Tangibly, this recognition has bolstered my career trajectory, opening doors to new*
23 *opportunities and networks that have enriched my professional journey. Beyond the*
24 *tangible benefits, the award has wielded an intangible impact, amplifying visibility and*
25 *recognition within the industry and across platforms like LinkedIn. This heightened*
26 *visibility not only enhances professional credibility but also fosters a sense of belonging*
27 *and empowerment. Emotionally, the award has instilled a profound sense of confidence*
28 *and esteem, reaffirming the significance of my contributions and inspiring continued*
29 *growth and advocacy within the marketing community”* (Dr. Mina Tajvidi, Senior.
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31 Lecturer in Marketing, Queen Mary University of London).
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47 These testimonials of the Marketing Scientist Award’s spiralling impact on the immediate
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49 professional lives of two award winners, speak not only to the direct impact of the award, but
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51 also to the future impact on their career aspirations.
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54 *National Diversity Council (NDC)*
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3 The National Diversity Council (NDC; nationaldiversitycouncil.org;) was a US-based non-profit
4 organisation with the mission of being “both a resource and an advocate for the value of
5 diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging (DEIB).” In September 2024, the organisation’s
6 activities were curtailed and NDC was terminated, a process on which we comment in the final
7 sections of the paper. The NDC served “as the umbrella organization to support our statewide
8 and regional affiliates, which foster an understanding of DEIB as a dynamic strategy for success
9 and community well-being through various initiatives” (NDC, 2024). In 2022, NDC contacted us
10 requesting access to our article on the DIEM initiative (Kipnis *et al.*, 2021) and permission to
11 place it in their NDC Toolkit, under the category Diversity and Marketing. In response, we
12 provided both the original article, and a more concise white paper outlining the key research
13 findings. The white paper provides a more easily translatable knowledge resource for
14 practitioners - an example of our brokerage efforts. At the time, NDC had 229 partner
15 organisations and a certification program with 1600+ alumni members. They offered their
16 partners and alumni a repository (NDC Toolkit, ndc-toolkit.org) of DEI research with 250+
17 resources in 11 categories, and 150+ webinars in a website that received 28,000+ visits from
18 2022 to 2023 (both in the open and secure pages). To put these figures into perspective, and
19 based on their farewell letter (<https://thendc.org/>), NDC further states that their “impact has been
20 profound with 1 million+ people through DEIB events, workshops and programs; we've
21 graduated 1700 NDC Certified Diversity Professionals; engaged 80,000 followers on social
22 media; established thousands of partnerships across the private, public and nonprofit sectors; and
23 worked across more than 60 industries.”

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51 Our contribution of the original article and a white paper enriched NDC’s toolkit and
52 exemplifies a form of impact. However, it was difficult to trace the impact of our individual
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3 contributions to the NDC toolkit, on their partner companies, as NDC evaluated the toolkit's
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5 impact in the aggregate. NDC assessed the impact of the password-protected toolkit in terms of
6
7 the overall value it offered to NDC partner companies and participants in the NDC certification
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9 programmes:

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12 *“Our partners, they receive access to the toolkit because the toolkit is a benefit of their*
13
14 *partnership so [...] there is a value tied to that, and the other audience is the participants*
15
16 *of the NDC certification program and they are also given access, they are given a*
17
18 *password [...] once they graduate from the one week program, they continue to have*
19
20 *access to the toolkit to continue to grow in their knowledge.”* (Dr. Cecilia Orellana-Rojas,
21
22
23 NDC Chief of Learning and Consulting)

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25
26 While partner organisations could freely roam through the toolkit, NDC certification students
27
28 delved deeply through all the items of the toolkit to complete their certificate requirements.
29
30 Considering that NDC graduated an average of 125 students per year and re-certified hundreds
31
32 more, the materials within the NDC Toolkit received focused attention. According to data
33
34 compiled by NDC, 85% and 89% of NDC certification graduates in 2022 and 2023, respectively,
35
36 rated the NDC Toolkit as useful or very useful. Consequently, the knowledge gleaned from these
37
38 resources, including our contribution, was not only absorbed, but also may have been actively
39
40 implemented within companies across the US and globally, making a tangible impact, albeit
41
42 currently untraceable, on organisational and business practices and outcomes worldwide. In the
43
44 NDC Learning and Consulting educational materials, the NDC Toolkit was described as *“a*
45
46 *resource to enhance team member awareness and advance DEIB efforts within your*
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48 *organization. It provides you with perspectives and best practices to accelerate business success*
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50 *in today's marketplace”* (NDC Learning and Consulting).
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3 Our experience as members of the NDC community highlights the collaborative essence
4 of impact generation, emphasising inclusivity and the integration of diverse perspectives in the
5 research process. This ensures that the resulting outcomes are comprehensive and representative
6 of a wide array of needs and viewpoints. While NDC had experience working with academic
7 researchers (about 70-75% of their content is created by academics), collaborating on research
8 with academics was new to them. Our collaboration impacted the NDC's process of sourcing and
9 developing relevant content for their members. The NDC Chief of Learning and Consulting
10 participated as a panellist in the 2024 Winter AMA Pre-conference mentioned earlier, where she
11 shared the latest NDC insights and gained connections to help her source future content.
12
13 Discussions regarding the expansion of our partnership also encompassed bridging capital
14 opportunities - such as collaborative research endeavours, as well as focusing attention on
15 brokerage work, including participating in webinars and training, and integrating additional
16 research into the NDC Toolkit - such as supplementary white papers and infographics. The
17 former NDC Chief of Learning and Consulting will participate in our TCR track in 2025,
18 collaborating with us on a research project.

37 *Challenges of impact co-creation*

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39 While we are appreciative of our partnerships, research, and impact co-creation journey, and of
40 the impact achieved to date, this work has its challenges. These challenges range from tracking
41 impact and maintaining sustained stakeholder involvement, to overcoming practical and
42 logistical demands.

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44 The first challenge that is potentially more critical when working in D&I is the
45 vulnerability of partner organisations to the wider context. Our collaboration with NDC was
46 flourishing when we learnt about their dissolution. While we continue to work with the people
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3 who enabled our collaboration, a significant part of our work with them, including statistics on
4 the impact of our activities, remain lost. Indeed, a significant challenge we have encountered is
5 the difficulty in tracking and measuring impact beyond the academic sphere. For example, as
6 mentioned earlier, it was difficult to know how many companies were implementing the
7 knowledge that was distributed by the NDC Toolkit, as their website had tracking limitations
8 similar to many other websites. It was difficult to know who exactly of the 28,000 visits in 2022
9 and 2023, read our white paper or used it to implement DIEM-related efforts or initiatives in
10 their respective companies. Similarly, quantifying the long-term effects of the WiM Marketing
11 Scientist Award on both recipients and their professional connections is a complex endeavour. In
12 the words of one of the awardees, receiving the award and being part of the WiM community can
13 be experienced as a process of creating meaningful but “slow” impact.

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Another challenge is maintaining our stakeholders’ ongoing engagement and involvement. As collaborating partners change leadership or individuals change jobs, their new leaders might not be interested in our partnership, their replacements might acquire different responsibilities, or the original organisation’s mission may be hampered. In the case of NDC, their discontinuance as an organisation in September 2024 meant that our partnership and continuity with the organisation was also curtailed. However, while losing continuity is indeed a challenge, it underscores the notion that partnerships are formed with the people within those organisations, who act as representatives of the organisation. Thus, our partnership with our key NDC contact, the former NDC Chief of Learning and Consulting, continues, and we view this setback as another opportunity to explore new partnerships and collaborations. Relatedly, it is important to remember that while the individuals with whom we partner and collaborate are representatives of particular organisations, new efforts may be needed to retain our relationships

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3 with organisations if those individuals leave the organisation. Moreover, relationships with those
4 individuals can remain if the organisation loses interest or dissolves. This dual-level
5 collaborative partnership must be managed with a strategic orientation and effort.
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10 Additional practical and logistical challenges encompass scheduling conflicts, and
11 differing perspectives on urgency and the prioritisation of tasks between academics and
12 practitioners. For example, academics and practitioners answer to different disciplinary bodies.
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14 In marketing academia, the requisite approvals from multiple ethics and institutional review
15 boards (IRB) before conducting research contrasts with the greater autonomy and quicker pace in
16 marketing practice, which could lead to delays and conflicting needs. Additionally, strategies and
17 guidelines around research effort and knowledge ownership need to be established early to avoid
18 potential conflicts, particularly for practitioner data used in academic articles. Questions about
19 content access, sharing, data protection, intellectual property rights, and ownership of impact
20 also pose potential challenges to practitioner-academic collaborations.
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33 Finally, we acknowledge that the ways impact is measured in academic institutions, with
34 a focus on anticipated and measurable outcomes, does not fully reflect our ongoing journey as a
35 research network that collaborates closely with various stakeholders through a knowledge co-
36 creation process. This generates tensions between internal (i.e., particularly relevant for
37 academic stakeholders) and external (i.e., relevant for non-academic stakeholders) impact. We
38 suggest that this challenge may be addressed through i) transparent communication between
39 academia and practitioners on the impact agenda; ii) recognising and harmonising partner-
40 specific and shared forms of impact; and iii) prioritising change-driven long-term impact and
41 maintaining reflexive collaborations for sustained co-creation of impact.
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53 **5. The ethics of impact**

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3 We acknowledge that co-creating impact through DIEM collaborations requires several ethical
4 considerations. First, we recognise that while our network continuously reaches out to different
5
6 DIEM-related practitioners, most of our close collaborators are located in Western countries and
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8 based in established organisations. This limits the impact of our bridging capital through
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10 brokerage work. For example, NDC membership was mostly US based and access to the NDC
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12 Toolkit required undertaking a paid qualification, thus limiting accessibility.
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17 Second, while researchers and practitioners benefit from multi-channel communication
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19 (e.g., workshops, e-mail, brainstorming conversations, and platforms for research inquiries and
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21 discussions), consumers, marketers, and the marketplace at large are the intended and ultimate
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23 beneficiaries. Through the impact co-created with our stakeholders, we hope to contribute to the
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25 drive for D&I in marketing and thus improve the well-being of consumers. Nevertheless, we
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27 acknowledge that our understanding and the nature of impact, while co-created with various
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29 stakeholders, might differ for disparate groups of consumers. Hence, our network needs to
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31 extend and diversify the types of practitioners we engage with to ensure that they represent the
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33 voices of different consumer groups, particularly those who have been traditionally marginalised.
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38 Third, although we strongly believe that our work contributes to enhancing academic-
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40 practitioner collaborations, we are also alarmed by the current backlash against diversity, equity,
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42 and inclusion initiatives (e.g., Berman *et al.*, 2023), given the focus of our DIEM work. The
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44 timing of the abrupt discontinuance of the NDC due to lack of funding (<https://thendc.org/>) is a
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46 possible consequence of this backlash, although we can only speculate. This hostility calls for
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48 reframing the benefits of DIEM-related initiatives to assist practitioners in addressing potential
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50 apprehensions and concerns, while fostering continued appreciation and support for the
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3 importance of organisational inclusion amongst their stakeholders. We are committed to
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5 addressing these concerns as part of the long-term research agenda of our network.
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8 **Conclusion**

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10 The evolution of our co-created understanding of impact reflects our experience with a more
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12 practitioner-based contextualisation and the progression of the broader academic understanding
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14 of impact. Impact is therefore created through an ongoing process of collaboration that cultivates
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16 skill development and entails changes. This evolution fits current definitions of impact in the
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18 academic literature, particularly when knowledge and impact are co-created dialogically between
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20 academics, practitioners, and educators. For example, Hutton *et al.* (2023) highlight the
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22 collaborative generation of impact as a process that produces results beyond quantifiable
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24 changes, highlighting the importance of inclusivity, a variety of viewpoints, and acknowledging
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26 comprehensive, alternative, and flexible forms of impact critical for practical comprehension.
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31 Collaborating with different stakeholders is challenging as our case studies illustrate. Our
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33 partnership with WiM is ongoing, and our network members have been asked to play a more
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35 direct role in the logistics and hosting of the 2024 WiM Awards. In contrast, our partnership with
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37 NDC has been curtailed and redefined, as we explore collaborations with our former key NDC
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39 contact. Nevertheless, finding diverse partners and adopting an open and inquisitive
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41 collaborative mindset are invaluable when working towards creating impact. As we continue to
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43 collaborate with partners within and outside our network, we expect the definition and scope of
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45 impact for our initiatives to continue evolving. We also hope that this broader expansion of a co-
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47 created understanding of impact occurs in academia overall, within and beyond DIEM research.
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50 This expansion will not only advance the academic and practice fields but will also benefit our
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52 ultimate target: consumers in multicultural marketplaces.
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